



PUNE URBAN AND MONUMENTS

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Pune became a large town/pargana under the Peshwas and enlarged more during the British period. Geographical description of Pune town came in various sources. Historical development of Pune established strong ground for its process of urbanization in the times of Maratha, Peshwa and British rulers. This article highlights some of the important monuments of Pune urban.

Pune became a halting place for traders on their route. Buddhist caves found in Pune and nearby area's (Saswad, Karle, Bhaje, Junnar, Shelarwadi) were funded by Shreshthis (followers of buddhist ideology) which were traders on the trading routes. Though Pune got specialised crafts, industries, markets, administrative system, educational institutions, and religious institutions which influenced the economic, religious, educational, cultural, administrative and traditional ideas and institutions of Pune. Though it becomes important to understand the Pune and its various monuments through historical and functional perceptions of modern times.



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Laal Mahal (The Red Palace):

In 1630, Shahaji Bhonsale, the father of iconic Maratha ruler Chhtrapati Shivaji Maharaj commissioned the construction of a palace for residential purposes of his wife Jijabai and a young Shivaji. Shivaji stayed in this palace till 1645 (until he capture his first fort i.e. Torna) It is really heartbreaking to know that the original building of Laal Mahal was completely destroyed and today what we see standing as Laal Mahal, is the building built by Pune Mucipal Corporation in 1988 to commemorate the Laal Mahal. Historically and even today, the Laal Mahal has been adjacent to Kasba Vasti (Where Kasba Ganapati Temple is located), however, many today claim that the newly constructed Laal Mahal is not situated exactly at the place where it was originally located. What conclusively can be told about it, is the fact that Laal Mahal existed somewhere close to Kasba Vasti and in turn close to today's newly constructed Laal Mahal. This palace's iconic importance can be understood by the fact that even in the construction of Shanivarwada, the soil obtained from Laal Mahal was used as an omen. Even Jedhe Sakawali (one of the most accurate primary source to study reign of Shivaji) mentions details of Laal Mahal.

Laal Mahal is best remembered in the pages of history as the palace where Chhtrapati Shivaji Maharaj cut the fingers of Mughal general (and emperor Auragzeb's uncle) Shaista Khan. The Shaista Khan episode is one of the most discussed episodes in the life history of Shivaji Maharaj and yet, right after this episode, the location at which it took place was neglected. By the time Bajirao I took affairs in his hands, only the base of Laal Mahal was in existence. Later on, during his reign itself, Ranoji Shinde



and Ramchandrapant Shenvi were granted the permission to construct residential places at the location of Laal Mahal.

Today, the newly constructed Laal mahal is located roughly at the place where Ambarkhana of the original Laal Mahal was situated. The new Laal Mahal consists of large size oil paintings and a statue of Jijabai. A carving depicting Shivaji using a golden plough along with Rajmata Jijau steals the attention of the viewer.

1. Shanivarwada :

Famous as the residence of the prime ministers of Maratha Chhatrapati, Shanivarwada remains one of the most iconic monuments located in the Shanivar Peth (Shanivar literally means Saturday while Peth means market) area which is situated right in the heart of Pune city. Today's Shanivarpeth was yester years' Mortajabad Peth and it's only during the reign of Bajirao I that the name of this Peth was changed into Shanivar Peth. In 1730, the Jagiri of Pune was granted to Bajirao I by Shahu Maharaj and hence Bajirao I came down from Saswad to Pune and settled here permanently in this wada.¹ The peculiar name of this residential palace is given to it perhaps because the foundation stone was laid on Saturday, 10th January 1730 and the Vastushant i.e. house warming was conducted on Saturday, 22nd January 1732. Shanivar is the Marathi word for Saturday. It is interesting to know that while the wada was a marginal one during the reign of Bajirao I, it started achieving grandeur with each passing year and by 1757-1759, this wada started looking the way it is usually depicted in grand movies, books and in the minds of ordinary people. 18th century was the century of Maratha dominance in India, especially in western India and due to this increasing political power, the residence of the personalities responsible for this political prosperity too was becoming more and more elaborate.

A few buildings which were a part and parcel of Shanivarwada are to be mentioned here. A lotus shaped fountain called as Hazarikaranje (in Marathi i.e. the fountain of thousand jets) used to be the epitome of attraction when it was in working condition. Today, we see only the remains of it. Another building worth mentioning was the Satmajali Kalsi Bungalow i.e. seven storey bungalow with Kalash.² Delhi Darwaja i.e. The Delhi Gate is a much discussed gate of this wada. It is said that it was an icon of Bajirao I's ambition to conquer and rule Delhi because of which he built this palace not as per old Hindu Vedic method which has a design for east-west plan for residential palaces and went ahead with north-south design plan. This wada has 4 other gates like Mastani Darwaza, Ganesh Darwaza etc. The iconic wada was set ablaze not once or twice but thrice i.e. in 1791, 1794 and 1827.

2. Lakdi Pool

Literally means 'wooden bridge' it is today known as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Bridge. Today it is not made of wood but nearly 250 years ago, it actually was! It was built by Nana Sahib Peshwa in 1761. When Nana Sahib was ailing due to his health, he ordered the construction of this bridge specifically in



wood as it would have taken considerable amount of time to construct it in stone and bricks. The primary reason for such a hasty construction of a bridge is in the militarism of Marathas as per the myths and legends. It was a convention that victorious Marathas returned through the Kumbhar Ves Stone Bridge and were usually met out with grand reception. However, the story was exactly opposite for the Marathas in 1761 when they had lost the 3rd battle of Panipat against the Afghan general Ahmedshah Abdali. Hence, it was thought by the Peshwa that it would not be gracious to bring the soldiers who have just lost perhaps the most important battle of their lives; through the gates which usually welcomed the victorious forces. Hence, the hasty wooden construction! This bridge was standing till 1840 but later collapsed and hence in 1940s English who had Pune under their sway considered about building a proper bridge at the site where Lakdi Pool was situated. They appealed Puneites to come forward and help. Tulshibaughwale, one of the leading bankers of the time donated Rs. 10,000. Since then, this bridge has seen multiple restorations by different authorities and today it still remains one of the major bridges of the city of Pune.

3. The Chhatri of the House of Shindes

Shindes were one of the most prominent sardar families under the Marathas. They are particularly famous for bringing the emperor of Delhi under their control in 1785. This proud and prestigious family later made Gwalior their seat of power. Mahadji Shinde, is perhaps the most celebrated generals of Marathas. The Shinde Chhatri³ is a memorial dedicated to this great military commander. In 1794, the Chhatri complex had only a Shiva temple. He died the same year and his last rites were performed in this complex. In 1965, an elaborate grave commemorating this great personality was built here. The Chhatri is built in Anglo-Rajasthani style and has many carvings and paintings. The chhatri has undergone many restoration works and is in a better preserved condition than most of the other monuments of Pune city.

4. Shikaarkhana:

After the completion of the Devdeveshwara temple of Parvati temple complex, Peshwa Nanasaheb turned his attention towards beautification of the Pune city. Shikaarkhana was an outcome of this vision of his. It was supposed to be a private zoo to the Peshwas, as it was very common during the medieval times to exhibit the pompousness of the Royalty through these kinds of projects. On this line was built the Shikaarkhana or the private zoo of the Peshwas. This Shikarkhana was devastated in 1763 when the forces of Nizam attacked the city of Pune and it was only due to the consistent efforts of Peshwa Madhavroa that it was reconstructed. Practically speaking it was a wildlife sanctuary which was stretched over 55-60 acres. In 1953 a garden and zoo was erected at the site of the Shikaarkhana by Municipal Corporation. Later the animals were transported to Katraj zoo.

5. Aga Khan Palace:

Built by Sultan Mohammad Shah Aga Khan this magnificent building is situated on Pune-Ahmednagar road some 15 kms from the city centre. It was built by the Sultan in 1892 to help famine affected people of Maharashtra. Aga Khan Palace is a two storey building and has 5 halls which are adorned with Italian



rches.

After Mahatma Gandhi launched the Quit India Movement against the British, he was arrested and imprisoned for 21 months. On 9th August, 1942, Aga Khan Palace became Gandhi's prison palace. His wife, Kasturba Gandhi, and his personal secretary Mahadev Desai accompanied him here. Today it is known for the memorials of Kasturba Gandhi and Mahadev Desai. The memorials were designed by the great architect Charles Correa. Today Aga Khan Palace is converted into a museum celebrating the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Today the upkeep of this palace is entrusted with Gandhi Memorial Society. Inside the Aga Khan Palace complex, a pure Khadi and cotton garments shop is present and a training centre is also present here which provides free trainings for those with weaker financial background.

6. Kesari Wada:

This wada was built by Baroda's Prince Sayajirao Gayakwad for his own personal residential purpose. It is located in the Narayan peth area of Pune city and is very close to the city centre. In 1905 Lokmanya Tilak purchased this wada from Sayajirao Gayakwad. He started two newspapers i.e. Kesari in Marathi and Maratha in English, the offices of which were situated in this very wada. Lokmanya Tilak himself was residing in this wada from 1905 till his death in 1920. Today this wada has a small museum commemorating life and work of Lokmanya Tilak. The museum was inaugurated by the then President of Indian National Congress Shreemati Sonia Gandhi on 22nd January 1999. This museum consists of Tilak's books, his writing desk, his original letters and also the first Indian National Flag unfurled by Madam Cama. The entrance of this wada is carved with the figures of roaring *Kesaris* (Sanskrit word for Lion) perhaps from which this wada derives its name. The famous Ganesh festival which was initiated by Lokmanya Tilak was celebrated for the first time in this very wada and thus, this wada also holds religious importance.

7. Mahatma Phule Wada:

This particular wada (means palace) exhibits 19th century wada architectural style where the main door is small and after crossing we are greeted with an *osari* i.e. a small courtyard. The wada also consists of a well and thus effective water management is seen here. The wada also has rampart wall outside which the remains of Mahatma Jotiba Phule are buried. This wada is situated in Ganj peth and is popularly known as *Phulyancha Wada* i.e. Palace of the Phule family. Mahatma Phule died in 1890 while his wife Savitribai Phule died in 1897. The cause of their death was plague.

This wada was initially purchased by Shri Balasaheb Kore who was a patron of Shri Savtamali Free Boarding from Shree Arjun Patil Bova in 1922 for a sum of Rs 1500. Since then Shri Savtamali Free Boarding was run here. In 1969 it was renamed as Mahatma Phule Vasatigriha (Mahatma Phule Hostel). This particular wada was declared state protected monument in 1972 and on 10th December 1993 the then Honourable President of India Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma announced it to be a monument of national importance. This area today is known as Samata Bhoomi i.e. the land of equality. Today there is a museum which commemorates the life and works of Phule family.



8. Vishrambaug Wada:

This wada was built by Peshwa Bajirao-II for residential purpose in 1811. It is a three storey mansion of which intricately carved design especially in teakwood is the highlight. Currently, only a small part is accessible to general public while most of the remaining part is occupied by different offices of Pune Municipal Corporation. The chief architects of this magnificent Peshwa mansion were Mansaram Laxman and Daji Sutar. They were paid hefty sum of 72000 and another sum of two lakh was spent for the construction of the mansion. The most notable feature of the wada is the east facing and beautifully carved wooden canopy which is still standing. When Bajirao-II lost to the British in 1818 he was forced to stay at Kanpur and was made an English pensioner while his wife stayed at this wada. Later on this wada was used as a centre of learning by the Britishers. The part of this wada which is presently accessible to public today hosts a fantastic museum know as Punvadi to Punyanagri. This museum is essentially the journey of Pune city since its origin. Today this wada stands right in between of all the hustle and bustle of Pune city on Bajirao road.

9. Bhide Wada:

Pune today is known as educational hub of India. There are many personalities which are responsible for this recognition granted to the city of Pune. Perhaps the tallest amongst these personalities would be Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule. It was in Bhide wada where first ever school for girls was started by Savitribai Phule and her associate Fatima Begum on 1st January 1848. This particular school was named as Bhide School after the owner of the property Tatyrao Bhide. Savitribai ran this school with the help of her husband and social reformer Mahatma Jyotirao Phule. Thus, Bhide wada is perhaps the most important monument directly connected with the 'Oxford of East status' of Pune city and yet it remains neglected and is now on the brink of collapse.

10. Mahatma Phule Mandai:

Situated in the Shukrawar peth area of Pune this largest vegetable market of Pune was built in 1880's. The construction of this fantastic Gothic styled building began in 1882 and was completed in 1886. It has eight entrances and this can award us with an understanding of its magnanimous size. During the Peshwa reign an open air market was held outside Shaniwar Wada which continued even during the British rule. Later on, after thorough discussion with Pune Municipality, it was decided that the market would be shifted indoors i.e. in the present building. Initially it was named Reay Market after the then Governor of Bombay Lord Reay. This market was comparatively bigger than the markets which were situated around it and hence smaller markets like that of Tulshibaug became satellite markets to this huge market. The change of name to Mahatma Phule Mandai was effected in 1938. One of the attractions in Mandai today is Mandai's Ganapati which is installed within the mandai itself during Ganesh festival.



11. Veer Savarkar Smarak:

Popularly known as Swatantraveer Savarkar, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was a radiant and turbulent nationalist leader who was impressed by Lokmanya Tilak's ideology of Swaraj, Swadeshi, National education and boycott of foreign goods. While studying at Fergusson College, the political scenario in India was going through turbulent times. At the same time the partition of Bengal in 1905 added fuel to the fire. Hence, Savarkar decided to torch foreign clothes on the banks of river Mutha on 8th October 1905 while he was still a college student. Many important freedom fighters like Lokmanya Tilak and S M Paranjpaye gave speeches on this occasion. This incident was highly discussed. The Principal of Fergusson College fined Savarkar with Rs 10 and ordered him to vacate the hostel.

Today, a memorial commemorating this incident is erected by Pune Municipal Corporation on Karve road of Deccan Gymkhana area of Pune. A mural depicting the scene torching heap of foreign clothes is installed here along with a bust of Savarkar.

12. Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Yerwada Prison:

Gandhiji started Non Cooperation movement in 1920, later he moved to Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad. In 1922 criminal proceedings were instigated against and he was imprisoned. The prison that was chosen to keep him was Yerwada prison of Pune. He entered the prison on 22nd March 1922 and was subsequently released on 5th February 1924. While he was in prison a surgery was performed on him on 12th January 1924 at Sassoon Hospital, Pune. This was his first imprisonment at Yerwada. He was again imprisoned at Yerwada prison in 1932 after his talks with Lord Irwin failed (popularly known as Gandhi-Irwin pact). It was here that the historical Poona pact was signed between Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar. He was kept as a prisoner in one of the rooms on the left side of the main entrance of the prison, this particular room was transformed into National monument and today it is known as Gandhi ward. It is 8 feet wide and 12 feet long room made up of stones completely. This room today has Charkha which was used by him. This ward is very important from the perspective of India's national movement as many important freedom fighters like Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Subhash Chandra Bose were kept prisoners in this ward itself.

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