Warkari tradition

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Why is in news? Union Minister Nitin Gadkari conducts aerial survey of 'palkhi marg' between Dehu and Pandharpur in Maharashtra

Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways conducted an aerial survey of the 'palkhi marg' (palanquin route) **between Dehu in Pune and Pandharpur in Solapur** district of Maharashtra that thousands of Vithoba devotees, also known as **'warkaris'**, traverse by foot.

The warkari-tradition is a **non-Brahamanical tradition** or a **bhakti movement**, which worships Vithoba, also known as Vitthal, who is regarded as a **form of Vishnu or Krishna**.

Vithoba is often depicted as a dark young boy, standing arms akimbo on a brick, sometimes accompanied by his **main consort Rakhumai**.

The Varkari-tradition is geographically associated with the Indian states of **Maharashtra and northern Karnataka**.

Saints and gurus of the bhakti movement associated with the Warkaris include **Dnyaneshwar, Namdev, Chokhamela, Eknath, and Tukaram, Gadge Maharaj** all of whom are accorded the title of Sant.

Pandharpur Wari or Wari (Vari) is an **annual pilgrimage (yatra) to Pandharpur** - the seat of the Hindu god Vithoba in Maharashtra, in honour of the deity. The tradition is more than 700 to 800 years old.

Palakhis (palanquin processions) carrying the paduka (foot prints) of various saints - most notably Dnyaneshwar and Tukaram - from the Varkari (Warkari) sect (which venerates Vithoba), are taken from their respective shrines to Pandharpur.

The warkari movement includes a **duty-based approach** towards life, emphasising moral behaviour and strict avoidance of alcohol and tobacco, The adoption of a **strict lacto-vegetarian diet** and fasting on Ekadashi day (twice a month), **self-restraint** (brahmacharya) during student life, equality and humanity for all rejecting discrimination based on the caste system or wealth, the reading of Hindu texts, the **recitation of the Haripath** every day and the regular practice of bhajan and kirtan.