

Chapter 13

Pragmatism in Making Policies: Insights from the Domain of Gems and Jewelry

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ABSTRACT

The Indian economy is one of the largest in emerging and developing scenarios. The contribution of gems and jewellery amounts to one-fifth of the total economy. This sector has one of the largest unorganized workforces in the country and is a major source of employment to a large number of people. The formulation of policies gains significance and demands statistical tools as philosophical debates often are inconclusive. The problem becomes more severe if quantification and inferential exactitude is a must. The nature of the gems and jewellery business, especially in India, is very secretive, and the use of language is highly elliptical, where it is very difficult to get any useful information or correct answers to the most basic questions. Diverse variables are difficult to place as well as correlate, and factors influencing an aspect may be very different than the perceived ones. This chapter explores the domain for the purpose of pragmatic policies that can be readily adopted by the government as well as by the industry.

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INTRODUCTION

Contribution of gems and jewellery sector in Indian economy amounts to one fifth of the total and yet it is one of the largest unorganized workforces in the country. It is one of the major sources of employment to a large number of people in both organized as well as semi organized sectors. (It is also important to note, it also has a highly ill organized section which works as a proof of miracles!) On one end of the spectrum we have brands such as Gitanjali, Tanishq, Ganjam and organizations suchlike, which have a corporate structure and style of working. On the other hand we have small one room setups in back lane of a jewellery market employing as few as one man doing a very specific stamping or casting work. These two are extreme, but real examples that exist side by side. Now for the policy makers, the big question is for whom the policies are being formed? To act in whose interest? The questions are very severe yet worthy of a good answer. There are many questions which piqued serious policy makers as well as practitioners of econometrics. The nature of business is very secretive and the use of language is highly elliptical where it is very difficult to get any useful information or correct answers to even the most basic questions. It not only is difficult to have inferential exactitude by conventional methods (either qualitative or quantitative); as a result, during formation of policies, opinion of a dominant personality or a group prevails. Policies thus formed lack objectivity and effectiveness. To get insights into this domain of Indian jewellery, let us first understand a few aspects on which literature otherwise sheds little light. Following passages elucidate why Jewellery in India is synonymous with bullion metals, preferably gold or silver (Untracht 1997). The reasons for these metals being preferred for jewellery are both sociological and psychological; as often, the bulk users are women. The affinity of Indian women (and occasionally men) to gold can be attributed to deep roots dating back to times when India was a collection of Ganarajya, several kingdoms coexisting side by side.

It was a custom that women married and left their father's house to join the family of the husband (Balakrishnan & Kumar 2004). This tradition continues to present date. In those days, often the family in which a girl was given was from a different Ganrajya, a different state in today's context. The custom was to give the share of the girl in her paternal property in the form of jewellery at the time of wedding, which was an important part of her trousseau. Sons of the family in turn married women from other republics and their women brought with them their (the women's) share in their paternal property, in a similar form.

The sons stayed in land and therefore inherited immovable property, which in turn was inherited by male lineal descendents. Female lineal descendents continued to be married to distant lands and the system worked wonderfully, where they carried their wealth with them in a very compact form of 'jewellery' that was portable and

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