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# गुल्लक Gullak

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20<sup>th</sup> of Every Month**

## The Unique Kongu Chera Coins

By Shastri JC Philip



The states today known as Kerala and Tamil Nadu came into clearly demarked existence only after India became independent. Before that the area that today spans these two states was part of what was (and is even today) technically known as Tamilakam, or the Tamil Kingdom.

Tamilakam was not one nation or one state, but rather a region of one language and similar culture. Malayalam, the language that is common in Kerala today, did not exist when Tamilakam was at its political apex, but rather developed from Tamil and Grantha languages only in the last one millennium.

Tamilakam was ruled by three powerful groups. The southernmost tip was ruled by the Pandyas, the north-western portion was ruled by the Cheras, and the north-eastern portion was ruled by the Cholas. The portion ruled by Cheras eventually acquired the name Kerala which derives its origin from Chera. The rule of Cheras can be traced at least from 300 BC, if not earlier. The name Kerala might have developed from the Classical Tamil Chera-alam (the declivity of a hill or a mountain slope) or from Chera alam (the Land of the Cheras).

A portion of the Chera-nadu was, however, lost to Tamil Nadu during the formation of the states because of historical and linguistic reasons. Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu today represents a major portion of that lost Chera territory. The historical reason was the eventual rule of this portion by a dynasty of kings who proclaimed their independence from the Cheras.

The foundation for Kongu Chera kingdom was laid in the tenth century when Ravikandan asserted the independence of his region from the rule of the traditional Chera rulers. To get this independence he sought help from the Chola kingdom and took upon himself the name Vira Chola. From this time onwards, Kongu Chera became an independent Chera kingdom. It was a very fertile and economically rich region, and was eventually attacked by many neighboring kings. Eventually the northern portion of Kongu Chera fell to the Hoysalas, and the eastern portion fell to the Pandyas. The western portion of Kongu quickly allied itself with Venad Cheras (thus the continuing name Kongu Cheras) and continued their autonomy till AD 1343 when the powerful Vijayanagar kingdom conquered them. Kongu Chera ceased to exist as an independent kingdom with that.



**Kongu Chera Coins:** While one can speak with confidence about when their minting of Kongu Chera coins came to an end, research is still going on to ascertain whether they started issuing coins with the beginning of the larger Kongu kingdom or after the smaller north western Kongu kingdom allied itself with the Vendad kingdom.

*contd... page 2*

### Highlights of the Nagpur Auction # 41



80) Pragmalji II, Gold, Mohur or 100 Koris, Very Rare. Realized- Rs. 53,000



94) William & Mary, Silver, Rupee, Bombay issue, Extremely Rare. Realized- Rs. 2,55,000



36) Jahangir, Heavy Square Mohur, Very Fine, a Great Rarity. Realized- Rs. 2,65,000



104) Victoria Queen, Gold, Mohur, 1841, Divided Legend, Very Rare. Realized- Rs. 82,000



100) Gold, Mohur, arms of the East India Company on obv, Very Rare. Realized- Rs. 75,000

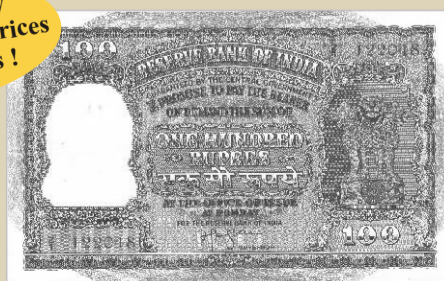
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157) Persian Gulf issues, Rupees 100, signed H.V.R. Iyengar, Very Rare. Realized- Rs. 1,45,000



187) Victoria Empress, Silver, Rupee, Nice deep and complete lakhi impression, Very Rare. Realized- Rs. 36,000

...from page 1

Since the Kongu Cheras had autonomy only for a short period of time, their coinage also spans only for a short period of time in Chera history. Thus the total number number of coins produced is not very large, and their availability is relatively less. This makes Kongu Chera coins rare, and much sought after today. Most of the coins coming to collectors are picked from riverbed, but in spite of that the coins are in very good condition probably owing to their higher weight and thickness. The coins feel thick and roundish in one's hand, and it is obvious that hot and soft globules or nuggets of copper were pressed with symbol-bearing seals to produced these coins which has given rise to the characteristic shape and feel.

The Kongu Chera coins have an attraction of their own and most of them have a bow and a stylized palm tree on the obverse along with many other symbols. The reverses have two crossed swords placed on an altar. Swords have always played an important role in the Chera territory which even today has several martial arts forms in which swords play an important role. Various kinds of palm trees are also very common in Chera territory and they play an important role in Chera region food as well as economy.

I could find only half a dozen brief papers and articles about Kongu Chera coins, and most of these are catalogues and not research papers. These coins need much more research to uncover their history, symbolology and social impact.

*\* The author is a lover and popularizer of Indian Coins. The map has been taken from Wikipedia (www.IndianCoins.org).*

**Photo Feature**



**RBI Platinum Jubilee Stamp Released**

On 16<sup>th</sup> January 2010, Mrs. Pratibha Patil, the President of India, released a stamp commemorating the Platinum Jubilee of the Reserve Bank of India.

The five-rupee stamp depicts the iconic New Delhi offices of the apex bank, which has the statues of the mythological Yaksha and Yakshini, designed by famous sculptor Ramkinkar Baij. In the background of the Stamp, a number of coins, starting from 1954 onwards to modern bi-metallic 10 Rupee coin and notes of Rs. 500 and 1000 are also illustrated.

**Did you know? Smallest Coins of World**

The silver 1/4 Jawa was made in Nepal in about 1740 and weighted only 0.002 g. You would need half a million of them to equal a kilogram!

The smallest coins of India are **Mashaka Punch-marked** coins, and also 1/4 **Fanam** coins of southern India both weighing about 0.010 g each.

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## First UNC Set from Hyderabad Mint

By Ravi Shankar Sharma

Proof and Uncirculated (UNC) sets were issued by the Mumbai and Kolkata Mints only. However, this is the first time that the Hyderabad Mint has issued single coin sets of “200<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Louis Braille (1809-2009)” & “Ter-Centenary of Gur-Ta-Gaddi of Shri Guru Granth Sahib (2008)”.

The sets were booked from India Government Mint, Hyderabad from 12-11-2009 to 12-12-2009. Mint mark of the Hyderabad Mint is a “Five pointed Star”.

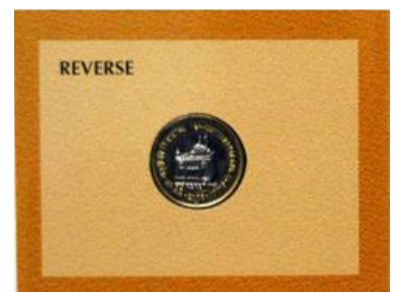
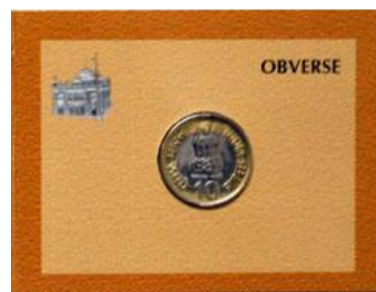
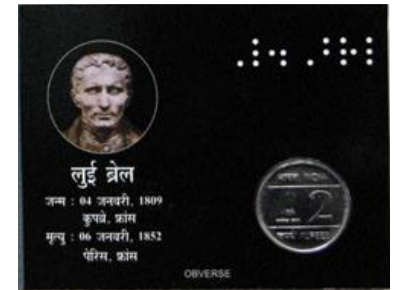
### Details of Coins:

#### Tercentenary of Gur-ta-Gaddi of Shri Guru Granth Sahib

Denomination: Rs. 10 (Bi-metallic)  
Weight : 7.7 g  
Shape : Circular  
Size : 27 mm  
Cost : Rs. 150/-

#### 200<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Louis Braille

Denomination: Rs. 2 (FSS)  
Weight : 5.62 g  
Shape : Circular  
Size : 27 mm  
Cost : Rs. 130/-



## Left us for their Heavenly Abode ...

**Mr. Om Prakash Choubey (Vakilbabu)**, a coin dealer from Ujjain (M.P.) left us on 17th Dec. 2009. He will be remembered for ancient and princely state copper coins that he used to collect from river beds in MP.

**Mrs. Laila Punshi**, wife of the late **Dr. S.K. Punshi**, expired on 28th Dec. 2009. We will always miss her for her lively nature and the tea party after the coin meetings at her residence hosted by her husband.

**Mr. Pradip Vankar**, a professional coin dealer from Chandrapur, left the world on 14th Jan. 2010. He was a soft spoken dealer with always a smile on his face.

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## Unusual Mule Coin of 5 Rupees

**By Ravi Shankar Sharma**

A "mule" coin is a coin struck with dies intended for two different coins. Recently, a "Connectivity & Information Technology" theme of 5 Rupee "Mule" coins appeared on the market. The obverse of the coin is from the "Nitya Mudra" 50 Paise coin issued in 2008. It features a Small Lion, Small Date & Thick Rim features. The reverse is from the regular issue of 5 Rupee coins with year 2008. Presently it is one of the most affordable & Rare "mule" coins available.

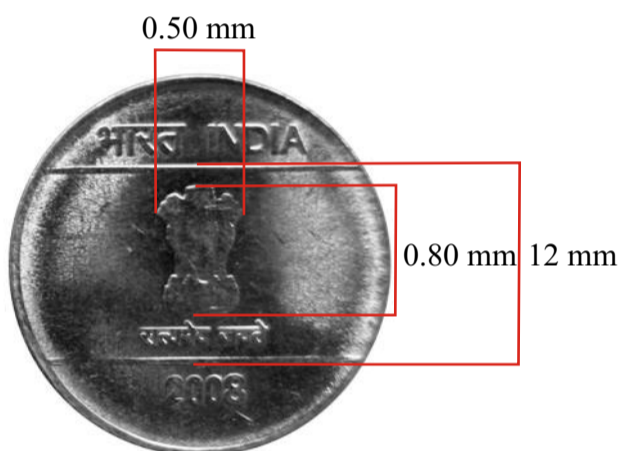
### Coin No. 1: 5 Rupees Connectivity & Information Technology

Weight: 6.00 g; Size: 23 mm



No. 1 obv

No. 1 Rev



Lion Tall : 0.80 mm  
Lion Nose Tips : 0.50 mm  
Line to Line : 12 mm

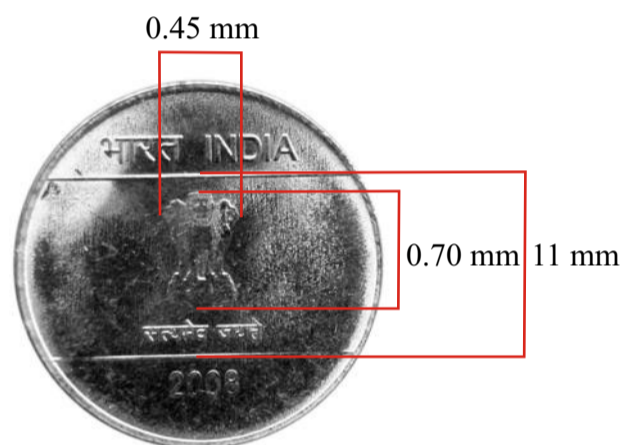
### Coin No. 2: 50 Paise Nitya Mudra

Weight: 3.79 g; Size: 22 mm



No. 2 obv

No. 2 Rev



Lion Tall : 0.70 mm  
Lion Nose Tips : 0.45 mm  
Line to Line : 11 mm

### The Mule



No. 1 obv



No. 2 obv

**Reference:** Ravi Shankar Sharma, "Modern Indian Coins Enter New Era, *ICS Newsletter*, No. 43, April-June, 2007, pp. 56-60.



# Zubayr Khan

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## Hobby Festival 2009: A New Trend



The first Hobby Festival 2009 organized by senior philatelist and numismatists of Delhi, is one of its kind. The festival was held at Sardar Patel Vidyalaya at **Delhi** from the **26-27, December 2009**. The exhibition had a unique concept of collecting all the main collectables (stamps, coins and banknotes) under one theme. It had on display, award winning collections on various subjects, related to stamps, coins, banknotes and autographs. An exhibition of this nature has been organized for the first time in Delhi. In this festival, collectors had a delightful time feasting their eyes on banknotes and coins they had only heard of or seen in museums.

On display at the festival in the banknote section were banknotes from the Bank of Bengal dating back to 1853 to the uniform currency issued under the British Government in India in 1867. The first currency notes printed by the Reserve Bank of India since 1936 were also on display, along with the banknotes of Burma printed by the Reserve Bank of India on display were from the collection of **Pervesh Gupta** of Delhi. Various high denomination modern Indian banknotes were displayed with fancy numbers and star series of banknotes by **Rajneesh Jain**, errors on Indian banknotes was also an attraction from the collection of **Rajeev Malhotra**. An almost complete collection of worldwide polymer banknotes from more than 28 countries could also be seen at the show from the collection of **Tarun Jain** of Delhi, this included bank-notes from Australia, Bermuda, Brunei, PNG, Vietnam, Romania and New Zealand that have completely switched over to polymer notes.

The complete collection of the Re. 1 banknotes was also on display dating from 1950 to 1994, they had signatures of the finance secretary, whereas all the other banknotes from Rs. 2 to Rs. 1000 had the signature of the Governors of the Reserve Bank of India. The silver coins of the Mughal Era and the unified coins of the British government from William IV to George VI were

on display. All the proof coin sets issued by the India Government Mint, on various events and subjects related to science & technology, trade and commerce were on display at the show dating as far back as 1950 when the first set of coins were issued by the Republic of India. **Ashwini Kumar** had mounted a special collection of banknotes, stamps and coins all related to scientists along with a detailed description on the history and discovery made by them.

Stamps on various themes like Indian Cinema, Commonwealth Games, Mahatma Gandhi, Automobiles, Road Safety, Coins, Princess Diana and Tigers were on the show. Indian Postal Stationery and postage stamps on freedom fighters series was also on display, early postmarks and army postal service covers were also on display from the army postal service collection. The collections were mounted in 80 display frames with stamps and philatelic material in them. A new display seen for the first time was autographs-photographs of popular stars from Hollywood and also the Indian Film industry. A total of 35 collectors from Delhi, Faridabad and Jaipur displayed their collections on the Hobby Festival 2009.

**Shri Vijay Kumar Malhotra**, Leader Opposition Delhi Vidhan Sabha and President, Archery Association of India was the Chief Guest of the award ceremony in which certificates were distributed to all the participants. **Shri Malhotra** was amazed and appreciated the rich cultural and diverse heritage that has been documented on Indian stamps, coins and banknotes. The Hobby Festival 2009 was supported by **India Post**, **Army Postal Service** and the **Reserve Bank of India** who have helped the collectors get new coins, banknotes and stamps for their collections. A special sixty page **souvenir** was also issued which has unpublished articles on Indian coins, banknotes and stamps. This includes an extensively researched article on Portuguese India banknotes in colour by **Mr. Rezwan Razack** (copies of the souvenir are presently available, email: stampstodayindia.com).

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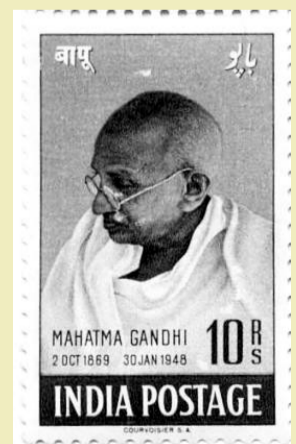
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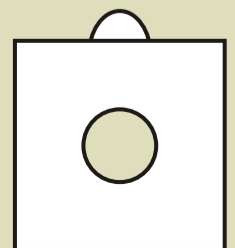
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## Annual Meeting of Kerala Numismatic Society

By Shastri JC Philip



The Kerala Numismatic Society, which has close to 800 members, celebrated its Annual Day on 13th December 2009 in the Banquet Hall of Hotel KK International, Ernakulam (Kochi). The full-day program was attended by around 25 dealers and 250 members.

The plenary session was addressed by Shastri Philip, who spoke on the subject of Silver Punch-marked Coins. He started by a chronological survey of Indian Coins followed by placing silver PMCs against that context. He explained the economical and practical reasons that led to silver coins and punch-marks on them.

He then gave an introduction to Janapada and Mahajanpadas and talked at some length about the research that has been done so far on the punch-marked coins. He also drew the attention of the readers to the book on Punch Marked Coins by Dr. Dilip Rajgor. He concluded by saying that much more research would be needed to bring in some kind of a "periodic table" that will help people to read and decipher the major and minor marks on PMCs.

The talk electrified the audience so much that it was proposed to have similar lectures every month, instead of having it annually, for the benefit of the members.

More than 150 lots of coins and related items were auctioned and there was great enthusiasm among the participants for these coins. North Indian coins attracted relatively fewer bids probably because of lesser availability/permeation of information about these coins.

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## Calendar of Events 2010

| Month    | Date  | Place      | Event                           | Venue   |
|----------|-------|------------|---------------------------------|---|
| February | 6     | Mumbai     | Museum Coin Show                | Dinesh Mody Numismatic Museum, University Kalina Campus, Santacruz (E), Mumbai 400098                         |
| February | 6     | London     | Argentum Auction                | Baldwins' Auctions, The London Coin Fair, Holiday Inn, London Bloomsbury, Coram Street, London UK             |
| February | 12-14 | Ahmedabad  | Coinex 2010                     | Gujarat Coin Society, Sushilaben Ratilal Hall, Opp. Choice Restaurant, Swastik Cross Road, CG Road, Ahmedabad |
| February | 19-21 | Calicut    | Calicut Coin Fest 2010          | Calicut Numismatic Society, Jubilee Hall, Near Temple, Calicut 1  |
| February | 25    | Hong Kong  | Hong Kong Coin Auction No. 48   | Baldwin-Ma Tak Wo, Holiday Inn, Golden Inn, Kowloon, Hong Kong  |
| March    | 6     | Mumbai     | Museum Coin Show                | Dinesh Mody Numismatic Museum   |
| March    | 27-28 | Tirupati   | XX Annual Conference            | South Indian Numismatic Society   |
| April    | 3     | Mumbai     | Museum Coin Show                | Dinesh Mody Numismatic Museum   |
| April    |       | Mumbai     | Shukla Day                      | Date & Venue will be announced later  |
| May      | 1     | Mumbai     | Museum Coin Show                | Dinesh Mody Numismatic Museum   |
| May      | 1-3   | Coimbatore | Coimbatore Coin Exhibition 2010 | Shri Coimbatore Gujarati Samaj, 500 Mettupalayam Road, Coimbatore 641002                                      |
| May      | 14-15 | London     | Joint Seminar of ONS & NSI      | Oriental Numismatic Society & Numismatic Society of India, British Museum, London                             |

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**COINEX 2010**



Gujarat Coin Society, under the leadership of **Shri Praful Thakkar** and **Shri Harish D. Shah** is organizing their **8<sup>th</sup> National Competitive Numismatic Exhibition** from **12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> February 2010** at **Sushilaben Ratilal & Leelavati Kanayalal Hall, Opp. Choice Restaurant, C. G. Road, Ahmedabad.**

The exhibition is spread over 14 categories. There will be three **Top Medals: Gold, Silver and Bronze Medals** for the first three Exhibits, and maximum **14 Bronze Medals** for the **Best Exhibits** in each category.

The collectors can also buy and sell items for their collections in over **40 Numismatic Stalls** at the venue. **Todywalla Auctions** will have their **42<sup>nd</sup> Auction** and **Oswal Auctions** will organize their **11<sup>th</sup> Auction** at the same venue. For the first time India, a Private Collection, **the Arvind Chandra Collection of Indian Coins**, will come under hammer at the **Oswal Auctions**. Numismatic community is looking forward to the **Coinex 2010**.

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