

A New Coin of Ratna Manikya - 1

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So far Ratna Manikya-I has been identified as the first ruler in Tripura to introduce coins in the then princely State. But according to *Rajmala*, he does not seem to be the first who took the title of *Manikya*. The *Rajmala* has referred to a copper plate inscription of another Manikya i.e. Dharma Manikya – who ruled before Manikya. The copper plate inscription dates back to 1380 Saka era (AD 1458). Again, the inscription also referred to Maha Manikya as the father of Dharma Manikya-I.

That copper plate inscription was inscribed in Sanskrit. But it does not give any information about the area, inouja, village, border, etc. It is also worth mentioning here that from the very beginning of the reign of Manikya dynasty in Tripura, both Bengali and Sanskrit were used as court languages. We get several documents in support of this conclusion. We also get to see that Brahmanism pervaded the royal court in full bloom. It can be termed as a symbol of intelligence and farsightedness of the rulers of Tripura who realized that they were not in a position to keep aloof from the influence of a greater culture of neighbouring Bengal. So far the coins discovered of Ratna are found to have been minted in Saka era 1386 and 1389 (?), which falls in A.D 1464 and 1467. He introduced a good number of coins of varied and interesting characters. About 40 varieties of coins of his time can be seen. This coinage seems to be an unparalleled feature of the reign of Ratna Manikya by means of which he earned a great distinction and credit from the Numismatists and coin collectors who, in fact, are compelled to give special importance to Ratna Manikya and his coins.

The coins of Ratna Manikya show the influence of the Sultans of Bengal. This striking of coins, so artistic and aesthetic in an isolated hilly State, is really praiseworthy. It is felt that the artists who designed the coins of Ratna were most probably brought from the then Bengal. That is why, Ratna Manikya has been able to carve a niche for himself in the history of numismatics of India. Undoubtedly, this is part of the pervading cultural influence of greater Bengal.

Some of the characteristics of his coins are - a) use of high quality and skilled artistry, b) use of 14 sticks of 14 deities, c) imitation of lion's figure that was introduced by the then Sultan of Bengal Nasir-ud-din

Mahmod Shah III in A.D. 1445, d) use of lion's figure in his own style, e) use of the name of queen Lakshmi Devi before his own name, f) introducing memorial coin in respect of Ratnapur village conquest, g) use of names of different deities and h) use of Sanskrit language in Bengali script. In these coins he a) depicted more beautiful art work in the coins than those introduced by other rulers of the North-east, b) projected himself as an ambassador of culture, c) had much resource to bring out so many coins etc. Certainly these points reveal an unparalleled contribution of one in the field of aesthetics, art and culture, particularly when he was a tribal king of an under-developed region. So far the numismatists assumed that Ratna released his coins from the mintage at Ratnapur. But our opinion is that he introduced some of his coins in memory of Ratnapur conquest.

Let us now talk about the main coin which is the subject matter of this study. This coin also provides some new information.

The observe side of the coin can be described as

1. Sri Sri Ra
2. Tna Mani
3. Kya Deva.

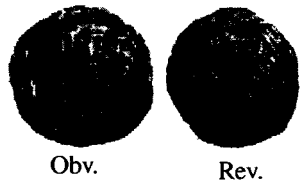
The coin is round shaped and has decoration on the outer edges.

The Reverse side

There is a line work of a lion running towards the left. The lion's figure is surrounded by small circles in which it is written "Sri Ha-Ri-Pa-Ra". Beyond there are two octagonal lines surrounded by decorative but with art works. To state briefly the artistic mode depicted in the coin is attractive.

Detailed description of the coin is as follows :

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| 1. Shape | - Round |
| 2. Metal | - Silver |
| 3. Weight | - 10.38 gm. |
| 4. Measurement | - 27 mm. |
| 5. Date | - No date (1386 Saka era assumed) |
| 6. Language | - Sanskrit |
| 7. Script | - Bengali |
| 8. Features | - Image of traditional royal lion is absent here. Ratna Deb dedicated this coin to his beloved god Sri Hari. |



Obv.

Rev.

Perhaps due to shortage of space, the dedication speech has been kept brief. Generally rulers of Tripura depict the name of devoted goddess or god in the obverse side of a coin.

9. Place where available - Tulashikhar, Agartala, West Tripura
10. Discoverer - The writer himself
11. Preserved at - Rajendra Kirtishala, Agartala

This coin stands as a testimony to the religious faith of Ratna Manikya. With this it can be perceived that he revered 'Hari' in addition to other deities. Mr. N.G. Rhodes, in his "*The Coinage of North-East India*" has referred to an identical coin of Ratna Manikya preserved at the British Museum. Unfortunately Mr. Rhodes misread the inscription as 'Sri-Hari-Hara' and he agreed with my new reading. The coins discovered so far establish that Maharaja Ratna Manikya-I introduced coins in the names of 14 tribal deities, Sri Durga, Narayan, Sri Hari, Parvati- Parameswar. The coin under discussion has more emphatically indicated his theosophical thought and faith. If we look deeply into the matter we can see that Ratna-Fa or Ratna Manikya was able to digest Hinduism and its essence fully. In that age such adaptation of a tribal king definitely speaks of his quality. His coins establish that he had also a good knowledge of Indian philosophy.

In other words, the *Shastras* in India have unified Vishnu, Narayan and Hari, i.e. Vishnu, Narayan and Hari are the deity. Dedication to Hari eulogy is the essence of Hindu *Shastras*, Hari in the form of Vishnu looks after the world. The coins of Ratna have also established him as a follower of Shaivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism. He was equally a follower of the 14 tribal deities.

For that it can be assumed that 'Shri Hari Para' was a shortened account of his devotion to Sri Hari. The term is perhaps - abbreviated form of Sri-Hari-Parayana or Sri Hari Charana Para to stand for offering into the knee of god Hari. Cropping of the sentence due to space problem has not at all reduced the artistic value of it. Rather it has augmented the same.

There is no authentic information confirming the period of the reign of Ratna Manikya and his life span. But from the copper plate inscription of 1410 Saka era or (A.D. 1488) of Bijoy Manikya-I who ruled most probably immediately after Ratna Manikya and the coin of Mukut Manikya of 1411 Saka era and a copper plate inscription of Dharma Manikya (probably Ratna's father) of 1380 Saka era, it seems that the authors of the *Rajmala* have made a mess of the pedigree of the genealogy of the Manikya dynasty.