Conservation: a people’s movement or elitist exercise—an Indian perspective

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Abstract

Conservation of heritage places in India has until recently focussed on ancient monuments, forts and palaces and their monetisation for tourism by adapting them into heritage hotels and museums. Where cultural value is embodied in layered histories and narratives and urban built heritage is defined by non-monumental buildings, grappling with issues of urban development, infrastructure and economics, the challenges of urban conservation become far more complex; making heritage conservation an elitist dream. At a time where there is a paradigm shift from expert driven to community led heritage practices, the methodologies for urban heritage conservation demand to be re-written and re-interpreted to make heritage relevant to the local community. We believe that heritage is not just about the buildings, it is about the people who lived then and who live now. This paper illustrates through a case study approach of our work over the past decade, ranging from that of a common haveli (historic courtyard house) to entire urban settlements; our experiments with community engagement, digital technologies, and hands-on conservation and interventions in historic buildings to help make the past relevant to the future.

Architectural & Urban Conservation in India: An Overview

India is a country in cultural continuum that retains the vestiges of its multi-layered history manifested in its traditional buildings, towns, and spaces, as well as a plethora of vernacular heritage. The concepts of sustainability and conservation as we understand them today, have been an integral part of the traditional way of life. Ancient scriptures such as the Shilpa Shastra and Mansara have described in great detail the methods, practices, principles and rituals to be followed for construction. The emphasis has always been on renewal, or constant care and maintenance to ensure that cultural resources remain relevant to society; often relying on the knowledge system of the artisans rather than being obsessed with authenticity of the material fabric.

The formal concept of preservation of monuments was introduced by the British with the setting up of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1861. The imposition of Western philosophies of conservation through legislative protection and boundaries distanced the community from their heritage, relegating them into mere spectators rather than custodians. Heritage conservation therefore became synonymous with monument preservation. The repercussions of this approach was that while the actual archaeological resource or monument may be protected and preserved, its context, both natural and built, was rapidly changing. The first half of the 20th Century in India coincided with a change in the political leadership and the search for an Indian identity. A turbulent period in the struggle for independence and the Partition
of India, as well as adoption of the socialist model for self reliance had a direct impact on architectural heritage. With national priorities being focussed on eradication of poverty, illiteracy and disease, heritage conservation was considered unnecessary, a luxury, and the responsibility of the Government, thereby completely disengaging the community from its heritage. This was further accelerated by the economic liberalisation of India in the 1990s, when traditional mindsets were challenged and the aspiration of modernity led to widespread piecemeal development by individual owners and developers. Vernacular as well as traditional architecture was rapidly replaced by new international styled buildings and generic concrete architecture. The late 1990s also coincided with the introduction of the concept of urban conservation to India. This was achieved by the activism of several non-governmental organisations, particularly INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage). The Trust lobbied the Government to build a case for the protection of urban heritage (INTACH 2004). Bombay (Mumbai) became the first city in India to adopt legislative protection for heritage buildings of ‘non-monumental’ value in 1995 as part of the Maharashtra Regional & Town Planning Act, 1966. After decades of a monument-centric approach to heritage conservation, the recognition of urban heritage as living buildings of everyday use has been considered as a path-breaker in the field of heritage conservation in India. (Mehrotra and Lambah, 2004). Within the next decade other cities such as Hyderabad, Nagpur, Pune, Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai, and Pondicherry adopted protection for urban heritage within their existing legislative frameworks.

While preservation continues to be adopted the primary approach for state protected monuments post independence in 1947, the private sector initiated the conversion of unprotected monuments into luxury hotels and resorts in the 1980s, with tourism becoming the impetus for conservation of historic properties. The new millennium, development of the IT industry and an economic boom unleashed a new wave of development in India. Infrastructure development, motorways, flyovers, mass rapid-transit urban systems, malls, glass buildings and skyscrapers projected the image of ‘India Shining’. The historic urban environment was readily compromised in the pursuit of ‘global smart cities’, and heritage was often criticised as unnecessary and anti-development. The field of urban conservation evolved organically, almost as a reflexive reaction to the loss of the historic fabric, built on a sense of nostalgia for the perfect ‘postcard city’. Heritage professionals thereby became activists for preservation rather than facilitators of change, primarily due to the lack of a comprehensive or cohesive vision. This has had the effect of focussing on the static built environment and negating the importance of the dynamism of historic Indian cities that gives them an identity (Mehrotra R 2007, 2017). The first generation of urban conservation projects in India between 1995 - 2005 were therefore aimed at beautification and are now often criticised as being superficial. While facades were beautified, the critical issues such as precarious structural conditions remained unaddressed.

In the new millennium, the rapid deterioration of the urban and natural environment as well as loss of character and identity pose a huge threat to the future of the historic cities. The impact of bad and piecemeal planning is now very evident, with frequent natural disasters including flash floods and earthquakes destroying large urban areas and crippling cities.

It is being recognised retrospectively by the Indian government and local agencies that the historic environment has a significant role to play in the identity, culture and development of historic towns and cities, and that sustainable planning is the way forward for the future of the historic environment. Concepts of integrated development are slowly making their way into urban planning practices, Government of India programmes such as HRIDAY, Smart City Mission, AMRUT have been initiated and place an emphasis on heritage based development.¹

Urban conservation in India is still in its nascent stages, but is evolving into a distinctive approach that is appropriate for India’s complex social, political and economic conditions. The dynamic balance between conservation and development is therefore critical and the role of the conservation professional is of vital importance.

**Conservation practice in India: The Aishwarya Tipnis architects experience**

The challenge of being a heritage professional in India is that it requires one to wear many hats simultaneously: that of a historian, architect, activist as well as a social scientist. Also, as
Rehabilitation as a tool for urban regeneration—Restoration of the Seth Ram Lal Khemka Haveli, Old Delhi

Rehabilitation of historic properties has long been advocated as a tool for inner city development (Steinberg, 1996). However, in a developing country like India, the historic cores of many cities are grappling with issues of overcrowding, unsanitary living conditions, ownership issues, and the lack of a comprehensive state policy, vision or master plan for integrated development. While the general understanding of adaptive reuse is typically expressed as conversion into a heritage hotel, art gallery or museum, the restoration of an ancestral houses (havelis) in the walled city of Delhi (Shahjahanabad) illustrates by example that rehabilitation into a contemporary home is a viable way for regenerating the historic city.

Laid out in the early 17th Century by the Mughal Emperor Shahjahan, Shahjahanabad is believed to be modelled on the Isfahan in Persia, its design having been based on Islamic planning principles. Defined by the iconic Palace Complex, the Red Fort World Heritage Site, the royal avenue of Chandni Chowk as well as the Jama Masjid, the dense city fabric is divided into cohesive mohallas, kuchas and katras on the basis of community (see Glossary for descriptions). It is morphologically defined by an intricate pattern of narrow winding lanes, with tightly packed havelis built around courtyards ensured a comfortable environment within the hot arid climate (Chenoy, 1998). The physical fabric of the medieval city is eloquent in its history, but the restructuring of the city by the British led to a large area being destroyed for the creation of an Esplanade and the introduction of a railway, the building of a town hall and the cantonment at Kashmere Gate (Gupta 1997). The Mughal havelis were restructured to accommodate colonial elements such as drawing rooms and fireplaces, and the adoption of new architectural expressions often using Neo-Classical and Neo-Gothic elements on their facades. The physical impact of the Partition of India in 1947 was severe in Shahjahanabad as buildings were encroached upon and sub-divided to accommodate the influx of refugees from Pakistan. Due to the increase in population, commercialisation and encroachment, the urban environment deteriorated, with adhoc insensitive constructions and extensions. Many of the havelis were in a serious state of deterioration, suffering from neglect with the situation compounded by complex issues of ownership. Many were replaced with modern buildings of no architectural value, while others were converted to commercial establishments and godowns (warehouses). Central courtyards were often covered and sub-divided due to pressures of overcrowding. In 2010 the Government of Delhi officially notified for protection, a list of 767 buildings within the walled city of Delhi in a top-down effort to save these buildings, a move achieved after almost twenty years of lobbying by activists and professionals. This supplemented the nomination of Delhi as a potential World Heritage Site for the surviving juxtaposition of the medieval city of Shahjahanabad and the garden city of Delhi designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens (UNESCO 2012).

The Seth Ram Lal Khemka Haveli was a derelict haveli situated in the heart of the commercial wholesale market of Chotta Bazaar in the Kashmere Gate area of the walled city of Delhi. The original haveli dates back to the 1850s, but the present owner’s family acquired it in 1920. The present owner bought out his cousins and consolidated the front courtyard of the haveli in 2010. The brief for the project was that the present owner had three sons and he wished to restore and renovate the house as a showcase to facilitate their marriages.

While the professionals and elite were discussing the value and cultural significance of Shahjahanabad and its potential nomination as a World Heritage Site, many non-heritage professionals had limited views of what heritage meant, what the practical implications of living in a listed building were, not of that city being part of a World Heritage Site. Common understandings of conservation meant preservation of monuments, seen as being the job of
the ASI. The concepts of restoration and sustainability were unheard of. In this case, what turned the argument in favour of conservation was that the building was listed as Grade II A and the law mandated that it be restored.

Although rehabilitation of the havelis in Shahjahanabad has been advocated for over two decades without a clear vision, policy or strong legislation, the enforcement of a conservation-led approach was not widely advocated. This project, the first conservation project to be implemented on the ground in the walled city, was executed over a period of seven and a half years, and set many benchmarks for conservation in the area (Sharmal 2014; Allen 2016). As the resources were limited, innovation became the backbone of the project. An understanding of the local situation was critical in developing methods and strategies that were in line with best practice in conservation, yet fulfilled the dreams and aspirations of the occupants of the property.

Conservation professionals in India have often been criticised for having a purist 'European approach' to conservation of heritage buildings, propagating the perception of the regular citizen that conservation is an expensive and elitist option or ambition. In the present case the use of cement plaster on the walls had caused the deterioration the building to a great extent, with rising damp reaching to almost 180 cm in height. This had to be reversed by the application of the breathable lime mortar which was the original construction material. However unlike in Western countries, restoration mortars and other materials are not available off the shelf in India, and sometimes they have to be prepared from scratch using traditional materials and technologies. Innovation led to the development of a lime mortar mill within the courtyard of the haveli with locally available materials and a discarded electric motor from the scrap market (Figure 1). In India, although the formal profession of conservation architecture is relatively new, the craft traditions are still extant, thereby providing a great opportunity for cross-fertilisation of ideas and philosophies between the architect and the artisans (Figure 2). This project is reflective of the impact of collaborative decision making between the owner, artisan and the architect that allowed for reuse of much of the historic fabric, developing local replicas of the Victorian tiles and cast iron grilles and sourcing locally made lights, furniture, accessories to keep the cost of the project within budget.

Although the overall framework for the project was based on the application of international best practice in conservation, bespoke methodologies and strategies that were practical and within the cultural and religious understanding of the client, had to be developed. For example, while repairing the central courtyard of the haveli, remains of a fountain and other archaeology from the Mughal era were unearthed (Figure 3). There is no legal mechanism or process that
deals with such a situation, thereby making it the prerogative of the architect to make decisions. The possibilities of exposing this archaeology for interpretation and undertaking further excavations were disregarded instantly by the client’s family for the simple reason that they believed there were some evil tantric forces (human remains in a terracotta urn found in the excavation), making it inauspicious. Therefore it was collectively decided to record and document the archaeology and preserve it insitu after performing the rituals of purification to maintain religious sanctity of the household. The conservation strategy therefore was not determined simply by the material heritage but also the intangible belief systems and rituals. There was a process of negotiation that was constantly undertaken to make sure that the interventions were compliant with Vaastu Shastra (an ancient Hindu science of architecture).

It was evident that being the first project executed within the walled city, there were many lessons that needed to be shared. The project also highlighted the lacuna in the availability of local knowledge about materials and practices. Therefore it was decided to disseminate the learning from the project in a way that becomes easier for other owners to replicate this model. A blog entitled ‘The Haveli Project: A common man’s guide to restoring a heritage home’ (www.thehaveliproject.blogspot.in) meticulously documented and described the process of conservation in the walled city (Figure 4). Social media provided the tool for visitors, students and enthusiasts to walk into the haveli, interact with the owners and learn from the ongoing work (Figure 5).

The principle of learning and sharing went a long way, not only popularising the project but also sending the message that conservation makes sense to the common person, that a traditional home can become comfortable and contemporary through sensitive design, and need not be demolished (Figure 6a and Figure 6b). The project became the trendsetter for living in the walled city, with more and more owners taking pride in their heritage and exploring the possibilities of revitalising and optimising their historic homes (Ahmed 2016).

The Haveli Project demonstrated that grassroots advocacy and individual efforts can go a long way to achieving the vision of the World Heritage Site and that the role of the conservation professional is critical at the intersection of planning, development and the community. While the project did answer some of the questions on how the community perceives their heritage, would the client have gone to these lengths to conserve their heritage if it was not listed? The need for legislative protection and its power cannot be underestimated in a country like India.
where the cost of the land in historic city centres is sometimes higher than the value of the built property itself. This is coupled with problems of land and property ownership, structurally unsound buildings with a lack of basic services, and developers wanting to redevelop properties for economic gain. Where there is a lack of legal protection or financial incentives for urban heritage conservation, what is the future of a large stock of heritage buildings and properties? Will they succumb to pressures of redevelopment or can they be saved by the community?

Sensitive architectural intervention to make the past relevant to the future—Restoration of The Doon School, Dehradun

Heritage buildings can only be saved if they continue to be relevant to the people who use and inhabit them. This has been the ancient philosophy that encouraged renewal, adaptation and reuse of historic properties to meet the evolving needs of the contemporary society. For example in the beginning of the early 20th century, the concept of ensuite bathrooms was unheard of in India. Until the 1970s they were a rare concept, but today have become an integral part of the way of life and effortlessly integrated into the spatial planning of new homes. Similarly, heritage properties need to be continually adapted to meet changes in ways of life. The marriage of the past and present is by far one of the most challenging tasks and particularly so in living buildings. There is always a dilemma as to how much to retain and how much to let go. How much change is permissible? What is sacrosanct; the material heritage or the spirit of the place?

Most of the educational institutions in India have British origins and were built and designed in the late 19th and early 20th century. As technologies and methods of teaching and learning changed over time, these were organically modified to meet the growing needs. While some interventions were sensitive others were rather intrusive and incongruous, compromising the very value and significance of the historic property. More often than not, the need of a conservation architect (or even an architect at all) is not considered necessary, people believing that it is enough to get the work done by the contractors and craftsmen themselves. Professional opinion is usually sought only when problems occur. As professionals, concepts of significance and heritage value are deeply ingrained in our methodologies, however this has less meaning for the people who are the users, owners and occupiers of the buildings.

The Doon School project illustrates this point. The Doon School is an elite private school in India, popularly known as the ‘Eton of India’. The alumni consists of politicians, administrators and business people, and this close network, known as the Doscos, are extremely proud of their school’s heritage and lineage. The main building of the school suffered from structural distress and in 2014 we were called in to advise on the matter. It was apparent that piecemeal development including new partitions, false ceilings, toilets, new beams etc. had been
added on an incremental basis. As professional opinion was respected by our clients at the school, it was a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate best practice, despite not being a listed building and preservation not mandated by law. A restoration plan was prepared that was professionally planned and executed by a project management consultancy. Tests were conducted, structural experts were consulted and in a step by step process the project was carefully implemented by local contractors. The central premise was essentially to take the building into the future sensitively. The classrooms remained as when they were when designed in the early part of the 20th century, although methods of teaching had radically changed from being teacher-centric to being student-led. The rigid arrangement of the classrooms had become a hindrance to new teaching methods. A particular need was to develop a Smart Class classroom that respected the history and legacy of the institution yet catered to the needs of 21st century teaching, integration with technology, better acoustics, and flexible furniture.

The conservation project at the Doon School won an honourable mention at the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation (2016), for its innovative approach and notable technical accomplishment in preserving the character of a renowned historic institution, while incorporating modern educational technologies in an unobtrusive manner (Figure 7a & Figure 7b).

The Doon School project highlights a dilemma of Indian conservation. Firstly, what qualifies as the heritage of a community, particularly a privileged community? In India, often ‘community’ is a word that is associated with the poor, which for the the Doon School project raises the issue of what happens to the heritage of the rich and the elite? It is still a challenge to preserve the heritage of the rich, since although they have the ways and means, it is not always considered necessary that design will be sensitive to the historic environment.

Working within existing systems or reinventing the wheel?
Experiments at the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee
(formerly Thomason Engineering College)

A project at the Indian Institute of Technology highlights the role of the conservation professional. Setting benchmarks in a private project may be straightforward, but what may be different for government projects? When government systems use lowest bidder tender systems, construction methods and material specifications left over from the 1950s, how does conservation fit these models? A level of understanding is required in order to work optimally within a bureaucratic framework such as that of the Indian Government which has established systems and policies. Bringing about change is a long process, especially in India.
To illustrate heritage conservation and bureaucracy, the example project is the restoration and reuse of the Directors Office of the Indian Institute of Technology in Roorkee, in the State of Uttarakhand in northern India. This Institute was established in 1847 as the Thomason College of Engineering. As the Institute grew, the original building was incrementally altered to meet their changing needs. Aishwarya Tipnis Architects were appointed to design and restore the Director’s Office wing of the quadrangle building. This involved recovering the original spatial design, restoring the materials and finishes and adding a new bathroom. Being a central government institute it was bound by the Public Works Department schedule of rates and specifications and the contractors were not specialised in heritage conservation. The challenge was to develop an appropriate aesthetic approach and quality of workmanship within the limitations of materials and finishes compatible with the historic fabric. The role of the conservation professional was to negotiate the fine line between conservation and development, and to create designs that bridged the gap between the past and the future sensitively.

Design as a tool for solving problems of the historic environment: Urban design and conservation of the Bandra Station, Mumbai

The impetus for heritage conservation in the private sector over the last three decades has primarily been tourism development and the adaptive reuse of historic properties into museums and luxury heritage hotels. The average Indian citizen’s engagement with heritage is limited to monuments as recreational spaces, propagating a perception that heritage is decorative and not functional. The apathy towards the recognition of industrial and 20th century buildings as heritage has resulted in large scale vandalism and insensitivity in terms of repairs, additions and extensions. Although the relevant policies outline that heritage should be the starting point for the creation of a high quality environment. This was achieved through employing a well defined urban design strategy to solve problems of traffic, people-movement patterns, views and vistas, as well as optimisation of the historic station building to meet the demands of the 21st century. The suburban railway station caters to 350,000 commuters each day, therefore the project provided a rare opportunity to focus on urban design and heritage conservation to solve a city level problem. A system of mapping was developed, which became the basis for people centric design strategies (UNESCO New Delhi 2005; ‘Bandra station soon to be model heritage landmark’ The Asian Age, 29 October 2015,).

Making heritage accessible to all: Adopting a multi-disciplinary approach to heritage conservation in the 21st century—The ‘Dutch in Chinsurah’ and the ‘Heritage and People of Chandernagore’ Projects

In the 21st century, information technology has changed the way we lead our lives, often with reliance on Google rather than our own imaginations, memory and knowledge. What role does information technology have to play in heritage conservation? The work of Aishwarya Tipnis Architects is at the intersection of a number of disciplines including two projects that are an amalgamation of history, heritage and digital humanities. Heritage is not only about the past, or ‘dead’ old buildings but is about the people who lived then and who live now. The projects known as ‘Dutch in Chinsurah’ (www.dutchinchinsurah.com) and ‘Heritage and People of Chandernagore’ (www.heritagechandernagore.com) are essentially documentation and community engagement projects aimed at making heritage accessible to all. Engagement in these projects provided an opportunity to explore the past and understand what it means for the future in a scenario where cultural value is embodied in layered histories and narratives. Where built heritage is defined by non-monumental buildings, the challenges of urban conservation may become far more complex. Chinsurah and Chandernagore are small towns on the banks of the River Hooghly in West Bengal just north of Calcutta (Kolkata). Former 17th century
trading towns of the Dutch and French, these settlements form part of a larger cultural landscape known as ‘Europe on the Ganges’. Most of the residents were neither aware nor interested in this colonial legacy. The proximity of these towns to Calcutta are making them vulnerable to generic piecemeal development, disregarding their layered histories and depleting them of their sense of place. The main question concerned whose heritage was represented by this somewhat difficult past, and what this means to the community that inhabits it today.

As part of a shared cultural heritage programme, Aishwarya Tipnis Architects were appointed to document and record the heritage of the two towns. These projects were designed as grass roots advocacy projects to empower the residents of the two towns to identify key values of the towns and to articulate their aspirations for the future. Participatory mapping involved the local community through citizen engagement workshops (Figure 8). To develop the community’s insight into what they valued, a series of competitions were organised amongst youth on the theme of ‘what heritage meant to them’. A group of young students participated in the programme as ‘citizen historians’ interacting with the local community and collecting local history and narratives.

By adopting a digital humanities approach, an interactive website was developed that allowed crowdsourcing of memories and photographs for a people’s archive for the town. Social media and blogs were extensively employed to spread awareness about the heritage of the towns. The websites and social media provided a platform for not only the residents, but also for others who lived elsewhere and have roots in Chinsurah and Chandernagore. Digital technology served to showcase the findings, to understand how the towns have grown and changed over time, identify the problems they face and suggest how they may be solved collectively. The role of the conservation professional was therefore as a strategist to empower the community to record and document their history, and to assist in developing a platform to interact with others on their shared cultural heritage.

Heritage has the power to connect people, history helps ground the individual and collective identity of any town or city. The experiments at Chandernagore and Chinsurah have been a successful demonstration of multi-disciplinary work where history, urban geography, interpretation, technology and conservation architecture complement each other. This project has demonstrated how the urban fabric itself can become a type of living museum, housing many stories and meanings that are accessible to all, and that can actively involve youth and inculcate a sense of pride in their environment.

**Conclusion**

The aim of conservation is not about fossilising a place in time, it is about mediating the forces of change to create a sustainable built environment. The role of the conservation professional is therefore a critical one as a facilitator between heritage, development and community. To make conservation a populist movement, it is important that awareness-building is considered an integral part of each project. The responsibility for making conservation a widespread aspiration lies on each individual professional, and not just on NGOs or government agencies. A greater goal is to change popular perception of not just the general public, but also of the heritage and design professions. Within the design professions there is also a need to work towards making the conservation of heritage places part of mainstream architecture and urban design.
Glossary

Shilpa Shastra
Literally means the Science of Shilpa (arts and crafts). It is an ancient umbrella term for numerous Hindu texts that describe arts, crafts, and their design rules, principles and standards.

Mansara
Hindu text has extensive discussions on architecture, guidelines for ancient village and town planning

Haveli
Hindi name for a large courtyard house/mansion belonging to the merchant or elite class mostly in the northern part of India.

Mohalla
Hindi name for a neighbourhood or group of houses in the traditional town

Tantric
Tantric form of Hinduism is rejected by orthodox Hindus and considered as dangerous and often equated with black magic.

Vastu Shastra
Is a traditional Hindu system of architecture which literally translates to “science of architecture.” These are texts found on the Indian subcontinent that describe principles of design, layout, measurements, ground preparation, space arrangement and spatial geometry. The designs are intended to integrate architecture with nature, the relative functions of various parts of the structure, and ancient beliefs utilizing geometric patterns (yantra), symmetry and directional alignments.

References


Endnotes

1 To help promote cities as engines of economic growth through improvement in the quality of urban life by facilitating creation of quality urban infrastructure, with assured service levels and efficient governance and for creating economically vibrant, inclusive, efficient and sustainable urban habitats, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affair has launched 6 Flagship Projects HRIDAY, SMART CITY MISSION, AMRUT, SWACCH BHARAT. HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojna), launched on 21 January, 2015, by the Central Government for 12 pilot cities with a focus on holistic development of heritage cities. The scheme aims to preserve and revitalise soul of the heritage city to reflect the city’s unique character by encouraging aesthetically appealing, accessible, informative & secured environment. <http://hridayindia.in/>. The objective of the Smart Cities Mission is to promote cities that provide core infrastructure and give a decent quality of life to its citizens, a clean and sustainable environment and application of ‘Smart’ Solutions. The focus is on sustainable and inclusive development and the idea is to look at compact areas, create a replicable model which will act like a light house to other aspiring cities. It is meant to set examples that can be replicated both within and outside the Smart City, catalysing the creation of similar Smart Cities in various regions and parts of the country. <http://smartcities.gov.in/content/>. The objective of Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) is to ensure that every household has access to a tap with assured supply of water and a sewerage connection; to increase the amenity value of cities by developing greenery and well maintained open spaces (e.g. parks); and, reduce pollution by switching to public transport or constructing facilities for non-motorized transport (e.g. walking and cycling). All these outcomes are valued by citizens, particularly women, and indicators and standards have been prescribed by the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) in the form of Service Level Benchmarks (SLBs). 500 Cities are being covered under this mission <http://amrut.gov.in/>.