

New bust variety of ½ Rupee in Victoria Empress Period

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The study of the British Indian (BI) Coinage is an ongoing process; it is a vast area for researchers to research and present new discoveries. In Indian sub-continent, this is a popular subject for coin collectors. Discovery of new varieties on a regular basis makes this subject more interesting and thrilling. From gold Mohur to 1/12 Anna many denominations were introduced in the British Indian Period from 1835 to 1947 with various metal; perhaps not all the denominations were deeply researched.

Let's take the example of one rupee coins, it can be noted that in regards to one rupee denomination many authors, experts, researchers and even senior collectors wrote their books, catalogues and articles on one rupee coins and still they are doing their work on that and discovering new varieties, but comparatively this is rarely seen in case of other denominations. Many things are yet to discover in British Indian Coinage. Two new varieties of ½ rupee obverse of Bombay mint in Victoria Empress Period have been discovered which is described below along with all the varieties introduced by Bombay mint in Victoria Empress Period.

There are four types of Obverse busts that were considered in ½ rupee coins in Victoria Queen's period. These are bust **A**, **B1**, **B2** and **C**. Bust **B1** and **B2** were used by Bombay mint. Bust **A** and **C** were used in Victoria Queen's period for Calcutta mint and they both had many differences in their jabot panel and bodice embroidery floral design. Bust **A** has a small raised V like design and in some specimen reverse tick like design as privy mark at the center point of the baseline of the bodice which was used in both the Queen and Empress Period from 1862 to 1899 for Calcutta mint but bust **C** was not used after Queen's Period.

In 1877, the very 1st year of empress period, Bombay mint introduced a **NEW BUST** for half rupee which is similar to the bust **A**. The new bust has a raised base line at the bottom of the bodice and some new embroidery floral designs. This embroidery floral designs are small but much prominent to identify the mint and do not match with old bust **A** which was used by Calcutta mint from 1862 to 1899 (Queen and Empress both period). Two images of the **NEW BUST** are shown below:



NEW Bust

In the above images the yellow line indicates the raised bottom line and the red marking areas indicate the new floral embroidery designs which do not match with **A** bust. Except those new designs, all embroidery floral designs are same as bust **A**, but the bodice embroidery design is little thicker than the bust **A**. A detailed description is given below with the help of split images:



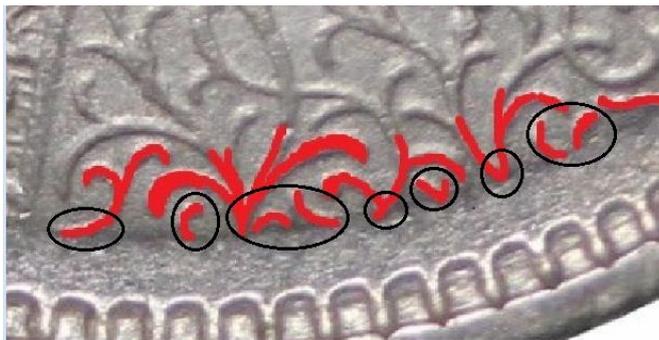
A bust



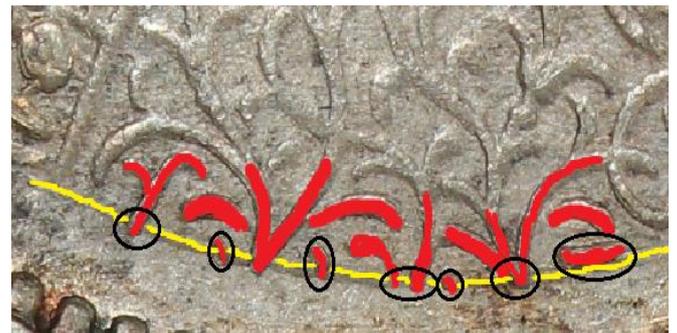
NEW bust

For better understanding the differences of those busts are explained in details by splitting it into 2 parts as shown below:

Part - 1



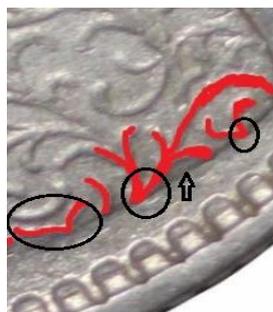
A bust



NEW bust

Left side image is from **A** bust and Right side is from **NEW BUST**, the yellow line of **NEW BUST** indicates the raised line which is absent in the **A** bust. Both of these images have 7 black circles marked area and they show the embroidery floral designs which reflect many differences between the two busts.

Part-2



A bust



NEW bust

Left side image is from **A** bust and right side is from **NEW BUST**. Both those images have three black circles which show the different embroidery designs of both the bust and there is an arrow mark in both the images which indicates different gaps between the flower petal and the base line of bodice.

By considering all the above discussions and comparisons it can be said that it is a **NEW BUST**, and this bust deserves a new name for recognizing. Since this bust is similar to bust **A**, so it can be named as bust **A1**. Bombay mint introduced this **A1** bust in 1877 and this bust always came with Reverse II. Surprisingly Bombay mint did not use this bust in later date (except any mule). No record was found for the **A1** bust in later date of Victoria Empress Period. Bombay mint also used old **B2** bust from 1877 to 1884 in half rupee of Victoria Empress Series which also came with Reverse II.

In their next striking year (1881) of Victoria Empress Period for half Rupee coins, Bombay mint introduced another **NEW BUST**. This bust is also similar with bust **A** and new bust **A1**. This new bust also has a raised base line at the bottom part of the bodice like bust **A1** but in some specimen bottom raised line of the bodice looks like cut out. It has some prominent embroidery floral design at the bottom part of the bodice which does not match with bust **A** or new **A1**. Except these changes all other embroidery designs are same. The images given below show a **NEW BUS** introduced by Bombay mint in 1881:



Another **NEW** Bust

This is the new bust introduced by Bombay mint in 1881; those blue arrows are showing a raised base line at the bottom part of the bodice and new embroidery floral designs are shown by red color. The comparison of this **NEW BUST** with bust **A1** is shown below:

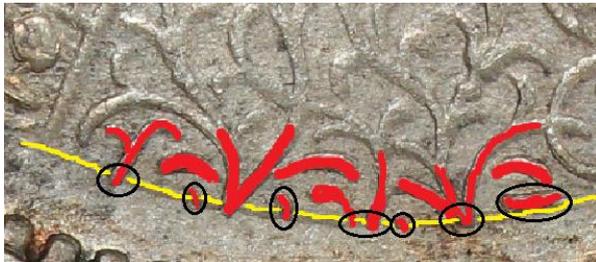


Bust **A1**

NEW Bust

From the above images many differences on the floral embroidery design can be seen. The only similarity is the raised base line at the bottom part of the bodice, it can be noted that some floral designs have crossed the raised base line in bust **A1** but in the new **NEW BUST** no floral design has crossed the raised base line. For better understanding of the bust details, splitting of the images with marked floral embroidery design area are done into two parts, as shown below:

Part - 1



Bust A1



NEW Bust

Left side image is from bust **A1** and right side image is from **NEW BUST**. Each image has seven black circles and those circles indicate the embroidery floral design differences. Those differences can be easily identified through each circle-marked area. 2nd part is shown below:

Part – 2



Bust A1



NEW Bust

Left side image is from bust **A1** and the right side image is from the **NEW BUST**. Each image has three circle-marked areas to clearly 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 floral design and base line of bodice.

Based on all these discussions, evidences and comparisons with other busts now it can be considered as a **NEW BUST** which is similar to bust **A** and new bust **A1**. So it should deserve a name as bust **A2** for recognizing. Bombay mint introduced this **A2** bust in their 2nd half rupee striking year of Victoria Empress Period 1881 and in most of the following years they used this bust. This bust came with all the Reverse I, II and II (i). However, there are few specific years where this bust has not been recorded yet, for example 1899.

In 1882 (3rd half rupee striking year of Empress Period for Bombay mint, 1st at 1877, 2nd at 1881), they introduced another **NEW BUST** which is pretty simple. Pridemore mentioned in his book about this variety as the only **A** bust variety of Bombay mint in Victoria Empress Period (page 126). Bombay mint used the **A** bust design (with minor change) which was used by Calcutta mint in both Queen and Empress Period from 1862 to 1899. In the **A**, bust there is a small raised V like design and in

some specimen, there is reverse tick like design as privy mark at the center point of the baseline of the bodice. However, in that **NEW BUST** there is no small privy mark raised V or reverse tick in the center point of the base line of the bodice but only the left stroke of raised V or reverse tick as privy mark.

Pridemore also mentioned about this privy mark (page 126) which is confusing. This bust actually came with both the Reverse I and II(i) with no change of the privy mark in bodice. Pridemore also mentioned about this bust with modern proof restrike in 1877 (page 127). Comparison of the **A** bust with **NEW BUST** of 1882 for Bombay mint is shown in the images below:



Bust **A**

Another **NEW Bust**

In bust **A** there is a raised V or reverse tick like privy mark in the center point of the base line of bodice (above left image) and in the **NEW BUST** there is only the left stroke in the same point of bodice (above right image). Except that little change, all embroidery designs are same as bust **A**. That difference is a minor one but very noticeable to identify the mint. So it can be considered as a new variety. Considering Bombay mint issuance of varieties over the subsequent years this variety may deserve a new name for recognizing as bust **A3**.

Based on all findings, information, comparisons and analysis, it is evident that in total Bombay mint used four different busts for their half rupee Obverse in Victoria Empress Period: Bust **B2** from 1862 to 1884 (both Queen and Empress Period), Bust **A1** only used in 1877 (no record found for further years), Bust **A2** from 1881 to 1898 (no record found yet in 1899) and Bust **A3** from 1882 to 1899. Interestingly, there are few dates for **A2** and **A3** which are very difficult to get, such as; **A3** is available in 1897 but not too easy to get in 1898. Considering those above described varieties there is chance for existence of **MULE** in that period. The images shown below are all the busts used by Bombay mint in Victoria Empress Period:



Bust **B2** from 1877 to 1884



Bust **A1** only for 1877



Bust **A2** from 1881 to 1898



Bust **A3** from 1882 to 1899

This article is based on circulated coins only.



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