

Cultural importance of the Vijaya Nagara Coins

***Dr.P. Bhaskara Rao**

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Introduction

This work elaborates study of VijayaNagara coins and its cultural importance. Coins played a vital role in Indian history through the ages. From the beginning of the human society man had trying to live a better life. The human life has transformed through various stages i.e. hunting gathering to globalization of the world in present day. The economy, trade and commerce had a crucial role to change the structure and thoughts of human society. In the part of developments man was started barter system in ancient period to control over the trade and commerce as well as monetary system continuing till today in terms of rupee coins and currency which were issuing by Government of India. Coins played an important role not only in economy and trade but also in expression of cultural history, political and social life of the people. The coins were started to survive from 7th century B.C. onwards. Most of the Kings gave importance to coins to focus the property and prestige of their dynasty and it will reflect the culture, polity, economy, trade, commerce and position of particular dynasty. The present study focuses the coinage and currency system during VijayaNagara period. The VijayaNagara dynasty was founded in 1336 A.D. to protect the Indian culture. Though many dynasties were ruled in South India, there was vacuum, which was filled by the Vijaya Nagara after Kakatiyas, and the Reddi Kingdoms. There was a disturbance and difficulties in Andradesa during 13th Century A.D. after the downfall of powerful kingdoms the local chiefs and feudatories were tried to be independent but it was spoiled by the Muslim invasions. By this time the strong pillars of Vijaya Nagara founded to foil the enemy's strategy and made the unity among the local people. The political activities of VijayaNagara minted on their coins to prevent the enemies into its territory by showing the strength of Army of Vijaya Nagara. They also minted the coins to focus the culture of VijayaNagara by portrait the deities and Kings and their names and period. The title itself gives us the theme of the study and it was focused on above mentioned points which were explained. The entire Paper focuses with the aim of cultural importance of VijayaNagara period which will be understand through the primary and the secondary sources.

Types of Vijayanagara Coins:

*Department of History Archaeology, Central University of Karnataka, Kalburgi. Email: bhaskarparisapogu@gmail.com

It is very interesting to note that the rulers of Vijaya Nagara was founded the dynasty to spread the Indian culture and protect its by unity among the people of the Indigenous, the fourth dynasties have played a vital role to serve the society in a better way. “The first dynasty was the Sangamma dynasty under which the empire was started and under which they struggled to fame. The second the Saluva dynasty was merely a transitory dynasty for two decades, where new and fresh blood was introduced in to the administration of the empire. The third dynasty was the Taluva dynasty, under which Vijaya Nagara rose to the biggest of its fame and glory, and under the last or the Aravidu Dynasty, the empire after the great battle Tallikota in 1565 A.D, held its own, till it came to a close finally in the 17th century A.D(Ramesan.N, 1979, P.35)”¹. Coins played a vital role in human life since ancient period. of course, there was barter system which exchanging goods to buy the products or commodities, and it were in types of kind, animals and different production of goods. The coins introduced in 7th century B C by Lydians and followed by China and India, brought the changes in monetary system of human history. What is coin? “The coin which small stamped metal discs of standard sizes used as tokens of money in commercial transactions. (Mitchell James, 1978.P.176)”².

The Use of cost-metal pieces as medium of exchange is very ancient and probably developed out of the use in commerce of ordinary ingots of bronze and other metals that possessed and intrinsic value. Until the development of bills of exchange in medieval Europe and paper currency in medieval china, metal coins were the only such medium. Despite their diminished use in most commercial transactions, coins are still indispensable to civilized economics. In fact, their importance is growing due to the wide spread use of coins-operated machines. The making coins called as coinage and the study of coins called as numismatics.

“The coinage of the Vijaya Nagara Empire was based on ‘hun’ or ‘pagoda’ a gold coin. This continued to be coined by the principalities of southern India and the Qutubshahi kingdom of Golconda even after the designation of the Vijaya Nagara Empire (Chanderi Japan Ray & Habib Irfan, 1984, P.360)”³.

“In South India tree seed called Kalanju and Manjadi known in Telugu as Guruginga was the basis of the metric system of coins originally as time went on, metallic pieces cut to the weight of these seeds were used. In Maharashtra and Konkan the heavy Gadhyana weighed 72 grains. In Tamilnadu, the Kalanju of 20 Manjadi was equal in theory to the same weight. Between these two areas, the light Gadhyana which was used in Andhra and Karnataka areas of the same weight as the coin of the name i.e. 50 to 52 grains. These coins were bearing the same name as the weight as for example the Gadhyam, the Dharana etc. according to Abdur Razack who was in Vijaya Nagara in the period of Devaraya II issued the currency with the small denominations follows as:

S. No	Particulars	Illustration
I	Gold	Varaha, Pratapa = ½ Varaha

		Fanam = 1/10 of Pratapa i.e. 1/20 of Varaha
II	Silver	Tara = 1/6 of Fanam or 1/20 of Varaha
III	Copper	1/3 of Tara i.e. 1/360 of a Varaha (Ramesan.N, 1927, PP.38-39)" 4.

The major denomination of Coins classified according to their metals i.e. Gold, Silver and Copper, the currency of Vijaya Nagara appeared to be different denominations based on the study of inscriptional and literary sources. The following symbols or types predominantly by the rulers of Vijaya Nagara to daily transaction of money as well as to show the sovereignty of the kingdom, political and cultural importance as well as to prosper the economy with trade and commerce etc.

S. No	Particulars	Illustration
I	Sangama Dynasty	(a) Hanuman and Garuda (b) Vrishabha (Bull) with sword (c) Elephant, Elephant & king (d) Umamaheswara, Lakshminarayana, Saraswathi and Brahma, and Lakshminarasimha.
II	Saluva Dynasty	No coins have been found.
III	Tuluva Dynasty	(a) Lion (b) Venkateswara (c) Umamaheswara (d) Vrishibha (Bull) (e) Garuda (f) Balakrishna (g) Lakshminarayana (h) Gandaberunda
IV	Aravaidu Dynasty	a) Srirama (b) Garuda (c) Sanka and chakra (d) The Vraha (e) Elephant (f) Bull in the coconut form (g) Hanuman (h) Venkatesha wils or without consorts (i) Venkatesa (Gandikota)

It is very interesting to note that we've seen this coins of types or symbols of all three dynasty of Vijaya Nagara, but we could not find any coins of this second dynasty i.e. Saluva dynasty of Vijaya Nagara because their rule was short period 1486-1505 A.D and the dynast was in facing with reverts and war of

succession which leads to the bad circumstances of the dynasty and their dynasty was ended with miserable situations.

Cultural Importance of Vijayanagara Coins:

Definition of Culture: Culture means way of life especially the general customs and believes as a particular group of people at a particular time. Human culture has been changed time to time and region to region. Anthropologists and other social scientists define human culture as learned behavior acquired by individuals as members as social group. The concept of culture was first explicitly defined in 1874 by the British anthropologist Edward B. Taylor “He used the term refer to that complex whole which includes knowledge belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Since, other anthropologists have admired numerous refinements and variations on this definition, but all have agreed that culture is learned behaviourally contrast to genetically endowed behaviour. The emergence of language was giant slip that made possible the remarkable complexity of human culture. Through language, human is able to use symbols, that is they are able to bestow and communicate meaning through sounds and the arrangements of sound in to words and sentences. Human cultures vary widely over the eargs from the primitive to the present civilized society. In spite of the cultural diversity around the world, in all societies’ certainly universal culture reflect basic responses to the need of human beings as social animals i.e. hunting, gathering, agriculture and industrialized labour etc. (Vexicon Universal Encyclopaedia, 1984, PP.384-385)”⁵. Vijaya Nagara rulers were because prominent in Indian History because of their cultural policy which unifying the people in regions of south. We have been discussed in the previous chapters about the establishment of the Vijaya Nagara Kingdom and they circumstance in region as the south which was attacked by the Muslim invaders of North India. We know that the foundation of the pillar of Vijaya Nagara is to defend its indigenou culture from the foreigners who was tried to loot the vast resources of India and also, they moved towards to South India especially in Andhradesa, Tamilnadu, Kerala and Karnataka regions. Culture have been referring in the customs of civilization which reflects the life of the people in various aspects like political, economic, social religious ideas as well as art and architecture. Here we will look in to the religious and political ideas of Vijaya Nagara, which were played a predominant role in Indian Society, to set up a greater dynasty in south India and it was proved by the religious and other images of symbols on the coins of Vijaya Nagara. The Vijaya Nagara Empire was established on the pillars of culture which was based on identity and power. Many historians and researchers have been argued that Vijaya Nagara founded to protect the Hindu culture. But here understand by this research, that the Vijaya Nagara was founded the protection of Indigenou culture but not religious culture. Though many coins of Vijaya Nagara expressed the identity through the images of Hindu gods, we came to know that the inner meaning of the images to promote the Justification of the power which always fought between evil and good things in the society. Coins of Vijaya Nagara depicted the images of Hindu gods as representation of the cultural identity of India through its nature and

styles. We have known through the study of history about the philosophers and different sects which were spread the ideas on different dynasties in India was helped to found the powerful dynasties to overthrow the foreign invasions and built-up the local empires to protect its original culture and identity. If we analysed the coins of Vijaya Nagara, the intension of the rulers really reflected in the images of coins which protected the cultural identity of Vijaya Nagara dynasty. The rulers of Vijaya Nagara have given importance to mint the religious symbols on their coins because they were influenced by the teachings of Sankaracharya, Ramanuja and the Vidyaranya, the Saivite and the Vaishnavite gurus. The rulers thought that though the symbols of gods and their vehicles could be possible to unification of the people and to protect the culture. Henceforth, the rulers might have been brought the symbols of religious gods, as also they personally believed the gods to be protectors of the dynasty from the neighbouring empires.

The Saiva Images of Coins and their Influence of Vijaya Nagara Culture:

As we know the rulers of Vijaya Nagara are predominantly Vaishnavite, though the first dynasty the Sangama, was Saivite in its faiths, which is also patronised Vaishnavism. The Tuluva and Aravidu was predominantly Vaishnavites but they have given priority to Saivite also the Saivite symbols of Sangama dynasty are Uma Maheshwara, issued by Harihara I, and Devaraya I, Elephant symbols of Saivite in Sangama dynasty issued by Ramachandra Devaraya II, and Mallikarjuna. Vrushabha the bull symbol of Sangama dynasty issued by Devaraya II, are prominent symbol of Saivism in Sangama dynasty of Vijaya Nagara. The Tuluva dynasty of Vijaya Nagara also patronised the Saivism through its symbols which minted on the coins. A major Saivite symbols in Tuluva dynasty are Siva Parvati and Vrishidha, coins of Srikrishnadevaraya, the Aravidu family also patronised the Saivism. In the part of patronization Tirumalaraya I, issued Vrishabha and elephant symbols and Sriranga II, also issued the Vrishabha type of coins. The Umamaheshwara coins of Harihara II, and Devaraya I, the lord Siva appears as Umamaheshwara seated with his consort. His hand in the Abhaya mudra or posture of production, and holds in his two other hands Trisula and a drum. The fourth hand holds the Uma in an embrace. The reverse of the coin the legend minted with Nagari as Sri Pratapa Harihara. This image represents the oneness of the god and the goddess which unity is symbolized in the concept of Arthanariswara when lord has given half of his body for his consort (Umamaheshwara coins of Harihara II, Devaraya II). "Saivism in its present form is a bundle of cults. In vedas, Siva is praised for wealth strength, welfare, and protection of cattle, sons, and progeny. There are verses in which Rudra (Siva) is described as ferocious deity implored by the worshipper not to injure men and cattle, not to cause havoc and diseases among children, cattle and horses. When Rudra ceases to be angry and became gracious, he is called Siva. From Satavahana period both the rulers and the ruled were adherents of Saivism. An inscription from Sthanakunduru in Shimoga district in Mysore says that the linga in the temple was worshipped by Satavahana. The earliest Saiva structure, and form of Siva is found at Gudimallam of Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. The Bull type of coins and coins having Skanda image were issued by Satavahana monarchs is clear evidence of their religious preference (Tamma Reddy.K.

1994, PP. 180 - 181)"6. The Saivism also flourished in Krishna Devaraya period. He also issued the Umamaheshwara or Sivaparvati coins. The obverse of coins the Siva seated with Parvati on his left thigh both wearing Kiritas (crowns), right hand with trishula and left hand holds his consort in an embrace. The reverse of the coin in Nagari Srikrishnaraya and the Umamaheshwara specious represents the oneness of god by unifying his consort parvati as depicted in their coins (Umamaheshwara coin of Krishnadevaraya). The Elephant type coins represent the symbol of Ganesha in VijayaNagara. Elephant represents the Ganesha the son of Siva and Parvathi. The Elephant represents the power. The strength of the empire which proclaims the strongness of culture in Vijaya Nagara. The Elephant symbols have been introduced by Devaraya II of Sangama who adopted these symbols from the Gangas. Gajapathi type coins have minted by Devaraya II, Mallikarjuna, and Tirumalaraya I of Aravidu. "Devaraya II was introduced Elephant symbols on the coins of Vijaya Nagara. This is explained by his being a dept in elephant hunting and his assuming the Biruda (title) Gajabentakara. His coins especially the copper issues bear a representation of the scene of fight between the king and wild Tusker elephant which was ultimately tamed down by the powerful strokes of the spear with which the king was armed (Aiyangar Krishna. S, 2000, P.109)"7. Another important symbol was the Vrishabha or the Bull. The Vrishabha or the Bull is vehicle of Siva, in front of every Siva temple there should be q statue of the Bull, the authenticity of vehicle of Siva. These Vrishabha symbol represents believeness or trustworthy of the servant to his owner, as relation between king and the people. If we observe the administration of Vijaya Nagara, we will understand the friendly relations of king and his people in Vijaya Nagara dynasty. These coins issued by Bukka II, Devaraya I, of Sangama, Krishnadevaraya of Tuluva, Tirumala Raya and Sri Ranga of Aravidu dynasty. These are the major symbols of Saivism which represents the cultural identity and unity of Vijaya Nagara dynasty.

The Vaishnva Images and Impact of Coins on Vijaya Nagara Culture:

The Vaishnava faith was influenced the rulers of Vijaya Nagara to mint different Vaishnava images on their coins. many kings of Vijayanagra was attracted to Vaishnavism and followed its principle because the chief literature comprised two epics The Ramayana tell the story of an Ideal king subsequently transformed into a incarnation of Vishnu, While the Mahabharatha presents Krishna another incarnation of him. The teachings of Madhava in the court of Harihara-II focused to pay the taxes in money instead of in kind. From the "Prasara Madhaviya" which was commentary or "Prasara Smirti" was proved that the administrative reforms of Vijaya Nagara kings which leads to development minting and issue of the coins. As part of taxation and administrative policies the Vijaya Nagara rulers issued coins which also reflect the culture and identity of the dynasty. The major symbols or images that were minted by the rulers of Vijaya Nagara are largely in Vaishnava symbols. "Vaishnavism in early period of south Indian culture was occupied second place. It was the religion of the eastern Gangas rulers and therefore was influential in north coastal Andhra region. The next position among the Hindu sects was occupied by the old Vedic religion. They have

practiced different forms of the cults of minor deities and popular beliefs in the post kaktiya period where saivism and Vaishnavism underwent major fluctuations in their fortunes. saivism though didn't experience any significant doctrinal changes, maintained its influential edge overall the other sects of Hindu religion till the middle of 15th century AD, subsequently, it declined losing its first place of importance. Vaishnavism which occupied the second influential position at the beginning and finally came to occupy the first place among the hindu sects. The advent of a few new vaishnavite sub sects like vallabhas, chaitanyas, vittalas, e.t.c., into the region and further sub division of some of its subsects like sriVaishnavism on doctrinal matters, strengthened the position of Vaishnavism. The first part of the 16th century A.D., when the major part of Andhradesa was under the Vijaya Nagara rule, can be regarded as the golden age of Vaishnavism in the Telugu country (Soma Reddy.R, 1984, P.5)"11. "Vaishanava narrative carvings form a unique and important group within Vijaya Nagara sculpture. The Ramyana Narratives in particular are of immense interest. The unique presence of icons of Anjaneya (Hanuman) is a reminder of the Ramayana association with the site of Hampi the Ramayana incidents connected with the Vijaya Nagara area centre on Ramas meeting with the hanuman and his alliance with Sugriava. Bhagavatha Purana is the only Purana whose myths are found in the Vijaya Nagara image so its popularity arose from the wide following Krishna enjoyed on the city there are numerous beliefs of Krishna in Vijaya Nagara. The story of Vishnu as varadharaja rescuing Gajendra from the crocodile is one of the major images of the Vijaya Nagara art. In Saiva images the Linga images around the Hampi are numerous and there are famous forms of seating and standing forms of Siva and Siva Parvathi images are pre dominated Vijayangara temples. (Dalla Piccola. L. Anna. 1998, PP. 21 -23)"8. The important Vaishnava images of Vijaya Nagara coins are: Garuda symbol which was issued by Harihara-I of Sangama, Krishnadevaraya and Sadasivaraya of Tuluva and Ttirumalaraya-I of Aravidu family of Vijaya Nagara dynasty. The image of Garuda which appears sometimes without wings and sometimes shown in a leaving posture facing the right in Harihara-I coins the Garuda which posturing right face and the legend in Nagari Sri Vira Harihara was minted. The Garuda image represents the royalty as lord's vehicle which is symbolic to expand the cultural values of Andhradesa. The other important image is Laxminarayna which was issued by Harihara-II, Devaraya I of Sangama, Sadasivaraya of Tuluva and Tirumalaraya-I of Aravidu family of Vijaya Nagara this is an important Vaishnava symbol which expressing the peace and prosperity to the devotees of the dynasty including the rulers and the people. Vishnu and Laxmi are seated together where the lord holds the Sudarshana Chakra with three conventional flames and one left hand holds the Sanka the other left arm embraces Lakshmi and the other right arm is in then Abhaya Mudra which symbolizing to protection and prosperity of the dynasty. Many rulers in faith the lord will give protection and prosperity to rule their people in the better was and the images shows the strengthening of power identity of this dynasty. Another important image of Vaishnava symbol was Venkateswara, the Venkateswara was the chief deity of Vijaya Nagara and this type of coins numerously issued by the vijayangara rulers the venkateshwara image was

issued by Krishnadevaraya of Tuluva, Sri Ranga –I, Venkatapati Devaraya -II, Sri Rangaraya-II of Aravidu family of Vijaya Nagara on the coins the image of Venkateswara standing to front with Kirita and upper and lower ornaments. The back-right hand has the Chakra and left has the Sanka. The front right hand holds Abhayamudra, while left hand is in points of his feet which gives refuge for devotees. The Arch have lion which supported by two Makaras, the Arch which had two ornamental shape one is star shaped the lower parts of which covered by planks, the deity stands on ground supported by a lotus. The image was showing the way of rituals and peace to the devotees. The rituals and offerings in the temple were continuing till present day, the Vijaya Nagara kings constructed the Mantapas in the campus of which explain the Vaishnavism in the dynasty of Vijaya Nagara, The Varaha, the Sanka chakra symbols also predominantly propagated the Vaishnavism in Vijaynagara.

Cultural Identity of Vijayanagara Coins:

The foundation and existence of vijaynagara dynasty was laid on the pillars of its cultural identity. Many coins of Vijaya Nagara have been found in religious centres with the religious images. The cultural identity of Vijaya nagara have been focused in the works of their rulers by reviving the Vedas and Vedic culture and the temples and Mathas, the coins which were reflected in major centres of Vijaya Nagara on their images. The Vijaya Nagara rulers to revive Vedic culture through the large grants made by them to Sringeri and for well-known commentaries, namely Vedadasya of Saynacharya, who was closely linked with the Sringeri Matha headed by his brother Vidhyaranya this Mathas became a new orthodox centre and a new religious network covering the whole India. The Vedic norms have also have been constantly emphasized in the inscriptional claims depicting the king as the protector of the Vedas and twice born. The inscription of references also gives a new pilgrimages network that covered the whole India presumably with Virupaksha of Hampi as its centre. In process of sacred centres, Tirupathi, Kanchipuram and Srirangam became a vital pilgrim' centres where the question of dominance was resolved by the reaffirmation of the deity's supremacy as evidenced by the Stalapuranas and the coins. The kings are seen undertaking pilgrimages to such centres where the new erected thousand pillared hall, Portrait and sculptures of the kings. "In worshipful attitudes emphasized the ruler's devotion and interest in protecting the sacred character of the centre through the large-scale donations (Champakalakshmi.R, 2011, PP.637-638)"⁹. Thus, the rulers predominantly prior to the major centres to protect the culture and its identity, The Vijaynagara rulers have given importance to the religious images which was struck on the coins because to show the cultural identity through spreading the coins as medium of exchange which also expressed the Identity of culture in Vijaynagara dynasty to the outside the world. Thus, we can say coins played an important role to promote cultural identity as medium of exchange from Vijaya Nagara dynasty to the other dynasties of India and world.

Conclusion:

Though the foundations of Vijaya Nagara have lay down to protection of regional culture and religious nature of South India. It is approached secular policies towards other beliefs. The rulers of Vijaya Nagara have maintained good relations with the Portuguese and some of the Muhammadians. It is very interesting to note that the Vijaya Nagara rulers recruited the Muslims into their army Devaraya II recruited Muhammadin archers and gave them liberal concession in the matter of religion, political necessity was the prime consideration not the religious faith. Bukka – I, declares “As long as the sun and moon endure the Vaihnava creed will continue to protect the Jaina Darsna. The vaishnava and Jainas are one. The Vijaya Nagara rulers were more than tolerant towards the Portuguese who belonged to Christian religion Depending on the Portuguese merchants for horses they patronized their religion. Ramayana allowed practicing Christian religion where he permitted to construct at Santhome by Jesuit fathers (Satyanarayana 1982: P.378 – 380)”¹⁰. It shows the religious tolerance of the Vijaya Nagara rulers which leads to integrity and secular identity of Vijaya Nagara as part of circulation of coins. They also have given permission to the foreign and private traders to mint their own coins in the dynasty. “The Portuguese traders in India issued as early as 1510 AD their Gold ‘Cruzodo’ of the same size, value and weight as the Varahas so that their money would be acceptable to lead traders. They also introduced gold coins called pagodas which were minted Porto novo where they had trade settlements. The Dutch United East India Company issued the Tegnapatam Gold pagodas with the image of Vishnu on the obverse. They also issued Porto Novo type pagodas which showed Laxmi on them. The Danish East India Company issued their ‘C7’ Pagodas with the figure of an Indian Idol on the reverse. The East India Company acquired Madras in 1639-40 Ad from the Raja of Chandragiri (Vankata III) have permitted to mint coins with the images of Vishnu, Laxmi and also issued star pagodas and three Swamy pagodas (Prasanna rao Bandela, 2003, P.76)”¹¹. The religious tolerance of Vijaya Nagara rulers have been spread over our culture from India to abroad. Many companies the Portuguese, The Dutch and the East India Company adopted the religious symbols of Hindu gods to mint on their coins. It shows the Integrity of the Vijaya Nagara symbols and secular state in nature to develop the bilateral relations between India and abroad which practiced those days and also have role model to present day. Thus, we can say, the coins of Vijaya Nagara was promoted political sovereignty and supremacy of the state and cultural Identity, unity and Integrity of the dynasty which was alive till today though its celebrating 500 years of Glory past of unforgotten empire the great dynasty of Vijaya Nagara.

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