



Research Paper - Geography

# Spatial Organization of Holy Places In Maharashtra

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Spatial organization lies very much the heart of most geographical investigation. Geographer study mans reaction to space and gives more attention to fact of distributional phenomena. The common concern of issue in cultural and religious studies is the distribution of sacred sites; while there is a tendency to think of sacred space in term of site and location; religious routs bear analysis as well. Maharashtra has a long tradition of tolerance and symbiotic interaction with different region faith. The imprint of region on the landscape of Maharashtra is visible in the form of shrines belonging to various creeds and castes. In this present state they also reflect the cultural impact of the various periods of history.

The spatial pattern of holy places is characterized by their uneven distribution in Maharashtra. Physiographic; social; cultural as well as political elements are influenced on the distribution of holy places in Maharashtra. Mainly the concentration of holy places has seen in the Bhima and the Godawari river basin and dispersion is seen in Vidharbha. In this paper the

discussion and analysis is directed to spatial pattern and distribution of holy places in Maharashtra. The study is also directed to identify central tendency and dispersion of holy places in Maharashtra.

Key Words: Holy place, central tendency, sacred and profane space, spatial organization, dispersion,

## INTRODUCTION:

Geography examines the man made environment from a spatial point of view, whether it is to examine spatial distribution or association of element, the organization of phenomena over space or the integration of divine phenomena in place. Within the worldwide ecosystem of which man is the dominant part; man creates for himself many environments. These environments are not studied in their totally by geographer; only in their spatial facts and orientation.

Geographic fact usually will be one of observation, either of the same characteristics at a series of place or of a series of characteristics at the same place. Spatial distribution is defined as

a set of geographic facts representing the behavior of a particular phenomenon or characteristics of many places. Three elements that all spatial distribution shares are; pattern density and dispersion. Aerial association is defined as the similarity within the same study area between two or more spatial distribution determined by information collected for the same unit area.

The common concern of issue in cultural and religious studies is the distribution of sacred sites. Many of the universal religious give more emphasis on the sites related to the life incidences of the founders of the faith, but in Hinduism the case is different, Hinduism is more complex in terms of varieties of sects, believers, varieties of deities and related systems. While there is a tendency to think of sacred space in terms of site and locations, religious routes bear analysis as well. In geographic context, Stoddard (1966) firstly raises the fundamental question of distribution, in his pioneering dissertation: *Hindu Holy sites in India*. Bharadwaj (1973), Schwartzberg (1978); Bharati (1970); Feldhaus (1986) has also studied the spatial distribution of holy places.

The present study has been analyzed the spatial pattern and distribution of worship- (holy) centers in Maharashtra. It have been also examine the central tendency and dispersion of holy places in Maharashtra.

#### **STUDY REGION:**

Maharashtra imbedded the

cultural and religious influence of the Northern Aryan and Southern Dravidians. Thus both the Vaisnavism and Shaivism Flourished in Maharashtra. In Maharashtra alone have five out of the twelve Jyotirlingas located. Many other worship centers of God Shiva are famous in Maharashtra. The influence of Vaisnavism also found in Maharashtra. Pandharpur is known as the Spiritual capital of Maharashtra. Among the other deities Mother Goddess (Devi), who rose to prominence in Maharashtra. Three and half Shakti Pithas are located in Maharashtra, which are Saptshrungi at Wani, Mahalaxmi of Kolhapur, Bhavani of Tuljapur and Renuka at Mahur. God Ganesh is one of the most popular deities worshipped by the people in Maharashtra. Asthavinayaka or eight important Ganesh Shrines ensures for the Pilgrims ever lasting bliss.

A Majority of the people of all castes worship as family deity one or two. Khandoba, Jotiba, Bhairoba or Devi these are the family deities. Khandoba of Jejuri is the family deity worshipped by most of the south and western Maharashtra people. Besides these gods holy persons (Saint); whom does Marathi people worship. Maharashtra is known as a land of Saint. Mahanubhavas have made of Maharashtra a vast network of pilgrimage places, each sanctified by the former presence of Cakradhar, Gundam Raul or another of the human incarnations of god (Feldhaus, 1986); Maharashtra is the play ground of god,

and microcosm of India. Maharashtra has positive religious value.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- 1) To find out central tendency and dispersion of holy places in Maharashtra.
- 2) To analyze the spatial distribution pattern of holy places in Maharashtra.

### METHODOLOGY:

To analyze the distribution pattern, central tendency and dispersion with in a spatial distribution apply the Centographic technique. To measure the central tendency and dispersion calculate the mean center and standard distance.

The mean center is a measure of central tendency within a spatial distribution, and it is calculated in a similar way to the mean of numerical distribution. The standard distance appears to be the simplest measure of geographical dispersion to be associated with the center. This index is the equivalent of standard deviation in a numerical distribution and measures the degree of dispersion of points about the mean center. Where standard distance, it can be calculated using the following formula.

$$SD = D \sqrt{\frac{fd^2}{n} + \frac{fd^2}{n} + \frac{fd^2 y_i}{n} + \frac{fd y_i^2}{n}}$$

Where,  
 SD - Standard distance  
 C - Class interval  
 f - Frequency of class  
 d - Distance of each centre from mean centre  
 n - Number of worship centres

### LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

For the present study selected 170 holy places in Maharashtra which are well known and popular in the Panchkroshi. The places which are known as Tirthaksetra.

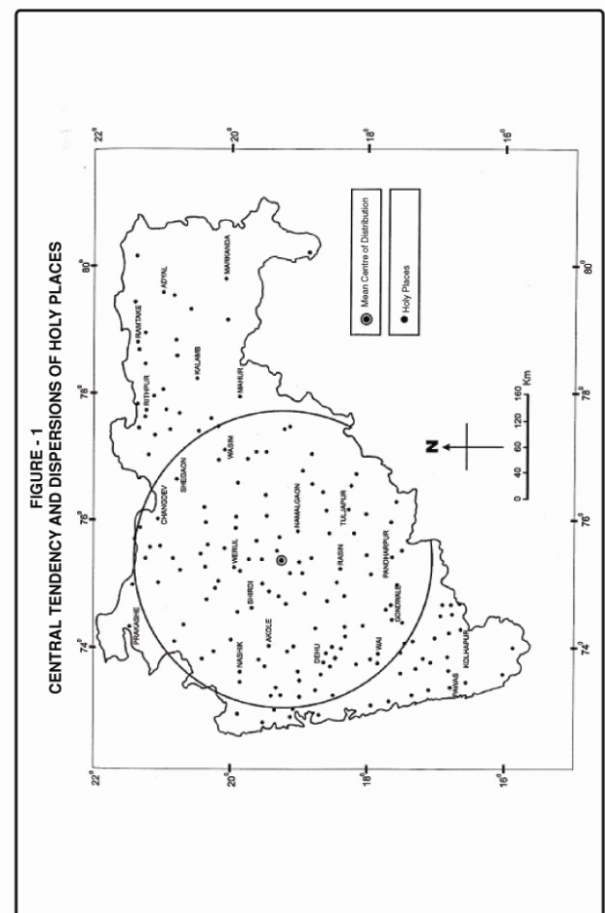
### DISCUSSION:

#### Central Tendency and Dispersion of holy places in Maharashtra.

The spatial pattern of holy places is characterized by their uneven distribution in the region. Figure-1 is illustrates the spatial distribution of all selected holy places, which are shown in point pattern. The mean center of this distribution is located near bout central part of Maharashtra in the Godawari basin. Circle has been drawn taking the radius, which is equal to the standard distance. A feature of standard distance is that this circle will contain approximately 2/3 in fact (68.27%) of the total number of the points provided that these are normally distributed

about the mean center.

In this case the fraction is slightly lower, with 112 out of 170 centers (65.8%) located within the circle marked it is clearly shows that the pattern of distribution is not normal, which is influence by terrain elements mainly drainage and altitude. Most of the holy places are located either along the river site or hill tops. Concentration of the holy places is shown in the Bhima and the Godawari basin and dispersion is shown in the Wardha and the Wainganga basins. A normal spatial distribution may be defined as one in which there is a symmetrical decrease in the frequency of points with increasing radial distribution from a central modal area. But in this case symmetrical decrease is found toward east other hand towards west centers are increases from central point because of impact of terrain, on the distribution of holy places. It is clearly indicate that the Maximum dispersion shows in plain region towards east. Comparatively concentration of centers has shown in the Bhima, the Godawari and the Krishna basin.



### **Central Tendency and Dispersion of Holy Places of Specific Deities:**

Holy places in Maharashtra are associated with a specific chief or presiding deity. Association of holy places with presiding deities can be useful initial step for the understanding of a spatial aspect of cultural and religious evolution in Maharashtra. All the selected centers for the present study to be classified on the basis of their presiding deities. It is also important to find out tendency of spatial distribution and spatial pattern. Table 1 shows the number of holy places of each

deity.

**Table -1**

Sr. No.	Name of Deity	No. of holy places
1.	God Ganesh	24
2.	Mother goddess	26
3.	God Shiva	40
4.	God Vishnu	19
5.	Khandoba/Jotiba	12
6.	Holy persons	37
7.	Jain and other	12
	Total	170

For the study of central tendency and dispersion of spatial distribution of poly places each deity calculate the mean center and standard distance. Distribution of holy places has been illustrated with point pattern in maps of Maharashtra.

#### **HOLY PLACES OF GOD GANESHA:**

Figure-2 indicates the spatial distribution of the holy places of God Ganesha. Ganesha is a presiding deity worshipped by people of Maharashtra. There are 24 main tirtha's of Ganesh selected for the present study. The mean center of spatial distribution is located in Pune District; it is clearly indicated that most of the centers of Ganesha are located in Pune district. The tirtha's of Asthavinayak and some other places of Ganesha had established in Peshwa's period they were ruled in Pune. Most of the Ganesha places are located in Pune, Ahmadnagar and Raigad district. There are only four places are found in Vidharbha namely Kalam, Adasa,

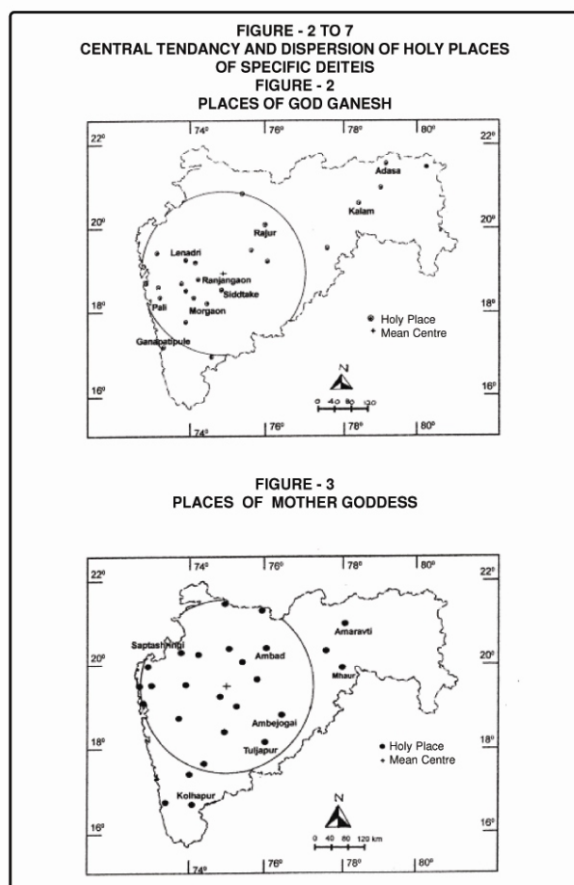
Amgaon, and Kelazer. Four centers are located in Marathwada namely Rakshasbhuwan, Rajur, Namalgaon and Trikut.

Spatial pattern of places shows that the eighteen places out of 25 located within the circle marked with using standard distance from mean center. It is clearly indicate that the 72% places are located within circle hence the distribution of places of God Ganesha is not normal. Most of the places are concentrated in western Maharashtra, Particularly in the Bhima basin. This pattern is influence by social and cultural factors.

#### **HOLY PLACES OF MOTHER GODDESS:**

Various forms of Parvati (Shakti) are worship in Maharashtra. There are three and half ShaktiPitha's located in Maharashtra. In fact every Maharastrian are worship a special Kuldeivata along with Kuldeivata (family God). Mahalaximi and Tulaja Bhavani these two goddess are Kuladewata (family deity) of many families in Maharashtra. 26 main tirthas of mother Goddess from various part of Maharashtra have been selected for the present study. Spatial distribution and mean center of these holy places are shown in figure-3. Mean center of the distribution is located in Ahmadnagar district. Pattern of distribution is dispersed, but the trend

of dispersion is decline towards north and west part of Maharashtra. 73% centers are located within the circle marked; it is indicated that the standard distance is more and distribution is not normal. The places of mother goddess are concentrated in the Bhima and The Godawari basin. Main



four Shaktipitas are located in four side of Maharashtra such as Mahalaximi of Kolhapur in south; Saptshringi of Wani in North Tulja Bhavani located in central part and Renuka of Mahur towards east of Maharashtra. The influence of terrain elements also showed on

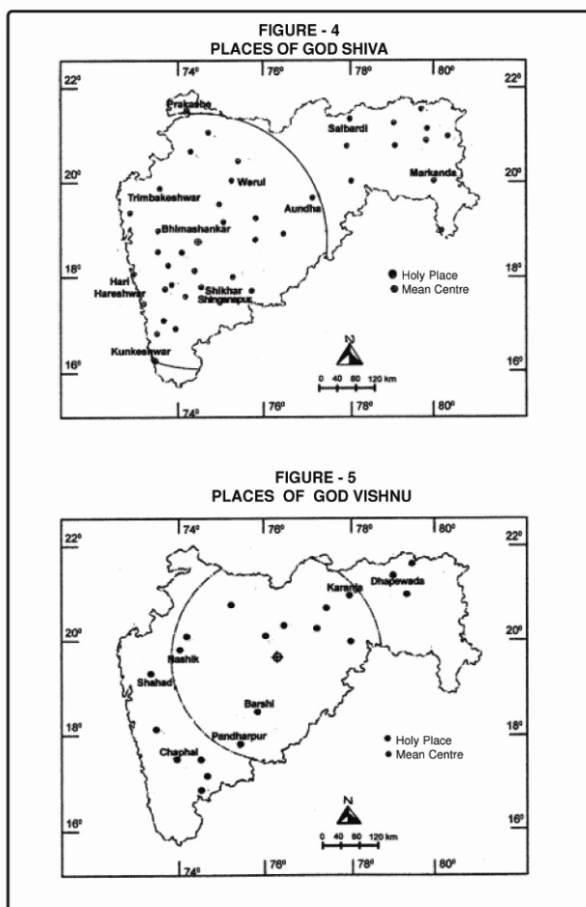
the distribution of the centers of mother goddess. Most of the centers are located either hilltop or bank of rivers.

### HOLY PLACES OF GOD SHIVA:

The holy places of god Shiva are distributed all over Maharashtra; because all castes and sects in Maharashtra worship this deity. Five Jotirlingas, out of twelve are located in Maharashtra, namely Trimbakeshwar, Bhimashankar, Parli Vaijnath, Aundhya Nagnath, and Ghruneshwar at Werul. Total 40 major centers of Shiva are selected for this study which are well known in panchkroshi. Figure-4 shows their spatial distribution in Maharashtra. The mean centers of this distribution is located in the Bhima basin near Pune. Twenty seven centers of holy places out of 40 located within circle; it is approximately two third (67.5%) of the total numbers of centers. It is clearly indicated that the normal distribution from their mean center; because of the centers of God Shiva are distributed through: out Maharashtra. God Shiva is worshipped from Konkan to East Vidharbha. The influence of terrain elements has shown on the distribution of holy places of God Shiva.

God Shiva is originally known as Mountain God. Kailash Mountain is original place of God Shiva. In Maharashtra also most of the centers of god Shiva having hilltop locations. They are located on hilltop of Sahyadri

Mountain or Spurs of Sahyadri and Satpudas hilly area. Some centers are located along the riverbank, configuration of rivers and Arabian Sea fioast. Maximum holy places of god Shiva are located in The Krishna, The Godawari, The Wardha and The Wainganga basins.



### HOLY PLACES OF GOD VISHNU:

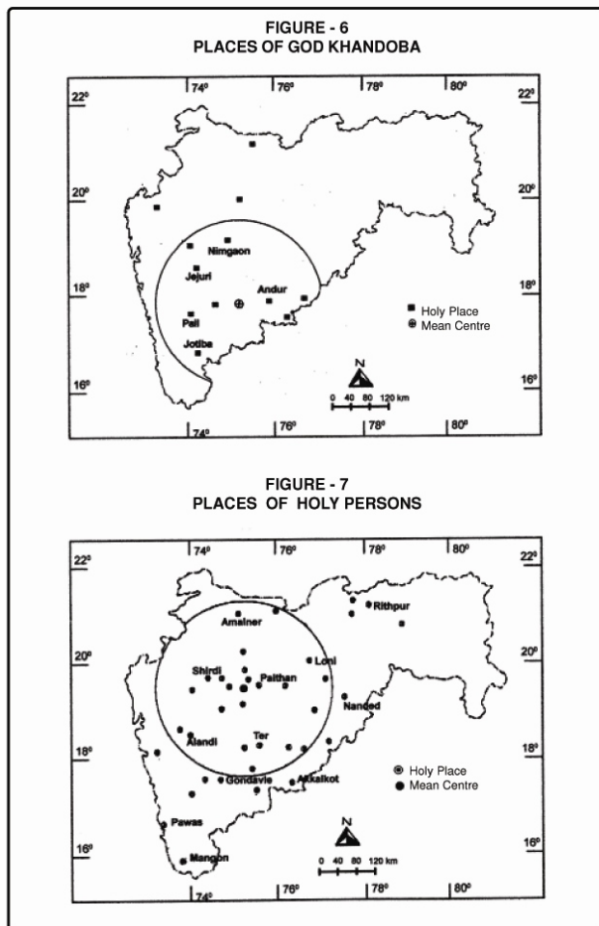
In Maharashtra worshipper of Shiva also worship Vishnu, perhaps in Maharashtra the two most sacred day's of fast are Maha-Ekadasi a day sacred to Vishnu in Month of Ashadha and MahaShivaratri a day sacred to Shiva in month of Magha (March).

There are many tirthas of God Vishnu and their incarnations in Maharashtra. This present study 20 main tirthas are selected which are well known in Panchkroshi. Figure-5 shows that the spatial distribution and mean centers of god Vishnu. The holy places of god Vishnu are dispersed all over Maharashtra; but very few places in Konkan region. Out of 20 places 11 places (55%) are located in the circle marked from mean center; it is clearly indicate that the distribution is not normal. Distribution pattern is dispersed. A temple of Vitthal is found in every big village of Maharashtra but Pandharpur is a main holy place of god Vitthal. An influence of this place has seen all over Maharashtra. God Ram who is an incarnation of Vishnu worship in Maharashtra. Nasik and Ramtake these are the famous centers of God Ram in Maharashtra. The influence of this deity has shown in Northern India. The main tirthas of Dattatraya located in Krishna and Wardha Basin. Geographically the holy places of god Vishnu are located in plain region and along riverside.

### HOLY PLACES OF KHANDOBA / JOTIBA :

Another important deity of Maharastrian people is Khandoba. Khandoba is a Kuldeivata (family god) of many families in Maharashtra. It may be noted that, this deity is worshipped by low cast peoples. Khandoba is known

as Rudra Avatar or incarnation of Shiva. Khandoba is also known as Malla (the Robber's God) or Mallari (Rf. Milti Isrweil and N.K.Wagle, 1987). Jyotiba, Mhaskoba, Bhairoba and



Mhalsa are the other Kuldeivata worshipped in particular part of Maharashtra. There are eleven major tirthas of Khandoba, out of these 6 in Maharashtra and five tirthas are located in Karnataka. Jejuri is a main worship center of Khandoba and other centers are Shegud in Ahmadnagar district, Satara in Aurangabad district, Naldurg

in Osmanabad, Pali in Satara and Nimgaon in Pune District.

For this present study 12 major holy places of Khandoba, Jotiba and other Kuladaivatatas are selected. Figure 6 is shown the distribution of holy places. The mean center of this distribution is located in southwest Maharashtra. Out of 12 places 9 (75%) are located in the circle marked. It is clearly indicate that the concentration of places in southwest Maharashtra. There is no any center of Khandoba deity in Vidharbha region and Konkan region. Distribution pattern of these places is appearing to cluster grouping. Khandoba, Jotiba, Bhairoba, Mhalsa these are the different deities are worshipped by low cast societies mainly Dhangar, Ramoshi, Kunabi and other. The percentage of the low class population is high in South-Western Maharashtra. An another important reason is this deity (Khandoba) had came from Karnataka; hence its influence is shown in South Maharashtra and Marathwada region.

### PLACES OF HOLY PERSONS:

Besides these gods, who are worshipped by Marathi people, for holy men too have always found a worshipful in all sects. This devotion is sometimes for greater than that shown to the Icons at home or in the temples. The worship of holy person has shown in Guru Smpradaya, Varkari Sampradaya and Mahanubhav sect also. In this rank of holy persons Dyaneshwar, Tukaram, Namdeo, Saibaba, Gajanan Maharaj, Gadge Maharaj and Gulabrao

Maharaj, Ramdas, Sant Sakham Maharaj and Tukdoji Maharaj these are the most important persons worshipped in Maharashtra (Ref. Gazetteers of Maharashtra).

There are many places of holy persons in Maharashtra, but 37 most famous places are selected for this present study. Figure-7 shows the spatial distribution and mean centres. The mean center of this distribution is located in Ahmadnagar district 23 places out of 37 located within circle marked which is 62.1% less than two third of the total numbers. It is clearly indicate that distribution is not uniform, most of the places are located in the Wardha and the Godawari Basin. It follows that the pattern of these places is random because of influence of Varkari Sampradaya is found in the Bhima and the Godawari basin and influence of Mahanubhava sect it is found in the Wardha basin.

## CONCLUSION:

The above discussion reveals that the spatial pattern of distribution of holy places is uneven. There are mainly physiographic, social and political elements are influence on the distribution pattern. Mainly the concentration of holy places is seen in the Bhima and Godawari basin and dispersed pattern shown in Vidharba region. Spatial distribution of holy places of each deity is also not even.

Centres of god Ganesha are concentrated in Pune District, but holy places of mother Goddess and God Shiva are randomly distributed. The places of these deities are located all over Maharashtra. Distribution pattern of holy places of God Vishnu and their incarnations is dispersed but the centres of Khandoba/Jotiba are concentrated in southwest Maharashtra. The places of holy persons are distributed all over Maharashtra but most of the places of holy persons are located in the Bhima, the Godawari and the Wardha basin.

SELECTED CENTRES OF WORSHIP ACCORDING TO SPECIFIC DEITIES

CENTRES OF GOD GANESH	CENTRES OF MOTHER GODDESS	CENTRES OF GOD SHIVA	CENTRES OF GOD VISHNU
Morgaon Siddhake Pali Mihad Theur Lenandry Ozar Ranjangon Chichwad Kankeshwar Titvala Prabhadevi Ganpatipule Sangali Wai Padmalaya Kalamb Kelazur Rakeshshuven Rajur Adisa Nanalgan Trikut Amagion	Saptshrungi Mihur Kolhapur Tulajapur Ambajogai Mihaximi (Mumbai) Mihaximi (Dahanu) Aundha Karle Kalasubai Anbad Chandvad Wajreshwari Bijasandvi Mihadevi Sonai Adware Rasin Pathandevis Manudevi Poharadevi Misamal Kelava Pune Amravati Kokale	Trimbakeshwar Bhimashankar Gruheshwar Parali wajinath Aundha nagar Shikhar shingraour Haribheshwar Marleshwar Welneshwar Niranashingpur Kunkeshwar Rajapur Prakeshe Wrudheshwar Our Dhogheshwar Kedreshwar Dhopeswar Shiddeshwar (Solapur) Karanje Banshwar Pavani Markanda Sulbardi Nandgaonkhandeshwar Kopeshwar (Khidrapur) Mahadevapur Gayamukh Achal Murdeshwar Humantpimpri Madhameshwar Guhagar Mihabaleshwar Bod Unabdev Bhuleshwar Kapaleshwar Welapur Bhiram	Pandharpur Shahad Dhapeswada Kolenashingpur Bashi Karanja Kundaryapur Nashivadi Chorwad Aundhar Rantake Nashik Deulaganraja Wesim Takedirth Mehkar Chaphal Chimur Parshuram  Centres of Khandoba/Jyotiba Jejuri Pali Satara Andur Nimgan Shengul Jotiba Bale Naldurg Atraval Korthan Javar

<b>CENTRES OF HOLY PERSONS</b> Akkalkot Apegaon Alandi Arani Gondawale Jansamarth Ter Dehu Narsi Pusegaon  Newasa Pawas Puntamba Paithan Madan Mozari Mangalwedha Loni Shirdi Shegaon Sajjangad Devgad Mangaon Amlner Changdev Akole Madi Udagir Domgaon Pawanar Shirala Arangaon Akot Ausa Nanded Anjangaonsurji Hiwara	<b>JAIN WORSHIP CENTRES</b> Mangitungi Kachaner Kumbhoj Bhadrawati Muktagiri Shirpur Shirdshahapur Kunthalgiri  <b>OTHER CENTRES</b> Nagpur (Buddhist w.c.) Jaydev wadi Runmachan Rithpur Shanishingnapur Digras
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