
Fourteenth Century Marathi Stone Inscription from Telangashi, Taluka Jamkhed, District Ahmednagar

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Abstract: Present work discuss an early medieval stone inscription from a small village named Telangashi in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. This inscription records construction of a step-well by a noble from Kusadgaon village. As the date of the inscription falls under the reign of Yādava king Rāmacandra (c. 1271-1309 CE), this inscription helps us in understanding several interesting facts from the last days of Yādava Empire.

Keywords: Telangashi, Step Well, Laṣumīdeva, Āladeva, Khaṁdhāgale, Jaṭāsamkara Temple, Stone Inscription

Introduction

Jamkhed (Coordinates: 18°44'16"N, 75°18'43"E), is small Taluka (Sub-district) in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. In the absence of an extensive documentary record, very little is known about the ancient and early medieval history of Jamkhed Taluka, An important exception is the recent publication of Daniel Balogh of a pair of copper-plates discovered from Jamkhed. These copper-plates are written in cursive box-headed characters and record a donation of land by an anonymous prince or king who claims to be the son of Devaraja and grandson of the Rastrakuta king Bhavanmana (Balogh 2014: 173-180).

The situation when it comes to material culture is somewhat better. Thus, for example, in the same Taluka, in the village of Jategaon (Coordinates: 18°41'52"N 75°34'5"E), Mahadevaiah of the Archaeological Survey of India, Aurangabad Circle, has located a ruined Hemadpanti temple (c. 13th - 14th century CE) and four sati-stones (IAR 1987-88: 82). One of the richest collection of early medieval and medieval remains, however, are concentrated in a small village called Telangashi (Coordinates: 18°41'50.80", N 75°28'20.72"E), located 35 km South-East of Jamkhed. The village has a temple dedicated to Jatasamkara. Based on the constructional features of the temple i.e. architecture and iconography of mandapa (hall), pillar, pilasters, plan, it is likely that this temple was constructed during 12th-14th-century CE (Campbell 1884: 740). Some

early medieval sati-stones and hero-stones are available in the courtyard of the same temple. The site also possesses a barava or a rectangular step-well with steps leading down to the water from four sides (Pathak 2001:8).

The inscription (Figures 1a and 1b) inside the step-well (Figures 2a, 2b and 3), which documents the circumstances of its construction, has remained unnoticed, unpublished and unstudied. The present publication remedies this situation by providing a transcription, translation, and through analysis of this interesting inscription which, in light of the limited documentary record in Jamkhed Taluka, is important for researchers and students of the Early-mediaeval history of this region.

The inscription is engraved on a rectangular slab fixed on the inner wall of the tank. Though some part of this slab is broken, the inscription is still intact. This inscription is in Old Marathi. It consists of 4 lines of writing in characters of the Nagari script current during the 14th century CE. Some symbols like sun and moon along with a plough are engraved on the right side of the inscription.

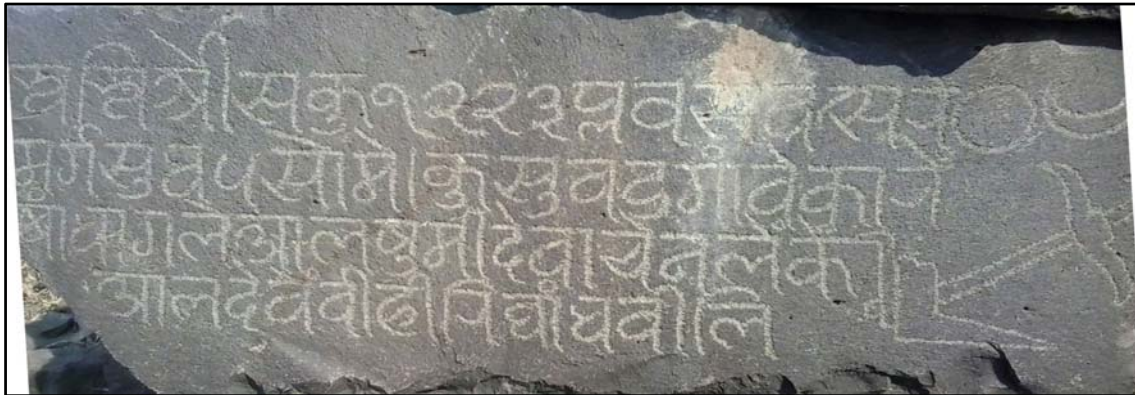


Figure 1a: -14th Century Marathi Inscription at Telangashi, Taluka Jamkhed, District Ahmednagar (Not to scale)

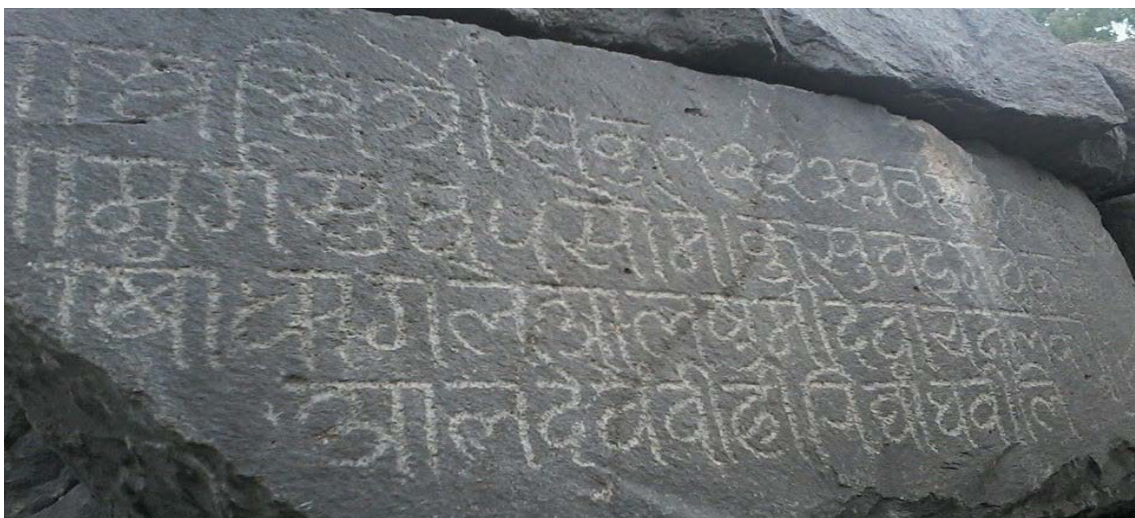


Figure 1b: Another view of the inscription at Telangashi, Taluka Jamkhed, District Ahmednagar (Not to scale)



Figure 2a: General view of the step-well at Telangashi



Figure 2b: General view of the step-well at Telangashi

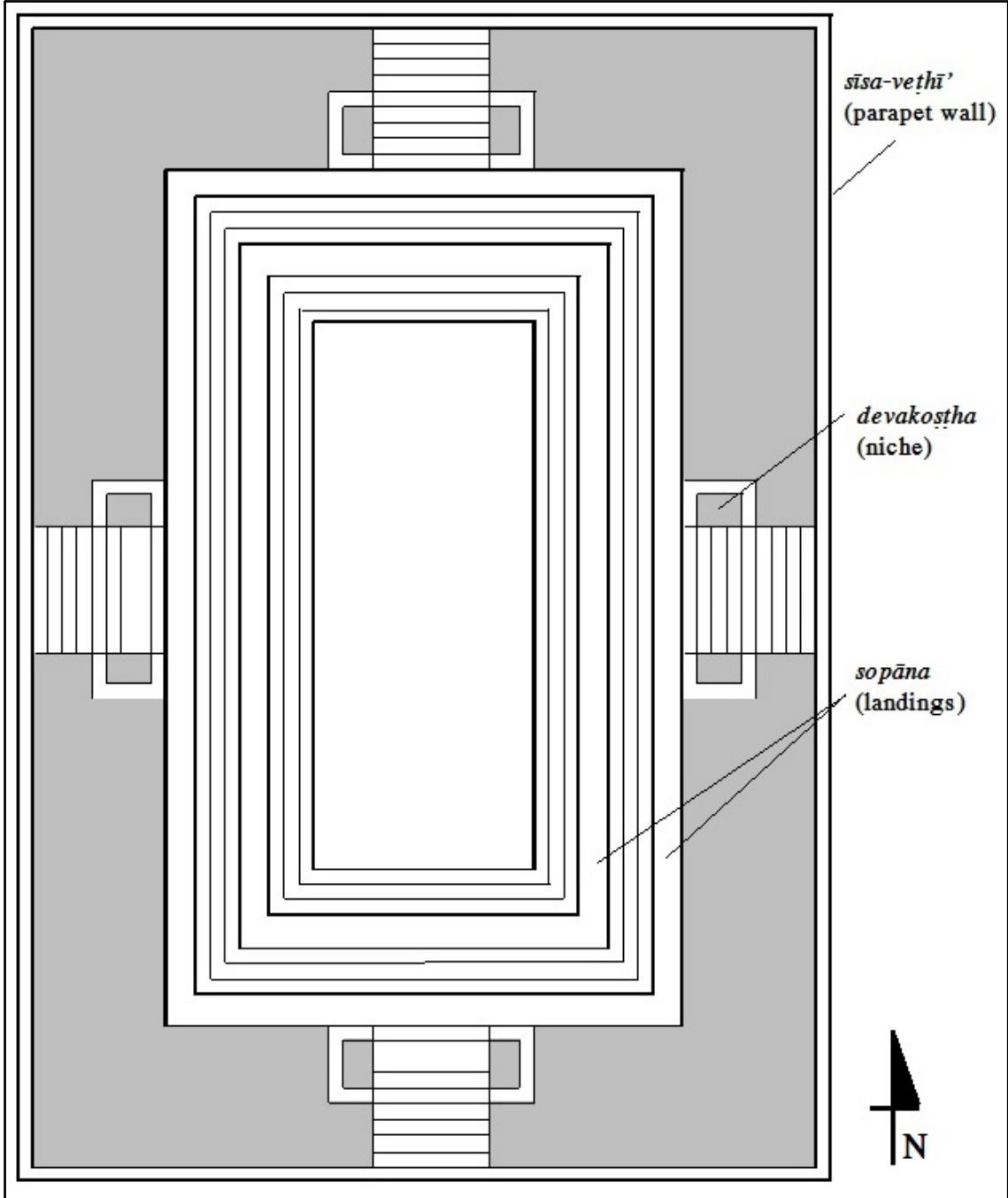


Figure 3: Plan of the step-well at Telangashi (Not to scale)

Marathi/English Transliteration

॥ स्वस्ति श्री सकु १२२३ प्लव संवत्सरे	॥ <i>svastī śrī saku 1223 plava saṁvatsare</i>
॥ मर्ग सुध ५ सोमे । कुसुवडगांवेकारें	॥ <i>marga sudha 5 some kusuvadgāmvekarēṁ</i>
॥ षां(खां)धागलेआ लषुमीदेवाचेन लेंकें	॥ <i>ṣām(khām)dhāgaleā laṣumīdevācen leṁkeṁ</i>
[॥] आलदेवें वीहीरि बांधवीलि	[॥] <i>āladeveṁ vīhīri bāndhavīli</i>

Emended Version

“svastī śrī saku 1223 plava saṁvatsare marga sudha 5 some / kusuvadgāṁvekāreṁ khāṁdhāgaleā[am] laṣumī[lakhumī]devācen leṁkerṁ āladeveṁ vīhīri bāṁdhavīli [/]”.

Translation

The inscription can be translated as “Dug by the inhabitant of village *Kusuvaḍagāṁva*, the well was built by Āladeva son of Laṣumīdeva on *mārgaṣīrśa śuddha 5 (pañcamī) śaka 1223, plava saṁvatsara.*” OR “The well was built by Āladeva, son of Laṣumīdeva Khamdhāgale, the inhabitant of village *Kusuvaḍagāṁva*, on *mārgaṣīrśa śuddha 5 (pañcamī) śaka 1223, plava saṁvatsara*”.

Date of Inscription

The date of inscription is given as ‘*marga (mārgaṣīrśa) śuddha 5 (pañcamī) śaka 1223, plava saṁvatsara*’ i.e 5th bright moon day in the month of *mārgaṣīrśa* in *śaka* era 1223, *plava saṁvatsara.*’ According to Pillai ephemeris, the date in the inscription corresponds to Monday, Monday, 6th November, 1301 CE (Pillai 1922: 205). The date of the inscription falls under the reign of Yādava king Rāmacandra (c. 1271-1309 CE).

Palaeography, Orthography and Language

As regards to the palaeography, orthography and language, there are several points, which attract our attention.

- The Inscription starts with the auspicious syllable – ‘*śrī*’, here an additional *mātrā* is added to conventional form ‘*śrī*’. It seems that this was a common practice in the 12th -15th century CE. Tulpule had already noted that, ‘*śrī* with additional *mātrā*’ is also recorded in Marathi inscriptions from Nevasa (1239-40 CE), Bhandak (1146 CE), Velapur (1305 CE), Pandharpur (1311 CE), Bijapur (1320-21 CE), Andheri (1377 CE), Mathgaon (1395 CE), Shelarwadi caves (1439 CE) (Bankar 2013:96-97, Tulpule 1963:37-42,248-270,290-297; Kolte 1987:301-308).
- Two vertical lines or ‘*daṁḍa-rekhā*’ are inscribed at the beginning of the first three lines. Near the fourth line, the slab is broken; hence ‘*daṁḍa-rekhā*’ is not visible for the fourth line.
- The name of the day i.e. (*somavāra* - Monday) is abbreviated in the inscription and written as ‘*some*’ (line 2). The word ‘*some*’ is also recorded in other ancient Marathi inscriptions at Lonad, Pandharpur, Chaul, Agasan and Velapur (Tulpule 1963: 72-76, 165-190,227-228,232-241,248-255).
- The name of month ‘*mārgaṣīrśa*’ is abbreviated as ‘*marga*’ (line 2) in the inscription. Which is different from various several other forms of ‘*mārgaṣīrśa*’ appeared in

ancient Marathi inscriptions viz. *mārgasira, mārgisara, mārgīsara, mārgisvara, mārgga, mārga, mārgḥa* (Tulpule 1963:37-42,156-160,165-190,206-211,237-241,248-260,298-301).

- Repeated use of ‘*am̐*’ (*anusvāra*) can be seen in the case of some words, eg. *kusuvadgām̐vekāreṃ* (line 2), *lem̐keṃ* (line 3), *āladeveṃ* (line 4). The *anusvāra* is unanimously shown by a small circle.
- Auspicious symbols like sun and moon are engraved on the right corner of the slab. They symbolise the ancient Marathi expression ‘*ā-candra-tārāvadhī*’ [Sk. *ā-candra-tārā-avadhi*]; ‘*ā-candrārka*’ [Sk. *ā-candra-arka*]; ‘*ā-candra-arka-parīyanta/-paryanta*’ [Sk. *ā-candra-arka-paryanta*] which denote ‘as long as the sun and the moon exist’ (DOM 2000:49).
- A plough is also engraved below sun and moon symbol, this represents involvement of the farming community in the construction of step-well. Plough is a common symbol or signature used by ‘*Pāṭila*’ (headmen of the village) and ‘*Deśamukha*’ (hereditary revenue collector of a *pargaṇā* or district.) as evident from Medieval Moḍī -Marathi documents and seals of the 16th -17th century CE.

Personal Names

There are references to the personal names ‘*Laṣumīdeva*’ and ‘*Āladeva*’ in the 3rd and 4th lines of this inscription. ‘*Laṣumīdeva / Laṣumideü*’ is a corrupt form of Sk. *Lakṣmīdeva* and a very common name in Marathi. ‘*Laṣumīdeva / Laṣumideü*’ is also recorded in Kati inscription (1398 CE). ‘*Laṣumīdeva*’ can also be read/pronounced as ‘*Lakhumīdeva*’ (Tulpule 1963: 298-301). *Āladeva* was probably the chief of the village as is suggested from the plough symbol used in the inscription.

In ancient Marathi inscriptions, sometimes syllable ‘*ṣa*’ and ‘*kha*’ are interchangeable (Tulpule 1963:64). In the 3rd line word ‘*ṣāmdhāgaleä*’ which can be read as ‘*khāmdhāgaleä*’, probably based on ancient Marathi verb ‘*khāṇaṇe*’ [Sk. *√khan*] means ‘to dig’. The reference to the digging of a well is noted in ‘*Govindaprabhucaritra*’ (DOM 2000:184; Deshpande 1999:95). It is interesting to note that, this word ‘*khāmdhāgale*’ is prefixed to *Laṣumīdeva*’s name. During personal communication Dr Bhandare had suggested that if we ammend/add additional *anusvāra* to the word ‘*khāmdhāgale*’, it represent title/family name of *Laṣumīdeva* (Bhandare: Personal communication).

If we accept Dr Bhandare’s hypothesis then it is most likely that after few centuries, the title/family name ‘*kham̐dhāgale*’ was turned into ‘*kham̐ḍāgale*’ and was one of the most prominent family name (surname) in the medieval period. Here *Āladeva*’s brief identity is recorded by citing his family name, father’s name and his village of inhabitation.

Place Names

The 2nd and 3rd lines of inscription records 'the step-well was dug by inhabitants of *kusuvadgāmva*'. The suffix *kāra/ kāre* [Pk. *-kera*] is used after a place name to indicate a person coming from (such-and-such a place) eg. (1) In Pandharpur Marathi Inscription we have certain Āmbekār from village Āmbe and Soḍavikār Hemādī Paṁḍit from village Soḍavī, (2) We also have a person with surname Veremkār from village Verem in Khategaon Copper-plate inscription (DOM 2000: 152). Here the place name '*kusuvadgāmva*' can be identified with modern 'Kusaḍgāmva' (Coordinates: 18°40'18"N 75°16'31"E), a small village located 20 km on the West of Jamkhed.

The Importance of Inscription

During the early medieval period, different types of cisterns, tanks, wells, small lakes, ponds and reservoirs were built by the kings, nobility and merchant community for strategic, religious and philanthropical reasons. There were some secular structures from which one could draw water. Several types of such structures mentioned in ancient Marathi literature and inscriptions viz.

- *āḍa* [Sk. *avāṭa/ cf. aḍa*] : a draw-well (DOM 2000: 52).
- *bārava* [Sk. *vāpī* ?]: a square or oblong well with steps leading down to the water (DOM 2000: 488).
- *bāva / bāvī* [Sk. *vāpī / cf. bāva*] : a well (DOM 2000: 488-489).
- *kupa* [Sk. *kūpa/ cf. kupā; kuhā*] : a well (DOM 2000: 163).
- *mokaḷa-vāvī* [Sk. *mukta-vāpī*]: a particular temple with an open well in its courtyard (DOM 2000: 566).
- *pāṇavathā/ pāṇivathā / pānivathā* [Sk. *pānīya-avāṭa / cf. pāṇa-vāḍā; pāṇivathā; pāṇivathā; pāṇothā; pānivathā*]: a place in a village where water is fetched, a lake; a water reservoir (DOM 2000: 429-430).
- *pāṇieḍa/ pāṇieḍā* [Sk. *pānīya-/ cf. pāṇiyāḍē; pāṇieḍā; pānaḍī; pāniyeḍā; pāneḍa*]: a water reservoir (DOM 2000: 429-430).
- *pāpaḍī* [Sk. *parparīka*]: a reservoir; a tank (DOM 2000: 433).
- *pavhā/ pavhe* [Sk. *pravaha/ cf. pavhā; pavhai*]: a booth where drinking water is available (DOM 2000: 416).
- *pokharaṇī* [Sk. *puṣkariṇī*]: an artificial lake; a tank (DOM 2000: 458).
- *tāḱē* [Sk. *ṭaṅka*]: a water tank; a reservoir (DOM 2000: 275).

Pathak had identified step-well at Telangashi as '*bārava*' (Pathak 2001:81), however, the present inscription refers to it as '*vihira*' (line 4). The term '*vihira*' also appears in the old Marathi Mahānubhāva text 'Govindaprabhucaritra' (GPC 75, 165). This step-well is constructed with well-dressed stones or '*cirā*' (as mentioned in old Marathi texts). A parapet wall or '*sisa-veṭhī*' [Sk. *śirṣa-veṣṭita*] is also built around the step-well (GPC 165).

Earlier researchers had labelled every well with a single staircase as 'vīhira', which become arbitrary with the discovery of present inscription. This rectangular step-well with staircase leading down to the water from four sides has niches (*devakoṣṭha*) on either side in the walls for housing sacred images. According to local legends, this step-well was dug to water garden dedicated to goddess Bhavānī, but the temple of Bhavānī in this village is not very old.

Probably construction of the step-well was associated with the concept of 'pūrta', a religious act of donation, such as digging a step-well/pond, building temples, feeding people, building a rest house for pilgrims and so forth, as, for example, is mentioned in *Manusmṛti* (*vāpikūpatadāgādi devatāyatanāni ca / annapradānamārāma: purtamityabhidhiyate MS. 4.226*).

Matsya Purāṇa notes, 'by constructing a well in the arid region, one can attain heaven for infinite years' (*evam nirudake deśe ya: kūpuaṃ kārayet budha: bindau bindau ca toyasya vaset saṃvatsaram divi //*, MP 154-155). It is also possible that this step-well was used for some religious reasons as it appears from the location of to have been associated with the early medieval shrine of Jaṭāsaṃkara or the garden (ārāma?) dedicated to the shrine.

Conclusions

The present inscription records the construction of a step-well by Āladeva son of Laṣumīdeva, the inhabitant of village *Kusuvaḍagāṃva*, on *mārgaśīrśa śuddha 5 (pañcamī) śaka 1223, plava saṃvatsara* (Monday, 6th November 1301 CE). The date of the inscription falls under the reign of Yādava king Rāmacandra (c. 1271-1309 CE). This inscription helps us to understand architectural term 'vīhira' used during 14th century CE. The use of vertical lines or '*daṃḍa-rekhā*' is unique in the context of early medieval Marathi inscription. The use of plough symbol in this inscription most likely denote the nobility of the donor.

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Abbreviations

ABORI	:	Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune.
DOM	:	Dictionary of old Marāṭhi (Ed. Tulpule and Feldhaus)
GPC	:	<i>Govindaprabhucaritra</i> (Ed. Deshpande).
IAR	:	Indian Archaeology - A Review
MP	:	<i>Matsya Purāṇa</i>
MS	:	<i>Manusmṛti</i>

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