



Proceedings Report Sense of History Workshop

Community based approach for heritage conservation

Organised by Greha and INTACH Heritage Academy (IHA), in Delhi -23-25 May 2016

CONTENTS

Background3

Objectives3

Proceedings3

Recommendations and Next Steps5

Annexure A (Workshop Programme)7

Annexure B (List of contributors and participants).....8

Annexure C (Synopsis for book – History of Architecture from indigenous perspective)10

BACKGROUND

The 'Sense of History' workshop, jointly organized by Greha and IHA is built upon an earlier work titled 'History of Architecture – Towards writing from an Indigenous perspective' which was a workshop organized by School of Planning and Architecture, Bhopal in 2015. A multi-disciplinary expert panel gathered in Bhopal and theorized on various concepts and responses towards understanding indigenous history which is embedded in the built environment. Sense of History workshop was organized to question our present approach to history of architecture which deals mostly with the study of built objects set in a chronological matrix. This approach tends to ignore our history as living heritage that it is, and separates the object from its lived reality, rendering the study as a lifeless art form. The revised lens of then observing, understanding and rooting history requires that we study history through evidence of life processes, and writing history based on empirical research.

OBJECTIVES

The Sense of History workshop was structured around the following objectives:

1. To realize the tools of comprehending architectural history from an indigenous perspective through theory and empirical investigation.
2. To develop a methodology for a community embedded approach towards heritage conservation and anchoring the society in its history.

Architectural history here is seen as a mirror of community resources, knowledge, tools and skills, beliefs and ideals that the community shares, which together signify cultural, social, economic and political forces of a particular time and place. Making sense of our architectural history therefore allows us to make sense of the society itself. The community which then lives in a continuum with this history is an integral stakeholder in understanding and maintenance of its environment.

PROCEEDINGS

The detailed programme of the workshop is Annexed (Annexure A)

List of collaborators, organizers and participants is Annexed (Annexure B)

The three day workshop started with examining the place of the study of history in conservation practice. Dr. K.L. Nadir (political scientist and policy planner) elaborated on the relationship between architecture and society as a cultural interface. He pointed out that our study of history of architecture, which is an ongoing project initiated at SPA Bhopal in September 2015, is engaged in widening and deepening our understanding of architectural history as the cultural base of society. What is not clear in the study at present is the particularity of Indian experience. This will emerge from clues about architectural form and aesthetic consciousness which produces form. Is there then a prelude to finding form?

This led to the enquiry about indigeneity. Most studies are coming from a European Enlightenment background, which relies on universalized reason. He pointed out that the high priest of modern

European philosophy, Immanuel Kant, has distinguished between two types of reason – determinate and indeterminate. Ethics and aesthetics are not determinate, and creative work is difficult to enclose in a finite frame. It can be more easily described than evaluated. He spoke about architecture as experience, and the representational systems emerging. To have meaning in the notion of indigeneity, it is necessary to engage with aesthetics and issues of surface and form, as well as the relationship between text and artifact.



This was followed by presentations of the synopses by the authors of the history essays proposed to be collected, collated and published as a book in about a year. Presentations were made by Shonaleeka Kaul (historian), Narendra Dingle (architect), Savyasaachi (social anthropologist), Rabindra Vasavada (architect and conservation expert), Aneerudha Paul (architect and urban designer) and M.N. Ashish Ganju (architect). List of research areas and working titles for history essays is annexed (*Annexure C*). The presentation made by Prof. Ganju relied on making a case study of history of architecture in Mehrauli.

Mr. Feisal Alkazi (theatre director) further elaborated and provided a historical insight into Mehrauli, unfolding history through narratives and as a theatre in the environs of Mehrauli. The participants as a collective iterated on various 'tools' of interpreting history which was followed by a preliminary site visit to Mehrauli, in particular to a potential site for enquiry at the entry of Mehrauli – Adam Khan's Tomb.

Day two of the workshop began with an enriching presentation by Prof. Sunil Kumar (historian) elaborating on various interpretations of history and investigating the case of Mehrauli. He pointed out the relationship between the settlement's ecology and history while describing various methods of deciphering the same.

Building on the two approaches of contextualizing history in architecture and settlements – one of approaching it as a theatre and the other of reading it as a text, various tools of interpreting and understanding history were discussed by the participants. It was realized that tools for establishing a 'sense of history' could be clubbed under the phenomena of 'listening', 'reading', and 'looking' at history in any settlement.

These approaches were explored through a tour of Mehrauli on Day 3, accompanied by facilitators from an NGO called ITIHAAS, promoting heritage education. The participants explored not just the monuments embedded in the urban environs but also the historic relics in the archeological park

adjoining. The two adjacent morphologies coexisting in Mehrauli offer a ground of empirical enquiry which connects development with history. The tools of listening, reading and looking were further elaborated.



The second session of the day explored the role of community and developing the 'sense of history' through the narratives of the community and engaging with them to maintain and develop their historic past and present. This idea of a people's history was illustrated by Prof. Surajit Sarkar from the Centre for Community Knowledge of Ambedkar University, Delhi. He described the 'Neighborhood Museum' concept for engaging with the local citizenry.

In the concluding session participants outlined possible directions for exploring Mehrauli as a ground for empirical research, and using history as a strategy for development by enriching the associations that the community has with its historic environs. This process was facilitated by the team of multi-disciplinary experts to understand endogenous history, both as monument and everyday environment, in order to develop a methodology for a community embedded approach to heritage conservation.



RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

It was considered imperative to engage in this process of rooting and developing a sense of history in Mehrauli, starting immediately, rolling out various activities in close collaboration with and support from IHA, as under:

1. Developing a 'Research Node' at Mehrauli.
2. Undertaking various entry point activities such as : Neighbourhood museum, photography exhibition, *nukaad nataks* around the theme of people's history and strengthening people's association with their heritage.
3. Organizing a 4 week inter-disciplinary 'Making History' studio in Nov-Dec 2016 directed towards transforming the urban piazza – Adam Khan's Tomb precinct at Mehrauli.
4. Revisiting and developing the Local Area Plan for Mehrauli, building on 'history' and 'community', for planning, implementation and maintenance.

These next steps can be further detailed with IHA.

As a start, one of the participants (an architecture student) who is also a resident of Mehrauli , is willing to intern with Greha-IHA for taking the intervention in Mehrauli further. Therefore a research associate can be anchored in Mehrauli with minimum operational cost, thus establishing the research node. This will facilitate the interaction between various sections of the community, other stakeholders, and conservation practitioners.

There was consensus among the participants that the workshop had raised important questions and set out a useful agenda for further research. The positive energy generated by the workshop needs to be anchored now in a programmed set of activities directed to engage with the local citizenry in discovering and appreciating the value of history.



ANNEXURE A

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

Day – 1: Monday (23 May 2016)

AM

- 10:00 Registration and Tea
- 10:30 Opening and introduction to the workshop – Mr. Navin Piplani, Principal Director, INTACH Heritage Academy; Mr. MN Ashish Ganju, President, GREHA
- 11:00 Examination of Boundary Conditions by Dr. K.L. Nadir
- 11:30 Investigating the Concepts: The panel of experts will share their synopsis of research writings leading to the writing the of an indigenous history of architecture - Key Chair: Mr. Ashish Ganju

PM

- 1:30 Lunch
- 2:30 Tools of listening, reading and seeing history - Key Chair: Mr. Feisal Alkazi , Mr. Navin Piplani
- 4:45 Site visit to Mehrauli

Day – 2: Tuesday (24 May 2016)

AM

- 10:30 Uncovering history through the case of a public place in Mehrauli - Key Chair: Prof. Sunil Kumar (History) Prof. Savyasaachi (Anthropology) and Prof. R J Vasavada (Conservation Architecture)

PM

- 1:30 Lunch
- 2:30 Break out session Investigating tools for listening, reading and looking at history – participants divided in three groups - Key Chair: Sunita Kohli
- 4:30 Joint sharing by the group - Mr. Narendra Denge, Mr. Neelkanth Chhaya, Mr. Aneerudha Paul
- 5:30 End

Day – 3: Wednesday (25 May 2016)

AM

- 8:00 Site Visit to Mehrauli led by Itihaas
- 11:30 Investigating roles and approach towards community engagement and stakeholder participation in heritage conservation - Key Chair: Mr. Surajit Sarkar

PM

- 1.30 Lunch
- 2.30 Writing of a joint statement by the participants towards understanding the ‘sense of history’ - Key Chair: Dr. KL Nadir (Policy planner) and Dr. Shonaleeka Kaul (Historian)
- 5:30 End

ANNEXURE B

List of contributors and participants

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ANNEXURE C

List of 'research areas and working titles' for history essays

Writing a Cultural History of Architecture: Some Reflections on the State of the 'History of Indian Architecture' Project

Shonaleeka Kaul

The Temple of Sateri Devi, Vengurla, Sindhudurg Distt; Konkan, Maharashtra

Narendra Dingle

Exploring civilizational uniqueness in Architecture

Saavyasachi

Searching for an ecosophic approach to space making: learning from Majuli

Aneerudha Paul

Value of Architecture in Gradient of Time

M.N. Ashish Ganju and K.L. Nadir

Architecture through History of Ahmedabad

Rabindra Vasavada

The Idea of Jaipur

Snehanshu Mukherjee

Residential Neighbourhoods of Kolkata: A Study of Identities and Transformations

Tapas Mitra and Sheuli Mitra

Architectural Treatise to Practice: Samarangana Sutradhara and Temples of Central India

Ajay Khare and Vishakha Kawathekar

Writing a Cultural History of Architecture: Some Reflections on the State of the 'History of Indian Architecture' Project

Dr. Shonaleeka Kaul

Associate professor of Ancient Indian History, Center for Historical studies, JNU

Synopsis

As we are gathered here at this 'Sense of History' workshop organized by INTACH, it is timely to reflect on where the project on 'History of Indian Architecture from an Indigenous Perspective' stands some ten months into it. Prior, intensive engagements with the theme threw up a host of challenges that the project evidently entailed. Fundamental among these was the problem of definition, that too of terms and concepts crucial to how the project was conceived. In particular, the words 'indigenous' -- and 'history' itself -- though both essential to capturing what was to have been novel about the effort, were found to be somewhat elusive, if not fraught.

While 'indigenous' implied originating or occurring naturally in a particular place, in this case native or inherent to India, there were fears that 'natural-ness' or 'native-ness' would tend to elide some of the rich diversity in the country that was generated over the centuries by processes including (though not only) immigration and import, as it were, of a number of social groups and non-Indic cultural traditions. And 'history', quite apart from its philosophical complexities, brought with it a number of questions to be answered or choices to be made: who or what (or who all and what all) were the objects of the history we intended to write? And who its intended audience or readership? Methodologically, how was it to be written? Was it to be a documentation of the profusion of architectural forms and techniques that are on display in the Indian subcontinent, accreted over the ages? Was that even possible, given the vastness of the landmass, its antiquity, and, again, its mindboggling artistic heterogeneity? Or were we in quest of something deeper, if necessarily more selective? *An engagement perhaps with meanings and motives, with ideas and impulses that animated both the creators and the consumers of architecture in this country?*

It is in the nature of all knowledge production that it be plagued by some semantic conundrums and limitations or the other. Given the fundamental and sometimes irresolvable nature of these, it is my belief that self awareness and reflexivity about them is perhaps all that we can hope to achieve ultimately, and is in itself salutary in that it guides and informs our writing, implicitly if not explicitly. My own response to some of the issues above is as follows: While India's diversity is undeniable, it need not disable any effort to understand or identify unities -- recurrent orienting principles of thought or patterns of praxis -- that equally characterize Indian history and culture. And it is precisely tapping in all their richness some of these ideas and practices in the context of Indian architecture that may be at the heart of the project of indigeneity at hand.

To attempt to spell out more specifically the agenda as I understand it, I contend that it is a cultural history of architecture that we seek to write. In its various ramifications, however, this does not exclude or counterpose itself to, as it were, a materialist history. So the history we write will very much continue to speak to aspects that older histories have been interested in, like building materials preferred and technology applied or innovated, and also patronage and sponsorship of construction, and so on over the centuries and across regions. But it will also look at questions of skills and ethics of labour and artisanship, on the one hand, and at epistemology of architecture and the role of ecology, on the other. These aspects together represent the range of essays already volunteered by contributors to the volume under conception.

However, what does it mean to write a *cultural history* of (these aspects of) architecture? To my mind, this approach can centre on prioritizing two guiding principles of investigation for all and each of the above mentioned facets. One, *Ideation*, even when researching technical and technological aspects that conventionally lend themselves more readily to statistical rather than philosophical documentation. Two, *Community*, in the role of artisans, patrons, and consumers, and how they of course shaped but were also shaped by tradition and architecture, in a trialogic collaboration. Keeping these two indicative principles in mind will, I believe, nudge

in a broadly unified and coherent direction the individual essays and disparate case studies that will form the conceptualized volume without compromising their rich variety, which is expected to be one of the strengths of the project. What foregrounding *Ideation* and *Community* in this project will do is also bring in a strong interdisciplinary character to a work of history: Philosophy, anthropology and sociology coming into explorations across time and space.

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In the second half of this set of reflections on the project of writing 'A History of Indian Architecture from an Indigenous Perspective', let us step back to contemplate *long durèe* the significance of studying, and therefore writing, a history of architecture. In the midst of architects, I need hardly expound on the centrality of architecture not just to human habitat but to civilization itself. Indeed the word 'civilization' is derived from the Latin '*civitas*' which means 'city'. That is because for historians and archaeologists, civilization is synonymous with urbanization. In an iconic article called 'The Urban Revolution' published way back in 1950 but cited to this day, the preminent archaeologist-scholar V. Gordon Childe put forth this association between the city and civilization and went on to offer a definition as it were of urbanism itself as consisting in ten criteria. Prominent among these criteria or indicators of a city was the presence of monumental architecture, which meant for ancient times palaces, cemeteries, temples, stadia, granaries, waterworks, town halls, market places, and the like.

Now, the wisdom behind citing architecture as a defining feature of urban civilization was of course empirical since all the world's earliest civilizations -- Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, Peruvian -- in fact possessed highly developed and striking buildings and settlement layouts. But it was more than that. The correlation between civic architecture and civilization that is recognized by historians also carries a deeper significance that deserves to be gone into here.

One: that the processes and productions of architectural practice represented the coming together, the mobilization and channeling of the community's resources, knowledge, and labour on an unprecedented and unmatched scale, thereby signifying and of course presupposing foundational social, economic and political forces of the time and place. In other words, architecture was a tangible index of much wider societal processes and phenomena.

Secondly, not just material processes and phenomena but ideational and valuative ones too are indicated by the development of architecture. That is, the association between architecture and civilization would also point to the fact that architecture -- like all forms of cultural production -- was practice through which a society made sense of itself and the world it inhabited, and through which it articulated its humanity. In other words, it was an expression of the important and lasting beliefs and ideals shared by members of a culture, of their *weltanschauung* or worldview, and was typically invested with meaning and not only utility. Moreover, especially for a highly public and performative field like architecture, it would have been not only about expression but communication of that meaning, making it manifest to a knowing audience or clientele that constituted its community of response. It is this meaning of architecture -- or meanings, if you will -- that I believe best represents the essence of this project that seeks indigeneity of architectural thought and practice in India.

Having said that, it would be instructive to recall that there are, and can be, a variety of ways in which architectural history of any part of the world is written. Similarly, the approach we adopt to Indian indigenous architecture can be from different perspectives: One, as I said, an ideational history, that goes into what meanings and symbolism architecture had not only for the artisans who practised it but for the communities that patronized it. Two, a contextual history, that explores the socio-economic and political forces -- and the ecological considerations -- that sustained particular types of architecture. Three, a technical history, that works out and compiles the technologies and instrumentation as also the materials that were brought together to produce the variety of architectural forms through time and space in the subcontinent. All three perspectives are potentially mammoth in scope but perhaps more so in

increasing order. In all three approaches, there can be historical investigations or ethnographic investigations, ideally a bit of both. To my mind, the guiding thrust of this project being indigeneity -- it is possible and desirable to realize it in all three ways but only in a representative and selective manner necessarily and hardly with any claim or objective of comprehensiveness. The main reason for this is the sheer extent of the space and number of the traditions that historically go by the name India over its five millennia long history. Once we make our peace with setting limits to this project rather than trying to cover every worthy area/region/style/issue, it will become achievable.

As far as I am concerned, being an a cultural historian of early India, someone who works with literature, and a historian of ideas and space, I see myself working on the ancient/originary idea of architecture in Sanskrit and Prakrt texts roughly up till the 12th cent CE. Not that these texts have not been read before but what I hope to prioritize, in my essay titled 'Towards an Epistemology of Architecture in Early India', is an exploration through categories internal to this textual tradition. I will of course do so conscious of intertextuality between the worlds within and without the text, i.e between theory and practice(s), and between written and oral traditions, so that it is not a top-down or idealized history. The texts I have in mind are the *Sulvasutras*, the *Visnudharmottara Purana*, the *Aparajitaprccha*, the *Samaranganasutradhara*, and the *Mayamatam* and *Manasara*. I will attempt to sift out meanings and philosophies or rationales from the welter of technical specifications that these texts tend to contain, and look for continuities of thought, if any, over the centuries to which these texts belong. It is pertinent to note here that there would be different kinds of philosophical impulses or ideation relevant to different architectural forms, not all of which were ritual or sacred in function in early India, it goes without saying. Similarly, the kind of community involvement with the university, the palace, the temple, and the marketplace would all vary.

A second question I will want to put to these texts, and one which will locate architecture in a cultural context beyond the boundaries of its own discipline, is whether architecture, or the theorists of architecture, in early India subscribed to, participated in or saw themselves as a part of a wider epistemology to which other branches of knowledge also subscribed. My hunch

and sense certainly is that yes, architecture as a discipline would have espoused or been oriented to the overarching Indic goals of balance on the one hand and liberation on the other. If *vastu* (science of building) also found itself aspiring to these ends, it would point to the integration of life values that the architects of this land once believed in.

Depending on my findings on both these fronts, I will be in a position to propose the existence (or not!) of an ancient indigenous architectural school of thought. A comparison of this theoretical base with the results of some ethnographic studies of rural and folk architecture in the country included in the proposed History volume would further be instructive.

The Temple of Sateri Devi, Vengurla, Sindhudurg Distt; Konkan, Maharashtra

A proposal for the study of the historical processes in the deviations and mutations in temple architecture in Konkan

Narendra Denge

Architect, Design Chair PVPCOA Pune

Preamble:

During 1987 and 1997 I spent a week every year, in the months of April-May, in the Sindhudurg district. Along with my family members and my students I helped in harvesting mango, cashew, jack fruit, coconut, ratamba (Garsenia Indica), jamun (Eugenia Jambolana), chikoo (Achras Zapota), and other fruits typical of the region over 80 acres of a farm land on the bank of the sweet and salt water river Karli at Bambuli . I also used the time to visit the surrounding small towns and villages that include the wonderfully unique landscape of Nerur, Dapoli, Dabholi, Khanoli, Parule, Waingan, Kelus, Deogadh, Deobagh, Tendoli, Walavali, Kudal, Bambuli, Sonavade, Tirode, Shirode, Achare, Vengurla, Aravali, Savantwadi, and Malvan, engulfed in vegetation, rivulets and hills all on the western coast. I was able to do some documentation of the folk temples, and houses in these regions through black and white & colour photography,

videos, sketches and measured drawings. Close to Goa, which has had several cultural influences from outside India, Vengurla also has an old ruin of the Dutch Wakhar (Gowdown & Fort). The region surrounding Vengurla displays temple architecture that is in variance with the typical traditional temples. The temple of Sateri Devi-the gramadevata of Vengurla- arrested attention in particular.

“Many many years ago, when Vengurla was not center of trade and commerce there is a village called Ansur (situated 4 km away from Vengurla) was the main center. Ansur was central place of old vengurla. Initial temple of Shri Sateri was placed at Ansur known as 'Mul Bhumikeche Mandir'. That time, a man from Parab family unit always march ten miles every day go to see and urge Shri Sateri Devi. As the time conceded by and the man grew older, it became extra difficult for the unfortunate guy to hold out this schedule. Still he maintained the prayers with the same moderation and enthusiasm.

Sri Devi was delighted to see the commitment and pledge shown by her follower. She blessed him and promised to end his suffering by coming nearer to his residence. On the way reverse, the old man witnessed a dazzling view where a ground like construction was unexpectedly growing from the ground. He realized that Shri Sateri Devi is appearing at the peak and hugged that formation with excessive pleasure. He asked Shri Devi to continue there and stop growing. At once the structure stopped increasing. That location is nothing but toady's Shri Devi Sateri Mandir. In the local language VENG menas a hug and URLE means remaining. That is how the place got its name as VENGURLE. ”

(<http://www.world66.com/asia/southasia/india/maharashtra/vengurla/history>)

Synopsis of the Research Proposal:

It is said that when your music changes it is an indicator that your culture has changed. So far as architecture is concerned one knows that if the design of the worshipping place alters it must be seen as a symbol of a fundamental turn in the manner in which religion is viewed and religious rituals are performed. This is quite evident in the temples that were built after

reforms in the Hindu religion such as the ones initiated by Prarthana Samaj or Arya Samaj. Architecture has a relationship with culture which while reflecting it, also has the capacity to effect a change in it. The case of Sateri Devi temple is therefore intriguing. The temple appears to be designed based on the pattern of cellars in Europe built in double vaulted structures. The adopted form and technique of construction have affected the manner in which the traditional *sabhamandapa* space was conceived. A *sabhamandapa* is supposed to hold *kirtan*, music, community functions, community worshipping on festivities, as well as for the individual's access and use of it. It is essentially a performing arts space where viewers can sit around or in the balconies above and participate in the performance. Often, the *dashavatara* - the local folk theatre is held in the *sabhamandapa*. Although the temple in the surrounding villages, also show signs of modifications and changes, the Sateri Devi temple stands out as the most striking example with the *sabhamandapa* space totally mutated. The outward form also shows a considerable variation from the manner in which folk temples were built. The traditional way of building temples in Konkan was in load bearing laterite masonry, and timber structure supporting the Mangalore tile roof with attention to clerestory lighting and ventilation. The plan generally respected the sequencing of two important spaces of the *grabhagriha* with a *pradakshina*, and the *sabhamandapa*. Sometimes even the third –the *natyamandapa* or the *bhogmandapa* is also noticed.

A history of architecture offers a study into the following three fundamental issues:

1. How do we read the historicity of a place and people for architectural significance? How can ideas, influences, lineages and philosophies that made a work possible in a social-historical context be studied? What is contemporary co-existence with the history of architecture of a place?
2. How can the relation between ideas and built form be discovered that represent continuity or discontinuity of processes among the participants manifested in a work of architecture?
3. What is the field of influence of such a work of architecture on the works contemporary to it, and what methodologies would be appropriate for such a study of their

interrelationships? How can the aesthetics of the part and the whole be comprehended for the cluster of values that it may represent- for the gross, the subtle, and the transcendental sensibilities in architecture?

Unlike a tree that grows true to its genetic order the form of human life and civilization changes ways and mutates with circumstances and discoveries. The Sateri Devi temple represents such a turning point hence requiring an inquiry into why a tradition was discontinued. What was the influence of this mutation on the lives of the community? Did it reflect or change the ritualistic patterns within the Hindu temple in Konkan or whether it reverted to its traditional ways of architecture? Perception, inference, comparison, and testimony would be four tools for this investigation into its historical and contextual parameters to examine how ideas take shape in architecture. Some philosophical texts have identified 1. *Paravrutti* (evolving), 2. *Karma* (performing deeds), 3. *Jati* (original nature) as the distinguishing marks of being and existence, all of which can be tested in the case of the architecture of the Sateri Devi temple for the traditional ways and the circumstances for deviations thereof.

Dwelling in Kutch: Architecture As A Crystallisation of Relationships.

Neelkanth Chaya

Architect, Former Dean of Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University, Ahmedabad

Synopsis:

Histories of architecture often depict, describe, analyse and situate *objects* or exemplary isolated works. Sometimes, such depictions are accompanied by studies of settlements and geographies in which these examples were built. This approach is useful for delineating the sequence of development of formal, spatial and stylistic characteristics; the development of technologies and the symbolic values attached to works of architecture. However, this mode gives the impression of a certain finiteness, a comparatively static notion of cultural change.

Places are continuously being formed and transformed by interactions of many kinds : of skills, materials, techniques, artistic mores, social and political arrangements and customs. A history written as a description of such process - where those whose ways of lives are varied and intertwined, whose manners of dwelling are diverse, but who are connected by mutual relations, rights and obligations - would allow one to theorise architectural works as depicting a continuous modulation of relationships in an ecosystem. The work of architecture is then seen as a participant in a society's continuous search for allowing life to sustain within an environment in the most appropriate manner.

Works of architecture, in this view, are subject to the effects of time and change. They need to be attended to and kept in good order, modified when conditions require, and are thus a part of living processes. Also, places are subject to new meanings, new symbolic associations, new uses and therefore cannot easily be bracketed as belonging to one particular identity or provenance. Classification in terms of religious or cultural identities, or in terms of "periods", or even in terms of techniques or materials – is useful to order the information being studied, but at the same time can become a hindrance to observation of processes at work.

Geographical conditions form the substrate that generates a diverse yet distinct set of survival and livelihood strategies. Climate, geology, vegetation, the pattern of seasons – all these offer opportunities and set limits to the ways in which humans can survive and prosper. Yet, in observing two places with similar conditions, one often finds distinctly divergent patterns of activity. One may presume therefore that the organisation of human society - its economics, politics and ethics – strongly affect the patterns of culture, accepting or overcoming the limits set by nature.

This now offers a way of studying histories of architecture as processes in particular landscapes, with particular societal mores, resulting in a variety of artifacts, amongst them dwellings, places of symbolic value, places of work and of utilitarian intention, all resulting in complex interrelated tissues that encompass settlements and even the landscape. In fact it becomes necessary to study the processes and products of human activity in defined geographical contexts in order to understand architecture as one of the forms of human efforts to comprehend and inhabit natural and human environments.

We may summarise the method proposed here as follows:

1. Architecture emerges as one of the tools of survival and sustenance in definite geographical conditions (or landscapes), but is equally the product of a culture's mode of organising itself.

2. This process happens over periods of time, change and transformation are endemic, thus architectural forms need to be seen not in terms of frozen moments in time but as crystallisations within a dynamic process.
3. Thus it is necessary to study these processes and products simultaneously.
4. Various groups may form interdependent socio-cultural complexes. Thus studying such complexes, without necessarily categorising them by religious, linguistic or temporal labels would allow a more wholistic understanding and will therefore be followed.
5. Various works of architecture, ranging from dwellings to buildings of civic, religious and symbolic value, need to be studied side by side.

Settlement forms and groupings of buildings in the landscape are also architectural configurations and need to be studied along with

single buildings.

6. Architectural configurations are ways of responding to physical conditions and are ways of maintaining distinctive socio-political organisations. Identifying commonalities and differences of pattern, analysis of the identified patterns and studying their relationship to societal and cultural mores, and theorising a grammar of patterns would be one of the objectives of historical study.

Architecture In Kutch:

Kutch presents an excellent example to be studied from this point of view. It has nomadic pastoralists roaming over the geography, fisherfolk and sailors at the edge of the sea, subsistence cultivators living in hamlets, farmers and finally town dwellers who are involved in many kinds of livelihood. While each of these groups maintained distinct ways of life, and characteristic forms of architecture, they did so in a situation of interdependence. They needed resources from each other and each group had skills and tools that the others needed. Their architectural forms are different, yet we hypothesise that they are symbiotic and synergetic, and form a continuum that can only be understood all together. Therefore it would be useful to study the histories of their architectures as being part of a complex set rather than as isolated forms and styles.

Further, Kutch was part of an interlinked international sea-and-land based trade system. Various religions, languages, artistic forms and technologies came into contact across this system, sharing and exchanging materials, ideas and modes of organisation. Again, this system of relationships existed over a long period of time, changing and transforming itself to meet new challenges from time to time.

Aspects of Study:

The method outlined above requires different areas of knowledge to be brought together. Studies from various fields will have to supplement the documentation and analysis of architecture. The study will have to include an understanding of:

- i. The Geographical conditions of Kutch and its transformations over time: Ecology and biodiversity in the Kutch Landscape.
- ii. Survival tactics, livelihoods, and consequent social forms: Economic and political organisation over time.
- iii. Materials, technologies, tools and skills and their relation to political economy: resources and interdependence.

The variety of settlement and architectural forms distributed over the geography and across time (using existing material or freshly documented where required) would be analysed.

Present Status of Work:

Through studies of various settlements and buildings in Kutch, done under my direction by students, a reasonably definite documentation has been completed.

Discussions at Hunnarshala and Khamir (both being artisan-centred organisations in Kutch), suggest that it would be possible to delineate the geographical, ecological and technical background fairly quickly.

However the other aspects need more work.

Exploring civilizational uniqueness in Architecture

Savyasaachi

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The historical landscape of India is rich with a variety of architectures from the time of Indus valley civilization. This is the only sensory evidence of a diversity of social formations. There is very little written material describing the processes and the people who constructed these. From these written materials, we know structures that are associated with the patrons. There is very little that is said about the labor. This poses a challenge to the study of the history of architecture. How is one to make sense of the architectural value in the absence of sufficient information? Historians have made efforts to infer the social use of these structures and describe social life on this basis. This has constituted the social significance of the architectural form; here in the mirror of architecture social life is reflected.

The architectures known by the name of the patron seem to be no different from similar structures across the world. These architectures normally follow rules and codes written for them. There is amazing architectural value here. These structures are stunning and are the work of most skilled craftsmanship. There is an amazing variety here; there are architectures introduced by invaders who became domiciled and there are others made by resident rulers. These are concerned more with demonstration of power, status and class. In all these lives of labor is not included, for they are mere instruments to live out and give shape to the imagination of patrons. By labor is meant the efforts of a large population engaged with historical processes and circumstances at any particular point of time in history and not just the masons and the workers directly engaged with the process of construction.

It is worth considering that these structures are landmarks, they are distinct and diverse but do not communicate civilizational uniqueness. Civilization uniqueness comes from efforts to give expression to historical experiences of people at large.

As an art form to what extent is architecture embedded in the dynamics of historical experiences of people at large. The imagination and processes that translate it into an architectural form is thus comparable with other art forms. The civilizational uniqueness of

architectural creativity is expressed in way it develops a language to grasp the turmoil and predicaments of human beings at large and not just of the rulers and patrons. The spaces that come forth from such efforts at grasping are thus created by the people and for the people. These may be describes as vernacular spaces of civil society.

An important feature of Indian art forms that highlights civilizational uniqueness is the absence of authorship. To understand its meaning and significance it is necessary to look beyond the architectures of patrons for here this absence is the result of exploitation.

In Indian art that is civilizational, there is 'no absence of authorship'. There is a notion of the self that is embedded in 'letting go'; 'not holding on' and seeking that sense of being that comes forth from this. This is different from the one suggested in the notion of an author.

To explore this, I would like to look at one or more of the following-the architecture of Ancient Nalanda University or the narratives associated with the worship of Vishwakarma (not the Vishwakarma Prakash) or the architecture of Harimandir Sahib.

The Idea of Jaipur

Snehanshu Mukherjee

Jaipur is one of the most favoured tourist destinations in India today. It is also a state capital, and therefore a busy ever expanding city which now boasts of an operational Metro line. However the Jaipur that tourists come to see is not its post 1947 expanded form, but the original nine square city plan commissioned in 1728 by a very enlightened ruler, Jai Singh II.

Jaipur is a fascinating study for any student of architecture, not only because of its exquisite architectural works, but the way architecture relates to the city and how the entire city was a result of co-opting its residents into the making of the city itself. In a way each of the havelis and mohallas in Jaipur are autonomous entities and yet they are an integral part of the city plan, and gives the city its form. Kulbhushan and Minakshi Jain have documented Jaipur along with five other cities in their book *Indian City in the Arid West* where they have this to say about Jaipur, "(E)ven in the case of Jaipur, where the approach was clearly classical, the final form is a case of enormous adjustment in time. It almost eliminates the spatial finality which in a general sense is closely tied to classical and formal precedence."

A very perceptive statement about the way Jaipur was conceived, as a formal plan with an on ground strategy to populate the new city, give it an identity and build in a sense of place. The formal plan allows the citizens, as community groups, to modify their territories and build their houses and shared spaces to suit their specific purposes. And yet there exists a sense of a coordinated whole that gives Jaipur its form, which is clearly discernible even today when many of the beautiful structures within the mohallas have been replaced by incompetent

“modern” buildings. It is quite amazing that Jaipur at the time of Jai Singh was a far more democratically planned city than a “modern” city that has been “master-planned” by a bunch of professionals! The design of Jai Singh’s Jaipur is therefore the subject of this inquiry; the essay would attempt to establish the design moves and planning rationale that integrates the city from the macro level down to the level of the havelis and mohallas.

Searching for an ecosophic approach to space making: learning from Majuli

Aneerudha Paul

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The background

The possibilities of carrying forward, one of the strands, from the set of ideas that the book, *Discovery of Architecture*, throws open, has primarily been because of my experience as an academician. I have observed that the education of the architect does not require, only the teaching of a set of objective skills to the student, but also requires a conscious shaping of the psyche of the students. This I propose needs to be achieved systematically through the curricula, simultaneously with the augmentation of skills. Most of the architecture schools do consciously attempt to impart skill to the students, but these methods of training and educating the architect often results in creating and nurturing a heroic self-ego, that is detrimental. This is especially in the background of the contemporary nature of economic, social and environmental crisis, where the lack of collective values is evident. Also given the present nature of education in the secondary and higher secondary system, that trains the students, primarily towards preparing for examinations, the importance of being able to impart an education which inculcates values and ethics, in architecture, through a process of being aware about one-self and the community at large, become difficult, but is the need of the hour.

At this juncture I would also like to highlight the nature of distancing our present society experiences with immediate realities, as we hurriedly embrace the virtues of global capitalism and its varied forms of cultural productions. The experience of the immediate locality and environment, for its subjects, is often lost in the midst of extremely mediated processes that

characterize such an endeavour. As architects, it has also affected the manner in which we practice and subsequently, articulate our discourse on sustainability; an approach that is important to address the immense environmental and resource crisis that we face in our present times. However we try to find solutions for sustainability within the narrow boundaries of scientific paradigms which perpetuate the profit motives of large corporate capital; we eliminate the discussion of ethics, value and subsequently a change in behaviour, which is needed for any discussion in this subject.

The book hints at the necessity of a consciousness, for the architect, who is able to transcend the boundaries of the self - ego and is integrated with the community and immediate environment at large. This is a requirement if architects want to contribute in addressing the present challenge of our contemporary society. Given to review, this book for the *Indian architect and Builder*, I had observed that:

“The category of the ‘self’ which this book proposes to reconstitute is extremely important to the formulation of the framework by the two authors. As this book identifies in the first section, even in the Western world, which has been the epicentre for modern and scientific thought, there is now an acute awareness of the problem of the project of the ‘modern’ especially in the framing of the arguments concerning sustainability. The World Summit on Social Development in 2005, organised by the United Nations, proposes a practice of sustainability based on the recognition and integration of three aspects - the social, the economic and the environmental. However, even here, the fundamental problem is the non-inclusion of ‘human behaviour’ which needs fundamental change in our times and is the key to any practice of sustainability. A world-view which promotes fierce competition eulogises the virtue of unending human greed, etc and cannot form the foundations for a sustainable world. This is where the recognition and reformulation of the ‘self’ as a key to bringing change in the practice of architecture, as proposed by the authors, is an important contribution by this book. The book proposes that the acute awareness of the self as connected to the whole, leads to a spirit of collaboration which is important to the creation of a sustainable built environment.”ⁱ

As earlier mentioned, it is in this background that the shaping of the self through the education of the architect becomes a very important effort. It has to be a systematic process that has to be evolved which allows the student to be able to comprehend the notion of the self, and become self-aware. At the KRVI A we have attempted to evolve a course structure which enables such a process. The process involves a process of de-education in the earlier year of the course, where a conscious attempt is made to break away from an exam based education system, to a form of learning which allows for the students to synthesize, based on values, ethics and finally choices that he is enabled to make. This is done through a process of learning which creates awareness about the one's self as well as other's. In the studio projects in the earlier years a process of collaborative work among students are encouraged so that the students make design choices after a process an intense discussion among colleagues. In the latter year he is consciously made aware of his immediate community, the environment and its complex institutional systems that he would be performing in, through a process of active engagement with its actors and agencies. In the final years he is encouraged to formulate her/his own position as an architect, through the choice an architectural project, where she/he is able develop methods and process for enquiry and research and be able to synthesize an appropriate architectural language.

Through this process of educating an architect the learning of history, to be able to have a consciousness of a subject's own past/root within the community is a very important for achieving values and ethics needed for acting responsibly towards creating a sustainable future. The subject of architectural history cannot be then, conceived primarily as an objective method of learning about techniques and formal/tectonic systems of synthesizing an object of architectural interest, but it should be a process of revelation, of a world view, within which the architect and the her/his processes of conceptualizing/ representing and creating the object is located. The book, *Discovery of Architecture*, provides for a "*four part analytical matrix*"ⁱⁱ which could be a framework to look into architectural history. As I have earlier mentioned in the book review that I had done, the present history of Indian architecture is primarily derived from a colonial perspective, in such a case, there is a need to develop an indigenous perspective to relook into Indian history of architecture. Here I must mention that there have been recent

efforts made to provide for alternatives by Indian authors like YatinPandya, Gemini Mehta, yet more work needs to be done.

This is where I suggest a project that could explore the relationship between the architects' self, the immediate physical/social environment and processes of creating architectural form, in history. There is a possibility of taking a geographic approach within which the history of architecture can be comprehended. This is a country with diverse geographic conditions, where in history, these conditions have played an important role in shaping the immediate worldview of its inhabitant, impact their cultural landscape, and consequently order the way they construct their built environment. There could be learning within this endeavour, which could help us comprehend this relationship to find new ways of being able to address the environmental crisis that humanity is experiencing.

The Study

The project intent is to present the form and processes of organization of the physical / built environment of historic indigenous communities, of this region; how such processes are shaped by individuals working within a collective worldview that it is closely interwoven to their immediate natural environment and systems. Though interdisciplinary in scope, it would comprehend these relationships; explore patterns, of space and process of space making at various scales- the local, the regional, the universal- from the conceptualization to the final manifestation in the form of buildings and settlements. Though the notion of space making in this case is essentially physical it would map it simultaneously with the construction of the mental and social space that provide the context to bring it into being, both as a form and as an aesthetic experience.

The Intent

The present study posits that the search for sustainability cannot be limited only towards searching solutions within current frameworks, but needs an ecosophic approach, which needs a transformation in our worldview; the way we view the nature of the present development of

our built environment, the way we practice, or profess, or intervene in the natural as well as the built, and the relationship between actors and agencies who are involved in such processes. The word ecosophic in this context is used, as proposed by Felix Guattari where he speculates a relationship between human subjectivity, social relation and environment. In his paper “The Three Ecologies”ⁱⁱⁱ he proposes the need to establish this relationship to be able to address the current nature of environmental and social crisis that we encounter.

However to create a contemporary framework towards comprehending sustainability, the assumption of this project is that there are patterns in the history of architecture and settlements in this region, that could be revealed, and from which we could learn. These patterns emerge from a holistic understanding of the relationship between the self, the community and the natural environment, similar to that being proposed by Guattari. Such an effort could hint at possible ways of reorienting the practise and education of an architect, simultaneously with new possibilities of creating physical expression, as being a way forward to achieve a sustainable built environment. It could help us in forging new relationship, especially sympathetic, with architecture, nature, community and technology and the ways we therefore shape our built environment.

Introduction to the case: Majuli

Majuli is a river island formed by the river Brahmaputra, Subansiri and a sub-branch of the Brahmaputra – KherkatiyaStuti, in the state of Assam. The island is known, on one hand, for its complex and fragile natural systems of dead rivers, ponds, wetlands and eroding banks - shaped and reshaped continuously by the process of extensive flooding, erosion and siltation of the Brahmaputra and on the other hand, for its rich heritage formed by the presence of numerous Vishnavite Satras started by Sankradeva (1449-1568), a Vishnava preacher and social reformer^{iv}. In history, the satras have been patronized by the Ahom kings and in its zenith the island was known to have around 100 such satras^v. Presently there are 23 such satras, which are known to exist, in the island, while the others have been either erased by floods and related calamities or shifted due to their constant threat. Due to a process of continuous erosion by the

Brahamaputra, which even continues as of today, this island has over time also been vastly reduced in size.

Though the satras, like any other monasteries, have their own internal organizational principle with their satraadhikari and the bhakts, they have also influenced the organization of settlers and settlements around them by having control over land, resources, as well as the formation of social, the cultural as well as moral life of the surrounding residents^{vi}. As experienced through a study trip conducted by the 2nd year students of the Kamla Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute of Architecture, Juhu, Mumbai it has been observed that the satras and the settlements, that are not so well connected with the mainland at Jorhat, are even today, reasonably self-sufficient, having a very unique settlement form that houses the rich cultural traditions, characterized by music, theatre, wall painting, mask making, pottery, boat making, etc. Though the landscape and its people are transforming, from what it used to be historically, it is obvious that it would be possible to document and construct the historic landscape, through presently available material, as there has been no major disruption seen in the last 500 years.

It is in this unique historic cultural landscape with an extremely fragile ecology, where we realize that there is an intricate relationship between the natural, the social and the built, that the geographic framework as proposed in the earlier part of the proposal could be used to reveal the practices of sustainability, resultant of the process of conceptualization and organization of settlements that are closely interwoven with their worldview. The practices will be studied in close consonance with the processes they adopt and their final outcome that are physically manifested in the architecture and the built environment.

Methodology of the Study

The study would suggest an intensely immersive process, to be able to experience, interact with the natural, social and built systems. The project would explore organizational systems of built environment, along with their relationship with natural and social environment, at all scales,

from the local, to the regional the universal/cosmological. Such an approach has similarities, to the study of geography, but with a bias towards being introducing the importance of the notion of the experiential, which is an attitude already, entrenched within the discipline of architecture. The approach to such a project has similarities to the work of Rana P.B. Singh who suggests the need for such a “compassionate and rational attitude” towards the study of Indian geography. In his work he describes the need for such an approach as follows:

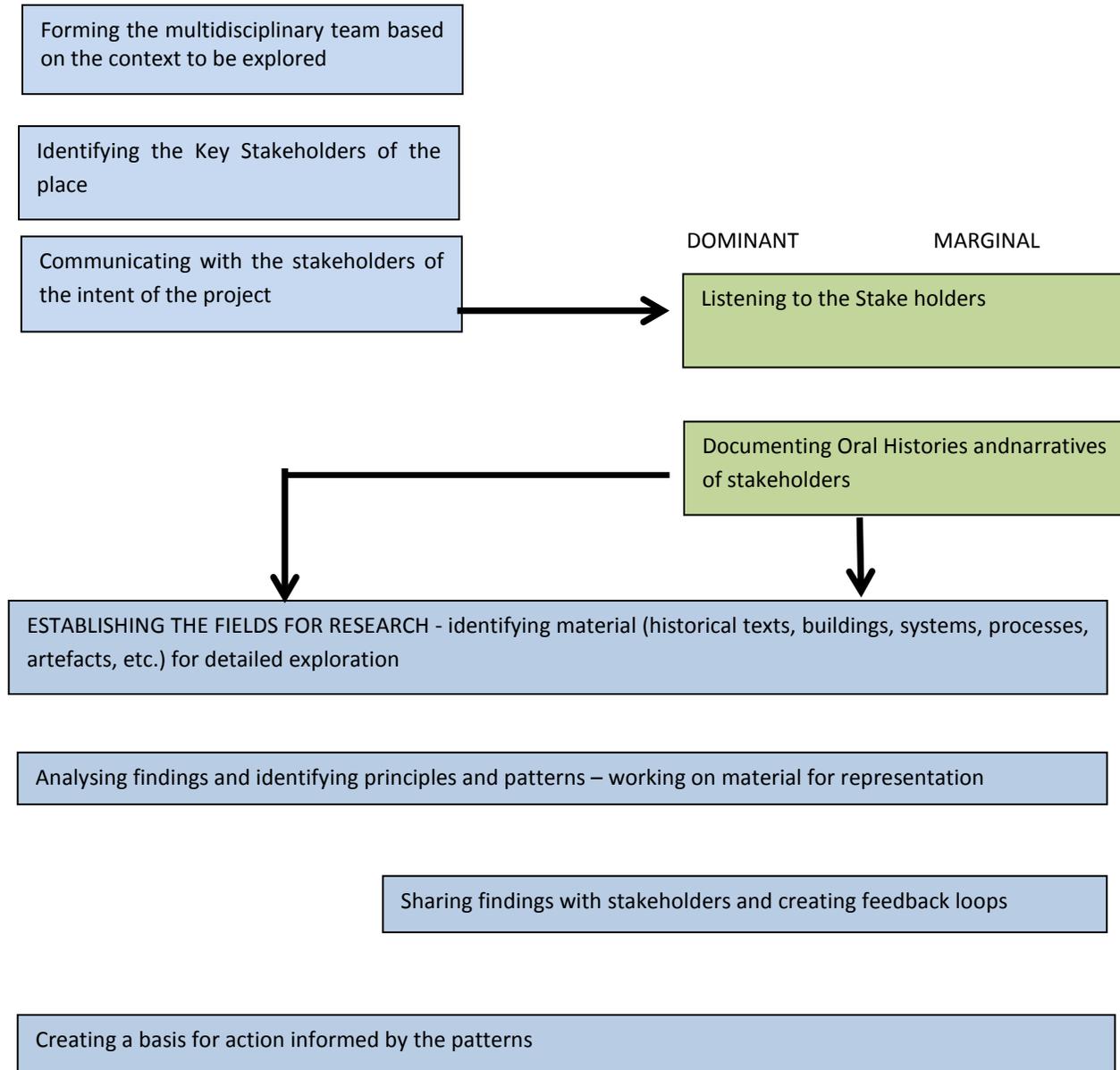
“Geography may be conceived as a perennial source of flowing thought-process that links the past, analyse the present and project the future. Where does the India Geography stand? Meeting people, interacting with societies, understanding place and its spirit, perceiving the aesthetics of nature, grasping the processes of transformation, realising self as impartial part of culture and society, may be cited as some of the consequential attributes of fieldwork experiences that today we’re missing in Indian Geography.”^{vii}

The geographic framework, in addition to the intensely immersive processes as suggested above, will allow us to connect at all scales while helping us draw relationship of the built environment between the natural and the social. This approach in a way tries to transcend the present narrow obsession among architects and architectural students to document built environments physically to realise the aesthetics of form, but suggest an alternative approach through working closely with other disciplines like history, geography, sociology, on site, to be able to comprehend the holistic relationships at all scales to processes involved in the creation of their object of interest, their subsequent use and maintenance. It would necessarily involve periodic site visits to the river island to be able to participate with the, and simultaneously document, the cultural life of its inhabitants.

The processes, to observe and document, and finally represent the findings will be decided through a mode of communicating with and listening to, all the stakeholders in the place. The first part of the study would map the stakeholder of the place and try to comprehend their relationship to each other. The stakeholders, both dominant and marginal, as identified by the study group, would be communicated of the intent of the study. This would help in initiating an

interaction with these groups, which could help in providing clues to explore other forms of historical material in the nature of artefact, written documents, existing practices of living and organization, etc. that might help the study to be able to comprehend the conceptualization and evolution of the built environment at all scales.

THE METHOD



ⁱ Paul Aneerudha, *A book review – Discovery of Architecture, Indian Architect and Builder*, March 2014, Mumbai

ⁱⁱ M.N. Ashish Ganju and Narendra Dingle, *Discovery of Architecture*, Greha Publications, New Delhi, 2013

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^{iv} D. Nath, *The Majuli Island, Society, Economy and Culture*, Anshah Publishing House, Delhi, 2009, p.2

^v Ibid, p. 3

^{vi} Ibid. p. 3

^{vii} Singh Rana P. B., *Uprooting Geographic Thought in India*, Cambridge Scholarship Publication, London, 2009

State of the Art of Architecture
or
Value of Architecture in the Gradient of Time

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Synopsis

Our enquiry into history of architecture begins with the acknowledgement of a loss of architectural value over the last few centuries. The statement may be contested, and it will need to be corroborated by examples.

The benchmarks for distinguishing value will be 'cultural significance' and 'indigeneity', which form one set; while another set will be formed, by 'iconographic clarity' and 'constructional skill'. The examples selected for the analysis in the first section will be those which have been generally accepted as 'primary' architectural exemplars, and the time period will extend from ancient to the present. 'Primary' in this context means those examples which are universally accepted as superior, like the Taj Mahal, Sanchi Stupa, old Nalanda University, Taragarh Palace in Bundi, Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi, High Court in Chandigarh, Assembly Building in Bhopal, Gandhi Memorial museum in Ahmedabad, India Habitat Centre in New Delhi, to make a start.

The value matrix formed by our two pairs of benchmarks will be the framework for testing the gradient of value over time. This section will therefore be the backdrop of classical architecture for our study.

The second part of the paper will examine architectural value as everyday reality, the romantic as opposed to the classical. The examples for this section will be taken from Mehrauli, where human habitation has been continuous for several centuries, and where even today examples of architecture for contemporary existence are in evidence.

To test further the matrix of value developed in the first section, we will examine buildings in relation to human settlement. Buildings selected will be of 3 types - memorials, the example of Adam Khan's tomb (also known as Bhul Bhulayian); institutional, the example of the market place in front of the police station; and residential, the example of apartment blocks adjoining the archaeological park. These building types will be examined in their settlement pattern - organically evolved, or planned, or spontaneously developed.

It is our expectation that the value matrix will need to be refined further to understand the examples of the second section. The primary or classical examples are the ones that find place in the history books. These, whether ancient or contemporary, become fixed in time and frozen in their meaning. The second set of examples, more romantic in nature, present a dynamic morphology; and their meaning evolves in relation with the socio-political environment. Instead of the history book their place of representation is in theatre or cinema.

How can we see history represented in a cinematic dimension? This is not to suggest that history should have popular appeal, or any box office significance, but to examine whether the classical boundaries of historical research can be enlarged to have meaning for the marginalised as well as the privileged.

Architecture through History of Ahmedabad

Synopsis of Essay by R J Vasavada

Study in History of Architecture

Study in History of architecture is about the context (time) and about the breakthroughs (events) which have marked important development in building art and engineering. It investigates a larger area of influence in a specific context - in a sub-regional context of a larger cultural region in a historical evolution. The 'Indian' as we understand is diverse in regional characteristic, which are defined in its important regional and sub-regional cultural contexts. When we consider a study in History of Architecture, specific regional and sub-regional contexts could be investigated for its cultural characteristics. Only such specific study can help compiling knowledge on diverse culture and related architectural expressions across the sub-continent. The study of history of architecture could be seen at several levels depending on the types of institutional buildings and built environment for community settlements. Both these categories would have different conceptions and purpose as it satisfies different sets of requirements. There are several categories in which buildings could be classified, but its architectural expression characterizes a region and its local physical and cultural conditions, which influence all works of architecture.

Study in history of Architecture is a record of a time and events of past. It records the buildings, and built environments, its purpose, its manner of conception, and its making. The buildings are representative expression in its time, of man's needs and aspirations in an evolving society. The building enterprises in any society may be expressive of power or glory (monuments) or built environment for shelter, and settlements, where the concurrent traditions are expressed. The buildings in an era express the prevailing skills of crafts employed to express symbolic adorations, and engineering and technology relevant to its time. In sum total the buildings express the culture of an era and breakthroughs in the field of architecture and to study, investigate and analyze its architectural expression to appreciate its wisdom is the main purpose of History of Architecture.

The sources of study of history of architecture are the evidences available on buildings and the settlement form and structures. Inscriptional evidences, archaeological findings and the secondary sources of historical writings or other such sources are the tools to appreciate history. Historians of architecture while writing history of architecture refer to these and then record their 'findings' accompanied by drawings, sketches and photographs. History of Architecture could also be 'read' from a buildings and settlements, as such building acts are also a records of builders/patrons' intentions in a specific era. For this reason one of the methods to study history of architecture is by developing an ability to 'read' and 'investigate' buildings and then through its analysis, develop an architectural study to approach history which is substantiated by archival records establishing the processes of evolution of architecture of past. The buildings as monuments preserved as 'authentic' examples of a specific period of history, invariably display associative symbolism and other attributes relevant to their culture. The investigation of this can actually help us find out the cultural purpose behind its making. Thus study of associative arts and symbolism provide a very useful subject for understanding the socio-political and religious reality many times expressed through mythological connections in a building. Similarly studying the physical aspects of a building provides understanding of the engineering skills

and techniques of handling building materials. In this sense it helps us through these, to understand how they achieved the breakthroughs in building technology to elevate the skills and abilities in successive phases in history. The methods of study of buildings by deconstructing its elements and structural form provide us a tool to understand its making. These studies would provide an insight into the then prevailing practices of conceiving buildings and its realizing its designs as a creative process of articulating the ideas and imaginations of creating spaces relevant to a desired programme emerging from cultural aspirations of people for whom the buildings are built.

The study of history of architecture thus provides a record of various aspects of architecture – both physical/built as well as its inner reality natural to its purpose– with a specific emphasis on culture of people in their context. It also records related philosophical aspect of creative art, theory and societal Concerns, which help understand its outstanding universal values for habitat in general. It also helps us appreciate concepts of artistic creation with its creative attributes as reflection of the culture of people in their habitat. Historic architecture deals with creative instincts supported by the imaginative ideas to suit its purpose and skills for execution. It always has a meaning/duality which deals with the inner spiritual content and an external physical material structure integrating creative ideas arising out of culture of the people. This two-part fusion through a creative and constructive process is realized into a built form – which represents an architectural expression.

Architecture of Ahmedabad

“Relationship between cultural traditions and architectural expression of any society has been an important aspect of architectural historical studies. The importance of this field is realized in recent past and architectural anthropological studies are being taken up with a view to understanding better, the role of architecture as an expression which communicates the cultural values of the people for which it is created. The essential aspects that are exposed are the ideological content and how these manifest through architecture in a society. In India the scope of such studies is immense, as examples of culture specific built-environment are intact where one can observe the relationship between the ideological content and its subsequent expression in architecture. The present study is intended to be an architectural one focusing on the traditional urban society. It attempts at analysing the factors which are responsible to shape the architectural expression of the period. These factors are identified as physical; being those arising out of the needs of context, and societal factors, being those arising out of the way of life of people which includes all the aspects related to human society, combined both, i.e. physical and societal factors portray the whole sphere of cultural phenomena, which become specific to people and regions. Since the study is detailed with an architectural viewpoint, it attempts at documenting the physical aspect in its full detail to analyze its relationship with the characteristic social activities. In a way the study is an attempt to answer one of the fundamental problems of architectural theory that is about the potentiality of architecture. The question: ‘What can architecture potentially be?’ is the fundamental problem of architectural theory, which has always been characterized by certain degree of ambiguity, practiced as it is by both scholars and artist-architects. The question leads into the traditional academic domain of general anthropological and cultural sciences. This leads us to the examination of two important inherent factors; which are expressed by architecture in any context the Form and the Content.”¹

¹ R J Vasavada : Notes for Ahmedabad: UNESCO Study, 1980 (unpublished)

"A number of thoughtful architects began systematic investigation of urban life and urban architecture in the traditional cultures of the East. Naturally, it was in those countries where the influences of modern modes of economic and social organization were least felt and where, consequently, the traditional independence of built environment and society was still intact, which attracted most of the scientific attention. The Indian cultural hemisphere, including the Islamic borderlands in the West and the Buddhist countries in the East presented this unity in a unique form."²

Architecture of Gujarat Sultanate has been an area of my interest since last four decades. This phase of regional (provincial) architecture shows its beginnings in this region from almost 15th century and evolved over next two centuries. The period was at its best from the early phase of 15th century and established its strong basis with the founding of Ahmedabad. Ahmedabad has been a living city since its foundation in the 1411. "Ahmedabad stands out as an interesting example of residential and non-residential structures and antiquities that throw enough light on its long history, in which the preferences of different periods for occupation and land use are seen. It is intended to examine these aspects of the city with special emphasis of the areas selected for residential purposes and the residential structures where evidences are available. Significantly, human settlements have been to a very large extent controlled by the geomorphologic features that are found by not only the first inhabitants with low technological capabilities, but these factors assist or retard the growth pattern of a given area, and therefore, the first essential feature for the city of Ahmedabad is the geomorphologic aspects of the area. Ahmedabad is a riparian town so it has developed on the bad-land topography of the river Sabarmati. From 15th century, it is interesting to note that structures are found to exist. Many of these buildings are of religious nature, as they were built of more durable nature. They are significant aspects of the townscape and some of the structures that are from the late 16th century A.D. i.e. after about one hundred and eighty years of the naming of the city of Ahmedabad. From this period religious and residential structures are seen to exist. There are many varieties of these buildings that are seen in the town. They show differences in plan, elevation design of decorations according to the time of construction, financial support of the builder, the social practice and the social status position as well as the function of the structure."³

"The domestic architecture of Ahmedabad of 18th and 19th century displays certain interesting issues related to scale and proportioning of the components, the overall plans and also attitudes to making of these components. The question of how these must have been handled poses intrigues in the minds of a contemporary observer when one tries to understand the whole aspect of design of these buildings as we understand the same today with our own training,"⁴

² Jan Pieper: AARP 17 (March 1980) Ritual Space in India: Studies in Architectural Anthropology, edited by Jan Pieper, Introduction, page 2.

³ Dr R N Mehta, Unpublished Essay, Domestic Architecture of Ahmedabad, 1989

⁴ R J Vasavada, unpublished essay on Domestic Architecture of Ahmedabad, 1986