

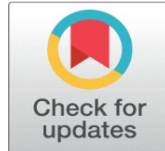
SILVER JEWELLERY AND THE CULTURAL GRAMMAR OF ADORNMENT IN MARWAR - ETHNOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS FROM THE MEGHWAL COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Silver jewellery in Marwar is not merely a decorative artform but a vital repository of cultural knowledge. By documenting its materiality, usage, and embedded meanings, the study aims to underscore that adornments serve as living artefacts of Marwar's cultural legacy. This article presents a comprehensive documentation and cultural analysis of silver jewellery traditions in the Marwar region of Rajasthan specifically through the silver jewellery of the Meghwal community. Moving beyond the idea of jewellery as mere adornment, the study explores the multifaceted roles played by silver ornaments.

INTRODUCTION

Silver jewellery in Marwar is not merely a decorative artform but a vital repository of cultural knowledge. By documenting its materiality, usage, and embedded meanings, the study aims to underscore that adornments serve as living artefacts of Marwar's cultural legacy. This article presents a comprehensive documentation and cultural analysis of silver jewellery traditions in the Marwar region of Rajasthan specifically through the silver jewellery of the Meghwal community. Moving beyond the idea of jewellery as mere adornment, the study explores the multifaceted roles played by silver ornaments.

Drawing on ethnographic interviews, field photography, and material analysis, the study situates jewellery within the broader historical currents and aesthetics of the desert region. In doing so, it aims to foreground the urgent need for

folk-centric documentation of cultural artefacts that are rapidly transforming or disappearing under the pressure of modernity.

The focus on the Meghwals (Singh 1894; 174), a historically marginalized community, arises from both ethnographic accessibility and scholarly intent. Renowned for their distinctive silver jewellery traditions, they offer a wealth of material and oral knowledge rarely represented in formal documentation. While the silver jewellery of the Meghwal community forms the core of this study, its forms and meanings are deeply embedded in the wider historical and cultural fabric of Marwar. Therefore, it is essential to understand Marwar's larger heritage landscape within which community-specific traditions such as those of the Meghwals emerged and endured.

Historical Roots of Silver Jewellery in Marwar and the Meghwal Traditions

Marwar, derived from the Sanskrit *maru* (desert) and *wār* (region), refers to a historical and cultural region located in the western part of Rajasthan. Often described as the "land of death" due to its unforgiving desert terrain, Marwar encompasses present-day districts such as Jodhpur, Pali, Nagaur, Barmer, and Jalore (Tod, 2001; Sharma, 2001). Historically, the region was ruled by the Rathore dynasty, with Jodhpur emerging as its political and cultural capital from the 15th century onwards (Tod, 2001). Despite its arid environment and frequent invasions, Marwar developed a vibrant cultural identity rooted in resilience, mobility, and artistic expression.

Silver, while less prestigious than gold in elite settings, held a significant place among agrarian and nomadic communities for its accessibility, affordability, and symbolic connotations. Its reputed cooling properties made it particularly suitable for desert climates. (Untracht, 1997). Among rural communities of western Rajasthan, silver was often regarded as a mobile asset and insurance against economic uncertainty.

The synthesis between royal and folk sensibilities is a distinctive feature of Marwari jewellery. The Rajput courts played a pivotal role in shaping the design idioms of silver jewellery. Their penchant for elaborate ornamentation and symbolism found expression in the heavier, richly adorned jewellery of Marwar.

The Meghwal community of Marwar, traditionally designated as a Scheduled Caste, has long occupied a position of marginalisation within the region's rigid caste hierarchy. Historically, they have been engaged predominantly in agricultural labour, weaving, embroidery, and mainly leatherwork which are all skilled yet socially subordinated trades (Singh 1894; 174). Geographically, they are concentrated in the western districts of Rajasthan, especially Jodhpur, Barmer, Bikaner, Jalore, and Jaisalmer (Singh 1998; 629).

Despite their artistic skills, Meghwals have historically suffered from limited resource access, social exclusion, and poverty, stemming from entrenched caste-based discrimination. Many still reside in rural hamlets constructed of round mud-brick huts, adorned with colourful painted designs, reflecting both economic precarity and cultural resilience. Understanding the lived realities of Marwar's communities such as the Meghwals also underscores the urgency of systematically recording their material culture. In the case of silver jewellery, these artefacts are integral to the social histories and ritual lifeworld of the people who create and wear them.

Documenting Silver Jewellery in Marwar: An Anthropological and Museological Imperative

The documentation of silver jewellery in the Marwar region of Rajasthan is an exercise in cataloguing artefacts. It is also an act of cultural witnessing and scholarly intervention. Within anthropological discourse, jewellery is recognised not simply as adornment but as a bearer of social meaning. Museologically, this work contributes to an evolving paradigm that values vernacular material culture and intangible heritage. Through systematic documentation that including photographs, interviews, and descriptions, this study offers both a scholarly resource and a preservation tool for knowledge at risk of obsolescence.

Scholarly work on Indian jewellery has often focused on courtly or temple-based ornamentation, with limited attention to rural or regional adornment practices. For instance, Oppi Untracht's *Traditional Jewelry of India* (1997) provides a vast typological survey but lacks ethnographic engagement with local communities. In contrast, more recent scholarship, such as that of Ganguly (2015), attempts to situate jewellery within its cultural contexts. However, the specific regional idioms of Marwari silver jewellery remain insufficiently explored and reference to Meghwal community entirely non-existent.

Museums, too, have begun to re-evaluate their curatorial approaches. Scholars such as Sandra Dudley (2010) and Sharon Macdonald (2011) critique the static and decontextualised display of ethnographic objects, urging a shift towards more reflexive and participatory frameworks. This thesis builds on these interventions by integrating fieldwork with museological practice, aiming to reanimate silver jewellery as lived and living heritage.

A critical engagement with existing literature reveals notable silences and fragmentary accounts of silver jewellery from Marwar, often subsumed under broader categories of Rajasthani art or tribal ornamentation. The current study responds to these gaps by integrating archival research with field-based inquiry.

What follows is a curated visual and descriptive archive of silver jewellery artefacts worn and preserved by Meghwal community in villages in and around Jodhpur and Jaisalmer. The following visual documentation is drawn from field visits to Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, and surrounding villages, between 2023 and 2024.

Silver Adornments: A Catalogue of Meghwal Community from Marwar

In the cultural landscape of Marwar, silver jewellery functions not merely as ornament but as an embodied culture of the society. Rooted in local economies and artisan traditions, these pieces mark gender, caste, marital status, and lifecycle transitions. This catalogue presents silver adornments drawing from fieldwork across Marwar (notably Jodhpur, and Jaisalmer). This section features visual documentation and wearer narratives, foregrounding jewellery as lived heritage transmitted across generations within the Meghwal community.

Head Ornaments

Adornment of the head in Marwar reflects both spiritual devotion and social aesthetics. These ornaments not only enhance beauty but also carry symbolic meanings. Some invoke divine blessings while others signify marital status, regional identity, or personal taste.



Figure 1 The Turban Ornament

Turban Ornament

This ornament is worn by a spiritual head of the Meghwal community, especially the devotees of Baba Ramdev who are visually challenged, during devotional gatherings. It consists of a slender black thread secured around the base of the turban. Suspended from it are small silver pendants called Thala/Phool, each intricately crafted with iconography associated with Baba Ramdev, the community's revered folk deity (Pemaram 1977; 56). Typical motifs include the deity's footprints (pagaliya), his portrait, and depictions of the divine steed (leelagar), upon which Baba Ramdev is believed to traverse (Bishnoi 2008; 37-38). The black thread secures the ornament in place and acts as a protective amulet. Thus, it serves both a functional and symbolic purpose.

This adornment transcends mere decoration; it signifies spiritual authority, marking the wearer as a custodian of sacred songs and rituals. Its presence on the turban places it on a highly visible and culturally significant part of male attire in Rajasthan. Thus, it is ensured that the community immediately recognizes the wearer's religious role. The choice of silver aligns with local beliefs in the metal's auspiciousness and its capacity to ward off negative forces. In this way, the ornament functions as a material expression of devotion, identity, and leadership within the Meghwal community.

Rakhdi/Borla



Figure 2 Rakhdi/Mindiya

The rakhdi (also known as mindiya) is a distinctive spherical or dome-shaped ornament traditionally worn by Marwari women at the center of the forehead, suspended by a thread, pearl string, or silver chain that encircles the head. Its placement aligns with the ajna chakra (between the eyebrows), believed to be the seat of wisdom and clarity, though in secular use it primarily denotes cultural belonging and marital identity. The ornament is often crafted in silver, sometimes gold-plated, and may be set with semi-precious stones such as garnet or glass to enhance its aesthetic appeal. Its design can range from plain and functional to richly textured and ornamented, as seen in this example where a central stone is surrounded by fine granulation work. Continuing the head-to-toe typology, the neck emerges as the next prominent focal point.

Neck Ornaments

Necklaces, chokers (aad), amulets (tabiz, kanthi), and small chokers Timaniya are integral to both everyday wear and ceremonial occasions. Their thickness, design, and material often communicate social and economic status. Many contain religious motifs or protective charms. Some, like the aad, are specific to Jat and Rajput communities and is usually a choker style heavy gold necklace worn by the brides. A neck ornament is an essential ornament for women of the region. It is considered a mark of marital status but also sometimes of having a protective family. Therefore, the cultural fusion of status of family, marital bonding, and amulet-like property is displayed when we move to silver jewellery and find such narratives when we move beyond the royal, elites, and culturally upper echelons of the society. "As social and political hierarchies evolved, shaped by competing monarchs of princely states and desert-driven nomadism, ornaments became part of its expansive language of visual symbols."

Silver jewellery remains integral to the visual traditions of the region, its value lying not only in aesthetic craftsmanship but also in its role as a repository of cultural memory and lived experience. Tripti Pandey has rightly said that "jewellery provides an easy clue in identifying the caste, social and marital status of the wearer." (Pandey, 2003: 134) Sometimes the jewellery pieces have a deeply personal story attached to them. Weiner argued that objects "acquire unique value through the personal importance they have to someone." (Weiner 1992: 9) Although much attention to subjectivity was not paid in this study, yet we had to acknowledge the connection of the wearer to the jewellery as is manifested in the following neckpiece.

Necklace with Central Pendant and Amulet Boxes

Materials: Silver, glass, printed image, cotton cord (dyed in orange and red), textile threads, organic fibre binding

Techniques: Chasing, suspension, tubular silver amulet work, twisted multi-strand cord assembly, soldering



Figures 3 & 4 Necklace with Central Pendant and Amulet Boxes

This necklace comprises a large, rectangular central pendant, suspended from an original multi-strand cotton cord dyed in variegated shades of orange and red. The pendant's front is covered in chased sheet silver, featuring motifs of parrots and floral patterns, framed within a repoussé border of spherical dangles (gajre). At the centre, beneath a protective sheet of glass, is a coloured print of a male figure in Rajput attire, positioned within a cusped arch.

Flanking the main pendant are six tubular silver amulet boxes (taviz), arranged in symmetrical sets of three on either side. Each amulet box is ornamented with a chased floral motif and fitted with three suspension eyelets, from which spherical silver dangles hang. The cotton cord is reinforced with wound yarn and silver tube spacers at intervals.

Such necklaces are traditionally worn by women in Marwar as protective and auspicious ornaments. Locally it is called Chiddi. The pendant often contains religious images or sacred verses, serving both decorative and talismanic purposes. The orange and red cord colours are linked to auspiciousness and marital status in Rajasthani culture. We were told often that these pendants were often used by wearers to insert their husband's photograph. The following picture displays a very interesting photograph inserted in the pendant. It was very amusing to find the picture of a man appearing on the bundle of beedis. We could not ask the respondent about it as we assumed it to be some significant person and only later when we were showing the photographs to another local, the amusing identification was revealed. We can only guess that the paucity of print photos led to this ingenuous creativity.



Figure 5 A close-up of the pendant and its photo



Figure 6 The same photo in the beedi bundle

Source https://www.instagram.com/p/DIMGCTyyh3g/?img_index=8

Protective Pendant, Thala Depicting Bhomiyaji

Materials: Silver, textile cord

Techniques: Likely silver alloy, cast and chased; loop for suspension

This is a small, circular/oval pendant with a raised depiction of Bhomiyaji, the revered figures in Rajasthan, who sacrificed their lives to protect cows and other welfare objectives (Bishnoi 2008). The deity's attributes and attire are stylised, with a halo or arch framing the figure. The back is plain, with a small suspension loop at the top for stringing onto a cord or chain.



Figures 7 & 8 Pendant depicting Bhomiyaji; Worn by a local woman

This petite, gable-pentagon-shaped silver pendant is suspended from a yellow-and-orange twisted cord, accompanied by glass beads. The front surface bears a chased depiction of the deified folk hero, mounted on horseback, framed within a stylised border. Bhomiyas are venerated for his miracles and dedication to the welfare of marginalised communities, occupies a revered position in Rajasthan's popular devotional landscape. His cult transcends caste boundaries, and his image in jewellery often serves both ornamental and talismanic purposes.

In this example, the pendant functions primarily as an amuletic object (tabiz), worn close to the body for spiritual protection. The choice of yellow-orange cord evokes auspiciousness in local colour symbolism, associated with sanctity

and divine blessing. This kind of cord is called moli and is considered auspicious across communities and is often ritually tied to the wrists during worship. Such pendants embody the intimate intersection of faith, identity, and adornment in Marwari material culture, where the wearer engages in a form of portable devotion while simultaneously signalling community affiliation. The wearer here belongs to the Meghwal community, who are staunch devotees of Baba Ramdev.

Ramdevji, also known as Baba Ramdev (Adams 1899; 101), was a 14th-century Rajput ruler and saint venerated across Rajasthan for his compassion toward the poor and oppressed. The Meghwal community believes that Gala ke Bhomiyaji had become a devotee of Baba Ramdev through Harji Bhati (Bishnoi 2008). His depiction on protective jewellery functions both as a devotional image and as a talisman against misfortune, evoking his status as a folk deity believed to possess miraculous healing powers. Such pendants are commonly worn by rural women in western Rajasthan, particularly among Meghwal community. Worn by devotees during daily life, pilgrimages, and festivals associated with Ramdevra, such pendants serve as tangible connections to the deity's spiritual power. They can be easily purchased at shrines, fairs, and marketplaces.

Necklace with Sapta Matrika

Materials & Techniques: Silver, cotton cord (dyed red); cast, chased, and stamped metalwork

This necklace (Figure 9 & 10) features a rectangular silver pendant depicting the Sapta Matrikas (Seven Divine Mothers) in a linear arrangement, each rendered in relief with stylized detailing. Its Local name is Ravatriyan ka Thala. The pendant is suspended from a bright red cotton cord alongside four smaller, round coin-like pendants, each depicting a late form of Hindu Goddess Durga, locally known as Satobai which is an assemblage of seven divine sisters and one brother. The silver elements are attached to the cord via small loops, allowing for subtle movement.



Figures 9 & 10 Necklace with Sapta Matrika Pendants

The central pendant portrays seven sisters which are traced as the Awad, Ajhi, Chechi, Hel, Roopali Khelad/Khol, Lang, Meharkha or Khetrapal (Brother/Bheru) (Westphall-Hallbusch 1973: 392). The necklace is generally called Ravatraiya ra Thala. Another scholar traces the following names for the seven sisters and one brother as Bhadariya Rai, Kaledungar Rai, Temdarai, Tanot Rai, Degrai and Bheru (brother). (Sankhla 2024) They are deemed to symbolise divine mother figures embodying the collective energies (shakti) of the principal male deities. Surrounding pendants depict forms of different Matrika with Bhairu ji. These deities symbolize protection, victory over evil, and the embodiment of feminine power. The imagery references the myth in which the Matrikas were created to assist Shakti Devi in slaying demons, underscoring themes of divine unity and martial strength.

The Ramdevji pendant is deeply embedded in the local devotional landscape of Rajasthan. Its iconography is specific to the region, venerating a fourteenth-century folk hero who was later deified. The pendant's use, materiality, and imagery are rooted in community-based worship practices, oral traditions, and local pilgrimage circuits. It speaks almost exclusively to a shared local identity and the intimate protective role of household and village deities. By contrast, the Sapta Matrika pendant incorporates imagery from the deities and myths found in classical iconography. Being reinterpreted through local jewellery-making techniques and worn in a specifically regional style, the pendants,

demonstrates how a mythological motif is translated into a portable, personal amulet. This also reflects a fusion of the textual, temple-based, pan-regional religion with the folk practices.

Necklaces adorned with Sapta Matrika pendants are worn as amulets in Rajasthan and other parts of northern India, combining religious devotion with protective function. They are often gifted during auspicious occasions, worn by married women only for both ritual and everyday protection, and sometimes passed down as heirlooms. The use of vivid red cord enhances its auspicious connotation while the iconographic details tell us about the incorporation of broader religious themes into local religion and visual aesthetics.

Ear Ornaments

Ear ornaments in Rajasthan range from delicate studs to elaborate, weighty constructions that frame the face and signal a wearer's identity, wealth, and community ties. Known by a variety of local names, such as topish, kundal, and totti these pieces are worn by both men and women across caste and regional lines. The variations in form, material, and ornamentation mark differences in age, marital status, and occasion.

Ear jewellery often combines aesthetic flourish with ritual significance. Ear piercing is often done in childhood for both male and female offsprings, believed to ward off evil eye. As they grow older, the purposes of beautification and markers of status take over. The functional transformation underlines fragility of infants in the region which gives way to sturdiness of adulthood in due course of time while giving new and different meanings to the ear ornaments.

As with neck ornaments, their designs embody a visual lexicon shaped by centuries of mobility, and localised adaptation of motifs. In this interplay between decorative beauty and cultural signification, ear ornaments function as both intimate bodily adornments and public statements of belonging. Silver remains the most prevalent medium among rural and pastoral communities, while gold and gemstone settings dominate among urban elites and higher castes. Many silver pieces documented in this study show an aspirational drive or fusion of gemstones with silver.



Figures 11 & 12 Topish – Traditional Ear Ornaments

Topish – Traditional Ear Ornaments

Materials & Techniques: Silver, coloured glass inlays (optional), pink cotton thread cord (bhagi); silver balls created using hollow-form technique; glass pieces set into silver bezels.

Figure 11 is a pair of paisley-shaped silver earrings (late forms of the Totti), each ornamented with inset coloured glass predominantly pink, with small blue accents. The lower edge features five small, hollow silver balls suspended from short loops, creating movement and a subtle jingling sound when worn. Each ornament is attached to a pink cotton thread cord (bhagi) that allows it to be secured around the ear. Interestingly, piercing is not required, and one can adorn the ears for ritual and social purposes with this unique style. The paisley (ambi) motif is a popular ornamental form in South Asian jewellery, often symbolising fertility, growth, and life's continuity. The use of bright pink and blue glass inlays reflects regional preferences for vivid, sparkling adornment that catches the light. The suspended balls enhance the visual and auditory presence of the piece, signalling festivity and femininity.

Figure 12 are another example of topish, crafted from silver and feature five suspended hollow silver balls, similar to the previous pair. They are also secured with a pink threaded cord, called bhagi, which loops around the ears. Unlike the earlier topish that incorporated coloured glass inlays (pink and blue) and a paisley-like form, this pair has a plain, domed central element with no glass embedding, giving it a simpler, more understated aesthetic. The absence of embellishment and the difference in shape reflect subtle variations within the same ornament type, likely influenced by personal preference and availability of materials.

The topish is worn by women in rural Rajasthan as part of their everyday adornment as well as during festive occasions. The pink bhagi cord is a practical and decorative element, ensuring comfort while adding colour. Earrings such as these are part of a wider ensemble of silver ornaments that signal social identity, and local aesthetics.

Arm and Wrist Ornaments

While ornaments adorning the head, ears, and neck command immediate attention, the embellishment of the arms and wrists holds an equally significant place in the cultural vocabulary of desert communities. Silver, in particular, is highly valued both for its beauty and its cultural resonance. The designs are often traditional and exquisitely crafted, carrying patterns and motifs that have been passed down for generations. These enduring styles continue to inspire contemporary jewellery makers, with many adapted and sold widely on online platforms. Armlets (bājūnband or vankī) and bangles (chūrī, kangan, valay) in silver are living traditions, embodying a dynamic connection between past and present.



Figures 13 and 14 Bazuband/Bajumal - Flexible Silver Armlets

Bazuband/Bajumal - Flexible Silver Armlets

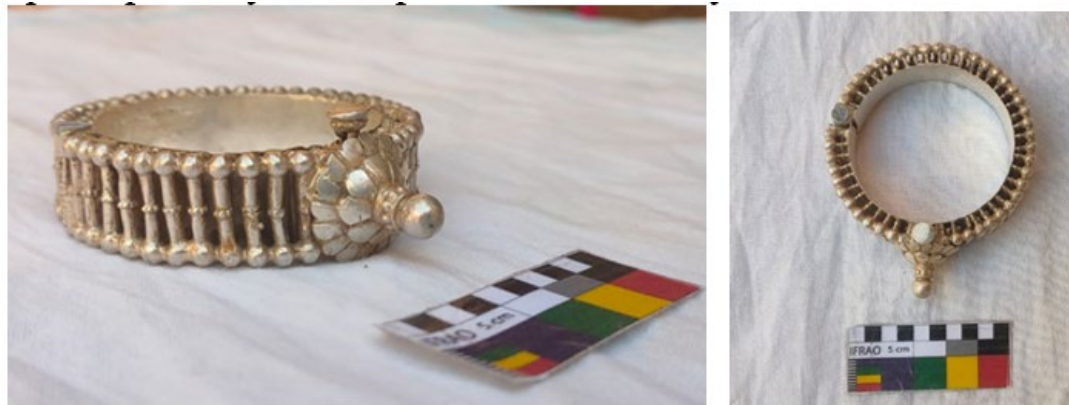
Materials & Techniques: Silver, pink and multicoloured cotton thread; linked unit construction with looped edges for threading.

Figures 13 and 14 are two different angled views of a pair of flexible silver armlets composed of multiple interconnected units that articulate smoothly to curve around the arm. Each segment is bordered with a rounded silver rim, while the upper and lower edges contain loops through which a pink cord is threaded. The cord terminates in multicoloured woollen tassels, adding a vibrant contrast to the silver surface.

Popularly worn across Rajasthan, including the Marwar region, the bazuband serves both decorative and symbolic purposes. Traditionally worn on the upper arm, it is associated with adornment for festive occasions as well as everyday wear in some communities. The flexibility of the linked design allows it to accommodate movement while retaining a snug fit.

Bracelets and Bangles for the Wrist

Bangles are usually the big ornament which is more visible to the wearer. Therefore, we see a remarkable variety of forms, from traditional patterns to innovative designs that adapt age-old motifs for changing tastes. It is also an ornament more specific to women. In silver, these variations reflect both deep-rooted cultural traditions and the creative flair of generations of artisans, perhaps inspired by self-expression and vanity of the wearers.



Figures 15 & 16 Konkan - Guard Bangle

Konkan - Guard Bangle (Khatria or Bangri Gokhru)

Materials & Techniques: Silver; hollow-sphere construction with hinge fastening.

A hinged silver bracelet designed to be worn at the wrist's end, functioning as a bangle to secure and frame other bangles. The ornament consists of an inner solid band from which a series of hollow silver spheres project outward, each soldered neatly to the next. The closure features a petal-shaped silver roundel with a larger terminal sphere serving as the finial above the fastening point.

Known variously as kakan, khatria, or bangri gokhru, this bracelet type has been worn historically by the Dangee and Patel tribes. These bangles are a symbol of the woman's married status. However, its appeal extends beyond community boundaries. While certain jewellery forms are strongly tied to specific communities, Marwar's social fabric, shaped by trade and regional exchange, has enabled the sharing and adaptation of ornament designs across groups. Some other popular designs include Gajre Naugari, and Gokhru.



Figures 17 & 18 Gajre - Two-Part Hollow Bracelet

Gajre - Two-Part Hollow Bracelet

This hinged bracelet is composed of two hollow sections fashioned from stamped silver sheet, imitating the clustered form of gajre (garland) balls. The surface is meticulously textured to give the impression of individual spheres linked in sequence. A quarter section of the bracelet opens on a hinge, secured by a central screw mechanism. The closure is adorned with a raised floral motif, crowned with a prominent silver sphere, combining functional fastening with decorative detailing.



Figure 19 Naugari Bracelet

Naugari

This silver hinged two-part bracelet, known locally as naugari, features projections of simulated gajre balls crafted from stamped sheet silver. The design creates a rhythmic, clustered texture across its surface. A hinged quarter section allows the bracelet to open, secured by a screw closure adorned with a floral motif topped by a silver sphere, blending ornamental beauty with practical function.



Figure 20 Gokhru/ Choodi – A set of guard bangles

Gokhru/Choodi

This tribal guard bangle, known as gokhru, is crafted in silver and encircled by evenly spaced spherical forms along its perimeter. The name gokhru, derived from a thorn of a desert bush, refers to the bangle's distinctive edge design, which echoes the form of thorns but is skilfully rounded to avoid sharpness. A hinged quarter section can be opened via a central pin, allowing the bracelet to be worn either on the wrist or higher up on the arm, just above the elbow. Both protective and ornamental, it reflects a balance of durability and aesthetic appeal.

Hand and Finger Ornaments

If the bracelet frames the wrist as a site of beauty, hand and finger ornaments bring focus to gestures themselves, transforming movements into expressions of cultural heritage. A variation of rings and hathphool fulfil this demand to add grace and glamour to hand movements.

Rings



Figure 21 Vesya/Davno Ring

Vesya/Davno Ring

This is a double-ring crafted in silver designed to be worn on two fingers, commonly referred to as vesya or davano. It is adorned with a cluster of small bells, known as gajre, securely attached to the main body by threading a wire through

their integral loops. This intricate work is known as "moti ke gajre ka kam." The bunch of silver balls is called "chandi ke gajre ka guchchha".



Figure 22 Hathphool

Hathphool

The Hathphool, literally meaning “flower for the hand,” is an ornament designed to adorn the back of the palm. Traditionally linked to a wristband by fine chains, it is secured with a hook or clasp. Among village women, silver Hathphools are often embellished with tiny bells that create a soft jingling sound with movement. This example (Figure 20) features a centrally placed decorated spherical plate, from which two delicate chains extend toward the fingers, attaching to ornate rings worn on the first and fourth fingers. The design not only embellishes the hand but also reflects the intricate craftsmanship and aesthetic sensibilities of traditional jewellery-making.

Waist Ornaments

The focus now shifts from the intricacy of hand jewellery to the captivating charm of waist ornaments, where form, movement, and tradition come together. Waistbands (kamarband, tagdi) are both ornamental and functional, holding up garments while enhancing posture and movements. These ornaments are markers of grace, social identity and prosperity as they invariably need a lot more silver to encircle the entire waist. Sometimes strings are used to enhance the circumference.



Figure 23 Kandora – Waist Band

Kandora

This multi-chain silver waistband, locally termed Kandora, is distinguished by heart-shaped motifs and a fringe of silver balls suspended along its lower edge. Traditionally worn during festivals and weddings, the gentle movement of the silver fringe produces a soft jingling sound, adding both visual elegance and auditory charm to the wearer's presence.



Figure 24 Kandora

Kandora

The kandora, a traditional silver waistband from the Marwar region, holds both aesthetic and cultural value. Typically worn by women as part of festive or ceremonial attire, it complements the region's brightly coloured garments. Crafted with silver chains inlaid with pieces of coloured glass, it reflects the local preference for vivid ornamentation and the interplay of light and movement. Beyond adornment, the kandora often signifies social identity, craftsmanship traditions, and the enduring heritage of Rajasthani jewellery.

Leg and Feet Ornaments

Beyond the waist, Rajasthani adornment extends gracefully to the legs and feet, where silver anklets, delicate baby anklets, and ornate toe rings form an integral part of personal and ceremonial dress. These ornaments not only enhance beauty but also carry symbolic associations with age, marital status, and community identity.

Anklets

Anklets or Pajeb (flexible anklet) and Kadla/Kadli (fixed and fitted small and large anklets with open brackets) are the most popular leg ornaments, crafted in designs ranging from delicate to heavy. Silver is the preferred metal, as most communities, even the elite, usually avoid gold for leg and feet adornments. In traditional attire, such as the ghaghra (traditional skirt like costume) worn slightly above the ankle by labouring communities like the Meghwals, anklets remain a particularly prominent feature leading to variations in designs.



Figure 25 Pajeb



Figure 26 Pajeb (below), Kadla (above)



Figure 27 A pair of Kadli



Figure 28 Pajeb with glass inlay



Figure 29 Pajeb with silver trinkets



Figure 30 Baby anklets (below) with Nazariya (above)

Figure 25 is a silver anklet, featuring a flexible chain decorated with dozens of small silver bells (ghunghrus). The local Name is variously called Chadda/ Payal/ Per Patti. Additionally, small bells hanging at the rear of the armlets draw attention to the back of the leg, creating a delightful tinkling sound. Figure 26 depicts two very typical anklets of the region. The hollow anklets (top) made with hammered silver sheet and flat plain front and bands on the sides, they are opened by a screw. A similar pair called Kadli is depicted in Figure 27. Silver anklet below in Figure 26 is Kaddi is made with interlocking silver wires. Front is pin clasped with a rectangular clasp on the interlocking. Figures 28 and 29 are delicate anklets with minor difference in design. They are held together as a flexible chain. One is embellished by glass pieces in colour while the other is bordered with trinkles. The anklets produce a jingling sound with each step. Figure 30 shows baby anklets that adorn toddlers of both genders to produce charming sound of trinkles as they walk about in baby steps. Above the anklet is seen Nazariya, (also called Nakaliya) which is a specifically baby ornament to ward off evil eye. Nazaria is a bracelet adorned with both black and silver beads, traditionally worn by infants to protect against evil eyes and spirits.

Toe-rings

Alongside anklets, toe rings form another essential element of traditional foot adornment which have a lot of design variations too.



Figure 31 Toe-rings for big toes

This pair of toe-rings (Figure 31) are made for each of the two big toes. They are of hoop form, with rounded tops and a flat base. These hoop-shaped accessories feature rounded tops and a flat base, embellished with bands of floral motifs. Each hoop is then crowned with a loop from which three silver bells dangle gracefully.



Figure 32 & 33 Toe-rings for multiple toes

Figure 32 & 33 show silver toe rings that are worn in three toes together connected by a chain with tea drop shaped toe rings decorated with coloured stone.

CONCLUSION

The present documentation of silver jewellery from Marwar, while drawing primarily on examples associated with the Meghwal community, underscores the prevalence of a head-to-toe ornamentation typology that transcends caste and occupational boundaries in Rajasthan. This layered assemblage of adornments, from distinct headpieces to anklets and toe rings, reflects not only aesthetic sensibilities but also embedded socio-cultural codes regarding material choice and bodily presentation. The preference for silver aligns with both cultural prescriptions and economic realities of marginalised communities.

By cataloguing these objects in their material and functional dimensions, the study contributes to a broader understanding of the regional jewellery traditions in Marwar. Placing the Meghwal repertoire within the broader ethnographic patterns of Rajasthan enriches understandings of both regional material culture and the lived experiences of historically marginalised communities.

The head-to-toe schema also emerges as a persistent cultural grammar, one that is both locally distinct and widely shared across the subregion. This documentation also opens possibilities for comparative research across communities of Rajasthan, examining how ornamentation intersects with changing political regimes, and shifting socio-economic structures. In this way, the study not only documents the material heritage of the Meghwal community but also contributes to a dynamic framework for interpreting continuity and change in Rajasthan's cultural landscape.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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