Abstract

Siva is worshipped mainly in two forms, his unborn (Sathanu) or Linga form and his visible or anthropomorphic form. The Sthanu or Linga form is more ancient than Siva himself. We can say this as the chief image in the central shrines of Siva temple, is in a large majority the Linga and not anthropomorphically. It is commonly depicted on ancient Indian coin and regarded as the theriomorphic representation of Siva. From this study we can say that Linga is more ancient than Siva’s anthropomorphic form as we find Linga of 1st and 2nd C BC and there is a continuity in Linga worship till kusana age. In Gupta period we do not have depiction of Siva Linga on the coin but we have architectural sources which can prove that his form of worship was prevalent in that time also. Linga is Siva himself. In other words Siva resides in Linga. Therefore Linga is more sacred than Siva himself and it is theriomorphic form of Siva.

1. Introduction

Numismatic material throws valuable light on the different aspects of the society. Every coin as a piece of historical evidence tells story which are invaluable because it may add a new fact, or a name or a date to history of any period or dynasty. Coins are important to reconstruct many aspects of the history. They are helpful not only in political aspect but they throw valuable light on the
beliefs of people of that time. We found many devices or symbols on the obverse and reverse of the coins. These devices and symbols symbolically represent different beliefs and faiths. Although, it is difficult to ascertain the origin of the symbols but their religious importance has been upheld by mostly by all the historians from time to time. It also through valuable light on the changes which were gradually introduced in religious practices of the Hindus.²

On the coins we find theriomorphic, anthropomorphic and aniconic representation of Hindu deities. We also find various attributes associated with the deities like Trisula, Chakra etc. Animals like Bull, Peacock, Garud etc are the theriomorphic representation. Some other symbols like mountain symbols also signify some cult.³

From Harappan Civilization to Kusana coins we find the depiction of Siva in all his forms. Moreover from literary point of view Siva worship is of great antiquity. In Rig-Veda we find the references of Rudra, though not a primary god but worshipped by the people. When we study the symbols appearing on the coins from earliest (PMC) to early medieval times we find that Siva worship extended almost in all parts of India. In fact in Indian history no time has been known when Siva adoration or worship was not practise.⁴ Siva is worshipped mainly in two forms, his unborn Sthanu or Linga form and his visible or anthropomorphic form. Siva's Linga form was prevalent from the ancient times and it is more common representation of Siva. The chief image in the central shrines of Siva temple is in large majority of instances, the Linga. In this paper I want to submit that before appearing anthropomorphically on the coin Siva is theriomorphically depicted on the coins in its linga form. There is continuity in phallus worship from punch marked coins to Kusana coins. So I will discuss in this paper that linga worship though not mentioned in Rig-Veda but still it is related to Siva. Before appearing on the coins Siva was theriomorphically depicted on the coins. Till now we do not find any Siva temple without Linga.

2. Objectives

One of the oldest and widely worshipped in ancient India is that of Siva and known for showering blessing on his devotees very easily, that may be the reason why he was worshipped by a large number of people. Lord Siva because of being favourite in ancient times was portrayed symbolically (in his trident form) theromorphically (in bull and his linga form) and anthropomorphically. This emphasis that his phallic emblem or linga form is even more sacred then Siva himself that is why we find linga in all the temples and it is more ancient than Siva’s anthropomorphic form as we rarely meet with anthropomorphic images of Siva in the Shrines but we find Linga. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to fulfil following objectives

i.) Attempts to find out the meaning of linga or phallus and its antiquity or how it is associated to God Siva.

ii.) Attempts to prove that we find linga right from the Punchmarked coins to Kusana coins. There is continuity in linga worship.

iii.) I will try to prove that linga is Siva himself and when we worship linga we worship the Supreme God Siva.

Many works have been done on the iconography during ancient India highlighting architectural and numismatic aspects. Regarding Linga or phallus many works have been done but most of them dealing with architectural and epigraphic sources. But for depiction of linga on the coins of ancient India no such attempt has been done. The present work is based on numismatic sources. Epigraphic sources and literally sources will be used wherever necessary.
An attempt would be made to find the antiquity of Siva's Sthanu form or phallus worship and try to find that there is continuity in phallus worship from punch marked coins tribal, local coins and also on Kusana coins we also find coins which corroborates the view that Linga alone or with bull and trident was depicted on the coins. Before proceeding further we should know the meaning of the term phallus.

3. Significance of Phallus

Phallic worship or phallicism is an anthropological term and is used for the worship of reproductive power of nature symbolized by phallus. In Sanskrit the term used for phallus is Linga which means a mark or a sign that proves the existence of a thing. As a distinguishing mark, it also means a characteristic and specifically the sign of gender or sex. Phallus also represents the cosmic pillar that is the centre of the universe. Ligam or Linga is a traditional form of representing the deity phallus is associated with Siva who is often regarded as a god of generation, though he has been assigned the destructive powers in the Hindu Trinity. Mythological Phallus has two aspects external and internal. The external aspect is a worship of Siva with a visible sign which may be a mark or type but the internal Linga has nothing to do with the outward emblem. Linga Purana also divided Linga into two types viz. the external and the internal, the gross one is the external and the subtle one is the internal. The Linga belongs to omni potent lord i.e. lord Siva who is formless, he has no form of his own yet all form are his form. It is the object of the greatest sanctity even more sacred then any anthropomorphic image. It has three significance. They are Linga as sign; Linga as phallus and Linga as cosmic substance (Prakrti or Pradhana) which is the subtle body (Linga sarira) of Siva who is the absolute reality, "the imperishable Purasa." Linga or sign not only signifies the existence of perceptible things but also denotes imperceptible sense of a thing even before the thing in its concrete shape has come to exist. The Linga is Siva himself and not a mere external emblem of him.

Antiquity

Now question arises when phallic worshipping has been started. We don't have any exact date but there is every possibility that Linga worshipping have been inherited from Harappan civilization. The Phalli discovered from Indus Valley shows its association with Linga worship and they are interpreted as separate cult objects by the historians. The separate cult may be of the Linga worshippers. The worship of the Linga may be originated from the conceptions of god as the Great Father or procreator and this father god and mother goddess were worshipped in both anthropomorphic and symbolic forms by the pre Aryan peoples of the Harappa civilization. Moreover the Ithyphallic representation of proto Siva in the Harappan civilization is a phallic conception. We don't find much in vedas about phallic worship. The name given to the Linga worshippers are Sisnadevas in Rgveda which means whose god was Sisna or phallus. Those people were kept away from the Vedic sacrifice. Moreover India also slew them, so in Vedic period phallus worship in Indra was practised by the non-aryans and aryans were against the worship of any symbol and hate those who worshipped the Linga mark or symbol but whoever they were, the object of their worship survives to this day in the form of Linga.

It is during the Epic period when we have many references which shows that the phallic worship became popular. In Ramayana it has been mentioned that after victory when Ram was coming back with Sita he thanks the God Siva by making a symbol (Linga) of Siva and worship it. Ram propitiated Siva on the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent and in his devotion and gratitude to the lord for his blessing that enabled him to cross the ocean successfully established
there a sivalinga which is known as the tirtha of Ramesvara. Linga worship is also eulogized in Mahabharata. We find many references of Linga worship. It was mentioned that Siva frees creatures from the fetters of the world can be easily attainable and only he appears in the Phallic emblem. He is the supreme Phallic emblem which is being worshipped by both gods and Asures. He (Siva) is supreme God as all creatures bear the signs which mark Mahadev and his consort (Parvati) so all creatures must be considered as belonging to Maheswara. Siva is always present in the phallic form. It contains the seed, as the seed cannot be seen while in the phallus Siva is invisibly present in the Linga. The Linga is not the god but it is the shape in which Siva dwells invisibly. We also get references of Linga worship in Linga Purana. Pradhana is Linga and lord Siva is its substratum. The Linga is the great lord himself. In Agni Purana importance of linga worshipped is emphasized because it is in the lingam the god exists and lingam worship invariably leads to wealth, piety and find liberation of the soul. From the epic period onwards we can say that Linga worship became a prominent from of worshipping Siva inspite of his other form also.

We can now safely conclude from the above discussion that phallism in India is said to have pre Aryan origin as phallic symbols were discovered it may be a possibility of a separate or independent cult during Harappan civilization. Aryans were also aware of the practice but a type of social sanctity is not attached to it and it was not popularly practised in the society. But from epic period linga worship become very popular and from this period phallic cult became fused with the cult of Siva worship and became an established mode of Siva worship.

**Numismatic Evidences of Phallus Worship**

R.G. Bhandarkar held-that the Linga worship had not come into existence at the time of Patanjali and it was unknown even in the time of Wema Kadphises. In support of his statement he mentions the Mahabhasya and said that Patanjali, in his commentary on Panini Sutres has referred to the image of Siva and not his Linga as an object of worship. He further pointed out that on the coins of Wema Kadphises human figure of Siva in being represented with trident in the hand and also depicted Nandin or the bull but not a linga or phallus. D.R. Bhandarkar also observed that Linga worship was foisted in the Siva cult in the beginning of Gupta period not before that but the above theories cannot be accepted as we have not only literature sources which talk about Linga worship but we have abundance archeological material to prove that phallic symbol was widely prevalent in the society from very ancient period. We have this phallic symbol on the coins from punchamarked to the Kusana age with continuity.

**4. Linga on Punchmarked Coins**

Kumara Swamy remarked that the marks which we might expect but which are not found include ligam. Dr. J.N. Banerja also accepted the view that no symbol of Linga has been found on the punch marked coins and held that the earliest representation of linga was on the local and tribal coins. But on punch marked coins group (vii) var. e. var(g), var.h; (i) J, k. and l. group (viii) var a, b, Allan mentioned three cylindrical shaped objects in a line on pedestal. The central of these three is higher than two. However Allan said nothing about this symbol but it might be the three forms of Linga namely Daivika, Arshaka and Manusha. We can corroborate this possibility with the other symbols which are depicted on the coins. Other symbols are Taurine, Chakra or Sun symbol on obverse and three arched mountain with crescent on its top and Taurine symbol on obverse. The Taurine symbol has close association with bull's horn and bull also is associated with the cult of fertility as the Linga is. Besides this bull is recognised emblem of Siva. Other symbol mountain with crescent on its top stand for Girisa Chandrasekhar i.e. Siva. After discussing this we
may draw an inference that all these symbols appeared on these coins are of Saivite nature and there is every possibility that these three cylindrical shaped object may be lingam i.e. the theromorphic representation of Siva. Moreover Linga form of the central position recalls one of the copper coins of taxila (which will be discussed later in tribal and local coins).

Allan while describing punchmarked class 6 group 1 var. a,b,c,d coins mentioned the characteristic symbols on these coins symbols are the rhinoceros or unicorn and a square tank with four fishes around a central pillar or lingam. Other symbols on these coins are taurine symbol. Great importance has been attached to unicorn in the Indus valley culture. It shares the features of both bull and antelope; whose procreative power was celebrated and symbolically added to the virility of the bull, which is also the theriomorphic form of Siva. Taurine symbol as discussion earlier is also a Saivite in nature. Animals who are born of water are to be connected with gods and goddess of fertility and love. Fish directly stand for the phallus. Between love and fish there is perhaps an aphrodisiacal connection. The ensign of love is the makara the composite figure of a fish and it is considered as a conjoint sexual symbol like Siva Linga. So the representation of the fish in a tank on the punchmarked coins no doubt signifies the cult of fertility which also involve worship of water. Class II group X var. b pl. ix.25 Allan two fishes with a spearhead between them. But O P Singh is of the view that this is not a spearhead but a phallic symbol. As discussed earlier that fishes stand for phallus and the other symbols (Taurine, plant and tree-in-railing) which are Saivite in nature also prove that it is not a spearhead but it may be a Lingam. So Allan view is not acceptable here.

From the above discussion we can draw a conclusion that earlier observations that lingam symbol was not found on the punchmarked coins is not acceptable as we have number of phallus representations on the punchmarked coins.

5. Lingam on Local and Tribal Coins

Lingam also appears on tribal coins. Allan mentions an uninscribed caste coin which has on obverse a building (?) on l; tree in centre, a female figure in I; and on the reverse tree in railing on l; lingam on square pedestal on r. the province of the coin is unknown but mark of lingam is identified by Allan. The tree in railing on the coin stands for Sthalavkrksa which is associated with Saiva emblem. Allan has also described two square copper coins attributed to taxila. There is a representation of Linga on a summarily represented pedestal (indicated by a short wavy line). However Allan has not named the symbol and mentioned it an uncertain symbol. But it may be Linga because lingams with or without elaborate pedestals are known to have existed in ancient times. We've Gudimallam Linga which is the earliest one in Andhra Pradesh rises abruptly from the floor. Moreover the reverse symbols of these coins are also very significant. On the reverse it has a hill with two trees emerging from the middle of hill also help in coming to the conclusion that the obverse symbol is Lingam because Siva has connection with hills and forest. According to Hindu mythology Siva was believed to have his abode in Kailasa and he is also Girisa. In Mahabharata also many references came when Siva is connected with hills and trees. Seal from Bhitai unearthed by Sir John Marshal also shows various Saiva emblems with Linga. It bears an umbrella on one side and a trident on the other. The Linga is placed on a hill in the form of a well arranged pile of round balls. In this way connection of Sivalingas and hill is established beyond any doubt.
A Linga is also represented between the different trees in railing on the obverse of class I var. e from Ujjain. This symbol is same as the previous symbols which was depicted on taxila. Trees in railing is connected with Siva (Kalpavrksa) and was sacred tree in ancient times. The phallic emblems connection with tree can be corroborated by a seal in the collection of D.S. Nahar of Calcutta having a Sivalinga on it between two trees with the legend Padepesvara in Gupta text. Even now many of the important Sivalingas worshipped in India have their particular trees. So the evidences furnished by the seal no doubt corroborates the numismatic data.

Similar representations of Sivalinga on Arjunayana (2nd BC) var a. coins are also found. On the obverse a bull to l. apparently standing on a hill, while the reverse has a standing female figure who may be identified with the Laxmi standing between a Lingam and a tree. Many historians has the view that the carved object is not lingam and identified the symbol as Yupa but Allan's view appears to be more appropriate as on the obverse there is a bull which is theriomorphic representation of Siva. Hills and tree in railing are also Saivite symbols.

Sivalingas were also enshrined in the Siva temples from very early period. The Saivas in general used to place Sivalinga as the principal object of their worship in the main sanctum of the shrines of their god. From this point of view Yaudheya copper coins are also important as they depict structures of temples in which Linga is enshrined. One Specimen indicates that the structure enshrined a Siva Linga. Another coin carries a depiction of a structure supported on four pillars, surmounted by something which like on an oval shaped phallus capped by a crescent. The temple may have a Siva Linga. One another piece depict a Sivalinga placed in a square yoni-pitha with a triangular water chute.

This view may be corroborated by the seals and other temples in India. The exhibit No. H. 1 in the collection f the Lucknow Museum described as a 'Linga with a broadened top. It is a realistic type of emblem from the north but without the figure is Siva on its shaft.

From the above discussion we can unmistakably accept that the above mentioned category of Yaudheya copper coins has the Linga. On the Audumbra coins we find the same type of temple having trident. Yaudheya has both trident with or without battle axe and Linga on their coins. Both are the important emblem of Siva.

6. Phallic Worship in Kusana Age

We do not have only punch marked coins, local and tribal coins which proves that phallic worship was prevalent from very ancient period. But we have evidences that during Kushana king phallic worship was also prevalent. The Gold coin of Kushana Huvishka was described by Gardner. Description of the coin is as follows 'Siva facing three headed, nimbate, clad only in waistland ithyphallic, has four arms and hands, in which are goat, wheel, trident and thunder bolt. Siva in the Urdhvalinga form appears for the first time on the coins. Siva has described as ithyphallic in the Mahabharata also. This figure reminds us the Indus seal referred by Sir John Marshal where Proto Siva has been depicted ithyphallic. This coin set aside previously set observations that on Kushana coins Siva and his other attributes were depicted and not the linga. It establishes the fact that phallicism or phallic worship was fully recognised in the time of Huvishka.

7. Conclusion

Thus we can safely conclude that the deity Siva was worshipped and often represented as a phallic symbol called the Lingam in ancient India. Even today Siva is worshipped in both human
form and that of the phallus and it is the object of great sanctity even more than Siva's anthropomorphic form. It is set up in almost every Siva temple. The word Linga is used in the visible symbol. Linga worship is important form of worship but when it was originated is not certain. We have many stories which narrates how Linga was originated (Lingodbhavamurti) in the Hindu scriptures like Linga Purana, Vishnupurana, but the exact time period or era when its worship became popular is not known. We have evidences that Siva as well as phallic god were worshipped in Harappan time. Many phallies were discovered from Harappan and it gives the impression that it may be a separate cult. This may be defused in Siva cult in epic age. The vedas have also references about the Linga worship (Sisnadeva) though in deprecatory sense but one thing is certain that it was prevalent in that time though not so popular. Phallus worship has its roots in prehistoric times. We have punchmarked coins and local and tribal coins having lingam on it.

Many observations which tried to prove that Linga worship was not prevalent in India till Gupta age and observed that Linga worship was fused in Siva worship in the beginning of Gupta period are set aside because of the representations of ithyphallic Siva on Huvishkas coin.

We may safely draw the conclusion that Linga worship was the established mode of worship and it is the theriomorphic form of Siva.

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