OUR ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE: RESPONSIBILITY OR BURDEN?[1]

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The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime

(with apologies to Arthur Conan Doyle and Mark Haddon)

Gregory: "Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"
Holmes: "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."
Gregory: "The dog did nothing in the night-time."
Holmes: "That was the curious incident."

'About half a dozen bulldozers worked overnight on April 23 at Pragati Maidan to pull down five iconic buildings—Hall of Nations and Industry. Next to come under the hammer is Nehru Pavilion.' Thus reported *The Hindustan Times* the following day (24/04/2017).

Thousands had signed petitions against the proposed demolition, but they could not/did not do anything when it was demolished on the night of 23-24 April 2017. This essay will suggest reasons for the absence of public reaction—reasons that go back over half-a-century.

Architecture, the Indian Government, the Citizens

This was not the first time an agency of the Indian government has destroyed buildings or settlements. Inhabitants of Delhi would recall the demolition of Mandi House in the 1970s, of the Turkman Gate *mohallas* and the shantytowns of Rouse Avenue during the Emergency of 1975-77, and of Jamuna Pushta in the 1990s. This was also not the first time people had expressed their views on public architecture. There were two episodes when protest had received a positive response from officials, and two others where the protests had been rejected. In 1989, the Central Government proposed to dismantle the canopy at India Gate, and install a large statue of Mahatma Gandhi. A sustained campaign to retain this piece of architecture was finally accepted, and a different site found for the statue (Gupta,

1994: 257-70). In 2003, public pressure led to the dismantling of an oversized and incongruously-placed structure for a police memorial. The failures were in 2006, when the Commonwealth Games Village was built on the floodplains of the Yamuna, and, separately, five Malls on the southern Ridge in Vasant Kunj destroyed the historic rock formations and forest.

The canopy victory occurred a year after the ICOMOS[2] Assembly at Toledo had issued a Charter to designate World Heritage Cities. India, where nearly all the major towns and cities (about 200) are historic, could have proposed one a year for many coming decades. But the first time India did put in nominations was 26 years later, in 2014, when Delhi, Ahmedabad, Chanderi and a section of Mumbai, prepared dossiers for application. In mid-2017, the walled city section of Ahmedabad was conferred the honour of being designated the first World Heritage City in India. With recognition comes expectations from town-planners and the custodians of culture and of urban development.

The *scale* of building in the last quarter century has made architecture not simply an 'art', but an industry. This leads on to another issue—land, especially in towns, is no longer as plentifully available as it was, and certain locations in towns have greater *cachet,* so that *replacing* buildings can appear to be an easy option. This is the great difference between architecture and the other visual arts—the present is in competition with the past. Painting and sculpture are largely securely lodged in museums. Some 'installation art' and *all* of architecture is located in the urban landscape. It is, therefore, endangered in a way the other arts are not.

Architecture, as it ages, becomes the physical manifestation of history, but it will remain a secure and integral part of our urban landscapes only if it is buttressed by four pillars:

- The *scholarship* that historicizes it (the responsibility of historians and architectural historians). Scholarship has been limited because political history has been privileged over the narrative of the developments of skills.
- The concept of *'heritage'* that gives it a definition and assigns responsibilities to care-givers, balancing a past against a present and an imagined future. This definition often sidelines minority or marginalized communities, and 'folk' traditions are treated less seriously than the 'classical'.
- The *nostalgia* that gives it emotional value because it is associated with a past remembered or imagined (a powerful

force which cannot be ignored). But nostalgia has often become diluted by indiscriminate merging with stereotyped images from myths and films.

• The application of appropriate *conservation norms*, relearning and applying the skills that created it (an optional specialization for architects), and working with inter-disciplinary teams. This is often paralysed in India because of a lack of fit between the Archaeological Survey's codes and those of conservation architects.

Indian Architectural History

Even today, seventy years after Independence, our children and all citizens are not taught the history of India after 1947.

By the 1970s, children born in independent India had become working adults—some of them became teachers of history, some engineers and architects. In those days, before the internet and autocad design, many teachers and students enjoyed reading history, and architects strove to be artists. But both history writers and architects unwittingly short-changed the country in one respect—historians ignored architecture, and architects ignored history.

Till the 1970s, Indian historians referred to architecture briefly and generally at two points—in the context of the Cholas, and of the Mughals. Courses of modern Indian history (conventionally 1707-1947) did not include any reference to architecture, and architectural history was not treated as a worthwhile field of research (thus leaving the field clear to non-Indian scholars[3], who steadily built up a superb body of work on this). In the anxiety to forge a nation, Indian scholars did not privilege the regional, much less the local. Great works of architecture were described as part of the *national* heritage, while smaller structures, streetscapes, neighbourhoods, went unrecorded. These could have been recovered by interviewing senior people, or those who were connecting after a long absence to a remembered landscape.

Ironically, the teaching of pre-Independence political history was going on at an exciting time, when 'modern' India was being constructed, literally and conceptually. In the 1950s and 1960s, the brutalist works of Corbusier, Rahman, Doshi and Kanvinde were changing townscapes, but students were not introduced to these, and therefore they did not develop an eye for them. A landmark was the completion of the pillar-free Hall of Nations in Delhi, in 1975, created by engineer Mahendra Raj and architect Raj Rewal, which

found its way into histories of world architecture. For the Delhi citizen, it was familiar as the venue of the Book Fair.

As for Indian architectural schools, 'architectural history' was taught as something essentially European-North American. Rewal's architecture was understood as branching out from this.

In Indian history, a landmark was the formation of the Urban History Association of India in 1978[4]. This was an acknowledgment that the history of urban settlements was not something to be done by historians alone, and that economists, sociologists, demographers and art historians could enrich it. Urban history was being approached by different roads—through the records of the Political Department, through municipal reports, through revenue and public health reports. Mariam Dossal surveyed the development and building of Bombay, Meera Kosambi of Bombay and Pune, and Veena Oldenburg, that of Lucknow. Pamela Kanwar described the creation of Shimla, a joint enterprise by the British and Indians.

Social scientists complemented the work of the historians. Geographers had been the first to study settlements, and the work of the Universities of Madras and Varanasi in the 1930s-1960s had been pioneering. Sociologists have published micro-studies of castes, communities, mohallas, slums (particularly examining these as likely points of tension, as Ratna Naidu did for Hyderabad). A corpus of work on medicine and disease has been built up. Post-1947, Indian architecture was the subject of a study on Chandigarh by the architectural historian Norma Evenson in 1969. It was followed, after a gap, from the 1980s, with work on individual architects.

In a country where political integration and economic modernization have happened simultaneously and not *in succession*, the specificities of individual towns should be committed to text before the towns become clones, with the same hoardings, the same leaders commemorated in street-names and statues, the same McDonalds and Woodlands shops. Increasingly, the inhabitants become foreigners to their country's past (this is to modify L.P. Hartley's "The past is a foreign country: They do things differently there"). Also, researchers should see the histories of different towns *individually* and not in typologies (Varanasi as a 'Hindu' city, Agra as 'Islamic' in architecture, Madurai as a 'temple town', Calcutta as a 'colonial city', Bombay as 'modern', etc.). Neither historians nor architects *alone* can do these portraits. Creative writers, like R.K. Narayan, Salman Rushdie, Intezar Husain, Asokamitran, Masoom Raza, Aman Sethi and Ranjit Hoskote, among others, have captured the spirit of town-dwellers.The hard work of antiquarian-enthusiasts

like the long-ago scholar Percival Spear on Delhi of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Spear, 1943), Thankappan Nair's street-histories of Kolkata (Nair, 1987), and R.V. Smith, who has written on Delhi's history every week for 40 years (Smith, 2005), is also something that history researchers should draw upon.

'Heritage': An Official Concern

Independent India continued two policies in the realm of Indian culture begun by the East India Company and the Indian Government under the Crown. One, they had catalogued archaeology and historic architecture; two, they had made government departments responsible for nourishing arts and crafts. Later, they took ownership ('protection') of sites and structures which had no obvious claimant or which had fallen to them by conquest. It was a more easy-going time, and they did not trouble to define the boundaries of listed sites. The Indian states also made surveys of historic structures. The Indian Parliament passed a law for safeguarding the architecture of the past. In the aftermath of Partition, there was a fear that these might be vulnerable, just as, in the aftermath of the 1857 Uprising Indian monuments were in danger of being destroyed by the British (Lahiri, 2017). There is similarity in the situations in which the Act of 1861 and that of 1958 were formulated. The reorganization of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) took time, and its cadre was demoralized by the sudden loss of one of their major showpieces, the Harappa sites. Continuing the tradition of the British showcasing Indian architecture and arts at Exhibitions, Maulana Azad in 1950 instituted the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) to familiarize other countries with Indian culture through exhibitions or performances. In 1952-54, three Akademies were set up to promote performing arts, literature and the visual arts (Sundar, 1995). A Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs was created in 1961, and the Archaeological Survey was attached to the Department of Culture. Culture became a separate Department in 1971. 'Culture' kept being paired off with different departments, for the longest time with Tourism.

In the 1980s, things changed. The work of government agencies in the realm of cultural heritage was supplemented by individual initiatives. This was inspired by developments in Western countries, and by a sense that the past suddenly seemed to be receding at a faster rate, and Indian culture was in danger of being submerged in a cultural globalization far more insidious than colonization had

been. 'Festivals of India' were held in the Soviet Union, USA, Britain and Japan to showcase Indian culture and architecture.

In towns like Jodhpur, centuries of deference have made it possible for a raja's charisma to achieve what a prosaic civic administration could not. The decline in the fortunes of the Rajput princes from 1966 did not weaken, in fact it enhanced, the presentation of their homes for public edification and enjoyment. There is a striking similarity in behaviour between these Rajas and the English aristocracy after the Act of 1911. Tourism became the major incentive to museumify Rajasthan's palaces in a fashion that James Tod would have approved (Ramusack, 2004).

The munificence of an English millionaire funded the creation of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) in 1984[5]. (The term 'heritage' was far more evocative than the term 'Survey' or the austere 'Akademies'.) This was to supplement the Archaeological Survey (which holds properties, like English Heritage) and was, perhaps, envisaged as becoming, like the English National Trust, an owner of more modern properties. As it happened, INTACH grew in a different direction—project-based, identification and conservation of historic water-bodies and forests, recording indigenous knowledge-systems, conserving objects and taking on architectural conservation in non-ASI properties. Its strength has been its network of Chapters all over the country, which can be as active as they wish.

B.K. Thapar, an archaeologist and Secretary of INTACH, was alarmed at the rate at which secular buildings were 'disappearing under the pace of modernisation' and initiated a programme of listing non-ASI heritage buildings. It was based on individual towns, not on typologies. The listings of heritage buildings by INTACH covered over 400 sites.[6]

Bombay showed the way in respect of concentrating on the particular—the little books published on different neighbourhoods was a means of making small beautiful and meaningful. Shyam Chainani and Cyrus Guzder, neither of them architects, listed the buildings which made a section of Bombay into a recognizable heritage city.[7] This was buoyed up by an enthusiasm shared by architects, planners, officials, industrialists and citizens, an enthusiasm mercifully untainted by political ideologies.

Listing 'unprotected' buildings in Delhi began in 1988, and was a stop-go process till 1997, when it was completed for the areas under the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and the New Delhi Municipal Council. The list was published in 2000. Things can

often go disconcertingly awry—when the INTACH published its list, *Heritage Buildings in Delhi*, the first reaction was interest, and a sense of gratification on the part of those whose properties were included, only to be succeeded by alarm at the dreadful possibility of there being a 'freeze' on those buildings, and a plea to have them 'delisted', a plea urgently reinforced by individuals with political connections.

Historians have been wary of 'heritage-ists', just as they are of popular books on history. They see 'heritage' as glamourizing the past by emphasizing the aesthetic elements of the creative and performing arts, bypassing narratives of oppression or injustice. It is true that widely-read books like *The Glory that was Greece, The Grandeur that was Rome*, and *The Wonder that was India*, did do this.[8] But to not study the arts critically is to impoverish the students. Imaginative lines of research would link ecology with regions (which are not necessarily coterminous with linguistic frontiers), migrations, choices in agriculture, festivals (in terms of cultural anthropology, as well as connecting them with seasons). Such efforts would identify the areas of cultural creativity that are based on social inequality but also recognize ideas that are produced by fine minds, aesthetic impulses that draw from the environment, from travails or hard endeavour, relations between texts and images, thus requiring the work of language-specialists as well as iconographers.

Indian architects from 1980 began discovering the 'heritage' qualities of British Indian architecture, and the Presidency towns and British hillstations came to be seen as 'heritage' as much as Varanasi, Agra, and Madurai. Birthdays and ranks have their uses—the 1990s saw the 300th anniversaries of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Bombay realized with delight that it had the largest holdings of Victorian Gothic anywhere in the world! The 1980s was a watershed. Bijit Ghosh, Director of the School of Planning and Architecture in Delhi, broadened the horizons of students and practitioners in two ways— one, he encouraged them to study the architecture of nineteenth and twentieth century India, flagged off by an exhibition on Lutyens' and Baker's New Delhi, brilliantly curated by Malay Chatterji[9]; two, he suggested that people's buildings—'vernacular architecture'— deserved as much attention as did the monuments built by trained architects. Thus, two other objects of nostalgia were created—the garden city of Lutyens' New Delhi, still intact, and the elegant *havelis* of Shahjahanabad, many deserted in 1947 after the owners moved to Pakistan, and subsequently divided up by refugees into shops or homes.

In the 1980s, architects who had earlier turned their back on the

Indian past, began incorporating gestures to the past—as in the Delhi Planetarium (1980) which M. M. Rana designed to harmonize with a fourteenth-century hunting-lodge, Charles Correa's Jawahar Bhawan in Jaipur (1991) which paid homage to the architect of Jai Singh's city, the dome of Bhikaji Cama Place of Raj Rewal (1980s), which imitated the dome of the vast Mohammadpur mosque nearby. Since there is in general very little awareness of architectural history, of distances in time (the Mohammadpur mosque is 600 years old, Rewal's building less than 60 years, and the contexts are totally different—a congregation space for prayer/a congregation space for shops and service-centres) the gesture achieves little. On the other hand, respecting the low-rise character of a precinct by not building towers is something that will be noticed by any passer-by. Mrs Gandhi responded to architect Patwant Singh's real concern that tower-buildings would soon destroy the low-rise beauty of Lutyens' New Delhi. The Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC), on the lines of that in New York (1898), was set up in 1974 to ensure that building projects would have to pass scrutiny by an independent group of people.

Memory and Nostalgia

While Indian scholars dragged their feet, 'heritage' was taken over by others. From the 1980s 'heritage' became an increasingly used word (as has become 'organic' since 2000). It is attractive to gesture to it in political harangues, it is written into textbooks, it is prefixed to tourism, it is used indiscriminately in advertising goods referred to as 'ethnic' (itself a patronizing word !). And, at a more popular level, two generations away from Partition, recent 'heritage' morphed into 'nostalgia'.[10]

Nostalgia is more personal, heritage is more inclusive. Nostalgia all too often can be an ill-understood or partial sense of the layered pasts. It can be projected backward in time, to generate a pride in some individual or group in the past with whom modern inhabitants would like to imagine a link.This can then see different communities as 'the other'. This is evident from the way the term 'Heritage Interpretation' in India has a meaning very different from that in the West where it refers to the many professions that co-operate to 'read', conserve and present aspects of historic structures, artefacts, and landscapes[11].

In India,'heritage interpretation' is understood to mean one of the three things: one, 'reclaiming' history, and establishing 'true facts' (a tautology); two, installing icons, in the form of statues, as was

done in Chennai and in towns in Uttar Pradesh; and three, changing names (one of the obsessions of political groups is toponymy—renaming is one of the most effective ways of blotting out or eliding history)—having won Bombay for Maharashtra and then corrected its name to 'Mumbai', there was a move to rename everything in Mumbai for Shivaji. In Delhi, there is another kind of competition—between the local and the national—so that Nicholson Park (named after the hero of the 1857 'Mutiny') became Tilak Park (nationalist hero) and has now got a statue of Maharaja Agrasen (founder of the Agrawal *biradari*). Kolkata went through a frenzy of renaming (such joy in turning Harrington Road, on which the US Consulate stood, to Ho Chi Minh Sarani!), which died down and was succeeded by a more sophisticated phase (Theatre Road became Shakespeare Sarani to indicate Bengali appreciation of British culture). It is not in the interest of any political party to press for a freeze on renaming, because they are privately reserving names still unchanged for their own heroes!

Reducing a place to anonymity has serious implications—if it has no association, none will grieve for it. The grave of Wali Dakhani in Ahmedabad is a case in point, where in 2002, his *mazhar* was flattened into a road and tarmac laid over. Such tragedies might be averted if people were made aware of localities and their specific histories.

Nostalgia can be a fragile balloon if it is not weighed down with factual or analytical material. Detailed knowledge may generate a new kind of *informed* nostalgia, which will be all to the good. This can be done by filling out history, with researchers working in the archives, with translators, anthropologists. Only then can we recover the past as social history, '*la vie quotidienne*', something not easy to do in our country, despite Indian historians' admiration for Marc Bloch. This shared enthusiasm has the potential to turn nostalgia into a sense of the past as it was, with its strengths and weaknesses. Otherwise losers of battles can be turned into victors, three-digit figures inflated into 1000s.

If people are to be concerned, even passionate, about the survival of great works of historic and modern architecture, the first step is to make town-dwellers familiar with them. None of it is 'packaged', the architects' names are not indicated, buildings are often in a state of demoralizing neglect, and can be mired in conflicts over land-ownership. They are unvisited either because they have become comforting havens for the socially marginalized, or because they are in use, and discourage curious visitors.

A quiet Englishman called Nigel Hankin (1920-2007) had for years been taking foreign visitors on 'heritage walks' in Delhi; two Englishwomen, Gaynor Barton and Lorraine Malone, had been taking friends on walks in Shahjahanabad. Some senior inhabitants enjoyed taking their friends for tours of their cities— Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore. These measures were paralleled by the emergence of popular groups with the same ideal of showcasing heritage, for the town-dweller as much as for visitors. Shyam Chainani founded the Bombay Environmental Action Group and worked tirelessly to list and protect architecture, forests and the seashore in a land-starved city. The Conservation Society of Delhi (CSD) had enthusiasts come together to introduce the city's historic architecture to its residents, in large part first-generation immigrants[12].The first 'advertised' walk for local people was led by a member of the CSD. Three friends elected to go on the walk. By the 1990s, the numbers had risen to 70. Today there are over a dozen walk-groups in Delhi, and others in towns elsewhere. They are commercially viable, and increasingly popular—people join for different reasons, the common denominator being nostalgia. City walks are different from visits to monuments. The latter awakens admiration for skills and for discriminating patronage. Walks communicate a sense of how earlier townsfolk lived. This can lead to rather superficial romanticizing of the past, of picturising *havelis,* imagining *mushairas* and street-cries, and recalling the fragrance of wet earth when *bhishti* sprinkles water in *galis.* There is no room here for irony, violence, cruelty, ugliness, corruption, though cloak-and-dagger stories are very popular.

Conservation as Policy

A backward glance. In Europe, following the horrific destruction of urban areas in the Second World War, the Charter of Venice[13] had been formulated in 1964 to guide conservation architects and heritage interpreters. UNESCO[14] and ICOMOS have been working on conservation in all its aspects—planning the technical work, generating public awareness, collaborating with governmental and tourism agencies, and designating 'World Heritage Sites'.

From about 1970, 'conservation' became a word used in India. The first breakthrough came in the context not of the maintenance of monuments or urban areas, but of the need to protect nature's world—with the Chipko Movement in 1973, from below, and Project Tiger, also 1973, from above. The latter followed on the enactment of the Wildlife Act in 1972, an initiative of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (Ramesh, 2017).

In 1982, 'Conservation' had been the theme of a seminar at Cambridge as part of the Festival of India in Britain (Allchin *et al.*, 1991). Frederick Allchin, well-known Cambridge archaeologist, played a leading role in this. Allchin had studied architecture before moving to archaeology, and became specifically interested in conservation from 1968 when, in his 40s, he spent two months in India to prepare a report for UNESCO on tourism in relation to the country's monumental heritage. He found that in India 'conservation' policy had stood still, and continued to mean just what it had meant to Sir John Marshall and the Archaeological Survey in 1907. Reading the papers presented at this seminar, it is clear that Bombay was ready to show the way to other Indian towns. Where Delhi officially had 174 monuments protected by the ASI, Bombay had less than five. 'Conservation' for Bombay-dwellers implied retaining the Indo-British heritage of buildings and precincts.

The term 'cultural conservation' has now come into use, to mean the new way of conserving monuments not in isolation but as part of 'conservation areas'. These needed to be delineated, both in island sites like Vijayanagara or Fatehpur Sikri as well as those enclaved in modern cities, like Delhi and Hyderabad.

With the institution of INTACH, what had been the responsibility of the ASI and the CPWD[15] became open to intervention from a new breed called 'conservation architects'—their number has gone up from one in 1982 (Prof. Nalini Thakur) to about 400. Careers could be built on revamping buildings of the colonial period, and also older buildings. But it was not easy to move in—the colonial buildings, mostly owned by official bodies, were the territory of the CPWD, and the older ones of the ASI. What could have surged into a nation-wide movement for conservation never happened because the fundamental requisite for conservation—which is that officials, technical experts, artists and social historians need to work as a team—seems very difficult to generate. Sadly, as professional skills multiply, enthusiasms die. There is often lack of a realistic timetable for projects, of stimulating interchanges of ideas, of building on what has been done, of ensuring regular maintenance, of using digital techniques to make up-to-date information available. Conservation projects since 1984, measured by *proposals*, are hearteningly numerous, but *completion reports* are dismally few[16].

In the 1980s, the second generation of Indian town-planners accepted the need to identify heritage buildings and to write conservation into master-plans. Delhi's *Master Plan* of 1962 had called Shahjahanabad a 'slum'. Its second edition, in 1982, called it one of five 'special conservation areas'. The Report of the National

Commission on Urbanization of 1988 had a chapter on urban conservation, written by M.K. Mukharji, which made conservation the responsibility of civic bodies. INTACH, in its early days, prepared a model bill on conservation. But no dynamic city-planner has thought to follow this up by creating teams of researchers to analyse the structure of cities, and work out ways to build livable urban settlements. Older planned cities or city-sections—such as Jaipur and Madurai—have been appreciated by scholars and practising architects in general terms—for their conforming to the 'canonical' (their sense of the *Vastushastra,* the result of reading it too schematically) or for their ambience (again it is very difficult to reconstruct the older city, therefore we may be indulging in nostalgia).

But it is in the *detail* that planning can be done sensitively, as pointed out in the 1910s by the most perceptive of city-analysts, Patrick Geddes. Integrating conservation into masterplans meant notifying and mapping cultural heritage sites. The process of municipal notification of heritage buildings in Delhi began in 2004 and was completed in 2010. In 2004, the Delhi Building Byelaws incorporated # 23, regulations governing notified heritage buildings. The CPWD published a good *Handbook on Conservation* in 2013, but the controls on heritage buildings have not been spelled out—whether it is to be the façade only, or also the interior? How are the skyline or the groundline and streetscape to be determined?

In increasingly crowded towns, it has been difficult to reach a consensus on design and permitted use. In 'developing' heritage areas as tourist baits, care has to be taken about two things—one, to control "creolization", when the inhabitants become—to borrow a phrase from Daniel Boorstin—'dishonest mimics of themselves'[17] (quoted in Waters, Hollington & Jordan, 2010: 30) as part of reinventing an area or a cultural practice in the anxiety to attract visitors, and two, to check the attempt to redesign towns to project a particular community's philosophy by renaming and designing theme parks.

As for ASI properties, the Archaeological Survey, by a notification in 1992 (incorporated into the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act of 2010) had formulated controls for monuments (not to be confused with 'heritage buildings') stipulating that 100 metres beyond a monument should be free of construction, and that for another 200 metres there would be design controls on construction). This cannot be made effective since the boundaries of most ASI properties are not demarcated,

and other buildings have come up close to them. The ASI (in charge of monuments) and municipal bodies (in charge of all buildings, including those notified as 'heritage') have a sense of territoriality which paralyses action.

These rules and prohibitions generate a tangle that is truly humungous. It needs full-time work by a dedicated office. The Ministry of Urban Development gave an impression of this being done. While formulating the Heritage Bylaws, they set up a Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC) for Delhi. But this has a handful of members who are required to attend meetings for about five hours every month. Its main concern seems to be to see that 'heritage conservation' does not stand in the way of 'urban development' rather than the other way round! The few and brief meetings of the Committee means that it cannot be taken as a serious group concerned with the beauty of the city.

It is difficult to get a measure of what is actually being *done* (as distinct from policy pronouncements, charters and declarations) to identify, showcase and take care of 'Heritage', portioned out as it is between ASI, INTACH, the Ministry of Culture and that of Urban Development. The last has expanded its functions of planning to becoming the national custodians of culture. In increasingly crowded towns, a consensus on design and permitted use is difficult, particularly when heritage areas are in use as offices or are covered with settlements. Their stakeholders have very different priorities. The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission of 2004 could have been an opportunity for creating heritage precincts in our towns, but no one had a clear idea of how it was to be done. In an echo of UNESCO's category, the Ministry of Urban Development in 2014 designated a dozen 'heritage cities', nearly all linked with the shrine of one or other of the religions in India. This is a rather narrow definition of 'heritage'.

In the last half-century, there is an impressive body of scholarship, and more institutions connected with heritage, and a vast increase in those with technical expertise on conservation. Oral histories and memory-projects have got off the ground. But the readiness to undergo the wear and tear of activism for a cause (the nationalist movement at one end, H.D. Shourie's Common Cause at the other) is conspicuously missing. Enthusiasm and vision was responsible for our architectural heritage, and enthusiasm and vision are needed if we are to give them their rightful place in our cities.

Designating Independent India's Heritage Buildings, 2014-17

To answer the question posed at the beginning of this essay we have to start from 2014. That year the Delhi Chapter of INTACH sent to the Delhi Urban Art Commission and the Delhi Heritage Conservation Committee a list of 62 buildings in Delhi constructed after 1947, to be added to the list of notified heritage buildings. Both bodies put off discussion on this for two years. Meanwhile, another document— the proposal for the Convention Centre to be built at PragatiMaidan after demolishing the Hall of Nations—was listed for discussion by the DUAC and the HCC, the former to discuss the design of the proposed Centre, the latter to ensure that its construction would not affect any nearby heritage building. It was quite clear that the unsaid issue was that a decision had to be taken as to whether the Hall was a heritage building-in-waiting.

When news spread about the proposed demolition, thousands in India and other countries signed a letter urging the Trade Fair Authority to redesign its proposed Convention Centre in such a way as to leave the Hall of Nations untouched (this, with the assumption that the Hall, along with 60 other buildings, was slated to be designated as a Heritage Building). In 1989, students of architecture had kept vigil by night to see that the PWD did not destroy the India Gate Canopy. Twenty-years on, schools of architecture have increased at an exponential rate, links between Indian practitioners and their counterparts in other countries have been growing. But on 23 April 2017 there were no students to check the bulldozers at Pragati Maidan. The battle had already been lost. This, in spite of the fact that on the surface many things were better now than they were 50 years ago: architectural history was growing, 'heritage' was defined, there were institutions for its protection, conservation was a profession, people at large were more familiar with their neighbourhoods and with monuments. Getting concerned citizens to sign a petition had been easy. What was not easy was to put a point of view across to officials who have the power to destroy as well as to preserve, and who have no real commitment to cultural heritage, and are reluctant to stick their necks out.

That is the answer to the question of why the dog was silent on the night of 23 April.

In Sum

Increasing attention to architectural history and increasing opportunities to be trained as conservation professionals have

improved the presentation of the major icons of architecture, but not the rest. Political parties and administrators alike look at all land as potential real estate. The nostalgia and the sharp sense of loss which fired the conservation lobbies in the West have been missing in India.

At present, there appears to be only one way to generate this enthusiasm—to work at a joint endeavour linking government agencies and individuals, without a sense of hierarchy. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, from the 1990s, has brought together material conservation, landscape revival, historical research and community involvement at Humayun's Tomb, Hazrat Nizamuddin and Nizamuddin Basti. This is an inspirational template for other sites. Its work meets rigorous standards of research, it is presented in a way not to evoke nostalgia but curiosity and pleasure. Its teams have a range of people across all ages and levels of skill. The rhythm of hand and mind working together will help impressionable children appraise our heritages and think of the artists, not the patrons, of the traditions honed in the forests and by the river, not in towns. These children will grow up to interact with the town, not *plan* it, to reverently restore the work of those who have gone before them, not bulldoze it, and enjoy their curiosity about history. Hopefully, this will build the bridge between past and present generations.

Notes

1. This is an updated version of a talk given at the IIAS in September 2016. I am grateful to IIAS for providing hospitality for a week's stay, and to the Fellows for their warmth and helpfulness. The talk was entitled 'The Hall of Nations and our Sense of History'. At that time, the future of the Hall of Nations in Delhi's Pragati Maidan was a subject of debate. Today, like the Babri Masjid, the Hall is a thing of the past, but its ghost haunts us.
2. International Council on Monuments and Sites.
3. Catherine Asher, Ebba Koch, Michael Meister, George Michell, Giles Tillotson, Anthony Welch, and Stuart Cary Welch (d. 2008) are among the scholars who have been continuously productive since the 1970s.
4. The Urban History Association of India was formed after a stimulating interdisciplinary conference organized by the History Department of Amritsar University in March 1978. Its sessions were held after the annual Indian History Congress sessions. Professor Indu Banga has been the driving force behind it.
5. Charles Wallace (1855-1916) bequeathed his considerable wealth for the promotion of Indian culture and heritage.
6. The earliest listings are from the late 1980s, and it is a work-in-progress. At present there are 400 volumes in the INTACH library. The next stage will be to have the sites 'notified' and designated as 'Heritage Buildings'.
7. Rahul Mehrotra and Sharada Dwivedi published some large books on themes from Bombay/Mumbai's architectural heritage, as well as small paperback

volumes which could be the basis for heritage walks. Shyam Chainani (1943-2011), who worked tirelessly for the conservation of structures and open spaces, published *Heritage and Environment* (Chainani, 2007).

8. According to a review that appeared in *The Hindu*: 'Part of a series on ancient civilisations—the other titles being *The Glory that was Greece, The Grandeur that was Rome, The Splendour that was Egypt* and *The Greatness that was Babylon—The Wonder that was India* [1st ed. 1954] was A L Basham's effort to correct the negative stereotypes of India perpetuated by the writings of James Mill, Macaulay and Vincent Smith. Smith's *Early History of India* [3rd ed. 1914] had become a standard in Indian schools and universities. Translated into a dozen languages including Spanish, Russian, Polish and Croat, *The Wonder*, along with nationalist historian R.C. Majumdar's multi-volume *History and Culture of the Indian People* sought to replace the imperial histories of India' (06/03/2005).

9. "The Making of New Delhi", exhibition organized jointly by the British Council, the Delhi Development Authority and the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi, March-April 1980.

10. But local studies and architectural history remain distant from school and university courses. In 2002, some college and university teachers applied themselves to examining school textbooks and to making suggestions for making them child-friendly. It has been seen in other countries that a child's scale is limited, and that within the smaller unit he is able to ask lively questions and retain more for longer. There is therefore a strong case to be made for teaching young children less *national* history and *national* heritage, and more local history and entry-points into local cultures and heritage—whether music in Chennai, theatre in Mumbai or architecture in Agra.

11. "Heritage Interpretation" is an umbrella term coined in 1957. Freeman Tilden defined six principles of interpretation (Tilden, [1957] 1977). The term came in general use only from the 1980s.

12. The CSD started as the Monuments Sub-group of the Environment Group which had been formed on the initiative of the inspirational Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya in 1982.

13. The Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, 1964, details an 'international framework' for the conservation of historic architecture.

14. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

15. Central Public Works Department, Government of India.

16. In putting the INTACH library in some order in 2005, I located 600 proposals, hardly any of which had been implemented.

17. Jaisalmer is only one example in India of how people living in a heritage site act the exotic role that tourists love to see, and also quickly learn to recite (not speak, since they do not understand the words) the guides' patter, in a range of European languages!

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