



Some of the exquisite pieces of jewellery displayed at Ayura

Although tucked inconspicuously away along one of the busiest roads in Colombo, simply stepping into Ayura acquaints one with the enormous presence of opulence and splendour that the exclusive jewellery store radiates.

Words Haseena Razak Photographs Indika de Silva

Framed in elaborate silver carvings, an elegant mirror placed in the centre of the space, establishes the aura of the room - antique and modern at once with a lavish feel of luxury. The plush couches and chairs, counter tops and display spaces - in fact, the entire room - take on chic shades of black, white and silver creating the perfect backdrop for the stars of the store - the jewellery.

Ayura creates some of the most exquisite jewellery, from rings and necklaces to bracelets and earrings for both men and women. The more classic pieces are generally gold or white gold entwined with the most flawless stones like sapphires, diamonds, emeralds and rubies. While these classic pieces are striking in their immaculate workmanship, the real head-turners are the more contemporary pieces that Ayura boasts. The designs and the blending

of materials are uncommon and the overall effect is one of supreme luxury combined with haute couture. One of the sizeable rings displayed at Ayura was covered in pink sapphires and diamonds. The gems were set so close, the arrangement appeared seamless. Another, a true rarity in Sri Lanka, was fashioned out of crisscrossing bands of pink gold. In a curious coupling of elements, a single flawless diamond was placed atop a copper bracelet, the unusual combination somehow making perfect sense. Perhaps the most unfamiliar creation that Sri Lankans will encounter at Ayura is the dog tag, a rectangular oxidised gold tag attached to a slim leather belt designed to fit closely around the neck.

The creator of these jewels as well as the luxury brand, Ayura, is Adhil Fouz, a young entrepreneur with a vision. Coming from a family that has been mining and exporting precious gems for generations, Adhil's vision was to create and position jewellery in upmarket stores like the ones he had browsed through as a student in England. Four years ago, a friend introduced Adhil to the owners of a high-end store, Apropos, in Germany. Once they had seen and approved of Adhil's jewellery, his new business partner began selling his pieces at their store. Thereafter, Ayura has grown rapidly and established 14 retail partners in upscale European locales, especially in Germany, France and Switzerland.

Most of the stones, especially the sapphires, are sourced in Sri Lanka, while some are also sourced in Africa and Burma. Crafting of the jewellery is also mainly done in Sri Lanka but certain settings that require advanced technologies are done in Hong Kong. Adhil himself carefully monitors every stage of production in order to ensure that the highest quality is maintained. The craftsmen have been working through generations for his family, guaranteeing their outstanding expertise.

As a result of satisfying Ayura's discerning clients, including celebrities and royalty, the brand excels at creating custom made pieces for individual clients. Ideally, it takes three to six months to design, source the appropriate stones and perfect each one-of-a-kind piece. In one instance, it had taken seven months to source the blue sapphires of a matching hue needed for a custom made necklace.

Meaning 'source of life' in Sanskrit, Ayura is looking to expand much further. Undoubtedly, one of the key factors for the rapid progression of Ayura has been the vivacious personality and indomitable attitude of Adhil himself. He hopes that Ayura's latest outlet in Colombo, only a year old, will capitalise on the increasing tourism and be the perfect base to create and operate outlets in India, China and Hong Kong in the future. Talking about the progress of the brand, Adhil said, "It's still young so I would say it's still growing. It's been five years down the line and I think we've done a very good job. We didn't even dream of this because we started so small."

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