

## New bust varieties of Half Rupees in the 'Victoria Empress' Coinage Leitton Rezaul

The study of the British Indian coinage is a vast area for researchers and new discoveries are constantly being made. In the Indian sub-continent, this is a popular subject for coin collectors. From the gold mohur to the twelfth anna, many denominations were introduced in the British Indian period from 1835 to 1947 with various metals and there is still much to be learnt.

A lot of work has been undertaken on varieties of the rupee denomination but comparatively little on lower denominations. The silver coins of Victoria are divided into various periods including a group labelled as 'Victoria Queen' (1874-76) and another as 'Victoria Empress' (1877-1901), depending on the Queen's title shown on the coins. This paper discusses two new obverse varieties of the half rupee of the Bombay mint in the 'Victoria Empress' period.

### The First New Variety

There are four types of obverse busts for the half rupee coins in the 'Victoria Queen' period. These have been labelled by previous authors: **A**, **B1**, **B2** and **C**. Bust **B1** and **B2** were used by the Bombay mint whilst Bust **A** and **C** were used by the Calcutta mint and there are many differences in the jabot panel and bodice embroidery floral design. Bust **A** sometimes has a small raised V-like symbol as a privy mark at the centre point of the baseline of the bodice and this was used in both the 'Queen' and the later 'Empress' period in the Calcutta mint. On some specimens the V looks like a reverse tick. Bust **C** was not used after the 'Queen' period.

In 1877, the first year of the 'Empress' period, the Bombay mint introduced a new bust for the half rupee, similar to **Bust A**. The new bust has a raised base-line at the bottom of the bodice and some new embroidery floral designs. An image of the new bust is shown below:



**Bust A1 with new features highlighted**

In the above image, the black base-line indicates the raised bottom line and the black marking areas indicate the new floral embroidery designs which do not match with **Bust A**. Apart from this, all the embroidery design is the same as **Bust A**, although a little thicker. A detailed comparison is shown below:



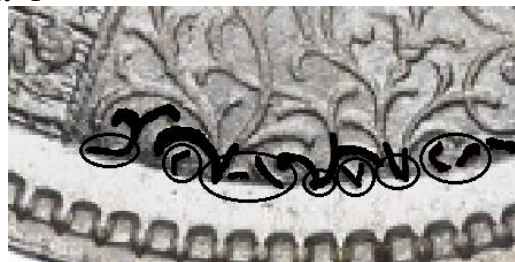
**Bust A**



**Bust A1**

A better understanding of the differences can be seen by splitting the images as shown below:

Part - 1

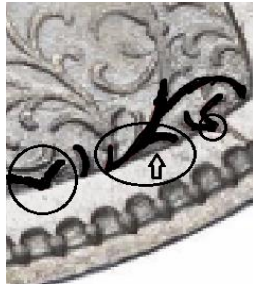


**Bust A**



**Bust A1**

The black base-line of **Bust A1** indicates the raised line which is absent in the **Bust A**. Both of these images have 7 black circles that show the differences in the designs.



**Bust A**



**Bust A1**

Both these images have three black circles which show the different embroidery designs and there is an arrow mark in both the images which indicates different gaps between the flower petal and the base-line of bodice.

The Bombay mint introduced this **Bust A1** in 1877 but, surprisingly, did not use this bust at a later date. They used **Bust B2** from 1877 to 1884.

#### The Second New Variety

In the second year of striking half rupees (1881), the Bombay mint introduced another new bust. This is similar to both **Bust A** and also the new **Bust A1**. This second new bust also has a raised base-line at the bottom part of the bodice but in some specimens this bottom raised line is not continuous but has sections cut out. It has a prominent embroidery floral design at the bottom part of the bodice and this does not match with **Bust A** or **A1**. Apart from these changes all other embroidery designs are same. The images given below show this second new bust (designated A2) introduced by Bombay mint in 1881:



**Bust A2 with new features highlighted**

The arrows show a raised base-line at the bottom part of the bodice. The new embroidery floral designs are also shown. The comparison of this new bust with **Bust A1** is shown below:



**Bust A1**



**Bust A2**

From the above images, many differences in the floral design can be seen. The only similarity is the base line at the bottom part of the bodice. It should be noted that some parts of the floral design have crossed the raised base line in **Bust A1** but not in **Bust A2**. As before, splitting the image into two parts makes this clearer:

#### Part 1



**Bust A1**



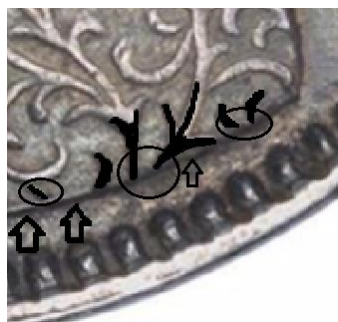
**Bust A2**

Each image has seven black circles and those circles indicate the embroidery floral design differences.

Part – 2



**Bust A1**



**Bust A2**

Each image has three circles to indicate the design differences of the floral embroidery. The only similarity between them is the arrow marked area. Both have the same gap in between the floral design and the base-line of the bodice.

The Bombay mint introduced the **A2** bust in the second year of striking the 'Empress' half rupee, 1881, and it was used in most of the following years. However, there are a few specific years in which this bust has not yet been recorded, for example 1899.

#### **Another New Feature of the Bombay Mint**

In 1882, the third year of striking 'Empress' half rupees, another small change was made. Pridmore mentioned this variety as the only **Bust A** variety of the Bombay mint in 'Victoria Empress' period (page 126). In this variety, there is a small raised V like design and in some specimen there is reverse tick like design added as a privy mark at the centre point of the baseline of the bodice (As mentioned earlier for the Calcutta mint). The present paper offers an opportunity to report a third variation of this privy mark, showing only the left stroke of the raised V. This is found on coins of the Bombay mint and is shown in the images below:



**Bust A showing complete V privy mark**



**Left stroke only of V privy mark**

#### **Acknowledgements & References:**

*THE COINS OF THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS, Part - 4 India. Volume 2 : Uniform Coinage East India company 1835-58 and Imperial Period 1858 - 1947. Author - F. Pridmore*

*The Uniform Coinage of India 1835 to 1947 A Catalogue AND Pricelist Author - Paul Stevens & Randy Weir SPINK*

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My thanks to Dr. Paul Stevens for his help in writing this article.