

Heritage Assessment for Mapusa City in Goa

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Abstract: Goa, India's smallest state by area, holds a rich and diverse cultural legacy shaped by centuries of rule under various dynasties, including the Mauryas, Satavahanas, Kadambas, and the Portuguese. This historical depth has left an enduring imprint on Goa's architecture, traditions, and cultural expressions. The built environment of Goa, comprising ancient temples, churches, and traditional houses, reflects a unique blend of Indian and Portuguese influences. However, rapid urbanization, industrialization, and tourism have contributed to the gradual decline of this heritage. This study focuses on the city of Mapusa, exploring its historical significance, architectural landmarks, and the pressing need for conservation. Through a field-based survey and observational analysis of built heritage in Mapusa from Maruti Temple to Court Circle the research identifies the deteriorating state of several historical structures. A household survey revealed that 100% of respondents acknowledged the presence of built heritage in the city, with a significant number recognizing their cultural value and advocating adaptive reuse as a conservation strategy. Furthermore, 92% of participants believed that local governing bodies have not initiated adequate efforts to safeguard these sites. The objectives of this study include understanding the value of cultural and built heritage, assessing current conditions, and proposing practical conservation measures. These include heritage zoning, adaptive reuse, policy implementation, and community engagement. The study concludes that preserving Goa's cultural identity requires a multidisciplinary approach that blends architecture, urban planning, and heritage management. Initiatives like the development of heritage zones in Mapusa can serve as models for other cities. By involving government agencies, professionals, and local communities, Goa can effectively protect and celebrate its cultural assets, ensuring that its historical narratives are preserved and passed on to future generations.

Keywords: Built heritage conservation, preservation of culture, urbanization, heritage zones, policy implementation, government agencies, historic architecture

1. Introduction

Goa, India's 25th and smallest state, is renowned not only for its scenic beauty and vibrant culture but also for its rich historical legacy shaped by numerous dynasties over the centuries. From the Mauryan and Satavahana empires during the Iron Age to the Kadamba, Vijayanagara, Bahamani, and Bijapur Sultanates in the medieval period, Goa has been a melting pot of diverse cultural and architectural influences. Perhaps the most enduring impact came with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1510, whose 450-year rule significantly shaped Goan architecture, culture, and traditions. This layered history is visibly embedded in Goa's built environment—its temples, churches, traditional homes, and public buildings—many of which now face neglect due to rapid urbanization, commercialization, and lack of structured conservation policies.

The city of Mapusa, a key urban center in North Goa, stands as a testimony to this rich heritage. Notably, it houses the Mapusa Municipal Market Complex—an iconic pre-liberation structure conceptualized in 1959 by former mayor Antonio Pinto Do Rosario, who drew inspiration from Western markets during his travels. Despite such valuable assets, the region's heritage is deteriorating due to inadequate maintenance and limited awareness. A household survey conducted in Mapusa highlights this concern: while all respondents acknowledged the presence of built heritage in the city, a significant majority expressed dissatisfaction with the role of local authorities in preservation efforts.

This research seeks to understand the importance of conserving built and cultural heritage in Mapusa, Goa. It aims to document the existing heritage, assess public awareness, and explore viable strategies such as adaptive reuse, policy formation, and the declaration of conservation zones. Ultimately, this study emphasizes the urgent need for a

collaborative, policy-driven approach to safeguard Goa's cultural identity for future generations

2. Literature Review

Case studies for Margao City, Panaji City, Old Goa

Margao City

Margao, a vibrant commercial and cultural nucleus of Goa, is renowned for its numerous heritage structures that embody the essence of traditional Goan architecture. The city's town squares, historic market complexes, and age-old residential quarters offer a vivid reflection of its colonial-era legacy. Among its most notable landmarks is the Holy Spirit Church, an architectural gem surrounded by a cluster of heritage homes. These traditional houses, with their ornamental balconies, sloping tiled roofs, and intricate detailing, not only enhance the visual appeal of the area but also hold deep cultural and historical value. Together, these elements contribute to Margao's unique identity and serve as a living reminder of Goa's rich and layered past.

Panaji City

Panaji, the capital of Goa, is home to a diverse range of heritage sites that reflect the state's colonial past and cultural richness. Prominent among these are the Church of Our Lady of Immaculate Conception, and the historic neighborhoods of Fontainhas and São Tomé. These two quarters, in particular, preserve the charm of the old Latin Quarter, with their narrow, meandering streets, brightly painted Portuguese-style buildings, and an atmosphere steeped in history. Walking through these neighborhoods feels like stepping back in time, as the architectural details, traditional signboards, and tiled roofs offer an authentic glimpse into Goa's colonial-era lifestyle. These areas not only serve as important cultural and architectural assets but also play a vital role in maintaining Panaji's historical identity amidst ongoing urban development.

Old Goa

Old Goa, once the capital under Portuguese rule, is a heritage-rich city known for its scenic beauty and exceptional architectural styles such as Manueline, Gothic, and Baroque rarely seen worldwide. The city houses iconic monuments built with laterite blocks and lime plaster, reflecting innovative construction methods.

It is also a spiritual hub, most notably the Basilica of Bom Jesus, where St. Francis Xavier's remains are preserved. His presence greatly influenced the region's cultural and religious identity, blending Portuguese traditions with local customs and creating a unique way of life.

Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986, Old Goa's heritage conservation zone spans 801 hectares and includes over 50 protected sites. These are managed by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the State Department of Archaeology, and local authorities. However, several heritage structures still await formal recognition and preservation.

Old Goa represents a harmonious blend of natural, built, and cultural heritage and stands as a model for religious coexistence and cross-cultural exchange. Continued efforts are needed to protect its legacy for future generations through sustainable conservation strategies

Challenges of Planning for Heritage Areas in Panaji City

Panaji, once a Portuguese colony and now a major tourist destination in India, is renowned for its cultural richness and heritage value. Recognized as a Heritage City under the JNNURM redevelopment scheme, Panaji's Outline Development Plan 2011 has listed 40 heritage sites, monuments, and buildings of historical and architectural importance under the Goa Land Development and Building Construction Regulation, 2010. However, many more heritage structures remain undocumented and are increasingly at risk due to unchecked urban development and lack of a cohesive conservation strategy. Economic pressures have led property owners to redevelop old buildings, threatening the city's cultural fabric. To preserve Panaji's unique character, a well-rounded and inclusive planning approach is essential—one that balances modernization with the protection of heritage zones and revival of traditional culture.

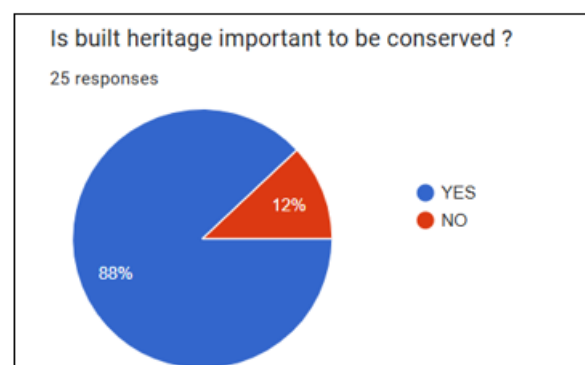
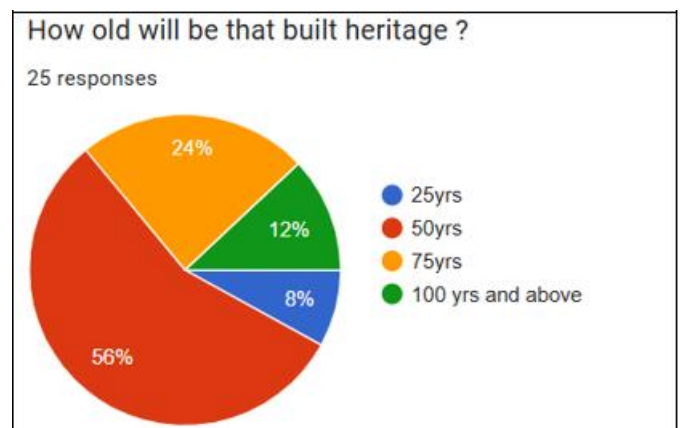
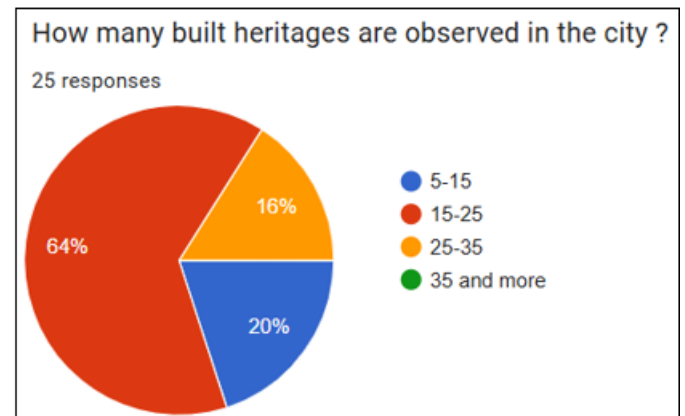
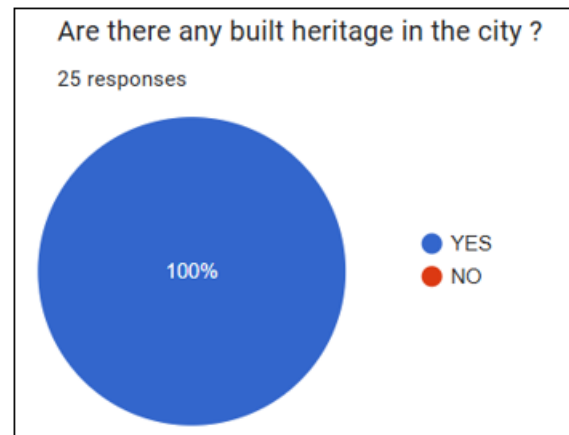
Conservation of Heritage Areas in the City of Panaji: A Case Study of Fontainhas Area

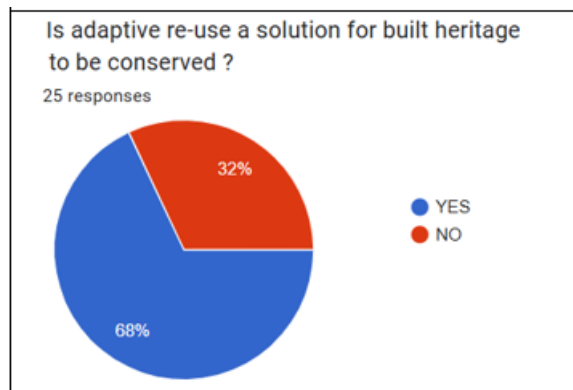
Fontainhas remains a key attraction for heritage enthusiasts, offering a glimpse into Goa's colonial past through its charming old houses, especially near Portais and St. Sebastian Chapel. While development is both inevitable and often welcomed, it must be approached sustainably. Over time, unplanned growth and weak enforcement of conservation regulations have negatively impacted the character of this heritage area. To ensure the preservation of Fontainhas, there is an urgent need for a well-structured conservation policy and a revision of existing regulations to promote balanced and responsible development.

3. Results & Discussion

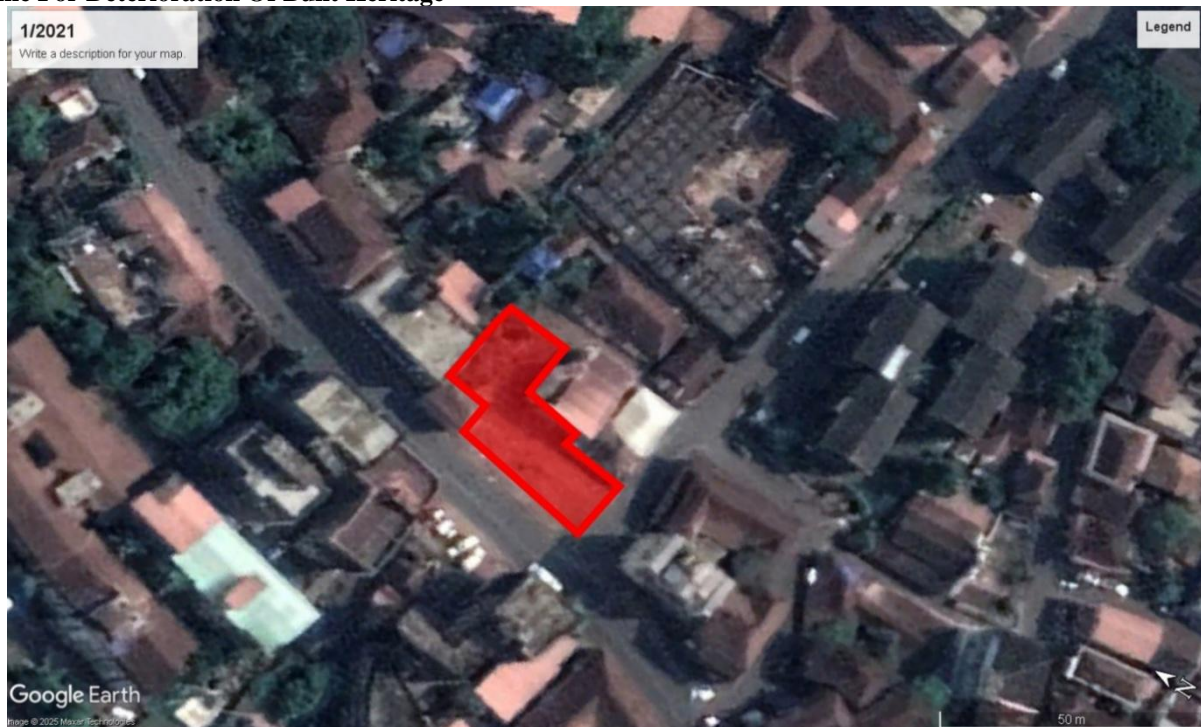
Data Collection

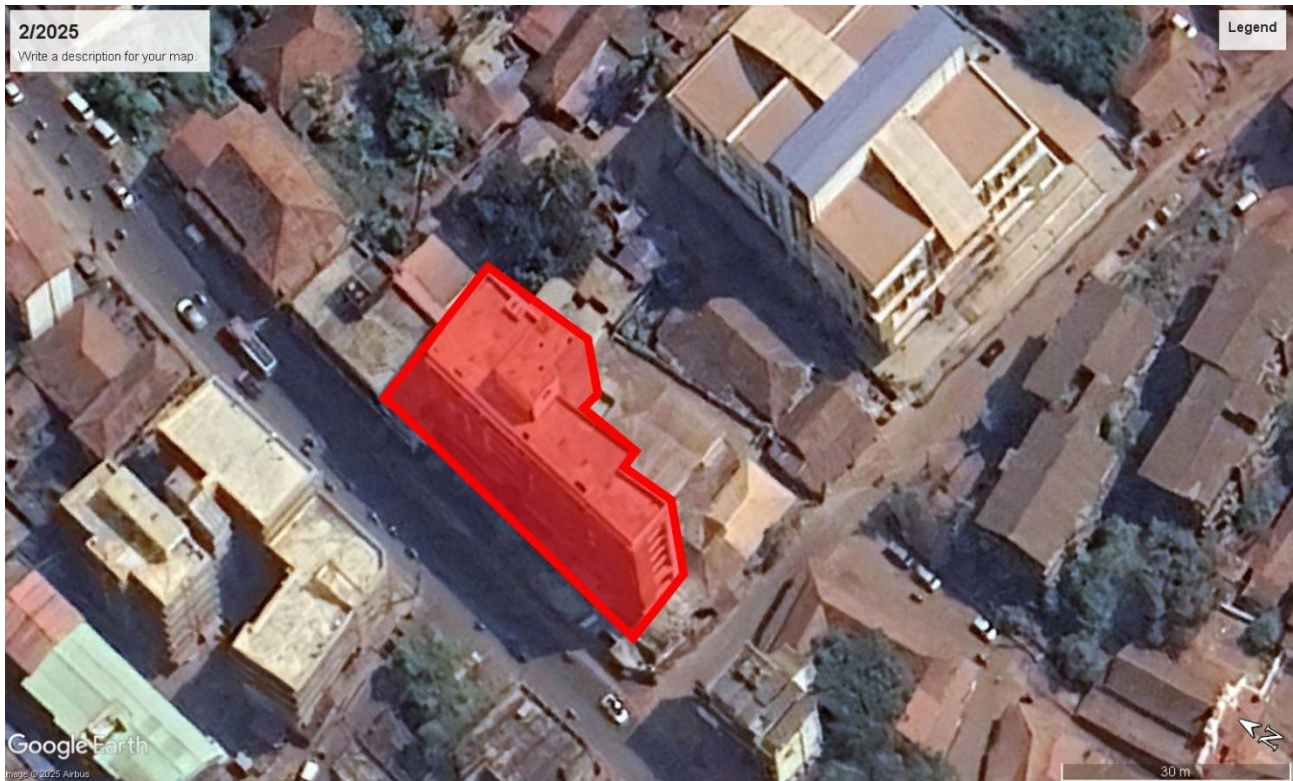
The following pie charts represents data collected by doing household survey





Timeline For Deterioration Of Built Heritage





The above images showcase how a built heritage which was collapsed due to natural calamity back in 2021 getting replaced by a storied building disturbing the cultural and heritage continuity by the year 2025.

Before



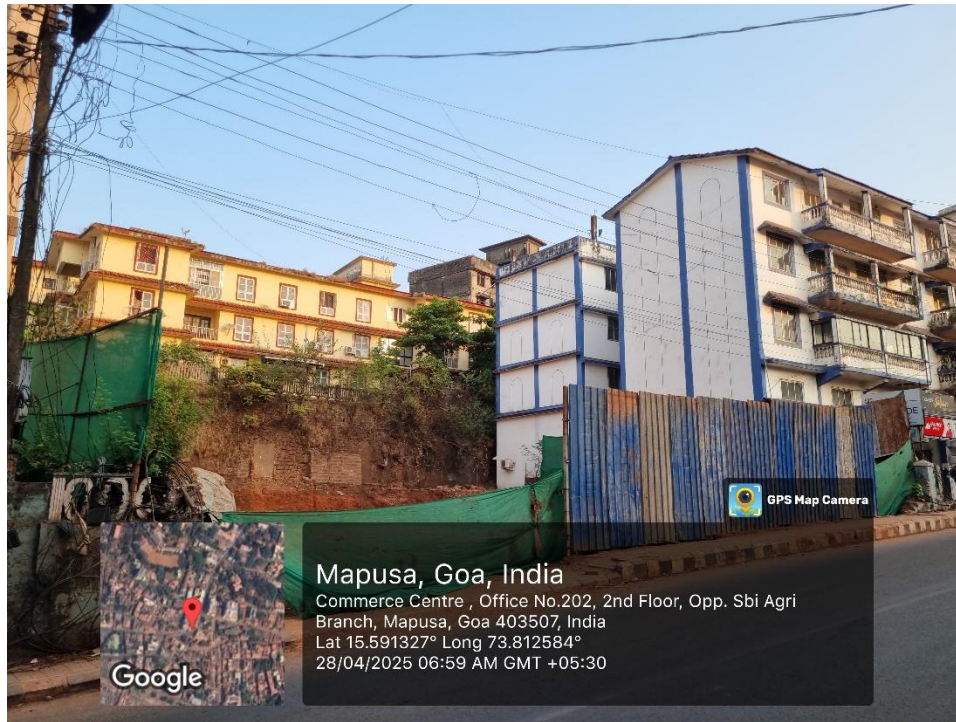
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/Internal storage/DCIM/Camera

Edit

After

Date – 28th April 2025 Time – 06:59

As you observe above within a span of 40 days the built heritage is demolished.

4. Conclusion

Safeguarding and interpreting Mapusa's cultural legacy across its streetscapes, sites, and living traditions is crucial to preserving its unique identity and historical essence. In the Goan context, especially in Mapusa, heritage conservation requires a multidisciplinary approach that brings together architecture, urban planning, interior design, and cultural studies.

Establishing a conservation zone within Mapusa is a vital move toward protecting the city's architectural and cultural assets. Integrating global best practices can help refine local strategies, ensuring that conservation efforts are both meaningful and sustainable.

For long-term success, these efforts must be collaborative, involving policy-makers, heritage experts, designers, and the local population. Initiatives like adaptive reuse of heritage structures not only support preservation but also offer economic opportunities through tourism and cultural engagement.

With thoughtful planning, clear policies, and community involvement, Goa can successfully balance modern development with heritage preservation passing on its tangible and intangible cultural wealth to future generations while continuing to enrich the lives of those in the present.

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