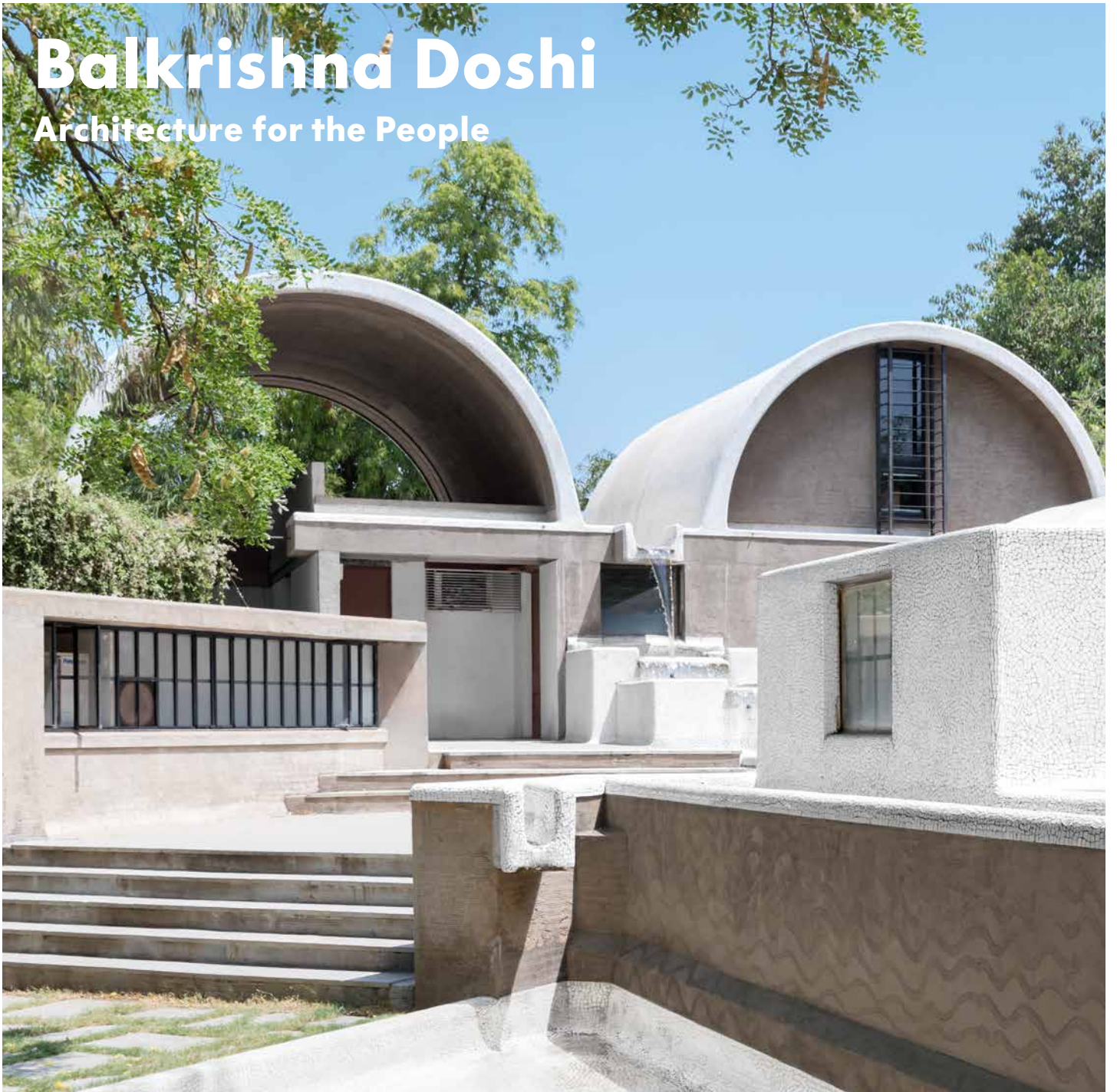


Balkrishna Doshi

Architecture for the People



Exhibition Concept

**Vitra
Design
Museum**



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Introduction



Balkrishna Doshi at Sangath Architect's Studio, Ahmedabad, 2018

» Doshi has dedicated himself to the issues faced by the people who live around him – a need for housing and the importance of education and a sense of a shared community.«

Glenn Murcutt

Indian architect and urbanist Balkrishna Doshi (1927–2023) was among the few pioneers of modern architecture in India. With over 62 years of practice, research and teaching, he realised a wide range of projects for public administrations, educational and cultural institutions, town planning projects and residences for private clients. They demonstrate his awareness for communities and environment, adopting modern architectural principles and adapting them to local traditions, resources and context. Doshi is acclaimed for his visionary work in low-cost housing and city planning, as well as for his strong commitment to education. In 2018, he was the first Indian architect to be awarded the prestigious Pritzker Prize.

Doshi's architecture, which is both poetic and functional, was strongly influenced by his learnings from Le Corbusier and Louis I. Kahn, with whom

he collaborated at the beginning of his career. However, Doshi took the language of his buildings beyond these early models. By melding modern tendencies with traditional Indian methods, he developed his own vocabulary that oscillates between industrialism and primitivism, between modern architecture and vernacular form. It revolves around the interrelation between outdoor and indoor spaces, integrates flexibility and openness and is based on an idea of sustainability, which takes into account the social, environmental and economic dimensions of architecture. Doshi contemplated not only the object-ness of architecture but also how to root the architectural object in its larger context of culture, environment, and social, moral and religious beliefs. For him, architecture's relation to context was akin to the self's relation to community and the essential question for both is: How does the former serve the latter?

Exhibition

The retrospective exhibition »Balkrishna Doshi: Architecture for the People« reflects on Doshi's philosophy and work and addresses the fundamental issues of his approach to architecture, such as the relationship with local culture and tradition, and the relevance of his architecture to society in the rapidly changing Indian context since the early 1950s. The exhibition includes Doshi's most significant projects realised between 1958 and 2014, ranging from the scale of entire cities to townships, from academic campuses to individual houses, from institutions to interiors. These buildings are documented with a wealth of exhibits from Doshi's archive and studio, including drawings and models, objects, artworks, sketches, films and photography. Several full-scale installations recreate the essence of the physical manifestation of Doshi's buildings. An extensive timeline gives an overview of the architect's professional and artistic career that spans over several decades and shows his close relationship with the most influential thinkers of the 20th century. The narration of the exhibition follows four main themes, which are essential to the understanding of Doshi's architecture, while also analysing the social and historical context, the influences, and thinking that have inspired Doshi's work.

The exhibition begins with the campus of CEPT University in Ahmedabad, where Doshi, between 1962 and 2012, has realised some of his most significant buildings, from the School of

Architecture that is raised above the ground to the half-buried art gallery Amdavad Ni Gufa. Here, questions about the nature of a campus are explored, such as »Shouldn't educational institutions break the barriers, enabling students to gain knowledge through discovery? Shouldn't institutions be open-ended and adaptive to growth?«

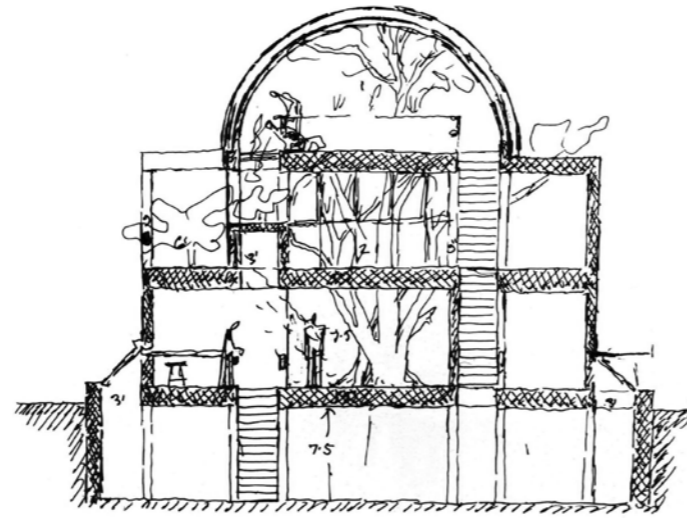
The second section focuses on home and identity and examines the power of architecture to bring about change in the various economic and cultural sections of Indian society. It evolves around questions such as »What is home? Where is home? What is the nature of open spaces in housing settlements? How can indoor and outdoor spaces, the private and public become intertwined? How can common elements be devised to give rise to a sense of community and sharing while respecting the privacy and identity of the individual and family? Can participatory choices lead to growth through adaptation?«

The third section displays some of the many institutions Doshi has participated in building during the last 60 years. They all broke the conventional mould and became important centres for education, research, debate and dialogue. Finally, the last section of the exhibition is dedicated to the large-scale town planning projects and examines the role and nature of cultural and civic institutions, as well as their relationship to the surrounding housing settlements.



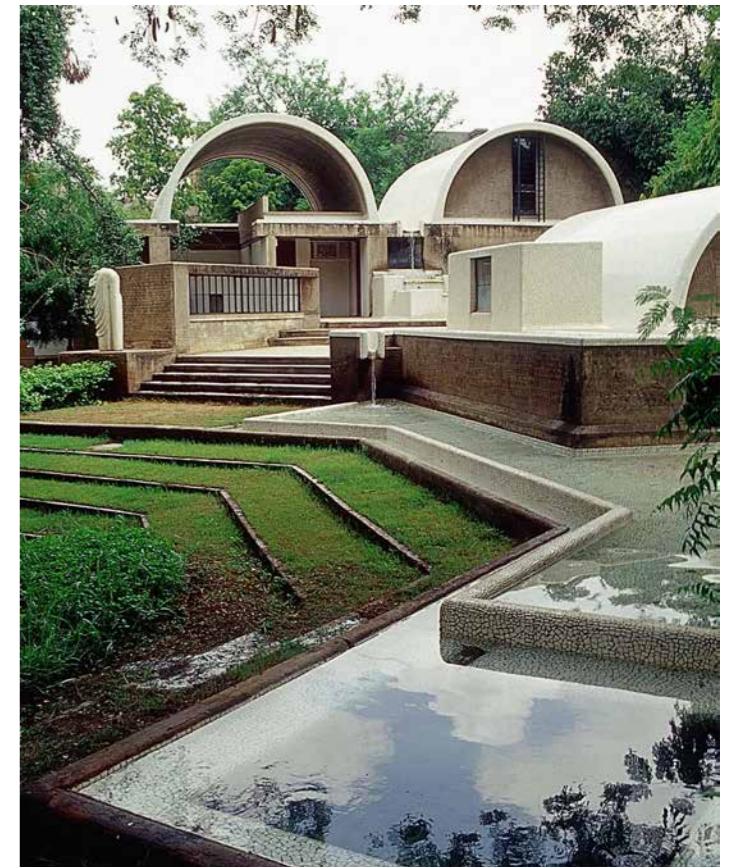
1. Balkrishna Doshi in collaboration with M.F. Husain, Amdavad Ni Gufa, Ahmedabad, 1994
2. Exterior view with entrance area, Amdavad Ni Gufa, Ahmedabad, 1994
3. M.F. Husain and Doshi during the construction of Amdavad Ni Gufa, Ahmedabad, 1994
4. Spatial model, underground art gallery with columns, Amdavad Ni Gufa, Ahmedabad, 1994
5. Interior view, Amdavad Ni Gufa, Ahmedabad, 1994

Biographical Notes



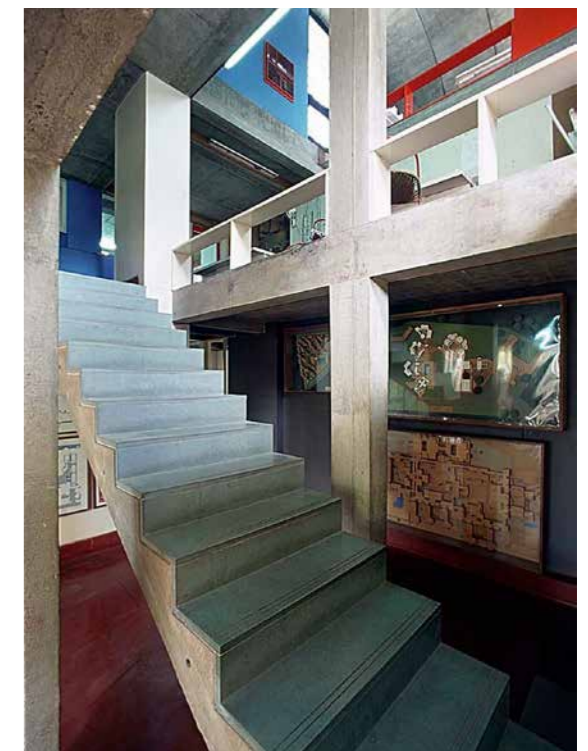
Born into a traditional Hindu family in 1927, the idea of myth, story, ritual and ceremony play an important role in his works. His early conditioning happened during the Indian Independence movement under Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore. His commitment to social housing was guided by Gandhi's philosophy, while his concern for the education system was inspired by the ideas and teachings of Tagore. He began his architecture studies in 1947, the year India gained independence, at the Sir J.J. School of Architecture Bombay (Mumbai). In the 1950s, he boarded a ship from India to London where he dreamed of joining the Royal Institute of British Architects and eventually moved to Paris to work under Le Corbusier. Doshi returned to India in 1954 to oversee Le Corbusier's projects in Chandigarh and Ahmedabad, which include the Mill Owner's Association Building (Ahmedabad, 1954) and Shodhan House (Ahmedabad, 1956), among others. Beginning in 1962, he also worked with Louis Kahn as an associate to build the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, and they continued to collaborate for over a decade. Doshi's association with Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn made him familiar with the vocabulary of Modernist architecture with a special emphasis on elemental forms and building materials.

In 1956, Doshi founded his own practice in Ahmedabad called Vastushilpa, a Sanskrit word meaning »Art of the Built Environment«, which has grown to employ five partners and sixty employees, and has completed more than 100 projects. In 1958, he was one of the first to receive the International Fellowship of the Graham Foundation, Chicago. In 1962, at the age of 35, Doshi founded the School of Architecture at CEPT University in Ahmedabad and in 1978 established the Vastushilpa Foundation for Studies and Research in Environmental Design. Having been recognised both nationally and internationally as one of the most influential Asian architects after 1947, Doshi was the recipient of numerous awards and distinctions such as the Global Award for Lifetime Achievement for Sustainable Architecture, Institut Français d'Architecture, the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, and the Gold Medal of the Academy of Architecture of France, among others. He received the 2022 Royal Gold Medal for Architecture and was a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Indian Institute of Architects, and an Honorary Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.



» Doshi encourages his projects to take on lives of their own even when it happens in ways he couldn't have predicted.«

Samanth Subramanian



1. Architectural study model, clay, Sangath Architect's Studio, Ahmedabad, 1980
 2. External view with water channels and grass steps, Sangath Architect's Studio Ahmedabad, 1980
 3. Interior view of workspace, Sangath Architect's Studio, Ahmedabad, 1980
 4. Staircases, studio space staggered over three levels, Sangath Architect's Studio, Ahmedabad, 1980
- Opposite page: Sectional sketch, Sangath Architect's Studio, Ahmedabad, 1980

In Search of Context

»Doshi has contemplated not only the object-ness of architecture (...), but also how to root the architectural object in its larger context of culture, environment, and social, moral and religious beliefs.«

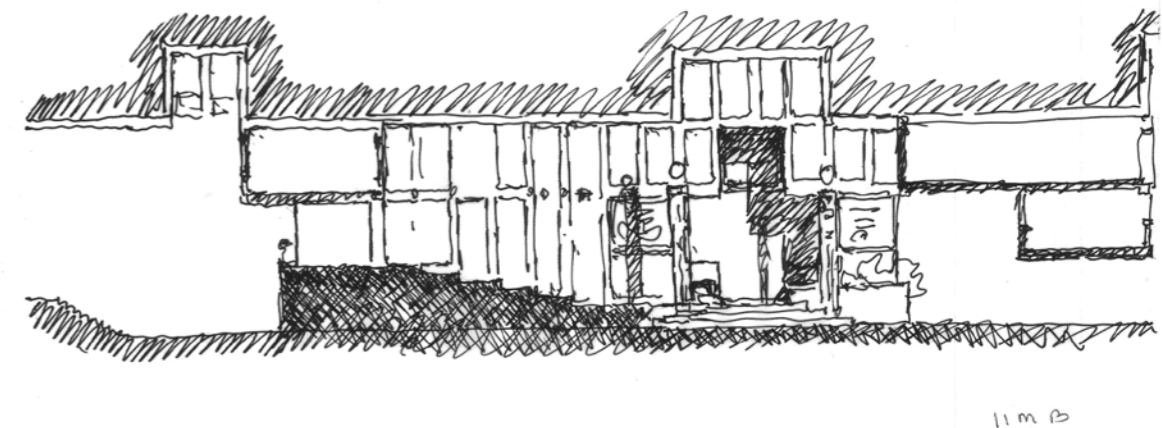
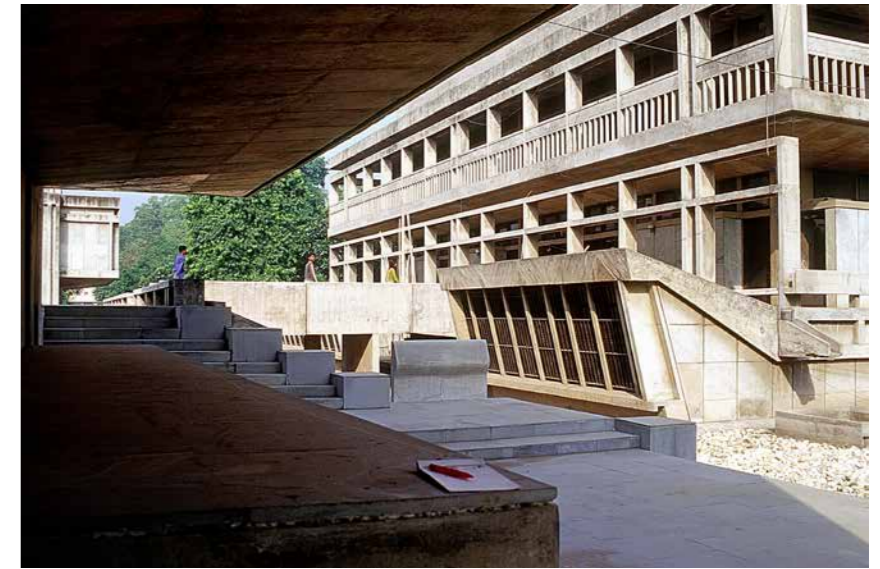
Glenn Murcutt

Doshi's architecture is characterised by a broad understanding of factors like climate, ways of life and particularities of material practices in the local context. Using patios, courtyards, and covered walkways, as in the case of the School of Architecture (1968, now part of CEPT University) or the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore (1977, 1992), Doshi created spaces to protect from the sun, catch the breeze and provide comfort and informal recreation as well as meeting spaces in and around the buildings.

For the Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Institute of Indology in Ahmedabad (1962), which preserves thousands of ancient manuscripts, Doshi created a naturally temperature-controlled, well-lit and ventilated space in a half-buried basement. His studio Sangath («moving together through participation»), located originally on the edge of the countryside in Ahmedabad and surrounded by an urban garden, is half buried in the ground to reduce the heat load in the summer. Its vaults with ceramic mosaic details are insulated with

hollow ceramic cylinders and glass wool. The entire building is made of waste material using locally available techniques and minimum resources.

Sangath embodies the essence of Doshi's long career. The barrel-vaulted forms of the parallel volumes are reminiscent of Louis I. Kahn's Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, but they do not owe a debt to either Le Corbusier or Kahn. Instead, when he was designing an earlier outhouse on the site, the contractor only had curved corrugated sheets for the roofing. The proportions of the vaulted roof in relation to the base were similar to Indian temples and Doshi sought to recreate this proportion at a larger scale for Sangath. By combining details like a figural statue at the entrance, the architecture bridges modernity and tradition. In that sense, Sangath embodies Doshi's whole oeuvre, which refuses to dispatch with the social and environmental forms of Indian culture in exchange for the homogenizing effects of modernity.



1. Upper floor with glare-reducing verandah, Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, 1962
2. View of the steps leading to the courtyard between the institute and Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum of Indology, Ahmedabad, 1962
3. Sketch sectional drawing for Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, 1977, 1992
4. Green courtyard in the hostel block, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, 1977, 1992
5. One of the spacious, light-flooded corridors, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, 1977, 1992

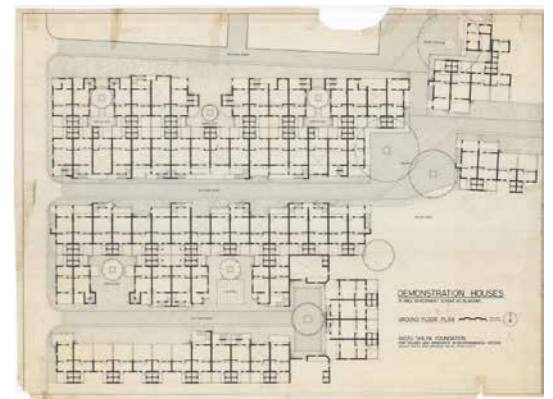
Empowering People



Doshi's commitment to social housing that led to pioneering settlement projects for the low-income groups, was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's famous quote that illustrates his social thought: »I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt [...], apply the following test: recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melt away.« Consequently, in the 1970s and 1980s, Doshi developed new approaches to experimental housing, based on the principles of participatory approach and with the possibility to grow and adapt to changing needs and requirements of their users over time. In order to achieve this goal, Doshi combined prefabrication and local craft for the construction. He worked out a set of basic principles and a limited set of housing types that were laid out along shaded streets, gradually developing from the private dwelling to the public

spaces. Among the outstanding examples of these settlement areas are the Life Insurance Corporation Housing (LIC), in Ahmedabad (1973) and Aranya Low-Cost Housing in Indore (1989).

Aranya was built as a model project planned for over 40,000 inhabitants. Most of these inhabitants have achieved a degree of social advancement in the period in which they have lived in this environment. The community is connected through a system of houses, courtyards and a labyrinth of internal pathways and is comprised over a site area of 6,500 m² residences, amongst six sectors – each of which features a range of housing options, from modest one-room units to spacious houses, to accommodate a range of incomes. A modular system allows the houses to grow, to change, and to adapt to a wide range of individual needs and economic possibilities. Aranya was predicated on a »sites and services« approach, in which electricity, water, and sewer services were provided, but the houses were built minimally as a services core (plinth, toilet and electrical connection) and a single room that each family could extend.



»Design converts shelter into homes, housing into communities and towns & cities into magnets of opportunities.«

Balkrishna Doshi



1. Aerial view of the cluster of demonstration houses, Aranya Low Cost Housing, Indore, c. 1989
 2. Cluster plan, ground floor plan of demonstration houses, Aranya Low Cost Housing, Indore, c. 1989
 3. Street view, Aranya Low Cost Housing, Indore, c. 1989
 - 4./5. Street view, Life Insurance Corporation Housing, 1973
- Opposite page: Coloured sketch with facade elevation, Aranya Low Cost Housing, Indore, c. 1989

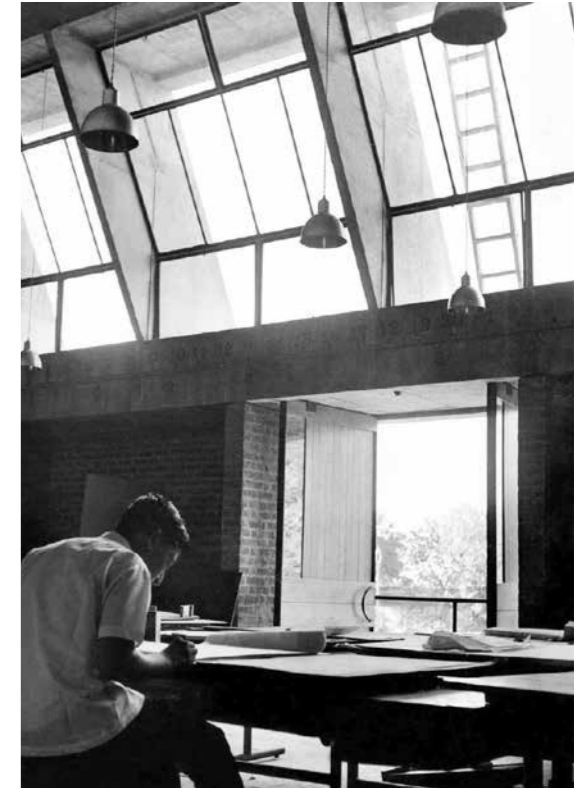
Spaces for Education



In 1962, Doshi initiated the School of Architecture at CEPT University (Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology) in Ahmedabad, which changed the face of architectural education in India and became one of the most important centres for urban planning. The School of Architecture is part of the CEPT Campus that has continuously grown under Doshi, who served, from its founding in 1962 until 2012, not only as the campus architect, but also as its director and chairman. The building of the School of Architecture, with its structure of parallel brick walls and deep concrete columns to cut down on sunlight while admitting natural ventilation, exhibits the influence of Le Corbusier's brise-soleil but also Louis Kahn's rigorous order. As with Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation or Villa Savoye, the building is raised up above the ground. But here the space underneath is active and multi-functional, designed for sun protection and exposure to the breeze. Where Le Corbusier lifted the building to express the ground floor's independence from those above it, Doshi elevated the school in response to India's hot climate and to enable a hub of activity where shade and breeze create a comfortable environment.

Not far away and always part of the campus, there is another building by Doshi, where the challenges between an artist and an architect gave birth to the most unexpected form: Amdavad Ni Gufa (1994), an underground art gallery that houses the works of the Indian artist Maqbool Fida Husain, departs dramatically from the earlier designs. Built by locals as ferrocement shells covered with ceramic tiles, the gallery animates, in Doshi's words to the Pritzker Prize Committee, »the mysteries of light and memories.«

In the course of his long career, Doshi has participated in building up numerous institutions of varied disciplines that aimed at blurring the conventional boundaries between the various fields of knowledge and became important centres of research, debate and dialogue. For some of them, he was also commissioned to design the buildings, including the Lalbhai Dalpatphai Institute of Indology (1962), the Gandhi Labour Institute (1982), the Kanoria Centre for the Arts (1984, 2012), the Jnana-Pravaha Centre for Cultural Studies (1999), all four in Ahmedabad, the National Institute of Fashion and Technology in New Delhi (1994), as well as the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore (1977, 1992).



»Education is to open doors – not one, but many«

Balkrishna Doshi



1. Exterior view of the Academic Studios, School of Architecture, CEPT, Ahmedabad, 1968
 2. Sectional model, studio space, School of Architecture, CEPT, Ahmedabad, 1968
 3. Workspace for architecture students, School of Architecture, CEPT, Ahmedabad, 1968
 4. View of entrance area, School of Architecture, CEPT, Ahmedabad, 1968
 5. Open workspaces on ground floor, School of Architecture, CEPT, Ahmedabad, 1968
- Opposite page: Coloured facade sketch, School of Architecture, CEPT, Ahmedabad, 1968

Facts

Exhibits

Original architectural models, drawings and plans, sketches, paintings, photos, models, films, slideshows, furniture, full-scale installations (parts of buildings), etc.

Curators

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Exhibition floor space

600 – 1,200 m² / 6,000 – 12,000 sq ft

Dates

Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein
30 March 2019 – 8 September 2019

Architekturmuseum der TU München
17 October 2019 – 20 January 2020

Architekturzentrum Wien
29 May 2020 – 29 June 2020

Wrightwood 659, Chicago
10 September 2020 – 12 December 2020

C-mine, Genk
2 July 2022 – 6 November 2022

Museo ICO, Madrid
5 October 2023 – 14 January 2024

Exhibition tour

»Balkrishna Doshi: Architecture for the People« is available to international venues until the end of 2024. The exhibition travels including all exhibits, contextual films and images, exhibition architecture and all media equipment.

Publication

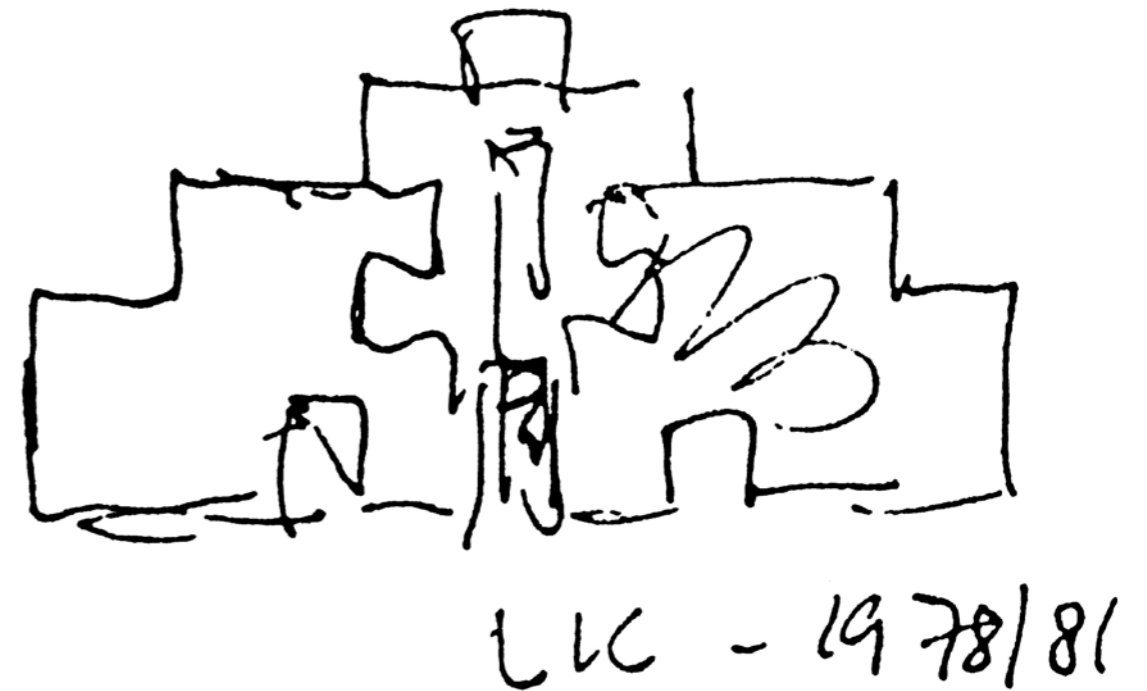
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Opposite page: Balkrishna Doshi, conceptual sketch, 1978/81

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Installation Shots





SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
1968

MONUMENTAL
BY







GSFC TOWNSHIP 1969

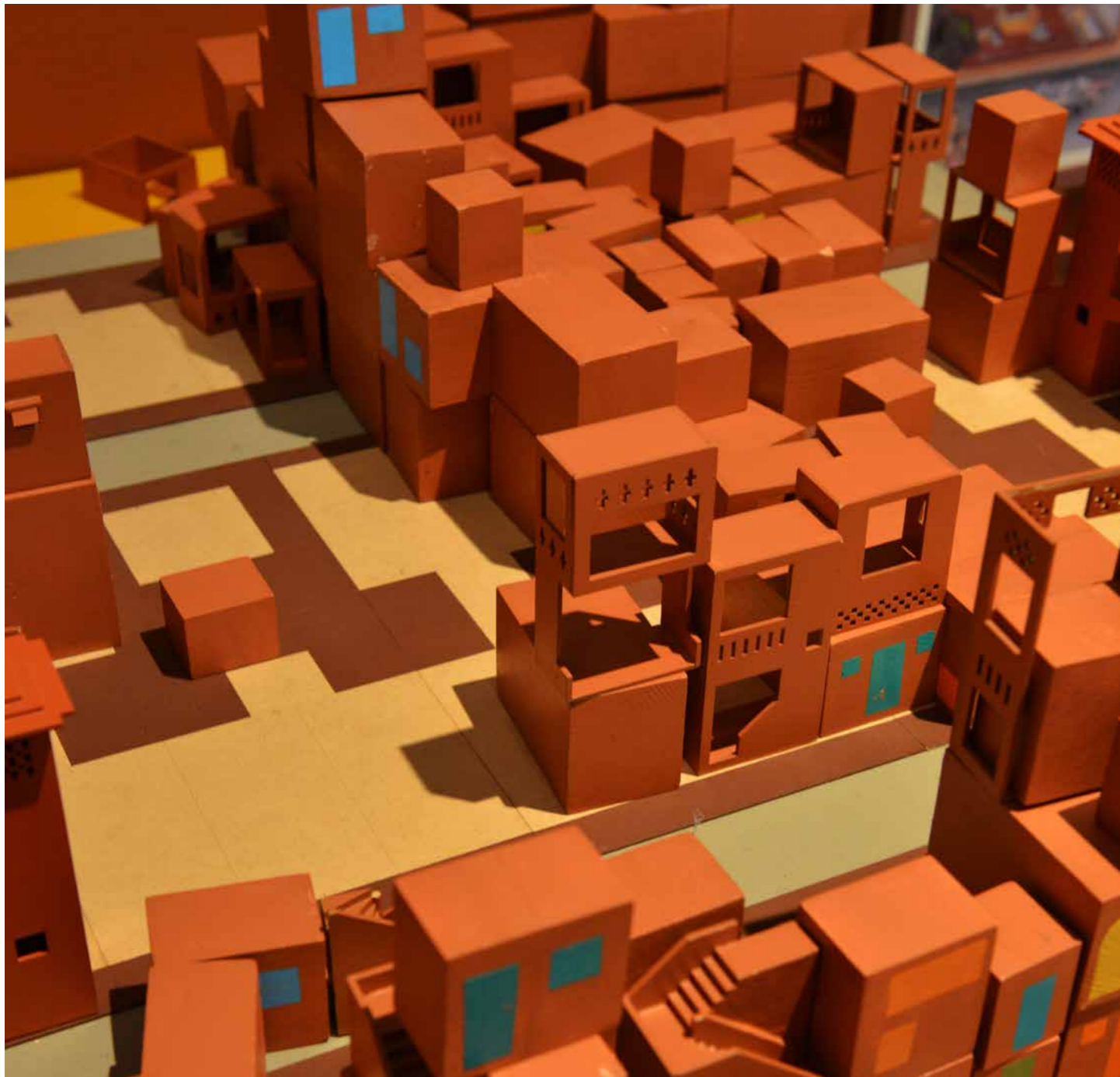


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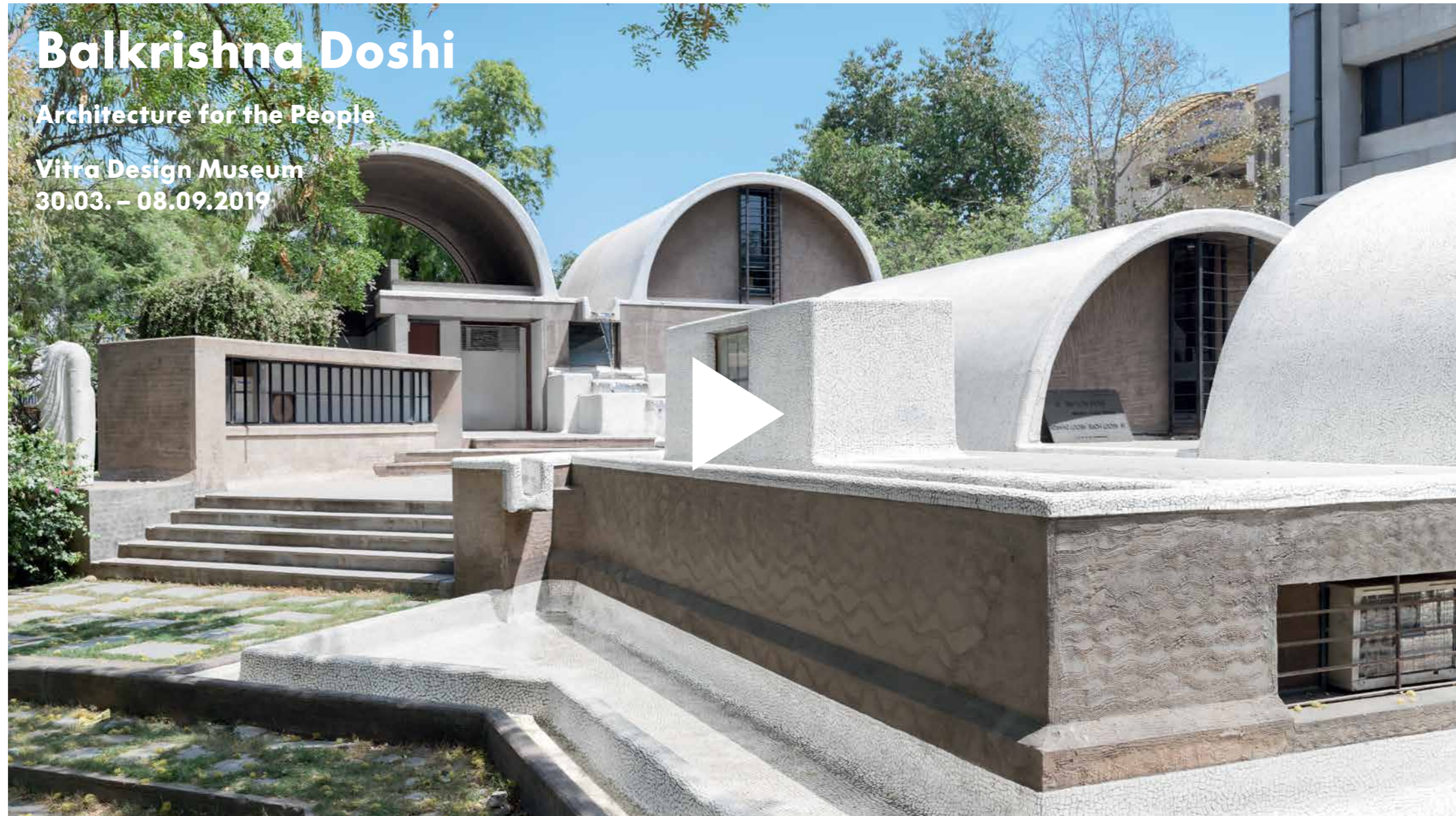








Video





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