



A Study of Inscriptions: Public Works and Civic Engagement in Colonial Satara

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Introduction:

This study examines four 19th-century inscriptions from Satara, Maharashtra, to explore the intersections of governance, infrastructure, and society during British colonial rule. These inscriptions, beyond religious or royal declarations, served as civic records highlighting public works such as the construction of water tanks, pipelines, and municipal regulations. They provide insights into how infrastructure projects were initiated, funded, and maintained through collaboration between colonial officials, local elites, and citizens. The study emphasizes the involvement of municipal committees and individual donors, revealing a shared civic responsibility in urban development. By analyzing these epigraphs, the research reconstructs aspects of colonial urban life and administration, illustrating how public utilities and social contributions shaped the city. These stone inscriptions not only reflect colonial governance but also highlight indigenous participation and memory, offering a deeper understanding

of the social and civic structure of Satara in the 19th century.

❖ *Vitthobacha Nal* Public Water Tap Inscription

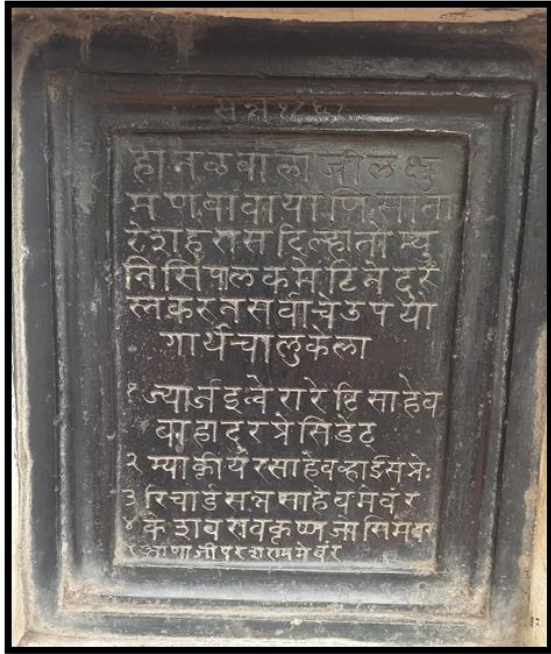
Introduction:

The inscription on the public water tap at Vitthalacha Nal, Satara (Lat. 17.683247°, Long. 73.986894°) is a valuable historical record from the British colonial era. Engraved on a basalt slab in Marathi (*Devanagari* script), it documents the restoration of the tap by the municipal committee in 1861. The study aims to analyze its historical context, administrative significance, and role in understanding colonial-era public works in western India.

Epigraphic Details:

- **Location of the Inscription:** The inscription is located on the water tank in front of Vitthal Temple (*Vitthobacha Nal*) in Satara city, in Mangalwar Peth, Maharashtra.
- **Coordinates:** Latitude 17.683247°, Longitude 73.986894°

- **Material and Appearance:** The inscription is carved on a flat Basalt stone slab.
- **Physical Dimensions:** 14.5 inches (height) 11.5 inches (width)., Letter Height: Approximately 0.5 inches.
- **Script & Language:** *Devanagari* script; Marathi language.
- **Number of Lines:** 13
- **Date:** Year: 1861 AD
- **Period:** British era
- **Purpose:** To record the donation of a water tap by Balaji Lakshman Bawa in 1861 and its repair by the Municipal Committee for public use.
- **Donor/Contributor:** Balaji Lakshman Bawa
- **Associated Names:** George Inverarity, MacRae Richardson, Keshavrao Krishnaji Joshi, Anaji Parsharam
- **Places:** Satara



The inscription reads as follows:

ओळ 1 सन 1861

ओळ 2 हा नळ बालाजी लक्ष

ओळ 3 मण बावा याणि साता

ओळ 4 रे शहरास दिल्ला तो म्यु

ओळ 5 निसिपाल कमेटिने दुरु

ओळ 6 स्त करुन सर्वाचे उपयो

ओळ 7 गार्थ चालु केला

ओळ 8 श्रज्यार्ज इन्वेरारेटि साहेब

ओळ 9 बहादुर प्रेसिडेंट

ओळ 10 २ म्याक्रीयर साहेब व्हाईस प्रे:

ओळ 11 ३ रिचार्डसन साहेब मेबंर

ओळ 12 ४ केशवराव कृष्ण जोसि मेबंर

ओळ 13 ५ आणाजी परशराम मेबंर

"Year 1861 — this water tap was donated to Satara city by Balaji Lakshman Bawa. The Municipal Committee repaired it and made it operational for public use.

1. George Inverarity Sahib Bahadur – President
2. MacRae Sahib – Vice President
3. Richardson Sahib – Member
4. Keshavrao Krishnaji Joshi – Member
5. Anaji Parsharam – Member."

Analysis and Interpretation:

Historical Background: Satara, annexed by the British in 1848, was directly governed by them after 1861. The inscriptions reflect a transitional phase where local donors (e.g., Balaji Laxman Bawa) and British authorities jointly contributed to urban development. The mention of the Municipal Committee and figures like George Inverarity shows early forms of local governance under colonial oversight.

Socio-Cultural Significance:

Local elites continued their patronage traditions during British rule, reflecting civic responsibility and social

status. Indian members in the Municipal Committee had limited but symbolic roles. The use of Marathi in Devanagari script highlights the importance of regional languages in official communication during the colonial period.

❖ The Inscription on the Public Water Tank at Ramacha Goth Peth

Introduction:

This Ramacha Goth reservoir in Satara, shedding light on civic infrastructure during British colonial rule. The inscription documents efforts to develop public utilities, revealing how the colonial administration planned urban projects and how local communities participated in them. By examining its content, the study highlights the intersection of governance, public welfare, and social cooperation, offering insights into the broader context of urban development and community involvement in colonial Satara.

Epigraphic Details:

- **Location of the Inscription:** The inscription is located on the water tank in front of *Bhataji Maharaj Math* in Ramacha Goth Peth, Satara city, Maharashtra.
- **Coordinates:** Latitude 17.681743°, Longitude 73.985805°.
- **Material and Appearance:** The inscription is carved on a flat Basalt stone slab.
- **Physical Dimensions:** 18 inches (height) 16 inches (width).
- **Letter Height:** Approximately 1.5 inches.

- **Script & Language:** Devanagari script; Marathi language.
- **Number of Lines:** 07
- **Date:** Year: 1864 AD
- **Period:** British era
- **Purpose:** The inscription serves as a record of the expenditure incurred in the construction of the public reservoir, highlighting the contribution of local residents.



The inscription reads as follows:

1. "हा हौद सातारा म्युनिसि"
2. "पाल कमिटीने सन् १८६४"
3. "त केला त्यास रुपये १३४७"
4. "लागले या कामास"
5. "आळीतील लोकांनी"
6. "मदत रुपये २००"
7. "दिलें आहे"

"This reservoir was constructed by the Satara Municipal Committee in 1864, at a cost of Rs. 1347. Local residents contributed Rs. 200 towards this work."ⁱⁱ

Analysis and Interpretation:

- **Public Infrastructure and Colonial Rule:** The Ramacha Goth inscription shows the British efforts to improve

urban sanitation through public reservoirs. By 1864, municipal committees had become important in city planning and utility management.

- **Community Participation:** The local people contributed Rs. 200 towards the reservoir's construction, showing civic awareness and cooperation with the British administration.
- **Economic Insight:** The project's cost—Rs. 1347—was a significant amount for that time. Its inclusion in the inscription highlights colonial transparency in public spending.
- **Social and Cultural Value:** The reservoir symbolized more than utility—it represented community welfare, unity, and the shared role of local society and government in urban development.

❖ *Tulsi Vrindavan Inscription at Hegdewar Chowk, Satara*

Introduction:

Stone inscriptions are vital primary sources that offer glimpses into the religious, cultural, and administrative aspects of historical societies. This particular inscription from 1892, engraved on a stone plaque attached to a *Tulsi Vrindavan*, is a testimony to local traditions of commemoration and public welfare. Through a critical lens, this paper deciphers the language, purpose, and broader implications of this short but meaningful record.

Epigraphic Details:

- **Location of the Inscription:** The inscription is located in *Hegdewar*

Chowk, Satara city, Mangalwar Peth, Maharashtra.

- **Coordinates:** Latitude 17.680623°, Longitude 73.987157°.
- **Material and Appearance:** The inscription is carved on a flat Basalt stone slab.
- **Physical Dimensions:** 11.81 inches (height) 9.06 inches (width),
- **Letter Height:** Approximately 1.57 inches.
- **Script & Language:** *Devanagari* script; Marathi language.
- **Number of Lines:** 08
- **Date:** Year: 1892 AD
- **Period:** British era
- **Deity:** *Shankar* (Lord Shiva)
- **Donor/Contributor:** Radhabai
- **Associated Names:** Govind Sakharan Kathapurkar
- **Purpose:** To commemorate Govind Sakharan Kathapurkar through a charitable Gomukh and Vrindavan for public water use.

The inscription reads as follows:

ओळ १ श्री शंकर.

ओळ २ हे गाय मुख आणि वृंदावन

ओळ ३ कै.गोविंद सखाराम कठा

ओळ ४ पूरकर यांचे स्मरणार्थ त्यांची

ओळ ५ मातुश्री राधाबाई यांनी दया

ओळ ६ करविले त्यास सार्वजनिक

ओळ ७ उपयोगा करिता म्यु.क.ने

ओळ ८ पाणी दिले आहे. सण १८९२.

Shri Shankar. This *Gomukh* (cow-faced water spout) and *Vrindavan* were constructed in memory of the late Govind Sakharan Kathapurkar. His mother, Radhabai, commissioned it as a charitable

act. The Municipal Committee provided water for public use. Year 1892.ⁱⁱⁱ



Analysis and Interpretation:

- **Religious Significance:** The invocation to Lord Shankar and mention of Gomukh and Vrindavan reflect sacred water traditions and devotional architecture in Hinduism.
- **Memorial Purpose:** The structure served as a memorial, showing how personal loss was transformed into public welfare in the 19th century.
- **Role of Women:** Radhabai's donation highlights female agency in religious, social, and philanthropic spheres—an often-overlooked aspect of colonial-era history.
- **Municipal and Civic Collaboration:** The involvement of the Municipal Committee shows cooperation between local governance and private donors in urban development.
- **Language and Historical Context:** The inscription is in 19th-century Marathi, blending religious tone with public purpose, reflecting early

municipal-supported civic infrastructure under colonial rule.

❖ **Koteswar Temple Water Tank:**

- **Location of the Inscription:** The inscription is located on the water tank in front of Koteswar Temple Shukrawar Peth, in Satara city, Maharashtra.
- **Coordinates:** Latitude 17.688294°, Longitude 73.986862°
- **Material and Appearance:** The inscription is carved on a flat marble slab. It is engraved in both **Devanagari and English scripts**, with text in **Marathi and English**.
- **Physical Dimensions:** Height: 24 inches, Width: 17.5 inches, Letter Height: Approximately 0.5 inches.
- **Number of Lines:** 14
- **Date:** 1890 AD,
- **Period:** British era
- **Purpose:** The inscription was created to record the **construction of a public water tank**.
- **Donor/Contributor:** Shrimant Balasaheb Holkar (Indore), Rao Bahadur Sitaram Damodar (Former Deputy Collector)
- **Associated Names and Places:**
 1. Rao Bahadur Agate
 2. Rao Saheb Thatte
 3. Phadnis
 4. Waghjis (Supervisor)

The inscription reads as follows:

ओळ १ श्री. म. बाळासाहेब होळकर
के.सी.एस.आय. यांची स्वारी

ओळ २ येथे सन १८८८ साली आली त्यावेळी रु.
४००० रा. ब. सीता-

ओळ ३ राम दामोदर मां.हु.डे.क. यांज कडे
दिले. त्यांतले ब्रा- भोज-

ओळ ४ न वगैरे २००० खर्च करून बाकी रु
२००० xx पैकी हा हौद बांध.

ओळ ५ THIS CISTERN THE CIFT OF
H.H. BALASAHEB MAH-

ओळ ६ ARAJA OF INDOR K.S.I ON HIS
VISIT TO THIS CITY IN

ओळ ७ 1888 THE WORK WAS
DESIGNED BY R.B. SITARAM

ओळ ८ DAMODAR LAT. H.D.Y.
COLLEOTOR IT WAS COMPLET-

ओळ ९ ED IN 1890 UNDER THE
SUPERVISION OF GVOVERSEER

ओळ १० THE WORK COST RS 800

या शिलालेखाच्या कडांवर देखील मजकूर
कोरलेला आहे तो असा.

वरील कडेवर – हे काम रा. ब. आगटे रा.
सा.थत्ते फडणीस पै रांगोळे म्यु क.यांचे मार्फत
पुणे झाले

उजव्या कडेवर – या कामास रुपये ८०० खर्च
लागला आस

डाव्या कडेवर – हे काम xxxवाघजीस आं याचे
नजरे खाली झाले

खालच्या कडेवर सन १८९०

Inscription Content:

Line 1: Shri M. Balasaheb Holkar,
K.C.S.I., visited this place.

Line 2: During that time, in the year 1888,
Rs. 4000 were given to Rao Bahadur
Sitaram Damodar Manohardeokar.

Line 3: Out of this amount, Rs. 2000 were
spent on a feast and related expenses.

Line 4: From the remaining Rs. 2000, this
water tank (hauz) was constructed.

Here is the English translation of the
inscription text carved on the sides:

Top Side: This work was completed
through Rao Bahadur Agte, Rao Saheb
Thatte, Phadnis, and Pai Rangole of the
Municipal Committee.

Right Side: An amount of Rs. 800 was
spent on this work.

Left Side: This work was carried out
under the supervision of xxx Waghji.

Bottom Side: Year 1890.^{iv}

Shrimant Balasaheb Holkar,
K.C.S.I., visited Satara city in the year
1888. During that visit, he gave 4000 to
Rao Bahadur Sitaram Damodar (former
Deputy Collector). Out of this amount,
2000 were spent on food and other related
activities. The remaining 2000 were used
for constructing this water tank. The
construction was completed in the year
1890. The design of the project was
prepared by Rao Bahadur Sitaram himself.
The work was executed under the
supervision of Waghjis. The total
expenditure for the tank was 800. This
project was completed through the efforts
of the Municipal Committee with the
support of Rao Bahadur Agate, Rao Saheb
Thatte, and Phadnis Pai Rangole.

Analysis and Interpretation:

Historical Significance of the Inscription:

- **Political Context:** The inscription
commemorates the visit of Shrimant
Balasaheb Holkar, ruler of Indore and
recipient of the British title K.C.S.I.
(Knight Commander of the Star of
India), to Satara in 1888.

- **Philanthropy and Public Welfare:** Balasaheb Holkar, as a royal dignitary, donated funds for the construction of a public water tank, reflecting a blend of royal honor and public service commitment.
- **Colonial Municipal Administration:** References to the Municipal Committee, its members, and financial details illustrate the functioning of urban local governance under British rule.
- **Engineering and Supervision:** The mention of engineers and supervisors (like Waghjis) highlights the planned and systematic nature of public construction projects during the period.
- **Bilingual Documentation:** The use of both Marathi and English languages in the inscription reflects the administrative bilingualism of the era and the effort to address both colonial and local audiences.
- **Additional Notes:**
 - The term "**cistern**" refers to the public water tank.
 - "**Overseer**" was an official position in the Public Works Department responsible for supervising civil works.
 - There are differences between the Marathi and English texts, and some parts of the inscription have eroded over time.



Conclusion:

The inscriptions studied in this research illustrate the vital role of epigraphy as a source for understanding colonial urban development and civic culture. These records from Satara provide concrete evidence of the collaborative nature of public works during the British era—where municipal committees, engineers, local leaders, and common citizens came together to shape infrastructure for collective benefit.

They reflect a transition in governance, where indigenous traditions of community service merged with colonial administrative frameworks to create new forms of urban planning and public accountability. The role of the Satara Municipal Committee, the contributions of private individuals, and the mention of British and Indian officials together suggest a multi-layered structure of decision-making and execution.

Moreover, these inscriptions preserve the memory of public generosity and civic pride, reminding modern scholars of the values and challenges of past urban life. This study underscores the importance of preserving and interpreting

such inscriptions not merely as historical artifacts, but as voices of a society negotiating its place within a changing colonial landscape.

References:

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