

# THE ANIMAL MOTIFS ON INDIAN COINS

## (ANCIENT AND MEDIAEVAL PERIOD)

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In the evolution of the species it has been universally acknowledged that man appeared in the last of all living creatures. Soon after his august appearance in the hoary past, his first task had been to adjust himself with the nature and the species. Initially, of course he had unreasonable fear about other animals whom he watched carefully from the distance and in fact, he admired strength and craftiness of some of the beasts. In his observation there was awe, admiration, sympathy and above all love for certain animals. Very soon man could distinguish between the ferocious as well as noble type. With his superior intellect man could tame the latter variety, specially those beasts who came down very near to the dwelling of man on their own accord. Of these some animals supplied milk, the flesh of some was taken as food, a few animals were chosen for riding, handling and chasing enemies, while a limited number of animals were used for drawing the plough-share. This close intimacy between the man and the animal was eventually reflected in art, sculpture and subsequently in coins. The fantasy and fascination of Indian mind for different varieties of animals make the coins of India highly Kaleidoscopic.

The animal world of the punch-marked coins consist of elephant, bull, lion, dog, cat, deer, camel, rhinoceros, rabbit, frog, fish, turtle, ghariyal (fish eater crocodile), scorpion and snake. Among the birds, peacock is very popular. The lion and horse symbols appear to have acquired greater popularity in 3rd century B.C. This is evidenced by the capitals of Ashok. The horse symbol is also found on some coins of Yaudheyas and on the series of the coins of Mathura rulers Sivadatta (reverse). It appears as a sacrificial victim which evidenced by the Kanauja coins. Allan has noticed a Yupa or a linga (Yupa is more acceptable) with the horse symbol on their round copper coin of Kanauja. He explained that the reverse has a horse apparently before a sacrificial post (Yupa) and may thus commemorate an asvamedha sacrifice. The horse figure is very often found on the coins of Kanauja Kausambi, Mathura. Panchala and Vrishnis.

The symbol of bull standing before a symbol on the earliest coins of the Arjunayanas and the Yaudheyas, may very well represent the bull before yupa i.e. (sacrificial post). The bull was also a characteristic device of monetary issue of Ayodhya. This symbol is very common on Kausambi coins and also on a few specimens of Mathura. The coin

from Almora also show the depiction of bull before tree in railing. The lion symbol gained more popularity than the horse in subsequent times. It came to symbolise power and might and ultimately royal dignity. Its entry in Indian art and mythology was apparently from Western Asia. and the earliest coins to bear lion figures were issued by the foreign rulers, i.e. the Indo-Greek kings called Pantaleon (C.185-175 B.C.) and Agathocles (180-165 B.C.). However, the lion device is also appeared on the silver punch-marked coins and on few specimens of local coins.

Lion symbol appears on the indigenous coin of Taxila, Agaras (Punjab) (late 2nd C.B.C.), Rajanyas (Punjab), Rajasthan (C. 1st C.B.C.) and Malva. The elephant symbol is another popular symbol prominently shown on the coins. Bull and elephant together have conspicuous symbols on Indian coinage. In fact, these two animals dominated the ancient Indian art. Three elephants with riders is characteristic reverse mark on coin issued by early Hindu rulers of Mathura, while single elephant is favoured variously on the coins of Ayodhya, Kausambi, Mathura, etc. The stag or deer symbol is also depicted on the coin of Kunindas and Yaudheyas as well as those from Almora.

Among the bird symbols cock, peacock, swan and duck are frequently represented. The depiction of owl can also be seen in Punch-marked coin. The peacock symbol is very popular in the coin of Yaudheyas. On some specimens of punch-marked coins the peacock is placed on the top of a hill. Among the reptiles the most conspicuous is the snake symbol, which is portrayed frequently on Indian coin. The fish symbol is generally depicted in pairs and also in a tank (Uddehikas early 2nd C. B.C.), but sometimes is to be found in a group of boar (on some punch-marked coins) or five (on a series of the Mathura ruler Gomitra I (C. 1st C.B.C.). Another water animal, represented on early Indian coin, is the crocodile. Frog is frequently depicted on punch marked coins.

We have number of coins having Mahavrsa, Vrsadhvaja or Vrsavahana (one whose mount in bull ). In this connection it may be noted that the humped Indian bull on Greco-Indian coins issued from the mint of Puskalavati has been identified as the emblem of Siva.

A large number of imitation Kushana coins have been found from different parts of Orissa. They are popularly called as Puri-Kushana coins. Among them a few coins bear on the obverse the elephant-rider type of Huviska.

The Buddhist contact with lion further transformed it as the power of the seeker of the liberation from all bonds of nature, which according to Buddhist faith is primary cause of all casual nexus "Pratitya Samutpada". Thus, the Buddha has been described as "Sakyasimha" i.e. the lion of Sakyas. The lions of the Asokan pillar facing four quarters and carrying Dharma-chakra on their heads stands for a two fold implications :—On one hand they represent the Buddha, who set in motion the wheel of law or Dharma Chakra to deliver mankind from the sorrow of samsana and on the other hand, they stand as the

royal symbol of Ashoka who dedicated his life to propagate the gospel of Buddha to the world at large. The influx of the symbol in the country with the mother Goddess (Isthar-Nana) identifies her with Durga-Simhavahini found on the coin of Azes who made an inroad from Eastern Iran, in the beginning of the Christian Era and also in the coin of Kushanas, who pushed their rule to the heart of India in subsequent period, helped to establish the original implication of the lion i.e. the symbol of female principle. The original implication of lion indicates its association with the Indian Goddess Durga, Uma, Sakti.

The horses were also used in Asvamedha sacrifice of Gupta rulers. Such horses are found on some of the gold coins of Samudragupta and Kumaragupta-I. To celebrate his memorable victories in Northern and Southern India, Samudragupta had performed Asvamedha Sacrifice, probably late in his reign and to commemorate this great event he had issued gold coins of a fairley extensive scale. Many Museums in India and abroad possess this variety of Samudragupta coin. The Bayana hoard alone has laid bare twenty Asvamedha coins. Samudragupta appears to have adopted the Asvamedha device for his seals also.

Dr. Altekar is right when he says that "The asvamedha coins are among the best specimens of the numismatic art of ancient India.

The horse on the overse looks noble and graceful and seems to be resigned to its impending doom. Obviously the best artist were selected to prepare the model and they were fully conscious of the importance of the event they were called upon to commemorate on the imperial coin. Chandragupta -II was probably a renowned horseman and he might therefore had conceived the idea of representing himself on some of his coins as riding on his horse and marching to the battlefield to win material glory. In his coin he is seen as riding a nicely modelled horse and is controlling the walking beast with a single rein loop. The horse is carved on his coin strictly in prolific where the king on his back is conceived in three quarter profile. Undoubtedly the horse is on the coin of Chandragupta-II has been very naturalistically rendered. The Asvamedha type of coins of Kumaragupta are very rare. There are two such coin in the British Museum and two are in State Museum, Lucknow and in Bharat Kala Bhavan. The British Museum coin depict horse as caparisoned and not bare as in the case of the Asvamedha type issued by Samudragupta.

Artistically, Kumaragupta-I's coins are much inferior in comparison to those of his grandfather. Samudragupta's horse is graceful and artistic and that of Kumaragupta whether unharnessed or caprisoned can stand no comparison with the former. Even the horseman variety of Chandragupta-II coins are much better than Kumaragupta's horseman type.

The coins of South India were generally identified on the basis of dynastic emblem or cognizances.

The Satavahana Currency is the earliest in the series of widely circulated coin of South India, coming next to the punch-marked coins. Satavahanas came into prominence in 3rd century B.C. and their rule lasted for more than 400 years. They had occupied quite a big territories in Western India and Deccan. They had issued a large number of coins which have been discovered from Malwa Krishna and several other places of Deccan and central India. These coins are of both lead and copper. In Maharashtra and Vidarbha, a large number of copper or potin coins are found showing an elephant with the trunk upraised or hanging down side and the Ujjain symbol on the other. The issuer of these coins are Sri Pulumavi, Siva Sri Pulumavi, Skanda Satakarni, Sri Yajna Satakarni, Vijaya Satakarni, Pulahamavi, Saka Satakarni, Rudra Satakarni, Kumbha Satakarni, Karna or Krishna Satakarni.

In Deccan, lead coins of Sri Sati, Sri Satakarni and Sri Pulumavi are found from Hyderabad. They bear a thick three arched hill on the obverse and the Ujjain symbol on the reverse. The coin issued in Maharashtra and the Deccan are exclusively of lead and they are known to have been issued by three or four rulers. These coins are of a number of varieties, showing three or six-arched hill, a horse, a lion, a ship or wheel as one of the main characteristics on the obverse side of the coins. The Ujjain Symbol on the reverse is almost common to all.

New dynasties came up after the Andhra Satavahana rulers in the Deccan sometimes in the 3rd century A.D. dealing with the later South Indian coins Vidya Prakash remarks, "South Indian coins are generally identified on the basis of the dynastic emblem or cognizances'.

In the following table the emblem of some of the principal dynasties of Deccan and South India is given :

Sl. No.	Name of the Dynasty	Emblem
1.	Chalukya	Boar
2.	Rashtrakutas	Bull
3.	Kalachuri	Bull and Garuda
4.	Kadamba (Mysore and the Kanara region)	Hanuman
5.	Yadava (Devagiri)	Lion, Garuda and Hanuman
6.	Hoyasala (Jaipur, Belgaun, Dharwer region)	Tiger
7.	Ganga	Bull
8.	Mysore Hindu rulers	Elephant, Siva and Parvati

9. Pallava (South Deccan)	Bull and Lion.
10. Chera (present day Kerala, and Coimbatore and sales district).	Bow
11. Pandya (South and South-East Tamilnadu)	Fish
12. Chola (Eastern Tamilnadu)	Tiger

The gold coins of the Cheras have the figure of an elephant, often caprisoned on obverse and a scroll device on the reverse. The representation of the boar incarnation of Vishnu, though evolved during the Sunga Kushana period, became popular in the sculptural art of Gupta period where in both the theriomorphic and therioanthropic type occurred frequently.

As in art and sculpture the image of Varaha has also been portrayed in Indian coin. In the silver coins of Mihira Bhoja, we find Varaha has been portrayed with an inscription containing the legend Srimad Adivaraha. Here the symbol is seen in composite form. He stands with the left leg raised above knee and the left hand rests apparently to support the goddess.

In the gold coins of the kings of Nala Dynasty of central India, the words of Sri Varaharaja and Sri Varaha are found embossed over the obverse of the coin. Though the legends ostensibly refer to the ruler of the dynasty in the 5th century A.D, the second one Sri Varaha could possibly be interpreted to mean Varaha from of Vishnu as well.

Mention may be made of the Ikshvakus and Pallava rulers. The Ikshvakus ruled in the northern part of the Deccan. Originally they were the feudatories of the Andhra Satavahanas and after their decline attained power. Ikshvakus immitated the Andhra Potin coins having an elephant on one side and the Ujjain symbol on the other.

The Pallavas issued their own coins in copper with a bull or a lion on one side. It is suggested that lion was the insignia of the early and bull of the later rulers of the Dynasty.

The Ikshvakus and the Pallvas were replaced in course of time by the Vishnukundins and the Eastern Chalukyas. They followed the motifs of the Pallava coin.

Of the Eastern Chalukyas the coin of Raja Raja-I (1019-1059 A.D.) bear the dynastic symbol of boar facing left flanked by a lamp stand on either side and surmounted by an ankusa (elephant goad ), a chhatra (parasol) and two chauries (fly-whisks) punched in the centre.

Rajendra Kulottanga-I (1070-1118 A.D.) who was a prince of Eastern Chalukya dynasty and a king of the Cholas, had issued coins with the central punch bearing two

fish and two tiger seated dog fashion and flanked on either side by a bow and parasol and a by which above.

Among the Western Chalukyas Jayasimha II (Jagadekamalla) (1015-1043 A.D.) and his successors issued a type of coin where five lions are punched separately and the title is punched with separate punches for each of the letter.

On a variety of coins having nine punches, the central punch bears the figure of Hanuman, four punches have the lion, two have conventional kannada letter Sri and the remaining two retain the legend 'Sugu' along with the ankusa Since Hanuman was the crest of the Hangala branch of the Kodambas, these coins might have been issued by them.

The Yadavas of Devagiri issued punch marked gold coins which were known as padma-tanka or achchhus. The first ruler of the dynasty Bhillam V (1185-1193 A.D.) issued coins bearing nine punches.

Five of them have the lion, two have Sri, the eighth has a sankha and the nine bear the name Sri Bhillama Deva in two lines in Nagari letters.

Die struck gold coins were prominently issued by the Kadambas of Goa Jayakesi-I (11th Century A.D.) issued coin of two types, one having Gajasardula (lion-elephant) and the other only a lion facing right. Both the types have a common reverse bearing a 'trisula' and the Nagari inscription Sri Malaigai Bhairava. The next ruler Soyideva issued coins with the lion and the name Malaharama on the reverse Soyideva also issued another type of gold coins with a large maned lion and name of the cyclic year on the obverse and a long Nagari legend.

The Hoyasala King. Vishnuvardhana (1115-1159 A.D.). Narasimha (1159-1171 A.D.) are also known do have issued die struck gold coins. The former issued coins of two types. On one a lion forms the obverse and the title Sri Tala Kadagonda on the reverse.

The other type has a lion-riding Chamunda on one side and the title Sri Nanambavadigonda on the other. The latter type was issued by Narasimha also. His coins bear the inscription Sri Pratapa Narasimha.

The Silaharas of Kolhapur region issued some uninscribed coin having a trident, with the sun and moon on the obverse and Garuda on the reverse.

A type of uninscribed gold coins having a large caprisoned elephant on one side and a floral scroll on the other have been found from Mysore area and are called "Gajapati Pagodas". Some gold coin of Harshadeva, the king of Kashmir are very similar to these coins. "The Raja Tarangini" mentions that his coin were imitated from those of the Karnata. According to some scholars the Gajapati Pagoda's belong to Mallikarjuna of the

Vijayanagar dynasty. Some tiny thin gold coins with a recumbent bull on the obverse and Telugu regnal dates on the reverse are found mostly on Orissa. They are attributed to the early Gangas who had settled in Kalinga and ruled from 6th to 11th Century A.D.

In adopting the animal motifs on coins the rulers of the Sangam Dynasty of South India took a pioneering role. Harihara, the first ruler and the founder of the Vijaya Nagar kingdom (1336 - 1356 A.D.) used both the Hanuman and Garuda symbol on his coins. His successor Bukka I (1356-1377 A.D.) took Hanuman as the coin symbol. The Garuda symbol was next used only in time of Krishnaraya (1509-1529 A.D.). Harihara II (Pratapa-Harihara) (1377-1404 A.D.) took the standing bull as the symbol on his copper coins. Devaraya (1422-1466 A.D.) took elephant as the symbol on his copper coin.

The kings of Taluva dynasty (1506-1570 A.D.), like their predecessors took the bull and the Garuda motifs on their coins along with the deities Uma-Mahesvara. Venkatesa and Bala Krishn. The Ganda bherunda motif on coin appeared during the time of Achyutaraya. which is a unique phenomenon in the numismatic history.

The rulers of Karnata dynasty (1570-1646 A.D.) seem to have been much influenced by Vaishnavism. Venkatesa is prominently seen on their coins. Sankha. and Chakra, the two main attributes of Vishnu. His vehicle Garuda and his incarnation Rama and Varaha are found on the coin of Tirumalaraya (1570-1573 A.D.). The bull on the Vijaya Nagar copper coins is the only device that continued from the very beginning. During the last thirty years of the declining days of the kingdom, Vaishnavism dominated not only the capital but also at the local centres. During this period Vishnu in almost all the forms of his incarnation, appeared on the local coin. Animals like lion, bull, elephant, tiger, deer, peacock are also seen on the local coins.

With the decline of the kingdom of Vijaya Nagara, a number of petty states issued their own coins. The Nayaka princes of Tanjore. Madura and Tinnevely and the Setupatis of Ramnad are prominent among them.

A series of copper coin were issued by rulers of these said areas having varying devices on the obverse, i.e. Hanuman, Ganesa, an elephant, a bull, a lion, a star, the sun, the moon, etc. The early coinage of the Madura Nayakas has the name of the rulers on the reverse in Tamil. But the coins of the later period of these rulers bear Telugu legend on them.

With the advent of Muslim in India, Indian coinage assumed an altogether new pattern. The representation of figures is eschewed in Islam, so like the other coinage of the Islamic world, Indian coins too, with a few notable exceptions, carried inscriptions on both the sides in Arabic or Persian script. The coins in India, hence forward displayed the names of the issuers with their titles, the date in the Hizri era and the mint name (the place of the issue of the coin). The Kalima or profession of the faith was also used in the coin.

Muhammad bin Sam founded the first Muslim dynasty in India after the final defeat of Prithviraj and his allies in the second battle of Thaneshwar in 1192 A.D. He struck coin in imitation of the coins that were current in the country and placed seated Lakshmi on the obverse and inscribed his name in Nagari letters. He apparently struck no silver coins in his Indian dominion but coins in billon of the "bull-horseman type."

Qut-buddin Aibak was the first Sultan to set up the capital at Delhi, but no coin bearing his name has so far been found. The next ruler, Iltutmish (1211-1236) issued silver coin with various legends. Some gold and silver coins, similar to the gold horseman types of Muhammad bin Sam were issued in the name of Iltutmish from Bengal. He issued three types of coins in billon. One type of coins has a bull on the obverse and a horseman on the reverse.

The Mughal Emperor Akbar and Jahangir brought some new introduction on the pattern of coins. Emperor Akbar introduced the effigy of Rama and Sita with the words Rama and Siya in Nagari. Jahangir, issued some gold coins where the bust of the Emperor in profile was portrayed. On the reverse of these coins a lion is found either to left or to right. He issued some gold and silver coins, which bear the zodiac signs on one side. They are remarkable in their execution.

Besides these few exceptions the muslim rulers seldom used any forms on their coins. Instead, much emphasis was given on calligraphy.

However on the coin of the Hindu rulers of the Muslim period we come across some figures both human and animal. The rulers of Kangra (a small hill state lying between the river **Ravi** and **Satlej**) issued coin of the bull and horseman type.

A Gond dynasty was ruling in the latter part of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with its capital at Amrakantaka, which extended in Kosala area and also occupied some parts of the ancient Akara (the area around Bhopal). This area is famous in history for the chivalry of Rani Durgabati who gallantly opposed the Mughal Governor Asaf Khan, who had invaded her kingdom on 1564 A.D. Her father-in-law, Sangram Shah had issued some gold coins of about 167 grains. The obverse of his coins has a crested lion in a square.

The coins issued from Tripura by the ruler Ratnamanikya bear a grotesque lion on its reverse. A 'trisula' was added at the back of the lion by Vijaya Manikya, a succeeding ruler. He placed a figure of Ardhanarisvara on some of his coins. Here the composite figure is made up of the half portion of the ten handed lion-rider Durga and that of the four-handed bull-rider Siva. This is altogether a new pattern which displays the innovative outlook of the issuer.

The most powerful successors of the Mughals were the Marathas and the Sikhs. They issued gold, silver and copper coins. The Maratha coins bear the legend in Nagari script whereas both the Persian and Gurmukhi scripts have been used by the Sikhs for the legend of their coins.

Ghaziuddin Haider, the Nawab of Awadh, was made the crowned king by the British Governor General in 1819. Initially he was hesitant to issue coin in his own name. He retained in the beginning the usual obverse of Shah Alam-II coin and only on reverse he introduced his coat of arms, two fish facing each other surmounted by a crown and a tiger on either side holding a pennon as a support.

In 1761, Haider Ali, the general of Mysore took up the reins of power of the state in his own hand. He introduced copper coins showing an elephant on the obverse and the date and mint on the reverse. His son Tipu Sultan, issued coins of bewildering varieties. With all these coins, the copper coins depicting the elephant was also current during his time.

After the death of Tipu Sultan Mysore State was restored to Krishnaraja Wodeyar. The early copper coins of Krishnaraja had the lion, the sun, the moon on the obverse and the name of the ruler in Nagari on the reverse. Later on the copper coins retained the elephant on the obverse and added to it the word Sri'or Sri Chamundi.

Thus, animals have been represented on the coins of India from very ancient period. Almost all the reigning dynasties having sovereign authority to issue coins, have taken some animal motifs for their coins. These symbols not only signify their religious inclination but also pronounce their urge for self-expression. Their presence is still very much available in the modern coinage of India, which suggests they can not be eliminated from our day-to-day life. The advance of science and technology will no way be a hindrance to love and sympathy for animals that is deeply ridden in Indian's mind.

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