



Research Article

Art Deco Architecture in Pune from the 1940s to the 1960s

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Abstract

Art Deco is a visual arts, architecture, and product design style. It first emerged in Paris in the 1910s, shortly before World War I. This style reached its height in Europe and the United States in the 1920s and early 1930s. The early to mid-1930s saw the emergence of Art Deco architecture in India, which ended in the mid to late 1950s. Indian cities like Mumbai, Pune, Chennai, Jaipur, Jodhpur, and Patiala are home to Art Deco structures. In terms of architecture, the Art Deco movement represented a dramatic departure from the colonial Neo-Gothic/Victorian Gothic model. The pursuit of modernity, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism were all reflected in Art Deco architecture. UNESCO declared the Victorian Gothic and Art Deco ensembles of Mumbai (Maharashtra's capital) a UNESCO World Heritage Site in June 2018. Nevertheless, Pune City's Art Deco buildings are not recognized as heritage buildings or documented. The study involved photographic documentation of Art Deco buildings in Deccan, Swargate Prabhat Road, Bhandarkar Road area of Pune. This paper examines the various motifs and their underlying symbolism that can be seen in Pune's Art Deco buildings. The results of this study show that the Art Deco buildings in Pune are now on the verge of extinction due to the age of the building, structural deformities and lack of awareness of the conservation of this historical heritage. The art deco features on the elevations of many buildings have been hidden/erased by renovation and commercial hoardings.

Keywords: Art Deco, symbolism, Heritage, Architecture, Conservation, Pune, Maharashtra, Urban Planning, UNESCO World Heritage site.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

Funding: No funding was received for this research.

Article History: Received: 20 March 2024. Revised: 21 May 2024. Accepted: 30 May 2024. First published: 01 June 2024.

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Published by: Aesthetix Media Services, India

Citation: Mahajani, N. (2024). Art Deco Architecture in Pune from the 1940s to the 1960s. *Rupkatha Journal* 16:2. <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v16n2.07g>



Introduction

Around 1910–12, the Art Deco movement in architecture and design emerged in Paris, and it persisted until 1939, when World War II broke out. It got its name at the 1925 International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris. It was a symbol of luxury and modernity, with strong geometric shapes, vivid colours, and highly stylized decoration. At the 1939 Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne and in movie theaters, department stores, and other public buildings, Art Deco architecture, sculpture, and decoration reached their pinnacle. Additionally, it was evident in the creations of graphic artists, furniture makers, jewellers, glass and metal designers, and jewellers in Paris.

The Society of Decorative Artists (SAD) suggested in 1911 that a significant new international exposition of decorative arts be held in 1912. Only contemporary pieces were allowed; no copies of historical styles were allowed. The display was delayed until 1914 and again until 1925 due to the war, which gave rise to the Déco style, encompassing a whole family of fashion.

Emergence of Art Deco architecture in India

In India, Art Deco architecture first appeared in the early to mid-1930s and persisted until the mid–late 1950s. The first Art Deco building ever built in Mumbai is the Syndicate Bank building, which is situated on Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Road in Fort. The building was built in 1932. In the 1930s, notable Indian entrepreneurs, including Framji Sidhwa, Shiavax Cambata, and K.A. Kooka, commissioned Art Deco structures in what was then Bombay (Dalvi, 2015). Marine Drive and the western side of Oval Maidan are lined with the initial Art Deco buildings created by a new generation of Indian architects, such as Gajanan Mhatre, Sohrabji Bhedwar, and P C Dastur. Most of the houses had similar heights, lofty ceilings, and open balconies. In the latter part of the 19th century, the city witnessed urban planning endeavors with the construction of groupings of buildings flanking the Oval Maidan, including early 20th-century Art Deco and Victorian Gothic structures (Sah, 2023).

The movement quickly spread throughout many of the major cities in our nation and emerged as one of the new stylistic identities of India after independence. Following World War I, India, a British colony, gained unique insight into world culture. Throughout the 1930s, Art Deco was the dominant design movement in Europe. People who relocated overseas for employment or education returned with a passion for modern living, having been enthralled with the dominant modern architectural style of the day. This was demonstrated by the various new building typologies that adopted this style in order to establish their identity. The elite favored this dynamic, artistic building style for their banks, insurance buildings, hotels & lodges, movie theaters, luxury apartments and standalone bungalows. It goes without saying that the Maharajas and other affluent social classes were heavily involved in the style's acceptance in India. Because of their wealth and education, these politically and economically influential groups of society were increasingly influenced by Western ideas and tastes (Sebastian, 2018).

When the world began to recognise its Art Deco heritage in the 21st century, Mumbai became the location of one of the biggest global collections of these flamboyant buildings. The two cities with the greatest numbers of Art Deco-style buildings are Miami and Mumbai. The Art Deco

architectural style spread to Pune, the next major city in Maharashtra, where the wealthy business class owned the majority of the residences.

Emergence of Art Deco architecture in Mumbai

Together, multiple architectural firms and designers shaped Mumbai into a modern metropolis at the beginning of the 20th century. It's interesting to note that many of them were first-generation Indian graduates of the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London and the Sir JJ School of Art in Mumbai. When they returned, they brought with them Art Deco, which was a fusion of various cultures since the majority of them had studied and worked in Europe.

Among them are Queen's Court, Green Fields, and the renowned Eros Cinema, all designed by Sohrab Kaikushro Bhedwar. The Somerset Place, Cumbala Hill, and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in Girgaon were designed by Jehangir Phiroshaw Vazifdar. Known for the Ravji Sojpal Building in Dadar, the Cambridge Court in Cumbala Hill, and the Karim Building on Mohammed Ali Road are Abdulhussein Meherali Thariani. The Bank of India in Fort was designed by Dattatray Raghunath Chowdhari. Keval Mahal, Kapur Mahal, and Zaver Mahal are three identical buildings designed by PC Dastur that are located along Marine Drive.

G.B. Mhatre is largely responsible for many of these Deco-era apartment buildings; his extensive body of work encompasses a variety of typologies, including commercial buildings, churches, and gas stations. The time frame for G. B. Mhatre's work was 1931–1970. He started his practice at the outset of Bombay's Art Deco movement, at a time when professionals were only recognised by their success, which was typically commercial, and there was little media coverage of architecture. The importance of G.B. Mhatre's contribution was largely overlooked (Iyer, 2000).

Rise of Art Deco Architecture in Pune

Between 1947 and 1982, advances in tectonic detailing and construction technology happened more slowly than in architectural aesthetics in the city of Pune. In Ar. U. M. Apte's constructions and stonework were typical. His Bank of Maharashtra and Shirke house has a façade composed of natural stone-faced brick walls. Polished natural stone adorns the entrances of plastered Art-Deco structures like the Western India House. Pune lacked stone masons on short notice, so they had to be imported. It was less common for second-generation architects to use stone masonry for entire facades in their 1960s and 1970s projects. Stone was more frequently used to draw attention to a single external wall (Melsens, 2016).

Early work by U.M. Apte shows stylistic experimentation. It is remarkable how skillfully he combined ornamental Art Deco, Indian revivalist, and modernist facades for various functional purposes within the same time frame. His design for a biscuit factory and the Western India House, which was constructed for an insurance company, have Art Deco features such as soaring facade planes, an accentuation at the entrance, and colorful plaster bands with smaller windows (Melsens, 2020). On the other hand, his Bank of Maharashtra building exhibits an eclectic blend of traditional Indian elements and Art Deco, reminiscent of the well-known Akashvani Bhavan (All India Radio building) designed by Ballardie, Thompson, and Matthews in Calcutta (1957–58).

Research objectives:

- To study the origin of Art Deco architectural style in India
- To study the history of Art Deco buildings in Pune and their architects
- To decode the symbolism in Art Deco buildings
- To study the current condition of Art Deco buildings in Pune and the threats
- To suggest measures for the conservation of Art Deco buildings in Pune.

Methodology

The Secondary data collection consisted of reviews of books and research papers to find the evolution of Art Deco in the world and its emergence in India. Through newspaper articles, the author found the Art deco structures in Pune which are under threat of demolition or already demolished. Primary data collection consisted of the identification of areas with Art Deco structures. The author completed site surveys, photographic documentation, and interviews in Prabhat Road, Bhandarkar Road, JM Road, Khadki and Bhavani Peth areas of Pune. Conservation measures were suggested based on findings and analysis.





Results**Symbolism in Art Deco architecture**

Every flat has a semi-open Art Deco balcony, with rails reminiscent of ship decks and grills made of concrete or metal. Buildings frequently include cantilevered extensions, or *chajjas*, painted in stark contrasts. There are low-height compound barriers on every property. Most of these buildings' nameplates are composed of stone, wood, metal, or stucco, frequently including creative typefaces and colors (Das, 2020).

Form

Stepped Profile / Ziggurat- Built in ancient Mesopotamia, ziggurats are stepped pyramids with receding storeys resembling tiered cakes. Building massing and/or facade profiles exhibit the influence of this stepped form of ziggurats (Figure 1a, 1b). Additionally, it is noticeable on ornamental details like grillwork, wall cladding, and basreliefs (Pai, 2020).

Streamlining- The Deco era's obsession with speed is reflected in the elongated forms, curved contours, and stripes known as "speed lines" on symmetrical building facades. These drew inspiration from aerodynamic advances in locomotive design, particularly those found in cars, airplanes, and ocean liners (Figure 2a, 2b).




			
<p>Figure 1a: Stepped profile of Radha Niwas, Shivajinagar, Pune Year: 1941 Source: Pune Art Deco</p>	<p>Figure 1b: Stepped profile of Vishwa Kala Building, Shukrawar Peth Year: 1944 Source: Pune Art Deco</p>	<p>Figure 2a: Streamlining on MatruPrem Building, Shukrawar Peth Source: Pune Art Deco</p>	<p>Figure 2b: Streamlining on Sugandhi Building, Budhwar Peth Year: 1951-53 Architect: D. R. Limaye Source: Pune Art Deco</p>

Elements

Balconies- Apartment balconies are partly open areas where residents can sip tea while enjoying the cityscape and a refreshing breeze. They can appear in various shapes and forms, such as rectilinear, curvilinear, or emulating the design of streamlined locomotives, and they can protrude from or be set back from the building facade. They frequently feature ship-deck-style railings or grilles made of concrete or metal (Figure 3).





Eyebrows- Cantilevered projections above balconies and windows, eyebrows serve as weather-shading elements. Commonly referred to as "*chajjas*," these projections can take on a variety of shapes, including rectilinear, curved, angular, or continuous eyebrows that emphasize the building's horizontality by extending continuously along its line. They frequently have a dark, contrasting color painted around the edges (Figure 4).

Compound walls—A compound wall marks a building's property boundary. They are usually low-height walls with concrete or metal grilles, which let air and light into ground-floor apartments (Figure 5).

		
<p>Figure 3: The corner of the residence abutting two roads is treated with a curvilinear dynamism common with Art Deco buildings built on corner plots.</p> <p>Source: Abhishek Gijare</p>	<p>Figure 4 The streamlining of balconies and eyebrows over the windows.</p> <p>Location: Khausara, Gandhi and Bhatija, Shivajinagar Year of construction: 1945 Source: Abhishek Gijare</p>	<p>Figure 5 The stunning compound wall becomes prominent due to the intricate concrete sunbursts, separated by duo-toned piers.</p> <p>Rachel Mahal, Bhavani Peth Year: 1948-49 (started); 1950 (completed)</p> <p>Source: Pune Art Deco</p>

Grilles- Ornate grillework with geometric or tropically inspired forms can be seen on gates, balconies, windows, stairwells, and outdoor lighting. It is often made of concrete, metal, or wood (Figure 6a, 6b).

Architectural Lettering—Art Deco buildings’ streamlined, flamboyant, and geometric features are embodied in the riot of creative fonts used in building nameplates (Figure 7a, 7b). These nameplates are frequently observed on the facades or floors near building entrances. Typically, they are composed of stone, metal, wood, or stucco.

			
<p>Figure 6a: Grille work Location: The Paranjape bungalow, Prabhat Road Source: Studio Gestalt</p>	<p>Figure 6b: Grille work Location: “Sakhu Nandan”, Prabhat road Source: Studio Gestalt</p>	<p>Figure 7a: Harikrupa Building, Sadashiv Peth Year: 1958 Contractors: S. P. Kane & N. B. Phadke Source: Studio Gestalt</p>	<p>Figure 7b: Somnath Ashram, Bhavani Peth Year: 1941 Source: Studio Gestalt</p>





Features

Symbolic Features: On Art Deco buildings, elements such as sunburst rays, tropical trees, frozen fountains, porthole windows, and sea waves are easily recognised as symbolic decorations. These elaborate details are inspired by tropical nature and Mumbai's history as a port city to provide a sense of place and individuality (Dwivedi, 2008).

Nautical features: Building architecture was influenced by the opulent ocean liners of the Deco era. Common visible nautical features include porthole windows, ship deck railings, and observation towers (Figure 8a, 8b).

Tropical imagery: The tropical imagery commonly featured on the exterior of Deco buildings in Bombay is inspired by the city's tropical vegetation and proximity to the sea. In basreliefs, grilles, railings, and glass panels, stylized images of sunbursts, sea waves, clouds, the moon, and tropical flora and fauna are shown (Figure 9).

Frozen Fountain: The Art Décoratifs Exposition at Paris in 1925 introduced the Art Deco style to the world. The fair also introduced the first fountains made of modern materials (Figure 10a). The most popular fountain was by René Lalique, a glass designer, who designed a 5m tall glass column made up of 128 caryatids (sculpted female figure support), each spraying a thin stream of water into the fountain below (Lalique,2001). The 'Frozen Glass' motif was popularized here and can be seen in many art Deco buildings. Glass panels, metal grilles, concrete grilles, and building facades all frequently use the motif as a decorative element (Ramani, 2007).

			
<p>Figure 8a: Observatory turret - Gulabchand Chatrinngji Building, Raviwar Peth Year: 194x Source: Pune Art Deco</p>	<p>Figure 8b: Porthole window- Sugandhi Building, Budhwar Peth, Part II Year: 1951-53 Architect: D. R. Limaye Original Owner: Manmohandas Vitthaldas Sugandhi Source: Pune Art Deco</p>	<p>Figure 9: Tropical imagery- 'Vishwa-Kala' or the Shree Lodge, Swargate built in 1955 Source: Pune Art Deco</p>	<p>Figure 10a: Luminous Fountain by René Lalique - Expo Paris 1925 Source:Musée Lalique</p>

Geometric Patterns




Decorative elements such as bands, chevrons, stripes, zigzags, squares, and oblongs transform plainly built buildings into extravagant structures. These bands and patterns, typically painted in contrasting colours, transform buildings into works of art.

Bands/Banding: To emphasize height or horizontality, building facades are painted with bands that are either horizontal or vertical and painted in contrasting colours. Bands may have geometric frieze patterns molded into them or they may be carved into the facade (Figure 11).

Chevrons: The directionality-emphasizing repeating V-pattern is often employed as decorative elements on Deco building facades or metal grille designs. The images below demonstrate the pattern's application in stone, wood, and concrete tiling for exterior and interior spaces.

Zigzags: Zigzags are patterns of uneven lines that appear as decorative motifs on building facades, such as deco banding and bas reliefs (Figure 12).

Figurative Ornaments—Reliefs representing a range of emotions and professions, including comedy, tragedy, farming, labor, and filmmaking, can be seen on many public Art Deco buildings. These angular, stone—or plaster-carved decorations are ornamental and reflect the local culture.

		
<p>Figure 11: The front facade of Western India House, with vertical fins in a contrasting rust colour running across the height of the building.</p> <p>Location: The Western India House, Laxmi Road</p> <p>Year: 1953</p> <p>Source: Studio Gestalt</p>	<p>Figure 12: Chevron pattern - Karve Mangal Karyalay, Shaniwar Peth</p> <p>Source: Pune Art Deco</p>	<p>Figure 12: Relief work on the building shows farmers and workers in agriculture and industry, sectors that were seen as pillars of the Indian economy post-independence.</p> <p>Location: The Western India House, Laxmi Road</p> <p>Year: 1953</p> <p>Source: Pune Art Deco</p>





Examples of various typologies of buildings designed in Art Deco style in Pune Institutional Buildings

ILS Law College- The Indian Law Society was established on March 4, 1923, and Dr. Sir Narayan Rao C. Chandawarkar served as its first president (ILS Law College, 2023). At this conference, establishing a private law college in Pune was suggested. Following initial arrangements, the Law

College officially opened for business on June 20, 1924, operating under the Indian Law Society's auspices (Figure 13a). At that time, it was called the "Poona Law College" (Goswamy, 2022). The Saraswati Building, the organization's first structure, was constructed in 1935 after the Society purchased 154 acres of land. (Figure 13b). On January 7, 1935, the Late Honourable Srinivas Shastri placed the foundation stone (Figure 13c).

The Saraswati structure was deliberately designed to resemble a sage sitting in the lotus position, contemplating. Subsequently, the resident student dormitories, a gymkhana, and a pavilion were constructed. The addition of a swimming pool enhanced the spaces even further. Later, the Laxmi building was erected to accommodate the College's expanding demands. All of this was carried out under Nana Saheb Gharpure's supervision, the college's first principal.

The building has a typical Ziggurat profile, and horizontal streamlining can be seen on the topmost portion (Figure 13d). The center of the building has a covered porch with the name of the college written on top of it. The concrete railings of the parapet wall have geometric design patterns. The building may have been repainted in a totally different color from the original one. The newly painted color scheme does not highlight any of the art deco features.

			
<p>Figure 13a: Ziggurat profile of the piers at the entrance and the granite signboard displaying the year of establishment i.e. 1923 Source: Indian Law Society - ILS Law College, 2023</p>	<p>Figure 13b: Archived photo of the Law College, Poona Source: Goswamy, 2022</p>	<p>Figure 13c: Foundation stone of the Saraswati building, ILS College, Pune. Source: Indian Law Society - ILS Law College, 2023</p>	<p>Figure 13d: Saraswati building, ILS College, Pune. Source: Indian Law Society - ILS Law College, 2023</p>

Balshikshan Mandir- The school was established in Bhajekar Pavilion in Deccan Gymkhana on 22nd October 1922 on the auspicious occasion of "Diwali Padwa" to inculcate patriotism in the students during the period of graduation. The number of students started increasing day by day. The Deccan Gymkhana Housing Society constructed the present building on Bhandarkar Road, and in November 1938, the school moved to the present building on Bhandarkar Road (Balshikshan Mandir, n.d.).

It is a reputed primary Marathi medium school. The Art Deco style is immediately apparent from the symmetrical, hierarchical front facade and the subtle, yet dynamic, curvilinear undulations on both sides (Figure 14a). The ornate grillework with geometric designs can be seen on the gate (Figure 14b). One characteristic of Art Deco with Indian influences is the swastik stucco work (Figure 14c). The tower has a feature that may have been a typical Art Deco wall clock (Figure 14a).

		
<p>Figure 14a: Front elevation of the Balshikshan Mandir, Bhandarkar road, Pune.</p> <p>Source: author</p>	<p>Figure 14b: Grillework with geometric designs</p> <p>Source: Studio Gestalt</p>	<p>Figure 14c: Swastik stucco work</p> <p>Source: Studio Gestalt</p>



Cinema halls

West End cinema- Keki Modi bought the Imperial Cinema, Pune's beloved single-screen English movie theater, from the Patel family in 1935. The Patels renamed it West End, which quickly gained enormous popularity. His business, Western India Theatres Ltd., held ownership interests in more than 100 theaters throughout India by the 1940s, concentrating on Mumbai, Pune, other Maharashtrian cities, and Kolkata. His notable properties included Globe [Shreenath], Minerva, West End, Empire, Shri Krishna in Pune, New Empire, Strand, Excelsior, Minerva Central (now Central Plaza) in Mumbai, Minerva and Elite in Kolkata. (Zankar, 2020).

West End Theater in Pune, in its old form, was a quintessential movie theatre. It is in the heart of Pune cantonment. A tall wall flanked by two open gates at the center of the compound wall displayed the poster of the film that was playing (Figure 15a). In the courtyard of mud and pebbles, an odd car passing you by would produce a crunchy sound as the wheels ground the pebbles. Next came the tiled section on the ground that led to a portico that protruded from a lobby. It was an open lobby and ticket windows were on the sides. Two staircases from either end of the lobby led to the balcony. The lobby extended on one side of the theater as a verandah on both the floors. The entrances had sliding grille doors with black curtains inside and outside (Zankar, 2020).

Keki's business was severely impacted in 1953 because the film *Jhansi ki Rani*, which he produced, was a disaster at the box office. In the 1980s, he had to give in to the industry's demands and agree to demolish the old theater, construct a new one in its place, and admit that the old theater was a significant portion of the property. It was around a century old when West End was destroyed in November 1983 (Choudhari, 2023). The former charm has faded.



The theater was upgraded over the years to a single-screen hall with 1,038 seats, celluloid film, Digital Dolby, AC, and digital projection facilities (Zankar, 2021). Today, West End is housed within a building (Figure 15b). It has an independent entry and exit point. Regretfully, the theater that was once one of Pune's most iconic attractions is no longer in operation.

	
<p>Figure 15a: The original building of West End cinema, which was demolished later in 1983 Source: Zankar, 2020</p>	<p>Figure 15b: New building of the West End Cinema Source: Zankar, 2021</p>

Jaihind cinema- This Cinema hall is located opposite Khadki railway station in the Khadki cantonment area (Figure 16a). The building has a Ziggurat profile and is symmetrical. The facade has a frozen fountain in the metal grillework of the windows. The entire facade has vertical streamlining which highlights the Ziggurat at the top.

There is a covered porch at the center. Timings of the shows are written on the front of the porch in typical Art Deco typography. The name of the cinema hall is also written in English script in the art deco typography at the center of the building. The hoarding of the name of the cinema hall (in Devnagari script) on top of the ziggurat may have been added later as it is not in the Art Deco font type. This cinema hall has not functioned for a long time and it is in a neglected state. Currently it serves as a godown for the construction materials of the Metro.





The Ministry of Defence received a suggestion from the Khadki local military authority (LMA) to provide land for the Pimpri Swargate route's elevated Metro segment and widening of Pune Mumbai highway. (Figure 16b). The Khadki Cantonment Board (KCB) has given in-principle approval for the transfer of land to the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) for the same (Gaikwad, 2018). For road widening, the stores that line the highway across from the Khadki railway station must be demolished. Jaihind theater will have to be pulled down. The Metro work is currently in progress and this beautiful Art Deco cinema will be demolished very soon (The Bridge Chronicle, 2018).

	
<p>Figure 16a: Jaihind cinema, Khadki cantonment, Pune Source: Author</p>	<p>Figure 16b: News showing sanctioned proposal of demolition of Jaihind Cinema Source: Gaikwad, 2018</p>

Commercial building

Commonwealth Assurance Building, Sadashiv Peth- It was designed by architect Messrs. Aga and Co. It was built by the contractor-Messrs. Poona Engineers Ltd. The construction began in 1938 and it was completed in 1940. In the first half of the 20th century, there was a substantial increase in domestic insurance companies. Although the idea of contemporary insurance originated in England and spread to India, it did so with strong nationalistic roots, offering social security through insurance to a range of societal segments. Following a merger, LIC India assumed ownership of the building, which was previously owned by Commonwealth Assurance Company. Today, LIC India, New India Insurance, and the Milk Development Industry all have branch offices housed in the same building.





The building's front facade is decorated with large Deco lettering that bears the original name of the structure (Figure 17a). A clock sits atop the building's entrance shaft, which ends there. Speed lines that curve at its sides surround it (Figure 17b). A concrete bas-relief sculpted by P. Kelkar, G.D.A., is located just above the entrance (Figure 17c). The mural's style is reminiscent of the bas-reliefs found on several Bombay buildings, including the Onlooker Building, Construction House, Cotton Exchange Building, and New India Assurance Building. The Commonwealth building's front facade features a single eyebrow that runs along the terrace level and banding above the second story (Figure 17d).

			
<p>Figure 17a: Large Deco lettering on the Commonwealth building, Sadashiv Peth, Pune</p> <p>Year:1940</p> <p>Source: Pune Art Deco</p>	<p>Figure 17b: Clock on the entrance shaft and speed lines on both sides</p> <p>Source: Pune Art Deco</p>	<p>Figure 17c: Concrete bas-relief sculpted by P. Kelkar</p> <p>Source: Pune Art Deco</p>	<p>Figure 17d: The Commonwealth building's front facade. Source: Pune Art Deco</p>

China Gate

This building is located on J.M. Road in Pune. This is a two-storeyed building, like most buildings on this road. China Gate, a Chinese restaurant has occupied this building for so long that this building is recognised as a restaurant only. In fact, some of the geometrical features on the facade also seem to suit the Chinese theme (Figure 18a). The color scheme, however, seemed too garish. On closer inspection, this building has quite a few Art Deco features. The balconies on both flanks are rounded symmetrically, and the sides of the buildings have some gracefully curved parts with eyebrows that continue beyond the curved walls (Figure 18b). It is not surprising that this building is going to be torn down (Figure 18c). In addition to disregarding the building's architectural style, the owners made haphazard and insensitive repairs to different damaged elements using

incompatible materials. A black box grill has been unceremoniously pushed onto the curved balcony (Figure 18d). This elegant little building will be replaced by another steel, cement and glass monstrosity that has no bearing on the size of the street, trees or beauty of J.M. Road.

			
<p>Figure 18a: Front facade of the China Gate Restaurant on J.M. Road, Pune. Source: Studio Gestalt</p>	<p>Figure 18b: Rounded balconies with eyebrows. Source: Studio Gestalt</p>	<p>Figure 18c: Hoardings suggesting the beginning of the demolition process. Source: Studio Gestalt</p>	<p>Figure 18d: A black box grill pushed onto the curved balcony. Source: Studio Gestalt</p>

CT Pundole building

This building is located on JM Road in Pune, a prominent commercial location. The building is barely visible beneath the large sign boards and billboards (Figure 19a). However, upon closer examination, the curved walls between the ornamental foliage become visible (Studio Gestalt, 2023). This lovely art deco building caught the author's eye approximately a year ago; sadly, scaffolding has since been installed around it (Figure 19b). This building exudes dignity; it is both majestic and classically designed. The building's street side is uncomplicated, and the remnants of a few circular pilasters can be seen behind the composite panels in the left corner (Figure 19b). The corner on the right is curved in the traditional Art Deco manner (Figure 19c). Even after the building was covered in paneling, these remained exposed.

The structure appears to be in good shape, and even the plaster damage from removing the paneling can be readily fixed. There have been no changes made to the grills or window panes. Some typical Art Deco motifs are displayed on the main gate, including an upside-down frozen fountain (Figure 19d). The building's symmetrical front side features a tall stairwell with a porthole at the top and a number of vertically arranged ventilators (Figure 19e). Numerous delicate stucco elements can be found, including a semicircular eyebrow *chajja* on the front porch (Figure 19f). The entry doors are made of wood and have engraved geometric leaping stripes.





		
<p>Figure 19a: Front elevation of the CT Pundole building. Source: Studio Gestalt</p>	<p>Figure 19b: The remnants of a few circular pilasters on the door. Source: Studio Gestalt</p>	<p>Figure 19c: Rounded balconies with streamlining. Source: Studio Gestalt</p>

		
<p>Figure 18a: Figure 19d: Inverted frozen fountain on the grillwork of the main gate. Source: Studio Gestalt</p>	<p>Figure 18a: Figure 19e: A tall stairwell with a porthole at the top Source: Studio Gestalt</p>	<p>Figure 19f: Semicircular eyebrow <i>chajja</i> on the front porch Source: Studio Gestalt</p>

Mixed Use:

Somnath Ashram, Bhavani Peth: This building was constructed in the Year 1941. The Bhatewara family resides at the Somnath Ashram, which was constructed in what is now known as Sindhipada, an area where a sizable portion of the Sindhi community moved following partition. The ground floor shops are owned by the family, and they live on the upper floor (Figure 20a). Dattusingh






Pardeshi, who also oversaw the construction of the building on a corner plot, was in charge of housing those who relocated to Pune following the Partition. The Somnath Ashram's facade is adorned with several Deco elements. The building's streamlined, curved shape is highlighted by an etched plaster wave pattern that never stops (Figure 20b). In addition, it features geometric patterns and motifs depicting the rising sun. The building's crown features an intricate nameplate in the Devanagari script beneath an intriguing stepped profile (Figure 20c). In contrast, the "*haud*," or water tank in front of the house, which is frequently used by cattle, stands out with its trefoil and onion-shaped free-standing arch, flanked by two piers with capitals that resemble inverted lotuses, and exhibits a completely traditional aesthetic (Figure 20d). The property requires extensive plaster and paintwork, even though it is not completely dilapidated.

			
Figure 20a: Front elevation of Somnath Ashram, Bhavani Peth Source: author	Figure 20b: Wave pattern Source: author	Figure 20c: Nameplate in the Devanagari script Source: author	Figure 20d: The water tank in front of the house Source: Pune Art Deco

Residential

Rachel Mahal, Bhavani Peth: This building is named after the matriarch of a Bene Jewish family of the Solomons, Rachel Solomon. It was constructed completely in RCC, with walls as thick as 18 inches. The construction was started in 1948 and completed in 1950 by a contractor named Abdullah. In the midst of a post-World War II material shortage, Rachel's husband, Gershon Solomon, who worked at the Central Defence Academy Head Office, managed to reserve an entire shipment of RCC from Italy. Rachel and her family occupied the right wing of the house, while the left wing was leased to the Indian Army. These days, the couple's five children share equal ownership of the property, which consists of the primary house and the outhouse. This information was shared by Reuben Solomon and Vimal Solomon.

The large projecting cantilever enhances the property's main entrance. The structure uses blue highlighting bands to illustrate the power of streamlining (Figure 21a). The compound wall is a sight to behold, its elaborate concrete sunbursts punctuated by two-toned piers (Figure 21b). The main entrance gateway's metal grille, which mimics the concrete sunbursts lining the compound wall, is a testament to the property's attention to detail and customisation (Figure 21c). A metal grille featuring an elegant yet simple design of a frozen fountain is installed over the window that follows the curve of the front facade (Figure 21d). The 'S' of the Solomons family name is represented by the mosaic installed on the home's terrace (Figure 21e).

				
Figure 21a: Canopy of Rachel Mahal, Bhavani Peth Source: Pune Art Deco	Figure 21b: Sunburst pattern in the metal gate Source: Pune Art Deco	Figure 21c: Concrete sunburst pattern in the compound wall Source: Pune Art Deco	Figure 21d: Frozen fountain grill on the window Source: Pune Art Deco	Figure 21e: 'S' of the Soloman family represented in mosaic Source: Pune Art Deco

Discussion

Pune, like many rapidly growing cities, is facing urban development pressures. As the city expands and modernizes, older buildings, including Art Deco structures, may be at risk of demolition or alteration to make way for newer developments. Neglect and lack of maintenance has led to the deterioration of Art Deco buildings. Without proper upkeep, these structures become vulnerable to structural issues, water damage, and other forms of decay.

Many people may not fully appreciate Art Deco buildings' architectural and historical significance, which could result in indifference to their preservation.

Rapid urbanization and development often prioritize economic growth over heritage preservation. This can lead to the demolition or alteration of older buildings, including those in the Art Deco style, to make room for new construction projects. Residential buildings have been converted to commercial restaurants and hotels. The Art Deco features of the structure are hidden because of the large hoardings of these commercial places and paintings in a color scheme that was not in keeping with the Art Deco theme.

In areas with high land value, there may be pressure to demolish existing structures, including Art Deco buildings, to make way for more profitable developments. Since many historical buildings are being demolished, it is crucial to maintain an inventory of archives.

In some cases, weak enforcement of heritage protection laws or inadequate regulations may fail to safeguard Art Deco buildings from demolition or unsympathetic alterations. Gentrification can sometimes lead to the displacement or marginalization of historic neighborhoods and their architectural heritage, including Art Deco buildings, as they may not fit into the aesthetic or economic vision of the gentrified area.

Recommendations

Conservation of Art Deco buildings in Pune involves a combination of legal protections, community involvement, and financial incentives to preserve these architectural treasures. The

following are some measures that could be taken:

- **Heritage Listing:** The first step in conserving Art Deco buildings is to identify and list them as heritage structures. This gives them legal protection against demolition or unsympathetic alterations.
- **Awareness and Education:** Conducting awareness campaigns and educational programs to highlight Art Deco buildings' historical and architectural significance can foster appreciation and support for their preservation among residents and stakeholders.
- **Conservation Guidelines:** Developing specific conservation guidelines for Art Deco buildings that outline appropriate restoration and maintenance practices while respecting their original design and materials.
- **Financial Incentives:** Providing financial incentives such as grants, low-interest loans, or tax breaks to property owners who undertake conservation and restoration work on Art Deco buildings.
- **Social media:** Using digital platforms to reach out to youngsters to share data in the form of blogs, photos, reels, video stories, talks, and webinars. The digital archive built in this way shall be accessible across the globe.
- **Curation of courses:** Curating courses in Art Deco style for people of all ages. Students of history, art and architecture could be targeted more.
- **Partnerships with NGOs and Heritage Organizations:** Collaborating with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and heritage preservation societies to pool resources and expertise to conserve Art Deco buildings.
- **Regulation of Development:** Implementing zoning regulations and development controls to prevent incompatible new construction or alterations that could harm the visual integrity of Art Deco neighborhoods.
- **Public Access and Events:** Organizing guided tours, heritage walks, open exhibitions on streets/ public plazas, and cultural events focused on Art Deco architecture to engage the public and showcase the value of these buildings.
- **Architectural Conservation Committees:** Establishing committees comprising architects, historians, and conservation experts to oversee Art Deco buildings' conservation and restoration efforts.
- **Documentation and Research:** Encouraging students of architecture, arts, design and history to conduct documentation and research initiatives to catalogue and record the history, architecture, and significance of Art Deco buildings in Pune, contributing to their preservation and understanding.

By implementing these measures collectively, Pune can work towards preserving its Art Deco heritage for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.

Conclusion

Between the 1930s and 1950s, Art Deco design thrived in India. During this period, a cohort of architects, many of whom were Indian graduates from institutions like the Architectural Association School of Architecture, London and Sir JJ School of Art, Mumbai, played a pivotal role in shaping Mumbai's modern architectural landscape. Having studied and worked in Europe, they introduced a unique blend of Art Deco influenced by various cultural elements upon their return. Ar. U.M. Apte and Ar. D. R. Limaye started designing stone masonry buildings in Art Deco

style in Pune. Art Deco buildings can be characterized by features like streamlining, eyebrows, frozen fountain relief, central tower, ziggurat profile, porthole windows, observation decks, etc

The commercial buildings are barely visible beneath the large signboards and billboards. The eyebrows have not been highlighted in a darker color in the re-painted buildings. None of the Art Deco buildings in Pune are listed as Heritage properties by the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC). Most of the buildings are under the threat of demolition for road widening, structural cracks, and floor expansion.

Conservation of Art Deco buildings in Pune entails rigorous maintenance, preservation of original architectural elements, and adherence to heritage guidelines during renovations. Collaborative efforts between local authorities, heritage organizations, and private stakeholders are vital to ensure proper restoration, awareness campaigns, and adaptive reuse strategies that honor the historical significance of these structures.

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