



Preventive
Conservation
in Historic Houses
and Palace
Museums:
Assessment
Methodologies
and Applications

SilvanaEditoriale

Preventive Conservation in Historic Houses and Palace Museums: Assessment Methodologies and Applications

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Traditional Maintenance Methods of Vernacular Houses in the Weavers Settlement of Paithan, Maharashtra for Preservation of Built Fabric

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Abstract

Traditional courtyard houses known as wadas, evolved across the western part of India in response to the climate. The wadas of Paithan, Maharashtra were studied in this research as they display a unique combination of technology, spatial planning, art and decoration. Due to availability of modern materials, the maintenance calendar of the wadas has deviated from the traditional cycle. The traditional methods of maintenance as well as preventive conservation were studied and correlated with the Hindu calendar of festivals. The study will help in the feasibility of reviving this traditional maintenance system and calendar.

Keywords

Vernacular architecture, traditional knowledge systems, maintenance cycles.



Fig. 1

Photo showing a variety of materials used in constructing the external envelope. (Source: author)

Month Marathi	Season	Festivals	Gregorian Month	Climatic Condition	Maintenance Cycle
Chaitra	Vasant (Spring Harvest Season)	Gudi padva New Year			Cleaning of entire house
Vaishakh	Grishma (Summer)	Akshaya Tritiya Auspicious day for remembrance of the ancestors	March and April	Avg. Temp. - 32° C Humidity < 18%	
Jyeshtha		Vat Pournima Women pray for longevity and health of husbands and family	May and June	Avg. Temp. - 36° C Humidity < 27%	
Ashadha	Varsh (Monsoon)	Guru Pournima Divyanchi Amavasya			Cleaning of all oil lamps (traditional lamps)
Shraavan		New season for fishing	July and August	Avg. Temp. - 30° C Humidity > 70%	
Bhadrapada	Sharad (Autumnal Harvest Season)	Ganesh Chaturthi Anant Chaturdashi			Cleaning of entire house
Ashwin		Nauratra Dussera Kojagiri			Cleaning of rooftops
Kartik	Hemanta (Autumn)	Diwali	September to Mid-November	Avg. Temp. - 26° C Humidity < 50%	Cleaning of entire house including preventive maintenance of wooden members.
Marghashirsha			November and December	Avg. Temp. - 22° C Humidity < 35%	
Pausha	Shishira (Winter)				
Magha		Maha Shivratri			
Phalguna	Vasant (Spring Harvest Season)	Holi Celebration of Spring	January and February	Avg. Temp. - 22° C Humidity < 30%	

Fig. 2

Ornamented teakwood columns in the wadas of Paithan.

Table 1

Linkage between festivals, seasons, climatic conditions and maintenance cycle of wadas of Maharashtra.



Traditional courtyard houses in the western part of India, particularly Maharashtra, known as wadas are built in local stone or brick in lime mortar and a structural wooden frame consisting of teak columns and beams that act as tie members for the structure.

The wadas in Paithan vary from the typical wadas of Maharashtra in their architecture as they are asymmetric and ornate (fig. 1 and 2).

The Marathi people follow the Shalivahana Hindu calendar where the Shaka New Year starts with the festival of Gudhi Padwa.¹ The weather and climatic conditions are interlinked as the festivals follow the lunar calendar and mark beginning of seasons.

The wadas are routinely maintained by the women of the household according to the Hindu calendar, with major maintenance done before the main festivals of Diwali and Gudi Padva (table 1). The maintenance cycle involves preventive maintenance of the wooden, stone and brick members to prolong their life along with cleaning and waterproofing of the roof.

The data collected and the practices observed display a deep rooted traditional knowledge system in place regarding the maintenance cycle of structures and links directly to the seasons and the community.

Notes

[1] <http://www.theinfolist.com/php/SummaryGet.php?FindGo=Maharashtrians>.

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