

PRESERVING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE: SAFEGUARDING SRI LANKA'S DISAPPEARING KANDYAN JEWELLERY CRAFT

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Abstract: Traditional Kandyan jewellery craftsmanship occupies a distinguished position within Sri Lanka's cultural heritage. Its exceptional artistry and highly specialised techniques define it as a unique craft tradition, sustained across generations through the transmission of indigenous knowledge and embodied skills. However, this craft and its associated artisan communities are increasingly threatened by socioeconomic changes, evolving cultural practices, and environmental pressures, resulting in a gradual erosion of both practice and knowledge. In response to such risks, the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage emphasises the preservation of knowledge systems and craftsmanship skills rather than focusing solely on physical artefacts. This study employs both primary and secondary data, using a qualitative research design supported by ethnographic methods to examine the issue in depth. The primary aim is to highlight the significance of indigenous knowledge preservation as a vital strategy for safeguarding cultural heritage. Specifically, the research investigates the decline of traditional Kandyan jewellery-making communities in Sri Lanka and examines how this decline affects the continuity of craft skills and knowledge. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to the long-term sustainability of Kandyan jewellery heritage through the preservation and transmission of its traditional knowledge systems.

Keywords: *Sri Lankan Jewellery Craft; Cultural Heritage; Indigenous Knowledge; Indigenous Knowledge Preservation*

1. Introduction

Cultural heritage refers to the accumulated traditions, practices, values, and expressions that are transmitted through generations. "Cultural heritage represents the portion of the past that we select and carry into the present to serve current purposes, whether economic, cultural, political, or social." (Nilson & Thorell, 2018) It encompasses both tangible and intangible forms of heritage. Tangible heritage consists of physical cultural components, while intangible heritage encompasses the non-physical elements preserved and practised within a community. Intangible heritage, passed down from generations evolves as communities interact with their environment, nature, and historical context. Traditional heritage studies frequently viewed heritage as something related to tangible heritage, such as archaeological objects. The primary focus was on safeguarding tangible heritage, while intangible cultural heritage received far less attention. However, at the present time, there has been a noticeable change in the conversation about the preservation of cultural heritage. "Any efforts to safeguard traditional craftsmanship must focus not only on preserving craft objects, no matter how beautiful, precious, rare, or important they may be, but on creating conditions that will encourage artisans to continue producing crafts of all kinds and transmit their skills and knowledge to others." (Elk, 2009) This statement was an important turning point in recognising the need to safeguard not just tangible items but also intangible aspects of cultural heritage.

Indigenous knowledge forms a central part of intangible cultural heritage. It is a system of knowledge embedded in culture, language, history, traditions, practices, techniques, and experiential learning developed over centuries by the local or indigenous community. "Indigenous knowledge is a unique form of local knowledge deeply rooted in specific cultures and societies." (Yang et al., 2018) If this knowledge transmission weakens, it is at risk of disappearing, which leads to the loss of that cultural heritage. Therefore, the preservation of cultural heritage relies heavily on safeguarding intangible heritage, which depends on protecting indigenous knowledge.

Sri Lankan traditional Kandyan jewellery can be identified as a rich and valuable part of the culture. It is rooted in regional identity and expresses uniqueness through specialised techniques, culturally embedded meanings, and a great history behind the craft. Moreover, traditional Kandyan jewellery stands as one of Sri Lanka's most significant carriers of such indigenous knowledge, which has been safeguarded and transmitted among craft families for generations. However, traditional Kandyan jewellery faces serious threats from socioeconomic as well as environmental factors like limited information, fading cultural value, modern trends replacing tradition, preference for cheap imported items, lack of infrastructure, lack of innovation, limited education and training facilities, financial constraints, and younger generations' disinterest. Thus, the most severe consequence is the potential disappearance of these valuable crafts, together with the indigenous knowledge and skills embedded in the traditional Kandyan jewellery craft. Therefore, this research aims to

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preserve traditional Kandyan jewellery knowledge by examining the challenges faced by these communities and analysing how their decline affects the continuity of traditional Kandyan jewellery craft. It uses a mapping of traditional Kandyan jewellery techniques under four categories to demonstrate how cultural erosion and community reduction impact the craft. Overall, the study underscores the urgent need for structured and effective interventions to safeguard this heritage, ensuring that the indigenous knowledge behind traditional Kandyan jewellery remains a lasting element of Sri Lanka's cultural identity.

2. Literature review

2.1 CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF TRADITIONAL KANDYAN JEWELLERY

"Kandyan crafts are well known as a sustained tradition which shows the cultural identity of Sri Lanka. The Kandyan period, which spans from the 14th century to 1825, is the most significant era throughout Sri Lanka's Craft history. Especially for the jewellery craft." (Dissanayake, 1986) During the Kandyan period, the jewellery culture and craftsmanship flourished highly organised under the influential Kandyan kings. They offered valuable compensation, including gifts, rewards, and even properties, to the craftsmen for their services. "The Kandyan king utilised a crown, throne, sword, and 64 pieces of jewellery known as "*sewsata abarana*," also called "*Raja Sadhaka*" along with a jewelled cane. These skilled craftsmen create these items and, more than that, they create other precious items like gifts for distinguished guests and offerings for temples." (Dissanayake, 1986) Because of these functions, jewellery craft gains a special place within traditional craft culture. This contributes to the establishment of a rich jewellery craft culture in the Kandyan era. "The complicated, skilful handwork that is connected to each design, leaving the observers in awe of its craftsmanship, is what truly differentiates Kandyan jewellery from the jewellery of other kingdoms." (Skublewska-Paszowska et al., 2022) Creating Kandyan jewellery was a family profession in the past, passed down from one generation to the next. In this way, the skills and knowledge of manufacturing traditional Kandyan jewellery were preserved and passed down through the ages. Therefore, considering these facts, traditional Kandyan jewellery can be recognised as an important part of Sri Lanka's cultural heritage, as it reflects specialised traditional craftsmanship, indigenous knowledge behind the jewellery craft and historical value, as well as unique cultural meanings. "Cultural heritage is the heritage of tangible and intangible characteristics that have been passed down from one group or community to another. Furthermore, cultural heritage suggests a connection, our inclusion in a community, and our identity. An important link between the past and the present is cultural heritage." (Rouhi, 2017) This cultural value shows that Kandyan jewellery is a cultural heritage practice that continues to shape Sri Lanka's cultural identity.

2.2 DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL KANDYAN JEWELLERY AND THE URGENCY OF KNOWLEDGE PRESERVATION

According to recent research, the traditional Kandyan jewellery craft is at risk of disappearing. The traditional Kandyan jewellery is still preserved and produced by the very last generation of jewellery craftsmen." (Samarasekara, 2023) This fact is further revealed by *Liyanage Rajamanthri*, demonstrating a drastic collapse in practitioner numbers in her book "*Traditional jewellery in Sri Lanka*." She noted, "Thirty to forty years ago, approximately 60% of craftsmen were continuing the traditional jewellery craft. But currently, that percentage has decreased to about 10%." (Liyanage, n.d.)

Kandyan jewellery artisans today face difficulties in transferring their indigenous knowledge associated with Kandyan jewellery to the next generation. Annemari de Silva, in her research "*Craft Artisans and State Institutions in Sri Lanka*", highlights that one of the biggest challenges faced by craftspeople is the issue of the new generation not continuing traditional crafts. "Many children of craftspeople choose not to pursue their parents' trade and instead seek employment in other fields." (de Silva, 2019) According to UNESCO, the decline in knowledge transmission is one of the major reasons for the fading away of traditional craft heritage. "The decline of transmission of traditional methods of knowledge and skill, such as apprenticeship and family-based transmission, is a major issue for keeping traditional craft heritage alive" (*Issues Affecting the Viability of Heritage Crafts*, 2017) These findings indicate that the traditional Kandyan jewellery craft community is rapidly shrinking, and as craftsmen decline, the specialised jewellery-making techniques, indigenous knowledge associated with the craft, and cultural meanings they carry are at immediate risk. This underscores the urgency of preserving Kandyan jewellery as a valuable part of Sri Lanka's cultural heritage.

2.3 SAFEGUARDING TRADITIONAL JEWELLERY CRAFT THROUGH INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE PRESERVATION

The preservation of indigenous knowledge has a profound impact on the continued existence of traditional Kandyan jewellery. "Knowledge preservation is about documenting and protecting indigenous knowledge to ensure it doesn't disappear and can be used by future generations and for development." (Ngulube, 2002) Indigenous knowledge preservation can be defined as the efforts and strategies focused on protecting, promoting, and passing down unique indigenous knowledge, skills, and practices within the modern system while also protecting traditional knowledge holders. It is about establishing awareness among indigenous communities about the importance of preserving their knowledge. This preservation is indispensable because it plays a pivotal role in the formation of cultural identity, prevents the erosion of invaluable knowledge, and facilitates the incorporation of indigenous knowledge into developmental initiatives. "The future of Indigenous Knowledge, which holds and reflects the solutions and the wisdom from generations of Indigenous people worldwide, is uncertain. If this valuable knowledge is lost, it could impoverish society, because just as the world needs genetic diversity of species, it also needs diversity of knowledge systems" (Ngulube, 2002). The following table presents

previous research papers and the knowledge gathered to illustrate some of the methods currently used for indigenous knowledge preservation.

Table 1: Global Knowledge Preservation Methods ((Perera, 2023) ,(Ngulube, 2002) ,
 (Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage - UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, n.d.)

01	Documentation	A cornerstone of knowledge preservation, documentation encompasses the recording, cataloguing, and inventorying of both tangible and intangible heritage elements. This task involves employing various media such as photographs, videos, written records, and audio recordings. When information is regarded as an asset, opportunities for its development arise.
02	Education and awareness	Central to cultural heritage and knowledge preservation is education and raising awareness. This is achieved by educating local communities and visitors about the significance of cultural heritage and the need to safeguard it. Educational initiatives include workshops, seminars, and dedicated programs.
03	Conservation & restoration	Preserving indigenous knowledge relies heavily on conservation and restoration techniques. These methods entail the repair and rejuvenation of culturally significant elements, such as monuments, artefacts, and artworks, that have sustained damage or deterioration
04	Community participation	The active involvement of the local community is a vital component of cultural heritage preservation. Engaging the local community in the preservation process allows them to contribute valuable insights about cultural practices, traditions, and customs, which, in turn, bolsters heritage preservation endeavors. Community participation is crucial for preserving cultural and craft knowledge. Active participation in the preservation process can help achieve this.
05	Government policies and regulations	The enactment of government policies and regulations is pivotal in the preservation of cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge. These legal measures serve to protect cultural heritage, including the safeguarding of monuments, artefacts, and artworks.

2.4 UK HERITAGE RED LIST CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL CRAFT

It is important to identify signs of decline in traditional Kandyan jewellery and assess its current state. In 2023, UK Heritage introduced the Red List, which outlines four criteria to identify the state of traditional crafts. This rating system, based on intangible heritage-safeguarding principles, indicates their future survival.

- **Extinct:** Crafts that are no longer practised, referring only to those lost within the past generation.
- **Critically Endangered:** Crafts are at serious risk of disappearing due to low interest, poor income, limited training, few opportunities, and a lack of innovation.
- **Endangered:** Crafts still practised by skilled craftsmen but facing threats such as declining craft communities, demographic issues, limited facilities, and reduced market demand.
- **Currently Viable:** Crafts in good condition with enough practitioners, strong community presence, good income, market support, and popularity to ensure their continuation.

3. Methodology

The research methodology followed a qualitative ethnographic research using primary and secondary data. The study has two main segments: a literature review and a single case study. The literature review used secondary data from books, e-books, web articles, magazines, newspapers, journals, theses, and research papers to establish key study areas. The ethnographic part used qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, expert interviews, open-ended questions, naturalistic observations, field notes, photographs, and non-probability sampling. A single case study involved an initial field visit to refine sampling, gather reliable findings, understand the Kandyan jewellery craft community, identify their challenges, assess decline, and determine its impact on the craft

4. Sampling Procedure and Participant Selection

This study focuses on exploring knowledge preservation, using a qualitative single-case pilot study to enable appropriate investigations and gather more reliable, relevant findings.

4.1.SAMPLE STRATEGY FOR A SINGLE CASE STUDY AND INTERVIEW JEWELLERY CRAFTSMEN

One of the main goals of this research was to identify the decline of the traditional jewellery craft community and determine how this decline affected the jewellery craft in Sri Lanka. So, selecting the most suitable and convenient craft village was

essential to observe the current situation. Therefore, the sample and participants were chosen according to specified criteria during the selection process.

- Craft village with a rich cultural history and strong traditional jewellery craftsmanship.
- Easy to select a participant with a minimum of 10 years of experience and good knowledge of jewellery crafts.
- Easy to contact craft communities that still practice traditional jewellery manufacturing techniques.
- Easy to observe craftsmen and their lifestyle within a limited time.

The sample was selected through convenience sampling, a non-probability method. When selecting jewellery craft villages to collect data for the study, the above criteria, a wide review of relevant literature, and interviews with experts who worked in the jewellery industry for many years were considered. The sample for the single case study was narrowed to the *Neelawala* traditional jewellery craft village in the Kandy District. Considering time and resources, four craftsmen from the *Neelawala* traditional jewellery craft community were selected to represent the group. Each had practised the craft for at least 10 years. Interviews were conducted in Sinhala at their workshops. Participants were selected using the non-probability sampling method. Semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions, natural observation, and field notes were used to gather relevant data.



Figure 1: Workshops of traditional Kandyan jewellery craftsmen in Neelawala village
(Source: by the author)

4.2. SAMPLING STRATEGY FOR EXPERT INTERVIEWS

During the expert interview phase, researchers selected distinct four experts in jewellery craft, including a government authority personnel from the National Gem and Jewellery Authority, a senior jewellery designer, a senior lecturer from the National Diploma in Jewellery Designing and Manufacturing Technology at the Maradhana Technical College, and a person with expertise about the jewellery craft and craft community in the central province. All experts were selected using the expert sampling method, and all expert interviews were conducted using unstructured open-ended questions.

5. Data analysis and the findings

To determine the research question, data obtained from extensive semi-structured interviews, expert interviews, and observations were analysed using the thematic analysis method with an inductive research approach. Narrative analysis was also instrumental when exploring individual experiences and personal perspectives. Data analysis for the study began with open coding as the first level of coding. Then, as a second stage, axial coding and elaborate coding were applied to refine, remove overlapping codes, categorise the data, and establish connections between emerging themes. Among those themes, the researcher selected two key themes to address the research questions.

1. Erosion of the traditional jewellery craft heritage
2. Methods for Safeguarding and Preserving Indigenous Knowledge behind the Traditional Kandyan Jewellery Craft.

5.1 EROSION OF TRADITIONAL KANDYAN JEWELLERY CRAFT HERITAGE

The thematic and narrative analysis will be employed to examine the decline of the craft community using data identified in previous studies in the literature review, along with primary data gathered through interviews conducted with traditional jewellery craftsmen and industrial experts. Many participants highlighted the concerns about the decline of the traditional Kandyan jewellery craft and the community.

1. Interviewee C1, C2, C3, C4 - Traditional jewellery craftsmen
2. Interviewee E1, E2, E3, E4 - Expert in jewellery industry
 - **A.1 Interviewee C1:** “A few years ago, we always heard the sound of cruising plates and the sound of carvings all over the village. Because of that time, most people worked in their jewellery workshops all day. But sadly, currently only a few craftsmen continue the craft.”

- **A.2 Interviewee C2:** “Ten years ago, 35 to 45 craft families lived in this village. But now it has decreased to 8 families. Due to the current situation in the country, the remaining craftspeople have also moved to different areas to find jobs.”
- **A.3 Interviewee C3:** “I am the only jewellery craftsman representing the young generation in our village. No one is interested in being involved in the craft”
- **A.4 Interviewee E4:** “In the past, there were four workshops in ‘Kaudupitiya’. Those workshops supplied tools and equipment for the jewellery craftsman. Because of the decline, those workshops have closed. Only one workshop remains to supply tools.”
- **A.5 Interviewee E3:** “Today, the jewellery craft community is rapidly disappearing. Most of the traditional craftsmen abandoned the craft. This began with the introduction of the open economy concept in 1977. More than that, the COVID pandemic and the economic crisis also caused a decline. With that, many craftsmen had to face several challenges and struggle to survive. This not only affected the jewellery craft but also had an impact on the majority of Sri Lankan traditional crafts.”
- **A.6 Interviewee E1:** “This village has a great history and many skilled jewellery craftsmen from the past. It was a long time ago. Unfortunately, nowadays the number of jewellery craftsmen has declined a lot, and you can count the remaining craftsmen on your fingers”

Issues related to the decline of traditional Kandyan jewellery craft are pointed out from the previous research discussed in the literature review.: Section B

- **B1:** "The Kandyan period traditional jewellery style is still preserved and produced by the very last generation of jewellery artisans." (Samarasekara, 2017)
- **B2:** "Thirty to forty years ago, approximately 60% of craftsmen were continuing the traditional jewellery craft. But currently, that percentage has decreased to about 10%." (Liyanage, n.d.)

Some data was gathered using both secondary and primary data to understand the extent of decline that happened in the Kandyan jewellery craft community. For this, the researcher used a book, 'Survey of Traditional Craft Villages and Families Descended from Traditional Craftsmen of Sri Lanka,' written by Jayadewa Thilakasiri. According to the book, in 1990–1991, 60 families in Neelawala village continued the jewellery craft. According to the primary data collected from the president of the Traditional Crafts Association, 35 craft families practised this craft in 2020. By 2023, there were only 8 families still practising the craft.

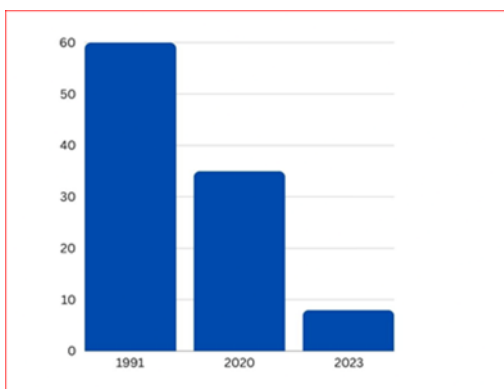


Figure 2: Illustrating the Decline in the Craft Community of Neelawala Village
(source by author)

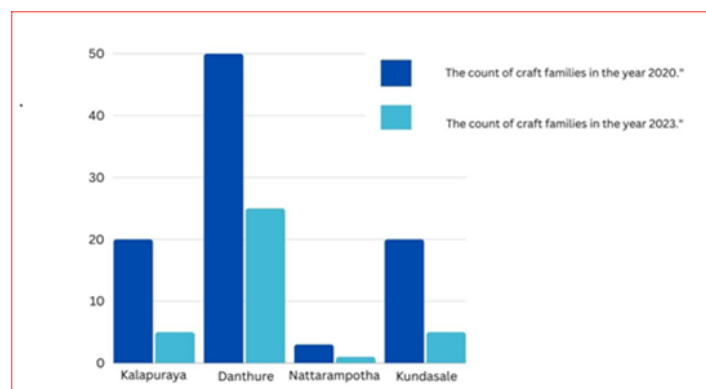


Figure 3: Illustrating the Decline in the Craft Community of Kalapuraya, Danthure, Nattarampotha, Kundasale
(source by author)

When analysing all data collected from both secondary and primary data sources, all facts become evident that a decline is occurring in the Kandyan jewellery craft community. This is supported by the data charts provided by the researcher, which illustrate the decline in the craft community in Neelawala jewellery craft village and other jewellery craft villages in the Kandy district.

5.2 CHALLENGES UNDERMINING THE KANDYAN JEWELLERY CRAFT COMMUNITY

Challenges undermining the jewellery craft community were identified through both primary data gathered from interviews with jewellery craftsmen and experts, as well as secondary sources. A critical issue highlighted by both sources is the younger generation’s decreasing interest in handicrafts, driven by low income and insufficient recognition. Artisans express concerns that lifestyle and cultural changes are causing handicrafts to lose their original meaning and form. As a result, many are hesitant to encourage their children to pursue careers in the craft. Additionally, the availability of better job

opportunities, economic hardships especially those intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic and the country's financial crisis and the lack of a promising future in the field have contributed to the decline. Traditional crafts have also been marginalised by cheap, lower-quality, mass-produced consumer goods. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge transmission and the labour-intensive nature of the craft are key reasons for the younger generation’s lack of interest in continuing traditional jewellery craftsmanship.

5.3. CONTINUITY AND TRANSMISSION OF TRADITIONAL JEWELLERY CRAFT KNOWLEDGE

The continuity and transmission of traditional Kandyan jewellery craft knowledge will be analysed using primary data from interviews with craftsmen, using narrative analysis and axial coding. The study focuses on three key aspects: the way craftsmen learn the craft, whether they use any written form or sketch to record their knowledge, and whether they involve and teach their children to ensure continuity. The following table shows how craftsmen acquired their craft knowledge by summarizing the primary data collected from interviews with traditional jewellery craftsmen.

Table 2: *The learning methods employed by craftsmen to gain skills and knowledge in jewellery craft (sourced by the author)*

Interviewed craftsmen	Learning method
Interviewee Craftsmen 1	Experimental learning and active involvement
Interviewee Craftsmen 2	Observation, experimental learning and practicing
Interviewee Craftsmen 3	Learning from teaching
Interviewee Craftsmen 4	Learn from observation and practicing

By analysing the above data, the knowledge-transfer methods that occurred in the past within the traditional jewellery craft community can be categorised into five groups. Those are active participation, observational learning, experimental learning, learning from teaching, and skill practising. The secondary data gathered from the book “ Survey of Traditional Craft Villages and Families Descended from Traditional Craftsmen of Sri Lanka mentioned data about 16 craft families in Neelawala village. Among 16 families, Children of 7 families learn and practice the traditional jewellery craft. According to the primary data collected by the researcher in 2023, only one child from each of the eight remaining craft families is actively engaged in learning and practising the jewellery craft.

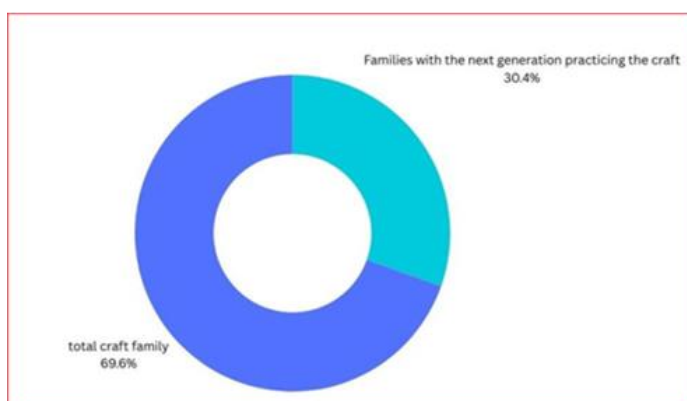


Figure 4: knowledge transfer percentage in 1990-1991 among the Neelawala craft community (source by author)

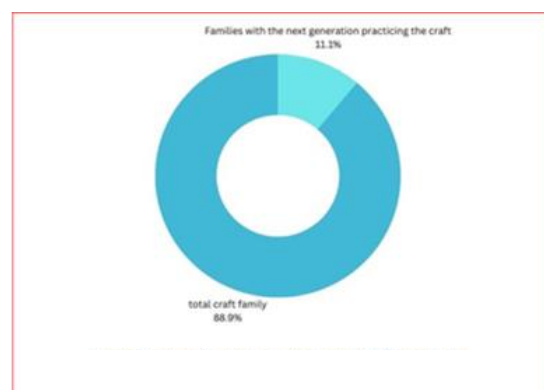


Figure 5 : knowledge transfer percentage in 2023 among the Neelawala craft community (source by author)

Comparing both information, it is pointed out that at present, the indigenous knowledge transfer is declining among traditional jewellery craft communities.

Interviewee C1- “ Usually, I don't sketch. Most of the time, I imagine the design and directly start creating the piece that I have in mind. I rely on my hands-on practice, so I don't want to sketch it”.







Interviewee C2 - “My father used books written about engraving. I don't know where those are now. Usually, I don't make notes”





Considering the interview data obtained from C1 and C2, it was identified that the majority of craftsmen didn't document or use any written method to keep and record their traditional jewellery craft knowledge. This lack of documentation, recording has been recognised as a contributing factor to the decline of the craft." As conclusions can be drawn, in the past, traditional jewellery craftsmen used different methods to learn the jewellery craft, and they continued the craft. However, the above data shows that knowledge transmission and continuity have declined in the present day. Even the craftsmen who had knowledge related to the craft didn't record it or take any action to preserve it.

5.4 IMPACT OF THE CRAFT COMMUNITY AND THEIR INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE DECLINE ON TRADITIONAL JEWELLERY CRAFT

After conducting multiple observations, expert interviews, and reviewing secondary data, the researcher compiled a list of traditional jewellery-making techniques. After identifying the craft techniques, the researcher focused on verifying their applicability. This aims to identify whether the craftsmen are knowledgeable about the mentioned jewellery crafting techniques, whether they use those techniques or not, or whether they are aware of the techniques but do not utilise them. This primary data will be combined with the UK Heritage "Red List" criteria to identify the decline of traditional crafts. Through that, create four categories to assess the state of traditional Kandyan jewellery craft technique due to the decline of the craft community and their indigenous knowledge.

Table 3: Four categories to assess the state of traditional jewellery craft

Jewellery making Techniques	The jewellery item uses the technique.	Variations of the main technique	Information	Current status						
Wire Technique (Kambi wada)		Arimbu kambi	Twisting the wire Combined with arimbu	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
		Thani kambi	Using a single wire for manufacturing known as thani kambi	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
		Kasa kambi	Twisting two thin wire together as a rope to create kasa kambiya	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
		Murukasa kambi	Coiling one wire around another wire	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
		Sannam kambiya	A gold or silver wire is wrapped around a gold or silver thin stick.	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Molding and casting (waththu wada)		Cuttlefish casting (Dali pothu waththu kireema)	Using the bone of a cuttlefish (a marine animal related to squids and octopuses) as a mould for casting metal.	Red	Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Red	Green
		Sand casting (pas waththu kireema)	Creating mold using sand to mold melting metal into the appropriate shape	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Engraving technique (katayam kapima)		Engraving is one of the oldest decoration techniques in jewellery craft. It's used to create patterns and textures on the surface of the metal. In ancient times, lots of engravings were inspired by natural elements such as flowers, leaves, animals, and birds. More than that, inorganic geometrical designs are also used for the engravings		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Surulu decoration technique (surulu sadeema)		Gini katu surulu	There are many surulu variations. Surulu is made with very thin wire. It's a very specific jewellery decoration technique. When doing surulu work, the creator needs good patience to fold the wire.	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
		P'ayanu surulu		Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
		R'ayanu surulu		Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Red	Green
		N'ayanu surulu		Yellow	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
		Bekku		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
		Thoran val		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Soldering technique (Paseema)		For the soldering, used the material called 'puskara' as a binding agent. The process involved combining this 'puskara' with another binding material called 'podi'. Subsequently, through heating, both binding agents were mixed, and they were applied to the edges of two objects that needed to be joined together. After that, using water, the bonded objects cooled and reduced the heat, and finally, the excess material was cleaned off.		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Gem setting technique ((Gal badeema)		Thahadu kola bamma (kannadi bamma)	Thahadu kola bamma, a method of setting stone in soft gold over wax, where the gold is moulded and pressed into shape around the gem as the work proceeds.	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Red
		kapala badeema		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
		Dath badeema		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Cleaning and Finishing methods	Cleaning with balloon vine leaves	After making jewellery pieces, balloon vine leaves were used to clean the jewellery. First, the leaves were crushed and made into a paste. Then, by using it, rub the jewellery. This method helped reduce scratches and damage to the jewellery. It is an ancient technique for cleaning jewellery		Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow
	Cleaning with charcoal	For the cleaning process, used charcoal as a cleaning aid. Here, charcoal is used as a paste by combining some specific things and then using that paste to clean		Red	Yellow	Red	Green	Red	Yellow	Yellow
	Clean with rosary pea (olida ata magin sceleema)	Abrus precatorius, commonly known as jequirity bean or rosary pea, is used to clean jewellery. However, detailed information about this technique is not readily available.		Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
	Rathran abarana gama Polishing technique using crushed gold	First, the gold plate needs to be crushed and cut into tiny pieces. Then mix the gold pieces with a liquid form of mercury. Next, the gold and mercury are blended. Through the process, can make pulp. Store the pulp in a clay pot. Using a copper stick, that pulp needs to be spread on the jewellery, ensuring that all parts are covered. Then, the jewellery should be placed in a clay pot and heated for a while. As a final step, wash the jewellery using water.		Yellow	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red

State of the craft Technique	Category	Color Code
No longer practice	Extinct	
Series risk to no Longer practice	Critically Endangered	
Have sufficient knowledge But didn't practice Continue often	Endangered	
Still practicing	Currently Practice	

When analysing the above details, some traditional jewellery techniques can be categorised as extinct, critically endangered, or endangered. Some techniques are still practised. However, the majority of them aren't documented or recorded and are maintained only through practice and the experience of the craftsmen. Another notable point is that some traditional tools and methods are no longer in use. Instead, craftsmen have adopted new tools, modern technology that are easier to use and help save time and effort. This table shows the traditional jewellery-making techniques and tools that are disappearing, which were identified during interviews with craftsmen in the Neelawala jewellery craft community.

Table 4: Declined Traditional Jewellery Techniques and Tools among the *Neelawal* Jewellery Craft community with Reasons for Their Disappearance

Technique / Tool	Technique / Tool	Reason for Decline / Not in Use
1. Clean with Rosary pea (Olida ata magin seedeema)	Cleaning and finishing method- Abrus precatorius, commonly known as jequirity bean or rosary pea, is used to clean jewellery. However, detailed information about this technique is not readily available.	Replace with modern tools and technology
2. Clean with Balloon vine Leaves	Cleaning and finishing method-After making jewellery pieces, balloon vine leaves were used to clean them. First, the leaves were crushed and made into a paste. Then, the paste was used to rub the jewellery. This method helped reduce scratches and damage, making it an ancient technique for cleaning jewellery.	Very time-consuming; Replace with modern tools and technology
3.Clean with Rosary pea (Olida ata magin seedeema) Clean with Rosary pea (Olida ata magin seedeema)	A cleaning and finishing method: Abrus precatorius, commonly known as the jequirity bean or rosary pea, has been used to clean jewellery. However, detailed information about this technique is not readily available.	Replace with modern tools and technology
4.Cleaning with charcoal	This technique is now rarely used. Charcoal was employed as a cleaning aid. In this method, charcoal was made into a paste by combining it with specific ingredients, and the paste was then used to clean the jewellery.	Replace with modern tools and technology
5.Thahadu kola bamma / kannadi bamma	Thahadu kola bamma, a method of setting stone in soft god over wax where the gold is moulded and pressed into shape around the gem as the work proceeds	Not in use among the craftsmen. Rarely find details about the Technique
6.Cuttlefish casting - Dalí pothu waththu kireema	Using the bone of a cuttlefish (a marine animal related to squids and octopuses) as a mould for casting metal	Very time-consuming; Replace with modern polishing-methods
7.Measuring with olida ata	Used for measuring purposes	Replace with modern-measuring tools and rare to find proper documentation about the method
8.Mainahāma (Traditional tool for Soldering / Joint-Finishing)	Technique used to connect small components of jewellery using manual heat control and traditional soldering tools.	Replaced by modern soldering machines and precision tools; the traditional method requires much time, effort, and skilled hand control.

5.5 STRATEGIES FOR SAFEGUARDING AND PRESERVING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE BEHIND THE TRADITIONAL KANDYAN JEWELLERY CRAFT

The second theme focused on finding suitable strategies for preserving the Indigenous Knowledge behind the Traditional Kandyan Jewellery Craft. Thematic and narrative analysis, supported by literature review data, helped highlight effective methods to preserve the indigenous knowledge behind the traditional Kandyan jewellery craft.

1. “Knowledge preservation is about documenting and protecting indigenous knowledge to ensure it doesn't disappear and can be used by future generations and for development.” (Ngulube, 2002)
2. “Keeping multiple copies is a safe digital information source preservation strategy, meaning that the more information is duplicated, the more secure it will be” (Reich and Rosenthal 2010)
3. “Documenting indigenous knowledge not only educates younger generations but also contributes to the conservation of endangered species and innovative research”. (Wai-Yin & Shu-Yun, 2004)
4. “Digital museums, digital libraries, and digital documents are supposed to increase manyfold in the future. The public can access it more quickly and easily, and there are no restrictions on time, location, or global boundaries. Digital preservation helps us preserve our heritage materials” (Abduraheem & Zarrin, n.d.)
5. “Community participation is crucial for preserving cultural and craft knowledge. Participating in the preservation process with the local community can help achieve this” (Perera, 2023)

comparing these findings with the global knowledge preservation methods outlined in Table 1 in the literature review, it can be identified that several key strategies have emerged as methods of knowledge preservation. Those are documentation, education and awareness, conservation and restoration, community participation, government policies and regulations, and digital preservation. These recognised methods offer a strong foundation for preserving Indigenous Knowledge. Applying these approaches to the traditional Kandyan jewellery craft can help protect the indigenous knowledge behind the craft and ensure that this knowledge is passed on to future generations, support efforts to keep the craft alive and strengthen its continuity into the future.

6. Conclusion

Sri Lanka's traditional Kandyan jewellery craft reflects the nation's rich cultural heritage but is facing significant decline due to socioeconomic challenges. This study highlights the urgent need to preserve indigenous knowledge, which underpins the craft's survival. Through a combination of secondary research and primary data—including interviews, observations, and field documentation—the study identified the key factors contributing to the craft's decline and gaps in knowledge transmission. The findings underscore that without active preservation and intergenerational transfer of skills, both the craft and its cultural legacy are at risk. Safeguarding indigenous knowledge is therefore essential to ensure the continuity and vitality of Kandyan jewellery traditions for the future.

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