

India's Rich and Traditional Heritage: A Journey Through Time Changing Identities of Rsate Wada, A Case of Wai, Pune

Ar. Kruti Joshi¹, Ar. Dhruvi Shah²

^{1,2}Raman Bhakta School of Architecture, UTU, Bardoli, Gujarat, INDIA

Abstract

Wai is a satellite town of Pune city. Wai originated as a settlement of weavers. Its name is an adaptation of the word Vaya, which means 'thread'/' by pass in Gujarati. As we can not firmly state the date of the origin of the town but it has witnessed the Maratha empire in 1700's. it's architectural style represents the layers of history in to it. Wai is Situated at the foothills of the Western Ghats. The town is on the southern part of the river krishna. People use to pray this river during festival times calling it as a krishna mai river. Wai cannot be simply vilipend, as it has a lot of potential attract tourists with its lanes that would remind you of the renowned years of the Peshwas. Rsate wada is one of the historic structure which is currently working as printing press but has witnessed the era of different dynasties. This was the journey of a structure from freedom fight to the condition till date.

Keyword: Wada Architecture, Historic Ruins, Journey Of A Built Form Through Time

Introduction

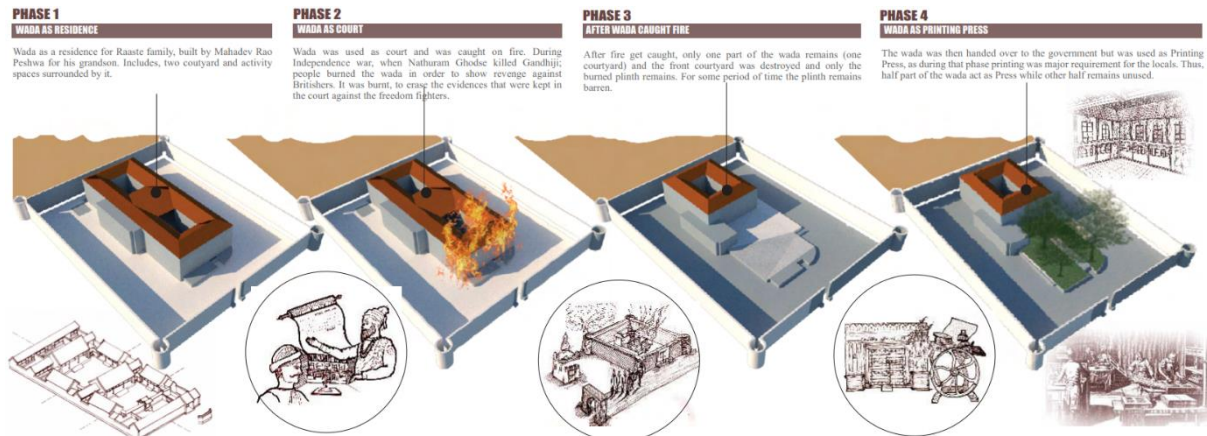
At a distance of 35 km from the city of Satara, coupled with Krishna's reverence in India, historically allowed Wai to thrive as a religious center, with Seven Ghats, west to east: Gangapur Aali, Madali Aali, Ganpati Aali, Dharmapuri Ghat, Brahman Shahi Ghat, Ramdoh Aali and Bhim Kund Aali. It's truly a pilgrim town with about 100 temples, which are constructed in Hemadpanthi style of Architecture; i.e. using huge stone slabs, without mortar. These layered relationships of the Ghats and the temples, resembling those of the Ganges in Varanasi, led to Wai being hailed as Dakshin Kashi or 'The Benares of the South'. Wai was also known as Virat Nagari, as it was believed that the Pandavas stayed with King Viraat of Wai, when they were in exile. An important center for business and commerce with traders heading towards Satara and Kolhapur or the port of Konkan.

Wai has rich history as well as cultural significance. One of the myth says that when Afzal khan has set his army to kill Chatrapati Shivaji outside the wai, one of the local person prayed their river goddess Krishnamai to save Shivaji. As his prayer was heard and Shivaji maharaj killed Afzal khan during the war the river was given one more wing to attatch with it as a goddess of safety. To mark the victory local people use to celebrate festival every year on each of the ghats called as "krishnamai Utasv". There are number of temples with good belief system lies on the ghat itself.

Wadas of the wai are having very unique architectural style representing layers of maratha as well as peshwa period. though it has its own significant style representing story of freedom fight. merger of features from Mughal, Rajasthan, and Gujarat architecture were combined with local construction

techniques. There are particularly six typologies of Wada in existence: Garhi Rajwada, Nobleman's Wada, Ordinary Wada, Wadas of merchants, Temple Wada and Ghat, Wada and Temple Complex.

Raste Wada



This is one of the typologies of wada with ghat and temple typology. This wada has its unique history. but this still stands as an eye witness of the whole historic events in and around it. There are number of myths attached to it. Some of them seems true as we can see the evidence on site of the printing press.

The unique planning based on a square grid pattern set the wadas apart from the other typologies available in India. Though in today's scenario, we notice a decrease and deterioration of Wadas on the maps of Maharashtra as they have been erected for years and today cannot sustain the changes occurring around them. Its style was a merger where features from Mughal, Rajasthan, and Gujarat architecture were combined with local construction techniques. One of those Wada's in Maharashtra is Raaste Wada, on the bank of Gangapuri Ghat in Wai, with specific typology belonging to Ghat, Wada and Temple Complex. It was around the time of Shivaji maharaj, land was gifted to the helpers of Shivaji on which the Wada and temples in today's time stands. It was used as a residence first by the Raaste family. And it was converted to a court which was led by Britisher's. During the time of independence, the Wada was caught on fire, as the court held some evidences against our freedom fighters (Krantikari's). So as to protect them, the villagers held the court on fire, due to which half of the Wada was burnt, i.e. the first portion of courtyard was completely destroyed. It is believed that Nathuram Godse had dressed like a Muslim and kill Gandhi as he want to separate Muslims from India so he shoots Gandhi in that dress, but one person name Puneche Gadgai had identified Nathuram Godse and so during that time all Wadas of Brahmins were burnt as Nathuram was also a Bhrahmin. Now only the plinth level remains. These remains were intact for several years without use until the building was handed over to government. Wada was given to Government in Rs.25000 when Peshwai was ended. Printing press over here was started by Lakshman Shashtri. Lakshman Shashtri and yashvant Rao had bond of guru- sishya (teacher- student). Yashvant Rao was sclupturer and mantri(minister/ government official) over there and he suggested Lakshman Rao to start press over here. When it was court, families of worker over there used live with their families in backside of the Wada, i.e. the current Wada. 100 of people can live in wada at a time.



Its construction should have taken place around 1750-55 AD when Gangapuri became a new settlement. It was built by Gangadhar Bhikaji, for grand son of Mai Saheb Raste. The history of the Wada was told by the current owner of the Raaste family. The coast is 75.55 meters long and 30 meters wide, the walls are 1.40 meters wide and 8.10 meters high, the façade of the Wada is similar to that of Shaniwar-Wada in Pune and it has a grand gate in the center, 3m high and 1.71 m wide also known to be Mahadwar. This Mahadwar was connected by huge walls also known as fortification walls. These walls were 6m high and 1.7m thick which protected the extruders from invading in insides of the Wada, which were built of a particular category of brick called as Khangar Bricks. These walls also had a secretive staircase on the right side which led us to the top passage of the fortified wall as they had gun points which were used during wars. The exterior façade of the wall had niches on the side of the Mahadwar, it was made to put candles/diyas inside them as they protect the light from the wind. There were two huge stone plinths as well, adjacent to the door for the soldiers (Rakshaks). On the left side of the Wada, they have a well; which is also known as the water level of which is said to be same as that of river. Bulls were used to fetch out water from well in Wada and all the water was transferred to outside land of Wada used to have agriculture land on back side of wada. The remains of the plinth level of the burnt Wada now acts as a landscaping area.



Currently the built form itself asks for the restoration. As Such small structures together makes an rich history together. Its richness is in the stories of the local people's heart and eyes who have witnessed it.