

Social and Cultural Study on Nevasa City

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Abstract

Nevasa is a city in Nevasa tehsil of Ahmednagar district in the Indian state of Maharashtra. Old name of this place are Nidhinivas and Mahalaya. Dnyaneshwars Temple is main temple. This place is near Pravara river, the river also called Amrutvahini.

Introduction

Located at 19°34' north latitude and 75°00' east longitude on the bank of the river Pravara, Nevasa Khurd, popularly known as Nevasa, is the head-quarters of the taluka bearing the same name. It covers an area of 13.2 square miles and has a total population of 8,882 persons as per the census of 1971. Nevasa is 20 miles from Shrirampur railway station and is connected with it by road. A branch road, 3 miles in length, taking off from mile No. 34.6 on the Ahmadnagar-Aurangabad road leads to Nevasa.

Being the head-quarters of a taluka and a Panchayat Samiti, located therein are the offices of the Mamlatdar and the Block Development Officer. The town has a seat of the Civil Judge (Junior Division) and First Class Judicial Magistrate. The jurisdiction of the police station at Nevasa extends over 121 villages. It has a post and telegraph office and a Government rest-house. The river Pravara forms the main source of water-supply to the town populace. The educational facilities are provided by the primary schools conducted by the Zilla Parishad and a high school known as the Dnyanoday High School. Medical facilities are provided by the private medical practitioners and a taluka dispensary with six beds. The dispensary was established in the town in the year 1877. A weekly market is held at Nevasa on every Sunday. It is also a cattle market. The agricultural produce market committee was established at Nevasa in 1961. The area of operation of this committee extends over 121 villages. The commodities regulated are jowar, bajri, wheat, gram, tur, math, kulthi, ground-nut, gur and linseed, besides cattle, sheep and goats.

History

During the Nizamshahi reign, Shahaji Bhosle used to stay at Nevasa many a time when Verul was his head-quarters. He had given many grants to the temple of Mohiniraj. After the death of Aurangzeb it came under the sway of Holkars and was conferred upon Shri Gangadhar Yashwant Chandrachud, the nobleman of the Holkars, as jagir. Consequent upon the differences he had with Malharrav Holkar, his diwanship of Wai was confiscated and he was externed from Wai. Having been in the knowledge of the prowess of Mohiniraj he prayed the god that he would construct a fine temple to him if he was reinstated in the diwanship of Wai. Shri Chandrachud was reinstated as the diwan of Wai consequent upon the agreement reached between Malharrav Holkar and the Peshva. The Peshva sanctioned an annual grant of ₹ 1,500 to the temple which the temple was getting up to 1860 when it was discontinued by the Inam Commission in 1861. Later on the British Government was giving a grant of ₹ 248 to the temple

annually. Nowadays, the expenditure of the temple is met from the income received from the land owned by the temple trust.

In 1290 A.D. Dnyaneshvar, the great Marathi saint-poet, wrote his commentary on the Bhagvatgita - Dnyaneshvari at Nevasa which he calls Nivas and described it as a place extending 10 miles (5 Kos) near the Godavari and as the abode of Mahalaya, in the kingdom of the Devagiri Yadav King Ramchandra (1271-1310). His commentary bears the date 1290.

The prominent object of interest in the town is the temple dedicated to Dnyaneshvar. About a quarter of a mile to the west of the town is a stone pillar four feet round apparently a part of the lost temple. It is called Dnyanoba's pillar from the local story that the famous saint-poet of Maharashtra, Dnyaneshvar (1271-1300) leaned against this pillar while composing his commentary on the Bhagvat Gita, viz., Dnyaneshvari. Dnyaneshvar is said to have dictated the commentary and one Sachchidanand Baba Kulkarni is said to have taken the dictation. The pillar is buried in the ground under a flat roof measuring about 30 × 36 feet. The pillar which stands about four and a half feet out of the ground, is square in the middle and round above and below. The front side of the square bears an inscription in seven lines and two Sanskrit verses. One of the verses mentions Nevasa as an abode of Mohiniraj which is a family-deity of many families from Maharashtra particularly from Khandesh, Marathvada and Vidarbha regions.

The temple of Dnyaneshvar has recently been renovated and it consists of a ground floor structure admeasuring 40' × 50', circular stone steps, an audience hall of 70' × 50', building for the Dnyaneshvar library, six rooms, and a guest-house. The entire construction has cost ₹ 2,25,000. Besides the idols of Vitthal and Rakhumai, the temple contains the images of two famous saint-poets of Maharashtra, viz., Dnyaneshvar and Tukaram. The temple has a gold-plated spire. The foundation stone of the temple was laid on February 2, 1949 by the late principal S.V., popularly known as Sonopant, Dandekar, a famous kirtankar of the varakari sect. The sabha-mandap or the audience hall was declared open in 1963 at the hands of the late P.H. alias Raosaheb Patvardhan.

Another object of interest in the town is the temple dedicated to Mohiniraj. As has been mentioned earlier, the temple is of comparative antiquity and had received many grants from Shahaji Bhosle. The new temple of Mohiniraj was constructed in 1773 at a cost of about ₹ 4 to 5 lakhs by Gangadhar Yeshwant Chandrachud. The temple is 75 feet high and is decorated with considerable ornamental work all around. The inner shrine contains an image of Mohiniraj or Vishnu. In the sabha-mandap, are placed the images of Ganapati, Shankar, Parvati, Shani, Maruti, etc.

There is an anecdote about Mohiniraj which runs as follows: The puranas mention that at the time of the churning of the sea to get the nectar, Vishnu with a view to depriving the rakshasas of the nectar appeared in the form of Mohini, a bewitching damsel, and enticed the rakshasas who just stared at the damsel so that Vishnu distributed the nectar to gods and goddesses and water to the rakshasas. The idol of Mohiniraj in the temple is of Ardhanari Natashvar, i.e., Vishnu in the form of the bewitching damsel - Mohini.

Three annual fairs are held in the town in honour of Mohiniraj, Dnyaneshvar and Kaminpir. The fair in honour of Mohiniraj is held from Magha Shuddha 15 to Magha Vadya 5 (January-February), that in honour of the famous Marathi saint-poet is held on Phalguna Vadya 11 (February-March) and that in honour of Kaminpir is held in April-May. Each of these fairs are attended by about five thousand people.

Devgad is a beautiful temple of Lord Dattatreya founded by Late Guruvarya Sri Kisangiri Maharaj. It attracts worshipers from all over the state. This place is well known among devotees for its beauty and cleanliness. The palkhi from Devgad to Pandharpur Ashadhi Eakadashi under the leadership of Bhaskargiri Maharaj is famous for its strict discipline and cleanliness.

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