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## Gaddhegal Stones: An Analysis of Imprecations and Engraved Illustrations

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### **Abstract:**

*Gaddhegal or the Ass Curse Stele is rock edict that has peculiar auspicious features like sun, moon and kalasha. The auspicious symbols ensure perpetuity of the grant and bestow prosperity upon the grantee. It also depicts an image of donkey and women in an act of sexual congress. The ass curse imagery engraved on these rock edicts suggests a warning to the transgressor of the grant. The inscriptions if any, engraved on them register land grants.*

*While working on the dissertation 'Rekindling the History of Shilaharas of North Kokan as Gleaned through the Recent Epigraphical Revelations' under the Justice K T Telang Fellowship of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai, my attention was drawn towards this unique stones. Large number of Gaddhegal stones has been studied for the important epigraphical data engraved on them.*

*However Ass Curse as engraved illustrations and the imprecations as text necessitated more attention and analysis. This paper will attempt to analyze the imprecations and the engraved illustrations of the ass curses with the help of thirty six new gaddhegal stones discovered from Maharashtra. An attempt is also made to understand the variations in the verses and illustrations as well as document various oral traditions that have survived in spite of the fact that the original meaning and context passed in oblivion.*

**Keywords:** Gaddhegal, Ass Curse, Land Grant, Inscriptions, Maharashtra, Orissa, South East Asia

### **1. Introduction**

Gaddhegal or the Ass Curse Stele is rock edict that has peculiar auspicious features like sun, moon and kalasha. The auspicious symbols ensure perpetuity of the grant and bestow prosperity upon the grantee. It also depicts an image of donkey and women in an act of sexual congress. The ass curse imagery engraved on these rock edicts suggests a warning to the transgressor of the grant. The inscriptions if any, engraved on them register land grants. While working on the dissertation 'Rekindling the History of Shilaharas of North Kokan as Gleaned through the Recent Epigraphical Revelations' under the Justice K T Telang Fellowship of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai, my attention was drawn towards this unique stones. Large number of Gaddhegal stones have been studied for the important epigraphical data engraved on them. However Ass Curse as engraved illustrations and the imprecations as text necessitated more attention and analysis. This paper will attempt to analyze the imprecations with the help of thirty four new gaddhegal stones.

### **2. Imprecations in Inscriptions**

Imprecations have always been an integral part of the inscriptions that recorded grants to people and religious institutions. A detailed note of the Sanskrit imprecations has been taken by F E Pargiter<sup>i</sup>, E. Hultzsch<sup>ii</sup> and G H Khare<sup>iii</sup>. They have noted the benedictory and imprecatory verses from various copper plate and rock inscriptions and traced their origin to the Mahabharata and various Puranas.

Dr. Burnell remarks, 'the last clause in most grants consists of imprecations on those who resume or violate them and these generally consist of the words from the Vyasasmriti.'<sup>iv</sup>

Richard Soloman while elaborating 'Techniques of Epigraphic Writing' has noted that many inscriptions; especially in medieval and later times are accompanied by engraved illustrations of various sorts, including ass curses that are explicitly spelt out in the texts of the inscriptions.<sup>v</sup>

Michael Willis also has discussed the imprecatory formulae found in copper plates along with explanatory notes on their origin.<sup>vi</sup>

The donors cautioned the transgressor of the grants with verses similar to the following.

Svadattam paradattam Va Yo Haret Vasundharam

Shshthim Varsha Sahasrani Vishthayam Jayate Krumi:

(One who will seize the land donated by him or by others will suffer as a worm in the feces for six thousand years.)

- Imprecations in Overseas Asian Inscriptions:

The imprecations have crossed over and can be seen in various Asian inscriptions.

- Near East and Southern Arabia:

Mohammad Maraqtan has taken a review of curses recorded in the Arabian and Near Eastern inscriptions.<sup>vii</sup> These curses were mainly used to protect property, sacred places, objects and memorial monuments. Maraqtan states that anything that was written was thought to have magical power in the ancient Near East and thus written curses were considered more powerful than the verbal ones.

Simon Parker<sup>viii</sup> has noted the curses in the Semetic inscriptions. She states that the inscriptions would essentially end with the curse on anyone erasing the king's name on it or damaging the stone.

- South East Asia (Batu Persumpahan):

In the Southeast Asian epigraphs, especially the inscriptions of the Srivijayan Period, such edicts are called as Batu Persumpahan or the 'Cursing Stones.' Many Srivijayan inscriptions contain a curse formula for those who do not obey and are not loyal to the king. Mention may be made of Karang Brahi, Bungkuk Inscription, Palas Pasemah Inscription, Boom Baru Inscription, Talang Tuo inscription in this respect.<sup>ix</sup>

- Telaga Batu Inscription:

Telaga Batu inscription<sup>x</sup> is a famous 7<sup>th</sup> century AD Srivijayan inscription discovered in Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia. The inscription was written with Pallava letters in the Old Malay language. (Fig. J) The inscription repeatedly refers to the curse being 'drunk'. The oath takers had to drink water poured over the stone that flowed down through the pout. In order to prevent possible uprisings, the ruler of Srivijaya thought it is important for them to be sworn to pledge their loyalty under the threat of curse.<sup>xi</sup> The people, occupations or titles mentioned in this inscription were categorized as potentially dangerous people or groups of people that might revolt against Srivijayan hegemony<sup>xii</sup>.

Arlo Griffiths suggested that vernacular curses were common in the Champa inscriptions found both on the mainland and in Indonesia.<sup>xiii</sup> Following example, has a close similarity to those found in some of the eastern and central Indian ass curse texts.

siy urāñ yañ mavāc tuy śanāpa niv asuv hitaṃ asuv putiḥ asuv mirah  
asuv pāk matā avis ta ya āśraya inā urāñ nan (C. 14 8 B, l. 8-12) (919/920 AD)

'The man who incurs this imprecation, may the black dog, the white dog, the red dog, the four eyed dog, all of them visit that man's mother'

- Bestiality in Indian Art:

Indian temples are adorned with various forms of art human, divine and erotic. There are many examples of scenes of bestiality in Indian art. Examples can be cited of temples like Shishiresvara at Bhuvaneshvar (8<sup>th</sup> AD), Badoh, Lakshmana Temple at Khajuraho (10<sup>th</sup> AD), Vishvanatha at Khajuraho, Nagda, Modhera, Roda and Ambarnath (Fig. K) (11<sup>th</sup> AD) and Menal, Ramgadh, Bagli, Belgamve (12<sup>th</sup> AD), Konark and later additions at Lingaraja (13<sup>th</sup> AD). Devangana Desai has observed three types in the above mentioned examples. viz.

1. Man mates with animal
2. Animal mates with man
3. Animal mates with woman

Desai suggests that they seem to represent some ritual practice however she is unable to cite the literary sources for the same.<sup>xiv</sup> According to various traditions women played a vital role in the ritual copulation rites like Ashvamedha that enhanced fertility of the soil and vegetation.

- Etymology of Gaddhegal or Ass Curse:

The ass curse stones are essentially land grant edicts. The ass curse as a verse in Marathi and occasionally in Sanskrit and Arabic<sup>xv</sup> or as a sculpted panel indicates the imprecatory warning. It must be noted that the word gaddhegal is not used in any edict. This nomenclature was offered by the historians who studied them later for their epigraphical importance. Dr. S. M. Kalburgi has given the meanings of two interesting terms frequently used in the Kannada inscriptions found in Maharashtra. 'Ghale' means a yardstick to measure the land and 'gadde bhumi' means fertile land.<sup>xvi</sup> Though these words cannot be definitely considered as the origin of the term, none the less their similarity to the term gaddhegal cannot be overlooked either.

- The Ass Curse: An Engraved Illustration on Rock Edicts

By early medieval times ass curse as a text accompanied by engraved illustrations started appearing on the edicts of various dynasties like the Paramaras of Malwa, Chhindaka Naga dynasty of Bastar, Palas of Bengal etc.

- Physical Attributes of Ass Curse Stele:

Gaddhegal<sup>xvii</sup> or the Ass Curse Stele has peculiar auspicious features like sun, moon and kalasha. It also depicts an image of donkey and women in an act of sexual congress. The ass curse imagery engraved on these rock edicts suggests a warning to the transgressor of the grant. The auspicious symbols of sun, moon and the kalasha ensure perpetuity of the grant and bestow prosperity upon the grantee. The inscriptions if any, engraved on them usually register land grants with necessary details.

- The Ass Curse - An Engraved Illustration on Copper Plates:

As noted earlier the ass curse, an image of donkey and women in an act of sexual congress were engraved on copper plates too. Mention must be made of S G Tulpule<sup>xviii</sup>, who states that Ass Curses are not found engraved on any Copper Plates. Following examples will correct this statement.

The Rajapur Inscription<sup>xix</sup> (965 CE) of Madhurantakadeva of Chhindaka Naga dynasty of Bastar can be studied in this respect. (Fig. G) On plate 3-b of this inscription along with the usual imprecatory verses, twelve hands in a row at the top, a cow with a bell attached to her neck, a dagger and a shield behind her feet, a swastika and the donkey in copulation with a woman are engraved.

- Variations in the Curse Imagery:

The curse imagery and text sometimes varied as can be seen from the Rajbhita stone Inscription of Mahipala I from Bangladesh (11<sup>th</sup> century AD)<sup>xx</sup>. (Fig. I) The curse can be translated as 'his father will be a donkey, his mother will be sow of a ditch, and his paternal uncle a camel. Similar curse illustrations can be seen on two Buddhist Rock Edicts.

- The Ass Curse as verse and engraved illustration in Buddhist Inscriptions:

The Bodha Gaya Rock Edict of King Aiokavalla (Ashokachalla) (Fig. C) dated 12<sup>th</sup> century AD records an ass and pig curse as an image. This edict records construction of a Vihara and provision for the maintenance and daily offerings of three chaityas by the Singhalese Order at Bodh Gaya.<sup>xxi</sup>

Another rock edict from Bodh Gaya (Fig. D) belonging to 12<sup>th</sup> century AD depicts sun, moon and the image of Buddha at the top and the ass in copulation with a pig below. The inscription records donation of a village that was accepted by a monk Mangalsvamin. The imprecation is a caution against king who might interfere with this gift that reads 'his father is a jack ass and mother is a pig.'<sup>xxii</sup>

- The Ass Curse: An Engraved Illustration in Maharashtra

On the basis of available information, rulers from the house of Shilaharas of North Konkan<sup>xxiii</sup> were the earliest who issued rock edicts with ass curses in different types such as only engraved illustrations and illustrations accompanied with Sanskrit or Marathi verses in Maharashtra.

- Vihar Edict of King Anantdeva I :

The earliest known edict with an engraved illustration from Maharashtra is the Vihar Edict of King Anantdeva I (1081 AD).<sup>xxiv</sup> (Fig. N) It's important to note that V V Mirashi has not taken note of the engraved illustration in the lowest panel. The illustration is also not clear in the estampage provided. However, M G Dikshit has taken note of the ass curse.<sup>xxv</sup>

Mention must be made of the Thane District 'Museum' Edict<sup>xxvi</sup> (1044 AD) which is definitely earlier than the Vihar Edict. Neither photo image nor estampage of this edict is available anymore. M G Dikshit states that a blank space of the size 11"x 8" was left, for probably ass curse image.

Thus for want of more evidence Vihar is the earliest known Ass Curse edict so far. Following table illustrates the details of Shilahara (of North Konkan) Rock Edicts where the ass curse is only in the form of engraved illustration. Often the traditional Sanskrit verse formula is used at the end of these edicts instead of the Marathi ass curse verse.

	King	Name	AD	Graphic	Verse
1	Anantdeva I	Vihar <sup>xxvii</sup>	1081	Graphic	-----
2	Aparaditya I	Cintra <sup>xxviii</sup>	1137	Graphic	-----
3	Aparaditya I	Chanje <sup>xxix</sup>	1138	Graphic	-----
4	Harapaldeva	Ranjali <sup>xxx</sup>	1148	Graphic	-----
5	Aparaditya II	Vasai <sup>xxxi</sup>	1197	Graphic	-----
6	Keshideva II	Akshi <sup>xxxii</sup>	1209	Graphic	-----
7	Keshideva II	Chaudharpada <sup>xxxiii</sup>	1239	Graphic	-----
9	Someshvara	Ranwad <sup>xxxiv</sup>	1258	Graphic	-----
10	Someshvara	Chanje <sup>xxxv</sup>	1259	Graphic	-----

Table 1: Shilahara Rock edicts with only Ass Curse engraved illustrations

- The Ass Curse: Verse formulae From Maharashtra

In the Rock Edicts of Maharashtra, the ass curses were often phrased in Marathi and sometimes in Sanskrit language.

- Mahula Rock Edict of Shilahara King Haripaladeva<sup>xxxvi</sup> (1153 AD)

This is the first edict where the ass curse is found recorded in Marathi. 'sa(sha)(sana) vyavastha jo chali tehachiye maya gadhawu valaghe' (the transgressor's mother would be copulated by the donkey)

Following table would help to understand various Sanskrit and Marathi ass curse formulae used in various published rock edicts of Maharashtra.

No	Name of Edict	AD	Dynasty	King	The Ass Curse	Language
1	<b>Mahul<sup>xxxvii</sup></b>	1153	Shilahara	Haripaladeva	sa(sha) (sana vya) vastha jo chali tehachiye maya gadhawu valaghe (the transgressor's mother would be copulated by the donkey)	Marathi
2	<b>British Museum<sup>xxxviii</sup></b>	1154	Shilahara	Haripaladeva	...jo gramabhujā ma(sa)nu athava adhiku kavana viruddhipurvaka e(ya)ca lopa kari gadhava (jha)ve (the villager's mother (whether of a low or of a high status, who, with a hostile intention, will cause damage to the water channel) would be copulated by the donkey)	Marathi
3	<b>Savaragav<sup>xxxix</sup></b>	c. 1158	Chalukya	Trailokyamalla	he bhaṣa pratipali na tehaci maya gadhau ghei (the transgressor's mother would be copulated by the donkey)	Marathi
4	<b>Vasai<sup>xl</sup></b>	1161	Shilahara	Mallikarjuna	tasya mata gadabhen (...his mother(would be copulated) by the donkey)	Sanskrit
5	<b>Savaragava<sup>xli</sup></b>	1142	Kadamba	Marudadeva	phedi to svana gadhavu camdalu (the transgressor himself is a donkey and belongs to the camdala caste)	Marathi
6	<b>Lonad<sup>xlii</sup></b>	1184	Shilahara	Aparaditya II	iye shasane likhita bhaṣa jo lopi athava lopavi jo gardabhanathu tehacie maye suryaparve gardhabhu (jhave) (the transgressor is a great fool and his mother will be copulated by the donkey at the time of sunrise)	Marathi
7	<b>Parel<sup>xliii</sup></b>	1184	Shilahara	Aparaditya II	tehaci maya gadhave jhavije (the transgressor's mother would be copulated by the donkey)	Marathi
8	<b>Manikapura (Vasai)<sup>xliiv</sup></b>	1197	Shilahara	Aparaditya II	lupyati lopayanti va tasya mataram gardabhena jhavije (the transgressor's mother would be copulated by the donkey)	Sanskrit
9	<b>Deulagava<sup>xlv</sup> Raje</b>	c. 12 <sup>th</sup> CE	-----	-----	jo he dharmu pali na tehaciye mae gadhau lagela (the transgressor's mother would be copulated by the donkey)	Marathi
10	<b>Jalgaon<sup>xlvi</sup></b>	1202	---	Jaitra Samanta	He thakali bhaash chandrarkaparyant jo maili to shwan gadabh chandalu (the violator of the edict will be dog, donkey and low born)	
11	<b>Velusa<sup>xlvii</sup></b>	c. 1208	Samgama	Devaraya I	tehaci mae gardhabhe jhavije (the donkey will copulate with the transgressor's mother)	Marathi
12	<b>Phulambari<sup>xlviii</sup></b>	1242	Yadava	Simghana Deva	jo madhace ayagata svodharae gheyave e madhu phedila yaca doṣu brahmabhojana phedila yaca doṣukari	Marathi
13	<b>Kiravali<sup>xlix</sup></b>	1248	Shilahara	Anamtadeva III	bhaṣa jo lopi teha(ci) (mae) gadabhu volagili (the transgressor's mother would be copulated by the donkey)	Marathi
14	<b>Tasgaon<sup>l</sup></b>	1250	Yadava	Krishna	Tanmata nawraasbhen rabhasa sopaskaram yabhayate (mothr of the violator of the grant would be enjoyed by a youthful ass with all the necessary means of enjoyment)	

15	<b>Akshi<sup>li</sup></b>	1291	Yadava	Ramachandra Deva	jo lopi tehaciye maesi gadhau ghodu jhave (the transgressor's mother would be copulated by the donkey and the horse)	Marathi
16	<b>Koparad<sup>lii</sup></b>	1297	Yadava	Ramachandra Deva	sarga sala udre kari lopi tehaci mae gadhavu jave (.....the transgressor's mother would be copulated by the donkey)	Marathi
17	<b>Cheula<sup>liii</sup></b>	1298	Yadava	Ramachandra Deva	jo phedi lopi tehacie maesi gadhavu jhave (the transgressor's mother would be copulated by the donkey)	Marathi
18	<b>Agasan<sup>liv</sup></b>	1300	Yadava	Ramachandra Deva	jo lopi tehaci mae gadhau jhave (the transgressor's mother would be copulated by the donkey)	Marathi
19	<b>Velusa<sup>lv</sup></b>	1402	Samgama	Harihara	teyacie maesi gadau ghodu (his mother would be copulated by ass and horse)	Marathi
20	<b>Bijapur Bavadi Edict<sup>lvi</sup></b> <b>Taj</b>	--	--	--	Bar khara zan wa madar i u sawaar bashad (Ass Curse would ride the mother and the wife of the transgressor)	Persian

Table 2: Sanskrit, Marathi and Persian ass curse formulae used in edicts of Maharashtra

- Continuation of Ass Curse Tradition under the Vijayanagara and Muslim Rule:

The ass curses were used by the Muslim rulers who succeeded the Shilaharas and Yadavas like the Nayate, Bahamani, and Adilshahi Sultans to ward off the transgressor. It is interesting to note that the Muslim rulers used Marathi to construct these imprecations.

- Dabhol Edict<sup>lvii</sup>: The imprecatory verse in this edict engraved states that the transgressor as well as his mother would be copulated by the ass. (tyavari va tyace maevari gadade ase)
- Ahmadnagar Mosque Edict<sup>lviii</sup>: During the reign of Murtaza Nizam Shah (1565-1568) Bismat Khan made provisions for a mosque at Ahmadnagar. The imprecation reads 'jo koni manha karil tyache mapar gadhaw' (the transgressor's mother would be violated by ass)
- Miraj Bada Imam Darga Edict<sup>lix</sup>: The imprecatory verse in this 17<sup>th</sup> century edict states that the transgressor's wife would be copulated by the ass. (tayace bailevari gadhou)
- Rangad Edict of Sangama King Devaraya II (Fig.M) (11<sup>th</sup> September 1426 AD)<sup>lx</sup>: This is the first Marathi rock edict of the Sangama Dynasty discovered at Rangad, Malwan taluq of Sindhudurg District in Maharashtra. The ass curse illustration is engraved in the lowest panel of the edict. There is no ass curse imprecation in this edict.

- Gadheda Galay :The ass Curse Tradition In Gujarat:

The ass Curse Stones were called as gadheda galay in Gujarat. Pandit Bhagwanlal Indrajai has taken a brief note of the ass curse stones.<sup>lxi</sup> He has reported the existence of figures of an ass alone as well as ass in copulation with a woman.

- Near Eastern Gate of the town of Porbunder in Kathiawad:  
The inscribed part prohibits the ruler of the place from taking possession of the estates of his subjects who die without an heir.
- Near a River adjoining the town of Amroli in Kathiawad:  
The inscribed part, exempts the people from a certain tax in 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- Near a well outside the town of Gogo, in Kathiawad:  
This edict belongs to the same date and the inscribed part has similar content.

Indrajai has given a small note of the ass curse stones, that he noted in Maharashtra.<sup>lxii</sup>

- Near the sea shore at Mahim in Mumbai (14<sup>th</sup> AD) that was in the possession of Dr. Bhau Daji Lad.
- In the bazaar of Karad City
- A Telugu ass curse stone in Village of Bombli, on the way from Ganjam to Kalingapatam on the Coromandel Coast ( 12-13 AD)

Indrajai has not given further references of these ass curse stones as such no further information about their content and present whereabouts can be traced.

- The Ass Curse Text Variant from Central and Eastern India:

The ass curse verses usually themed around a donkey violating a mother. It's variant from central and eastern India, often involved a donkey, sow and sometimes a camel. The transgressor was repeatedly threatened with the rebirth of his close relatives like parents and paternal uncle as donkey and pig. Following examples of the aforesaid type can be cited as follows:

- The Kuteshvara Rock Edict from Athamallik in Odisha, dated 8-9<sup>th</sup> century AD records an ass curse at the bottom of the panel. (Fig.H)
- Bhilsa Rock Edict (Fig. E) of the time of Jayasimha<sup>lxiii</sup> (Vikrama Year 1320 – 1263 AD) records a donation made by a lady called Sanumati (Bhanumati?) a resident of Kuptaka(?), for the religious merit of *Pam* (Paṇḍita) and *Ṭh* (Ṭhakura)



Madanasimha, who seems to have been her husband. Here the curse along with the engraved imagery is also recorded as a verse in Sanskrit as 'yo na dadati tasya mata gardabho ja(ya)bhati'

3. Jatanpal (Bastar) Inscription of the time of Nagavamshi King Narasimhadeva<sup>lxiv</sup> (1225 AD) has a figure and text that curses transgressor of the gift by declaring his father a donkey and mother a pig. (jasya bhumi pralopaya(ti) tasya garda(bha) va(ba)pa su(kari) mai)
  4. Kuruspal Inscriptions of Dharana Mahadevi of the time of Naga King Someshvaradeva<sup>lxv</sup> (1069 AD) also depict donkey copulating with pig and curses the transgressor with father an ass and mother a pig.
- Inventory of 41 newly discovered Ass Curse Stones from Maharashtra:

No	Location	Taluqa	District	Details
1	Akaloli	Bhiwandi	Thane	Inscribed Broken
2	Akeri-a	Kudal	Sidhudurg	Uninscribed
3	Akeri-b	Kudal	Sidhudurg	Uninscribed
4	Ambejogai	Ambejogai	Beed	Uninscribed
5	Aundh	Khataw	Satara	Uninscribed
6	Bhalivadi	Karjat	Raigad	Worn Out
7	Chakrashvar Wadi- a	Radhaagari	Kolhapur	Inscription worn out
8	Chakrashvar Wadi- b	Radhaagari	Kolhapur	Inscription worn out
9	Chirner- a	Uran	Raigad	Uninscribed
10	Chirner-b	Uran	Raigad	Undeciphered
11	Dhanakawadi	Puradar	Pune	Uninscribed
12	Gorai	Borivili	Mumbai	Uninscribed
13	Kadaw	Karjat	Raigad	Uninscribed
14	Karneshvar	Sagameshvar	Ratnagiri	Undeciphered
15	Kiravali-a	Vasai	Thane	Uninscribed
16	Kiravali-b	Vasai	Thane	Deciphered
17	Koregaon	Koregaon	Satara	Inscribed Undeciphered
18	Lonad	Bhiwandi	Thane	Uninscribed
19	Murud (Durga Devi Temple)	Murud	Raigad	Uninscribed
20	Otavane	Sawantwadi	Sidhudurg	Uninscribed
21	Pali Khandsai	Sudhagad	Raigad	Uninscribed
22	Pavshi	Kudal	Sidhudurg	Uninscribed
23	Pimpalvadi	Girgaon	Mumbai	Inscribed Undeciphered
24	Pirangut	Mulshi	Pune	Uninscribed
25	Pohale Caves	Panhala	Kolhapur	Uninscribed
26	Pune	Pune	Pune	Inscribed
27-a	Raite	Kalyan	Thane	Uninscribed
28-b	Raite	Kalyan	Thane	Uninscribed
29	Raogaon	Murbad	Thane	Uninscribed
30-a	Sagareshvar	Kadegaon	Sangali	Undeciphered
31-b	Sagareshvar	Kadegaon	Sangali	Undeciphered
32	Sangoda	Titawala	Thane	Inscribed Worn out
33	Satara Museum	Satara	Satara	Inscribed Undeciphered
34	Shevgaon	Shevgaon	Ahmadnagar	Inscribed Undeciphered
35	Tadsar	Kadegaon	Sangali	Unidentifid
36	Thorwe Shiravali	Junnar	Pune	Undeciphered
37	Tulajapur	Tulajapur	Osmanabad	Undeciphered
38	Varasoli	Alibaug	Raigad	Uninscribed
39 -a	Vasundri	Kalyan	Thane	Inscribed Undeciphered
40-b	Vasundri	Kalyan	Thane	Inscribed Undeciphered
41	Walshind	Bhiwandi	Thane	Inscribed Worn out

Table 3: Table of the newly discovered Ass Curse Stones

	Provenance	Details
A	Baroda State Museum (Obverse)	Inscribed
B	Baroda State Museum (Reverse)	Inscribed
C	Bodh Gaya Edict of Ashokachalla	Published
D	Bodh Gaya Edict	Published
E	Bhilsa Stone Inscription	Published
F	Hassan Museum Chariot Relief	-----
G	Copper Plates of Madhurantakadeva	Published
H	Kuteshvara Edict	-----
I	Rajbhita Inscription	published
J	Telaga Batu Inscription	published

Table 4: List of Ass Curse and Curse Stones and Copper Plate Inscriptions and Illustrations located outside Maharashtra

	Provenance	Details
K	Ambernath Temple	-----
L	Dombivili Edict	published
M	Ramgad Rock Edict	published
N	Vihar Edict	published

Table 5: List of Ass Curse Stones and Illustrations located in Maharashtra

- Typology of the Present Collection:

Following types of ass curse edicts are observed in the present collection.

1. Inscribed Ass Curse and with Engraved Illustrations:

Most of the Shilahara ass curse edicts, the earliest known of the type in Maharashtra are included in this category. Along with the sculptural representation, the edicts include elaborate details of the grant and an imprecatory verse in Marathi or Sanskrit language and Nagari script.

2. Inscribed Ass Curse on the sides with Engraved Illustrations:

A curious pattern has been observed on the recently discovered Ass Curse stone from Vasundri. (Fig. 39 a & 40 b) The inscribed portion flows on the right side of the stone.

3. Double Faced Ass Curse with Engraved illustrations:

The Ass Curse Stele dated 1599 AD of King Bharamalla of the Rathor family of Idar in the premises of Baroda State Museum is unique in itself. It is inscribed on both the sides with the regular features of sun and moon. On the Front Side (Fig. A) the auspicious symbols of sun and moon are carved on the top. The inscribed portion is in the middle and the ass curse as an engraved illustration is at the bottom. On the back side (Fig. B) too there are auspicious symbols on the top. The inscribed part in the middle is much worn out. In the lowest panel there is the ass curse as an engraved illustration in the right and a cow and its suckling calf in the left. This inscription proves that the ass curse tradition survived till the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar in India. So far this is the only example of Double Faced Ass Curse with Engraved illustration that I could locate.

4. Ass Curse Engraved Illustrations with Persian Edicts:

The Muslim rulers in keeping with the tradition of the land engraved ass curses as texts as explained elsewhere in the paper. In the Satara Museum Edict (Fig. 33) the ass curse appears as an engraved imagery.

5. Only sculptural Representation:

In this type of ass curse stones, no inscription is engraved. The donkey is depicted in sexual congress with a female figure. In the absence of the inscribed data no guesses can be made regarding the date and the dynasty that it belongs to.

6. Sole Donkey Sculpture:

In the third type only a donkey is sculpted on the stele. However this sculpture is engraved on the exterior of this temple. This type of image can be seen on the stones from Akeri (Fig. 2a-3b) and Aundh (Fig.5). It is interesting that there are two panels on the Chakreshvar Wadi (Fig.8-b) stone. On the lower panel there is the usual ass curse scene however on the upper panel sole donkey is sculpted. Amidst the ass curses kept in the premises of the Bharat Itihas Samshodhan Mandal, Pune, (Fig. 26) a 12<sup>th</sup> century inscribed stone has a similar sole donkey sculpture in the lower panel.

7. Combined Cow Calf and Ass Curse Stones:

This is rather unique representation found so far only at two places, Kiravali (Fig.15a) and Gorai. (Fig.12) The cow and calf image is symbolic of the donated land the recipient beneficiary.<sup>lxvi</sup> The ass curse imagery is explained above. On the broken ass curse at Kadaw (Fig.13), below the usual ass curse panel, a couple is sculpted. However in the absence of the lower portion I could not ascertain the meaning of this panel. Similar combination has not been observed so far. In the absence of information I am unable to assign a typology to this stone.

8. Ass Curse with footprint:

The ass curse from Pirangut (Fig. 24) depicts sun and moon as the usual auspicious symbols. However in the central panel footprints are carved. In the absence of any inscription, the purpose of these footprints cannot be established. Probably it was a

grant to a revered person. The ass curse as engraved illustrations carved at the bottom. The foot prints on the ass curse stele have been observed for the first time.

9. On the exterior of temples and Rathas:

Usually ass curse panels are raised as an independent stele. However an ass curse panel is found at the dilapidated Shiva temple at Lonad. (Fig.18) An ass curse panel is also found on the wooden chariot (ratha) displayed at the Museum from Hassan (Fig.F), Karnataka.

- Lack of epigraphical information:

As seen in the photographs, most of the ass curses are either broken or with only sculpted panel which deprives of the necessary historical facts. We therefore might not know exactly when and who raised them. Their size is also substantially small as compared to some of the elaborate Shilahara Ass Curse Edicts, the earliest of the type found in Maharashtra. Yet they are an essential and integral part of our heritage and a proof of the local antiquity and as such preserved with great care.

- Role of Oral Traditions:

- i. Often oral traditions have helped in tracing these stones. While examining the stone at Kadaw, an elderly onlooker Kaluram Patil told that there was a similar stone in his field in the neighboring village of Bhalivadi (Fig.6). He also knew the exact technical term 'gaddhegal and its historical importance'. Upon quizzing him whether he performs any puja or offering he said that there was no need to perform rituals with such stones. These facts were narrated by his father. As seen in the photograph, the stone in his field is completely worn out and broken in two parts. Had it not been for the surviving oral traditions, we would have never been able to recognize this ass curse stone.
- ii. There is a broken stone at Modnimb (taluka- Madha, district- Solapur) amidst the cluster of other veergals, that is identified by the villagers as the 'gaddhegal', however the regular features of the ass curse are missing. It could not be ascertained why this particular stone is picked and saved by the oral tradition as the ass curse.
- iii. According to the tradition believed at Sangoda (Fig.32), the stone moves by the size of a grain every year. Currently it is placed under the Wild date-tree (local name - Shindi) on the borders of a farm land. The villagers firmly believed that the world will come to an end the day the stone will move in the farm.
- iv. A peculiar practice was observed until a hundred years ago at Tadsar (Fig.35), taluka Kadegaon, district Sangali. A stone with rounded top is found buried opposite the Vitthal temple. The traditional punishment for immoral behavior or sexual offence was to ask the culprit to sit on the stone in the presence of the villagers, known as the 'donkey' in Tadsar. This punishment was humiliating for the offender. As the stone is not recovered from the ground the typical features of the ass curse stone cannot be ascertained. However an important reference from the Katyayana Shrauta Sutra offers a clue. It is suggested that a Brahmachari, a celibate, can perform the Gardhabhejya, i.e. giving an offering of an ass if he is an Avakarnin. An Avakarnin is described as one who has violated the rules of celibacy. (Kat-Sr. Su.-1.1.4)<sup>lxvii</sup> Though the donkey was not offered by the offender, the association of a donkey and 'shindalaki' or an act of sexual offence or illicit act is clearly brought out.

- Apathy and Ignorance:

Often these stones succumb to the apathy and ignorance of the locals.

Recently, the twin ass curse stones of Raite (Fig.27a, 28b) were submerged by the villagers along with the old temple idol as a part of the renovation process. One of the ass curse was found by a villager at Raite when he purchased stones to renovate his house. It was not possible to figure out the exact stone of the two. Thus we may never know the exact find spot of the stone.

Often these stones are worshipped by locals as deities. The generous smearing of vermilion completely deprives us to trace the inscriptions that are already succumbing to vagaries of time and our ignorance. According to the villagers, the inscription on the ass curse at Chirner (Fig.9a) was visible till it was smeared with vermilion. The ass curse at Dhanakawadi (Fig. 11) is worshipped as Khandoba.

The grotesque imagery often gives rise to strange customs and rituals that the villagers firmly believe in. A coconut is offered to the ass curse at Walshind (Fig. 41) by the owner of the field on every new moon day to ward off evil that might be inflicted by this stone.

- Precise

After surviving nearly for nearly four centuries, the Gaddhegal tradition slowly died out, slipping into oblivion. Today expect very few subject experts; common people do not remember the relevance and importance of these marker stones, though at some places like Tadsar and Bhalivadi (Fig.6) and Sangoda (Fig.32) the oral tradition works well. In fact the oral traditions have survived in spite of the fact that the original meaning and context passed in oblivion. I have observed that the threat of the curse survives in the form of the oral tradition and the fear acts as a safeguard.

Those in the custody of various museums are safe and well looked after. However many of them are still lying in open fields are bearing the ravages of time and people. Some like the Dombivili edict (Fig. L) have succumbed to the puja performed by the devotees that included ample usage of water, oil, flowers and vermilion as they believe it to be 'Shani Deva'. The blatant imagery also gives rise to superstitions and blind faiths. I was told by a 'concerned' villager at Walshind 'such an incident had actually happened there in the past' and some offerings were periodically made to ward off the evil. Similarly the ass curse stele at Dhanakawadi, (Fig.11) Pune is worshipped by the locals as 'God Khandoba'. The inscribed marker stone at Thorwe Shirawali (Fig. 36) near Junnar is worshipped as 'Gadhe Samadhi' by the villagers.

It is thus necessary to educate the public about this rare historical heritage so that it will survive for the posterity.



Inventory of Newly Found Ass Curse Stones from Maharashtra



1. Akaloli



2a.-3b. Akeri



4. Ambejogai



5. Aundh



6. Bhalivadi



7. Chakreshvar Wadi-a



8. Chakreshvar Wadi-b



9. Chirner-a



10. Chirner-b



11. Dhanakawadi



12. Gorai



13. Kadaw



14. bvd



15. Kiravali-a





16. Kiravali-b



17. Koregaon



18. Lonad



19. Murud



20. Otavane



21. Pali Khandasai



22. Pavshi



23. Pimpalwadi



24. Pirangut



25. Pohole



26. Pune (Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal)



27-a, 28-b. Raite



29. Raogaon



30-a, 31-b. Sagarashvar

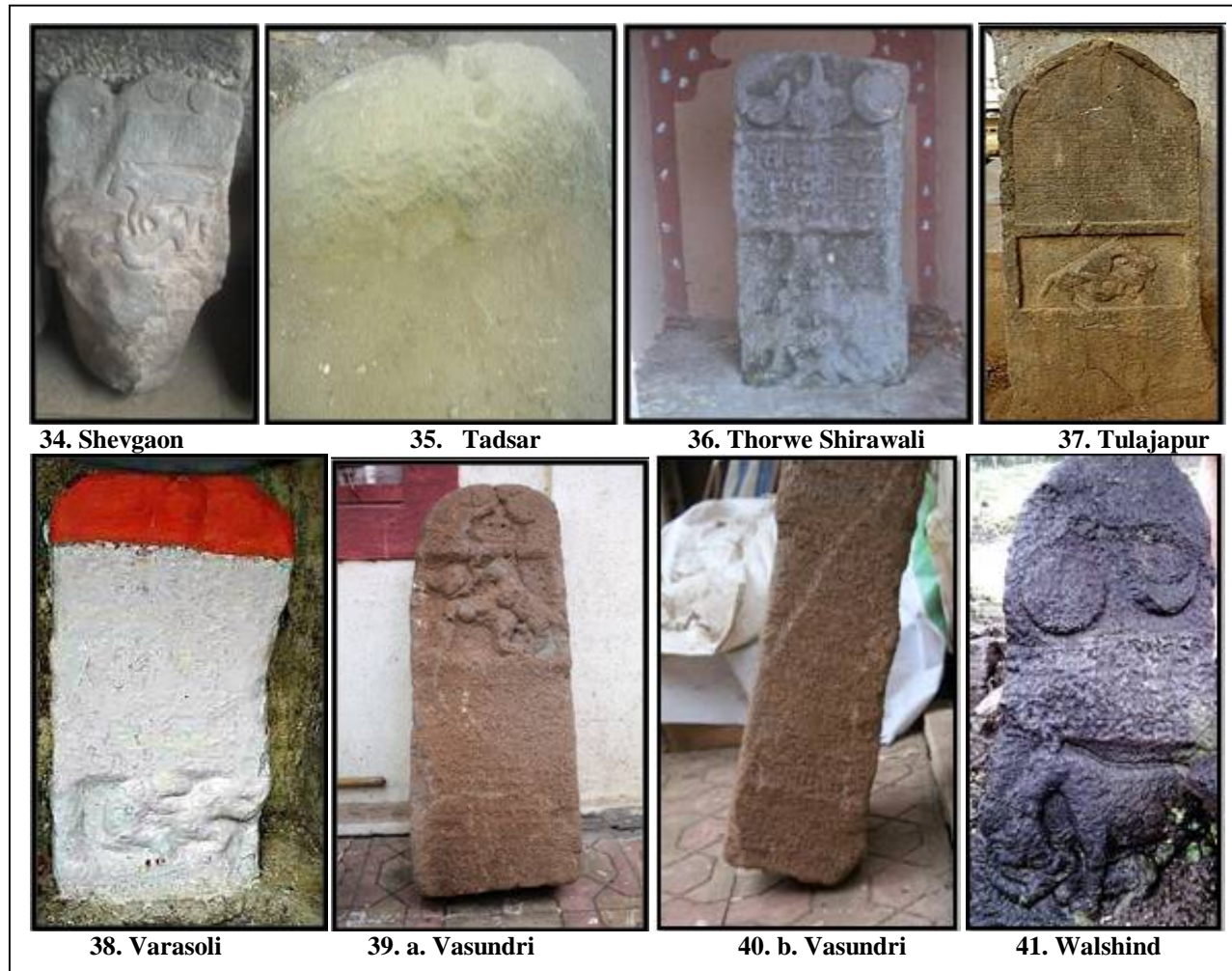


32. Sangoda



33. Satara Museum





34. Shevgaon

35. Tadsar

36. Thorwe Shirawali

37. Tulajapur

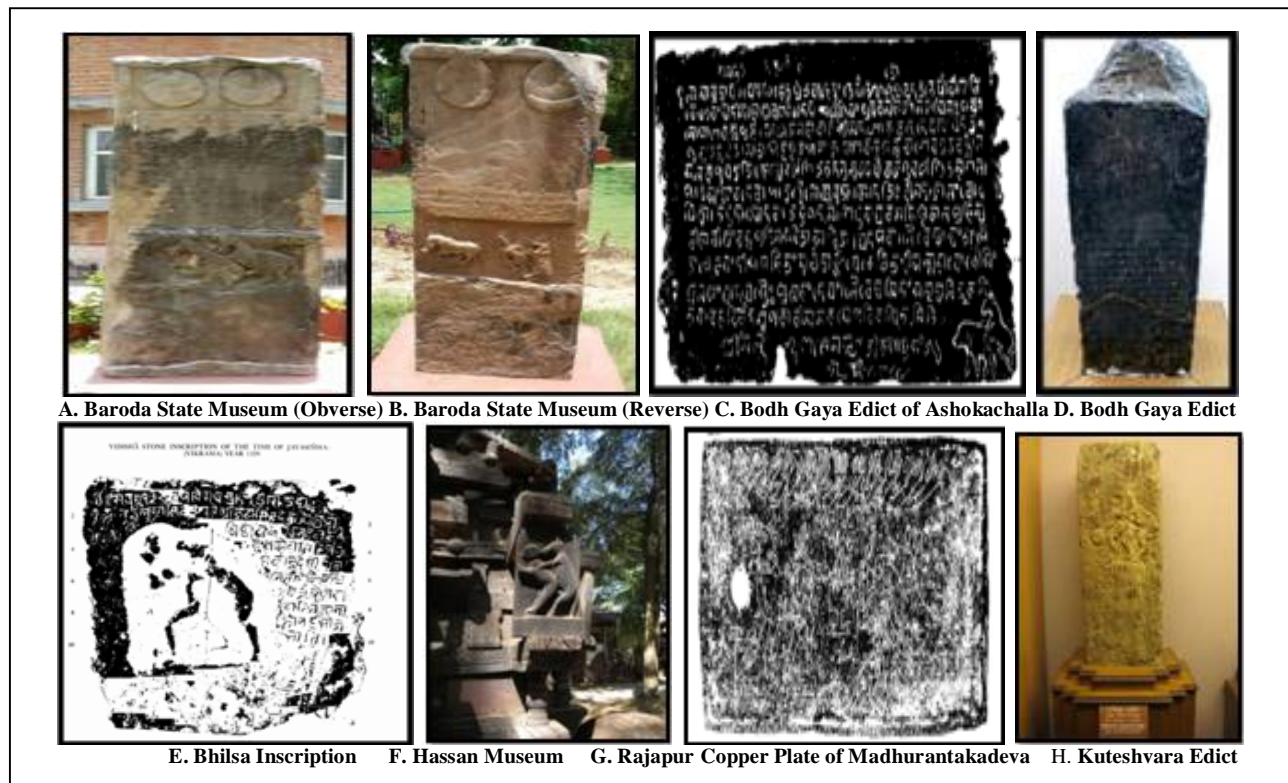
38. Varasoli

39. a. Vasundri

40. b. Vasundri

41. Walshind

Important Ass Curse Inscriptions Located Outside Maharashtra



A. Baroda State Museum (Obverse) B. Baroda State Museum (Reverse) C. Bodh Gaya Edict of Ashokachalla D. Bodh Gaya Edict

E. Bhilsa Inscription F. Hassan Museum G. Rajapur Copper Plate of Madhurantakadeva H. Kuteshvara Edict



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