



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Warkaris

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Why is in news? Warkaris walk 250 km to worship Lord Vitthal at Pandharpur in Maharashtra with faith and joy during their annual pilgrimage

The tradition goes back 700 to 800 years.

It is a community or sect in the **state of Maharashtra** which is **associated with the bhakti spiritual tradition** of Hinduism since the thirteenth-century CE.

The word warkari is explained as a combination of two words. War is an abbreviation of wari, which means pilgrimage, and kari is the one who performs the pilgrimage.

This sect recognizes **as many as fifty poet-saints**. Some of the saints associated with this community are **Dnyaneshwar, Namdev, Chokhamela, Eknath, and Tukaram**.

They worship the **deity of Pandharpur**, known as **Bhagwan Vitthal or Vithoba**. He is regarded as a **form of god Vishnu**.

They wear Tulsi-mala, a string/rosary made of the sacred Tulsi beads.

Their **annual pilgrimage** is called **wari** on the auspicious occasion of Ashadi Ekadashi.

On this day of pilgrimage, 11th day of Ashadha (as per Hindu lunar calendar), the people belonging to this sect gather in Pandharpur.

People in organized groups, called **Dindis**, observe many celebrations like fugadi dance, collective singing, dancing, chanting.

The pilgrims **walk a distance of about 250 km** in three weeks covering the districts of Pune, Satara and Solapur. Along the way, they chant the Lord's name (nam japa), sing holy songs (abhang) and read sacred texts (haripath).

The warkaris, bearing palanquins carrying footprints of the saints, must ensure that they reach Pandharpur on the sacred day of Ashadhi Ekadashi.

On reaching the temple town, warkaris pray and complete their journey with a **sacred dip in the river Chandrabhaga**.

Palkhi festival is also celebrated.

This community follows duty based life style which emphasise on moral behaviour. Hence it involves in activities and values like -

Strict avoidance of consumption of substances alcohol and tobacco.

Eating a sattvic diet – without onion and garlic.

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Fasting twice a month on Ekadashi day (11th day according to lunar calendar).

Practicing celibacy during student life.

Preaching equality and humanity for all.

Regular practice of bhajan and kirtan.

Promoting the values of peaceful coexistence, compassion, nonviolence and love.

Palkhi:

It is a **1000-year-old Maharashtrian tradition** of warkari panth.

It is a 22 days festival which falls in June.

They carry Tulsi saplings and paduka (sandals) of saints Tukaram and Dnyaneshwar in a Palkhi (palanquins) from their places of Samadhi (Enlightenment or "spiritual birth") to Pandharpur.

The **Padukas** are considered as the **symbolic footwear of Sant Tukaram Maharaj and Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj**.

Women Warkaris carry 'tulsi' or drinking water in pots on their heads.

Sant Tukaram:

He is also known as **Tuka, Tukobaraya, Tukoba** in Maharashtra,

He was a 17th-century Marathi Poet -Saint of Bhakti tradition who was born in a village named Dehu.

A devoted devotee of Vitthal, he wrote **Abhanga poetry** in Marathi and emphasised on devotional congregations and kirtans.

He raised his voice **against caste and gender discrimination** and **preached the values of egalitarianism**.

His teachings were **based on philosophy of Vedanta**.