

Dear Yagya Friends,

For the first time, we sent two of our priests on an extended journey to perform pujas at a special group of Ganesha Temples near Pune in Maharashtra State, India. There are eight famous and ancient temples, so it is referred to as the Ashta (eight) Vinayaka (Ganesha) Yatra. A yatra is simply a journey or pilgrimage specifically to visit temples and participate in pujas or yagyas.

Traditionally, one is not allowed to take photos inside the temples, but our two priests, Sameer and Avinash did a great job capturing the temple grounds and the surrounding area. I've added in photos of the Ganesha murtis from the temple websites.

Enjoy the photos and as always, thank you for your continued support.

Very best regards,

Ben Collins

Upcoming Yagyas

- * **10 day Navagraha Yagya**
- Kanchipuram - Jan 28 to Feb 6
- * **11 Day Shiva Maha Rudra Yagya**
- Kanchipuram - Feb 7 - 17
- * **Shivaratri Yagyas**
- Kanchipuram, Pune, Varanasi
February 17
- * **Ganga Yagya**
- Varanasi Feb 18th.

Ashtavinayaka Yatra - 8 Ganesha Temples in Maharashtra



Ganesha is known as Vigneshwara; “The Lord of Obstacles” and as such he is honored at the beginning of anything that we do in life, from the start of a yagya to undertaking any meaningful activity. In Maharashtra State of India (near Mumbai) there are a series of eight temples, each dedicated to a different form of Ganesha. To visit all of them is called a “yatra” (pilgrimage) and is considered to be one of the great blessings possible in this region.

The special yagya program was performed by two priests (Pundit Kishor Purkar and Pundit Sameer Khanwalker) from Pune who undertook this 1,078 kilometer journey to perform pujas at each of the eight temples on our behalf.

The story of these temples is a particularly interesting one. Each of the murtis (statues) in the temples is considered to be “Swayambhu”, meaning that it is self-revealing, rather than being carved by a sculptor. With the exception of one, they were all discovered naturally in this shape.

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



Sequence of Temple Visits

1. Morgaon (Moreshwar)
2. Siddhatek (Siddheshwar)
3. Ranjangaon (Mahaganapati)
4. Theur (Chintamani)
5. Pali (Ballaleshwar)
6. Mahad (Varadavinayaka)
7. Ozar (Vignahar)
8. Lenyadri (Girijatmaj)
9. Morgaon (Moreshwar)

Completion of the cycle at the same temple the yatra began.

Distance Covered: 1078 Kms

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



Morgaon is the first temple. The town is named because of the large number of peacocks (Mor) that used to live in the village (Gaon).

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



The temple tower in Morgaon (l) and the Moreshwar Ganesha within (r).

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



The Siddheshwar temple at Sidhatek

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



The magnificent gateway to the Sidhatek temple grounds.



The interior entrance to the temple and the Siddheshwar Murti contained within. The surrounding area is farmland and beautifully green at this time of year.

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



The next stop was at Ranjangaon to see the Mahaganapati temple.

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



The temple grounds are beautiful and garden like. See the giraffe? (not real)



Mahaganapathi at Ranjangaon

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



Chintamani Ganesha at Theur

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



The grounds of the Chintamani Ganesha Temple at Theur

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



Chintamani Ganesha at Theur

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



Ballaleshwar Ganesha at Pali



Ballaleshwar Ganesha at Pali

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



The Varadavinayaka Ganesha Temple at Mahad

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



The grounds of the Varadavinayaka Ganesha Temple at Mahad

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



Varadavinayaka Ganesha at Mahad

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



Vignahar Ganesha Temple at Ozar. The image top right is Hanuman.

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



The countryside near Ozar

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



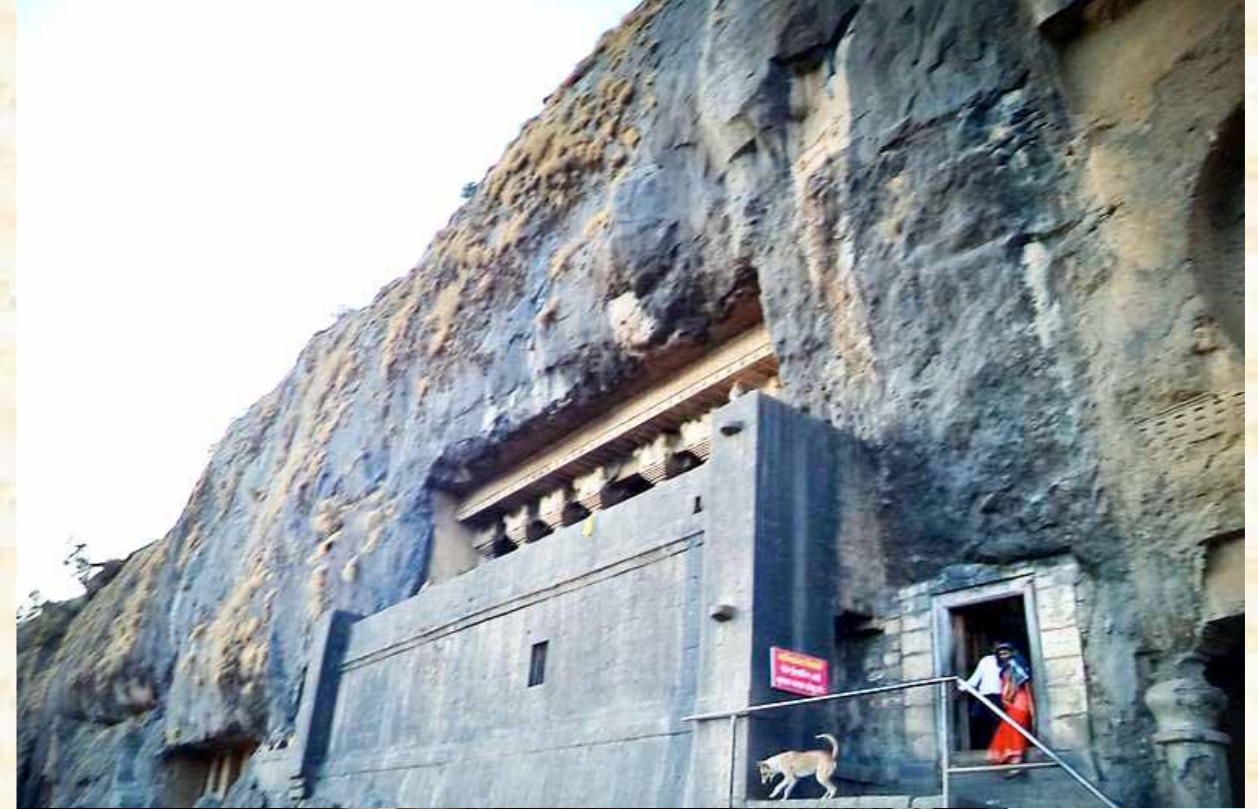
Vignahar Ganesha at Ozar

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



The Vignahar Ganesha Temple at Ozar was originally Buddhist meditation caves.

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



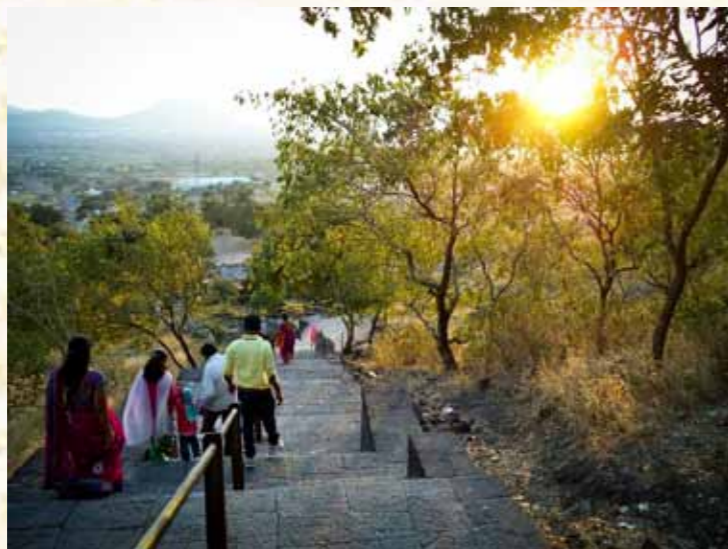
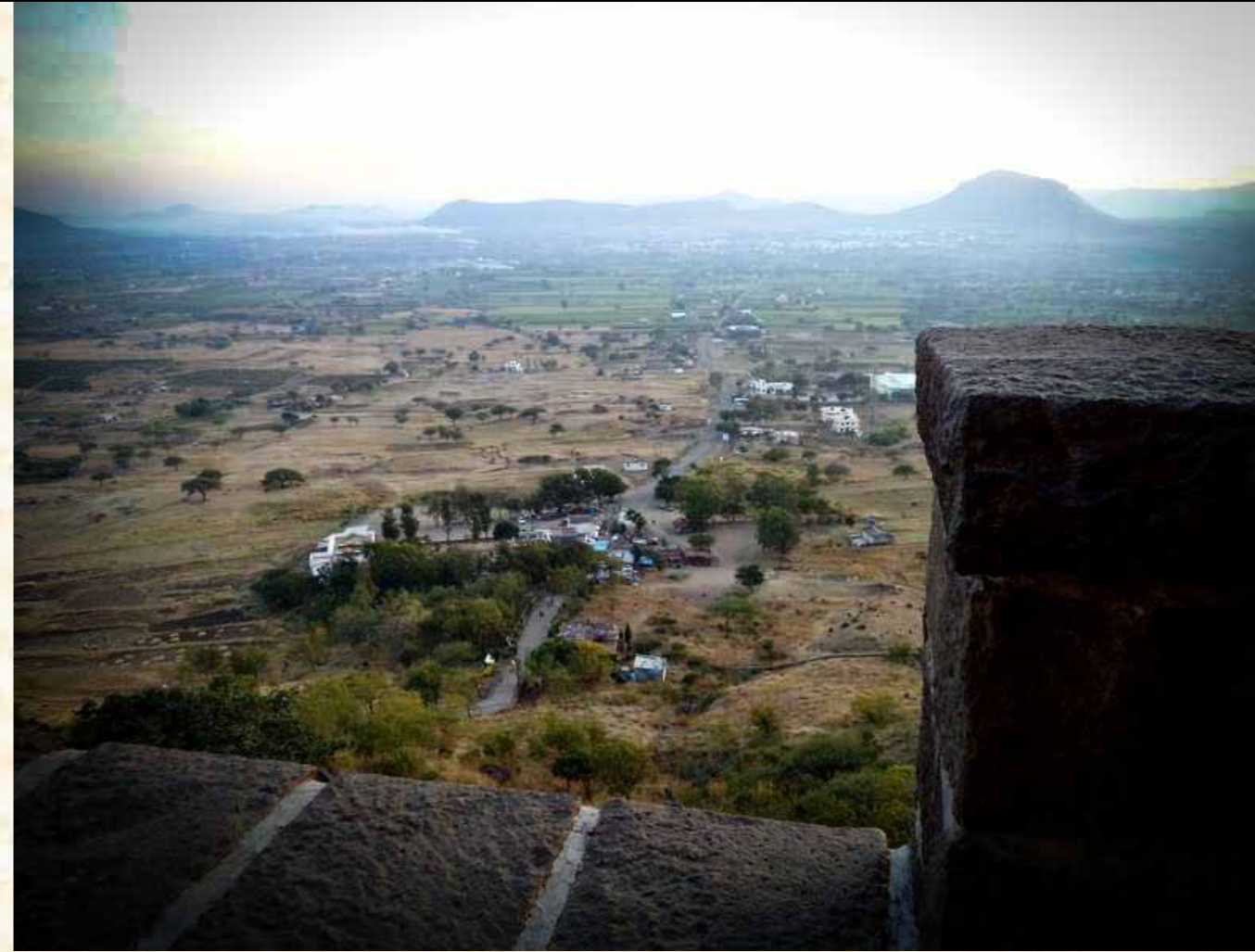
The temple is carved into the side of the mountain and the Ganesha within is a part of the wall and is not free standing.

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



The climb up to the temple is over 300 steps. they gave some food to the dog, who then accompanied them to the top and scared the monkeys away the whole time.

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



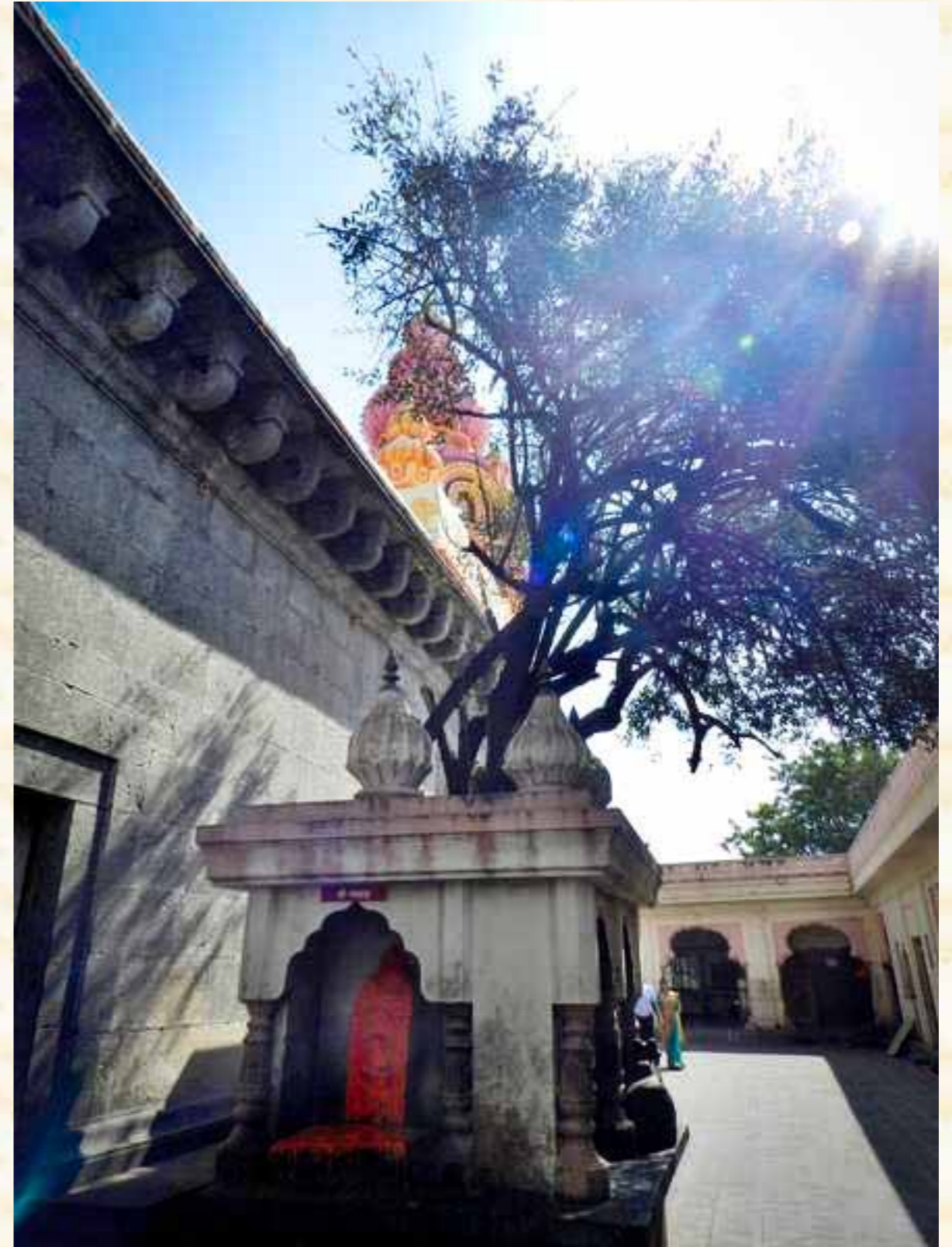
Different views of the area near the temple.

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



The priest very kindly allowed a photograph of the Vignahar Ganesha.

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



Completion of the yatra with a final puja in the Shiva Temple at Morgaon, where the yatra began with Moreshwar Ganapati

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



Completion of the yatra with a final puja in the Shiva Temple at Morgaon, where the yatra began with Moreshwar Ganapati

Ashtavinayaka Yatra



Completion of the yatra with a final puja in the Shiva Temple at Morgaon, where the yatra began with Moreshwar Ganapati