

# The Rupees of British India Under King Edward VII

1903 – 1910

KM# 508 • Y-34 • Silver (.917)

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## 1. Historical Background

King Edward VII ascended to the British throne following the death of Queen Victoria on 22 January 1901. As King and Emperor, he was sovereign over British India, and new coinage bearing his portrait was introduced in 1903. The series ran until 1910, the year of his death, producing one of the most distinctive and widely circulated coin series in Indian numismatic history.

The Edward VII coins are immediately recognizable for one unusual feature: the King is shown uncrowned. The explanation is that the master dies were engraved before Edward's coronation, which was held on 9 August 1902 — leaving the engravers no choice but to portray him without a crown. A new crowned portrait was reportedly prepared for 1910, but Edward's death that year prevented any coins from bearing it. The sole exception is the one anna cupro-nickel piece introduced in 1906, which does depict the King wearing his crown.

## 2. Design and Specifications

### Obverse

The obverse bears the right-facing bust of King Edward VII, uncrowned, with the legend EDWARD VII KING & EMPEROR running around the rim. The portrait was executed by George William de Saulles, Chief Engraver to the Royal Mint. De Saulles was the most prominent British medallic engraver of the era, also responsible for the effigy used on British coins of the period.

### Reverse

The reverse design follows the standard British India format: the denomination ONE RUPEE and the word INDIA appear in English, with the Urdu transliteration یک روپیہ (Yek Rupiya, meaning One Rupee) below. The date is centered at the bottom, flanked by sprays of lotus flowers on each

side and surmounted by a crown. All elements sit within a raised, toothed border.

### Physical Specifications

Attribute	Detail
Composition	Silver, .917 fine (11/12 silver)
Weight	11.66 grams
Diameter	30.6 mm
Thickness	1.9 mm
Shape	Round
Edge	Reeded
Orientation	Medal alignment (↑↑)
Catalog Reference	KM# 508 / Y-34

### 3. Mints and Mint Marks

The rupee was struck at two mints during the Edward VII series: Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Bombay (now Mumbai). Identifying the mint of a given coin is one of the most important tasks for collectors of this series.

#### Calcutta Mint (No Mint Mark)

Calcutta-struck rupees bear no mint mark. The absence of any identifying symbol on the reverse is the defining characteristic of the Calcutta issue. In catalog listings, these are sometimes designated with a “C” by editors, but no literal letter C appears on the coin itself.

#### Bombay Mint (“B” and Dot)

Bombay-struck rupees carry two identifying features that collectors should know:

- A small incuse “B”: Located in the space below the cross pattée of the crown on the reverse. This mark can be extremely difficult to see on circulated coins, and from 1906 onward the mint apparently attempted to remove it from the dies — though traces often survive.

- A dot on the lotus-bud stem: A more prominent and reliable identifier. A raised dot appears on the stem of the lower-right lotus bud on the reverse. According to Indian numismatic scholar D. Chakravarty, this dot was intentionally used because it was found adequate to distinguish Bombay products without a conspicuous incuse letter. The dot is the recommended identifier for mint attribution.

On the 1903 Bombay rupee, both a raised “B” and an incuse “B” variety exist, making 1903 the most variable year for mint marks.

## 4. Key Varieties and Errors

### **The 1903 Four-Dot and Five-Dot Varieties (Calcutta)**

The most celebrated variety of the entire Edward VII rupee series occurs on the 1903 Calcutta issue. The reverse inscription includes Urdu text, which normally includes five dots as diacritical marks. On a small number of 1903-C rupees, only four dots appear — the lower dot is missing. The explanation, according to researchers, is that the die engraver was not familiar with Persian (Urdu) script and simply omitted a dot in error. This mistake was identified and corrected quickly, so the four-dot variety exists only on the first year of issue and is considerably scarcer than the five-dot version.

### **The 1908/7 Overdate (Bombay)**

A 1908-B overdate exists in which the underlying ‘7’ of 1907 is visible beneath the ‘8’ in the date. This type of overdate occurs when a mint reuses a die from the previous year and punches the new date digit over the old one without fully erasing it. The 1908/7 overdate is scarce and commands a premium from collectors.

### **The 1909/8 Overdate (Bombay)**

Similarly, a 1909-B overdate exists showing traces of an underlying 1908 date. These overdates are diagnostic of how the Bombay Mint recycled and updated dies between striking years.

## 5. Mintage Data by Year and Mint

Mintage figures for the Calcutta issues are less consistently documented than for Bombay. The table below presents known mintage data from standard references.

Date	Mint	Mintage	Notable
1903	Calcutta	Not recorded	4-dot & 5-dot varieties; Proof known
1903 B	Bombay	Not recorded	Raised & incuse B varieties; Proof known
1904	Calcutta	58,339,000	Proof known
1904 B	Bombay	101,949,000	
1905	Calcutta	51,528,000	Proof known
1905 B	Bombay	76,202,000	
1906	Calcutta	104,797,000	
1906 B	Bombay	158,953,000	Proof known
1907	Calcutta	81,338,000	Proof known
1907 B	Bombay	170,912,000	Proof known (~\$1,600 UNC)
1908	Calcutta	20,218,000	Lower mintage
1908 B	Bombay	Not recorded	1908/7 overdate exists
1909	Calcutta	12,759,000	Low mintage year
1909 B	Bombay	Not recorded	1909/8 overdate exists
1910	Calcutta	12,627,000	Final year
1910 B	Bombay	Not recorded	Proof known (~\$1,300 UNC)

## 6. Collector Values

The following values are approximate retail prices in USD based on Numista community data and Heritage Auction results. Values vary significantly by grade; UNC (uncirculated) coins command substantial premiums. Proof issues are rare and can realize \$500–1,600+ at auction.

Date / Variety	Fine (F)	VF	XF	UNC
1903 (4-dot)	—	\$59	\$59	—
1903 (5-dot)	\$34	\$45	\$45	\$53
1903 B	\$25	\$42	\$49	\$170
1904	\$42	\$42	\$42	—
1904 B	\$36	\$36	\$37	\$110
1905	\$34	\$41	\$41	\$89
1905 B	\$42	\$42	\$42	\$150
1906	\$34	\$35	\$40	\$96
1906 B	\$24	\$39	\$39	\$130
1907	\$27	\$43	\$43	\$77
1907 B	\$34	\$37	\$37	\$160
1908	—	\$41	\$41	—
1908 B	—	\$34	\$38	—
1909	—	\$41	\$41	\$48
1909 B	—	\$42	\$46	\$330
1910	—	\$46	\$46	—
1910 B	—	\$35	\$35	\$560

Note: The 1909-B and 1910-B in UNC are scarcer than most other dates, explaining their higher valuations. Late-date Bombay issues (1909-B, 1910-B) appear to have had lower circulating mintages relative to earlier years. Proof strikes for most dates exist but are extremely rare; the 1907-B Proof has realized approximately \$1,600 and the 1910-B Proof approximately \$1,300 at recent Heritage Auctions.

## 7. Collecting the Series

### Building a Type Set

A collector seeking just one example of the Edward VII rupee has many affordable options. The 1904 and 1906 Calcutta issues had the largest

mintages and are the most frequently encountered. Either makes an excellent, inexpensive type coin.

### **Building a Date and Mint Set**

A complete date-and-mint set requires 16 coins (one per date/mint combination listed above). The most challenging pieces are the later Bombay issues — 1909-B and 1910-B — in higher grades, and the 1903 four-dot Calcutta variety. Proofs are generally beyond a casual set and are treated as a separate specialty.

### **Attribution Tips**

- Use a 10x loupe to find the incuse B on Bombay coins; on worn examples, look for the dot on the lotus-bud stem instead.
- For the 1903 varieties, count the Urdu diacritical dots carefully — four dots is significantly scarcer than five.
- For 1908-B and 1909-B, examine the last digit of the date under magnification for traces of the undertype.
- Consult Pridmore's "The Coins of the British Commonwealth of Nations: India" or the Krause Standard Catalog of World Coins for detailed die variety information.

## **8. Context in the Broader British India Series**

The Edward VII rupee series is generally considered more straightforward to collect than the Victoria series that preceded it. Victoria's coinage ran for decades and accumulated numerous portrait varieties, reverse types, and die differences. The Edward VII series, by contrast, maintained a consistent design throughout its eight years.

The series is succeeded by the George V rupees beginning in 1911. The first George V rupee — infamously known as the "Pig Rupee" — had to be redesigned because an elephant on the King's collar was mistaken by some Muslims for a pig. This controversy makes the Edward VII series the last "uncontroversial" rupee before the design debates of the George V era.

Today, Edward VII rupees circulate regularly among British India collectors worldwide. Their silver content (0.344 troy oz per coin), historical significance, and relative affordability in circulated grades make them perennial favorites.