PREFACE

This thesis is an attempt to understand the concept of modernity and how it has shaped the architecture, urban design and form of cities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Hailed as a product of the Modern Movement, India’s modernization process is also influenced by the concept of modern, modernism, and modernity which originated in the west, but filtered in to the East through men, methods and materials of construction as an east west dialogue and exchange. An examination of India’s modernization process reveals that while modern technology and modern modes of thought were western imports, it was the indigenously generated ‘modernising’ ideals of the country’s nationalist movement that directed the stupendous task of nation building.

During the 1950s in India, Modernism was an attitude reflected in the attempt to break away from and (undesirable) past to realise a better future. The Modern Movement was a reaction to industrialization, enlightenment, science and technology, and the need for large scale urban development required due to the destruction that occurred during the world wars. This movement created a series of waves not only in architecture, but also the way in which people were to begin to live their lives, once again in full measure. So effectively the Modern Movement was a break from the past, into a (better) future and so in order to plan this future, an entirely new system of designing cities and towns became an urgent need. Post war constructions needed to address the issues of community facilities, high-rise living, separation of urban functions, (separate living, working, circulation and recreation areas) and most important, plan for the automobile pedestrian segregated city.

With these new agendas cities of the Modern Movement were designed. In migration into cities, from the hinterlands occurred at a rapid pace, as cities became propellers and generators of economic growth, offering better job opportunities, living conditions and enjoyment in contrast to the rural areas. This necessitated the quick production of modern building materials such as concrete, steel, glass that therefore had to be factory made and mass produced to furish the growing populations in cities .The new functions that the city had

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to support (industrial estates, mass housing, healthcare, higher education, recreational centres...) demanded a new architectural vocabulary which had few precedents so far.

Further, the thesis examines three case examples which represent the Modern Movement and have been inscribed by UNESCO World Heritage Centre for their Outstanding Universal Value and are representative of twentieth century heritage. These are Brasilia; capital of Brazil inscribed in 1987, The White City of Tel Aviv, Israel in 2003 and Le Havre –The City Reconstructed by Auguste Perret, Le Havre, France, in 2005. Each of these cities has been nominated as it represents certain values and fulfills the criteria as laid down by UNESCO WHC. For example Brasilia has been nominated for being an outstanding example of human creative genius, being built exnihilo. UNESCO has recognised The White City of Tel Aviv (which is based on a plan by Sir Patrick Geddes), has the largest concentration of buildings of the International Style, depicts a stylistic homogeneity and completeness, is easily accessible due to the centrality of its location in the bustling metropolis of which it forms the central part. From a twentieth century historical perspective, the incidental overlap of Geddes’ Modern Movement Plan for Tel Aviv, with the city’s Modern Architecture, accentuates Tel Aviv’s modern character and wholeness. Likewise Le Havre, a city bombed completely in the World War (1932) was reconstructed by Auguste Perret utilising the potential of Beton Brut (exposed concrete), and modular buildings on modular grids. The nomination of Le Havre has borne it the coveted label “World Heritage of Humanity”, and revolutionized French architectural traditions notably by inventing a new architectural order of reinforced concrete. The scale of Le Havre’s reconstruction, as well as its coherent development plan, made the city a symbol for all of Europe’s rebuilt cities symbolic of the Trente Glorieuses (thirty glorious years). All these exemplars depict the modern movement and how the modern world has adopted the tenets modifying the universal principles to indigenous applications to fulfill climatic, economic and technological variants.

Chandigarh the new capital of Punjab is the city under evaluation with respect to the UNESCO criteria. Le Corbusier’s sole realised urban scheme, the city is a
modern masterpiece that, integrating the functional and the efficient, tempering the aesthetic and the humane, sought to achieve the highest standards of twentieth century urbanism, and served as a pacesetter for future developments in modernizing India. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's lofty optimism and his incredibly progressive vision for the newly independent nation, together with Le Corbusier's plan for the city represent a symbolic gesture that directed India's future course in history. The city was envisaged as a utopia representative of a democratic social order, fresh notions of urban living and an appropriate aesthetic idiom—the vision of a future 'unfettered by the traditions of the past'. For these attributes of Outstanding Universal Value, currently, the city is on the Tentative List of UNESCO, (where it is placed for a year) prior to its nomination as an inscribed site on the World Heritage List. The thesis evaluates the city based on personal and user survey for its nomination, the benefits of inscription as well as the added pressure on the city post nomination. The problems posed in the conservation of modern heritage, the temporary nature of modern construction materials, issues of conserving not everything, coupled with the international responsibility of being a world heritage site are discussed. Finally, addressed, in a vision plan, is the future of Chandigarh in terms of the challenges a living city must contend with, and respond to its citizen's aspirations.