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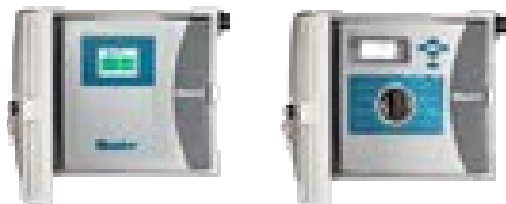
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Pradeep Sachdeva's architecture, inspired by vernacular and local traditions gave much respect and dignity to the craft traditions, especially in the public realm. His iconic vocabulary of crafts bazaars, haats, now replicated in all major cities of the country will remain a lasting legacy of a very sensitive, hands-on practitioner. He was also amongst the foremost architects who identified much ignored but most significant places of streets and roads as the canvas of a designer's work. His contribution in the formulation of guidelines for Indian streets and roads (for UTTIPEC) is invaluable. Gautam Sachdeva, his son and Suparna Bhalla, his long time associate and friend remember him in a tribute feature.

India has a great tradition of historic gardens belonging to various regions and cultures. These gardens have often remained sources of interest for artists and painters. Various inspirations for planting designs and their distinct characters are the subjects of a new four-part series on Aesthetics of Planting Design in Early Mughal Garden Paintings by James L. Wescoat Jr., a much-respected scholar of the subject of Islamic Studies. Separately, the issue profiles the professional journey while sharing thoughts and views of Narendra Dengle, an erudite academician, thinker and senior practitioner.

The concluding part of the discussion on the Central Vista Redevelopment project brings to forefront views of professional bodies like INTACH, ISOLA, and IUDI along with opinions of a diverse set of practitioners, academicians, and thinkers from different fields. With the idea of revisiting the knowledge and lessons imparted by classic books related to the subjects of nature and design, culture, environment, conservation, and sustainability, the Journal features a review of 'The Fissured Land' by Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha by Rahul Paul. Views of Feizal Alkazi, theatre director and artist, may find some resonance with spatial designers who are engaged in designing imaginative and experiential landscapes. In an interview, he shares some of the distinct aspects of the performative craft.

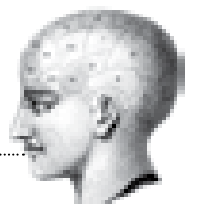
Advisory Editor of the Journal, Adit Pal—associated with it since its founding months in the year 2001—will no longer be involved in its content from this issue and onwards. He will remain involved in discussing the Journal's vision and direction.

The current pandemic situation has changed the world all around us in more ways than one—the way we work, the way we interact, the way we think, the way we live, and our priorities and our directions. Like the previous issue, this issue [and the next one too], would be made available only as a digital version, and no hard copies would be printed. While we ourselves miss the printed copies, we are happy to share that the last issue has had a far greater—and much quicker—reach in its digital format. We hope to return to the printed version by the end of the year.

Take care. Stay safe.



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Adit Pal Resigns

Due to irreconcilable differences regarding the publication of the feature *'Democracy, Participation and Consultation: In Conversation with Bimal Patel'* in LA-61, Adit Pal has resigned from his post of Advisory Editor. He observes that "publishing it in its present form—with its size and length, and absence of any other discussions on the project and its context in the same issue to provide balance—has given the feature a prominence and implied support which should not have been the case."

As a background, the Journal started a discourse about the redevelopment of Central Vista, New Delhi in LA-60 (published in February earlier this year) that featured a critique article on the Competition Brief of the project (*'Central Vista Competition: Debriefing The Design Brief'*, by Geeta Wahi Dua). In the next issue, LA-61 (published in May), the Journal interviewed Bimal Patel, the consultant of the redevelopment project to know about his professional background and views regarding the project (the feature mentioned in the above paragraph). As the concluding part of the discussion, the Journal invited professional bodies and eminent personalities to share their views and opinions about the project and reflect on Bimal's ideas as expressed in the interview. The extensive feature is published in this issue LA-62 (pages 46–87).

In an unbiased manner—and with the intent to have an informed discussion on critical aspects—we believe that we have taken a balanced approach by bringing out diverse views and opinions of both sides — of the consultant and of the concerned citizens, including professional bodies about this important project.

We stand by our position on the issue.

—Editors

About encounters and meetings

Subconsciously we are in search of people who make us strive for a higher degree of thoughts, a new meaning to life as an unending endeavor to elevate ourselves beyond our limits. They make us look at the world with different and new eyes, inspiring us in numerous ways.

In our professional journey, we were fortunate to meet Adit Pal. We met him in 2001 when LA Journal had just started. He had come back to India after completing his landscape education from the University of Pennsylvania in the US and was a visiting faculty at the departments of Landscape Architecture and Urban Design at SPA, New Delhi. We didn't know much about him but wanted to get his views about our new venture. In the first meeting itself, Adit came across as an extremely sharp, clear-hearted, and intelligent person, and seemed excited about the Journal. The encouraging response from a well-respected stranger came as a pleasant surprise to us against the usual cynical reactions that we had received from many. At the same time, he cautioned us about the kind of dedication needed for it and the loneliness of the journey. His faith in the future of the Journal, in us, and his offer of selfless support laid a strong foundation of an impeccable association and a deep friendship.

In May 2001, he joined the Journal's newly-constituted Advisory Board with other members and in 2004, with his increased interest and involvement in the journal, he became the Advisory Editor, a position which has remained honorary to date.

With no experience of managing a regular publication—that also of a nascent field—was a huge challenge for us. Regular discussions with Adit in the initial years helped carve the identity of the Journal. In those early days, on his advice, a mandate was formulated that the Journal will represent the discipline of landscape architecture and not only the profession. It opened new exciting directions to explore the content and define the Journal's character. He encouraged the idea to include research works, studies, and academic exercises in the realm of landscape design in the journal. The attempt was to compile relevant content that is diverse, knowledgeable, multidisciplinary, and representative of the ethos of Indian culture. Unbuilt works, competition entries, theoretical perspectives, philosophical essays along with design works, hence found a prominent place in the Journal. A wide range of contributors from diverse fields — spatial design, natural sciences, horticulture, and creative arts have nurtured the publication to date. Another significant decision was to encourage designers to share the processes of design by contributing sketches, drawings, and details while showcasing projects along with photographic documentation. Along with his larger role of being Advisory Editor, Adit also lent his hand to edit the language of content for each issue. He used to go through various compiled articles and features, while thoroughly marking edits and his other suggestions, a work that he did till September 2017.

He, himself, has contributed considerably to the publication's content. Some of the noteworthy features include interviews with Anuraag Chowfla in a special issue on Joseph Allen Stein, Carol Smyser McHarg—landscape architect and partner of Ian McHarg, and Jon Coe, eminent Zoo designer. He also wrote an homage to Lawrence Halprin, an eminent landscape architect, whom he considered his mentor. Over the years, with his vast knowledge of the world of landscape design, Adit has referred many projects, research works, academic exercises, and personalities to be included in the Journal. His association has also helped in expanding the Journal's base amongst his past associates, colleagues, and friends. Few of them have been contributing regularly to the Journal.

Adit has remained the foremost person, with whom we share all our initial thoughts regarding the Journal. His appreciation of contrary points of view while bringing to the forefront many perspectives to look at the subject in hand is noteworthy.

Whether it was the establishment of Landscape Foundation, India, or a decade-long annual Students' Landscape Design Competitions (2008–2018), he has been a constant person for us to look up to for the thrashing of ideas and its larger vision. For *Landscape Architecture in India, A Reader*, Adit was the first person whose name came to our mind while constituting its editorial team. As co-editor, besides offering many useful suggestions and comments, he contributed substantially to the content of the book. Our research work, Nature in the City maps series, and its subsequent presentation at North Carolina State University in the US in March 2019 was another exciting venture in which he generously shared his suggestions. He happily acted as our distant guide for various places that we had planned to visit, even booking tickets for our train journey there.

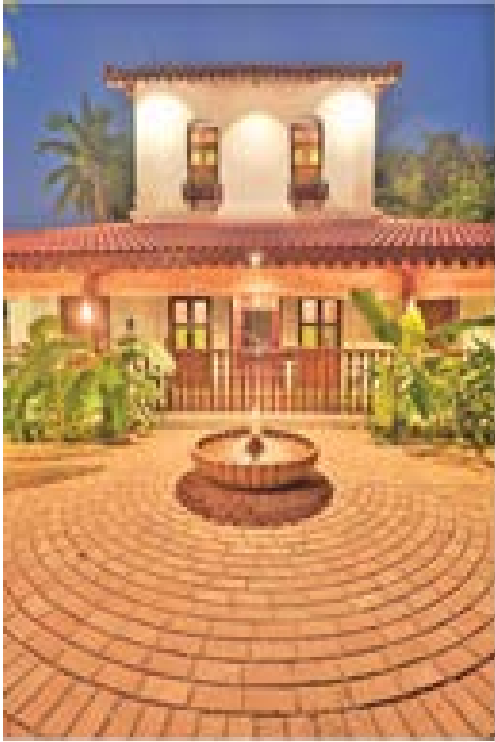
With a deep, imaginative, and empathetic vision, Adit has encouraged us to aim for a higher level of discourse, above the mundane matters and concerns. His friendship has enabled us to shed many of our inhibitions, biases, and narrow-minded thinking. We believe that many sharp edges of our personalities have blurred while working with him. He has nudged us to come out of our comfort zone and explore new possibilities, without expecting the obvious. This has helped us to stay afresh, alive, and open for new intellectual explorations. As an intellectual and moral anchor, and at times, as our conscious keeper, he has played a significant role in shaping our professional and personal persona and their evolution.

Our meetings with him during his annual visits to India have remained a great source of delight and inspiration which fills us with all the enthusiasm and energy. These engagements keep us refreshed, nurtured, and hopeful for the coming days. He has, and will remain, our mentor, guide, and a dear friend for the remaining years of our lives.

As mentioned in the note on the previous page, Adit Pal has resigned from his post of Advisory Editor. He, however, will be available to discuss the larger vision and direction of the Journal along with its other future endeavors.

We wish him all the best.

—Brijender S. Dua | Geeta Wahi Dua
Editors

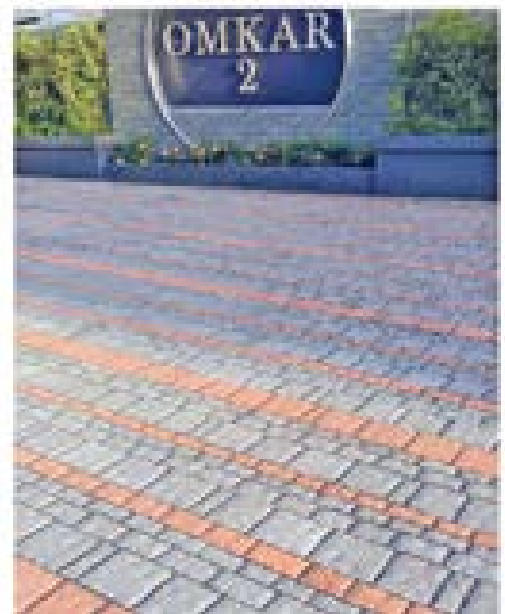
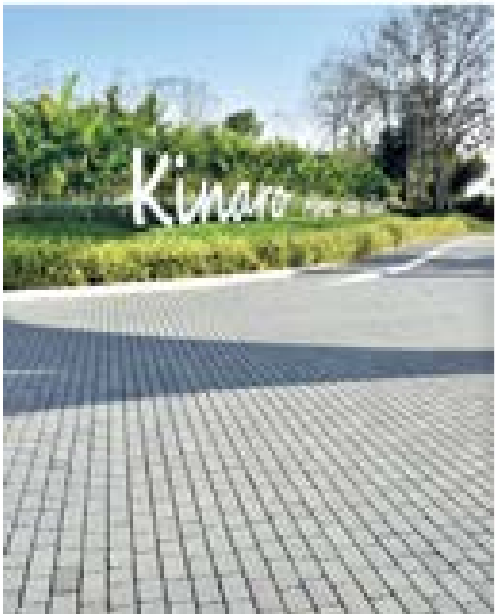


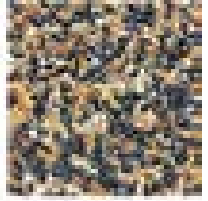
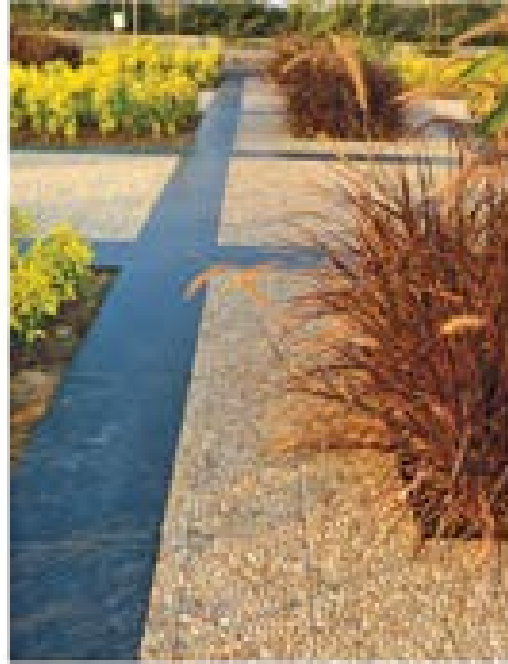
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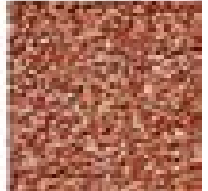
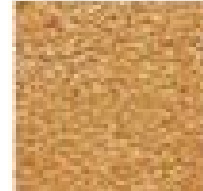


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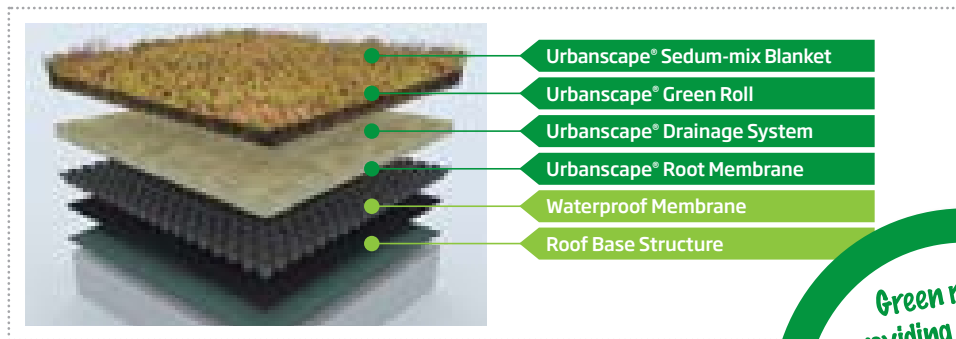
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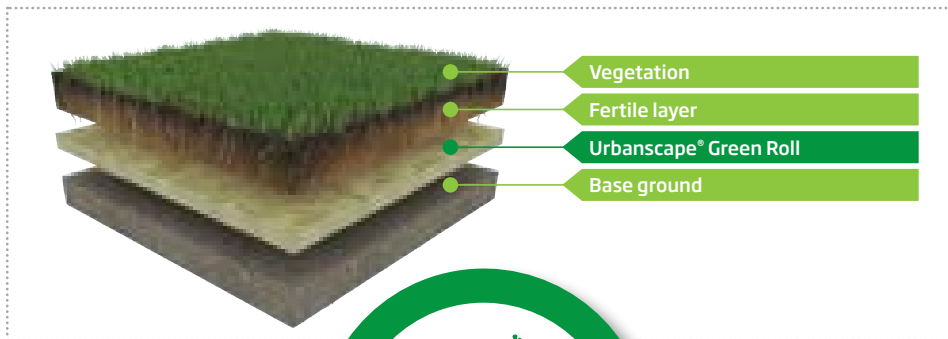
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HERITAGE, LOCAL TRADITIONS AND CRAFTS



Gautam Sachdeva, Landscape Architect
| gautam@ayanagar.com

EXPLORING DELIGHT WITH P.S.

GS [Gautam Sachdeva]: “Why can’t we have beautiful things?”

PS [Pradeep Sachdeva]: “We can. And we do.”

We travelled together often, and there remains not a single of those journeys where we were not compelled to pause, just because some odd form of completely underwhelming architecture or a peculiar element of design had caught his eye. These seemingly absurd instances were not just a hallmark of his childlike curiosity but his instinctive draw to the innocuous. Like, on our way to Farukhnagar, Haryana, PS made us stop at an abandoned well which at first glance appeared like a demolition site but turned out to be a well dating back to the Colonial era, using ‘lakhori’ bricks—Its arched vista with solid stone carved columns overlooking a natural reservoir, currently being used to sun dry cow dung. Or when he made us stop to admire a bunting of no particular uniqueness hanging in some village market on our way to Dehradun, that oddly fit right in with all the hustle and bustle, creating a sense of presence for what was otherwise ordinary.

Once, ambling through the lanes of Shekhawati in Rajasthan we stumbled across a crumbling ruined edifice, so dilapidated that a section of an arch was clearly visible in its exposed brick skeleton—its patina layered on the plaster had turned it into a shade more plant than lime—framing a courtyard studded with hand-carved sandstone columns and brackets precariously supporting a balcony. Neglected by all as debris, yet it caused a gleam in his eye as he excitedly exclaimed: “Wow, we need to have that”. So much so that he started making plans to venture out in the night to steal this so-called ‘treasure trove’ of ornamented stone. That plan was fortunately abandoned after a few drinks and a tiring day.

In all these instances he would try and reveal to me the magic that lay in the construction skill set indigenous to our country. PS saw it as something that was dying a slow death but when reused or reinvented in new designs or even when restored well in their habitat, they were a source of delight like no other. It is not “borrowed architecture” he would say, unlike some of the contemporary architecture that you experience today, in India.

He had me convinced that this skill set was intrinsically important for his practice of architecture as it was about faith. “Faith of a past in what lies ahead.”

It was after several of these excursions that I ceased to question his genius and allowed him to reinforce my belief, that it was possible for anyone to make beautiful things regardless of background and training. It needed both a sensitivity and a sense of respect to understand a place and its people. Beauty according to him lay not in the monumentality of things but in taking ownership of the smallest of them and giving them critical pride through simple elegant gestures he called design. Once made physical, even the smallest architectural venture has a sense of permanence in memory as well as in place. “Design is not accidental,” he would say, “you cannot delight the audience of architecture without depth.”

His last—and my first personal collaboration with him—was a project that was perhaps an amalgamation of these journeys, conversations, trysts, and spontaneous design dioramas. It all began as I awoke one morning, to find the courtyard of our home at the farm choked with miscellaneous pieces of hand-carved stone columns, brackets, Dasa, cladding, bricks and heaps of quartzite stone. Unable to fathom his motives I put it down to insanity as he gleefully chuckled, “Oh, but these columns came free with the bricks I bought from an old demolished building.”



INSPIRATION

Indian heritage was a source of inspiration for Pradeep in all his works. Dilapidated historic precincts were a repository of invaluable design elements—broken columns, lintels, window frames, cornice, old bricks, and stone—that he used to collect and often integrate in his designs.

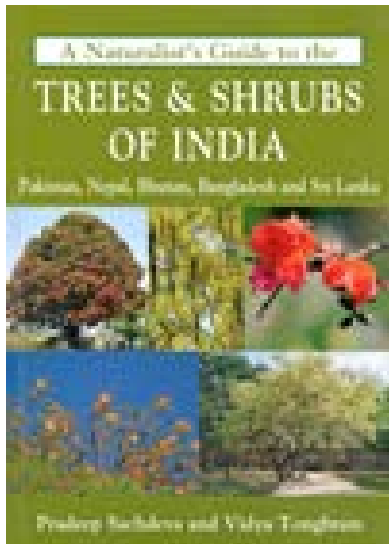
GS: “And what are we going to do with all this?”

PS: “We shall be making a library the real Mughal way.”

He was not referring to the vocabulary of Mughal architecture but of the practice of Mughal emperors and their erstwhile counterparts who demolished temples, with their iconography, during their reign and reused the carefully dismantled material to create their own monuments! “Much like the colonnade at Qutub Minar in Delhi,” he exemplified, where you in fact still see a collection of column bases and capitals just lying on the ground which were not used, much like our present courtyard. It was pointless to point out that Qutub Minar was not Mughal as he was already assimilating his eccentric ideas into a design with me as his willing, if then, unworthy accomplice. We used the old bricks and quartzite stone to make load-bearing walls, erected a few columns that supported the pieces of carved stone as lintels, pierced with brackets to emulate the arched colonnades of a verandah. The entire building is a product of reclaimed materials that enable passive cooling and yet it imparts a contemporary sophistication that puts its shiny new peers to shame.

To PS, Indian architecture was not what it appears to most of us, to him it was only a reflection of the people. He cared for people and the importance of providing them with comfortable spaces, places people could call their home, places, in which people could make memories, places, where even the marginalized could call their own. For him, the flamboyance of the architectural statement or stamp were irrelevant in the pursuit of public equity, where he would carve a place for everyone. His was an inclusive design style, where both the designer and the client both understood what they were getting and getting into with clarity. I would often describe his method as ‘zero’, as in a zero loss of understanding. While he would painstakingly sample each and every unique element of design to full scale leaving nothing to ambiguity, he would readily accept the quirks left by the hands of the craftspeople entrusted with his designs.

Apart from architecture and perhaps more than architecture, nature and studying nature was his true passion as is evident by his two publications on the native flora of India. He self-taught himself the botanical skills that made him an accomplished landscape architect. We travelled to various botanical gardens and parks around the world, in search of the exotic and enjoying the magnanimous beauty of the ordinary, sharing fleeting glances and irreverent thoughts ever too often upon discovering an enviously beautiful plant that stirred delinquent thoughts of smuggling it out of the country back to our home. Of course, we never did indulge them but did manage to legally get a few of them back when times were simpler.



BOOK

***A Naturalist's Guide to the Trees & Shrubs of India* [2017]**

"An identification guide to the 280 tree and shrub species most commonly seen in India. Photographs from India's top nature photographers are accompanied by detailed species descriptions, which include nomenclature, size, distribution, and habitat. The user-friendly introduction covers geography and climate, vegetation, opportunities for naturalists, and the main sites for viewing the listed species. Also included is an all-important checklist of all of the trees and shrubs of India encompassing, for each species, its common and scientific name, its status in each state as well as its global IUCN status."

The Road Ahead

A recent fond memory is one, where he asked me to drag a chair out of our house and made me stand on it right next to a tripod made out of bamboo for an elephant ear climber. He said, “Stand on top of the chair and raise your hand so I can take a picture for scale.” It’s reminiscent of when I was asked to do the same when I was ten years old in the middle of a public park! Completely unselfconscious and oblivious to how the world saw him or me, he remained committed then as he did always, to the understandings and correlations of the human and the natural scale. It is in this equation he found beauty.

At PSDA, the importance of this equation is paramount to the architecture it builds, and the way ahead is made both easier and harder due to it. Easier, because the integrity of the PS method assures a system of beauty that can transcend scale, from a home to a housing, from a luxury hotel to a village school, from the stepped *ghats* along a river to the paving that edges the street, from the parks to even the benches that overlook the lily ponds. They all are made possible in the balance between the human and natural. As we reinvent our furniture arm Windmill, launch our new web site, and pave the path to new projects, we do so with a commitment to this method. For in it is not a system but a principle of a kind and generous architecture that upcycles, that is tactile and sensitive to the human way of life.

The journey ahead also seems harder because, while the world moves one-way PSDA will need to seek out its own way. Make its own spontaneous stops and plan its own quirky dreams. The legacy of PS is not in the baggage of its history, as he never took history seriously, but in the lightness of faith. That allows us to leap. Small and giant pushes and thrusts into an experimentative future filled with the adventurous, promise of good things. As PS would say, “Good things come to those who can see good.”

“Good things come to those who can see good.”

All images provided by the Author

Suparna Bhalla, Architect
| suparna.bhalla@abaxial.org

SIR

● For everyone he was 'Boss', but for me, Pradeep Sachdeva was always 'Sir'. He insisted that 'Sir' was something you had to have firmly screwed on your shoulders, but I stubbornly persisted on deferring to him. What else do you call the person who teaches you that scale in architecture is just a position, who gives you the freedom to fail and tells you there will always be a desk waiting for you, at his office, wherever you are, who travels across the world to be at your graduation when your parents cannot make it, who holds your hand and partners in your initial projects pretending they are actually yours, who delights even in your smallest victories and children, insisting they call him 'nanaji'?

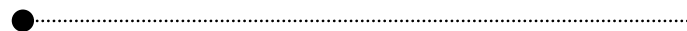
He was and remains my teacher, mentor, guide, hand-holder, back support, and it would not be wrong to say, my practice. While I trained and worked for him briefly, I ended up working with him for decades. His ability to see architecture not as an artefact but a product of lasting human endeavour is unique. Pradeep's architecture was never in the plan, it was always in the experience of it. The floor that braced the past and meandered into a pattern, the door crafted with wooden panels and embellished with a brass knob shaped like the lotus that finds its way on to the fresco on the wall behind the mirror, that reflects the arched colonnade, that in turn frames the leaves of the tree, that makes for the filigree that fills the space with shadowy imaginings, each always making visible the hands that created them.

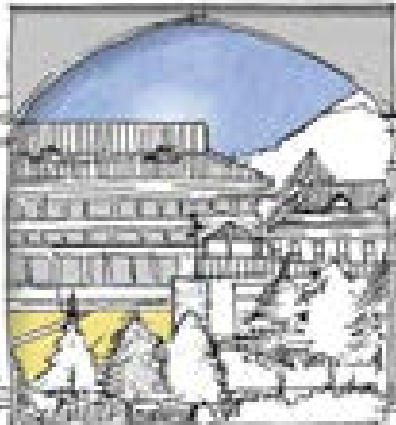
The aim of his spaces was never perfection but a sense of discovery—personal, humbling and very human. Whether it be a palace in Rajasthan, a street that led to the offices of DDA or even a chair for the master-architect, Stein, he never designed an end but more a journey that evolved in the hands of those who built it. Naked in its material and embodied with tradition, his architecture stemmed from his desire to reach out and touch people. It is this characteristic that made him the face of public architecture in the country. The mason, the carpenter and the client, for him held equal curiosity and equally had the power to influence his design. Never seeing people as users of space but participants, his brand of architecture was rooted in his innate belief, in the goodness of humanity and its vast potential.

In a cynical, complex world, he stood out not because he seemingly kept it simple, but he did so in bold strokes. He ‘simply’ built Delhi’s most popular bazaar, Dilli Haat, on a stormwater drain, culled an award-winning garden out of Delhi’s thorny Ridge, ‘simply’ converted a garden to Hotel at Samode, ‘simply’ built the largest bamboo dome as India’s ode to the future at the World Expo and ‘simply’ shifted a house from Kerala to a farm in Haryana. He set the simple bar really high, not only at PSDA but also in the many practices he seeded.

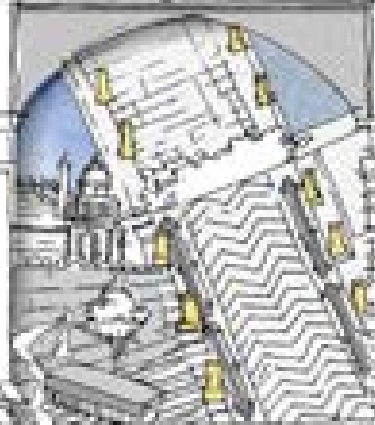
Aniket Bhagwat, the architect, and my friend, once wrote a piece titled ‘Thank you for the music’ based on the erstwhile song by the 1970s pop group ABBA equating music to our ability to design. Its lyrics could not be more appropriate for Pradeep. For while I was educated as an architect, all plans, elevations, and perspectives, it was ‘Sir’ who first showed me the music. The music that makes his architecture. In his characteristic nonchalant way, he sensitized many like me, to open ourselves to the music that exists all around us, in the small streaks of sunlight that escape the branches, in the carved turns of columns, the flow of the rain on slate tiles, the odd rock that marks the bend of a road...to hear it, see it, feel and design with it. Even in it.

Thank you, Sir!

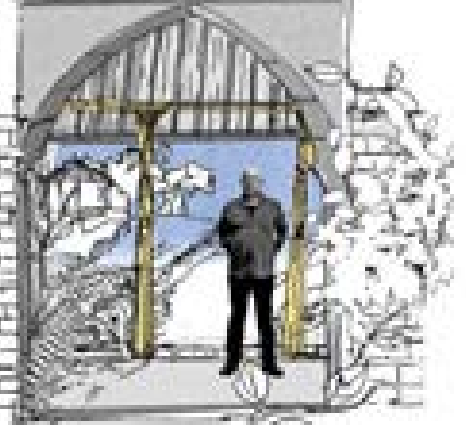




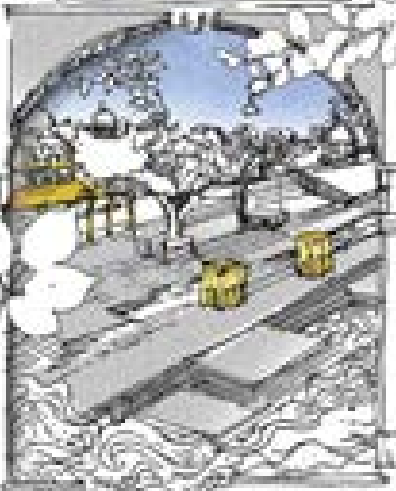
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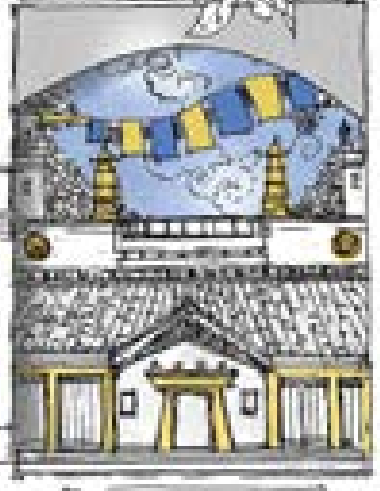
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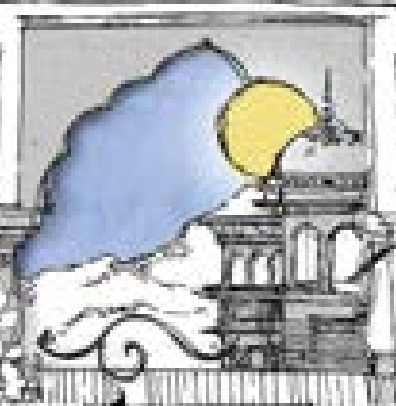
Nanded Ghat



India Pavilion Shanghai Expo



Rato Monastery



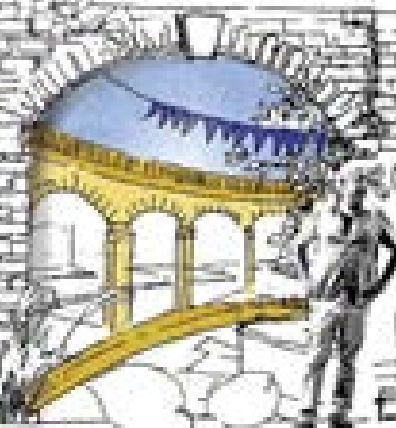
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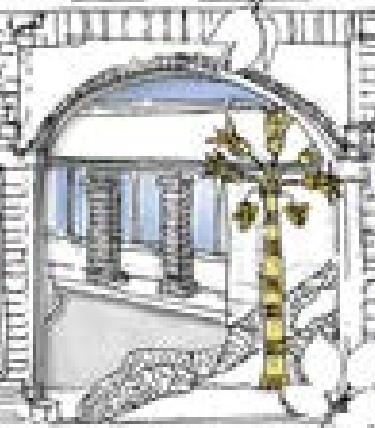
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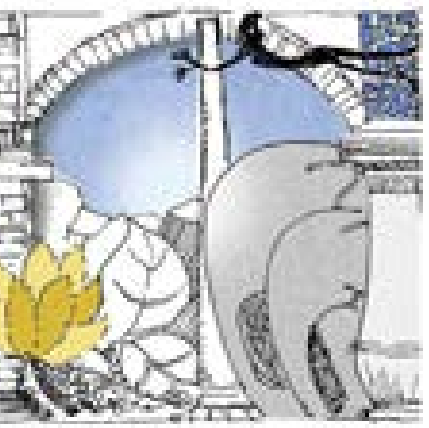
Windmill



Dilli
Haat



Loka School



Garden of Five Senses

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THE AESTHETICS OF PLANTINGS IN EARLY MUGHAL GARDEN PAINTINGS

'It's the Day for the Garden!' is the verse of poetry associated with a small Mughal painting from the Divan-i Akbari, painted around 1580 for the third Mughal ruler Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar (figure 1). Annemarie Schimmel and Stuart Cary Welch describe the painting in eloquent terms, but they say little about its beautiful plantings, which are some of its most intriguing qualities. By the end of this series, we will develop an aesthetic interpretation of the plantings in this painting and its implications for landscape architecture.

Planting design is central to landscape architecture (Shaheer, 2016, pp. 68-75), but it remains underdeveloped in theory and practice, which has led to criticisms by leading garden designers and horticulturalists. The aesthetics of Mughal planting design has likewise been an elusive topic for garden historians, archaeobotanists, and historic garden conservationists. In light of the increasing interest in Mughal garden conservation, as well as new gardens inspired by Mughal precedents, this series of articles focuses on paintings as a rich source of insight into the aesthetics of Mughal planting design.

Several caveats must be considered when using paintings in garden history and conservation (Wescoat, 1989). As Professor Shaheer (2013) once wrote, "A Landscape is not a Painting." Even so, the relevance of Mughal paintings for the history and theory of planting aesthetics in India seems promising. This first article lays out a conceptual framework and surveys previous scholarship on planting aesthetics. It then proceeds to an interpretation of paintings in two of the earliest Mughal manuscripts—the Tutinama (Tales of a Parrot) and Hamzanama (Adventures of Hamza). Future articles will focus on plantings in historical manuscripts like the Baburnama and poetic manuscripts like the Khamasa of Nizami. But before proceeding to the paintings, it is useful to consider the rationale and approach in this study.



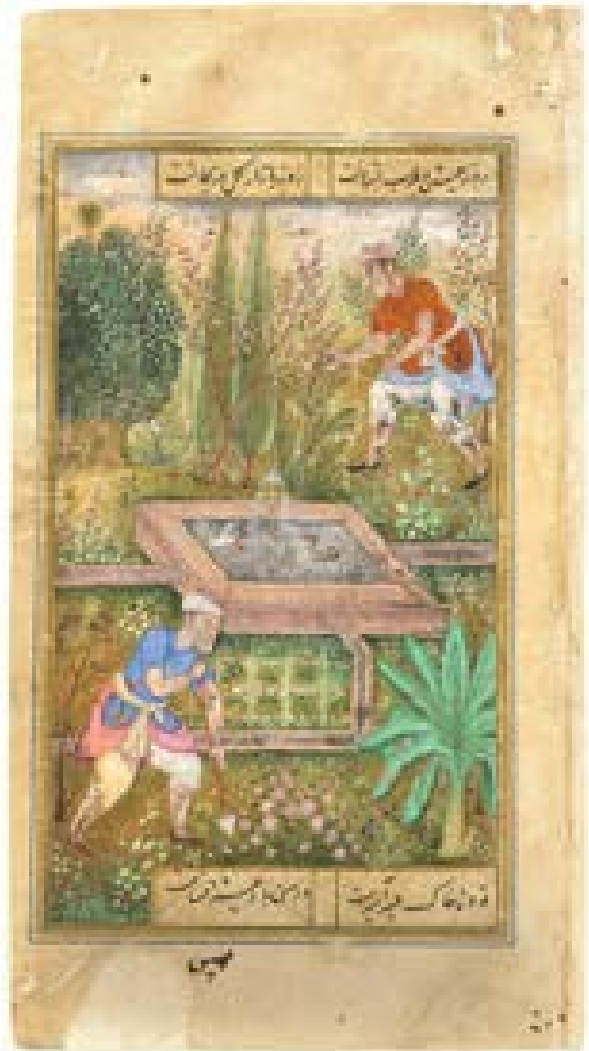
THE TUTINAMA [TALES OF A PARROT] AND HAMZANAMA [ADVENTURES OF HAMZA]

Rationale: Limited Historical Evidence of Mughal Planting Design

Little survives in the way of original Mughal planting plans, drawings, models, or textual descriptions. The *Irshad al Zira'a* ('Guide to Agriculture') constitutes an important exception. Written in Herat in the 15th century, it was shaped in part by a landscape architect whose family became directly involved in the design of Babur's gardens in Dholpur and Humayun's tomb-garden in Delhi (Subtelny 1995, 1997). There have been at least three different spatial interpretations of the *chahar bagh* described in that text.

Mughal literature often mentions the names and qualities of individual plant species, which have been compiled in lists for garden conservation purposes. In addition, several detailed studies have been made of botanical references in poetic works like Nizami's *Khamsa* (van Ruymbeke, 2007) as well as Mughal sources (Gupta, 2018). Little archaeobotanical evidence survives in the way of pollen or macro botanical fragments (Lentz, 2000). Historical photography does reveal vegetation change at sites like the Taj Mahal, but only from the mid-19th century onwards (Priyaleen Singh, pers. comm.). Painting is thus the nearest-contemporary visual evidence of planting aesthetics.

Before proceeding to the paintings, however, it is useful to briefly consider the wider literature on plant culture in India. There are detailed studies, for example, on plant lore, devotional practice, and symbolic meaning (Findly, 2008; Haberman, 2013; Roth, 2018; Simoons, 1998). There are beautiful guides to plant species (e.g. Krishan, 2006). The aesthetics of plants and gardens are addressed more in literary than in philosophical writing (compare Sharma [2017] on landscape poetry of Kashmir with theoretical *rasa* works on the aesthetic emotions in theatre, music, and dance in Pollock [2016]).



THE DAY OF THE GARDEN

It's the Day for the Garden (painting, recto; text, verso),
folio 173 from a manuscript of the *Divan* (collection of works)
of Anvari, 1588 CE

COURTESY: Harvard Art Museum.1960.117.173



Mughal paintings have been used as illustrations in garden histories, albeit with limited commentary on their plantings, perhaps in part because there are major gaps between paintings and the landscapes depicted (Wescoat, 1989). Painters rarely painted from direct observation, and they employed stylistic conventions from various sources, but they still offer rich insights into the aesthetics of planting.

Approach: Aesthetics of Plants and Planting in Mughal Painting

We began with the image titled, ‘It’s the Day for the Garden, for Cheer and for Joy’ in which the poet praised his patron and friend, and his modern editors noted that, “Akbar’s trees and flowers grow with natural abandon, whereas Shah Jahan’s appear to have been set with a jeweler’s precision” (Schimmel and Welch, 1983, p. 86). We will question this comparison later, but for the moment it is interesting to note the aesthetic tone of their commentary.

Other art historians have written about the origins, attribution, and stylistic development of early Mughal painting (e.g., Beach, 1987). They help one see the overall image in relation to its painterly details. Of particular interest are recent books on flora and fauna painting, though not surprisingly, they too have focused more on portraits of individual species than on plantings in garden design (Das, 2012; Verma, 1999). An important exception is Parodi and Wannell’s (2011) identification of the historical landscape scene and venue of Akbar’s circumcision ceremony outside Kabul painted in 1546 CE. Several art historians have written about the visual logic of Mughal painting, which has relevance for interpreting garden layouts and plantings (Koch, 2017; Minissale, 2006). Others have drawn attention to Occidental and Persian influences on the hybrid aesthetics of Mughal painting (Gonzalez, 2016; Natif, 2018; Singh, K., 2017). Of these, Ebba Koch (2017) offers the most detailed combination of spatial analysis of hierarchical principles coupled with art historical interpretation of meaning in Shah Jahani *darbar* paintings. The closest approach to the one followed in this article is Professor Priyaleen Singh’s study of Marwar paintings as the basis for garden conservation plantings in Jodhpur and Nagaur in Rajasthan, which included plant selection and planting bed (*kiari*) design, surrounded by fruiting and flowering trees and shrubs (Singh, personal communication, and articles in LA). Because this article focuses on planting aesthetics in early Mughal painting, we begin with two of the earliest Mughal manuscripts produced in the early decades of Akbar’s reign in the 1550s through the 1570s.



Aesthetics of Planting in *Tutinama* and *Hamzanama* Paintings

We begin with the *Tutinama* which is one of the earliest manuscripts composed for Akbar between 1560 and 1565. Its plantings have a simplicity that bears comparison both with pre-Mughal and Rajput painting traditions (Beach, 1987, 1992). The *Tutinama* presents 52 stories illustrated with over two hundred paintings that are told by a parrot to his owner's wife to forestall her visiting a lover while the owner, a merchant, travels on business (Chandra and Ehnbohm, 1976). This genre fulfilled Akbar's enjoyment of morality tales. Many *Tutinama* illustrations have limited vegetation, but several tales were set within gardens (see the Cleveland Art Museum website for all of the paintings in its manuscript). Some gardens feature cypress and flowering tree plantings, while others have pools with floating lotus blossoms surrounded by loosely symmetrical arrangements of palms and trees. Here, we focus on paintings that have tree-lined forest borders.

Aesthetics of tree-lined forest borders

On the twelfth night, the merchant of Mazanderan's daughter went to visit a gardener to whom she had made an outrageous promise in exchange for a priceless flower. Along the way, wolves and bandits accost her, but she impressed upon them her obligation to fulfill her duty. Ultimately, she meets the gardener who virtuously waives the obligation. Of special interest to us are the ornamental tree borders. As noted above, they have a simplicity of layout that consists of a long row of large alternating species seen in elevation. Tree types vary dramatically, from bright green bananas placed slightly in front of broad leaf evergreens with bands of lanceolate leaves, to adjacent white-flowering trees. Interestingly, the bananas are Mughal overpainting, on top of an earlier Sultanate painting (Seyller, 1992). Each tree has a distinct form, outline, and texture—they are individuals. However, they have a common level of detail. The major veins of the banana tree have an affinity with the size of leaves and flowers on the larger species. They provide bright highlights and colours to the design. These qualities hold the composition of the tree border together. The row of trees in the background complements the bright clothing of the row of human figures in the foreground. Light-brown tree trunks illuminate the dark understorey while alternating darker trunks recede. Bright patches of grass punctuate the bases of the trunks. Similarly, widely spaced clumps of grass illuminate the dark green ground cover in the middle of the painting. The interior garden setting is marked by several flowering shrubs that resemble oleanders (*kinar*), and the gardener standing on the brick pavement with his shovel. This concept of the multi-species tree-lined forest border occurs frequently in regional painting styles. It stands in contrast with wild forest scenes in the *Tutinama* that have irregular tree forms and placement, as for example in the tales where a mother parrot warns her children perched in the tree branches about the dangers of foxes and hunters. In contrast with modern perceptions of Mughal garden plantings as having symmetrical rows of single-species plantings, this aesthetic norm was defined by three or four alternating tree species and a small number of shrubs and flowers. This became a prominent planting pattern within and outside the garden setting.



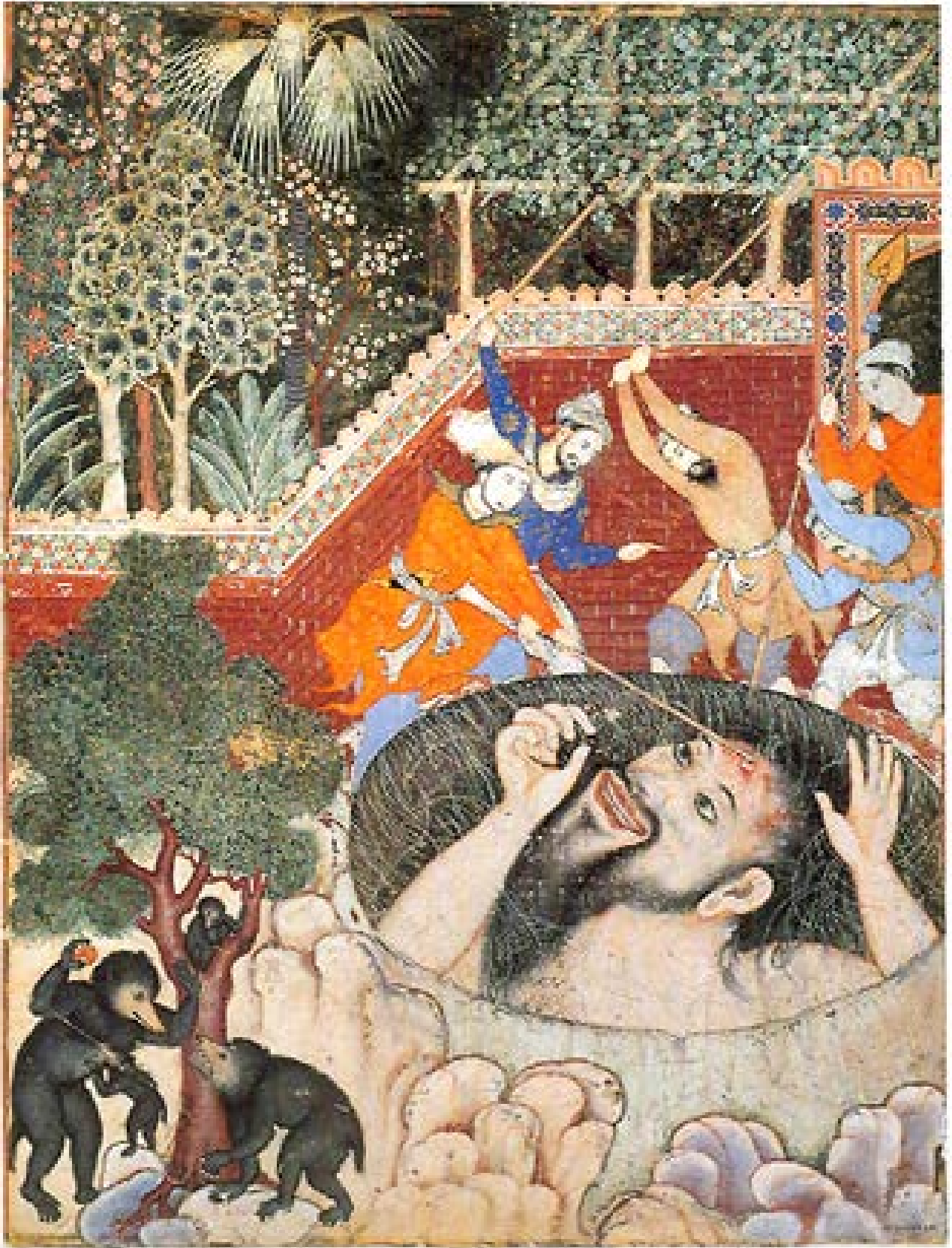


TUTINAMA

Twelfth Night: The merchant's daughter meets the gardener to fulfill her vow. c. 1560 CE.

Cleveland Museum of Fine Art. Opaque watercolor, gold, and ink on paper. Gift of Mrs. A. Dean Perry 1962.279.100.b.

<https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1962.279.100.b>



HUMZANAMA

The giant Zumurrud Shah is beaten by gardeners who blame him for damage done by a family of bears. Victoria and Albert Museum, painted 1562-1577. Victoria and Albert Museum IS.1516-1883

Aesthetics of garden enclosures

Turning to garden plantings in paintings of the large *Hamzanama* manuscript, we find a strikingly different yet contemporary aesthetic with the *Tutinama* (Beach, 1987; Seyller, 2002). The *Hamzanama* was an unusually large manuscript both in the size of paintings (74 cm x 58 cm) and their number. It was said to comprise of 1,400 illustrations in 14 volumes of 100 folios each, which took 14 years to complete, during which time Mughal painting underwent many important developments. It was the largest early project of Akbar's atelier that involved 30 painters and a coordinated mode of production. An estimated 141 or 10% of these paintings survive (Seyller, 2002), of which many have landscape imagery and several feature garden plantings. As in the *Tutinama*, the *Hamzanama* was a compilation of stories to be read and displayed to the king, but in this case, they were wild adventure stories. The hero Hamza had many dangerous, romantic, and marvellous encounters that the first Mughal ruler Babur dismissed as frivolous, but his grandson Akbar greatly enjoyed.

The massive size of the manuscript makes it impossible to treat individual paintings as representative of the whole, but it does not prevent us from looking at individual paintings for their garden aesthetic. For example, one well-known *Hamzanama* story involves a garden that is fascinating, both on the level of plot and planting design. The malevolent giant, Zumurrud Shah, has fallen into a pit and is being beaten by gardeners who unjustly blame him for damage to their walled garden, shown in the painting, which was actually perpetrated by the family of bears shown in the bottom left (Seyller, 2002, pp. 100-101).

Let's focus on the garden rather than the giant. One enters the strongly walled brick enclosure through a formal gate, arriving in a trellis area with grapevines overhead! Who imagines a Mughal garden to have a wooden grape trellis? (see Roth, 2018, 69-70). Or to enter the garden into a shady horticultural space that opens up into a bright ornamental space, without any formal walks? As in the *Tutinama*, the ground plane is dark, but not so dark as to obscure the gnarled vineyard trunks.

The stair-stepped garden wall creates a space for a diverse multi-level planting, whose volume stands in contrast with the more narrow linear border of the *Tutinama*. The composition of seven trees consists of two bananas flanking the lowest level, with a coarse-foliaged tree in the centre, surrounded by three flowering trees, and surmounted by a tall fan palm. Visually, each plant illuminates the garden in its own way, in one case through brightly highlighted foliage; in others through their white, pink, or red flowers; or the alternating colours of tree trunks. While their individual identity is clear, they overlap and complement one another in a solid ornamental planting.

Outside the garden, the family of bear culprits plays in and around a single less-illuminated forest tree in wild rocky terrain, whose irregular branching and rooting may reflect European painting influences (Natif, 2018). In this instance, the garden is a densely planted horticultural paradise, set in contrast with the wild landscape outside.

Reflections

The *Tutinama* and *Hamzanama* paintings extend conventional ideas about Mughal garden plantings beyond preconceptions about *chahar baghs* with a small number of highly symmetrical plantings. We shall see such paintings, but many other patterns as well. The paintings discussed here feature stories about gardeners, rather than royal patrons. The gardeners face complex moral situations where aesthetics and ethics are closely related to one another. These perspectives on Mughal garden plantings continue to develop in historical manuscripts like the *Baburnama* and *Akbarnama*, which are addressed in the next article. By the end of the series, we will build up an aesthetic perspective on early Mughal planting design that can help us interpret complex planting imagery like the 'It's the day for the garden!' painting, and in ways that can inspire modern landscape architectural design as well.

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Acknowledgments by the Author

This series of articles is dedicated to Professor Milo C. Beach who taught me how to look at Mughal paintings at a seminar in Williamstown, Massachusetts, and to the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT where I was able to offer these lectures in my seminar on Islamic gardens.



All images provided by the Author



CONSERVATION, PLANNING AND DESIGN



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CELEBRATING CONTEXTUAL MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE ACROSS TWO CONTINENTS

SARTO AND ANTHONY ALMEIDA

Born in Tanzania (then Tanganika), Sarto and Anthony, the Almeida brothers were architects par excellence, both searching for the local Modernism—Sarto in Goa and Anthony in Tanzania, especially in Dar es-Salaam. Both were keenly aware of the Modernist movement and they perceived the Modernist philosophy to be a great tool to translate traditional architectural image and spatiality to that of the ‘now times’. Both are no more, Sarto passed away on 26 May 2020 and Anthony had passed away on 17 March 2019. They have left some architectural landmark designs in their places of practice. They belonged to the generation of architects who not only took Modernism into their fold but also inspired younger architects through their practice and persona.

Both the brothers studied at J. J. College of Architecture in Mumbai, under the tutelage of Claude Batley.¹ Their parents had migrated to Tanganika from Goa. Anthony returned to Dar es-Salaam and established his practice there. Sarto had a short stint with Balkrishna Doshi in the early 1960s in Ahmedabad, as a contemporary of the Kanade Brothers, Thackeray and others. This coterie, then, was figuring out the ‘ism’ of the day. In fact, it is in Ahmedabad that Sarto met his lovely future wife and companion, Therese. Sarto later set

ALMEIDA BROTHERS

TOP LEFT: *Sarto Almeida*

PHOTO CREDIT: *Ian*

TOP RIGHT: *Anthony Almeida*

PHOTO SOURCE: *abalmeidaarchitect.com*

¹ <https://www.sharparchitects.co.uk/blog/modernism-in-tanzania-the-work-of-anthony-almeida>
Accessed on June 16, 2020



CARMELITE CHURCH, GOA

ARCHITECT: *Sarto Almeida*

PHOTO CREDIT: *Bhavana & Harsh*



Anthony remained a die-hard Modernist till the very end. He undertook varied projects and was celebrated as the foremost Tanzanian architect. He also took a keen interest in the preservation of Tanzania's culture and heritage.² In addition to many other projects, both Anthony and Sarto designed a church each that well-demonstrated their Modernist temperaments: Joint Christian Chaple in Tanzania University at Dar es-Salaam (1975) and Carmelite Church in Goa are two works in contrast. These churches have not only become a measure of the Modernist interpretation of a traditional typology, but they also managed to clearly demonstrate the ethos of the perceived Modernism.

Sarto's Carmelite Church is an exercise in hollowed-out, unitary forms in light yellow that readily announce themselves as large spaces with faceted volumes in a leaning stance where the modern belfry becomes the signature mark! The inner area is sparse but well-lit and airy, befitting the somberness of spirituality.

up his practice in Goa. His works have been amply documented and talked about, however, many of us were enamoured by the man himself. This is what I value this and am sure this has to do with the psychophysical lay of the land where he practiced! He belonged to that group of architects who were/ are adherent believers in the Genius Loci of Goa. Never in a hurry, soft-spoken, looking at you with a glint in his eye, smilingly, he would break out in laughter saying, "You are taking things too seriously, you are in Goa, smile and expect exactly the opposite!" This is my personal tribute to the gentleman-architect Sarto, the 'Tall-standing, short man!' And also, a brief introduction to Anthony Almeida's work.

² <https://abalmeidaarchitect.com/> Accessed on June 16, 2020

**JOINT CHRISTIAN CHAPEL
IN TANZANIA UNIVERSITY,
DAR ES-SALAAM**

ARCHITECT: *Anthony Almeida*

PHOTO CREDIT: *Vidu Chavda*

The chancel (where pulpit and altar are sited) is an awe-striking experience with a leaning wall, supported by aptly articulated thin columns, lighting the wall, and the space. The font sits quietly on top of the platform. A lot has been taken away from a traditional church experience and a lot more has been endowed. Anthony, on the other hand, was working with a cube, out of which cubical volumes protrude and end up in *brise-soleil*. The corner slit windows of the cube and a band of light running below the slab, make it float under the cantilevered canopy. The building is painted stark white. The drama of light and floating volume at the chancel make up for a modern statement about the prime space of a church. The general volume is harboured under a waffled slab with trapezoidal units suspended over the band of natural light. Both churches are par excellent examples of Modernism of their own times.

Coming back to Sarto, though he respected Goan heritage, he was a rationalist when it came to situations like privately-owned wooden structures that were being



eaten up away by white ants or were rotting, falling into disrepair and ultimately dying their own deaths. He saw the essence of Goan traditional architecture in their plan and sections; the movements and the volumetric experiences. He attempted to sensitively translate that essence in a building using new or modern materials, arguing against the exorbitant costs of wood versus the architectural value. You cannot change the weather, you cannot buy original materials, and you cannot stop further deterioration; with a low budget and if it is a private property with meagre earnings, what then does an architect do? All the same, he was not ruthless, he pursued merit warranted by the architectural project.

He was commissioned to restore the *shikhara* of a copper tile clad circular temple around 2010. The trustees wanted the job done fast and the way out was to remove the remaining copper tiles, the wooden under layer, and replace the *shikhara* with masonry and concrete. He insisted, brought the chief trustee in favour of his arguments, and took to conserving it with a similar copper tile technique. The craft and the craftsmen of this technique were long gone. He had a missionary zeal when it came to doing something that he thought was both right and correct! He found one family in the boondocks, persuaded them, and got the cladding of the *shikhara* done in the original method.

However, in the case of Narchihaman Temple at Ponda, he did a fine job of creating a new paradigm for repairs and conservation of certain important but privately owned properties. The major damage to the temple was due to white ants and dis-repair. He conserved the masonry and plaster job, repaired the main roof over the *sabha-griha*, completely renovated the stepped-in bathing pond, and added an inn for the visiting devotees to stay overnight. But when it came to the turned wooden elements that were forming the predominant wind and ventilation system and which gave the structure its architectural personality, these were moulded in coloured concrete with a single bar reinforcement. He saved a lot of wood, as well as saved it from being eaten by ants in the future. Both these projects are good lessons in 'appropriate conservation'.

Sarto personified humility, empathy, and generosity. Architects in his office; be it a junior, a senior, or a trainee, were equally well-respected and taken care of. Trainees got full responsibilities and personal care by way of site visits and access to all the drawings in the office. He mentored many younger architects of Goa and had a close relationship with them till the end. When a visitor came, he would take the entire staff for lunch or a dinner. Those were fun times as he would converse with the visitor without hesitation; new topics were learned and secrets revealed! He was much agitated by the blind commercialization of the traditional urban cores of Margao and Panaji. Raising his voice against the mindless urbanism and insensitive development of Goa was almost a part of his practice as an architect.

Sarto was very worried about architectural education in Goa. It was he who brought in late Professor Cho Padamsee from England and later on, invited me to take care of the school. I had an appointment letter with a note saying that I would be full time for the school and should not be involved in any of my research and writing practice while heading the school! Both Cho and Sarto were flabbergasted, and Sarto said, "This land (Goa) of great architecture will never have a good school of architecture as it doesn't want to look beyond its four walls.

"But Miki, you must go and see the Sancoale Church, that will tell you how the facade was used to welcome the downtrodden from one faith to the other. It is an abstraction of the front profile of a temple, the new temple, the new faith. The thing is, we must see it both as a historic moment and a beautiful articulation. Of course, clever!" Only he could be so clear and so frank.



When I rejected the offer to head the Goa School of Architecture; once again he said, “Remember, you are in Goa, smile. You must learn to expect exactly the opposite of what you expected to happen and make the best with what you get. Sorry, this time you didn’t get anything but isn’t that great, God saved you from Goa.” Both Cho and he laughed aloud. Once he took me to his house and showed me a detail. It was a ridge beam that was a hollowed-out half of a coconut trunk; the beam was a gutter too! Said he, “That is called having it and eating it too!”

TEMPLE OF NARACHIHMAN, PONDA, GOA

RESTORATION BY: *Sarto Almeida*

TOP | *The restored temple exterior*

INSET | *Concrete elements that replaced the turned wooden ones*

PHOTO CREDIT: *Miki Desai*



EXISTENTIAL ISSUES, MEMORY AND FREEDOM



PHOTO CREDIT | Minal Sagare

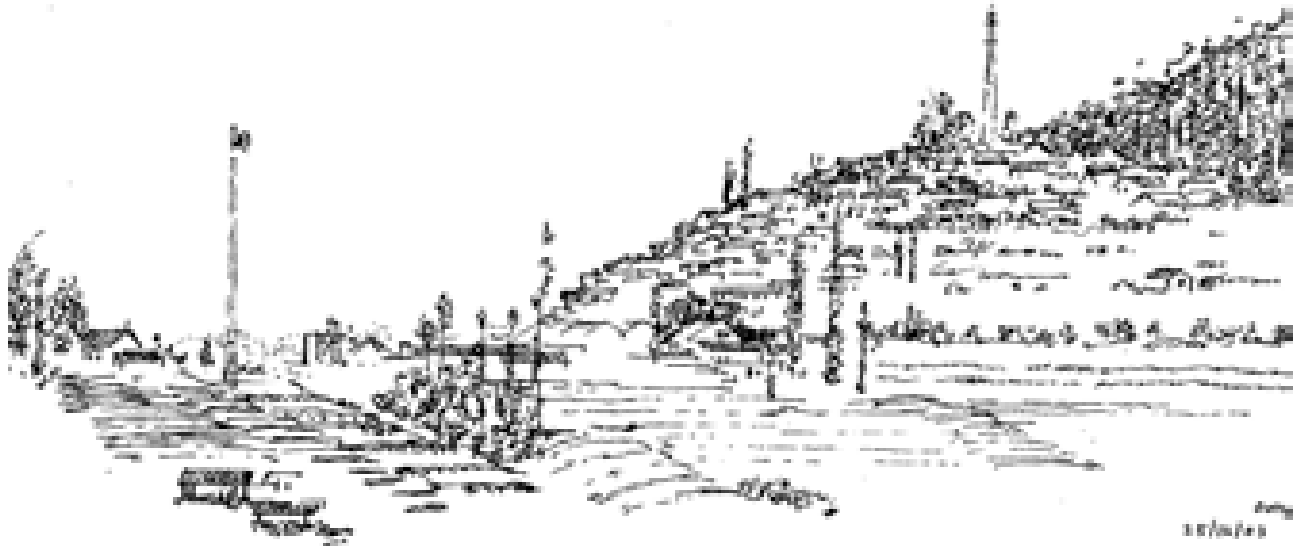
Narendra Denge's practice centres on a diverse set of cultural, aesthetic, and contextual issues. His varied interests have manifested in many interesting endeavours that he is associated with - a long engagement with architecture academics, directing a film on architecture appreciation, and writing books (at times in Marathi) on various themes under spatial design. In the special feature, Narendra Denge shares his journey, inspirations, influences, and works.

Even before taking up studies in architecture, following the SSC exams in 1964, I had travelled to north India with three friends. One vividly remembers three encounters. The beautiful railway station at Barog near Solan nestling up in the pristine hilly terrain – for its *context*, the *flight of imagination* in Le Corbusier's Assembly Hall in Chandigarh, and the trees and the *furniture design* in wood at the Forest Research Institute at Dehradun. This may have had some effect on the future course of my studies in architecture.

Studies in Pune

Abhinav Kala Mahavidyalaya, in Pune, had departments of painting, sculpture, commercial art, and architecture. All teachers were in private practice. With no explicit pedagogical approach, we experienced enormous freedom to get over naivety, explore intuition, study history, and landscape. Once Achyut Kanvinde gave a stimulating talk and showed his work through a slide presentation. His convictions came forth vividly. Kanvinde was inspirational and in my mind, I must have decided to work with this master in the future.

My egalitarian family background would remain with me for life. Baba Amte, the Gandhian social worker, had called upon the youth to come for a work-camp at Somanath in the Tadoba forest of Gadchiroli district in the summer vacation of 1967-68, where the leprosy patients he had been working for at Anandavan, would be involved in farming. I travelled with a few friends to join the camp attended by a thousand students from all over India. This left an indelible impression of the complex nature of our society, its social stratification, taboos, the austerity of living and the meaning of social work.



School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi

Romi Khosla and Vasant Kamath, my colleagues at Kanvinde Rai & Chowdhury, and I started the partnership firm THE GRUP and began simultaneously teaching at the SPA in 1974. I was mentored into teaching construction by CSH Jhabvala. He was very encouraging. When I introduced a new design program for the first year, he probed enough to satisfy himself that I knew what I was entering into! I was blessed with having some very bright students in the first year of B Arch batches. Together, we explored ways the human mind tackles ‘design’ and the subtleties of the psyche that prompt our synthetic vision. It is a revelation to find some of my ex-students turning into capable architects, administrators, academics, filmmakers, writers, and graphic designers of repute. The whole faculty was basically driven by Modernism and the Bauhaus. Post-Modern concerns arrived through the books of Robert Venturi and Charles Jencks, although they were not examined for their significance in Indian society. In fact, some faculty had proposed to do away with history from the syllabus, but better sense prevailed! My colleagues at the SPA, Vinod K. Gupta and M. N. Ashish Ganju—visiting faculty members—became close friends. In the evenings some of us occasionally met to discuss issues connected with ‘social housing’. During the Emergency sometimes meetings of underground activists were held at my small apartment in Jangpura Extension.

For a few years, I also taught Basic Design at the Department of Landscape Architecture, headed by Ravindra Bhan. Mohammed Shaheer had joined as faculty soon after me and we shared a cabin.

THIS PAGE [TOP]

SKETCH

Landscape view of Ooty

As a young teacher, I had felt the need to explore the philosophies of arts and aesthetics to strengthen critical thinking. I proposed to convene a seminar on aesthetics, which I called 'Tradition and Modernity'. It was an attempt to examine historical associations, ancient wisdom, philosophies of aesthetics, and performing arts for their critical relevance to contemporary expression in art-architecture. Bijit Gosh was the Director of SPA at the time, and Ved Raori, the Head of Department of Architecture, both of whom were supportive. The seminar, probably the first one in the history of the SPA, was held in 1980, and the panelists included an aesthetician, a musicologist, a dramatist, a painter, and architect Raj Rewal.

Kamla Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute for Architecture and Environmental Studies(KRVIA), Mumbai. Goa College of Architecture (GCA), VIT's PVP College of Architecture, Pune

I had been to KRVIA on a Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA) inspection and was impressed by the energy and the phenomenological approach adopted by the faculty for its pedagogy. I accepted Aneerudh Paul's invitation to hold the Design Chair for five years. It meant taking off two days a month from my practice for KRVIA in Mumbai. The young and bright faculty was finding numerous ways of exploring the city of Mumbai using sociological and political frames on one hand and the notion of design on the other, by exploring literary references, using various techniques from cinema to art installations. The Academic Council brought out the Faculty Resource Manual, a very useful document for all, clarifying their academic and administrative responsibilities. Round Table Conferences and an exhibition of the works of students of the previous twenty-five years seen through various 'probes' were the events to celebrate KRVIA's 25th anniversary. At KRVIA, the struggle to resolve the idea and the practice of architecture continues.

Subsequently, I agreed to spend five days a month, as the Academic Chair at the GCA, at Charles Correa's insistence. Working closely with Charles, was a great opportunity. Charles made it a point to join me in some of the juries besides actively participating in reshaping the curriculum. We made the exercises Goa-centric for all years, created a framework for adjunct professors for each year in addition to appointing the Design, Technology, and Humanities Chairs. Later as the Academic Chair at the PVPCOA, I saw my role to facilitate and extend the academic vision, otherwise enmeshed and scattered in the syllabic webs.

Narendra D. Dengle

Born 31 December 1948, Mumbai

EDUCATION

1971: G. D. Arch., Abhinav Kala Vidyalaya, Pune

PRIVATE PRACTICE

1987: In private practice in Pune
[In partnership with Shekhar Garud, 2002-18]

1983-1987: Principal Architect and Resident Director for SEMAC [I] Pvt. Ltd, Sultanate of Oman, A Joint venture of SEMAC and The GRUP

1974-87: In private practice in New Delhi

TEACHING/ ACADEMIC

2018: Co-Chair, Asian Advisory Board, Building Beauty Program, the Sant' Anna Institute, Sorrento, Italy

2015-2020: The Academic Chair, PVPCOA, Pune

2011-2013: The Academic Chair, Goa College of Architecture, Goa

2006-2015: Panel of Jury for Charles Correa Gold Medal

2006-2011: The Chair of Design, Kamla Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute of Architecture and Environmental studies [KRVIA], Mumbai

1994-2004: Visiting faculty at various architecture colleges in Pune

1990-2000: Co-Convenor, INTACH, Pune Chapter

1974-1980: Lecturer, Department of Architecture and Department of Landscape Architecture, School of Planning & Architecture, New Delhi

BOOKS

The Discovery of Architecture [co-authored with M. N. Ashish Ganju], Greha Publication, 2013

Dialogues with Masters of Indian Architecture [conceived, conducted and edited], The Marg Foundation, 2016

Jharoka, Collected Essays on Architecture [Marathi], 2006

Education

AWAITING PUBLICATION

Cause Gaitonde, Bodhana, Mumbai

महाराष्ट्रातील वास्तुकला: परंपरा आणि वाटचाल
[Architecture in Maharashtra: Tradition and Journey], Editor. [Two Volumes, each in Marathi and English], Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Sanskruti Mandal, Mumbai, Government of Maharashtra

Various articles on Culture, Art, Architecture, Aesthetics, City Planning, and Conservation [in Marathi and English] published in leading newspapers, magazines, journals, and selected books

Architectural works, drawings, sketches featured in professional magazines and journals in India, Italy, UAE, China, and South Africa

EXHIBITIONS

Selected projects showcased in PVPCOA, Pune [2018], State of Architecture, Mumbai [2016], LAD College, Nagpur [2007], Sir J. J. College of Architecture, and Rizvi College, Mumbai [2005] and VISTARA, Festival of India Exhibition [1986], Curated by Charles Correa

FILM

Researcher, Scriptwriter, and Narrator for an educational film [2000] for the appreciation of Architecture [in Marathi & English] primarily for non-architects for Y. B. Chavan Open University

AWARDS

Competition for Museum of Archaeology for the Government of Jammu & Kashmir at Srinagar, 2001 [First Prize]

Habitation Space [International] Switzerland for Housing Project, Bihar, 1979 [Prize]

All India Low-Cost Housing Design Competition held by HUDCO, 1975 [Second Prize]

Architectural education has certainly moved in different directions in recent years. There is a possibility to fundamentally re-examine the pedagogical approach for independent universities by themselves—should it interest them. The scenario of most colleges under one university shows the preference for a comfortable status quo that can be intellectually dull and without a cohesive vision for the planet Earth and human habitation.

At the undergraduate level, we should forget the silos implied in the compartmentalization of disciplines. Architectural education too should really open up to other disciplines. It has also to do with envisaging an education system where one can opt for different subjects without being restricted to water tightness of ‘disciplines’. Life is not so fragmentary. One must be able to learn architecture or habitat studies from fine arts-crafts and humanities by actually getting involved in the processes along with the sciences. Students may be free to design clusters of subjects of their choice. These clusters may vary depending upon aptitudes and directions one is seeking—which too can never be static. This would mean that the faculty and institutional infrastructure must be capable of offering such options in arts, humanities, philosophies, crafts, and technologies routinely.

By skill today what is taken for granted is software skills. Of course, these are wonderful as a tool to analyze various constraints and issues, to base one’s design on and communicate ideas but a connect with the real people and places can never be substituted by it. ‘Skills’ also apply in meditation, observation, and using the limbs of one’s body, and on the other hand, we all know how ‘skills’ have come handy for some to market themselves by falsifying facts!

There is a practical world that involves aggressive competitiveness bringing existential issues to the fore. A curriculum doesn’t train the students in marketing and lobbying in the power circles, nor does anyone need teaching how to survive. Teaching is imparting values aimed at the flowering of minds. In the profession, one is tested if, how, and why values are compromised. These are encounters that individuals have to sort out for themselves. Social consciousness comes about through observing the world, the wholeness of life—both outwardly, as well as, inwardly. Indoctrination of minds by squashing sensibilities would be tragic. Artistic endeavours are not necessary to be viewed as ‘anti-social’. One wants to live in this world and the beauty of living is integral to it. Digital technology has helped us in many important ways. The areas of concern are their capacity to increase exclusiveness, control-surveillance, and fragmentation from the phenomenal reality. Any tool and medium that one uses as a means to architecture cannot be so exclusive or indulgent as to draw one away from the Self, as well as, the real people and place.

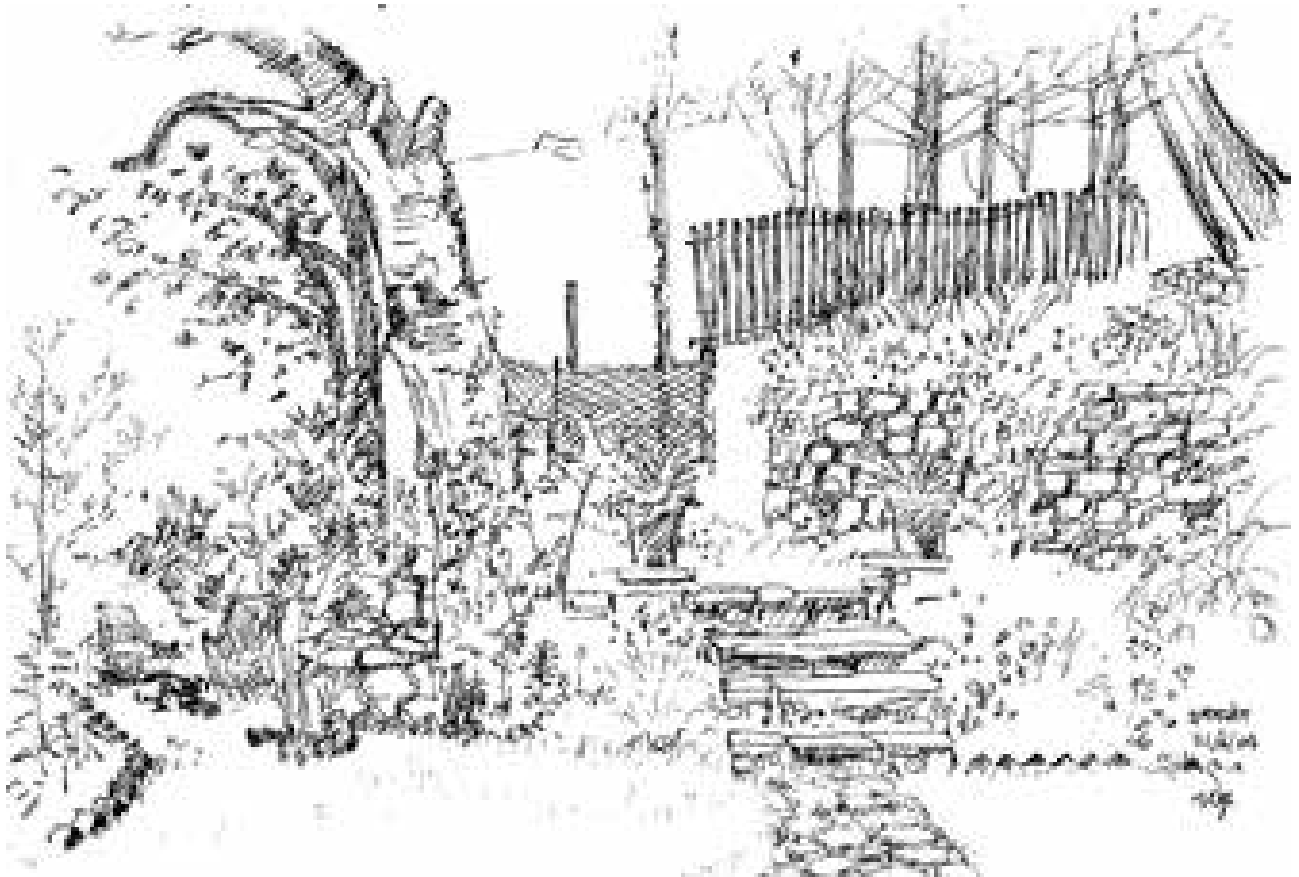


Practice

Prior to venturing into the partnership (The GRUP), the three of us had the experience of working together on a housing competition floated by the DDA. We got an early break with a project in Hazaribagh. We travelled to remote places and built several modest campuses in Hazaribagh, Bhagalpur, the Santhal Pargana, Rajibpur, Darjeeling, Sikkim, Nagaland, Manipur, Puri, etc. This way we had the firsthand and priceless experience of rural and tribal settlements and their cultures. The concept of 'waste' seemed unknown to the tribes. These projects sensitized us to local construction practices as also to respect labour, context, and landscape. Our younger staff was talented, most of whom are now well-known practitioners. Achyut Kanvinde graciously asked us to design the Unite Breweries HQ in Bangalore. We witnessed the big-hearted architect in him, who encouraged younger architects by giving out work to them. This indeed is a rare phenomenon in the profession.

SKETCH

At Matheran, a hill station near Mumbai

**SKETCH**

*Garden at the house of Sawhneys,
Bhowali*

I opened an office in Muscat under the banner of SEMAC, a joint venture between The GRUP and SEMAC, a consulting engineering firm. British and European firms were busy marketing and controlling the construction scene. The important learning for me was that local traditional cultural practices do have the capacity to be of universal significance. Sometimes I had a nightmare of camels dragging big cars up and down the flyovers, as the oil reserves dry up!

Back in India in 1987, I set up my practice for a third time. This time in Pune. The works were in and around Pune, Mumbai, Thane, Kalyan, and some in south rural Gujarat. V. D. Joshi, whom I knew from Delhi had also settled down in Pune and it was wonderful to have him as my structural engineer for a few projects.



**MHASOBA MANDIR
KHARAWADE, NEAR PUNE**

A temple campus with its Master Plan addressing the natural terrain in the step-down form, it consists of three large courtyards or angans housing the garbhagriha, the sambhamandapa and the natyamandapa. These are surrounded by the osaries, or resting verandas. Designed like an amphitheatre, the natyamanadpa has a canopy that provides a reflecting surface for the sound from the performing area of the stage. The canopy's form reflects that of the sabhamandapa roof by inverting it. ●



Use of natural and local materials evokes traditional architecture of Pune region. The walls of the surrounding darshanbari are treated with traditional look with their lower portion built in basalt stone and the higher wall resting on it in exposed brickwork—the ambiance meant to be contemporary, devoid of any decorativeness but evoking traditional temple space. The construction of the shikhara is in ferro cement precast ribs and cast in-situ verticals. The garbhagriha roof is also in ferro cement.



Philosophy

A philosophy of architecture takes shape as one wanders aimlessly in imagination, places, and spaces, and meditates. 'Balancing' the four elements is a subtle and creative act that has no formula. No organism is composed without them. More recently, I have begun to think that प्रत्यक्ष or *witnessing*, उपमान or *analytical reasoning*, अनुमान or *inference*, and शब्द or *testimony*, as propounded by NYAYA philosophy, as critical in making knowledge. प्रत्यक्ष suggests witnessing both outwardly, as well as, inwardly. A creative response germinates from existential issues, memory and freedom. These terms need a constant exploration to go beyond in thought and deed.

I was appalled to read Steven Hawking's advice to philanthropists of the world to start looking for another planet because 'the earth is going to be a ball of fire in 600 years.' It sounded like, 'having ruined this planet let's inhabit another and exploit that too.' The human domination of nature can agonizingly boomerang on life's ecosystems, where care and responsibility become key concerns. Some terms now in vogue such as 'sustainability', 'green', 'eco-friendly' have already become cliché, often confused with each other. I prefer to examine 'holistic'; going closer to the order of nature. The ancient Greeks' concerns *phusis*, *ethcos*, and *techne* remain valid. I have been thinking harder as to 'how can the wholeness be witnessed and realized through work?' It cannot only be witnessed partially-intellectually, for then it would still be a fragment of the whole. A philosophy of work is neither a method nor a static idea but a new discovery to balance the four elements.

Communication

Communication of ideas, intentions, and proposals within and outside the discipline is an essential way to comprehend the social-political reality and to bring fragments of consciousness together. Architecture will certainly benefit from inter and intra-cultural communication. The patron and the architect together make a discovery of their wants and visions. We have to build a society that is sensitive to the processes that make our habitat.

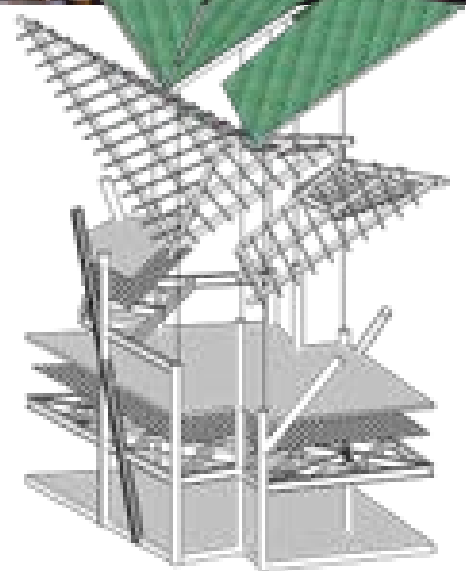


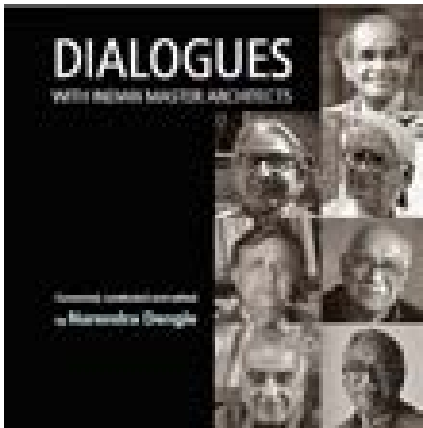


**NATURE OBSERVATION CENTER
MODEL COLONY LAKE, PUNE**

Nestling between trees, the observatory is a simple structure in steel, shaped in the form of a bird taking flight. It allows residents to enjoy the bio-diversity present in abundance around the lake in a natural setting.

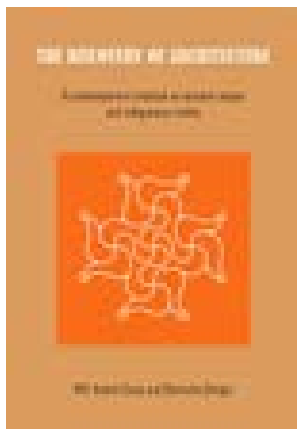
PHOTO CREDIT | Tejal Nahar





“The *Dialogues...* with architects that I conducted before the audience of FEED, started by Prasanna Desai in Pune, were to uncover many subtle concerns and lessons from the play of ideas and craft that architects have been engaged with. That generation of architects was engaged in a tough task to build our country after Independence, with a fresh insight addressing the local issues of resources, work ethics for the new democratic government and bureaucracy. They were all trained abroad but were

not strangers to this country. They had brought back with them bundles of influences from star architects, science, geometry, movement systems, urbanity, philosophy, theatre, and visual arts of the developed world. I found that they were sensitive to the local ethos and attempted to create a new consciousness among the community of professionals, educators, and builders of our cities. Some were more engaged in problem-solving, learning from and training the craft persons, working with engineers or artists, some steering the direction by mentoring design decisions, competitions and education, or resolving artistic riddles by interpreting history and traditions. But all of them were attempting to break out of the shackles of various influences—intellectual, visual, and popular. The *Dialogues* tried to bring out such struggles.”



“One of the four points in the matrix that *The Discovery of Architecture*, M. N. Ashish Ganju and I co-authored, discusses ‘Self as Community’. I believe this riddle is more serious to resolve than one can catch in words. We have continued our discussion on the matrix proposed in the book by involving historians, political scientists, anthropologists, and architects. We have tried to see how the ideas proposed in the book manifest in traditional settlements or other works of architecture. The book received an encouraging response from some architects, academics in India as also from John Habraken and Christopher

Alexander. This led to both of us being invited to the faculty of Building Beauty at Sorrento based on Christopher Alexander’s theories. The ‘wholeness of life’ that he writes about in his four-volume magnum opus *The Nature of Order* is most significant for architecture since I believe it seriously investigates the human creative spirit and process of building the habitat. We are making an attempt to start a course in India, open to all, on the ideas based on Alexander’s book together with ours.”

Pune & Heritage

Our society consists of so many layers of interests—the interests of self, community, business, and political ambitions, which often conflict with each other. These interests want to overlook our common built and natural heritage—one which gives it a historical identity and character, while the other serves as a resource and life-system for all organisms. Pune is surrounded by hills and is blessed with five major water reservoirs and two rivers. The number of listed heritage structures is small when compared with the force of development. It is necessary to conserve these. Any awareness for heritage gets pressured by the lack of will and financial incentives for the maintenance of these structures—especially the non-institutional individual properties. These need support, protection, and openness to be assimilated within the development plan. It is important that the architect performs both the roles—of a knowledgeable professional and a responsible activist.

Current engagements

Institutional campuses, temples, and housing continue to engage me in the profession and so does the editing of an upcoming book *Architecture of Maharashtra: Tradition and Journey*, for the Government of Maharashtra, for the last two years. Visiting some remote areas of Maharashtra, which we had not seen adequately before, with my three young coeditors, has been educative. In the process several questions have cropped up about places and people, associations and memories, breakages and linkages, politics and activism, individual and the collective imagination, and the spirit of constancy.



All images and sketches by the Author

narendraden@gmail.com

SELECTED PROJECTS

HOUSING & COMMUNITY CENTERS

Housing for Fatima Jaffer, A'Seeb, Muscat [1986]
Workers Club and Shopping Centre, for BHEL, Karwar [1985]
Housing, School, Community Center, for HCI Hazaribagh [1975]

EDUCATIONAL

Nature Observation Centre, Model Colony Lake Pune, [2020]
Social Sciences Complex, SPPU, Urban Design and Architecture, Pune, [2012-ongoing]
Educational buildings and Teachers' Hostels, Pune University [2003]
Three Educational Complexes at Wansda, Chaswad, & Kaprala, for BAIF, Gujarat [1999-2001]
Secondary School, A 'Seeb, Muscat [1985]
Kendriya Vidyalaya Head Quarters, Qutb Road, New Delhi [1983]
Training Institute, School and Convent for HCI, Gangtok, Sikkim [1980]
Educational Residential Complex for Tribal Students, for HCI, Kuj, Bihar [1978]
School for HCI, Sonada, Darjeeling [1977]
Schools Complex, for HCI, Rajibpur, Bengal [1976]

WORK SPACES

Auditorium for GMRT, NCRA, Khodad, Pune, [2020]
Software offices interiors for TCS, TRDDC, Pune [2005]
Training Centre, Guest House Complex, for METRIC Consultancy, Wai, Satara [2005]
Eternia, Commercial Project for Godrej Properties, Pune [2004]
Agro-Industrial Complex for Deccan Florabase, Talegaon, Pune [2001]
Ceramic Studio for Vaidya, Chowk, Mumbai [1988]
Workshop for Range Rovers & Jaguars, Muscat [1987]
Oman Computers, Al Khuwair, Muscat [1985]
United Breweries, HQ, Bangalore [1986]
Beach Resort at Jaganathpuri, Odhisha [1981]

RESIDENTIAL

Ogale Apartments, Erandawane, Pune [1999]
Talwalkar House, Pune [1995]
Bhagwat House, Pune [1997]
Dengle Studio & Residence, Pune [1997]
Minoo Ghadiyali House, Jogeshwari, Mumbai [2005]
Nitin Shah House, Sangli [2007]

TEMPLES

Mhasoba Mandir, Kharawade, Pune [2016]
Chattushringi Temple, Pune [Ongoing]
Universal Temple for Sri Ramkrishna, Pune [2002]

MUSEUMS

Maharshi Karve Samadhi & Memorial Museum, for MKSSS, Pune [1986]
Railway Museum, Mysore [Unbuilt]

HOSPITALS

KEM Hospital Extension, Pune [2001-2009]
Hospital at Jullundur [1983]

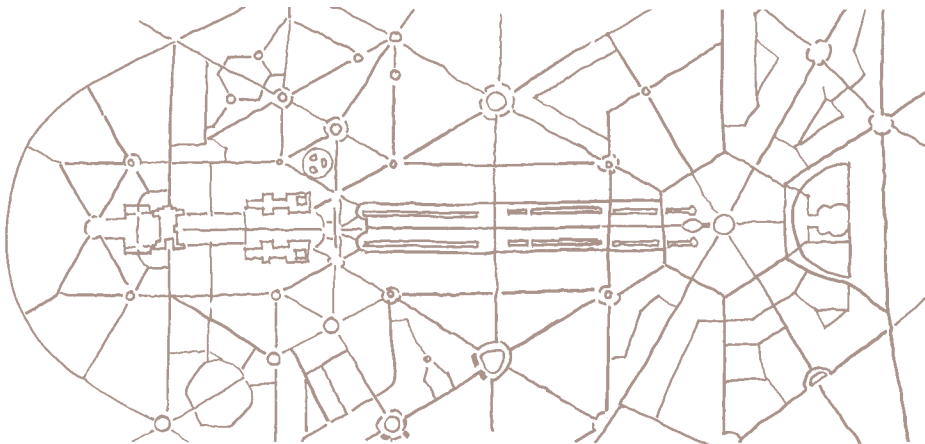
CONSERVATION

Bapatwada, Contemporization, Pune [1996]
Fountain at Garden Reach, Pune [2000-2002]

REDEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL VISTA NEW DELHI

In the months of February-March, 2020, three professional bodies—Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage [INTACH] Delhi Chapter, Indian Society of Landscape Architects [ISOLA], and Institute of Urban Designers of India [IUDI]—came together to discuss and debate various aspects of the proposed redevelopment of the Central Vista, New Delhi. They drafted preliminary guidelines and development controls concerning heritage, conservation, urban design, environment, and landscape. These were submitted to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the office of the consultant HCP Design, Planning and Management Pvt. Ltd., Ahmedabad.

Here, INTACH, Delhi Chapter explains the significance of the Central Vista, while ISOLA and IUDI share their respective set of recommendations in the context of landscape and urban design for the redevelopment.





PROFESSIONAL BODIES

INTACH, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, Delhi Chapter

The Ministry of Culture, Government of India, nominated Delhi, (New Delhi and Shahjahanabad) to UNESCO's tentative list of World Heritage sites in 2012, because Delhi is believed to have 'Outstanding Universal Significance'.¹

The nomination dossier compiled by INTACH Delhi Chapter in 2015, stated that '*New Delhi is an outstanding example of imperial city planning enterprises which illustrate significant stages in the history of the Indian subcontinent... The city displays an innovative urban morphology that is an unprecedented and unequalled expression of distinct and dominant town planning principles of the time: the City Beautiful Movement and the Garden City Concept and*'.² New Delhi synthesized in one layout, a fusion of these two town planning concepts; a combination never attempted anywhere in the world before New Delhi, nor attempted again since its realization.

Specific attributes that contribute to the Outstanding Universal Significance of New Delhi:

Planning and Design

New Delhi's city armature consists of the ensemble of the Central Vista at its core, anchored by iconic buildings; an urban morphology comprising of tree-lined avenues and bungalows on large plots of land depicting the Garden City ethos. The grandeur of the Central Vista lies in a certain volumetric composition which is the scale of the built form and its relationship with the open spaces. Key buildings — Rashtrapati Bhawan, Secretariat Buildings (North and South Blocks) and the War Memorial (India Gate) dominate the visual composition while ancillary buildings have a subdued character. An effective use was made of the natural rise in the ground, Raisina Hill. Rashtrapati Bhawan and the Secretariat buildings were set on this vantage point behind which the Ridge formed a green backdrop, while at the opposite end, the composition is balanced by the grand proportions of India Gate.³ The park is surrounded by the palaces of the princely states, now adapted to contemporary needs as institutional buildings.⁴

All administrative and public buildings were planned on the avenues parallel to the Central Vista. There are distinct vistas and site lines which ensured that the grandeur of the architecture was appreciated from various vantage points. There is a porosity to the boundaries dividing each plot around the Central Vista, which allows for an appreciation of the architecture and setting of each building.

¹ By UNESCO's definition in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention 'Outstanding Universal Significance' translates to being 'among the priceless and irreplaceable assets, not only of a nation but of humanity as a whole'.

² The City Beautiful Movement sought to emphasize monumental architecture as well as parks and grand boulevards in city plans, while the Garden City movement was an answer to the overcrowding, pollution, and poor quality of life seen in cities at the time, and sought to develop housing in settings that kept humans in harmony with nature through greenery in urban settings.

³ Any other building which rises above this height will cause India Gate to lose its significance and all it represents for the people of this nation. All visual axis to be retained. The visual link from Raisina Hill to Purana Qila to be left undisturbed. Proposed constructions should not overpower the grandeur of the Rashtrapati Bhawan, and North-South Block ensemble, either in volume or height.

⁴ The ensemble is an important culmination of the Central Vista and should be respected. Additional buildings if required on these plots can be added on the lines of the Jaipur House. Internally they may be refurbished and the use and function changed.

Architectural Legacy

The architects, Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker incorporated Indian motifs, and forms like *jalis*, *chhajjas*, *chhatris*, carved elephants and materials, to give the buildings a distinct Indian identity. Red sandstone, used extensively by the Mughals, and the cream Dholpur sandstone, employed by the Rajputs, were adopted as building materials. The skill and labour of thousands of Indian workers gave shape to this vision. A number of the buildings have been notified as heritage by the New Delhi Municipal Council. They have influenced developments in subsequent decades, as architects have been inspired by them.

Inclusive Planning

In recognition of the need for fostering of traditional Indian arts as well as cultural growth, the crossing of Rajpath and Janpath is characterized by cultural institutes signifying the very heart of this central core. Though only one building—the National Archives—was built originally, the later addition of the National Museum in 1960, and the IGNCAL later, is in keeping with the original intention. This intersection is an important cultural hub of the city contributing to its intangible heritage value.⁵ The four Cultural institutes too were much smaller in scale compared to the key buildings and therefore a hierarchy was established.

Green Recreational Public Open Space

Central Vista has played a very important role as a public open space, accessible to people from all walks of life. The ‘India Gate lawns’ is a space embedded into the subconscious of every Delhi-ite, as a celebratory public open space where entire families would visit and felt they were a part of the grandeur of the capital of the nation.⁶

Natural Features

The Ridge, indigenous trees, and water were incorporated into the layout and design. It was not just the incorporation of nature, but giving nature a high priority. In no other Garden City until then had the tree planting component been as fundamentally integrated into the city plan as it was in New Delhi. Care was taken to ensure that all ancillary buildings would remain below the tree line. When you walk down the Central Vista, it is the 3 parallel rows of trees on either side that camouflage the buildings beyond.⁷ The grandeur and elegance of the Central Vista is defined by the relationship between the buildings, open spaces, water bodies, and trees.

India has acknowledged that the Central Vista ensemble is an irreplaceable architectural and planning icon, and put in place a number of mechanisms to protect its value, even before it was proposed for nomination as a World Heritage Site:

- Central Vista Committee (circa 1962) and the Steering Committee for the Central Vista and the Bungalow Zone, were constituted by the Central Public Works Department and the MOUA&E under the Chairman DUAC, respectively.

⁵ Replacing these with Government offices would be akin to destroying the very soul and pulse of the city.

⁶ A decision was taken at a Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to change the land use of seven plots where new Government offices will be constructed and similarly the land use of a 15-acre plot has been changed from recreational to residential on Dalhousie Road near South Block where the PM’s new residence is proposed. Of grave concern is that this area will then become a high-security area and what was an important open public space will be lost to the people of Delhi, forever. This unique intangible value cannot be taken away. Excluding people, and more specifically, the common man, from public spaces will be a tragedy in a city where accessible open spaces are, to begin with few, and fast shrinking. Recently, much of the open green space was replaced by the war memorial, reducing the recreational area available to the general public.

⁷ The volume of buildings in any proposed scheme should not rise much higher than the tree line.

- Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC), set up by the Ministry of Urban Development vide section 23, Delhi Building Bye-laws, 1983 (Annexure-II) for the protection of Heritage. All projects in Heritage Zones have to be approved by HCC.
- Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC), set up by the DELHI URBAN ART COMMISSION ACT, 1973) is mandated to scrutinize, approve, reject or modify proposals in respect of the Central Vista.
- The Central Government has in place, since 1988, a general ban on all new construction in Colonial Delhi and specific projects for new construction are carefully screened by the DUAC and HCC.
- Master Plan of Delhi 2021 identifies this area as the 'Lutyens Bungalow Zone', and designates it a Heritage Zone, deserving of careful conservation. Section 11.0 Urban Design, acknowledged the Significance of the Central Vista, "In the planning of New Delhi in 1916, the Central Vista was conceived as a landscaped stretch to form continuity between the Ridge and the river Yamuna. The stretch with the Rashtrapati Bhawan and the India Gate at two ends has a tremendous visual quality and is one of the finest examples of Urban Design and monumentality in planning in the world'. Further, Section 11.0 11.1.3 OTHER AREAS, Central Vista has been listed under, 'Other areas of Urban Design importance'.
- New Delhi Municipal Council declared iconic buildings along the Central Vista, to be Grade I Heritage Buildings, protected vide Bye-laws 23.1, and 23.5 of Delhi Building Bye-laws, 1983, sub-section (17) of Section 2 of the New Delhi Municipal Council Act 1994.

Since a number of mechanisms are already in place to protect the value of the Central Vista, the development proposed along with the Central Vista, should conform to these regulations.



ISOLA, Indian Society of Landscape Architects

LANDSCAPE DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Central Vista in New Delhi is up for renovation as part of a larger renewal of the urban fabric of this entire precinct. Given the significance and magnitude of the Central Vista project, Sujata Kohli, Honorary President, confirmed that the Indian Society of Landscape Architects (ISOLA) has committed to providing constructive suggestions and feedback to ensure that any comprehensive redevelopment of the area is in keeping with the ethos of the cultural and natural heritage of the place. With reservations on aspects of the project and the process raised earlier in conjunction with other professional bodies, IUDI and INTACH, we find that it is imperative that the planning and redesign of one of the most unique public landscapes in India represent the best principles of landscape architecture.

Landscape architecture works with a “whole ecosystem” approach to preserve environmental needs and also enhance user comfort and experience. Its overarching goal is to maximise the inherent value of the landscape for the public good. Furthermore, we believe that the success of any project depends on the synergy between the built and the unbuilt, and its sustainability for generations to come. First, it is important to understand what was intended with the original landscape approach by Lutyens and Baker and how it functions today. Second, alterations and evolution over the past 90 years have created a new set of opportunities and constraints. What the Central Vista can be and should be will only be rightfully designed if this understanding is in place.

ISOLA urges consideration of the following important principles during the design and implementation of any redevelopment work at Central Vista.

Respect the Context

The Central Vista is the only equitable, inclusive, and accessible public space of its magnitude in New Delhi, the nation’s capital. It is the most significant public open space in India and is a symbol of the democratic nation.

There are two components to the context. The historic legacy of buildings — the Rashtrapati Bhawan, North and South Blocks, Parliament House, the Archives, National Museum, Government, and State Houses form one part. The second equally or maybe even more important part of the context is the Open Space. The lawns of India Gate, the War Memorials, Vijay Chowk, C-Hexagon, Rajpath and the waterbodies, form the core precinct of Delhi. Beyond this immediate area, the rest of the city is connected via the tree-lined avenues of Lutyen’s Delhi.

The design approach and intent should preserve the Central Vista as an unfenced public space, without restrictions, barriers, and security hindrances. The quality of place, within the established structure of rows of shade trees, water bodies, lawns, and circulation must be enhanced in any change (not minimized). Connections to the rest of the city should be preserved and in fact, vastly improved via public transportation

Formulate a People-centric Approach

The expanse of open space of the Central Vista creates, both physically and metaphorically, a foreground for the democratic people of India. The centrality of one cohesive space supports the natural inclination of the people to congregate for homage (Republic Day), celebration (New Year’s Day). or protest (Nirbhaya demonstrations).

Any and all development impacts should be reviewed comprehensively to create the best possible development solutions to support this use. The landscape design approach should take into consideration the city-level vision. The city level connect should be improved, more tree cover for shade should be added, integrated storm-water management should be followed keeping in mind that is major recharge zone for the city, and sustainable landscape practices should be formulated where the use of pesticides and insecticides is shunned. This an opportunity to consolidate the

The design approach and intent should preserve the Central Vista as an unfenced public space, without restrictions, barriers and security hindrances.

green lung of the city with linkages through cycle ways, pathways, and greenways. Low impact programs that further the goals of a Delhi's Central Park should be added.

Follow the Existing Character and Viewshed

The Central Vista is the geographical centre of New Delhi, with a web of radial roads branching out to Old Delhi in the north, the river to the east, the Ridge to the west, and the rest of the city around.

Symmetry, geometry, balance, and proportion play an important role in the Central Vista. The striking symmetrical aspects enhance the effect of power and magnificence of the space. This includes each of the designed landscape elements – waterbodies, tree plantation, light poles, bollards, and benches, amongst others. Any and all additions should maintain these principles.

The integrated nature of the open landscape of the Central Vista, with its place of centrality, allows visual and physical access to the heritage buildings along its axes and its entire heritage precinct. Its open aspect allows those arriving or passing by to see into and, through the mature tree canopies. The openness allows democratic inclusiveness, and the lack of barriers blurs boundaries of class, caste, religion, and gender.

The most significant viewshed is the linear view along Rajpath, the landscape creating the foreground for the Rashtrapati Bhawan on the one end and India Gate on the other. The wide breadth of the space with the symmetrical tree lines edges and water bodies and set back buildings control the extent of the view. They represent key design strategies of proportion and scale to create a landscape of monumentality and also a scale for the individual experience. This viewshed of the Central Vista between the two tree avenues should be kept sacrosanct and no change whatsoever—visually or physically—should be made. To maintain the original concept, any arbitrary elements that have been temporarily added, need to be removed.

The viewshed of the Central Vista between the two tree avenues should be kept sacrosanct and no change whatsoever—visually or physically—should be made.

The linear viewshed from the Rajpath currently remains unobstructed. Having zero obstructions heightens the experience of the focal points, further enhancing the linearity. This design thinking must be maintained and respected without any deviation in any future redevelopment effort.

Visual edges are defined by material changes which impart a distinct colour palette to the Vista. All elements including light fixtures, bollards with chain-links, road marking, *bajri* footpaths, the water bodies, and the lawns should be maintained as per the original design.

Improve the Edges, Access, and Circulation

Edges

While the central zone between the tree avenues lining Rajpath is relatively well maintained and heavily used, the edges of the Central Vista provide the main opportunity of a redesign for better public use. The long water bodies cut off these spaces so much that they neglected and not served with even proper paths, lighting, or amenities. These edges comprise a large percentage of the open space but are cut off from the

larger open space. The water bodies could be bridged at the points of pedestrian access so that the whole area is equally connected and no shadow areas are left. The edge of all the built masses should have the arcade as originally envisioned by Lutyens himself, as a public interface between the buildings and open space.

The edge space should be open to the public in general with unhindered access for all. The imperative of controls for security and demarcations easily become dominant with high fences and grills, but people-friendly creative design solutions can serve the same purpose. There are a number of low-impact ways of doing this while activating the edges at the same time. We suggest a robust portfolio of public use programs be envisioned to maximise these neglected zones that are connected by shaded arcades (as envisioned by Lutyens) and broad pedestrian promenades on both sides of the Central Vista.

Access and Circulation

With its central location in the city, vehicular circulation to and through the area emphasizes its significance. However, seeing the role of this public space in the lives of its residents – whether they are transiting, visiting, or congregating – the amount of access to this zone is bleak. Unlike the Washington DC mall or the Champs Elysee, this area is not connected well to the Metro system. The two nearest metros are nearly a mile away from India Gate, and in the high heat of Delhi walking from the Metro is not a viable situation. The result is a clutch of chaotic visitor traffic that chokes India Gate and peak times. With the implications of greater densification and people working, visiting and passing through this space, improved access, circulation, and parking are the key. We envision that traffic congestion and queuing, increased parking and security requirements, NMV transport, taxis, and autos spaces will all have a compounding effect on the rest of the city. This requires timely traffic studies and planning for not only the designed capacity, but future projections too. Overall, access for Delhi residents and visitors should be prioritised over that of future office goers. Access routes and parking for this public space should be first designed for the public.

To integrate the city planning, particularly with the monumental changes expected at its core, the city's infrastructure – metros, roads, services, evacuation routes, disaster preparedness, and management need to be integrated in parallel. Also, if additional underground transit infrastructure is created for the offices, it should have public access points, services, and facilities. Bicycle infrastructure and seamless pedestrian connectivity across the roads (through pedestrian safe crossings) should be added and prioritized.,

Emergency Preparedness

With the vast numbers of people that visit at all times of the day and night, the open aspect allows for easy egress during emergencies and refuge during disasters, therefore easy access and egress assumes importance and should be maintained. A clear plan to address this issue needs to be drawn up.

To integrate the city planning, particularly with the monumental changes expected at its core, the city's infrastructure – metros, roads, services, evacuation routes, disaster preparedness, and management need to be integrated in parallel.

Minimise the Built Footprint

As the buildings get planned, consequential impacts of reduction on the existing area of natural ground, virgin soil and plantation need to be anticipated and minimised. We anticipate that the integration of services for the built-up area and connectivity will further reduce the area of natural ground. A commitment to maintain a qualitative and contiguous percentage of the natural ground area should be made. Repercussions of increased built-up footprints on water management, due to expanded hard pavement and basements need analysis and redressal at both a masterplan and detailed design level. The built-up area basements should be utilized as public parking to reduce the impact and area of parking of vehicles on open ground.

All additional built footprints must give back a built amenity to the public as well. The edge of all the built masses should have the arcade as originally envisioned by Lutyens himself, as a public interface between the buildings and open space. Here, the public can walk around the edges of the park in shade and comfort, and the built edge of the office buildings does not become a dead face to the Central Vista either.

Calculate a Performative Value of the Landscape

This opportunity should be utilized to demonstrate the principles of water conservation and integration of nature with the city and its culture in a comprehensive redevelopment for the next century. Climate-appropriate, nature-based solutions are recommended to mitigate urban issues of pollution, flooding, traffic congestion and to increase pedestrian safety and comfort.

A place of ecological value in response to climate change through climate modulation, thermal comfort, stormwater management, biodiversity habitat, and landforms should be integrated into the design solution. This value needs to be calculated and articulated for the citizens of Delhi who are being asked to share this public space with a high density of offices. The proportion of natural ground versus built-up area will have an impact on the groundwater recharge and potential for flooding, which due to the wide spans of natural ground has not been an issue so far. Therefore, appropriate stormwater management techniques, landform grading to avoid water-logging, waste disposal, and, planting to avoid heat islands, humidity and dust should be integrated into the design to mitigate adverse construction impacts and enhance the performative landscape benefits. How this redesign will address and lower air pollution, which is the main environmental problem of Delhi, needs to be addressed. As Delhi's main green lung, the oxygen generated by this space cannot be lowered and, in fact, needs to be increased.

Adhere to the Materiality of the Original Design

Materials

Any reconstruction must respect and continue the simplicity of the material, and colour palette. The cohesiveness of design elements, materiality, durability, and resilience bind the space. It may be noted that incongruous materials such as concrete pavers and stainless-steel lights or rails or bollards will look out of place and will ruin the visual character of the vista and therefore should be avoided at all costs.

The opportunity should be utilized to demonstrate the principles of water conservation and integration of nature with the city and its culture in a comprehensive redevelopment for the next century.

Planting Palette

Central Vista has a plethora of lush green gardens with large trees. The trees were very carefully chosen for their grand stature and consideration was given to how the tree mass would evolve over time. A tree audit should be carried out and replanting the historical landscape should be carefully undertaken taking references of the original tree palette to maintain its authenticity. Intermediate planting should be undertaken to fill in the gaps. The formal spacing and grid of planting should be restored.

Emphasis should be given to providing continuous shade paths. Loss of tree cover should be minimized, and any new plantation should keep in mind not only thermal comfort, appropriateness of plantation, form, and aesthetics, but also biodiversity habitat and ecosystem services. The form, function, life cycle and role of trees and other plants, their performance value for environmental benefits, varieties of their life cycle, maintenance, the native, aesthetic, and symbolic value must be integrated early on in the process.

Mitigate the Impact of Construction Process

During the construction process, it is important to mitigate negative impacts on public use. The construction will surely lead to traffic snarls and circulation access issues. Through this process, it is vital to protect open spaces, particularly mature trees, and protect continued and easy access to the open space by the public.

The re-routing of traffic during the construction phase needs to be studied in detail before the work begins, as does the movement of construction debris after the demolition of the existing buildings and the movement of construction material to the site. The housing and movement of tens of thousands of people involved in the construction of the project also need to be studied in detail. There will be a huge water requirement and considerable dust and debris, for which a pollution control, resource conservation, and impact assessment and mitigation plan should be in place. The generation of huge quantum of waste, the staging and stockpiling plans, the transport of waste and disposal of it are a huge concern and need to be considered in parallel. Clear cut diagrammatic plans for at least five areas of concern need to be drawn up. These are: public access routes, construction staging, pollution mitigation, water conservation, and tree conservation. These plans should be made public and amended per public input.

As the park itself gets renovated, designation of different types and uses of open space, access, and detailed design should be followed. This will allow for a phased plan of intermediate use, as well as for improvements to the area's soils, groundwater, and urban forest.

Summary

The intangible experiential qualities of the Central Vista have given it a unique place in the pantheon of iconic public places. These intangibles are tied up into aspects that need to be addressed comprehensively in any intervention to maintain its integrity, within any specific changes suggested.

This project has an impact on the city and country at large. It requires inputs from landscape architects, planners, urban designers, service consultants, stakeholders, environmentalists, engineers, and specialists with expertise as well as its citizens.

The intangible experiential qualities of the Central Vista are tied up into aspects that need to be addressed comprehensively in any intervention to maintain its integrity, within any specific changes suggested.



IUDI, Institute of Urban Designers, India

ANURAAG CHOWFLA [PRESIDENT] AND MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, IUDI

A few months ago, various professional bodies like IUDI, ISOLA, and INTACH came together and drafted preliminary guidelines and development controls concerning urban design, landscape and heritage, and conservation for the project of Redevelopment of Central Vista. What was the objective of this initiative, an unprecedented one in the modern urban history of the city, when various professional bodies have collaborated for a common cause?

What are the main concerns regarding urban design aspects in the context of the project?

A project of this magnitude, significance, and implication, which would have a far-reaching impact on both the precinct and the city of Delhi was conceived, awarded, and advanced without adequate information, consultation and preparation. Central Vista is one of the finest examples of urban design, landscape, and heritage that has contributed to the defining character of the capital city of Delhi across the world. The sudden manner in which the gigantic transformation of such a precinct has been initiated without any study and specified brief to the consultant, made the three organizations, among many others, extremely concerned about the future of the place. It is this concern that made them come together to express the primary characteristics and underlying design principles that any change would need to consider, protect and uphold and a combined set of recommendations was formulated to guide the development for such a precinct.

There are two sets of concerns.

The first set comprises the formative principles of urban design that constitutes the CV precinct in relation to Lutyens' Delhi, which is the genesis of the spectacular urban assembly that this precinct offers to us all. These principles comprise a whole range of concepts and ideas that embody the spirit of the place and give it its distinctive character. Among the most important principles are the three axes: (1). Raisina Hill to River Yamuna, (2). The cross axis of Rajpath [Kingsway] and Janpath [Queen-sway] and (3). Parliament House to Jama Masjid) that generate urban relationships between different parts of the city and tie this place to the larger urban context. The other important principle is the way the buildings and spaces around this precinct are distributed giving each part of this overall assembly its individual distinctiveness—the assembly on Raisina Hill, the linear arrangement of building blocks along the Central Vista, the crossing of Janpath and Rajpath and the C-Hexagon. Though there is overall spatial symmetry along the Central Vista Axis, individual buildings are not made to form a monotonous line of regimented blocks that align the entire stretch of the Vista. In fact, the crossing of Janpath and Rajpath was celebrated with a deliberate departure, both in terms of plot sizes as well as in terms of building alignments to create the imagined 'cultural platform' conceived by Lutyens. That is why the Central Archives and National Museum align with Janpath and not the linear formation along Rajpath. The proposed IGNCA building as per the winning entry design followed the same. Functionally also, these three buildings continued the idea of this central urban 'node' with the public, cultural uses that were synchronous to the original idea of the meeting point of the two axes. The Ministry of External Affairs deviated from this original idea in terms of function but at least aligned with Janpath along with the other three buildings mentioned earlier.

The proposed project disregards the above two most important principles that comprise Central Vista. Neither does it recognize the existence and significance of the three axes collectively, nor does it make any gesture towards the distinctive nature of the variations in this precinct, especially at the nodal point of the cross-axes of Rajpath and Janpath. In fact, by aligning new, proposed buildings as a rigid, monotonous mass of building blocks along the Central Vista and demolishing all buildings along Janpath apart from the Central Archives, the project offers no positive response to the other two axes mentioned before and actually erodes their presence as the formative urban design principle of this precinct. This departure from the genesis of urban design order and dilution of the CV through this scheme is of extreme concern to IUDI.

The proposal takes a piece-meal, plot-based, architectural approach for the development of a precinct of such urban design and heritage significance. Generating a collective built form strategy for significant locations, for example, the Parliament complex, C-Hexagon, and areas around North and South Blocks without compromising on the diverse richness of varied architectural artefacts require a thorough urban design study and form-space analysis as the starting point of such a project. The proposal unfortunately does not use any such study to determine a wholesome outcome nor does it exhibit a multi-scalar, collective approach that ties the underlying formative urban design principles of CV mentioned earlier to the contemporary, place-making initiatives this precinct needs.

The second set of concerns relates to the present context of the CV precinct and future implications of the project.

The publicness of the CV precinct through its vast expanse of green with unhindered access had been one of the biggest assets of this place, which upheld the true democratic spirit of the capital city of Delhi. This level of free access has in recent years been significantly reduced, first with the new, gated development of the War Memorial compound and then with the fencing around the rest of the C-Hexagon surrounding India Gate. With the proposed distribution of high-security areas and functions at the other end of the Vista on both sides of Vijay Chowk (Parliament Complex on one side and the Prime Minister's residence and office on the other) along with government ministries and offices on Central Vista, the proposal highly diminishes the possibility of true, unhindered publicness and use of this precinct. This is one of the biggest losses that the precinct faces and it is worrying to imagine that in the future, the overall quality of free, inhibited use of this memorable space would be under increased control and security surveillance. Though the consultant has claimed to the contrary, the proposal so far is unconvincing on this vital issue that IUDI is extremely concerned with.

The CV precinct attracts a large range of user groups by virtue of the diversity of form and function that it offers. This diversity is expressed by the varied distribution and mix of public uses like museums, library, convention facilities, cultural and arts centres along with governmental and institutional functions. Correspond-

ing to this mix of functions is a wide variety of built forms and building types that express the layers of adaptations and additions over time. Together, these two facets contribute to the vibrant richness of experience and purpose with which the precinct is widely associated. By adopting an irrational strategy of demolishing and replacing a large number of buildings of this precinct with monolithic and mono-functional building types along both arms of the Central Vista and using strict zoning principles to group functions together, the essential quality of present diversity and morphological richness of the precinct has been significantly jeopardized. Apart from the sheer unsustainability of such a decision of large scale demolishing without an acute assessment on use and life-cycle continuity of such buildings, the proposal makes unnecessary moves of relocation, replacement, and rebuilding of perfectly usable built assets that exist in this area. This goes against all principles of reduce, recycle, and re-use that are fundamental to any issue of sustainability. By moving away, this proposal traces an extremely capital intensive, unsustainable approach to the future redevelopment of CV.

The lack of an overall and comprehensive movement strategy based upon detailed traffic studies and analyses for the entire precinct, especially the C-Hexagon, is glaringly absent from the proposal since its inception until date. This factor by itself should have been one of the determining factors for deciding on the extent and intensity of new functional additions and increased load on the erstwhile mobility infrastructure in place. Apart from an underground shuttle interconnecting two metro stations and proposed secretariat functions, the proposal has no consideration on critical questions related to surface transport conditions especially related to motorized private vehicular movement. We understand the already prevalent crisis of vehicular traffic load on the central areas of the city and C-Hexagon, in particular, as the largest roundabout of the city catering to thousands of through-moving traffic across all directions, is operating at full capacity in peak hours. The consultant's response to this concern so far has been that ongoing studies for traffic conditions are underway. It is disturbing to note that the project is conceived and proceeded upon to such an extent without the foundation of such studies, which should ideally determine such a project rather than find ways to fit it in.

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Were there any engagements with the Ministry and the selected consultant firm in regard to these guidelines? How far are they being followed now as the design evolves?

IUDI has had the opportunity of engaging with the Hon'ble Minister of MHUA on one, and with the consultant on three occasions regarding the project. At all times, the concerns related to the urban design aspects of the project were highlighted and brought to the notice of the consultant. The Ministry was informed about the concerns along with recommendations through the joint document of IUDI-ISO-LA-INTACH sent earlier. In the meeting with the Hon'ble Minister, in which the consultant made his presentation, the above points of concern were also specifically mentioned. At all times, the consultant had acknowledged the importance of the concerns raised along with the assurance of action to be taken to address the same. This has not happened so far. Subsequent updates of the overall proposal have not reflected the incorporation of any of the observations made by IUDI. Most impor-

tantly, the vital need to create comprehensive urban design studies including impact assessments on carrying capacity, overall mobility, morphological adaptations, urban form, streetscape and public space characteristics as a way to determine design decisions have been continuously ignored. Until date, apart from some preliminary studies of built form relationship along with CV, no substantial study has been placed by the consultant for any discussion related to the legitimacy and efficacy of this proposal. In the absence of these studies, this proposal seems to have been progressing within a vacuum of technical foundations to support a scheme of such a consequence.

Institutions and professional bodies represent the collective vision of their members. In what ways can our professional institutions play a more empowered role in shaping the direction of such projects of national importance in the near future?

This project reveals the vital need for professional bodies connected with issues of the natural and built environment of our habitat to come together as a collective that could protect, nurture and strengthen existing resources as well as contribute together to sustainable, inclusive and participatory ways of ushering trajectories of change and transformation. Together, professional bodies like IIA, IUDI, ISOLA, INTACH, ITPI, IUT, and others form a formidable group of diverse expertise who could collectively inform and advise on projects of such magnitude, significance, and consequence. The need for a platform for such a convergence has become imperative within the dynamic situations that our cities face today.

Promoting transparency, participation, and co-development methods at all stages of decision-making should be the way forward to all such projects in the future.

URBAN DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Central Vista precinct is a unique example of landscape urbanism, connecting the Ridge to the River through a series of urban design and landscape strategies resulting in the consequent form-space configurations that we find today. A designed sequence of open spaces from the wilderness of the Ridge to the gardens of Rashtrapati Bhavan, formal lawns of Central Vista, through the National Stadium and Purana Qila, finally to the riverine landscape of the Yamuna, forms the primary spatial organization of this precinct. Buildings and structures were strategically located in this organization as focal objects in space (Rashtrapati Bhavan and India Gate), as space-defining envelopes (North and South Blocks) or as a string of built units along movement paths (Bhavans around the C-hexagon).

This principle of collective assembly of built-form and landscape needs to be recognized, preserved, and enhanced. The focal objects (Rashtrapati Bhavan and India Gate), space-defining envelopes (North and South Blocks), and built form along movement paths (Bhavans around C-hexagon) should re-

main as such. Any future planning/design move/s should, in no way violate such an urban gesture at the macro level and no structures, buildings, markers, towers or infrastructural elements should obstruct or destroy the existing visual quality of this composition along its entire expanse from the Ridge and Raisina Hill to the River Yamuna.

2. The urban structure of Delhi has the Central Vista at its core with axial lines of physical and visual connections laid out in a geometric configuration forming the foundation of such a structure. The urban experience of the whole of New Delhi revolves around this axial and geometric layout, both in terms of its horizontal spread across the landscape and also in its three-dimensional manifestations. The provision of tree-lined boulevards and vistas with soft-edges along with individual plots, low boundary walls, and adequate 'setbacks' from adjoining road/s as well as from the lawns of Central Vista create the "Garden City" experience of New Delhi with which it is identified worldwide.

This essential urban structure and character of Lutyens' Delhi need to be protected/ preserved especially along the primary corridors of movement parallel to the Central Vista precinct (along with Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Maulana Azad roads).

3. New Delhi reflects on a grand scale, hitherto unequalled, the fusion of two dominant themes of early twentieth-century city planning: the City Beautiful movement (vistas) and the Garden City (verdure). These were combined with a conscious attempt to create a capital that would draw inspiration from the traditions of India. The Central Vista, a broad ceremonial avenue, anchored by grand buildings, is expressive of pomp and grandeur. An effective use was made of the natural rise in the ground to the west - Raisina Hill. This provided a setting for the Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Secretariat buildings, behind which the Ridge formed a green backdrop. The grouping of the palaces of the Princely estates around the hexagon at the end of the Central Vista, provides a variety of form and design.

Proposed constructions should not overpower the grandeur of the Rashtrapati Bhavan and North-South Block ensemble. The areas to the north and south of these two blocks in proximity to this ensemble as well as around the Parliament Building need to have stringent urban design guidelines for any kind of addition or alteration to the present situation. Any proposed building or cluster of buildings are to be planned according to these guidelines and as per building bye-laws especially with regard to building setbacks, built envelopes, height restrictions, and architectural vocabulary.

4. Since Independence, the meaning and usage of the Central Vista precinct have transitioned from its Baroque, Colonial imprint of the British Empire to the democratic, everyday space of free India. The precinct today expresses both - its ceremonial grandeur of national significance and its daily association as the most popular public space of this capital city. The princely estates, though originally a political construct of Colonial rule, have now been re-inscribed with institutional and public use, suited to an independent nation.

High-Security areas like the Rashtrapati Bhavan and Secretariat offices as well as public functions like museums and open, green public spaces are to be zoned accordingly. The publicness of the Central Vista with unfettered freedom of access to all citizens (including vendors) and visitors to the entire area of the central vista needs to be ensured/restored without any form of fencing, gates, or barrier through the total length and breadth of the central open space. High-security zones are to be planned and located with caution and under no circumstances should the freedom of access and public engagement within the entire central open space be constrained due to new functional insertions and connected security reasons. In fact, functions needing high security need to be zoned away from high visitor footfall domains. Adequate visitor amenities are to be incorporated inclusive of public parking, police booths, drinking water facilities, toilets which are to be appropriately and conveniently located.

5. Built forms within plots that adjoin the central open space accentuate the linear spatial arrangement of the Central Vista on both sides of Rajpath and are vital to the experiential unity of the precinct.

Alterations or replacement of this built form within individual plots should ensure continuity of the built edge overlooking the Central Vista as well as adjoining transportation corridors. This continuity of form should be ensured, at both the ground plane and skyline as visible from Rajpath and adjoining roads. Under no circumstances, should there be sudden departures or sharp disconnect to this linear volumetric composition formed out of the buildings in individual plots. While these plots could be interconnected with free movement across them, they are not to be amalgamated for FAR and building bulk calculations for generating built units.

6. The geometric layout of New Delhi stems from a clever integration of grand boulevards lined by particularly large and fast-growing native trees and roundabouts each with a unique character. Even along the central vista, each of the two crossings has a unique character. The cross axis where Janpath meets the Rajpath was designed to have a group of four important public buildings marks the crossing where today the National Archives, the National Museum, Indira Gandhi National Center for Arts (IGNCA) and the Ministry of External Affairs stand. These functions, especially the National Archives and National Museum orient themselves to Janpath with their primary facades aligning towards this cross axis. In this manner, the buildings in these four plots break away from the linear formation of the remaining buildings that line both sides of the vista and thereby accentuating this formative dual axes structure of the precinct.

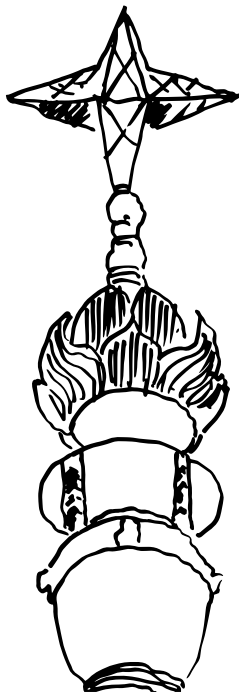
The overall morphology of the streets and plots of this precinct should be retained. Under no circumstances should plots be amalgamated and dividing roads in between them, obliterated to create larger parcels either for built or open use. Apart from breaking the continuous boulevard experience of the

precinct, such moves will compromise traffic movement and smooth operation of the roundabouts. As mentioned above, plots around Rajpath-Janpath crossing that extend beyond the other plots along Rajpath and resultant variety of urban character should be retained.

7. Built forms around the C-Hexagon are uniquely disposed of within individual plots. The individual buildings are oriented towards both the central focal element of the C-Hexagon (the Canopy) as well as the adjacent roads that abut them.

This disposition should be maintained for any change that is imagined in this special formation within the precinct. It is important that the string of buildings along the C-Hexagon though separate from each other, form a collective sequence of unified experience along with the hexagon and encounters each form as they unfold.

8. The Central Vista precinct today houses a wide range of functions that have been retrofitted into past buildings which were originally created for other uses. This range of adaptations of erstwhile stately buildings is specifically highlighted through the new uses that have been incorporated in the Prince's Park or C-Hexagon area. Not only does this depict the sensibility of continuing existing built resources without unnecessarily demolishing them but also the prioritization of continuity of heritage values rather than abrupt change. Such an approach is visible in other parts of this precinct too and in different parts of New Delhi. Additionally, the new range of functions has ushered in a higher degree of vitality through the diversity of uses and activities that this precinct offers.



New functions proposed for this precinct should, therefore, use detailed analysis of adaptive re-use and retrofitting possibilities with respect to individual building types and arrive at the most appropriate usage that could be incorporated in each of these buildings. Functional distribution across the precinct should be proposed to promote diversity and robust place-making rather than mono-functional zones or areas.

Edge conditions between the built and the open are an extremely important design element for appropriate user experience as well as the overall character of the precinct. No plots in this precinct are to be bounded by high, opaque or semi-opaque surfaces that inhibit visual permeability between the public domain outside the plots and the development within. Plot edges that align with the Central Vista are to retain their soft qualities with low boundary walls and vegetative cover with active frontages as determined by respective functional content within the plots. Built edges have to be adequately set back (minimum 9m) to allow the retention of existing trees as well as the possibility of a green corridor along the entire length of the central space. These edges need to have pedestrian amenities and utilities apart from vending kiosks and information booths to provide a live interface between the central vista greens and the plots abutting them.





'Only Entry, No Exit': People at India Gate, Central Vista, New Delhi PHOTO CREDIT: bsd+grafiniti



PRACTITIONERS, ACADEMICIANS, THINKERS



In continuation of the discourse about the proposed Redevelopment of New Delhi's Central Vista, professionals, academicians, and thinkers were invited to express their opinions about the various aspects of the project, and also in the context of the views expressed by Dr. Bimal Patel, the consultant, in his interview, "Democracy, Participation and Consultation", featured in the Journal's last issue LA-61.

ROW-1 [LEFT TO RIGHT] | **Ashok B. Lall** [ARCHITECT] | **A.G.K. Menon** [CONSERVATION ARCHITECT] | **Dr. Narayani Gupta** [HISTORIAN]
| **Shiv Vishwanathan** [SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGIST] | **Kavas Kapadia** [URBAN PLANNER]

ROW-2 [LEFT TO RIGHT] | **Ravi Punde** [URBAN PLANNER] & **Savita Punde** [LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT] | **Anupam Bansal** [URBAN DESIGNER]
| **Razia Grover** [FREELANCE EDITOR WITH INTEREST IN ART & ARCHITECTURE]



Ashok B. Lall

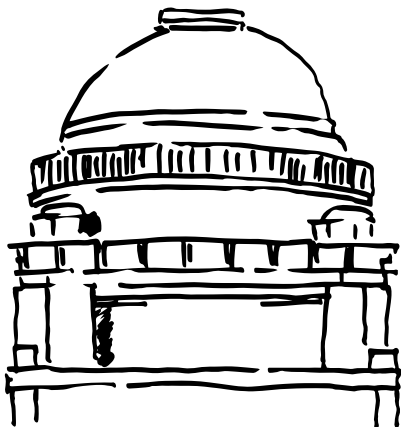
I have read Dr. Bimal Patel's account, published in the last issue of the Journal, in the first person, of his professional journey and his attitudes and beliefs as a professional rendering services on large and complex public projects.

With regard to the role of professional service in the Great Rajpath Renewal Project to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Nation, some important issues arise.

There is no doubt that the uppermost purpose and intent of the grand project is to present the ruling party and its leader as ushers of a New India—a New India that is forward-looking, dynamic, and efficient. And that, just as the British Raj has left its indelible imprint on the psyche of the Nation through the monumental urbanism of the Central Vista, the present ruling party and its leader too desire to be memorialized by a necessarily substantive and palpable superimposition of its own imprint to subdue the prominence of the Colonial legacy.

There is also no doubt that, if the intention of completing the whole project before the next national elections stands, this will be a colossal charge on a stressed public exchequer. The brazenness of such expenditure on symbolic projects in the face of the present imperative to conserve all resources as the economy slows down is astonishing—when the first call on the exchequer is to alleviate hunger, disease, unemployment and environmental degradation. The Great Rajpath Renewal, though proposed in the name of the Nation, is really an assertion of the 'supremacy' of the rulers—not very different from the Colonial British and the Mughals.

When an independent profession lends some questioning support to such a project, that profession becomes complicit in an exploitative charade of democracy. And when professional institutions concerned with Town Planning, Urban Design, and Architecture, including relevant statutory institutions, are bypassed in the conception and formulation of such a project, or are merely subservient to such political ambitions, they have to admit their low status in the eyes of the present State. And the State too must admit its utter disregard for a culture of governance that is founded on the pre-eminent role accorded to public institutions in matters of public concern.



Instead, Dr. Patel claims and enjoys a position of pre-eminence. There is no doubt that, beyond his firm's professional credentials of technical and managerial competence and experience of working with governmental agencies on public projects, he has the trust of the powers that be. Indeed, his judgment on what is needed for the 'client's' visionary Great Renewal is tellingly prescient. That which is coded into Dr. Patel's Concept Design is being pursued with praiseworthy alacrity—amending the Master Plan and granting Environmental Clearance, to clear the decks for rapid implementation. Clearly, all matters have already been thought through and 'traded off' by the pre-eminent consultant. 'The way to get things done is to present a *fait accompli*' as a strong, though cynical, administrator would say.

Public Institutions

When a professional agency becomes complicit in undermining the value of public institutions, the clock of democratic governance is turned back. It becomes a harmful precedent for the evolution of Democracy. On the other hand, when a professional agency promotes, refines, and strengthens institutionalized processes of Participation and Consultation, it strengthens democratic governance. And that is possible. Not only is that possible, but this project is also a capital opportunity for demonstrating best practice and high standards of transparency and debate.

We seek, on a project of such national significance, which is to be built in the name of the Nation, at great public expense, a higher level of professional accountability towards the institutions of 'Democracy, Participation, and Consultation'. We are, therefore, grateful for Dr. Patel's commitment to do what is possible 'to bridge the gap between self-appointed advocates of the public interest and those who are duly elected and appointed to take decisions in the public interest'.

But we should, first, require that Dr. Patel retracts his insinuation that critics and commentators on matters of public interest are often mere opposers for the sake of opposition. This is symptomatic of the virus contracted by autocrats who get into positions of power, a virus that is dangerously rampant today.

Primarily, the professional must require the project brief to articulate its purpose and intent and to clearly discern between need and necessity for governmental functions on the one hand, and from symbolic statements on the other. There is no justification for such a scale of expenditure in such haste even if some importance is to be attached to the jubilee year of India's Independence.

Symbols

Even though it is claimed that the purpose of the design competition was, primarily, to select the architect, while the Concept Design would evolve in response to further studies and consultations, the Concept Design does embody embedded symbols. Evidently, these have the 'client's' approval, as they seem to persist through 'evolution and change'. These embedded symbols bear some discussion.

The appropriation of public/ semi-public zones towards the India Gate end of Rajpath for ministerial buildings and their expression in a domineering march of identical blocks down both flanks of the Lawns signals a preference for a militaristic persona of government—reminiscent of the Soviet era. This persona is enforced at the expense of a relaxed space of social and cultural communion, open to all—children and youth, citizens, and tourists to participate in the rich spectrum of cultures that constitute the Republic. The earlier land-use plan held the promise of a true and vibrant symbol of the Republic.

The Concept Design of the ministerial blocks also signifies a repetitive stamp of architecture delivered in a single blow—the horror of Kahnian hard volumes and forms. What we would rather see is a robust Urban Design that proposes and anticipates a dynamic of variety and changes over time. Guidelines could be laid down

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on materials, crafts, and responsiveness of building skins to climate and the harsh sun—producing an authentic aesthetic that is born out of local resources and conditions—and inviting many designers to contribute their creative interpretations.

The compensatory donation of the North and South Blocks to National Museum functions and of Sansad Bhawan itself to a Museum of Democracy is ironic. This compensatory gesture entails dual costs—of re-housing the dislodged Ministries into new buildings and of creating museums to fill the grand vacant spaces. Surely, this expensive ‘musical chairs’ is triggered by a commitment in the Design Concept to an extensive new building along Rajpath.

Professional Duty

For giving a rightful place to the above considerations and many other matters not discussed here, in the due process for the project, the consultant must require:

- A formal engagement with public institutions—The Delhi Urban Arts Commission DUAC, INTACH, professional institutions, and experts—to elicit suggestions, for they too are representatives and clients by the fact of their responsibility to citizens.
- A plan that must, inevitably, have a long-term perspective that goes beyond the next election year, and which calls for careful deliberation and gradual execution, duly approved by Parliament.
- A formal engagement with the exchequer for a budget with a clear economic rationale and justification.

All is not lost. An immaculate folly can be averted. We must count on Dr. Patel’s professional leadership to set the required processes in motion, just as he has shown most admirably, as a young, public-minded professional, on his first street improvement project in Ahmedabad.



A.G.K. Menon

The objective of urban governance—and of urban development—is to secure public good. This is a catechism that every student of civics imbibes, one that morally binds architects and urban planners who undertake urban development projects to its imperatives. This is why architecture and urban planning are considered professions and not trades, but somewhere along the way, both civic authorities and the professions seem to have lost their moral bearings.

Perhaps, it was only the soul-wrenching images of migrant workers abandoning cities following the national lockdown to contain COVID-19, that finally awakened both professional and public consciousness and initiated a questioning of the ends of urban governance.¹ Simultaneously, the aggressively authoritarian and opaque response of the government in carrying out the redevelopment of Central Vista

¹ Serge Chermayeff pointed out, “Modern man’s preoccupation with private comforts and pleasures have left the public realm neglected. It receives little attention until a major crisis forces private interests to take notice of the public conditions”. With necessary changes, this could as well refer to the condition in Indian cities. *Design and the Public Good, Selected Writings, 1930-1980* by Serge Chermayeff, Edited by Richard Plunz, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1982. p.58

in New Delhi generated similar feelings of despair and concerns. Both sparked the kind of public discourse not heard in recent times, highlighting not only the problems of urban governance but also the infirmities of how professionals—both government and private—deal with the problems of cities.

As a professional, I feel complicit in the many failures that have been pointed out. I realize that as a community of professionals we have seldom examined whether the ideologies we believe in helping to resolve, or in fact contribute to, the urban problems around us. Since this is a complex subject, I will focus on only one aspect of professional ideology that I consider central to the issue, which is our engagement with the public good. I will examine it from three perspectives: first, as a professional urban planner; second, as a practicing architect; and finally, as an urban conservation professional—the last because it is my belief that the conservation of historic precincts offers salutary lessons, for both architects and urban planners in India, on how to achieve public good in their work.

Urban planning as a public good

Planning proposals are invariably presented to the public as *fait accompli*. This is because planning is seen as an expert-driven scientific exercise that the layperson is not expected to understand, which in turn is based on the belief, now outdated, that the dynamics of the environment and social and economic forces that drive development can be scientifically manipulated to achieve social good. To achieve these ends, urban planners reduce the complexities of urban development to an exercise in seeking and achieving simplistic targets based on the speed of decision-making.

Social scientists know that such strategies cannot work in complex societies such as ours, yet urban planning in India is predicated on that fallacy. Not surprisingly, planners consider dialoguing with the public an obstacle; which is why the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), for instance, does not take public objections seriously. The DDA routinely solicits it because it is legally obliged to do so, but consider the objections they receive as irrelevant to their task. What is lost in translation between the legal requirement and its practice, is public good.

Such subversion of the democratic ideals of governance, in fact, derives from the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act of the UK, that Indian planning authorities adopted in toto after Independence. In the UK this Act has undergone several modifications to become more democratic, thus ensuring that greater public good is achieved; not so in India. For example, The Royal Town Planners Institute's (RTPI), 'A Vision for Planning' (2000), defined the professional planner as a *facilitator*, working with conflicting sets of values and competing objectives to ensure that the process of planning is an inclusive procedure leading to negotiated outcomes.²

The practice of urban planning in India has not followed this ideological trajectory. The profession is dominated by government employees, generally low-level decision-makers in the hierarchy. Unlike the RTPI, the Institute of Town Planners

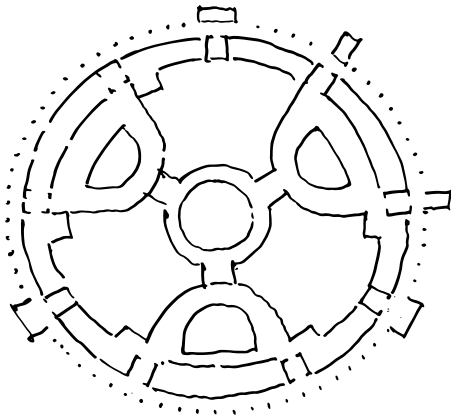
It is my belief that the conservation of historic precincts offers salutary lessons, for both architects and urban planners in India, on how to achieve public good in their work.

² Barry Cullingworth, *et.al.*, *Town and Country Planning in UK*, Routledge, 2014. p.523

India ITPI—its counterpart—exercises no agency in determining policy issues. Urban development decisions are invariably made by bureaucrats or politicians (or private real estate developers for considerations other than public good) and the job of urban planners is to facilitate their implementation. The Central Vista project, for example, is the ‘dream’ of Prime Minister,³ which urban planners and administrators are unquestioningly implementing. Indeed, the DDA has willingly rationalized the need to rewrite the Master Plan in order to facilitate its implementation. Unless the present practice of urban planning is overhauled, the foundational objective of the profession, which is to achieve public good, will remain an empty promise.

Architectural practice as a public good

To identify the ideology of architectural practice, I will rely on statements made by Bimal Patel, the architect of the Central Vista project, in an extensive interview that appeared in an earlier issue of this Journal.⁴ Prem Chandavarkar has already offered a compelling critique of this interview,⁵ so I will only refer to one of Patel’s statements in the context of its impact on public good.



Discussing the architect—client relationship, Patel states unequivocally, that: “The project belongs to the client”.⁶ He goes on to rationalize this ideological perspective by stating that he is a successful practitioner because he has learnt quite early in his career to pragmatically align with this reality. He differs from other architects who believe that, in the mould of Ayn Rand’s iconic Howard Roark, the project, at least metaphorically, belongs to the architect. Both views consider the public, the real client of any project, an abstract necessity, merely a peg on which to hang their respective design ideas. I identify these quotidian architectural ideologies as an important issue to consider, because it is unwilling, or unable, to accord a central role to the actual user—the public, in public projects. Public good is lost in the process.

This ideology is in contrast, for example, to the position taken by the profession in the US in response to the recent protests associated with the Black Lives Matter movement. Responding to the need to respect new perceptions of public good, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) issued a statement expressing solidarity with the protesters: “We were wrong not to address and work to correct the built world’s role in perpetuating systemic racial injustices...(but) we support and are committed to efforts to ensure that our profession is part of the solution.” To that end, the statement added, “We will review our own programs (and) ask our community to join us and hold us accountable.”⁷ There are profound lessons for the architectural profession in India to learn from the AIA’s response to emerging public perceptions.

A public project like the redevelopment of Central Vista does not ‘belong’ to the government, as Patel suggests, but to the citizens who use it as a public place. Making it a hub of government offices will inevitably restrict its use on security considerations. The public is protesting this usurping of its space and the architect must listen. This is public good.

³ Statement made by Minister Hardeep Singh Puri at Agenda Aaj Tak 2019, on December 16, 2019. Retrieved from India Today App, on June 30, 2020

⁴ *Democracy, Participation and Consultation*, in conversation with Bimal Patel, *LA Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Delhi, Issue No. 61, 2020, pp 84–97

⁵ <https://architecturelive.in/the-central-vista-redevelopment-prem-chandavarkar-bimal-patel>

⁶ *Journal of Landscape Architecture*, *ibid.* p.88

⁷ *It’s Time for Architects to Stand Up for Justice*, Michael Kimmelman. *The New York Times*, Saturday June 13, 2020

Historic cities as a public good

Historic cities offer a litmus test for understanding professional ideology. They represent, comprise, and contain in a complex manner, all the problems of Indian cities and of architecture. But contemporary architectural and urban planning ideology in India denigrates historic cities. This denigration has Colonial roots and is now part of the DNA of modern architecture and urban planning. But historic cities contain the roots of Indian urbanism that continue to define contemporary urbanity. Therefore, there is a causal relationship between the denigration of historic cities and the failures of contemporary urban planning and architecture that is yet to be understood and absorbed.⁸

The world over, the conservation of historic cities as civilizational memory is considered a public good, because it organically links the past and the present. But the ideology of the Indian architect and urban planner precludes this possibility in Indian cities. Both professions are content to merely rationalize their engagement with historic legacies by preserving only iconic monuments and locating them in a sea of modern redevelopment. In the Indian context, this is a travesty. This is what happened at the Vishwanath Dham redevelopment project in Varanasi, and it is what is happening with the redevelopment of Central Vista.

The 'dream' of Prime Minister to redevelop Central Vista offers many readings; it is for the profession to interpret its meaning. There was nothing wrong with the Prime Minister having a vision for redeveloping Central Vista, but by simply translating the vision on to the ground does not achieve public good. To achieve it the process of implementation must be mediated by the professional agency that is committed to achieving public good. The job of professionals, under the circumstances, is to negotiate the best outcomes. This has not happened to redevelop Central Vista. This failure has wider implications for urban governance and urban development in general. Only by following the imperatives of participatory decision-making can we create more satisfying environments for all to live in.

.....⁸ AGK Menon, *Imagining the Indian City*, Economic and Political Weekly, Mumbai, vol. xxxii, No.46, November 15, 1997. pp. 2932–36



Dr. Narayani Gupta

Revolutions in city planning and in architecture occur when new materials and new technologies come into use. But in terms of the layout of ceremonial urban spaces, there has been a remarkable similarity in design across time. The visitor has a *déjà vu* feeling when he sees the imperial Roman temple of the 2nd century repeated in 18th-century Berlin and Washington and again in 20th-century New Delhi and Canberra.

The similarity lies in the long avenue, flanked by wide spaces, beginning and culminating in monumental architecture or a prominent natural feature. The avenue celebrates power through processions and events on specific days in the year. At

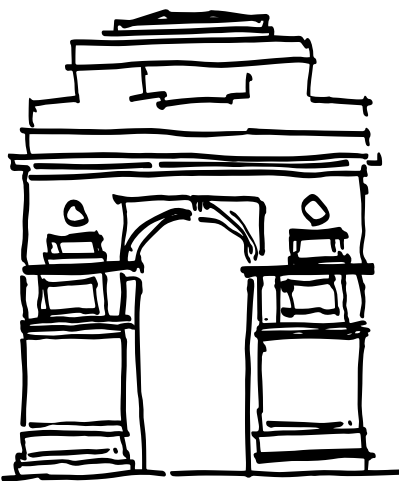
the same time, the avenue invites people to its gardens, elegant museums, and galleries, memorials, shopping arcades. Thus these are spaces of power but also of democracy. These central spaces are national, not simply part of a city. As the visitor's eye sweeps over its extent, admires its architecture and its carefully-selected trees, its walkways, he can for a moment feel an exhilaration akin to that which comes unbidden when listening to a harmonious rendering of the national anthem or seeing the national flag fluttering in the breeze. Each ceremonial avenue has its own story—some are deliberate breaks with history, some are contrived to connect with the past. Unter der Linden in Berlin is replete with references to the many incarnations of Prussia-Germany, the Champs Elysees in Paris has memories of the great Bourbons, of Napoleon, of de Gaulle, masked by glittering shop fronts, in Rome, the great buildings of the Empire of Octavian are connected to the present, itself rooted in Mussolini's Empire. Each with its own history, its own euphoria and tragedy, and softened by the patina of history.

But they are not just sites of history. The ones that linger in our memory have a spirit of place, snatches of birdsong or piped music, memories of laughter and conversation, lingering tastes of ice cream or popcorn, golden sunrises or sunsets. A spirit of place is created cumulatively, with people gathering, returning; it brings together different generations, of birds, trees, and people.

Delhi has two historic avenues—one three and half centuries old, the other one century. Chandni Chowk is the centre of the city, Rajpath is the centre of the nation. Both are aligned east to west. The first is truly urban in being multi-functional—it is procession-way on occasion, sites of worship and trade all the year, leading at the eastern end to a royal fort, the charisma of which is still pervasive. The other is truly *official*—it is procession-way on occasion, sites of officialdom and cultural hubs all the year, leading to a presidential fort at the western end. Both provide employment to a large number of people, and attract many visitors. Today, Chandni Chowk is being ploughed up to recover a pedestrian-friendly thoroughfare, Rajpath is being prepared to be ploughed up for a form-and-function transformation.

The settings could not be more different. Chandni Chowk is lively to the point of being chaotic, because not only is it visited by hundreds of tourists and people from other parts of the city, it is surrounded by organically grown lanes and sub-lanes, packed densely with *permanent* residents. Rajpath is sedate and does not throb with the same vitality, because it is flanked by a network of wide avenues and spacious garden-houses inhabited by transient occupants. Its offices are busy in the daylight hours only, while Chandni Chowk never sleeps. As to vehicles—there is a bewildering assortment in Chandni Chowk, while on Rajpath the processions are of elegant and aloof cars.

We have taken it for granted that national central spaces will be beautifully designed and, at the same time, welcome everyone in. For short intoxicating spells of time, the visitor will feel himself a dignified citizen, even as there will be elements that will evoke his sense of pride in the nation. The Central Vista has in its life of less than a century, become a section through India's modern history. It showcas-



es the cultural life, art history, the memory of our multicultural country. The two majestic terminal-points—the Rashtrapati Bhavan, and India Gate—create a sense of awe and of introspection. The three cultural institutions at the Janpath-Rajpath crossing—the National Museum the National Archives, and the IGCA—also do that, in addition to awakening a sense of delight. The festival element is displayed at the Republic Day parade and draws people in art exhibitions, folk festivals, and cultural celebrations. The city does not lack for other cultural milieux, but they lack the unique quality of Rajpath—the tranquil surroundings of grass and of water-channels, and of a vast expanse of sky—the answer to the shimmering heat of the Delhi summer.

“The cultural life of the country, its art history, its memory”—this is ‘living heritage’. The project to modify New Delhi’s Central Vista seeks to destroy all these, destroy the oxygen of the mind as much as the oxygen from the trees which will be killed. We are told that the Baker buildings (modified into museums) and the War Memorial Museum will not be demolished. The only reference to the life of the republic on its diamond jubilee in 2021 will be to the wars that it fought as part of the Empire and as an independent nation.

The rest of the space will be dominated by buildings to house the anthills of administration. Herbert Baker built two spacious buildings to house these, so large as to be simply known as (North and South) Blocks. The offices have got steadily more bloated after Independence. It is now proposed to house them in eight/ nine-storey blocks. These look-alike buildings, double the height of existing ones, will be self-contained offices, without the breath of fresh air created by cultural spaces. At this rate, by 2100 pretty well the whole of British New Delhi will be office blocks!

The British Central Vista project—in the concept and in the detail—had its critics right from 1912. One of the issues was the historical implication. An alternative scheme, wanting to emphasize that the British Raj was the successor of the Mughal had as axis a street running west from the Red Fort and continuing beyond Shahjahanabad to end in the Viceroy’s House. This was given up in favour of the Rajpath axis, to link the oldest Delhi (the site of Pandava Indraprastha) to the newest (the Viceroy on Raisina Hill).

The present generation is also in a tangle about their attitude to the British. It is difficult to exorcise the ghost of Lutyens (who is becoming less and less of a person and more and more of an idea). Till 1980, ‘Lutyens’ was a bad word to many, and continued that way with many intellectuals. Now he is seen as ‘heritage’. If the hostility was tragedy, what is now happening is distinctly farce. The architect offers soothing reassurances that the changes proposed will “continue the legacy of Lutyens”, and “complete the original vision of an avenue running from Raisina to the Yamuna.”

Memory is the average man’s handbook of history. But memory is capricious. When landscapes change, people forget. There was in the city of Ahmedabad, a small *mazhar* consecrated to a great literary figure called Wali, whose patriotism made him add to his name the suffix ‘Gujarati’. In 2002, the *mazhar* was destroyed, and a tarred road built over it. His people chose to forget him.

The city does not lack for other cultural milieux, but they lack the unique quality of Rajpath—the tranquil surroundings of grass and of water-channels, and of a vast expanse of sky—the answer to the shimmering heat of the Delhi summer.

Micro-landscapes do change, people do forget. The poignancy lies in the fact that the minds of the next generation will blur over what was lost when the 'world-class city centre' was built, when multicolour and multi-functional became unicolour and one-dimensional. If this wholly unnecessary project comes through, hardly anyone will recall the slender columns of the National Archives or the *ratha* under a sunshade at the side of the National Museum. Will Lutyens' lovingly-designed fountains also go?

Perhaps it is time to re-read 'Ozymandias'.



Shiv Vishwanathan

When I was invited to comment on Bimal Patel's interview, I hardly knew him, we had only met a few times. I realized I could not comment on the person in the real sense but could focus on the *persona* constructed and presented in the interview. I must confess, when I read it I was disappointed. It sounded innocuous. I was puzzled, till I asked a friend of mine, a psychologist, to help me. He read it and said, "Yes, innocuous but lethal. It hides power as backstage." That persuaded me to re-read the text. I decided to construct Bimal in three parts; by reading him, the text, as sign, symptom, and symbol. One created a spiraling narrative beginning with the man, reading him as a professional in power, examining the implications of the Central Vista controversy in the wider sense.

The sociologist, Erving Goffman, once a professor at Berkeley, wrote a fascinating book called *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Goffman showed how the self is a construct that we have to decode and unravel, and then examine the backstage to get a real sense of the person. Bimal Patel's interview is an immaculate presentation of the professional self. Like many Indians, he reduces autobiography to biodata, as if he is writing a recommendation certificate for himself. It is when one reads between the lines, one senses silences and erasures.

Reading Bimal Patel, talking about his teachers and other legends like Manuel Castells and David Harvey, one senses a certain amnesia. These were great names to cite, but Patel's claim that they were Marxists makes little sense today. It is Bimal's very distancing from his great teachers that reveals his flaws. He forgets, they were not just Marxists, but great Democrats, who understood the city as a public space and a knowledge system, some things he desperately needs to do. It's Bimal Patel's indifference to democratic values that still keep Castells and Harvey alive and relevant for the Indian imagination.

Bimal celebrates a university like Berkeley, but not the spirit of the university, its traditions of dissent and plurality. Berkeley, for all his celebration, sounds like a boy-scout badge that he wears, rather than a university known for dissent



and scholarship. It's a badge of statuses, 'foreign returned', as my friend put it. He talks of nationalism as a part of the liberal imagination, and praises it for its pragmatism, yet, his sense of nationalism is textbook bound. There is no feel for the pluralism of the movement, of the real debates it evoked. He projects into it a pragmatism when the Indian debate was essentially normative and pluralistic. It displayed cognitive diversity at its very core, as different groups dialogued over fundamental issues and strategies. Reductionist readings of nationalism are often a convenience. But it is his sense of democracy that is ambivalent. As my psychologist friend told me, "He is a man easy with power but uneasy about democracy, which he tries to reduce to table manners."

Bimal begins interestingly by stating that many professionals, like his father, who have expertise in urban issues tend to avoid the public domain. He suggests, that a change of elites is responsible for this, and argues that one can make an attempt to engage with the new politics. The second part of the essay deals with his encounter with the public domain, with government and clients in particular. As a narrative, it gets caught between storytelling and specifying the normative. He has a sense of power, but also a sense of the difficulties of negotiating a project through the public domain. Bimal's focus on the client restricts his sense of the urban. He hardly visualizes the user, the symbolic consumer of his facility, preferring to hide behind the expert's mask. His sense of design and the citizen's reading of the street will be radically different, as many in Ahmedabad would testify. More, his sense of design sees history and culture as secondary, partly it stems from a sense of memory as a negligible factor. One wishes one could do a Geddesian analysis of the Lutyens in him. From his mechanistic ideas to his servicing of the megalomania of the current regime.

Since his narrative is fragmented, one needs a frame for evaluating him. I am doing this within the four-fold frame of accounting, accountability, responsibility, and trusteeship. Bimal Patel is proud of his professionalism. His sense of adhering to standards, to the right specifications, yet he himself realizes a functional building is only one half the story. Many buildings, have or conveyed, meaning, and memory, as he himself adds, "You can build a McDonald's to specifications, but a Taj Mahal or a Parliament is a symbolic domain." He is high on accounting. He understands specifications, scale, interdisciplinarity, but the sense of the building is still functional. The symbolic barely seeps in. A building remains a technical answer to a technical question. In fact, Bimal's sense of Parliament is that of a building rather than a political process. It's almost as if he is happier building Lutyens's Delhi as a McDonald's. But there is more. While his sense of accounting is professional, his sense of accountability is restricted to bureaucrats and clients. He as a professional has little sense of the fraternity of ideas, a realization that accountability is a conversation of ideas, a sense of the mutuality of peer group critique and response. Meaning and community do not seep in. He talks of 'trade-off', but has little to say on dialogue. In terms of responsibility, he remains narrow and restricted, a collection of specifications rather than a normative frame. He complains about populism, fundamentalism, but does not seem to be happy with transparency, hinting it opens a way to populism. Finally, he ignores trusteeship,

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which is the moral custodianship of a building. You may not own the building, but you have to own up to the traditions and legacy of the culture in which the building is embedded in. Trusteeship is the protection of text and context, but Bimal has nothing to say about heritage as trusteeship. I guess his real problem is, he likes power but wants to ritually distance himself from debates and controversy. He reduces democracy to table manners in this context. His professionalism, of course, goes beyond his father's generation, but his sense of the social is restricted. He is happy with the power, but inane and clichéd in his presentation of it.

If this was only an autobiographical fragment, even that would be acceptable. But this is a text which serves as a prelude to the Central Vista debate, something which is haunting the nation. He refers to it casually, almost as another project. It is as if he is hinting that the project is on, that it is a *fait accompli*.

Beyond the presentation of the man, his definition and narrative of the professional self, there's a symbolic domain, a wider sense of community, memory, heritage, debate that Bimal completely ignores. Thus, he shows his contempt for the university as a public domain, and as a framework of knowledge. The university as a knowledge system has to be invited to debate the projects historically, sociologically, and technologically. His coyness is almost a form of secrecy and indifference to the idea of the public. It is ironic that he praises Berkeley but refuses to take the Indian university seriously. As the President of CEPT, the least he could've done is to have the humility and the confidence to present himself both as analyst and yet allow a full academic case study of the Central Vista Project.

Secondly, people's knowledge of the city does not count for him. Dr. Narayani Gupta's comment that a public space is also memory, makes little meaning to a man who reduces it to real estate. There's little sense of him listening to the voice of the common man. He has restricted attention to power brokers. But when voice and memory fade, there's little democracy left, but he seems to be quite content with this amputation.

There is a shrinking of ethics as an imagination. His ethics become technically skeletal and not an experiment in creating a supple world. He has little sense of the polysemy of debates around Central Vista, or even the genealogy of Lutyens' debate. In a way, he robs the Central Vista controversy of its claims to storytelling, its sense of a theatre of epic ideas.

Central Vista is a fragment from a debate that has haunted India for decades. It goes back to the battle between Haussmannism represented by Lutyens with its grids and monumentality, and the more neotechnic concept of the city as an organic domain. We treat Lutyens as a *fait accompli*, as the only visions of the city, ignoring the traditions of urbanism which dissenting intellectuals like Patrick Geddes established. Bimal is entitled to a stand, but he needs to locate himself within these wider debates. Deep down, he prefers to be a technocrat

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rather than the public intellectual facing an idea through diverse origins. One has to ask, are Bimal and the Prime Minister imperialists in nationalist clothing? India has, over the last century, debated issues about urbanism, yet the amnesia about it every time a new project comes is amazing.

One would expect some discussion of the budget in this era of COVID-19, Bimal has no comments on it. It is almost as if money is meant for monumentality, and questions of justice fade before it. The Parliament project is an exercise in conspicuous consumption, where the ordinary citizen rarely counts. Finally, what is necessary is a sense of democracy as transparency, as a dialogue of difference, as genealogy identifying the traditions of debate, and finding a celebration of scholarship. The question is, is Bimal an extension of the regime's searches for permanence, monumentality, and authoritarianism? Even a hint of that turns him from a technocrat to an authoritarian, an innocuousness which leads to something lethal.

It is his technological autism that prevents him from seeing a connection between art, environment, culture, and architecture. All he conveys is that he is an adjutant to megalomania and monumentality. It is an indifference power that feels to the protest or the more complex imagination. It is sad, in this very act he shows a contempt of public space and the university. In the decades to come, this interview will be a collector's item illustrating how professionals cater to power, hypothecating environment, and democracy to monumentality and megalomania. Bimal Patel's career thus becomes paradigmatic of that uneasy transition.

What is necessary is a sense of democracy as transparency, as a dialogue of difference, as genealogy identifying the traditions of debate, and finding a celebration of scholarship.



Kavas Kapadia

In his interview, Dr. Bimal Patel comes through as a charismatic professional, endowed with the best of Indian and US education and also the winner of some prestigious works and awards. What also shines through, without his elaboration upon it, is his suave, calm, and calculated appeal to win over the opponent in a debate. He is currently exploring all avenues to justify the project.

Despite his efforts, the professional fraternity of architects, urban designers and planners are angry. Very angry.

So are a lot of other sensitive citizens of India. One of the reasons is the undue haste that the current government has displayed in rushing this project through and by appointing Bimal as the architect of an extensive program to revamp the Central Vista. Yes, I use the word 'appoint' as I believe it lends a modicum of dignity to the sanctity of such an important project—in contrast to the farcical act of the 'selection of an architect' call for tender based on a shoddy paper of a building program—an act that insults the intelligence of the masses in general and professionals in particular. Bimal's compulsion to defend the situation is quite understandable.

Yes, all citizens do not quite understand and practice the essence of democracy but should we, as professionals, not attempt to make a place for ourselves in the process of democratic decision-making?



While describing ‘practice in the public realm’, Bimal oscillates between the interpretation of democratic power with the people versus those practiced by the elected representatives. Yes, all citizens do not quite understand and practice the essence of democracy but should we, as professionals, not attempt to make a place for ourselves in the process of democratic decision-making? Nowhere in his arguments does Bimal make it evident that the bureaucrats and the politicians in power need to be educated in the basics of urban design and city planning.

I think that our bureaucrats and our politicians have a clear vision and are quite well informed to understand the intricacies of the design brief undergoing change as a project of this magnitude unfolds. Trying to simplify it further by giving the example of McDonald’s outlets may actually send wrong signals.

Bimal has forwarded so many convincing answers to complex issues that we are confronted with under ‘Indian versus Western’ arguments. Of specific interest here is his argument that India is today in the same position that the West was in the 19th century. In so saying he has accepted that cities change and transform over time. This maturing of the citizenry contributes greatly to the society’s identification with the city and its spatial character that creates livable cities. The lawns of Rajpath have, over the last sixty years or so, been appropriated by the people of Delhi in ways that even Lutyens never anticipated. In the Central Vista, the residents of Delhi see a history, a magical dignity of trees, and the green carpet that is unimaginable elsewhere in the city. In fact, in most other cities of the country.

So Bimal’s argument that when this city was given a small incremental thrust, in the form of adding two floors to the Parliament House and creating a whole new street in the late 1950s, early 60s, there was no hue and cry, so why now? Today the society has matured. We live in an information age (Professor Manuel Castells calls it ‘the network society’). People are more informed and having travelled the world and seen how other people care about their public spaces. His argument in opposition to people’s action of defending their turf seems to be clearly biased. And if the issues of heritage conservation, as stated by him, are a matter of judgment and balance, then the people at least deserve a chance to put their side of the argument across.

One major flaw in his comment is about people being fixated by the cost aspects. This protest is being opposed on the grounds of environment, heritage, urban design and ignoring the common man’s voice in matters of civic importance. The COVID-19 crisis has thrust the issue of cost in the debate.

Bimal will know, that New Delhi was built under very tiring circumstances in the face of a growing rebellion against the British, mutiny, bombing, the rising popularity of Mahatma Gandhi and internal strife, of sorts—mainly on the idea of shifting the capital from Calcutta. The British badly needed a symbol of power, stability, and perpetuity.

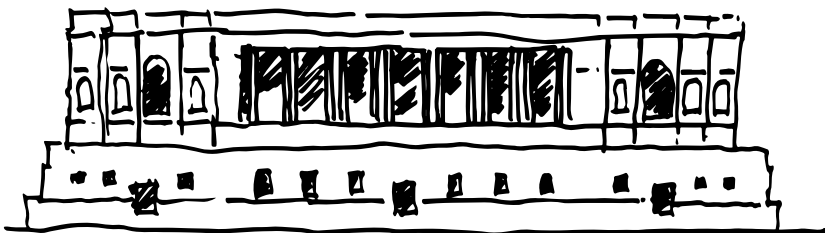
The present government on the other hand seems to be pushing a personal agenda of continuity, conformity, and imposed credibility. Completely bulldozing public opinion. It is perplexing how the same government that crows about inclusivity in all walks of life, especially for the welfare of the masses, can be so annoyingly exclusionary in the matter of the Central Vista. This is one argument that will demand the full debating acumen of Bimal to sway the citizens in favor of the government.

If this section, the ‘client-professional relationship’, has to be decoded in simple language it would mean that Bimal has established a perfect working rapport with the present government as the client. He lucidly explains the protocol and the full procedure for an iterative process required for complex projects and the consequences of its going wrong. He selects the IGNCAs building as an example of this process gone haywire. OK, this may be his way to prepare us to believe that a lot of programming is yet to be done. This is despite informing us in an earlier section that, “Several studies were commissioned to assess the impact of the proposed buildings on the existing infrastructure and site, for example, traffic studies, tree inventories, and infrastructure maps...”

So, what happened to those studies? Is there more such information hidden from the public domain? And yes was this not supposed to have been a level playing field for all architects/planners to share in? Surely everyone including him, so extensively travelled abroad, knows how such projects are selected and executed the world over.

Lastly, and without trying to be judgmental, I would humbly request Dr. Patel to reflect upon his comments on “...*Perhaps the situation will only change when more professionals put in the effort to constructively engage with government as problem-solving professionals rather than as adversarial critics, advocates, and activists. In the meanwhile, I try to the extent that it is possible, to bridge the gap between self-appointed advocates of the public interest...*” Is it not justice denied when a huge majority of the professionals are denied involvement on flimsy and untenable grounds?

When the British set upon to design New Delhi they had an army of architects, landscape architects, surveyors, and contractors besides a viceroy who was most sympathetic to Indian culture and values. For its complete duration, the ‘Project New Delhi’ was on top of the administrative agenda open to public scrutiny at every step. This present extension seems to be shrouded in secrecy, heavily reliant on one minister, one architectural firm and a one-point agenda—get it over with by May 2024.





Ravi Punde & Savita Punde

Reshaping of Delhi's Central Vista is probably the biggest moment in the history of India's Urban Landscape. A space that shaped India's past, a space that is deeply engaged with its present and a space that has the potential to manifest to the world and its people a vision for its future. While there is a need to review this space on grounds of age, use, and typologies, it is important to recognize that all of this is happening at a time of great turbulence and churning around the globe on three different fronts. The state of our environment, questions on the prevailing economic order and ideas of growth, and emerging opportunities of digital technologies and the Cloud.

The earth systems are going through a transformation caused by human activities such as altered landscapes, resource extraction, and urbanization. The disruption is visible in the growing number of natural and man-made disasters. The economic order built through capitalism, free market, and globalization has not yielded the promised ubiquitous well being thus disrupting the socio-economic fabric with inequalities across the globe. The numbers are not adding up and new divisive lines are being drawn. The digital world is opening up new possibilities while raising some very significant questions on human relationships. It is redefining human engagement and its relationship with space, ranging from transcending national borders while redefining existing spatial arrangements of the built environment. The state of the Indian environment is no exception. It too is very vulnerable to these transformations and calls for new opportunities and visualizations. Our notions of conflicts between the desire for rapid development versus the health of our environment, the need for high growth in GDP numbers and the resultant questions of income disparity, coupled with India's emergence as a significant player in the new evolving digital world, are significant contradictions to navigate a vision for a common future.

The Central Vista Project not only raises questions of how we see national legacy, history and its assets but also how we respect our environment, and deploy our resources. It also questions how truly inclusive and democratized we would become and bring greater publicness to our built environment and open space system.

On the one hand, the problem of building a new vision is compounded in a democratic ecosystem with all systems stretching themselves to operate in a deep democratic environment with a divided and diverse society and frugal resources. In the case of the Central Vista Project, this not only raises questions of how we see national legacy, history, and its assets but also how we respect our environment and deploy our resources. It also questions how truly inclusive and democratized we would become and bring greater publicness to our built environment and open space system. The questions of how we safeguard and enrich the biodiversity of this landscape that straddles between the Ridge and the river and finally, how we seize opportunities that the emerging digital world offers, to dismantle centrality creating opportunities to redefine space and location in the context of the Central Vista.

On the other hand, there are also concerns that the disciplines related to the built environment need to introspect and address. Under the current practices, a large part of our community is bothered by the definition of the informal. They are not informal, rather are the normal that inhabits this void. It is the real India. A normal that is usually excluded and lives in and off the voids of the city. This must question the current norms and practices of planning and design of the public realm and our understanding of the larger common good. These may well be at odds to that of the ordinary and the daily. It is quite likely that people's idea of the common good is anchored in something else, somewhere else. These contradictions are the challenges of our time. This is a difficult and fragile landscape that cannot rely on pre-existing successful western models to emulate and grow but needs to evolve from its own experiences and learnings.

Our definitions of 'client' in a public project such as Central Vista and how we define the 'public' are important to the very understanding of the public realm. At a spatial level how we redefine the axial imperial, authoritarian space to mean and become a new landscape of a democratic space without disrupting its soul are important discourses that need urgent interrogation by the discipline itself. Over the past couple of months, there have been several articles, discussions, and presentations on the subject of the Central Vista Development that have focused on the issue of process and non-availability of information. These engagements have therefore thrown up several arguments and questions to the Government on the very publicness of every aspect of the project. This inadequate response is primarily a result of the crisis of Trust. There are a few important reasons for this. Global as well as local, both interconnected.

In recent times, the major impact on the relationship of the intellectual and the professional with society faced a serious crisis of Trust post the 2008 financial crisis. This is explained by Professor Pratap Bhanu Mehta in a public lecture given at the second Neelabh Mishra Public dialogue, 12 April 2019. He argues that post the economic crisis it gave rise to anti-elitism, a preference of an acceptable personality as leadership as against institutional mechanisms and, finally anti-institutionalism where due process is seen as an obstruction to growth and development.

Clearly, the crash led to some serious questions on the trust the public had reposed on the intellectuals, institutions, and its processes. This gave rise to the alternative political dispensation of nationalism that promised to investigate and dismantle the frameworks and institutions that failed its very people. In India, the wave of corruption charges coupled with the collapse of public institutions and promise of a new nationalism also led to similar transformations.

However, in the course of the struggle with perceptions and mistrust, and the Government's management of its political ambition, both, the activists and the Government, devised methods to counter actions by each other. As a result, the use of various legal provisions of inquiry and seeking justice were seen by the Government to be misused by the intellectuals as obstructions to development. On the

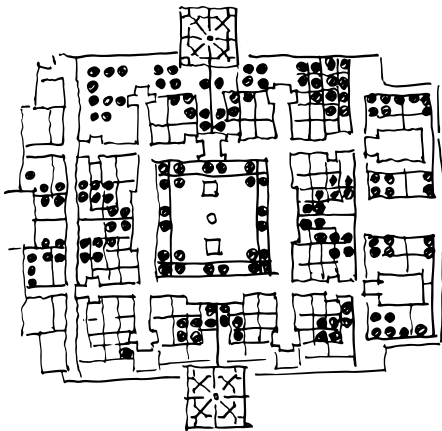
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other, the state mastered the art of reducing any possibility of engagement with public discourse on its ambitious projects. In addition, a democratic environment, a diverse community, and limited resources demands greater accountability, making it difficult for the political dispensation to manoeuvre its unilateral agenda. This pushes it to narrow the space of publicness and thereby the public discourse. These positions of mistrust have hardened over time. The resultant distance between Law and moral responsibility is growing to a level that is discomforting to a civilized democratic polity.

To seek a way forward, it is extremely important that all stakeholders work collectively with common points of agreement rather than engage in confrontation. We have no alternative method worthy of its purpose. Our democracy is deepening and so are a variety of perceptions of development. It is therefore as much a reason to create a new ecosystem of greater publicness, of more interconnectedness, more conversations, and less confrontation. Quite simply these agreements of the collective will have a chance of a longer life beyond limited political ideologies and tenures. How this imagination could pan out is anybody's guess. Certainly, the conundrum makes it a difficult landscape to navigate. However, all of us, the professionals, opinion-makers and decision-makers on both sides of the argument, have to address some key questions and introspect to be able to draw up a vision for a collective future with equal emphasis on questions of our own understanding of our environment, people, space and systems alongside a push towards a more inclusive and open process by the Government.

If we do not seek answers we would be left with a landscape of new lines and numbers. A set of lines that make the axis seem longer and balances the numbers but painfully disrupts and fragments the ecosystem of a collective publicness we need to build our future on. Finally, given the significance of such an opportunity, its processes, form, and its products in all manner of speaking will not only leave a legacy of a new landscape but will be a precedent to follow for a long, long time. Too much is at stake for it to be left alone.



Anupam Bansal

Gautam Bhatia, in his 1986 prize-winning scheme for the IGNC A competition, had in a poetic allegory re-appropriated the Rajpath (former Kingsway) into a river, a primordial symbol of civilization. Bhatia generated a decentred composition of fragmented buildings with arbitrary shifts in axes reminiscent of an Indian city on a riverfront. His proposal took the form of 'a journey along the river', using symbols like the street, the ghats lining the riverfront (Rajpath). Affronting the main public space of his scheme along the central vista, he had caused a schism in the spatial order of the city. Bhatia had

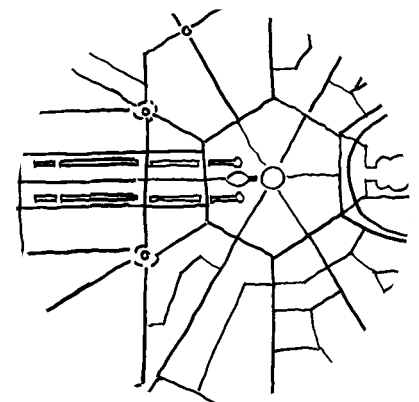
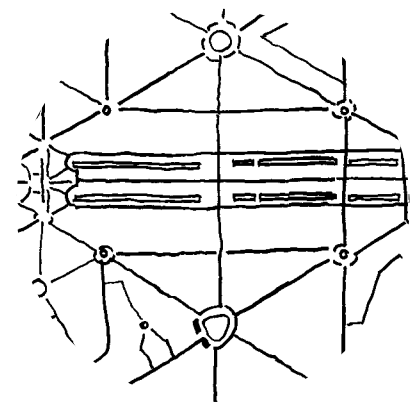
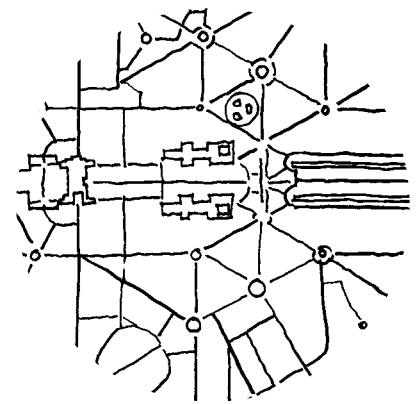
presented a new way to confronting reality; firstly by denial of dominance to the Lutyens geometrically ordered plan and secondly by transporting the viewer into an imaginary time and place. Though the competition was awarded to the more conformist Post-Modern scheme of Ralph Lerner, Bhatia's scheme was intriguing as it had presented an alternative and propitious reading of the city apropos the transition of India from a Colonial to an independent nation.

The selected proposal for Central Vista presents a study in contrast. As opposed to Bhatia's poetic reference, the scheme further reinforces this axis of power and renders an alternative reading impossible. A continuous row of eight-storey introverted and repetitive office typology proposed between Rafi Marg and Man Singh Road, extending 1.2 km on either side of the Vista, alters the quintessential character of the space from being 'buildings amidst gardens' to a 'confined open space'. This character is gravely endangered as the buildings acquire primary visual dominance and the space appears as caged rather than the currently open and vegetated.

Interestingly if we compare the consultant's Central Vista proposal with the firm's own, much-publicized and controversial Sabarmati Riverfront Development project in Ahmedabad, a curious commonality of approach can be discerned. There is an indistinguishable misinterpretation of the urban and cultural context in both their projects. Both the schemes represent the physical translation of a shared conceptual and ideological idea akin to 'dam the river'.

In my maiden visit to the Sabarmati Riverfront a few years back, the project struck me as being peculiar and amiss. Here, I'm not even discussing the environmental transformation of the river such as the disruption of the river ecology, straightening of the banks, downgrading into a narrow artificial 'canal' etc. Observed solely on the basis of the physical and urban construct, the defining feature of the project, its stark and lifeless concrete walls running on both sides, act as a physical and psychological barrier to the water. The walls isolate the river not only from its natural surroundings; it robs the river and the city of its essential identity. Compared to Indian cities on riverfronts, its most conspicuous element, the descending steps (ghats) are hidden and parallel to the river. Sabarmati Riverfront development is a system conceived on a western model which views the river merely as a recreational and leisure space. Simply put, this model of the riverfront is out of the urban, cultural, and spatial context. Though the Riverfront is surely a popular public space in Ahmedabad, I find it is an erroneous comprehension of the city and its cultural connect with the river.

The Central Vista suffers the same fate. Like the Sabarmati project, the project is conceived in isolation, it causes a disconnect of this avenue from the remainder of the city. The proposal forces us back into a 'space of control and surveillance'. Like the Sabarmati Riverfront, it exposes the 'will to control and impose' on the essential nature of the landscape. There is a comparable misinterpretation of the urban and cultural milieu. Though the architect was in a uniquely advantageous position



to define the design brief as well as design the project, his misplaced vision and premise have caused an unrecognizable and out-of-place architecture.

The heart of Lutyen's New Delhi plan; the intersection of Kingsway (Rajpath) and Queensway (Janpath) was earmarked as a cultural plaza, with prominent cultural institution located on each quadrant surrounding the intersection. Though these institutions were originally subordinate to the Colonial power, nevertheless they imparted a civic character amidst the space of power. Over the course of the last seven decades these institutions—National Museum, IGNCA, and National Archives—enabled common citizens to intermingle within the space of power. They imparted a distinct cultural character to the area by hosting several events, exhibitions which were open to the public at large and thus, truly represented the intersection of power (*Raj*) and people (*Jan*).

The consultant's proposal to erase this plaza and instead replace it with homogenous offices has denied space for people in its midst. This has been the greatest fallacy of the proposal. This is erroneous not only from the point of view of the heritage of the area but also from the perceived image and functioning of a democratic space. The architect's claim of increased public space on one hand and erasure of the cultural plaza on the other hand are contradictory.

This intervention in the country's most iconic and visible public and ceremonial space should be justified by its perceived legacy. Being the capital of the nation, this ideology and its physical manifestation will serve as a model worth emulating across the country. Is this imposition of a contrived vision and marginalization of the people's space from the plan, then an urban model worth being inspired by, is the key question to be addressed repeatedly.

We must acknowledge that cities cannot remain fossilized and should continue to evolve. The existing *bhavans*, which have not been upgraded or redesigned regularly, are definitely not indispensable. It is the first time that there is a master plan attempting to bring all the Ministries together in close proximity, similar to other capital cities such as Washington, London, Berlin, with the intent to promote closer connections and interaction, thereby enabling greater efficiency in their functioning. However, the current COVID-19 pandemic has made it apparent that government offices in the future will transform either partially or wholly to remote working. Thus, the premise of the Central Vista redevelopment project, i.e. exponential increase in spatial requirements for the Parliament and Ministries is in crisis. This grand intervention should be subjected to a meticulous, unhurried scrutiny and calibration not only in keeping with the urban and cultural context but more so because much water has flowed since the project was initially conceptualized last year.

This grand intervention should be subjected to a meticulous, unhurried scrutiny and calibration not only in keeping with the urban and cultural context but more so because much water has flowed since the project was initially conceptualized last year.

While this project has grabbed headlines and has been subject to intense public scrutiny, it would be missing forest for a tree to be critical of it alone. It should be viewed in the realm of the larger malaise that has inflicted the production of government architecture in the past decade particularly. This project is not unique in representing the current erosion of the process of architects' appointment. The 'process' has become dominant over the 'product'. With design competitions dead and buried, the focus has shifted from the quality of architectural production to the perceived legitimacy of the selection process alone. A closer examination of recent public projects such as East Kidwai Nagar, Pragati Maidan redevelopment, reveals a similar dismissal of the urban, cultural and environmental context. They are representative of a complete marginalization of an architect's position from an ideologue or a custodian of the built environment to merely a 'vendor' of services. The Lowest Bidder (L1) culture is all-pervading and apparent in mindless resultant urban form.

Firms meeting the requisite 'eligibility criterion' may definitely have an abundance of capability but often have sheer poverty of novel ideas. The CV project had only six 'eligible' big firms competing while excluding India's most innovative design firms as they were nowhere close to the qualifying criterion. The process was thus, highly exclusionary for a project that is intended to represent the most iconic space of the democratic nation. With the current process of architects' selection steamrolling project after project, we will continue to increasingly witness many such urban blunders in the future. Till such time that a new process for the production of public spaces is put in motion, we have to hope as Dr. Bimal Patel has stated, *"More often than not, the initial concept design has to be abandoned and a new concept has to be developed"*.

I am compelled to present my wish list. The avenue should reinvent the precepts of sustainability and inclusiveness. It should revitalize as a living ecosystem much like a river which is not merely a spectacle but a harbinger of life itself. We should view the redevelopment as a unique opportunity to set a precedent in the making of public architecture, which is premised not in the false narrative of grandiose but rather like a river that 'takes everyone along'. The urban transformation which is necessary to address current challenges can no longer be simply decreed in from a 'top-down' manner: it should be made more inclusive both in its process and its product. Such undertakings must increasingly look to form wider partnerships. As a citizen, I aspire for a space that does not divide the city but bridges and connects it like a river by being our 'collective memory'. Perhaps re-imagining the avenue as leisure and recreation linear parks, scattered with cultural buildings and connecting all the way to the river actually. While the proposal propagates a river that is 'dammed', I imagine and aspire for a river that is allowed to 'flow freely' with the elixir of creative ideas.

The avenue should reinvent on the precepts of sustainability and inclusiveness. It should revitalize as a living ecosystem much like a river which is not merely a spectacle but a harbinger of life itself.



Razia Grover



Much has already been said and in great detail on the issue of the Central Vista project. As a non-professional, I will not comment on design issues (though I do have views on that too). The entire matter has certainly been troubling, as it resonates with the arrogant and cavalier attitude that this government has exhibited throughout its tenure. How does it justify the selection of architect and design flouting all accepted conventional norms of competitive selection? It is indeed a slap in the face to the entire profession.

On the face of it, it is apparent that the Council and Institutes of Architects/Urban Designers/ Landscape Architects have been completely ineffective in protecting their brood. I understand that there are almost 119,000 qualified architects registered with the Council of Architecture, apart from approximately 7500 qualified town planners of which 5900 are registered with the Indian Town Planners Institute, 400 qualified urban designers registered with the Institute of Urban Designers India and 1,30,000 urban development professionals. But we have only heard one name when a project of this magnitude should surely be a team effort of several professionals. This is a HUGE project in terms of its context and history, which will not only affect millions of people in Delhi and above all, the architectural image of the country but unnecessarily eat up public resources which imperatively need to be put to use for the greater good in a country like ours and especially at a time like this.

In my view, it is an ego-ridden exclusionary decision. I have no doubt the appointed architect is a competent talented one. But the very fact that he has had to go around the country justifying his design says volumes. The Parliament, Secretariat, existing Prime Minister's residence could all have been upgraded at a small percentage of the announced costs if indeed this was all so necessary. And a couple of the nondescript buildings that came up later could also have been modified, though by all accounts we are going to need less rather than more office space given the changing current and predicted future workplace scenario.

My concern which I would like to elaborate on is: What are the norms and justification that have allowed for this kind of arbitrary selection for a project of this magnitude and prestige, with no public discourse (or complete disregard for) on significant details such as a change in land-use, environment, form, and features? And without any strong and immediate blocking from the so-called guardians of the profession itself? The announcement of the competition should have sent a signal

It is apparent that the Council and Institutes of Architects/ Urban Designers/ Landscape Architects have been completely ineffective in protecting their brood.

that all was not well. It was more like a tender notice—a call for a product rather than a carefully articulated invite for a prestigious design. Were the guidelines for professional services issued by the Council of Architecture deliberately flouted and uncontested?

Leave aside the government (which has only played true to character) but are design professionals so divided or apathetic and afraid to speak up as one body for upholding norms and values lest they lose out on their own commissions, or had already been compromised? Engineers, chartered accountants, and lawyers may charge individual fees but there are certain ethical norms and legally constituted bodies that try (and succeed) at least to protect them. What have the architectural luminaries and academics achieved in more than seventy years to strengthen their own professional regulations? Where, for one, is the program or brief that outlined the parameters for this massive project? How was it finalized without any study being done (at least, not made public even if it was done)—any assessment of existing conditions regarding the environment, relevance to historical context, transportation, pollution, and so on? How does one justify this ridiculous reverse process—first select the design, then conduct studies, then conduct an environmental assessment, then change land use ignoring all objections, then modify the ‘hallowed’ Master Plan, then conduct traffic studies, etc? Above all, how does one justify a refusal to engage in public debate? The public must know where and how their taxes are being spent. We all know that the estimate given of ₹25,000 crores will almost certainly be exceeded.

A small group of architects and some individuals have spoken out and even gone to Court questioning the government’s decision to put up what seems like (apologies to the designers) walls of monotonous structures on either side of the beautiful Central Vista, loved and frequented by hundreds of Delhiites and visitors to the capital. But what about the rest? What about the Council and Institutes themselves? Perhaps they would recall that in 1967 a twenty-seven-year-old Canadian student, Moshe Safdie, won the prestigious design for the Habitat housing complex for the Montreal World Fair. It was, in fact, conceived for his Master’s thesis. And he was given the commission which he beautifully completed with the help of established firms who had the resources to do so, which he didn’t at the time. Today, he is a world-renowned architect. We have a mountain of young brilliant designers. Why were they not given a chance?

I am continually disturbed at seeing my city being mauled over the years. No doubt there have been some outstanding contributions to its urban form which have respected its historical architectural character while moving

Engineers, chartered accountants, and lawyers may charge individual fees but there are certain ethical norms and legally constituted bodies which try (and succeed) at least to protect them. What have the architectural luminaries and academics achieved in more than seventy years to strengthen their own professional regulations?

It is not too late to rethink and reformulate rules that ensure best practices for members, the environment, respect for history and professionalism. We have been given grace time by the pandemic. All those concerned can make good use of it if they have the will.

along the path of modernity. As one of the foremost historic capitals on the planet, we stand unique in the world in the syncretic nature of our culture which has absorbed different peoples, creeds and products. Would one destroy the Marine Drive and Chowpatty Beach at Mumbai simply because it was built by the British, and justify doing this by reclaiming more land from the sea to create more commercial space for the city? Most of the discordant voices on the urban design proposal may have come from the capital of India, but that is a telling comment on the *laissez-faire* attitude of the profession in the rest of India, barring some. On completion of the Gujarat High Court building, the architect himself commented on the importance of making a design process inclusive. “When designing a building,” he said, “make sure to get inputs early from everyone who is going to use it.” The ‘users’ in this case—of not just a building but a vast heritage zone—are not just the people at the top of the pyramid but the citizens of India who have been bypassed or taken for granted.

It is not too late for the relevant professional institutes, and anyone engaged with urban development, starting with the Ministry itself, to rethink and reformulate rules that ensure best practices for members, the environment, respect for history and professionalism. We have been given grace time by the pandemic. All those concerned can make good use of it if they have the will.



‘REPUBLIC OF INDIA’

Artwork from a stamp released on 26 January 1950, India’s first Republic Day when the Constitution of India came into effect, making it a sovereign-democratic nation



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EXPANDING HORIZONS

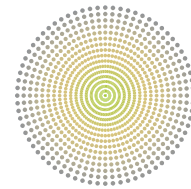
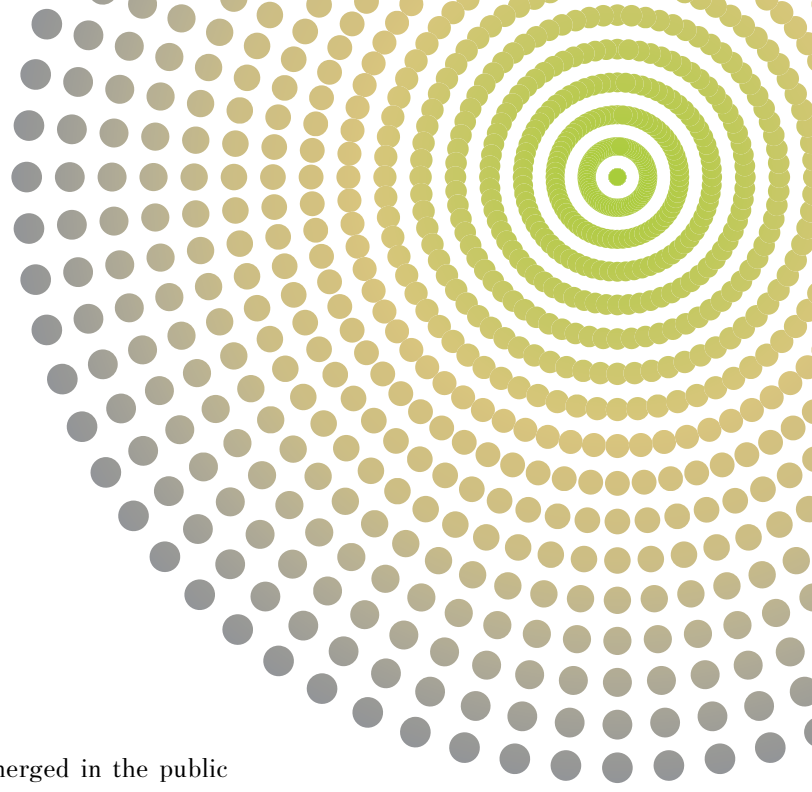
With the growing cities, many new fields have emerged in the public domain, where spatial designers are making their presence felt. Their contribution is not only in designing public areas but also in the formulation of policies and legislations which provide a framework for these works. As mentioned in my article 'Directing the Course' in LA-57, I was curious to explore this crucial but unseen role. After my readings and discussions, I am happy to report some good results.

Now urban contexts are more expansive, complex, and multidisciplinary. Realms of working of designers have expanded to cover fields of urban planning and infrastructure, urban heritage and conservation, building regulations and bye-laws, affordable housing, and up-gradation works in rural areas to name a few.

Heritage and Conservation

INTACH with a pan Indian presence has been instrumental in giving opportunities to conservation architects, landscape architects, and planners to work in historic sites and precincts all over the country. It has recently declared in its Vision Plan for the next thirty-five years that it will strive to be the Government's Advisor/Consultant for Policymaking on Culture and Heritage.

Conservation professionals' works in preparing exhaustive documentation and studies, for the nomination of historic sites as World Heritage Sites, and Dossiers for historic cities as World Heritage Cities—Delhi (Delhi Chapter, INTACH, 2003/ under Tentative List), Ahmedabad (Rabindra Vasavada, 2016) and Jaipur (DRONAH, 2018)—for UNESCO and other heritage conservation bodies play a key role in the formulation of policies and laws for heritage management in historic cities, both at State and Centre Government levels. In collaboration with local municipalities and conservation bodies, the consultants are working on heritage documentation, mapping of historic towns and their heritage precincts, Heritage Management Plans and their integration with other city documents. The formulation of the Jaipur Heritage Management Plan (2007) by DRONAH and its in-



clusion in Jaipur's Master Plan (2014) is one such example. The UNESCO Mission for temples in the state of Tamil Nadu supports the development of policies and recommendations for the conservation of 38,000 temples in the State that come under HRCE, TN (2017). DRONAH is involved as one of the consultants.

In another instance, a few years ago, landscape architect Samir Mathur (Integral Designs, New Delhi) was part of the Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC), under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs for digital heritage mapping for Delhi. Various aspects of urban heritage conservation like recommendations on incentives for Heritage Preservation, and Norms for identifying Architectural, Cultural, and Environmental Heritage in urban areas were part of the scope of HCC.

Mobility

In the new development paradigm, mobility has attained a special significance. In 2009-2010, with an idea of creating a safe, inclusive, and sustainable urban transportation system with more sensitivity to pedestrians, Unified Traffic and Transportation Infrastructure (Planning & Engineering.) Centre (UTTIPEC) (under Delhi Government) formulated a set of guidelines. With prior experience of designing many public streets and areas, Pradeep Sachdeva Design Associates (PSDA) and Oasis Design Incorporated, played an important role in the formulation of these guidelines. Since 2010, these are now being followed in Delhi NCR for any road-scape work. Sustainable Stormwater Management Guidelines (Oasis Design Inc.) is another important document. Multimodal integration and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) are two other typologies that are being studied with an idea of formulating systems and guidelines. Local Area Plan (LAP) for Transit, supported by Shakti Foundation and CEPT University and The Urban Design Framework, Guidelines for Railway Station Development (2019) by Indian Railway Station Development Corporation (IRSDC) are noteworthy documents where urban designers, transport planners, urban strategists, and planners have contributed. Organizations like ITBP India and Centre for Green Mobility (CGM), Ahmedabad, are also working in the context of designing sustainable and inclusive mobility infrastructure. Both organizations have a healthy presence of traffic planners, urban designers, landscape architects, and architects.

Samarthyam, National Centre for Accessible Environments has provided opportunities to design professionals to offer their expertise to promote universal accessibility in design and built environments. It has been working with national, state and local governments, raising awareness and conducting access audits and workshops for capacity building in regard of universal design, over the last 25 years. Its significant works include Harmonised Guidelines and Space Standards for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly, 2016 for Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Building Byelaws for Bureau of Indian Standards, India Roads Congress, and Indian National Standards used for the built environment and transportation eco-system which were adopted for the Accessible India Campaign and Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

Design and Planning

Over the last few years, there has been an active involvement of design professionals in both Advisory and Statutory positions. The National Building Code of India (NBC) 2005, a national instrument providing guidelines for regulating the building construction activities across the country, incorporated aspects of site planning, protection of landscapes during construction, soil and water conservation, stormwater management and filtration, environmental and design aspects of planting and service utilities in landscapes under two exclusive chapters on the subject. In this respect, contributions of the late Mohammad Shaheer, late Mahesh Paliwal, and Vinita Vijayan are significant. The role of Samir Mathur in the subsequent revision, NBC 2016, and the framing of Unified Building Byelaws (UBBL), Delhi 2016, is noteworthy where such engagements have led to the inclusion of various environmental concerns and sustainable landscape development-related clauses, including calling for a mandatory engagement of landscape architects in projects of a certain size.

The role of Delhi Urban Arts Commission (DUAC) with the active participation of professionals—landscape architects, urban designers, architects, and historians (a few years ago)—is to be noted in the context of maintaining a certain level of aesthetic and environmental character of the new development in the city of Delhi. Over a while, the Commission has formulated various design guidelines related to Public Art, Street Design, Park Design, Educational Institutions, and Housing development norms which are available in the public domain for reference.

The strategic components of urban development under the government's Smart City Mission are city improvement (retrofitting), city renewal (redevelopment), and city extension (greenfield development) and a pan-city initiative in which solutions are applied covering larger parts of the city. A variety of public space improvement projects for recreational use, infrastructure development, and natural resource, and conservation are being conceptualized which may see the active involvement of landscape professionals in the coming times. Some of the examples include the development of sustainable and green public transportation in Amritsar, a participatory planning approach for improvement of low-income settlements in Puducherry, basic

infrastructure development in low-income settlements in Amravati, and the Mahakal Rudra Sagar Integrated Development Approach in Ujjain. These projects are guided by global mentors and domestic experts, mainly design professionals, who are closely associated with capacity building including PDA, Pune, and CRCI, New Delhi. As an independent land-use specialist, Malini Krishnakutty, an urban planning consultant based in Mumbai, has worked on the most recent Draft Regional Plan for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, RPG-2016-36 (with Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Development Authority [MMRDA]), and the Regional Plan for Goa, RPG-21. Earlier, with Bombay Collaborative, she was involved in providing inputs for the Master Plan for the Mahableshwar-Panchgani Region including a new Development Plan and Revised D.C. Regulations and bye-laws for the first Eco-sensitive declared zone in the country.

The National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), with its set of urban planners, urban designers, and strategists is involved in many multi-scalar works including formulating MPD41 in collaboration with Delhi Development Authority (DDA). Another important project of the Institute includes The Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework across energy and green buildings, urban planning, biodiversity and green cover, mobility and air, water resource management, and waste management.

Rural Development

Schemes like the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) have offered opportunities to design and planning consultants in slum redevelopment projects and rural and affordable housing schemes. In 2011, Hunnarshala Foundation, based in Bhuj, under Indira Awas Yojana, provided technical facilitation for the implementation of appropriate design options, technical guidelines, prototype demonstrations, and training. Another noteworthy example is of Kirtee Shah, Director of the Ahmedabad Study Action Group, a non-profit NGO, who works in the area of disaster rehabilitation, housing for the urban poor, and policy advocacy. Having served on various expert committees and advisory groups, he is currently assisting the

Government of India in housing projects for the war victims in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. In 2001-2002, architect Kabir Vajpeyi conceptualized BaLA (Building as Learning Aid)—the idea that works on the premise that the scope and dimension of the built environment can contribute to the teaching-learning process in a school environment. An intrinsically interdisciplinary concept, it combines architecture and design with child development, child behaviour, and the pedagogy of learning languages, mathematics, and science. Since then Vinyas, his consultancy firm, has focused on implementing the approach in government schools in rural India. Acting as a technical partner to the Government of India's Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), he works with various State Governments in the planning and implementation of the concept.



The article is based on various readings in the realm of landscape planning, design, and infrastructure development in the public domain in India. The Author is thankful to professionals associated with practices mentioned in the article – Samir Mathur [Integral Designs, New Delhi], Prasanna Desai [Prasanna Desai Associates PDA, Pune], Shikha Jain [DRONAH, Gurugram], Malini Krishnankutty, Mumbai, Rahul Paul [Inde, Bengaluru], Sanjay Prakash [sSHIFT, New Delhi], Nidhi Madan [Samarthyam, National Centre for Accessible Environments], and Sujata Hingorani [Oasis Design Incorporated ODI, New Delhi] for sharing their views and experiences in these fields]

In this context, it may not be out of sync to refer to Lok Jumbish ('People's Awakening'), an ambitious project launched in the 1990s in the State of Rajasthan to address the need for education in rural communities. One aspect of the project was a plan to address the need for sustainable building infrastructure and support for the overall goal by designing and building primary schools. With the involvement of architects as facilitators with village communities, the program had an impressive record of building more than three hundred rural school projects in five years in the state.

Public Participation

Public participation in the design and improvement of the public realm is a crucial but much-ignored aspect in urban works of any scale. A noteworthy example is AAPKI SADAK, a project conceived by Ashok B. Lall (ABL Associates, Delhi) in partnership with Innovative Transport Solutions (iTrans), Oasis Design Incorporated (ODI) and Sandeep Gandhi Architects (SGA) and Habitat Tectonics Architecture & Urbanism (HTAU). The project looks towards the improvement of neighbourhood-level pedestrian and Non-Motorized Transport (NMT) accessibility in the context of the typical urban precinct of South Delhi served by various public transit systems. It is a community engagement led project engaging residents, agencies, and technical experts in a participatory approach.

If one takes into account the scale of the public areas and what all has been established, it is at a very nascent stage. Various basic systems are being put in place, many with a set of flaws, but with the involvement of more professionals and experts in these fields and good intentions of the decision-makers, who are now more aware of global practices of urban development, and the active role of professionals, one can look forward to a more professional and sophisticated approach in making more liveable places in our cities, towns, and villages.





ENVIRONMENT, ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY



Review by **Rahul Paul**, Landscape Urbanist
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CULTURES IN CONFLICT



THE FISSURED LAND
AN ECOLOGICAL HISTORY OF INDIA
Author **Madhav Gadgil & Ramachandra Guha**
Published by **Oxford University Press, 1992**
Size **140 x 216 mm, 312 Pages**
Paperback
ISBN-13: **978-0-19-807744-2**
ISBN-10: **0-19-807744-0**

The invaluable knowledge of a subject of universal importance imparted by classics in diverse contexts is ever relevant across all physical and cultural boundaries and time periods. It makes a reader reflect on what exists against what should. In LA-25 [2009], T.M. Chengappa reviewed ‘**Design with Nature**’ by **Ian McHarg**. In the upcoming issues, the Journal will visit some of them to refresh their relevance and value in the present times.

In the first feature, **Rahul Paul** reviews ‘**The Fissured Land**’ by **Madhav Gadgil** and **Ramachandra Guha**. The book offers a perspective on the ecological history of India, examining the ‘prudent’ (sustainable) and ‘profligate’ (unsustainable) use of natural resources by evolving societies. Presenting a socio-ecological analysis on the modes of resource use, the growth of popular resistance, and sifting state environmental policies both during the Colonial period and of India, post-independence.

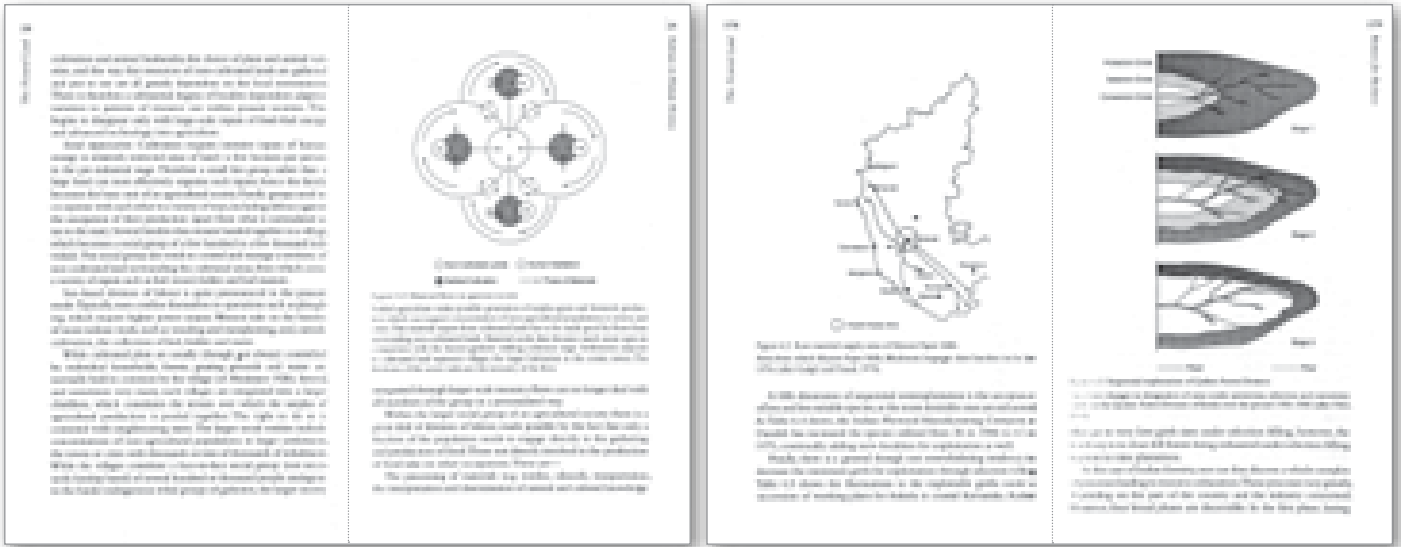
The serious academic study of India’s environmental history began only in the 1980s—at a time when social history, cultural history, and economic history and women’s history, were well developed (sub) disciplines. Environmental history, emerging globally as a discipline only in the 1960s and 70s. Sieving the discipline in India reveals a first wave—‘drawing attention to locally-based conservation movements’, a second wave—‘adding chronological depth to ecological by tracing their origins’ and the current third wave that—‘deconstructing the categories by which current and historically earlier diverse and often contending groups have conceptualized the nonhuman world around them.’ *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India*, is a ‘second wave’ (and one of the earliest) works in this discipline.

The Oxford India Perennials edition of the book published in 2013 prefaces the authors' ambitious note on the principal scholarly aims of the book: one analytical, the other descriptive, towards 'opening up the field of environmental history' that was still in its infancy. It concludes on a contemplative note stating, 'the social strife and environmental degradation currently underway means that regrettably, the title of the book is even more apt now than it was on its first publication', in 1992. One cannot argue that the statement is even more relevant today.

Four themes—prudence, profligacy, strategies of resource use, and the conflicts they give rise to—provide the unifying framework for the three parts of the book. The first part—*A Theory of Ecological History*—as the name suggests, is a theoretical positioning of the book, for understanding relations between human society and the natural world. Though arguably oversimplified and based on Marxian literature of Modes of Production and extending it to Mode of Resource, the chapters discuss aspects of *technology, economy, social organization, ideology, and the ecological impact* of gathering, nomadic pastoralism, settled cultivation, and industry. Illustrating through very simple diagrams the material flows—land and its usage, a concept that has long been diluted under the emerging trend of 'land use' patterns—of each society, it then elaborates on characteristic forms of social conflict between and within different modes. The authors convincingly argue that 'more the spatial separation from the forest (natural system), greater the impact on its ecology, as actors are further removed from the consequences of this impact'.

The second part—*Towards a Cultural Ecology of Pre-Modern India*—is a refreshing interpretation of the manner in which the cultural and ecological mosaic of Indian society has evolved together. It effectively captures history from the Neolithic period to the birth of River Valley civilizations, from an empathetic understanding of Buddhism and Jainism all the way up to the Christian era. As the authors state, this part may be viewed as a 'reconstruction', as one plausible scenario of ebb and flow of different social and belief systems, as well as systems of resource use. Till date, India's belief systems—both religion and customs—have typically found itself at the mercy of 'scientific methods', especially with regard to knowledge of natural systems. One of the most significant readings in this part comes in the study of endogamous groups in the country and their traditional subsistence patterns; resource use and ecological adaptation to resolve inter-caste conflicts through two paths: the path of extermination and path of selective incorporation. Read, especially the vivid description of Masuri-Lukkeri, a village close to the town of Kumta in Karnataka, and the interrelationships between the thirteen endogamous groups through their traditional occupations. The narrative is reminiscent of the theoretical 'Valley Section' by Patrick Geddes, only far more complex here—with forward and backward linkages (ecological and economical) and one of sympatric living with the diversification of usage. In the words of Geddes, "*this is the real stuff, of the economic interpretation of history... A study of a landmass in this way makes many things vivid to us.*"

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This journey altered and reconfigured the ecology in many ways. From monoculture practice to replacing mixed tropical forests species with man-made forests, greater subsidies of raw material to state and private industry, and even the advent of cash-crop agriculture—all under the premise of ‘national interest’.

In the third part titled—*Ecological Change and Social Conflict of Modern India*—the book highlights the impacts of British Colonial rule in marking a crucial watershed in the ecological history of India—a consequence most Indian historians have been indifferent towards. Rather than simply hinging on a nationalistic fervor to ‘blame’ the British, through primary and secondary research, the authors reveal the ‘modes’ that have continued to operate with modifications, after independence, since 1947. In a nutshell, this journey can be summarized by the formulation of the 1878 Indian Forest Act that was based on creating distinctions between ‘rights’ and ‘privileges’ over forests, leading to the formation of ‘Reserve Forests’ and ‘Protected Forests’ (both state owned) to ensure sustained exploitation for Colonial demands. Though the Act provided for another category—village forests—the option was not exercised by the government. Carrying forward this assigned role of ‘forest’ as a ‘money spinner’, independent India driven by the economic development mode and through the mantra of ‘industrialize or perish’, turned the forest department into a ‘commercial venture’ that required ‘the highest tonnage of production of organic raw material, within the shortest possible period, and at the lowest possible cost.’ It is indeed a sad commentary on our times that the same attitude persists in the working of the forest department even till date.

This journey, as the book states, altered and reconfigured the ecology in many ways. From monoculture practice to replacing mixed tropical forests species with man-made forests, greater subsidies of raw material to state and private industry, and even the advent of cash-crop agriculture—all under the premise of ‘national interest’. An addition to the National Forest Policy of 1952 legitimized exclusion of local communities, further reinforcing Colonial systems that ‘obliterated the centuries of customary relation of the forest with the rural population all over India’.

This condition, as the book documents through several forms of 'Fights for the Forest' by indigenous, tribal and caste groups with the State reveals, remains one of the most critical concerns of environmental degradation—'competing claims on the commons'. The Right to Commons continues to be the most significant struggle for people to exercise their customary rights on natural resources. Not only have they been displaced and continue to decline, they have often been dismissed by formal structures that differentiate between 'professionals' and 'non-professionals', completely devaluing traditional knowledge systems. Equally, there has been limited understanding of Commons—with the urban imagination restricted to the 'agrarian sector' often not recognizing associated uses of land such as grazing, gathering, shifting, and the 'sacred' as a 'right' of people.

By foregrounding the above, the book finds significant relevance in contemporary society where current urban concerns for the environment (especially for the forest) are defined by deforestation for industries and infrastructure. If traced historically, this appears simply as a transaction between one revenue production board (forest department) with another revenue generation (industry or infrastructure) and the outcry merely to a superficial problem than the 'hidden' historical question of 'rights' of local communities who have been transformed from 'stewards' of ecology to 'laborers' in forests.

Through the same viewfinder, look at the debates surrounding the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) that have emerged today. Most, 'environmentally aware citizens' have raised their voices on the new draft calling it a 'façade of legal paperwork for a range of *de facto* concessions enjoyed by industries' that will eventually lead to further 'environmental destruction'. While the voices seeking a 'process more transparent and expedient' is crucial, an 'ecological history' diagnosis will reveal that they are merely symptomatic solutions. For the questions on the 'role', 'ownership' and thereby 'distribution' of forests between state 'owned', and community 'belonging' remains the most critical dialogue, to be contested, that over the years have produced 'undesirable yields'.

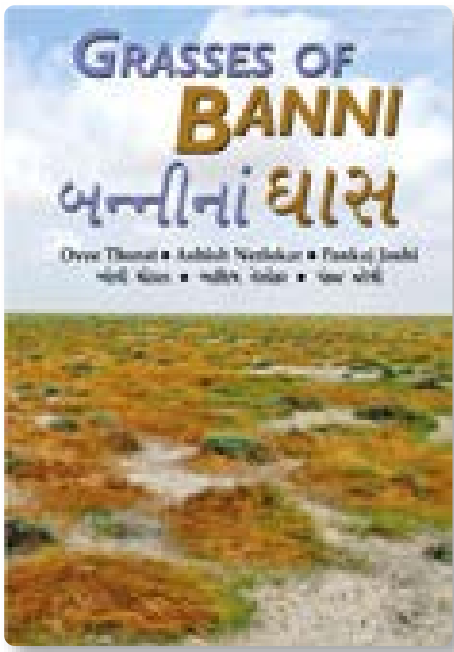
Lastly, tracing the making of a society through ecological evolution and the subsequent transformations, the book should also lay to rest the common statement of current practitioners whose limited imagination of environmental problems begins with 'rapid urbanization' or 'in the contemporary society of 21st century' and fail to recognize and acknowledge the embedded concerns and conflicts of human society and the natural world in 'this fissured land' that 'have existed from time immemorial which are as difficult to define as they are necessary ... and a necessity of life.'

There has been limited understanding of Commons—with the urban imagination restricted to the 'agrarian sector' often not recognizing associated uses of land such as grazing, gathering, shifting, and the 'sacred' as a 'right' of people.



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AS STRONG AS GRASS



GRASSES OF BANNI

Authors Ovee Thorat, Ashish Nerlekar
& Pankaj Joshi

Published by BAIF Development Research
Foundation, 2019

Size 140 x 200 mm, 170 Pages

Softcover

ISBN: 978-81-935449-2-1

India is characterized by a remarkable diversity of biomes and vegetation types. Yet, the number of user-friendly aids for plant identification is surprisingly small. Where they do exist, they are largely focused either on trees or exclusively on flowers. But for those of us who have been waiting for a field guide to grasses—one of the most ubiquitous and diverse groups of plants—I believe that our long wait is finally over. Three young plant ecologists—Ovee Thorat, Ashish Nerlekar, and Pankaj Joshi—have managed to produce what few botanists/plant taxonomists have—a bilingual field guide to an extremely challenging group of flowering plants. ‘*Grasses of Banni*’ to my knowledge represents the first pictorial field guide to the grasses of India, more specifically to a small arid region of Gujarat known as ‘The Banni’. The primary motivation behind this book is to stimulate further research on the ecology and diversity of grasses in Banni by simplifying the otherwise tedious and technically intensive task of grass identification, which so often acts as a deterrent to even the most determined botanist and plant enthusiast.

Introductory Chapters

Grasses of Banni offers its users more than just aid to the identification of grasses. The introductory chapters cover all the essential information useful to the uninitiated as well as to users who are seasoned botanists. It starts with a short yet fascinating socio-ecological overview of the Banni grasslands—a region of unparalleled ecological and cultural significance, which supports one of the most extensive grasslands of India. In this section, the authors underscore the dynamic and sensitive nature of the grasslands, their unique biodiversity value, the strong linkages between the grasslands and the agro-pastoral communities, and finally the major threat that looms over this ecosystem. An account of the peculiar habitats of Banni, both natural as well as man-made, is provided with images. These habitats are a great starting point for anyone interested in spotting grasses that are featured in this book. The book also presents insights into characters that should be noted in the field and those that should be observed under the microscope in the lab for ascertaining the identity of grasses. Guidelines right from collecting grass samples in the field, to preserving and organizing specimens in the form of a herbarium are also provided. This is followed by an illustrated guide to the vegetative and reproductive morphology of grasses and finally a section on how to use the book.

Species Pages

The book features forty species of grasses and provides a taxonomic key to their generic identity, which is useful for those who are familiar with using taxonomic keys and comfortable with botanical terminology. However, the book also provides a novel and innovative organization of grass species into five groups based on their inflorescence morphology, and thus provides a simple, non-technical means of identification for those with very little exposure to technical botany. These five groups are colour coded and can be precisely navigated, by following the respective colour tabs visible along the fore-edge of the book. For each of the forty species, the left-hand page portrays the pressed specimen along with the magnified images of floral parts accompanied by the scale bar. The right-hand page portrays the field images of the plant along with basic information including their local names, the localities where they can be seen, and the diagnostic features.

Highlights

Grasses of Banni stands out from other field guides in at least two aspects. First, the textual content of the book is provided in both English as well as the locally spoken Gujarati language which increases its reach and user base. The authors certainly deserve special credit for the effort of translating the tough technical and botanical terminology into Gujarati. Second, it is the only book currently available for identifying grasses that can be used by professionals and amateurs alike.

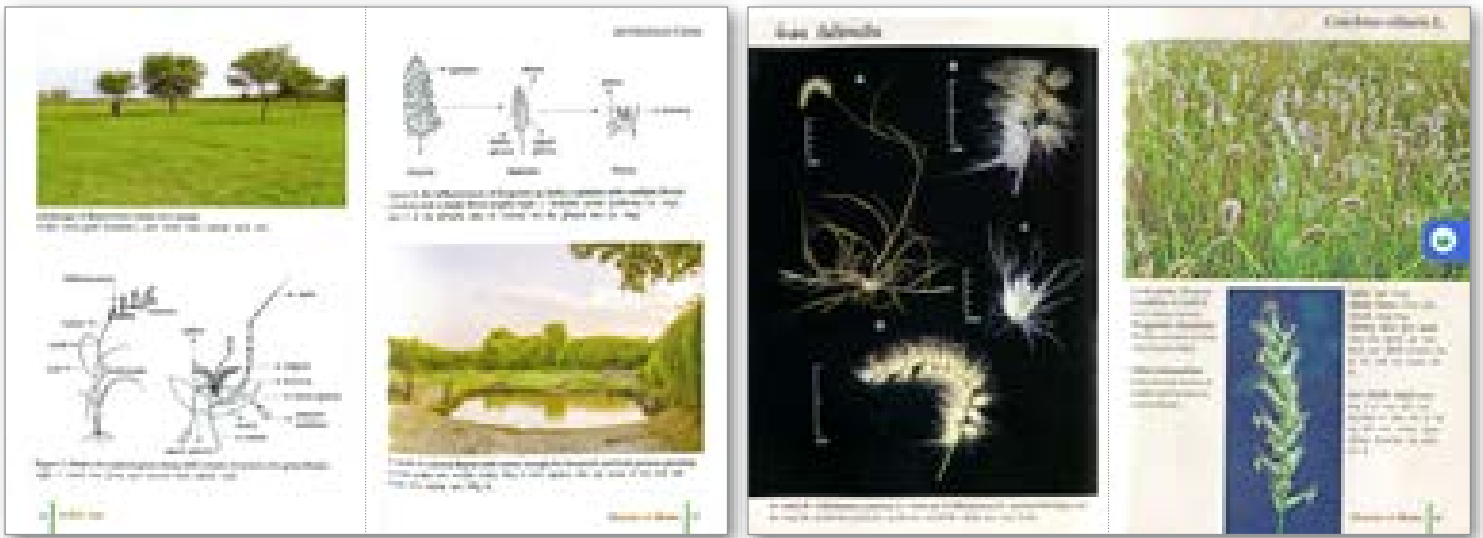
Although the book makes no such claims, it certainly satisfies all the criteria essential for a good field guide. Despite the geographic scope of the book being restricted to the grasslands of the i region, the content and its design make it applicable to most arid grasslands of peninsular India. The size of the book is handy and concise which makes it convenient to carry and use in the field.

Information on the degree of palatability of each grass species extends the utility of this book further to ungulate and nutritional ecologists as well as wildlife managers.

Shortcomings

The most crucial bit of information that is missing from the book is how representative it is of the grass diversity of Banni. Why were only forty species included in the book and what were the criteria for choosing these over others? An indication of what percentage of species is missing from the book would have been useful for the users of the book. The five groups used in the book for the ease of identification do not seem to be mutually exclusive and, hence, can potentially confuse the user about which group to follow. Further, the authors could have used more characters based on leaves or node morphology to further resolve the species within each group. Line drawings could have been used more extensively to bring more clarity to the text. Moreover, the existing figures are aggregated at the end of the introductory chapters which ideally could have been placed along with the text where these figures are cited, thereby saving the reader the trouble of flipping back and forth.

Grasses of Banni is a welcome and much-awaited addition to the list of plant field guides of India. There is little doubt that this book would form an integral part of a naturalist's kit, especially those that enjoy plant hunting. This is exactly the kind of book that would encourage a reluctant plant enthusiast or a botany student to observe and identify grasses and not shy away from them. I hope that this book inspires many more young ecologists across the country to produce user-friendly books that document and help identify poorly known and complex taxonomic groups.



“Gujarat’s Banni grasslands are an ecologically distinctive and very special saline tract in a corner of western India that is unravelling under the onslaught of invasive plants, overgrazing, and attitudes of disdainful neglect. This book by 3 aficionados about the Banni’s grass species and how to tell them apart is timely, important, and very useful.

Grasses are not at all easy to get to know for two substantial reasons – firstly, there’s a whole lot of them, outnumbering trees in most Indian ecosystems [for example] in a ratio of 10:1, and in difficult or stressed tracts, by much more than that. The other reason is that grasses are wind-pollinated and this means that they have no need for showy flowers, colours, scents, or perches for insects, birds or bats, no nectar, nor any of the other lures and baubles that have evolved in the natural history of pollination. Grasses only court the wind and get by with tiny, contracted flowers with even tinier parts and characters that scientists have had to invent a whole new lexicon of terms to name and describe.

Result: the vast majority of us, including those of us who are happy to shout out tree-names and recognize garden flowers, are vastly ignorant about grass characters like lemmas and empty glumes, even though grasses are so ubiquitous and form such an important part of the world we live in.

‘Grasses of Banni’ does most things right. It relies on useful keys to distinguish species, provides lots of pictures with useful close-ups, and divides up grass flowering heads into form-groups that even a layman can follow. Moreover, this is a bilingual book, reaching out to a Gujarati-reading readership that would be shut out if this were only in English. Bravo!

My only grumble is that some of the botanical terms used in the descriptions (like ‘geniculate’) could easily have been substituted by simpler words that would have made more sense to a layman. But I am being churlish when the dominant urge is to applaud.

There seems an obvious sequel to this book – all about the sedges and rushes of the Banni. I hope this comes about sooner rather than later.”

— Pradip Krishen



SEEING THE UNSEEN



THIS MOMENT IN TIME

IN CONVERSATION WITH **FEISAL ALKAZI**



Feisal Alkazi is a theatre director, an educationist, and an activist. Over the past four decades, he has directed for his group 'Ruchika', over 200 plays in Hindi, English, and Urdu along with 30 films, and over 100 productions for schools all over India. Author of around 20 books, he is also actively involved in heritage education, initiating projects in the historic cities of Delhi, Jaipur, Srinagar, and Hyderabad.

Elements of Visual Experience as Inspiration

I think we are greatly influenced by the spaces we grow up in. I grew up in Mumbai in the 1950s and 60s surrounded by a very rich visual and aural environment. My parents had studied theatre in England soon after independence. When I was born in 1955, our family had just moved into a fabulous new flat on the fifth floor of a building in Mumbai. My parents did away with all the internal walls to create a completely free-flowing studio-like space. Large windows on two sides looked out on the sea. Because of their great interest in the visual arts, I had a Calder mobile hanging over my cot, while an eclectic collection of objects: an exquisite Bodhisattva, a powerful Shiv Shakti bronze, M.F. Husain's paintings, and African masks hung on the walls. This space also served as my father's rehearsal space and on the floor above he created an open-air theatre named Meghdoot. Here the sky, the stars, and the sound of the sea formed the backdrop for his productions of several classics of world theatre. Every evening there would be actors going in and out of our flat wearing Greek and Victorian costumes, intoning their lines, readying themselves for a performance.

When I was two I moved with my mother and my elder sister to Chennai. Here I entered a completely different environment as my mother was learning Bharatnatyam from the great Bala Saraswati and I grew up in her home, a traditional household that resounded with the sound of music and dance. By the time I was four, we were back in Mumbai—to the Colonial buildings of South Mumbai where my school was, and where much of my extended family stayed. The contours of my world had changed dramatically.

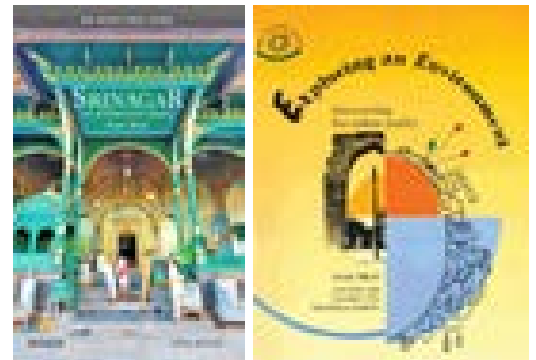
By my ninth birthday, in the early 1960s, we had moved to Delhi. It was a time of Le Corbusier's Chandigarh, Habib Rehman's Rabindra Bhawan and also Stein's iconic architecture in the capital. Prime Minister Nehru was attempting to create a renaissance in the arts. My dad who was now the Director of the National School of Drama, was enamoured by the ruins that dotted Delhi. Every Sunday we had a picnic in what is now known as the Mehrauli Archaeological Park and explored various monuments like Jamali Kamali and some *baolis*. The visual landscape of my world had transformed from Mumbai's heavy and over-ornate Indo-Saracenic architecture to the many-layered 'pasts' of Delhi: pre-Sultanate, Sultanate, Mughal and then Colonial, each with their own distinctive architecture, each elegant in their own way. My father presented many of his plays in these structures, in Purana Qila, Talkatora Gardens, and Feroze Shah Kotla, bringing Delhi's past to life. All of this and more became my own visual literacy and legacy.

About Heritage

I have been exploring the idea of heritage for the past four decades. In 1985 in Delhi, I, with a group of young people, began looking at the urban village of Mehrauli, that had existed for over a thousand years. Here you can find an unbroken architectural tradition starting from the building of the Qutub Minar in the twelfth century. It was time to explore. Working on this project opened up for me the whole tapestry of history, architecture, and urban planning and their interwoven strands. It posed questions relevant to us all—Do we preserve old structures the way they are? Do we modify their use? Do we tear them down? Do we replace them? Beyond the actual project work, we also produced a documentary film and a book that captured our process of discovery. And enthused several others in different parts of India to embark on a similar journey.

Wherever I have worked on heritage projects with young people, whether in Delhi, Srinagar, Jaipur, or most recently Hyderabad, their enthusiasm and energy has convinced me that you must understand your own roots, particularly if you don't know where you're headed.

After my first book in 1986, *'Exploring an Environment'*, based on the Mehrauli project, I initiated a new project and book on the riverfront of Delhi with many schools participating. And also children who lived in a *basti* on the riverbank. We explored the flora, fauna, water life, pollution, history and culture, and the demands that a city makes of a river over time.



BOOKS

Srinagar: An Architectural Legacy [2014]

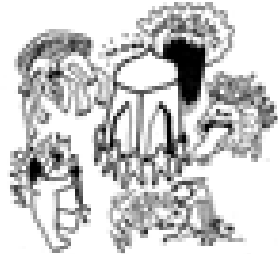
"A unique part of India that is associated with the best living traditions in craft, cuisine, houseboats and shikaras, rushing mountain streams and snow-clad mountains, Srinagar is a garden of paradise. The book explores the history and architectural heritage of this 500-year-old city bringing to life its rich past, with its different eras of rulers who made the Valley a part of their empire. To understand the present context of the city, the book takes on a series of walks giving readers a chance to get a sense of the architectural culture, as well as the dynamic interplay of civic life, religion, and trade in the city."

Exploring an Environment [on Mehrauli] [2002]

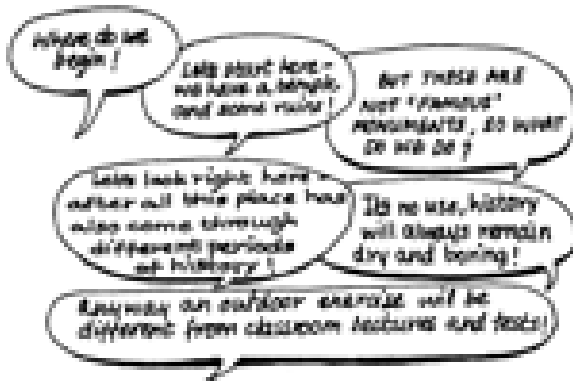
"The book describes a series of exciting ideas and activities that will help children discover the urban reality. Based on actual projects done in Mehrauli, it challenges the way one looks at the environment. It suggests a range of possible ways to explore and involve students in their surrounding urban environment."

BOOKS

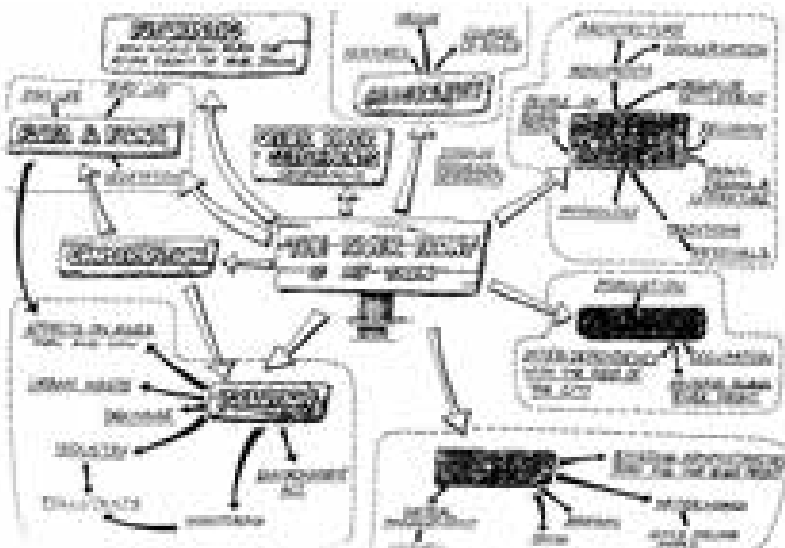
Visuals from 'Exploring an Environment [on Mehrauli]' and 'The Riverfront of My Town', that give a sense of the participatory approach being followed so that experiential learning can happen



You will probably face the following reactions from your class before you begin on your historical adventure.



Remember, a 'Historical Adventure' can be carried out by everyone and at any place. The following steps will help you make it meaningful.



Indian Culture

I think we're very uniquely ourselves. In India, we have a very polyphonic culture with so many languages and dialects and a range of beliefs. At present, I'm spearheading a project entitled 'Before It Goes', which is documenting age-old festivals from across India before they disappear. For instance in Manipur, there is an exquisite festival called Lai Haroba to appease the water spirits, in Delhi Basant Utsav is celebrated at the Nizamuddin dargah, while in Tamil Nadu eunuchs come together annually to mourn the death of Arjun's son Aravan, who has to be sacrificed before the Mahabharata war for the Pandavas to succeed. Aravan insists that he must spend a night with a woman before giving up his life. So Lord Krishna appears dressed as Mohini and there is a union between both of them. Every year to commemorate this mythical event, eunuchs congregate, posing as Mohini and provide the free bodily pleasure that night. The next day they break their bangles, have a ritual bath, and wear white saris as though they've actually been widowed by the death of Aravan.

Each part of our country has its own unique local tradition. Today we're fast losing these celebrations that were once the wellsprings of our creativity.

None of us has grown up in a Walt Disney world. We don't have notions of the polarities of good and evil. We don't subscribe to that view of the world at all. As Indians, we inhabit a completely different space. Here every stone has a story, each river tells its own tale. As Girish Karnad often asked, "Do we listen closely to the kitchen *kathas* that our grandmothers tell us?" All those stories, even though they belong to a different time and space, and are unique to specific regions, speak to us even today. So we are not Western, neither are we Chinese or Japanese. We are unique to ourselves.

Street Theatre

A very political street theatre emerged in the 1970s and 80s, as a reaction to the oppressive Emergency years. As artists, we had experienced a complete closing in the state on our idea of freedom. Two of my plays were banned and we were not allowed to stage more shows. Subsequently, the street theatre became the easiest way to reach out. Safdar Hashmi played a major role in leading this movement.

In 1980, I directed a play called '*Balaatkaar*,' on the request of several in the women's movement and we performed across Delhi, outside the Supreme Court, outside Old Delhi station. It was a very strong piece asking for an immediate change in the anti-rape laws which happened subsequently, not because of my play, but because it was part of a bigger movement. With Manushi Collective, a major feminist magazine at the time, I directed another street theatre piece '*Roshni*,' a sardonic, sarcastic play that explored how we devalue women in society, right from when they are born. So, in those decades, the street theatre played an important role in awakening public consciousness regarding various political and societal issues.

Unfortunately, over the years, it has become more decorative. Certainly street theatre is not meant to be performed on the stage in a college auditorium. It's meant to be in the open air, to engage people who are just passing by. It has become one more way of doing theatre. The original purpose was to create agitprop plays—plays to push an agenda, a particular kind of theme. I think a lot of that focus is missing today.

Nature and Theatre

Theatre has an ancient history of depicting nature, going back to the Greeks, about 300 BCE. Their religion was based completely on propitiating the forces of nature, whether it was Poseidon, God of the Sea, or Artemis, God of the Wind. They would perform in open-air theatres that seated thousands of people. They used words to create a setting. Several other playwrights over the centuries like Shakespeare or Kalidasa also created a setting through the use of descriptive language.

I think theatricality is an essential part of theatre and the imagination of the audience has a huge role to play. So the audience must be encouraged to visualize with just a few cues. As Indians, we are so well trained through our fantastic film industry to travel easily into realms of fantasy. There is so much we see in the films that are larger than life. So I think for an Indian, exploring imaginatively is very, very easy. We don't lack for that at all. Poetry is never far from us.

About Theatre and Films

In film and TV, the camera is really the audience. Movies are mostly shot in close-up or in mid-shot. By contrast, theatre is a whole experience, a live experience. There is an engagement, a lot of *sawaal jawaab* between the audience and the actor. A lot of the actor's own energy and cues are coming from the audience. How are they receiving the play? What do we need to express more effectively? Where are we losing them? An actor is acutely aware of all these questions as he performs onstage almost non-stop for two hours. Even for cinema actors, theatre remains the ultimate challenge. So to develop a character on the stage is very, very difficult.

Keeping Theatre Alive

I only direct plays that are relevant to this moment in time. I am not one who believes in the classics so I have not explored many of them.

For a script I'm currently writing, I've gone back to the Mahabharata for the base story. It's full of flawed, very human characters and the theme is gender. It deals with possession, monogamy, and a man's eternal search for youth. I'm going to work on it with a jazz guitarist and also use an Indonesian folk form, Kecak. As a result, the final product will be unique. I'm not contemporizing the story, the clothes, the language, or the plot. So it will be the coming together of a folk tradition, a jazz tradition and theatre to create something very new.

We're very uniquely ourselves. In India, we have a very polyphonic culture with so many languages and dialects and a range of beliefs. Each part of our country has its own unique local tradition. Today we're fast losing these celebrations that were once the wellsprings of our creativity.

Three Social Contexts that I would like to recreate in my Productions

I think the production we were rehearsing before we shut down for COVID-19 is very relevant. It's a beautiful play called 'Barbaad' in Hindi. We've adapted it from an American play. It is set in Chhattisgarh, a war zone, but in a brothel. To this brothel come all kinds of people: policemen, extremists, *adivasis*, farmers, even businessmen. Questions regarding gender, power, identity, alienation from his land for the *adivasi* and the role of the state versus the rights of the people, are discussed in a very different way and in a completely different setting.

Secondly, over the next five to ten years, I think we will explore this moment—the COVID-19 lockdown. It'll get explored in many different ways. Samuel Beckett's strange and absurdist 1950s French play, 'Waiting for Godot', is a good metaphor that can be easily adapted to our uncertain times, where one waits for something that never arrives.

Thirdly another play that I find has resonance is Eugene Ionesco's 'Amédée or How to get rid of it'. It is about a couple at home and in the next room there is a corpse, which is growing larger by the minute and has begun pushing in the door, threatening to evict them. This character is dead, but it is growing and bursting and soon will take over the whole house. This is so relevant today, when the whole world is thinking, 'Will there ever be a tomorrow?'

'BARBAAD'

Smita and Gurleen during rehearsal of 'Barbaad'



TWO PLAYS

A QUIET DESIRE

Storyline

This is a fascinating true story about Rabindranath Tagore, his elder brother Jyotirindranath and his wife Kadambari Devi. There was a ten or twelve-year gap between husband and wife, Jyotirindranath and Kadambari. Since she was the same age as his younger brother, Rabindranath, they grew up together. She was his first muse and also his first audience. In the very gender-segregated, very conservative Bengali society of that time Rabindranath and Kadambari's great friendship becomes a topic for gossips. The family gets worried that he's too close to his sister-in-law Kadambari, so he starts withdrawing from her. The family finally gets him married and within four months Kadambari commits suicide. But she remains a central figure in all his writings. Even in his paintings, Kadambari is always there—very sad, very melancholic.

Setting

Almost eighty percent of this script came from Tagore's own writings. I drew on what he had written—poetry, prose, songs. A lot of the script was sung in Bengali, Tagore's songs sung unaccompanied and then overlaid with poetry in English. The set has strong Grecian pillars dwarfing the wallpapered walls. The set, lighting, and ambiance were designed to transport the audience into 19th century Calcutta. A very simple backdrop of two walls and eight pillars gave a fantastic gravitas to this poetic play.



..... **'A QUIET DESIRE'**
..... *Scenes from the play*

GOODBYE FOREVER

Storyline

Estelle has died a week before the play opens. Her husband and son are unable to reconcile themselves to her loss. Then the doorbell rings and she walks in, dressed in a very fancy, typically Roman-Catholic kind of dress. She is alive, she is here. She's just got out of her grave and walked down the road and come home. Her mother-in-law insists that she can't stay because she's really dead. She must leave.

The play is about all the things that get left unsaid when a person dies. What the son wanted to tell his mother before she died, what the mother wanted to express to her son before she went away. At the end of the play when she decides to return to the graveyard, the whole audience weeps with the son as he breaks down, as though they've lost somebody in their own family.

Setting

The play explores how we deal with loss. It is in the realm of magical realism, and the audience knows the action is not 'real' yet they are willing to suspend their disbelief. So we decided to set it in a very real environment with very real flesh and blood people.

We set the play in Mumbai in the 1980s, and worked a lot on the details of a Mumbai flat using more than hundred props: beautiful fretwork designs above the door, the door itself made of frosted glass, several paintings, religious images, a huge cupboard, a fridge, and a clock.



'GOODBYE FOREVER'
Scenes from the play





LANDSCAPE INDUSTRY

Matthew McArdle
Copywriter, Hunter Industries

SAFE SPORTS FIELDS ARE CREATED BY UNDERSTANDING BEST PRACTICES FOR IRRIGATION

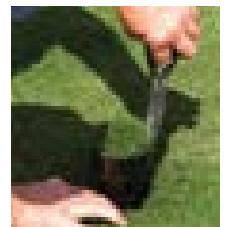
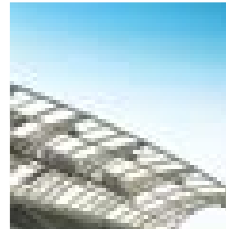
A safe, pristine sports field can only be developed by implementing an irrigation system that consists of high-quality components designed with sports surfaces in mind. To determine the right irrigation products for a particular field, the turf manager must focus on player safety, aesthetics, playability, and cost.

The essential components of a well-designed sports field can be selected only by a thorough understanding of efficient irrigation practices. The manager must consider how the field will be used, as well as frequency of use. The manager should also have a firm grasp on basic irrigation hydraulics, plant/soil/water relationships, and irrigation terminology. These basic steps are the same for any field across the world — new or renovated — and are imperative to field success.

While the automatic valves are often referred to as the “heart” of an irrigation system and the controller is called the “brain,” rotors are the only components that reside on the surface of the sporting field. Because of this distinction, they should be placed only in a manner that does not cause a risk for players or interfere with the game.

The irrigation rotors must perform flawlessly. They should have special characteristics to help ensure the best possible playing surface, even after a service task has been completed. The I-80 rotor from Hunter Industries is the most technologically advanced sports turf rotor on the market. It is built with a robust, dirt-tolerant gear drive that provides the highest torque output of any rotor in the commercial sphere, offering unparalleled levels of power, performance, versatility, and safety. They also provides total top serviceability via its integrated, surface-mounted snap-ring. This no-dig solution makes maintenance quick and easy.

Moreover, the I-80 offers an advanced ProTech Turf Cup System — an industry first. With ProTech TC™, living or synthetic turf is retained in a cup mounted to the top of the rotor and installed flush to the surrounding turf. The special retaining rings in the turf cup add surface area for increased root adhesion, which helps keep turf securely in place.



The overall design of the irrigation system is equally as important as selecting the right products.

Choose a professional irrigation designer who specializes in this process and understands the hydraulics required for an efficient system. It is generally best to contract an experienced professional, especially for a new build. During installation, installers should closely follow the installation specifications provided by the manufacturers.



After the design and installation phases, the final step to establishing an efficient, safe playing field lies in the hands of the manager. This person must understand how the products operate and how to troubleshoot them, if required. Also, understanding the specific site is very valuable when considering water supply, quality, and available pressure.

Thus, closing recommendations for your sports field irrigation project include proper research and planning, as well as selecting a qualified designer, contractor, supplier and manufacturer. Finally, choosing the best equipment, such as valves, controllers, and I-80 rotors from Hunter Industries, will ensure an aesthetically pleasing installation that helps ensure safety during play. Learn more about Hunter irrigations solutions at hunterindustries.com. ■

LANDSCAPE & GREEN ROOF SOLUTIONS

Active in more than 35 countries all over the world, Knauf Insulation is one of the leading manufacturers of insulation materials for energy-efficient systems for buildings. Building on over 30 years of expertise in energy efficiency solutions, it is focused on providing a comprehensive range of solutions for residential and non-residential buildings and industrial customers. **Sujay Shah**, the company's representative in India introduces Urbanscape Landscaping System.

Types of Products

All three products of Urbanscape are produced by Knauf Insulation using a patented process in which specific type of rocks are selected and they are melted to make fibers and they are processed into different forms such as flocks, rolls, and cubes using a patented process which does not use any of binders (adhesives) and hence the finished product is 100% binder-free and hence it is hydrophilic permanently unlike other rock mineral wool which is hydrophobic. Urbanscape material can be used as a growing medium and as a soil improver. They are perfect growing media, that boast high water retention capacity designed specifically for landscaping applications such as residential gardens, sports fields, commercial spaces, cemeteries, public parks, and various complex green architectural solutions. Urbanscape products provide green space in a demanding urban environment and express perfect water absorption and distribution characteristics. Urbanscape products ensure that the right amount of water is available to plant roots over extended periods of time. As a result, the frequency and amount of water for irrigation can be reduced after the system is well established..

Use

Depending upon the application, different forms of Urbanscape products are selected. For instance, for bigger areas with lawns, ground covers, and slope greening generally, Green Rolls are used, for shrubs and trees planting Green Flocks are used, and Green Cubes are used in confined areas such as pots and other types of planters. However, an exact decision is taken only after taking into account the project requirement, plant types, type of irrigation, and other factors.

Since the products are made from the melting of rocks at a very high temperature, they are chemically and physically inert when used. These have been successfully used in extreme climatic conditions such as in very hot and dry areas in the Middle East, extremely cold areas such as the Nordic regions, along with the equatorial areas such as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and other similar places.



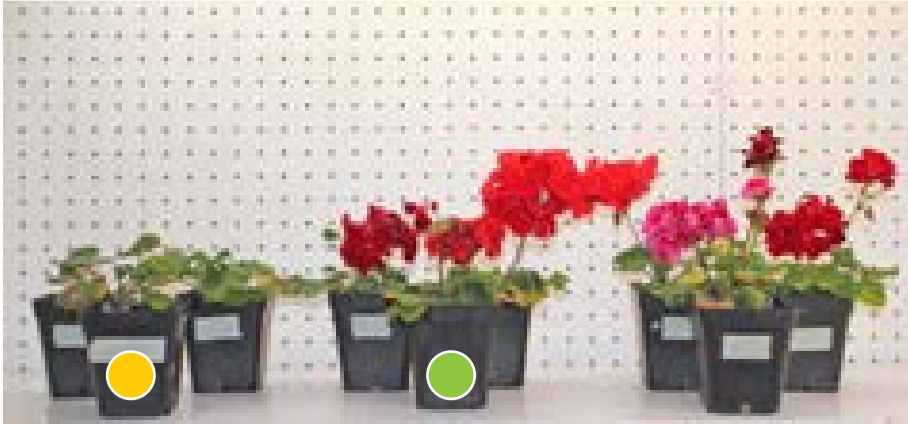
GREEN ROLL



GREEN FLOCKS



GREEN CUBES



COMPARISON

Comparison between commercial substrate versus mixing Green Cubes into commercial substrate

 WITHOUT GREEN CUBES

 WITH GREEN CUBES

Environmental Aspect

In addition to their use in planted areas, these also help to manage stormwater drainage to a great extent, especially Green Rolls. When used on green roofs, they help by storing water in them and also by reducing and delaying the surface runoff of rainwater and keeping it staggered which will help the city's drainage system to overcome the load of the storm rainfall condition.

Maintenance

They are very easy and simple to install. Green Rolls are similar to installing a grass roll or a carpet. Green Flocks and Green Cubes have to be mixed with the substrate in the same way other ingredients are mixed. Since they are made of rocks, they are not biodegradable and have a similar life as of a typical soil. Also, as they store the micronutrients from the water into them, they can also be used as a compost/ manure in the long run if one decides to change the landscape design. No special treatment for the Urbanscape mineral wool products is needed. Only the normal maintenance which is required for a green roof/ landscape project is enough.

More information:
www.urbanscape-architecture.com



Mehul Jain
| mehul@vyaratiles.in

'FREE FORM' NEW AGE MATERIALS

That cement and concrete are ubiquitous and extremely versatile as materials, needs no elaborating. Yet what cannot be said often enough is that these are most malleable of materials when being cast and one with a most singular and natural feel when set. No surprise then, that for centuries these have been a material of choice for several leading designers for a variety of applications.

Building on the more than half a century of experience and expertise of VYARA, 'Free Form' has put forth a collection of highly improved cementitious products which overcome most of the material limitations, enhance its special characteristics and offer finishes and applications beyond the customary ones. The materials are adapted and offered in the form of ready-to-use, trouble-free premixes.

Using varying degrees of skilled applications these premixes are used for a stunning array of finishes for the horizontal and vertical surfaces. Products are offered with a fair degree of customization, yet with industrial reliability to ensure high performance of these traditional materials. An unparalleled range of surface finishes for floors and walls of interior and exteriors can be created with permutations and combinations of colour, ingredients, and textures and finishes..



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- Hard Top floor topping for application on freshly casted concrete floors
- Novasol resin bound aggregate floors also known as stone carpets

Products for Walls

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More information:

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Product Data Sheets and Application methods
[Downloadable pdfs]





RAVINDRA
BHAN

“An
appropriate
tribute to an
iconic teacher
and seminal
landscape
architect.”

—
A. G. Krishna Menon
Architect & Academician



**LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTURE
IN INDIA
MONOGRAPH
SERIES**

The series profiles design philosophies, works, and experiences of eminent landscape architects in India, who have practiced in the field of landscape design and architecture. It explores their significant role and contribution in giving a sense of identity, meaning, and purpose to the discipline in academics and practice in the country.



RAM
SHARMA

“This is
History, for
our succeeding
generations
...to be read to
find guideposts
that underpin
creative
professional
service.”

—
Ashok B. Lall
Architect and Academician

BOTH BOOKS
AVAILABLE
NOW!

RAVINDRA
BHAN.

RAM
SHARMA

COLOUR

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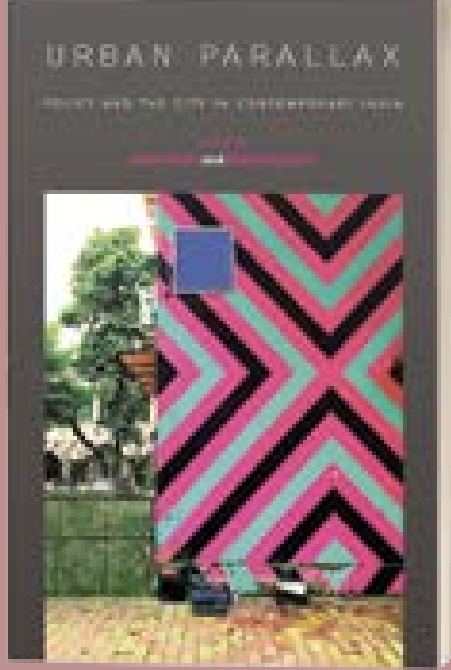
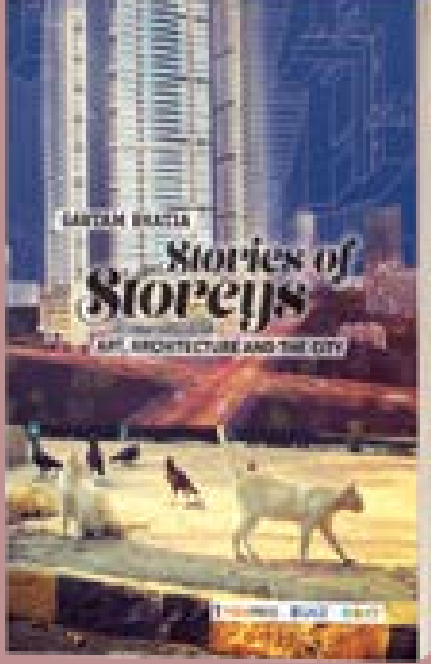
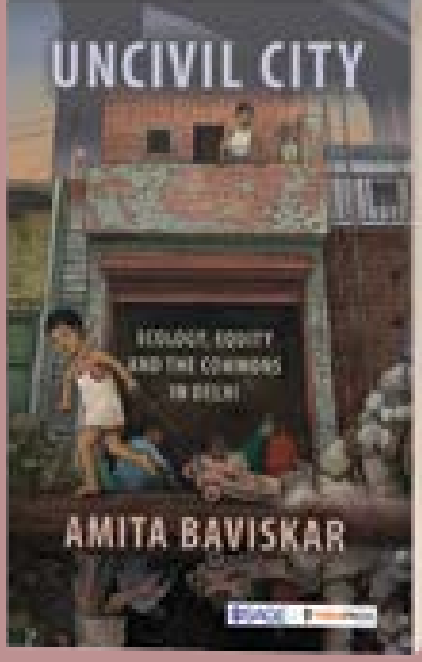
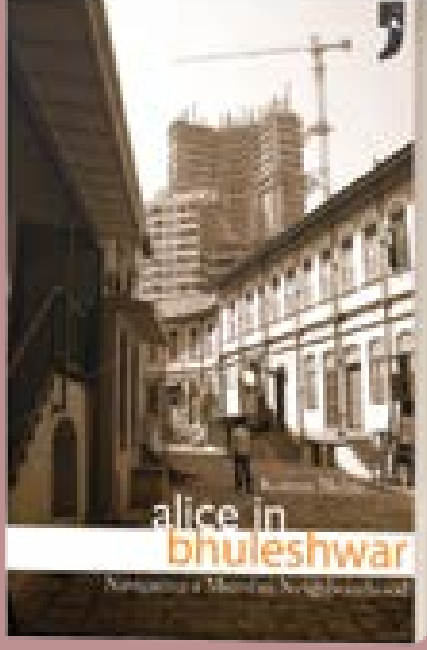
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