



# SHANIVAAR WADA : UNVEILING THE HAUNTING INCIDENT

**ADITI KUMAR**

Research Scholar,  
Department of English  
and Modern European Languages  
University of Lucknow,  
(UP) INDIA

## ABSTRACT

*Shanivaar Wada, located in Pune India is regarded as the residence of the Peshwas and the Maratha empire. Famous for its enigmatic architecture and the mysterious incident which gives a gothic touch to it. Many enthusiasts and scholars have been drawn to Pune to witness its rich architectural legacy and also because of the reported paranormal activity. This paper aims to explore Shanivaar Wada from a gothic lens , by delving into the haunted incident which occurred inside this historical monument. I place Shanivaar Wada within the category of gothic Literature by revealing the sinister past which adds value to its haunting atmosphere through literary study and historical investigation.*

## INTRODUCTION

India's architectural past is packed with grandeur and intrigue, as represented by the Shanivaar Wada. Constructed by the Peshwas in the year 1732. Peshwa Bajirao 1, laid the foundation of his own mansion on Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> January 1730. The Marathi term for Shanivaar (Saturday) and Wada (house) were used to give it the name of Shanivaar Wada. The Wada was a thirteen story building, it was initially decided that the Wada will be built entirely of stone but the people of the Satara region complained to Shahu ji 1 that the stone monument will only be sanctioned and built by the Emperor only. After this, an official letter

**ADITI KUMAR**

1 Page



was sent to the Peshwas which stated that the remaining building will be built with brick and not stone. The Wada is constructed in the Maratha architecture. Teak was imported from the jungles of Junnar, stone from the nearby quarries of Chinchwad and limestone from the lime belts of Jejuri. The building was completed in the year 1732. Shanivaar Wada is regarded as a symbol of the majesty and power of the Maratha Empire but beyond its outward form, a deeper story lies which is full of tragedy, mystery and bloodshed which becomes the supreme cause of the paranormal activities, which is why this place is said to be haunted. Shanivaar Wada explores Maratha power structures and Cultural traditions in a community. Professor RP Singh examines societal critique in his paper, “ Reading Taboos as Allegory in O.V Vijayan’s The Saga of Dharmapuri.” He emphasizes how every aspect of public life including bodily functions is examined as a metaphor for the widespread abuse of power and the degradation of civil liberties. He states, The examination of every bowel movement of the press is a satire of the pervasive control of authority, where even the most intimate aspects of public life are scrutinized , symbolizing the erosion of civil rights and liberties. (Singh, 2015, 3.) By comparing and contrasting Shanivaar Wada with “The Saga of Dharmapuri” , we can learn more about the context of culture that is portrayed in each work. Shanivaar Wada’s tragic past relates with Dharmapuri’s critique of power dynamics and societal collapse since it explores similar themes of Corruption and Moral degradation inside the Maratha Empire.

Bajirao 1 had the greatest influence on Pune’s history and culture of all the Peshwas. The magnificent building had around thirteen stories but due to british invasions it collapsed and now only the stone building is left. During the reign of the Peshwas, there were around thousands of people living in the fort. It was the most strong and daunting forts during those times. The Wada has many incidents of the history of the Peshwas. An incident which marks in the history as one of the most gruesome and deadly was the assassination of Narayan Rao by his own Uncle. Narayan Rao Bhat was born on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1755. He was the third and youngest son of Balaji Baji Rao, popularly known as Nana Saheb. Narayan Rao’s elder brothers included Vishwarao and Madhavrao. He was educated in reading , writing and Math. He also had knowledge of Sanskrit. On April 18, 1673, he was married to Gangabai Sathe at the age on 17. His eldest brother Vishwarao who was the Peshwa died in the battle of Panipat in 1761. Few months later, his father also died, after which, his brother Madhavrao took over as Peshwa. Madhavrao was always unimpressed by Narayanrao’s performance therefore, he wanted to train his brother in the administrative work. Madhavrao always feared that his brother’s future will be destructive. However, Narayanrao was trained under the Maratha Minister Sakharam Bapu. Before the death of Madhavrao, he nominated his younger brother Narayanrao as the next Peshwa . On the other hand, Raghunanthrao, who was the uncle of both the brothers was not satisfied with this nomination but couldn’t say it publicly. He wanted to become the Peshwa and was envious towards Narayanrao. He couldn’t oppose this nomination in front of the dying Peshwa, Madhavrao.



In the beginning, Narayanrao had cordial relationship with his uncle, he also arranged his daughter Durgabai's wedding. Later Raghunanthrao planned his escape and enlisted his own troops. Naro Appaji, the Maratha officer increased security and Raghunanthrao declared an expedition. He also gained support from Raghuji Bhonsle as the next ruler of Nagpur requested approval. Raghunanthrao tried to escape but failed everytime. Narayan Rao now restricted his uncle more in response to his attempts of escaping, his luxurious lifestyle was put to a hold and was kept away from seeing the sun. Later, Raghunanthrao gained support from Haider Ali's ambassador in Pune, Appaji Ram. Narayan Rao imprisoned his uncle who planned to flee away with Haider's help. Raghunanthrao starved himself to death for 18 days but then his nephew offered him a small concession.

The 18 year old Maratha Peshwa Narayan Rao was murdered on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1773, which is commonly known as The Narayan Rao Attack. The Ganesh Chaturthi festival which was held between 21 August to 31, was when this whole conspiracy took place. His Uncle Raghunanthrao and his aunt Anandibai were the chief architects of his assassination, they also managed to get the assassins from the Kalbelia tribe. Raghuji Angre visited Pune to meet Peshwa and Haripant Phadke to discuss the unsettling rumors. Raghuji warned Narayanrao against unnecessary risks. They went to Parvati temple for breakfast, then returned back to the palace advising Haripant to take precautions. At around 1 in the afternoon, the Gardi chiefs led by five hundred soldiers killed the back gate guards and entered the palace for salary demands they attacked and killed people and hid behind with their swords drawn, they shut the front gate and entered in the Peshwa's room. At this hour, Narayanrao was unarmed he ran and escaped through the back entrance to his aunt Parvati bai's flat, he was quite close to his aunt as she raised him when he was a baby. His aunt advised him to seek help from his uncle. Narayanrao grabbed his uncle and pleaded him to be saved. He even offered him to become next Peshwa in return for the Gardi soldiers sparing him. Narayanrao begged and repeated this phrase in Marathi- "Kaka Mala Vachva" (Uncle, save me!) He was forcefully taken by Tulaji and Sumersinh, they butchered him with a knife. His servant Chapaji Tilekar fell beside his master's body to save him but they were all chopped into pieces. Shortly after Narayanrao was assassinated by the Gardis, An old reliable man came who was serving the palace, criticised Raghunanthrao for permitting such horrific act. Thirteen people had been murdered in the palace in less than thirty minutes including – two Marathas, two maids, seven Brahmins and one cow was also butchered. These tragic events which occurred in the Shanivaar Wada have been the subject of the Wada being haunted. However there is no scientific proven theory which states that the palace is haunted but local legends have been talking about how the ghost of Narayanrao still cries for help on full moon nights. It is said that the spirit of Narayanrao still wanders around the corridors of the Wada seeking for justice. Local people confirm that, there is some kind of supernatural energy that surrounds the Shanivaar Wada. Historians have shown skepticism about this place being haunted or not. Many scholars and researchers get attracted from the deadly past



which this Wada holds. I'm writing about Shanivaar Wada from a gothic perspective because if we talk about this fort, it has a dark past and betrayals which occurred within the walls of this palace. How Narayanrao's own uncle conspired against his nephew and get him killed in such a gruesome manner.

Additionally, there have been reported

Tales about Shanivaar Wada's haunting. Rumors have been circulating since a long time. The ghost of Narayanrao, the fifth Peshwa emperor, is said to haunt the palace, according to a well-known tale. In accordance with the local legend, Many have claimed to have seen his ghost moving around the corridors, frequently accompanied by whispers and the sound of footsteps people still claim that they hear his cries for help. Shanivaar Wada has been the subject of investigations by numerous researchers and paranormal investigators in an effort to verify the mysterious stories associated with it. They have examined dealing with unexplained phenomena including cool spots, abrupt fluctuations in temperature, and a sense of being watched during their research. Shanivaar Wada's eerie mystery is heightened by an enigmatic well and local legend linking it to eerie rites and paranormal activity. Whether it's a myth or truth there's no scientific logic yet local people have claimed that the fort is haunted and there is a presence. There is no concrete evidence of the place being haunted yet many stories are circulating since a long time. These tales and eerie reputation of the Wada makes it a hub for tourists to witness the architecture and the macabre which surrounds the place. Those who are interested in the paranormal are still drawn to Shanivaar Wada's dark past, which is filled with tragic and deadly tales. A factor of interest is added to the rich tapestry of Shanivaar Wada's legendary past by the haunted perspective, which can be fed by real paranormal encounters or the collective power of myth.

## REFERENCES

Chatterjee, Pyusha, and Pyusha Chatterjee. "Is Bajirao and Kashibai's Shaniwar Wada in Pune Really Haunted?" *Travel and Leisure Asia | India*, 1 Sept. 2023, [www.travelandleisureasia.com/in/destinations/india/shaniwar-wada-in-pune-haunted-or-not](http://www.travelandleisureasia.com/in/destinations/india/shaniwar-wada-in-pune-haunted-or-not).

Chaudhary, Ankur. *Assassination of the Peshwa: A True Story of the Murder That Shook the Maratha Empire* | a Thrilling Historical Account. Sristhi Publishers and Distributors, 2023.

Kosambi, Meera. "Glory of Peshwa Pune." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 24, no. 5, 1989, pp. 247–50. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4394341>. Accessed 14 Dec. 2023.

Nair, Meera. "The Secret of Shanivaar Wada." *Mystory*, 4 Jan. 2017.

ADITI KUMAR

4 Page



Nandakumar, Sanish. *Rise and Fall of the Maratha Empire 1750-1818*. Notion Press, 2020.

Pitre, Maj Gen Shashikant. *Bajirao Peshwa: A Soldiers' General*. Vij Books India, 2021.

Rongmei, Precious. "Is Pune's Shaniwar Wada Really Haunted?" Times of India Travel, [timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/destinations/is-punes-shaniwar-wada-really-haunted/articleshow/92863946.cms](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/destinations/is-punes-shaniwar-wada-really-haunted/articleshow/92863946.cms).

Singh, RP. *Reading Taboos as Allegory in O.V Vijayan's the Saga of Dharmapuri*. Journal of Applied Cultural Studies, vol. 1, 2015.

Shankar, Shabari. "Unraveling the Bloody Tales of Shaniwar Wada." Savaari Car Rentals Blog, 17 Jan, 2024.