

#CIVILISATIONS

When Greeks Minted Krishna and Balarama!

Around 180 BCE, an Indo-Greek king, named Agathocles of Bactria, minted coins that depicted Vasudeva Krishna and Samkarshana Balaramaa.



This isn't just a coin, it's a forgotten echo of civilizational crossover. In the swirl of history, where empires clashed and cultures intertwined, there are moments that stand out as extraordinary bridges between civilizations. One such moment came around 180 BCE, when an Indo-Greek king,

named Agathocles of Bactria, minted coins that depicted none other than Vasudeva Krishna and Samkarshana Balarama, figures revered in the Indian subcontinent for millennia. Yes, you read that right. A Hellenistic ruler, far from the heartland of Bharat, issued coins bearing the images of Indian deities, and even had their names inscribed in Greek script.

A Rare Coincidence or Conscious Reverence?

These coins aren't simply pieces of ancient currency. They are powerful symbols of cross-cultural respect and recognition. On one side, Balarama is depicted holding his traditional mace (gada) and plough (hala). On the other side, Krishna has, as

Vasudeva, is shown holding a conch (shankha) and discus (chakra). Both are named in Greek inscriptions as 'Sankarsana' and 'Vasudeva,' a striking indication that their identities were not just copied visually but understood at a deeper level.

Who Was Agathocles?

Agathocles was one of the Indo-Greek rulers who governed regions of modern-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, and northern India after Alexander the Great's campaigns in the East. These kings, though of Greek origin, ruled over a culturally diverse population, including Buddhists, Hindus, and follow-

ers of local traditions. Their coins often reflect this blend, featuring Greek deities on one side and Indian symbols on the other, or even bilingual inscriptions in Greek and Brahmī. But the coins featuring Krishna and Balarama go a step further. They don't just acknowledge Indian culture, they celebrate it.

Why Does This Matter?

In a world that often frames history as a binary struggle of 'us vs them,' 'invader vs native,' this moment from antiquity stands as a reminder that cultural exchanges and mutual respect were not only possible but actually occurred, often more than we realize. The coin of Agathocles is a tangible, metal-forged testam-

ent that Indian deities were honored, even beyond Bharat's borders, not through conquest, but through civilizational dialogue. It challenges the simplistic narrative of ancient India being isolated or always under threat, and instead suggests a more nuanced history of shared reverence and admiration.

The Legacy of Fusion

These numismatic gems are now rare museum pieces, but they carry timeless lessons. They reflect a world where identity was fluid, where rulers adapted to local cultures, and where divine figures transcended borders. So,

next time you think of Krishna and Balarama, remember, they were once immortalized not just in temples and scriptures, but on the coins of a Greek king who ruled far from Mathura, yet understood its gods.



● Kshema Jatuhkarna

In the rugged, high-altitude terrain of Ladakh, where the majestic Himalayas and Karakoram ranges meet, the Indian Army has unveiled a truly remarkable creation, a café built on the decommissioned Bailey Bridge over the Shyok River. This café is not just a symbol of innovation and resilience but also a testament to the Army's continued presence and commitment in one of the most strategically significant and challenging regions in India.

The Bailey Bridge : A Strategic Icon

The Bailey Bridge has long been a crucial part of India's military infrastructure. Originally constructed in the 1960s during the Indo-China War, the bridge served as a vital link to remote areas, particularly in the Ladakh region, which borders both China and Pakistan. It was named after the British engineer Sir Donald Bailey, who designed the modular bridge system used exten-

sively during World War II. The bridge, which crosses the Shyok River (a tributary of the mighty Indus), had been in operation for several decades. However, after years of service, the bridge was decommissioned due to wear and tear. But instead of letting the structure remain idle, the Indian Army chose to put its strategic location and structure to good use, transforming it into a café.

Location : A Café in the High Altitudes of Ladakh

Situated at a height of about 11,000 feet above sea level, the Shyok River Café sits in one of the most beautiful yet unforgiving landscapes on Earth. Ladakh, known for its barren landscapes, snow-covered peaks, and crystal-clear rivers, is also a region that has seen increased tourism in recent years. With its proximity to the Karakoram Range and Siachen Glacier, the café provides both

a strategic stop for military personnel and an astonishing experience for adventurous tourists. While the region is known for its remote and often harsh conditions, the café offers a warm, inviting space for trekkers, tourists, and soldiers alike. The breathtaking views of the river and surrounding mountains make it a perfect stop for those exploring the region's natural beauty.

A Symbol of Innovation and Hospitality

What makes this café extraordinary isn't just its location but also the manner in which it has been constructed and operated. The Indian Army, known for its ingenuity in remote and challenging environments, worked meticulously to transform the decommissioned Bailey Bridge into a fully functional, welcoming space. Design: The structure has been carefully crafted using military-grade materials, ensuring that it is robust and resistant to the harsh elements

of the region. The Army's engineering corps played a crucial role in refurbishing the bridge to accommodate the café, ensuring that the bridge could support the necessary infrastructure, including seating, kitchen equipment, and supplies.

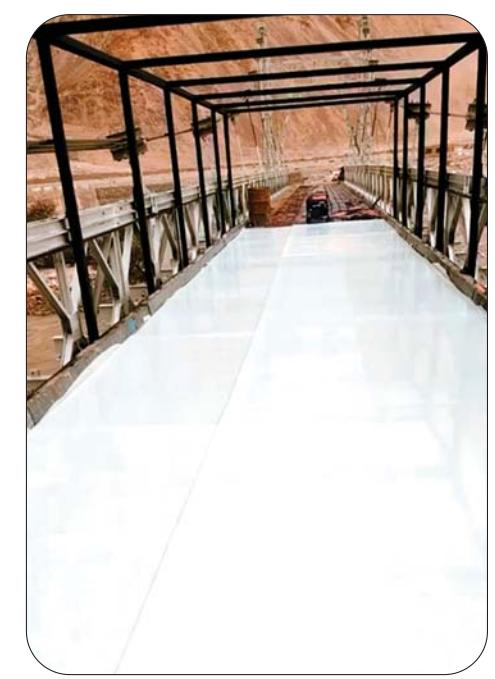
Ambiance: Despite the cold winds and the daunting terrain, the café offers a cozy and unique setting. It serves hot beverages like tea, coffee, and traditional Sulaimani chai, along with snacks and local delicacies, making it an essential

spot for those who wish to take a break and soak in the view. The rustic yet functional design gives it a charm that reflects both military efficiency and a welcoming atmosphere.

Community Engagement: The café has become a symbol of the Indian Army's engagement with the local community. The Army personnel who run the café interact with tourists, trekkers, and locals, helping to foster a sense of camaraderie and shared responsibility for the region's well-being.



#BREW WITH A VIEW



Warming Your Cockles' The Army Way

While the primary purpose of the café remains military, it has also become a growing attraction for adventurous tourists. Ladakh, with its stunning landscapes, has long been a destination for trekkers, motorbikers, and photographers. The café provides an ideal spot for travelers to take a break, enjoy a hot drink, and chat with Army personnel, gaining insights into the region's history and culture.



A Tourist Attraction

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A Bridge Between Tradition and Modernity

The café built on the decommissioned Bailey Bridge is not only a testament to the Indian Army's resilience and innovation but also an example of how infrastructure can serve multiple purposes. What was once a purely military structure has now become a part of the region's tourism and culture, offering a unique fusion of modern military utility with traditional hospital-



Strategic Importance of the Café's Location

This café is not only a testament to the Indian Army's spirit of innovation and resourcefulness but also holds strategic significance. The Shyok River, which flows through the valley and meets the Indus, has always been an important geographical feature in the region. The bridge and its surrounding infrastructure have played a key role in connecting various military posts and providing logistical support.

The Bailey Bridge Café sits atop a critical military route and provides a symbolic reminder of the Army's enduring presence in Ladakh, an area of high geopolitical importance. Given the volatile border situation with both China and Pakistan, the Army's initiative also shows how even in such a remote region, the military's efforts go beyond mere defense. It focuses on community-building and improving morale, both for the armed forces and civilians.



Conclusion: An Ingenious Blend of Functionality and Hospitality

The Bailey Bridge Café is a one-of-a-kind creation, combining the military might of the Indian Army with the warmth of hospitality. Set against the backdrop of Ladakh's breathtaking beauty, this café not only serves as a vital stopover for soldiers but

also introduces visitors to the wonders of high-altitude life. It's a living example of how the Army's creativity, dedication, and hospitality converge to create something truly special in the heart of the Himalayas.

Whether it's for a soldier on

duty or a tourist passing through, the Shyok River Café represents much more than a place to enjoy a cup of tea, it's a symbol of the Army's resilience, ingenuity, and the warmth of its people.

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#ODDLIFE

Models and Mimics are marvels

The moth was found only 7 times in 2 expeditions, meaning your Thai holiday is unlikely to allow a look at this particular clearwing.



Mimicry is one of those evolutionary showpieces that has been used and researched for centuries. The Batesian classic theory has a mimic which is harmless and a model which often has a sting or some such offensive device for protection. The mimic has no defence but is protected anyway.

In this case, the Sessiid moths, known as clearwings, have a variety of stingless bees (Tetragonilla spp) and wasps to choose from. Each species model mimics a different hymenopteran, but often only a general phenotype. Our own mimic here is Heterosphenia pahangensis, a new species the researchers discovered! The moth was found only 7 times in 2 expeditions, meaning your Thai holiday is unlikely to allow a look at this particular clearwing, or indeed many others as the rainforests disappear. This novel individual mimics stingless bees. All the subjects of this video study were caught in horizontal flight as they performed mud-puddling behaviours near rivers in Malaysia and Thailand. The bees, bee mimics, wasps and wasp mimics such as Pyrophleps spp. all seemed to perform this puddling, probably as a physiological necessity.

The flight trajectories were digitised frame by frame to ensure that the head was followed correctly. Hovering was flight at less than 0.1 m.s-1, and was excluded from analyses but presented in longest hovering time data because both bees and bee mimics were characterised by this behaviour. They flew in a meandering fashion, keeping their distance from and much slower than the rapid and direct-flying wasps and their mimics.

Defying the definitions, as many models do, the relevant Tetragonilla bees here have no sting, but like other relatives, behave exactly as if they have, with a bite often given to add emphasis! Such behaviour is



typical of the mimics, borrowing a trick from them. They have to cope with that load of mimicry, presumably by being predated more by savvy insectivores! A point of information is that no male wasp or bee can sting us, but we avoid them as we do the many mimics.

In conclusion, the researchers from the University of Gdansk (Poland), Macquarie (Australia) and UC Berkeley (US), as well as the Clearwing Foundation for Biodiversity in Warsaw, had to cope with a rarity of specimens. Most of these species are never seen, except

occasionally as individuals. Hence, the stake-out of muddy puddles. The bird, spider and beetle predators observed possibly restrict the numbers, but human activity and loss of rainforest is likely to restrict these animals massively. The predators, however, seem to have created generalist mimics, whose flight pattern more resembles their models than their actual phenotype or even colour. The wasps, particularly, can hardly be seen by predators or ourselves, meaning both clearwings and wasps cannot be distinguished clearly.



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

THE WALL

