

Energizing the Future with Memories of the Past: The Wadas of Pune City

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Abstract: Pune, described as the Queen of the Deccan, [1] is located in the state of Maharashtra, India. It is a historic city associated with the Maratha Empire and seat of the Peshwa power. During the Colonial Period it was a British cantonment. Contemporary Pune city is considered as the cultural capital of Maharashtra and is also referred to as the Oxford of the East due to the presence of several well-known educational institutions. The old city of Pune is constituted by the seventeen Peths or localities. The wadas are a characteristic built-form that evolved during the Maratha Period. They were the residences not only of the Peshwas but also those connected with the administrative system of the times and are the manifestations of the culture of the period. They vary considerably in size and form. They have a characteristic spatial organization harmonizing form and space with distinct architectural features. They were once the seat of power, intrigue and grandeur. Now, they are the surviving witnesses of battle plans and palace intrigues at the height of glory of the Maratha Empire. After more than three hundred and fifty years the wadas themselves are waging a final battle for survival considering the apathy towards their woes and issues from both the civic body as well as their private owners. The objective of the paper is to explore the possibility of developing selected wadas as nodes in developing Pune city's culture infrastructure as well as heritage showcase. It seeks site specific solutions of 'Energizing the Future with the Memories of the Past' in Pune city.

1 Introduction

For thousands of years, cities were having much simpler form although they rarely served single purposes. Instead, they supported a range of activities. Different land uses like Housing, commercial buildings, government offices and warehouses formed the built environment of the city. Urbanization took place at different chronological periods. The factors influencing urbanization were also different. Rapid urban growth is usually associated with time period of intense socio-economic or political change. Changes in the international trade modified the internal structure of national economics and the cities started getting flooded with migrants in the search of employment. Pressure on the existing housing stock increased with the swelling population, and people filtered in the central city through rented housing and hutments.[2] This scenario is continuously transforming the urban morphology of cities. The effect of these processes is seen through transforming social and spatial patterns of entire city.

The world is experiencing intense urbanization by the hand of extensive yet uneven processes of growth and expansion. More than half of humanity now lives in cities, and 80 per cent of the Earth's land surface has come to reflect the influence of city-based human activity. Dominating the urban world is a selective group of dynamic and highly specialized cities, as well as massively urbanized industrial regions.

The variation in influencing factors and historical circumstance gave rise to different urban fabrics in different parts of the world. The evolution of these urban forms or patterns is based upon main key factors that is social pattern and the built form. The characteristics of the social and the built form of the urban areas contribute to form an urban fabric for the area.

2 Urban Fabric

Buildings, soft and hard landscaping, signage, lighting, roads and physical networks are the main physical characteristics of urban areas, which comprehensively form urban fabric of the cities. It is a reflection of the physical texture of the urban area. Changes in urban areas refers to long lasting spatial dynamics and is characterized by transformations of city objects that depends upon choices made upon by the residents and policy makers. Cities are with long lasting nature and thus characterized by the inertia of urban fabric and social structures. As cities go through continuous process of transformation in terms of physical and social structure urban fabric becomes very vital in nature. Heterogeneity of urban fabric is a key element of any developing urban area. [3] Throughout the process of this transformation cultural heritage of the area plays an important role. Within the changing urban pattern importance of this cultural heritage is getting weakened. It is a strong element of any urban fabric which needs to be strongly considered in terms of policy planning and regulatory framework as it represents origins of particular urban area, which is a main part of cultural infrastructure of the area.

Looking at Pune city, the city has not completely cut itself from its ancient character. Old city area and cantonment area still defines many of the areas and structures which represents moorings of the tradition and culture. The Pune city has also been famous for rich cultural heritage and long history of educational development. It paved strong base for achieving today's recognition 'Oxford of East'. Pune also has a good industrial base since independence, but after IT revolution, it

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flourished as one of the ideal place in India as well as international as all-major software industries established here.

Along with the process of transformation Pune has witnessed transformations in urban fabric. Core city area of Pune is denser and represents old structures and architecture. It is developed in more organic pattern. [4] Instead new development is in more planned manner and with less density. These patterns kept changing along with chronological development of the city. The low rise high density which was the alternative to urban sprawl in the core continued due to few factors, thus assessing and understanding the phenomena of growth of traditional city by analysing the housing condition became more important.

The core area signifies the traditional Architecture which dates back to Peshwa era. It was the central trading area which attracted many artisans to settle within. Thus the Vernacular Architecture where the communities intending to build had close connections to housing, practical considerations and Architectural response was reflected in building complex. The type attempted to bring together the benefits of urban and sub-urban living.

The High density residential zone which was result of unplanned neighbourhood. The housing patterns and sizes shows variations in old core which can be the result of ecological footprints back then. Varieties of typologies were observed which interconnected through communal spaces highlighting the community biased development. The urban scenario of core city reflects the heterogeneous community with dense population which demands for housing causing congestion in the inner city. As a result of this the high income group which owned the wada's shifted to outer periphery of the core and rented out traditional housing.

The streetscape in the Peth areas still glorifies the old typologies, like wada, traditional houses, and chawls. It can be said that WADAs are most distinctive residential typology in the urban fabric of old Pune City. [5]

3Cultural Infrastructure

Along with the transformations in happening in the cities as a result of rapid urbanization, the cultural infrastructure in the urban areas is also witnessing a paradigm shift. Culture is recognized as an integral part of communities and a key element of creating great places for people to live, work, visit, play and do business. Cultural infrastructure is not solely hard infrastructure; people, technology, cultural collections and buildings form definition of cultural infrastructure. [6] Together, these components of cultural infrastructure enable delivery of heritage, arts and cultural experiences. Cultural heritage of any city plays key role in cultural infrastructure of the city. Any city which undergo through continuous process of transformation change its face chronologically. But origins of its character remains in olden architecture and built forms. Every city has a core area which represents original architectural character. Along with the urbanization and growth architecture, materials, built form keep changing over the period. Hence these old structures which represent character of the city plays an important role in cultural infrastructure of any city. This has never considered in any policy planning or regulatory framework as a component of development plans. Regulatory planning is essential to the development of existing and future cultural infrastructure.

5Image of the city

It is explained in the theory of Kevin Lynch, image of the city; a public image of any given city is the overlap of many individual buildings. There are other influences on image ability, such as

the social meaning of the area, its function, its history, or even its name. The contents of the city images so far studied, with reference to physical form can be classified into five key elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. These elements are integral part of any urban area which strongly represents the character of the city.

Paths are the channels along with movement happens. Edges are the boundaries between two phases, linear breaks in continuity basically lateral references rather than co-ordinate axes. Districts are sections of the city having two dimensional extent having some common, identifying character. Nodes and are points, the strategic spots of the city, which are intensive foci for an individual one. Landmarks are the points of reference person cannot enter into. These can be buildings, signs, stores, public arts etc. these are the physical elements with unique and special visual features that has point specific location and can be identified from the distance. These elements are integral part of any city's urban fabric.

Once the pride of the Maratha Empire, Pune exists as an intriguing blend of the past and the present. The city revealed in its image as Chhatrapati Shivaji's legacy before globalization hit on its door in the 1990s. Since then, the erstwhile capital of the Peshwas has transformed into a smart, vibrant metropolis that thrives with a modern vibe. However, Pune managed to preserve its bygone-era charm through its historical edifices and monuments. Exploring the city is a pleasant affair in itself because of this contrasting aspect.

City has many historical places which are nodes and landmarks representing the cultural and architectural face of the city. A walk through the streets of Pune will reveal to you a wealth of historic structures that offer a glimpse into the city's rich past. Dotted with ancient temples, palaces, forts, and Wadas. Which has its own importance in terms of cultural infrastructure of the city. Areas like cantonment area, old city clusters such as Kasaba Peth, Mandai precinct are the precincts representing old face of the city.

Together these old precincts, heritage buildings, wadas, mountains, forts, streets like MG rod, JM road form different layer of image of the Pune city. This image represents the architectural, cultural character and heritage of the city. Which needs to be integrated with the current face of the city to preserve the cultural infrastructure of the city.

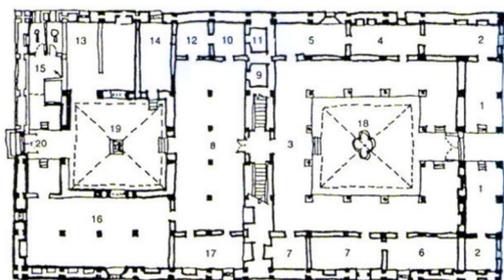
4Wadas of Pune city

Wada symbolizes the tales of Pune's rich culture and heritage. They are historical symbol of Pune. They are famous for their typical architectural character and the traditional character of old city of the Pune. Wada's were used for both domestic as well as political purposes. These are basically two to three storied tall oldest structures in the city, generally square or rectangular in shape having courtyard at the centre. From the olden days till now, the designs of these houses have changed significantly but the main elements still preserve the essence. Wadas basically denote mansions with the courtyard having introvert design. [7] This type of planning was introduced by Marathas to safeguard their families from outsiders. The design is amalgamation of Mughal, Rajasthani, and Gujarati architecture combined with the local construction techniques. These houses are typically multiple storey buildings with internal open courtyards surrounded by rooms. These are designed to accommodate multiple or single families. The most important element of the wadas are the open courtyards known as 'Chowks'. The number of chowks vary based on the size of the house. The architecture is characterized by stone walls, wooden staircases and open chowks.

During the reign of the Peshwas the neighbourhood of Pune was well established and divided in wards known as Peths. The

major highlights of these old jewels are the woodworked railings of balcony, tinted glass windows and thick walls protecting the interiors from the changing climatic conditions.

If we see the planning of these wadas, the well-defined zoning of the internal spaces can be seen. The areas are divided in public, private, and semi-private zones. There are different elements that make these houses different and unique. Here are few important elements of these traditional houses. [8] Besides a central tank or a well, the central courtyard generally has a temple or a 'tulsi vrindavan'. These massive structures generally have very thick stone or mud walls, which are as thick as 6 to 8 feet. The wooden staircase is often set in the thick walls. Such Wadas are reminiscent of the society characterized by large joint families. They have generally number of bedrooms with a common drawing room, storeroom, kitchen and a toilet block. Formerly 'Wadas' used to be occupied by large joint families but with changing social set up they are occupied by many tenants and sub tenants.



- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| 4 Kacheri | 14 Balantinichi Kholi |
| 5 Khalbatkhana | 15 Nahani / Sandas |
| 6 Baithak | 16 Swayanpakghar |
| 7 Dalan | 17 Kothar |
| 8 Majghar | 18 Karanja |
| 9 Balad | 19 Tulsi Vrindawan |
| 10 Devghar | 20 Rear Entry |

Fig. 1. Typical image of space distribution of wada plan

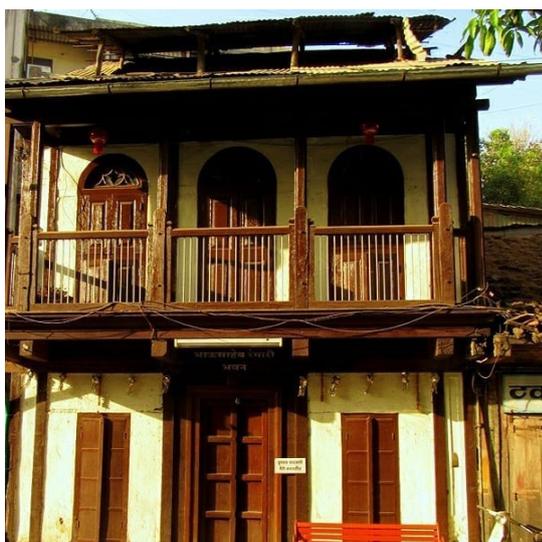


Fig. 2. Image showing wooden windows, doors and Typical railing pattern in wadas

Wooden Balconies with wooden doors and windows. Windows are wooden windows generally starting from the floor. Wooden Railings with wooden vertical posts are common feature of wada architecture.

Any house cannot be called a Wada without the courtyards or chowks. This is the main element in the design of wadas and its number can vary from 1 to 7 based on the size and capacity of the house. All the rooms are built facing the courtyard. This private open space is commonly used by the families residing there and can be converted to public space during festivals. This space is used to perform rituals, prayers, for gathering, gossip sessions and more.



Fig. 3. Image showing wooden balconies with wooden windows & railing

Apart from residential Wadas there were Wada structures built for administrative purpose also. [9] Throughout the second half of the century the Peshwas spent on improving civic amenities. Building activity was flourished during this period. A number of government wadas were built during this period. The Wadas became larger and lavish. Usually two storeyed, some Wadas became much higher this period.

The courtyard is surrounded by semi-covered passageway known as 'Sopas'. This space connects all the rooms and provides shelter from sun and climatic changes. This space is also used for recreational purposes where the families would put swings and play indoor games. [10]

The transitional space between outside and inside is referred as threshold. At the entrance of house, on the either side of the door, there are elevated platforms called Osari, which is supported by pillars. This provides space for the residents to connect with their neighbours. It also provides shelter from the harsh weather outside.

These wadas have huge wooden doors with smaller gates known as 'Dindi Darwaja'. For day to day purpose only the Dindi Darwaja is kept open. This was mainly for security purposes. The huge wooden gates have bolts called as 'Kadi Koyanda' in the local language.



Fig. 4. Image showing ornamental wooden columns at external sofa of Vishnubaug Wada Pune



Fig. 7. Internal Court of the Vishnubaug Wada showing different elements of Wada Architecture.



Fig.5. Image showing courtyards within the wadas

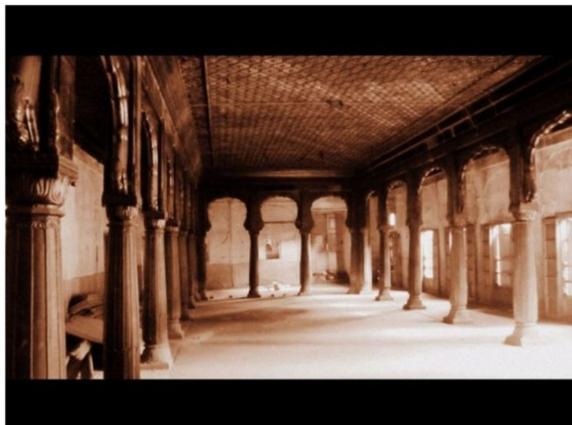


Fig. 6. Upper Floor of the wada which is mainly used for gatherings and programmes

Here is list of some Heritage Structures which are still standing, reflecting the culture of their time and surviving as link connecting as past to future. [11]

- Shaniwar Wada
- Vishnubaug Wada
- Nana Wada
- Bhide Wada
- Kanya Shala
- Pawar Wada
- Mujumdar Wada
- Yelekar Wada
- Biniwale Wada
- Patwardhan Wada
- Deo wada
- Dagad wada

Apart from these there are some wadas still present in the core area of the city, many of the other old structures which are part of the cultural infrastructure on the city. [12]

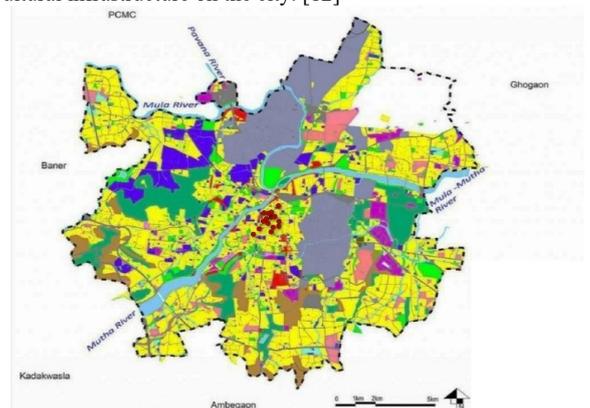


Fig. 8. Wada structures marked on development plan of the city

6Envisaging Pune's cultural infrastructure

Pune has been well known as the Oxford of the East, Queen of the Deccan, cultural capital of Maharashtra, Pensioner's City, Cycle City and Detroit of India. Pune has a long history and played a significant role in India's pre independence era.

Physical and social infrastructure of the city has always focused by regulatory bodies and policy makers. Still the heritage of historical Pune city is critically threatened. Since last 10 years around 50% of built heritage in Pune has disappeared and many more are in poor condition. The unique traditional values of old core area, the residential wadas are also vanishing. A big challenge is to preserve the city core area and must be solved gradually. How the structures can be preserved by doing additions to existing ones is important for preserving the old core of the city. The aim of the preservation has to be in totality of the urban fabric not only in the single building or structure. [13] Some of these wadas and ancient structures can be listed and featured as nodes and landmarks of the city which will be strong elements of city's cultural infrastructure. These structures are not only traditional architecture but the memories of the city which talks about the history, cultural and social structure of the ancient era. In the era of rapidly changing built form and urban fabric these nodes will stay intact and enrich the developing city with their presence. Some of them can be restored and revitalization of some wadas can be done in the form of museums which will showcase the particular era in terms of built form and socio-cultural aspects.

A network of these identified nodes and landmarks need to be established within the city and proper regulatory framework needs to be established to preserve and feature cultural infrastructure of the city. This will involve a coordinated approach to cultural network mapping along with research and consultation that enhances collective understanding of the diverse cultural and artistic circumstances of the community. Some of the residential wada structures like Belbag, Nana Wada can be identified as nodes and prominent built forms such as Vishrmbag wada, Ancient Temples can be identified as landmarks.

Apart from the wada structures there is a huge list of structures which can be part of Pune's cultural infrastructure. These small nodes weave a strong network of cultural infrastructure. A simple stroll across the narrow paths of Shaniwar peth, Kasba peth, Budhwar peth and the adjacent areas reveals a plethora of architectural marvels, some crumbling, some still standing tall. As you drift into the lanes at the cost of getting lost, you find more such interesting buildings that clearly shout out 'heritage.' Not only are there *wadas*, but also multi-storied buildings from the British era that adorn the narrow streets on both sides.

This network of nodes and landmarks is strongly associated with emotional cultural and use values. Those values are part of collective memory and create identity of the city. With regarding to the formation of urban space, the cultural infrastructure always plays a role of identity, for the cultural representation of a group in a given area and at a given time. It creates memories for the people living in it, for the particular urban area and for that particular era.

7 Conclusion

Along with the process of urbanization, with continuous flow of migration city of Pune have become more heterogeneous and multicultural. Cultural infrastructure is very important factor needs to be taken into consideration while making regulatory framework for the planning of the city. [14] For the city of Pune, considering its rich cultural heritage along with the physical environment, non- physical elements of the city such as urban spaces need to be improved through creative means promoting the term 'cultural infrastructure' The city needs to establish a strong connection between cultural heritage, tourism and present urban fabric which will not only form cultural locality but also promote urban economic development. Culture is recognized as an integral part of communities and a key element of creating great places for people to live, work, visit, play and do business.

Cultural infrastructure planning needs to be integrated with development plan of the city. The wadas are the surviving built-forms which as architecture epitomize the culture of their times, through their conservation the heritage of the city can be showcased and a link can be established between the past and the future

The cultural heritage of Pune, old and new writes the story of the city. It reflects its character and authenticity in today's globalized world. [15] It will transfer the memories of the city through generations of residents of the city as well as through the conservation and showcase of the architecture of the past which can be perceived by the generations to come and add to the culture infrastructure of the city.

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