CHAPTER IV

The Priests in relation to the God & the Devotees

In this chapter an attempt is being made to analyse the relationship between the priests and the God and the priests and the devotees. We have already described about the various types of priests and their duties in relation to the main temple in Pandharpur.

From the early 16th century onwards the present priesthood of the Vitthal temple was in existence. The way in which their watans are mentioned in the Watanzada docu- ment, we can surmise the existence of the same priesthood for at least a century or two before 1519. This surmise could be supported by another inscriptive evidence. An inscription apparently belonging to a smaller Vitthal temple before the bigger one was built mentions+ 7 types of main priests. This inscription is known as "Pandharpur Vitthal Devachā Shilalekh Śak 1111 i.e. 1189+. We may therefore safely surmise that the deity Vitthal with its present priesthood and the worship existed almost from the beginning of the period in which the poetry of the Vaishnav saints of Maharashtra began.


This inscription is variously dated as 12th century or 14th century.
As the paper of 1519 shows the Priesthood has been looked upon as a hereditary right with duty, responsibility and emolument attached to it. The inheritance of the various hereditary rights, duties etc. is governed strictly by the usual rights of inheritance to property and other hereditary offices; for example, Patilship in a village.

The Priest and the deity:— The term "Priest" used in the sociological literature represents one of the types of Religious Authority. The term priest is also used for a person who is authorized to preside over the celebration of traditional ceremonies.

In the Webarian sense, "Hinduism, however, is exclusive — like a sect." But in Hindu Religion the office of the priest is not the same as it is in Christianity. In Hindu Society the term priest is applied to certain ministrants or ritual functionaries. In India and particularly in Maharashtra many terms are in vogue for the persons who follow the occupation of priesthood or are related in one way or the other to the priestly duties and functions.


Unlike the Christian countries a person is not born in an all embarrassing religion with special ritual; what is called Hinduism is a loose conglomorate of different cults and Gods with a familial ritual needing different types of priests according to one's caste. Generally one inherits the family Gods but one always has the freedom to embrace any of the numerous cult prevalent in a region. One also can remain completely unattached to any cult and pay respects to one or more Gods.

The God Vithoba at Pandharpur is the cult God of a particular sect called the 'Varkari sect' i.e. belonging to worshippers of Vishnu or Vaishnavas. In the relationships of these people to the deity the hereditary priesthood plays almost no part. In this respect the priest is a formal intermediary between the God and the devotee.

The priesthood\(^+\) is rooted in and confined to the town and temple of Pandharpur. Many devotees have built\(^+\) temples for the God Vithoba all over Maharashtra. Each of these temples has its own compliment from one to several priests depending on the size of those temples. But the priests of those other Vithoba temples have no connection whatsoever with the Pandharpur priesthood. In this respect the Pandharpur

\[^+\text{In India priesthood differs from region to region and from castes to communities.}\]

Upadhye, Upadhyaya, Asheta-Upadhye, Tirth-Upadhye, Pujari, Purohit, Panda Maharaj, Acharya, Bhat, Bhatji, Badwe, Kul-Upadhye etc. are the terms applied for them.
priesthood is on par with the priests of other famous temples like Khandoba, Devi and Shiva in Maharashtra. As regards the Devi and Khandoba temples there are more than one equally famous temples for these deities e.g. the Bhavani of Tuljapur and Amba of Kolhapur, or the Renuka of Mahur. These can be deemed to be equally important. In the same way the Khandoba temples at Jejuri, at Pali and Bale are equally important. This is the case also with the three Shiva shrines namely Trymbakeshwar, Gurusneshwar and Bhimashankar. The priest of each of these temples is an independent body.

The priesthood of all temples including the older ones and newer ones owe their position to an appointment by some private individual who may have established or in some way owned the temple or by a government officer or by a Raja who may have built the temple. The caste of the priest depends on the type of temple and the nature of a deity. For Vitthal temple they are strictly Brahmins, for Devi, Shiva and Khandoba temples they may be brahmins or people belonging to non-brahmin communities.

This relationship between the priest and the deity is like that of a hereditary servant to his master. There is no inner "call" in the Weberian* sense for an individual to become a priest. Even if an individual has such call, he would not be allowed to become a priest. Also unlike a religion which has a central Church, the appointment to priesthood is not the

business of a central religious authority. Therefore the priesthood of each localised temple is independent of all other priesthoods. The organisation of a total priesthood of a temple is a matter for that priesthood, though when such a temple is "owned" by an individual - that individual may exercise such a function. All the different types of priests (the Badwas and Sewadharis) of the Vitthal temple, who are engaged in a specific activity with regard to the worship and attendance on the deity believe implicitly in the supernatural powers of the deity, but all of them worship other Gods chief among whom would be their own family Gods called "Kula Daivata" (described later).

In a polytheistic religion which is institutionalised here and there in India but not everywhere, all people worship many Gods and owe different kinds of allegiances to these Gods. The pattern of belief and worship changes from region to region because of historical causes. In Maharashtra most of the people believe in and pay respects to such Gods as:

A) Vaishnavite Gods : Vishnu, Ram, Krishna & Vitthal.
B) Śaivaite Gods : Shiva, Kartikeya, Ganesha.
C) Mother Goddess : Amba, Bhavani, Renuka, Ekvira, Maha-Laxmi, Kalubai, Janai, etc. & a host of folk Gods.
D) Other deities : Khandoba, Bhairoba or Biruba, Mhasoba, Rokdoba etc.

In most of the temples in Maharashtra the images of the above deities could be seen. At Pandharpur in main temple there are several subsidiary sacred icons, & in the town there are images of some saint-poets which have been established by the priests.
In the Dravidian South wars were fought between Vaishnavites and Saivaites and the worshippers of these deities are rivals of one another even today in religious, social, and political fields. One does not find these differences in Maharashtra. Almost everybody in Maharashtra observes the two Maha-Ekadashis in honour of Lord Vishnu, and the Mahashivratri in honour of Lord Shiva, 'Dasara' in honour of the Mother Goddess and sacred days in honour of the other Gods.

Among the Hindus the ritual in the family which includes daily worship of Gods at home and the worship of the God at shrines form two separate aspects of religious life.

In the worship by the family or by the individual, four types of deities can be recognised:

I) Kula Daivata
II) Upasya Daivata
III) Sthana Daivata
IV) Grama Daivata

I) The deities recognised in this category are supposed to be deities worshipped by any family for generations. Any member or a whole family worships -- certain God or Gods as 'Kula Devata (Daivata). The members of the whole family therefore regard particular God as their family God. This may be
one God, or God and his spouse. Their names appear on invitations issued for marriage or thread ceremony.

II) The second type of deity or deities which may be worshipped are those adopted specially by a person or a family. This is called "Upasya Daivata". This may coincide with the "Kula Daivata". On many occasions in the life of a family or individual in times of difficulties a particular God is supposed to have come to the help of the distressed - that God then becomes an "Upasya Daivata". This deity is also recognised as "Aradhya" or "Ishta" Daivata.

For example "Vijay Vitthal" was the "Upasya Daivata" of the Vijayanagar king - Krishnadevraya and Bhavani of Tuljapur was worshipped as "Upasya and also as "Aradhya Daivata" by the Maratha Kings. Lord Ram was "Upasya, Aradhya and Ishta Daivata" for the 17th century saint-poet Ramdas. Eknath - the famous Vaishnava saint-poet in the 16th century - used to worship "Renuka" or "Ram Varadayini" as his Aradhya Devata.

III) Every Hindu worships the deities which are supposed to be special deities of the town or of the village in which he lives. These are called "Sthan Daivata". This third type namely the "Sthan Daivata" is different from the last type the "Gram Daivata". It is situated at a particular sacred place (Sthan) on a bank of a holy river or on the confluence of two holy rivers or near a holy 'Tirth'. This place is regarded as sacred on account of some Mythological events.
IV) The last type namely the "Gram Daivata" are the deities which are located in the Gram (village or town) at which a person lives. Every Gram i.e. village or gaon in Maharashtra has got its own Daivata. The Daivata may be 'Shiva', 'Mother Goddess', Ganesh, Maruti, Bhairav or the deity in the form of 'Malhari-Martand' generally known as 'Khandoba' in Marathi.

This attitude towards God is also shared by the priesthood of Pandharpur. All of them have their own "Kula Daivata and Gram Daivata" and the priests take opportunities to visit other shrines in Maharashtra as also in India if they can.

The Kula Daivata (family deity) of the priests of the God Vitthal are different. They are given in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname of the priest's family</th>
<th>Name of the Kula Daivata</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Badwe</td>
<td>Ekvira (Mother Goddess)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewadharis:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Pujari</td>
<td>Bansankari (Mother Goddess)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Benari</td>
<td>Renuka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Paricharak</td>
<td>Bansankari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Dingre</td>
<td>Brahmadev, Ganesh, Narsimha, Maruti.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Haridas</td>
<td>Renuka (Mother Goddess)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Dange</td>
<td>Maruti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Diwate</td>
<td>Narsimha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It will be seen from the above table that each family of the temple priest worship their family deities; besides the daily worship of the God Vithoba. Because they are the priests of the God Vitthal they do not have more intimate contact towards other deities from religious point of view. Some of them are not even Vaishnavas in the sense of belonging to the sect. They are therefore hereditary and one presumes them as loyal servants of the God Vitthal. Apparently their main pre-occupation, however, is not only devotion to deities like devotees in general but the living, that they can make from such a service. As technicians in ritualism they try to get as much money and gifts from the pilgrims as they can.

The pilgrim is housed and fed by the temple priests. He is charged for that. He has to do certain rites before different shrines and on the bank of the river Chandrabhaga for which he has to pay his host priests as also the various other priests. In olden days it was thought that a pilgrimage (a Yatra) to such shrines would bring full merit only if one stayed there, for at least three nights*. Some pilgrims formerly stayed and even now stay for the four monsoon months (Chaturmas). These are the people who pay money to the priests. The people visiting the temple town are known

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* A "Sect" in the sociological sense of the word is an exclusive association of religious virtuous or of especially qualified religious persons, recruited through individual admission after establishment of qualification: This is Max Weber's interpretation.

* Purvaminasa –"Kapinjalat Aalabhet". Tirtha Samipya pratou vidhi. Dharmasindhu Tritiya Parabhadra Uttarartha.
by various names and may be grouped as follows: -

1) The newcomer devotees: People coming to Pandharpur for first time.
2) Varkari Devotees: People coming to Pandharpur once in the month or in the year.
3) Travellers: People coming to Pandharpur for visiting main temple.
4) Devotees on pilgrimage: Group of devotees coming with family members.

Out of the above five types the visitors of the first four types are also called Bhaktas, Yatrekars, Varkaris, Yajmans, Clients pilgrims etc. An estimate of the devotees and pilgrims visiting the temple town throughout the year is given below.

A) Four Great Fairs. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>No. of People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chaitri</td>
<td>(6 days)</td>
<td>1,00,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashadhi</td>
<td>(10 days)</td>
<td>3,00,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kartiki</td>
<td>(10 days)</td>
<td>2,50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maghi</td>
<td>(6 days)</td>
<td>75,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B) Monthly Fairs (Shuddha Ekadashis)
Eight Ekadashi days
Visitors 10000 for each Ekadashi - 10000 x 8 = 80,000

C) Monthly Fairs (Vadya Ekadashis)
Twelve Ekadashi Days
Visitors 10000 each Ekadashi - 5000 x 12 = 60,000

D) Other sacred and festival days in the year
36 days: 3000 visitors for each day: 3000x36 = 1,08,000

E) Remaining days in the year other than
A = 32 + B = 8 + C = 12 + D = 36 = 88
Per day visitors 5000 approx. 277 x 500 =

\[ \frac{1,38,500}{11,11,500} \]

We have seen that more than 11 lacs of people visit Pandharpur throughout the year. Out of these nearly 8 lacs of pilgrims come to the temple town for four great fairs or in the subsequent fortnights after the fair days in Chaitra (April), Ashadha (July), Kartik (November) and Magha (February).
The number of Varkaris who come to Vari on foot is about 2,00,000. The remaining pilgrims and devotees use transport e.g. the State Transport Buses, the Railway, Private Motor Cars, the Bullock carts Cycles etc. Naturally the person who decides to visit Pandharpur has to spend at least Rs.10/- minimum for the conveyance including two days meal which is to be taken during the journey. After reaching the temple town a devotee spends at least a day in Pandharpur, he resides either with the priest or in any Math or Dharmashala. Afterwards he pays visit to the riverside, takes bath and then visits the Vitthal temple. Then according to his convenience he goes round the Nagar Pradakshina road and pays his homage to Pariwar Devatas. Before leaving the town he purchases certain articles by way of Prasad and momento other articles which are needed by him. During his stay of one day an average devotee spends minimum Rs.3/-. If he has come to Pandharpur with any member of his family then this amount is exceeded. The pilgrims generally offer Dakshina to the Priests and they also spend something for the poor people. The minimum figure is Rs.1.25 np. Before leaving the town during fair days, every pilgrim has to buy the pilgrim tax ticket that is issued by the Municipality of Pandharpur. The charge of this ticket is 60 paise. This means one pilgrim or devotee spends at least Rs.5/- or more per head during his visit to Pandharpur. By expenditure of Rs.5/- per head during a person's stay of one day in Pandharpur we may say that nearly Rs.55,00,000 are spent in Pandharpur. Besides the amount spent by the 9,00,000 of pilgrims and devotees for the transport purposes come to Rs. 90,00,000 ( 10 x 9,00,000).

The table of the Monetary Transactions of the town merchants
an estimate for one calendar year is given herein. The figures were communicated by various merchants & were collected during field work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description of Trade</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Variations Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A)</td>
<td>Articles of Prasad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I)</td>
<td>Dale Churmure &amp; Mewa</td>
<td>50 n.</td>
<td>50-80 n.p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td></td>
<td>7,00,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II)</td>
<td>Pedha; Khadkut &amp; sweets</td>
<td>6-8 &quot;</td>
<td>6-12 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,00,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III)</td>
<td>Kumkum &amp; Bukka.</td>
<td>1-50 N. &quot;</td>
<td>2.50 to 6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to 4-00 &quot; &quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV)</td>
<td>Ashtagandha</td>
<td>Rs. 10/-</td>
<td>10-12 Rs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V)</td>
<td>Udbatti</td>
<td>Rs. 4-7/-</td>
<td>3-12 Rs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,00,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI)</td>
<td>Flowers and Garlands</td>
<td>25 np to 50 np</td>
<td>50 np to 10 ns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lot</td>
<td></td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| B)   | Religious Books                       | 25 np to 35/- | 10 np to 45 Rs. |
|      | per copy                              |        | 1,00,000        |

| C)   | Photo Frames and Pictures of Saints and God. | 50 np to 40/- | 25 np to 50 ns. |
|      |                                          |        | 1,00,000        |

| D)   | Musical Instruments                    | 8 to 15 Rs. | 10 Rs. to 10,000 |
|      | per article                            |        | 50 ns.           |

| E)   | Metal Pots: Copper                     | 15 Rs. per kilo | 14 Rs. to 16 |
|      | Brass                                  | 14 Rs. "        | 12 Rs. to 25,00,000 |
|      | Steel                                  | 40 Rs. "        | 39 Rs. to 46 |
|      | Aluminium                              | 9 Rs. "         | 8 Rs. to 12 |

| F)   | Bangles: Glass                         | Rs. 1 to 7 per set | 2 Rs. to 14 |
|      | Chuda                                  | Rs. 0.50 to 2 " " | 1 Rs. to 20,000 |

| G)   | Woollen Blankets (Handloom)            | Rs. 8 to 20 per | 10 Rs. to 15,00,000 |
|      |                                        |        | 30                     |

| H)   | Tobacco and Snuff                      | Rates are always fluctuating | 1,00,000 |

+ Messrs Dnyoba Mane, Daji Mangle, Lad, Gajanan Bhosale, D.T. Kokate, P.V. Godbole, D.B. Badwe, Suresh Utpat, P.V. Badwe, A.B. Kolhapure and others helped the author in collection of the above data and he is grateful to all of them.
The devotees and pilgrims who come to Pandharpur are called Yajmans. The members of the priests' organisation are always present at the railway and bus station. These representatives of the priests approach the pilgrims first and receive them. If the group of pilgrims is of newcomers to Pandharpur then the priests observe a professional technique.

In many cases secret auction is held and the highest bidder gets the privilege of hosting the group of pilgrims. The winner has to distribute 1/5 or 1/6 of the money of his bid to the other bidders. Through years certain preferences are seen for certain families for example pilgrims from Gujarat generally go to the Paricharaks, Pujaris and branch of Dingres, Marwadis i.e. the pilgrims from Rajasthan and pilgrims from Andhra and Tamilnad go to the Badwas. The Kannad people like the Marathi people seem to be devided among all the priests.

A way of securing clientele is to travel all over the country and keep relationships. All the temple priests the Badwas, Sewadharis and Utpats have a few families who undertake such travels (Firasti) after the October November fair some in February March they are out for a month or two. They take with them a brahmin cook and if possible an older member of their family. Sometimes the wife sometimes the young son who is being imitated in to the priesthood and the family goes. They go to certain bigger villages and towns and put up in a Dharamshala or in a house of their rich client.
All the clients are called Yajman and on behalf of these Yajmans the ritual in the town of Pandharpur as also in the temple is performed by the priests. The religious merit of these performances goes to the Yajman while the gifts given by a satisfied Yajman provide for the worldly well being and subsistence of the priests.

Here again the analogy between the Yajna performance and the modern worship in Hindu temple comes vividly to mind. This can be termed the Yajna performance transformed into a less esoteric and more folktumlish performance. While in the Yajna ritual offerings were made into fire to deities who were visually not represented in this case worship and offerings are made to a visual image. The image is given all the treatment due to the king. The God is the king of kings, and the devotees like to see him in his glory and liked to take part in giving him offerings with due ceremony. The utterances of the Saint poets bear witness to the feeling of glory, imparted by a glimpse of the image. One praises the crown, other the ear ornament, a third praises magnificent garlands put round the deity, fourth mentions the yellow silken garment worn by the deity. It is always the gracious king in his kingly glory standing there to give audience the complaints and do the favours. This feeling is enhanced by the multiplicity and solemnity of the many worships carried out by the multitude of the priests i.e. the servants of the God. The priests are technicians like the vedic "adhvarya" and must not fail in the proper ceremonials. Their function is to keep the deity always in the form in which the devotees
expect to see it; and to convey the humble offerings of
the devotees to the deity. They perform a formal but
a very necessary function. The God of the Vaishnavas is at
Pandharpur, standing eternally to grant audience and he must
be presented with his proper splendour. The priests never
hold religious discourses. It is not expected from them.
Unlike the priests in the church they have not become priests
because of a call. They are hereditary servants - just as
there is an analogy with the yagna ritual in their religious
handling. There is again the analogy of the hereditary ser-
vants with the hereditary privileges whom one finds in each
Indian village. "Pandaricha Rana" (The king of Pandharpur)
is almost like the Patil of Pandharpur.

The third analogy again is with the village admi-
nistration which is autonomous where all rights and privi-
leges and services go back to hoary tradition and which runs
by itself unless there are internal dispute where a higher
outside authority may step in. The Pandharpur priest-hood
is not subordinate to any other priesthood. In spite of all
its internal bickerings it has kept the daily ritual going,
it administers its own moneys and it caters to certain formal
needs of the devotees. It is thus on the religious plane a
picture of the same kind of self administering mostly
autonomous unit that an Indian village is and it has
translated the principals of Yajna ritual to an easily
understandable folk ritual.
Internal Organisation of the Temple Priests:

We have already seen that there are two independent organisations of priests in the Vitthal temple namely the Badwas, and Sewadharis, and separate Organisation of the priests at the Rukmini temple known as Utpats. Upto the end of 19th century the older members of these organisations were looking into their respective organisational affairs. But after 1896 due to the Bombay High Court's instruction the Badwas Committee was legally constituted. Subsequently, the Sewadhari and Utpat priests also constituted their independent committees. The titles of these three priestly organisations are as follows:

1) The Badwe Committee.
2) Samasta Sewadhari Committee
3) The Utpat Committee.

These committees elect their office bearers once in the year for administrative functions. The office bearers are held responsible for day to day ritual performances and regular administration of the temple routine. Therefore, they contest the election with great interest.

Election System:— Every member of the Priest's family of age who has completed 21 years is eligible for voting. The chief of the organisation issues a circular for a general meeting at the end of an administrative year. The beginning
days of a new year are different+ in these three organisations.

An agenda of the annual general meeting is circulated along with the notice of the annual meeting 8 days before the commencement of the new year. This agenda generally contains minimum of four items viz.

1) Administrative report of the previous year prepared by the outgoing office bearers is submitted.

2) An item for sanction of the budget for the current and the next year.

3) Report of the various sub-committees appointed by the Chairman or the General body, is placed.

4) Panel for the new election of the office bearers is suggested.

The Chairmans of the Badwe, Samast Sewadhari and Utpat Committees are held responsible for the day to day ritual and other administrative functions performed by the priests of their respective organisations. Every committee distributes the temple share of the members of their respective organisation according to routine.

For this every organisation has created sub-committees.

There are two sub-committees of the Badwe and Utpat Committee, while the Sewadhari committee transacts its business with the assistance of seven committees namely their seven constituent clas:

+ The Badwe Committee starts its year Chaitra Shuddha Pratipada, i.e. on the first day of Hindu new year, while the Samasta Sewadhari Committee treat Shravan Vadya Pratipada as its first day of the new year. The Samasta Utpat Committee begins its new year from Vaishakha Shuddha Pratipada.
Probable income of the Temple Priests -

(A) Badwas -

Among the three types of the temple priests the Badwas are the most important ones. They are associated with the temple since the 16th century and they are residing with their families in Pandharpur since that time. Originally they are the descendants of the four brothers according to a legend. The names of the four brothers were: (1) Tanaba (2) Timman (3) Shamraj (4) Malhar. In course of time every brother got his sons and grandsons and great grandsons and the number of their original four families increased to one hundred in the beginning of the 20th century. At present (1966) there are about families (Tanaba - 24, Timman - 28, Shamraj - 15 Malhar - 15).

The Badwa's income is of two kinds: (1) Collective income of all the Badwas and (2) the personal or individual income.

(1) In collective income there are two sources -
(a) The first money offerings received at the feet of the God Vitthal and (b) The income received in front of the "Pariwar Devatas" i.e. deities placed in the precinct of the temple and in the town.

The method of collecting the income received from the first money offering placed at the feet of the God:

The Badwa Committee appointed under the provisions of
the scheme prepared by the High Court of Bombay in 1896 holds auction everyday for the next day's income to be received at the feet of the God.

Each of the four sections or 'Takshims' of the Badwe gets a day in a month so that they follow one another in rotation and the sum bid for the right to the offerings in common gets to the section whose turn it is to officiate. Every night the Badwe committee puts to auction and sells the right to the next day's offerings. The right for collecting the next day's offerings is generally given to the highest bidder. The bid may vary from Rs.100/- to Rs.3000/- depending on the importance of the day according to Hindu Panchang or religious calendar.

Each month, the original four brothers' descendants get one day each to start with after four days are over. The first day belongs to Tanba's descendants; the second to Timman's; the third to Malhar and the fourth to Shamraj and this cycle goes on the whole year round. Thus 90 times a year (360 + 4 = 90) the descendants of each brother get the money offered before the God.

The highest bidder who gets the privilege of collecting the next day's income generally tries to collect more than what he has bid for. The bid goes to the highest bidder from any "Takshim". Whatever may be the bid amount, the bidder has to pay it immediately to the Badwe Committee. The Badwe Committee is bound to distribute the temple income (after
defraying the temple expenditure) among all the 80 families of the Badwe.

The Badwe member who has purchased the right of collecting the offerings and sitting by the right hand side of the deity is called as the "Devaskari Badwe" or the day-man. He has a right to collect the first money offerings that are placed at the feet of the God. These money offerings are known as the "Dakshina". The duties of the Devaskari Badwe are conventionally decided. He is the link between the Badwe Committee and the Sewadharis. He is to prepare the puja materials and bound to provide them to the pujari for the daily ritual of the temple. (The Badwe Committee holds him responsible for the ornaments given in possession of Pujari - which the Pujari puts on the person of the deity).

Collective income during the year -

The average yearly collective income (from the first money offerings received at the feet of the God) of the Badwe is Rs. 80,000/- (See the income of the temple).

The income received in front of the "Pariwar Devatas" i.e. deities placed in the precinct of the temple and in the town is about Rs. 20,000/-. The net collective income received by the whole body of the Badwe annually from all sources is about Rs.

Division of the collective income -

The amount of the collective income is divided into
four sections i.e. Takshims. For the distribution of the amount one rupee is regarded as a unit in every section and the amount is distributed as per share in one rupee. If in a group there are 20 families holding different shares then one rupee is divided into as many shares. A person holding a share of 12 pie (6 N.P.) in a rupee will therefore get a sum of Rs. 1250/- approximately.

But every Takshim has got different number of families and their shares vary according to the number of persons in the family. Therefore the share of each Badwe family is not the same.

(2) The Personal or individual income -

This income includes presents of money or things intended by the devotees for their own Badwa and solely appropriated by that Badwa. This income the Badwe receive for the services they render to the devotee i.e. Yajman.

This income is not ascertainable. Because the Badwe are not liable to keep accounts for their private income. The Badwe take the fees from the Yajman for the services they render to him. The amount varies according to the grade of service rendered and social and economic position of the Yajman.

The average amount the Yajman has to pay for the
of persons accompanying him while putting himself with the priest. For the performances of the pujas and upcharas in the temple i.e. ritual the Badwe priests take the fees according to the nature of ritual and expenses required. Besides these rituals the Badwe take the fee for the rituals performed in the Kshetra if desired by the Yajman.

The nature of rituals that are performed in the temple and in the town and the minimum expenses required for them can be understood from the table

(B) Sewadharis -

The next class of priests is the Sewadharis. They are sub-divided into seven groups namely: (1) Pujari (2) Benari (3) Paricharak (4) Dingre (5) Haridas (6) Dange and (7) Diwate.

The sewadharis also are associated with the temple of the God Vitthal since the 16th century. They are residing near the temple from that period.

The number of their families varied from time to time. At present there are about 127 families of all the Sewadharis. The number of families of each group of the Sewadharis is noted below:

(1) Pujari 8
(2) Benari 22
(3) Paricharak 24
(4) Dingre 22
(5) Haridas 48
(6) Bange 1
(7) Diwate 3

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The Sewadharis offer their services at the time of daily pujas and upcharas of the God but for these services they are not given special grants or salary. However, they are entitled to demand Dakshina from the devotees who come to see the pujas and upcharas.

The Sewadharis also offer their services at the time of the pujas and upcharas performed by the devotees and they demand Dakshina from them. For the pujas and upcharas performed by the Yajmans they get two kinds of income: (1) They get the Dakshina called as "Sambhavana" collectively for the services they offer to the God for the ritual of the Yajman. (2) They also get the Dakshina called as "Bhuyasi". This Dakshina is given gratis by the Yajman to seven Sewadharis individually.

Besides this cash income the Sewadharis sometimes get utensils required for their seva if the Yajman is so pleased to give them. (For example silver pot to Pujari).

The collective income of Sambhavana received by the Sewadharis annually for pujas and upcharas of the Yajmans come to about Rs. 9000/- and is divided into six shares by
the seven Sewadharis. Dange and Diwate get one share in common and the remaining five Sewadharis get one share each. Every group gets collectively an income of about Rs.400 - 425/- every year from the pujas and upcharas of the Yajman.

As the income of the Dakshina called Dhuyasi is received individually by each Sewadhari hence no definite amount can be ascertained.

For the daily pujas and upcharas of the God each of the Sewadhari group sends its representative. The person doing the duty gets the income. The method of sending a representative for the daily services of the God varies with each group as detailed hereafter.

Pujari - There are eight families of the pujaris. Each family gets days according to their share. The representative of the said family who is entitled to the day's income is present in the temple from the first ritual performed in the early morning to the last ritual at night. He sits to the right hand side of the God and performs his duties - for which he gets the "Ovalani" (second money offering placed before the God by the person who comes to take the Darshan of the God). He also gets the "Ovalani" at the time of the pujas and upcharas performed by the Yajmans. The daily income of the pujari depends upon the importance of the day. (The pujarás do not auction the day's income like the Badwes).

The average monthly income of the pujari is about
Rs. 1000/- During festival and fair month. They get additional income. Therefore the average annual income of the pujaris collectively comes to about Rs. 18000/- to 20000/-

**Benari** - There are 22 families of the Benaris. They hold auction among themselves for the right to attend at the daily pujas and upcharas and to attend at the Yajman's pujas and upcharas, performed in the temple throughout the year.

The Benaris give the auction to the highest bidder and the highest bidder or his representative remains present in the temple, does his duty and take the "Dakshina".

The income thus received annually comes to about Rs. 5,000/- to Rs. 6,000/-. This income is divided into 22 families according to their respective shares.

**Paricharak** - There are 21 families of the Paricharak. They hold auction among themselves for the right to attend at the daily pujas and upcharas and to attend at the Yajman's pujas and upcharas performed in the temple like the Benaris.

The average annual collective income received by the Paricharakas is Rs. 2,500/- to Rs. 3,000/-. This income is divided into 24 families according to their respective shares.

**Dingres** - There are 22 families of the Dingres. They
hold auction among themselves for the right to attend at the
daily pujas and upcharas and to attend at the Yajman's pujas
and upcharas performed in the temple like the Benaris.

The average annual collective income received by the
Dingres is about Rs. 1200 to 1500. This income is distributed
among four groups of the entire Dingre families.

Haridas - There are 48 families of the Haridas. They
hold auction among themselves for the right to attend at the
temple for their services at the daily and Yajman's pujas and
upcharas performed in the temple like the Benaris. The average
annual collective income received by the Haridas is about
Rs. 1200 to 1500, and is divided among 48 families.

Dange - There is only one family of the Dange. There-
fore the question of auction or dividing the income does not
arise. The Dange attend the temple from early morning till
midnight and does his duty and receives the income. The Dange
gets Rs. 1200 to 1500/- annually.

Diwate - There are two families of the Diwates. They
do their services in the temple by rotation and take the
income. The average annual income of the Diwates is about
Rs. 1200 to 1500.

(C) Utpats -
The Utpats are the priests of the Goddess Rukmini. They
are associated with the Rukmini temple since the 16th century and they are residing in Pandharpur from that period.

There are four divisions among the Utpats and the number of their families at present is 71. The number of families of each division is as follows:

1) Khedkar ... 33
2) Barabhai ... 17
3) Damu Anna ... 12
4) Undegaonkar ... 9

All the three types of priests were maintaining themselves on the part of the income they got from the temple due to the hereditary priestly position.

Besides the temple income all the three groups owned lands and houses. The devotees who used to come to Pandharpur gave them some lands. Out of the income of which they were to provide for the Naivedya to the God Vitthal and Goddess Rukmini. They also received yearly cash-grants for doing some services to the God.

At present the temple priests are maintaining themselves partly on the income they receive from the temple and partly by doing other business as they could not maintain themselves solely on the temple income.
The income received from the temple by each type of temple priests is estimated on the auctions each group makes among itself. The auctions they hold of the income (they received) being strictly private no authentic accounts are available for verification of the figures.

The amount of the income of the various types of priests is therefore based on estimation and information received orally from the various priests.

The income of the Utpats:

The Utpats are the chief priests, trustees and managers of the Rukmini temple. They manage the temple and take the surplus income after defraying the expenses of the pujas and Upcharas and administrative expenses of the Rukmini temple. There is no corresponding priesthood like the Sewadharis in the Rukmini temple.

The Utpats auction among themselves the right to take monthly income received before Rukmini and give the auction to the highest bidder like the Badwas. Sometimes the auction for weekly income is also held. There are 71 families of the Utpats. They are divided into four groups. They distribute the income among themselves according to their respective shares. The average monthly income of the offerings received in the Rukmini temple is Rs. 2000 and the annual income comes to Rs. 24000/-. In addition to this income on the festival and fair days more income is received. This additional income comes to about Rs. 6000/-. Thus the total annual income comes to about Rs. 30000/-. The average monthly expenditure of this temple is about Rs. 1000/- per month. The average annual expenditure is Rs. 12000/-. Thus the Utpats collectively receive the net income of Rs. 18000 for distribution among themselves.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Name of the priests</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupa-Region from which they resided</th>
<th>Total Nos. of persons they had resided during the week</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Narayan Dattatraya Badwe</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Badwe</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>Badwe</td>
<td>Marathwada 5 Dists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nanded, Parmbani, Latur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vishwanath Gopal Badwe</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Badwe</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>Badwe</td>
<td>Hyderabad, Andhra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pandurang Ramchandra Badwe</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Badwe</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>Badwe</td>
<td>Karnataka, Kolhapur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dattatraya Balwant Badwe</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Badwe</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>Badwe</td>
<td>Nasik, Nagar, Bombay, Poona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gopal Raghunath Badwe</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Badwe</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Badwe</td>
<td>Maharashtra, Bid, Osmanabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dattatraya Bhimaji Benari</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Sowadhari</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>Sowadhari</td>
<td>Southern Maharashtra, &amp; Marathwada</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Jaganath Gangaram Pujari</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Nagpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Narayan Narhar Dingre</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Konkan, Goa, Ghat, Poona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Narhar Sitaram Dingre</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Konkan, Gujrat.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Vithal Keshav Dingre</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Satara, Sangli.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Trimbak Digambar Hari Das</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Western Maharashtra</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Dattatraya Vishwanath Paricharak</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Southern Maharashtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sakharam Vithal Paricharak</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sakharam Ramchandra Divate</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Digambar Gangaram Dange</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. No.</td>
<td>Name of Priest</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Services to</td>
<td>Asha-Extra accommodation</td>
<td>Income necessary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>N.D. Badwe</td>
<td>Solely dependent on temple income</td>
<td>Boarding partly, Lodging &amp; Darshan</td>
<td>More than for 500 people</td>
<td>Rs. 1500/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>V.G. Badwe</td>
<td>90% temple, 10% Agriculture</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>More than for 300 people</td>
<td>Rs. 800/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>P.R. Badwe</td>
<td>Solely dependent on temple income</td>
<td>Lodging and Darshan</td>
<td>Rs. 400/-</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>D.B. Badwe</td>
<td>75% dependent on temple income, 25% rent and other investment.</td>
<td>All facilities &amp; Darshan</td>
<td>More than About 200</td>
<td>Rs. 1400/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>G.R. Badwe</td>
<td>Solely dependent on temple income</td>
<td>Only Lodging, Few Boarding &amp; Darshan</td>
<td>More than About 100 people</td>
<td>Rs. 400/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>D.B. Benar</td>
<td>30% on temple income</td>
<td>Lodging; Few Boarding, Few Darshan</td>
<td>More than About 50</td>
<td>Rs. 500/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>J.G. Pujari</td>
<td>90% on temple income</td>
<td>All Lodging; Few Boarding and Darshan</td>
<td>More than About 50</td>
<td>Rs. 400/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>M.N. Dingre</td>
<td>90% on temple income</td>
<td>All Lodging; Few Boarding and Darshan</td>
<td>More than About 100</td>
<td>Rs. 500/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>N.S. Dingre</td>
<td>40% on temple income</td>
<td>All Lodging; No Boarding, and Few Darshan</td>
<td>About nil</td>
<td>Rs. 200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>V.K. Dingre</td>
<td>10% on temple income</td>
<td>Limited Lodging, No Boarding &amp; No Darshan</td>
<td>About Nil</td>
<td>Rs. 150/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>T.D. Haridas</td>
<td>10% on temple income</td>
<td>Limited Lodging, Few Darshan</td>
<td>About</td>
<td>About 50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>D.V. Paricharak</td>
<td>10% on temple income</td>
<td>All Lodging, Few Darshan</td>
<td>About</td>
<td>About 25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>S.V. Paricharak</td>
<td>30% on temple income</td>
<td>All Lodging, Few Darshan</td>
<td>About</td>
<td>About 25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>S.R. Diwate</td>
<td>90% on temple income</td>
<td>All Lodging, Few Boarding, Few Darshan</td>
<td>More than About 50</td>
<td>Rs. 400/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>D.G. Dange</td>
<td>80% on temple income</td>
<td>All Lodging, Few Boarding, Few Darshan</td>
<td>More than About 50</td>
<td>Rs. 400/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Type of Property owned by the Temple Priests:

We have already seen that there are in all 290 families of the temple priests, of three types - (A) Badwas - 92, (B) Sewadharis - 127, and (C) Utpats - 71 = 290. Nearly 160 families of all these priests are, however, still dependent on the income of their traditional priestly profession. Out of the 130 remaining families 70 families are partly dependent on the temple income and 60 families maintain themselves on other occupations.

Until the end of 19th century all the temple priests were in possession of nearly 600 houses (including big Vadas) in Pandharpur. Besides this many priests owned their landed properties e.g. shops, plots and farms. But due the changing circumstances and increase of members in their families the priests find it difficult to maintain themselves on the income derived from the sources of their landed properties. Naturally many priests have therefore sold their spare houses, plots and farms in the last 50 years. Some of them have invested these amounts while others have paid off their debts. It is the author's guess that, this landed property has been converted by them into valuable ornaments of Gold and Diamond as well as into silver utensils etc. Because these utensils are essential for the temple services. The temple priests accept and offer the gifts of gold and silver at the time of the thread, marriage and other ceremony. Besides this most of the temple priests and their children wear a gold chain or a ring. This is a common fashion among all the temple priests. They also preserve the silken garments for their use on sacred days.
Other sources of livelihood of the temple priests:

In former times the temple priests were getting money for the meals they provide to their Yajmans. The Yajmans also asked the priests to prepare and offer 'Naivedya' to the God and also fed brahmins. For this 'Naivedya' and feeding of the brahmins the temple priests got big amounts from the Yajmans. Some Yajmans gifted away some lands to the priests and out of the income of the lands concerned the priests were to provide Naivedya to the God daily. Like lands they also used to give annual cash-grants* for offering the Naivedya to the God throughout the year.

But this practice is nearly abandoned now by most of the devotees. As the great number of devotees began to reside in the Maths and Dharmashelas for the last 60 years, the income from them and from other sources decreased. Therefore the temple priests are now compelled to follow other occupations for maintaining their families. Some priests accepted public or private services and some have opened shops, some follow agricultural profession.

In former times the temple priests followed the professions of Puranik and Kirtankar but their descendants could not maintain the scholarship and these occupations are now abandoned by a majority of temple priests.

Out of 280 families of temple priests about 10 to 15 priests can perform Kirtan and narrate Puran. The number of Sastris and Pandits among them is also negligible now.

The majority of the priests only performs their respective duties in the temple and act as the "Ashetropadhya" of the Yajmans who come to reside with them from generation to generation. They act as watchful masters of the temple.

* Scindias and Holker and other Maratha nobleman used to donate such grants to the temple priests.
The Position of the Various families of the Temple Priests: Education and Occupational Background.

Since the last two decades there is a shift in the traditional view of the occupation of priesthood in Pandharpur. The younger generation of the priestly class is taking modern education. The data collected for this work shows that of the 290 families nearly 1/4th of the adult male members of the Badwas, Sewadharis, Utpats are not following their traditional calling. They are settled all over Maharashtra and some of them are in the Central State Government Services. Following are some of the details in this connection.

Amongst the temple priests Badwas were and are still the richest class. It appears that majority of them (80 out of 92) prefer to stick to their traditional profession of Badweship. Only two members from the one branch of Badwas are in the Central Government service. The other 12 members from the remaining branches are double graduates. Of these six are teachers in the Secondary Schools in Pandharpur; and others are employed elsewhere. Nearly 25 are just matriculates and remaining (more than 50) are all non-matrics. Two Badwas were the municipal councillors of the local municipality.

As for the Pujaris, who are the sole ritual performers of the deity, they still maintain themselves on their meagre income. Two members of only one family from this group are
professionals; one is a medical practitioner and the other is a lawyer. Two are graduates and other four families have their own lands.

The Benari priests, maintain their role of hymnist in the temple and act act as Kulopadhyes of the Pujaris, Dingres and Diwates. Out of their 22 families 15 adult members (age group 25 to 39) are out of their ancestral role and are following different professions. One is conducting a hospital and three are in the Government service. Two have their own business and remaining are employed elsewhere.

As a contrast with the Pujaris, out of the 48 families of the Haridasas only three or four families are maintaining themselves on the temple income and most of the other families are professionals like Engineers, Police Officers, Judges, Lawyers, Teachers, newspaper correspondents and agents etc.

Out of the 22 families of Dingres only four families are performing their traditional roles. 15 families have their own income from land and the remaining Dingres have their landed properties. Two members of the Dingres are in the State Government service, while 8 persons are retired from their active life and are above 60. Of the four Taxims of Dingres 4 members from the two Taxims have completed their education upto the Post-graduate level.
The Bange and the Biwate priests follow their traditional professions and one family of Biwate conducts one restaurant. The only family of the Banges maintain itself on the temple income and possess some landed property.

Among all above mentioned families the Paricharaks priests stand distinctly. Few families of this class have taken great interest in social and political activities in Pandharpur. Two members of one family were elected as municipal councillors for a number of years and one member was the President of Pandharpur Municipal Council for a period of six years.

The priests of the Rukmini temple namely the Utpats are also the dominant class of the temple priests. Some of them are richer than the sewadhari, and some are equally rich like some of the Badwas. Out of their 71 families more than 1/4th members of all the families have migrated outside the temple town in last 20 years. They are in all professions. There are three lawyers, 10 have obtained their graduations. One is a newspaper editor and 25 are employed in the town. Nearly 1/3 families are still dependent on the sole income of their priestly profession.
Besides the priesthood of Vitthal and Rukmini temples there is a minor priesthood of many small temples of different vaishnava saints in Pandharpur. These, however, are not as important as third type of the hereditary priests. In this third type there are the non-brahmin kolis who are attached to Pundalik shrine and other Shiva temples of Pandharpur. They possess hereditary rights to carry pilgrims to Vishnupad shrine and to the smaller shrines across the river. The Pundalik shrine is on the same side to the Vitthal temple but near the river course and the Kolis have the right to worship at the Pundalik shrine and also to take whatever is offered at this shrine. We have already seen that they are also the hereditary priests attendants of the Mallikarjun and other few Shiva shrines in Pandharpur.

The second type of priests in this category are not attached to any temple. They are called the "Kshetropadhya" : Priests belonging to the kshetra i.e. a sacred place. As already mentioned a number of pilgrims stay in Pandharpur at least three days and perform different types of ritual. Besides these there is a rush of pilgrims for the great fairs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the temple saint &amp; its temple</th>
<th>Caste of the priests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Chokhamela image</td>
<td>Mahar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Namdev</td>
<td>Shimp(Tailor community)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Sona Nhavi</td>
<td>Barbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Vallabacharyya</td>
<td>Gujarati brahmin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Sawata Mali</td>
<td>Malis caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Swami Narayan Sect.</td>
<td>Deshastha brahmin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These pilgrims need board and lodging. The Badwas, Sewadharis and the other temple priests work also as Kshetropadhye. But their number was not enough to provide the above mentioned facilities to all the pilgrims. So Pandharpur attracted many brahmin families to work as hosts of and get ritual performed by the devotees. The oldest of such Kshetropadhyes bear the following family names:

Tathe, Thite and Aradhys. These names occur in the Watanzada of 1519. They are also mentioned as Patils of Pandharpur. At some later time the Aradhye also got a portion of a Patil Watan. Because of this watan all these three families are called Patil at Pandharpur.

After these three families other brahmin families also came to Pandharpur in the 17th, 18th and 19th century. Tathe, Thite and Aradhye belong to the Deshastha Rgvedi sub-caste of Marathi brahmins. The other family names are as follows:

(1) Aradhye (2) Ruplag (3) Tare (4) Terkar (5) Dole
(6) Kange (7) Gandale (8) Telang (9) Wangikar (10) Khiste
(11) Pimpalnerkar (12) Manjul (13) Sangolkar (14) Kavade
(15) Watane (16) Barsode (17) Gurjar (18) Turiwale (19)
Dandavate (20) Paithankar (21) Puntambekar (22) Supskar
Tapkire (28) Nasikkar (29) Navlakhe (30) Adsul (31)Kasegaonkar

Patilship is a symbol of status in Maharashtra and number of Badwas also put the word Patil after their surname "Badwe". But they have no functions of Patilship.
(32) Ambike (33) Durugkar (34) Bidkar (35) Pitake (36) Virdhe and (37) Deodhar etc.

All these families came to Pandharpur in course of time and settled in the town. These families also began to help the devotees in the ritual of the Kshetra and became the "Kshetropadhyes".

Among them are Deshastha Shukla Yajurvedi i.e. Kanya and Madhyandin. There are also Chitpavans belonging to the Apastambhha branch of Krishna Yajurvedi. The Chitpavans are the latest comers and came with Khasgivale (Limaye), the administrators appointed by the Peshwas.

All these priests i.e. barring the Kolis but including the temple priests and the Kshetropadhyes have always kept a record of the people who have lodged and boarded with them. Some of the oldest records go back to the early 17th century. The record is called "Lekha".

The record of the priests (Nature and expansion) -

In former times when devotees used to come to Pandharpur for pilgrimage they preferred generally to reside with either the temple priest or town priest. Because there was no other provision for residence like Dharmashalas or lodging and boarding houses. They also used to take their meals in the houses of these priests. Through these priests they used to perform their temple worship and religious rites in
Pandharpur. Before returning to their own places the priests used to request them to write down in the record books kept by them the following information:

(1) Full name of the head of the family and names of other family members and their relationship with each other.

(2) Age, occupation, residential address.

(3) The names of persons who visited Pandharpur along with them and the day, month and year according to Hindu calendar.

(4) The details about the religious performances (kshetra vidhi and puja) performed by them through the priests.

(5) Acknowledgement from the Yajman (who resided with them) that his descendants and successors would continue to recognise them as their Upadhye and would perform all the religious rites in Pandharpur through them.

If the Yajman could write, the priests induced them to write down the above information which is called "Lekha" in their own handwriting and to put his signature under the "Lekha". Otherwise the priest used to write it and took the signatures or thumb impressions of the Yajman under it.

These "Lekhas" were taken in the record book district-wise, so that the priests could readily find them out whenever necessary.
In course of time it so happened that the sons, grandsons, relatives of the Yajman (who came earlier) came to reside in the houses of the very priest at the desire or instance of their fathers etc.

The priest also took down their lekhas below the lekhas of their family members who came earlier. In this way the priest's record expanded.

This record is written and signed by the pilgrim itself or it is written by the priest and signed by the pilgrim or the thumb impression of one pilgrim is put if he is illiterate. These records are sometimes produced and accepted as evidence in the Law Courts.

There is a tacit understanding among the priests that if a pilgrim's forefathers had put up with one family of priests that family had the right to host the particular pilgrim. This convention is jealously guarded on the days other than the great fairs - where the enormous number of people coming in makes it impossible to make such enquiries also all those pilgrims come for staying in the town for a day or two only and they are not interested in visiting other shrines or in the performance of usual kshetra ritual.

People come to Pandharapur as occasional pilgrim and gets assigned to the temple of particular priest. A few
thousand (approximately 4-5 thousands) pilgrims come to Pandharpur to stay for four months between June-July to October-November. During these four months they stay in the family of a priest, visit the sacred places in Pandharpur, go everyday to the Vitthal temple, listen to Harikirtan, and to religious discourses called Pravachan. During this stay or at the end of their stay they may feed brahmins and perform pujas at the Vithoba temple when a pilgrim either alone or in group come to Pandharpur they are surrounded by the local priests. If the pilgrim’s ancestors had been to a priest’s family before he goes to that priest. If on the other hand he or the whole group is a new comer then there is great tussle as regards which priestly family should have it.

The importance of the Priest’s record –

The priest’s record is important in many ways.

When the priests show these records to the descendants of the Yajman who had resided in their houses the descendants naturally recognise them as their own Upadhyay. The link between the priest’s family and Yajman’s family continues and the sacred relationship is strengthened.

Some of the descendants get the opportunity to see the handwriting and signatures of their forefathers, which could not be available elsewhere.
Some of the descendants are able to know the names of their ancestors and other family members and the time of their visit to Pandharpur.

Most of the temple priests have such record from 18th century onwards. This record is vast. The lekhas of the Yajman and other particulars filled by them are the sources of the family history of the devotees and Yajmans.

The record of the priests is a guiding and useful factor of their priestly profession.

The social position of the temple priests in Pandharpur -

When Marathas and Peshwas were ruling over Maharashtra, the people were in the habit of visiting sacred places. Pandharpur being regarded as 'Dakshin Kashi' and central place of the Bhakti cult pilgrims and devotees were coming in great numbers to Pandharpur. They came not only during the fairs but even throughout the year and performed worship and pujas of the God. Naturally they needed the help of the temple priests and consequently the temple priests were respected by them highly.

The priests acted as guide of the pilgrims in performing worship of the God, easily and satisfactorily. Being pleased with the services of these priests the pilgrims, devotees and Yajmans gave them much in cash and kind. Consequently the temple priests built houses, purchased lands and
their social status was raised. This position continued for about two centuries and a half, i.e. from 1650 to 1900.

But afterwards in some communities there grew a tendency to have their own places of residence or Dharmashalas and they began to collect funds and build residential houses and dharmashalas of their own.

Simultaneously with this the leaders and traditional heads of the Varkari Sampradaya who were annually coming to the fairs and bring their Palkhis and Dindis with them found it necessary to have permanent places of residence in Pandharpur. They acquired open plots, built over them buildings called Maths. Their followers began to reside in these Maths during fairs. Some religious heads designated as Maharaj or Buva began to reside in these maths during the Chaturmas period along with their followers. These followers began to take the help of the temple priest for the puja and darshan of the God only.

Owing to the new construction of the Maths and Dharma- shalas the temple priests, viz. the Badwas, Sewadharis and Utpats found it impossible, the maintenance of their families on the sole occupation of priesthood. Some of the rich clients of the temple priests induced them for selling their spare vadas and landed property to them. These circumstances were responsible in dwindling down the economic and social position of the temple priests.
The priests also failed to get proper education and did not rise to the occasion in behaving with the devotees. Instead of using persuasive methods to attract more devotees as their clients they began to harass them and tried to extricate money by using harsh language and coercive methods.

Many devotees therefore did not give the same respect and honour to these priests as was given to them by their forefathers.

The ideas about public charity also changed in course of time. Instead of giving Dakshina to individuals the people thought it better to give donations to public and charitable institutions which were going social and educational service and which were looking after the needs of the poor and the oppressed people and the sick in society. Therefore the personal income of the temple priests decreased. Because the middle generation of the priests failed to do some sort of social service during 1940 - 1960 they are not getting the same honour and respect from the devotees as they used to get in former times.
The Vaishnavites- The Varkari devotees of the deity Vitthal:-

The word Vari means frequent visits to particular place. Jnāneshwar the famous Vaishnav saint-poet has used this word+. The word Varkari is derived from Vari-kari that means who visits a place. But this word later got a limited meaning. The person who visits Pandharpur once in a month or once in a year, for paying his homages to the deity Vitthal is called the Varkari. We have already seen that people were coming to Pandharpur since the 13th century which is definitely ascertained by epigraphic and inscrip-

tional evidence.++ The organisation of the Varkari Sampradaya: From the 13th century to the 18th century this sub sect of the Vaishnavas developed into four groups. These four groups with four diffe-


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sampradaya:</th>
<th>Mantra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A) Chaitanya</td>
<td>Om namo Bhagvate Vasudevāy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Swarup</td>
<td>Sri Ram Jay Ram Jay Jay Ram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C) Anand</td>
<td>Sri Ram Ram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) Prakash</td>
<td>Om namo Narayan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Varkaris have to observe a certain rituals as laid down by the tradition of Varkari sect. The aim of Pandharpur pilgrimage is to obtain some merit (Punya or Apurva). The Varkaris during

+ i) Kaya vachā mane jīve sarvaswe udar/Bap Rakhuma Devivar Vitthalacā Varikar / Jnanadeva Maharaj Abhang.

ii) Mhanoni kam vairi, नमो जलाजेठ वालारी, Tetha sarali vari, Krodhachi hi.(Jnaneshwari XVIII 1061)

++ Hettbalil Inscription 1248. The Ekadashi is the Hari Din. The day of Hari. Ekadashi Vargi is the verbatim translation of Haridin Vargi.
their stay in Pandharpur observe the following routine.

He takes his bath in the river Chandrabhaga and then goes for Nagarpradakshina+ (holy round in the town for taking the Darshan of the different deities) after visiting the temple of Pundalik and the main shrine of the God Vithoba.

He reads a portion of some holy scripture like Jñaneshwari, Hari Path, Gathas etc.

The Varkaris are a sub sect of the Vaishnavas which was apparently founded sometime before the 12th century. A man who wishes to belong to the Varkari sect must do the following things.

1) Be initiated by a Guru of that sect.
2) As mark of that initiation he wears a necklace of 108 beads made from the wood of Tulsi.++
3) He must never part from his necklace.
4) He must fast twice a month on the Holi day of each month.
5) He must go to Pandharpur at least once a year. Some varkaris go every month. This is the Haridinvari referred

++ This complex has importance in the Varkari sect. Its route is already described in Chapter I.
significantly as Haridin vritti in the Hebbalil Inscription. A repeated travel is called Vari in Marathi.

6) He must carry an orange colour banner as the sign of Vaishnavism on all these travels to Pandharpur.

7) He must read daily certain sacred books - utter the mantra (formula) sacred to his particular group and taught by his Guru.

During the four months and the two months that follow, there are pilgrims who stay at the houses of different priests. The priests have to provide food for their clients as also prepare rich food for the various feasts given to Brahmin, etc. During this season about 100 elderly women mostly widows come to seek job as cooks in Pandharpur. Such a job at Pandharpur is coveted by certain types of women because they earn money, and it is for the definite small period they can also maintain themselves by the money they earn. While doing these jobs they have the satisfaction of being in a sacred place paying visit to Vitthal Temple and listening to religious discourses. This type of employment is not found in other Taluka towns.

All important familial rituals like thread ceremony and marriage are banned during Chaturmas. These are the months for different types of fasts and austerities and listening to religious discourses and taking part in bhajan etc. The devotees stay at Pandharpur during these four months to participate in these religious activities, and they are described in the 5th chapter.
### Pandharpur: Fair Tax: Information Table - 1950-51 to 1965-66.
(Tax @ 50 Paise per head from 1950-51 to July 1965)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>No. of tax payers</th>
<th>Total amount</th>
<th>No. of tax exempted</th>
<th>Collection Rs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April to March</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>85 days</td>
<td>5,38,922</td>
<td>2,69,461</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>79 &quot;</td>
<td>5,47,052</td>
<td>2,73,541</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952-53</td>
<td>79 &quot;</td>
<td>4,26,802</td>
<td>2,13,401</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953-54</td>
<td>85 &quot;</td>
<td>4,55,907</td>
<td>2,27,953</td>
<td>28,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954-55</td>
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<td>4,02,772</td>
<td>2,01,386</td>
<td>24,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>100 &quot;</td>
<td>4,52,596</td>
<td>2,26,128</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>79 &quot;</td>
<td>4,40,210</td>
<td>2,23,105</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>79 &quot;</td>
<td>4,30,480</td>
<td>2,15,240</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-59</td>
<td>100 &quot;</td>
<td>4,90,678</td>
<td>2,45,339</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>79 &quot;</td>
<td>5,24,352</td>
<td>2,61,176</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>79 &quot;</td>
<td>5,51,649</td>
<td>2,73,324</td>
<td>29,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-62</td>
<td>100 &quot;</td>
<td>6,49,637</td>
<td>3,24,818</td>
<td>37,664</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>79 &quot;</td>
<td>4,57,816</td>
<td>2,28,948</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>85 &quot;</td>
<td>4,67,554</td>
<td>2,33,777</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>100 &quot;</td>
<td>6,49,490</td>
<td>3,50,165</td>
<td>32,947</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>79 &quot;</td>
<td>4,68,203</td>
<td>2,80,921</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Pandharpur Municipal Record: (Data collected during 1964-65 at Pandharpur)

**Note:**
A) From November 1965 onwards the Pandharpur Municipality has increased 10 paise per head and the price of Fair Tax ticket is 60 paise since then.

B) The exempted people include Sanyasins, Sectarian heads of the different Maths; the citizens of the town - those leaving the town area during fair days and the dumb: deaf and lames.


The duration for tax collection is 21 days to 25 days for Ashadhi and Kartiki fairs, 12 to 16 day for Maghi and for Adhiki 20 days - which is held after every three years.