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Republic India's Numismatic Legacy up for Grabs

By R Vaidyanadhan



The Republic India's numismatic legacy, the first ever set of pattern coins, is up for grabs. The Baldwin's Auction, London, is offering (lot 1609) this along with other Indian coins on September 29.

The mind-boggling fact is that the set of eight pattern coins is estimated GBP 1,00,000-1,50,000 (Rs. 75 lakhs – 1.12 crores).

Artist and chief engraver Patrick Brindley prepared the set in 1949 for an entirely new proposed coinage for the new republic.

The set composed of: **1-Rupee** (man winnowing wheat); **1/2 Rupee** (worker pouring metal in foundry); **1/2-Rupee** (worker pouring metal in foundry with structure behind); **1/4-Rupee** (mine worker holding pick); **2 Annas** (side view of peacock); **2 Annas** (peacock facing straight); **1 Anna** (water buffalo); **1 Pice** (sheaves of wheat).

All the coins show Lion Capital of Ashoka on the obverse with English and Hindi legends. A very significant fact is that only four sets are recorded as having been struck.

No coins were struck for circulation dated 1948 or 1949. However, a distinct new series of designs were, required due to partition and Independence. After partition in July of 1947 and the achievement of Independence by both India as well as the newly-created Pakistan, both countries thought to create new and distinctive coinages.

During 1946 in India rupee coinage in nickel had been introduced, this comprising the 1/2- and 1/4-rupee struck in that year, as well as in 1947 a 1-Rupee coinage, together with additional 1/2- and 1/4-Rupees of a similar design being struck again with the 1947 date.

The initial coinage of approximately 460 million pieces apparently sufficed until 1950 when new designs were introduced. It is not known to the cataloguer whether final dies were actually prepared for these patterns, or whether the master matrices were used to strike the coins.

Engraver Brindley explained to William Barrett in Ottawa, Canada, during the 1970s that for various reasons each of the 1949 patterns was rejected, leading to other designs introduced in the following year.

Though all the 1949 pieces are vastly more appealing than the coins issued in 1950, for one reason or another -- mostly political -- each was rejected.

The Spink Numismatic Circular of 1954 reports that only four sets of these charming patterns were struck. A complete set in a custom case was contained in the Barrett collection during the 1980s. This set included a ticket making reference to the 1954 Spink statement that only four sets had been struck and priced in 1954 at the then substantial value of £100. The occasional single coin has surfaced in past years, suggesting that at least one of the four sets has been broken up.



Coins of the Sikhs: Zarb Sri Amratsar Jiyo

By Gurprit Singh Dora (Gurprit Singh Gujral)

سری امبرت سر جیو

I started collecting coins about 20 years ago. I had never before seen the silver rupees of the Indian sub continent of medieval period till then, and it fascinated me when I first held them in my hand. I started collecting haphazardly and used to buy almost anything that came my way. It was barely a year after I started collecting coins, probably in 1991 or 1992, that I came across the photo copy of the manuscript of "Coins of the Sikhs" by Mr. Hans Herli. For the first time, I came to know about the huge variety of the coins of the Sikhs and I decided to concentrate on the collection and study of the coins of the Sikhs.

I had one "Chācha Choudhary" as my guide. Chācha Choudhary was not his actual name. "Chācha" is "Uncle" in English. It was same like Uncle John or Uncle Tom among the British. His real name was Sat Prakash Choudhary. It was only out of love and respect that everybody addressed him as "Chācha Choudhary" or only "Chācha". An unassuming, habitually beetle chewing, of nearly 70 years of age at that time, he was an iconic figure among numismatist and collectors of old and antique items in Punjab. His name was synonymous with numismatics. Almost everybody in the trade seemed to know him.

He once took me to Nābha¹ to a gold smith. The gold smith showed a silver rupee of Amritsar mint of the year VS 1834 and asked for Rs.450.00 (approximately 10 USD). Common silver rupees of the Sikhs were then available for around Rs.100.00 each. I looked at Chācha enquiringly. He told me to pay the demanded price. Once out of the shop, I asked Chācha why he agreed at more than four times the price of a common coin. He told me, "Can't you see, the name of the mint on the coin is "Amratsar" and not "Amritsar"? Frankly, I could not read the Arabic script then and took his word as Gospel Truth.

Today, in the course of attempting to compile a catalogue of the silver rupees of the Sikhs, based almost entirely on images of the actual coins, I was suddenly reminded of him. I was nearing completion of the chapter on coins of the Misls of Amritsar mint from VS 1832 to VS 1858, and reviewing the images of the coins and corresponding texts. I was suddenly astounded to realize the importance of the words of Chācha Choudhary.

I was surprised to note that on all the early coins of Amritsar, the name of the mint is clearly and unambiguously given as "Sri Amratsar Jiyo" سرت میر او ی ج ر س, and not "Sri Amritsar Jiyo" وی ج ر سی سرت امر, as was assumed till now. For a layman, the difference is indistinguishable, as it was for me when I was first shown the coin. The difference is of a dot placed below "MR" م ر م of "AMRIT" and sometimes the very slightly elongated horizontal line between "Meem" م and "Ray" ر to signify the presence of "Bay" ب, as illustrated below:

"Amrit"	"Ambrat"
امرت	امبرت

As evident from the above illustration, the marked difference between "Amrit" and "Ambrat" in Urdu script is presence of the dot below in the "Ambrat".

It took me some time to reconcile to the fact. It happens when you want to be certain before trying to break a long accepted convention. It is really surprising that even the most astute numismatists failed to realize the significance of the dot below the "Meem" of "Amrit" امرت that represents the "Bay", to sound

"B" and converts "Amrit" to "Ambrat" ت میر ا, on all early coins of this mint. The dot is consistently present on all coins of the mint up to the year VS 1844 except for the year VS 1841, in which the mint name temporarily appears to have changed to "Sarāye Amritsar Jiyo" وی ج ر تس سر ای امر. The dot signifying the "Bay" ب completely disappears on the coins of this mint after the year VS 1844, and was replaced by a cluster of dots or other ornamental features.

To support my view, I am first posting below multiple images of actual coins of VS 1832 to early VS 1844, except those of VS 1841:

VS 1832 to VS 1840

Year of Issue VS/AD	Image of the reverse of the coin	Year of Issue	Image of the reverse of the coin
1832/ 1775	The dot and the bond for "Ray" ب to form Amratsar 	1832/ 1775	The dot indicating the mint name to be Amratsar 
1832/ 1775	The dot for "Amratsar" 	1833/ 1776	The dot for "Amratsar" 
1833/ 1776	The dot for "Amratsar" 	1833/ 1776	The dot for "Amratsar" 
1834/ 1777	The dot for "Amratsar" 	1834/ 1777	The dot for "Amratsar" 

1834/ 1777		1835/ 1778	The dot indicating the mint to be "Amratsar" 
1835/ 1778	The dot indicating the mint to be "Amratsar" 	1835/ 1778	The dot indicating the mint to be "Amratsar" 

1836/ 1779	The dot indicating the mint to be "Ambratsar"	1836/ 1779	The dot indicating the mint to be "Ambratsar"
1836/ 1779	The dot indicating the mint to be "Ambratsar"	1837/ 1780	The dot indicating the mint to be "Ambratsar"
1837/ 1780	The dot indicating "Ambratsar"	1837/ 1780	The dot indicating "Ambratsar"
1838/ 1781	The dot indicating the mint to be "Ambratsar"	1838/ 1781	The dot indicating the mint to be "Ambratsar"
1838/ 1781	The dot for "Ambratsar"	1838/ 1781	The dot for "Ambratsar"
1839/ 1782	The dot for "Ambratsar"	1839/ 1782	The dot for "Ambratsar"
1839/ 1782	The dot for "Ambratsar"	1840/ 1783	The dot for "Ambratsar"
1840/ 1783	The dot for "Ambratsar"	1840/ 1783	The dot for "Ambratsar"

VS 1842 to VS 1844

1842/ 1785		1842/ 1785	
1842/ 1785		1843/ 1786	
1843/ 1786		1843/ 1786	
1844/ 1787		1844/ 1787	
1844/ 1787		1844/ 1787	

In the later part of the year VS 1844, the silver rupees of Amritsar mint appear to have been given a final shape. Except for the addition of the symbol of a leaf on the reverse at some point of time in the year VS 1845, there was no distinctive change in the type, design, calligraphy and legend etc., both on the obverse and the reverse, of the rupees of the subsequent years. Such rupees of VS 1844 I have termed as "Transitional" rupees. The dot was entirely done away with from these rupees of this year and that of the subsequent years. The mint name, now onwards, continued to remain "Amritsar" till the end of the Sikh empire. The single distinctive dot was replaced by cluster of dots or other ornamental features. The images of the rupees of the subsequent years, i.e. VS 1844 (Transitional) and onwards are self-explanatory. Without being selective, I am providing the images of the coins from VS 1844 (Transitional) to VS 1857.

VS 1844 (Transitional) onwards

As mentioned above, the name of the mint distinctly changed in the year VS 1841. The "I" ی was replaced by the "Yay" ے, and the word "Sri" سرس changed to "Sarāye" سرسے. The exact redemption of the changed word could be a debatable issue, that the change has been there is undisputable. The absence of the "dot" only on the coins of this year, between VS 1832 to VS 1844, adds to the conviction that the name of the mint was definitely changed in this year. In view of this fact, the coins of the year VS 1841 have not been included here.

Below are images of VS 1842 to VS 1844 to demonstrate that the name of the mint continued to remain "Ambratsar" till early VS 1844. The dots are not indicated by the arrows in the following images up to the year VS 1844. It is expected that the reader can now make out, on his/her own, the presence of the dot on these coins.

1844/ 1787 (Transitional)	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots	1845/ 1788	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots
1845/ 1788	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots	1845/ 1788	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots

1846/ 1789	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots 	1846/ 1789	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots 
1847/ 1790	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots 	1847/ 1790	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots 
1848/ 1791	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots 	1848/ 1791	The cluster of dots is largely off-flan 
1849/ 1792	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots 	1849/ 1792	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots 
1850/ 1793	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots 	1850/ 1793	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots 
1851/ 1794	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots 	1851/ 1794	The dot replaced by ornamental cluster of dots 

In the images below, it is left to the readers to see that the single dot representing the "Bay" of "Ambrat" has been replaced by a cluster of dots or some other ornamental feature, or sometimes is completely missing.

1852/ 1795		1853/ 1796	
1853/ 1796		1853/ 1796	
1854/ 1797		1854/ 1797	
1855/ 1798		1855/ 1798	

1856/ 1799		1856/ 1799	
1857/ 1800		1857/ 1800	

I am sure so many images should be enough to satisfy even the extreme skeptic.

To further the argument why there is possibility for the mint name to be "Amratsar", it is interesting to note that the name of the mint on all copper coins of Amratsar mint with the Gurmukhi (Punjabi) legend, without exception, has clearly been written as "Amratsar". There is not a single copper coin of the Sikhs from Amratsar mint with the name of the mint as "Amratsar".

"Amratsar" in Gurmukhi (Punjabi) is written as:

ਅਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ
↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
A MRI T SA R

"Ambaratsar" in Gurmukhi (Punjabi) is written as:

ਅੰਬਰਤਸਰ
↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
AM BARA T SA R

The word "Zarb", meaning mint, in Gurmukhi (Punjabi) is written thus:

ਜ਼ਰਬ
↓ ↓ ↓
Z(a) R B

The images of copper coins of Amratsar mint illustrated below are self-explanatory (The mint is on the leaf side, and the dash signifies the change of line):



The mint is clearly "Zarb - Sree Am{Leaf symbol}ba(ra) - tsar Jee".



The mint is clearly
“(Za)rb - (Sree) Am{Leaf symbol}bara - tsar Jee”.



Mint name "Zarb Sr(ee) Amb {leaf symbol}ratsa - r Jee"



The mint is "Zarb - Sri {leaf symbol}Am(ba) - ratsar J(ee)".



Mint name "Zarb Sr(ee) - Amb {leaf symbol}ratsa - r Jee"



It is clear from the above images that the mint name was always written as "Amratsar" on all copper coins of "Amritsar" mint. In view of this, the fact that during the initial coinage from "Amritsar" mint, the name of the mint was written as "Amratsar" on all silver rupees should not come as a surprise.

¹ Nābha was one of the Cis Sutlej states

Mint name "(Z)arb Sree - Amb{leaf symbol}rat Sa - (r) Jee"

- - - * * * * - - -

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Re-Certificate	X	=	
Total Fee Rs.			

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10+ Items	Rs. 35/- per Item	X Items =	
Total Fee & Shipping Calculation			
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Total Fee Rs.			+
Total Rs. Payable			

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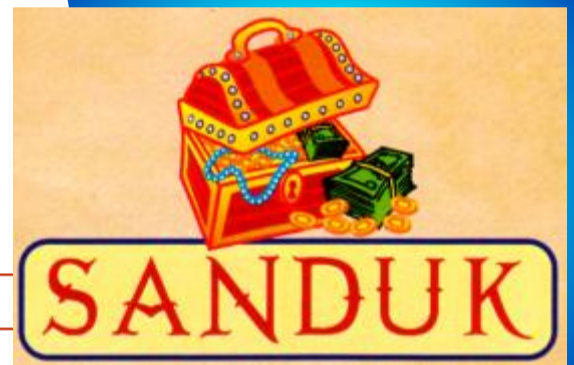
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October	14-16	Chennai	National Numismatic Exhibition 2011	Chennai Numismatic Society with Numismatic Promotion Service of India at Arignar Anna Arangam Hall, 14/29 Dr. Guruswamy Road, Next to Maharishi Vidya Mandir School, Chetpet (09840424344, 09710040000)
November	3-6	New Delhi	Stamps of India National Exhibition	sine@stampsindia.com; 098111 60884
November	12-14	Indore	Coin & Philatelic Fair 2011	Indore Coin Society (Girish Sharma 099770 50987)
December	3-5	Mumbai	3rd Museum Coin Fair 2011	Dinesh Mody Numismatic Museum, University Kalina Campus, Santacruz (E), Mumbai
December	9-11	Pune	Coinex-Pune 2011	Sankalp Hall (Basti Solanki 98230 88865)
December	23-25	Kolkata	Mudra Utsav 2011	Numismatic Society of Calcutta at Haldiram Banquet Hall, Ballygunge (secretarynsckolkata@yahoo.com)

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