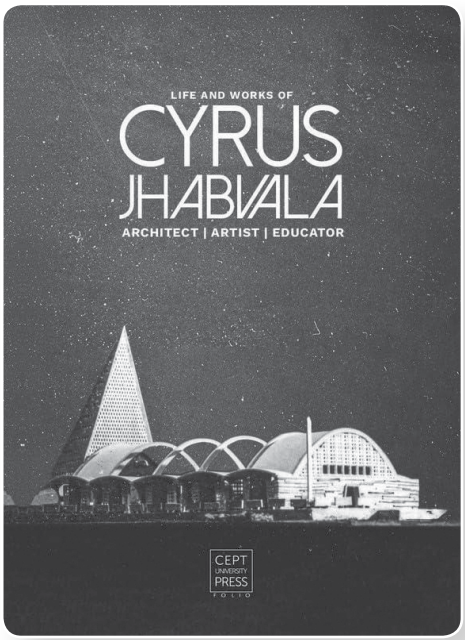
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ARCHITECTURE AS SERVICE



The monograph on architect Cyrus Jhabvala, traces his multidimensional life, pioneering pedagogy and pragmatic practice. It contextualize his architecture, writings, and institution-building within post-Independence India, revealing a remarkable contribution to nation-building, architectural education, and modern Indian architectural history.

LIFE AND WORKS OF CYRUS JHABVALA
ARCHITECT, ARTIST, EDUCATOR

AUTHOR | Iftikhar-mulk Chishti & Snehil Tripathi
PUBLISHED BY | CEPT University Press, August 2025
SIZE | 210 mm x 150 mm x 46 mm
567 Pages, Hardcover
ISBN | 978-93-83184-94-1

Architectural lives with the most impact are often those that resist dramatic narration. They are not marked by singular masterpieces or loud declarations, but by a commitment to betterment of the profession, to teaching as an act of service, and to creating responsible architecture within the constraints of real institutions, real cities, and real people. Prof. Cyrus Jhabvala belongs unmistakably to this category. An exacting educator, a principled practitioner, and a formidable presence at a critical moment in the formation of post-Independence architectural culture, his influence has endured in the memories of former students and colleagues and in passing references within broader histories of modern Indian architecture, but has rarely been assembled into a coherent historical narrative. The recently published monograph, *'Life and Works of Cyrus Jhabvala'* undertakes this task with restraint and seriousness. The significance of the monograph lies not only in the story it tells but also in the manner in which it tells this story. At a moment when architecture is increasingly measured by singularity, speed, and spectacle, this book reminds us of another measure of worth: continuity, integrity, and commitment across a lifetime. The book is important not only because it documents the life and work of a remarkable architect, educator, and artist, but because it offers a compelling framework for understanding an entire generation of post-Independence architects whose contributions were grounded in service rather than self-promotion.

Published by CEPT University Press and grounded in extensive archival labour at the CEPT Archives, the book aligns Jhabvala's life with the larger project of nation-building, post-Partition reconstruction, and the formation of architectural education and practice in India. In doing so, it transcends the boundaries of biography to become both a work of architectural historiography and a meditation on the values that defined a formative period in modern Indian architecture.

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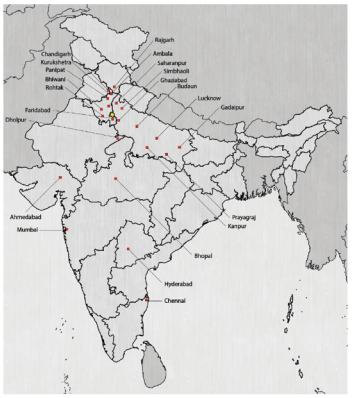
The monograph is structured in three major sections reflecting the breadth of Jhabvala's intellectual and professional life. The first section, *Cyrus of Many Dimensions*, serves as an extended introduction to the man himself, presenting him not only as an architect but also as an educator, artist, collector, and public intellectual. The second and largest section, *AAJ: A Pragmatic Practice for Nation Building*, forms the core of the book and examines the extensive body of work produced by the firm Anand, Aptay and Jhabvala. The third section, *Words as Building Blocks*, gives equal importance to Jhabvala's writings, treating his essays, lectures, and reflections as an essential part of his architectural legacy. The book is rounded off by a postface, *Cyrus' Century*, which places Jhabvala's nearly hundred-year life within the wider political, cultural, and architectural transformations of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The effect is to situate Jhabvala not as an isolated practitioner, but as a participant in, and witness to, an era of extraordinary change. The appendices extend this portrait through quotations from students and colleagues in *Behind the Glass Door,* and deeply personal insights by his daughters in *The Householder*, which reveals him as a devoted husband, father, and family man.

Born in Bombay in 1920, Jhabvala came of age during one of the most turbulent periods of the twentieth century: between two world wars, amid the intensifying struggle for Indian independence, and on the eve of Partition and the massive social and spatial upheavals that accompanied it. The book makes a persuasive case that these circumstances were not incidental to his development but foundational to the values that would define his life and work, having inherited intellectual seriousness, social commitment, secularism, and personal discipline. The book recounts his architectural education through Sir J. J. School of Art, and G.B. Mhatre's Architectural Academy, supplemented by office apprenticeships to support his family. It then draws upon his shift to London in 1946 and subsequent return to India at precisely the moment when the nation was confronting the immense tasks of reconstruction and institution-building.

One of the most significant contributions of the monograph is in institutionalizing the history of the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi. The monograph traces Jhabvala's journey as an educator in parallel with the evolution of architectural education in post-Independence India and the growth of School of Planning and Architecture (SPA), Delhi from its origins as the Department of Architecture at Delhi Polytechnic into the country's most influential school of architecture and planning. Through the memories of his students, the



AAJ-DESIGNED PROJECTS IN DELHI
Residences
Factories
Hospitality
Cultural institutions
Retail
Educational insitutions

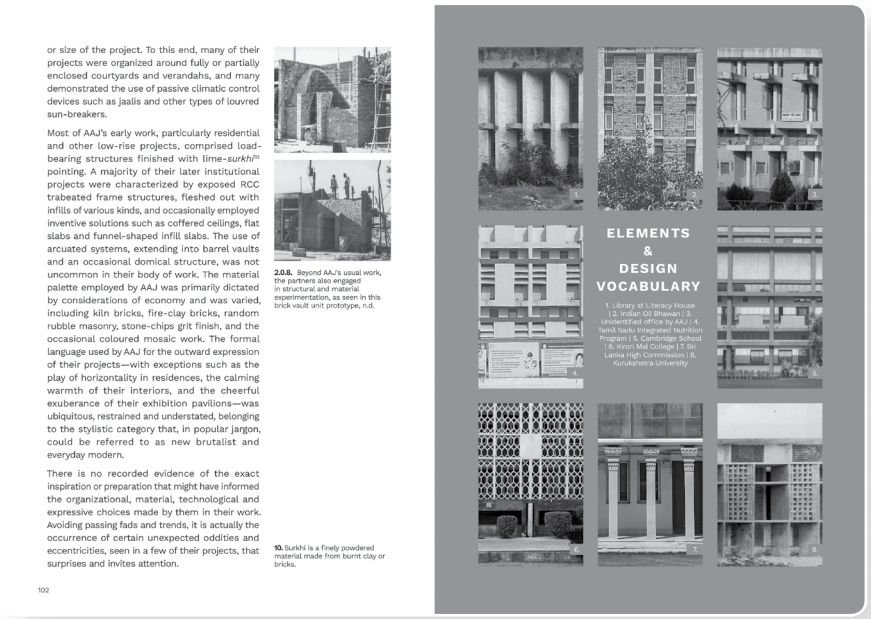


SITES OF AAJ PROJECTS ACROSS INDIA

monograph shows that sketching, field visits, and close observation were central to his pedagogy, not merely as representational tools but as ways of learning to see and think critically. The book shows how, during his leadership, and in close collaboration with T. J. Manickam, SPA underwent what may be regarded as its formative "golden era." The curriculum was comprehensively restructured to balance design studios with building technology, environmental studies, social sciences, history, and professional practice. Although often regarded as demanding and controversial, Jhabvala's enduring legacy lies in the generations of architects he trained and in the institutional culture he helped build. The monograph also highlights a recurring institutional debate between professional practice and academic teaching. Throughout his tenure, Jhabvala consistently argued that architecture could be taught meaningfully only by those actively engaged in practice, and the book documents his prolonged negotiations with government authorities over restrictions placed on faculty undertaking private work.

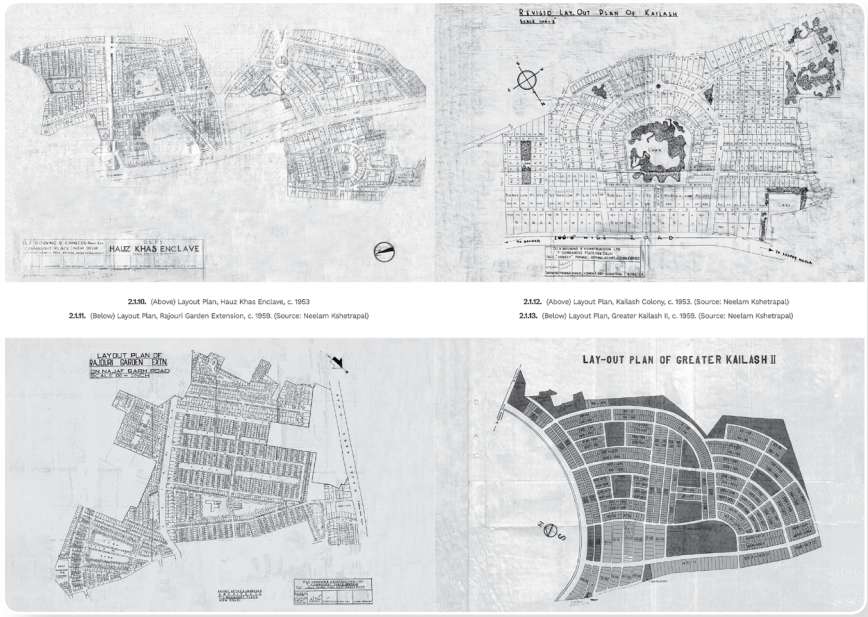
The central section of the monograph, *AAJ: A Pragmatic Practice for Nation Building*, examines the work of Anand Aptay and Jhabvala (AAJ) embedded in the larger project of post-Independence reconstruction. The monograph positions AAJ as one of the most important yet relatively understudied architectural practices of its generation, distinguished by its longevity, the breadth of its commissions, and its deliberate avoidance of celebrity culture or formal self-branding.

The book organizes AAJ's work thematically, revealing the extent to which the practice engaged with nearly every major building type necessitated by the needs of a newly independent nation. It documents the planning of some of Delhi's most prominent post-Partition residential colonies, including Greater Kailash, as well as group housing in DDA which accommodated the expanding migrant middle class. It examines the firm's industrial buildings, where factories and



warehouses were treated as carefully articulated architectural compositions rather than purely utilitarian structures. The monograph also highlights AAJ's work for cooperative institutions, most notably the Central Cottage Industries Emporium and the Super Bazaars, which embodied new models of collective economic organization. Educational commissions ranged from schools to major colleges and university campuses, while civic and commercial projects included embassies, offices, and shopping centres. Lastly, it speaks about the work done by the firm in exhibition design in India and abroad, where AAJ created temporary environments that projected the image of India as a confident and modernizing nation. Taken together, the extraordinary range and significance of these commissions demonstrate that AAJ was entrusted with shaping many of the institutions, industries, neighbourhoods, and public interfaces through which modern India was imagined, constructed, and presented to itself and to the world.

Beyond cataloguing projects, the monograph analyzes AAJ's architectural language, material choices, and planning strategies. It identifies a pragmatic and workmanlike modernism that balanced international ideas with climate, craft, and local building traditions, suggesting the early emergence of what would later be described as critical regionalism. It argues that the everyday-ness of their work, combined with its sheer volume and ubiquity across the city, helped embed the image and materiality of modernism into the built fabric of Delhi in a way that was both gradual and pervasive. This is a distinguishing aspect of their practice when compared to more visibly authored works of their better-known contemporaries, especially in a period when architectural discourse was sharply divided between competing stylistic positions, oscillating between calls for a return to more traditional forms and demands to break away from the local context as a whole.

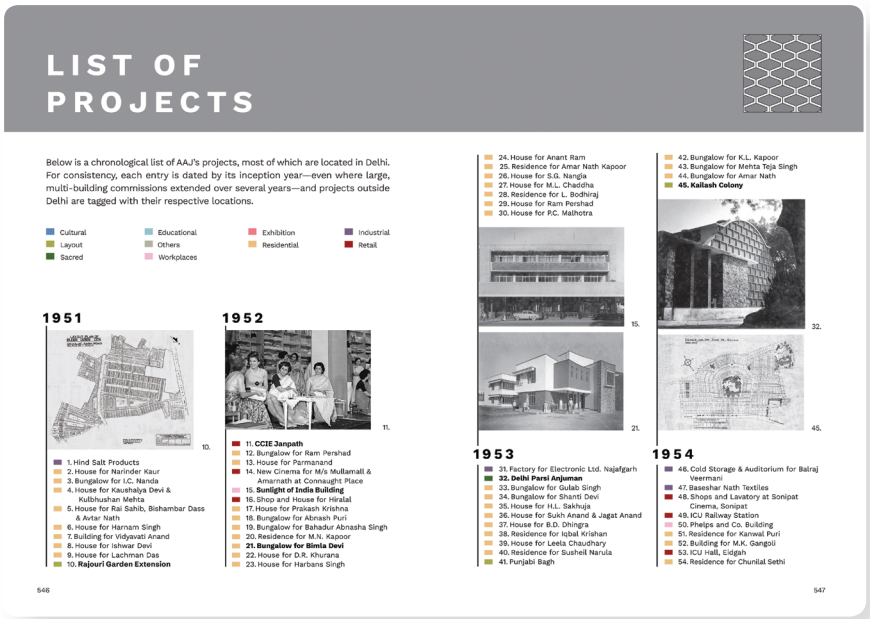


2.1.10. (Above) Layout Plan, Hauz Khas Enclave, c. 1953
2.1.11. (Below) Layout Plan, Rajouri Garden Extension, c. 1959. (Source: Neelam Kishetrapal)
2.1.12. (Above) Layout Plan, Kailash Colony, c. 1953. (Source: Neelam Kishetrapal)
2.1.13. (Below) Layout Plan, Greater Kailash II, c. 1959. (Source: Neelam Kishetrapal)

The final section of the monograph, *Words as Building Blocks*, accords Cyrus Jhabvala's writings the same seriousness as his buildings and teaching. It brings together essays, lectures, letters, and policy critiques that reveal him as a thoughtful and articulate participant in the architectural debates of post-Independence India. Among the most significant texts are *A Plea for Freedom*, his forceful defense of the architect-teacher's right to practice; his critiques of housing and planning policy; and his detailed appraisal of the Delhi Master Plan. Across these writings, Jhabvala consistently argued for professional autonomy, institutional integrity, and a socially responsible approach to architecture.

The book ultimately reinforces a central insight: Jhabvala's greatest achievement was not the creation of iconic monuments, but the shaping of institutions, pedagogies, professional values, and generations of architects. By documenting his life with such care, *The Life and Works of Cyrus Jhabvala* expands the historiography of Indian modernism beyond celebrated formal auteurs and restores attention to a generation of rigorous, socially committed architects whose enduring legacy lies in the minds they formed and the institutions they helped build.

One of the most compelling dimensions of *The Life and Works of Cyrus Jhabvala* lies in the story of recovery that made the book possible. Despite the extraordinary scale and significance of the work produced by the firm, and the breadth of its influence on the physical landscape of a developing nation, no formal professional archive had been maintained. Drawings, correspondence, photographs, and documents remained dispersed across offices, homes, and institutional records, vulnerable to gradual loss. Following Jhabvala's passing, materials were identified, catalogued, and preserved through the collaborative efforts of Mihir Bhatt, the Jhabvala family, and the CEPT Archives. Enriched by Iftikhar-mulk Chishti's



LIST OF PROJECTS

Below is a chronological list of AAJ's projects, most of which are located in Delhi. For consistency, each entry is dated by its inception year—even where large, multi-building commissions extended over several years—and projects outside Delhi are tagged with their respective locations.

Cultural · Educational · Exhibition · Industrial · Layout · Others · Residential · Retail · Sacred · Workplaces

1951

1. Hind Salt Products
2. House for Narinder Kaur
3. Bungalow for I.C. Nanda
4. House for Kaushalya Devi & Kulbhushan Mehta
5. House for Rai Sahib, Bishambar Dass & Avtar Nath
6. House for Harnam Singh
7. Building for Vidyavati Anand
8. House for Ishwar Devi
9. House for Lachman Das
10. **Rajouri Garden Extension**

1952

11. **CCIE Janpath**
12. Bungalow for Ram Pershad
13. House for Parmanand
14. New Cinema for M/s Mullamall & Amarnath at Connaught Place
15. **Sunlight of India Building**
16. Shop and House for Hiralal
17. House for Prakash Krishna
18. Bungalow for Abnash Puri
19. Bungalow for Bahadur Abnasha Singh
20. Residence for M.N. Kapoor
21. **Bungalow for Bimla Devi**
22. House for D.R. Khurana
23. House for Harbans Singh
24. House for Anant Ram
25. Residence for Amar Nath Kapoor
26. House for S.G. Nangia
27. House for M.L. Chaddha
28. Residence for L. Bodhiraj
29. House for Ram Pershad
30. House for P.C. Malhotra

1953

31. Factory for Electronic Ltd. Najafgarh
32. **Delhi Parsi Anjuman**
33. Bungalow for Gulab Singh
34. Bungalow for Shanti Devi
35. House for H.L. Sakhuja
36. House for Sukh Anand & Jagat Anand
37. House for B.D. Dhingra
38. Residence for Iqbal Krishan
39. House for Leela Chaudhary
40. Residence for Susheil Narula
41. Punjabi Bagh
42. Bungalow for K.L. Kapoor
43. Bungalow for Mehta Teja Singh
44. Bungalow for Amar Nath
45. **Kailash Colony**

1954

46. Cold Storage & Auditorium for Balraj Veermani
47. Baseshar Nath Textiles
48. Shops and Lavatory at Sonipat Cinema, Sonipat
49. ICU Railway Station
50. Phelps and Co. Building
51. Residence for Karwal Puri
52. Building for M.K. Gangoli
53. ICU Hall, Eidgah
54. Residence for Chunilal Sethi

546 547

evocative visual portrayal of Jhabvala's life, grounded in his long personal association with Jhabvala, and Snehil Tripathi's extensive archival research and analytical reconstruction, the publication draws upon archival records, personal recollections, interviews, photographic surveys, and close readings of buildings and writings to assemble a remarkably comprehensive account.

In this sense, the book is as significant methodologically as it is biographically. It demonstrates how Indian architectural history can be reconstructed responsibly even when conventional archives are absent, and offers a model for documenting overlooked practices whose contributions have shaped the built environment without generating extensive self-documentation. The monograph forms part of a broader commemorative effort that includes memorial lectures, exhibitions, and a dedicated website, underscoring that remembrance is conceived as a collective and institutional act rather than a process of myth-making. The monograph thus also implicitly calls for an expansion of architectural historiography beyond its repeated focus on a limited set of internationally canonised figures, towards practices whose influence lies in their ubiquity, endurance, and integration into everyday urban life. In this vein, within the CEPT Archives, both the monograph and the Jhabvala Collection contribute to the larger *Professional Practitioners* initiative, an ongoing archival programme that preserves materials from independent architectural practices across the country and, in doing so, documents the history of modern architecture in India through the records of those who shaped it.

Karan Gandhi is an architect, urbanist and management consultant. He edited Prof Christopher Benninger's "Great Expectations: Notes to an Architect". His bachelor's thesis, guided by Dr Bimal Patel and Fahad Zuberi was the first academic study on Prof. CSH Jhabvala.