



The Sutra Ruby and Diamond Fan
Earrings from the Signature collection.
Set in 18k Rose Gold.



East Meets West

SUTRA JEWELS IS CELEBRATING A DECADE OF GLITTERING CREATION AND OF DECORATING THE GLAMOROUS. ARPITA NAVLAKHA TALKS ABOUT THE BRAND'S UNIQUE DESIGN HERITAGE AND WHAT COMES NEXT

by Archana Khare-Ghose

IMAGE COURTESY: SUTRA JEWELS

Arpita Navlakha

IMAGE COURTESY: SUTRA JEWELS



When she was First Lady, Michelle Obama wore creations by Sutra Jewels. So did Jennifer Lopez, most notably at the 2015 Met Gala. On various occasions, pieces

by Sutra Jewels have been flaunted by many other global celebrities such as Halle Berry, Katy Perry, Adriana Lima, Jessica Alba, Selena Gomez, Taylor Swift, Queen Latifah, Gigi Hadid, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Priyanka Chopra, and Angela Bassett to name a few.

Arpita Navlakha, who co-founded Houston-based Sutra Jewels with husband Divyanshu in 2008, feels grateful that her brand has exceeded her own expectations in its 10 years. But that must not be a complete surprise as both Arpita and Divyanshu bring to Sutra rich experience of their respective families' traditional jewelry business — she grew up in a family of jewelers in Mumbai while Divyanshu hails from an established family in the field from Delhi.

What sets Sutra Jewels apart is the distinct global appeal of its pieces, largely because of the confluence

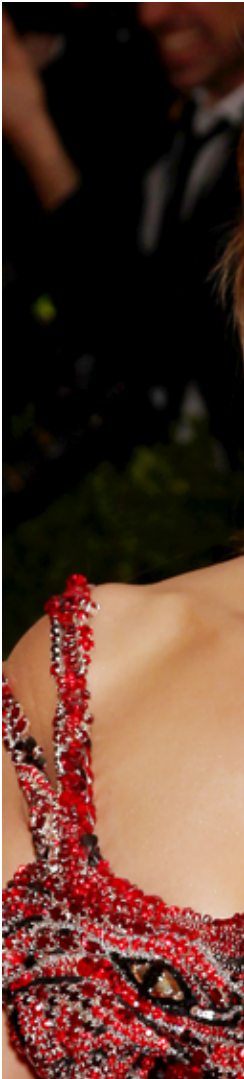
of cultures its designer, Arpita, brings to the table. Raised in India, she studied at the Gemological Institute of America in California and travels extensively, imbibing influences from all over. The description of her style on her website is “classic-East meets modern-West.”

In this interview, she answers myriad questions for BlouinShop. Excerpts:

You were born in a family of jewelers and married into one. Did you always know you would follow in the family's footsteps or ever considered some other career options? When was it that you were confident of getting into jewelry designing and owning your brand?

I always knew jewelry would be my path in life. My father would take me to the factory as a child and I remember the thrill of seeing how things came to life from raw materials to beautiful finished pieces. If I were not a designer myself, then I would still be doing something in the jewelry world. It's too big of a piece of my heart not to be submerged in it.

Sutra's Mosaic Collection, 11 ctw turquoise, 6 ctw emerald, 1 ctw diamonds, 18K white gold (price upon request).



Celebrities sporting Sutra Jewels on various occasions, clockwise from top left: Former First Lady of the US, Michelle Obama, Amanda Righetti, Chrissy Teigen (at the Donna Karan Show), Kim Kardashian, Priyanka Chopra, Shakira, Mila Kunis, Jennifer Lopez (at the MET Gala 2015, and Katy Perry (at the Beatles Tribute Grammys Weekend 2014).





A piece from the Sutra Couture, X collection.

Sutra Jewels has turned 10. How have these 10 years been for you as the owner of a brand that is already sought-after? Has your brand's trajectory progressed in a manner you would have dreamed?

Sutra has exceeded my expectations, and I'm grateful for the brand evolving into what it is. My goal when I started Sutra was to create wearable art for women to feel good about wearing — what I refer to as mood-altering jewelry. I am a shy person myself, but I create vibrant and audacious jewelry for women who don't mind being the center of attention or having conversation-starter pieces on. When I am designing, it's as if I am creating for my alter ego. The craftsmanship and importance of the stones have reached a level that makes me feel as if sky is the limit. I am very thankful women have embraced my designs.

Could you talk about your inspirations in general? Any figure

from the past or present whose work has influenced you?

I have always been inspired by my father's work ethic, but my design inspiration largely comes from nature. I recollect on all the beauty I was fortunate enough to experience growing up in Mumbai, the oceans I have traveled to see and the architecture around the world that has always caught my eye.

After having a child of my own, I realized how significant the butterfly was to me. The whole process of life is so beautiful and being able to capture that in a majestic creature in gemstone form was dear to me.

Given your family's Indian ancestry, is there an undercurrent of some influence of the strong jewelry traditions of India in your work? Is there a conscious effort to incorporate some of it for a particular occasion or collection?

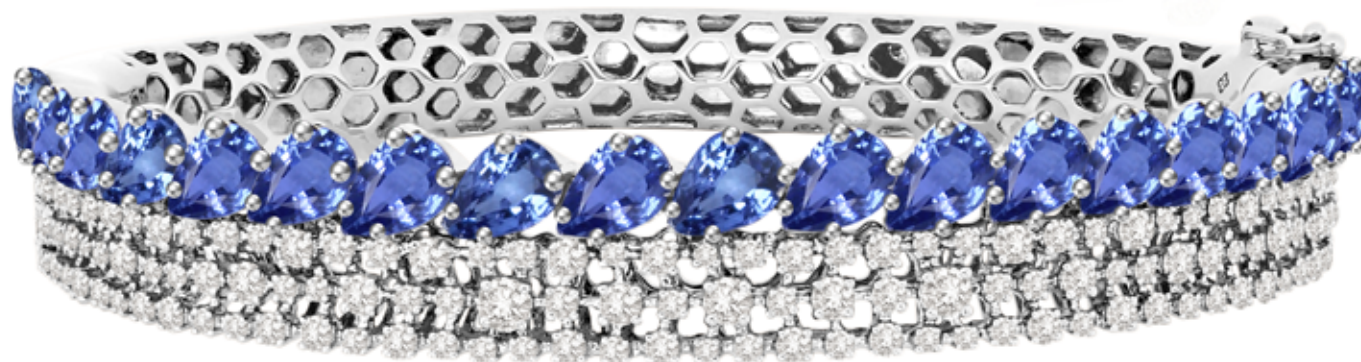
My family manufactured traditional Western jewelry, and my husband's family manufactured traditional Indian



An ear piece set in sapphires and diamonds from the Scintillae Collection by Sutra Jewels that made its debut at The Couture Show in Las Vegas, Nevada, in May last year.



Above: A piece from Sutra Couture, X collection. Below: A piece in sapphire and diamond from the Scintillae Collection of Sutra Jewels that made its debut at The Couture Show in Las Vegas, Nevada, in May last year.



Sutra Jewels, earrings, Butterfly Collection, 18k white gold.



Earrings from Sutra High Jewellery Collection, 16 ctw emerald, 5 ctw black pearl, 18K white gold (price upon request).



A pair of earrings from Sutra Jewels' The Paraiba Collection, 18 ctw paraiba, 20 ctw mint tourmaline, 3 ctw diamonds, 18K black gold (price upon request).

Sutra Emerald Collar from the Colombian Emerald Collection, 18k white gold featuring a total of 19ct emeralds and 51ct diamonds.





A piece from Sutra
Couture, X collection.



Earrings, Sutra Feather
Collection, 18K yellow
gold (16.59 grams),
7.8cts diamonds.

IMAGES COURTESY: SUTRA JEWELS

jewelry. I obviously grew up wearing Indian jewelry and our family's heirlooms over the years. When starting Sutra, the idea was to fuse the two together and create modern pieces with Indian fusion, so they are wearable yet bold and unlike anything you've seen before.

What are your favorite stones and metals to work on?

Opals are a long-time favorite. I'm fascinated by their iridescence.

I also really love Paraibas because they remind me of the exact hue of the Maldives water where my husband and I honeymooned.

Any contemporary jewelry designer whose work you admire, and whose pieces you would love to buy?

I absolutely adore so many. You go to these trade shows and it's truly inspiring to meet other female designers who all have a story to be told through their pieces. I have too many to choose.

What is your next collection about and can you share some of its details? When will it be launched? And what do you think will be the dominating trends for jewelry in 2019?

We have beautiful large stone creations, which were my focus for the Baselworld in March 2019. I'm also using my signature look of rose-cut stones in the new lines but in a fresh way. I believe emeralds will still be huge this year, along with other trends such as over-sized hoops and linear statement earrings. I try to create the trend rather than follow it. All of those themes will be recurring in my new collections.

Any historical or contemporary figure who you would love to design jewelry for?

I would be beyond delighted to design a piece for Kate Middleton and Meghan Markle. They both exude style, grace and class, making them the perfect Sutra stars. ✦