

Manish Verma

A Numismatist and Curator



Sonal Butley

Student, Hansraj College
Intern, UMRAN

Sonal Butley: Thank you for agreeing to this interview, sir. I understand that you've spent nearly a decade immersed in cultural heritage, specifically numismatics, working at the Hinduja Foundation. What first sparked your interest in history and culture, and what factor retained that drive over time?

Manish Verma: Since I was a young child, I have enjoyed going to historical sites and museums. History has made my world enlightened, dazzling, and explicit. It enables me to remember my roots and helps me comprehend who I am. For the simple reason that knowing the past helps us discern the present and gets us ready for the future, I have always been interested in history. My desire to contribute to my nation's cultural legacy has remained strong over time, and I have ultimately chosen to pursue a career as a numismatist.

SB: Numismatics is such an important historical discipline. What drew you towards it specifically? Would you say that it is a part of contemporary historical studies, or will you argue that it is a separate discipline in itself?

MV: As a source of historical data, coins are essential. These coins are a reflection of our nation's rich culture. They have seen the triumph and defeat of the state empires as well as the ascent and fall of the rulers. The development of Indian coinage sheds light on its significant influence on the political, cultural, and economic fabric of the country over the ages. It can be studied separately, such as Before Money, Coin Evolution, and the Continuance of Indian Coinage Tradition, and its significant stages over a long period of 2600 years. It is also a part of historical or contemporary studies.



Manish Verma is an accomplished researcher with a wealth of experience in Indian archaeology, specialising in Indian numismatics. Currently, Mr Verma is serving as curator of the Hinduja Foundation Antiquity Collection in Mumbai, India since 2015.



INTERVIEW

Mr. Verma has worked as a research associate at the Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies in Nashik for seven years. Along with conducting numismatic certificate courses in colleges, he possesses certifications in Digital Strategy.

SB: Your publication, *Coins of India*, is a significant contribution. I understand that you utilised the work of Dr. Navin Shah as well, who preserved India's numismatic heritage, an assortment of Indian coins spanning from 600 BC to 2022 AD. What was the process of thinking, writing, researching, and finally releasing this book? Did you face any challenges?

MV: The process was very interesting. I visited Washington, DC, in July 2017. In Maryland, USA, Dr. Shah is a well-known surgeon for prostate-related conditions. He is ninety years old now. Over the course of 70 years, he has collected about 2600 coins since his early years. Nearly every significant series and dynasty of coins is represented in this collection. He requested me for the coin documentation. This is a truly amazing collection. After documentation, I suggested Dr. Shah that your collection represents almost 2600 years of a long span of Indian Coinage Tradition, and it is nearly impossible for someone to collect coins which is representing 2600 years of history. It is an excellent collection for a book.

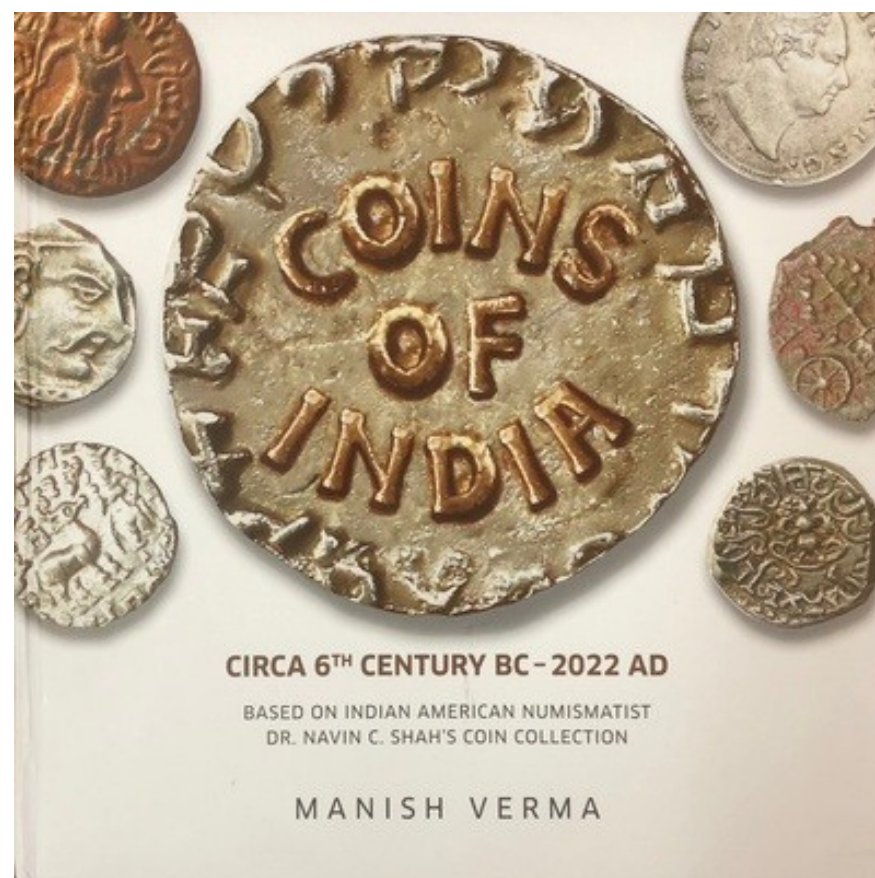
The current numismatic books on the market are mostly meant for academics and can be costly and complex, making them hard for the average coin collector to understand. I have tried to maintain the scholarly subject of this book while using simple language. *Coins of India* is a book that provides a thorough overview of the topic. Two main goals have been maintained: to explain the coinage's development and to demonstrate its importance in economic history as well as the cultural and political history of the era in question. It is intended for a diverse audience, including coin collectors, dealers, students, and researchers. The book includes maps that help to understand the territories of the dynasty or ruler, as well as more than 327 colour illustrations of coins. Before the evolution of coins.

The history and saga of Indian coinage tradition spans around 2,600 years, from 600 BC to 2022 AD. Earliest Coins of India and their features. Through the coins, explain different coin minting techniques and India's economic history.

Each coin's details are presented with its respective photograph, and, wherever applicable, transliterations and translations of the coin legends. Dating System on Ancient Indian Coins. Features of Islamic Coins: over 400 fascinating facts on economic history to readers. This book provides a detailed overview of the most crucial series/dynasties of Indian coins that will prove useful to college students and coin collectors in India and elsewhere.

SB: Sir, you have worked formerly at the Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies. What was that experience like, and what was your biggest takeaway there?

MV: I was quite fortunate to have handled 4,70,000 coins from various collections and institutions in India and elsewhere. In just eight years, the team I was a part of documented around 4,70,000 coins. The most important lesson I gained in the institute was how to interpret coin legends, both ancient and medieval, and then impart that knowledge to students.





SB: Can you tell us about the Hinduja Foundation's recently published *Kunindas and their Coins* by Shri Devendra Handa? Also, what will be incorporated in the Heritage of India Series?

MV: The book discusses the Kunindas, a tribe of North Indians who lived from the second century BCE to the third century CE, and their coins. There are several aspects of these coins, such as their legends, attributes, denominations, weighing patterns, and various forms of analysis. The foundation plans to publish books in the next few years that focus on different aspects of the Hinduja Foundation Coin Collection and Indian Coinage Tradition under the Heritage of India Series.

SB: You're now pursuing digital strategy and data-driven decision making. How do you envision these transforming future occupations and the job market?

MV: Now, on LinkedIn and our website www.hindujaheritage.com, I am working to promote heritage awareness through coins and the concepts of Digital strategy and data-driven decision-making are set to significantly reshape future occupations and the job market, driving the need for more data-driven professionals and creating new roles. These trends will also likely make existing jobs more reliant on analytical skills and automation, leading to both increased demands for certain roles and potential displacement in others.

SB: Last year, there was a debate on the internet regarding popular history and academic history after William Dalrymple's remarks that Indian academics are responsible for 'WhatsApp University'. What is your take on these approaches to constructing history?

MV: Academic history would, in my opinion, be given greater weight and should be presented objectively.

SB: What advice would you offer to students or early-career professionals who are passionate about coinage studies, but are unsure of how to go about it?

MV: No subject or discipline is unfair, in my opinion, and it is up to the students to adapt it using the most up-to-date techniques. There are several career opportunities for numismatists in museums and other institutions in the near future.

*Mr. Verma has obtained a Master's degree in Archaeology and Heritage Management from the Delhi Institute of Heritage Research and Management. As the author of **Coins of India**, he has meticulously documented the evolution of Indian coinage.*