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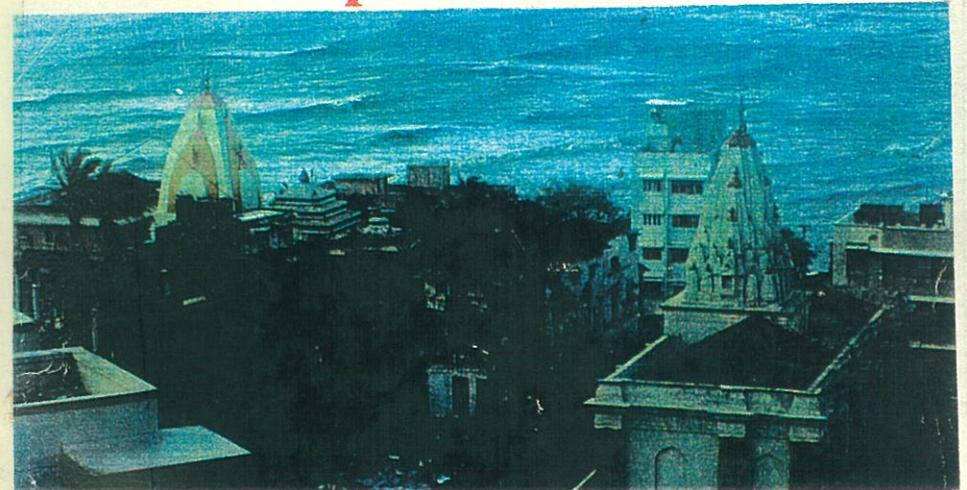
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These guidelines are bases on the MMR Heritage Conservation Society's directive guidelines for the conservation of the Mahalakshmi Temple Heritage Precinct in Mumbai and are subject to BMC Heritage Committee permissions. For all permissions and building sanctions regarding this precinct, the jurisdiction of the BMC D ward and Heritage Committee for Mumbai is applicable.

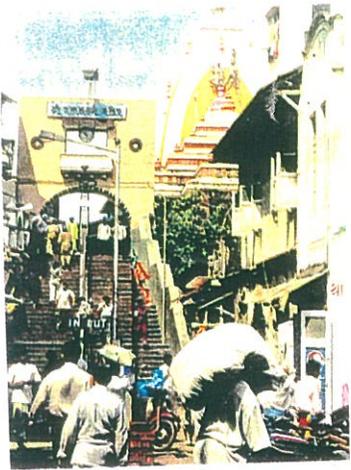
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**Sponsored by: MMR Heritage Conservation Society, Mumbai**

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# A Conservation Manual for Mahalakshmi Temple Precinct



**MMR Heritage Conservation Society**



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## A CONSERVATION MANUAL



**MAHALAKSHMI TEMPLE PRECINCT**

# MAHALAKSHMI TEMPLE PRECINCT

## A Conservation Manual

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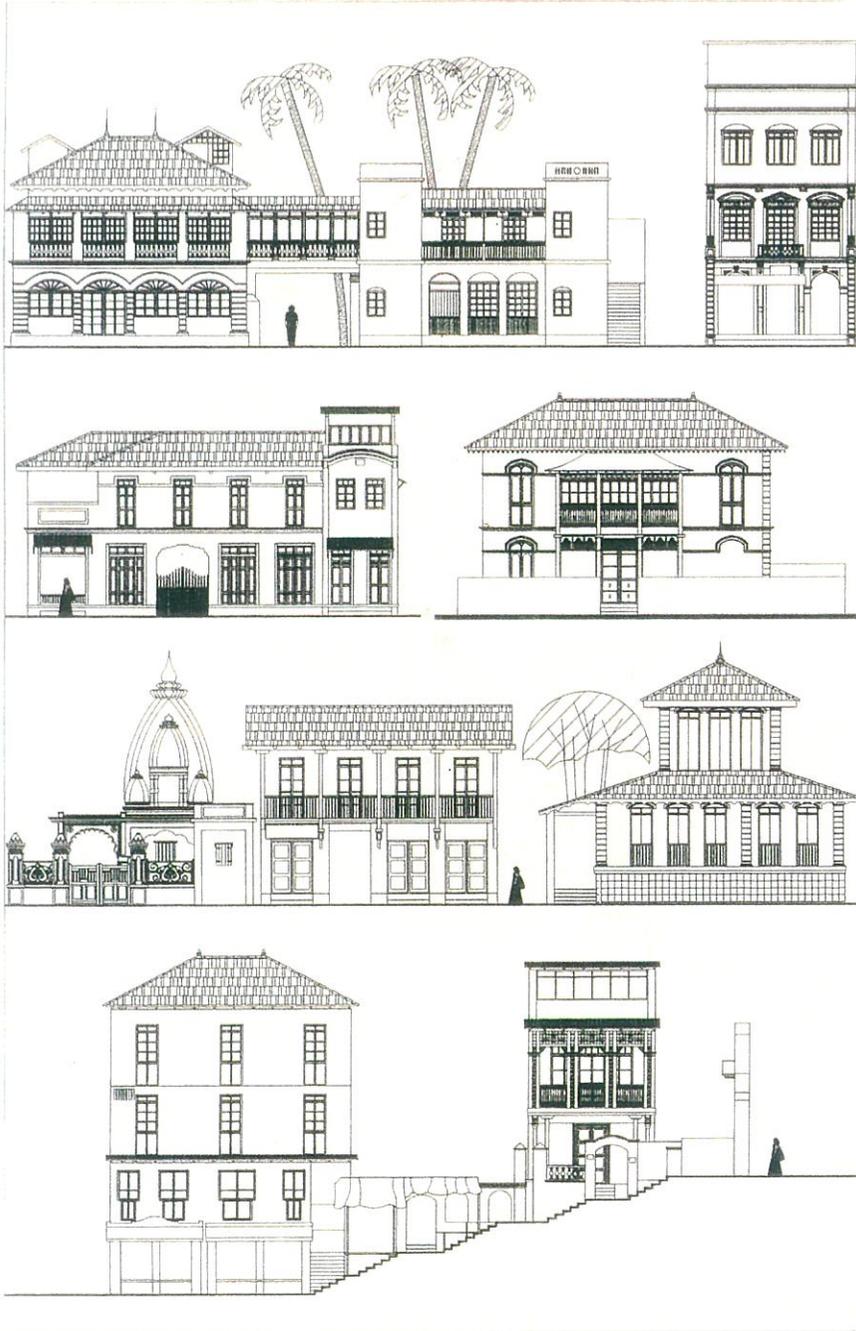
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## Introduction

Situated on a rocky outcrop along the sea face off Breach Candy, the Mahalakshmi Temple is revered as among the most pious and holy sites in Mumbai. Its historical associations date back to the early growth of the city and local folklore dates the structure to the 1720's, when Ramji Shivji, a contractor working on the reclamation of the Great Breach is said to have found idols of the goddesses in the sea and installed them in a temple. Believed to be the reason for Mumbai's financial prosperity, Mahalakshmi temple is dedicated to the Hindu goddess of preservation and the historic settlement around it has been declared a heritage precinct under the 'Heritage Regulations for Greater Bombay, 1995.'

Situated within the Municipal D Ward, the Mahalakshmi Temple Precinct is bound by the sea on the western and northern edges and Bhulabhai Desai Road to the east and south. The Mahalakshmi Temple is visible only after turning the narrow pedestrian lane behind the Trambakeshwar Mahadeo Temple, a white marble structure located at the junction of Pedder Road and Bhulabhai Desai Road.

The precinct is in fact dotted with temples and shrines, with a ritual pathway threading through narrow streets and linking religious shrines like the Ganapati, Dhakleshwar Mahadev and Hanuman temples within walking distance. These streets, of a distinctly pedestrian nature, are today abounding with flower sellers, *prasad* and garland shops along with other ancillary structures and residential buildings. Co-existing with these temple shrines, is a valuable historic fabric of vernacular dwellings that represent some of the local building traditions in the city of Mumbai.

Over the years, the historic core of this settlement has shrunk to a narrow strip along the main temple lane and even these houses are being continuously threatened either by sheer neglect, or radical building transformations and urban pressures created by the spiralling land values in the area.

In spite of this, many fine historic structures have survived the onslaught of time, retaining their original features with very few or no alterations. It is critical that this remaining heritage be adequately protected and preserved for the future through comprehensive architectural controls and preservation guidelines.

The following pages outline a strategy for the preservation and continued protection of this historic settlement, with a view to retaining its significance as a valuable architectural ensemble





Above: Existing precinct demarcation for the Mahalakshmi Heritage Precinct as per Heritage Guidelines for Greater Bombay, 1995.

### 1.1 The Precinct Demarcation

According to the Heritage Regulations for Greater Bombay, 1995, a list of buildings of architectural, historic and streetscape value have been included to ensure their preservation and legislative protection.

Areas and urban pockets with a larger concentration of such buildings and those which had a strong architectural and urban character as the Fort area, Mhatherpakadi and Khotachiwadi have also been given a special status as a delineated Heritage Precinct.

Mahalakshmi is designated as a heritage precinct as a result of its architectural value, unique streetscape and intrinsic quality of a historic settlement dotted with traditional temple shrines. It has a unique ambience of vernacular domestic architecture and temple forms, with a picturesque street character of low-rise buildings along largely pedestrian thoroughfares.

The aim of creating area specific guidelines with architectural controls specially formulated for this heritage precinct is to chart a clear path to guide future development in the precinct in conformity with and sensitive to the intrinsic character of this settlement. If given legislative status under the Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning Act 1966, would make it mandatory to follow the guidelines as suggested in the manual, hence absolving it from other general bye-laws.

Below: A typical street section through the temple street in the precinct.



## 1.2 The Heritage Listing

Though structures were listed initially, most were subsequently deleted from the list and the final notification included the names of just Mahalakshmi Temple complex and MahaKali Temple as Grade III structures, with the Shree Dhakleshwar Temple as a Grade II A. The deletions are: Muljee Jetha Sanatorium, Ketkar Motiwala Residence, Jaykar Building and Rukshmani Bhavan (Jhaveri House)

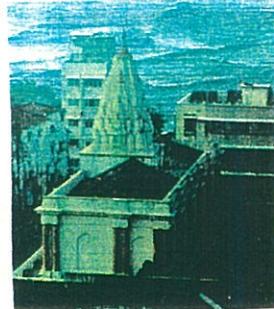
### GRADE II LISTING

Heritage Grade – II (A & B) comprises buildings of regional or local importance, possessing special architectural or aesthetic merit and cultural or historical value, though of a lower scale than in Heritage Grade – I. They are local landmarks, contributing to the image and identity of the City. They may be the work of master craftsmen, or may be models of proportion and ornamentation, or designed to suit a particular climate.

#### OBJECTIVE OF GRADE II LISTING

Deserves intelligent conservation.

Right: View of the Dhakleshwar Mahadeo Temple, listed as Grade II structure. The 1995 Heritage Regulations state that “No high rise building should be allowed around to obstruct the view of the temple.”



### GRADE III LISTING:

Heritage Grade III comprises of buildings and precincts of importance for townscape; they evoke architectural aesthetic or sociological interest though not as much as in Heritage Grade II. These contribute to determine the character of the locality, and can be representative of lifestyle of a particular community or region and, may also be distinguished by setting on a street line, or special character of the facade and uniformity of height, width and scale.

#### OBJECTIVE OF GRADE III LISTING:

Heritage Grade III deserves protection of unique features and attributes.

#### SCOPE FOR CHANGES:

**External and internal changes** and **adaptive reuse** would generally be allowed. Changes include **extensions, additional buildings** in the same plot or compound provided that extension / additional building is in harmony with and does not detract from the existing heritage building / precinct especially in terms of height and/or facade.

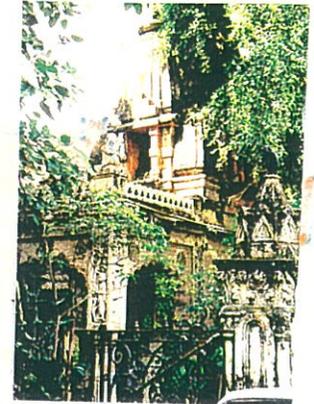
**Reconstruction** may be allowed when the building is structurally weak or unsafe or when accidental fire or any other calamity has affected it or if reconstruction is required to consume the permissible FSI and no option other than reconstruction is available.

**Reconstruction** may also be allowed in case of those buildings which attract the provisions of regulations 33(6), 33(7), 33(9) and Appendix II and Appendix III of Development Control Regulations, 1991. Reconstruction may be allowed in those buildings being repaired/ reconstructed by MHADA. However, unless absolutely essential, nothing should spoil or destroy any special features or attributes for which it is placed in the Heritage List.

**Development permission** would be given for changes by the Planning Authority itself but in consonance with guidelines, which are to be laid down by Government in consultation with the Heritage Conservation Committee.

However, an amendment to DCR 33 (7), according to the Government notification dated 25/04/1999, Heritage Regulation no. 67 (2) does not become applicable to the Grade III buildings which are cessed. This would mean that these buildings would be susceptible to ad-hoc development and reconstruction. Hence, it is proposed that these guidelines remain applicable for any development within the precinct, irrespective whether development is of cessed or non-cessed buildings.

An analysis of the heritage listing shows that the entire bulk of housing stock has been left out. This leaves the entire fabric of residential structures extremely vulnerable to rapid transformation and future re-building. Even within the listing of temples, there seems to be anomalies, with the *ParamRameshwar Mahadeo Mandir* being excluded.



Right: The Param Rameshwar temple that has been excluded from the list

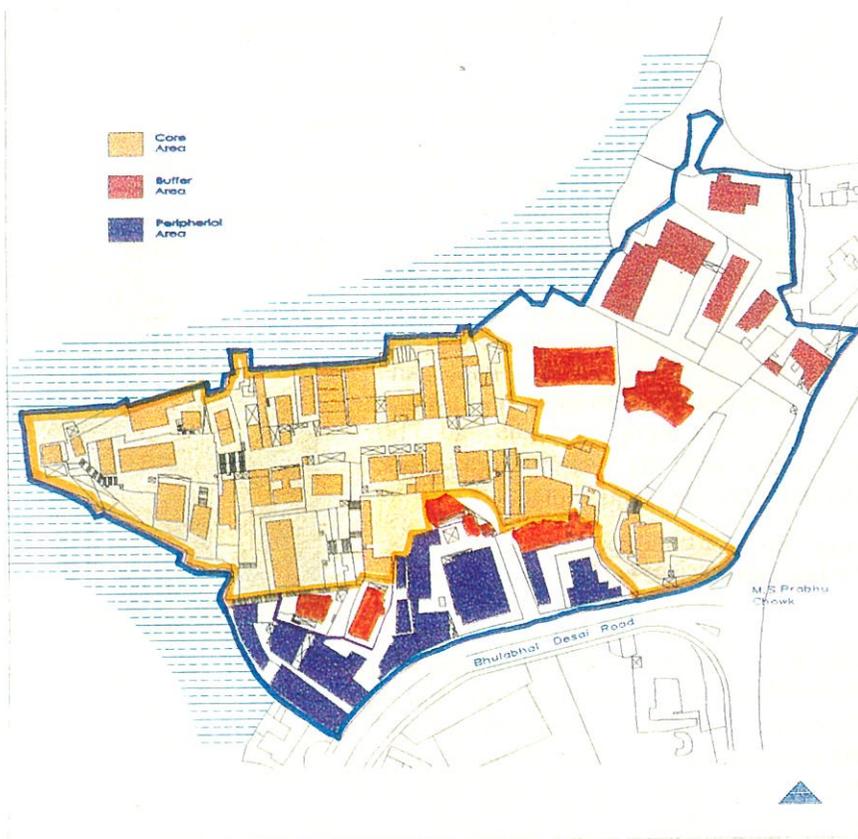
Critical in this listing, is the sentence qualifying the selection of the *Dhakleshwar Mandir*, stating, “No high rise building should be allowed around to obstruct the view of the temple”. This could be applied to the entire vicinity of the temple, including the view corridors. This has sadly been already quite badly affected, with modern concrete structures like the Ashiana, Mahalakshmi Chambers and Municipal Primary School obstructing the view to the temple structure along various routes.

## Introduction

### 1.3 Defining the Proposed Precinct & Listed Buildings

Based on the present distribution of heritage buildings within the area and the fact the peripheral areas along Bhulabhai Desai Road have undergone a radical transformation as a result of the urban pressures, the historic area within the precinct has really shrunk to a narrow strip of land adjoining the main temple street. Hence, a gradation of zonal boundaries is proposed in order to divide the precinct into a central core area, a transitional buffer zone and an outer peripheral area, with a similar gradation of urban controls.

Below: Proposed precinct demarcation with the main core area along the temple street highlighted

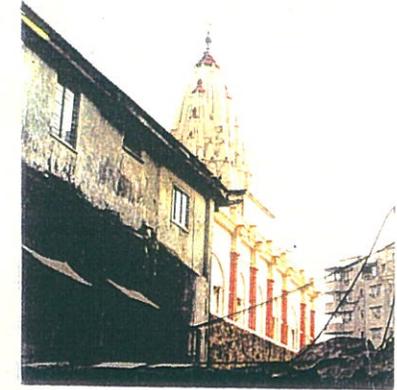


## Introduction

On the basis of an extensive documentation of the Mahalakshmi precinct, the present listing is proposed to be revised in order to include buildings of architectural and streetscape value within the precinct that have not been included in the heritage listing. It is attempted attempted, through this revised listing, to get rid of certain anomalies that existed in the 1995 listing, especially with regards to a complete absence of domestic structures.

Below: Images of the existing heritage structures as per the 1995 Listing.

1. Shree Dhakleshwar Mahadeo Temple  
Grade II-A
2. Mahalakshmi Temple  
Grade III
3. Shree Maha Kali Mandir  
Grade III



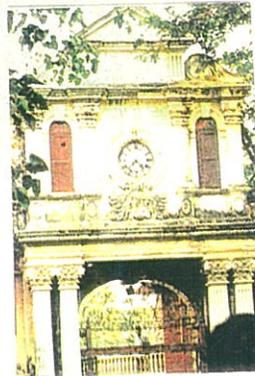
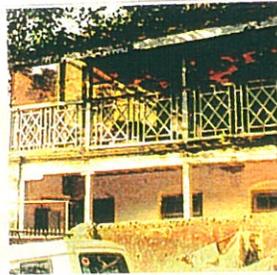
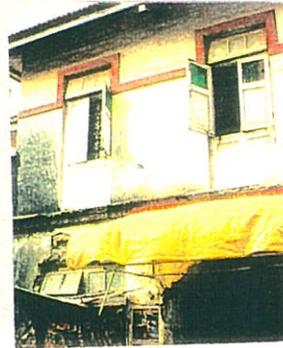
Note: Following buildings were deleted from the original list by the time the 1995 Regulation was notified.

- 1) Muljee Jetha Sanatorium
- 2) Ketkar Motiwala Residence
- 3) Jaykar Building
- 4) Rukshmani Bhawan (Jhaveri House)

## Introduction

### PROPOSED HERITAGE LIST

1. Shree Param Rameshwar Mahadeo Mandir –(II-A)
2. Shree Sanatan Satya Narayan Mandir (III)
3. Bhagwan Bhawan (III)
4. Muljee Jetha Building (III)
5. Bhatia Building (III)
6. Kasturbai Building (III)
7. Sanyasi Ashram (III)
8. Ramdas Bansali Chawl (III)
9. Ketkar Motiwala Bungalow (III)
10. Jariwala Building (III)
11. Gateway Portal to Trambakeshwar Mahadeo with Clock Tower (Grade II-



## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

**M**ahalakshmi precinct is not only significant as a streetscape of valuable vernacular buildings, but also represents one of the most picturesque historic residential areas, with a unique pedestrian scale and neighbourhood quality. The temple precinct comprises a fragile collection of charming vernacular dwellings that have largely survived the onslaught of the modern construction. The neighbourhood has an immense wealth of architectural heritage in the form of quaint vernacular houses with interesting architectural features like wooden fretwork balustrades, wrought iron work and stone pediments and sloping terracotta tiled roofs.

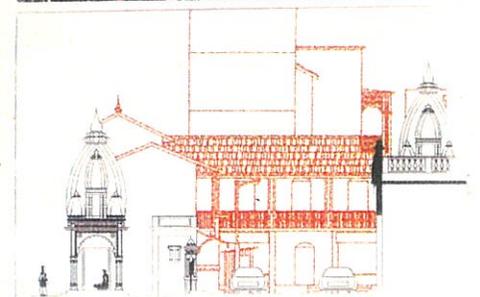
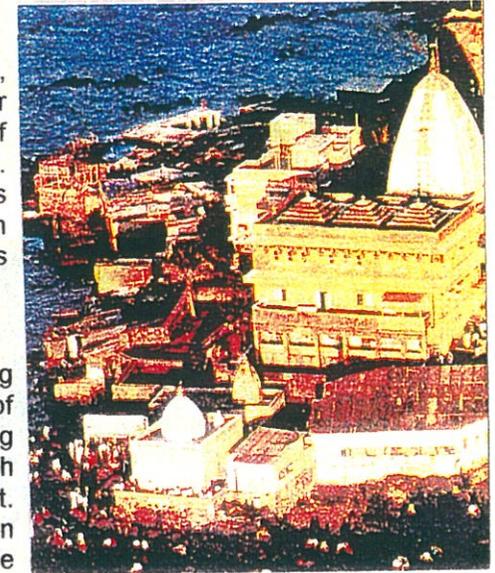
The planning elements that lend its characteristic ambience to Mahalakshmi and hence must be retained are:

### ROOF SCOPE

The typical sloping roof scope, of mangalore tiles with a timber barge board is characteristic of the urban form of Mahalakshmi. It is imperative that buildings with this roof are made to retain it and consciously preserve this roof line and tiling.

### STREET EDGE

The street edge is a strong element in the planning of Mahalakshmi, especially along the main temple street with houses and shrines abutting it. There is no front setback in most cases, and even when the structure is slightly set back from the street, the low transparent compound wall as in the Paras Rameshwar Mahadeo Mandir, becomes an extension of the architectural character of the structure.



## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

### THE FENESTRATION PATTERN

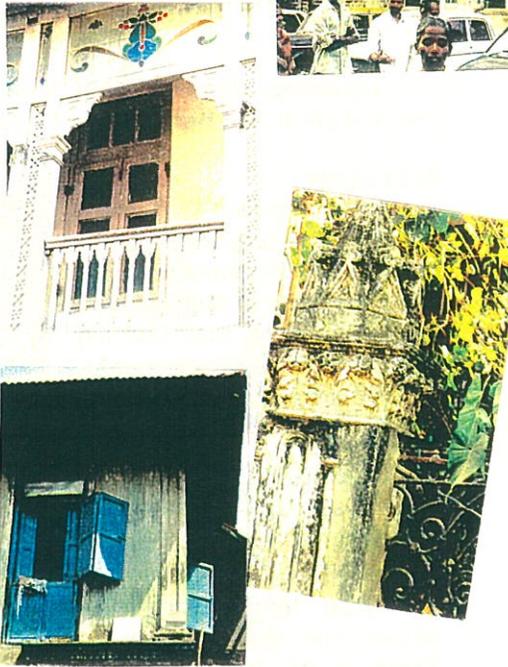
Most structures in the precinct conform to a well regulated pattern of windows along the front façade. These range from pedimented windows in neo-classical structures like the Bhatia Building, to rectangular or segmental arched windows with bold architrave bands as seen in the Kasturbai building, Ketkar Motiwala Bungalow and Bhagwan Bhawan.



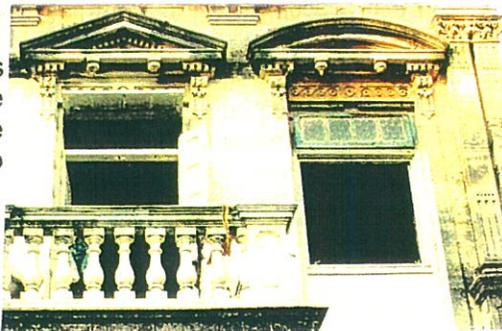
### BALUSTRADES

The façades of most of the residential buildings are punctuated by a line of balustrades that form a band on the first floor of the structure.

This decorative feature of timber balustrades is seen in structures like the Sanyasi Ashram, Ketkar Motiwala Bungalow and Jariwala Building, while cast iron balusters are seen in the Ramdas Bansali Chawl and Muljee Jetha Building. The Bhatia Building stands out in its very neo-classical detailing of Italianate stone balusters on a cantilevered balcony supported on ornately carved brackets.



Even some temple structures have ornate cast iron railing like the compound wall along the Param Rameshwar Mahadeo Temple.



## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

### 2.1 General Guidelines for the Precinct

The Precinct as delineated in the 'Heritage Regulations for Greater Bombay, 1995,' Government Publications, is proposed to be further defined to define a central core area and a buffer zone, followed by an outer peripheral area on the basis of the existing hierarchy of architectural character and transformation within the precinct.

The core area is the most valuable section of the precinct, with the strongest architectural character reflecting the heritage streetscape. This area has undergone minimum transformation, largely surviving the urban pressures that the precinct is subjected to. It can be best defined as the narrow strip of structures adjoining the main temple street leading from Trambakeshwar Mahadeo Mandir to Mahalakshmi Mandir steps, with an offshoot connecting it to Shree Dhakleshwar Mahadeo Mandir.

What is also critical to the core area, is that it falls within the CRZ zone (Coastal Regulation Zone). Detailed guidelines for the core are mentioned in a separate section and emphasis is laid on its accurate preservation, as against general guidelines for the buffer and peripheral areas, which are more flexible to developmental modifications.

### DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Mahalaxmi Precinct should be marked and designated as a Heritage Precinct in the Development Plan. The precinct is also to be absolved from any further reservations proposed in the Development Plan. The Development Plan also specifies any independent pedestrian pathway to the Mahalaxmi temple. This would considerably ease the pressure on the current single lane to the temple. As this reservation was specified before the CRZ became applicable, it should be implemented which would lead to de-congestion of the precinct and effective pedestrianisation.

The Heritage Conservation Committee is requested to consider these aspects and make necessary recommendations to the Municipal Commissioner for suitable further action.

### AMALGAMATION OF PLOTS

Clubbing up of property shall not be permitted as this would set an alarming spate of high rise construction which is not possible in small plots. This would also detract from the original footprint of the buildings.

### DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS

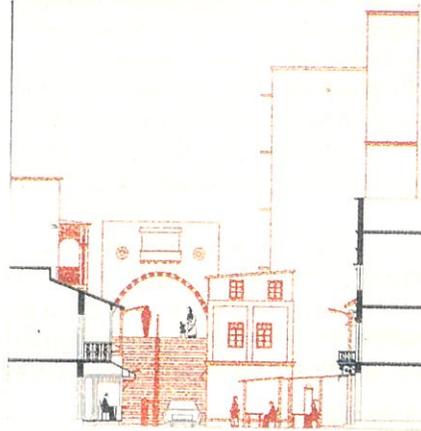
**MANDATORY REGULATIONS:** No building within the designated Precinct, shall be demolished without prior consent of the Heritage Committee. No listed building would be allowed to be demolished either whole, or in part.

## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

### ROAD WIDENING

**MANDATORY REGULATIONS:** No road widening would be permitted within the main temple street as this would involve cutting through the existing building lines.

**DIRECTIVE CONTROLS:** Motorized traffic should be reduced to a minimal, by creating adequate parking facilities in the peripheral areas and consolidated parking lots outside the heritage precinct. Areas for such consolidated vehicular parking need to be identified and implemented through the revisions shown in the Development Plan in conjunction with the existing regulations.

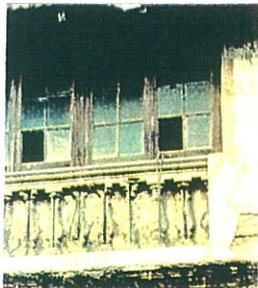


Above: A typical street section showing how the structures abut the main street. Any kind of road widening exercise would severely damage the architectural character of the precinct.

### HERITAGE STRUCTURES (EXISTING AND PROPOSED) AND PRECINCT GUIDELINES

All structures falling under the precinct, as also existing or proposed Grade II and III structures are covered under guidelines specified for Heritage Grade III in the Heritage Regulations for Greater Bombay, 1995. These would automatically come under the jurisdiction of heritage regulations and repairs. Additions and alterations to these structures would necessarily have to be referred to the Heritage Committee for approval.

Below: Images of heritage structures needing careful restoration



## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

### OPEN SPACES

All open spaces whether private or public shall be maintained without being built upon by the owners or the residents. This is specially important in the case of extensions of shop fronts or hawker lines other than the specified size approved by the Municipal Corporation. Any such encroachment of the open space or the street should be strictly monitored.

### SIGNS, SIGNAGE AND STREET FURNITURE

The entrances to the precinct should be adequately highlighted by way of sensitively designed signage. The area, being predominantly pedestrian, needs an upgradation of the existing paving and road surfacing. Appropriate positioning and design of street furniture, i.e. benches, street lights, fire hydrants, litter bins etc. is required. A strict regulation of sign boards and shopfronts is necessary to ensure that the intrinsic heritage character of the precinct is not diluted.

Existing street furniture that requires upgradation



### NEW CONSTRUCTION / RECONSTRUCTION

Any proposals for new construction or reconstruction or additions to existing structure should follow the norms of the planning elements, building height, architectural treatment and features, recommended finishes and materials, and street edge etc. as specified in the manual. Additional floors must follow the existing architectural features or the original structure as well as the sloping roof profile and street edge.



## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

### IMPLICATIONS OF THE COASTAL REGULATION ZONE

With the area falling within the Coastal Regulation Zone Category II under section 3(1) and Section 3 (2) and Section 3 (2)(v) of the Environment Protection Act 1986 and Rule 5(3)(d) of Environment Protection Rules 1986, declaring Coastal Stretches as Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), the regulating activities in the CRZ as follows:

- (i) Buildings shall be permitted neither on the seaward side of the existing road (or roads proposed in the approved Coastal Zone Management Plan of the area) nor on seaward side of existing authorised structures. Buildings permitted on the landward side of the existing and proposed roads/existing authorised structures shall be subject to the existing local Town and Country Planning Regulations including the existing norms of FSI/FAR.
- (ii) Reconstruction of the authorized buildings to be permitted subject with the existing FSI/FAR norms and without change in the existing use.
- (iii) The design and construction of buildings shall be consistent with the surrounding landscape and local architectural style.

Since the FSI allowable at the time of the CRZ notification did not include the present increased FSI for Cess rebuilding, higher FSI would not be applicable to Cess reconstruction in the area between the sea and road leading to Mahalaxmi Temple.



A view of the street line along the main Mahalakshmi Temple Lane indicating the height restriction that would be applicable if the CRZ guidelines for "buildings to be consistent with surrounding landscape and local architectural style" applies.

## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

### PLANNING ELEMENTS

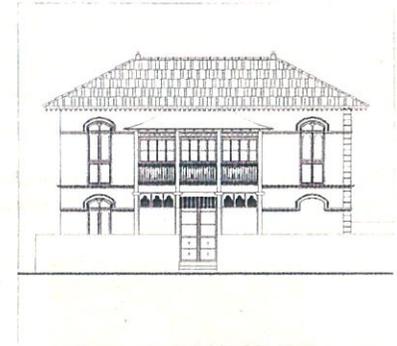
Planning elements such as the Footprint, Roofscape, Street edge, Front Verandah, and the Fenestration Pattern of Window Openings must be retained in any case of restoration, repair or rebuilding of any structure in the precinct.

#### Footprint

**MANDATORY REGULATION:** Any new construction or reconstruction proposals in the precinct should follow the exact shape and size of the existing or original footprint of the building.

#### Roofscape

**MANDATORY REGULATION:** Any building with a sloping roof and Mangalore tiles with timber eaves board has to retain its roof form and consciously preserve its roofline. As also, the roofscape shall be a mandatory consideration in the design of any new building arising due to extension/reconstruction or new construction within the precinct.



#### Street edge

**MANDATORY REGULATION:** The street edge of the buildings shall be retained. Structures abutting a street shall not construct a solid masonry compound wall and the height of the wall shall not exceed 4 ½ feet.

#### Front Porch & Verandah

**MANDATORY REGULATION:** The front porch, with a sloping roof form and timber or cast-iron balustrade shall be retained. So also the seating system of timber benches or concrete or stone seating.



Street Elevation of structures abutting the interior Mahalakshmi Temple Lane

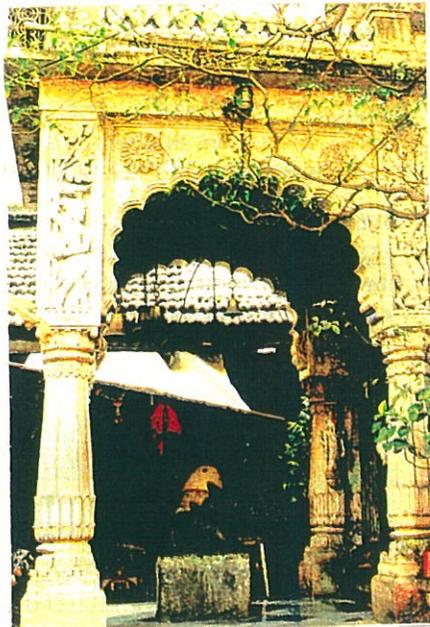
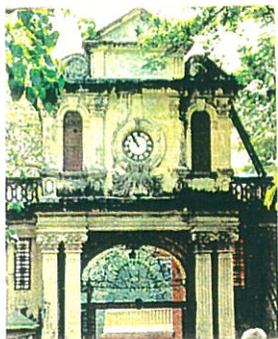
## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

### MODIFICATIONS TO THE FAÇADE & ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Modifications to the original façade or of any distinctive architectural feature are strictly to be avoided in the entire precinct. This is to be particularly stressed for the core area along the Mahalakshmi Temple Lane.

Any structural work undertaken in the precinct or alteration to any façade element require prior permission of the Heritage Committee, BMC. Replacement of existing materials should be strictly avoided and only should be allowed in case the original is completely in disrepair. However such details should be accurately duplicated in terms of the aesthetic quality to the original and should be sensitively treated. Obliteration of architectural details and planning elements, in-filling or cladding of external wall is not permitted.

Below: Architectural details that lend a characteristic ambience to the heritage precinct and should therefore be carefully preserved.



## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

### 2.2 Conservation Guidelines for the Core Area

#### 2.2 (A) AREA GUIDELINES & CONTROLS

Since the intrinsic heritage value of the core area necessitates special measures for its careful conservation, specialized guidelines prepared for the core area should be strictly followed and enforced.

#### GENERAL GUIDELINES AT MACRO LEVEL

##### DEMOLITION

Demolition of any structure in the core, in part or in whole, unless absolutely essential due to structural failure, shall not be permitted. In cases where it is absolutely necessary, this would require prior approval of the Heritage Committee, BMC.

##### FSI ALLOWABLE

The FSI allowed to be consumed in this precinct shall not exceed 1.33. The consumption of any unutilized or balance FSI is not permitted in the core area. Under no circumstances should TDR be granted within the Precinct. Under no circumstances should TDR be granted within the precinct. The excess FSI may be utilised as TDR within this Ward or in accordance with the Appendix (VIIA) to D. C. Regulation No 67.

##### AMALGAMATION OF PLOTS

Clubbing up of property shall not be permitted in the precinct, especially in the case of the core area along the Mahalakshmi Temple Lane.

Below: Image indicating the transformation in the precinct character due to amalgamation of plots



## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

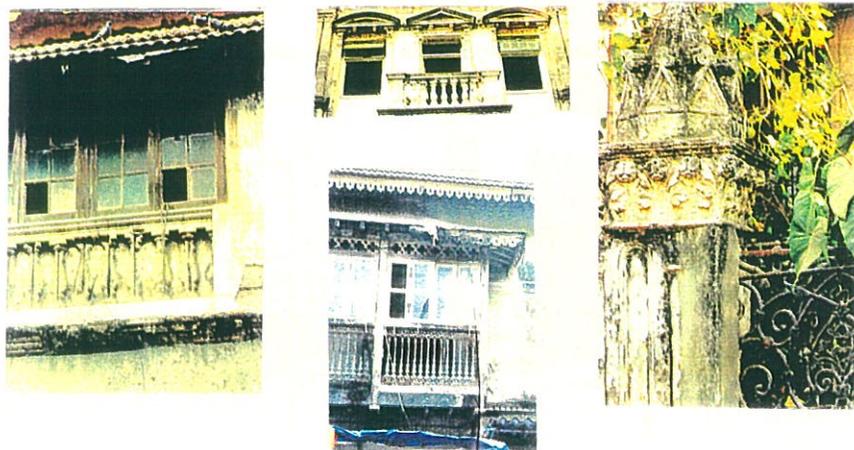
### HERITAGE STRUCTURES

All structures falling under the Grade II-A and Grade III status, whether existing or proposed shall be covered under guidelines specified for Heritage structures. These would automatically come under the jurisdiction of heritage regulations. Additions and alterations to these structures would necessarily have to be referred to the Heritage Committee for approval.

No demolition of these structures should be allowed unless due to complete structural failure and even then, the new construction should follow the footprint, height, massing and architectural elements of the original building. Special features such as carved timber barge boards, balustrades, corner quoins etc should be preserved or carefully replicated.

Given that the condition of many heritage structures such as the Muljee Jetha Building is in urgent need of repair, the repair work should be undertaken with the utmost sensitivity towards the historic fabric of the structure. Repairs should as far as possible, use original materials such as timber to timber replacements, lime mortar and such finishes that are authentic to the original fabric of the structure. All special architectural features such as balusters, timber facia, teak wood purlins, stone brackets etc should be preserved.

Below: Images of special features such as barge boards and balustrades that need to be preserved, failing which the precinct would lose much of its intrinsic heritage value.



## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

### GUIDELINES AT MICRO LEVEL

#### HEIGHT RESTRICTION

The core of Mahalakshmi Temple precinct is characterized by a cluster of G+1 storeyed structures. In keeping with this, the height restriction is recommended to be restricted to G + 1 floors in the core. No floor additions to temple shrines shall be allowed as a mandatory measure.

For existing residential G+1 floor structures such as the Ramdas Bansali Chawl, Govind Bhavan, Ketkar Motiwala Bungalow, Bhagwan Bhawan, Jaykar Building, Muljee Jetha Building, Kasturbai Building and Sanyasi Ashram, the recommended building height along the Mahalakshmi Temple Lane upto a depth of 5 metres should be restricted to a maximum of two habitable floors with a maximum height of 10 meters or the existing height of the structure, whichever is lesser.

In case of the existing annexe block that might be G+2 floors as in the case of the Ketkar Motiwala Bungalow, the existing height may be allowed in case of re-building, only for the annexe footprint.

In cases of structures that have an existing height of G+2 floors such as the Bhatia Building, Khandelwal and Jaykar Building, the second floor, upon any reconstruction of the structure, should have a minimum front setback of 2 meters from the front building line of the lower floor.

For taller modern structures (such as Ashiana, Tulsi Bhawan, Ma Ashish and Darshan Apartment), repairs may be allowed within the existing massing. It would be however recommended, that at any future date if these involved reconstruction, the additional FSI be utilized out of the precinct, restoring the heritage character of Mahalakshmi precinct.



Below: Height regulation within the core would prevent cases of incongruous infills

## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

### 2.2 (B) SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES & FINISHES

The Mahalakshmi precinct has a valuable conglomeration of charming vernacular dwellings and temple shrines that are representative of the local building traditions. Any proposed building additions, alterations, reconstruction, repair should be consistent in scale and design with the architectural legacy of the precinct and the original vocabulary of the adjoining buildings that have not been subsequently reconstructed.

#### SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

No obliteration or removal of decorative features in the existing facades of heritage structures in the core would be permitted. Original features such as sloping roofs, front colonnades, balconies, carved timber panels, balustrades, fascia boards, etc. should be retained. Even in the case of structural repairs to any building, care should be taken such that the architectural detailing is not lost and all original fretwork panels, timber balusters etc. should be carefully restored.



Above: Removal of architectural features damages the integrity of a heritage structure

#### MATERIALS & FINISHES

Lime based paints must be the only allowable paint finish for all external walls in buildings along the core area. Oil based finishes do not allow the masonry to “breathe” and should be discouraged. Stone masonry such as seen in the Param Rameshwar Mahadeo Temple should not be painted over or clad in any other finish. Under no circumstances would cladding of the facade with any material be permitted.

## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

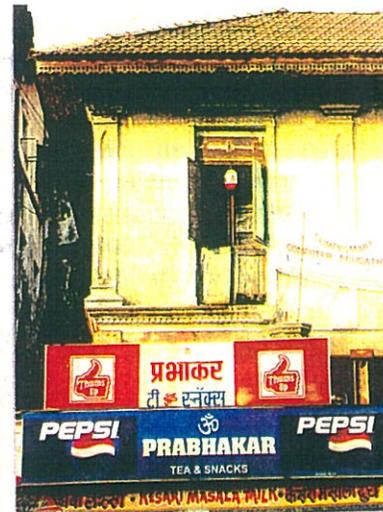
### 2.2 (C) FAÇADE CONTROL & SHOP FRONT REGULATION

#### ADDITIONS & ALTERATIONS

Accretions and additions such as wires, cables, television antennae, air conditioning units, etc. should not be located on the front façade in any manner that distracts from the architectural character of the building. Obtrusions such as box grills for windows, galvanised iron and asbestos chajjas and such haphazard accretions damage the visual integrity of the façade and should be strictly discouraged. Closing up of verandahs, concealing decorative features and infilling of balconies and railing panels shall not be permitted.

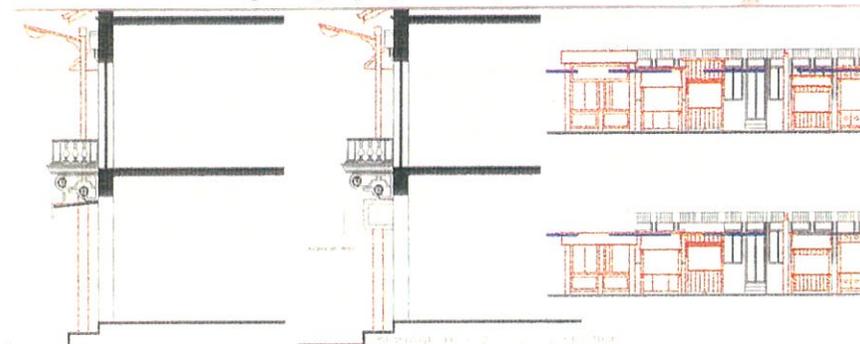
#### SIGNBOARDS, AWNINGS & SHOP FRONTS

Any additions to the façade of the buildings in the form of awnings, projections and shop fronts should be strictly monitored by the Municipal authorities and actively discouraged. Even in the case of existing shop fronts and awnings, their size and projection should be carefully regulated to a minimum acceptable size and made to conform to the pattern of a regulated heritage streetscape. The placement, design and size of any signboard or shop front should be carefully regulated and made to conform to signage guidelines specific for the area.



Above: Images of shop fronts that severely damage the architectural integrity of the heritage precinct.

Below: Guidelines for regulating signage and shopfronts within the precinct.



## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

### 2.2 (D) Change Of Activity & User

Accessed through a lively street flanked by temples, *puja* shops, flower sellers and *mithai* shops for *prasad*, the Mahalakshmi temple sits at the heart of the urban fabric of the precinct and is a vital focus of the entire neighbourhood. Its tall *shikhar* dominates over the seafronting skyline and is visible as far as Worli along the western coastline of Mumbai. This amalgam of devotees, hawkers and vendors create a lively scene on any given day, adding to the throbbing vitality and dynamism of this heritage precinct. In its user pattern therefore, Mahalakshmi is predominantly a religious and residential neighbourhood.

Internal changes and adaptive reuse would generally be allowed in consonance with the existing socio-religious character and chiefly pedestrian fabric of the core area. However under no circumstances would clubbing up of property to accommodate commercial use be permitted.



Images of the temple lane bustling with prasad shops, and flower vendors

Commercial activities not requiring heavy traffic, unloading of goods, godowns and trade of inflammable materials, etc., would be permitted in the core area, for e.g. prasad and flower vendors etc. directly related to the temple activities and needs of devotees. Such services as well as those of welfare and community participation such as *Dharamshalas*, *Satsang* halls and spaces for social and religious gatherings and activities that tend more towards service usage rather than any storage, manufacturing or industrial establishment would be generally permitted, that too with the prior approval of the Heritage Committee.

## Character of the Area & Elements to be conserved

### 2.3 Conservation Guidelines for Buffer & Periphery

#### GUIDELINES FOR THE BUFFER

**LISTED HERITAGE STRUCTURES:** All structures falling under the Grade II and Grade III status, whether existing or proposed are covered under guidelines specified for Heritage Grade III in the Heritage Regulations for Greater Bombay, 1995. These would automatically come under the jurisdiction of heritage regulations. Additions and alterations to these structures would necessarily have to be referred to the Heritage Committee for approval.

**AMALGAMATION OF PLOTS:** Clubbing up of property shall not be permitted in the precinct as this would set an alarming spate of high rise construction which is not possible in small plots.

**DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES:** As against the height restriction of the core structures to G + 1, the structures in the buffer are restricted to a maximum of G + 2 or the existing height of the structure in case of future reconstruction. However, all developmental guidelines are subject to the restrictions imposed by the CRZ zone.

#### GUIDELINES FOR THE PERIPHERY

**AMALGAMATION OF PLOTS:** Clubbing up of property shall not be permitted in the precinct.

**DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES:** As against the height restriction of the structures in the buffer to G + 2, the structures in the periphery are restricted to a maximum of G + 3 or the existing height of the structure, subject to the restrictions imposed by the CRZ zone.

For structures in the periphery especially along Bhulabhai Desai Road, the setbacks as demanded by the developmental guidelines and D.C. Regulations shall be applicable.

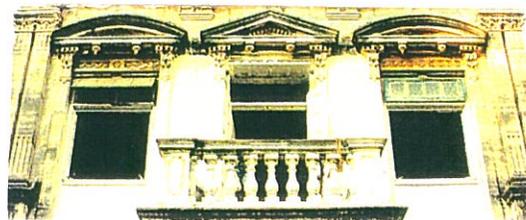


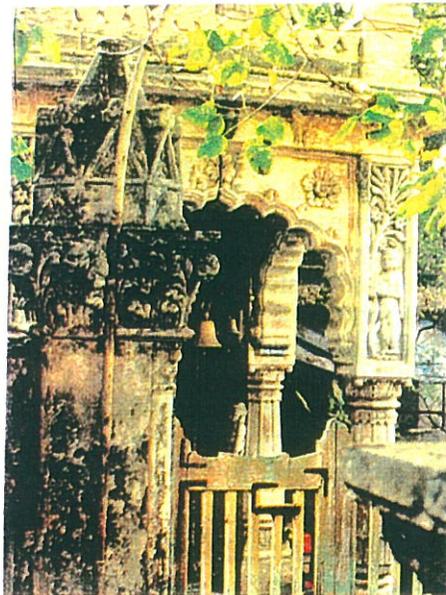
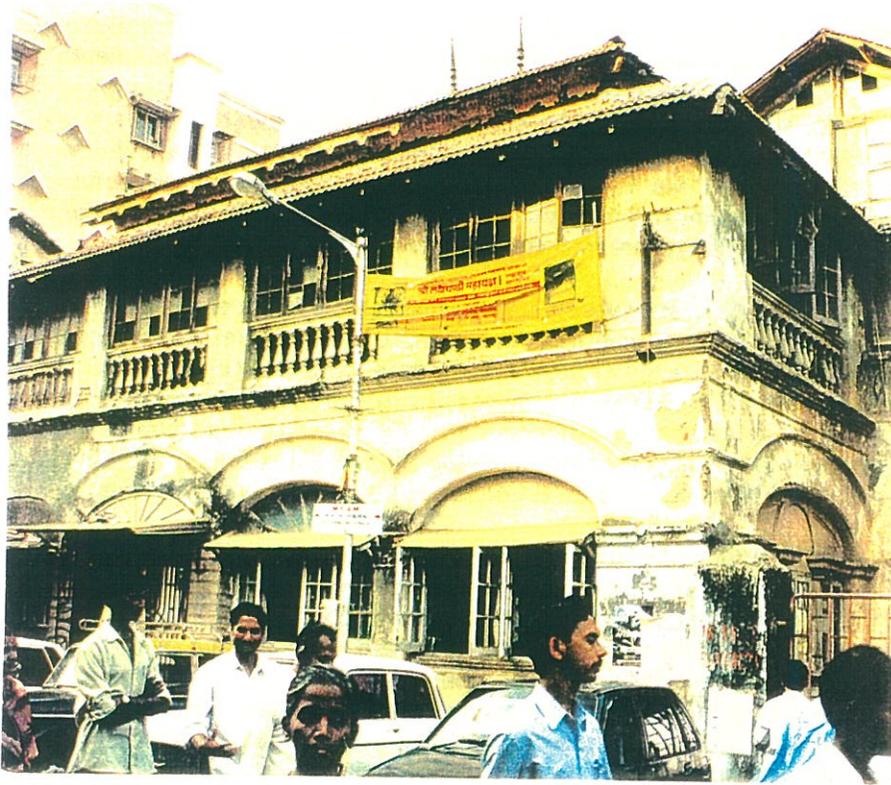
The structures in the Mahalakshmi precinct range from stone temples, to vernacular brick and stone houses with timber elements and even modern concrete buildings. Though the condition varies, it is largely seen that most of the structures of heritage value face some threat to their integrity. A large number of structures are already included in the MHADA Cess list, making it imperative to view their future preservation from the point of view of dovetailing conservation techniques with present Repair Board practices.

Even in the case of relatively stable buildings, threats are posed due to a variety of issues ranging from over loading due to incremental changes and alterations to the structure, ficus growth, roof leakage and issues that threaten the aesthetic integrity of the structures. A variation in either the original features or materials could result in the deterioration of the historic fabric and it is critical to ensure that both these constituents are respected in any future repair. Some basic thumb rules are as follows:

1. All structural timber members such as timber posts, binders, girders, ceiling joists, staircases etc. if distressed should be repaired and replaced in well seasoned timber wherever possible.
2. Decorative features such as stained glass, cast iron etc. should be adequately restored using the same material.
3. The roofing material for the sloping roofs should be terracotta tiles and appropriate water proofing should be carried out periodically.
4. The original design for door, window frames and shutters should be strictly adhered to in all case of repair, restoration or renewal.
5. Care should be taken to use lightweight construction materials for internal partitioning such that they do not overload the structure. Overhead tanks for water storage should be lightweight and only placed after ensuring the load capacity of the roof members. These too should be located such that they are not visually obtrusive.
6. Materials that are authentic to the original construction such as lime mortars should be preferred over the indiscriminate use of non breathable finishes such as epoxy mortars and chemical sealants in repairs to stone pointing, mortar joints and plasters and renders.
7. In the case of temple structures, ancillary elements such as *Deepastambhas*, decorative railings, entrance gateways etc. too should be restored in keeping with the original design.

A material store, housing features obtained from demolished or reconstructed structures, could be generated such that these materials are available for cases of repairs to heritage buildings at a subsidised cost

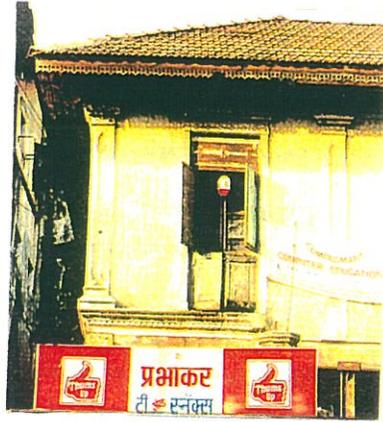




### 3.1 Periodic Maintenance

1. Periodically uproot any ficus growth and plants such as *pipal* or *banyan*. These tend to grow into the walls and widen cracks, leading to water ingress and seepage stains. Use a mixture of *hing*, *gur* and unslaked lime and apply on the remaining stump or root system.
2. Periodically check for :
  - leakage from drainage pipes
  - leakage from the roof or due to dislodged roof tiles
  - wet patches and seepage
  - termite infestation signs
  - a hollow sound when knocking a timber beam or rafter
3. Painting should be carried out bi-annually. A lime wash is not only a cheaper alternative, but also allows the historic walls to "breathe".
4. The problem of rising damp could be tackled by correcting site slopes, checking for blockages in drainage systems and plumbing or laying a lead or bituminous damp proof course.
5. Gently scrape off moss and algae growth. These aid to seepage.
6. Replace broken roof tiles and lay displaced tiles in proper position.
7. All timber members, such as posts, boardings, beams, purlins especially the ends embedded in the walls should be checked for wet rot or deterioration and displacement, sagging, cracking, warping etc. should be rectified. Replacement of timber members, if required should preferably be done in well seasoned, treated timber.
8. Check for places where the old lime plaster has fallen off. Application of cement plaster in such places does not adhere to the surface and falls off eventually. Use lime plaster for authentic repair.
9. Overhead water tanks should be adequately supported to ensure that the main structure is not subjected to additional loading.

Repair and not replace original features. Try to salvage and re-use all elements like cast iron balusters, wooden columns, Minton tiles etc. rather than new inconsistent finishes. In case replacement is necessary, new elements could duplicate original designs.



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