



Middle-Class Dwellings, Hybrid Domestic Spaces and Suburbanization in Late- Colonial Bombay, 1920s-40s

Abstract

This paper analyses middle-class suburban houses built in interwar Bombay as sites of typological experimentation emerging from conditions of late-colonial (sub)urbanisation. Focusing on detached bungalow-type houses constructed largely by local *mistris* within cooperative housing societies, it challenges prevailing narratives that frame suburban domestic architecture as derivative or transitional. Drawing on archival research, site observations, and ethnographic and literary sources, the paper examines how these houses emerged under conditions of limited budgets, municipal byelaws, and shifting middle-class aspirations. Informed by Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, the analysis shows how urban *chawl* practices of sociability and rural domestic traditions from Salsette were selectively translated into suburban spatial forms through verandahs, compounds, circulation spaces, and gardens. These houses reveal how colonial development paradoxically created a space of relative freedom for architectural experimentation, producing forms of everyday modernity that challenge architect-centric and Eurocentric narratives of late modern architecture.

Keywords

Suburban housing, colonial modernism, middle class, hybridity

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Introduction

Scholarship on domestic architecture in colonial India has largely focused on elite housing typologies and architect-led modernism. Studies of the colonial bungalow have examined its role in articulating power, race, and class, while research on Art Deco apartments and post-war modernist housing has foregrounded stylistic innovation and professional architectural discourse. In contrast, domestic architecture beyond the city, particularly the detached houses built by and for the middle class, has received limited attention. When discussed, these houses are often framed as diluted, imitative, or transitional forms lacking architectural intention.

This paper argues that suburban domestic architecture in Bombay constitutes a critical yet underexplored site for understanding architectural modernity as a lived and negotiated condition. Emerging in the wake of the Bombay plague and facilitated by suburban planning schemes, these houses offered a liberty space for architectural experimentation, not by architects but by *mistris* (craftsmen-builder), cooperative housing societies, municipal regulations, and the locals' everyday practices. Far from being architecturally passive, the suburban house typology actively translated multiple spatial imaginaries such as colonial domestic ideals, bourgeois notions of privacy, *chawl*-based sociability, and rural vernacular traditions into 'hybrid' domestic forms.

Drawing on Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, this paper approaches suburban houses not as stylistic hybrids but as spaces produced through aspirations and everyday negotiation. The analysis combines archival research, architectural analysis, ethnographic accounts, and site observations in Bandra, Khar, and Juhu to examine how suburban domestic space was inhabited and reworked over time. By foregrounding ordinary suburban houses, this paper contributes to broader debates on modernity, everyday architecture, and middle-class agency.

Modern Architecture and Hybridity

Most histories of Indian modern architecture revolve around a limited selection of acclaimed architects or canonical projects.¹ However, recent scholarship, such as Tania Sengupta and Stuart King's *Reclaiming Colonial Architecture* and Peter Scriver and Amit Srivastava's *India: Modern Architectures in History*, has made a shift by focusing on architectural education, government

institutions, and cultural and trade agencies.² Desai and Desai's work on the twentieth-century bungalow traces how technological, political, and social transformations shaped elite domestic forms while also acknowledging the emergence of suburbanisation and its "offspring" typologies.³ Rao's studies of Bombay's residential landscapes, particularly his ethnographic engagement with flats and *chawls*, reveal how everyday practices shape domestic space beyond architectural design.⁴ Haynes and Rao have further called for greater attention to the histories of the middle decades of the twentieth century and to the experiences of the middle classes, whose architectural landscapes have been overshadowed by both colonial elites and postcolonial avant-gardes.⁵ Scant yet important studies on suburbs and their social aspects exist, notably Preeti Chopra's work on Bombay suburbs, William Glover's work on the emergence of suburban towns in Punjab and Tania Sengupta's work in provincial towns or *sadar* in Bengal.⁶ This paper builds on these interventions by positioning suburban houses as equally critical as bungalows and *chawls* for understanding Bombay's architectural modernity.

The paper also draws on scholarship that examines hybridity and translation in architectural modernism. Works such as Felipe Hernández's engagement with Bhabha's theory in architectural contexts and Patricia Morton's analysis of hybrid modernities demonstrate that modern architecture in colonial and postcolonial settings cannot be understood as a unidirectional

1. Lang, *A Concise History of Modern Architecture in India* (Permanent Black, 2010); Bahga, Bahga, and Bahga, *Modern Architecture in India: Post-Independence Perspective* (Galgotia Pub. Co, 1993).

2. Sengupta and King, *Reclaiming Colonial Architecture* (RIBA Publishing, 2024); Scriver and Srivastava, *India: Modern Architectures in History* (Reaktion Books, Limited, 2016).

3. Desai and Desai, *The Bungalow in Twentieth-Century India* (Routledge, 2017).

4. Rao, *House, but No Garden* (University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

5. Haynes and Rao, "Beyond the Colonial City", *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 36, no. 3 (September 2013): 317–35.

6. Chopra, "Free to Move, Forced to Flee," *Urban History* 39, no. 1 (January 10, 2012): 83–107. Glover, "The Troubled Passage from 'Village Communities' to Planned New Town Developments in Mid-Twentieth-Century South Asia," *Ecologies of Urbanism in India*, April 1, 2013, 92–117; Sengupta, "Between Country and City: Fluid Spaces of Provincial Administrative Towns in Nineteenth-Century Bengal," *Urban History* 39, no. 1 (January 10, 2012): 56–82; Chattopadhyay, "Introduction: The Historical Legacy of Suburbs in South Asia," *Urban History* 39, no. 1 (January 10, 2012): 51–55.

transfer of Western forms.⁷ Instead, modernism emerges through processes of negotiation, adaptation, and reinterpretation, which is also demonstrated through works of Swati Chattopadhyay in Calcutta and Jyoti Hosagrahar's work in Delhi.⁸ Important precedent to these includes Chopra's work on hybrid architecture by locals in Bombay city, Farhan Karim's thesis on domesticating Modernism in Bombay and Sarah Melsens' work in middle-class housing in Poona.⁹ These studies provide an important foundation for analysing suburban domestic architecture as an active site of translation rather than passive reception.

Bhabha's concepts of hybridity form the core theoretical framework of this paper. Hybridity is the site of cultural productivity that emerges on the margins of culture.¹⁰ It is also the process of rearticulation of culture, in which cultural elements change in relation to one another.¹¹ It emerges in the Third Space, where inherited and imposed meanings are rearticulated and destabilised by the marginalised.¹² For Bhabha, this is the space of translation where cultural meanings are neither inherited nor entirely imposed but actively rearticulated, producing a difference that mocks the authority of the dominant culture and questions the binary system of cultural analysis.¹³ Within this Third Space, suburban houses became hybrid architectural formations where modern architectural forms, colonial domestic ideals, *chawl*-based sociability, and rural imaginaries were brought into continuous negotiation.

This paper mobilises hybridity to understand suburban houses as spaces where multiple spatial imaginaries intersect. Rather than being positioned at the intersection of coloniser and colonised, suburban houses occupied a liminal space between urban and rural domestic traditions, bourgeois ideals of privacy, and inherited practices of sociability. Hybridity here is not an architectural style but a condition produced through habitation, everyday practice, and negotiation.

Crucially, the application of these concepts in this paper is deliberately restrained. While Bhabha's theoretical vocabulary is engaged, the analysis avoids overt jargon and abstract theorisation. This methodological choice reflects both the empirical nature of the material and the need to adapt theory to context. Suburban houses were not explicitly conceived as theoretical projects; their hybridity emerged through mundane decisions about circulation, *verandahs*, compounds, and gardens. Hybridity thus functions as a subtle analytical tool that help interpret these practices without imposing an external theoretical agenda.

This paper adopts an interpretive methodology that combines architectural analysis, archival research, ethnographic accounts, and site observations. Primary sources include previously unexplored archival material from the Maharashtra State Archives, Bombay: internal correspondence related to suburban schemes among residents, revenue department, collector and commissioner, building byelaws, and municipal records. These documents provide insight into regulatory constraints, land-use negotiations, and the conditions under which suburban houses were produced. Literary accounts and ethnographic studies of *chawls* and flats offer valuable perspectives on lived experience and domestic practices, particularly those that shaped suburban habitation. Site observations conducted in the neighbourhoods of Bandra, Khar, and Juhu inform the analysis of spatial practices.

Detached Suburban Houses

The Bombay plague forced the provincial government to create institutions like the Bombay Improvement Trust and the Bombay Development Department to build suburbs in the northern part of Bombay.¹⁴ Unlike the rich and the working class, it was the middle class or the clerk class living in the *chawls* of Bombay, who were forced or were willing to move to the suburbs.¹⁵ To house the middle class, the local municipalities of suburban towns and the BDD came up with planning schemes, loosely based on "garden city" principles.¹⁶ The onus of the construction of houses was, however, placed on the local inhabitants of Salsette or those moving to Salsette from Bombay, themselves, who came up with co-operative housing societies to buy plots and construct houses on them with limited state aid.

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7. Hernandez, *Bhabha for Architects* (Routledge, 2010), 90; Morton, *Hybrid Modernities* (The MIT Press, 2003).
 8. Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta* (Routledge, 2015); Hosagrahar, *Indigenous Modernities* (Routledge, 2006).
 9. Chopra, "Refiguring the Colonial City," *Buildings & Landscapes* 14, no. 1 (2007): 109–25; Farhan Karim, thesis, *Domesticating Modernism in India, 1920–1950* (2012). Melsens, Bertels, and Srivastava, "The Architectural Production of India's Everyday Modernism: Middle-Class Housing in Pune, (1960–1980)," *ABE Journal* 16 (2019).
 10. Hernandez, *Bhabha for Architects*, 58.
 11. *Ibid.*
 12. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 2012).
 13. Hernandez, *Bhabha for Architects*, 90.

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14. Kidambi, "Housing the Poor in a Colonial City," *Studies in History* 17, no. 1 (February 2001): 57–79; Kidambi, *The Making of an Indian Metropolis: Colonial Governance and Public Culture in Bombay, 1890–1920* (Routledge, 2016).
 15. Rao, *House but No Garden*.
 16. *Ibid.*

The predominant typologies in suburbs were flats or apartments and the detached two or three-storied bungalow-type houses (henceforth the suburban house). Suburban houses were pragmatic experimentations of the colonial bungalow and the wada (traditional courtyard houses), shaped by smaller plots, limited budgets, and emerging middle-class lifestyles. Built largely within cooperative housing societies, they became a defining feature of suburban expansion. Their layouts prioritised functional efficiency, ventilation, and economical use of space.

Exemplified by Moraya Villa (Cover; Figure 1) in the Prabhu Pathare Co-operative Housing Society, and Kashi Niwas (Figure 2), in Laxmi Co-operative Housing Society, both built in 1926 in Khar, the houses were typically planned as deep rectangular blocks with two bays organizing public and private functions efficiently and each room had a specific function, crucial markers of middle class bourgeois respectability. The main hall or *baithak khana* (drawing room), entered through a small *verandah* and placed off-centre, functioned as the



Figure 1. Plan of Moraya Villa (Mumbai Metropolitan Region Heritage Conservation Society). MMR-HCS's Report of Heritage Structures and Precincts, 2006, 391.



Figure 2. Plan of Kashi Niwas. Reproduced from MMR-HCS Report, 418.

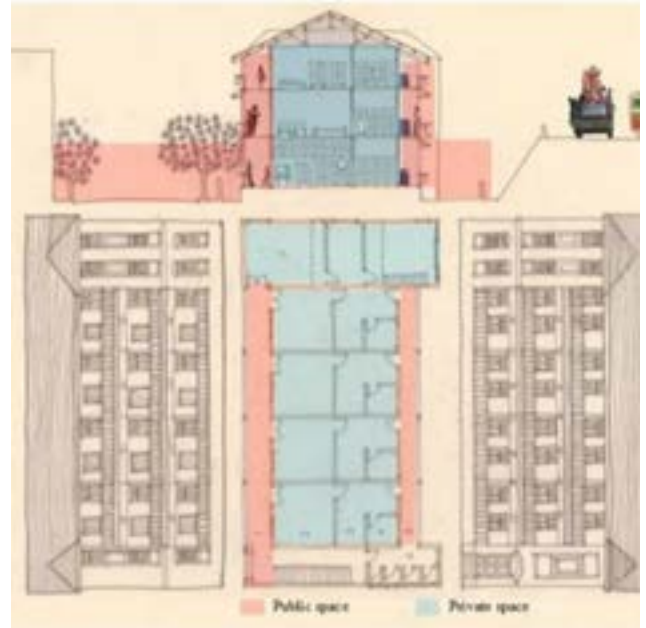


Figure 3. Public and Private spaces highlighted on a drawing of a chawl. Source: Pradhan Chawl, Rupali Gupte, Sahapedia.

spatial core, serving both formal and everyday family needs. Kitchens were compact and brought indoors, bathrooms are also inside the building, circulation spaces were minimised, and staircases were utilitarian and detached, reflecting reduced reliance on domestic servants and rising land costs. Designed and built by *mistris* (artisan-builders) rather than architects, these houses embodied a practical, middle-class approach to domestic architecture.

Chawl Imaginaries and Urban Domesticity

Typology here operated as a flexible framework, open to reinterpretation through habit, negotiation, and necessity. For many residents who moved into suburban houses during the 1920s, prior experiences of living in Bombay's *chawls* (multi-storeyed single-room tenements) significantly shaped expectations of domestic life. *Chawls* were characterised by dense occupation, shared amenities, and intense everyday sociability. *Verandahs*, corridors, common water taps or *nahanis*, and staircases functioned as extensions of domestic space and places of interaction, blurring distinctions between private and public life (Figure 3).¹⁷ When families relocated from *chawls* to suburban houses, they did not simply abandon these practices; instead, they reworked them within new spatial conditions. Suburban domesticity thus absorbed and transformed chawl imaginaries, producing hybrid modes of habitation.

P. L. Deshpande's *Batayachi Chawl* (1958) reveals the emotional and social challenges faced by *chawl* residents moving into more privatised dwellings in the

17. Sanyal, "Towards a Design Methodology- A Case of Chawls in Bombay" (thesis, 1983).



Figure 4. Children playing cricket in the compound. Author, 2025.

1950s.¹⁸ The loss of everyday interaction, particularly among women, was frequently articulated as a sense of isolation. Neera Adarkar's ethnographic study of *chawls* reveals that older generations felt isolated as *chawl* dwellers moved to apartments.¹⁹ Such discomfort is still prevalent, as demonstrated by a housewife, Edna Nair's interview, who moved from a *chawl* to a flat in 2006, with *The Times of India*: "Their new apartment has assured them all the things they lacked: an attached bathroom, a separate kitchen, privacy and respect. And a loft that is now filled with utensils instead of people.... But Edna is already feeling suffocated. She is missing evening chats with other women on the common balcony."²⁰

While suburban houses and flats offered privacy, improved sanitation, and spatial separation, they lacked the shared thresholds that had structured social life in *chawls*. This absence prompted residents to reinterpret new architectural elements as substitutes for earlier communal spaces. Corridors, *verandahs*, and compounds became sites through which sociability was reintroduced into ostensibly bourgeois domestic environments.

In suburban houses, *verandahs* often played a crucial role in mediating between interior and exterior space. Though smaller and fewer than those in *chawls*, *verandahs* functioned as places for sitting, observing street life, and interacting with neighbours. Their positioning at the front or side of the house enabled visual and social connection without fully exposing the interior. This use reflects a continuity of *chawl* practices, adapted to the scale and layout of suburban

plots. The *verandah* thus became a hybrid space, simultaneously private and communal. The compound (the open area surrounding the house and the plot boundary, mandated by setback rules) also absorbed *chawl* imaginaries. Municipal byelaws allowed the maximum permissible built-up area of the house to be one-fourth, and sometimes one-third, of the plot; the remaining area was to be left open, forming the compound. However, these open spaces were not merely residual land but actively used environments. Children played games and sports like cricket within compound boundaries (Figure 4), women gathered for conversation, and everyday activities spilt outdoor.

Noted from site observations and Rao's study, women often wear maxi skirts inside their homes and within the compound walls but refrain from wearing them outside the compound.²¹ This shows that though visually accessible from the street, compounds were treated as protected semi-public space, safer for women and children, blurring the boundaries between private and public. Its use echoed the shared courtyards and *verandahs* of *chawls*, translating communal life into a suburban context.

Interior spaces were similarly reinterpreted. Rao's study of Dadar-Matunga speculates that the flat residents performed certain socio-spatial practices that blurred the isolation of living in the flats.²² If there was a good relationship between the families living in adjacent flats sharing a common corridor in the building, then the corridor became a semi-public extension of the flats. Rao observes, "The door [of the flat] would be opened, and people would treat the two flats as one unit. The connecting door would only be closed at night."²³ Adarkar also notes that,

21. Rao, *House, but No Garden*, 166.

22. Rao, *House, but No Garden*.

23. *Ibid.*, 162.

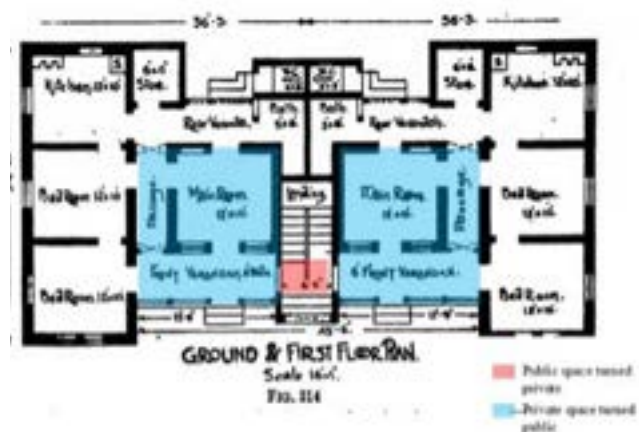


Figure 5. Perceived private and public spaces on a generic floor plan of a flat. R. S. Deshpande's Residential Building suited to India, 243.

18. Deshpande, *Batayachi Chawl* (Mouj Prakashan, 2015).

19. Adarkar, *The Chawls of Mumbai: Galleries of Life* (ImprintOne, 2011)

20. Ram, "The Chawls-to-Flat Trauma," *Times of India*, April 22, 2007.

*the opaque door remained open, particularly throughout the day, and the grill door, in small measure, extended the private into the public neighbourhood space. The older women in particular then could talk across the corridors to their counterparts in other apartments on the floor.*²⁴

Living rooms in flats, thus, frequently became multifunctional zones that shifted character throughout the day. Public during daytime hours, they accommodated visitors, social interaction, and domestic labour; at night, they often transformed into sleeping spaces. This ‘typological interchangeability,’²⁵ what Sengupta discusses in provincial Bengal sadar houses, in this case, recalls the spatial economy of *chawls*, where limited room sizes required constant negotiation of function. Rather than reinforcing rigid bourgeois divisions between rooms, suburban houses enabled fluid patterns of use shaped by inherited habits.

Equally, corridors and circulation spaces within suburban buildings acquired social significance. In flats, shared passages became sites of interaction, particularly among women and children (Figure 5). With doors open, the private interiors extended outward through everyday practices, which also created an impression of a larger ‘home’ area and perhaps better airflow in humid weather. These behaviours undermined the architectural intent of separation embedded in suburban planning, demonstrating how social life reshaped spatial meaning.

Importantly, these adaptations were not uniform or universally embraced. While some residents actively recreated *chawl*-like sociability, others valued the privacy and autonomy that suburban houses offered. The suburban house thus became a contested space where competing desires for privacy and community coexisted. This tension reflects broader shifts in middle-class identity, as residents navigated changing social norms while retaining familiar practices.

Through the lens of hybridity, these practices reveal how suburban domesticity resisted binary categorisation. *Chawl* imaginaries were neither preserved intact nor entirely erased; they were selectively rearticulated within new architectural forms. The result was an ambivalent domestic environment that combined bourgeois ideals of privacy with inherited modes of sociability. This hybridity was not designed but produced through everyday negotiation, revealing the limits of architectural form in determining social life.



Figure 6. Gaothan in Bandra. Author, 2025.

By foregrounding *chawl* legacies within suburban houses, this analysis challenges narratives that frame suburbanisation as a straightforward transition toward privatised modern living. Instead, it demonstrates that suburban domestic space remained profoundly shaped by earlier urban experiences. The suburban house thus emerges as a site where urban domestic traditions were translated rather than replaced, producing forms of habitation that were socially resilient and culturally meaningful.

Rural Imaginaries, Gaothans and Gardens

Alongside urban legacies carried from *chawls*, suburban houses also absorbed rural imaginaries brought by locals of Salsette villages. These mainly included the members of the East Indian Catholic community (the Catholic community native to Bombay) and other long-standing rural inhabitants who carried with them spatial practices rooted in vernacular domestic traditions. When relocated to suburban plots governed by municipal regulations and suburban grids, these traditions were not abandoned but selectively translated, producing hybrid domestic forms that reworked rural domesticity within an emerging (sub) urban context.

One important rural typology influencing suburban houses was the *gaothan* dwelling. Gaothans are compact village settlements characterised by narrow lanes, extroverted houses, and intense social interaction (Figure 6). Domestic life extended outward through *verandahs*, plinths, external staircases, and semi-open spaces that facilitated everyday encounters (Figures 7 and 8). These features reflected close-knit social structures and blurred distinctions between private and communal space. While suburban plots did not allow direct replication of *gaothan* morphology, many suburban houses incorporated elements that echoed these practices.

An example of this is Miranda House in Bandra, built by

24. Adarkar, *The Chawls of Mumbai*, 8.

25. Sengupta, “Living in the Periphery,” *The Journal of Architecture* 18, no. 6 (November 26, 2013): 905–43.



Figure 7. Extensive use of timber in the balcony and beams. Author, 2025.

Polycarp Miranda in 1940, who came from the nearby Pali *gaothan*. Sloping tiled roofs, external staircases, and timber details recalled *gaothan* construction practices, even when executed in concrete or hybrid materials. Extroverted *verandahs* and semi-open vestibules became key devices through which rural sociability was translated into suburban houses. Positioned toward the street or compound, these spaces enabled interaction with neighbours while maintaining a degree of enclosure. These became the skeleton on which suburban houses were made.

Another example is Sycamore (Figure 8), built by the Reveiro family in 1931. Along with the semi-open *verandah*, the house has a spiral iron staircase and concrete jalis with motifs, like the wooden staircase and timber railing in *gaothan* houses. These features did not signify architectural nostalgia alone; they represented deliberate experiments that allowed residents to retain familiar domestic rhythms within new spatial regimes.

The compound also played a significant role in mediating rural imaginaries through the creation of gardens. The importance of gardens can be seen through the case of Kikabhai Premchand. Premchand owned a plot of land on Juhu foreshores and wanted to have a larger garden for his plot by renting a strip of municipal land adjacent to this plot, facing the sea.²⁶ Such practice of renting strips of land and converting them into gardens was done by his neighbours, Mr Captain, Mr Vaidya and Mr F. J. Guzdar, who were paying high rents and premiums on them.²⁷ The government, however, provided Premchand with only a part of the land that he initially demanded before giving him the whole of the land.²⁸ Similarly, other residents were leased strips of land for the purpose of a garden.²⁹

One resident named Alma Latifi wished to erect shacks on his leased strip of land (Figure 10).³⁰ To which the Collector proposed an extremely high premium rent and a premium.³¹ Latifi was prompt to refuse the price, calling the land only "nuisance value," yet he was somewhat interested in buying the land and asked the municipality to consult him first if the land were alienated.³² In a couple of months, the land was available to be leased for the purpose of a garden only, which Latifi accepted, on the condition that no one would be allowed to lease/buy any strip of land between

his land and the sea.³³ Following this trend, many who had plots by the foreshore leased strips of land in front of their plots, even when such land could be used only for aesthetic purposes.³⁴ These negotiations reveal how gardens functioned as markers of taste, comfort, and middle-class aspiration. Possessing a garden signalled refinement and autonomy, distinguishing suburban houses from both *chawls* and dense urban neighbourhoods. Premchand's letter requesting the Collector to let him lease more depth of land so the foreshore boundary would not be "irregular and give a bad appearance"³⁵ demonstrates that these gardens were carefully curated spaces designed for aesthetic and sensory experience, not just for the plotowner but for the whole neighbourhood. Even the *Journal of the Indian Institute of Architects* published a prize-winning entry for a landscaped garden in the suburbs (Figure 11), which showcases the taste and sense of aesthetics that were developing in the suburbs regarding gardens.

Salsette Island was considered 'picturesque' through paintings (Figure 12), photographs, and in one instance, a paper read by a municipal officer, titled *Some Interesting Antiquities of Salsette* in 1917, which

33. Ibid., 93, 97.

34. MSA/RD/File-6273/39-194, 39; MSA/RD/File-3496/33(II)-1936, 49.

35. MSA/RD/File-3496/33(III)-1939, 35.



Figure 8. Outer staircase of timber in *goathan*. Author, 2025.

26. Maharashtra State Archives/Revenue Department/ File-3496/33(II)-1939, 5.

27. Ibid, 56, 113; MSA/RD/File-3496/33(I)-1935, 7-8.

28. MSA/RD/File-3496/33(III)-1939, 35.

29. MSA/RD/File-3496/33(III)-1939, 35; MSA/RD/File-3496/33(II)-1936, 49.

30. Ibid. 9

31. MSA/RD/File-3496/33-1939(III), 73-74.

32. Ibid., 81.



Figure 9. Front Façade of Sycamore. Author.

vividly described the partial submerging of the island during spring tides.³⁶ However, the suburbs built with an ordered vision with straight, wide roads did not do much to integrate with the natural landscape of Salsette. Thus, gardens with coconut trees³⁷ and shrubs framed views of the setting sun, softened the rigidity of suburban layouts, and invoked the picturesque qualities associated with Salsette's countryside. Importantly, rural imaginaries in suburban houses were not reproduced intact. Municipal regulations, plot sizes, and urban aspirations constrained their translation. Rural forms were simplified, compressed, and reframed within bourgeois domestic ideals. This selective adaptation in typology aligns with Bhabha's notion of hybridity as translation rather than synthesis. Rural domesticity did not coexist alongside urban modernity as a parallel system; it was rearticulated through suburban housing practices, producing ambivalent and unstable spatial meanings.

The late colonial development in Bombay created conditions where *chawls* became obsolete, especially for the middle class. Operating outside the centres of architectural authority, suburban house typology evolved through experimentation driven by necessity rather than doctrine. These houses reveal how belated urbanisation paradoxically opened a space of freedom, where architectural terms were renegotiated in response to lived realities. By incorporating urban and rural imaginaries into suburban houses, residents resisted the complete erasure of earlier modes of living and the rigid framework of emerging modernist housing by professional architects. While suburban houses employed modern materials and bourgeois spatial zoning, their use was shaped by *chawl*-based sociability and rural practices and were built by local *mistris*.

36. "Some Interesting Antiquities of Salsette by J. A. Saldanha," *The Asiatic Society of India*, Mumbai.

37. *Ibid.*, 16.

Verandahs, corridors, and compounds became spaces of negotiation, enabling residents to balance privacy with community. These adaptations reveal how suburban domestic space functioned as a site of cultural negotiation, accommodating both inherited traditions from *chawls* and villages and new aspirations. The suburban house typology functioned not as a fixed form but as a flexible framework capable of absorbing social change, constraint, and aspiration. The typology exemplifies hybridity as an everyday condition produced through use, negotiation, and adaptation.

Conclusion: Top of Form

This paper has argued that middle-class suburban houses in interwar Bombay were not marginal or transitional forms but central sites where architectural modernity was lived and negotiated. By examining detached suburban houses, it demonstrates how modern domestic life was shaped through everyday architectural experimentation rather than elite design or professional discourse. Through the reworking of typology, the negotiation of architectural terms, and

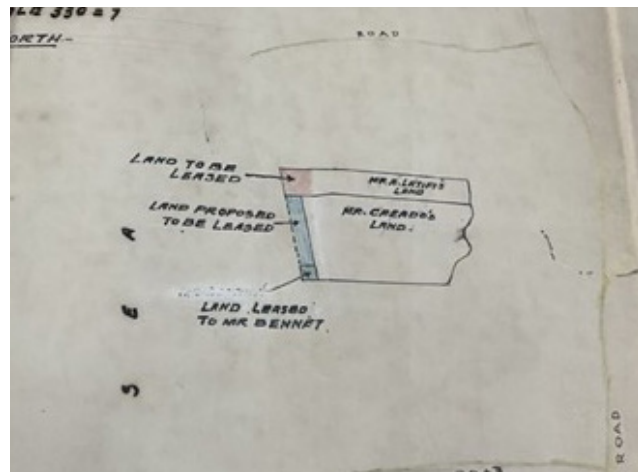


Figure 10. Site Plan of Juhu showing the land to be leased to Latifi. MSA/RD/File-3496/33-1939, 105.



Figure 11. A design of a garden in the JIIA. JIIA, January 1948.

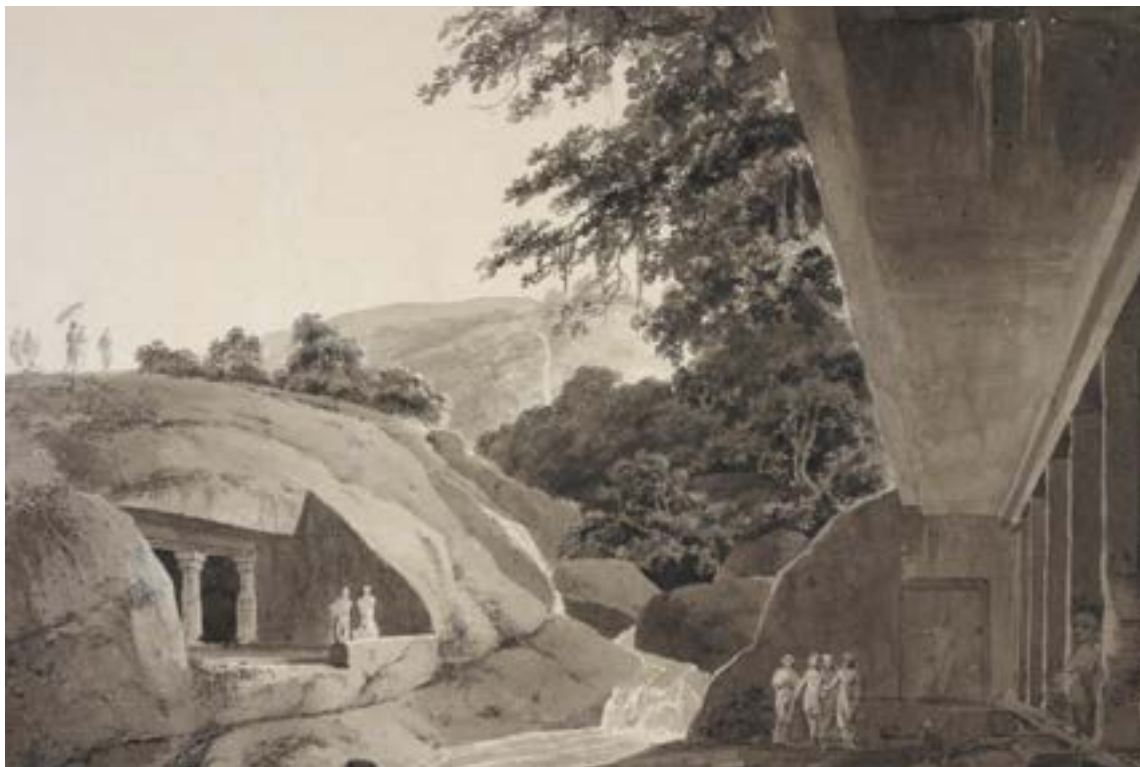


Figure 12. Caves in Salsette, 1793. Source: BL/IOR/ WD 547- Russell Collection.

the translation of inherited practices, these houses reveal how modernity was lived rather than imposed.

Through the lens of hybridity as translation, the analysis shows how suburban houses absorbed and reworked *chawl*-based sociability and rural domestic traditions within bourgeois spatial frameworks. These negotiations produced flexible and ambivalent domestic environments that resisted rigid categorisation. Read retrospectively, Bombay's suburban house typology challenges the temporal and geographic boundaries of late modern architecture. They suggest that aspirations for freedom from rigid modernist frameworks were already being explored in colonial contexts.

By situating Bombay's suburban housing within broader debates on late modernism and belated colonisation, the paper challenges architect-centric and Eurocentric narratives of modern architecture. It suggests that colonial peripheries were not merely sites of diffusion but active arenas where aspirations for architectural freedom were materially produced through everyday life.

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