

The Batihagarh Inscription of Jallala Khoja: Samvat 1385

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Abstract

The Batihagarh stone inscription dated at samvat 1385, offers us a unique viewpoint at the workings of the administration of Mahmud of Yoginipura (another name of Delhi). Engraved on a slab 1'11" x 1'6" and in a good state of preservation, the edifice is quite informative. Written in the Sanskrit language in Nagari characters, the average size of letters are generally at half an inch. The primary purpose of the inscription, it seems, is to record the construction of a "Gomatha", a garden and a step-well in the town of "Batihacim". The Credit for the public – Utility projects go to the local Muhammedan ruler "Jallala Khoja" the son of "Isaka"

KEYWORDS: Batihagarh, Jallala Khoja

The Batihagarh stone inscription dated at samvat 1385, offers us a unique viewpoint at the workings of the administration of Mahmud of Yoginipura (another name of Delhi). He was none other than the illustrious Turk Nasir-ud-din Mahmud of the Slave dynasty who reigned between 1246 and 1266 A.D. Mahmud had conquered the Bundelkhand country, which was also known as Chanderi and Malwa in A.D 1251. Subsequently he appointed a governor for the new addition to his provinces. Malik Julachi was his new governor, though his name does not appear to be mentioned in the Persian histories. The inscription records the construction of a 'Gomatha', a garden and a stepwell in the town of Batihadim. A stepwell was a major public-works construction at that time as it had a direct effect on public health since it was a major source of drinking and household water.

The origin of the stone is Batihagarh, a village lying 21 miles north – west of Damoh in the Hatta tehsil. At a medieval timeframe, Batihagarh was the seat of Mussalman governors sent from Delhi. There are extant ruins of a fort and other remains of its past greatness. These include inscriptions in Sanskrit and Persian. This bilingual mode of inscription is a very interesting facet of those times.

Engraved on a slab 1'11" x 1'6" and in a good state of preservation, the edifice is quite informative. Written in the Sanskrit language in Nagari characters, the average size of letters are generally at half an inch. Altogether there are 15 verses in the total of 16 lines which make up the main body of the inscription. The writing has a coverage of a space of 1' 7" x 1'. The entirety of the record is in verse with the exception of the word Siddhih at the beginning and subham bhavatu at the

conclusion, in parallel with the details of the date which is repeated in figures in line no. 14.

The 13th of April, 1328 A.D is the purported date of the inscription. The factual statement about the year is given in symbolical terms. As an afterthought, the substance – keynote of the symbolic verse is repeated in the immediate sequence. To add clarity, numerical representation of the year and the “tithi” is added too. On a more specific note, the 13th verse of the inscription refers to a Wednesday, the third day of the “bright” fortnight of the “Vairathe” month. The year being specified Vikrama scale as 1385.

The primary purpose of the inscription, it seems, is to record the construction of a “Gomatha”, a garden and a step-well in the town of “Batihadim”. The credit for the public –Utility projects go to the local Muhammedan ruler “Jallala Khoja” the son of “Isaka”.

The notable town of “Batihadim” (Batihagarh) was being upgraded with a garden, a stepwell and a “Gomatha”, by order of the aforementioned “Jallala Khoja.” According to the inscription, this Jallal Khoja or Jalal-ud-din was the representative of “Hiramadim” or Hisim- uddin. The other name of Hisam-ud-din is mentioned as Chhipaka. In all probability, Chhipaka is probably a corrupt form of “Safiq” is extant as the son of “Malik Julachi.” Historical sources state “Malik Julachi” as a notable figure in the time of Sultan Mahmud who was appointed as the Commander of the “Kharpara” armies along with the governor of the Chedi country by the Sultan.

On a similar note, the Sultan Mahmud is titled “Sakendra” in the lord of the Sakas with his Capital being at Yoginipara (another name for Delhi). He is also referred to as the Conqueror of other kings. Going by the way of the inscription, it is stated that Jallala had appointed “Dharar”, his servant, as the manager care taken of the principal architects are given as Bhojuta, Kamadeva and Hala of the Silapatta family (of Silawat caste, traditional masons in the neighbourhood of Delhi). The inscription clearly delineates its composer and author. The former is one Baijuka (Kayastha by caste) of the Mathera subdivision and the latter another one from Mathera named Vasa, who is the son of one Sahadeva.

The inscribed date corresponds to Wednesday, the 13th of April, 1328 A.D. However, the year is actually expressed in symbolical words. On the 13th Verse, it goes like “Wednesday, the third day of the bright fortnight of the Vaisakha month in the Vikrama year 1385. The “Tithi” is since in figures. Further clarity is attempted by repeating the substance of the verse in prose immediately afterwards. The year is given in figures too.

The “Sakendra” title allotted to Mahmud, and the reference to the “Kharpara” armies of the Chedi century prints out a very interesting side to this inscription. Samudragupta’s stone pillar inscription of Allahabad mentions the “Kharparikas”, who are theoretically identical to the “Kharparas” mentioned in these inscriptions. It is inscribed that Samudragupta subdued the warlike Kharparikas in the 4th century A.D. V. A. Smith, in the journal of the Asiatic Society of 1897, has delineated the Khasparika homeland in Seoni or Mandla in the Central provinces. The present inscription is a testament to the genius of Mr Smith as it corroborates his guess/hypothesis unequivocally. It is also evident that the Kharparas were quite a warlike people who had resisted fiercely to any outside occupation. So, their subjugation was bound to be memorized by inscription(s). It might also be surmised that “Chedi” is a corruption of Chanderi. It is also recorded that the Sultan Mahmud sent his forces to this area in 1251, leaving a governor to rule in his name. This governor was titled “Chedidesadhipa”.

Another important point to be noted in this regard is the information about the stepwell. For centuries, the stepwell has been an integral part of Indian culture, engineering and public life. Construction of step wells along major Indian roads at a distance of every 8 kos is mentioned in Ashokan inscriptions (for the convenience of travellers). King Ashoka states that this was a very well established practice in predated edicts and reigns of other sovereigns. An oft-quoted edict is a testament of this fact:

“King Devanampriya Priyadarsin speaks thus. On the roads banyan-trees were caused to be planted by me, (in order that) they might afford shade to cattle and men, (and) mango-groves were caused to be planted. And (at intervals) of eight kos wells were caused to be dug by me, and flights of steps (for descending into the water) were caused to be built. Numerous drinking-places were caused to be established by me, here and there, for the enjoyment of cattle and men. [But] this so-called enjoyment (is) [of little consequence]. For with various comforts have the people been blessed both by former kings and by myself. But by me this has been done for the following purpose: that they might conform to that practice of morality.”

— Ashokan Pillar Edict No 7

The stepwell may have its origins in the idea to ensure water during periods of drought. At Dholavira, the site has water tanks or reservoirs which are provided with flights of steps. This might be the earliest archaeological evidence of wells provided

with steps to reach them. The great bath at Mohenjodaro also has steps on opposite directions.

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