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ABSTRACT

Numismatics is the study of coins . Coin is one of the most important archaeological element in the history of Ancient India. Weapons have been engraved on coins. The most common weapons of ancient Indian coins is arrow, bow, spear, trident, sword etc.

KEYWORDS: Ancient coins, Weapons, Bow and Arrow, Spear, Sword.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Coin is one of the most important elements in the history of ancient India. The coins play a vital role in illuminating history not known from other sources and help in its reconstruction. Coins are important for the study of the history, it confirms, modify and even amplifies history. Coins are discovered from time to time either in the course of archaeological excavation or as accidental finds during digging operations of the earth. Coins are not only source of economic history but also give an extensive information about official, religious and cult, political thought, ideology and actual portraiture of historical figures. A large number of decorated motifs and designs and contemporary religious observations are stamped on the coins for example on the Gupta coins the depiction of garments, ornaments, musical instruments, furniture, weapons etc. Various weapons can be seen in the coins of ancient India. Weapons play an important role in the expansion of the empire and the maintenance of order. Weapons have been engraved on coins keeping in mind this importance.

Ancient Indian weapons

Weapons, an instrument used in combat for the purpose of killing injuring or defecting an enemy. In prehistoric times, people first used weapons for self-defence. Later they used new weapons for hunting. People when started living in a grouped society through agricultural work, started using weapons to protect the agricultural surplus and protect themselves from other groups. A King is then needed to protect people and property. One of the strength of the royal power is its military power. Strong weapons are needed to strengthen the military. From the weapons which are engraved in the ancient Indian coins we can know the structure and nature of the weapons of that time. Many weapons (Bow, arrow, sword, chakra, spear, javelin etc.) are known from the Hindu and Buddhist scriptures of ancient India. The Vedas and other associated texts contain reference to warfare. The earliest allusions to a specific battle is Battle of the Ten Kings in Mandala 7 of the Rig Veda. The two great ancient epics of India, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (c.1000- 500 BC) are centred on conflict and refer to warfare and esoteric weaponry. Bows were the primary weapons for the infantry, chariot an elephant warriors and even the commanders.

Local punch marked coins

Punch mark coins are divided into two groups- Local punch marked coin and Royal punch marked coin. The first Indian coins punch marked coins called puranas, karshapanas or pana were minted in the 6th century BC by the Mahajanapadas and continued to be used to a limited extent up to the 3rd century CE. This punch marked coins are usually

made of silver, irregular in size and shape, but of a standard weight. Around 450 symbols can be identified from this coins. 2 types of symbols occur on most of the coins, a sun with radiating rays, and a six-armed symbol. Then there are various geometric, plant, nature and animal symbols. The coins must have been used in trade, but the symbols had there own meaning. Symbols of some weapons are found in this coins. Such as Bows and arrows, an axe-head, spear and a kind Ask victory symbol referred to as a jayadhvaja. Three specific symbols have been found in the coins of Banga janapada. A single decked ship, a wheel, a six-armed symbol having 6 arrows place around a double circle. On the other side of this coin is a conch symbol. The meaning of the various symbols used in the punch mark coin is not clear. Some circular symbols have been used on coins which look like Chakram. The earliest references to the chakram come from Indian epics the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Where the Sudarshana chakra is the weapon of the God Vishnu. Chakram is a throwing weapon. It is circular with a sharpened outer edge. However, The most common weapon symbol found in local punch marked coins is the bow and arrow.

Alexander's coin

Puru was the King of the land in the middle of the river Vitasta and Chandrabhaga during Alexander's expedition to India. Peru's heroics struggle in the war of Hydaspes (326 BC) made a great impression on Alexander. He engraved a kind of silver coin in remembrance of this war. On one side of this coin is a portrait of a man. He has a helmet on his head, armour on his body, is sword on his Waist, spear in one hand, Vajra in the other. The male person is probably Alexander. On the other side of the coin are two people sitting on the back of an elephant. One of them was throwing a spear backward at a horseman who is running behind him. The rider is also hitting the elephant with a long spear. The person sitting on the back of the elephant is probably poor. These coins give an idea of the various weapons used at the time.

Punch Marked Coins of Maurya Empire

The Mauryan coinage consisted almost exclusively of silver karshapanas of roughly 3.4 gm, a series that continued the Magadha karshapana series. Almost all Mauryan coins have five punches, as did the Magadhan and coins before them- a sun, a six-arm symbol and three others. Some of the last coins in the series also had a punch on the reverse of the coins. With the expansion of the Mauryan Empire, weapons became important. Symbols of some weapons such as bows and arrows, spear can be noticed on Mauryan coins. A human figure has been found in a coin of the Maurya period with a stick or a spear in his hand (silver karshapana).

Kushana Coins

In the North West, the Indo-Greek rulers issued a few gold coins, but the Kushana issued them in considerable numbers. The financial prosperity of the Kushana period is reflected in the abundance of coins of that era. The Kushana coins were made of gold, silver and copper. Silver coins were known as purana and copper coins were Casa pana. On account of contact with Rome they began to issue the dinara type of gold coins, which became abundant under the Gupta rule. On the main side (obverse) of the Kushana coin there are portraits of the King with the names and titles and on the other side (reverse) there are statues of various deities (Siva or Oesho, Buddha, Ardoksho, Mao, Nana, Miuro, Mahasena Skandakumara etc.). From this it can be said that the Kushana were religiously tolerant. Like other coins, various weapons can be found in Kushana coins.

Vima Kadphises (110- 128 AD) mostly used one deity Shiva (Oesho in Bactrian language) standing (with trident) with or without his bull Nandi, on reverse of his coins. Shiva with a trident are also found in the coins of the other Kushana Kings (like Kanishka I, Basudeva I) Spear is one of the various weapons found in the coins of Kushana Kings. For example, such spears have been found in gold quarter dinar of Kanishka I (128-154 AD). In the obverse- king standing left, sacrificing over altar and holding goad in right hand and spear in left and on the reverse a Athsho, God of fire, standing left. Huvishka (154-192 AD) was a great ruler. His cosmopolitan outlook is amply evident in his coinage. His early coins portray him as a warrior, sporting a beard and brandishing weapon. But his later coins show him a handsome king with a imperial crown. This transition from a nomadic warrior to a king accustomed to court life of opulence (gold dinar of Huvishka). Swords were found in his various coins, for example a gold dinner honouring Miuro on the Roman God Mithna. Some of the most interesting numismatic specimen with considerable historical importance are minted by Huvishka. One such coin of him shows a pair of deities, Skandakumara and Vishakha. Skandakumara or kartikeya was considered to be God of War. War was necessary for the expansion of the empire. For this reason various Kushana kings were worshiped the gods of war. Weapons were important in the context of the expansion of empire. That is why the Kushana coins depict kings as warrior, along with that a large number of weapons have been engraved on coins.

Coins of Chera Dynasty

The Chera dynasty ruled in southern India during the sangam age between 3rd century BC to 9th century AD. During this time, the biggest empires in the region were the Chera, Cholas and Pandyas. The Cheras who controlled The West Malabar coast.

Almost all the Chera coins showcase an elephant figure on the obverse, and bow and arrow on the reverse - the Royal emblem of the Cheras.

Satavahana Coins

Satavahanas is one of the most celebrated dynasty of ancient India. Satavahanas ruled over large area of modern western and southern India. The Kings of this dynasty were great patrons of art and architecture. This dynasty also have unique distinction of issuing the coin with the portrait of ruler. Most of the coins minted by Satavahanas were made of lead or copper. Most of the coins have elephant, lion, horse and chaitya on obverse while reverse side shows "Ujjain symbol" a cross with four circles at the end. Not less than 15 different symbols appear on the Satavahana coins. The meaning behind them is not certain. A wheel with twelve spokes is found on a coin of Vasishtiputra Pulumavi and Satakarani I issued a coin depicting wheel with eight arrow headed spokes. Various symbols and motifs on Satavahana coins throw light on socio-religious ideas of that period.

Gupta Coins

The Gupta kings engraved many types of gold coins (Dinaras). The number of silver coins of Guptas is less than that of gold coins. The Gupta kings introduced copper coins but they were very limited in number. The influence of the Kushana currency can be noticed in early Gupta coins. But very soon new types were introduced. During the region of Samudragupta, six types of gold coins were introduced. This number increased to 8 during the region of Chandragupta II. The gold coin of the Gupta period are really fancy in art. Different types of weapons can be noticed in Gupta coins. The sword can be seen in the coin of Chandragupta II. Dagger can be seen in the coins of Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta. Arrows and bows can be seen in some Gupta coins. (such as Archer type coins of Chandragupta I, Chandragupta I, Lion slayer type coins of Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta I Tiger slayer type coin of Samudragupta, Kumaragupta I. Weapons were essential for the expansion of the empire and the establishment of internal peace and order, that's why weapons were shown in these coins.

The Gupta military was heavily dependent on cavalry. There were also infantry and archer in Gupta military. The archer were armed with bow and arrow. Bows and arrows were also found in Gupta coins. For example lion slayer type coin of Chandragupta II. Chandragupta II is depicted here holding an Indian bow in his left hand and an arrow in his right. This gives an idea of what the weapons looked like during the Gupta period. The Gupta empire's military also had heavy cavalry and sword- equipped cavalry.

Shields and javelins were also utilized by the infantry divisions. The heavy cavalry also frequently had armour made out of metal or leather. War equipment's or elements were commonly used by the Gupta empire. They were protected with armour, and they were also supplemented with light infantry. For example Gupta king Kumaragupta I's (elephant-rider type) gold coin depicts him on an elephant with a goad, which is essentially a spiked weapon. Samudragupta's battle-axe type coin shows him holding a battle axe. Goddess of victory (Vijaya) is seen in his Ashvamedha type coins. A spear can be seen in the hand of this Goddess Vijaya. The swordsman type is one of the rarest types of Kumaragupta gold coinage. Kumaragupta is seen holding a sword in his left hand. This coin is the testament of the Golden period of Gupta empire in the Indian history.

II. CONCLUSION

The most common weapons of ancient Indian currency were arrow, bow, Spears, tridents, swords etc. Weapons are important for the expansion of the empire and the establishment of peace and order. Coins of ancient India have shown that Kings are skilled at using special weapons. The Kings of ancient India wanted to assert their power and strength through coins. They wanted to promote the skills of using different types of weapons through coins. It is also a special strategy of the Kings through which they want to propagate how strong they are and so that the opposition will be afraid. The portraits of Kings in various coins are engraved in such a way that they are ready for battle with arms. Similar weapons were engraved on the coin of ancient India although the weapons have been improved overtime but the use of new weapons has become less noticeable. The importance of this type of coins in the composition of military history of ancient India is immense.

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