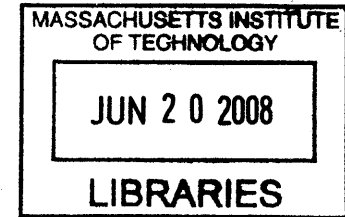


REFIGURING THE SKETCH: THE NARI GANDHI CARTOGRAPHIC
by
Aftab Amirali Jalia
Bachelor of Architecture, Allana College of Architecture
Pune University, India, May 2006

Submitted to the Department of Architecture in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ARCHITECTURE STUDIES
at the
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
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Refiguring the Sketch: The Nari Gandhi Cartographic

by

Aftab Amirali Jalia

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 21, 2008 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Architecture Studies

ABSTRACT

Nariman Dossabhai Gandhi, one of the earliest proponents of organic architecture in India, was born in Surat in 1934. Trained at Taliesin and heavily influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright's teachings on the same subject, Nari Gandhi assimilated and reimagined a personal understanding of the term: organic, extending it beyond his mentor's architectural rendition.

Nari Gandhi defied the legal and social norms that govern most present day architectural practices and established himself as a less-known exemplar of the organic ideology. This study of his works is placed in the backdrop of post-independence India, an era that saw the emergence of new social thought, culture and architectural exploration that sought to reflect the aspirations of a nation wanting to renew its physical identity. My thesis looks at his life, unusual working methods, his loosely structured practice and attempts to understand the ramifications of the rarity he embodied.

A 37 min film, researched and shot in India, accompanies this text and is the first kind of video documentation on Nari Gandhi's life and works.

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I would not have understood Nari Gandhi's work and life as well had it not been for Mr. Pravin Bhayani's invaluable time and generous sharing of photographs, letters and memories that he has cherished for several years now. My sincere thanks to Mr. Sadruddin Daya, Mr. Kishore Bajaj and Mr. Nasir Jamal for permitting me easy access to study and film their houses. A special thanks to Mr. Rajen Chowdhry. Thanks to Mr. Gopi, Mr. Sudhir, Mr. and Mrs. Barkya and Mr. Ashok for their vivid contributions to the film and my research. Thanks to Mr. S.P. Mehta for gifting me Nari Gandhi's handwritten letter, solely because he felt that my research could help spread the message of Gandhi's contribution to Indian architecture. Thanks to Mr. Amritlal Thakker, Mr. Nitin Barchha, Mr. Disney Davis and to Mr. Girish Parmar for their persistent support. Also, thanks to Mr. Dali Gandhi and Mrs. Khorshed Adrianwalla, members of the Gandhi family who extended full support for this project.

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REFIGURING THE SKETCH : THE NARI GANDHI CARTOGRAPHIC



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Introduction

"Interview! Winter-view, toh theek che bol, su janvu che?"ⁱ Nari Gandhi.

(Translates to: "Interview! Winter-view, tell me, what is it that you wish to know?")

One of the earliest proponents of organic architecture in India, Nariman Dossabhai Gandhi was born in Surat in 1934. His work blends forms, which are unique to India, with elements similar to those by Frank Lloyd Wright, with whom he trained at Taliesin, while still in his early twenties. In the context of modern India, where architects often resorted to traditional depiction of cultural imagery rather than creatively developing their implications and inherent qualities, Nari Gandhi's works blew life into the structure by sensitively responding to climate, local craftsmanship and spatial organizations that suited Indian lifestyles.

Nari Gandhi practiced in India between 1966 and 1993, a phase where architects in the country were engaged in establishing a

ⁱ Mrs. Meena Chowdhury & Manisha Shah, "An Interview with Mr. Nari Gandhi," *Garodia School of Interior Design - Kala Nirmiti*, April 1993. Nari Gandhi had agreed to give this interview after being convinced by Mr. Pravin Bhayani, a close associate and friend, who taught at the same college. I also strongly believe that Nari, who was otherwise so averse to media attention and the whole construct of interviews, conceded Mr. Bhayani's request because the two interviewers were young students. He declined a photograph so one of the students drew a sketch of him instead.

post-independence architectural identity for their newly democratic nation. Nari Gandhi possessed acumen for identifying skilled craftsmanship and his construction techniques were often co-developed with the craftsmen and masons on site. This was unlike the more common practices that used the drawing board for solutions. His early training under Wright gave him a sharp understanding of architecture that he brought back to his home country and he subsequently pioneered a new style like his mentor's that was profound in its sensitivity to a new context. His major contribution lies in conceiving such remarkable work consistently.

Heavily influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright's teachings on organic architecture, Nari Gandhi assimilated and re-conceptualized the term and extended it beyond Wright's architectural rendition. Gandhi also intuitively developed an integrated approach to his architecture, which, similar to the Vitruvian tradition, saw an architect as a builder and craftsmen as students who learnt through experience. Upon his return to India, Nari Gandhi consciously chose to deviate from the more common architectural practices in the country and established himself as a less-known but leading architect of organic architecture in the country.

The Film on Nari Gandhi:

Extremely averse to any kind of media, Nari Gandhi was rarely published in leading journals during his lifetime. This

resulted in a lacuna of comprehensive information on the man and his works. His projects exemplify the experience of tropical residence and adapt their personality of the changing seasons of the Indian sub-continent.ⁱⁱ The lack of such sensitivity in most works today makes the contrast of Gandhi's creations even richer. Learning about his unusual practice makes us rethink our ways of designing.

It was for these reasons that I decided to make a film on Nari Gandhi and rebuild a map from the pieces available today.

I collaborated with Adityan M., a recent graduate of filmmaking from the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad.

The film titled, "Building Nari", is split into two parts. The first features clients, associates, laborers and friends of Nari Gandhi elucidating several facets of his practice in the Indian post-independence milieu. The second half weaves a pattern of Gandhi's works, showing the variety of his styles and responses to context and the present poignant state of some of his works.

The film was researched in India over a period of 3 and one half months and shot over 3 weeks in February.

It was through Adityan's absolute commitment and keen insights that we were able to give the film its final form. As of today, it is the only known video documentation of Nari Gandhi and his works.

Statement:

My thesis looks at the evolution of Nari Gandhi's belief in the principles of organic architecture and its extrapolation in his built works, his understanding of the Indian milieu and his choice of a loosely structured practice that was as unconventional for its time as it is today. This study is placed in the backdrop of post-independence India, an era that saw the emergence of new social thought, culture and architectural exploration that sought to reflect the aspirations of a nation wanting to renew its physical identity.

I seek to learn more about his life, study his methods and understand the ramifications to Indian architecture, of the rarity he embodied.

ⁱⁱ The monsoon being the most dramatic!

Changing Times in India: Changing face of Architectural Education and Practices

Pre-Independence: *New Directions for Architectural Education*

In 1907, India was still under the British rule when architectural education in the country was being reviewed for a transformation to better enable the countrymen with skills to support the building industry. That same year, a qualifying course for candidates as architectural draughtsmen was established at the Jamsetji Jeejibhoy School of Art in Bombay (J.J. School of Art). At that time, this was a first of its kind program in India, structured on the system followed by the Royal Institute of British Architects (R.I.B.A.). George Wittet, an English architect took over the responsibility for the school and introduced a four-year diploma program but it was not until 1920 that the J.J. School was recognized as an independent body capable of producing students who were exempted from a final qualifying exam by the RIBA, held in England. In 1929, following the RIBA recognition, the Indian Institute of Architects (I.I.A.) was formed that consisted of Indian and British members with the aim to unify the interest of the architects nationwide.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱⁱ Madhavi Desai, Miki Desai & Jon Lang, *Architecture and Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

The architectural profession too, changed as a consequence of the national recognition Indian architects were receiving while still under the British rule. Existing architectural practices headed by British nationals in India slowly saw a wave of Indians joining their firms as senior associates, also allowing the firms, in turn, increased opportunities for commissions by Indian patrons.^{iv}

Moving Together towards Political Independence:

The refreshed architectural practices now had more drive to battle out different ideals in architectural expression. The trends most likely to guide these ideals were the tried-and-tested schools of Art Deco and Revivalism.^v Jon Lang, Madhavi & Miki Desai also argue that while the Revivalist British firms sought to retrieve Classicism 'as an expression of imperialism,' the Indian firms chose to look at the architectural elements of the Buddhist and Gupta eras, dating back a number of bewildering centuries. The third kind of practice,

^{iv} Madhavi Desai, Miki Desai & Jon Lang, *Architecture and Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Govt of India Act of 1935 and under the growing influence of the nationalist movement - Indian clients were discouraged to engage architectural firms headed wholly by British nationals, resulting in a mixing of nationalities to politically suit the situation - which also suited the increasing numbers of fresh graduates of the J.J. School.

^v Ibid. The authors clearly define these movements with collective understanding of the national social and political situation in India.

the Anglo-Indian firm engaged itself in a more commercial face, working with what was coined as: 'modernized Classicism' often seeking to balance out the acceptance and adoption of forms, although that may not have been the motive.^{vi}

Prior to independence, one of the major events organized by the Indian Institute of Architects was the 1937 Ideal Indian Home Exhibition to promote improved design in India. Something that evidently emerged from this exhibition was the insistence on a shift from Revivalist or Classicist forms to Modernist expressions in architecture and design but because of its alien contextual setting in India, where it targeted only the urbanized taste, its success was impeded.^{vii} Some of these ideas were carried forward at smaller scales such as furniture produced in cheaper materials and easily manufactured forms, but the occurrence of this exhibition only left a reminiscing impact on the socially aware urban society.

Tending to retrospect for solving contemporary problems, the Revivalists saw this notion literally and fashioned their works using historical pastiche. But culture is not a static entity and later critics therefore rightfully criticized the Revivalists for their stance.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Sharada Dwivedi and Rahul Mehrotra, *Bombay : The Cities Within* (Bombay, Maharashtra: The India Book House, 1995).

India, Post-Independence:

After 1947, the year of India's independence, the nation, under its first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership had opened its arms to foreign architects to help shape the physical manifestation of a country that had set out to be the world's largest democracy. This initiative of shaping the nation was to be met with mixed reaction of adventure, daring and caution. As Mulk Raj Anand, the founder of *Marg* magazine and a leading proponent of Anglo-Indian fiction wrote:

"In any country newly come to political maturity, there is always a tendency to patriotic glorification of the country in its buildings. This, in itself a healthy instinct, often leads to vulgar display in an attempt to symbolize the country's greatness through sheer bombast"^{viii}

His word of caution was not baseless. Nehru's impact on architecture was, in these terms, to be more direct and literal. It was a team assembled by Nehru that put together the architects Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry, Le Corbusier and his cousin Pierre Jeanneret to follow up on the initial proposal by Albert Mayer and

^{viii} Mulk Raj Anand, "Design and Patronage," *Marg* 1, no. 4 (1947): 16 - 19. The Cambridge educated Mulk Raj Anand, a leading proponent of Anglo-Indian fiction was also a notable national voice through his journal, *Marg*, (an acronym for Modern Architectural Research Group) founded in 1946.

Matthew Nowicki for the city of Chandigarh.^{ix} Invitations to several other foreign architects were sent out at every level as well: Ahmedabad based industrialists, the Sarabhai family invited Charles & Ray Eames and Frank Lloyd Wright to prepare the 'Ahmedabad Report'^x and design an unrealized showroom for their Calico brand of textiles, respectively. Simultaneously, Otto Koenigsberger's plan for the city of Bhubaneswar in the state of Orissa saw fruition. A decade after Le Corbusier's arrival in India, the American architect Louis Kahn also designed and built the Indian Institute of Management in 1962, marking an influential trail for a new generation of Indian architects to tread on.

On the educational front, several other foreign educators came, prepared reports and left for their homelands having sent recommendations for directive steps needed to improve the Indian architectural educational system. Individual pursuits by Indian students in foreign universities coupled with the system of architectural exchange programs that were backed by Nehru's government saw a wave of foreign influenced-and-trained Indian architects return to India.^{xi} Some of these Indian architects, such as

Habib Rahman, who was trained at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, enjoyed an influential status in the Central Public Works Department.

Amidst such times, the young Nari Gandhi attended the J.J. School of Art's diploma program in architecture until 1956. The school continued to follow a program that was shaped under the English educator Claude Batley's vision of customizing a RIBA recognized course to suit Indian conditions. He wrote:

"The object in view of both my predecessors in office and by myself has been rather to bring out the reasoning powers of individual students, so that they may understand the inner meaning of the old forms and their original function and may develop and modernize them and gradually produce an architecture, Indian in character, but at the same time suited to present day India as the old styles were in their times and environment."^{xii}

^{ix} Madhavi Desai, Miki Desai Jon Lang, *Architecture and Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

^x Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty : Design in the Age of its Global Reproducibility* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

^{xi} Madhavi Desai, Miki Desai Jon Lang, *Architecture and Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). The authors talk in detail of the pre-independence and post-independence state of architectural

education in India and elaborate on the changes taking place due to the newly introduced systems.

^{xii} Claude Batley, "Architectural Education in India," *Journal of the Indian Institute of Architects* 20, no. 3 (September 1940): 382-5. Claude Batley, an English architect was among the early educators in pre-independence India who attempted to shape the architectural education in India to suit Indian conditions as the British authorities felt it was more suited for the conditions in Britain as compared to India. The first formal architectural school in India

In spite of a seemingly responsible approach to their architectural education, Nari Gandhi was not happy with the system and seemed to have set his mind on attending Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin.^{xiii}

During his studies at the J.J. School, he frequented the office of Mr. Rustom Patell, a former Taliesin fellow (1949-1952) who had returned to practice in Bombay. Mr. Patell recollects Nari visiting his office very often to watch over their drafting boards intently. Rustom Patell eventually referred Gandhi to a colleague from Taliesin, Mansinh Rana (1947 - 1951) who had also returned to India and he narrated to Gandhi his own experience at Frank Lloyd Wright's famed school. Following a recommendation from Mansinh Rana, Nari Gandhi left for Taliesin in 1956 without completing his formal education at the J.J. School^{xiv}, embarking on a training he was to venerate for the rest of his life.^{xv}

offering diplomas was the J.J. College of Architecture, Bombay, also where Nari Gandhi studied but never completed his formal education.

^{xiii} Jigeesha Thakore, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, (May 12, 2008).

^{xiv} Nari Gandhi had already completed 4 out of the 5 years required for the diploma program at J.J. School.

^{xv} Michael Hawker, "Celebrating the Works of Nari Gandhi," *Friends of Kebyar* (Friends of Kebyar, Inc.), November 2007: 2-4. Mr. Rustom Patell maintained an architectural practice in Bombay and Mr. Mansihn Rana later assumed the seat of Dean, Sushant School of Architecture, New Delhi.

Influences - Shaping Nari Gandhi

“A river does not begin at one place, there are many influences, and then there is a final confluence.”^{xvi} - Nari Gandhi

Numerous influences shaped the architectural practice of Nari Gandhi but the recurring figure of Frank Lloyd Wright was to remain the single most influence throughout his life.

Frank Lloyd Wright, along with his wife, Olgivanna, started the Taliesin Schools in 1932. Taliesin, Wisconsin was the summer home for the school and Taliesin West, in Scottsdale, Arizona was the winter home. Frank Lloyd Wright, however, never saw himself as a teacher nor did he believe in teaching an art (such as architecture). At Taliesin, his belief was to inculcate an understanding and development of architecture by having an environment conducive to learning.^{xvii}

Taliesin was thus conceived as a workshop and was to be as much an exercise for refining Wright's own principles of architecture, as it would be for the young students who joined as apprentices.

^{xvi} Nari Gandhi to M. Kamaraju, ed., "The Eccentric Genius of Nari Gandhi," *Society*, July 1986.

^{xvii} Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (New York: Bramhall House, 1953).

Nari at Taliesin: *Unlearning and Re-learning*

“Probably the most important thing that the Taliesin experience gave me was the feeling that I was on the right path.”^{xviii}

- Nari Gandhi

Nari Gandhi attended Taliesin from October 1956 through December 1961 - continuing for almost two years after Frank Lloyd Wright passed away. When Gandhi joined Taliesin West, it had been in existence for 24 years and was renowned as an unconventional workshop for budding admirers of Frank Lloyd Wright's ideas. Young Nari, only 22 years of age then, was no exception. During Frank Lloyd Wright's lifetime, the school never attained a formal structure for instruction and fellows of Taliesin were not recognized by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB), which had begun accreditation for graduates of architecture courses in the United States as early as 1932.^{xix} This

^{xviii} Pervin Eichert, "A State of Becoming," *Inside/Outside*, Oct 1978. This was a rare interview, first of its kind for Nari Gandhi, in which he spoke to the author, traveling with her to some of his sites to show her the work his 14-year practice in India had produced. The usually press-averse Nari Gandhi had also provided photographs along with an interesting mix of dialogue.

^{xix} Inc. National Architectural Accrediting Board, *NAAB History*, 2006, http://www.naab.org/about/naab_history.aspx (accessed April 17, 2008). Accreditation was first extended in 1898 and 1902, to

was an expression of Wright's adamancy to challenge pedagogical norms of his times. Mr. Wright saw himself as a leading proponent of organic architecture especially in contrast to the Classical or Modernist education that perpetuated throughout the United States in the early 20th century. Following Olgivanna Wright's death in 1985, Taliesin regularly reported to NAAB and was finally accredited in 1996 and was renamed as the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture.

In its most idiosyncratic agenda during Wright's lifetime, Taliesin's teachings consisted of "learning by doing" methods that applied to drawing exercises in the drafting room, working on construction sites and farms adjoining both the Taliesins.^{xx} Students were also required to live on the estate, do their daily chores, work with Frank Lloyd Wright on architectural projects as well as participate in the daily activities of Taliesin's colourful social life. Through such an alternative instruction and learning system, Wright was able to influence an entire generation of architects with his pre-eminent ideas on architecture. Wright's own practice was influenced by his mentor Louis Sullivan's notions of rejecting a historicist approach to design and developing an appreciation for

independent graduates from Illinois state and later to graduates of Columbia, MIT, Cornell, UPenn and Harvard Universities. A nationally integrated accreditation system for schools followed subsequently.

^{xx} Dr. H. Nicholas Muller III, *Historic Legacy of Taliesin*, 2006, <http://www.taliesin.edu/pages/history.html> (accessed April 12, 2008).

nature.^{xxi} Apprentices of Frank Lloyd Wright would learn his philosophy, ideas and design techniques by personally interacting with him at Taliesin.

Gandhi had soon adjusted to the way of life at Taliesin and his peers recall him as a respectable young apprentice, also acknowledged by Wright on several occasions. A letter written by Wright's office to Nari's uncle, Mr. D. P. Daruwalla, in 1956 confirms this:

"We are pleased to have your grand-nephew, Nari, with us in the Taliesin Fellowship. It seems to us that he has made the adjustment to our way of life and work better than many American students."^{xxii}

Frank Lloyd Wright occasionally heeded to Nari Gandhi's suggestion; he apparently respected the young Nari for his talents and judgment.

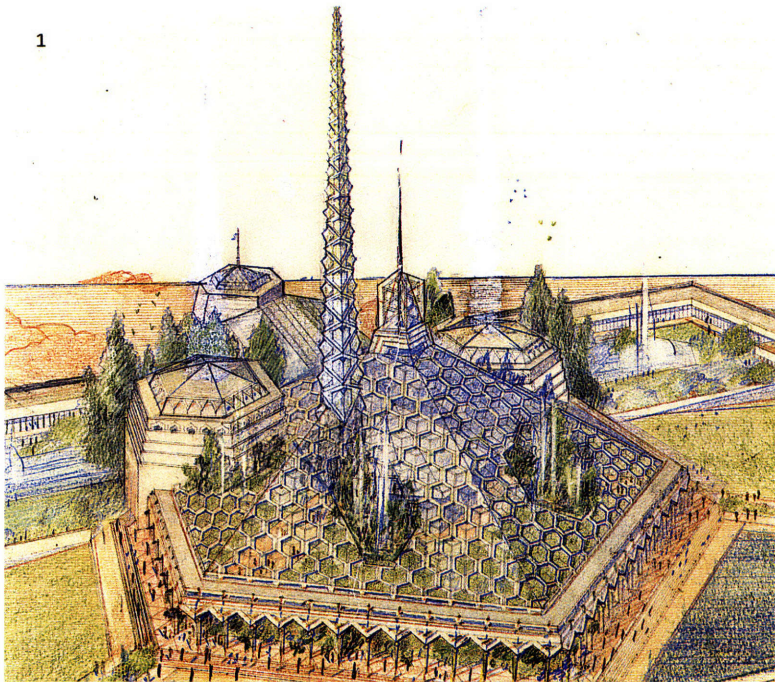
The Friends of Kebyar journal narrated another incident when Wright had heeded to a suggestion made by Nari Gandhi regarding the Arizona State Capitol project. Frank Lloyd Wright had prepared

^{xxi} Louis Sullivan, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered," ed. Leland M. Roth, *America Builds* (Icon / Harper and Row), 1983: 344-46.

^{xxii} Michael Hawker, "Celebrating the Works of Nari Gandhi," *Friends of Kebyar* (Friends of Kebyar, Inc.), November 2007: Pg. 2.

the drawings for his proposal for the Capitol and personally asked Nari Gandhi what he thought of the project to which Nari had commented that the composition was too symmetrical, without making any suggestions as to how one could change the design. In the following days, Wright made some changes in the renderings and the correction is clearly visible in the prints of the Capitol project published in books even today.^{xxiii}

1



Two erased towers in Wright's proposal for the Arizona Capitol project are considered to be a result of Gandhi's suggestion

^{xxiii} Ibid. Mr. Parvez Commissariat, who had joined Taliesin from 1959-1961, recollected this anecdote.

Although Nari Gandhi did spend time in the drafting room, he preferred working outdoors: on the farm and workshops. Gandhi's friends recollect not seeing much of him in the drafting room, where most fellows spent their time. In a telephonic interview to Mr. Michael Hawker, Mr. Parvez Commissariat mentioned that Gandhi would be engrossed in stonework in the workshop rather than in the drafting room at Taliesin West.^{xxiv}

His love for stone is elucidated by an episode when Gandhi had discovered a huge rock on the mountains near Taliesin West and chose to ignore the mandatory Sunday breakfast with Mr. and Mrs. Wright to instead drag the stone down to the Taliesin campus. Gandhi felt had he left it in the mountains, it would have been impossible to retrace it amongst thousands of others. This stone was then erected at the entrance of the campus and is referred to as Eagle Stone or more rarely as Nari's Rock. Frank Laraway, a colleague of Gandhi from Taliesin recollected that Nari Gandhi was always looking for beauty in everything.^{xxv}

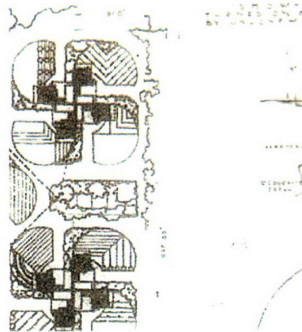
^{xxiv} Ibid.

^{xxv} Frank Laraway, "Nari's Rock," *Journal of the Taliesin Fellows*, no. 17 (Spring 1995): 16, 17.

2



Photographs of Nari (third from the left) from Taliesin with the photo on the right being Nari's rock installed at Taliesin West, after an adventurous tale



A Taliesin West Monument 3



Nari Gandhi was clearly immersed in Taliesin's learning system and was developing his taste for other arts such as sculpture, ceramics, textiles and music. Through Taliesin's rich 'Arts and Crafts' environment students were encouraged to engage themselves in various forms of art expression. It was here that Nari got interested in pottery and chose to later pursue it at the Kent State University.

Speaking of the relation between pottery, architecture and a man's integrity he had remarked:

"As I got older, some magic drew me to the Japanese potter Shoji Hamada's ceramic bowls. There was a simplicity, a lack of pretense in his work. The turning of the wheel was not apart from him; it was an extension of the great Japanese master...He once said something that can be applied to architecture, "Pot is the man; no deceit is necessary, no deceit is possible."^{xxvi}

Throughout his career, Nari Gandhi remained an ardent user of pottery in his projects. Nari's first client, Mr. Jal Gobhai had offered his Mountain Lodge project to Nari to carry out his pottery work. Mr. Gobhai had later backed out. Mrs. Asha Sheth, another early client, came across Nari at a pottery studio where she

^{xxvi} Nari Gandhi to Pervin Eichert, "A State of Becoming," *Inside/Outside*, Oct 1978.

remarked, in an interview to Michael Hawker that she was 'struck by the quality and size of pottery Nari was working on.' She had subsequently asked Nari Gandhi to design the interiors of her penthouse in Bombay.^{xxvii}

During his stay at Taliesin, Nari Gandhi had also befriended noted architect Bruce Goff. Goff's office in Price Tower, Bartlesville is considered to have been a convenient stop between the two Taliesins and Gandhi had shown Goff some of his sketches. According to a mutual friend, William Miller, Bruce Goff remembered Nari with much respect.^{xxviii}

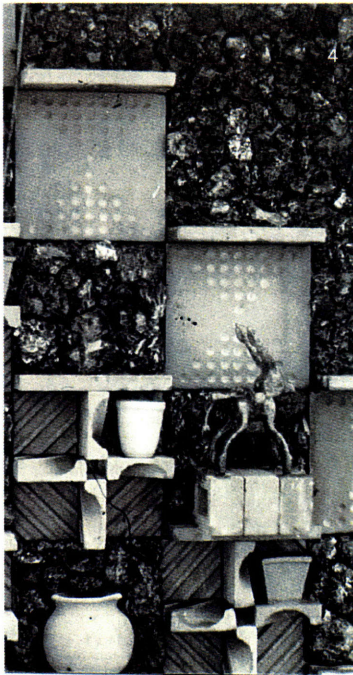
It was perhaps Goff's inexhaustible creativity, sensibility to a Wright-sensitive architecture and humble persona that attracted Nari Gandhi to his works. As a gesture of friendship, Gandhi had gifted a clay vessel to Bruce Goff during his education at Kent State.

Goff's designs can be interpreted as informal offshoots of Wright's later work but also carry an original evolution in aesthetic and architectural expression. With arresting forms and unconventional aesthetics, Goff's daring experiments with materials such as coal

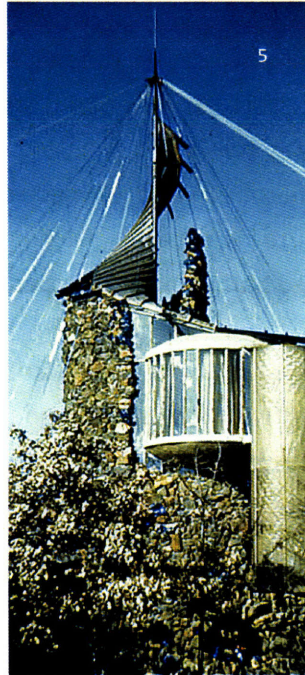
^{xxvii} Michael Hawker, "Celebrating the Works of Nari Gandhi," *Friends of Kebyar* (Friends of Kebyar, Inc.), November 2007.

^{xxviii} Ibid.

walls for the Bavinger house in Utah, colored work on glass; occasionally resonate in Nari's works such as in the Desai house in Bombay (1978 and 1979) which had a mural wall made of coal and terracotta plates.^{xxix}



Left: Coal mural at the Desai residence,
1979, Nari Gandhi



Right: Bavinger residence with coal walls,
1955, Bruce Goff

Organic Pixie Dust

Of all his ideas, the one that Frank Lloyd Wright harbored most dearly was that of organic architecture. He promulgated his ideas on organic architecture through his public and academic lectures, books and through the works he produced. Revivalist, post-colonial and modernist styles of architectural expression divided the society over several years of Mr. Wright's 70-year practice. At the peak of his career, Wright spoke of organic architecture as something that 'emerged from life itself and was therefore, an intensely humane thing'. Upholding that this had been the founding principle of his architecture, he vehemently opposed the modernist movement referring to it as mere fashion. The contrast to his philosophy was rooted in the increasing importance of the modernist movement in early 20th century United States. Observing this, he remarked:

"We at Taliesin see these new (modernist) buildings, hard, unsympathetic in aspect, thin, as useful negation in appearance but essentially, merely the expression of another aesthetic, though a better one and not greatly nearer the truth of architecture and no nearer the heart of life than the ornamenta and grandomania that preceded the modernistic."^{xxx}

^{xxx} Ibid

Wright thus promoted his teachings on organic architecture as ones related to the 'spirit' and not mere aesthetics.

In his address during 'The London Lectures: 1939', Wright elucidated his concept of organic architecture by saying that it paralleled the early teachings of Lao Tzu who declared:

"The reality of a building consisted not in the four walls and the roof but inhered in the space within, the space to be lived in."^{xxx1}

Maintaining that finding Lao Tzu was coincidental to his early-formed beliefs, Frank Lloyd Wright further expanded upon this principle and believed that the creation and proliferation of organic architecture extended beyond an architectural rendition. Accordingly to him, it had a revolutionary beckoning even in the social context.

^{xxx1} Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (New York: Bramhall House, 1953). Wright was delivering 'The London Lectures: 1939' elucidating on his concept of organic architecture. The quote has also been wrongly attributed to Nari Gandhi in subsequent publications - *Society*, July 1986 and *Friends of Kebyar*, Dec. 2008. Nari Gandhi was only echoing Lao Tzu's words, which he is likely to have learnt from Wright - a clear indication that Wright revisited the concept during Gandhi's tenure at Taliesin.

The Concept

Wright envisioned organic architecture as being not just tectonic but also natural, humane, patient, agrarian, *of* the place rather than *on* it, as much of culture as of independent thinking, democratic and not fascist or monarchic, scientifically built but embellished by the heart and an interpretation of life itself, therefore deeming itself timeless. Most remarkably, he pointed out that over the course of learning this notion of organic architecture, a person began to see beyond the societal and academic distinctions between engineer, architect, landscape architect and interior designer and that he 'gained a sense of the whole' and did not remain 'pigeon-holed'.^{xxxii} According to him, the key was to be engaged in the actual and not the theoretical.

This highly idealistic vision was further distilled into architectural forms through Wright's works at Taliesin and he acknowledged the early impact of these ideas on younger students. Frank Lloyd Wright believed in an omnipresent 'knowing' of virtues that made his idea of organic architecture appeal to everyone thoughtful and 'young in spirit'.

The impact of these teachings made on Nari Gandhi is evident in his built projects. The following sections briefly talk about the direct connections of 'organic' thought that appear in Gandhi's work.

^{xxxii} Ibid

Organic: *Agrarian*

Nari Gandhi often recounted his experience on a strawberry patch that Frank Lloyd Wright had put him in charge of. Gandhi spent five summers growing strawberries that were bigger and more delicious than the previous ones. By the end of the fifth summer Nari Gandhi noted that he had experienced “strawberriness.” By “strawberriness”, Gandhi was referring to the understanding he had developed of natural processes by observing them so closely for five years.

Gandhi’s expression of “strawberriness” also gives us an insight into the conviction he held for such an agrarian based exercise that prepared him to learn an “organic” way of life from nature. He would then interpret these principles for organic architecture. It was in tune with this belief that Nari Gandhi told young students: “*Pehle khet mein naagar joth ke aao*” [translates to: “first learn to plough the fields (before you come to me to learn architecture)].”^{xxxiii} - Sudhir, caretaker of the Madh Island house, who worked with Nari Gandhi on the same project.

Clearly, Nari Gandhi was convinced of the training he had received and believed in the same system of instruction.

^{xxxiii} Sudhir (caretaker - Madh House), interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Madh Island, Maharashtra (Feb 19, 2008).

Organic: *Pride / Conviction*

In practice, Frank Lloyd Wright always maintained that ‘A job should find a man and not a man his job.’ In Wright’s indifference to seeking a job, there lay earnest patience that awaited a commission from an enlightened client who shared his vision for architecture in building the Usonian dream and not merely quenching the commercial thirst of the early 20th century America. Such a client would come to him only because he was aware of what to expect from Wright’s organic endeavor. Wright claimed that if a client did not understand this effort or sought Wright’s building just for the name, he happily broke-away from the project.^{xxxiv} Frank Lloyd Wright did in fact need the money. He was in debt even during the founding of the Taliesin School in 1932, but his passionate attitude towards his beliefs superseded his need for wealth and dictated the nature of his practice.

Nari Gandhi effortlessly applied this propensity in his independent practice in India. Gandhi often gave up projects because he felt that he could not relate to the client. ‘Relating’ mostly meant that the client would disagree to Nari Gandhi’s terms and style of

^{xxxiv} In his book, *Treasures of Taliesin: 72 unbuilt designs*, Bruce Pfeiffer sheds more light on Wright’s tendency to take up smaller residential projects in spite of being well aware that he needed the money from commercial clients to keep his office running. It is possible that Frank Lloyd Wright did pursue clients, even if they had smaller projects, if he felt they would allow him to build on his terms and embrace the ideas he devoutly upheld.

working, which often was irregular in schedule, unflinching in adjustments and obdurate overall. Also, Gandhi, like Wright, consciously engaged in creating architecture that was indigenous and of the place but several of his clients, having seen the post-independence influence of foreign architecture in India, had preconceived notions. To this he said:

“Nowadays we are characterless, we lack character, people in general have accepted what they have got, they do not want to go in for anything new. They have made a compromise and adopted the western style of losing the reality.”^{xxxv}

- Nari Gandhi

Nari Gandhi gracefully declined such projects, unflustered with a client’s potential affluence or influence.^{xxxvi} Nari Gandhi also declined requests from politicians by simply saying: “Politicians do not deserve to live in my houses,”^{xxxvii} declaring his nonchalance

^{xxxv} Mrs. Meena Chowdhury & Manisha Shah, "An Interview with Mr. Nari Gandhi," *Garodia School of Interior Design - Kala Nirmiti*, April 1993.

^{xxxvi} Mr. Pravin Bhayani, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (Jan 17, 2008).

^{xxxvii} Mr. Amritlal Thakker, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, South Mumbai, Maharashtra (Feb 26, 2008). Mr. Thakkar mentioned that Nari turned down the Chief Minister of

without hesitation. Most importantly, he did not make these issues public, reflecting integrity of character. He was fully aware that by his mid-career he had already earned the reputation of being eccentric and whimsical while dealing with clients. Nari Gandhi’s indifference expresses the peculiar authority he chose to exercise in selecting and executing a commission that in his eyes fulfilled his endeavor of organic architecture. And he was contented with the few projects he was able to realize.

The message was clear. Nari Gandhi was not working for money or fame as he once told a young student interviewer:

“I grade our profession in terms of services, not in terms of money.”^{xxxviii}

Organic: *Indigenous*

Another important extrapolation of Wright’s philosophy seen in Nari Gandhi’s work was the sentient establishment of a national identity. While Frank Lloyd Wright maintained that

Maharashtra, Vasant Rao Naik’s (1963 – 75) commission for a farmhouse. Mr. Thakker also narrated an incident that occurred at the Lalit Kala Academy in Delhi where Indira Gandhi had come visiting the workshops and Nari had not bothered to acknowledge her presence while continuing to work.

^{xxxviii} Mrs. Meena Chowdhury & Manisha Shah, "An Interview with Mr. Nari Gandhi," *Garodia School of Interior Design - Kala Nirmiti*, April 1993.

although the essential characteristics of organic architecture were universal, the realization of such an effort would have to be in its specific given conditions and milieu. This broader context of architectural production, for Wright, was the American dream, something he fondly referred to as the Usonian dream. This vision encompassed democracy, freedom of expression, independent thinking and empowered each individual to identify himself with the idea of Usonia.

During his lifetime, Nari Gandhi consciously involved the crafts, labor and vernacular techniques of his nation in his architecture. In an interview, Nari Gandhi asked his weaver-friend, Mr. Rajen Chowdhry:

“Rajen, I am really glad you have brought out the importance of tradition through your motifs because nowadays everybody is so carried away by the West that I might as well be living in London and it will feel just like Bombay, so there is no fun...What else have you been weaving recently... that we can call *totally ours?*”^{xxxix}

The question was in context to Mr. Chowdhry’s use of a traditional motif, ‘the tree of life’, for a textile that was woven using

^{xxxix} Rajen Chowdhry, Video interview by Nari Gandhi, *Rajen Chowdhry: Painter - Weaver, In Conversation with Nari Gandhi*, (1992).

techniques enhanced by modern weaving technology. Nari Gandhi immediately contextualized the ‘tree of life’ symbol as a ‘fertility symbol often used as wall-hangings by the Mughals in their bedrooms.’ He also pointed out that the motif appears on a window in an Ahmedabad mosque.^{x1} Gandhi found it heartening to see a craftsman, practicing in post-independence India, refer a rich historical symbol, to creatively translate it into his own work. He perhaps saw a parallel of his understanding of the traditional-modern translation in Rajen Chowdhry’s work and was thus, quick to articulate the association of the motif to its re-interpretation.

I also strongly believe that Gandhi’s attempt in doing so was not to fulfill a Wrightian criterion for organic architecture, but to creatively integrate the living crafts of his nation into his works. One can construe Nari Gandhi’s affinity to India’s tradition of craftsmanship not only as identifying with his homeland, but also analogous to Wright’s kinship with the Usonian concept. If organic architecture were to derive its strength from an indigenous character, Nari Gandhi had to gracefully embrace the crafts and traditions of his place. Through the contribution of local crafts, skills and ideas, his buildings would become indigenous. Since Gandhi did not maintain a formal office, it was through the laborers that Nari Gandhi would materialize his architectural

^{x1} Nari Gandhi was referring to a window installed at the Siddi Sayid Mosque in Ahmedabad. The window is also considered to have inspired the logo for the renowned Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, designed by Louis I. Kahn in the 1960s.

aspirations. Gandhi's sensitivity to less-sophisticated materials such as broken bangles, glass chips, terracotta, cork, leather and stone reflect an inherent affinity to earthy materials more akin to Goff than Wright.

The economical, skilled craftsmanship and abundant labor-force in India provided fertile conditions for such an endeavor to materialize.

Organic: *Freshness*

Nari Gandhi developed and enriched Wright's vision of organic architecture by extending its association from the built-form to those who helped build it. By forging a bond with his workers and craftsmen, he motivated them to be more creatively productive. This creativity was vital to Nari Gandhi's own efforts to better his work and evolve over time. Evolution is the crux of the 'organic' idea and thus an inseparable component of Gandhi's practice.

“What we call organic architecture is no mere aesthetic nor cult nor fashion but an actual movement based upon a profound idea of a new integrity of human life wherein art, religion and

science are one: form and function seen as one, of such is democracy.”^{xli}

Gandhi personalized the democratic vision that Frank Lloyd Wright propagated through social equity in his practice. He did not discriminate between a client and a laborer and elevated organic architecture to a process that was not restricted to the creativity of the architect solely, but also embraced the numerous individuals involved in realizing a project. Gandhi added to his buildings a human quality, which involved people emotionally as well as intelligently in its creation. He added a mystical quality through his innovative metaphorical allusions that immersed the workers in creating highly personal pieces of work. The jobs were labor-intensive and he shared their load, transforming an arduous experience to a rich and enjoyable one. (*This is elaborated in subsequent sections*)

Nari Gandhi can be seen as a unique apprentice of Frank Lloyd Wright, in that he not only sincerely believed in the principles of organic architecture taught by Wright at Taliesin, but also responsibly carried them forward in his own life and practice. Several of these traits that he adopted cannot be seen as mere transfer of virtues and principles for they had reinstated some of Nari Gandhi's own beliefs and given him the conviction to embark

^{xli} Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (New York: Bramhall House, 1953).

upon a personal journey backed by a mentor who had believed in the same. Expressing his gratitude to Wright several years later, he had said:

“When you meet a man like Frank Lloyd Wright,
you meet your destiny.”^{xlii} - **Nari Gandhi**

Following his exit from Taliesin in 1961, Nari Gandhi worked briefly with architect Warren Weber in Portland following which he studied pottery, weaving, ceramics, photography and woodcarving at the Kent State University for fifteen months.^{xliii} Completing his course at Kent State, Gandhi returned to India to begin his practice as an independent architect.

^{xlii} Nari Gandhi to Himanshu Burte, "Nari Gandhi's Works," *Indian Architect and Builder*, (published posthumously) April 5, 1995.

^{xliii} Michael Hawker, "Celebrating the Works of Nari Gandhi," *Friends of Kebyar* (Friends of Kebyar, Inc.), November 2007: 9.

India, at the Time of Nari's Return

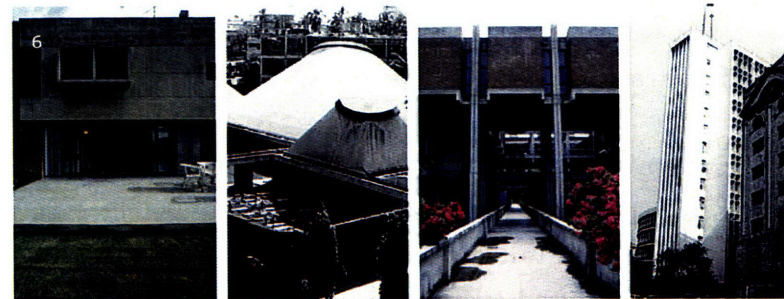
Having had his sensibilities prepared by the arts and crafts experiences of Taliesin and Kent State University, upon returning to India in 1963, Nari Gandhi entered a world of intense activity and distinct movements that conformed to either a revivalist or internationally influenced thought for architectural expression.

The following section attempts at placing Nari Gandhi's early works in context to this phenomenon.

The Flow Conformists

Decades following Indian independence not only brought a fading trend of emulating foreign architects that had worked in India but also greatly increased the sources of inspiration from world over. As a result multiple strategies emerged to resolve problems of architectural expression. Young Indian architects returning from foreign schools were less keen to incline to the Revivalist movement and instead, sought to synthesize an Indian identity with the predominant Modernist ideology of the 1960s. Early projects by foreign-trained architects like Achyut Kanvinde (1965, I.I.T. Campus, Kanpur), Charles Correa (1964, Ramakrishna House, Ahmedabad), B.V. Doshi (1956, A.T.R.I.A, Ahmedabad) and Hasmukh Patel (1965, Newman Hall, Ahmedabad), began their practices around the same time and explored to balance traditional and Modernist rationales in their buildings.

The interpretation for this 'Indian identity' varied amongst them, but unlike the work of Revivalists who used historic forms as pastiche, this generation tended to abstract traditional forms to solve problems pertaining to climate, economy and contextual variables. This was also the generation of Indian architects with established formal offices, were active members of the Indian Institute of Architects (I.I.A.) and, owing to their foreign experiences, were well networked in the international community. They also regularly published projects and writings in leading journals, within and outside India, establishing the face of India's architectural scenario.^{xliv}



Post-independence buildings in India - Left to right: Ramakrishna House, Salvacao Church, IIT Kanpur, New Secretariat Calcutta

A handful of other Indian architects such as Habib Rahman (1967, New Secretariat, Calcutta), Pilo Mody (1951-8, Oberoi

^{xliv} Charles Correa, *Transfers and Transformations*, ed. Hasan-Uddin Khan (London: Butterworth Architecture, 1987).

Hotel, Delhi), Durga Bajpai (1910-61, Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay) designed large scaled buildings reminiscent of the 'International Style.' These were mainly governmental, commercial and institutional buildings. They clearly revive the work of International Style masters such as Oscar Niemeyer, Eliel and Eero Saarinen. A leading proponent of such work, Habib Rahman, worked as Senior Architect and later, Chief Architect of the Central Public Works Department, was instrumental in encouraging projects in the same vein through his executive position in the government.^{xlv}

The Non-Conformists

While Indian architects were inspired by forms from outside the nation, foreign architects living in post-independence India, like Laurie Baker and Joseph Allen Stein chose to explore styles distinct from any international movements.

An American architect, Joseph Allen Stein had a formal office partnered with two other Indians, Bhalla and Doshi. Stein's buildings, fairly akin to the International Style, blended with the Indian context through intricate detailing. He wrote in the Journal of Indian Institute of Architects:

"We should live and work on the earth without spoiling it...Architecture begins where man comes into contact with nature, where buildings are

^{xlv} Madhavi Desai, Miki Desai Jon Lang, *Architecture and Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

placed in relationship first to the site and then with some sort of inner logic that ultimately shapes it."^{xlvi}

Echoing principles similar to Wright's organic architecture, Stein's buildings articulated unique tectonic expressions using a mix of local materials, concrete and innovative responses to site constraints. The India International Center (1959-62) and Ford Foundation building (1969), located close to the historical Lodi Gardens site in Delhi, are excellent manifestations of his ideas.

Laurie Baker, an Englishman inspired by the political leader, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (M. K. Gandhi), stayed back in India and continued to practice vernacular architecture in Trivandrum, Kerala. He enjoyed a fulfilling practice working mainly on small-scale (his own home, 'Hamlet') to mid-sized institutional projects (1975, Center for Developmental Studies, Trivandrum) by instructing and building primarily on site. Some years into practice, he expressed his views on formal 'office culture' as:

"I preferred my way and I have never run a proper architect's office. I have close to my bed a small, old drawing board— the same one I had in

^{xlvi} Joseph Allen Stein, "The Responsibility for Environment," *Journal of the Indian Institute of Architects* 29, no. 1 (Jan - March 1963): 10 - 19.

school. I broke my tee square quite a long time ago and never bought another. I have an old brass pair of compasses, which belonged to my older brother, and it was passed on to me when I first went to school. So I don't look the part at all! ... I have to be on the site to enjoy the transition from drawings to buildings. Not to be involved in building would be, to me, as foolish as buying a camera and film, viewing and clicking the trigger, getting a negative done, but not getting the print.”^{xlvii}

Laurie Baker worked with local building materials in Kerala, such as bricks, Mangalore tiles, lime, mud, recycled tiles and wood. A regionalist at heart, his was a socialist ideology that was concerned with the social implications of his buildings. Baker once explained that he favored constructing buildings using local strengths ‘to create an impact on housing in a country the size of India.’^{xlviii}

Unlike the offices of other foreign-trained Indian architects, Nari Gandhi’s practice was modeled like Laurie Baker’s, but differed in its primary concern. Although socially sensitive, Nari

^{xlvii} Laurie Baker, *On Being and Architect*, 2007, <http://lauriebaker.net/work/work/on-being-an-architect.html> (accessed May 2, 2008).

^{xlviii} Gautam Bhatia, *Laurie Baker: Life, Work, Writings* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1991).

Gandhi’s practice was like that of an independent artist’s. He worked by himself and reasoned through judgment. After returning to India in 1964, Gandhi’s early works were atavistic of Frank Lloyd Wright’s designs and thus different from the widely accepted architecture styles dotting the country by the mid 1960s. One can contemplate the influence Wright’s Calico Textiles Showroom (*proposed in 1945, Ahmedabad, see Works: Evolution, Innovation and Intrepidity - Valia Residence,*) would have made on the Indian architectural community. Seeking inspiration for new forms of expression, one can strongly suggest that Indian architects were likely to learn from Wright’s work in Ahmedabad as much as from Le Corbusier or Kahn’s in the same city!

India: Context, Problems and the Question of Identity

Upon his return to India, Nari Gandhi also entered a common pool of problems faced by other architects in the country. No matter how sophisticated the international styles expected their influences or imitations to be, building in India was also a contextual problem. Not only were architects faced by the dilemma to choose between traditional and modern, but they were also faced with issues of abundant but unskilled manual labor, less-sophisticated construction methods and a vibrant cultural heritage largely circumvented by a Revivalist-phobic generation.

So, if it is assumed that Nari Gandhi was indifferent to other schools of thought, how different was it for him to build in Indian

conditions than it was for those architects who had tested modernist expressions to imitate or modify?

This was iterated by Vikram Bhatt and Dr. Peter Scriver in their brilliant essay titled “Roots and Modernity”, through the example of Raj Rewal’s Permanent Exhibition Structures in New Delhi, built in 1972. Raj Rewal’s proposal for the Buckminster Fuller-inspired truncated pyramids made of triangulated space-frames, turned out to be far more expensive to build than the available budget of the government. A structure of such complexity was not only contrived on fundamental logic unique to the concept but also demanded a mechanized construction method involving precast concrete members to be connected together. This process was substituted by a ‘hand-hewn’ method to capitalize on the labor force available to break-even with building costs and realize the project. Bhatt and Scriver state:

“The architect’s willingness to compromise the intrinsic logic and prestige of his form source with crude exuberance of the structures as actually built indicates the changing intentions in Indian architecture of the 1970s.”^{xlix}

Raj Rewal was not the only architect with similar concerns. Others like Charles Correa, who had earlier experimented with the Hindustan Lever Exhibition Pavilion in 1961, were likely to have

^{xlix} Vikram Bhatt & Peter Scriver, *Contemporary Indian Architecture : After the Masters* (Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing Pvt. Ltd, 1990).

faced similar difficulties.^l This was the period that Nari Gandhi had stepped into as a foreign-trained architect and was perhaps as vulnerable to address multiple issues affecting architectural production in India, as were other architects.

These shortcomings in real practice prompted young Indian architects to investigate better processes of design and construction in the country.

Another problem posed by the excessive dependence on Modernism was the lack of regional or national character in the buildings. This discontent grew rapidly and was further fuelled by Bernard Rudofsky’s exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1964, “Architecture Without Architects”, that questioned the Western architectural educational and practice systems that skipped centuries of ‘fermentation’ of vernacular and indigenous architecture and be inspired only by the ‘symphony orchestra’ of iconic buildings of the West.^{li} His gesture acknowledged the rich presence of layers of indigenous works in Eastern countries and

^l Charles Correa, *Charles Correa*, ed. with an essay by Kenneth Frampton (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996). The random plate R.C.C. structure was gunited on site and shows a rough-finished surface hinting at the workmanship available to execute structures considered unconventional for India at the time, but were fairly tested by the Modernists in Europe.

^{li} Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture Without Architects: An Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1964).

inspired to learn from them rather than impose indifference to historical inspiration or learning from the Western world alone.

Several Indian architects addressed this problem that stunted architectural creativity in their nation beyond the limitations of on-site production. Through their writings and responsible practices they acknowledged this missing jigsaw piece by blending it in their works, graduating to a 'modern-regionalist' sensibility.^{lii}

Referring to this phenomenon, Dr. Suha Ozkan wrote:

“Modern regionalism in very broad terms can be handled by employing two categories of reference: *concrete* and *abstract*. Concrete regionalism accommodates all approaches to regional expressions which copy features, fragments or entire buildings, in the region. When these buildings are loaded with spiritual values of symbolic relevance, they become much more acceptable in their new form, owing to the values attached to the original.

Abstraction, on the other hand, is a long, tedious and sometimes endless devotion to an ideal. The line which separates historical pastiche

^{lii} Charles Correa's design proposal for various projects make allusions to historical and mythical references that are unique to India at times, but also look at other parts of Asia.

from regional achievement is very thin and delicate.”^{liii}

India was also a different socio-cultural setting for work. The country exhibited different value systems that often involved building with communities and not in isolation. This created a sense of the 'whole' contributed by many and shared by all. Building was a collective endeavor and not an individual one. The way people would relate to architecture was through layers of interpretations and symbolism. Romi Khosla in his essay titled 'Crashing through Western Modernism into the Asian Reality' wrote: “In Asia, we are more concerned with the consciousness of the work rather than the idea of it. Myths, symbols and reality are interwoven...we must struggle for design solutions that have not been pre-empted by the developed countries.”^{liv}

Khosla was referring to this problem of understanding the context of Asia (a vast umbrella covering multiple cultures) as being different from Western ones. If Modern Architecture's basis sustained through ideas like Descartes' that rejected all traditional thought and building was solely through knowledge on deduction, building in India, for Nari Gandhi would have been practically impossible! The prevalent model of craftsmanship in the country

^{liii} Dr. Suha Ozkan, "Regionalism with Modernism," *Exploring Architecture in Islamic Cultures* (Concept Media Pte Ltd, Singapore), 1985.

^{liv} Romi Khosla, "Crashing through Western Modernims into the Asian Reality," *Regionalism in Architecture 2*, 1985: 58 - 60.

had sustained through the centuries through heredity. This phenomenon was central to Gandhi's practice and his perception of tradition was of growth, like the wider perceptions of the 'organic.'

By the mid-seventies, Nari Gandhi had already completed six projects in India that were rooted in the teachings of organic architecture, (aforementioned in the section "Organic: Freshness"). It was the blend of the socio-economic conditions of India in the 1960 - 70s, with Gandhi's preference to include more craftsmen in his work that made his model of practice one desirable by the clients and laborers alike. Distinct from other movements, he continued to build upon his philosophy through the cultural offerings of his nation, evolving a highly individualized style in subsequent years.

The Practice of Nari Gandhi

Nari Gandhi | Architect with No Office:

“Nari carried with him a *jhola* (arm bag) that had a Parsi *topi* (a small cap), a pair of clothes, foldable mattress and money (either open or in an envelope). This was his office.”^{lv}

- **Jigeesha Thakore**, Gandhi’s friend and collaborator on leatherworks.

For Nari Gandhi, the key for problem solving lay in spending more time with the clients and learning about their preferences, idiosyncrasies and deriving a solution based on these parameters.

Unlike the structured I.I.A. regulated offices that most architects in India were establishing, Nari Gandhi was not a registered architect with the Institute. The various legal permissions for his projects were obtained by an architect-friend Dady Banaji and later through other associates.^{lvi}

^{lv} Jigeesha Thakore, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, (May 12, 2008).

^{lvi} Michael Hawker, "Celebrating the Works of Nari Gandhi," *Friends of Kebyar* (Friends of Kebyar, Inc.), November 2007

In spite of him not having a formal office, Nari’s works did not fall short of getting the attention of famous and powerful businessmen such as Vasant Sheth of the Great Indian Shipping Corporation, Mr. Sadruddin Daya, owner of Dawood Shoes and the biggest art collector in India back in the 1980s^{lvii}, Mr. Nasir Jamal - owner of CityWalk shoes, Mr. Pramod Jain - co-owner of India’s leading daily ‘The Times of India.’ On occasions more than once, Nari had declined a project because ‘he wasn’t interested’ or thought that ‘the client didn’t show up on time’ (something Nari was very particular about) or ‘if Nari felt that he would not get along with the client on moral grounds’^{lviii}

This ensured that a client found Nari and not the other way round. With time, Nari’s reputation had spread and it smoothed any probable friction that might have occurred with clients if they tried to interfere with him during his works. If something on site was done without his permission or if he was involved in a disagreement with a client, he would often just disappear.

^{lvii} Mr. Sadruddin Daya, interview by Romi Dev, *The High Life*, Bombay, Maharashtra (1980s).

^{lviii} Mr. Pravin Bhayani, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (Jan 17, 2008) and Mr. Amritlal Thakker, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, South Mumbai, Maharashtra (Feb 26, 2008)

“Sometimes a client feels he knows better and starts interfering and giving instructions to the carpenter and the contractor. Then I feel I should leave the client to get on with it. And so I go off. No hard feelings. If he comes to me again, I am ready to resume - on the same old terms, of course.”^{11x}

For clients who were closer to him, his behaviour and relationship transcended personal boundaries. Once Nari asked a renowned socialite client in Mumbai, Kishore Bajaj, to buy three airplane tickets to Delhi for the first flight out of Mumbai the day-after. Bajaj was asked to deliver them first hand in the morning to the *agiyari* (the Parsi’s Fire Temple) where Nari would often go to pray. Out of respect, Bajaj followed Nari’s instructions and met him outside the *agiyari*. He was then asked to drive Nari and another friend to the airport. It was only at the airport that Kishore Bajaj found out that the third ticket was meant for him and that Nari had planned to take him on a trip to the Himalayas!

^{11x} Nari Gandhi to Pervin Eichert in a rare interview, “A State of Becoming,” *Inside/Outside*, Oct 1978.

While narrating the entire incident, Kishore Bajaj distinctly recollected: “I would not dare ask him ‘why’ or ‘when’. Who could? I just called my wife and simply went along with him.”^{1x}

From Bajaj’s mannerism in narrating the account, it can be inferred that he accompanied Nari Gandhi only out of sheer admiration for the man. They had been associated for a couple of years by then and he clearly knew this was something he could have avoided, but still chose to do. Perhaps, Mr. Bajaj trusted Nari Gandhi completely; something a client must do when he sees work emerging without drawings and without any legal contracts - something Nari was consciously inculcating in his clients.

It would be interesting to believe that this was the kind of world Nari Gandhi wanted to live in - to be able to practice complete freedom from legal or material bindings of an office or associates - and yet be able to win the confidence of clients only through one’s work and of course, persona. And he was well able to achieve that.

Nari’s work can be seen to capitalize on this abundance of labor and combining with it a refined sense of materials to evolve a painfully (and literally so) meticulous style of construction. Labor-intensive methods were intrinsic to his work. He in fact, reversed the hierarchy of architect-client-laborers and forged a bond with the laborers to collaborate and learn from them. His friends

^{1x} Mr. Kishore Bajaj, interview by Aftab Jalia, , *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, (Jan 21, 2008).

remember Nari Gandhi to get along with the laborers better than with his clients.^{lxi} They were his source of inspiration, giving him the will to continue his efforts of indulging in a style that combined so many art forms and brought them to architecture.

Nari Gandhi did, in fact, own an office space in the reputed Napean Sea Rd. Bombay's upper-class residential district and he could have well made a functional office for himself there. He just did not seem keen on having one and that place remains unoccupied to date.^{lxii}

^{lxi} Mr. Amritlal Thakker, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, South Mumbai, Maharashtra (Feb 26, 2008).

^{lxii} Mr. Pravin Bhayani, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (Jan 17, 2008).

Works - Evolution, Innovation and Intrepidity:

“The client never has patience. It is we who have patience and tolerate their impatience.”^{lxiii}

- Nari Gandhi

With Nari Gandhi one will not find eloquent and passionate quotes like Mr. Wright but Nari’s buildings take over the mantle of flamboyance and daring expression to a level at par, if not higher than Wright’s residential designs.

During the three decades of his practice, from 1964 until 1993, Nari worked on approximately 27 projects that involved designing mainly residences and weekend houses, a few remodeling of houses and designing the interiors of apartments and offices. Besides these, he also undertook smaller commissions to design furniture, upholstery textiles and a concept design for a boat.^{lxiv}

Throughout this period, Nari Gandhi’s works constantly incorporated Frank Lloyd Wright’s teachings they also embarked upon a remarkable process of evolution. Once experimented, tried and mastered new techniques of construction, Nari Gandhi evolved a style that would be true to the organic tradition of building and

^{lxiii} Mrs. Meena Chowdhury & Manisha Shah, "An Interview with Mr. Nari Gandhi," *Garodia School of Interior Design - Kala Nirmiti*, April 1993.

^{lxiv} Mr. Pravin Bhayani, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (Jan 17, 2008).

yet establish itself as a unique language of architectural expression.

In my study, I have tried to categorize his works into three general phases, while acknowledging the fluidity of their demarcations:

- **The Taliesin Retrospective Years**

This phase covers the initial years of Nari Gandhi’s practice in India, which owed much to Gandhi’s learning years in the United States

- **Modulating Localization | *Radical Materials, Original Forms***

Illustrates Gandhi’s mid-career phase that saw a dip in the number of commissions but also bolder experiments with atypical materials

- **Synthesizing | *Swan Song***

The final decade of Nari Gandhi’s practice produced some of his most expressive works, synthesizing the learnings of his life. This section elucidates his efforts.

The Taliesin Retrospective Years

Mountain Lodge, Lonavla

In 1964, Nari Gandhi was commissioned for his first project, a small Mountain Lodge for a senior architect-friend, Mr. Jal Gobhai, near the Tungarli dam in Lonavla.^{lxv} The program was a simple weekend house for the Gobhais. The Mountain Lodge is situated on a cliff in a remote location near an elevated dam reservoir, barely accessible by a heavy vehicle even today. However, for his first project, Nari managed to get a good job done using locally quarried stone and semi-trained labor within what appears to have been a modest budget.

The lodge is a stone masonry structure built in the 'desert masonry' method that Wright developed for Taliesin West. Stones are placed between wooden formwork with flat sides facing outwards and concrete is poured from the top. After the concrete is allowed to set, the formwork is removed and the effect is that of large stones set in rough concrete.

The trusses for the lodge are wood; the roofing sheets are asbestos cement. The flooring is of plain cement concrete (p.c.c) and has

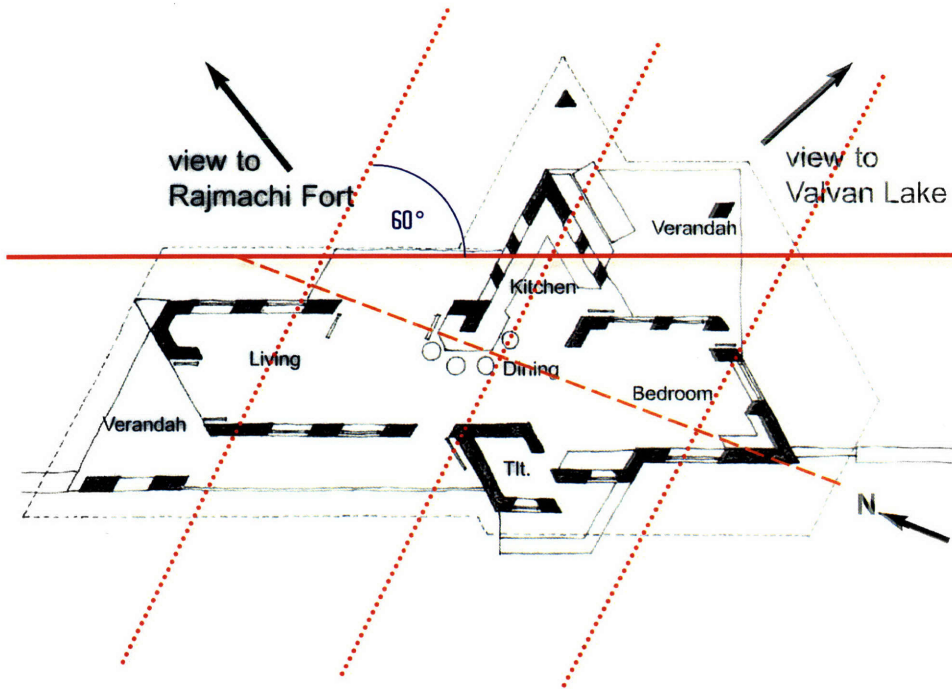
^{lxv} Michael Hawker, "Celebrating the Works of Nari Gandhi," *Friends of Kebyar* (Friends of Kebyar, Inc.), November 2007: 10-11.

grooves following the roof's triangular geometry.^{lxvi} The roof is very expressive with long projections at the gable and eaves that touch the ground (see fig). Nari used this characteristic expression of the roof in several of his following projects.

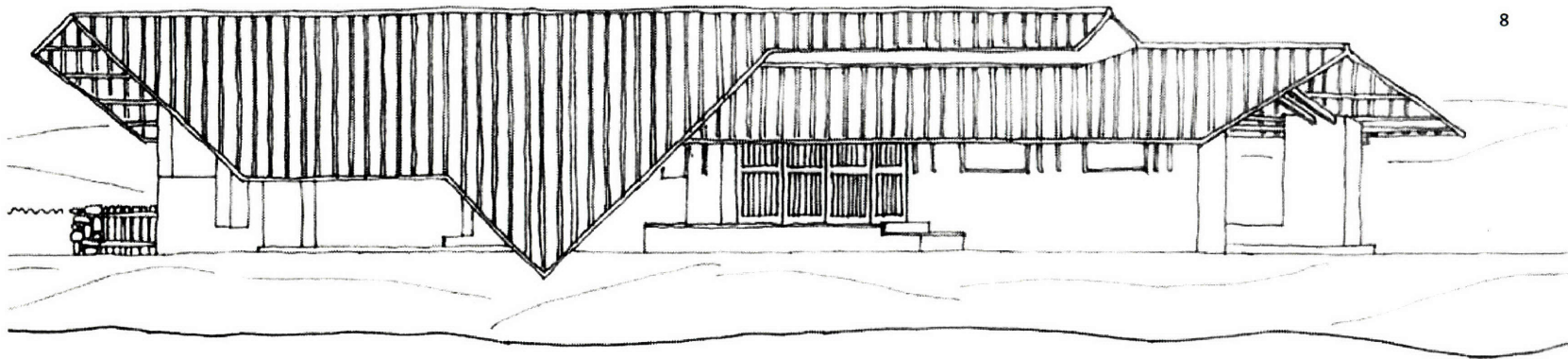
What is most striking in the design of this house is its plan. For parcels of land not constrained by urban grids or shape, Frank Lloyd Wright used a customized method to determine the triangular geometry for a house on that site. He would place the T-square, as a median, on the line running East West on a site and then use a 30° - 60° triangle setsquare to draw the plan of the house. He would also keep the contour lines in mind, but the method was used to maximize the sun's heat and light.^{lxvii} The way Nari customized this to the Lonavla site and climatic conditions was by providing verandahs at every side to protect the house from heavy rains and by aligning the openings to face the reservoir, valley and the Rajmachi fort in the distance.

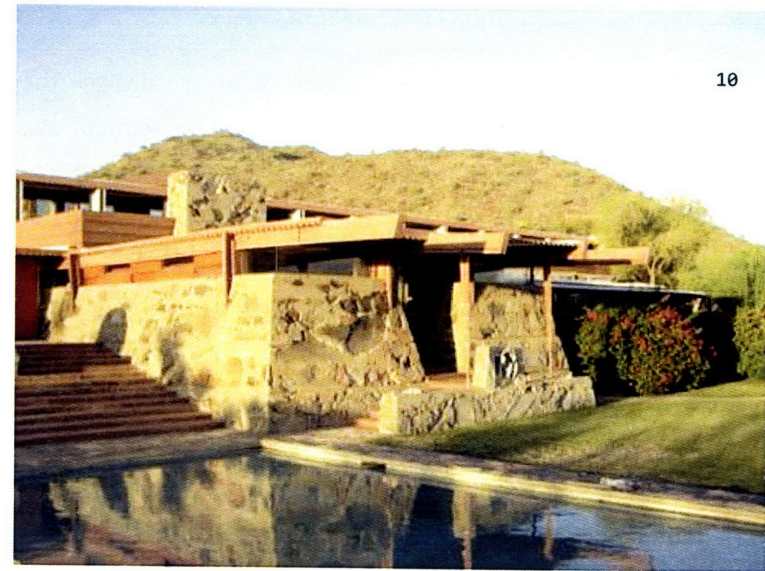
^{lxvi} Rahul Gore, *The Works of Nari Gandhi*, Graduate Thesis, Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (C.E.P.T.) (Ahmedabad: Unpublished Thesis, 1996).

^{lxvii} Interview with the Taliesin Architects, Mary Rawson, *The House on the Waterfall*, Video, 1989.



Drawings of the Mountain Lodge project by Rahul Gore elucidate the trigonometric arrangement of space with relationships to the surrounding views.





In its appearance, organization and essence, the Mountain Lodge for Jal Gobhai is almost a literal transfer of ideas Nari was carrying with him since his Taliesin days.

The first manifestation of his learnings began to mark a personal pursuit of exploring Wrightian principles of design in subsequent projects.

Asha Parekh's Residence ('Akruti'), Juhu, Bombay

The next project Nari undertook was to design the residence for a famous Indian film personality, Asha Parekh. Ms. Asha Parekh was among the leading actresses in India during the decades of 1960 and '70s and Nari had landed upon the project through the recommendation of a friend, Dady Banaji.^{lxviii} Asha Parekh's site was located in Juhu - a sea-facing locality in Bombay.

The stonework is layered in strips with projecting whitewashed floating concrete planes smoothed at their edges. These overhead planes are punctured with rectangles and circles to create dramatic chiaroscuro on the facade. These responses evoke images of Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater, and are as sensitive to its site orientation with the concrete planes extending towards the sea. An inimitable site response in this case is the placing of a column beside a palm tree-trunk - similar to its shape, proportion and surface treatment, extending beyond the roof. This deliberate rendition expresses Nari's idea of 'design', which has the connotation of responsive action in built form for circumstances posited by the given site.

Asha Parekh's house was named *Akruti*, a Sanskrit word meaning 'form or appearance.' I find the word fitting not just to the realization of Ms. Parekh's desire to have a beautiful house, but

^{lxviii} Mr. Pravin Bhayani, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (Jan 17, 2008).

also to the expressive voice that Nari's creativity was beginning to find in India.



Asha's Parekh's residence, *Akruti*, in Juhu by Nari Gandhi - responding to site conditions.

Top row: (Left to right) First two images are from '*Akruti*' whereas the third is from Wright's *Fallingwater*

Bottom: Floating, projecting planes are evocative of the Taliesin tradition, echoes of which are seen here

Valia Residence, Vile-Parle, Bombay

The third project that testifies Taliesin's direct influence on Nari Gandhi was the Valia Residence in Vile Parle, Mumbai. Built between 1968 and '69, the Valia residence was Gandhi's first attempt to build a house using modular textile blocks.

Mr. Valia's son, Paresh Valia recalls that Nari Gandhi would show him and his father, books on Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture^{lxix} to assure them that the result of using modular patterned blocks for construction could be perceived as a beautiful one. Indeed, the result was a picturesque transition of terracotta roofs with broad eaves, wood-framed fenestrations and walls made of deeply textured textile unit blocks having stellated openings. The blocks were white in colour and contrasted sharply against the terracotta roof.

This use of textile blocks is not uncommon among the Taliesin fellowship. Wright had executed four houses using modular textile blocks made out of concrete between 1923 - 24 in California.^{lxx} Experiments on textile blocks were continued at Taliesin and a picture of Nari also captures him sitting next to a block made by

^{lxix} Michael Hawker, "Celebrating the Works of Nari Gandhi," *Friends of Kebyar* (Friends of Kebyar, Inc.), November 2007: 14.

^{lxx} Wright designed the Millard House, Pasadena in 1923, Storrer House in 1923, Freeman House in 1923 and the Ennis House in 1924 - all three in Los Angeles

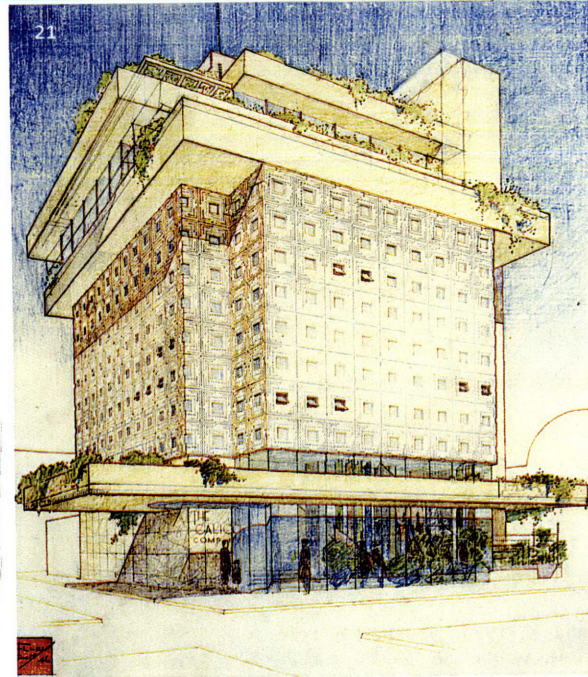
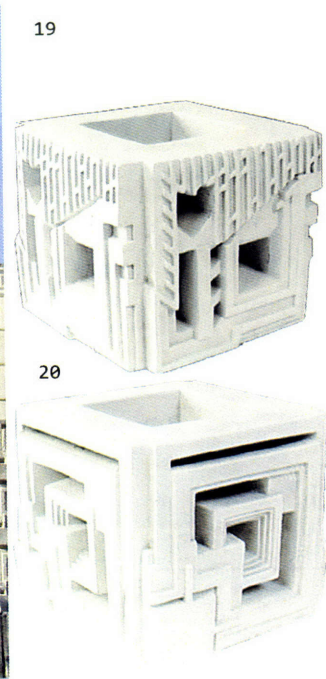
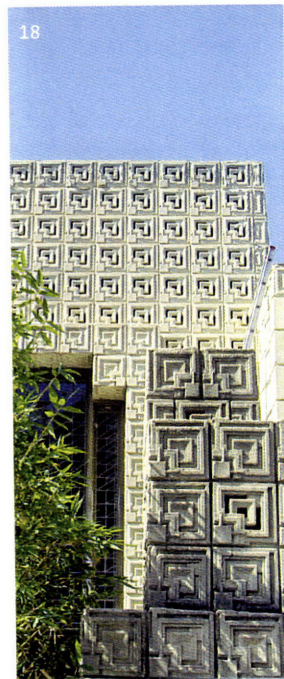
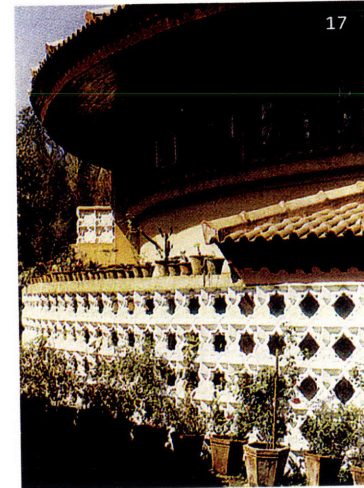
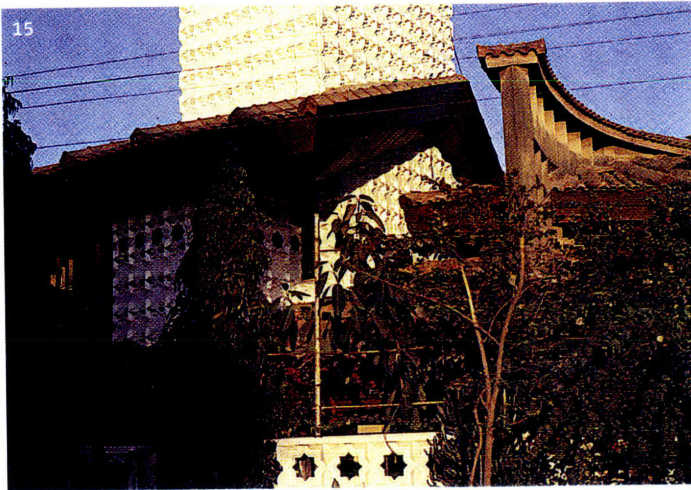
William Davies, a Taliesin fellow. Another Taliesin fellow who independently experimented with the modular textile block design was Alden Dow who later went on to have a flourishing practice in Midland, Michigan.^{lxxi}

Interestingly, in 1945, Frank Lloyd Wright proposed design for the (aforementioned) Calico Mills Store for the Sarabhai family in Ahmedabad used the textile block idea. Perhaps, Nari paid his homage to Wright's unbuilt dream through the realization of the Valia house, albeit in a residential typology and in a different city.



Nari Gandhi sitting against a textile block designed by William Davies

^{lxxi} Tobias S. Guggenheimer, *A Taliesin Legacy: The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright's Apprentices* (New York, N.Y.: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1995).



Top row:

Valia house by Nari showing the textile blocks on the façade and interiors

Bottom row: (left to right)

Ennis House by Wright, textile blocks from the Freeman and Ennis house, Wright's proposal for the Calico Showroom in Ahmedabad and Alden Dow's studio and home, Midland.



About 6 years into practice in India, by the early 1970s Nari Gandhi had received commissions for designing the interiors for Mr. Vasant Sheth's penthouse in Mumbai, - later admitted by Mrs. Asha Sheth as 'a highly adventurous step for that time'^{lxxii} - not for having Nari Gandhi design it but designing interiors in the 1970s, in Mumbai, was proving to be a flourishing profession. Among other projects Nari was commissioned for included a beach-facing weekend house for Dr. Sam Dastoor (around mid 1970s) and another beach house project for Vasant Sheth. Nari Gandhi's responses to these works were rooted in their contexts: site, materials available and the intensive use of labour.

ALDEN B DOW ARCHITECT F A I A
15 POST STREET MIDLAND MICHIGAN

Mr. Nari Gandhi
Taliesin
Spring Green, Wisconsin

Dear Mr. Gandhi:

I remember your visit to the office.

If you could send us some of your drawings as you suggested in your letter, we would be better able to determine if we could employ you at this time.

Yours very truly,


Alden B. Dow
December 14, 1961



23

Letter by Dow addressed to Gandhi in Dec, 1961

Dr. Dastoor's house

In the case of Dr. Dastoor's house, Gandhi's design bears a remarkable resemblance to the Taliesin architect, Alden Dow's proposal for the Roscommon Congregational Church in Michigan

^{lxxii} Michael Hawker, "Celebrating the Works of Nari Gandhi," *Friends of Kebyar* (Friends of Kebyar, Inc.), November 2007: 15. Hawker quotes Mrs. Sheth from a correspondence letter dated in 2005.

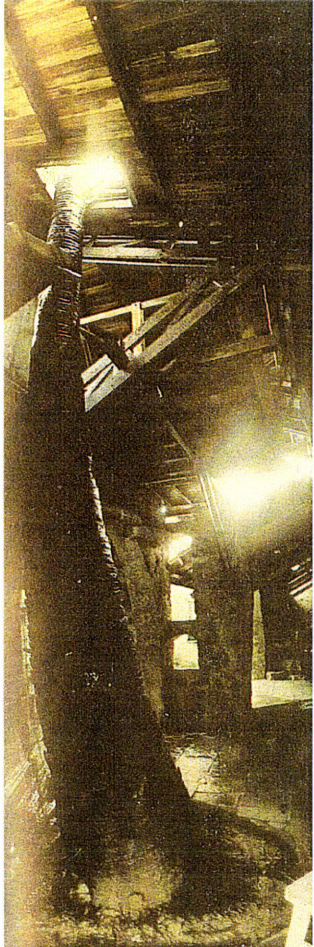
(1961). Coincidentally, in December of 1961, Nari Gandhi had also applied for a job at Alden Dow's studio so one can be assured that Gandhi was aware of his work. However, Gandhi is known to not have joined Dow's studio and moving to Kent State University instead. The external form of both these projects resonates with peculiar similarity but Nari Gandhi seems to have taken only the external massing of the building, changing its roof profile to touch the ground (for the second time since the Mountain Lodge project) in the case of Dr. Dastoor's project.

In his practice, Nari Gandhi was also establishing themes that would recur in his later works such as: extending roof slopes low enough to touch the ground, using arcuated systems of construction, preserving trees on site and building with or around them - sometimes preserving them inside the living room areas and then allowing the trees to penetrate the roof; blurring the distinction between exterior and interior spaces and picking instinctive directives from site to absorb them in the project's design.

By this time, Nari's work-team was also beginning to get familiar with their master's working methods. This gradually strengthening expertise was further reinforced by new associates like Mr. Pravin Bhayani, an architect who joined Nari Gandhi and would later be rightfully acknowledged by Nari as his 'troubleshooter.' He

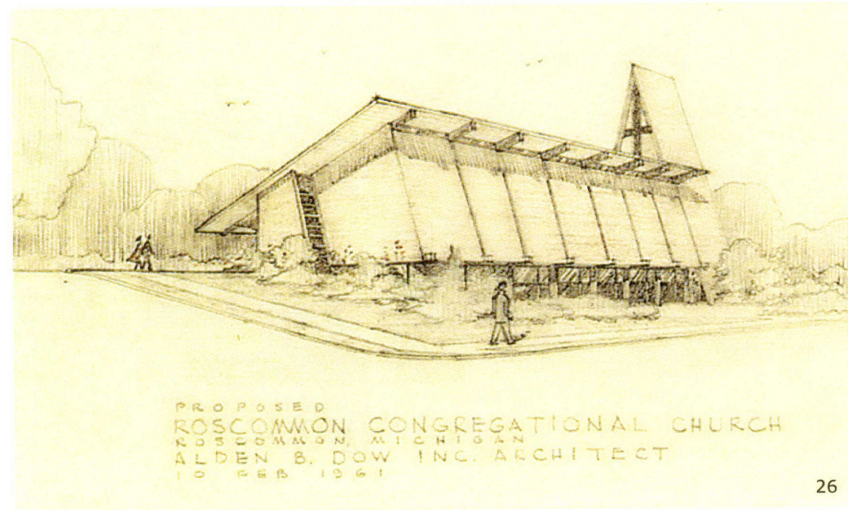
accompanied Nari on sites, supervised with him, took care of legalities as they arose and also helped with purchasing Nari's palette of exotic materials from remote parts of India. Mr. Arvind Soni, a site supervisor had also been with Nari on a couple of projects by now. It was Mr. Soni's job to maintain a constant labour-force for Nari and ensure that Nari's training for handling materials was appropriately executed on site.^{lxxiii}

^{lxxiii} Mr. Pravin Bhayani, interview by Aftab Jalia, , *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (Jan 17, 2008).



Left to right:
First two photos
show the
preservation of
nature within and
outside the Sheth's
beach house in
Manori.

Right: Sweeping
staircase in
Sheth's penthouse,
Bombay



PROPOSED
ROSCOMMON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
ROSCOMMON, MICHIGAN
ALDEN B. DOW INC. ARCHITECT
10 FEB 1961

Left:

Dr. Dastoor's bungalow, Madh Island, and below that is Dow's proposal for the Roscommon Church in Michigan.

With a loose 'office' structure having formed, Nari Gandhi's personality and working methods, as an architect, were beginning to find shape. Clients who saw his works as unique - but not necessarily accepted his ideas on how their houses would eventually function - were still commissioning him. (This is elaborated upon in the following sections.) But Nari was determined to keep such differences at bay and play by his own tune. He was confident of the vision for architecture that he boldly held.

This period gave him the freedom to further his experiments with new materials, forms and tectonics and to arduously produce work of magnificence and awe. It was unlike the work that other foreign-trained Indian architects with formal offices were producing in India around the same time. This kind of uncommon work also brought with it numerous differences with existing and prospective clients and later saw a lull that lasted a decade from around the mid 1970s to the mid 1980s. I believe it was this lull that gave Nari Gandhi the time to immerse himself in experimenting with the handful projects and weave existing crafts and skills in the labour around him into his ideas of architectural expression.

In the following section: **Modulating Localization**, I have observed this phase, beginning roughly from Mr. Sadruddin Daya's remodeling for his 'Moon Dust' residence through the commission by Rustom Mehta for his Korlai beach house, as a period when Nari Gandhi introspected at his earlier training, customized it to the

Indian context and immediate surroundings and evolved an original interpretation of materials and aesthetics that he would continue to build upon towards the final years of his practice.

In 1969, Mr. Sadruddin Daya, owner of an Indian shoe company: Dawood Shoes, learned about Nari Gandhi through a gardener, Mr. D'Souza, at Mumbai's prestigious Willingdon club. Mr. D'Souza had referred to Nari as: "...he is a little eccentric but will do a good job..."^{lxxiv}

Moon Dust, Versova

Mr. Daya owned a sea-facing bungalow in Versova and had called in Nari to design the landscape and furniture. A businessman that Daya was, he was also cautious in this new venture and informed Nari Gandhi that he had a budget of only Rs. 30,000. A willing Nari had smiled and taken up the job. Having seen the site once, Nari returned after a 2-month hiatus along with a worker asking Mr. Daya to pay him Rs. 7000. A reluctant Mr. Daya did the needful and Nari then disappeared for a further two weeks only to return with a sack full of mother-of-pearls. A few more quiet weeks of working on the 'stinking' mother-of-pearls, Nari finally made a beautiful chandelier out of them only to find Mr. Daya very surprised at his feat. The act established Nari in the eyes of Mr. Daya as an unnoticed, unassuming genius. Mr. Daya then gave Nari every liberty to take charge of the project.

^{lxxiv} Mr. Sadruddin Daya, interview by Aftab Jalia, , *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (February 14, 2008).

What had begun as an interior design project went on to be a complete remodeling of the house.

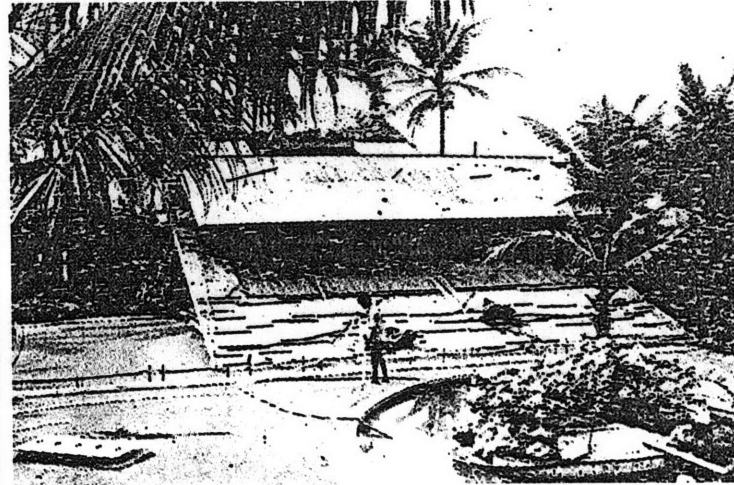
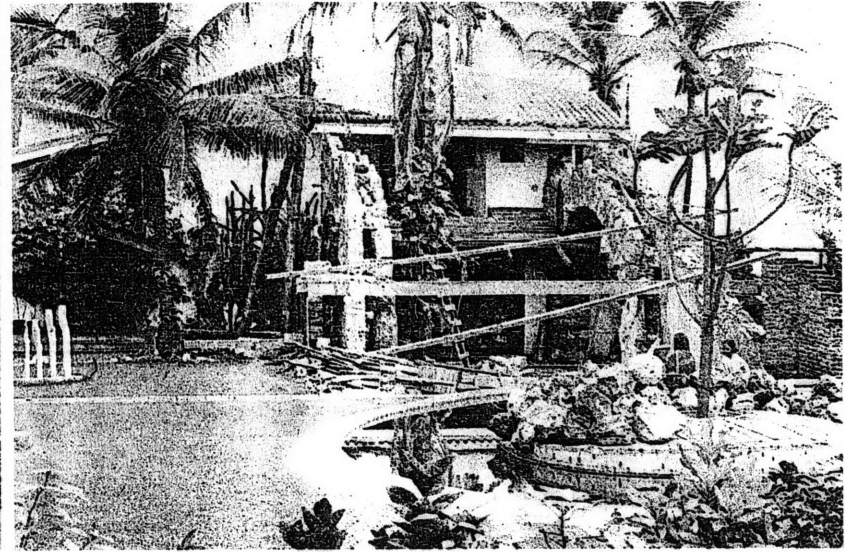
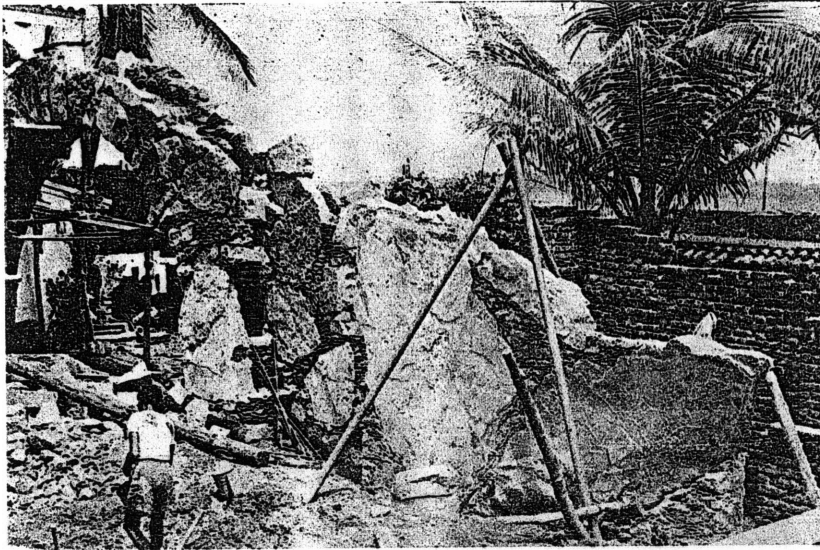
Piece by piece, Nari began to renovate the house and change its intrinsic character. Mr. Daya's house was earlier a concrete framed, plastered and painted structure. Nari conserved some of this trabeated framework and began adding intersecting arches for a steady transformation of the house. His ideology: "A house is organic, it grows"^{lxxv} is certainly at play here. Moon Dust, as the project was named, took about 10 years to complete and Nari would still keep returning to the place, knock off a wall and rebuild it differently. In Mr. Daya's recollection: "Nari said: 'A house never stops growing. You have to make something new or change something.'"^{lxxvi} Associates of Frank Lloyd Wright also recollect a similar attitude in Wright when relating to his Wisconsin studio. Owing to Wright's energetic motivations and some fateful events, Taliesin Wisconsin was in constant flux of rebuilding, rearranging and extension - always marked with hope and joy and never as a burden.^{lxxvii}

This notion of constancy in growth in relation to time was forever present in Nari's independent works.

^{lxxv} Nari Gandhi to Pervin Eichert, "A State of Becoming," *Inside/Outside*, Oct 1978.

^{lxxvi} Ibid.

^{lxxvii} Kathryn Smith, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin and Taliesin West* (New York: Harry N. Abrahams, Inc., 1997).



27

Photos from a 1978 journal show the gradual progress in construction taking place at Mr. Daya's Versova residence

Most importantly, since the Moon Dust house, Nari's work also saw confident stylistic changes. He notably used chipped stones for the first time. The large arches he made were built using local stones of varying sizes (ranging from boulders to chips!) made into monolith using cement slurry. Studies by Ms. Rupali Khanna Ekbote elucidate how these differing stone sizes were played around with to create dramatic compositions in colour and texture.^{lxxviii} This method was excruciatingly tedious but Nari was in no hurry. He first trained his workers by demonstrating on stone himself and later let them take over. Oftentimes, they would come up with a creative method to break the stone or even a new way to use the chips and Nari would gladly accept the suggestion. Work on site was very slow but it conformed to Nari's idea of allowing time to mediate the growth of the house.

The flat façade facing the beach was also transformed into a sloping roof that met the floor of the backyard garden and it appeared to move toward the beach. Having a sea facing site, Nari did not use steel trusses for supporting the elaborate roofs. Instead he opted for wooden trusses and covered the roof in terracotta tiles. The deep projections almost touching the ground are propped using wooden struts - radiating from flowerbeds - making a metaphor to their organic symbolism. Punctures in this roof are subtly reminiscent of Alden Dow Studio's roof, built around 1934.

^{lxxviii} Rupali Khanna Ekbote, *Articulation of Materials in the Works of Nari Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Unpublished Thesis, 2001).

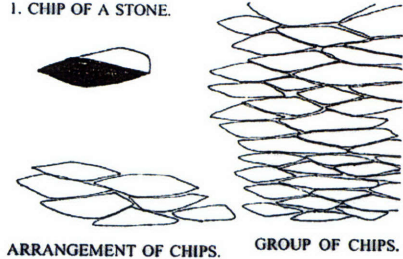
However, its design and construction is more meticulous - gaining from not just the abundant labour force but also the traditional Indian living crafts.



Two images above show the elaborate roof of Moon Dust and its possible association to an organic aesthete

30 Studies by Rupali Khanna Ekbote show Gandhi's choice of stone-chips and their use in structures

1. CHIP OF A STONE.



ARRANGEMENT OF CHIPS.
fig.181

GROUP OF CHIPS.

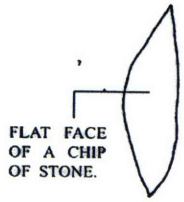
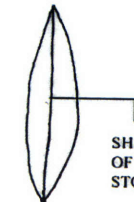


fig.182

FRONT VIEW.



REAR VIEW.

VERY SMALL SIZED CHIPS ABOUT 2-3 CMS. LONG.

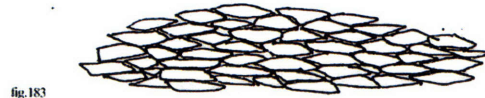


fig.183

SMALL SIZED CHIPS ABOUT 6-12 CMS. LONG.

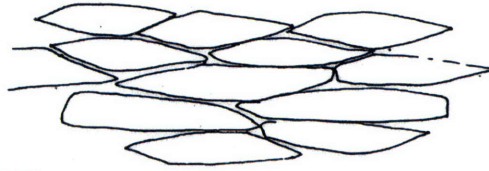


fig.184

MEDIUM SIZED CHIPS ABOUT 15-20 CMS. LONG.

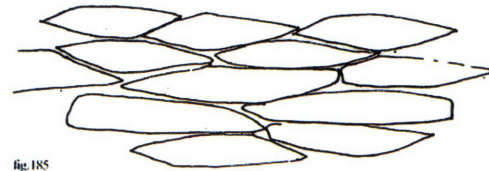


fig.185

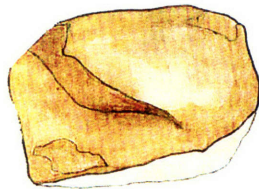


fig.70



fig.71

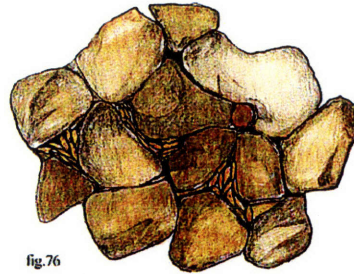


fig.76



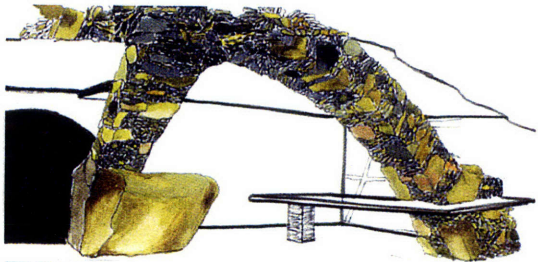
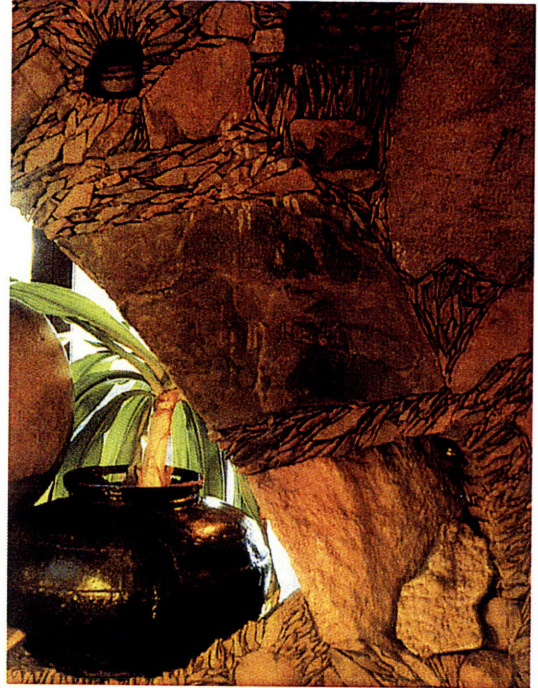
fig.72

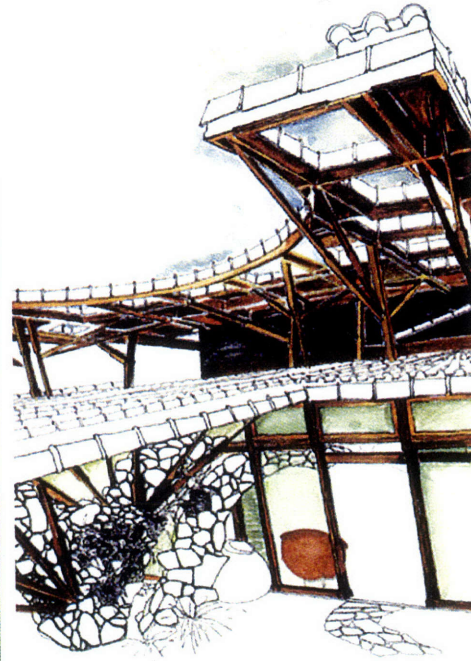


fig.73



fig.77

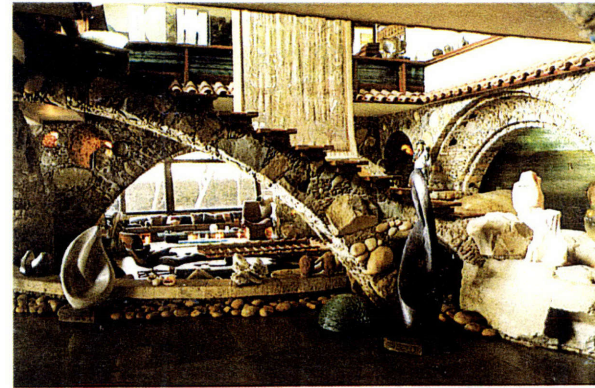




Comparative studies of Alden Dow Studio's roof in Michigan (top and bottom image on the left) to Nari Gandhi's experiment at Versova, Mumbai (above) show a possible transfer of ideas similar in form but different in treatment

Nari also encouraged Mr. Daya to collect art pieces and gradually ornated the house with them. True to the Arts and Crafts tradition, Nari's houses, like those of Wright and Goff, were an ensemble of beautiful sculptures, elaborate textiles and fine woodwork within a resonating architecture that itself was intricately crafted. Nari designed everything he could in the house - from the structural parti to the windowpanes. He engaged other craftsmen, both - accomplished and budding ones, working in numerous media - leather, metalwork, loom and stone to embellish his creations with theirs. His houses were not complete without these elements and nor did the art works belong as suitably anywhere else but in these houses.

On the personal level, Nari's daring initiatives reflected in the liberties he took with asserting his influence and thoughts on the clients - in this case Mr. Daya. The only staircase leading to the upper level in the Moon Dust residence did not have any handrails and was made on an arch. One can be certain that Mr. Daya would have liked at least a simple handrail but Nari did not seem to have wanted to ruin the flowing space of the living room. Another example of such a liberty is when Nari simply did not provide closets in the bedrooms and Mrs. Daya had them made later. The owners considered Nari's answers to such issues evasive and while on one hand they were impressed by the overall product given to them, they probably did not know how to react to Nari's idiosyncratic insistence on using the house the way he designed it!



Living room with stairs on an arch



34



Bedroom with leather upholstery and glass partitions

Daya's Revdanda Residence

Nari Gandhi's next project was also a remodeling one wherein he was given an old house in the coastal village of Revdanda, south of Mumbai, a place better connected by water than by road back in the 1980s. The vernacular architecture of the village echoed in the deep roof overhangs, spacious verandahs, clear stories to allow ventilation and simple brick and mud construction of the existing structure. The house was also placed in the heart of a dense betel nut and coconut plantation and still retains the slender vertical trees.

Nari understood the vitality of these climate and context responsive observations and began to remodel Mr. Daya's Revdanda house using the local materials and local labour. In an interview to Inside / Outside in 1982, Nari Gandhi had remarked:

“Villagers handle concrete differently when they see a storm coming. Then they are forced to work fast and so use the cement with individual flair and style.”

This may have influenced him to use brick and tree trunks as the main building elements and disregarded all superfluous additions. This house conforms to its rural setting and is extremely Spartan. However, the process of this change is similar to Mr. Daya's Moon Dust residence. Walls were torn down and replaced by the addition of arches for structure and fenestration providing an alfresco

natural landscape. A mezzanine was later added which was used as the sleeping area. Clay murals were added to the walls while the old multicoloured windowpanes were preserved. Nari Gandhi left the original plastered walls on the lower level as they were and introduced a new storey in exposed brick. The entire house was then given an external finish in the vernacular technique of 'geru' paint. Today, these layers testify the palimpsestic history of the house.

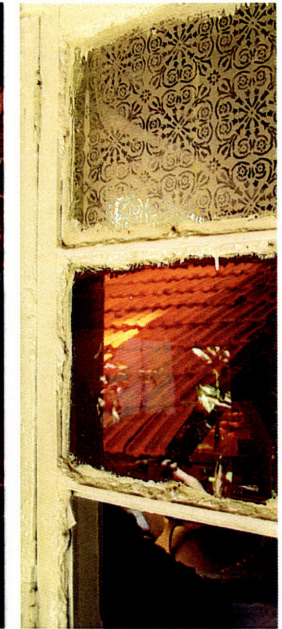
The remodeling process carried out by Nari thus, typified the essence of renewing a place by adding new vitality while accentuating the indigenous rudiments that root the identity of architectural creation in its milieu.

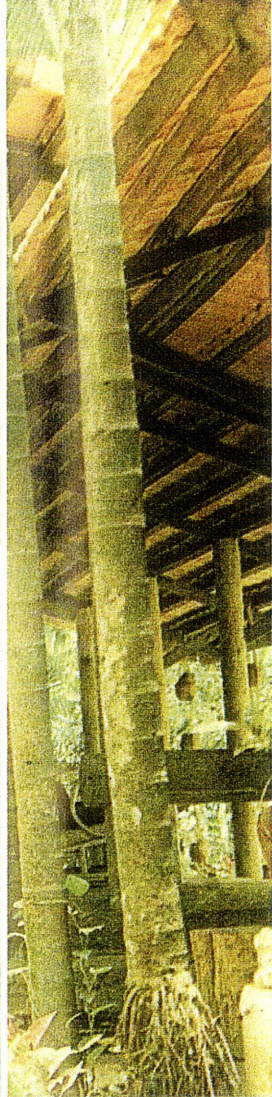
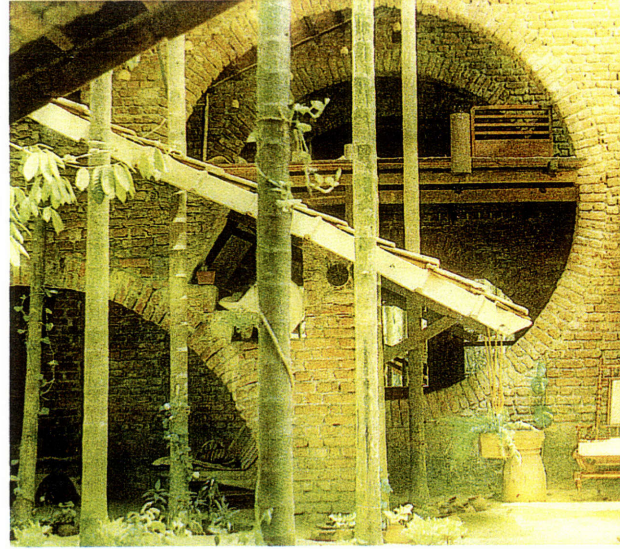
Following the same line of thought, a possible inspiration for Nari to add the arches could have come from the Revdanda Fort, which is located within close proximity from the site. The region was once a Portuguese colony and remnants of this fort still survive amidst the natural flora of the place. The profiles of circles and vertical tree shafts were strikingly similar to that of Daya's Revdanda residence.

Another highlight of this project was the landscape garden that Nari designed. Using locally made pots, Nari filled them with cement and inverted them onto a bed of plain cement concrete (p.c.c.). These pots were then arranged in a concentric pattern and

in different sizes so the result was a dramatic 'ripple' of inverted pots in the heart of the plantation.

35 Photos from Daya's Revdanda house showing a blend of old and new





Daya's Mark Haven Apartment

Nari was then given the commission for designing the interiors of Mr. Daya's apartment in Colaba, South Mumbai in 1980. Considering the shift in scale, Gandhi experimented with square terracotta pieces as ceiling cladding material and strips of 'Padauk wood' and 'Rosewood' for paneling the walls. Work continued on leather upholstery, now becoming a Nari Gandhi trait. A new, curious experiment done was to use treated cork as a wall-cladding material in Mr. Daya's toilet.^{lxxix} The effect was almost surreal because of the rarity of the material used in this fashion. It also featured in the Inside Outside magazine issue of 1990.

Patel Residence, Surat

Nari Gandhi's experiments with new materials continued into a fresh project in Surat, Gujarat, for Mr. Suryakant Patel. Another residential project, this one was modeled using a hollow brick module. Unlike the Revdanda house, this one used wire cut, good quality bricks that were procured from a leading construction firm in India: Babubhai and Billimoria and were reinforced with steel to serve as efficient structural elements. The result in this

^{lxxix} Rupali Khanna Ekbote, *Articulation of Materials in the Works of Nari Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Unpublished Thesis, 2001).

case is a building with a clear structural grammar, open and closed spaces and a fresh change for Nari who had been working with a vocabulary of sloping roofs and arcuated structures for almost a decade into his practice now.

An interesting study by Rupali Khanna Ekbote shows how brick modules were used in the flooring along with in situ terrazzo. Nari's innovation in this house lies in the use of terracotta pots. Having worked with terracotta as a roof cladding material in Moon Dust (1969 - 78), in Daya's Revdanda house (1970s) and more creatively in Mr. Daya's Mumbai apartment as ceiling cladding material, Nari now explored its use as a structural element in filler slabs. These terracotta pots were quadrangular in shape and during the casting of the slab they were inverted and placed side by side with their edges touching each other. The edges of the slab were faced with flat fascia tiles. Minimal reinforcement was added and the slab was cast.^{lxxx} The result was a 'crate' patterned ceiling made of terracotta that blended seamlessly with the brick walls. Through this method Nari Gandhi not only tested a new material for slab construction but also reduced the amount of concrete used for conventional slabs.

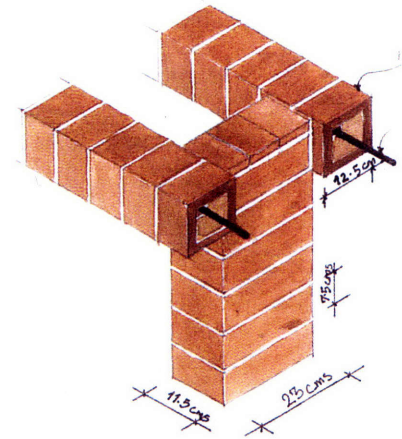
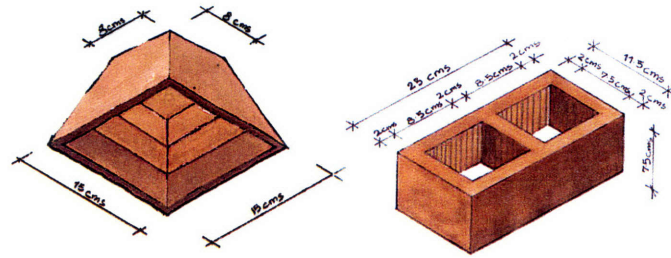
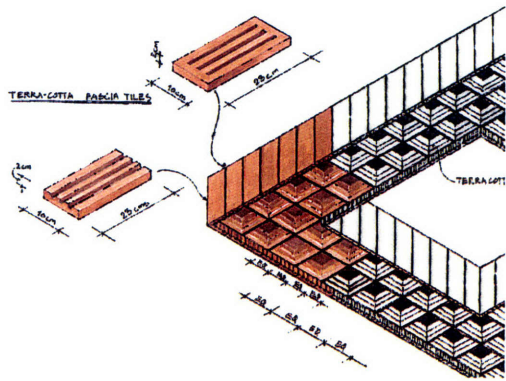
^{lxxx} Rahul Gore, *The Works of Nari Gandhi*, Graduate Thesis, Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (C.E.P.T.) (Ahmedabad: Unpublished Thesis, 1996).

While responding to its urban setting, the Patel residence possibly derives its grammar from Wright's design for the Robie House. The Robie house used concrete and brick as building material with Wright's signature horizontal projecting roofs. However, minimizing the use of concrete here, Nari Gandhi has adapted this design to the conditions of the place and requirements of the client. The horizontality, projecting roof planes and linear arrangement of living functions are similar to the Robie house but contain a lot more functions while including open-to-sky courtyards for natural light and ventilation. Like Wright's apt response to Chicago's climate by having a somewhat closed and insulated plan, Nari's organization and open-to-the-outdoors design of the plan is conducive to living in the climate of western India. Nari also modulated the roof overhangs by extending the terracotta slab and constructing a pergola similar to their slab construction method deployed for the interiors. So even if we can see Wright's influence on his work, we cannot conclude that Gandhi's creations now were imitations since he was revising them to suit the context.

Tejani's Apartment, Kanchanjunga, Bombay

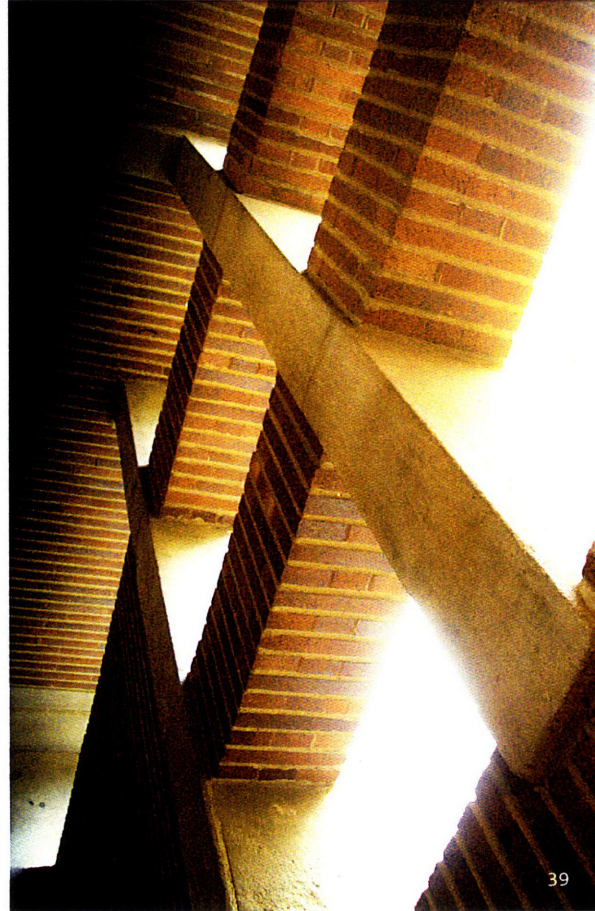
Two years after Charles Correa's famous building, Kanchanjunga was completed in Bombay, Nari was brought in by Mr. Malik Tejani

to design the interiors of his apartment in this building in 1985. This commission was a peculiar combination of Charles Correa's modernist vocabulary of structural and spatial arrangements and Nari's response in a quasi-Arts and Crafts tradition. The crisp modernist structure is heightened by Gandhi's addition of bands of wooden strips on the beams to accentuate their presence. Simultaneously, spaces that are organized on different levels are woven together by marble cladding, also done in strips. Subtle curves in the marble cladding transform into niches that accommodate down-lighting and small creepers. The larger, blank walls have woven wall hangings with animal and vegetal motifs. The predominant white washed interiors contrast with unusual aquamarine blue leather upholstery and the introduction of planter beds in the immediate living zone subdue the overall streamlined tectonics of modernist architectural expression. The most interesting piece of detail in this house is the pivoted door. Correa's classical modern concept of the pivoted door was upheld and anchoring the door as the crux of the composition, the entire lobby that leads one from the elevators to the main door was remodeled in a tube-like shape. The rectangular frame of the lobby was filleted at the edges and a smooth cornered rectangular section was achieved. This was painstakingly clad entirely in marble strips. The 'tube' culminates in the main door, which is made using numerous materials such as: wood, precious and semi



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Images of the Patel house show its grammar and the influence of Wright's Robie house but in a localized context



Left: Gandhi's Patel house

Right: Wright's Robie house

The two houses follow a similar grammar in structural expression but Gandhi uses reinforced brick and almost no concrete in the trabeated structure

-precious stones such as onyx, marble and agate in the form of flattened wafers kept together with poured lead. The result is a glowing panel of white and purple coloured stones that welcomes the clients and guests into a beautifully designed architecture behind it.

Nari's touch to the Kanchanjunga apartment marries the rich crafts he worked with to an outstanding machine-for-living-like spatial order situated in one of India's fastest changing cities. It was perhaps Nari's attempt at evoking a sense of awareness in his patrons, a sense of awareness of the traditional richness that surrounded them and that was losing itself during the transition into an urbanized setting.

Rustom Mehta's house, Korlai

Following Tejani's Kanchanjunga apartments, Nari's next project was for a friend, Mr. Rustom Mehta. Having recently worked with bricks, Nari decided to use wire-cut hollow bricks similar to the Patel House for this project in Korlai, a coastal village near Revdanda. Nari had selected the sea-facing property^{lxxxii} and his design was that of an elevated open arched pavilion facing the sea. The lower levels formed services, bedrooms and kitchen areas whereas the upper level served dining and living areas giving spectacular views of the sea. The base for this large roof was

^{lxxxii} C. Bhagat, "Remembering Nari Gandhi," *Indian Architect and Builder*, January 1994.

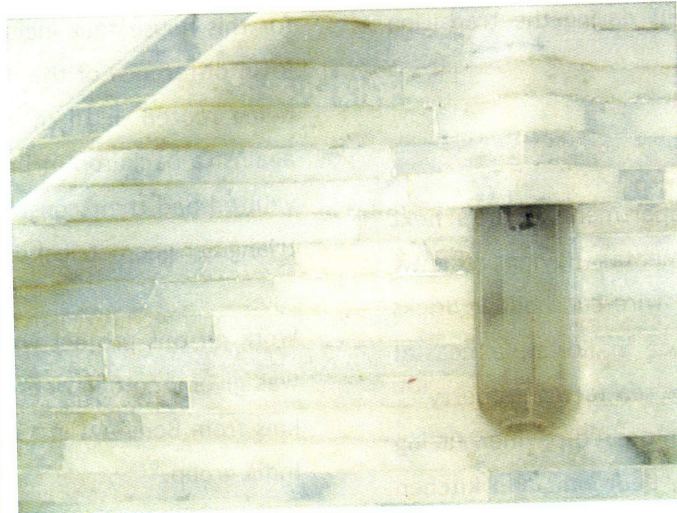
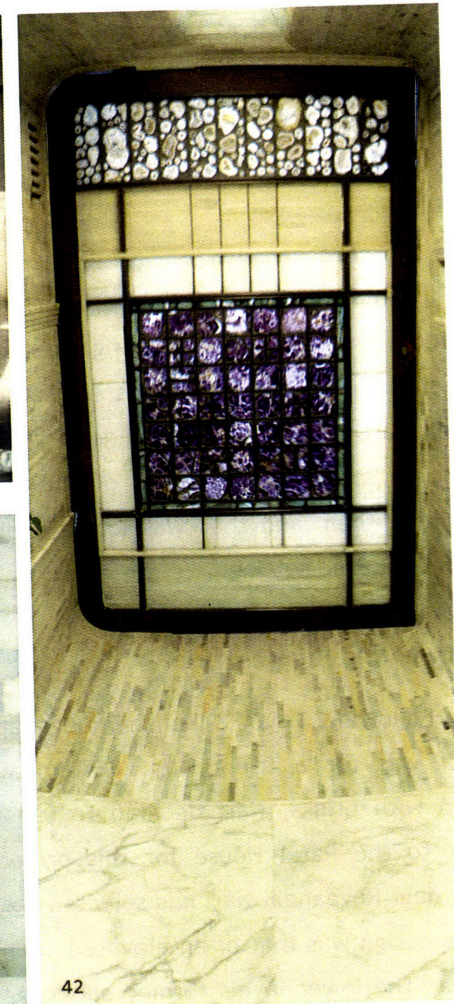
constructed first and had flying buttresses supporting it. Then the two parallel large arches were constructed while simultaneously being loaded with brick walls at their side to bear the thrust of the arch. Nari then played around with this brick wall and introduced stained glass in its openings; parallel to the way Laurie Baker treated the small brick-sized openings in his buildings using recycled materials.^{lxxxiii}

Mehta's Korlai house originally had a thatched roof that was replaced over time with a Mangalore tiled roof having wooden battens on the inner side. Nari Gandhi also designed the furniture for this house that included chairs having uneven legs to take the level difference of the dining area. Trees jut out from the house as being rooted in them and it creates an interesting juxtaposition against a backdrop of brick walls. Bedrooms on the lower level are vaulted and their construction seems to have been derived from a triangular geometrical division.

Work on this project was fairly quick, midway through which Nari was given another weekend house project in Lonavla, (roughly 100 kms from Bombay) in 1987 by the Jains, co-owners of the Times of India group.^{lxxxiii}

^{lxxxiii} There is no formal record of the two having met and their approaches are entirely different, but overlapping ideas like these often bring in speculative connections to what made them both have similar approaches to solving problems.

^{lxxxiii} Michael Hawker, "Celebrating the Works of Nari Gandhi," *Friends of Kebyar* (Friends of Kebyar, Inc.), November 2007: 36.



Kanchanjunga apartment: Subdued modernism



Rustom Mehta's Korlai beach house. Above, main arch facing the beach



Below: left and right: Photos show intermediate stages of construction. The main arch and buttress were constructed first - and piled sand is used as landfill during construction



This period also marked the beginning of a prolific phase of exceptional activity and intense creativity and Nari Gandhi embarked upon roughly 17 more projects in the next 6 years. Of these he had completed or at least initiated most until his untimely death in an accident in August 1993.

These final outbursts of ideas from Nari Gandhi also stand today as his best surviving works. They vary in complexity, size and type and most importantly, they synthesize his training at Taliesin, the philosophies that influenced his way of life and his experiments with earlier projects in India. Most importantly they reflect his maturity as a designer, builder and architect.

Jain bungalow, Lonavla

In 1987, Nari Gandhi began work on the Jain bungalow in Lonavla. Not uncommon, he had no sketch for the house and instead chose to spend time with the Jain family to learn more about their requirements to begin designing the house.^{lxxxiv} Placed on a sloping site, the design of the house nestled it in the heart of terraced gardens. Right from the site boundary, which was at a much higher level than the entry to the house, Nari built up receding terraces that hosted a variety of local plants and trees. The entry level houses a double-heightened living room, a kitchen and a prayer hall. To enter the other areas of the house one needs to take the 2 feet wide straight-flight staircase that runs centrally through the house dividing it in two parts with rooms flanking each side on different levels.

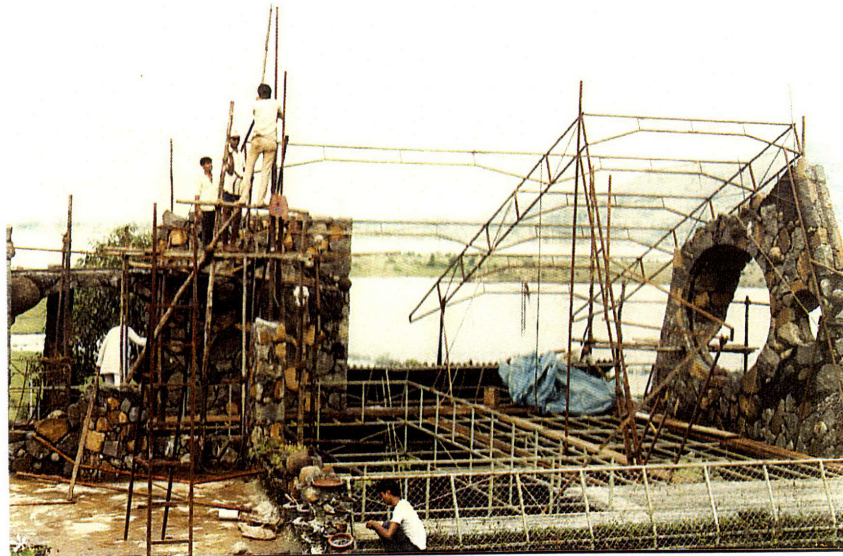
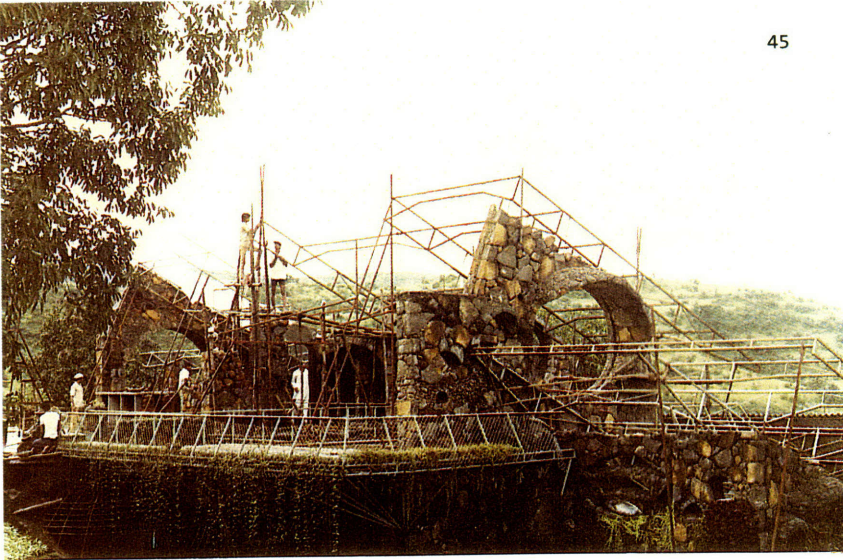
The structure consisted of stone masonry walls - deploying varying sizes and colours of igneous rocks from the Western Ghats, and steel trusses and struts. Inner courtyards were embellished with small chips of stones, similar to those in the Moon Dust house. The house followed a stepped profile throughout with a single roof plane, having dormer windows that unified the distinct rooms. Existing trees on site also dictated the spatial arrangement of the

^{lxxxiv} Ibid. Quoting from Mrs. Usha Jain's interview.

house. Overall, the house follows the profile of the slope and the roof resonates the incline of the mountain in the backdrop. Radiating struts shoot from the ground level to support the deep roof overhangs and exist in tandem to the plants and trees on site, inheriting an organic character. The arrangement of some of these trusses emerging from the masonry wall itself amplifies this effect.

Work on this house was also slow due to the nature of labour it required. Photos of the construction process reveal the crude nature of formwork used and the rather unsystematic progress on the site. For example, the photos show work has begun on the trusses while the walls are not fully completed. In another image, the balcony's platform is completed with a finished handrail, *jali* (lattice) and it also has some creepers dangling from it, but work on an opposite wall is not complete nor is the area roofed. This perhaps shows the non-sequential progress that Nari's work made on site. Without any working drawings or civil engineers to supervise the site's progress, Nari maintained an ad hoc construction method even in the more experienced years of his practice. The method can also be interpreted as a sort of 'organized disorder' that maintains its focus on the goal while doing what may seem haphazard antics.

This haphazardness perhaps gave him the liberty to keep experimenting with new materials and forms without having to adhere by a schedule. In a rough sketch made by Nari only to inform a friend, David Milner, in the United States sheds



Left: Top, creepers dangle from the balcony platform and the walls, roofs are yet to be completed.

Left: Workers install trusses on incomplete masonry walls.

Above: Photo of the entrance atrium of the Jain bungalow showing the gradation in stonework from base to the top with installed steel trusses

Photos from various parts of the Jain house show Nari's palette in organic expression with abundant use of rough local stone and contrasting finishes in steel, glass and smooth finished stone.

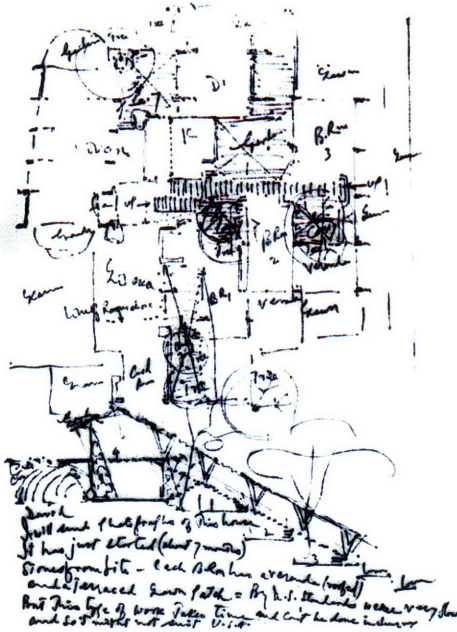
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light on Nari's patience with the kind of time and effort needed for such kind of work.^{lxxxv} It said:

"By U.S. standards, we are very slow but this type of work takes time and can't be done in a hurry and so it might not suit the U.S.A."^{lxxxvi}



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Nari's sketch (above) accompanied a letter to a friend, James Schildroth, explaining the time consuming nature of his style of working

^{lxxxv} Frank Laraway, "Nari's Rock," *Journal of the Taliesin Fellows*, no. 17 (Spring 1995): 16, 17.

^{lxxxvi} Nari's note on the Jain bungalow's drawing sent to a friend, James Schildroth, taken from: Michael Hawker, "Celebrating the Works of Nari Gandhi," *Friends of Kebyar* (Friends of Kebyar, Inc.), November 2007: 36.

Interestingly, Nari did not tile the entire roof with terracotta tiles. He used transparent plastic sheets over the courts and made planter beds in these courts to beautify them with natural vegetation. Due to the dust that a mountainous region such as Lonavla is prone to in the summer, these transparent sheets get coated with a layer of dust, making them translucent at times. The monsoons then bring a wash of rain on the sheets and once again reveal the house to the sky and the sky to the house.

Nari's sensitivity to nature and the climatic changes has been upheld by the Jains in maintaining the house over the years.

Bajaj Farmhouse, Karjat

Lessons learnt on the Jain house were carried over by Nari Gandhi in the farmhouse for Mr. Kishore Bajaj that begun in 1989. The Bombay based Mr. Bajaj has an active social life and Nari's design for the house embodies flamboyance. Beautifully situated on a sloping site that meets a placid lake, Nari designed a section similar to that of the Jain house. Rooms are arranged on different levels and follow the profile of the site to meet the waterbed. Deploying a mix of arcuated and rectilinear geometry, Nari worked on forms different from the Jain house. The Bajaj farmhouse is very open to nature and follows rhythms set by the existing natural vegetation on site. The hollow bricks used as modules for building corbel to match the inclination of the trees. In an interview, Mr. Gopi told me that the brick kiln in Morbi, where Nari wanted the

bricks from, had shut down but Mr. Bajaj had them operational once again only for the Bajaj farmhouse.^{lxxxvii} Nari Gandhi had worked with bricks on several occasions by now and like his last project that used hollow bricks - Rustom Mehta's Korlai house, the Bajaj house also used similar elements of flying buttresses, handrails, vaults and arcuated geometries.

A large inverted arch placed above a semicircular vault forms the entrance to the house. Although there is no central focal point to the house and it consists of several independent pavilions tied together by a multi-leveled courtyard, the entry-level structure is the largest pavilion. One can proceed towards the lower level pavilions either through the courtyard or through a forecourt leading to the master bedroom. The master bedroom extends into an external platform that overlooks the lake with an overpowering roof hitting the sightline as one stands. The handrail of this platform resembles the balcony at the Jain's Lonavla bungalow and as one sits on the built-in bench, one gets a clear view of the lake and surrounding landscape. The overhang of the fiber-reinforced plastic roof then frames the horizontality of this view, accentuating the breadth of the lake.

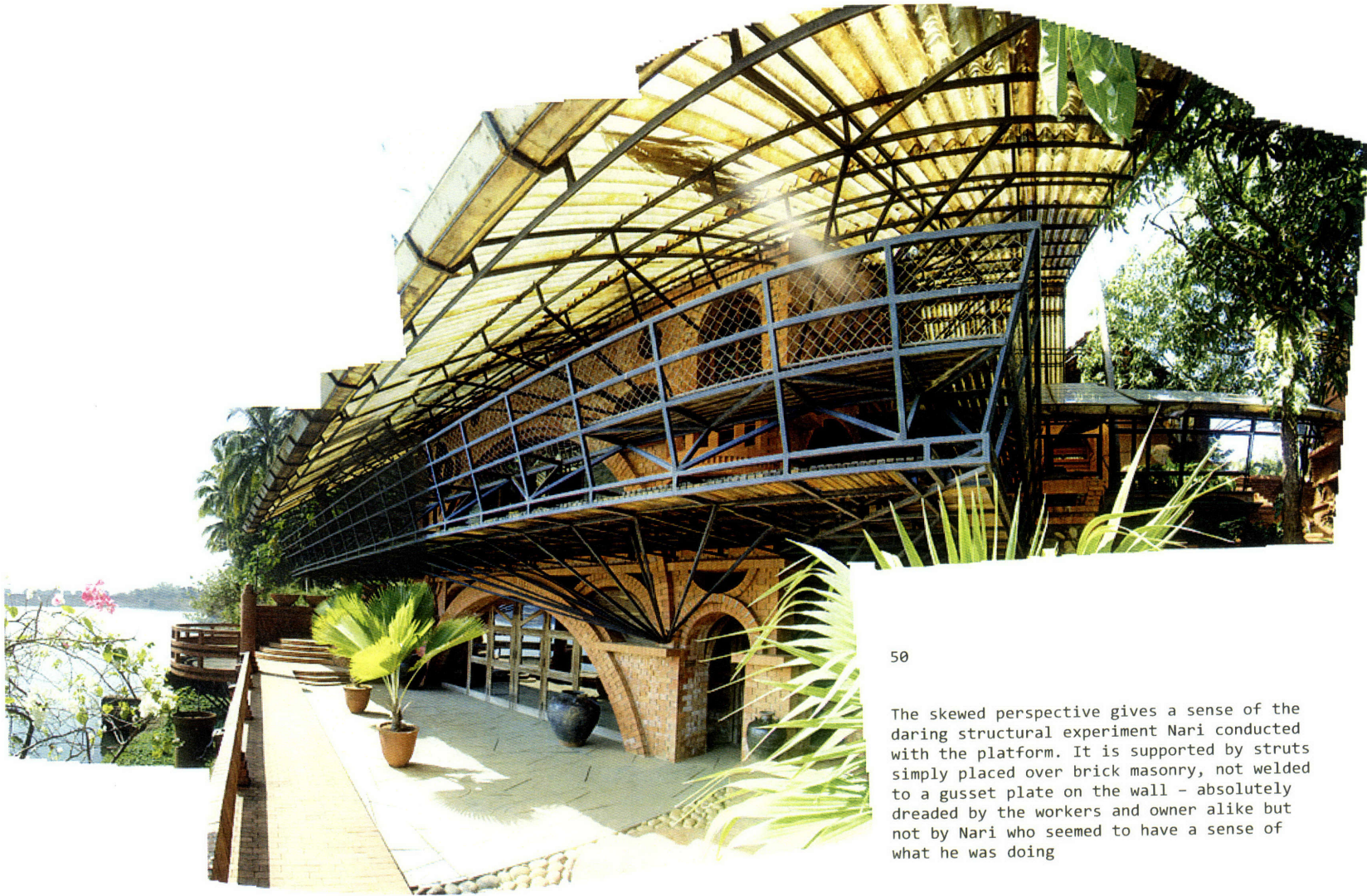
^{lxxxvii} Mr. Gopinath P. - (caretaker - Bajaj Farms), interview by Aftab Jalia, , *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Karjat, Maharashtra (Feb 22, 2008).

The platform is made in wooden battens and supported by radiating struts from the lower level. These struts are an enhancement on those used at the Jain bungalow. They radiate from the edge of an arch and support the overhead platform that is precociously cantilevering towards the lake. Openings from the bedrooms and living spaces facing the lake are arched. The farmhouse pavilions also seem to 'approach' the lake through their corbelled brick walls that emulate the existing trees on site bending towards the water body. This effect is sensitively exploited into not just the brickwork but also the steel supports so the resultant is a layer of nature, skin (of the wall) and external structure that are unified by posture.

Throughout the project, not a single tree was cut and the house was built around this principle of preservation. Photographs reveal that Nari made sure platforms framing the existing trees were made first and then began organizing the other spaces accordingly.



Photo shows how existing trees on site were maintained during the construction phase



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The skewed perspective gives a sense of the daring structural experiment Nari conducted with the platform. It is supported by struts simply placed over brick masonry, not welded to a gusset plate on the wall - absolutely dreaded by the workers and owner alike but not by Nari who seemed to have a sense of what he was doing



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Entry-level panorama of the Bajaj farmhouse

While working on the Jain and Bajaj projects, in 1991, Nari also undertook the commission to re-design Mr. Nasir Jamal's penthouse, owner of CityWalk Shoes. The penthouse is located in Colaba, very close to the famous Gateway of India that overlooks the Indian Ocean.

Jamal Penthouse, Colaba, Bombay

Unlike the crude stone chips used by Nari in the Lonavla weekend house, this penthouse uses regular shaped stone slabs for decoration. As one enters the house, one sees the flat Dholpur stone slabs cladded on the wall in a triangular geometry. With plenty of plants covering the elevated parapet wall of the house, the terrace becomes a recreational, semi-private space. An external staircase with hollow risers filled with glass-chips leads you to the upper level that houses a living room and a bedroom. Both rooms are cladded with rectangular stone slabs in colours of grey, cream and a maroonish shade of brown. Malaysian wood and Burma teak is used for the wooden furniture.^{lxxxviii} The door done for Mr. Jamal's penthouse is a further advancement of the Tejani apartment door in Kanchanjunga, having multi-coloured precious stones.

A final stroke of completion was the addition of sloping roofs having deep overhangs and that connected the two different levels-

^{lxxxviii} Rupali Khanna Ekbote, *Articulation of Materials in the Works of Nari Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Unpublished Thesis, 2001).

a trend Gandhi would never let go of in any project that had sloping roofs. The terracotta tiled sloping roof change the very character of the house even in the broader context of its setting.

Abu Asim Azmi's Penthouse, Colaba, Bombay

While working on Mr. Jamal's penthouse, Nari Gandhi also received the opportunity to work on Mr. Azmi's penthouse, which is located only three buildings away. A sweeping roof connects three levels of the Azmi penthouse and covers an external staircase that leads to the two upper levels, each having terraces and subtle level differences in them. The upper levels of the Azmi penthouse resonate Gandhi's work at Mr. Tejani's apartment in Kanchanjunga but still maintain an original flair.

Textures in wood and marble are at play in the Azmi penthouse and an elaborate steel grill, running along the large roof, carries pots of various plant species that protect the different levels of the house from prying neighbours living in closely placed buildings.

The lower levels of the buildings that house Jamal and Azmi's penthouses are styled in the modernist tradition and yet both these penthouses stand out amongst the modern-styled buildings of Colaba, expressing freshness in the neighbourhood even after 20 years of being designed.

Nari Gandhi also experimented with a triangular arch in the Azmi penthouse for the first time. This was to be a crucial design element in his second project for Mr. Tejani near the Tungarli dam.



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Left: Deep roof projections at the Jamal penthouse with terracotta roof tiles

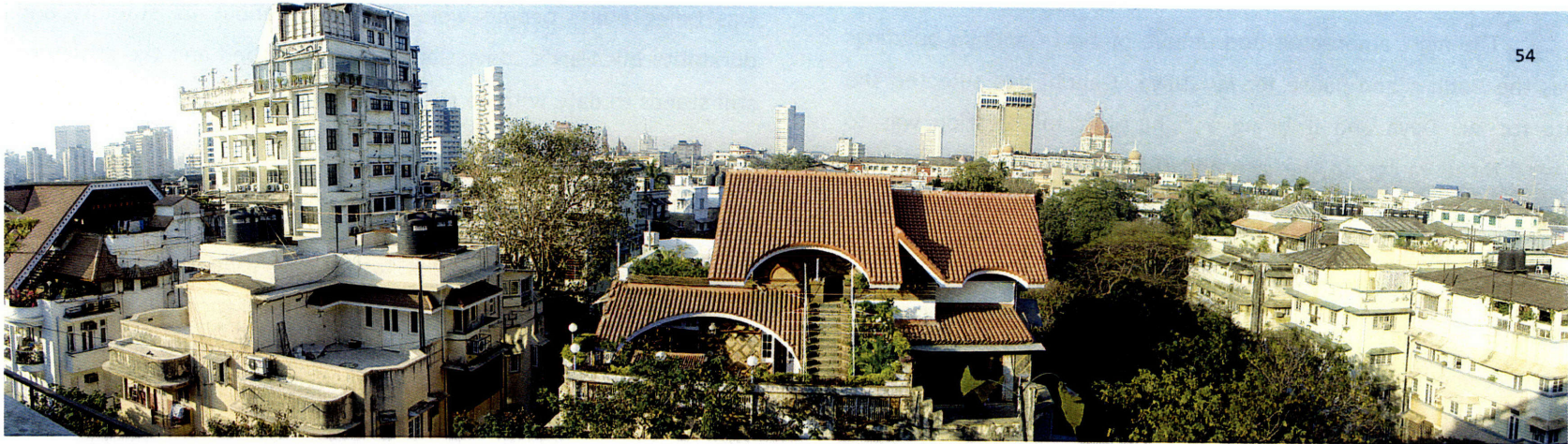
Right: (top) Detail of entry door made using precious stones and glass, set in poured lead and metal frames

(bottom) Multicolored flat stone slabs for wall cladding, Planter beds made of Dhoolpur



Left: The triangular arch tried by Nari Gandhi at the Azmi Penthouse. This was later tried again on a larger scale at Tungarli.

Right: V shaped struts to support the wood-battened roof rest on a marble half-wall furnished with leather cushions and seats



Above: A panorama of Colaba's skyline with the Taj hotel in the distance. The Jamal penthouse stands out with its regionalist vocabulary of terracotta in an otherwise modernist setting. A portion of Azmi's penthouse can also be seen to the extreme left

Left: The Azmi penthouse appears capped over an 'Art Deco' styled building

Madh Island house, Bombay

The most amorphous and unique of Nari Gandhi's buildings was the Madh Island house for Mr. Daya. Gandhi had selected the site for Mr. Daya and it being a tight plot, his solution was to create three vaults on the site and fill their external shells with earth to convert their crowns into a continuous mass of garden. The roof was thus a traversable garden, roughly the same size as the house and had punctures all over that were sometimes capped with domes made from glass-chips to throw light in the space below. Camouflaged in the already dense palm plantation on site, Nari planted more species of plants to create an even denser environment. Although the project had been conceived as early as 1980, Nari would still leave it unfinished through his demise in 1993. Aggravating this delay was Nari's elusive disappearance for about four years and sudden reappearance to take over the project again.^{lxxxix}

The Madh Island house is not only outstanding among Nari's designs for its form but also for the surface treatment and almost primitive cave-like interiors. The slabs used for cladding the interior are 10 feet in length and 2 inches thick. Barkya, a labourer on site, mentioned that work on the vault was started both ends and then

^{lxxxix} Mr. Sadruddin Daya, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (February 14, 2008). Mr. Daya had appointed another architect, Mr. Joshi, to complete this work for him and Nari refused to enter the site before all the work that Joshi had created was demolished! And so it was done.

met as they progressed towards the center.^{xc} Even as the structure was being built, people were concerned about its stability and durability but Nari's conviction was unperturbed and the structure still stands to date with no signs of failure.

The Madh Island house was embellished with numerous art pieces ranging in media from earthenware to metalwork. By now, Mr. Daya was familiar with Nari's tastes and style of working that embraced and expected the ubiquitous presence of art in the house. The decorative touches Nari added to the house were nothing less than art itself. The materials for glass skylight domes varied from broken glass chips, marbles and stained glass to beer bottles. Although recycled, these materials take on a role almost indispensable to the house. The terrace has a vaulted canopy made from nylon strings and mother-of-pearl shells. The one that exists to date was added later and Nari's original design was for a mother-of-pearl canopy suspended in tension, in a quasi-Frei Otto style.

Stonework in the exterior garden and punctures is similar to Nari's work in Moon Dust. Stone was broken into small chips and clad onto a surface coated with cement. Ceramic sculptures of people's faces were then introduced in this stonework and highly personalized touches like these are seen throughout the house.

^{xc} Mr. Barkya, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, (Feb 19, 2008).



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Camouflage: Madh
Island house:

If it was not for
the triangular
gates and the
glistening canopy
atop the house,
Daya's residence at
Madh Island could
easily pass as a
mound of landscape



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Madh Island house: This photo from the site shows the veritable plantation on site, blurring distinction between landscape and built-form

Projects running alongside included the interior design for Mrs. Shreya Dalal and Mr. Manu Rupani's apartments in Malabar Hill, Bombay; the Dalal residence in Awas, near Alibaug and the Tejani bungalow at Tungarli dam in Lonavla.

Tejani's Tungarli house

The Tungarli dam bungalow for Rafique Tejani is in close proximity to Nari's first project - the Mountain Lodge for Mr. Jal Gobhai. In a mythical way perhaps, Nari's first and last projects were in the same vicinity - as if life had seen a full circle.

The Tejani bungalow at Tungarli exemplifies Nari's understanding of organic architecture and its expressive bold forms reinstate the clarity of his fundamentals in tectonics. The house is located on a very steep slope and Nari did not initiate work on this site before he had blasted the slopes in terraces and allowed some vegetation to grow on them.^{xci}

Following a triangular geometry, the house blends in anamorphic forms in this structure. Reflecting a resolved approach, the three large arches, spanning 9 meters and only 50 centimeters thick,

^{xci} Rahul Gore, *The Works of Nari Gandhi*, Graduate Thesis, Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (C.E.P.T.) (Ahmedabad: Unpublished Thesis, 1996).

were erected first along with the 'mouth' that housed the toilet. The arches were successors to Nari's attempt at making a triangular arch for in Mr. Azmi's penthouse.

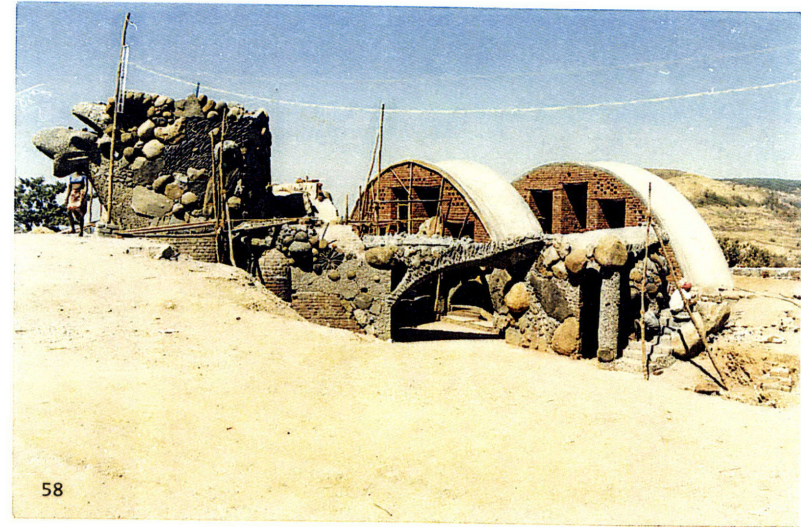


Image shows the construction of 3 arches and the 'tortoise-looking' toilet block on the left as the first structural elements

These arches were made using brick formwork at the base with a triangular edge running across it. Stones of varying sizes, a favourite play of Nari throughout his career, were then compacted into position in the triangular section of the arch. A rich mix of slurry was poured over it and allowed to cure till the stones became monolith. The result is an incredible triangular section that defies the kind of materials holding it. The thrust of these arches is negated by the addition of radiating struts that support trusses and the fiber-reinforced plastic roof. The roof and the arch are thus interdependent for loads and help sustain each other. The roof also



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Tejani's Tungarli bungalow follows an arcuate structural parti with stones of all sizes rising from the ground and making the house. Details are done in chipped-stone with glass and smoother rocks

completes the house as a 'small hill.' Its relationship to the mountainous locale is that of co-existence. Nari Gandhi also used massive sized stones on the site. Some of these were placed within the masonry while others contributed to the landscape of the house. Gandhi also pushed his expertise in using this technique in construction to its limits with unbelievable sizes of stones embedded in masonry.

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Massive stones used for masonry and landscape

The interior space is designed to diminish the distinction between exterior and interior. The massive single roof and voluminous interiors allow only the condition of being covered by the roof as being 'inside' the house. This difference is further blurred by large dormer projections in the roof that permit views of the hilly terrains beyond. The fiber-reinforced plastic sheets are translucent

in nature and filter an enormous amount of light under the roof, transforming the interiors into an exterior space. The rustic ambience, rough finishes and almost cavernous state of a defined 'house' evokes various kinds of responses from its inhabitants.

Ironically, on my visit to the house, the caretaker told me that in the village he hailed from, only animals lived in such cave-like houses and he was perplexed at my interest (or that of other frequenting architecture students) in the unusual cave-like dwelling!

I found this particularly interesting and believe Nari Gandhi may have been delighted to hear that comment. In simple language the man elevated Gandhi's creation from a 'designed' house to a non-existential state of being, a perfect synthesis of structure and nature, rendering it organic.

Madhusthali Vidyapeeth, Jharkhand

Nari's final works included the Madhusthali Vidyapeeth, a school for girls in Madhupur, Jharkhand and a shrine for a saint revered by Mr. Daya in Kolgaon, Ahmednagar. They were both left unfinished.

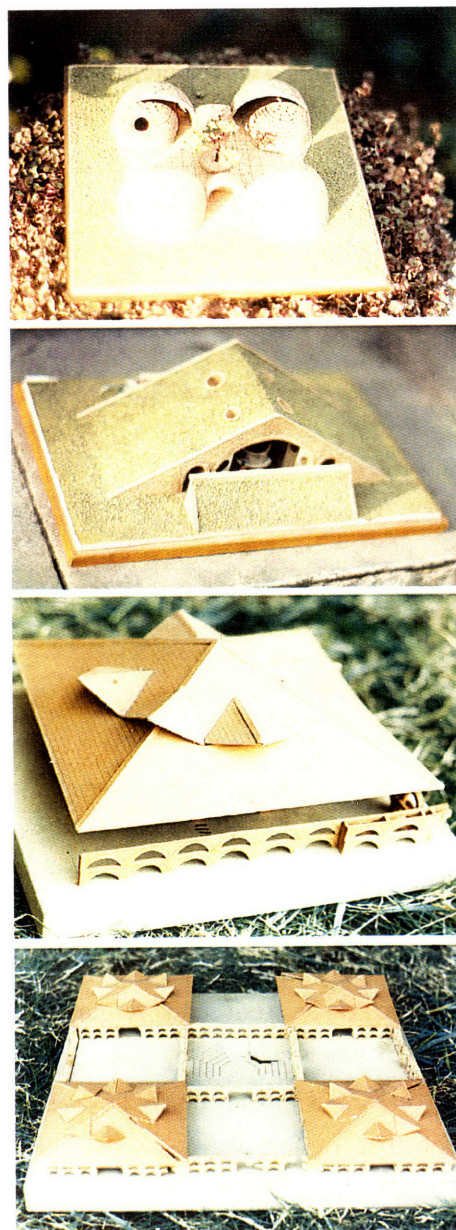
For Madhusthali, Nari had a couple of scaled models made to test his first (and unfortunately last) large-scale project. Studies of

early sketches show that the form was more or less clear from the beginning but one can conjecture that these models were made to ascertain the final forms with the little room a project of this scale offered to an architect who was used to experimenting and bringing down works that did not please him. Nor did the school have an elaborate budget to support a trial and error method.

Nari's response for Madhusthali's program was an arcuated brick construction capped by large roofs having dormers. The construction is considered to have been cost-effective, suiting the client's requirements and the rural context of the project. Nari even had plans of settling down in Madhupur eventually and encouraged his associate, Mr. Bhayani to consider the option as well.^{xcii} Mr. Bhayani also said: "Nari saw this as philanthropic - not in a glorified sense, just as something he could do for the villagers that were not as privileged."

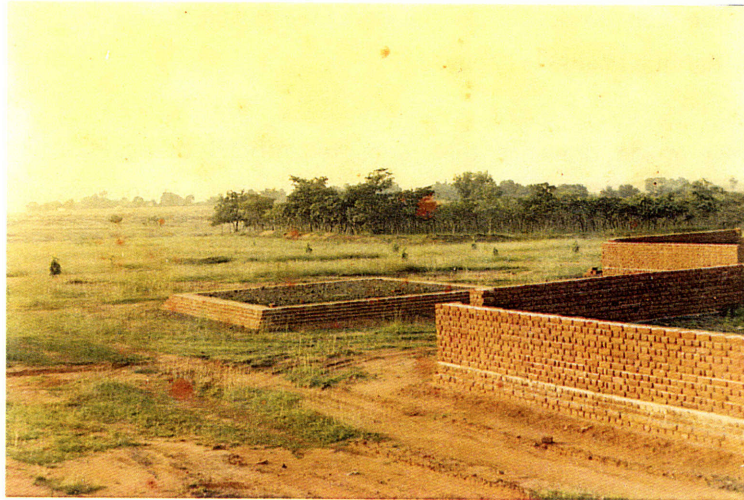
Madhusthali was a dream Nari Gandhi was not able to fulfill, but he gave a direction to Madhusthali to shape their buildings in. The school is active to-date, in Jharkhand.

^{xcii} Mr. Pravin Bhayani, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (Jan 17, 2008).



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Models for the Madhusthali project that Nari had made before finalizing the designs



63

Madhusthali:

Site photos show the gradual process of brick construction that took place during Gandhi's lifetime



Immersion through Instruction: *The Mystic On Site*

“I will draw and explain the function of some detail or design. But I will not sing the song and try to justify it. If they (the clients) cannot sense the music there is no point in justifying it anyway.”^{xciii}

Nari Gandhi

Nari Gandhi had a peculiar way of conveying his ideas. His exchange with clients, associates and laborers rarely took place in the form of sketches but mostly through metaphorical analogies, mythical stories, blunt retorts and drawing on mud.

Trained in drawing and well conversant with the regional languages of the state, Nari Gandhi still preferred being ambiguous and imaginative in instruction.

Nari Gandhi's sketches expressed a lot more than the plan, section or view on it. They have scribbled ideas, notes for clients that say:

“Your suggestions are not welcome. Now, or in the future.”

Or sometimes more accommodating ones for another client, saying:

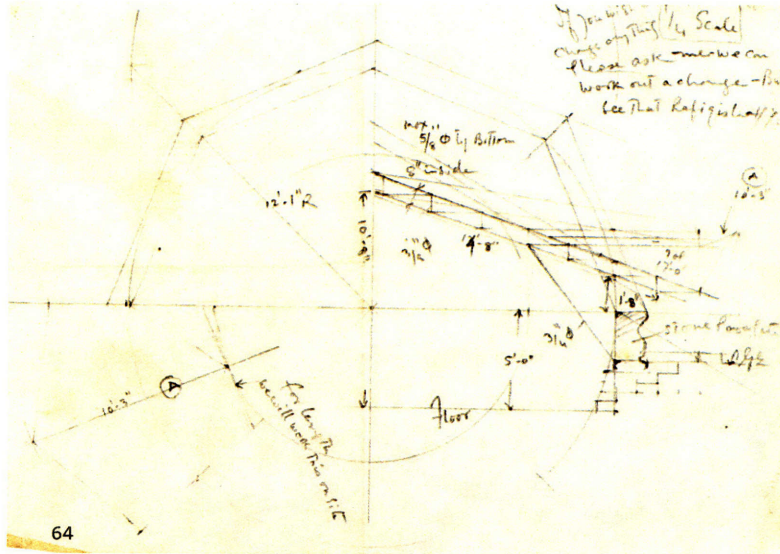
^{xciii} Nari Gandhi to Pervin Eichert, "A State of Becoming," *Inside/Outside*, Oct 1978.

“If you want to change anything, please ask me. We can work out a change. Please see that Rafique (Malik) is happy.”

He never made drawings that were for official purposes. The approvals for his buildings were obtained through associates or friends he knew. On site, he instructed labourers by ‘doing’ or drawing on mud with a stick.^{xciv} He would assign work for a week and return then to see the progress.

Approval for a job done would mean a pat, a ‘good’ or more instruction for the next assignment whereas, disapproval would often result in a restless ‘bring it down.’ According to Mr. Sudhir and Mr. Barkya who worked for Mr. Gandhi as labourers on several sites, most workers would be petrified at Nari Gandhi's arrival. As much as they were fond of this simply dressed, *Parsi* gentleman, they were equally or perhaps more in awe of his temperament should they fail to produce an assigned task.

^{xciv} Sudhir (caretaker - Madh House), interview by Aftab Jalia, , *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Madh Island, Maharashtra (Feb 19, 2008).



Two sketches showing the quality of drawing that Nari made with scribbled comments for his clients.

“If you haven’t understood his (Nari Gandhi’s) instructions, you should ask him again. Ask several times until you are sure you know what he wants. But to do something badly is an absolute catastrophe. He would get very angry and walk away from the site. Sometimes he may shout at you and then after a while come and talk to you nicely. He had a bad temper but would never stay angry for a

long time. After something like this he’d sit with us to eat sometimes.”^{xcv}

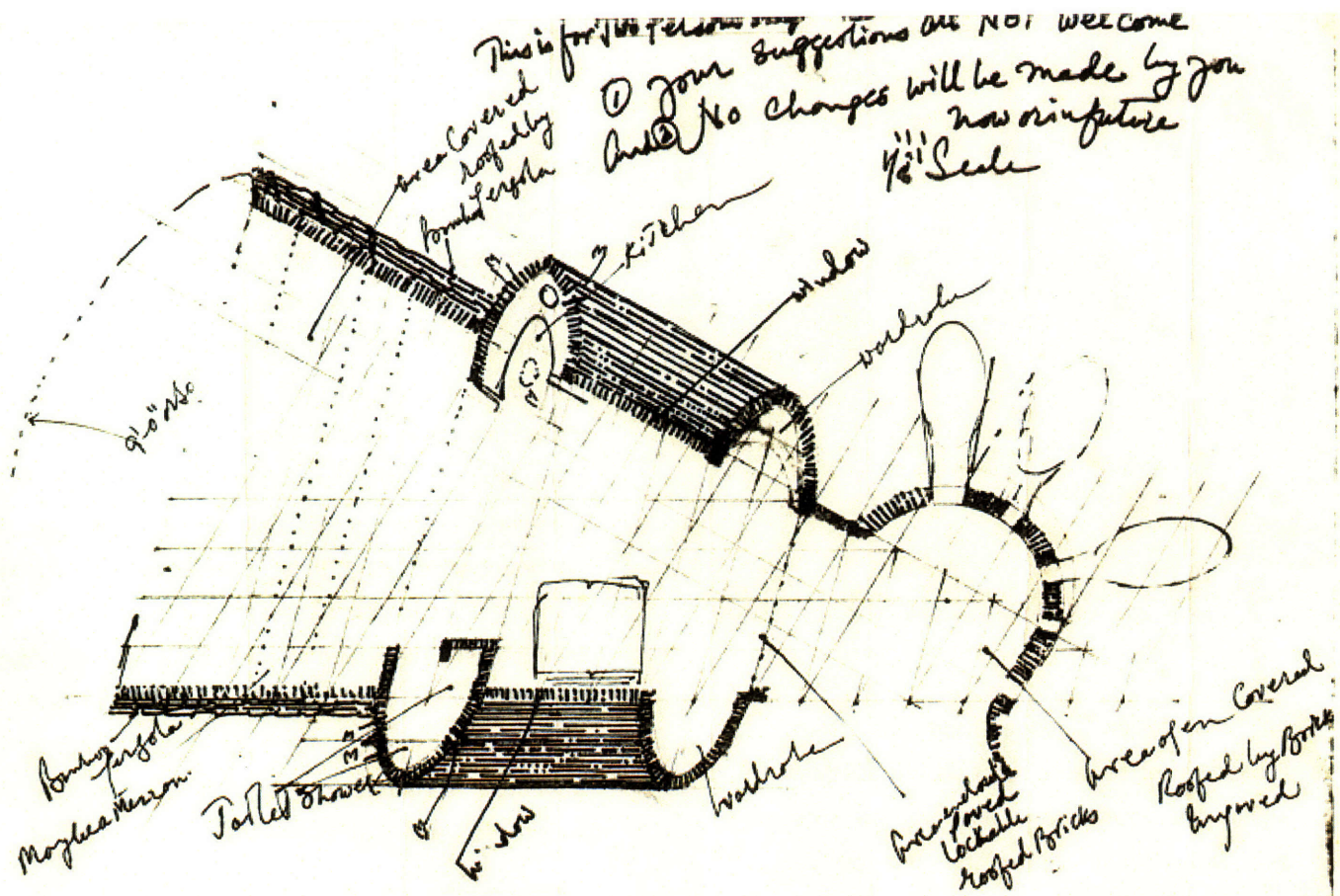
Drawings appear to have been a liability. “The design was always developing in his mind as he continued working on a project.”^{xcvi} Sometimes, like in designing a resort scheme for Mr. Mukhi, Nari’s sketches are extremely clear and illustrative of the form that he had in mind, which were later developed into scaled models and published by Mr. Mukhi for the advertisement brochure of Heartland Clubs and Resorts.^{xcvii} But more importantly, what we also witness here, in the late practice of Nari’s, is the commodification by patrons of the icon that Nari Gandhi has become by the late 1980’s - at least among certain clientele.

In this case, Heartland Resorts Pvt. Ltd. published Nari’s name as the architect of the unbuilt project on their brochure - with a clear intention of advertising to a niche audience that Nari’s work appealed to. What is also unclear is whether Nari would have supported such a happening. After having designed mostly

^{xcv} Sudhir (caretaker - Madh House), interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Madh Island, Maharashtra (Feb 19, 2008).

^{xcvi} Mr. Pravin Bhayani, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (Jan 17, 2008).

^{xcvii} This particular site for Heartland Clubs and Resorts Pvt. Ltd. is located close to Pune city, India. The scaled models along with the brochure was made posthumous and I wonder if Nari would have encouraged a poster like this - or perhaps played a part in making it better at least.



From
 May 6th 91

Two sketches showing the quality of drawing that Nari made with scribbled comments for his clients.

residences and remodeling projects, designing a club and resort may be seen as an inventive discursiveness that Nari would have loved to indulge in but I doubt if he would have enjoyed or even allowed being used as a brand for selling beautiful villas or any other product.^{xcviii}

Perhaps this explains why his drawings lack sheen. They have a child-like quality in them. They're playful and not pretentious. His sketches are vividly illustrative but are not concerned with their aesthete nor seek to become paintings for a fashionable "Gandhi Sketches" edition by a famous publication house. They are not done to impress a client into buying the project or to win a competition, but rather to give a sense of direction, an evasive hint of the resounding rigour that Nari's fantastical imagination was shaping.

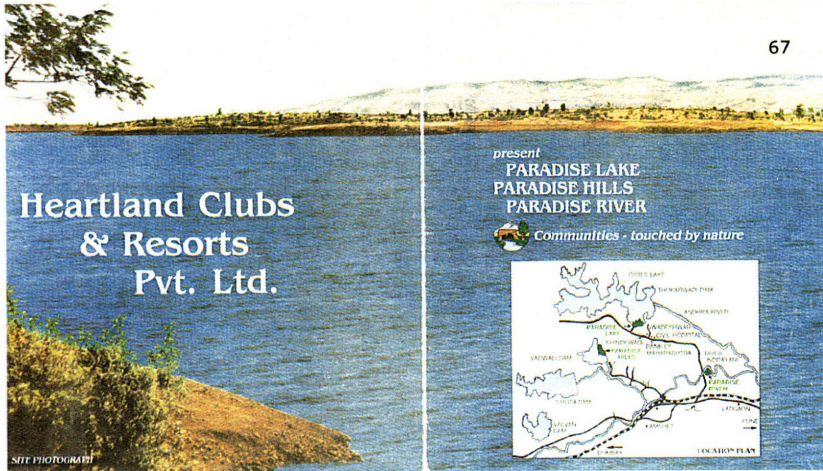
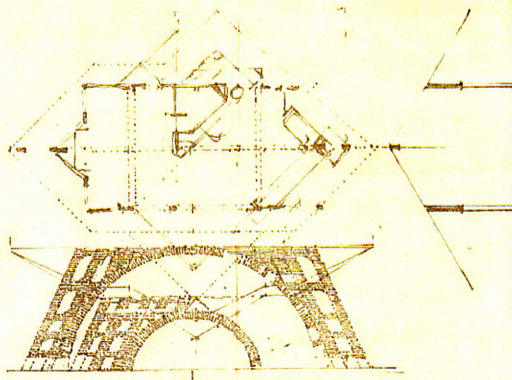
Mr. Pravin Bhayani spoke to me about an incident that took place at the Indian actress, Asha Parekh's house when she was considering commissioning an architect to design her house in the up-market, sea-facing locality of Juhu, Mumbai. "Dady Banaji put Nari's name forward for the job. Dady was Nari's friend who was

^{xcviii} In a letter to a Taliesin fellow, Frank Laraway, Nari had expressed his discontent over the commercialization of Taliesin after Wright's death, which makes me speculate if he'd even prefer something like that happening to him. For him, architecture was a personal endeavor, free from any kind of commercial gain. To then commodify it and make money would betray this principle.

aware of the kind of work Nari enjoyed and was capable of doing. After meeting Asha Parekh once, Nari was chosen for the job and three months later, to Ms. Parekh's concern, when he still hadn't produced a single drawing, Dady Banaji took Nari along to meet her once again. An unassuming personality in khadi, Nari stood in front of a now half-confident, half-worried mega film star: Asha Parekh, who asked Dady if Nari had any drawings to show her for the proposed house. On hearing this, Nari reached for a crumpled tracing tucked under his arm and extended it to her. She made a face and after seeing the half-clear, rather elusive drawing, agreed to still keep him on board - perhaps hoping for a miracle."^{xcix}

Mr. Bhayani also doesn't recollect Nari making many drawings for the house but rather worked on site and 'disappeared' for days at a stretch, returning every now and then to resume work.

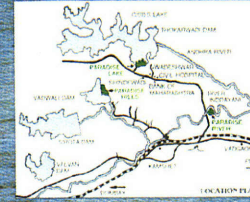
^{xcix} Mr. Pravin Bhayani, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (Jan 17, 2008). Mr. Bhayani has maintained a log of his time spent with Nari and was most willing to read this out whenever we discussed about Nari's association with his clients.



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the architect

Another incident that was revealed to me was of a drawing that Nari made for Mr. Kishore Bajaj. This drawing was on a wedding card and Mr. Bajaj still has it with him as a remembrance of Nari's.^c One cannot help dismissing the fact that Nari also had a personal connection with some of his clients, a relationship that went beyond commissions and projects. There is a clear sense in some clients to still want an association with Nari and to do something for his less known status - even if it may be as simple as supporting a researcher to see Nari's works.

Also, an important issue of relevance here is the desire to possess a sketch of Nari's - which the clients and associates recognize may be something of a rarity or just that the emotional connection a client has with his commission that Nari, through his creative contribution has made so special. In either case, if an architect is able to make this incredible association with his work and in turn passing on this fervour to a client - we might just have better a heightened sense of ownership and responsibility towards a larger physical fabric of private and public spaces among patrons of architecture. A thought that may seem too far-fetched in today's world but one that is much needed esp. in India - the world's largest growing democracy where inculcating an appreciative civic sense for public space and architecture has been sacrificed through rapid urbanization.

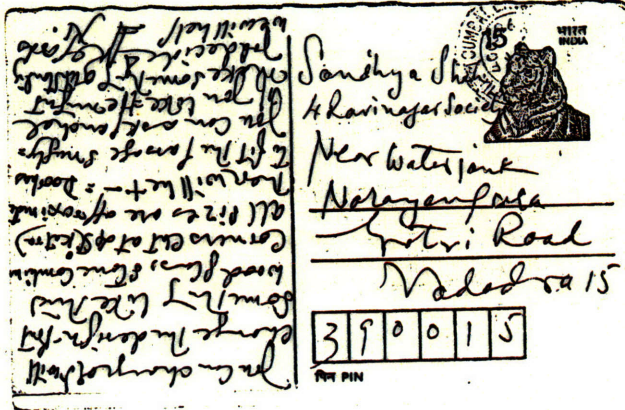
^c Mr. Kishore Bajaj, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, (Jan 21, 2008). I was not able to see this particular sketch myself but Mr. Bajaj said he has treasured it.

Nari also spontaneously drew details of doors, plans and sections on whatever he had around him. Communication was important. The medium was irrelevant. He drew this door detail for Mr. Bajaj's house on a postcard to his associate, Sandhya Shah in Baroda, and the card carries details of what he's thinking. The spontaneity emerges from a sudden rush of ideas - a thought similar to what Nari wrote in a letter to Frank Laraway, a colleague from Taliesin: "Sophistication comes at the end of a creative surge. There is something very robust and barbaric in the first flush of creative impulse..."^{ci}

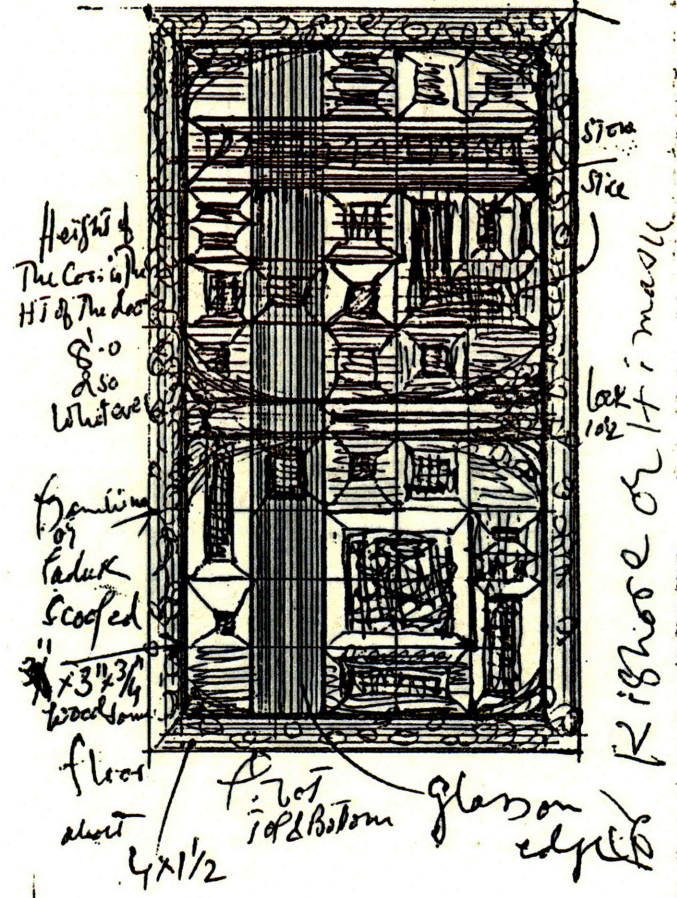
The quality of his sketches exuberates the same 'barbaric' notion. They are not carefully drafted technical drawings, but almost-scribble-like at times. Nari's sketches appear more to give relief to his mind that is engrossed in figuring out a detail or that is constantly working on a project. At such a point, the sketching medium available seems to have been irrelevant.

The illustrations of the following two sketches elucidate this idea.

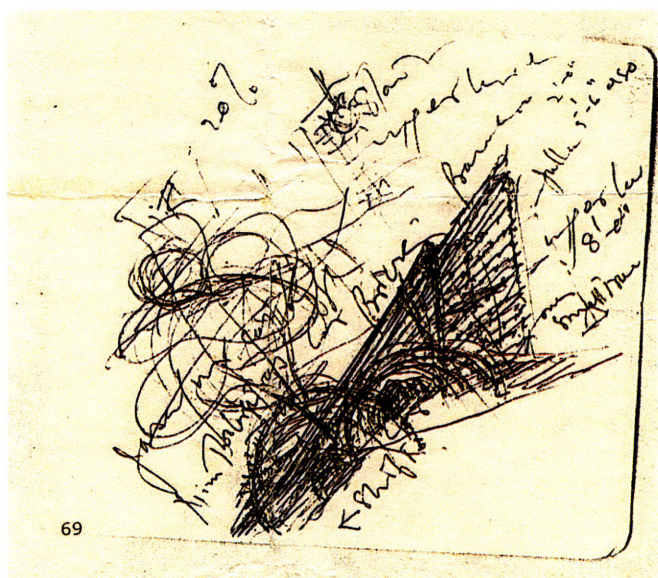
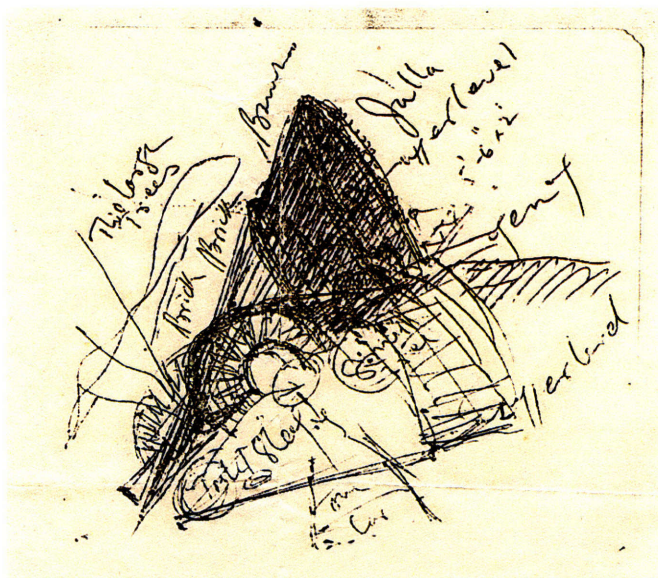
^{ci} Deirdre Treacy Babcock, "Insights from Nari's Own Hand," *Journal of Taliesin Fellows*, no. 17 (Spring 1985): 2-3.



Width of the Corridor is the
 width of the door
 about 4' - 6' or whatever



68 Postcard (front and backside) sketched upon by Nari, sent to an associate, Sandhya Shah, explaining in detail the construction and materials for a door at the Bajaj farmhouse



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Concept sketches for Mr. Dava's Madh Island residence

On site, Nari had his own way of explaining a detail to the labourers. He'd create a mystical aura around the very act of building. Therefore, breaking glass into chips would be a ritual - learnt by one and passed on to many^{ci}; building a slanting wall alongside a tipping coconut tree would be surreal, projecting struts for a truss to support an overhead roof would be referred to as: "Teer lagaado"^{ci} - (trans. "deploy the arrows") and the workers would suddenly be immersed in the act of constructing the place.

Another example is when Nari stood up on Madh Island house's barrel-vault and instructed his workmen to make an arch in the shape of a 'sling that a farmer swings' - and actually enacted the throw to demonstrate.^{civ} The shape was realized in the form of a non-structural buttress, which is accentuated by a teasing metallic pot that seems to support the buttress but does not - and was put there later.

Indeed, Nari's works sought an ambit of fantasy in them and the man seem to have been immersed in the processes of conception, design and construction - innovating constantly at every level.

^{ci} Mrs. Barkya, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, (Feb 19, 2008). She spoke enthusiastically about Nari wanting to involve many workers in this and since she was the one to pick up quickly, she was asked to train the newcomers.

^{ci} Mr. Pravin Bhayani, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (Jan 25, 2008). He exclusively spoke of the 'Teer Lagaado' reference and said that the workers would love the

^{civ} Sudhir (caretaker - Madh House), interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Madh Island, Maharashtra (Feb 19, 2008).

Such subtleties in on-site participation by the 'boss' created a sense of awareness among the workers to what was shaping on site and Nari could then easily absorb the workmen into enjoying what they were doing. We can also deduce, from such mythical creations, the quality of emotional association Nari Gandhi exhibited to his work and workmen. He perhaps shared the knowledge with them that his kind of work - working in remote sites, with large boulders and intricate chipped-stone work at the same time, was labour-intensive. Mythical stories like the ones Nari narrated to his labourers was to perhaps share the load of his own hectic lifestyle and the hard work done on site by the labourers.

"I don't see why it isn't a more profitable thing to make the lives of the workers happy, they'll be more productive."^{cv}

The quality that clearly comes out here is keeping a humane approach while designing a project and placing human life at its pinnacle. Nari certainly adopted this teaching and extended it to the labourers on site.

The thought for 'learning by doing' is indeed a Taliesin trend but compared to the meticulous drawings made at Taliesin's famed drafting room - Nari's disconnect with formal drawings seems to indulge in indifference to problems that could be tackled on site.

^{cv} Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (New York: Bramhall House, 1953). Wright was talking about the issues guiding the design of a factory building and why the human values involved in such a design was the most important issue.



Photos on left and above illustrate the form that Nari's ideas for the 'teer' (arrows) took on site

The image below shows the 'sling' conceived at the Madh Island house





An angled window at the end of a tapering truncated cone forms an Escher-like effect merging the background and the reflecting foreground

One example that establishes this occurred at Daya's Moon Dust residence. A part of the living room had a large mural wall designed and put up by Nari Gandhi himself. This sun-burnt brick wall was made by instructing the workers to make "5 of these, 10 of those (textured bricks)..." The crude quality of instruction produced an astonishing product. Gandhi kept the complexity of his idea to himself, not bothering the semi-skilled workers with detailed drawings or sketches and executed the mural in a highly personalized fashion.

This working method is substantiated by Gandhi's belief:

"All art must be spontaneous and cannot be planned."^{cv} - Nari Gandhi

His disconnect from sketches and indifference to submit timely drawings to his clients gave Nari Gandhi the liberty to continue experimenting with new stylistic expressions, materials and structure that have resulted in the variety of projects he has realized. It also clearly liberated him from the hassles of what we today see daily in architectural offices - getting permissions from

^{cv} Rahul Gore, *The Works of Nari Gandhi*, Graduate Thesis, Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (C.E.P.T.) (Ahmedabad: Unpublished Thesis, 1996).

local authorities at various stages of the project. However, someone else had to take on that responsibility for him.^{cvii}

In a formal analysis of his sketches, we can see that Nari Gandhi would superimpose orthographic projections to overlay plan-section-elevation and resolve their geometries. This technique was prevalent even in Taliesin and although the trigonometric relationships are clearly evocative of the Frank Lloyd School; the superposition of projections seems to have been a useful technique to give a plastic shape to forms spontaneously germinating in his mind. Once the rare sketch was done, it was sent off for the client or the site supervisors but Nari did not collect these and keep a record of any kind. He did not find it necessary to compile his sketches, photographs or document any of his works. According to Jigeesha Thakore:

"Nari considered materialistic belongings to be ephemeral and therefore did not attach himself to anything of the kind. He loved photography and would take numerous pictures. But he never cared to keep them well documented."^{cviii}

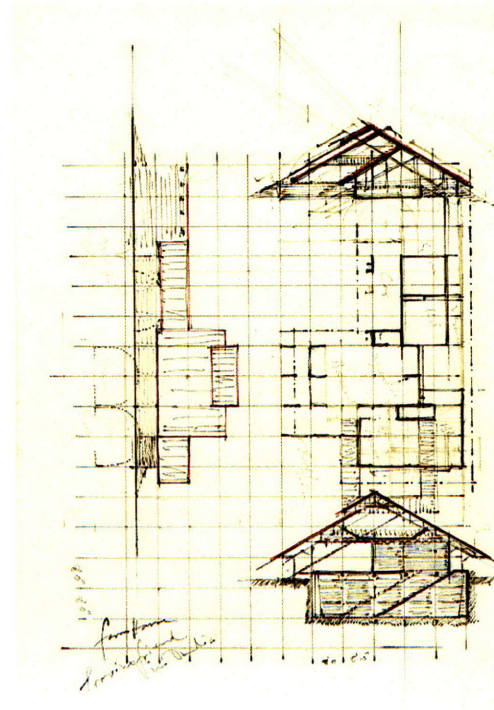
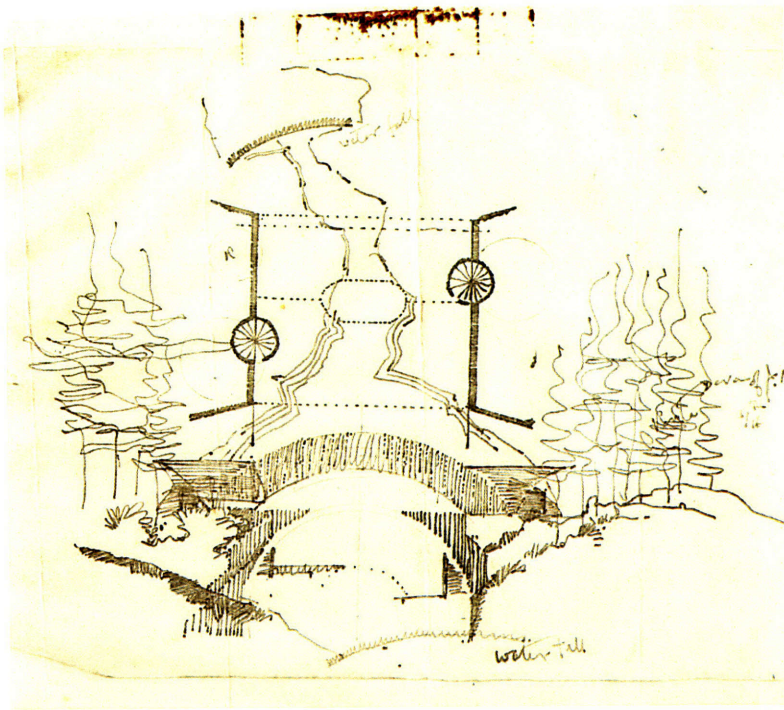
^{cvii} Mr. Pravin Bhayani, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (Jan 17, 2008).

^{cviii} Jigeesha Thakore, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, (May 12, 2008).

Nari Gandhi's personal statement in an interview to Pervin Eichert in 1978 sums up his attitude to drawings:

"A house is organic, it grows. I need a heart and mind (to build) not a static blueprint."^{ci}x

^{ci}x Pervin Eichert interviewing Nari Gandhi, "A State of Becoming," *Inside/Outside*, Oct 1978.



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Nari's sketch
for the
Heartland
resorts
project and a
semi-formal
drawing of
Mr. Nasir
Jamal's
penthouse in
Colaba,
Mumbai

Geometry: *Mathematical Abstraction of Nature*

“The box is a Fascist symbol, and the architecture of freedom and democracy needed something basically better than the box. So I started to destroy the box as a building.”^{CX}

One essential difference in the ‘open-plan’ of Frank Lloyd Wright and Nari Gandhi’s open plan (Patel House, Mountain Lodge, Tejani’s Tungarli house) is that Nari’s houses actually opened up to the tropical bliss of moist air and rain, to the sun and to nature. His clients did not always like this. Mr. Daya narrated an incident for the Moon Dust house where Nari had left a ventilator strip open to allow natural sea breeze to flow, which also invited birds, filth and made dust settle in parts of the house. Daya’s wife complained of the nuisance it caused and Mr. Daya then had it sealed. When Nari found out he was furious at Mr. Daya’s intervention and said: “Would you splash a streak of red on an artist’s painting?!”

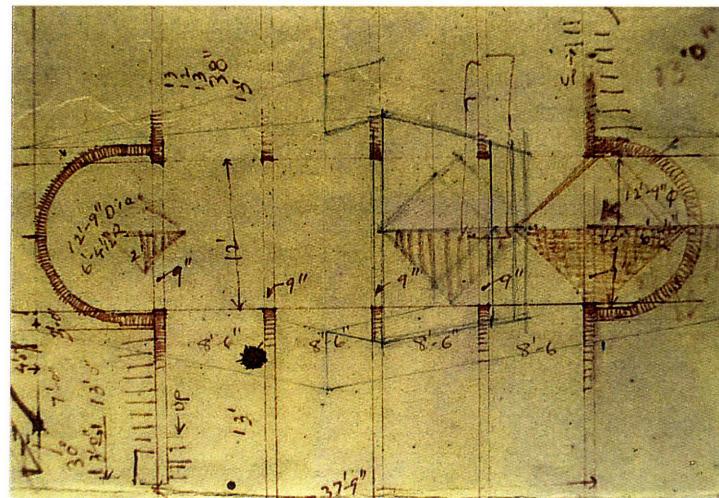
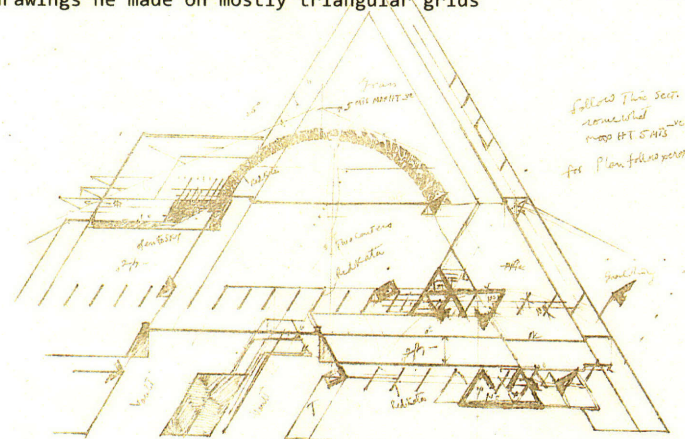
Another interesting connection is his preference of skewed geometry for expressing structure. This is exemplified in the Tungarli project that takes on a triangular geometry with a mix of unusual organic forms. Also, because these organic forms could not be easily determined on paper, Nari chose to resolve them on site while construction. This is why we see calculations and geometric

^{CX} Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (New York: Bramhall House, 1953).

drawings in his plans or sketches but never a serpentine line appearing in his drawing.

Nari’s choice of geometry reflects in these drawings he made on mostly triangular grids

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Frank Lloyd Wright believed that 'Proportions came in (architectural design) much later. It is the 'spirit' that must come in first. Nothing could be imposed onto a design or an assemblage, prior to its abstract self.^{cx1} This 'abstract self' that Wright was referring to was the quintessential understanding he believed an architect ought to have of the given site, materials chosen and the nature of people about to inherit the space being designed. Clearly remarking on Le Corbusier's Golden Section driven designs, Wright interpreted proportions only as tools to implement his designs. They served the important role for structural principles but not for organizing space.

Nari Gandhi's sketches suggest that his designs were derived from a strong sense of geometry. Once the parallelogram grid was laid out, Nari Gandhi took liberty in structural expression that was based on a personal understanding of the materials to be used.

"Architecture is abstract. Abstraction has no reality except as it is embodied in materials. Realization of form is always geometrical - it is mathematic. We call it pattern. Geometry is the obvious framework upon which nature works to keep her scale in 'designing'. She relates things to each other and to the whole, while meantime she gives to your eye most subtle, mysterious and apparently spontaneous irregularity in effects."

^{cx1} Elizabeth Kessler, "The Whole Man," *Architectural Record* (McGraw Hill Publication), 1975: 10.

"To arrive at expressive 'form' an architect must work from within, with the geometry of mathematic pattern. But the so works only as the rug maker weaves the pattern of his rug upon the warp. Music, too, is mathematic. But the mathematician cannot make music for the same reason that no mere builder can make architecture. Music is woven with art, upon this warp that is mathematics. So architecture is woven with a super-sense of building upon this warp that is the science of building. It is also mathematical, but no study of mathematic can affect it greatly. In architecture, as in life, to separate spirit and matter is to destroy both."^{cxii} - Frank Lloyd Wright

^{cxii} Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (New York: Bramhall House, 1953).

No Fees, *Please*

“Today everything is understood in terms of money, nobody today, really renders service in the true sense.”^{cxiii} - Nari Gandhi.

To add to the unusual peculiarity of Gandhi’s practice, money seemed to have been secondary to not just his work but also his outlook on life. The value of money was clearly there but I have not been able to find any instance where he demonstrated a dire need or greed for money. This is something I found to be commendable and extraordinarily destructive for Nari.

This was all the more remarkable because Nari’s clients were very rich people - Mr. Sadruddin Daya, Mr. Kishore Bajaj, Mr. Nasir Jamal, Mr. Abu Asim Azmi, Mr. Vasant Sheth and Ms Asha Parekh so fees should never have been a problem for Nari to ask, but he just didn’t seem interested. Mr. Bajaj recalls when he learned that Nari desired a wide-angle camera and out of gratitude for Nari’s work for him, he managed to secure a model, after a much trouble, from a seller in Kobe, Japan. “When Nari was gifted the camera he refused to touch it! So I said: ‘Don’t touch it. I’ll leave it there. I know you want it.’ And after a while he took it.”^{cxiv}

^{cxiii} Mrs. Meena Chowdhury & Manisha Shah, “An Interview with Mr. Nari Gandhi,” *Garodia School of Interior Design - Kala Nirmiti*, April 1993.

^{cxiv} Mr. Kishore Bajaj, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, (Jan 21, 2008).

Kishore Bajaj also expressed his astonishment at a purchase Nari made for him during his trip to Rajasthan. Nari bought him a carpet for Rs. 70,000/- and didn’t bother to ask for a reimbursement. He saw it as a gift for a client who was also a friend. Nari Gandhi must’ve seen something fit for Kishore Bajaj in the artifact to buy it at impulse and gift it to him. Mr. Bajaj was very touched but also perplexed at Nari’s relationship to money that seemed to withdraw when offered fees but would not shy at spending exorbitantly on something he found worthwhile.^{cxv}

Mr. Barkya recollects a time when Nari had forgotten his ‘*jhola*’ or the arm-bag on the Madh Island site. The bag had about Rs. 50,000 in it and Mr. Barkya was surprised at Nari’s carelessness to have forgotten about it completely. Nari returned after 3 weeks and asked if he had forgotten the bag with Barkya. Mr. Barkya returned the bag that had all the money to which he now recollects as: “*Saab bahut khush tha. Woh aise humaara test leta tha.*” (Translates to: “The boss (Nari) was very happy. He would test us for our morality through such incidents.”)^{cxvi}

^{cxv} Mr. Kishore Bajaj, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, (Jan 21, 2008).

^{cxvi} Mr. Barkya, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, (Feb 19, 2008). It was interesting to me that Barkya thought Nari Gandhi did something like that to test him for his moral values, maybe Nari did - or perhaps Nari was just careless enough to have forgotten his bag this one time.

Nari might have been indifferent to money but he made it a point that the labourers on site were paid on time. He'd take them along and ask the client to pay them directly so that the workers could carry on with their work smoothly and be confident about their master's intentions. Sometimes, Nari Gandhi would also donate all the money he received as fees to a welfare organization like a colleague, Jigeesha Thakore's animal welfare fund.^{cxvii}

Mr. Rustom Mehta, another friend and client of Nari's recollected: "He once returned a cheque I gave him for his fees with all kinds of sketches on it but he'd pay off the labourers on site with jewels without letting me know when I was away."^{cxviii}

'Little has been published of the design activity in the developing world. It is to our conviction that such an assessment would do much to renew the passion for the act and the art of building with which the current architecture of Europe and North America has lost touch in its present state of complexity and confusion. The

^{cxvii} Mr. Pravin Bhayani pointed out a fund-raising box for the animal welfare organization, whose efforts are supported by Jigishah Thakore, at Mr. Kishore Bajaj's office reception desk when we had gone together to meet Mr. Bajaj. Ms. Jigeesha Thakore collaborated with Nari Gandhi for some projects involving leather works. Nari Gandhi had a keen interest in this medium and also had another artist named Mr. Kampa Prasad working with him on leather.

^{cxviii} Michael Hawker, "Celebrating the Works of Nari Gandhi," *Friends of Kebyar* (Friends of Kebyar, Inc.), November 2007: 34.

limitations of a developing economy can be creative rather than an inhibiting constraint on architectural invention.^{cxix}

This observation by Dr. Scriver and Vikram Bhatt exemplifies the conditions under which Nari Gandhi worked. In a developing world, where the value and need of money is crucially understood by one's upbringing, here came a man who looked beyond material-need and chose to keep himself immersed in his work instead. Much like Frank Lloyd Wright, who in spite of being one of the finest American architects, didn't own a fortune towards the end of his life, Nari Gandhi took another direction and did not ask for it from clients or be least interested when offered fees. In a developing economy, such an attitude can be seen to liberate an artist from a commission that makes him produce art for the sake of money. Nari saw this equation very clear and sought to be such a free-artist.

^{cxix} Vikram Bhatt & Peter Scriver, *Contemporary Indian Architecture : After the Masters* (Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing Pvt. Ltd, 1990).

Camaraderie

Nari's attitude towards money, his personality and command over work automatically won the respect of his patrons and they always felt indebted to him for the splendid work he'd done for them. Nari was also very knowledgeable in several topics and it only added to the respect that clients had for him.

Amongst his friends, he continues to live in fond memories and I found quite a few of them possessing mementos of their times with Nari. Mr. Bhayani has a log of his time spent with Nari, illustrated by a large collection of photographs. Mr. S.P. Mehta, an old friend of Nari's had kept Nari's handwritten letter in his office safe for nearly 15 years. When informed that I was researching Nari's works and writing a thesis on him, Mr. S.P. Mehta generously gave me Nari's note on Lao Tzu's philosophy for 'The Perfect Man.' Mr. Mehta said that he wanted Nari to write something for him because he wanted to keep a memory of a man he thought would someday be considered 'great'.^{cxx}

Mr. Rustom Mehta wrote to Taliesin informing them of his interest in compiling Nari Gandhi's letters and works 'only out of interest and love for Nari.' His sincere concern is elucidated in the letter attached.

^{cxx} Mr. S.P. Mehta, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interview*, (Jan 2008).

Nari Gandhi's long time associate, friend and 'troubleshooter', Mr. Pravin Bhayani accompanied me to every possible place where I could get more information and oftentimes, went out of his way to make my study on Nari easier.

To my surprise, when Mr. Bhayani and I went to a slum in Madh Island to meet Mr. Barkya, one of Nari Gandhi's laborers, there were some people who came by the door, peeped in^{cxxi} and greeted Mr. Bhayani with: "*Namaste. Kaise hai? Armin kaisi hai? Hum sab theek hai. Bahut time baad aaye.*"

(translates to: "Namaste, How are you? How is Armin? We are all fine. You've come after a long time")

Mr. Bhayani later told me that Nari Gandhi often encouraged poor laborers to come to work for him and that is how some other - not-so-regular site workers still remember Nari, Mr. Bhayani and Ms. Armin Driver, a close associate of Nari Gandhi towards the last years of his practice, who often accompanied him on site. Such an

^{cxxi} The scale of a slum often forces a packed environment with most doors to houses open all day and neighbours frequenting each other very often. Relations among dwellers might also be strained due to various issues: social pressure, uneven resources distribution, surviving in underprivileged conditions. Having said that I also find it important to add that when I decided to interview Mr. Barkya on another date inviting him to come to Mr. Daya's Madh Island house nearby, I was given the cell-phone number of another man - his friend - who made absolutely no issue about me calling in several times asking for Mr. Barkya who lived next door, and would send his son with his cell-phone to Mr. Barkya's place.

attempt to socially uplift a needy person was not a new act for Nari Gandhi. When working on the Bajaj Farmhouse in Karjat, Nari got hold of a local tile worker and commissioned him to execute the flooring of the kitchen and dining room. The mosaic flooring of the dining area is multi-colored and contrasts with the overall exposed brick-and monochrome aesthetic of the house. More importantly, Nari Gandhi saw this job as a deed to better an unemployed man's life and to be able to achieve this through his work must have been a matter of pride for him as well.

The architect duo, Silvio Caputo and Clare Brass, sum this up best in their letter to Nari in 1992: *"...probably you will be indifferent to the fact that your work is one of the most well known architectural magazines, but we are convinced that it is important that other people can learn from what you are designing. We believe that there is a lesson to learn from every person but from you one can learn two lessons: a human one and a professional one."*^{cxxii}

They had visited Nari for only a couple of months, accompanying him to his remotest sites in India.

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Right:

Silvio Caputo's letter to Nari Gandhi informing him of the publication of his works in Abitare

^{cxxii} Silvio Caputo & Clare Brass, "Publication of Work in Abitare," Letter (Milan, June 17, 1992), 1.

SILVIO CAPUTO ARCHITETTO

NARI GANDHI
PARSI COLONY
DADAR
BOMBAY

MILANO 17/6/92

Dear Nari,

we are very glad to hear from Suresh Sethi that you are well and very busy with your work.

He told us that at the moment he is working with you and we are both a little bit envious of his luck.

We are well and we are both busy with work too.

As you can see from the magazine that we enclose to this letter, we managed to publish some pictures of your houses.

The photographs that you can see in those pages, have been taken during our last visit to India, when we met you.

Since then we have presented them to some Italian architectural magazine until when, last May, "ABITARE" told us that they were planning a report about India for the issue of the following month and that they liked our photographs.

What you can see in the pages 142-143 and 170-171 is the result.

We wish we could have written more about you and your work and in fact we did, but the magazine could not give more space to an article longer than the one published.

Probably you will be indifferent to the fact that your work is on one of the most well known architectural magazines, but we are convinced that it is important that other people can learn from what you are designing.

We believe that there is a lesson to learn from every person but from you one can learn two lessons: a human one and a professional one.

Please send our regards to Pravin Bhayani.

Our best regards

Silvio Caputo Clare Brass

Silvio Caputo Clare Brass

October 23, 1995

Mr. ^{Louis} Wickle
Taliesin Telleges
2438 Canyon Oak Drive
Los Angeles, Ca 90068

Dear Mr. Wickle,

I got your name and address from Indira Berndtson, at Taliesin West.

Late Mr. Nari Gandhi happened to an old friend of mine. I am told you both graduated the same year. I studied (at USC) and worked at Xerox Corporation for several years before I returned to India sometime in 1982. This is the time I met Nari ^{he} really but it off well, for 2 years I took a sabbatical of sorts and travelled with Nari throughout India. During this period he also built a brick house for me 80 miles from Bombay. The house is ^{bang} on the beach. I also happen to have a lot of interest in Mr. Wrights works. I ^{must} tell you that seeing some of Nari's works, even Mr. Wright would have saluted him. Although people in Bombay called him an eccentric chap, I can tell you he could be hilarious at times. He had few friends but he was a ture friend.

I am presently trying to gather whatever material I can get on Nari as a student at Taliesin. I would be more grateful than ever if you help me acquire any such material. It is only out of interest ^{& Love} for Nari that I am doing this and the material will not be put to any commercial use. I have also constantly corresponded with Derride Babcock and Lin PO both ^{of} students.

If the work involved in gathering information on Nari requires ^{do} let me know.

Thanking you much,

(Ruston)

"I have to be still, quiet, so that life can approach me."^{cxixiii} - Nari Gandhi

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Left:

Ruston Mehta's letter to the Taliesin Fellowship requesting to gather information on Nari Gandhi

^{cxixiii} Pervin Eichert, "A State of Becoming," *Inside/Outside*, Oct 1978.

Through the 3 decades of his practice, Nari evolved as an architect par excellence. His notion of the architect was that of a master builder - unlike most of our training today that associates academic bearing to validate an architect's thought process.

Having worked with local materials, craftsmen and within contextual constraints, it is still a difficult proposition to place Nari Gandhi as just a 'Regionalist' because although he consciously engaged in deploying creatively adapted traditional materials in his designs, he completely broke away from tradition or the immediate surroundings for geometry, form and structural expression. Through the Bajaj Farmhouse, Madh Island and especially the Tejani House at Tungarli, we see structural experiments using traditional materials that involved: optimizing sizes of structural components (as in the triangular arches at Tungarli), pushing the load bearing capacity (as in the Bajaj Farmhouse platform supported on welded and placed-on-brick struts) and using compacted mud filling for structural purposes (the case of Madh Island house where one can traverse the top of the house as if on a landscaped mound).

Nari Gandhi's works also emanate a sense of impermanence. His houses are emblematic of his own philosophy of life. These houses lack the notion of durability and hint at the fact that he did not see his creations as permanent. This could be a dormant reflection of J. Krishnamurthy's philosophy that constantly insisted on the

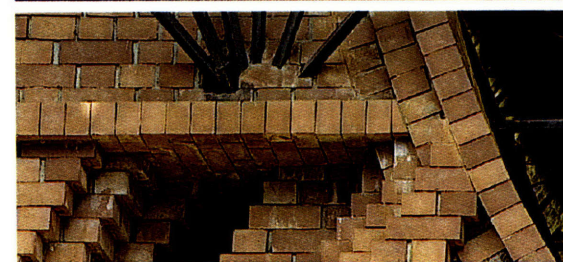


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Madh Island landscape



Tungarli's triangular arches



Bajaj farmhouse's welded placed-on-brick struts

ephemeral nature of life.^{cxxiv}

^{cxxiv} The Collected Works of J. Krishnamurti, 2007, www.jkrishnamurti.org/ (accessed March 28, 2008).

The skin of the building, its structure and form are seen as sturdier elements - but not the roofs, which like the building's surroundings, are a changing element. Expressing concern about vernacular forms that were still appropriate but increasingly being neglected by architects, an Indian architect, Mr. Bhoosan had written:

"...the sloped roof is slowly vanishing. Use of concrete and other wasteful tendencies are making an impact in such a way that these productions are neither artistically nor environmentally suited."^{cxv}

His works must be viewed over a period of different seasons. The impact natural changes make outside and inside the building form a fundamental component of his buildings' tectonics. The internal courtyards change personality, different treatments for the soaring roofs add character to the space under it and surrounding natural beauty is accentuated through Gandhi's architecture. Many of Gandhi's houses give the impression of merging into nature over time if not occupied by humans.

Seeing such emotive, seasonal, tectonic establishments in Gandhi's organic architecture that also involve socially responsible perspectives, I am prompted to reflect upon the state of

^{cxv} B.S. and R.P. Mishra Bhoosan, *Habitat Asia: Issues and Responses*, (New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 1979).

architectural education and practices today and pose the following questions:

Scale

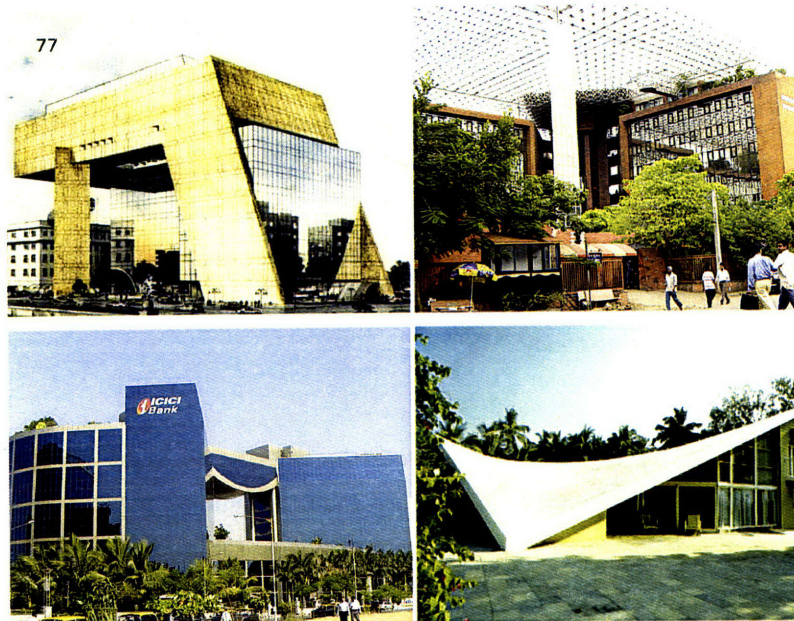
Nari Gandhi did not receive any commissions for large-scaled buildings until the end of his career (the Madhusthali School) - which he could not see completed. His practice was limited to residences, interiors and weekend houses in the remotest of locations. With evident expertise for designing objects, furniture and buildings on the smaller scale, the question I am tempted to ask is whether Nari Gandhi's ideas for organic architecture could have transferred to larger buildings?

When inquired if he had sketched or discussed any ideas for designing other typologies of buildings, his long-time friend Amritlal Thakker replied:

"Oh yes!! He had ideas for all kinds of projects. He'd sketch out plans and sections and explain to me what he thought an office building should look like. His ideas were very different from the glass buildings we see around us. He could design any project."^{cxvi}

^{cxvi} Mr. Amritlal Thakker, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, South Mumbai, Maharashtra (Feb 26, 2008).

Raja Aederi, an Indian and Taliesin Fellow, returned to India and was able to work on several corporate and large-scale projects. Mostly commercial or office buildings, these larger projects seem to lack the 'organic' ideology of Wright's and perhaps do not even try to achieve them. Aederi's small-scale houses are faintly reminiscing Wright's style with flamboyant roofs and large windows opening to the landscape, but they lack the richness and exploration of materials present in Nari Gandhi's works. Overall, his work succumbs to the commercial or corporate calling of the time.



Raja Aederi's projects.

Clockwise: Top left - Virginia House, Mahindra Towers, Pereira House and ICICI Bank

Can a practice like Gandhi's realize such projects within the philosophy of organic architecture? Will this philosophy need to be modified to suit certain conditions like larger programs, stricter requirements, deadlines, etc? If Nari Gandhi would have built projects in the same vein, what would they have been like?

Value Systems

"The source for the (Asian) architecture is not the intellect but the consciousness."^{cxxvii} - **Romi Khosla**

With the architecture in the Indian sub-continent constantly imitating the West for its own identity, can we still maintain the above-mentioned quote as valid?

Value systems are changing rapidly and with more exposure to Western education and thinking systems, is it still possible to break away from purely deductive conclusions and accept the more probable or traditional ones? Is it possible to look at tradition as a tool to drive creativity rather than stunt it? Or is shunning

^{cxxvii} Romi Khosla, "Crashing through Western Modernisms into the Asian Reality," *Regionalism in Architecture 2*, 1985: 58 - 60.

traditional perceptions of collective endeavors in constructing buildings a lost myth?

Does the work of Nari Gandhi offer anything to us today?

Several of Nari Gandhi's projects have been demolished or altered over the period of time. The Gobhai Mountain Lodge will be torn down soon as a new building is coming up next to it. The Valia residence was demolished in 2003, Asha Parekh's house in 2006, Sheth Beach house lies in dilapidation and perhaps the most shocking of all: Daya's Versova residence (Moon Dust) has now been converted into a corporate party place named Kino's Cottage. Numerous changes have been made to the house and the owners have little sensitivity to its aesthetics. Perhaps, one cannot blame them as it is located in a prime real-estate location and caters to its purpose for an 80 people party hub sufficiently well. Moon Dust and the Valia residence also featured in several Bollywood movies starting from 1974 - "Roti, Kapda aur Makan" to as late as 2004 - "Tere Naam" but Moon Dust's present state is absolutely appalling.

Is this a tendency of present times, where we do not care beyond the buildings' looks and abuse it for our benefit without caring for the idea that shapes it and gives it meaning?

Acknowledging the pressures of urbanization, Nari Gandhi had said:

"Apartments limit the growth for individuals. Space should not be cut up, but should be allowed to flow through you so that you may perceive

your relationship to the cosmos. Urban people tend to become synthetic; like the airhostess's namaskar which has no swagat (welcome) because it is not born out of love...Anyway, its difficult in a large city. The urban-industrial setup depends on a rapid transit system to transfer people from a crowded residential area to a crowded industrial area. What do people gain? It reflects their attitude towards work as a chore. Work should be the same as playing. It's the poverty of living habits that is made manifest in slums, even in affluent slums."

"If there is going to be any solution to the environmental problem, its got to be our solution, evolved by us. It's true; Le Corbusier showed us a way, which has the potential to change according to our circumstances. Certainly better than the kind of hotel architecture we are developing today." ^{cxviii}

In today's context, do we perceive Gandhi's work to be purely photogenic but do not value it more than its visual appeal? Is the work of Gandhi doomed only for recreational, isolated or interior

^{cxviii} Nari Gandhi to Pervin Eichert, "A State of Becoming," *Inside/Outside*, Oct 1978.

projects? Can such work enter mainstream architecture and survive? Or are the pressures of quick urban aesthetics dictating what we will be offered by multi-national developer groups?

Crafts and Architectural Expression

With the rapidly constructible building industry booming in several parts of the world, can we be any less sensitive to the dying crafts of our cultures?

Can we work with the rich crafts of our cultures, especially in the Indian sub-continent, without commodifying them? Efforts for these have been initiated by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Building and Social Housing Fund^{cxxix} and numerous other agencies that encourage national / regional introspective approaches to architecture. But will independent architectural offices take on this concern seriously? In socio-economic conditions can architects help bridge the divide between economically poor and the more privileged ones? Are our practices not empowered to achieve this in certain ways: for example architects can make special efforts for resorting to local help for labor - skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled

^{cxxix} Aga Khan Award for Architecture, http://www.akdn.org/agency/aktc_aka.html, From the website: The selection process emphasizes architecture that not only provides for people's physical, social and economic needs, but that also stimulates and responds to their cultural and spiritual expectations.

to engage in the construction processes. This step can further be incremented if local strengths in crafts are tapped into and incorporated into the building design. Not only will this render the buildings 'of the place' but it will also uplift the lives of those in the region socially and economically.

Is it possible to also play within the domains of new architectural materials and techniques and build upon the existing skills of the craftsmen?

Will time-bound projects accommodate such initiatives? Can they be promoted to?

Legacy

Is there a generation that has been inspired by Nari Gandhi? Mr. Girish Parmar, who as a young student never met Nari Gandhi but has visited all his sites and is now a practicing architect. He strongly believes that such kind of work is meaningful and he is trying to: "Carry forward Nari Gandhi's legacy."^{cxxx} Not many practitioners in India are known to follow in Gandhi's footsteps. Students of architecture often do not hear about Nari Gandhi because he was never well published.

^{cxxx} Girish Parmar, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (May 2, 2008).



Girish Parmar's projects (circa 2006)

Girish Parmar's studio: Influenced by Nari Gandhi.



Similar to Nari Gandhi's working style, Girish Parmar chooses to spend time on site, working with the laborers and craftsmen to involve them in the design process. He does not hold a formal

office and travels extensively but practices through the suburb of Parel.

Clearly inspired by Nari Gandhi, can we foresee more practices like Parmar's emerging if people learnt about Gandhi's working styles? Will such an idea be dismissed as an initial infatuation with adventure or can loosely structured practices like these sustain in urban settings where architects are bound by legal regulations and are timely obligated to the clients for progressive developments on the projects?

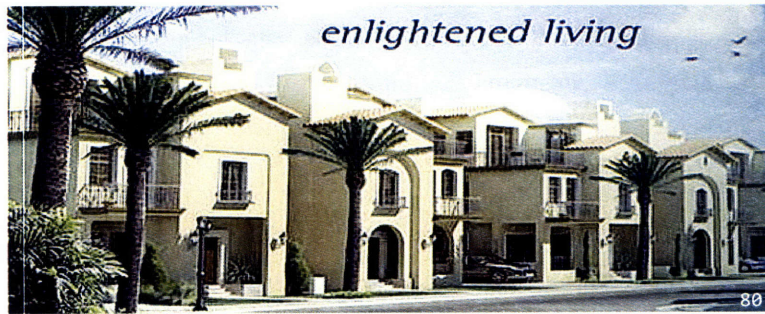
Will prevalent mediocre designs in cities make an eccentric but unique "Nari Gandhi" still desirable?

Nari Gandhi's practice was also one that sought no compromise in the design - a somewhat selfish and unacceptable attitude for some, but that did not deter clients like Mr. Daya from commissioning Gandhi for 5 projects.

In fact, Nari Gandhi faced a situation when he retracted from a project for slum dwellers in Chembur, Bombay after disagreements with the authorities.^{cxxx1} This project is worth mentioning at this juncture because Mr. Bhayani recollected Nari Gandhi to have been displeased with the authorities' attitude to house slum dwellers in a highly dense plan whereas he sought a more humane approach for this rehabilitation scheme.

^{cxxx1} Mr. Pravin Bhayani, interview by Aftab Jalia, *Nari Gandhi Project Interviews*, Mumbai, Maharashtra (Jan 17, 2008).

Property developed by EMAAR group for India – could be anywhere in India



Conclusion

Documenting Nari Gandhi made me rethink our approach to architectural design. He compelled me reconsider what we deem important in an architectural practice, the numerous social and intellectual values we uphold and the ones we compromise. He made me re-evaluate the role of drawings in the design process, on construction sites and even as beautiful visual material in different contexts across the globe. His ways shed light on instruction media and the importance of the architect-builder to be able to relate to his labor-force to shape better buildings. Gandhi also reframed the architect - client relationship to suit his style of working that allowed him to produce commendable work.

Nari Gandhi's works were unique to the given conditions. They could not belong elsewhere or be ubiquitously reproduced. His were works of craft, highly individualized and intensely laborious.

His works posed the most fundamental challenge to the machine-driven modernistic expressions that could be reproduced, almost anywhere globally. These are important questions of our times and our interpretation of them will shape the architecture of the future.

His was the definitive anti-machine aesthetic.

Nari Gandhi continued to work until his untimely death in 1993, while on a visit to a client's site. Less than a year before he expired, he wrote the following anecdote to his friend, Mr. S.P. Mehta, in a casual letter (dated 1992). It appears to have been written in a reflective mood, as if for himself. This anecdote, I believe, undermines his working ideology and perception of life:

(Also note the writing perpendicular to the ruled page!)

“THE MAN WHO SPURNED THE MACHINE - When Tse King, the disciple of Confucius came south to the State of Chin, on his way to Chin, he passed through Honyin. There he saw an old man engaged in making a ditch to connect his vegetable garden with a well. He carried a pitcher in his hand with which he was bringing up water and pouring it into the ditch with very great labour and little results. “If you had a machine here” said Tse King, “in a day you could irrigate a hundred times your present area. The labour required is trifling compared to the work done. Would you like to have one?”

“What is it?” asked the gardener looking up at him.

“It’s a contrivance made of wood - heavy behind and light in front. It draws water up smoothly in a continuous flow - which bubbles froth like boiling soup. It is called ‘Well-sweep’.”

Thereupon the gardener flushed up and said with a laugh: “I have heard from my Teacher that those who have cunning implements are cunning in their hearts and those who have cunning in their hearts cannot be pure and incorrupt and those who are not pure and incorrupt in their hearts are restless in their spirit. Those who are restless in spirit are not fit vehicles for ‘Tao’. It is not that I do not know of these things, I should be ashamed to use them.”

Tse King’s countenance fell - humiliated and he felt discomfited and abashed. It was not till they had gone thirty feet that he recovered his composure.

“Who was that man?” asked his disciples. “Why did your face change color after seeing him and why did you seem lost for the whole day?”

“I thought,” replied Tse King, “There was only one man (Confucius) in this world. But I did not know there was this man. I have heard from the Master that the test of scheme is practicability and the goal of effort is success and that we should achieve the

greatest results with least labor. NOT SO (for) this manner of men - coming into life he lives among people not knowing whether he is bound - infinitely complete in himself. Success, utility and the knowledge of skills would certainly make a man lose the human heart.

But this man does nowhere against his will and does nothing contrary to his heart. Master of himself, above the praise and blame of the world. He is the Perfect Man.” - **Nari Gandhi**

(attachments on following page)

The man who opened the machine → When Tseking the disciple of Confucius came south to the state of Ch'u on his way to Ch'u - he passed through Hanyin = There he saw an old man engaged in making a ditch to connect his vegetable garden with a well = He carried a pail in his hands of which he was bringing up water and pouring it into the ditch with very great labour and little profit =

"If you had a machine here" said Tseking "in a day you could irrigate a hundred times your present area. The labour required is trifling compared with the work done. Would you to date have one?"

"What is it?" asked the gardener looking up at him.

It is a contrivance made of wood - heavy behind and light in front. It draws water up smoothly in a continuous flow - which is thicker forth like boiling soup = It is called well-sweep = Thereupon the gardener flunked up and said with a sigh "I have heard from my teacher that those who love learning implement a rule in their hearts and those who are learning in their deeds have learning in their hearts and those who have learning in their hearts cannot be pure and incorrupt and those who are not pure and incorrupt in their hearts are not true in their spirits. Those who are not true in spirit are not fit vehicles for Tao = It is not that I do not know of these things & I should be ashamed to use them =

The king's countenance fell - humiliated and he felt discomfited and chastened. It was not till he reached home that he recovered his composure.

"Who was that man?" asked his disciples: "Why did your face change colour after seeing him and why did you seem lost for words?"

"I thought" replied Tseking "there was only one man (Confucius) in this world but I did not know there was this man & I have heard from the master that the test of a scheme is its practicability and the goal of a foot is success and that we should achieve the greatest results with least labour, NOT so this manner of men = committing into life we lives among the

From
St. George
New South Wales

People not know, either we is kinder infinitely complete in
himself = success utility and more useful for a spirit's world, certainly
make now here the knowledge of: but this man also is certainly
against his will and less with conformity to his heart-fault
of himself above the fringe and the line of himself
He is the perfect man is

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