

Conservation & Management of Goan Living Heritage

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Abstract

The intention of conservation is to protect values linked to cultural heritage that we are trying to keep safe for future generations. The old native people and people make regular visits of the opinion that Goa is rapidly losing its special character of Indo-Portuguese Architecture. One of the main reasons is that, Goan houses that formed the special character are disappearing and the type of structures that are coming up could be commonly seen anywhere in India. In Goa, this special architectural character and aesthetic development is a result of its long association with Portuguese people and cross cultural influences with them. If this significance and architectural values has to be protected then every old house in Goa must be considered. Re-architecture is absolutely needed for occupants looking for conservation, preservation and suitable re-use of that building. This paper discusses about the main causes of degradation, the values and significance, methods of interventions & management practices for conservation of the heritage Goan houses.

Keywords: re-architecture, adaptive re-use, cultural ambience, Goan houses, Heritage value

Word Count: 3194

1.1 Overview

“Architecture is that great living creative spirit which from generation to generations, from age to age, proceeds, persists, creates, according to the nature of man, and his circumstances as they change. That is really architecture.”Frank Lloyd Wright.

It is evident that architecture last for long & does not change suddenly & abruptly. Historical & cultural architecture is important to understand the meaning of continuity & change if any. Architectural structures of the past make sure the need and better understanding for kind of architecture we want today and tomorrow.

Old structures reinforces the image of the city as well as extend tangible connection to the past. Sometimes buildings often defunct their original purposes and the ‘character, spirit and sense’ of place is often missed. This results in the process of adaptive reuse of such buildings in order to bring back to life, the existing structure and surroundings active once again. Conservation projects come in many shapes and sizes – adaptive reuse, expansion, and much more.

Aims

Aim of this paper is to develop strategies & policies for linking past, present & future Goan houses, on the lines of existing old great houses, residences, villas etc. I also have looked for a design gene of that locality to give it a unique character.

Objectives

1. By managing existing architecture & controlling future architecture, respond well to buildings surrounding and reinforce the image of area.
2. To develop essential guideline for heritage conservation & new construction management.

1.2 The Values & Significance

Globalization has robbed many cities of their individual character, resulting in a blending of cultures and a loss of individuality. Goa, however, the most Portuguese looking small state in India, and also the least Western, is one of the few provinces in the world that has retained its own unique and authentic character.

Architectural Significance

The rich heritage of Goa consists of residences, churches, precinct, associated landscape, forts, churches, temples and archaeological sites. Each one of these places reflects richness of culture. Largely it is the architectural style, the interior decor, the facades or even the landscaping that are physical reminder of the place’s story. So in order to understand the story of the place, the original or significant elements should be identifiable to future generation. The conservation of built heritage is generally perceived to be in the long term interest of society. Over the past several years, as development pressure increase in our cities, more heritage buildings are being reused. In reuse of heritage buildings there is challenge to Architects and Designers to produce innovative solutions which would retain heritage significance. There are some structures comprises of non-heritage structures within heritage area, however these still contribute to determine the character of the locality.

Cultural Significance

The architectural heritage of Portuguese colonial period offers itself as a vast branch of learning. The Portuguese colonized Goa for a period of 451 years, the most lasting European presence in India. Goan house illustrate the blending of urban and rural civilization, culture and the wilderness of nature, the sense of a continuing narrative, a story that has evolved in time.(Ref. Fig No. 1) It is by keeping socio-cultural context in mind that flourished in 18th and 19th century houses. Goan houses which have emerged as Portuguese influence on the coastal area of Goa. It can be termed as the result of amalgamation of natural beauty, climate and prevailing socio cultural conditions.

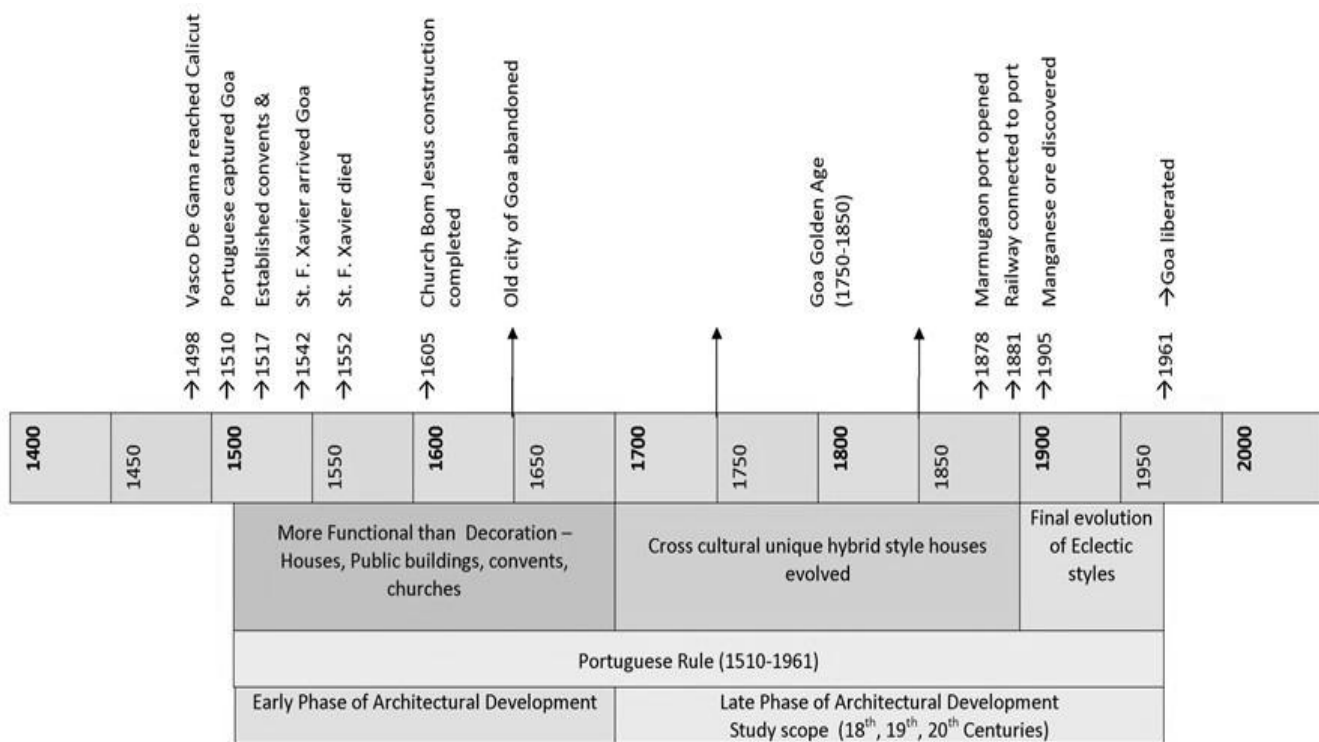


Figure 1: TIME SCALE- Showing Portuguese Period Milestones vs. Goan House Development

These dwellings, which, for the most part, were built not by Portuguese settlers but by Indian families of the Brahmin and Chardo castes who had converted to Christianity, are the expression of the cultural and economic heritage left to the Goans through the path they shared with the Portuguese for more than four centuries (Carita, 1999).

1.3 Issues & Potentials

An interesting location is often one that retains its originality, and offering ways of seeing the past. It may be that, an interesting kinship emerged the Hindu and Portuguese houses of Goa. It is also observed that, it is becoming

increasingly difficult to maintain them. As a matter of fact, many of the houses studied here are already in a state of disrepair. The following to be the main causes of degradation:

1. The rigorous climatic factors caused the deterioration of the building materials.
2. Inappropriate interventions in existing spaces, for instance, were fitting kitchens into veranda, creating rooms in big halls, building toilets in bed rooms.
3. Infiltration of water and moisture from the road, doors, windows, the foundations and drainage system.

There is a lack of systematic maintenance which might be because the house has been abandoned or because it is not seen as part of the cultural heritage of Goa. Houses may be abandoned, locked up and neglected due to following reasons:

1. The division of property between family members leading to partition in the structure.
2. Family disputes and the end of family line.
3. Growing emigration debility of aged owners.
4. Lack of fund for maintenance and scarcity of caretakers.
5. Problem as cultural value, which prevents the house from being seen as considerable worth.
6. Impossible to restore and maintain the ancestral house.
7. Threat of developers.

The question comes in mind- what is Goa to do with its Great Houses and can they survive in the 21st century despite their complex, problems. For an answer it would seem one must put our trust in this resourceful region. With its remarkable revolutionary history and new increasing tourist/economic success, Goa simply needs the will to find a way to preserve this precious part of Goa's history and heritage. In efforts to preserve Goan Houses many such structures have been turned into:

1. Museum houses
2. Houses for intercultural meetings
3. Rest houses
4. To rent out for special occasions
5. Tourism homes

1.3.1 User's Preferences for Goan Houses

Today's houses coming up in Goa are technically superior in construction that is they are energy efficient, weather resistant and maintenance free, however they seem to lack in the warmth and charm of Portuguese era houses. Different cultural overlaps and modern trends caused a gradual decline in human, social and emotional qualities of Goan houses.

Users' preferences for houses.

1. The changing behavior of people/society changes the house preferences and choices. (Ref. Fig.No.2) To fulfill individual preferences; one has to choose from the available options, ready in product market. Technology is becoming an integral part of new-age houses.

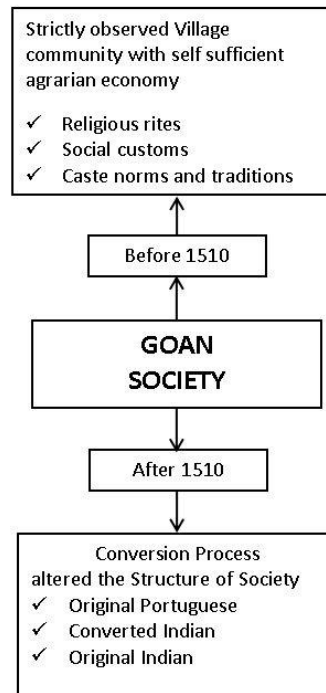


Figure 2 : Change of Life Pattern in Goa

2. On very macro level people have indicated the desire for more environmentally and accepted sustainability as on its qualifying features.
3. The influence of Europeanization and industrialization reduced the dependency of agriculture and importance of granaries in houses. Big prayer rooms, large store rooms where grains and valuables were stored now replaced with small puja room and kitchen store. The young house owners also looking forward for improving the external and internal aesthetics of house by means of building design, interior design, furniture and landscaping.
4. Coexisting efforts by the local architects and designers towards the cultural context of Goan designs and its architectural priorities would provide a platform in the demand to relate emerging architecture with the place and time. Combine the preferences of both architects and users for preservation of “inherited value.”
5. The existing Goan Houses has a “heritage value,” that might get lost due to various economic and market pressures. (Ref. Fig No 3) The society, in general, has to be inculcated with the glorious past through advertisement and imparting this sense to the school children.

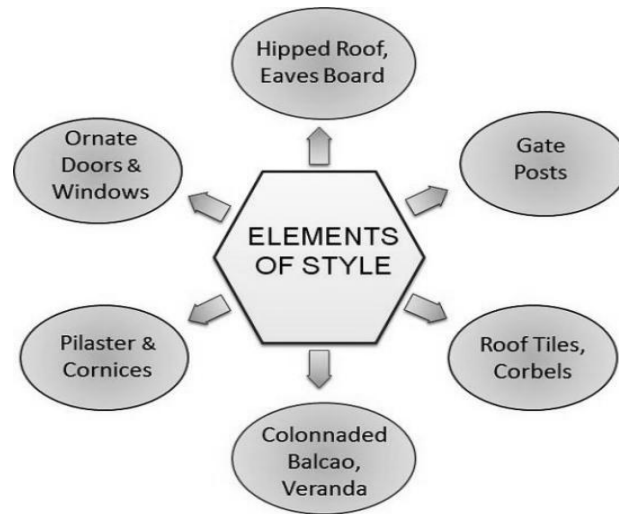


Figure 3: Elements of Goan House Style

6. The local inhabitants could also be intimated about the lucrative “tourism industry” of Goa and they should be told about the potentiality of increase in tourism by protecting these heritage houses. The local bodies may also be given the power to protect these heritage structures by awarding some incentives to those who protect their own houses from further changes.

1.4 Conservation Strategies

The social and cultural sustainability demands for harmonious reuse of old structures, and controlled new development yet retaining local originality. (Ref. Fig No.4) In order to restore legacy & manage future architecture in Goa, development guidelines are to be brought out. The success of essential Guidelines depends upon- How we treat the past and what we value? In order to hold together existing and future architecture two types of guidelines would be made:

1. Guidelines to manage existing architecture
2. Guidelines to control future architecture.



Figure 4 : Anant Desai's Traditional House At North Goa
(Source: Author)

1.4.1 Conservation of Present Structures

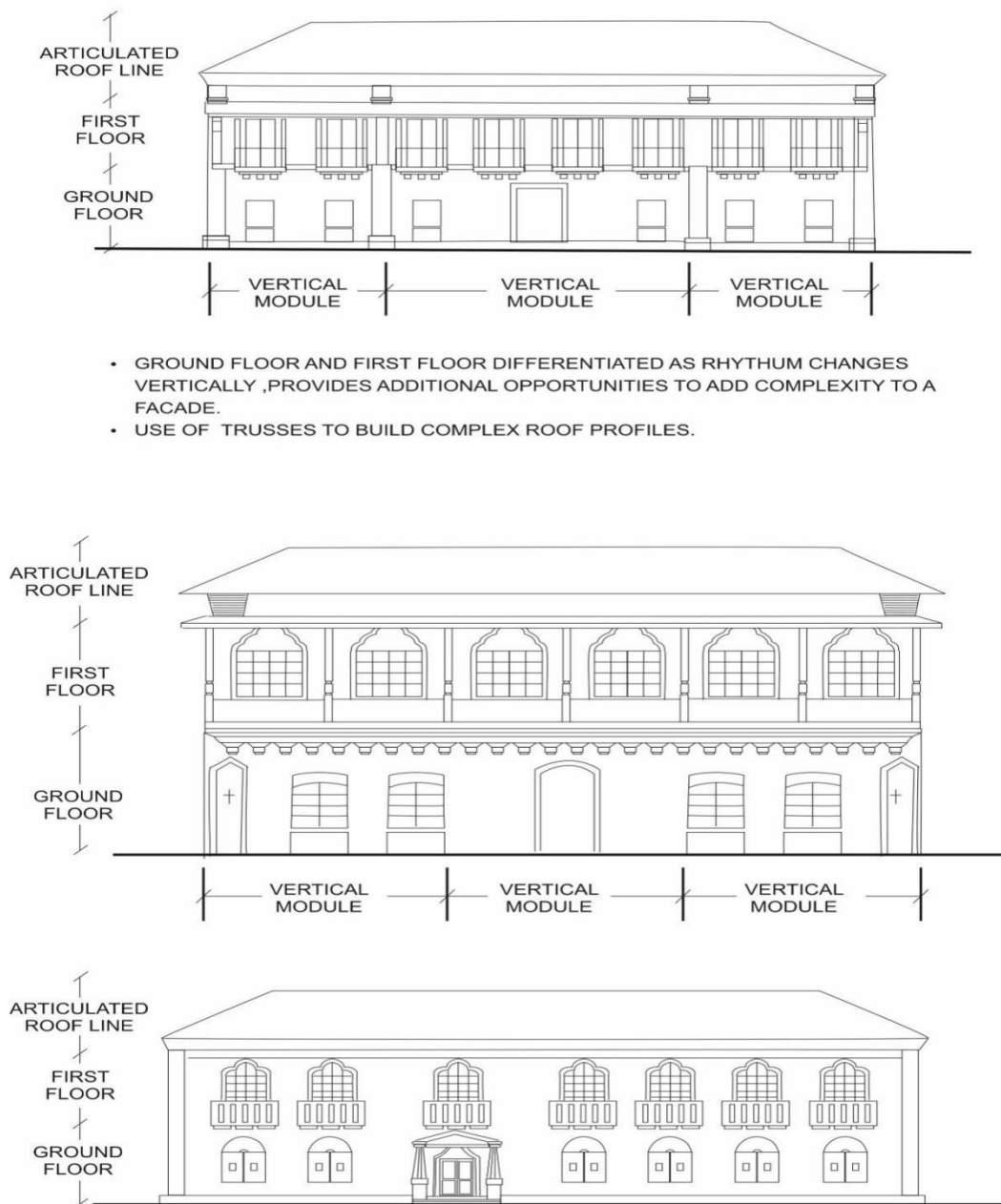
To create awareness about conserving our rich heritages, following essential Guidelines are suggested which would help the professionals in this field.

1. **Preserve the beauty of the area:** The local heritage conservation authority is to be establish and should have the power to direct, especially in areas designated by them, that the exterior design and height of buildings should have their approval to preserve the beauty of the area.
2. **Maintain skyline and architectural harmony:** Building within heritage precincts or in the vicinity of heritage sites shall maintain the skyline in the precinct and follow the architectural style as may be existing in the surrounding sites, so that to retain and not destroy the value and beauty of or the view from the said heritage sites.
3. **Incentive uses for heritage buildings:** If owner agree to maintain the listed building as it is in existing state owner may be allowed to change use zone to convert to commercial, office use, and hotel. If the heritage value of the building is spoiled in any manner the change of use zone shall be disallowed.
4. **Responsibility of the owners of heritage houses:** The Govt. departments should be responsible for repairs and maintenance for the buildings owned by them. To carry out regular repairs and maintenance of the building in heritage precincts shall be the duty of concern owner. Concern local authority requires compulsory documentation before undertaking any alteration or extension work. The responsibility of protecting the special ambience and the architectural heritage of this area lies with its building owners, citizens and political representative as well as the state Government.
5. **Restriction of development or re-development or repairs etc.:** No development or redevelopment or additions/alterations, repairs, renovations, replacement of special features or plastering or painting of the listed building shall not be allowed except with the prior permission of concern authority.
6. **Penalties:** Impose high penalties on those who demolish without permission. If the listed building is allowed to be damaged or destroyed due to the neglect or any other reason, no permission to construct any new building shall be granted on the site.
7. **Alteration/ relaxation in development norms:** on the advice of the local heritage authority, the commissioner of concern authority may alter, modify or relax the development control rules prescribed in the master plan if required.

1.4.2 Suggestions for Upcoming Building & Reconstruction

1. **Heritage Streetscape -** Keeping in view the existing low density development, sub division of residential plots should not be granted. The residential zone has a unique green character, with tree studded avenues, large open front private courts, wide setbacks, fruit tree planting and garden around the house, to be maintained.
2. **Facade composition-** Avoid placing bathroom and staircases in the front that is street facade as they disrupt the basic facade composition. Place doors and windows of right proportion symmetrically in wall panels framed by pilasters and cornices with bands. Generally use traditional patterns for window shades, balconies, gates, gate posts, fencing wall design, slopping tiled roof etc. (Ref. Fig No.5)

TYPICAL DOUBLE STORIED HOUSE FACADE WITH HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL RHYTHM



- GROUND FLOOR AND FIRST FLOOR DIFFERENTIATED AS RHYTHM CHANGES VERTICALLY ,PROVIDES ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO ADD COMPLEXITY TO A FACADE.
- USE OF TRUSSES TO BUILD COMPLEX ROOF PROFILES.

Figure 5: Facade composition: Symmetric Organization

Source: (Pandit, Mascarenhas, Koshy, & Dalvi, 1999)

3. Exterior Facade finishing- construct and finish the building in traditional method- Laterite stone and plastering preferably in lime cement mortar. Finish the exterior façade in traditional finishes and colors. Original finish to be identified and preserved. The prevalent colors are maroon red, light green, pale yellow, ochre, terra-cotta, white and off-white, Mediterranean blue. Color schemes drastically contrasting with the typical color schemes of the precinct to be avoided. Stripping the original finish or replacing it with facing/cladding materials such as ceramic tiles, stones, metal, synthetic plaster are in disharmony with the traditional materials to be avoided. For sunshades use lightweight materials like commercial board on wooden frames. Where unavoidable modern materials like concrete can be used with care and sensitivity.

4. Roof Design- Roof is the most important character, defining the skyline. Original roofs are type of basic sloping roofs that is hip roofs and lean to roof, supported by huge wooden trusses. New roofs to be in harmony with the character of the precinct, complementing the skyline of the street scape/town scape. Roof tiles shall be Mangalore or half round country tiles and shall be left in the natural finish.
5. Compound wall- The existing compound walls are built with Laterite stones and sometimes carved in intricate design. The gatepost is elaborately ornamented. The unique gate posts seen in Goa are with finials and animal perched on top. Dogs and lions were popular choices. The compound walls and gates become the prominent street characters. Original compound all shall be sensitively designed to complement the streetscape.
6. Balconies- the original balconies including their wooden/iron railings, lean to roof with wooden posts and wrought iron brackets to be retained and preserved. New designs with steel/iron pipe railings or fanciful balustrades contrasting with the characteristic skyline of the street scape to be avoided. New balconies to reflect the characters of the traditional balconies and to be sensitively designed so as to complement the streetscape.
7. Scale and Proportions- Retaining and preserving the original floor plan features such as size, configuration, proportion and relationship of rooms/spaces. Extensions to be harmonious and in such a way that their addition or later removal does not affect the essential character of the building. New construction to match with the traditional plan features of the precinct. Radically changing the original floor plan/interior spaces, demolishing the principal walls or damaging the quality and relationship of spaces to be avoided. The original scale and proportion of the old buildings should be maintained. New constructions should comply with the generous scale and proportions characteristic of the precinct. The horizontal floor divisions and vertical bay divisions to be adopted based on the site context. Out of scale features like slender dummy columns, fanciful pediments or squatted proportions of openings (low ceiling height) or absence of horizontal/vertical divisions to be avoided. Scale and proportions, varying with the overall street context or heritage building, of the precinct to be avoided.
8. Columns, Pilasters and Cornices- Although Goan houses became display cases for a variety of indigenous columns, pilasters and pillars; they did not apparently follow any strict order. Existing pilasters and cornices to be retained and preserved. In the case of new constructions the exterior wall shall be divided into panels by well-proportioned pilasters and cornices based on the overall street context. Very thin pilasters and cornices or haphazard wall panels with inconsistent rhythm of verticals and horizontals to be avoided.
9. Windows- the windows gave facades character and personality. Windows are mostly high with flat, segmental or semi-circular arches with bands, wooden shutters with oyster shells to replace glass. The flat shells were selected, dressed, shaped and slipped between grooved wooden battens of 2" x 2" size. The Goan house windows shows style that range from Neo-Mannueline to Baroque and Rococo and spotted both Catholic religious as well as Hindu temple influences. So the characteristic proportions with typical shutters to be adopted, which include size, position and number of openings to be retained and preserved.
10. Doors- doors are similar to windows—featuring high and arched or flat lintel with elaborate moldings around it. A combination of pilasters and cornices around the door give the different look of that period. The symmetrical schedule, including the size, position and number of doors/openings to be retained and preserved, in the case of new constructions.

1.5 Result - Modern Era Designs

1. The house design may combine one and two story models with add-on high end day to day requirements like porches, drive ways, landscape, water pools etc. to address local preferences and styles.
2. The intricate and visually style sensitive element like doors, windows, furniture, false ceiling and interior decoration elements could be factory-built with market preferences so as to maintain a likeness in the overall image of newly constructed houses.
3. Most of the negatives, in workmanship could be overcome with the implementation of selected design priorities.
4. Revitalization of traditional skills like preparation of lime mortar, country tiles, mud walls, stucco, broken china mosaic etc. and encouragement for such traditions which would generate employment.

5. In view of above conditions, construction quality, visual appeal and costs can be better controlled than for conventional site-built housing.
6. In modern era the size of nuclear families, shrunken with just 4–6 family members, still they needed a spacious separate automated house of large size which would meet their needs of domestic appliances in the domain of technological development.

1.6 Conclusion

1. A few pointers were common that indicated during the discussion with Goan house owners that, certainly they want their houses to look and feel like European houses (Portuguese- inspired) and houses would function to suit Indian behavior pattern. They are also inclined for quick adaptation of technology, good design and good workmanship.
2. Goa is now crowded with tourist oriented land uses, which has developed conflict between urban change and heritage. The latest trend is to own a second home for elites from the urban metropolitan. They are luxury second homes, for the elite people, who are like new colonizers, and who have no role or interest in the future of this place.
3. Architect Gerard da Cunha questioned the fate of these houses. He further admits that, they would be replaced by faceless blocks of apartment's buildings by property developers. He doesn't want technically driven architecture of the West for Goa, which would cause destruction to our environment and is unsuitable to our climate.
4. The traditional Goan houses has also has a lot to "teach" about vernacular architecture, climatic adaptability and suitability to the life style of the locals. The schools of Architecture in Goa must come forward in this regard to understand the "meaning" and contextuality of the Goan Houses.

1.7 Recommendations for Heritage and Conservation Management in Goa

So it is intended to preserve these existing beautiful great houses and develop new houses as per essential guideline to explain how to construct new buildings harmoniously within the historic context. The conservation and re-use of heritage is not only the work of creativity but it is also a social responsibility of Architects and Planners.

1. Conservation Pilot Projects: To undertake pilot projects in conservation and adopt Houses/areas for conservation and creative re-use of heritage.
2. Conservation Plan: To understand key features of houses/buildings and precincts, it is suggested to prepare the Conservation Plan for heritage areas in Goa. This plan attempt to understand the integrity of the house and other heritage assets. The purpose of a Conservation Plan is to establish the conservation policies within which, decisions about an asset's future are established. The Conservation Plan directs the nature of the project, identifies the scope of works and the budget required to conserving the assets.
3. Preservation Movement: old building is cultural and material resource, and it would be recycled, reconfigured and built upon, and develop a people's movement aimed at protecting architecture of cultural or historical importance. Whenever we work on it, we not restoring the structures but we are reviving the traditions which have got lost.

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