

Warkari Sect: A Cultural Splendor of Maharashtra

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Introduction

Religion is the heart of the Pandharpurwarkari sect. Pandharpur is the maternal home of the saints, one sees a beautiful view of the coordination in Pandharpur, which is a place of devotion for Krishna. All saints have called Pandharpur as Vainkunth. Saint Namdev had said in his abhangas that 'when the animate and inanimate world did not exist, Pandharpur existed'. From this it is quite clear that Pandharpur is existing since time eternal.¹ Pandharpur had different names like Pandhari, Pandurangpur, Pandaripur, Fagatipur, Paundarik, KshetrePandurange, Pandurangpalli in various periods of time.² Pandharpur is situated on the river Bhima. This river turns like a

half moon in this place, therefore it is also known as river Chandrabhaga.³ Srikrishna went to Pandharpur to look for his angry wife Rukmini or he stood on a brick for his devotee Pundlik, from that period onwards the importance of Pandharpur is in the minds of the people. Many people have tried to establish the ancientness of Pandharpur.

Bhagwat or Warkari sect

The Warkari sect is the largest devotional sect in India.⁴ Number of people belonging to this sect could be millions. This sect is spread in various other parts of the country. Vitthal of Pandharpur is their beloved Deity. The religion that is told by God, is the Bhagavat religion and the one who

does the wari to Pandharpur is known as Warkari and their sect is called a Warkarisampradaya /sect. This has been explained by saint Tukaram in his abhangas. On Ashadhi, Kartiki, Maghi and Chaitriekadashi the Warkaris come to Pandharpur. These four are the important waris for which people come to Pandharpur for Darshan of Vitthal. Similarly quite a few people come to Pandharpur every 15 days or every month. Saint Dnyaneshwar is the founder of Bhagwat religion. People used to come to Pandharpur for wari even before Dnyaneshwar Maharaj. But it was not of collective nature. People did not come there in masses, like they do day. Dnyaneshwar opened the doors of devotion to all the people belonging to different casts and community and saint Tukaram put a dome on top of it.

Features of Warkari sect

Warkari sect has quite a few features. By following the conduct, proper thinking and principles one can overcome the time. Doing a wari regularly by wearing a garland of holy basil is one of the features of this sect. Rama Krishna Hari is the mantra of this sect. Rama means who is happy in his heart, Krishna means the one who attracts and Hari means the one who becomes one with God, i. e. with Vitthal. In this sect it is important to purify one self. Rituals and other confusing ideas are not there. While doing mundane affairs of daily life do

charity and other good work and lead a good life full of virtue is the essence of this sect. The Mantra has no constraints of place, time, caste, clan and money. A garland of holy Basil around the neck, Bukka and Gopichandantilak on the forehead and a flag on the shoulder are the signs of the warkaris. Vitthal likes the garland of holy Basil. This is to be taken from a senior warkari. This ritual is very simple. While giving the garland the Guru gives his disciple this oath: 1. Speak truth. 2. All other women are like mothers. 3. Do Pandharpurwari. 4. Ekadashi fast. 5. Simple vegetarian diet. 6. Always reciting the Mantra. 7. Reading of Haripath and Dnyaneshwari. 8. All the sorrows and happiness in life, everyday duties should be done properly and sincerely by changing the name of Vitthal all the time. Dnyaneshwari, Eknathi Bhagwat and Abhangagatha of Tukaram are the religious books of this sect.

Tradition of saints

The tradition of Pandurang is quite large. Right from shri Dnyaneshwar-Namdev to Tukoba-Niloba. A reputation of promoting the warkari sect goes to Pundalik. 1. A period from Pundalik to Dnyaneshwar 2. A Period from Dnyandev to Namdev 3. A Period from Bhanudas to Eknath 4. A period of Tukaram and 5. A period after Tukaram. This is the tradition of saints. To this tradition also belong the women saints like Muktabai,

Janabai, Nirmala, Kanhopatra etc.

A palanquin ceremony

In the warkari sect there are two waris, one is Pandharpurwari and the second one is Alandiwari. The most important Pandharpurwari is the one from the month of Ashadhi. e Ashadhi Ekadashi. The palanquins of the Saints Dnyanadev come from Alandi and Tukaram from Dehu and of other saints come . People from all over Maharashtra come together for palanquin. They do Bhajan, Kirtan, and recitation by playing drum on their way to Pandharpur.

"DnyanobaMauliTukaram" is the Mantra of Warkarisampradaya.

Similarly the main day of the Alandiwari is in the month of Kartik, i. e Kartiki Ekadashi. For this Alandiwari the palanquins of Namdev, Pundalik and other saints come from Pandharpur. Here also the warkaris do Bhajan, Kirtan, and recitation by playing the drum.

Warkari sect has many public Resorts/Fud and Hermitages. These are mainly the chiefs of the warkaris and their desciple's organized community. In the warkari sect the tradition of teacher and student is very important. After doing the wari the teachers and students have to take part in the Bhajan, Kirtan and Namasankirtan. All saints have their public Resorts/Fud and Hermitages.

Home of the Bhagawat sect: Pandharpur

Pandharpur is the home of all the saints. When a woman comes to her maternal home, she feels very comfortable and homely. In the same way when a person is in the confinement of worldly duties, he is in the house of his in-laws. He is not very comfortable there. But when he comes to Pandharpur he feels very comfortable, as if he is in his own home. The deity of the warkari sect is Vitthal, who is the deity of the whole universe. All the relations like mother, father, brother, sister are concentrated all together in Vitthal. Therefore all the warkaris feel that it is their maternal home.⁷

Contribution of the warkari sect

1. Warkari sect is doing an important work of maintaining the tradition of Maharashtra
2. It is creating good quality students from the Mathas in Pandharpur. By this a flag of Bhagwat religion is passed on from one generation to another.
3. Warkari sect has done an important work of nurturing the principle of Bhagwat religion, i. e chanting the name of Vitthal while doing everyday work and do your parmartha.
4. In the warkari sect saints come from all castes and class and they have given the message of equality.
5. All the warkaris bow down to each other, feed the Prasad to each other. Here there is no discrimination of rich, poor, man, woman, high caste, low caste etc. Because of this the tra-

dition of castes is broken down and the process of social convergence is evolved. This is an important contribution of the warkari sect to the society.

6. It has given the right of devotion to all. Through discourses, Abhang, Kirtan the saints have created social awakening among the people. They have done the great work of maintaining the Indian culture in unfavorable conditions and are still doing it.

7. By participating in the palanquin all the women saints came out of their traditional household work and have proclaimed the freedom of women. One can see the seed of women's emancipation in this.

8. As there is lot of influence of western culture on the society today and it is increasing day by day. In such situation there is a great need of the thoughts of these saints.

9. The struggle of women saints, the story of their life etc. can be guiding and inspirational to the women of modern times.

10. The work done by warkari sect is quite important for creating national integrity.

According the Bhagwatacharya Mr. V. N. Utpat, 'Due to devotion of Bhagawat religion, good conduct, staying among the saints, solid philosophy of good standard and good tradition one does not fall prey to temptations. Besides ones the garland of holy tulsi is around ones neck, he starts behaving virtuously.'⁹The things which cannot be achieved with legal

force; can be achieved by the teachings of the saints;Warkari does not turn towards western culture. He remains firm where he is; with the warkari sect.The Indian is preserve by the deeds of WarakariSect .

Maharashtrian culture posses a good place in the Indian culture.

Pandharpur is the soul heart of the Mahrashtra. Lord Vitthal is the only ideal worship of these people and Pandharpur is their motherland . We have Palakhi Ceremony and along with this equally important is the wari of the months Ashadhi, Maghi, Kartiki, Chaitri. The footed wari from Alandi to Pandharpur was introduced by Saint Dyaneshwar. Abhang ,bhajan ,kirtan,pravachan perform the work of awareness of social reform and the warkari saints united the people. Due to this warkari saints the left out their orthodox cultural concept(frame) and started unity.

The women left their usual routine work and joined the palakhi .The seed of women freedom were sowed here. Fredom means not unlimitations but here Indian women proved how to preserve the culture with certain restrictions. People were influenced by westernization , but once a person came into contact with warakari saints then he they are totally away from infatuation.

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