

MANAGING INDIAN URBAN HERITAGE PRECINCTS THROUGH 'HERITAGE GUIDELINES'- A CASE STUDY OF DEULWADI PRECINCT IN URAN, MAHARASHTRA

MAULIK HAJARNIS*
BHAGYAJIT RAVAL**

*Associate Professor, Faculty of Architecture, Parul University, India

**Associate Professor, Faculty of Architecture, Parul University, India

Abstract

The present paper intends to justify 'Heritage Guidelines' as an effective to manage urban heritage precincts in Indian cities. First the basic concepts of Heritage, Urban Heritage, Heritage Precincts and the processes involved in the management of an Urban Heritage Precinct are taken into consideration. The process of heritage management becomes all the more difficult when it comes to the conservation of a Heritage Precinct situated in an urban area, because of several issues and concerns. These issues are explained briefly in the next section of the paper. The last section of the paper discusses how these issues of urban heritage management can be dealt with by exercising effectively the guidelines drafted for the conservation of the precinct under consideration. The discussion is supplemented with an overview of the project of 'Preparation of Action Plan for Heritage Management of Deulwadi Precinct in Uran, Maharashtra'.

Keywords: Urban Heritage, Heritage Management, Heritage Guidelines, Deulwadi Precinct

UNDERSTANDING URBAN HERITAGE AND HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

'Heritage' by most of the common people is perceived as an archeological monument or site. But the term 'Urban Heritage' refers to the entire heritage that is embedded in an urban settlement. It is more of a living heritage and includes not only architectural monuments, but also old houses, structures, temples, urban plazas, streets, informal activities, multiplicity of usage of specific locations, festivals, rituals, customs, beliefs, myths, literature, music, dance, lifestyle, etc. In short, it encompasses all the tangible and intangible aspects of the life of the people residing in the area under consideration or delineated as a Heritage Precinct. An urban heritage precinct may or may not encompass any archaeological structure/ sculpture/ site/ element. In case of Indian urban heritage precincts, most cases do not categorize as an archaeological site; which is why certain legislations such as the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Amendment Act, 2010 do not apply to them.

Before the issues in Heritage Management are discussed, it is essential to have an overview of some basic definitions relevant to Heritage Management. Some widely accepted definitions of 'Heritage' and a 'Heritage Precinct' as formulated by various field experts are given below:

- a) **"Heritage"** means buildings, artifacts, structures, areas, streets and precincts of historic or aesthetic or architectural or cultural or environmental significance and natural features of environmental significance and natural features of environmental or of scenic beauty including but not restricted to sacred groves, scenic points, walks, rides, paths, hills, hillocks, water bodies such as lakes, kayals (and the areas adjoining the same), open areas, wooded areas etc. (Chainani, 2007)
- b) **"Heritage Precinct"** means and includes any space that requires conservation and /or preservation for historical and / or architectural and/or aesthetic and/or cultural and/or environmental and/or ecological purpose. Walls or other boundaries of a particular area or place or building or may enclose such space by an imaginary line drawn around it. (Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India, 2010)

Thus it is clear that 'Heritage Management' would include all the efforts involved in the preservation, conservation, restoration and reconstruction of any tangible and intangible assets of a Heritage Precinct under consideration. Heritage Guidelines are a part of such efforts. The purpose of these Guidelines is to regulate and control the various developmental activities in such a way that any development/ alteration/ addition in the existing fabric of the precinct does not harm or disturb the character of the precinct.

ISSUES IN CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF AN 'URBAN HERITAGE'

There are several problems faced during management of any Urban Heritage Precinct. To name a few, the pressure of urbanization, lack of awareness in the people, absence of any regulatory framework, lack of goodwill from influential people, selfish interests of builders and developers, structural failure and weak institutional mechanism. Some of the common problems faced today while managing heritage precincts in several cities and towns of India are discussed below:

- **Unidentified potential structures/elements/sites:** There are numerous unidentified spots, elements, spaces, structures, etc. in urban settlements which could be categorized as an important part of the city heritage. Such instances could be

identified by the urban local bodies, NGOs, researchers, non-profitable organizations like INTACH, institutions, people, etc.

- **Lack of Regulatory Framework:** When there is an absence of any regulatory framework in the form of heritage guidelines, it creates a lack of development controls/architectural controls. In such cases, people living in heritage structures (owners of heritage properties) do not have a proper framework according to which they can carry out alternations and/or modifications to their structures. In addition to architectural controls, the guidelines may specify usage of certain spaces, restraints to vehicular entries on certain days or time, green cover control, etc. These constraints shall differ from case to case. It is only when such essential controls are imbibed in the form of guidelines and published as a part of DCR (Development Control Regulations) by the concerned authority, that the developmental activities occurring in the precinct are manipulated so as not to harm the existing the heritage fabric in the precinct.
- **Pressure from the Real estate market:** There is an increased pressure on the owners of heritage for amalgamation of smaller plots to form a sizable bigger plot which could be developed in a commercial form or if they are suitable for any other kind of development. In other cases the developers pursue the owners to sell off their property to them for a handsome amount of money. The developers are attracted to these properties because of the following reasons:
 - a. High Permissible ground coverage
 - b. Locational advantage
 - c. High Salability
- **Unutilized FSI:** In certain cases where the permissible FSI in the area possessing heritage properties has been increased, the owners of respective heritage properties are tempted to utilize the unused FSI which may cause disturbance to the original heritage structure and the heritage streetscape.
- **Structural failure:** In cases where the heritage structure is not fit for occupancy, it has to be demolished. At times, this is followed by a re-construction at the same location or plot. Structural disturbance of a heritage building is caused due to
 - a. Deterioration of the building, or
 - b. Natural disaster like earthquake, flood, heavy rainfall, etc.

c. Construction activity in any of the adjacent structures sharing a common wall or separate

- **Amalgamation of plots:** This is a type of developmental activity where two or more property owners combine their plots into one and sell it off or develop it on their own. The resultant reconstructed building might disturb the scale or character of the heritage street.
- **Disturbance to landscape:** In an urban settlement, the landscape also carries a heritage value apart from the built heritage. This criteria includes elements like Topography, Tree platform in the common public plaza (*Chowk*), *Tulsi Kyara*, Bird feeder (*Chabuttra*), Water body (*Talaab*), any peculiar species of trees, plantation, etc. The landscape gets disturbed mainly due to installation of contemporary municipal services' infrastructure.
- **Lack of awareness and goodwill from the people:** The people living in the heritage areas should be made well aware of the heritage value of the area/precinct/structure. There are cases when the people look at idea of heritage conservation as an anti development idea and an unnecessary burden. This is because they have to go through the prescribed process of building plan approval before making any modifications or alterations to their property. They cannot make changes to their building at their own will. Even if there is a higher permissible FSI in the area, usually they are barred from this flexibility also. In most cases when they are pushed to maintain their property since it is of heritage importance to the city, there is no financial backing to them for doing so. These all factors result into a lack of goodwill from the owners to conserve their heritage properties.
- **Lack of fiscal incentives to the owners of the heritage properties:** The owners of the heritage properties find it very difficult to maintain the structure because of high financial burden that it incurs upon them. This problem inculcates a feeling of disgrace towards the idea of heritage conservation and heritage management is then seen as an anti-development concept by the owners. They feel deprived of the financial gain that they would get by selling off the property to a developer or using the unutilized FSI by construction of an additional floor.
Again, there are no alternatives to provide any funding to the owners of the heritage properties for the maintenance of their respective properties.

- **Parking problems:** The parking problems which are evident in most inner city areas or urban heritage precincts are a result of the growth of cities through the times. Often the open urban plaza or the *chowk* in the precinct is used as a common parking area by the owners of houses along the street. This is because the old houses do not possess a parking space for a four wheeler or at times even a two wheeler.
- **Encroachments:** In most of the inner city areas there are several encroachments by hawkers, street vendors, other informal activities, etc. Such instances make it all the more difficult to manage circulation around the heritage structures and in the streets.
- **Inappropriate municipal services:** All municipal services like solid waste management, sewerage, street lighting and electric cables when inappropriately planned, do create issues. Like for instance, placement of secondary collection points for solid waste near the heritage structures do cause decay of its local environs. Appearance of the streetscape is at times spoiled by the electric cables hanging from the poles.
- **Hoardings and Signage:** Commercial hoardings and signage if not assigned an appropriate location, could spoil the visual appearance of the heritage streetscape. However if they could be designated proper locations in the heritage precinct, the revenue generated could be used for the maintenance and upkeep of the precinct.
- **Vandalism:** There are several instances when the people cause damage to the existing heritage structures. Along with vandalism, nuisance spots also emerge around certain heritage sites due to anti social activities, uncontrolled rituals, fairs, festivals and other religious activities.

RESOLVING ISSUES OF URBAN HERITAGE MANAGEMENT THROUGH HERITAGE GUIDELINES: CASE STUDY OF DEULWADI PRECINCT IN URAN, MAHARASHTRA

Heritage guidelines give a regulatory framework including architectural controls, institutional mechanism, funding mechanism and the process of building plan approval for any newer interventions. However, these guidelines do not outcast the importance of actual building conservation. But they definitely go beyond the processes of physical interventions for conservation of tangible heritage.

But unless and until implemented effectively and monitored periodically by the governing body and the citizens together, these guidelines cannot achieve an ideal state of heritage

conservation. For this matter, appropriate funds, good governance, goodwill of the citizens and marketing campaigns are required inevitably. A proper database including maps, ownership details, plot and building drawings, photographs, sketches, significance and history of the precinct is also required in the process. This database would prove elemental in drafting the guidelines for the precinct and could be published for the ready reference of the people.

The said process can be understood by taking an overview of the project of 'Preparation of Action Plan for Heritage Management of Deulwadi Precinct in Uran, Maharashtra'. The project was aimed at proposing a set of Conservation Guidelines for the Management of the Deulwadi Precinct to MMR HCS (Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Heritage Conservation Society) which would then become a part of the DCR (Development Control Regulations) published for the town of Uran. A summary of the same is given as follows:



1: Location of India in World Map (Left) & Location of Maharashtra State in India (Right)

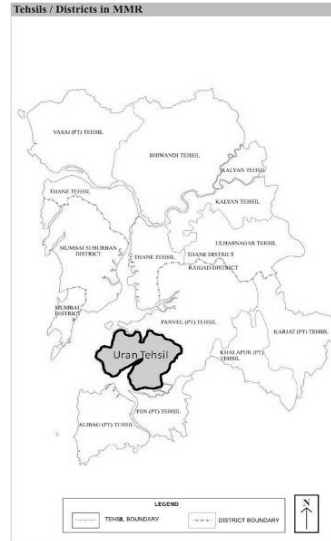
Uran is part of the Navi Mumbai city township in the Raigarh district near Panvel and Karjat. It is situated to the east of Mumbai across the Dharamtar Creek (See Images – 2 & 3).

Uran has developed over time and due to proximity to Mumbai, it is facing increasing urbanization pressure. This pressure of urbanization is tearing apart the versatility and culture of the area. The old is giving way to new, which lacks any visual or cultural connection with the context it is placed in. This is what called for an urgent need of an action plan to conserve the tangible and non tangible heritage of Uran.



Uran
 Uran, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra 400702

2: Location of Uran in Maharashtra, India



3: Location of Uran in MMR

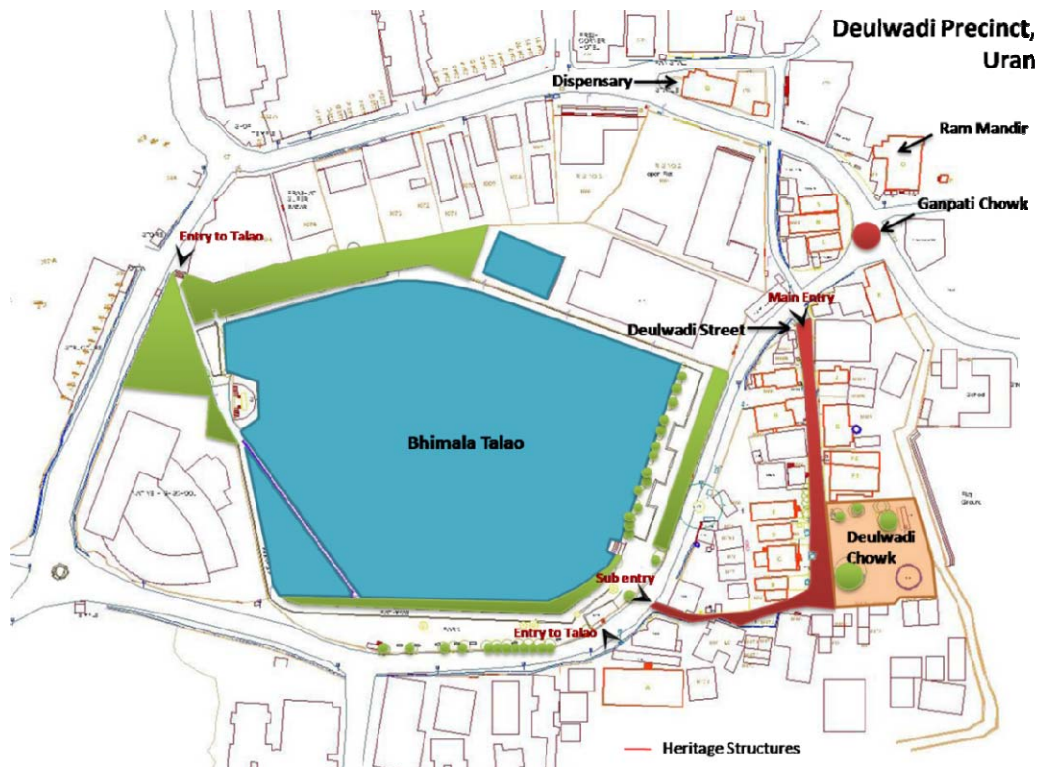
The Deulwadi precinct is a core and oldest area of Uran town located near Bhimala Talao as evident from the below images. The precinct consists of the Deulwadi Sansthan Chowk, a series of temples located in Temple Street, Ganpati Chowk and peripheral road of Bhimala Talao. The temple street has a series of temple specimens which possess a high religious value for people of Maharashtra. The ten temples set in two groups in close proximity give a unique character to this precinct (See image 6). The temple street has a small pathway leading to the Bhimala talao, which connects the two. The temples and the talao are deeply imbedded in the socio-cultural aspect of the life of the people of Uran.



4: View of Uran (Left) and View of Deulwadi Precinct (Right)



5: View of Bhimala Talao, Deulwadi



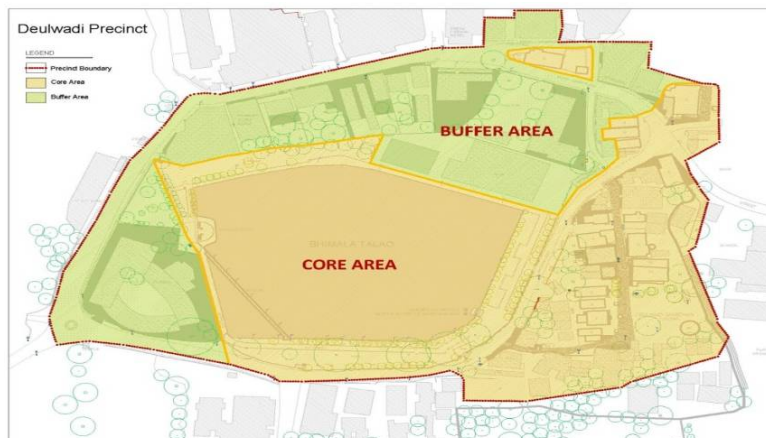
6: Plan of Deulwadi Precinct, Uran

Total Area of Uran town:	229 hectares
Total Area of Deulwadi Precinct:	5.6 hectares
Total Area of Bhimala Talao:	2 hectares



7: Deep Stambhas and Temples along Deulwadi Chowk (Left) and Ram Mandir (Right)

Due to the felt need, the project under consideration was floated by MMR HCS (Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Heritage Conservation Society) along with MMRDA (Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Development Authority). UMC (Urban Management Centre) – Also known as ICMA SA (International City Manager’s Association – South Asia) was appointed as a consultant organization to accomplish the project and at the end of process suggest a set of drafted guidelines which could be published as a part of the DCR for the town of Uran and would be applicable to the area falling under the Deulwadi Precinct delineated by MMR HCS. The project was carried out in six stages each dealing with a specific concern such as Understanding the precinct through primary and secondary surveys, detailed condition assessment, assigning of significances and identification of issues, preparation of action plan (including physical interventions and infrastructure reforms, governance reforms, etc.) and lastly drafting a proposed set of conservation guidelines for the Deulwadi Precinct. By the end of the process, for recommending conservation guidelines, the Deulwadi Precinct was divided into two zones: Core Area and Buffer Area in order to formulate different sets of guidelines for each (See image-8)



8: Core and Buffer Area, Deulwadi Precinct

Core Area

The Core Area of the *Deulwadi* Precinct included the *Bhimala talao* along with its built up edges, the temples in the *Deulwadi Street*, *Sansthan Chowk* and the *Ganpati chowk* and the Dispensary.

The Core Area comprised of buildings/elements which are of historic importance, natural water bodies, embodying excellence in architecture, material and construction techniques been use, associated with personalities or cultural events.

Buffer Area

Buffer Area meant a special regulated zone where protective measures would be enacted for the protection of the heritage precinct. The Buffer Area of the *Deulwadi* Precinct included most of the residential, commercial and institutional buildings of the precinct excluding the Core area.

In addition to the above, a list of buildings and elements falling into the Core and Buffer Areas was recommended by UMC (Urban Management Centre) – the heritage consultants of the project; before arriving at the set of guidelines.

After the listing; grading of these buildings and elements was proposed as per the criteria laid down by INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) for grading of listed buildings/ listed precincts.

Then, a ‘Building Plan Approval’ Process was suggested in order to ensure that any of the new construction, reconstruction, alterations or repairs, etc. planned by owners of heritage properties is filtered through the Uran Municipal Authority and its ‘Heritage Cell’, whose constitution was also a part of the proposal. Formation of Conservation Corpus was also recommended to carry on with the (O & M) Operation and Maintenance of the precinct. However, initial repairs of the identified damages could be carried out by the grant from MMR HCS.

Lastly, after accomplishing all of the above, the required set of guidelines for the Core and Buffer areas of *Deulwadi* Precinct, was drafted and proposed to MMR HCS for its inclusion in the DCR for the Uran town.

For furthering this initiative of Heritage Management in Uran, an INTACH Uran Chapter could be initiated, just like in case of other several instances such as INTACH Pondicherry, etc.

CONCLUSION

There is no thumb rule or a common solution to manage heritage precincts in urban centers. But solutions have to be carved out depending on the location, significance, political will, available funding sources and other respective consequences of the precinct under consideration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Sincere thanks to Ms. Manvita Baradi - Director, UMC (Urban Management Centre) for the in-depth discussions on the subject.

“I am highly indebted to Ms. Manvita Baradi for giving me an opportunity to work with UMC as a Project Associate on the project of ‘Preparation of Action Plan for Conservation of Deulwadi Precinct, Uran’.”

- Maulik R. Hajarnis

REFERENCES

1. Chainani, S. (2007). *Heritage Conservation - Legislative And Organizational Policies for India*. Delhi, India: INTACH.
2. Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India. (2010). *Chapter-8 Conservation of Heritage Sites including Heritage Buildings, Heritage Precincts And Natural Features*. Retrieved March 23, 2012, from www.urbanindia.nic.in: www.urbanindia.nic.in/publicinfo/byelaws/Chap-8.pdf
3. NSW Heritage office & Royal Australian Institute of Architects. (2005, June 12). *Design in Context*. Retrieved July 5, 2012, from www.heritage.nsw.gov.au: <http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au>