

the Italian
CONNECTION

ITALIAN JEWELLERY IS A FORCE TO
RECKON WITH, IN THE INDIAN
JEWELLERY MARKET, FINDS OUT
SAVIA RAJAGOPAL



Italy — the name conjures up images of glitzy fashion, delectable cuisine and exquisite jewellery. The Italians are known the world

over for their exuberance and passion and these very qualities can be found in all they do. Italian jewellery is no exception to this rule. Fine detailing, sophisticated designs and an unparalleled finish — are all hallmarks of Italian jewellery, and of late, Italian jewellery is on its way to finding popular appeal in the local Indian market.

With India being one of the biggest gold centres in the world, it's no surprise that Italian jewellers look at India as a growing market that has immense potential. Andrea Turcato, CEO, Vicenza Fiera International, explains "India is the largest consumer market in the world and high-end consumers are asking for more fashionable and high-quality jewellery. So we believe that Italian manufacturers can find a good market here."

Needless to say, Indo-Italian trade too has picked up in this segment. At the India International Jewellery Show (IJS) 2006, the Italians made their presence felt with a pavillion dedicated solely to Italian jewellers and this comprised participation from 18 high-profile Italian companies such as Tecnigold, Rossano Oro, Rasai Gemma, Penta Preziosi, amongst others. The Italian Trade Commission (ICE) too has played an instrumental role in promoting bilateral trade. Commenting at a press meet held at IJS, Vittorio Mecozzi, Trade Commissioner, ICE, stated, "Having been established since 1971 in Mumbai, the Italian Trade Commission's primary function is to catalyse bilateral trade between jewellers in India and Italy." He further added that trade between the two nations was significant especially in the area of gems and jewellery and more Italian companies are looking into entering the Indian market.

What makes Italian jewellery such a popular favourite in India — a country that is no stranger to a fascination with gold? Answers Sanjeev Agarwal, Managing Director, World Gold Council, India, "The Indian consumer today is changing and wants different types of jewellery for different occasions. Currently, there's a gap in India in terms of contemporary and stylised pieces. So getting Italian jewellery into India is a

perfect fit between what the Italians can offer and what the Indian consumer wants." Added to that, Italian designers are studying the Indian market, identifying the tastes of the consumers here and then creating pieces that are uniquely Italian but still possess an element of Indian aesthetics.

The Italian gold industry plays a very important role within the Italian manufacturing industry. It accounts for 8.1 per cent of the national active trade balance, as per statistics of the ICE. Traditionally, the Italian jewellery industry can be looked at specifically with respect to the four most important manufacturing centres, which are Valenza, Vicenza, Arezzo and Marcinise. Vicenza deserves special mention as it is one of the key centres in Italy. It accounts for 1,826 Euros in gold export. Vicenza employs the maximum employees followed by Arezzo and Alessandria. With 1,118 gold companies, and 11,200 workers, it has a turnover of 3.647 million Euros, and 37.5 per cent turnover for international markets. Vicenza Jewellery is known the world over and is promoted by the Vicenza Fair Authority through various fairs held





initiatives such as those of the World Gold Council, through its Gold Expressions collection, which has been launched in association with Vicenza Fair Authorities and D'damas Gold (as the Indian retail partner). This year's collection offers the consumer a staggering 400 pieces from the top Italian manufacturers, which constitutes over 50 per cent of Italian gold jewellery. "Vicenza Fair plays a dynamic role in the promotion of the Italian goldsmith jewellery industry, representing gold jewellery manufacturers, machinery manufacturers and other suppliers of the industry. India has always been one of the highest consumers for gold and today, the Indian market is ready to witness the launch of internationally renowned design collections," said Turcato on the partnership with the World Gold Council.

With the Italians set to leave mark in the Indian markets, are local jewellery houses ready to face the heat? Or will Indian jewellers prevail? Biren Vaidya, MD, Rose Group of Companies, says, "It's not Italian jewellery but good quality and strong design which the customer aspires for in jewellery. I do not see Italian jewellery per se as a threat. With the Indian market opening up, the benchmark on quality and design will separate the men from the boys." Brave words or an indication of things to come, time will soon tell. Till then, the consumer is spoilt for choice and no one's complaining.



throughout the year. As far as exports are concerned, Vicenza leads the pack accounting for the highest Italian Goldsmith's clusters' exports with approximately 41 per cent, according to FederOrafi, while Arezzo, Milano and Valenza followed with 35 per cent, 12 per cent and 11 per cent respectively.

Many companies belonging to these regions are collaborating and sharing information with their Indian counterparts. Still others are eyeing the market here with caution. However, it can still be said in all fairness that the Italian jewellery sector is in fact paying close attention to the developments in the Indian sector. This can be gauged from the fact that trade fairs in India are seeing higher rates of participation from Italian companies. Also, the Indian market is witnessing the advent of many Italian manufacturers through

