

## A Numismatic Study of The Exceptional Four-Dot One Rupee of Edward VII, British India

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### ABSTRACT

The coinage of King Edward VII in India, spanning from 1903 to 1910, represents a pivotal period in colonial monetary history, bridging the late Victorian era with the early decades of the twentieth century. During this period, the majority of rupee issues adhered to well-established designs, including the standard five-dot Bombay rupees and the rare three-dot Calcutta error of 1903. While these types have been studied extensively, this research identifies and examines a previously undocumented variant: the four-dot rupee, issued in 1903, 1904, and 1907. Through a combination of comparative analysis, photographic documentation, and review of existing numismatic scholarship, this study investigates the origins of the four-dot rupees. The research considers several possible explanations for their unusual dot arrangement, including engraver oversight, intentional modification, or transitional minting practices that reflect the technical and human factors influencing coin production. Each coin's distinctive pattern underscores the nuanced and often unpredictable nature of colonial minting, where minor deviations could create lasting variants. The study's findings highlight not only the rarity of the four-dot rupees but also their significance within Edwardian numismatics. By systematically documenting these coins, the research expands the classification of Edward VII coinage and offers new insights into the processes behind early twentieth-century minting in India. These discoveries enrich numismatic scholarship, providing collectors and historians with a deeper understanding of the production, variation, and historical importance of Edwardian rupees.

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### Introduction

The study of colonial coinage provides critical insights into political transitions, economic systems, and minting practices [1,2]. King Edward VII's reign (1901–1910) was relatively short, yet it produced a distinctive coinage series in India, dated from 1903 to 1910 [3-5]. These coins not only circulated widely but also represented the symbolic authority of the British Crown in India [6]. The rupee was the central denomination, minted in both Calcutta and Bombay, with small but significant variations in mint marks [2]. The discovery of unusual minting anomalies, such as the four-dot rupee, challenges our current understanding of this series. This paper investigates the four-dot rupees of 1903, 1904 and 1907, situating them within the broader framework of numismatic research.

King Edward VII, the eldest son of Queen Victoria, ascended the throne following her death in 1901 [7,8]. His reign ushered in a new phase of colonial symbolism, as reflected in the coinage of British India. The Indian rupee, a linchpin of the subcontinent's monetary system, continued under Edward's effigy. Between 1903 and 1910, rupees were struck in Calcutta and Bombay [9]. While Calcutta coins bore no mint mark, Bombay rupees were distinguished by a small incuse 'B' and a prominent dot on the

lotus-bud stem on the reverse. The dot eventually became sufficient as the identifying mark, rendering the incuse 'B' unnecessary [10]. The complexity of mint mark usage and transitional practices created conditions for variations and errors.

The study of Edward VII coinage, though less extensive than that of Victorian coins, offers important context. The evolution of mint marks is traced, highlighting the rare three-dot variety of 1903, which likely arose from an engraver's unfamiliarity with Persian script [10]. Auction catalogues from firms like Spink and Baldwin further record the different rupee varieties, providing insight into their rarity and appeal to collectors [11-13]. However, existing literature does not mention four-dot rupees. Numismatic forums and online archives occasionally feature anecdotal reports, but no systematic study has been undertaken. The objective of this research is to identify, document, and analyze previously undocumented four-dot rupees of King Edward VII (1903, 1904, and 1907), examining their origin, rarity, and significance within colonial Indian coinage. This research fills that gap by formally analyzing the 1904 and 1907 four-dot issues.

### Methodology

The methodology of this study integrates primary examination of coin specimens, high-resolution photographic documentation, and systematic comparative analysis. Specimens of the four-dot one rupees were sourced from the author's personal collection

and verified through detailed photographic records to ensure authenticity [14]. Each coin was meticulously inspected for dot alignment, spacing, and engraver marks, with measurements recorded to facilitate quantitative comparison. Comparative analyses were conducted against standard five-dot rupees and the three-dot Calcutta error of 1903, highlighting morphological variations and minting anomalies [15]. To contextualize these findings within the broader numismatic framework, secondary sources such as auction catalogues, historical numismatic references, and scholarly works were consulted [16,17]. This multi-pronged methodology allows for both qualitative and quantitative insights, ensuring that the identification of the four-dot variant is robust, reproducible, and grounded in existing numismatic scholarship.

### Result and Discussion

The three-dot rupee (1903, Calcutta) is shown in figure 1 with the missing lower dot on the reverse, with a standard five dot rupee. The standard five-dot rupee demonstrates the expected downward diagonal alignment from right to left. An exceptionally rare variant is the three-dot rupee, missing two of its dots. This anomaly likely stemmed from an error by the engraver, and its limited availability has made it a prized piece for collectors of Edwardian coinage.



Figure 1: Three Dot and Five Dot Rupee

The reverse displays the denomination ‘One Rupee India 1903’ in English and Persian, with four dots visible below the script in figure 2.



Figure 2: Four Dots Rupee in 1903

The reverse displays the denomination ‘One Rupee India 1904’ in English and Persian, with four dots visible below the script is shown in figure 3. The enlarged close-up highlights the missing fifth dot and the vacant space suggesting a possible engraving lapse.



Figure 3: Four Dots Rupee in 1904

The 1907 four-dot rupee mirrors the configuration of the 1904 coin. The reverse shows identical four-dot alignment, reinforcing the hypothesis that this was a repeated pattern rather than an isolated mistake, shown in figure 4.



Figure 4: Four Dots Rupee in 1907

The rupees of Edward VII exhibit three primary dot patterns as below:

1. Three-Dot Rupee (1903, Calcutta): An acknowledged error, attributed to an engraver’s unfamiliarity with Persian script. This missing-dot anomaly is exceedingly rare and confined to the first year of issue.
2. Five-Dot Rupee (Standard Type): The predominant configuration used in Bombay issues, with dots descending diagonally from right to left.
3. Four-Dot Rupee (1903, 1904 and 1907): The subject of this study. Both the 1903, 1904, and 1907 rupees display four dots, each with an unusual spacing pattern. A rare variety of the Calcutta issue features only four dots in the Persian inscription, rather than the usual five. Scholars suggest that this occurred because the engraver, unfamiliar with Persian script, omitted a dot. The enlarged close-up in the 1903 coin highlights the missing fifth dot and the vacant space suggesting a possible engraving lapse. In the 1904 coin, an empty space appears above the fourth dot, suggesting either a failed engraving or an intentional omission. The 1907 four-dot rupee mirrors this configuration, indicating a repeated pattern rather than a one-off mistake.

The consistency across three separate years implies that the four-dot variety was not a random accident but possibly a transitional design choice or a repeated engraver oversight. Comparative Features of Dot Varieties is shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Comparative Features of Dot Varieties**

Coin Type	Year(s) of Issue	Dot Pattern Description	Possible Explanation
Three-Dot Rupee	1903 (Calcutta)	Only three dots appear on the reverse inscription; lower dot missing.	Engraver error; unfamiliarity with Persian script.
Four-Dot Rupee	1903 (Calcutta)	Four dots with unusual spacing.	Possible engraving lapse or transitional design.
Four-Dot Rupee	1904 (Bombay)	Four dots with unusual spacing; empty space above fourth dot.	Possible engraving lapse or transitional design.
Four-Dot Rupee	1907 (Bombay)	Four dots, similar alignment to 1904 variety.	Repeated engraver error or deliberate modification.
Five-Dot Rupee	1903–1910 (Bombay)	Five dots descending diagonally from right to left.	Standard issue.

The identification of the four-dot rupee has several implications. First, it expands the classification of Edward VII coinage beyond the well-documented three and five dot varieties. Second, its rarity enhances its collectible value, particularly for specialized numismatists focusing on minting anomalies. Third, it contributes to the broader study of colonial minting practices, suggesting that errors and transitional varieties were more common than previously acknowledged. By highlighting these coins, this study encourages further exploration of unrecorded varieties in private collections and archives.

Numismatic scholarship often grapples with the boundary between error and variety. An engraver’s oversight, once repeated and circulated, may gain recognition as a legitimate variety. The four-dot rupees of 1903, 1904 and 1907 exemplify this ambiguity. If accidental, they demonstrate lapses in quality control; if intentional, they reveal experimentation in minting practices. In either case, their survival in circulation enriches our understanding of Edward VII’s coinage. Future research might involve die studies, metallurgical analysis, or examination of mint records to clarify their origins.

### Conclusion

The four-dot rupees issued in 1903, 1904, and 1907 represent some of the most remarkable variants within the coinage of King Edward VII. Unlike the more commonly studied three-dot and five-dot types, these coins introduce a distinct category of variation, highlighting the nuanced complexity of early 20th-century Indian minting practices. Each coin exhibits a unique dot arrangement, which not only distinguishes it visually but also provides insight into the technical and human factors that influenced mint production during the colonial period. The irregular spacing and alignment of the dots suggest that small errors or intentional modifications by engravers could produce significant and lasting differences among otherwise standardized coinage. The identification and systematic documentation of these four-dot rupees add depth to numismatic scholarship, demonstrating that even well-studied series can yield new discoveries when examined closely. Their existence underscores the unpredictable nature of coin production at the time, revealing a dynamic process that combined precision with occasional imperfection. By cataloguing these variants, this research establishes a foundation for further inquiry and encourages collectors and historians to reassess the full spectrum of Edwardian rupee types.

Continued study may uncover additional undocumented varieties, offering opportunities to refine the classification

and understanding of early 20th-century Indian rupees. These findings not only enrich the historical record but also enhance appreciation for the craftsmanship and complexity of colonial minting, transforming seemingly minor anomalies into key points of numismatic significance. In doing so, the four-dot rupees serve as a reminder that even small deviations can have lasting historical and collectible value.

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