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News: Coinage with images of gods and goddesses dates back to Kushans

History of Coinage in India

Punch Marked Coins

- The **first documented coinage is deemed to start with 'Punch Marked' coins issued between the 7th–6th century BC and 1st century AD.**
- These coins are called **'punch-marked' coins because of their manufacturing technique.**
- Mostly **made of silver**, these bear symbols, each of which was punched on the coin with a separate punch.

They are broadly classified into two periods;

- The **first period is attributed to the Janapadas** or small local states.
- The **second period is attributed to the Imperial Mauryan** period.
- The motifs found on these coins were mostly drawn from nature like the sun, various animal motifs, trees, hills etc.

Dynastic Coins

- The earliest of the dynastic coins relate to those of the Indo-Greeks, the Saka-Pahlavas and the Kushans.
- These coins are generally placed between the 2nd century BC and 2nd century AD.

Indo Greeks

- Hellenistic traditions characterize the silver coins of the Indo-Greeks, with Greek gods and goddesses figuring prominently, apart from the portraits of the issuers.

Sakas

- The Saka coinage of the Western Kshatrapas is perhaps the earliest dated coins, the dates being given in the Saka era which commences in AD 78.
- The Saka era represents the official calendar of the Indian Republic.

Kushans

- Kushans, who hailed from the Central Asian region depicted Oesho (Shiva), moon deity Miro and Buddha in their coinage.
- Earliest Kushan coinage is generally attributed to Vima Kadphises.

- The Kushan coins generally depicted iconographic forms drawn from Greek, Mesopotamian, Zoroastrian and Indian mythology.
- Siva, Buddha and Kartikeya were the major Indian deities portrayed.

Satavahana

- The dates of their coming into power are contentious and are variously put from 270 BC to 30 BC.
- Their coins were predominantly of copper and lead; however, silver issues are also known.
- These coins carried the motifs of fauna like elephants, lions, bulls, horses, etc. often juxtaposed against motifs from nature like hills, tree, etc.
- The silver coins of the Satavahanas carried portraits and bilingual legends, which were inspired by the Kshatrapa types.

Western Kshatrapa

- The legends on the coins were generally in Greek and Brahmi, Kharoshti too was used.
- The Western Kshatrapa coins are reckoned to be the earliest coins bearing dates.
- The common copper coins are the 'bull and hill' and the 'elephant and hill' types.

Gupta

- Gupta coinage (4th–6th centuries AD) followed the tradition of the Kushans, depicting the king on the obverse and a deity on the reverse; the deities were Indian and the legends were in Brahmi.
- The earliest Gupta coins are attributed to Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta and their coins often commemorate dynastic succession as well as significant socio-political events, like marriage alliances, the horse sacrifice, or for those matter artistic and personal accomplishments of royal members (Lyrist, Archer, Lion-slayer etc.).
- South Indian Coins were also prominent minted by Cheras, Cholas, Pallavas and Pandyas.

British Coins

- The British East India Co. at Madras Presidency minted coins labelled as the Three Swamy Pagoda, which depicts Lord Balaji flanked by Sridevi and Bhudevi on either side.

Other Coins

- Ancient India had considerable trade links with the Middle East, Europe (Greece and Rome) as well as China. This trade was carried out over land partly

along what came to be alluded to as the silk route and partly through maritime trade.

- In South India, having na thriving maritime trade, Roman coins even circulated in their original form, albeit slashed at times as a gesture disclaiming intrusions of foreign sovereignty.