



**Antique Indian Silver Egg Cruet, For Six Persons, Kutch (cutch) – Circa 1900  
£2,800.00**

This lovely antique Indian silver egg cruet is of European form with traditional Kutch style ornamentation. The set comprises thirteen separate elements; the stand, a set of six identical matching egg cups and a set of six identical matching spoons. It is wonderful to find a complete set in such superb condition!

The stand is of six-lobed shape, resembling the outline of a simple regular six-petal flower head. It is supported by three decorative scroll shaped feet. All the pieces have been ornamented in the typical Kutch style using repousse and chased techniques. At the centre of the stand is a tall silver pillar surmounted by a large scroll shaped ring handhold. Below this, and surrounding the central pillar, is the circular spoon holder with separate semi-circular slots for each spoon.

At the centre of each petal, or lobe on the stand, is a plain silver circle with a short silver rod emanating up from the central point. The area between the circles has been ornamented in typical Kutch fashion with floral and foliate sprigs around the central pillar, which is surrounded by an acanthus leaf border. To the perimeter is a raised and finely chased rope border surrounded by a ribbon of scrolling flowers and foliage contained by the outer raised and beaded border.

The egg cups have hollow stems to accept the rods and the underside of the base of each contains a strip of silver straddling the width internally with a circular drill hole at the central point to guide positioning and ensure minimum movement. The cups would be lifted up and guided onto the rods through the central hole in the base plates with the tops of the rods concealed within the hollow stems. This would ensure that the cups stayed in position once the stand was carried or moved. Each cup has been ornamented in the Kutch style with loose and rhythmic floral and foliate scrolls to the body and a pronounced beaded border to the rim. The cups are held on a short pedestal stem over a spreading pedestal foot. The stems are ornamented with acanthus leaf borders.

The handle of each spoon has been ornamented with a typically Kutch flower and foliate sprig over a small acanthus leaf, contained within beaded borders around the edges of the handle. The ornamentation to the feet of the stand is similar.

Egg cruets were a favourite and much-used item of breakfast silver in British households, particularly in the Georgian period and they continued in use up to the Edwardian period. They fell out of favour after World War I when tastes changed, lifestyles became less formal and the grand houses were experiencing great difficulties in recruiting adequate staff due to new opportunities for employment and profound social change. The cruet would have been filled with freshly boiled eggs and placed on a buffet or in the centre of a dining table, so that people could serve themselves. The quality of this set is extremely high and comparable to examples created by top London silversmiths.

It is very unlikely that the silversmith who made this set was well travelled or had ever left the Kutch region, let alone seen such an item in use! He would have probably have been provided with an existing set to examine and copy or detailed design drawings to work from. European residents living in India included many wealthy merchants and officials, some of whom were of aristocratic stock. They liked to continue living their lives in the traditional British way and dining in the same way they would do at home. In India, they lived a life that, at the very least, mirrored their lifestyle at home or in most cases, was infinitely more affluent and cosseted than their lives would have been had they remained in Britain.

Silver from the Kutch (Cutch) region of India was probably the most famous of the various Indian regional styles. The Maharajas of Kutch gave a lot of help to the silversmiths living there. Championing their fine work, they commissioned silver for their own use and sent it out as gifts. They also encouraged and sponsored some of them to attend various prominent national and international exhibitions, ensuring that the region's silver wares were always well represented and exhibited to great effect. The fineness of the silver itself was usually very high and a minimum of sterling quality or 925/1000. As a result, Kutch silver work became very well known in the UK, Europe and America. The style was greatly admired and very popular; highly regarded for its great craftsmanship and aesthetic sensibility and appreciated for its good weight and the high grade of silver they used in manufacture.