Samira Rathod Through the Lens of the Neo-Vernacular

Understanding the evolution of the neo-vernacular and its connection to India's national identity and how it informs Samira Rathod's design philosophy

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Figure 1. Samira Rathod with "Kit of Parts" exhibition (Prescott Road, 2021)

Abstract

Neo-vernacular architecture transposes traditional vernacular learnings of context and techniques and utilizes modern technologies to tackle issues concerning climate, site and people. This thesis charts the evolution of neo-vernacular architecture in India as a by-product of India's need for a national identity after its Independence in 1947. Over the 1950s to 1990s, many iterations and popular names have delved into the neo-vernacular as it relates to India. The thesis uses this knowledge to further understand and develop a foundational basis for the education and career of Indian architect Samira Rathod. Her association with the neo-vernacular will be studied with reference to her completed architectural works. With this understanding, the thesis will analyse Samira Rathod's design philosophy and how it relates to sustainability, the neo-vernacular and the characteristic traits of her work both in architecture and academia. These studies connected to the evolution of the neo-vernacular will attempt to place Rathod as a figurehead for the neo-vernacular amongst her peers.

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Introduction

"In my design, there is always a striving for a larger, amplified version of the mundane."

- *S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024*

This thesis explores the design evolution of the Indian architect Samira Rathod through the lens of the shifting perspectives of the 'neo-vernacular' or 'contemporary vernacular' movement in India with an emphasis on Indian craftsmanship. The above quote could summarise Rathod's two and a half decades of work. Holding playfulness, innovation and experimentation at the core of her design ideology, Rathod has a diligent eye for materiality, tactility and Indian craft.

Starting her independent career with furniture exhibitions and working through initial periods of criticism from her peers in the industry for her often whimsical designs, she has grown her practice to encompass a furniture design wing and workshop, a research cell that often debates architecture and architectural education in India and an award-winning architecture and interior design practice.

Her work is often linked to vernacular traditions owing to her diligent research and involvement of context, climate and people in all her projects. She uses the vernacular to weave whimsical and sculptural pieces of architecture. This aspect of her work with indigenous peoples and craftsmen, their practised traditional techniques and their mastery of materiality superimposed within the evolution of the contemporary vernacular architecture of India is what drives my interest in Rathod, and this forms the basis of my history thesis. In light of this connection, typical of her professional work, leads to the thesis' main research question:

How did the 'contemporary vernacular' movement develop in India and to what degree was Samira Rathod the figurehead for the expression of this style amongst her peers?'

This main question is investigated through several secondary questions:

How did contemporary vernacular architecture evolve in India? Can this evolution be linked to building a national identity after its independence in 1947?

What were the contemporary influences on Rathod's design philosophy from her education in the 1980s and later periods of her career?

What is the trajectory of Rathod's education, early career and evolution of design philosophy? Which of her projects are most exemplary of the 'neo-vernacular'?

What is her design philosophy and what is her architectural legacy? How has she been influential in the field of contemporary vernacular architecture in India?

In dealing with these questions, there has to be in-depth research into both major topics of discussion- the 'neo-vernacular' and our protagonist Samira Rathod. The former has been academically researched in great detail. Brown's and Maudlin's excerpt "Concepts of vernacular architecture" (2012) from The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory" gives insight into defining the universal vernacular definition while Aishwarya Tipnis through "Vernacular Traditions: Contemporary Architecture" (2012) tries to bridge the gap between the past and future translations of vernacular within the context of India. Zographaki with her dissertation on neo-vernacular trends (1986) and Rajpu and Tiwari with their journal on neo-vernacular architecture (2020) help define its characteristics. Herrle and Schmitz, through "Constructing Identity in Contemporary Architecture: Case Studies from the South" (2009), speak in depth about architectural identity and nation-building in India. The latter, however, has been written about in a handful of academic books and a few architectural journals. Madhavi Desai's "Women Architects and Modernism in India: Narratives and Contemporary Practices" (2017) and Mary N. Woods' "Women Architects in India: Histories of Practice in Mumbai and Delhi" (2018) are seminal literature in unmasking Rathod's design evolution while exploring the dynamics of class, caste, tradition and family. A parallel analysis of Woods' and Herrle and Schmitz's books will provide a clear timeline and trajectory of the vernacular movement tied to nation-building but within the background of the Indian woman architect.

In this thesis, I will bring a novel approach addressing the substantial link between Rathod's design philosophy and the contemporary vernacular and how she has equipped this professional knowledge to disseminate its values through her outreach. To piece together her contributions from the vernacular perspective as well as her more recent projects, additional readings will include a personal interview, her writings and information from online platforms and articles.

Chapter I of this paper provides a comprehensive look into vernacular architecture, its origins and its applications in building a national identity after India's independence. It will also touch upon the major names that contributed to these attempts at identity creation. This will give an insight into the events in Chapter II comprised of dissecting vernacular architecture in the 1980s through to the early 2000s. This helps understand Rathod's contemporary influences; the architects, movements, political events and schools of architectural education that have directly or indirectly provided a foundational basis at the start of her career.

Chapter III explores Rathod's early projects, design methodology, and the different verticals of her practice and establishes her outreach within the architectural profession. Noteworthy projects in her later years of practice are studied in light of vernacular influences to establish her design philosophy which will finally be elaborated upon in Chapter IV.

Chapter 01: The Vernacular and National Identity

Samira Rathod is known for her conscientious and grounded designs steeped in contextual literacy both climatically and culturally. She combines modern methodologies and experimentations of practice (neo) with traditional knowledge of building (vernacular), creating her interpretations of contemporary or neo-vernacular architecture. To analyze her design evolution, we first create a foundational understanding of the origins of neo-vernacular architecture. To further this, the first chapter will serve to introduce the various definitions and concepts behind vernacular architecture in theory and practice and how it has remained an important facet of creating national identity through its applications. The definition of vernacular is explored both contextually and globally, and the properties of vernacular architecture are defined, and this helps our understanding of neo-vernacular architecture which we witness today. The chapter will explore India's effort to create a national identity after its independence on August 15, 1947, and the different permutations this catapulted Indian vernacular architecture into.

The vernacular: Definitions and origins in India

Vernacular architecture is defined differently from primitive traditional buildings in many texts and the definitions overlap in others. Brown and Maudlin (2012) refer to vernacular architecture as the study of "traditional buildings", buildings that are, or were the authentic product of a specific place and people, have evolved in form over time and are produced by "non-experts" through shared knowledge passed down over time. For this thesis, primitive or traditional buildings will be referred to as "vernacular buildings" and modern interpretations will be called "neo-vernacular" or "contemporary vernacular".

Amos Rapoport (1969) referred to the neo-vernacular design process as one of "models and adjustments or variations". Its "unspecialised, open-ended nature, so different from the closed, final form typical of most high-style design buildings, helps it to accept changes and additions, which would destroy a high-style design visually and conceptually" (Zographaki, 1986). As a basis, the 'variations' happen under the foundational framework of a common heritage and value system. Although choices and decisions take place in both vernacular and neo-vernacular instances, in the former, personal expression is stifled and decisions are unconscious next to a fixed pattern of building. The latter however designs through conceptual and theoretical associations of tradition displaying a personal command over the vocabulary in which design is translated in the modern context.

> *"In the vernacular buildings, design is the result and not the process (question of what), while in the neo-vernacular, design is conscious (question of why)"*
>
> *- Zographaki, 1986*

Each period in Indian history can be associated with a style of architecture which reflects the values of the society it represents. Thereby vivid images of such periods are etched in our collective memory. For India, these regional interpretations (vivid images) may vary extensively considering the geographical, climatic and cultural context of the region. This context also establishes a few primary vernacular materials, namely mud (adobe walls), brick and terracotta, lime plaster, stone (each region has a specific stone type), timber, bamboo and coconut palm, mostly in the south (Tipnis, 2012).

Traditionally in India, design and building were in the hands of master builders and artisans, who were overwhelmingly male, as in the rest of the world. These men called mistris, have created most of India's built environment, especially in rural areas. Mistris passed their vocational knowledge onto the next generation, usually family members. This knowledge however drew on the Vaastu shastras, "ancient building texts combining both Hindu and Buddhist beliefs on design and construction from the Vishwakarma (community of designers) from thousands of years ago. These manuals codified proportional systems, directional alignments, and other methods to ensure harmony between nature and architecture" (Tipnis, 2012). The courtyard house is the most common prototype of a vernacular dwelling in India where the courtyard is the focal point of equilibrium[1]. Different regional variations like the "haveli in Indo Gangetic Plains; rajbari in Bengal, the wada in Maharashtra, naalukettu in Kerala and Chettinad mansions in Tamil Nadu" (Tipnis, 2012).

Figure 3: Image of the courtyard in the naalukettu in Rajakkad, Tamil Nadu (Prince, 2020).

[1]The house is built around a central open space, ruled by Brahma as per the Vaastupurush mandala. Each side of the square holds one function of the house (Chakroborti, 1999).
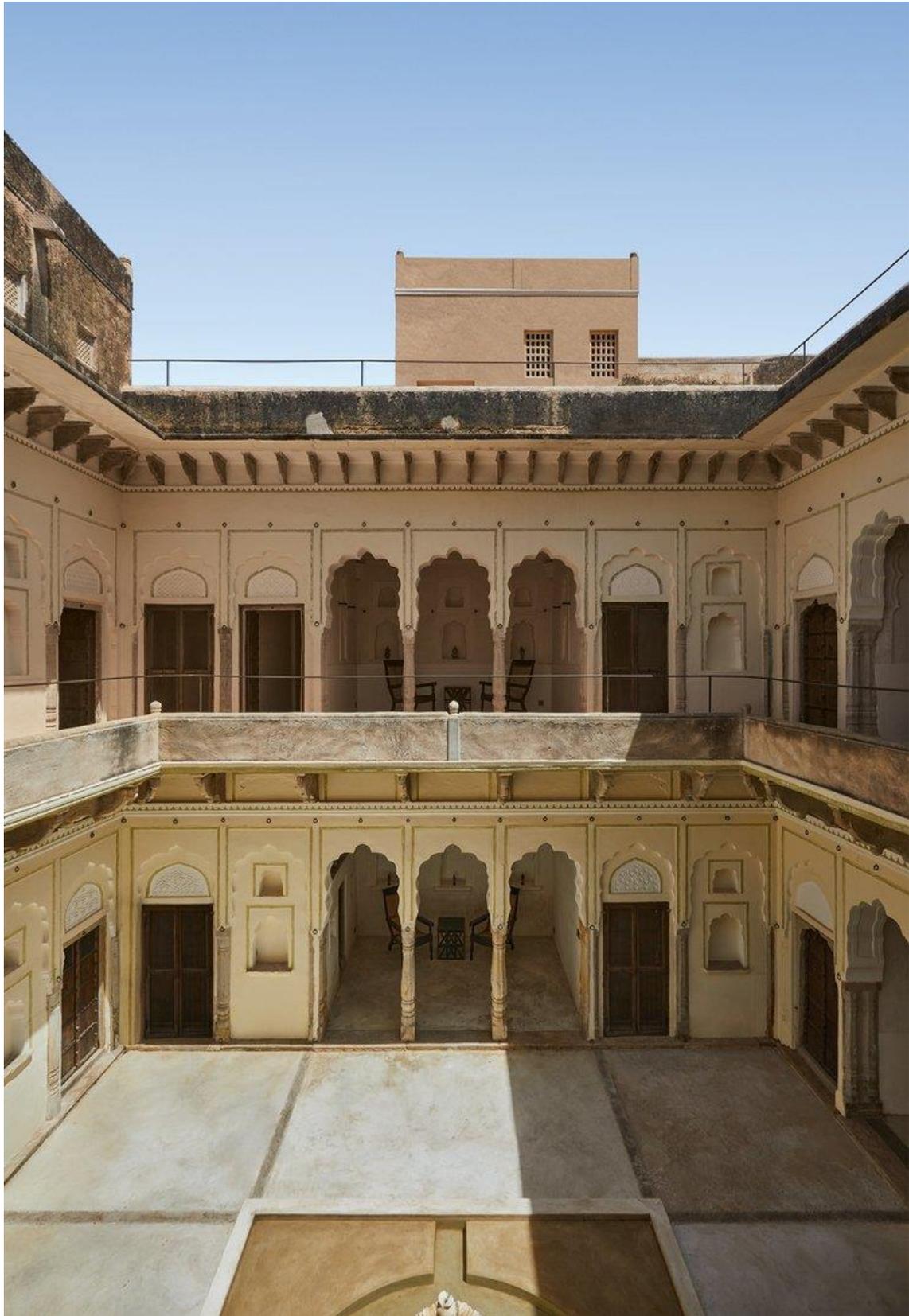
Figure 4: Courtyard, Deeppura Garh Sikar, Rajasthan (Sahi, 2021).

Apart from the written scriptures, vernacular practices in India utilized elements that sustained social hierarchy and religious patterns and were an effective design tool in developing plans for sustainable habitats. For example, the Muslim tradition of Purdah, where the women could not be seen in the public eye, translated into the zenana quarters in havelis (balconies with jaalis or lattice screens so that women could still observe the outside world while remaining out of sight themselves (Tipnis, 2012).

Neo-vernacular: A new typology

Pressure on the traditional habitat began with industrialization and was accentuated by the modern movement and urbanization in the 20th century. This change required new models of buildings and cities that overcame the limitations of traditional settlements. The question now was, "What is locally available?" and "Is it cheap?" and recently "Is it sustainable?". For example, lime plaster which was traditionally used on walls was no longer readily available. The craftsmanship has also deteriorated significantly over the years, making it an expensive material. In the changing social, economic, political, and natural environment what is neo-vernacular?

As the name suggests, neo-vernacular principles are the qualities of vernacular trends used alongside modern technology and provide an equilibrium between form, function, energy consumption, technology and natural context. It merges the vernacular with technical consciousness (Rajpu & Tiwari, 2020). This merging took many forms: new materials, building technology, sculptural canons, settlement patterns and aesthetic values. While some of the resultant architecture is overtly inspired by the vernacular, some appear rather modernist despite being rooted in traditional knowledge. The fuzziness between modern and post-modern translations in India is most pronounced while examining this trait (Sanghamitra & Mukerji, 2014). The term "neo-vernacular architecture" first appeared globally in the period of the 1950s and 1960s when "architects sought to appropriate simple traditional buildings to legitimize prevalently functionalist theories of design" likely evolving from post-war sentiments (Brown and Maudlin, 2012).

Neo-vernacular traits can be assessed through the following criteria as laid out by Rajpu and Tiwari (2020). The first is cultural adherence brought on by socio-cultural parameters creating symbolism of what a place means to its users and visitors over time. Neo-vernacular resonates with old forms, connecting past cultures to today's needs. The second is vernacular influence birthed from the outcome of prolonged community transmission of traditional values. "Neo-vernacular buildings have their own identity, yet they treat historic content as something livable and transformable". The third is the style's coherence with ongoing practices; to be able to merge ancient philosophies with present-day requirements like cooling and ventilation. Zographaki (1986) calls out the spirit of familiarity that is imparted by using local building materials.

The colour, details, finishes etc, of the neo-vernacular are denotative. Modern construction techniques may be cladded with materials that invoke the "soul of the building". The fourth is the design's harmony with its built environment. The interior-exterior link is often emphasized to impart connectivity, construction offers minimum hindrance to the site and micro-climate is monitored through permaculture. The most defining trait of the neo-vernacular is in the interpretative design

process where the available contextual data is subjected to rigorous methodology to evoke the best contextual outcome. An example is seen in Charles Correa's city plan for Jawaharlal Kala Kendra, Jaipur. It draws on references from the traditional Rajasthani architecture as well as references from the Vastu Shaastra. It fuses the symbolic grid, courtyards and shading mechanism through a highly optimized process of design, introvert planning, colour scheme and the use of local materials.
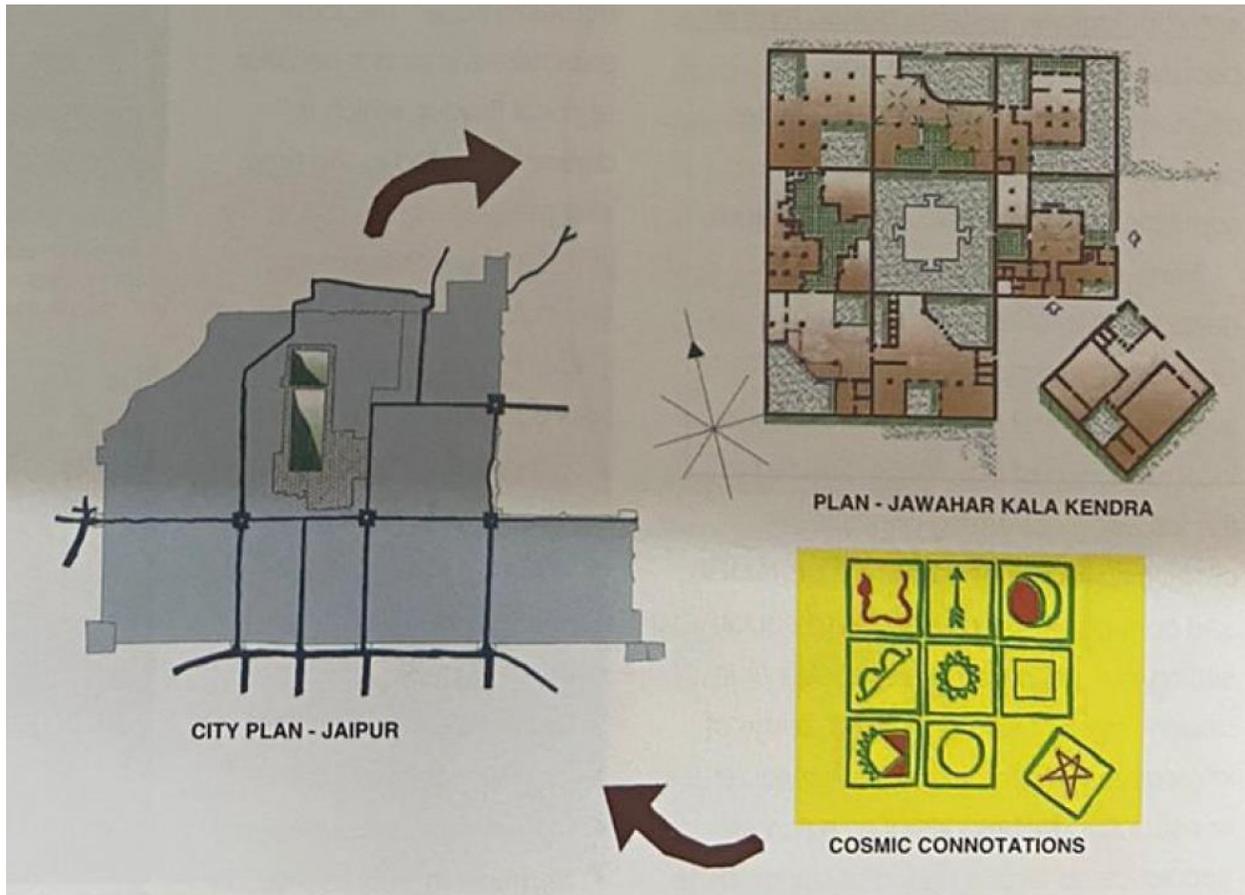

Figure 5: Cosmic connotations as inspiration for city plan form and Jawaharlal Kala Kendra, Jaipur
(Bhardwaj & Garg, 2010)

Addressing national identity: 1950s to 1980s

Mehrotra et al (2009) emphasize that the question of identity is deeply rooted in the outcome of power structures and what is asserted on the built landscape is the identity of dominant or shifting power groups. Identity is usually tied to symbolism and local traditions. "The search for roots" and "looking ahead in time" are the two respective positions that get articulated through this concern for the "local".

Historiography of Indian modern architecture has stressed, even agonized over nationalism and the search for pan-Indian identity (Woods, 2018). It was only in the 19th and early 20th century that

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Western influence, during the British Raj[2], imported the idea of professional practice to India. Since the neo-vernacular is almost purely a product of professional practice, its origins are worth studying. Established in 1913, the architecture course of study at Sir J.J. College of Architecture in Mumbai (where Rathod received her undergraduate degree in architecture) became the first school of architecture in South Asia and became noteworthy in disseminating Indian architecture through its students. Claude Batley, an Englishman, was the head of Sir J.J. College from 1923 to 1943. Predecessors before him had followed the Beaux Arts School of sculptural ornament and architectural detailing while Batley brought focus back to Indian traditional design strategies. He still fell short by aspiring to catalogue all Indian vernacular architecture into a "kit of parts".

> *He claimed, "Indian traditional work takes up a great deal of our attention, colouring all our teaching, while almost all design work is based on it". He insisted on looking to vernacular examples for inspiration, especially those elements that Indian mistris had evolved to deal with heat, dust, humidity, glare, monsoons, and ventilation. In his writings, he catalogued these elements as stone plinths; thick walls; overhanging eaves; latticed screens; internal courtyards; and roof terraces. Batley reduced Indian architecture to a kit of parts where modern designers rummaged for climatically appropriate elements. There was very little discussion of how climate (much less architectural forms, materials, structures, and socio-political systems) varied from Delhi to Madras, or Shimla to Jaipur.*

> *-   Woods, 2018*

It was India's independence from the Raj on August 15th, 1947, that ushered in the age of modernism through the effort of its new Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, popularly called "the architect of modern India"[3]. This new Indian state could reclaim the Western modern movement from its tainted associations with capitalism. It was utilized to unify a country divided by class, religion, language and gender (Woods, 2018). But Brown and Maudlin (2012) caution us against the dichotomy of establishing national identity through vernacular traditions. These traditions may be appropriated as convenient symbols of national identity, and this connection can be exploited by national governments to build political agendas.

The three capital cities of New Delhi, Chandigarh and Bangalore are "cited as instances of the state's attempts at manufacturing a sense of authority, a sense of modernity and a sense of tradition respectively amongst its subjects" (Mehrotra et al, 2009). The prominence given to Le Corbusier's Chandigarh Capitol Complex symbolizes the glorification of independence after a sustained political struggle.

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[2] The British Raj was the period of British Parliament rule on the Indian subcontinent between 1858 and 1947, for around 89 years of British occupation. The system of governance was instituted in 1858 when the rule of the East India Company was transferred to the Crown in the person of Queen Victoria.

[3] Nehru promoted parliamentary democracy, secularism, and science and technology during the 1950s, powerfully influencing India's arc as a modern nation. Including other reforms, he also brought on Le Corbusier to design the city of Chandigarh and many other iconic institutions as part of his vision (Chaudhary, 2022).

Figure 6: Le Corbusier's Parliament Building, Chandigarh. (The Architectural Review,1962)

Within Corbusier's abstract sculptural forms for the Parliament building in Chandigarh with several Indian references are carefully woven in (e.g. the Assembly Hall's roof is curved like a cow's horns), incorporating his "usual hot-climate devices with fundamental patterns grasped in a variety of temple, palace and bungalow prototypes" (Curtis, 1987) and Louis Kahn's use of brick in the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad there "resonates the post-modern neo-vernacularism of the west" (Sanghamitra & Mukerji, 2014).

The 1950s and 1960s saw experimentation with steel, concrete and glass but this at the same time was restricted to public commissions owing to the government restrictions on imports and India's limited industrial capacity. Thus, the modern Indian architect learnt to make use of brick, wood, stone and plaster instead. Given abundant and inexpensive labour, Indian modernism was about handicrafts and details (Woods, 2018). Regional identity was built inevitably concerning rural traditions. Traditional materials and processes spoke of regionalist identity while imported glass and steel were associated with seeking an international identity (Mehrotra et al., 2009). Gandhian admiration for the spirit of the village was never replaced. Even today, craft and industry are always interlinked in India with projects simultaneously utilizing the use of computers and intensive manual labour (Curtis, 1987).

The 1960s saw a younger generation, some of them educated abroad, begin to look for a modern Indian architecture. Charles Correa's Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad (1962) was a pivotal building combining brick piers, concrete beams and low pavilions. This was a blend of learnings from "Le Corbusier and Kahn, but the humble scale and meandering route evoked Indian vernacular as well as encapsulating the moral restraint of Gandhi" (Curtis, 1987).

Figure 7: Entrance detail of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. (The Architectural Review, 1962)
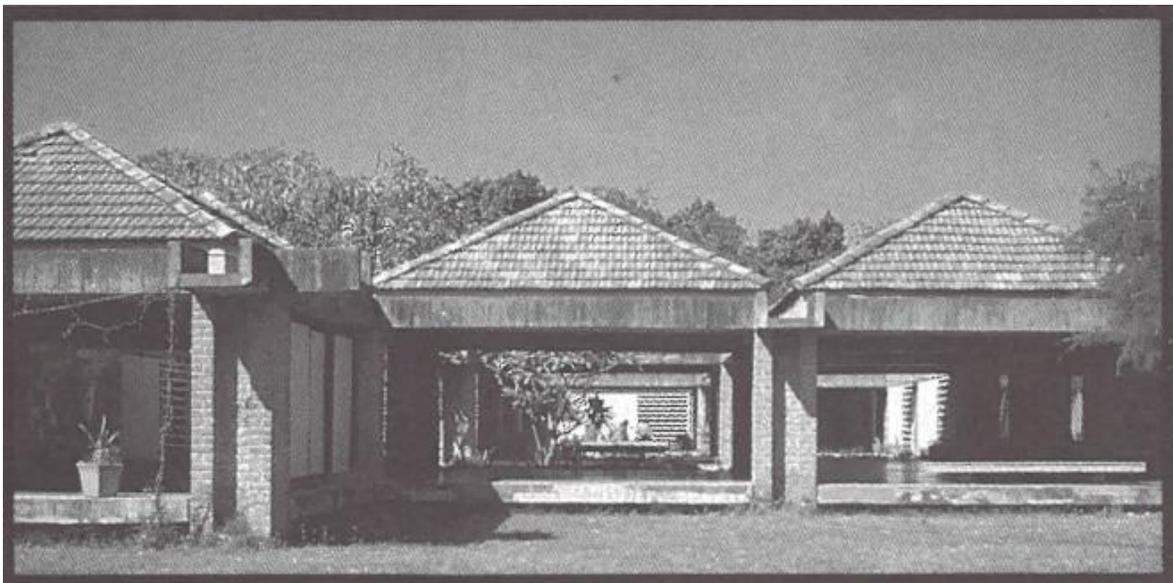

Figure 8: Charles Correa's Gandhi Ashram building, Ahmedabad (The Architectural Review,1962)

By the 1970s, Correa had formulated his very own Batley "kit of parts" such as "section types for hot/wet and hot/dry regions; sheltering roofs of various sorts; sunken courts and outdoor rooms; platforms, terraces and steps for transitions; planar walls to create a dense labyrinth of public and private spaces" (Curtis, 1987) but this integrated by a deep understanding of context. The Kanchanjunga project, encompassing luxury apartments in Bombay(1973-86) blended both Wright's and Le Corbusier's organizational matrix with an understanding of hot climate vernacular (Curtis, 1987).

After the 1970s, there was rising disillusionment with modernity compounded by issues of corruption within the Public Works Department which handled many public projects. Still, many architects continued with modernism. Also, neo-vernacular architecture was a valid inspiration informing many works. While all the projects stated above "remain modern in their paucity of added decoration, avoidance of direct or abstract elements for historical reference, and lack of flamboyance, but a nascent quest for 'meaning', 'identity' and 'context' cannot be denied" (Sanghamitra & Mukerji, 2014).
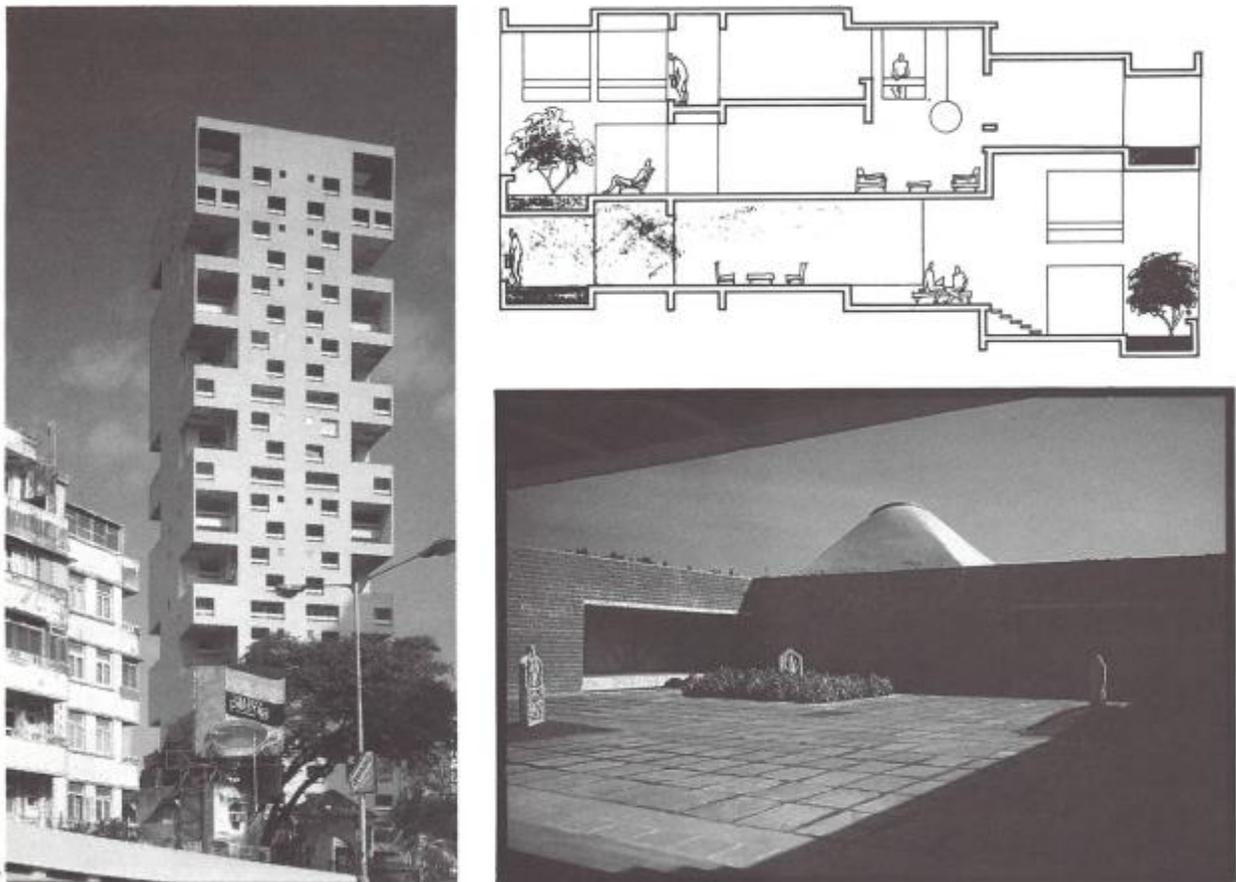

Figure 9: Left and above right: the Kanchenjunga apartment block, Bombay. Right bottom: The Arts Centre for Bhopal. Source: The Architectural Review (1982)

Chapter 02: Contextualising Rathod's Education and Early Career

This chapter seeks to establish factors, both direct and indirect, that influenced Rathod's design philosophy. In the 1980s, we begin with a look at the atmosphere surrounding her education and then early career with popular names and concepts surrounding neo-vernacular design. A personal interview was done to supplement information accessible from academic works and archives and will therefore be used to provide more context. By the end of the chapter, we hope to lay the foundation for exploring Rathod's private projects.

The 1980s: Vernacular revival and paradigm shift

During the 1980s, there existed a vernacular revival of craft-based and labour-intensive architecture, especially with carpentry and metalwork including the use of discarded and recycled materials and elements, especially in mostly residential and institutional buildings (Desai, 2019).

Beyond the positions taken for evoking national identity, there is another position that turns to "looking at real problems, rather than self-consciously trying to find identity as an end in itself" (Correa, 1983). This position attempts understand local climatic, behavioural issues rather than leaning on oversimplifications of traditional elements. Published in 1983, Kenneth Frampton's arguments for a critical regionalism to counter universal modernism had a particular resonance for many Indian architects (Mehrotra et al, 2009).

As we have seen so far, a single search for Indian identity did not exist. Spread over different cultural accommodations and local contexts, this search was rather fragmented and took multiple directions. Their self-assured work expresses a high degree of knowledge of the material and confidence to experiment within an established framework, incorporating appropriate models where required (Desai, 2019).

In the 1980s, during which time Samira was working towards her bachelor's degree in architecture at Sir J.J. College of Architecture, Mumbai, there was a paradigm shift in India and a search for defining an appropriate 'Indian architecture' which took many forms. Architects, young and old, searched for new referents other than modernism, literary criticism and post-structuralist and post-modernist thinking (Lang, 2002).

Sir J.J College had, in the 1980s, evolved from the traumatic "Batley's kit of parts" and explored its curriculum to better suit the changing atmosphere. "Students were going on measured-drawing trips and were appreciating, studying and recording traditional, classical, vernacular and folk architecture" (Desai, 2010). Throughout Rathod's college years, the modernist and neo-vernacular trendsetters like Kahn, Corbusier, Doshi and Correa were big figures. A big proponent of vernacular translations for this new India was architect Balkrishna Doshi. Among his works, his studio Sangath in Gujarat emerged during this time as the poster child for the contemporary vernacular (Rajpu and

Tiwari, 2020) (Doshi et al., 2019). It encapsulated the essence of traditional thinking about passive climate (Cruickshank, 1986). Its low vaulted spaces, water channels, and china mosaic to combat Gujarat's heat have inspired a look into more modern translations of the vernacular. Also, throughout Rathod's undergraduate education, "Bawa and Laurie Baker were also making a big dent in the students' perspective[4]. Vernacular was becoming a very important word" (Desai, 2019).

Figure 10: View of vaulted roof and water channels, Sangath, Ahmedabad. Source: Vastu Shilpa Foundation, (2023)

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[4] Bawa, a Sri Lankan architect, sought with his work to mediate between modernist approaches and traditional Sinhalese architectural styles to weave his own regionalist typology. Bawa gained popularity in India through his elegance and design skills utilizing low-tech traditional buildings often with open-plan typologies to tackle modern issues (Alcock, 2023).
Laurie Baker, a British-born Indian architect was renowned for his cost-effective energy-efficient architecture. Being a Gandhian at heart, he promoted the revival of regionalist techniques to maximize space and achieve a striking aesthetic quality through the use of brick (Kuriakose, 2022).

Figure 11: Geoffrey Bawa: New Sri Lanka Parliament, 1979–1982. (Architectural Digest, 2016)

Figure 12: Geoffrey Bawa: Courtyard space of Geoffrey Bawa's House in Lunuganga, 2007 (Pragya Bharati, 2016)

The period from 1982 to 1986 saw the "Festivals of India" travelling abroad which contained presentations of Indian handicrafts, visual arts, architecture and performing arts (Woods, 2018). Partially funded by the government, they were ideated after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's return to power in the 1980s. This was an attempt to regain popular standing after she suppressed dissent during the Indian Emergency[5] (Woods, 2018).

Figure 13: Magazine excerpts showing Festivals of Indian (Museum, XXXIV, 1982) (New York Times, 1982)

Education and freedom in design thinking

During an interview with Matter (2023), Rathod recalls early inspirations for choosing design as a career. She cites Sunday mornings with her art teacher as "where the seed of design or this love for composition began". But even in the light of inspirational figures of the age, Rathod felt that she was a misfit at Sir J.J. College. In a personal interview, Rathod explained that the college's emphasis on structure, buildability and presentation, void of the freedom for exploration curbed her enthusiasm. She felt that she had an innate sense of direction but her diligence and explorative attitude in her

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[5] The Emergency in India was a 21-month period from 1975 to 1977 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency declared across the country. Officially issued by President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, the order bestowed upon the prime minister the authority to rule by decree, allowing elections to be cancelled and civil liberties to be suspended.

work was never well-received. She does recall however the classes of a professor of humanities speaking of human-interest stories, talking about the common man and ethnographic studies that she enthusiastically attended (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024).

Desai (2019) notes that an internship with architect Uday Master of Master and Associates, Mumbai in her fourth year reinstated her interest in architecture. During her final year, extended conversations with the J.J. faculty Yatin Chandawarkar about the profession, in practice and ideology, resonated with her. He encouraged her to do a thesis she enjoyed immensely involving a low-cost housing colony laid out in a vernacular and sinuous layout mimicking the chaos of Mumbai. Upon graduating in 1986, a broken engagement brought her to the US where, shortly after working at an architectural office through a connection from Uday Master, she realized she wanted to study. It was the master's degree at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that everything changed for Rathod.

Rathod felt that "the university experience lent her confidence, maturity and a new sense of independence" (Desai, 2019). Rathod recalled in our interview that compared to other schools of design in the US under the tutelage of star architects, Urbana-Champaign was run by experienced senior architects. There was no single strong ideology of a star architect so it was easier to mould yourself as needed for the brief. They gave her the freedom to explore concepts in their entirety before looking at the structural needs. In retrospect, she feels good that she didn't receive a formal education at J.J. making it easier to "do what logically felt had to be done for the site" during the initial years of her career (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024).

Early career and step into furniture design

Woods (2018) notes that after the Emergency and with the economy on the edge of bankruptcy the government decided to incentivize the private sector. The easing of import and currency restrictions since 1991 meant that architects could now import building materials and technologies from abroad. "Extremely fluid landscapes of architectural practice emerged in India after 1991" (Woods, 2018). The next generation of architects such as Anupama Kundoo, Bijoy Jain, Samira Rathod and Revathi and Vasanth Kamath have demonstrated how ecologically sensitive, yet cost-effective buildings can be designed with local materials adapted with modern technology (Tipnis, 2012).

After a short stint at Don Wald and Associates in California, she returned to India to work for Ratan J. Batliboi from 1991 to 1995. During this time, she was offered the chance to do a furniture exhibition repurposing antique wooden pieces from the "Chor Bazaar" market in Mumbai in 1991. She immediately noticed an affinity for furniture design and wished to explore this more.

> *"There is a nuanced connection between furniture and architecture. Architecture doesn't necessarily hinge on a bodily connection. But with furniture, you are wholly involved, direct and personal. It is a sensual relationship."*
>
> *(S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024).*

Indirectly through the experimental atmosphere in the 1990s and her explorative nature, her work stood out differently. Understanding the obsolescence of constructing a Georgian-style beach

house in India she convinced Batliboi and the client to go for a conceptual approach based on weaving the house according to the grid of coconut trees on site (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024). She quit Batliboi when she was pregnant with her second child.

In 1999, Rathod curated a solo show of avant-garde furniture 'Liasons des Formes' which opened her up to new clients including a first official solo project of designing the interior of a bathroom (Desai, 2019) (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024). Around 2000, she also partnered with Purvi Parikh to open the furniture outlet, Tranceforme Designs.

Figure 14: Furniture pieces, Liaisons de Formes Exhibition (PRAXIS, 2023)

According to Lang (2002), by the end of the twentieth century, architecture in India was flirting with many ideas. Namely, modernist principles, deconstruction, neo-traditional learnings, post-modernism and community involvement; all of which were underpinnings in Rathod's philosophy. The focal points especially at the end of the 1990s were 1) a greater concern for past architectural and urban forms with conservation or preservation work and 2) an 'ecological' architecture trying to find a balance between Indian and global contexts. This co-existence of themes has enriched the architectural scene and has continued throughout the last few decades.

Chapter 03: Career Trajectory, Design Verticals and Projects

Having sufficient knowledge of her educational background and early career working as an architect in architectural firms abroad and in India, this chapter delves into Rathod's solo ventures, and initial learnings from the site and will analyse how she developed her craft through an analysis of her architectural projects. After which the thesis explores her design firm's verticals and established methodologies. Her outreach in the context of the architectural profession will also be touched upon including her latest works to date.

Initial solo projects and developing craft

Having gained acclaim from her furniture designs, Rathod founded her namesake firm Samira Rathod Design Associates (SRDA) in 2000 and was commissioned for her first solo architecture project, a farmhouse in Karjat, Maharashtra. Completed in 2000, she was able to hone her technical knowledge through collaboration with craftsmen on-site (Desai, 2019).

Figure 15: Karjat Farmhouse Exterior, Karjat, Maharashtra, 2001 (Wiley, 2007a)

Figure 16: Karjat Farmhouse Interior, Karjat, Maharashtra, 2001 (Wiley, 2007b)

In the personal interview, she revealed that prioritizing her freedom of expression was more important than making a sizeable amount of money from her first project. Knowing Rathod's proclivity for non-structured design, the client requested a house made only of right angles. Rathod confessed that she negotiated a "small poultry amount of money" for "maximum freedom" in designing the house (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024). The site attracted many migratory birds so the house was designed to meanders around an existing row of trees, leaving them undisturbed (Wiley, 2007). Early on in her career, she was aware of advocating for the site above all else. In using natural locally available materials and responding to the climate with its form, the house exists as an early vernacular translation in Rathod's books.

To celebrate the coming of the millennium in 2000, the Tree House in Bharuch, Gujarat was conceived out of the client's children's playful nature. The tree house is made of three boxes from canvas, gunny bags and eucalyptus tree logs (Wiley, 2007). Although made for a short term, the treehouse showcased her capabilities for exploring the limits of local material.

Figure 17: Tree House, Bharuch, Gujarat, 2000 (Wiley, 2007c)

Figure 18: Interactive Maze, Colaba Woods, Mumbai, 2002 (Wiley, 2007d)

She kept her inspiration alive with a variety scales of projects. The interactive maze in Colaba Woods in 2002 was an installation that was inspired by the wood from the site. The maze made of blue and red wooden logs provided a curious space for play for children (Wiley, 2007). There is a constant need to respond to the site with deep research rooted in the user experience.

One project that popularized Rathod's work in the greater public eye was the Mariwala House in Alibaug, Maharashtra. The house was for a couple who found each other in their late sixties. Completed in 2006 and diving deeper into her love for deconstructivist and sculptural forms, Rathod explored the "unconventional shattering of the form" (Desai, 2019) as an uncanny architectural means to metaphorically express the clients' "emancipation of a long-felt unexpressed emotion" (Desai, 2019). There exists an uninhibited palette of aluminium fins, mild steel, glass, stone and fabric moulded around the trees on site which offer beautiful views of the mountains.

We can see this inquisitive nature of learning from children and guiding the user through the project and curating a flow even in her early works. In the initial years of starting her firm, Rathod allowed herself to be an unhindered architect who did what she wanted to do. However, these experiments worked out and provided a successful portfolio of architectural projects.

Rathod recalls that during the reception of her work post doing the Mariwala house, there were mixed reactions. Many applauded her work in transcending the understanding of spatial forms and her keen understanding of the site and her ability to weave materials to her needs. There were also a large number of her peers who were quite critical of her more outlandish explorations (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024).

Figure 19: Mariwalla House, from the lawns (Rathod, 2006)

Figure 19: Mariwala House, the pool (Rathod, 2006)

Establishing methodology, SPADE and The BIG Piano

In 2008, she started SPADE, the research wing of SRDA that dabbles in academic research and debate about the architectural profession and education. This venture began as a criticism of the architectural journalism seen during that time which did not critically analyse architectural projects but rather existed as a collage of the architects' musings and professional photographs strategically hand-picked by the architects themselves (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024). Starting as a non-commercial venture, it enjoys support from multinationals after its four published volumes (Desai, 2019). Each volume explores and debates a central theme; 'Politics' (Volume 1), 'Reincarnation/Recycling' (Volume 2), 'Collage' (Volume 3) and 'Opium and Architecture' (Volume 4). Later Spade India Research Cell (SIRCLE) emerged as an offshoot of SPADE. It categorically supports studies and explorations of ideas that influence design thinking (Desai, 2019).

"She (Rathod) feels that one is so often trapped in pursuits of worldly comforts and a meaningful expense of time that the significance of the leisurely vagabond daydreamer is little realized. Indulgence in unyielding experimentation of ideas, not necessarily propelled by needs, is often labelled esoteric and a waste".

(Desai, 2019)

"I always believed that the research that you might undertake now will find its meaning, probably a decade later or even more. So, there is no immediacy in terms of result."

Samira Rathod (Matter, 2023)

Figure 20: The SPADE volumes (Rathod, *SRDA Outreach*)

Figure 21: A series of lamps from old collections, The BIG Piano. (Rathod, 2019)

In 2010, she leaned into her interest in furniture design by starting her own experimental workshop and furniture outlet The BIG Piano. Here, she curates the creation of paraphernalia as experiential furniture; objects to hold, see, smell and experience.

Figure 22: Faucets from an interior design project[6]. Courtesy: Samira Rathod, 2024

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[6] Samira Rathod designed these faucets with distinct relation to how she wanted the experience of using the basins to be, how the water would flow and caress the hand was thought of (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024).

SPADE (ideation) and The BIG Piano (the making) inform the main studio, SRDA and these form the three verticals under Rathod. At SRDA, every project is defined and executed with relevance to the local context. The design process is systematic. Functions, program, user needs, context and climate are understood to direct the evolution of design. There is always a strong concept that leads the design. This idea is first thoroughly researched to grasp the full potential and avoid unnecessary bottlenecks. As a lover of pencil drawings, many sketches and explorations into the program are carried out by Rathod and her dedicated team. Then the programmatic drawings and schemes are drawn up which get translated into physical models to study, form, scale, the effect of light etc. (Matter, 2023). Rathod also explains the iterative models as an integral component of the process. The conceptual drawings and models are explored further and turned into permutations of designs. This process repeats and refines. Once the design is finalized volumetrically and spatially, the joinery and detailing are focused on. Sampling of the details and materials is done to solidify the design. This part is laborious yet yields refreshingly crafted results. Then one executes on-site (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024).

Figure 23: Design Process: Model iterations (SRDA)

"I will not take a decision to say that this is good or bad or we go with it until it is made into a 3D model. You will see the models are really small because they can be made quickly and you can get a sense of scale and composition immediately and then once things get more and more finalized and they get bigger, you see more detail in the model... You would not see any well-finished model in the studio because it is a study tool."

Samira (Matter, 2023)

Outreach, KRVIA and scope for experimentation

Alongside debates discussions and publishing architectural journals, Rathod's outreach extended to organizing Architects' Retreats where prominent architects spend a whole day debating architecture as education and practice. A notable retreat was held in February 2014 at the Yacht Club, Mumbai. Throughout the day the architects made short presentations on various topics related to the practice and academics including the built environment and the consequences of construction, architectural patronage, structure, technology, education, pedagogy etc.

Figure 24: The Architects' Retreat, February 22, 2014 (Behind Closed Doors YouTube video, 2015)

She has also taught at KRVIA, Kamla Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute for Architecture and Environmental Studies, in Mumbai as a visiting faculty since 2004. Teaching has played a huge role part in her approach as a free thinker. Her affinity for recycling or re-using materials was also compounded by discussions with students (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024). Rathod believes in cultivating talent and is a constant fixture on many juries and panels all over the world (Desai, 2019). In the future, she also hopes to start the "SPADE School" for architectural education. Here she wishes to bridge education and practice and develop it as a space to develop one's skills in underscoring the link between the built environment, climate, context and people (Desai, 2019).

Furthermore, Rathod has helped curate many exhibitions on architecture to further spread awareness of the use of vernacular and approaches to building contextually. Shivkumar (2020) explains that from 2016 to 2018, there existed four large-scale exhibitions examining architecture in India, each a public exhibition raising awareness about the role of architects in society. One of these was The Death of Architecture exhibition curated by Aniket Bhagwat and Samira Rathod in 2018 at the Nehru Science Centre in Mumbai. The exhibition traveling to 12 cities in the country, was curated as a space of inquisition into the architectural profession and its relevance and addressed concerns. Rathod's contribution examines ruin as an iteration of beauty. The abandoned architecture of the town of Bhadran was studied due to the mass departure of its people. She

explored this barren land as a way to construct new meanings. She curated an assemblage of relics from the town with her team at SRDA to unearth potential meanings. This constant unearthing of use in dismantled or broken down paraphernalia parallels her desire for reuse and recycling in her projects.

Figure 25: Samira Rathod Design Associates, some of the objects reconstructed from the residue of demolitions in the town of Bhadran, Death of Architecture (Shivkumar, 2020)

Samira Rathod pointed out that she chose projects that kept her inspiration alive and these would inadvertently point to projects where she was most free to experiment with materials, form and light. In India, there is more scope for this experimentation in residential projects as clients want to

show off their own houses and have the budget to do so. Another way she could explore further was through adopting pro-bono projects and this has given her an impeccable portfolio of experimental yet contextual works. Each project takes 1-3 years usually to execute so these are always supplemented financially by undertaking other architecture or interior projects at SRDA (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024). A few of these projects in her latest years of practice are studied to establish her philosophy of practice in the next chapter.

Later works and final translations of the neo-vernacular

In the book "Design Studio Vol. 1: Everything Needs to Change: Architecture and the Climate Emergency" (2021) Rathod explains the design for the "School of Dancing Arches in Bhadran" (2019), a pro-bono project for the English Medium School in Bhadran, as an approach to designing buildings while uplifting craft, use of local materials and indigenous techniques as a way to address the climate emergency. For Rathod, the school needed to be an obvious translation of the inquisitive nature of a child's mind- uninhibited and wild with possibilities. Using a child's scribbles as the synthesizer of design she conceived the building with a strong language of arches. It uses local brick available in Bhadran. SRDA employed repeated use of shuttering of waste steel for the arches, irregular jack arch roofs with skylights for classrooms and utilized the brilliant techniques of local craftsmen to arrive at solutions for the irregular form. Passive cooling techniques employed thicker walls for thermal mass, brick floors which could be sprayed with water to cool down the micro-climate and channelling the water through the site using berms to collect rainwater for further use.

Further explorations into a singular material as the driver of a project led her to design the House of Concrete Experiments at Alibaug, Maharastra in 2022. She infused novel design thinking and research into context and incorporated of waste from the site to have the house wrap around existing trees creating a fragmented footprint. The existing contours help situate the sunken courtyard where the land already had an existing pit. There were ducts incorporated in the walls as learning from ancient techniques of catching cool breeze through small ducts in walls and circulating it through the building's volume to cool it down. Other experiments of the house include debris-cast concrete using waste from the site, waterjet concrete and form finish concrete with pigments (Abdel, 2022). Her ability to use light as a medium is captured well in this project with the concrete terrazzo floor with intricately placed waste stone pieces glistening with the sun and creating a mirage of playful light patches throughout the house (Astbury, 2022).

Similarly in the Cool House in Bharuch completed in 2022 novel methods needed to be employed for cooling down the interiors in Gujarat's harsh heat. The form of the house was manipulated to act as a funnel that channels the wind into the house and is captured by inward-looking windows that also diffuse sharp light. Aiding the cooling are thick external walls, interior lime plaster and a central courtyard with water that channels through the rooms as winds blow over it (Griffiths, 2023).

Figure 26: Courtyard and arch construction, School of Dancing Arches / Samira Rathod Design Atelier. (Archdaily, 2023)

Figure 27: Jack arch roof construction, School of Dancing Arches / Samira Rathod Design Atelier. (Archdaily, 2023)

Figure 28: Aerial view showing channeling of water, School of Dancing Arches / Samira Rathod Design Atelier. (Archdaily, 2023)

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Figure 29: House of Concrete Experiments (Archdaily, 2022)

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Figure 30: Samira Rathod Designs a cool house to protect occupants from Hot Indian Summers. (Griffiths, 2023)

Further experimenting with a singular material, this time granite, One Tree Hill Community Hall, Hosur, Karnataka completed in 2022, another pro-bono commission stands as a testament to a client's love for his land and attempt to provide a space and identity to its people. The client, an 88-year-old Harvard alumnus wanted to create a community in Bysandra, Hosur. Rathod drew on Bysandra's cultural context and ethnographic studies. Here the limitations of using the granite from a local quarry, only 3 inches thick informed the decisions taken. Even with this constraint, many textural explorations have been done. Local craftsmen also advised using eucalyptus logs for the columns outside as well as flooring patterns.

Figure 31: One Tree Hill (Iype, 2023)

The Container, conceived as an exhibition space for the Kochi-Muziris Biennale in 2022 is a culmination of her research into circular industries and exists as an attempt to utilize the construction waste for its envelope as well as re-use the products as needed after dismantling. It has precariously balanced between showcasing the destructive construction industry and poetically speaking the truth when it comes to the profession of architecture and its effects on the built environment. The roof descends downwards to meet the ground with movable elements in the façade letting the user create a dynamic structure. Debris from bricks, stone and demolished walls from the vicinity were used in the walls, roof and floor. It has lightweight construction allowing it to not need foundations for easy dismantling. Additionally, the materiality and its inherent translucency in layered format are used to cultivate dappled light in the interior.

Figure 32: The Container: Exterior and Interior. (Balasubramaniam)

Figure 33: The Container: Material Layering. (Gupta)

"In my design, there is always a striving for a larger, amplified version of the mundane."

Chapter 04: Establishing Design Philosophy

Two decades after establishing her firm, SRDA is synonymous with the neo-vernacular realm of Indian architecture for its quirky yet grounded designs. There is always playfulness and a wild unhindered spirit in Rathod's interpretations. This chapter will seek to establish a clear design philosophy inspiring all her efforts towards the neo-vernacular, sustainability and circularity.

The firm has a versatile range of projects ranging from boutique residential projects to holistic institutional buildings. It is supplemented and informed by the two verticals SPADE and The BIG Piano creating a foundational basis. Her meticulous search for innovative solutions to pressing architectural issues led her to different outreach interventions and to explore architecture to its limits. There is always a conscious differentiation between needs and wants, addressing the site in the most responsible way and thereby checking the violence inflicted on the environment.

Her master's degree at the University of Illinois had a lasting effect on her design thinking liberating her process to think freely and then making the structure fit the design. Her design philosophy has been less about semantics and more about attaining practical knowledge on-site. Over the years she has grown extremely sensitive to climate and its implications. For her, it is important that the built form is not an imposition on-site, rather it accentuates it. The spaces have the quality of a labyrinth of dreams expertly weaving both material and light.

She believes that the context of buildings is a starting point for design and that architecture relies on its context, including the materials available, local craft etc. As a practitioner of deconstructive concepts and aesthetics, she seamlessly joins hybrid and distinct forms into poetic architecture (Desai, 2019). At SRDA, traditional craft forms the foundational basis for form and materials. She tries to translate this craft into more fluid narratives solely centred around context, user and climate. She uses the regional context as a means to evolve contemporary aesthetics (Desai, 2019).

B.L.I.R.S.

There have been no epiphanies or conscious decisions to work towards sustainability certifications. Rathod recalls that her design process reinforces itself through the multiple conversations she has about her work. Inspired by American philosopher Denis Dutton's talks, she upheld that "Beauty is that which is done well" (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024). "There exists a different kind of love, almost involuntary, much like a mother's love for her child" that Rathod feels for her projects.

Over the years, Rathod has been able to conceive an acronym for their efforts. The acronym BLIRS, B – beautiful, L – local, I – indigenous, R – recycle, and S – small, encapsulates the basis of Rathod's notion of sustainability and the SRDA's philosophy (Desai, 2019). Beautiful always informed the process from the start. The inspiration from local materials and craftsmen and her inherent aversion to luxurious materials like Italian marble that many designers use in India led her to look inward and contextually (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024). There were always sophisticated and invaluable learns from the indigenous peoples and Rathod constantly strives to understand their ways of living as seen in both Bhadran and Hosur. Multiple conversions during her teaching at KRVIA helped her realise the value and potential of recycling and reuse. Small comes back to looking at the object very closely and personally and decreasing its footprint (Matter, 2023). There is always a look back at detailing and footprints which brings joy back to the craft (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024).
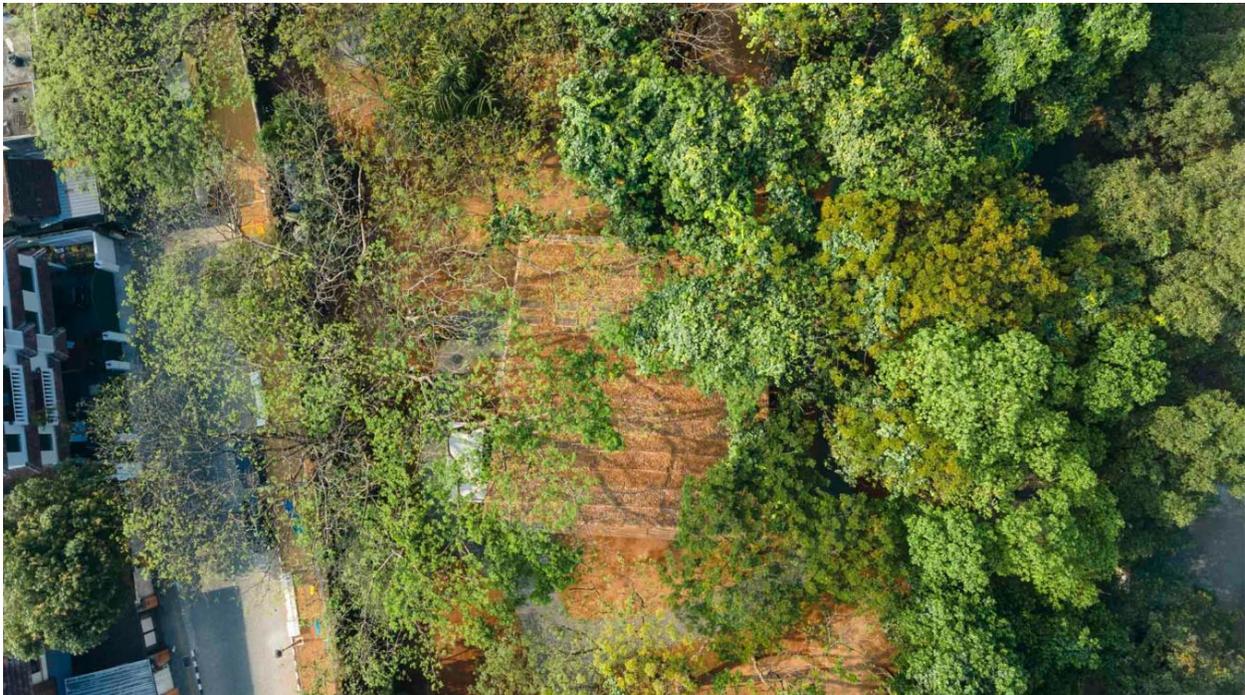

Figure 34: Aerial view of the container (Gupta)

Research, craft, sculptural freedom and Light

Inspired by her early education under the professor of Humanities at Sir J.J. College, Rathod's work has always been steeped in a deep understanding of local peoples, their customs and learned techniques. Each project starts with an in-depth analysis of rituals and traditions before anything is even drawn. Speaking about local peoples she iterates that "they have lived a hard life but this has inspired frugality and vernacular agility" that informs them of what best to do for their context.

Desai (2019) comments that SRDA sees traditional craft, "not as an embellishment but as a methodology of composition in materials and form". Utilising this basis of craft, she emphasizes the inconspicuous with her detailing. In her later years, she has honed in exploring a material palette of wood, stone, glass and construction waste to render textural complexity to the final design. When she uses recycled and reused waste products, this renders the space an heirloom quality indicative of its many stories. This tactility of material is also felt visually through interplays with light. She does not shy away from the limitations of the material and through trial and error has learned to work with them, as seen in Bhadran with monolithic brick and in One Tree Hill using 3-inch thick granite.
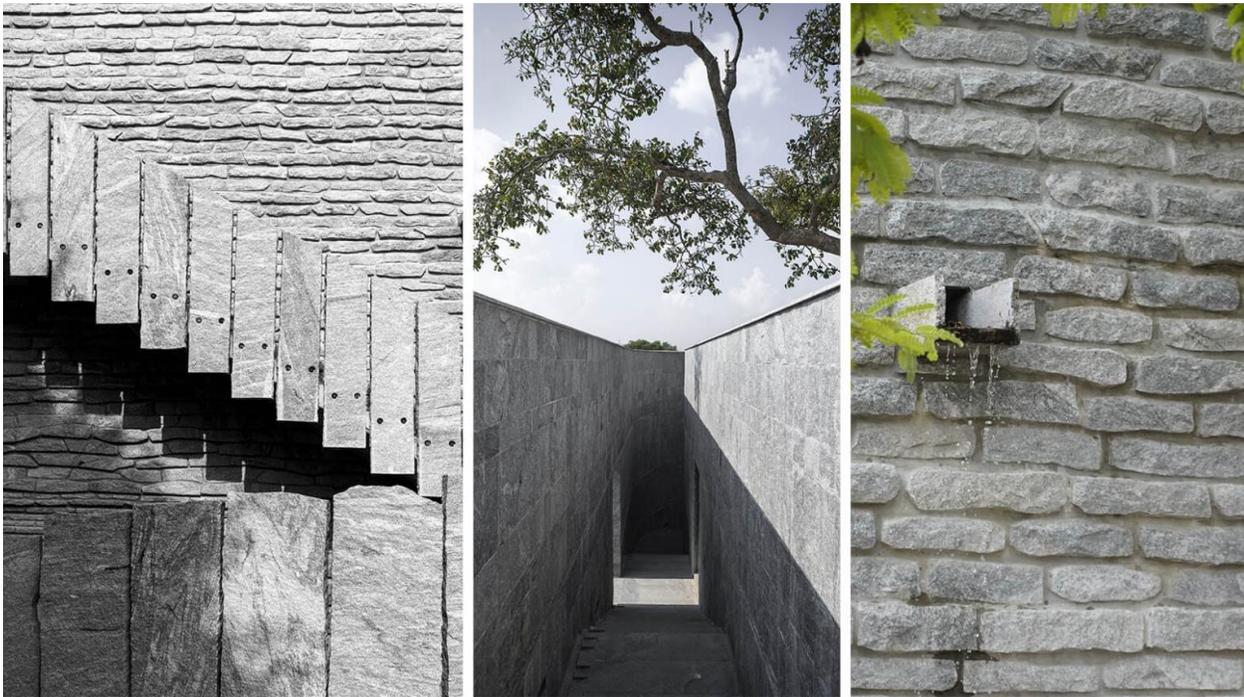

Figure 35: A closer look at the various textures expressed in granite throughout the building *(Gupta)*

In the 1990s, in response to the utilitarian and mundane work around them, architects tried their hand at free-form architecture (Lang, 2002). Influenced by the postmodern underpinnings of the 1990s and deconstructivist theories, she creates bold, sensual, non-conforming designs (Desai, 2019). This playful tendency is usually a response to minimise the influence of the structure on site but also to capture and direct light and wind.

Figure 36: Lighting in School of Dancing Arches (Dezeen, 2018)

Throughout her process, she exhausts drawings and models as tools to further understand the spatial experiences and break down the complexities of the projects (Desai, 2019). This also helps filter the light through the complex volumes.

> *" Light for us is a tangible building material. We often tend to use it as a needle to embroider moments and experiences in our architecture. The sharp dark shadows of the irregular arches in the corridor, the soft glow of tangerine through the lopsided vaults, beams of light through the slits and skylights in the classroom add to this experience, generating intrigue."*

> *Samira Rathod (Choreography of Bricks, 2021)*

Rathod is also influenced by Le Corbusier's work in capturing and using light through his projects like the chapel at Ronchamp. Plays of light are evident in all her works as she uses them to weave dreamscapes. Skylights, quirky reflective floorings and smooth plasters all help catch the light during the day. From diffusing the light through inward-looking windows in Cool House, Bharuch to exploring light filtering through the layering of material in the Container, Kochi using light as a building material is a unique characteristic of her projects.

Labour and navigating failures

Rathod is conscious of how labour is treated by her team and her clients (Desai, 2019). Rathod says that having a connection with the people carrying out the construction helps keep her grounded. She recalls many instances where the craftsmen saved the project in times of distress or deadlines, even when Rathod would compromise on the design to meet the deadline. At the Container in Kochi, the labourers took the responsibility themselves to get it done the right way even when pressed against time and budget (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024). Since the local craftsmen are usually indigenous peoples aware of the context of the project, their contribution is most valuable. With her firm and young designers, she stresses the need to be honest and forthright in their approach to design and the profession (Desai, 2019).

Rathod in the personal interview confesses that failures are a part and parcel of any experiment. That is the general characteristic of trials. Rathod has always been open about her mistakes and learnings while experimenting with forms and materials. She recalls that in Mariwala House I, the upkeep of aluminium in its curved interpretations on the façade was quite difficult after a decade of its installation and had to be replaced. There are always fallbacks when you try something new. However, she learns from her mistakes and tries to use these in her later projects. She notes that using too many materials in a project in direct joinery combinations does not always work out well due to their inherent expansions and contractions (S. Rathod, personal communication, April 6, 2024).

Conclusion

Neo-vernacular architecture has a deep-seated space in the national identity of India following its Independence in 1947. Understanding various definitions for the traditional vernacular, the neo-vernacular was differentiated as a combination of traditional vernacular influences applied with modern interpretations to tackle the complex issues involving site, climate, form and function. Starting from Nehru's modern India cultivated by Le Corbusier himself, the thesis has navigated multiple projects of master architects popular for their neo-vernacular translations.

With this foundation, the paper established the paradigm shift in the 1980s following a vernacular revival focused on craft. Rathod's lack of structured education at Sir J.J. College at which time Doshi, Baker and Bawa were active, and a high level of freedom in design thinking during her master's has informed her approach to design. Tackling motherhood for the first time at Batliboi she was offered a step into furniture design which she gladly welcomed following which she went on to do many exhibitions. This opened her up to new solo ventures.

Learning from craftsmen on site, Rathod was able to quickly traverse dialogue between context, people and craftsmen to weave powerful expressions of the neo-vernacular. Acclaim came with criticism from peers but her self-motivation and diligent nature carried her through to success and critical acclaim for her inspiring forms, and sensorial architecture with a basis in regional and contextual design. She keeps her inquisitive nature sharp through her research wing and conducts experiments and sampling through her furniture design and workshop. Her firm has a systematically driven process which involves hand sketches, drawings and iterative models. A huge proponent of education, she has worked as a visiting faculty as well and conducted seminars, debates, and exhibitions on various topics of interest in the architectural profession as well as academia. She developed her contextual designs through experimental residential and pro-bono projects which have inspired beautiful sculptural, detailed forms capturing the essence of the site, the people and the climate. Recently her project, the Container in Kochi has also been nominated for Building of the Year 2024. This stands as a testament to her steadfast and clear design philosophy rooted in the power of the vernacular.

Rathod has kept beauty, local materials and people, indigenous practices, recycling and reuse of materials and construction and the concept of a small footprint at the heart of all her designs. A master at using craft both in materiality and harnessing light to drape her projects, she hopes to inspire the young architects she works with and hopefully inspire others to look at contextual neo-vernacular architecture as a solution to climate emergency as well as a sustainable future. She provokes one to realign their way of thinking about architecture; to look at materials, and textures and allow patinas.

Photo acknowledgements

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Figure 6: Le Corbusier's Parliament building, Chandigarh, 1950: the imagery of the cooling tower crossbred with an ancient solar observatory. Source: The Architectural Review.

Figure 7: Entrance detail of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, 1963-70, by Louis Kahn whose 'metaphysics were stimulated by the ancient traditions of India'. Source: The Architectural Review magazine

Figure 8: Charles Correa's Gandhi Ashram building, Ahmedabad, 1962: a pivotal building blending Western Modern and Indian vernacular influences. Source: The Architectural Review magazine

Figure 9: Left and above right: the Kanchanjunga apartment block, Bombay, of 1973-86 by Charles Correa. Right bottom: the Arts Centre for Bhopal, 1982, by Charles Correa. Source: The Architectural Review magazine.

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Figure 22: Faucets from an interior design project. Courtesy: Samira Rathod, 2024

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