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A life-long romance with glass

PASSION

Anjali fell in love with glass when she was 10. Then she welded her creativity into it



ANJALI Venkat's studio is on Tiger Varadachari Road in Besant Nagar. My photographer and I entered, and we were like 'Ooh!' and 'Aah!' It took us few moments to find words. The ingenuity of this lady is simply amazing.

The first things our eyes fell on were lampshades. In a corner was a lamp



with what looked like silk cloth draped over it. It turned out to be draped glass. It was priced at Rs 900. There was a lampshade made of different textured glass soldered together. In one corner of each side an intricate design was of beveled glass, or a sheet of glass cut and filed with a cutter into different shapes and then melded into the remaining glass. This with the lamp stand was for Rs 7,500.

Then there were candle holders and candle shades. The candle shades were made of glass sheets cut and shaped into different shapes. There was a Ganesha, and another - hold your breath - had a sea shell her son had picked on the beach soldered into the different coloured glass.

There were liquor bottles cut and melted to shape like small trays. You could offer your guests nuts and chips at a drinks party, or chips and sauce. You could simply keep your pencils or pens in them. These are for Rs 850.

Then, of course, there was glass jewellery. This was truly exquisite. There

were dichroic glass pieces cut into shapes of dragons, butterflies, or tortoise shells, and her favourite - trees and woven into the glass. The pendants had 18-carat gold trees and butterflies inside the glass, and again 18 carat gold around the edges of the pendants. Spectacular! The bracelets, with dichroic glass and gold work inside the glass, had been made with two to three layers of glass melded together. Dichroic glass is one, which transmits one colour and reflects another. So the effect is breathtakingly vibrant. This glass is very expensive and is used only in her jewellery.

I turned to her, at first speechless. How did it all start? She was ten years old when she picked up her mother's broken glass bangles, melted them over a candle, and melded them together into a small curtain. Ten-year old Anjali was hooked onto glass.

In 1995 she did a workshop at the Corning Museum of Glass in New York, followed by a workshop on glass blowing at Norway, and then a workshop on making lampshades in Australia. However, she has no equipment for blowing glass as of now, so that is something she does not do.

She has a studio kiln which is worked at 1500 degrees Fahrenheit, with an attached computer that controls and times all her creations. She has a smaller kiln which works at the same temperature, with which she fashions her jewellery. The bracelets are made by bending the glass - at that temperature - with her hands. The glass is cut and shaped at the same temperature. This is one reason her creations are expensive. The glass itself is expensive, and then she works with them herself.

Has she thought of taking on someone else to do it with her? No, she says, because whoever comes will be working at a job. But it is a passion with her. The person has to be passionate while working with glass, because it is dangerous to work at that temperature. It requires complete and utmost concentration. She does hold classes at her studio for people who are passionate about it. Her 13-year-old son Ishaan seems to have inherited her passion for glass. He cuts and shapes glass, and has made two or three forms of Batman. Contact Anjali at 9840076492



Pix: P. Jawahar

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