

Shaiva symbols on Punch-Marked Coins

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Abstract: *The study of coins is called Numismatics. Although Coins are very small in size, but he is strongly present important historical sources . The earliest coins of India is known as Punch-marked coins (Aahat mudra). We have Found various type of symbol on Punch-marked coins (Aahat mudra) as sun, Wheel, Six armed Wheel, Meru, Swastik, Fish, Flower, Trident, Nandipada, Taurine, animals and Jyमितिक etc. all symbols are meaning full and he present social, Economic, Political, Religious and cultural conditions of contemporary India. In this research paper is present the only Shaiva symbols on punch-marked coins and prove the religious believers of contemporary Indian society and culture.*

Key words: *Coinage, Iconography, Symbols, Religion, Culture.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Coins are most important sources for Indian historiography. Although he is very small in size, but its interruption can solved a large problem of 'Dark age' in ancient Indian history. The coins of most authentic pieces of evidence and enlighten us about various aspects of the human life and culture of the people. Though the history of the study of the ancient Indian coins goes to back to 1800 AD, when Coldwell Found some coins from Coimbatore. The earliest coins of ancient india is known as Punch-Marked coins (Aahat Mudra). Remarkable that the earliest coins of india is called Punch-Marked, nominated by James prinsep¹ in 1835 A.D. Dr. Vasudev Sharan agrawal² also call him "Aahat Mudra" based on manufacturing style.

We Know that five hundred fifty symbols are identified by dr.P.L. Gupa on punch-marked coins.³ These Symbols in most cases have religious signification and they constitute the development of religious idias and concept in Indian history. When we have no record find out the religious concept and ideas of mankind , these coins fortunately prove to be only positive source for the study of human behavior. The iconographic study of coins sometime authentic because they present the contemporary method of depicting the cult-divinities in local areas.

2. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:

Although many work in field of numismatics by various scholars as- coins and icon: A study of myth and symbol in Indian numismatics art by B. Chattopadyaya, Development of hindu iconography by J.N.banerjea, The age of kushanas: A numismatics study by B. Chatopadyaya, The history of indian and indonesian art by A.K. Coomaraswamy, Religion and iconography on early Indian coins by O.P. singh, Astudy of vaishnavism by K.G.goswami, Iconography of hindu, budhist and jains by R.S.Gupta etc. We know that all above scholars are define a large Selected portion of numismatics icons. But this research paper is present the only Shaiva symbols on punch-marked coins and prove the religious believers of contemporary Indian society and culture. The aim of this research paper is presenting iconographical study of these symbols.

3. SHORT HISTORY OF COINS:

The history of coinage in our country is quite old and its antiquity can be early as 700 B.C. It can be asserted that the coinage in India was evolved at about 800 B.C. and we accept view of Alexander Cunningham by assigning 1000 B.C. a date of earlier Indian coins, we are not likely to go wrong, at least margin of error would be very small. These coins have been a large number of symbols which study is subject to deep study. We shall been found that the symbols makes on ancient coins are not meaningless.

4. SYMBOLS AND ITS SIGNIFICATION:

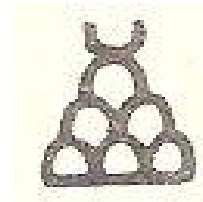
The Punch-marked coins present various type of symbols, But Some important symbols I shall really related him with religious faith of Indian culture. In this research paper some most popular symbols are also related with Shaivism or Lard Shiva, because Lard Shiva is most popular God of Hindu culture, Who has defined Four handed with your weapons. Sometime iconographer is not present whole figure of Lard Shiva, rather he present only one or all Weapons for the presenting him as- Trident, Mountain, Nandipada and Vrsabha etc.. Remarkable that Lard shiva is one, from three chief Goddess in Indian culture as bramha, Vishnu and Mahesh. These Shivas symbols are absolutely present on Punch-Marked coins. Details of these coins and symbols is given below-

Trident (Trishul)



Trident is most popular weapon in ancient India. Trident is prominent symbol on Punch-Marked coins. On the obverse of a coin found from 'Kamrej' hill, dots, and a trident on a base appear⁴. A new variety of Ujjain coins depicts on its obverse a trident symbol, tree with railing and river with fish⁵. We know that trident is weapons of Lord Shiva in Indian literature, art and culture. We found a trident symbol on Ujjain coins with river and fish. Lord Shiva is known as chief God of India. He is most powerful god, he can do everything according to Puranas. The depiction of river on the coins is presenting the figure of Ganga, which is situated on the head of Lord Shiva. So I want to say that, this depiction (river, fish and trident) are clearly presentation of Lord Shiva on punch-marked coins. The depiction of river with fish on coins is absolutely present "the origin of life in water". As a weapon trident is used by tribal. Because Lord Shiva is a most popular god of tribal in early period, so simply trident is attached with Lord Shiva. Shiva is known for showering blessing on his devotees very easily, it explains why he was worshiped by a large number of people. Shiva literally means welfare. Shiva has two aspects as Saumya (Anugrah) and Rudra. We know that, there has been three stages in the development of Indian iconography as symbolic, theriomorphic and anthropomorphic. Naturally trident is the symbolic presentation on punch-marked coins. The trident was an emblem of Lord Shiva which appears independently on punch-marked coins.

Mountain with crescent



The symbol of mountain with crescent is most popular on punch-marked coins. In this depicts mountain symbol comprising of three arches being topped by the crescent⁶. Spooner revised his opinion and identified, it is the mountain symbol⁷. The mountain symbol is found variously represented on punch-marked coins. The British Museum has sufficiently large number of both the punch marked and local coins and tribal coinage as well on which this device is figured. This symbol is found to have been throughout the length and breadth of country⁸. The symbol of mountain is even called royal emblem of Maurya emperors, but I want to say that the symbol of arched mountain with crescent is nothing else than Himalaya. Which is known as a abode of Lord Shiva. Shiva is known as Kailashpati or Girish in Indian literature. The suggestion of this symbol is endorsed by JN Banerjee also. Banerjee also said that, this symbol is really presentation of Lord Shiva⁹. Coomaraswamy has pointed out that the mountain represented arches is found, not only India, rather Mesopotamia and throughout the ancient world as well as in central Asian and Chinese art also¹⁰. The mountain is clearly attached with Shiva in Indian iconography. So I think that the symbol of mountain is really presented divine figure of Lord Shiva. Because mountain provides first abode, medicine, food and cloth etc for early humans, so he gave him respect and associated with series of Gods. No doubt the depiction of mountain with crescent on coins is presented Chandrashekhar (Shashankshekhar) aspect of Lord Shiva.

Nandipada



There are many Nandipada symbols depicted on punch-marked coins. The Nandipada on punch-marked coins is associated with the tree in railing and taurine¹¹. The Nandipada appears on the reverse of a punch-marked coin in association with two-orbed Ujjain symbol¹². Another type of punch-marked coins a Nandipada depicts association with triangle-headed flag-staff and bull. The taurine (Nandi) is clearly attached with Shiva in Puranic period and later coins as like Kushanas. No doubt Nandipada is presenting iconographical depictions of Lord Shiva.

Vrsabha



The animal motifs played no doubt a very important role in Indian iconography. Bull is the most important animal symbol on punch-marked coins. On a coins bull appears with a hump¹³. The bull with a hump in particular is known to be sacred to Shiva. Bull as a symbol on the punch marked coins is variously interpreted. When a bull associated with a lingam, there can be no doubt that the bull nandi is intended, as the attitude of the animal on the coins is that in which nandi is represented in almost every temple of Shiva¹⁴. Remarkable that the bull is associated with Indra in Rigveda¹⁵. In the Avesta also, the bull appears as one of the incarnations of Verethraghna, the Avestan Indra.¹⁶ In one of the Vedic rituals, a bull also represents the god Rudra¹⁷.

5. CONCLUSION:

After interpretation of these symbols, I can say that trident, mountain, Bull and nandipada is associated with early agricultural system. Trident is originated from nandipada. Because Nandipada and trident are similar symbols, so I think that the concept of trident is originated from Nandipada. The most popular Hindu symbol Om is also originated by Nandipada or trident, because if nandipada is moved 90° in anti-clockwise then we saw clearly Om (ॐ). No doubt all the above symbols are religious and associated with Lord Shiva.

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