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## HERO STONES IN MADKAI, PONDA-GOIA

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### INTRODUCTION

Emotions and emotional attachments are inborn traits of human life since the earliest phases of human evolution. Along with evolution of social groups and communities, the phenomena of emotional attachment with other members of the group have increased over the ages. Right from prehistoric times till modern times such behavioral patterns are seen in almost all communities of the world where emotional attachments are strong amongst the members of any social groups.

There are several examples from the past which display the concept of inter-dependency among the members of the community. May it be paintings from Bhimbetka, sculptural depictions from Hoysala temples, hero-stones of medieval period or even the folk dances and rituals. Inter-dependency; respect for each other is clearly visible. It is seen in many societies that the emotional attachment of the society rarely gets affected by death. In such cases society remembers such members even after the death. Otherwise in physical sense death brings end to the life, but emotional bonding of the society does not consider it as an end.

When it comes to a person with dignified character, religious in behavior, warrior or a protector, society pays a special treatment to such people even after the death. Memorials of various kinds found all over the world stands as evidence to the above mentioned discussion. It is worldwide phenomena that, memorials were erected in memory of great personalities whose contribution towards the society was felt worth remembering even after the death. This has been a practice since long time in history, for eg. Pyramids of Egypt, memorials like Taj Mahal, BibikaMaqbara or modern days statues of National leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Babasaheb Ambedkar and so on.

The antiquity of erecting memorial stones in honour of dead persons can be pushed back to very remote times. These memorials took different forms in different countries and times. Megalithic burial monuments such as stone circles, Dolmens, Menhirs and so on refers to the similar tradition of venerating dead members of the society an their memories.

In Goa, the tradition of erecting memorials (hero stones) popularly known as 'virgal' gets its firm foot during the 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> century period of Goa (Mitterwallner 1983). The State of Goa has discovered many hero-stones, with and without inscriptions, in recent decades. The salient features

of which have been discussed in writings of Settar and Sontheimar, Fr. Henry Heras, R.N Gurav, Gritli Mitterwallner and Varad Sabnis.

A hero-stone is a stone which is erected in memory of a hero who took part in a battle, a fight, a skirmish or a scuffle and died fighting the enemy (Gurav 1982). The late professor R. N Gurav has cited, "Besides throwing light on the social conditions of the day, they (hero-stones) also reveal the martial spirit and a sense of social responsibility in the youth of the time.

Generally, a hero-stone is divided into three panels. The lowest panel or portion shows the scene of a fight which shows a hero fighting the enemy with a sword or a bow, the army, cattle. The hero in most cases is shown dressed as a warrior armed with weapons and riding a horse (Sabnis 2008). The middle panel shows the hero being taken to heaven and the top panel portrays the hero sitting before God in heaven, offering prayers. Occasionally, there are four or five panels. Usually a linga is shown on the top panel along with sun and moon on either side.

A group of six hero stones have been noticed in the village of Madkai in Ponda taluka in course of exploration. These Hero stones are considered testimonials of the great tradition of heroism in the land which belong to the early medieval times. These hero stones serve as a unique example of 14<sup>th</sup> century art, and the overall representation of military skills, socio-cultural and religious beliefs of that era. (fig 1).



#### Hero stone No. 1:

This is a three paneled hero stone topped by *shikhara*. It depicts battle scene on the third panel. Second or middle panel depicts two men besides hero. One man is shown beating drum and taking hero to heaven. The first panel shows hero in seated posture worshipping *Shivalinga*. Other figure is standing and shown performing other rituals (fig. 2).



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**Hero stone No. 2:**

This threepaneled hero stone depicts hunting scene on the third panel. Here the hero is shown on lower panel along with other man and between the hunted animal. The second panel depicts musicians playing instruments. First panel topped with *shikhara* depicts hero in front of *Shivalinga* (fig. 3).

**Hero stone No. 3:**

This three paneled hero stone topped by *Shikhara* is worn off and only few figures can be seen. Theme can't be traced and identified (fig. 4).

**Hero stone No. 4:**

Having three panels this hero stone is topped by *Shikhara*. Third panel depicts the decapitation or self-immolation scene. The hero is seen seated with folded hands and other two figures are seen too. Second panel depicts celestial damsels taking hero to the heaven dancing. One figure is shown holding flying whisk. The top panel depicts hero seated in front of *Shivalinga* with folded hands and other two figures are shown on either side (fig. 5).



**Hero stone No. 5:**

It has three panels this hero stone depicts decapitation or self-immolation scene on the third panel. The third or lower panel shows hero seated whose head is cut off. Here two other men are standing on either side of hero. Second or middle panel depicts two figures is carrying hero to the heaven and musical instruments are being played in honour of the hero. The topmost panel depicts the hero seated cross-legged with folding hands in front of *Shivalinga*. Other two celestial figures are also seen on either side of the hero (fig. 6).

**Hero stone No. 6:**

All the three panels of this hero stone is worn out and it makes it difficult to identify the type of hero stone. Four figures can be seen on second panel. The figures of sun and moon are worn off too on the top of the hero stone (fig. 7).



Sr. No	Hero stone	Measurements	Period
1	Hero stone No. 1	123x 35cms	14 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> century CE.
2	Hero stone No. 2	100x 37cms	14 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> century CE.
3	Hero stone No. 3	84x 34cms	14 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> century CE.
4	Hero stone No. 4	66x 30cms	14 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> century CE.
5	Hero stone No. 5	86x 36cms	14 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> century CE.
6	Hero stone No. 6	102x 37cms	14 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> century CE.

**Table 1: Hero stones in Madkai, Ponda taluka**

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## CONCLUSION

As no inscription or oral traditions are available in the village of Madkai about these hero-stones, hence it is difficult to say who has erected it. But based on archaeological evidences/observations like the theme on panels of stone, hero's costume, religious motifs and types of the ornaments worn and other designs on the stone dating of these hero stones are been made. The villagers in Goa are not aware of the importance associated with the hero-stone and do not know who is depicted on the panels, but they worship it during important festive events. Goa still has a number of hero stones, but they lie neglected and abandoned under trees or in shrines where they are installed for worship. Systematic study/research of memorial stones of Goa would be of great importance and significant contribution to the social/religious/economic history of this region.

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