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Vaishnava Symbols on Punch-Marked Coins

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Abstract: *The study of coins are called Numismatics. Although Coins are very small in size, but he is strongly present important historical source . 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, animal and Jyemitik etc. all symbols are meaning full and he present social, Economic, Political, Religious and cultural conditions of contemporary India.*

Study of ancient Indian coins are very important for reconstruction of Indian history .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. Vasudevsharan agrawal² also call him "Aahat Mudra" based on him manufacturing style. We Know that five hundred fifty symbols are identified by dr.P.L. Gupta 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 n local areas.

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. Chattopadhyaya, Development of hindu iconography by J.N.banerjea, The age of kushanas: A numismatics study by B. Chatopadhyaya, The history of indian and indonesian art by A.K. Coomaraswamy, Religion and iconography on early Indian coins by O.P. singh, A study 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 Vaishnava symbols at punch-marked coins and prove the religious believers of contemporary Indian society and culture.

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 be found that the symbols makes on ancient coins are not meaningless.

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 Vaishnavas or Lard Vishnu, because Lard Vishnu is most popular God of Hindu culture, Who has defined Four handed with your weapons. Sometime iconographer is not present whole figure of Lard Vishnu, rather he present only one or all Weapons for the presenting him as- Shankh, Chakra, Gada and Padam. Is proved by Ramcharitmanas , In this religious book present a source when Hanuman arrived in Lanka then he saw Vaishnav symbol on a house. As- "Ramayudhankitgrihshobhavarnina jay". So I definitely say that these symbols are already related with Lard Vishnu. Remarkable that Lard Vishnu is one, from three chief Goddess in Indian culture as brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. The Lard Vishnu is presented with four weapons as Shankh. Chakra. Gada and Padam by Iconographer of Our Country. These vaisnvas symbols are absolutely present on Punch-Marked coins. Details of these coins and symbols given below-

I. SHANKH (CONCH SHELL)



We should found the various types of conch shell in world culture. This symbol are also present on Punch-Marked Coins⁴. The Conch shell is used as musical instrument for making distance of evils⁵ in ancient world. Shankhas used for religious worships are

not only India, rather various country of world as Peru and Aztea⁶ etc. We know that the origin of Shankha is in water, and the Wife of Vishnu (Laxmi) is originate in water also. So she naturally related with him. When the Vishnu clearly joined Laxmi then the Shankha attached him also. So I understand that Conch shell should be related with Vishnu. The Shankha is available in literary source atharvaveda. The Arthvaveda⁷ present various type of Shankha.

II. CHAKRA(WHEEL)



The Chakra is the most popular symbol on Punch-Marked coins after solar symbol. He is situated on Imperial class Punch_marked Coins⁸. One another type of coins who preserved in Lucknow museum is making clear symbol of wheel⁹. The Traditions of chakra is very ancient as pre and proto age of history. D.D. Kaushambi is present awheel symbol in archaeological sources, who found from Mirzapur¹¹ cave at Uttarpredesh. The earliest Literary reference of Chakra is in Rigveda.¹⁰ We know that Chakra is the indicator of mobility. Its origin from “Chree” Dhatt’ in Sanskrit. Chakra is also known as Kalchakra, Jeevchaka and Bhavchakra and brahmachakra in literature. In the pre stage Chakra is completely attached with Lard Vishnu. The Chakra is also related at Buddhist, jainist and other religion. So he present religious similarity in ancient age.

III. PADAM(LOTUS)



The Lotus or Padama is another popular symbol which makes on Punch-Marked coins. A clear Lotus appears on the obverse of silver Punch-Marked coins¹². A cast coins of Padamawati depicts a lotus showing six petal and bearing on them a Tortoise, awastik and Taurine.¹³ In early period the Lotus related with right hand on god Sun¹⁴. Vishnu and sun do not appear to have had separate entity in the vedic literature. Rather Vishnu was not explicitly mentioned and surya was described as Narayana. His name Narayans is related as inclusive of both Vishnu and Surya. In such an early period of Indus valley civilization and early Vedic literature, the lotus was signified with son but later Vedic and puranic age Padam and laxmi both related with Vishnu.

After interpretation of this symbol I can say that the tradition of vaishnavs is early vedic age. Although the Vishnu is not a popular god in vedic period, but his worship is start in this age as a secondary gods. In later vedic period age we can see the importance of Vishnu. He is a popular god in Mahakavya and puranic period. The Gupta period is the golden age for Vaishnavism, because the king of Gupta dynasty is protected him. He accept the Lard Vishnu as a chief god and making a legend related with Vishnu as Parambhagwata, Aadivarah etc.

In Conclusions I say that the Vaishnva symbols are appearing with four hands of Vishnu as Shankha. Chakra, Gada and Padama. These sumbols are clearly present on Punch-Marked coins. So that present popularity of Lard Vishnu in Indian society and culture.

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