



Temple  
atmosphere  
**JEJURI**







Special Project

**Visual  
Ethnography  
at Jejuri**

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M.Des.

Visual Communication

**Guide**

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## Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources.

I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/ data/ fact/ source in my submission.

I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

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January – May 2010



## Approval Sheet

The Visual Communication Special Project titled —  
“Temple Atmosphere at Jejuri” by Vallabh Munshi, Roll  
number 08625003 is approved towards partial fulfilment of  
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Design in Visual Communication.

Project Guide

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Industrial Design Centre  
Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay  
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I would like to thank Riyaz Sheikh and Sujana, who were quite enthusiastic about the project and gave me leads in Jejuri which proved to be of great help.

*Jadhav pujari* who took his time out and introduced me to the god and the temple which made things simpler in the latter days of my project.

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Parents for their unconditional love and support.





## Temple Atmosphere

In India, the religion is an inherited pattern, and it becomes a part of a man's space, time and soul. Religion has the most fascinating things to offer, to name a few are food, festivals, clothes, language and even scripts.

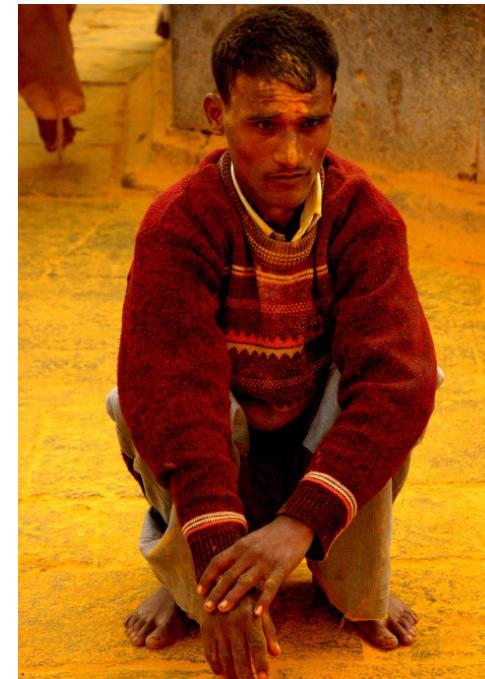
All the gods seem to have blessed certain locations on earth during their *yugas*, Lord *Rama* blessed *Ayodhya* and Lord *Krishna* blessed *Dwarka*, just their mere contact with the land have given birth to uncountable number of holy places. One of the things that man can do to prove his *bhakti* and get blessed is to visit these holy places, and the time to visit him is always right, it could be an exam, after the wedding, a holiday, an important achievement, some times even when nearing death! Also, it is believed that gods have some important dates when they are in a good mood, it could be particular day in the week, his birthday or a certain position of the moon. This has produced a very important activity for religious men which is called the pilgrimage. It has further effects



on society, business and economy of a whole region.

Pilgrimage destinations have the most intriguing faces, faith is the driving force and people seem to have a strong belief that supernatural powers actually control their destinies.

An observation is that the people who have a rationale in their daily lives become either eccentric or naive while on a pilgrimage. Suddenly, god becomes the objective and priests become the bosses, nothing else matters. Man is ready to stretch himself to limits for a simple *darshan* or a ceremony in the temple.



## Visual Ethnography

Ethnography is a qualitative research method often used in the social sciences, particularly in anthropology and in sociology. It is often employed for gathering empirical data on human societies/cultures. Data collection is often done through participant observation, interviews, questionnaires, etc. Ethnography aims to describe the nature of those who are studied (i.e. to describe a people, an ethnos) through writing.<sup>1</sup>

Visual Ethnography aims to describe the nature of those who are studied through a whole range of methods for collecting data. Photography, filmmaking, notes, fieldwork are some of them. The strength of visuals in communicating a socio-logical context is unparalleled. Unlike text, images have more than one potential meaning. In fact, there is no end to meaning-making. These studies are usually holistic, founded on the idea that people are best understood in the fullest possible context. So an ethnographer lives among the people who are the subject of study,

learning the local language and participating in their everyday life while striving to maintain a degree of objective detachment. While detailed written notes are the mainstay of fieldwork, tape recorders, cameras or video recorders are also used because the beauty of everyday activities is best 'seen' and cannot be explicitly described in mere words.<sup>2</sup>

### Visual Ethnography at Jejuri

I reached Jejuri clad in my regular T-shirt jeans, shoes and carrying a back-pack. As I started wandering around and talking to people, I sensed some hostility among them, which was probably due to the urban attire which I had. The first thing that I did after finding a lodge was to change to a simple shirt, trousers and *chappals*. I didn't even carry a camera for the first few days because people would doubt what I did with the photographs. Knowing the local language was a big advantage, and I could easily understand

their conversations. I spoke with all sorts of people who contributed to the atmosphere at Jejuri like the priests, local vendors, businessmen like lodge owners and restaurant owners.

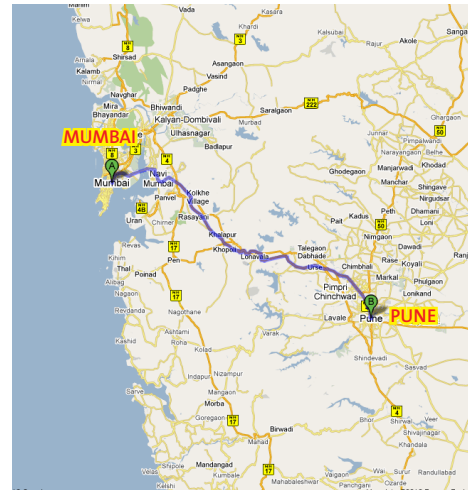
Once the people got friendly and comfortable, collecting data became simple. They were not conscious in front of the camera and I was able to capture life in its natural state. I have used audio recorder and a still camera extensively in this particular project.

I believe that still images capture and stress upon particular moments, and when two or more such images as juxtaposed, they are able to give a comparative account. Series or a sequence of images or photo essays are a good medium to communicate and tell stories.

## Reaching Jejuri

### Mumbai to Pune

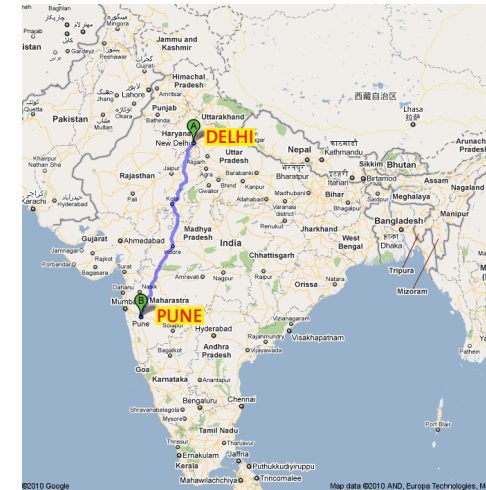
Pune is about 150 km from Mumbai. Reaching Pune takes about 3 hours by road and about 4 hours by rail. The Mumbai - Pune mega highway is the fastest and the most comfortable route to Pune. Buses of all kinds i.e. economy, semi-luxury and air conditioned buses including volvos run on the highway. The train is also another option.



Route: Mumbai to Pune <sup>3</sup>

### Delhi to Pune

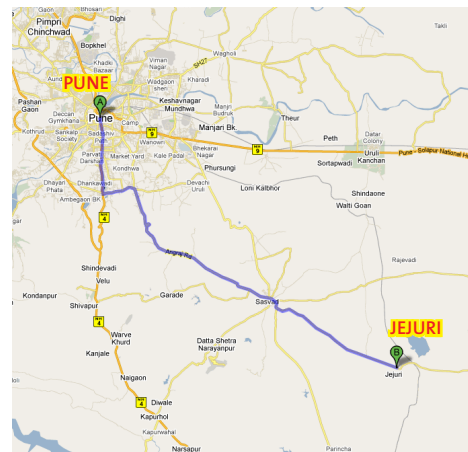
Pune is about 1300 km from Delhi and is well connected by air, rail and road. Transport by rail/ road takes about 24 hrs.



Route: New Delhi to Pune <sup>3</sup>

### Pune to Jejuri

Jejuri is quite close from Pune, about 48 km distance or 75 minutes time. The frequency of buses from Pune is quite high, so one can travel in it almost at anytime except for a few hours in the night. Buses which go to *Pandharpur*, *Phaltan* or *Baramati* can drop off people at Jejuri. Pune Municipal Transport buses ply till Saswad which is 10 km away from Jejuri.



Route: Pune to Jejuri <sup>3</sup>



An ST bus at Jejuri.

A state bus is the cheapest mode of travel to Jejuri from Pune, it takes less time and the frequency is also quite good. It is also comfortable if it is not crowded.



## Jejuri

Jejuri is one of the famous temples in Maharashtra. Popularly known as ‘Khandobachi Jejuri’ — it is one of the major Gods in Maharashtra. Jejuri is to the South – East of Pune towards Phaltan. The temple of Khandoba is situated on a small hill, so can be seen from the approaching road.

As the temple is on the hill, one has to climb almost 200 steps. The climb is not so tough, and it is worth the breathtaking view of the town.

Jejuri can be abstractly separated into the following parts for the sake of study viz.

1. The highway
2. The market area
  - 2.A. On the street
  - 2.B. On the steps of *Jejuri-gad*
4. Temple complex

These parts have been elaborated in the following pages.



View of Jejuri from the temple

## The Highway

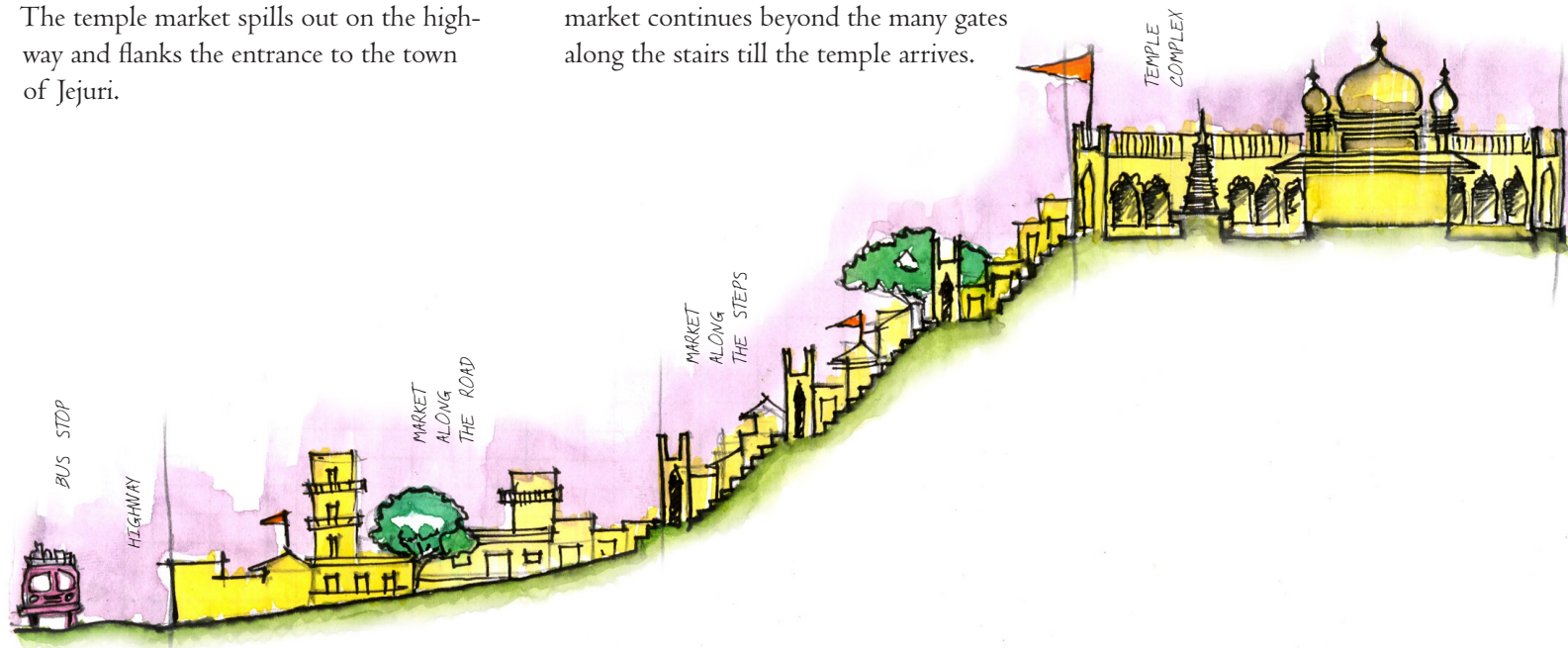
The highway running through Jejuri connects to *Pune* on one end and *Phaltan* or *Pandharpur* on the other. This highway offers a range of road-side bars, restaurants, and motels. Buses of all sizes, trucks, jeeps and bullock carts bring in people to Jejuri. A typical state government bus-stop and its compound harbours almost all of these vehicles. The temple market spills out on the highway and flanks the entrance to the town of Jejuri.

## The Market area

The market squeezes the road to the temple from both sides, all that can be seen are shops after shops, selling flowers, sweets and trinkets. There are eateries and lodges here and there which thrive on pilgrims. This market is the point where the walk to the temple starts, and is a haven for a lot of locals which range from priests, vendors, bards and beggars. This market continues beyond the many gates along the stairs till the temple arrives.

## Temple complex

The scent of turmeric fills the air and the fine yellow dust settles on everybody and everything. Happy families and shy couples are seen circumambulating (*pradakshina*) the shrine. People chant verses, ring bells and wait eagerly in the long-long queues for the *darshana*.



## To Spot A Temple

Temples sit like kings on hills or relatively higher grounds, the holy *shikbara* of the temple also pushes its height. The obvious purpose being that a pilgrim could spot it easily, another not-so-obvious purpose is that the temple could announce its presence in a particular territory.

Come 2010 AD, and our naive temples are threatened by buildings of brick and concrete which are stretching their dimensions way beyond everything else. I thought that one would need to do a bit of hunting for *Khandobachi Jejuri*, but as the bus pulls into a dusty bus stop, a huge neon sign comes to the rescue and relieves me from all the inquiry. The temple can be seen from far away, even before the town of *Jejuri* arrives! And, in the day, the temple cannot be missed as it is perched on a hill which overlooks the highway. The temple is within a fort which has the distinct characteristics of thick, high walls and huge gateways.



A still from the film *Lagaan* showing a temple



A typical neon sign



Temple on the hill





A neon sign showing the way to the temple

The two things that are inseparable from Jejuri are Khandoba and turmeric (*baldi*). Temple atmosphere at Jejuri cannot be explained before describing these two.

## Khandoba

The name *Khandoba* comes from the words *khadga* (sword), the weapon used by *Khandoba* to kill the demons, and *ba* (father).

Legend has it that the two demons *Malla* and *Mani* ruled somewhere on the earth, they grew powerful day by day and *Mani* impressed lord *Bramha* with his penance, and earned powers which made him invincible, and power in wrong hands always had disastrous effects. *Mani* wasn't an exception, he harassed men and women, saints and priests, he even challenged the gods! Life had become hell for everybody.

But, one can always trust the Hindu lessons in which evil has always been defeated by gods and heros. The famous

words by Krishna in Mahabharata— ‘*Yada yad hi dharmasya glanir bhavati Bharata*’ Which meant something like this: “Whenever the balance of the universe is disturbed by external interference from any of its parts, then I reveal myself as the power of eternal balancing. For the protection of those who are in harmony, and the rectification of everything disharmonious, I incarnate myself at every juncture of time”



Representation of Khandoba killing the demons.

So this time as the poor earthlings approached the gods they were directed from one god to another and then finally to lord Shiva, who agreed to help. Shiva assumed the *avatar* of *Martanda Bhairava*, or Khandoba, riding the Nandi bull, leading an army of the gods. *Martanda Bhairava* is described as shining like the gold and sun, covered in turmeric, three-eyed, with a crescent moon on his forehead.

In a popular oleograph representation of Khandoba, Mhalsa (his wife) is seated in front of Khandoba on his white horse. Mhalsa is piercing a demon's chest with a spear, while a dog is biting his thigh and the horse is hitting his head. The other demon is grabbing the reins of the horse and attacking Khandoba with a club as Khandoba is dismounting the horse and attacking the demon with his sword. In murtis, Khandoba is depicted as having four arms, carrying a *damaru* (drum), *Trishula* (trident), *Bhandara-patra* (turmeric powder-filled bowl) and *khadga* (sword). Khandoba's images are often dressed as a maratha sardar, or a Muslim Pathan. A lingam is also a common symbol for Shiva.





A painting of Khandoba on the temple walls



Representation of Khandoba on the Shikhara



An Idol of Khandoba at *Kadepathar*



## Turmeric

Devotees always made some agreements with god in return of success or fulfilment of their wishes. Once that was done, the devotees would happily offer gold and silver coins, even today millions of devotees make offerings in return of success, but it was not quite reasonable for

everybody to offer gold and silver, so they offer dry coconut pieces (*khobra*), along with it is the yellow turmeric. Offering turmeric/ *haldi*, *bel-patra* and *khobra* is considered as the ultimate *bhakti* towards lord Shiva, so these things are seen every where in Jejuri. Some devotees bring

it from home while some buy it in the streets and markets of Jejuri itself. The most peculiar thing about this is the way turmeric is offered to god, it is thrown in the air due to which it settles everywhere. Turmeric is applied or rather smeared on the entire forehead.



The idol of Khandoba covered in yellow turmeric

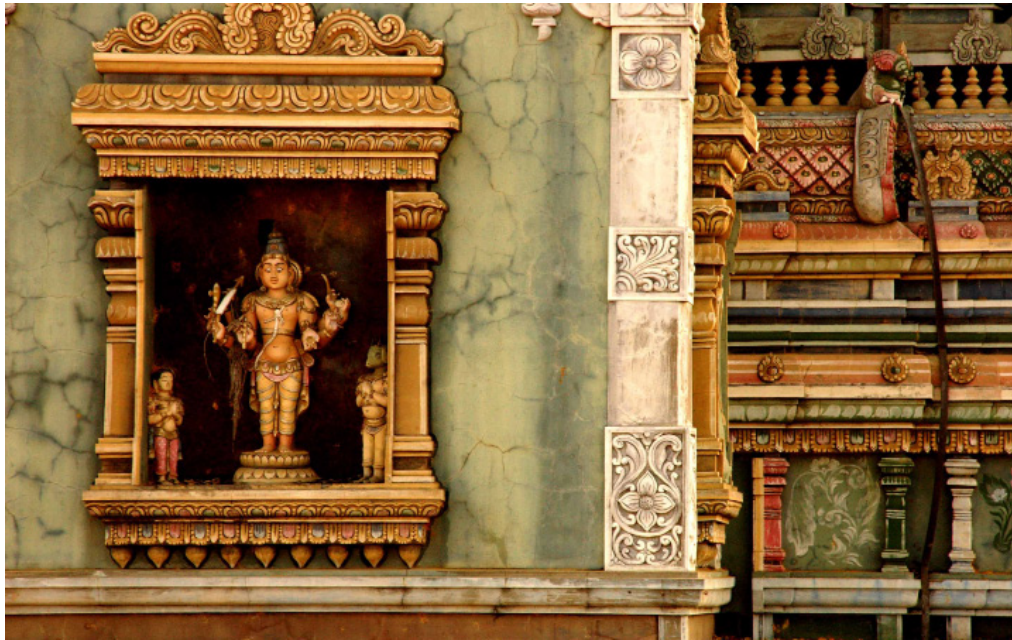


On the forehead



The idol of Khandoba covered in yellow turmeric





Details on the shikhara



Silhouette of the shikhara



The Temple

## Khandoba's Temple

The temple can be divided into the *Mandapa* and *Gabhara*. The *shikhara* is fairly detailed out and has fine sculptures comparable to the best temples in India, the colours and the paintings on the shikhara look like the ones in south Indian temple – *Vimanas*.

The profile resembles to that of a mosque, probably because the new temple was built during the presence of Mughals in India and art and architecture is always influenced by The *mandapa* area remains simple. A huge tortoise which is beleived to be made up of the *panch dbatu* lies humbly in front of the entrance to the temple. The *Tali-Bhandara aarti* is generally done while sitting on this tortoise.



Temple complex



## The fort of Jejuri

The temple of Jejuri is within small fortification. The temple and the fort architecture belongs to the time of Shivaji and Aurangzeb which is around 1625 - 1700 AD, later on, it has undergone renovations during the times of Peshwas

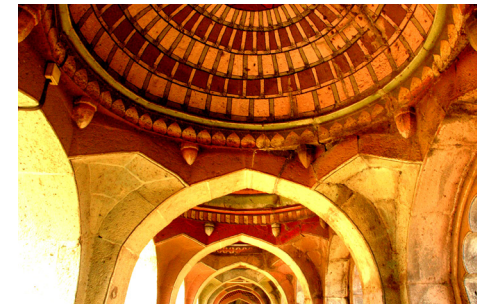
and Ahilyabai Holkar. The thick walls, the heavy gates, and the defensive architecture make it evident that Jejuri and its wealth had to be protected from the Mughal aggression. Jejuri had a strategic importance for the Marathas as it is a

good vantage point owing to its location and elevation.

Ironically, the fort had a lot to borrow from the Mughal architecture, the arches are a good example of the influence.



Rear side of the fort



The arches



Inside the entrance gate



Entrance gateway to the temple complex





The demon *Mani*



Dogs are sacred in Jejuri



The demon *Mallya*

## Associates of *Khandoba*

Anybody featured in the story of *Khandoba* and his life becomes sacred, even if they are the bad guys.

*Khandoba* had some sidekicks, a loyal dog and a horse who helped him in defeating the demons *Mani* and *Mallya*. So today, any living dog or a horse in or around the temple complex is considered sacred, these holy animals are smeared with *baldi*, which is almost the same treatment given to anything that is sacred and belongs to the god. There is also a small stable for horses, which is the vehicle of *Khandoba*. The stable is on the way to the temple. People feel duty-bound do a small prayer or at least throw a handful of *baldi*.

I consider these as value additions which make the place visually rich and integrate the whole atmosphere. A fine visual hierarchy is observed here, where the god is at the top followed by demi-gods, priests, sacred objects and it ends with us, the devotees or the tourists..

## And associates of Shiva

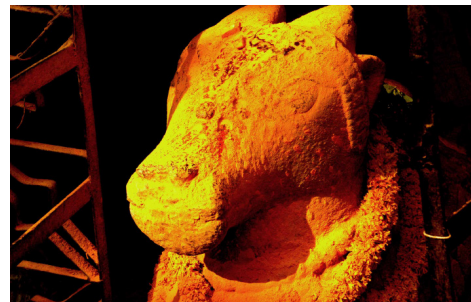
A tortoise in Shiva Temples has a symbolic significance to inspire the devotees in their spiritual practice. A tortoise has the ability to withdraw all its limbs and head completely within its shell. This symbolically inspires a spiritual aspirant to withdraw all his senses from the material world.

Further when a tortoise lays eggs, it has a peculiar way of hatching them. She does not sit on top of them to hatch them but focuses her attention by constantly looking at them. The energy from her eyes hatches the eggs. This inspires a spiritual aspirant to focus all his attention one pointedly towards Lord Shiva. Also the importance of 'Darshan', focussing ones attention on the image or the Lingam of Shiva, is explained by the symbolic use of a tortoise in the temple.<sup>7</sup>

'Nandi', the bull is Shiva's vehicle. Nandi is a symbol of 'Dharma' or righteous living. It also symbolizes 'Will Power' and 'Strength' which help in one's spiritual practice.



Tortoise facing the image of Shiva



Nandi the bull



A small Nandi





A Typical priest



A Typical priest



A priest performing Tali-Bhandara

## Priests & Prayers

The priests in Jejuri have the most atypical attire, first of all they aren't Brahmins, which is the case in most of the temples. The priests here are generally dressed in a white *kurta-pyjama*, and wear Gandhi cap. Sometimes they loose their kurta and are happy to be in their vest because they have to work in heat and claustrophobic environments. Now, Some priests have started putting saffrons scarf around themselves probably to look more convincing.

The priests perform many *poojas* and ceremonies the basic ones are *abbishek*, *aarti* and they most common and unique one is the *Tali-Bhandara*. The *Tali-Bhandara* has the most interesting sights, this involves a family or a group of people sitting in a huddle around the priests and repeating phrases in Marathi after him. There is a point at which everybody yells in unison and throws handfuls of turmeric and dry coconut in the air. And on busy day like Sunday, there are many such explosions which cover the entire temple complex in a fine dust of turmeric.





A priest performing Tali-Bhandara

## His Devotees

### ‘Dhangars’

Khandoba is regarded as the ‘God of Jejuri’ and is held in great reverence by the Dhangars, one of the oldest tribes in India. Lord Krishna was a shepherd and a Dhangar, and Jejuri is considered as the *kul-daivat* of Krishna. <sup>4</sup>

In addition to the Dhangars, the cult of Khandoba in the Deccan principally consists of peasant classes: Marathas and Kunabis, shepherd Dhangars, ex-criminal Ramoshis, the former “untouchable” Mahars and Mangs, fisher-folk Kolis, balutedar castes like gardeners and tailors and nominally a few Brahmins and Muslims. He is worshipped by tribals, ‘untouchables’, Brahmins, farmers, robbers, kings, merchants, pastoral castes, Jains, Lingayats and even Muslims. He is viewed as a “king” of his followers. Deshastha Brahmins, as well as the royal families like Gaikwads and Holkars worship *Khandoba* as their family deity (*Kuldevta*). <sup>5</sup>



A Dhangar

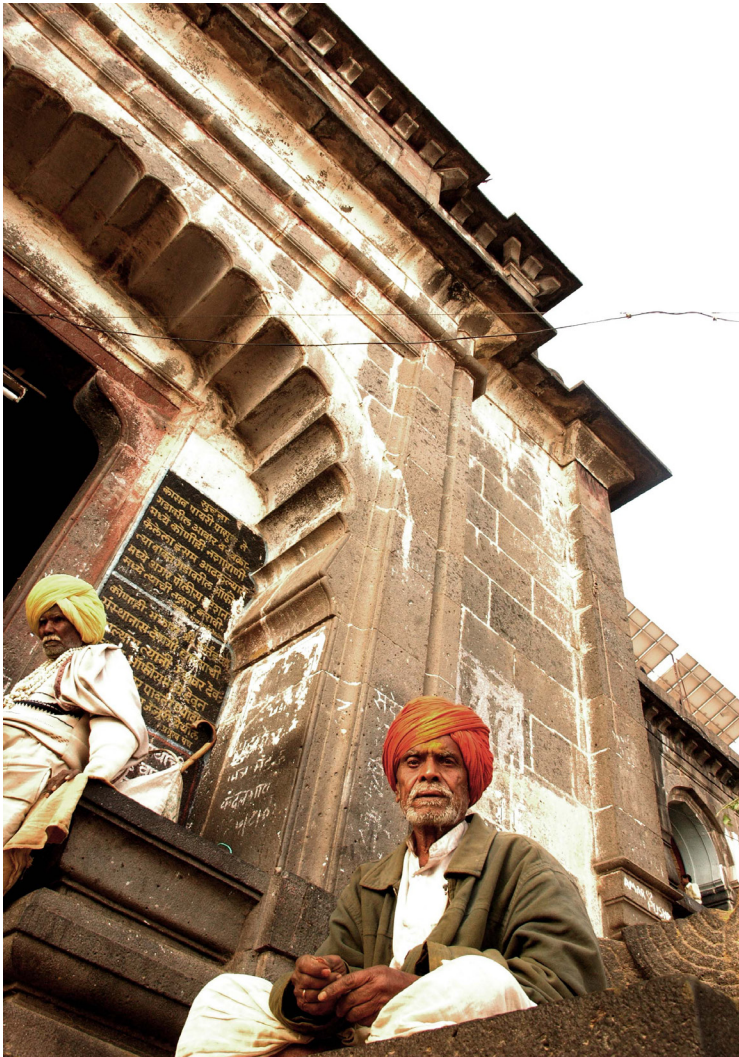


A farmer



Circumambulating the temple





People at Jejuri







A couple circumambulating the shrine



A couple performing *Tali Bhandara aarti*.



A family performing *Tali Bhandara aarti*.

## Couples & Clans

Any wedding ceremony is considered to be incomplete until the couple visits Jejuri or any other temple of the god Khandoba. These couples have a religious compulsion to perform the *Tali-Bhandara* at Jejuri. Newly married couples are quite naive and are so shy that they don't even talk to each other alone the intimidating priests. They are like a prize catch for the priests and other people in Jejuri. So they easily fall in for demands and are ready to pay any price to be blessed with a happily married life.

People come to get their newborns blessed. Entire families, clans, farmers, businessmen keep visiting Jejuri to seek blessings whenever they feel the need for it. All Hindu homes have a small place of worship, disciples of *khandoba* have his idol, but in order to make it sacred they need to perform ceremonies at *Jejuri* after which they can establish a place of worship at home or anywhere else.

## The sacred

The fear and faith of humans on anything godlike has some of its own effects. People have become so complaisant that they fail to understand the difference between the genuine and the phony. All that some of them do is to sit by the side

of something sacred and humbly demand some alms. People don't mind tossing a few coins. But the 'so called priests' have started making this an income generating activity. They even work in shifts. Morning and evenings!



A holy man



A man by a tortoise in the morning.



A lady by the same tortoise in the evening.





A man sitting by the entrance



A lady sitting along the steps

## Bhiksha

In Hinduism, *bhiksha* is a devotional offering, usually food, presented at a temple or to a swami or a religious Brahmin who in turn provides a religious service (*karmkand*) or instruction.<sup>6</sup>

Here, there are no Brahmins and there

is no religious service, just a smudge of haldi or tilak on a forehead is all you get. The desired *bhiksha* is generally money.

Here some people are quite helpless and genuine, while some people do quite a lot of antics to fetch your attention to get some cash or kind.



People along the corners



## Bards

The most interesting, hardworking, and genuine people that I have come across in Jejuri are the bards. They sit along the stairway which lead to the temple complex. They take their particular positions early in the morning and keep singing till late evenings.

Pilgrims sit patiently in front of these bards and listen to their songs after which they offer a maximum of 10 rupees. The bards narrate the folklore of *Khandoba* and *Jejuri* in the forms of songs in a tribal Marathi language which is supported by a string instrument (*tun-tuna*) and a percussion instrument (*sambal*).

Sometimes there are families of bards who work together, even children as young as 5 year old are involved in the singing, this is an evidence of the fact that this particular art form has been passed down in generations.



A man singing



A man waiting for his day to start



A child singing



A queue of devotees on a Sunday



A queue of devotees on a Sunday



Jejuri on a Sunday

## Sunday

Throughout Maharashtra, Sunday is considered as the day of the *Malhari*. People flock in on this particular auspicious day of the week.

The true spirit of Jejuri can be seen only on a Sunday. This day being a public holiday adds to the number of devotees coming in, automatically the number of vendors, priests and other people also increase. Jejuri starts looking like a colour full fair. The pictures below show the change in the temple atmosphere on a Sunday compared to any other day in the week.



Jejuri on a Monday



## Market

The market is unavoidable, It squeezes all the routes to the temples. Since most of the people are on a holiday/pilgrimage budget, they don't mind spending some money on offerings to god, some



Charms



Trinkets

souvenirs and puja material for home. The local vendors thrive on the pilgrims, they compete with each other and try their best to woo some customers. The scene becomes even more chaotic on

Sundays or other important days when the number of pilgrims is huge. The people have also started depending on these vendors, because now all things are available ready-made.



Flower vendors by the foot hill

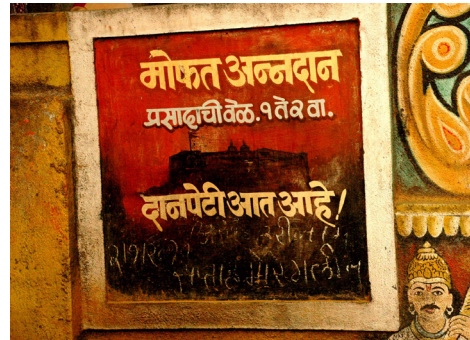




## Signs

Signboards, signs and instructions from through out the ages can be seen here. Some of the signs date back to as much as 1698 AD, i.e. during the time of Ahilyabai Holkar. It is good to see old and outdated signs which give a hint of how the temple atmosphere might have been back then.

Although these signages may be foreign to the architecture but they are still a part of the temple atmosphere. Apart from giving instructions, they talk about the dynamic activities that happen in and around the temple complex and the town.

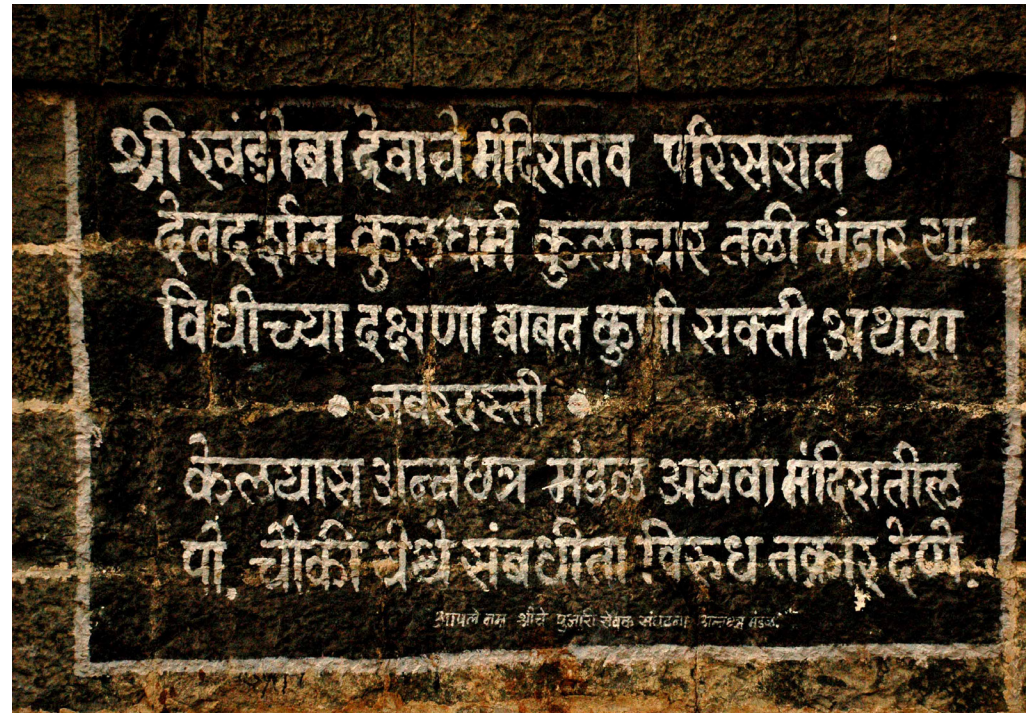






Most of these signs are warnings, prohibitions and instructions, if one ponders why these signs are here in the first place, im sure he/ she would be able to visualise the probable conditions prevailing in the temple complex.

It also shows the presence of different people who actively take part in the temple environment. These particular signs indicate the way people behave naturally and the reason why these written instructions belong here, perhaps to bring about order and discipline.

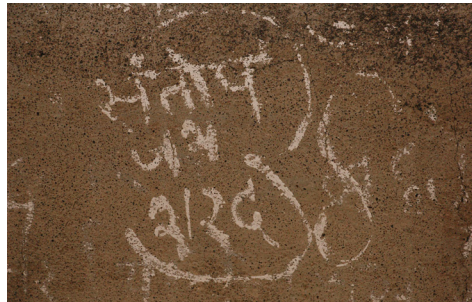




## More signs

It is difficult to see a monument of historical importance which is immune to vandalism. It is even more difficult to understand what pleasure people get when they deface public property that too which is of cultural importance. Perhaps people are under an impressions that scribbling on the walls could make them famous, or make their names immortal.

This page is dedicated to Santosh, Sharad, Vivek More, Mali and Ganpat from Baroda, A certain couple with the initials S and N, and certain others whose names I cannot read.



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