

## ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the transformation of statue-based urban nodes in Mumbai through the framework of nodes, networks, and negotiation. It analyses how monuments such as Flora Fountain, Khada Parsi, and Gateway of India have shifted from place-oriented colonial landmarks to movement-dominated junctions under increasing mobility pressures. Through case-based study, the research identifies strategies including relocation, pedestrianisation, traffic reorganisation, and symbolic reframing. The renaming of Hutatma Chowk after the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement illustrates how infrastructural adaptation and memorial reinterpretation can coexist. The study argues that heritage nodes are negotiated spatial conditions shaped by mobility systems, governance decisions, and collective memory, calling for integrated mobility–heritage planning in rapidly transforming metropolitan contexts. This study employs a qualitative, case-based urban analysis combining archival research, spatial mapping, and comparative evaluation to examine how heritage nodes in Mumbai are negotiated within evolving mobility networks.*

**KEYWORDS:** Urban Nodes; Heritage and Mobility, Mumbai

## INTRODUCTION

**Introduction:** Mumbai's urban landscape has been continuously changing due to the continuous infrastructure projects seen on a rise due to the growing demands of the various stakeholders. Though Mumbai has been dotted with several heritage structures, the same are continuously facing pressure due to increasing traffic flows, infrastructure led issues, commercialization etc. and hence are seen as sites of conflict often being relocated or eventually razed. Heritage structures are not standalone relics; they are closely woven into the rhythms and routines of everyday urban life. These monuments that once occupied generous civic settings, formed prominent landmarks of the cityscape, are today embedded within congested road networks, are eventually losing their identity and now just are passive markers of history.

### Development of Mumbai:

During the development of Mumbai there are many important nodes which came up during various phases:

- **Colonial period: 1850's -1947:** The major development during this period saw the transformation from the scattered archipelago of seven islands into a consolidated, capitalist port city through massive engineering, land reclamation, and strict spatial segregation. The city first developed around the British Fort in the south, meant mainly for Europeans and administration. Residents were moved north, forming a separate "Native Town" in areas like Kalbadevi and Bhuleshwar. During this period the streets were not designed for heavy traffic movement and hence the **statues were placed such that they act as civic and commemorative landmarks.** They formed important nodes; functioning as places of pause and identity which later became memorable in history, and the people could relate and identify the place due to the presence of the statues. Eg. Flora Fountain (presently known location Hutatma chowk), Khada Parsi (presently located Byculla junction) and Kala Ghoda (presently located at Veermata Jijabai Bhosale Udyan (Rani Baug). The **Flora Fountain known as Frere Fountain** was to commemorate the achievements of the Governor, Sir Bartle Frere in 1869 at a cost of Rs. 9,760. It was also created to celebrate the junction of the bow like cross

axis and presently is almost drowned in incongruous development of parking lots and insensitively placed street furniture and related paraphernalia. Similarly, the garden surrounding the fountain neither helps in directing the pedestrian traffic nor does it enhance the node but only adds to the visual clutter. (UDRI, 2003)



Image: 01 The Flora Fountain, c. 1905  
Source: Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries.



Image 02: Aerial view of Flora Fountain  
Source: Architectural Digest, April 2018.

**The Khada Parsi or Ubha Parsi** was first erected in 1860s at the Nagpada junction in the memory of Seth Cursetjee Manockjee Shroff, a prominent Parsi philanthropist and businessman, by his son Judge Manockjee Cursetjee. Seth Cursetjee Manockjee Shroff, was a prominent Parsi businessman and philanthropist who played a significant role in the commercial and civic life of Bombay during the early colonial period. The 155-year-old statue is 40-feet tall, cast-iron monument with bronze statue of Seth Cursetjee Manockjee perched atop a Corinthian pillar with sculptures of four mermaids surrounding the base. The original statue had lamps (which were stolen), and some parts of the cast iron shaft were gone and had four mermaids on top of the fountain which had been vandalised by local goons. (Technologies, n.d.) The statue reflected both familial reverence and the Parsi's contribution to Bombay's civic and economic life and was built in parts, in London by spending almost Rs. 20,000 then. The statue was erected at the Nagpada junction in 1860's by his son with the intention to keep an eye on the happenings of the world. When the statue was originally placed at the Nagpada junction, the statue occupied a prominent urban position and the traffic volumes then were modest and public monuments were central to city planning. Over time, the Khada Parsi became a familiar reference point in the city—people used it to give directions, fix meeting spots, and orient themselves within the neighbourhood. The statue was later shifted to the current position at Byculla junction under the

Byculla flyover to accommodate expanding traffic infrastructure in 1970's.



Image 03: Khada Parsi statue in its original state in 1860s  
Source: Parsi Khabar, April 29, 2013.



Image 04: Khada Parsi statue in its present location, Byculla junction Source: Mr. Vijay Malhotra.

<https://pedalandtringring.com/2021/03/20/if-statues-could-speak/>



Image 05: Timeline of statues during Colonial period.

Source: Author.

- **Post independence period – 1947 – 1990's:** The development during this period was characterized by rapid, largely unplanned urbanization, significant population growth, and a shift from a concentrated island city to a sprawling metropolitan region. After Independence, colonial statues were re-evaluated and questioned. Amidst strong nationalist sentiment and a push to decolonise public spaces, many colonial statues were removed as symbols of imperial power.
- One such example was the Edward VII statue, which was removed, retaining the node while erasing its colonial identity and redefining the space as a civic-cultural precinct. Practical concerns like traffic and the changing urban priorities also played a pivotal role. At Kala Ghoda, the landmark was temporarily erased but later re-coded. The original colonial equestrian statue was replaced by a contemporary symbolic sculpture, "The Spirit of Kala Ghoda" (2017) allowing the node to retain legibility while its meaning shifted from imperial power to cultural identity.



Image 06: King Edward VII statue presently at Bhauji Lad museum Source for 06 and 07: Mr. Vijay Malhotra  
<https://pedalandtringring.com/2021/03/20/if-statues-could-speak/>



Image 07: Kala Ghoda Association proposed the MHC to host a statue which came up in 2017

Between the 1950s and 1980s, rising motorised traffic transformed place-oriented junctions into movement-dominated nodes. Statues located at intersections began to obstruct traffic flow, reflecting that spatial configuration increasingly governs urban use over symbolic intent. One such example is the Khada Parsi which was shifted to the current position at Byculla junction under the Byculla flyover to accommodate expanding traffic infrastructure in 1970's. Today the Khada Parsi stands traffic-surrounded between the two arms of the Byculla flyover. As colonial symbols faded, statues of national figures—especially Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj—were placed at major junctions as markers of identity and new urban anchors. Positioned along high-integration corridors, these statues became embedded within fast-moving traffic networks rather than place-oriented civic spaces. Statues of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj were installed at several major junctions across Mumbai during the post-Independence period, many of which came to be popularly identified as 'Shivaji Chowk', marking a shift toward nationalist symbolism at urban nodes. Eg. The Shivaji Park / Dadar area has the Shivaji statue which is a Cultural-political node more associated with public gatherings. The statue was unveiled in 1966.



Image 08: Statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Shivaji Park, Bombay. Source: indianhistorypics



Image 09: Present image of Shivaji Maharaj statue at Shivaji Park Source: Mid Day, October 2021.

- **Contemporary Metropolitan City (2000s–Present):** Mumbai's current urban form is shaped by major traffic corridors that prioritise speed and connectivity. Junctions function mainly as parts of the movement network rather than as public gathering spaces. As a result, heritage nodes are judged by how well they allow traffic to move. To manage conflicts between

monuments and traffic, different solutions are used. Some statues are relocated to reduce congestion, such as Khada Parsi. In other cases, traffic is restricted or removed to protect important landmarks, as seen at the Gateway of India. The Gateway of India was originally surrounded by heavy vehicular movement, with roads passing close to the monument. Over time, increasing tourism, public gatherings, and security concerns made this arrangement unsafe and unsuitable for a landmark of national importance. Instead of relocating the monument, the city restricted vehicular access and pedestrianised the immediate precinct. Traffic was diverted to peripheral roads, allowing the Gateway to function as a public civic space rather than a traffic node. This intervention restored the monument's symbolic dominance by removing through-movement and prioritising pedestrian use.



Image 10: Aerial view of Gateway of India. Source: India History Collection.



Image 11: Gateway of India Source: P K Das Architects.

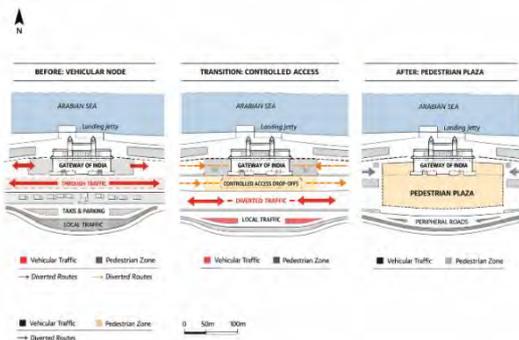


Image 12 Showing the transition in front of the Gateway of India through the years. Source: Author.

Flora Fountain was originally installed as a colonial-era monument at a key junction in South Mumbai, functioning as both a visual landmark and a place-oriented node. With increasing vehicular traffic after Independence, the junction became a major circulation point, and the fountain began to interfere with movement and safety. Instead of removing the monument, the city reorganised the junction as a controlled traffic node, introducing a roundabout, signals, and pedestrian crossings to allow vehicles to move around the fountain. At the same time, the space underwent symbolic reframing. Following the 1956 Samyukta Maharashtra movement, the surrounding junction was renamed Hutatma Chowk, and memorial pillars were added to commemorate the martyrs. This dual intervention—traffic management combined with symbolic reinterpretation—allowed the monument to remain in place while altering the meaning of the node. The fountain shifted from being the primary becoming part of a layered memorial landscape, demonstrating how heritage nodes can be adapted rather than

removed in response to mobility pressures. Thus, during this phase, it was seen that the routes were dominant, and the heritage nodes were evaluated through their mobility efficiency and hence saw the relocation of monuments or traffic calming or pedestrianisation. Thus, the nodes were negotiated.

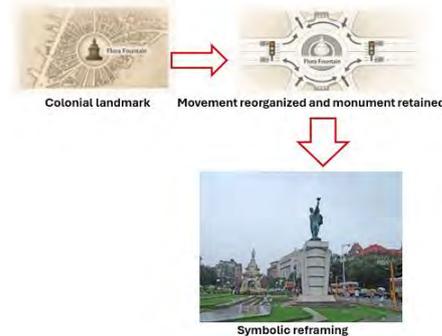


Image 13: Showing the transition w.r.t Flora Fountain. Source: Author.

### INFERENCES

This study examines the shifting significance of statue-based urban nodes in Mumbai through the conceptual lens of nodes, networks, and negotiation. It demonstrates how monuments positioned at major junctions have been continually reinterpreted in response to changing mobility systems. In the colonial era, statues played a central role in shaping place identity and urban legibility within comparatively low-intensity circulation networks. In the decades following Independence, rapid expansion of traffic infrastructure transformed these sites into contested terrains, where infrastructural imperatives increasingly intersected with symbolic, historical, and social values. In contemporary metropolitan conditions, highly integrated mobility networks have further reframed such heritage nodes primarily in terms of circulation efficiency, prompting varied strategies including relocation, pedestrianisation, and traffic regulation. The case of Khada Parsi reveals that tensions between heritage conservation and mobility demands are not isolated occurrences but reflect broader structural processes influencing historic cities. When viewed alongside interventions at Flora Fountain–Hutatma Chowk and the Gateway of India, the study underscores how urban nodes operate as arenas of continual negotiation, where collective memory, civic sentiment, and administrative priorities are persistently recalibrated. Rather than indicating planning inadequacies, these negotiations highlight the resilience and adaptability of heritage within evolving urban systems. Conceptualising nodes as negotiated spatial conditions provides a more comprehensive framework for heritage and urban policy—one that transcends binary choices of preservation versus removal and instead acknowledges the dynamic interplay between movement, memory, and urban morphology.

### FUTURE SCOPE

The future research could combine comparative case studies with spatial and policy analysis to better understand how heritage nodes are negotiated within

evolving urban mobility networks across different metropolitan contexts.

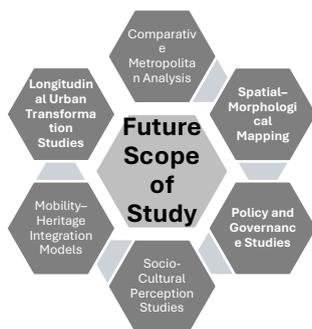


Image 15: Future scope of study  
Source: Author.

- Comparative Metropolitan Analysis:** Future research may extend this framework of nodes–networks–negotiation to other Indian and global metropolitan cities to examine how statue-based heritage nodes are managed under similar mobility pressures. Comparative analysis across cities such as Delhi, Kolkata, or Chennai could reveal whether relocation, pedestrianisation, or traffic management follow consistent patterns or are shaped by local governance structures and public sentiment.
- Spatial- Morphological mapping:** Detailed spatial mapping using tools such as Space Syntax, GIS-based traffic modelling, and pedestrian flow analysis can quantify how integration values, connectivity, and movement hierarchies influence the fate of heritage nodes. This would strengthen the theoretical argument by grounding it in measurable urban parameters.
- Policy and Governance studies:** Further work may examine how municipal bodies, heritage committees, and infrastructure agencies negotiate decisions regarding monuments. Analysing policy documents, public consultations, and legal frameworks can clarify how governance priorities shape outcomes at contested nodes.
- Socio-cultural perception studies:** Surveys and ethnographic research can explore how citizens perceive relocated or reframed monuments. Understanding public memory, attachment, and identity politics can provide insight into why certain statues are protected, reinterpreted, or marginalised.
- Mobility -heritage integration models:** Research can develop integrated planning models that proactively incorporate heritage nodes into mobility planning rather than treating them as obstacles. This may include simulation-based design proposals for adaptive junctions.
- Longitudinal urban transformation studies:** Tracking selected nodes over time through archival documentation, mapping, and photographic analysis can help understand how symbolic meaning and spatial configuration co-evolve.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES BASED ON THE STUDY

Drawing from the cases of Khada Parsi, Flora Fountain, and Gateway of India, the following guidelines may inform future urban and heritage policy:

- Recognise Nodes as Negotiated Spaces:** Urban nodes containing heritage monuments should be understood as dynamic and negotiated spatial conditions rather than static commemorative sites.
- Integrate Heritage into Mobility Planning:** Transport planning should assess heritage value at early design stages of flyovers, metro corridors, or junction redesigns to avoid reactive relocation.
- Prioritise Context-Sensitive Solutions:** Different nodes require differentiated responses:
  - Relocation only when spatial conflict is irreversible.
  - Pedestrianisation for nationally significant monuments with strong civic identity.
  - Traffic calming and controlled roundabouts where coexistence is feasible.
- Preserve Symbolic Legibility:** Even when movement networks dominate, visual prominence and pedestrian accessibility of monuments must be maintained to prevent them from becoming residual artefacts within infrastructure.
- Encourage Public Participation:** Public consultation mechanisms should accompany decisions regarding removal, renaming, or reinterpretation to ensure civic memory is acknowledged.
- Layered Reinterpretation Over Erasure:** Instead of removing monuments, reinterpretation (renaming, memorial additions, contextual plaques) may allow nodes to adapt symbolically while retaining spatial continuity.
- Balance Efficiency with Identity:** Mobility efficiency should not be the sole metric in evaluating urban nodes. Cultural value, memory, and identity must be included in assessment frameworks.

## CONCLUSION

This research suggests that historic cities like Mumbai require adaptive, negotiated planning approaches that reconcile infrastructure demands with embedded memory. By reframing heritage nodes as active participants within urban networks rather than obstacles to circulation, future planning can move toward more resilient and culturally responsive metropolitan development.

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