

# **A study of sense of place for historical preservation and maintaining character : A case study of Parvati-Taljai hill in Pune City, Maharashtra**

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## **Abstract :**

Sense of place is geographic, social and psychological concept. Sense of place is a bonding and attachment of the people and places. Places with a strong sense of place have strong identity and character that is deeply felt by local inhabitants and many visitors. It can be called as social phenomenon that exists independently of any individual's perception or experiences.

Sense of place which is strong attachment with the place can be used to preserve the places and maintain the character of the places. The paper aims to evaluate the sense of place felt by local inhabitants of the study area. It also aims that how the sense of place can be used for the preservation and sustainable development of the place.

Parvati Hill, a hillock located in Pune city in Maharashtra. Parvati hill covers the conical hill along with the forest area behind called Pachgaon Parvati. It has historic, ecological and cultural importance. It has history of 250 years. The hillock rises up to 2,100 feet (640 m) above sea level. Atop the hillock is the Parvati Temples, which are one of the most scenic locations in Pune. The temple is the oldest heritage structure in Pune and was built in the Peshwa Dynasty rule. It is also used as an observation spot for visitors of the panorama of Pune. It is the second highest point in Pune premises (after Vetar Hill). Parvati is the daily visiting place for a number of citizens and for many people, going to Parvati (103 steps) forms a part of their daily exercise routine. Being the second highest point in Pune and having conveniently located observation points, the beautiful panoramic view of Pune city leaves visitors spellbound. Beautiful. It has created strong bonding between the people.

In recent years it is started to fade away its beauty with growing slum area around the hill. Forest cover on the Pachgaon Parvati is decreasing day by day. The area needs development in sustainable manner which will help to become the place as one of the important tourism destination. The paper aims to study the sense of place of the local people visiting the hill. The intensity of sense of place will be studied through the questionnaires. It will be also studied that how this sense can be useful for preservation and maintaining the character of the Parvati Hill.

**Introduction** : Sense of Place is term used for the bonding and attachment for the place. The sense of place is the sentiments of attachment for the place. The strong bonding towards the place is useful to preserve and maintain the quality of environment. ‘Place Attachment’, ‘Place Identity’ and ‘Sense of Place’ are some concepts that help to describe the quality of people’s relationships with a place. The concept of Sense of place is used in studying human-place bonding, attachment and place meaning.

A sense of place is created from the importance and meaning of a particular local based on an individual or group’s experience associated with that setting (Stedman, 2003). Sense of place is also contingent on the contexts of race, gender, and class within society. According to Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) a place is a center of meaning or field of care which is based on a compilation of social relationships, human experience, emotions and thoughts.

**Historic preservation** is an attempt that seeks to preserve, conserve and protect buildings, objects, landscapes or other artifacts of historical significance. It tends to refer specifically to the preservation of the built environment. Historic preservation helps to create and develop opportunities for maintenance and adaptive reuse of all historic buildings, districts and properties. Historic preservation can also be employed to assist in the creation of growth boundaries, use of conservation easements, formation of design guidelines and implementation of other smart growth techniques. As a result, historic preservation encourages economic and community revitalization, improvements in a community’s environmental & physical appearance and an increase in community pride in established areas.

The paper tried to study the bonding and attachment of people towards the Parvati-Taljai hills in the Pune city. It also tried to measure that is this attachment will be useful to preserve and maintain the geographical, cultural, historical and environmental importance of Parvati-Taljai hills.

### **Historical Importance :**

Pune is considered as cultural capital and the form of Marathi spoken in Pune is considered to be the standard form of the language. The culture of Pune encompasses both the traditional Maharashtrian lifestyle that is prevalent in the heart of the city, as well as a modern, progressive outlook resulting from its being a hub for education and liberal thought. People from multiple religions and speaking different regional languages reside here. It also hosts various cultural events throughout the year.

Pune is known to have existed as a town since 847 AD. It was the first capital of Shivaji. In the 18th century, Pune became the political centre of Indian subcontinent, as the seat of Peshwas, the Maratha Empire's prime ministers. Since the 1950-60s, Pune has had traditional old-economy industries which continue to grow. The city is now also known for information. Pune prospered as a city during the reign of Nana Saheb Peshwa. He developed Saras Baug, Heera Baug, Parvati Hill and new commercial, trading and residential localities. (1740- 1761) The main temple, as it stands today was built by Shrimat Nana Saheb in the year 1749 A.D.

Parvati is the daily visiting place for a number of citizens and for many people, going to Parvati (103 steps) forms a part of their daily exercise regimen. It is second highest point in Pune and conveniently located observation point.



The Parvati gates open at 5.00 am and close at 8.00 pm. There are 103 steps to reach the hilltop. The steps are an example of fine stone work of the Maratha period. A special black quarry stone has been used for all these steps. It is weather-resistant and except for a few places, the stone has survived for over two hundred and fifty years even after being fully exposed to sun, wind and water. The steps are so wide that an elephant can easily walk with all pomp and gaiety towards the temple. They are not too steep and even old people can climb with ease. It is an enjoyable sight to see children running up and down the hill. There are 5 temples on the hill which includes Devdeveshwar temple, Vishnu Temple, Kartikeya Temple, Shri Vittal Temple and Ramana Temple.

The palace built by Shrimant Peshwa in the year 1795 still exists. Part of the same has been converted into Peshwa Museum.



### **Peshwa Musium at Parvati**

Near the museum is situated the Samadhi Sthan of Shrimant Nanasaheb Peshwa, who died here due to the intense grief experienced by him when his son Vishwasrao and elder brother Bhausahab lost their lives in Panipat war. The Peshwa Museum has been built using part of the Peshwa's Mansion, using many old carved wooden pieces and displays a collection of items belonging to the Peshwa Era. The museum contains paintings of all Peshwas, Maratha Sardars, and their family members along with the arms, articles and coins which were in use in Peshwa era. The entire palace of Sardar Bhuskute of Burahanpur Samadhi Sthan of Shrimant Nanasaheb Peshwa is now renovated and converted into sabha mandap where the paintings relating to various battles fought by Marathas are on display. Some of the beautiful paintings of Peshwas are also displayed in the hall. (M.P.) has been installed in the museum. The rare collection is displayed in the museum and hence treated to be the most important museum connected with the history of Pune and Peshwa Raj.



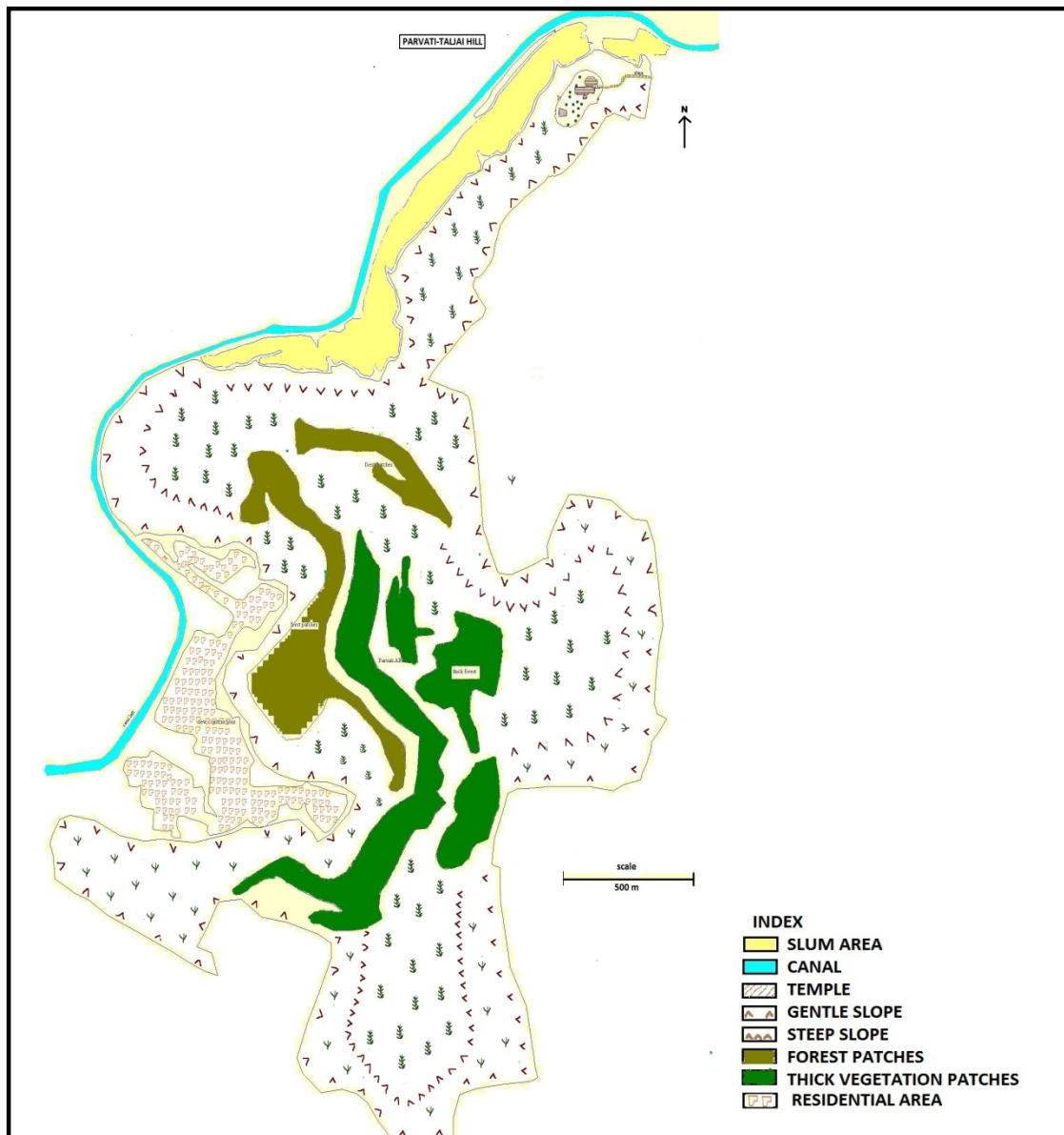
Vistiors getting down



Greenery on Parvati hill

Parvati Hill is situated in the south-east part of the city. The entire place was full of fields, trees and small dwellings during the Peshwa rule. The vast plains at the foothill were often used by feudal lords and dignitaries to put their camps when they visited the city with their armies. There are numerous references of Angres-the Controllers of Coastal area of the Maratha Empire, the Scindias and other Sardars camping luxuriously at the base of Parvati hill.

Taljai Hills is extending southern part of Parvati hill. The total area of the Parvati-Taljai hills is about 4.25 sq.km. The hill is lush green during the monsoons. Panoramic view of Pune City from the hill top is easily seen. It is a beautiful place to take a walk amongst the woods. Rabbits and peacocks are spotted between the trees.



### **Environmental importance:**



Taljai hill includes forestry with variety of trees. It also includes variety of animals and birds. Ela Foundation, a city-based non-governmental organization, has recorded more than 300 species of flora and fauna, as well as 133 species of birds in 94 genera and 44 families in these hills. A comprehensive checklist of several other taxa, a group of one or more populations of organisms, recorded at Taljai-Waghjai foothills. These include 15 species of mammals, five of amphibians, at least 13 of reptiles, butterflies, scorpions and spiders, odonates, and flora. (Times of India April 17, 2013)

The hills provide for several winter migratory birds. Five species of birds recorded in the foothills are endemic to India and are found nowhere else in the world. Another species of mammals is native to the Indian subcontinent. Many of them are sensitive to disturbances and will be forced to leave this habitat if there is traffic, noise and pollution.

### **Environmental and social degradation of the hills -**

In the recent years these hills are under threats. Slum areas around the Parvati hill increasing day by day. Now the hill is totally surrounded by slum. Illegal tree cutting, liquor consumption, obscene acts by couples and encroachment of land on the Taljai hill are also threatening problems.



**Slum at the foothill of Parvati**

**Methodology :**

Both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed in this study. Literary works about the hill, newspaper articles, and formal and informal interviews were used to the importance and identity of the place. The interviews were constructed utilizing open ended questions to allow interviewees to express their feelings associated with current economic, environmental, and socio-cultural aspects of the area.

The second method employed in this study utilized quantitative data obtained through a questionnaire that was distributed at the Parvati and Taljai hill to measure sense of place among the people visiting the place.

The questionnaire contained 23 questions in which 4 related to demographic information of the visitors. 13 questions regarding the attachment, identity and dependency towards the hill, 6 questions regarding the preservation of the place, their contribution for preservation and problems faced by them today. The question for the frequency of visits has 5 responses (daily, once in a week, once in a month, Once in six months, rarely). Attachment towards the place addressed through the question which has 3 responses (strongly, very less and absolutely not). Questions regarding the place attachment have only 2 responses (strongly agree or disagree). Questionnaires distributed to the visitors randomly who visited the hill. 87 questionnaires were filled by visitors.

## **Sense of Place**

This paper tries to measure three components of sense of place: place attachment, place dependence, and place identity (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). Place attachment is developed via the personal connection an individual or group has with a certain geographic setting (Nanzer, 2004). It is defined as an affective bond or link between people and specific places (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001). Place dependence refers to the importance of a place with regards to relying on that place for personal goals and satisfaction. Place identity is described as the “dimensions of self that define the individual’s personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, goals, and behavioral tendencies and skills relevant to this environment” (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001: 234).

**Place Attachment:** Everyday life activities assist in building a place attachment within an individual or group by creating the conditions for individuals to develop a relationship with the environmental aspects of place (Nanzer, 2004). The degree or intensity of place attachment is directly related to the level of experience an individual has with a particular locale. Nanzer (2004: 364) claims that place attachment, “is the result of long-term emersion in and acceptance of an area’s values, beliefs, and cultural systems that help convert individual un-rooted thinking to acceptance of group norms and attachment to the geographic location in which the group resides.”

### **Place Dependence**

Place dependence as first described by Stokols and Shumaker (1981) reflects the importance of a place in providing features and conditions that support specific goals or desired activities as compared to another potential location. This dependence is embodied in the area’s physical attributes that in our case are identified by Parvait hill. Place dependence suggests an ongoing relationship with a particular place by establishing a functional attachment to the natural resources of the area (Vaske and Kobrin, 2001). When a particular place is close enough to allow for frequent visitation, place dependence may increase because a consistent relationship with a particular setting develops. Though local natural areas and preserves may be ideal for establishing this functional attachment, such attachments may form with any place that supports highly valued goals or activities (Williams and Roggenbuck, 1989). This research examines not only the dependence established by those who have resided in the area within their entire lives, but the people residing away from the place frequently visit the place.



## Place Identity

Place identity has been described as a component of self identity that enhances self esteem, increases feelings of belonging to a community and is an influential factor in determining environmental values and policies. (Cantril, 1998; Proshansky et al ., 1983: relph,1976) The strength of place identity is based on the emotional investment made by individuals towards a specific place and their associated length of involvement with the place. (Nanzer 2004)

## Overall Sense of Place

The respondents who participated in the questionnaire reported a fairly strong sense of place associated with Parvati and Taljai hills. Statement 5 (I am attached with the place – strong, less, absolutely not) generated the strongest response at 83.33%. Statement 13 (No other place in the city can be compared with this place) generated 73.80 % response. Statement 16 (I believe there is no place like Parvati hill which provide more opportunities for the exercise) generated the strong response at 79.76. Statement 15 (There are better places in the city than Parvati) recorded weaker positive responses at 35.8%. Response results for the 12 statements measured in the questionnaire are depicted in as a value in percentage form (Table 1).

**Table 1**

Percentage of responses by scale item indicating sense of place.

Statement No	Sense of Place	Survey response
	<b>Place dependence</b>	
7	I am happy living around the Parvati- Taljai Hills	91.66% N=84
8	I would like to live nearby Parvati –Taljai hills for a long time.	98.78% N=82
13	No other place in the city can be compared with this place	73.80% N=83
15	As far as I am concerned there are better places than Parvati-Taljai hill	35.80% N=81
	<b>Place Attachment</b>	
9	I feel very connected with the Parvati-Taljai	95.06%

	hill.	N=81
11	I am the part and parcel of the Parvati-Taljai hill	90.5% N=85
10	It make me remember the history and creates environmental awarness	98.80 % N=84
12	The place is very special for me	96.42% N=84
	<b>Place Identity</b>	
16	I believe there is no place like Parvati hill which provide more opportunities for the exercise	79.76 N=84
17	It is one of the best examples of history and culture.	73.49% N=83
18	It is the place which I most enjoy	85.71 N=84
14	It is the ecologically, culturally and historical importance place for me	83.33 N=84

These statements show that respondents have a sense of place attached to the study area; The study includes place attachment, place identity, and place dependence in determining the overall sense of place. Analysis of the three subscales reveals place attachment as the strongest factor influencing overall sense of place among the three indicators. An average of all responses was calculated for the three subscales coupled with the score for overall sense of place (Table 2). A strong place attachment value (95.19%) was clearly the strongest factor, followed by place identity at 80.44%, and then place dependence at 75.01%. An average of the responses to the three indicators used to construct the overall sense of place revealed 83.54% strength in attitude towards Parvati-Taljai hill.

#### **Preservation and maintaining Character:**

Additional data was collected to measure the need of preservation and contribution of the visitors to preserve and maintain the place. 84 respondents answered for the question related to preservation. For the Statement 19 (I feel that this historical and ecological important place should be preserved and conserve) 99 % respondents generated positive response. The question regarding their contribution was answered by 79 respondents. 55.63% people generated strong response with using their time and money. 45 % people have

weak responses for preservation but 3.79% respondents answered negative. When the question asked about the serious problems faced by visitors majority people answered about the problems like encroachment of hills with the buildings, increasing slums, garbage on the area, tree cutting, obscene acts by couples.

Information collected about the solution of the problems. The question was asked (who should try to solve the problem – 1. Corporation 2. MLA’s 3. Visitors, 4. NGOs 5. All coming together). 63% respondents answered that all should come forward to solve the problems. 21.42 % people responded that MLA’s and Corporation is responsible for the solution of the problems. It means that majority people are ready to solve the problems and to preserve the identity of the place.

**Table 2 Overall survey response rates for sense of place**

<b>Sense of Place</b>	<b>%</b>
Place Attachment	95.19%
Place Identity	80.44%
Place Dependence	75.01%
Overall Sense of Place	83.54%

### **Demographic Comparison**

The questionnaire item regarding the gender of the respondents generated 84 responses, of which 54 were male (64.28%) and 30 female (35.71%).

The questionnaire item regarding age data was scaled 18-20 years, 20-40 years, 40-60 years, 60-80 years. The 0-18 years and 60-80 years range contained the lowest percent of respondents at 17.07 of the 82 respondents who provided data for this variable. All other ranges comprised between 10% and 30% of the respondents. Members of the 20-40 age group represented 34.14 % of the respondents followed by the 40-60 age group at 31.7%,

The annual household income demographic was scaled in the following ranges: less than 10, 000 Rs; 10,000-20,000 Rs., 20,000-50,000 Rs and greater than 50,000 Rs. 84 individuals provided data for this variable, 13.25% reported earning less than Rs 10,000; 19.27% earned between 10,000-20,000 Rs; 20.48% earned between 20,000-50,000 Rs; 10.84% earned above 50,000. The major group is the students at 28.91% and housewives at 7.22% do not have earnings. Additional data was collected in an attempt to measure the regularity of visiting the area.

84 Respondents provided data for the occurrence of the visit. It is tabulated in the following table.

<b>Occurrence of visit</b>	<b>Number of person</b>
Every day	56
Once in week	9
Once in month	4
indefinite	7
rarely	8

Respondents visiting the subject area every day are 66.66 %, once in week 10.71%, Once in month 4.76%, once in six months 8.33% and rarely visiting are 9.52%. Statistical analysis of the regularity of visitation provides much diversity in resulting data. Most of the persons visit the place every day. Many respondents are visiting the place every day from last 40 years.

### **Conclusion:**

The study measures the place attachment of the visitors towards the Parvati and Taljai hill. It tried to correlate the attachment of the place and their contribution for the preservation and maintaining its ecological, historical and cultural characteristics of the place. Strong attachment and sense of place is necessary for preservation and conservation of the place. The study shows that sense of place is considered important in the planning and policy for the preservation of sites. Strong sense of attachment and identity make them aware of the problems and to solve the problems. In this case People have strong attachment with the Parvati-Taljai hills. With this attachment, identity and dependency people are well aware about the problems and ready to contribute for the preservation of the sites.

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