

# Relation between Architecture and Pilgrimage in the Modern World: A Study of Kaudanyapur, Maharashtra

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**Abstract**— This article discusses the changing dynamics between architecture and pilgrimage in the contemporary scenario, with a focus on Kaudanyapur, Maharashtra. As a historically revered pilgrimage center associated with the myths of Rukmini and Krishna, Kaudanyapur demonstrates how ancient religious stories continue to influence architectural form and urbanity, yet conform to modern requirements. The research identifies the conflict between tradition and modernity, and how pilgrimage architecture has to navigate cultural heritage, infrastructural development, and tourism pressures in the 21st century.

**Key words**— Pilgrimage tourism, Pilgrimage architecture, Spiritual landscape, Modern religious infrastructure, Sustainable pilgrimage, Heritage conservation, India pilgrimage sites, Architecture and religion, Maharashtra temple towns.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Pilgrimage is perhaps the oldest and most resilient of human movements, with deep roots in faith and tradition. Temple towns in India have long evolved around sacred geography, mythological connections, and spiritual rituals. In the 21st century, these destinations are facing drastic changes with urbanization, technological progress, and mass tourism. This research centers on Kaudanyapur, a lesser-known but spiritually significant location in Maharashtra, and compares it with Pandharpur, Alandi, and Shegaon—three well-known pilgrimage sites that represent various scales and models of religious architecture in the contemporary world.

## II. KAUDANYAPUR HISTORIC BACKGROUND: MYTH AND PLACE

Kaudanyapur is a place of Hindu mythological importance as the birthplace of Rukmini, the wife of Lord Krishna. The town, according to the Mahabharata, was once the capital of Vidarbha.

Other sacred places, remains a draw for pilgrims seeking to connect with this mythic terrain. This religious past serves as the cornerstone upon which traditional and contemporary architectural evolution rests. The Rukmini Temple, Wardha river Ghats, and small shrines characterize its sacred. The Rukmini Temple, along with architecture. The site is still rural in character, with minimal modernization.

### A. key features

- River ghats utilized for ritual bathing.
- Small-scale temple architecture with local materials.
- Strong oral tradition and seasonal religious assemblies.

### B. Modern challenges

- Poor infrastructure for growing pilgrim footfall.
- Heritage buildings under threat for want of conservation plans.
- Little tourism-driven economic activity in spite of mythological significance.



Fig 1. Pie Chart of User Group and Event Activities in Kaudanaypur



Fig 2. Historic image of Krishna in Mahabharat



Fig 6. Vitthal Rukhmini photos



Fig 3. Image of kaudanyapur temple



Fig 4. Wardha river , kaudanyapur



Fig 5. Large crowd devotees in kaudanyapur on occasion of Shravan

### III. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES

3.1 Pandharpur: The Dynamic Pilgrimage Economy  
Pandharpur, the shrine of Vithoba, is Maharashtra's most frequented pilgrimage destination.

Architectural Features:

- Vitthal-Rukmini Temple with medieval character and ornate stone work.
- Broad pilgrimage procession routes utilized during Ashadi Ekadashi.
- Chandrabhaga River ghats for ritual immersion.

Modern Adaptations:

- Crowd management infrastructure (barricades, queuing systems).
- Renovated ghats with lighting and public amenities.
- Mobile apps for darshan booking and digital donations.
- Increased lodging, transport hubs, and markets integrated into urban form.

Relevance to Kaudanyapur: Pandharpur demonstrates how a pilgrim town can expand while maintaining religious importance, presenting a model for adaptive infrastructure planning.

Estimated Annual Pilgrim Visits:

- Ashadhi Ekadashi (June–July): ~1,000,000 pilgrims
- Kartik Ekadashi (October–November): ~500,000 pilgrims
- Maghi Ekadashi (January–February): ~200,000 pilgrims
- Chaitri Ekadashi (March–April): ~200,000 pilgrims

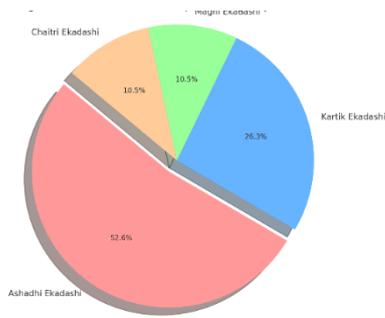


Fig 7. Pie Chart of pilgrimage distribution in Pandharpur, during major festivals



Fig 8. Pandharpur temple

3.2 Alandi: Spiritual Depth with Minimalist Sacredness Alandi, the samadhi place of Sant Dnyaneshwar, presents a more contemplative model of pilgrimage.

Architectural Elements:

- Dnyaneshwar Samadhi Mandir, constructed modestly, promotes subdued devotion.
- Riverfront buildings and processional routes (palkhi marg).
- Incorporation of Marathi Warkari tradition into town planning.

Contemporary Developments:

- Regulated urban zoning to maintain temple zone.
- Revamped river ghats with eco-sensitive development.
- Smart surveillance and waste disposal systems.

Relevance to Kaudanyapur: Alandi offers an ideal of spiritual urbanism that Kaudanyapur can follow in order to preserve sanctity while facilitating necessary modern amenities.

Estimated Annual Pilgrim Visits:

- Ashadhi Ekadashi (June–July): ~400,000 pilgrims

- Kartik Ekadashi (October–November): ~300,000 pilgrims
- Maghi Ekadashi (January–February): ~150,000 pilgrims
- Chaitri Ekadashi (March–April): ~150,000 pilgrims

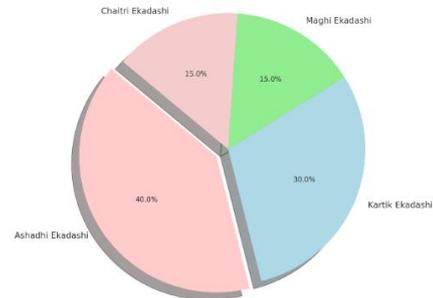


Fig 8. Pie Chart of pilgrimage distribution in Alandi, during major festivals



Fig 9. Alandi temple

3.3 Shegaon: Spiritual Tourism as Pilgrimage Shegaon, the location of Sant Gajanan Maharaj, is a blend of devotion and institution management.

Architectural Attributes:

- Imposing, temple complex to hold lakhs of tourists.
- Anand Sagar Project: landscaped garden, centers for meditation, lakes.

New Infrastructure:

- Governing management by Shri Gajanan Maharaj Sansthan.
- Large accommodation (Bhakta Niwas), dining halls, transport vans.
- Integration with pilgrimage as an eco-tourism activity.

Relevance to Kaudanyapur: Shegaon demonstrates how contemporary comforts can be replicated in a spiritually themed manner, providing ideas for Kaudanyapur's future development.



Fig 10. Master plan of Shegaon temple pilgrimage



Fig 11. Entrance of Shegaon pilgrimage



Fig 12. Accommodation courtyard

Estimated Annual Pilgrim Visits:

- Gajanan Maharaj Samadhi Day (February): ~200,000 pilgrims
- Guru Purnima (July): ~150,000 pilgrims
- Gudi Padwa (March–April): ~100,000 pilgrims
- Dussehra (October): ~100,000 pilgrims
- Other Festivals and Regular Days: ~450,000 pilgrims

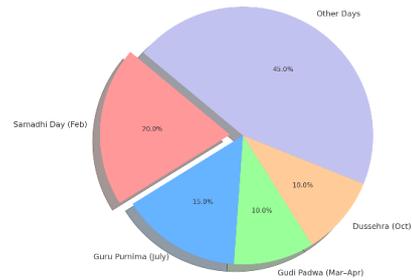


Fig 13. Pie Chart of pilgrimage distribution in Alandi, during major festivals



Fig 14. Shegaon temple

#### IV. COMMON ARCHITECTURAL THEMES ACROSS SITES

Element	Kaudanya pur	Pandharpur	Alandi	Shegaon
Core Temple	Small, intimate	Historic, central	Samadhi-focused	Modern and expansive
Ritual Water	River ghats (Wardha)	River ghats (Chandrabhaga)	Indrayani ghats	Artificial lakes
Pilgrim Flow	Local, seasonal	High-volume	Steady, spiritual	Managed crowds
Modern Amenities	Limited	Advanced	Balanced	Extensive
Tech Integration	Minimal	High	Moderate	High

## V. CONTEMPORARY PILGRIMAGE ARCHITECTURE CONCERNS

### 5.1 Crowd and Infrastructure Management

- Use of modular construction, barriers, and circulation systems.
- Queueing, resting, and moving architectures are needed.

### 5.2 Eco-spirituality and Sustainability

- Green technologies (solar lighting, rainwater collection).
- preserving sacred rivers and ghats.

### 5.3 Digital Transformation Web-based reservation, online darshan, QR-enabled navigation.

- Architecture today includes information kiosks, LED signs, and monitoring.

### 5.4 Commercialization versus Sanctity

- Balancing pilgrim requirements and tourist needs. Zoning regulations to delineate sacred and commercial purposes

## VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR KAUDANYAPUR

- Kaudanyapur's low-scale setting offers an opportunity to develop context-sensitive pilgrimage architecture:
- Conservation-first approach to preserve the Rukmini Temple and traditional paths.
- Development of basic pilgrim facilities (resting shelters, clean ghats, sanitation).
- Digital outreach to revive its mythological identity and connect with wider audiences.
- Learning from Pandharpur's procession planning, Alandi's zoning, and Shegaon's hospitality model.

## VII. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Challenges

#### Lack of Infrastructure:

- Limited accommodation facilities for pilgrims.
- Poor sanitation and waste disposal.
- Bad public transport connectivity and road condition.

#### Neglected Heritage:

- Hindu temples and heritage sites are showing signs of deterioration due to lack of conservation.
- Lack of architectural documentation or restoration protocol.

#### Low Visibility:

- In spite of its mythological value (associated with Mahabharata and Rani Damayanti), it is not branded as a major pilgrimage site.

- Little digital or tourism promotion.

#### Seasonal Pilgrimage Only:

- Pilgrim visitation is considerably restricted to some festival days, and there is low year-round participation and economic contribution.

#### Unorganized Pilgrim Flow:

- There is no planned movement routes, signs, or spatial ordering inside the sacred space.
- No formal system for managing visitors.

#### Opportunities

##### Spiritual Tourism Development:

- Kaudanyapur can be developed to receive more pilgrims and spiritual tourists fascinated by Mahabharata-period locations with suitable promotion and infrastructure.

##### Architectural Conservation Projects:

- Temple and ghat restoration could be a template for heritage-led rural development.
- Possibilities for joint ventures with institutions or government heritage missions (e.g., HRIDAY, PRASAD).

##### Cultural and Mythological Branding:

- Distinct identity associated with Rukmini and King Nala-Damayanti myths can be utilized to create thematic trails, storytelling areas, and experiential pilgrim experiences.

##### Community-Based Economic Empowerment:

- Local handicrafts, local cuisine, and local-led tours by trained locals can create employment and income, ensuring sustainable development.

##### Eco-Friendly Pilgrimage Infrastructure:

- With its riverside setting on the Wardha River, eco-sensitive development like green accommodation, solar lighting, and clean ghats can make it a model for rural spiritual tourism.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

In the contemporary world, pilgrimage is still an intensely emotional and communal act—but its spatial and architectural requirements are changing. Kaudanyapur, while small, can serve as a model for

sacred integrated planning—respecting mythology and rural context and drawing lessons from larger pilgrimage towns. A sensitive combination of traditional materials, community involvement, and low-impact modernization can enable places like Kaudanyapur to flourish spiritually and sustainably.

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