From Coins to Credit Cards

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the National Museum, all of you!

This is the biggest museum in the country and where you are standing right now is called the "Numismatics Gallery".

Don't get scared by these big words.

"Numismatics" is nothing more than the study or collection of coins, notes etc. Many of you have collected Game Cards or Marbles, right? Similarly, some people collect and study coins.

This activity booklet will help you understand the Numismatics/ Coins gallery better. You will get to learn what kind of coins existed many-many years before us, how and what to look for in a coin, and why old coins, not in use anymore, are still important.

Also, at the end of this booklet is a feedback section where you can write about what you learnt here today.

So let's begin!

1 . A world without coins

Can you spot this big panel close to the entrance?

This is a model of a medallion from Bharhut Stupa. You can see original medallions downstairs in the Maurya, Shunga Gallery. This is a Buddhist story of a person called *Anandapindika* who covered an entire garden with gold coins.
Can you spot any coins here? Do they resemble the coins you see today?
What does this story tell you about coins and their shapes?

……
……

At the beginning of time, people did not know about coins. They just exchanged goods with each other, and lived in something called the **Barter Economy**.

You could walk to the cabinet on your right and try to figure out how the Barter system worked.

Eventually the barter system got complicated and that is when people invented the "cowry shell money". Now cowries and rathi seeds were exchanged for goods.

Cowry Shells

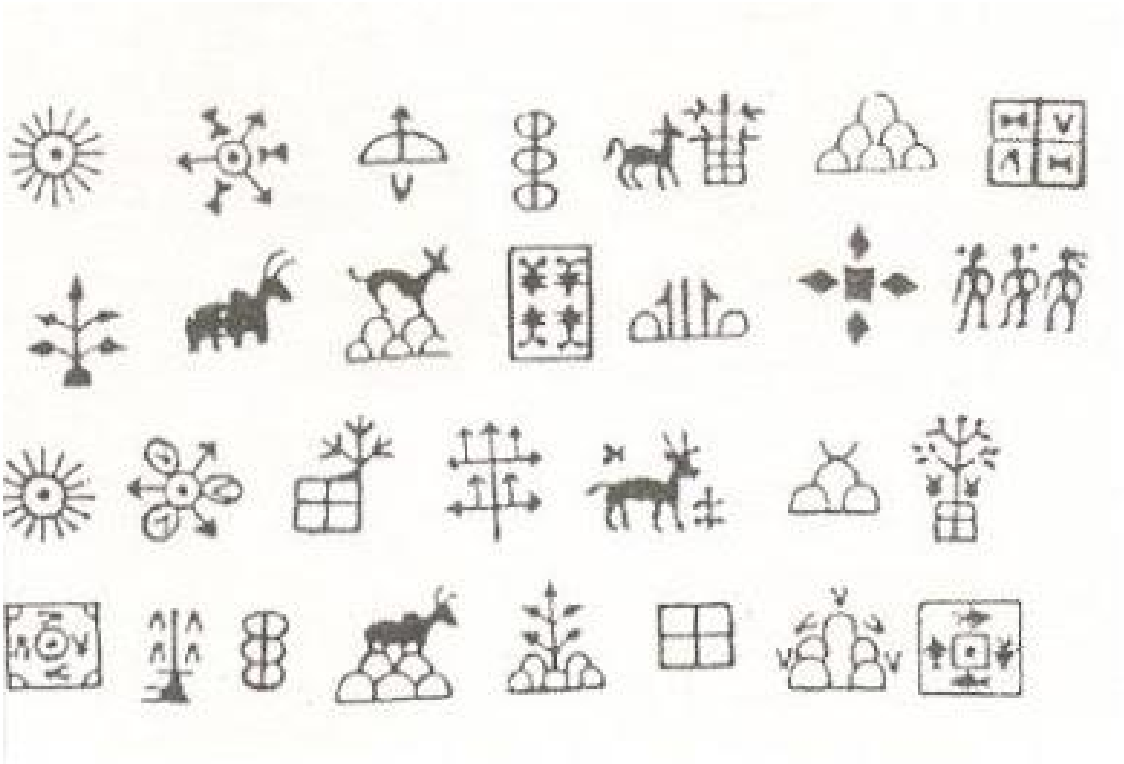
Would you like to know how these cowries were measured? Standard vessels like this one were used for it.

You can see them in display case 1.

2. The Earliest Coins

Now walk to showcase number 2 and look at the various patterns on these coins carefully.

Can you find any that matches the symbols given below? You can also look for these symbols in case number 3. Circle the symbols you find:



With social development, metallurgy techniques and artistic sense also grew. People incorporated different patterns and designs inspired by nature and their surroundings into their coins.

Cowries and seeds gave way to the "**punch marked coins**".

They got this peculiar name because of the minting technique – the metal sheets were heated and designs were punched on them. The coins you see in case 2 and 3 are some punch marked coins.

Before you move on to the next activity, can you complete the sentence below?

The entire series of punched marked coins were produced

……

……

(Clue: The interpretation board on you right, near case number 2, would have the answer)

3 Travelling Coins

This is the mighty Greek King Diodotus. He was “Satrap” (General) in Bactria and founded the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom in India in 250 BCE.

Greeks brought gold coins to Indian soil for the very first time. Their coins were also bilingual, which means they were inscribed in two languages.

To have a closer look at him, can you go to case number 5 and spot it first?

This is a very curious coin and wants to know some things! Can you answer some of his questions?

Have you ever eaten anything that looks like me?

Do I look any different from the earlier coins?

Have you ever seen other shiny things that look like me?

What am I made of?

Can you find these two robust Indo-Greek emperors in the same showcase and write their names?

Did you know, these faces were actual portraits of living people? So coins help us know how ancient rulers looked like.

Coins have two sides. The one facing up is called Obverse and the one facing back is called Reverse. Indo-Greek coins had the portrait of the king on the obverse side and an inscription on the reverse.

4. Storey-telling Coins

Coins were minted during every ruler's reign, with his unique symbol, name and year. Even when you look at a thousand year old coin, you can know who introduced it and when!

If you were to introduce a coin in your name how would that be? Would you put your face on it? Or some other symbol?

Chose any shape from the coins you see here and design a coin with your own symbols:

5. Let's read a coin!

Can you find this coin in Display Case number 8? This is a gold coin from the Kushana Dynasty.

Kushanas were rulers from Central Asia and made Mathura, a city in Northern India, their capital. They also had a summer capital in Gandhara, present day Afghanistan.

Let's observe! What do you think is this person doing?

……

……

If you look hard enough, you can even read many letters that surround him!
Do you see “P”, “O” and “K”?

(This is an ancient script from which modern English alphabets were constructed).

Collection of Government Museum, Mathura

This is a statue of an important King, Kanishka I. Does the person in the coin you just saw look similar to this statue?

Do you think they could be the same people? They wear the same clothes, don’t they?

Coins can help one know about ancient languages and ancient clothes too.

The long coat that this king is wearing was for protection from the harsh winters, the native land of the Kushana rulers are very – very chilly!

6. Worshipping a coin

Now look for this coin in the same display case.

Does the figure look somewhat similar to this?

Coins also help us know about ancient religion.
What is a figure that looks like Shiva doing in a coin that is 2000 years old?
Write down what you think this means:

……
……

7. Multi-talented coins

Now go to display case number 9 and find the odd one out from the coins here. Can you search another coin that fits this group?

Lion Slayer

Veena Player

Tiger Slayer

Archer

Draw the right coin here:

Coins help us know about the activities of ancient people.

These coins are from the Gupta dynasty, who ruled North India 1300 years ago.

The coins you just saw depict one king called *Samudragupta*. He was very talented and brave, and wanted people in his kingdom to know about this. So he made these coins featuring himself doing various things like hunting, getting married or just hanging out in his royal palace.

8. Godly Coins

A while back, you found Shiva in the coins. There are many other gods in the room. Can you look for these coins and name the gods depicted in them? Look for them in cases 10, 12 and 25.

A God who sits on a pretty bird. (Case 10)

……

A very strong god, half-man and half-boar. Do you recall who? (Case 12)

……

A half-man and half-bird, the mount of Lord Vishnu. Tell us who? (Case 25)

……

9. New rulers, new coins

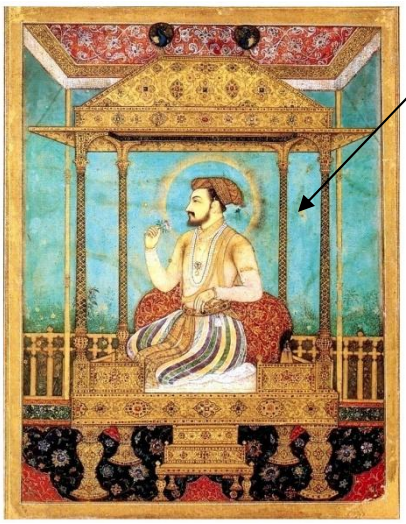
Once upon a time there was a mighty ruler called Akbar. He belonged to one of the most illustrious dynasties the ruled India in the 16th century, The Mughals. He was a kind and righteous king and introduced many good things to India, including new coins.

This is an *Illahi Mohur* of Akbar. Read the labels in display case 18 to find it:

The *Illahi Mohurs* were inscribed with beautiful poetry instead of religious prayers.

When you go home today, try to find out what the word "*Illahi*" means.

Now let's meet Akbar's son, Jahangir. He was a ruler who admired paintings and literature, and did not bother much about battles and politics. During his rule, making portraits came into fashion.



This is a portrait of Jahangir as shown in Mughal paintings.

There is a coin in case number 19 that looks like this painting. Can you find it?

Coins help in making comparisons and connections.

In the same showcase, you can see these coins. Notice the labels and write down what they are called.

Why do you think these curious-looking coins were made?

Look it up in a book and discuss with your friends. How about making a class project about these coins?

10. Coins that remember

After Independence in 1947, India decided to have only one currency for the whole nation. This is when our money came to be called the “Rupee”.

Sometimes the government also makes coins in memory of important people and events. These coins are called “Commemorative Coins”.

In display case number 35, you can see many of such coins. Can you figure out why these coins were made?

To start you off, here is an example

What is depicted? Jantar Mantar

What event is commemorated? IXth Asian Games, Delhi. 1982

The rest is for you to do:

What is depicted?

What event is commemorated?

What is depicted?

What event is commemorated?

11. Colonising Coins

The British ruled India for 200 years. While they were here, they made India a British colony and minted their own coins. India was a part of the British Empire and so the coins had British people on them, not Indian people.

In display number 34, you can see a section of such coins. Can you spot this one?

This is King George Vth, who was the King of Britain and thus, King of India too. In reality, he looked something like this:

This is George Vth with his wife Mary.

Can you observe very carefully and find something that is common in the photograph and the coin?

Write down here

……

……

……

12. Time for Maths!

The value of this coin is ¼ th!

It was called the “Char Aana”, as you can see written on top of the coin.

Find this coin in display case 34.

Can you calculate how many “Char Aanas” would make One Rupee?

…….

Here’s a little help: *1 Chaar Aana = 25 Paise*

100 Paise = 1 Rupee

So, 1 Rupee = How Many Chaar Aanas?

Answer Here:

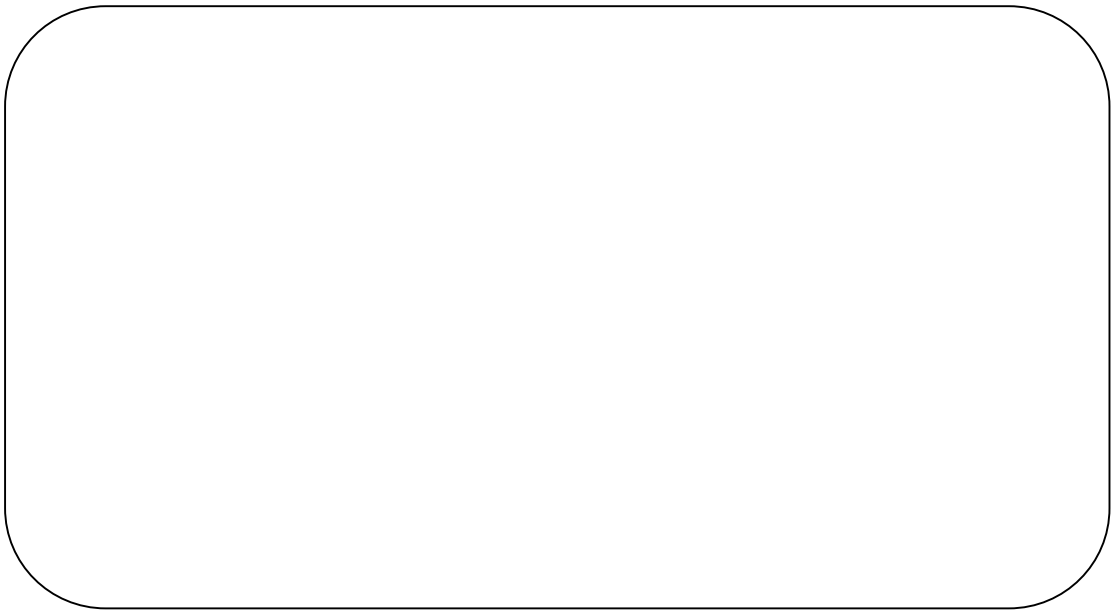
13. End it with a Homework

When you go back home today, begin a little project for yourself.

Try collecting old coins that look interesting and unique.

Maybe you can make it a hobby and see how many old coins you can collect!

What do coins tell you about a world that is now lost?



Tell Us How You found This Activity Book

It was Informative	Yes	No
I had fun	Yes	No
I want to do more activities	Yes	No
I know more about Indian Miniature Paintings now	Yes	No

Concept: Rige Shiba, Assistant Curator, Education Department
Text: Shubhasree Purkayastha, Young Museum Professional

Department of Education
National Museum, Janpath, New Delhi, 110011
www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in