

# INSCRIPTIONAL EVIDENCES PERTAINING TO *BHUMIDANA* MADE BY *GURJARPRATI HARAKINGS*

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The aim of this paper is the presentation of basic inscriptional facts regarding land grants in northern India during *GurjarPratihara* period. The inscriptional evidences have been arranged in tabulated form also with all the relevant details available in the inscriptions/copper plates.

After the fall of the *Gupta* Empire and the eclipse of *Maukharis* in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century A.D., one of the ruling dynasties that came into prominence was that of *Gurjara*. Taking advantage of the fall of *Gupta* empire they established an important kingdom into the region of what is today called *Rajasthan* and *Gujarat*.

The *Pratihara* empire, which lasted in its full glory for over a century, was the last great empire in northern India before the Muslim conquest. Historians compared *Pratihara* empire, in duration and extent, with that of the *Guptas*. The *Pratiharas* not only brought a political unification of large part of northern India, but also successfully repulsed the foreign invasions from the west. The *Pratihara* line of *Kannauj* (also known as *Imperial Pratiharas*) was distinguished for its long succession of able rulers. Apart from the hero who founded the royal dynasty, four remarkable kings namely *Vatsaraja*, *Nagabhatta II*, *Bhoja I*, and *Mahendrapala I* ruled almost uninterruptedly for a century and a-half with a short break of only three years. They created the tradition of an imperial glory which long endured and survived many rude shocks. It is reflected in the literary work of *Rajasekhara*, who with justifiable pride refers to his royal patron as the *Maharajdhiraja of Aryavarta*” (King Emperor of Northern India).

*R.S. Sharma* in his work *Indian Feudalism* describes *GurjaraPratihāra*, *Pāla* and *Rāshtrakuta* in the context of feudal polity. He says, “The process of transfer of fiscal and administrative rights to the recipients of land grants which began on a large scale under the *Guptas* and *Harsha* was continued by their successors” (*Sharma* 1980:63). However, as we shall see below, the kings of *Gurjara* dynasty gave only five villages, in *bhumidāna* to the temples in a long span of over 300 years of their reign and there is nothing like “large scale” land grants.

## *Bhumidana given by GurjaraPratihara Kings*

### 1. *Bhumidana* Given by *Bhoja I*: (836-889 A. D.)

*Bhoja I*, son of *Rainabhadra* and *Appadevi*, was possibly one of the greatest rulers of northern India in 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. He is known to history by several names, recorded in his inscriptions. *Sri Bhojadeva* in *Daulatpur* inscription, *Adivarah* in *Gwalior* inscription, *Mihir* in *Sagartal* inscription, and he was addressed by Arab historian as *Paramesvara*.

(a) **Barah Copper Plate (E.I. XIX. pp. 15-19; 5<sup>th</sup> day of bright half of *Kartika*, V.S. 893; 836 A.D.)**

The first inscription of Pratihāra dynasty that mentions any bhumidāna belongs to Bhoja I, issued from Mahodaya (Kannauj). This inscription gives the genealogy of the Pratihara family from *MahārājaDevasakti* down to Maharaja Bhoja. This inscription record the *bhumidana* of a village, originally made by *ParamēsvaraSarvvavarmadeva*, and sanctioned by *MahārājaNagabhattachadeva* and its disturbance in the time of *MahārājaRamabhadra* for some time due to the fault of some judicial officer (*vyavahārin*). This *bhumidāna* was restored by *Bhojadeva*. The text of the relevant portion is as follows: “*Bhojadeva* commands all the residents and the officer appointed to their respective posts, that have assembled at the *agrahāra* of Valaka (Balaka) attached to *UdumbaraVishaya* which is included in the subdivision of *Kalanjara* in the bhukti of *Kanyakubja*.

“Seeing the *sāsana* of the illustrious *ParamesvaraSarvvavarmadeva* and the approval of the illustrious *Maharaja Nagabhattachadeva* and finding that, the allotment was, for the time being, obstructed through the incapacity of a legal officer during the reign of illustrious *MahārājaRamabhadradeva*, the above mentioned *agrahāra* together with all the income, exclusive of all the gifts already granted for gods and *Brahmanas*, have been given away by me to endure as long as the sun, the moon and the earth exist for the increase of the spiritual merit of my parents, to the *Brahmanas* born of the family of *Bhatta-Kachara-Svamin* of the *Bharadwajagotra* and the *Vajasaneyasākhā*, after having rejected the obstruction (of the *dāna*) which took place for some time and in accordance with the same old apportionment. Thus understanding, you should assent to it; the residents (of the village) also being obedient on hearing the order should take all the dues to the donees.”

**(b) Daulatpura Copper Plate (E.I. V. pp. 208-13; 13th day of bright half of Phālguna; V.S. 900; 843 A.D.)**

The next record is from *Daulatpuranow* known as Ajmer copper plate. It again records the renewal of a *bhurnidanawhich* was made by the great grandfather of *Maharaja Bhojadeva I, Maharaja Vatsarajadeva* and continued by his grandfather *Maharaja Nagabhattachadeva*. It had, however, fallen into abeyance in the reign of Bhoja, and then he renewed the *dana*. It also contains the same genealogy, as given in the Barah copper plate and refers to *yuvarājaNagabhattacha* as the *dutaka* in the record. The relevant portion says, “*MahārājaBhojadeva*, issues these commands to all appointed to the several offices and to the inhabitants, assembled at the *agrahara* village of *Siva* which belong to the *Dendvanakavishaya* in the *Gurjaratabhumi*.

“The *Bhatta Harashuka* has apprised (us) that the above written *agraharawith* every income from it, excepting previous gifts to gods and *Brahmanas* by means of charter was donated by our great grandfather, the *mahārājaVatsarajadeva*, for as long as the sun, the moon and the earth endure, to his grandfather, the *Bhatta Vasudeva* and was possessed (by the latter) and then by him (the *Bhatta Vasudeva*) the six part of it was given by a deed of donation to the *Bhatta Vishnu*, that our grandfather the *maharajaNagabhattachadeva* signified his consent; but, that in our own reign, that charter and consent have fallen into abeyance.

“Having heard, then, of that charter thus brought to our notice, of the consent, the deed of donation and the (fact of) possession, we, for the Increase of the religious merit of our parents, have given permission, that (the agrahāra), shared in exact accordance with previous possession, shall belong to the *Brahmanas* born in the lineage of the Bhatta Vasudeva; who are of the *Kasyapagotra* and are students of *Asvalayanaskha* of the Rigveda and to the *Brahmanas* born in the lineage of the Bhatta Vishnu, who are of the *Katyayanagotra* and are students of the *Asvalayanaskha* of the *Rigveda*”.

Thus, it can be seen that there are two records of *bhumidāna* of the period Bhoja I but both were the renewal of earlier *dana*. On his own he did not give any new *bhumidana*.

## 2. *Bhumidāna* given by Mahendrapala I (c. 890-907 A.D.)

Bhoja I was succeeded by his son Mahendrapala I. There are several inscriptions of his time, scattered all over northern India from Bengal to Kathiawar and from Peheva (Karnal district) in Haryana to *Siyadoni* (Jhansi) testifying to the vast extent of his empire. This empire was inherited as a legacy from his father. His name is at variance in different records e.g. *Mahendrayudha* is known from Una copper plate, *Pehevainscription*, and *Paharpur* copper plate, Mahendrapaladeva surnamed Bhāka is known from Dighwa-Dubauli copper plate, *Siyadoni* inscription and from British Museum plate; Mahendrapaladevaraja in Guneriya copper plate, Rājasekhara, the court poet, also addresses his patron with *birudas* like *Nirbhayaraja* and sometimes with his full name *RahulaChudamaniMahendrapala* in his *Karpūramanjari* (1.5).

### (i) **Dighwa-Dubauli Copper Plate: (I.A. XV. pp. 1 10-113; 10th day of bright half of *Māgha*, *Kumbhasainkranti*, V.S. 955; 898 A.D.)**

Mahendrapala I gave only one *bhumidāna* which is recorded in Dighwa-Dubauli plate found from Saran district of Bihar. It records the gift of a village named *Paniyaka* in the *Valayikavishaya* of *Sravasti* mandala to a *Brahmana* named *Bhatta Padmesvara*, who was a student of *Chchhāndōgasavrasākhā*, and for the spiritual merit of parents and himself. The village was given with all the share of produce to the donee.

## 3. *Bhumidāna* Given by Vinayakapala I (c. 931-945 A.D.)

Bengal Asiatic Society Plate: (I.A. XV. pp. 138-14 1; 9th day of the dark half of *Phālguna* year 188, era not specified probably *Harsha* era).

The inscription records the *bhumidāna* of the village *Tikkarikagrama* in the *Pratishthanabhūkti* that was attached to the *Kasiparapathaka* and belonged to the *Varanasi vishaya*. The *bhumidāna* was given by *Vinayakapala* in order to increase the religious merit of his parents. The *dana* was given to *Bhatta Bhullaka* of the *Darbhigōtra*, a student of *Atharvaveda*. The village was given with the all share of produce.

## 4. *Bhumidāna* Given By Mahendrapalall (c. 945-949.A.D.)

Pratapgarh Inscription (E.I. XIV. pp. 176-88; 5th day of dark half of *Mārgasrishas* V.S. 1003; 946 A. D.)

Mahendrapala II, son of Vinayakapaladeva ruled probably for less than five years. The only bhurnidāna of Mahendrapala II is known from Pratapgarh inscription, issued from Mahodaya (Kannauj).

This Inscription records a large number of dāna given by several individuals and by the king Mahendrapala II. These dānas were in favour of shrines attached to the matha of Hari-Rishisvara, who originally belonged to Daspura. Under the mana iexfoftbismatha were the Shrines of VataYakshini Devi. The inscription records that at the request of one Dhanasura, Mahendrapala II bestowed the village of Kharaparapadraka in the holding of Tala-VargikaHarisada, situated in the vicinity of GhontaVarshikaIn the western Pathaka of Dasapur (Mandsor) upon the goddess VataYakshiniDevi whose shrine was connected with the matha of Han Risisvara, who was well versed in four vedas. The dāna was given for the repairing and maintenance of matha and temple.

After searching the epigraphical evidence of land grants by Gurjar-PratiharaKings,I prepared some tables pertaining to the details about the donor, done, date, place, area, purpose and privileges etc, and came to certain conclusion regarding the importance of landedproperty and practice of Bhumindana.

### ***Bhumidana given by Gurjara-Partihara Kings***

**(Details about King, Inscription, Reference, Donee, Area, Privileges and Purpose of Bhumidana etc.)**

S. No.	King & Date	Inscription/ Copper Plate	Reference	Donee	Gramas (G), Vishaya (V), Mandala (M), Bhukti (B)	Type of Bhumidana & Duration	Privileges	Purpose
1.	<i>Bhoja-I*</i> V.S. 893 (836 A.D.)	<i>Barah Copper Plate, Barah, Kanpur, U.P.</i>	<i>E.I., XIX, 1983 (reprint), pp. 15-19.</i>	<i>Brahmana born in the family of BhattakacharSvamin</i>	<i>Valakagrahara (G), Udumbara (V) Kalanjar (M), Kanyakubja (B)</i>	<i>Agrahara &amp; Perpetual</i>	With all the share of produce upto its boundaries.	For the support of education and maintenance of Brahmana
2.	<i>Bhoja-I**</i> V.S. 900 (843 A.D.)	<i>Daulatpura Copper Plate, Daulatpura, Jodhpur, Rajasthan</i>	<i>E.I, V, 1984 (reprint), pp. 6-9.</i>	<i>BhattaVishnu and Bhatta Vasudeva</i>	<i>Siva (G), Dendvanaka (V), Gujjarattarabhumi (B)</i>	<i>Agrahara &amp; Perpetual</i>	With all the share of produce upto its boundaries.	For the support of education and maintenance of Brahmana
3.	<i>Mahendrapala-I</i> V.S. 955 (898 A.D.)	<i>DighwaDubali Copper Plate, Saran, Bihar</i>	<i>I.A., XV, 1983, pp. 105-113.</i>	<i>Padmesvara</i>	<i>Painyaka (G), Valayika (V), Sravasti (B)</i>	<i>Religious &amp; Perpetual</i>	With all the share of produce upto its	For the support of education and

							boundaries.	maintenance of <i>Brahmana</i>
4.	<i>Vinayakapala-I</i> H.S. 188	<i>Bengal Asiatic Society Plate</i> , Varanasi, U.P.	<i>I.A.</i> , XV, 1983, pp. 138-141.	<i>Bhullaka</i>	<i>Tikkarika (G), Varanasi (V), Pratishtana (B)</i>	Religious & Perpetual	With all the share of produce upto its boundaries.	For the support of education and maintenance of <i>Brahmana</i>
5.	<i>Mahendrapala-II</i> V.S. 1003 (946 A.D.)	<i>Pratapgarh Inscription</i> , Rajasthan	<i>E.I.</i> , XIV, 1982, pp.176-188.	<i>Matha of Hari-Rishisvara and temple of Vata-Yakshini Devi</i>	<i>Kharapara-padraka (G), Pathaka (V), Daspura (B)</i>	Religious & Perpetual	With all the share of produce up to its boundaries.	For the repairs and maintenance of temple and <i>Matha</i> and the <i>Brahmana</i> Associate with it.

\* It is renewal and approval of previous *dana* given by *Sarvvavarmadeva*

\*\* It is renewal and approval of previous *dana* given by *Vatsarajadeva*

***E.I.:* Epigraphia Indica, New Delhi.**

***I.A.:* Indian Antiquary, Bombay.**

**Table 1.2 : *Bhumidana* given by GurjaraPratihara King**

S.No.	Name of King	Period	Area of <i>Bhumidana</i>	Number of Donee
1.	Bhojadeve I (c. 836-889 A.D.)	53 years	1 Village	1 Brahmana
2.	Mahendrapala I (c. 890-907 A.D.)	17 years	1 Village	2 Brahmanas
3.	Vinayakapala (c. 931-945 A.D.)	15 years	1 Village	1 Brahmana
4.	Mahendrapala II (c. 945-948 A.D.)	4 years	1 Village	1 Brahmana
Total	19 kings ruled for 300 years and only 4 kings gave the <i>bhumidana</i>		5 Villages	5 Brahmana and 1 Matha

After a thorough study of the above mentioned *Pratihara* epigraphs, following conclusions can be drawn:

- (a) The distribution of inscriptions shows that the empire of *Pratiharas* included almost the entire area of modern Gujrat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh,

- Haryana, Punjab and Bihar. In all, 19 kings ruled for 300 years over such a large territory.
- (b) Out of Nineteen Kings, who ruled for over 300 years, only four of them, gave *bhumidana* i.e. *Bhojadeva-I, Mahendrapala-I, Vinayakapala-I, Mahendrapala-II*.
  - (c) The area of *Bhumidana* is one village in *Kannauj* (Farrukhabad, U.P.), second in *Jodhpur* district (Rajasthan), third in *Sravasti* in *Basti* district (U.P.), fourth village in *Varanasi* (U.P.) and fifth village in *Pratapgarh* district (Rajasthan).
  - (d) As far as the area of the *bhumidana* is concerned, only five villages to five *brahmanas* and to a *matha* was given by them.
  - (e) Two *bhumidana* of *Bhoja-I*, were the renewal of previous *bhumidana* made by his grand father *Nagabhata-II*. These *bhumidana* fell into abeyance due to mistake of judicial officer during *Rambhadra's* time, therefore, fresh imperial order for removal of the charter was made.
  - (f) The *Pratihara* kings made the above-mentioned grants on religious grounds and that the donee could use only that share of produce which was the share of the state as tax.
  - (g) These grants were mainly as financial support to educational institutions, temples and *mathas*.
  - (h) These grants were perpetual in nature.
  - (i) The *Pratihara* charters also specify the boundaries. The *Pratihara* charters use the term *Svasima-truna-yuti-gocara-paryantah*. These charters also mention the *Maryadadhurya* (The officer who was head of the boundaries).<sup>15</sup> The village lands were measured by '*Parmesesvariyaastas*' (royal yards) and *Nalukas* and were well demarcated by boundaries.<sup>16</sup>
  - (j) No *Pratihara* king shared the administrative or judicial rights with the donees.
  - (k) No *Pratihara* charter was given for the military services on behalf of the king.

### References

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3. Ibid, p. 65.
4. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III, 1981, p. 2
5. Ibid., V, 1963, p. 24.
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7. Ibid., p.138.
8. *Epigraphia Indica*, XIV, 1982, p.13.

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10. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, IV. pt. II., 1998, pp. 382-97.
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13. *Epigraphia Indica*, III, 1979, p. 36.
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15. *Epigraphia Indica*, I, 1983, pp. 154-162.
16. *Ibid.*, p.159.- *Ibid.*, V, 1984, pp. 113-114.

