

FORTS IN MAHARASHTRA: GLORIFYING HISTORY OR TURNING INTO LANDSCAPES?



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1. Abstract:

Forts in Maharashtra are relics of the glory of the kings in the past and their victory, defeat or power. We started our project with a question "Is Pune on the verge of losing its history or can we still restore them?". Surveys, interviews, data collection from websites and observing evidence from fort visits played an important role in our research. We thought that low maintenance by the government is the major factor affecting forts' destruction more than other factors like climate or tourism. We researched through authentic websites, contacted the Archeology department and experts who have been working in this field for many years. For our primary research we visited forts near Pune. We visited a minor fort like Malhargad, and a major fort like Sinhagad. In Malhargad there were hardly any structures or fortifications seen, whereas in the case of Sinhagad, the fort was less damaged and the fortifications were kept clean. We also conducted surveys to interview people who visit forts regularly. The state government and tourists see these forts more like a picnic spot than a heritage monument. These forts have been exposed to harsh climatic conditions, natural disasters and human interference for many decades which have made them weaker. If these forts are not given proper attention, we will lose them soon. Government announced schemes for forts but the work done by them is a matter of debate. If the situation continues, Pune city will no longer be known for its historical background.

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2. Introduction:

This topic raises a question on our consideration and respect towards our history. We often show our gratitude towards the great emperor Shivaji Maharaj by building statues, declaring holidays, singing patriotic songs and remembering their bravery stories. But we often fail to recall and conserve the real sign for their valour, where they were born, where they fought, where they died. Our forts have witnessed all the happenings of the past, and often symbolize many courageous sacrifices. But now these forts have started to fall apart. Most of the forts are littered and demolished by citizens and government. If we don't take steps to conserve them now, we will lose them forever.

2.1: Research Question:

“Is Pune on the verge of losing its heritage or can we still restore them?”

2.2: Hypothesis:

Forts in Maharashtra are on verge of falling and conservation efforts fall short of requirements that will give the desired results.

2.3: Rationale:

- *Personal reasons*

These forts have witnessed many stories of bravery and heroic sacrifices, which teaches life lessons and they are our pride and bring glory to the city of Pune. If they fall apart, all the teaching will be in vain.

We found this topic important because if the current situation of forts is not paid any attention to, we will lose our rich heritage forever.

- *Importance to city*

Pune is considered the cultural capital of Maharashtra. The city was once the proud capital of the Maratha Empire, and a political center. Today, this city is known as an IT hub and a major educational center. This research would help people remember Pune's original identity.

3. Methods: Multi-method

Our primary research started with **interviews of experts and citizens**. Due to Covid pandemic, the interviews were taken online, on zoom calls. We interviewed Mr. Milind Kshirsagar (Shivaji Trails founder) on 11th October'21, Sachin Joshi on 9th October'21 (Archeologist) and Shridatta Raut (Conservator) on 6th September'2021. All the three experts have been engaged with forts for the past 24 years. We collected people's responses through **google forms and offline interviews**.

For secondary research we found some **authentic websites and articles** which stated important information about forts. We **visited two nearby forts in Pune**. Sinhagad- which is a popular fort, and Malhargad- which is a minor fort located in the village area of Pune to know the difference between both the forts' condition

3.1 Selection of Methods:

Methods used for Research:

- **Survey through Google form**

We used google survey forms for collecting diverse information in a systematic way from common people. This was a lot easier than interviewing everyone in person to know their opinions regarding the current condition of forts.

- **Interviews with experts (online)**

Due to Covid pandemic, it was not possible to meet the experts in person. So taking online meetings was an efficient way to get information from them. Talking through this platform would make things simpler than texts or calls.

More information about experts we interviewed is available on the following link.

Mr. Milind Kshirsagar (Shivaji Trails founder), Sachin Joshi (Archeologist) and Shridatta Raut (Conservator)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZfVy2e_nlqGJhgB4y736ZriJT0NmMd75ditn8jCV1U4/edit?usp=drivesdk

- **Collecting data from official websites**

Data collected through official websites is more accurate and verified, so we used some web resources which are certified by government for our research.

- **Collecting evidences by Visiting forts**

Actually visiting forts and observing condition on the site was the most reliable source of research. We visited 2 forts, to verify the news about the falling structures on the forts. The actual fort visit was beneficial to see the truth.

We used these methods because they were easy to follow the research, and were suiting our topic. Methods like experimenting and testing were not relevant for our topic, so we couldn't use them.

3.2 Data Collection Tools

We used primary data collection tools like online interviews, google forms, live interviews. The meetings made us clear about present-day conditions on forts, and possible factors responsible for it. Our secondary data consisted of authentic websites and informative videos which explained the work done on forts by government bodies. Visiting forts was our main agenda, because we can't get a hold of the current forts' situation just by trusting online websites. So, we made a visit to 2 forts which would form a clear picture in our mind about our RQ.

4. Findings:

4.1 Major findings:

1. Around 10.3% of forts in Pune are damaged to such an extent that they can't be further restored.
2. More than 70% of forts are restored by Private NGOs, who have to collect their own funds and are not employed by the government.
3. There are 20.6% forts in Maharashtra left unattended by both, government as well as NGOs.
4. Climatic factors can be a major cause for this condition of forts. The forts in low rainfall regions are in better condition than forts located in high rainfall regions.
5. Many forts are given away to people in the form of legacy
6. Utilization of funds is not done properly by the Archeology department.

4.2 Detailed findings:

1. **Around 10.3% of forts in Pune are damaged to such an extent that it can't be further restored.**
 - According to Mr. Sachin Joshi sir, out of 29 forts 10.3% of forts in Pune like Ghangad, Birwadi, Mangad don't need further restoration work, as the main monument on the fort has collapsed over time and only the surrounding walls are left. It is readily possible for the government to construct new monuments on these forts, but it would not be worth it as the main attraction on these forts is the relics which are 400 years old.

Condition beyond restoration



Birwadi



Ghangad

2. **Work by NGOs:** The NGOs that work on restoration of these forts try to keep the original look and feel of the site the same but still manage to conserve them.

According to one of our experts, Shridatta sir, more than 70% of forts are restored by NGOs. The table below tells us the restoration status of forts in Pune (refer table 1.1).

Sr no.	Names of forts	Is restoration work going on? Yes/No	Who is doing the work?
1.	Hadsar fort	Yes	Private NGO
2.	Chavand fort	Yes	Private NGO
3.	Shivneri fort	Yes	Archeological Survey of India
4.	Jivdal fort	No	---
5.	Narayan fort	Yes	Private NGO
6.	Sangram Durg	Yes	Maharashtra State Archeology
7.	Rajmachi fort	Yes	Archeological Survey of India (ASII)
8.	Dhavalgad fort	No	---
9.	Lohagad fort	Yes	Archeological Survey of India (ASII)
10.	Tikona Gad	Yes	NGO
11.	Korai fort	Yes	Maharashtra state Archeology

12.	Ghangad fort	Yes	NGO
13.	Kailasgad fort	No	---
14.	Sinhagad fort	Yes	State archeology
15.	Rajgad fort	Yes	State archeology
16.	Tornagad	Yes	State archeology
17.	Rohida fort	Yes	Private NGO
18.	Purandar fort	Yes	NGOs (50-70)
19.	Vajragad fort	No	---
20.	Bahadurgad fort	Yes	State Archeology
21.	Daulatmangal fort	Yes	Archeological Survey of India (ASI)
22.	Durga fort	No	---
23.	Dhakoba fort	No	---
24.	Malhargad fort	Yes	Private NGO
25.	Mohangad	Yes	Private NGO

(Table 1.1)

3. **There are 20.6% forts in Maharashtra left unattended by both, government as well as NGOs.**

- Mr. Sachin Joshi sir stated that forts like Jivdhan fort, Dhavalgad fort, Kailasgad fort, Vajragad fort, Durga fort and Dhakoba fort are not maintained either by the Government or by any NGO. (Refer table 1.1)

4. **Climatic factors** can be a major cause for forts' condition. The forts in low rainfall regions are in better condition than forts located in high rainfall regions.

- Maharashtra's forts were built in the 16th Century, and have been exposed to the climate for the past 400 years. Over time, the strong walls have become fragile due to low maintenance. Forts like Vairagad, Sangadi, Balapurcha fort, Bahadurgad (hamam khana), Manjarsumba fort (Ahmednagar), Meghdambari fort, Rohida fort Ausa fort, Udhir fort, Naldurg fort, Paranda fort, Vajragad are damaged due to climatic conditions.



5. **Many forts are given away to people in the form of legacy.**

- The law '**acquisition of rights in a protected monument**' was implied in 1958. This law comes under Ancient Monument and Archeological Sites and Remains Act. According to the law, the Collector may purchase, or accept a gift any protected monument with the sanction of the State Government. Many forts are given away to

contractors and builders who use them for commercial purposes. This unfair law practice resulted in decline of forts in Maharashtra.

The below link consists of more such laws which have been used since British rule and needs to be changed. <http://www.bareactslive.com/MAH/MH014.HTM>

6. Forts like punavdhi killa are demolished for commercial use.

- Milind Kshirsagar sir provided information along with evidence that forts like Punavdi killa were demolished for commercial use. This construction is majorly done on forts, there are only small remains left. There are even illegal constructions done on forts like building lodges and shops. These shops are now a major attraction for tourists and the fort is gradually losing its historical significance. This link contains 160 illegal constructions done on forts in Maharashtra. <https://m.timesofindia.com/city/pune/160-illegal-constructions-around-historic-places-asi/articleshow/10861846.cm>



Shops on forts

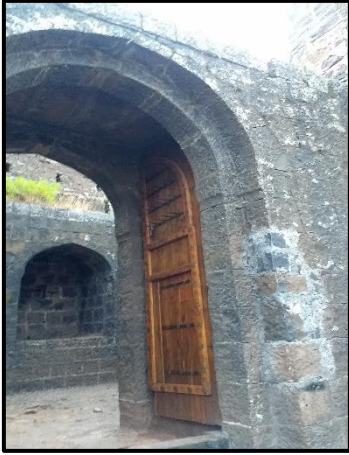


Commercial use

7. Improper utilization of funds by the Archeology department.

- Government gives funds every year for restoration of forts, but the result is still not seen. Either the funds are not enough for maintaining all the forts or the they are not utilized properly. On Malhargad we observed there is a vast sum of funds given for restoration of the fort, but only has a door fully repaired. In case of Sinhagad, more than 23.5 crore in 2021, still the visit reveals no change in the fort's condition.
- https://m.timesofindia.com/city/pune/shivneri-fort-up-for-conservation-with-rs-23-5-crore-government-funds/amp_articleshow/80887334.cms

Some restoration work at Malhargad



Wooden door installed



Temple restored

8. Visits to major and minor forts to study the condition at present:

We visited Malhargad and Sinhgad to observe the actual situation and varified the information we received from various sources mentioned above.



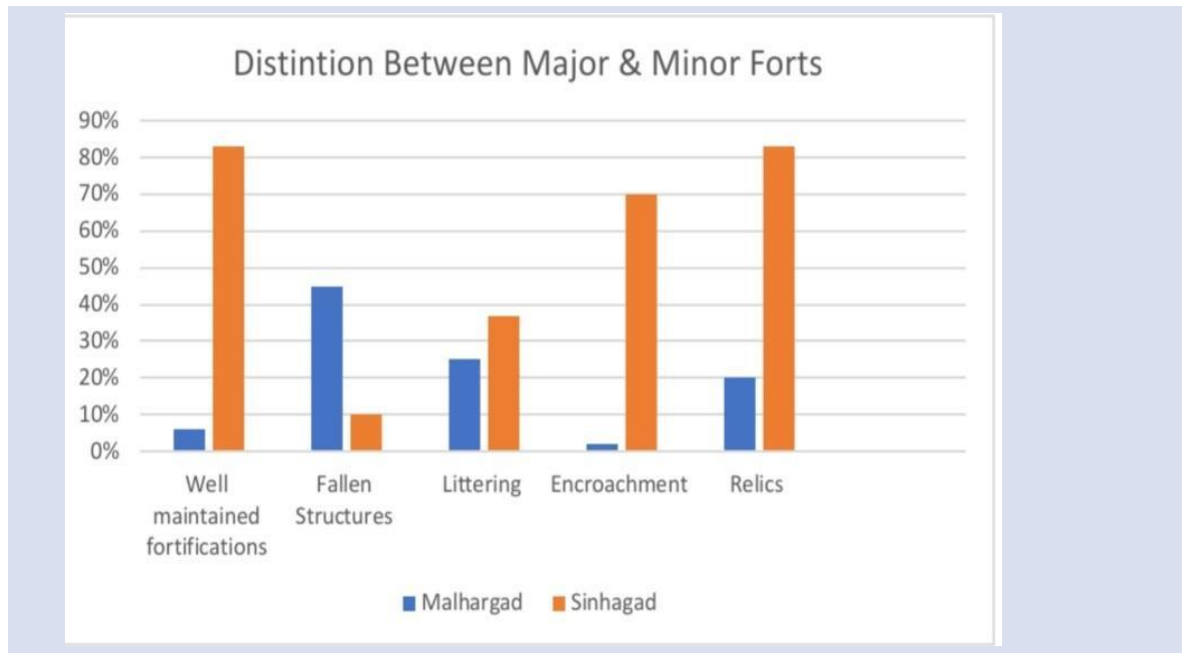
Interview with visitors



Fallen walls and pillars



We observed major difference between the state of Malhargad(Minor fort) and Sinhagad(Major fort)



From the above graph we can clearly state that Sinhagad is in a better state than Malhargad.

- The below link states the aspect of citizens towards forts.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UL7-CEIqaq6iLLD9gr6vu-A5lKZhTYysPLf6FD18J58/edit?usp=drivesdk>

5. Discussion:

After the research, we conclude that the situation of forts will worsen with the passage of time if no timely attention is given to them.

And within the next few years the forts might be completely destroyed.

5.1

Forts in Maharashtra are on verge of falling and conservation efforts fall short of requirements that will give the desired results. Our hypothesis was proved partially right, as the condition of major forts in Pune is better than the condition of minor forts.

5.2 Implications on Pune city:

1. Taking the findings into consideration, it is clear that non-famous forts are in the state of neglect. This research will help to improvise the conditions of minor forts.
2. The research can be used as an sensitization awareness in different schools, universities etc. And even make people aware about the

5.3 Influencing factors:

1. Sample size: Opinions from a huge number of people would have ended in collection of irrelevant data. So we selected a sample of people who are interested in forts like regular visitors to the nearby forts, people working for NGOs, official and people related to archeology department.
2. Using data from unofficial websites would have given the wrong direction to the project.

● Two action steps after the research:

- We decided **to raise awareness and educate people** about the condition of forts and also help NGOs in every possible way.
- We wanted to study and explore forts not only from Maharashtra but from all over India.. This will help us to acquire more knowledge and one day we will

be able to **appeal to the government for the improvement** in the condition of forts.

- **The new RQ:**

What can be done to save the forts from demolishing?

Can forts be seen as a historical monument rather than a picnic spot?

6. Conclusion:

Pune is a home to many forts. They tell us many stories and are a sign of the existence of Marathas. As years passed, forts became weak and were gradually ignored. Forts are now used as tourist attractions, sometimes pre wedding shoots destination, holiday spots etc. Many forts are littered, ignored and destroyed. Many small forts like punavdhi killa are raze for building complexes and other commercial centers. Many forts are in a terrible state due to low maintenance and inappropriate methods of restoration and conservation.

After months of research, we came to a conclusion that our hypothesis was partially right. All forts were destroyed in some percent and many of its parts were broken. But we observed that major forts like Sinhagad, Raigad or other popular forts were in a better state than the minor forts like Malhargad, Ghanghad. Major forts have now started to get in better condition but, the condition on minor forts is getting worse.

If this continues, one day, minor forts will disappear and we will be able to see only a few number of forts and their remains. And if the situation worsens more, the major forts will also start breaking down and soon we will lose our beautiful heritage and its significance.

7. Reflection:

7.1 Group reflection:

Indicators -Collaboration	4	3	2	1	Example
Every member of the team was <u>always</u> prepared, well informed on the project topic and ready to work.		✓			Every member is well informed about online meetings and time is fixed according to everyone's convenience.
Every member of the team <u>always</u> completed assigned tasks on time without having to be reminded.		✓			It is sometimes hard to keep track of work assigned to team mates, but most of the time, we don't have to remind anyone twice to do any assigned work.
As a team, we created a detailed task list that divided project work reasonably among the team members.	✓				We created a task list for every member for every week.
As a team, we set a schedule and tracked progress toward goals and deadlines.	✓				Every member is reminded about his/her goals and deadlines.
As a team, we used time and ran meetings efficiently; kept materials, drafts, notes organized	✓				We scheduled meetings for minimum thrice a week. Our notes and data were organized in a separate google doc whose access was given to all the members including the teachers.
As a team, we developed ideas and created products with the involvement of <u>all</u> team members		✓			We spend a huge amount of time creating unique ideas for our research, Due to some reason, it was not possible for all the members to be present in

					developing new ideas.
Indicators Communication					
Every member of the team listened to others' ideas without interrupting; responded positively to ideas even if rejected.	✓				All the members were good listeners, and gave their suggestions if necessary. Some ideas were even rejected as the majority of team members didn't agree to it.
Team members communicated openly and treated one another with respect.	✓				We gave more importance to communication. And if we felt that we aren't able to convey a few things in online meetings, we arranged offline meets and talked in person.
Every member of the team felt safe and free to seek assistance and information, share resources and insights, provide advice, or ask questions of each other.	✓				Every member held a free conversation between each other. And shared ideas, resources, information, and suggestions without any hesitations.

7.2 Individual reflection:

Trisha Kotwal:

1. CAL was a big opportunity to learn the real meaning of teamwork. Being in a squad, there are a lot of responsibilities and expectations that have to be fulfilled, So, I enjoyed being with the trio and learning new things from them.
2. Contacting experts and arranging meetings with them was the part which I struggled a bit. As they were busy with their work, it was difficult to find a time where the experts as well as teachers would be available for the interview.
3. The skills I got to learn from CAL is public speaking which was necessary while taking offline interviews, expressing thoughts in suitable words and using vast English

vocabulary which was essential while making the phase 1, 2 and final document, and most importantly my listening skills developed a lot, as it was an important part of project to listen to my teammate's opinions.

Neha Godse:

1. Visiting forts and observing and collecting information was the most enjoyable thing I ever did.
2. Contacting Archeology department members and searching for official and authentic websites was the most difficult part of the project and as I was in in change of secondary data, I struggled a lot to provide official data.
3. Before starting the project, I lacked confidence and vocabulary. But, when I see myself now, I feel like I have improved a lot and feel much more confident. First, I didn't feel confident enough to call people to acquire information, but after a period of time I felt confident to interview people. I also discovered myself and learned to manage time.

Bhumi Mohod:

1. Firstly, I enjoyed being with my friends. Apart from studies and gossip we had another topic to work on. Visiting forts with them, having meetings, we had a precious time period in these 2 months.
2. During this period everything was online but however I don't like to read texts and reply to them much. This was the only one thing which I struggled with the most during the project.
3. I learned to be focused during this project. As we had deadlines to submit our phase 1, phase 2 doc etc. I think for achieving goals we need to be focused in our life.

8. References:

1. https://m.timesofindia.com/city/pune/states-forts-suffer-rain-damage-parts-of-walls-structures-cave-in/amp_articleshow/70666919.cms ~{14Aug 2019, Times of India)
2. <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/7-shocking-facts-about-shivajis-forts-thatll-leave-you-furious-3600-crore-statue-maharashtra> ~ {03 Apr 2021, The Quint}
3. News articles from Lokmat dated 8th September, 2021.
4. Group of fort lovers and researchers “Itihasache Shivbharat Parva”

9. Citations:

1. <https://www.indiaculture.nic.in/built-heritage> ~{18 Nov, 2021, Ministry of Culture}
2. <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/7-shocking-facts-about-shivajis-forts-thatll-leave-you-furious-3600-crore-statue-maharashtra> ~ {03 Apr 2021, The Quint}
3. <http://Trekshitiz.com> ~{24 July, 2020}

10. Appendix

a. Interview Questions:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/19wNtnyFzGW5Q_kSjWUCMyv4TQzd26alvaaB1dI00ZqY/edit?usp=drivesdk

b. Google form link:

<https://forms.gle/GHvF84j7UQn3scB99>

c. Checklist during visit to the fort:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/19wNtnyFzGW5Q_kSjWUCMyv4TQzd26alvaaB1dI00ZqY/edit?usp=drivesdk
