

hundredhands presents

DOSHI

a film by premjit ramachandran
2008

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B.V. Doshi (BVD): In the School of Architecture I never took [the] salary that I got, Rs800, I never took it home, for all those twenty years, when I was in the beginning of my career. It's a temple, how can you do it? How can you take money from the temple?

Charles Correa, Architect: I think it's wonderful what Doshi has achieved. That's the best school in India and it started from scratch and it has its educational component and then I think there were people like Bernard Cohn and Rasu Wakil and many others who made huge contributions, but the essential contribution I think was the bridge between Doshi and Kasturbhai Lalbhai and people don't realize how important that is. Without that, that school wouldn't have happened, without Kasturbhai's backing. I mean you have to be a bit of an empire builder and have somebody backing you to do something as marvelous as CEPT. So a lot of the credit absolutely goes to Doshi because regardless of what else happened it's he who was the basic driver of that project.

Vasudevan Akkitham, Artist (Son-in-Law): You see there are these three daughters and the son - he's the architecture school, CEPT in some ways. In the sense that you see everything is in a way brought back to that fulcrum or brought back to that centre, epicenter which I think is an orientation of the family in certain ways.

Graham Morrison, Architect: People with imagination become prophetic in some ways and they enter into a world where they predict an imaginary future on behalf of the people that they are working with and if you're poetic in your description of what might be, then you can persuade people to enter into tasks way beyond their initial imagination and I can't help feeling that Mr. Doshi is very much out of this mould.

Anand Sarabhai, Biologist: He's an architect of ideas.

Nimish Patel, Architect: After my parents and grandparents, if an individual has had a role to play in my life it's Doshi.

Giovanni Leone, Architect: I've learned from Doshi the way to be yourself. Always.

Prof. Neelkanth Chhaya, Dean (School of Architecture, CEPT): He's able to talk to any level of person. He can talk to a peon or a driver for two hours at a stretch and he can talk to a minister as required and he's aware of all these levels of society. That combined with this rigour I think gave him a certain distinct standing in the way in which he looked at architecture.

Rahul Mehrotra, Architect: His ability to kind of intuitively respond to a painting, to visuals, to a landscape, to other architecture and then to convert those sort of intuitive readings into a narrative that would just engage a young student is absolutely incredible.

Nagraj Vastarey, Architect: He is a mark, consciously or unconsciously we need to respond.

Sen Kapadia, Architect: The thing about him is that he doesn't carry himself as a persona, he'll just be with somebody. Now, to my mind, a cultured person is one in whose company you feel neither inferior or superior. That is Doshi.

INSTITUTE OF INDOLOGY

1958, Ahmedabad

BVD: My career has evolved over time and one of the most significant beginnings was with Indology. Kasturbhai Lalbhai said, 'I have a lot of manuscripts which have come from Jain *munis*, Jin Vijayji Maharaj and Punya Vijayji Maharaj and they are to be preserved so why don't you do this project'. At that time in '58 I was going abroad. I had got this Graham fellowship with my wife. He said if you're going to U.S.A. go and see Duke University and they have a place for preservation of manuscripts so please have a look at it.

And I remembered that in Pattan and other places they were always preserving manuscripts in the basement. So I said it doesn't matter, we will make a basement and then we will make this place. She says that's fine, then it is good, which means one of the first time I mean it is the beginning I began to understand what climate can do.

When the opening was there - there were people standing in the balcony, *sadhu's* and others. The water was overflowing from the terrace tank, down in the pipe and came to that gargoyle which you see there on both sides and so it looked really like a boat in water and this is how this building was visualized and this was the time it looked like that. So it is not only the shading of the light etc., it is not cooling only but it also became part of the water and the floating area, so if you see the profile on the side you will see the shape - it goes like this, lifted up.

In [Kenzo] Tange's work I found concrete used as wood. I said that's not a bad idea, you know. You should really do concrete like wood and the services can go into the columns, so the 'H' shaped column came, one side drain pipes for the rainwater, other side electricity and then large span and then this structural concrete structure, so that's how this building happened. The first one, I don't think there are many buildings like this where the upper balcony's little pieces are all precast. In fact the detailing is very much like wood. It is one of the best detailed buildings that way. Very well done you know, in a sense, it has a quality which is very different. It stands apart.

CHAPTER 1

8 months with olives and cheese

BVD : I was new, I had no background, I was with my wife, why you know, you talk about the museum building [Sanskar Kendra, Le Corbusier, Ahmedabad] when we were supervising one Mr. Kenny from Bombay, the engineer, said this cavity wall cannot be built like this. So he said why don't you change it to load bearing wall, I refused. So the *Khaatawala*, the engineer said why don't you call Mr. Doshi so he called me, I said no I don't think I would like to change that plan, you can't change it. So then they says well then we will get somebody else, then I said I'll resign. I resigned the job which was giving me Rs.250 or Rs.400 per month. I had already completed two jobs, I was only getting Rs.150, Rs.65 was rent, I had Colitis had go to Bombay and get doctor's medicine, I had no money to live. So, practice starts like this. I used to bicycle almost 18 to 20 kilometers minimum. From there to Shahibaug to come back to Mill Owner's, go to museum, Shodhan House and back home, everyday. So difficulties were there. When you have a role model you have a problem, you have comparisons then you have a problem, when you think that this is the only way you can survive then you have a problem. And when I went to Paris, Corbusier did not pay me for eight months. And I had hardly any money. I had very little money. I went against my brother's wish to Paris, I was not able to speak. Eight months with olive and cheese... and bread, that's all. Crying. So this is how the practice was and I was having Colitis that time, and I was having pain. But something had happened, I still don't know what it is. And that's what keeps me going even today. This idea, that no I have to do something which is right you know. What happens if he [Le Corbusier] asks me a question. You see Corbusier told me once which I think is important that remember there is somebody standing behind you who is better than you and you are answerable to him.

SHREYAS SCHOOL

1960, Ahmedabad

Charles Correa, Architect: I think Ahmedabad was special because it had a number of people there who wanted to do something - what is called on the cutting edge. That's very important for a young architect and that's gone out of Ahmedabad. It's a very commercial city that was always there. Ahmedabad is basically about buying and selling whether its Corbusier or whether its Post-Modernism but there are people there who understood the genuine thing. I think of course of Kasturbhai Lalbhai, I think of Gautam and Geera Sarabhai. These were people who brought the world's best to Ahmedabad. That didn't happen in Bombay. So Ahmedabad was a very good place to grow I think. There was Kanvinde, Doshi, myself, there's Raje who's still there and then later on Raj Rewal in Delhi and so there were a number of Indian architects who I think did exceptional...I mean, tried pretty hard but we had exceptional clients.

BVD: Shreyas was my first project and Leenaben, whom you met, she's a remarkable woman of capacities. She had started a school near Shahibaug. One day she and Anand's [Sarabhai] mother Manorama Sarabhai, they were working together in the school, so they said, "Why don't you do a campus for us we have this place you know"- they had acquired 30 acres on a hill. So I said, "Sure I'll do it". It was my first job and incidentally her husband Madan Mohan (Bachubhai) he was there and when the estimate came to something like 8 lacs for the whole campus he said, "But, Leena you think you know can afford this, you know? Can it ever happen?". So suddenly she shook her head, the hair came out you know, she took out the thing, you know, the band? And the hair came like Durga you know? She said, "Do you think I am wearing bangles", she removed the bangles, she said, "I'll get it done". That is the spirit of this lady.

So she talked about Maria Montessori and education and landscape and size and systems. I saw her earlier one without corridors - I said why should we make buildings with corridors? I said, shouldn't children walk from one class to the other even after the break rather than teacher going there? And while they get out of the class they look at birds and they look at snakes and animals, insects, clouds, rain. And that will give them a chance also to recapitulate. So she says that's what I want to do. Now that's what she was talking also. So I think that made these clusters. And then there was a question of how do you have a building typology where children are young, by the time they go to matric they almost become five feet tall and the teacher who is already tall. So how do you create a scale in a building where the small and the grown-ups simultaneously will feel comfortable? And then the next question was ventilation? So how do you get cross-ventilation, so those storage cupboards are there and there are louvers below and above.

Leena Mangaldas (nee Sarabhai), Founder/Principal : He was young I think about twenty five and I told him about our idea and he very earnestly took it up. Then Doshi saw this place and he said he'll see the old place also and see how we work. So every place the activity rooms, the laboratories, the library then the kitchen then the dining place all that he saw. And he said he will see how we are working and on that basis he will build this new building. And we didn't want children to learn from books and sit in rooms and give examinations. We wanted to them to be free.

Doshi: So there was a there was a valley and so we said we will do an amphitheater there. I said I'll make it like a Greek one. Then she says I'll make the curtain you know with water and at the back is the art school so that you can use [it] as a backdrop and also like a big theatre. She incidentally writes and she directs also. Big shows there used to be - full with kids and everybody. It was so good to see. Rarely you see something like it.

CHAPTER 2

Indian plan is not centric

BVD: India has always survived and celebrated via frugal-ness and very intelligent ways of using everything to the best for example this *dhoti* -it is completely half naked, no? But it is a clothing which has a great style and it gives you all the air and what not. Look at the Indian clothing. How comfortable it is, more comfortable than even the Japanese, you know, because it works with climate etc. Now look at the turban and a *dhoti*. And you go to the well and you can take out that long thing and you can take a little pot and go down and drink the water. Or you spread it at night or you cover yourself. How many ways you can use it? And I think this is Indianness. Indianness is ingeniously finding several ways of using

the same thing very efficiently.

The *lota* which Charles Eames talks so much about, I think it is all Indian. Now, that is Indian mind. Indian mind is ingenious.

Indian mind says, "if I can do this, can I do something else?". That is where we get confused also. But they will always say one plus not just one. In everything. Look at mathematics, look at language, look at everything else. There's always something added. Now that something added is that extra joy and I think that is where the ingenuity is seen.

Music you look at it. Why you know it should be compared with jazz only and why not like this. How is it that its time bound but in time bound each *gharana* can sing differently. Same notes but you can play differently. Theatre, that whole theatre with Ram-Lila you are going in a cross like this, in four places, you find a king here and an ordinary fellow here and ministers here and public here and you go in time and space over a long time. You can do it in twenty minutes, you can do it in two months. How come? And you are formally separate but informally you are close by. Its not centric. The Greek theatre is centric, you know, focussed. Indian plan is not centric.

SANGATH

1958, Ahmedabad

BVD: The whole idea is [that] if it is a sustainable building it should use everything which is available from almost waste. And all this is done by the local people. I told them just do what you like, I gave them pieces, so... this is Amitabh Bachchan for them.

So this is where you enter. Very small inconspicuous entrance. Not a royal entrance no portico, nothing. A little courtyard. Its like a domestic entrance. And the entrance here is even like that you know? Its very simple. I was thinking why should an office be like an office? Why should I not only have an office only for myself and close at five? Why can't it become a public space? So you are talking about public and private, form versus formlessness, growth and other things and yet it has to be a studio. And then you talk about partly above, partly below ground. All this happened.

I think now you can shoot my granddaughter. Let us see my darling daughter.

I had made this building by chance the extension. The building happened because I had to make this into non-agricultural land. And so I had to find something. So the neighbor had only curved sheets. So I said overnight let me take the curved sheets and make a plan. So I made a plan and I made the roof and I got my stamp. But then I said, 'My God how nice this?' So always there are clues. We must be aware to use them.

So you get the sense of all this spaces. And this buildings inserts into this. As if this building is going in. It moves like this. And this is, you can see, the old sample. And it is north-south. And then I had a very big garden here. And again this is against *vastu*. This is west. And this is south. So one *vastu* chap came here and he saw this he said, "You are going to have some trouble". I said, "No". He said, "You never had any problem?" I said, "No, in fact I have been successful". After a month he comes back and says, "You are right. This is where Dhirubhai Ambani's entrance is". This is *vastu*.

I said, "Why don't I make a village and that's what I like, a tree, a garden, the steps". And that's how it began to happen. Then one day I made those arches and then came everything. And again it has all the waste products, it has china mosaic which was never used before, it has [Antoni] Gaudi, it has [Frank Lloyd] Wright, it has this, everything is there. It is like good food that you enjoy which is done by the best chefs, but you are the one who is digesting this and you have to convert it into your blood and your life and what I do is only follow this biological order. Borrow everything and finally become yourself. And that Gandhiji's idea that look open the windows but see that your roof is not blown off. Your foundations have to be strong. So you have to be deep inside an Indian who is frugal, who can invent, who can take a chance, and who can starve.

There's a student here from Stuttgart, you know, who is working here. And I was talking to her about Indianness and she mentioned something very interesting. She says you know Indianness is in riding in the bus or in the train. In the train there are no windows which are closed. You are in a journey and the air is flowing all the time, everywhere and you are partly inside and partly outside. I think that is India. And not only this way, physically, philosophically also we are very ambiguous - more or less, I may come I may not come.

CHAPTER 3

Ritual is another fascination that I have been having from childhood

BVD: One of the essential Hindu philosophy is the *rasa*. I think the *rasa* theory is the one which is correct. Like when you eat food and when you go to somebody's house and then your friend says how was the meal. You don't say soup was good or this was good, you say I think it was wonderful, you know, I'm so happy and I'm content. And then you burp maybe, you know. In Indian style. I think then you say that because that is enough to suggest that you are really content, contented no? So this contentment do we really express in our buildings or in our work?

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT

1977, Bangalore

Graham Morrison, Architect: You can imagine the Management Institute that has no powerful sort of symmetrical axis. It feels much more like an organism. That it would grow in a natural way, just as an organism would, through pre-determined values and rules very much the way the body would grow and change and age according to pre-determined principles. The little that I know about Doshi's past, inside that man is a sensibility,

that combines heroism with modesty. You know, you can't help feeling that he truly cares, he has a deep sensibility for the people that might live or work or occupy a building. He's thinking about the humanity of the problem rather than the grandeur of his own ego.

BVD: So Ramaswamy says, "I'm interested in small scale people. So I want this made, you know, for small scale and therefore the buildings have to be such that everybody feels at home and not really awed by buildings". I said, "I will make this place gardens". And I told Ramaswamy that we should have buildings..in fact the board I met...I said I will only make three storied building so that they are in stone and eventually they will disappear. So one of them says but when they disappear you mean there will be no architecture.I said more or less no architecture but you will experience what you experience in Madurai temple. Then thy kept quiet See reference helps that time. Because they cannot say Madurai temple is not good. So, even as an architect you have to be very quick, you know, in answering them.

I made the drawing. I forget the name of the very nice person who was there, an administrative officer. I made a drawing and now you have to approve the budget. So, pergola is between the two buildings and there is only a column structure. So basically it is an empty corridor. So I calculated all the areas and then I got the budget approved. But the plan showed the pergola. So when the building started working, the man says you know...I should remember his name, he says, "Why are you worried? It is approved in the plan, no? So you show it as approved in the plan and go ahead". So it happened.

Graham Morrison: If you look at Mies's [van der Rohe] work or Corb's [Le Corbusier] work or [Alvar] Aalto's early work - actually their training is neo-classical and its all about composition - the creation of compositional space. And, I know doshi is obviously much younger than that but you can't help feeling that his training gave him an understanding of the nature of composition but also the benefit of history so that you feel his work is reaching back into our sensibility not only about how things combine, to where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, but also recalling space and material and simplicity that takes us back into eras before modernism. So we connect with things that are so timeless and they have a gravitas and significance that is much greater than us as simple individuals today.

BVD: Actually, if you really go back to your childhood and think about the childhood and say that "this is how I've enjoyed my life when I was always wanting to be outside with my friends". And then this Kanade was saying that, "I don't remember my college days; I remember my school days". The reason is, there are no places given at higher education like the child will use. And if that is done... I mean what is there to do? You just pave this, make from here the steps, make a little table. That's all you need. These trees are already there. Because suddenly, if they see from top, they will gather and look down and I'm sure a fellow who wants to play guitar or they want to have a jam session or they want to have two people and they want to listen to some music. Why can't they come out here?

Graham Morrison: Last thing I would say with my consciousness about our visit to the Management Institute, was the breathtaking simplicity with which everything was achieved that I, sort of, call it architecture without adjectives. So, our visit was humbling - to come across this building that did everything that we could ever wanted to do in a building ourselves, and yet, here it had been done decades before and we hadn't really experienced it.

BVD: I was supposed to go and teach in Colombo, I mean, [be an] examiner for Colombo. And I tell my wife, "Let's go to Colombo". Now we land in Madras. Srivatsan was staying there, so we stay with him and I said "I want to go to Colombo, how do I go?". He said, "But, do you have a visa?" I said, "No, do you need to have visa"? He said, "Of course". I said, "What do I do now?". And about a week was there - only four, five days. So, I went to the embassy there and they said, "No, you can't, you have to get to Delhi and all that". So after three days, they say, "You can't get it". So, what do I do? I forgot to inform them that I am delayed or I have no visas. Then I tell them, "Why don't I go to Madurai and other places. So, my wife and myself made two weeks of trip. In between so many calls came from Sri Lanka, I mean, Colombo to here and back and forth. And they did not know where we were and that was the best period - I saw Madurai temple and the other things there Tanjore and others. I found proportions, rhythm, light and same structure but with variations. And you see these columns going up and courtyards. And one discovers this. But your also observing - I'm observing people there and some people are sad, some are happy. Some people transform themselves and you see people rolling, you know, Guruvayoor and others - you see all kinds of ritual. So ritual is another fascination that I have been having from childhood. Mahabharat, Ramayan - see these are all useful things because when you go back and you see these images you ask questions - why the images are there? Why it is like this?

Uncertainty, I discovered here - that incremental growth and growth which is not proper. And then in the school I can only build that much, but I had made a master plan. So, all these things came from these understandings of Indian life.

CHAPTER 4

You are God's representative on Earth

BVD: Consider every building that you do is a temple for God. Now imagine this concept. If you are doing a house - a small house and now you are given this idea that this is a temple of God - would you think miserably? Would you think at all miserably? No! You will say the man is poor but it is his temple so I have to find a way by which it gives him heightened experience. You represent this God, so you are an emissary of that man so you cannot see that he is abused by your mistake. Nobody actually likes misery, no! We make it misery because we are miserable. We are ordinary, so we give ordinary. Now if you think that you are representing God. One is temple for God now you are representing God. Would you try to be less generous? Would you do something as a representative of God you say, "I cannot do" or "My circumstances are not allowing"? Because there is no circumstance left. For God there is no wrong circumstance so God will play the game.

LIC HOUSING

1973, Ahmedabad

BVD: Housing, I have observed that whatever I was doing was company townships. So they were restricted, then people would retire. But I remember my childhood and my grandfather's house where it was always added on. And I saw also a lot of housing by housing board and others eventually they would cover the balconies they would add extras, you know. So everybody was doing this addition and I wondered [that] those additions in the old city did not destroy the architecture at all and yet they had all the things there to live for generations?

Amrith Thakker, Resident: The people are very nice over here and you know there is a lot of breeze. Green plantation is there and you know, my grandmother is there, my brother is there.. Entire family is good. Open space - that is the best thing about it, open space - it's a wide spectrum.

BVD: So I was wondering, I said, if these people are going to be there is there no way that we can make a new kind of plan, where growth can take place and certain things will remain constant? So that has been my concern because I remember Jaisalmer, I remember Udaipur, I remember old towns here and I say that this is something that we don't talk about as architecture. Primarily, I don't believe in formal buildings, I believe in formal buildings, slightly modified. So additions, modifications, changes become very important.

Amrith Thakker: My Uncle, Sharath Thakker was an architect from the school of architecture. So, he told me that B.V. Doshi is considered to be one of the best in Asia.

BVD: I knew one thing people normally don't change is the staircase and landings because they belong to everybody. Staircases, actually add to connecting the city otherwise the margin and the setback means you're too far away. When you land, you land near the road so extending your arm is like shaking hands. So the building shakes hands and yet there is a privacy because the distance is quite big between the two houses. If you had no staircase the houses would have come very close.

Amrith Thakker: Actually I use only one room and that is this (balcony). This is my block. So I come at night here, over here. I sleep here, I switch on the TV from here. So, open drive-in theatre is here. So, I sit here and you know I watch TV at night. In the morning I do some little bit exercise and then I go down. If somebody requires [accommodation] we give them without any rent. If somebody tells me that you know that there is a marriage of my daughter and we need a house for our guest we give them. We do not charge anything. If some student comes and asks that, "I want to study for one year" then from morning to evening we give it to him. "You can read, you can make it clean, no problem". So you can sit here for hours together and you do not need anything else. Just sit here, get your newspapers and read it and see the people.

Second Resident: My elder son saw this society and liked it a lot and said we should move here. So, I sold my big house and moved here and I like it so much here that even if I step out of the house for a stroll I feel like I have been out and about.

BVD: I say, now I will make different colors so that they will not like some colors and they will change even colors. So, it will begin with changing of colors because in my other townships in Baroda and others they had changed colors from bright colors to these ice cream blue and white and all kinds of things were there. I said, well, let's see what happens. The reason is I have said, life has to be lived, it is not supposed to be regulated and they must enjoy it. Slowly they began to go on adding, adjusting - that means they learnt to live, they learnt to negotiate exactly like an old city. And I think from that point of view it's a very important social phenomenon -that only five percent or less than five percent people have changed hands. That means that our social moorings, as architects if you want to think, that we must really look at housing as a place where the communities can continue to thrive over generations because they have the house as part of them accommodating their life and changes.

CHAPTER 5

The end product is not as exciting as the process.

BVD: Husain. I'm very glad that he mentioned that process is important. The end result is of no consequence because he is highly part of the Indian philosophy here. He is from here so he can only think about the process. Other people think of the end result but actually the end product is not as exciting as the process is. How will you enjoy the food if you were not aware about how it was cooked, how everything was brought together and put together and done? I think this is very important but we never have time for this We are actually interested in conclusions - summary of notes.

AMDAVAD NI GUFA

1991, Ahmedabad.

BVD: In Gunwanthbhai's house Husain used to come often and one day we met and he said, "Oh, it's so hot here. How do you manage? How do you build these houses? Don't they get heated up?" I said they can be made underground as well - its possible. That was long back. Then 25 years later he comes back again. I used to meet him often. Then he said, "I have done a gallery in Hyderabad and Calcutta. Now I want to build a gallery here". And so I said finding a place shouldn't be a problem. So, we saw the thing and then as usual he had a press conference and he said I am going to make a gallery here. So I said, "Why make a gallery? Let's create something underground". So he said, "That's a good idea, lets make a cave". But, I said, "I am going to challenge you - you can't paint, you will have to invent something. You can only invent because you have the ability to invent. I am going to challenge myself and I challenge you". And this is how it started as an idea of a *gufa*.

M.F. Husain, Artist: When everything was complete then I said these outer surfaces look beautiful, but, there must be something. Why not have a snake - make it more sensuous. They (the domes) are like the breasts of the earth - let a snake entwine them. So I got up and I drew just free hand like that without showing the face - the snake. Otherwise it would just be a pretty thing.

BVD: When I made the model, I shook the model - I said I don't like going straight. So the thrust changed, then it was designed on the computer. So (for the) first time in my life or anywhere as I know a completely sustainable building. These are saucers. Black saucers I got made - ten thousand for cobra. So the myth became here an integrated part of the whole story.

Prof. Neelkanth Chhaya, Dean (School of Architecture, CEPT): His own personal experiences would have also, I think, contributed as he was constantly traveling, constantly sketching, looking at places in India and abroad. This is a very open minded approach to architecture whether it is in India or elsewhere. But whatever he was impressed and inspired by somehow remained as a something in his memory which has affected a lot of the work later. So that we can see from the late seventies onwards Doshi trying to create a distinctive language which takes of the best of both his masters but is his own.

Sen Kapadia, Architect: Now this architecture particularly, I was telling Doshi, this is a miracle and why is it not repeating and he said, "its just because it a miracle - because you must get a client and a function that is not defined". You know, function is not defined there - it's a gallery to meditate. Now galleries you just go to see things but here in this gallery you can meditate over things.

Navnath Kanade, Architect: You know, if you meet a person there are various ways you can greet the person - you may shake hands, you will say Namaskara or you may embrace. So in his buildings you find all these three phenomena. See the Indology building. It has landscape and it just stands out there. I say it does Namaskara. See IIM here - it virtually shakes hands. See the landscape and the building - they just meeting each other and again go back. It (the landscape) doesn't enter but if you see Sangath and particularly the Gufa, I think this building is completely rooted, rooted into the ground and virtually it is like a tree - it is drawing its nourishment from inside, you know, its just going up. That is like embracing, I mean that building shows a tremendous intimacy. It is a virtual marriage between the land and the building. It doesn't mean one is better than the other, these are three ways of meeting friends, you know - we can greet in various ways.

BVD: ...and then this is like actually the real Varaha avatar. Varaha avatar is the one where Vishnu goes down to find the rakshasa because Indira's wife was taken by him. So they will be separate, this goes below, so you get that sense. And this is very smooth finish - all one material, and this is very rough.

CHAPTER 6

Architecture is a matter of transformation

Jaimini Mehta, Architect: Doshi's contribution cannot simply be said that he started an institution because then you put that institution at par with any other institution, Shantiniketan was also there. But this institution was very much rooted in the time and the place of its making. That is the Ahmedabad as it was emerging, and being so close to Ahmedabad and Baroda we suddenly felt that there was a movement of which we wanted to be a part of. And I remember my father who was a freedom fighter - he went to jail with Gandhiji, telling us similarly that Gandhi had started a movement that we felt we wanted to be a part of. So you see its that kind of a ..and this was in the fifties and early sixties - not very far from the independence movement.

BVD: I am not an architect, that's the problem. For me it's a search - its only a search, search for that unknown which I have not known, neither I know how it will manifest. That's actually the essence of my work. It begins somewhere, ends somewhere, and in that process I grow and the work grows and we both grow together.

I am a traveler, its a journey and you don't know the destination. So, if you meet somebody on your journey where the destination is not known, what kind of conversation will there be. Will that be a conversation with a definite plan? No! So he is exploring, you are exploring.

CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND TECHNOLOGY

1966, Ahmedabad.

BVD: I would like to take you from a path which people are not supposed to travel or they don't travel. This is the straight way to go, this is another way to go. The whole idea is - this jungle has been made by us. Before it was all barren. So, we talk about architecture. I think architecture is a matter of transformation - transformation of all situations into a favorable condition. All these mounds were made by me standing on the roof top over there.

So, it was not a decision on paper, it was not a decision on program, it was not a decision with material alone, it was not a decision talking about climate, it was also a decision with people, their behavior and their attitudes all tied up in a spatial way.

I had shifted this canteen from here to a little away and I found audio visual connection becomes very important. How you see. I brought it back. So architecture is also the connection between audio and visual, both.

Whenever I work, I become that. I had become a student - good student and a mischievous student. I was a bad teacher and a good teacher. I was a lazy fellow. Then I was a good director and I said let me have a strike (?) also. So in everything I have played at two ends.

You come back and you design a school here and you say, you are director, you have to build, you have to teach and the teachers here maybe there or may not be there. How do you catch hold of a teacher? He must be visible. So, you can stand in the balcony and call him. And that main space becomes where everybody gathers and goes and then, you know, you look at Indian movies and you say I want the staircase so children

can play. So, that's my childhood that you play around the tree, no? So, here they can go like this and come back. So, there's one and two. When you make a shape like this then suddenly the lower basement changes so those things began to happen and then I said, I will have no doors. In fact, if you go there in that concrete there's a cut. There were supposed to be two doors. I said why keep a door at all. We don't need a door because in St. Louis I wrote, architecture is to open doors not one but many and now I am in presence of Kahn. Kahn has come here to design IIM and I was drawing the school of architecture campus and he looks at that drawing in the office and he says, "But, am I not supposed to do this building that you called me for?" I said, No, you are going to do this big campus and that is why I called you". Because he did not sign the papers, I signed on his behalf and I wrote back also on Kasturbhai's behalf. I was working on both ends.

When he was there he talked about precision, you know, reduction of vagueness. So, how do you do a class room? A studio? So, there are many sketches of Corbusier's about the studio - you want to get north light and south breeze. So, climate is there already. You have a structure but when you make an angle, how do you make an angle? And I was thinking of Kahn, so, I was then influenced by Kahn on the structural clarity but the articulation is Corbusier's. It's a marriage between them. That staircase is Corbusier, the gargyle is Corbusier, the concreted and brick is Corbusier, but the attitude is Kahn's. You know, it's very interesting. I have no compunction - I used to draw like Corbusier, sign like him. When I was with Kahn, in his office, I was drawing, trying to draw like Kahn. Why not? You are enacting, no? You do this, you know, so I do that . So, you have to know how to fuse...

Charles Correa, Architect: Corbusier was very, very important but I think frankly a distance from Corbusier is also very important or whether its Corbusier or Kahn or Frank Lloyd Wright or Mies, it seems to me. If you listen to Bach, Bach learned everything he knew at the beginning, as a child by transcribing. He transcribed earlier great composers. Later on he became Bach because he could distance himself from that. In fact, there's a famous story that his uncle was so angry with him because in the night he used to climb up and transcribe. He wasn't allowed to play these complicated pieces and he tore up the book and punished the child and this Wanda Landowska, who was a great harpsichordist, she said "Too late". In the very act of transcribing the child had learnt everything he needed to know about that music. Like the roots of a tree gather all the water and the soil. So you know its very important to learn that and move on.

BVD: I remember Picasso, he looked at everybody's drawings but in the end he transformed them totally. So, I said I am a damn good fellow in copying, I can now change beyond and do something else. So, this is how I did.

Nimish Patel, Architect: Every single student of this school in the first eight or ten years had a bond with Doshi that I have not seen in a student teacher relationship. I would not be totally wrong if I would say that in the first five to six years he knew every student and his father's name and what his father was doing. And those parents would call him at twelve at night saying their child has not returned and Doshi would go to the school and find him and if he is not in the school, he would send somebody to find that person. So there's no surprise that we all felt like we were his children - so that he never differentiated. His family was much larger than his family and I think if we have to really look at Doshi, and I look at Doshi, and everybody talks about him as an architect and assesses him as an architect, his architectural work , I find that architecture, from my eyes, is a part of him but not a significant part as what Doshi as a whole is, that as a human being, as a teacher, both are to me as important as his architecture and his contribution in both these other fields is so enormous and which will never be judged other than by people like us who would revere him whether we either agree or disagree with him but he is on a pedestal for us as a teacher and as a human being.

CHAPTER 7

Human being, by nature, is a compassionate, lovable animal.

Highly sophisticated.

KAMALA HOUSE

1959, Ahmedabad

Nimish Patel, Architect: I have not seen anything more closely than his house and I have seen it for the last 42 years - change, adapt, readapt, alter. And there are some constants in that house that have a quality of timelessness that you cant really find in most projects, not just his, but most projects of contemporary Indian architecture.

BVD: My mother-in-law who was with us for thirty eight years. So many things I learned from her - humility, simplicity. Very simple life. When she came here and when she lived with us everything was with her, the keys, but when she passed away, in the cupboard there was nothing of hers. There was only one small suitcase, black, with five sarees and five blouses and five underwears. She was fantastic. So one learns you know all the time. I think that's what makes the family.

This is an Indian way of sitting and there is a storage here and then this is the tray. So, this is what it is. So, I squat here. I mean, I sit like this always, I enjoy doing this so I have Indian style and other people have the western style so it combines both the worlds.

If you are here, you are completely private, you see the garden and I am not disturbed by any visitors and this is really like an Indian *jharokha* and look at the scales. So, all these overhangs then become very useful elements, they become really multipurpose. The furniture is not projecting out of the wall.

People forget that one has to have a very small but a very nice place for children from the age one. It changes their life totally. They become human. They become sensitive. They become compassionate. And they will never hurt anybody and they will be still alive.

Tejal, daughter: Whenever there was any exhibition or music concert or anything he used to say just don't go to school, you know, but come and see all these things. I think he's a great, great father.

Maneesha, daughter: I mean, he understands the pulse of his children. He knows, whenever we are not in a mood or when we have mood, he will realize immediately.

Tejal, daughter: ...And till today, you know, my daughters are married, but till today you know he's always with us. Everyday we talk to him.

BVD: These windows actually open like this. So, advantages are if you are sitting here you get the garden. My children must learn right from childhood to observe trees, birds and nature. I said, if I can do anything like this nothing is more than that education. And I learnt from the world but it was also nature of another kind but here they can look at birds and actually it did change their lives. And then I started doing the house. I had gone to the Graham Foundation and came back and I was thinking about an umbrella. So, I made a plan with an umbrella and columns, you know, in the middle and a diagonal space and below kitchen and one room and a big living room and other bedrooms on top.

Bijoy: Like a Corbusier plan

BVD: Yes that's right, and I said, what is this house? It's not India. So when I went to the brick kiln here to buy some burnt bricks, you know, fire bricks, I saw a woman coming with the bricks on her head on the steps and with the little tin holes (that's how Tejal's house got those holes) and that light came and I saw four columns in front and I saw her coming and I said, my God! So, these four columns, somebody mentioned, and then I said, my God, you know, this must be my haunting. My haunting is with staircases, columns and shrines. Then I discovered the plan and you can see many temples have offsets like this and so I found that I was not at all wrong because I said it's a question of belief. I am throughout guided and so in that guidance somewhere this eternal force comes into being and marks its presence and it's always there somewhere you will find that happening.

Charles Correa, Architect: Well I think I'd like to really congratulate Doshi for all that you've done, you know, first of all to the school and all the things we've been discussing, but also to reach eighty years old - that's a great achievement and to do it with all these things thriving, including your children and grandchildren. That's wonderful.

BVD: I spend all my time even now and what not. Actually the credit goes to my wife, mostly. Otherwise I would be like anybody else you know, quick money and all that. Thank God, you know, she wanted once upon a time to go to Bombay and we did not go and she doesn't repent anymore...

Bijoy: She wanted to go to Bombay?

BVD: Yes, in the beginning only, because she belongs to Ahmedabad. But then now she knows Bombay and other places. She says it's not good to go anywhere, it's better to be here - quiet place. But I'll tell you one thing - Human being, by nature, is a compassionate, lovable animal, highly sophisticated.

Kamala Doshi, wife: Actually Corbusier has played an important part in our meeting. Because of his building he came to Ahmedabad, to supervise. He was in Chandigarh and he decided to come to supervise this building and my brother was a friend of Shodhan's, you know, and he was a chemical engineer. My brother introduced me to Doshi and we used to meet very often and then we decided to get married.

Radhika Doshi Kathpalia, daughter: You know yesterday my mother was not well and I went straight from the airport to spend a night with them and at eleven o'clock in the night he was doing each and everything for my mother - giving her water, giving her medicine, giving her food. If my mother wears a new sari he notices and he says, "Oh, what a beautiful sari you are wearing. You are looking so beautiful". He has time for each and everything, for each of us. Every wedding I do I am not bothered about the client. I am bothered about my father. If he says pass, it's pass. If he says fail, it's fail to me. I think we are just blessed to have him. I mean it must be some past life's karma that we are born here.

Bijoy: So thanks, Radhika. Thanks for your time. All of us are very fortunate that we get a chance to be with him.

Radhika Doshi Kathpalia, daughter: I see hundreds of students feeling so blessed so you can imagine how we must be feeling all the time. I mean it's just fantastic. He would baby sit my children if I have a meeting. He would do anything, anything. I am sure other parents also do it but he always had time, you know. Never went to parties. He would go only where we were invited otherwise everybody was allowed to come to our house. He never left us. Never. I don't remember ever going to parties without us. Never. One thing which I really remember is all my childhood we would get up with music. Even today I got up with music in the morning. And he would specially put the music when I go to spend the night - the one I like. In the morning he would get up and put the music. But it's every day we get up with the music. Through out our life. And I would order him, I would be sleeping, I would say, "Papa put this music", you know, and I would lie down for half an hour and listen to the music and get up. I mean, really pampered. And people used to say you're spoiling your daughters and he would say love cannot spoil anybody and I have three princesses.

CHAPTER 8

So what is our heritage?

SARKHEJ ROZA

1451, Ahmedabad

BVD: Future and past. I think, if you look at this monument you always wonder how come that these people had these ideas of the scale, the size and even the kind of elaboration, you know. It gives you a joy of working. You come back, and you visit, you touch your hand, you can sit places. How come we don't think about this public realm? We have no public realm at all. We don't talk about people, communities, communities rejoicing. We don't have urban development at all.

Actually that place there are these steps which goes down and they go down to the water.

That's for the elephants to come.

But where are the communities gone? Neighborhoods are not there and not only that, but there are no museums. There are no civic spaces.

There are no institutions which inspire you. Cultural, social, economic activities have to be clustered and they become the focus of our development. Then everything will spread.

If you make a developer aware that you are doing this but ten percent of your money, of your space, of your buildings should be made into institutions. But if he says no, we succumb. We are constantly succumbing. He says, "You don't bother about what is going to happen outside my property. I am not bothered about neighbor. You just do me what I want". So we are not professionals at all. We are *lachar*. We are actually submissive and an architect has even a greater responsibility. Then what happens? Parents are not aware, society is not aware, we are not aware, news papers are not aware and so what are we dependant on? So anybody comes here, we come to these ancient monuments and say this is our heritage. So what shall we say about it, you know. What is our heritage? Present heritage? What have you contributed to contemporary heritage? Show me one example, one example you show me. Its not there. You think architects are not powerful? But because they are not doing, nobody is listening to them - because they have nothing to do with society at large.

See its a beautiful wall. you know the kind of transparency you get from here. You get this plus that plus this...

So, eventually, all over the country in India, except such monuments nothing will be there. No trace. We will have only roads, you know, for cars, parking, hawkers because that is how we eat our days, you know, enjoy our celebration, entertainment of cheap type and rooms which are shelters, which may be luxurious but that's all. Because we want to be now alone, isolated and enjoy yourself and so we don't talk about society. Socially relevant architecture I don't think that we have anymore. I don't mean to say that we cannot have a better house but when you just step out of the house and get into the entrance and go to the street, what kind of street is there? Can my children walk and go in two minutes to a park? Can they see something there and learn and come back? Can the family go there and say, "Oh its wonderful, now I learnt something more today, I enjoyed my time". So what do they do? They go back and they have computer screen, laptop and television. What do we have on television? When you show these things you show as heritage but that's all. We don't talk about saying all right now gentlemen, here is our new heritage. Not expensive - idea wise. You think to collect water is expensive? To create with the light and shadow and sun and just show people the play of volumes and sculptures and music going on together and dance. Is it expensive? If things are good people will come and dance. But if they are not there, they won't dance. So we will have a Konark festival, Khajeraho festival, Sarkhej festival. Because we as professionals are so much involved in our day to day mundane survival we are not at all talking, we are just surviving. We are just surviving. Institution building is gone. Look at the Indian institute of Architect, look at the Council of Architecture - they are fighting against each other. Doing what? You see the schools and look at the kind of teachers you get. What do you do? And the teachers are talking when the parents are there and the students are there - who is telling what and we only talk about, only say how do we do for a developer today? What can we say? How can you not have glass in the building. Because you're not convinced. If you bring a client here you think he will not like it? And then if you add glass nobody will say but there is something to do with beauty which comes by subtle nuances of volumes and surfaces. Look at the skyline. Look at the scales. Its not the big, its not the monumental, its not the size at all. Nothing is there talked about .

We just talk about this is the price, this is the value, this is what I do, in this much time.