



NAMASTE!

(Nah-mahs-teh) In a number of India's many languages (including Hindi), the word for hello greetings, good-bye, etc. Derivatives of this word include namaskar, namaskara & namaskaram.

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MONEY IN INDIA

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Money! It is neither good nor evil, because it is an inanimate object. It has no life in itself—but can provide life by allowing us to buy food and water, pay for medical help that may save our lives, put gasoline in our cars to allow us to go where we need to go (including work), etc. Money is not the root of all evil, contrary to what some people say. That is a misquote of Scripture! The Bible says that it is the “love of money” that is the root of all evil (I Timothy 6:10).



Mahatma Gandhi is pictured on the front of most currency notes. The symbol of India, the 4-headed lion “sarnath lion” is on every piece of coin and currency.

Having said all that, I confess that I love old coins. They don't have to be valuable—just historic. When you hold a coin in your hand, you really are holding history, and this lends itself to curiosity about what was going on in that country during that period of time. It also makes me wonder why they used the kind of metal that they did. If a coin has the image of one of its national leaders or heroes, again that leads to curiosity. Why that man (or woman)? What did they do to inspire such an honor of being placed on that coin?

I also collect some old currency notes. Again, they may not be worth much in terms of face value—it is the history of it and the “whys” and “hows” that are interesting to me. I would like to spend a little space here to tell you about the money of India and a little about why it is as it is today—or was under the British.

Beginning in 1600, the British were in India. They came to set up “factories” (trading warehouses). The “why” of that is because all of Europe had gotten a taste of two things that changed the face of that continent and its economy. What were those two items? Spices and silk. Let's face it: once you eat food with spices that add to its flavor (whether or not those spices are “spicy” as in hot), you never go back to bland.

And silk swept across Europe as the finest thing anyone could wear. Some local economies were literally ruined because of an imbalance in trade. Everyone had to have their silk! Nothing else mattered! Since India was loaded with both commodities, and the word got out about that, the European “invasion” began. So the Portuguese came to the west coast of India in the 1490’s. Then came the Dutch, the Norwegians, the French (especially on the east coast), and on and on. A number of these minted their own coins for the land possessions they staked out for their respective nations. And then the British came to India.

The English monarchy chartered the East India Company to do its trade, rather than to do so directly with the crown. As time went by, the British extended their territory (still “ruled” by the East India Company) until 1857. After the Sepoy Rebellion (what Indians call the “First War of Independence”), the British crown decided enough was enough, and the greater part of India was placed under the direct control of the United Kingdom. The King of England thus was the Emperor of India, and the queen was the Empress. Queen Victoria came to the throne at the age of 18 and ruled for 63 years and 7 months! She took the additional title of Empress of India in 1876.

It was during this time (under the British and East India Company) that money in India became very interesting. This was a fusion of two cultures, and even after independence from the British, Indian money continued to follow the British pattern. This was true for currency notes as well as coins. In the early days of India, as a free

country, currency notes were much larger than the narrower bills used today. In fact many countries formerly used currency notes that were very large, and almost square—the larger the denomination, the larger the bill. Today, while there is a small difference in the width of different currency notes in India, the larger the denomination, the longer the note!

This could be a VERY long dissertation, because of the subject (and my interest). But I want to tell you some of the most interesting things about coins in India during the British Raj (rule). The currency of India is called the “rupee”. This same term is used for the currencies of Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Mauritius (and in addition to these, Indonesia uses the plural term of “rupee”—“rupiah”). The British used this Indian term for British/Indian currency while in power in India. The word “rupee” comes from the Sanskrit (the mother tongue for all Indo-European languages) “raupya”, which means “silver coin”.

Instead of dividing the rupee into 10ths or 100ths (cents) like we do with our dollar, the British decided to divide the rupee into 16 parts. Each of these was called “annas”. So there were 1 anna coins, 2 anna coins and 4 anna coins. The prize of all of these, minted only 2 years (1919 and 1920) was the 8 anna coin. Sometime in 1920 they decided to change the 8 anna coin, and instead called it the ½ rupee. Thus the 8 anna coin is indeed a very rare coin.



In earlier times Indian currency was progressively larger with each denomination. Today they are longer and only slightly wider as each value progresses.

There were smaller divisions of the anna. There was a half anna coin and a quarter anna coin. That meant that a half anna was 1/32nd of a rupee and the quarter anna was 1/64th of a rupee! But that was not the smallest of the anna coins—there was a 1/12th anna! That made that little coin worth 192nd of 1 rupee! That probably was enough to buy a cup of “chai” (Indian tea).



Top is the 1/12 anna (one pie – the lowest value in the history of Indian coins); Middle is the 1/2 pice coin (1/8 anna); Bottom is the 1/4 anna coin (1 pice or 1/64 rupee). Are you confused yet?

All this is when the rupee was backed by the power of the British Empire. It was a currency with clout, and this was long before the kind of world-wide inflation we have witnessed in the past 150 years (more or less). The retirement pay for an Indian soldier (probably a private) who served in the British Indian army was about 3 rupees (Rs. 3) per month. Way back then, a man could live on that amount in India, because the rupee was a pretty hefty amount. Today, Rs. 3 is barely enough to buy a cup of chai (spiced tea, served hot).



Top is the 1 anna coin (1/8 rupee); Middle is the 2 anna coin (1/4 rupee); Bottom is the 4 anna coin (1/2 rupee)



The very rare 8 anna coin, only minted in 1919 & 1920



India's first decimal based coins appeared in 1957. They introduced odd shaped coins as part of their design. Read on to see why!

Back to the division of Indian currency under the British. Each anna was divided into “pice” (pronounced like “ice” with a “p” in front). There were 4 pice in each anna. Pice was the plural of “paise” (pronounced “pie-say”). You want to really go crazy? Listen to this: each paise was divided into a pie. There were 3 pies for each paise. Do you understand all of this? That means there were 12 pies per anna, and each rupee consisted of 192 pies. No, folks—these are NOT edible pies! That probably led the Indian government to quit making pies (after its independence from Great Britain), and go to the decimal system for its coins (in 1957).

They then had 100 “naya paise” (new paise) per rupee. In 1964, the word “naya” was dropped from Indian coins. So even though it is not nearly worth as much as a penny, the paise took the place of the other denominations of coins and became the “Indian penny”.



Modern Indian coin set with all the oddly shaped coins



Note the thickness of the 5 rupee coin

But there is more! All the coins have different sizes and shapes. It is a good question to ask why, and some (before they know why) think all this is silly—or just dumb. There are 2 good reasons in a country like India for this type of coins (remember—this goes way back in time). To make sure that those who are blind and those who are illiterate can tell how much a coin is worth, all they have to know is the size and shape of each coin! Actually, I think it is quite brilliant!



Below you will see some miscellaneous pictures of various coins.



5 Rupee coin (Front & Back)



Variations of the 10 Paise coin



2 Rupee coin (Front & Back)



5 Paise Coin (both sides)



Variations of the 1 rupee coin

Over the many years we have worked in India we have collected many coins of all kinds—currently in use and a number of older and rare coins. I am more than happy to make these available to anyone interested in having some really nice conversation pieces to add to their coin collection. If you are interested in coins like I am, just contact me at our office. All donations are used to help the work in India and are greatly appreciated. Send me an E-mail or give me a call & we can talk about what you might be interested in. (rcindia@sonet.net or 205/921-3737).



RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

As a preacher of the Gospel, I can tell you that one of the greatest emotions we preachers experience is to see visible responses to the lessons we deliver. It gives us a sense of accomplishment—that we have said something to help move a precious soul to come closer to God. (Certainly, we understand that it is the power of the Gospel that is responsible for this—those who preach are simply messengers who proclaim that Gospel.)

The most meaningful responses are those who come to the Lord to be baptized. If you have ever taught someone in a home Bible study and have seen them respond to the Lord to become a Christian, you know what I am talking about. There is a great joy in teaching someone and witnessing their obedience to Christ.

I baptized all 3 of my sisters. I have baptized sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren. What a great spiritual blessing! When someone obeys the Lord in baptism, this is a new birth taking place. Some are fortunate enough to witness the physical birth of their children; this is the same thing on a spiritual plane.

Baptism is the culmination in becoming a Christian; faith and repentance are compulsory before baptism can mean anything. Being baptized comes only because someone has heard the Gospel and considered its plea.

This inquiry into the truth of God involves a good deal of study. And this is what I want to talk about very briefly—the way Indians appreciate the Scriptures and approach the study of the Word of God.

You simply cannot understand (until you see it) how our Indian brethren love to study the Bible. When we have a Bible class and expect 100 to come, usually we have closer to 200 that attend. When we conduct a lectureship lasting several days an ever growing number of students attend each day. When I think of this, I am reminded of what Acts 17:11 says: “These (in Berea) were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the Word with great eagerness (all readiness of mind), examining the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so”.



This Bible belongs to Bro. Benjamin, converted from the Hindu religion. At the time these 2 pictures were taken, he had been a Christian only 6 years.

It is this love of the Word of God and their desire to learn what God says that lends itself to the kind of response to the Gospel that we are witnessing in India. Since 1979, our team has conducted more than 2,250,000 Gospel meetings. It is common to begin speaking, and the audience continues to grow as we are preaching. Millions have heard the message of Christ through our team's efforts. Gospel meetings are still very popular, and what is happening in India today is like in the USA some 150 years ago.

The people of India are truly the most religious people on earth. Their sense of things sacred, doing their duty toward God and of having a right relationship with Him are all inspiring. When it comes to their study of the Bible and the things that motivate them to become Christians, one can see the sense of nobility in these people as they deal with God and His Word.

— Ron Clayton —