CHAPTER VI

Pandharpur as a Centre of Cultural Communication

In India every temple serves as a smaller or bigger communication centre. The smaller shrines are visited by local people and there are generally one or two festivals in which all the people of the village take part and which are celebrated as the day sacred to a local deity. Such festivals are called "Urus". - Invitations are sent by the Patil of the village to surrounding villages to attend an "Urus". There is always the fair which consists varied shops, entertainments, wrestling matches, distribution of food as prasad of the God and many times a procession of the idol or its "Padukas". The temples of the deities like Khandoba, Devi, Shiva etc. are visited by people all the year round and attract large number of pilgrims on certain sacred days. The deity Khandoba attracts people from all over Maharashtra. The Bhavani of Tuljapur is visited also by people from Karnataka and Andhra. The God Vitthal at Pandharpur attracts Vaishnavas from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Mysore. Nasik is also a very sacred place where on certain occasions like Simhastha people from all over India come. But no other temple in Maharashtra has served cultural communications within Maharashtra.
like the temple at Pandharpur.

Songs and legends are connected with all temples - but they cannot be compared with the poems and literature created by Vaishnava saints round the idol of Vithoba at the town of Pandharpur. Hardly any one of the Saint-poets lived at Pandharpur. They all, however, came to Pandharpur on pilgrimages where their poetry spread among the many pilgrims who carried it back to that part of Maharashtra from where they came.

Pandharpur never had the grandeur of ancient capitals of either Paithan or Kolhapur or Poona. There was no patronage to poets, musicians and learned people in the way it was given to them in those capitals. But the very fact that it was not a capital city, made the inter-course easy and informal in this temple town. People came there not to seek the patronage of the king but to offer their humble worship, to deliver "Pravachans" or "Kirtans" before the pilgrims assembled and danced and sung together the praises of the God Vithoba. Before going into details about this aspect of Pandharpur temple a brief historical resume will not be out of place here.

During the Muslim reign and afterwards in the reign of Shivaji and Shahu, whose chief ministers were the Brahmin Peshwas, the language used for revenue and legal transactions was Marathi, so much mixed with Persian that it was not understood by the common people. There was also the pressure of Muslim religion and later under the British rule of the Christian missionaries, while resistance to these powers was built
up on the political level and on the cultural level, a unity of feeling and an understandable common language were being created through the activity of the Saint-poets.

Pandharpur as a township is in the Krishna basin in the sense that the river Bhima on which the town stands is a tributary of Krishna and meets Krishna near Raichur in Andhra outside the Maharashtra area. Pandharpur has been open to southern influences as history and legend both show:

The earliest inscription (516 A.D.) shows that a king had given a grant to a brahmin named Jaydvitha in which Pandharpur and its neighbouring villages have been mentioned. This inscription comes from Avidhyeya - the Rashtrakuta king belonging to the Kannad speaking area.

The inscription (Hebbalil inscription of 1248 A.D.) which records a gift to be used for catering free food to persons who would halt at the place while on their way for regular visits to Pandharpur was given by a village headman (Sing-gavund) from the Kanadi speaking area.

The famous inscription called the "Writing of 84" and which was carved in 1273 A.D. records the names of pilgrims and their towns* who gave gifts for the repairs of the temple during 1273 to 1277 A.D. Among them are few names of townships which are situated also in Karnatak.
In the early 16th century, it is said that the image of the God Vitthal was taken to Vijaynagar by King Krishnadevray and brought back to Pandharpur again by the Marathi Saint Bhanudas (1448 - 1514).

We have already seen that the brothers from whom ultimately the Badwas trace their geneologies had come from Karnataka region.

Pandharpur thus belongs to that part of Maharashtra which was much under the influence of Southern culture and southern dynasties.

This brings us right into the Muslim dynasties of the Bahamani kings which ruled from 1347 to 1525 A.D. over an area which ranged from the Godavari basin to Bijapur. To this period belongs the document of the duties of Priests of the Vitthal temple which has been quoted and discussed in Chapter II.

The common political and literary history of this part of Maharashtra and northern Karnataka needs to be studied from the point of view of the formation of the linguistic area.

While a large part of both the areas was governed by the same Political Power, apparently linguistic boundaries within this region were getting gradually fixed while parts of this region are still a disputed boundary between Mysore.
and Maharashtra and Mysore and Kerala.

Pandharpur from an early period apparently became firmly established as the centre of Vitthal worship within Marathi speaking area. This is probably due to the position held by Pandharpur as the main shrine of the God Vitthal for the Vaishnav Saint-poets of Maharashtra and from the 13th century right upto date it has played its part in making people conscious of their Marathi heritage.

The reason perhaps for this shift to Pandharpur may be sought in the conquest of the capital of Maharashtra namely the Fort of Devgiri (later Daulatabad) by the Muslim king Alla-Uddin Khilaji (1318 A.D.) which was built in early Yadav times about 1000 A.D.

"Prathisthan" is the old name which survives to-day in the name of small town of Paithan on the left bank of Godavari. Prathisthan was the capital of the Satwahan kings who ruled this area from about the second century B.C. to about third century A.D. The inscriptions of Satwahan kings are all in Prakrit and they seem to be the kings who made Prakrit or a language derived from Prakrit (Proto-Marathi), the language of this area.

After that came Chalukyas who definitely seemed to have more connection with the south i.e., Karnataka. After the Chalukyas came the Rashtrakutas who as patrons of
Jains again encouraged a type of Prakrit called "Maharashtri".

After the Rashtrakutas came the Yadavas. Some of the Yadav kings have kannad sounding names but the Yadav kings seem to be patrons of Marathi. The earliest Marathi poets (Mukundraj and Jnaneshwar) seem to have flourished in their reign.

Nearby Paithan is a very large site which shows that it was inhabited from the early Christian era to Muslim rule. The inhabitation can be inferred from the Buddhist caves of Ellora. The latest cave sculpture namely the temple of Shiva was finished during the Rashtrakuta kings Krishna's reign (753 to 775 A.D.). Nearby is the fort Devgiri which was also completely built in the reigns of a last Rashtrakutas and early Yadavs. The township in the vicinity of Daulatabad was called "Khadaki".

The name of the Devgiri fort was changed as Daulatabad after its conquest by Muslims. The name of the township 'Khadaki'* was changed to Aurangabad in the 17th century during Aurangzeb's viceroyalty in the Deccan. The memory of the old...

* On the death of Akbar in 1605 A.D. Mughal power in the Deccan declined. Their general in Ahmadnagar had to deal with Malik Ambar (1605 - 1626), the statesman of Ahmadnagar. Though the Mughals held Ahmadnagar fort in 1605, Malik Ambar raised Murtaza Nizam II to the throne and succeeded in making "Khadaki" near Elura (Verul) afterward called Aurangabad, the headquarters of a State which included the greater part of the former Ahmadnagar possession.
name still exist in the name of the temple in modern Aurangabad called 'Khadakeshwar'. It is the Shiva temple of the town 'Khadaki'.

Marathi literature was flourishing under the patronage of the Yadavas as the last verse of 'Jnaneshwar' shows. This patronage was lost after the Muslim conquest of Devgiri and possibly that might have been the reason for the rising importance of Pandharipurna to Marathi-speaking people. It is probable that this Vaishnav shrine which was possibly established in Proto-Marathi time and was a kind of a common shrine to people from three regions became more Marathised through this political upheaval and has since then served as a force for consolidation and spread of Marathi language as will be seen further.

Vaishnavism rose in central and south, apparently in the northwest and then reached gradually in India as Prof. Bhandarkar points out. Three or four different deities were included in this sect, by the beginning of the Christian era. Narayan seems to be the name of an old deity mentioned in Mahabharat. Vishnu was a minor God in the Vedas, but assumed greater

+ Many towns in India particularly in Maharashtra owe their origin to the temple name, e.g. Tryambakeshwar (Nasik district), Chrushneswar (Aurangabad district).

** Dr. Bhandarkar R.G. "Vaishnavism, Saivism and minor religious systems". Strasbourg, Karl J. Trübner 1915.
importance in Post-Mahabharat times. Krishna-Vasudev was a
great historical personality who became a cult hero and then
a God. Lastly there was a cowherd God who killed many demons
and established a cult of cow-worship in defiance to older
vedic Gods. All these various Gods have been known in the
Post-christian era. The sect. came to be called the Bhagvat
from the sanskrit word 'Bhagvan' for God.

There is an inscription in Besnagar** in Central India
(now Madhya Pradesh) written on a pillar which commemorate
name of a greek who calls himself Bhagavat.

One of the well known Puranas is the Bhagwat Puran+ 
parts of which have been translated into Marathi by Marathi
Saint-poets.

---------------------------------------------

* Bhagvan means full of fortune and glory. This term was
applied to many great people who were supposed to have
a godliness in them. Sri Krishna was called "Bhagavan
Krishna".

Buddha was called "Bhagavan Buddha".

** Epigraphia Indica IX - List of Brahmi inscriptions
from the earliest time (669).
Besnagar Vaishnava Column - Errection of a garuda-
dhvaja of Vasudeva - the God of Gods by the bhagavata
(votary of Bhagavat).

Heliodora (Heliodoros) -
(A) Note by Fleet, Jour. Roy. As. Soc. 1910, p.141.
Vol. XXIII, p.104.

+ C. Vaidya C.V., JBBRAS, 1925, pp.144 ff.

According to R.C. Hazara the date of composition
of Bhagavata falls in the sixth century A.D.

R.C. Hazara: The Puranic Records on Hindu Rites,
Chapter II, p.52.
The most sacred book of the Vaishnavas is "Bhagavad Gita"* (the song of the God) which is supposed to be ethics and philosophy as taught by Krishna to the Mahabharat hero Arjun. Bhagavadgita** as known since the Christian era is supposed to be a much inflated version of the original talk between Krishna and Arjun. Bhagavadgita has been translated and commented upon by Marathi Saints from Jnaneshwar (1275-1296 A.D.) to Tukaram (1608 - 1649 A.D.). The latest well known translation in Marathi of this book is by Vinobaji Bhave. It is called "Gitai".†

This shows the hold of this book on the Marathi mind.

The wife of the God Vishnu is supposed to be Laxmi. Krishna had many wives. The most famous among them was Rukmini - the princess of Vidarbha. The cowherd God the Gopal had a companion called - Radha. It is conventional to have temple of Vishnu and Laxmi++, Krishna and Rukmini and Gopalkrishna and Radha.

** Bhagavadgita: Apparently there was a song with Vishnu called "Vishnu Gita" mentioned in Sanskrit as "Srivishnugita". This Gita inculcates the worship of Vishnu. It is in seven Adhyayas - 912 Slokas: Mrs. Oka S.V. - "A Survey of Gitas" in Sanskrit literature. Ph.D. Thesis (Unpublished) B.O.R.I.
++ There is also an interesting form towards which Dr. N. G. Kalelkar drew the attention of the author. The Vitthal of Pandharpur is associated with Rakhmavdei as his wife. Rakhma is supposed to be in Marathi - name of Rukmini one of the wives of Krishna.

The word Rakhma, however, cannot be linguistically derived from the Sanskrit word Rukmini which becomes Rupppini in Prakrit and Apabhramsha. Rakhma can be taken back only to the word 'Lakshmi'.

In many Sanskrit words La alternates with Ra. In the language of illiterate people the word Rakhma is found. Just as there has been an identification between Vishnu and Krishna and also there has been an identification and confusion between Lakshmi and Rukmini so that the present temple behind Vithoba is supposed to belong to Rukmini - It might have been originally a Lakshmi temple.
Vishnu* the Sanskrit word becomes Vinhu in Prakrit literature. The word Vinhu in its turn becomes Vithu in Marathi. In Marathi the same word is Vithal, Vithu or Vithoba - as the God of Pandharpur is variously called.

We have seen that there is no image of the Goddess side by side of the God Vithal at Pandharpur. But behind the main shrine within feet is a separate shrine to his consort who is in this case is supposed to be Rukmini, called Rakhamai or Rakhamabai. Vithal is sung by all Saint-poets as the husband of Rakhamai in Maharashtra.

Maharashtra Vaishnavism recognizes Vishnu and Krishna as separate. It recognizes Krishna as the 8th incarnation of Vishnu. It, however, makes no distinction between Krishna, Vasudev and the cowherd God Gopal Krishna.

There is a story about a song called Vinhu Giya in an early jain work - Vasudev Himdi* in an early jain work. This song was supposed to be about a jain ascetic Visnukumar. This story seems to have been told in order to lay claim to a hymn of Vishnu which was apparently well known in those days. Radha is supposed to be the lover of Krishna while Rukmini is the wife. Rukmini is recognized as an incarnation of Laxmi. The ordinary worshiper including the Saint-poets did not recognize Vithal as Vishnu but identified with Krishna. So that we have Vithal or Vithu coupled

* Vishnu is called Bhagavan or Bhagawant and has a well known temple in Barsi in Sholapur district.
+ Vishnu: See reference to Vasudeo Himdi
with Rukmini and not with Laxmi, also the many poems of the Vaishnava saints sing exploits of the God Krishna as the Cowherd God and identify him with Vitthal of Pandharpur.

The best known Vaishnava saint-poet of Maharashtra was Jnaneshwar. His work called "Bhavartha Dipika" is a commentary on Bhagavadgita. It gives a translation of the original sanskrit words in one or two Marathi poems of the kind called "Üvi" and with ample illustrations and also in Ovi metre makes clear the meaning of the original verse. This book in the commentary part, follows the tradition of Śankara who wrote his commentary on Gita in the 8th century in Sanskrit called Shankar Bhaṣya.

Śankara was the greatest exponent of the Mayavad. The doctrine of 'Maya' which teaches that Brahman alone is real and that all phenomena are transitory, changing and therefore unreal.

Jnaneshwar was also a disciple of the 'Natha Sect'. His eldest brother was his spiritual teacher as he acknowledged again and again in his commentary. This sect flourished from about 6th century to 14th century and was based on discipline called 'Yoga' which was of great antiquity in India.

* Śankara (788 - 820 A.D.).
+ Nivrutti Nath (1273 A.D.) see: The Philosophy of Jnanadeva p.12. By, Bhirat B.P. (Published by Popular Book Depot, Bombay 1901)
++ Jnaneshwari. [ XVI : 1802-05 ]

Tētha Mahēśaṁvāya Saṁbhūtsa / Śrī Nivruttinathuśulē
Kele' Jnanadeva Gite / Desikar Lene.
Yoga* laid stress on certain physical discipline including controlling of breath. These physical disciplines are supposed to give perfect control over all physical and physiological activities including those dependent on the sympathetic nervous system. This type of discipline leads the mind away from phenomena and ultimately makes one realise Brahman. The Yoga practices also are supposed to bestow on a person extra ordinary powers like levitation walking on water, controlling riches etc.

Jnaneshwar gives very vivid account of Yogic practices and Yogic achievements as also the spiritual dangers arising out of Yogic achievements. The third stream of thought in Jnaneshwar’s commentary belongs to what is called Bhakti-marg i.e. the path of devotion, shortly called ’Bhakti’, flourished after the Mahabharat period and especially after christian era.

The devotion is to an incarnated God with a visual representation. Bhakti, first was supposed to lead ultimately to oneness with God and so to the realization of highest Brahman.

The Bhakti doctrine was best described in short in Narad’s 'Bhakti Sutras' and in details in Bhagawat Puran.

This great stream of philosophical and religious thought Bhakti which was looked in Sanskrit tradition and which was available to only a few learned people (’rahmins), was brought

* The earliest known work on Yogas are the "Yoga Sutras of Patanjali" (147 B.C.). Though the word Yoga is mentioned long before the Sutras. Das Gupta : "A History of Indian Philosophy", p.219
into Marathi by the Vaishnava saint-poets. Their achievement was that of bringing the great tradition into the stream of life of peasants who did not know Sanskrit. In this stream of thought the Yoga doctrine was never emphasized to the same degree as Jnaneshwar did.

The Mayavad of Śankara was talked by all but it receded before the Bhakti doctrine. The Mayavad was talked in a slightly different way from Śankar. It was said that the reality was God. In this visible power and by forgetting everything else for the love of God, man ultimately reach the realization of identity with God which was equated to the realization of Brahman. The intellectual approach found in the Upaniṣadas and in the Śankara’s tradition was lost in the sense that Maharashtra saint-poets emphasized devotion (Bhakti) rather than an intellectual seeking after truth.

The Bhagwat Sect was praised by all the poet-saints as something which was easy to follow and which could be practised by the most ignorant and by the poorest. The appeal of the poets was always to the masses. Jnaneshwar’s Bhavartha-Dipika (popularly called 'Jnaneshwari'), though a learned composition, was first given out orally in a temple in a town Nevasa before a considerable audience as the context shows all the time. It would even appear that it represents an impromptu performance. Because we are told that it was taken down in writing by a man called 'Sadchidananda' while it was being told to the audience. This was more so in the case of Saint Tukaram who
lived in Dehu (1609-1649). It is said that he would discourse and sing poems to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument* and castanets.† It is recorded that sometimes Tukaram danced in the extacy of his devotion. Thus the poems were always pieces sung by the populace either singly or in a group. As we have seen in Chapter I, all poet saint belong to all castes of Maharashtra and their appeal was to the masses. The recent history shows that it was continued to be so in the present. We shall discuss this point further.

† The life of the people in Maharashtra was guided and influenced by the poet-saints who flourished between 13th and 18th century. Jnaneswar (1275-1296), Namdeva (1270-1350), Bhanudas (1445-1513), Eknath (1533 - 1599) and Tukaram (1608-1649) were prominent among them. Most of them wanted to bring the people in Maharashtra under the banner of Bhagwat Sect or Varkari Sampradaya based on Vitthal-Bhakti or devotion to the God Vithoba.

During the period mentioned above these prominent poet saints and many others have stressed upon oneness of thought, emotion and action through their literature in Maharashtra. The poet saints taught the people to lead a pious life and to be kind to every being that is born in the world. Some poet saints exhorted people to love God with pure mind and asked them to concentrate their mind on one God only.

+ Veena and Chipalya in Marathi.
Every God has certain days in a week, or in a month or in a year. Specially sacred to him. The mother Goddess under her various names has Tuesday and Friday sacred. The Tuesdays and Fridays of the sacred months of Shravan are regarded particularly sacred. Mondays is sacred to God Shiva. Besides Monday Shiva has the 28th or 29th day of each month sacred, which is known as Shivaratra.

Many Gods have a particularly sacred day or days once or twice a year. Navrata - the first nine days in the month of Ashwin (in October) are especially sacred to the Goddess. "Maha Shivaratra" in the month of Magha (February or March) is most sacred to God Shiva. Maha Ekadashi in the month of Ashadha (June - July) and Kartik (October-November) is most sacred to the God Vitthal and his devotees flock to Pandharpur for the fair from all over Maharashtra.

During the travel to Pandharpur the Varkari is supposed to sing Abhangas (hymns) in the praise of God. This is called "Bhajan"* in Marathi. The Bhajan consists in uttering the name of the God or singing the poems composed by the saint-poets. At Pandharpur on the day of the Maha-Ekadashi and as also on the in monthly Ekadashi days Bhajans go on the temple, in the streets and in the various other places in the town where pilgrims gather.

* Sometimes Bhajan is sung in chorus along with many Varkaris - One Varkari sings first and others repeat.
The tradition of the saint-poets starts from Jnaneshwar who lived in 1295-1296. Jnaneshwar has written Jnaneshwari or Bhavartha Dipika, Amritanubhav, Changdeva Pashasthi, Haripatha and miscellaneous Abhangas. Jnaneshwar wrote in learned Marathi, his contemporary Namdev - another saint poet sung poems in the language of the people. Namdev has composed his poems (Abhangas) which describe various incidents in the life of Srikrishna.

Chokhamela, Gora Kumbhar, Sawata Mali, Narhari Sonar, Janabai flourished between 1290 to 1350. Namdev and these poet-saints had a great belief in the thought that the God Vitthal or Pandurang of Pandharpur was the incarnation of Shrikrishna. Every one of them has written the poems (Abhangas) in praise of the God Vithoba and about the Bhakti. These poets have written their poems in the Marathi language spoken and understood by all castes of people of their times. Their poems are not in the learned tradition.

Saint-poet Eknath -

Eknath* (1533-1599) lived at Paithan and has written voluminously on Bhagwat and Ramayan. Throughout the 14th and 15th century people in Maharashtra were engrossed in their daily activities on account of the invasions of the Muslims and political as well as social unrest caused thereby. They were in need of some religious leader and guide. This they got in Eknath.

* Phatak N.R.: Sri Eknath Vangmaya ani Karya, Mouj Prakashan, 1960
Though he was a brahmin by birth still he had great compassion and pity for his fellow brothers of other castes and for oppressed people. He mixed with masses and helped them in times of need.

Ek Nath wrote many books, all of them are in Marathi. He also composed songs which were called 'Bharud', which were in popular dialect and which have been sung with music and acting. At the present day the people who sing and act Bharud generally do not belong to the Brahmin community.

Ek Nath's Bharud and Abhangas show his keen observations of the ways in which the different classes of people in the Society were living in his times. He mentions the Gondhali, Mahar, Garudi, Vasudev, Bal Santosha, Kolhati, Murali, Vaghya, Joshi etc. and bring them before us by his lucid description in their own form and language.

The literature of Ek Nath is varied and it includes the Chatus Shloki Bhagwat (commentary in Marathi on the 10th Chapter of Bhagwat Puran and popularly known as Ek Nathi Bhagwat). Rukmini Swayanvar, Bharud poems (Padas) and Abhangas etc.

Ek Nath was the great devotee of Shrikrishna and has written on the many incidents of the childhood of Gopalkrishna. He has prepared a critical edition of Jnaneshwari and was the follower of Bhagwat sect i.e. The Varkari Sampradaya. Though his family

+ In Marathi Bahu Rudha i.e. most popular. It is the sort of poem describing particular social class with certain reference to his occupation or life.
deity (Kula Daivata) was "Renuka", he was worshipping the image of the God Vitthal* daily as one of his "Istha and Upasya Daivata".

Eknath entered the samadhi at Paithan in 1599. After Namdev he popularised the Krishna and Vitthal Bhakti in Maharashtra. His literature is greatly appreciated in learned tradition as well as by the populace.

Dasopant (1550 - 1615) was contemporary of Eknath and was a great poet. His writing has not become as popular as that of Eknath. He has written his commentary in Marathi on Bhagvadgita. It is known as Gitayogita (स्पृहा). The work contains 13,000 verses composed in book-Marathi.

Last of all the vaishnava great poets was Tukaram (1609 - 1649) a peasant who was a prolific singer and whose poems are known and sung with devotion almost in every house in Maharashtra. The Varkaris both men and women know of his poems by heart.

Besides the vaishnava poet saints there were other devotional writers and poets who did not take the Varkari vow or had not followed the Varkari Sampradaya but who wrote on the life of Shrikrishna, Ram etc. during the 17th and 18th century.

These devotional writers* and poets are known in the

* At Paithan the image of god Vitthal known as Vijay Vitthal that was worshipped by Eknath in his daily worship has been preserved in his house. His descendants still worship the image along with their family deity Renuka.
+ Dr. Watve K.N. : "Pandit Kavi" published by N.S. Kulkarni
  1st ed.Hm 1953.
Marathi literature) as the Scholar Poets (Pandit poets) of the Marathi language. They flourished during the 17th and 18th century. These writers and poets were generally learned Brahmins, who wrote on Bhagwat, Maha-Bharat and Ramayan and on Philosophy also. The prominent among them are as follows:

1) **Mukteshwar:**

Mukteshwar (1609 - 1660) was the grandson of Eknath. He translated Sanskrit epic of Maha Bharat into Marathi. Though he has written on the whole Maha Bharat in Marathi, his poems on the five Parvas are available. Mukteshwar has written his commentary on Bhagwad Gita known as 'Sampadya Tika' and there are other miscellaneous poems. He imitates the style of Eknath. But his poems abound in figures of speech especially. He depicts the life of people in his times and the social conditions. His poems are not easily understandable to common people. He is called the pioneer scholar (Pandit) poet.

2) **Vaman Pandit:** (1608 - 1695):

Vaman Pandit is another Pandit Poet. His famous work + is 'Yathartha Dampika' which is a very fine commentary on Gita in Marathi. It is, however, not read very widely.

+ He has also written other poems like 'Vanauda, Venusudha, Raakrida, Radha Vilas, Dwaraka Vijay, Mrittika Bhaksan, Ukhal Bandhan, Goras Haran, which are based on the life of Shrikrisna or incidents from the childhood and young age of Gopal Krishna. These poems are written in attractive style and show the great devotion of the poet to God Shrikrisna. Vaman Pandit is known for Figures of Speech.
3) **Sridhar** : (1678-1729) -

Sridhar was born in about 1678, at the village Nazare about 25 miles from Pandharapur. Sridhar has written the following books. Most of these are composed in Ovi metre.

1. Hari Vijay - The Life of Krishna.
2. Ram Vijay - The Life of Ram.
3. Pandava Pratap - The story of Maha Bharat.
4. Pandurang Mahatmya - The praise and greatness of Pandurang.
5. Pandhari Mahatmya - The importance of Kshetra Pandhari.

Sridhar is wellknown for lucid and simple language. His books were appreciated by the learned and they were popular among commoners. His books especially 'Hari Vijay', 'Ram Vijay' and 'Pandav Pratap' have been used in almost all the temples of Maharashtra by the Puraniks who tell the stories of God.

4) **Madhva Munishwar** (1678-1734):

Madhva Munishwar is mainly known for his devotional songs (Padas) narrating Ram and Krishna Bhakti. He was born at Nasik and his family deity was "Ramchandra". His description of certain incidents in the life of Ram are very graphic. He has

+ His father Brahmanand was the follower of "Ananda Sampradaya" (one of the four group of Vaishnava Sect, in Maharashtra) and entered Samadhi at Pandharapur.

++ Temple Town Pandharapur.
also written verses, padas, abhangam and artis. They were sung by some of Kirtankars and some are sung even today.

5) Amrit Raya (1698-1753):-

Amrit Raya was the disciple of Madhwa Munishwar. He has written his poems in a special type of Prosody called 'Katav'. He has written various poems on the incidents of the childhood of SriKrishna like Krishnalila, Sudam Charitra, Ras Krida etc. Amrit Raya also used to perform the Kirtan. His devotional songs (padas) were very popular in his days. The Kirtankars in the future period were and are using his poems and songs in their Kirtan.

6) Krishna Dayarnav : (1710-1760):-

Krishna Dayarnav is another famous poet who has written many poems on the life of ShriKrishna. The work is known as "Hari varada". He has written other poems also. He preaches Krishna Bhakti mainly.

7) Mahipati Taharabadkar (1715 - 1790)

Mahipati was born at the village Taharabad which is in the Nagar district. Mahipati wrote only about the saint poets, their lives and the supernatural powers manifested by them. He has written his books due to the inspiration from the Saint Tukaram which he got in his dream, it is said.

+ Commentary on 10th Skand of Bhagvat Puran.
The following books of Mahipati are famous:

1. Bhakt Vijay (The stories of devotees)
2. Katha Saramrit (The incidents from the life of the devotees).
3. Sant Lilamrit (The stories about supernatural powers of Saints).
4. Panduranga Mahatmya (The praise and greatness of the God Pandurang)
5. Katha Saramrit (Legends from the Puranas and the information about the religious observances that is "Vrat").

His books are not used by the Puraṇiks but they are extensively used by the Varkaris who perform the Kirtanas.

Mahipati was the follower of the Varkari Sect and performed the varis to Pandharpur throughout his life. This might have been one of the reasons why his books are popular among the Varkaris.

8) Moropant Parakar (1729-1795):

Moropant was a cholar (Pandit) Poet who continued the tradition of Mukteshwar and Vaman Pandit in the 18th century. He composed the whole of Mahabharat in Marathi and also done short renderings of Ramayana.

Moropant uses many Sanskrit words in his Marathi language and uses Figures of speech. His poems and Aryas were very popular and were used by many Kirtankars in their Kirtan.

+ 1. Arya Bharat
   3. 108 Ramayanas.
   5. Hari Vansa.
The work of the poet saints is in some ways comparable to that of the priests of centralised religions like Christianity and Mohammedanism. In both these religions the priest communicates religious thought and ethical content of the religion to the people. This is not the case in India, especially with regard to the temple priesthood which is entirely occupied in the ritual worship of the deity.

The communication of ethical and religious thought to the masses is done by the Saint poets, some of whom may not care about the ritual. The saint-poets also embodied the great literary tradition of their times.

The kind and scope of the cultural communication in Pandharpur is as follows:

I  Spread of a standard Marathi
II The spread of the advait philosophy
III The spread of vaishnava sampradaya
IV The toleration for the other God of the Hindu pantheon.
V The teaching of humanity and the entrance of scheduled caste people into Pandharpur temple.
VI Attempts of social reform by Gadge Maharaj and others.
VII Entry of the various orthodox heads of Maths into the Pandharpur temple which was held to be polluted by the entry of untouchables.
Some of the great pilgrim centres in India have patronage of some ruling houses. The Jagannath temple in Orissa, the Padmanabha temple in Travancore and the Amba temple at Kolhapur, can be cited as examples. The (historical) temples at Kanchi and Madurai have also been associated with ruling families. Pandharpur had never any kingly house associated with it. Many kings might have visited the temple or helped to restore it. But there never was royal patronage attributed to the Pandharpur temple. It started apparently as a folk temple and has remained so all through the century.

Vitthal temple has been always the temple of the common man, as we have seen Vithoba is not the family deity of the majority of the Marathi people. It certainly neither was the family deity of the Rajas of Kolhapur and Satara and of the Maratha chieftain nor that of the Peshwas of Poona. All great people at one time or the other did go to Pandharpur but it never had the patronage of a ruling house. The old Vitthal temple was repaired and enlarged (Jirnoddhar) during 1273-1277 A.D. and we have in this inscription the names of people and their places who subscribed for reconstruction. Most of these people were common people, but among them one of the name mentioned is that of Ramchandradeva - the Yadav king of Maharashtra. This exemplifies the position held by Vitthal temple from 12th

+ For ex. Saint-Poet Ramdas and Tukaram.

++ Family deity of the Rajas of Satara and Kolhapur is Bhavani, mother Goddess, while that of the Peshwas was Ganapati.
century up-to-date. The kings and queens and chiefs have come and paid their respects to the deity - but the deity never became an exclusively royal possession. The people who respected this deity in medieval period had all come from the various castes and communities.

This characteristic of Vitthal temple has been emphasised in modern period. Its function as the rallying point for Marathi people has been strengthened during the post-Maratha period* by the establishment of the Palkhi procession and its phenomenal growth in recent years.

The modern saintly people who have gathered round Pandharpur also belong to all castes. Its character as the temple of the people has been strengthened since 1948; in this year a Brahmin leader not belonging to the powerful Brahmin families of Poona or Bombay but respected and loved by thousands of people in rural and semi rural areas, undertook a fast (satyagrah) unto death in Pandharpur in order to bring about the temple entry for the untouchables. His influence in Maharashtra was so great all the leading journals took up the cause and the Bombay Govt. intervened to prevent the death of this man Shri Sane Guruji and put pressure on the trustees of the temple. As a result Vitthal temple was opened for the untouchables. Since this time, some of the more orthodox priests and Maharaj of the various Maths avoided going into the temple and carried on Bhajan and Kirtan in their own Maths. The public disapproval

* Again a period of foreign rule.
of this attitude has, however, gradually laid many of these orthodox people to give up their attitude and they are visiting the temple as they used to do. But a small diehard section* is still clinging to its non-participation in the temple worship. The work done by Sane Guruji was further carried out by the Sarvodaya leader Shri. Vinobaji Bhave who succeeded in taking Christians and Muslims into the temple in May 1958 at the time of "Sarvodaya Sammelan" held at Pandharpur. This, however, has no significance in the eyes of the Vaishnavas who gather at Pandharpur.

Again Vitthal temple has received far greater notice at the hands of modern journalists than any other temple in Maharashtra. Apart from the leaders journalists in Maharashtra were also favourable to Harijan entry* into the temple. They were criticizing the trustees and managers of the temple at the time of Satyagrah of Sri Sane Guruji. It was held in October 1947.

* This section is known at Pandharpur as Sanatani people. Pandit Bhagwansastri Dharurkar holds the leadership of this section.

* According to the past tradition of Hindu religion, the people of the low castes among Hindus like the "Chambhars", "Mahars", Mangs, Vadars, Bhangis, Lonarils, Pardhis and other were prohibited from entering the temple and taking "Darshan" of the God Vitthal and other deities. Social reformers and leaders like Mahatma Gandhi did not like the treatment given to these untouchables whom Gandhiji called "Harijans". Due to the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar and other leaders, the untouchables were given some political and social rights and concessions but their entry in the temple was strongly objected to. When the Chief Minister of the Bombay State Mr. B.G. Kher visited Pandharpur (in July 1938) and went to take the "Darshan" of the God Vithoba he expressed his keen desire that the "Harijans" should be allowed to take Darshan of the God. Later on the Central Govt. passed legislation allowing all sections of the Hindu castes' entry into the public temples and the agitation of temple entry was finally put an end to.
In recent years a number of younger writers and poets have written against the stone gods. The influence of these writers is not however widespread. Pandharpur has lost its position as a centre of Marathi language and culture. The new literature and the press belonged to the cities in Maharashtra. But in the heart of Marathi people Pandharpur the city and the deity Vitthal the God of Pandharpur hold a place of a reverence. At least today in Maharashtra there is not a political leader who will visit Pandharpur and not going in the temple. The gesture not only reveals the humility before God but also symbolizes the Marathiness of the leader. This was well illustrated of the visits to Pandharpur temple by Shri Y.B.Chavan, Sri C.D.Deshmukh and Sri V.P.Naik and others.

In last 4 years again there have been quite substantial discussion in the newspapers about the management of the Pandharpur temple e.g. unbecoming behaviour of many priests who harass the devotees for money, presents, and the practice by which better-off people get Darshan by payment to the trustees and Managers on days when there are great crowds at Pandharpur. All newspapers advocate that Pandharpur shrine should be open to all devotees; for all the time and that the priests should not extract and harass the devotees and if possible the temple should either partly or wholly be administered by the State Govt. There is actually a Bill in preparation to this effect and is being considered by the Charity Commissioner and the Advocate General of Maharashtra State. The Bill, however, has not been published yet.

A Verbatim translation of the editorial published by Poona Daily paper 'Tarun Bharat' (published in the issue of 15th December 1964)†

"The Panchayat Samiti of Karad has recently passed a resolution to the following effect. The management of the Vithoba Temple at Pandharpur should be taken away from the Trustees and should be taken by the Government; in its own charge. The Badwe give a humiliating treatment to the common people and extract money from public which is highly detestable.

We congratulate the Panchayat Samiti (of Karad) for placing this delicate question about the Pandharpur Temple before the public in this manner. All those of the countless people who have performed the ordeal of going to Pandharpur and of taking Darshan of the Lord of Pandharpur or those who were compelled to return from Pandharpur with a sad heart because they were unable to take a proper Darshan of the God, will be thankful to the Karad Panchayat Samiti, for giving vent to their injured feelings in this manner.

The Vithoba of Pandharpur is regarded as the family deity (Kula:Daivata) of the people of Maharashtra. Thousands of people, not only from Maharashtra but from other parts of India, flock to Pandharpur with utmost devotion in order to have a sight of this fair looking; cloud coloured image standing on the brick with his hands kept on the waist. Lacs of people gather together in Pandharpur during Ashadhi and Kartiki fairs and the Maghi and Chaitri fairs; which fetch thousands of pilgrims to Pandharpur. But

† The author is grateful to the editor for this translation.
what is the reaction of these countless devotees going to Pandharpur every year? Some might be grumbling, some might be giving vent to their feeling or some might be enduring all these hardships with faith and might be keeping mum; but everybody wishes in his heart of hearts that the present state of affairs in Pandharpur and in the management of the temple must improve. The extraction of money by the mediators - the Priests in the 'Darshan' of God must be put to a stop to. Their faith and devotion must receive due respect, and the God of the poor people of Maharashtra must be made available to the common people.

Why do people express these wishes? In this respect we clearly think that 'Money' has become the real God at Pandharpur and that Vithoba has become a sure means of amassing wealth of these greedy people. All the paths and by-paths that lead to the innermost sanctum of Vitthal Mandir are quite open by day or by night to the person who pays (rather who is able to pay) and the man (who has not even a farthing with him) has to remain satisfied by taking a Darshan of the 'Kalas- the topmost portion of the Shikhar, from a long distance. After waiting for hours together in the 'Waiting hall (Darshan Mandap) specially built for the visiting devotees and after standing in the long queue when he gets his turn to take 'Darshan' of the God Vithoba (by His grace); Somebody from the Badwas catches his neck, and smashes his head over the feet of the image of the God. Then some other Badwe pushes him forward by catching hold of his neck, the devotee does not even get the opportunity of having a look at the image of the God Vithoba for a moment or two to satisfy his yearning eyes; - This is the daily experience of a common man (who visits the Vitthal temple).

Today money and undue influence have got such a prominence in the temple of the God at Pandharpur, that the feeling of the devotees are greatly hurt and it is needless to describe the effect of these happenings. It is only sufficient to mention that in the name of God, extrication of money, force and malpractice are playing
a terrible havoc in Pandarpur. Everybody will agree to the fact that this state of affairs must be improved. The public and the Government must come to mutual understanding about the measures to be taken for the improvement of these affairs. Today all the management of the temple is in the hands of the trustees (the word of the Badwas is final there) and everything goes on there as per orders of the Badwas. Is it not possible for the Government to make such a management here as is prevalent in other famous and foremost temples in India? Are there any insurmountable difficulties in making such legal provisions for the same? Is it not possible to make urgent improvements with regard to the Darshan, Pujas and Upchars of the God - the Daxina to be placed before God and with regard to the Police Bandobast?

Time has now definitely come to consider all these things in a proper perspective. There is police Bandobast at the time of big fairs at Pandarpur. It is quite possible that Government may state that the 'Charity Commissioner' is paying due attention to the problems of this temple. But it is needless to state what kind of Police Bandobast is kept at Pandarpur at least to those who are in the know of it. Even at the time of the big fairs, the temple is in charge of the Badwas, at night and the doors of the temple are not opened without money. As a matter of fact, even reserving one hour for the daily Puja and Upchars why should not the Public be allowed to take Darshan at such times for the remaining 23 hours? Why should restrictions not be placed on the Badwas, about the number of Maha Pujas and Padya Pujas to be performed in a day and on the delay they cause for the Darshan of the Public?

Why should not any prompt arrangements receiving the 'Daxina' to be taken for the various kinds of Pujas and Upchars to be performed to the deity be made? The practice of auctioning the day's income to the highest bidder among the Badwas, that is prevalent among the
Badwas of Pandharpur exhorts the highest bidder to make limitless use of coercive methods and malpractices. Not only this but it is said that even the Police constables who wish to be appointed to the duty in the temple take part in the bids held for such a purpose. It is not proper for us to mention all the incidents that are heard to take place in Pandharpur in the name of the God and under the patronage of the God day by day. But today the Vithoba of Pandharpur has become a captive of the Badwas and we can only say that the events that are taking place there are a blot to humanity. Just as the question of putting a stop to the improper conduct, to the greediness of these commission agents standing in the door of temple, in the holy and sacred town of Pandharpur is very urgent, so also it is quite necessary to consider the question of providing other proper facilities to the pilgrims coming over to Pandharpur.

Really it is the primary duty of the Pandharpur Municipality and the Government of Maharashtra, to consider the various questions as to how the roads should be prepared, as to how the lodging arrangements are to be provided for the pilgrims and as to what planning is to be made for the development of trade and commerce etc. at Pandharpur, where lacs of pilgrims go every year. At present there are very small and narrow roads round about the Viththal temple; and during fair days, the vast congregation of people cannot easily pass by these roads. The schemes about the expansion of the roads are planned often, but nothing seems to have been done actually. The Pandharpur Municipality has recently made an increase in the pilgrim tax. According to the information that is available to us, the net income received from the pilgrim tax in 1963 by the Pandharpur Municipality amounted to about 3 lacs of rupees. What part of the income thus received annually is utilised for the purposes of road widening and town development? What plan for the development of the town of Pandharpur is prepared and published for general information? What arrangements are made by the Railway Ministry in order that pilgrims may go to Pandharpur and return from there, very quickly and easily and without undergoing any hardships?

As soon as the mention of both Pandharpur and the Railway
is made, one shudders and feels very much worried. Every year, about
two and half lacs of people make use of the Railway while coming to
Pandarpur on account of different pilgrimages. Out of these a major-
ity of people, who are our brothers are coming from the rural area.
How do they travel? Somebody should go to a station like Kurduwadi
at the time of the Ashadhi fair and have a look at the state of
affairs. It appears that the Railway authorities are not in any way
cognisant of the fact that the people going to Pandarpur are even
men. These persons are crammed into luggage wagons just as deadstock
is piled up in the wagons of the goods trains. Nobody is going to
take care about their worries and troubles that they have to under-
go. Nobody can tell for how many days they will have to wait on the
stations. The railway department which poses to be a secular one -
and which gave abundant facilities of special trains and concessions
to the representatives of one international Christian Conference
(held recently in Bombay) does not keep its eyes open to look to
the hardships of the pilgrims in our country; coming over to Pan-
darpur daily. The Railway Department is not in a mood to treat
them as human beings. From time since long, every year, the pilgri-
mage at Pandarpur are being held; men are going and returning but
the Railway Department does not deem it proper to prepare any good
plan and make any special arrangement for these pilgrimages.
while going on foot and after coming in Pandharpur, they have to suffer too much trouble in having a Darshan of God Vithoba, but unmindful of either of these difficulties the pilgrims rush at the feet of the God Vithoba. We express our highest regards to the heavenly faith of these pilgrims who are following the great and age-long tradition.

But is it not the duty of the Society (which professes itself to be developed and cultured) and the Government (administrators) to make some arrangements for these devotees? The Panchayat Samiti of Karad has reminded us about that duty and accordingly, we have tried a bit to direct the attention of the Government of Maharashtra; of the Railway Department and of the Pandharpur Municipality to this important subject. We think that Pandharpur is the centre of Maharashtra, for the making great efforts for liberal and all pervading social unity. All the tissues of tradition for which Maharashtra should be proud of, are centred round Pandharpur, and this city of Pandharpur should not become the centre of coercion; malpractices and unlimited lust for money. There should be such an atmosphere in Pandharpur which should give peace and happiness to the minds of the devotees who are pure and pious, sacred and solemn. Instead of having a setback to faith, their faith should develop at Pandharpur. There should be no difference between the rich and the peniless. All the differences should be forgotten there in the temple of Shree Vithoba and one should have and experience of equality which is quite necessary there.

The faith for their own religion (which has remained intact after facing violent attacks of the foreigners) should be developed and strengthened there. It is in these directions, that there should be change in the management of the Vithoba temple and it is our earnest desire that there should be reform of Pandharpur also instantly."
Verbatim translation of the article by Shri A.V. Fatil, Editor of Newspaper "Vishal Sahyadri" of Poona.

"Pandharisai Ja Re Alya No Sansara
Dinacha Soyara Pandurang"

(Saint-poet Tukaram)

"Oh Man Visit Pandharpur once in life.
Pandurang – the Benefactor of the oppressed is waiting for you there."

As soon as the word Pandhari is uttered, that cloudlike image of Shree Pandurang and the bank of the river Bhima come before our eyes. The benefactor of the poor standing on the brick and His beloved wife Rukmini come before our mind's eye. The Congregation of Saints like Namdeo and other Saints namely Janabai Chokha and Sawata Mali; Damaji and Dnyaneshwar, Shnath and Tukaram, passes slowly from our eyesight. We can see the Dindis and the flags (Patakas) on the bank of the Chandrabhaga and the sound of the "TALA AND MRIDANGA" resounds in our ears. We can realise faith and devotion of those devoted pilgrims – Varkaris who utter and repeat: -

"JAY JAY VITHHAL, SHREE HARI VITHHAL"

(May the God Viththal flourish.)

And seeing that handsome and cloudlike image of Vithoba we also think that we should place our head on His feet. Tukobarai, has described the importance of Pandhari and has laid so much stress on the devotion of Viththal, that a person like me who has entered the Sholapur District area
cannot go forward without paying a visit to Pandharpur. Even though I have to go rather aside, still I prefer that, and I obtain mental peace and happiness after observing my Vitthal to my heart's content.

Discontent about my Faith:— Tukobarai says in his Abhang—
The greatness of Pandharpur is such that we cannot find any other place which is as great as Pandharpur. Here we can have audience with the God very easily. There is no other place where we can get such a facility and concession. Tukaram says that this Pandharpur is the residence of God Vishnu(Vaikuntha) on this very earth. Is there any man who does not wish to see this Bhu-Vaikunth? The devotees of this temple— which follow the Bhagwat Dharm— (the foundations of which were laid down by the Saint Jnaneshwar and the pinnacle of which was placed by Tukaram) visit this sacred town of Pandharpur, once in a year. But other devotees who are not directly the followers of the Bhakti Sampradaya and who stay hundreds of miles away from Pandharpur also go to Pandharpur in spite of the inconveniences and hardships, they have to undergo during the journey, and also absolve themselves from the sin by taking the Darshan of the Lord of Pandharpur. Tukaram Maharaj says that the holy waters of Chandrabhaga destroy the greatest of sins and all kinds of pleasure and happiness that one is able to enjoy in the Vaikuntha have descended upon this town on earth (one is able to get everything here at Pandharpur— which one aspires to enjoy in Vaikuntha). Tukaram Maharaj
further exhorts everybody to pay a visit to Pandharpur and once in his life because here Pandurang the benefactor of the oppressed is standing and waiting eagerly to meet devotees. Hence during the last week when I went to Sholapur from Barsi I decided to go to Indapur via Pandharpur and I directed my car to Pandharpur from Mohol. Knowing my eagerness for the Darshan of God Vithoba and seeing my devotion for the deity, my friends laughed at it in their heart of hearts. The faith which I showed in the latter half of the 20th century, was not so much liked by them. One of them said, "Even though we are in Pandharpur, we generally do not go everyday to the temple.

The handsome cloud like Image of the God :- As soon as I entered the town of Pandharpur, I turned my car towards the temple and taking Darshan of the steps of Namdev I entered the temple. I washed my hands and feet on the tap which was in the temple precincts and holding a flower garland in my hand, I stood in the queue of the devotees wishing to take Darshan. I was sure that I would enter in the Garbhagriha of the deity within half an hour. Those being the summer days the person of the God was bedecked with sandal paste (to make it cool). In the evening there seemed a greater crowd than is seen on ordinary days. I looked at my watch. I wanted to continue my further journey after taking Darshan. Shri Prabhakar Lad our correspondent in Pandharpur understood my difficulty. Meanwhile, a Budwe with whom Shri Lad was acquainted, called Sri Lad aside and whispered to him something. He told him
something. He told him that the hereditary priests like the Badwas, can carry their Yajmans (devotees) for Darshan directly in the Choukhambi Mandap, without being compelled to stand in the queue and gladly admit me inside for Darshan at once and without any delay. My mind did not deem it proper. I did not like the use of private influence in the temple. I did not think it proper that I should be a party in promoting that private influence. Shri Prabhakarpant and another gentleman Mama who had come with me satisfied themselves by taking Darshan from a distance, but I myself followed the Badwe and went near the image in the Garbhagriha. A very near attractive and beautiful sandelpaste was applied to the person of the deity Shri Pandurang. The image of the God appeared more attractive. The devotees were placing their hands on the feet of the person of the God with devotion and faith.

Demand of money by coercion: The Badwas and other Sewadharsi were demanding money from the persons who had come from different places. They were loudly asking for money. Sometimes they were becoming angry with them. They were even quarreling among themselves for the money. I felt very uneasy to look at the sight. I placed the garland at the feet of Shri Pandurang, one of the priest placed a coconut in my hand as prasad and brought me outside. He naturally expected that I should place something before the God. But as I thought the whole atmosphere to be so dejected that I took out my hand which I had placed in my pocket (to
take out some money) and came out of the Garbhagrih in great haste, meanwhile a sentry on duty stopped me and demanded money from me. One Utpat from the Rukmini temple also coerced me for money. I was so eager to come out of the temple, that I could not wait there even for a moment further. Because near different deities ministrant was compelling me to take Dakshina and to place it at the feet of the image and if I did not give money, he was becoming angry with me. While I was taking a holy round outside the temple, every where I saw uncleanness and unhealthy atmosphere. I was not able to enjoy, even for a moment, an atmosphere which would refresh and elevate my mind and make it happy. I came out of the temple and went straight to the house of Shri Lad.

Shri Lad is a resident of Pandharpur. His own house is there. When this young Royist begins to speak about holy places and the atmosphere prevailing there, even though his narration is true, still a devotee like me feels it unpleasant. My feelings are more or less hurt. However, when I try to verify his statement in the context of the atmosphere pervading in the big holy places like Pandharpur, Nasik etc. I realise the truth of them and I begin to ask myself the question as to why and how does this happen?

Why is there no arrangement like Tirupati?

There is much truth in the complaints about the temple of Pandharpur. It is quite necessary that they must be
properly dealt with and removed. Pandharpur is the greatest centre (University) of Devotion. But there instead of devotion we see tricks used and instead of faith, we see fickleness just as Pandharpur is famous on account of Pandurang, it is notorious on account of its multifarious intrigues and plots. Men and women taking advantage of the orphanage and villains like Bandu Kaulgi belong to Pandharpur. There are many here who instead of cleaning the routes of the saints are engaged in following the ways of the cunning and the rascals. We doubt very much whether Pandharpurians are observing proper sanctity in the Vithoba Temple when we look at the surroundings of the temple, we feel. What do the houses, the streets and lanes and by lanes show?

When we have a look at the melancholy state of affairs at the seat of the famous deity of Maharashtra, we feel very much sorry and dejected. Then we are reminded of the Tirupati temple towards the South; of the church of St. Francis in Goa, of the Golden temple at Amritsar, of the Jumma Masjid at Delhi. The churches and Masjids are so much clean, delighting, attractive and enlightening (elevating) the mind. The atmosphere there is so much different and peculiar; there is no hubub and noise, no quick movement, no extrication of money and no deceit. One may come, take Darshan of the deity and if one is inclined he may put some daxina in the great basin placed in front of the deity. From the income of the Devasthan, educational and so many other institutions are
being run - That Devasthan had itself become a state and everything is going on in a disciplined and proper manner. Why should we not be able to have the same state of affairs in our Vithoba temple at Pandharpur. Is not the Government empowered to do anything in this matter? Why should this temple be not turned into a religious public charitable trust after making proper provision for the income of Badvas and Utpats? Such a thought inevitably comes in the mind.

Why should we go to Pandharpur?

Some provisions have been made since long, for the puja and upchars of the God and for the maintenance and sanitary arrangement (cleanliness of) in the temple. But instead of properly using them it appears that they are misused; some temples have been given grants (in the form of lands etc.) (Inam). But instead of applying the income of the Inams for the use of the deities and the temples, the ministers (Pujaris) and other hereditary priests are appropriating the same for themselves. The selfishness of these people is becoming detrimental to the spiritual tendency of the devotees. Hence it has become necessary for the Governments to pay attention to these matters. When we look at the auctions made of the Gods and of the temples, and then at the various tricks and deceit perpetrated by the auctioneers, our mind is pained to see insult (humiliation) of religion and religiosity.

If the religious feelings centred round the Vithoba of Pandharpur are not properly respected and then it has become
quite necessary for the Government to transfer the management of that temple to the Charity Commissioner. As lacs of pilgrims and devotees are visiting this temple (during the twelve months of the year) throughout the year, it is not just and proper to neglect these things. If a person like me says to an educated person, that he should pay a visit to Pandharpur at least once in life, because the benefactor of the oppressed is standing and waiting there, then he says, "Why should we go to Pandharpur? to count ill-treatment from the Badwas and to fall a victim to the epidemics and diseases as a result of dirt and uncleanness prevailing there? Instead, I prefer to perform Puja of the God at home and to bow him with great devotion. If such a tendency is fostered what is going to happen to Pandharpur after some days? This thought inevitably comes in mind. Taking these things in my mind, I left Pandharpur and reached Poona.

(CXC)

{This article was published in the weekly edition dated 23rd May 1965. Shri A.V. Patil had given his consent to this author for the translation. The author is grateful to him.}