

# Colonial Imprints and Local Adaptations:

Architectural Evolution of Rua Abade Faria, Goa,  
in dialogue with Urban and Domestic Forms of Portugal.

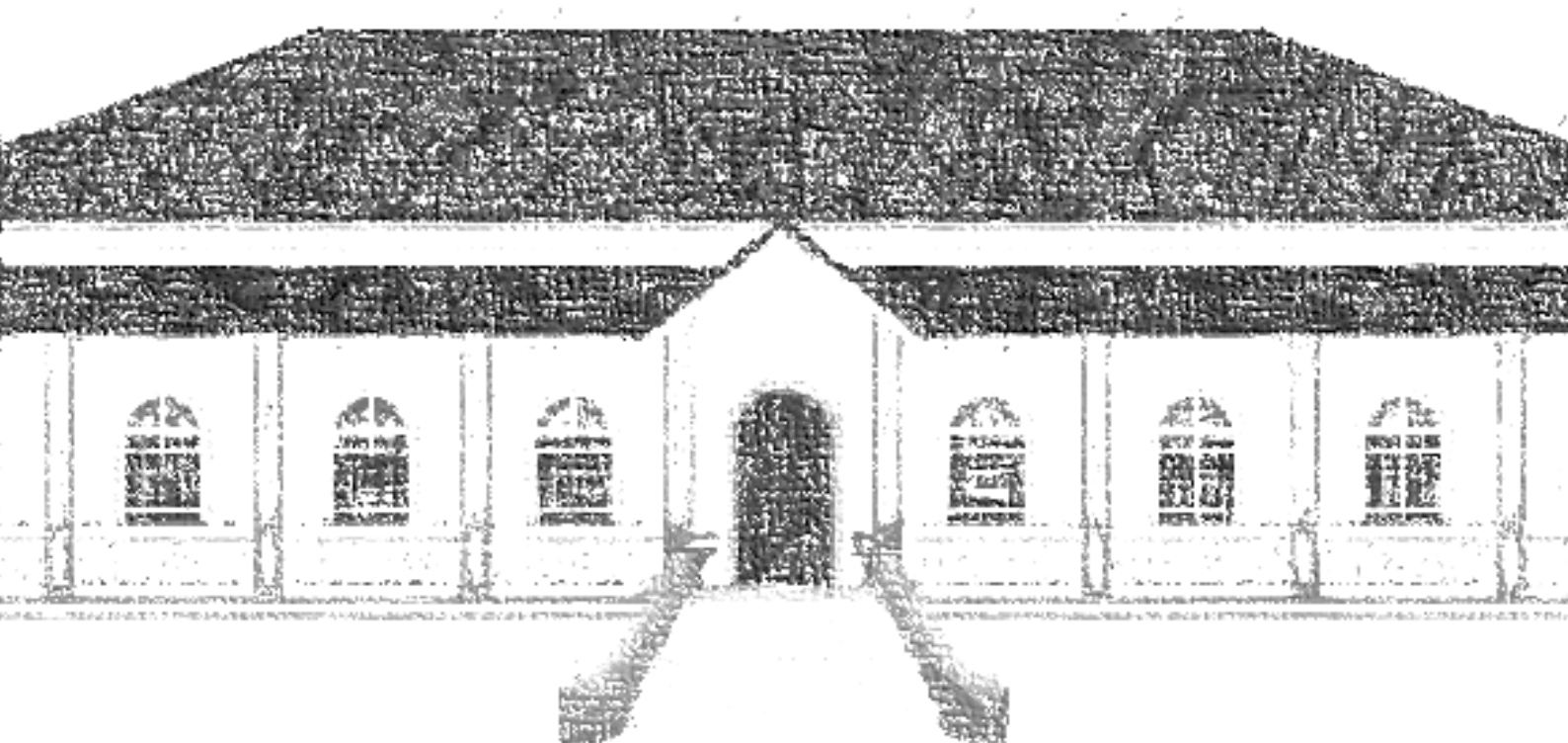
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Date: 15.04.2025

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MSc. Architectural History Thesis

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# 1 Introduction:



Figure 1: The Siege of Goa in 1517 | Credits @ Portuguese Goa in Civitates Orbis Terrarum, 1572

Colonial architecture stands as a visible testament to the dominance of imperial powers, symbolizing not only political control but also an imposition of spatial ideologies in distant lands (Boxer, 1969). However, the architectural forms introduced by colonial powers were not static replicas of European designs. Over time, they evolved in response to the unique cultural, social, economic, and environmental conditions of the colonies (Freire & Meneses, 2009). The urban settlements established by the Portuguese in Goa, India, offer a compelling case study of such architectural transformations. In these settlements, particularly those with layered histories and heritage value, architecture became a site of negotiation between imported forms and local traditions (Figure 1). As cities grow, there is an inherent tension between urbanization and the conservation of heritage, which embodies the identity and roots of a place (Hamzah, 2020).

Rua Abade Faria in Margao, Goa, a historically significant road exemplifies this tension. The settlement's architectural fabric, once predominantly residential and rich with heritage value, has undergone significant transformations, influenced by urban pressures and changing social needs. As cities like Margao grow and modernize, the challenge becomes how to retain the heritage values embedded in historical settlements while accommodating the pressures of urbanization, commercialisation, and infrastructural change which have redefined its identity, eroding many of the spatial and material qualities that once defined its character. However, these changes are not merely losses; they are also adaptations, negotiations between heritage, function, and modernity and the nuances of everyday life.

This research builds upon my undergraduate dissertation titled *In Between Heritage and Progress: Urban Morphology of a Historical Urban Settlement - A Case of Abade Faria Road, Margao*, completed in 2021 at Goa College of Architecture, Goa, India. That study aimed to trace the physical transformation of Rua Abade Faria, a historically significant street in Goa's commercial capital across time. As a street once lined with Indo-Portuguese residential buildings, Abade Faria Road has increasingly been subjected to commercialisation, infrastructural pressure, and unsystematic redevelopment. My earlier work focused on documenting these shifts through a morphological lens, tracing changes in street patterns, building typologies, and urban character. The current research extends that inquiry by shifting its focus, from observing what has changed, to asking why those changes happened, how they were shaped by local and colonial conditions, and what they mean in the broader context of Goan architectural identity and heritage today.

## 1.1 Reflections on Previous Research



Figure 2: Transforming Architectural character of Rua Abade Faria shaped by commercialisation | Credits @ Author

In my undergraduate dissertation, I explored the morphological evolution of Rua Abade Faria, Margao - a historically significant street in Goa's commercial capital, through the lens of urban change across time. It aimed to trace how the physical form and spatial character of the street had transformed over time, from its early residential nature to its current condition shaped by commercialisation as seen in Figure 2, unsystematic redevelopment, and infrastructural interventions, documenting these shifts through a morphological lens, tracing changes in street patterns, building typologies, and urban character. Building on this groundwork, the current research shifts from documenting change to interpreting it, asking what drove these transformations, how they respond to layered local conditions, and what they reveal about the evolving meaning of heritage in a rapidly urbanising Goan context.

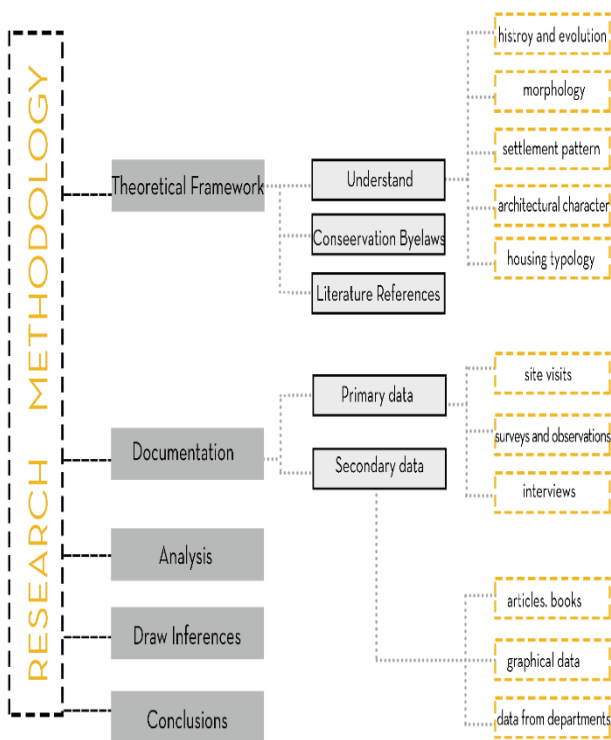


Figure 3: Framework for Research Methodology | Credits @ Author

To investigate these shifts, I employed a range of spatial and visual analysis methods and developed a framework (Figure 3) to guide the study. These included analysis of historical maps sourced from government archival departments to identify changes in street patterns, plot divisions, and land use over time. I also conducted typological studies, photo documentation, and field surveys to better understand how architectural features had evolved. The investigation of visual elements such as balcaos, plinths, cornices, and window styles enabled me to determine which features had been retained, modified, or removed in response to changing functional demands and aesthetic preferences. Additionally, I used comparative photographs, diagrams, and sectional drawings to illustrate the contrasts between traditional Indo-Portuguese architecture and newer, often informal, interventions within the street.



Figure 4: Timeline showing the Urban Evolution of Rua Abade Faria | Credits @ Author

I explored the urban evolution of Rua Abade Faria by analysing changes in built form, land use, and façade characteristics across four distinct timeframes: the pre-Portuguese period, the Portuguese colonial period, post-Liberation Goa, and the contemporary urban context (Figure 4 & 5).

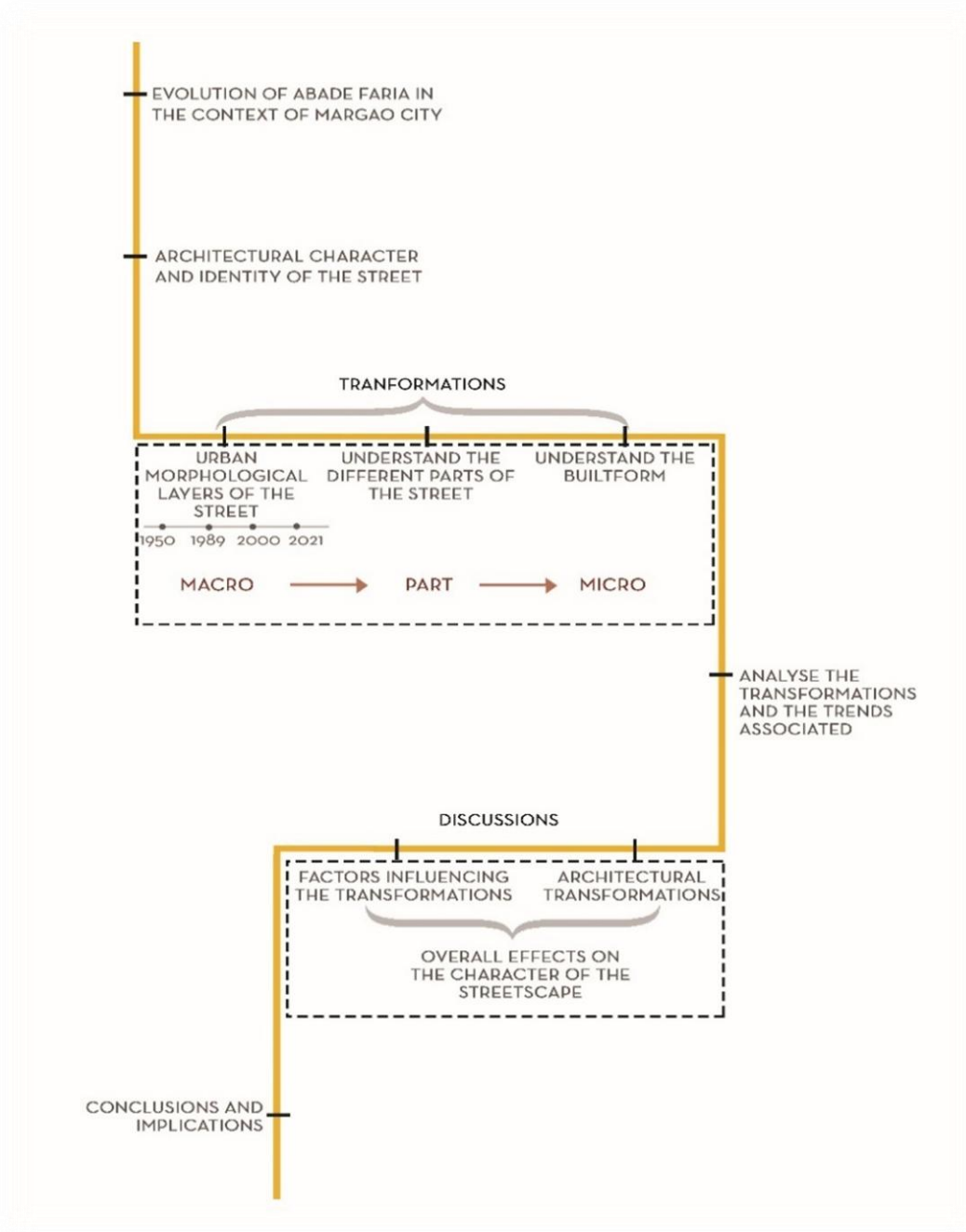


Figure 5: Research Timeline | Credits @ Author

The identity concept from the point of cities and architectural products includes a wide definition covering natural, geographical and cultural products and social life norms. Urban identity, architectural identity and the urban images about them are sometimes formed by very different components in a long period in urban space. (Yaldız et al., 2014) This perspective became particularly relevant in the case of Rua Abade Faria, where the built-form functions not merely as a container of cultural memory, but as an active site of continuous negotiation. The street's ongoing transformation - including shifts in land use, partial facade alterations, and changes in occupancy patterns, reflects how urban identity is continually redefined through lived experience.

On analysing the transforming character of the street of Abade Faria (Figure 6), tracing back to the 1950s till its state in 2021, the following observations were made in terms of the components that contributed to the architectural changes in the process of transformation and loss of its identity.

- o A gradual shift from introverted domestic forms with internal courtyards to outward-facing, street-oriented Indo-Portuguese houses.
- o Increasing spatial fragmentation and façade transformation in response to commercial pressures in the post-Liberation era.
- o A visible erosion of architectural identity, with many houses being adapted, altered, or replaced, often without heritage sensitivity, as seen in Figure 7 and 8 below.

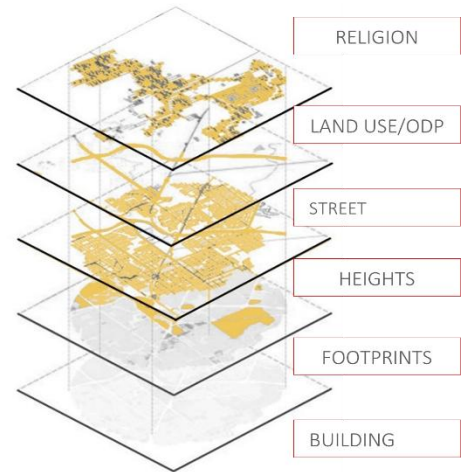


Figure 6: Diagram showing the Urban Morphological layers | Credits @ Urban Collage, University of Melbourne

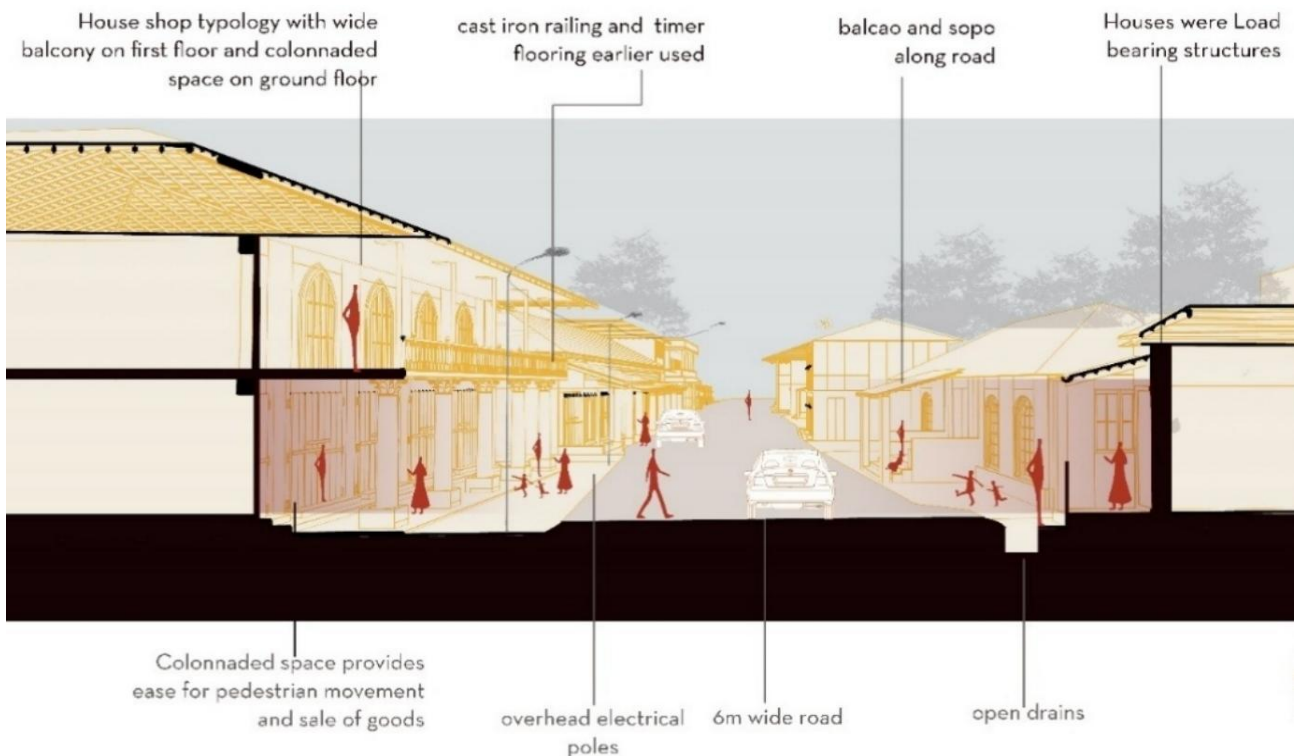


Figure 7: Sectional View of Rua Abade Faria before the 1990s | Credits @ Author

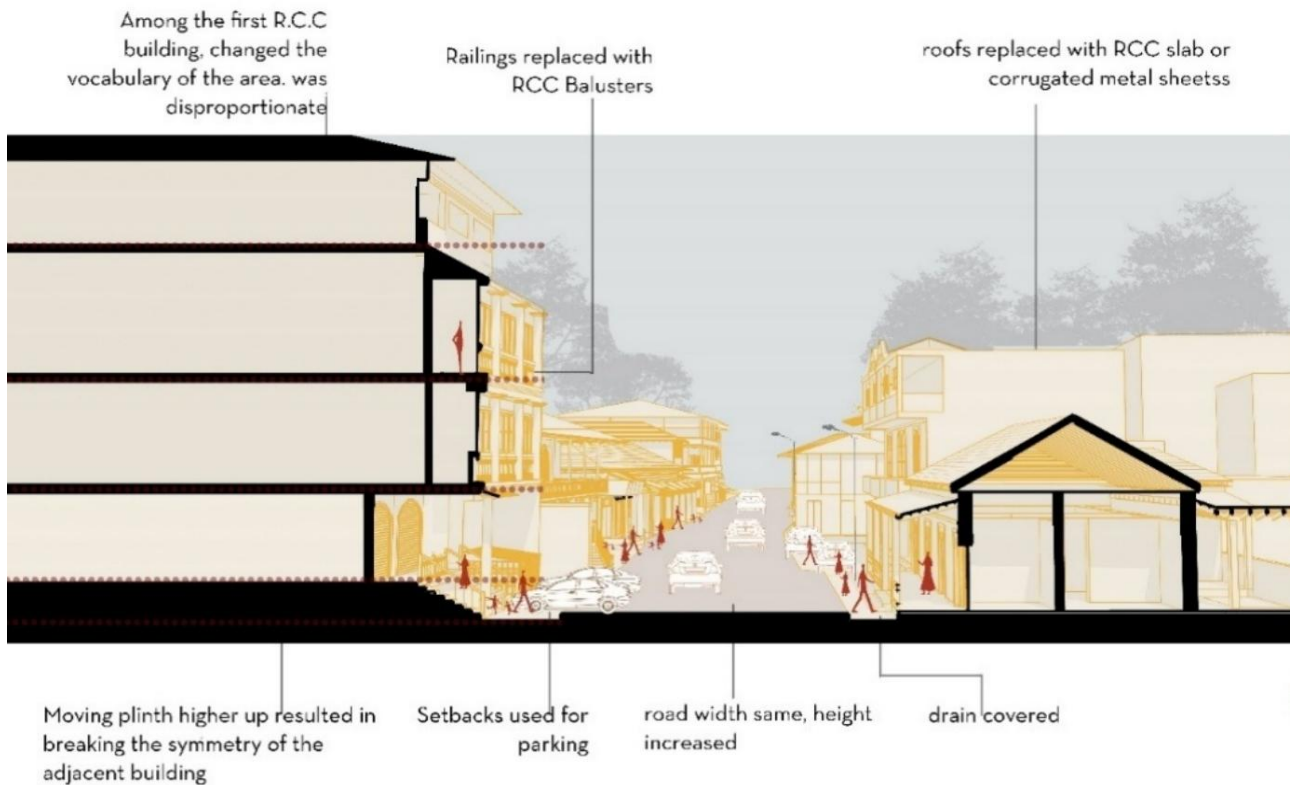


Figure 8: Sectional View of Rua Abade Faria before the 1990s showing the architectural transformations | Credits @ Author

The study effectively documented the **visible layers of change** along the street, offering a diachronic understanding of Rua Abade Faria's physical evolution. However, it remained largely observational and descriptive. However, it remained largely observational and descriptive. Building on my previous study, the current research shifts toward a more interpretive approach, examining the socio-cultural implications of spatial transformation.



Figure 9: Modern material inserts within an existing structure



Figure 10: Modern material inserts within an existing structure



Figure 11: Modern material inserts within an existing structure



Figure 12: Modern material inserts within an existing structure

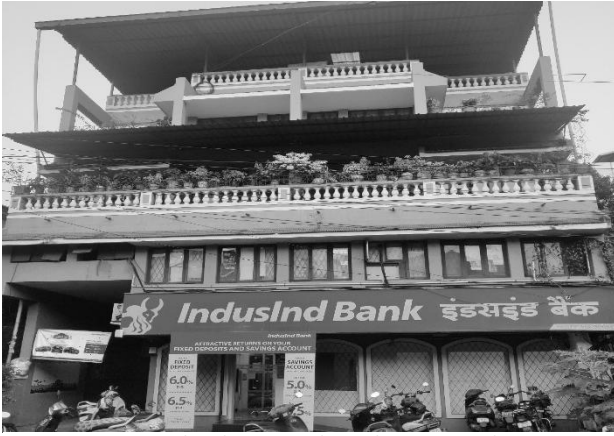


Figure 13: Newer development along the street in the 1980s



Figure 14: Newer development along the street in the 1980s



Figure 15: Newer development along the street - present day



Figure 16: Newer development along the street - present day

The above figures (Figures 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16) present a series of photographs showcasing the current state of the street, highlighting the various transformations over time. While the study succeeded in visually capturing transformations, it left several critical questions unaddressed. The gap between morphological change and architectural meaning remained largely unexplored. **Why were certain features retained while others disappeared? What influenced the way people adapted colonial domestic architecture to local needs? How did materials, climate, religion, and cultural practices shape this evolution? What meanings do these changes hold for residents today, especially in a city negotiating between heritage and modernity?**

Even in this layered transformation, moments of spatial logic and material memory persisted - revealing how heritage does not vanish, but often gets embedded, altered, or concealed. These unanswered questions laid the foundation for the current research.

## 1.2 The Present Research: Reframing the Inquiry

This research picks up where the earlier study left off, moving from documenting physical transformation to interpreting the underlying processes that shaped it. Rather than mapping change, here I investigate how Portuguese colonial architecture influenced urban and domestic forms in Goa, and how these forms were gradually adapted in response to local climatic, cultural, and social contexts. This approach enables a shift from observing buildings as static entities to understanding them as dynamic records of negotiation, between past and present, between heritage and use.

Rua Abade Faria remains central to this investigation, but it is now positioned as a microcosm through which broader patterns of architectural adaptation can be understood. Given the limited availability of site-specific archival data, the study draws on key literature by scholars such as Heta Pandit, Gerard da Cunha, and Angelo Costa Silveira, to establish a broader typological and cultural framework. This literature provides a foundation for identifying key features of Indo-Portuguese architecture and their regional reinterpretations.

Building on fieldwork from my undergraduate dissertation, the current research focuses on the Noronha House, a selected residence on Rua Abade Faria, as a detailed case study. Through site documentation, spatial analysis, and photographic comparison, the house becomes a lens through which broader typological trends and patterns of adaptation are made visible. The case study enables a shift in perspective, from viewing buildings as fixed artefacts to interpreting them as dynamic, lived spaces that reflect continuous negotiation between heritage and contemporary use.

The research aims to explore the evolution of Portuguese colonial architectural principles in Rua Abade Faria, Goa, examining how these forms were transformed over time and adapted to the local climatic, cultural, and social conditions. The central research question guiding this inquiry is: ***How did Portuguese colonial architecture influence the urban and domestic forms of Rua Abade Faria in Goa, and how were these forms adapted to the local context over time?***

To address this question, the research is guided by four key objectives. First, it seeks to analyse the architectural characteristics of Portuguese colonial influence in Goa, with a specific focus on residential and urban typologies. Second, it examines how these architectural forms evolved and were reinterpreted in response to the socio-cultural, environmental, and economic realities of Rua Abade Faria. Third, it evaluates the role of these adaptations in shaping a distinctive Goan architectural identity, particularly in relation to urban morphology and domestic space. Lastly, it investigates the contemporary implications of these transformations for heritage conservation and urban planning in Margao, especially in light of increasing development pressure.

Methodologically, the research adopts a comparative and interpretive approach, integrating both primary site analysis and secondary literature. The visual and spatial data gathered during earlier fieldwork is re-examined through a new analytical lens, supported by additional documentation of Noronha House. Comparative typological analysis helps to identify architectural patterns across time, while theoretical readings of domesticity, material culture, and identity formation inform the interpretation of architectural change.

## 2 Colonial Architecture in Goa and Evolution of the Traditional Goan House

Culture is defined as the entire way of life of a society. It is a complex set of beliefs, values, traditions and customs of that social group as outlined by the Cambridge Dictionary (2008). Culture is reflected in the art, and architecture of a society. Hence it can be construed that architecture is an expression of culture. It responds to the needs and values of the society thereby creating a unique style which differs from one society to another (Stephen, 1994). This unique architectural style thus establishes a new cultural identity.

In certain places, one society might consist of one or more cultures reflecting different styles of art and architecture within the same area. While in certain places there may be a fusion of two different cultures due to various reasons predominantly influenced by colonisation, resulting in the creation of a new culture. This new culture will reflect the aspects of both cultures but in differing shades, depending on the dominant culture. Thus we can concur that culture is dynamic and can accommodate itself to the changes over time (Amos, 1969).

In Goa, the cultural identity was shaped by a long-standing tradition that underwent significant changes with the arrival of the Portuguese. The architectural evolution in Goa became a fusion of indigenous traditions and European colonial influences, creating a unique Indo-Portuguese architectural style (Figure 17).



Figure 17: A Portuguese merchant being greeted by his Indian household. 16th century | Credits @ Códice Casanatense

## 2.1 Portuguese Colonialism around the World

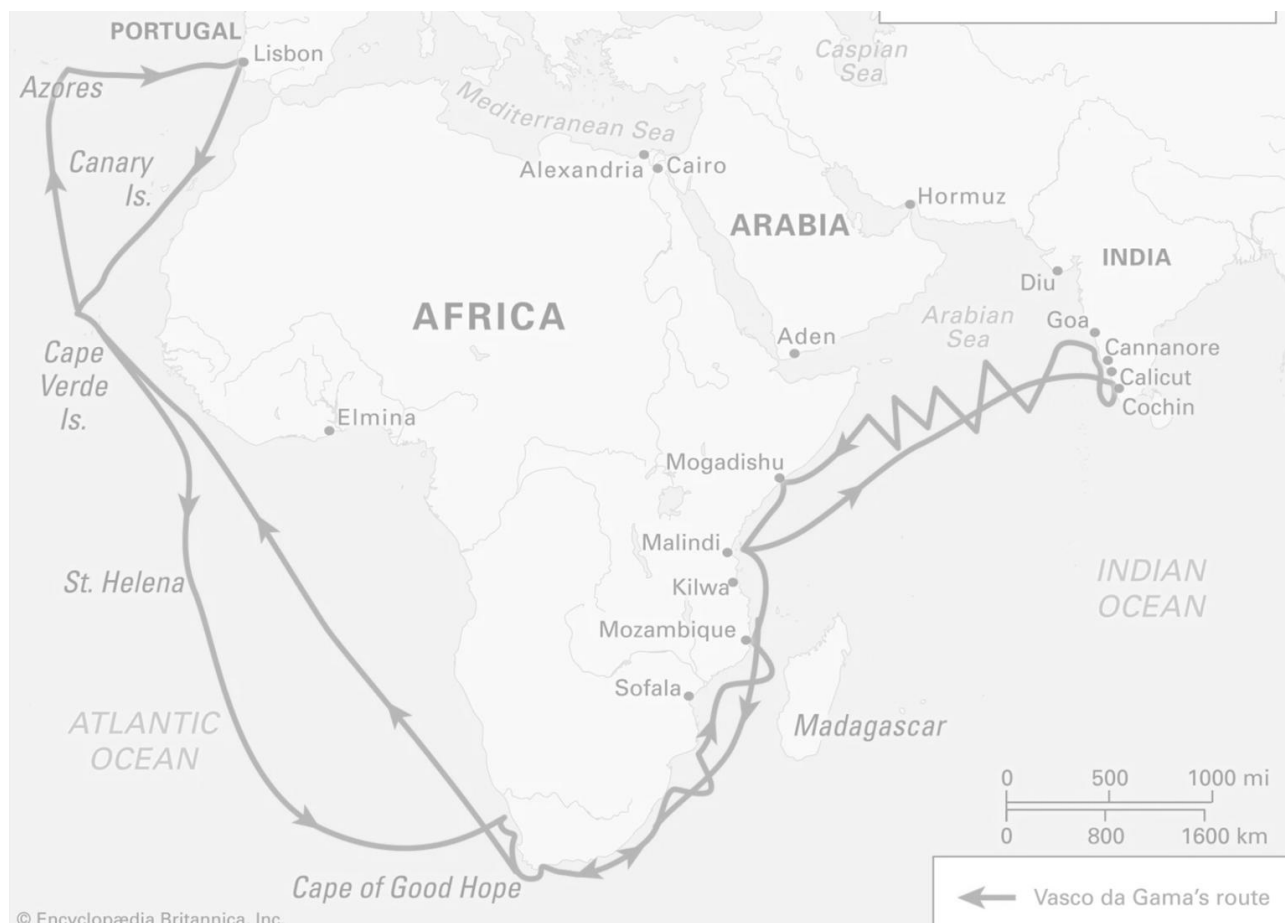


Figure 18: The Portuguese trade route to the Indian Sub-Continent | Credits @ Britanica

The Portuguese arrived in Goa in 1510 under the leadership of Afonso de Albuquerque. Their colonial presence in Goa lasted for over four centuries, and during this time, the region became a pivotal center for Portuguese power in Asia. The Portuguese colonization was not limited to military control and resource extraction but also sought to introduce European cultural, religious, and architectural norms into the region.

The conquest of Ceuta, Morocco in 1415 marked the beginning of Portuguese overseas expansion, primarily driven by their interest in controlling the trans-Saharan trade of gold and slaves. Interestingly, during their maritime explorations, the Portuguese incidentally colonized Brazil while en-route to discover a sea route to India (Nisha & Jayasudha, 2020). But around 1480, their focus shifted more deliberately towards India and its lucrative spice trade. At the time, this trade was dominated by Muslim merchants who sold spices to European traders at a profit. The Portuguese aimed to bypass these intermediaries and gain direct access to the spice-producing regions (Pearson, 2008). Vasco da Gama's arrival in Calicut in 1498 marked the beginning of their presence in India. To secure their routes, the Portuguese established trading stations or factories and fortified settlements along the coasts of Arabia, Africa and eventually India. These trading posts served not only as economic hubs but also as strategic points of control, helping the Portuguese establish a near-monopoly on maritime trade routes across Asia and Europe. Alongside trade, the Portuguese missionaries began spreading Christianity in the regions they occupied (Jeyaseela, 2009). And many of these trading outposts evolved into permanent colonies (Manuel, 1990). Figure 18 shows the Portuguese trade route to the Indian Sub-Continent in the early 1500s.

Portuguese people by nature were able to easily interact with other cultures as their ultimate goal was to get hold of spice trade and spread Christianity. This led to the creation of an impeccable cross-cultural mix between the Indians and the Portuguese. These cross cultures were clearly reflected in Indo-Portuguese architecture creating a unique built environment (Nisha & Jayasudha, 2020). One of the major characteristic features of Traditional Portuguese architecture and its colonial architecture is the perfect adaptation and amalgamation to its surroundings (Inês, 2015), and the resultant Indo-Portuguese architecture stands as an epitome confluence. Thus, the emerging multi-cultural architecture was indeed acknowledged and accepted by the natives as a neo-typology revolutionising their traditional architecture.

Initially, Portuguese architecture in Goa sought to replicate European forms and structures. The Portuguese sought to impose European architectural styles and urban planning principles in their colonies, using architecture as a means of asserting power and authority (Saldanha, 2006). The architectural models were drawn from Lisbon and other European centers, with churches, forts, and administrative buildings dominating the urban landscape. These buildings served both functional and symbolic purposes, asserting Portuguese dominance and fostering a sense of colonial authority (Figure 19).

However, the replication of European architecture in Goa was not a straightforward endeavour. Local climatic conditions, cultural practices, and the availability of materials necessitated a series of adaptations. The tropical climate, characterized by high humidity and heat, led to the introduction of wide verandas, sloping roofs, and large windows to facilitate ventilation and cooling. Local materials, such as laterite stone, mangrove wood, and clay tiles, became integral to the construction of colonial buildings. These changes marked the beginning of a hybrid architectural style that blended European design with indigenous practices (Cabral, 2014).



Figure 19: Statue of Luís Vaz de Camões in the centre of Saint Francis Xavier Square in 1962, after the Estado da Índia became part of India. Photo by Francis Millet Rogers. | Credits @ Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 'Francis Millet Rogers 1962'

## 2.2 The Traditional Goan House

To understand the evolution of Goan architecture, it is essential to first examine the traditional Goan house form (Figure 20) before Portuguese colonisation. Pre-colonial Goan society was highly organised, with a well-structured social and architectural order. The arrival of the Portuguese brought significant changes, leading to a fusion of architectural styles. In the presence of advances and withdrawals, Indo-Portuguese civil architecture was based fundamentally on the interconnection and reciprocal social



Figure 20: A traditional Goan house pre-colonisation | Credits@ Soul Travelling

intercourse between the two architectural models; the local Hindu model and the Catholics. The Portuguese were confronted in Goa with an ancient culture involving a social structure which was strongly hierarchical, as well as customs defined by extremely strict rules. If conversion to Catholicism brought a new set of behavioural patterns, the persistence of the caste system in the local population perpetuated many of the social codes, especially those relating to domestic life. Within this interconnection; whilst Portuguese architecture acquired a position in relation to the structure and design of the façade, the Hindu architectural controlled the interiors, displaying a strong resistance to the Portuguese spatial styles. (Pandit, 1999).

## 2.3 Understanding the Traditional Goan House

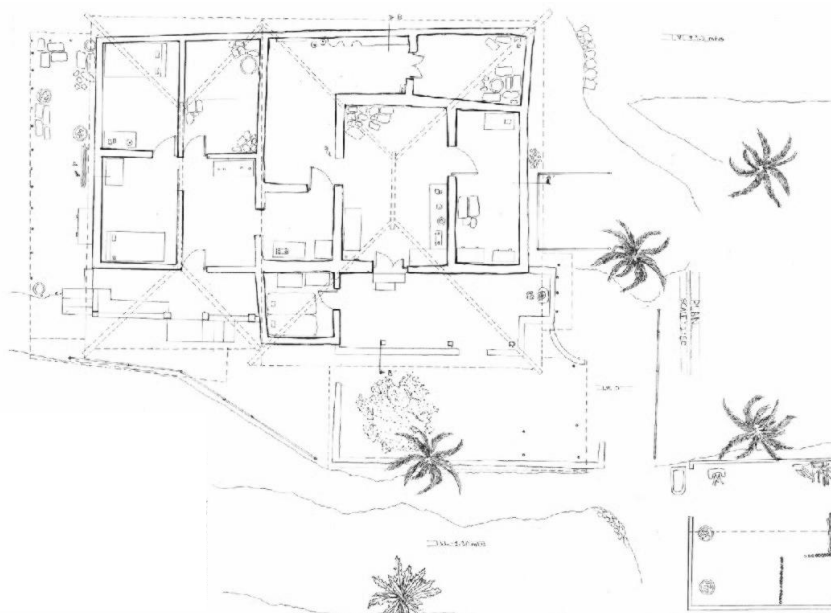


Figure 21: Ramesh Velip's House-Plan, Soliem, redrawn from Dsilva, T. (2015). Goa Documentation Programme GCA-CEPT

As man shifted from being hunter-gatherers to settlers a lot of new concepts that are very prevalent in modern architecture came to reality. Small clusters developed initially which were connected with a common alley and the compound walls which we see now initially developed as a picket fence to keep the wild animals outside and the domestic animals inside ensuring their safety as their primary occupation was agrarian. This evolved to

become symbols of proprietorship, ownership, and social status. The winding alleys connected to the forecourts which then opened up to the house and shed. Later the Portuguese arrived and were colonized the locals and their way of living in the 16th and 17th centuries which had a volatile impact on the architecture and how these houses were embellished. (Pandit & Mascarenhas, 2006).

There are various steps involved in building a Goan house which are very scientific and practical because of the weather conditions of Goa, which makes it very special and unique geographically (Barbosa 2016).



Figure 22: Ramesh Velip's House - Section A & B, Soliem, redrawn from Dsilva, T. (2015). Goa Documentation Programme GCA-CEPT

In traditional-vernacular Goan houses, the layout is typically divided into three main sections: the Front, the Middle, and the Rear. Each part serves specific functions and contributes to the house's comfort and climate response, the drawings of Ramesh Velip's house (Figure 21, 22, 23 and 24) is taken as a reference for better visual understanding.

**Front Section (Entrance Area):** The front of the house includes the *sopo*, which acts as the buffer zone between the outdoors and the interior. These spaces serve as social areas where family members interact and welcome guests. They also provide shade, helping to protect the main walls from rain and reducing direct exposure to sunlight, which keeps the interior cooler. This buffer space adds a layer of security and privacy by creating a physical separation from the street or entrance pathway.

**Middle Section (Transitional Spaces):** The middle area usually contains spaces like courtyards, inner verandahs, or hallways. These transitional spaces serve as connections between different parts of the house. They are designed to maximize natural lighting and ventilation, allowing air to flow freely through the house, which is essential in a tropical climate. This section is often used for various household activities, including religious rituals, daily chores, and sometimes for occupational purposes. The design of the middle area is thoughtfully integrated with the overall layout to support the daily life and cultural practices of the family.

**Rear Section (Service and Private Areas):** The rear part of the house contains private and service areas such as the kitchen, dining room, bathrooms, and toilets. There is often a bore well here, placed strategically between the kitchen and bathing area, making it convenient for both spaces to access water. This layout supports practical needs, especially for water usage, and keeps service activities somewhat separated from the front and middle sections.

Additionally, these homes are oriented to make the most of prevailing wind patterns while minimizing direct sunlight exposure, especially during the hottest parts of the day. This orientation reduces heat gain and contributes to a cooler indoor environment, demonstrating the climate-sensitive approach of traditional Goan architecture. (Silveira, 2008)



Figure 23: Ramesh Velip's House - Elevation, Soliem, redrawn from Dsilva, T. (2015). Goa Documentation Programme GCA-CEPT



Figure 24: Ramesh Velip's House - Section, Soliem, redrawn from Dsilva, T. (2015). Goa Documentation Programme GCA-CEPT

Traditional-vernacular Goan architecture has a clear consistency in construction methods, materials, and techniques used for various building components, such as roofs, walls, and floors. This homogeneity is evident in the similar methods and materials seen across many vernacular buildings.

**Roofs:** Roofs in traditional Goan houses are usually made from timber, pan tiles, Mangalore tiles, or thatch. The structure consists of horizontal wooden beams resting on the walls, connected by additional timber above, forming the base for the sloped roof structure or truss. Wooden battens are placed on the truss to hold the roofing material in place. Eaves and cornices mark the roof's edge, providing both a finished look and protection from rain and sunlight.

**Walls:** Walls were mainly constructed using locally sourced laterite stone, cut into blocks for uniform masonry. Some walls were solid laterite, while others had a cavity filled with soil from the construction site to provide insulation. Finally, a mortar made from powdered laterite, lime, river sand, and water was used to finish the walls.

**Flooring:** Floors were raised by about one or two meters using laterite blocks and compacted earth. Initially, floors were finished with cow dung, which acted as a cooling agent, was easily available, and filled any cracks or crevices. Later, red oxide flooring became common, with sugarcane jaggery sometimes added to the mix for strength and as a natural binder.



Additionally, the settlements in Goa were influenced by Islamic urban planning principles, seen in the narrow, winding streets and the layout of houses. This adaptation was reflective of the need for mutual shading in response to the hot and humid climate. The intersections of streets often featured grottos or small communal spaces, which were integral to local social interactions.

## 2.6 Adaptation of Portuguese Architecture to Goa

While Portuguese colonial architecture initially sought to replicate European forms, it quickly adapted to the local climate, culture, and materials. Goa's tropical climate, characterized by hot and humid conditions, necessitated the inclusion of climate-responsive design features, such as wide verandas, sloping roofs, and large windows for ventilation (Cabral, 2014).

Indigenous cultural practices also influenced the design of colonial buildings. Initially, The layout of Hindu houses were based on a quadrilateral plan, following the belief that the four corners of a home are sacred (Figure 26). Privacy was not emphasized, and spaces within the home were flexible, shifting functions depending on the season or need. The courtyard played a central role, used as a multi-functional area for drying, washing, chores, religious rituals, and family gatherings. (Deshpande, 2003). These changes marked the beginning of a hybrid architectural style that blended European design with indigenous practices.

The traditional house design in Goa was affected by the following factors:

- o The European lifestyle was encouraged in an attempt to separate newly converted Goan Christians from their cultural roots. They adopted a European outlook but did not cut themselves off from their Indian roots completely. The resulting cultural fusion affected the house design.
- o Protecting one from the fierce monsoons was the basis of the architectural form.
- o Portuguese rule allowed Goans to travel abroad, when they returned they brought with them ideas and influences, making the Goan house a mixture and adaptation of design elements and influence from all over the world.



Figure 26: The Hindu House Courtyard, Sanvordekar House | Credits @ www.thehindu.com



Figure 27: Typical façade of an Indo- Portuguese residence | Credits @ Mohta

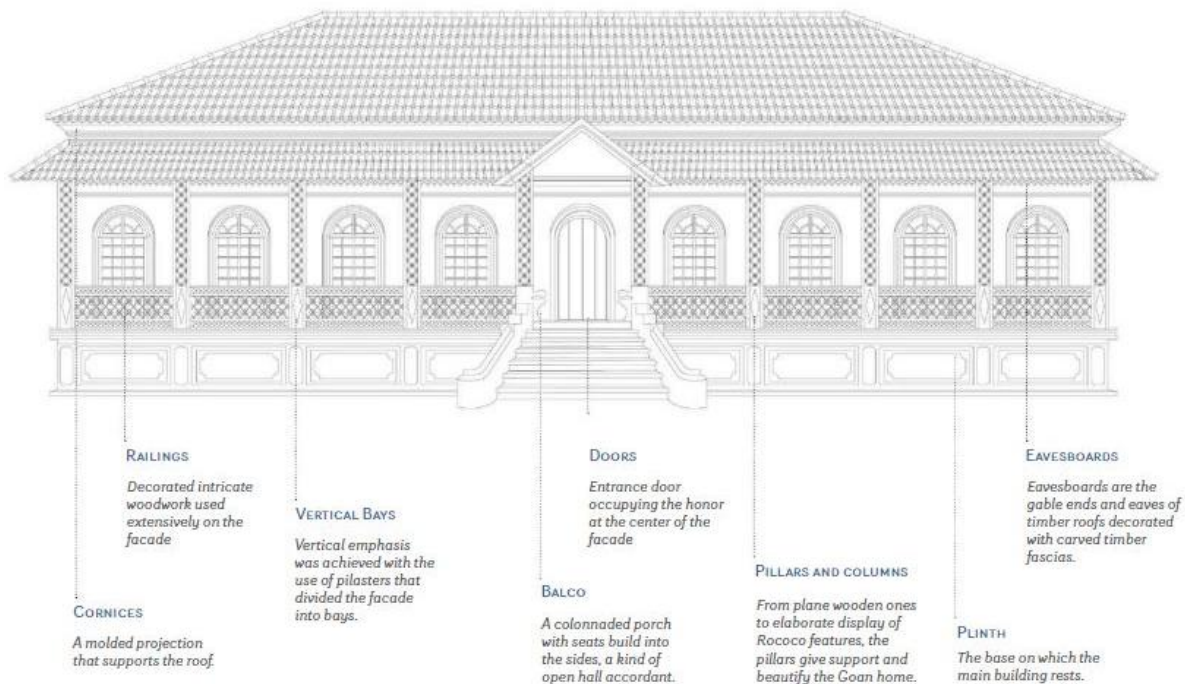


Figure 28: Typical façade of an Indo- Portuguese residence with descriptive elements | Credits @ Mohta

The year 1750 was a turning point in Goa's political and social history. It is this turning point that was also responsible for the exuberance and ostentation in architectural wealth that we see in the houses of Goa built subsequently

The traditional houses of Goa were all introverted displaying their introverted nature. They had small openings which rarely opened on to streets. The rooms opened into the courtyard. On the contrary with the arrival of Portuguese, their cultural change also brought in a change in the traditional architecture of Goa, converting the introverted plan into an extroverted one. **Balcaos, Balconies and verandas** (Figure 31, 32) were all brought in to make it extroverted. These spaces were used by both men and women, day and night and enjoyed their leisure time. The houses had **high plinths and ornamental columns in the balcaos**. (Figure 31) The facades were proportionate and were decorated with lime plasters. **Windows and door surrounds were painted in white and the corners were emphasized with pilaster strips**. (Figure 33) These were all some of the aspects that could be found in the houses of both Algarve and Goa. (Pandit, 1999) Figures 27 and 28 graphically illustrate the typical façade of an Indo-Portuguese residence, accompanied by descriptive annotations that highlight its defining architectural features.

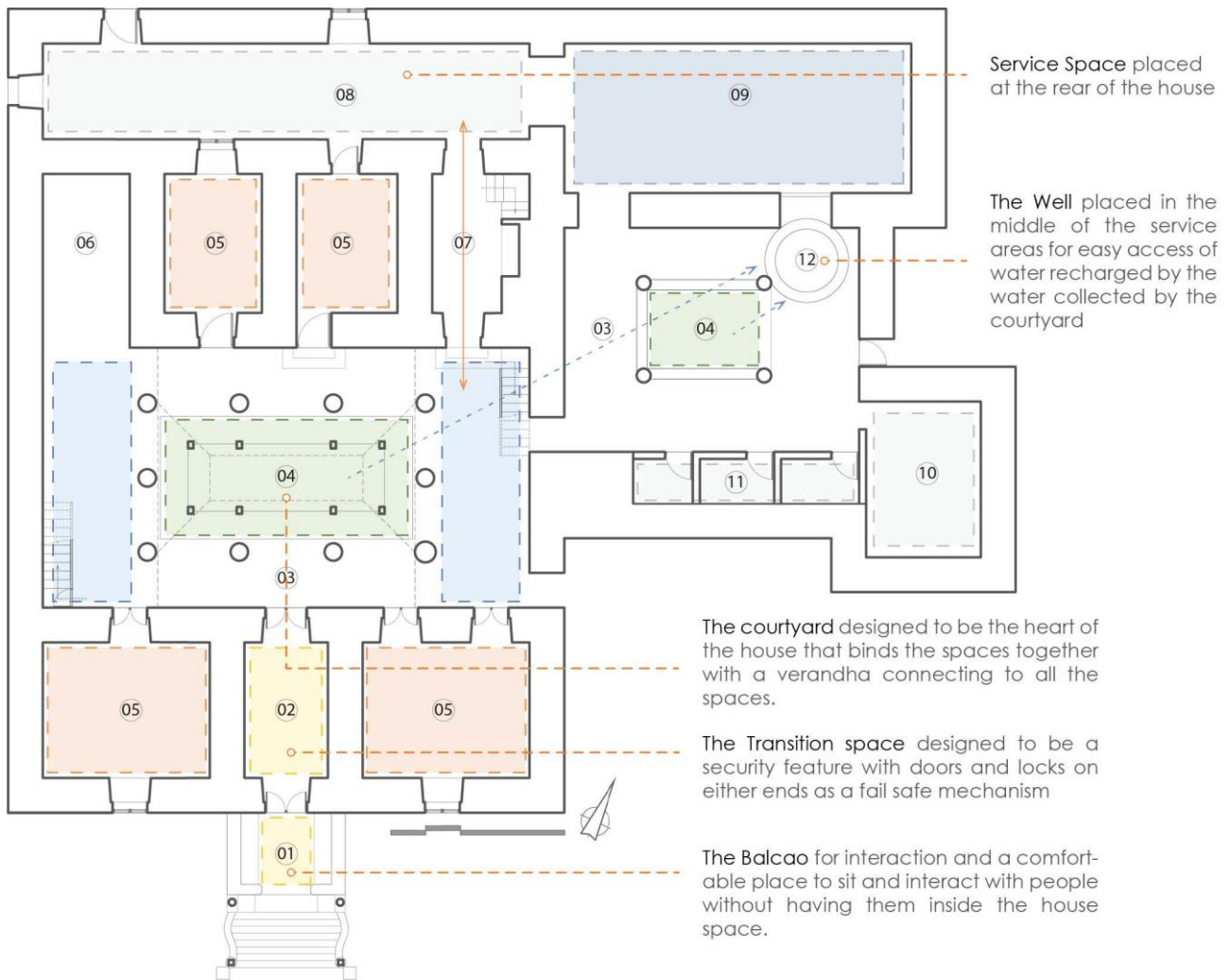


Figure 29: Shiroda House Plan: Spatial planning and functions | Credits @ Muhammed Beg

The tropical climate of Goa necessitated the incorporation of climate-responsive elements in the design of buildings. **Wide verandas** and **overhanging roofs** provided shade and protection from the sun. **Large windows** (Figure 29) were used to allow for cross-ventilation, keeping the interiors cool and comfortable. The use of local materials, such as laterite stone and mangrove wood, helped regulate the temperature inside the buildings, ensuring they were better suited to the hot, humid conditions. The use of **courtyards**, a **central feature of traditional Goan homes**, (Figure 29, 26) was adapted into colonial buildings as a way to create cooler living spaces. The courtyards acted as social spaces, allowing for privacy while promoting family interaction. Shiroda House, a traditional Goan Hindu house adapting to the colonial imprints is used as an example. (Figure 29, 30)

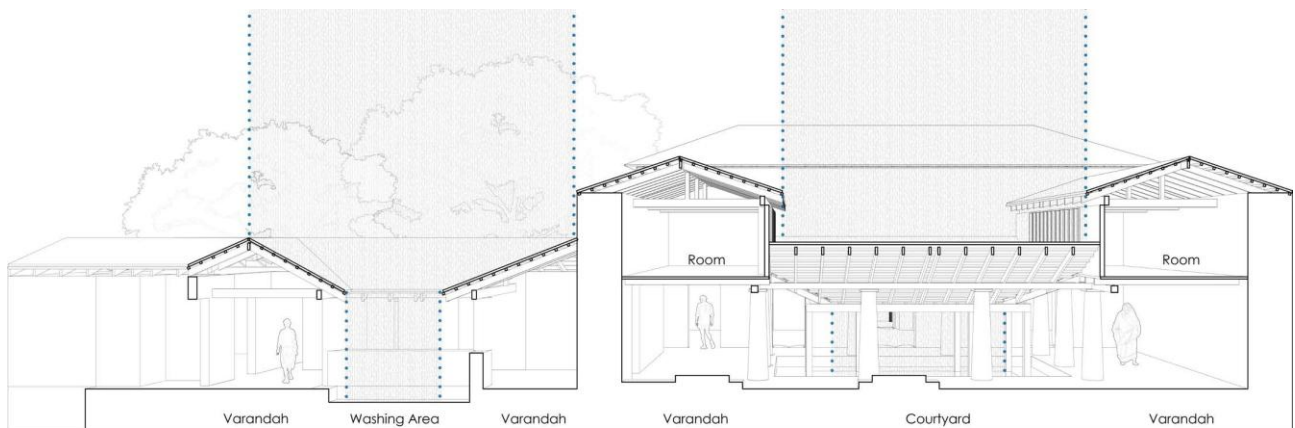


Figure 30: Shiroda House Section through the courtyards | Credits @ Muhammed Beg



Figure 31: High plinth with Balcao



Figure 32: Balcao with Verandah



Figure 33: Full length arched window

The height of the plinth and the detailed ornamentations in the façade displayed the wealth and status of the owner. Another character which is peculiar to Indo-Portuguese architecture in Goa is the usage of **oyster shells in window shutters instead of glass.** ((Figure 34, 35) Diffused light enters the building when the light gets reflected in these shutters.

Islamic influence in the decorative elements can be seen through floral and vegetative patterns. The houses also had certain decorative or ornamental elements which symbolically conveyed certain meanings. For example, the presence of a **rooster on the roofs of houses, wells etc.** (Figure 36) was to represent that they belonged to the Portuguese origin, as roosters were the national bird of Portugal. Another element which is present in most houses is the **statue of a soldier**, (Figure 36) which represents that a person from their family belongs to the army.

Another distinctive character of Indo-Portuguese houses in Goa is the **colour code** followed in the buildings. The strict instruction was given that all the houses should be painted in bright colours except white, which was limited only to Church and administrative buildings (Figure 39). **Azulejos** (painted tin-glazed ceramic tiles panels) in white and blue, were present at the entrance of all houses and were used as name plates. The use of porcelain and ceramic tiles indicate the trade link between Goa, China and other Asian countries (Figure 37).

Mohan Pai states that Goan domestic architecture is a combination of biodegradable building material and an exposure to the elements may have been responsible for the collapse of older constructions.

The main stock of houses that have survived appear to be those built or refurbished between the middle of the 18th and the 20th centuries, a period when the region was under Portuguese governance.



Figure 34: Oyster Shell Window



Figure 35: Oyster Shells



Figure 36: Rooster and Soldier on rooftop



Figure 37: Name-plate with Azulejo

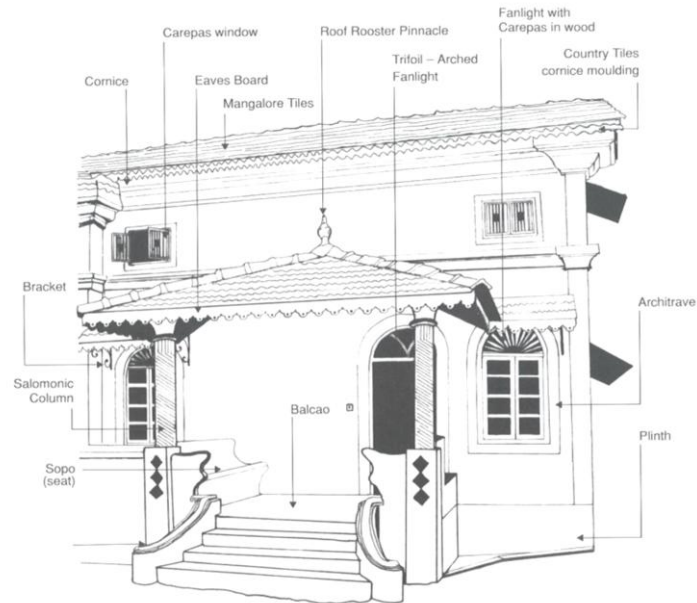


Figure 38: Architectural elements distinct to the style | Credits @ GHAG, 2017

The evolution of Portuguese colonial architecture in Goa, particularly the transformation of the traditional Goan house, reflects a complex interplay between indigenous architectural traditions and European colonial influences. The adaptation of Portuguese architecture to local conditions, materials, and cultural practices resulted in the creation of a distinct Indo-Portuguese style that remains a significant part of Goa's architectural heritage. Figure 38 above highlights architectural elements that are distinct to the Indo-Portuguese style.

By examining the evolution of the traditional Goan house and the impact of Portuguese colonialism, this chapter has outlined the ways in which architecture can be both a reflection of and a response to the broader socio-cultural and environmental context. The next chapter will explore the specific architectural features of Rua Abade Faria, analysing how the fusion of Portuguese and Goan architectural forms has shaped the urban and domestic landscape in this unique part of Goa.



Figure 39: Fontainhas, Goa | Credits @ Shutterstock

# 3

## Rua Abade Faria: A Case of Lived Adaptation

Building on the preceding chapter's analysis of the traditional Goan house and its evolution under Portuguese influence, this chapter applies those insights to a focused urban and architectural case: Rua Abade Faria in Margao, Goa. As one of the quieter heritage streets in the city, it represents a layered palimpsest of Goan domestic architecture adapting to shifting socio-economic, urban, and cultural forces. Figure 40 shows Miranda House, one of the oldest residences on the street, bearing layers of history embedded in its architecture.

This chapter analyses Noronha House, a residence with deep roots in the postcolonial period, tracing its transformations from the 1950s to the present day. The spatial evolution of Noronhas House is used as a lens to explore broader questions: How are heritage houses altered when domesticity, economy, and memory intersect? What happens to traditional identity when a single house undergoes division, functional adaption, and partial redevelopment?



Figure 40: Casa Miranda | Credits @ Author

### 3.1 Margao City

The city of Margao lies in the centre of Salcete Taluka and serves as the South Goa district Headquarters.

Margao lies on 15 16' 30" North latitude and 75 57' 30" East longitudes and is connected to the capital city Panjim and Karwar in Karnataka by the NH17 highway. The river Sal 24km long rises near Verna and runs close to the city and then connects to the Arabian Sea near Betul. Figure 41 shows the location of Margao within Goa.

Margao is basically bounded by two major hillocks, Pajifond area and the Monte Hill with the main settlement having a flat terrain. River Sal runs south of Margao whereas in the North and West it is made up of vast marshy paddy fields. (Prabhudesai, 2011) Figure 42 illustrates its figure-ground map, offering an overview of the city's spatial layout.

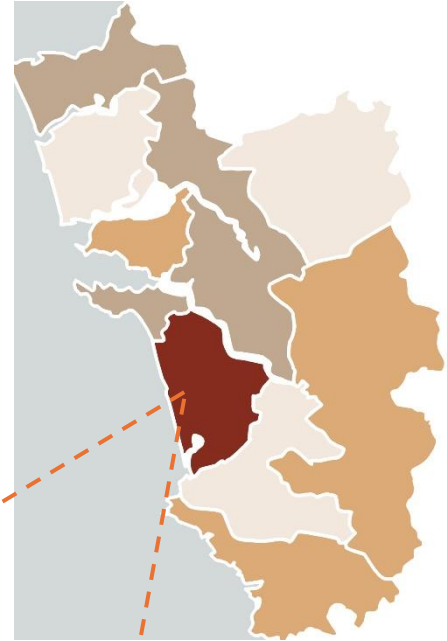


Figure 41: Map of Goa showing the location of Margao | Credits @ Auhtor



Figure 42: Figure ground map of Margao city | Credits @ Author

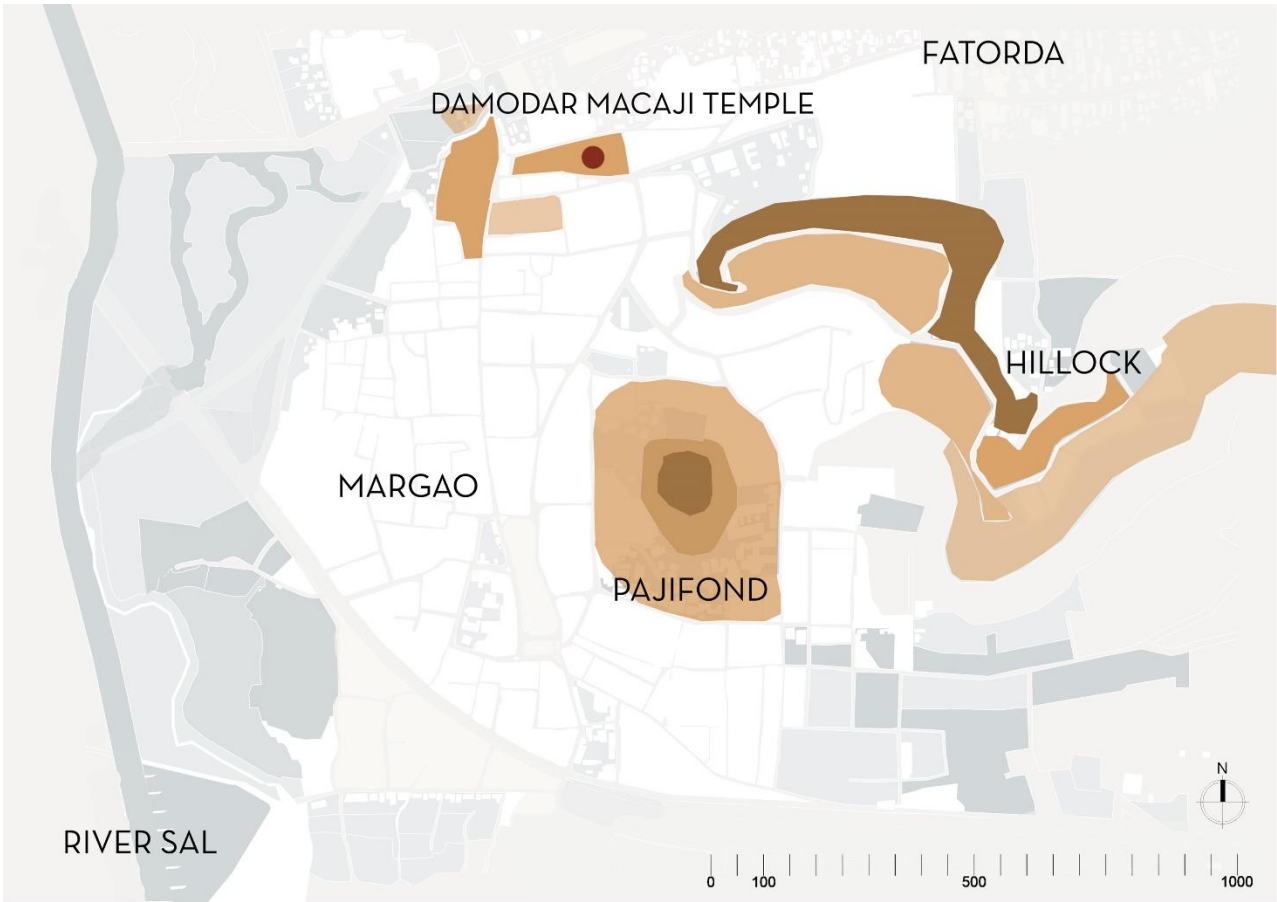


Figure 43: Map of Margao City, Pre-Portuguese | Credits @ Author

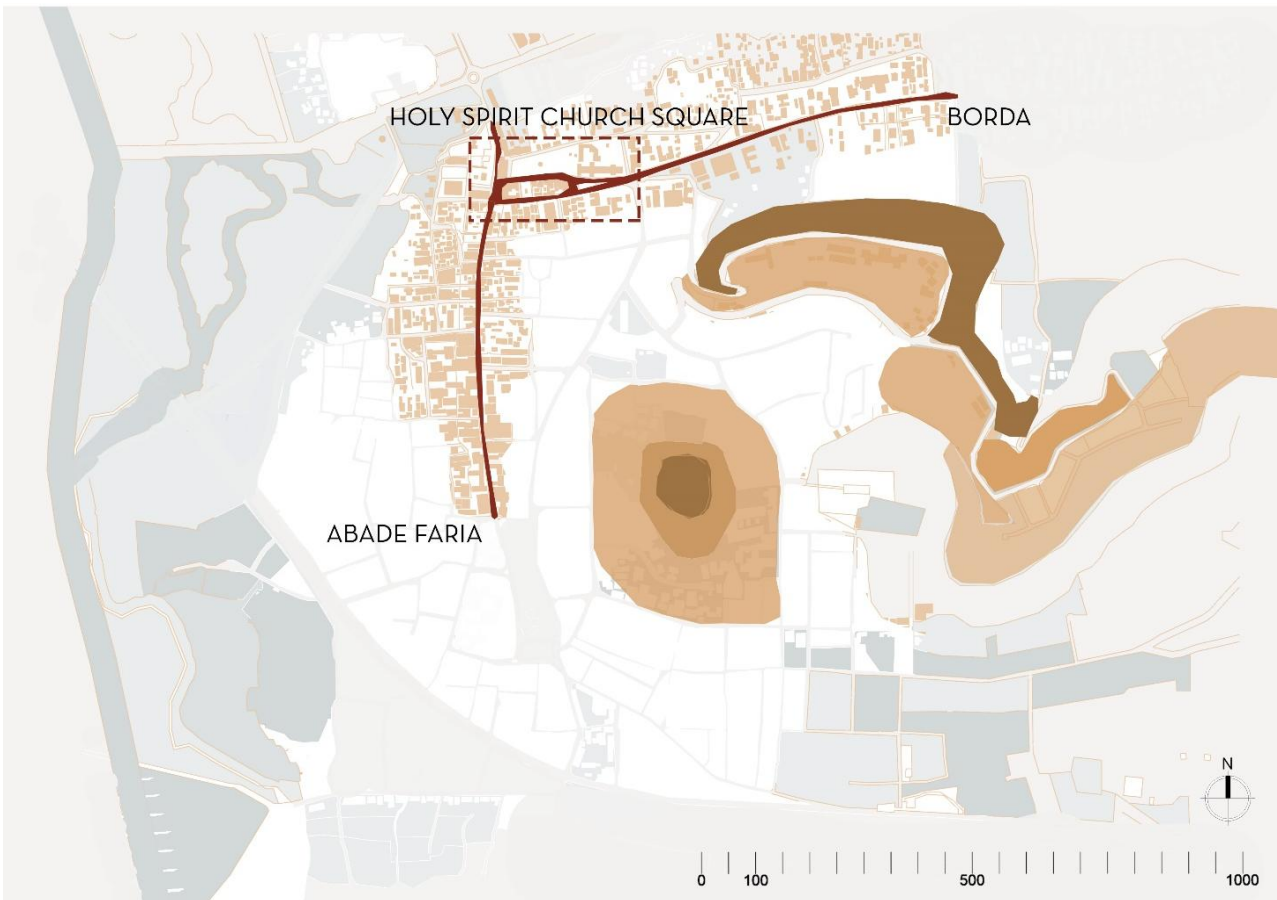


Figure 44: Map of Margao City, Capture of Goa by Portuguese | Credits @ Author

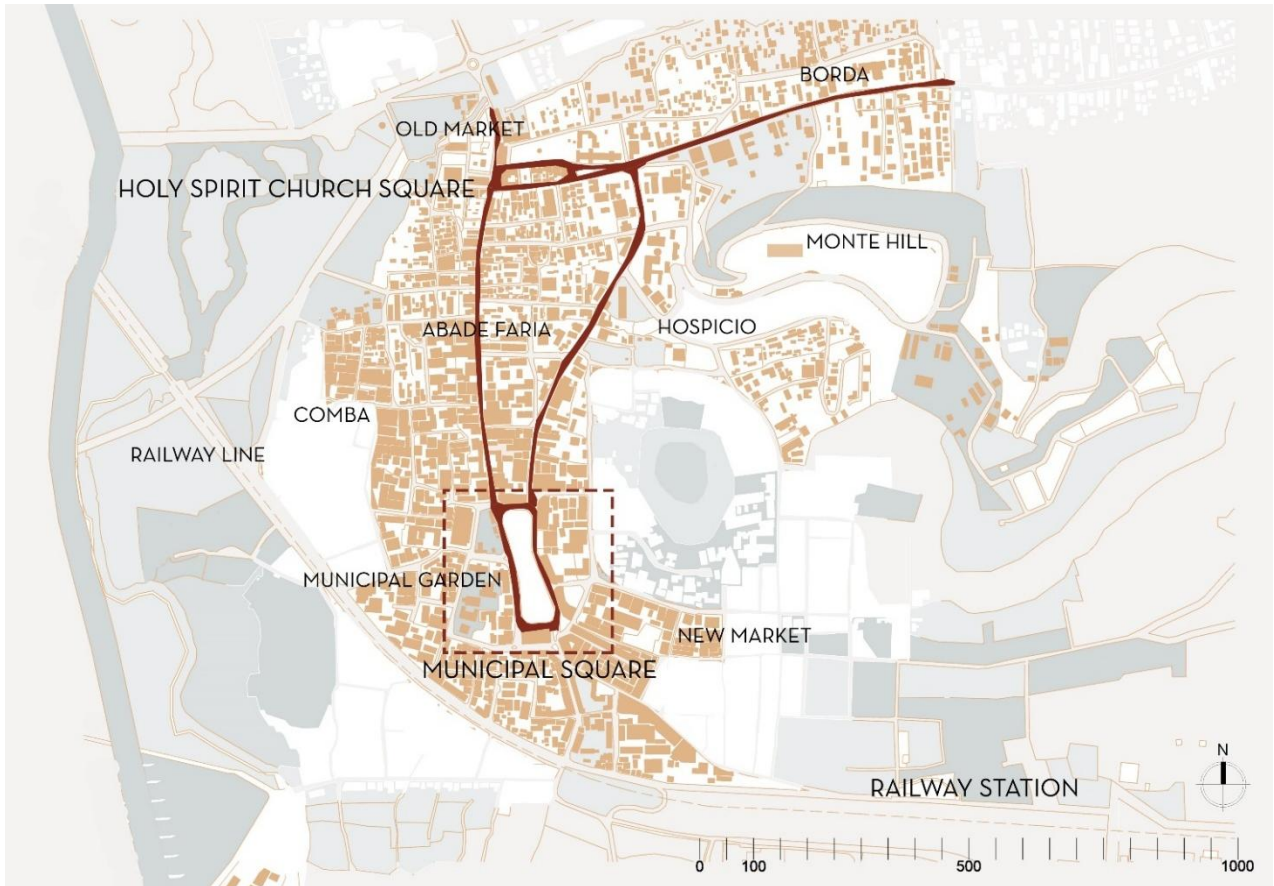


Figure 45: Map of Margao City, 1910-1950 | Credits @ Author

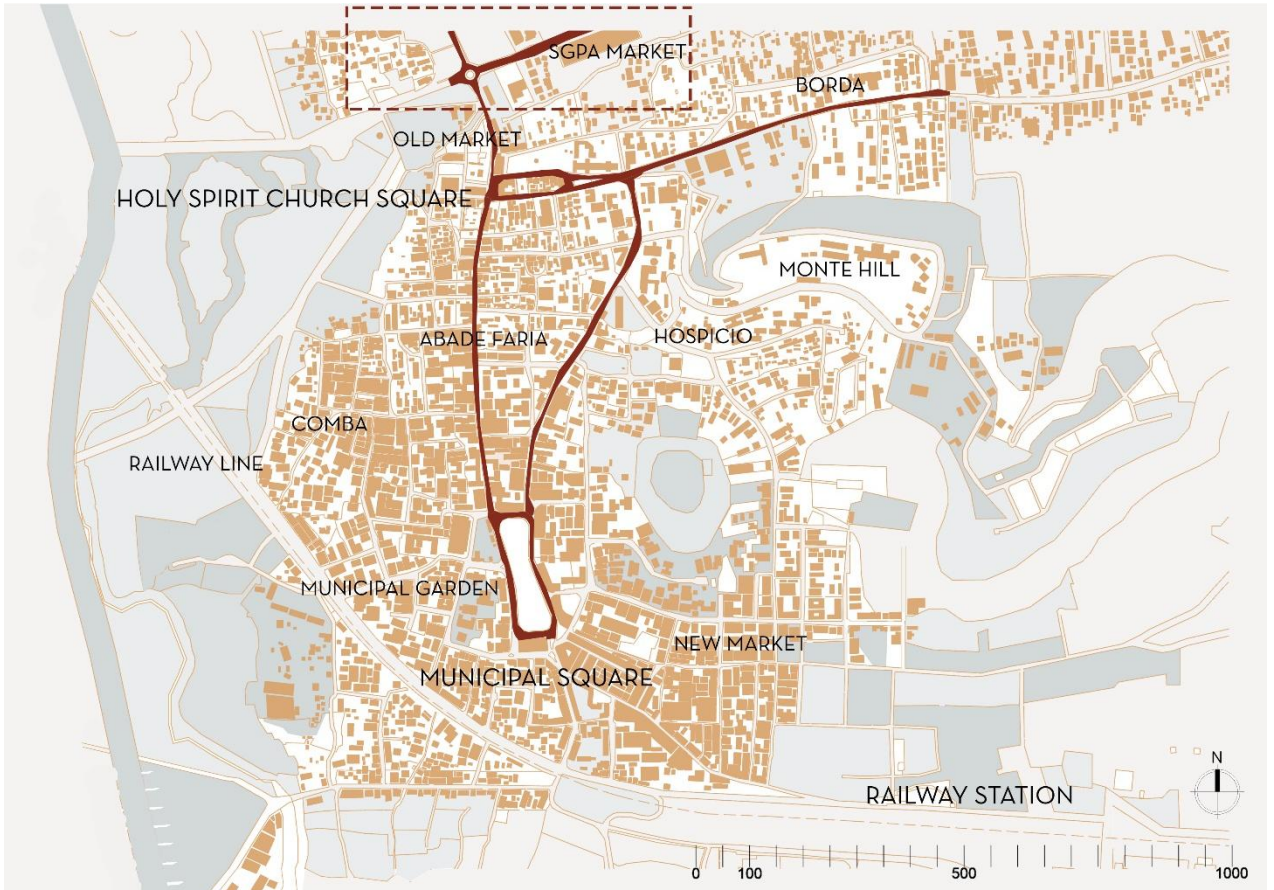


Figure 46: Map of Margao City 2021 | Credits @ Author

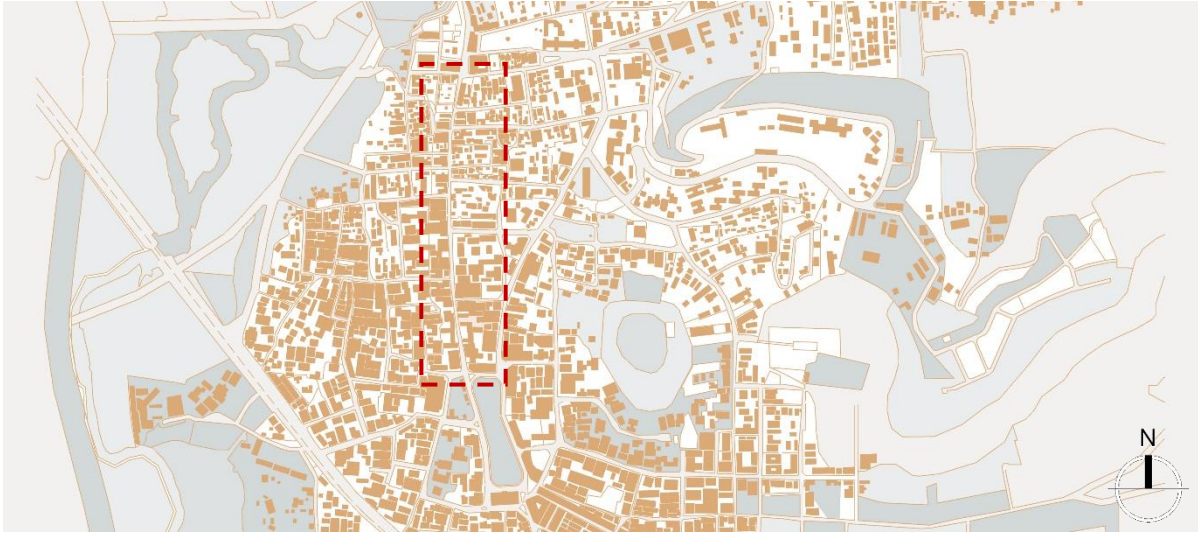


Figure 47: Map of Margao showing Abade Faria Road | Credits @ Author

### 3.2 Abade Faria Road

Abade Faria Road was primarily a housing stock of its time. Its growth from a residential settlement to a settlement untouched for the longest of times, saw most of the built-forms exhibiting architectural characteristics distinctive from the local architecture of the place. This distinction was due to the colonial influence on local architecture. Figure 47 locates Abade Faria Road within the broader map of Margao, while Figure 48 presents a figure-ground map of the street within the designated conservation boundary. Figure 49 offers an illustrative elevation of the street, capturing the architectural character that defines its present condition.

During the modernization period around the early 1900s, the city of Margao grew exponentially and many buildings belonging to the Portuguese era were torn down and replaced by multi-storeyed structures, eventually, the built form along the street succumbed to urbanisation.

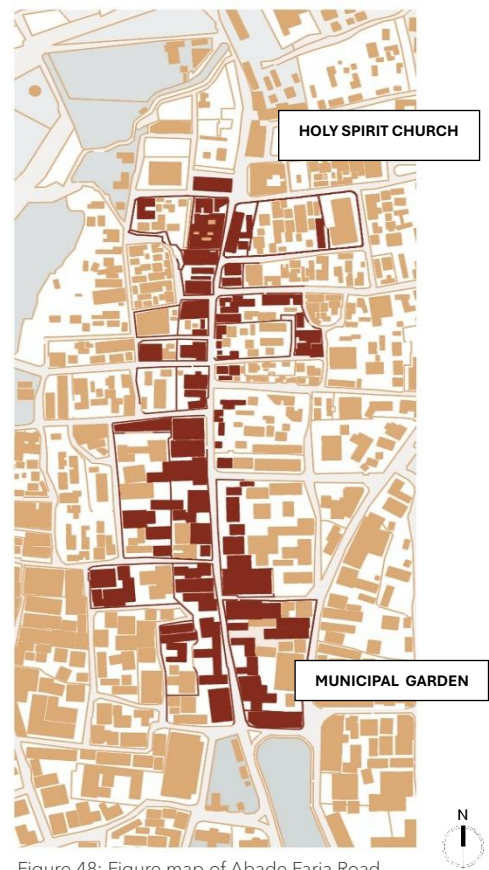


Figure 48: Figure map of Abade Faria Road within the Conservation boundary

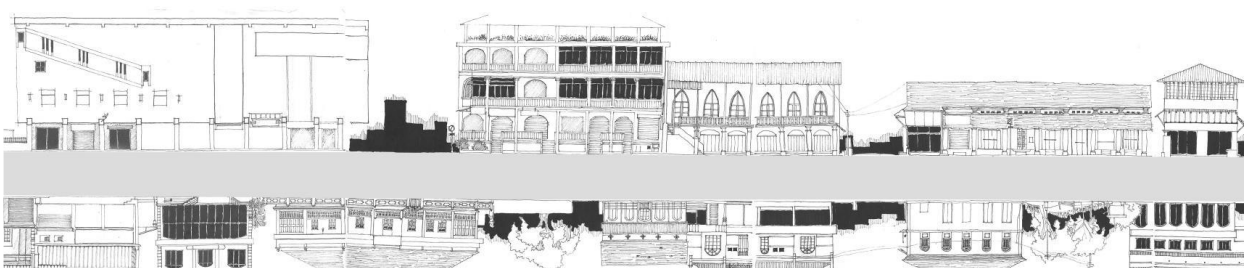


Figure 49: Illustrative elevation of Abade Faria depicting the present architectural character | Credits @ Simon Rebello

## Cultural identity and Architectural Character of the street

Rua Abade Faria was among the earliest residential settlements in Margao and once served as the primary arterial link connecting the town to surrounding villages (Figure 44). As Margao expanded, the development of the parallel Padre Miranda Road eventually eased the pressure on Abade Faria, yet the legacy of its linear growth remained deeply imprinted on its urban form. (Rege, 2001) (Figure 45 and 46)

The street's early development was shaped by the sale or lease of contiguous plots, often in threes or fours, by a single wealthy landowner, giving rise to a distinct typology of row houses. These houses were typically built without front setbacks, directly abutting the street, resulting in a tight rhythmic, and pedestrian-friendly streetscape. The narrow facades, decorative balconies, and uniform roof-lines contributed to a unique visual cohesion, while the close proximity of homes encouraged a sense of shared public life.

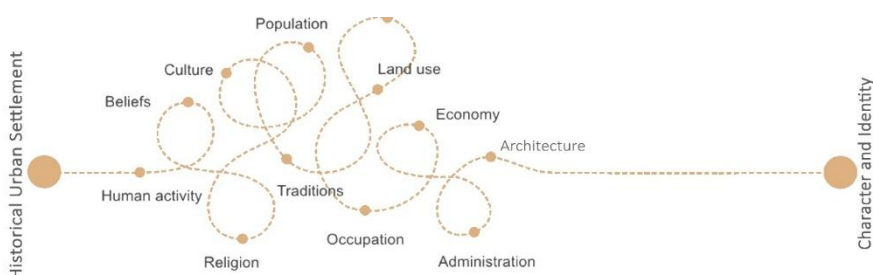
However, in contrast to this dominant typology, a handful of houses broke away from this immediate street-edge alignment. These homes featured front porches or gardens that created a buffer zone before the house footprint began, offering spatial relief, enhanced privacy, and room for vegetation or semi-public activities. Noronha House is one of those rare examples, distinguished by its expansive front porch that historically hosted vegetation, but now accommodates seasonal displays and commercial activity.

By the early 2000s, changing socio-economic patterns led many homeowners to lease out portions of their plots or modify the original use of their properties, often resulting in changes to the overall architectural footprint. What was once a street of unified, single-family homes is now a mosaic of mixed-used buildings, subdivided houses, and evolving functions.

Unlike curated heritage zones such as Fontainhas in Panjim, Rua Abade Faria is a lived street undergoing gradual and organic transformation. Some of the Indo-Portuguese houses here remain well-preserved, while others are altered, transformed, semi-abandoned, dilapidated or adapted for modern uses. This diversity gives the street an authenticity that makes it a more realistic case for understanding how heritage architecture negotiates contemporary pressures (Figure 50).



Figure 50: Cultural Identity of the street: In between Heritage and Progress



### 3.3 Case study: Noronha House

The **Noronha House**, situated at the junction between Rua Abade Faria and Padre Miranda Road, is a prime example of this transformation. From its origins as a unified residential plot in the 1950s to its current mixed-use and partially inactive state, it encapsulates the tensions and adaptations that have shaped the street over decades. Figures 51 and 52 situates the house within the street context, while Figures 53 and 54 compare its floor plans from the 1990s and the present day, revealing the spatial adaptations over time.

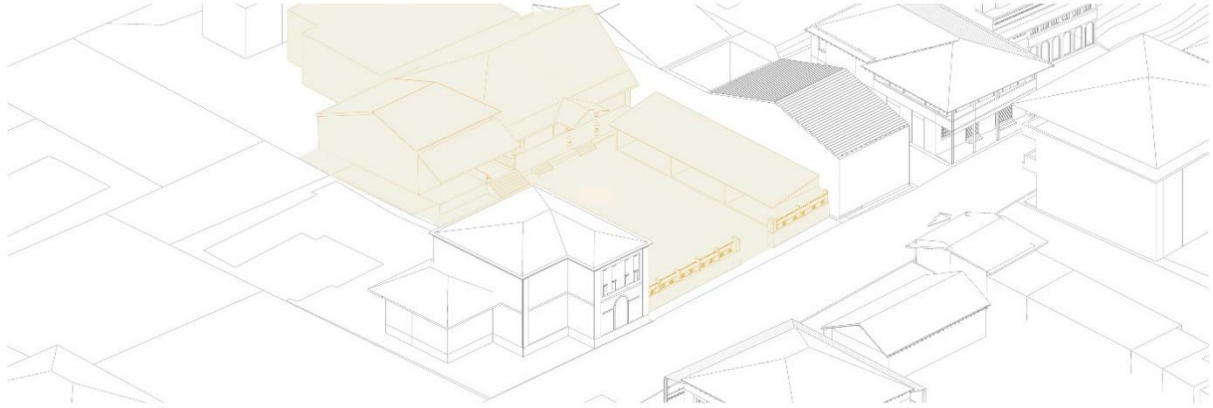


Figure 51: Location of Noronha House within the context of Rua Abade Faria | Credits @ Author

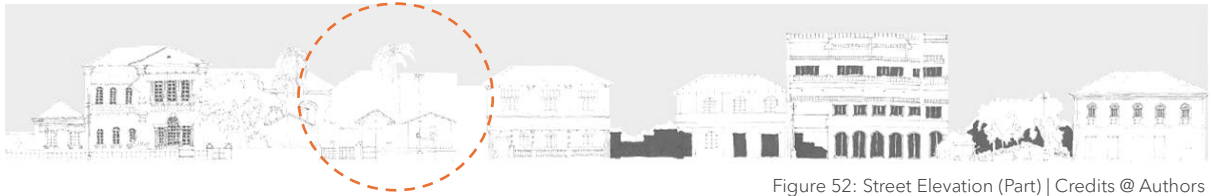


Figure 52: Street Elevation (Part) | Credits @ Authors

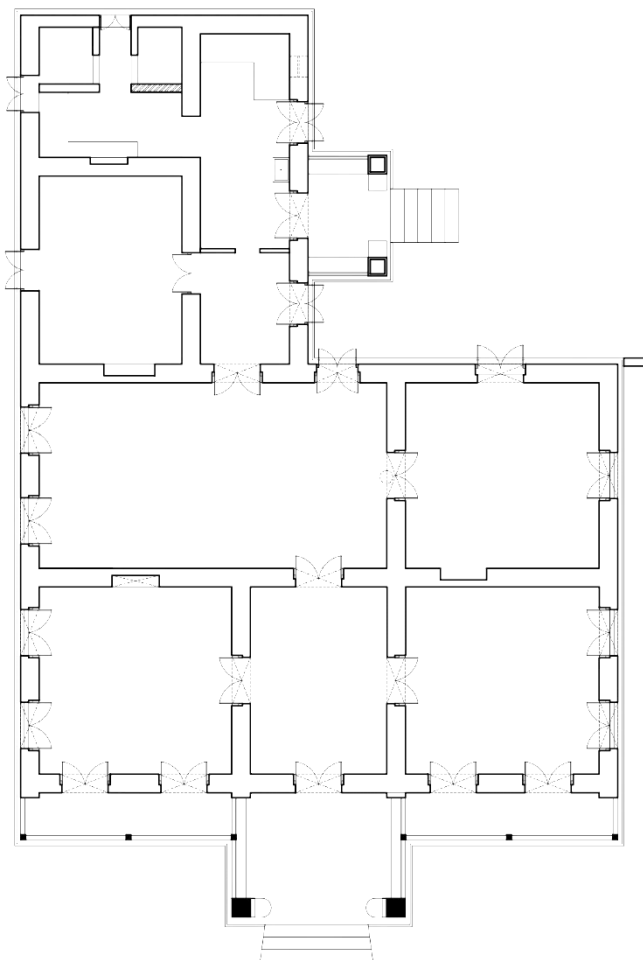


Figure 53: Noronha House Plan, 1990s | Credits @ Author

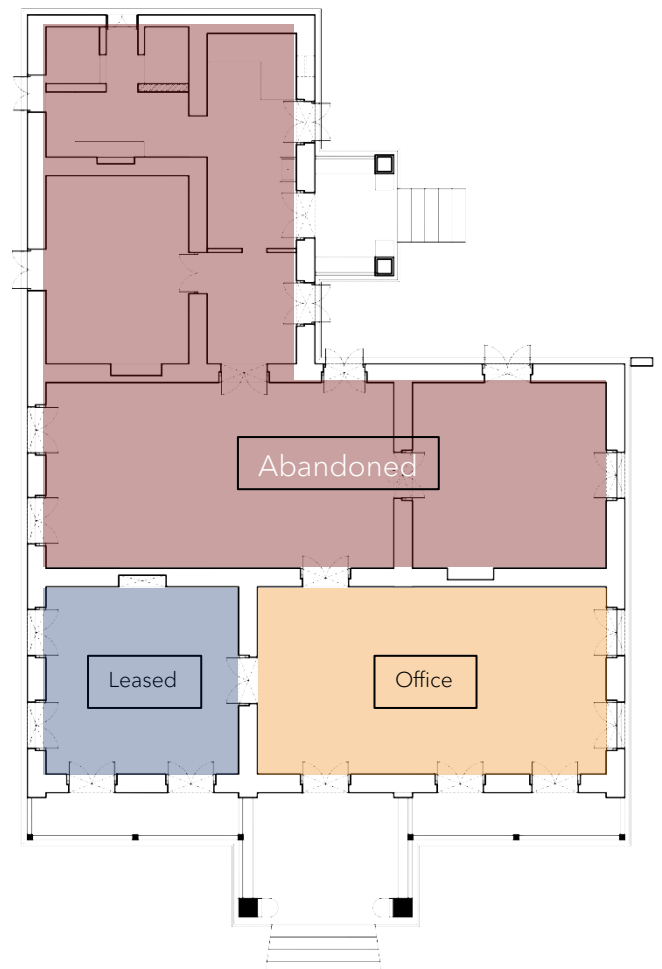


Figure 54: Noronha House Plan, Present Day | Credits @ Author

## 1950s: Singular Ownership

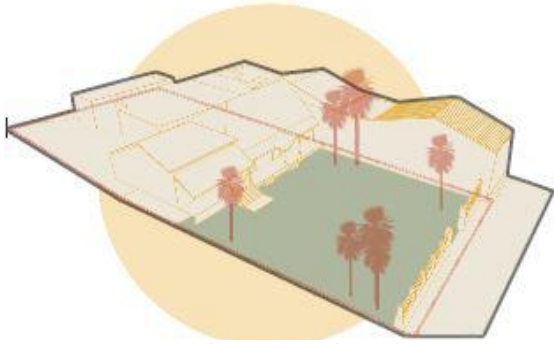


Figure 55: Noronha House in the early 1950s

Noronha House originally stretched from Rua Abade Faria to Padre Miranda Road, a deep, linear plot. The front was designed as a residential villa, complete with a lush porch area, coconut palms, and a generous setback from the street. The house typified Indo-Portuguese domestic ideals: **axial symmetry, central porch, balcao, high plinths, and pitched tiled roof**, all surrounded by a soft landscape that served both as privacy buffer and social space.

At this stage, the house functioned as a **unified family home**, with its full footprint reinforcing the idea of land as both resource and heritage. The porch was part of a **social landscape**, where neighbours interacted, and thresholds between public and private were performatively negotiated.

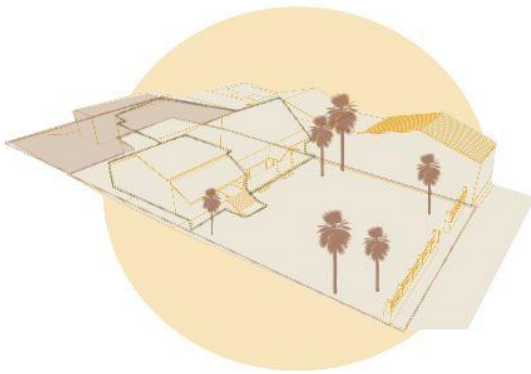


Figure 56: Noronha House in the early 1980s

## Early 1980s: Fragmentation and Functional Divergence

As land values increased and families grew, the property underwent its first major transformation: **subdivision**. The rear was sold, the front was divided into two and accommodated two families, which resulted in two distinct facades thus affecting the **character of the street**. This fragmentation significantly affected the **visual coherence of the street**, disrupting the typical rhythm of Indo-Portuguese architecture with asymmetry, modified entries, and differing aesthetic treatments. Here we see the first clear

spatial metaphor of **postcolonial adaptation**: what was once unified-spatially, socially, and architecturally, becomes differentiated and multiple. Heritage, in this moment, becomes negotiable.

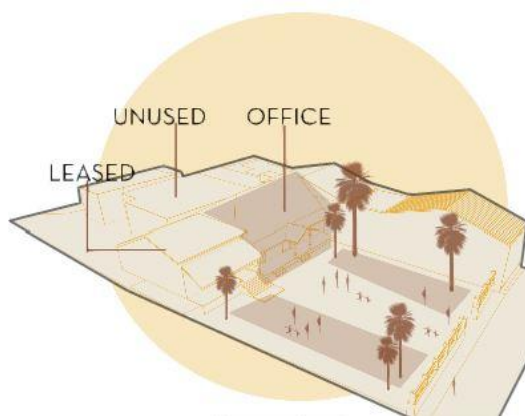


Figure 57: Noronha House Present-Day

## 2021: Hybrid Use, Seasonal Commerce, and Partial Inactivity

Today, Noronha House stands as a hybrid relic of its own history. The front part of the house now accommodates a **small office**, while the rear (the part not sold off) remains largely **unused**, a spatial vacuum within the former domestic whole.

More interestingly, the **porch area**, which began as a shaded garden and later became a social gathering space, has **transformed into a seasonal site of commercial activity**. During traditional festive seasons, the porch is used to sell decorative and home-decor products, reinvigorating the area with periodic public life. This transformation from a private social threshold to a **micro-economy of tradition and celebration** reflects the elasticity of Goan domestic space.

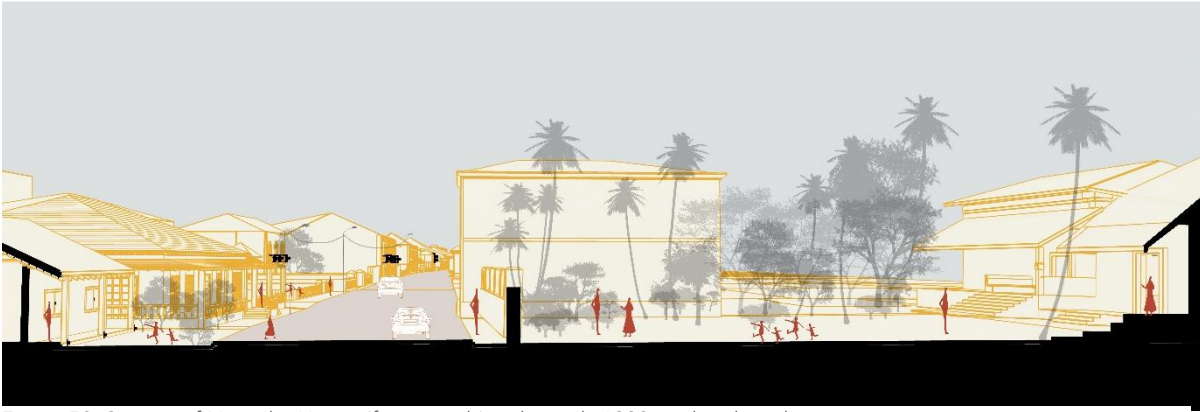


Figure 58: Section of Noronha House (front porch) in the early 1990s within the urban context



Figure 59: Section of Noronha House (front porch) present-day within the urban context showing the architectural adaptation

Noronha House is an architectural and anthropological cross-section of Goan urban transformations:

- o Fragmentation of property reflects the challenges of intergenerational land ownership in postcolonial Goa. The division altered spatial and social relationships, reflecting deeper shifts in family structure and ownership models.
- o The loss of architectural coherence through mismatched facades and rear construction is not just visual, it reflects a cultural uncoupling from the unified idea of the Indo-Portuguese home as a familial seat of identity.
- o The adaptive reuse of the porch from semi-private leisure to commercial seasonal space, shows the flexibility of threshold spaces in Goan homes, and how they become mediators between memory, economy, and identity. But also raises the question of the activities effect in the urban setting as seen in the Figure 58 and 59 .
- o The coexistence of use and neglect with the front activated and the rear abandoned reflects how heritage is often preserved selectively, based on economic viability, family legacy, or functional demand.

This analysis mirrors a wider trend in Goan urbanism: the heritage house as a negotiation space, and not a fixed artefact.



Figure 60: Noronha House | Credits @ Author

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Figure 61: Noronha House | Credits @ Author

# 4 Reflections and Conclusions: Architecture, Adaptation, and Cultural Continuity

This research is set out to understand the evolution of the Traditional Goan house within the broader frameworks of colonialism, cultural identity, and urban change. By analysing Portuguese colonial strategies and their spatial imprint on Goan domestic architecture, and then grounding those ideas through Rua Abade Faria and Noronha House, this research highlights the continuous and layered negotiation between tradition and transformation. The street today reflects a complex layering of time: traditional built forms battling modern-day challenges, land subdivision, rising property values, increasing densification, and evolving commercial demands. While the Goan house evolves to accommodate new uses while retaining a distinct spatial character. In this dynamic landscape, architecture becomes both a **vessel of memory and an agent of change**.

## 4.1 The Evolving Goan House:

As outlined in the earlier chapters, the traditional Goan house is a result of layered influences. While rooted in pre-Portuguese vernacular sensibilities, it absorbed and rearticulated spatial and material practices introduced during the colonial period. The Portuguese did not bring architectural plans to the colonies, neither is the architectural style an exact replication of their European counterparts, but they relied on inherited spatial models and symbolic geometries. These models governing alignment, symmetry, and functional zoning, were adapted to the local climate, topography, and available materials in Goa. The resultant Indo-Portuguese or Indo-Goan house emerged as a typology capable of accommodating formal representation as well as everyday life.

However, this typology was never static. Architectural transformations by shifting patterns of ownership, changing economic conditions, and new urban demands have gradually redefined its internal logic. The built-form of the Goan house thus evolves not solely through deliberate architectural intervention, but through incremental, often informal, processes of repurposing, subdivision and reinterpretation.

## 4.2 Rua Abade Faria and the Noronha House: A case of Lived Transformation

Rua Abade Faria offers a valuable context to study such transformation. Unlike Fontainhas, Panjim, it remains an un-curated, lived street in the heart of Margao city. The initial character of the street, defined by closely spaced row houses with minimal setbacks, created a unique, continuous streetscape. Over time, however, urban pressures have led to changes in land use, plot subdivisions, vertical extensions, and functional diversification. In particular, since the early 2000s, the street has witnessed the rise of mixed-use adaptations, with portions of residential buildings repurposed for commercial activity. These spatial modifications, while not always formally regulated, demonstrate the flexibility of traditional housing typologies to respond to urban needs.

The Noronha House summarises the broader narrative of Goan architectural adaptation. Originally a single-family residence occupying a large plot with a prominent front garden, its spatial configuration has undergone significant transformation over the decades. The transformation reveals to us how traditional domestic spaces can support changing social and economic dynamics without erasing their architectural lineage completely. Even as material alterations occur, the underlying spatial framework – the porch as an interface between public and private, the linear depth of the plot, the street-facing orientation, remains legible.

### 4.3 Implications for Heritage, Planning and Cultural Memory



Figure 62: House on Rua Abade Faria in a dilapidated state

Rua Abade Faria and its houses invite a broader reflection on the treatment of heritage in contemporary urban planning. It offers not just architectural data, but insight into how Goans live with their history, and how urban fabric absorbs the changes of everyday life. Indo-Portuguese houses in Goa are neither frozen in the past nor completely overwritten by the present. They adapt, sometimes awkwardly, sometimes poetically, to new demands, new generations, and new functions. Figure 62, showing a house in a dilapidated state, underscores the

vulnerability of this architectural legacy when adaptation is stalled or neglected.

Preserving architectural identity need not entail freezing it in a singular historical moment. Instead, a more nuanced approach is required, one that embraces heritage as a process, rather than a product.

Three key arguments emerge:

- **Heritage as Lived Practice:** Architectural Identity in Goa is shaped as much by cultural routines and seasonal rhythms as by materials or stylistic elements.
- **Planning for Adaptation:** Urban policies must be responsive to the changing needs of residents, a point which was also addressed in my previous Undergraduate research. Although there are Conservation Zone Regulations already existing, the new regulations should account for incremental transformations rather than attempt to impose rigid frameworks of authenticity.
- **Memory and Continuity:** Even as buildings adapt to new uses, their spatial logic retains cultural meaning. Preserving architectural memory therefore involves sustaining these logics, such as the depth of the plot, the placement of courtyards or the treatment of facades, rather than only ornamental details.

I argue that the Goan house, particularly in contexts like Rua Abade Faria, cannot be understood solely as an architectural relic of Portuguese colonialism. Rather, it functions as a living typology, one that continually negotiates between inherited form and contemporary use and adapting with the nuances of everyday life. Architectural transformation is not necessarily a loss of identity, but often a re-articulation of cultural continuity under evolving socio-economic conditions. Drawing on Lefebvre's notion of space as social product, Goan domestic architecture emerges as a spatial practice where memory, use, and change co-exist. This perspective challenges conservation frameworks that privilege architectural rigidity, proposing instead that resilience in postcolonial urbanism lies in the capacity to accommodate transformation without severing ties to cultural memory.

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