

century buildings in Bombay where a portion of the old Castle walls had been demolished by the Navy to make way for multi-storied barracks for sailors; The Haffkine Institute (the Old Government House), which was reportedly under threat of demolition; The Colaba Observatory built in 1826 and stated to be the oldest scientific building in the country, which was also under threat of demolition.

An important move was that the Committee did not confine its work only to "historical and monumental buildings" but included "aesthetical buildings" as well as "precincts".

At its third meeting on 2nd June 1978, the Committee constituted a Sub Committee "to prepare a List of buildings and precincts of historical, architectural, and aesthetic importance and also those which are associated with important events and persons". It was this Sub Committee, which for some time, took the work forward. In July, the Sub Committee constituted three "informal working cells". The first one was to "make a List of buildings and precincts of historical importance together with the details of precincts associated with these structures". The second one was to List those "buildings and precincts, which though not of historical importance has some architectural/aesthetic significance". The third cell was to "suggest model legislation for the preservation of old buildings in Bombay".

Listing was the first priority. Looking back, it is surprising that two separate cells were constituted for Listing. A more serious error, though perhaps inevitable, was the low emphasis given to legal action. Serious efforts to draft legislation were not made for nearly another decade. The first priority should always be enactment of enabling legislation coupled with regulations to provide statutory backing to the Lists. Excellent Lists, mainly prepared by INTACH, have been drawn up for many towns. Other than as a historical record, which is an important purpose in itself, it makes little sense having these wonderful Lists if the buildings themselves are not legally protected and are being destroyed. A few years ago I was proudly shown glossy books containing the Heritage List of one city and asked whether we had any such publication in Bombay. Since we are not in competition with other towns or with other NGOs, I bit back a reply which I was about to make i.e. that Bombay's Listing document was nowhere near as impressive as theirs, but in Bombay, our Listed buildings at least had statutory protection

whereas in their city there was no such protection and the buildings were being demolished.

The Committee started with a small List of 90 buildings prepared by Foy Nissen, who can thus be called the pioneer of Heritage Listing in Bombay. This List, however, included no precincts. The reason for this omission was, to quote Foy Nissen, "..... at that time the usual importunate request for a List confined only to building structures was solicited and supplied". Moreover, it was many of those Listed buildings, which were under severe threat. It was not that Foy Nissen was unaware of the importance of precincts; he was fully cognisant of this. In his note of 25th April 1978 he stated that "it is necessary to think of it beyond individual items, viz in terms of precincts, because the public benefit then is multiplied. Certain areas in Bombay have developed in the past century into precincts with a character of their own and have so far managed to survive almost intact. The Banganga precinct retains its character despite the skyscrapers which have been allowed to encircle it visually (this might not have been allowed in a city abroad where there is an advanced consciousness of the human and potential value of such preservation); other obvious examples are parts of Matherpakadi and Khotachiwadi. The Oval precinct and the Azad Maidan are other examples – open spaces and the historic architectural vistas bordering them merit equal attention."

Though the Lists prepared by the Committee had no statutory backing, the Municipal Corporation put them on a watch List. All that could be done was that the Municipality, in particular the Municipal Commissioner, could bring informal pressure to bear on a builder who wished to significantly alter/demolish a heritage building. Much, therefore, depended on the Municipal Commissioners. Some were lukewarm, some were interested and some stood on their pride. S.S. Tinaikar deservedly respected Municipal Commissioner went so far as to say that the citizens of Bombay would not tolerate people living in large bungalows and at the same time getting incentives for preserving them.

Discussions had been going on about the plans of the State Bank of India to demolish Kinellan, their bungalow, on Napean Sea Road. In February 1989 the Municipal Committee was informed by municipal officials that Tinaikar had replied to the Bank saying that it was the Municipality and not the Save Bombay Committee, which gave permissions for demolition of buildings. This was in spite of the fact that we had been assured in writing the previous