



PEOPLE PLACES & PURSUITS

A TOWNPLANNER'S MEMOIRS

PRAKASH MADHUSUDAN APTE

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Cover Page: The Main Road "GH" in Gandhinagar: Gujarat

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Preface

This book is what it says in the title-my recollections of persons, places and my pursuits. The title is modeled on the town planning principles- Work, Place, Folk- propounded by the 18th century English town planner Sir Patrick Geddes, who visited India and helped in the planning of the cities of Jaipur & Baroda. He felt that the foundation of all town planning must be the three principal elements; 1. Work- all activity that forms the economic base of cities, 2. Place- all locations for work, residences, recreation and social activities and 3. Folk- the people for whom the cities are planned and created.

Though I have generally followed a chronological order in the narration I have described my recollections with reference to places, incidences, events and work experiences. Originally, I had thought of modeling this book on the one by Mr. J.B.D'Souza titled 'No Trumpets or Bugles: Recollections of an unrepentant Babu'. However I realized that, though there was a common link between my recollections and that of D'Souza in the variety of multiple work experiences, a major difference was that his experiences were due to his being part of the system of administration-his being an Indian Administrative officer- while I did a lot of job hopping not being a part of any system. Noting the undertone of dejection in his book about not having been able to make any dent on the system of administration and my own feeling of my suggestions and solutions to urban problems having been neglected, I thought of calling my book 'No kudos, No Bouquets: Recollections of a neglected Visionary' !.

However, both my sons shot down this title not because they disagreed with my notion of being a visionary but because of the negative implication of the title. Moreover, I realized that while I might indeed have been neglected individually and professionally, most of my suggestions and solutions for the urban problems and issues in India were in fact slowly getting accepted –albeit in the name of some others - I had indeed succeeded modestly in my crusade to bring about sanity in the approach to urban issues and their solutions. Keeping aside my personal hurt, I should in fact be happy that I am indeed a visionary whose visionary approaches to urban issues were accepted even though I did not get any credit for it.

I must thank both my sons- Dr. Shireesh & Dr. Palash- for taking keen interest in my writing and encouraging me to complete it. This is my seventh book, the earlier ones

being, in chronological order, 1.The building of Gandhinagar: The new Capital of Gujarat, 2.Urban Planning & Development: An Indian Perspective3.Urban Growth Strategies: Mumbai Lessons,4. Hands on Guide to Housing & Urban planning, 5.Planning of new capital cities and 6.What Ails India.

I must admit candidly that the professional progress and success that I achieved very early in life has been at the cost of being an 'adequate' husband and a caring father to my two sons. I achieved unparalleled success in my profession and career at a very young age and hence had to keep driving myself to maintain the pace and level of my achievements. As a result, I could not be as good a husband as I could have been and left the upbringing and education of my sons almost entirely to my wife. My wife holds two academic degrees in classical vocal music. She succeeded greatly in upbringing of my sons and all credit goes to her for the academic excellence that both of them have achieved. Even while there were health emergencies, like when my elder son had his right arm fractured, in Delhi while I was away on HUDCO work to the north eastern states, she alone managed it, getting him to the hospital and putting his arm in plaster.

In all my assignments so far, in the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, Delhi Development Authority, Asansol Planning Organization, New Capital project of Gujarat, Housing & Urban Development Corporation of India, Spencer & Company, Makers Development Services, the World Bank and many important national and state level committees; I helped a number of friends as well as young, budding Architects & Planners in not only getting them selected for good jobs in those organizations and elsewhere-many a times by bending the rules-but also ensured their professional progress and prosperity. Unfortunately, human nature being what it is, most of them quickly forgot the debt they owed to me. Perhaps it constantly pricked their conscience that they owe their advancement in career more to me and less to their own merit! That is why perhaps, they turned their back on me. But in doing so they have unknowingly acknowledged my debt! I wish them well.

I dedicate this book to all of them as well as to the very few who have been good friends and philosophers to me all my life. Particularly to my wife, I wish to say that though I rarely uttered a good word for all her dedication and love for me; in the depth of my heart I have always acknowledged her contribution to my success in life and career.

Prakash Madhusudan Apte

Mumbai. April 2015

PEOPLE PLACES & PURSUITS:

A TOWNPLANNER'S MEMOIRS

1 THE BEGINNING : MAHARASHTRA 1939



Amaravati railway station (present)



Gunji (abrus precatorius)

During the 1940s Amaravati in Maharashtra was a small town. It was connected by railway but the railway station was a small one as it had only a shuttle train coming from Badnera junction and returning back probably twice a day. My maternal grandfather's-Damodar Bapat's- bungalow was just in front of the railway station and one could see the train arriving or departing. The bungalow was quite large with a copious open area around and a well at the back. There was a fountain in the front courtyard with an ornamental parapet wall, but I don't recollect seeing it work at any time. The road between the railway line and the bungalow was one of the main roads of the town. The bungalow was called Damodar Niwas after my grandfather's name. He was a practicing lawyer. I never saw him; I remember having visited Amaravati only after his death.

In Amaravati there was a place called Mal tekdi which was a small hillock. On the hill there were a lot of plants that yielded small red fruits the size of a small pearl with a black dot on them. These were called "Gunji" (Abrus precatorius) plants and the round seeds were used by goldsmiths as measure of weight for gold. The leaves of the plant which are sweet to taste, are commonly used in the preparation of "Pan", (betel leaf) normally eaten after meals. One of my maternal uncles who was quite a vagabond used to take me for a trek on the hill. This uncle of mine was no good at studies and my maternal grandmother prevailed upon my father to take him along with us to Ahmedabad for school studies. Surprisingly, for two years, while he studied with me he did fairly well and stood eighth in the division. Later when we shifted to Baroda he went back to Amaravati. I came to know later that back there he was back to his old ways but somehow managed to complete his school education.

I was born in this bungalow in 1939 (in a global context, at a time when Hitler invaded Poland and his armies had reached Warsaw) a premature child in the seventh month of my mother's pregnancy. I am told that at birth I was very weak and weighed only 4 pounds! I was therefore required to be kept in a bundle of cotton and fed milk with a dropper! My constitution remained fairly weak till the age of 19. I was therefore generally pampered at home and left alone in the school where I was probably the youngest and the smallest child in the class. In the school at Baroda I used to sit on the first bench (being a "scholar") in the right half of the classroom as the left half was kept reserved for the girls. The school bench accommodated 2 students and the most robust and elderly student in our division, Shivaji Bhosale used to occupy the place next to me. No one could challenge him because of his physique. His argument for sitting with me was that my proximity may help some of my knowledge and intellect to penetrate his head!

My Grandfather's bungalow was a huge building of stone. There were two tenants on the ground floor and my grandmother (Radha) with her sons and daughters lived on the first floor which had an attached terrace. Occasionally, her sister from Pune (Bhagirathi Marathe) who was a widow since the age of 12 came and stayed with her. My mother called her "Mavshi" and we the children also addressed her as Mavshi. She used to play organ and do "Kirtan- a very ancient form of storytelling (mostly tales from the Hindu religious scriptures) interspersed with singing of songs in praise of god. After her husband died when she was only 12 she studied in the school and appeared for the Vernacular final examination which made her eligible to be appointed as a school teacher in Marathi. She worked as a teacher in Pune and retired at the age of 60 and lived to be over 90. My mother with my two sisters used to visit her in Pune in her one room abode in an old "Wada" in Sadashiv Peth during summer vacations. Both the grand mothers used to cook soft rice as breakfast for all the children and somehow I can still recollect its taste after almost 70 years!

My eldest maternal uncle (Bhalachandra) also used to stay in Sadashiv peth in an old "Wada" and was married to my "Mami" who was a hunchback. Though a bright civil engineer by education and very handsome he chose to marry "Mami" out of compassion and a kind of social responsibility. My grandfather was naturally much upset as he felt that his son could have had a very good girl as a wife from a wealthy and well-to-do family. This Uncle, whom we called 'Dadamama' was a body builder and I recollect him carrying my 2 year old son on his shoulders and climbing up the "Parvati" hillock at Pune at one of our visits to him in the 1960s. He had a bookshelf over the main entrance door to his room and on it was the book "Arabian Nights" in Marathi titled "Arabi bhashetil suras aani chatmakarik goshti", which he would let me have to read when we visited Pune in the 1950s.

In the Amaravati bungalow being very fond of reading, I found some old issues of a journal called 'Chitramaya Jagat' (pictorial world). In one of the issues an artist had drawn the picture of a woman based on the description of a woman by Marathi poets. For example, the eyes were that of a deer, palms were like the lotus! The total

picture was most amazing though it didn't look like a woman by any stretch of imagination!

Whenever in Pune, mavshi used to make us attend the cotton yarn spinning class. That is how I learned to spin a thread from cotton. I also used to visit a private library where my favorites were the novels by Hari Narayan Apte and Nathmadhav. The library, used to remain open only for 4 hours in the morning. As such I read all those novels by installments like the T.V. episodes of today. Mavshi also tried to send me to learn swimming at the Tilak tank with a hollow dried pumpkin tied to my west. But I was afraid of water and never learnt to swim which I regret to this day. My mother learnt swimming at a 'Vyayamshala' (gymnasium) in Amaravati. She was very proud of her achievement. When our family was in Baroda, Ahmedabad or Delhi and people said it is very hot here she used to counter by saying that she belonged to 'Vidarbha' (one of the hotter regions of Maharashtra) and quite used to such heat.

My grandmother was quite a mimic and fond of displaying her talents. She was a good singer a talent that she passed on to my mother. She used to give programs of "kirtan". I remember once when she had come to Baroda, she performed at the place we were staying in Wadi Vadi. I don't remember when she died, though I remember having visited Amaravati after the death of my grandfather. I went to Amaravati after many years probably around 1990s when as a consultant to the Maharashtra Housing and area development authority I visited the place to inspect some proposed building sites for a housing program by the municipal Corporation.

As I write these paragraphs in the night (October 2014) I am wearing ear muffers to try and keep out the ear splitting noise from the loud speakers used by the residents of a housing society to the east of our own in their enthusiastic celebration of the 'Navaratri'. For the last 20 years our society residents have been undergoing this torture of deafening music during 9 days of the festival at Dussara time and whenever the residents feel like celebrating any other festive occasion. Normally one should not have any objection to such celebration if it does not bother the neighbours. But the music "decibels" at these occasions is so high that it literally reverberates through and one can feel the walls of our building vibrating! Why can't a Garba- a traditional dance round the idol of the goddess 'Amba' that is performed for 9 nights- be played or performed without such loud speakers in the premises of a housing society?

What is necessary is a complete ban on the playing of any music on the loud speakers particularly in the night. The madness continues late in the night defying the so called court orders of not playing loud music after 10 pm. I invite anyone who may care to sample this monstrosity to come to our society during this festival and see if he can tolerate it even for a few minutes! If we raise a voice against it we are branded 'Anti Hindu' It is in fact such practices that create bitterness amongst communities and leads to hatred of a particular class of people, caste or religion. Such people and their housing societies are not only a menace to the

neighbourhood but to the entire humanity! While everyone must have the freedom to engage in any pursuit required by his beliefs such activity should not create nuisances for the neighbours.

Our housing society is rather fortunate in having greenery on all three sides except the approach road. This greenery of tall trees is made up of plantations not in our housing society but within the boundaries of the compound walls of the housing societies surrounding our own! So, in a way, without planting a single tree we have a “green cover”. But there are disadvantages also. In the autumn, leaves from the trees are shed into our compound and the sweeper, not wanting to carry the big load of heaps of leaves, makes a bonfire of those creating billows of smoke that pervade my flat on the third floor. Some of the branches of a few trees extend into our balconies and even the rooms but the adjoining housing society office bearers never listen to our complaints or requests to prune the trees. Our society members being mostly salaried class are reluctant to spend money to hire labour and have the trees pruned. Finally when our society officials hired some labour to do the job the officials of the adjoining society to which the trees belonged, had the cheek to say that we can prune the trees only if we ensure that the branches do not fall in their compound!

This adjoining society known as “twin towers” mostly has occupants who are small businessmen though earning tons of money. The men folk leave their apartments late in the morning and return home also late in the night. As a result, the children keep playing in the building premises till late in the night. The ladies of the house are highly tradition bound. A temple has been created in a small room on the ground floor of one of the twin towers where devotees keep coming throughout the day and an “Arti” takes place twice a day. During certain festivals the religious rites require a fire to be burned in which coconuts are offered to the deity. Due to the religious dictats the fire has to be allowed to burn itself out and not doused with water. So, quite often we have the entire area full of smoke which penetrates our building and the flats, making the residents quite uncomfortable particularly those suffering from breathing ailments.

As a town planner, these problems raise two issues in my mind. Firstly, the municipal Corporation regulations allow location of religious use within the residential area. This inclusive regulation probably did not foresee the kind of problems it will create over a period of time. As a town planner and thinking intellectual I have always felt that every regulation has to be seen in its time and context. This is of great relevance. For example in the good old days, in the small towns, an event like a wedding was celebrated and culminated with a public pageant of the newlyweds through the town streets. At that time when mass communication was almost non-existent, this was the best way to make it known, and bring to the knowledge of the residents that a new relationship has been created between a man and a woman and ensure a large number of witnesses to the fact. In the present times, despite having made great advances in the field of communication and

information technology we continue this practice of a street procession of the newlyweds which only results in traffic jams and curses from the people so inconvenienced rather than blessings to the new couple!. So why not ban such processions?

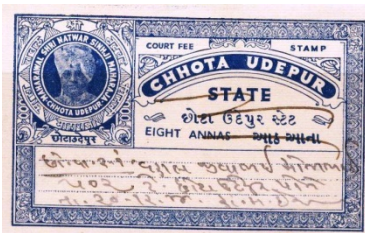
When the regulations for allowing religious uses in residential areas were included in the development control documents it was probably not envisaged that with changing times and social tensions, location of religious places in the residential areas could be as hazardous as having a noisy factory there. The second issue is our regulations about membership of housing societies which require no distinction between caste, religion or any other issue. It is a well-known fact that the working of the housing cooperative societies is greatly hampered because of disharmony between the members. Traditionally, economic status and the religion of the members greatly affects their social behaviour and culture. Can regulations which prohibit differentiation or distinction between people of different faiths or religious beliefs in allotting membership of a cooperative housing society lead to a harmonious community that can live together and not be at war with each other all the time?

I remember an incidence during my career with HUDCO when I had promoted a low-income housing competition. An organization which took part in the competition was building about 250 houses for slum dwellers by relocating them in a piece of land. In the layout plan of the new project, housing clusters were formed each one comprising of about 20 houses grouped around a small open space. The designer of this project Kirit Shah. thought of a new and innovative approach. Because of the disparity in economic status and diversity in caste, religion and language of the slum dwellers, there used to be a lot of tension in the existing colony. Instead of allotting the newly constructed houses by drawing lots in a lottery system; he called a meeting of all the prospective residents and asked them to form groups of 20 families that would agree to live together in a cluster. This approach ensured that there was reasonable harmony in a cluster of houses. It also brought out the startling fact that there were a few families whom no one wanted within their cluster!

It may be that the families that came together to live in a cluster belonged to a particular caste, religion or speak the same language. This approach may not be admissible under our so-called secular constitution but certainly resulted in creating harmonious communities. Can we not find a system by which the admission of a member in a cooperative housing society ensures harmony between neighbours? The disharmony and tensions between the two cooperative housing societies that I mentioned earlier is due to the differences in the occupational and economic status of the residents. Even though people may belong to the same economic status their education, culture and upbringing has a lot to contribute in achieving harmony. Incidentally, it is my belief that education does not necessarily bring about good culture. The upbringing of a person and the environment in which he grows up contributes a lot in his being a good human being.

I cannot but forget an incidence when we were looking for prospective brides for my son. A girl, who accompanied her father and visited our place, having finished the cup of tea that we had offered, took it to the kitchen sink. My wife, thinking that she may be trying to wash the cup and saucer told her not to bother and just leave it there. The girl said, yes I will keep it in the sink but I am just filling it up with water otherwise the tea stains will occur and remain on the inside of the cup. That I think is culture, definitely a result of good upbringing. So, people may belong to the same occupational group or have similar economic status, be of the same caste or religion but that does not necessarily mean that they can get along with each other unless they have the same culture. The meaning of the word culture here should be properly understood and appreciated. How to achieve harmony in a community that has to live, stay and work together should be a matter of great concern for the town planners who claim to be the builders of human habitat. To the best of my knowledge no town planner or their Institute has ever paid any attention to this fundamental issue of human habitat.

2 CHOTA UDEPUR : GUJARAT 1945



Portrait of the king Natwarsingh of Chota Udepur on court fee stamp.

It is only recently, after the Bharatiya Janata Party won the parliament elections in India and formed a government that there is a thinking to avoid mention of the caste in the application forms. I remember an incidence in 1948 when my father shifted from Baroda to Ahmedabad and I was seeking admission to a school there. In the application form for admission, information was required to be given about the caste and religion. My father wrote in both the columns, rather proudly, "Indian" and submitted the form. The school administration would not accept it and tried to explain to him, as if he was an illiterate person that he was expected to write the caste as Brahmin and religion as Hindu. He refused and persisted with "Indian". The school semester started and I was still not admitted to the school. Finally, at the behest of some of his friends, very reluctantly he wrote the 'correct' information. But he felt dejected that even after the independence of the country we still wanted to know a person's religion and not accept him as an Indian.

He had his beliefs. Despite my grandfather being a highly honoured Sanskrit pundit and very religious in his beliefs my father was not so. He therefore did not perform the thread ceremony for me as is customary in the Brahmin community. When after many years I asked him why I was not wearing the sacred thread despite being a member of the highest Brahmin community, he said, a Brahmin is one who pursues

knowledge and acquires it. If I did that there was no need for me to undergo the ceremony and wear the sacred thread. I carried on the tradition and did not perform the thread ceremony for my two sons. A few years back my elder son who was then studying in the United States one-day telephoned to me and asked me to which caste did we belong. He said most of the Indian students there asked him this question and he didn't know the answer! I wonder when we shall be rid of this scourge of caste and religion.

My paternal grandfather was a practicing lawyer in Baroda and a highly respected scholar. My father, after obtaining a degree in law joined him and was involved in editing the Law reports. During this period in 1944, Baroda was an independent state and well ruled by the then maharaja' Sayajirao III who can perhaps be counted among the very few enlightened rulers in India. Despite belonging to a humble family- he was an adopted child- he had great intellect and foresight. He collected around him the best of the talent from various fields of activity and used these people to wisely rule the state. He identified and recognized the scholarship of my grandfather and promoted him to write books on various subjects. One of these books, called "Rajyabhishekchandrika" described the rituals that had to be gone through for a king to be enthroned. This book is perhaps the only one of its kind in the world containing authentic information on the subject and as late as in 1990 when a French scholar came searching for the book to me, having come to know that I was the grandson of the Daji Nagesh Apte the author of the book I realized the importance of the written words!.

Around 1943 – 1944 my father had an opportunity of a job in a small state called Chota Udaipur. It was hardly a distance of 150 km from Baroda but in those days with a meter gauge railway line it took almost a whole day to reach the town of Chota Udaipur from Baroda. My father was appointed as a Magistrate and Revenue officer for the state. We – my parents myself and my younger sister – shifted there. We were provided with an old bungalow in the town on the way to the river called "Orsung". Our family occupied the upper floor while the lower floor was occupied by Mr. Chavan, the commander-in-chief of the State's Army. I can still remember the army parade that used to take place on the occasion of the birthday of the Raja when Mr. Chavan used to be riding a horse – the only one in the entire army – and behind him was the "army" consisting of about 20 half clad "bhils"(the local tribesmen) with spears and behind them another 50 of still less clad marksmen with local bows and arrows!.

The state had six important officers. The Chief Minister-Parakramsingh- was a relation of the Raja. There were two chief engineers, Sathe, In charge of the electricity generating station and Chunibhai Patel in charge of civil construction. Mr Ganjakhane was the Treasury officer, Mr. Chavan the commander in chief of the army and Mr Chandrakant Desai was the judge. For some reason that I never knew Mr Sathe had the privilege of having a private vehicle at his disposal which was a horse drawn carriage! Once Mr. Sathe came to us in his horse drawn carriage

holding a large green leaf on which was a live queen ant of the white ants! He had it dug out of his bungalow premises and was going round to all the officer's residences to show the 'Prize'! I had never seen a queen white ant neither have I seen it there after!

There was another closed type of horse carriage which was a government vehicle for the transport of officers coming to the town or going out of station for transport to the railway station. Another similar but totally closed horse carriage was at the disposal of the wives of the officers for visits to a temple on the mountain near the town across the river. Only the Raja had a 'Ford' car. There was an officer's club which had an indoor badminton court. There was one open air Cinema theatre where the projection room had an attached Verandah where the officers and their family could sit to watch the movie and we had to send our servants with chairs to be kept in the Veranda before we went to the theatre to watch the movie. The theatre was an open-air affair and the people who watched the film from there had to squat on the floor.

We stayed in this old bungalow on the way to the river till my youngest sister was born there. We then shifted to a new bungalow on the way to the palace. This bungalow was a duplex. There was a common staircase in the centre and we occupied one half while the other half was occupied by the Treasury officer. Chunibhai used the same design when he built a bungalow for himself when he left the state service and retired to start his own construction business in Ahmedabad. Unlike my father who was rather stiff and stern, Chunibhai was very jovial and could mix with children easily. Many years later I saw him shaving in his bungalow at Ahmedabad without a mirror. When I asked him the reason he said all the people who shave looking in the mirror ultimately have to feel the cheeks to ensure that they have had a proper shave. So why bother with a mirror?

My father used to go on tours in the state and ride a horse and many a times we the children accompanied him in a bullock cart which followed him. During one such trip a small black puppy dog kept following us and we insisted that our father allow us to take it home. We did. The little puppy grew up to be a very handsome black dog and we called him 'Blakie'. He was with us for about seven years. It was after many years later in the 1960s that my father got an Alsatian puppy when we were staying in Ahmedabad a little after my marriage when I had taken up a job with the capital project of Gujarat to build the new city Gandhinagar. My father named him 'Suman' and he lived to be about 12 years old which is considered as equivalent to 60 years of human life. Suman was a very lovable dog and my mother used to take great care of him even wiping his jaws after he had his meal of milk and 'rotis'! My son Shireesh, just 3 year old then, used to play with him and the dog was very indulgent of the young boy catching hold of his tail or his ears!

There used to be a day-long celebration on the birthday of the Raja. A local person would come in the morning to our residence where all the 6 officers would gather to

get the traditional headgear wound over their heads –a must for all the officers for attending the durbar. The children of the officers used to greet the Prince at the Palace and offer him a gift of one rupee coin each after garlanding him. I was so short that I could not garland him and as a prince he could not bend in front of me. So one of the servants used to take the garland from me and put it around the neck of the Prince while keeping his own head down and not looking at the prince.



The Premvilas Palace where we greeted the Prince on his birthday.

There was a special tutor for the prince who was I think an Anglo Indian and his son was named Silas. He was allowed to play with the sons of the officers as a special privilege. Mr Sathe, Mr Ganjkhane and Mr Patel had no sons. So, in fact myself, Mr desai's son Dinu, the commander in chief Mr. Chavan's son Vikram and Silas were the only children who could play with the Prince. But I don't recollect ever having played with him except one or two sets of badminton on rare occasions.

The main and only product of the state was timber and a tiny fruit called "Charoli" that was used extensively in milk products. The 'Kesuda' or "Mahua" (*Madhuca Longifolia*) trees yielded red flowers from which colours were produced for the 'Holi' festival. The local tribesmen made wine from the 'Mahua' fruit which was quite potent and a source of family feuds and crime. I quite enjoyed the criminal cases that were tried with my father as the magistrate and his pronouncing penalties and sentences to the scantily clad tribesmen. Among our servants was one 'Amir' and 'Ratan'. I and my younger sister were taken around in a stroller by Rattan who once asked my father whether he could bring a tiger puppy for me to play with! In the mountain across the river there were quite a few tigers and I remember having seen one sleeping inside a cavern while on a visit to the temple on top of the mountain.

There was a small lake in the centre of the town with an island within it. On the island which was hardly about 200 feet diameter were a few concrete benches. There was a boat specially for the use of the officers and many a times on full moon nights our families would make a trip to the island and have a picnic there. On one such occasion I recollect our parents hastily asking us to get back into the boat from the island where we had gone for a picnic as one of them had noticed a large

crocodile resting below one of the benches! We hastily returned to the banks of the lake and took our conveyance of the horse carriage and returned home.

3. BARODA: GUJARAT 1947



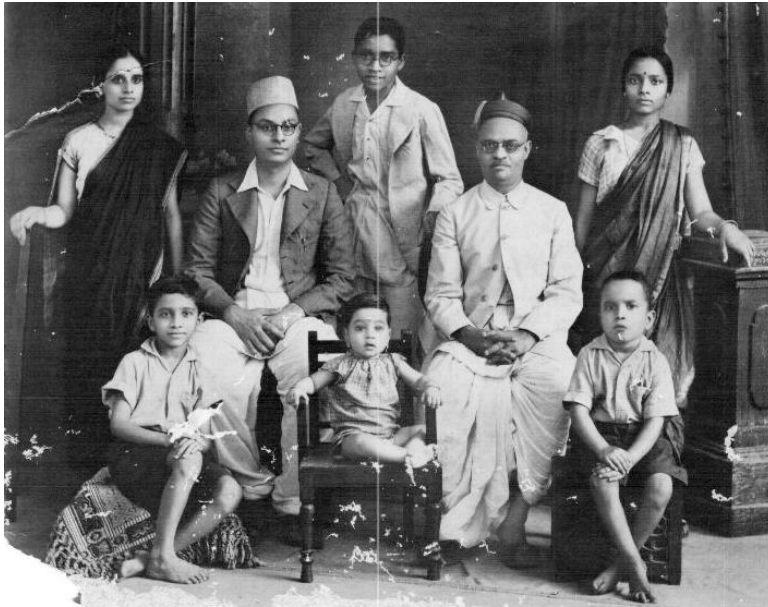
Laxmi Vilas palace : Baroda

My father resigned his job in the state and decided to take an assignment with a company which promised him a job as a manager after training in export management for which he would be sent to London. We therefore returned to Baroda and started living with our grandfather who was still practicing as a lawyer. He had rented a house in Dandia Bazar and occupied the ground floor which had six rooms and a large rear courtyard. His office was in the room facing the road where he used to meet his clients and also had his clerk keep records of the court cases. Many years later when his eyesight had grown weak and he could not write the various literary articles in Marathi for which there was always a great demand from scholarly journals, I worked as his writer. I remember having written two or three articles one of which was the ancient history of Maharashtra, the second was about to be age determination of the personalities of Ramayana and the third was I think a rewriting of the article for which he had to bear the displeasure of the British government. This article depicted a scene from the hell where a selection was in process to be the King of the Hell and various characters were expounding their achievements for which they claimed the throne. The British ultimately won the right as they expounded the many atrocities that they had committed against the Indian population!

My grandfather had a habit of keeping the handbills and torn pages of the calendar of the bygone months and uses the blank side of these – cut into convenient pieces – to keep notes of whatever took his fancy. I remember his having noted that the most beautiful actress on the Indian screen was called Naseem! He also had a lot of other useful information on these strips of paper. After about 70 years I now realize that I'm following his practice and that I use the blank side of a number of papers received as reports literature et cetera by using these for printing out from my printer the drafts of my articles!

After the departure of my father to London I joined the primary school in Baroda which was a municipal School with Gujarati medium of instruction. It was called a

Raopura: Gujarati school number three and I think it still exists. Later I joined the Jayashree Model high school in the Kathiawad Diwanji Wada. During this time which was probably between 1944 and 1948 we stayed at my grandmother's place where in the night he used to tell stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata to me and my sisters. I think being a successful lawyer he was quite an actor particularly in conveying expressions through his voice and we children used to get afraid sometimes when he narrated such stories. He was very fond of eating ice cream in fact all kinds of food and fruits. I think the liking for ice cream and fruits has been transmitted through the genes to myself and my son and grandson.



My Grandfather seated on right, my Parents to his right, Uncles Govind and Aunt Sudha at the back, uncles Prabhakar, Mukund seated in front and myself in the centre.

Those days we used to make ice cream by churning the metal milk pots in a wooden case by a handle and we had to get a lot of ice and salt crystals to expedite the process of freezing of the milk. We used to get generally three pots the largest one was a 15 litre one and the smallest of 2 litres. In the larger pot when the milk was about to freeze into ice cream it used to be very difficult to turn the handle as the whole pot would move and I had to stand over this with a stick in my hand to stabilize myself and only then my uncles could turn the handle. This process went on till late in the evening and though everyone had a good fill of ice cream there would still be some left which we used to preserve in the pot itself by filling up the sides with the ice and crystallized salt. In the morning we were ready to have the ice cream again!

During 'Diwali' (Hindu festival of light) myself and my sisters often went to a town called 'Patan' about 4 hour journey from Baroda via Mehsana by the meter gauge train. The younger sister of my father and her husband were school teachers there. My father would put us in the train and my aunt would be there at the station to

receive us. It was perhaps in the 1950s that there used to be frequent 'Locust' attacks in India. During our travel to Patan once we had the locust swarm over the train. Many were crushed under the wheels of the engine and then the wheels would just turn but would not take the engine ahead as the wheels would clip on the sticky mess of the crushed locusts. I remember that the fireman and the helper of the rail engine gathered some bushes from the track side made brooms of those and would remove the locust swarms from the rails and then the train would move ahead! It took us quite a lot of time to travel to Patan with this process!

The most striking feature of Baroda in those days that I greatly liked was the 'Sursagar' a lake in the centre of the town close to the High Court building. The lake was surrounded by some of the most beautiful buildings with great architecture. On the east was the classic building of High Court called "Nyayamandir", on the west was the maharani Chimnabai school. On the south of the lake was the music College a building whose architecture is still unsurpassed, and to the north on higher grounds was the basic training College which was meant for ladies.



Sursagar lake with music college in the background.

The lake was not the focal point of these buildings but in fact bound them together into an urban design complex as a whole. The lake was periodically cleaned by the municipal committee employees by sailing on a raft made of empty drums. But there was hardly any refuge that they collected such was the level of cleanliness and the culture of the people.

Recently around 2008 I was aghast to read from the newspapers that the municipal Corporation had employed a so-called beautification architect who suggested that a 6 feet tall wire net be constructed all-round the lake to stop people throwing garbage into it and a light small toy rail track be laid skirting the lake! One cannot blame the architect as he was probably looking for physical planning solutions and glory for himself by putting in the rail track. All such suggestions come out of a mental block and a total lack of vision by our so-called architects Planners and administrators in understanding and appreciating the intrinsic beauty of urban design of a ruler who envisioned it a 100 years back. As if to add insult to the injury some politician had a bright idea of erecting a Shiva statue in the centre of the lake! Today, if one visits the lake one can see this utterly destroyed urban design complex

with a towering Shiva statue erected in the centre of the lake which cannot be properly maintained nor can we avoid the bird droppings on it! We totally lack vision and our architects and planners have become subservient to the administrators and politicians and constantly look for personal glory and of course financial gains.

Baroda in those days was a small town though the capital city with very few cars but mostly having bicycles and horse-drawn carriages. Near the house where my grandfather stayed there was a horse carriage stand where normally 2 to 4 carriages would be waiting with the horses eating the cut green grass given to them by the driver who used to carry the cut grass in a gunny bag. The carriages had a door at the back from where one could enter and sit inside and generally four persons could occupy the carriage. I was often called upon to fetch a carriage to our house which was hardly a few paces away from the stand. My grandfather normally took the horse-drawn carriage to go to the court and in those days used to pay 8 to 10 annas (half a rupee) for the journey including the waiting time at the court before he returned for lunch. We often used the services of the horse-drawn carriage to go to the railway station which was located across the River Vishvamitri at a distance of about 8 km. This was the broad gauge rail line (Mumbai-Delhi) station while we had another meter gauge rail line station whose terminus was called Goyagate. One could avail of the rail service from there to go to Chota Udaipur and Dabhoi which was on the way. It used to take almost the entire day to reach from Baroda to Chota Udaipur. We travelled by the train when my father was working there and we had to carry food and water with us as nothing would be available on the stations in between the two cities.

I recall that before my father left the service of the state, his friend Chunibhai Patel had bought a Ford car. During one of our proposed trips to Baroda he offered that we may travel by his newly acquired car. That car trip was an experience that I still remember. We started late in the morning and the roads being mostly mud tracks, had a number of tire punctures on the way. Having exhausted the resources to replace the punctured wheels and there being no repair shops on the way, the driver and a servant frequently used to stop to stuff larger tree leaves into the tire of the wheel! We somehow managed to reach Baroda almost at the nightfall and it was certainly a trip to remember. This old car had a sliding accelerator on the driving wheel in addition to the foot pedal. Chunibhai, not having any children of his own loved me as his own son and let me drive the car when I was hardly 12 year old. While in Chota Udaipur, he had his brother-in-law's son Ramesh stay with them and we became good friends. Ramesh used to call Chunibhai "Fua" as he was his paternal aunt's husband. Not knowing that Ramesh was not his son I thought that in Gujarati father was addressed as "fua". So I also started calling my father by that name and Chunibhai had to explain to me the Gujarati terminology of relations!

My grandfather- Daji Nagesh Apte- was a very learned man and was well respected in the literary circles. Many eminent people used to visit him. I remember having seen veer Savarkar, the founder of the RSS Hedgewar, Munje and N.C.Kelkar in

conversation with him at our house in Baroda. My grandfather had a large library of Marathi books. He himself authored over 18 books and the entire collection of his books was donated to the M.S. University after his death. I remember having seen a book in his collection written in Marathi which contained over 100 prints of the palms of convicted murderers. I have not come across any such book so far which tries to lay a scientific basis for the art of palmistry. Chiro's book on numerology does try to give a semblance of science to this discipline. When Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated and two persons, Godse & Apte were arrested for the crime, there was a communal backlash in Baroda also. Many a Brahmin families suffered personal injuries and property damage by the crowds. It was the eminence of my grandfather as a scholar and lawyer that prevented an attack on our house in Dandia Bazar though crowds did collect a little distance from our house for a few days after the incidence.

My elder uncle those days was a member of the Praja- Socialist Party and my aunt was a member of the Communist Party of India. Both of them used to hold their party meetings in our house in the large central room used for dining of the family. In addition to my three uncles, and aunt, there used to be frequent visitors staying with us mostly relations but also others. Whenever there was a political party meeting I had to help out to cover the floor with 'Durries' and later roll those back and store those in their appointed places. Many a times my grandfather used to delegate the morning "pooja" ritual of the idols in the house to one of the younger uncles. They did not like the task as it involved cleaning up the small temple, bathing the idols, and anointing them with the sandal paste and flowers, wearing the special dhoti while performing pooja. To avoid this chore the standard practice was to station me at the door of the room to warn them in case grandfather put in his appearance and then quickly just remove the earlier days wilted flowers and heap a lot of "Parijat" flowers over the idols so that it was not possible to ascertain whether the 'Pooja' had been performed properly!

In our house at Baroda we had a woman cook who was a widow. She stayed in the Wadi area of Baroda and used to come for work early in the morning and leave late in the evening. On a particular day in the year – I don't remember what day it was – she used to invite all of us to her home for lunch. It was during one such visit sometime around 1948, I found that in her home she had a gas stove run on piped gas. Later on I came to know that the maharaja had, with help from some foreign technicians erected a sewage gas plant and it supplied piped gas in the Wadi area. I think it was only in the 1980s that the concept of producing gas from sewage but using only the excreta from the animals came into practice in India. Even today, to my knowledge, there are no gas plants producing gas from the sewage of a town or city. It is a pity that ideas that could be put into practice hundred years back are still not taking roots in India. I think all our municipal administrators and politicians and technocrats should be made to study the advancements made by states like Baroda and Mysore about 200 years ago. Such a measure may yield good benefits for the people but will not help the officials as it would stop them from undertaking trips to

foreign countries to study similar projects that were implemented by our enlightened rulers many years back!

While working with HUDCO I had received a low income housing project for financial assistance from the Tamilnadu Housing Board. It was designed by their lady Superintending engineer Mrs. May George. She had designed a cluster of about 20 houses in a circular form the individual houses being in a radial pattern. At the centre of the circle was a sewage plant to generate cooking gas from the toilet waste. She had constructed a prototype near Chennai and I visited it with her. Because of her obsession with the production of cooking gas from the toilets of the residential units in the circular pattern proper attention had not been paid to the grouping of the circular clusters and individual house designs. Yet, it was a pioneer attempt and had it been replicated could have revolutionized the development of low income housing project design in this country. I now regret that I did not support the idea as vigorously as I could have.

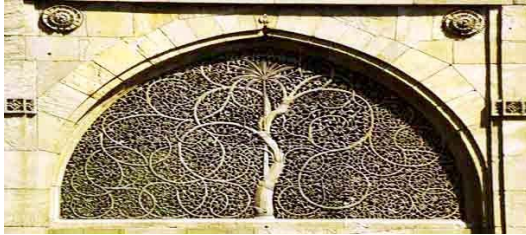


Myself in a meeting with May George and the chief engineer to understand the design of the project.

We had a very large 'Parijat' (night flowering Jasmine) tree in the backyard which used to yield a huge number of flowers in the morning that had to be collected in four or five large steel plates. The fragrance of these flowers is something one cannot forget. Every time on the road or in the gardens I smell this sweet fragrance mentally I am transported back in time and place to this courtyard in the Baroda house. We also had a Queen of night plant which is not very common and its fragrance also still lingers in my memories. Unknowingly and subconsciously my brain collected and stored Data about such fragrant flower yielding plants and encouraged me to study plants and trees and also to take up gardening wherever possible. I remember having planted a bitter gourd climber in a small pot in our flat in baroda in 1952 and I was able to raise a small harvest of those which was a great joy. Many years later around 1990 I once planted and a raised a maize plant in a

coffee mug which grew to a height of about a foot and yet yielded a corn! I photographed it and sent it over the email to some of my relations.

4. AHMEDABAD: GUJARAT 1948



Sidi Sayyad mosque grille

After my father returned from London, though he had completed his training he was somehow unable to get along with the directors of the company and resigned his position. He got a job with Sarabhai chemicals in Baroda but was soon transferred as an officer in the Calico Mills at Ahmedabad. My family shifted to Ahmedabad around 1948 and we were provided accommodation at an old barrack owned by the company on mirzapur road almost in the Centre of the town. After a dispute about the writing of the caste and religion in the application form I was finally admitted to a Marathi medium school in 'bhadra'. The school was located close to the Sabarmati River and was headed by principal D.R.Shevde a very fair looking & imposing man.

I was very good at my studies and the principal as well as other teachers were very happy with me. I was always addressed as 'scholar'. I used to walk to the school and return on foot. The large open space which I had to traverse was adjacent to the Sidi Sayyad mosque the large carved stone grille of which has become a symbol of the city of Ahmedabad. The large open space was partly occupied by the Ahmedabad municipal transport service buses but also accommodated a weekly bazaar on Fridays. I often watched the street magicians performing their tricks on these days and reached home very late. The bazaar cast such a spell on me that I tried to replicate it by creating an open space in the town centre of Gandhinagar the capital city of Gujarat which I was fortunate enough to plan during the period from 1965 to 1971.

Our house on mirzapur road was but a hutment where three families working with the Sarabhai group were accommodated. It did not have an attached toilet. So, when Chunibhai Patel started his own business and built his house on the outskirts of Ahmedabad at a place called Sohrabji compound near Wadej village, we shifted there on the first floor. It used to take almost an hour by bus to reach my school and returning home at noon and walking all the way from the bus stop to the house a

distance of about a kilometer on the dusty road was quite an arduous exercise in the sweltering dry heat of the summer of Ahmedabad. The bus stop was the last but one, before the terminus which was the famous Sabarmati ashram of Mahatma Gandhi. The fare for the bus from my school to home was 2 annas ($\frac{1}{8}$ th of a Rupee). While going to school I used to carry two coins of two annas each for the return journey. I recollect that while returning home once I misplaced one of the coins and was on the point of crying when the conductor consoled me and said that he knew I used to travel everyday and I could pay him the amount any time that day. As soon as I reached home I did not take my lunch but collected two annas from my mother and went back all the way waiting for the bus to return from the terminus and paid the amount to the conductor.

There were hardly four or five houses in the colony where we had gone to stay. One of the houses belonged to the family of Mohanbhai Patel who was about 20 years older than me and was employed in the state PWD after obtaining his degree in civil engineering. All the houses belong to Patel families who were closely/distantly related. One of the houses belonged to Shankarbhai Patel brother-in-law of Chunibhai Patel. He was the municipal auditor in the municipal Corporation. His signature came in handy on the application form for admission to the municipal library near the Town Hall which I frequented and used to borrow a number of Marathi books including novels of Hari Narayan Apte & Nathmadhav. Mohanbhai Patel later rose to be chief engineer and later on Secretary to the government of Gujarat. When I joined the capital project as a senior town planner in 1965 he was a father figure to me. Yet, when I officiated as the chief town planner and architectural adviser to the government, I was higher in rank than the Chief engineer Mr Mohanbhai Patel and as our offices were in the same building in Ahmedabad for any official meeting he would come down to my office and never showed any reluctance at having to sit across the table from a person who was at least 20 years his junior.

Even during this period of 1948 – 52, Ahmedabad was a fairly congested city and the traffic in the Centre of the town was chaotic. In order to ease the congestion the local authority thought of constructing an additional road between the central part of the city and the railway station. The road was appropriately named relief road and was constructed in a short period. On this road came up one of the most modern cinema theatre of that time and it was also named 'Relief'. It was I think one of the first air-conditioned cinema theatres in Ahmedabad. The air conditioning was achieved by blowing air over large slabs of ice stored under the theatre. We could see these slabs being loaded in the compartments that held them for the air to pass over and be blown in the theatre through grills at the lower level.

During our stay in Ahmedabad my father came in close contact with Ambalal Sarabhai the patriarch of the Sarabhai family, his wife Saralaben who was an ardent social worker, his brilliant son Dr Vikram Sarabhai, his wife Mrinalini, and his daughter Mridula Sarabhai who was a great friend of Sheikh Abdullah of Kashmir and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. My father was soon asked to take over the job of a

liaison officer in Delhi and was asked to be the local guardian to Mridula Sarabhai. Mridula was a very simple and kind hearted person who could be easily taken in by anyone. Since she was a great friend of Sheikh Abdullah and very much in favour of independence for the Kashmiris, Ambalal Sarabhai insisted that all the monies (lest she squandered it on the hangers on) she had be kept in a bank account which she could not operate without a joint signature from my father.

5. BARODA AGAIN 1954



Maharaja Sayajirao University (MSU) of Baroda ,main building.

My father left for Delhi to take up his new assignment and we stayed back in Baroda so as to complete my education till matriculation. We did not stay at my grandfather's place but rented a house in the same area almost opposite to my grandfather's place. This house was in fact like a train with four rooms in a row. The last or the rearmost room was the kitchen the front one on the road was the living room. The entire building was raised slightly above the plinth level of the adjoining buildings and common toilets were provided in the basement. During rainy season the basement was flooded and in fact the sewage also used to enter the basement due to backflow and we had a horrible time cleaning up the mess to be able to use the toilets. Fortunately for us there was 24-hour water supply and the municipal street cleaner would do the job of cleaning up the toilets for a small compensation. After my matriculation when I joined the College for a degree course in architecture, my mother and both sisters shifted to Delhi and I rented a single room in the same place where we had this house.

For my matriculation I joined the senior division of the Jayashree model high school located near a cinema called Mohan talkies. Our school was a single story 'U' shaped building and there were I think only six classrooms. The barracks had sloping roof of corrugated iron sheets with clay tiles laid over the sheets. It used to get pretty hot. We had some very good teachers. Particularly I remember my English teacher who also taught Marathi Mr N B Puranik. He stayed in a small Lane near the Jubilee Gardens. The house was just a room on the ground floor with a mezzanine above and the floor was made of wooden rafters covered with cow dung

plaster. He used to inhale 'tapkir' –snuff-and reeked of it!. He used to wear a dhoti and an ash coloured jacket over a shirt which must have been white when he bought it. I don't think he ever washed the jacket. His house was full of books which were just heaped around and one had to make place for oneself to sit!

He encouraged me and my class mate Madhukar Pradhan to participate in an interschool elocution competition in Marathi. We used to visit his place every day for practice and I remember that mezzanine where we stood up and recited the speech with tonal intonation as suggested by him. The competition was held in the Rosary School. Though the first prize was awarded to probably Rosary School I was awarded the first prize for individual performance. My photograph was published in the local Gujarati newspaper with the news item and I realized many years later that it must have been my teacher who had got it published with my photograph. Another of my friend Ramesh Modak was very bright, but could not afford to buy footwear and hence got into the habit of walking on his toes to reduce contact with the hot asphalted roads! He had almost calligraphic Marathi writing and wrote the first hand written student's journal that our class produced. I edited it. As coincidence would have it he was married to Pushpa Vaishampayan a bosom friend of my wife to be Neela Joshi! With grit, determination & hard work he managed to graduate in marine engineering and rose to be a Commander in the Indian navy! Mr. Puranik had great expectations of me of achieving a distinction in Marathi in the final matriculation exam. He was very confident and would say that not even a great Marathi 'Pundit' from Pune could give me less marks than 60 which was the distinction level. As it happened, I got only 50 marks which must have greatly disappointed him as it did me and to this day I feel that my answer papers must have been either misplaced or some confusion took place.

It was in this school that Shivaji used to occupy the place next to me for his misplaced belief that my proximity would make him a scholar! During this time I was very fond of Hindi and English movies and often went to the Mohan talkies to watch those. The lowest admission ticket was five annas where the seating was wooden benches without backs. But there was a facility for the school students to upgrade to the higher class at the same price by giving a print of a stamp of the school logo. We therefore used to get the peon of the school to print a notebook full of the school stamp which we used, to watch English films by upgrading to the next class which would otherwise cost 10 and half annas.

Though I was fairly good in all subjects my weak point was mathematics which included algebra, geometry and arithmetic. Both my younger uncles helped me out but I would still fail in the subjects. I remember, in the preliminary examination before the matriculation I failed in the subject of mathematics having got only three marks in algebra, five in geometry and four in arithmetic! Despite my failure the school gave me the form to appear for the matriculation examination as I had stood first in the school despite the low marks in mathematics. The matriculation examination was about three months away and between December 1953 to March

1954 both these uncles took up the challenge to tutor me in the subject. The elder one— Prabhakar—was very good at solving problems in geometry and did manage to inculcate in me the ability to solve the problems. But he was rather short tempered and would not persevere if I failed to comprehend a problem the very first time. The younger uncle— Mukund—had infinite patience and a knack of teaching, particularly algebra and he not only managed to teach me well but also created in me an interest in the subject! In the final matriculation examination I scored 73/100 in mathematics. I stood first in the school and eighth in the Baroda Centre.

While I would not belittle the importance of hardware in the educational system, I still feel strongly that ultimately good dedicated teachers and students who really want to learn make the difference to the entire educational system. We can now hardly find teachers like Mr Puranik who took great pride in teaching and spent their earnings on further acquiring knowledge which they could impart to their students. Many years later I came to know that Mr. Puranik died in abject poverty uncared by anyone as he had no children. Another of such teachers was our teacher of Sanskrit whose name was Shastri. He never sat on the chair but always squatted on the table and did not wear his footwear while teaching the language which he considered as 'Devavani'-the language of the gods.

Though I was a voracious movie fan and watched almost all Hindi and English movies that came to the town I never neglected my studies. I used to carry the textbook with me to the movie theatre and before the movie started and during the interval I used to read! Just for fun, I watched five movies in a row in a day—from 9am. To 12 in the night— at the end of which I had such a bad headache that I did not know what movies I had watched. The Hindi movies those days were mostly historical, mythological or fictional. I remember having watched the old Dilipkumar-Vaijayantimala starrer movie 'Madhumati' eight times in a row on 8 consecutive days and another one—Azad— starring Dilipkumar & Meenakumari seven times in a row. Later during my college days I got addicted to reading English novels particularly Woodhouse, Ian Fleming, Alistair MacLean, Agatha Christie, Edgar Allan Poe, Edgar Wallace, Earle Stanley Gardner. Much later I was greatly fascinated by the book titled 'Rise and fall of the Third Reich' by William Shirer and 'Three men in a boat' by Jerome K Jerome. I must have read these books more than 10 times till the pages almost came apart but I persisted with those copies!

I passed my matriculation examination at the age of 14 in March 1954. My grandfather took me to the Faculty of Technology then called 'Kalabhavan' to meet the Dean D. Subbarao and requested him to admit me to the Architecture course as I was good at "Drawing"! Thus, I was admitted and was to start my studies from June that year. Till 1954 Architecture was a 4 year diploma course but a 5 year degree course was to be introduced from that year and thus I was the first degree holder in architecture from Kalabhavan which had produced famous architects like Rehman, Joglekar who later held the post of Chief Architects to the government of India in the central public works department. The Maharaja Sayajirao University of

Baroda was in those days and is even now one of the few universities that offered educational courses in all fields.

Those days there used to be a few reserved seats in architecture course for students from states like Assam, Punjab and also from other countries. So in my class we had a student from Burma called Stanley Ba Pe. Two students from Punjab who were already graduates in arts/science and probably already married. One of my classmate was Suryakant Pawar the elder brother of the famed politician Sharad Pawar. He was very tall and I looked like a pygmy with my tiny height of 4'6". Having been brought up in Gujarat I was not aware that he belonged to the well-known family of Pawars in Maharashtra and was fairly rich. Suryakant remains a friend to this day. I found a group photograph of all of us when we passed out. Out of curiosity I counted 7 of those who are no more alive in this year 2015. One of them was my very dear friend D. Sitaram who had joined IIT Kharagpur one year later than me. He unfortunately died very young.

One of the frequent visitors to my grandfather was one Krishnarao Marathe a very elderly person who had his jacket pockets full of sweetmeats for which myself and my sisters lingered where he used to squat on the floor to talk to my grandfather. He leaned against a bolster to start with but after about an hour of talking he would be almost prostrate on the carpet with only his head resting on the bolster! He would have a very heated discussion with my grandfather, get very angry and would leave the house in a huff proclaiming that he would never come there again to appear again next evening!



first row-Vishnukumar Bhatt extreme left, D Subbaro in the centre, Suryakant Patel flanked by M.B.Dave (with tie) and Prof. Pandit (with tie), third row D.N. Sitaram (with tie) extreme left, Suryakant Pawar in centre; last row fourth from left P M Apte and extreme right Manohar Katdhare

In 1954 as I was admitted to the University for Architecture my father decided to leave me in Baroda and take rest of the family to Delhi. His office staff in Baroda gave a very grand sendoff when we left by train for Delhi. Our railway compartment was decorated with garlands and it was a touching farewell at the railway station. Thereafter I travelled to Delhi almost every summer. In 1957 when I was going to Delhi by train (those days it used to take a two night's travel to reach Delhi from Baroda) the journey became memorable for me for two reasons. It was on that day

that the Russian Sputnik with a dog was put into orbit. I read the news when I bought a newspaper at Ratlam station where the train had a fairly long halt. I bought the newspaper on seeing the photograph about the space achievement. But I was at the newspaper stall not to buy a newspaper but to check whether it had a Marathi monthly magazine titled "Gammat" which was to start publication from that month only and had accepted my short story- an adaptation of an incidence from the book, "Three men in a boat" describing how uncle Podger went about hanging a photo frame on the wall in the house. My short story had appeared and it was obviously a great joy for me. Short stories from some other authors were also published. While this was my first and last fictional piece to be published in the Journal some of the others authors, particularly one Snehalata Dasnurkar who also had her story published in the same issue later on became well-known literary figures.

In Delhi during that summer vacation before returning to Baroda to join architecture I used to explore a number of old book stalls in 'Chandni Chowk' in search of any book which could illustrate how to build crystal radio sets. I did find one and after deciding upon which set to build I started exploring the used material market behind Jama Masjid to buy components for the radio set. I bought a set of headphones which must have been army discard for just a rupee and a crystal for two rupees along with a variable condenser. I built the set and enclosed it in a small wooden box. The crystal had to be mounted on the top of the box where one had to maneuver the adjustable arm with a connecting tip to go over the small crystal and find the exact point at which one could get a medium wave reception of Delhi radio station. It was a great joy when I first received the transmission. Since my father would not have such patience to get the radio transmission, I carried the crystal set with me when I returned to Baroda. Later on I was able to buy a crystal diode for five rupees which obviated the need to find the right spot in the crystal stone for getting the radio transmission.

The Department of architecture was then headed by Prof. M B Dave. He was a diminutive man with thinning white hair. He taught us architectural design. Mr Pandit a plump person taught history of Indian architecture. Mr.Thomre taught history of European architecture. Mr.Pingle used to teach aesthetics and drawing. For all the first three years. His classes used to be on Saturdays between 1 to 3 PM. I invariably skipped his classes as on Saturdays at the Mohan talkies there used to be generally an English movie that I could not miss attending! In retrospect I think I lost some good education from him. He knew very well the reason for my not attending his classes but never held it against me and remained a good friend for many years later whenever I meet him in Baroda.



Kalabhavan-Faculty of Technology, Baroda, the extreme left wing accommodated the department of Architecture. Now it is shifted to a new building in the University campus.

I must mention Vishnukumar Bhat who taught us art appreciation. He used to take us to the Museum, picture & art galleries in Baroda, to the music college to listen to great vocal and instrumental music artists and helped me further develop my ability to appreciate fine arts

During the third year of my education professor M.B.Achwal joined college to teach architectural design as Mr Dave retired. Achwal has been a great influence on my life. He was not only a good teacher of architecture but also a very fine literary person. His writings in Marathi about aesthetics in the form of short essays, to my mind are a priceless contribution to Marathi literature. He had rented a house in Shiabaug which was frequented by great personalities from fields of literature and fine arts. Vasant Bapat a great Marathi poet, Kumar Gandharva the great Marathi classical singer, P L Deshpande the greatest of them all- a writer, actor, singer music composer, a playwright and an innovator in all fields of fine art were all great friends of Achwal. I developed a special bond with Achwal and he frequented my apartment in Delhi between 1970 and 1975 and invariably had lunch with us. My wife being a classical singer and a voracious Marathi literature reader was befriended by him. While working in Delhi as chief of HUDCO, wherever I went to Baroda to visit my parents myself and my wife invariably had a late-night session at his house. He presented all his Marathi books that he had authored to both of us with his signature. He was a heavy smoker which ultimately took his toll.

Suryakant Patel joined as a Professor in 1958 and our association with him was short. However when I was working with HUDCO he prepared a rather innovative lowincome housing project for the Surat municipal corporation. In that connection he often came to Delhi and we were again in close contact. Whenever I was in Baroda for official work he invited me for dinner either at his house or at his farm near Baroda. I visited his office at the Kirtee towers near Vishvamitri river and I was always welcome there. Even after I left HUDCO and either was on my own or working for SPENCERS I was always welcome at his office. We had a celebration in Baroda in 2004 on the 50th year of the commencement of the B. Arch course in Baroda and he attended it despite his ill health. Unfortunately he died soon after.

My sisters could not get along in the school in Delhi and hence returned to Baroda with my mother in 1955. We took a house on rent in an old Wada in a place called Vadi-Vaadi in Raopura just opposite the Gujarati school which I had attended during my first schooling in Baroda. During the five years of my education in architecture I was hardly at home except to come for lunch after the morning studio work and later

on late in the night after completing the various drawings that we were required to prepare for which we used college studio. I therefore had very little interaction with my mother or sisters and was constantly engrossed in my college work. I learned film processing at the darkroom facilities available in the college and later on used a small room in the house to process the films. I used to travel to the college on a bicycle and learned to carry the drawing Baroda in one hand under one arm and drive the bicycle with only the other. The regular drawing board made of special wood was too heavy to carry on a bicycle and hence I got one made from hardboard. I had a very innovative mind.

I remember in those days I had designed a machine to make 'Rotis', it was in the form of a Tiffin box with one compartment below the other. The top one had to be fed with the wheat flour and water and then a rotating blade mixer would mix it, the mixture would drop down in the lower compartment where it would be kneaded by a number of pistons and a small lump would drop down in the next lower compartment where a roller would flatten it onto a round roti and finally it would fall down into the bottom compartment where it would be made into a roti by applying heat from the bottom. I had also thought of making a comb which would have its individual hollow needles filled with hair oil when one combed the hair the oil would naturally flow on to the hair !

Those days we had to use a drawing board and a 'T' square. It was only in the 1990s that, computer drawing was introduced in India. We were therefore taught the art of drafting with different kind of pencils. One of my classmates was so good at drafting that the drawings prepared by him looked like being printed by a machine. My forte was design. I had a great innovative mind but was poor at presentation. My mind raced ahead of my ability to draw as it does even now race ahead of my ability and speed to write/type. In the final examination of architecture I stood first as usual but was not awarded the gold medal. A protracted correspondence with the University authorities only yielded a stubborn reply that "the university has considered the matter on its own merits and has decided to award the gold medal to P.C.Shah".

During the five years of architectural course we visited a number of places to prepare measured drawings which was one of the requirements of the course. Our visits to these places including making arrangements for the student's transport, accommodation, permissions from concerned authorities to prepare the drawings of a particular building and generally looking after the students was done by the professor in charge which was normally professor Achwal. I recollect, in one such trip in 1958 to Kashmir we were stuck in Srinagar due to an early snowfall and all the roads were closed. We were short of money and had to send telegrams home asking for funds. I had also sent a telegram to my father in Delhi to send me some money. I have a recollection of this because later next year when Mridula Sarabhai was imprisoned for her sympathies to the freedom struggle of Kashmir, the Delhi police conducted a search of our house in Delhi as my father was a co-signatory for

the bank account of Mridula Sarabhai and found this telegram which they thought was a proof of my father being involved in this political struggle!

During the summer vacations I used to visit Delhi and mostly spend my time in visiting various parts of the city by bus. I also used the bicycle in spite of the summer heat and saw many a movies at the theatres in Connaught place. After finishing my studies in Architecture and before I joined IIT Kharagpur my father requested the famous architect A.P.Kanvinde to let me work with him for the summer which I did. Kanvinde was the finest and gentlest of persons I have ever come across in my life. Despite being a highly creative architect he was humble and very soft spoken. As he was the architect for many of the office buildings of Sarabhai group he was a great friend of my father and took me under his tutelage. I visited his house in the Maharani Bagh area of Delhi a number of times as I was known to his wife also who belong to Baroda.

Later in my career sometime in the 1970s when I was working as chief of HUDCO I was nominated for the position of the director of school of planning and architecture in Delhi. As Chief of Projects in HUDCO I had been nominated on the board of governors of the school of planning & architecture in New Delhi the most prestigious institution in India. During that time whenever the Director of the school was on long leave I officiated as the director of the school and looked after its academic as well as administrative work quite successfully even handling a student's strike! Perhaps due to this experience I was nominated for the post of Director for the selection of which the Government of India constituted a selection committee.

The interview committee consisted of Dr.Karan Singh as the chairman who was the Minister of education then and number of officials from the Ministry. Mr Kanvinde was the expert advisor in the panel. While Dr. Karan Singh seemed to have been impressed by my career and the interview, the last person to interact with me was Mr Kanvinde. He asked me how I would lead the institution as its director and maintain its preeminence in the country. I replied that in my own opinion there were already very eminent professionals heading the departments of architecture, housing, landscape design, and city planning and therefore I would rather coordinate the efforts of these competent professionals and manage the Institute than try to take a lead in the academic part. His question thereupon was whether I felt that the director's job was to administer and not to provide leadership in academics. When I replied in affirmative he sarcastically asked whether in my opinion an administrator could be a director of the school. I said "yes", any person with good understanding of the subjects being dealt with by the Institute even if he were only an administrator could be a good director. He was aghast and almost went red in the face with anger and said, do you mean to say Mr Apte that an IAS person also can be a director of this school? I said "yes".

Needless to say I was not selected. A professional town planner was selected to be the director and as I came to know later, was constantly at loggerheads with all

heads of departments and soon unfortunately died of a heart attack. Many years later sometime in the 1980s when I thought of settling down in my hometown of Baroda and having found that there was a vacancy for the post of a professor in the architecture department I applied for it. The pay scale of the professor then was Rs. 1600 – 2000. I felt that with over 20 years of experience in architecture and city planning and occasional teaching I could fill the bill. At the interview where the Vice Chancellor Prof. Vakil was the chairman of the committee, Mr. Pramdar as head the head of the department was a member, Mr Kanvinde was the expert advisor.

The interview went well, so I thought. But I was not selected. I came to know later from the head of the Department that while the Vice- Chancellor was strongly in favour of my selection, Mr Kanvinde favoured an architect who had 'the gift of the gab' and had worked in the USA. He was appointed but delayed joining giving various excuses. He then joined the Department and after having worked for a month or so took leave of absence and went to the USA. He kept on prolonging and extending his leave. Ultimately the University authorities had to issue a legal notice to him to be served in the USA where probably he had found a more profitable assignment. The post remained vacant for years to come. While I do not regret not having been selected for the job as I found more rewarding opportunities and assignments in Mumbai, had I been selected, with the responsibility of the education of two of my sons I might have settled down in Baroda where I had my contacts, friends and own house.

A few years later when I was working in Bangalore as a director and had my office in hotel West End I met Mr Kanvinde there and hosted a lunch for him. I cannot but marvel at the simplicity honesty and truthfulness of the person when he told me that Mr Apte, I was wrong in not selecting you in Delhi as well as in Baroda and I regret my decision. I do not think there could be any other personality of his eminence and professional standing who would have the courage to openly admit that he had committed a mistake. One of my friends who is an architect but also studies 'Adhyatma' once mentioned to me that his interpretation of the couplet from the 'Bhagavadgeeta' "YOGAHA KARMASU KAUSHALAM" is that 'proficiency and a rise in one's own chosen field of activity should make the person more humble and rise to a higher level as a human being'. I have no doubt in my mind that with his preeminence in his own profession of architecture, Mr.Kanvinde rose to a higher level in his spiritual standing and hence had no hesitation in looking back upon his decisions in life and admitting if those were right or wrong.

I cannot but compare this experience with another one in which I was confronted with another world-famous architect probably better known than Kanvinde. I was a member of the committee to judge an urban design competition in Mumbai where a limited number of architects had been asked to submit their entries with models. This architect being world-famous was the chairman of the committee and I was a member being the chief of HUDCO. We had a very long discussion and were generally unanimous in deciding for the first prize. But for the second place I

favoured a particular solution which this great architect did not like. Since I had the courage of my conviction I continued to argue for a pretty long time and could see that the architect was losing his temper. Finally almost enraged he said, 'Apte, I am ++++++ ++++++, when I say that this design is good IT IS GOOD" I gave up the argument. This incidence only illustrates the greatness of mind of Kanvinde and how he had conquered his ego.

Many years later some time in 2002 after the creation of the state of Chattisgarh, the government there decided to build a new capital. Applications were invited from town planning consultants with experience of designing new cities for short listing. Myself with my experience of planning Gandhinagar and my friend Christopher Benninger who was then engaged in designing Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan jointly submitted a proposal. To our surprise we were not even short listed!. Kanvinde was a member of the committee as an expert adviser. I wrote a letter to him. I received a reply from him many months later that in view of the many irregularities that were being committed by the administrators in the competition procedure he was very unhappy and was to resign as a member of the committee. He did resign thereafter. I have preserved his long letter.

During the summer vacation of 1958 I and four of my friends joined the office of the chief architect of Chandigarh project for training. One of the Maharashtrian Architects working there made available to us a bungalow designed by him for a client, free of rent for 3 months. The office time was from 7 am to 1 pm and bicycling home from office on the deserted roads in the scorching heat was nothing less than torture. The only sector well developed was no.21. We had a number of Maharashtrian Architects there including Mr. Prabhavalkar and we used to get invited for dinner at their homes quite often. I worked with Architects B.P.Mathur and M.N.Sharma. but as a trainee, more than the office work, it was the opportunity to have a look at the earlier project design for Chandigarh by Architect Noviki and planner Albert Myer, that I cherish. I strongly believe that had these two been allowed to design the new capital it would have been a gem of a project totally rooted in the tradition of Indian architecture, tradition and culture, unlike the regimental stereotype concrete boxes created by le Corbusier. The experience in Chandigarh helped me take a decision for my future course in academic education.

6. KHARAGPUR: W. BENGAL 1959



After my graduation in Architecture my father asked me if I would like to go to USA for higher education. To keep him happy I applied for and got admission to 5 universities in USA including MIT and Cornell. I was also awarded a scholarship by 3 of them. It was about US \$ 1500 per year with a waiver of tuition fees. However there would be initial expenses and the airfare (which was around Rs.5000 in 1959). My father found that he was not in a position to bear the expenses. So he approached Dr. Vikram Sarabhai who immediately promised to give him a personal loan of the amount! Thereafter I had a long discussion with my father. I argued that after my education in USA when I return to India I will find that the economic and technological conditions here are not conducive (the technological gap in the 2 countries was about 20 years till as late as 1990)to the use of the knowledge gained in USA and will definitely feel frustrated. The frustration may drive me to go back to USA for a job. Hence, if we knew the ultimate result of these efforts is it advisable to go to USA for higher education? I was keen on working in India and felt that a higher education in town planning may take me nearer my goal and ambition.

He agreed with my rational thinking (a trait inherited from him!) At that time postgraduate education in town planning in India was available only in Delhi school of planning which awarded a Diploma and the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur which awarded a degree in Regional Planning. IIT also awarded scholarship to all post graduate students. So it was settled that I would apply at IIT. I did, was interviewed and was selected for the session to begin in August 1959. For the first year I would get a scholarship of Rs. 75 per month and in the second year Rs. 150 per month. The fees were very low. Having settled this issue I started working in the office of Kanvinde in June 1959 till August that year.

I joined IIT in August in the department of Architecture and regional planning. Prof. DVR Rao was the head of the department and Vishwanath Prasad an Architect planner himself was Deputy Director. IIT had the best of the teachers and the teaching schedule was rigorous. I was accommodated in the Rajendra Prasad hall of residence where most of the post graduate students were located. We had single seated rooms and the mess and the common hall were on the ground floor. When I joined the Undergraduate students were already "in" and it was only during the second year that I saw some ragging taking place for them. But it was not in bad taste nor in any way a physical torture. I remember, one fine evening after a knock on my door when I opened the door I found a very fair tall girl in a white frock all made up with lipstick and realized that it was a boy dressed as a girl. He(he) had to say 'hi' to everyone. I found out later that this boy was the son of a highest ranking officer in the Indian armed forces. In later life he rose to be the Director of a public enterprise and we met frequently in Delhi. I never reminded him of the incidence. The hostel life was good as we had single seated rooms and our hostel-the Rajendra Prasad hall of residence was nearest to the Institute.



I.I.T.Kharagpur main entrance.

The IIT campus was quite isolated with its own township and was about 5 KM. away from Kharagpur town which is a major railway hub and had a large anglo-indian population who were mostly railway employees. One had to have a bicycle without which there was no other means of transport. Cycle rikshaws were available from the railway station to go to the IIT campus. There was a steep slope on a section of this road and bicycling was quite an effort. But we had to go to the town almost every alternate day to buy necessities as well as drawing materials. But the visits were mainly to go to the Udupi restaurant and ofcourse to watch movies. There were 3 cinema theatres of which one had exclusively Tamil-Telgu movies (catering to the railway workers) and the other two had hindi movies. The south institute, a club of railway officers, used to show English movies on Sunday mornings and I watched some of the good movies like Bicycle thief and yesterday, today & tomorrow there. We also had to go to the town for a hair cut as the only barber in the campus was an old man engaged in his profession under a tree to whom we dare not entrust our heads!

During the summer vacation the undergraduates would go home to their respective places but for us there was project work. Out of the 8 halls of residences only one used to run the mess during this time. But quite a few P.G.s used to occupy the staff quarters of the professors as they also used to go to their native places but dared not lock up the residences for fear of thefts and burglaries. Most Professors would select a post graduate student from their own department and speaking their language. The arrangement was beneficial to both parties as the students had the liberty to use larger space and had almost 24 hour water supply. The hostels used to have watersupply for hardly 30 minutes in the morning and evening. It was between 11 am to 11.30am in the morning. So, as soon as we finished our lectures in the morning we would rush back to the hostel. I used to immediately change in my daily use clothes and get into the bathroom and with the clothes on take a cold shower and apply soap over them. So the bath served the dual purpose of washing the body as well as the clothes! After the quick bath just squeeze the clothes and

put them on the balcony railing for drying. We did have a washer man visiting us once a week for our other clothes. I used to subscribe to the newspaper Statesman and read the Amritbazar Patrika in the common hall of the hostel. But all the south Indian students would eagerly wait for the 'Hindu' to arrive in the evening.

After lunch, at times, we spent almost the entire day at the studio working on our project drawings and would go back to the hostel for dinner and back to studio. I remember once when we fell short of printing paper late in the night, two of us bicycled to the town, woke up the owner of the stationery store-one Mr. Thakkar-and bought the material required and peddled back to studio. We had very good equipment and facilities at the IIT and I have nostalgic memories of my sojourn there. My health not being robust, I often suffered from cold & fever. At such times my classmate Moni Sharma (Chatterjee) who, rarely interacted with us, would immediately come to my room get medicines for me and ensure that the mess gave me a 'sick diet' which consisted of barley water and biscuits! I think he migrated to USA and there was no contact with him after we left Kharagpur.

For my dissertation I prepared a new town plan for Bokaro steel town which was in the offing at that time. My Thesis jury consisted of our Director Sengupta, our department head and the director of the school of planning in Delhi Mr. T.J.Manikkam. I was awarded an A+ for the thesis work and stood first in the class as always. For the Regional Planning post graduate course admission was open to Architecture-Engineering graduates and also those from Socio- economic disciplines but they were not awarded a Degree but a Diploma. My father was very proud of my achievement and mentioned it to Dr. Vikram Sarabhai. Dr. Sarabhai asked my father for a meeting with me to show him the project drawings. I remember meeting him in the restaurant lounge of the Delhi airport (in his very busy schedule he could find time only then!) and showing him the Bokaro plans. He asked me if I would be willing to work on a township project for a petrochemical project near Baroda for which he was thinking of engaging Mr. Kanvinde as the chief Architect. I readily agreed. Unfortunately, due to his increasing interest and preoccupation with nuclear research, he took much less interest in industrial enterprises.

7NEW DELHI 1961

After returning to Delhi from Kharagpur I was in search of a job and applied for a post of Junior architect with the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research which is the apex body for all the research institutes in India. It had at the head office in Delhi a large Architecture division to prepare designs for all the national laboratories including their housing colonies all over India. I appeared for the interview and was selected as a class I officer in the salary grade of Rs. 450-900. Our chief Architect was Ajay Bharadwaj a short jovial person and a competent Architect. He had the knack and capability to keep all the allied divisional heads for structural design, water supply-sewage-air-conditioning, electrical engineering under his control. We

had a staff of about 12 architects and my responsibility was to ensure production of working drawings 'good for construction' for all the projects. I also designed most of the housing colonies including those at Chandigarh, Jealgora, Jorhat, Calcutta, Chennai etc.

While Mr. Bharadwaj was away I was responsible for the division and had to interact with the Director General. During one such meeting the Director –a General Williams- called me to know the current status of design of the Central Scientific Instruments Organization at Chandigarh. The design was in the preliminary stage and being personally handled by Bharadwaj. I was therefore unaware of the state of the project. When General Williams asked me about it I told him the fact that since the work was being done by Bharadwaj I was unaware about the progress. He looked at me and said in a very serious voice, 'don't you know that Bharadwaj is dead? He died in an air crash yesterday on his way to Jorhat.' I was stunned! I think he realized that I was flabbergasted so he said with a smile, 'you as the second in command must keep yourself abreast of developments; work cannot stop if the chief is away. Thereafter I made it a point to keep a notebook of all projects under design process and their status and the persons who dealt with it. It was a valuable lesson.

In all my assignments thereafter I always ensured that I install systems & procedures that can ensure smooth working during my short or prolonged absence. Many people have called me a fool for such a policy as it more or less dispenses with my presence on the job! But I always wanted to ensure that the system and hence the organization should go on irrespective of personalities. There are many –I have personally encountered them-who proudlyboast that until they were at the helm of the organization everything went on well but it collapsed as soon as they left! I consider it a blot on the merit of a person not something to be proud of! When I see all the organizations where I worked continue to work efficiently and prosper, I feel proud that I could put them on their feet to stand without my support. I am not boasting when I say that that not many a so called efficient technocrats have been able to instill such confidence or systems in the organizations that they worked with. It is not an easy thing to do as it requires conquering one's ego as did Mr. Kanvinde!

Though I got a good experience of building design in all its aspects I was not happy to do only architectural work. There was some diversion as Bharadwaj was entrusted the design work of a very large open air theatre on the ridge in Delhi, commissioned by the Robindranath Tagore centenary celebration committee, It was to accommodate 8000 spectators and it was very interesting to work out details of the design. The stage was to have a basement to store props & property for the shows and had to be designed to be able to withstand the performance of a circus with wild animals, horses and elephants. I remember Prof Narayanan of the Delhi school – who was appointed structural design consultant for the project-going around in a daze trying to find out the weight of elephants and the way to design the concrete slab of the stage for their performance! Today at the click of the mouse we get such information in few minutes on the internet but those days he must have

spent a lot of time and referred a number of books before he could find the weight of an elephant!

At this time, the Delhi Development Authority advertised for the post of a planner, I applied for it and was appointed Assistant Associate Planner. The DDA peon who came to deliver the appointment order personally openly asked for “Bakshish” for delivering the good news and was not satisfied with the amount paid and demanded more! This culture of DDA was starkly revealed to me many years later when I was working in HUDCO. My personal secretary Arora through his ‘personal secretaries grapevine’ had got the information that a few DDA flats in Katwaria Sarai were in fact vacant but had been shown on records as ‘allotted’. He suggested that I approach Mr. M.N.Buch an honest and upright officer who was the vice chairman then to get one allotted to me. In the loan agreement with the borrowers HUDCO had a standard condition that the borrowing agency had to keep a certain number of flats/houses reserved for HUDCO employees.

I went to Katwaria sarai and found the location and the ground floor flat to my liking. I therefore sought an appointment with Mr. Buch and went to meet him on the appointed day at 11 a.m. In my presence he called the concerned officer from the estate department and asked him if there was any flat unallotted in Katwriasarai. He just smiled and said it was the most prized scheme and no flats were available. Mr. Buch insisted that he investigate and let him know after lunch. The reply remained negative after lunch. So Mr. Buch called a meeting of the top officers of the department and told them that as per the conditions of loan agreement with HUDCO a flat was required for Mr. Apte and he would not leave the office today until one was found in Katwria sarai. He said Mr. Apte will also be here with me today, throughout the night if required but he will not leave until a flat is found and an allotment letter for it is issued to Mr. Apte. I was with him in his office when at 7 o'clock a junior officer came with some files and explaining the mistakes in the procedures and records ascertained that flat no A-33 was indeed vacant and unallotted. He was asked to prepare necessary orders immediately. I was handed over the allotment letter at 10 o'clock in the night!

I joined DDA in October 1962. I was placed in charge of planning of villages falling within the urbanizable zone of Delhi. These were designated as Urban Villages. Mr. Sri Manohar was the chief Planner in DDA those days and he was very happy to be able to get a person like me who had academic and practical experience of regional planning. As it happened, I worked in DDA only for about 3 months. I had applied for an Italian government scholarship for higher education in Urban Design before I joined DDA. I was soon called for an interview and was selected. Coming to think of it, except for the two jobs, one in the Delhi school of planning and the other in the department of Architecture Baroda where Mr. Kanvinde had rejected me (to later on admit his mistake) I was always selected for any job or assignment that I applied for and never faced a rejection

8NAPLES: ITALY 1963



I was awarded the scholarship along with 4 other candidates from India, one an Architect and 3 others who were painters/sculptors. We were awarded an amount of Lire 50,000 per month, free admission to the University of Naples and return passage by sea. It was August 1963 and we were to sail in September. All 5 of us with a student from Nepal were accommodated in a 6 berth cabin. Many of my relations had come to wish me bon- voyage along with my wife to be –Neela Joshi- to whom I was engaged days before we sailed for Italy.

We sailed in the morning. We had a stop at Cairo in Egypt. We had a day trip to the city and a bus transport in the evening to go to port Suez. The ship was to make its way through the Suez canal and we were to board it again in the evening after its passage through the canal. We saw the Cairo museum and roamed through the city buying eatables –mainly fruits and dates-with Indian money. My memories of the city and the populace are positive. Unfortunately I cannot say the same about the same people and some of their neighbours in Arab countries during recent times after 2008.

After a brief halt at Malta and Palermo in Sicily, we reached Naples after a 9 day sea voyage. We were received the port and transported to a 'Pensione' (hotel) where we were to stay for the next academic at year.

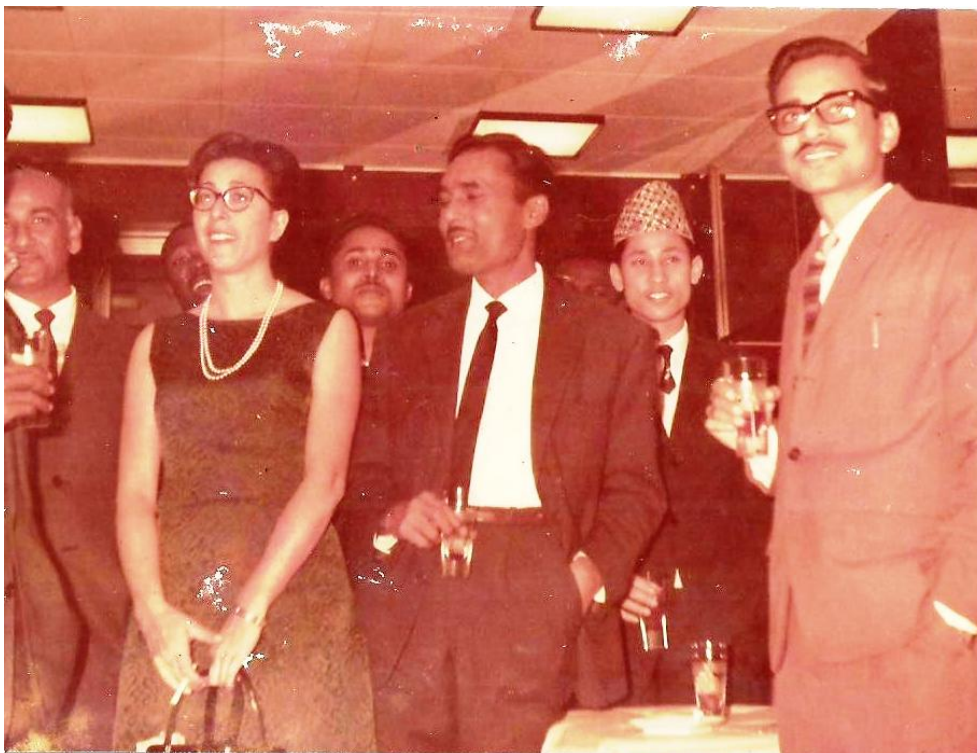


front row: from left, Prabhakar Apte (my uncle), his wife Sphurti, my sister Jyotsna, my father, Dadamama, self and Neela Joshi

My room mate was a student from Morocco. It was very clear over the next few months that he had come to Italy to enjoy life and he did so! We had a common toilet on each floor but a washbasin in each room. Next day we went to the bank and received that month's scholarship of Lire 50,000 of which half the amount I deposited back in my account. I had decided that I would save enough to take a tour of the main cities in Italy and also take a trip to Europe. I did so during the Christmas vacation visiting Rome, Florence, Milan, Turin, Genoa, Venice and Pisa. Three of my Indian colleagues travelled with me for the tour in Italy.

In Rome, while on a crowded bus to go to the coliseum, a very beautiful young girl was close to them and all three of them made very liberal comments about her anatomical features. When we were getting off at our stop she addressed us in Hindi and said "bahut shukriya aapke meri sundarta ke bareme bolaneke liye". (thank you for praising my beauty) In their haste to get off the bus and get away from her quickly, I was left behind in the bus. She then told me that she studied Hindi at the University and had enjoyed the comments! I got off at the next stop and walked back.

Travelling by trains in Italy was no different than in India. Perhaps the trains and railway stations were a little more cleaner, the attire of people different but the crowds, the jostling, and indiscipline was the same as in India. Those days Italy was the poorest of the European countries and politically as unstable as it is even today. There was a change in the government very often. But as one travelled north to Turin & Milan the picture was a little different. These cities then were more like the other European cities which also I visited.



At the welcome party in Naples our local guardian Signorina Bowe and myself at extreme right

But travelling from Genoa to Venice was a very pleasant experience. The train before reaching Venice travelled over the sea on the longest bridge I had seen till then. Many years later sometime in 1978 when we travelled to Rameshwaram from Madurai I had the same experience of travelling over the sea on the longest bridge. But unlike in Rameswaram, the railway station at Venice was almost on the sea and from there one had to take a 'Vaperetto'-water taxi- to go to any place. I normally stayed in the youth hostels, having wisely taken a membership before leaving India . But one had to leave the hostel by 9 am with bag and baggage though one could get back late in the evening. But stay was not allowed during the day and before leaving the hostel one had to do some house work. Mostly it was cleaning up the dormitory or the dining hall. Only in London I remember the house warden had me not only sweep the stairs but also sent me off on an errand to get some tobacco for him from a cigarette shop round the corner. My dislike for the British was further accentuated! I returned to Naples after visiting Milan, Turin & Genoa.

An incidence, much later in 2011, when we had gone on a tour of Greece, Spain and Portugal with my elder son Shireesh, added to the bitterness about the British peoples.. While leaving for Athens via London we had to board the flight from Heathrow airport. But when we returned from Madrid, the flight landed at Gatwick and we had to go to Heathrow to catch our return flight to Mumbai. Being a little knowledgeable and experienced about international travel I had checked with the carrier –British Airways- that we would not have any difficulty transferring from one airport to another which involved bus travel to London for over an hour. But at the

Gatwick airport at the passport counter the young British officer was extremely rude and said we could not go to the other airport as for that we required a Visa for UK. When I told him about the assurance by the British Airways he sarcastically commented that British airways is not the British government and cannot give such assurance. Knowing well, from our onward journey ticket that we had a confirmed flight by British airways in just 3 hours hence, he still abused us and in the end said as a special case he was issuing a one day visa to us. We somehow managed to reach Heathrow in time despite the morning rush hour traffic and caught our flight. Later on I came to know that it was standard practice elsewhere when travelers had to change airports within the city, to issue such temporary visa. After his abuse when we went to catch the bus I asked the 'Help" desk British officer if the bus company will accept the fare in US \$, he said with obvious sarcasm, "they will accept gold also"! I have always discerned in the attitude of the British people a hidden "bloody Indian" sneer! May be we were unfortunate in having encountered 'exceptions' and hopefully most British people do not have such attitude! But since then, I for one, try my best to avoid travelling anywhere via London!

Our college in Naples was in the centre of the town close to an exhibition hall. I remember there was once an exhibition of ancient artifacts from Pakistan and the exhibition was called "5000 years of Pakistan!" All of us had a hearty laugh at the title by a country which was just a part of India before the cunning British had the subcontinent divided and came into existence just 20 years back! I could take a bus from the college to our hotel by lunchtime or I could walk to the Marina and catch the 'Funicolare"-the cable car- to go up to the mountain ridge where our hotel was located. There were rough steps but in a circuitous route to get down from the ridge to marina. Many a time I went down by these steps and enjoyed the experience. I had a similar experience in Thimphu, Bhutan. In 2008 I worked as an adviser to the government there for the planning of the capital city. At that time I often climbed up/took a taxi to some of the Buddhist temple on hillocks and later on climbed down from the backside where there were just few tracks used by the local people. It is a thrilling experience to climb down a hill by the 'rough' route. As young children during our visit to Pune we quite often climbed down the "Parvati" hill from the backside.

My Indian friends, who were much older than me and being 'artists' enjoyed life with their Italian friends and spent most of their own as well as scholarship money in beer/wine drinking sessions. I saved as much as I could as I wanted to take a tour of Europe which I did, visiting, London, Paris, Geneva, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Brussels and returning via Milan & Turin. I cannot forget the ferry crossing from Europe to UK as I had the lowest class ticket which meant I had to spend the night on the deck in the freezing cold! All the benches on the deck were occupied and I had to squat in some protected corner to avoid the cold draft! I visited all the tourist places in London. I also met some of my college mates mostly junior to me. I saw them in the apartment that they shared after visiting the Tate art gallery. None of them, despite their over 3 year's stay there had visited Tate gallery. Neither

had they been to Madame Tussad's or the British museum. I suppose when one is at a place just for a few days one visits all the places worth a visit while those who stay there never seem to make it!

The British museum is really vast. But in the quantity and quality of exhibits the Museum at Cairo in Egypt and the one in Chennai in India are comparable. My father had given me some British currency coins which he had with him since his return from England in 1948. I was able to get a meal of Fish & Chips with that money. That was my first and the last meal in the entire Europe tour! I didn't have enough money to eat in a restaurant a regular meal. Thereafter my staple diet was cheese and apples! I used to stay in the youth hostels where some sort of frugal breakfast was available at a very low price. Thereafter throughout the day I roamed around and whenever hungry, bought apples and blocks of cheese and rested on roadside benches to consume that. I had to move around with my luggage as during those days lodgers at the youth hostels had to take away their belongings after breakfast by 9 am. And get re-admittance to the hostel in the evening after 7 pm! Therefore, I carried only a shoulder bag that had minimal clothes and toiletries. I had bought a raincoat at Naples which had some woolen lining and that served as an overcoat. A hat was also a must. I had also bought long woolen underpants and a vest which protected me from the inclement weather.

I visited London twice thereafter in 1988 and 1998 with my wife. I passed through London sometimes on my way to the Europe, Scandinavian countries and later to Greece, Spain & Portugal but avoided staying there. With my wife, I again visited the British Museum, Madame Tussad's, Buckingham Palace, Westminster, walked on the banks of the Thames river, visited Regent's park and travelled by the still old fashioned underground metro rail.

The youth hostel at Paris was closed and hence I had to stay in a hotel. Those days one could go up the top of the Eiffel tower which I did. The view from the top was good as Paris is a well planned city. But I didn't think it was anything great. One could get a similar bird's eye view from the top of the Kutubminar those days. I did take an evening conducted tour of the night clubs. I took the same tour with my wife years later. Going over the roof of Notre dame was an experience. Versailles I revisited with my wife in 1998. I took a night tour on the river Seine.



Painter Dasgupta to the left and myself on the right

During the tour the ship's search lights would suddenly catch young couples along the banks intent in their lovemaking, many of whom did not seem startled by the sudden search light ! From Paris I went on to Brussels as I wanted to see the model of the Atom called Atomium which was constructed an year before for the international industrial fair perhaps in 1961. From Brussels to Amsterdam was quite a transformation as it had a small town feeling with its canals and the roads full of bicycles! Cars were very few on the roads of Amsterdam. I visited the house of Rembrandt. Those days Amsterdam had not become as free as it is today in respect of 'adult' films. From Amsterdam to Geneva where I still remember the visit to the lake Geneva, with the high rising water jet fountain. Thereafter I visited Dusseldorf and Frankfurt where my Uncle Govind was undergoing training at a Pharmaceutical company Hoechst. He took me round the city and I had lunch with him at the company canteen. For me, those days the canteen seemed like a five star restaurant! I returned to Naples after my European tour.

On a weekend I made it to Pompei the city that was destroyed when the volcano Vesuvio exploded. Pompeii is *the* most important archeological site anywhere in the world. Prior to the eruption of Vesuvius, Pompeii was a thriving city. Then it was buried with so little warning in 79 A.D. that Pompeii was literally frozen in time. Researchers believe that the town was founded in the seventh or sixth century BC. By the time of its destruction, 160 years later, its population was approximately 11,000 people, and the city had a complex water system, an amphitheatre, gymnasium and a port.

The eruption killed the city's inhabitants and buried it under tons of ash. The objects that lay beneath the city have been well-preserved for centuries because of the lack of air and moisture. These artifacts provide an extraordinarily detailed insight into the life of a city. During the excavation, plaster was used to fill in the voids between the ash layers that once held human bodies. This allowed one to see the exact position the person was in when he or she died.



A paved street in Pompeii. The blocks in the road allowed pedestrians to cross the street without having to step onto the road itself which doubled up as Pompeii's drainage and sewage disposal system. The spaces between the blocks allowed vehicles to pass along the road.

There is a striking similarity between the planning aspects of the city and Mohen-Jo-Daro though it was older than Pompeii by almost 2000 years. After completing the writing of this book, god willing, I may take up a comparative study of these two ancient cities.

I now concentrated on my studies in the university college. I had started a study of the Italy's plan to develop (particularly the industries) the underdeveloped areas of the country which comprised of the region south of Naples including Sicily. The plan was nicknamed 'Mezzo-Giorno'- which meant southern Italy. I tried to compare industrial development there with that in the capital region of New Delhi. During the time -1961 –there was much similarity between the stage of economic development (or under development!) in southern Italy and the north Indian economic conditions. Italy was the poorest of the European countries (perhaps it remains so even today now, joined by Spain, Portugal, Greece). The conditions have worsened after 2008 for these countries while Italy is comparatively better off.

I completed the work by May 1964 just a month before the end of my scholarship period. While in Naples staying in the hotel meant for international students, all of us were bonded together by our affection for the city and the people of Italy. I recollect the all Europe music competition which used to be televised live. When I left India there was no television transmission in India which started only in 1972. All the international students used to gather in the lounge of the hotel glued to the TV programme that televised the competition. If I remember right, there used to be loud cheers when the Italian competitor Giliola Chinquetti advanced in it and was in the last finalists. When finally she won the competition having been placed first for her song 'non oh leta' we roared with triumph and for the first time in my life I tasted a glass of beer provided 'gratis' by the hotel owner to celebrate the occasion! For many years later and even today I can hum that song in the right tune and find it unparalleled among other European language songs. This song can be compared to a few Hindi or Marathi songs sung by famous Indian female singers for not only its melody but also the lyric that is full of emotional content. 'Non Oh Leta' (I am still too young) is a song in which a young adolescent girl tells her lover to be patient as she cannot go out with him alone as she is too young. But assures him that one day we will go together to the church (for their wedding) but till then have patience. The social relevance of the song to the Indian culture is very striking. The Italians, like us, are in fact a highly family oriented society (or were till quite some time ago) The 'Familia' was very important and one of the basis for the Italian organized crime groups in USA was the 'Casa Nostra'- our house-. Like in the villages of northern

India clan bonds were very strong and honour killing often took place. The Italian 'Mafia' in USA belonged to a single clan.

I had recorded the song- 'Non Oh Leta'- on the spool type tape recorder that I bought in Italy and which amazingly worked well for many years. Amazingly because Italian goods are known for their very poor quality! The tape recorder was with me till a few years back till 2010! I gave it away to a person from Baroda who was searching for a spool type of tape recorder as he had many old tape spools with religious chants that he wanted to play and record on a DVD. He came all the way from Baroda to Mumbai to take the tape recorder and was very happy to see it in excellent working condition. I am sure it is still working well! We the Indian students were booked for a return sea voyage back to Mumbai on the 9th of June 1964. While we were loading our bags into the taxis that were to take us to the port, the resident Director asked signorina Bowe as to which of us learnt to speak Italian well. She replied, pointing at me, "quello che parla mai"_ the one who rarely spoke! She, I think, summarized my characteradequately!

9 Asansol :West Bengal 1964



Mother Theresa.

Before I reached Delhi my father, having come across an advertisement about the formation of a 'scientist's pool' had sent in an application on my behalf. The government of India had set up the pool wherein any Indian coming back from a foreign country where he had been on a scholarship or had been employed after post graduation was immediately absorbed as a 'scientist' and depending upon his qualification and experience was posted to an appropriate organization till he found a permanent employment commensurate with his qualification. It was a laudable scheme to ensure that qualified young Indians returning to India were not forced to remain unemployed for lack of suitable opportunities and were assured of sustenance till they found a job of their choice. Accordingly I was appointed as a 'Pool Officer' and was asked to report for duty to the MES –Military Engineering Service- at the headquarters in Kashmir house in Delhi as a town planner. Since my uncle Govind was away to Germany he had asked me to use his 'scooter' and I rode it to work for the next 2 months I did not do any really substantial work but I was able to educate & train the engineers in the elements of planning like criteria for site selection, devising a road pattern to suite the topography and site conditions, allocating use of land and their relative juxtaposition etc.

During this time I applied for the post of Associate Planner for the Asansol/Siliguri planning organization under the government of West Bengal. Interviews were held in the office of the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning organization headed by K.C.Sivaramakrishnan & M.G.Kutty. As always I was selected and chose to be with the Asansol Planning Organization. It was to prepare a plan for the 600 sq. km. Asansol-Durgapur coal-steel region. After my selection I received a long letter from Sivaramakrishnan wherein he outlined his ideas about its future planning. The most memorable part of his letter was the initial paragraph in which, if I remember right, he had said, "... without trying to influence an expert in the subject and with due respect to your expertise in regional planning.. I put forth my ideas as an administrator about the planning of the region". Rare is such humility in an I.A.S. officer most of whom generally consider themselves as experts in any and every field of activity! The other three of the I.A.S. clan that I came across in my career, who showed such humility and respect for the experts were late J.B.D'Souza ex. Chief secretary of Maharashtra and Late S.S.Tinaikar, Municipal Commissioner of Mumbai, M.N.Buch Secretary to the government of Madhya Pradesh and K C Sivaramakrishnan.

While I was Chief of Projects in HUDCO and Mr. D'Souza was the Chairman & Managing Director we published many guide books for our borrowers who were mostly state housing authorities or local bodies. These books were about low income house design concepts, comparative studies on density, corridor concepts, common toilets etc and even today are referred to by the students of low income housing. Initially when I wrote these books, as is the practice in all public sector undertaking, I requested Mr. D'Souza to write the preface. He always declined saying "what do I understand about design & planning? You are the expert, you should write the preface". In this context I remember a similar incidence when HUDCO had its first M.D. Mr. Vinod Parekh who later was M.D. of State Trading Corporation. As the chief in charge of design & planning I had suggested many amendments to a project design submitted by the U.P. state housing board. The project was prepared by the chief planner of the state-J.P.Dube- much senior to me in age and experience. He felt rather offended and saw Mr. Parekh to complain about me. While Mr. Dube was with him Mr. Parekh called me to his chamber and told Mr. Dube, "Apte is our chief and an expert in the field, I know nothing about design and planning. So you either convince him or accept his suggestions". Thereafter no one ever complained about me to the M.D. This corporate culture inculcated by the Chairman Keshub Mahindra lasted till 1978 till Mr. H.U.Bijalani took over as the Chairman & Managing Director.

I joined my job as Associate Planner in the Asansol Planning Organization (APO) in September 1964. Our office was located in an old bungalow called Evelyn lodge at the southern end of the town which had a population of about 1.3 lakhs. The director of the organization was the sub-divisional magistrate Mr. Sujit Banerjee a young IAS officer. Dr. Lalit Sen was the other associate planner in charge of socio-economic planning. Sen's wife was a white American and having just returned from USA he needed a residence "fit" for her and his social status. I was a bachelor (though engaged to Neela Joshi) and took a one bedroom first floor flat in a building called 'Bharati' at Apcar Garden area. The flat had no piped water supply. There was a built in storage tank in the bath room which was filled by conveying water manually by an old man whom we called 'Bhari'. He used to fetch the water from a well at the back of the building. APO had an Ambassador car for the director and a

jeep for other officers. As the director, being the sub-divisional magistrate had another car for his official duties we the officers of APO used the car for our daily transport to office and back including coming home for lunch. The car, if not required by the Director was used on Sundays for personal work mostly by Dr. Sen and his wife. I preferred to use the man pulled rikshaw even after my marriage in February 1965 and when my wife came to Asansol.

The town was well spread but the commercial area was a strip along the Grand Trunk (GT) road for a length of over 3 km. There was an officer's club at Burdwan which our Director frequented and often took me along where occasionally we had a glass of beer. It was during one such visits that he asked me whether I would mind helping out an organization called 'Sisters of Charity' who were engaged in rehabilitation of leprosy patients on a small piece of land near Burdwan. This part of W. Bengal and adjacent Bihar had many leprosy patients. Thus I started working on a small township plan, called Shantinagar. The site was a barren piece of land obviously belonging to the government far in the barren wilderness with no human settlement nearabout.

After having prepared the plan I went to the site in our jeep where some of the sisters of charity were to meet me. I met them there and was introduced to Mother Theresa their head. A short frail woman with much wrinkled face and accent like the Italians, I explained the plan to her. I had located a church at a central point and hutments for the families in the area with a skeleton road work. Mother Theresa said that the leprosy patients belonged to different religions and there was no need for a church. She wanted to locate a well in a central place to make water available to all families. After going over the area and based on my understanding of visible evidence of underground water sources I suggested a point near the lone tree on the site more to the north east of the colony. My elementary knowledge of geology indicated existence of subsoil water near about the tree. She said an American peace corps volunteer was expected there within a week and he would supervise the work of building the colony and digging the well. I made frequent visits there when she would make it a point to be present. We started digging the well with the help of 3 patients, one would dig, the other would pull up the debris by a rope and a pulley and the third would transport it to fill up existing ditches. It was a slow and laborious process. By the time I left Asansol the well was about 18 feet deep and had already struck water. I used to have a cup of tea with them and the volunteer-whose name I forget-and return to Asansol.

I think by the time I went on a short leave in February 1965 for my marriage, the well had struck water which was an event of joy for all of us and mother Theresa complimented me for making the plan and suggesting the right location for the well. I still remember her face lit up with joy and satisfaction of a job well done. I never met her thereafter but only saw her photographs and her celebrity status ascending when she was awarded Bharat Ratna. In her photographs, till her death she looked the same as I had seen and remember her in 1964. I do not believe in miracles nor in religion. But the fact remains that she never seemed to have aged between the first time I saw her in 1964 till her death may be 40 years late. When at the foolish insistence of his fans and with unthinking support from a legendry singer a cricket player was awarded Bharat Ratna, I could not but remember mother Theresa and

her work for the poor and the ailing in India and how we Indians fail miserably in evaluating the intrinsic worth of a person!

Most of the staff in the drawing office of APO had been appointed before I joined and as such there was a well equipped drawing office well supplied and maintained by our head-clerk-Mihirbabu- a dhoti clad young man. To finalize the major proposals for the development plan and identify physical projects I had the help of a Ford Foundation American town planning expert Prof. Leo Jacobson, who was stationed in Calcutta and made frequent visits to Asansol. In India we didn't have coloured ink feltpens then and the ones that he used to bring along were a novelty. These were in fact short bottles with a broad felt sticking out that could be used for drawing. When he left India he presented the entire set of those used pens-12 of them-to me. I preserved those though no more usable as the ink had dried up. I found a new use for them- to teach and identify colours to my first son Shireesh when he was about 4 year old. When he went to USA for his P.D. in pharmaceuticals, sometime in 1990 he went to Madison, Wisconsin where Prof. Jacobson was still working and met him as the son of P M Apte!

In February 1965 I took 8 day's leave from the job and went to Mumbai where I was married on the 10th. I returned to Asansol just a week after. I could now get a square meal everyday afternoon when I came home for lunch. Just about two weeks after my return, on a Saturday my deputies asked me if I could accompany them to visit the site at Raniganj where in our plan we had proposed a new bridge across the river Damodar. I would have liked to but the temptation to be at home with my wife prevailed and I declined to go with them. I had designed a very large public park in Raniganj. It was my first landscape project which was in progress.



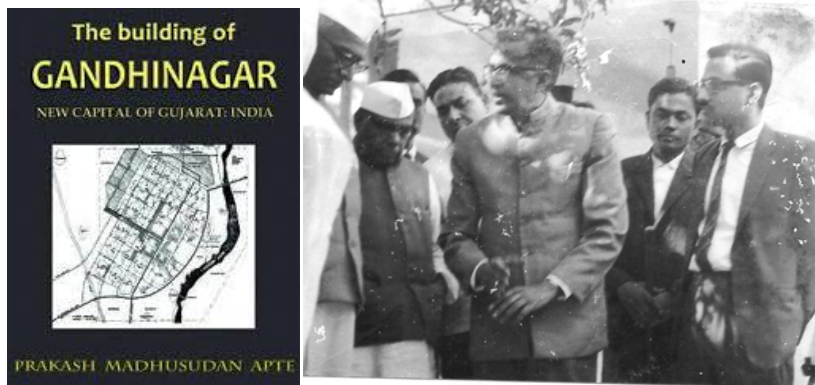
My wedding with Neela Joshi in Mumbai February 1965.

I would have liked to have a look at it. However I decided not to accompany my deputies for the site visit. Saturday being only a half working day and all of them being bachelors they thought of making the trip into an 'outing'. In the evening that day I got a message from our Director that our jeep had an accident, two of the officers sitting in front with the driver were mortally wounded and others were in serious condition. Since the jeep carried the name of the organization someone or the police informed the Director's office. Our Director being the head of the police also things moved very quickly. The injured were put in a good hospital at Kulti and the dead officers after a quick post mortem were cremated at Asansol the last rites being performed by one of our 'Brahmin' employees. Had I not been married just a

week back I might have accompanied my deputies for the site visit to Raniganj! All the officers dead or injured had 'lost' their money wallets!

I completed the Asansol draft development Plan in August 1965. I had come to know by then that a new capital city of Gujarat was being planned and the state government was looking for a competent young planner to join the planning team as a Senior planner.

10 GANDHINAGAR: GUJARAT 1965



With ex. Prime minister Morarjee Desai & Mewada

My association with Gandhinagar Project was as sudden as it was unexpected. I was in Asansol, West Bengal, working as the Senior Planner of the Asansol Planning Organization of the Government of West Bengal. I had joined there in September 1964 a little while after returning to India. I had completed the draft regional development plan for the Asansol-Durgapur Region when I received urgent telegrams from M.D.Patel, the Chief Engineer and H.K.Mewada the chief Town Planner of the New Capital Project of Gujarat offering me the post of Senior Town Planner for the New Capital Project. Those were the days when urgent communication was possible only through telegrams! I hesitated for a few days to weigh this proposal against a verbal offer made by Dr. Vikram Sarabhai to my father to put me in charge of designing the township for a large industrial project near Baroda. Presently I received a telegraphic appointment order as Senior Town Planner for the Capital Project, an unprecedented procedure in the history of government administration! I joined the project in October 1965.

The capital project office was located in a building in the premises of Gujarat college. It housed the offices of the architecture & planning department and the office of the chief engineer of the project. After staying with my parents for a few months, I rented a two bedroom apartment in a building called 'Laxmikunj' in Paldi

which was just about 4 km. from my office. My elder son Shireesh was born (in Mumbai) while we stayed in this house. He was about 5 year old when we shifted to Gandhinagar. While in Ahmedabad I bought my first car, a pre-owned standard super10. We often went to the garden and the zoo near 'Kankaria lake'. There used to be a small goat driven cart there and Shireesh greatly enjoyed a ride in it. After a few months of my joining the project, the post was advertised by the Gujarat public service commission. I had to appear for the interview. I was selected and my appointment was regularized in the pay scale of Rs. 1300-1600 pm.

Recently a research scholar from USA, after extensive investigation to find someone personally involved in the building of Gandhinagar so as to get firsthand knowledge about its planning concept, met me at my residence in Mumbai. I realized then, that I am the only surviving planner of Gandhinagar. Most of my then colleagues, the Chief Town Planner, Chief Engineer, and even the executive engineers, are no more. Most of the IAS officers and the politicians are also no more. Lest it be misunderstood, I must clarify, that I survive as I was the youngest person to be associated, in designing the new capital city. I was only 26 years old when I joined the project in 1965. The plan for Gandhinagar was prepared between October 1965 and April 1966. The construction of the first phase of the new city was completed in 1970. Not many books have been written, about Gandhinagar. One book, by Ravi Kalia, though well researched and exhaustive, deals more with the geo-political history of Gujarat and the political history of the project. It vividly relates, behind the scene machinations, of some Architects of Ahmedabad and the doings of the industrialists, and their cronies to procure the commission to design the city. As for the planning aspects, the aforementioned book relies mostly on hearsay or secondary data from persons, though presently occupying important positions in the state government, who were mere school kids when Gandhinagar was being built, and hence unaware about its planning concepts. (Surprisingly, the author in his preface thanks me-P.M.Apte- for information on the project, though in fact he never met me and I was totally unaware that such a book even existed! It was my elder son Shireesh who came across the book in a store in USA and glancing through it to find some objectionable and derogative language used about me, sent it to me!) As a result, the book does not elaborate on the planning process or the considerations behind the planning of Gandhinagar (as no one but me knew about it) and there is no evaluation of the basic concepts of the plan itself. It is unfortunately, short on planning information, but long on the project politics. It fails to mention that this is the only capital city in India designed by Indian Planners and, on the contrary; laments the fact!

Its accounts about Gandhinagar's planning are quite biased and use a derogatory language about its planners! It would appear that the book could have been promoted by those Architects, who had failed in getting the job of planning the city. But the state government was determined to have it done through talent that existed in its own organization than award it to a foreigner-Louis Kahn- whom these

Architects had put up as a front. I therefore decided to write the book, 'The building of Gandhinagar: New capital of Gujarat'. The book was published in March 2012.

It is surprising and distressing that even after 50 years some architects now seek to disfigure the plan of the city and dismantle its very concept! This is what would appear to be the attempt if one were to evaluate objectively the new plan prepared by the Consultants of the Gandhinagar Urban Development Authority (GUDA). It also could be that the profit to be gained by the trading of lands –with the advance knowledge of the intended plan proposals- for urbanization is the prime motive in the dismantling of the planning concept of Gandhinagar!

It is the great quality of Gujarat & wise 'Gujaratis' of opting for the best, irrespective of personal or community biases that made the state government go for Mewada & Apte, rejecting the American Architect, Louis Khan, who was propped up by a group of architects from Ahmedabad. Their self proclaimed superiority, despite a slavish attitude to the 'white man', was perhaps not appreciated by the politicians and administrators of the state in 1965. The modest but talented and home grown creative planners won the day to design Gandhinagar.

How did Mewada contend with the constant politicking, machinations and irritations of a group of architects from Ahmedabad and other actors on the scene? Only I have that knowledge. Why did the state government and its administration stand firm in getting the job done through its own organization? What was the concept that shaped the plan of Gandhinagar? How did my upbringing, education and training shape its concept?

My primary schooling was at Chota Udepur- a small state east of the Gaekwad state of the then Baroda in Gujarat. My grandfather, Daji Nagesh Apte was a practicing lawyer in Baroda and was much respected by the ruler Maharaja Sayajirao III who commissioned him to write many books in Marathi and published them under state patronage. It was around 1990 that a French research scholar came to Mumbai searching for me-having come to know of my relation with Daji Nagesh Apte, who had authored a book titled "Rajyabhishek Chandrika". He wanted to know if I had a copy of the book. I was able to procure it for him. It was then that I realized the value of the written word and resolved to pen all my professional thinking and project design work for the benefit of the future generations and wrote the book about planning of Gandhinagar.

Chota Udepur state, in 1944, had just 5 senior officers. My father was the magistrate and revenue officer and there was a judge, chief civil engineer, chief electrical engineer and the commander of the army, apart from the Diwan (chief administrator) of the state. As in most towns of Gujarat, Chota Udepur developed on the banks of a river called 'Orsang', and had a lake in the centre of the town. We, the officer's families, could use a special rowing boat that would take us to the island in the centre of the lake where there were a few concrete benches. I remember having gone there once on a full moon night with other families and being very hastily

bundled back in the boat in a short while to return to the land. Later I came to know from my father that a large crocodile was seen under one of the concrete benches on the island!

I would have loved to create a lake in the centre of Gandhinagar. Alternatively, I had thought of creating a narrow and long water body in the central green of the avenue, road no. '4' focusing on the state assembly building; almost like the central vista of New Delhi. However, fiscal resources were a constraint and the idea could not be implemented. But we did create a small lake in the garden in sector 29. The city's main north-west to south-east roads were numbered 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 etc. while all north-east to south-west cross roads were designated by Gujarati language alphabets 'CH', 'CHH', 'J' etc. I had also planned to turn the ravines of river Sabarmati into an adventure park with an entry near the dilapidated fort at village Indroda on road 'J'. The adventure park land has now been sacrificed by the Consultants of GUDA designating that land east of road 'J' for residential use, presumably for week- end cottages for the rich of Ahmedabad!. The small Indroda park presently developed along the ravines does however showpiece statuesque recreations of prehistoric animals like dinosaurs including a large crocodile!

We moved to Baroda in 1946, after my father took up an assignment and went to London leaving us with my grandfather. Baroda also has a lake called 'Sursagar' in the heart of the town. Rather than being a focal point, it aesthetically strung together the buildings surrounding it; the Hindu, Mughal & Gothic style buildings comprising the music college on the south, the women's basic training college raised on a high ground to the north, the girl's high school on the west and the high court building on the east. This aesthetic "binding" quality of the lake is lost today with the implanting in the middle of it, a giant sculpture of 'Shiva' thus making it a focal point! This complete reversal of the role of the lake and a partly constructed and later abandoned commercial tower in front of the high court building has completely distorted the urban design of the area! I have seen this distortion and destruction of a unique urban design concept by self seeking architects! Little did I have an inkling that after a few years the civic design concept of Gandhinagar that I had so lovingly planned and developed would be similarly distorted and destroyed!

Baroda, till about 1959 was a 'pedestrian friendly' town. We could walk or cycle to the school or college, visit friends in their old houses in the 'pols' -narrow streets- close to the main town thoroughfare yet quiet and peaceful in their interior environment. We used to coat the threads for kite flying, in the long narrow streets, without any vehicular disturbance. In the stillness of the night, round the street light posts, we wound and prepared the thread, lacing it with a mixture of ground glass, aloe-vera and wheat flour, for the kite fights on 'Makar Sankranti', a day invariably occurring on the 13th or 14th of January, every year. The experience instilled in me, the feel of pol living at night and day, and its community network, neighbourly feelings and bonhomie. Consciously, I tried to recreate that environment in the planning of the government housing clusters in Gandhinagar .

For a short while, during this period in 1948, our family shifted to Ahmedabad. My school was at Lal darwaja where the main intra-city bus station was located. I could walk to school and back home. On Saturdays, the large ground at Bhadra (old fort at Ahmedabad) that I had to cross, used to hold a weekly fair of skills and crafts, dominated mostly, by the street magicians and performers. It was a great attraction for the people, young and old alike. The idea and concept was so imbibed in my mind that I tried to recreate a similar fair ground in the form of an open square, bounded by commercial buildings in the civic centre of Gandhinagar in sector 11. Unfortunately, the profit motive and money making hunger of the Consultants has resulted in the sacrifice of this fair ground, a heritage feature of town planning in Gujarat. Instead the land has been designated for commercial use though, only about 50% of land marked for commercial use in the original master plan of Gandhinagar had been sold till 2011.

On Fridays, there used to be a 'shukravaria' bazaar (Friday bazaar, selling all kinds of old, used and discarded nick-knacks) on the dry sand beds of the river Sabarmati. It was a treasure trove, for innovators to build or repair implements at low cost. The civic square that I planned in sector 11 of Gandhinagar, was intended to accommodate such regular events. It was also meant, to provide a stage for 'garba' -the traditional dance festival that precedes "Diwali" the festival of lights-competitions at town, district or even state level. It could also be used as an open air venue for civic meetings, 'mushairas' (poetry recitation at a poet's gathering) street plays and many such events that are germane to the rich culture of Gujarat. Fortunately, I am told, the state government holds state level garba dancing competitions there every year.

It is for these reasons that any attempt at re-planning or redevelopment of a city or an urban design has to first understand the genesis and absorb the underlying concepts that gave birth to the original physical plan. The plan is but a manifestation of the culture, traditions and life styles of the people for whom a city has to be a vibrant and proactive organism that makes the citizen really "feel at home". The re-planners of Gandhinagar were perhaps obsessed by their desire to get even with Apte & Mewada nor did they have the intelligence and foresight to understand such concepts. They did not make any efforts to understand the genesis of the Gandhinagar plan. Their only motive seemed to be to benefit by exploiting the development potential of the lands between Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar, when their plan received the official seal of approval.

The GUDA (Gandhinagar Urban Development Authority) consultant's totally irrational and ill-informed proposal of extension of the city towards the south (like a monkey's tail attached to a beautiful human baby) was perhaps born out of such non-professional considerations. Even a layman, if shown the original master plan of Gandhinagar, and asked what would be the logical direction of its growth and extension, would endorse the expansion towards the north-west, as originally envisaged in the plan. It is either a measure of the consultant's professional

incompetence, imbecility or deliberate intent, that the most important symbol of the capital city, its capitol complex, has been disoriented by the re-planning because it is no more the foci of the city's central axis (road no.4), which itself has been made into just a dead end road! Not content with it, the Consultants deliberately allowed the expansion of the village Wavol near road no.4 so as to make the continuation of it impossible even at a later date!

During the 1960s, a joke about the 'Amdavadi' (resident of Ahmedabad) was very popular and widely circulated. In the middle of the night a train stops at a railway station for quite some time. A passenger on the train wakes up and opens the window to look for the name of the station. There are not many people around on the railway platform, but eying one, he beckons him to come near. He then asks him "sir, what is the name of this station?" The person on the platform, looks furtively around and then says in a whisper, "I will tell you, if you give me 4 annas (quarter of a Rupee)". The passenger closes the window. He does not need to have the reply. He knows it is Ahmedabad!. Even after 50 years the 'Amdavadi' mindset prevails: think nothing but money, money, money!

After matriculation I studied Architecture in Baroda. The teacher who influenced me the most was M.B.Achwal, a thinker, and a writer. Even after I left Baroda, he remained in touch and was a good friend till his death. While I worked in Delhi as Chief of Projects of Housing & Urban development Corporation of India, while on leave, visiting my parents in Baroda, he would invite me and my wife to his house for dinner. We used to have long discussions about the latest trends in Architecture and in Marathi literature till late in the night. He lived in Shiyabag, in an old detached house overshadowed by a large gulmohor (Leguminosi) tree. The tree was so large and distinct that it was the address for his house. When it was felled for street widening, Achwal wrote a very poignant essay about it.

To him the tree was almost a kin, gently soothing his nerves with its green expanse and rustling of leaves, nudging his creative instinct with its vibrant blood red flowers when in bloom. It sheltered many birds that had their nests on the branches. Generations of parrots, Mynahs and Sparrows were sheltered by it. During the hot and arid summers, a bicycle repair shop, under its shade, was the resting place for passersby, and the pans & pots sellers. It was not just a tree, but a distinct and integral feature of the urban landscape.

May be with this image imbibed in my mind, I used trees in the landscape of Gandhinagar far more differently than done in the past either by planners or by landscape architects. In the city plan I adjusted the road grid, to save every little tree of any kind, from being cut down. This was not an easy task, as I could not create bends in the main road grid. All this had to be achieved, with the primitive survey instruments like the dumpy level and theodolite. While aligning the main road grid we had to contend with the protesting goat herders ready to attack us with 'dharias' (a solid 5 ft wooden staff with a curved sickle fixed to its top)

In the planning of the internal roads in the residential sectors, to save existing trees, I made the roads literally go around trees! While constructing a primary school with pyramidal roofs over each class room, I left the existing tree intact in the central courtyard of the school! Trees were deliberately not planted in neat rows along avenues in Gandhinagar. Tree planting, along the city streets and the major roads connecting Ahmedabad and Khodiar railway station, was done in informal groups and not in straight rows, with a sprinkling of occasional flowering shrubs. While, to a visitor today, it may give an informal look to the landscape, but achieving this 'planned informality' required detailed plans for each section of the roads and was an arduous task for the director of parks and gardens Mr. M.Z. Shah. But he appreciated the concept. A well known landscape expert Mr. B.N.Rahalkar from Delhi, helped me to get this idea of informal plantation accepted by the bureaucrats.

In the entire planning of Gandhinagar, in almost 10,000 acres of land, only 5 trees were uprooted! All these were mango fruit trees. Shah cooperated in transplanting them. Each was trimmed, to a height of 8 feet, most branches chopped off, and the tree removed while retaining as much of a root bulb as we could, with manual labour without any mechanical equipment. Every time I visited Gandhinagar till 1971, I used to check on the replanted trees. A special nursery was established and plants were provided at no cost to citizens. The profusion of trees in Gandhinagar and its reputation as the greenest city in the world, owes it in large measure, to this unconventional concept that we followed of group plantation along the streets and the completely informal street patterns in all residential sectors designed to avoid cutting of trees.

The Gandhinagar plan is often compared with that of Chandigarh and branded as a poor copy of it! Nothing could be farther from the truth! I have dealt with this falsification graphically in the chapter titled 'Tale of Two Capitals' in this book. But to highlight, Gandhinagar's planning concept differs from that of Chandigarh's in three major aspects.

Firstly, it is democratic, contrasted against the Imperial plan of Chandigarh. The Capitol Complex of Gandhinagar, is not at the apex of the town, but surrounded by residential sectors, on three sides.

Secondly, it is not colonial like Chandigarh where there is a distinct hierarchy and segregation in the physical location of housing for government employees and no intermixing of different categories of housing for government employees

Thirdly, it achieved social integration between the housing for the government employees and the supporting population. In each residential sector, along with the 4 categories of Government housing, there is a corresponding category of plots of land meant for the supporting population.

This is vividly demonstrated in the layout plan of sector 29. At the core of the sector are the community facilities like the school, shopping, community centre etc. Each

residential sector is 1 km. long & 0.75 km. wide so that the distance to be traveled to the core was a maximum of 10 minutes of walking. Around these facilities, are four groups of housing for government employees, arranged on the concept of the 'pol' as in the old towns of Gujarat. independent, yet in close proximity to each other, to afford social integration. The housing, for the government employees, hence, was self sufficient from day one, having access to the offices, by the bicycle track, passing through the middle of the sector.

The plots of land, for sale to the supporting population, also form four groups, juxtaposed with an appropriate and corresponding group of housing for the government employees, (in terms of economic level) and are located, on the periphery of the residential sector . As a result, to a visitor today, in Gandhinagar the government employees housing, which had to be 'typed' by necessity, is not visible, on account of being hidden by the houses built on plots for the supporting population. This lends a variety to the streetscape, unlike the stereotype in Chandigarh.

The plan of social integration was not easy to achieve. In those days, we had neither electronic calculators nor computers. I spent days and nights, making manual arithmetical calculations, firstly, to distribute the population, dependent on government service in different sectors, in the required numbers and balance the numbers in four categories in each sector. Thereafter, I worked out the distribution of the plots for supporting population in each sector, without losing sight of the overall density to be achieved, in each sector. It was a complex exercise to work out the right combination. I achieved it in about a month's time. I then prepared a social integration plan of housing for government employees, and the plots for the supporting population. This "social plan" formed the basis, without which the Gandhinagar physical development plan, and the detailed sector planning and layouts could not have been worked out. Unfortunately, I no longer have a record of the visual depiction of this social plan.

In 1960, when the separate states of Gujarat & Maharashtra were created, both inherited the systems of the erstwhile Bombay state, wherein the consulting surveyor to the government, managed the town planning issues as well. In Gujarat, the department was headed by J.T.Patel, a surveyor by qualification. He came to know the intentions of the government to create a new department for the planning of the new capital for the state. He considered it a prerogative of his department, to deal with all town planning matters, and hence considered it his right to be in charge of planning the new capital.

While the state government was scouting in the country, to find a person to head the planning team for the new the capital, J.T.Patel came to know a Mr. Ram Sethia, an architect- town planner, and employed him in the department to strengthen his claim to plan the new capital. Mr. Sethia was a glib talker and well versed in the art of politicking. The architect to the state government, a Dr. V.J. Mistry also felt sidelined

that the government should be looking outside the bureaucracy to appoint a new Architect and town planner for the capital project. All three teamed up, with a mutual understanding that Mistry would design the state legislative assembly building and Sethia & Patel would jointly prepare the master plan and design other important buildings..

After I joined the capital project in October 1965, Dr. Mistry once invited me for dinner and made a slide presentation of his design for the state legislative assembly building. It had the assembly hall with two separate chambers for the legislative assembly and the legislative council, and the entire structure was topped by a roof in the shape of a 'Gandhi cap'! I made due exclamations of appreciation expected of me! I personally could not appreciate the design. Perhaps, Dr. Mistry thought that the political leaders would fall for the Gandhi cap! The political leaders of those days, were far too intelligent and mature, to fall for such gimmicks! They continued their search for a competent planning team.

In the meanwhile, one of the influential industrialists of Ahmedabad, Mr. Kasturbhai Lalbhai, had initiated the building of a new Institute of Management. He had earlier invited Le Corbusier to design the building of the mill owner's association building, and later persuaded the Ahmedabad municipal corporation to invite him to build a museum (Sanskar Kendra). He now invited another American Architect Mr. Louis Kahn to design the building. Well known architects like B.V.Doshi from Ahmedabad who had worked with Le. Corbusier in his Paris studio, were naturally supportive of the idea of commissioning an American Architect to design the Institute of Management.

A group of Architects in Ahmedabad, aspiring to design the new capital, initiated a dialogue between Architect Louis Khan and the political leaders, for designing the new city. They came to a quid pro quo understanding with Louis Kahn, whereby the building designing work would be undertaken by them, in return for projecting him, as a second Le Corbusier, to design Gandhinagar, the new capital city of Gujarat,

H.K.Mewada was appointed Chief Town Planner & Architectural Adviser for the Capital Project in early 1965. But the efforts of the group of architects to install Louis Kahn as the consultant for the project continued unabated. It was under these circumstances, that Mewada and the chief Engineer M.D.Patel, urged me by sending successive telegrams, and later a telegraphic appointment letter as Senior Town Planner, to join the project immediately.

On my joining, Mewada took me in his confidence, and explained the situation to me. He was a most adroit person and an expert in handling politicians. He was a superb man management expert, and could out maneuver anyone in such politicking! He told me, that all his energies would need to be fully directed towards, defeating the machinations of the group of architects, the consulting surveyor and Architect to government. He could therefore, not find enough time to devote to the technical aspects of designing the city. He had prepared a basic concept, which he

explained to me. He then told me, "Apte, I leave all town planning matters to you. Don't come to me for any guidance. Do as you feel right. I have full confidence in you. Even if there are short comings these can always be corrected later once I get rid of all the 'meddlers'!"

I could not have asked for more! I neither liked nor was good at dealing with politicians. Moreover, I was too young and inexperienced, to deal with scheming people, whether politicians, bureaucrats or professionals, but had a very creative and innovative mind and ideas about planning a capital. Recognizing my strengths, Mewada gave me a clean slate to plan the city based on my ideas and concepts. He, thereafter, devoted his full time and energies to deal with the group of Ahmedabad Architects, who wanted to have him replaced by the American Architect Louis Kahn.

Thus, a very fruitful and mutually beneficial relationship was born between me and Mewada. He recognized my brilliance and talent and was not ashamed to admit or give credit where it was due. In his absence, I had to hold fort, and attend meetings with the Chief Minister and other ministers, secretaries to government the Governor and other central government dignitaries, and take them round to various sites under construction in Gandhinagar. He jealously guarded my stature and position, and would not tolerate, even the most influential of politicians, if he or she dared to treat me badly. It did happen once, when a very senior cabinet minister did not listen to my defense of a planning decision which I had to explain to her in the absence of Mewada. Having come to know of the incidence later, in a huff, he took me to her chamber, and made her almost apologize to me. Later on, he said "how dare she insult "my Apte"!"

Mewada, despite his astuteness, soon realized that it was an uphill task to counter the campaign to bring in Louis Kahn. The backers were very influential industrialists, and could resort to a lot of arm twisting! Moreover, they were the financiers of political parties for elections. We came to the conclusion that we had to bring in someone who could counter a white skinned man. What better alternative, than another white skinned man? But, it could be a very risky gamble. If we could not control the new white man, he could team up with the Ahmedabad group of architects, and we could end up shooting ourselves in the foot!

It was during this time that I received a brochure from the United Nations development programme about scholarship in the UK. I was too deeply involved and interested in building the capital, and was not lured by a short term training programme abroad. But it gave me an idea, which I discussed with Mewada. He was simply thrilled. The U.N. Development programme had a provision of funds to send experts to developing countries, for short duration, to help the local officers carry out tasks assigned to them in a more efficient manner. We decided to approach the UNDP to send an expert in town planning, to advise the Capital Project.

Thus, a U.N.D.P. expert, Vernon Z. Newcombe, a town planner from the U.K. arrived in Ahmedabad as a town planning expert to advise the chief town planner! His assignment was for six months and I was to work closely with him and provide technical assistance to work out his recommendations. Mewada had frequent interaction with him and convinced him of the futility of suggesting any changes in to the basic structure of the plan. Mr. Sethia, with his background in the U.K., tried to befriend him and suggested that he be taken on as a team member in the capital project. Suffice it to say that he did not succeed! Mr. Newcombe ended up by suggesting some modifications in the detailed planning. His major suggestion was to combine the four residential sectors to limit the vehicular traffic on a grid of 2 km. by 1.5 km. Mewada readily agreed, knowing fully well that neither the politicians, nor the IAS officers would take kindly to such a suggestion!

Prof. Newcombe submitted his report, had a very ceremonious send off and went back to England. His visit had achieved what Mewada's earlier efforts had not! The state government, now armed with the U.N. expert report and the fact that the expert had endorsed the Mewada-Apte plan, became confident to deal with any criticism by the group of Architects. Louis Kahn, realizing the futility of pursuing the matter further, lost interest in the project. A misconception was propagated by the group of Architects that the basic concept of the Gandhinagar plan was prepared by Louis Kahn. In support of it is cited the orientation of the road grid which is not north-south, to avoid facing the direct sun in the morning and evening! Surely, such a decision about the orientation, which is simple common sense, does not require the genius of a great architect!

Taking advantage of the visit of Newcombe, and to further strengthen our position as the planners of the project, Mewada got Newcombe to recommend to the government of Gujarat that he be sent to the U.K. on a study tour to visit the new towns being developed there. Accordingly Mewada went to the U.K. and as recommended by him, during his absence, I was appointed the chief Town Planner and Architectural Advisor to the Capital Project.

Many dignitaries used to visit Gandhinagar, and invariably Mewada deputed me, to take them round, many a times in my personal car. I remember having accompanied Mr. Kanetkar, the then director general of the border security force, to show him the site north of Palej village, on the eastern banks of Sabarmati for locating a cantonment. Since the site abutted the N.H.8, it was convenient from a strategic point of view. The BSF, as well as the Indian Army, now have a cantonment in this area. The housing provided there is based on the type designs for the government employees, prepared by us.

A memorable visit was by Shri Morarji Desai who was then Deputy Prime Minister, government of India. Since Mr. Desai, could not spare time to go round the city under construction, we were asked to display plans, designs and photographs at the guest house to explain the entire project to him. We accordingly put up a display of

all plans and building designs on the rear lawns of the government guest house at Pethapur, on the northern boundary of the Gandhinagar city area.

Those days, we did not have computers. All drawings, maps, designs, had to be hand drawn on the drawing board. The three dimensional perspectives also, were hand drawn, and coloured with poster or water colours. There was no Indian architecture or planning journals. We used to subscribe to the American or English journals. Two of our architects, who were proficient in making perspectives, prepared those for the various housing types. In those perspective drawings copied from American journals, the human figures were all clad in neckties & jackets. The layout plans of the city and some sectors, were also prepared and coloured. We ordered professional model makers, to make models of residential sector layouts, city centre, district shopping centre and civic centre.

I explained the city plan, and the residential sector plans and the social integration plan for the city to Shri Morarji Desai and the chief minister. Desai appreciated the gradual social integration of housing groups in the sector plans as well as the city. Later, looking at the perspective drawings of the buildings for the housing types- I think it was the bungalow for secretary level officers- he asked why all the men in the drawings were donned with ties and jackets. "They must wear Indian national dress" he said. Though I was wearing a suite I was saved! I can still recall the incident vividly.

It was during the time of Hitendrabhai Desai as chief Minister that Mewada had gone abroad and I was the Chief Town Planner & Architectural Adviser. I designed the bungalows for the ministers and the chief minister and used to visit them to explain the plans. The minister's bungalows had 4 bed rooms and a room on the ground floor to be used as an office. The chief Minister's house had 5 bedrooms, an office with rooms for secretaries attached and two additional guest bed rooms. The minister's housing enclave was located on the east of road 'J' to the north of the city and was a gated area for security reasons.

When Hitendrabhai took over as the chief minister of Gujarat, the foundations for the bungalow had already been laid. He was told that the house would be ready in about 8 month's time. He was keen to perform a Puja for the house before its construction. A remedy was found by one of our resourceful executive engineers. At his suggestion, the main door frame of the house was erected by Hitendrabhai and a Puja was performed on the occasion. At the ceremony, he honoured me as the architect of the city and his house, by presenting me a 'Shreefal' (coconut) and a shawl!

I also recall the visit of the former maharaja of Baroda, Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, who, for a short period was a minister in the state ministry. He wanted to have a look at the bungalows constructed for the ministers. Mewada asked me if I knew him. I said that we have met a few times, but he knew me as the grandson of Daji Nagesh Apte. So, I was deputed to take him round the city, now almost built and then show

him the bungalow designated for him. As we entered the bungalow meant for him, I showed him round the ground floor which had the living-dining, kitchen and a bed room, and then the first floor, which had 3 bedrooms. We climbed down to the living room and exited from the rear terrace on the lawns. He looked at me and asked in Marathi, “bas, itkach?” (is that all?) I think it must be an anti climax for him, normally residing in the Laxmi Vilas palace at Baroda with probably over 100 rooms, to be shown a 4 bed room house as his residence! During the construction of the capital city many dignitaries such as the then central government minister Ramniwas Mirdha, Director general of the border security force Mr. Kanetkar, an architect-planner from Poland, and many others. It was invariably my job to take them round the new city under construction, many a times in my own car.

The execution of the first phase of Gandhinagar started in 1966, the state government shifted to the new city in 1970, 1st of June. The city was ready for habitation in just 4 years. No other project of this magnitude has ever been completed in such a short period! In 4 years, more than half of residential sectors were developed with all physical, social and other infrastructure. Offices for the state government, pro-tem accommodation for the legislative assembly and legislators built, schools & colleges developed, inter and intra-city bus service was started. Water supply and electricity was provided to the population that shifted to the new city. The city was in no way deficient. My elder son, who was then 4 year old, started his schooling at the St. Xavier’s school in Gandhinagar, when I shifted there in June 1970.

On the 1st of June 1970, when the state government was in the process of shifting to Gandhinagar (a great convoy of trucks transporting files and records- the transfer was completed in 2 days) the Managing Director of City and Industrial Development Corporation of Maharashtra (CIDCO) Mr. J. B. D’Souza visited the new city and met Mewada. I was on a day’s leave, to see to the shifting of my personal belongings, to Gandhinagar. He met Mewada and our Architect M.Y Thackeray, who had not shifted his residence, and was therefore in the office. Thackeray was given the offer to join CIDCO as Chief Architect to design new Mumbai. Thackeray soon left to join CIDCO. He was never really comfortable in Gujarat and preferred to be back in Maharashtra.

Undoubtedly, M.Y. was a very talented Architect. But D’Souza gave the offer to him (he himself told me, over a drink, after many years later) mainly as he was a Maharashtrian and related to one of the rising political star Shri Bal Thackeray. Later on, Mewada good humouredly chided me, for being absent on the day as otherwise he said ““Apte, he (D’Souza) would have preferred you over Thackeray and you would have had the opportunity to design new Bombay”! It so happened that after leaving the assignment in Gandhinagar, I joined Housing & Urban Development Corporation of India (HUDCO) as its Chief of Projects and closely worked with J.B.D’Souza. JBD greatly admired me as an Architect, particularly as a highly innovative one, and we had a lifelong friendship that lasted till his death in 2008. He

eulogizes my role in HUDCO, in his autobiography, 'No Trumpets or Bugles, Recollections of an Unrepentant Babu'.

Having completed the first phase development of Gandhinagar, I was on the lookout for a similar challenging opportunity. It was in 1970 that Housing & Urban Development Corporation of India (HUDCO) was established and the organization needed a Chief Architect- Planner. I was among over 29 candidates, interviewed by a committee. Two were short listed. One was a person with high connections in Delhi and was interviewed next day by the chairman Keshub Mahindra the industrialist. I was not informed of being short listed and came to know about it accidentally next day when a selection committee member saw me on Curzon road in New Delhi and asked me why I had not met the chairman for the final interview. When he came to know of the lapse on the part of the secretary HUDCO of not informing me, he got in touch with Mahindra and fixed an appointment for me in Mumbai. I met Keshub Mahindra at his office in Dhanraj Mahal. He was so impressed with my work that, in my presence, telephoned to Delhi and asked the secretary to issue a letter of appointment. I joined HUDCO in July 1971.

It was in HUDCO that I met Christopher Benninger, the world renowned Architect. His great humility impressed me and –as he after many years admitted- my integrity and honesty, him! We have worked together since, particularly on the housing plan for Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. Around 1988 when the most prestigious Eisenhower Exchange Fellowship (EEF) used to be awarded to a candidate selected from amongst those to be nominated by some eminent personalities, Christopher nominated me and the committee selected me as the EE Fellow for 1988, from India. It was a great honour & experience for me and my wife, who was also invited to visit USA-it was our first visit- and meet the cream of the professionals in the city planning and management field. But I am running ahead in my narrative.

A high frequency bus service was provided between Gandhinagar & Ahmedabad to facilitate students and workers who needed to commute to Ahmedabad daily. Free ambulance service was made available to take patients to Ahmedabad if they could not be treated in Gandhinagar. The state government took all possible measures to ensure that the families that shifted to Gandhinagar did not have to face any hardships due to the transfer. It is a measure of the government's forethought and appropriate preparedness to deal with emergency situations, that there was hardly any protest from the families. In fact, they were happy to have got good accommodation, in very congenial surroundings.

Even the lowest of the category, had a one bedroom house, with front and back courtyards, or attached terraces on upper floors. Most houses were only two storied. Adequate parks and playgrounds were available, schools of repute had already started working, health facilities were provided. Fair price shops and consumer goods store "Apna Bazaar" was also started from day one. The public sector milk

distribution scheme was also extended to Gandhinagar. The common man had very little to complain about, except the lack of urban environment –mainly the hustle bustle of Ahmedabad. The people from surrounding villages like Borij, Indroda, Vavol and Pethapur found a ready market for their produce like milk and vegetables.

In the one year sojourn in Gandhinagar during 1970-71, I found the life peaceful, healthy and quiet in a town that I was proud to call my creation! However, in later years, I rarely went back to it neither gloated over my great achievement, though it is a unique one. But I did visit it recently in 2010, with post graduate students of the Ball State University of USA, to explain the concepts and have a last look at the city that could soon be dismantled and its plan obliterated by the Consultants of the Gandhinagar Urban Development Authority.

In Retrospect:

Given an option, would I have planned the Capital in a different manner than what I did in 1965? I have pondered over this question often.

What is a Capital city? Is it a physical symbol of the power of a state or is it a sustainable human settlement that houses the seat of power? Why is it to be perceived as a human settlement and not just the seat of power? Why not aggrandize the power function and make the human settlement secondary? Why do we tend to visualize a capital city in the mould of New Delhi, Canberra, Brasilia, Washington or Chandigarh? Why should a capital be a city in itself? Why not have a grand Capitol and human settlements away from it? Why should a capital be a compact city? Why can't it be a decentralized and dispersed physical matrix of work centres and settlements?

These questions haunted me for a long time. If the capital is to be a symbol and the seat of power of a state why not make it a real symbol of power, a complex of edifices that are truly sculptural and monumental? Unhitch it from the residential areas with their necessary appendages of schools, temples, hospitals and clubs? Why does a capital have to be a compact urban structure? Why couldn't the existing villages, around Gandhinagar, for example, be developed into residential areas connected to the capitol by rapid transit routes?

Developing the existing villages like Borij, Indroda, Palej, Vavol, Dhola Kuva etc around Gandhinagar could have achieved the dual purpose of the development of those villages as also a comparatively lesser cost of physical infrastructure development. These could have been very high density developments in multistory towers so that most of the land now occupied by the 30 sectors could be just open green fields! There would just be the capitol complex from which rapid bus transit routes could radiate to these villages which would become the residential nodes that would house the population dependent on government employment.(See diagrammatic sketch at the end of this chapter)

The green fields around the capitol complex could accommodate very low density institutional functions like the knowledge hub, info-tech hub etc.(this has happened by such locations today in the lands between Ahmedabad & Gandhinagar) These could also accommodate Olympic level sports facilities for swimming, indoor stadiums, track events etc. There are 8 villages close to the site of the new capital city, some of them within the boundary of the city. These villages have the infrastructure to support the new city population. They also have a fairly good level of physical infrastructure like roads, water supply etc.

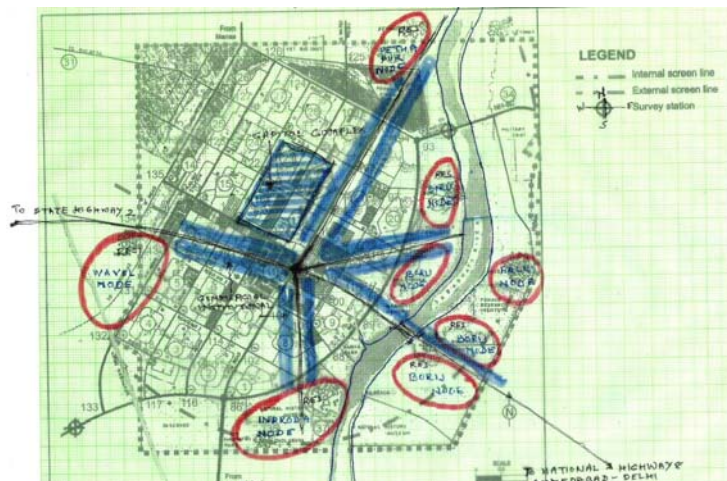
If these villages had been developed as the residential nodes for the government employees required to shift to the new capital, perhaps a far superior social environment and life could have been created there. It could have been an organic growth pattern as observed in Ahmedabad. A number of villages like Paladi, Navarangpura, Vasna which are now integrated in Ahmedabad were and still exist as villages. Most of the suburban settlements of Ahmedabad derive their names from these villages. Similarly, these villages within the designated site of Gandhinagar could have become the residential localities. This type of development could have organically achieved social integration.

A good mass surface transport system could have been put in place that would have provided the means of communication from home to work. These villages are within a perimeter of 5-6 kilometers from the capitol complex. The distance could be traveled by motorized transport within 10 minutes. Thus, an entirely different urban landscape in the form of 8 high density urban nodes around the government offices complex could have been created. Such a poly-nucleated growth would have facilitated development of work centers other than government, and may have helped in a more speedy development of Gandhinagar as a city rather than a predominantly government residential township. The poly-nucleated growth of work centres leading to self supporting and sustainable habitat could have made Gandhinagar a unique capital city.

It would however have meant that there would be no identifiable capital city in the conventional sense like Canberra or Brasilia or Chandigarh for that matter. But does a capital city have to be a compact, closely knit urban fabric solely or predominantly an administrative urban centre of governance? Or could it be just an atomic structure having only the 'Capitol'? Such ideas may be difficult to be accepted in our present circumstances conditioned by our concepts of capital cities strengthened by historical precedence from Delhi to Chandigarh! But are not all futuristic concepts, as discussed above, perceived as impracticable at the time they are propounded? But as city planners, should we not be looking 50-100 years in the future? Why should we be bound by the so called great concepts of capital cities like Chandigarh or Brasilia? Building a national or state identity in India should not be by aping either the so called great cities or their creators!

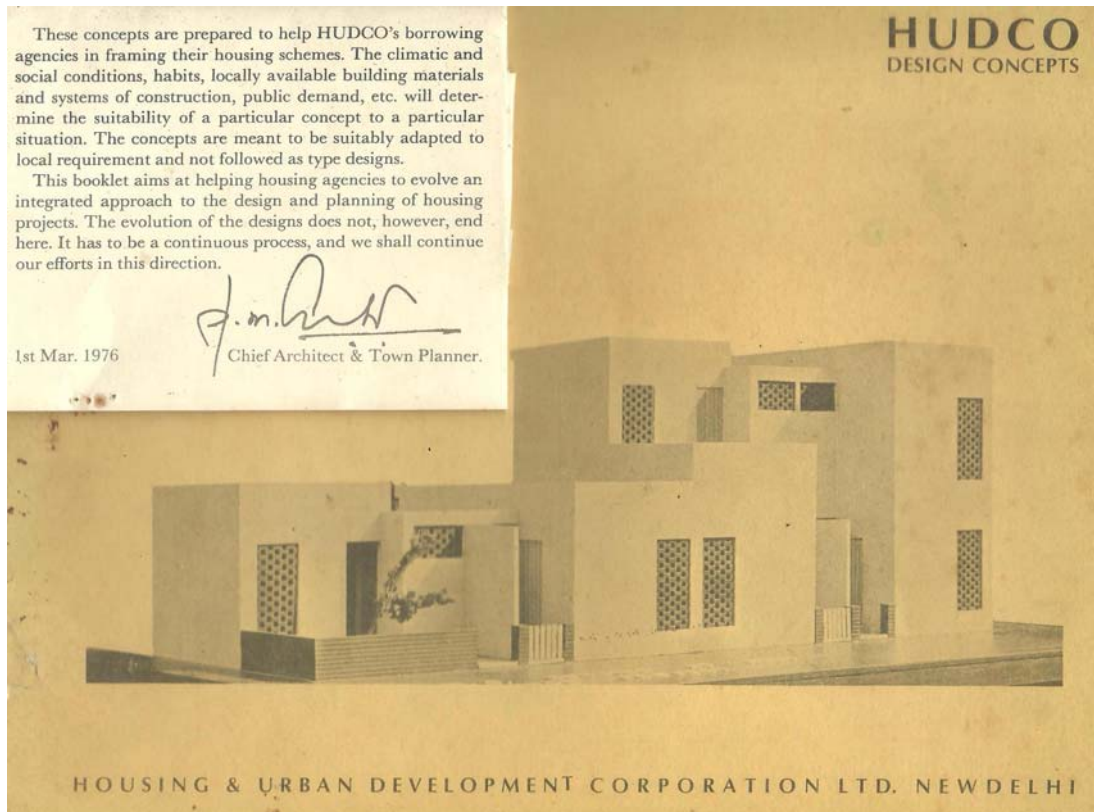
The diagrammatic sketch below illustrates my Utopian concept for Gandhinagar. Unfortunately, it would not have been palatable either to the politicians or the bureaucrats to whom, a new capital meant images of Chandigarh or Brazilia. But is such an idea too far ahead of our times or is it impracticable? I am sure even the town planners of today would frown upon such an idea! They may talk endlessly about decentralization or multi-nuclei approach to physical development of large regions but may not accept such an approach to planning of a city, least of all a new capital city. I want to draw the attention of such city planners again to the organic growth of cities. In recent times, even the national capital at New Delhi has amply demonstrated that, apart from the governmental administrative centre at the historic Raisina hill housing the Secretariat, Government ministries, President's palace and the parliament, other work centres at places like Nehru centre have given rise to residential development around and have made Delhi a poly-nucleated city.

As in most fields of human activity, there cannot be an end to the search for and innovation in our knowledge to continually devise approaches that meet the need of the times. Especially in the field of city planning, there must be a constant search for innovative and resource optimized solutions to problems that face the human habitat.



Gandhinagar Utopia:: Villages around the site developed as residential nodes with rapid transit to Capitol Complex at the centre (concept superimposed on Gandhinagar Master Plan)

11NEW DELHI again: HUDCO EXPERIENCE 1971



After my marriage in 1965, I joined the Gujarat New Capital project and for 6 years had a most satisfying time designing Gandhinagar the new capital city. The challenging task over, I did not want to continue doing routine work and left Gujarat in July 1971.

I left for Delhi with my wife & 2 sons, the younger one just 11 months old by my car. Before leaving I met Mewada who realized that I was very much disturbed emotionally at the thought of leaving Gandhinagar which was like my own child. He therefore asked our senior Architect Kadia to follow me in his car till we left the city boundaries. I was uncontrollably crying while driving the car for over an hour. Those who now seek to destroy Gandhinagar's plan out of sheer vendetta can never understand the grief of a planner-not having ever planned and implemented a township themselves- leaving the town which was like a part of my own being.

We had a stop over at Udaipur and reached Delhi late afternoon next day. As my uncle Govind's daughter was to appear for her 12th standard examination, we did not think it wise to stay with him and took a room at a guest house in Karolbugh. I telephoned my friend N. Ranganathan about our arrival and he came to see me in the evening. He insisted that we stay with him at his Curzon road one room apartment as his wife was away for her pregnancy. We shifted to his one room flat next day. When I joined HUDCO I had no cabin and used to sit in the board meeting room. The office was in the Jamnagar house barracks. Noticing a name board "Bhagwat" on one of the cabins I just went in and introduced myself. Mr. Bhagwat

who was the accounts officer asked me if I needed a house and took me in the evening to the landlady of an apartment on Todarmal road just a few kilometers away. The lady was a classical vocal singer and immediately agreed to rent out the 3 bedroom flat to us. So within a week I shifted there and informed my deputy Mr. B B Shah at Gandhinagar to send our household goods by truck. We had already packed the goods and kept it in the house for transport to Delhi. Thus it was that Ranganathan and Bhagwat helped me immensely during real need are therefore real friends. Mr. Bhagwat died a few years back. I am yet to come across a pure hearted person like him.

I had left Gandhinagar to join the newly formed Housing and Urban Development Corporation of India (HUDCO) as its chief Architect-Town Planner. I was groomed under the Chairmanship of Keshub Mahindra and Managing Director Vinod Parekh, both executives from the private sector. It was a totally different culture, discipline and work ethics that I gradually imbibed. It helped me in evolving and putting in place in HUDCO a system that was flexible and responsive to the socio-economic conditions and developing new technologies to deliver the product- a low cost house – to the millions of poor in this country. Being required to interact with all the state housing agencies and municipal and planning authorities; I acquired an overview of the urban development scenario in most states including the problems of cities there. Maharashtra being a leading borrower of HUDCO I frequently visited the state and Mumbai.

After Mr. J.B.D'Souza joined the HUDCO as its next Managing Director, he reoriented its policies to be entirely pro- poor and disciplined the housing boards of different states to that end. Fortunately for me, being a man of great integrity and honesty, he admired and encouraged those qualities in his officers and I was therefore soon to be his right hand in his crusade to build houses at costs affordable to the poor of this country. It may seem like a fairy tale but it was at his urging that I was able to design and execute a housing project in Agra wherein a house on a 25 sq. mt. plot was built for Rs. 8000! This was the maximum cost HUDCO had prescribed for the houses for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) whose household yearly income did not exceed Rs.6000! To all the public housing authorities in the state, which called this limit of Rs. 8000 for a house as 'absurd' and 'nonsense' he wanted me as his chief architect, to demonstrate and prove that it was possible. I did it, and he never ceased admiring me for it.

With the help of our MD I was able to streamline the working of HUDCO. When we received housing projects for financial assistance these were first examined by the technical department for the site suitability, design & planning. These were then sent to the finance department to scrutinize its financial viability and then to the legal department to ensure that the borrowing agency had the powers to borrow and provide collateral guarantees etc. I suggested to the MD that we should form teams of 4 professionals one each from Architecture-Planning, Engineering, Finance & accounts and Legal departments. This would ensure simultaneous and not

sequential scrutiny and cut down the period of scrutiny by at least 75%. I already had 4 teams of engineers and architects looking after four regions of the country. To this would be added finance and legal professionals and I would head all these teams. Though my suggestion was made in the interest of the organization and its effectiveness the Finance and Legal department heads viewed it as an attempt to reduce their importance and enlarge my 'empire'!

Mr. D'Souza however willingly embraced the idea and designated me as 'Chief of Projects' and reorganized the teams waving aside the protests of the other two departmental heads. Later on I added two more groups to my 'empire' one to look after propagation of research in building & planning technology and the other to actually build low income 'demonstration projects' This The HUDCO was in fact 'Projects' department and the Finance & Legal sections were reduced to just a few professionals. I took on such great responsibility at the age of 35 years and in the eyes of the borrowing agencies became the most important officer of HUDCO next to the Managing Director. While Mr. Keshub Mahindra was the Chairman & Mr. Vinod Parekh the MD, at one personal discussion he said 'Apte, think always about the advancement of the organization you will automatically prosper with it'. Unfortunately my well intentioned and right decisions to form such project groups though purely in the interest of the organization lead to my own ouster from it!

In the 1970s HUDCO was the most powerful organization providing techno-economic assistance to housing organizations in the country and I was its virtual head. In that capacity I travelled all over India visiting most states and their important towns & cities. Gujarat & Tamilnadu were the most 'advanced' states in terms of availing of loan facilities from HUDCO. In Gujarat we financed housing projects designed by some of the eminent Architects like Christopher Benninger, Raje, Talati, Suryakant Patel. I started housing design competitions for the housing agencies which later on were converted into actual construction project competitions using innovative building technique. I, in HUDCO propagated and introduced in the field more of the new technique evolved by Central Building Research Institute (CBRI) at Roorkee than official central government organizations specially created to do the job! I conducted studies and published a series on the same to educate them. I held periodic meetings with the chief technical heads of these organizations for interaction and cooperation in adopting new building technique.

Having come to head the Projects department I felt the need to have a good grounding in management & administration and joined an evening part time course in Business Management at the Bharatiya Vidyabhavan in 1974 and kept my record of academic success by topping at all the centres and achieving the Chancellor's gold medal in the final examination. Since its headquarters is at Mumbai On the expected result day I telephoned to my friend Manohar Katdhare who had his Architect's office in the Flora fountain area to personally go and see the results at their office and let me know. As I did not receive a call from him when I again

telephoned about the matter he said, 'why are you so anxious, the result is the same as usual. You have stood first'!

We had financed a scheme for development of housing in the 'Nallah Mar' area in Srinagar in Kashmir but it remained on paper. Haryana & Punjab took good advantage of HUDCO finance. Punjab housing board was however quite adverse to our urging to use PVC pipes for house sewage disposal. Their argument was that because of the local government requirement they had to embed the pipes in brickwork but as the rats ate away the pipes it was a health hazard! I did not believe this statement about the rats eating away the black high density PVC pipes and made a special visit to see for myself the facts. Punjab housing board was thereafter exempted from using PVC pipes! Haryana was a small state but had a volatile dynamic minister-Sushma Swaraj –as its housing minister. I remember meeting her with Mr. D'Souza to urge availing of financial assistance from HUDCO. Rajasthan used mostly local building materials for its housing projects and the then chief engineer Mr. Sarin was very successful in completing his projects in time and within stipulated costs.

Himachal Pradesh has its special problems . I remember having visited Shimla to review some of the housing projects under construction there. During a site visit I was rather perturbed to find that one of the 4 story building seemed 'out of plumb' I could not believe that such a mistake could happen. I therefore made excuses to go round and round the buildings to view those from different angles. When I was convinced that my observation even with naked eye was correct I took Mr. D'Souza aside and told him about my observation. He was shocked as the chief engineer of the board who was accompanying us was a very senior person. He therefore ,making a pretext himself went round the buildings observing those from different angles and then finally affronted the chief Engineer with his observation. The officer just pooh-poohed the observation and called it a visual deception-an error of sight! But as D'Souza was convinced of my observation, he insisted that we drop a plumbline from the top of the building and check the fact. With great reluctance the test was done and the building was found to be leaning to ne side by almost a foot! He made a great show of anger and immediately ordered the building to be dismantled! I do not know if it was actually dismantled or some day I might be able to view this modern 'leaning tower of Pisa' if and when I visit Shimla!

For the U.P.Housing Board I designed and executed a demonstration housing project at Agra wherein a small house of 232 sq. ft in a plot of 360 sq. ft was constructed at a cost of Rs. 4500 and sold at Rs. 7000 including infrastructure! We did this project at the insistence of the then housing minister Mr. Sikandar Bakhat who used to criticize HUDCO as a 'Pathan' lending money! When he visited the project at Agra Mr. D'Souza insisted that I accompany him in his car and try to dispel his ideas of HUDCO becoming a super house building agency and let it remain as a financing institution only. In the 2 hour drive from Delhi I was alone with the minister

and tried to tell him that we could take up demonstration projects like in Agra we should not dissipate our energies in becoming a



The low income houses I designed for Agra project

super housing board. I don't think I succeeded but neither did the government of which he was a part! In the design of this house I had placed the bath and the water closet in such a way that only one door could close either. The idea was to reduce the cost. Mr. D'Souza was greatly amused when one of the chief engineers from a state in south India termed this idea as 'bigamous'!

The response of Bihar was very poor in putting up projects for financial assistance D'Souza and myself made a visit to Patna and met the then chief minister Jagannath mishra. When I mentioned that projects were not being prepared by the Bihar housing board ,he turned to me and said, 'aray aptesahab hamko itni akal hoti to aapki zrrorathi nahi hoti' (had we the talent to prepare projects we would not require you). Orissa was no better. However due to my personal equation with the chief architect of the state and an enthusiastic officer Mr.Panda of the Cuttack development authority we did generate some projects there. Gujarat as mentioned earlier was quick and the largest borrowers of HUDCO then.

There was a good response from Maharashtra but not so from the then Vidarbha housing board. While visiting a site near Nagpur along with HUDCO's Finance Director, I had a discussion with the Chairman of the board. It went somewhat like this. 'See Mr. Apte, to get a loan from you I will have to prepare a project, for that I will have to acquire land, for that there will be many objections by the land owners, if I get the land we will have to prepare a project, get it sanctioned from you then construct it, and the allot the houses wherein there will be lot of pressures, thereafter there may defaulters so we will have to manage to repay the loan to you from our resources there will be allegations against me for various reasons isn't it? But I f we don't construct the houses and don't take a loan from you we have no problems! I could not agree less!

In order to increase the share of Maharashtra's borrowing from HUDCO, I got prepared a chart showing the comparative population, housing need and the actual borrowing for housing projects by all the states. Taking advantage of my friendship with Suryakant Pawar –elder brother of Sharad Pawar who was the chief minister then-I sought a meeting with Sharad Pawar and met him at a farm house in Madh

island. I explained to him how other so called less developed states were taking better advantage of the finance available from HUDCO as against Maharashtra. He gave a patient hearing to me and kept a copy of the chart with him. The inflow of housing projects from Maharashtra for financial assistance from HUDCO did show an increase thereafter.

Madhya Pradesh was a dynamic state under the leadership of M.N.Buch the then secretary to the government in charge of housing. As a query to one of their projects I once sent a telegram asking him for “explanation’ about certain issues. He seemed to have been greatly offended by the contents of the telegram and visited Delhi to talk to the Chairman and say “how dare Mr. Apte ask for explanation from a secretary to the government?” It then dawned upon me that in the IAS governmental parlance asking for explanation was like asking a convict to explain his behavior! I profusely apologized to him “explaining” what was meant by the telegram! He was convinced and regretted his misplaced overreaction. We are the best of friends to this day.

In Andhra Pradesh we had more borrowers, as apart from the housing board the state had an industrial infrastructure corporation. The M.D. of it one Mr. Shastri energetically followed up his contention that HUDCO should also finance industrial estates and got its approval. He had acquired large tracts of land and wanted me to have a look at the work he was doing. Once despite my tight schedule of work in Hyderabad and because of his urging I agreed to visit the sites which he said were on way to the airport. We visited the sites and saw the infrastructure work being done. As it was getting late for the reporting time at the airport I had already left the hotel and was visiting the site with my suitcase in the car. As we left the site for the airport we came across a manned rail crossing which was closed for the oncoming train. I was sure that I would miss the flight. But Mr. Shastri was calm. He asked his driver to pick up my suitcase from the car, we walked across the railway track and I found another A.P.I.C. (Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation) car waiting on the other side and we reached the airport in time. Mr. Shastri had foreseen the possibility and had arranged for another car to wait there! It was a good lesson in good planning and logistics!

The Karnataka housing board was one of the very few that had obtained a loan from HUDCO for two townships one at Yelahanka and the other at Kengeri both quite a few miles away from the city of Bangalore. Just a few years back perhaps in 2011 I was in Bengaluru to chair a session on new city development at the Indian Institute of Management and could see that the new airport at Yelahanka and the township had almost become part of the city. But in the 1970 I had doubted if Yelahanka would develop so rapidly. In Karnataka HUDCO had 2 major borrowers the housing board and the Bangalore development Authority. Once when I visited the housing board office I was surprised to find a section of it on the ground floor cordoned off with collapsible gates. I was told that the ex Chairman of the board lived there and

had shut himself in as he refused to leave his office even after being removed from the position by the government! I do not know what happened later!

Housing in West Bengal was almost non-existent in the public sector. HUDCO therefore thought of taking up a housing project there on its own and engaged a local architect to design it. The state housing board made a site available at Maniktola and the work was started there during the time of Vinod Parekh as the M.D. of HUDCO. The project was completed in about 18 months and inaugurated by the then chief minister Siddhartha Shankar Ray. The project remained an isolated example of our failed efforts to activate either the W.B. Housing board or the Calcutta Improvement Trust or the Calcutta Municipal corporation in taking up housing schemes through HUDCO finance.

At Mr. D'Souza's initiative the Indian Standards Institution agreed after great persuasion and reluctance to appoint a committee to frame a standard for low income housing. Though the committee was headed by a retired chief Engineer I was the person in charge of preparing the standard. After an year's arduous work and a number of meetings the standard I.S 8888 was framed and become applicable all over India. The framing of this standard marks a watershed in the history of low income housing efforts in India as it facilitated the state housing efforts in building low income housing with substantially lower limits in plinth area, plot area, room sizes, building materials and techniques and layout requirements. Similarly, the book of my low income housing concepts published by HUDCO has made a nationwide impact on the house designs. Since then even the private housing developers have widely copied these very economical designs particularly for high rise buildings in large cities. I consider these two achievements as my greatest contribution to the low income housing efforts in this country.

In 1974 Mr. D'Souza asked me to visit Hongkong & Singapore to study the low income housing projects there, and also visit Indonesia & Thailand to see the slum resettlement work being done there. The visit was very educative. The problem of low income housing was and perhaps is still quite acute in Hongkong & Singapore and the way it was being tackled was quite revealing.

Jakarta those days seemed like a cinema set city! If one moved on the main roads the streetscape was quite modern with new buildings. As soon as one travelled behind this 'façade' it was nothing but squalor and slums. It seemed as if the streetscape was all painted posters propped up by timber supports behind which was the real face of the city. When we travelled to one of the 'Kampungs' (slum) which was being improved, we had food at a roadside restaurants which was almost like the Punjabi 'dhabas' in Delhi den with names like 'Kakedi Hatti'!

The Jakarta Sites & Services project at Klender was financed by the World Bank (1974). In Jakarta, 65% of the households had an income less than 50 US dollars per month. The site was located on the eastern periphery of

Jakarta near an industrial estate which was expected to provide 100% employment to the residents of the Sites and Services project. The plan envisaged development of 8,000 plots in 110 hectares of land of which 7,500 were to have a core house built on each and sold at a subsidized rate. The plots were to have all services except electricity which was to be provided only on the main grid roads. The water supply was to be from tubewells. Each plot was to have a 'pit privi'. The Plan provided for all community facilities.

Singapore, even in 1974 was quite a modern city, very clean and disciplined. I visited some shopping malls there the likes of which we did not have even in Delhi. There was quite a lot of Indian population there and a number of Indian shops selling sarees. The sight of the 'sampans' and other sailing vassals was quite a sight on the sea shore. The housing board officials took good care of me and provided transportation to the various housing estates and building sites.

Housing in Singapore

Singapore is a city State having an area of 587 sq.km. (almost equal to the area of Mumbai) It has a much higher per capita income than India. The Singapore Housing Board originally started constructing one room tenement given on rental basis only. Subsequently it started selling the flats on hire purchase basis. It was decided that the families could afford to pay the installments for a flat if the total cost does not exceed its 2^{1/2} year's income. This was, therefore, the starting point for the Board's housing programmes. The contribution to the CPF (Contributory Provident Fund) was immediately allowed to be used for payment of installments. The Board had designed new towns with industrial workshops, for the non-polluting type of industries. There was great emphasis on landscaping to give relief to the high rise concrete buildings. In providing recreational facilities the emphasis was more on facilities that afforded participation by a large number of people. In most of the flats, the concept was to have a long block 8 to 12 storey high having a number of units with a common external corridor. Not more than 6 to 8 flats were grouped around a single staircase and lifts which stopped at every third or fourth floor with a common entry lounge.

The city of Hongkong that I saw then in 1974 hasn't changed much from what it was when I visited it recently about 4 years back. It is now more congested perhaps more Chinese and more 'tourist oriented' than what it was then in 1974. The entire city smells of the typical 'Chinese' smell of fishes of all kinds! I visited the Victoria hill which was quite a pleasant sight unlike now. The Star

ferry service was in operation and I was shown the 'New Territories' where new townships were being constructed with tall residential towers. Travel to Macau was not as easy then as it is now.

Housing in Hongkong: Public Housing in Hong Kong was constructed and managed by the Housing Authority established in 1973. It used to construct about 15,000 flats per year. It was responsible for providing public housing to all those families which were unsatisfactorily housed. All land was owned by the Government. Until 1974 the authority constructed flats only for rental purposes. These tenements, were constructed in long 6 storey row block with an external 3' wide access balcony, These units accommodated families of upto 11 persons in a single room. The cooking was done in the 3' common corridor where a lockable box was kept and the kitchen equipment is locked in it.

Resettlement of Squatters: Resettlement areas for squatters were provided with skeleton houses consisting of a room of about 150 sq.ft. in a single storey structure. These were in fact long sheds with asbestos cement sloping roof. Each family had to put up walls with its own resources and help. The roads in the area were paved and common toilets, water supply, parks and children play equipment was provided. This is the kind of temporary housing that I designed and provided for the Tsunami resettlement project in Tamilnadu at Chennai in 2010!

On my way to Singapore I had also visited Kuala Lumpur and stayed with one of my Architect friends. I was there again in 1978 on a consulting assignment for 'Malaysia low cost housing & Site & services programme'. While going to the office in Kuala Lumpur one morning just near the road to the hotel the car bumped into a shallow ditch much to the annoyance of the other consultant who was a British national. He uttered a typical British 4 letter word. But surprisingly on our return in the evening we found that the ditch had been filled and fresh asphalt laid making the road even! This consultancy assignment came about after my participation in an international housing conference at Chennai. I presented there my design and implementation of the Agra low income housing project. The chief of the Malaysia planning consultants was present there and made a note of my contribution. I was engaged as a consultant for the Malaysian government national site and services project

On way back to India I stayed at Bangkok for a day and visited a new town under construction. My impression of Bangkok then was a city with congested roads with heavy traffic jams. On return to office I had to tell Mr. D'Souza very frankly that I was able to impart more knowledge to the housing officials in Jakarta, Singapore & Hongkong than what I gained from them! He only smiled.

In Maharashtra, in January 1975, MMRDA was created under a state act. At that time it was called the Bombay Metropolitan Region Development Authority (BMRDA) and had three functional boards, one of which was Housing, Urban Renewal & Ecology (HURE) board of which the well known Architect Charles Correa was appointed as Chairman. I was appointed as a member of this board. I can thus claim to be the earliest “planner” in MMRDA! There used to be meetings of the board almost every month and I used to fly from Delhi. I attended most of the meetings. I continued to be a member till the boards were abolished sometime around 1979. We discussed the major problems of the city and often had interaction with secretaries of the other two boards dealing with transportation and water supply. We also undertook field visits to many parts of the city.

As a result, I acquired a first-hand knowledge of the city and its problems. Officers of the planning wing of MMRDA used to attend the meetings and were very helpful, being very knowledgeable about the city. Mr. Vidyadhar Phatak, Kashinath Diwadkar, and Suresh Pendharkar need special mention. Their integrity, honesty and keen desire to make Mumbai a livable city created a very healthy professional bond between us that has endured all these years. After each of them retired from MMRDA it was very difficult to find competent and honest replacements. Probably as a result, MMRDA drifted towards appointment of Consultants for almost every issue in the city which in the earlier days used to get tackled by us as members of the HURE board and the highly competent officers we had then. Currently, appointing consultants has become almost a ‘mania’ with MMRDA to an extent that the officers of MMRDA now seem to be the support staff for the Consultants!

Many of the projects that MMRDA initiated in those days were not followed up later due to appointment of consultants. The consultants, in their own interest and as a matter of survival; could hardly admit that the approaches outlined by the boards that consisted of government officials were the right solutions for the problems! Thus, all our suggestions about improvement in the housing, transportation and services sector were shelved under the guise of making fresh assessment of the problems for which appointment of consultants was recommended and finally approved by MMRDA.

During the time that I was a member of the HURE board we had very competent officers, mostly chief engineers of the state P.W.D as secretaries to the boards. The last was Mr. N.V.Merani secretary to the HURE board who did an excellent job with his studious approach and wealth of knowledge of the city and his subject. Mr. Merani greatly appreciated my initiatives and remains a good and valued friend. He later on retired as Principal Secretary to the state government and is still active as an adviser to the municipal corporation. Had his advice been acted upon, Mumbai may not have had the severity and extent of many of the problems that it faces today including problems of bad roads and potholes.

During this period ie. from around 1977 to 1979 I was also appointed as a member of the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA). I attended its meetings about once in 3 months and acquired in depth information and knowledge about the urban development scenario in most of the towns in Maharashtra. During some of these meetings I found that I was more knowledgeable about the housing situation in Mumbai than most other members. This was due to my work in HUDCO since 1971 when Maharashtra still had only a single housing board of which one Mr.Lulla was the housing commissioner. The Bombay building repairs and reconstruction board had a chief engineer Mr. Dastur who had constructed many projects of low income housing in Mumbai.

The government of India appointed two committees to review the housing situation in the country, one for the northeastern states and the second for the rest of India including the union territories. I was appointed a member of the second committee and had to tour almost the entire country and gained a firsthand knowledge of the housing situation and the administrative structure for housing and urban development in the country. Along with this work I was also appointed a member of the working group on housing for the formulation of the 8th five year plan of India. I can record with pride my contribution in suggesting a number of options in the plan to alleviate the housing situation in the country.

In 1977 before constituting the MHADA, the then Secretary to the state government Mr. S S Tinaikar used to consult me about the constitution of a unified state housing authority. Later on, during his tenure as the vice-president of MHADA we had a very fruitful association. I remember once his showing me a map of Mumbai in his chamber and pinpointing lands available for public housing. According to him over 3000 hectares of public land at various locations was available then but could not be acquired by MHADA due to 'disinterest' or 'vested' interest by the state government. He often came to Delhi on official visit and had dinner at my house. He was a very forthright, honest and enthusiastic officer and remained a good friend till his death. Last we met was at the funeral of J.B. D'Souza.

Before Mr.D'Souza left HUDCO to join as Chief Secretary to government of Maharashtra, he created two senior posts, one of Chief Finance and the other of Chief Projects. My erstwhile colleague K.K.Sachdev was appointed Chief Finance and I was designated Chief Projects. I had 7 senior managers, four dealing with project approvals in four regions of the country, one dealing with construction of model/demonstration projects, one dealing with propagation of new technologies, one Mr. V. Suresh (who later went on to become the managing director of HUDCO till he was summarily asked to resign by the HUDCO's Board of Directors) and one dealing with design and research.

After an year in Maharashtra Mr. D'Souza returned as Secretary to the government of India in the housing and urban development ministry. The then Hindustan housing factory, a loss making venture of the central government was under his jurisdiction

and he appointed my colleague Mr. Sachdev as its Managing Director. He also was instrumental in getting Mr. H.U. Bijlani appointed as the Chairman and Managing Director of HUDCO. Mr. Bijlani was a chief engineer in the much maligned and corruption ridden Delhi Municipal Corporation and at that time was doing research at the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) in Delhi.

Mr. D'Souza's contention in getting him as the CMD of HUDCO (he told me many years later in Mumbai) was to have someone close to the then minister of housing Mr. Sikandar Bakht. He thought that the unpopular policies of HUDCO in prescribing what the housing boards called 'absurd' and nonsensical' cost limits on housing for the poor could be sustained only by political support for which he thought, Mr. Bijlani being very close to Mr. Bakht, could make some contribution. Though his intentions were honest, he unknowingly sowed the seeds of devastation of HUDCO. After I left HUDCO and took up a job in private sector in Bangalore, I happened to meet the chairman of BDA (Bangalore Development Authority) who told me that while on a visit to Bangalore the CMD, HUDCO, after a few drinks, had boasted to him that he would soon get rid of D'Souza's men, Sachdev and Apte. I had no way of checking the veracity of his claim but I believed him as he was a very straight forward person.

As a member of the board of directors of Hindusthan housing factory later renamed as Hindusthan Prefab Ltd. (HPL) Mr. Bijlani had to sit in the board room as a member while Sachdev, his deputy in HUDCO, chaired the meetings as the Managing Director! Moreover, as M.D. of HPL Mr. Sachdev had direct access to the secretaries to the government and some ministers. In the highly class conscious environment of Delhi this must have further tormented Bijlani. Whatever be the reasons, one fine morning all officers in HUDCO were shocked to learn that Mr. Sachdev was suspended from his service in HUDCO as Chief, Finance on charges of corruption. His deputy Mr. G.S.Ahuja was given the charge of the post.

The Chief Vigilance Commissioner of the government of India investigated the charges. The investigation went on for over 4 years. During that time Sachdev's young son, while riding a scooter was struck down by a heavy vehicle and had multiple wounds. He had to be hospitalized for over an year and later had to be in a wheel chair. Sachdev's daughter was molested a number of times and he was forced to employ a body guard for her. Sachdev was cleared of all the charges and HUDCO was ordered to reinstate him on his previous post. When he went to HUDCO office, (it was then located in the Jamnager house barracks) he was told that there was no cabin available to seat him. For days he would go to the office on time and sit on a wooden stool outside any officer's cabin. He then approached a court of law and the legal battle dragged on. He finally quit in disgust and took up a job with an N.G.O. The first of the "D'Souza's men was got rid of!

It was the year 1978. It was clear to me then that my days in HUDCO were numbered. Anonymous telephone calls were made to my wife saying "bhabiji aj apke bacchhe schoolse ghar nahi ayenge" (Madam, your sons will not return home

today from school). We were staying at Bengali Market and both of my sons were schooling at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on Curzon Road. I normally used to give them a lift home while on my way home for lunch. But many a times I was delayed due to work at office and they used to wait under a tree outside the school compound or just walk home. As the frequency of the threatening telephone messages grew and the tone became more menacing, my wife become panicky. Though the morning school session ended only at 1 p.m., she would walk to the school in the blazing sun reaching there much before the closing time to ensure that the children were not kidnapped.

My home atmosphere became very tense though my sons were gratefully unaware of it. On Saturdays, when my son's school ended early, my wife would, after fetching them for school, lock the apartment from outside and go for her vocal music classes. She is an accomplished musician and was a disciple of the famed Vasant Thakar who was a teacher at the Gndharva Mahavidyalaya on Deen Dayal Upadhyaya marg. It was just across the railway line and from my house one could walk across it and reach there on foot in about 10 minutes. If one did not take this route, the road was very circuitous requiring a 30 minute journey by autorikshaw. She would go for her music classes across the railway line at 11 in the morning returning at 12.30 pm by the same route.

On a Saturday, while returning from her music class she sensed being followed by some ruffians. As she was about to cross the railway line and was engrossed in the maneuver, two of the 4 ruffians caught hold of her from the rear. She started shouting and tried to break free. At that time of the day there was not a soul in sight. Two more ruffians came and started pulling her down by the embankment of the raised railway line. Her clothes were torn and sari came unwound. She continued to shout and cry out. Fortunately for her, some laborers housed in a makeshift tent put up nearby who were having their lunch hearing her shouts came out picking up their work tools. The ruffians sensing the danger ran away shouting abuses at my wife. By that time a gentleman from the nearby railway residential quarters came running out. Looking at the condition of my wife, he offered her a bedcover to wrap around and accompanied her across the railway track to the gate of our residence.

She narrated the horrid experience when I returned from office in the evening and urged me to resign the HUDCO job. The matters came to a head when, within a week one morning, just when I was settling down in my office cabin, I was called by Mr. Bijlani and told that I was being posted as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) at Calcutta. I was asked to join duties within 2 days. I realized that the blow had been struck to get rid of the second "D'Souza man". It was many months after I left HUDCO and settled down in Bangalore as a Director in a private company that I was told by the chairman of BDA that before my wife started receiving the threatening telephone calls a personal secretary to the Managing Director from HUDCO spent a month traveling to almost every city that I had visited as Chief of Projects trying to collect evidence that could prove some corruption charges against

me. He drew a total blank as by upbringing, temperament and culture it was not in my nature to accept any gifts from the borrowing agencies. Having drawn a blank it was probably realized by whosoever had planned the suspension of Sachdev that the same strategy may not work in my case.

I had to take a decision in two days whether to shift to Calcutta as OSD or resign. I sought legal advice and was told that my transfer amounted to demotion as my powers to recommend schemes for loan approval would be naturally in-exercisable and therefore I could file a legal suite of demotion without being served with any notice for such an action. I examined my options. I telephoned to my friend Mr. Ashok Bhat who was the minister for slum improvement in Gujarat. On being acquainted with my situation he managed to send me a telegram appointing me as housing adviser to the state government and told me on phone that I could stay in his bungalow in Ahmedabad till proper arrangements were made. Simultaneously, another of my friend Mr. P.C.Nayak who was a joint secretary in the ministry of commerce in Delhi, asked me not to worry as he was seeking premature retirement from service and joining the well known house of "Spencers" in Madras and offered to appoint me as a Director in charge of its real estate company called 'Spencer Estates'. Next day I submitted my resignation personally to Bijlani with a month's notice as required under the terms of my appointment.

During the notice period of one month I met my Architect friend A.J.Talati at Ahmedabad who had worked with Le Corbusier in his studio in Paris for his advice if I could start my own Architectural practice in Ahmedabad or Baroda. Having been acquainted with the entire background of my resignation, he wondered if I would ever be allowed to have any clients for my architectural practice till the current management of HUDCO continued. For the same reason he advised me not to join Gujarat government as an Adviser, as the long hands of those responsible for my ouster from HUDCO, could force the state government to get rid of me. The only option left for me was to accept the job in Chennai. It was the month of October when I was served the transfer order in HUDCO. It was very cunningly timed as would make the shifting of my school going sons very difficult in the middle of the academic year. Yet, I decided to shift to Bangalore where the Managing Director of Spencers, Mr. P.C.Nayak had decided to have his office.

12BENGALURU: SPENCER & COMPANY 1979

When I joined in 1979 the private company Spencer Estates, a subsidiary of Spencer & Company, as Director in Bangalore, I found it very difficult to get school admissions for my sons. In Delhi they were in the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) stream and in those days, apart from Central schools which were meant primarily for the wards of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers, there was only one school in Bangalore offering the CBSE stream. With the help of an officer from the BDA deputed by its chairman, I went to see the Principal of the

school. He was quite upset at the presence of the BDA official and asked him to 'get out'. Thereafter he asked me "Mr. Apte do you remember me?" In HUDCO I used to meet people from all over India literally in hundreds. Because of my nature to stick to my duties and not get close or friendly with anyone of them, I had few close contacts. Since I did not respond, he said "I had accompanied Mr.Somanna(chairman of Bangalore Development Authority) when he visited your office in Delhi. While he was in your cabin you came to know that I was accompanying him but was waiting outside and so you asked your peon to call me in your cabin and offered me a cup of tea till my friend had completed his business with you. So, how can I not give admission to your sons? I have to admit them".

It is an incidence that I cannot forget ever. For what I considered normal, courtesy extended to him, he remained ever so grateful. In the context of the trauma and inhuman treatment that I and my family had to go through at the hands of those in power in HUDCO, his kind gesture helped me retain faith in "human" qualities.



Gulmohor Cottage in West End hotel Bengaluru that I designed: Amitabh Bacchan always insisted on staying there.

Before leaving the house hired by HUDCO for my residence I handed over the telephone instrument to the Telephone department and the possession of the residential apartment to the owner who had, with great foresight, worded the agreement with HUDCO stating that the apartment was rented to HUDCO for the residence of P.M.Apte till such time that he was in the employ of HUDCO. I was therefore within my legal rights to handover the possession of the house to the owner. HUDCO however, on the grounds that I had not handed over the telephone instrument and the apartment to it, withheld the payment of my provident fund due to me. This, despite a law in force that the provident fund of an employee of a public undertaking cannot, under any circumstances be withheld. I had to fight a legal battle in a Delhi court for 2 years. The court rejected the grounds of HUDCO and

ordered the provident fund amount to be paid back to me. Despite the court order the amount was not paid to me. It was only after Bijlani retired from HUDCO that the amount was paid at the intervention of the then Managing Director Mr. Sharma an IAS officer who in my presence asked the administrative officer why the amount was withheld in the first place against the law to which the officer could hardly provide the true answer.

I joined Spencer Estates as its executive director. Mr. P.C.Nayak I.A.S.who worked as secretary (commerce) in the government of India, had taken premature retirement and was to join Spencer & Company as its Managing Director. While in HUDCO I had come in contact with him and he had asked me to join the company. After resigning from HUDCO I asked him if his offer was still open. He said I could join any time I liked. In November I left for Bangalore with bag & baggage. I was received at the station by his secretary and lodged in a hotel. My household goods were stored in the premises of the company on M.G.Road. Though the headquarter of the company was at Chennai, Mr. Nayak having his own house in Bangalore was to stay there and be in Chennai as and when necessary. A first floor flat was found for me in the Kumar Park just across the rail line from the West End hotel where we had our offices.

My sons were admitted to a school in Rajajinagar by the Principal who for some reason had felt obliged to me. I recruited some officers for the company. The environment in the company was very informal. I normally visited Chennai for 2 days in a week. The company owned 3 hotels, Westend in Bangalore, Connemara in Chennai and Savoy in Ooty. I looked after the renovation and additions to these hotels, planned development for our properties in the south as well as in Delhi where it had a huge old property in old Delhi area near Kashmeer gate. I also looked after the construction of an office building in the premises of the showroom in Chennai where our corporate offices were located. We also had a large property at Forjett street in Mumbai. and at a prime location in Calcutta. I was therefore quite on the move between Kanpur (where Spencer's had a parachute manufacturing facility), Curnool (where Spencer's owned the Rob Roy Tea estate and some vacant lands in the town), Chennai, Ooty, Calicut, Mumbai, Mangalore, Calcutta and Delhi. However it was a time when I was well looked after wherever I went on work with accommodation in 5 star hotels and company transport. In Calcutta the company owned a trawler mainly used for prawn fishing and a cold storage.

Our chairman was Dadabhai a very lovable Parsi gentleman. He stayed in Chennai and so did most of the directors on the board. During my about 2 years work there was a serious fire accident at the showroom in Chennai and it was totally gutted. The then Chief Minister of Tamilnadu Mr. M.G.Ramachandran made a visit to review the fire damage and Mr. Nayak sent me to Chennai post haste to acquaint him and I was there when he visited the ravaged building. The showroom was over 100 years old and had beautiful high ceilinged roof supported by wooden trusses. I ensured the preparation of the plans for a new modern showroom but left the company

before the building work started. My stay in Bangalore was very pleasant. There being a good Marathi population and a building of the Marathi association, my wife gave many concerts there and also acted in two Marathi plays. She participated in a competition conducted by Maharashtra government and was awarded the first prize for being judged the best actor.

After working in Bangalore for over two years I met the Chief Engineer Mr. M A Chavan of MHADA who was dining at a Spencer hotel with the vice president of MHADA Mr. Anil Gokak a very honest and upright IAS officer. It was over the lunch that Mr. Gokak offered to appoint me as a consultant to MHADA. The deal was that, I would visit Mumbai for one week every month and guide the officers of the housing boards under MHADA to formulate housing schemes for financial assistance from HUDCO. It was the year 1982 and I had made up my mind to return to Baroda where a real estate developer had offered me a job to oversee construction of over 3000 apartments and bungalows in the Race Course area of Baroda. In June 1982 I shifted to Baroda and started working with the developer who had agreed that I could go to Mumbai for a week every month. That is how I again started visiting Mumbai regularly and reestablished my contacts with MMRDA and my old friends there.

13MUMBAI: MAHARASHTRA 1981

I stayed in Baroda visiting Mumbai for a week every month. I looked after the housing project of the private developers, taught at the school of Architecture established by Architect Suryakant Patel and also at the University college of Architecture. I also undertook consultancy projects for design of hotels and housing in Mumbai. In view of my increasing commitments for work in Mumbai I thought of taking up a regular job in Mumbai and shift there. Fortunately an old friend from Bangalore invited me to join a very prominent Realtor in Mumbai who offered to give a very good compensation package including housing.

In 1984 I shifted to Mumbai. Since then I have been involved in many projects that gave me an insight into the problems of Mumbai. I worked as a Consultant to MHADA for over 8 years since 1982. In 1987-88, I was a member of the D'Souza committee to review the development plan of Mumbai. During over one year of its very intensive working we reviewed the Mumbai development plan ward by ward, studied the suggestions and objections received and frequently had field visits to assess the issues.



A project in Mumbai

designed by the Author

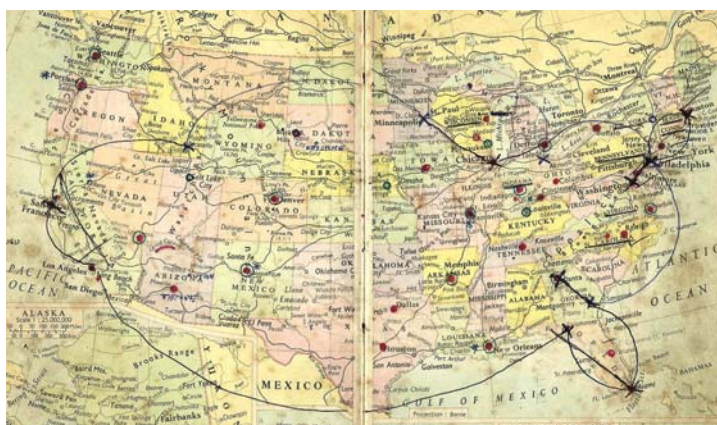
In 1996 I was appointed a member of the planning review committee for the Vasai-Virar development plan and similarly reviewed the development plan and assessed the development of the northern suburbs of Mumbai. Working with private consultants, including Tata Consultancy services I was involved in the assessment and planning of suburban rail routes to Panvel. I was also involved in an Indo-German collaboration project for a partially overhead and underground rail link from Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus of the Central Suburban Railway to Churchgate and Cuffe Parade. Working for a N.G.O. I designed a small township (5000 houses) in Dindoshi, in the northern suburb of Goregaon.

Mr. D'Souza who had settled in Mumbai after retiring as the Chief Secretary of Maharashtra, was appointed chairman of a committee to review mumbai's development plan by the the chief minister Shankarrao Chavan. He immediately asked me to be on the committee along with Vidyddhar Phatak of MMRDA and EFN Rebiero of TCPO Delhi. The committee was to review over 4000 objections and suggestions received on the draft plan and submit a report within one year ie. by April 1988. We had site visits and also reviewed de-novo the development control regulations. A revolutionary concept that I suggested and was adopted and subsequently incorporated in the new regulations was that the minimum opens open space in a plot required by the rules need not be at the ground level but could be at upper level not exceeding 4 meters above the ground. This will facilitate creation of a podium in large housing projects and increasing parking places at the ground level.

I was awarded (along with my wife) a Fellowship by Eisenhower Exchange Fellowships in the field of urban planning and management and went to USA in 1988. It was a great honour and the USA consulate took care of our visa and all other formalities. I worked out a programme of visit for 3 months wherein I visited many Universities delivering lectures at some, had discussions with urban planning & development authorities, and met eminent planners. My wife also gave Indian Vocal Classical music recitals at some schools. I visited over 20 cities and was back in Philadelphia from where we had started after a week of orientation course and submitted a short report on my experience.

After a joint session with all the fellows at the sugar loaf convention centre for a week, all fellows pursued their individual programmes for 10 weeks. EEF had appointed a fellowship adviser for a group of fellows who arranged for air travel, appointments with persons/organizations and accommodation. We were given a daily allowance for food. We were free to have our personal visit schedule on weekends also arranged by the EEF. It was one of the most liberal fellowship programmes very well managed and arranged.

Starting from Philadelphia we visited Georgia university at Atlanta, Washington Planning authority at Washington, Dade county development authority at Miami, City Hall offices at Los Angeles, University at San Francisco, Planning authorities in Detroit, Chicago University. In Chicago I visited the ill famous Carbin Green project, a rental housing project. There was such crime and vandalism in the project area that I was taken round in a bullet proof car and accompanied by two heavily armed policemen.



Cities in USA visited during my Fellowship Programme.

Streets in the project area were deserted and a house that had been recently been vacated was stripped of all fittings and fixtures by the previous occupant mostly afro-americans. After I visited the project within an year or two it was raised to the ground. It remains one of the striking failures of rental housing projects in USA.



1988 EEF Fellows from 23 countries. I am fourth from right (standing) Suneela Apte second from right first row.

At the end of the Fellowship programme there was a grand dinner and we were all given a farewell. But before that we had a week long session again in Philadelphia at the Sugarloaf Convention centre where the secretary of state addressed us.

I visited the Maryland development authority at Baltimore and then to New York where I had interesting discussions about development of the new areas. On weekends we visited friends and the usual tourist places like Disneyland, Universal studios, Grand Canyon, Las Vegas, Niagara falls. Neela gave a classical vocal concert at Chicago and New York. I gave lectures at the Ames University and Ann Arbor.

Back in Mumbai ,I was appointed a member of the review committee for the Vasai virar development plan. The meetings were held in Vasai office of the City & Industrial development corporation of Maharashtra. Apart from hearing and deciding upon the objections & suggestions we had to take expert opinion on the creation of “holding ponds’ and area to be demarcated for those in the development plan. Being close to the sea arrangements had to be made to ensure that water coming in through creeks did not flood the town and hence the requirement of holding ponds. The meetings lasted for about 2 years at end of which a draft plan was submitted to the government. Unfortunately there were too many conflicting interests and powerful political pressures that ultimately ruined all the work done by the committee.

All this time I was formulating low cost proposals for the problems of Mumbai while the state government and the MMRDA were busy formulating high cost glorified solutions that would transform Mumbai into Shanghai! I worked as a Consultant on the staff of the World Bank from 1999 for about 6 years for the Mumbai Urban Transport Project II looking after the rehabilitation and resettlement project wherein over 39,000 residential tenements were built under my guidance and supervision. The construction of roads and rail overbridges and widening of roads under the MUTP required resettlement of families affected by these projects and it was my responsibility to ensure that this was done to the satisfaction of the project affected families and their resettlement was done according to the World Bank guidelines.

It is my nature to always review all solutions to see if there are low cost options that would serve equally well. Instinctively I go for optimization of available resources rather than suggest high cost solutions requiring large scale investment. I continually reexamine the solutions to find if the same end could be achieved with lesser resources and investment. I try to find solutions that are flexible and amenable to course correction over time with changing circumstances and environment. In the process, I realized that the high cost solutions adopted are not necessarily out of, though misguided, but genuine desire to mitigate the problems. Quite often there are hidden or ulterior objectives. Sometimes the solutions so dazzle the technocrats that they become oblivious or blind to the most glaring flaws in them.

Take the example of the elevated monorail now under construction in Mumbai. It costs over Rs 220 crores per km.(Rs.2200 m. or US \$ 45 m.) Instead, under the very same raised platform which, with its massive pylons, occupies a traffic lane width, if a dedicated lane for buses were to be operated as BRTS it would cost hardly Rs. 2.5 crores per km. ie. 1/10th of the cost of the elevated rail and yet would carry the same number of passengers. But blinded by the glamour of elevated monorail, the planners forget that they are in fact taking away over 4 mts. width from the road on the ground which if converted into a rapid bus transit route would cost a fraction of the elevated rail project and would serve the same purpose That is why, very reluctantly, I come to the conclusion that for the technocrats, bureaucrats and politicians it must be to their benefit to spend Rs. 220 crores per km. of which at least 20% will flow back to their pockets as kickbacks rather than spend only Rs. 2.5 crores per km.! Out of this realization has emerged the now oft quoted 'Apte Principle' that, "projects in Mumbai are undertaken for their propensity to generate kickbacks for the technocrats, bureaucrats and politicians and any benefit accruing to the people is incidental and unintended"!

During the first 14 years of occasional professional visits to Mumbai since 1971 and later a permanent stay of 28 years in this city, I studied most facets of the basic issues that confront it and suggested low cost solutions in my various articles, speeches and letters to news papers. While the data in some of these may be in need of being updated the issues basically remain the same and so do my solutions. This book is a collection of these articles and letters to the newspapers. Each one is not merely a criticism of the governmental or MMRDA's approach but makes a positive suggestion which is workable though not eye catching, newsworthy or glamorous.

Many of these suggestions have struck a positive chord in the minds of right thinking intellectuals who unfortunately are not the decision makers. But some are. For example the erstwhile Minister for railways during one of her visits actively supported my suggestion to have double decker coaches for the suburban rail service. The RTO has been receptive to my suggestion to allow new registration of cars only if the owner can give proof for their night parking within his premises. The suggestion to start a water transport along the coast to the mainland has found

favour with MSRDC. Very recently the MMRDA has finally accepted that its proposal for the elevated monorail is not cost effective and has shelved this project after the completion of its first phase costing Rs.4250 crores!



My book on Growth strategy for Mumbai

But many of my suggestions like the location of the new international airport south of Thane, scrapping the construction of trans-harbor bridge and resettlement of hawkers have fallen by the wayside. It is so because the investment in these projects is astronomical (incase of all works related to the new international airport the total amount is currently estimated at Rs. 11,000 crores) and there the 'Apte Principle' operates i.e. projects in Mumbai are undertaken for their propensity to generate kickbacks...."

Following is a synopsis of the solutions to the various issues that confront the city of Mumbai. Each issue and its solution are described in the chapters of this book. These solutions are lessons that similar cities in the developing world can learn from and apply the principles to the issues in their own countries.

A City's Vision Plan

Many big cities have vision plans. But these are not mere colorful dreams ! They are the shortest statements in fulfillment of which the cities can constantly explore options. The latest among Mumbai's vision plans is one by a Singapore consultant 'Subana'. It projects a slum-less city in 2052! It proposes building up the saltpan lands for development. Were the Consultants ignorant or willfully ignored the fact that the salt pans are also the 'holding ponds' for the runoff from the built-up areas of the city? If those are also built up, the rain water run off from the city will be blocked and during high tide the city can get inundated as it happened in 2005. Salt pan lands must not be used for development until this issue is resolved by experts.

The Consultants propose using the Thane creek lands for development. It will not only add to the population but will destroy the only true open 'green' expanse in the centre of the city. Instead, the proposed new airport for Mumbai could be located there. As for its densification proposals, the argument to reclaim lands at Nariman point and shift the city centre back there is contrary to the plans so far followed by MMRDA and the heavy investments already made in Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) as a district employment centre. The argument to shift back to Nariman Point

presupposes the construction of the Nhava Sheva bridge across to the main land. All these proposals are detrimental to the organic development of Mumbai. A new development plan for Mumbai must have a radically different approach.

How should a Region and City development plan be prepared?

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region was created sometime around 1967. However, the validity of its geographical boundaries was not tested based on specific criteria and norms. To achieve its own balanced growth and not retard or kill growth of other urban potential nodes in the region, the presently defined MMR needs to be segregated into i) an immediate influence zone of Mumbai that may comprise of the city and its suburbs and ii) the region comprising of Thane, Navi Mumbai, Pen, Alibagh and other smaller growth centres.

How will the suburbs develop (as envisioned by MMRDA) if the trans-harbor link facilitates further concentration at the southern tip of the island city?

In terms of a transportation plan therefore, Mumbai with its suburbs needs to be divested from the rest of the region and both planned independently as self sustaining urban regions. The trans-harbor link needs to be scrapped if the mainland area is to develop as a self sustaining entity and not become a dormitory area for the island city. Instead of a bold, original, innovative, down to earth and “out of box” approach; the MMRDA regional plan merely makes arithmetical projections for the distant future without really being “futuristic”, and is neither perceptive nor realistic.

Similarly, Mumbai’s city development plan should set out the directions of and identify the thrust areas for its development. It must suggest alternative routes, strategies, and interventions for bringing about the change. It should provide a framework and vision within which projects should be identified and implemented. It must establish a logical and consistent framework for evaluation of investment decisions. It must focus on the development of economic and social infrastructure, strategies that deal specifically with issues affecting the urban poor, strengthening of municipal governments and their financial accounting and budgeting systems and procedures, creation of systems for bringing in accountability and transparency, and elimination of legal and other bottlenecks that have stifled the land and housing markets. It should provide a basis for Mumbai to undertake urban sector reforms that will help direct investment into city-based infrastructure. Most important of all, it must have a built in mechanism to ensure public participation at every stage of its evolution

A new development plan for Mumbai must have a radically different approach. It must be an assemblage of local level citizen oriented projects. We must first prepare development plans for each ward based on fullest possible public participation, completely scrapping the top down approach followed so far. These plans can then be co-laced at the city level keeping in mind the 'vision' of the city and then broken up again in projects for each ward of the city.

Impact of liberalization

The impact of liberalization policy being followed by the government of Maharashtra, like SEZ (Special Economic Zones) and new townships notification will lead to the exclusion of the poor and their further impoverishment, destruction of environment and ecological balance, paucity of land for agriculture, horticulture and vegetable farming, making these commodities scarce for city dwellers, displacement of large adivasi (aboriginal) population which may migrate to cities adding to slums, deforestation resulting in climate changes, increased vehicular traffic to existing cities from these townships for work, recreation, higher education and medical facilities, and serious imbalances in the urban economy leading to crime and lawlessness.

the purpose of this liberalization it would seem, is to create more problems or accentuate existing ones, making life miserable in the urban areas so that the politicians can initiate, bureaucrats can programme and technocrats can prepare blue prints to undertake new projects like flyovers, metro rails, sea links, multistoried housing, that will generate an eternal source of kickbacks for them

Evolving A Sustainable Development Model for a City

The now defunct mill lands of central Mumbai could hold the key to the future "model" for the city's development. A large number of mills occupying over 150 hectares are almost contiguously located at the "nodal point" in the city centre (at the proposed joining of the Bandra-Worli sea link, with the proposed Shivree- Nhava Trans- harbour Sea Link through J. Bhatankar Marg). Irrespective of the use or apportionment of this land among the owners and /or statutory bodies, it is imperative that all these mill lands are "assembled" for an integrated urban development model by either framing a "Town Planning Scheme" or declaring it a special planning area under Maharashtra Regional & Town Planning Act (MRTP) or making it obligatory under development control regulations to prepare an overall layout by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGB)

Thereafter, a "structure plan" must be prepared for this area incorporating mass rapid transit terminals on the periphery with road-rail interchanges, multi-storied automobile parking adjoining these terminals, a mass transit system encircling the area, and a 'nature park' with a lake (for water harvesting, fishery etc.)

This entire area can then be made a "model" of "sustainable" development by providing a desalinization plant/rain harvesting for its potable water requirements, harnessing solar and sea wave energy for generation of electricity, sewage treatment plants in each building to recycle the water for growing fruit and vegetables by hydroponics on the terraces, making the ground area automobile free for pedestrian movement (as in Bogota, Columbia). This 150 hectares "model" urban

development project should be made self sustaining with least dependence on the existing physical infrastructure services of the city.

Remodeling slums like Dharavi:

Dharavi (termed as the biggest slum in Asia) contains the attributes for environmentally and socially sustainable settlements. Its use of local materials, walkable neighbourhoods, and mix of employment and housing add up to "an underlying intuitive grammar of design that is totally absent from the faceless slab blocks that are still being built around the world to 'warehouse' the poor".

It would be rational and just, to give land tenure to the existing residents of Dharavi so that they themselves can redevelop the area and upgrade its physical environment through self help efforts by registering ownership to their piece of land and availing institutional finance. The least, that can be done is to insist on remodeling this project to provide for, low-rise - high density development for the existing families engaged in crafts like leather tanning & making leather goods and pottery so that each house with ground + first floor has a terrace and a courtyard that will afford proper space for their work place. Alternatively, stilt + 3 floor small apartments can be built with the entire ground floor under the building and the terrace free for carrying on their occupations that requires large open areas.

Any plan for a Dharavi like slum must consider the work-place relationship developed over the years so that it does not destroy the existing social structure that has sustained the local economy. Area wise divisions of Dharavi proposed in the state government initiated Dharavi redevelopment plan that would segregate land uses, is evidence of the insensitiveness of the top-down approach to planning. The involvement of the concerned population in the planning process is a planning imperative if the redevelopment is to be successful from a human and urban perspective.

Low Cost Shelter Projects

A project was designed by the Author for a site in New Mumbai to demonstrate that it is possible to do in situ development of slum areas by using it as a model. It is a low cost, low rise, high density project where most ideas described in the various chapters of this book have been clearly demonstrated. It provides for informal layout, mixed land use, integrated community development and estate management. It is perhaps the lowest cost project ever designed in Mumbai .

Resettlement of Hawkers

How to find a solution which does not uproot the street hawkers from the existing location and yet does not create problem for the city as a whole is a challenging task. Therefore, instead of a shopping line prescribed in the development control regulations, it would be desirable to allow construction of shop/shops within the plots

abutting the roads but restricting their land coverage and height. In short, the hawkers could be resettled within the plots adjoining the streets. This will free the pavements for pedestrians and the properties along the street will derive income. The hawkers will have a legal tenure, access to water supply and electricity and become a productive constituent of the city community rather than being 'parasites'

Rain Water Harvesting

Rain water harvesting is merely "putting back rain water into the soil", where it will be stored in natural underground reservoirs and aquifers. We need a rain water harvesting system that is sustainable, replicable and economically viable. Practical experience in the past has established the socio-economic impacts of rain water harvesting at plot scale. If it is promoted at the city scale and gains wider acceptance, the associated social, economic, and environmental benefits will contribute substantially in improving the quality of life in Mumbai. I have examined the role of GIS in promoting such a system and methodology for rain water harvesting and data requirements to enable its large scale adoption in cities.

Mitigating Urban Floods: Simple Solutions

Sweeping the city every day, removing the garbage immediately (instead of doing it just before monsoon), either covering the roadside drains or cleaning those everyday, making it obligatory for all building premises to be paved only with perforated tiles to allow water percolation and harvesting, paving all footpaths with perforated tiles only, keeping the mandatory recreation garden (R.G.) in every development unpaved and in one location (not in small bits and pieces) and providing an open dug well of minimum 5 mt. diameter to let rain water percolate and accumulate are some measures that can go a long way in arresting urban floods. Allowing basements not over the full plot area but only under the building footprint removing debris and obstacles to flow of storm water drains, widening and keep free from encroachments mouths of all main storm water courses joining the sea, creating holding ponds near the mouths of all the creeks and rivers to hold the runoff in a deluge (the kind that took place on 26/7 2005 in Mumbai) till low tide are some simple solutions that, if put into practice, can mitigate urban floods.

Public Transportation Strategy

The strategy should be to build on the current strengths of the existing transportation network, optimize its utilization and shun the temptation to make Mumbai look like Shanghai or Singapore by taking up grandiose projects like trans-harbor sea links, elevated light rail or 'sky bus' projects. The only rational alternative is to OPTIMIZE available infrastructure that can double the capacity of suburban trains by having double decker coaches and bus service by dedicated bus lanes (that can transform into light rail tracks in future); restrict entry of private cars in the city by area licensing, initiate 'park & ride' schemes at suburban rail stations and bus depots, facilitate pedestrians and two wheelers for the east-west traffic, construct elevated

pedestrian walkways as extensions of the foot over bridges at rail stations; provide a satellite air terminal in south Mumbai; reconsider construction of the Trans-Harbor link bridge using the investment instead for creation of employment opportunities on the mainland and create a 'calm sea channel' along the west coast to facilitate plying of ferries all the year round.

New International Airport for Mumbai

The location of the second International Airport must facilitate its use from the existing and proposed work centres in Mumbai and Navi Mumbai. It must afford quick and easy access to rail transport for travel to different parts of the city and the state. Such an ideal location is the vast undeveloped tract of land north of the new Thane Creek bridge. It is bound to the south by the rail and road link from Kurla to Vashi, to the west by salt-pans, to the east by coastal wet lands and stretching up to the proposed road link from Airoli in Navi Mumbai to the Eastern Express Highway to the north. This area is about 6,400 ha. including the existing Thane creek. The area is ideally situated as it gives linkages to the entire state by road and rail from Thane and a suburban rail ring is available and already in operation.

Metro & Skywalks

Are so many sky walks required, usable and necessary?

Have any other options, both for the "Metro" and the Skywalks been examined and evaluated?

Was any need/pedestrian traffic volume and "desire lines" study conducted before embarking on the construction of the skywalks?

Judging by the scant use of the constructed sky walks and the fierce opposition of the residents of the areas it would appear that most of these were or are being constructed not because they are required or necessary but perhaps just to make the city look "modern" and in the process benefit the builders and the officials/politicians

All the monorail links are 'East-West' links. Has the need for such east west links been established by any 'origin-destination' surveys to determine the daily volume of projected traffic? Do the volume and the carrying capacity of Metro justify its construction at a cost of about Rs. 220 crores per km.? A most modern low carriage bus would cost less than Rs. 1 crore and may carry the same number of people. It means that Metro is costlier by 200 times!

It is possible by earmarking special bus lanes for a bus rapid transit system. The expenditure, apart from the bus, will be just for 'marking' the special transit lane. Alternatively more double decker buses can also be plied on the east-west routes.

Even at this late stage when construction for “Metro” is in full swing, has the option of converting these elevated rail tracks in to elevated roads been considered? The width is adequate to carry minibuses and will save on the special rolling stock of the Metro rakes that constitute about 50% of the cost or about Rs. 110 crores per km.

Elevated Mono Rail

The elevated Mono rail proposed and under construction is a political project as it is not economically viable, financially too costly, technically extravagant and socially a disaster. The cost of such a project is about Rs. 220 crores per km. A 15 km. stretch of such a line (for example Varsova-Andheri) will cost around Rs. 3300 crores. It will take away a minimum width of 4mt. from the centre of the road over which it is constructed. This space below the rail, because of the widely spaced heavy pillars cannot be used for road traffic. It will most probably be encroached upon and will become a slum or hawkers paradise. (A news paper report in Hindustan Times of 20th September 2011 says that the MMRDA has realized that the “Mono rail routes duplicate other networks like rail and Metro” and that it is not cost effective! So MMRDA is likely to abandon construction of further routes having already spent over Rs.4,170 crores!)

The space which would otherwise be made unusable by the overhead light rail can serve as a “dedicated” road lane if the rail track is not constructed. The entire cost of the overhead structure can be avoided. This dedicated two lane road can be used for bus rapid transit system (BRTS) and like the present local trains, buses can run on it every 3/5 minutes. Its carrying capacity in terms of passengers per day will be double that of the light rail and yet the only additional expense will be for the buses. It is estimated that for an equal carrying capacity per day the rapid bus transit system will cost only Rs.2.75 crores (1/80 of the cost of the light rail system). Total cost of the project for a 15 km. stretch may thus be only Rs. 41.25 crores as against Rs. 3300 crores for the light rail system!

A new Light Rail Connection, CST-Churchgate

The two suburban rail lines in Mumbai, Western Railway and Central Railway, have their originating points at ‘Churchgate’ (on the western suburban rail line) and the ‘C.S.T.’ stations (on the central suburban rail line) respectively. There is a large concentration of offices and commercial areas south of these stations which are not served by any rail routes. This results in a great exodus of commuters from and to these two rail heads traveling to and from the southern tip of the city at the World Trade Centre, mostly by road transport, buses and taxis. Location of the main State Government offices, the World Trade Centre and other private corporate offices at the southern tip of the city generates heavy commuter traffic.

A proposal was mooted in 2001 to join these two rail heads – ‘Churchgate’ and ‘C.S.T.’ by underground rail and extend it at grade up to World Trade Centre at the southern tip of the city. This proposed Light Rail Transit (LRT) line from CST –

Churchgate to World Trade Centre was investigated in a report and was found to be potentially bankable and financially feasible. This Project called SMART (Selection of a Mass Rapid Transit System for Mumbai) was a technical co-operation project between the Republic of India and the Federal Republic of Germany. I was involved in working out the financial viability of the proposal by property development. I also worked on the proposal for the Kalyan-Panvel rail line working out the financial viability by property development at the railway stations.



Tsunami Emergency Resettlement project Chennai; Author (blue shirt) in the centre on his left Deepak Singh (wearing glasses) W.B.expert.. Residential buildings constructed in the background.

Between 1998 to 2007 I worked on the staff of the World Bank for the Mumbai redevelopment and rehabilitation project (MUTP II) for the first 6 years and for the Tsunami emergency rehabilitation project for Tamilnadu for the next 3 years. I got to know the work culture, systems and procedure of world bank financed projects and interacted with State government officials as well as the world bank hierarchy. For the Tamilnadu project I designed low income housing for the fishermen and saw its construction at Marina in Chennai. My work was done mostly by emails and frequent site visits in Mumbai as well as Chennai.

Making Cities Livable: Mumbai.

Certain administrative measures can help improve livability in Mumbai, such as:-

Hygiene: efficient solid waste management. This can make a great difference to the visual aspect as well as help better health for the residents.

Traffic & Transportation management: removal of roadside parking, traffic discipline, pedestrianization of streets can make life easier for the common residents

Relocation of Hawkers: It could restore the footpaths to the pedestrians, prevent their walking on the streets, speeding up the vehicular traffic and reducing road accidents

Noise pollution: loudspeakers, festivals, crackers, social & religious procession on streets, home improvements/repairs all create noise pollution.. A complete ban on use of loudspeakers except on large grounds, banning all noise making firecrackers except those that create visual effects, processions on streets or major traffic arteries and a ban on in situ building works like cutting of stones and tiles etc will greatly reduce noise pollution.

A vigilance force of cooperative housing society members: To implement such measures a vigilance force of members from cooperative societies could be created with certain police powers.

VIP movement: Movement of the 'VIP's has become a great menace in Mumbai. Their movement, as far as possible, should be by helicopters so as to create least hindrance to road traffic.

Installation of public address and information system through radio, TV etc.: The administration should use the TV channels, FM broadcasts etc. extensively to inform the people of all news about traffic jams restrictions, sudden outbreaks of violence etc.

In my book 'Urban Growth Strategies: Mumbai Lessons', I have dealt with all these aspects in detail making constructive suggestions for optimal urban restructuring derived from lessons in Mumbai to make cities livable at low cost. Apparently, such low cost solutions, obviously not being grandiose, eye catching or 'news worthy', are discarded as unviable or too short sighted. They are neither. However they do deny to the politicians, bureaucrats and technocrats the opportunity to indulge in very costly investment projects requiring astronomical expenditure which is the aim of all concerned because, "projects in Mumbai are undertaken for their propensity to generate kickbacks for the politicians, bureaucrats and technocrats; any benefit accruing to the people being incidental and unintended"

14. BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

During my professional career spanning over 54 years, I contributed to the field of Urban Planning & Development through my writings of articles in professional journals, letters to the Newspapers, lectures and participation in Seminars & workshops and through short term assignments. Below is an illustrative list of some of my major assignments with;

The World Bank

Royal Government of Bhutan

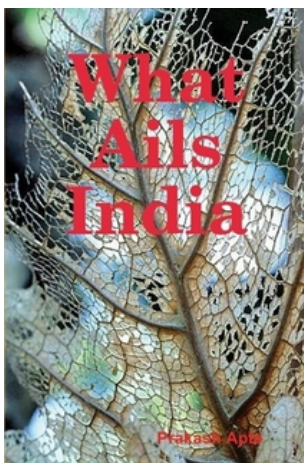
Government of Malaysia

Indo-German Technical Cooperation Mission

Government of India: Planning Commission
The National Housing Bank
Tata Consulting Services
Review Committee: Development Plan of Mumbai
Review Committee: Vasai-Virar Development Plan
National Committee on Science & Technology: Government of India
Review committee: Housing Needs of Western Region: Government of India
International Housing Competitions
HUDCO: Research & Development Wing
Union Public Service Commission
Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority
Maharashtra Housing & Area Development Authority
Indian Institute of Public Administration
Kerala Housing Board
Institute of Local Self Government: Maharashtra
Nagari Nivara Parishad: Mumbai

15. EPILOGUE

When someone mentions to me that he is retiring after 25 years of service/work, I just smile to myself. I worked at regular jobs without any significant break from 1961 to 2012, a period of 51 years. I worked in New Delhi, West Bengal, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Maharashtra. I moved all over India in almost all states except Andaman & Nicobar islands. I came to know and appreciate the language, literature, culture and the people of my country as few might have done. I therefore do not ever hold a biased brief for any region not even for Gujarat and Maharashtra where I was brought up and educated. I almost pity those who blindly blow bugles and trumpets of praise for their own language or region and eulogize their regional heroes. I feel that I am truly an 'Indian' and not a 'Gujarati' or 'Maharashtrian'. And I am proud of it. I attribute this universal attitude to my having travelled extensively in this country and my open minded interaction with people from almost every state of India.



In this book I have identified five major issues viz. Politics, Religion, Urbanization, Corruption and Terrorism that ail India and my constructive & positive suggestions to tackle these issues.

Interestingly, of the seven of us who passed out from IIT Kharagpur obtaining a degree/diploma in Regional Planning in 1961, two have migrated to USA, while four have worked in the state of their origin and retired holding senior/top positions in Tamilnadu, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Punjab. I am the only one who did not get into the state town planning service. I had perhaps a wider vision or ambition and worked at the national level and ultimately with the World Bank.

I believe firmly that we must have a national perspective and transcend; physically, intellectually and vision wise; beyond the states of our origin and understand & appreciate the people, places and pursuits in India as a whole. In the context of the current (2014) bias and alienation displayed by most mainstream regional populace towards our brethren from the north eastern states of India; I feel that we must encourage our young people to travel to those states and understand their culture and not have a biased view because of their physical and facial appearances. Unless such interaction is actively encouraged this country cannot truly be “myIndia.”

Prakash Madhusudan Apte

Mumbai April 2015

It is not the intention of the Author either to cast aspirations or ascribe motives for any actions taken by the persons mentioned in the narrative nor cast any suspicions on the actions taken by them. If however any person feels hurt in any way or feels portrayed in a wrong perspective I tender my unconditional apology.

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