

**Pundalik** (**Marathi**: पुंडलिक) or **Pundarika** (**Sanskrit**: पुण्डरीक, *romanized: Puṇḍarīka*) is an Indian saint and a devotee of the [Hindu](#) deity [Vithoba](#).<sup>[1]</sup> Vithoba is a [Vaishnava](#) deity and is a reincarnation of [Vishnu](#) and [Krishna](#). Pundalik is credited to have brought Vithoba to [Pandharpur](#), where Vithoba's main shrine stands today. Pundalik is also the historical founder of the [Varkari](#) sect, which is centered on the worship of Vithoba.

Pundalik was one of the earliest [Kundalini](#) Yoga practitioners. As He was the master of Kundalini Yoga, people used to call him "Kundalik". Later, after several years, Kundalik become Pundalik. He symbolised Kundalini energy in the form of Vitthala also known as [Panduranga](#) after his name Pundalik. [Pandharpur](#)'s Vitthal was an incarnation of [Vishnu](#) or [Krishna](#). According to legends it also depicts the symbol of the [Kundalini](#) energy, although spiritually, the same energy dwells in all.

The brick on which Vitthala is standing is the basic chakra of Kundalini energy known as [Muladhara](#) Chakra. Both hands, like bows, represents Ida and Pingla [nadis](#) which cross over at the central body of [Sushumna](#) or Brahma [nadi](#). Body represents purusha means [Vishnu](#) or [Krishna](#) and the tilaka or the mark on the head represents [Ajna](#) Chakra or **guru chakra** or **third-eye chakra** is the subtle center of energy, believed to be located between the eyebrows, located behind it along the subtle (non-physical) spinal column, as said by [Krishna](#) in [Bhagavad Gita](#).

## Historicity

[[edit](#)]

Pundalik is a historical figure, connected with the establishment and propagation of the Vithoba-centric Varkari sect.<sup>[2]</sup> [Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar](#) considers Pundalik to be the founder of the Varkari sect and the one who promulgated the sect in Maratha country.<sup>[3]</sup> Frazer, Edwards and P.R. Bhandarkar (1922) suggest that Pundalik tried to unify Shiva and Vishnu, and that this culture originated in Karnataka.<sup>[4]</sup> Ranade (1933) thinks that Pundalik, a Kannada saint, was not only the founder of the Varkari culture but also the first great devotee or first high priest of the Pandharpur temple.<sup>[5]</sup> Upadhyaya supports the priest theory but declines the Kannada origin theory.<sup>[4]</sup> Tulpule also accepted the theory that Pundalik was the historical founder of the Varkari sect, though declines to fix a date for him due to "lack of authentic evidence".<sup>[4]</sup> According to M. S. Mate, Pundalik was instrumental in coaxing the [Hoysala](#) king [Vishnuvardhana](#) to build the Pandharpur temple to Vishnu, placing him in the early 12th century.<sup>[6]</sup>

Deleury (1960) believes Pundalik was a mystic, influenced by the Vaishnava [Haridasa](#) sect of [Karnataka](#), who brought a drastic change in the worship of Vithoba. Pundalik not only founded the Varkari sect, but also was the first to identify Vithoba with the god [Vishnu](#). Pundalik's fame also led to naming of Pandharpur to *Paundrika-kshetra* - the sacred place of Pundalik.<sup>[6]</sup>

Other scholars like Raeside (1965), Dhanpalvar (1972), and Vaudeville (1974) have questioned the historicity of Pundalik altogether, and dismissed him as a mythical figure. In his analysis of the text *Panduranga mahatmya* by Sridhar (discussed in "Legend" section ahead), Raeside says that the legend of devotee Pundalik could have been nothing more a derivative of [Puranic](#) legend.<sup>[7]</sup> Dhanpalvar strongly agreed with this possibility.<sup>[8]</sup> Vaudeville found the legend of the Pundalik of Pandharpur was very similar to the legend of Pundarika, the devotee of Vishnu, in the Hindu epic [Mahabharata](#).<sup>[9]</sup> The religious historian [R.C. Dhere](#), winner of the [Sahitya Akademi Award](#) for his book *Sri Vitthal: Ek Mahasamanvaya*, opines that identification of Vithoba with Vishnu led to conversion of the Shaiva (related to god [Shiva](#)) Pundarika shrine to the Vaishnava shrine of the devotee Pundalik. The main argument of the hypothesis is that the memorial shrine of Pundalik is a Shaiva shrine, rather than a Vaishnava one, compromising of a Shiva-[linga](#), the symbol of god Shiva

Texts, that narrate the legend of Pundalik and Vithoba, can be categorised into the Varkari tradition, the Brahmin tradition and what Raeside calls a "third tradition", that includes both

Varkari and Brahmin elements. The Varkari texts are written in [Marathi](#), the Brahmin texts in [Sanskrit](#), and the "third tradition" are Marathi texts written by Brahmins.

The Varkari texts are: *Bhaktalilamrita* and *Bhaktavijaya* by [Mahipati](#), *Pundalika-Mahatmya* by [Bahinabai](#), and a long *abhang*a by [Namdev](#). All these texts describe the legend of Pundalik. The Brahmin texts include: two versions of *Panduranga-Mahatmya* from the [Skanda Purana](#) (consisting of 900 verses); *Panduranga-Mahatmya* from the [Padma Purana](#) (consisting of 1,200 verses); *Bhima-Mahatmya*, also from the Padma Purana; and a third devotional work, yet again called *Panduranga-Mahatmya*, which is found in the [Vishnu Purana](#).<sup>[11][12][13]</sup> The "third tradition" is found in two works: *Panduranga-Mahatmya* by the Brahmin Sridhara (consisting of 750 verses), and another work of the same name written by Prahlada Maharaj (consisting of 181 verses).<sup>[14][15]</sup>

There are three versions of the Pundalik legend, two of which are attested as textual variants of the Skanda Purana (1.34–67). According to the first, the ascetic Pundarika (Pundalik) is described as a devotee of god Vishnu and dedicated to the service of his parents. The god [Gopala](#)-Krishna, a form of Vishnu, comes from [Govardhana](#) as a cowherd, accompanied by his grazing cows, to meet Pundarika. Krishna is described as in *digambar* form, wearing *makara-kundala*, the *srivatsa* mark, a head-dress of peacock feathers, resting his hands on his hips and keeping his cow-stick between his thighs. Pundarika asks Krishna to remain in this form on the banks of the river Chandrabhaga. He believes that Krishna's presence will make the site a *tirtha* (a holy place near a water body) and a *kshetra* (a holy place near a temple).<sup>[16]</sup> The location is identified with modern-day Pandharpur, which is situated on the banks of the Chandrabhaga. The description of Krishna resembles the characteristics of the Pandharpur image of Vithoba.<sup>[17]</sup>

The second version of the legend depicts Vithoba appearing before Pundalik as the five-year-old [Bala Krishna](#) (infant Krishna). This version is found in manuscripts of both Puranas, Prahlada Maharaj, and the poet-saints, notably Tukaram.<sup>[18]</sup> The remaining version of the Pundalik legend appears in Sridhara and as a variant in the Padma Purana. Pundalik, a Brahmin madly in love with his wife, neglected his aged parents as a result. Later, on meeting sage Kukkuta, Pundalik underwent a transformation and devoted his life to the service of his aged parents. Meanwhile, one day, Krishna comes to the forest Dandivana, near Pundalik's house, in search of his angry wife [Rukmini](#), who has left him. After some coaxing, Rukmini was pacified. Then Krishna visited Pundalik and found Pundalik serving his parents. Pundalik threw a brick outside for Krishna to stand on. Krishna stood on the brick and waited for Pundalik. After completing his services, Pundalik asked that his deity, in the Vithoba form - waiting arms-akimbo on the brick, remain on the brick with Rukmini, in Rakhumai form, and bless his devotees forever.