A 52 years old male reported to the outpatient department with chief complaint of ill fitted artificial set of teeth. On clinical intra-oral examination one gold colored enamel tattoo on the right central incisor was found [Figure 1]. On history taking it was found that patient had got the gold tattooing called “choumps” done on his central incisors by a local tooth tattoo maker called Ferua. He stated that his parents and siblings also had similar tooth tattooing. Reasons given by patient for these tattoos included that it was a fashion in their village for such tattoos and some were of the belief that this will be the only gold they will carry with them after their death to the heaven and some said they were used for identification in a given nomadic clan. History also revealed that the patient belonged to the Gujjar tribe. On intra-oral periapical radiographic examination, round well defined radio-opacity was found in enamel and superficial dentin of incisal third of the central incisor [Figure 2] and no evidence of any periapical pathology was seen radiographically. Electrical pulp testing revealed the tooth as vital.

Choumps are a rare type of tooth tattoo made in gold and are placed on the enamel layer of tooth, mainly on the facial surfaces of the maxillary anterior teeth. This practice has no sex predilection and usually done at adolescent age after eruption of all permanent teeth and during local festivals or local fairs called “Melas”. Various patterns of enamel choumps among different tribes are discussed in literature like single, double or triplet gold spots on central and lateral maxillary incisors.[2] Choumps are very low incidence and thus could be used as an identification trait in forensic science. This unique practice of getting the teeth restored or engraved with gold is prevalent among certain tribes of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan of India, specially the Gujjar Tribes, Thakurs and Jaat Tribes. This prevalence among different communities can serve as a beneficial aid for the Forensic Odontologist as they provide clue about cultural beliefs and traditions of the people who practice them. It is better to reproduce proper radiographic and photographic records of this type of tooth tattooing and include them into ante-mortem records, securing our cultural heritage and traditions of the communities, and thus helping a forensic specialist by acting as beneficial aid in the identification of individuals during mass disasters.[1,3,4] Enamel choumps are extremely unique and distinctive form of tooth tattooing. They maintain a self identity because its geographical distribution which distinguishes from others and thus making it important to the forensic odontologist.

Figures and Legends

Figure 1: gold colored enamel tattoo on 11.
Figure 2: round well defined radio-opacity in incisal third of 11.

REFERENCES