



**Unusual Indian Silver Bowl, Tutankhamun, Large Size, Signed, India –
Circa 1925
£9,500.00**

This extremely unusual antique Indian silver bowl is of large size, boasting a diameter of 34 cms and stands 18.5 cms high from base to rim. It weighs just under two and a half kilograms. The bowl has been ornamented using repousse, chasing and engraving. We believe that the bowl was made in the first quarter of the 20th century, probably shortly after Howard Carter, the British archaeologist and Egyptologist, became world famous after discovering the intact tomb KV62 in the Valley of the Kings, the resting place of the 18th Dynasty Pharaoh, Tutankhamun, commonly referred to as 'the boy king' in November 1922.

Pictures of this sensational tomb with its amazing contents featured heavily in newspapers around the world, resulting in a frenzy of interest. The images were heavily copied and inspired many artists to create objects in the Egyptian style which became the latest fashion. There was a surge of interest in the ancient Egyptians, their mythology and the pantheon of Egyptian Gods. There is a vacant cartouche on the side of the bowl which can be found to the top of the principal border.

The pictorial 'signature' of the maker has been engraved to the underside of the bowl. This depicts a composite creature with the body of a winged horse with a peacock's tail and a human face, which is known as a Buraq. By choosing this symbol to mark his work, it also indicates that the silversmith who made the bowl was most probably Moslem, a follower of the Islamic faith.

In Indian and Persian Islamic art, the Buraq is depicted as having a beautiful, usually female, humanoid face with the body of a white horse, colourful wings attached to its shoulders and the tail of a peacock. It is believed that the physical description of the creature might originate from a misinterpretation or mistake when translating the hadith texts of the Koran from Arabic to Persian. The phrase that was used was: "beautiful-faced creature". This phrase captured the imagination of Indian and Persian artists and examples of 16th century paintings of a human-faced, horse-bodied Buraq are known although in the scripture itself it was never written that the Buraq was winged or that it had a humanoid face.

A short distance under the rim is a repeating vegetal border with beaded borders which lies immediately above the deep Egyptian inspired principal border. Below this, a narrow plain silver ribbon border provides contrast to the rich ornamentation and echoes the band of plain silver under the rim, balancing the design.

The principal border depicts deities from the Egyptian pantheon. Often, the gods can be identified as such by their dress and the objects they hold or carry. The animal headed staff or sceptre, called a was, traditionally signified a male deity but here it seems also to have been used to denote a Goddess. The symbol of a staff with triangular appendage to the top, is also the picture representing the word 'God' in Egyptian hieroglyphs. Many of the figures also hold an ankh symbol. This represents eternal life and a drawing of an ankh was the hieroglyph used for the word life. Commonly, the looped top of the ankh is held in the hand with the bottom of the cross only visible. Many of the figures depicted on the bowl are holding an ankh.

The scenes on the bowl appear to be a composite of wall paintings and objects which were found in the tomb of Tutankhamun and ancient Egyptian beliefs. Among the objects were the mummified remains of two of Tutankhamun's children, probably stillborn. It seems likely that the bowl was commissioned as a memorial object for the elderly Indian gentleman with the moustache depicted in the principal border. Perhaps he too had lost a baby, which might explain the theme chosen for the lower border.

The first image shows, from left to right, the God Anubis (fully visible), the Goddess Nut and the God Osiris, Osiris is weighing the heart of Tutankhamun - represented by a miniature version of Tutankhamun - against the feathers in his scales.

In Egyptian belief, the weighing of the heart was a ceremony where the God Anubis/Osiris would judge the dead using a feather which represents the Goddess of truth and justice, Ma'at. Hearts heavier or lighter than the feather were rejected and eaten by Ammit, Devourer of souls.

The next image appears to show (the dead) Tutankhamun kneeling on a chair waiting to hear the judgement from the weighing. Behind him stands the God Horus holding out a torch.

The second photo shows the God Amun, arguably the most important god in the Egyptian pantheon. Amun adopts the traditional pose with his left leg forward. He can be identified by his characteristic flat-topped crown, supporting tall feathers. He has the Gods' braided beard with a curled tip and carries a