

Transformation of Land Into Public Space After Pilgrimage: A Case of Saswad

Ar. Prerana B. Zende, Ar. Rujuta M. Pathak

PCET's S.B. Patil College of Architecture & Design, Pune, Mahartashtra, India

Corresponding Author: Ar. Prerana B. Zende, p.zende@sbpatilarchitecture.com

Article Information

Article history:

Received Jun 10, 2023
Accepted Dec 10, 2023



ABSTRACT

Pandharpur is the most important pilgrimage site in Maharashtra where Mauli of all saints i.e., Lord Vitthal's shrine is located. The Wari is generally in the form of 'Dindis', where the palkhi is fixed and takes place. About one and a half lakh devotees participate in Wari. Dindi from Alandi and Dehu takes 15 days to reach Pandharpur, during which the pilgrims spend the night in villages.

A 'Palkhi Tal' will act as a secure night halt for the pilgrims. The need for Palkhi Tal arises due to the unavailability of huge areas of agricultural land, which would earlier have been used by the pilgrims as a stopover place. Saswad is one of the important sites having a varasa of Mauli's palkhi tal halt. Palkhi Tal would include an area for Palkhi and various mobile facilities for devotees.

Palkhi Tal land occupies large amount of space which is used only once in a year and after that the land which is not used properly by the residents left vacant. Due to rise in urbanization since past many years, space unavailability problems for public space in urban and rural areas are faced. This land can be used for public place i.e., temple, market-yard, garden, etc. in consideration of Wari.

Therefore, it is necessary to find a solution, which will cater the needs of both public place and Palkhi Tal as a multi-functional space during and after the Wari time.

Keywords: Palkhi Tal ¹, Public Place ², Multi-functional space ³ etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

The pilgrims as they known 'Warkaris' in Maharashtra, undertakes this 'Pandharpur Wari' by singing bhajan and kirtan by praising the Lord and dancing on the rhythmic beat of cymbals, mrudunga, faithfully, every year. On this journey, they take a halt at certain public places at night. In the rest of the days post-wari, these spaces are not used effectively by the locals. Such lands can be designed for locals as well as Warkaris as a multi-functional public space.

1.1 AIM

Proposal for multi-functional public spaces used for Palkhi Tal as well as for locals of Saswad, pre & post-Wari period.

1.2 OBJECTIVE

- The research must blend with the regional current issues of the Palkhi Tal site.

- Considering the sentiments of pilgrims and their devotion towards the almighty with the issues faced in Palkhi Tal during the holy month.
- Considering the demand of locals after the Wari period, the place can be used for public space.

1.3 SCOPE

Travel to Pilgrim destinations has become more frequent due to increased accessibility and availability of transport. It results in changing the pilgrimage tourism & its traditional form in India.

Due to urbanization, it is observed that there is a lack of public open spaces to conduct such gatherings.

Palkhi Tal acquires large ground land for a halt. Pre & post-Wari, it is observed that people are unable to use such lands effectively. So, as per public demand & needs, the proposal can be given for public space considering both pilgrims and locals.

1.4 LIMITATIONS

Wari of Pandharpur is divided into two main groups (Dindis) namely Alandi and Dehu. According to the cultural values of both groups, they have their significance and rituals. When these groups leave their places and go through villages, people from every village come for Darshan and join these groups. This gradually increases the amount of Warkaris as the Palkhi travels further. Due to this, the land used for the Palkhi Tal is not handled properly.

Looking at such issues, there will be a few limitations for the usage of land for each Palkhi Tal. Therefore, without compromising the cultural value of Palkhi Tal, it is important to map out each place of stay and which activities can be carried out in such.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research can be carried out with the help of a comparative analysis of various case studies. Field visits were made in October 2022 and included face-to-face interviews with local communities and agencies that are involved in some way of Management of pilgrimage.

The pattern of movement of the Palkhi, their stops and the area were studied to design a multi-functional public space for locals and the Warkaris. To identify the problems, a visit to a few places in Palkhi Tal has been carried out. The problems were identified & analyzed in these areas and find the solution & give proposals for these such issues in these areas.

For such a study, the following things are considered:

1. For the evaluation of Palkhi Tal, the location of various sites, site context, existing structures or any large natural aspects like large trees or water bodies, etc. were studied.
2. Study the reasons for a site for Palkhi Tal development – like the size or location of the site concerning town or village, ease of accessibility, and any natural or cultural or religious importance of the site.
3. Identify people's occupancy details for public space and their demands on wari and non-wari days, worked out for other facilities required.
4. Study on use of site on non – wari days.

3. OBSERVATIONS

Dindis of Dehu and Alandi depart from their respective places, meets at Pune and separate their routes towards the Pandharpur destination as per [Fig. No. 1].

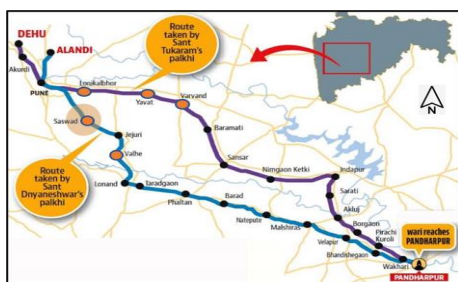







Fig. No. 1: Road Map of Dindi (Source: Google)

Table 1. Observations of various sites for Palkhi Tal.

Palkhi Tal Sites	Observations
<p>1. Yavat</p>  <p>Fig. No. 2: Yavat map</p>	<p>Site area of Yavat is about 6.20 Acres. The Dehu Palkhi takes halt in open space of Yavat. Capacity of the this Palkhi Tal is for 15,000 people.</p>
<p>2. Lonikalbhori</p>  <p>Fig. No. 3: Lonikalbhori map</p>	<p>Site area of Lonikalbhori is about 15-16 Acres. The Dehu Palkhi takes halt in the open space of Temple complex of Dehu. Capacity of the this Palkhi Tal is for 25,000 people.</p>
<p>3. Varvand</p>  <p>Fig. No. 4: Varvand map</p>	<p>Site area of Varvand is about 3.18 Acres. Dehu Palkhi takes halt in the open space of Temple complex of Dehu. Capacity of the this Palkhi Tal is for 10,000 people.</p>
<p>4. Valhe</p>  <p>Fig. No. 5: Valhe map</p>	<p>Site area of Valhe is about 13.83 Acres. The Alandi Palkhi takes halt in the open ground in Valhe. Capacity of the this Palkhi Tal is for 15,000 people</p>
<p>5. Saswad</p>  <p>Fig. No. 6: Saswad map</p>	<p>Saswad palkhi tal is 3.28 Acres of land. The Alandi Palkhi takes halt in the open ground of Saswad. Capacity of the this Palkhi Tal is for 9,000 people.</p>

4. SELECTION & OBSERVATIONS OF PALKHI TAL FOR PROPOSAL:

As per some of the above cases considered for Palkhi Tal, it is observed that every Palkhi Tal is different from other with respect to the area, usability & their cultural values. Out of all these places, Saswad is one of the important Palkhi Tal in Pune District. It is situated in the midst of the mighty peaks of the Sahyadri, on the banks of the river Karha.



Fig. No. 7: Photograph of Saswad Wari in 2015



Fig. No. 8: Saswad Palkhi Tal land Google Map [source: google]

4.1 POPULATION OF SASWAD

Saswad village had a population of 78,521 in 2019 [source: Saswad Municipal Council City Population Census]

4.2 FLOATING POPULATION IN SASWAD

The floating population of the city is mainly due to the large number of pilgrims arriving in the city during the Pandharpur Palkhi Wari.

4.3 DURATION OF PALKHI HALT

Average stay of pilgrims in Saswad is one day while in Panadharpur it depends on their darshan. In the free time at Saswad, visitors are observed to go for site-seeing and therefore implicit is the potential for an increase in consumption of resources and an extra demand for services. The following points have been analyzed from the case study of Saswad Palkhi Tal.

4.4 CURRENT SITUATION OF SASWAD PALKHI TAL

Area of Palkhi Tal is an open site of 3.28 acres having irregular shape [fig. No. 8]. Land is surrounded by compound walls having one main entrance to site [fig.No. 9]

4.5 LANDUSE OF PALKHI TAL PLACE IN NON-WARI TIME

The open space of Saswad Palkhi Tal is not suitable for work in public places. The entire site is provided with

pathway surrounding and a central platform for palkhi. There are some open gym facilities near the pathway but people rarely use them. Most of the children are seen playing games on the ground. It is observed that this land is mainly used for Palkhi halt purpose not mostly for public activities. Therefore the land leaves vacant after pilgrimage halt.



Fig. No. 9: Main entrance of Saswad Palkhi Tal



Fig. No. 10: Platform at center of land for Palkhi



Fig. No. 11: Open gym equipment and drinking water facility provided at side corner of site



Fig. No. 12: Palkhi Tal land photo in non-wari days, Saswad

Table 2. Land use Status

5. SERVICES IN PALKHI TAL SITES

The main service factors to consider are.

5.1 ACCESS TO SITE & TRANSPORTATION

Table 2. Land use Status

Present status
Due to roadside parking Narrow interior roads, less effective width. Roads that run across the main arteries of the city.
Indiscriminate parking of vehicles leads to traffic jams Clash of pedestrian & vehicular traffic
Parking A parking lot - also used for informal shops on the border
Vehicles and auto rickshaws parked near PCMT / ST bus stand & the front of the open space used for parking
Analysis
Vehicle traffic and parking is very close to the Sopandev Samadhi area, and passes through the main town, which was intended for pedestrians only.
Heavy traffic roads need to be widened, and parking arrangements need to be made at appropriate places.
Bypasses need to be designed and implemented to divert traffic.
Recommendations
The main city was for pedestrians and should remain so.
Basically, all vehicles should be banned from entering the city which has a pedestrian walkway.
Parking should be kept far enough away from the holy places used by the pilgrims.
Vehicles like horse carriage or palanquin can be used for disabled / elderly people.

5.2 WATER FACILITY

Table 3: Water facility status

Present Status
Currently there is a drinking water tank at corner of the Palkhi Tal. Water is supplied by ESR tank.
The capacity of the water treatment plant is 1.68MLD
3.5 MLD of water is supplied to the city during festival
Supply 20 LPCD for floating population.
Analysis
Due to floating population demand Water Treatment Plant is not properly operated and maintained.
The distribution network is old & needs to be assessed.
Recommendation
Current capacity is adequate for population, although issues such as operations, maintenance and staffing must be addressed.
Required potable water, which can be managed despite current capacity



Fig. No. 13: Traffic problem faced & having no access to Saswad during wari time [source : google]



Fig. No. 14: Road of Saswad in non-wari days

Present status of Land use in non-Wari days

The land after Palkhi Halt is currently used for walking and jogging track.

During festivals time, temporary shop stalls are set aside.

Kids play games on the ground of Palkhi Tal.

One corner of the space is used for open gym

Analysis
People are not aware of the Public place landscape use.
Land is not designed for other public activities in non - wari days.
No shades, pergolas are provided for pilgrims and residential in rainy/ harsh sunlight time.
Open Gym facility is not proper arranged as per use.
Space is not planned for permanent public activities for all age category people.

Recommendations
For pedestrian and pilgrims seat outs/ benches should arrange along pathways.
For shades provide gazebo in rainy time or for small functions like bhajan / kirtan.
Laughter club, Yoga, Play grounds, etc. activities can be planned in public space.
For shade and rest purposes landscape Shady trees and shrubs should be provided.



Fig. No. 15: Water Facility provision at Palkhi Tal

5.3 SOLID WASTE

In Saswad, owing to the inadequacy of the sewerage system in many areas, open drains and soak pits are heavily used. This causes severe contamination of ground water; more than 60-80% of the ground water is subjected to such contaminated.

The infrastructure of public toilets and public conveniences is grossly insufficient in Saswad and poses a major threat for public health. During peak visitation, foul smell and overflowing gutters around public conveniences are now these days uncommon. To avert any epidemics of diseases, the local municipality should spray of pesticides and insecticides.

Table 4: Solid Waste status

Present Status
After the Wari, the land is contaminated with solid waste. Saswad municipality-collection and disposal Waste discarded in open drains results in choking.
Wastewater flows on streets & forms wastewater pool municipality dumps solid waste away from town without treatment
Analysis
Inadequate equipment and manpower for collection
Solid waste-dumping technique is unscientific & hazardous for public health.
Identification new site for future growth.

Recommendation
Disposal of solid waste at source. It can be reused after processing to grow plants, veggies, trees, etc.
For the discharge of solid waste during wari and post wari time an appropriate management should provide.

5.4 SEWERAGE

The infrastructure of public toilets and public conveniences is grossly insufficient in Saswad and poses a major threat for public health.

For avoiding diseases maintain a proper management for Sewerage purpose.



Fig. No. 16: No Proper maintenance of toilets at Palkhi Tal



Fig. No. 17: Septic Tanks at the Palkhi Tal

Table 5: Sewerage service status

Present Status
On the Palkhi Tal site, there are no adequate public toilets. Therefore, mobile toilets are provided during wari. .
Due to sewerage problem, Open space have no proper public value.
Analysis
High risk of pollution of groundwater
No underground sewerage system and sewage treatment facility.
Untreated sewage flows through roadside drains into the nallahs and pollutes the watercourses.
Disposal of sewage into river without treatment
Public Toilets highly inadequate
Problem of identifying suitable location & type of toilets

Recommendation

Use of septic tanks for treating sewage is harmful to the environment. When this water leads to the river, destroys eco-system of site.

Provide dry-sanitation system, which does not use water for carrying sewage, converts the sludge into usable manure and does not pollute the water sources.

Similar facilities for the large pilgrimage population are possible.

Storm-water drainage, if thus freed from carrying sullage, can become once again the resource for fresh water to the river.

5.5 ACCOMMODATION, VISITOR MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC PLACE MANAGEMENT

In wari time, people travel from Pune to Saswad with wari. At Saswad Palkhi Tal, few people come with Dindi takes a halt and some people return back after darshan.

For the management of their accommodation as well as for public activity all above services should be properly planned.

For providing a safe environment to people, there should be complete control management and visibility inside and outside of Saswad site. Some Attraction Features, signages should added to Saswad.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Design public areas and streets with convenient access for all sorts of activity, notably pedestrians. Walking in the public realm should be taken into consideration.
- Promote visual diversity and richness and maintain the interest of those using the area as well as those passing through it. The study shows that this may be done by combining different architectural articulations and compositions, moving and changing objects, and mixed applications. Events that "change" the common settings and methods of living are also quite important.
- Sensitivity toward the changing rituals and their importance in 'place' formation. As our research shows, rituals have influenced several towns through the experiential designing a multifunctional space. They help in retaining the cultural identity of a place and foster an attachment to it by creating strong associations and imagery
- Sensitivity to the shifting rituals and their significance in the creation of "place." Our research demonstrates that rituals have made a number of towns experientially, maintaining a place's cultural character as well as alternate design proposal.

- For maintaining this space and its services the place can be designed a multipurpose public Recreational place, like Playgrounds, Mangal Karyalay, Public Gathering Lawns for functions, etc. Therefore, the place will be used and maintain by people.

7. CONCLUSION

Currently, Saswad has more land for farming and other purposes but people have no proper facilitated public place and health facilities. Also, people are not aware about public places. They use random places as per the place availability and requirement.

Saswad Palkhi Tal is one where multipurpose public place can be developed.

This place can be redeveloped by providing landscape elements like shading areas, sit outs, tree kattas, etc. for the pilgrims as well as the residents can take rest. As the site acquire large area, can be used for interactive space for gathering people in festivals, pilgrimages, sports playground, public park and many other purposes.

For environmental awareness, signages can be added, also programs of social activity can be conducted in wari period.

Services like drinking water facilities, permanent toilets, solid waste bins, control on service management etc. should be proper planned for better landscaping of public places.

8. REFERENCES

- [1] X Shinde, K. (2003), Environmental crisis in God's abode: Managing religious tourism. In C. Fernandes, F. Mcgettigan and J. Edwards (eds) Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage – Conference Proceedings of the 1st Expert Meeting of ATLAS – Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Research Group, 23–27 April, 2003 (pp 87–102). Portugal: Tourism Board of Leiria/Fatima.
- [2] Report on documentation and development of palkhi tal sites by Ar. Kiran Kalamdani
- [3] Prajakta Sane (2007), Experiential shaping of public Space during pilgrimage: the Alandi-pandharpur palkhi. Submitted in University of New South Wales.
- [4] S.VIJAYANAND, Phd scholar, Department of tourism studies School of Management Pondicherry University Kalapet, Pondicherry (2013), published in Radix international journal of Economics & business management.
- [5] Singh R.P.B. (2006), Pilgrimage in Hinduism, historical context and modern perspectives. In Timothy and Olsen (eds) Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journey (pp. 220–236).London: Routledge.
- [6] 5.Action for environmental improvement of Alandi. Maharashtra pollution control board, Wilbur Smith Associates Private Limited.
- [7] Shinde K (2018) Palkhi: A moving Town in book: Religious Pilgrimage Routes& Trails: Sustainable development Management

- [8] Singh, R.P.B. (2002), Sacred space and pilgrimage in hindu society: The case of Varanasi. In R.H. Stoddard and A. Morinis (eds) *Sacred Places, Sacred Spaces. The Geography of Pilgrimages, Geoscience and Man*, 34(1), pp 191–208.