

# Dealing in 'currency' of Indo-Pacific Oceans

## Glass Beads Got A Place Of Pride In Multiple Tribes

Parth.Shastrri@timesgroup.com

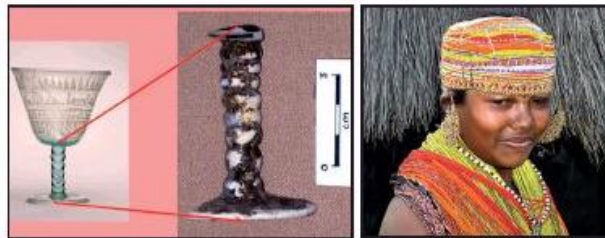
Ahmedabad: When the European traders approached African coasts for trading in ancient times, they offered beads in lieu of ivory and other valuables.

"However, records mention that the Africans refused the 'inferior' beads, demanding the beads made in India for trade," remarked Thomas R Fenn from the US-based University of Oklahoma. Dr Fenn was speaking on the sidelines of recently-concluded conference-cum-workshop at IIT-Gandhinagar titled 'History, Science & Technology of Ancient Indian Glass.'

Dr Fenn and his team are already working in India in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu to understand how the ancient glassmakers made the precious substance that travelled length and breadth of Indian and Pacific oceans, opening trade from Indonesian islands to East Africa.

Gujarat ports such as Khambhat played an important role in the international exchange of beads in barter economy, bringing in wealth to Indian coasts.

Dr Alok Kumar Kanungo, coordinator for the conference, said that Gujarat ports, also finding men-



(Clockwise from top) An artisan showing the ancient technique of preparing glass beads at IIT-Gn, A Banda tribe woman decked up with glass beads, a 10th century stem of a glass chalice found from Sanjan

## Part of global catalogue

Dr Kurush F Dalal from Mumbai University, and his team had excavated Sanjan from 2002 to 2004. Before that, little was known about the landing site of Parsis centuries ago. "During our excavation, we found a number of glass artefacts which we compared to the global catalogues such as the ones with Emir of Kuwait and found astonishing results - it matched the time period of 10th to 12th century CE perfectly," he said. TNN

tion in ancient texts such as Periplus, already had established trade networks extending to Africa and Mesopotamia through stone beads.

"While Gujarat did not produce glass beads, its ports were gateways to the world through the trade net-

works," he said.

A number of researchers such as Dr P J Cherian, director of PAMA, are thus exploring the role Indian coast played in truly international trade exchange between Europe, Africa in one hand and southeast Asia on the other.

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