



Religious Work of Sardar VitthalShivdev Vinchurkar

(With special reference to the renovation of Narsingh temple, Narsinghpur)

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Abstract

A debate has developed over which approaches to constructing, planning and implementing lessons are more effective and operative. Task based learning is the activity where learner is actively engaged in a particular task. It can be teacher-driven - with direction from an instructor - or learner-driven with the learner having freedom to explore. It facilitate learning by students to develop their natural intelligences, it provides an ambience where students can explore and inquire in their own styles at their own pace, which results into students growth and helping them towards being responsible citizens excelling in fields of their choice. Task-Based Learning is characterized by various factors: a focus on fluency, a high degree of learner's self-sufficiency, review of previously learnt language, and the importance of relevancy. This article at some length presents an overview of a task-based learning approach (TBL) and highlights its advantages over the more traditional Present, Practice, and Produce (PPP) approach.

Introduction -

India has always been remained as religious country. One can see the impact of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam on various walks of the life. This impact prevailed during medieval period too. It was because of the kings, Sardars and patrons and their contribution to religious works. Sardar Vitthal Shivdev was not exception to this. He constructed many temples and renovated some of them all over Maharashtra. In the course he renovated Narsingh temple of Narsinghpur. Renovation of this temple

can be a good source material for study of *shaiivism* and *vaishnavism* of the time. Hence the title of this paper is "Religious work of"

Introduction of Vitthal Shivdev-

Vitthal Shivdev was a horse attendant in the stable of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Satara. He rose to the fame as Sardar Vitthal Shivdev Vinchurkar during the Peshwa period. He was born in 1695 A.D. in *Saswad* in *Rigvedi* Brahmin family¹. His surname was *Dani*.² He lived in *Vinchur*, village of Nashik district. So he came to be known as *Vinchurkar*. Thus he became a first person of *Vinchurkar* lineage.

Geographical formation of Narsinghpur-

Narsinghpur in Indapur taluka of Pune district is famous and religious place. This is situated at the confluence of river *Bhima* and *Nira*.³ River *Nira* is originated from a particular well at the foot hill of sahyadri whereas *Bhima* is originated at in *Rathachal* Mountain, thenceforth for it flows and reaches at Narsinghpur. Both the rivers merge in at Narsinghpur. Vitthal Shivdev Vinchurkar renovated old temple of Lord Narsingh situated at this *sangam* (confluence of rivers)

Early history of Narsinghpur-

During medieval period Adilshah of Bijapur had come to this place with a view to build a fort. But he physically suffered here and abandoned the thought of building a fort.⁴ This implies that this region was ruled over by Adilshah of Bijapur.⁵ This place is important a sit is situated at the confluence of two rivers. Sultan Adilshah donated this village to the Brahmins as *Inam*.⁶ Chh. Shivaji continued grant to this.⁷ One can infer that this village was under possession of Adilshah and Chh. Shivaji. This is corroborated by the charter given to the officials. The *Pujaris* and Astrologers had a right over temple and income of village.

Renovation of Narsinghpur temple by Vitthal Shivdev-

Vitthal Shivdev renovated this temple on the insistence of his Guru Amrutswami. He lived in the Ashram on the bank of river *Krishna* in the village *Mardhe*. Once swami came to Narsinghpur, he saw the temple of Narhari in state of ruination state. So when Vitthal Shivdev visited his Guru, Guru asked him to renovate the temple for the deity in temple was kuldaivat of Vitthal Sivdev's family (family deity).⁸ It can be said that Vitthal Shivdev renovated the temple for the wish of his Guru and for the service of the God.

Foundation of temple-

Before renovation of the temple it was very small.⁹ This is also stated in the order of Guru. Since the temple is small. Since earlier temple was small its foundation had deteriorated due to flow of river. So Vitthal Shivdev started the restoration and consolidation of foundation. The circumference which includes recently built *Dharmashala* along with the temple was dug up to the level of bank of river. The foundation reinforced with the lime and stones and then it was built by all the sides,¹⁰ so even today if river flows at higher level water does not cross the first step of *Mahadwar*.¹¹ It took seven years to build only the foundation and required a two and half lacks of rupees.¹²

The stone bastion has been constructed on solid foundation. The main hall of temple (*Gabhara*) has been built with the stone masonry over which its peak (*shikhar*) has been worked out. It took approximately twenty years for the completion of renovation of the temple.¹³ After this renovation two idols which are made up of sandstone and rockstone respectively have been placed into the hall of the temple (*Gabhara*). Both the idols are seen today. Original idol was replaced by the duplicate one due to the fear of Aurangzeb.¹⁴ Vinchurkar donated some ornaments to the temple where those two idols are seen.¹⁵ *Peshwai Pagdi* was one of the ornaments. Now those ornaments are not available.¹⁶ There is inscription which states that,

“shri Narsingh prasanna

*Shree Kshetra Nira Narsinghpur Ghat, Gabhara, Dvalaya. Chrbidi. Vitthal Shivdev Dani Kasbe Sasved Prant Pune Shake 1695 Dhatanaam Sawatsare Chaitra Shudhha”.*¹⁷

This implies that temple and hall were constructed by the Vitthal Shivdev.

Scientifically built temple-

Vitthal Shivdev would visit many places during his campaign. He would visit religious places to have *Darshan*. Having seen many temples and their great architecture, he thought to build a temple like those one. With this thought he builds a huge temple of Narsingh. This temple is built according to the arithmetical and architectural view. This implies that area of city is twelve miles and the Narsinghpur is situated at the middle of it; its area is five miles (kos) and the temple two miles far. Thus its length and width is said in the *shloka* .

“Panchakosh Haripur Nagar Yoganyantraya, Devalayam Yoganartha Pranaminivishrut”¹⁸

This proves the scientific approach in the construction of this temple.

There are more than forty three *tirthas* in the temple area having distance of hundred hands from east to west and distance between smaller *tirthas* is five hands.¹⁹

In the inner side of the temple there are some mother goodness statues are carved.²⁰ There are total nineteen *tirthas* on the bank of river Nira. One of them *kapiltirtha*, it is stated that Kapil rishi gave sermon on ‘Sankhyashastra’ to *rishis* circle.²¹

Arrangement of Expenditure-

Vitthal Shivdev had provided ten thousand rupees for maintenance of the temple,²² through which ‘holy drum’, *Prasad*, Brahman for Pooja Brahman for *anushtan* and garden of *tulsiflower* for *pooja* and deity etc being maintained.²³ Besides, birthday celebration of God, waterman and guards maintenance through this amount. Vinchurkar provided some extra money from *sansthan*, if required.

Symbol of integration of Shaiva & Vaishnav –

Narsinghpur is good example of integration of *Shaiva* and *Vaishnav*. It is proved by the sculpture and literature of temple. The rivers on which confluence the temple is situated bear the names from circle of deities of *Shavism* i.e *Shiv* and the deities of *Vashnavism* i.e *Vinshnu*. This validates from the following *shloka*.

“Nayani Sarva Bhavana Niray Tathyate Budhai: Sa Nira Prarthika Lokko Vishno;Shakti Padeshwari Bhiyn Nayati Lalaysa Lokanna Ya Sarupath; Bhimatsya Mudravatnurbhiyalokeshu Pathtye”²⁴

This means that Nira is the power of lord Vishnu which fulfils all the wishes, while Bhima originates from Bhim, form of lord shiva and do away with worries and feares. *Shloka* can be validated from the fact that there are idol of four goddess; *Ganpati*, *Ambika*, *Durga*, *Sharda* who defends the temple from all the four directions.

Construction of temple is according to laws of construction described by the Holy Scripture. If carefully watched, one can notice that idol of Ganpati has been installed at the gate of temple’s inner hall (*garbhagruha*). According to sculptural science the idol at the gate of *garbhagriha* should be from the same family of deities as of main deity of temple. However, in Narsingh temple there are Narsingh and Ganpati idols together at

the gate. Even Narsingh's seat is in the north direction and appears in the shape of *lingam*. In inner hall of temple, something appears to be drawn from the earth. Perhaps, there had been *Nandi*. Many sculptures and figures were there from family of deity Shiva, which have been deities of Shiva cult. But now Vaishnavas favorite god Narsingh's idol is seen there. From this, one can say that, probably, previously this temple belonged to lord Shiva and later on, during renovation; Vitthal Shivdev might have converted it into Vaishnav temple of Narsingh, because Narsingh is his family deity. Secondly, it can be also said that Vitthal Shivdev was the staunch devotee of both lord Shiva and lord Vishnu, therefore, he might have deliberately reconstructed this temple in such way that it should appear as the symbol of unity of Shaiva and Vaishnav.

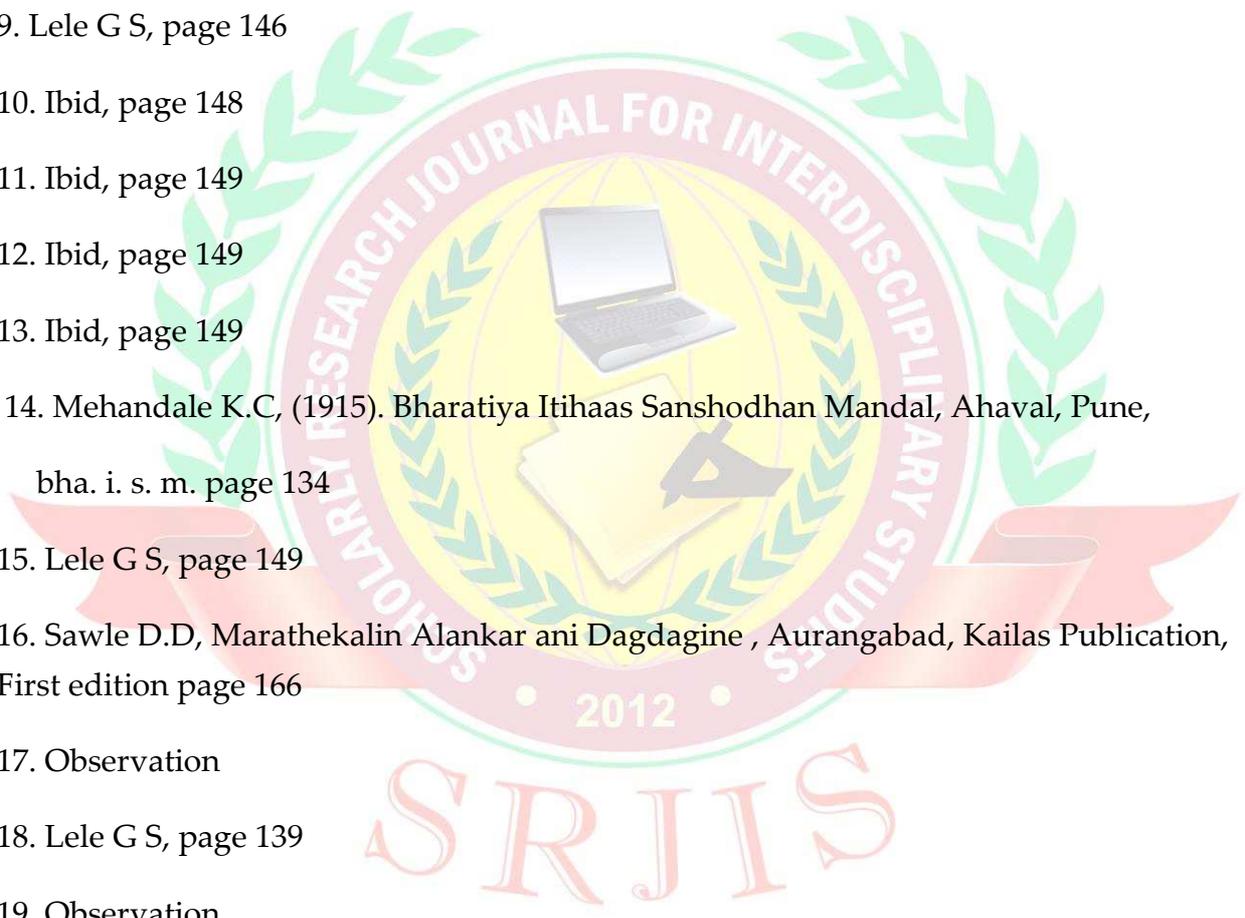
A story in 'kshatra-Mahatmya' tells that there happened a debate among *rishis* on whether 'Kotithirth' of Narsinghpur was more sacred and yielding than that of *Prayag* and *Gokarn*. Naradmuni gave final opinion that 'Kotitirtha' was superior to others one.²⁵ This indicates influence of Vaishnavism was growing in this place. A. N. Bhagvat's 'Tirthayatra Prabandha' also gives some reference. This book gives us that Pooja was stopped over their right of it. Because different Poojaris claimed the right of Pooja. Eventually justice office gave final verdict over the right of Pooja.²⁶ These modern and Puranic references show that there had been conflict between Shaivaities and Vaishnavaities over the right of Pooja of this holy place.

Conclusion-

Narsinghpur is one of the holy places of India. It became specific after renovation of old temple and construction of new one at the confluence of rivers by Vitthal Shivdev. It helps us to understand religious attitude of Vitthal Shivdev. Temple architecture and sculpture also helps us to understand the history of conflict and peace between Shaivism and Vaishnavism in India. Epigraphs in temple are helpful to determine chronology of important event. Therefore renovation of the Narsinghpur temple is important.

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