# CHAPTER - II



#### PERSONALITY OF THE REGION



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## Pandharpur

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#### References

## 2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TOWN :

The oldest mention of Pandharpur is in inscription dating as far back as 516 A.D. It was carved by the Rastra-kuta king Avideya and the town was called as Pandarange or Pandare. It remained a part of the Rastrakuta domain for over a century. In 615 A.D. Pandharpur came under the control of Chalukyas and it remained upto 1180 A.D.

In 13th century Pandharpur became a part of Yadav dominion. The emergence of Varkari Panth and arrival of Saint Dnyaneshwara to Pandharpur was the great achievement in this period which made Pandharpur a centre of culture as well as centre of spiritual learning. In 1318 Pandharpur was attacked by the Muslims and the image of 'Lord Vitthal' had been shifted to some unknown place since then Pandharpur became town of ruins and not recovered until the time of Peshwas. During the second half of the 14th century Bahamani kingdom ruled over the Deccan and Pandharpur belonged to Gulbarga province of this kingdom. Very little is known about Pandharpur during that period. The 16th century was an unfortunate period for Pandharpur because it was attacked frequently by the various Muslim armies.

Pandharpur during the 17th century had better days.

A new temple of 'Lord Vitthal' was built. Tukaram and his disciples had contributed to give back to the Pandharpur it's

former greatness and fame. They had spread Varkari Panth amongst the common people. He had many disciples. Amongst them Bahinabai and Niloba were famous.

The Varkari Sampradaya also got a new impetus under the guidance of the great Tukaram who infused great enthusiasm in the pilgrimage of Ashadha and Kartika and therefore, Pandharpur became a great centre of pilgrimage and culture.

The Maratha power especially in the second half of the 18th century proved to be the golden age for the Pandharpur. People were able to go freely to pilgrimage. Temples were built and new buildings arose on the bank of Bhima. In those days Holkar, Shinde, Pawar and Peshwas had contributed towards beautifying the town. From 1770 to 1800 seven out of nine ghats were built on the bank of Bhima. Among which the more important ghats were the Mahadwar, the Uddhav and the Chandrabhaga. Many new temples were built during this period such as Gopalkrishna, Vishnupuda, Lakhubai, Padmavati, Chowpala, Balika Mahadeo, Ram Chandra and Bablya Mahadev. The great temple was also rejuvanted in this period.

During this period Pandharpur had got its fame as a place of learning due to great contemparary poets. Amongst them was Shridharswami, who published most of his work at Pandharpur. The Harivijaya in 1702, the Ramvijaya in 1703, the Pandavpratap in 1712 and Pandharpur Mahatmaya in 1718. He took samadhi at Pandharpur. Mahipati who was born in 1715 became

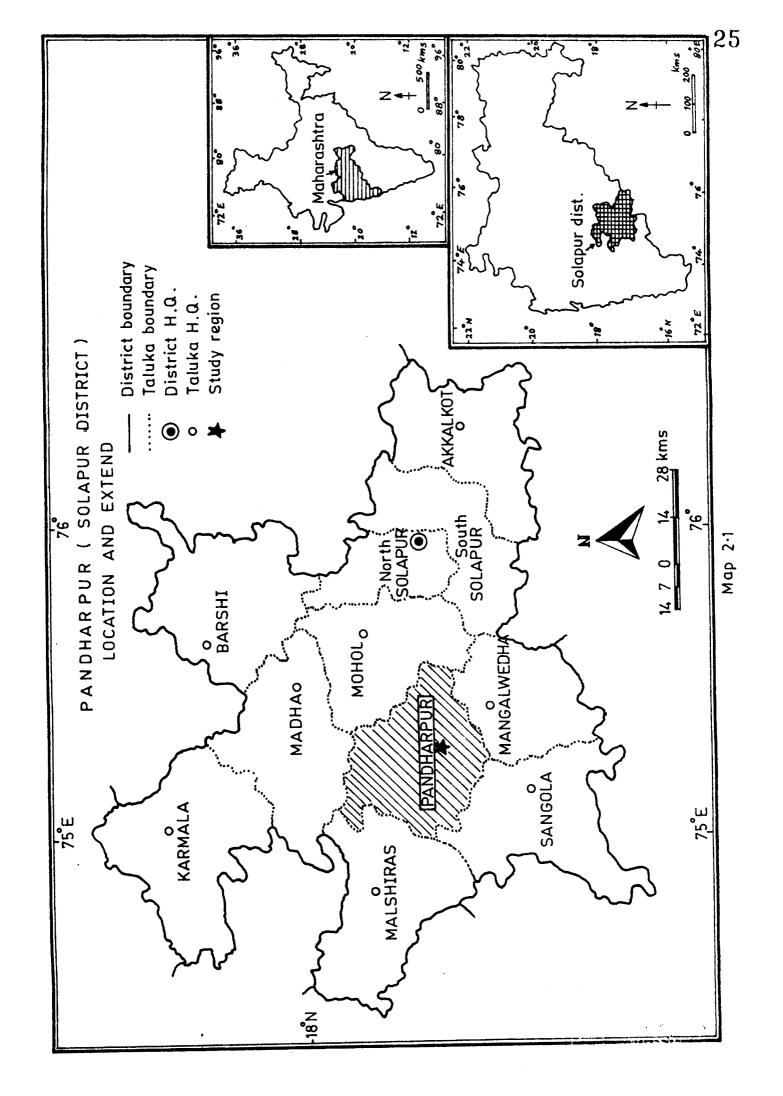
the most famous biographer of the saints of Pandharpur. He wrote the story of the life of Pundlika. He took samadhi in 1790. Moropant, who translated the great Sanskarit epic into Marathi, lived in the period between 1729-1794 in Pandharpur.

remained peacefully under the English rule. The town steadily developed and new buildings were added. During this period the town was well connected to other areas by rail and road transport. A small railwayline was built up which connected Bombay-Madras line on one side and Poona-Miraj line on the other side, which influenced the growth of Pandharpur town. The town has developed as an important administrative and commercial centre of the taluka. Many services such as health, sanitation, education were developed and town expanded in size from 10.575 sq.kms to 12.07 sq.kms (Table 2.1). The expansion of the city took place towards the westernside.

#### 2.2 GEOGRAPHICAL PERSONALITY OF THE PANDHARPUR :

#### 2.2.1 Location :

The holy town Pandharpur is situated at 17°40° North latitude and 75°23° East longitude about 74 kilometers west of Solapur (Map 2.1). It is on the right bank of the meandering Bhima, the main tributary of Upper Krishna which rises in Poona district close to Bhimashankar in the Sahyadri ranges. The town lies about the centre of the large drain basin of Bhima and Upper Krishna.



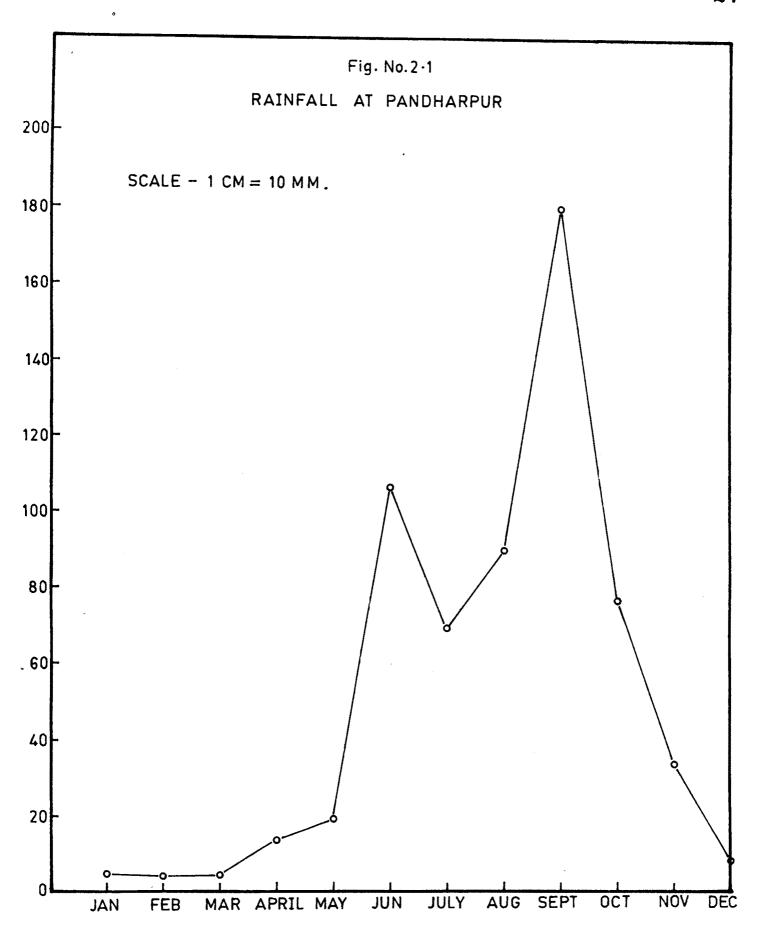
Pandharpur is divided into new and the old parts.

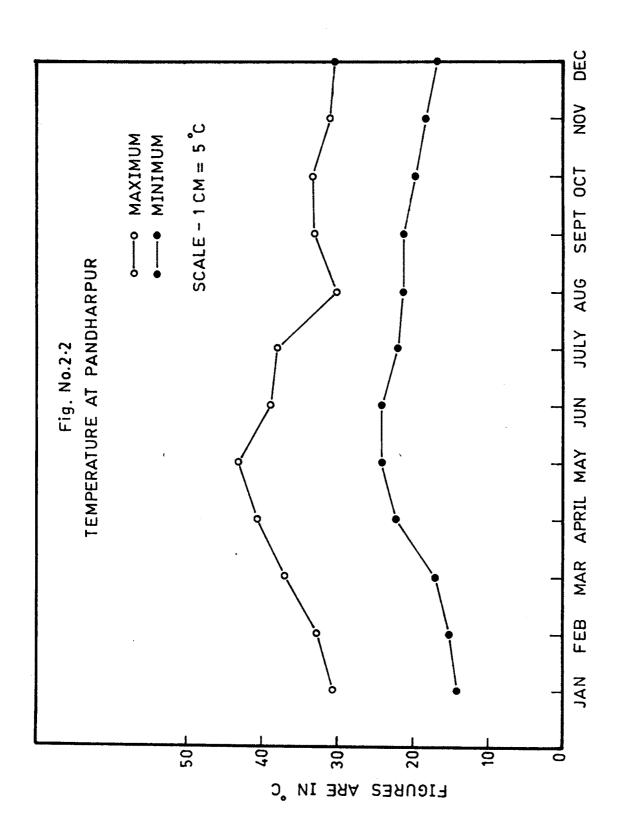
The old part lies on the right bank of the river Bhima or Chandrabhaga while the new town has developed along the railway line. The new expansion includes mostly the area of market yard, railway colony, irrigation colony and other residential sub-urban areas. These residential extentions include middle class and high class family dwellings.

#### 2.2.2 Climate:

Climatically the town falls in the rain-shadow area. The town has rainfall from south west monsoon as well as from north east monsoon. The south west monsoon receives 77 percent of rainfall whereas N.E. Monsoon receives 23 percent of rainfall of the year. The average annual rainfall is 661 mm. Sometimes rainfall in the form of thunder showers occur during the month of April and May (Fig. 2.1).

The winter starts by the end of November. December is the coldest month with the mean daily maximum and minimum temperatures 29°C and 14.8°C respectively. During the period from the middle of February to the end of May, there is a continuous increase in temperature. May is the hottest month (Fig.2.2) with the mean daily maximum temperature of 39.9°C and the mean daily minimum of 21.1°C. The heat during the summer season is intensive. Afternoon thunder showers bring welcome relief from the heat. The onset of the S.W.monsoon by about the first week of June brings down the temperature appreciably.





#### 2.2.3 Population:

The town has an area of 12.07 sq.kms and the population was 64,338 according to 1981 census (Table 2.1).

TABLE 2.1: Population of Pandharpur, 1981.

sr. No.	Year	Area of the town in sq.km.	Total population	Percentage of growth
1	1901	10.575	32,405	-
2	1911	**	28,550	- 11.90
3	1921	Ħ	25,210	- 22.20
4	1931	n	29,460	- 9.08
5	1941	N	33,329	+ 2.85
6	1951	•	40,515	+ 28.02
7	1961	12.07	42,421	+ 30.90
8	1971	**	53,638	+ 65.52
9	1981	N	64,338	+ 98.54

SOURCE: District census handbook.

Table 2.1 reveals that population of Pandharpur in 1901 was 32,405 which reduced to 28,550 in 1911 and 25,210 persons in 1921. But from 1931 onward population of Pandharpur began to increase. The population of the town in 1931 was 29,460 which shows slight increase of 16.86 percent with preceding decade but as compare to base years 1901 it was - 9.08 percent. Population

of the town was 33,329 in 1941. As compare to base year it shows growth of 2.85 percent. In 1951 population was 40,515 it shows + 28.02 percent increase of the base year. In 1961 it was 42,421 (+30.90 percent of base). In 1971 it was 53,638 (+65.52 percent of base year) and finally it reached to 64,338 persons in 1981. This increase was + 98.54 percent as compare with the 1901. The main cause of increase of population after 1951 was the emerging importance of the town as a significant pilgrimage centre in Maharashtra.

#### 2.2.4 Morphology of the town:

bureau in 1855. Now, it is a class II town. From the administrative point of view it is divided into 31 wards and 77 blocks. The occupied houses are 11,450. Being a headquarter of taluka and also Panchayat Samiti, the offices of Mamledar and the B.D.O. are located in the town. It is also sub-dividional headquarter of Collector. The courts of the civil judge and the first class judicial magistrate are also located at Pandharpur. There are two police stations in Pandharpur, one for the town and other for the taluka, the jurisdiction of which extends over 83 villages.

Pandharpur is a railway station on the Latur-Kurduwadi Miraj narrow guage line of the central railway and had proved to be of immense use to devout pilgrims. There are also government rest houses and dharmashalas. The educational needs of the town are fulfiled by one college, nine junior colleges, nine highschools, 28 primary schools. There are three cinema houses in the town. There are six banks that cater to the needs of growing trade and commerce of the town. All the roads in the town are pucca roads having the length of 38.34 kms. The rickshwas and tangas are serving the people and pilgrims at Pandharpur.

## 2.2.5 Occupational structure :

The evaluation of occupation structure gives an idea about the change in functional characteristics of the town.

Table 2.2 reveals the occupation structure of Pancharpur town. The occupation picture of two decades (1961 and 1981) is shown in the table. From the table it reveals that total population of the town was 53,638 in the year 1961 in which 14,194 (26.43%) was working population and 39,464 (73.57%) was non-working population. In the year 1981 total population was 64,380 in which 17,162 (26.65%) as working population and 47,208 (73.23%) as non working population. The percentage figures show that there is slight increase in the working population during the span of two decades. The percentage of cultivators decreased from 7.40 to 5.01 and agricultural labourers that from 2.95 to 2.28. The persons engaged in categories III, IV, VIB, VII and IX were increased from 12,114 (85.34) to 14,906 (86.85%) during twenty years. The persons engaged in category VA (Household industry) increased from 611 (4.30%) to 1003 (5.84%).

TABLE 2.2 : Occupational structure of the Pandharpur town.

Sr.	Total population	Total working Population	Total non- working population	н	11	*	III, IV, VB VI to IX
<b>~</b>	53, 638	14,194 (26.43%)	39,464	1.049	1.049 420 (7.40%) (2.95%)	<b>611</b> ( <b>4.</b> 30%)	12,114 (85,34%)
8	64,380	17,162 (26.65%)	47,208 (73.32%)	861 (5.01%)	861 392 (5.01%) (2.28%)	1003	14,906 (86.85%)

I - Cultivator, II - Agricultural labourers, III - Livestock, IV - Mining and VI - Construction, VII - Trade and Commerce, VIII - Transport, storage and quarrying, VA - Household Industry, VB - Other than household industries, communication, IX - Other services.

NOTE

SOURCE : District Census Handbook.

- 6.Kasar ghat
- 7. Chandrabhaga ghat
- 8. Vipra Datta ghat
- 9. Vaikuntha ghat

It shows that there is a considerable change in the occupation structure during the span of two decades. Household industries increased in the Pandharpur town mainly due to fairs and festivals which are held throughout the year in faith of Lord Vitthal of Pandharpur.

## 2.2.6 Important Ghats:

The meandering shape of Chandraphaga is a natural phenomenon which gives a unique feature to the town. Along the bank of the river Chandrabhaga there are nine ghats (Table 2.3). From these ghats one can get the best view of the river. The visit during the early morning, scene of the sacred ghats of Pandharpur is an inspiring experience at the time of great Ashadhi and Kartiki fairs. From these ghats one can see the endless crowd of Worshippers who are taking ablution in the river Chandrabhaga which gives great pleasure to us (Photograph No.2.1).

The oldest ghats such as Kumbhar Ghat and Vaikuntha Ghat were built in 1770 and the latest Ghat Vipra Datta was built in 1826. Remaining six of them were built during the last quarter of the eighteenth century when the Maratha power was at its peak (Map 2.2).

The most important of these ghats are the Mahadwar, the Uddhav and Chandrabhaga ghat. The Mahadwar ghat was built at the end of street which leads to the great temple of Lord Vitthal

Photograph No.2.1

Panoramic view of river Chandrabhaga

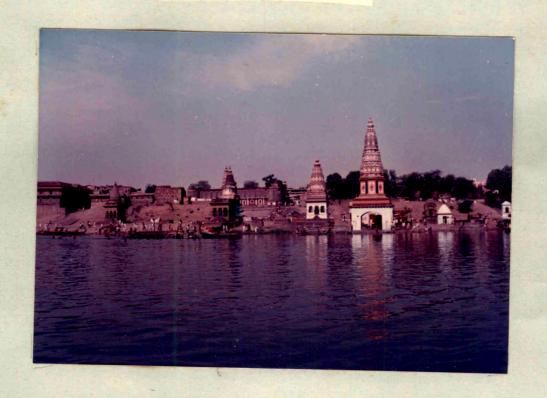
(Photograph No.2.2). Pilgrims who come from the temple of 'Lord Vitthal' on their way to the river and to the temple of Pundlika usually use this ghat. The Uddhav ghat owes its importance to the Pradaksina. The pilgrims should reach the river by using this ghat. The Chandrabhaga ghat is frequently used by pilgrims to enter the town from the bed of the river during their holy round. The Vipra Datta Ghat is close to the circuit road as its landings have to be crossed by pilgrims. The Kasar ghat is used by the people to fetch the water for their use.

TABLE 2.3 : Important ghats in Pandharpur.

sr. No.	Name of the Ghat	Year (in which it was built)
1	Krishnaji ghat	1825
2	Uddhav ghat	1780
3	Haridas ghat	1785
4	Kumbhar ghat	1770
5	Mahadwar ghat	1785
6	Kasar ghat	1798
7	Chandrabhaga ghat	1870
8	Vipra Datta Ghat	1826
9	Vaikuntha ghat (it is unfinished)	1770

SOURCE: Compiled by the author.

Photograph No. 2.2



Mahadwar Ghat

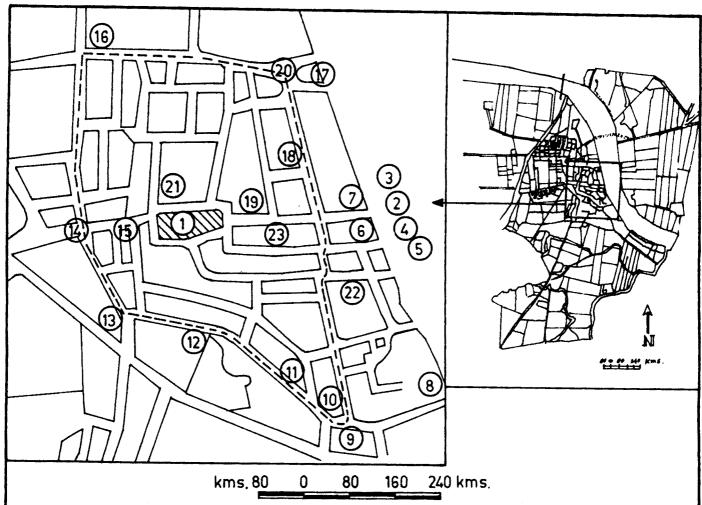
All these ghats are not maintained regularly and have remained all the time dirty. The sides of some important ghats, such as Mahadwar, Uddhav, Chandrabhaga are always lined up with beggers and hawkers.

## 2.2.7 Temples:

Pandharpur is a town of temples. There are 27 temples in the town (Table 2.4). About fourteen of the temples are dedicated to Siva, and five temples are dedicated to Lord Vishnu, the remaining temples are dedicated to other deities (Map 2.3).

The temples of Pandharpur may be divided into four groups; the temples lying on the way of pradaskhina, the temples lying on the bank of river Chandrabhaga and temples on the Nagar Pradakshina road and the temple of Lord Vitthal. The pradaskhina road covers the temples of Datta, Panchamukhi Maruti, Tukaram, Balicha Mahadeo, Kalamaruti, Takpithya Vithoba, Dnyaneshwar Paduka, Tambada (red) Maruti and Tetiskoti Mandir. The pradaskhina starts after having the darsana of Lord Vitthal. The pilgrims enter in the river through Mahadwar Ghat, then visit the temple of Pundlika and then start towards Vippra Datta ghat to visit the temple of Datta, Kalamaruti, Takpithya Vithoba, Tambda Maruti and finally enter the river bed through Uddhav ghat and complete the pradaskhina.

Nagar Pradaskhina starts from Pundlika temple. Pilgrims proceed towards the Vishnupad temple by a small boat. They then visit the temple of Gopalkrishna (at Gopalpur) Padmavati, Vyasa, Lakhubai, Ambabai and return to the Mahadwar Ghat.



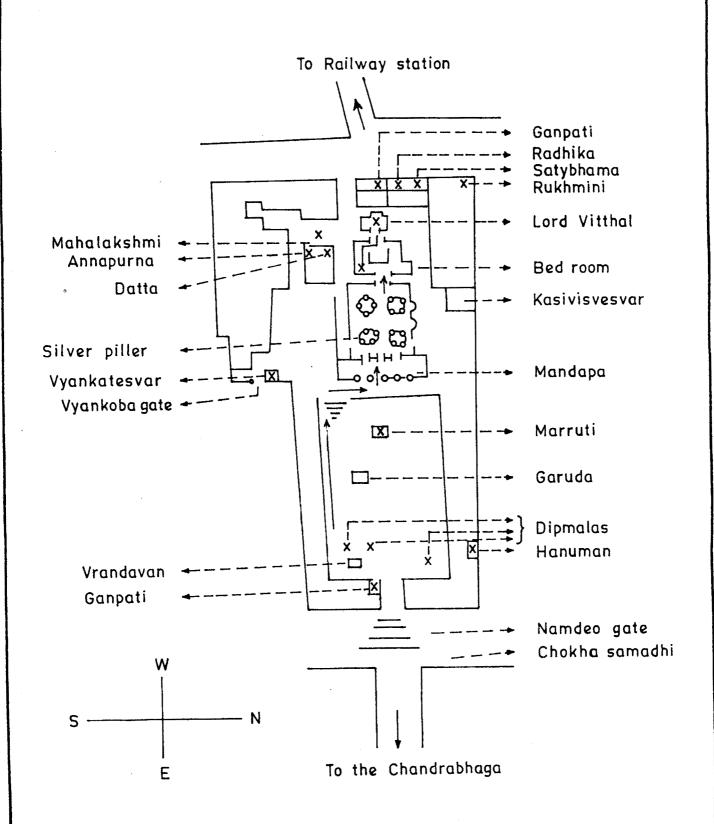
	<u>Importan</u> t	temples in Par	<u>ndharpur</u>
1	LORD VITTHAL TEMPLE	18	AMRITESVER TEMPLE
2	PUNDLIKA TEMPLE	19	MALLIKARJUN TEMPLE
3	AMALNERBONO TEMPLE	20	TAMBDA MARUTI
4	BHANUDAS TEMPLE	21	TRYAMBAKESVAR
5	JANABAI TEMPLE	22	NAMDEO MANDIR
6	MURLIDHAR TEMPLE	23	SAKAMBHARI
7	RAMCHANDRA TEMPLE		
8	VIPRADATTA TEMPLE		
9	PANCHAMUKHI MARUTI TEMPLE	$\circ$	NUMBER OF TEMPLE
10	KALIKA MANDIR		PRADAKSHINA ROUTE
11	TUKARAM MANDIR	<b>\</b>	
12	BELICHA MAHADEO		
13	KALA MARUTI	•	
14	GOPALKRISHNA MANDIR		
	(COPALA MANDIR)		
15	TAKPITHYA VITHOBA		NIVES
16	DNYANESHWAR MANDAP (PADUKA)		A CARA
17	DATTA MANDIR		E (18)

TABLE 2.4 : Temples in the town

sr. No.	Name of the temple	Year of constru- ction
1	Laxmi temple	1830
2	Pundlik temple	1850
3	Vishnu temple	1785
4	Trimbakeshwar temple	••
5	Panchamukhi Maruti temple	-
6	Balicha Mahadeo temple	1787
7	Kalbhairav temple	1730
8	Ganapati temple	***
9	Shakambhari temple	1775
10	Mallikarjun temple	1820
11	Ambabai temple	1854
12	Ramchandra temple	1735 - 95
13	Babhlya's Mahadeo temple	1772
14	Chandrabhaga temple	1972 - 73
15	Murlidhar temple	1849
16	Chophal temple	1770
17	Padmavati temple	1700
18	Yyas temple	-
19	Takpithya Vithoba	1618
20	Batteshwar Mahadeo	1870
21	Beris Mahadeo	1785
22	Kala Maruti temple	•
23	Tambda Maruti temple	1799
24	Garicha Mahadeo temple	1720 - 40
25	Lakhubai temple	1780
26	Amriteshwar Mahadeo	1780
27	Gopalkrishna	1744

Fig. No. 2.3

LORD VITTHAL TEMPLE (Internal structure)



Scale - 1": 67 feet.

## a) Lord Vitthal Temple:

The Lord Vitthal temple is located at the centre of Pandharpur town. It is a pivot of pilgrimage (Photograph No.2.3). The temple is erected on the top of hillock surrounded by a circular path called as Pradskhina road. The main entrance of the temple is at the east, facing the river. At the entrance near the lowest step Saint Namdeo took Samadhi and, the door is called as Namdeo Gate after him. A few yards at the east of Namdeo Gate there is a Samadhi of Chokkamela, the Mahar Saint.

Inside the Namdeo Gate there is a narrow passage.

This passage opens to a large paved quadrangle. In the quadraagle there are many dipmalas, a brindaban and a Nim tree and
two small shrines dedicated to Garuda and to Maruti. The western
part of the quadrangle is covered with a high wooden Sabhamandap
used for song services and devotional dances.

on the western side of the quadrangle there is a narrow stone mandap built on a raised platform. It leads to the sixteen pillar mandap where pilgrims gather to attend the rituals. To the west of the mandap there is a small four pillor room which is the first room of the shrine itself. In the north-east corner there is a bed room of Lord Vitthal. From this room a small arch leads to an ante-chamber which opens to a small room is called as Garbhagriha. On the back wall of this room stands the image of Lord Vitthal (Fig.2.3).

Photograph No. 2.3



Lord Vitthal temple

To the north-west of this shrine there is a Rukmini shrine which consists of Sabha Mandap, a pillared hall, ante-chamber and the garbhagriha. To the south of Rukhmini shrine there are shrines dedicated to Satyabhama, Radhika and Ganpati.

To the south of 'Lord Vitthal' shrine there is a shrine dedicated to Laxmi. In the pillared hall of Laxmi temple there are shrines dedicated to Annapurna and Datta. A small shrine dedicated to Vyankoba is near the gate called as Vyankoba gate.

## b) Rites in the Lord Vitthal temple:

The rites performed in the temple of Lord Vitthal are of two kinds - the daily rites and the special rites. The daily rites are divided into five services (Table 2.5).

TABLE 2.5: Daily rites in the temple of Lord Vitthal.

Sr. No.	Daily rites	Time of rites
1	Kakadarti	At 3.00 a.m.
2	Panchamritpuja	At 6.00 a.m.
3	Madhyahan puja	At 12.00 noon
4	Aparahan puja	At 6.00 p.m.
5	Sejarti	At 10.00 p.m.

The Kakadarti begins at 3.00 a.m. It is the rite of the awakening of the 'Lord Vitthal'. At the appointed time the trumpeter

of the temple blows his long instrument called as Karna to warn the various attendants to gather in the sixteen pillared hall. The the Badva (Priest) stands in front of the door of the bed room, prays to the Lord Vitthal to awake and opens the room and enters in it. Then other attendants also enter the room. Only pilgrims remain in the sixteen pillared hall. When puja begins the pujari first removes all the garlands and then he washes the feet of Lord Vitthal and offer flowers to him. He puts new garlands round it's neck. Then the pujari slowly waves kakada in front of the Lord Vitthal. To see the face of Lord Vitthal in this light is a great pleasure to the pilgrims. During articeremony various hymns are sung by the Haridasa. When the artiis over all the pilgrims throw flowers on Lord Vitthal. This is the morning rite of kakadarti.

The second rite is Panchamritpuja. The pujari give bath to 'Lord Vitthal' with milk, curd, ghee, honey and sugar. The Lord Vitthal is dressed with fresh garments and puja is done. And then pilgrims are permitted to get a darshan of the Lord Vitthal till afternoon.

In the afternoon Madhyanhapuja starts and the pujari bath Lord Vitthal and re-dressed; and the meal is given to Lord Vitthal. When the meal is over the pilgrims are again permitted to take darsan of Lord Vitthal.

The next rite is aparahana puja, which is celebrated at the time of the sun set. The pujari washes the feet of the Lord

Vitthal with water. Flowers, garlands and other ornaments are put to the Lord Vitthal and the pujari performs an arti which is called the evening puja.

The last ceremony of the day is Sejarti. It consists of departure of the Lord Vitthal to bed at about 10.00 p.m.

#### Special rites

The special rites are performed on every Wednesday and Saturday and every eleventh day of the lunar month or Ekadashi on Ashadi and Kartiki Ekadashi. Many modifications in the daily routine occur on these days.

On Wednesday and Saturday in the morning between the Kakadarti and Panchamritpuja the Lord Vitthal is bathed with scented oil, sweet scented powder and milk.

On every Ekadashi special arti is held after the usual Sejarti and evening food is offered to the Lord Vitthal which is cooked without water. Lord Vitthal does not go to his bed chamber.

On Ashadhi and Kartiki Ekadashi whole routine is changed except Panchamritpuja. From Ekadashi to Paurnima (full moon day), for five days the bed chamber of Lord Vitthal remains closed. It is supposed that Lord Vitthal does not go to bed so that pilgrims are able to have a darshana throughout the day. On fifth day special bath is given to Lord Vitthal which is called as Praksalapuja.

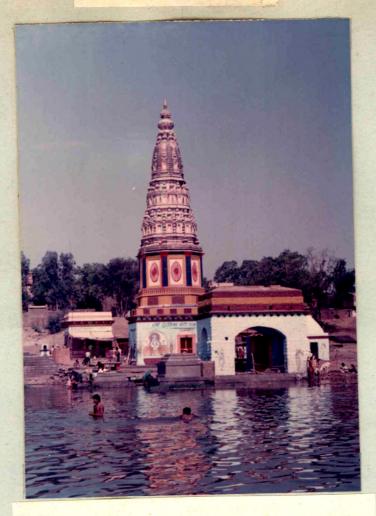
#### c) Other important temples :

Apart from the temple of Lord Vitthal the more important temple is the temple of Pundlika (Photograph No.2.4). It lies in the middle of the river bed opposite to the temple of Lord Vitthal. It is surrounded by water during the monsoon. The temple is of very simple construction and has two parts - a shrine and a sabha mandap. The present temple was built by Holkar in 1750 A.D. On the north side of this temple there is a temple of Amalnerbuva and to the south Janabai and Bhanudas temples.

Pilgrims first of all reach the Chandrabhaga to have an ablution in the river, then they takes darshan of Pundalika and crossing the Mahadwar Ghat reach the main temple of Lord Vitthal.

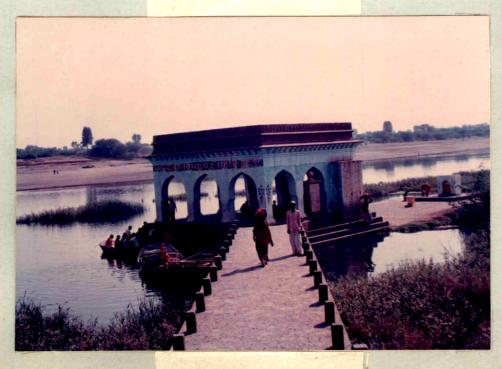
The Vishnupada temple is also an important temple. It was built on a platform on a small island in the middle of the river towards the south-west side of the town (Photograph No.2.5). During the monsoon the temple is completely covered by the water. In the middle of this temple there is rock with footprints of Krishna and his cow. Those footprints are worshipped by the pilgrims. The month of Margasirsa (November-December) is celebrated at Vishnupada. On the fifth day of the Margasirsa the Paduka (foot-prints) of Lord Vitthal are carried to the temple with procession. Lord Vitthal is supposed to stay there with Gopies. On the last day of the month the padukas are brought back to the temple in a torch light procession.

After the Kartiki Ekadashi Lord Vitthal stays at Vishnupada for the whole of the Margasirsa. During this month pilgrims and



Pundlika temple in the river bed

Photograph No.2.5



Vishnupad temple

people of Pandharpur visit Vishnupada which becomes a holy place to them.

The Gopal Krishan Temple of the Gopalpur is another important temple. It is on the south-west side and 5 kms away from Pandharpur on Pandharpur-Mangalwedha road. It was built in 1744 A.D. (Photograph No.2.6). It consists of garbhagraha and a mandap. The shrine contains an image of Gopal Krishna. The main function is held on Gokulastami, but many people go to the temple on Ashadi and Kartiki Peurnima for the Kala ceremonies.

In this temple there are shrines of Bhimakrajmahadeo the father of Rukmini and the two devotees of Lord Vitthal. Kanhupatra and Janabai.

Photograph No.2.6



Gopalkrishna temple at Gopalpur

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