

Epigraphic Records from Nevasa

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Abstract

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

Introduction

Nevasa is a city of Saint and located in 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 souls as per the census of 1971. Nevasa is twenty miles from Shrirampur railway station and is connected with it by road. A branch road, three 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. The educational facilities are provided by the primary schools conducted by the Zilla Parishad and a high school known as the Dnyanodaya 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, groundnut, gur and linseed, besides cattle, sheep and goats.

In 1290 A.D., Dnyaneshwar, the great Marathi saint-poet, wrote his commentary on the Bhagvat Gita - Dnyaneshwari at Nevasa which he calls Nivas and described it as a place extending ten miles (five kos) near the Godavari and as the abode of Mahalaya, in the kingdom of the Devagiri Yadav King Ramchandra (1271-1310).

The prominent object of interest in the town is the temple dedicated to Dnyaneshwar. 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, Dnyaneshwar (1271-1300) leaned against this pillar while composing his commentary on the Bhagvat Gita, viz.,

Dnyaneshwari. Dnyaneshwar 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 33 × 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 Dnyaneshwar 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 Dnyaneshwar 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., Dnyaneshwar 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 and 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, the images of Ganapati, Shankar, Parvati, Shani, Maruti, etc. are placed.

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 Nateshvar, i.e., Vishnu in the form of the bewitching damsel, i.e. Mohini.

Three annual fairs are held in the town in honour of Mohiniraj, Dnyaneshwar 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.

Epigraphic Records

Today, 'Nevasa Khurda' is a small village, popularly known as 'Nevasa'. It is the Head Quarter of the Taluka bearing the same name.

The archaeological excavations in this region of the Pravara Valley and at Nevasa have proved its antiquity since chalcolithic period. An excavation at Nevasa has yielded five coins of the Satavahanas. Four of them are round shaped lead coins and one is a copper in square shape. There are some

epigraphic records mentioning the name 'Nidhivas'. (i.e. Nevasa). For instance, Neurgaon inscription of Ramchandra Yadava, dated 1279, records that three villages were granted to 87 Brahmana Donees. The gifted villages were located in 'Nidhivas' - meaning an administrative division. The same inscription records as for one more time.

'Nidhivas' is also mentioned in 'Dnyaneshwari, as 'Nivas'. Dnyaneshwar was the most celebrated saint of the varkari sect. In his work, he has described Nevasa "as a place extending about 10 miles near river Godavari, in the Kingdom of the Yadava ruler Ramchandra. Since, Dnyaneshwari was written and completed by about 1290 A.D., we may conclude that Nevasa was a fairly big city during this period.

Another copper plated grant of Mahadev from Kalegaon also mentions Nevasa as a 'Khampana'. Khampanak is an administrative division and it supports the view that Nevasa was a big city during the 12th and 13th centuries A.D. This inscription also records certain village grants that were located in the Nidhivasa Khampana. All these village have been located in the present Nevasa and Shevgaon Talukas of Ahmadnagar district.

Thus Nidhivas was the Head quarter of a Khampana division that has been equated with Nevasa in Present Ahmadnagar district of Maharashtra. Yet another interesting inscription is in Nevasa itself.

It is engraved on a stone slab in the temple of Kanereshwara. The inscription is in Sanskrit and consist of only 6 lines. It was first edited by Shri. G.H. Khare. Later on, Alfred Master translated it in English with his scholarly comment. It records the date as Shaka era 1161, i.e. A.D. 1239-40. The inscription is as following:

- Only one place name is recorded in the inscription.
- According to Shri. M.G. Dixit, it was a village in the vicinity of Nevasa.

The inscription informs us that Shri. Silu Pandit was a 'Vrittikar' of this temple. He was granted this vritti for explaining the Puranas in the temple. He was a Yajurvedi Brahmana of Madhyandina branch and his gotra was Shaunaka.

The inscription records that a land was granted earlier to this Silu Pandit as a source of his livelihood as mentioned earlier. However, it was suspended and the granted land was handed over to the deiti of the temple. Later on, it was handed over to a person viz. thou.

However, it does not inform us that why the vritti of this land was suspended, and why it was given to other person? the purpose behind this is unclear. Further studies are required in this connection.

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