

## Archer Type Coins of the Gupta Kings

Dr. Priya Jyoti Samanta

In the realm of Indian Numismatics, the coinage of the Imperial Guptas occupies a place of great interest. Some of their predecessors like the *Indo-Bactrians* and the *Kuśānas* had no doubt issued coins of high artistic beauty, but they are usually foreign in inspiration, with their legends written in either *Greek* or *Kharoṣṭhi*. Some Indian predecessors of the Guptas like the *Mitras* of *Pāñcāla* and the *Śātavāhanas* of the *Deccan* had issued coins; they were however, poor in artistic merit and irregular in size and weight. They also usually showed no portrait or figure of the issuer. The Gupta coins constitute the earliest Indigenous coinage of India, which approximates most closely the coins as we know them in the modern age. They are regular in size and weight and bear the figure and name of the issuer. For a few years they showed some foreign influence, but very soon they become thoroughly Indianised in their art, motif and execution.

The coinage of the Gupta dynasty probably started with Chandragupta I, perhaps at the time when he assumed the imperial title of *Mahārājādhirāja*, towards the end of his reign. The political condition was reflected in the coinage of Chandragupta I<sup>1</sup>, which was confined to a single type, showing the Gupta emperor and his queen on the obverse and mentioning on the reverse the name of the powerful Licchavi clan from which the bride hailed

However, from the time of Samudragupta, the illustrious son and successor of Chandragupta I, the Gupta Kingdom seems to have been turned into the shape of an empire. Samudragupta is known to have issued coins of different types. His coins types comprise (1) *Standard type*, (2) *Archer type*, (3) *Battle-axe type* (4) *Aśvamedha type*, (5) *Lyrist type* and (6) *Tiger-slayer type*. Of these standard type is most common.

The Archer type, which was rather rare with Samudragupta, becomes most common with Chandragupta II.

Kumāragupta I continued the *Archer, the Horseman, the Lion slayer* and the *Chattra* types, which were most popular in the preceeding reign. He introduced several new types of coins such as *Kārtikeya, Elephant-rider, Rhinoceros-slayer* and the *Elephant-rider-Lion slayer types*.

The decline in the fortune of the Gupta empire, that started with the accession of Skandagupta, is perhaps responsible for the absence of that pleasing variety of types. Only two types of coins were issued by Skandagupta in large numbers. One of them was the *Archer type*, so popular in the two previous reigns and the other was his *Numismatic novelty*.

Most of the successors of Skandagupta confined themselves to a single type, viz, the *Archer type*. Such is the case with Budhagupta, Narasimhagupta, Kumāragupta II, Viṣṇugupta and Vainyagupta.

Of the various types of coins of the Gupta monarchs we have selected the Archer which was introduced by Samudragupta in the last phase of this reign and was continued by his successors for a detailed study.

### **The Archer Type**

**I. Description-** The coins of the Archer type of Samudragupta may be described as follows:

**Obverse :** King standing left, nimbate, dressed as on the standard type, holding a bow with string inwards by l hand and reverse had either holding an arrow or offering oblations on alter Garuda standard with fillets on l. in front of the king; crescent between the king's head and the banner in some cases. Legend commencing at 1. *Apratiratho Vijitya Kṣitim sucaritair (or avanīśa) divam jayati.*

**Reverse :** Goddess (Lakṣmi?) seated as on the standard type, holding cernucopiae in l. and noose in the reverse hand. Symbol on l. only. Legend, *Apratirathah.*

The coins of this type are usually divided into two classes. In class I. the emperor is holding an arrow in the right hand; in class II he is offering oblations by that hand. No coins of class II, however have been illustrated, and they can no longer be traced. Three specimens of it's are stated to have

been found in the Bharasar hoard<sup>2</sup>. It is indeed strange that it should have had no specimen of the usual type showing the king as holding an arrow. It may be pointed out that if carelessly observed, it produces a fleeting impression that the king is offering oblations, the transverse fingers touching both arrow and the staff of the Garuda standard appearing like an altar. Whether the so-called altar on the Bharasar specimens was of this type, we do not know, as no photographs of their have been published and the coins are now untraceable<sup>3</sup>. Since, however, the reverse legend is definitely stated to be *porakramah* and not *Apratiratah*, we may perhaps presume that class II of the Archer type does exist. It represents a transition from the standard type to the Archer type class I. For, while the king is shown as holding a bow in the left hand, he is shown as offering oblations by the right, as on the standard type.

In class I, we can distinguish two varieties based on the difference in the legend which reads *Apratirtho Vijitya Kṣitim Sucaritair Divam jayati*. In variety B, the word '*avaniso*' supplants the word *sucaritairh*. The reading *mavaniso* is however, conjectural. Only its first two letters are visible and their reading is not distinct on the photography published as yet. Only two coins of this variety are known.

## II. Justification of the title :

The Archer type is an adaption of the standard type. There are more than one varieties but there is hardly any ambiguity over the title of this type. The king is shown here as an archer holding a bow with his left hand. So the coin type is obviously called Archer type.

## III. Legends :

There are two distinct obverse legends on the coins of the Archer type. That on variety A is read.

*Apratiratha vijitya kṣitim sucaritair divam jayati*. It means 'having conquered the earth, the invincible king wins heaven by good deeds'.

Variety B has a slightly different legend. It begins similarly with '*Apratiratho vijitya kṣiti*'; the next two characters are clearly *ma*, *va*; the first characters on the left is probably *ma*, and there is space for two or three more akṣaras before the next, the last of which must be '*Avanipatir*' has been suggested as the word required to complete an upagiti line, but this may not be correct. A coin acquired by W. E. M. Campbell, clearly shows that

there are only two *akṣaras* before the end, of which the first is distinctly as suggested the next is clearly; the word therefore is 'avaniso', a synonym of 'avanipatih' and the legend should be: 'Apratiratha vijitya ksitm avaniso divam jayati'. It means, the invisible king, having conquered the earth, coins heaven (being already) the lord of earth.

The epithet 'apratirathah' - matchless, unrivalled, invincible - which is also found on the reverse, was a favourite one with Samudragupta. It occurs in the Allahabad inscription, while the synonymous expression 'aprativa ryarirayah' is found in the Eran inscription.

The Bharasar hoard of Gupta coins is said to have contained three coins of the Archer type, where the king on the obverse was seen offering oblations on altar by the right hand in stead of holding an arrow in it. The legend on the reverse of these coins is 'paragramah' and not 'Apratirathah'. These coins have not been illustrated, and therefore we cannot be sure of their constituting a new variety in this type.

#### **IV. Chronology :**

The Archer type of Samudragupta is one of the rarest types. The Bayana hoard has only three coins of this type while the British Museum and Indian Museum have only four coins each and the Lucknow Museum possesses only one. The Archer type was destined to become the most popular one in the succeeding reigns; it continued in use down to the end of the dynasty.

In the long reign of Samudragupta the scarcity of the type suggests that the king started to issue these coins almost in the last phase of his reign. The obverse legend of this type vary in this type.

In variety A we have one word 'sucaritair' when in variety B it is 'Avaniso'. This variation is not to be called unintentional and from the difference of its meaning it is said that these two varieties were issued in different times of Samudragupta's reign.

#### **V. Process of Indianisation :**

The Archer type represents another direction of the effort of the Gupta mint-masters to Indianise the foreign prototype. The standard in the left hand of the king in the standard type was superfluous in view of the Garuda standard appearing in his front as well. King as his own standard in

the king's left hand was therefore replaced by the battle-axe in the battle-axe type; here we find it supplanted by the bow.

The offering of oblations on alter by an individual wearing coat, trousers and boots was inconsistent with the Hindu ideas of purity and religious etiquette. In the Archer type, therefore, we find the king shown as holding an arrow in the right hand. The reverse of this type, however, shows no effort at Indianisation, as does the reverse of the Battle-axe type; the goddess continues to be seated on high-backed throne, holding a fillet or noose (paśa) in the right hand and a cernucopiae in the left. The latter is not yet replaced by the lotus.

## **VI. Provenances :**

The Bharsar hoard, discovered in 1851, near Banaras, consisted of coins of the emperor from Samudragupta to Skandagupta, three coins of the Archer type of Samudragupta have been found. Except Hajipur hoard (one Archer coin) and the biggest Bayana hoard we have no hoard contained of Samudragupta's Archer coins. In the Bayana hoard we have two coins of variety A and one coin of variety B. Besides these we have a number of hoards. For instance-A hoard found at Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh. The Gopalpur hoard found in Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh consisted of twenty pieces, of which seven were of Chandragupta II. The Jhusi hoard found at Jhusi opposite Allahabad is said to have consisted of twenty or thirty pieces, of which two were of the Archer type of Kumāragupta II.

At Banka in Bhagalpur district of Bihar four Gupta coins were discovered in 1912. But the types are not known.

A hoard of Gupta coins was found in a mound on the bank of the Rapti. Some of the coins in the collection of Hoey, which is now with D.G.Hamilton, were apparently from that hoard, according to the information supplied by the latter gentleman. At Pattan in Baitul district of Madhya Pradesh a hoard was apparently discovered at an unrecorded date;

At Devattha village in Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh, a big hoard was reported to have been found in circa 1940 A.D. consisting of more than a thousand Gupta gold coins. No coins, however, could be recovered;

**VII. Metrology of the Archer coins of Samudragupta :**

The earliest Gupta coins follow the standard of their late Kuṣāna prototypes. Ten well-preserved coins of Samudragupta's standard type average 118.9 grains, four of the Archer type. These figures agree very well with the weights of the late Kuṣāna coins of the third century which run from 118 to 122 grains. The variation of four to six grains in well preserved specimens of the same type of Samudragupta's coins may be due to variations of the standard in different districts, but it probably shows that little effort was made to strike the coins accurately on a particular standard, and that they were considered rather as medals than coins.

In the Archer type of this ruler the Bayana hoard have two coins; one, which is slightly worn out, weights 115.6 grains and the other, which is well preserved, weights only 108.2 grains. Obviously the later is a 'reminder' coin, the last piece to be issued in a particular minting operations. The five coins described in the coins of British Museum, Gupta Dynasty, were all issued to the standard of 120 garins; their actual weights vary between 116.4 and 120 grains.

**VIII. Chandragupta II Vikramaditya continues the Archer type :**

Though we have a little amount of Archer type of Samudragupta, it became very popular in the succeeding reigns and it continued in use down to the end of the dynasty. Among the other issues of this type Chandragupta II obviously acquires the top position for the quantity of this type. Besides Chandragupta II we have almost all Gupta rulers who issued this type in their reign. The Archer coin of Chandragupta II, which is represented by 798 coins in the Bayana hoard, was undoubtedly issued as a mass production, but it should not be supposed that the coins of this type present a dead uniformity. The creative vein was the most characteristic feature of the Gupta art, and it urged the mint-masters to attempt ever new variations within the frame-work of the main type. The name of king 'Candra' is written sometimes under his left arm, sometimes between the bow and bow-string and sometimes outside the string. Sometimes the string of the bow is inside and sometimes it is outside; sometimes the bow is held of the top and sometimes by the middle at its back. Usually the bow is in the left hand and the arrow is in the right; but sometimes the position is reversed. Generally the Garuda standard is on

the left, but sometimes it is on the right also. On several coins the king's head is adorned with different varieties of beautiful crowns, but very often he is bare headed with curly hair falling down like a wig on the neck.

Coins of the Archer type are usually divided into two classes<sup>5</sup>, class I with the Throne Reverse and class II with the Lotus reverse. All the coins of this class known so far are issued to the weight standard of 121 grams. The coins of class I bear closer resemblance to the Kuśāna prototype than those of the class II i.e. the Lotus reverse. The goddess on their reverse appears on high-backed throne, which replaced by a Lotus in class II. It was therefore thought that the coins of class I were issued either early in the reign when the Kuśāna influence was still dominant or in the north-western part of the empire, where the foreign prototype might have continued to be copied down to the end of the reign<sup>6</sup>.

In class I of the Archer type, the obverse shows the king dressed usually in Kuśāna coat and trousers and holding the bow in the left hand and the arrow in the right, as was the case with the Archer type of Samudragupta. There is also a Garuda standard in his front. The coins of this class are divided into four varieties. In variety A the name 'Candra' is written vertically under the left arm<sup>7</sup>. In variety B, the bow is held with the string inwards and the name of the king 'Candra' is written vertically between the bow and the bow string. The variety C differs from the above variety in having the bowstring outside; it is a new variety disclosed by the Bayana hoard. In variety D the bow is held at the middle with its spring outside, 'Candra' being written vertically outside the string. The obverse legend on all these varieties is 'Devāśrīmahārājandhirāja-Śrī-Candra Gupta'.

The reverse of all these varieties show the goddess seated on the throne, whose back is visible in some cases and invisible in others. The right hand of the goddess is sometimes empty, but sometimes it is scattering round coins. In the left hand the goddess holds sometimes a cornucopia, and sometimes a lotus, and holding a roose in the right hand and a lotus instead of the cornucopieae in the left hand, may be regarded as forming the transition to class II. The obverse of the coins of class II bears a general resemblance with that of the obverse of class I; the circular legend is also the same. King is generally bareheaded, but he usually wears a *dhoti* instead of trousers; he, however, continues to wear the Kuśāna coat. The goddess

on the reverse is now definitely identified with Lakṣmi; She is seated on a lotus and holds another lotus flower in her left hand, the right hand usually holding a *pāśa*.

Four main varieties of the lotus reverse class may be distinguished according to the obverse. The obverse of variety A is quite distinct, where 'Candra' is written vertically under the left arm of the standing king and the king does not hold on arrow, but is drawing one from a quiver which stands in the place occupied by the altar on earlier coins; Mr. R. Buon, who first called attention to this rare variety described the object as an altar, but it may more appropriately be identified as a quiver full of arrows, the king holds the bow as usual by the top.

The variety B, show a hunter hanging by the side of the king<sup>8</sup>. The same observation holds good of the variety C, where a sword is hanging by the side of the king instead of the hunter<sup>9</sup>. Varieties D, E and F are also new. Variety D resembles variety A in the obverse, but differs from it in the reverse in as much the right foot of the goddess is shown as hanging down the lotus, the left one being tucked up. Variety E differs from all other varieties in having no vertical legend 'Candra' on the obverse. Variety is quite peculiar; its reverse legend is 'Candragupta' instead of the usual on 'Srivikramah'. In variety G, the position of the bow and arrow is reversed; the bow is held in the right and the arrow in the left hand<sup>10</sup>. Variety H partially resembles variety A; it differs from it, in as much as the king looks to right though his body is turned to left. Variety I of this class show the king holding the bow in the left hand by its middle with its string outside, 'Candra' being written vertically outside the string<sup>10</sup>.

#### **IX. Kumaragupta I and the Archer type :**

The Archer coins of Kumar Gupta I are divided into seven classes according to their legends instead of as previously into two according to the position of bowstring the obverse type shows little or no variations on the different varieties. The king is conventionally represented standing to l. as on the Archer type of Chandragupta II, holding a bow in his l hand and an arrow in this right hand. The variations in the reverse type are equally trifling; here again we have the goddess Lakṣmi seated facing on a louts, holding a lotus in her l. hand and as a rule a fillet in right hand.



But Altekar says that the classification of this type is not easy. We propose to classify the coins by the presence or absence of the term 'Ku' or 'Kumāra' on the obverse. Class I consists of coins which have 'Kumara' under the left arm of the king. The legend is in prose, *Mahārājādhirāja-Sri-Kumāraguptah*, coins of this class are all issued to the standard of 124 grains. In class II the verticle legend 'Kumāra' is engraved outside the bow. Here variety, A shows the same legend as beginning with 'Guneso mahīṭalam' and probably ending with 'Jayati Kumāra'. Both the varieties are of the standard of 121 grains.

In class III, we have 'Ku' under the arm of the king. In variety, A, the legend is *vijitavaniravanipatih Kumāragupta divam jayati*. In variety B, the legend is *Jayati mahīṭam Sri-Kumārguptah* and in variety C, it is extended by adding the word *Sudhanvi*<sup>11</sup> at the end. The coins at all these three varieties are generally issued to the standard of 127 grains, though in variety A. We sometimes get some rare coins weighing 130 and 124 grains.

In class IV, we have neither *Ku* nor *Kumāra* in the field. Here in variety A, the legend is *Paramarājādhirāja-Sri-Kumāraguptah* and in variety B, *Jayati mahīṭalam Sri Kumārgupta*. The standard of 127 grains prevails in this class.

#### X. Skandagupta and the Archer type :

The most popular type of coin of Skandagupta was the Archer type, as was also the case with his grandfather. But his Archer type hardly shows any variety on the obverse either in the position of the king or in the way in which he holds the bow or in the manner in which the name of the king is written in the field. The king is in coat and trousers, and not in *dhōti*, always faces left, and holds the bow in the left hand at the top and the arrow in the right. His name Skanda is always written perpendicularly under the left arm, never between the bow and the bowstring or outside the string. We can however, classify the coins into two varieties, mainly by the weight standard. Coins of the variety A follow the weight standard of 132 grains and those of variety B of 144 grains. The latter usually look larger than the former.

The circular legends of both the varieties are not yet completely deciphered; that is the variety A seem to be *Jayati mahīṭalam Sudhanivi*<sup>12</sup>. In variety B the legend was probably *parahitakāri rāja jayati divam Sri-*

*Kramāditya*. The metre would be upagiti. It must be, however, added that the word *rāja* is not clear on any specimen and on some coins, the letter after Parahita seems to have been a conjunct. Smith states that on one coin of this class (belonging to Mr. Barstow) the obverse legend contained the word *Vikrama*<sup>13</sup>. He has not, however, illustrated the coin. His view that the legend on this variety was *Parmarikram Sri-Skanda-guptadeva* does not seem to be correct. The reverse legend in variety A is *Sri-Skandaguptah*, that in variety B, *Kramādityah*.

#### **XI. Wrongful attillation of the Archer type of Purugupta :**

The brother of Skandagupta named Purugupta, was once supposed to have issued the gold coin of the Archer type, with the biruda *Vikrama*. One variety of these coins had no distinctive name of the emperor on the obverse, the reverse giving only the legend *Sri-Vikrama*. On a solitary coin of the other variety, however, along with the legend *Sri-Vikrama* on the reverse, there was a name under the king's left arm. This name was read as *Puru* by Allan and it was therefore assumed that all heavy weight coins with the biruda *Sri-Vikrama* were the issues of Purugupta.

For a long time, the question could not be settled with certainty. For, on the solitary coin known till 1948 the first letter could be read both as *pu* or *bu*. The second letter could be taken as a slightly misshapen *dha* or a blurred *ra*, the flan having moved during the striking. In 1948, however, two new coins of this type were found, where the reading of the obverse legend under the arm was clearly *Budha* and the reverse legend was *Sri-Vikrama*. It thus became quite clear that the king, who issued these coins, was Budhagupta.

#### **XII. Kumārgupta II and the Archer type :**

Kumāragupta II, the great grandson of Kumāragupta I, also issued coins of the Archer type<sup>15</sup>. It is no doubt that coins of Kumāragupta II have also *Ku* under the left arm as those of Kumāragupta I; they also have a Legend similar to that of class I and IV of Kumāragupta I, viz., *Mahārājādhirāja Sri Kumārguptah*. But their weight standard is that of 144 grains, which had not been adopted by Kumāragupta I. The reverse legend is also not *Mahendra* with *Kramāditya*. There can be no doubt that the Archer type with *Kramāditya* on the reverse was issued by Kumārgupta II and not by his great grandfather Kumāragupta I.

### **XIII. Archer type of Ghatotkaca :**

We come to know from Tumain fragmentary inscription (435 A.D) the name of Ghatotkacha, who appears to have been a son, or perhaps a brother of Kumāragupta I. It is possible to attribute him the solitary Archer type coin (in the St. Petersburg Museum) bearing the legend *Ghato* under the king's left arm. There is only one coin of this ruler and its attribution is not free from difficulty. Bloch attributed it to the father of Chandragupta I but Archer type is hardly considered to be issued before Samudragupta. It is further admitted that the Tumain inscription does not enable us to find out the precise relationship between Kumāragupta I and Ghatotkatchagupta (the Mālwa governor), so we have to wait for further consideration.

### **XIV. Archer type of Narasimhagupta :**

Narasimhagupta probably succeeded his father Purugupta. He first introduces single letter between the feet of the king. On the coins of this ruler the letter *gre* or *gu* appears on the coins of both the varieties. Such letters occurred on the late Kuṣāna coins, but were discontinued by the early Gupta emperors. Why they were introduced by Narasimhagupta and continued by most of his successors and what was their significance is not yet known. His coins are divided into two classes. Class I consists of circular legend *Bālāditya* while it is absent in class II.

### **XV. Archer Coins of Budhagupta :**

Budhagupta confined himself only to the Archer type which shows no variations in details. The weight standard was in between 142.7 grains and 144.5 grains. The king is always facing left, holding the bow at the top. In class I the name of the king *Budha* is engraved under the left arm; in class II, this feature is absent. There is a circular legend on the obverse, but it has not yet become possible to decipher it, as it is fragmentary and indistinct. Initial letters appear to be *paraha* it may have begun with *parahitakari*.

### **XVI. Viṣṇugupta and the Archer Coins :**

Viṣṇugupta, who was probably the last Gupta ruler issued gold coins of the Archer type. The weight standard was in between 147 and 151 grains; their size was however, rather small, its varieties between 0.75" and 0.8". Between the King's feet occurs the letter *ru*, which is seen to figure on the coins of Prakāśaditya, under the King's left arm, we have the legend *Viṣṇu*,

but there are not traces of any circular legend on the obverse. The King's biruda on the reverse is *Sri-Chandrāditya*.

**XVII. Reason behind the increase in the weight of coins :**

We find that the Archer type issued by Samudragupta was of 119 to 121 grains standard but from the time of Chandragupta II, the standards of 121, 124 and 127 grains were followed. In the reign of Skandagupta, all these standard were given up; his King-and-Lakṣmi type and one variety of the Archer type were issued to the standard of 130 or 132 grains, while his second variety of the Archer type was issued to the standard of about 144 grains, which is identical with the ancient Indian *Suvarṇa* standard of 80 rattis.

We are not yet able to explain why the weight standard of gold currency should be gradually increasing from reign to reign. It is possible to argue that gold was becoming cheaper in terms of silver and hence the state felt compelled a progressively bigger gold coin to its subjects. There is, however, no evidence to show that gold was thus actually getting cheaper; it may be also doubted whether the gold currency was accurately adjusted to the prices of silver in ancient times.

The other possible explanation is that the government wanted to replace the foreign standard of 121 grains by the indigenous standard of 144 grains. This is quite a plausible view, but one wonders why the government found it necessary to take about 75 years to achieve this desideratum. It could have introduced the Indianised standard all at once, without going through the intermediate stages of 124, 127, 132 grains. It may be pointed out that the jump from 132 grains to 144 grains, taken by Skandagupta, was quite a big one. Why was not a leap of a double the magnitude taken at an earlier stage?

There is no doubt that the heavy weight standard of the later Guptas was intended to conform to the *Suvarṇa* standard. But what was given by one hand was cleverly taken away by the other. The coins of the early Guptas contained an alloy of 10%, as has been observed by Cunnigham. A coin of 125 grains would thus contain about 113 grains of pure gold. The coins of Skandagupta, Budhagupta, Prakāśaditya, Narasimhagupta and Kumārgupta II contain an alloy about 25%. So their coins weighing about 150 grains also contained only 113 grains of pure gold. It is usually assumed that the strained

condition of the imperial treasury was responsible for the adulteration of the Gupta gold currency. This does not seem to have been the case. It is forgotten that every gold coin in ancient India was accepted at its real value and not at its face value. The state in ancient India was not bound to issue coins; many governments did not issue them at all. Altekar believes that the heavier alloy of 25% in the coins of the later Gupta emperors was due to the desire to have a coin of the traditional weight of Suvarna, but giving only 112 grains of gold as before.

### **XVIII. Later imitations of the Archer type :**

The tradition of issuing the Archer type of coins was continued in post Gupta India by some kings who do not seem to have been in any way related to the Imperial Gupta dynasty. It is in this connection that mention may be made of King Samacaradeva of East Bengal, who is known to have issued, in silver, some coins of the Archer type. They bear on the obverse the Standing figure of the King holding a bow and an arrow in his hands. The same is the case with the Gupta kings as represented on their Archer types of coins. But the Archer coins of Samacaradeva show a striking departure from the Archer coins of the imperial Guptas. The Gupta coins would almost invariably show the Garuda standard. This is in tune with the predilection of the Gupta Kings for *Vaiṣṇavism*. But the Archer coins of Samacaradeva show a *bull-standard*, i.e., a standard surmounted by the *bull Nandi*. Samacara seems to have espoused the cause of *Śaivism*. This explains the occurrence of the bull standard on the obverse of his Archer coins. The reverse of these coins showed the Goddess *Lakṣmi* as is usually on the practice with the Gupta coins.

Another King of Bengal, Jayanāga, who is usually placed between 550 and 675 A.D., is likewise known to have issued the so called Archer type coins in silver. This coinage of Jayanāga is a close copy of the well known Archer type of the imperial Guptas. The obverse shows the King usually standing to the left but sometimes facing also and holding bow and arrow. The reverse has *Lakṣmi*, seated on Lotus. His coinage replaces the Garuda standard by the *Cakra-standard*, which had made its appearance on the coinage of *Kaca* and on one variety of the Archer type of Chandragupta II. *Cakradhvaja* is quite appropriate for a *Vaiṣṇava*.

The Archer type was also issued by some local rulers of East Bengal, who seem to have come to power in the period following the death of *Sasasika*.

The coins of these Kings have been found in the districts of Bogra, erstwhile, Tipperah, Dacca and Fairdur. Opinions differ on the identity of this ruler. But these coins are too worn out to warrant for a correct reading. These coins show as usual the King standing to left holding a bow in left hand and arrow in the right. The reverse shows a goddess who is sometime represented as being eight armed. Some of these coins bear on the obverse the figure of a horse, a feature which is conspicuous by its absence of the coinage of the imperial Guptas.

It can be concluded that the Archer type is an adaption of the standard type. In this type there is a conscious effort to Indianise the standard type. The notion of a king offering oblations, while dressed in coat and trousers, was foreign to Hindu tradition the motive was adopted from the Kuṣāna prototype on account of the persistent conservatism, which is so characteristic of Indian Numismatics. We, however, see the mint-master gradually improving upon the prototype by representing the king as *Dhanurdhara*, or bow-man in the case of Archer type.

It is usually assumed that the strained condition of the imperial treasury was responsible for the adulteration of the Gupta Gold currency. This does not seem to have been the case. It is forgotten that every gold coin in ancient India was accepted at its real value and not at its face value. The state in ancient India was not bound to issue coins; many governments did not issue them at all. Altekar believes that the heavier alloy of 25% in the coins of the later Gupta emperors was due to the desire to have a coin of the traditional weight of *Suvarṇa*, but giving only 112 grains of gold as before.

The Archer type, which was very scarce in the reign of Samudragupta, became the most popular type in the succeeding reigns. The Standard type was a foreign prototype and the Archer type was an adaptation of the standard type. The Guptas were trying to Indianise the foreign types and this conscious effort was distinct in their replacement of goddess, dresses and ornaments. So, the standard type which was purely foreign prototype was discontinued but the Archer type, which was a conscious effort of Indianisation, became popular in succeeding reigns.

**Footnotes & References**

1. The view that these coins are commemoration medals issued by Samudragupta in memory of his parents is untenable.
2. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, pp. 390-400, 1852
3. Altekar, A.S., *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, p.54 , Varanasi, 1957
4. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, I, 1889
5. The throne coins belong to the Northern provinces while the latter belong to the central or eastern provinces. No marked difference in fabric, however, can be noted as exists in the case of the standard coin of Samudragupta, and in the absence of satisfactory evidence finds, it is impossible to insist that these two classes are geographically distinct : *J. Allan*.
6. *Coins of the British Museum, Gupta Dynasty*, p. clii
7. It corresponds with variety of the *Coins of the British Museum, Gupta Dynasty*, p.Cly.
8. It is a new discovery disclosed by the Bayana Hoard.
9. The name of the King is written under his left arm; this differentiates this variety from the coin, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, p.168, 1894.
10. This variety was so far known from a solitary specimen published by Prayag Dayal : *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, p.211, 1920.
11. The grammatically correct form in Sindhava
12. The letter 'nvi' is usually written between Garuda and the head of the King
13. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, p.125, 1893
14. If the letter is taken to have a top mātra, it can be read as *pu*: if the top mātra is regarded as a part of the letter , it can be read as *bu*.
15. This type was once assigned to Kumāragupta I by Smith, but later he changed his views : *Journal of Royal Asiatic society*, p.116, 1893.