

City States in Ancient India

- The city states of Greece are so well known for their political, economic, religious, and social activities.
- In India, coins of various cities are known.
- It appears that after the disintegration of the Maurya empire, some cities, which were main trade centres, found it convenient to issue coins as medium of exchange for local transactions.
- This reflects their autonomy, at least in the economic field, as pointed out by Bela Lahiri.
- The city coins are all of copper.
- They are square, or rectangular, or round, and some cities issued coins in more than one of these shapes.
- Most of the city coins are die-struck.
- Only a few are cast.
- They bear the figure of an animal, or a deity, or a group of symbols.
- The metrology of the coins is not uniform, and, hence, their weight standard is difficult to determine.
- The cities which issued coins are Ayodhyā, Vārāṇasī, Kauśāmbī, Vidiśā, Erakiṇa, Bhāgila, Kurara, Ujjayinī, Tripurī, Māhishmatī, Jyeshṭhapura, and, probably, Tagara.
- Almost all of them are situated on river banks.
- Scholars have suggested, for these coins, dates ranging from the end of the third century BC to the beginning of the first century BC.
- But, probably, the earliest such coins belong to the second century BC.

Ayodhyā

- The early, uninscribed coins from Ayodhyā, have been dated by John Allan to c 200 BC.
- Some coins in the Allahabad Museum bear legends, which have been read, variously, as *Ajudhe*, *Ajadhe*, or *Ajidhe*.
- These have been considered as issues of the city of Ayodhyā.

Bhāgila

- Five coins from Hoshangabad district (Madhya Pradesh) bear the legend, *Bhāgilāya*, in c second century BC characters.
- They are taken to be city coins, as Bhāgila appears to be the name of a city, not far from Sanchi.

Eran

- Three coins with different devices and with the legend, *Erakanya*, have been found.
- These three coins are regarded as the city coins of Eran.
- Some other inscribed coins from Eran have also been reported recently by Pieper, and these bear names like Nārāyaṇamitra and Hastideva, with the title *rājñā*.

Kauśāmbī

- Kauśāmbī (modern Kosam) was the capital of the kingdom of Vatsa.
- Coins bearing the name of the city are of three main types.
- Type 1 bears the legend, *Kosāmbi*.
- Type 2 has the legend, *Kosāmbiya*.
- Type 3 bears the legend, *Kasabikanam*.
- The legend on Type 3 seems to refer to the people of Kauśāmbī.

Kurara

- Some coins found from the Hoshangabad district (Madhya Pradesh) bear the legend, *Kurarāya*.
- Kurara is mentioned as a place name in some Sanchi inscriptions.
- These coins have been taken to be the city coins of Kurara.

- The city seems to have been situated not far from Sanchi.

Māhishmatī

- Māhishmatī was the capital of the southern part of Avantī.
- It is identified with Mandhata by some scholars, and with Maheshvar by others.
- Five coins of this city, all rectangular and die-struck, have come to the light.
- These coins bear the legend, *Mahisati*, in second century characters.
- The *provenance* of the two such coins in the British Museum, London, is not known.

Tagara

- Some scholars read the legend on a coin, which was attributed to the Rājanyas by earlier scholars, as *Tagara*.
- They take it as a coin of the city, Tagara, modern Ter in Osmanabad district.

Takshaśilā

- A large number of uninscribed coins are reported from Takshaśilā.
- These have been divided by Allan into seven classes.
- All these uninscribed coins from Takshaśilā have been regarded as city coin by some scholars.

Tripurī

- A few coins from Tripurī (Tewar, near Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh) bear the legend, *Tipuri*, written from the bottom upwards, in the third or second century BC Brāhmī characters.
- One coin is reported to have been found in the deposit, which has been assigned to the third century BC.

Ujjayinī

- Ujjayinī (modern Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh) was the capital of the *janapada* of Avanti, in the sixth-fifth centuries BC, and a great centre of trade and culture.
- Of a large number of coins obtained from the city.
- Two such coins bear the legend, *Ujeni*, in second century Brāhmī letters.

Vārāṇasī

- Kāśī was one of the 16 *mahājanapadas* in the sixth century BC.
- Vārāṇasī, its capital, has yielded two coins with the legend, *Bārānasī*, in first century BC Brāhmī characters.

Vidiśā

- Twenty-one coins obtained by a dealer from Vidiśā, the ancient capital of eastern Mālavā, bear the legend, *Vedisa* or *Veddasa*, in early second century BC Brāhmī characters.
- The coins are taken as issues of the city of Vidiśā, which was quite an important city during the Śuṅga rule.
- Located on the important trade route, it was a centre of Bhāgavatism.
- As per the testimony of a Sanchi inscription, it was known for its ivory carving.