

Heritage Management for Wadas located in core area of Saswad region of Pune district of Maharashtra

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Abstract — New The aim behind this research paper is to study the heritage management of Wadas located in Saswad region of Pune district of Maharashtra. Saswad is a cultural and historic town in Pune district of Maharashtra. Wadas- the grand mansions (traditional Indian houses with courtyard) that once defined its architectural and cultural significance. These structures remind us of the glory of Maratha Empire and the Peshwas of Maharashtra. Wadas in Saswad are not only the residences but also they are the places where history, administration, social gathering, and culture developed. The paper highlights on heritage management of Wadas with respect to the practice of preserving and protecting the historical and cultural significance of Wadas, by undertaking appropriate means like conservation, restoration, preservation, maintenance, and adaptive reuse activities to guarantee its long-term sustainability and usability to future generations.

Key words- Heritage management, Wada, Saswad, culture, conservation, maintenance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Saswad is a small town in Pune district of Maharashtra, about 30 kilometers from the city of Pune, but well connected by good roads. It is linked to Pune by major routes: Pune – Saswad – Nira – Pandharpur road, Saswad-Bopdev-Pune road, and Saswad to pune via Dive ghat. Saswad is an old town of Maharashtra, with a deep cultural and political heritage. It was an important halt on the ancient trade route between Pune and the Konkan coast, and over the centuries, it grew into a major center of administration and spirituality.

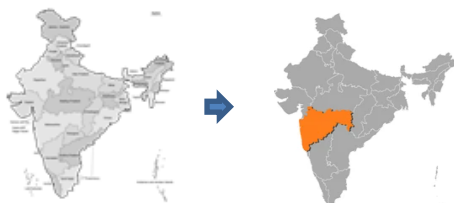


Figure 1: India map Figure 2: India Map Highlighting Maharashtra State

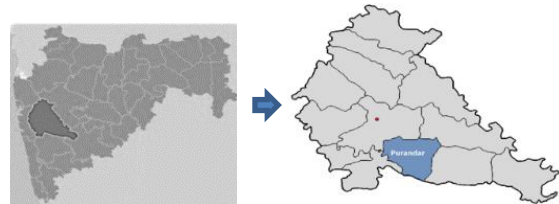


Figure 3: Maharashtra Map Highlighting Pune City

Figure 4: Pune Map Highlighting Purandar

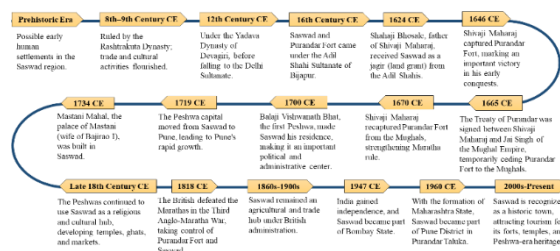


Figure 5: Timeline of Saswad

II. AIM, OBJECTIVES, SCOPE & LIMITATION

A. Aim:

To propose the Heritage Management for Wadas of core area of Saswad by identifying the architectural significance and its heritage potential.

B. Objectives:

- To document and classify various types of Wadas (small scale, medium scale, large scale) in Saswad based on architectural characters and heritage potential.
- To propose the mapping of identified Wadas.
- To propose the heritage management of identified Wadas.

C. Scope:

The proposal is for the Wadas of Saswad, which will help in preservation of the heritage of the place.

D. Limitation:

The study is limited to core Saswad region and Wada typology.

III. HISTORY OF SASWAD

In the 17th century, Shahaji Raje Bhosale, the grandfather of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, was a very important figure in the politics of the Deccan. Shahaji Raje rose to top positions during the Nizamshahi regime and subsequently the Adilshahi Sultanate, and his jagir comprised regions in and around Pune and Saswad. Saswad, with proximity to Purandar Fort and Shivneri Fort (birthplace of Shivaji Maharaj), found itself automatically included in the geography of early Maratha resistance and administration. Its proximity to Purandar made it strategically significant during the military campaigns of Shivaji Maharaj. Subsequently, in the 18th century, Saswad again came into prominence when Balaji Vishwanath Bhat, the first Peshwa of the Maratha Empire, used it as his headquarters prior to the shift of the capital to Pune. His successor, Peshwa Baji Rao I, who was famous for his battle tactics, was also attached to this region. Saswad houses several ancient temples and wadas, such as the Sangameshwar and Vateshwar temples, which indicate its religious and architectural significance.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Wada Architecture

Wada architecture is a unique as well as an ancient architectural construction type in Maharashtra, which emerged and flourished between the 17th and 19th centuries, during the Maratha period. These grand residential structures were usually constructed by nobles, landlords, or wealthy families and functioned as Admin Centres, Social Hubs, and Homes for Cultural activities. Wada's distinctive feature is the large central courtyard (chowk), around which, as is typical to Indian houses, rooms are placed which capture cross ventilation and natural light which is very good for the climate. Wadas were generally multi-storeyed with private quarters for families on the upper floors while the ground floor distributed amongst public or service areas.

Enhanced Multi family living using teak and stone utilizing efficiently. These structures were constructed of bronze grade locally available materials including stones, bricks, plastered limes, and Teak Wood, some available even at sea level. Strong fortified walls with complex carvings alongside gleaming pillars encouraged the construction of wooden railings which improved the aesthetics of voluminous private areas. The provision

of security, comfort and sufficient accommodation for generations led to the design of extended families living together. Some larger wadas even boasted of having temples, wells and distinct areas for guests and servants. Shaniwar Wada and Vishrambaug Wada in Pune are renowned across the world for their intricate STA weaved glance and elaborate plan which portray the level of sophistication achieved within Indian marat architecture. Unlike many such towers today, wadas are hands down the most appreciated for forming the shadow of Maharashtra.

B. Heritage management

The practice of conserving, safeguarding, and advancing historical, cultural, and natural resources for current and future generations is known as heritage management. Heritage sites, monuments, customs, artwork, and natural landscapes are all carefully documented, conserved, and occasionally restored. Maintaining these resources' authenticity and importance while making sure the general public can access and understand them is the aim. Developing policies, engaging local communities, encouraging sustainable tourism, and spreading awareness of the value of heritage are further aspects of heritage management. Heritage management contributes to the protection of our common history and identity by striking a balance between development and preservation.

C. Research paper review-Purandare Clan of Saswad as Architectural Patrons

Ar. Siddhant Gadade and Dr. Vaishali Latkar's research offers a comprehensive look into the architectural patronage of the Purandare clan in 17th–18th century Maratha-era Maharashtra. Originating from Karnataka, the Purandares rose to prominence in Saswad through their administrative role under the Peshwas, particularly their association with Balaji Vishwanath. This alliance brought them significant influence and wealth, which they channeled into architectural commissions. The study, grounded in both historical sources and fieldwork, places their contributions within the broader context of Maratha urban planning and elite cultural identity.

One of the key architectural examples examined is the Sarkar Wada at Saswad, constructed in 1710 by Ambajipant Purandare. This defended house or Gadhi is a quintessential Maratha wada with defensive, status, and ritualistic features. The Wada has 30-foot high defensive walls, an imposing eastern entrance with a 25-foot-tall door for elephants

(Ambari), and is built of basalt stone and Pustaki Vita bricks with lime mortar. Inside, the Wada has a spacious Diwankhana with intricate timber carvings, a central Phadacha Chowk, and details such as Stambhashirsha (lotus-shaped column heads), Kelpool motifs, and Panchkoni Sajje (pentagonal balconies)—details not found in modern wadas. The employment of materials and detailing in architecture demonstrate a combination of aesthetic sophistication and purposeful design, mirroring the elite status of the clan.

The research also documents how the Purandares patronized religious architecture, particularly the Ganpati Temple near the Sarkar Wada and the Sangameshwar Temple at the confluence of two rivers. These temples are constructed in the Maratha-Neo-Yadava mode with symbolic iconography, processional imagery, and stucco decoration. Additionally, the research documents Purandare Wada in Modhave, a post-partition fortified residence with features like high bastions, wood-carved Diwankhana, and forward-thinking planning uncommon at the time. These structures as a whole not only represent architectural patronage but also serve as instruments of socio-political assertion and cultural continuity. This essay offers an insightful case study of the interstices of politics, urban planning, and architecture in Maratha-era Maharashtra.

A. Case study- Vishrambaug Wada

Location: Pune

In the early 19th century, Peshwa Baji Rao II, the final Peshwa of the Maratha Confederacy, lived in luxury at Vishrambaug Wada, a magnificent mansion on Thorale Bajirao Road in central Pune. The 20,000-square-foot wada now houses a post office on the ground floor, as well as a number of municipal offices and a small museum of Maratha artifacts that was assembled by famed historian Babasaheb Purandare. The building's imposing entrance and finely carved wooden balcony are its most notable features.

The land on which Vishrambaug Wada stands originally belonged to Shri Haripant Phadke and featured a garden or baug. In 1799 AD, Bajirao II purchased the property and bestowed upon it its current name. Construction of the wada began in 1806 AD, and upon its completion in November 1807, the total cost had reached approximately Rs. 1,52,000. Additional expenses included Rs. 8,500 for

building an aqueduct and cisterns, and Rs. 14,000 for furnishing the palace. A dedicated staff was also maintained to serve and protect the Peshwa during his stay, with operational costs amounting to Rs. 400 per month.



Figure 5: Vishrambaug Wada

Architectural features of Vishrambaug wada-

Traditional Materials: Built with teak wood, basalt stone, bricks, and lime mortar for durability and climate adaptability.

Central Courtyard: Open-air chowk provides light, ventilation, and space for gatherings.

Teakwood Columns & Brackets: Carved wooden pillars and decorative zalis offer structural support and aesthetic appeal.

Jaalis & Jharokhas: Latticed screens and projecting balconies ensure airflow, light, and privacy.

Verandahs & Corridors: Shaded walkways around the courtyard connect various rooms.

Ornamental Woodwork: Rich carvings reflect Maratha, Rajasthani, and Mughal design influences.

Staircases: Mostly internal and wooden, discreetly placed to connect different zones while preserving privacy.

Diwan Khana: A spacious first-floor audience hall for official gatherings, well-lit and ornately designed.

Devghar: A small prayer room within private quarters, reflecting the spiritual life of the Peshwas.

Climate-Responsive Design: Thick walls, high ceilings, courtyards, and jaalis maintain natural cooling and ventilation.

Spatial Zoning: Clear separation of public, semi-private, and private areas ensures privacy and functional order.

Wooden Columns: Carved teakwood columns provide structural support and decorative richness.

Restoration efforts and architectural leadership-



Figure 6: Vishrambaug Wada restoration
source:<https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/conservation-site-management-plan-vishrambaug-wada-pune/142644590>

The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) initiated a comprehensive restoration project in 2003 to preserve and rejuvenate Vishrambaug Wada, entrusting the work to Badawe-Sowani-Kalamdani Architects, led by veteran architect V.V. Badawe, Peshwa-era scholar Avinash Sowani and Ar. Kiran Kalamdani. Supported by municipal commissioners, local corporators, and elected representatives, the project aimed not only at architectural conservation but also at cultural revival, with Sowani compiling a historical exhibit titled Punavdi te Punyanagri, currently displayed in the Wada. This exhibit is envisioned to expand into a full-scale presentation of Pune's rich history, showcasing the contributions of its freedom fighters, politicians, writers, educators, industrialists, artists, craftsmen, athletes, scientists, and even infamous figures who have shaped the city's legacy.

V. METHODOLOGY

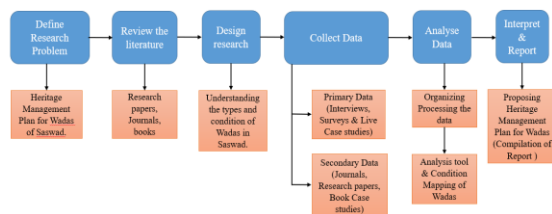


Figure 7: Research process flowchart

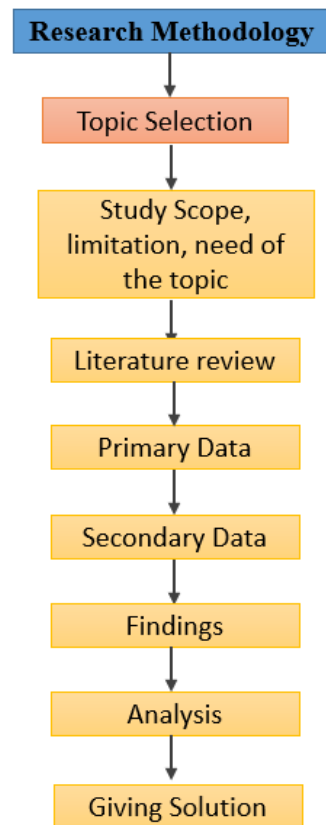


Figure 8: Research Methodology Flowchart

VI. ANALYSIS

A. Data collection through site visits.

"While visiting the Saswad site a number of traditional Wadas were studied in considerable detail and the various architectural, cultural and historic nuances of these Wadas had been outlined. These Wadas typically have an open chowk (courtyard) in the center, are constructed using local materials such as stone, brick, timber and lime plaster, and display elaborate wooden carvings, balconies, and jaalis. They are testament to the brilliance of indigenous, climate-responsive, sustainable construction. Wadas were more than just homes; these were places of socialisation, administration and religious activities that reveal some of the social mores of the Maratha and Peshwa periods. But most of these monuments are left unattended, neglected, and are lost due to their antiquity, pressure of the urbanization and lack of awareness about heritage. Rotting woodwork, leaking roofs, and structural damage are frequent. Conservation of these Wadas is necessary to maintain the historic urban form of Saswad, its identity and knowledge for future generations.

B. Mapping of Wadas –

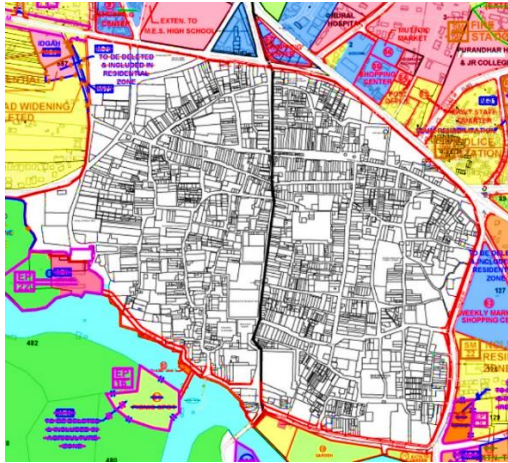


Figure 9: DP of core Saswad

C. Condition mapping of Wadas -

CONDITION	COLOR CODE
demolished	Red
poor	Orange
moderate	Yellow
average	Light Green
good	Dark Green

Table 1: Condition and rating of Wadas

SIZE	SCALE
Small	Upto 2000 sq.m
Medium	2000 - 5000 sq.m
Large	Above 5000 sq.m

Table 2: Scale of Wadas

SR.NO.	NAME OF THE WADA	SCALE	CONDITION	IMAGES	STOREY
21	Jagtap Wada	small	Red		Ground Floor
22	Kunjir Wada	medium	Green		Ground Floor
23	Bandal Wada	small	Red		Ground Floor
24	Bokil Wada	small	Orange		Ground Floor
25	Pawar Wada	small	Yellow		Ground Floor
26	Damle Wada	small	Light Green		Ground Floor
27	Purandare Wada-2	small	Orange		Ground Floor
28	Purandare Wada-3	small	Red		Ground Floor

Table 4: Condition mapping of Wadas

SR.NO.	NAME OF THE WADA	SCALE	CONDITION	IMAGES	STOREY
1	Sardar Godaji Jagtap Wada	small	Orange		Ground Floor
2	Jagtap Wada	small	Yellow		Ground Floor
3	Bramhe Wada	small	Yellow		Ground Floor
4	Gokhale Wada	small	Orange		Ground Floor
5	Hathmagcha Wada	small	Orange		Ground Floor
6	Jagdale Wada	small	Orange		Ground Floor
7	Kakade Wada	small	Red		Ground Floor
8	Pan darwaja	small	Orange		Ground Floor
9	Kaale shaala	small	Yellow		Ground Floor+1
10	Dunakhi Wada	small	Orange		Ground Floor
11	Saste Wada	small	Red		Ground Floor
12	Purandare Wada(jewellers)	medium	Green		Ground Floor
13	Palshikar Wada	small	Yellow		Ground Floor
14	Dhere Wada	small	Red		Ground Floor
15	Poman Wada	small	Red		Ground Floor
16	Sardar Purandare Wada	large	Orange		Ground Floor+2
17	Masude Wada	small	Red		Ground Floor
18	Shikkekar Wada	small	Yellow		Ground Floor
19	Deshmukh Wada	small	Green		Ground Floor+1
20	Patil Wada	small	Red		Ground Floor

Table 3: Condition mapping of Wadas

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals that although Wadas retain historic and cultural significance, their abandonment is a result of insufficient coordinated management and consciousness. There are mostly reactive interventions, not preventive. Stakeholder interviews suggested that there was a gap between authorities and property owners, with the latter fearing legal entanglements should they undertake repairs.

A major discovery is the scope for adaptive reuse — redeveloping Wadas as homestays, cultural spaces, or museums — that can yield revenue without damaging the building. But in the absence of guidelines and funding support, these initiatives are sporadic.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Saswad Wadas are a treasured architectural and cultural heritage. Conservation requires an interdisciplinary approach that bridges the gap between conservational requirements and urbanization. With participatory heritage management and adaptive reuse, these old structures can be made lively as living monuments rather than being just a relic of history. Prompt action, policy coordination, and community participation are necessary to ensure that the Wadas of Saswad not only exist but flourish in the new urban environment.

IX. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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