

Vice Chancellor, Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute (Deemed University), Pune

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A MARATHI INSCRIPTION FROM DHARUR, TALUKA TULJAPUR, DISTRICT OSMANABAD, MAHARASHTRA

ABHIJIT DANDEKAR AND GOPAL JOGE

The inscription under consideration was noticed by Dr. Vijay Sarde from the Department of AIHC & Archaeology, Deccan College PGRI during his doctoral fieldwork. It was documented by the authors during their survey in the winter of 2015. Subsequently, lists of hitherto deciphered inscriptions (Khare 1930a, 1930b, 1930c, 1934; Dikshit 1947; Tulpule 1963; Deo 1984; Kolte 1987; Pathan 1989; Tendulkar 2015; Bapat 2016) were checked to ascertain whether or not it was published previously by other scholars. .

The inscription (Figs. 1 and 2) is located in the Dharur village of Tuljapur tehsil in the Osmanabad district of Maharashtra. The village of Dharur is around 12 km north-east of the Tuljapur town. Stone on which this inscription is recorded, was lying outside the Bhairavnath temple (Figure 3) which was being renovated at the time of documentation.

The stele

The rectangular slab on which the inscription is written is not well-dressed. Large flake marks are visible, on which, in the case of the last line, the last two letters are engraved. The extant height of the slab is 85 cm and width is 35 cm. The inscription has ten lines. The average height of letters is around 5 cm. depiction of an ithyphallic

donkey is found below the inscription. The top line of the inscription contents only a



Fig. 1 : Inscription at Dharur

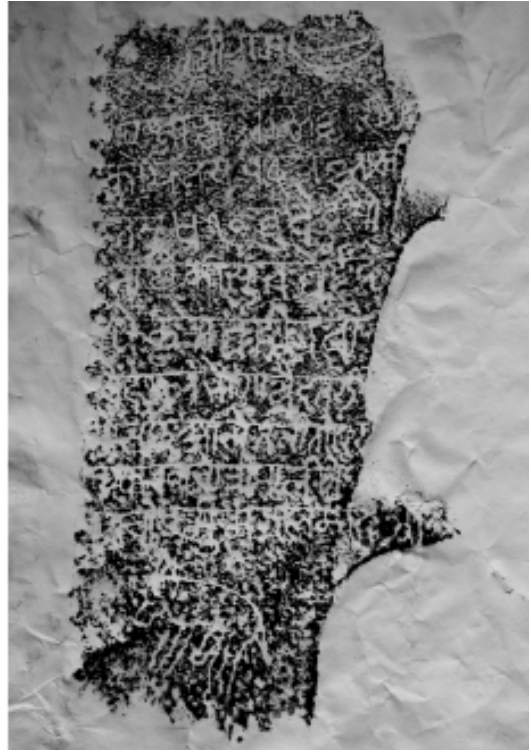


Fig. 2 : Details of the inscription and its stampage

single word Śrīrāma, which is flanked by symbols of Sun and Moon.

The reconstructed text of this inscription is as follows:

- 1 श्रीराम
- 2 छ स्वस्ति श्री सकु १२४(७)
- 3 क्रोधन संवखरे आस्वी
- 4 न सुध १० बुधे दसौ
- 5 वायकासुत घेईदे
- 6 वेंकृत बहीरवां
- 7 चें देऊल भोगार्थे दत[।*] गु
- 8 रो सीउ आसेत[।*]नीत(णे) xx
- 9 अकरवाचो[।*]श्री पाली ते
- 10 आचा धर्मु[।*]मंगलमहाश्री[।*]

Translation

The temple of Bahīrava (Bhairava), built (out of the donation) by Gheīdeva, son of Vāyakā, was dedicated on Wednesday, the 10th *tithī* (lunar day) of the bright fortnight of the month *Āsvina* (*Āśvina*), Śaka Era 1247, in the cyclical year Krodhana. Śiva is the teacher. A piece of land measuring xx (number unclear) *nīṭaṇe* (a unit of land measurement), exempted from taxes, was also donated. At the end of the inscription are two benedictory verses which were very commonly used in the early Marathi inscriptions.



Fig. 3 : Bhairvnath temple at Dharur

Script and language

The script of this inscription is Devanagari of the Yadava period. An interesting aspect of its orthography is the presence of hollow as well as filled circles to denote the *Anusvāra*. While it is hollow in the case of pronounced *Anusvāra* ('*Sam*' in the word '*Samvachare*', l. 3; '*Vān*' in the word '*Bahiravāncen*', l. 6, l. 7), in the case of unpronounced *Anusvāra* (letters '*Ghen*', In and Ven in the word '*Ghenindeven*' in l. 5 and l. 6; letter '*Cen*' in the word '*Bahiravāncen*' in l. 6 and l. 7), it is shown by filled circles. This is probably done to distinguish between the pronunciations. One more peculiarity observed in this inscription

is the orthography of the letter '*Cha*' in the word '*Samvachare*' (l. 3). Here the letter is very much akin to the letter '*Da*', the only difference being the knot in '*Cha*' is very prominent, whereas in the case of '*Da*' it is absent. This confusion could be because of the error in rendering this letter by the scribe.

The language of the inscription is the Marathi of the Yadava period. However, the initial part of the inscription appears to be in Sanskrit, which usually was a norm during this period, especially for mentioning the date of a particular inscription. There are certain peculiarities of this Sanskrit text and seem to have a very obvious influence of

Marathi. For example, dental 'S' replaces palatal 'Ś' almost at all the instances in bilingual (Sanskrit-Marathi) inscriptions of this period, maybe barring a very few. In this particular inscription also one observes the same phenomenon. For example, words such as *Āśvina*, *Śāke* etc. are written as *Āsvina* and *Saku* respectively. There are more such examples of dentalisation of palatal sounds where Ś is replaced by S such as words 'Sudha' in line four and 'Siu' in line eight. However, in the case of the letter 'Śrī', the palatal Ś is retained at all instances in this inscription. Another aspect of this language is degemination. For example, *Sudha* (l. 4) < *Śuddha*; or *Data* (l. 7) < *Datta*. One more peculiar feature observed in this inscription is the form of locative case in case of the word *Dasau* (l. 4). The word 'dasau' stands for the 10th lunar day. This form seems to be a version of its Sanskrit counterpart, 'Daśamī', and its subsequent locative case 'Daśamyām'. Though the case marker 'au' is common in Sanskrit, the form 'Dasau' is unusual and is found for the first time in this inscription. Thus, though the initial part appears to have been written in Sanskrit, it is highly influenced by Marathi of that period.

Another interesting phrase that has appeared in this inscription is 'Akaravāco' (l. 9). There is a phrase 'Akaravātottaraḷe', which has appeared in two other inscriptions; one in the Palasadev inscription dated to SE 1079 (Tulpule 1963: 59-62, Pl. 11) and the other in the Velapur inscription of the Yadava king Ramachandradeva (Tulpule 1963: 229-231, Pl. 52). The phrase, *Akaravāco*, though apparently different, probably conveys the same meaning, i.e.

exemption from taxes. This meaning appears to be correct in this context.

Date of the inscription

The date mentioned in the inscription is Wednesday, the 10th *tithī* in the bright fortnight of the *Āśvina* month in Śaka Era 1247. The *tithī* is written both in numeral form as well as in words. In the case of the year of this inscription, the last digit of the year is not clear. It has been reconstructed with the help of the mention of the Jupiter calendar year, *Krodhana*, in the inscription. This year coincided with the year 1247 of the Śaka Era. All the other details, such as the day, the *tithī* and the month correspond exactly with the Śaka year 1247 and its corresponding date according to the Gregorian calendar is 18th September 1325 (Pillai 1922).

The day of the donation is very significant from the religio-cultural point of view. This day marks the end of the 'nine-night festival' (*Navarātri*) celebrated in honour of the goddess during autumn. It is one of the three and half most auspicious days in Brahmanical Hinduism. *Kathākalpataru*, a Marathi text of 16th century, elaborates on the connection between Bhairava and the goddess (Dhere 2009: 307). This connection further underlines the importance of this particular day on which the donation was made.

Discussion

Firstly, a donation to a temple of Bhairava is unique and noteworthy. In addition, this inscription raises some important issues. It begins with the invocation to Śrīrama. This invocation itself is very intriguing. In most of the inscriptions

of this period, the initial obeisance is paid to gods such as Śiva, Viṣṇu, Gaṇeśa and in some case, the goddess. Obeisance to lord Rāma is not seen in any of the inscriptions of this period. Secondly, in none of the inscriptions, one observes such a position accorded to any of the presiding or tutelary deity. Hence, it is quite possible that the obeisance paid in the inscription is not to any deity, but to the deceased king, Ramachandradeva Yadava, who died sometime in the year 1311 or 1312 CE. Interestingly, the gold coins of Ramcandra-deva have exactly the same legend, ‘Śrīrāma’, which matches even palaeographically with the present inscription. If such is the case, then the beginning of this inscription with the word ‘Śrīrāma’ remains no more an obeisance, but the memory of the deposed and deceased king.

The donation

The inscription then records dedication of the temple of Bhairava. It also mentions the area of land donated to the temple. However, the exact measurement of the land cannot be ascertained owing to the obliteration of the numeral after the word ‘*nitane/ṇe*’. This word is a corrupt form of the word ‘*nivartana*’, which was a unit of land measurement. The word ‘*nitane*’ is also mentioned in the Ter inscription during the reign of the Kalachurya king Vijjaṇa (Tulpule 1963: 62-67). Its another variation ‘*nitane*’ is mentioned in the Vijapur inscription during the reign of Qutub-al-din Khilji (Tulpule 1963: 261-270).

In this context, the reference to the exemption of taxes to be levied on this

particular land is very important. The other two inscriptions cited above where reference to the exemption of taxes is mentioned are donations by royal officials. In the case of the Palasdev inscription (Tulpule 1963: 59-62, Pl. 11) it is by a ‘*daṇḍanāyaka*’ (an officer in charge of civil and military affairs). In the case of the Velapur inscription (Tulpule 1963: 229-231, Pl. 52) it is by an official who was an officer governing or a region (*Māṇadeśa-sambandha*) who was also a brother of the official representative (*Tanniropita*) of that area. Their titles are specifically mentioned in these inscriptions displaying their authority to grant such exemptions. In the case of the Dharur inscription, however, any such title of the donor (Gheideva) is missing. Then the question arises as to who gave the authority to the donor to grant such exemption. To answer this, one has to understand the contemporary political scenario of the region. This was a period of a lot of political upheaval. As is well-known, the Khilji ruler, Muhammad Alauddin attacked the Yadava capital in 1296 C.E. The Yadava king Ramachandradeva was defeated and he accepted the suzerainty of Alauddin Khilji. However, Aladuddin did not establish a total rule and went back after receiving the war booty. Ramachandradeva continued ruling as his regent. In spite of Ramchandradeva accepting the over lordship of the Khiljis, his son Shankaradeva revolted against it and kept on making attempts to overthrow the Khilji rule. The Khiljis once again attacked the Yadavas in 1307-08 under the leadership of Malik Kafur under the pretext of collecting the annual

tribute from the Yadavas which was stopped by them and defeated the crowned prince Shankaradeva. However, Harapaladeva, the son-in-law of Ramachandradeva kept making attempts to depose the Khilji rule. This lasted till 1318, by which time, both Ramachandradeva and Alauddin Khilji were no more. Many local petty chiefs tried to establish their independent rule during this time of unsettled political scenario. Such anarchical scenario continued till 1345, well beyond the Tulghluq rule, coinciding with the rise of the Bahamanis, who was a local ruling family (Joshi and Husain 1973; Verma 1970: 148-163).

Against the backdrop of the discussion above, it can be said that Gheideva was one such petty ruler, who somehow chose not to use any title to describe his position. He was probably also aware of the death of Ramachandradeva but wanted to take advantage of his reputation and gain some support by showing allegiance to him. Hence it can be said that mentioning the deceased king's name on top of the inscription was a clever move on part of Gheideva to consolidate whatever little territory he held sway over. A donation to a temple must be another attempt in this endeavour.

The image of an ithyphallic donkey also must be understood in the same context. The ass curse stones sometimes have a curse explicitly mentioning the result of the violation of the donation (Tulpule 1962: 57-58). Sometimes, either only the curse is mentioned or only the graphic representation of the curse is depicted (Tulpule 1962: 57; Wirkud 2017a; 2017b). In the case of

the present inscription, no such curse is mentioned, neither do we find the depiction of a female being sodomised by the donkey. In spite of this particular inscription can be taken as the 'ass curse stone' because of the implicit meaning embedded within the so-called benedictory phrase, "पाली तेआचा धर्मु". The Deulgaon-Raja inscription (Tulpule 1962: 370-372) clearly mentions the remaining portion of this phrase as "जो हे धर्मु पली न तेहाचीए माए गाढौ लागैल" succeeded by "जो पाली तेआचा धर्मु". Thus it is quite obvious that the intention behind the depiction of the ithyphallic donkey is to insinuate the curse to be befallen on the violator of this donation.

This inscription has thus made it necessary to take a fresh review of the political condition in Deccan in the last decade of the 13th century and early decades of the 14th century.

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