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## PHANIGIRI INSCRIPTION OF RUDRAPURUSHADATTA

(1 Plate)

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Recent excavations conducted by the Andhra State Department of Archaeology and Museums at Phanigiri in Tirumalagiri Mandalam, Nalgonda district of Andhra Pradesh has yielded a number of Prakrit, Sanskrit as well as Sanskrit-Prakrit inscriptions belonging to the period ranging from 1<sup>st</sup> century to 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. during the heydays of Ikshvāku rule. From among the above discoveries, we have selected an epigraph engraved on a pillar excavated from this site. The excavations have revealed remains of a *stūpa* structure in a mound wherein excavations were conducted. At the foot of the mound there are two temples which are under worship. The relationship between these temples and the Buddhist structure and epigraphical remains is not clear.

The inscription under study consists of 10 lines of writing on one face of the pillar in which line-10 is unfortunately badly damaged. The inscribed area measures 39 cms x 74 cms. The text consists of 4 verses in Sanskrit, each verse being numbered from 1 to 4. The engraving of the record is neatly executed and, as stated above, but for the last line the preservation of writing is satisfactory.

Language of the inscription is Sanskrit in lines 1 to 7 while lines 8 to 10 are in Prakrit language. The writing abounds in orthographical peculiarities most noticeable of which is unnecessary doubling of consonants, for example, *prakkhyāta*, *Ruddra*, *aggra* and so on. In line 8 the first word is written as *dagdhani* instead of *dagdhāni*. In the first line there are two types of 3, one after the word *paksha* and the other after word *divasa*. The doubling of the consonants in words like *chakkra* (lines 4 and 8) reminds us of the same tendency of doubling the consonant *k* in Gupta inscriptions. The inscription under study belongs to the reign of the Ikshvāku king Rudrapurushadatta and is dated in his 18<sup>th</sup> regnal year, the other details of date being Hemanta *paksha* (winter season) 3 and day (*divasa*) 3. There are two types of numerical figures for number 3 in this line, the first one after Hemanta *paksha* being horizontal 3 almost resembling modern Nāgarī 3 whereas the second figure 3 following the word *divasam* consists of 3 horizontal strokes and the same is repeated in line 6. Though the details are not enough for the firm dating of the inscription, on palaeographical grounds the inscription may be assigned to the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

We already know a couple of Ikshvāku inscriptions which are in Sanskrit<sup>1</sup> but clearly betraying Prakrit influence. The inscription under study is not only in Sanskrit language for the first eight lines but also contains four verses. This may be considered as the earliest Sanskrit poetic composition in the Ikshvāku kingdom. The four verses are of great poetic, historical and religious interest. Of the four verses the first one appears to be metrically defective. Of the four lines, the first line agrees well with the *anushtubh* metre while line 2 has eleven syllables. Line 3 also is in defective *anushtubh* metre while the last line has 9 syllables. I am unable to identify this metre. Verses 2, 3 and 4 are in *upajāti*. But the 3<sup>rd</sup> line of the fourth verse is metrically defective. The verses are of considerable religious interest. The first verse records the erection of a lofty *dharmma chakra* (wheel of righteousness) by the chief physician of the Ikshvāku ruler Rudrapurushadatta who is lauded as of shining fame. Verse 2 the import of which is somewhat obscure refers to the destruction of the haughty Manmatha by the Lord having the bull for His banner (Śiva). Verse 3 refers to the episode of the killing of the evil king Kamsa by the great Lord Madhusūdana (i.e., Viṣṇu). The last verse obviously refers to the Buddha rhetorically by comparing him with the illusory god of fire, who was given to deep contemplation and who had burnt down the forests of ignorance, jealousy, suffering through (*dharmma*)*chakra*.

As stated above, part of line 8 and lines 9 and 10 are in Prakrit. This portion refers to a religious grant (details not clear) made by *mahāsenapati* Saramenaṁḍiṇaka in the same year (reg. year 18). Again it refers to the installation of some object (text worn out) by Bhadaṁta Dhemasena. The text ends with the last seven letters reading *mānusō lōkō iti* with two *daṇḍas*. This damaged portion possibly originally contained a benedictory passage invoking blessings on the the world of human beings.

Coming to the historical importance of the inscription Dr. D.C. Sircar had fixed the year of accession of the last Ikshvāku ruler Rudrapurushadatta as 334 A.D. Before the discovery of the present inscription, the last known regnal year of this king was 11. But the present inscription adds 7 more years to his reign. Thus on the basis of Sircar's fixation of the first year of Rudrapurushadatta's reign as 334 A.D., the present inscription may be assigned to 352 A.D. This year will mark the end of Ikshvāku rule.

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1. For example *Ep. Ind.* Vol. XXXIV, No.4, pp. 17-20.





TEXT<sup>1</sup>

1. Siddham ॥ saṁvatsaram 10 8 Hemanta paksha 3 divasa 3 [\*]  
prakkhyāta dīpta ya-
2. śaso rājña \*s śrī Ruddrapurushadattasya [\*] aggra bhishajā kṛitōyam-  
[s\*]sa-
3. muchchhrayō dharmmachakkrasya [\*] 1 darpa-ddhvajō yō Makara  
ddhvajasya na pātītō
4. gō vṛishabha-ddhvajēna tam pāditaṁ śakkya kulōddhvajēna imēna  
chakkrena sa-
5. dharmmajena [\*] 2 mahātmanā Kaṁsa-nisūdanena na sūditō yō  
Madhusūdanena
6. sa sūditō rāga nisūdanena dōshāsūrō chakkravarenimena [\*] 3 māyā  
śarīr-ā-
7. raṇi-saṁmbhavena ten-ottamadhyāna-guṇendhanena jñānōrvvīrsha kleśa-  
mahāvanāni
8. dagdha[gdhā]ni chakkrena imena tena [\*] 4 tam varisaṁ chakraṁ  
mahāsēnapati Saramenaṁ -
9. diṇakasa deya dhammam apanō nivane saṁbharathatāya thāpitaṁ  
bhadaṁta Dhe-
10. masenena aṁnūdhī . . . . . mānusō lōkō iti ॥

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1. From the ink impression.