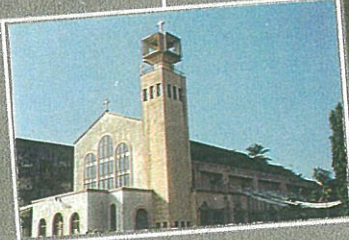
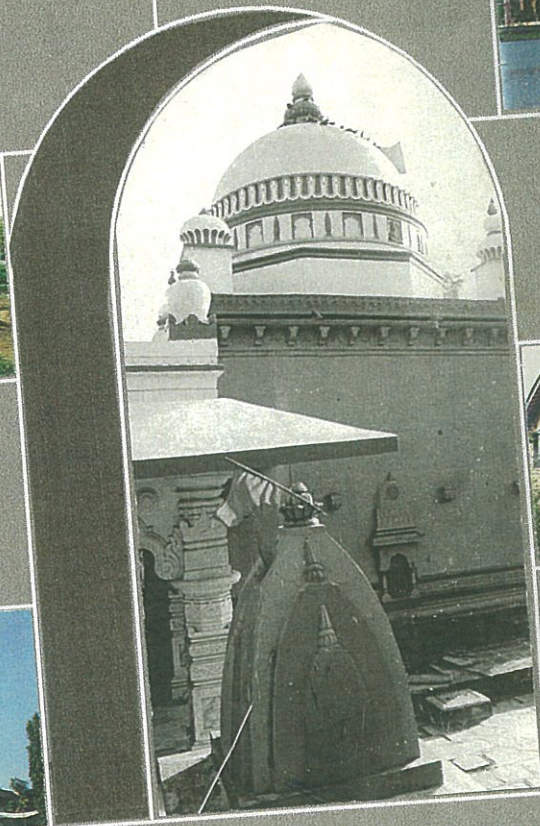
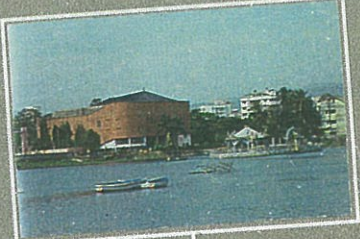
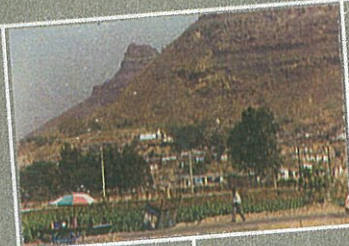


Draft Final



A COMPREHENSIVE LISTING OF HERITAGE VALUES IN THANE

RACHANA CONSULTANTS

MMR-HERITAGE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

A COMPREHENSIVE LISTING OF HERITAGE VALUES IN THANE

FINAL REPORT

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PREFACE

This Document forms the third and final part of the presentation of "*A Comprehensive Listing of Heritage Values in Thane*". It mainly comprises of the revised grading structure of listed buildings and precincts, revised list and policy framework for Heritage Conservation in the city of Thane.

The Sub-committee of MMR-Heritage Conservation Society provided valuable suggestions on account of grading structures devised by Rachana Consultants. The grading structure has been simplified in order to facilitate easy understanding and work out acceptable formulae for effective conservation of listed structures. The committee members had also advised to review grading of certain monuments. The revised list is enclosed herewith as a part of this presentation. Natural heritage features have also been paid attention to while preparing policy framework.

An extensive study of Heritage Regulations for Greater Bombay 1995 was conducted as one of the earliest exercise of such nature in India. Heritage regulations in other parts of World were also put in mind before coming up with policy framework. The ICOMOS charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Areas, 1987 commonly known as the Washington Charter provided the necessary groundwork along with other relevant charters. UNESCO recommendations concerning the safeguarding and contemporary role of historic areas, Nairobi 1976 proved quite useful in preparation of safeguarding measures.

Input received from many experts active in the field of built and natural heritage conservation was extremely valuable, particularly in understanding the complex task of introducing heritage regulations in Thane. The dynamics of urban development in this context could be explained by practicing architects and developers in the city. It was too premature to discuss the probable policy framework with the property owners who may get affected except those who were open to the idea of listing. Most of the owners are dead against any impediment in their right to develop their properties as per their wish.

Discussions were also held with government officials regarding the listing, grading procedures and policy framework considering special problems of Thane city. Many of them were optimistic about the possible inclusion of monuments

and religious buildings but were clearly skeptical about any place for residential structures in the final list. According to them it was too late to conduct such exercise in Thane at this stage considering the loss that has already taken place and unprecedented pressures over these properties for redevelopment.

To compound the problems, it was observed that during the third phase of road widening a few listed residential structures have lost their facades or have been completely demolished due to their dilapidated condition. Therefore it is extremely important to enforce comprehensive heritage regulations to save remaining buildings from the jaws of developers and provide viable option to the property owners with minimum damage to their rights of enjoyment of their properties. It was also deemed necessary to include urban design related issues within the purview of heritage regulations as senseless beautification schemes of chowks and lakes, hoardings popping over all corners and inappropriate signage are causing harm to the aesthetic environment of the city.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to express our special gratitude to MMR - Heritage Conservation Society, MMRDA for granting us this opportunity of conducting the first ever Heritage Project in the city of Thane.

A compilation of information of this scale and nature was impossible without the help and co-operation of government authorities namely Thane Municipal Corporation, Survey department (Thane), Assistant Director Town Planning (Thane District), Public Works Department (Thane) and Collector (Thane District).

The efforts of a number of people made this exercise possible and we would like to thank Dr Vijay Bedekar (Indologist), Mr Dhopate (Numismatist), and Mr Arun Joshi (Historian) for their various contributions at every stage of the project. A special note of thanks to Mr Haribhau Shejwal (Historian) for making available archival photographs with information.

We also extend thanks to Mr Pendharkar (Chief, City Planning, MMRDA), Mr Girkar (ADTP, TMC), Mr Samaik (Director Town Planning, Thane), Mr Nagare, Ms Aparna Bhatte and Mr Nagarkar (Heritage Cell, BMC) for their kind assistance.

Thanks are also due to Mr Aadhish Goray for timely advice on architectural photography.

We are grateful to Prachya Vidya Sanshodhan Sanstha, Asiatic Society, Town Hall Library, Maharashtra State Archives, Hera's Institute, Mumbai Marathi Sangrahalaya, MMRDA Library and Thane Nagar Wachan Mandir for making available historic documents and papers.

As also thanks to Mrs Patil, Mr Chavan (Administrative Officer) and Mr Yadkikar (ex-Secretary) of MMR - Heritage Conservation Society for providing necessary information and help throughout the project.

The project would not have been possible without the continuous guidance and personal interest shown by Mr Pantbalekundri (Secretary, MMR - Heritage Conservation Society) a concerned citizen of Thane. We are indebted to him for his constant support and encouragement.

Lastly thanks are due to residents of Thane who have been supportive of this unique exercise conducted in the city.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 HERITAGE- A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY OF SOCIETY

In this fast changing world, when the old settlement patterns are undergoing tremendous change and being transformed into concrete jungles, the need for conservation of historic monuments and precincts becomes a must. The historical monuments are testimonials of architectural heritage of past generations. They represent a time span that covers many lifetimes. Mere survival of these buildings is enough to impart them symbolic importance of stability and continuity in the world where the only permanent thing is change. Nostalgia associated with these structures has a great psychological impact over people's mind. A sense of belonging is regenerated amongst the residents of the city.

The buildings and precincts need adequate legal protection in order to save themselves against onslaught of modern development. As the buildings / monuments have their own life cycles and grow old with the aging of its component materials, therefore through proper legislations, systematic efforts need to be taken to ensure the continuous and careful maintenance of the monuments without changing their original character. If this is not done there is every possibility of their damage that warrants adequate legislative, administrative, social and economic measures.

The need for protection and preservation of natural settings and environment of archaeological monuments and historical places has been accepted at all levels. Only challenge in front of the conservationists is to convince those stakeholders who get affected by the provisions of heritage regulations and take them in the mainstream of the movement. It is necessary to devise new methods in order to minimize losses incurred by them and come with new compensatory techniques in this era of liberalization.

The historic city of Thane with its existence for more than 800 years presents a unique opportunity, as it is only one of its kind mix of heritage potential, tremendous pressure for development and high awareness level amongst residents. The exercise of "A Comprehensive Listing of Heritage Values in Thane" proved a challenge considering the above facts.

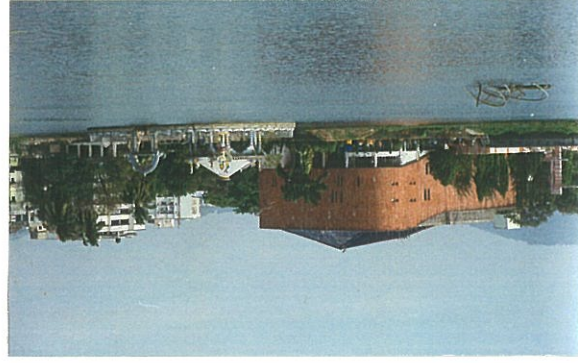
Thane, the second most populated city in Mumbai urban agglomeration is situated next to the metropolis of Mumbai nestled between Yeoor Hills and Parsik Hills. Thane creek flows through the city dividing it into two parts with different patterns of development in each. It extends between 18°42' N and 20°20' N latitude and 70°25' E and 73°44' longitude. It is the headquarter for the district consisting fourteen Tehsils, including Thane with a total population of 7.95 Lakhs as per 1991 Census and an estimated population of 12.0 Lakh as per 1996 estimates. The decadal rate of growth for period 1981-1991 was 67% perhaps the highest in whole of MMRDA region.

The total area of Thane Municipal Corporation encompasses about 147 sq. km. At present the city is divided into 95 wards to facilitate administration. It is well connected by road and rail links with the rest of the country but its position as an entrance gate to Mumbai has virtually converted into its suburb outside Mumbai municipal corporation limits. Central location, easy accessibility, adequate infrastructure, established market places, civic services and facilities, wide industrial and trading base suggest that Thane will continue to grow with the average growth rates found during 1951 to 1981.

Thane, the second largest city in MMR-urban agglomeration has some picturesque landscape resources as part of its city structure. The Yeoor hills, Parsik hills, Thane Creek and numerous lakes spread all over Thane, all these natural elements definitely add to the character of the city. In fact, Sir Patrick Geddes, an eminent British town planner had visited Thane in 1915 and was impressed by the lakes and had suggested preservation and beautification of lakes. Thane has evolved organically, barring a few planned localities and shows some definite stages in its growth during post-independence period have left their distinctive marks over the townscape of the city. Rich architectural heritage areas constituting not only monuments but also an ambience of the period can still be seen and enjoyed in areas like Bara Bangala, the British period town-planning scheme.

In the past few decades considerable urban growth and development had taken place in the city resulting in extensive horizontal growth and filling up of interstitial spaces. The very core of the city is experiencing unchecked vertical growth. The natural heritage and built heritage is today experiencing tremendous pressures of urban development causing damage and distortion of its very character. The natural resources such as lakes and hills are being extensively

Thane – A city of lakes



Thane – A city of lakes



used for unsuitable building activity and the heritage areas are rapidly degenerating. This was shown by the

replacement of landmark buildings like Sarkar Wada and B. J. High School that constituted its very character. This is happening in spite of planned physical development and in proximity of Mumbai where heritage movement has born

and prospered.

Senseless additions / alterations and repairs are also equally responsible for destruction of rich architectural heritage e.g. The exposed stone masonry wall of 18th century Thane Fort was plastered with cement plaster when only pointing would have served the purpose and maintained the look. Road widening projects have mercilessly stripped off the buildings of their decorative facades in historic areas like Charai causing an irreparable loss to the heritage movement. Archeological findings in Thane have also suffered on account of general neglect and apathy shown by the concerned government departments.

This issue however, has now attracted the attention of a few conscious and concerned citizens and non-governmental organizations of the city. This is evident from the news coverage that such issues have received in local and regional newspapers and television channels. The citizens today feel that this distortion and insensitive exploitation must come to an end. Organizations like Prachya Vidya Sanshodhan Sanstha and HOPE are wielding their lone battle to save the natural, archaeological and built heritage of the city. Unfortunately their activities are painted as anti-development and anti-society by those lobbying for a free hand in the development of the city in their own manner.

The city therefore needs immediate conservation measures for such areas and monuments. The effort should be to enrich the townscape and to let the citizens of this city experience these natural and the built heritage areas as significant parts of the cityscape. The citizens should also be able to revive the nostalgic memories of an era bygone by looking at a few survived structures.

Only a few individuals and organizations have carried forward the conservation movement in Thane and they lament the absence of any supportive legal framework so as to stop the mindless destruction of last remnants of the heritage. The neglect in this regard has led to the distortion and decay and also the demolition of some of the heritage buildings. The hills are noticing encroachment and are slowly being stripped of their green cover. The lakes are being filled up or



Demolition of B. J. High School



Demolition of Old Collector's Office

beautified without showing consideration for urban design principles. With these unscrupulous activities taking place the citizens of Thane shall be left with nothing to boast of their rich architectural and natural heritage of the past.

For a city like Thane, which has a glorious history of over thousand years and which has about 100 historical structures / sites of importance, heritage conservation has become very urgent. It is necessary to take immediate action to save these symbols of stability and continuity, for their psychological impact or simply as cherished treasures of the bygone era.

1.2 PROJECT BRIEF

The project involved identification of potential areas / locations for conservation. The process included survey of the area within the Municipal limits. It also involved identifying significant areas of Architectural, Archeological, Cultural, Landscape, Scenic and other physical features of heritage value.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE :

The city of Thane has great significance from historical point of view. Once bustling harbour over Thane Creek, the area has witnessed rules of several dynasties such as Shilahars, Yadavas, Mughals, Marathas, Peshwas, Portuguese and finally British. As trading center, the city shows influence of cultures of many visitors from Europe and Asia.

The city has typical layouts of old towns, the *alis* and *paadas* distributed with villages around. The Central Bazaar Street (*Bazampeth*), the select locations of private property, rich architectural character of traditional built forms (*Wadas*), the lakes within the city limits, hill ranges, religious places, archaeological sites etc. each is a unique feature needing a comprehensive architecture and planning study.

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE :

The history and development of Thane has a significant heritage value. Certain parts of the old city have still maintained their character, their built form, lifestyle, irrespective of onslaught of modern times. But the pressure for

development is so intense that, individual owners are becoming easy targets for the developers. Some of the private and public buildings are being pulled down and replaced by ugly residential and office buildings. Before it is too late it is necessary to lay conservation guidelines and list buildings and precincts, which need to be saved. The study has been planned in this direction.

1.3 SCOPE OF WORK

- The area within the municipal limits was surveyed to identify physical and natural features.
- Historical references regarding the development at all level of individual property holdings were provided. The town planning schemes, within the content of development plans for Thane were studied.
- Identification of heritage significance of the features was done and a comprehensive heritage list was prepared.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

PROJECT WORK PLAN :

The historic city of Thane does not have any conservation guidelines or legislation presently. Precincts, within the city with rich architectural character and an established heritage value need to be conserved through appropriately designed guidelines backed by a true legislation.

The first step towards providing the above-mentioned guidelines was to identify the zones within the Municipal limit; next step involved identification of the collective value of the features of that physical or natural zone or with

relation to other zones. An inventory of these items with historic and other references has been prepared as a database.

Finally a "List" of then short listed structures and other features has been presented.

IDENTIFICATION :

The areas and buildings which figured in heritage and conservation list were identified on the basis of the knowledge of the city. To add to this, initially, the entire city was divided in terms of areas on the basis of names and an insight of any important building or landmark in each of these areas was made. Certain areas were identified by the age-old names derived from the customs and trade practiced from there. An entire list of all such areas was made so that surveys could be conducted in each of these areas. Another list of individual structures, which deserved attention, was made to highlight the same. At the same time available plans were also studied to facilitate the surveys. The ward-wise distribution of the city was accounted and correct boundaries of the areas were identified accordingly. Another reference for this process was to scan through various local newspapers that regularly carry features on historically and culturally significant buildings and areas. This proved to be quite beneficial in the early stages of the study. After finalizing the areas, specific surveys were carried out on foot so as not to miss any structure. The surveys were intensive and covered visual analysis in terms of architectural style, age of the building, interesting details and features meriting conservation and photo-documentation of the same. The history of the place was studied by talking to the residents and referring any relevant literature wherever available.

CLASSIFICATION :

The classification is based on the surveys conducted. Broadly, areas that comprise of many structures bearing similar architectural features have been clubbed to form a precinct. The other individual entities, which exhibit their own style and bear no relation whatsoever to any structure around have been classified as singular structures. The classification will enable forming separate guidelines for precincts and individual structures so as to facilitate the implementation of the same at a later stage. Natural heritage features such as lakes, hills and creek has been put up separately since the guidelines for these will be different than those for the built fabric.