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Presidential Address

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GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
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Respected Chief Justice, Sri E.S. Venkataramaiah, Sri Chandrasaha Gupta, Santosh Kumar Gulvadi, organisers of the South Indian Numismatic Society, Dr. Devaraj, Dr. Narasimha Murthy, and Fellow Delegates.

I am extremely thankful to the Society for giving me the opportunity to preside over the sixth annual conference of the South Indian Numismatic Society which I deem it an honour and a privilege. It shows your generosity rather than my achievements in this field which are indeed limited. I am particularly happy that this year we are meeting at Mysore which was a pioneer in Archaeological studies in the whole country. In the field of Numismatics, the name of M.H. Krishna automatically comes to our mind. The work begun by him is continued with greater vigour by A.V. Narasimha Murthy and the present Director D.V. Devaraj. Under his guidance the numismatic and archaeological personality of Karnataka is unfolding gloriously.

I am glad to see a growing awareness of the importance of numismatics in our country in general and South India in particular. The credit for this happy trend goes in no small measure to Numismatic societies functioning at various places in India particularly the Numismatic Society of India which is the oldest parent body and other societies and institutions of more recent origin like the Institute of Research in Numismatics Studies at Anjaneri,

Nagpur, Tamilnadu Numismatic Society at Madras, Kannadanadu Numismatic Society at Bangalore and the South Indian Numismatic Society and the recently formed one in Kerala. We should be thankful to these societies for giving a forum for the numismatists to publicise the ever-growing number of discoveries and provide opportunity for the scholars to examine the coins and discuss their historical value. In this field South Indian Numismatic Society has been doing consistently good work. Apart from honouring the distinguished veterans in this field every year, it has provided a forum for several younger scholars to come up with their new discoveries and publishing them promptly. I wish to take this occasion to indicate the broad trends of progress in the recent times.

Early Coins

Many impressive discoveries have come to light on the early coinage of South India. Punch-marked coins which in earlier years were found accidentally as hoards of chance finds have now come from the well stratified excavations at Dharanikota in Andhra, Kanchipuram, Kodumanal (Tamilnadu), Banavasi in Karnataka and several other sites in Andhra, Maharashtra. These coins provide good economic, technological linkages with several parts of India in North and the Deccan. The mobility of ideas, symbols and metal technology exhibited by the punchmarked coins is indeed remarkable for their close

similarities as well as a few variations. The role of the state as well as the merchant guilds (*nigamas*) seems to have been the primary agencies in their distribution. The vast Mauryan empire with its southern frontiers including Andhra and Karnataka could have provided the occasion for this distribution. Scholars have also noted the local variations and raised the question whether there were many centres or mints. The discovery of moulds at Kondapur (A.P.) and Kanchipuram and a bronze die at Karur (P.V. Radhakrishnan) indicate some possibilities which are worth further investigation.

Satavahana Coins

Evidence on the coinage of the Satavahanas, a major power of the Deccan is steadily increasing both from excavations and as chance finds. A perusal of the previous numbers of the Journal of the South Indian Numismatic Society and other Journals and books published recently would fully attest to this. The discovery of lead coins of king 'Satavahana' from Sannati (I.K. Sarma, 1994), 'Sri Satavahana' (C. Gupta, 1994) and Kotilingala (Raja Reddy and P.S. Reddy) are recent additions. Equally important is the discovery of the coins of kings like 'Siri Satavahana' and Simukha in stratified deposits in the Kotilingala excavations. In his recent publication Dr. P.V. Parabrahma Sastri has shown how the coins of 'Siri Satavahana' are found in the earlier levels than that of Simukha. According to him the former was the founder

of the dynasty. More and more new types of Satavahana coins are coming to light like Sivaskanda Satakarni reported by Dr. Siddiqui. Equally significant is Prof. Ajay Mitra Sastri's identification of the Satavahana Silver coin, Mints at several centres including Kondapur in the form of a circular terra-cotta with the legend in Dravidian Brahmi and Prakrit mentioning Vachitti Sivasri Pulumavi. His observations on the clay mould which he calls proof of the die are indeed valuable. The discovery of similar terra-cotta Satavahana coin moulds from Kanchipuram excavations would probably indicate further extension of the mints in South India.

One other interesting fact regarding the Satavahana coins in the recent years is that they have been found in the interior region of Tamilnadu like Tirukkoilur (Capital of Malayaman Chieftains) and as far west as Karur, the capital of Irumporai Cheras. They are all of a single type with elephant and ruler's name on the obverse and Ujjain symbol on the reverse. Coins of Pulumavi and Yajna Satakarni have been identified. They clearly indicate the trade contacts with Tamilnadu in the 2nd C.A.D. The mention of the Satakarni kings as 'Nutruvar-Kannar' in the Sangam work Purananuru shows their recognition of these rulers.

Maharathi Coins

One significant discovery in recent years is that of the several Maharathi coins of the Deccan. Scholars like

Dr. Parameshwari Lal Gupta and Dr. L.C. Gupta have drawn our attention to this interesting factor and consider them as pre-Satavahana. There were a number of principalities in the Deccan during the transitional period from the Mauryan to the Satavahana. L.C. Gupta identified one lead coin (along with many uninscribed ones) with a partial legend read as *Maharathisa*. Coins with similar legends and symbols like the elephant, Srivatsa, standard etc, on the obverse and tree and railing on the reverse have been described by Dr. P.L. Gupta. They have come from the Raichur and Belgaum areas. Gupta has read the name *Maharathi Siva Kshapana* who was probably the ruler of that area. Coins of other Maharathi rulers like the Kuras (Brhamapuri), Kalalaya Maharathi from Chandravalli, Hasti Maharathi from Veerapuram (Karnool Dt.) show the importance of the coins of this period and area. Further sustained work is called for in the coins of the Maharathis. The coins of the ministers and high officials with titles like Mahatalavara, Mahasenapati, Mahagramika, etc. discovered in Telengana area and described by Dr. Raja Reddy and P. Suryanarayana Reddy are indeed important and raise the questions whether the authority to issue coins was decentralised or delegated and if so on what conditions.

Moulds & Dies

Speaking of moulds, I have to mention the discovery of two Roman coin moulds, one at Karur and another at

Talakadu the former a surface find and the latter in the excavations. This is in addition to the one found at Banavasi. They have been discussed by R. Krishnamurthy and Dr. A.V. Narasimhamurthy and Dr. D.V. Devaraj. Punch marked coin dies have been discovered extensively at Mathura, Kondapur, Veerapuram, Kanchipuram, Sisupalgarh. More recently a bronze die was found by P.V. Radhakrishnan at Karur on which he has written an interesting paper (SISIC V). Teracotta moulds used for Satavahana and Pallava coins have been brought to light in the excavations at Kanchipuram (K.V. Raman and P. Shanmugam). The significance of these finds has to be fully assessed. Do they indicate the location of royal mints in different centres in a kingdom or do they indicate counterfeiting is debatable. The imitation Roman gold or silver coins particularly the hybrid ones as pointed out by R. Krishnamurthy became associated with certain portraits because they were identified with certain intrinsic value and catered to the local demand.

Sangam Age Coins

As regards Tamilnadu, till a few years back our knowledge of the coinage of the early Tamil kings was extremely limited and hazy. Now thanks to several scholars, we are getting coins clearly attributable to the Cholas, Pandyas and the Cheras (of Karur) and a few chieftains, like Malayamans of Tirukkoyalur, etc. A perusal of the last five volumes of the Society's journal brings forth this

important development. Karur has been the prime place for yielding such coins besides Madurai and Kaveripumpattinam. However, coins with the legends or royal names are very limited or even scarce. Further exploration is necessary in this field to bring to light the names of Tamil kings like the celebrated Karikala Chola or Seran Senguttuvan, which I am sure will be found even as their contemporary Satavahana kings have been found.

One important aspect which I would like to draw your attention is that even the earliest coins of South India exhibit many common traits and here the numismatics offers one other evidence of pan Indian cultural unity, Eg. depiction of elephant and auspicious symbols (like Srivatsa, nandipada etc.) on one side and the royal crest on the other, besides ofcourse the Brahmi script. I must also state that though there was undoubtedly some influence of the Greek and Roman coins on ancient Indian coinage eg. introduction of portraits, our early coins seem to be indigenously designed and free from foreign influence.

Coins of the Pallavas, Chalukyas, etc.

The system of coinage during 6th to 9th or 10th centuries of South India appears to be elusive. It is indeed a paradox that today we know more about the coins of the Satavahana and the Sangam periods than about their successors like the Pallavas, Badami Chalukyas or the Pandyas of the 'First empire'. Very few coins of this

period have come down to us though the period is rich in copper plates, inscriptions and monuments. But like silver linings have come the discovery of a few Pallava coins with legends. A silver coin with their bull emblem and the Tamil legend *pagapidugu* on the obverse and a *chakra* on the other side has been reported by A. Seetharaman (1994). He has identified it with mahendravarman I (600-630) who had the title *pagapidugu*. This is in addition to a few Pallava coins with legends reported few years ago by R. Krishnamurthy and Thirugnanasambhandam. The study of coinage under the Badami Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Kadambas etc. has not met with any new discoveries in recent years, and they continue to be as hazy as before. The same holds good for the Chola coinage also. The abundant numismatic evidence for the reign of Rajaraja I, is not followed up for the subsequent reigns. A very few coins of Rajendra Chola, Vikrama Chola and Kulothunga have been found but their number is negligible when compared to the abundant references found in their inscriptions. The discovery of thousands of Chola copper coins many with the name 'Raja Raja' in *nagari* script and many without the script is well-known. The latter types with the stereotyped standing king on one side and seated goddess on the other might have been commonly accepted as the standard Chola copper coin. The absence of true portrait coins in medieval South India needs a satisfactory explanation. However the report on the coins of Vishnukundis and Eastern Chalukyas from Peddavegi excavations described by Dr. I.K. Sarma are quite re-assuring. The

finding of a coin of the Posalesvara (Hoysala) in Tamilnadu provides another link of the Hoysalas with Tamilnadu in the 13th century (A. Seetharaman).

Incidentally, the discovery of the early Chola coin (of Sangam periods), Satavahana and Pallava and later Chola coins, though limited in Thailand and Malaya coast in recent years (N. Karashima and others 1992-94) indicate further links with South East Asia in addition to the already known epigraphical and other influences.

Foreign Coins

Speaking of the numismatic contacts with foreign countries, I am glad to record the good progress in the study of Roman coins in South India. Apart from new discoveries both as hoards or from surface excavations (Alagankulam by N. Kasinathan and Talakad by A.V. Narasimhamurthy and Devaraj) a good methodology has been evolved. Thanks to many scholars like Prof. David Macdowell, Peter Beghaus, Pala Turner, P.L. Gupta, R. Krishnamurthy and others. These involve the dating of the hoards, recognizing the imitations and later issues etc. The recent publication of catalogues of Roman coins in Kerala by Satyamurthi and the one on Andhra by V.V. Krishna Sastri show the soundness of the methodology. The late Roman copper coins from South India were posing a problem regarding their utility, original mints, their dates etc. R. Krishnamurthy's recent publication on such coins from Karur and Madurai provides consid-

erable clarity besides a systematic documentation thereof. He has identified the mints from places like Alexandria, Constantinople and Antiochia (Turkey). R. Krishnamurthy's discovery and identification of coins of Greek Islands, Rhodes and Crete at Karur opens a new and interesting chapter in South India's relations with the Greek world.

Vijayanagar and Later Coins

The study of Vijayanagar coinage is making steady progress. Since the publication of a monograph on Vijayanagara coins by A.V. Narasimha Murthy some new coins have been discovered and described, such as : Sadasivaraya's horse and Nandi types (M.S. Krishna Murthy); Krishnadevaraya's copper coins with Balakrishna (M.V. Krishnappa) Portrait coin of Srirangaraya; Harihara's coin with name hana and denomination 2½ in Kannada (R. Gopal). Coins of the Nayakas of Senji and Vellore have also come to light. They all indicate the fruition of the recent efforts of the numismatists.

There have been valuable publications this year. Mention has already been made of Dr. Parabrahma Sastri's work on the Satavahana coins. Another valuable publication of recent times is Michael Mitchiner's *Coin Circulation in Southern most India* brought out by the Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies, Anjaneri. It is a painstaking documentation of a vast number of coins

of various times and types amply illustrated by 870 photographs, 23 maps, detailed bibliography and above all his insightful assessment and comments. The author deserves our gratitude for this excellent publication.

It is indeed heartening to see such publications of recent times which are indicative of excellence being achieved in this field and I would like to close the address full of optimism for the future of the field of numismatics in South India. In this endeavour, both the numismatists and the coin collectors should work in close collaboration and understanding. I am glad to note many who started as coin collectors are becoming good numismatists by experience and interaction with the scholars. This as a healthy trend which would ensure the safety of the coins and also help further researches. Thank you for the patient hearing.

