



Component-I (A) – Personal details:

 **Pathshala**
पाठशाला
A Gateway to all Post Graduate Courses


 **MHRD**
Govt. of India
An MHRD Project under its National Mission on Education through ICT (NME-ICT)


Subject: **Indian Culture**


Production of Courseware
- Content for Post Graduate Courses

Metaphysics
Law
Philosophy
Arts
Mind
Science
Aesthetics
Religion
Education
Politics
Logic
Ethics
Epistemology
Language

Paper : **Indian Epigraphy**
Module : **Junagadh Inscription of Rudradaman**


एन सी ई आर

 **Pathshala**
पाठशाला

 **MHRD**
Govt. of India

Development Team

Principal Investigator	Prof. P. Bhaskar Reddy Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati.
Paper Coordinator(s)	Prof. P. Bhaskar Reddy Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati & Dr. K. Muniratnam Director i/c, Epigraphy, ASI, Mysore
Content Writer	Prof. Suchandra Ghosh Dept. of AIHC, University of Calcutta.
Content Reviewer	Prof. P. Bhaskar Reddy Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati.

Component-I (B) – Description of module:

Subject Name	Indian Culture
Paper Name	Indian Epigraphy
Module Name/Title	Junagadh Inscription of Rudradaman
Module Id	IC / I Epi / 29
Pre requisites	The inscription is considered to be the earliest eulogy written in Sanskrit. . It narrates the history of the Sudarshan lake, story of its repair, along with the career and achievements of king Rudradaman
Objectives	The historical importance of the inscription is discussed here. The political contestations of the period can be gleaned from the inscription. This inscription suggests the presence of supra local irrigational projects in early India. Revenue terms indicate the different kinds of taxes that were imposed.
Keywords	Rudradaman, Sudarshan lake, Junagadh, Prasasti, Saka Kshatrpa

E-text (Quadrant-I)

1. Introduction

Prasasti as a genre of epigraphy made a visible presence in India during the post-Mauryan period. With the decline and disintegration of the Maurya Empire, the political map of the subcontinent began to be dotted with new ruling dynasties who were contesting with each other and proclaiming their superiority through the mode of inscriptions which were public orders. Most of the early *prasastis* were inscribed on rocks, stone tablets or pillars but later on incorporated in royal charters engraved on copper plates. These public orders came to be preceded by eulogistic descriptions of the king's attainments in poetic style. Thus *prasastis* were political texts which were most of the times marked by unqualified exaggeration. The courtly milieu of the post-Mauryan period was instrumental in the beginning of the writing of *prasastis* for rulers. Each of these texts engaged in the exaltation of a ruler and their primary function was that of praise. Three well known *prasastis* of the period, the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela, the Nasik *Prasasti* of Gautami Balasri and the Junagadh *Prasasti* of Rudradaman were completely different in their form and content but these had some shared ideas. We shall discuss the Junagadh inscription here.

In about early 2nd century CE a line of Saka Kshatrapas known as the Kardamakas came to the fore in western India. Rudradaman I belonged to this line of the Saka rulers and was the grandson of Chastana, the founder of the Kardamaka dynasty. In fact he succeeded his

grandfather to the throne sometime after 130/131 CE. The most eloquent testimony to his reign is the Junagadh inscription dated around the Saka year 72 i.e. 150-51 CE.

2. Location, Script and Language :

This inscription is inscribed on the western side, near the top of a rock bearing a set of Asokan Major Rock edicts and another of the Gupta monarch Skandagupta at Junagadh, Gujarat. The script is Brahmi and it is the first prasasti in Classical Sanskrit in prose.

3. Purpose of the inscription :

The purpose of the inscription is to record the restoration of a Mauryan period dam on the Sudarsana lake by the *Mahakshatrapa* Rudradaman. This dam was still in use but badly breached by a violent storm.

4. The inscription was first edited by James Prinsep in 1838. It was republished in *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.8 by F. Kielhorn. The inscription consists of twenty lines.

5. Summary of the Content of Junagadh inscription

This inscription gives us the history of the Sudarsana lake when it records its restoration during the time of Mahakshatrapa Rudradaman. The name Sudarsana is first recorded in the opening line of Rudradaman's inscription as *idam tadakam sudarshanam(This lake Sudarshana)*

The text states simply that 'the work was carried out by the minister Suvisakha'. That he was successful in what he did is made clear at the outset itself where it is stated "this lake Sudarsana...is now rebuilt in excellent condition".

It is said in the inscription that it was constructed by Vaishya Pushyagupta who was the provincial Governor of Chandragupta Maurya. It was beautified by adding channels (*pranalibhir alamkritam*) by Yavanaraja Tushaspha, governor of this area during the reign of king Asoka. Then many years later, during the reign of Rudradaman, in the winter of the year 72 of the Saka era (150 CE), there was a terrible storm. We are told that 'clouds, pouring with rain, had converted the earth, as it were, into one ocean, by the excessively swollen floods of the Suvarnasikata, Palasini and other streams of mount Urajayat [Girnar].' The storm which was of a most tremendous fury befitting the end of a yuga, tore down hill tops, trees, banks, turrets, upper stories, gates, and raised palaces of shelter.' Stones, trees, bushes and creepers lay scattered all over. Although precautions had been taken, the storm tore a breach 420 cubits long and wide and 75 cubits deep into the lake's embankments. All its water flowed out and the lake resembled now a sandy desert. The Sudarshan lake which was literally beautiful to look at became durdarshana (ugly to look at). People were very sad and lamented the terrible event. The extent of the damage led the councilors, ministers, executive officers to think that the lake was beyond repair. But Rudradaman was bent upon to get the job done. In this respect he found his provincial governor of Anarta and Surashtra, Suvisakha to carry out this work. Suvisakha was a Pahlava and the son of Kulaipa. He is praised as an exemplary officer, able, patient, self controlled, upright, honest and not given to arrogance. The lake was reinforced and made three times as strong in length and breadth on all sides in a very short time. The inhabitants of towns and villages were not oppressed by taxes, forced labour, or any other impositions. The inscription tells us that Rudradaman had all this done in order to benefit cows and Brahmanas for a thousand years and for the sake of righteousness (dharma) and kirti(fame). A eulogy for Rudradaman is included. The geneology includes his father Jayadaman and grandfather Chashtana.

Rudradaman is described as the lord of Akara, Avanti, the Anupa country, Anarta, Surashtra, Svabhra, Maru, Kachchha, Sindhu, Sauvira, Kukura, Aparanta, Nishada and other countries

by dint of his own valour. He is said to have destroyed the Yaudheyas who had become arrogant and claiming to be heroes by defeating all the *Kshatriyas*, Rudradaman is described as having defeated Satakarni, Lord of Dakshinapatha twice in fair fight but sparing his life only because he was a close relative. We are told that the towns, villages and markets of this king were never troubled by robbers, snakes, wild beasts or diseases. His subjects were attached to him and as a result of his prowess; he attained the goals of *dharma*, *artha* and *kama*.

The elaborate poetic description of Rudradaman describes him as one who was distinguished by royal fortune right from the time he was in his mother's womb. He was chosen by all *varnas* as their lord to protect them. He had made vow never to kill men except in battle. Rudradaman was moved by compassion and reinstated deposed kings; by raising his hand earned the strong attachment of dharma. He had earned wide fame by his knowledge and practice of grammar, music and logic and other great sciences. Skilled in the control of horses, elephants and chariots, in the use of sword and shield and in face to face combat, Rudradaman was also generous and in the habit of bestowing gifts and honours on others and showed respect to others. His treasury was overflowing with gold, silver, diamonds, lapislazuli and other precious things through rightfully obtained tribute, tolls and shares. The king was a composer of Sanskrit *kavyas* in prose and verse, embellished with figures and the proper use of words, and possessing lucidity, sweetness, vividness, and brilliance; whose body was marked by the most excellent marks and signs such as auspicious length, dimension, height, voice, gait, complexion, vigour, and strength. He had been wreathed by many garlands at the *svayamvaras* of many king's daughters.

5.1 Historical Importance

The foremost importance of this inscription is that it gives us the history of a reservoir/lake built during the time of the Mauryas which has been completely devastated by a storm. The greater part of the text is devoted to the actual restoration of the lake, which naturally gave an occasion for a full eulogistic description and a record of the exploits of the ruler by whom it was accomplished. There is a wealth of technical detail contained in the inscription. The breach caused in the dam by incessant rains is said to have been 450 hastasatas in length (*ayata*) and width (*vistirna*) and 75 hastas deep (*avagadha*). As a result of the repairs commanded by Rudradaman, the dam was not only rebuilt but made thrice as strong as before (trigunadrhataravistharayam). This repaired dam is said to be a well articulated structure (sushlishta-bandham) with strong embankments made of clay and stone, lacking any gaps in length, height and breadth. The dam itself had been erected on a site possessing a natural embankment (akritima setubandha). It was also provided with conduits, drains and devices to take away foul matter (suprativihita-pranali-parivaha-midhavidhanam). Thus the planning of supra local irrigation project is clear from this description. This sort of construction and the need to repair in case of breach suggest the importance of such irrigational projects for the state as the common people were affected. Considering the arid nature of Gujarat such projects are all the more important.

This inscription also gives us an insight into the political and economic history of the time

5.2 Political

The Saka-Satavahana struggle entered its third phase at the peak of which the Saka power experienced a major expansion, thanks largely to the exploits of Rudradaman I, as described in his *prasasti* at Junagarh (Kathiawad, Gujarat). Rudradaman I (c. 150 CE) established his power over Akaravanti, Anupa, Anarta (northern part of Kathiawad), Surashtra (Kathiawad peninsula), Svabhra (on the banks of the Sabarmati), Kaccha (Kutch), Sindu-Sauvira (lower Indus valley both to the east and the west of the Indus), Kukura, Aparanta and Nisada (located somewhere between the Vindhya and the Paripatra mountains). Several of the

conquered areas had also figured in the list of territories under the Satavahanas, according to the Nasik *prasasti* e.g. Kukura (northern Kathiawad), Anupa (Mahismati to the south of the Narmada, Vidabha (Vidarbha in Nagpur), and Akaravanti (Avanti located around Ujjayini in Western Malwa and Akara in Eastern Malwa around modern Sanchi –Vidisa (-Bhopal region in Madhyapradesh). One can easily infer that the territories which were earlier in the possession of Gautamiputra Satakarni were now under the territorial control of Rudradaman. Thus these areas were wrested from the Satavahanas. The struggle is referred to in the inscription itself. Rudradaman I, according to the Junagarh *prasasti*, twice defeated Satakarni, the lord of the Deccan, but spared him on account of the nearness of relation.. An inscription from Kanheri informs us that the Satavahana king Vasishthiputra Satakarni married the daughter of *Mahakshatrpa* Ru.. (the name is unfortunately broken and not legible therefore). If *Mahakshatrpa* Ru is the same as Rudradaman I then the defeated Satavahana king could have been Vasishthiputra Satakarni who by the virtue of being the son-in-law of Rudradaman was not uprooted by his Saka adversary.

The list shows that most of the provinces ruled by the Kshaharata Nahapana had been recovered by Rudradaman. It is also likely that many of the subordinate rulers once ruling under Nahapana and dispossessed of their respective territories by Gautamiputra Satakarni were reinstated by Rudradaman; for he is described in the record as 'the restorer of the kings who had been deprived of their kingdoms' (*bhrashtarajapratisthapaka*). He also conquered the Yaudheyas who are described in the inscription as loath to submit, rendered proud as they were by having manifested their title of heroes among all the *Kshatriyas*.; he evidently regarded the conquest of this martial tribe as a great feat of valour. Moreover the Yaudheyas were located in the Rajasthan area after they migrated from the Punjab region. They could be potential threat to Rudradaman and thus their conquest merits mention in the official *prasasti* of the ruler.

5.3 Economic

Creation of large scale irrigation project on the part of the ruler is always a viable programme. In case of Sudarshan lake it already existed and Rudradaman repaired the severe breach that happened due to heavy storm.

In connection with the construction of the dam huge amount of wealth was spent from his own treasury (*svasmat kosha*). It is stated in the epigraph that his treasury was overflowed 'with an accumulation of gold, silver, diamonds, beryl stones and other precious things' rightfully obtained through (collection of taxes like) *bali* (a kind of tribute from the subjects), *sulka* (ferry dues, tolls, duties on merchandise etc.) and *bhaga* (royal share generally 1/6th of the produce). According to the same inscription, Rudradaman I caused the rebuilding of the dam 'without oppressing the inhabitants of the towns and country' by *kara* (periodical tax or some other kind of tax), *vishti* (forced labour) and *pranaya* (benevolence tax of non-recurring nature). Thus we can easily understand that the prevalent taxes of the time were *bali*, *sulka* and *bhaga* though extra tax could be imposed on the subjects for welfare activities. That his treasury was overflowed with precious and semiprecious stones might suggest that royal dues were collected by accepting different kinds of precious stones and metals. If we consider the territorial limit of Rudradaman, we find that diamond mines and other mining areas were under his control. It is but natural that his treasury would overflow with precious stones. From this inscription we get an idea of the system of taxation of the period

5.4 Personal accomplishments of Rudradaman

The inscription gives us an idea of the requisite accomplishments of a ruler. Thus the ruler is said to be well versed in grammar, music, logic and other great sciences. Apart from these intellectual pursuits, he was also equally trained for any kind of military endeavour, worthy of a King . Therefore he was adept in fighting in any kind of combats. Following the common

tradition of *prasastis* of the period Rudradaman's physical attributes have also been described in the inscription. We learn that he was handsome and was adorned with excellent marks in his body. His voice, gait, colour, vigour and strength make him stand out as a ruler. Therefore the princesses of many countries were eager to marry him.

It is significantly suggested in the inscription that he acquired by his own accord the title of *Mahakshatrapa*. This suggests his might and valour. Rudradaman's *prasasti* states that through his might the objects of piety, wealth and pleasure are duly attained. It was expected that the three categories *dharma, artha and kama* were deemed by the Smriti texts to constitute the three fold goals of human activity. Taken together with *moksha*, they made up the *purusartha* or the goals of human life. They were explicitly associated with worldly activity and noblemen were expected to conduct their lives in a balanced pursuit of these three spheres.

5.5 Qualities of a minister

In the end the qualities of the *amatya* Suvisakha is highlighted. It is said that his dealings with people were proper and had sane views in things temporal and spiritual. He was able, patient, not wavering, not arrogant, upright and honest. What is interesting to note that it is pointed out that by the minister's good governance, the spiritual merit, fame and glory of his master Rudradaman increased.

6. Summary

In this inscription the previous history of the lake is sketched briefly. A vivid and striking account is given of the storm by which the lake and the surrounding country were devastated. This description shows that the writer was endowed with poetic power though it is written in prose. The focus of attention is the king where his bodily splendour is described in a glorious manner. They also talk about the fact that these kings wielded sovereignty over lesser rulers. The kings were compassionate. Beginning of a stereotype could be seen as most of these refer to gifts to brahmanas and exemption from taxes. We get an idea of the types of taxes that were imposed. The *prasasti* also reflect competition and contestation of the period. Thus Gotamiputa is described as "the destroyer of the Sakas, Yavanas and Pahlavas" and "the extinguisher of the Khakharata line". Rudradaman's *prasasti* states that although he defeated Satakarni twice, in fair fight, he did not destroy him on account of the closeness of their relationship. Taken together these two *prasastis* make interesting reading of the political scenario of the time.