

Selfsame Spaces: Gandhi, Architecture and Allusions in Twentieth Century India.

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

Venugopal Maddipati

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Catherine Asher, Adviser

May, 2011

@ Venugopal Maddipati 2011

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following institutions and people for supporting my work. I am grateful to the American Institute of Indian Studies in Delhi, The Center of Science for Villages in Wardha and Kumarappapuram, The Indira Gandhi Institute of Developmental Research in Mumbai, The Gandhi Memorial Library in Delhi, The Center for Developmental Studies in Trivandrum, The Kutch Nav Nirman Abhiyaan and the University of Minnesota. I would like to thank the following individuals: Bindia Thapar, Purnima Mehta, Bindu Rajasenan, Soman Nair, Tilak Baker, Laurie Baker, Varsha Kaley, Vibha Gupta, Sameer Kuruve, David Faust, Donal Johnson, Eleanor Zelliot, Jane Blocker, Ajay Skaria, Anna Clark, Sarah Sik, Lynsi Spaulding, Riyaz Latif, Radha Dalal, Aditi Chandra, Sugata Ray, Atreyee Gupta, Midori Green, Sinem Arcak, Sherry, Dick, Jodi, Paul Wilson, Madhav Raman, Dhruv Sud, my parents, my sister Sushama, my mentors and my beloved Gurus, Frederick Asher and Catherine Asher.

Dedication

Dedicated to my Tatagaru,
Surapaneni Venugopal Rao.

Tatagaru, if you can read this:

You brought me up and taught me how to go beyond myself.

Abstract

In this dissertation, I suggest that the Indian political leader Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi infused deep and enigmatic meanings into everyday physical objects, particularly buildings. Indeed, the manner in which Gandhi named the buildings in his famous Satyagraha Ashram in Ahmedabad in the early part of the twentieth century, makes it somewhat difficult to write, in isolation, about their physical appearance. Quite apart from considering what the buildings at the Ashram denoted physically, that is, architecture as shelter, one must also take into account what their names connoted. Writing a history of Gandhi's engagement with architecture must necessarily involve taking into account how he sometimes mythified architectural spaces into metaphors for other spaces.

In this dissertation, then, I enquire into how Gandhi mobilized particular aspects of the physical appearances of the buildings that he lived in or considered between 1891 and 1930, as allegories. I also write about how Gandhi systematically infused allegorical meaning into his experiences of places by giving names to those places. Moreover, I consider how, in 1936, Gandhi explicitly emphasized the physical appearance of a hut that had been built in the village of Segaoon by Mira Behn, the famous social worker. If Gandhi spoke at length about how Mira Behn had built that hut out of material that contingently became available to her in Segaoon, he did so in order to emphasize life as the activity of making do with contingencies. To fully appreciate the purport of Gandhi's description of Mira Behn's hut, then, one has to read it primarily as an allusion towards a contrast between an inner life of equanimity and an outward life of coping with transience and contingencies. Indeed, on the one occasion Gandhi exclusively spoke about the denotative aspects of architecture, he did so in order to make those very aspects connote a deeper, more enigmatic spatial reality which he was always already familiar with. I derive, then, from Gandhi's reading of spaces as allegories for other intensely familiar spaces, or what I call self-same spaces, to write about Gandhian architectural experiments in post-colonial India.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

.....vi-xii

Chapter I: Introduction: An Enquiry into Habitude

..... 1-31.

Chapter II: The Hut and the Ashram.

..... 32-81.

Chapter III: The Signification of Pragmatism: Laurie Baker, Gandhi and Architecture.

..... 82-121.

Chapter IV: The Signification of Innovation: The case of the Wardha Whole Tumbler roofs.

..... 122-155.

Chapter V: The Signification of Utopia: Charles Correa, Gandhi, Geometry and the Belapur Housing Project.

..... 156-177.

Chapter VI: Conclusions: The Beginnings of Beginnings.

..... 178-194.

Figures

..... 195-280.

Bibliography

..... 280-284.

List of Figures

Chapter I

- Figure 1.1:** The Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab. Photograph.
<http://www.gujarattourism.com/showgalleryphotos.aspx?contentid=141&webpartid=1713>, (accessed 03/16/2011).....**195.**
- Figure 1.2:** Inside the Kochrab Ashram. Photograph.
<http://www.gujarattourism.com/showgalleryphotos.aspx?contentid=141&webpartid=1713>, (accessed 03/16/2011).....**196.**
- Figure 1.3:** Hriday Kunj, Gandhi’s Home at the New Satyagraha Ashram on the banks of the Sabarmati river in Ahmedabad. Photograph.
<http://gandhiashramsabarmati.org/visitor-information/ashram-tour-sites.html>, (accessed 03/16/2011).....**197.**
- Figure 1.4:** Mira Behn’s hut in Segaon. Photograph.
<http://ruralreporter.blogspot.com/2009/11/bapu-kuti-sevagram-wardha.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).....**198.**

Chapter II

- Figure 2.1:** House at Gandhi’s Phoenix Settlement. Photograph.
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/7440918@N03/4318094849/> (accessed 03/16/2011).....**199.**
- Figure 2.2:** The Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab. Photograph.
<http://www.gujarattourism.com/showgalleryphotos.aspx?contentid=141&webpartid=1713> (accessed 03/16/2011).....**200.**
- Figure 2.3:** The Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab. Photograph.....**201.**
- Figure 2.4:** The Crematorium also known as Dudeswar No Aro. Drawing.
<http://www.ahmedabadmirror.com/index.aspx?Page=article§name=News%20-%20Fathers%20Day§id=68&contentid=201002262010022618280325185c960a6> (accessed 03/16/2011).....**202.**
- Figure 2.5:** Walls of the Sabarmati Jail Today.....**203.**

Figure 2.6: View from the Ashram towards the river today. Photograph. http://picasaweb.google.com/lh/photo/9HTKCOx9f6OAw_ig0kagA (accessed 03/16/2011).....	204.
Figure 2.7: Hriday Kunj, Photograph. http://picasaweb.google.com/lh/photo/yTuEN41cWzBKVgQci2L4Tg (accessed 03/16/2011).....	205.
Figure 2.8: Greenlees, Duncan. <i>Map of Sabarmati Ashram</i> . Sketch. Palghat: Scholar Press, 1934.....	206.
Figure 2.9: <i>Magan Niwas</i> . Photograph. http://gandhiashramsabarmati.org/visitor-information/ashram-tour-sites.html (accessed 03/16/2011).....	207.
Figure 2.10: <i>Nandini</i> . Photograph. http://gandhiashramsabarmati.org/visitor-information/ashram-tour-sites.html (accessed 03/16/2011).....	208.
Figure 2.11: <i>Udyog Mandir</i> . Photograph. http://gandhiashramsabarmati.org/visitor-information/ashram-tour-sites.html (accessed 03/16/2011).....	209.
Figure 2.12: Greenlees, Duncan. <i>Court of the Chatralaya</i> . Photograph. Palghat: Scholar Press, 1934.....	210.
Figure 2.13: <i>Court of the Chatralaya</i> [As seen today and known as Somnath Chatralaya]. Photograph. http://gandhiashramsabarmati.org/visitor-information/ashram-tour-sites.html (accessed 03/16/2011).....	211.
Figure 2.14: <i>Bapu Kuti</i> [Mira Behn’s hut]. Photograph. http://picasaweb.google.com/lh/photo/IEuU2NSrtEQJsUvCEiRTnA (accessed 03/16/2011).....	212.
Figure 2.15: Mud relief in Mira Behn’s hut. Photograph from film clip. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HKZMQ74Org (accessed 03/16/2011).....	213.
Figure 2.16: Mud relief in Mira Behn’s hut. Photograph from film clip. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HKZMQ74Org (accessed 03/16/2011).....	214.
Figure 2.17: Windows with bamboo frames and article case. Photograph from film clip. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HKZMQ74Org (accessed 03/16/2011).....	215.
Figure 2.18: The bathroom floor in Mira Behn’s hut, Photograph from film clip. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HKZMQ74Org (accessed 03/16/2011).....	216.

Chapter III

- Figure 3.1:** Baker, Elizabeth. Cover of *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*. Kottayam: DC Books, 2007.....**217.**
- Figure 3.2:** Singh, Joginder. “Baker's innovative use of discarded bottles, inset in the wall at Col. Jacob's residence in Thiruvananthapuram, creates a stained glass effect.” Photograph. <http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl2005/stories/20030314000906400.htm> (accessed 03/16/2011).....**218.**
- Figure 3.3:** Coventry Cathedral (Old) 1939. Photograph. <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/5062090> (accessed 03/16/2011).....**219.**
- Figure 3.4:** Baker, Laurie. Ladies Hostel at Center for Development Studies, Photograph.....**220.**
- Figure 3.5:** Baker, Laurie. Interior view of Hostel at Center for Development Studies, Photograph.....**221.**
- Figure 3.6:** Baker, Laurie. *The Center for Development Studies*. Photograph. <http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/pictures-of-buildings.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).....**222.**
- Figure 3.7:** Arvind, Lakshmi. *Light as a Leaf* [View from inside the Padmanabhapuram Palace]. Photograph. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/lakshmiarvind/3841145299/lightbox/> (accessed 03/16/2011).....**223.**
- Figure 3.8:** The exterior of the refurbished Coventry cathedral. Photograph. <http://www.yourlocalweb.co.uk/west-midlands/coventry/pictures/page2/> (accessed 03/16/2011).....**224.**
- Figure 3.9:** The Baptistry of the new Coventry cathedral. Photograph. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/herry/3538639716/lightbox/> (accessed 03/16/2011).....**225.**
- Figure 3.10:** A Typical Mangalore Tile [Double Grooved]. Photograph. http://btiles.com/roofing_tiles/clay_roof_tiles.html (accessed 03/16/2011).....**226.**

Figure 3.11: Bhandari, Siddharth. A Typical Mangalore Tile roof. Photograph. http://www.flickr.com/photos/75061930@N00/4738115641/ (accessed 03/16/2011).....	227.
Figure 3.12: Jain, Sudhir K. <i>Critical Structural Details: Mangalore Tile Roof Construction</i> . Photograph. http://www.world-housing.net/wherereport1view.php?id=100055 (accessed 03/16/2011).....	228.
Figure 3.13: Baker, Laurie. Typical Filler Slab. Drawing. Gautam Bhatia's <i>Laurie Baker: Life, Work, Writings</i> . New Delhi: Viking/HUDCO, 1991.....	229.
Figure 3.14: Baker, Laurie. Self Employed Women's Association Building [Sewa Vilaapshala]. Photograph by Seema K.K. http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/pictures-of-buildings.html (accessed 03/16/2011).....	230.
Figure 3.15: Baker, Laurie. Self Employed Women's Association Building [Sewa Vilaapshala]. Photograph by Seema K.K. http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/pictures-of-buildings.html (accessed 03/16/2011).....	231.
Figure 3.16: Baker, Laurie. Self Employed Women's Association Building [Sewa Vilaapshala]. Photograph by Seema K.K. http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/pictures-of-buildings.html (accessed 03/16/2011).....	232.
Figure 3.17: Baker, Laurie. <i>Major Jacob's House</i> . Photograph. http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/pictures-of-buildings.html (accessed 03/16/2011).....	234.
Figure 3.18: Baker, Laurie. <i>Major Jacob's House</i> . Photograph. http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/pictures-of-buildings.html (accessed 03/16/2011).....	235.
Figure 3.19: Laurie Baker, <i>Fight for Non-Violence</i> . Sketch. http://lauriebaker.net/personal/artwork/cartoons.html (accessed 03/16/2011).....	236.
Figure 3.20: Baker, Laurie. <i>Taking a Head Bath</i> , Sketch. http://lauriebaker.net/personal/artwork/cartoons.html (accessed 03/16/2011).....	237.
Figure 3.21: Baker's Manuals.	
Figure 3.22: Baker, Laurie. Drawing. <i>Mud</i> . Trivandrum: COSTFORD, 1985.....	238.
Figure 3.23: Baker, Laurie. Drawing. <i>Brickwork</i> . Trivandrum: COSTFORD, 1988.....	239.

Chapter IV

- Figure 4.1:** *Adi Niwas* [Adi Niwas: The Hut Mira Behn built for Gandhi in 1936. Gandhi eventually shifted over to Mira Behn’s own hut. That hut has since been named as Bapu Kutii]. Photograph. <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/4993022> (accessed 03/16/2011).....240.
- Figure 4.2:** *Adi Niwas* [Roof of Adi Niwas made of Halves of Kavelus]. Photograph. <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/4993022> (accessed 03/16/2011).....241.
- Figure 4.3:** A cut-away section on display of the tumbler roof from the exterior: at the National Institute of Rural Development in Hyderabad.....242.
- Figure 4.4:** The underbelly of the roof of the rest-house made of whole Kavelu tumblers by the Center of Science for Villages at Kumarappapuram.....243.
- Figure 4.5:** The CSV roofs as they appear in the Village of Waagdhara.....244.
- Figure 4.6:** The interiors of Subhash Shamraoji Ghudewara’s house. The walls are annually painted, but the roof is left as it is.....245.
- Figure 4.7:** Vitthal Kolhe Ji’s house at Wagdhara.....246.
- Figure 4.8:** The colors of houses in Waagdhara. The most preferred colors are mostly shades of blue. These are samples at Wardha city where people from the surrounding villages go to buy the paints.....247.
- Figure 4.9:** These are the kinds of roofs that Shyam Raoji remembers living under. Today, they are used to keep livestock in Waagdhara.....248.
- Figure 4.10:** The exhibition at The National Institute of Rural Development in Hyderabad. Photographs. <http://www.nird.org.in/Rural%20Technology%20Park/RTP%20Photo%20Gallery.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).....249.
- Figure 4.11:** The exhibition at The National Institute of Rural Development in Hyderabad. Photograph <http://www.nird.org.in/Rural%20Technology%20Park/RTP%20Photo%20Gallery.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).....250.
- Figure 4.12:** Khadi Propaganda Poster. From Lisa N. Trivedi’s “Visually Mapping the Nation: Swadeshi Politics in Nationalist India, 1920-1930.” *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol 62, No. 1 (Feb., 2003).....251.

Figure 4.13: Fathy, Hassan. Image of a Nubian Vault, at New Gourn. Photograph. http://arquitecturasdeterra.blogspot.com/2008_10_01_archive.html (accessed 03/16/2011).....	252.
Figure 4.14: Kavelu tumblers which are usually made on a potter’s wheel are cut into two symmetrical halves and then fired in an oven to make roof-tiles. This is an image of the backyard of the Center of Science for Villages in Wardha where Kavelu tumblers are baked whole, not in halved.....	253.
Figure 4.15: Sculpture by Clarkwin Goodman at Maganwadi. Photograph. Jawaharlal Jain’s <i>J.C. Kumarappa: Jeevan, Vyaktitva aur Vichar</i> . Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1972.....	254.
Figure 4.16: Painting by Nandalal Bose inside the the exhibition area within Maganwadi.....	255.
Figure 4.17: Contemporary Efforts at Building Nubian Vaults. Photograph. http://hopebuilding.pbworks.com/w/page/19222398/Earth-roofs-in-the-Sahel-provides-affordable-alternative-to-timber-and-metal-house-construction (accessed 03/16/2011).....	256.

Chapter IV

Figure 5.1: Page from “Own Your House Scheme ’85: In the Artist’s Village, Belapur, New Bombay.” Publication date unknown – hard copy available at CIDCO office in Navi [New] Mumbai.....	257.
Figure 5.2: Page from “Own Your House Scheme ’85: In the Artist’s Village, Belapur, New Bombay.” Publication date unknown – hard copy available at CIDCO office in Navi [New] Mumbai.....	258.
Figure 5.3: Correa’s Artist’s Village some time after it’s construction. Photograph. <i>Charles Correa</i> . Singapore: Thames and Hudson, 1996.....	259.
Figure 5.4: Correa’s Artist’s Village. Photograph.”Belapur: Space Disaggregated – Architect Charles Correa.” <i>Architecture + Design</i> , Jan-Feb (1988).....	260.
Figure 5.5: Correa’s Artist’s Village: Courtyards in the Present.....	261.
Figure 5.6: Correa’s Artist’s Village: in the Present.....	262.
Figure 5.7: Mrs. Suhasini Vivek Mastakad.....	263.
Figure 5.8: Houses in the present.....	264.

Figure 5.9: Houses in the present.....	265.
Figure 5.10: Houses in the present.....	266.
Figure 5.11: Houses in the present.....	267.
Figure 5.12: Chawl in Sector II.....	268.
Figure 5.13: Chawl in Sector II.....	269.
Figure 5.14: Chawl in Sector II.....	270.
Figure 5.15: Chawl in Sector II.....	271.
Figure 5.16: Billboard in Trivandrum.....	272.
Figure 5.17: Billboard in Trivandrum.....	273.
Figure 5.18: Billboard in Trivandrum.....	274.

Chapter VI

Figure 6.4: Coffee House near the Trivandrum Central Railway Station. Photograph from http://www.flickr.com/photos/draconianrain/3003410474/ (accessed 03/16/2011).....	275.
Figure 6.2: Baker, Laurie. Bridge at CDS. Photograph. http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/pictures-of-buildings.html (accessed 03/16/2011).....	276.
Figure 6.3: Bridge at CDS.....	277.
Figure 6.4: Bridge at CDS.....	278.
Figure 6.5: <i>Plan of Zulu Settlement</i> . Drawing from Norman J. Johnston's <i>Cities in the Round</i> . Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983.....	279.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Gandhi and Architecture: An Enquiry into Habitude.

Architectural historians may be in for some disappointment when they read through the early and central sections of the collected works of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), that famous Indian politician and advocate of non-violence. Gandhi, at least until the latter portion of his life, mostly understood architecture in the most conservative sense as an outward material form that possessed a hollow interior. While he may have stayed in many buildings over the course of his young and adult life, he scarcely viewed architectural form as a societal artifact. He evinced little interest in appreciating how buildings, through their appearance, addressed the larger phenomenal and anthropomorphic predispositions of a culture.¹ Indeed, from the time Gandhi lived in Porbandar, the town in British Colonial India where he was born in 1869, through his life in Johannesburg where he became a revolutionary in 1906, to his life in Gujarat where he was based between 1915 and 1933, he only barely looked towards dwellings in cultural terms. Unlike the more complex ways in which he affected material culture in India by manipulating his personal affects such as his dress and his headgear, he spoke or wrote about architecture in the most spare, functional terms.

And yet, Gandhi's very understanding of dwellings as exterior forms which wretched inner voids served him well as he explained the most complex existential concepts. Indeed, one productive way of writing about Gandhi and his engagement with

architecture, is to consider how, on a few occasions in his adult life, he mobilized the interiors of buildings as allegories. He deployed architecture as a sign which referenced the experience of entrapment, containment and circumscription. Indeed, he even relied upon his simple understanding of architecture to achieve clarity while thinking and writing about revolution.

So as to demonstrate how Gandhi alluded to complex ideas by the means of references to an interior void which resided within an external form, I will begin with a historiographical investigation. I will explore the degree to which such architectural terms as interior and exterior have had an extra-architectural life in scholarship on Gandhi in general. I will consider to what degree scholars and historians who work on Gandhi have been able to make a distinction between his widely acknowledged and objectified, exterior, public persona on the one hand, and his own subjective sense of his interior, that is, his sense of self on the other hand. I will engage, particularly in this introductory section, with his biography from the vantages of such existential categories as interior and exterior, and then consider how deeply these existential categories resonated as architectural categories in his discourse. Is it at all possible to distinguish between Gandhi's understanding of architecture from his critique of modern civilization? This is the larger question that I seek to explore in the following sections.

Scholarship on Gandhi and the Interior.

The acclaimed sociologist Richard G. Fox, in his 1989 *Gandhian Utopia: Experiments with Culture*, took a negative view towards the very idea of Gandhi's

interior as an existential category.² Indeed, Fox's writing, in many ways, represented a significant transition, if not a commentary on Gandhian scholarship in general. If an entire generation of Gandhian scholars in the sixties and seventies had devoted themselves to explaining the continuity between Gandhi's childhood, his young adulthood and his mature life as a politician, Fox, in the late eighties, took a different track. He was more invested in exploring how the transformations Gandhi underwent as an individual were brought about by the changes within the networks of intellectual and social relations within which he progressively found himself in India, England and South Africa. According to Fox, Gandhi did not believe that individuals needed to conform with the traditions of their early life, for the length of their life-span.³ Gandhi, according to Fox, believed that a human "had lives, not a life course."⁴

As opposed to studying Gandhi's selfhood, that is, the sense of selfhood he derived from his own childhood, one must, as Fox suggested, apply oneself to understanding Gandhi's discontinuous "personhood," that is, one must read into the transformations in his public actions and ideas and his changing social relations with others.⁵ As to whether this discontinuous personhood was a rupture in Gandhi's internal psychological self-hood was not a question that Fox was willing to entertain. "My approach," he observed, "treats the 'person' as an empirical manifestation of underlying but nondeterminate relationships in society, not as a psyche with an internal cognitive structure."⁶ Fox, then, was not interested in Gandhi's sense of the interior, at least in so far as the interior referred to a "psyche with an internal cognitive structure."

Fox's appreciation of Gandhi as a person who responded to the changes around himself, that is, his appreciation of Gandhi as a person who sought to learn from the circumstances befalling him, resonated in different ways in the writings of more recent scholars who pursued the history of Gandhian materialism. In Emma Tarlo's essay "Gandhi and the recreation of Indian dress" in her acclaimed 1996 *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India*, one finds, for instance, how by 1921, roughly six years after his having returned to India from South Africa, Gandhi planned to take up wearing the loincloth in response to an absence of sufficient interest in his plea for a complete boycott of British made cloth in India.⁷ He consulted with his friends about the drastic step of wearing a loincloth in public, and how it could possibly be misinterpreted. In spite of his own hesitation, Gandhi ultimately persevered with his plan, so as to encourage the poor in India to let go of their foreign cloth more easily, to make them less ashamed about their nakedness, and to encourage people to spin more yarn on their own spinning wheel, that is, the Charkha. Not unlike Fox's Gandhi, then, Tarlo's Gandhi shaped and understood his persona from the vantages of a society at large, that is, from the vantages of how he would be perceived from the exterior, in the public sphere.⁸

While Tarlo emphasized how Gandhi willed his appearance to respond to the contingencies of a political climate, Joseph Alter, in his essay "Gandhi's Body, Gandhi's Truth" suggested that Gandhi's obsession with sexuality, food and non-violence cannot be explained as manifestations of some inner psyche or Hindu spirit.⁹ As Alter saw it, there wasn't much of a point in getting inside the man's head to understand his obsession with questions concerning Ahimsa or non-violence, *Brahmacharya* or celibacy, dietary

control and health. But rather, the more useful and perhaps more relevant way of understanding Gandhi's discourse on the body is to locate it within a public, colonial discourse on self-control and "dramatic socio-political change."¹⁰ According to Alter, instead of emphasizing the inner psychological or spiritual origins of Gandhi's experiments in self-regulation and dietetics, it is more fruitful to observe how those experiments resonated in the public sphere where "the problem is demographic and cumulative, rather than biographic or reflexive."¹¹ It was not to pursue some interior spiritual calling, or to appease some "psychology of desire and power in Hinduism," rather to affect change at a public, trans-national level, one body at a time, that Gandhi took to experimenting with his own body.¹²

There is, then, some convergence between the thinking of Fox, Tarlo and Alter. All of three of them represented a particular, and may I say, a very attractive and engaging approach towards Gandhi. All of three of them, in different ways and to varying degrees, placed themselves at the end of a long tradition of writing about Gandhi from the vantages of his self-hood. They responded to the question of Gandhi's sense of identity, not so much by asking questions about his own inner, subjective sense of self; rather by asking questions about his continuing engagement with people, events and circumstances in the public sphere. In this sense, the scholarship of Fox, Tarlo and Alter was quite unlike that of an older generation of scholars such as Suzanne Rudolph and Erik Erickson, who, in their own different ways, emphasized Gandhi's investment in his inner sense of self and in the desires and affectations which he had inherited by the virtue of his birth and early upbringing.¹³ Building upon the work of Fox, Tarlo and Alter, one could,

then, provisionally say that Gandhi's ascetism, if not his notions of non-violence, evolved primarily in contingent circumstances, as particular responses to particular phenomena in the public sphere.

While I am indebted to Fox, Tarlo and Alter's method, I do wish to engage with the question concerning the interior, which they tended to skirt or avoid altogether. Building upon my own research, I argue in this dissertation that Gandhi's sense of the interior is by no means limited to his inner sense of self, that is, to his psyche, his childhood, his spirituality, or, for that matter, his sense of privacy. Rather, I suggest that Gandhi's interior, besides corresponding to his innate psychology, his spirituality and his private sense of belonging and religious identity, was also an overt component of his public discourse. The interior, on some occasions in Gandhi's writings, is a space, if not a moment of repose, from within which he expressed his difficulty in reconciling to the habitude imposed upon him by his own public persona, if not to the habitude imposed upon others by their personas.

But what is habitude, and how does it impose itself upon one's public persona? Looking up the word habitude in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one finds that it means, among other things, "manner of being or existing" and "usual or characteristic bodily condition, temperament."¹⁴ I would suggest that were Gandhi to have read the *Oxford English Dictionary*, he would have taken these definitions of the word habitude as references to a negative condition. Gandhi, I argue, experienced the greatest discomfort when life was straight-jacketed or typified into a characteristic condition. This discomfort is visible in his reliance upon architectural metaphors in his political writing and his

social-reformist writing. His references to the city, the village hut and the home as interiors, that is, as spaces of confinement and arrest, do sometimes palpably portray his discomfort with habitude.

Drawing upon these references, then, I will explore in this section how Gandhi, as a political theorist, took recourse to a language common or internal to describing buildings in general, in which one can speak of buildings in their most elementary form as interior spaces residing within exterior appearances of solidity and form. I am interested in exploring the degree to which the buildings Gandhi lived in may have resonated in his very public notions of the interior. In what ways did these buildings distinguish themselves from some of the other artifacts that have come to be associated with Gandhi, be they his clothes, his spectacles, his pen or his own body? Responding to this question, I would say that it is the very obviousness of buildings as the possessors of interiors that made them eminently available to Gandhi in his critique of habitude as a form of entrapment or confinement. Indeed, I would argue that it is hardly sufficient to simply presume that he understood architecture in functionalist terms. But rather, it is important to appreciate how he mobilized what is functional about architecture, as an allegory.

Before one considers Gandhi's architectural representations of habitude, however, one must also acknowledge how he had written about architecture itself in a negative manner, fairly early in his life, as a young law student in London. In his 1891 essay titled "Indian Vegetarians," Gandhi had written about how the Indian vegetarian shepherd derived therapeutic benefits from staying outside his own hut. In so far as the shepherd

did not spend the better part of his life inside a shelter, he led, in Gandhi's opinion, an ideal life. As one explores how Gandhi sought, in the early part of the twentieth century, to rail against habitude from the vantages of one who lived outside of it, that is, outside of conformity, one must also, then, pay heed to how, as early as 1891, he had already defined the outside as a real-world place. He had already defined the outside in contradistinction to the real-world, architectural space of the inside.

What, then, one might ask, came first? Did Gandhi's love of the real-world spaces outside of buildings, help him to define, allegorically, the places outside architecture as the places outside of habitude? Or did Gandhi's dread of habitude itself inspire him to pay greater attention to the experience of the interior of buildings as a negative one? To what degree, did Gandhi, in 1891, write about the empirical experience of being inside buildings, while thinking of the interior as an allegory for the experience of entrapment within habitude?

Apart from these questions, there are also those concerning Gandhi's engagement with architecture in his later career as a politician in India, beginning in 1915. After he arrived in the country from South Africa in that year, Gandhi, it must be noted, named his new spiritual commune in a posh, colonial bungalow in the city of Ahmedabad, as Satyagraha Ashram (Plate 1.1, 1.2). He named the establishment Satyagraha Ashram because he wished, as he claimed, to acquaint India with the political method he had adopted in South Africa while striving for the rights of Indian indentured laborers in the country.¹⁵ Gandhi referred to Satyagraha or "a force which is born out of truth and non-violence" because he sought to make his commune convey the means and the ends of his

political and social revolution in India.¹⁶ Similarly, he used the word Ashram to refer to the bungalow as the abode of Satyagraha, that is, the home of Satyagraha.

The question to ask, then, is whether the word Ashram in early twentieth-century India referred to a free-wheeling concept which could be situated and contextualized in different locations, and in different spaces? In my response to this question I would say that whatever the history of the word Ashram may have been prior to Gandhi's arrival in Ahmedabad, he, for his part, promoted the word and indeed mythified it into a reference to an enclosed space. Gandhi, in essence, naturalized the word Ashram into architecture.

However, there is a further qualification one must add to Gandhi's promotion of the word Ashram as a reference to architecture. If at all there was a history of the word Ashram in the early twentieth century as a reference to a place of economy and simplicity, Gandhi, I suggest, must be absolved for the contradictions which may have arisen between the appearance of the bungalow and the name he gave it, simply on account of his functionalism. In naming a bungalow Satyagraha Ashram, I suspect that Gandhi exercised a certain amount of perceptual ignorance. In so far as he was a functionalist, he was able to see beyond the ostentatious appearance of the bungalow and descry within it, only its serviceability as a building. In so far as Gandhi was a functionalist, then, there wasn't much of a contradiction between the Ashram as an economic concept, and the Ashram as a bungalow.

If Gandhi has to be held accountable for being somewhat disingenuous, then, it must only be for his having mythified the word Ashram into a reference to architecture, that is, for his having mythified the indeterminate concept of Ashram into a simple

reference to an interior space housed within an exterior form. Gandhi made the Ashram, an ambiguous spatial concept in the Sanskrit language, refer to a definite, and finite architectural space. Indeed one could even go so far as to say Gandhi mythified language itself into the experience of architecture. This is more than evident in how he meddled with the names that had been assigned to the buildings in a new Satyagraha Ashram which he established along the banks of the Sabarmati river in 1917 (Plate 1.3). His emphasis on retaining some linguistic purity while naming buildings in the Ashram in 1929, for instance, serves to suggest how much importance he attached to exploring language as the experience of architecture.¹⁷

Here, so as to be clear, I am not suggesting that Gandhi viewed the forms of the buildings at the Ashram as references to some complex, social meaning that resided outside them and beyond them. But rather, I am suggesting how Gandhi sought to reduce the complexity of language itself into the experience of architecture in purely functionalist terms. It is for his having sought names for the everyday experience of being sheltered that Gandhi can be deemed a myth-maker.

Whatever Gandhi's peculiar engagement with the Ashram as architecture may have been between 1915 and 1930, by 1936 he engaged with the architecture of a hut that his follower, the acclaimed social worker Mira Behn (1892-1982) had built in the village of Segaoon, from the outside of habitude. If, for the better part of his life, he had lived within or relatively close to urban settings, in 1936 he shifted to the village of Segaoon so as to go beyond his own habitual understanding of himself as an urbanite. He sought to embrace a way of life, which, in his understanding, was riven by exigencies and

environmental contingencies. But before I account for how this life transpired, I must write about the ways in which Gandhi's architectural functionalism served him in his political writing and discourse in general. Indeed one can only begin to address Gandhi's notions of architecture and the question of a Gandhian architecture in a post-colonial India, after taking into account his critique of modernity as habitude.

Gandhi, Interior, Habitude.

Returning to Gandhi's young adulthood, that is, to the time he had finished his higher secondary education at the city of Rajkot in Gujarat, and joined the Samaldas College at Bhavnagar in 1887, one may observe how contained and circumscribed he felt by virtue of his own caste identity. Even as he identified himself as a person who belonged to the Bania caste group or trader merchants of the business class in India, he attached, at this early stage, the greater importance to his own cosmopolitanism. In this regard he recounted in his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, how he was held hostage by his own caste identity at the time of his departure for England from Mumbai in 1888 so as to pursue an education in law and to become a barrister.¹⁸ "My caste people," he remembered, were agitated over my going abroad."¹⁹ "No... Bania had been to England up to now, and if I dared to do so, I ought to be brought to book!"²⁰ In so far as it was incumbent upon Gandhi to adhere to the life of a caste Bania, then, he could only ever go to England by becoming an outcaste.

From the vantages of the politics surrounding Gandhi's attempts at writing his autobiography, there wasn't anything particularly spectacular about his remembrances of the event in Mumbai, his eventual departure for England in September 1888 and his becoming an outcaste. By 1925, as he began to relay his autobiography serially in the two journals *Navajivan* and *Young India*, Gandhi was already a well-established figure in the Indian political landscape. He had, by that time, led the non-cooperation movement against the British Empire in India and was well known across the world. Indeed, one would think that now, in 1925, his reminiscences, in the form of an autobiography, catered to a burgeoning national and international appetite for the facts of his life, however interesting or insipid these facts may have been.

And yet, Gandhi recollected the incident in Mumbai not merely only to furnish his readers, fans and detractors alike, with the details of his life. Rather, he recollected that incident to also reveal himself as a person somewhat at odds with the life that had been foisted upon him by virtue of his birth and his upbringing. He wrote not so much about how he adhered to societal and cultural expectations and obligations; rather he wrote of how he had come to understand abiding by social expectations and obligations as conformity.

It is in this second sense, then, that one may appreciate Gandhi's autobiography as one of the more powerful narratives in parlance. It was an extraordinary story because it not only depicted how Gandhi had gone beyond the bounds of the expectations posed by solidary, caste feelings, but also because it depicted how he had overcome the limitations which resided within customs and formalities. While the ordinary events, rituals and

obligations of Gandhi's community may have made him to feel bound and overpowered, he was, quite successfully able to portray his prevailing with his own way in the end as a measure of his vitality as a person in *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.

Quite apart from his autobiography, which he set into words fairly late in his life, some of Gandhi's earlier writing, on the other hand, sheds light on how the very western, metropolitan modernity that he sailed into also came to cohere in his imagination as a form of bondage. One confronts Gandhi, the breaker of bondages, for instance, in his incendiary pamphlet titled *Hind Swaraj*, which he wrote as he sailed to South Africa after a visit to London in 1909. That text, even as it took the British Empire to task for the enslavement of millions of Indians, simultaneously emphasized "modern civilization" as a form of involuntary intoxication, that is, as an involuntary self-incarceration.²¹

Here, one could say that Gandhi, the anti-colonial, political revolutionary with a long history of transgressing laws in South Africa where he had been based for many years, quite predictably made mince-meat of the modernity of his British colonial masters. And yet, it was the intricacy of Gandhi's condemnation, if not his audaciousness in addressing what was mechanical and machine-like about "modern civilization," which made his text, written as an imagined dialogue between an "editor" and a "reader," particularly riveting. He wrote:

READER: Now you will have to explain what you mean by civilization.

EDITOR: It is not a question of what I mean. Several English writers refuse to call that civilization which passes under that name. Many books have been written upon that subject. Societies have been formed to cure the nation of the evils of civilization. A great English writer has

written a work called *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure*. Therein he has called it a disease.

READER: Why do we not know this generally?

EDITOR: The answer is very simple. We rarely find people arguing against themselves. Those who are intoxicated by modern civilization are not likely to write against it. Their care will be to find out facts and arguments in support of it and this they do unconsciously, believing it to be true. A man whilst he is dreaming, believes in his dream; he is undeceived only when he is awakened from his sleep. A man labouring under the bane of civilization is like a dreaming man. What we usually read are the works of defenders of modern civilization, which undoubtedly claims among its votaries very brilliant and even some very good men. Their writings hypnotize us. And so, one by one, we are drawn into the vortex.²²

Here, modern civilization was diagnosed as a dream. Modern civilization was, in essence, a dream which did not permit its dreamers to perceive it as a dream, at least in so far as it induced them into a continuing state of sleep. So long as one continually believed in the dream state as a state of wakefulness, one never knew what it was to be awake and to know the dream to be merely a dream. This is evident in the allusion to “a man” who, “whilst he is dreaming, believes in his dream.” Gandhi, necessarily, then, wrote from the vantages of one who was awake, that is, from the vantages of one who was “undeceived” enough to understand the dream as a dream under the influence of which people labored so long as they were asleep. Indeed, only from the vantages of those who were awake, in a place outside of sleep, could one observe civilization as a form of intoxication or, for that matter, civilization as a form of incarceration within one’s own unreflexivity, that is, within one’s spontaneous assumption that modern civilization was a state of being awake. To some degree, then, this very critique of modern civilization as a kind of dreaming, as a

form of mechanical belief in one's being in a wakeful state, must be read in the light of Gandhi's erudition in general. In this regard, it helps to take recourse to Benjamin Zachariah's *Developing India: an Intellectual and Social History* in which he explores in some detail Gandhi's reading habits in his early years as a lawyer and a politician.²³

Gandhi's political philosophizing, according to Zachariah, crystallized along two divergent lines of flight. In the first instance, Gandhi, deriving from his reading of the work of Leo Tolstoy and John Ruskin, if not on account of his immersion in a late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century tendency to react to industrialization, evolved as an anti modernist in the most conservative sense.²⁴ What Zachariah does not dwell upon in his reading of this first line of flight, however, was how Gandhi uniquely framed his conservatism in opposition to machines. Indeed, in *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi wrote about modern civilization as if he were writing against machines. No opportunity was lost at hinting how "western civilization" itself was doomed by its machines. "Machinery" Gandhi claimed "has begun to desolate Europe."²⁵ "Ruination" now knocked "at the English gates."²⁶ "Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization; it represents a great sin."²⁷ What was fascinating about this criticism, was how this "chief symbol of modern civilization" began to be translated into modern western civilization as a machine, that is, as a form of somnambulism. So much one assumes in so far as one reads into being "intoxicated by modern civilization," in that text, as an allusion to a machine's dead nature, that is, its tendency to merely mechanically repeat its tasks.

Gandhi's critique of the mechanical aspect of "Modern Western Civilization" in this sense has some bearing on his espousal at the same time of the concept of *Swadeshi*

or a home-grown approach towards politics and society. Unlike some of his contemporaries in Bengal who framed a *Swadeshi* approach towards Indian nationalism by contemplating what would ideally be the most appropriate borrowings from the west, Gandhi took a maximalist position. In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi enunciated *Swadeshi* as a rejection of cultural borrowings from the west in their entirety. A revolutionary Indian nationalism, as Gandhi saw it, was to be built on the bulwarks of nothing less than a comprehensive and totalizing critique of western civilization as a machine. In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi wrote about how endorsing *Swadeshi* amounted to rejecting the very machinery which produced the matches, pins, the “tinsel splendour of glassware” of western civilization. He argued that by making wicks out of home-grown cotton and by using handmade earthen saucers for lamps “we shall save our eyes and money and support Swadeshi.”²⁸

As a corollary to this very rejection of machines and the machine-like nature of western civilization, informed as it partly was by a European critique of modernity, Gandhi also took recourse to approaching Indian traditions from the vantages of a the writings of Europeans who were curious about alternatives to their own culture. Gandhi’s interest in Indian tradition was very much informed by a European interest in India. He read, for instance, such texts as Sir Edwin Arnold’s translation of the *Bhagwadagita* titled as *The Song Celestial* and Henry Maine’s 1899 book, *Village-Communities of the East and the West*. If deriving from his reading of such thinkers as Ruskin and Tolstoy, Gandhi upbraided western civilization for its depravation, he also took recourse to reading work espousing what Zachariah identifies as “a rejection of materialistic values

and a privileging of rural life.”²⁹ Zachariah’s observations are borne out by *Hind Swaraj* in which Gandhi noted “our ancestors” lived in villages because “large cities were a snare and a useless encumbrance and... people would not be happy in them, that there would be gangs of thieves and robbers, prostitution and vice flourishing in them and... poor men would be robbed by rich men.”³⁰ “They [Our ancestors] were,” Gandhi surmised “therefore, satisfied with small villages.”³¹

Gandhi, then, clearly approached the Indian village as an alternative to “modern civilization.” However, instead of providing a description of the village in general, he merely represented it as the negative of the city. The village was only visible on account of its miniscule size in comparison to the large sizes of cities. Moreover, he represented the city itself as the trap of modern civilization. If previously, in *Hind Swaraj*, he had written in his capacity of a person who was “undeceived” enough to note “a man laboring under the bane of civilization is like a dreaming man,” now he wrote about how “our ancestors” knew what it was like to be snared by the city. The city, they surmised, was a den of vice and was therefore best avoided. It is Gandhi’s description of the city, from the vantages of a place outside it, as the experience of imprisonment within a den of vice and temptation, then, which lent some clarity to what he previously explained as one’s entrapment within a dream. One could, in essence, understand the experience of entrapment within a dream better when one appreciated, from the vantages of a place outside, how the city was the material, spatial manifestation of a trap. However simplistic and problematic Gandhi’s architectural conception of city may have been, it is the

manner in which he deployed this very simplicity to explain the complex, self-perpetuity of modern civilization as mechanical nature which leaves the more lasting impression.

But then what about the village? Was there anything more to the village than its simply being the negative of the city? Reading through Gandhi's writings as his career progressed, one finds, ironically, how upon his return to India in 1915 and after he became overtly involved with the freedom struggle against the British empire, he disparaged Indian villagers for their very own mechanical nature. For instance, in a series of articles that Gandhi wrote in 1919 under the collective title "Father of the World" in *Navajivan*, a monthly journal in the Gujarati language, he railed against the insanitation of India's villages.³² Even though the essays' collective title "Father of the World" may have referred to the agriculturist as the provider of the world, some of the essays in and of themselves were scathing in their criticism of the village, that is, the abode of the agriculturist. For instance, Gandhi, as he whole-heartedly agreed with an interview given by Lionel Curtis, a British colonial official and a member of the Transvaal Legislative Council in South Africa, observed:

Mr. Lionel Curtis , who came into limelight during the Lucknow Congress, has in one place drawn a realistic picture of the Indian villages. He says that the villages of India are situated on dunghills. The huts are in ruins and the inhabitants feeble. Temples are to be found at all sorts of places. Cleanliness is non-existent. The lanes are full of dust. The general appearance would suggest that no one was responsible for the management of the village.³³

Here, Gandhi relied upon Lionel Curtis's vivid representation to grasp the life of the villagers as an insanitary one. What began in "Father of the world" as a description of "Indian villages" being "situated on dunghills," their huts and their inhabitants in a state

of ruination, if not their lanes being “full of dust,” culminated in a long discussion on how the unsanitary conditions in the villages were the product of a continuing giving in to habits. Gandhi, as the text progressed, dwelled upon the habitude of the villagers in “going to the fields for evacuation” or for that matter, upon how the villagers, in the absence of latrines, turned the area around their households into latrines and thereby made the village unclean.³⁴ Similarly, he wrote about how people spat chewed out betel leaves and tobacco or cleaned their noses on streets.³⁵ Furthermore, he wrote of how peasants are very thoughtless in their use of water. “The well or pond from which drinking and cooking water is taken” he chafed, “must be kept clean.”³⁶ What made it impossible to keep sources such as wells or ponds clean in villages was, as Gandhi saw it, the absence of a sense of disgust over drinking polluted water. Indeed, as he claimed, “if drinking filthy or polluted water caused disgust, it would be easy to follow the rules of hygiene with regard to water.”³⁷

Evidently, then, Gandhi apportioned a considerable part of the blame for the squalor of India’s villages to the habitude of villagers, that is, to their incapacity to hesitate and reflect upon what they would, as a matter of habit, will themselves into doing. It is the unreflexive spontaneity with which they took recourse to repairing to the fields for evacuation, to spitting and cleaning noses in the street, and to drinking filthy and polluted water, that was cause for some exasperation. The appearance of the village, its being situated on a dunghill, if not its huts being in a state of ruin, then, in Gandhi’s understanding, was not so much a condition that villagers were subjected to, as much as it was a condition they subjected themselves to, habitually, without disgust, even as they

suffered. Such vivid architectural metaphors as the dung heap and the dilapidated hut, in this sense, then, were not so much references to a state of ruination, as much as they were references to the villager's habituation to ruination.

Habitat, Village Reform, Spinning and the Ashram

Gandhi wrote "Father of the World" so as to galvanize a new corps of village workers to take up the task of teaching sanitation to the villagers, that is, to encourage them to take up the task of improving "the health of the village within a year." He appealed to volunteers from India's cities to travel to the villages and to bring about changes through the means of simple suggestions and interventions to the villagers. He encouraged them to intervene by emphasizing a few rules of hygiene to make the villagers to break their habits. "All that is required" he claimed "is a few sincere and willing workers, both men and women, as many as may be counted on the fingers of one hand. These will be able, by their own exemplary conduct and spirit of service, to bring about the necessary transformation in every village."³⁸

What is fascinating is how Gandhi went on to elaborate his message in "Father of the World," in his discourse of the charkha or the spinning wheel upon which cotton could be spun into a yarn. By 1921, for instance, he wrote in *Young India*, a journal which he edited, about how the spinning wheel could provide employment for the millions living in India's villages. If previously, Gandhi encouraged village workers to help the villagers to break their habits, now he enjoined upon village workers to make the villagers to spin their own yarn out of cotton. Indian villagers remained unemployed for

four months of the year on account of the agricultural cycle. Gandhi believed, then, that villagers could take up spinning cotton on the charkha, so as to shed those four months of enforced idleness and become economically self-sufficient. By selling homespun cotton, the villagers could, Gandhi hoped, find an alternative source of income. So much is evident in Gandhi's address to his English-speaking, urban audiences, through the auspices of *Young India*.

If the reader would visualize the picture, he must dismiss from his mind the busy fuss of the city life or the grinding fatigue of the factory life or the slavery of the plantations. These are but drops in the ocean of Indian humanity. If he would visualize the picture of the Indian skeleton, he must think of the eighty per cent of the population which is working its own fields and which has practically no occupation for at least four months in the year and which therefore lives on the borderland of starvation. This is the normal condition. The ever-recurring famines make a large addition to this enforced idleness. What is the work that these men and women can easily do in their own cottages so as to supplement their very slender resources? Does anyone still doubt that it is only hand-spinning and nothing else? And I repeat that this can be made universal in a few months' time, if only the workers will.³⁹

It is hardly sufficient to read this long discussion from *Young India* as a description of the ignorance of those caught in the whirl of the busy fuss of city life, that is, as a description of their ignorance over how "the eighty per cent of the population," the country's very "skeleton," was worse off than themselves. One must, at least from the vantages of Gandhi's evolution as a critic of a modern, mechanical nature, also observe how for a large demographic of farmers, having little to do for a quarter of the year was normative. One must, in essence, take note of how "enforced idleness" was a kind of habitude within which the villagers found themselves trapped. As to who the enforcer of this idleness remained a pregnant question. If, for instance, a month prior to writing his

essay in *Young India*, Gandhi had written in *The Hindu*, a newspaper, of how it was the “deprivation of cloth manufacture” which was the cause of “enforced idleness,” a few years later, in 1925, Gandhi wrote in the journal *The Searchlight* of the dangers of the enforced idleness becoming a voluntary one.⁴⁰

Regardless of who the enforcer was of the idleness, its remedy, ultimately, lay in hand spinning. Workers from the cities were to encourage villagers to take up the work of spinning in the months within which they remained unemployed, be it on account of the absence of some village industry of cloth manufacture, or on account of their own mechanical, involuntary adherence to the habit of being idle. Gandhi, in essence, expected the village workers to help the villagers to break out of their own status quo, that is, the spontaneity of their acceptance of their unemployment as normality.

From the vantages of an architectural writing, what calls for pause and some consideration is how Gandhi casually clarified this automatic of acceptance of normality with a description of space. One may remember that in 1919, in “Father of the World,” Gandhi had emphasized how the architectural dilapidation of the villages spoke of the villagers’ conformity to their own bad habits. By 1926, on the other hand, Gandhi expressed entrapment within habitude in more thoroughgoing architectural terms. Now, conformity to habitude, at least metaphorically, was represented as a form of incarceration within an inner space. So much one reads in Gandhi’s description of a visit paid by Satish Chandra Das Gupta, the scientist and advocate of Khadi, or cloth made out of handspun cotton, to the spinning centers in the state of Bihar. Gandhi, while noting how spinning was benefiting the nation, also observed how “millions of threads spun are

like so many rays of sunshine brought into the frigid and dark dungeons miscalled homes of India.²⁴¹ At the face of it, there isn't much to be gained in reading beyond what is more than immediately apparent in this somewhat brief, almost bromidic remark. What could be so special about a casual reference to homes in India, or what Gandhi alluded to as dark dungeons?

But then again, it isn't so much the frigid nature and the darkness of the home, rather how the frigid nature and darkness of an interior void clarified the complex idea of entrapment within habitude that calls for pause and consideration. As is the case with much of Gandhi's engagement with architecture in general, it is not so much architectural form itself, rather it is how he made architectural form to assimilate and concretize nascent, non-architectural, social, existential and philosophical themes that bears emphasis. Indeed, "frigid and dark dungeons miscalled homes of India" were houses in a double sense. On the one hand, they housed people in India. On the other hand, in Gandhi's understanding, the "homes of India" were the forms most suited to housing, that is, giving some sensuous legibility to his nascent ideas concerning habitude. Indeed it is not the space of home that Gandhi wrote about; rather he made it evident how about that space was most suited to serve as an allusion to other kinds of spaces of the imagination.

There are, then, based upon what I have referred to thus far, at least three different strains in what one may provisionally call Gandhi's architectural thinking. On the one hand he relied upon his very functionalist understanding of architecture to explore the negative experience of habitude. This, as is evident in some instances in his political and social reformist writing, was an attempt at achieving clarity and simplicity of expression.

Indeed I would say that Gandhi's economy of expression as a politician, to some degree, can be attributed to his ability to confer a certain architectural sensuousness, that is, to confer a certain easy, architectural accessibility to the most abstract ideas about entrapment within habitude.

At the same time, Gandhi also made accessible the experience of linguistic purity and such vernacular concepts as the Ashram through the means of what was functional about architecture. His simple act of naming buildings, regardless of their form, reduced the experience of language and tradition into the experience of architecture as function. The implications of this reduction from the vantages of an architectural history of South Asia cannot be overstated. By the means of his architectural functionalism, that is, by the means of his indifference towards the appearance of buildings in general, Gandhi may have in no small way contributed to the loosening of the ties between the forms of architecture and the content they denote. Many post-colonial era appropriations of colonial buildings in India, for instance, to some degree, are attempts at loosening what filiations there may have been between the form of the building and the context within which they were constructed. The renaming of the Victoria Terminus as Chattrapati Shivaji Terminus, for instance, while not only serving to overtly undermine the significance of the building in colonial terms, also serves to annex the functionality of the building to the name of Shivaji, the king who founded the Maratha empire in the west of India in the seventeenth century.

A third aspect of Gandhi's architectural thinking emerged when he sought to go beyond his own habituation to his identity as an urbanite. He shifted, in 1936, to the

village of Segaoon in central India, so as to experience the exigent and unpredictable nature of the life of the Indian villagers. Nothing about village living, as he now emphasized, could be known in advance. Indeed, Gandhi believed that he could learn how to become a villager himself only by experiencing the unpredictable nature of environmental and economic contingencies that befell the denizens of Segaoon. It is, then, in the context of his interest in stepping away from the predictability and comfort of his own urban existence, that Gandhi praised the hut that his follower, the social worker Mira Behn (1892-1982), had built for herself in Segaoon (Plate 1.4). He now no longer thought of architecture in allegorical terms. Rather, he spoke of the very craft of building as a way of making something productive out of exigencies.

And yet, as I will demonstrate in the concluding chapter of this dissertation, Gandhi's interest, in 1936, in going beyond his own habitude, in some ways was entirely predictable. In so far as he had, in the nineteen twenties, defined a sensorial life of exigencies as one that existed only in contradistinction to an inner spiritual life of peace and quietude, he could not but have been solicitous in advance towards the exigent and contingent life of villagers in Segaoon. Indeed Gandhi was still within his own habitude as a spiritualist when he sought to experience the unfamiliarity and the exigent nature of life Segaoon. In this sense, by the means of his description of Mira Behn's hut in 1936, he alluded to existential and spiritual axioms that he had already been brooding over and developing.

For Gandhi, ultimately, there was, as I wish to demonstrate by the means of my dissertation, no way of escaping his own habituation towards determining his experiences

of spaces and places in advance. That Gandhi was aware of his own habituation, is more than patent in a text he wrote in 1942 titled “Akash (ether).” In this dissertation, I do not write about that text. Rather, I concentrate my efforts on exploring the memories of those who took up the project of building a utopian Gandhian architecture in a post-colonial India, and what those who live within that architecture, oftentimes experienced. I find that many of these people are trapped within their own memories and past experiences, and these, together, continually affect how they create and experience spaces in their present. Here, I wish to mention that I do not necessarily take a negative view towards memory. But rather, as an architectural historian, I seek to explore a productive way of writing about how one’s own habitual understanding of spaces and places can determine what one experiences in advance. One is, as I see it, always already prepared for new spatial experiences, with a fairly advanced spatial vocabulary.

Chapter Outline

In the second chapter of this dissertation, I will explore Gandhi’s engagement with architecture from as early as 1891, when he wrote about a vegetarian shepherd’s hut in the journal *The Vegetarian*, to the time he shifted into a hut in the village of Segaoon in 1936. I will discuss how the hut fared in Gandhi’s political pronouncements upon his returning to India from South Africa in 1915. I will also, simultaneously, discuss Gandhi’s Satyagraha Ashram in Ahmedabad and dwell upon its naming. Building upon my discussion on the Ashram, I will subsequently emphasize Gandhi’s prowess as a

myth-maker, specifically in architectural terms. At the same time, I will dwell upon the architectural aspect of Gandhi's writing and thinking, more specifically upon the manner in which the village hut and the home were useful to him while explaining habitude in India's villages. I will end this chapter with a discussion on Gandhi's description of Mira Behn's hut in Segaon.

In the third chapter of this dissertation, I will explore the life and the work of the Quaker, Gandhian, architect Laurie Baker (1917 – 2007). I will discuss how Baker came to take Gandhi's injunction to him in 1944 to use locally available material to build, as a reference to how people in modern India had become habituated to an unthinking acceptance of modern building traditions. Furthermore, I will discuss how Baker's religiosity, prepared him advance for a Gandhian simplicity. As I will suggest, Baker's interest in architectural honesty during his years in India, in many ways stemmed from a time prior his arrival in the country. I seek, then, to establish in this chapter, the continuity between Baker's pre-Gandhian past outside India, and his Gandhian present in India, beginning in 1944. If Gandhi was prepared in advance, by the means of his spiritual outlook towards a world of flux and exigencies, for the exigent environment of Segaon, then Baker as a Quaker, I argue, was no less prepared, in advance, for Gandhism in India, beginning in 1944.

In the fourth chapter of this dissertation, I will explore the arched terracotta-tumbler-roofed homes built by the Gandhian Center of Science for Villages (CSV) based in the central Indian town of Wardha, not terribly far from where Gandhi had settled in Segaon in the nineteen thirties. In the discourse surrounding the creation and the building

of these CSV roofs, I discern some aspects of Gandhi's later thinking, that is, his interest in the exigent nature of the construction of Mira Behn's hut. Moreover, I also examine how the engineers and workers at CSV were influenced, towards the end of the nineteen seventies, by the Nubian vaults built by the Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy (1900 – 1989) in the village of New Gournia near the Aswan Dam. The engineers and the workers at CSV, I argue, may not have approached Fathy's vaults as unfamiliar forms. Rather, deriving from their own familiarity with Mira Behn's hut at Segacon, and the work of the Gandhian Joseph Cornelius Kumarappa in Wardha, the engineers and workers at CSV may have possessed their own, local interpretive frame, from within which, Fathy's vaults may have seemed quite familiar to them. Finally, and more significantly, I will explore how in a village in which these CSV vaults were constructed, the villagers have their own local interpretive frame from within which they always already know in advance how they must interpret these vaults. The theme I explore is how the Engineers at CSV, as much as the villagers who live under the CSV roofs, approach architecture from the vantages of their own memories, and habitual notions of how space is and ought to be.

In the fifth chapter of this dissertation I will examine the urban designer Charles Correa's (b. 1930) Belapur Housing Scheme in Navi Mumbai in the state of Maharashtra. In this chapter, I will emphasize Correa's fascination with alternatives to a metropolitan urbanity. In particular, I will explore how contrary to Mumbai's high rise, high density urbanity, at Belapur in Navi Mumbai, Correa proposed in the seventies, a low-rise, medium density pattern of living. In this regard, Correa, in an essay in 1976, cited

Gandhi's vision of a village utopia, in the context of his plan concerning low-rise, medium density habitation. Building upon Gandhi's Euclidian, geometrical conception of a village utopia, I will explore the prospects for that utopianism from an architectural perspective. By suggesting that the practice of architecture is heavily invested in descriptive geometry, I will demonstrate how Correa's Gandhian utopianism is distinct from Gandhi's own, Euclidean, geometric utopianism.

¹ Michael Graves, who is one of the most renowned proponents of post-modernism in architecture, in his essay "A Case for Figurative Architecture" in 1983 made a distinction between what he called a "standard form" of architecture and a "poetic form" of architecture. A standard form, as he suggested, is the buildings internal language, that is, its most basic form, determined by pragmatic, constructional and technical requirements. In contrast, he observed, "the poetic form is responsive to issues external to the building." In abiding by Graves' distinction while writing about Gandhi, I am particularly taking architecture's functionalism, that is, its simply being an inside void contained within an external frame, as what Graves would have called "standard form." Graves' essay can be found in *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture*, ed. Kate Nesbitt, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) 86.

² Richard G. Fox, *Gandhian Utopia: Experiments with Culture*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

³ Fox, 23.

⁴ Fox, 23. Gandhi's becoming a political revolutionary striving for the rights of Indian indentured laborers in turn of the century South Africa, his arriving upon non-violent protest as a legitimate means towards their emancipation in 1906, and his becoming the leader of the Indian freedom struggle by the beginning of the nineteen twenties, in this sense, have to be studied as discontinuous events. Each of these historical episodes demands an enquiring into particular circumstances and particular social networks within which Gandhi found himself. In order to explain the inconsistencies between Gandhi's young adulthood and his many later lives, then, one must, according to Fox, move away from a model of assessing the politician from the vantages of psychological selfhood. In models of psychological selfhood, as Fox notes, a sense of self is originally constituted in childhood and thereafter compels the individual to present himself or herself in a relatively consistent fashion in society over the course of his or her life. Such psychological models of selfhood, then, are certainly not adequate to explain how Gandhi went from being an elite, urbanite, to being a near naked ascetic who spoke about freedom from British rule and the need for social and economic upliftment, on the behalf of the millions who lived in India's villages.

⁵ Fox, 25-26.

⁶ Fox, 26.

⁷ Tarlo's discussion on the loincloth may be found in *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996) 71-78.

⁸ While the transformations Gandhi affected on his own persona were initially his responses to a contingent, external, social climate, those very transformations would eventually come to affect that external climate, if not affect his own sense of what his public persona ought to be. Gandhi, in essence, became a near-naked ascetic on account of contingencies. Whatever his interior, romantic imaginings about a Hindu asceticism and spirituality may have been, he discarded his clothes on account of his interest in abiding by the vagaries of a transitioning, transformative political moment in the public sphere.

⁹ Joseph Alter, "Gandhi's Body, Gandhi's Truth." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (May, 1996) 301-32.

¹⁰ Alter, 304.

¹¹ Alter, 305.

¹² Alter, 303.

¹³ In this regard it helps to examine the following two fairly famous works. Susanne Hoerber Rudolph, "The New Courage: An essay on Gandhi's Psychology." *World Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Oct., 1963), pp. 98-117 and Erik Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: The Origins of Militant Non-Violence*. (New York: Norton & Comp. Inc., 1969).

¹⁴ *Oxford English dictionary*

http://dictionary.oed.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu/cgi/entry/50101075?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=habitude&first=1&max_to_show=10 Accessed, 10/24, 2010.

¹⁵ Mahatma Gandhi, "An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with The Truth" [November 29, 1925 and ending on February 3, 1929]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 44 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 386

<http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL44.PDF>. Accessed: 10/23/2010.

¹⁶ Mahatma Gandhi, "Satyagraha in South Africa" [appeared serially in the issues of the *Navajivan*, beginning on April 13, 1924, and ending on November 22, 1925]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 34 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 94,

<http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL34.PDF>. Accessed: 10/23/2010.

¹⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, "Letter to Chaganlal Joshi" [June 13, November 1929] from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 46 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 117,

<http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL34.PDF>. Accessed: 10/23/2010.

¹⁸ *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with The Truth* initially serially appeared in *Navajivan* beginning on November 29, 1925 and ending on February 3, 1929.

¹⁹ Mahatma Gandhi, "An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with The Truth" [November 29, 1925 and ending on February 3, 1929]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 44 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 122,

<http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL44.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

²⁰ Mahatma Gandhi, "An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with The Truth" [November 29, 1925 and ending on February 3, 1929]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 44 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 122,

<http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL44.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

²¹ Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj* in Gujarati while returning to South Africa from England on the *Kildonan Castle* and subsequently, published the text in his journal in South Africa, *Indian Opinion*.

²² Mahatma Gandhi, "*Hind Swaraj*" [the first twelve chapters issued on 11-12-1909 and the rest on 18-12-1909]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 10 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 258, 259, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL10.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

²³ A discussion on Gandhi's reading habits can be found in the chapter "The Debate on Gandhian Ideas" in Zachariah, *Developing India: An Intellectual and Social History c. 1930-50*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005) 169-171.

²⁴ Zachariah, I must mention, was not merely only writing about Gandhi in his book. That said, he is one of the few people to have written with such clarity of the continuities between Gandhi's socio-political thinking from his early years as a revolutionary, through the time he came to advocate village reform later in his life. Most accounts of Gandhi, I find, dwell more upon his early life and not so much his later life.

²⁵ Mahatma Gandhi, "*Hind Swaraj*" [the first twelve chapters issued on 11-12-1909 and the rest on 18-12-1909]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 10 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 303, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL10.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

²⁶ Mahatma Gandhi, "*Hind Swaraj*" [the first twelve chapters issued on 11-12-1909 and the rest on 18-12-1909]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 10 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 303, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL10.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

²⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, "*Hind Swaraj*" [the first twelve chapters issued on 11-12-1909 and the rest on 18-12-1909]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 10 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 303, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL10.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

-
- ²⁸ Mahatma Gandhi, “*Hind Swaraj*” [the first twelve chapters issued on 11-12-1909 and the rest on 18-12-1909]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 10 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 303, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL10.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²⁹ Zachariah, 172.
- ³⁰ Mahatma Gandhi, “*Hind Swaraj*” [the first twelve chapters issued on 11-12-1909 and the rest on 18-12-1909]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 10 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 280, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL10.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ³¹ Mahatma Gandhi, “*Hind Swaraj*” [the first twelve chapters issued on 11-12-1909 and the rest on 18-12-1909]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 10 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 280, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL10.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ³² Gandhi began publishing these essays, collectively titled “Father of the World” in *Navajivan* in September 1919 and ended with the fourth and final edition, in November that year.
- ³³ Mahatma Gandhi, “Father of the World II published in *Navajivan*” [5-10-1919]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 19 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 27, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL19.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ³⁴ Mahatma Gandhi, “Father of the World IV published in *Navajivan*” [2-11-1919]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 19 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 98, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL19.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ³⁵ Mahatma Gandhi, “Father of the World IV published in *Navajivan*” [2-11-1919]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 19 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 98-99, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL19.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ³⁶ Mahatma Gandhi, “Father of the World IV published in *Navajivan*” [2-11-1919]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 19 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 99, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL19.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ³⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, “Father of the World IV published in *Navajivan*” [2-11-1919]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 19 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 99, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL19.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ³⁸ Mahatma Gandhi, “Father of the World II published in *Navajivan*” [5-10-1919]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 19 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 28, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL19.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ³⁹ Mahatma Gandhi, “Co-operation published in *Young India*” [3-11-1921]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 25 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 51, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL19.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ⁴⁰ In 1925, Gandhi mentioned in *The Searchlight* his time at the Champaran district in the state of Bihar in India, where he had led a campaign in 1918 against the British government on the behalf of the workers in Indigo plantations. In this regard, he observed “I have lived in the midst of the 17 lakhs of people of Champaran for six months or more, and I have seen them hovering round me from day to day without doing anything whatsoever. They were satisfied to draw a little of warmth from one whom they considered to be their true servant, but they would not work. But I had not, at that time, this spinning-wheel or I would have placed it before them. They were not famishing, not starving, but they had forgotten the use of their limbs. They would scratch a little bit of earth, grow indigo, reap corn, but would not spin. They had no industry in their homes and, having forgotten it for years, they now consider it perfectly useless. That is why I call it enforced idleness.” Mahatma Gandhi, “Speech at Bengal provincial conference Faridpur published in May 3, 1925 in *The Searchlight*” [8-5-1925]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 31 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 268, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL31.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ⁴¹ Mahatma Gandhi, “Give us Cotton” [25-2-1926]: The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 34 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 320, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL34.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

Chapter 2

The Hut and the Ashram

It is tempting to say that Gandhi had an integrated way of approaching Ashrams and village huts as spaces of habitation.⁴² He frequently wrote about these spaces in his capacity as a political reactionary. As was the case with the clothes he wore, the food he ate and the morals he espoused, Gandhi, one supposes, idealized the hut and the Ashram as spaces that ran counter to the grain of an elite, Indian nationalist imagination in early twentieth century India. Gandhi idealized the hut and the Ashram because they, as spaces, chafed against the grain of what was deemed modern by metropolitan nationalists in early twentieth century India.

The village hut, one assumes in this regard, was the counterpoint of the colonial bungalow. Unlike the bungalow or the mansion, which housed India's urbane, cosmopolitan elite, the hut was the home of the peasant.⁴³ If peasants had no space within the metropolitan freedom struggle in early twentieth-century India, Gandhi emphasized the huts they lived in, so as to confer some symbolic visibility upon them. Gandhi described the village hut and ultimately took up residence in one in 1936 in the village of Segaoon in central India, because he sought to restore the peasant to Indian nationalism as its principle protagonist.

Similarly, Gandhi emphasized Ashrams because he saw withdrawal from urbanity as a form of politics. In so far as the Ashram came replete with a history of housing spiritualists and mendicants who withdrew from the material excesses of urbanity in India, it was but understandable that Gandhi name his home, a rented colonial bungalow

in a suburb of Ahmedabad in 1915, as Satyagraha Ashram. If Ashrams were traditionally housed in the margins, in forests and other such places at a great distance from the temptations of the wealth of urbanity, Gandhi sought to bring that marginality closer and deeper into urbanity. While Gandhi's bungalow, in 1915, may have been situated on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, it was, at the same time, scarcely distant from Ellis Bridge, an important spine which led to the commercial heart of the city of Ahmedabad.

One can, then, go so far as to say that Gandhi sought, by the means of the name for his new home, to bring India's religious margins as close as possible to the urban mainstream.⁴⁴ Gandhi sought to fight against British colonial rule in India by questioning the materially indulgent religiosity of the moneyed classes in India's cities. He questioned the opulence and extravagance of urban religion in India by conferring some urban visibility to its very counterpoint, that is, to the frugal, parsimonious life led in the religious commune called the Ashram.

And yet, to simply read Gandhi's village hut and his urban Ashram as symbols of a political counterculture to an affluent Indian nationalism or religiosity, is to severely underestimate his capabilities as an architectural thinker. After all, Gandhi did not merely infuse the village hut, for instance, with a single meaning; rather, he relied upon it to convey multiple meanings at different points in time in his life. In this regard, it helps to read steadily through the early portions of the Gandhi archive, that is, the portion of the archive which appertains to the time beginning in 1891 and ends roughly in the nineteen twenties. From this portion of the archive, one learns how Gandhi simplified architecture into a grammar. In his descriptions of the hut, for instance, Gandhi, reduced architectural

form into an interior space housed within an exterior frame. By the means of this basic grammar, Gandhi conveyed the complexity of his ideas concerning truth, economy, healthful existence and habitude. In this chapter, then, I set aside the story of Gandhi's appreciation of the hut as a symbolic architectural language which expressed the life of labor and husbandry in India's villages, and explore how he communicated his social reformist ideas by marginalizing architecture itself into grammar.

Chapter structure

In the first section of this chapter I will address Gandhi's ability to make the grammar of the village hut to carry meaning in the context of his discourse on vegetarianism in the early eighteen nineties and, eventually, in the context of his discourse on truth in his autobiography in the nineteen twenties. In the second section of this chapter I will write about how Gandhi found rich communicative possibilities within the word Ashram. I note, particularly in the context of Gandhi's colonial bungalow in the city of Ahmedabad, how he did not so much only embrace the word Ashram as a reference to a marginal religious culture of living away from the cities; rather, more significantly, I observe how he set that word to work as a myth. Far from restricting himself to the history of the word Ashram, Gandhi sought to imbue that word with an architectural meaning by naming the colonial bungalow as Satyagraha Ashram. I not only write about how Gandhi relied upon architecture to clarify complex ideas in his own writing, but also about how he relied upon language to imbue meaning into the very experience of architecture.

In the third section of this chapter, I write about the belated development of Gandhi's architectural pragmatism, specifically in the context of a hut he visited in 1936. If, for the better part of his life and his political career, Gandhi had emphasized the architectural functionalism of the hut as a means to convey and clarify his ideas while writing, by the time he came to reside in the village of Segaon in central India in 1936, he emphasized the pragmatism underscoring the construction of huts. Prior to his stay in Segaon, he had mostly written about architecture in a state of completion, that is, as an artifact that had already been constructed to serve the purpose of housing an interior space within an exterior frame. At Segaon, on the other hand, he grew interested in the circumstantial materialism which led to the construction of huts. In this regard, I pay close attention to Gandhi's description of a hut built by his disciple, the social worker, Mira Behn (Also known as Madeline Slade, 1892 – 1982).

The Architecture of *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*

While reading through Gandhi's autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, one initially gets the impression that he appreciated architecture not so much for its formal qualities, rather only for its materiality. One notes, for instance, how he only very barely expressed an interest in architectural form in his description of life in the commune he established in Phoenix in South Africa in 1904 (Plate 2.1). That year, he read the English political theorist John Ruskin's *Unto This Last* (first published in 1860). Upon reading the text, he grew somewhat convinced that modern civilization and its political economy were inimical to moral and spiritual well-being, and subsequently

decided to relocate the task of publishing his revolutionary newsletter *Indian Opinion* from Natal to a farm in Phoenix. At this farm in Phoenix, he had hoped that his followers would labor, draw the same living wage, and attend to the press work in spare time. If Ruskin had resisted the idea of a modern political economy in which laws of a divine morality were frequently misplaced in the pursuit of physical and economic well-being, Gandhi sought to put into praxis at the farm in Phoenix in South Africa, a form of community living based on egalitarianism and principled, voluntary labor. What begs emphasis, then, is how, upon shifting to Phoenix, Gandhi and his followers built their homes. As Gandhi observed:

In order to enable every one of us to make a living by manual labour, we parceled out the land round the press in pieces of three acres each. One of these fell to my lot. On all these plots we, much against our wish, built houses with corrugated iron. Our desire had been to have mud huts thatched with straw or small brick houses such as would become ordinary peasants, but it could not be. They would have been more expensive and would have meant more time, and everyone was eager to settle down as soon as possible.⁴⁵

From this laconic description, one finds it somewhat difficult to glean what Gandhi and the settlers understood of the form of the hut or the brick house. Indeed how can one explain the settlers' architectural fantasy of the hut and the brick house in formal terms? Were the huts and brick houses of the settlers' imagination cuboids? Moreover, what does architectural formalism have to do with the principles undergirding the everyday praxis of an ideal community based on Ruskin's principles? These principles, as Gandhi had duly noted before writing about his experiments at Phoenix in his autobiography, were:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.⁴⁶

Evidently, none of these principles, at least at the face of it, spoke the language of architectural form. Nothing about this abridgement of Ruskin's ideals from *Unto This Last* translated into a spatial philosophy. At best one could only read it as an invitation to resettle in a place where the strictures of modern, urban class conflict would not be relevant. As to what life in this new place must appear to be, or how the shape and volume of a habitat in this new location would contribute to a shared sense of communitarian feeling, on the other hand, is not so patent in Gandhi's autobiography.

And yet, from the vantages of the third principle, which is, "the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living," one could at least provisionally comprehend what architectural desires the settlers did profess. In so far as the life of labor of a handicraftsman was the "life worth living," building thatched huts and brick houses, piece by piece, was an ideal, "ordinary" form of activity for the settlement. In this somewhat limited sense, then, in Gandhi's recollections, it was not so much the form of the hut or the brick house that the settlers had compromised upon, rather they had compromised upon their very desire to build edifices with their own bare hands. In essence, using corrugated iron sheets to build homes, in their eyes, may have amounted not so much to labor as much as it may have amounted to an intelligent assembling of ready-made parts. One would think, then, that Gandhi and the settlers at Phoenix were stigmatized by the very ease with which they could build out of corrugated iron.

And yet, to suggest that Gandhi only thought of architecture as building activity, that is, as the labor that went into erecting an edifice, is by no means sufficient. After all, he had previously written about the hut as a volume, that is, as a box-like container. Indeed he had arrived at his own personal imagining of an “ordinary” hut well before he had read Ruskin’s *Unto This Last*. In 1891, as a young, impressionable law student in London, Gandhi had taken recourse to an architectural metaphor in his description of the life of a shepherd in India in his essay titled “Indian Vegetarians.” The “vegetarian shepherd” of India, who spent the better part of the day superintending his cattle in the pasture, possessed a bare-essential dwelling. As Gandhi observed:

He [the well-to-do vegetarian shepherd] sleeps either in the open air, or in a hut which is sometimes overcrowded. He resorts to the hut in winter or in the rainy season. It may be worthy of remark that these huts, even though miserable in appearance and often without any windows, are not air tight. Being constructed in a rude state, their doors are made, not as a protection against draughts of wind, but against burglars... Such, then, is the living of a well-to-do shepherd. His, in many respects, is an ideal mode of life. He is perforce regular in his habits, is out of doors during the greater part of his time, while out he breathes the purest air, has his due amount of exercise, has good and nourishing food and last but not least, is free from many cares which are frequently productive of weak constitutions.⁴⁷

This description at the end of a long discussion on the merits of vegetarianism, is representative of a young Gandhi’s interest in writing about the marginality of architecture to a flourishing life. The shepherd, after all, only took recourse to the hut in the winter or in the rainy season. Indeed, as Gandhi had noted, the shepherd sometimes even slept outside his own house at night. The hut, in this sense, was not so much a place the shepherd came to dwell in, as much as it was a place that he was only marginally

invested in. His very indifference towards the appearance of the hut, in this sense, spoke of how he hardly thought about it.

And yet, were one to set aside the issue of the marginality of the hut's relevance to the shepherd and to take that it is "rude" seriously, a somewhat different picture emerges. One may observe that the hut was very bare. The shepherd did not waste any time building windows; rather he simply designed the hut in a "rude" fashion, as a place to whose safe-keeping he could submit his own body or his valuables.⁴⁸ The vegetarian shepherd, in essence, did not represent his own cultural or social aspirations by the means of the appearance of the hut. Rather, he, in Gandhi's understanding, invested in the hut's very basic use value as an exterior membrane, which protected an inner space from burglars.

Gandhi's description of the hut, then, could be studied as a ruse. He, in essence, relied upon architecture to bestow some sensuousness to the negative experience of indoor life. One could even go so far as to say that Gandhi wrote about the protective, box-like appearance of the hut, that is, about its not possessing any windows, so as to refer to a way of life which was devoid of exposure to the elements. This becomes evident when one studies how the shepherd's hut functioned in the larger economy of the essay "Indian Vegetarians." The essay was an account of how those who were vegetarians in India could be just as fit and strong as meat-eating westerners. Gandhi emphasized how a good constitution had much to do with factors other than diet. The Indian shepherd became a "finely built man of Herculean constitution" because he was a

denizen of the outdoors.⁴⁹ More specifically, the shepherd had a sturdy constitution because he spent time away from his hut.

Returning, then, to the matter of the marginal relevance of the hut to the shepherd, one may now be better placed to observe how architecture, in its very marginality, possessed a certain sensuous shape and character in the young Gandhi's imagination. It was only by the means of an allusion to the experience of the life indoors, that Gandhi could ultimately explain the experience of life outdoors. Gandhi, in essence, could only define the outdoor, or the exterior, after he had first attempted a description of the poverty of the life of the interior of the architectural frame.

From the vantages of Gandhi's tendency to sometimes communicate by marginalizing architecture into a simple structural, functional frame, I suppose his description of the settlers' buildings at Phoenix in his autobiography, was a bit of a paradox. After all, in that description, Gandhi did not so much rely upon a description of the syntax of architectural functionalism to diagnose or to explain some larger structural, existential or scientific principle. On the contrary, he referred only to the materiality of the appearance of home from the vantages of the outlook of an "ordinary peasant." The hesitation of the settlers at Phoenix in using corrugated iron spoke about how they were not so much invested in architectural functionalism, but rather, of how they were more invested in the social messages that could be parlayed by the material appearance of their homes. It was the ordinariness of peasant life that they wished to portray through the appearance of their homes. One supposes, then, that corrugated iron sheets were by no means adequate to this communicative task.

As one reads through Gandhi's autobiography, however, one finds that he did eventually revert to a description of architecture as a structural frame. While remembering, in his autobiography, his struggle for the rights of Indigo plantation workers in Champaran in Bihar, India, between 1917 and 1918, Gandhi essayed the poverty of India's villages by the means of description of a village hut. This description of the village hut as a frame is so deeply buried within the flow of Gandhi's arguments, so busily performing the work of conveying a larger, structural impression of the economic plight of villagers in India, that one scarcely notices it in a cursory reading of the autobiography. And yet, those who have labored through Gandhi's "Indian Vegetarians" from 1891, are perhaps better prepared to appreciate this description as a measure of Gandhi's prowess as an architectural semantician. They may note how an account of the hut not only enhances the theme of the apathy of the villagers in the region of Champaran towards Gandhi's project of sanitation and ensuring cleanliness, it also furthers his broader narrative of delving into the truth. Gandhi noted:

It may not be out of place here to narrate an experience that I have described before now at many meetings. Bhitiharva was a small village in which was one of our schools. I happened to visit a smaller village in its vicinity and found some of the women dressed very dirtily. So I told my wife to ask them why they did not wash their clothes. She spoke to them. One of the women took her into her hut and said: 'Look now, there is no box or cupboard here containing other clothes. The *sari* I am wearing is the only one I have. How am I to wash it? Tell Mahatmaji to get me another *sari*, and I shall then promise to bathe and put on clean clothes every day... This cottage was not an exception, but a type to be found in many Indian villages. In countless cottages in India people live without any furniture, and without a change of clothes, merely with a rag to cover their shame.⁵⁰

Part of the difficulty of appreciating this description as a measure of Gandhi's interest in space, as one may note, is on account of how it captures somebody else's experience of architecture. It was, after all, the unidentified woman in a dirty sari, who, by the means of a description of the bareness of her hut, that is, by the means of description of how her hut was reduced into an empty void, expressed the functionalism of architecture itself as a cruel joke. Why must one live within four walls and under a roof, she sarcastically seemed to say, if there was nothing to really protect and shelter? Indeed why must one think of washing a sari, if one had been reduced to possessing only one? What use was there for cleanliness if being clean meant being naked while washing clothes? What use was there for architecture as a frame designed to contain and protect valuables, when one could only stare at the empty walls of the frame? She seemed to mockingly pose these questions to Kasturba Gandhi (1869 –1944) who was Gandhi's partner.

The question to mull over is why Gandhi stressed on the unidentified woman's description of architecture as a white elephant? As a response to this question, I would suggest that Gandhi wrote about her hut as an empty frame because he wished to allegorically convey his own pursuit of truth. Here one could argue that Gandhi, as a person who had oftentimes thought of only what was immediately useful about architecture, may have merely appreciated and forwarded the unidentified woman's account of how architecture's use value itself could, ironically, become redundant. For my part, I would go beyond such an explanation and pay heed to how Gandhi began his description of the hut. "It may not be out of place here" he observed "to narrate an

experience that I have described before now at many meetings.” What was it about the story of the poor woman with a single sari and her hut that compelled Gandhi to describe it in many meetings? Why this opening gambit? Indeed what encouraged Gandhi to mention that he had frequently described the incident at the hut, in his autobiography?

So as to answer these questions, one could consider how Gandhi suggested he was visiting the villages of Champaran to not only, as he claimed, “enquire into the condition of the Champaran agriculturists and understand their grievances against the indigo planters,” but also to know the conditions of India’s villages in general. Indeed within the flow of *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Gandhi remembered his visit to Champaran as a journey of discovery into the obscurity of the truth of India’s villages.⁵¹ Gandhi’s account of his stint at Champaran, within *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, in essence, demonstrated how he eventually became a mature and adequate peasant revolutionary only by initially assuming the incompleteness of his own knowledge of the truth of India’s villages.

As to whether the incident at the hut of the village woman who could not afford more than a single sari most adequately crystallized his larger mood of enquiry at Champaran, then, is the question that is well worth asking. In this regard, it is helpful to return to Gandhi’s opening gambit, “It may not be out of place here to narrate an experience that I have described before now at many meetings?”⁵² Evidently, the experience had served previously, on many occasions, as a telling illustration. Parsing through the archive, I have, unfortunately, not yet been able to locate these other speeches in which Gandhi had narrated the same experience. And yet, it is tempting to

construe the “place” from “It may not be out of place here to narrate,” as Gandhi’s larger mood of investigative enquiry at Champaran. Indeed, by the means of his description of how Kasturba had entered into the hut, he gave some sensuous legibility to that very project of investigative enquiry.

I wonder, then, if Gandhi’s account of Kasturba’s visit to the hut can be read along two simultaneous, but somewhat different registers. On the one hand, it was only when Kasturba entered into the hut and was shown the bareness of its interior by its owner, that the truth behind the villagers’ apathy towards their own cleanliness became a revelation. Gandhi’s description of Kasturba’s visit to the hut, in this somewhat limited sense, was a demonstration of how he had come to encounter and appreciate his own ingrained assumptions about the home as a container of valuables, if not his assumptions about how people remained dirty because they were lazy and apathetic towards their own lack of cleanliness. Cleanliness and architecture, he discovered were both redundant, white elephants in so far as one remained poor. At the same time, on a second and more telling register, it was not out of place for Gandhi to write about Kasturba’s visit to the hut, because that visit served as an allegory for the project of enquiring into the truth of the villages. Gandhi’s description of the very act of entering into architecture, served, in essence, as an allusion to a larger, more thoroughgoing hermeneutic enquiry.

Having considered Gandhi’s account of the hut at Bhitiharva, I must mention that there are other references to architecture in *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. What, for instance, must one make of his account of the Ashram Gandhi founded in Ahmedabad in 1915? In what ways did the Ashram resonate or fail to resonate with

Gandhi's architectural functionalism? In the next section, then, I will take into account Gandhi's memories about how he founded that Ashram.

The “Satyagraha Ashram”

In his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Gandhi paid especial attention to how he had arrived at a name for a spiritual commune he established in May 1915, shortly after his return to India from South Africa. He remembered how after much deliberation, he had found the “Satyagraha Ashram” to be the most suited for his commune, housed as it was at the time in a home owned by Jivanlal Desai, a barrister, at Kochrab, near the city of Ahmedabad. (Plate 2.2, 2.3)

The first thing we had to settle was the name of the Ashram. I consulted friends. Amongst the names suggested were 'Sevashram' (the abode of service), 'Tapovan' (the abode of austerities), etc. I liked the name 'Sevashram' but for the absence of emphasis on the method of service. 'Tapovan' seemed to be a pretentious title, because though *tapas* was dear to us we would not presume to be *tapasvins* (men of austerity). Our creed was devotion to truth, and our business was the search for and insistence on truth. I wanted to acquaint India with the method I had tried in South Africa, and I desired to test in India the extent to which its application might be possible. So my companions and I selected the name 'Satyagraha Ashram,' as conveying both goal and our method of service.⁵³

It is fascinating to observe how Gandhi's justification for a name for the commune responds to, at least from the vantages of an architectural history, the appearance or even the context of the site in which it was situated. One cannot but help think, for instance, of the unbridled expansiveness of the building, a “military board” style bungalow with an arcuated loggia and a centrally placed staircase on the exterior of the loggia.⁵⁴ It would have been laughable to refer to such an enclosure, with its firm walls and its plentiful

shade as “*Tapovan* (the abode of austerities)” housing “*tapasvins* (men of austerity).” Perhaps it was best to name this bungalow “Satyagraha Ashram,” at least in so far as Satyagraha meant going about one’s “business” in “the search for and insistence on truth” in the city of Ahmedabad that was, in early twentieth century India, an economic powerhouse built on the back of the textile business. So long as Gandhi could vouch for Satyagraha not so much as a class struggle, but rather as the business of pursuing truth, it was relatively easy for him to christen his home Satyagraha Ashram.

And yet, to proffer such an explanation amounts to suggesting that Gandhi had been wholly serious about or conscious of his usage of the word “business.” Also, what must one make of the draft constitution of the commune which dated to sometime before May, 1915, and listed non-possession, that is, the vow not to “keep anything which may not be absolutely necessary for the nourishment and the protection of the body” among the many vows a Satyagrahi abided by as a matter of principle. A Satyagrahi’s possession of a large colonial bungalow, even if it was merely in the capacity of a renter, could be seen, in plain view, as an egregious violation of the constitution. Indeed, one could go even so far as to say that one need not have read the draft constitution to observe how ostentatious the house was.

It is, then, not so much to the name “Satyagraha Ashram” but to the act of naming itself that I turn. It helps, in this regard, to remember that the two spiritual communes that Gandhi founded in South Africa, also had names. These names were Phoenix Settlement (established 1904) and Tolstoy Farm (established 1910).⁵⁵ The name “Phoenix Settlement” for the commune at Phoenix, as Gandhi had emphasized in 1909, served to

pay homage to the land in which the settlers lived. Moreover, Gandhi saw some significance in the word Phoenix itself. He wrote of the legend in which the bird Phoenix came back to life again and again from its own ashes. The structure and behavior of the settlers at the farm, he surmised, were those of the bird Phoenix.⁵⁶

As one parses through Gandhi's explanation for the name of the settlement, then, one may note how he remained supremely invested in where it was located. The name of the holding, "Phoenix Settlement," far from alluding to an abstract ideal, underscored, for Gandhi, the possibilities which resided within the name of the location itself. The location's name, "Phoenix," in essence, came replete with its own symbolic meaning. All that Gandhi did, then, was simply appropriate this symbolism.

Quite unlike the "Phoenix Settlement," the name "Tolstoy Farm," on the other hand, had less to do with where it was situated, that is, in the state of the Transvaal in South Africa, and more to do with a person who had lived at a great distance from South Africa. The title "Tolstoy Farm," it is important to note, had been initially suggested by Herman Kallenbach, Gandhi's friend and the owner of the holding at the time.⁵⁷ In this regard, one may note that much has been written about how Kallenbach, a German Jew, may have known of the Kibbutz movement that followed Tolstoy's principles at the time.⁵⁸ That Kallenbach sought to invoke Count Leo Tolstoy's name while titling the holding in the state of Transvaal, then, was in keeping with his interest in an international idea of Tolstoy-oriented communities in general. And yet, the name "Tolstoy Farm" did allude, at least partially, to its location. Breaking down that name, one may note that it did retain the noun "farm." Indeed, the holding had been a farm prior to Kallenbach's

acquisition of it. Yet, the reputation of Tolstoy Farm, at least in so far as its first and lengthier name went, was allied to communitarian trends in a world outside itself and distant from itself.

Returning, then, to the name “Satyagraha Ashram” one may observe how it aspired towards both, nationalism and internationalism, at the same time. In so far as Satyagraha had evolved and become a political movement in South Africa, the name “Satyagraha Ashram” was very much South African. On the other hand, the word Ashram enjoyed wide currency in India in diverse theologies, as a place which signified austerity, spiritual living, withdrawal from society, and also, as a rest stop in life. Similarly, the word Satyagraha, a combination of Satya and Agraha, was demonstrably Sanskritic. And yet, neither of the two words, Satyagraha or Ashram, alluded to the space of the bungalow itself. Nor for that matter did the process of naming the new commune at Kochrab refer in any explicit way to the bungalow, or to Kochrab itself.

One way of reading the absence of the word bungalow in the name of commune, is to approach Gandhi as a myth-maker. By naming his bungalow Satyagraha Ashram, Gandhi, one could suppose, did not necessarily erase the significance of the space as a bungalow. But rather he mythified the space of the Kochrab bungalow. By naming the commune “Satyagraha Ashram,” Gandhi undermined the capacity of viewers to read the bungalow as an attestation of the class-distinction of its occupants and, in an expeditious way, simplified the bungalow into the space of the Satyagraha Ashram, no more and no less. The bungalow, in essence, was no longer read a bungalow. It was legible only as Satyagraha Ashram. So much one could infer while parsing through a vast amount of

scholarly literature on Gandhi in which the appearance of the bungalow at Kochrab is hardly ever mentioned. In so far as Gandhi, the myth-maker, made people to effectively believe that the establishment was an Ashram by naming it as such, the architectural attributes of the bungalow no longer spoke of class politics and taste; rather, they spoke only of the Satyagraha Ashram.

Were one to approach the bungalow from the auspices of Gandhi's architectural functionalism, however, a somewhat different picture may emerge. One could, building upon his earlier writing in his autobiography, approach his residence in the bungalow and his naming of the bungalow as two distinct and not entirely commensurable events. In so far as Gandhi, the architectural functionalist, needed to find a place to stay in Ahmedabad, he settled for what was immediately available. He rented Jivanlal Desai's bungalow because it was available. Gandhi, in essence, did not so much think of the appearance of the bungalow, but rather settled for it simply as a temporary shelter for his spiritual commune. Indeed, as an architectural functionalist, he only saw the bungalow as a simple shelter.

Conversely, one could also assume that Gandhi may have been somewhat hesitant about the message the appearance of his bungalow could send across, that is, the message regarding the affluence of its inhabitants. And yet, he may have gone past what reservations he entertained about the appearance of the bungalow, not quite unlike how he had, at Phoenix, somewhat expeditiously settled for tin sheds, as opposed to the much desired mud hut or brick house. As a politician and a community organizer frequently battling the paucity of funds, and also seeking to put his ideas into praxis as expeditiously

and quickly as possible, Gandhi may have resigned to what accommodation he could muster on a short notice at Ahmedabad.

The naming of the commune at Ahmedabad, on the other hand, can be studied in independence from the appearance of the bungalow. Indeed, one could say that Gandhi did not so much seek an appropriate name for his commune as much as he wished to indulge himself with the very act of naming. Having returned to India after a long sojourn in South Africa, Gandhi sought to exercise his very interest in publicly proclaiming his conformity with the Sanskritic aspirations of the broader community at Ahmedabad. Gandhi, in this sense, did not so much name his commune Satyagraha Ashram, as much as he sought, by the means of the act of naming, to pronounce his conformity to the linguistic milieu with which he wished to be identified in India.

And yet, even as I explore the interpretative possibilities which reside within a decoupling of Gandhi's settling in at the bungalow from his naming the bungalow as Satyagraha Ashram, I do find myself somewhat incapable of setting aside his act of naming as an attempt at mythification. After all, Gandhi's success at obscuring evidence of contradictions, that is, his ability to reduce inconsistencies to a matter of what Roland Barthes would have called "blissful clarity," is plainly visible in the manner in which he described life in his new home at Kochrab in *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.

Domesticity, Householding, Myth and Architectural Functionalism

In *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* Gandhi remembered how the space of

his new home in the Kochrab bungalow, was the space of community and consanguinity.

He wrote:

There were at this time about thirteen Tamilians in our party. Five Tamil youngsters had accompanied me from South Africa, and the rest came from different parts of the country. We were in all about twenty- five men and women. This is how the Ashram started. All had their meals in a common kitchen and strove to live as one family.⁵⁹

Whatever differences there may have been among the Tamils and those who came from different parts of the country, here were evaded by striving “to live as a family” through the means of taking “meals in a common kitchen.” The different members of the Ashram became a community, or even a family, by passing through the filter of the social knowledge of the kitchen as a mutual, fraternal, domestic space. The space of the common kitchen, in essence, was the site where the consanguinity between the twenty-five men and women became self-evident, beyond logic and beyond reproach.

To better appreciate how Gandhi so successfully mythologized the space of home and used it as a filter that underscored commonalities and downplayed the differences between his followers, it helps to read Erik Erikson’s now somewhat dated, but still enormously influential *Gandhi’s Truth: On the Origins of Militant Non-Violence* (1969). It is in this text that one finds perhaps the most systematic appraisal of Gandhi as a consolidator of notions of the family and home he had developed in turn of the century South Africa. Erikson, a psychoanalyst, found in Gandhi’s extended notion of his family and his household, a perfect foil for his own disciplinary enquiry into the rigors and the travails of adulthood.⁶⁰ As Erikson saw it, in so far as Gandhi had achieved some proficiency as a young adult householder in turn of the century South Africa, his

solicitude as a mature adult towards a wider community beyond his household was but to be expected.⁶¹ In fact, as Erikson expressed, Gandhi's householdership "even serves him in his applying to a wider community the lessons of householding in small and acute matters."⁶²

It is with some interest in Gandhi's ability to translate his experiences of managing the microscopic world of his household, into his solicitude towards a wider community, then, that Erikson went on to draw the analogy of God's admonition to St. Francis Asissi in *Gandhi's Truth*.

If St. Francis' householdership began with God's admonition: "Va, Francesco, ripara la mia casa che, come vedi, va in rovina" ("Go, Francis, and repair my house which, as you can see, is in ruins"), the "house" to be repaired meant a single chapel as well as the Church in the City of God. But for Gandhi, "repairing came to mean curing, teaching, reforming, governing—that is, any context within which one can remain a religious craftsman. Gandhi's widest acceptance of power would wait for the time when he also accepted the Indian masses as his family and nothing less than independent India as his city. How Gandhi consolidated himself as a lawyer and a family man and then began to envisage a more inclusive "house" and a widening "city" – that is the story of his young manhood.⁶³

For Erikson, if, on the one hand, St. Francis was the repairer of the microscopic "single chapel," then on the other hand, the story of Gandhi's young manhood would suggest that he was beginning to "envisage a more inclusive "house" and a widening "city" " as soon as he consolidated himself as a lawyer and a family person.

To appreciate the depth of Erikson's arguments, it helps to turn to Gandhi's own writing, specifically to his *History of the Satyagraha Ashram*, an essay he wrote at the time while he was in prison in the Yeravda Central prison near Pune in 1932. The

following description of the Ashram in Gandhi's introduction to that essay must by now sound most familiar.

Ashram here means a community of men of religion. Looking at the past in the light of the present. I feel that ashram as a necessary of life for me. As soon as I had a house of my own, my house was an ashram in this sense, for my life as a householder was not one of enjoyment but of duty discharged from day to day.⁶⁴

This was Erikson's young householder Gandhi, only older and more resolute in devolving his sense of householding into a fluid task-orientedness, perhaps towards an ever-accruing mass of recipients requiring "curing, teaching, reforming, governing." The responsibility of householding "discharged from day to day," clearly impinged in these lines from the *History of the Satyagraha Ashram*, upon partaking in the fruits of householdership, or what Gandhi summarily dismissed as "enjoyment." In essence, no sooner did the home become an Ashram for Gandhi, it also became an enjoining upon him to constantly perform his duty, to incorporate the millions into his home. From Erikson's perspective, the becoming of the home into an Ashram, in this sense, marked the beginning of Gandhi's attempts at magically simulating a sense of fraternity and kinship between disparate social groups.

Returning, then, to the Satyagraha Ashram in 1915, one finds how within Gandhi's home, there was a space where mutuality and kinship was more legible, more intensely homely, than the home itself. The kitchen, in essence, was such a space which functioned as a crystallization of the ideology of home within the home. So much one is led to understand from Gandhi's promotion of a common kitchen in which consanguinity

and connections between diverse individuals, against the grain of their own logic, became intelligible and self-evident to them through their simply cooking and eating together.

I must note here that even as Gandhi mythified notions of fraternity and home, he also simultaneously sought to mythify the history of his struggle against the oppression of Indian, indentured laborers in the hands of the British in South Africa. So much is evident in a speech Gandhi made while at the Satyagraha Ashram in July 1916 about the life of hardship he had endured as a Satyagrahi against the British government in South Africa. Responding to a question raised at the end of a post prayer meeting, Gandhi expressed somewhat flamboyantly that a Satyagrahi:

does not have to break another's head; *he* may merely have *his* own head broken... In opposing the atrocious laws of the Government of South Africa, it was this method that we adopted. We made it clear to the said Government that we would never bow to its outrageous laws. No clapping is possible without two hands to do it... Similarly, No State is possible without two entities [the rulers and the ruled]. You are our sovereign, our Government, only so long as we consider ourselves your subjects... If you make laws to keep us suppressed in a wrongful manner... these laws will merely adorn the statute-books. We will never obey them. Award us for it what punishment you like... Send us to prison and we will live there as in a paradise. Ask us to mount the scaffold and we will do so laughing. Shower what sufferings you like upon us, we will calmly endure... We will gladly die. But so long as there is yet life in these our bones, we will never comply with your arbitrary laws... What transpired later is well known to you: the Government of South Africa was compelled to come to terms with us. All of which goes to show that we can gain everything without hurting anybody and through soul-force or Satyagraha alone. He who fights with arms has to depend on arms and on support from others. He has to turn from the straight path and seek tortuous tracks. The course that a satyagrahi adopts in his fight is straight and he need look to no one for help... For the battle of satyagraha one only needs to prepare oneself. We have to have strict self-control. If it is necessary for this preparation to live in forests and caves, we should do so. The time that may be taken up in this preparation should not be considered wasted.⁶⁵

The message, evidently, was geared towards fortifying those preparing for a battle against the British government in the present, with a secure knowledge of an antecedent. Gandhi, with some acuity, sought to leaven the struggle in the present in India with the reassurance that the British government in turn of the century South Africa “was compelled to come to terms with” him only in so far as he had relied upon “soul force or Satyagraha alone,” or for that matter, only in so far as he had taken “a tortuous track.” Gandhi, then, emphasized not so much the novelty of Satyagraha as a political strategy in the present in India, but rather, he emphasized its antiquity as a tried, tested and successful method. Confidence in Satyagraha, in essence, was to be derived from the fact that it had already marinated and matured in the brine of lived experience in South Africa.

What marked Gandhi’s speech as a particularly skillful one, however, was the manner in which he explicitly naturalized suffering as a part of Satyagraha. After all, the prison, as Gandhi identified it, was “paradise,” suffering was calmly endured and death, that most harrowing of all prospects, was apparently met with gladness and laughter. By reducing the complexity of human emotions in the face of imprisonment and death into happiness, gaiety and calmness, Gandhi, the mythologizer of history, generated the powerful illusion of how it was normal and self-evident, and perhaps even desirable for Satyagrahis to court suffering in the present. It was, then, not so much the fact that the Satyagrahis in the past went to jail or embraced the gallows, but rather Gandhi’s rhetorical emphasis upon how they composedly, confidently and even happily accepted imprisonment and death which served to naturalize suffering as an expected part of the

Satyagrahi's reality in the present. Through the usage of a few carefully contemplated words, Gandhi naturalized a history of jail-going and perhaps even self-willed suffering in South Africa, into a life-style of jail-going for the present.

Bearing in mind Gandhi's prowess as a mythologizer, then, it becomes only too tempting to construe Gandhi's eventual shifting of the Satyagraha Ashram to a site a few miles to the north of the Kochrab Ashram, between a prison, the Sabarmati Jail and a crematorium, *Dudheshwar nu Aro*, in 1917, as but yet another attempt at naturalizing Satyagraha as a life of suffering (Plate 2.4, 2.5). But then to attempt such a reading of the move to the new site, one would have to gloss over the circumstances in Ahmedabad at the time. Can it, for instance, be entirely forgotten that Gandhi sought a new site for his Ashram to get away from the outbreak of plague at the Kochrab bungalow where the Satyagrahis had previously been housed? Here, it is important to note that for much of that year, he had been away from the Ashram, in Motihari in Champaran, Bihar where he led a Satyagraha against the British government Bihar at the time. And yet, when he returned briefly to visit Ahmedabad, he had grown alarmed by the unsanitary conditions of his beloved home. That he set forth, almost immediately, with the merchant Punjabhai Hirachand towards the north and the south of Kochrab in search of land for a new home, and his settled for the site near the Sabarmati jail on account of its cleanliness, then, was but to be expected. Indeed as Gandhi admitted many years later in his autobiography, he had liked the site by the Sabarmati jail because he "knew that the sites selected for jails have generally clean surroundings."⁶⁶

And yet, it begs remembering that Gandhi had also mentioned, in the same vein in his autobiography, how he preferred the site by the Sabarmati jail because “jail-going was understood to be the normal lot of Satyagrahis.”⁶⁷ Historically, at least, this memory sits well with a statement Gandhi made upon visiting the site in 1917. “This,” he had observed, “is the right place for our activities to carry on the search for truth and develop fearlessness, for on one side are the iron bolts of the foreigners, and on the other the thunderbolts of Mother Nature?”⁶⁸ Setting aside the hyperbole of that statement for a moment, it is not too difficult to observe how Gandhi translated the act of environing the world of Satyagrahis, that is the act of finding an adequate place to prepare for a Satyagraha, into the project of naturalizing Satyagraha as suffering. If previously, in his speech at the Ashram at Kochrab, he had, through his choice of words, transformed the history of Satyagraha into the basic nature of Satyagraha, that is, into Satyagraha’s natural alliance with suffering and death, now Gandhi sought a concrete real world situation which would connote the same.⁶⁹

We’ve observed, then, how the word Satyagraha moved almost freely in an economy of secondary meanings. Be it by his naturalizing a colonial bungalow as the space for the life of Satyagraha, or, for that matter, by naturalizing Satyagraha as suffering through the medium of a situating of the new “Satyagraha Ashram,” Gandhi sought to mobilize already established sign systems to embrace new content. Indeed, his ability to naturalize new ways of thinking of a space on the one hand, if not his ability to naturalize history into a way of life through the medium of situating people in space,

vouches for his credentials as a myth-maker par excellence after his return to India from South Africa in 1915.

Even as one studies Gandhi as a myth-maker, it helps to bear in mind his attempts at demystifying those already established myths and entrenched cultural assumptions he confronted in his new environment in India upon returning from South Africa. One only has to read Mark Thompson's description of the Satyagraha Ashram in his monumental *Gandhi and his Ashrams*, for instance, to observe how Gandhi resisted untouchability in Ahmedabad, the stronghold of orthodox Hinduism which held on to the caste system and ostracized particular social groups by deeming them as ritually polluted. Indeed, as is well known in scholarly circles, Gandhi himself did not reject the caste system, but rather he sought to make a qualified distinction between the institution of Varnashrama or the caste system and untouchability. In this regard, Thompson, in *Gandhi and his Ashrams*, wrote at length about Gandhi's admission into his Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab, of a Gujarati family belonging to what was at the time an untouchable caste. In Thompson's narrative, it is evident that Gandhi was most at home defying the dogmatic, caste-related assumptions of those who were already a part of the Ashram community, if not those who were contributing to the upkeep of the Ashram.⁷⁰ I must note, however, that Thompson, sadly, does not dwell in any detail on how Gandhi's Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab was an experiment in demystifying rigidly ordered and hierarchized spaces of caste consolidation in general.

Unlike Mark Thompson, Thomas Weber, a scholar who has published extensively on Gandhi, writes about the spaces of the Ashram, albeit of the spaces the new

Satyagraha Ashram. Weber's accounts of the spaces of the Ashram, in two of his more significant texts *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor*, and *On the Salt March*, are deeply personal.⁷¹ Weber, for his part had stayed at the Satyagraha Ashram by the Sabarmati River between 1982 and 1983. It is with some fondness for the Ashram, then, that Weber reminisced about the beauty of the establishment in an essay on Maganlal Gandhi, who was Gandhi's nephew, spiritual heir and also the manager of the Satyagraha Ashram in Gandhi's absence. Paying tribute to Maganlal's skills as the principle planner and designer of the Satyagraha Ashram, Weber recounted in *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor* how the absolute beauty of the settlement, especially imagining how it may have appeared before the city of Ahmedabad crept up to it and then engulfed it, had him wondering how Gandhi could have eventually abandoned it. Weber continued the same refrain in *On the Salt March*. He wrote of how he had:

spent much time walking around the Ashram grounds. It is a wonderfully designed complex, peaceful, full of trees, light and space. The main buildings are set high above the Sabarmati River with steps leading down to the various bathing Ghats. The high retaining walls are relatively recent additions to protect the historic buildings from being washed away by floods (and probably to make room for seating the sound and light show audience). Without the walls, the floods of a few years ago would have destroyed Gandhi's hut. It is interesting to visualize the scene at the time when there was only a gentle slope to the river. Now the city has surrounded the Ashram; it is a small island of tranquility the midst of a sea of traffic, noise and pollution.⁷²

Weber's reminiscences are tempered by his desire to retrieve the landscape of the Ashram from the vicissitudes of an encroaching, engirdling city. These reminiscences are a refreshing digression from the more cumbersome theme of mythification that I have been laboring over in this essay. How, one might ask, in keeping with Weber's curiosity, can

one write about the Ashram's architectural ethos, especially to the extent that this ethos emphasized a lack of separation between buildings and landscape? How to write about a time before the "recent additions" of retaining walls, about "the scene at the time when there was only a gentle slope to the river?" To what degree did the absence of an embankment at the time speak of the desire of the Ashram's planner, Maganlal, to preserve an uninterrupted view of the river from within the Ashram precincts? In what ways does the absence of a retaining wall at the Ashram speak of a larger architectural philosophy of solicitude towards the environment? (Plate 2.6)

One can explore these themes in the context of *Hriday Kunj*, Gandhi's home in the Ashram, at least in so far as *Hriday Kunj* can be vouched for as the titular representative of the Ashram's larger architectural philosophy (Plate 2.7). With regards to the history of *Hriday Kunj*, from the record, it can be ascertained that Gandhi, along with his followers, Maganlal and Amritlal Thakkar, planned a few buildings at the new site for the Satyagraha Ashram as early as September 1917.⁷³ From the public domain, on the other hand, it can be ascertained that Gandhi, by 1918, had already begun living in what eventually came to be known as *Hriday Kunj*, situated alongside the Sabarmati-river front of the Ashram, sitting atop the slope that Weber talks about with such interest.⁷⁴ Those visiting the Ashram in the present, can observe how the walls of *Hriday Kunj*, especially those facing the river towards the east, are interspersed with spaciouly mullioned, almost see-through doors, windows and even Jaalis or screens. In addition, there is also, on the east face of the building, a large verandah, which must, at the time Gandhi lived in the building, have afforded him a rather placid, but nevertheless engaging view of the river.

As to whether the decision to not build an embankment along the slope in front of *Hriday Kunj* was simultaneous to the decision to keep the eastward face of the building open, porous and solicitous towards the outside, is a question that I wish to pursue at a later date.

There is, however, another way of interpreting the airiness and the unconstrained openness of *Hriday Kunj*. It must be remembered, for instance, that the older Ashram at the bungalow had been evacuated on account of a plague that had struck the village of Kochrab in 1917. The emphasis on ventilation and light at *Hriday Kunj*, in this sense, spoke of the Ashram community's anxieties regarding hygiene. Gandhi himself had made it a point to talk about hygiene at the Gujarati political conference at Godhra in November 1917. He observed,

I am afraid that in regard to the plague, we must shoulder the entire responsibility. It is very significant that when the plague is working havoc in our rural quarters, cantonments as a rule remain free. The reasons are obvious. In the cantonments the air is pure, houses detached, roads are wide and clean and the sanitary habits of the residents wholesome, whereas ours are as unhygienic as they well could be.⁷⁵

It is tempting here to compare the Satyagraha Ashram with the cantonments Gandhi alluded to. The bracing airiness of *Hriday Kunj*, the manner in which the buildings at the site alongside the Sabarmati River were detached from each other and dispersed over a wide radius: these idiosyncrasies of architecture and planning, in and of themselves evocatively spoke the language of the cantonment. (Plate 2.8)

For those such as myself visiting the site by the Sabarmati River in the present, the experience of the Ashram is one of both, its layout, and the names that the buildings within the layout have acquired. As one enters into the complex from the noisy Ashram

road and walks past the new library building, one is gently reminded by a guide that the forlorn building towards the north is *Magan Niwas*, where Maganlal Gandhi stayed until he died tragically of typhoid in April, 1928 (Plate 2.9). As one walks southward, along the embankment, past *Hriday Kunj*, one comes across *Vinoba Kuti*, or what is also known as *Mira Kuti*, the place where Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Gandhi's spiritual heir, lived from 1918 to 1921, and Mira Behn lived between 1925 and 1933. Further, to towards the south, one sees *Nandini* (plate 2.10), the guesthouse, to the west of which is *Udyog Mandir*, "the Temple of Industry," in which Gandhi initially stayed after settling down in the Ashram (2.11).

That at least some of these names date back to the nineteen twenties is evident in an overly long letter Gandhi wrote to Chhaganlal Joshi, the Ashram's new manager after Maganlal Gandhi's death in April 1928. Gandhi wrote:

I shall make one criticism about the names suggested for the different places in the Ashram. I see no uniformity in them. There is a mixture of Bengali, Marathi and Persian words. No thought seems to have been given to the matter. Why *Kutir* and not *Kuti*? Why should we not call the place "Magan Kutir" or "Magan Niwas"? What shall we gain by having a new name in place of the suggestive one, "Striniwas"? Why not "Prathanabhavan"? Or, why should we not try to find a word which can be easily understood to indicate that the place where prayers are held is an open maidan? I see no reasoning behind the suggestion to call the guest house "Nandini". I should certainly like Bhansali's name to be connected with Mahadev's dwelling. Why should we not name it "Jaybhuvan"? Why should the kitchen be named "Sharadamandir"? Why not "Bhojanshala"? Since the place serves both purposes, its name should refer to both. "Kailas" for "Vankar Niwas" sounds ostentatious. "Rustom Block" should be changed into a suggestive name. We should find the Gujarati equivalent for "block". "Goshala" is a suggestive name, and we have no right to replace it by the most sacred name "Gokul". "Uttar Prantar" and "Dakshin Prantar" too do not sound well to me. We should dismiss "Rajmarg". I have some doubt whether to permit "Vithi" to say. "Tirtha" should be

dismissed.⁷⁶

Reading this letter, one finds oneself completely overwhelmed by the sheer profusion of names. There were, in 1929, on the one hand, the names that already existed for buildings at the Ashram, be it *Nandini* the guesthouse, *Sharadamandir* the kitchen, Rustom Block, *Goshala*... On the other hand, there were the suggestions that Gandhi now made: *Magan Kutir*, *Prarthanabhavan*, *Jaybhuvan*, *Bhojanshala*... The new names were suggested variously with an interest in ensuring uniformity, linguistic purity, simplicity and, most importantly, with an interest in polyvalence, or suggestiveness. The old names, on the other hand, tell us nothing about their own genesis.

If one proceeds past the individual names in Gandhi's letter to Chhaganlal Joshi, and takes a larger view towards the general matter of naming itself at the Ashram, a somewhat different picture emerges. One wonders, for instance, if Gandhi resorted to naming the buildings primarily on account of the architectural layout of the Ashram, that is, on account of its very cantonment-like nature. One wonders, in essence, if it was the fact that the Ashram's houses and buildings were detached from each other, or at any rate, the fact that they were at an adequate enough distance from each other, that made the naming possible in the first place? Or was it, quite to the contrary, Gandhi's enthusiasm in mythifying buildings into emphasizing only the ideality residing within a title, which inspired the rash of names for buildings at the Ashram. In this regard it helps to ask why Gandhi did not emphasize the uniformity of architectural styles or the scale of the buildings at the Ashram? Why did he only restrict himself to seeking uniformity in terms of names? The buildings, for their part, today do appear similar simply because

they have all been whitewashed. And yet, some of the buildings are much smaller than the others. Moreover, the plans of many of the buildings are different. Indeed some of the buildings are also differently elevated from the ground level. And finally, and most significantly, the court of the Chattralaya, a two storied building towards the south of the Ashram has arcuated verandahs (Plate 2.12, 2.13). These verandahs come into some visual conflict with the trabeated nature of the rest of the buildings at the site. One wonders, then, if Gandhi was indifferent towards the appearance of the buildings of the Ashram because he attached the greater importance to the capacity of language itself to elide architectural differences. In so far as he could ensure some linguistic uniformity while naming buildings, he felt somewhat secure that what architectural differences there were between buildings, could be suppressed. Indeed by ensuring linguistic uniformity while naming, Gandhi, one would think, believed to some degree that architectural differences could be mythified into similarities. Language itself, as he saw it, retained the capacity to shape the experience of architecture, regardless of its physical appearance.

The Village Hut.

Thus far we have noted Gandhi's interest in the semantic possibilities which resided, on the one hand, within architecture's inherent functionalism, and on the other hand, in language itself, specifically within such names or phrases as *Satyagraha Ashram, Magan Kutir, Prarthanabhavan, Jaybhuvan, Bhojanshala*... We observed, for instance, how Gandhi, far from emphasizing how he had arrived at his impression of the hut as a frame, attached the greater importance to simply putting that impression to work

as a structural metaphor for the negative condition of habitude and the pursuit of truth. Gandhi, for the most part, did not attach so much importance to the manner in which the hut may have emerged as a pragmatic architectural response to particular environmental and social circumstances in specific regional contexts. Rather, in his autobiography, he appropriated the already emerged hut as a reference to a functional, architectural frame, and immediately set it to work as a metaphor.

In this section of the chapter, then, I turn to another, somewhat distinct phase in Gandhi's thinking about architecture, particularly in the context of his stay in the central Indian village of Segaon, beginning in June 1936. While exploring Gandhi's stay in Segaon, it is important to note that it was, fundamentally, a heuristic pursuit. Gandhi chose to leave urbanity behind in the favor of a village not so much only to put his ideal of improving India's villages into praxis, but rather, he also sought to explore how the experience of staying in a village would itself provide the very principles and terms through which the project of rural improvement could be practiced. After spending some twenty odd years debating the economic and existential debasement of Indian villagers, Gandhi now sought to live among them so as to personally know and appreciate the difficulties assailing them. Now, in the nineteen thirties, as he grew increasingly concerned about the lack of sanitation in India's villages and the villagers' adherence to such antiquated, caste-oriented social practices as "untouchability," he sought, through his personal involvement, to ascertain how villagers wished to be improved on their own terms. Gandhi now wished to test the notions he had entertained in the past about the terrible conditions of India's villages and the solutions he had proposed so as to

ameliorate those conditions, on the anvil of his own experiences. “Whatever defects there may be in my way of thinking” he had declared somewhat solemnly in March 1936, “will come to the surface on my living in a village.”⁷⁷

So as to appreciate how Gandhi sought the practicable criteria for village improvement within his experience of staying in the village, it helps to pay heed to his engagement with the phenomenon of rain at the time. The rain had been on his mind for some time before he shifted to the village. For instance, he had written a letter while in Ahmedabad to Mira Behn, a disciple who was a social worker in her own right. Mira Behn, early in 1936, had already shifted to Segaoon after she had served a long stint in the village of Sindi. It was at this time that Gandhi wrote to her about how he envisaged living in the village in the future. Gandhi, at the time was convalescing from high blood pressure and sought, as he claimed, an excuse for going to Segaoon. “If you can persuade yourself” he wrote to Mira Behn, “to leave Segaoon, as soon as I return from my convalescence, I would love to go to Segaoon not as any punishment to you but as a welcome God-given opportunity for going to a village.”⁷⁸ The rains, he surmised, “won't worry me in the slightest degree. I should find for myself all the comfort I may need there.”⁷⁹

That Gandhi shifted to Segaoon in the beginning of the rainy season, then, was something of a coincidence. Indeed it rained on the sixteenth of June, as Gandhi walked towards Segaoon from his then home at the city of Wardha upon returning to it after a prolonged stay at the hill station at Nandi hill in the state of Karnataka. He had hoped that there would be no rain that morning, but when it did begin pouring about half way

through his journey, he did not stop walking. He continued to squelch through the mud. If he did not quite give up on making his journey to Segaon that day, it was because he had prepared himself to embrace a life of contending with environmental contingencies. One could even go so far as to say, that Gandhi, in his mind, had already envisaged himself as a villager even as he journeyed to a village to take up residence within it.

In this regard, it is helpful to take note of a statement Gandhi made by the end of that month. Upon having established himself in a mud hut built by Mira Behn in Segaon and now on a visit to Wardha for a meeting, Gandhi observed:

We all know that conditions of life in a village are particularly hard in the monsoon. Why then should I not begin with that rich experience and wait until conditions were better? I had been nursing the thought of going to live in a village ever since I had heard of the experiences of Timappa Naik and his friends, and I tell you that now that I am there, I grudge having to come here even for a single day.⁸⁰

While referring to the inspiration he derived from the experiences of Timappa Naik, a village worker in the state of Karnataka, Gandhi noted how he found it opportune to be in a village in the rainy season. He had, as he hinted, not necessarily retired into a pastoral paradise at a great distance from the hurly burly of urbanity. Far from it, he now sought to learn how villagers contended with changing environmental phenomena. Indeed, Gandhi now did not seek ways of defining the project of rural improvement in India from the vantages of the safety and the distance of the city; rather he sought to define the project of rural improvement in India from within the villagers' very experience of environmental adversity.

In this regard, it is helpful to once again travel back in time and observe how Gandhi, in 1935, had made it something of a habit to emphasize village improvement as a

project that entailed urban educated village workers becoming authentic villagers. We have already observed in the first chapter how, in the nineteen twenties, Gandhi, in his village discourse, had paid especial attention to village work. I noted how urban village volunteers were to enlighten villagers, that is, to help them to break out of their own habituation. By the nineteen thirties, on the other hand, Gandhi thought of the project of village improvement in a different way. Now volunteers from cities were expected to think like villagers and to improve villages on strictly bucolic terms. In this regard, in October 1935, Gandhi had even gone so far as to suggest somewhat crudely to a village worker how “it is impossible to get under the skin of the villagers until one lives in their midst all the twenty-four hours for an unbroken period.”⁸¹ In the same vein, he had mentioned how the “best discipline” for a village worker was “to settle down quietly and work away uninterruptedly for a year.”⁸² How, then, one might ask, can one read these terse statements? What to make of Gandhi’s qualification of the experience of village life purely in terms of time? In what way would staying in a village for protracted periods of time, help arrive at or set an agenda for village improvement, strictly in the villagers’ terms?

Since I am invested in observing how people articulate the reciprocity between the continuity of their experiences and the accrual of their recollections of those experiences over time, I do, at a first glance, find it somewhat difficult to answer these questions. Gandhi after all made no reference whatsoever to the faculty of memory when he wrote about time. Were he to have emphasized such a thing as “village memories,” his reference to “living in the midst of the villagers” for the “unbroken period” of “twenty

four hours,” would have been so much more accessible. Indeed, from the vantages of “village memories,” I could, at least momentarily, turn my head away from Gandhi’s reduction of the villager to an object of ethnography. I could read, from the vantages of “village memories,” Gandhi’s emphasis on “living in the midst of the villagers” for the “unbroken period” of “twenty four hours” as an expression of his interest in building recollections of staying in a village through whatsoever environmental or social contingencies befell the place in the course of time. In essence, one’s life in the village would be constituted by a continuous succession of events in the unbroken flow of time. In this unbroken flow, one’s response to each new event would be informed by the memory of how one responded to the preceding ones.⁸³

Were Gandhi to have mentioned such a thing as “village memories,” then, I would have some grounds to assume that his usage of such phrases and words as “unbroken period” and “uninterruptedly” referred to time as a continuum. In this continuum one’s present in the village would be comprehended through the vantages of one’s recollections of one’s past in the place. Similarly, one’s future in the place would be comprehended through the vantages of one’s growing recollections of one’s present in the place.

While there are no references to “village memories” in Gandhi’s writing as such, the continuum, for its part, is palpable in a highly condensed, almost super-compressed form in an essay he wrote in September that year, roughly three months into his stay in Segaoon. Gandhi wrote that essay titled “Of My Recent Illness” for his journal *Harijan* in a weakened state, as he recovered from a bout of malaria.⁸⁴ The essay was a particularly

long, rambling tract and for my part, in this chapter, I will begin by concisely outlining the contents of that essay, particularly, in the manner in which they cohered on three divergent registers: as a remembrance of events from the past; as a writing about circumstances in the present; as a hearkening towards an unsteady, uncertain future through the lenses afforded by present circumstances. There is, as I seek to demonstrate, no easy way of separating these registers from each other. They continually interpenetrate and indeed make it somewhat difficult to write about them from a historical perspective. And yet, it is only because they mellifluously interpenetrate each other, that they speak most effectively of Gandhi's overarching project of defining village improvement in India as a form of pragmatism.

Gandhi began "Of My Recent Illness" by remembering how he had against the grain of his own investment in nature-cure methods, felt obliged by his friends and his well-wishers to seek treatment for the malaria he had recently contracted, in a hospital at the nearby town of Wardha. He wrote how he had intended to stay in Segaoon and not venture out of it for three whole seasons. He regretted, in this sense, his visit to the town of Wardha, for treatment. He was mortified over how he had broken his penance of an unbroken year's stay, his "instruction and first-hand experience" in the village.⁸⁵

To some degree, he also qualified what this "first-hand experience" ought to have been by referring to how the villagers at Segaoon would not visit the town hospital or dispensaries and would "usually resort to village quacks or incantations and drag on their weary existence."⁸⁶ While he did not explicitly mention why they would not visit the hospitals, he made it somewhat evident that the rains were partly responsible. In this

regard, he described the physical landscape of Segaon under the influence of rain, as he saw it in the present:

All round me the fields are waterlogged. The crops are rotting. The ground is unwalkable unless you are content to wade through knee-deep mud. Fortunately a pukka road was built for my convenience through Jamnalalji's fields which keeps Segaon somewhat accessible to people from Wardha. The road has proved a great convenience for man and beast.⁸⁷

While Gandhi wrote about how a road had been constructed, on account of him, from Segaon to Wardha, he did so only after he explained the way in which the village became isolated on account of the rain. Gandhi, mentioned how the ground is “unwalkable unless you are content to wade through knee-deep mud.” Gandhi's intention, then, was not necessarily to explain how the road had ameliorated the isolation of Segaon; rather, he appears to have emphasized how he now understood the way in which villages became isolated on account of environmental contingencies. Indeed, it would appear, that Gandhi sought to explain how the villagers were habituated to local quacks and incantations, because of the isolation environmental contingencies imposed upon them. In so far as the villagers could not travel to town hospitals on account of environmental contingencies such as the rain, they felt obliged to seek local solutions.

By treating many among the villagers who were suffering from dysentery or malaria with “the simple remedies at our disposal with dietetic control,” then, in some ways Gandhi demonstrated his affinity towards this very environmentally contingent isolation of Segaon. Indeed, if he mentioned his own visit to the hospital, he did so out of a sense of guilt over his having forgone the opportunity of finding a cure for himself, ideally, from within the very limited means that the villagers' enforced isolation

permitted them. In this regard, it helps to observe how Gandhi even wrote a letter by the end of that month, to Gopinath, the Editor of *Arogya Darpana*, a Hindi journal advocating Ayurvedic system of medicine. In that short letter, he asked:

Now tell me if there is in the Ayurvedic system any medicine for malaria as efficacious as quinine. Which medicine is definitely more effective than the allopathic drugs? In the villages, in spite of my strong inclination to the contrary, I have to take recourse to quinine, soda-bicarb, potassium permanganate and tincture iodine⁸⁸

Evidently, the “the simple remedies at our disposal” from the essay “My Recent Illness” were allopathic drugs and chemicals. If, then, Gandhi sought to find an Ayurvedic cure for malaria, that is, a cure based upon plant-based medicines and treatments, it appears he did so because he wished to further enhance his knowledge of what could possibly be used from within the perimeter of the village. He had, in this regard, in the month August, even gone so far as experimenting, dietetically, with locally available leaves. He wrote in a letter to the Indian nationalist Subhash Chandra Bose:

Just now, I am trying to find jungly edible leaves. And I have succeeded beyond expectations. I am not having any fresh vegetables from outside Segaoon.” The second thing I am doing [is] to use lemons and *gur* [as] an effective substitute for fresh fruit.⁸⁹

Gandhi did not mention the rain in his letter to Bose or, for that matter, in his letter to Gopinath. And yet the rain effectively did provide the very environmental background to his investigations. While his experiments with dietary control date back further than the nineteen thirties, in the context of his life at Segaoon, he sought to acknowledge his own investigations into locally available comestibles and herbs as a pattern of behavior demanded of him by circumstances. He sought, it is tempting to assume, not so much to find new and innovative solutions to the problems afflicting those who lived in the

villages, as much as he sought to define his own interest in local solutions, as one that arose spontaneously, in response to the village's environmental contingencies.

Circumstances, in essence, demanded that he think of local solutions. How else, for instance, can one explain the following concluding remarks in his essay "Of My Recent Illness?"

If I had listened to friend's advice to postpone settling in Segaoon till after the rains, I would have missed the rich experiences I have gained during the heavy rains of the past two months. Everything I have seen hitherto therefore convinces me that, if I am to make any approach to the village life, I must persevere in my resolve not to desert it in the hour of danger to life or limb. And I ask all the friends to help me in carrying out the resolve and pray with me that God may give me the strength to do so.⁹⁰

Here, one observes how Gandhi wrote, somewhat emphatically, about his interest in an experiential determination of his ideal of village improvement. It was by the means of his recollections of the rich experiences he had gained during the rains of the past two months that Gandhi looked towards the future. If, by the means of those very experiences in the past, he remembered having found it opportune to resort to "the material at our disposal" as a cure for illnesses in the present, now, as he looked towards the future, everything that he had "seen hitherto" convinced him further about how the project of village improvement could be understood by the means of submitting oneself to the contingencies of village life. Gandhi, in essence, did not so much emphasize localism idealistically, as much as he sought to promote localism as a form of pragmatism, that is, as a form of making something constructive out of what circumstances befell him, not unlike the way, as he saw it, a villager ideally would. It is, then, from the vantages of Gandhi's writing about his project of village improvement as a form of continuing pragmatism, a writing, that as we have already observed had commenced in an unbaked

way since late 1935, that I approach his description of Mira Behn's hut in July nineteen thirty-six, roughly a month after his commencing his stay in Segaoon.

Mira Behn's Hut

In July 1936, Gandhi, in a conversation with Devdas, his youngest son and Jairamdas Doulatram, a politician from the Sindh province towards the northwest, launched into his description of Mira Behn's hut. He was sitting within his own hut, but a few meters distant from hers and was, it appears from his description, for the first time in his life, taking a keen interest as a conversationalist in the material particularities of architecture. Indeed, by all accounts, this was the most Gandhi ever spoke in a single session about the materiality of architecture.

I am very happy that you have come here, but, I hope, not to see this dignified hut of mine. I am responsible for little of the planning here, and I have given to it none of my art or my labour. But I wonder if you saw on you way Mira Behn's hut. It was worth while coming all the way to see her hut certainly. That is really and truly HER hut. This is a hut built FOR me, not MY hut. Here is her own hut, planned and built by herself (of course with other people's labour). But it is not merely a hut. It is a poem. I studied it in detail only yesterday, and I tell you I had tears of joy as I saw the villager's mentality about everything in it. You know I often have my quarrels with her, but let me tell you that no one from amongst us can claim to have the real rural-mindedness that she has. Did you study the position of her little bath-room and the inside of it? She has utilized every stone that the blasting of the underground rock in her well, made available to her. The seat for the bath is all one stone fixed to the ground. Next to the bathroom in the same little hut is the latrine. No commode or wooden plank or any brickwork. Just two beautiful stones, half buried in the ground, and with two halves of kerosene tins between the stones. Any villager can do this, but never does it. All the water naturally runs to carefully made beds for plants and vegetables. And look at the care with which she has built the little stable for her horse, on the grooming and feeding and keeping of which she lavishes all her love and attention. Her love of animals is a thing to learn from her. Even whilst she is sitting and

working in her hut; the stable is so arranged that she can give an occasional look to the horse. And now let us see the inside of the hut—all mud and split bamboo and wattle of palm-branches. You note every little article in the hut and the place given to it. Her *chula* (fire) is all made with her own hands, and though she has learnt it from us no one can beat her in the art. Then see the bamboo mantelpiece (if you will give it that big name) on which she keeps her earthen cooking utensils. Then see the little doorless windows and bamboo bookshelf and note the palms and peacocks over the windows, moulded in relief by herself. Also note her little kitchen and the carding room. The village where she works is about two to three furlongs from the hut. All the women and many of the men in the village know her, and the women confide to her many of their household secrets and look to her for advice and guidance—not always an easy matter, but always unfailingly for solace and comfort. She looks like one of them. Well, if you have not studied her hut carefully I would like you to go there again on your way back.⁹¹ (Plate 2.14, 2.15, 2.16, 2.17, 2.18)

Even at a first cursory glance, Gandhi's description of Mira Behn's hut is so intense that one feels somehow compelled to seek an account for the intensity itself. What, for instance, must one make of Gandhi's emphasis on how Mira Behn, while building her bathroom, had relied upon spare stones from the blasting of the underground rock in her well? How to read Gandhi's gushing about the hut had been made of "all mud and split bamboo and wattle of palm-branches?" What to make the continual allusions to details? How to explain this interest in virtually every particularity of the hut?

The extent of Gandhi's knowledge of Mira Behn's hut, as I see it, can at one level be appreciated and understood from the vantages of his experience of the rain itself. In the profuseness of Gandhi's insight into Mira Behn's hut, one reads the endless hours he may have spent indoors on account of the rain outside. He may have remained restricted to moving within the perimeter of his own hut and Mira Behn's on account of the monsoon season. Knowing about the details of what comprised architecture was a way of biding one's time in inclement weather.

However, Gandhi also spoke of how Mira Behn had confined the materiality of her hut to the general area in and around the village of Segaoon. Bamboo was and continues to be a material that is easily available in the region of Vidarbha, where the hut was situated. Furthermore, Mira Behn had relied upon the waste material which came out of the very process of blasting her well outside her hut. She had paved her bathroom with the stone from the blasting. In addition, she had also found potential in a used-up empty kerosene tin. She had used it to build a latrine. In this sense, Mira Behn's building was not necessarily an attempt at conforming to the building habits of her neighbors, that is, the Gonds, the Marathas and the Kumbhis of the village.⁹² Like nineteenth century and early twentieth century anthropologists who had, for instance, explored with some curiosity the pragmatism which undergirded the appearance of the huts of the Gonds in the general perimeter of the region of Vidharbha surrounding Segaoon, Mira Behn, in Gandhi's appreciation, sought to enact that same pragmatism.⁹³ Reading Gandhi's description, one gets the impression that Mira Behn had sought to discipline herself not so much to build a village hut, but rather, to build like a villager in the face of the paucity of material resources. Virtually every artifact in her hut spoke of how she had sought to make something out of her own material circumstances at Segaoon. She could conceive architecture, in this sense, only from the vantages of what her circumstances permitted. Her "real rural-mindedness" in this strict sense, was not so much an effort at architectural mimicry, as much as it was an attempt at responding to the task of dwelling in Segaoon as somebody from the village would from the vantages of his or her own experiences of the place.

Gandhi's emphasis upon the pragmatism which led to the construction of the hut and its contents, is a relatively new development in his discourse on architecture. Gandhi's went quite beyond his description of the huts of the settlers at Phoenix, and delved into pragmatism in great detail. Virtually every object he talked about was an index for a process entailing Mira Behn's acceptance of certain material circumstance besetting those who lived in a village, and her action to make something exclusively out of that circumstance. Moreover, one cannot strictly read Gandhi's description of Mira Behn's hut as a dull listing of particulars. Quite to the contrary, in some places, it appears to have been an attempt at finding an adequate way of expressing Mira Behn's "real rural-mindedness." In this regard, one may note how in Gandhi's description of the hut, some of the details appear to serve the purpose of surpassing the ones that had been previously mentioned. For instance, Mira Behn's having paved her bathroom with the waste material from the blasting of the well was a measure of her "real rural-mindedness," then her building a latrine out of Kerosene tin cans was an act of fashioning out of waste appears to be an even more exacting "real rural-mindedness." If previously Mira Behn had relied upon the waste from blasting a well outside her home as a means towards paving its interior, now she looked towards relying upon the waste from inside the house to build. Similarly, the way she arranged her stable so as to be able to give an occasional look to the horse in it even as she worked inside the hut, can only be fully comprehended were one to recollect an antecedent description of the way the water from the latrine naturally running to carefully made beds for plants and vegetables. Mira Behn put everything, even her own glances, to use. What I am suggesting, in essence, is not so

much how Gandhi mentioned the details of Mira Behn's home with the intention of merely expressing her sagaciousness as a pragmatist, but rather the way in which he sought to find the most adequate way of expressing how deeply she had given herself in to her circumstances.

⁴² Ashrams are mostly religious institutions which oftentimes house mendicants and spiritualists in India. While people in India's cities oftentimes think of the Kuta or the hut as an integral part of the Ashram, there is no reason whatsoever to suggest that the hut is exclusive only to the Ashram. The hut has an independent life in Indian urban discourse about villages and village life.

⁴³ Motilal Nehru, the leader of the Indian National Congress, for instance, had lived in a Mansion called Anand Bhawan from as early as 1899. Rabindranath Tagore, for his part, was born in *Jorasonkho Thakurbari*, a colonial style manor in Calcutta. Gandhi himself was born in Kirti Mandir, a minor mansion in Porbandar in Gujarat.

⁴⁴ I found one of the most compelling portraits of Ahmedabad's affluent, urban religiosity in Erik Erikson's *Gandhi's truth: on the origins of militant nonviolence*. I am not necessarily suggesting that Erikson's portrait is in any way exhaustive. I am simply emphasizing how that description in so many ways can be read as a counterpoint to a popular perception of the Ashram. Throughout Erikson's description, one notes his emphasis upon the wealth of the Jains and the Vaishnavas in the city, and how that wealth manifested itself in the elaborate carvings of house facades and entrances (Pols). The houses themselves were organized around a quadrangle and a temple. Religiosity, in this sense, was an inward affair among the town's elite. To know more about this involuted nature Ahmedabad's religiosity and its architecture read Erik Erikson's *Gandhi's truth: on the origins of militant nonviolence* (New York: Norton Company, 1969) Pages 258 to 265. On the other hand, on a broader, urban scale, religion also served to compartmentalize communities adhering to particular belief systems. Moreover, there were caste hierarchies too within Hinduism.

⁴⁵ Mahatma Gandhi, "An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with The Truth" [November 29, 1925 and ending on February 3, 1929]: from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 44 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 318.

<http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL44.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010

⁴⁶ Mahatma Gandhi, "An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with The Truth" [November 29, 1925 and ending on February 3, 1929]: from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 44 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 314.

<http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL44.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010

⁴⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, "Indian Vegetarians V, as published in *The Vegetarian*" [7-3-1891]: from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 1 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 26-27, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL01.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

⁴⁸ One could arrive at the same conclusions by reading Gandhi's description somewhat differently. For instance, one could also suggest that the shepherd's very indifference towards the appearance of the hut spoke of his not being interested in expressing, by the means of an outer façade, some meaning that was external to the hut. The lack of decoration of exterior of the hut, indeed, its being rude and perhaps hastily put together, only referenced its being a bare minimum membrane protecting an inner place in which valuables were to be kept. The architectural value of the hut, in this sense, resided strictly in its being a membrane, that is, in its being an interior cocooned by an exterior surface. The truth of the hut, in essence, was writ large on the blandness of its exterior face. The truth of the hut, one may even indulge oneself and write, was its being a box, no more and no less. As to whether the shepherd stayed or did not stay in the hut was of little consequence. All that mattered was the hut's capacity to be a container for valuables.

⁴⁹ Gandhi, 26.

⁵⁰ Mahatma Gandhi, “*An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with The Truth*” [November 29, 1925 and ending on February 3, 1929]: from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 44 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 406, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL44.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010.

⁵¹ Mahatma Gandhi, “*An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with The Truth*” [November 29, 1925 and ending on February 3, 1929]: from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 44 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 395, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL44.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010.

⁵² Mahatma Gandhi, “*An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with The Truth*” [November 29, 1925 and ending on February 3, 1929]: from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 44 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 406, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL44.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010.

⁵³ Mahatma Gandhi, “*An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with The Truth*” [November 29, 1925 and ending on February 3, 1929]: from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 44 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 384 -385, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL44.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010.

⁵⁴ For a better description of the “Military Board” style bungalow, refer to Anthony King’s *The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 38. The Kochrab Bungalow, is somewhat similar to military board style in terms of its arcuated loggia and its centrally placed entrance staircase on the exterior. However, unlike the “Military Board” style bungalow, the Kochrab bungalow has lancet arches on either end of the loggia.

⁵⁵ Mark Thompson, *Gandhi and his Ashramas 1869 – 1948* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1993) 47. According to Thompson “Gandhi’s decision to retain the of Phoenix for the settlement reflected the experimental nature of the community work. In reply to a suggestion that a name of the settlement be changed to mirror its Indian orientation and Gandhi’s involvement in the work, he indicated his firm belief in the universality of the community at Phoenix.”

⁵⁶ Thompson, 47.

⁵⁷ That Gandhi found himself in agreement with Kallenbach over the name, of course, was mostly on account of his having read Tolstoy’s writings, if not on account of his having corresponded with Tolstoy in 1909. To know more about the event of the naming of the Tolstoy Farm, read the article in *Indian Opinion* in Mahatma Gandhi, “Johannesburg: Tolstoy Farm” [Appeared in *Indian Opinion*, Monday, June 13, 1910]: from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 11 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 194, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL11.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010.

⁵⁸ To cite an example, Margaret Chatterjee has written about Gandhi’s affinity to the Kibbutzim of Israel in her essay ‘Gandhi’s Conception of a New Society’ in Douglas Allen’s edited volume *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi for the Twentieth Century* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2008) 218.

⁵⁹ Mahatma Gandhi, “*An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with The Truth*” [November 29, 1925 and ending on February 3, 1929]: from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 44 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 386, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL44.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010

⁶⁰ Erikson, in his influential *Childhood and Society* of 1950 had written, somewhat obscurely, about adulthood as a stage in ego development in which, specifically during middle age, individuals begin to consolidate their “need to be needed.” Some of his writings on Gandhi substantiated this very idea of needing to be needed. For a detailed understanding of adult generativity, as indeed Erikson fleshed it out later in his life, it is useful to delve into such texts as his *Vital Involvement in Old Age* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1986).

⁶¹ Gandhi’s becoming, over the course of his stay in South Africa, into a new kind of religious revolutionary capable of tending to the lives of millions in India was, as Erikson put it, “neither in psychological nor in ethical contrast or contradiction to his householdership.” Erik Erikson, *Gandhi’s Truth: On the Origins of Militant Non-Violence* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1969), 177.

⁶² Erikson, 177.

⁶³ Erikson, 178.

-
- ⁶⁴ Gandhi's history of the Satyagraha Ashram was written in Gujarati and published, initially, in May 1948 as *Satyagrahashramno Itihas*. It was translated into English by Valji G. Desai and published by the Navajivan Publishing House under the title *Ashram Observances in Action* in 1955. For this text, I am relying upon the version available as *History of the Satyagraha Ashram [July 11, 1932]*: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 56 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 143. <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL56.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010.
- ⁶⁵ Mahatma Gandhi, "Speech on the Secret of Satyagraha" [*July 27, 1916*]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 15 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 239. <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL15.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010.
- ⁶⁶ Mahatma Gandhi, "*An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with The Truth*" [November 29, 1925 and ending on February 3, 1929]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 44 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 411. <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL44.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010.
- ⁶⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, "*An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with The Truth*" [November 29, 1925 and ending on February 3, 1929]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 44 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 411. <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL44.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010.
- ⁶⁸ While This quotation cannot be found in the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, it is cited in the official website of the Manibhawan museum which is dedicated to maintaining a research centre in Gandhian thought & rural development that is affiliated to Mumbai University. The quotation can be found at http://www.gandhi-manibhawan.org/relatedlinks/sabarmati_detail.htm; 06/14/2010.
- ⁶⁹ One needs to pay greater attention to Gandhi's act of environing the world of the Satyagrahis. One needs to notice how he was, not surprisingly, alluding to a space between the jail and the crematorium. Gandhi, in essence, reduced the jail and the crematorium into sentinels, serving to anoint the land which fell between them and the Sabarmati river as an ideal, interior space for the praxis of Satyagraha. It is tempting, then, to think of his environing, as an attempt at creating an interior space, that is, a space contained by the jail and the crematorium, between them.
- ⁷⁰ Thompson, 101-129.
- ⁷¹ Thomas Weber's two texts are *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and *On the Salt March* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2004).
- ⁷² Thomas Weber *On the Salt March* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2004), 14.
- ⁷³ One can read about Gandhi's discussions with Maganlal Gandhi, his nephew, about his taking help from Amritlal Thakkar to make a plan for the Ashram and also, to make a wood-filled foundation with brick for the Ashram buildings refer to "Letter to Maganlal Gandhi" [*September 23, 1917*]: from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 16 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 28. <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL16.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010. It is important to note here that the pragmatic matter of constructing the Ashram is not really mentioned in Gandhi's public discourse.
- ⁷⁴ http://www.gandhiashram.org.in/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=18&Itemid=37. Accessed: 03/03/2011.
- ⁷⁵ From "Speech at Gujarati Political Conference" at Godhra [*November 3, 1917*] from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 16 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 121. <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL16.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010.
- ⁷⁶ "Letter to Chhaganlal Joshi [June 13, 1929] From *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 46 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 176. <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL46.PDF>. Accessed: 11/17/2010.
- ⁷⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, "'My Idea of Living in a Village" sent to Jannalal Bajaj, from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 308, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ⁷⁸ Mahatma Gandhi "Letter to Mirabehn" [February 14, 1936] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 223, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

-
- ⁷⁹ Mahatma Gandhi “Letter to Mirabehn” [February 14, 1936] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 223, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ⁸⁰ Mahatma Gandhi “Talk with a Friend” [About June 27, 1936] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 177, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ⁸¹ Mahatma Gandhi, “Letter to a Village Worker,” [Before October 12, 1935] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 51, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ⁸² Gandhi, 51.
- ⁸³ Far from simply abiding by a fixed impression of village life, then, one would continue to give in to the growth of one’s own thinking through a bit by bit enlargement of one’s store of memories. One would give in to these very memories being continually redeployed as the means to discern and perceive new contingencies, even as those memories would be affected and reshaped by these very new contingencies in unbroken time.
- ⁸⁴ The full text of “Of My Recent Illness” as published in *Harijan* [19-9-1936] can be read at *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 375-377, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ⁸⁵ Gandhi, 376.
- ⁸⁶ Gandhi, 376.
- ⁸⁷ Gandhi, 377.
- ⁸⁸ “Letter to Gopinath” [September 25, 1936] can be read at *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 398, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ⁸⁹ “Letter to Subhash Chandra Bose” [August 5, 1936] can be read at *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 279, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ⁹⁰ From “Of My Recent Illness” as published in *Harijan* [19-9-1936] can be read at *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 377, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ⁹¹ From “Talk with Jairamdas Doulatram and Devdas Gandhi” [Before July 18, 1936] as noted by Mahadev Desai in his “Weekly Letter” as accessed in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 224-225, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ⁹² Of the 1,550 acres of village land in Segaoon, 220 were owned by its revenue collectors (one of whom was Gandhi’s disciple, the industrialist Jammalal Bajaj), the rest of the land was divided among sixty small landholders. Mark Thompson, *Gandhi and his Ashrams* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1993), 188. In their book *Mira Behn, Gandhiji’s daughter disciple*, Krishna Murti Gupta refers to the sixty landowners as “23 Gonds, 22 Kunbis and Marathas.” (Himalaya Sangh, 1992) 126.
- ⁹³ Shoshee Chunder Dutt, who wrote his somewhat poorly titled *Wild Tribes of India* under the name of Horatio Bickerstaffe Rowney, mentioned with almost characteristic Victorian repugnance how “the buildings [the homes of the Gonds] are all of the most miserable kind, with walls built of stakes cut from the nearest jungle entwined with rude wicker-work and plastered over with mud, while the roof consists of a thin layer or coating of dried grass over which are spread some praus leaves, and a few battens made of bamboo fastened over all, to prevent the leaves from being blown off by the wind. Inside, the conveniences are even more slender. Of house furniture, there is none at all, beyond some dry gourds for bringing water; no bedding to sleep upon, nor platter to eat from, the leaves of the forest serving all such purposes alike.” *Wild Tribes of India* (London: Thos. De La Rue & Company: 1882) 10.

The Signification of Pragmatism: Laurie Baker, Gandhi and Architecture

In the previous chapters I wrote about two, somewhat divergent trends in Gandhi's thinking about architecture. In an early phase which began in 1891, Gandhi invested in the semantic possibilities residing within both, the village hut and phrases such as Satyagraha Ashram. He set the village hut and Satyagraha Ashram to work as myths. On the one hand, he made the village hut to work as a sign connoting non-architectural content such as the negative condition of habitude and the pursuit of truth. On the other hand he made the phrase Satyagraha Ashram to connote architectural content.⁹⁴

At a later time, in 1936, Gandhi, as he expressed his interest in a hut, simultaneously emphasized building as a form of circumstantial pragmatism. When he talked about the hut of the social worker, Mira Behn, Gandhi did not allude to the hut as a functional frame which housed an interior space for valuables. Nor did he make the hut to convey non architectural content, such as habitude. Rather, for him, the hut, as architecture, was a part of the larger material and circumstantial reality of Segaoon. For Gandhi, every component of the hut was evidence of Mira Behn's circumstantial pragmatism, that is, how she built a life for herself in Segaoon strictly out of what her immediate environmental circumstances afforded her. If, in an early stage in his political career Gandhi infused meaning into architecture, at a later stage he advocated architectural pragmatism.

That in independent India, the British born, Quaker architect Laurie Baker (1917-2007) found his own way of reading extra-architectural meaning in Gandhi's architectural pragmatism, then, is no small irony. Laurie Baker, or Daddy as he was affectionately known in the architectural fraternity in the south Indian state of Kerala, read architectural pragmatism itself as an expression of moral and social values. To appreciate how and why Baker did so, it helps to begin with his background.

Laurie Baker or Lawrence Wilfred Baker was born in England to a staunch Methodist family in 1917.⁹⁵ In his teens, he was attracted towards the Quakers and their interpretation of the Christian faith and beliefs. He subsequently became a member of the Society of Friends.⁹⁶ He trained as an architect at the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design and became affiliated with the Royal Institute of British Architects or RIBA in 1938.⁹⁷ He took up active duty in a Quaker Ambulance unit in China and in Burma during the Second World War.⁹⁸ He worked for some four years, particularly in a leper colony in China and finally decided to return to England.⁹⁹ As he sailed back to England, he briefly halted at Mumbai or Bombay in 1944. Here he had the opportunity to meet, through a group of Quaker associates, with Gandhi who, for his part, suggested to the young Baker that the ideal home must be built with material found from within a five mile radius around it.¹⁰⁰

Gandhi appears to have had an electrifying affect upon the young Baker. In later years, the architect remembered about how he had talked to the old man about his "urge to return to work in India even though the British were being urged to get out."¹⁰¹ Evidently, even as they spoke, Baker was already under the spell of Gandhi and India.¹⁰²

After his meeting with Gandhi, Baker returned briefly to England, and in 1945, roughly two years before India became free from colonial rule, he returned to the country in the capacity of chief architect for the Mission to Lepers.¹⁰³ After setting up base in the Pithoragarh district in one of the northern provinces of the country in 1948, he worked to improve hospitals for the treatment of people suffering from leprosy.¹⁰⁴ As a builder, he followed Gandhi's words and exercised fidelity towards the ideal of using local materials. Indeed, for the sixty odd years he spent in India, from the time he returned to the country in 1945, through the time he set up base in the southern Indian state of Kerala in 1963, to his death in 2007, Baker demonstrated how using local materials was perhaps the most efficient way of cutting costs when it came to building.¹⁰⁵ Using local materials, Baker emphasized, was the most fruitful approach towards providing homes and shelters to the homeless with little monetary assistance or investment.

While so much can be said about Gandhi's impact upon Baker in 1944, the more provocative narrative would be one which asks why Gandhi's injunction had an impact on Baker in the first place. Was Gandhi's architectural pragmatism something entirely new and alien to Baker's sensibilities in 1944? Was Baker drawn towards Gandhi's philosophy of architecture purely out of a sense of adventure? Or conversely, did Gandhi's words echo Baker's very own Quaker pragmatism which dated further back to the time he spent in England, China and Burma? Did Gandhi's words, in essence, reaffirm the way in which Baker already had thought since the time he spent in China, or, for that matter, the way he thought as a youth in England?

Such questions assume some relevance in the light of the publication of Laurie Baker's wife, Elizabeth Baker's *The Other Side of Laurie Baker* in 2007 (Plate 3.1). Since she had been with Laurie Baker for over sixty years, Elizabeth Baker wrote about her husband with a certain amount of intimacy in her book (In the rest of this paper, I will always refer to Elizabeth Baker by her whole name). Indeed the title of the book was a punning reference to Baker's not so well-known, lighter, more humorous side. While she met Laurie only after he came to India, in 1946, over the years, Elizabeth Baker came to understand him the way few others have. From her very affectionate account, one learns, for instance, that Laurie Baker was almost singularly invested in images and memories. In this matter, Elizabeth Baker's recollection of her meeting with him for the first time at the railway station in the city of Allahabad in north India is particularly poignant. Elizabeth Baker was preparing to travel and meet her brother Dr. P.J. Chandy, the Medical superintendent in the town of Faizabad in the north Indian plains.¹⁰⁶ At the time, an unknown Englishman affiliated with her brother had posted her a letter in which he offered to receive her at the Allahabad station, at some distance from Faizabad.¹⁰⁷ This Englishman "had sent a small snapshot of a knock-kneed camel and at the back of which it was said – "for recognition purposes.""¹⁰⁸ When she arrived at the Allahabad station, after a three-day journey from the town of Karimnagar in south India, she was greeted by her "knock-kneed camel." "There he was, thin as a rake in khaki shorts and an aertex T-shirt. He welcomed me and made me feel as though I had known him all my life."¹⁰⁹

This, then, was Elizabeth Baker's Laurie Baker. He was a somewhat comical person who endeared himself to others even in the most mundane circumstances. More

significantly, he was an individual who sought to present himself by the means of images such as the knock-kneed camel. Indeed he even understood the world around him by the means of the images he retained within his own memories. What, for instance, must one make of the very opening lines of *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*? Elizabeth Baker wrote:

I am relaxing on the very special armchair Laurie designed and made for me, many years ago. It is at the side of my desk, and from here, I get a good view of the garden and the road below, through the large trellis that fills the whole of one side of our bedroom—cum—living—cum—working—cum—everything else—room. From here, we watch the sunrise over the highest mountain in Kerala, at the Agasthiyaparvatham, nearly eight thousand feet above sea level, lighting first the tip, and gradually turning the whole into red-hot cone. In the evenings we enjoy watching the sunset through another set of windows which are really openings in the brick-filled wall with coloured bottles – beautiful blue, red and green. This, for Laurie, gives the Coventry Cathedral effect.”¹¹⁰

I never did get to see brick-filled wall with coloured bottles at Elizabeth Baker’s house. And yet, I gained some idea of what she may have meant when I looked at a photograph of the window in a building Laurie Baker built for Col. Jacob in Trivandrum (date of construction unknown) (Plate 3.2). Mulling over this photograph, then, one wonders what Baker remembered about the Coventry cathedral in England (Plate 2). Baker, as a former Englishman who was born in Birmingham, which is not far from Coventry, may have seen the old St. Michael’s church (the old Coventry cathedral) in that city. This church, which, as is visible in the lithograph, had stained glass windows, was bombed by the Germans in 1940 (Plate 3.3).¹¹¹ At one level, then, Baker’s “Coventry Cathedral effect” in his own home in Trivandrum could not have but been a reference to his own memories

of a place that he may have visited, or at any rate, may have known rather well through his peers as a young person who grew up in Birmingham.

And yet, quite apart from Baker's "Coventry Cathedral effect" in his own home in Trivandrum, there are also his other projects in that city, in which one sees a constant play with light. One could, for instance, observe how he staggered bricks on end in the curved surfaces of the front wall of the Ladies hostel at the Center for Development Studies in the north of Trivandrum (built circa 1971) (Plate 3.4, 3.5). Furthermore, as one walks in a corridor within the guesthouse at CDS, one can note how thoughtfully he made tiny slivers of light, into a running leitmotif. (Plate 3.6)

It is perhaps only fair to compare the reticulations on the walls of the buildings at CDS with the wooden frames of the famous Padmanabhapuram palace in Kerala, which dates back to the seventeenth century (Plate 3.7).¹¹² I learnt, for instance, from Baker's son, Tilak, how his father had been profoundly affected by the play of light in the Padmanabhapuram palace.¹¹³ Baker, at CDS, had responded to the manner in which the builders of that palace had broken down the harsh glare of the Kerala sun by the means of a network of wooden lattices.

And yet, Baker's play with light at CDS also correspond, at one level, with the appearance of another Coventry cathedral, that is, the one which was reconstructed by Basil Spence (1907 –1976) and John Piper (1903 – 1992) and eventually consecrated in 1962.¹¹⁴ The exterior walls designed by Spence for the refurbished Coventry cathedral (Plate 3.8, 3.9), and Piper's new baptistery for the same building, appear remarkably similar to the punctured screen-like walls of the buildings in CDS. One way of explaining

these similarities is to suggest that Baker was, at all times, in tune with architectural developments in England. Such an appraisal of Baker, in which one places some importance to how he continued to correspond with the world he had left behind for India, awaits a more careful and detailed enquiry into his life.

At this stage, however, one can at least wonder if Baker built in Trivandrum, the way he would have, were he to have remained in England. Presuming, at least momentarily, that pierced screens belonged to an English architectural style which predated the reconstruction of the Coventry Cathedral, one could suppose that Baker remained true to his English roots, while in India. Indeed, one could, in this sense, take Elizabeth Baker's account about "the Coventry Cathedral effect" very seriously and suggest that Baker was a person who sought to view his new world of Kerala through a screen of his own remembrances of another world.

It is Elizabeth Baker's account of Laurie's commemoration of his own past, combined with the patent similarities between his work in Kerala and the work of Spence and Piper, then, which provoke me to ask to what degree he had always approached his present in India, from the vantages of his own past. Indeed, did Baker find himself in very familiar territory when Gandhi asked him to build out of locally available material in 1944? In what ways did building in a Gandhian manner out of locally available material in the villages of Pithoragarh, and eventually in Kerala, help Baker remember his own religious and secular self-identity as he had honed it in England?¹¹⁵ To what extent did Baker, in the nineteen eighties, come to remember his meeting with Gandhi not so much

as a sovereign event unto itself, but rather as a stepping stone which took him closer to his own long abiding identity as a Quaker and a satirist?

Some of these questions, I wish to mention, are not entirely new. The acclaimed apologist Gautam Bhatia, in his *Laurie Baker: Life Work, Writings*, has already written sensitively about the continuity between the architect's Gandhism and his religious identity as a Quaker. As Bhatia observed, Baker became receptive to Gandhi's pragmatic idealism because he was a Quaker to begin with. In so far as Baker's Quaker upbringing, emphasized "simplicity and austerity," and "rejected all ornament and luxury as sinful self-indulgence," he remained, according to Bhatia, instinctively responsive to "Gandhi's simplicity."¹¹⁶

What, then, in the light of Bhatia's observation, must one make of Baker's meeting with Gandhi in 1944? Parsing through Baker's writings, I find that there are at least two, somewhat conflicting ways in which he mobilized his recollection of that event.¹¹⁷ On one occasion in 1980, when he wrote about his experiences as an architect in the Pithoragarh district in Himalayas in North India between 1948 and 1963, Baker remembered how he had found people in the district already building the way Gandhi had asked him to in 1944.¹¹⁸ On another occasion in 1980, Baker wrote that he had been blinded by his own hubris as a western educated architect, towards how people in the villages of the Pithoragarh district built the way Gandhi had asked him to in 1944.¹¹⁹ What to make of this contradiction? Was Baker disingenuous about his experiences in Pithoragarh? Or had he become confused as he grew older?

One way of going beyond such questions which can only serve to paralyze enquiry, is to approach Baker's remembrances of his time in Pithoragarh individually, on a piece-meal basis. In the context of the first version of the Pithoragarh story one could, for instance, set aside Baker's impression of Gandhi as a person. One could draw upon Bhatia's thesis and observe how Baker wittingly or unwittingly made Gandhi, to serve as a reference towards his own Quaker values. To the extent that Baker made Gandhi into a hieroglyphic for his own Quaker values, then, one feels obliged to read deeper into the matter of his having found ample evidence of Gandhian pragmatic architectural wisdom in the villages of Pithoragarh. Baker, one would think, did not so much write about Gandhi's wisdom in Pithoragarh; rather he wrote about how, as a Quaker, he had felt at home among villagers who built pragmatically. In the ensuing section of this chapter, then, I will explore how Baker's Quaker values may have served as a prism which refracted his empirical impressions of Gandhi in particular and pragmatism in Indian architecture in general, into tell-tale signs. In this regard, I will pay particular attention to Baker's pragmatic history of architecture in Kerala, where he settled in 1963. I ask if Baker emphasized such a pragmatic history of architecture in Kerala because he was sensitive to architectural pragmatism as a sign which referenced moral values. Bhatia, in *Laurie Baker: Life Work, Writings*, merely broaches the matter of Baker's Quaker religiosity. I go one step further. I explore the extent to which Baker may have hoped that Indian architectural pragmatism over and above being a kind of bare-essential economic rationalism, served as a signficatory system in its own right.

In the third section of this chapter, I take a somewhat different approach in the context of the second version of Baker's Pithoragarh story. I explore that version of the Pithoragarh story as satirical commentary. I am emboldened to take such an approach upon reading some of the letters Baker wrote to his parents in the early nineteen forties. These letters, which Elizabeth Baker procured and duly published in her *The Other Side of Laurie Baker* in 2007, provide a fascinating insight into the more secular, humorous aspect of Baker's personality. While reading these letters, one cannot but help observe that Baker was peculiarly sensitive to how people behaved mechanically. As a young nurse who worked in the hospitals of war-torn England, Baker wrote with wit and sarcasm about people's eagerness to comply with customs, traditions and rituals. This mechanical habitude, as is evident in Baker's letters to his parents, sometimes worked comically towards the detriment of its pursuer.

If, then, Baker, in 1980, wrote about how he had been blind to Gandhi's wisdom in Pithoragarh, I suggest that he did so as a satirist. In this regard in the final section of this chapter I explore how Baker's narrative about his own blindness to wisdom was consistent with his routine as a satirist and as a cartoonist. Moreover, I build upon such an interpretation to examine some of the building construction manuals that Baker drew in the nineteen seventies and eighties. I go beyond merely reading them as texts instructing people how to build. I pay more attention to how they instructed people not to build. As a person who was fairly unsympathetic to modern building construction practice as a form of blind, unthinking compliance with mostly mythified norms, Baker, by the means of some of his drawings in his manuals, sought to lampoon those norms. He sought to show

people how they mechanically complied with norms. He was irked by how people did not base their compliance with norms on reasonable premises.

If I read more into Baker's writing and drawings than has traditionally been attempted, it is mostly because I have perused through Elizabeth Baker's *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*. The details of Baker's life, a measure of the time he had spent in England, China and Burma as a nurse and a driver, how deeply faithful he was: Elizabeth Baker has very thoughtfully chronicled these. Indeed, in her book one finds so many vivid impressions of Baker's life prior to his meeting with Gandhi in 1944 that one feels somehow obliged to view that meeting as but one episode in a larger, more engaging story.

While in this chapter I do not write a great deal about Baker's experiences in England, China and Burma, I do proceed with some awareness of how much his memories of those experiences directed him towards a particular experience of India. Just as the writer Gautam Bhatia, I would say that Gandhi's advice to Baker to build out of locally available material merely affirmed, in Baker's mind, ideas that had already been brewing. I extend Bhatia's observations, however, when I suggest that Baker's pre-Gandhian past as a Quaker and as a satirist, may have made him infuse into the India he saw, wrote about and built for over a period of sixty odd years, with more meaning than is immediately apparent.

I do not proceed chronologically in this essay. Rather, I begin with an appraisal of Baker's time in Kerala, in the latter part of his life. I draw upon a systematic appraisal of his ideas and how he shaped them in Kerala, and then plunge backwards, into the past,

that is, into the time he spent in the Himalayan district of Pithoragarh. I approach Baker's meeting with Gandhi in 1944, if not his experiences building in the villages of Pithoragarh between 1948 and 1963, as his memories. Baker's past experiences, as memories, may have helped him retain his sense of purpose and mission in his present in Kerala. For my part, then, if I take the license to freely move from Baker's present in Kerala to his past in Pithoragarh, to a more remote past in Mumbai where he met Gandhi or even England where he grew up, it is because I write about Baker's life as a single continuum. In this continuum I find that events, memories and signs effortlessly slide into each other.

Baker and Architectural Pragmatism in Kerala

After he had spent fifteen years building inexpensively in the Pithoragarh district in the Himalayas in north India, Laurie Baker, in 1963, shifted with his family to the south Indian state of Kerala.¹²⁰ Here, he initially settled at the city of Kottayam and eventually moved to the village of Vagamon in the foothills of the Western Ghats mountain range.¹²¹ In 1969, however, he shifted to Trivandrum, the capital of the state of Kerala. Here, in Trivandrum, Baker procured a site with a view towards the Ghats, particularly towards the Agasthiyaparvatham, and built a house for his family.¹²² He stayed in this house with his family till his death in 2007 at the ripe old age of ninety.

When one steps back and takes an expansive view of the thirty-eight years that Baker spent in Kerala, one wonders if the Gulf-Boom decade era which lasted through the seventies was the most tumultuous for him.¹²³ After all, the state of Kerala underwent a significant architectural transition in that decade. With the discovery of oil in the

Arabian Peninsula, a demand gradually arose in that region for skilled labor.¹²⁴ A huge number of people from Kerala migrated to the Arabian Peninsula to cater to this demand in 1972.¹²⁵ As they started sending money back to Kerala, a new culture of building that was somewhat scornful towards the past became the norm. People took apart old, sloped-tiled-roof houses and replaced them with modern concrete flat-roofed houses.¹²⁶ Many people discarded ancestral homes, and in their place, built new ones with modern construction materials such as a concrete and glass.¹²⁷

When one reads about these developments in Elizabeth Baker's *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, one's initial impulse is to presume that Baker's keen interest in traditional homes and settlement layouts in Kerala was precipitated primarily by his awareness of how tradition itself had been uprooted in the state. Indeed I went on to interpret an essay he had written in 1984 titled "Architectural Anarchy" not just as a history of architecture in Kerala, but also as a lament about its erasure. He began the essay with the following lines:

People who come to Kerala almost invariably express delight in architectural styles. Until a few years ago each town had its own distinctive character. There are many factors which contribute to this character formation. One relates to town planning. Old towns usually started as very small settlements and slowly grew into towns. This meant that often there was no road system to begin with and it only came slowly as the need to communicate with other places arose. Even then, the roads meandered to avoid hazards and natural features such as hills and rocks, trees and water, or old religious buildings that they felt should not be moved. So right from the start every location itself determined the original basic layout. The other factor is related to the construction of buildings. Before these days of easy, but costly transport, people built only with the materials that were found nearby. For example, you would not find any buildings of burnt brick in an area of rock and stone. As the local materials varied from place to place, so did the appearance of the building

constructed with them. The variation was not only in colour and texture and but also in the shape and/or height of the building. The materials also determined the shape and size of the holes in walls for the doors and windows.¹²⁸

Baker's historicism, that is, his usage of such phrases and words as "until a few years ago" and "old," clearly appears to respond to his present at the time in Kerala, in which remittances from Gulf countries fueled a building boom. In addition, land reforms had been undertaken in Kerala in 1963.¹²⁹ People who were previously landless laborers were now landowners. With their increased income, they now aspired for houses of their own.

Baker's interest in the past, then, was silhouetted against the backdrop of massive changes in Kerala's economy. Even as he himself was explicitly involved with the state government in shaping housing policy in the nineteen seventies, he could not but help note how a vapid, new consumer culture aggressed upon traditions of construction from the past. Baker wrote about history and culture primarily because he witnessed them as they passed into oblivion.

And yet, upon a more careful reading of the opening lines from "Architectural Anarchy," one is forced to mull over not only what precipitated Baker to write about the past, but also what kind of past he emphasized. At the face of it, he appeared to have mostly been interested in how the forms and the appearances of old edifices and settlements in Kerala were evidence of the pragmatic considerations of builders.¹³⁰

People in the towns and villages of the Kerala built the way they did in the past, only out of necessity. They built out of locally available material because they could not afford the cost of transporting expensive construction material from other, more geographically

distant locations. They carefully weighed the topography of their environment, took stock of what was immediately available to them as building materials and built in the most practical way conceivable.

As one parses through “Architectural Anarchy,” then, one cannot but help surmise that Baker himself sought, principally, a pragmatic history of architecture in Kerala. It is another thing that for people in Kerala, pragmatism may have been one of many considerations while building. People in Kerala may have designed and built edifices not only as pragmatists, but also as ritualists. They may have inherited their traditions of building and vocabularies of ritual expression as memories over many generations of travel in a world outside Kerala.¹³¹ But Baker, for his part, was most receptive to their situational, architectural pragmatism. Indeed, for Baker, the architectural pragmatism that went into building edifices was not simply one facet of architectural history. Rather, for him, architectural pragmatism was central to the very aesthetic experience of edifices. How else, for instance, to explain the following lines from “Architectural Anarchy:”

Some special features are obvious in the buildings of old villages, towns and cities of India. The first is the simple straightforward, honest way of using local materials. For instance, in areas where the local stone is smooth and sleek, such as marble, the builders have exploited the characteristics of stone resulting in smooth and elegant buildings. Where forests abounded, buildings made use of wood. But as there are different kinds of timber, there are different ways of using wood of different kinds. All this is fairly obvious, but the point I want to make is summed up in the word I have used to describe the use of materials – the word ‘honest.’ Put simply, it means that a brick wall looks like a brick wall and you could, if you so choose, count the number of bricks on it. A stone wall makes use of the sparkling quality of granite or the rich colour of sandstone.¹³²

Baker, one may note, emphasized how people in India left their use of locally available materials transparent. They may have built with locally available material such as wood, stone or even bricks burnt in local kilns; but more significantly, they chose to be conspicuous about having done so. People were honest, in essence, because they did not conceal how they built, with plaster or with some other surface-finish such as stone-cladding. People, as Baker saw it, wished to communicate that they were architectural pragmatists by the means of their buildings.

Baker's "Architectural Anarchy," then, can be read along three simultaneous and somewhat interconnected registers. On the first register, the essay was a response to an immediate present of intense construction activity in which old houses in the state of Kerala were demolished and replaced by new ones built out of modern construction materials. In this regard, it is interesting to note how Baker's historicism itself was to some degree supported by the construction boom. After all, as Elizabeth Baker notes, Laurie Baker was able to acquire readymade timber doors and windows from old houses at a negligible price while building his own house at Nalanchira in Trivandrum.¹³³ In the throes of the Gulf Boom, people in Kerala devalued their old, antique houses, broke them down, and sold them in pieces at throwaway rates. One can only imagine how delighted Baker may have been as a low-cost architect who had been presented with the opportunity to build a home with readily available, priceless carvings and antiques.¹³⁴

On another register, when Baker alluded to a history of architecture in Kerala, he gave primacy to situational decisions and considerations which led to traditional building patterns and paradigms of settlement planning. Baker, in essence, attributed the

emergence of traditional patterns and paradigms of building and settlement planning in Kerala to its people's rational, circumstantial survival skills. It would appear that Baker did not trace the shapes and the appearances of old buildings and towns to some original, arcane ritual or practice of building. Rather he seemed more invested in how people in Kerala had always been reasonable, architectural pragmatists.

On a third register, Baker also found ample evidence to suggest that people in India were only too happy to reveal how they built pragmatically. Not only did people take recourse to pragmatism out of necessity, they also made no bones about their having done so. Indeed they wished to make an architectural expression out of their very pragmatism. Baker's interest in a pragmatic history of Indian architecture, and his receptivity towards people's having left pragmatism transparent as a statement of their architectural honesty, are best understood in the context of his discussions on Quaker values. As a Quaker, Baker, it helps to know, attached some importance to transparency. In this regard, one may observe in the following excerpt from his unpublished essay "Baker on 'Laurie Baker architecture,'" how deeply his faith affected the manner in which he viewed the world. He wrote:

Very briefly, the Quaker ideal is that there is a form of direct unity with the Creator, that Man experiences this at any time, in any place and under any circumstances. Special 'religious' surroundings and appurtenances are not essential, though many people find them a help. But, however much we hoodwink our fellowmen, it is impossible to be deceitful or put up a false front to the Creator. So all efforts to 'put on a big show' or indulge in deceit to make ourselves look greater than we are, seems to be quite pointless. A house has to be designed as a home for a particular group of people to live together as a family in their own inimitable style and if this planning and designing for them is done well it is highly unlikely that the outside of the building will be ostentatious

or showy. It is even more so with religious buildings where people usually gather together for purposes of worship and prayer, with their own particular form of ritual or liturgy. The architect will do his utmost to provide the 'right' space in which these acts of worship can be made. As this mainly concerns our search for union with the Eternal it seems particularly 'not right' to indulge in a pretentious façade with these buildings. This anti-façade-ism has definitely been a very noticeable and is a deliberate characteristic of Laurie Baker's architecture, no matter what type of building is being designed.¹³⁵

Setting aside the matter of Baker's almost jocular reference to himself in the third person, one may observe how he saw little reason in concealing from view the way one practically lived. In so far as groups of people came to arrive pragmatically at their own peculiar understanding of how they cohered together as a family, from the vantages of Baker's Quaker philosophy, they did very well. From Baker's Quaker perspective, they were honest when they made their mundane, inner familial life transparent to an outside world. What need, after all, was there to conceal the workings of their own inner world if they were at all times visible to the creator? As an architect who happened to be a Quaker, then, Baker was hardly invested in building facades; rather, he was more invested in learning about the practical dimension of how families lived together, and how that practicality could be made to resonate with some consistency within and outside the home. Architectural ostentation, as Baker saw it, merely contributed to a distinction between an inner, less visible familial life at home, and an outer, more visible, public familial persona.

Returning, then, to "Architectural Anarchy," I reiterate how Baker was almost instinctively drawn towards a pragmatic account of the development of architectural forms and settlement layouts in Kerala. Far from obsessing over how the forms of

buildings were imitated and mobilized as signs and symbols in a society that teemed with diverse faiths and was so richly implicated in the material and visual culture among countries that mark the rim of the Indian ocean, Baker wrote about a spontaneous architectural common sense.¹³⁶ For the Quaker Baker, the architecture and the settlement planning of Kerala arose as pragmatic responses to particular environmental and topographical contingencies. Perhaps he even gleaned in the attempts of people at being honest, their awareness of an all-seeing omniscient creator. Perhaps Baker was not just invested in how people had been reasonable as builders in the past. Rather, he read their very architectural reasonability as a religious sign.

Here, in the context of Baker's own religiosity, that is, in the context of his propensity to read architectural pragmatism itself as a sign referencing social and religious values, it helps to dwell on his remembrances of his meeting with Gandhi in 1944. What, for instance, to make of his 1980 essay titled "Building Technologies in Pithoragarh" for an edited volume titled *Science and Rural Development in Mountains*. In that essay Baker chronicled his experience of living in the district of Pithoragarh, in the Kumaon hills of the Himalayas in north India from 1948 to 1962, as an elaboration of his meeting with Gandhi in 1944. Baker, for his part, had been based in the villages of Chandag and Chera in Pithoragarh. Here, he had not only worked as a nurse and an anesthesiologist along with Elizabeth Baker who tended to Leprosy patients, he also simultaneously undertook building, in bits and pieces, a hospital, a home and schools. As he went about building, it appears he had been rather meticulous as an architectural observer. As he wrote in "Building Technologies in Pithoragarh" in 1980:

One of the main things that Mahatma Gandhi had said, that impressed me, and has influenced my thinking more than anything else, was that the ideal houses in the ideal village will be built of materials which are found within a five mile radius of the house. In my training as an architect, I have clearly seen wonderful examples of Gandhiji's wisdom all around me. The wood for the roofs was obtained locally and was extravagantly lavish in size. Whole tree trunks were used for ridge poles, purlins and trusses. A layer of split pine was laid over thick rafters and carried the split-stone or slate roofing which was bedded in mud. All these roofing materials were close at hand. Occasionally a wealthier person would send for a thinner quality of slate a few miles away. This whole roof construction over the wall construction was completely adequate to cope with the climatic extremes of heat and dryness in summer, the violent rainstorms in monsoons, the heavy snow in winter.¹³⁷

While Gandhi may have suggested how the ideal houses were built with material found within a five mile radius around the site, Baker, one supposes, was receptive to that suggestion on account of the values he already espoused as a Quaker. In so far as the Quaker ideal demanded one to be honest with one's circumstances, Gandhi's emphasis upon circumstantial materialism as a form of architectural idealism could not but appeal to Baker. Which raises the question, did Baker write about his discovery of evidence of Gandhi's wisdom in Pithoragarah because he remembered how his own Quaker idealism had been validated? Was the usage of locally available wood, slate, or mud in Pithoragarah, in Baker's eyes, a validation of Gandhi's powers of architectural observation? Or conversely, did Baker approach Gandhi's wisdom from the vantages of the social and religious values that he already possessed?

While answering such questions, it certainly helps to take into account the acclaimed, architectural apologist Gautam Bhatia's *Laurie Baker: Life, Work and Writings*. Upon meeting Baker in the nineteen eighties, Bhatia had come to appreciate

how Baker's Quaker values had made him particularly sensitive and solicitous towards a Gandhian simplicity. Bhatia observed:

Baker's instinctive response to Gandhi's simplicity and his acceptance of the frugal life in Pithoragarh stems perhaps from his Quaker background. The rigorous Quaker upbringing, with its emphasis on simplicity and austerity, its rejection of all ornament and luxury as sinful self-indulgence, was reinforced by the theories of Modernism that were current during his architectural training – the one complementing the other. And so, though Baker's work appears to emanate from the functionalist doctrines of the modern movement, it is largely the outcome of his Quaker past. If the modernist ideology dictated that design be determined by purpose and by the mechanical process by which it is realized, the Quakers arrived at a similar conclusion from a different starting point. The sort of burdened band forced functionalism that the modern doctrine enforced with elaborate theory, came naturally to those whose religious beliefs sought to express in their handiwork the desire to labour willingly and honestly.¹³⁸

Both, Gandhian simplicity and Modernism, it seems, appeared familiar to the Quaker Baker. Indeed Gandhi's architectural pragmatism, or what Bhatia called Gandhi's simplicity, and a modernist functionalism merely served to affirm a sentiment that already had been long since welling within Baker.

While Bhatia wrote a great deal about Baker's avant-gardism as a modern-traditionalist, I, for my part, wish to emphasize the architect's Quaker investment in an architectural pragmatism. Baker, as I have already noted, read peoples' architectural pragmatism as their personal expression. He read, for instance, that a brick wall appearing to be a brick wall or a stone wall appearing to be a stone wall, revealed the honesty of their builders. In a manner of looking at things, Baker, one could hazard, did not just approach architectural pragmatism as evidence of the rationalism of builders.

Rather, he went one step further and read architectural pragmatism as a sign referencing moral values.

Here I wish to say, somewhat cautiously, that there may be more to Baker's investment in architectural pragmatism than his Quaker values. Baker, after all, hailed from John Ruskin's (1819 – 1900) England. In the nineteenth century, John Ruskin, the famous art-critic, had written at length about architectural dishonesty itself as a sign of a lack of morality. In a chapter titled "The Lamp of Truth" in his book *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Ruskin had railed against what he identified as "direct falsity of assertion respecting the nature of the material, or the quantity of labor."¹³⁹ "This," he raged, "is, in the full sense of the word, wrong; and it has been a sign, wherever it has widely and with toleration existed, of a singular debasement of the arts; that it is not a sign worse than this, of a general want of severe probity can be accounted for only by our knowledge of the strange separation which has for some centuries existed between the arts and all other subjects of human intellect, as matters of conscience."¹⁴⁰

Since Baker was educated as an architect in Birmingham, it is possible that he came under the influence of the Ruskin Society of Birmingham (established 1896), and thereby under the influence of Ruskin's interest in reading architecture as an assertion "respecting the nature of the material, or the quantity of labor."¹⁴¹ In this sense, Baker's interest in reading architectural honesty as a reference to social and moral values, it would appear, belongs not so much to his inclinations as a Quaker, but rather to a romantic, nineteenth century architectural temperament that was somewhat belatedly prevalent in early twentieth century Birmingham. Baker's interest in architectural honesty

in India, in essence, may have belonged predominantly within a very English, turn-of-the-century tradition of architectural thinking.¹⁴²

I seek, then, to emphasize the way Baker, like Ruskin, was receptive towards old buildings as signs of social and moral values. What, for instance, must one make of his having accorded the use of locally available material the status of a “natural style?” In 1974, Baker wrote:

Distinctive architectural styles were not designed by some famous ancient architect who decreed that a certain style will be used in Japan and a certain other style will be used in Peru and yet another style in Punjab. The upturned, horned roofs of buildings as found in Kerala, China and Japan are the direct result of the people of those places making use of the most common plentiful, useful material: bamboo – to house and protect them from natural enemies such as sun, rain, hurricanes and wind. A completely different set of styles has evolved in hot, dry, treeless, desert areas, as in parts of Egypt, Iran and India; in almost every district in the world these natural styles have grown into patterns that could be seen in the first half of the century.¹⁴³

Here it is helpful to pay heed to Baker’s usage of the word “pattern.” People in a more distant past may have arrived at natural styles of building as they spontaneously responded to their immediate natural circumstances and natural enemies such as the “sun, rain, hurricanes and wind.” But by the early part of the twentieth century, people had ritualized “natural styles” into patterns. In keeping with this observation, were one, then, to not so much abide by the upturned horned roof as a “natural style” but rather, as a pattern, one could, at the face of it, read it as a rather complex sign. In the early part of the twentieth century, the upturned roof did not so much only refer to the circumstances in which it was built, but rather, it also commemorated building as the act of responding to circumstances. However incredible and unconvincing it may sound, going strictly by

Baker's writing, the upturned roof was not so much evidence of architectural pragmatism, as much as it was a representation of architectural pragmatism as it had been practiced in a more distant past.

One is tempted, then, while reading much of Baker's writing, to assume that he viewed vernacular building practices in a composite manner. On the one hand, he approached buildings from a recent past as the evidence of the circumstances that necessitated their construction. On the other hand, he also viewed them as commemorations of some other, more authentic attempt at building pragmatically in a more distant past. When he wrote about buildings in Pithoragarh, for instance, Baker had observed how people built the way they did so as to respond to the contingencies of their more immediate present. Roof construction which used materials more immediately at hand in Pithoragarh, he wrote, "was completely adequate to cope with the climatic extremes of heat and dryness in the summer, the violent rainstorms in monsoons, and heavy snow in winter."¹⁴⁴ These, then, were the climatic circumstances that Baker himself may have witnessed while he stayed in Pithoragarh. In so far as he understood an architecture that responded to those circumstances not so much as a natural style, but rather as a pattern, one feels compelled to assume that he referred to a vernacular historicism as much as he referred to a vernacular pragmatism. People in Pithoragarh, one assumes, not only built the way they did out of necessity, they also built the way they did to adhere to the historical idea of the naturalism of builders in the past.

It is in this sense, then, that one could tentatively suggest that Baker read architectural pragmatism not only as a sign which referenced social and moral values, but

also as an historical sign. Even as buildings appeared to be a people's response to more immediate environmental contingencies in the present, they also hearkened towards an older tradition of contending with contingencies. In this sense, people in the early part of the twentieth century were not so much only pragmatic rationalists. They were also traditionalists who viewed building pragmatically as a hearkening towards some bygone age of architectural pragmatism.

To some degree, one observes how these two very different sign systems intersect in Baker's own work as an architect. Indeed Baker's relevance to a twentieth century Indian architectural avant-gardism resides in the manner in which he mellifluously blended these two very different systems in his work. In this regard, it is particularly useful to explore Baker's employment of the Reinforced Cement Concrete, filler roof-slab in many of his buildings in Kerala.

The common practice in Gulf-Boom-time Kerala, as Baker came to learn, was to use flat concrete slabs with reinforcements while building roofs. This method, he surmised, was not environmentally suited to Kerala where heavy rains and extreme heat were common. Sloped roofs using wooden frames and tiles were the most efficient way of responding to such a climate. Indeed Baker noted in this regard how people in the past built houses and temples with steeped tiled roofs and deep overhangs.¹⁴⁵ And yet, in the present, building new tiled-sloped-roofs was expensive because they demanded fresh wood, a scarce resource. Deriving, then, from an experiment he had conducted in Lucknow with an engineer and a contractor from Bengal, Baker began building roofs using waste Mangalore roof tiles as inexpensive filler material within sloped cement roof

slabs. Mangalore tiles were originally flat tiles made out of country clay that was found in the region near the Netravati river not far from the city of Mangalore (Plate 3.10, 3.11, 3.12).¹⁴⁶ Over time, however, people began manufacturing such pressed tiles all over India. The tiles themselves have ridges on a relatively flat surface and can as such be very neatly interlocked on a roof. As Elizabeth Baker notes “One [Mangalore] tile placed upside down on the other tile made an excellent filler, which had the added advantage of being hollow and furthermore, it was much larger in area than two or three bricks.”¹⁴⁷ (Plate 3.13) Such a filler slab, in essence, was light in weight, reduced the use of steel reinforcement and also led to houses being cooled down faster at night in Kerala where the day was inordinately hot.

Today, if one visits many of Baker’s buildings in Kerala, one may observe how he not only somewhat unconventionally used waste Mangalore tiles to build roofs of many different shapes and sizes; he also left his attempts at having done so transparent (Plate 3.14, 3.15, 3.16, 3.17, 3.18). In many instances Baker did not finish the under-surfaces of these filler roof slabs with plaster. One can, then, clearly see that a traditional roofing material has been employed in a new, pragmatic way to reduce the cost of building. One feels, while standing under a Laurie Baker filler slab roof, obliged to acknowledge the practical manner in which in which it has been imagined and constructed. Moreover, one also feels obliged to mull over the pragmatism leading to the usage of the Mangalore tile in the past in Kerala.¹⁴⁸

On the one hand, then, the filler roof is an invitation to explore a specific pragmatic architectural history leading to the development of the Mangalore roof-tile in

the past. On the other hand, the filler roof is visible for what it is, that is, a sloping slab composed of Mangalore tiles. By leaving his use of Mangalore tiles as filler material transparent in his filler-roof-slab, Baker, it appears, sought to make that architectural element into a testimony of his own architectural honesty.

Baker's Manuals

In this section I move away from the semiotics underscoring Baker's moral and historical appreciation of architecture towards some other facets of his personality, particularly as they came to affect his appreciation of Gandhi's message to him. In this regard, I wish to pay close attention to another essay Baker wrote in 1980. In this essay Baker wrote once again, with some poignancy, about his meeting with Gandhi; only, this time, he paid attention to how he had not heeded the old man's words at Pithoragarh.

Baker wrote:

I believe that Gandhiji is the only leader in our country who has talked consistently with common-sense about the building needs of our country. What he said many years ago is even more pertinent now. One of the things he said that impressed me and has influenced my thinking more than anything else was that the ideal houses in the ideal village will be built materials which are all found within a five-mile radius of the house. What clearer explanation is there of what appropriate building technology meant than this advice by Gandhiji. I confess that as a young architect, born, brought up, educated and qualified in the West, I thought at first Gandhiji's ideal was a bit 'far-fetched' and I used to argue to myself that of course he probably did not intend us to take this ideal too literally. But now, in my seventies and with forty years of building behind me, have come to the conclusion that he was right, literally word for word, and that he did not mean that there could be exceptions. If only I had not been so proud and sure of my learning and my training as an architect, I could have seen clearly wonderful examples of Gandhiji's wisdom all round me throughout the entire period I lived in the Pithoragarh district.¹⁴⁹

This decidedly, was a lament over missed opportunities. While Baker began, once again, by invoking the memory of his meeting with Gandhi, he now observed how his own arrogance and perhaps even hubris as a “a young architect, born, brought up, educated and qualified in the West” had blinded him to the “clearly wonderful examples of Gandhiji's wisdom all round me throughout the entire period I lived in the Pithoragarh district.” If previously, Baker had noted how he found ample evidence of Gandhi’s wisdom in plain sight at Pithoragarh, now he wrote, somewhat self-critically, how his own habitude as a trained professional had concealed from him the wisdom behind Gandhi’s words. Now, with the benefit of the hindsight afforded to him by his “forty years of building” Baker remembered his own superciliousness and his incapacity to adequately grasp Gandhi’s powers of observation.

So as to better understand why Baker contradicted himself, I turned to Elizabeth Baker’s version of Baker’s meeting with Gandhi. In a short chapter titled “Laurie meets Gandhiji” in *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, Elizabeth Baker wrote about that meeting as Baker had recounted it to her.

Laurie had to wait three months in Bombay, living with some British Quakers at the time when Gandhiji was also in Bombay. The McLeans were also friends of Gandhiji, and they regularly attended Gandhiji’s prayer sessions. Laurie also thus came in contact with Bapuji. He also immediately attracted and touched by Gandhiji’s principles of non-violence and love. He listened to Gandhiji’s discourse on overcoming hatred with love. Laurie was able to have talks with Gandhiji and although it was Quit India time, Gandhiji was able to explain to Laurie that it was not the British people he wanted to quit, but the British government. Gandhiji was also able to point out to him, that Bombay was not the real India, and that more than seventy-five percent of the people live in rural India – in villages. Gandhiji’s life and principles made a deep impression on Laurie. He left India on the next available boat with the firm

determination to come back to India and learn more from this great man.¹⁵⁰

From the tenor of Elizabeth Baker's description, it appears that Gandhi had emphasized how the experience of the city of Bombay hardly qualified as an adequate one of India's reality. The country's larger and statistically more preponderant reality, as Gandhi told Baker, resided in the experiences of villagers who lived in its villages.¹⁵¹ One can build upon Elizabeth Baker's account of Laurie Baker's meeting with Gandhi, then, to understand why the architect took up working in the villages of Pithoragarh. He adhered, it appears, to Gandhi's suggestion and served the real India, and not the impression of India, as an architect.

As I mentioned in the previous section, it is not entirely possible to distinguish Baker's sense of his own religious identity from his recollection of his meeting with Gandhi. As I noted, Baker, unlike others who were attracted towards Gandhi, may have been receptive to the old man's ideas, because he was a Quaker. In so far as Baker was, in keeping with the Quaker values, invested in going past ostentation and showiness towards an inner, more honest expression of a people's reality, Gandhi's invocation of a real India beyond its cities may have been a siren call to him. But more significantly, for Baker, as a satirist, the very manner in which Gandhi made a distinction between perceptions and reality may have also held considerable appeal. Indeed, Baker's recollection of his blindness to Gandhi's wisdom in Pithoragarh has to be studied from this second perspective, that is, from the vantages of his own history as a satirist who wrote and illustrated a distinction between perceptions and reality.

In this regard it helps to read through Baker's letters to his parents between 1940 and 1944. In these letters Baker often lampooned people for their conformity. Writing, for instance, about an unnamed parson, while serving as a part of the nursing crew in Dorset in 1940, Baker observed:

The patients can't wear Sunday clothes, nor can the nurses and they have Holy Communion on Thursday mornings early. One of the parsons is very temperamental or something. He can't work, i.e., do his stuff unless he is facing east or west or something, one has to rush around with a compass... He was awfully mad on one ward, because the men, some sailors, managed to change the wine for some Guinness and he recognized the taste half way through the performance. However they had downed it by then, so he couldn't do anything practical about it.¹⁵²

Here, evidently, the sailors had learned a little about the parson's blind, steadfast adherence to rituals and sought to make a production out of it. They counted upon the parson to be so preoccupied with his rituals so as to not realize that the wine for Holy Communion had been replaced with Guinness. The reality of the hollowness of the event dawned upon the parson rather late into the ritual.

In this narrative, then, what begs emphasis is not so much only the parson's mechanical adherence to his own routine; rather, what also deserves attention is how Baker himself duly noted the parson's conformity. Indeed as one reads through some of Baker's other letters to his parents from Dorset, one observes that he was particularly predisposed towards observing the ways in which people unquestioningly conformed to rituals. Writing to his parents a few days after the Guinness incident, Baker noted how the patients at the hospital were prone to complying, without thinking, with whatever demands their nurses imposed upon them at the hospital.

I don't know why it is, but as soon as you get people into bed, you immediately become their dictator, and they accept you as such. You tell them they must waggle their big toe six times every half hour and they waggle it. You tell them you're going to cut off their hair, and they acquiesce as lambs. It is the rarest thing ever to hear anyone even trying to disobey or disagree, and the nurses of course grow up in such an atmosphere, and thrive on it for the rest of their days.¹⁵³

The patients imposed a routine upon their own bodies because they believed in their nurse or what Baker identified as “their dictator.” The politics of the hospital, one surmises, was a combination of how patients came to comply, perhaps in the hope of being cured, with the ordinances of their nurses, and how the nurses derived their sense of authority out of this very compliance. While the patients persevered with their perception that they were somehow being cured, Baker, in his capacity as a nurse, was better placed to understand the reality of how they had been played with by the nurses in general.

Not quite unlike his letters to his parents in 1940, Baker, in later years, while remembering his years in England, was just about as faithful to the theme of lampooning compliance; only, now he lampooned his own compliance. Baker recollected how he had learned to drive in London, in preparation for being a part of an ambulance team in the early nineteen forties in China and Burma, Baker narrated:

After I had preliminary hospital and first aid casualty training in London, the Unit decided that I must learn to drive. I well recall, when we were in training in London, some of us were housed in a youth hostel, which was a beautiful old period, manor house, with a magnificent wrought iron gate supported by two classical carved gateposts. A lorry was brought and one of the Unit's experts on vehicles and driving told me to get in. So I got in, and clung on to the big steering wheel. He told me about the gears and clutch and other such devices and said “OK – now let us go!” I manhandled and foot-handled some of the devices in front and below me.

We shot off like a bullet from a gun – and alas, straight into one of these architectural classical gems of gateposts.¹⁵⁴

Baker's almost immediate compliance with the Unit Expert's order "OK – Now let us go" resulted in the defacement of what he had previously noted as a classical, carved gatepost. The eagerness with which Baker preoccupied himself with acquiescing to the command blinded him to the danger he now posed to the very architectural artifact that he appreciated.

There is, then, something to be said about Baker's interest in how people became myopic as they immersed themselves into rituals or pliant behavior. In so far as people unhesitatingly complied with the expectations placed upon them by some overseer, or even some socio-religious litany, they always ran the risk of losing sight of the larger picture, that is, of reality itself. Indeed Baker, in many of his cartoons oftentimes represented the mechanical nature of people's lives as seen from the vantages of one who saw reality for what it was. How, for instance, to appreciate the cartoon "Fight for non-violence?" (Plate 3.19) In this cartoon, one may observe how sometimes people become so immersed in the idea of non-violence, that they begin to fight for it. As a cartoonist, then, Baker took on the task of revealing the irony from an omniscient perspective. In the case of "Fight for non-violence," this perspective was sadly not available to those advocates of non-violence involved in the thick of fighting for it.

One could, in a similar manner, observe how Baker lampooned himself in his drawings. In "Head bath" for instance, Baker represented himself taking the phrase "Head-bath" quite literally (Plate 3.20). In this cartoon, then, he emphasized his own

unquestioning fidelity towards what words denoted and not so much what they connoted. A blind compliance with what was literal, in essence, produced the most comic results.

Not surprisingly, then, Baker oftentimes promoted architectural pragmatism as a critique of architectural conformity. In this regard, his building construction manuals are particularly revealing. Baker wrote and published these manuals with the Center of Science and Rural Technology or COSTFORD, an institution he founded with bases in the cities of Trivandrum and Trichur in Kerala. He promoted these self-help manuals as training material for laymen, professionals, practitioners and non-practitioners of architecture all over India. By the means of these manuals, Baker sought to suggest that the task of building houses and shelters need not necessarily be the vocation or the prerogative of governmental housing boards and large construction houses; rather, one could build a house or a shelter by oneself (3.21).

However, and more significantly, Baker, in these manuals, pitted his building construction solutions against the ingrained assumptions of those who followed modern construction procedures. In his illustrations for the foundation of a home made out of mud in the manual *Mud*, for instance, Baker began by drawing what he called an “orthodox foundation.”¹⁵⁵ (Plate 3.22) In this type of foundation, a trench which is bigger than the basement wall is dug and lined with concrete. Upon this concrete base, stepped stone courses are consecutively added to serve as a foundation. The remaining empty sides of the trench are then filled up with the originally excavated soil. Baker demonstrated the inappropriateness of such a foundation by drawing a large cross next to

it. In the text accompanying this diagram, on the other hand, he explained the cross by deeming “the orthodox foundation” as

a wasteful and expensive and unnecessary exercise as far as ordinary house building is concerned... A trench only [with] the thickness of the basement wall should be dug so that no infilling is needed. This will prevent much soaking in of water, which in turn would seep upwards and weaken the mud wall above.¹⁵⁶

So as to elaborate his idea of a spare, essential trench around the basement foundation wall, Baker drew another diagram with a large check mark towards its right.

To better appreciate how and what Baker communicated through the means of both the aforementioned diagrams in his manual, it helps to read them as tapestries with layers of information woven into them. For instance, even as Baker wrote next to his diagrams in English, he was deeply mindful of the privileges enjoyed by those fluent in the language. Indeed at the very beginning of *Mud* he had suggested:

The fact that you are reading a book written in the English language means that probably you are educated and are living in “reasonable” circumstances in quarters of some sort. They may or may not be adequate and according to your tastes and wishes but there is a roof and the walls give you a certain amount of security and privacy. Now, without arguing about the usefulness and veracity of statistics, it is a fact that something between twenty and thirty million families in our country do not have anything like your living accommodation and these 20 odd million families do not have anything that can even remotely be called a home or a house or even a hut. So I wish that we had a collective national conscience about this and seriously all of us, not just ‘the Government’ should set about doing something about it so that this disgrace is removed.¹⁵⁷

At one level, Baker, in *Mud*, addressed a privileged audience for whom architecture, or roofs and walls, were not a necessity, but rather were an inheritance. For English

speakers, in essence, it was not so much a matter of finding a shelter, but, as Baker saw it, a question of ethically choosing to build the appropriate type of architecture. With millions of families in India without houses, it behooved those who were privileged, to understand the necessity-driven lives of those families, and to build frugally.

At a second level, Baker emphasized knowledge of building construction. To those who merely purchased or inherited buildings, Baker sought to bring awareness of how edifices were built. The drawings of foundations in *Mud*, for instance, demystified architecture. Buildings were not just to be lived in, but were also to be understood as the products of labor.

At a third level, however, Baker revealed how people labored without thinking. Builders were dogmatic. In this regard, Baker represented the practice of digging large trenches for foundations, a practice that is even today is pursued while building residences in India, as habitude. To build large trenches for foundations, as Baker saw it, was to be “orthodox.” People did not derive their understanding of the stability of foundations from any practical understanding of how rainwater seeped into walls. Rather, they did so because they unquestioningly inherited modern construction knowledge.

To appreciate this third level of meaning better, one could also take a look at another manual by Baker titled *Brickwork*. In this manual, Baker drew a human figure engaged in building a brick wall (Plate 3.23).¹⁵⁸ The reader is expected to identify with this toiling figure, who, by the force of habit, is about to break a brick into two. Once again, a large cross next to the figure suggests what he is doing is wrong. Only, this time one is also distracted by a larger “DON’T” accompanying the drawing. Baker, by

capitalizing the word, almost appeared to admonish the figure. “Wake up you thoughtless automaton” he almost seemed to say to the figure. Wake up and understand “how you are wasting bricks, time, money and energy cutting a whole brick into pieces.”

It is, then, at this third level, that Baker’s manuals have to be read, not so much merely as demonstrations of how buildings ought to be built, but rather also as commentaries on how those involved in the trade of construction were somnambulists. They adhered to the norms of building without so much as exploring the practicability of the norm. That Baker castigated those involved in the trade of construction may be immediately visible to those who read his manuals discerningly. However, so as to appreciate how he arrived at his criticism or why he chose to approach established norms of building construction as orthodoxy, one needs to delve further into his past. One needs to delve into his past as a satirist so as to understand why he was inclined towards representing the ways in which people’s dogmatism blinded them to both, reality and the constructive, architectural possibilities residing within it. Indeed it is from the vantages of this past that one must approach Baker’s recollection of his meeting with Gandhi. Baker’s lament about how he had been unaware of Gandhian wisdom in Pithoragarh was a measure of how, in his own humorous way, he saw a lack of awareness of reality as a self imposed prison that needed to be broken out of. And yet, it is also fair to say that Baker was himself so habituated to humor, that he could not conceive a world outside of it.

-
- ⁹⁴ Gandhi mythified what he saw as the purity of language into a reference to architecture.
- ⁹⁵ “Early Years” <http://lauriebaker.net/personal/life/early-years.html> 03/06/2011.
- ⁹⁶ Laurie Baker, “Thoughts on Religion” <http://lauriebaker.net/personal/values--beliefs/thoughts-on-religion.html> 03/06/2011.
- ⁹⁷ “Biography Summary” <http://lauriebaker.net/personal/life/biography-summary.html> 03/06/2011.
- ⁹⁸ Laurie Baker, *Rural Community Buildings* (Thrissur: COSTFORD, 1997) Back cover.
- ⁹⁹ “India and Gandhiji” <http://lauriebaker.net/personal/life/india-and-gandhiji.html> 03/06/2011.
- ¹⁰⁰ Baker’s own account of how he had stayed with some Quaker associates of Gandhi, his meeting with Gandhi, and the old man’s words to him concerning the ideal house in the ideal village can be found in “India and Gandhiji” <http://lauriebaker.net/personal/life/india-and-gandhiji.html> 03/06/2011.
- ¹⁰¹ “India and Gandhiji” <http://lauriebaker.net/personal/life/india-and-gandhiji.html> 03/06/2011.
- ¹⁰² “India and Gandhiji” <http://lauriebaker.net/personal/life/india-and-gandhiji.html> 03/06/2011.
- ¹⁰³ “Biography Summary” <http://lauriebaker.net/personal/life/biography-summary.html> 03/06/2011.
- ¹⁰⁴ Laurie Baker “The Himalyan Era: Pithoragarh” <http://lauriebaker.net/personal/life/the-himalayan-era-pithoragarh.html> 03/06/2011.
- ¹⁰⁵ One can find a general outline of Baker’s life in “Biography Summary” <http://lauriebaker.net/personal/life/biography-summary.html> 03/06/2011. However, the specific details of the Kerala years are found in Elizabeth Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker* (Kottayam: DC Books, 2007).
- ¹⁰⁶ Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 94.
- ¹⁰⁷ Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 94.
- ¹⁰⁸ Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 94.
- ¹⁰⁹ Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 94.
- ¹¹⁰ Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 7.
- ¹¹¹ According to the British Architecture historian Nigel Jones “During the Second World War, at the height of the Battle of Britain, the German Air Forces launched a massive attack on the city of Coventry in the industrial heartland of England – it was the night of Nov 14th, 1940. The Cathedral of St. Michael [Coventry Cathedral], which dated from the early medieval prosperity of the city, was in the path of the fire-bombs and could not be saved, but rather than feeling bitterness or hatred the people of Coventry wanted a “sign of faith, hope and trust for the future of the world,” and decided to rebuild... The porch [of the new Coventry Cathedral which was consecrated in 1962] connects the ruins of the old cathedral... to the new building... clad in red sandstone.” As observed in *Architecture of England, Scotland and Wales* (Westport: Greenwich Press, 2005) 82-83. I wish to also mention that I visited my sister in Coventry and observed how people in the town continue to sell postcards of the ruined shell of the Coventry cathedral. The bombing of the Coventry Cathedral is as much a part of the folklore of the city as the mythical Peeping Tom and Lady Godiva. When I read Elizabeth Baker’s reference to the “Coventry Cathedral effect,” in some ways, I was, perhaps purely by accident, rather well placed to appreciate how deeply that building resonated in his recollections as somebody who belonged originally to the West Midlands region in England.
- ¹¹² The earliest known reference to the Padmanabhapuram Palace in literature dates to 1601. Mary Beth Heston “The Nexus of Divine and Earthly Rule: Padmanābhapuram Palace and Traditions of Architecture and Kingship in South Asia” *Ars Orientalis* Vol. 26, (1996), 82.
- ¹¹³ Tilak Baker, interview by author, Trivandrum, India, 28th November, 2006.
- ¹¹⁴ The new church was completed in 1962 and Piper provided the Baptistry. Nicola Lambourne, *War damage in Western Europe: the destruction of historic monuments during the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001) 176.
- ¹¹⁵ Baker had a tendency to look back towards his own past as a religious one. In this regard, one can read an undated essay he wrote about his childhood in England in an essay titled “Thoughts on Religion.” In this essay, he mentioned he had been born into a family that was somewhat regular and strict about its ideas regarding the Christian religion. The family, he wrote, was devout to the point of going regularly to church service, offering daily prayers and keeping a strict time-table. He noted that he had liked and enjoyed going to church, music and singing. He also mentioned how, in his teens, he came in contact with Quakers

(members of the Society of Friends) and “was much attracted to their interpretation of Christian religious beliefs and principles.” He wrote about growing up and learning about other religions in other parts of the world. He was, for the most part, fairly interested in the idea of an afterlife and God, and mentioned how different people had different, historically sanctioned ways of communing with this God. In this sense, he saw himself as adhering to one of many different ways of communing with God. He wrote, “having been brought up in the Christian religion I tend to follow the teachings of my religious founder Jesus. I have no regrets about trying to live my life, according to Jesus teachings, but often, in China and in India, I have known people who have followed their founder of their particular religious branch from the written ‘scriptures’ of various religions, often the same truth or way is expressed by their founder, which tends to lead to the idea, that there is one God, the overall creator. Baker’s essay “Thoughts on Religion” can be accessed in Laurie Baker, “Thoughts on Religion” (“Essay”) <http://lauriebaker.net/personal/values--beliefs/thoughts-on-religion.html> (accessed December 27, 2010).

¹¹⁶ Gautam Bhatia, *Laurie Baker: Life, Work, Writings*, (New Delhi: Viking/HUDCO, 1991) 16.

¹¹⁷ I refer to three essays by Baker in this chapter. They are “Architectural Anarchy” in *Laurie Baker: Life, Work, Writings*, Gautam Bhatia (New Delhi: Viking/HUDCO, 1991), “Building Technology in Pithoragarh” from *Laurie Baker: Life, Work, Writings*, Gautam Bhatia in (New Delhi: Viking/HUDCO, 1991), “Low Cost Building for All,” *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 17 January 1974, reproduced *Laurie Baker: Life, Work, Writings*, Gautam Bhatia (New Delhi: Viking/HUDCO, 1991).

¹¹⁸ From “Building Technology in Pithoragarh” [1980] in Bhatia, 234.

¹¹⁹ “The Question of Taking Appropriate Technology to Pithoragarh,” *Science and Rural Development in Mountains*, eds. J.S. Singh, S.P. Singh and C. Shastri (Gyanodaya Prakashan: Naini Tal, 1980). Essay reproduced in Bhatia, 16.

¹²⁰ Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 128.

¹²¹ Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 133.

¹²² Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 151.

¹²³ Abdul Azeez and Mustiary Begum, “Gulf Migration, Remittances and Economic Impact” *Journal of Social Sciences*, 20(1) (2009) 55.

¹²⁴ Abdul Azeez and Mustiary Begum, 55.

¹²⁵ Abdul Azeez and Mustiary Begum, 55.

¹²⁶ Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 142.

¹²⁷ Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 152.

¹²⁸ From “Architectural Anarchy” as reproduced in Bhatia, 238

¹²⁹ To learn more about this boom and the events paralleling it, one may read the economist G. Gopikuttan’s essay “The Economics of Housing Boom in Kerala” in the Indian Administrative Service officer Dr. C.V. Ananda Bose’s edited volume *Housing & Society in Kerala*. “The Economics of Housing Boom in Kerala” in *Housing and Society in Kerala*, ed. C.V. Ananda Bose and K.T. August (Trivandrum: Nirmithi National Institute of Habitat Management, 1995) 22-53. Gopikuttan wrote at length about the many significant economic changes in the state that accompanied the inflow of Gulf remittances and the increased incomes on account of land reforms. Bose’s book, in general, is an exhaustive account of the history of building construction in Kerala. I would go so far as to say that reading it is essential for those interested in the history of co-operative housing, the evolution of housing policy and the environmental dimensions of housing in the state. While the book does not dwell on Baker’s work in general, many of the ideas that it occupies itself with have much to do with his work.

¹³⁰ As Tilak Baker noted, Baker was only too keen to draw inspiration from the climatological pragmatism of the builders of the Padmanabhapuram Palace. Tilak Baker, interview by author, Trivandrum, India, 28th November, 2006.

¹³¹ One can observe, parsing through some studies devoted to architecture in Kerala, how there has been a tendency among some scholars to think about that architecture as a corporate entity comprising diverse influences. In this regard, I will cite a very early essay: the renowned architectural historian, Stella Kramrisch’s 1953 study titled “Dravida and Kerala in the Art of Travancore.” In that essay, Kramrisch began by dividing up the architecture along the southwestern coast into a Dravida tradition and an indigenous Kerala school. In the context of the Dravida school, for instance, she compared 9th century

temples in Vizhinjam, a coastal Town in the Thiruvananthapuram District of Kerala state, with contemporary temples in South East India, particularly shrines with square plans attributed to the Chola dynasty in Kaleyapatti Tiruppur and Pudukkottai. Kramrisch, in essence, began by establishing some continuity between traditions of building in the South west and South East of India. Quite apart from this continuity, she also wrote about what she called an “indigenous Kerala school” of building which emphasized temples with circular plans. As Kramrisch went on to observe, the complexity of the builders of the Malabar, or the South Western coastline of India which includes Kerala, resided in their ability to incorporate “a Dravida temple within a [indigenous] Kerala temple.” Stella Kramrisch, “Drāvīda and Kerala: In the Art of Travancore,” *Artibus Asiae*, Supplementum, Vol. 11, (1953): 11. Rather than exploring the architecture of Kerala as a response to particular pragmatic circumstances at particular points in time, Kramrisch approached it as a steady amalgamation of regional and trans-regional formal idioms. Kramrisch’s approach, it appears, was consistent with her general emphasis on how certain regional archetypes are co-opted in other regions, or, for that matter, how forms germane to particular building materials such as stone are translated into other materials such as wood. The indigenous, it would appear from Kramrisch’s work, is best studied in translation. The architecture historian Mehrdad Shokoohy in his 1991 essay “Architecture of the Sultanate of Ma’bar in Madura, and Other Muslim Monuments in South India” not unlike Kramrisch, compared the plans of mosques on the South East coastline of India with those built predominantly with wood in the city of Calicut in Kerala. See Mehrdad Shokoohy, “Architecture of the Sultanate of Ma’bar in Madura, and Other Muslim Monuments in South India,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Apr., 1991) 77.

¹³² From “Architectural Anarchy” in Bhatia, 238-239.

¹³³ Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 152.

¹³⁴ If Baker wrote about the history of architecture in Kerala, he may have done so with mixed feelings. On the one hand he may have rued the passing of long established traditions of construction. On the other hand, he was more attuned to the history of architecture in Kerala because, in his capacity as a low cost architect out and about in the market on the lookout for inexpensive building material, he found antiquated doors, windows and roof-timbers at a bargain. Historical buildings, or at any rate, dismembered portions of historical buildings, were available to him at little expense. Baker, in essence, wrote about history not only because it had come to pass, but also because as a low cost architect, he was uniquely positioned to make something out of it.

¹³⁵ From “Baker on ‘Laurie Baker’ Architecture” [Undated] in Bhatia, 229.

¹³⁶ In this regard, I wish to emphasize my visit to Porbandar, the town along the western coastline in India in which Gandhi was born. Gandhi was born in a house which is now called Kirti Mandir in Porbandar. The pattern on the pierced screens on the outward faces of this house is, ironically, nearly identical to that of some of the pierced screens of the Padmanabhapuram Palace in southern Kerala. While I have not delved into the traditions of construction and decoration in either region in great detail, as an architecture historian, I cannot simply let such obvious congruity between the two pass without mentioning it. Kerala and the coastline of the Kathiawad peninsula, it would appear from the most basic architectural evidence, are connected. I do propose to study this correspondence in greater detail at a later date.

¹³⁷ From “Building Technology in Pithoragarh” Bhatia, 234.

¹³⁸ Bhatia, 16.

¹³⁹ John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1849) 31

¹⁴⁰ Ruskin, 31.

¹⁴¹ The proceedings of the Ruskin Society of Birmingham may be found in *Saint George*, which was founded in 1898, as the journal of the society. I have only been able to read through Volume IV of this journal. Ruskin Society of Birmingham, *Saint George Volume IV*, ed. John Howard Whitehouse (London: George Allen, 1901). John Howard Whitehouse, the editor of *Saint George* is mentioned in the Quaker *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* in an article titled “Friends and Current Literature.” In that article it is mentioned that “J. Howard Whitehouse, a London Friend, has edited a collection of Centenary addresses on Ruskin, delivered 8th February, 1919.” *The Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, ed. Norman Penny Vol XVII (London: Swarthmore Press, 1920) 33.

¹⁴² Moreover, it helps to note that the Ruskin Society of Birmingham was established by John Howard Whitehouse (1873–1955), who was a Quaker. It would appear, then, that Ruskin’s ideas concerning architectural honesty, deceit and integrity, were not merely passively inherited by those studying architecture in Birmingham in the early part of the twentieth century. Rather, Ruskin’s ideas were actively filtered through a Quaker lens from the very beginning in Birmingham. In a roundabout way, then, one could say that even if the young Baker merely inherited his notion of architectural honesty from Ruskin, he did so in a Quaker, educational environment that was receptive that notion.

¹⁴³ Laurie Baker’s “Low Cost Building for All,” *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 17 January 1974, reproduced in Bhatia, 7.

¹⁴⁴ From “Building Technology in Pithoragarh” reproduced in Bhatia, 234.

¹⁴⁵ Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 148.

¹⁴⁶ J. W. Bond, Arnold Wright, *Southern India: its history, people, commerce, and industrial resources* (Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2004) 524.

¹⁴⁷ Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 149.

¹⁴⁸ So far as I know, a comprehensive history of the Mangalore roof tile has not been written [Yet].

¹⁴⁹ Laurie Baker, “The Question of Taking Appropriate Building Technology to Pithoragarh,” *Science and Rural Development in Mountains*, eds. J.S. Singh, S.P. Singh and C. Shastri (Gyanodaya Prakashan: Naini Tal, 1980). Essay was Reproduced in Bhatia, 16. There is some confusion regarding this essay in which Baker contradicted himself. Bhatia refers to the names of the two different essays in which Baker remembered his time in Pithoragarh differently, in a similar manner. Further verification is required to ascertain how the two essays ended up having such similar names.

¹⁵⁰ “Laurie Meets Gandhiji.” in Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 90.

¹⁵¹ As Gandhi spoke with Baker, he may not have necessarily known that Baker had already visited India and stayed in Calcutta in 1941 as he traveled with British volunteers to tend to those who had been wounded by the Japanese bombing inland China. Moreover, Baker had also stayed for a few weeks at a mission hospital in Shillong in the north-east of India as he recovered from an attack of Malaria which he contracted in the jungles while driving supplies on the Burma Road from Rangoon to Kutsing in the Yunan province in southern China. Regardless of whether Gandhi may or may not have been made aware of Baker’s mild familiarity with India, as he spoke with him, he emphasized how being situated in India’s cities was a deficient way of experiencing India.

¹⁵² Letter from Laurie to his Parents from a Hospital in Rodwell Road, Weymouth, Dorset, dated 2 or 3.12. 1940. As reproduced in Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 27.

¹⁵³ Letter from Laurie to his Parents from Hospital in Rodwell Road, Weymouth, Dorset, dated 14. 12. 1940. As reproduced in Baker, *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 29

¹⁵⁴ From the beginning of “In the Burmese Jungle” as narrated by Laurie Baker to Elizabeth Baker and reproduced by her in *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*, 43, 44.

¹⁵⁵ Laurie Baker. *Mud*. (Trivandrum: COSTFORD, 1985) 20.

¹⁵⁶ Baker, *Mud*, 19.

¹⁵⁷ Baker, *Mud*, 1.

¹⁵⁸ Laurie Baker. *Brickwork*. (Trivandrum: COSTFORD, 1988) 6.

Chapter 4

The Signification of Innovation: The case of the Wardha Whole Tumbler roofs.

It is widely reported that Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) once asked his disciple, the social worker Mira Behn (1892-1982), to spend no more than the frugal sum of one hundred Indian rupees in building him a house in the Wardha district in central India.¹⁵⁹ As it turned out, Mira Behn did make a house for Gandhi in 1936. She built the walls of this house with mud, and the roof of the house out of bamboo and halves of *kavelus*, or the split halves of tapering, clay tumblers shaped on a potter's wheel (Plate 4.1, 4.2). The halves of *Kavelus*, as the masons told me in Wardha, are traditionally used to build roofs for homes. They are laid in interlocking fashion upon a bed of grass, which, for its part, is held up by the timber frame of the roof of the house. Since Mira Behn did not spend more than one hundred Indian rupees in building the house for Gandhi, it may be assumed that halves of *kavelus* were abundantly available and fairly inexpensive in the Wardha district in the early nineteen thirties.¹⁶⁰

Some fifty years after the building of Adi Niwas, which is the present-day name of the house that Mira Behn built, Devendra Bhai (1925-1999), a Gandhian village worker began, not unlike Mira Behn, to build inexpensive roofs with *Kavelus* in the Wardha district. However, unlike Mira Behn, Devendra Bhai did not use the halves of *Kavelus*. Rather, he built his roofs out of unsplit, whole *Kavelus*. Devendra Bhai had established the Center of Science for Villages (CSV) in Wardha in 1976. With the help of the engineers at this center, he had figured out how to use the unsplit, whole-Kavelu as

both, the structural support for the roof, and the filler material for roofing (Plate 4.3, 4.4).¹⁶¹ In what was one of the more daring innovations in the history of Indian architecture, Devendra Bhai, simply wedged whole *Kavelus* concentrically into each other, and began building stable vaults of many different shapes and sizes. Nothing, as it turned out, could be closer to the materiality of *Adi Niwas*, and yet so distant from its appearance as Devendra Bhai's vaults.

In 2007, when I made my first trip to the building laboratory Devendra Bhai had set up in the eighties at Kumarappapuram in Wardha, I was told by masons how the vaults he designed can very well function as highly cost-effective, structurally stable homes. For so long as clay is a material that remains easily available in and around Wardha, building such arched tumbler-roofs cannot but be a relatively inexpensive and expedient proposition for the district's home-builders. Furthermore, the effectiveness of clay as an insulation material also enables those working and living below such roofs to derive thermal benefits. As the masons at Kumarappapuram told me, these roofs are similar to the bamboo-framed, half tumbler roofs or the traditional halved *Kavelu* roofs. The spaces below these roofs are cool in the summer and warm in winter.

Quite apart from their structural and thermal value, what is also notable about those CSV roofs is the manner in which they reveal indoor space as a documentary on the efforts that go into making it. The very visibility of the tumblers which constitute those roofs, forces those sheltering under them to mull on the work done by the potter's hand. In fact, one wonders if it is precisely the inordinate degree to which an awareness of the potter's labor impinges upon any visual encounter with those roofs, which makes people from Wardha fear being under them.

For instance, in the village of Waaghdara, some forty miles from Kumarappapuram, on a low escarpment in the dry, brambly reaches of the Satpura mountain range, the Center for Science and Villages erected many mud houses with those tumbler roofs in an experimental, construction campaign some twelve years ago (plate 4.5). And while every October, the villagers of Waaghdara prepare for the festival of Diwali by beautifying and painting the interior walls of their houses in vivid, bright colors, they have never attempted to paint the CSV tumbler roofs over their heads (Plate 4.6, 4.7). The villagers use wood-stoves to cook their food, and the underbellies of the roofs are pitch-black from the smoke of those stoves (Plate 6). Unlike the walls within the households of Wagdara, which are annually patched-up and painted by the residents in shades of Sagar (sea) and Akash (sky), the roofs which sit upon those very walls have clearly remained untouched and untended for a long time (plate 4.8).

I asked Subhash Shyam Raoji Ghudewara, the spokesperson of the *Kollam Samaj* (the village community of Waaghdara wishes to be addressed collectively by their caste name: *Kollam Samaj*), why this was the case?¹⁶² Shyam Raoji, in his response, spoke about reinforced concrete roof slabs in nearby cities.¹⁶³ According to him, ever since the villagers have started working as day-laborers under the reinforced concrete roof-slabs of the households of the cities of Wardha and Nagpur, they have developed some fairly clear-cut ideas on what a structurally stable, substantial home ought to be. Shayam Raoji remarked rather wistfully that:

The curved CSV roofs under which we now live are by no means like those expensive, brand-new, flat, concrete roof-slabs under which city-people live. These roofs remind us of the very unstable, thatched hut-roofs they replaced some twelve years ago. In fact, the grass roofs which you see by our houses are what those thatched huts used to look like (Plate 4.9). Back in those days, we

used to rebuild our roofs out of straw all the time. For those curved, weak roofs would last only a year. While these curved roofs built by CSV have not fallen down, I would still say they are weak. We don't think it will be good to paint them. We are afraid to touch them because we do not know how to touch them.¹⁶⁴

Shyam Rao Ji's ambivalence over the stability of the CSV's vaulted roofs is a combination of his yearning to possess what rich home-owners in the cities of Wardha and Nagpur possess, and his repugnance towards anything that reminds him of those difficult days spent living under unstable, impermanent, locally made roofs of straw. Putting it differently, on some occasion over the past twelve years, the *Kollam Samaj's* recollections of the instability of the hand-made straw roofs that the CSV roofs had replaced, and the *Kollam Samaj's* knowledge of a terracota tumbler's journey from a shapeless mud-pile to the CSV roof, converged.

It seems, then, in the baldest of Marxist terms, that the villagers of Waagdhara are indifferent towards the CSV roofs primarily because they do not possess any commodity value. After all, the terracota tumblers are made, like a straw roof, out of locally available material such as clay. Furthermore, those roofs are made, like most straw roofs in the region, through the means of monetarily non-remunerable, local labor or labor Shyam Rao Ji can virtually see himself performing on a potter's wheel.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, it would appear that for those laboring without the promise of monetary reward, there is no fundamental difference between straw as a roofing material and clay as a roofing material. Which leads one to wonder if those durable and permanent terracota CSV vaults made of whole *Kavelu* tumblers fail in the eyes of the *Kollam Samaj*, because they hearken back to the traditional, half *Kavelu* roof house. In other words, does the CSV roof fail in the eyes of the members of Kollam Samaj precisely because of their

familiarity with the monetary-value-free materiality of the local architectural norm, of which the house of Mahatma Gandhi, at the not so distant Sevagram Ashram, is the titular representative?

On the one hand, one wonders if it is the familiar, local nature of the CSV vaults that makes them irrelevant and even dangerous in the eyes of an upwardly aspiring *Kollam* community. On the other hand, one also has to account for how the local nature of those vaults visibly endears them to an Indian metropolitan mindset as it courts a progressive, scientific version of Gandhian village traditionalism. After all, on a barren, heat-blackened hill abutting the National Institute of Rural Development in the high-tech urban center of Hyderabad, some four hundred odd kilometers from Wagdara, the same whole terracota-tumbler-vaulted-roof house is under display as one of fourteen different typologies of progressive, rural buildings from all over India. Located at a stone's throw from a giant statue of a seated Gandhi at the National Institute of Rural Development, those fourteen different rural houses built to specification promote building locally. According to Surekha Sule, a freelance journalist and an environmentalist from Mumbai, those houses highlight "local-material-based traditional technologies in which building components can be manufactured by the rural people using local available material and through skill upgradation."¹⁶⁶ (Plate 4.10, 4.11)

From a purely geological and ecological perspective, that exhibition on "local-material-based traditional technologies," not far from the urban sprawl of Hyderabad, showcases considerable diversity. Besides the CSV terracota-tumbler-vaulted-roof house from Wardha, at the exhibition, one can also see and walk through a wattle and daub-walling house from Sikkim, a laterite stone house from the west coast and a quartzite-

stone masonry house from the Himalayas. Each of those citations from a rural India serve to demonstrate, not unlike the CSV house, the absence of a distinction between what is, on the one hand, a freely available, abundant local, natural, physical world, and what is on the other hand, the human habitat or the artifice that is architecture. In a very palpable way, those houses constitute consummate physical grafts from the particular, geological and ecological worlds within which they were originally built. In virtually every one of those houses, one observes, in essence, how builders curbed or did away, to a great extent, with their reliance upon such alien, dislocated materials as cement, sand, pebbles and steel which can be purchased in the urban marketplace. In this sense, the material out of which those houses have been built, are not at all unlike "air" and "virgin meadows," or what Karl Marx identified in his discussions on commodity culture, as free, locally available things which exist in one's immediate environment, or things without commodity value.¹⁶⁷

Which begs the question, why must such local, rural, innovative architecture, be so commemorated in a city that is increasingly becoming one of the great, Indian national hubs of commodity value? Why must monetarily non-remunerative, local labor and local, freely available material, enjoy such visibility within the nationalist narrative of an emergent urban India. To what extent are terms such as local and regional intertwined with a pan-regional, pan-local pact of Gandhian development in India? What cherished Gandhian ideal, after all, is met in viewing the vernacular, the local or the traditional in such flagrant geographical dislocation?

In keeping with these somewhat simple questions, which came to my mind after I had travelled the distance of four hundred kilometers between Wagdhara in Wardha and

an urban, cosmopolitan Hyderabad, I explored literature on Gandhi and Indian nationalism. Is there a way of writing about the local or the regional in an Indian nationalist context in the present? In what ways did Gandhi contribute to a discourse of nationalism from a regionalist perspective? To what degree can one understand Gandhi's discourse concerning regionalism and localism through an examination of his efforts at promoting Khadi or cloth produced locally out of yarn spun on the Charkha or the spinning wheel? How does the CSV roof respond to this discourse? Quite apart from answering these questions about how the CSV roofs responds to a discourse on nationalism, one also have to account for how Devendra Bhai was originally inspired by a foreigner, the Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy, to build the whole-terracota-tumbler roofs.

In the village of New Gurna in Egypt, in the nineteen forties, Fathy had taken help from the masons in the region of Nubia in the southern part of the country to build catenary vaults with mud bricks (Plate 4.13). The word catenary, in latin, refers to a linked chain. Catenary vaults, in this sense, are architectural forms achieved by building along points on an inverted representation of a chain suspended from two points. Devendra Bhai and the staff at CSV had seen images of Fathy's Nubian Catenary vaults and had interpreted them in their own way. Going past my own initial interest in exploring the CSV roofs from an Indian nationalist perspective, I began to wonder what Devendra Bhai found attractive in Fathy's Nubian vault? Moreover, are the CSV vaults genuinely indigenous? Or do they belong to trans-national trends in design and architectural thinking in the seventies? (Plate 4.14)

In this chapter, then, I begin by addressing the CSV vaults from a nationalist perspective. I explore Gandhi's ideas concerning regionalism from an Indian nationalist standpoint so as to think about what the CSV roof from Wardha could mean in the context of a hi-tech Hyderabad? Subsequently, I approach the history of architectural and scientific experimentation in and around Wardha itself. How does one relate the hut Mira Behn built for herself in 1936, the social constructivism of the Gandhian economist Joseph Cornelius Kumarappa in and around Wardha, Fathy's work in Egypt and the CSV's experimental roof? And finally, and most significantly, I explore why the villagers of Wagdara are averse to architectural experimentation.

Khadi, Regionalism, Nationalism and the CSV Roof.

The local and the traditional, in a Gandhian sense, are primarily political frames of reference that emerged in deep dialectical tension with British capitalism. One learns of this from anthropologists and historians who write about the production and the usage of Khadi or cloth produced locally out of yarn spun on the Charkha or the spinning wheel. For instance, in his famous essay from 1986 titled "The Origins of Swadeshi (home industry): cloth and Indian society, 1700-1930," the historian C. A. Bayly wrote about Gandhi's moral appropriation of Khadi. Gandhi conspicuously embraced Khadi, as opposed to what he somewhat mischievously lauded as the "latest finery on Regent Street," as a moral and religious duty towards becoming self-sufficient and free from British industrial rule.¹⁶⁸ As Bayly observes, locally produced "cloth stood alongside the symbols of mother cow and freely prepared salt at the heart of the national movement of the 1920's and 30's."¹⁶⁹ In a more recent essay titled "Visually Mapping the Nation,"

Lisa Trivedi similarly suggested how Khadi or home-spun cloth “was portrayed as a material artifact of the nation.”¹⁷⁰ “As Swadeshi consumers clothed themselves in homespun and went about their daily lives, they represented their experience of a new community that challenged the political boundaries of both traditional Indian society and the British colonial regime.”¹⁷¹ “Clothing and other consumer goods of the Swadeshi movement,” Trivedi summarized, “linked a distinct material culture of nationalism to what were seen as the nation’s basic values.”¹⁷²

What bears considerable emphasis in both Bayly's and Trivedi's discussions on Khadi, is the manner in which Gandhi imbued Khadi with a rich diversity of pre-modern, socio-cultural associations. He made the processes of Khadi’s production and its consumption into opportune sites for a populist retelling of diverse religious and magical narratives. For instance, in the context of weaving, the Gandhian Charkha (on which Khadi is spun), according to Bayly, “hearkened back to anthropomorphic ideas common among spinners and weavers, who held the wheel to be an actual member of the family.”¹⁷³ Furthermore, Bayly adds that the symbolic status of women as a productive labor force, as affirmed by the mythical lawgiver Manu, was to be re-invigorated by providing them with a Gandhian spinning wheel.¹⁷⁴ In her discussion on such Khadi propaganda posters as “Gandhi and woman spinning India” Trivedi substantiates Bayly's observations (Plate 4.12). Through an analysis of the image of the Khadi spinning Bharatmata or “Mother India” in that famous poster, Trivedi observed “how only women's labor, as orchestrated according to Gandhian principles,” was promoted as a means to produce “India as a bounded, sovereign state.”¹⁷⁵

In addition to such discourses which emphasized the relevance of Khadi within the arena of production, a concomitant set of discourses promoting that material's cause in the arena of consumption also gained currency. As Bayly observes, at the level of consumption, purchasing Khadi amounted to abstaining from machine-made goods produced under British governmental rule. The government, according to Bayly, after all had "forfeited its right to rule by failing to acknowledge the basic duty of the raja -- to succour its clients and people through the encouragement of their arts and the consumption of their goods."¹⁷⁶

In bringing to the fore a number of mythico-moral exigencies that came to be to be associated with the making and the use of Khadi, then, historians and anthropologists clearly veer in the direction of revealing that fabric as being outside the domain of a mainstream, British capitalist consumer culture. Gandhi, in essence, promoted Khadi in the pre-independence period in India, so as to suggest that production and consumption in India were inalienable acts. By inalienability, I am referring here to the degree to which laboring and consuming could be presented as acts unavailable for abstract evaluation and exploitation in the British, capitalist marketplace. One labored and produced yarn on the Charkha or spinning wheel by oneself and for one's own use, out of a sense of obligation towards any of the many myths and moral postulates which distinguished and protected the uniqueness of one's sense of self or selfhood from alien rule. People produced and wore Khadi, as Bayly and Trivedi suggest, primarily because of its symbolic value.

Building on Bayly's and Trivedi's arguments, then, one could say that the emergence of Gandhian Khadi as "a material artifact of the nation," indexed the rise of

the local and the traditional as precisely those political discourses concerning the resistance of places, labors, appetites and ecologies towards the hegemony of British capitalism. It was Gandhi's espousal of Khadi, one could argue, which played a significant part in the promotion of "the local" as a political discourse concerning the inalienability of places, cultures, labors, appetites and ecologies from their own purported uniqueness. Indeed, early to mid-twentieth century Indian nationalism, when viewed strictly from within the perspective of a Gandhian Khadi-based localism, can be defined as a discourse against homogenization. It is in such a sense, then, that a Gandhian Khadi-based localism belongs to the epoch of a political vision. Putting it differently, in so far as resorting to Gandhian Khadi-based localism was a way of expressing the uniqueness and the imperviousness of places to change, one could see it as a means towards a political end, which was, a free, sovereign India.

As a federation of many diverse cultures, can a post-colonial Indian nation state, then, be seen as a variation upon the theme of such a Gandhian political definition of the local which was the basic building block for an expansive Indian national consciousness in the pre-independence period? At the face of it, the presence of the Wardha tumbler roof home and the thirteen homes in Hyderabad appear to be late symptoms of precisely a pre-independence Indian nationalist resistance against the reduction of diverse localisms into a homogenous, unitarian culture. Be it in the context of the mud house from Wardha, or the wattle and daub one from Sikkim, or, for that matter, the one made out of laterite stone from the west coast, I could not but help ask myself what message the organizers of the Exhibition at NIRD had wished to send to visitors. Surely the organizers did not expect anybody in Hyderabad to build houses with Wardha mud, wattle and daub from

Sikkim, or laterite stone from the west coast? Far from simply demonstrating how houses ought to be built in general, then, one gets the distinct impression that the organizers of the exhibition catered to an Indian cosmopolitan expectation. The organizers catered to an unspoken demand for evidence of how somewhere in India, people still relied almost exclusively upon local geologies and ecologies, while building.

One could, however, ignore the organizers of the exhibition at NIRD, and simply argue that the CSV roof is only barely local to Wardha. After all, Devendra Bhai and the engineers at CSV had been inspired in the late nineteen seventies by the architect Hassan Fathy's Nubian vaults, to design their roof out of whole Kavelus. The CSV vaults, in this sense, are the products of a composite, trans-national, architectural culture, and as such, there can hardly be anything wrong with showcasing them in a location that is at a great distance from Wardha.

And yet, is important to qualify the internationalism of the CSV roofs. While Devendra Bhai and the staff at CSV may have been influenced by Fathy, their receptivity towards, if not their interpretation of Fathy's work, has to be situated in the context of a longer history of experimentation with materials in and around Wardha itself. In the following section, then, I will explore the Gandhian history of CSV and its experiments, and how Devendra Bhai may have become receptive to Fathy's work.

Back to Wardha

In 1948, a group of intellectuals living in Los Angeles began a journal called MANAS to make Americans more aware of Buddhist and Indian philosophical traditions.¹⁷⁷ The group sought to address philosophy in an international context. They were particularly interested in what they called "Eastern thought."¹⁷⁸ They chose Manas,

a Sanskrit word which means man or the thinker, as a name for their Journal.¹⁷⁹ For the next forty-one years, they published many short essays that discussed the human condition in every eight-page weekly issue of MANAS.¹⁸⁰ That the economist, E.F. Schumacher's classic essay "Buddhist Economics" was first published in MANAS, in the United States in 1969, was but to be expected, given the deep interest of its editors took in philosophical Buddhism.¹⁸¹ Similarly, one can perfectly well understand why, in June 1983, the editors of MANAS published a brief description of the building experiments the staff at CSV, Wardha in India, conducted with the help of drawings of the Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy's Nubian Arch roof.¹⁸² An American journal with an interest in broader, trans-national currents of idealism and pragmatism, could not but help appreciate similar attempts made by people in a faraway land, at embracing ideas from a world foreign to themselves. Indeed the editors of MANAS may have derived special pleasure in writing about how "two pages of cartoon diagrams (with text)" of Fathy's architectural efforts in Egypt had been provided to the staff of the CSV and that after testing the plans and instructions, the staff had announced their work was "very successful."¹⁸³ It is perhaps safe to assume that the whole tumbler Kavelu roof was the "very successful" work which the editors of MANAS wrote about.

What, I ask in this section of the chapter, made Devendra Bhai and the staff at Wardha receptive to Fathy's ideas? Did Devendra Bhai begin to study the applicability of the ideas of a foreign architect because he was, like the editors of MANAS, interested in looking beyond the traditions of thinking within his own local world? Indeed, to build like Fathy may have even been the appropriate thing to do at the time given how influential he was at the time. Or conversely, did Devendra Bhai find Fathy's

architectural ideas intensely familiar as a Gandhian? Moreover, what kind of a scientific sensibility allowed for such architectural experimentation in Wardha in the first place? The following, then, is the story of Gandhian architectural and scientific experiments in and around Wardha. I pieced this account together from, among other sources, the booklets on Devendra Bhai's life that his daughter, Vibha Gupta, provided me in 2006. In my account, I briefly examine Gandhi's involvement in Wardha and the nearby village of Segaon in the nineteen thirties, and subsequently explore how such individuals as the noted Gandhian economist Joseph Cornelius Kumarrappa and Devendra Bhai evolved as thinkers and people of science. Towards the end of this section, I will compare the CSV roof and Fathy's Nubian vault and provide some suggestions concerning the similarities between the two.

Devendra Kumar Gupta, or Devendra Bhai as he was popularly known, was born in 1925 in Uttar Pradesh.¹⁸⁴ He trained as an oil technologist from the Harcourt Butler Institute in Kanpur.¹⁸⁵ He joined the Gandhian movement in 1946 and travelled to Wardha to meet with Kumarappa, a distinguished Gandhian who worked on finding alternative ways of providing livelihood to villagers in India.¹⁸⁶ Kumarappa, for his part, had been involved with village-upliftment work in Wardha for some time. Prior to staying in Wardha, he had worked as an accountant in London and had also received a Ph.D. at Columbia University in the United States in 1928 on the topic "The Contribution of Public Finance to the Present Economic State of India."¹⁸⁷ Upon returning to India in 1929, he met with Gandhi and was so deeply moved, that he took upon himself the difficult task of elaborating economic theories based on Gandhism. He attempted, as the historian Benjamin Zachariah notes in "Uses of Scientific Argument: The Case of

‘Development’ in India, c 1930-1950,” “to establish the practicability of the village based economy on the basis of the scientific wisdom of the principles of economics on which it rested.”¹⁸⁸

That Kumarappa sought practical scientific applications for Gandhi’s ideas, was not altogether surprising. After all, Kumarappa belonged to a generation of Indian thinkers who, beginning in 1918, sought to go beyond utopianism. The Montague-Chelmsford constitutional reforms had been introduced in 1918. Edwin Montague, the then Secretary of State in India, and Lord Chelmsford, the then Viceroy of India, had emphasized “the devolution of authority to provincial governments and the introduction of partial responsibility to the provinces.”¹⁸⁹ While such pronouncements fell far short of the expectations of Indian nationalists seeking greater freedom from the British Empire in 1918, they were, nevertheless, a tacit admission by the Empire of its own weakening. Indeed, as Benjamin Zachariah observes, the Montague-Chelmsford reforms marked the beginning of a late colonial state. “The lateness of the colonial state begins from the point at which it declares its own impending demise, rhetorically, in the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms document.”¹⁹⁰ To a great degree, then, the Indian revolutionaries’ utopian visions of a free nation, assumed, after the Montague-Chelmsford reforms, a certain urgency or what Zachariah calls “emotive significance.”¹⁹¹ The desire to understand how a nationalist utopianism could be translated, practically, into a coherent, realizable developmental enterprise, now became a part of the political rhetoric of Indian anti-colonialists.

Kumarappa’s attempts at translating Gandhi’s idealism into a practical economic model of development, in this limited sense, belonged to the era of late colonialism. If

Kumarappa sought practical, developmental applications of Gandhism in 1929, it was because he belonged to a generation of revolutionaries who desecrated the prospect of developing a post-colonial, Indian society on the horizon. He set upon himself the task of finding a way of implementing Gandhi's village utopianism because he believed that the time to usher in such a utopia was dawning. He left his residence in metropolitan Mumbai and settled down in the small town of Wardha where he began experimenting with village technologies in his capacity as the executive director of the newly constituted All India Village Industries Association (AIVIA, established 1934).¹⁹²

Here it helps to note that Gandhi founded the AIVIA so as to examine the circumstances in which villagers lived, the condition of their handicrafts, and "to revive such village arts and crafts as may be revived."¹⁹³ Over and above this mandate, however, the members of the AIVIA also sought to bring greater awareness of villages in India, to its city dwellers. For the functionaries of the AIVIA, ushering in a village utopia did not just amount to improving the economic conditions and the circumstances of villagers; there was also a pressing, preliminary need to make India's urban population more knowledgeable about what life was like in India's villages.¹⁹⁴ In this regard, then, the AIVIA, under Kumarappa's jurisdiction, organized a rural exhibition in the north Indian city of Lucknow in March 1936, for the meeting of the Indian National Congress. People in Lucknow could now, conveniently, see a few aspects of village life in India. The exhibition comprised some sixty exhibits which conformed to the following categories:

Agricultural occupations (manures and cattle, dairying and milk products, poultry farming, bee-keeping, tanning and carcass disposal, oil presses, molasses and sugar-making, flour-grinding, rice-husking, paper-making, sericulture and lacquer extraction); textiles (with regional techniques in regard to cotton [carding, spinning, weaving], wool and silk); other crafts including coir, various kinds of wood and of stone, ivory, cutlery,

spectacles, filigree and enamel work, bangles, embroidery, toys, brushes, slate, leather and horn, brass, clay, leather... etc.); and fine arts.¹⁹⁵

Evidently, the emphasis in the exhibition was on the practical articles of village life. Indeed crafts and fine-arts were seen as a part of a larger display showcasing everyday agronomy in villages. If, in previous years, Gandhi had talked at length to city dwellers in India about how the real India resided in her villages, now, in 1936, the AIVIA, under the guidance of Kumarappa, attempted to show that reality as a principally agrarian one.

Gandhi's own remarks, in the context of the exhibition, are particularly revealing. In his speech in Lucknow on March 28th, he talked at length about how the exhibition brought out "concretely for the first time the conception of a true rural exhibition" he had nursed within him for several years.¹⁹⁶ He spoke passionately about how "India is to be found not in its few cities but in its 700,000 villages," and how Congressmen "who are intent on freedom" will win it only if "they will establish a living bond between towns and villages."¹⁹⁷ He piously hoped, in this sense, that the country's urban, political elite would flock to the exhibition and study its various demonstrations.¹⁹⁸

With regards to the exhibits that were showcased, Gandhi could barely conceal his own wonderment over how well-crafted they were. In a second speech at the exhibition in Lucknow, on April 12th, he observed:

If you move about this exhibition with my eyes and ears, you will spontaneously exclaim, 'Hurrah! what a splendid exhibition!'... Do you know Orissa and its skeletons? Well, from that hungerstricken, impoverished land of skeletons have come men who have wrought miracles in bone and horn and silver. Go and see these things not only ready-made but in the making, and see how the soul of man even in an impoverished body can breathe life into lifeless horns and metal. A poor potter has also worked miracles out of clay. I have bought from the stall a nice little ink pot to hold my ink. I thought its price would be six or seven annas, but I was surprised to learn that it was just one pice. Well, when

you look at it you will no doubt wonder if it had not come from Germany or Japan. But the article is village-made. If this is not a wonder, what is? Things which I thought would be worth several annas are worth only a copper or a couple of coppers and yet they are delicate little pieces of art.¹⁹⁹

Gandhi explained how the people in Orissa, in spite of their impoverishment had produced articles of surpassing beauty. Similarly, he deemed the inkpot, made by villagers, as a wonder. How were people living in such difficult economic circumstances, able to produce such “delicate little pieces of art,” Gandhi seemed to ask his audience at the exhibition.

It would appear, then, that Gandhi not only sought to highlight the economic circumstances of the villagers, he also attempted to promote what he believed was their latent potential to lift themselves out of those very circumstances. He expected his audience to not only be sympathetic towards the villagers and to contribute monetarily towards their welfare, he also simultaneously expected them to observe how villagers were capable of improving their lot by themselves, by the means of their own industry.

The AIVIA exhibition, then, was a delicate balancing act. On the one hand, the organizers of the exhibition, under the helm of Gandhi and Kumarappa, sought patronage for the work of impoverished villagers. As Gandhi observed in his speech, “The price you pay here will not go to fill the pockets of any rich commission-agent. It will directly reach the purse of the poor villager to whom all of us are indebted.”²⁰⁰ On the other hand, Gandhi was also at pains to express how patronizing the villagers was not an act of charity. The villagers were demonstrably the possessors of skill and talent, and were capable of industry and commerce by themselves. In spite of their own circumstances, the villagers had immense potential, and it behooved city dwellers to respect them as equals.

What begs emphasis, then, is how Gandhi went from elaborating the potential of villagers at the exhibition in Lucknow in March and April that year, to exploring, in July, in the context of Mira Behn's hut in Segaon, the potential of material found within the village. Gandhi's interest in the potential in material itself is certainly not immediately evident in his description, at the time, of Mira Behn's hut. He had, at the time, somewhat emphatically mentioned how Mira Behn had made a chula or stove out of her own hands and that nobody could beat her in that art.²⁰¹ Moreover, he had also expressed his delight over how she had molded in relief palm and peacocks over the windows, out of mud, by herself.²⁰² It would appear, then, that Gandhi was talking about Mira Behn, the way he had been talking about the villagers who "worked miracles out of clay" and also made inkpots at the AIVIA exhibition in Lucknow.²⁰³ Indeed when Gandhi mentioned how "no one from amongst us can claim to have the real rural-mindedness that she has," he appeared to refer to her ability to be as creative as villagers at the AIVIA exhibition earlier that year.²⁰⁴

And yet, one cannot completely discount how Gandhi had emphasized the nature of the material that Mira Behn had used to create the objects of everyday use that comprised her hut. Be it her bathroom, her latrine, her mantle-piece, or her cooking utensils: Gandhi had explicitly mentioned how each of these objects of everyday use had been fashioned by Mira Behn out of waste material or locally available material.²⁰⁵ Indeed, Gandhi emphasized both, the objects of everyday use themselves, and what these were prior to their being made into objects of everyday use. While building her bathroom, for instance, Mira Behn had, according to Gandhi, "utilized every stone that the blasting of the underground rock in her well, made available to her."²⁰⁶ Similarly, the latrine was

“no commode or wooden plank or any brickwork;” rather, it was “just two beautiful stones, half buried in the ground, and with two halves of kerosene tins between the stones just two beautiful stones.”²⁰⁷ Moreover, the inside of the hut was made of mud and split bamboo and wattle of palm-branches.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, the mantelpiece was made of bamboo and the utensils were earthen.²⁰⁹ One supposes, then, that Gandhi promoted Mira Behn’s hut as a measure of her “real-ruralmindedness” because he understood real-ruralmindedness as the ability to discern and to bring to the surface hitherto unknown use values within everyday waste material and locally available material.²¹⁰

To better understand how the Gandhi of the AIVIA exhibition in Lucknow who acknowledged the potential of villagers to be artistic, became the Gandhi of Segaoon who celebrated the potential residing within the everyday waste and locally available material in the villages, it does help to take into account his discourse of self-discipline at the time. As I had mentioned in the second chapter of the dissertation, as early as October 1935, Gandhi had suggested to a village worker how “it is impossible to get under the skin of the villagers until one lives in their midst all the twenty-four hours for an unbroken period.”²¹¹ He had also mentioned how the “best discipline” for a village worker was “to settle down quietly and work away uninterruptedly for a year.”²¹² In this sense, it would appear that Gandhi settled in Segaoon in June 1936, in the beginning of the rainy season, with the intention to practice what he had preached the previous year.

If he approached and studied Mira Behn’s hut in July, then, one would think that he did so through the dreariness of the rain, if not the dreariness of his own self-imposed isolation within Segaoon. Indeed one would think that he expressed joy over how that hut had been built because he saw it as heartening evidence of how, for a village worker, self-

imposed isolation from the world outside the village could amount to something valuable. While the means at one's disposal, as a village worker, may have been limited within a village, there was, evidently, no reason to limit what one could do with those means. Mira Behn had amply demonstrated how one could discover an almost endless number of ways of using a limited palette of local materials. Gandhi, one supposes, was happy with Mira Behn because she did not approach the regimen of living within a village as drudgery; but rather, she approached it as the opportunity to be creative and to read more in everyday material in Segaoon than was immediately legible.

Joseph Cornelius Kumarappa at Maganwadi

It is fascinating to observe how, like Mira Behn, Kumarappa, in the not so distant town of Wardha, was animated by an interest in exploring the potential residing in locally available material. Even as Gandhi settled down in Segaoon, Kumarappa worked with the AIVIA in the estate called Maganwadi in the outskirts of Wardha. Before he had shifted to Segaoon, Gandhi himself, since 1933, had been based at that estate at the behest of its owner, his disciple, the noted industrialist Jamnalal Bajaj.²¹³ While it is not entirely clear at what exact date Kumarappa took up residence in Maganwadi, in his 1972 Hindi biography titled *J.C. Kumarappa: Life, Personality and Thoughts*, the writer Jawaharlal Jain mentioned that after Gandhi had shifted to Wardha, Kumarappa had stayed for some time with him in a small portion of the house in the estate.²¹⁴ By 1934, Kumarappa, according to Jain, began building small huts in Maganwadi, along with his friends Chotelal Jain and Kalu Khan, so as to house the experiments of the AIVIA in hand-

spinning, hand-grinding of grain, oil-pressing and beekeeping.²¹⁵ Jain also described how virtually all buildings within Maganwadi were built, under Kumarappa's supervision, out of locally available materials.²¹⁶ Moreover, after the construction of the main buildings, Kumarappa collected the material that had been left over, that is, the bricks, stone and bamboo and made out these a small hut with two rooms and a verandah behind the Magan Sangrahalaya.²¹⁷ According to Jain, Kumarappa, while building this hut, strictly used only what was left over as waste material.²¹⁸

Over and above involving himself in construction, Kumarappa, by 1938, had also patronized painting and sculpture in Maganwadi. By the entrance into the compound of Maganwadi, he commissioned the acclaimed artist Nandalal Bose to paint scenes from village life. Furthermore, the Christian Kumarappa also patronized the creation of an open to air statue depicting Jesus after he had been removed from the cross and had been laid to rest on the ground.²¹⁹ According to Jain, the creator of this statue, Clarkwin Hawkman, suggested that the mud and the chemicals that had been used to make the statue would harden, through exposure to rain and elements for a period of some fifteen to twenty years, into stone.²²⁰ (Plate 4.15)

Did Kumarappa, then, adhere to some coherent social or environmental philosophy as he promoted experimentation with village industrial work, architecture, painting and sculpture? While answering this question, it helps to read his book *Economy of Permanence*. He wrote that book while he was in prison for having participated in the Quit India Movement of 1942.²²¹ The book is principally a philosophical text and does provide a glimpse into how Kumarappa thought of development in a holistic manner. For instance, he went to great lengths in that book to explain how human development in

general must conform to nature itself as a complete cycle of life.

‘Work’ in nature consists in the effort put forth by the various factors – insentient and sentient – which cooperate to complete this cycle of life. If this cycle is broken, at any stage, at any time, consciously or unconsciously, violence results as a consequence of such a break. When violence intervenes in this way, growth or progress is stopped, ending finally in destruction and waste. Nature is unforgiving and ruthless. Therefore, self-interest and self-preservation demand complete non-violence; co-operation and submission to the ways of nature if we are able to maintain permanency and non-interference with and by not short-circuiting the cycle of life.²²²

In Kumarappa’s philosophy, human beings protect themselves from violence when they protect nature. They preserve themselves and their interests better in so far they do not intrude into nature’s cycle, incorporating both sentient and insentient factors.

What is of some consequence to my narrative, however, is how Kumarappa, in *Economy of Permanence* had very briefly alluded to the paints that the artists had used in the Ajanta caves which are rock cut monuments that date back to the 2nd century BCE. As he saw it, by painting with what he called “earthen colors,” the artists of Ajanta had sent across a message of non-violence to the lovers of their art, across the ages.²²³ In this regard, during my own visit to Maganwadi in 2007, I did note that the paintings of village life near the entrance and within the interiors, were drawn by Nandalal Bose in a manner reminiscent of the art in the Ajanta caves (Plate 4.16). Notwithstanding Nandalal Bose’s own fascination with the paintings Ajanta, then, it appears to me that Kumarappa may have been interested in their allusion to a technique of painting with what he called “earthen colors.” Painting with “earthen colors,” in Kumarappa’s understanding, may have been a matter of discerning aesthetic possibilities within locally available materials. Painting, in essence, may have been the simple matter of identifying and isolating what

was pleasing to the eye within nature itself.

Can the same be said in the context of Clarkwin Goodman's statue of Jesus? That statue became hard as stone only through the environmental action of rain over a protracted period of time. Here too, one could imagine that Kumarappa encouraged Hawkman to work with the environment. Time and the natural action of water, and not any human contrivance, would harden the statue into stone. The sculptor's task was to merely identify what environmental agency would be most suited to imbuing the sculpture with the attribute of permanence.

It is in this environment of experimentation, then, that Devendra Bhai arrived in 1947. He worked at the oil unit at the place, under the guidance of Kumarappa.²²⁴ Together, the guru and the disciple sought non-conventional technologies for jaggery (unrefined sugar) production, palm juice-production, soap-making, paper-making with fibrous and cellulosic waste.²²⁵ In keeping with the general mandate at Maganwadi, Devendra Bhai explored, for a period of five years, how locally available material within and around Wardha could be productively interpreted and utilized by villagers.²²⁶

In 1952, however, Devendra Bhai left the All India Village Industries Association at Maganwadi to live with landless villagers near Machla in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.²²⁷ Here he not only helped the villagers to regain their land from the clutches of landlords, he also helped to organize a cooperative. Moreover, he helped begin a school, a health center, a dairy and other, basic village industries.²²⁸

By 1965, Devendra Bhai shifted to Delhi with his family. Here, he served as the secretary of the National Gandhi Memorial Trust and also became the organizing secretary of the National Committee for Gandhi Centenary.²²⁹ He served as a liaison

between grassroots non-governmental organizations and policy makers at the central governmental level.²³⁰ Moreover, he helped foster a rural outlook in such scientific institutions as the Indian Institute of Technology.²³¹ Furthermore, in his capacity as the organizing secretary of the National Committee for Gandhi Centenary, Devendra Bhai met with a diverse array of international luminaries such as the famous environmentalist Rachel Carson, the economist E.F. Schumacher, the philosopher Ivan Illich, and the Italian, Gandhian spiritualist Lanza Dalvasto.²³²

While Devendra Bhai actively worked towards the internationalization of Gandhian idealism in the late sixties, it is also quite possible that conversely, by the seventies, he shaped his own ideas concerning Gandhian, local development in India, from an internationalist perspective.²³³ After all, in 1976, upon establishing the Center of Science for Villages in Wardha, he proceeded to organize international meetings on technology and the rural poor of the third world.²³⁴ Indeed, in 1978, he even invited the Austrian philosopher, Ivan Illich, who had written at length about modern technocracies and the principle of counterproductivity, to speak at Segaon.²³⁵ Since Devendra Bhai knew such international luminaries who observed and wrote critically about institutional trends in the west, it is highly likely that he also grew enamored with Fathy's work. The journal *MANAS*, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter, reported in 1983 how the staff at CSV experimented with the Nubian vault. According to the editors of that journal, some information on Fathy's Nubian vault had been provided in the form of cartoon diagrams to the staff at CSV.²³⁶ Here it is important to note that Fathy had been quite well known, internationally, for some time. For my part, at this stage, I cannot say for sure that Devendra Bhai already knew about Fathy's work since the early nineteen seventies. Nor

can I confirm, at this time, the claim made by Sameer Kuruve, the chief engineer at CSV, that Devendra Bhai had seen a vault made out of whole Kavelus in Gujarat.²³⁷ However, I can attempt to locate Devendra Bhai's experiments with the Nubian vault, or more specifically, his interpretation of it using terracotta tumblers, within the larger, historical ethos of Kumarappa's philosophically driven experiments at Maganwadi, especially his experiments with what he identified as natural materials.

To begin it helps to understand the whole Kavelu tumbler itself in structural terms. Devendra Bhai and the staff at CSV may have noted how halves of Kavelu tumblers, as they were used in and around the villages of Wardha, primarily served the purpose of protecting the interior of homes from the rain, heat and other such environmental elements. As a layer above a mat of grass held up by a wooden frame, these halves of tumblers were a dead weight. They may have been useful as a form of insulation, and yet, they were by no means a part of the structural framework of the house. If anything, those erecting homes had to build a wooden framework to support the weight of these halves of Kavelu tumblers.

In a manner of speaking, then, leaving the Kavelu tumbler whole, served to bring to the fore the possibility of using it as a structural support, that is, as a part of the frame which holds us a roof, almost like a truss. The staff at CSV found a way of making the very familiar Kavelu to serve as a structural member. If previously, in its bifurcated form, the Kavelu tumbler was a dead load, that is, as weight which pulled the timber frame on which it sat downwards, now, as a whole, it resolved the weight of the tumblers preceding it, into compressive forces. Now the whole Kavelu simply replaced the timber frame which previously supported halves of kavelus. All it took to build a structural roof

out of Kavelus, in essence, was to invest in the compressive strength of the whole Kavelu. As the whole Kavelus pressed against each other, they held their own weight and served, together, as a roof frame.

Hassan Fathy, the Egyptian architect with Beaux-arts training, had done something similar in the village of New Gournā in the nineteen forties.²³⁸ In 1945, he was commissioned by the Egyptian Department of Antiquities to design a new village for the residents of Gournā or what later came to be known as old Gournā.²³⁹ As Fathy wrote, “[Old] Gournā had grown up to serve the antiquities trade, and its inhabitants had been employed mostly as laborers at the excavations and had made lot of money too by tomb-robbing and selling things to tourists.”²⁴⁰ The Department of Antiquities, then, commissioned Fathy to build a new settlement for the Gournā residents so as to stop them from selling the relics in the site on which they lived.

Fathy, for his part designed the new village of Gournā bearing in mind the requirements of the necessities of individual settlers. Moreover, he built inexpensively so as to stay within the meager budget provided to him by the Department of Antiquities. In this regard, then, he took to building with mud walls. When it came building roofs for the houses of New Gournā, however, he faced a problem. Roofs required timber and timber was expensive in Egypt.²⁴¹ Since the ancient Egyptians had erected vaulted roofs with mud bricks, Fathy attempted to do the same.²⁴² These roofs, however, collapsed without the support of wooden props.²⁴³

Upon scouring the region near the Aswan Dam, Fathy finally found a crew of Nubian masons who could build vaults without using props.²⁴⁴ With the help of these masons, Fathy was able to build mud brick houses at extremely low costs. The cost of a

cottage that he built for an artist, for instance, was a mere \$125, or fifty Egyptian pounds.²⁴⁵ With regards to the Nubian vaults themselves, it isn't particularly difficult to appreciate how they could stand without the support of wooden props. The earth bricks that constituted the arches comprising the vault, were visibly laid on a slope and made to rest against the gable wall, or the vertical arch-shaped wall at the end of the vault. The arch in essence, was converted into an ogive form which transferred a portion of its own weight on to the gable wall as if it were a buttress. (Plate 4.17).

If Fathy, at New Gourn, with the help of the Nubian masons, interpreted the gable wall as a structural support for mud-brick vaults, the staff at CSV had similarly attempted to harness the compressive strength within whole Kavelus wedged into each other in an arch. Like the Nubian vault, the whole Kavelu roofs built by CSV do not require any wooden structural supports. Without using wood, the staff at CSV, in a manner reminiscent of Fathy's attempts at reducing constructions costs, were able bring down the price of the roof to the meager amount of Rs. 20 per square foot.²⁴⁶

Mira Behn, Gandhi and Kumarappa could not have been more proud of Devendra Bhai and his staff, had they been alive to see the construction of the CSV roofs. After all, in pre-independent India, the three of them had sought to identify and isolate something novel and productive within an already prevalent local, material culture. Like them, then, Devendra Bhai and the staff at CSV, instead of resorting to building with such new, expensive materials such as cement, sand and concrete, had found something new in what was old and familiar. Indeed were Gandhi himself to have stepped under a CSV roof, he would have gasped and been at a loss for words. If, on the one hand, in the context of Mira Behn's hut, he had described both, the architectural elements of her cottage and

what they had been prior to their having been interpreted and mobilized as architectural elements, on the other hand, with regards to the CSV roofs, he would not need to proffer any such description. One could, after all, see by oneself how the roofs are made out of the very familiar Kavelus. Since the underbellies of the roofs were left transparent, one could, with one's own eyes, appreciate the nature of the innovation of Devendra Bhai and the staff at CSV.

One wonders, then, if the *Kollam Samaj* of *Wagdhara* are afraid of the roofs above their heads because they can see, with their own eyes, the innovative manner in which the Kavelu has been used. As I had recounted, in the beginning of this chapter, the members of the Kollam Samaj, after having spent close to thirteen years living in CSV houses, have clearly not habituated themselves to the roof as a safe, reliable union between its various tumblers. Even after such a long time, the mere sight of that roof serves to replay, in their minds, the moment of its initial conception in all its youth and uncertainty. Indeed, they had even mentioned to me how the CSV roof reminds them of "those cruel days" of creatively making do with brambly grass, discarded plastic and bark as roofing material. In their minds, creativity itself signifies a hard-life, where brutal necessity drives people to experiment with the meager resources at their disposal. If, for the staff at CSV, innovating with local materials was a responsible way of developing India, for the villagers of Wagdhara, innovation itself hearkened to a time when they were innovative out of necessity. Innovation, in essence, hearkened to a way of life in which one was never certain of how long the roof above one's head would last.

¹⁵⁹ Mahatma Gandhi, "My Idea of Living in a Village" [March 19, 1936] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 300, <http://gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

Gandhi arrived in Shegaon or Sevagram, near the city of Wardha in the district of the same name in the state of Maharashtra in April 1936 (the name Shegaon was dropped in the favor of Sevagram in 1940). He came to Sevagram after having formally renounced his residence at the Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad in Gujarat.

¹⁶⁰ I must mention here that the exact point in time when the half- *kavelu* tumbler or half a tapering, burnt clay tumbler became native or local to Wardha is not entirely clear. In this study, the grounds for my suggestion that the *kavelu* half tile is native to Wardha is, strictly speaking, its visibility at the Sevagram Ashram. For photographs from the nineteen thirties and forties indicate that most structures from the Sevagram Ashram, had, even in those early days, halved *kavelu* tile roofs. And since it is widely reported that Mahatma Gandhi exhorted Mira Ben (Madeline Slade) to make him a house in Sevagram for not more than Rs. 100 I am presuming that the *kavelus* used by Mirabehn to build roofs for the buildings at the Sevagram Ashram may have been both abundantly available and fairly inexpensive in those days. It is in such a sense that I deem the half of a *kavelu* tile as being local to Wardha. At the same time, based on what I was made to understand at the Center of Science for villages in Wardha, the *kavelu* is also known as the *Guna*. "Guna" is a telegu word for a tapering, burnt, clay pipe. Which would amount to saying that the *Guna/kavelu* is native to the neighboring state of Andhra Pradesh and not Wardha in Maharashtra.

¹⁶¹ It is not entirely clear when the CSV was founded. In Veena Poonacha's "Interpreting Gandhi differently" Portraying the Lived and Work of Two Gandhian Women," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 2008 15: 67, I find that CSV was established in 1976. However, Hartman De Souza, in his essay "Appropriate Technology for Rural Development" in India: Specially Published for the Festival of India (Delhi: Brijbasi, 1987) 126, suggests that "the Center of Science for Villages started their work between the years 1956-59 in Wardha." Since Poonacha has interviewed Vibha Gupta, Devendra Bhai's daughter, I am more inclined to go with her date of 1976.

¹⁶² I had noticed that the ceiling of the village community center, a structure made out of bricks and reinforced concrete, had also not been painted blue. However, the community center had been built after the CSV roofs had been erected. In this sense, it is a bit difficult to comprehend the inconsistencies in Shyam raoji's account. For my part, I stick with his explanations for why the villagers would not paint the CSV roofs. In this regard, I wish to also mention that I visited two other villages in the Wardha region where CSV roofs were built. At the village of *Amgaon*, I was informed that the roofs were not acceptable since their tops were curved and therefore, it was not possible to dry crops on them. I was also informed that part of the problem in *Amgaon* was not so much the roofs themselves, as much as the contested nature of the land they sheltered. The problem at *Amgaon* was the relocation of villagers from their older homes to the CSV roofed houses. In that sense, their grievances with the roof had much to do with their sense of dislocation from their ancestral village. In the village of *Kanapur*, I found the residents to be relatively happy with the roofs. The entire village of *Kanapur* was built relatively recently, and the villagers appeared satisfied with their homes.

¹⁶³ I was not provided with much of a history of the *Kollam Samaj*. Upon asking, I was told that the villagers referred to themselves collectively as the *Kollam Samaj*.

¹⁶⁴ Subhash Shyam Rao Ghudewara, interview by author, written notes, *Wagdara*, 21 November 2006

¹⁶⁵ Which amounts to saying that from within the perspective of bodies laboring without the promise of monetary reward, there is no fundamental difference between straw as a roofing material and clay as a roofing material.

¹⁶⁶ Surekha Sule, "Low Cost rural houses from local materials," *India Together*, 18 June 2008 [Journal-online]; available from <http://www.indiatogether.org/2005/nov/eco-lowcost.htm>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

¹⁶⁷ Karl Marx, *Capital: An Abridged version*, Ed. and intr. David McLellan (Oxford University Press, 199) 17.

¹⁶⁸ C. A. Bayly, "The origins of Swadeshi (home industry): cloth and Indian society, 1700-1930," in *The Social life of things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 313.

¹⁶⁹ Bayly, 312.

¹⁷⁰ Lisa N. Trivedi, "Visually Mapping the Nation: Swadeshi Politics in Nationalist India, 1920-1930," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol 62, No. 1 (Feb., 2003), 13, 14.

-
- ¹⁷¹ Trivedi, 14.
- ¹⁷² Trivedi, 14.
- ¹⁷³ Bayly, 314.
- ¹⁷⁴ Bayly, 313.
- ¹⁷⁵ Trivedi, 18.
- ¹⁷⁶ Bayly 313.
- ¹⁷⁷ Editors of MANAS “Foreword to the MANAS READER” [1971] <http://www.manasjournal.org/foreword.html> Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ¹⁷⁸ Editors of MANAS “Foreword to the MANAS READER” [1971] <http://www.manasjournal.org/foreword.html> Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ¹⁷⁹ Editors of MANAS “Foreword to the MANAS READER” [1971] <http://www.manasjournal.org/foreword.html> Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ¹⁸⁰ Editors of MANAS “A Man and His Paper” [1971] <http://www.manasjournal.org/foreword.html> Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ¹⁸¹ Editors of MANAS “A Man and His Paper” [1971] <http://www.manasjournal.org/foreword.html> Accessed 20 January 2011. E.F. Schumacher’s essay titled “Buddhist Economics” was published in MANAS VOLUME XXII, NO. 33 [August, 13, 1969]. http://www.manasjournal.org/pdf_library/VolumeXXII_1969/XXII-33.pdf. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ¹⁸² “Frontiers: News from India” in MANAS Volume XXXVI, No. 25 [June 22, 1983] http://www.manasjournal.org/pdf_library/VolumeXXXVI_1983/XXXVI-25.pdf, 12. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ¹⁸³ “Frontiers: News from India” in MANAS Volume XXXVI, No. 25 [June 22, 1983] http://www.manasjournal.org/pdf_library/VolumeXXXVI_1983/XXXVI-25.pdf, 12. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ¹⁸⁴ Devendra Gupta, *Inevitable Gandhi* (Delhi: Gandhi Book House, 1972) 22.
- ¹⁸⁵ From Booklet circulated at the Magan Sangrahalaya at Wardha titled *Devendra Bhai: A Lone Crusader* (Delhi: Ideas and Impressions, 2001) 6.
- ¹⁸⁶ From Booklet circulated at the Magan Sangrahalaya at Wardha titled *Devendra Bhai: A Lone Crusader* (Delhi: Ideas and Impressions, 2001) 6.
- ¹⁸⁷ Mark Lindley. *J.C. Kumarappa: Mahatma Gandhi’s Economist* (Popular Prakashan, 2007) 19.
- ¹⁸⁸ Benjamin Zachariah “Uses of Scientific Argument: The Case of ‘Development’ in India, c 1930-1950” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 36, No. 39 (Sep. 29 - Oct. 5, 2001): 3692.
- ¹⁸⁹ Manik Lal Gupta. *Constitutional Development of India* (Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributers, 1989) 41.
- ¹⁹⁰ Zachariah, 3690.
- ¹⁹¹ Zachariah, 3690.
- ¹⁹² Lindley, 30.
- ¹⁹³ Mahatma Gandhi, “Speech at Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition, Lucknow” [March 28, 1936] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 332, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ¹⁹⁴ Mahatma Gandhi, “Speech at Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition, Lucknow” [March 28, 1936] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 333, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010
- ¹⁹⁵ Lindey, 33.
- ¹⁹⁶ Mahatma Gandhi, “Speech at Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition, Lucknow” [March 28, 1936] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 333, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ¹⁹⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, “Speech at Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition, Lucknow” [March 28, 1936] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 333, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ¹⁹⁸ Mahatma Gandhi, “Speech at Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition, Lucknow” [March 28, 1936] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 334, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

-
- ¹⁹⁹ Mahatma Gandhi, "Speech at Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition, Lucknow" [April 12, 1936] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 357, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²⁰⁰ Mahatma Gandhi, "Speech at Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition, Lucknow" [April 12, 1936] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 358, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²⁰¹ Mahatma Gandhi, "Talk with Jairam Doulatram and Devdas Gandhi" [Before July 18, 1936] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 225, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²⁰² Mahatma Gandhi, "Talk with Jairam Doulatram and Devdas Gandhi" [Before July 18, 1936] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 225, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²⁰³ Mahatma Gandhi, "Speech at Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition, Lucknow" [April 12, 1936] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 357, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²⁰⁴ Mahatma Gandhi, "Talk with Jairam Doulatram and Devdas Gandhi" [Before July 18, 1936] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 225, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²⁰⁵ Mahatma Gandhi, "Talk with Jairam Doulatram and Devdas Gandhi" [Before July 18, 1936] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 225, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²⁰⁶ Mahatma Gandhi, "Talk with Jairam Doulatram and Devdas Gandhi" [Before July 18, 1936] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 225, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²⁰⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, "Talk with Jairam Doulatram and Devdas Gandhi" [Before July 18, 1936] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 225, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²⁰⁸ Mahatma Gandhi, "Talk with Jairam Doulatram and Devdas Gandhi" [Before July 18, 1936] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 225, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²⁰⁹ Mahatma Gandhi, "Talk with Jairam Doulatram and Devdas Gandhi" [Before July 18, 1936] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 225, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²¹⁰ Mahatma Gandhi, "Talk with Jairam Doulatram and Devdas Gandhi" [Before July 18, 1936] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 225, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²¹¹ Mahatma Gandhi, "Letter to a Village Worker," [Before October 12, 1935] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 51, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²¹² Mahatma Gandhi, "Letter to a Village Worker," [Before October 12, 1935] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 51, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²¹³ Wardha was Bajaj's home-town. Here he owned a large house with orange orchards. This estate, which was eventually eventually named Maganwadi, by the mid-nineteen thirties, became the center of Gandhi's political operations at the time. Debjani Ganguly. *Rethinking Gandhi and Non Violent Relationality: Global Perspectives* (New York, Routledge, 2007) 95.
- ²¹⁴ Jawaharlal Jain, J.C. Kumarappa: Jeevan, Vyaktitva aur Vichar (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1972) 50.
- ²¹⁵ Jain, 51.
- ²¹⁶ Jain, 52, 53.
- ²¹⁷ Jain, 53.
- ²¹⁸ Jain, 53.
- ²¹⁹ Jain, 51.

-
- ²²⁰ Jain, 51.
- ²²¹ Lindley, 40, 41.
- ²²² J.C. Kumarappa. *Economy of Permanence* (Varanasi: Sarva Sewa Sangh Prakashan, 1984) 2.
- ²²³ Kumarappa, 55. He also wrote about the composition of the alloy which was used to create what he called the “steel pillar near the Kutab Minar at Delhi bearing an ancient inscription.” Similarly, he wrote about how “the colors used at the Ajanta Caves must have taken decades to evolve to have attained such perfection as to have lasted all these centuries.” Kumarappa, 109, 110.
- ²²⁴ From Booklet circulated at the Magan Sangrahalaya at Wardha titled *Devendra Bhai: A Lone Crusader* (Delhi: Ideas and Impressions, 2001) 8.
- ²²⁵ Magan Sangrahalaya, 8.
- ²²⁶ Magan Sangrahalaya, 9.
- ²²⁷ “Devendra Bhai: The Crusader” [May, 2008] Booklet titled *Prayas: Experiences in Partnership* (Delhi: Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology, 2008) 4, http://capart.nic.in/pub/Magan_Eng.pdf. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²²⁸ Veena Poonacha. “Interpreting Gandhi Differently : Portraying the Lives and Work of Two Gandhian Women,” *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 2008 15: 64.
- ²²⁹ “Devendra Bhai: The Crusader” [May, 2008] Booklet titled *Prayas: Experiences in Partnership* (Delhi: Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology, 2008) 4-5, http://capart.nic.in/pub/Magan_Eng.pdf. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²³⁰ “Devendra Bhai: The Crusader” [May, 2008] Booklet titled *Prayas: Experiences in Partnership* (Delhi: Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology, 2008) 5, http://capart.nic.in/pub/Magan_Eng.pdf. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²³¹ “Devendra Bhai: The Crusader” [May, 2008] Booklet titled *Prayas: Experiences in Partnership* (Delhi: Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology, 2008) 5, http://capart.nic.in/pub/Magan_Eng.pdf. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²³² This information can be accessed in an article by Vibha Gupta. Devendra Bhai’s daughter, titled “Mahatma Gandhi - Grassroot Science.” <http://www.lifepositive.com/spirit/masters/mahatma-gandhi/gandhian-economics.asp>. Accessed 18/01/2011.
- ²³³ In this regard, I read a book by Devendra Bhai in Hindi titled *Aaj Ke Sawal Gandhi Ke Jawaab* (Today’s Question: Gandhi’s Answers) (New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal, 1972). In this book Devendra Bhai, perhaps influenced by many of the thinkers he had met in the late sixties for the Gandhi centenary, wrote at length about how India’s economic problems ought to be solved using Gandhian methods. More significantly, he also wrote a great deal in this book about science and scientists in the west. In his chapter “Surya Shakti Yantra ke liye (For solar energy devices)” he wrote about how many western scientists, writers and thinkers approached questions concerning technology and energy. What I find fascinating that even as Devendra Bhai wrote his book in chaste Hindi, he referred to the writings of non-provincial thinkers such as Aldous Huxley. He also mentioned the work of Richard Gregg, an American social philosopher who was inspired by Gandhi and developed a theory of non-violent resistance. Refer to page 89 in *Aaj Ke Sawal Gandhi Ke Jawaab* (Today’s Question: Gandhi’s Answers) (New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal, 1972).
- ²³⁴ Poonacha, 67
- ²³⁵ To read more about how CSV was established and the speech Ivan Illich gave on 22nd January 1978, while inaugurating an international seminar on techniques for the rural poor at Sevagram, refer to Asharani Mathur, Sonya Singh, *Festival of India, India: Specially Published for the Festival of India* (Delhi: Brijbasi Printers, 1987) 126.
- ²³⁶ *Frontiers: News from India*” in *MANAS* Volume XXXVI, No. 25 [June 22, 1983] 12. http://www.manasjournal.org/pdf_library/VolumeXXXVI_1983/XXXVI-25.pdf. Accessed: 10/18/2010.
- ²³⁷ Sameer Kuruve, Interview by Author, Kumarappuram, Wardha, India, 28 November 2006.
- ²³⁸ Ronald Rael. *Earth Architecture* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007) 12, 13.
- ²³⁹ Rael, 12, 13.
- ²⁴⁰ Hassan Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1973) 60.
- ²⁴¹ “Review: For Builders and Planners” in *MANAS* Volume XXVIII_1975/XXVIII-39 [September 24, 1975] 7 http://www.manasjournal.org/pdf_library/VolumeXXVIII_1975/XXVIII-39.pdf Accessed 18/01/2011.

²⁴² Review: For Builders and Planners” in *MANAS* VolumeXXVIII_1975/XXVIII-39 [September 24, 1975] **7**
http://www.manasjournal.org/pdf_library/VolumeXXVIII_1975/XXVIII-39.pdf Accessed 18/01/2011.

²⁴³ Review: For Builders and Planners” in *MANAS* VolumeXXVIII_1975/XXVIII-39 [September 24, 1975] **7**
http://www.manasjournal.org/pdf_library/VolumeXXVIII_1975/XXVIII-39.pdf Accessed 18/01/2011.

²⁴⁴ *MANAS*

²⁴⁵ Review: For Builders and Planners” in *MANAS* VolumeXXVIII_1975/XXVIII-39 [September 24, 1975] **8**
http://www.manasjournal.org/pdf_library/VolumeXXVIII_1975/XXVIII-39.pdf Accessed 18/01/2011.

²⁴⁶ Sameer Kuruve, Interview by Author, Kumarappapuram, Wardha, India, 28 November 2006.

Chapter 5.

The Signification of Utopia: Charles Correa, Gandhi, Geometry and the Belapur Housing Project.

A Gandhian village utopia does not have to be exclusive to villages. According to the Indian architect, Charles Correa, such a utopia can also be achieved in cities. In 1976, some thirty years after Gandhi's assassination, the forty six-year-old, western-trained Correa wrote an essay titled essay, "Third World Housing: Space as a resource." In this essay, Correa argued with Gandhian fervor about the failure of Indian cities and the ills of urbanization. However, unlike Gandhi in the nineteen thirties, Correa, in the seventies, did not relocate to an Indian village; rather he explained how urban India could be transformed into an "analogue" of Gandhi's vision of rural India.²⁴⁷

That Correa sought to make significant, structural changes in the very spatial fabric of Indian cities was evident in the ferocious manner in which he criticized urban housing in his essay. "Most attempts at low-cost housing," Correa observed, "define the question simplistically as the necessity of piling up as many dwelling units on a given site, without any concern for other spaces involved in the hierarchy. As a result, in much of urban India, the people – especially the poor – are trying somehow to work out a pattern of living within the totally inadequate context provided for them."²⁴⁸ How then to go beyond merely "piling up of dwelling units" or multi-storied high-rise housing? How to move beyond thinking about housing in the narrowest of contexts, within the decisions of individual commercial developers who conflated higher densities with higher values? Correa answered these questions in his essay by proposing something remarkable. In the face of arbitrary changes in the value of property, the problem of housing, as Correa saw

it, could be overcome by not necessarily increasing densities; but rather it would overcome by decreasing them. The real housing solution, in Correa's understanding, lay in acknowledging the entire range of social relations among the inhabitants of the city and not necessarily conferring undue emphasis upon commercial or labor relations alone. The result of such a synchronization of different socialities, in his view, was a medium density, low-rise pattern of habitation. Such low-rise habitation, "under Indian conditions," Correa stated, "would have the additional advantage of continuing the pattern of life which people were accustomed to: as though Mahatma Gandhi's vision of a rural India had an almost exact urban analogue."²⁴⁹

While considering Correa's essay, it certainly helps to note that he had, in 1958, designed a museum at Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad.²⁵⁰ Moreover, he had served as the chief architect to the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) of the state of Maharashtra between 1971 and 1974.²⁵¹ On the one hand, in the late fifties, Correa had built the museum with tiled roofs at the Sabarmati Ashram as a response to what he saw as a "typology analogous to the villages central to Gandhi's thinking."²⁵² On the other hand, in the early seventies, as the chief architect of CIDCO, he had undertaken the leviathan task of settling four million people in the township of New Mumbai.²⁵³ By the nineteen seventies, Correa, in essence, already had something of a past as a privileged interpreter of Gandhi's legacy, and as an architect who had attempted to think beyond individual buildings in India, at the scale of urban planning. What, then, in the light of Correa's own history, to make of his 1976 essay, "Third World Housing: Space as a resource?" Did Correa seek to express a third world urbanism in Gandhian terms, or had he sought to clarify his own peculiar approach towards urbanism

in the third world by alluding to Gandhi's vision of a rural India? Before one answers this question, one must respond to an even more basic, fundamental query. Did Gandhi have a vision of utopia in the first place?

In a previous chapter, I wrote at length about how the economist J.C. Kumarappa sought to put Gandhi's village idealism into practice in the nineteen thirties and the nineteen forties. Kumarappa not only wrote extensively about Gandhi's emphasis upon villages and village-living in economic terms, but also, as a functionary of the All India Village Industries Association, he sought to bring attention to the instruments, processes and materials the villagers relied on as they worked. In this chapter I seek to go beyond Kumarappa's interpretation of Gandhi's village utopianism. I will address how Gandhi, himself, sought to explain his village idealism, especially in the latter portion of his life. In this regard, I find that the more thoughtful, historical writing has been devoted to observing how Gandhi politically mobilized the very impossibility of realizing his own utopian ideals. Partha Chatterjee, in his now classic *Nationalist thought and the Colonial World: The Nation and Its Fragments*, for instance, has addressed with considerable sensitivity how Gandhi cultivated a gap between his utopian vision and the practicability of that vision. In the following section, I will recapitulate Chatterjee's argument in some depth, and subsequently raise a few questions concerning the nature of Gandhi's utopian vision, and how that vision corresponds to Correa's urban, village utopia.

According to Chatterjee, Gandhi, especially in his early career as a politician, was an anarchist. Gandhi wrote the pamphlet *Hind Swaraj* in 1908, and eventually, by 1919, led an agitation in India because he sought to reject, in an uncompromising manner, the entire institutional structure of the British state and its modern civil society.²⁵⁴ Until the

time he led his resistance in 1919, Gandhi, according to Chatterjee, did not formulate any specific “political process of struggle, of its organizational procedures, norms of practice, strategic and tactical principles.”²⁵⁵ Rather Gandhi framed his resistance to British colonial rule, purely as a negative consciousness.²⁵⁶

However, after striking against the British imposed Rowlatt Act in 1919 regarding emergency measures and the imprisonment of revolutionaries without trial, Gandhi “became aware of the fundamental incompatibility of political action informed solely by a negative consciousness against the procedural norms of a bourgeois legal order.”²⁵⁷ Pursuing resistance negatively, that is, purely as a rejection of an existing political mandate without formulating a coherent, organizational philosophy of resistance, as Gandhi now saw it, merely led to mob mentality. So as to introduce an element of organization into his own political resistance, Gandhi, then, developed the principle of Ahimsa, as opposed to Satyagraha. Ahimsa, as is popularly known today, literally means avoidance of harm. While previously, Gandhi had framed Satyagraha, or non-violent resistance, as a negative approach, now, he substantiated Satyagraha as a positive force by the means of Ahimsa. He made, as Chatterjee observed, Ahimsa into the organizing principle for a ‘science’ of politics... of nonviolence”²⁵⁸ Ahimsa “dealt with the questions such as the requirements of being a political Satyagrahi, his rules of conduct, his relations with the political leadership as well as with the masses, questions about the structure of decision-making, lines of command, political strategies and tactics, and about the practical issues of breaking as well as obeying laws of the state.”²⁵⁹

According to the science of Ahimsa, then, political Satyagrahis, like soldiers, were to be led by a leader. This enlightened leader would lay down instructions and the

Satyagrahis were to simply obey. As Gandhi put it, “it is enough if he [the Satyagrahi] trusts his commander and honestly follows his instructions and is ready suffer unto death without bearing malice against the so-called enemy.”²⁶⁰ At the same time, however, the commander or the leader, according to Chatterjee, did not derive authority over the flock of Satyagrahis, from enlightenment principles, or, for that matter, from a mutually or collectively derived goal. Rather, the leader derived authority “from a moral claim – of personal courage and sacrifice and a patent adherence to truth.”²⁶¹ The leader claimed authority by pursuing mostly unrealizable, moral, utopian ideals, and the Satyagrahis, for their part, adhered to the practical, political strategies laid out by the leader.

In this model of Ahimsa, then, if the politics of the leader were to fail, the blame for the failure could be squarely laid upon the unrealizability of the moral and utopian ideal itself. Indeed, as Chatterjee observed, “under the moral umbrella of the quest for utopia, the experimental conception of politics could accommodate a potentially limitless range of imperfections, adjustments, compromises and failures.”²⁶² Gandhi and Gandhians, then, not only derived their legitimacy to lead the masses, from the difficulties they experienced while they pursued utopianism and truth, they also explained their own follies and compromises as the imperfections of their very fallible human agency in the face of the loftiness of their utopian idealism. Those who followed Gandhi, in essence, had virtually no say in the failure or the success of the utopia which they were expected to and did pursue on his behest.

It is in the context of Gandhi’s ability, especially after 1919, to move with ease between the loftiness of a freewheeling, moral utopianism, and the compromises which constituted political pragmatism, then, that Chatterjee wrote about what was, arguably,

Gandhi's most celebrated vision statement for India. In July 1946, a correspondent had asked Gandhi for a broad but comprehensive picture of the Independent India of his own conception.²⁶³ The following, then, is an excerpt from that answer, portions of which one can find in a variety of books and websites explaining Gandhi's developmental ideas:

Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or *panchayat* having full powers... In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Therefore the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want, before we can have something approaching it. If there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verity for my picture in which the last is equal to the first or, in other words, no one is to be the first and none the last.²⁶⁴

Not surprisingly, Chatterjee, in *Nationalist thought and the Colonial World: The Nation and Its Fragments*, emphasized the portion from this statement that was devoted to Euclid. "Of course," Chatterjee observed wryly, "this was an ideal construction, a 'picture,' but as Gandhi put it... 'like Euclid's point ... it had an imperishable value... We must have a proper picture of what we want, before we can have something approaching it.'"²⁶⁵ The picture, in essence, had to be an ideal one because Gandhi had made the practice of pursuing ideality as the very grounds for his legitimacy as a leader. Putting it somewhat differently, Gandhi did not present a practical impression of what he

envisaged for India, based upon a widespread consensus with villagers about a concrete solution founded on economic and social principles. But rather, Gandhi presented himself as a moralist who truthfully pursued nothing less than the ideal, “proper picture,” so as to exercise charismatic power over his peasant followers. Gandhi painted an impossible picture because he derived his popularity and his authority from pursuing the impossible.

Charles Correa, then, could hardly have been thinking about such an impossible, Euclidian, “proper picture” when he mentioned “Mahatma Gandhi’s vision of a rural India.” After all, Correa, especially in his capacity as a modern architect, belonged to a school of geometrical thinking in which there was no difference between envisioning, and the practical task of translating, into building or organizing, that which had been envisioned. In this tradition of geometry, which in modern architectural parlance is known as Descriptive Geometry, the description of an object through its projections on to three planes, had, since as early as 1882, served as a neutral tool that put across information unambiguously almost as if it were scientific prose.²⁶⁶ Putting it more simply, a picture drawn by a modern architect, from the vantages of the science of descriptive geometry, was not an impossible ideality; rather, it was an ideality directly translatable into reality. Indeed, it is the very science of descriptive geometry which made it possible in the modern era for an architect to explain the task of building to a mason or carpenter by the means of working drawings or precise detail designs.²⁶⁷ So long as architects sufficiently explained the task of building by the means of working drawings, they did not need to get involved in that task by themselves.

Bearing in mind, at the broadest possible level, Correa’s credentials as a trained architect, then, it is perhaps necessary to approach his utopianism somewhat differently

from that of Gandhi's. While Gandhi's utopia is best understood in terms of how it is not possible to achieve it, Correa's architectural utopia, on the other hand, has to be understood strictly in the context of it can be achieved. Indeed, it is not only important to explore how Correa, in 1983, eventually gave concrete expression to his utopianism in the form of a housing scheme at the Artists' village at Belapur in the city of New Mumbai, it is also important to stress that his ideal village, in his 1976 essay "Third World Housing: Space as a resource," was feasible from the very beginning.

Consider, for instance, in that essay, the manner in which Correa wrote about the hierarchy of spaces people needed, so as to live in a city. In the context of providing housing, he observed:

This hierarchy is determined by many factors, such as climate, culturally-defined life styles, and so forth. For instance, under Indian urban conditions, it appears to have four elements:

The space needed by the family for exclusively private use, such as cooking, sleeping, or storage.

The areas of intimate fine-scale contact such as the doorstep where children play, or you chat with your neighbor.

The neighborhood meeting places (for example, in our villages, the village well) where you become part of your community.

Finally, the principle urban area – such as the maidan – used by the whole city.²⁶⁸

This hierarchy, Correa observed, could contain a variety of covered and open-to-sky spaces. He observed how, at the bottom end of the hierarchy, at what he called "the micro-end," such activities as cooking and eating, instead of taking place indoors, transpired in an open courtyard.²⁶⁹ In Correa's understanding, then, when it came to

housing, particularly in the context of developing countries in the tropics such as India, one could reduce construction costs by allowing for some activities to take place in the open. At the same time, so as to pursue reducing the cost of construction by increasing open-to-air areas at the micro level, one would also need to simultaneously make smaller dwelling units, or, conversely reduce the size of the public areas at the higher end of the hierarchy.²⁷⁰

It is certainly not easy to compare this hierarchy of spaces with that of Gandhi's Euclidian picture. After all, Correa qualified his hierarchy in the context of real-world places. The city of New Delhi, he observed, provided roughly 1.5 hectares of open space per thousand people or roughly 72 square meters for every family. He asked, then:

if we would be better off trading some of this public area for more private space – say a courtyard of 10 square meters per family? Exchanging monumental vistas for greater individual privacy – especially for the poor – may not be such a bad bargain. And we may even save some land area in the process.²⁷¹

Evidently, the experience of housing in the city of New Delhi could best be understood when it was reduced into an hierarchy comprising spaces that corresponded to different levels of social organization. One could resolve the design problem of humanizing housing in the city by identifying the appropriate trade-offs between these various levels. In a nutshell, Correa not only saw the city of Delhi analytically as a four-tiered hierarchy, he also believed that the city could be humanized only when one understood it as a four tiered hierarchy. The reality of the city was not just accessed through a representation, that is, through an analysis of it; the reality of the city was also to be reformulated by the means of the room for variability within Correa's very analytical representation.

Is it any wonder, then, that one finds Correa had reiterated his faith in a correspondence between experiential reality and architectural, analytical representations, in his Artists' village at Belapur in the city of New Mumbai. In that project, Correa realized his long cherished ideal of a low-rise, medium density housing solution. The project itself had been commissioned in 1983 by the City and Industrial Corporation of Mumbai, for which, Correa had served as the chief architect between 1971 and 1974.²⁷² The village was built approximately a kilometer from the city center of New Mumbai. Correa designed it to accommodate residents from diverse economic groups, be it the middle-class, or the lower middle-class. In his design solution, he gave pride of place to urban equity, that is equal importance to all economic groups. This was borne out by the areas of the individual plots within his scheme which varied only marginally from a minimum of 45 square meters to a maximum of 70 square meters.²⁷³ The houses were built incrementally on these plots – so they could grow, as Correa observed in his book *Housing and Urbanization*, from a single lean-to-roof (for the very poor) to urban town houses (for the well to do).²⁷⁴

In terms of organization, the households were placed around community spaces. Seven housing units were generically clustered around a courtyard. Three of these clusters, each comprising some seven units, would then girdle a larger open space. This spatial hierarchy, as the editors of the journal *Architecture + Design* noted in 1999, “continues until the neighborhood spaces are formed where schools and other public use facilities are located.”²⁷⁵ People, one supposes, could be expected to relate with each other along any of the many pre-formulated registers of sociability provided within the

scheme. In this sense, to live in a house in the Artists' Village was to be a good neighbor, a good villager, and a good citizen. One was to become a simultaneous participant in many communities regardless of one's economic circumstances. No single form of social relationship between people, one infers, could assume undue importance within the scheme. After all, so many invitations were simultaneously extended to the inhabitants of the village by its spaces, to get them to relate to each other on so many different registers.

Quite apart from the very unambiguous correspondence between Correa's analytical representation of spatial hierarchies in 1976, and the design of the Artists' Village in 1983, one must also consider his architectural representation of the village itself. For instance, in a booklet titled "Own Your House Scheme '85" that I collected from the head office of CIDCO in 2007, I found that the village had been marketed by the means of images of its plans and a small-scale model.²⁷⁶ (Plate 5.1, 5.2) As I read through the booklet, I could not but help observe the similarity between the schematic plans, at varying scales. For instance, the nature of the organization of a cluster of seven houses around a courtyard, at what Correa called "the smallest scale," was not unlike the nature of the organization of three such clusters that were together combined to form a module of 21 houses. Similarly, the schematic plan of the community plan, at the largest scale, seemed to resonate in the schematic plan of three modules that had been clustered together. A plan-representation of the organizational principle at the smallest scale, in essence, had provided the logic for planned, architectural organization at progressively larger scales.

The correspondence between architectural representations and architectural reality in Correa's Artists' village, then, can be established in many different ways. On the one

hand, the architectural reality of the village was marketed through the medium of architectural representations. What CIDCO's clients saw in the plans of village, was what they got. The drawings unambiguously conveyed how the layout of the village would appear at a variety of scales. While Gandhi, in 1946, may have taken recourse to geometry so as to leave the matter of constructing his utopia, as ambiguous as possible, Correa, for his part, emphasized geometry because it would convey the very geometrical organization of social spaces at Belapur. Unlike Gandhi's Euclidian Geometry, Correa's geometrical representation would have real-world, architectural referents, that is, the village and the larger city to which it would belong.

On a second register, however, Correa's geometrical organization of space at the smallest scale, also denoted the architectural reality of the village at the largest scale. I gather from the booklet "Own Your House Scheme' 85," that Correa used an architectural representation of organization at the level of seven houses, to generate an architectural representation at higher scales. These representations at a higher scale were, subsequently, translated into architectural realities. A real world organization of space at the higher end of the scale, it would appear, was not so much the product of careful, experiential thinking; rather it was purely the translation into built mass, a design derived rather arbitrarily from the geometry of another architectural representation, at a smaller scale.

While so much can be said about how Correa's architectural intentions were translated into an architectural reality at a number of different scales in 1983, it is also important to consider, in some detail, to what degree those intentions resonate in the reality of the project today, in the present (Plate 5.3, 5.4). If, in 1983, Correa's purpose

was to promote equality in the Artists' Village, then today, what has survived of that project soundly belies that early purpose. Indeed, what abides today is not so much an overriding sense of egalitarianism among the dwellers of the village. Rather, one finds at the village those very economic and commercial inequalities of urban living, from which it had at one time offered an escape. For the most part, I say this based on my own experiences in the Artists' Village in 2007.

When I first visited the Artists' village, I could not find any sign of community activity within its fabled squares and neighborhood piazzas (Plate 5.5, 5.6). Initially, I attributed this quietude at the Artists' Village to the timing of my visit as much as to the weather. At the time, I had to commute to Belapur from Goregaon where I stayed in Mumbai. Given the considerable distance between Belapur and Goregaon, I could only ever reach the Artists' Village by noon. People, at that time of the day, in the month of April, were either away for work, or were, I presumed, tucked away somewhere deep in the interiors of their homes. However, persisting with knocking at the doors of some of the houses, I was finally able to speak to a few residents. From them I learnt that the relative absence of outdoor community activity I witnessed at the Artists' Village, was consistent at all times: morning, afternoon and evening. Indeed, the residents of the village were more inclined to stay confined indoors, away from the public, rather than outdoors. Mrs. Suhasini Vivek Mastakad, a long time resident of the village, for instance, was quick to point out how there was little by way of social cohesion among the people (Plate 7). Before I quote her, I wish to very succinctly define the Chawl system, a form of housing, that she referred to in her conversation with me. Chawls, in Mumbai, are multi-storied tenements. They often house migrants from other parts of India. They are distinct

from slums. If those who live in slums do not have any tenure security, those living in Chawls pay rent on a unit basis. That Mrs. Mastakad liked the Chawl system is evident in account (Plate 5.7). She had lived previously in a Chawl and observed:

Nobody helps each other here. There is no unity here. We plan to shift away from here. I always prefer the Chawl system in Sector II. You really should go there and see how people live in unity. Here, I never know what my neighbors are doing or thinking. I don't even know how rich or how poor they are. We share the same walls, but if their house is so much bigger than ours, how can we expect to be friends with them? Go to Sector II and see how the Chawl system works there. Everybody knows how much space their neighbors have there. Nobody richer, nobody poorer. That is unity.²⁷⁷

Here, I have to admit that of all the various responses that I elicited from the dwellers of the Artists' Village, Mrs. Mastakad's account was the one that conversed the most sensitively with the rich array of physical and morphological changes one sees in the Village. If Correa had, in his 1983 design, provided alongside his allowances for community spaces and courtyards, occasion for individual houses to grow incrementally from "single lean-to-do to urban town houses (for the well-to-do)," then today, what survives of that 1983 design is strictly the incremental growth of its individual housing units. While the community spaces and the courtyards remain, for the most part, as they were in 1986, the houses surrounding those spaces have since gone on to acquire multi-storied buildings, high marble plinths and ornate boundary walls and gates (Plate 5.8, 5.9). Indeed, if Correa had initially designed and constructed a dwelling unit on virtually every plot, over time, the residents of the village had either renovated those units, or had completely replaced them with larger buildings. As one walks along the large road which abuts the complex on two sides, one cannot but help observe how different some of those buildings appear from one another. (Plate 5.10, 5.11)

The status and prestige people enjoy in the Artist's Village, then, has less to do with how they endear themselves to each other through the medium of everyday face-to-face encounters in the arenas and forums provided to them in the scheme, and more to do with the purchasing power they possess as individuals. If anything, Mrs. Mastakad's testimony merely echoes what one sees with one's own eyes at the Artist's Village. Indeed, one finds it somewhat ironic that Mrs. Mastakad spoke in the manner Correa wrote in 1976. After all, were not her observations on the value accruing to individual plots of land somewhat similar to Correa's observations on urban commercial property development? Her observations on the lack of unity among the residents of the village sounded so similar to Correa's remonstrations in general against the lack of socialization engendered in cities and metropolises by the piling of housing units vertically upon each other "without any concern for other spaces in the hierarchy?"

Somewhat puzzled by Mrs. Mastakad's comments, then, I visited Sector II of New Mumbai. If the Artist's Village of Belapur had been Correa's practicable idea of an escape from the unsociability of high-rise dwellings in urban settlements, then what sort of an escape from the disunities of the Artists' Village did Mrs. Mastakad's Chawl system of Sector II have to offer? Sector II, which was a good, twenty minutes of brisk walking away from the Artists' Village, was a neat array of single-storied Chawls or tenements (Plate 5.12, 5.13, 5.14). While it is well beyond the scope of my study to provide a complete and exhaustive history of the Chawl system in Maharashtra, I do find it necessary here to dwell on those aspects of it which are germane to Mrs. Mastakad's account.

Chawls, or rental housing units, by way of an introduction, date back to the nineteenth century. The word Chawl, or more specifically Chaal, in the Gujarati language, implied a passageway or a corridor.²⁷⁸ Chawls in the city of Mumbai, in particular, were built so as to house its workforce, especially the city's cotton-mill workers.²⁷⁹ Initially, entrepreneurs had erected Chawls; however, in later years, Improvement Trusts undertook constructing them so as to provide accommodation for new immigrants to the city from rural areas.²⁸⁰ In 1989, Chawls constituted 74.4 % of the housing stock in Mumbai.²⁸¹ One scholar even suggests that while half of the population of Mumbai may live in slums, about 20% live in Chawls.²⁸²

In terms of its layout, the average Chawl consists of a row of single-room living units with a corridor or a verandah serving as the circulation space.²⁸³ The architectural form of the Chawl is akin to military barracks, and perhaps even back-to-back workers' homes that were erected in England, especially in the industrial areas.²⁸⁴ The size of the living room units, at least the ones I saw in Sector II, were roughly fifteen feet wide and ten feet deep.²⁸⁵ The latrines and washing facilities are usually shared by the residents of the Chawl. Most household activities spread outwards from the residential unit, into the corridor area in the establishment.²⁸⁶ The tenements themselves, historically, were usually built with a timber framework supporting brick masonry walls, with lime-mortar, teakwood, or jack arch flooring.²⁸⁷

Over and above the architectural form or layout of the Chawl, what distinguishes them as forms of settlement is their proletarian character. Indeed some scholars have even suggested that trade unionism arose in the city of Mumbai in its Chawls.²⁸⁸ The very foundations of India's nationalism, they add, were laid in the Chawls.²⁸⁹ Moreover, given

the intimacy between the occupants, which emerges from their having to participate in the activity of sharing space on a regular basis, Chawls have often found reference within the popular culture of Mumbai, specifically in cinema and literature, as settings for the most vibrant forms of solidarity among people. In fact, so mellifluously have egalitarianism and the Chawl system come to intertwine within popular culture, that for those such as myself who somewhat infrequently visit Mumbai, it becomes difficult to ascertain which of the two precedes the other in the city. Does Mumbai's commitment to egalitarianism precede the Chawl; or is it the Chawl which foments a sense of obligation towards egalitarianism within the city?

Stating the question in a different way, if Mrs. Mastakad was nostalgic about the unity of the Chawl system of Sector II, what, in her thoughts, accounted for that unity? Had unity emerged among the people in the Chawls of Sector II, because they, for the lack of an alternative, shared spaces and therefore saw some functional value in seeing each other as being equally entitled to those spaces? Was it easier, in essence, to be an egalitarian than to be a person who disliked neighbors? Or was unity, in Mrs. Mastakad's understanding, an indication of how people remained deeply aware of the sameness of others' circumstances, which, in the case of the Chawl, were the length and the breadth of the unit? Such questions, needless to say, present us with a classic, what came first, the chicken or the egg, scenario.

Setting aside such questions, however, the larger point I wish to raise is that Mrs. Mastakad, like Charles Correa, not only thought in egalitarian terms, her egalitarianism, like his geometry, was descriptive. Her egalitarianism alluded, in essence, to a real-world referent, that is, the Chawls of Sector II. Indeed, when she walked through Sector II, Mrs.

Mastakad may only barely have been preoccupied by how different the units of the Chawls appeared from one another (Plate 5.15). Their surfaces may have been painted or tiled differently; and yet, she may have seen past the differences, into how the spaces within were, in terms of form and volume, near-identical.

Conclusion

Through the course of this study, if I have emphasized the similarities between architectural representations or analytical, utopian representations on the one hand, and architectural realities on the other hand, it is because I increasingly find such similarities in parlance in India. Between 2005 and 2007, for instance, as I sought to learn more about the Gandhian architect, Laurie Baker, I also watched how the city around his home was changing dramatically. In Trivandrum, absolutely independent of Baker's own productivity as a low-cost home builder, the housing market had picked up pace with considerable rapidity. From my position at the window seats of the buses on which I travelled from the Center of Development Studies in the north of Trivandrum, to such buildings by Baker as the Indian Coffee house near the Trivandrum Central Railway Station, I could not but help notice large billboards that had been erected by the banking establishments in the state of Kerala, which showed expensive, stuccoed single and double-storied mansions. On those billboards, the mansions were nick-named "Dream Homes." (Plate 5.16, 5.17, 5.18).

In the monsoon-pelted alleyways of the city, these Dream Homes were truly the last word on purchasing power. Everything about these Dream Homes suggested a lot of expenditure. The houses themselves were rather large and usually extended to about three bays horizontally, and two stories vertically. Usually, these houses had a porch, and

almost invariably, there were two cars parked in it. Looking upwards, one could see that the houses had pitched roofs; although the eaves of these roofs were, contrary to traditions of building in Kerala, neatly concealed by a horizontal, plastered band of concrete. Moreover, the undersides of the pitched roofs were also concealed by a concrete slab, indicating how the pitched roof was purely a decorative element. And finally, as if to provide clarity, the entire composition was often shown in three quarters view, oftentimes in the middle of a large, green, well-manicured lawn.

Initially, I simply dismissed those dream homes as mere fantasies. Taking a loan to build a house is one thing. Building such a squeaky clean house with an enameled exterior, and concealed eaves is quite another. Indeed I even thought that the eaves were concealed in the images on the billboard so as to make the image appear more appealing. There was no way a builder would attempt something like this in reality. Or so I thought, until I saw how people had built houses which almost unambiguously resembled the representations of Dream Homes. Indeed, along the highway from Quillon to Idduki, from Idukki to Cochin, I saw many houses with concealed eaves. It would appear, in essence, that the distinction between a representation of middle-class dreams, and middle-class reality in India was increasingly becoming a matter of the past.

From an architectural perspective, this development should not be entirely surprising. After all, descriptive geometry is the very foundation of the modern practice of architecture. Architects have always given vent to their imagination on the drawing board, with the confidence that many of their representations can be translated unambiguously into reality. The drawing itself is by no means a mystical diagram; but rather, it refers to concrete materials and concrete acts of building in the real world. If

anything, then, the simultaneous emergence of the Dream Home as a fantastical representation, and as a real-world building, merely marks a late moment in the story of descriptive geometry. Putting it somewhat differently, the similarity between fantastical representations and architectural realities now only grows more and more precise and unambiguous. While architects previously relied upon drawings of plans and orthogonal projections to convey their architectural intentions to those working on a site, now, it appears, that a three dimensional representation conveys, to those who seek a housing loan, the precise appearance of what kind of a house they will be investing in by taking a loan.

In the story of the growth of such equivalences in India, then, Correa's citation of Gandhi's vision has to be seen as a significant event. In fact, it is not so much whether or not Correa understood, in precise terms, what "Gandhi's vision of a rural India" was like; rather, how Correa confidently presumed that he could devise an urban analogue to Gandhi's vision of a rural India, which calls for attention. Gandhi's vision of rural India, whatever it may have been in Correa's imagination, could be translated into reality. In so far as Correa thought as an architect, by the means of descriptive geometry, a utopian vision always referred unambiguously to a spatial reality. From an architectural perspective, it is almost inconceivable to think of Gandhi's utopia in utopian, impossible terms.

²⁴⁷ Charles M Correa, "Third World Housing: Space as a Resource," in *EKISTICS*, Vol 41., No 242, (January 1976): 38.

²⁴⁸ Correa, 34.

²⁴⁹ Correa, 38.

²⁵⁰ A brief description of the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya can be found in *Charles Correa* (Singapore: Thames and Hudson, 1996) 30-35.

²⁵¹ To learn more about Correa's career, refer to "Biodata" in the edited volume *Charles Correa* (Singapore: Thames and Hudson, 1996) 264.

²⁵² Correa, 30.

-
- ²⁵³ Peter Gast, *Modern Traditions: Contemporary Indian Architecture* (London: Springer, 2007) 69.
- ²⁵⁴ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist thought and the Colonial World: The Nation and Its Fragments in The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999) 103.
- ²⁵⁵ Chatterjee, 103.
- ²⁵⁶ Chatterjee, 104.
- ²⁵⁷ Chatterjee, 105.
- ²⁵⁸ Chatterjee, 107.
- ²⁵⁹ Chatterjee, 107.
- ²⁶⁰ Partha Chatterjee uses this quotation by Gandhi in his book. I am still looking for the reference. I am yet unable to find it in the online archive. I will need to find it in the paper version, manually.
- ²⁶¹ Chatterjee, 109.
- ²⁶² Chatterjee, 109.
- ²⁶³ Mahatma Gandhi, "INDEPENDENCE" [Panchgani, July 21, 1946] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 91 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 326, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL91.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010333
- ²⁶⁴ Mahatma Gandhi, "INDEPENDENCE" [Panchgani, July 21, 1946] The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 91 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 326, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL91.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010333
- ²⁶⁵ Chatterjee, 121.
- ²⁶⁶ To learn more about the history of the emergence of descriptive geometry, in particular how it evolved as a science after the publication, in 1882 of Victor Poncelet's (1788-1867) treatise on Projective Geometry, refer to Albert Perez Gomez's essay "Architecture as Drawing" JAE, Vol. 36. No.2 (Winter, 1982) 3-4-5. At this stage, I am not going into the details of Gomez's arguments; nor am I writing about the full range of developments which led to a significant break, especially in the Ecole Polytechnique in Paris, in terms of how geometry was understood. I do hope to write in considerable detail, fairly soon, how this transition occurred, in what ways does one approach this thinking through Emmanuel Kant's notion of geometry and mathematics as synthetic a priori categories, and finally, what implications this has for architectural thinking, especially in India. I hope to flesh out a small portion of my observations in these matters in the concluding section of this dissertation.
- ²⁶⁷ Perez-Gomez, 4.
- ²⁶⁸ Charles M Correa, "Third World Housing: Space as a Resource," in *EKISTICS*, Vol 41., No 242, (January 1976): 34.
- ²⁶⁹ Correa, 34.
- ²⁷⁰ Correa, 34.
- ²⁷¹ Correa, 34.
- ²⁷² Refer to "Chronology" in the edited volume *Charles Correa* (Singapore: Thames and Hudson, 1996) 257.
- ²⁷³ Charles Correa, *Housing and Urbanization* (Mumbai: The Urban Design Research Institute, 1999) 48.
- ²⁷⁴ Correa, 48.
- ²⁷⁵ "Belapur: Space Disaggregated – Architect Charles Correa," *Architecture + Design*, Jan-Feb (1988), 62.
- ²⁷⁶ "Own Your House Scheme '85: In the Artist's Village, Belapur, New Bombay." Publication date unknown – hard copy available at CIDCO office in Navi [New] Mumbai.
- ²⁷⁷ Venugopal Maddipati, interview by author, written notes, Belapur, New Mumbai, 2nd Feb 2007.
- ²⁷⁸ Jon T. Lang, Madhavi Desai and Miki Desai, *Architecture And Independence: Search For Identity - India, 1880 To 1980* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997) 111.
- ²⁷⁹ Vinit Mukhija, "Property readjustment and a tenants' cooperative in Mumbai: some lessons and questions," *Environment and Planning A*, volume 38 [2006]: 2161
- ²⁸⁰ Lang, Desai and Desai, 111.
- ²⁸¹ P.S.A Sundaram, *Bombay: Can it House its Millions?* (New Delhi: Clarion Books, 1989), 61
- ²⁸² Makhija, 2157
- ²⁸³ Lang, Desai and Desai, 111.
- ²⁸⁴ Lang, Desai and Desai, 113.
- ²⁸⁵ According to Vinit Makhija, The rooms range in size from around 6 to 12 square meters. Makhija, 2161.
- ²⁸⁶ Sundaram, 61.
- ²⁸⁷ Sundaram, 61.

²⁸⁸ Makhija, 2161. Refer to a book by Sharada Dwivedi and Rahul Mehrotra titled *Bombay: The Cities Within* (Bombay: Eminence Design Private Limited, 2001) 209.

²⁸⁹ Makhija, 2161.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The Beginnings of Beginnings

In 2005, I visited Trivandrum to learn more about Laurie Baker, his life and his architectural work. I took up accommodation in a guesthouse he had designed at the Center for Development Studies (CDS), in north Trivandrum, and sent word to him, about my interest in meeting him. Baker, for his part, responded by communicating that he could do a brief phone interview. He subsequently called me in my room at the guesthouse at CDS and spoke in a crisp, British accent about how he had not been keeping particularly well. He then suggested that I must visit his buildings. “My work is out there for you to see. There really is nothing that I have to say about it... it is all out there.”²⁹⁰ Having expressed this, Baker politely excused himself and hung up.

One could take Baker’s reluctance to speak about his buildings fairly seriously. After all, many architects, who belonged to the modernist tradition, often believed that buildings spoke for themselves. These architects presented buildings as objects that were autonomous from social narratives, that is, as objects that could be comprehended on their own, formal terms. Buildings certainly do not have any agency. However, one has to also concede that architectural Modernists oftentimes thought buildings did possess some autonomous character. Indeed they believed that geometry was architecture’s very own, autonomous, visual language, and buildings, especially modernist buildings, addressed viewers in this language.²⁹¹ Buildings, in essence, expressed their own content in terms of the degree to which they visually corresponded to, or diverged, in a geometrical manner, from certain idealized types such as the sphere, the cube and the cuboid.

In so far as one presumed, beforehand, that Baker was an architectural modernist, one could, then, construe his desire to remain silent about his buildings as a message in its own right. One could, in essence, confidently approach Baker's buildings with very little knowledge of his life, his career and his religion. Indeed, in so far as one approached Baker's work from the vantages of geometrical ideality, there was no need whatsoever for him to explain his own work.

And yet, it is hardly possible, much less appropriate, to read Baker's buildings as ideal, geometrical compositions. For one thing, Baker's buildings, especially his Coffee House near the Trivandrum Central Railway Station (Plate 6.1), were certainly not ideal, geometries. For another, Baker, as I was to find out later from his son, Tilak Baker, did not define the locations of the buildings at CDS, prior to their construction, in geometrical terms. Indeed, in 1971, he by no means sat in his office in the Trivandrum suburb of Nalanchira and studied a two-dimensional plan representation of the site of the future CDS.²⁹² Rather, Baker visited the site of the future CDS, surveyed it and made a distinction between young trees and old trees at the place. If many present-day architects proceed to level the building construction site and make it into a flat plane in its entirety before erecting their buildings, Baker, for his part, in the nineteen seventies, sought to build at the sloping site of the CDS, in locations where he did not have to cut down young trees.²⁹³ Baker erected buildings, in essence, after considering the environmental and topographical circumstances of the crescent shaped site of CDS. If anything, the almost hap-hazard manner in which the buildings appear to be situated at CDS, confirms this.

While one cannot legitimately treat Baker's buildings as ideal, geometrical compositions, one can, however, consider how he distorted geometrical forms in the most mischievous manner in his buildings. Standing, at CDS, under the spiraling, serpentine bridge Baker made out of filler-slabs, and looking upwards at that bridge's staggered brick balustrades, one cannot but help imagine that the architect had consciously sought to show how far one could go with defying the orderly principles of geometrical compositions (Plate 6.2, 6.3, 6.4). In so far as one expects bricks, which are themselves regular geometrical solids, to constitute larger, regular, geometrical solids such as rectilinear, masonry walls and flat arches, one cannot but be surprised by how Baker belied all such expectations at that bridge. Indeed one supposes that Baker took it upon himself as an architect to challenge the confidence that architectural modernists had vested in geometry.

One way of reading the buildings at CDS, then, is to assume the role of an architectural modernist and question one's own ingrained belief in the value of geometrical compositions. In this sense, with very little knowledge of Baker's own history, or, for that matter, without a commentary from him about his own work, one could, as a modernist, or as an historian of architectural modernism in India, write a great deal about his work. Indeed, from the vantages of Baker's reticence towards speaking about his work, exploring his buildings may very well be a matter of confronting and understanding, with greater reflexivity, what modernism means and how it is inherently limiting as a vocabulary of architectural design.²⁹⁴

If, on the one hand, then, one can begin to understand Baker's work in a modernist context by attaching some importance to his reluctance towards speaking about

his oeuvre, on the other hand, one can better appreciate his architectural simplicity by not listening to what he had to say about his meeting with Gandhi in 1954. One can appreciate Baker's architectural simplicity by delving further into his past, prior to his meeting with Gandhi. Indeed, as the architect Gautam Bhatia has noted in *Laurie Baker: Life, Work and Writings*, "Baker's instinctive embrace of Gandhi's simplicity and his pursuit of a frugal life in Pithoragarh arose partly from his Quaker upbringing."²⁹⁵ Gandhi's emphasis upon building honestly out of locally available material in his meeting with Baker in 1944, in essence, merely affirmed, in Baker's mind, ideas and religious values that had already been brewing.²⁹⁶

On the one hand, then, one can listen to, and interpret Baker's silence over his own work so as to situate it within a tradition of a geometrical modernism, as its very antithesis. On the other hand, by temporarily silencing Baker, that is, by turning away from his own account in the nineteen eighties concerning how he deeply he had been influenced by Gandhi, one can begin to appreciate the degree to which he had always already been predisposed towards discourses of simplicity and architectural honesty. Indeed, by turning to Baker's life prior to his career in India, one can learn a great deal about his life in India.

If, then, in Baker's case, silence, be it his own, self-willed one, or one that is temporarily imposed upon him by historians, allows for engaging architectural narratives to emerge, in Gandhi's case, temporarily muffling his descriptions of his experiences in Segaoon in the nineteen thirties and traversing further back into the archive, is no less promising an endeavor. Indeed, I find that delving into the archive, especially into those portions pertaining to a time prior to Gandhi's stay in Segaoon in 1936, serves to

demonstrate how he may have, conceivably, anticipated his experiences in Segaoon, in advance. To conclude my dissertation, then, I wish to demonstrate how Gandhi's experiences of the space of the Indian village, during his stay in Segaoon, in many ways affirmed how he had already been thinking about spaces and places for some time. I seek, in essence, to establish how Gandhi had a rather complex system of spatial perception in place, even before he arrived at Segaoon.

How Gandhi always already knew the Circle, the village and Inner Space

In my chapter on Charles Correa, I had discussed Gandhi's emphasis in 1946 upon the impossible nature of Euclidian geometry. Quite apart from his descriptions of Euclidian geometry, however, Gandhi, it would appear, also thought about real-world places with the help of such spatial determinations such as length, breadth and area. This is evident in his letter to a village worker from sometime before October 12, 1935. In that letter he had mentioned staying within "a radius of ten miles [of the village]" for the uninterrupted period of a year was the only way of getting "under the skin of the villagers."²⁹⁷

On the one hand Gandhi seemed to request the village worker to learn about the villagers by living in the village, within its environs. On the other hand, in his own mind, Gandhi envisaged the village and its environs as entities he already knew, in advance. He saw the village and its environs as a large circle with a radius of ten miles. Only if one first presupposed such a measured understanding of the space of the village and its environs, could one, in essence, remain rooted within it.

I wonder if historians have not written about Gandhi's geometrical presupposition concerning the village because they have not been able to identify an adequate methodological framework from within which they can approach it and historicize it. Must Gandhi's description of the village and its environs as a large circle with a radius of ten miles be studied from the vantages of the history of regional planning or from the vantages of architectural history? As an architectural historian myself, I could, in a presumptuous way, ask to what degree did Gandhi think of the village and environs as architects think when they present buildings, prior to their construction, as measured drawings in which the various shapes and features of the edifice are represented as the variable multiples of invariable units of measurement such inches and feet? How far, in essence, did Gandhi go in approaching real-world villages as variable multiples of invariable units of measurement?

One could, while pursuing this question, take into account how Gandhi had, in 1917, relied upon a preconceived, plan-drawing as a tool while building the new Satyagraha Ashram in Ahmedabad.²⁹⁸ While Gandhi himself was no architect, he certainly understood architecture as the practice of pre-formulating the project of building in analytical terms, as a plan-drawing in two dimensions, and subsequently translating that drawing into a real-world space. Gandhi was familiar with the practice of architecture involved making the appearance of real-world places to conform with precisely pre-formulated and dimensioned, scaled geometrical representations on a two dimensional plane.

And yet, it would be a bit far-fetched to say that Gandhi, in his letter to the village worker, wrote about the village and its environs in two-dimensional terms, that is, as a circle with a radius of ten miles, because he sought to promote an understanding of the village environment in two dimensions. Indeed, I would be forcing the case if I approached Gandhi as if he were a designer who sought to simplify, and therefore mythify the experience of places into the easily accessible, analytical terms of architecture. Virtually nothing I have read in the Gandhi archive suggests that he drew inspiration from architectural plans and architectural construction to define his village utopia in general.

This is, however, not to say that Gandhi did not think in terms of geometry. One could, for instance, consider Gandhi's deeply racial and essential description of the Zulus in his 1925 book *Satyagraha in South Africa*. In that text, in which Gandhi had recounted his political experiences in South Africa, he wrote fairly thoughtlessly about the Zulus, or those whom he identified as Negroes in South Africa. He mentioned their color and also how they lived in round huts of wattle and daub. "They have" he continued, "trained their eyes to see and make only round things. We never find nature drawing straight lines or rectilinear figures, and these innocent children of nature derive all their knowledge from their experience of her."²⁹⁹ Deriving from this description, one could, in a sense, trace the genealogy of Gandhi's circle of 1935, to his primitivism, in which innocence, nature, race and geometry were almost synonymous. Indeed, one could suggest, somewhat cautiously, that the circle, in Gandhi's understanding, not only denoted two-dimensionality, it also connoted the innocence of those he had infantilized in his ethnographic descriptions. Gandhi, in essence, emphasized the circle because he naturalized geometrical forms. In

this regard, I am also tempted to bring attention to the plan of a Zulu village. While it is not entirely clear in what setting Gandhi studied the Zulu hut, it is conceivable, that he visited one in a Zulu village. (Plate 6.5)

However, to be fair to Gandhi, in spite of the confidence he placed in his geometry, in early 1936, he was noticeably skeptical about his ability to conceive a village in advance of living in one. After all, as he prepared to shift to the village of Segaoon in March, Gandhi had declared in his statement in to Jamnalal Bajaj, “whatever defects there may be in my way of thinking will come to the surface on my living in a village.”³⁰⁰ If previously, in 1935, Gandhi had appeared reasonably familiar with the village and its environment as a circular space with “a radius of ten miles,” now it would appear that Gandhi approached the village as a place that he was not familiar with. Indeed, it would appear that Gandhi believed it was impossible to be familiar in advance with villages and village living. In this regard it helps to note that in May, a few weeks before Gandhi shifted to Segaoon, Mira Behn had written to him and alerted him that it had rained in Segaoon. In his response to Mira Behn, Gandhi wrote how the storm that she described was “an indication of what things can be in the villages in the rainy season... It is better therefore not to make elaborate plans about things which are themselves unending.”³⁰¹ One supposes, then, that Gandhi shifted into Segaoon on June 15th that year, so as to understand how villagers lived on a day-by-day basis without elaborate, long term plans. He approached the village as a place which changed, depending upon its changing circumstances, particularly its climatic circumstances.

As I have suggested earlier in this dissertation, some aspects of Gandhi's interest in learning about how life in Segaoon was contingent upon its changing circumstances, are evident in his description of Mira Behn's hut. Gandhi, as I have demonstrated, celebrated Mira Behn's hut for the manner in which she had shown how the waste that came out of the activity of blasting a well, if not the waste stemming from day-to-day activities at the village, could be innovatively used to build a home. Gandhi, in essence, praised Mira Behn not only for her having built some portions of her hut with material that was immediately available to her from within the general region of the village, but also, and more significantly, for her having used the material that providently became available to her from the construction of other portions of the hut. Indeed, the very activity of building the hut provided the waste material and the logic of construction for further building activity within it. In this sense, if Gandhi praised Mira Behn's hut as a sign of her real-rural mindedness, one would think he did so because he understood real-rural mindedness as a form of thinking that stressed making something productive out of resources that were exigently available.

And yet, even as he sought to emphasize a life of coping with and making something productive out of exigent circumstances in Segaoon, Gandhi also simultaneously inculcated a stable, inner sense of calm and equilibrium within himself. If living in a village demanded adapting one's way of thinking to changing circumstances, then it was also necessary to find some way of making peace with a life of changing circumstances in general. It was necessary, in essence, to define a secure internal place from within which an outside world of unpredictable, fluctuating phenomena would not appear too overwhelming or depressing. To adapt oneself to the flux of external

phenomena, it was imperative to define an inner reserve, from the vantages of which one would never be perturbed.

In this regard, shortly before he shifted to Segaon, in the rain, Gandhi wrote in his journal *Harijan*, about God as a form of inner music.³⁰² God he wrote did not exist outside the body. One cannot look for exterior proof of good; rather “we must ever fail to perceive him through the senses, because He is beyond them. We can feel Him, if we will but withdraw ourselves from the senses.”³⁰³ Gandhi likened the feeling of God, then, to a divine music that incessantly occurred within oneself. The senses, if anything, merely served to drown out this “delicate music” which was different from and significantly superior to whatever one perceived or heard through one’s senses.³⁰⁴

In the archive, one finds some evidence of how Gandhi continued with this train of thinking later that year. By August, for instance, Paula Lecler, an American and Y.S. Chen, a member of the Cotton Industry Commission of China, asked Gandhi at Segaon if he was happier being in the village, rather than outside of it.³⁰⁵ Gandhi responded by saying “I cannot say, for my happiness is not dependent on external circumstances.”³⁰⁶ In so far as Gandhi believed in an inner space where the experience of the divine was by no means beholden to the senses, it came but naturally to him to repudiate external circumstances while talking about happiness. Indeed, even as he lay in hospital in Wardha recovering from fever a month later, Gandhi had made it a point to write to a disciple how thinking of objects of sense, that is, the external world, was a delusion.³⁰⁷ When Gandhi mentioned that he wrote the letter in a weakened, enfeebled state, he did so

because he wanted to indicate how he still remained strong from the inside, strong enough, at any rate, to articulate himself well in writing.³⁰⁸

On the one hand, then, Gandhi sought to embrace the unpredictable and contingent nature of life at Segaon. Nothing could be known about life in Segaon in advance; rather one could only learn how to cope with its changing circumstances, as they panned out, in real time. On the other hand, Gandhi sought to simultaneously promote a spiritual philosophy in which one need not be overwhelmed by fluctuating external circumstances, in so far as one could securely define, from within a resilient, interior redoubt, the exterior world as flux and changing phenomena. Indeed, from the vantages of this secure, interior place, one could even expect, in advance, the exterior world to be fluctuating, contingent and “unenduring.”

This secure, interior place of Segaon in 1936, like Gandhi’s geometrical preconception of the village space of 1935, has a history. One could, in this regard, refer to the sermon Gandhi gave on the *Bhagavadagita* at the Satyagraha Ashram, Ahmedabad, on March 31st 1926. In this sermon, he mentioned how the understanding of people could be secure if they withdrew their senses from objects the way a tortoise draws its limbs in from every side. He suggested:

The man who holds in his senses to prevent them from going out to their objects, as the tortoise draws in his limbs and holds them as if under a shield, has an intellect which is steadfast. Only that man who voluntarily holds in his senses may be known as completely absorbed in God. When our senses seem to move out of our control, we should think of the tortoise. The objects of the senses are like pebbles. If we hold in the senses, the pebbles will not hurt, that is, if we hold under control our hands, our feet, our eyes, and so on.³⁰⁹

While considering how Gandhi made it clear, in 1936, at Segaoon, that his happiness was not dependent upon external circumstances, it is helpful to return to this sermon of 1926. In so far as one identifies Gandhi as a religious person who sought, in 1926, to interpret the message of the *Gita* as a call to become an idealist, that is to withdraw from the sensorial world, it is only appropriate to say that he was, at Segaoon, in 1936, revisiting a place that he had already long since been with familiar with. The place into which the tortoise withdrew its limbs in 1926 was, in essence, the place of ““delicate music” which was different from and significantly superior to whatever one perceived or heard through one’s senses” in 1936. Indeed, if, as an historian, one attaches any amount of importance to the manner in which Gandhi’s defined life at Segaoon as unpredictable and contingent, one must also, at the same time, appreciate how he, from the vantages of his already developed inner calm, was prepared in advance for the unpredictability and contingent nature of village life. In so far as Gandhi had already, at a prior time, drawn a distinction between an exterior sensorial world and an interior space of withdrawal, his descriptions from his early months in Segaoon merely served to affirm, if not throw into dramatic relief, that very distinction. Once again, it would appear, that Gandhi knew how things would be in a village, prior to staying in one.

From the vantages of a history of Gandhi and architecture in general, the implications of suggesting that Gandhi may have been able to anticipate his experiences in Segaoon, in advance of his stay in it, cannot be emphasized enough. After all, once such a suggestion is made, Gandhi’s descriptions of life in the village in the early months of his stay in it increasingly appear to refer not so much to what he saw or encountered empirically in that place. Rather, those descriptions begin to appear as rhetorical

reiterations of existential and spiritual axioms that he had already long since been brooding over and developing. Indeed, even Gandhi's reference to Mira Behn's hut as a sign of her ability to cope with and make something productive out of exigent circumstances, now has to be studied from the vantages of an already established framework in which it was but expected that an exigent exterior world would be sharply silhouetted against an interior world of withdrawal and calm.

There is, then, something to be said about how spaces repeated themselves in Gandhi's experiences. His nascent spatial imaginings or, for that matter, his allusions to metaphorical spaces, oftentimes found expression in his sensory experience of spaces. Indeed I would go so far as to say that one can only approach Gandhi's descriptions of his own sensory experiences of spaces after considering the prospects for a Gandhian theory of sensory perception in general. From the vantages of such a theory of sensory perception, Gandhi's own sensory experiences in 1936 come across as signs that referenced a larger, perhaps spiritual, spatial reality. Gandhi's spatial experiences in 1936, in essence, were always already foretold by his own theories of spatial perception.

Throughout this dissertation, then, I have pursued precisely how spaces repeat themselves, be they in the work of Laurie Baker, in the eyes of those who built the tumbler roofs of Wardha, or, for that matter, in the eyes of those who live under those roofs. Spatial cognition, as I have repeatedly emphasized, is informed by memories and habits. By the same coin, I have also explored how architects' very capacity to think of space, is informed by their belief in the feasibility of translating their own spatial conceptions into reality. In this sense, from an architectural point of view, spatial experiences are oftentimes merely reiterations of what has been conceived of in advance.

Indeed, Laurie Baker's silence about his work alerted me to my own tendency to read spaces from the vantages of my own training as an architect.

At the end of this dissertation, then, I wish to state that I have only begun to explore how to write the history of a Gandhian architecture in India. Based upon my research on Gandhi's own writings, I find that I can, at this stage, define the project of writing about the history of Gandhian architecture in a negative manner. On the one hand, I feel tempted to place Gandhi's most elaborate engagement with architecture in his career, that is, his engagement with Mira Behn's hut, at the beginning of the history of a Gandhian architecture. On the other hand, the beginning of Gandhi's ability to be receptive to the world of exigencies to which the hut belonged, preceded his visit to the hut, if not his visit to Segaoon itself. I find then, that what I provisionally propose as the origin of a Gandhian architectural history, has its own origins in a prior time. In essence, at the very moment I wish to write about and affirm the history of a Gandhian architecture by identifying a moment of origin, I feel obliged by what I find in the archive, to negate that moment of origin and reach further back towards an antecedent.

That it is the profuse and thorough Gandhi archive itself which necessitates such negations in the first place, must be fairly obvious to my readers. With every facet of Gandhi's life, his letters and daily utterances, at one's fingertips on the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* website, establishing the continuity between his present and his past never came easier. And the easier it becomes to establish this continuity, the less sovereign and singular the events in Gandhi present, as he wrote or spoke about them, begin to appear. Everything he said or wrote begin to appear as echoes of an anterior writing or saying, which, are only too accessible in the archive. That he never wrote the

word Déjà vu in his life, then, must only be attributed to the fact that he was not conversant in Frenc

²⁹⁰ Laurie Baker, interview by author, Trivandrum, India, 12th June, 2006.

²⁹¹ Admittedly, more has been written in the west, than in India about how modernists have come to understand architectural autonomy, or what I refer to as architecture's ability to express its own, internal truths, irrespective of social, cultural and existential realities. One can read, in this regard, Anthony Vidler's "The Ledoux Effect: Emil Kaufmann and the Claims of Kantian Autonomy" in *Perspecta*, Vol. 33, Mining Autonomy (2002)16-29. In that essay, Vidler wrote about how many modernists believed in "architectural autonomy," that is, they believed architecture, like the other arts, possessed its own specific language. "Whether as a way of classifying the qualities of architectural "form" as opposed to "style," or as a way of defining the role of the architect in an increasingly specialized professional world, the assertion of autonomy has been a leitmotif of modernism, from the end of the nineteenth century, if not earlier. Art historians, beginning with Wofflin and continuing with Riegl; architects beginning with Loos and continuing with Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe; critics beginning with Fry and Stokes, and continuing with Greenberg and Krauss, all in different ways and with differing agendas have established their grounds of debate on the relative autonomy of modernist aesthetic practices." Vidler, 15. Furthermore, Vidler writes about how the modernist Phillip Johnson (1906 – 2005) built upon the work of such writers as Emile Kaufmann (1891 – 1953) to promote the geometrical nature of his own work. In 1950, Johnson wrote about architectural autonomy as, "variously, "the free play of architectural language as style, the independence of architecture from society, and the personal freedom to change style at whim." Vidler, 26.

²⁹² Tilak Baker, interview by author, Trivandrum, India, 28th November, 2006.

²⁹³ Tilak Baker, interview by author, Trivandrum, India, 28th November, 2006.

²⁹⁴ One architect, Himanshu Burte has been rather critical of such an approach. In his understanding, to reflect as a modernist upon Baker's work as if it were an alternative to modernism is to diminish that work. In this regard, Burte wrote in his tribute to Baker, a day after his passing away on April 1 2007 that: "It is a commentary on our understanding of what it means to be modern, that Baker's approach has often been thought of as only an 'alternative' to modern architecture. That may simply mirror the fact that we view the Nehruvian direction of modernization as the only possible one. In reality, the sheer intelligence, social aptness, and technical, aesthetic and constructional innovativeness of Baker's work contrasts starkly with the standardized processes of producing waste and alienation followed by the mainstream." Himanshu Burte, "April 2, 2007 Laurie Baker: A Tribute,"

http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:gD2s_sTJG18J:gyanpedia.in/tft/Resources/books/bakerburte.pdf+&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESgEzRR_ecbU5C5HdP-7pmV_Y19j6--1mWLc9HIXvswt014AkRv7RwKCicKX0NoKAYnVB7fr6WddidVUQwEiwrnqbiTw7pDkqTqVP4LWqi0HusLW47iC2o1Ps355Y96pE3vi9Pp8&sig=AHIEtbRfHGKNykwIUmxCe8YITjY6O0bHYQ (visited 02/22/2011).

²⁹⁵ Gautam Bhatia, *Laurie Baker: Life, Work, Writings*, (New Delhi: Viking/HUDCO, 1991) 16.

²⁹⁶ This is, however, not to say that that Baker's meeting with Gandhi is of little consequence. Rather, what begs emphasis is how the more one pursues Baker's religious and his secular past, the more one can begin to anticipate his receptivity towards Gandhi's emphasis upon architectural frugality and honesty in general. As I have suggested earlier, Baker's faith, and his history as a satirist, especially from a time prior to his meeting with Gandhi, have to be taken into consideration when it comes to understanding his career in India as an architect who built out of locally available material. Indeed Baker's efforts, as a cartoonist, at railing against the architectural dogmatism of his peers, have to be studied in the light of some of the letters he wrote to his mother in England, in the early nineteen forties.

²⁹⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, "Letter to a Village Worker," [Before October 12, 1935] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999) 51, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

²⁹⁸ In this regard, there are a few references in the year 1917, in the *Collected Works*, to Amritlal Thakkar (1869-1951), a follower of Gandhi, who designed the plan of the Ashram building in Ahmedabad. On the 15th of September, for instance, Gandhi wrote to Maganlal Gandhi from Bombay, "Amritlalbhai has fallen ill. That is the reason why he is late. He is somewhat better now and will be ready with the plan for our

building in eight or ten days perhaps.” Mahatma Gandhi, ““Letter to Maganlal Gandhi,” [September 1, 1917]] from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 16 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 4, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL16.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010. Furthermore, on September 25th, that year, Gandhi once again wrote to Maganlal Gandhi from Ranchi “Amritlalbhai believes that, without a framework in wood [for the foundation], it will be impossible to build there. There was a letter from him today, in which he says he will send the plan to you in a day or two.” Mahatma Gandhi, ““Letter to Maganlal Gandhi,” [On or after September 25, 1917] from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 16 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 42, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL16.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

²⁹⁹ Mahatma Gandhi, “Satyagraha in South Africa” in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 34 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 12, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL34.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

³⁰⁰ Mahatma Gandhi, ““My Idea of Living in a Village” sent to Jamnalal Bajaj, from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 68 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 308, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL68.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

³⁰¹ The complete statement on May 27, 1936 was as follows: “The storm you describe is an indication of what things can be in the villages in the rainy season. Perhaps the things were better in Segaon, because it is not on an eminence as Paunar is. Every position has both its advantages and disadvantages. It is better therefore not to make elaborate plans about things which are themselves unending.” Mahatma Gandhi, “Letter to Mirabehn” [May 27, 1936] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 44, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

³⁰² Mahatma Gandhi, “Where is the Living God” [Published in *Harijan* 13-6-1936] from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 127, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

³⁰³ Mahatma Gandhi, “Where is the Living God” [Published in *Harijan* 13-6-1936] from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 127, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

³⁰⁴ Mahatma Gandhi, “Where is the Living God” [Published in *Harijan* 13-6-1936] from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 127, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010. Gandhi also had written a letter to a follower, Vijaya N. Patel, in the same vein on July 11th: “There is within us divine going on constantly; it is, no doubt, beyond the perception of sense-organs, but we can believe in it on the strength of our faith. Moreover, just as we have sense-organs, so too we have the *atman* within us, don’t we? Hence the *atman* may experience it, being itself beyond the senseorgans. I experience every moment the presence of the *atman* and therefore I occasionally catch the echoes of the divine music. With effort you, too, can hear the music if you wish. It is not the music that another can help one hear. One can communicate to another only that which is perceptible to sense-organs. About the *atman*, the *atman* alone can know.” Mahatma Gandhi, “Letter to Vijaya N. Patel” [July 11, 1936] from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 210, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

³⁰⁵ Mahatma Gandhi, “Interview to Paula Lecler and Y.S. Chen” [Before August 8, 1936] from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 283, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

³⁰⁶ Mahatma Gandhi, “Interview to Paula Lecler and Y.S. Chen” [Before August 8, 1936] from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 284, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

³⁰⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, “Letter to Jugalkishore Birla” [September 7, 1936] from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 345, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

³⁰⁸ I am reproducing some portions of the letter here for reference. Gandhi wrote: “I was about to have an attack of fever when your letter of 26th August reached me. I am now free from fever but am still confined to the hospital bed. Even then I should write to you. Thinking on objects of sense is a delusion.” Mahatma Gandhi, “Letter to Jugalkishore Birla” [September 7, 1936] from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 69 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 345-346,

<http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL69.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

³⁰⁹ Mahatma Gandhi, "Discourses on the Gita" [As given at the Satyagraha Ashram, Ahmedabad, during morning prayers on March 31, 1926] from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 37 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 110, <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL37.PDF>. Accessed: 10/18/2010.



Figure 1.1: The Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab, photograph, <http://www.gujarattourism.com/showgalleryphotos.aspx?contentid=141&webpartid=1713> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 1.2: Inside the Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab, photograph, <http://www.gujarattourism.com/showgalleryphotos.aspx?contentid=141&webpartid=1713> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 1.3: Hriday Kunj, Gandhi's Home at the New Satyagraha Ashram on the banks of the Sabarmati river in Ahmedabad, photograph, <http://gandhiashramsabarmati.org/visitor-information/ashram-tour-sites.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 1.4: Mira Behn's hut in Segaon, photograph, <http://ruralreporter.blogspot.com/2009/11/bapu-kuti-sevagram-wardha.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 2.1: House at Gandhi's Phoenix Settlement, photograph, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/7440918@N03/4318094849/> (accessed 03/16/2011).

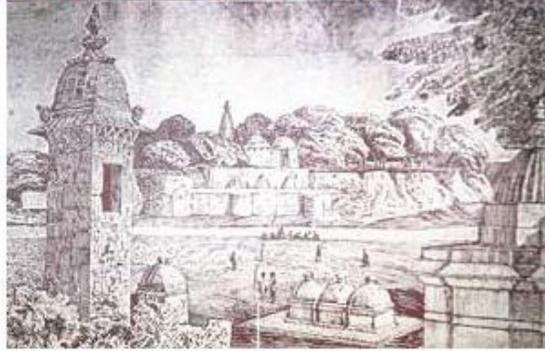


Figure 2.2: The Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab, photograph, <http://www.gujarattourism.com/showgalleryphotos.aspx?contentid=141&webpartid=1713> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 2.3: The Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab, Photograph.

7. Dudeshwar no Aaro (riverbank)



Since times immemorial, this place has been used for cremation. Mythology has it sage Dadhichi who built an ashram here and sat in penance, would only offer milk to the shivaling. The name Dudheshwar is a combination of Dadhichi and doodh. Another story goes that Lord Indra needed a potent tool for turning it into a powerful demon-slaying weapon. The sage offered his right arm and its bone went into making Indra's vajra.

CURRENT STATE: A crematorium

Figure 2.4: The crematorium also known as Dudeshwar No Aro, drawing, <http://www.ahmedabadmira.com/index.aspx?Page=article§name=News%20-%20Fathers%20Day§id=68&contentid=201002262010022618280325185c960a6> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 2.5: Walls of the Sabarmati Jail Today, Photograph.



Figure 2.6: View from the Ashram towards the river today, photograph, http://picasaweb.google.com/lh/photo/_9HTKCOx9f6OAw_ig0kagA (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 2.7: Hriday Kunj, photograph, <http://picasaweb.google.com/lh/photo/yTuEN41cWzBKVgQci2L4Tg> (accessed 03/16/2011).

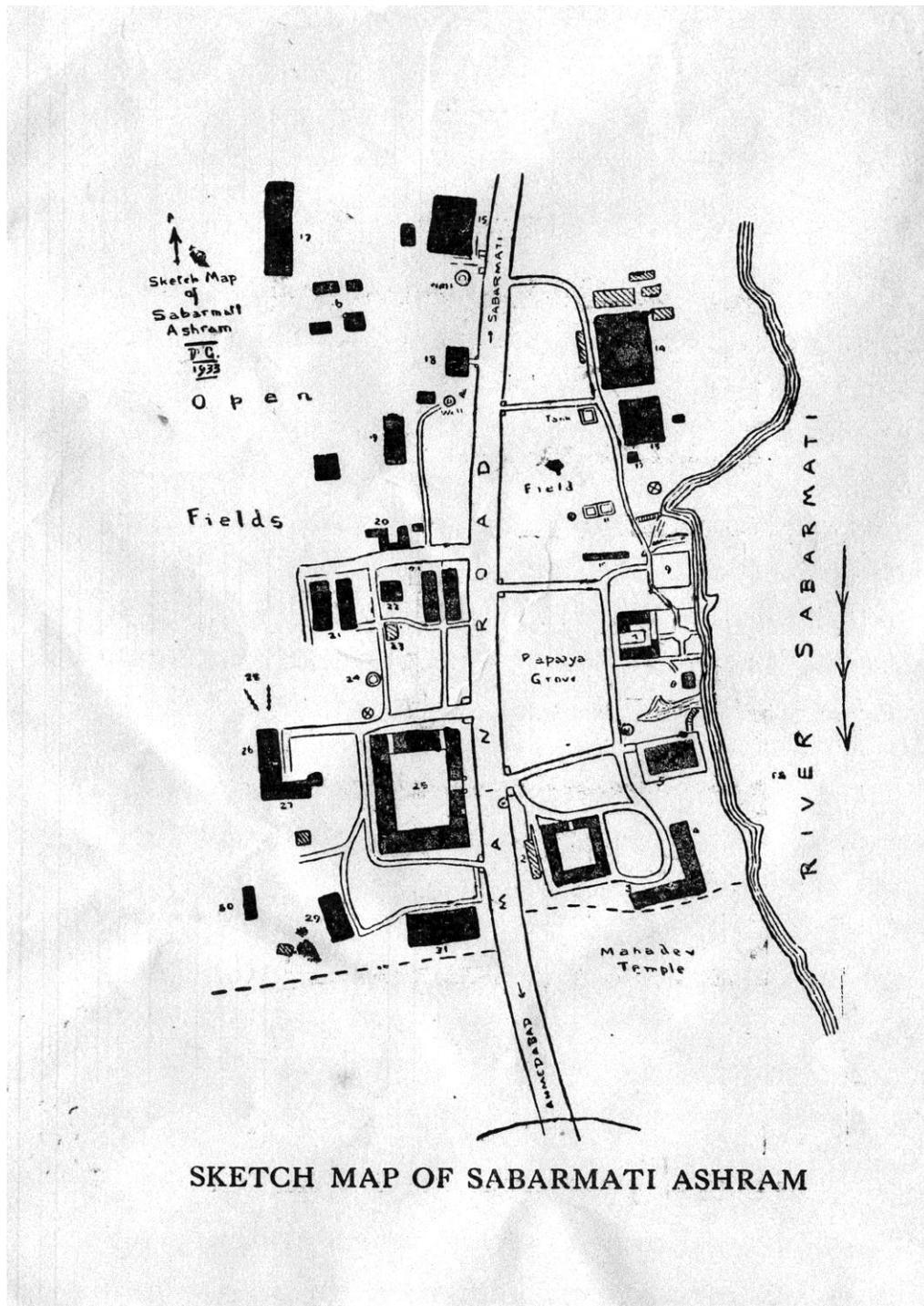


Figure 2.8: Duncan Greenlees, “Map of Sabarmati Ashram,” sketch (Palghat: Scholar Press, 1934): 1.



Figure 2.9: “Magan Niwas,” photograph, <http://gandhiashramsabarmati.org/visitor-information/ashram-tour-sites.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 2.10: “Nandini,” photograph, <http://gandhiashramsabarmati.org/visitor-information/ashram-tour-sites.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 2.11: “Udyog Mandir,” photograph,
<http://gandhiashramsabarmati.org/visitor-information/ashram-tour-sites.html>
(accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 2.12: Duncan Greenlees, “Court of the Chatralaya,” Photograph (Palghat: Scholar Press, 1934): 10.



Figure 2.13: Court of the Chatralaya [As seen today and known as Somnath Chatralaya], photograph, <http://gandhiashramsabarmati.org/visitor-information/ashram-tour-sites.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 2.14: *Bapu Kuti* [Mira Behn's hut], photograph, <http://picasaweb.google.com/lh/photo/1EuU2NSrtEQJsUvCEiRTnA> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 2.15: Mud relief in Mira Behn's hut, photograph from film clip, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HKZMQ74Org> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 2.16: Mud relief in Mira Behn's hut, photograph from film clip, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HKZMQ74Org> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 2.17: Windows with bamboo frames and article case, photograph from film clip, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HKZMQ74Org> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 2.18: The bathroom floor in Mira Behn's hut, photograph from film clip, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HKZMQ74Org> (accessed 03/16/2011).

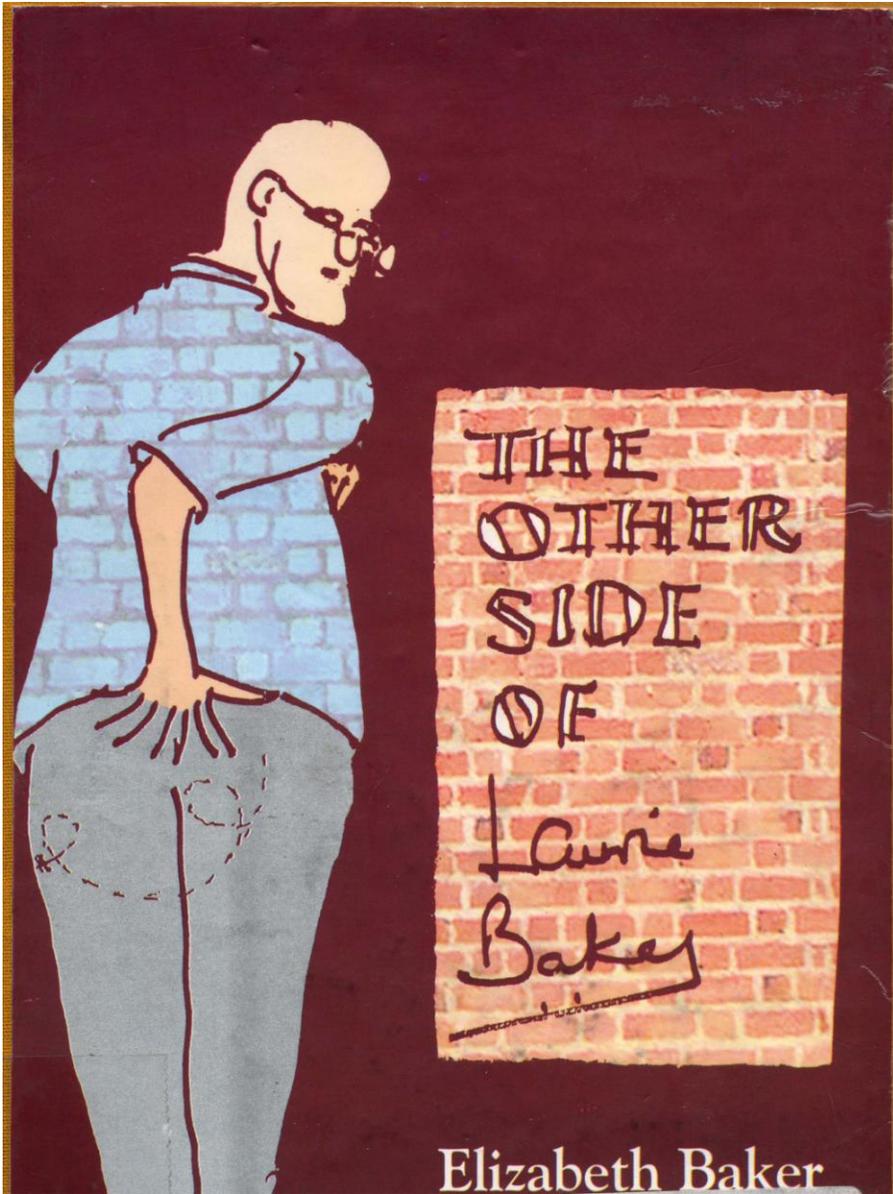


Figure 3.1: Cover of *The Other Side of Laurie Baker* (Kottayam: DC Books, 2007).

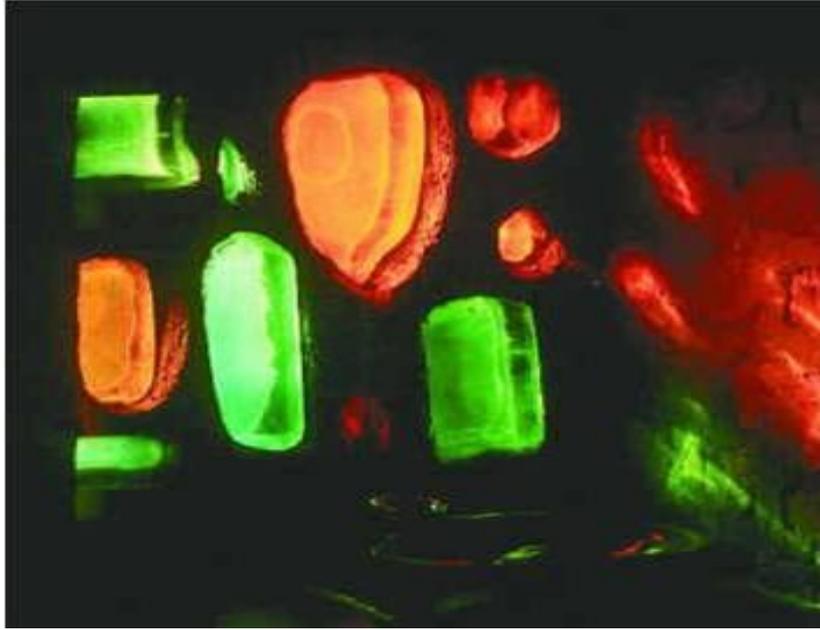


Figure 3.2: Joginder Singh. “Baker's innovative use of discarded bottles, inset in the wall at Col. Jacob's residence in Thiruvananthapuram, creates a stained glass effect,” photograph, <http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl2005/stories/20030314000906400.htm> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 3.3: Coventry Cathedral (Old) 1939, photograph, <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/5062090> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 3.4: Laurie Baker. Ladies Hostel at Center for Development Studies, Photograph.



Figure 3.5: Laurie Baker. Interior of Hostel at Center for Development Studies, Photograph.



Figure 3.6: Laurie Baker. *The Center for Development Studies*, photograph by Seema K.K., <http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/pictures-of-buildings.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 3.7: Lakshmi Arvind. *Light as a Leaf* [View from inside the Padmanabhapuram Palace], photograph, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/lakshmiarvind/3841145299/lightbox/> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 3.8: The exterior of the refurbished Coventry cathedral, photograph, <http://www.yourlocalweb.co.uk/west-midlands/coventry/pictures/page2/> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 3.9: The Baptistry of the new Coventry cathedral, photograph, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/herry/3538639716/lightbox/> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 3.10: A Typical Mangalore Tile [Double Grooved], photograph, http://btiles.com/roofing_tiles/clay_roof_tiles.html (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 3.11: Siddharth Bhandari, A Typical Mangalore Tile roof, photograph, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/75061930@N00/4738115641/> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 3.12: Sudhir K. Jain, *Critical Structural Details: Mangalore Tile Roof Construction*, photograph, <http://www.world-housing.net/whereport1view.php?id=100055> (accessed 03/16/2011).

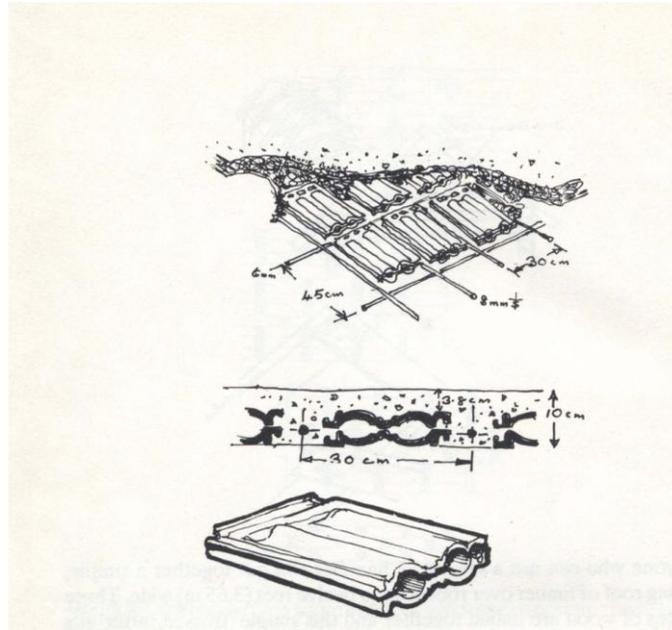


Figure 3.13: Laurie Baker. Typical Filler Slab, Drawing from Gautam Bhatia's *Laurie Baker: Life, Work, Writings*, Gautam Bhatia (New Delhi: Viking/HUDCO, 1991), 238.



Figure 3.14: Laurie Baker. Self Employed Women’s Association Building [Sewa Vilaapshala], photograph by Seema K.K., <http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/pictures-of-buildings.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).

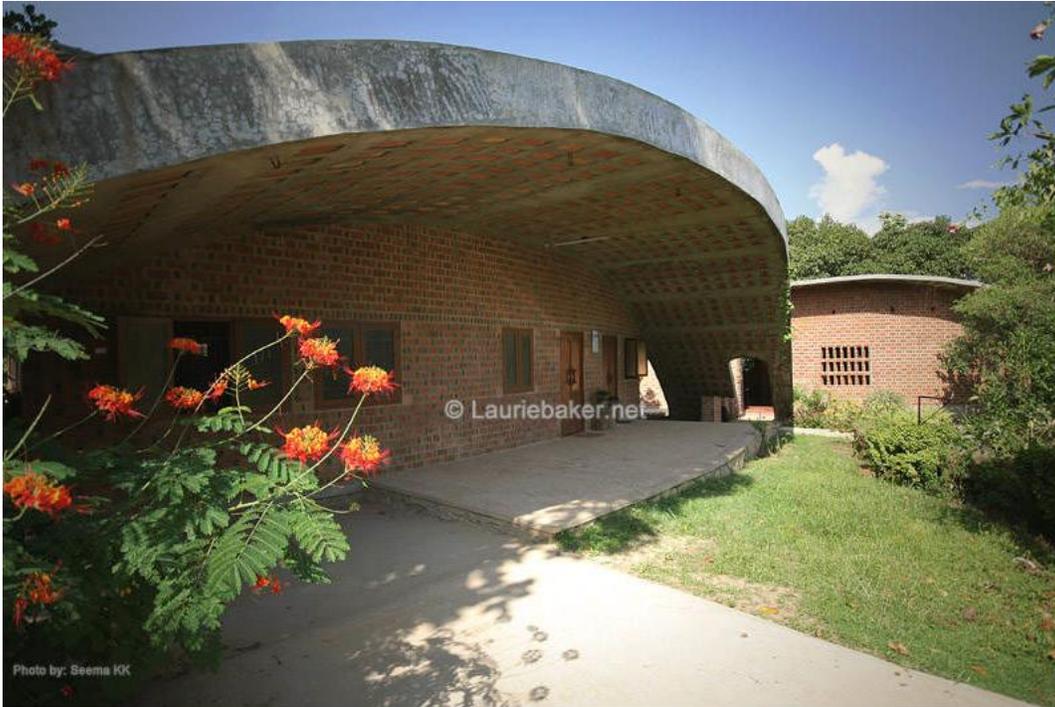


Figure 3.15: Laurie Baker, Self Employed Women's Association Building [Sewa Vilaapshala], photograph by Seema K.K., <http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/pictures-of-buildings.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 3.16: Laurie Baker. Self Employed Women's Association Building [Sewa Vilaapshala], photograph by Seema K.K., <http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/pictures-of-buildings.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).

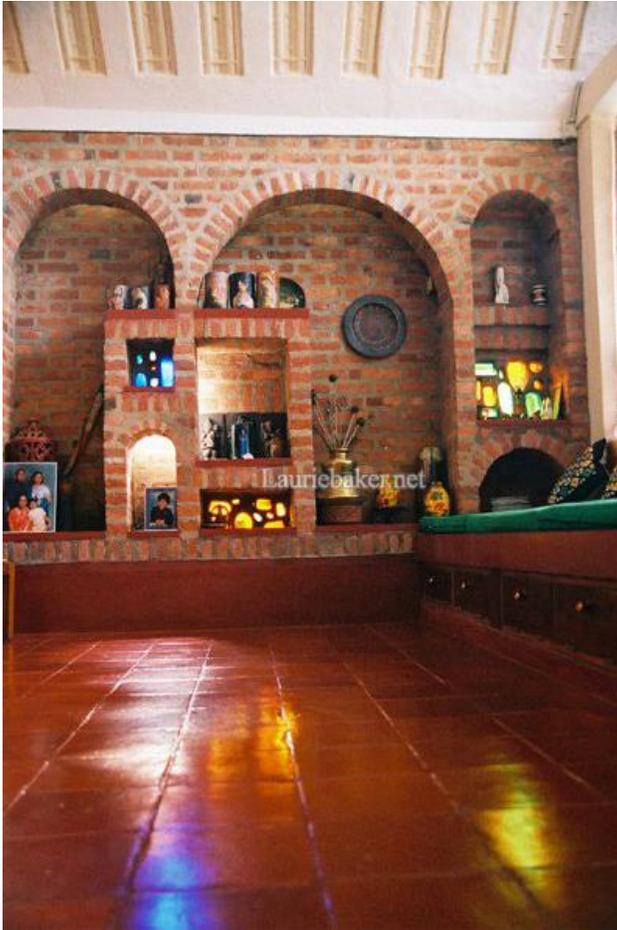


Figure 3.17: Laurie Baker. *Major Jacob's House*, photograph, <http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/pictures-of-buildings.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).

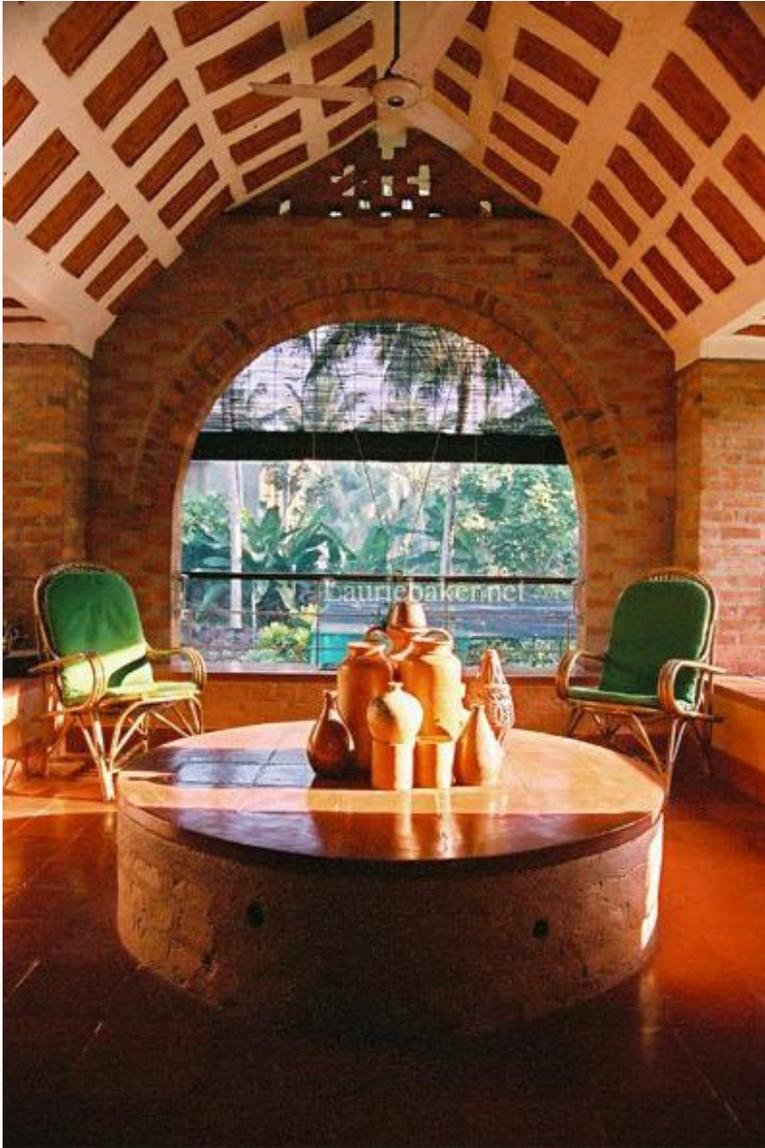
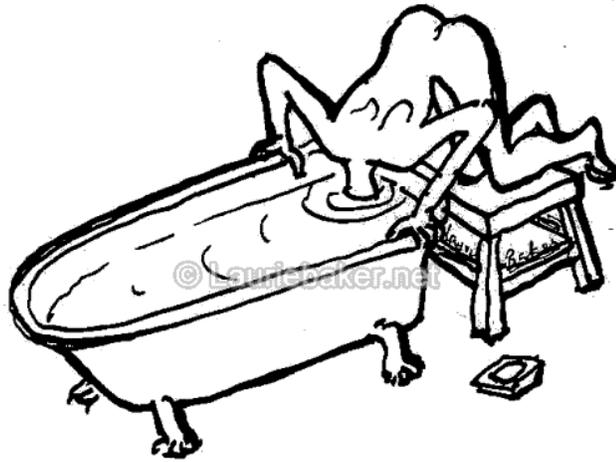


Figure 3.18: Laurie Baker. *Major Jacob's House*, Photograph, <http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/pictures-of-buildings.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 3.19: Laurie Baker. *Fight for Non-Violence*, Sketch,
<http://lauriebaker.net/personal/artwork/cartoons.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Taking a Head Bath....

Figure 3.20: Laurie Baker. *Taking a Head Bath*, Sketch,
<http://lauriebaker.net/personal/artwork/cartoons.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 3.21: Baker's Manuals.

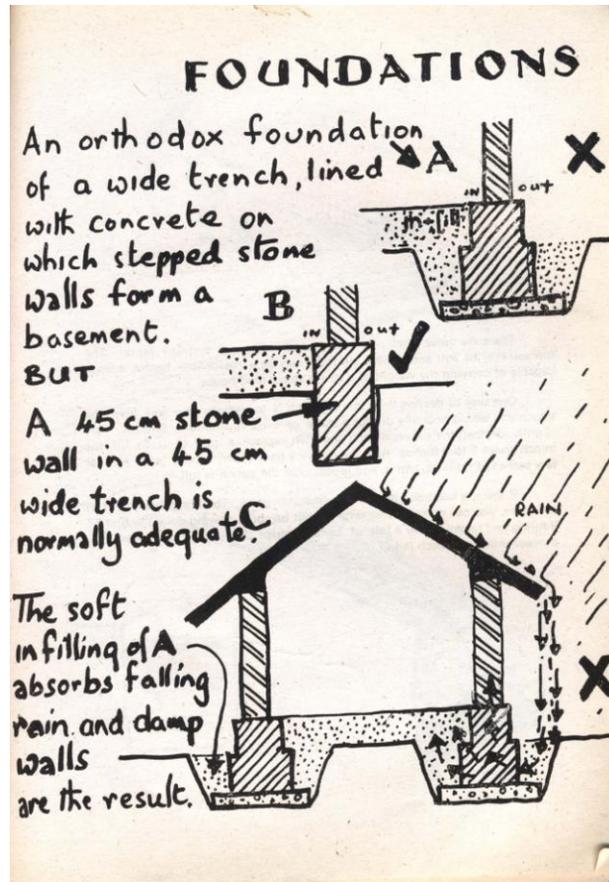


Figure 3.22: Laurie Baker. Drawing from *Mud* (Trivandrum: COSTFORD, 1985) 20.



Figure 3.23: Laurie Baker. Sketch from *Brickwork* (Trivandrum: COSTFORD, 1988) 6.



Figure 4.1: *Adi Niwas* [Adi Niwas: The Hut Mira Behn built for Gandhi in 1936. Gandhi eventually shifted over to Mira Behn's own hut. That hut has since been named as Bapu Kutii], photograph, <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/4993022> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 4.2: *Adi Niwas* [Roof of Adi Niwas made of Halves of Kavelus], photograph, <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/4993022> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 4.3: A cut-away section on display of the tumbler roof from the exterior: at the National Institute of Rural Development in Hyderabad.



Figure 4.4: The underbelly of the roof of the rest-house made of whole Kavelu tumbleders by the Center of Science for Villages at Kumarappapuram.



Figure 4.5: The CSV roofs as they appear in the Village of Waagdhara.



Figure 4.6: The interiors of Subhash Shamraoji Ghudewara's house. The walls are annually painted, but the roof is left as it is.



Figure 4.7: Vitthal Kolhe Ji's house at Wagdhara.



Figure 4.8: The colors of houses in Waagdhara. The most preferred colors are mostly shades of blue. These are samples at Wardha city where people from the surrounding villages go to buy the paints.



Figure 4.9: These are the kinds of roofs that Shyam Raoji remembers living under. Today, they are used to keep livestock in Waagdhara.

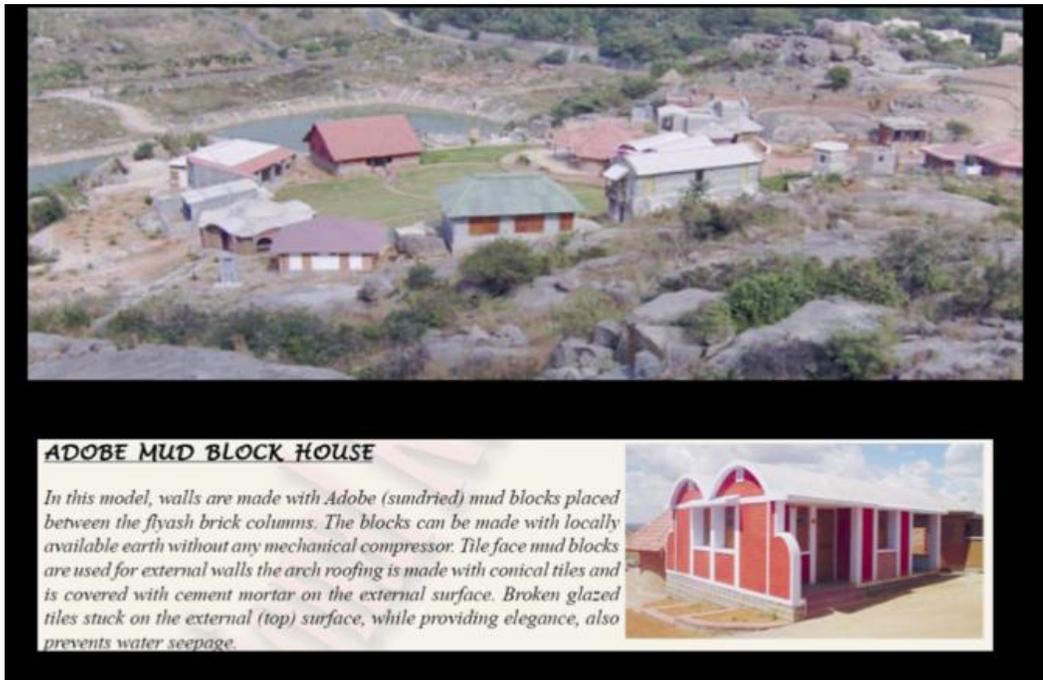


Figure 4.10: The exhibition at The National Institute of Rural Development in Hyderabad, photographs, <http://www.nird.org.in/Rural%20Technology%20Park/RTP%20Photo%20Gallery.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 4.11: The exhibition at The National Institute of Rural Development in Hyderabad, photograph, <http://www.nird.org.in/Rural%20Technology%20Park/RTP%20Photo%20Gallery.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 1. Gandhi and woman spinning India (All-India Congress Khaddar Department 1922, cover).

Figure 4.12: Khadi Propaganda Poster, from Lisa N. Trivedi, “Visually Mapping the Nation: Swadeshi Politics in Nationalist India, 1920-1930,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol 62, No. 1 (Feb., 2003): 17.

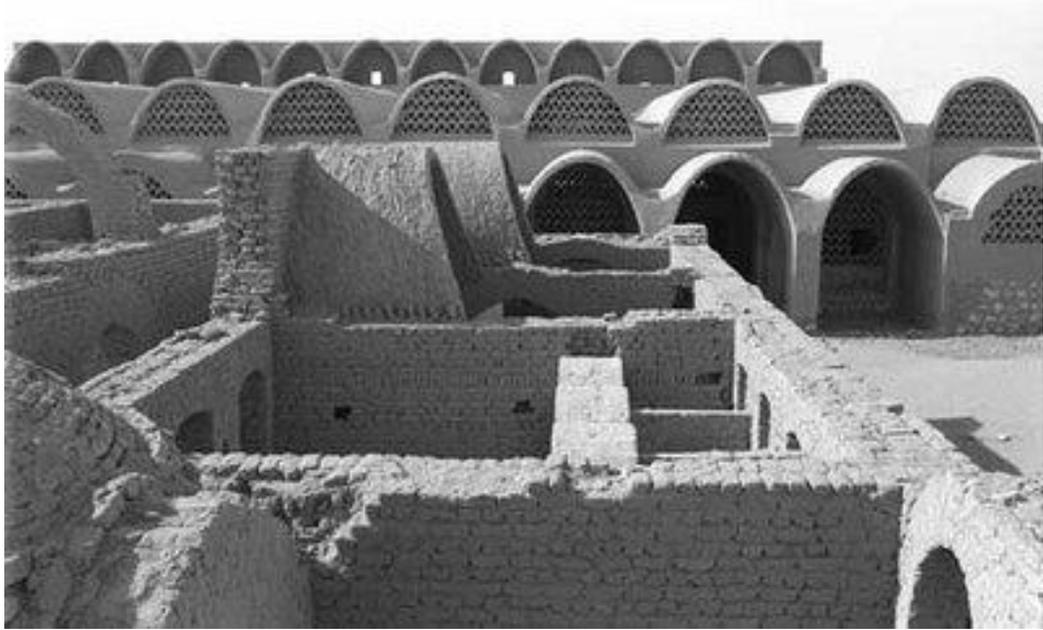


Figure 4.13: Hassan Fathy. Image of a Nubian Vault, at New Gurna, photograph, http://arquitecturasdeterra.blogspot.com/2008_10_01_archive.html (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 4.14: Kavelu tumblers which are usually made on a potter's wheel are cut into two symmetrical halves and then fired in an oven to make roof-tiles. This is an image of the backyard of the Center of Science for Villages in Wardha where Kavelu tumblers are baked whole, not in halves.



प्रभु ईसा का पुनरावतरण : मगनवाड़ी में स्थापित मूर्ति

Figure 4.15: Sculpture by Clarkwin Goodman at Maganwadi, photograph, from Jawaharlal Jain, *J.C. Kumarappa: Jeevan, Vyaktitva aur Vichar* (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1972): 50.



Figure 4.16: Painting by Nandalal Bose inside the exhibition area within Maganwadi.



Figure 4.17: Contemporary Efforts at Building Nubian Vaults, Photograph, <http://hopebuilding.pbworks.com/w/page/19222398/Earth-roofs-in-the-Sahel-provides-affordable-alternative-to-timber-and-metal-house-construction> (accessed 03/16/2011).

THE ARTISTES' VILLAGE:

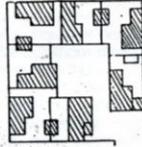
In this picturesque valley is located the Artistes' Village—over 600 independent houses, designed by Charles Correa. Against the back-drop of the Parsik Hills, the houses are grouped around a rivulet which runs through the site—making a lyrical context conducive for artists, writers, dramatists, musicians, architects, planners and those engaged in cultural activities. For this reason, a quarter of the houses are reserved for this category of people.

Each house has a small courtyard and/or terrace to augment the built-up space. Furthermore, the houses are incremental, i.e. they can be extended by their occupants (as indicated in the designs). In order to achieve this, each house has been built on an individual site.

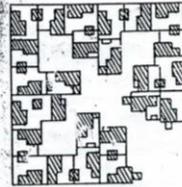
The principal bearing walls are independent of those of the neighbours—thus allowing any house to be extended unilaterally (with the previous permission of the Town Planning Officer of CIDCO).



At the smallest scale, seven houses are grouped around an intimate courtyard (about $8\text{ m}^2 \times 8\text{ m}^2$).



Three of these clusters combine to form a bigger module of 21 houses.



Three such modules interlock to describe the next scale of common space—approximately $12\text{ m}^2 \times 12\text{ m}^2$.

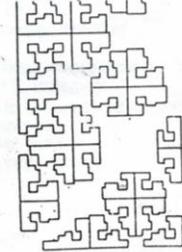
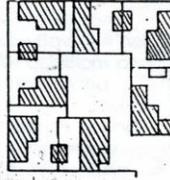
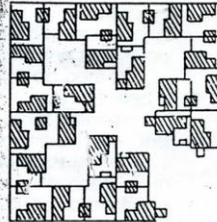


Figure 5.1: Page from “Own Your House Scheme ’85: In the Artist’s Village, Belapur, New Bombay,” Publication date unknown – hard copy available at CIDCO office in Navi [New] Mumbai.

At the smallest scale, seven houses are grouped around an intimate courtyard (about $8\text{ m}^2 \times 8\text{ m}^2$).



Three of these clusters combine to form a bigger module of 21 houses.



Three such modules interlock to describe the next scale of community space—approximately $12\text{ m}^2 \times 12\text{ m}$.

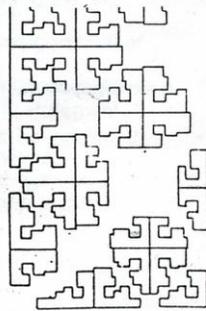


Figure 5.2: Page from “Own Your House Scheme ’85: In the Artist’s Village, Belapur, New Bombay.” Publication date unknown – hard copy available at CIDCO office in Navi [New] Mumbai.



Figure 5.3: Correa's Artist's Village some time after it's construction, Photograph from *Charles Correa* (Singapore: Thames and Hudson, 1996): 154.

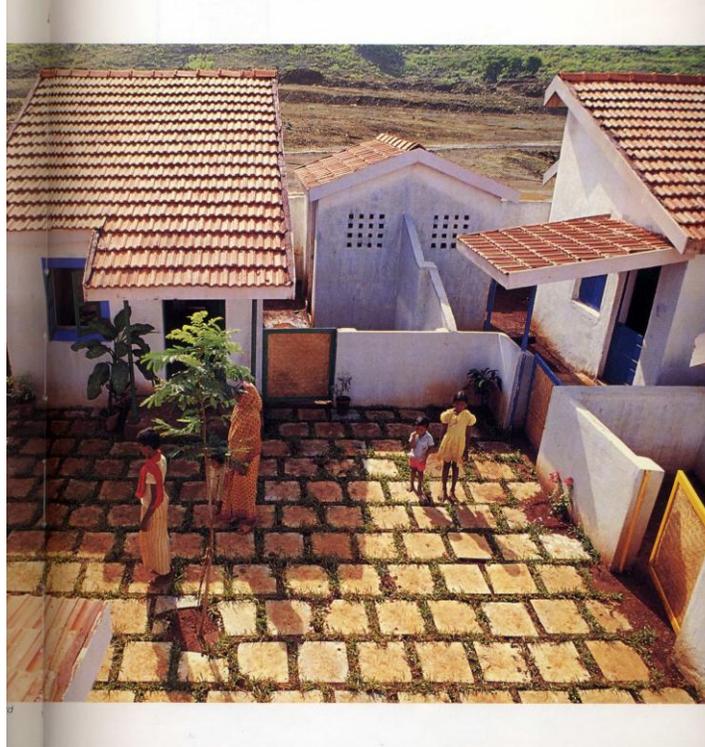


Figure 5.4: Correa's Artist's Village, Photograph from "Belapur: Space Disaggregated – Architect Charles Correa," *Architecture + Design*, Jan-Feb (1988), 62.



Figure 5.5: Correa's Artist's Village: Courtyards in the Present.



Figure 5.6: Correa's Artist's Village: in the Present.



Figure 5.7: Mrs. Suhasini Vivek Mastakad



Figure 5.8: Houses in the present.



Figure 5.9: Houses in the present.



Figure 5.10: Houses in the present.



Figure 5.11: Houses in the present.



Figure 5.12: Chawl in Sector II.



Figure 5.13: Chawl in Sector II.



Figure 5.14: Chawl in Sector II.



Figure 5.15: Chawl in Sector II.



Figure 5.16: Billboard in Trivandrum.



Figure 5.17: Billboard in Trivandrum.



Figure 5.18: Billboard in Trivandrum.



Figure 6.1: Coffee House near the Trivandrum Central Railway Station, photograph, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/draconianrain/3003410474/> (accessed 03/16/2011).



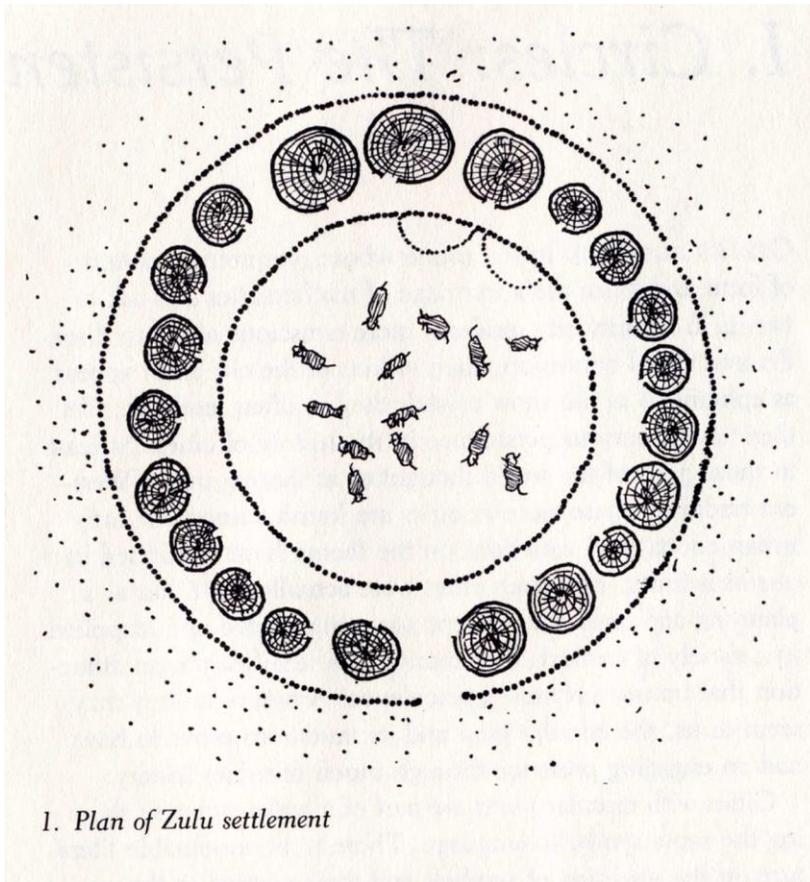
Figure 6.2: Bridge at CDS, photograph, <http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/pictures-of-buildings.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).



Figure 6.3: Bridge at CDS.



Figure 6.4: Bridge at CDS.



1. Plan of Zulu settlement

Figure 6.5: *Plan of Zulu Settlement*, Drawing from Norman J. Johnston's *Cities in the Round* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983): 4.

Bibliography.

Books

Baker, Elizabeth. *The Other Side of Laurie Baker*. Kottayam: D.C. Books, 2007.

Baker, Laurie. *Rural Community Buildings*. Thrissur: COSTFORD, 1997.

Bayly, C. A. "The origins of Swadeshi (home industry): cloth and Indian society, 1700-1930." In *The Social life of things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Bhatia, Gautam. *Laurie Baker: Life, Work, Writings*. New Delhi: Viking/HUDCO, 1991.

Bond, J. W. and Arnold Wright. *Southern India: its history, people, commerce, and industrial resources*. Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2004.

Bose, C.V. Ananda and K.T. August. *Housing and Society in Kerala*, ed. (Trivandrum: Nirmithi National Institute of Habitat Management, 1995) 22-53.

Chatterjee, Margaret. "Gandhi's Conception of a New Society." In *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi for the Twentieth Century*, edited by Douglas Allen. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2008.

Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist thought and the Colonial World: The Nation and Its Fragments* in *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Correa, Charles. *Own Your House Scheme '85: In the Artist's Village, Belapur, New Bombay*. Presentation Booklet, CIDCO office, Navi Mumbai.

Correa, Charles. *Charles Correa with an essay by Kenneth Frampton*. Singapore: Thames and Hudson, 1996.

De Souza, Hartman. "Appropriate Technology for Rural Development" in *India: Specially Published for the Festival of India* (Delhi: Brijbasi, 1987) 126

Dutt, Shoshee. *Wild Tribes of India*. London: Thos. De La Rue & Company: 1882.

Fathy, Hassan. *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1973.

Erikson, Erik. *Gandhi's Truth: The Origins of Militant Non-Violence*. New York: Norton & Comp. Inc., 1969.

Erikson, Erik. *Childhood and Society*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc, 1993.

- Erikson, Erik. *Vital Involvement in Old Age*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1986.
- Fox, Richard G. *Gandhian Utopia: Experiments with Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.
- Ganguly, Debjani. *Rethinking Gandhi and Non Violent Relationality: Global Perspectives*. New York, Routledge, 2007.
- Jones, Nigel. *Architecture of England, Scotland and Wales*. Westport: Greenwich Press, 2005.
- Gupta, Devendra. *Aaj Ke Sawal Gandhi Ke Jawaab*. New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal, 1972.
- Gupta, Devendra. *Inevitable Gandhi*. Delhi: Gandhi Book House, 1972.
- Gupta, Krishna Murti. *Mira Behn, Gandhiji's daughter disciple*. Delhi: Himalaya Sangh, 1992.
- Gupta, Manik Lal. *Constitutional Development of India*. Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributers, 1989.
- Gast, Peter. *Modern Traditions: Contemporary Indian Architecture*. London: Springer, 2007.
- Graves, Michael. "A Case for Figurative Architecture." In *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965-1995*, edited by Kate Nesbitt. New Haven: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996.
- Jain, Jawaharlal, J.C. *Kumarappa: Jeevan, Vyaktitva aur Vichar*. Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1972.
- Kumarappa, J.C. *Economy of Permanence*. Varanasi: Sarva Sewa Sangh Prakashan, 1984.
- Lambourne, Nicola. *War damage in Western Europe: the destruction of historic monuments during the Second World War*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001.
- Lang, Jon T., Madhavi Desai and Miki Desai. *Architecture and Independence: Search For Identity - India, 1880 To 1980*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.

- Lindley, Mark. *J.C. Kumarappa: Mahatma Gandhi's Economist*. Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 2007.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital: An Abridged version*. Edited and introduced by David McLellan. Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Mathur, Asharani and Sonya Singh. *Festival of India, India: Specially Published for the Festival of India*. Delhi: Brijbasi Printers, 1987.
- Mehrotra, Rahul and Sharada Dwivedi. *Bombay: The Cities Within*. Bombay: Eminence Design Private Limited, 2001.
- Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Perez Gomez, Alberto. *Architecture and the crisis of modern science*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983.
- Rael, Ronald. *Earth Architecture*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Ruskin, John. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1849.
- Sangrahalaya, Magan. *Devendra Bhai: A Lone Crusader*. Delhi: Ideas and Impressions, 2001.
- Sundaram, P.S.A. *Bombay: Can it House its Millions?* New Delhi: Clarion Books, 1989.
- Tarlo, Emma. *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996.
- Thompson, Mark. *Gandhi and his Ashramas 1869 – 1948*. Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1993.
- Weber, Thomas. *On the Salt March*. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2004.
- Weber, Thomas. *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Zachariah, Benjamin. *Developing India: An Intellectual and Social History c. 1930-5*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Journal articles

Alter, Joseph. "Gandhi's Body, Gandhi's Truth." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (May, 1996): 301-322.

Azeez, Abdul and Mustiary Begum, "Gulf Migration, Remittances and Economic Impact" *Journal of Social Sciences*, 20(1) (2009): 55-60.

Correa, Charles M. "Third World Housing: Space as a Resource." *EKISTICS*, Vol 41, No 242, (January 1976): 33-38.

Heston, Mary Beth. "The Nexus of Divine and Earthly Rule: Padmanābhapuram Palace and Traditions of Architecture and Kingship in South Asia." *Ars Orientalis* Vol. 26, (1996): 81-106.

Kramrisch, Stella. "Drāvida and Kerala: In the Art of Travancore," *Artibus Asiae*, Supplementum, Vol. 11, (1953): 1-51.

Mukhija, Vinit. "Property readjustment and a tenants' cooperative in Mumbai: some lessons and questions," *Environment and Planning A*, volume 38 [2006]: 2157-2171.

Perez Gomez, Alberto. "Architecture as Drawing." *JAE*, Vol. 36. No.2 (Winter, 1982): 2-7.

Poonacha, Veena. "Interpreting Gandhi differently" Portraying the Lived and Work of Two Gandhian Women," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 15:1, (2008): 51-80.

Rudolph, Susanne Hoeber. "The New Courage: An essay on Gandhi's Psychology." *World Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Oct., 1963): 98-117.

Shokoohy, Mehrdad. "Architecture of the Sultanate of Ma'bar in Madura, and Other Muslim Monuments in South India," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Apr., 1991): 31-92.

Trivedi, Lisa N. "Visually Mapping the Nation: Swadeshi Politics in Nationalist India, 1920-1930," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol 62, No. 1 (Feb., 2003): 11-41.

Vidler, Anthony. "The Ledoux Effect: Emil Kaufmann and the Claims of Kantian Autonomy." *Perspecta*, Vol. 33, Mining Autonomy (2002): 16-29.

Zachariah, Benjamin. "Uses of Scientific Argument: The Case of 'Development' in India, c 1930-1950." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 36, No. 39 (Sep. 29 - Oct. 5, 2001): 3689-3702.

"Belapur: Space Disaggregated – Architect Charles Correa," *Architecture + Design*, Jan-Feb (1988), 62.

Saint George Volume IV. London: George Allen, 1920.

The Journal of the Friends Historical Society Vol XVII. London: Swarthmore Press, 1920.

Online Sources

Burte, Himanshu. "April 2, 2007 Laurie Baker: A Tribute,"
http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:gD2s_sTJGl8J:gyanpedia.in/tft/Resources/books/bakerburte.pdf+&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESgEzRR_ecbU5C5HdP-7pmV_Y19j6--1mWLC9HIXvswt014AkRv7RwKCicKX0NoKAYnVB7fr6WDdidVUQwEiwrnqbiTw7pDkqTqVP4LWqi0HusLW47iC2o1Ps355Y96pE3vi9Pp8&sig=AHIEtbRfHGKNykwIUmxCe8YITjY6O0bHYQ (Accessed 02/22/2011).

"Devendra Bhai: The Crusader," May, 2008. Booklet titled *Prayas: Experiences in Partnership*. Delhi: Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology, 2008, http://capart.nic.in/pub/Magan_Eng.pdf. Accessed: 10/18/2010.

Gandhi, M.K. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. Delhi: The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India, 1958-1982. <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/cwmg.html> (accessed 03/16/2011).

Gupta Vibha. "Mahatma Gandhi - Grassroot Science,"
<http://www.lifepositive.com/spirit/masters/mahatma-gandhi/gandhian-economics.asp>. (Accessed 18/01/2011).

"*Gandhi Ashrams in India.*" http://www.gandhi-manibhavan.org/relatedlinks/sabarmati_detail.htm. (accessed 03/16/2011).

MANAS: The Journal of Intelligent Idealism. Manas Pub. Co., 1948-1988, <http://www.manasjournal.org/> (accessed 03/16/2011).

Sule, Surekha. "Low Cost rural houses from local materials." *India Together*, 18 June 2008, <http://www.indiatogether.org/2005/nov/eco-lowcost.htm>. (Accessed: 10/18/2010).