

The architectural profession has approached the crossroads in its development in India, and the direction it now chooses will determine both its effectiveness in serving society, and the validity of its future existence.

In this respect the profession must take the initiative in considering the relevant factors concerning its future options, rather than have them forced upon it through necessity or expediency. These factors have either been ignored or have only been considered in a haphazard and piecemeal manner for too long and, thus, they have had no perceptible impact on the profession to date.

The Problem

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The problems of the profession can be considered under three broad, but overlapping categories.

- 1) The problem of the architect's self-perception and the definition of his role as a professional.
- 2) The problems of developing a rational base for the profession (or the role of the profession in terms of overall social needs); and.
- 3) The problem of the level of technology to be aimed at to meet the needs of development.

Any reform begins at home. In the case of the architect, we must begin by examining what he thinks of himself and how he relates to society before considering the efficacy of his work.

There are two aspects to this issue. Firstly, in order to become aware of how the architects view themselves, it is necessary to identify the cultural and symbolic fixes which dominate his thinking. And, second, we must consider the concept of professionalism which, either through commission or omission, governs his activities.

Any discussion on the cultural and symbolic fixes in the minds of the Indian architect would pivot round the building of Chandigarh in the 1950s. Architectural thinking before this time was dominated by ideas received second-hand from the British administrators. We were very much out of touch with progressive thinking taking place in the rest of the world. The most significant architectural exercise in India during the first half of this century, was the building of Imperial Delhi. And this exercise was an amazing anachronism for, while in Europe ideas on architecture and the plastic arts were undergoing a revolution, the design of New Delhi by Sir Edwin Lutyen's was a masterpiece in

High Renaissance architecture, the result of a way of thinking typical of the early nineteenth century in Europe. (This exercise in cultural chauvinism generated such reactionary ideals amongst the 'brown Sahibs' that they still yearn for 'Indian' or 'Dravidian' styles of contemporary architecture). Lutyen's had by-passed the cultural and technological changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution and the consequent changes in design thinking which led to the 1920s in Europe being called the 'Heroic Period of Modern Architecture'.

These ideas of the Heroic Period were to come to India but not until 1950, when Le Corbusier was commissioned to design the new capital city for the State of Punjab. Le Corbusier had been one of the leading figures in the architectural revolution but was unable to utilise their talents to any significant extent, and the majority of the country's population is excluded from contact with them.

Ideally, a profession establishes a set of codes to regulate the conduct of its members in order to ensure a good standard of service. As already mentioned, the concept of professionalism prevalent today relates back to the values set down by the R.I.B.A. in Victorian England. This concept was based upon the implicit altruism of the architect in managing the interests of his clients and, today, this is still supposed to form the foundations of the architect/client relationship.

The legitimacy of this concept has been rarely valid in India not only because of its lack of social validity, but also because of the nature of the country's economic under-development. Civil contractors, civil engineers, and sometimes even laymen perform the services of the architect, and anything extra which the architect can put into a project is considered non-commensurate with the fee he is expected to charge. With his very identity in question, the architect in India generally becomes an avaricious businessman, governed by the ethics and morals of a severely stringent and competitive market place. This again leads to a conflict with the National Process.

While society at large is working towards socialistic goals the profession is rooted in commercial practices based on a distorted capitalistic system. It should be noted here that the country's huge black money economy finds a substantial outlet in the building industry and the architect is, at best, an unwitting accomplice.

Let us consider some of the external forces affecting the work of the architect. The most significant architectural resources are expended on a few prestige projects, either private or governmental. The people who employ private architects are generally moneyed individuals, private corporations or semi-government corporations who expect their buildings to be not just functional but also a conspicuous expression of their wealth or power. (In government projects, the values imputed are generally those of concerned ministers or senior officials who can be quite irrelevant in the architectural expression).

The architects serving the majority needs are, perforce, the middle-and lower-echelon government architects who have their own problems to cope with. They are hampered most often by two factors—most projects are run under the overall authority of engineers, (a peculiar distortion of architectural practice

introduced during the British rule when there was a great shortage of architects, in the modern sense of the term) and the fact that promotion and, therefore, responsibility, is governed by the number of years of service; a condition which is bound to suppress initiative and talent. The majority of the population is thus excluded from real contact with the architects.

And the majority problems such as the problem of mass housing are really outside the grasp of the average architect.

It is apparent that the profession is not really geared to even thinking about environmental problems of any magnitude and fundamental importance. What can be a relevant rational base for the architectural profession in India today?

At present we are ordering our priorities on a design method which emphasis architectural form and visual drama. Thus, while we have easily absorbed and emulated Le Corbusier's lessons in the handling of architectural and urban space, we have failed to evaluate the impact of these ideas on our life style and societal aspirations.

This tangential development in the profession is rooted in our educational system where the gathering of data and the articulation of the problem (as opposed to the solution) find little mention in the curricula. No wonder, therefore, that economics, sociology, psychology and technology (except in the form of elementary structural mechanics) are seldom reflected in our architecture. The rapid increase in industrialisation, the great expansion of urban centres, the green revolution in the countryside, and the accompanying environmental, social and political changes are situations which, we feel, the architectural community in the country has not equipped itself to face seriously.

Who can inspire and re-orient the never increasing number of architects in the country? It has to be they themselves—by opening their minds afresh to their own immediate environment and seeking their design parameters in the cultural milieu of their own community. The schools have to rise out of their stagnation to become arenas for the exchange of relevant information and Europe in the 1920s and 30s, and the design of Chandigarh was his largest and most ambitious project. The impact of Corbusier, a giant among the architectural thinkers of Europe, was bound to be tremendous on the nascent architectural community in India. Chandigarh became the first major fix on the modern architectural scene here. At the same time, the tendency among the Indian intelligentsia to seek higher education and cultural inspiration from Europe and, later, the U.S.A. was becoming widespread. Thus a pattern was established. The Indian architectural community took its direct inspiration from ideas developed in the western world.

During the 1960s, these western oriented architects attained commanding positions in the profession, both as teachers and as practitioners. They taught and practised what they had absorbed in the West ten or fifteen years previously, keeping up as best they could with subsequent developments in the countries that were their source of inspiration. It is important to note here that, while India in this period was undergoing tremendous social changes, these architects who now dominated the profession were out of touch with what was

going on here. Their eyes and minds looked elsewhere; and, sadly, their ideas were also becoming obsolete by western standards because they were outside the quickly evolving western milieu. With these cultural and symbolic fixes of the Indian architect in mind, it is relevant to speculate why he, unlike say the Indian economist or the Indian lawyer, has not tried to come to terms with his country's larger cultural and symbolic milestones. In another sense of course, he has come to terms with them with them, for he rejects them, and here lies the source of the architectural community's problems in society. As a consequence both the society and the profession suffer.

The second aspect of the problem of the architect's self-perception is in the concept of professionalism. Here, again, we have inherited a British legacy which originated amongst the values and mores of Victorian England when the Royal Institute of British Architects established a code of conduct to derive and maintain the legitimacy of the role for architects. In India, where clan and caste ties have always been predominant, sociologists point out that the very consciousness of professionalism has never taken root.

Since this institution of architectural professionalism does not strike a responsive chord in our society, architects have been unable to form an effective pressure group that would enable them to create the controlled conditions necessary to perform their services in the manner envisaged by the concept of professionalism. Much of the frustration of individuals and collective groups of architects arises from the fact that they do not possess any power to express or implement their ideas. In any form of government, pressure groups articulate and effectuate policy and, if the architects are unable to form an effective pressure group, they will continue to be misrepresented, underutilised, and generally castrated.

This leads to a conflict with the National Process, for while the need for while the need for good architecture and architects is enormous, we are places for constructing models concerned with the life of the real people around them. This is not to say that we adopt a totally nationalistic stand, but a high priority should be given to legitimising the image of the architect in the eyes of his immediate society.

We have seen from the preceding analysis how the internal forces acting on the minds of architects have alienated them from the realities of the Indian scene, and how the external forces acting on the profession as a whole have reduced its legitimacy in the eyes of society. These two factors combine to generate a certain confusion in the language of architecture at the level of techniques which are available for solving specific problems.

The lessons from the West have pointed towards the efficacy of an increasing industrialism and the consequent sophistication of technology—greater mechanisation, development and use of synthetic materials, and an accelerated programme of building to generate economies of scale. There is a danger of this becoming yet another fix in the minds of Indian architects, who, while being unable to recreate the new technology here are, nevertheless, fascinated by the new imagery. The most obvious example of this tendency would be some of the major permanent structures built for the recent Trade Fair in New Delhi.

The issue is, should the profession seek technologically oriented solutions to the architectural problems of the environment or should it find a more manpower intensive and the indigenous level-of-technology approach? Is it possible that a number of the more difficult environmental problems may require solutions that are more social than technological?

At a smaller scale of thinking, if we look in detail at what is happening in the building business, we see that there is a great deal of attention being given to the building envelope, while there is no corresponding attention being given to the servicing system required in buildings and on the building site. It is very difficult to find well-qualified and creatively inclined people to tackle the problems of mechanical servicing, public health and sanitary engineering, and quantity surveying.

Surely, a fascination for plastic expression and visual appearance without being backed by efficient and maintainable servicing systems will not produce buildings which are pleasant to live in. This sort of thinking will only ensure that the building industry stays backward and that the architects remains unable to provide a real direction and impetus to innovation.

Another aspect of technology almost totally ignored by the architects is the subject of building materials. In India, today there are shortages of even traditional building materials like bricks, tiles and timber, besides the well publicised, near scarcity of cement and steel. A great amount of research is being conducted to make available new and substitute materials by converting industrial and agricultural waste into useful building materials and to develop and propagate more economical building construction techniques. The architects and builders will need to change their conformist attitudes and the conventional building codes will need to be amended before the new technology can be harnessed for the welfare of society. Are the results of the researchers impractical or are the architects unmotivated to use them? Can the architect break this vicious circle by bringing these and the broader aspects of technology within the ambit of his concerns?

These are only a few of the problems which need to be resolved in order that architects and the building industry can seriously take up the challenge of development.

We have attempted to define some of the parameters governing the future development of the profession. It is apparent that while the need for shelter continues to increase, the architectural profession in its present state is unable to fulfil this need. We are beginning to realise that the traditional concerns of architects now need to be enlarged. It is necessary to work closely with a number of other disciplines so that our problems can be seen in more realistic and open framework.

We believe that it is only after setting up this dialogue, in which thinkers from the arts and social sciences as well as those from the environmental sciences can freely participate, a new method of structuring the architectural profession would emerge and architects could then hope to have a relevant role in society.

Historical Bias

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The root of formal architecture lies in written history. Since the books of history deal with the privileged and the powerful, their exploits and symbols of their authority, the source of inspiration for both public and architects has been historical monuments – temples, churches and palaces – artefacts built by master builders for their deeds and perpetuate their memory. This history, as told by religious and political leaders and historians for generations through legends, scriptures, folklore and books, has conditioned the socio-cultural thinking and has established the architectural frame within which the architects view their role and the public forms its sense of appreciation.

This historical bias has produced a value system which encourages monumental architecture and has determined to a large extent the architects' preoccupation with image making and visually dramatic forms. With the passage of time and changes in the socio-economic pattern, building techniques and materials, changes occurred in architecture also. At the turn of the present century with the industrial revolution trading place in Europe and newly invented machines producing products and performing functions which were new to society, architectural thinkers in Europe saw visions of revolutionary changes in architecture.

Hinging the art of architecture on the new-found technology and materials like concrete, glass, steel and devices like lifts and electric bulbs; architects designed buildings with large spaces, wide openings, straight lines and clean surface devoid of ornamentation and applications. The spaces and forms thus generated had an aesthetics which came to be known as machine aesthetics and the buildings following this style came to belong to the modern movement of architecture. The theoretical underpinnings of the modern movement were supposed to be functionalism and rationality, and it was published and sold as such to the general public, but whether the conceptual framework of this new style was different from the styles of past periods is debatable.

Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona pavilion, acclaimed as one of the masterpieces of the modern movement in Europe, was 'so purely symbolic in intention that the concept of functionalism would need to be stretched to the point of unrecognisability before it could be made to fit'.¹ His later buildings in Chicago and New York follow the same pattern and their pristine quality can well be compared with that of the Parthenon. Corbusier's Capitol Complex at Chandigarh is in the same strain as Lutyen's New Delhi. Awesome and grand, symbolic of power and authority over the common man. Conceptually, the two are the same although the styles differ.

Architects alone are not to blame. The public - particularly the cultural and

financial elite who in almost all cases are the clients and critics of architects - suffer from a similar edifice complex and it appears to be universal, cutting across geographical and ideological barriers. The Kremlin and the Capitol Hill appear to be the same and the Space City outside Moscow can be mistaken for one near Houston. Large corporations all over the world, whether private or public, vie with each other to show their commercial dominance through visual symbols in the form of buildings, taller and grander than others.

Architects are thus caught between the professional pressures to emulate the examples of giants like Mies and Corbusier, and the pressure of client taste to have buildings which are 'unique' indulge in design exercises which vary from pure plagiarism to feeble attempts at 'originality' - in most cases arrived at by clever manipulation of forms and other design elements. The pre-occupation remains with the end product and what is visible.

The more substantive questions of cultural and socioeconomic relationships with the built environment are lost sight of, if not totally ignored. Even in cases where individual architects try to cope with the larger socio-economic questions, the interpretation of the problem remains highly personalised and more often than not the solutions turn out to satisfy only those who share the author's view of the life style.

To fulfil the role determined by historical tradition and client's taste, architect designed and sustained over the years an educational system which puts heavy emphasis on aesthetics. From Vitruvius to Beaux Art to Bauhaus, the stress has been on design elements like proportions, composition and form and on their interplay to create artefacts of visual impact. These academic ideas were derived from the Arts and Crafts Movement, painting and sculpture provided the inspiration. Indeed, their study has formed an important part of architectural education. Even in the Bauhaus which was concerned with the implication of the new-found technology for architectural design, the source of ideas remained the painting and sculpture of that period. Science and technical subjects like physical laws and mechanics did not form any significant part of architectural study. In recent years subjects relating to economics and sociology have been introduced but what impact they will have in changing the direction of architectural thinking is a matter for speculation.

Similarly, the client-architect relationship, professional ethics and the building industry and trade have been organised over the years to provide to the upper strata of society an architectural service which is highly personalised and which is designed to meet the particular wants and tastes of individuals of this elite group.

Architectural literature also emphasizes heavily the visual aspects of design. Books are full of photographs and little is said of either the causes or the effects of what is designed. The same goes for the architectural periodicals which can well be compared to fashion magazines. Debates and seminars are conducted in a language which at times is difficult to comprehend by an average architect, leave alone the general public. Thus, a vital means of communication with the public to convey, exchange and discuss ideas on the substantive issue of environmental planning concerning society are made ineffective.

The problem today is not of the few and the privileged, but of the masses and near destitute who are forced to leave their impoverished villages to come to the cities in the hope of keeping flesh and bone together. Arriving in the cities, they live on pavements, in drainpipes or under culverts. They join dogs to scrounge for food in dustbins near large eating houses and posh hotels or beg or simply prostitute to feed themselves and their dependents.

Those who are fortunate enough to get some work join millions already living in vast sprawls of hutments built of tin cans, burlap and bamboo sticks with little or none of the basic facilities—water, sanitation and light. Some find their way into overcrowded chawls in dilapidated buildings, many of which crumble with the first monsoon downpour, taking with them some of their inhabitants.

This pattern is repeated year after year exerting unbearable pressure on the already limited infrastructural resources of the cities, creating inhuman living conditions and acute social tensions. Today, the magnitude of this problem has become such that over three-fourths of the total population of our large cities lives in conditions of deprivation and despair. It is commonly agreed that providing shelter to these millions of homeless and basic environmental facilities in large urban centres is the most urgent task facing architects and planners.

The problem is unprecedented. Never before in history have such problems of environmental planning been faced. Therefore there are no set theories or tested solutions which can be readily applied. Moreover, a very large part of the problem area falls below what may be called 'conventional design threshold', so conventional architectural methods are largely inoperative. In situations like those of pavement dwelling and squatter settlements, due to lack of resources, it is not possible to provide pucca houses in well laid out patterns with the necessary environmental facilities. Of necessity, solutions must be found in terms of self-aided houses made of inexpensive and discarded materials which can be added to and improved upon over a period of time, to suit the requirements and resources of individual households.

In situations like these, architects using the conventional design approach of conceiving buildings in terms of form and space, employing sophisticated building techniques, using materials like concrete, brick and glass; and operating within the existing organizational framework of inviting tenders, awarding contracts and providing the clients a finished product, cannot make any meaningful contribution.

Even in areas like those of low-cost housing, which could be considered design threshold and where architects can make significant contribution in alleviating the problem. The record to date has been dismal. Lack of knowledge regarding low-cost building materials and architects own inadequate understanding of local climate and social conditions has prevented them from evolving designs and standards suited to the Indian pattern of living.

Moreover, most architects in India have been preoccupied with prestigious projects which are more remunerative in terms of money and professional prestige. In the absence of social responsibility. This has left them with little time and will to concentrate on environmental problems concerning the poorer sections of society.

Also, the prestigious projects like those of multi-storied administrative and commercial buildings, luxury hotels and cultural centres lend themselves to the conventional design approach with which most architects feel more at home. Consequently, much-needed talent and material has been diverted into projects which architects feel more at home. Consequently, much-needed talent and material has been diverted into projects benefiting few at the cost of basic facilities for the masses. No doubt, sophisticated structures and multi-storied buildings are necessary in certain instances to house facilities vital to the economy of the society, but such projects must be seen in a larger perspective. Professional and material investment in these should be commensurate with their use value in the national framework of socioeconomic needs. Such buildings must reflect not only what the individual or corporate clients can afford but, also, what the society on the whole can sustain.

In the prevailing social conditions of massive population increase, widespread poverty and rising expectations and where the need for basic shelter has not been met for three quarters of the population, the problem cannot be answered through the conventional orchestral approach and within the confines of the existing organizational framework. The profession must undergo fundamental changes in its structure and more importantly, in its perception of its role in society. Changes are needed in the architectural education patterns to acquire proper understanding of problems and new ways of solving them.

The existing organizational setup including architect-client and architect-contractor relationships needs modifying so that professional services can be made available to the masses in the larger interest of society. Professional ethics must also change to favour social needs rather than individual interests. The need is for architects to lower their sights to reach the humble, at times sacrificing quality for quantity and making marginal improvements for the benefit of many in preference to total accomplishments for the use of the few.

In a society where the majority lives under subsistence levels and where, due to scarce resources, it is not possible to provide 'desirable' standards to most in the foreseeable future, the cumulative effect of small improvements to our environment can create a revolution. Architects must divert their attention to innovations and design standards which will have wide applications and which can be adopted to advantage by builders, artisans and homeowners.

The emphasis must shift from the end-product to the process which creates built-environment and in which factors other than architectural, and people other than architects, participate. In the process, the architects must be prepared to lose some of the control which they like to enjoy over the product.

The realization must come that buildings and towns are not the exclusive preserve of architects or products of their efforts alone, nor do they have any exceptional insights into these problems. In fact, in the past, most of what has been built (much good with some bad has been built) is the outcome of the continuing activity of a whole community using shared experiences. Architects must become part of this common enterprise using their specialized knowledge to stimulate and help development in the desired direction providing missing links where necessary. The approach must be to support and encourage

community initiative and effort and not to provide a substitute for it.

There is much that architects can learn from the villages and small towns of our country. From nondescript dwellings in old parts of our cities built over a period of time by their owner occupiers with the help of artisans and mistries; from the bungalows built all over India by English engineers and administrators who certainly had a better understanding of our climatic conditions. Much can be learnt from a typical Bengal village built around a pond creating an almost perfect ecological system; from Poles of an old city, grouping dwellings around a common space, forming a cohesive social group; from town dwellings of Rajasthan making extensive use of courtyards and traces; and from the innovative genius of the people of Hyderabad-Sindh who created techniques to provide ventilation in their homes. Much can be learnt even from the 'busties' of Calcutta and Bombay. No doubt, much is wrong with them and much can be improved there, but it can be hardly denied that they are the only examples of mass housing in India which the people living in the can afford.

There are innumerable such examples of built environment created by anonymous builders, which are frictional - and some even aesthetically satisfying. These examples are closer to the problems with which we are faced today and more relevant to understanding the process of development than temples and places of the past from which architects have derived their knowledge and inspiration, so a beginning must be made by rewriting history; a history which will emphasize the efforts and aspiration of the common man through the ages, his accomplishments and his artefacts; history which will remove the distortions in our perception and change our value system, for without it the relevance of architects in solving the problems staring us in the face will always be questionable.

- Rayner Banhan, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, the architectural Press, London, p.3

Team Approach Needed

Kamath, Vasant. "Team Approach Needed." In *The Architect: a Symposium on the New Disciplines of a Profession, Seminar (India) Magazine*; vol 180. SEMINAR. New Delhi, India: Seminar Publications, 1974.

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That there is a widespread frustration among architects in India is evident from the fact that thousands are leaving the country every year for better opportunities abroad. The frustration is on many deferent levels. Many young architects are frustrated because they are exploited and underpaid. As employees in private offices, they see fat fees coming in for jobs which they have handled at a ridiculously low hourly rate.

Salaries are unrelated to profits, individual output and ability, in a system which tends to be grossly unjust. Low salaries are related to the type of work that is expected of young architects. Their architectural education trains them to be designers yet on entering offices they find that youngsters are given only the mechanical tasks of drafting and presenting others' creations. Furthermore, there is often a conflict between the values inherent in their bosses' designs and their own design values fall far below expectations tempts to express themselves meet with a discouraging response and the frustration grows. In other offices where maybe they are allowed to design, the frustration is of a different nature. They find that the commercial pressures of cut-throat competition and under-cutting tactics, produce a 'building-a-day' attitude. Quality is sacrificed for quantity and they are forced to churn out stereotyped, second rate designs, without being given enough time to think about problems in depth and arrive at appropriate solutions.

The outlets for these frustrations are few. Some architects offices or agencies, where at least the salary, the allowances, the regular increments and, finally the pension make for some degree of economic security.

For others with design aspirations and/or the hope of big money, private practice is the dream. But, in an atmosphere of stiff competition, under-cutting and corrupt practices, of black money and difficulties of obtaining payment, few survive. Some struggle waiting for the big break which day never comes, while others give up and it is bitterly frustrating.

Many sensitive architects also react against what they see as the unreal and irrelevant preoccupations of the profession. They react against the obsession for forms and sculptural expression and see the need for buildings that really work; for buildings that recognize and reflect the many complex problems of today. They also see the fundamental, basic problems that demand urgent solutions are being ignored. They are frustrated by a lack of opportunity to do anything which is really meaningful and worthwhile.

Is it any wonder, then, that there is a mass exodus of architects from the country?

The drain on our resources is enormous. We invest large sums of money every year on the education of architects, but get little in return. On the one hand, many talented youngsters leave the country for fulfilment abroad and, of the other hand, those who do remain are neither usefully employed, nor employed in situations which best utilize their education and mental capacity.

What has gone wrong? The problem is primarily one of attitudes, deeply-rooted attitudes which are ingrained in the profession and manifested in the educational system, the structure of offices, the building designs and in the architect's perception of the nature and scope of his work; attitudes that must change before architects can play a more relevant role in socio-economic development. Let us take a look at some of these attitudes.

In the educational system, many of the outmoded attitudes continue to prevail. Firstly, there is the accent, subconscious perhaps, on plastic expression and visual impact in the final design. An accent of being different and spectacular. Secondly, and related to the above, is the accent on individual creativity rather than coordinated teamwork.

It must be recognized that a valid methodology of architectural problem solving is a thorough analysis of all the problem constraints (planning, sociological, economic, structural, constructional, technological and environmental), and balanced solutions which reflect those constraints are more important than personal responses to the less tangible aspects of form, space and aesthetics. An awareness of the intangibles in design can and should be inculcated, at the emphasis should be on the process of design and a synthesis of the total problem. We cannot expect a student to achieve a maturity of expression in five years, but we should at least ensure that the starting point of his development is a rational theoretical base.

The emphasis on individuality in architectural education is also outmoded in the present context. For, with the ever increasing scope of human knowledge; with the increasing complexity of servicing systems and constructional techniques; with the availability of new materials and new design tools; with an increasingly complex social and economic framework and with the growth of overlapping but distinct sub-specializations, it is becoming more and more difficult for the architect to comprehend and coordinate the total design problem. There is a real need for the setting up of broad-based design teams to study and find solutions the complex problems of today. A limited architectural vision is not good enough.

We must recognize this situation and train students for it by encouraging teamwork and by taking the accent away from individual design. Team situations can be created in which architectural students work with each other and also with students from other fields such as planning, economics, sociology, art and engineering, to tackle broad problems. And the ability of a student to work in and contribute to such team situations, should also form a part of his overall assessment.

We must see the architect not in isolation, but as one of a number of specialists who can work together to solve the problems of building in their widest sense.

Architectural institutions in the country seem to pay lip-service to this concept in the widening of their curricula to cover a smattering of other subjects. But, in the final analysis, the emphasis on imagery and individuality remains and the actual experience of team situations is absent. This emphasis can change only if the isolation so faculties are broken down and inter-disciplinary studies, in a broad sense, are implemented.

It is futile, however, to talk about changing the content and bias of architectural education, unless the attitudes and deep-rooted beliefs of the profession undergo a radical change first. For it is the leading practitioners and educationists among the profession who are directly responsible for the educational policies of today. And, unless there is a genuine awareness among them of the above problems and a conscious reappraisal of their own out-moulded attitudes, no change is possible. In drawing rooms and on public platforms, many architects profess to be aware, but the acid test of their sincerity is in their work and in the structure and organization of their private kingdoms, their offices. It is there that we see them in their true colours. If any changes are to come about in the educational system, they must be begun at 'home', that is, in the architect's office.

To begin with, architects could recognize the fact that the youngsters who join their offices have been trained as designers and should be employed as such. Through the setting up of design teams within the office structure, young architects could be given an opportunity to participate in the design process. Each design team could handle a few prefects at a time and be given complete responsibility for the design and implementation of their projects. The traditional hierarchy of the 'prima-donna' architect and his many assistants, would be replaced by a structure of design teams. As conscious policy, any rigid hierarchy within the teams should be discouraged, as this could again lead to master assistant relationships. A natural hierarchy and division of responsibility may develop, as a result of the personality interaction involved, but this would be a fluid hierarchy rather than an imposed, rigid one.

The composition of teams could be balanced on the basis of the nature of its prefects and the ability, experience, interests and specializations of its members, so as to create conditions where each member can make a positive contribution to the group effort. In such a structure, young architects would have a part to play in the decision-making process and, thus, a much greater sense of participation, involvement and fulfilment. The design load would be shared, manpower resources would be better utilized, projects would be more efficiently run and, perhaps, better buildings would be designed. As a corollary, more efficiency and a better utilization of resources would result in higher productivity, more profit and therefore, higher salaries. The consequences of such a change would, therefore, remove many of the present causes of frustration among young architects and would make for a better professional service.

Together with this change in attitude towards decision-making in the design process, must come the realization that the present obsessive need for personal expression in sculptural gymnastics, must be replaced by a more rational, balanced approach to design; an awareness of the complexity of present day architectural problems and their solutions, and a willingness to accept and cooperate with specialists from various fields, which encompass all the forces in

society that influence and shape buildings.

This involves allowing a more active participation in the design process of the various engineers who already form a part of the building design team but who, by and large, perform a negative, remedial friction, working within irrational limitations imposed by the architect. This further involved an expansion of the traditional design team to include policy makers, planners, economists, sociologists and other relevant specialists.

If such teams were to be formed and could work in the right spirit of cooperation and 'give and take', buildings would be a much more relevant response to social, economic and technological needs. The buildings we see today are either embodiments of the private fantasies and inflated egos of their architects, or unashamed, insensitive responses to commercial pressures. Inherent in both, these are a blatant disregard for ethics and the real needs of today.

A few days spent in walking around any Indian city will highlight the striking contrast between the monumental, indulgent, expensive and fanciful public and private buildings and the grim, stark, indescribable squalor of the urban slums; slums where people live in makeshift shelters or under no roof of all, where there is no water-supply or drainage, and electricity is unimaginable; where there are no places to defecate in privacy, where education and training facilities, medical and community services are not available; where disease is rampant and the mortality rate high; and where there is not even a silver lining to the dark clouds of the future. This is the grim reality of the urban slums, where millions of Indians eke out a day to day existence with apathy, resignation and an animal instinct for survival.

And urban slums are but one tiny part of the massive problems today. There is an urgent need for cheap houses, schools, dispensaries, hospitals, community centres and infrastructure services, on a scale that is almost inconceivable. And how the available resources of manpower, materials, technology and money can best be mobilized to meet these needs is one of the fundamental problems of the hour. This is what we should be concentrating our energies on.

Yet, one has only to visit a handful of architects' offices, both public and private, to realize that the vast architectural resources of the country are largely being wasted on pandering to the comfort and whims of the elite, and the self-glorification of the architects. Who then is going to tackle the problems of the slum-dweller and the villager? Will the architect of tomorrow get to grips with the screaming reality, or will he, as he is doing and has been doing, turn a blind eye to it, happy and content in his dream world?

The future of the profession depends on the path it chooses. The choice is between remaining largely irrelevant to the mainstream of future development. Many young architects today are aware of this and want to do something meaningful in terms of the basic problems, but find that there are few ways open to them. The system does not respond.

Consider the need for 'low-cost' housing. Government responses to this need are largely insensitive, crude and unrealistic. Their low-cost houses are not nearly low-cost enough and do not even begin to cater to the people who need them

most. Where houses costing Rs 1000 or less are necessary and feasible, they build houses that cost Rs 6000 each; where a sensitive understanding of lifestyles is needed, they build inhuman blocks. The reality is ignored and the officials hide behind Master Plans, Building Bye-Laws, scarce resources and the promise that someday, somewhere, they will build houses for these millions. But the houses need to be built now. And it has been convincingly demonstrated that houses can be built that are acceptable yet cheap enough, and that large subsidies need not be involved.

The problem is not one of the scarce resources, but of how available resources can be intelligently used. The problem of low-cost housing can be solved if one's conception of it changes; if one accepts a moral responsibility to tackle and solve it; if Bye-Laws and Master Plans, instead of catering to elite, minority interests recognize and reflect majority needs; if instead of making hypocritical promises, the authorities combine in a concerted effort to find solutions.

To those who argue that the problems to slums, etc. are outside the realm of architecture, one can only say that their conception of architecture must then change, for these are the pressing problems of today. It is true that given the traditional bias of architecture, such problems are outside its scope, for they are social and economic problems too. But then, the traditional bias of architecture, as argued in this article must change; architects' attitudes must change, and it is only by adopting a truly multi-disciplinary approach, can the profession transcend its narrow limitations and play a relevant role in solving the complex human problems of today.

Relationship with Clients

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The profession of architects is very difficult to define but a broad definition could be expressed as follows. Architecture combines the skills of a technologist, an artist and a social psychologist. Although the qualities demanded are so varied, present training concentrates around aspects like aesthetics, functions and elementary building technology. All through training and later, during professional practice, the architect is fond of talking about the variety of clients, client-architect relationship, client's choices, client's satisfaction, etc. No architect tells the truth but the fact remains that architects are terrible egoists and rarely design in accordance with the demands of the job in totality. Any soul searching on our part reveals this gap between precept and practice.

Common observation shows that architects and doctors are very conscious of their professions. Let us compare their role in society with that of other professionals and find the points of vulnerability. Any neglect by food processors or drug manufacturing concerns can affect the life of thousands. Politicians can destroy the morale of an entire society. Educationists train hundreds of youngsters year after year who are the makers of future society. An army general could, perhaps, decide the destiny of the nation. Doctors are essential for a healthy and thriving society. Compared to this, we are designers of buildings and however badly they may be designed, people get accustomed to them and keep living in them for generations. Any comparison of roles does not justify the importance which society attaches to architects.

What we exactly imply by our role as professionals would provide endless discussion. However, there would be no difference of opinion on the fact that we have definite responsibilities to society in general. Talking in the Indian context, we architects have hardly contributed to the general good. Whatever contribution has been made can be summed up in the general category of 'better aesthetics'. This has invariably been the result of foreign stimulation, i.e. Le Corbusier's and Louis Kahn's works in India, and the architectural training directly in the West or indirectly in India under western influence. Beautiful buildings were in demand when there were very few architects and the profession was not recognized by society at large. Then came the period when an architect's service was considered vital for a good building.

However, there were very few clients then - only the very rich or industries and institutions. It was easy to satisfy them. Recently, in the wake of socialism, the need for building for millions and the shortage of resources, architects with their aesthetic assets are now more vulnerable. They are required to perform the additional role of shrewd economists. Certainly, in the near future they will Architects have failed to recognize the need for this and, subsequently, neglected the necessary modifications required in training. The result has been

that no architect of repute is concerned with the many large housing project, the thousands of developmental building units and the common man's home in different regions which comprise the bulk of building activity. Works of this magnitude pose problems like the optimisation of resources. the maximum exploitation of land, minimum cost, permanency, little maintenance and a very fast rate of construction. These are handled individually or collectively by engineers, bureaucrats and developers We could all sing in chorus about these buildings being ugly, inhuman, impersonal, iniquitous and everything else. That may be so but they reflect the need of our society and, consequently are a commentary on the incapacitated profession of architects which can only be addressed by greater competence on our part.

Whereas the individual client during the fifties and sixties was interested in good looking buildings with adequate facilities, the present day buildings are designed for dummy clients (developers) or faceless clients (community). The demands of the situation are to provide solutions which are not exclusive but general enough and readily multipliable. This is an acute problem in urban areas where the demand is towards imitating westernized solutions and in rural areas where they want to transplant the urban image on their environment.

Against this background, architects have notions of their own regarding the needs of the community. They tend to disregard feedback data and social research in the field to ascertain the success or drawbacks/limitations of their projects. Contempt and a false sense of ego in relation to fellow professionals prevents any constructive criticism to permeate their thinking. Every project has defects which, if unheeded, are repeated by every other architect facing the same problem afresh. The root cause of this lies in the working methods of architects. They tend to be impressed by photographs of buildings in glossy magazines ignoring the concept of function and the demands of each individual situation.

The need for architects to play a constructive role in a developing society hardly requires elaboration. An enlightened architect can contribute a lot in dealing with the multifaceted problems of buildings. The technological aspects of evolving new building materials and innovating new techniques requires the urgent attention of experts. Certainly the architect has to find substitutes for brick, steel and concrete to meet the increasing shortage of basic materials. New methods to exploit the potential of these materials have to be found. Our resources of land, material and money demand new forms and new solutions to problems. The concept of rooms, the dimensions of which vary from ten feet to fifteen of eighteen feet in either direction, has to undergo change. There must be another solution to square or rectangular rooms with definite doors and windows. We cannot bypass the problem by saying the clients want it. Research in terms of sociological implications of building types, applied economics on cost, rent, instalments, land price, etc. is necessary to meet with the demands and aspirations of clients.

Housing is a most vital sector. As a recent estimate shows, a total of 24 million housing units are required to be constructed to provide homes for all. It is a fact that most of us should have to be working with housing projects and service in situational buildings. Whereas we architects visualize each housing project as an exercise in community design the client needs an identity of an independent

unit. This may invariably take the shape of a cluster of one-storey buildings or, at the most, two or three storied. It is a challenge to us to devise independent units so that clients can repair, replace, rebuild to suit changing needs and personal tastes in accordance with the over-all economics of land and structure.

Take, for example, the use of high-rise housing in the centre of the city in order to provide high densities. No building has yet been successful because it fails to fulfil the client's expectations of a house of his own. Why cannot we provide independent units in a multi-storied building? Having fulfilled this basic desire, most people will find it easy to adjust to a different living pattern.

Different clients have different problems. Although most of what they demand is easy to visualize, of great importance are their psychological demands which require more serious notice. Building brings about a change in the physical environment for the client. Such a change has to be incorporated with the special demands of human nature. A general remark applicable to all of us is that we are obsessed by beauty function, technology, etc. and we forget that the demands of society are more important than the private vision of architects. Architects have to search for and pose problems based on intensive studies in problem areas. No one attempts this nor does any other organization function to provide the necessary relevant background information. The present problems have to be projected adequately in scale, economy and a time perspective to meet with future demands and problems.

Professional Ideology

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If the majority of architects in India lack any ideological vision, the more sensitive ones are increasingly becoming aware of their incapacity/inability to make their vision of things and the environment acceptable to society. Architects, including physical planners, by the very definition of the terms, are involved in a project—the shaping of a man-made environment at a relatively durable level. They assume needs, demands, styles of life and concomitant values, beliefs and attitudes, which call for symbolization.

The symbolization has an ideological character, notwithstanding the denials of the architects. The contention that architects and physical planners merely project trends on the basis of a given situation is itself an ideological position, for it presumes that life styles will not change, or ought not to change fundamentally—a conservative stance.

His feeling of inability is markedly pronounced because the architect's profession is centrally involved in the definition of the goals, values and objectives of a society. Like art, philosophy and religion, but unlike medicine, it cannot escape from the realm of the subjective—the definition of values and the creation of meaning. Like art, it is more involved in the subjectivity of man because of the very nature of the product: form-in-content and content-in-form, making it dependent of the culture and society, the basic framework of communication.

The relevant questions in this context are: how far have architects in India, as a professional group defined their views on the subject? To what extent are these views shared by or linked with other groups in the society, especially the elite groups? And how far is the possession or lack of the views related to their inability to make an impact on the man-made environment?

For the West, one could safely presume that there is a consensus of values which is holding the society and polity together and, therefore, the problem of professional ideology could be reduced to one of identifying and seeing the link with the ideology of other groups in society. However, society in India is not consensual; its integration is still predominantly political. The Indian tradition essentially lacks an inner core of unity such as that generated in the West by the Greco-Roman and Judea-Christian civilizations. Our past is fractured with broken pieces lying unaligned. It is on this fractured tradition that the British rule was imposed, generating the conflict between tradition, albeit a fractured one, and modernity, a {gift} from the West.

It is this cultural past which the Indian architect has to reckon with in defining his goals, objectives and values. The problem is one of choice and selection. In parenthesis, one might mention that the ancient temple architects of India had not to make this choice. The architect symbolized in concrete space-dimension,

the given belief-system, primarily scriptural. At best, he gave form to the potentialities implicit in that belief-system. Life was one whole, and meaning to that life was given by religion. Thus, architects had no need for a specific or particular viewpoint in shaping the man-made environment—the shared, common belief-system provided that. Although architectural treatises were written then, they were inalienably tied to the religious literature. It is doubtful whether architecture had the professional autonomy during this period which the priesthood did.

As we move from the ancient to the medieval period, we notice that Indian architecture was enmeshed in the larger issues of the conflict, adjustment, and part-reconciliation between two different and distinct belief-systems: the Hindu, with social inflexibility and doctrinal liberalism, and the Muslim with its social liberalism and doctrinal rigidity. Before these rival traditions could, if ever, reach a point of synthesis, India's cultural fabric was severely rent by westernization, which partly heralded modernization.

The first expressions in Indian architecture of this onslaught of westernization were sheer monstrosities, 'designed' for the 'enlightenment' of the 'natives'. They were exhibits of western rule on an alien soil. Reconciliation with the past of this country was sedulously and systematically avoided. But this phase, however, contributed to an incipient professionalisation of architects: architecture became a discipline. Architects were freed from the dominance of a received dogma. But, on the other hand, they fell for 'modernity' which, in actual practice, meant imitation of western models of the man-made environment, most of the time without relevance to the cultural past of this country and its social and economic conditions. As in other walks of life in India, the gap between 'tradition' and 'modernity' was not bridged. Neither revivalism nor baling imitation of the West would constitute a solution, not even when imitations are made in the name of the 'International Style'.

Architects in India do not seem to be involved in the anguish, the pain, and suffering of the transition, nor are they particularly interested in symbolizing the hopes and fears of the people of this country. They are not even willing to reckon with the social and economic factors involved in designing structures specifically suited to Indian conditions. These are harsh and extreme allegations, but they inevitably go with the doctrine of 'International Style'.

Seen in this light, it is not difficult to understand why architects have not evolved a philosophy of architecture which would be modern as well as relevant to this country. Thus, the claimed professionalism of architects in India is of a very dubious variety.

This judgement is perhaps not arbitrary; it is confirmed by the common man's perception of the architect's role. With what expectation does he approach an architect? To ask him merely to put up a utilitarian structure, to enclose space for a living/ working purpose? That job is better done by a civil engineer, a tent-maker, a mobile designer: they have made a large number of shelters without the benefit of or advice from architects. These shelters will not collapse just because an architect has not been consulted.

Let me put the question differently, with the intention of answering it. What could motivate an Indian to seek advice from an architect? I believe it would be

the requirement for a durable shelter which takes care of his needs, which are not only biological—at a certain level they are universal—but also culture-specific needs, subsuming values, attitudes and beliefs. Thus, a 'shelter' implies a larger dimension of meaning to his life. But, in the Indian situation an architect's repertory of expertise consists of 'International Style' or more simply, 'Western Style.' That style stemmed from the human condition in the West and is at several removes from the culture-specific or socio-economic specifics of our situation.

Caught up in this synthetic professional ethos, an Indian architect at best offers the client the 'status symbol' of 'International Style', and not a 'meaningful' shelter. However, the better class of 'clients' would simply prefer to have the foreign label on the products of this International Style through some Paris-New York based firm or a foreign architect. Such a product has obviously a higher status.

In short, the architectural profession in India has no specific 'expertise' which is of relevance to the Indian condition. What aggravates the situation is that the client too sees the architect as a decorator of sorts. The result is a near absence of professional ideology—an absence of a specific viewpoint on life in India and its problems in the context of architectural practice. To acquire professionalisation, which will confer on him the authority to shape the environment, the architect needs public approval and consent. It is a two-way process: the artist carries a vision fostered through formal training, and the public confirms it by drawing upon his services.

This sharing between the Indian architect and the public has been hampered by the way architects as a group are linked to other groups and the society as a whole. The emergence of shared values, objectives and goals has, therefore been largely missing. Professions themselves have a character similar to that of a medieval guild (from which professions sprung). Involving the setting up of internal standards for its operation, autonomously regulated, largely by professional associations. The training of the Indian architect is no doubt of a professional level, and the associational structure exists in form. Yet, somehow, these do not seem to have contributed much to the definition of the architect's professional role.

For linking their values, objectives and goals to the culture and ideology of other groups (primarily client-groups) and the society, professions and occupations have theoretically two alternatives: professional autonomy and diffusion. Let us first spell out the conditions in which professional autonomy is bred and nurtured.

The public acceptance of the right of a person to give expert advice and the acceptance, by society, of the claim that the advice is given for the benefit of the client and not merely for commercial reasons, help to establish the professional status. The practicing member of the profession is granted the right to be judge, without feeling undue pressure from the prejudices and predilections of the client. The submission of a client to the authority of a professional is based on the assumption that (1) the client does not and can-not have the necessary skill to handle his problem; (2) that the stakes and risks are doubly high if the advice of the professional is ignored. Professional claim is then a claim of authority. The authority is to be unchallenged from outside the profession. Moreover, it

presumes absence of alternative instrumentalities.

The level of professionalisation could be measured in terms of the level of challenge from outside, or the number of alternative instrumentalities available. The medical profession is closest to this definition of professionalisation, though in India it is still involved in waging battles against alternative instrumentalities, ranging from self-medication to quackery.

Professionalisation in architecture has an added degree of complexity because it constantly involves the clarification, definition, concretization and symbolization of life styles. Along with this complexity of definition, the architect's claim of expertise is subject to challenge by the common sense of the client; nay, even of the prejudices of the public. Then what is ironical is that by foregoing the advice of an architect, the public, or more specifically the client, would not be risking the loss of anything 'significant'. The client, even when cornered, would manage to get his prejudices incorporated into the architect's advice.

This conflict between the client's view of the professional role of the architect and the architect's own view, is minimized when the clients and the architects share values and beliefs with respect to the man-made environment. In the West, the situation is precisely that in India, because of the discontinuities and fractures in the tradition, and the conflict between 'tradition' and 'modernity' neither the clients nor the architects, and for that matter, not even the society, has any defined view on the man-made environment.

The absence of a definition of the goals, values and objectives of architecture, either from the architectural profession or from the client-public, promotes a fit, an amalgam between the Indian architect's 'International Style' and the client's status-hunt for the 'foreign'. Both refuse to face themselves or go through the painful exercise of searching for meaning in life.

Now to diffusion of ideology. Instead of treating it at a professional level, if architecture is merely practiced as an occupation, the chances of its diffusion are high. Among society's several commercial interests, the architect's occupation also takes its meaningful place. If the architect finally comes to accept the fact that a house is a product like tooth paste, then he has little difficulty in recognizing the fact that it is subject to consumer tastes. The architect is then a mere designer who makes products tailored to consumer tastes without any fanfare about the values, objectives and goals of society and their symbolization.

A paradoxical position may prevail here: the public may not always be satisfied with the ideology of 'consumer-taste'. The result: a clash between consumer taste and 'consumer-interest'. The inevitable resolution of such a clash in a developing country is nationalization or greater public control under the plea of safeguarding the public interest. The logical outcome would be the architect's inability to shape the environment.

From the foregoing it is clear that neither professional autonomy nor diffusion would exclusively ensure profession allocation in a field like architecture. A certain mix of the two might be the ultimate condition for ensuring profession allocation. The commercial aspect of architectural practice, therefore, cannot be wholly ignored in any definition of the specific goals, values and beliefs of the

profession. However, the business interest has to be defined in such a way that it does not conflict with the primary professional role of the architect in shaping the man-made environment, consistent with the needs of the people as perceived by the architect. In order to do so, the architect has to diffuse his professional ideology to other groups in society, especially the elite groups, who are primarily involved in clarifying and defining the goals, values and objectives of Indian society.

In defining these ends of Indian society, the architect like other professionals in this country has to take note of political ideologies currently prevailing in the opinion market. These ideologies have implications for all aspects of life including those which the architect would think to be his specific area of operation. Any simple acceptance by the profession of any particular political ideology, or a mix of both, as the basis for the definition of its professional ideology would amount to surrendering its professional role of shaping the environment in terms of its own perception of the needs of the society.

Architects cannot merely be illustrators in concrete of given political ideologies. Luckily for the architect, because of our democratic political framework, in spite of ideological noise political authority does not seem normally to control creative expression in architecture. Theoretically, the architect is free to create without bothering about political ideologies, provided he can defuse his viewpoint to those who make decisions about the man-made environment.

The most vital decisions about the man-made environment is taken by bureaucrats and managers; and at the operational level, because of historical reasons, by civil engineers who head the public works departments of the government.

The bureaucrats have a specific professional ideology which is rooted in the belief that all events, things, and values can be definitely and unambiguously categorized under a particular head. They are intolerant towards ambiguity and novelty. Furthermore, bureaucrats in India do not have a highly defined view on the basic values, goals and objectives of the society. The intellectuals whose business it is to define these goals, values and objectives, have not done their job.

The only advantage the bureaucrats, managers and civil engineers have over the architect is their capacity to control obedience to their own brand of uneducated beliefs. Architects have nothing much to offer to counter their beliefs. 'Foreign' is a status symbol in this country for all those who matter. The linkage between the architect's International Style and the decision maker's craze for the 'foreign' provide, presently, the basis for architectural practice. Thus, 'International Style' becomes a much worse monstrosity when Indian frills, the stapes and Sanchez gates, are added to basically western-style edifices, to satisfy the nationalist urge either of the architects or of the decision-makers, or both.

The solution of transferring decision-making powers to architects is a vacuous one. It might confer power and prestige on the profession but this profession is hardly in a position to make any better use of that power than the bureaucrat and the manager. Unless the architectural profession has a specific viewpoint relevant to the country, which it wants to diffuse to other groups, the increased

capacity to persuade provided by the fact of having power and status, cannot be very meaningful.

It is only with the emergence of a definite professional ideology which is not limited to a tiny number of sensitive architects that the process of diffusion to the elite groups can be fulfilled. Professional associations of architects can then be in a position to persuade other groups in society to accept their view-point and lay the basis of the conferment of decision-making power on the architect.

The Alternatives

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I must confess that what I am going to generalize about - so heterogeneous a mix of individuals as architects - is not the result of any scientific study. On the contrary, it is the sporadic observation over the past few years of socially concerned young students of architecture and recent graduates with whom I have had the opportunity to associate during my job as teacher architect. In order to gain some insight about young architects today, their aspirations and dissatisfaction with the way things are, it is necessary to review the contemporary position of the profession, even though cursorily.

In India, historically, the architect has been used as an anonymous means to an end. In the past, the end was generally the glorification of the State for religion through the creation of plastic forms and visual drama. Today, though not so anonymous, architects are ready accomplices to the property speculators, who either want to make money or glorify themselves. In other words, things have changed but little. As in the past, architects are asked to build buildings whose social nature has already been decided upon. Common decency would prohibit questions like what is the purpose of the building. Whom is it going to serve? Such questions are to be decided by the powerful.

This view of the profession, exaggerated at times and naive at its face value, is what many young architects find suffocating. Instead of crafty artisans, they want to assume new roles corresponding to contemporary socio-economic demands. They feel the choice is between being content with today's subservient role or struggling for establishing a rational base for the profession. This struggle is, naturally, not directed against any real or imaginary enemy but concerns expanding their vision as architects so as to be more effective in decision-making. It is a search for social relevance by the architectural profession which is now at the point of stagnation.

Obviously, this search for new roles cannot be the search for a 'particular' role; that would be self-defeating. It must be as multidirectional and multifaceted as contemporary society is. The complexities of the profession, and the various other disciplines which are involved or which could be involved, make it impossible to oversimplify the role of an architect. There is scope for him to adopt various unconventional, and unorthodox, alternatives to the traditional norms.

Professionally speaking, an architect is a building specialist and, therefore, architects may also feel reassured that need for their profession has been established and that they can go on enjoying a high status so long as they keep mystifying the objects of architecture and promote easy design solutions to complex problems. But, the ultimate yardstick for measuring its relevance or importance will remain the same as for any other profession - its contribution

towards evolving a better social and physical environment.

An architect would only be contributing towards society if he were able to generate ideas for building processes which satisfy the demands of the society and which take into account major economic, social and cultural parameters.

The search for a rational base, thus, would invariably leads us to analyse the needs of the society in terms of buildings or in its enlarged vision - the physical environment. If architecture can provide for these needs, there will emerge automatically a legitimate picture of an architect and architecture will become a relevant force in society. To achieve this, architects must be prepared to do whatever is required to do whatever is required architecturally or otherwise.

It does not take much to realize that the staggering housing shortage both in urban as well as rural areas, poses the greatest challenge to everybody concerned with the building industry. Even if we forget about the quality, the sheer quantitative aspect of it is overwhelming. Next only to food and clothing, this social necessity is still neglected by all professionals. So much so that it has acquired a reputation of being a problem which is better talked about than solved. This is not without its accompanying reasons. Housing is a very complex problem, and it cannot be solved by demonstrating architectural dexterity on a particular site.

The roots of the housing problem are socio-economic and lie buried in processes like the mass migration of the rural populations, shortages of traditional construction materials and urban land. Apart from this, the housing problem is closely linked with the problems of the infrastructure of services like water and electricity supply, mass transportation systems, etc. Housing has also to be seen against the infrastructure of social amenities like shopping, hospitals, schools, etc. They are all inter-related and one would collapse without the other. This complex problem is generally attempted to be solved in isolation by the formulation of certain timid policies at political level and their follow-up at lower governmental echelons, of putting up a couple of hundred or thousand dwelling units here and there in big cities. What this problem demands is the creation of new cities, new urban centres, and attracting the migrating population to these cities and centres by providing them with housing and the rest, with simultaneous attempts at preventing the migration of the rural population by developing smaller towns near villages or the villages themselves. Along with this, there have to be attempts at the increased production of traditional construction materials or the invention of new materials from industrial waste as substitutes.

It is apparent from the above that in the chain of decisions so far, the role of an architect as we traditionally understand it to be is limited. It is only when it comes down to giving forms to housing policies, the social nature of which has already been decided, that an architect is called in to build at a particular site, for a particular person or a set of persons; that architect can then reflect his understanding of socio-economic parameters, the psychological make-up and the technological standards of society. Architects for the most part have to reserve their acrimony and polemic for the specific and isolated character of what they are charged to build with.

Today's younger set of professionals would like greater participation even if they had to act extra-architecturally for it.

Apart from housing, another sphere where architects could contribute is urban environment in our urban centres. Concern for the fast deterioration urban environment is primary in the minds of people. If the environment which surrounds us and its way of life is taken as a measuring rod for determining the progress that man has made over the years, one wonders if one could claim to have progressed at all. Our way of life, our desires, our concerns, our everyday pleasures and pain are all reflected in the environment that surrounds us in our cities, where indifference and expedience rules, where the human being is looked upon as a commodity and where people are condemned to live, generation after generation, in the squalor of slums.

While an architect is quick to discern the problem and while perhaps there are situations where architects can contribute, they find themselves helpless spectators of the whole tragic drama. This is simply because the sequence of actions or decisions which lead to this hopeless situation are quite outside the field of action of an architect.

The above is a description of the social needs of the utmost importance from the point of view of the architectural profession where, if architects contributed substantially, they could establish a rational base for the profession. Housing and the urban environment, though more extensively and intensively the primary areas of socially concerned young architects, do not rule out other forms of building which are important to society and where architectural expertise is needed. These can be institutional buildings, hospitals, industrial buildings, commercial complexes and so on and so forth and it is gaped that in these cases architects would certainly establish their legitimacy by doing an efficient job of it. However, the field of their primary concerns, i.e. to be able to help the poor of India provide shelter for themselves and live in a more liveable environment find no outlet through their medium of design.

The search for a rational base, thus, brings us face to face with a very frustrating reality, where one realizes that unless the interests of those who are politically powerful are identical with those poor, there are no possibilities of bold decisions being taken in consultation with architects. Under such circumstances, some may feel that socio-political changes are called for. For the betterment of those who are socially and economically handicapped. Now the question that arises is whether these social changes can be brought about through architecture?

Architecture as we conventionally know it is not a political force. That is to say, it is a 'neutral' mass of bricks and mortar and holds no intrinsic political meaning. It can be part of or supportive of a particular socio-economic or political set-up but it cannot be instrumental in it.

Among architects particularly, the attitude that architectural change can be the harbinger of social change, runs very deep at a subconscious level. The conviction seems to spring from a rather bizarre reading of history. While it is quite proper to draw conclusions about a given society on the basis of its architecture - like Greece was orderly and sublime and Rome grand - reversing the logic is absurd. Here, there is obvious confusion of cause and effect. No doubt architecture is paradigmatic of social relationships, but it does not mean

that by physically reorganizing the elements within architecture we can change the society by the reverse logic. Architecture cannot be the harbinger of social change.

Having recognized these limitations, those socially concerned architects whose primary aim is not to find a niche in the architectural establishment but who are looking for a stance that would satisfactorily combine their social concerns with professional commitment to designing are left with few alternatives. These alternatives are available in a number of shades ranging from the thoroughly radical stand of rejecting the profession and participating in politics, to the milder ones in which one tends to work within the system and make the best of it.

Fundamentally, a radical architect is faced with only two choices: to practice architecture or not to? It is relevant to point out here that there is a perfectly valid case for renouncing the practice altogether. As already pointed out, the social, political and economic circumstances within the parameters in which architects operate are quit outside the effectiveness of architects' actions. The macro-politics of our society, which decide what should be built and for whom, is outside the jurisdiction of architects. Generally, the jobs which filter down to architects through decision making mechanics have mixed up priorities - political interest riding them all.

Glaring examples of such insanity are the beautification programmes which include putting up sculptures on all roundabouts and decorating government buildings with the murals of famous artists, instead of improving the infrastructure of basic services, the inadequacies of which cause unbearable suffering to society in general. Traditionally, architects have been content simply to give expressive plastic forms to the buildings whose social nature was already decided upon by others. A thoroughly radical position would take issue not with the form of the building, but with the processes that generate such decisions. Therefore, if an architect finds the tasks offered by society objectionable, he must operate architecturally, i.e. politically to change them.

A milder version of the radical stance would be in the form of 'advocacy architecture'. This is an alternative in which the socially concerned architect allies himself with the underprivileged section of the society, and works within the system by gathering political pressures. The idea being this form of practice stems from the realization that the suppressed section of the society is not articulate enough to be able to express what is good for it and does not know how to go about achieving it. Under such circumstances, socially concerned architects with experience and a hard-hitting realism, could work out proposals resolving conflicting interests and use the people as a political force to get their ideas across. This kind of practice is almost non-existent in this country and if any remains it is at the level of intellectualization in clubs for lack of organized and concerted efforts.

The only example anywhere close to it may be seen in the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority's efforts at slum development schemes in Calcutta. In this case, a number of sociologists and architects and engineers cooperated to work out a plan for the development of bustees. Work involved first talking to bustee dwellers and selling them the idea that development was necessary

and feasible if they all cooperated. It involved lots of hard bargaining, because people were afraid of changes in the existing patterns, howsoever bad. However, these schemes are a major political force today in the life of West Bengal. This is because of the qualitative aspects of the scheme which improve the bustees without uprooting the people from there - a fine example of working under the social and economic parameters.

Although advocacy in one form or another represents the main possibility for the socially concerned architects, this is not to say that there are no conventional ways left for them of working within the system. There are those who are likely to find a place in the establishment while also doing justice to their professional commitment. Many young Indian architects have opted for the technologically-oriented modern movement, whose forerunners claim that depending upon the degree of optimism, we can design ourselves to 'survival' or happiness. They believe that design action can substitute political action.

This attitude has filtered down to us through Le Corbusier, and those who follow him have been proclaiming systems thinking, the mass fabrication of houses, etc. The reigning guru of this detached and scientific approach to social problems is Buckminster Fuller, who is doing airports for us in India. He proposes that people set about producing so much that everybody has enough and that, indirectly, would cure all social problems. That there is enough affinity between this kind of thinking and that of those in power is apparent from various prefabrication factories, etc. which have been put up in this country. This approach in the Indian context has problems. Firstly, its economic feasibility is doubtful and, secondly, experience has taught us that organization for mass production is a social problem related to such other problems.

Nevertheless, I guess there are possibilities of solving the quantitative aspects of construction problems by suitably adapting the systems approach to Indian conditions. Hardly any serious thought has been given to this in India. There is certainly scope for socially concerned young architects to create opera systems where one could retain many options and where one could get manufacturers or government bodies like the Delhi Development Authority who are interested in doing housing on a mass scale. There also is plenty of scope for research in any number of subsystems, say, structure, external skin internal finishes, etc.

Apart from technology-oriented architects, there are others who believe that basic urban problems stem from a lack of proper land use plans. They perceive the problem in the framework of a much larger context, often the regional or national scale. It is their contention that proper plans should be prepared on a regional level, in which every little town and village is assigned a proper role, so that there is no unwanted and unnecessary movement into cities, and the whole region acts as a unified whole.

One of the foremost architects of India, Charles Correa, believes that problems of housing within cities is a problem of land use and is not necessarily to be solved by mega-structures. He is of the view that low, preferably single storey, high density developments made out of conventional materials and methods on the principle of self-help is the answer to housing problems rather than the huge, prefabricated multi-storey apartment blocks. This is, of course, only possible if proper land use plans are drawn up, in view of the magnitude of the

problem this is the only possibility, economically and socially. He claims that this would be the cheapest way of building - as in the villages. 'Our villages never throw people destitute, it is only our cities.'

Conforming to this view, again, architects have the opportunity to project growth patterns for a city or town, taking into account the totality of services and public transport, etc. while achieving the required density in low rise construction. The above is a description of various alternatives or directions which are open to socially concerned architects. This list is by no means exhaustive. As a matter of fact, we are at such a critical stage of development in the profession, that each one of us has to research for some such alternative which will have relevance to the socio-economic conditions of our country. These alternatives may or may not be in architecture in the traditional sense that we understand it. But then, that is not of great importance. What is important is the search for a rational base for the profession, and the assuming of responsibility for creating a new, more beautiful environment to live in, in harmony with the socio-economic parameters of our country.

Are our schools of architecture geared to producing architects who are capable of affecting such a change? Are our schools making our students realize that the problems of the physical world are primary in the minds of people, and it is their responsibility to do something about it? Are our schools equipping them with enough skills to make this physical environment a better place, a more beautiful place to live in?

The answer is 'no'.

Unfortunately, our schools, which are run on the same pattern as 20 years ago, leave much to be desired. Instead of being places for fomenting new ideas and values, and imparting skills to students to become efficient architects, they have ended up by becoming a degree manufacturing factory, places for producing architect-slaves. Not only is there a lack of professional and task oriented goals, but complete absence of student-oriented goals as well. There may not necessarily be a contradiction in the two, but they are not identical either. Students must be able to recognize different frames of reference, see things in more than one way, and develop the ability to share information, ideas and images. Architectural programming should be integrated into the stream of general study. They should be aware of national development plans and other national programmes so that we can expect them to assume their role satisfactorily in diverse architectural practices.

Professionals, students, educators are part to the same profession. It is about time they all came together and became mutually complementary. In extreme moments of social concern or frustration, students or even professionals may proclaim that architecture is unnecessary so long as social inequities exist or that all we need is social change. There might be others who say that systems thinking are the only architecture, or that ecology is the only thing, that architecture is nothing else but mathematics, etc. There is some element of truth in each one of these statements which draws thinking people towards it and yet the incompleteness of each one of these statements makes it impossible to cling to it for too long. The important thing however, is that in all these there is honesty of intention, and it is the special responsibility of educators to encourage this honesty of intention. They must work in close collaboration with

those practicing these ideas, if they expect them to produce graduates whose special attribute is social concern.

Books: a Review Article

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Parameters and Images: Architecture In a Crowded World by Lionel Brett, Widenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1970.

Modern Movements in Architecture by Charles Jencks, Allen Lane London, 1973.

Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture By Charles Jencks, Allen Lane London, 1973.

Definitely, modern architecture has gone wrong somewhere. That dream which the European architecture pioneers promised the world in the early thirties has faded away. The modern metropolis is unreal, depressing and divorced from nature which once gave us all our energies and inspirations. This is a point of view of course. Others maintain, equally well, that modern architecture has changed our lives for the better, and that the metropolis is a throbbing, live cultural centre where man's inventiveness has reached new dimensions. What seems beyond dispute however is that the twentieth century has ushered in a new era of architecture and urban life which is both dynamic and static and that one's assessment of the achievements of this era depends entirely on one's political standpoint. The slums have increased and remain static pools of human degradation while commercial buildings have sprouted like mushrooms taking the mechanics of architecture to even greater heights.

Both view points are expressed in these three books. Lionel Brett, older to Charles Jencks by twenty six years, outlines the pessimistic view of modern architecture while Jencks, the hip American historian, takes us deep into its pleasures and contradictions. Brett is not a historian.

He is a practicing architect who has a thriving practice which is creating the very cities and buildings that he condemns in his book. He writes 'most of us spend our lives in a totally man-made environment which we totally repudiate'. It is a luxurious view of the city which assumes that most city dwellers have a choice and are unwillingly living in the city. Brett of course has known choice and is able to commute between his country house and his London residence.

For most city dwellers, the city is a place they migrate to voluntarily to realise their hopes and ambitions. Inevitably, they stay on, not repudiating the city but accepting it as a new way of life. It is not architecture that determine the quality of life in a city but the social, economic and political conditions. If there are people who live in the city and repudiate it, it is not because of the physical environment but because of the oppression (both social and economic) that the cities of the developed and underdeveloped world create. Brett claims that modern architecture has failed because it has abandoned the provision of human needs. But can architecture satisfy urban discontent? He views the past through a rosy lens as being desirable. He talks about the ideal Greek and Gothic days

completely overlooking the untold human misery caused by epidemics and starvation in the cities of those times.

The book gives a rambling account of the architectural scene of the urban West and tries to rationalize the cause of the failure of modern architecture. It is not an important book and like Max Fry's *Art in a Machine Age*, it reflects the thoughts and ideas of a person who has been totally by passed the dynamics of the twentieth century urban phenomena. It looks to the past rather than to the future for our solutions.

Both Jencks' books are a refreshing contrast to *Parameters and Images*. American by nationality, Jencks is a professional architectural historian who views the history of modern architecture in a completely novel way. He discards the notion that there is such a thing as The Modern Movement which has provided the main stream of architectural ideas. On the contrary, he writes that the history of modern architecture unfolds in a series of 'discontinuous movements' that amount to a conglomeration of styles working in different directions. *Modern Movements* is profusely illustrated with buildings which are both famous and unknown.

It opens with a chapter entitled 'The plurality of approaches' in which Jencks defines his complex analysis of architectural history. For instance, he maintains that there are two types of historically relevant materials: the influential and the perfected. Whereas he regards the influential works as being those significant in the link of history 'such is the development of the communal house in Russia, or the pop movement in England,' he considers the perfected as being the 'kind of event or building best analyzed critically for its internal relations. For instance the multivalent work of Le Corbusier, James Sterling and Aldo van Eyck is so significant in itself that historical narrative has to stop and analysis of internal relations take over, Jencks then continues to define six traditions which have developed during the last fifty years and these traditions (idealist, self-conscious, intuitive, logical, unselfconscious, and activist) are governed by subjective attitudes and not by their objective impact on architecture as a whole.

As one continues to read the book, it becomes apparent that Jencks considers this complex approach as the only realistic approach to contemporary architecture. The work of Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius and Frank Lloyd Wright is reassessed in the light of their late work which has avoided any real analysis before. For instance, he takes the Mendenhall County Civic Centre which Wright built in 1964 and shows how the work of a onetime genius deteriorates into a dreary cake style. We see the London building of the onetime pioneer Walter Gropius. *Modern Movements* is an important book and the only one which takes a comprehensive look at the complete range of modern architecture in the developed world.

Le Corbusier is a flashy book which is grotesquely expensive for the Indian market. All books on Corbusier since his death have been flashy and expensive. Nevertheless, Jencks has contributed considerably to the already vast literature on the colossus of modern architecture.

It is no wonder that so much has been written of the man: 'Because of Le Corbusier's's undeniable creative potency, he left us a mass of technical-

aesthetic inventions which have had a widespread influence on the world of architecture probably comparable only to Palladio 's influence in the past. He changed, or was instrumental in changing the aesthetic direction of modern architecture, twice; once in the twenties with his philosophy of "purism" and once in the fifties with his sculptural form of Brutalism'.

Jencks has for the first time brought out these two turning points in Corbusier 's work. He considers Corbusier as a creator of perfected buildings which must be assessed for their intent thus remains in the background while the ideas of the man and how they influenced his buildings are brought to the fore. It was his sense of failure that made him try and try again to invent new forms and languages of architecture. It is this torment that Jencks brings out vividly. '.... he brought about in his life the very bitter-sweet, tragic struggle he was looking for from the start. Judged by worldly standards his life was anything but a failure, even including the rejected schemes as failures, but judged in larger terms it was not a success. He did not realize one city plan, even Chandigarh, that brought harmony to modern life for which he was struggling. Hence his life was ultimately a failure and judging by many bitter comments he knew it to be one'.

The style of writing is good and with this fourth book Jencks has achieved the unrivalled position of the most sought after contemporary historian of architecture.

Meanwhile, back in India, these books only emphasize more than before that the great architecture of forms is created in the developed countries only and that our own architects in India are borrowing bits and pieces from there and sticking them together on to their 'mini-masterpieces' which can neither afford Le Corbusier's lavish concrete sculptures nor the slick sky scrapers coming out of the SOM offices. Our own new directions in architecture lie totally away from the dream forms of the West with their slick detailing and sophisticated building industry. We have bricks, a little cement and steel, some expensive glass, exorbitant air-conditioning; and significantly, a vast working population that doesn't have shelter to live in. Shall we still compete with the West in discovering new forms or does our choice lie elsewhere?