



Nowroze, Jer, Rustom and Cusrow Baugs, built by the Wadia brothers, Sir Cusrow and Sir Ness and their mother, Bai Jerbai. Residential clubs and hotels were also built for a variety of communities and classes and high-rise blocks that could be typed as sort of upmarket forms of *chawls*.

A conspicuous feature of this period was the formation of many co-operative housing societies by the different communities of Bombay, who took advantage of the housing loans offered by the Government at an interest rate of 6%. In fact, of the 1,819 plots leased by the Government in 1919-20, 465 were leased to co-operative societies.

New patterns of lifestyle also became evident during the boom with the introduction of concepts such as 'commuting' to the place of work or travelling long distances for a weekend outing. The new forms of family entertainment such as the cinema and the social clubs, increasingly encouraged mixed gatherings and the coming out of women with their husbands in public - a custom hitherto frowned upon by Indian society. In this respect, Bombay became a trend-setter and took a national lead in social reform.

The acceptance of new and alien delineation and configurations of living space in the new 'flat' system was also an evolving phenomenon of the time. Indians who had frowned upon or been unaccustomed to the ideas of dining on tables in special rooms, entertaining in living rooms, sleeping in bedrooms with attached bathrooms or cooking in kitchens located in close proximity to the living area, very quickly adapted to these new forms of living arrangements.

In the meanwhile, with the growth of commerce, shipping and industry, new business precincts were also established. Elitist residential enclaves, middle class colonies and clusters of workers' housing schemes were constructed or were redeveloped and realigned from old urban patterns.

By the mid-1930s, the city had expanded extensively into the newly developed suburbs. Bombay was thus beginning to spread outward in a northerly direction and to intensify around the core area of the newly created central business districts in the Fort and at Ballard Estate. This intensification also manifested itself in the form of higher buildings, facilitated by the use of the recently introduced construction materials such as reinforced cement concrete (RCC) and ferro concrete. The modern era had dawned in Bombay.

**The Wadia brothers, Sir Cusrow and Sir Ness and their mother, Bai Jerbai, spent lavish sums for the construction of housing for Parsi middle class families. Nowroze Bagh, comprising 13 buildings accommodating 358 families was commenced in 1907 and completed at a cost of Rs 1.5 million.**

**Rustom Baug with 22 airy buildings was built in the vicinity of the Sassoon family mansion (now Masina Hospital) at Byculla for Rs 3.6 million and could accommodate 326 families. On a plot near Gloria Church at Byculla, 170 flats named after Bai Jerbai were erected at a cost of Rs 2 million. The most successful of their housing schemes, however, was the Cusrow Bagh complex on Colaba Causeway, designed by Claude Batley.**



## Art Deco

Coincidentally, around the time of the building boom in the city, an innovative architectural style known as Art Deco percolated through to India and manifested itself at Bombay. In many ways this unique style became symbolic of the last burst of westernisation that engulfed the city before India gained independence in the following decade.

A unique combination of factors led to the popular adaptation of Art Deco in Bombay. Tourism and travel had made rapid strides in the period between the two World Wars, resulting in a continuing stream of visitors to Bombay. Many touring European ballet, opera, theatrical and musical troupes were presented at the new hotels and theatres and brought a touch of glamour and new forms of entertainment to the city.

The upper classes and the business community of entrepreneurs and managers happily imbibed contemporary trends in western culture to create a *bon vivant* lifestyle, that symbolised gaiety and colour and encompassed western cuisine and dress, ballroom dancing, jazz, cabarets, horse-racing and the cinema. The social and cultural ambience at Bombay was thus suitably conducive to the introduction of Art Deco

interiors and architecture.

*Top: A 1930s function*

*at the Taj Mahal.*

*Above: A motor car showroom. Opposite*

*top: The Air India office*

*designed in the Art*

*Deco style. Opposite*

*below: The Ideal Home*

*Exhibition, 1937.*

Around the same time, the rulers of the Indian states began to visit Bombay at regular intervals for shopping and sports and en route to foreign lands, and most importantly, for informal meetings of the Chamber of Princes,

the official body constituted for negotiations with the Government of India.

Many of these maharajas and nawabs began building mansions and apartment blocks in Art Deco or buying flats in the city, in preference to renting villas or living in clubs or hotels. This created the appropriate patronage for the introduction of a new style.

In addition, several Bombay architects including those who had graduated from foreign schools of architecture, were travelling around India and to the west and emulating contemporary European and American styles in their own designs. The presence of several European architects, decorators and designers in pre-war Bombay also gave tremendous thrust to the movement.

Further impetus to the Art Deco movement was given by the Ideal Home Exhibition, the first architectural exhibition ever to be held in the country, organised by the Indian Institute of Architects at the Town Hall in November 1937. The intention of the organisers was primarily to enlighten the public in matters of contemporary building materials and styles, furniture and household gadgets - all of which at that time employed Art Deco styling!

The exhibition provided an insight into modern methods of building for roofing, partitioning, interior walls, doors and windows, fittings and ventilation. Various local manufacturers exhibited their products in interior decoration, furnishing, lighting, electrical household aids, sound proofing and airconditioning. Furniture for living and dining rooms, bedrooms, children's' rooms, kitchens and bathrooms was also displayed. The newspapers were filled with advertisements of furnishers and interior decorators wooing prospective owners and tenants.

The movement's strongest influence was evident in new office buildings in the Fort, bungalows on Malabar and Cumballa Hills and Juhu, the apartment blocks at Marine Drive and in Backbay Reclamation and in the new cinema theatres. Many watered down versions of Art Deco were also built all over the city in areas like Colaba, Gamdevi, Mohammedali Road, Dadar, Mahim and several other parts of Bombay.

Although far less exuberant compared to, say, its counterpart buildings on Miami Beach at Florida in the USA, the application of Art Deco in Bombay was consistent to the original style in that forms were angular and facades often stepped back. This was especially true in taller and non-residential buildings, as in the case of the Eros and Regal cinemas.

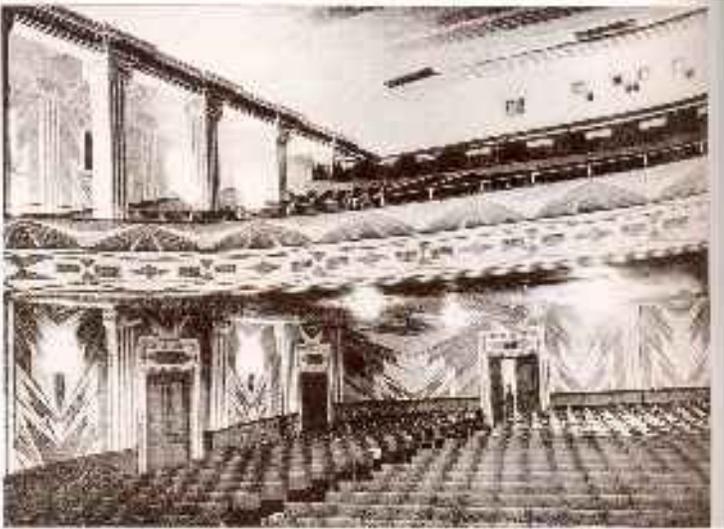
Decorative elements at Bombay ranged from industrial symbols to palm trees, sun ray patterns, the moon and ocean being among the favourite decorative themes expressed in basrelief stucco panels, etched glass and metal work in balconies. In fact, in Bombay, the style manifested itself consistently both in the overall form of the building and in details as well as in

the conception of the interiors and objects and gadgets of daily use like radios and refrigerators - the entire spectrum.

The original style had been adapted successfully to the locale and available technology. But most importantly, the development of Art Deco rapidly replaced Bombay's image from a Victorian to a cosmopolitan and modern city. In this process, the trailblazers of the Art Deco movement in Bombay were the new cinemas, the most vibrant and dynamic symbols of the glamorous new lifestyle that had enveloped the city. The Regal Cinema, designed in reinforced cement concrete by Frederick William Steven's son, Charles, spearheaded the movement.

For its time, the Regal was one of the finest cinemas in the city, constructed with unconventional simplicity at the beginning of the building boom in Bombay. The cinema was luxuriously fitted and fully air-conditioned with an underground parking facility equipped with a lift for the





convenience of its patrons. Karl Schara designed the interiors with dominant sunray cubist motifs in pale orange and jade green.

In 1935, the modern Plaza Cinema opened at Dadar and in the following year the Central Cinema was completed on the south side of Charni Road. On 3 September 1937, the remodelled and renovated New Empire Theatre was opened by the Western India

„II Theatres Ltd on the Hornby Road Estate near the Capitol Cinema,

followed by the thousand-seater Broadway Cinema opened at the site of the old Dadar Police Court in October, 1937. All the theatres employed the Art Deco style!

The movement reached its pinnacle in February 1938 with the opening of a grand luxury cinema, the Eros, the only non-residential building to be constructed on the new plots fronting the Oval in the Backbay reclamation scheme. When completed, the Eros could rightly claim to be the last word in design, style and finish. It was designed by Sohrabji Bedhwar and the foundations were laid in 1935. Situated on a remarkably prominent site at the junction of several roads fronting the Churchgate railway terminal, it occupied the most commanding position in the Church gate Reclamation. Designed as a V-shaped structure, it incorporated two wings, which united and rounded off at the main entrance to the cinema theatre.

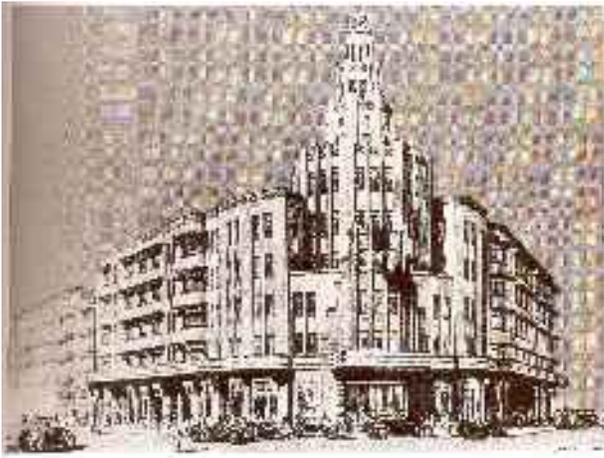
The Eros was partially faced with red sandstone from Agra. The same shade of red was used for the colour finish of the mouldings and ornamental details while the rest of the structure was painted in light cream. The visual

*Above and below: The Regal Cinema interiors created an impression of airiness and size in harmony with the modern simplicity of the exteriors.*

*Opposite above and below: The Eros, while seeming light is a massively based structure with a foyer of white and jet black marble, and three staircases with chromium handrails.*

*Overleaf: A 1937 Haseler aerial of Art Deco buildings along the Oval. The harbour is seen in the background with the Fort area before it and the Back Bay and Victoria swimming baths in the front. Despite the varying scales and styles of the Victorian Gothic buildings of the 1860s on the eastern edge and the Art Deco blocks of the 1930s along the western, the open maidan created an urban composition with two centuries of building fronting each other across the green!*





interlocking of these colours created an added illusion of height, making the building seem larger than its actual size. The structure thus established its presence at the important urban intersection it was situated in.

The interiors were equally imposing with a magnificent foyer of gleaming white and jet black marble, relieved with streaks of gold, from which three marble staircases with chromium handrails led to the auditorium and balcony. On the walls were artistic murals painted in soft tones symbolising India with its tropical vegetation and forests, the dim outline of the Taj Mahal and the temples of the south.

The cinema was and still is a fine example of a multi-use building that also works incredibly well at the level of urban design, especially in its response to a major urban node in terms of its scale, massing and multiple activities. Also, it serves as a visual marker on approaching the Fort area from Marine Drive, for, beyond it are first glimpsed the Gothic buildings that edge the Oval *maidan*. Both the Regal and Eros in that sense were modern buildings, which were nevertheless responsive to the historic urban context they were set in.

Within a few months of the opening of the Eros, another grand cinema, the Metro, was inaugurated on 8 June 1938 at a prominent site on the Dhobi Talao junction (where Carnac Road, Cruickshank Road, Esplanade Road, First Marine Street, Girgaum Road and Kalbadevi Road converged). The 2,943 square yard plot was formerly occupied by stables for the Air Force and was





*Right: Rajjab Mahal.*

*Below: Bilkha House*

*(Ram Mahal) Opposite*

*from top: Art Deco*

*details. Among architects*

*who designed Art Deco*

*buildings in Back Bay*

*were Contractor & Kanga,*

*Gregson, Batley & Ivng,*

*G B Mhatre, John*

*Mulvaney, K P Daver, M*

*Dalal, Merwanji & Bana,*

*Mistri & Bhedwar,*

*P C Dastur, Poonager &*

*Billimoria, S Chandabhoy,*

*Suvernapatld & Vora and*

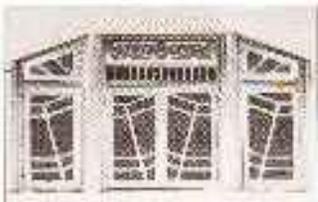
*Sykes, Patkar & Divecha.*

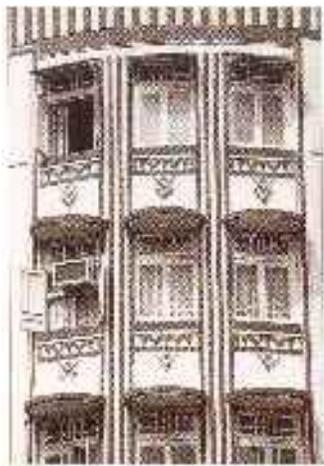
acquired by the Metro Goldwyn Corporation in May 1936 on a lease for 999 years with a nominal ground rent of Re I a year.

Like the Eros and Regal, the Metro was the last word in luxury. Thomas W Lamb, Architects of New York, drew the plans for the Metro, which screened the films made by Metro Goldwyn Mayer, and D W Ditchburn

of Bombay was appointed the associate architect. The Metro's Art Deco interiors were aesthetic and stylish. The grand auditorium was approached from the marble foyer beyond the main staircase by four aisle entrances. The cinema equipment and the chairs and carpeting were all imported from America.

The colour theme in the auditorium was red with pinkish shades for floors, walls, ceiling and furniture. The most striking ornamental features were large mural paintings on either side of the auditorium, executed by the Bombay School of Art under the supervision of the Director, Charles Gerrard. Aside from the cinemas, striking examples of Art Deco could also be found in a large group





of residential apartment blocks constructed on the new Back Bay Reclamation and along Marine Drive, the western seaside road fringing the reclamation which was completed in the late 1930s.

Similarly, on the swath of land along the Oval were built a row of residential houses, conceived in the Art Deco style, facing the imposing Gothic edifices on the eastern edge of the *maidan*, and anchored at the northern end by the Eros Cinema. Despite the varying scales and styles of buildings, the open *maidan*, or urban void, created an absolutely fantastic setting and urban composition with two centuries of building styles valiantly and defiantly fronting each other across the *maidan*!

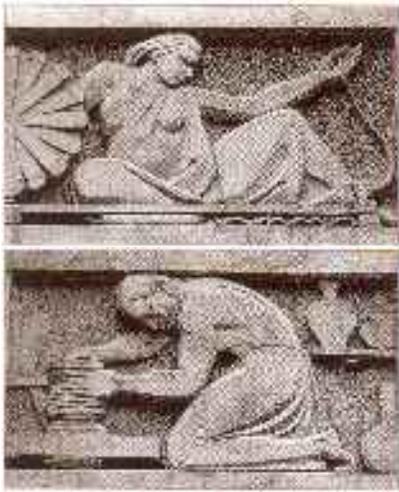
Collectively, all the various Art Deco styled buildings in these newly reclaimed lands at Marine Drive, Churchgate and Queen's Road created a cohesive image - clearly another layer, both physical as well as in terms of style that was added to the city. Like the Gothic buildings in their time, which represented a new face of the city and an expression of power, so too the Art Deco buildings and precincts symbolised the shift in expression to represent contemporary aspirations. This time in the 1920s and 1930s, the city had once again renewed itself to keep' . pace with international trends, thus truly making Bombay India's connection to the west and the world - the Gateway to modern India.

## **Nerve Centres of Business and Finance**

Concurrent to Bombay's new modern image, the city's role as the country's nerve centre of national and international trade, business, finance and industry also intensified as many new consumer industries were established at the end of the economic depression in the early 1930s. After the newly created Ballard Estate had been completely built over, a fresh demand grew for more commercial space, resulting in the establishment of new centres of business.

One of the city's most important commercial precincts was created in May 1928, with the completion of the Municipal Hornby-Ballard Scheme. This was the opening of a new central avenue (later named after Sir Pherozeshah Mehta), that connected the head of Ballard Pier through Mint Road to the corner of the Whiteaway & Laidlaw Building (now Khadi Bhandar) on the

**The presence of several European designers gave a boost to the Art Deco movement. Karl Schara, a Czechoslovakian artist, designed the interiors of the new tearoom and the ballroom for the restaurateurs Cornaglia's, designed the interiors for the Regal Cinema and also renovated the frescoes in the Church of the Holy Name. John Roberts, specialists in furniture, employed four European designers in 1928, including Fritz von Driberg, who was responsible for the Eros interiors and the renovations of the New Empire. Angelo Molle designed the interiors of the Broadway Cinema at Dadar. In the 1930s, E F Messerschmidt, who also designed for Kamdar Furnishers, renovated the ballroom and interiors of the Taj Mahal Hotel. Established in 1938, Kamdars' projects included interiors for the Governor's Pavilion in the Cricket Club of India and residential flats for industrialists like JRD Tata, N Saklatvala and Dinshaw Petit, all in the Art Deco style.**



western edge of Hornby Road. This main central artery was designed as a section of the continuous avenue which would ultimately lead from the landing stage at Ballard Pier to Queen's Road and thus provide a new eastwest link for south Bombay.

The Municipality took almost three years to demolish over 200 old structures and cut through the congested Bazaargate precinct of the northern Fort area to create this east-west avenue. Prior to the construction of the new avenue, Churchgate Street had been the only route that connected to Ballard Pier and to the important commercial centre at Ballard Estate. The Hornby-Ballard scheme not only set up an important new thoroughfare, but also, more significantly, opened up ventilation and light for the dark and congested Bazaargate precinct.

The wide, surfaced and well lit Hornby-Ballard scheme road (Pherozechah Mehta Road) had footpaths on either side and was unobstructed by tramway lines which ran on the main Hornby Road. With over 60 building sites becoming available on the frontages and on connecting streets, it was expected to become the most dynamic business street in the old quarter of the Fort.

During the construction of this avenue, expectations were high that there would be a ready demand for sites, particularly for frontage plots on the new avenue. Unfortunately, many years passed before demand was created for this building ground. Property investors were not easily attracted to the area as several old structures and a portion of the old bazaar were left standing on the fringes of the avenue long after its completion. The severe trade depression acerbated the situation and demand for the sites at the offset of the project in 1928 was at ebb.

It was only in the early 1930s that economic conditions began to improve and by 1934 a great volume of building was underway along this new avenue in the city. By 1935, the building boom intensified as the land market promised a handsome return on investments, and although prices had risen steeply, there was a rush for sites on the Hornby-Ballard scheme road and especially for prime frontage and corner sites. The new blocks of commercial buildings entirely changed the appearance of the old Bazaargate area and this road, later named after Sir Pherozechah Mehta, emerged as one of the most important commercial and financial districts and the centre of the insurance business.

The insurance buildings of the 1930s on Pherozechah Mehta Road showed a marked change in design and style from commercial architecture of the pre-war period. One of the early buildings was constructed for the Bombay Mutual Life Building, for one of the oldest life assurance companies, established in the 1870s. The prime site at the junction of Hornby and Pherozechah Mehta Roads was leased in 1933 and the building was completed in 1935. The ground floor was leased to the Bombay branch of the National City Bank of New York

*Opposite: The fine architecture of the Bombay Mutual Building set a precedent for other new buildings built on Pherozechah Mehta Road. The sculptural work on the buildings depicted typical Indian Art Deco motifs.*



1936 and the imposing design with a tower and chiming clock was again the work of Master, Sathé & Bhuta. The beautiful sculptural work on the building facade was executed by the well-known sculptor V. A. Kamat. In time, more buildings were completed for companies like the Universal Fire Insurance Company and the United India Life Assurance Company Ltd, the latter designed by Iyengar & Menzies. The imposition of a 10% Urban Immovable Property Tax in February 1939 had a discouraging effect on the building trade. With the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, there were apprehensions that the industry would sink into the doldrums as the cost of construction materials rose steeply.

Within two months, however, the situation brightened as a result of increased activity in the main industries and markets on the stock exchanges. The building trade, thus surprisingly prospered even through the period of the War II. To the early 1940s, almost 900 new buildings completed in Bombay during the year 1940-41. One of the outstanding buildings constructed during the war period and completed in late 1939, was for the Gresham Life Insurance Society Ltd at the eastern end of Pherozeshah Mehta Road.

Stylistically, all these buildings were designed in an intriguing fusion of 19th Century elements combined with indigenous icons, themes and symbols. The Laxmi Insurance building, for example, carries atop it a larger than life size statue of Goddess Laxmi. Similarly, elephants and other indigenous icons were freely

As more business houses sought space in the newer commercial areas in the 1930s, properties in the antiquated Fort area became less attractive to investors. With a view to remodelling the area, the Municipality made plans for street improvements in the northern Fort, including widening Cowasji Patel and Parsi Bazaar Streets to 60 feet, the latter to be extended from Elphinstone Circle, through P Mehta Road to Gunbow Street and up to old Bomonjee Lane at the northern end. Plans were also made for remodelling layouts and streets in the southern fort, such as the extension of Hamam Street to Esplanade Road in line with the University Clock Tower, creating a direct approach to Apollo Street, the Exchange Building and the Imperial Bank. On the eastern side, since the range of buildings extending from Ballard Pier to Apollo Bunder obstructed the view of the sea, a proposal was made to transfer the dockyard to the north of Ballard Pier, but none of these schemes were implemented.





amalgamated in the designs to create a unique blend particular to Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Road. This trend was in keeping with the contemporary renaissance movement in Indian art and architecture, then especially noticeable in Calcutta and ardently followed in the School of Art in Bombay.

Apart from the development and concentration of new business on the Pherozeshah Mehta Road, the other more traditional commercial area in the central and southern Fort also intensified in use. Several valuable properties, some of which had been in the possession of individual families since the 18th century, were located in the area between Esplanade Road and Apollo Street in the southern quarter of the Fort area. Development was much slower here than on Hornby and Pherozeshah Mehta Roads, since vacant sites were unavailable and redevelopment could take place only after demolition of old structures.

Within this area space was cramped and business was transacted from small, dusty offices without adequate ventilation or light, but with high site values. The thoroughfares on which these buildings abutted were extremely narrow and the one-way traffic rule introduced by the authorities was looked upon with disfavour by shopkeepers who believed that this resulted in loss of trade in the area.

As recorded in an issue of *Property Market*, despite the evident drawbacks, property prices in these areas had surprisingly remained

*Opposite: Pherozeshah Mehta Road in the 1950s showing the new buildings erected during the building boom of the 1930s. Laxmi Building crowned by an image of the goddess was built on the street by the Laxmi Insurance Company of Lahore. Above: Art Deco details on the street.*

consistently high. Around 1920, when real estate boomed, a plot at the corner of Tamarind Lane and Armenian Lane was sold for Rs 950 a square yard. Only a short distance away, a plot at the back of Churchgate Street (south side) fetched as much as Rs 1,325 a square yard. The plot on which the Central Bank offices were built was said to have been the most expensive land acquired in the area. In 1933, however, after some years of slump, a prominent site on Hornby Road fetched only Rs 375 a yard.

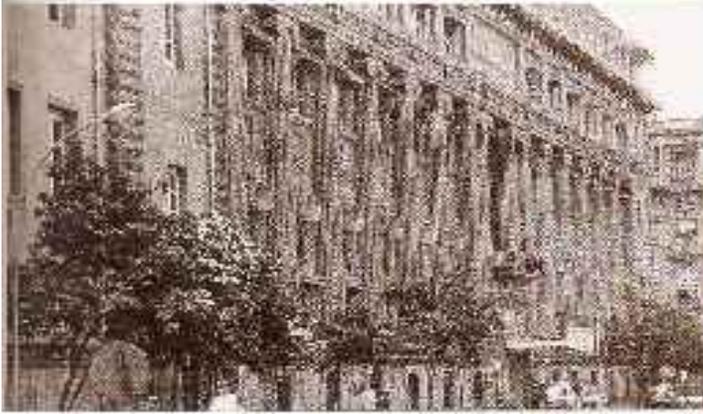
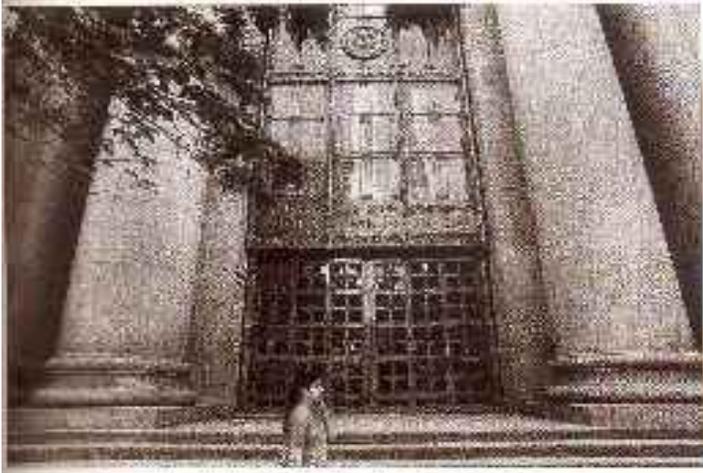
The central portion of the Fort experienced minor redevelopment in the form of piecemeal additions to individual buildings, thus never altering its essential pattern. One example of this sort of redevelopment was the Maneckji Wadia or Chicago Radio building on Esplanade Road (now Mahatma Gandhi Road). Gregson, Batley & King designed it in association with N R Wadia & Co in a style modelled on contemporary American commercial architecture, built in Malad and artificial stone with cement concrete backing.

In the meanwhile, the southern section of the Fort had come to be characterised by the banking institutions that had been constructed over the decades in this quarter. In time, Apollo Street, from its junction with the old Dockyard Road to Elphinstone Circle came to be termed 'Bank Street'. This was because of the many bank buildings erected on its frontages in the 10 years following the close of World War I, a time of depression during which there was hardly any other construction activity in the rest of Bombay.

On 1 April 1935, the Reserve Bank of India came into operation and the Bombay branch was opened in the old Bank of Bombay. It functioned there for four years before its own building was constructed close by, opposite the Mint. On this site had formerly stood old military barracks, solid relics of the old Fort whose demolition in 1925 proved to be a formidable task. The site lay vacant until 1936, when a large plot in the angle formed by the junction of Mint Road and Bazaar Gate Street was purchased outright by the Reserve Bank of India. J A Ritchie, partner in Bombay of Palmer & Turner, was appointed consulting architect to the Bank.

The impressive building was completed in April 1939. As the headquarters for India's premier bank, the building was designed to be entirely utilitarian, giving an impression of security and solidity without ornamentation or architectural flourish. The building stands out in Bombay as one of the finest examples of construction in Malad stone. The building's most outstanding feature is the magnificent main entrance section with its lofty dimensions, enhanced by two giant stone columns on each side.

While the Fort area was emerging as the primary business district for the Bombay region, other business areas also developed to cater to local business



requirements. Thus, many public buildings connected with the city's industrial and financial life were also constructed in different parts of Bombay in the 1930s, including the new Electric House at Colaba. Sykes, Patker and Divecha designed the city's tallest building at that time, with a height of 102 feet for the East India Cotton Association Exchange. It was built on the site of an old building, which had stood within the angle formed by the junction of Kalbadevi Road and Sheikh Memon Street. The new Exchange, inaugurated by Sardar VaUabhai Patel in 1937, seemed to be placed almost out of context as it towered above the adjacent old structures in the congested precinct,



*Opposite: Art Deco statuaI)'  
on the New India Assurance  
Company on M Gandhi Road.  
The building was constructed  
on the former site of the*

*Currency Office. Left top:  
The majestic 60 feet high  
Corinthian columns of the  
Reserve Bank were  
built with massive blocks of  
Malad stone. Left below: The  
Imperial (now State) Bank of  
India, designed by T S  
Gregson was completed in  
1924 on Apollo Street.*

light: An aerial of the E-shaped Central Government offices on Queen's Road shows the spacious bungalows with their gardens and tennis courts. Behind are seen the Air Force building and grounds and the Metro Cinema completed in 1938. Bombay Hospital was built later on the plots to the left. Opposite: An aerial of Colaba cantonment shows Afghan Church and military barracks. In 1911, Government proposed providing a hundred acres for the army on the southern most blocks of Back Bay Reclamation. In 1920, a fresh scheme proposed the surrender of old military properties in the Fort and army bungalows on Marine Lines, in exchange for land at Colaba (and partly at Deolali). However, the area earmarked from the Back Bay scheme for the military was considered too large and more appropriate for civilian use. A settlement of 265 acres was agreed to, with the understanding that the Army would give up all old military properties.



R T Russel, Consulting Architect to the Government of India, designed stately offices for some departments of the Central Government in Bombay. They were completed in 1937 at a cost of Rs 1.2 million on a 37,000 square foot site on the eastern side of Queen's Road and north of Churchgate Station. The six-storied building, with a total floor space of about 250,000 square feet and a frontage of over 350 feet, was the largest office building to be constructed in the 1930s.

Apart from these buildings, most other building activity was concentrated in the Fort area, which was by the 1930s and 1940s becoming the unquestioned commercial district for the city and a desired address.

Simultaneously, as residences were being extracted from the Fort with the improved infrastructure and opening up of the suburbs, more space was becoming available in the Fort. But demand always outstripped supply. By the end of the decade, with the imposition of the Rent Control Act, which froze rents, landlords were tempted to subdivide premises to supplement their income as well as cater to the growing demand. Inevitably, by the 1940s, what became evident was that the era of the Central Business District had arrived. The Fort area was rapidly becoming a specialized zone - a nerve centre for business and finance.

The opening of the new Reserve Bank of India in close proximity to the Mint and to the Stock Exchange in the heart of the old banking district and the conglomerate of new insurance company buildings along Pherozeshah Mehta Road, further reinforced and intensified the image of the Fort as the city's central business district. Even more importantly, these buildings collectively became symbolic of Bombay's emerging role as the indisputable financial capital of India.

Despite this amplifying image in the realm of finance, Bombay was still faced with the formidable problem of residential housing for its vast population. As a natural consequence, the building boom spread in all directions and completely transformed Bombay - from the southernmost precinct of Colaba, continuing northwards through the heart of the city to the new suburban developments. This inevitably caused the city to explode to encompass the greater region and the intensifying core to implode around the old centre where Bombay's development began!

### **South of the Fort Area**

In complete contrast to the hectic construction activities that were gathering momentum in the rest of the city, at the southern end of the city, there were hardly any transformations in the Colaba cantonment, which had continued to remain in control of the military forces. In 1924, although work was begun on new bungalows such as Gun House, Fleet House and Air Force House for senior military officials, the overall character of the cantonment remained more or less unchanged in the form of low densities that continued to characterise the area.

Just outside the cantonment limits, there were evident changes in the neighbouring Cuffe Parade area where an extension was laid out in residential plots south of the Panday Sanitarium. Amongst the prominent buildings



designed in watered down versions of the Art Deco style at this edge of the cantonment were Revills, Pallonji Mansions, Sea Foam, Sea Land and Goolestan, most of which were designed by the Bombay firm of Gregson, Batley and King. All these were remarkably airy buildings with superb sea views.

Nearby, in contrast to the cantonment, dramatic intensification took place in the bustling Colaba Causeway (Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg) area, which gradually emerged as a favoured residential and throbbing shopping quarter, lined with residential flats, shops, hotels and restaurants. Through the decades, Colaba Causeway also witnessed many demographic transitions from an area inhabited only by native Kolis and visiting Englishmen to a residential quarter for the English, Anglo-Indians and Parsis.

During the building boom of the late 1930s, many affluent Muslim families also moved to the Causeway - all contributing to its rich mix of communities.

Notable blocks of residential buildings erected in the late 1920s on the eastern side of middle Colaba were Firdaus-Beharistan and Heliopolis-Petropolis, with commanding views of the harbour. Both these residential blocks, the largest in this neighbourhood, were designed by Gregson, Batley & King and accommodated a mix of 'boxwallas' as well as entrepreneurs from different communities.

Similarly, a couple of large housing schemes undertaken along Colaba Causeway in the early 1930s were the Cusrow Baug complex and the Brady's Flats. The architects for the Cusrow Baug complex were Gregson, Batley and ICing who designed the housing enclave as an introverted, self-sufficient society for the Parsi community. The edge of the building that ran along the commercial strip of the Causeway was designed to accommodate shops on the ground, opening out on the main street but set back on their individual *otlas*.

The buildings were situated right up to the property line, thus ensuring continuity in the streetscape.

This main street wall which accommodated flats at the upper level formed a well-articulated gateway to the Baug in the centre. Inside, the buildings were arranged around a large open space conceived as a garden hence the name 'Baug'. The *agia.ry* or fire temple was placed very carefully at one end of the garden.

Around this 'edifice in the garden' were three-storied blocks that comprised the major dwelling units. Besides these, a gymnasium above the gateway, a dispensary, a school, a gymkhana pavilion and, in a secluded corner of the site, a building in which funeral services of the Zoroastrian faith could be performed, were also accommodated. Thus in terms of its components Cusrow

*From top: The Cusrow Baug complex on Colaba Causeway, Brady's flats at Colaba and Dhanraj Mahal, the largest and costliest residential cum commercial complex built in the 1930s on the site of the Watson's*

*Hotel Annexe on Apollo Pier Road.*

Baug was a fairly self-sufficient housing complex which still serves as an important model for urban designers and architects of how a large, new intervention can be skilfully woven into an existing urban fabric without disrupting the streetscape or the overall urban context.

Another outstanding housing enterprise in the Colaba Causeway neighbourhood was Brady's Flats, located further south on the quiet, tree lined Sohrab Bharucha Marg (named after the architect) and comprising ten identical three-storied buildings.

By the mid 1930s, all plots along the Causeway and in adjoining roads towards the Apollo Reclamation in the east and the former railway lands to the west, were built over in a watered down Art Deco style.

**In** spite of its many transformations and intensified densities, Colaba Causeway has continued to maintain a unique, dynamic vibrancy. It could, in fact, be considered as one of the most buoyant districts in south Bombay where commercial and residential uses coalesce into an acceptable balance. Similarly, in the architecture of the street - especially from Regal Cinema to the Arthur Bunder Road intersection, an amazing number of varying styles and buildings appear to be held together by the sheer dynamism of the many activities that take place along the street.

In fact, the northern segment of Colaba Causeway, which is perhaps the original length of the actual causeway, serves as a regional shopping centre. Its catchment extends beyond south Bombay to the Greater Bombay regional area, while also serving a large tourist population located along and off this major thoroughfare leading towards Apollo Bunder.

At Apollo Bunder on the south-eastern foreshore, the plots laid out on the old Arthur Bunder basin found no buyers as the strip had been reclaimed by the simple process of dumping building rubbish into the basin. Since this would have necessitated the use of concrete piling for foundations, there was little initial demand for these plots. Gradually, however, as the main Apollo reclamation plots were saturated, demand for the Arthur Bunder sites also increased. By 1936, all the plots were taken on 99-year leases and 14 buildings were completed in the following year.

The most prominent block of flats built on the Port Trust's Apollo Bunder Estate was the Dhanraj Mahal residential-cum-commercial complex on the site of the Watson's Hotel Annexe on the western edge of Apollo Pier Road. Work on this project was commenced in 1933. This was the largest and costliest single building scheme undertaken in Bombay during the 1930s. The Art Deco building was characterised by the exclusive use in the interiors of marble mosaic on the floors and dados. With the building of this complex, the area *south* of the Fort had now more or *less* completed the intensification process that had started in this precinct in the beginning of the 20th century.





Subsequently, in the 1970s, the Apollo Bunder experienced one more and perhaps the most disastrous addition - the Navy's reclamation east of the Gateway of India. Here, for want of expanding its facilities, the Navy brutally altered not only the profile of the water's edge, but irreversibly destroyed the promontory quality of the Gateway of India monument. This drastic move symbolised the increasing lack of co-ordination between the number of government agencies that could now impact the physical form of the city. In fact, this issue of maintaining a cohesive image of the city was well on its way to becoming one that was to be constantly abused in the coming decades.

## Western Foreshores

*Top: The Industrial Assurance building at Churchgate designed by Master, Sathe and Bhuta. Above: Soona Mahal, a striking example of Art Deco. Opposite: Completed by the late 1930s, Marine Drive became the most splendid sea-side promenade in Bombay.*

While construction activity in the southernmost part of Bombay was intensifying, the filling of the Churchgate area along the Oval Maidan was completed in 1929 by dredging from Backbay. The initially slack demand for plots revived in 1933 and the Collector of Bombay suggested an expeditious provision of drainage, water supply and lighting to the area. Although seven sites fronting the Oval were leased by November 1933, possession could not be given until matters were settled with regard to the strip of railway land along the western coast, over which the BB&CI trains had run for 65 years.

In the middle of 1935, work was commenced on Marine Drive, the splendid western foreshore road. When the full scale of the layout was completed in 1940, Marine Drive or the 'Queen's Necklace' emerged as the most magnificent avenue on the island of Bombay.

The project, however, was a comedown in terms of the original 1921 plan of W R Davidge, who had envisaged broad avenues laid out in a classical pattern with Government buildings at each end of a central avenue. However, the end result was quite different, for what were created were long, narrow blocks with minimal exposure to the magnificent western seafront and with narrow *gulleys* separating them. Bombay architect Claude Batley described this scheme as "a rather badly fitting set of false teeth to the city".

This was a clean break from the densities and qualities that the British had followed in their upper class housing layouts at Cuffe Parade or at the Apollo Reclamation. Like most other contemporary urban development, it was, in a sense, founded on narrow intentions, overly pragmatic requirements and extremely limited urban design considerations. This was a rather unfortunate loss of potential urban space in the city, restricting the benefit of views and exposure to a few buildings set immediately on the sea face.

In fact, Batley made an alternative scheme where he organised the blocks around central gardens, much like the Cusrow Baug pattern his firm had designed at Colaba Causeway in the early 1930s. In order to achieve the densities the Government was bent on doing, Batley increased the heights of all



the buildings uniformly, in the process being able to accommodate large, open spaces around which the inner blocks could be organised. Unfortunately, even this plan was not implemented and what the city got was a long Marine Drive promenade with a monotonous form overlooking a glaring sea - an urban pattern that was far removed from Davidge's or Batley's plan.

However, the building regulations formulated for these new areas at Backbay achieved a sense of openness and freedom. The overall layout of the scheme ensured that the space occupied by carriageways, footpaths and recreational ground was large in relation to the total space allotted for buildings. In addition, for each building, a clear space of 20 feet all round and a space of 40 feet between any two buildings was mandated, with provisions made for garages.

The builder had to comply not only with the ordinary Municipal bylaws but also with a number of special Building Rules stipulated by the Government for the Backbay scheme. The situation of buildings, their purpose, their structural design, finish and colour were all governed by these special rules. The Backbay Reclamation thus served as a fine example of a judiciously controlled building area.

By September 1935, construction of several residential blocks had made rapid progress on several sites on the Queen's Road frontage. Some imposing commercial buildings were also constructed on the reclamation. The Indian Merchants' Chamber (Seth Lalji Naranji Memorial Building), designed by Master, Sathe & Bhuta, was built on Churchgate Street extension, with shops on the ground floor and offices on the other floors. The Ritz Hotel and the new Bombay Club on Marine Drive were both designed by Gregson, Batley & King, who also drew the plans for the Cricket Club of India and the Brabourne Stadium. The magnificent cricket stadium, inaugurated in December 1937 by



**Strict guidelines were laid down regarding construction in the Backbay layout. Buildings had to be constructed of stone, brick, concrete or steel-framed, but the use of Porebunder stone was forbidden in parapets, corbels or brackets. With the exception of some commercial buildings, stone was not used. Perhaps this was due to the architectural vocabulary of the Art Deco style which employed surfaces built in RCC and plastered bricks, which was also a cheaper alternative and allowed profits to be maximised. An important rule stated that a uniformity and harmony of design was to be maintained in all buildings, with regard to permanent features such as height of plinths or colour of external walls. No work could begin unless the plans, elevations and sections had been approved by the Chief Engineer to Government.**

'The' Governor, Lord Brabourne, was in the coming decades, to become synonymous with the game of cricket in the city.

As it happened, the entire sweep of the wall to the south was never completed, but in the final analysis what this sweeping gesture gave Bombay was an incredible promenade that captured and welded the entire bay edge into one - even if only as an external face. The function of Marine Drive as an urban space at a city level is more than evident. The promenade continues to throb, like it always has through its history, with an astonishing variety of activities.

The Backbay Reclamation scheme gave birth to a new precinct with its various land-uses adding yet another layer to the city. But more than that, the Backbay Reclamation project symbolised a major shift in the spirit of the city, a shift not only in popular architectural styles, but also as an indicator of the growing 'commercialism' in the real estate business in the city. In addition, what was put into place was another patina to the city, an image that in this case was to sustain for decades to come. For, except for the addition of a single floor on the buildings in Marine Drive, no transformation took place in the following decades. In the 1960s and 70s, concrete tetrapods were put in place, reinforcing the promenade wall at Marine Drive and signalling the outer limit that the land could stretch along this bay on the western shore.

In fact, the entire western foreshore developed in a similar manner. For example, in the case of the Chowpatty area, its development had been inextricably linked with that of the adjoining areas of Malabar Hill, Girgaum, Gamdevi and Khetwadi and improvement in one brought betterment to the other. Over the decades, reclamation, roads and bridges constructed in the area improved the precinct considerably.



*Opposite top: Tetrapods being placed along the water's edge at Marine Drive ensured the outer limit that land could be stretched along this bay. Opposite: Tetrapods in a dilapidated condition in the 1990s. Left: Built to seat 4-000 people, Brabourne Stadium now hosts school sports and entertainments since the construction of Wankhede Stadium.*



By the end of the 1930s, Chowpatty had been entirely transformed with a new seafront occupying the former site of the old wood market of Lakdi Bunder. Along the southern side of the Sandhurst Bridge approach, a compactly built range of modern blocks extended upto the western end of Sandhurst Road. From this point southwards on the Chowpatty sea-face stood more new buildings on the former Morvi Estate.

On the Chowpatty sea-face the buildings were of the combined residential and commercial type, with



ground floors for shops or showrooms, and usually four upper floors for residential flats. An interesting development that took place in this precinct was the large number of motor workshops and showrooms that were established on the ground floors and basements of many of the new buildings.

This perhaps came about as this area developed simultaneously with the opening up of Marine Drive serving as a sort of 'base station' leading up to Malabar Hill. For, the motor car, since its introduction to the city had considerably aided the transformation of the Malabar and Cumballa Hills by making them more accessible from the core and central business district in and around the Fort area.



*Opposite: The overbridge at Chowpatty. Left: Syed's 1930s view of Vithalbai Patel's statue facing the new buildings at Chowpatty. This view has changed dramatically due to the pedestrian overbridge. Overleaf The Government House*

*complex at Malabar Point, 1930s.*



Madgaokar records that the owner of a piece of land at Walkeshwar, tried to sell it in the 1830s for Rs 500, but could find no buyer. By 1864, many airy bungalows had been built and the same property appreciated to Rs 30,000! In the 1930s many noteworthy buildings were constructed on Malabar and Cumballa Hills. These included the Oomer Park building scheme at Warden Road and Marlborough House and Hill Crest on Peddar Road. In Gamadia Road noteworthy buildings included Gold Croft, Silver Foil and Alcazar. A palatial residence with terraced gardens was built for Mafatlal Gagalbhai on Cumballa Hill. Near Hanging Gardens at the junction of Ridge and Nepean Roads, a four storied house was built for David Sassoon. The Bharucha house on Little Gibbs Road and two bungalows, Printemps and Sans Souci on Ridge Road were also added. On Nepean Sea Road, flats for A B Dubash, Vasant Vihar for R G Saraiya and Dubash Terrace were among prominent houses constructed.

## Malabar and Cumballa

By the 1930s and 1940s, Malabar and Cumballa Hills were established residential areas. In fact, the area was developed in 1911 and intensified further by the City Improvement Trust. Hughes Road, Nepean Sea Road, Warden Road and Ridge Road. Many Maharajas including those from Hyderabad, Rewa and Cutch built palatial villas.

After the economic situation improved, many

private residences and blocks of luxury flats appeared along Hughes Road, Nepean Sea Road, Warden Road and Ridge Road. Many Maharajas including those from Hyderabad, Rewa and Cutch built palatial villas. Other prominent citizens who built houses in Malabar and Cumballa Hills included the Birlas and M K Jinnah on Bella Vista on Pedder Road, the Dubash home, and Mafatlal House on Altamont Road.

In 1937, when sections of the vast project on Altamont and Carmichael Roads was sold, development took place in Cumballa Hill with blocks to this area. With building operations in progress, vacant sites were available in these affluent seaward slopes of Malabar Hill.

A magnificent palace, Darya Mahal (now the offices of the Atomic Energy Commission) was built by the architects, Bhedwar & Bhedwar and completed in 1940 for the Maharaja of Cutch on Nepean Sea Road. North of the former battery site, beyond the Breach Candy Baths on Warden Road, a waste area was reclaimed



*Above: Wankaner Palace, designed by Claude Batley, now the American Consulate.*

*Below: Houses in the Gamdevi area, 1890s.*

*Many bungalows on Malabar and Cumballa Hills gave way to high rise buildings in the 1960s and 1970s.*

*Opposite from top: Malabar Hill seen from Chowpatty in the 1950s, Bansda Palace on Warden Road, now offices of the Atomic Energy Commission and Hornby Vellard in the 1940s.*

and two large plots were created. These were leased to Seth Mafatlal Gagalbhai and the Maharaja of Bansda at only Rs 10 per square yard, on the condition that the lessees carried out the reclamation at their own cost. The Bansda residence and the Mafatlal Park complex comprising 5 blocks with 60 luxury flats were both designed by Master, Sathe & Bhuta and completed in 1940. What characterised all this new development was the use of a modern architectural vocabulary, which had emerged, with the arrival of Art Deco. Also, the new complexes were fitted with modern amenities and followed site planning norms that were luxurious, especially in comparison to the development that was emerging on the Back Bay reclamation and Colaba.

The picturesque old bungalows on the Malabar and Cumballa Hills continued an undisturbed life through the years of the Second World War until Independence, when enormous numbers of new people, including Sindhi migrants from Pakistan came to the city. With the population increasing from 1.49 millions in 1941 to 2.3 millions by 1951, demand for housing reached its peak. Former English properties on the hills were sold and were redeveloped into multi-storeyed blocks of flats mainly by Sindhi and Marwari entrepreneurs.

In the following decades, properties in these localities appreciated manifold, largely due to a vast new demand created by wealthy diamond merchants from Gujarat. Many owners thus found it more lucrative to sell their bungalows and compounds at fantastic prices for redevelopment. By the 1990s, rates for property on the Hills had appreciated to over Rs 10,000 per square foot. Despite this escalation, properties continued to be developed, outstretching basic infrastructure like roads and sanitation beyond manageable limits. By the 1990s, however, although identified as an abode of the wealthy, Malabar Hill had degenerated into a congested and decrepit urban environment. It was almost as if the character of the inner city was manifesting itself once again, this time not on the 'low grounds' but the strategic 'high points' of the city.

Cumballa Hill on the other hand, had in part, along its northern end, still maintained the character of the early 1900s with large bungalow type apartments continuing to be occupied in their original state. Thus Carmichael Road on Cumballa Hill became a slice of the physical environment that characterised the Hill areas in the early 1900s.

In nearby Hornby Vellard, the National Sports Club of India and the Vallabhai Patel Stadium, with cinder tracks for athletics and a banked tract for cycling were opened in 1952 on an admirable sea-facing site. The precinct was



thus filled with recreational spaces comprising the Willingdon, Turf and NSCI Clubs. The retention of these open spaces accentuated the 'causeway' like quality of the Vellard road and promenade. The Vellard still continues to exist as a connecting neck with vast open spaces on one side and the hollow nucleus of Haji Ali bay on the other.

In fact, the open space of the Race Course almost acts as an exact mirror image of the vastness of the bay! This scale is exaggerated on account of the visual layering created by the fencing in the Race Course as well as the rising chimney stacks of the Parel mills in the background. This sense of vastness and expanse serves as an incredible visual relief while travelling from the overcrowded areas at either end of the Vellard - on the Vellard the horizons suddenly open up only to close in again on entering the dense urban fabric on the other side.

### **Inner City**

The openness of the Vellard was in complete contrast to the densities that developed in the neighbouring inner city areas during the building boom of the 1930s. In the congested Kalbadevi-Bhuleshwar area, several banks established branches, as did institutions representing commerce and exchange, such as the

Marwari Chamber of Commerce, the Memon Chamber of Commerce, the Grain and Seed Merchants' Association and the Bullion Exchange. The modern building of the East India Cotton Association Exchange was designed by Sykes, Divecha & Patker and constructed at the corner of Kalbadevi Road and Sheikh Memon Street.

In neighbouring Girgaum-Khetwadi, building activity gained momentum in the 1930s primarily due to the stimulus it received from building activity in other areas. Within this precinct it was a case of 'follow the leader', The gradual redevelopment of old properties by renowned architects set an example for better standards of living and helped to demonstrate the necessity of good residential dwellings. In time, many old buildings were demolished and new residential houses and chawls were constructed in the area. Although these contemporary developments did not alter the high density of the area, they did not respect the original balance. Earlier, the bungalows, *wadis* and *chawls* all harmonised in terms of scale. This balance has now been upset on account of Municipal byelaws, which almost inevitably force the high-rise building form, thereby considerably altering the character of the precinct.

In Tardeo, large residential complexes like Sonawalla Buildings were constructed in the late 1930s. Most of these complexes like Dalal Estate (opposite Bombay Central station) accommodated shops on the lower level

*Top: Sudha Kunj, the Mariwala family house. Above and opposite top: Two comparative views of Thakurdwar Road and Girgaum Road junctions taken in the 1890s and a century later. Opposite below: Bhendi Bazaar in the 1990s. Overleaf: Banganga is now encompassed with insensitive new development that has considerably detracted from the original ambience of the sacred tank and this historic religious precinct.*



with residences above. In fact, this typology came to characterise these inner city areas as they were built over gradually.

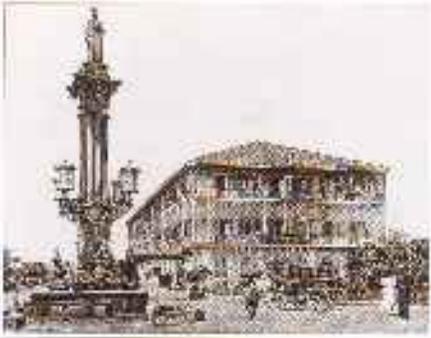
As the original estates in these precincts were larger than those in south Bombay, the new structures being developed were large footprint buildings and estates. In the same way, the appearance of Gowalia Tank had changed considerably in the 1920s with the building of larger complexes such as the Parsi Sanitarium and the Parsi General Hospital. In 1938, further changes took place when the Sir D M Petit Trust Settlement Building filled up the former vacant area where Grant Road met Girgaum Road. Across the road from this building, at the junction of Girgaum and Gamdevi Roads, a seven-storied structure with shops on the ground floor and residences above was completed, thereby beginning to give definition to this emerging urban node in the city.

Nearby, the Seth Cursondas Natha Bhatia Hospital Building was completed on a 6,000 square yard plot in December 1936. Its main entrance had a distinctive design and a frontage of 80 feet on Tardeo Road but the building extended far behind this road with a frontage of 150 feet on the lateral Chikalwadi Lane. Although the Bhatia Hospital with 75 beds was built as a modest, one storied building, 28 feet in height, it was an early example of 'modern' functional architecture.

Opposite the Bhatia Hospital, the Parsi Panchayat Building scheme in Tardeo at the foot of Cumballa Hill was commenced in the mid 1930s. Simultaneously, further south at the junction of Grant Road and Girgaum Road, an extensive area of 94,000 square yards also became available for housing in the form of the Ness Baug complex. When completed, these buildings for the Parsi community had a curved frontage of 350 feet on Gowalia Tank. With these developments, in a span of 10 to 15 years, not only were large chunks of residential stock added to the city, but the skyline of the inner city transformed dramatically.

Similarly, in the eastern localities of Nagpada, Null Bazaar, Grant Road, Bhandi Bazaar, Mandvi and Dongri, formerly described by the Improvement Trust as the 'congested area', hectic building activity took place in the 1930s. During the trade depression when prices slumped, the plots newly laid out by the Improvement Trust lay vacant. By 1934, however, in the heart of the crowded trading centre of Mandvi, frontage plots on both sides of Mohammed Ali Road were leased for high prices varying from Rs 125 to 200 a square yard.

The new Mandvi Post Office at the junction of Parel Road and Mohammed Ali Road was one of the first new buildings to be completed in the area and when complete, neatly rounded off the curve of the road and vastly improved the appearance of the locality.



In the 50 years between 1940 and the 1990s, except for some reconstruction work, no major activity took place in these areas on account of the prevailing densities and congestion. These areas had, in fact, achieved in the 1940s the densities that the rest of the city is crumbling under today. The Municipal authorities had originally intended that arcades would be mandatory for the building frontages on either side of Mahammed Ali Road, but after some of the buildings had built arcades, it was decided to discontinue the system because several shopkeepers complained that shop fronts remained dark at certain hours!

## North Bombay

Further northward on the western foreshore, as the infrastructure improved and as the number of available sites eastward of the railways diminished, the disposal of building ground became quicker in the palm grove areas in the west. Also, the extensive building activity in the neighbouring Dadar-Matunga area from the 1910s to 1930s had a strong influence on demand in the new areas along the city's north-western edges.

Properties in the Dadar-Matunga area were all leased and built over by 1935. Several bungalows of the same general type were erected in Hindu Colony, which lay to the north of Tilak Bridge. From here, building extended into the Kingsway (Ambedkar Marg) frontages and to the area around the Dadar Tramway Terminal Circle. By 1934, the four quadrants of the Circle were completed with buildings designed by Sorabjee Bhedwar.

In June 1937, the Ramnarain Ruia College designed by R S Patankar & Company was opened (on a site halfway between Dadar and Matunga Railway Stations) and two years later, the Podar College of Commerce was built on an adjacent site at Matunga. Within the short span of a decade, the northern suburbs of Bombay developed as self-sufficient towns and not merely as dormitory extensions to the city. Thus, as they became saturated, demand naturally grew for newer suburban areas on account of the sheer scarcity of available land in the fast growing city.

The newly laid out plots within the Shivaji Park area were all leased by 1936-37. This development was characterised by a U-shaped plan, which comprised a large *maidan*, along which free standing ground plus two-storied buildings formed a crescent. For the first time since the restructuring of the Fort area in the 1860s, did a city level green emerge - this time *sans* the public buildings. Shivaji Park, like the rest of the Dadar-Matunga developments carried through a distinct image - an image of structured suburban development. Even today, these precincts have sustained their sylvan qualities while being seamlessly woven into the incremental development that has mushroomed all around them.

*Above and right: The bronze statue of Cursetji Manekji (1763-1845) crowning a public fountain, once formed an important landmark*

*at Byculla and was popularly called 'Khada Parsi' - the statue is now out of context, given the transformations that have taken place around it.*

**The Maharajas of Gwalior, Baroda and Hyderabad owned vast estates on which they built palatial mansions. The Maharaja of Indore owned Somerset Palace (now Sophia College) off Warden Road and Aurora, at the junction of Babulnath and Hughes Roads. The Maharao of Cutch built his mansion off Nepean Sea Road; the Maharajas of Bansda and Wankaner built palaces on Warden Road whilst the Raja of Bilkha built an apartment block on Back Bay. Palatial bungalows in the city included Mount Nepean, the Dubash family home, Petit Hall, Mafatlal House, Saklatwala House, Birla House, Jinnah House, Ialbhai House and Bella Vista, built by Sir Ness Wadia.**