

French High Jewelry Illustrates Ancient Indian Legends

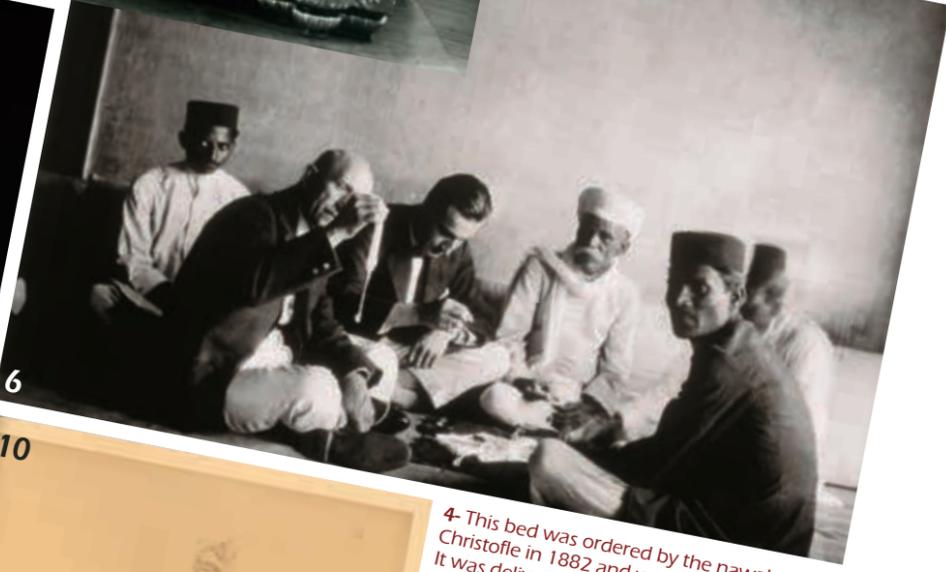
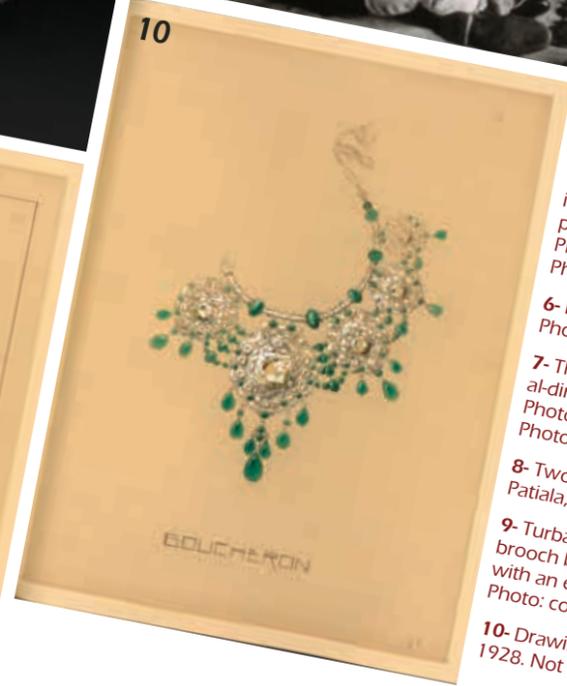
By Marie Chabrol

Indian culture was definitely one of the most important sources of inspiration for French high-end jewelry houses during the second quarter of the 20th century, and especially during the 1920s and the 1930s. To understand why Maharajas and aristocratic Indian families chose France for the creation of extraordinary jewels, we have to go back to some political history.

Between the 16th and the mid-19th centuries, India was governed by the Mughal empire but their power declined during the 18th century. It's thanks to different emperors that the Indian Muslim states joined forces to transform India into a powerful country and gather one of the most sumptuous treasures in the world during the 16th and the 17th centuries: Bābur (1526-1530), Humāyūn (1530-1556), Akbar (1556-1605), Jahangir (1605-1627), Shah Jahan (1627-1658) and Aurangzeb (1658-1707).

For these emperors, gems and jewels were important and their collections were full of impressive and colorful gemstones. Most of them were bought in the Goa market which was one of the most famous trading posts for gems. In the Islamic tradition, color and weight are more important than purity, and gems were classified into different categories:

- The favorite is definitely spinels, especially the dark pink to luminous red ones from Badakhshan, a region now divided into Tadjikistan and Afghanistan.
- Then, some other gemstones, described in the oldest gemological book: the *Ratnapariksha* in which gems represent planets and their influences. First diamonds, then a group called *Maharatnani* with pearl, ruby, sapphire and emerald; finally a group of four gems *Uparatnani* featuring zircon, topaz, chrysoberyl and coral.



1- A pendant from India, circa 1575-1625, made of gold and set with pearls, rubies, diamonds, emeralds, sapphires, glass and enamel. Photo : ©The AI Thani Collection 2016. All rights reserved. Photographs taken by Prudence Cuming.

2- A portrait of the Maharaja Sir Sri Krishnaraja Wodeyar Bahadur, circa 1906. Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

3- An imperial necklace with engraved spinels. Northern India, circa 1600-1650. Imperial engravings on four spinels dated between 1609 and 1635. The center stone weighs 162 carats, total weight about 790 carats. Photo: ©The AI Thani Collection 2013. All rights reserved. Photographs taken by Prudence Cuming.

4- This bed was ordered by the nawab of Bahawalpur at Christoffe in 1882 and was photographed in the workshop. It was delivered in 1883. Photo: courtesy of Christoffe.

5- This brooch was bought by the Maharaja of Kapurthala in 1905. Made by Mellerio, this enameled gold and platinum jewel is set with diamonds. Photo: ©The AI Thani Collection 2013. All rights reserved. Photographs taken by Prudence Cuming.

6- Louis Boucheron in India, 1909. Photo: courtesy of Boucheron.

7- The 30.61-carat Shah Jahan emerald. Engraved "Shihab al-din Muhammad Shah Jahan Padshah Ghazi 1031." Photo: ©The AI Thani Collection 2013. All rights reserved. Photographs taken by Prudence Cuming.

8- Two drawings for a head ornament for the Maharaja of Patiala, 1928. Photo: Courtesy of Boucheron.

9- Turban ornament called "Sarpech". India, circa 1900, brooch by Cartier in 2012. Made of gold and silver, it is set with an emeralds, diamonds and a pearl. Photo: courtesy of the AI Thani collection.

10- Drawing for a necklace for the Maharaja of Patiala, 1928. Not realized. Photo: Courtesy of Boucheron.

All these materials were often engraved with the name and the title of the Mughal emperors or with flowers (especially for emeralds), a pattern that Emperor Shah Jahan greatly admired. Almost never cut but simply polished to preserve their weight, gems were drilled and used to make necklaces, bracelets, and were – of course – worn on traditional turbans.

India was the main supplier in the world for diamonds until the 18th century. Golconde stones were famous (and always highly valuable) for their purity and their absence of color. Regarding spinels, Mughal emperors wanted to preserve the weight, so stones weren't cut as happened in Europe. Many different names are used to describe these stones: "Polki diamonds", "Indian cut" or "rose cut", but these were cut again to give them more brilliance and symmetry.

Some of the most famous historical diamonds in the world came from India: the Koh-i-Noor (105.60 carats), the Régent (140.05 carats), The Hope (45.52 carats) or

the Orloff (189.62 carats). Later, jewelry houses such as Cartier, became customers for Golconde diamonds and included them in unique and bespoke creations: the "Tiger tears" weighing respectively 57.53 and 56.64 carats; the 41.28 carat "North Star" preserved by Joseph Bonaparte, Tatiana Yousoupova and her descendants, Lady Deterding. Sold in 1980 at Geneva, nobody has seen this stone since. The "Queen of Holland", a 136.25-carat blue diamond formerly in the Maharaja of Nawanagar collection; the 94.80-carat "Eastern Star"; and the 42.92-carat "Tereshchenko" blue diamond.

Maharajas really appeared on the Indian political scene at the end of the 18th century with the fast-growing British Empire. With Englishmen present in the country from 1600 with the East India Company, their power grew progressively between 1650 and 1750 while the Mughal Empire – with the descendants of Shah Jahan – declined because of wars and invasions. England founded its influence due to local princes who often owned little independent kingdoms which sometimes didn't exceed a few dozen square kilometers. As the British Empire financed military expenses, the Maharajas



11



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14

11- Drawing for a diamond and emerald brooch. Photo: courtesy of Chaumet Paris.

12- Gold box depicting the Queen Eugenie and her ladies, circa 1942, formerly in the collection of the Maharani of Baroda. Set with diamonds, rubies, sapphires and emeralds. Photo: courtesy of Van Cleef & Arpels – P. Gries.

13- Drawing for a princely headdress. Photo: courtesy of Chaumet Paris.

14- "Sarpech" platinum brooch featuring diamonds, rubies, sapphires and emeralds, circa 1924. Photo: courtesy of Van Cleef & Arpels – P. Gries.



18



16

15 and 15B- Drawing (and photo before delivery) of a necklace for the Maharaja of Patiala, circa 1928. Photo: courtesy of Boucheron.

16- Platinum brooch/pendant set with diamonds, rubies, sapphires and emeralds, circa 1924. Photo: courtesy of Van Cleef & Arpels – P. Gries.

17- Drawing for a necklace for the Maharaja of Patiala, 1928. Photo: Courtesy of Boucheron.

18- The Hindu Necklace ordered by Daisy Fellowes at Cartier in 1936. This jewel was modified in 1963 to add a clasp. Photo: Nick Welsh, Collection Cartier © Cartier.

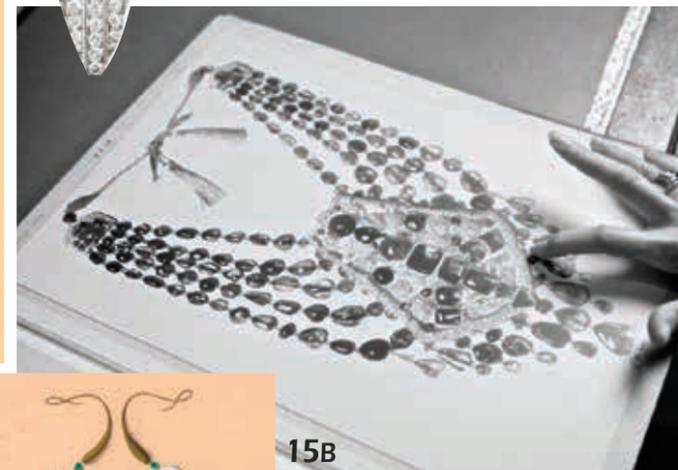
got to keep their ranks and positions. And thanks to these savings, they built impressive fortunes and learned to love the British and European way of life.

In 1857, a revolt broke out against British power. This political crisis ended in 1859, when the last Mughal emperor was banished, the East Indian Company was dissolved and, finally, India became a part of the British Crown. It's the beginning of an important era for India with the British Raj which lasted until Independence in 1947. In 1877, Queen Victoria became the Empress of India.

Having discovered, and then taken on, a Western way of life, Maharajas became important British power representatives on Indian territory. By the end of the 19th century, they had adopted European food, clothes and even sports, such as cricket. Their children studied in Europe, often famous universities, such as at Oxford or Cambridge, and, of course, these families became important customers for European and French luxury goods houses which all operated branches in London. In time, luxury suppliers came to India to introduce their jewels, including Cartier and Boucheron. And then the Maharajas decided to travel themselves in Europe, helped by the first travel agency, Thomas Cook and Sons, known now simply as Thomas Cook.



17



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19- Drawing of a diamond and emerald necklace.
Photo: courtesy of Chaumet Paris.

21- Drawings in a Van Cleef & Arpels catalog from 1925 with one of the bracelet ordered by Daisy Fellowes. Photo: courtesy of Van Cleef & Arpels.

22- Drawing of a necklace for the Maharaja of Patiala, 1928. Photo: Courtesy of Boucheron.

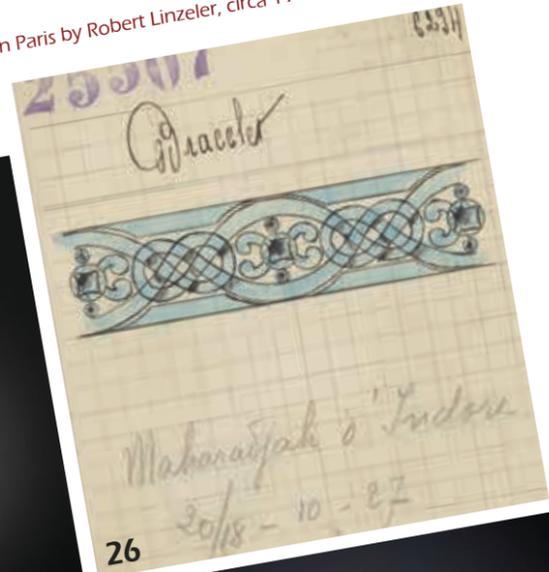
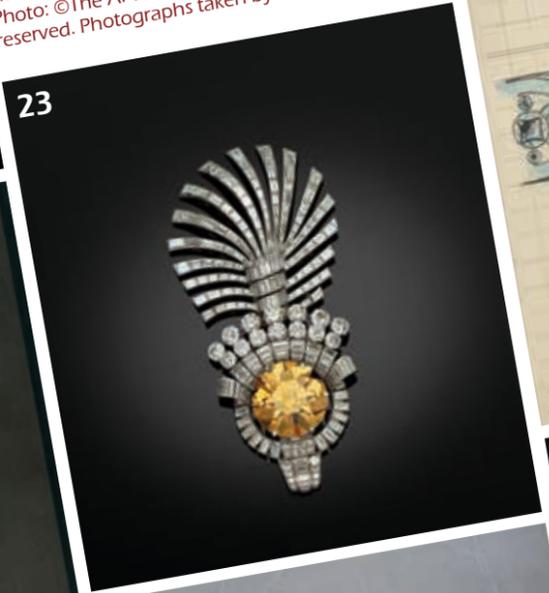
23- Turban ornament "The Eye of the Tiger", made of platinum and diamonds. The center stone weighs 61.56 carats. Made by Cartier, London, in 1934.
Photo: ©The Al Thani Collection 2016. All rights reserved. Photographs taken by Prudence Cuming.

24- Drawing for an emerald, diamond and pearl devant de corsage and a shoulder jewel.
Photo: courtesy of Chaumet Paris.

25- The Agra diamond weighing 28.15 carats, Golconde, before 1536 but cut again in the 1880s.
Photo: ©The Al Thani Collection 2015. All rights reserved. Photograph by Prudence Cuming.

26- Drawing of a bracelet commissioned by the Maharaja of Indore in 1925.
Photo: courtesy of Van Cleef & Arpels - P. Gries.

27- Head ornament created by Paul Iribe and made in Paris by Robert Linzeler, circa 1910. Platinum, emerald, sapphires, diamonds and pearls.
Photo: ©The Al Thani Collection 2015. All rights reserved. Photographs taken by Prudence Cuming.



Extraordinary Orders and Mesmerizing Artistic Heritage

In 1882, the French luxury house Christofle was commissioned by Sadiq Muhammad Khan Abbasi IV, nawab of Bahawalpur, to create a "bed in dark wood decorated with applied sterling with gilded parts, monograms and arms, ornamented with four life-size bronze figures painted in flesh color with natural hair, movable eyes and arms, holding fans and horse tails". It was delivered in February 1883 for a price of 80,000 French francs.

In December 1905, the Mellerio dits Meller company sold the enameled gold and platinum brooch set with 1,742 rose-cut diamonds to the Maharaja of Kapurthala. This transformable jewel is wearable in different ways: in the hair, on clothes or on a hat. Depicting a peacock, this jewel was gifted to Anita Delgado, his future wife, a Spanish dancer, whom he met in Madrid and now preserved in the Al-Thani Collection.

In 1911, Joseph Chaumet received an important order from Tukoji Rao III, the Maharaja of Indore, for a diamond necklace that was set with two 47-carat pear-shape diamonds. Many sketches were preserved in the Chaumet archives about these creations, made with an abundance of gems and pearls for the Gaekwar of Baroda, the Maharajas of Cooch Behar or Kashmir, Ladies Jehangir and Tata.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Cartier maintained close relations with India. Jacques Cartier, one of the three founding brothers – based in London – was made responsible for all the business related to India. He first traveled to the country in India in 1911 for the Coronation of the King George V, and opened an office in Dehli in the same year.

Many orders were commissioned from Indian, European and American families for jewels directly inspired by Indian traditional patterns with gemstones specifically imported as Burma rubies, engraved old-mine emeralds from Colombia or diamonds, natural pearls, spinels and sometimes, but rarely, blue sapphires because these stones bring misfortune in India.

Among the most beautiful and representative sets of jewels handmade by workshops is an impressive and rare platinum arm-bracelet set with diamonds (for M. Dhunjibhoy Bomanji, 1922), a shoulder brooch with an antique engraved emerald (from the end of the 16th century) to the glory of Abbas I Shah of Persia and bought by Marjorie Merriweather-Post in 1923. Between 1925 and 1928, the house produced many important jewels: an ornamental turban for Maharaja of Kapurthala and set with emeralds (the biggest is an hexagonal stone weighing 177.4 carats), the reassembly of the family jewels from the Maharaja of Patiala with the delivery of two diamond necklaces – the first set with rough stones, and the

second was one of the most impressive diamond necklaces in the world (more than 2,930 stones were used, including an 18-carat tobacco-colored diamond and two Burmese sapphires weighing more than 29 carats) and the 243.69 carat De Beers yellow diamond.

In 1935, the Maharaja ordered some new jewels for the Maharani. In 1936, Daisy Fellowes ordered the "Hindu necklace", a stream of emeralds, rubies, sapphires and diamonds set in platinum. Modified in 1963, this jewel didn't have a clasp but was tied behind the neck using two long black laces. It was directly inspired from another order for the Maharaja of Patna with rubies, emeralds and diamonds. The same year, a platinum necklace set with 81 carats of Burmese rubies was ordered for the Maharaja of Nawanagar. And in 1939, Jacques Cartier sent to India his best jewels for the Maharani of Jodhpur and, at the same time, the company worked with the nawab of Bahawalpur who wanted a jewelry set with all his pearls, diamonds and emeralds set in a unique necklace.

Frederic Boucheron developed close relationships with Maharaja families during the 1870s, with his son Louis taking over when he first traveled to India in 1909). Among the many orders were: a diamond brooch with a 22-carat briolette for the Maharaja of Kapurthala in 1905. The Maharani of Indore, as the Princess of Berar (who was linked to the nizâm of Hyderabad), entrusted her natural pearl necklaces whenever they were in Paris. During the winter of 1926-1927, Louis traveled to India to introduce new creations from Paris, with the Maharajas of



20- Bird cage in gold and glass with lapis lazuli, coral, beryl, agate, enamel, wood, rubies and sapphires, 1935. This cage was commissioned by a maharaja in the mid-1930s for his pet frog, Hortense. The Maison modified this design to include a pair of lovebirds made of rose quartz after the death of Hortense. Photo: courtesy of Van Cleef & Arpels - P. Gries.



28

28- The "Blue City" of Jodhpur. Photo: courtesy of Boucheron.

29- An emerald, diamond and gold necklace made by Van Cleef & Arpels for Her Highness, Princess Salimah Aga Khan, in 1971. Photo: courtesy of Van Cleef & Arpels – P. Gries.

34- Piaget ring in 18K white gold set with 12 emerald beads, 14 round blue sapphires and 30 brilliant-cut diamonds. From the Mythical Journey collection. Photo: courtesy of Piaget.



34

Patiala, Baroda and Mysore buying his jewels. Some months later, on August 2, 1928, an impressive delegation arrived at the Place Vendôme: the Maharaja of Patiala was followed by twelve Sikhs with six crates containing more than 7,500 diamonds and more than 1,400 emeralds, rubies and natural pearls. These gemstones had an estimated value of more than 2 billion French francs. The workshop produced 149 jewels, including necklaces, bracelets and brooches for him, his wives and his daughters.

In the 1920s, Van Cleef & Arpels began to introduce jewels with Indian designs. Daisy Fellowes, who was an important jewelry connoisseur and lover, ordered jewels from all the famous French jewelry houses, and especially two platinum bracelets set with diamonds and emeralds in 1926 and 1928 which could be transformed into a statement necklace. In 1956, Claude Arpels traveled to India and returned from Bombay with an impressive sapphire known as the "Neela Ranee" or "The Blue Princess". Weighing 114 carats, it was purchased by Florence Jay Gould and mounted as a detachable pendant and was the highlight of a diamond necklace. Nicknamed by the press as "the Mumbai diamond King" or "the friend of Maharajas", he made more than 10 trips to India between the 1950s and 1970s. In his own words, he called them his "jewel safaris". In 1970, he married Mherulisa who was born in Pakistan but who had always lived in India. She inspired most of his marvelous Indian jewelry creations in New York.

It's impossible to speak about India and not mention one of the most mythical customers of Van Cleef & Arpels after 1950: Sita Devi, the Maharani of Baroda. In June 1949, two years after India gained independence, she left her country, taking her fabulous treasures made of gold, thousand of gemstones and mesmerizing jewels such as her necklace with the most important Bassorah natural pearls ever seen since they once belonged to Princess Mathilde – the sister of Napoléon III. In 1950, Jacques Arpels had it estimated at a value of €3.8 million. Her first order at Van Cleef & Arpels dated from 1946 during her first trip to Paris which she made with her husband. Until 1967, she commissioned from the Parisian jeweler 100 jewels set with her own gemstones. These included: a diamond platinum necklace set with emerald drops in 1950, a diamond and ruby necklace in 1952, an impressive emerald, ruby and diamond set of jewels in 1954, and a platinum ruff set with diamonds in 1957.



29

In 1960, Van Cleef & Arpels bought a 34.64-carat pink diamond originally from Golconda Sotheby's for \$128,000 and named it "Princie" in honor of the son of the Maharani. The most sumptuous order was probably a pair of bracelets ordered in May and June 1950, each set with old-mine diamonds from 4 to 18 carats. Behind this fabulous legend, another story appeared about a generous woman who was forgotten and apparently quite ruined. She died at Paris in 1989, and 46 jewels and some loose stones were left behind and were sold in 1974 by the Crédit Municipal of Monte-Carlo.

India Honored in Modern Creations

French and European high-end jewelry houses have never forgotten the importance of India in their artistic heritage. For many years, we have seen many collections dedicated to this country, with traditional patterns and colors reinterpreted into spectacular jewels and watches.

Van Cleef & Arpels has never stopped creating jewels inspired by this country and its history. The high-end jewelry collections "Bals de Légende", "Les voyages extraordinaires", "Seven Seas", "Pierres de caractères" or "Emeraude en majesté" unveiled jewels remembering the Orient and famous legends. The Makara ring, representing an elephant, set with a 30.76-carat Ceylon yellow sapphire, or the Taj Mahal ring, set with an impressive 32.77-carat sugarloaf sapphire, are two perfect examples.

Since 2013, Piaget has introduced new pieces to its "Mythical journey" collection. This is dedicated to the ancient Silk and Spices Roads featuring some legendary cities, places or gods, such as the white marble Jag Niwas palace (Udaipur) built under the reign of Jagat Singh II or Ganesh – Obstacle Remover – God of new Beginnings.

One of the most important tributes of recent years was definitely the amazing and challenging "Bleu de Jodhpur" collection designed by Claire Choise for Boucheron in 2015. An opus entirely created in honor of the "Blue city" also named "The city of sun" – Jodhpur – and made under the patronage of His Highness Gaj Singhji II Maharaja of Marwar-Jodhpur. Designers and craftsmen have used unusual materials such as marble of Makrana (the same used for the Taj Mahal) or sand from the Thar desert. The Jodhpur necklace is a wonderful homage to the princely jewelry of the Moguls and to traditional kundan craftsmanship with an extraordinary reversible



33



36

30- Drawing for a Hindu necklace in 1964. Photo: courtesy of Van Cleef & Arpels.

31- One of the embroidered "Sac des Indes" made by Van Cleef & Arpels in 1964. Photo: courtesy of Van Cleef & Arpels – P. Gries.

33- Piaget Altiplano Double Jeu Gold Engraving One watch, two cases with 18-carat white gold case set with 40 brilliant-cut diamonds. In the upper case there is a hand-engraved Indian landscape in white gold. In the lower case: Mythical Journey logo engraved on the case back Silvered dial Manufacture Piaget 830P, ultra-thin hand-wound mechanical movement. From the Mythical Journey collection. Photo: courtesy of Piaget.

36- This Piaget Emperador Gold Dial 18K pink gold case is set with 163 brilliant-cut diamonds. Mythical Journey logo engraved on the case back. Gold dial with appliques diamond and ruby set appliques representing elephants. From the Mythical Journey collection. Photo: courtesy of Piaget.



30



31

35- Work in progress on the Piaget Polo Tourbillon Relatif Champlévé Enamel. Hand-engraving by Piaget. From the Mythical Journey collection. Photo: courtesy of Piaget.

37- A spessartite garnet, ruby, yellow and pink sapphire and diamond "Theyyam" ring from the Van Cleef & Arpels "Seven Seas" collection unveiled in 2015 featuring an important 11.68-carat cushion-cut rubellite. Photo: courtesy of Van Cleef & Arpels – Antoine Delage.

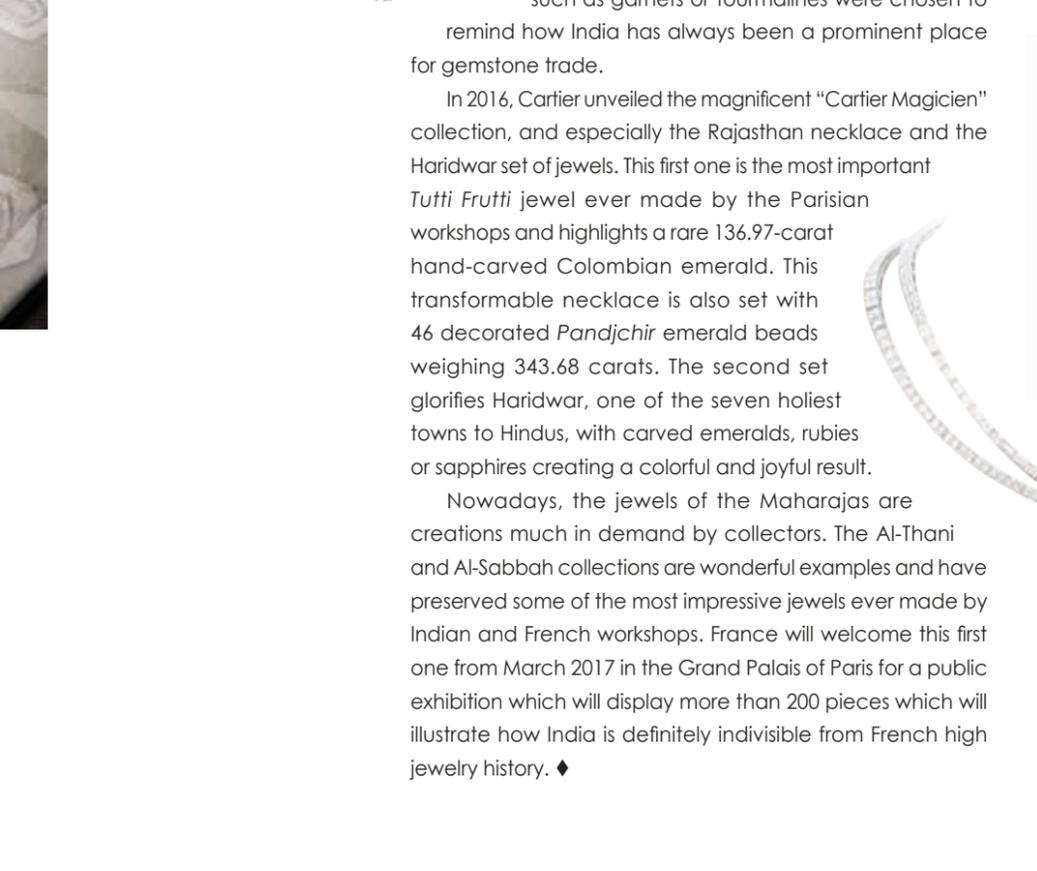
38- Work in progress on the Jodhpur reversible necklace. Photo: courtesy of Boucheron.

39 and 39B: Jodhpur Reversible Necklace. Set with a kite diamond weighing 6.01 carats, marble, rock crystal, paved with sapphires and diamonds on white gold. Photos: courtesy of Boucheron.

40- The sapphire and diamond Tiger Ring by Boucheron (Bleu de Jodhpur collection) featuring a 19.22-carat aquamarine. Photo: courtesy of Boucheron.

43- A gold, diamond, ruby and onyx Bindi ring by Boucheron (Bleu de Jodhpur collection). Photo: courtesy of Boucheron.

45- Earrings by JAR (2012). Gold, diamonds and pearls. Photo: ©The Al Thani Collection 2016. All rights reserved. Photographs taken by Prudence Cuming.



32- The gold, diamond and turquoise Panka necklace made in 1973. Photo: courtesy of Van Cleef & Arpels – P. Gries.

41- The Maharani gold and diamond brooch by Boucheron (Bleu de Jodhpur collection) featuring a 19.87-carat Colombian emerald. Photo: courtesy of Boucheron.

42- The Nagaur necklace by Boucheron (Bleu de Jodhpur collection): Japanese cultured pearls, with central motif of rock crystal and sand of the desert, set with diamonds on white gold. Photo: courtesy of Boucheron.

44- A gold and diamond "Grand Opus" necklace from Van Cleef & Arpels "Emeraude en majesté" collection was unveiled in July 2016 in Paris. It is set with old-mine Colombian emeralds weighing 127.88 carats. Photo: courtesy of Van Cleef & Arpels.

46- The Haridwar Ring from the Cartier Magicien collection (2016). White gold, carved sapphires weighing 36.18 carats, carved emeralds of 26.24 carats, melon-cut emerald beads of 6.21 carats, melon-cut sapphire beads weighing 6.14 carats, carved rubies of 3.51 carats, and brilliant-cut diamonds weighing 2.16 carats. Photo: courtesy of Cartier - ©Vincent Wulveryck.

47- The Rajasthan necklace from the Cartier Magicien collection (2016). A 136.97-carat carved antique cushion-shaped emerald from Colombia, 46 melon-cut emerald beads from Afghanistan totaling 343.68 carats, a 22.61-carat carved pear-shaped ruby, 16.40-carat carved sapphire from Burma, carved rubies weighing 179.27 carats, sapphire beads of 71.27 carats, carved sapphires weighing 55.01 carats, carved emeralds of 47.61 carats, melon-cut sapphire beads weighing 8.78 carats, kite-shaped diamonds of 1.31 carats, and 25.00 carats of brilliant-cut diamonds. Photo: courtesy of Cartier - ©Vincent Wulveryck.

jewel featuring an important 6.01-carat diamond. The house has also chosen to enhance its creations with the usual favorite materials like yellow gold or pearls: the Nagaur necklace is created like a talisman representing the edges of the citadel of Ahichatragarh, a fortified town described as a miracle in the middle of the Thar desert. And gemstones such as garnets or tourmalines were chosen to remind how India has always been a prominent place for gemstone trade.

In 2016, Cartier unveiled the magnificent "Cartier Magicien" collection, and especially the Rajasthan necklace and the Haridwar set of jewels. This first one is the most important *Tutti Frutti* jewel ever made by the Parisian workshops and highlights a rare 136.97-carat hand-carved Colombian emerald. This transformable necklace is also set with 46 decorated *Pandjchir* emerald beads weighing 343.68 carats. The second set glorifies Haridwar, one of the seven holiest towns to Hindus, with carved emeralds, rubies or sapphires creating a colorful and joyful result.

Nowadays, the jewels of the Maharajas are creations much in demand by collectors. The Al-Thani and Al-Sabbah collections are wonderful examples and have preserved some of the most impressive jewels ever made by Indian and French workshops. France will welcome this first one from March 2017 in the Grand Palais of Paris for a public exhibition which will display more than 200 pieces which will illustrate how India is definitely indivisible from French high jewelry history. ♦

