Foreign influences and gods and goddesses, various symbols, animals, birds, and the political and economic, social, and archaeological significance of the kings who ruled: revealed in the metal coins of India.

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Abstract -*Indian coinage in the ancient and medieval periods served as a sophisticated medium that extended far beyond simple economic transactions, functioning as a powerful instrument of statecraft, religious policy, and imperial propaganda. Rulers across different dynasties systematically engraved the portraits of deities and their own likenesses onto currency to address complex historical, political, economic, and religious necessities. By placing highly revered gods and goddesses—such as Lakshmi, Durga, or Kartikeya on Gupta coinage—monarchs strategically cultivated divine legitimacy, positioning their governance as an earthly extension of heavenly mandate. This religious iconography also served a vital economic function; because spiritual symbols were universally sacred to the common populace, their presence on currency instilled psychological confidence, guaranteeing the intrinsic value and public acceptance of the legal tender. Furthermore, the selection of deities reflected the state's official patronage and ideological stance, as demonstrated by the Kushan emperor Kanishka, whose coins depicted a diverse pantheon of Hindu, Buddhist, and Greco-Iranian deities to broadcast a policy of religious tolerance across a multicultural empire. Simultaneously, the introduction of royal portraits, popularized extensively by the Indo-Greeks and the Guptas, served as an unyielding visual marker of sovereignty, making it immediately clear who held supreme authority over a specific territory. These royal issues acted as durable historical documents and mass communication tools, carrying grand titles like 'Vikramaditya' or 'Maharajadhiraja' alongside the king's image to project imperial achievements and reinforce hierarchical power. Special celebratory coins were also minted to immortalize monumental achievements, such as Samudragupta's performance of the Ashvamedha Yajna or depictions of him playing the veena, which showcased both his military might and cultural sophistication. In short, ancient and medieval Indian kings masterfully utilized numismatic art to consolidate their political power, secure public loyalty, advertise their triumphs, and permanently etch their legacies into the archives of history.*

Keywords: gods and goddesses, symbols, animals, birds, archaeology, metal coins.

Introduction:-Before and after the birth of Christ, all the tribal kingdoms, city states, monarchies, etc. that existed in India, mainly in coins, are the source of all historical theories about them. Only coins provide us with accurate information. Muhammad Ghori himself had the image of Goddess Lakshmi engraved on his conventional gold coins. From this it is assumed that he was liberal in religious matters. Apart from the historical value, the aesthetic qualities and artistic taste of the artists were also proven. (Gupta-1987)

The gold ornaments called 'Nishka' of the Aryans of the Vedic age have been found. These coins of that time were the most coveted (Gupta-1987) In the Vedic age, there was a price for these 'Nishka' coins. (P 6, Gupta). The coins of Gandhara were also of a strange shape, resembling a human waist, with six tridents and a flag (p. 12, Gupta). A coin of the Batas kingdom was discovered, which had geometric lines, animals, circles, and a six-armed symbol, a scorpion-shaped animal. (p. 13, Gupta). These coins have geometric lines, elephants, rabbits and trees, and some coins from Andhra have been found with two elephants and a bull on the front. (p. 14, Gupta). On the other hand, the coins found from Magadha seem to belong to two eras. Both depict lotus flowers, and in one of the two coins, a bull and a lion facing from the left, and in the other, a circle with a sun and a human figure. (Gupta-1987).

The Indo-Bactrian striking rulers introduced the drag-striking method from Greece to India, which was not known in India before. (Gupta-1987). A type of copper coin issued by Ayagathokles, recently discovered during excavations at Ai-Khanum in the Aksu river valley, shows that the Indo-Bactrian rulers were gradually influenced by Indian traditions. On the one hand, Vasudeva with a wheel and on the other, Balarama with a plough. This is the first depiction of an Indian god in art. Later, on the other hand, there are also horsemen, elephants, lions, and two bows. The form of writing on a coin is the first in India. (Gupta-1987)The evolution of ancient and medieval Indian coinage reveals a intricate tapestry of political transitions, shifting religious allegiances, and rich multicultural syntheses following the decline of major empires. Numismatic

evidence from the post-Mauryan epoch to the early medieval era highlights how successive dynasties adapted foreign iconographies while preserving indigenous traditions to assert regional sovereignty. The Shakas, for instance, diverged
from the Indo-Bactrian tradition by omitting royal busts, instead engraving heavy armor-clad cavalry motifs that visually echoed their nomadic central Asian lineage.(Gupta-1987) This fluid blending of cultures was highly pronounced under the early Kushans; King Bhima Kamphuises initially utilized the Greek language on his coinage before introducing the Khotanese-Shak vernacular. Furthermore, he and his successor Kanishka populated their currency with an expansive, multicultural pantheon. They proudly depicted Iranian deities like *Mihir* (Sun), *Mao* (Moon), and *Vado* (Wind),(Gupta-1987) alongside classical Indian deities—most notably the god Shiva (*Aesho*), who occasionally appeared alongside his consort Uma.

As the political landscape fractured into numerous local kingdoms and city-states, coinage became highly regionalized yet highly artistic. Excavations in Central and Northern India highlight independent urban centres like Push Kalavati, whose coins showcased a profound Greek aesthetic fusion featuring a crowned figure on one side and a bull (*Tauros* / *Brishob*)
accompanied by bilingual scripts in Greek and Kharosthi. (Gupta-1987) In regions like Shaur Sena and Panchala, the Mitra and Datta dynasties extensively minted coins depicting Goddess Lakshmi standing on a pedestal, establishing a visual motif of divine prosperity that deeply resonated with the public.(Gupta-1987) Even major geopolitical shifts, such as the defeat of the Panchala ruler Achyuta Mitra by the rising Gupta emperor Samudragupta, are meticulously preserved through these shifting issues. Meanwhile, southern and western kingdoms leveraged localized animal totemism; the Pandya kingdom featured elephants and fish, the Gujarat-Saurashtra region incorporated lions, and central city-states like Tripuri combined human figures with distinct symbolic emblems stamped onto copper and lead alloys.(Gupta-1987)

In the post-Gupta and early medieval periods, coinage continued to project imperial authority despite fluctuations in economic prosperity and metal purity. Rulers in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, such as Varahoraja and Bhavadraja, minted distinct gold pieces bearing reclining bulls, Brahmi legends, and the spread-winged Garuda bird. In the east, Bengal and Assam became centers of vibrant post-Gupta numismatic art. Rulers Samacharadeva and Jayagupta issued coins capturing elaborate courtly life—depicting the king flanked by female attendants—alongside representations of Goddess Saraswati and her companion swan. Even during the early 7th-century conflicts involving the Gauḍa ruler Shashanka and Harshavardhana, gold coins continued to display Shiva seated on his bull and Lakshmi on her elephant, despite a noticeable drop in gold purity. This iconographic momentum carried forward into the 8th century and reached an artistic peak during the Pala Empire. The gold coin of King Devapala (810–850 AD) depicting the monarch as an archer alongside Goddess Lakshmi stands as a definitive masterpiece of early medieval Pala art.(Gupta-1987) Ultimately, these coins prove that across centuries of structural collapse and imperial rebirth, Indian monarchs consistently utilized currency as an enduring archive of their military triumphs, cultural sophistication, and spiritual alignment(Gupta-1987)

There are many such coins in circulation of the kings of Assam and the northeastern region, that is, Tripura. The coin issued in 1467 by the ruler of Tripura, Raja Ratna Manikya, is the oldest coin. Since then, of course, coins have been issued continuously until the last decade of the 19th century. But the coins have inscriptions engraved in the Ahamiya script. The next king Vijaya Manikya issued some coins engraved with the image of Ardhanarishvara on the occasion of his holy bath-abgahan in the Laksha River. The Ardhanarishvara idol is given the form of half of Durga with 10 hands and Mahadeva with 4 hands. Durga's vehicle is a lion and Shiva's vehicle is a bull. In the coins of Josha Dhar Manikya, the upper half of the upright side has Krishna surrounded by two Gopi's and below is the lion-trident symbol and the name of the king on the reverse. (P 138, Gupta).

Tripura Sundari Murti was during the Prathistana period and a coin of the victory of Chittagong by Dhanyamanikya was introduced in 1435 Saka, which is currently kept in Rajendra Kirtisha. Historians Dr. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sarkar, and Dr. PK Bhattacharjee, Head of the History Department of the University of North Bengal, have made various analyses of the coins in circulation of Mahashaya Shashanka and his reign. It is also known from the descriptions of Hiu N Tsang and It Singh that there is a mention in all the coins that Shashanka introduced after the fall of the Gupta Empire. On one side of the coin is the idol of Shiva riding a bull and below it is the word 'Jai' in Brahmi script. Many such coins were discovered in the south-eastern part of Bangladesh, in Chandpur subdivision, Jessore district, and these are currently kept in Dhaka Museum. Among the coins of Shashanka, one gold coin and two silver coins are kept in the Surendraganj High School Museum. Some of these coins are preserved in the Indian Museum in Kolkata and the British Museum in London. (P 82-83, Jahar)

The history of the circulation of coins is probably 2700 years old. Coins not only provide historical elements, but also prove many valuable historical facts. Such as the name of the ruler, date, religious beliefs, lineage, contemporary painting, decoration, language, script, victory and defeat,

and bear the identity of different countries. (P 84, Jahar). From the history of the coins discovered in Tripura, it is known that 'Ratna Fa' i.e. Ratna Manikya first introduced his coins in 1464 AD. And the last one to introduce coins was Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya in 1931 AD. (P 84, Jahar)It is believed that this was a tradition or custom introduced by the kings of Tripura. A rare coin of the 1411th century of the crown jewels was discovered by Shri Jahar Acharya. The western and southern districts of Tripura, including Comilla, Noakhali, Chittagong, and Sylhet, were included. Because a large amount of archaeological material has been discovered from those regions. Among these discovered archaeological materials were coins, copper certificates, statues, etc. Coins of Samatata, Harikela coins, coins of the Sultans of Delhi, coins of the Sultans of Bengal, and coins of some Arakan states have also been discovered in large quantities. Ratna Fa, taking the name of 'Ratna Manikya Dev' (1464-87 AD), conquered Ratnapur in 1464 AD (Ratanpur village of Amarpur) and introduced coins in Bengali script and Sanskrit language, imitating the Sultanate of Bengal. He also introduced many coins in the name of his Hindu gods and goddesses. However, the word 'Tripur' in the coinage comes from a coin of 1412 Shakabd (1490-91 AD) of Dhanyamanikya. By adopting 'Shakabd', they showed their foresight as a partner in the larger Indian culture. But the adoption or introduction of 'Tripurabda' is a much later event, for which there is much historical evidence. (Zahar 90-91 p)

The history of Tripura coins is 467 years; the kings of Tripura have their own independence in the circulation of coins. Compared to other states of northern India, the kings of Tripura had much more creativity, beauty and uniqueness in the existing coins. Both gold and silver coins have been found in Tripura. A copper coin of Radha Kishore Manikya was discovered by Shri Acharji. The said copper coin and the 2 taka coin are especially worth mentioning. Almost the coins had the names of the king and queen together. A rare sight in the history of coins. However, many kings of Assam have used the names of non-mahisis. The kings of Tripura often used to name the mahisis in accordance with their own names. For example, Vijay-Vijaya, Amar-Amaravati, Govinda-Gunavati, Dharma-Dharmavati, Dharmamanikya-Dharamsila, Ishwar-Iswari etc. Tripura is also diverse and extraordinary in terms of iconography. Except Tripura, no king's coin of North-East India has such an image or sculpture of a god or goddess engraved on it. In terms of artistic style, all these coins have occupied a special place in Indian iconography. The lion statue of the king of Tripura is present on almost every coin. There are also idols of various gods and goddesses. The low-relief sculpture of Lord Krishna playing the flute with the gopis on the coin of Maharaja Jasho Manikya in 1600 AD is impeccable and incomparable. Its depth in such a small space can rival many modern sculptures or art. Therefore, the coins of Tripura are highly valued by numismatics and collectors. There are many kings who, instead of making idols or sculptures of gods and goddesses in their coins, used the names of their worshipped deities, such as Narayana Charanpar – Sri Sri Ratna Manikyadev. Shiva-Govinda Manikyadev, Har Gauri-Sri Sri Chhatra Manikya Dev or Radhakrishna Birchandra Manikya etc. The first Ratna Manikya was exceptional in using the fourteen 'Danda' symbols of fourteen gods in one of his coins. (Jahra 93 94)

The Maharajas of Tripura used to issue special coins to commemorate various occasions such as military victories, pilgrimages or religious commemorations. For example, Chittagong Vijaya Sri Sri Dhanya Manikya and Subarnagram Vijaya Sri Sri Dev Manikya were minted. And honorary titles were added such as Sri Ratna Manikya, Dhvajghat Shashi, Lakshmi Shashi, Padma Shashi etc. This was a rare occurrence in North-East India at that time and it indicates the religious devotion of the Maharajas. The Western or British influence can be seen first in the coins of Maharaja Ramganga Manikya. Because at that time the British entered Tripura. However, the most complete British influence is seen in the coins of Raja Birchandra Manikya. He was the first to use the British Court of Arms and his own picture extensively on the coins. Later, Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya used his portrait on the coin of 1928 AD, but no new coins were minted after his death. Coins of several kings have also been discovered in the last thirty-five years (1965-2000). Through research, it has been seen that there is no doubt that they were the kings of Tripura. These unknown kings are Virbhadra Manikya (1521 Shakabda), Ishwar Manikya (1522 Shakabda) and 2nd Dharma Manikya (1523 Shakabd). Researcher Jahar Acharji has discovered many coins of Tripura which are preserved in his 'Rajendra Kirtisala'. (P 94-95 Jahar)

So far, about forty types of coins have been discovered, which is one of the achievements of Ratna Manikya. These coins are very valuable to numismatists and collectors. (P 96, Jahar) In the history of Indian numismatics, there is a status, advanced and skilful art style. Use of symbols of fourteen gods in fourteen bars on coins, use of Singha idols or sculptures and own type of Singha idols popularized by Sultan Nasir Ud-din-Mahmud Shah (3rd) of Bengal (1445 AD), name of Maharani Lakshmi Devi before his own name, use of names of worshipped gods and goddesses. Use of Sanskrit language in pure Bengali script. With the help of coins discovered so far, it is known that the emperor introduced coins with the names of fourteen gods, Sri Durga, Narayana, Parvati Parameshwara, as the first gemstone. (P 97, Jahar)

Mukut Manikya was the second king to issue coins, his two silver coins were undated, the place of discovery of these coins was Jiraniya, in which the name of Adivasi Ramani is mentioned. The first coin discovered in Tripura was found during excavation of soil from the house of Naninkundo Mahasaya in Karimura village of Vishalgarh, 10-12 coins were found. (P. 105, Jahar)

The first to the last kings of Tripura issued coins, most of which were commemorative coins of Chil and were issued to commemorate the events of Rajya Vishaka, Deva jay, Tirtha Darshan. Tripura's own coins were gold and silver. (Chowdhury 2009,)

Admitting the paucity of information in the history of ancient India, it can be said that in ancient India, along with social, political, life, economic life also developed. At that time, the exchange of money for goods, the collection of money through interest, the Indrapur inscription of Skanda Gupta is also significant evidence of this. The picture of the exchange of foreign currencies during the time of Barigajat's Minandar has also been supported in the economics. (Mahmud A.A-1995)

First discovery and neglect: The first hoard of Gupta gold coins was found in Kalighat near Calcutta in 1783-85. The then Governor General Warren Hastings sent them to the directors of the East India Company. Unfortunately, a few coins found their way into several libraries, including the British Museum, while the rest were melted down.

Attempts to decipher the inscriptions: Initially, Paine Knight failed to read the inscriptions on these coins and called them imitations of Greek coins. Later, Marsden was the first to successfully read the inscriptions 'Chandra' and 'Sri-Vikram' from the coins. By 1835, James Prinsep had made further progress in deciphering the Gupta Brahmi script.Later discoveries: Many more hoards of Gupta coins were discovered throughout the 19th and 20th centuries in various places in India (such as Allahabad, Hooghly, Jessore, Mitthathal, Bamnala, etc.).Importance of Bayana Bhandar: The most important of these discoveries was the 'Bayana Bhandar' of 1946. About 2100 gold coins were found from here (out of which 1821 were recovered). (Agrawal,1989)

Gupta coinage serves as an invaluable primary document, offering an unvarnished reflection of the empire's economic vitality, political stability, religious shifts, and cultural trends. Rather than being mere transaction tools, these coins mirror the personal inclinations of rulers—such as Samudragupta's musical passions captured on lyrist-type coins—while solving literary mysteries, like the Malwa copper coin discoveries that proved the historical existence of Rama Gupta from the play *Devichandraguptam*. The sheer diversity of coin designs directly correlated with imperial strength; while Kumara Gupta I introduced an impressive fifteen distinct coin variations during the empire's golden age, later weakened rulers were economically restricted to just one or two simple styles. Ultimately, as historian A.K. Narain notes, the weapons, attire, and religious symbols struck onto these coins offer a far more dependable record of a ruler's true character and era than any biased dynastic biography.(Agrawal,1989)

The metallurgy, weight standards, and iconography of Gupta coinage provide an exact barometer of the empire's shifting economic health and political fortunes. To facilitate international trade, early Gupta rulers adopted the Kushan and Roman weight standard of 121 grains, which was later elevated to the indigenous Indian standard of 144 grains under Chandragupta II and Skanda Gupta. However, fiscal strain soon manifested in the metallic purity of the currency; the pristine 90% gold content of Chandragupta I's era dropped to 75–80% under Skanda Gupta, before collapsing to an alarming 43–54% under late rulers like Narasimha Gupta and Vishnu Gupta, signalling severe economic decline. Archaeological breakthrough discoveries by researchers A.L. Srivastava and Upendra Thakur—who unearthed base-metal replicas of the "King and Queen" and Samudragupta's "Lyrist" types—conclusively proved that the Guptas minted gold, silver, and copper from their inception, though highly valued gold specimens survived in far greater numbers. Among the most iconic designs, the foundational "Chandragupta-Kumaradevi" type features the royal couple on the obverse and a lion-seated goddess on the reverse honouring the *Lichchhavayah* alliance. This paved the way for Samudragupta's highly popular "Archer" type, depicting the king holding a bow alongside a Garuda standard, a design that came to symbolize imperial triumph and unparalleled warrior status for generations. (Agrawal,1989)

Samudragupta's numismatic legacy comprises seven distinct coin types that highlight his military triumphs, cultural passions, and political sovereignty. The highly popular Bow (Archer) type depicts the king with a bow and arrow alongside a Garuda standard, hailing him as an invincible warrior, while the General type adapts Kushan styles with pure Sanskrit inscriptions praising his victories in a hundred battles. The Axe type projects fearsome power by showing the king holding a battle-axe (*parashu*) alongside a dwarf servant, explicitly likening his might to Yama, the god of death. Demonstrating raw physical prowess, the Tiger-Hunter type portrays the monarch trampling and shooting a tiger, paired with an image of Goddess Ganga on a *makara*. In contrast, his refined artistic nature is immortalized in the Lyricist type, which features the king in a dhoti playing the veena on a couch. The imperial Ashvamedha type commemorates his grand horse sacrifice, showcasing a sacrificial horse on the obverse and his crowned queen on the reverse. Finally, the enigmatic Kacha type resembles the general type but bears the name "Kacha" and the title *Sarvarajochchetta* (uprooter of all kings), representing either a fierce rival or Samudragupta's alternative moniker.

Chandragupta II and his successor Kumara Gupta I greatly

expanded Gupta numismatic artistry, introducing diverse iconographies that reflected territorial conquests, religious devotion, and dynastic transitions. Chandragupta II popularized the Dhanurdhara (Archer) type bearing his title *Sri Vikram*, alongside the Chhatra (Umbrella) type showcasing imperial majesty, and the Equestrian type, which highlighted his horsemanship and deep Vaisnava faith as *Param Bhagavat*. His Singha-Nidhaan (Lion Slayer) type—celebrating the annexation of Gujarat—depicted theking conquering lions under the epithet *Singhabikrama*. Rarer issues included the Palanka (Couch) type, the King and Queen on a Couch type, the standard-derived Standard type, and the highly rare, unlettered Chakra Vikrama type, where the deity Chakrapurush bestows divine gifts upon the monarch.

Kumara Gupta I further diversified the imperial currency with complex thematic motifs. He struck an Ashvamedha type acknowledging his horse sacrifices, and his celebrated Kartikeya type beautifully depicted the king feeding a peacock, mirroring his patron deity Kartikeya. He also continued the traditional Chhatra, King and Queen, and Lyrist styles—the latter uniquely featuring his queen on the reverse according to scholars. Finally, his enigmatic Apratigha type portrayed three figures in deep debate, while the single-sided Garuda Repose coins discovered at Khairatal continue to fuel intense academic debate regarding their true economic purpose.(Agrawal,1989)

Conclusion:

The custom of transforming currency into wearable jewellery developed globally as a sophisticated strategy for securing portable wealth, offering self-defence, and establishing social nobility prior to the advent of modern banking. Widely popular across the Roman, Persian, and Ottoman Empires, this practice found a uniquely rich expression among the rural and indigenous communities of India, Nepal, Myanmar, and Northeast India. In regions like South Rajasthan, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, and Tripura, wearing necklaces crafted from pure silver British-era rupees served as a practical, informal banking system. For hill and tribal communities lacking access to secure lockers, stringing hard currency onto threads minimized the risk of theft while ensuring absolute liquidity; during emergencies like war or drought, individual coins could be detached and spent directly at market value without requiring melting. Furthermore, this numismatic jewellery functioned as *Streedhan*, securing financial autonomy for women. In Tripura, Kokborok-speaking tribes like the Tripuri, Reang, and Jamatia fashioned these iconic coin necklaces, known as *Ringbang* or *Kham Chang*, by piercing the canters of silver coins acquired from royal revenues and *jhum* cultivation sales. Ultimately, as researcher Das (2004) highlights, these intricately crafted ornaments served a triple purpose: a testament to artistic beauty, a marker of high social prestige, and a living savings bank account worn proudly around the neck. (Das 2004)

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