Chapter No. 1

Introduction

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Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The Indian culture is known to be a fatalist culture the world over in the sense that there is a no. of deities which are worshipped in our culture. The basis of the Indian Hindu culture is the temples of various deities of the Hindus. After the Independence, the need for bringing about development of Hindu temples was felt. In India, the no. of temples is more in the states of Kerala & Maharashtra. Since Kerala is the only completely literate state, it seems that the temples in Kerala have developed properly, but in their comparison, the temples in Maharashtra State don’t seem to have developed to that extent. In Maharashtra, we have reputed (huge) temples at Shri Saibaba temple at Shirdi, Shri Vitthal Rukmini Temple at Pandharpur, Shri Tuljabhavani Temple at Tuljapur, ShriSant Gajanan Maharaj Temple at Shegaon & other such temples. Before the Independence, the management of temples was completely at the disposal of local priests. Taking into consideration the various factors such as the growing numbers of devotees, increasing incomes of temples & the rivalry produced among the locals, the Govt. of Maharashtra established temple trusts, in order to look after the management & run the administration of each temple. Presently, the administration of all major temples in Maharashtra is carried out by the temple trusts. In order to exert control over the functioning of the temple trusts, the govt. has appointed officers from Revenue Dept., as representatives of the govt. In order to run the administration and management of Shri Saibaba Temple Trust, the Govt. of Maharashtra has passed the act, namely Shri. Saibaba Trust Management Act, 2004.

In India, theoretically, a temple is managed by a temple board committee that administers its finances, management and events. However since independence, the autonomy of individual Hindu religious denominations to manage their own affairs with respect to temples of their own denomination has been severely eroded. State governments of many states in India have gradually increased their control over all Hindu temples. Over decades, by enacting various laws which have been fought both successfully and unsuccessfully up to the Supreme Court of India, politicians of the ruling parties especially in the southern states control every aspect of temple management and functioning.
1.1.1 Preface of Management:

One of the most important activities in any organization is the management of the 4M’s – Men, Machine, Material and Money. The term management can be interpreted differently in different contexts. Hence, it is difficult to define. In one context, it may comprise the activities of executives and administrative personnel in an organization, while in another, it may refer to a system of getting things done. In a broad perspective, management can be considered as the proper utilization of people and other resources in an organization to accomplish desired objectives. With increasing global competition, changes in the world of technology, changing business practices and increasing social responsibility of organizations, the role of management has become all the more significant.

Definitions of Management:

The term management can be interpreted in a variety of ways. To gain a better insight into the nature of management, let us look at some of the definitions of management.

Harold Koontz and Heinz Weihrich defines “Management as the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individual, working together in groups, efficiently accomplish selected aims.”

Louis E. Boone and David L. Kuntaz defines “Management as the use of people and other resources to accomplish objectives.”

Dalton E. McFarland defines “Management as a process by which managers create, direct, maintain and operate purposive organizations through systematic, coordinated, cooperative human effort.

1.1.2 Functions of Management:

The functions of management provide a useful framework for organizing management knowledge under the various heads of Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Leading and Controlling. Managerial functions are effective tools for managers to achieve the organizations planned objectives. They include general administration duties that need to be carried out in virtually all type of organization.
1) Planning:

Planning can be defined as the process, by which management decide the mission and objectives of the firm and take necessary steps to achieve the desired objectives. At the same time, managers need to determine the future trends in business and incorporate change and innovation into the organization from time to time. There are various types of plans and they may range from planning to define the overall purposes and objectives of an organization to planning for a specific action. Planning helps a firm decide its future course of action.

2) Organizing:

Organizing is the process of assigning tasks and allocating resources to individual to enable them to accomplish organizational goals. Organizing is a continuous process of determining (1) which tasks are to be performed, (2) how tasks can best be combined into specific jobs, (3) how jobs can be grouped into various units and (4) the authority and reporting relationships within the corporate hierarchy. The organizational structure of a organization is a key element in determining its success or failure. If plans are not organized properly even the best of plans can fail. On the other hand, the pitfalls associated with a poor plan can be eliminated by excellent organization.
3) **Staffing:**

Today, staffing is better known as human resource management and involves manning or filling the various positions in the organizational hierarchy. Activities like determining manpower requirement, assessing the number of people presently available in the organization, recruiting and selecting candidates, training and placing them in the organization come under the purview of staffing. This function also deals with compensation, performance appraisal, promotion and career planning.

4) **Leading:**

Leading is defined as the management function of influencing, motivating and directing people towards the achievement of organizational goals. It is the management function that involves influencing and insuring team members to perform well and accomplish corporate objectives. Leading involves (1) communicating with others (2) leadership styles and approaches and (3) motivating people to put forth the effort required to achieve organizational goals. In simple words, it is the act of making thing happens through others.

5) **Controlling:**

The final step in the management process is to monitor the progress of an organization towards its goals. Controlling can be defined as the continuous measurement and analysis of actual operations against the established industry standard developed during the planning process and corrections of deviations, if any. The control process involves (1) comparing performance with standards, (2) determining where negative deviations occur and (3) developing remedial measures to correct deviations.

1.2 **Difference between Temple Management and Business Management:**

Our purpose in this study is not just to provide ‘better governance’ to temples but to also run it with a vision, responsibility and accountability. In one sentence, “to be able to run temples in an efficient manner”. Indeed, it is easier said than done. Temple is not like a factory that uses finance from investors and manufacturers a
product with labourers, machines and raw materials. In the case of a factory, its efficiency is well defined and can be easily measured using just a calculator. It is not the case with a temple, its production is not tangible and its value is immeasurable. But, on the other hand, even if we cannot compute the numbers, we have to certainly define, even in descriptive terms, what intangible service or produce a temple provides to the community. We have to know it clearly. If not, how else would we be able to steer the temple? If we do not know the direction and not know the path, we cannot decide how to run it, much less how to run it efficiently and impossible to measure success at running it efficiently.

At macro-level, an ideal temple is that which acts as a throbbing community-centre that is freely open to every single members of community without any bias, where one worships the resident deity, prays to God, receives spiritual, intellectual and moral guidance and meets other members with he or she celebrates common festivals, feasts and gets volunteering opportunity to help temple itself or those in community who are in need. Community also receives protection, shelter and solace in the times of crisis and all possible help during natural or manmade calamities.

So, if one asks, what does a temple produce? What is its output? We know that it cannot be quantified as a figure on a calculator. That is why, the easy answer, “to run temples in an efficient manner” needs more elaboration and a methodical approach.

India has rich culture and historical heritage well preserved in its temple architecture and pilgrim sites. There are several famous India temples and if you were to go anywhere in India you will find a few of them. A temple is considered to be sacrosanct place and people of all religious are welcomed into its pristine and peaceful surroundings. The temple depicts to people the growth of religion throughout the country and it spread. There are several extremely rich and major temples in Maharashtra and some of them are listed below:

In the present research work, office administration & financial management of the above – said temple trusts has been undertaken. Brief information about the temple trusts chosen for research work is as follows –
1.3 Major Temples in Maharashtra:

Following is the major temples in Maharashtra state.

1.3.1 Shirdi Saibaba Temple, Shirdi (Maharashtra)

Shirdi, a small village in Kopargam Taluka, in Ahmadnagar, Maharashtra is regarded to be an important pilgrimage place in India as sage Saibaba lived here till his death. It is about 285 km, which is 6 hours’ drive from Mumbai.

After his death, Saibaba’s fame has spread far and wide. Saibaba believed and respected all religions. Samadhi Temple was started during the lifetime of Saibaba, with a view to having a temple of Sri Krishna. But later, Saibaba himself decided to live there. So, after Saibaba attained Nirvana (eternal peace), His mortal remains were buried at the place. The articles and valuables, which were used by the Baba, are exhibited in a room here.

_Dwarkamayee_ Masjid is the place where Baba lived for almost for 60 years. There is also a place called _Chavadi_ where Saibaba used to visit every alternate night. _Gurusthan_ is the place where Saibaba used to sit under a neem (Margo) tree. It is said that the leaves of this tree lost their bitterness with to the grace of Saibaba. _Samadhis_ of Baba's devotees like Abdul Baba, _Nanavalli_, _BhauMaharaj_ and _Tatya_ are also there in Shirdi. There are also interesting and holy places related to Saibaba.

Nearest important railway station is at Kopergaon, trains of major cities are available. The Shirdi Shri Saibaba Temple Trust provides boarding and lodging facilities but since large numbers of devotees throng the place, especially on Thursdays, one can find it difficult to get accommodation. But there are good hotels, which cater to the needs of all classes of devotees.

1.3.2 Siddhivinayak Temple (Mumbai)

Siddhivinayak Temple is in Mumbai, Maharashtra. Siddhivinayak Lord Ganesh is worshipped in the temple. The temple dates back to 18th Century.

The present form of the temple was re-constructed five years ago. The temple has a Kalash, which is a pointed dome of 12 feet high Gabhara (sanctum sanctorum) weighing 1500 kg and plated in gold. So, it facilitates the 'Darshan’ of Sri Siddhivinayak from either the area surrounding the Gabhara or the stage (_Sabha Mandap_) constructed to conduct pujas and festivities.
The idol of Ganapati is also called *Chaturbhuj* as it has four arms. A lotus is held in the upper right hand symbolises auspicious piety and a small axe in the upper left, a holy rosary of beads (*Japmala*) are held in the lower right and a bowl full of *Modaks* (a delicacy which is a perennial favourite with Shri Siddhivinayak) in the lower left. On auspicious Tuesdays, the serpentine queue of worshippers is over 2 km long.

Mumbai is well connected by air, rail and road with all the places in the state as well as the country. Tourists can take the city buses from any point of the city and reach this temple.

### 1.3.3 Gajanan Maharaj Temple (Shegaon)

Shegaon has gained renown as a pilgrimage centre, since Shri Sant Gajanan Maharaj lived (and died) there. Hindus consider Gajanan Maharaj a saint, with miraculous powers. His origins are unknown. Shri Sant Gajanan Maharaj Temple is built at his place of death. Sant Gajanan Maharaj Temple Trust is the largest temple trust in the Vidarbha region and is known as the "Pandharpur of Vidarbha". It attracts pilgrims from all over Maharashtra.

The Gajanan Maharaj Temple Trust coordinates the day-to-day affairs of the temple; it is headed by the Managing Trustees, who normally come from the Patil family. The Trust coordinates services in the spiritual, religious, medical and educational fields; most notably, it runs Shri Sant Gajanan Maharaj College of Engineering (SSGMCE), a well-known engineering college in the Vidarbha region. It is on Central Railway.

### 1.3.4 Vitthal Rukmini Temple (Pandharpur)

Pandharpur is located in a place, which is 65 km away from Sholapur on the banks of river Bhimarathi. This place is one of the most revered pilgrimage sites in Maharashtra.

Pandharpur preserves Lord Vithoba's image in a grand temple. Vithoba is a form of Krishna. The name *Vithoba* means Father Vitthala. Vitthala is said to have been derived from the word Vishnu in Kannada.
The worship of Vishnu - Vitthala at Pandharpur is derived mainly from the puranas and has been augmented by the contribution of the great Vaishnava saints of Maharashtra from the 13th to 17th centuries (Namdev, Jnaneshwar, Eknath, Tukaram).

The temple with its vast area has a total of six gates. The eastern entrance to this temple is known as the Namdev gate. The sanctum enshrines a standing image of Vithoba also known as Panduranga, Pandhari or Vitthala.

The image dates back to the 5th century. There are inscriptions in this temple dating back to the 13th century. Namdev, the 13th century saint was closely associated with this temple. Copper plate inscriptions of the Rashtrakootas place this shrine in the 6th century. There is also a shrine to Pundalik at Pandharpur.

1.3.5 Tuljabhavani Temple (Tuljapur)

Tuljabhavani Temple is a Hindu temple of Goddess Tuljabhavani. It is located in Tuljapur in Osmanabad district of Maharashtra and is considered as one of the main Shaktipitha. It is situated 44 km from Solapur. The temple was built in the 12th century.

The second among the 'Shaktipeeths' is Tuljabhavani of Tuljapur. It is the family deity of the Bhosale Royal family. The founder of Maratha Kingdom, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj always visited the temple to seek her blessings. It is believed that the Goddess gifted him a sword - 'the Bhavani sword' - for success in his expeditions. The history of the temple has been mentioned in the 'Skanda Purana'. There was a sage known as "Kardam". After his death his wife "Anubuti" had performed a penance at the banks of river "Mandakini" for Bhavani Mata (Mother) to look after her infant child. While performing the penance the demon known "Kukur" tried to disturb her penance during which Mata Bhavani came to the aid of "Anubuti" and killed the demon "Kukur". From that day onwards the Goddess Bhavani came to be known as Tuljabhavani. The temple is located on the hill of "Balaghat".

1.3.6 Mahalaxmi Temple, Kolhapur

The Shri Mahalakshmi (AmbaBai) Temple of Kolhapur in Maharashtra, India, is one of the 'Shaktipeeths' listed in various puranas of Hinduism. According to these writings, a Shaktipeeth is a place associated with Shakti, the goddess of power. The Kolhapur Shaktipeeth is of special religious significance being one of the six places
where it is believed that one can either obtain salvation from desires or have them fulfilled. The temple takes its name from Mahalakshmi, the consort of Vishnu, and it is believed that the divine couple reside in the area.

The temple belongs architecturally to the Kannada Chalukyaempire and may have been first built in circa 700 AD. Mounted on a stone platform, the image of the four armed and crowned goddess is made of gemstone and weighs about 40 kilograms. The image of Mahalakshmi carved in black stone is 3 feet in height. The Shri Yantra is carved on one of the walls in the temple. A stone lion, the vahana of the goddess, stands behind the statue. The crown contains an image of the Sheshnag — the serpent of Vishnu. In Her four hands, the deity of Mahalakshmi holds objects of symbolic value. The lower right hand holds a mhalunga (a citrus fruit), in the upper right, a large mace (kaumodaki) with its head touching the ground, in the upper left a shield (khetaka), and in the lower left, a bowl (panpatra). Unlike most Hindu sacred images, which face north or east, the image of this deity looks west (Pashchim). There is a small open window on the western wall, through which the light of the setting sun falls on the face of the image for three days around the 21\textsuperscript{st} of each March and September. There are a number of other shrines in the courtyard to the Navagrahas, Surya, Mahishasuramardini, Vitthal-Rakhmai, Shiva, Vishnu, Tuljabhavani and others. Some of these images date back to the 11\textsuperscript{th} century, while some are of recent origin. Also located in the courtyard is the temple tank Manikarnika Kund, on whose bank is a shrine to Visweshwar Mahadev.

1.3.7 Swami Samrath Temple (Akkalkot)

Swami Samarth Maharaj also known as Akkalkot Swami Maharaj of Akkalkot was an Indian Guru of the Dattatreya tradition, widely respected in Maharashtra, as well as in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. With Shripad, Shri Vallabha and Narasimha Saraswati. His existence in physical form is dated in the nineteenth century. He is often accounted one of three successive reincarnations of Guru Dattatreya. The 'Gurucharitra' gives lot of information about Him.

The holy book of Shri Gurucharitra mentions that the second Datta incarnation Shri Narasimha Saraswati entered into mahasamadhi in Kardalivana in 1458. After over 300 years he emerged from the samadhi when a woodcutter accidentally cut through a tree and hit Shri Narasimha Saraswati. That divine personality who was
awakened there from came to be known as Shri Swami Samarth. Shri Swami Samarth travelled all over the country and eventually set his abode at Akkalkot village in Maharashtra, India.

Maharaj first appeared at Akkalkot on a Wednesday around the September–October period in the year 1856 near Khandoba Temple. He stayed in Akkalkot for close to twenty two years. Like all other Datta avatars, his parentage, name, native place, etc., remain obscure to this day. There was an incident when a devotee posed him a question about his life and Shri Swami Samarth indicated that he is the origin of the Banyan tree (Vata-Vriksha) whose prop roots represent other saints, his disciples and other Datta incarnations. On another occasion, Swami said that his name was Nrusimhabhan and that he was from Kardalivan near Srisailam confirming that he was Nrusimha Saraswati.

In the present study, the management of three temple trusts from three regions of Maharashtra has been undertaken.
1) Shri. Saibaba Temple Trust, Shirdi (North Maharashtra),
2) Shri. Tuljabhavani Temple Trust, Tuljapur (Marathwada region) &
3) Vitthal Rukmini Temple Trust, Pandharpur (West Maharashtra)

1.4 Geographical, Religious and Historical Background of Selected Temple Trusts in Maharashtra:

1.4.1 Shirdi Saibaba Temple, Shirdi:

1.4.1.1 Geographical Background of Shirdi:¹

Shirdi is a town and falls under the jurisdiction of municipal council popularly known as Shirdi Nagar Panchayat, located in Rahata Tahasil in Ahmednagar District in Maharashtra. It is accessible via the Ahmednagar - Manmad State Highway No.10, approximately 83 km from Ahmednagar and 15 km from Kopargaon. It is located 185 km east of the Western Seashore line (the Ahmednagar - Manmad road), which is a very busy route. Shirdi is located approximately 296 km from Mumbai, capital of Maharashtra. It is called the Land of Saibaba Shirdi now has a new railway station called "Sainagar Shirdi", which became operational in March 2009. Shirdi is best known as the late 19th century home of the popular guru Shirdi Saibaba.

As of the 2001 India census, the population of Shirdi stood at 26,169. Per day some 25,000 devotees come for darshan. On holidays the number reaches to about
half a million people. Due to easy availability of jobs, a lot of migrant population, mainly of unskilled labourers from UP, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, etc. also reside here.

Shirdi is a small village in Kopargaon Taluka, in Ahmadnagar District of the Maharashtra State. When Baba was physically present at the age of 20 in Shirdi, Shirdi was a small village of 80 thatched houses with mud walls. Today Shirdi is a big town with palatial modern buildings and shops.

1.4.1.2 Religious and Historical Background of Shirdi:

No information is given regarding Saibaba's real name, place and time of birth. When asked about his past, he often gave elusive responses. The name "Sai" was given to him upon his arrival at Shirdi, of Maharashtra. Mahalsapati, a local temple priest, recognised him as a Muslim saint and greeted him with the words 'Ya Sai!' meaning 'Welcome Sai!'. Sai or Sayi is a Persian title given to Sufi saints, meaning 'poor one' and in Banjara language, "sayi" means good one. The honorific "Baba" means "father; grandfather; old man; sir" in most Indian and Middle Eastern languages. Thus Saibaba denotes "holy father", "saintly father" or "poor old man".

Some of Saibaba's disciples became famous as spiritual figures and saints, such as Mahalsapati, a priest of the Khandoba temple in Shirdi, and Upasni Maharaj. He was revered by other sants, such as Sant Bidkar Maharaj, Sant Gangagir, Saint Janakidas Maharaj, and Sati Godavari Mataji. Saibaba referred to several sants as 'my brothers', especially the disciples of Swami Samartha of Akkalkot.

Devotees agree that there is no reliable evidence for a particular birthplace or date of birth. Communities have claimed that he belongs to them, but nothing has been substantiated. It is known that he spent considerable periods with Muslim fakirs, and his attire resembled that of a fakir. He did not discriminate based on religion and respected all forms of worship to God.

Little has been officially documented on the early life of Shirdi Saibaba. An account of Shirdi Sai's missing childhood years has been reconstructed by his disciple Das Ganu, after researching in the area around the village of Pathri. He collected this story in four chapters on Saibaba, later also called the Sai Gurucharitra. Das Ganu states that Saibaba grew up in Pathri, with a fakir and his wife. At the age of five, says Das Ganu, the fakir's wife put him in the care of the saintly Desmukh Venkusha, where the boy stayed several years. Dasganu calls the young Saibaba the
reincarnation of Kabir. Because Das Ganu was known to take poetic liberties when telling stories about Saibaba, and as there are no other sources to corroborate this story, it usually is left out of biographies of Saibaba of Shirdi.

Saibaba’s biographer Narasimha Swamiji claims that Saibaba was born as the child of Brahmin parents. "On one momentous occasion, very late in his life, he revealed to Mhalsapathy the interesting fact that his parents were Brahmins of Patri in the Nizam's State. Patri is part of Parvanitaluk, near Manwath. Sai Baba added, in explanation of the fact that he was living in a Mosque, that while still a tender child his Brahmin parents handed him over to the care of a fakir who brought him up. This is fairly indisputable testimony, as Mahlsapathy was a person of sterling character noted for his integrity, truthfulness and vairagya." —Narasimha Swamiji, Life of Saibaba.

According to the book Sai Satcharita, Saibaba arrived at the village of Shirdi in the Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra, British India, when he was about 16 years old. He led an ascetic life, sitting motionless under a neem tree and meditating while sitting in an asana. The Shri Sai Satcharita recounts the reaction of the villagers- The people of the village were wonder-struck to see such a young lad practicing hard penance, not minding heat or cold. By day he associated with no one, by night he was afraid of nobody.

His presence attracted the curiosity of the villagers, and he was regularly visited by the religiously inclined, including Mahalsapati, Appa Jogle and Kashinatha. Some considered him mad and threw stones at him. Saibaba left the village, and little is known about him after that. However, there are some indications that he met with many saints and fakirs, and worked as a weaver. He claimed to have been with the army of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi during the Indian Rebellion of 1857. It is generally accepted that Saibaba stayed in Shirdi for three years, disappeared for a year, and returned permanently around 1858, which suggests a birth year of 1838.

In 1858 Saibaba returned to Shirdi. Around this time he adopted his famous style of dress consisting of a knee-length one-piece Kafni robe and a cloth cap. Ramgir Bua, a devotee, testified that Saibaba was dressed like an athlete and sported 'long hair flowing down to the end of his spine' when he arrived in Shirdi, and that he never had his head shaved. It was only after Baba forfeited a wrestling match with one Mohiddin Tamboli that he took up the kafni and cloth cap, articles of typical Sufi clothing. This attire contributed to Baba's identification as a Muslim fakir and was a
reason for initial indifference and hostility against him in a predominantly Hindu village.

For four to five years Baba lived under a “Neem Tree” and often wandered for long periods in the jungle around Shirdi. His manner was said to be withdrawn and uncommunicative as he undertook long periods of meditation. He was eventually persuaded to take up residence in an old and dilapidated mosque and lived a solitary life there, surviving by begging for alms, and receiving itinerant Hindu or Muslim visitors. In the mosque he maintained a sacred fire which is referred to as a Dhuni, from which he gave sacred ashes ('Udhi') to his guests before they left. The ash was believed to have healing and apostrophic powers. He performed the function of a local hakim and treated the sick by application of ashes. Saibaba also delivered spiritual teachings to his visitors, recommending the reading of sacred Hindu texts along with the Qur'an. He insisted on the indispensability of the unbroken remembrance of God's name (dhikr, japa), and often expressed himself in a cryptic manner with the use of parables, symbols and allegories.

Historical Sources:

Biographers of Saibaba (e.g., Govindrao Raghunath Dabholkar, Acharya Ekkirala Bharadwaja, Smriti Srinivas, Antonio Rigopolous) have based their writing on primary sources. One such source is the Shirdi Diary by Ganesh Shrikrishna Khaparde, which describes every day of the author's stay at Shirdi.

Speculation about the unknown episodes of Saibaba’s life is primarily based on his own words.

The most important source about Sai’s life is the Shri Sai Satcharita, written in Marathi in 1916 by Govindrao Raghunath Dabholkar, whom Saibaba nicknamed 'Hemadpant'. Consisting of 53 chapters, it describes Saibaba's life, teachings, and miracles. The book compares Saibaba's love to a mother's love: caring and loving, but reprimanding when needed. It describes Baba's lifestyle, his selfless attitude, and his love for his devotees. The book describes how one should surrender one's egoism at God's feet and trust one's guru. It explains how God is supreme and His devotees should trust Him and love Him. It teaches that God is omnipresent in all living things, so that everything on Earth must be treated with love and respect.

Saibaba of Shirdi and His Teachings by Acharya Ekkirala Bharadwaja is an in-depth study of Saibaba's life routine and activities. Shortly after Saibaba's passing,
devotee B.V. Narasimhaswamiji compiled accounts by eyewitnesses such as Sri Saibaba's Charters and Sayings and Devotee's Experiences of Saibaba. Regarding the original photographs of Shirdi Saibaba, research still needs to be done to identify the authentic ones, as there are also paintings as well as photographs of other persons of similar appearance in circulation besides the few genuine photographs.

1.4.2 Tuljabhavani Temple Trust, Tuljapur:

1.4.2.1 Geographical Background of Tuljapur:

The town of Tuljapur predominantly known as a holy place and dwelling of the great Goddess Tuljabhavani known all over India and the world. Tuljapur is a taluka place in Osmanabad district. In Marathwada region Osmanabad district is considered as backward, but due to famous temple of ‘Tuljabhavani’ it has a different identity on the map of India.

It is a centre of trade in grains and lies 45 km north of Solapur, the biggest textile manufacturing centre in Maharashtra and 22.54 km due south of Osmanabad, the district headquarters. Tuljapur is situated at 2150 feet (approx.) from the sea level & has a population of about 30000.

The town is administered by municipality, which was established in 1942 but started functioning with an elected council from 1952.

The Great Maratha King Shivaji Maharaj was an ardent devotee of Tuljabhavani, who used to take her blessings before embarking upon any expedition. He built this temple in 1661 but it is said that he could not visit the temple due torrential rains. According to legend it was here that the Goddess gifted him a sword the Bhavani sword for success in his expeditions. Goddess Bhavani is considered to be an embodiment of the ugra or ferocity, as well as a Karunaswaroopini - filled with mercy and compassion.

Tuljapur is well connected by road and is an important destination on the Solapur - Dhule national highway No. 211. The nearest railway stations are: Osmanabad at 30 km and Solapur at about 47 Km, both of which are connected with Mumbai, Pune and Hyderabad by daily express trains. Tuljapur is having a high frequency of S. T. buses not only from Maharashtra but also from almost all major cities of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. It adds to the high number of devotees
visiting the pious place. Nearest airports are Solapur (52 km) and Latur (80 km), which are connected with Mumbai by Kingfisher flights.

1.4.2.2 Religious and Historical Background of Tuljapur:⁴

Tuljapur, the one amongst three and half Shaktipeethas (abodes of cosmic powers) of the state, is situated in Maharashtra, wherein resides the Mother Goddess Tuljabhavani. She is also fondly revered as Aai (mother) Ambabai, Jagdamba, Tukai by her devotees who throng in millions to Tuljapur for her Darshan and for seeking her blessings. As a divine Mother, she protects her children from the sins of evil desires, selfishness, jealousy, hatred, anger and ego. At the same time, Tuljabhavani symbolizes the power of the Supreme Being that maintains moral order and righteousness in the universe.

Tuljabhavani is also described as the impressive and formidable goddess in Hindu Puranas. She is known for combating demons who threaten the stability of the universe. She killed the Demon (asur) called Kukur, who, endowed with supernatural powers, had become arrogant and a great menace to the social and moral order of the day. When the Goddess appeared to kill him, the demon assumed the form of a ferocious buffalo (mahisha) and challenged her for a combat. She vanquished him in the battle and killed him and from then onwards, she became popularly known as “Mahishasur Mardini”, the one who killed the demon called Mahishasur.

In Maharashtra, Tuljabhavani worship is of great antiquity and innumerable royal houses and their nobles have been devotees. She is the Family Deity (Kuldaivat) of most of the Maharashtiran families, including the great Bhosla dynasty, whose most celebrated progeny was Great Shivaji Maharaj, the founder of Hindavi Swarajya. Legend has it that it was Tuljabhavani who gifted the Bhavani sword to Shivaji to vanquish his opponents in the battlefield.

1.4.3 Vitthal Rukmini Temple Trust, Pandharpur:

1.4.3.1 Geographical Background of Pandharpur:⁵

Pandharpur is a pilgrimage city on the banks of Bhima River in Solapur district, Maharashtra, India. Pandharpur is situated on the 1711 north axis and the 7511 east longitude in Solapur District. The Vithoba temple attracts about a million
Hindu pilgrims during the major yatra (pilgrimage) in the month of Ashadh (June–July).

According to the 2010 census of India, Pandharpur had a population of 1,20,000. Males constituted 52% of the population and females, 48%. 71% of the population was literate; 78% males and 64% females.

Pandharpur is one of the most prominent pilgrimage places in Maharashtra. It is located on the banks of the Bhima River, which is alternatively known as Chandrabhaga because of its half-moon-like shape. The city is named after a great merchant, Pundalik, who achieved self-realization there.

Pandharpur, also known as Pandhari, hosts the renowned Vitthal temple on the banks of Bhima. "Vithoba", "Pandurang", and "Pandharinath" are the popular alternate names of the deity, Vitthal, who is regarded in Hinduism as a form of Lord Krishna. Krishna is considered as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Rakhumai or Rukmini is Vitthal's consort in the temple.

The worship of Vitthal in the Pandharpur temple is based mainly on the contents of the Puranas, and the contributions of the Vaishnav saints of Maharashtra and Karnatakaduring the 13th through the 17th centuries. Some of these saints are Dnyaneshwar, Namdev, Gora Kumbhar, Chokhamela, Eknath, Tukaram, Purandara Dasa, Vijaya Dasa, Gopala Dasa, and Jagannatha Dasa.

The Pandharpur temple covers a large area and has six gates. The eastern gate is known as the "Namdev Gate."

Pandharpur hosts four annual pilgrimages (yatras) of Hindu devotees. Among them, the pilgrimage in the month of Ashadh (June–July) in the Hindu calendar attracts the largest number of pilgrims—around 5 Lakhs to 7 Lakhs people. The pilgrimages in the months of Kartik (October–November), Magh (January–February) and Shravan (July–August) attract the second, third and fourth largest numbers of pilgrims respectively.

1.4.3.2 Religious and Historical Background of Pandharpur:

Long ago there was a brave king. His name was ‘Muchkung’. In the battle of Gods and Devils, Gods demanded help of the king. Making a great feat the king gave a great victory to the Gods, favourably disposed on his deed God told him to demand blessing. The king said, I am very tired, I want to rest now. If anyone brings an obstacle in my rest, he will be burnt by my eyes. Then he slept in cave, in the
incarnation of Shree Krishna. The strongest cannot die devil ‘Kalyavan’ who by any weapons. Shree Krishna by trick brought him in where the king Muchkund and hide in the darkness. Kalyavan came in the cave. He saw the shawl of Shree Krishna, so he gave a strong kick to the king. As soon as the king Muchkund awakened from his sleep, he burnt the devil by his eyes. Then Bhagavan Shree Krishna gave darshan to Muchkund. He told the king all events. Then the king Muchkund begged to the Lord stand him as it is. Our Lord Shree Krishna has him front of Muchkund, promised his to complete his desire in the next life.

Thus the king Muchkund was borne as the name of great devotee Pundlik. He lived in ‘Dindir forest’ which was near to Pandharpur. To complete the promise Shri Krishna came in Dindir forest, to find Rukmini. Pundalik hated his father and mother. His wife was an obstinate woman. He was set off to Kashi pilgrimage with his wife. On the road he lived in the Hermitage of Kukkut Muni. Kukkut Muni was a great devotee of his parents. He got a great strength by servicing of his parents. Many sinful persons take bath in the river. So they want to become soared, hence our sacred rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati serviced in this heritage. It was experienced by Pundlik that the rivers perched. He got knowledge and then he took a bath of service to His parents. Then he returned to Pandhari. He devoted his entire life in the service of his parents.

Seeing of his devotion about his parents our Lord delighted on him. He came near the Pundlik’s place, where he lived. He saw Pundlik lost in the service of his parents. Lord gave him darshan and blessings. Pundlik prayed him to stand on brick stone and wait. Lord approved his pledge. Pundlik put a stone brick for standing. The bank of Bhima River means the second ‘Dwarka’. Our Lord Shree Krisna has changed his form and become Shri Vitthal. From that time our Lord Vitthal has been standing on brick of his devotee Shre Pundlik. Vitthal means our Lord Shree Krishna.