

Preliminary Report on Common Complaints of Pandharpur Pilgrimage - The Insite..

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Abstract

The PANDHARPUR WARI is distinct from all other forms of pilgrimages like the 'yatra' in a variety of ways. To begin with, it is a collective form of BHAKTI (worship) often undertaken as an extension of family tradition. It has a predetermined scheduled and route and has no purpose other than sheer worship. The 'yatra' on the other hand is undertaken by individuals at their convenience to a variety of deities for personal reasons. Participating in the WARI is its own reward and Panduranga the lone object of worship. The WARI is a microcosm of the vast sects, sub-sects, castes and trades that go into the making of the state of Maharashtra - as men, women, young and old people from all walks of life, age and socio-economic status walk alongside each other, never for a moment being aware of their differences or status. Most unconventional is the belief that the Lord Vitthal awaits this meeting with his devotees (bhaktas). The eagerness to meet Lord Vitthal and the repetitive chanting of RAM-KRISHNA-HARI refrain during the walk are unifying bonds among different peoples all termed WARKARIS. No other rituals dot the WARIKARI horizon unlike in the 'yatra' where host of rites and rituals are prescribed and have to be adhered to. In short, WARI is synonymous with annual pilgrimage on foot to PANDHARPUR and the WARKARI refers to the ardent devotee of Lord Vitthal.[1]

Keywords: Pandharpur; Warkari; Worship; Social aspect; Complaints.

Introduction

The Pandharpur yatra is held on Aashadi Ekadashi (June- July). One of the most famous pilgrimages in Maharashtra, Pandharpur Ashadhi Ekadashi Wari has been taking place for more than 700 years. This is a religious padyatra is comprised of over 1 million pilgrims traveling for 21 days to Vithoba temple by foot. Numerous palkhis (processions) from various towns and villages join the main palkhi that starts from Sant Tukaram Temple at Dehu in Pune district. The yatra culminates at the Vithoba temple on

Ashadi Ekadasi at Pandharpur. The annual Pandharpur Yatra to the famous Vithoba Temple at Pandarpur in Maharashtra is an unparalleled pilgrimage that breaks the barriers of caste, creed, rich and poor. The main rituals are performed in the early morning (0300hrs).[1]

There is no definite information available on the origins of this "wari" tradition, which is a pilgrimage on foot to Pandharpur. However, there are some references about Vitthalpant, Saint Dnyaneshwar's father joining the Wari to visit Pandharpur in the month of Aashaad & Kartik (October / November). So it can be inferred that the state of Maharashtra has seen this tradition being followed since the last 800 years. The pilgrims known as "warkaris" started the main pilgrimage on 23rd of June from Dehu in Pune district on foot, carrying the palkhi (palanquin) of Saint Tukaram, a renowned devotee of Lord Vitthala, a form of Lord Vishnu. This main procession was joined by other palkhis from other towns and villages like the famous Saint Dnyaneshwar palkhi from Alandi. On their way, the pilgrims

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played musical instruments like veenas, mridungas, dholkis and chiplis. The pilgrims also played the traditional folk dance “fugdi” with their infectious enthusiasm and energy. With the saffron coloured triangular ‘paatakas’ (flags) in hands and tulsii leaves on their heads the pilgrims presented a perfect picture of the Bhakti tradition of Maharashtra. These devout pilgrims got the reward for their long journey when they witnessed the “maha puja” of Lord Vitthala and his concert Rukhmini in Pandharpur on the Ashadi Ekadashi day. The maha puja was performed by Maharashtra chief minister Prithviraj Chavan and his wife Satyashila, as is the custom. Speaking to reporters after the puja, the chief minister said that that he prayed to lord Vitthala for good rains across the state for farmers’ prosperity, and the state’s development in all fronts.[2]

One of the most famous pilgrimages in India, Pandharpur Ashadhi Ekadashi Wari has been taking place for more than 700 years. The annual Pandharpur Yatra to the famous Vithoba Temple at Pandarpur in Maharashtra is an unparalleled phenomenon that breaks the barriers of caste, creed, rich and poor; which are so deeply rooted in the society. More than 40 ‘Palkhis’ (palanquins) form a major part of the procession during the pilgrimage. The pilgrims follow the tradition of carrying the paduka (footwear) of the saints in a palanquin. This annual pilgrimage is a 21-day trek and culminates on the Ekadashi, that is the eleventh day after the full moon in the month Ashadh (June - July) according to the Hindu lunar calendar. The Warkaris, as the pilgrims are called, walk their way to Pandharpur and spend their nights in the



camps set up in different villages en route. The local people from these villages make arrangements to lodge and feed the Warkaris, a scene of unadulterated humanity.[3,4]

The Warkaris give up all the wordly pleasures and comforts, during their journey to Pandharpur.

They uphold a strict vegetarian diet throughout and observe fasts during the pilgrimage. During this journey the Warkaris always address each other as ‘Mauli’ (mother like) and never use their real names. Most of the saints are fondly called as Mauli, thus breaking the wall between God and a human being. It is a belief that these saints still travel as a part of the Wari, through the Every year pilgrims from all over the Maharashtra gather together in Alandi-Dewachi and Dehu to do wari from alandi to souls of the other Warkaris.[5]

Materials and Methods

The study was undertaken by PDVVP’s Medical college, Ahmednagar during period of July 07, 2013 to July 12, 2013(6 days) so as to include all pilgrims passing from Manmad - Shirdi highway during this period.

Total 963 pilgrims were included in study and all pilgrims were classified according to their complaints so as to include:

Inclusion criterion

- All pilgrims passing from Manmad - Shirdi Highway during period of July 07,

2013 to July 12, 2013(6 days).

Exclusion criterion

- pilgrims less than 10 years of age and more than 90 years of age
- pilgrims having chronic illness interfering with common complaints.

Observations

Total number of patients were 963 of which 592 (61.47%) were males and 371 (38.52%) were females (Table 1). Five hundred (51.92%) pilgrims were farmer, 126 (13.08%) were servant(Govt. and private sector), 49 were businessmen, 288 (29.90%) were from non specific group.

The most common complaints of pilgrims

Table 1: Agewise Distribution of total pilgrims. (n=963)

Age in years	No of cases		
	Male	Female	Total
10-20	07	04	11
21-30	27	21	48
31-40	100	70	170
41-50	190	106	296
51-60	160	109	269
61-70	98	56	154
71-80	07	05	12
81-90	03	00	03
TOTAL	592	371	963

Table 2: Distribution of pilgrims according to muscular pain involvement

Part involved	No of cases		
	Male	Female	Total
Upper limb	145	59	204
Lower limb	200	110	310
Chest	07	03	10
TOTAL	352	172	524

Table 3: Distribution of pilgrims according to joint involvement

Joint involved	No of cases		
	Male	Female	Total
Spine	66	54	120
Hip	05	02	07
Knee and Ankle	95	110	205
Shoulder	08	07	15
Elbow and wrist	15	06	21
TOTAL	189	179	368

Table 4: Distribution of pilgrims according to Common Complaints

	No of cases		
	Male	Female	Total
Non specific pain	05	05	10
Respiratory tract infection	132	53	185
Mouth ulcer	08	07	15
Gasritis(Hyperacidity)	44	56	100
Skin Allergies	28	12	40
Leg ulcers	12	08	20
Loose motion	23	32	55
Headache	44	16	60
Fever	20	15	35
Nausea Vommiting	05	15	20
Tingling , Numbness	08	02	10
breathlessness	17	08	25
TOTAL	346	229	575

was muscular pain. 524 (54.41%) out of 963 pilgrims had muscular pain (Table 2).

Joint pain is second common complaint amongst pilgrims with 368 (38.21%) out of 963 had joint pain distribution as per Table 3.

Remaining 575 (59.70%) out of total 963 pilgrims had other complaints as per table 4

All pilgrims were screened according to their complaints and tables are made so as to highlight common complaint.

Discussion

Every year Warkaris walk hundreds of miles to the holy town of Pandharpur, gathering there on *ekadashi* (the 11th day) of the Hindu lunar calendar month of Aashaadha (which falls sometime between late June to July in the Gregorian Calendar). Warkaris making the pilgrimage to Pandharpur carry the *palkhis* (palanquins) of the Saints from their places of *Samadhi*. According to historians, Vitthal devotees were holding pilgrimages prior to the 13th century.

In the present times , many devotees, come from all over Maharashtra to Pandharpur. All age group male -females irrespective of caste -religion, economic, social status come to Pandharpur by walking. In this study we have tried to get a preliminary report regarding their complaints. It was surprising report that in our study we have seen both the age group of



persons walking to Pandharpur in wari. In pediatric age group total 11 children were participated where as 170 senior citizens was walking in wari esp. 3 Warkaris were in the age group of 81-90 yrs. Many of them were farmers also few from government retired person and businessman. Major complaints we got from this study of only muscle/joint pain. Irrespective of distance not single warkari had cardiac or breathing difficulties in any age group. By analgesics and physiotherapy they got the relief of muscle and joint complaints.

References

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2. RC Dhere. Sri Vitthala: Ek Mahasamanvaya. Pune: Srividya; 1984, 53.
3. Much of the etymological information that follows is from PR Behere, Vithobache Rajya. Mumbai: Karnatak Prakashan; 1964, 72-6.
4. BP Bahirat. Varkari Sampraday: Uday va Vikas. Pune: Venus; 1988, 23-4.
5. Bharatiya Sanskriti Kosha, ed. Mahadevashastri Joshi. Pune: Bharatiya Sanskriti Kosha Mandala; 1993, 607-8.
6. Bahirat observes: 'In the Punjab region, many people from downtrodden communities like Shimpi, Tanka Kshatriya, Shripa, Darjee, Jassal, Tippee, Sappal, Kaitha, Bhatta have reverence for Namdev. They feel that Namdev helped them to achieve a raised or uplifted status for good living'; Varkari Sampraday, 50.
7. Adapted from Sri Jnanadeva's Bhavartha Dipika, 671.