

ARCHITECTURE AND CONTEMPORARY INDIAN IDENTITY

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"from its early beginnings in the vulgar naturalism of raja ravi verma and the pastoral idealism of the bengal school, down through the hybrid mannerisms resulting from the imposition of concepts evolved by successive movements in modern european art on classical, miniature and folk style to the flight into 'abstraction' in the name of cosmopolitanism, tortured alternately by memories of a glorious past born out of a sense of futility in the face of a dynamic present and the urge to catch up with times so as to merit recognition, modern indian art by and large has been inhibited by the self defeating purposiveness of its attempts at establishing an identity"

-Jagdish Swaminathan (1962) (as quoted in Sambrani, 1989)

Through a critique of conventional perspectives on the relationship between architecture and identity, which base themselves upon the discourses of 'symbol' and 'local', the paper makes a case for the necessary engagement with the larger cultural landscapes to discern a reading of identity. The paper further argues that the question of identity is deeply entwined within the question of power structures and what is asserted on the built landscape is the identity of dominant or shifting power groups, irrespective of the symbol and the location. The paper does not set itself an agenda of undertaking a comprehensive survey on the identity issue in India, as the diversity and vastness of the country would, involve mapping varied landscapes in some detail – a task beyond the scope of this research project. Thus instead, the aim of the paper is to develop a framework to address the question of identity specifically in the Indian context.

1. THE IDENTITY QUESTION

Two backbone discourses that have been consistently used in architectural theory, to establish the relationship between architecture and identity are the discourse on symbolism and the idea of the local. Using the case of Architecture in India, we make preliminary arguments that both these discourses remain inadequate and sometimes inappropriate to throw any light on the relationship between architecture and identity.

1.1. The Myth of the Symbol

In dealing with the identity question in architectural practice and theory, the discourse of the symbol becomes central (Lang, Desai and Desai, 1997; Curtis, 1985, Khosla, 1985). Georges Bataille's (1929) analysis summarizes "architecture as the expression of the very being of societies":

“It is in the form of cathedrals and palaces that the Church and State speak and impose silence on the multitudes... It is obvious, that monuments inspire socially acceptable behaviour, and often a very real fear.” (Bataille, 1929)

The discourse of the symbol suggests that Architecture becomes an instrument to understand the identity of a culture. While the use of traditional materials and processes, in the symbol-discourse are equated with an assertion of a regionalist identity, the use of imported glass and steel get associated with a quest for seeking an international identity. There seems to be here a rather simplistic link between the architectural symbol and the corresponding claim of a particular identity.

“The international style, on the other hand, was the outcome of a rational approach to design, unhampered by historical and cultural restraints. It had a distinct expression with free facades, unembellished planes, long horizontal glazed windows and contemporary sun shading devices... The prominence accorded to this area (Chandigarh Capital Complex) symbolises the glorification of independence attained after a long and sustained political struggle. The Master plan is asymmetrical, symbolic of the democratic nature of the state... The high court symbolises three ideas in its structure – the majesty of law, the shelter of law and power and fear of law” (Bahga, Bahga and Bahga, 1993)

Architectural symbols remain inadequate to describe an identity since each symbol can simultaneously denote contradictory meanings and contradictory symbols can suggest similar meanings. This contradiction is illustrated in the following examples from the Indian architectural Landscape.

Let us take the instance of the *Taj Mahal* (Agra). While the *Taj Mahal* represents love and romance and the aesthetic taste of the culture, it also represents the desperate exploitation of labour, the appropriation of resources and the inequity prevalent in that culture. Architecture here simultaneously describes love and tyranny. We could perhaps think of a number of cases of such contradictory representations: the *Babri Masjid* of Ayodhya could be read as an account of Indian Heritage or a symbol of Hindu hatred, the *Capital Complex* in Chandigarh, as a sign of democratic modernism or an indication of western hegemony. Similarly the *National Crafts Museum* of New Delhi could be seen as a representation or assertion of Indian identity or the detachment or objectification of the Indian Folk Arts through the formal museum format; a *chawl* in Mumbai could represent a productive energy centre of the city or the abusive living condition of the labour (not housing but warehousing people), a *slum* as a celebration of entrepreneurship or urban decay. All these examples seem to suggest that each symbol can simultaneously denote not only different but contradicting meanings.

On the other hand we could also identify how various contradictory symbols suggest similar meanings: the *Hiranandani Complex* (Mumbai) malls with Greek columns and pediments and the high-tech glass and steel shopping centre of Gurgaon near Delhi, both suggest the existence and growth of the same consumer middle class. The new *Jain temples* in Mumbai that employ traditional materials and processes, the *Bahai Temple* in

Delhi designed as a high-tech shell structure and the *Radha Parthasarathi Temple* in New Delhi, experimenting with reinforced concrete, all suggest a kind of religious fundamentalism that supports cutting edge and expensive building processes. Similarly, the legislative assembly of Bangalore with its traditional and classical symbols, the assembly of Mumbai with an imposing modern form and the assembly of Bhopal that borrows symbols from ancient history, all represent the same seat of power, that of the state authority.

To complicate things further, it is extremely difficult to find any relations between formal abstractions and identity. For example a monumental scale does not necessarily indicate and impose power. The *Red Fort* (Delhi) in all its might today is one of the most accessible places; the pristine arcades of the Fort area in Mumbai today harbour a large informal industry. These places no longer represent an Empire. They no longer exert power (like Bataille's monuments) or are symbols of colonization – their symbolism has been inverted, converted and internalized.

From these examples we could possibly conclude that the relationship between a symbol and identity is a construction of the architectural theorist and hence it is misleading to discuss the issue of identity solely through the discourse of the symbol.

1.2. The Idea of the Local

Our literature review shows that the term 'Local' is the second most important idea through which the issue of identity is discussed. Here all concerns seem to hinge around and oscillate between the need to assert the local and a desire to embrace the extra-local (international, global, western etc.). "The search for roots" and "looking ahead in time" are the two respective positions that get articulated through this concern. Often buildings are conveniently bracketed into themes like "nationalist", "regionalist" etc. to very clearly distinguish from the other "internationalist" or "global" ones. Beyond both these positions, is another position that aims at "looking at real problems, rather than self-consciously trying to find identity as an end in itself" (Correa, 1983). This position attempts to locate the local in specific issues such as climate, behaviour etc. rather than leaning on oversimplifications of history and progress. In discussions that focus on the binary understanding of nationalist/internationalist or regional/global, this new category viz. "Critical regionalism" (Frampton, 1985) seeks "contextual inspiration" while simultaneously celebrating the "progressive modern".

Fredrick Jameson's (1994) criticism of Frampton's "Critical Regionalism" begins to articulate the perceived difference in the various positions on the local, where he suggests that the search for the local (whether in history, progress or climate) itself may be a product of the global multinational capitalism. Jameson tries to suggest that all these positions are actually the functions of the market and in that sense not too different at all.

Let us now examine the power of architecture to produce a sense of local, if any. Here the cases dealing with “constructing the nation” through architectural explorations, become particularly important. The three capital cities of New Delhi, Chandigarh and Bangalore are invariably cited as instances of the state’s attempts at manufacturing a sense of authority (Lang, Desai and Desai, 1997), a sense of modernity (Lang, Desai and Desai, 1997; Bhat and Scriver, 1990 Curtis, 1985; Kalia, 1987) and a sense of tradition (Lang, 2002, Bahga, Bahga and Bahga, 1993) respectively amongst its subjects. Revisiting these sites, one fails to observe any traces of ‘authority’, ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’ in the public realm. On the contrary exactly opposite accounts are available. While New Delhi is known for the misbehaviour and non-performance of the public service sector, Chandigarh still remains a feudal city (Correa, 1987) of *Babus*¹ without public transportation and Bangalore on the other hand looks like the most progressive city experimenting with Public Private Partnerships and being recognised as India’s Silicon Valley. Architecture here seems too meagre a phenomenon to influence the manner in which nationalism is imagined, experienced and executed. On the other hand, Eric Hobsbawm (1990) theoretically articulates how state impositions cannot be considered as identity at all:

“First, official ideologies of states and movements are not guides to what is in the minds of even the most loyal citizens or supporters. Second, and more specifically, we cannot assume that for most people national identification - when it exists - excludes or is always or ever superior to, the remainder of the set of identifications, which constitute the social being. In fact, it is always combined with identifications of another kind, even when it is felt to be superior to them. Thirdly, national identification and what it is believed to imply, can change and shift in time, even in the course of quite short periods. In my judgment this is the area of national studies in which, thinking and research are most urgently needed today”. (Hobsbawm, 1990)

Several post-colonial theories on the sub-national (including people from various diverse regions within the same nation), the subaltern (including people who are generally classified as the minority groups determined through race, religion, caste, class etc) and the trans-national (including people belonging to a certain nationality, but living in other countries) identities challenge the grand unifying concept whereby a nation defines the identity of its people. But more importantly these theories situate the identity issue in the political realm rather than in the aesthetics.

Let us further consider the attempts to claim an overtly local identity through the examples of some institutions. We could consider three cases: the *National Crafts Museum* in New Delhi, the *Jodhpur University Complex* and the *Centre for Development Studies* in Tiruanathapuram. All three institutions utilise local processes and materials to develop their architecture. Moreover, they also attempt to recreate physical scales, symbols and spaces that one would experience in the Indian village or a pre-colonial town. But the question that still remains is whether this process of engaging images to represent the past of the locale makes these institutions more local than the others. The

¹ Babu: A term representing the Indian Bureaucrat simultaneously cultured in European consumerism and Indian tradition. A Babu has become an icon of the continuing feudalism in the Indian Bureaucracy.

first contention, as we understand, is that there has been never a museum, a university and an international institute in an Indian village. The contexts of the village never produced such a programme. Such programmes seem to be a product of an extremely centralised state aspiring to develop institutions to represent its concerns. Delving deeper into the production of these buildings, we find that these were all state projects that were initiated during the years of political emergency² Nehru's Modern³ project was being challenged and a quest for regional identities was developing (Chatterjee, 1997). This was also the time when a number of regional parties in India developed after the intense centralisation imposed by Indira Gandhi (Chatterjee, 1997) – all asserting regional identities and in the process building and reinforcing localized constituencies. In such a political environment, then it is obvious that the state would support projects that asserted a high degree of regionalism. In the above examples, architecture uses extreme symbolism to execute such visions of the state. However, inspite of their claims of a search for a regional identity, the *National Crafts Museum* remains as much a museum objectifying the village cultures, the *Jodhpur University* also reflects its education mandate and purpose like any other university in India and the *Centre for Development Studies* undertakes the best political and cultural studies on par with any International Institute. The question then is for whom is the regional identity created? Or what effects are expected (both within and outside the profession of architects) after such attempts are made?

We could identify several writings that suggest attempts to create a nationalist or a regionalist identity (Lang, Desai and Desai, 1997; Bhat and Scriver, 1990; Curtis, 1985; Lang, 2002). But to find writings that undertake the task of examining whether the respective buildings actually manifest any notion of identity is extremely rare! While the discourse of the local against global has been a favourite amongst architectural theorists, the paper argues that these theoretical explorations remain far from being adequate in representing the constituencies central to these theoretical writings. The exact relation between architecture and identity remains undiscovered. The power of architecture to represent the 'local' requires a thorough re-examining.

2. LOCATING THE NOTION OF IDENTITY

The arguments in the earlier section question the relationship between architecture and identity. Perhaps a more thorough investigation of the concept of "identity" is crucial in

² Political Emergency: Between June 1975 and November 1976, the Indian State was in Emergency on account of the Parliament being dissolved by the President as the government was unable to maintain the law and order in the occasion of a mass movement against the centralisation policies of the then in power Indira Gandhi Government.

³ Nehruvian Modern: Soon after Independence, to address the issues of high diversity and extreme poverty, Prime Minister Nehru envisioned the idea of embracing modern ideas for developmental purposes. Various modern Institutions, technological developments, policies were initiated for the purpose. Architecture of the time also showed an aspiration towards stylistically developing the Modern Language.

order, to establish such a link. The complexity and ambiguity of the term “identity” can be clarified through the question: “what is one’s/your/my/our/its/their identity? Often burdened adjectives like *Brahmin, rich, Indian, Punjabi, male, NRI*⁴, *urban, global* etc. are used to answer this. Sometimes even more opaque adjectives like *traditional, folk, contemporary, progressive, orthodox, classical* etc summarise the answer. The problems with these adjectives are that they themselves are summations for a complex cultural subjectivity, which might have several layers of contradicting description. For example, the term *Brahmin* could be described as *the priest community, the Indian upper caste, the knowledge bearing community, the enlightened community, the power holders, the exploitative feudal lords* etc. The rendering of the particular description depends upon the intentions of the describer. Hence the adjective itself does not have a clear definition. The problem of deciphering identity becomes more acute when more than one such adjective is used to describe identity. In fact, asking such questions or answering the question in such adjectives suggests a very essentialist understanding of the concept which does not grasp the complexity and the process crucial to the production of identities (Hall, 1996).

In order to understand the issue of identity in its complexity one would also have to make a few theoretical clarifications on the question of identity. The first one deals with the issue of it being an *imagined concept*. Benedict Anderson (1985) suggests: “Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined”. The imagination of identity becomes the backbone for the making of the community itself. “Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a “production” which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (Hall, 1998). Here we embark on the second theoretical clarification of identity being an *evolving process* rather than a fixed entity. Thus, it is evident that identities are not static or predefined but “infinitely malleable” (Woodward, 1997). Echoing this notion, and enlarging it further is Appudurai’s (1996) thesis of the ‘production of locality’:

“I want to unsettle the idea of the local as somehow given, and draw attention to the fact that any form of local social life requires agency, purpose, vision, design. The local is as much a process and a project as anything else”.

Lastly one needs to ask why we are asking this question at all. A. G. K. Menon (1989) suspects that the need to assert a local identity is related to the recent political history in India characterised by “the rise of cultural fundamentalism and communalism” (Menon 1989). So also in the context of this research project and questions raised in its brief⁵

⁴ NRI: Non Resident Indian: a term that is very unique to the Indian state (one fails to hear *NRP* (Non Resident Pakistani) or *NRN* (Non Resident Nepali) etc). The term was coined by the state bureaucracy to describe the Indian Diaspora especially when this community wanted to open bank accounts or hold property in India. The state was gave incentives to this community for investing in India. Today the term has several connotations relating to a taste, value system, aspiration, class etc.

⁵ The context of the Conference is a Research undertaken in five countries: Mexico, Brazil, India, Egypt and Singapore. The website of the conference shows the brief asking the following questions:

- Who are the actors in the process of creating new identities and what are their roles? (cont...)

(where five post-colonial contexts are under study, four of which representing the third-world), the issue of the local versus the global become a central theme. The most important question seems to be: How do countries from the other (non-west) contexts represent their identities? And all of this is to be discussed in a platform created in the west. We aim at foregrounding the whole issue of *identity being an entity for global consumption* just as it could be *a vehicle for fundamentalist construction of nationhood*. Homi Bhabha (1994) summarises the complexity of the concept:

“Each time the encounter with identity occurs at the point which something exceeds the frame of the image, it eludes the eye, evacuates the self as a site of identity and autonomy and – most important- leaves a resistant trace, a stain of the subject, a sign of resistance. We are no longer confronted with an ontological problem of being but with a discursive strategy of the moment of interrogation, a moment in which the demand for identification becomes, primarily, a response to other questions of signification and desire, culture and politics.” (Bhabha, 1994)

The above theoretical articulations allow us to relocate the notion of identity beyond the discourses of ‘symbol’ and the ‘local’ into a larger *cultural space*. Henry Lefebvre’s (1991) views on the “production” of space are of utmost relevance here to describe the cultural space. He sees different forms of cultural construction as central to the production of space – principally in terms of class, but also gender, ethnicity, sexuality, family relations and age. He suggests: “space as a historical production, at once the medium and outcome of social being. It is not a theatre or a setting but a social production, a concrete abstraction, simultaneously mental and material, work and product – such that social relations have no real existence except in and through space” (Lefebvre, 1991). The paper argues that – it is in such a cultural space that identity is imagined, nurtured as a process, and values are associated to it. Identity is further used to manipulate such a space. Identity, being produced by a culture space, becomes an agent to reproduce it.

3. THE IDEA OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The earlier section locates the notion of identity in a larger realm of the cultural space. In this section we would explore the idea of the cultural space to articulate a framework for analysis of architecture to deal with the identity issue.

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- What are the patterns and criteria for distinguishing the "own" from the "foreign" in architecture?
 - What are the specific architectural themes and elements that are used to transfer the notion of identity?
 - Which are "internal" and "external" factors that influence the making of local identity?
 - Can these patterns be generalized or are they locally/regionally specific?
 - Is the concept of "critical regionalism" an appropriate tool to explain processes of building identity in developing countries?
 - Are the newly created identities short-term results of a long-term process of social transformation?
 - What is the value of geographic "location" in building new identities or restoring old ones?

One of the first deconstructions required for such an analysis is regarding the position of “urban professionals such as planners and architects who believe themselves to be democratic negotiators, community advocates, neutral social scientists, exponents of the beautiful and masterful shapers of space” (Borden, Rendell, Kerr and Pivarro, 2002). However they seem to act only as part of a much broader cultural space, which is governed by “deeper systems of power, economics and signification” (Borden, Rendell, Kerr and Pivarro, 2002). And in such larger and deeper systems, architecture and architects remain too feeble to create or manipulate identity. To construct an understanding of identity, perhaps there is a need to broaden the perspective from looking at architects and architectural form to a larger *cultural landscape*.

To develop the idea of the cultural landscape, Edward Soja’s formulations are significant. He articulates a critique of the architectural discipline’s vision of the city as a “collection of separate cells with built environment compacted together to form an urban mass” (Soja, 2002). His critique exhorts the architectural community to understand “a radically different large scale spatial or regional vision of the city as an expansive urban system of movement and flows of goods being produced and people living not just in built environments but in constructed geographies characterized by different patterns of income, unemployment, education levels, ethnic and racial cultures, housing and job densities etc.” (Soja, 2002) Soja advises architects to “think and work at the regional scale because it provides a very important entry point into the heart of what has been reshaping our cities” (Soja, 2002). This, in Soja’s words, will stir the architect away from “wild gropings into vague new concepts that may sound flashy and appealing but don’t necessarily lead us anywhere” (Soja 2002). It is the notion of the “regional” in Soja’s writing that we adapt here towards formulating the idea of the *cultural landscape* which allows us not only a much broader investigations into the various contexts of architectural intervention, but also elopes from the restrictions and connotations of the terms – *space*, *region* and the *city*.

The first formulation towards constructing the new framework using the idea of cultural landscape is to shift the analysis of architecture from a focus on buildings to a reading of landscapes. To illustrate this shift in the analysis of architecture, let us consider the case of housing development in Mumbai during early twentieth century. We find a number of accounts (Alff, 1991, Dalvi, 2000, Iyer, 2000) describing these developments as Art Deco explorations and a birth of Modern Bombay. These accounts elaborately document certain buildings that embody these Art Deco characteristics. It is through such an identification of the Art Deco, the idea the “Modern” identity is constructed (Alff, 1991, Dalvi, 2000). The reading of the larger landscape however would lead to the construction of a completely different scenario. The development of housing in the 1920’s was undertaken by the city administration, which brought two new concepts to India: the apartment type and the garden township. An investigation into history indicates that during the 1920’s the status of the city was shifting from being a market place and an industrial centre towards becoming an administrative and financial capital for the region where the English educated Indian bureaucrats (*Babus*) were demanding a European lifestyle. It was for this group, that the apartment type and garden townships were built. If we were to further describe the landscape of these townships, we find a number of slum

quarters developing on the edges of these settlements to serve the new apartments. The continuing feudalism is evident when we find at least one maidservant in each of the houses. Thus through this reading, the landscape is not modern as the building centric view seems to suggest – rather it is unequally modern! The case of early twentieth century housing in Mumbai effectively shows how when we shift the framework *from buildings to landscape*, the notion of describing identity through the adjective of “Modern” collapses and it is displaced by a new construction of Bombay during the 1920’s – that which harboured and supported indigenous feudal and thus not “Modern” as we would conventionally understand the term.

The second formulation in developing the new framework is a shift from focusing on forms to understanding of types. Aldo Rossi (1984) employed the notion of *type* to understand landscapes (Rossi was referring specifically to urban landscapes). The conception of *type* is useful not only as a “repetitive typical” (Rossi, 1984) that constructs and (hence) represents the landscape, but also as a “typology” that informs substantially the behavioural pattern that gets imposed by the type. This subsequently elaborates the contexts of the architectural production and the issue of identity. The useful examples here would be the development of large institutions in India during British colonisation like the *Victoria and Albert Museum* (Calcutta), the *Municipal Corporation Building* (Bombay), the *Muir College* (Allahabad), the *High Court Building* (Bombay) etc. These buildings are often described through elaborate documentation and analysis of their elements and forms (Tillotson, 1989). Further, genealogies of these forms are traced and terms like Indo-Saracenic, Gothic Revival and Vernacular Architecture are manufactured to facilitate their descriptions and origins. This then becomes the basis to describe the newly forming unique “Indian” identity that attempts to localise traditional Indian or European forms to create its own distinct architecture. But if we shift the framework from looking at *forms* to looking at *types*, a very different picture of these institutions emerges. The *type* of institutions during the colonial period speaks specifically of a fundamentally different kind of organisation in education, governance, justice etc. The elaborate arcades of the courts and the educational institutions, the large gathering space within the museum, the clearly demarcated bureaucratic capsules in the administration buildings indicate a distinct shift in the form of the government that wanted a change in the power distribution. The idea of the Public Space was getting formed through these building types. One clearly notes the immense pressure the colonial government would have been under from groups demanding political freedom. These were types, perhaps introduced to legitimise the colonial rule.

The case of institutions that were created after independence like the *Gandhi Smarakh Ashram* (Ahmedabad), *Indian Institute of Technology* (Kanpur), *Jodhpur University* (Jodhpur) etc would also be illustrative to describe the shift from *form to type*. Accounts of these institutions largely speak about the negotiation of the “Indian outdoor space” and “modern form” for creation of a “Modern Indian” identity (Bhat and Scriver, 1990, Bahga, Bahga and Bahga, 1993, Lang, Desai and Desai, 1997). The shift in the analysis *from form to type* would however focus on the *campus type* built for a completely new set of programmes and sponsored by the state. Here again a new type is developed for a context of a new nation with very clear state intentions towards developing generous

campus environments dedicated for education and research. Nothing specifically is Indian (as there was never any context for such institutions in India earlier) except for the symbolism. The state obviously is at the centre of power here aiming to manipulate its citizens for the projection and representation of a stronger nation. We can also see how the state is forced to share this power and form a different opinion regarding itself. The *type*-based analysis allows to distinctively move away from reductionist notions of identity that are explained through adjectives of “Colonial” or “Indian”. It is now able to specifically focus on the changes in behavioural pattern that the type enforces, like the public access to government in the case of colonial institutions and the generous education environment in the institutions built after independence. And through the understanding of this shift in the behavioural pattern we could throw some light on the complex identity issue.

The third formulation in the development of the framework takes off from our earlier section: “Myth of the Local” where the geographic region becomes the most important basis to establish the local. The notions of Rajasthani architecture or Gujarati architecture or even Indian architecture are formed on the ideas of the locale that get generated along geographic regions. In the assertion of identity, architecture seldom is able to represent a geographic region, but rather more accurately represents a cultural community, which might get identified due to a sharing of common social, political or economical backgrounds. Leo van den Berg’s (1987) conceptualisation of the urban landscapes as a function of spatial behaviour of its *actors* becomes central to this argument. Many theorists have significantly contributed to this conceptualisation of landscapes as a function of its actors (Latour, 1999 and Law, 1999 Bunschoten, 2001).

The earlier example of Bombay’s housing type in early twentieth century clearly indicates that the development of this type had nothing to do with the geography of Mumbai, but actually was the function of the new economic community of *Babus*. Similarly the cases of institutions in colonial and independent India inform us on the changing role of the state and the power redistribution amongst the citizens rather than the specific geographic locations where the institutions are built. The analytical shift of associating an architectural product from a geographic region to cultural actors could be best demonstrated with comparing the two works of the same architect: *National Crafts Museum* (New Delhi) and *Bharat Bhavan* (Bhopal). Both of these were state projects and were designed around the same time with a similar programme for a museum. The two projects however have a distinctly different expression: while *National Crafts Museum* has an overt display of the Indian Folk objects quoted for their “Indian identity” (Khan, 1984), *Bharat Bhavan* is an example of the campus type well carved in the contours of the landscape without any distinct elements of traditional Indian architecture, but with ample spaces for discussions, experimental arts and research. When we investigate the specific actors involved in the project, we find that the two projects were influenced by two different actors: Jyotindra Jain and Jagdish Swaminathan respectively. Very clearly, the intentions of the two actors are seen in these projects where, Jain advocates the display of traditional Indian Art as museum objects and Swaminathan remains preoccupied with providing spaces for all kinds of artists in a museum space. The *actor* analysis aims at understanding the architectural production as a function of the interests

of the various actors involved. The issue of identity could be filtered through such an understanding. While Jain's National Arts and Crafts Museum clearly aims at forcing an Indian Identity on its people through high objectification of the Indian folk, Swaminathan's Bharat Bhavan seeks to provide spaces for legitimising Indian Art Practices as contemporary art.

The *actor* analysis situates architectural discourse outside the realm of a region seeking agenda, which Ravindran (1985) claims as a "dangerous variety of historicism of 'fads' or 'styles' in architecture". Ravindran goes further to pose another serious problem on such a tendency suggesting that "the problem with seeking a regional identity is that, such attempts are basically reactionary in spirit and historically, they have been an important cultural manifestation of fascism" (Ravindran 1985). The actor analysis opens another important question on the identity issue – that of power. From the examples discussed earlier one seems to find identity through architecture closely associated with power centres. While in the case of the capital building exercises of the 60s, it may be the government holding power, in the case of the malls developing in the 90s, it seems that the power has reached the consuming middleclass. The fact that remains consistent through all the examples is that architecture is an excellent instrument to execute power. More accurately: architecture is able to represent power centres and power shifts. And perhaps, an identification of such power landscape is essential to understand the identity representations.

The idea of the cultural landscape forces a much larger investigative analysis to deal with the issue of identity. But more importantly, it is able to dismantle the singular notions of identity and render crucial complexity to the concept.

4. READING THE INDIAN LANDSCAPE

In this section we focus on the case of Indian Architecture. The first sub-section is a brief survey of mainstream efforts of "identity constructions in India". This establishes the context for the second sub-section, which focuses on contemporary Indian Architecture and Urbanism.

4.1. Establishing the Idea of Identity

The notion of a clear Indian Identity first surfaced with the Nationalist movement in India. This movement had taken root in India in 1905 with the establishing of the Swadeshi Movement which had emphasized non – cooperation with British Rule and the call to evolve a nationalistic lifestyle. A central emphasis of the movement was self-reliance, used as a tool to struggle against colonialism and to exert an "Indian" identity. It was with this movement that architecture was first appropriated to combat imperialism and become the foundation for a new Indian identity. The experimental houses in Shantiniketan by Rabindranath Tagore in Bengal during this period illustrate an exercise

to exert such an Indian identity in architecture based on indigenous techniques of building. On the other hand, the “Empire” was building several large institutions not only to facilitate the production and movement of goods, but also to administer its people. Often referred to as the Indo-Saracenic architecture in various texts (Tillotson, 1989), these buildings provided architectural benchmarks for the country. In the coming years, up to the attainment of independence in 1947, the nationalist movement itself evolved and oscillated between engaging with modernism as well as revivalist tendencies that attempted connections to a perceived golden era – an ancient Indian identity! However, the revivalist tendencies did not hold ground with the future leaders of India like Nehru clearly embracing Modernism as being the appropriate vehicle to represent India’s future agendas. For the elite patrons (of architecture) modernism was also attractive as it was devoid of references of the past and was brimming with optimism about the future. In fact, Nehru’s orientation made India the most vibrant site of the ‘modern project’ where the east - west relationship was constantly redefined and where the modernizing experience was a key to forming the identity of the nation. The culmination of this process was the invitation extended to Le Corbusier to design Chandigarh. Here his designs become the symbol for the modern independent India of Nehru’s imagination.

But India’s independence, while closing the debate on Architecture and identity, did not produce the society that the nation had hoped and yearned for and instead all efforts were directed to dealing with a splintered society the nation inherited. A society fractured by caste, class, economic disparities, rural- urban divides and a multitude of beliefs - religious affiliations that were wielded together as a nation state. Sundaram Tagore succinctly describes this post independence scenario - “Independence unleashed waves of violence that seemed to be the wrath of supernatural powers. Indeed, in a metaphorical sense, the violence embodied the Indian philosophical tenets of creative and destructive forces – the cycle of chaos leading to order to only return to turmoil. “Although modernity claims to decry chaos, its determination to oppose tradition breeds confusion” (Tagore, 1997) – a phenomenon that continuously resurfaces in the coming decades and plays itself out in far more potent manifestations as the nation evolved. Hence, in such a society and unlike in the west, the modern movement in both Art and Architecture in India did not develop gradually but resulted from a complete overthrowing of the traditional artistic system and adopting modern vocabulary as a Stylistic development often mistaken for asserting a Modern Identity. Issues of uneven social and economic mobility threw up disparate aspirations; and their representation became more challenging. It was in fact the decades after Independence that the struggle for identity really played itself out where these modern works were to soon confront ambiguity, anguish and the struggle to address the issues of multiple identities. Architects struggled with making modernism work, not only in relation to their existing traditions but also how they would place their modernity within a cultural context and often allow it to be subsumed by the process of the creation of local identities. This process attempted at reconciling western forms and issues with ideas and lessons from the past. This was an ambitious process that resulted naturally in divergent architectural forms and solutions - as well as the widening of the role of the architect and by default reinforcing the pluralism that has for centuries characterized the Indian landscape. Simultaneously, there evolved a greater sensibility towards reviving traditional crafts – of looking deeper at the

past for clues both to address issues of cultural continuity as well as economic appropriateness.

In fact by the 1970's, nationalism was less of an issue for architects than just attempting to resolve the contradiction of trying to intensify development while also preserving the best of the inherited culture and societal values. Interestingly this, while not being inspired per se by nationalism, was driven by a newfound sense of national identity. As also was the first manifestation of post-independence architectural production limited by an obsessive drive towards fabricating a pan-Indian identity. The decades of the 1980s saw many moves by architects to create this Indian identity or an 'Architecture for India'. The Festivals of Architecture, an amazing spectacle of international travelling exhibitions, celebrated the coming of age of a Nation and its confidence to confront the world on its cultural terms worked towards reinforcing this pan- Indian identity.

The discourses on efforts to establish a pan-Indian identity and to assert regional identities through architectural vocabularies was completely dismantled in the decades of the 90's which saw a large-scale development in the private sector and a dissolving of the public sector. The structural adjustment programmes and liberalisation policies of the Indian State adopted in the early 1990s brought in a new era of economic and cultural globalisation and subsequent changes in the Indian landscapes.

4.2. Contemporary Indian Landscape

It is in the rapidly growing urban areas of India that the largest investments and explorations in architecture are taking place. And it is here where the issue of identity gets most intense and contested. Recent changes in the urban areas show several types of new landscapes where the identity assertions are pronounced. We aim here to conceptualise four landscapes that represent identity assertions. These four landscapes are formed by Consumptive/Competitive Urbanism, Imaginations of the Diaspora, Conservation of City Environments, and Subaltern Assertions.

4.2.1. Consumptive/Competitive Urbanism

The most striking change in the recent landscape of the Indian Metropolis is the emergence of new types of built-forms for working, living, shopping, education and leisure that indicate a definite change in the behavioural patterns of the people inhabiting them. The changes in the economy of the city since its liberalisation seem to have influenced the development of these types.

For example, the dismantling of the means of production and the de-industrialisation processes has resulted in the work conditions changing from the traditional smokestack-industries to small industrial/commercial units and house based entrepreneur units. It is easy to find old industrial warehouses being converted into discotheques and art galleries, while small apartments are transforming into office and industrial spaces. On the other

hand housing production has changed from providing mass community provisions like open spaces towards providing privatized and often enclosed services of swimming pools and gymnasiums. Housing has entered into the competitive market in the environment of easy loans. Similarly, the traditional bargain oriented market places with the 'all-knowing' salesperson seems to have disappeared and its place has been taken over by shopping centres displaying branded products with clear price tags. The salesperson has changed to the "marketing executive" not involved in bargaining and negotiating anymore, but rather in advertising/branding. The large public and missionary schools also seem to have stopped growing and the education sector is now being taken over by expensive international schools.

One of the powerful descriptions of this emergent urban landscape is through the conceptualisation of "Privatopias" (Soja, 2002). While planning cities earlier, equity and quantity seem to be the most important agenda that drove Master Plans, in recent years these concepts have been taken over by concepts of Efficiency and Quality which are executed by action plans and partnerships between sectors. This shift seems to stem from an agenda of creating equal opportunities and services for people like in the case of plans for Chandigarh, New Bombay, Gandhinagar or Jamshedpur towards supporting a breed of a new class of professionals who demand high services and are ready to pay for it. The instance of Utopias sought in Gurgaon and Ambi-valley with high end luxury services through Public Private Partnerships, or the cleanliness drive of Bangalore through action plans, and the case of e-governance in Hyderabad all respond to the aspirations of this new breed of young professionals who live through easy loans as against their earlier counterparts who lived through provident funds and saving schemes. The power of this group is ascertained through the pressures that it creates on politicians, administrators and investors to create such utopias. We clearly see that the unit of concern has shifted from the traditional migrant labour to the young urban professional. Often these 'privatopias' are made possible without relying on (often inadequate) state provided infrastructures. Gurgaon for example has complexes that provide their own electricity, water supply and sewage facilities. These self-sufficient units will then try to shut themselves off from the rest of the urban landscape that is light years behind them in terms of amenities. Here in surreal contrasts a Gurgaon village exists cheek by jowl with a Gurgaon strip development complete with Malls, corporate curtain walled office towers and large residential complexes with gyms and saunas. Imagery, perhaps reminiscent of a sprawled version of a Blade Runner landscape is seen here. Here the elite, while located (often) on the edge of the city have clearly succeeded from the city and are not dependent on it for basic Infrastructure.

We find that from being state provisions with an agenda to homogenise people and provide mass services, architecture in the contemporary condition has become a market product luring aspirations of the new middle class that has emerged after the liberalisation and globalisation of the economy. The agenda here is to provide expensive quality services. The new middle class that has grown after the post liberalisation reforms of the state has to be distinguished from the earlier middle class specifically in its affording, demanding and spending capacity. The growing number of service apartments, townships with large facilities, call centres, shopping malls, international schools along

with instances where houses are increasingly converted into professional offices are very clear indications of architecture suggesting a shift of power holding from the state politicians to the new middle class.

4.2.2. Imagination of the Diaspora

The other characteristic shaping Indian landscapes is through the imagination of its Diaspora, popularly called as NRIs (Non Resident Indians). Since the 1990's the state opened its doors for this group hoping to draw large investments in Dollars. This spurred a number of developments that were aimed at luring the aspirations of the NRIs – these took the form of building large townships offering luxury lifestyles, which are often located in the prime sites. The development of the *Sea Woods NRI Complex* in New Bombay and *Sahara Ambi Valley Township* are perhaps the best examples to describe these developments. While these townships are elaborately advertised all over the world, entry to them is highly restricted to any average Indian as they are well guarded with the most advanced security and surveillance systems. These townships are equipped with the most expensive facilities and services that have become benchmarks for good living.

However, the imagination of the NRI has not only been of high-end consumer lifestyles, but this group has also been able to preserve a variety of traditional Indian conservatism that is evident through the matrimonial advertisements from this group that seek brides following orthodox Indian cultures. This group has been able to promote this mixed imagination manipulating Indian landscapes through the power of the Dollar and Dinar.

The other areas where the NRIs are investing are towards developing second homes in the form of “farmhouses” in the outskirts of the city. Some of the most important experiments in the architectural vocabulary are explored here, as these projects have become the largest earning components for average city architects. We see the NRI presence not only in business and industrial sectors but also in social sectors of health, housing and education.

In other instances, the NRIs tend to generously donate resources to preserve and develop institutions like in the case of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT). Here the state declared itself unable to bear the burden of sustaining a premier engineering institution. Immediately, the alumni of the institute that were mostly residents in the West poured large amounts of money to build new buildings and other infrastructure resources. The case of Indian Institute of Technology in Mumbai is interesting where the campus of the 60s and the 70s built in Modern vocabulary, is now studded with buildings with roofs and railings borrowed from classical Greece and classical India. Moreover, the engineering institutes that have acquired funding from such sources tend to diversify into establishing management schools – indicative of their pandering to the powerful financial sector.

The instance of IIT Mumbai indicates another layer in the imagination of the NRI community that includes an overlap of a superior technical expertise with an affiliation to high managerial abilities. This powerful overlap is increasingly becoming prominent

amongst the young professional groups that aspire to obtain a “green card” and who follow a definite pattern in education that includes a degree in a professional field followed by another degree in business management. This overlap gives a unique routine to such NRIs who work in Los Angeles but prefer to spend their weekends somewhere in the outskirts of Mumbai or New Delhi.

4.2.3. Conservation of City Environments

The other important phenomenon that is influencing the form of the urban areas in recent times is the growing concern for conservation and protection of city environments fiercely advocated by Non Governmental Organisations (NGO), citizen groups, Private Practitioners as well as other members of urban society. The recent acknowledgement of local communities by the state constitution⁶ towards encouraging their participation in city development processes has been a clear indication of the process of the decentralisation of power and decision-making.

There have been various kinds of coalitions like group of professionals and industrialists coming together to form a NGO, or a group of slum dwellers coming together with social workers to form cooperatives, or certain ethnic community groups forming a Community Based Organisation, or even tenants of old buildings forming an association. We find a series of these groups fighting for issues of cleanliness, public open spaces, better regulations, land appropriation, environmental protection, etc. In several instances, these groups have been successful in bringing about a change in the physical landscape of the city. Their pressure assertions have been so effective that in several recent occasions, the city administration has nominated these groups as consultants in the development of the city. The power holding of these coalitions can be understood when one looks at the instance where one such NGO⁷ is involved in developing a vision plan for the city of Mumbai that has the blessings of the political and administrative communities.

The instances of public space protection undertaken by some of the Community Groups are best illustrations of power-shifts and changes in physical landscapes of the city. These groups in several cases have fought against the appropriation and protection of Public Open Spaces in the city. In the case of Oval Maidan, the residents’ association was not only successful in mobilising substantial resources to fight the case in the court of law, but also to undertake the development of these open spaces themselves. In another instance viz. that of the Bandra Reclamation Grounds, a local residents’ group was able to protect an open space from being sold to a private developer by the local politicians. We find here that community groups have become custodians of some important open spaces in the city. They not only seem to protect and maintain the open space but also regulate the manner in which it is being used and by whom. We find here, again power

⁶ The 73rd and the 74th amendment in the Indian Constitution devolve power of city development, administration and governance at local levels. It encourages participation of the local communities and stakeholders in the planning and development processes.

⁷ The Vision Plan for Mumbai 2020 is initiated by the NGO: Bombay First.

being shifted from the land mafia and the politicians to these community groups who claim to represent ‘public interest’.

However, the new consciousness for environment has also been a cause for creating highly reductionist positions like fighting for the rights of leopards⁸ and saving the mangroves in the city. It is increasingly becoming clear that this kind of consciousness for the green eco-living is leveraged from the concepts of cleanliness, good living, crime free environment, health food etc. that are primarily marketing techniques of the global economy. This new environmental consciousness is described well by Amita Bhavisar (2004) as bourgeois environmentalism:

“The concern with an ordered environment, that is safe, hygienic, unpolluted, green and un-congested, is in some ways an extension of the concern about bodily well-being. Personal health, physical and mental, is linked to ‘quality of life’ and the affluent are more able to address their anxieties about crime, disease and other stressful urban characteristics. Parks for morning walkers, temples and *ashrams* where they can seek spiritual succour, the ‘green’ magic bullet of ‘plant more trees’ are ingredients in imagining cities in ways that exclude basic concerns of shelter, sanitation, water and transport as they affect the lives of the working class... For the bourgeois environmentalist, the ugliness of production must be removed from the city. Smokestack industries, effluent-producing manufacturing units and other aesthetically unpleasant sites that make the city a place of work for millions, should be discreetly tucked away out of sight, polluting some remote rural wasteland. So must workers who labour in these industries be banished out of sight. Even people whose services are indispensable for the affluent to live comfortable lives – domestic workers, vendors and sundry service providers, should live where their homes do not offend the eyes, ears and noses of the well-to-do... For the bourgeois environmentalist, urban spaces should be reserved for white-collar production and commerce, and consumption activities... Commerce and leisure are fused together in the new shopping malls, amusement parks, cineplexes and other developments sprouting across the city, frequently on land vacated through slum demolitions. That this ordered landscape is underwritten by an ugly real estate mafia with links to politicians and city authorities is another inconvenient fact that is conveniently forgotten... Bourgeois environmentalism forces us to rethink the assumption that ecology and equity are always intertwined in the Indian case. The notion of the ‘environmentalism of the poor’ has been powerful because it does describe the ideology of several social movements, but we need to remind ourselves that all environmental movements do not necessarily lead towards social justice. In fact, bourgeois environmentalism directly threatens the survival and other interests of the urban working class.” (Bhavisar, 2004)

⁸ The famous leopard case surfaced in Mumbai during the beginning of monsoons in 2004 where allegedly, for over a period of one and half weeks, more than a dozen leopards from the national park of Mumbai waged an organised attack on the poor tax paying citizens who decided to take their dogs for an early morning walk. Immediately the environmentalists came into limelight discussing the rights of leopards on the front pages of national newspapers and television talk shows. It was yet another time in recent years when the environment was considered under severe threat by rapid urbanisation. Social Workers working with tribal settlements in Mumbai confirm that the lives of the tribes have always been under severe threat from wildlife. However, it is only now that our urban sensitivity seems to respond to such incidences.

Bhavisar's allegations foreground an important issue of how this consciousness becomes a powerful instrument to allow processes promoting urban inequity and resource appropriations. The case of three villages⁹ on the outskirts of Mumbai City, which are famous for the hot water springs and several ancient temples could illustrate this charge by Bhavisar. Recent allegations by temple trusts in the area suggest that actions by uneducated villagers trying to take advantage of the rising number of tourists are hampering the sensitive environments and the spirituality of the place. The government on the other hand seem to see an immense potential in developing the area for tourism and desires to protect the environment that is allegedly getting damaged. While the area has undergone immense change over several centuries, it is only now that the consciousness of environment seems to surface. This consciousness seems to be propelled by the powerful temple trusts who see the development of the place into a spirituality centre with luxurious leisure based tourism products like nature parks, meditation centres, hot spring spas, etc. as against it being a traditional pilgrim spot with busy streets and occasional fairs. Thus this process of sanitizing pockets in the city where citizens have evolved a working consensus would, in the coming years in cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Bangalore etc become a determining factor in the aesthetics of the city. This process could potentially heighten the polarized adjacencies that already exist in most urban centres thus perhaps visually and metaphorically fracturing them to an even greater extent.

4.2.4. Subaltern Assertions

Having outlined three broad categories through which a large section of the contemporary landscape can be read, one finds an even larger portion of the visual physical and perceptual assertions that does not even make it to mainstream discourse of architectural identity. These subaltern assertions comprise the largest and perhaps the most negotiated landscapes that exist in urban India - landscapes that house a majority of the country's urban populations.

a. Interstitial Urbanism

Actors and their productions that lie outside architectural imaginations inhabit this category. Here activities of working, living, shopping and leisure are negotiated through completely different, often twisted means. One thing characteristic of this sphere is the lack of resources but then its flip side is a resilience to partake of all the above activities that make for urban living. A robust interstitial urbanism emanates from this resilience.

Taking the case of Mumbai, one finds that 60% of the city's population does not have access to formal housing. This population lives on 8% of the city's land. Some statistics show that about 70% of the city's population works in the informal sector. This number

⁹ The three villages of Vajreshwari, Akloli and Ganeshpuri are located some 60 kilometres to the north of Mumbai and are famous for the hot water springs and temples of Swami Nityanand, Vajreswari, Bhimeshwar etc. They attract a huge number of (around 500 per day and around 50000 during festive days) pilgrims from all around the area.

has risen with the new liberal economy that curtails bargaining capacity through fragmenting labour in the cities. This subaltern population lives in the interstitial spaces of the cities, such as road edges, *nalla spaces* (drainage channels), edges of railway lines, along pavements and engages in innovative means of negotiating everyday life by living in pipes, under plastic sheets or in houses with walls made of empty drums. Their workplaces could be under the staircases of some buildings, in little cabinets attached to some others and entire production units could be in slums¹⁰ or in “environmentally sensitive”¹¹ zones. Leisure activities for this largely migrant class could take place in the city’s (male-customer dominated) multitudinous dance bars, brothels or class B movie theatres or video parlours. Its shopping needs are met by roadside hawkers that sell cheap commodities, (often imported from China) inexpensive but delicious homemade food, garments (often dexterously made copies of the world’s most renowned and expensive brands) or pirated music CDs. They have to often come up with tactics to resist attempts

b. Temporary Spectacles

A large part of the cultural landscape of the country comprises of temporary spectacles. These range from wedding celebrations to festivals like the Ganesh Chaturthi, the Durga Puja and Muharram processions. While extravagant wedding celebrations often become yet another means of expressing middle class aspirations (some of these, a means of spending unaccounted money) festivals like the Ganesh and the Durga Puja become vehicles for organising political parties and ensuring voter loyalties and those like the Muharram can become outlets for a minority’s attempts to imprint its assertions on the landscape. These celebratory moments, when manifested in the urban realm can challenge architecture and planning disciplines’ secular modernist leanings. For 10 days of the calendar year, during festivals like the Ganesh or Durga Puja, colourful pandals (pavilions) dot the city’s¹² landscape – transforming the city temporarily with overlays of religious symbols and paraphernalia.. With different building societies competing over the grandiosity of their deities, one finds the sizes of deities increasing (though recently sizes of the idols have been restricted by planning authorities to 30 feet) and their attires getting more innovative from flower studded costumes to expensive silk attires complete with set designs that depict nationalist themes to imaginations of a possible *swarg* (heaven) to moral themes that educate children. Often these celebrations are accompanied by local singing competitions, skits and the puja chanting organised by the local street or building committee. On the final day of the respective festivals, with what constitutes a

¹⁰ As Surabhi Sharma’s documentary film, ‘Jari Mari’ shows, after the closing down of the mills in Bombay a large share of the garment production has been shifted into sweat shops, cutting down production costs for the manufacturers and ensuring larger profits for them at the same time subjecting the workers themselves to appalling conditions and further suppressing their dissenting voices by limiting their numbers and so not allowing organized unions.

¹¹ The Darukhana, a ship breaking yard in the Bombay’s eastern waterfront, houses a large informal economy that feeds off ship breaking, an activity deemed hazardous both environmentally and for human engagement. Workers, with a great threat to their own lives, engage in dismantling old ships. The parts of the ship obtained through this process and through this illegal activity are then sold in a large marketplace adjacent to this yard, thus meeting the city’s requirements of tools and scrap metal.

¹² The Ganesh Chaturthi is celebrated with the greatest pomp and celebration in Mumbai whereas Durga Puja is celebrated with the same fervour in Calcutta.

feat in traffic management, the deities are immersed in the sea. The *Muharram* procession on the other hand, a one-day Muslim festival, less flamboyant than the two pujas, where men donning black costumes flog themselves, becomes an enactment of trauma and mourning over the killing of prophet Mohammed's grandson in the public realm. Very often these temporary spectacles also become the loudest voices both auditory and visual through which the contest for space and resources is acted out.

c. Resurfacing of the ancient

Simultaneously there is an emerging phenomenon, which perpetuates a model or pattern of practice that is facilitating the resurfacing of ancient practices – the master craftsmen as the decipherer of ancient texts and scriptures! This resurfacing of the past is a growing phenomenon with numerous temples and an entire range of institutional buildings being built by these practitioners.

Besides religion-driven fundamentalism, the quest for greater economic mobility has triggered a great interest in ancient treatise with the industrialist and business community in India seeking refuge in the security of ancient props – where pre-industrial, even primitive images are confidently labelled as being integral to the regional identity. Besides being clear strains of resistance to the modern Identity these trends are symbolic of the collision course religious chauvinism has taken with the integrative mechanisms of globalisation; a situation in which communities are concerned about the threat to their identities as well as their autonomy and freedom to dissent. This is a trend that has led to large amounts of remittances from Indians abroad to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) being siphoned into either making expensive modern temple complexes or in organising rallies for demolishing mosques (as in the case of the Babri Masjid demolition). Moreover, an increasing demand for the ancient techniques of *Vastu Shastra* in the designing of buildings and interiors is a clear indication towards such a resurfacing of the ancient.

This phenomenon is questioning the basic foundations of the nation state and its time-tested capacity to absorb influences from the world and seamlessly absorb these towards constructing, enriching and perpetuating its own identity.

d. The folk and the vernacular

The folk or the so-called vernacular is manifested in two ways: one through the artisan, the craftsperson and the mason-builder and the second via an architect with formal education as an agent facilitating the design process. This method is characterised by a vigorous use of local materials and construction techniques often through a process that eliminates the drawing as the medium of communication or allows it to evolve on site. Often abandoning the Loosian adage of ornament is crime, this mode of practice engages in exquisite ornamentation that renders a sense of place to the dwelling.

This practice ensures an aesthetic that maintains the vernacular as the quaint symbol of the East that is being destroyed by western modernism and its rampant use of reinforced concrete.

Though sometimes one sees that in the type of practice where a formally trained architect acts as a liaison between the master builder or craftsperson and the patron, an exploitative relationship exists. Work of the craftsperson often goes unacknowledged and underpaid with accolades showered on the architect who has the means to get her/his work published or awarded.

Having said that, this model of practice may also be embedded in the socio-economic milieu of the region. It at times facilitates the engagement of social networks in the process of building and is characterised by cost effective solutions – often derived out of the conversion of social assets into financial ones in the way labour is engaged or material procured. This can be a valuable mechanism where housing can generate a building industry that creates a large economic potential within the region along with solving its housing problems.

5. POSTSCRIPT

In this paper we have argued for an alternative analysis of the architecture in India when dealing with the identity issue and suggest the locating of architecture in a cultural landscape in order to bring rigour to this process. The paper further discusses the shifts that are required for undertaking such an alternative analysis: which involve focusing on regional issues rather than individual buildings; on building types rather than forms; and on cultural actors and behavioural patterns rather than geographical locations.

In the postscript we aim to formulate the idea that if architecture and identity are functions of the cultural landscape, then practice is the negotiation with such a cultural landscape. The aspirations of the practice towards constructing/asserting identity could only be identified through an analysis of such cultural negotiations. We would briefly look at contemporary practices of the 90's and their efforts in such negotiations, because these contemporary practices have been able to significantly exercise some extremely difficult negotiations as against the practices that preceded them. While earlier practices enjoyed the protected and a sustained business from the state, the newer practices have to engage in stiff competition for jobs from the markets governed by private and global economies. Moreover, the sharp rise in the number of architects since the beginning of the 90's has assured a greater supply of architectural services contributing to the competition aspect of practice. The times of nation building politicians with prima donna architects have fast faded and the contemporary times have seen the growth of an entrepreneurial practice.

Our earlier examples of nation building through capital complexes, large institutions and mass housing describe practices that sought a certain kind of imposition of identity over the people. We have already discussed the case of the "Modern" Chandigarh remaining feudal, "Imperial" Delhi remaining chaotic, "Indian" Institutions remaining just as any other institutions anywhere in the world inspite of their localized formsetc. Practice seemed to execute visions of the patrons who were desperately trying to manufacture

identity. These practices evidently did not have a context for negotiating with the inhabitants of their architecture but only with the politicians and bureaucrats who facilitated the funding for these projects. Negotiations with the cultural landscape limited itself to the creative individualistic ideas from architects. Hence practice was able to only assert the identity that was sought by these individual architects, - often reinforcing their own agendas and self generated narratives about Architecture for India.

The shift in the demand and supply of architectural services and the changes in the funding systems have substantially changed the kind of negotiations of the new practices with the cultural landscapes. They now have to not only respond to the quality and aesthetic requirements articulated by various global and market conditions; but also have to be proactive to acquire work, sustenance and credibility. We find a large number of new practices developing newer techniques to negotiate with the cultural landscape and these include:

- *High investments in research activities:* There is an intense growth in documentation literature in recent years supported by private, government and international agencies, but developed by architectural and urban development practices significantly informing intervention and policy. There is also an effort to integrate different sectors and disciplines to have a comprehensive understanding of contexts rather than a unilateral one to articulate relevance, efficiency and equity in interventions.
- *Careful outsourcing of specialised labour:* Firms have reorganised themselves from being large units handling all kinds of services to being specialists in certain activities in the development sector. We find firms specialising in hotels, hospitals, in conservation, slum rehabilitation, interior design, industrial design, housing, urban development etc. Projects in recent times are handled through several task consultants rather than hierarchical offices. Even in the case of large practices that function as a Corporate, the departments within the firm are highly segregated and compartmentalised to incubate specialisation (Khadilkar, 2004)
- *Aggressive networking with various stakeholders:* Networking with other actors has become one of the key survival components of contemporary practice which is not only essential as a marketing strategy, but also to gather opinion and support from various stakeholders for the development of projects. The rise in the Internet sites of architectural firms, the number of conferences, workshops, award ceremonies and other social gatherings, public meetings, articles in national newspapers on architecture and urban development etc. are all indicative of the aggressive networking.
- *Intensive activism for rights of the stakeholders:* Often the networking of practices develop into organise various kinds of interests towards concerns like conservation of heritage and environment, housing rights, public participation in planning, protection of public open spaces, etc. Contemporary landscapes provide instances of practices getting involved in not only championing concerns of the stakeholders (who have otherwise remained as passive clients in earlier practices), but also mobilising resources for developments in the interests of the stakeholders.

These new negotiation strategies of the new practices have not only made them more accountable, but have brought them much closer to the people for whom they would plan. The changes in the kind of negotiations have also created new agendas for practices. While the older practices were obsessed with creating identity using *Modern* and *Indian* iconography, we see the new practices articulating agendas of quality production and protection of rights. The earlier section on contemporary Indian landscapes brings into foreground agendas like protection of public space, property and resources; timely delivery of buildings and other services; provision of quality-based environments and images; promoting employment generation; strategising resource mobilisation and several other kinds of interests in the new practices. The structures of new practices make it impossible to impose identities on people; on the other hand these practices have been able to significantly shift the identity assertions from the politicians and bureaucrats to the corporate sector, the middle-class, local communities and even the slum-dwellers.

While conventional discourse in recent times remains preoccupied with discussions on efforts to *create global identities* (through the new developments of glass boxes, shopping malls, hoardings and high-rises) and *assert local identities* (through local festivals, slum cultures and the use of vernacular and ancient building techniques), the broader and more textured analysis of architecture and identity celebrates the multitudinous efforts at negotiating the complex contemporary Indian cultural landscape. These negotiations, in the process, create a multiplicity of simultaneous fluid identities, thus abandoning the reductive binary of the pure global or pure local. This reading celebrates this dynamic process creating a kaleidoscopic representation of identity rather than a singular, clear and tangible representation highlighting the notion of identities being dynamic rather than static - growing out of multiple as well as ever changing societal aspirations. It is this celebration and assertion of more pluralistic indigenous identities that would create a truer understanding of the relationship between architecture and contemporary Indian Identity.

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