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*Gandhiji on the Central Vista: A Postcolonial Refiguring**

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Monuments, memorials and statues, so commonplace in squares and parks of late twentieth-century cities, have interesting histories and convey particular historiographies. In public arenas planned and maintained by state administrations, symbolic representations situated for the purpose of communicating messages to passersby, visitors, and residents often mark the state's attempt to control space, history and popular memory. By extension, changes in statuary or monumental architecture over time may reflect shifts in rulers and their representations of rule. As Hung (1991) demonstrates, the 'war of monuments' in Tiananmen Square reflected struggles for power and demands by those excluded from power for rights and access. The 'statumania' of post-revolutionary France personalized contests for power and representation (Agulhon 1985). On the other hand, monuments that remain fixed on landscapes can be variously interpreted over time, forming, as Young (1989:70) has noted, 'a kind of screen across which the projected shadows of a world's preoccupations continue to flicker and dance.'

In India, the practice of creating and installing statues of national rulers and leaders extends a tradition developed and promoted by British colonists. But colonial agents did more than introduce a method of representing power; they laid a material infrastructure which has outlived imperial rule to restrict the ways landscapes can be modified and redefined in postcolonial India. Since Independence, elites in the nation's capital, while planning to cast national symbols in the shape of icons of Indian nationalists, have confronted what they see as structural obstacles inherited from British imperialism. This paper presents a debate about a landscape in the capital city of Delhi to provide a window on how particular groups of urban elite interpret imperial structures and create a public space from a pre-figured vista. Extending over four decades, the debate develops cri-

* 'Ji' is an honorific marker added at the end of a surname.

tiques of material heritage and proposals for creating a public space for the nation-state.

The participants in the debate are members of the Indian Parliament and of private professional groups and non-governmental heritage organizations. They are elites who, to use Marcus' (1983: 10) definition, use their institutional positions to make decisions and bring about effects which shape events for others. The participants, while representing governmental and non-governmental bodies and organizations, assume various positions in the decision-making process to argue for political legitimation, agendas of heritage conservation and public education, or architectural and aesthetic principles and values.

While setting out who attempts to shape and define national symbols, this paper traces the evolution of particular decisions made about representing the nation. The discussion focuses on how symbols are conceived and the spaces in which they are to be situated are mapped out. The consequences of such representations cannot be addressed as the debate will indicate. Rather, contests over criteria for the selection and fashioning of symbols (Handelman 1990) and processes of entitlement (Parkin 1985) are central to decision-making. Historians and anthropologists have argued that nationalist historiography in India has tended to reproduce categories and essences set forth in Orientalist scholarship (Guha 1988; Prakash 1990, 1992; Thapar 1978). This paper looks closely at a debate about national iconography to ask a related question: how is the colonial past refigured vis-a-vis the positioning of representations of the postcolonial nation-state?

In order to trace a debate that moves through documents, written correspondence and discourse over time, it was necessary to draw upon methodologies emerging from the rapprochement between history and anthropology (see Cohn 1987; Ohnuki-Tierney 1990). Journals of parliamentary debates and documents from government departments and private organizations constituted one form of data used to analyze all phases of the debate. Correspondence between participants in the debate, read from the files of the non-governmental organizations involved, provided data on more recent communication. Interviews conducted in 1992 with government officials and members of professional groups and voluntary organizations drew out participants' memories of what they called 'the controversy' and its transformation over time, and, as narratives, in most cases corroborated events and statements recorded in print docu-

ments.¹ Participant-observation during the summer of 1992 facilitated a perspective on the variable influence participants wielded in the debate.

The material ground on which the debate focuses—the ‘central vista’—was founded during the construction of the capital of British India, at a time when architectural schemes explicitly promoted an imperial vision. The paper begins with an overview of how this imperial vision was projected to constitute a central vista for the colonized nation. The discussion then documents a debate which takes shape after the Independence of India in 1947 and the establishment of an Indian Parliament in 1952. This debate takes up issues concerning the removal of colonial icons and the installation of statues of Indian leaders, before turning to the problem of recreating the central vista.

Laying the Foundation of New Delhi

Architecture in British colonial India was an important vehicle through which colonial officials expressed and asserted their identity as rulers of a foreign land. During the early stage of rule (mid 18th century to mid 19th century), British architects incorporated Indian motifs into the reproduction of Gothic and Renaissance structures. By the late nineteenth century, they developed a synthesis of ‘Hindu’ and ‘Muslim’ styles they coined Indo-Saracenic (Metcalf 1984). But as individual projects, these structures were dispersed throughout the country in a manner that, appearing incongruous with extant material landscapes, defied a unified imperial concept (see Metcalf 1989; Irving 1981; Gupta 1984; Evenson 1989). In contrast, the building of a new capital in Delhi was to follow a grander scheme than had underlined architectural projects in Madras, Calcutta and Bombay. The interest in shifting the capital of British India from Calcutta to Delhi embodied the desire to create a thoroughly imperial city which would project a civilization flourishing under the British Empire (Davies 1985:13).

This desire was linked to concerns for restoring an image of command and stability to the British Raj. British officials saw that a

¹ Interviews were conducted during the summer of 1992 with participants active in the debate from 1969. It was not possible to reach the highest placed government officials or the deceased.

shift in capital cities from Calcutta to Delhi would help to maintain imperial unity. Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal had accentuated discord between Hindu and Muslim populations and brought resistance from Bengali nationalists to British rule. Fearing a greater rebellion, the secretary of state, Lord Crewe, turned to the construction of Delhi to express an 'unfaltering determination to maintain British rule in India.' The planning of this new governmental complex was initiated in 1911 (Metcalf 1989:211; Irving 1981:27).

In 1912, a Town Planning Committee was formed to select a chief architect and lay out the new Imperial city. After nominations were made, the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, chose Sir Edwin Lutyens, a consulting architect to the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust in England. Herbert Baker, an architect working for the British Empire in South Africa, was summoned to assist him.

After choosing a site south of the established city of Delhi, where former Moghul rulers had made their capitals, architects and government servants began to discuss the architectural form the city would take. Suggestions were also put forward by British educators and architects outside the Government of India, but officials excluded input from Indian craftsmen and planners. E. B. Havell, a retired school principal, John Begg, consulting architect to the Government of India, and Gordon Sanderson of the Archeological Survey, among others, pushed for a revitalization of indigenous building crafts and argued for the employment of Indian craftsmen (Metcalf 1989:212–19; Havell 1913a,b). Despite these pleas, the final report on town planning defined New Delhi as 'an Imperial capital' which would 'convey the idea of a peaceful domination and dignified rule over the traditions and life of India by the British Raj' (Delhi Town Planning Committee 1913:2; and quoted in Evenson 1989:146).

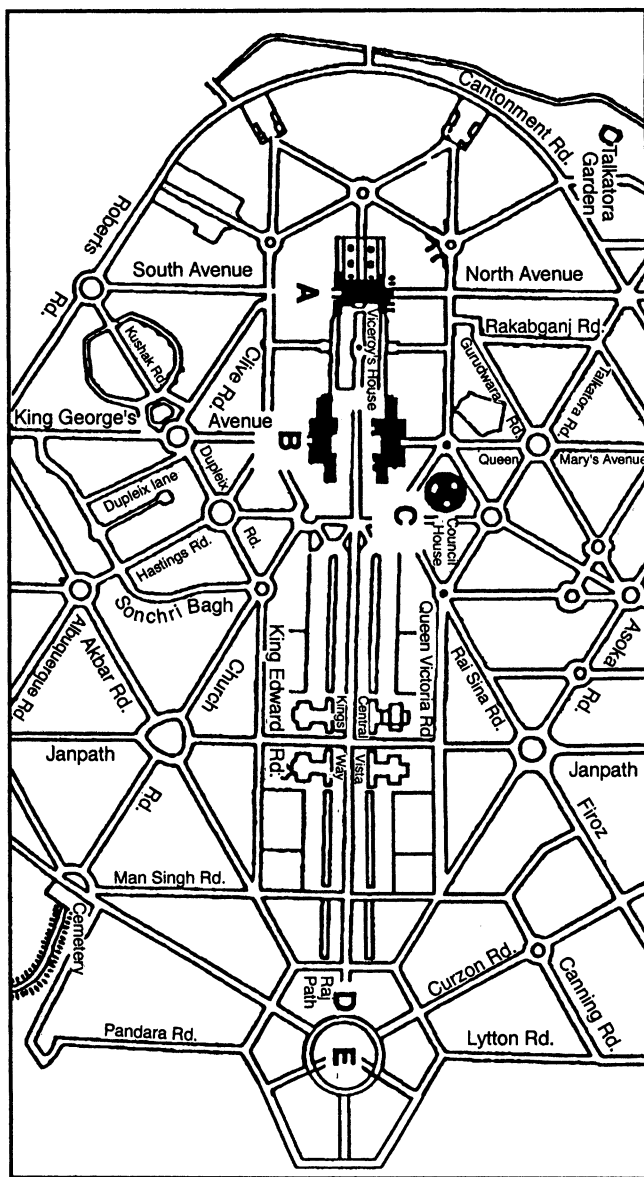
Although an advocate of European classicism, Lutyens did incorporate into his plans pre-Moghul, Moghul and Rajput elements such as carved screens (*jaalis*), small domed kiosks (*chhatris*), and the high domed portal arch. The resultant design, as Viceroy Lord Hardinge put it, should be 'plain classic with a touch of Orientalism' (Metcalf 1989:219). When inaugurated in 1931, the government complex was dominated by the palace of the Viceroy, a sprawling structure 630 feet wide and 530 feet long. The palace was crowned with a great stupa-like dome and punctuated with a Jaipur column in the front courtyard. Along Kingsway, the ceremonial lane that descended eastward down Raisina Hill from the palace, were the symmetrical buildings of the Secretariat. Off to the north side, the Parliament House

was constructed in the form of a circular edifice 560 ft. in diameter. One and a half miles beyond these sandstone structures two monuments were built after the government buildings were completed. In 1931, the All-India War Memorial, a portal arch standing 140 feet high with panels of stonework relief, commemorated 60,000 Indian soldiers lost in World War I and 13,516 British and Indian officers who died in the North-west Frontier during the First Afghan War.

In 1936, beyond the War Memorial, Lutyens designed a 73 ft. monument to King George V, the first Emperor of the British Empire to visit India and receive a coronation Durbar (see Trevithick 1990). A white marble figure of the King was placed beneath a sandstone baldachin or canopy (chhatri) and elevated on a circular pedestal in the center of a rectangular pool. The canopy or chhatri was situated within a hexagonal park and enclosed by a radial road (see map). Architectural historians note that the monument wove together symbols of imperial prowess. Irving (1981:262) writes:

Both alien and native heritage were fused in explicit symbols which emphasized the majesty of the King-Emperor's person and of his proconsuls and servants. Emblems of Kingship abounded: the British imperial crown, orb, and robes, the chivalric star of India, the baldachin, and even the water itself evoking ancient Oriental traditions of a divine monarch as mystic giver of the waters of life. Sculpted nautilus shells implied British dominion of the seas and conjured memories of the sovereign's oceanic pilgrimage for his coronation Durbar. The baldachin was not only an image of Kingship but also of the heavens, of that abode of the divinities and cosmic canopy which compassed the whole British Empire.

The grand scheme for the primary edifices and monuments of what became the central vista of New Delhi was rooted in an imperial conception of enduring power: to construct a material legacy that would outlive any resistance to colonial authority. However, material artistry was to concretize British authority at a time when the Indian Congress Party was stepping up its struggle for swaraj or self-rule. The work was directed by British architects who held little interest in integrating the architectural heritage of the varied kingdoms and communities of the sub-continent. This material symbolism deepened the divide between ruler and ruled. Visible to a populace barred from real decision-making processes, these monuments represented the Indian nation as an obedient and willing servant of the British Empire.



Map 1. The Central Vista of New Delhi

Key

- A — Viceroy's Palace
- B — North and South Blocks of the Secretariat
- C — Council House (Parliament Building)
- D — War Memorial (India Gate)
- E — King George V Memorial

Appropriating the Imperial Landscape: Parliamentary Debates on Nationalist Statues

As Cohen (1989:493–4) has noted, tearing down and erecting monuments are ways of taking vengeance on the past and shaping a new understanding of it. After the Independence of India in 1947 and the establishment of Parliament in 1952, the Government of India put forward a policy on the removal of the statues of British colonists. This, however, became a subject of debate among government officials and, later, the professional elite of Delhi. Largely within the Lok Sabha (the People's House) and to a lesser extent in the Rajya Sabha (the Council of States), members of Parliament pressed Cabinet Ministers and the Prime Minister to act quickly to change the names of roads and rid landscapes, particularly those in the capital, of colonial icons. Beginning in 1955 in the Lok Sabha, requests were expressed during question hour for information on the progress made in removing the thirteen statues of British Viceroys and Generals erected in Delhi and New Delhi during colonial rule. The Council of Ministers had relegated the matter to the respective states in which statues rested, but Parliament members representing many of the other states were also concerned with landscapes in the capital. Most Parliamentarians were in agreement that landscapes in Delhi, and most importantly the central vista, were to become arenas for projecting the new nationalism to the people.

The first statement on the Central Government's policy on foreign statues was made by the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in May of 1957. He spoke to members of the Lok Sabha:

I was venturing, Sir, to place before the House what the general policy of Government is in regard to this question of statues put up during the period of the British rule in various parts of India. There are various kinds of statues; some may be considered historical, some may be considered artistic and some may be considered, well, rather offensive in themselves, and of various types. Our general attitude has been, first of all, to remove such as might be considered offensive, and that too, gradually without making too much fuss and without doing anything to raise ill will between countries. We have removed some of those statues and we propose to continue doing that. There are those which have been historically significant without causing offence; we shall also remove them and put them in historic museums. There are those that are not important historically or artistically. I do not know what we will do with them; if somebody else wants them, we will make a present of them. In particular, regarding such statues as may be considered in a sense offensive to our national sentiment, we have taken them up and we do propose to take them up; but we wish to do all this in a manner

so as not to create international ill will and raise up old questions which are dead and gone.²

Members of Parliament demanded 'target dates' for the removal of statues of foreign rulers while they lamented the 'inordinate delay in arriving at a decision.'³ Ministers responding to the questions and complaints of Parliament members claimed that a lack of suitable places for the accommodation of statues was impeding the process of removal.⁴ To many, these statues were the most glaring representations of, as one official put it, 'our former humiliation.'⁵ By March of 1958, two statues in the capital had been removed but by June of 1964, eight of the thirteen original statues still remained in prominent sites in front of Government buildings and on the central vista.

The relationship that the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, maintained with Britain until the time of his death in 1964 may have accounted for his willingness to retain the statues of British administrators amidst opposition from Parliament members. Nehru was concerned with avoiding any 'ill will,' as he mentioned in his address to the House, that might compromise the position in global affairs he cultivated through membership in the British Commonwealth. If those who opposed Nehru's conciliatory posture towards Britain in the early post-independence years had wanted to remove signs of the imperial past more rapidly and thoroughly, they were unable to do so in the nation's capital until after his death. So the statues of Lord Irwin, Lord Chelmsford and Lord Reading were not removed from outside the Parliament House until late 1964. At that time, Lord Willingdon was also hauled away from the South Block of the Secretariat, and Lord Hardinge was removed from the President's House. Of the four statues remaining, the statue of King George V situated beyond the War Memorial on the central vista was, to many Parliament members, the most offensive. One House member remarked in May of 1965:

Seventeen, eighteen years have gone by, India's Independence and the establishment of a Government by the people has taken place; enough time has passed. This is a very shameful thing that the statue of King George remains in front of President's House till today. At least this should be removed, at least the statues of foreigners should be removed.⁶

² Lok Sabha Debates, vol. 1, 13/5/57.

³ Lok Sabha Debates, vol. 5 part 1, 31/7/56.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Lok Sabha Debates, vol. 5 part 1, 18/7/56.

⁶ Lok Sabha Debates, vol. 43, 6/5/65 (translated from Hindi).

On the night of August 13th, 1965, in a show of protest, twelve to fourteen unidentified persons climbed up to the pedestal of the statue of King George V, and broke the nose and ears of the figure. But it was not until late 1968 that the statue was hauled off to a storage site in Old Delhi at a cost of 4200 rupees.⁷ To the relief of many Parliamentarians, the capital city of India was cleared of all statues of foreign rulers by 1970.

In the wake of demands to remove foreign statues from landscapes in the capital came numerous requests, followed by concrete proposals, to install figures of national leaders or 'heroes' in the city. Many members of Parliament requested that statues of Indian nationalists be erected in the places left vacant by the removal of foreign statues. From late 1957, representatives of the Council of Ministers responded to questions raised in the Lok Sabha about the Government's plans to erect statues of national leaders. Several Ministers articulated a vague policy stipulating that proposals could be submitted to a Committee whose members would make decisions regarding sites for the installation of statues in the capital. The costs for creating and erecting the statues, however, had to come from non-governmental organizations or private funds. The first Committee established in late 1957 to make these decisions was composed of the Chief Commissioner of Delhi, the Chief Engineer and Chief Architect of the Central Public Works Department, the Presidents of the Delhi and New Delhi Municipal Committees, and representatives of the Ministries of Health, Home, and Works, Housing and Supply. It was wholly a governmental matter at this stage, yet within the Government only the few representatives of the named Ministries were aware of the details of proposals requesting statues. Reports in the Lok Sabha on the Committee's deliberations did not yield any firm decisions on sites for these statues, despite pleas from members of Parliament to speed up the process. One member requested: 'In view of the total absence of the statues of Indian national heroes, will Government consider the practicability of having some statues at least to start with?' The Prime Minister's response played down the issue: 'The Indian background in regard to statues has been somewhat different from that of the West. In the past statues have been put up here of Gods, not of human beings.'⁸ Following in the same discussion, another Parliamentarian com-

⁷ Lok Sabha Debates, vol. 26 no. 26, 24/3/69.

⁸ Lok Sabha Debates, vol. 15, 11/4/58.

plained that statues ought to be larger than 'a small bust.' The matter, a Union Minister then assured the House, would be followed through by the appointed Committee. But until 1964, the only statues erected were those of Motilal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and these were achieved through private donations.

Parliamentarians, on the other hand, were eager to populate the city's landscapes with statues of freedom fighters such as Subhash Chandra Bose, Shradhanand, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Maharani Laxmi Bai, among others. Numerous proposals were submitted to the committee and during question hour in the Lok Sabha additional names were put forward. But the Council of Ministers continued to avoid directing statue installation, invoking instead a policy of private donorship. To the distress of many, Gandhiji, or the 'Father of the Nation,' was neglected by the Government's inaction. One House member objected in December of 1964:

May I know whether Government are not prepared to consider any revision of that particular policy even in the case of the Father of the Nation? Is it not a shame that there is no statue at all of the Father of the Nation in the capital? God only knows when that policy was laid down. Is it not the duty of the Government to take upon itself the responsibility of raising a statue of the Father of the Nation? (Cheers)⁹

Another member asked if Gandhiji would be installed in King George's place. But a response to these demands was not forthcoming until March of 1965. At that time the Government announced in the House that it would not delay consideration of Gandhi's statue any longer by waiting for the public to collect the necessary funds. A second committee was to be appointed to consider the specific issue of installing the statues of national leaders in the capital and would include government officials and non-governmental professionals of Delhi.¹⁰

A Place for Gandhiji

Amin (1988) has demonstrated that Mohandas Gandhi was a crucial signifier of the nationalist movement. However, popular perceptions of Gandhi, he argues, were often at variance with the images of him

⁹ Lok Sabha Debates, vol. 37, 23/12/64.

¹⁰ Lok Sabha Debates, vol. 39, 10/3/65.

projected by Congress party members. Nationalist narratives tended to misrepresent the popular understanding of Gandhi by reducing this sentiment to a simple, guileless devotion. The debate suggests that the Congress Party, in the post-independence years, continued to assume that by constructing an image of Gandhiji they might portray their devotion to the respected leader and thus win over an eager audience. Mahatma Gandhi had developed the philosophy and political strategy of non-violent revolution (ahimsa) and sought the attainment of power for Indians by 'holding fast to Truth' (satyagraha). Political elites attempted to tie these concepts of ahimsa and satyagraha, concepts which informed the public understanding of swaraj, to the legitimacy of the ruling party.

Although many Parliament members welcomed the decision to install a statue of Gandhiji at government expense, accusations that the Government was 'allergic to' the erection of a statue of Subhash Chandra Bose characterized the remarks of some opposition party members. Contrary to the announcement, however, the Committee formed on the 10th of August 1965 did not include non-governmental participants. It was chaired by the Minister of Works and Housing and included members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, the Mayor of Delhi Nagar Nigam, the Chief Commissioner of Delhi, the Senior Vice President of the New Delhi Municipal Committee, the Chief Engineer and Chief Architect of the Central Public Works Department, and the Secretary of the Works and Housing Ministry. By November, they had appointed a sub-committee to discuss an appropriate design for Gandhi's statue, but had excluded members of opposition parties.¹¹ For three years, the Committee made little progress apart from creating a long list of statues to be erected once private funds could be provided. By February 1969, the decision was announced in the Lok Sabha that a statue of Gandhiji would be installed at government expense near India Gate (the War Memorial) on the central vista but no further details were provided.

The problem of exactly where to place Gandhiji then became more intractable than the problem of ensuring effective committee work. The Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, was asked in the Rajya Sabha if King George's place would be suitable. Since many Parliamentarians supported the idea that Gandhiji should assume the spot once held by the King-Emperor, they pressed her for an opinion. Avoiding a

¹¹ *Ibid.*; Lok Sabha Debates, 4/11/65.

personalized response, she remarked that Committee members in charge of the problem were discussing how well Gandhi would 'fit' in that spot.¹²

The idea of placing Gandhiji under King George's canopy did not receive the favor of professional architects and artists employed in private practices in Delhi. Upon hearing of the Parliamentarians' interest, the President of the Indian Institute of Architects met with Indira Gandhi to argue against the proposal. This exceptional leader of non-violence, the architect argued, should not be placed under an imperial canopy which marked the power Gandhi sought to expel. Mrs Gandhi was reticent, however, explaining that it would be difficult to contravene the wishes of Parliamentarians. But in the interests of courting public sentiment, she recommended that a sub-committee of government officials including the Chief Engineer of the Central Public Works Department and of non-governmental professionals in art and architecture be formed to discuss the issue further. After its members exchanged views, the committee put forth a set of suggestions to the Prime Minister. First, the committee argued, a leader who opposed imperial rule should not be placed underneath or contained within structures representing British power. Not only would this be symbolically incongruent, but this accommodation to British imagery would flagrantly contradict Gandhi's philosophy of satyagraha. Secondly, from a planning point of view, they pointed out, Gandhi should not be placed along the axis Lutyens created to align the Viceroy's palace with the War Memorial and the canopy, as this was an axis with an established imperial value. Thirdly, they added, when the nation celebrates Independence Day, and caravans parading state symbols of power and force ply down Rajpath, Gandhiji should not be seated there to preside over these displays. Finally, to emulate this practice of installing statues of rulers, the sub-committee pointed out, would be to make Gandhiji into a westernized symbol of power.¹³

On the 1st of December, 1969 in the Lok Sabha, a Union Minister's attempt to communicate to House members the considerations raised by the Committee met with intense verbal opposition. The Union Minister began by stating the Cabinet position:

Shri B. S. Murthy: It had been earlier decided that the statue of Mahatma Gandhi be installed at the site near India Gate where formerly stood the

¹² Rajya Sabha Debates, vol. 69 no. 26, 26/9/69 (translated from Hindi).

¹³ Interview with Shri Balla, President of the Indian Institute of Architects 1969–75 (summer 1992).

statue of King George V. Certain views were expressed by a Committee of experts and some of Gandhiji's close friends . . . (Interruptions). In the light of their views, a revised decision was taken. Government continue to be firmly of the view that if any statue is to be installed at this particular site, it should be that of Mahatma Gandhi and no other. However, in view of the fact that a large number of people including experts as well as many honorable Members of Parliament have expressed varying views on the question of a suitable site for Gandhiji's statue (Dr Ram Subhag Singh: That is wrong. Nobody was consulted.) Government have decided to appoint a small committee to go into this question. Members of Parliament will be associated with the Committee (Some members: No, No). It will also be composed of experts in the fields of architecture and sculpture and representatives of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and the National Committee of the Gandhi Centenary. This Committee will be asked to report within this month.

Shri M. L. Sondhi: Give a helicopter to this committee.

Shri Samar Guha: How could the British build up the statue of George V? Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani: Sir, I must say that I am astounded at the answer given. It is full of equivocation and it is not a straightforward answer. On such a simple matter, at least we expect an honest and straightforward answer. Advisedly, I am not using stronger language than I would have liked to use. This matter was first agitated in the press with the news item that appeared on the 26th November. There was no contradiction by the Government. Then, it was briefly raised in the Lok Sabha which was not contradicted by the Government. It was raised in the Rajya Sabha which was also not contradicted by the Government. Today this morning we find in *Patriot*, an un-official mouthpiece of the Government, that there is no decision to change the site. Now, we had given notice of a Call Attention, when the House was seized of it, the manner in which this information has been leaked out, I do not know from which particular news agency, I think, constitutes contempt of the House. It is a matter of breach of privilege also. It is a back-door method of giving information. Then this reply of the Government is astounding. A Committee was appointed on which Members of Parliament, both of this House and the other House, were represented and I think the Lt. Governor Shri A. N. Jha was also a member of the Committee. That Committee gave a unanimous recommendation that Gandhiji's statue should be installed where the statue of King George V was at the India Gate. In view of that unanimous recommendation, I think, a Cabinet decision was taken. I want to understand where from certain views were expressed by a Committee consisting of experts and some of Gandhiji's close associates? What was that Committee? Who were Gandhiji's close associates who expressed their views? We know of only one Committee that was appointed. We are not aware of this Committee. We know that Committee gave a unanimous decision. I do not know another committee came into existence and in the light of their advice, a revised decision was taken. When was a revised decision taken and by whom? If there was a Cabinet decision, I would like to know when the Cabinet revised its previous decision. Why was a new Committee appointed? When was it

appointed? Then we are told that there are varying views expressed by Members of Parliament. Who are the Members of Parliament who have been expressing varying views and for what reasons? The most astounding factor is this. After all, the Government which is supposed to be representing the people—no other party here is supposed to be representing the people except the Prime Minister's little group—and if they are representing the people, should at least know that in Delhi as well as in the whole country, there is a strong feeling that Mahatma Gandhi is the biggest leader of this country. Do they not know even this? The most prominent place is India gate which should have Gandhiji's statue in the Gandhi Centenary year. Why was the decision changed? When was the decision changed? What Committee was appointed? Who were the members of that Committee? Who were the close associates of Gandhiji who said that Gandhiji's statue should not be there? Now what is the reason for appointing this new Committee? We would rather say if they are thinking of a new committee, let the decision be taken by this House. Let the Parliament decide where Gandhiji's statue should be installed.¹⁴

After complaints were voiced, another Minister defended the Government's position:

Shri K. K. Shah: Please listen. After a decision was taken, a committee, with a view to decide the type of statue, was appointed consisting of Shri M. L. Nanda, the Engineer-in-Chief; Shri Brij Kishan Chandiwalla, the Chief Architect; Shri Devendra Kumar Gupta, Shri B. C. Sanyal, Shri J. R. Bhalla of the Indian Institute of Architects, Shri H. Rahman . . .

Shri Sucheta Kripalani: When was it appointed?

Shri K. K. Shah: I will give you the date; I have got all the papers here. I will just now give the date.

An hon. Member: You ask Mr. Jaganath Rao.

Shri K. K. Shah: This was appointed on 26th June 1968. This Committee came out with a proposal that, 'While deciding the statue, we feel that the canopy which is a regal canopy either should have to be removed . . .'

Some hon. Member: Remove it.

Shri K. K. Shah: I have made it quite clear in May 1969 when the first meeting was held after the report was received and that also I am going to read it for your information. Secondly they say, 'If you remove the canopy and if you want to put up a double life size statue, then, on account of the India Gate, the view will be obstructed unless you keep the pose sitting as the King George statue is. Because you want a 2½ size statue to be put up, then the view will be obstructed.' They pleaded that the place just opposite the 'chhatra'—here you can have a fountain or something you like—that means the hexagon which is covered between the children's park and the statue so that it will be on the road and it will be facing this and there will be a fountain. They made this suggestion. Now when the suggestion came to me, I called the first meeting and said with a view to leave no doubt that

¹⁴ Lok Sabha Debates, vol. 34 no. 11, 1/12/69.

the Parliament wants that the statue should be at that place [under the canopy].¹⁵

Eager to push the proposal of installing Gandhi under Lutyens' canopy, some House members accused the government of delay in taking a decision on matters concerning statues of national importance. One member remarked:

For the last four years, the statue of Lala Lajpat Rai has been lying in Lajpat Bhawan. The Centenary Committee approached the Government four times, we approached the Government three times, I approached the honorable Minister in charge so many times and still no decision has been taken. That is the tendency. I am sorry and it pains us to think that probably the same thing will apply to Mahatma Gandhi's statue also . . .¹⁶

By the following year, sculptors were invited to submit proposals and maquettes despite the fact that the exact location for the statue of Gandhiji had not been resolutely fixed. Sculptors were told that the statue would be put 'near India Gate.'¹⁷ The Committee of Government officials, artists and architects, however, did not find any of the maquettes suitable; meanwhile Parliament members continued to push for installing Gandhi under King George's canopy.¹⁸ This disagreement stalled any decision-making on the issue until 1974, when Indira Gandhi formed a fourth Committee of the Chief Justice of India, the Former Director of the National Museum, the President of the Indian Institute of Architects, and the Chairman of the Delhi Urban Arts Commission, a statutory body created by Parliament. This committee, concurring with the conclusion of the third committee, decided that Gandhi should not be placed under the imperial canopy along the Rajpath axis. The announcements in the Lok Sabha regarding the Committee's progress, however, deflected the issue of where to place Gandhiji by continuing to report that none of the sculptors' maquettes were suitable. This deadlock continued through the change of governments that took place three years later.

After the Congress Party lost the majority in the Parliamentary elections in 1977, a new government was formed by the Janata Party, and Morarji Desai, the appointed Prime Minister, took up the issue once again by appropriating Gandhiji as a symbol of nationness. Since Gandhiji's participation in swaraj preceded the formation of

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Rajya Sabha Debates, vol. 74 no. 6, 18/11/70.

¹⁸ Lok Sabha Debates, vol. 45 no. 10, 23/11/70.

many post-independence political parties, organized groups hoped to project Gandhi as a representation of the 'undivided nation' (see Prakash 1990:389). The Janata Party's particular play on Gandhi invoked his disillusionment with political parties in the years just before Independence. This theme of disillusionment figured prominently in the Janata Party's campaign. The socialist programs the Janata Party claimed to support also drew from Gandhian values of *sarvodaya* and a decentralized economy (see Ostergaard 1989:218; Paliwal 1986:90).

In response to the new government's announcement to consider installing Gandhi's statue under the imperial canopy, the President of the Institute of Architects once again issued a statement against such a move. But arguments opposing the Gandhi-under-the-canopy proposal were dismissed by a headstrong Parliament.¹⁹ Amidst continued opposition from members in the professional community, the Government reconsidered the matter in April 1978 and once again called forward eminent sculptors in the country to submit proposals for a design of Mahatma Gandhi. The sculptors were informed that the designs should be drawn in such a way that Gandhi's statue could be situated under the canopy or in the vicinity of the War Memorial.

Twelve sculptors submitted maquettes which were exhibited at the Prime Minister's House. After the designs were ranked, a top candidate was chosen. The top candidate's design depicted Gandhi, $3\frac{1}{2}$ times life size, seated on the original imperial pedestal. The sculptor suggested that since the *chhatra* or canopy does not 'go well' with the personality of Gandhi, it should be removed along with its four pillars. Others admitted: 'This would suit the scale of India Gate and the surrounding environment. The tip of Gandhiji's head would be near about the same height as was the top of the Crown of the King George V statue.' However, the sculptor's report stated further: 'Architecturally, the scale of India Gate was such that anything near it would be dwarfed and would not look complementary to this massive edifice.'²⁰ To overcome these incongruities, a suggestion was made that the space created by the two grassy quadrants of the hexagon in which the canopy lay might be a more suitable location. The sculptor then proposed to create a statue of Gandhi

¹⁹ Interview with Shri Bhalla (summer 1992).

²⁰ Documents provided by the Chief Architect of Central Public Works Department, Indira Gandhi administration (now retired).

seven times life size, as this larger size would 'fit the scale of the open space' of the grassy quadrant.

A change in governments in 1978 stalled the plans further but when the Congress Party resumed power in May 1980, the appointed Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, constituted a Government Working Group to finalize the selection of a suitable design and place for the statue. The Working Group was chaired by the Director General of Works of the Central Public Works Department. The members included the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Works and Housing, the Chairman of the Delhi Urban Arts Commission, and the Chief Planner of the Town and Country Planning Organization. The group was convened by the Chief Architect of the Central Public Works Department. They reviewed the plan proposed by the sculptor selected earlier but noted in their final report that, 'When Rashtrapati Bhawan [President's House] was viewed from this height through the chhatra and the India Gate [War Memorial], only about 3 feet above the bottom of the gate was visible, or in other words, the statue would not be seen from the steps of Rashtrapati Bhawan.' Other sizes were problematic, as they noted, 'A statue six times life size when placed on a 23 ft. high pedestal would be fairly visible from the Janpath-Rajpath crossing and would appear as a dot from Rashtrapati Bhawan. The statue would fill nearly $\frac{2}{3}$'s of the void of the chhatra when viewed from the India Gate. A statue 5 times life size placed on a pedestal 23 ft. high would also be fairly visible but would appear diminutive in the large open space around it.'

The Group also considered placing the statue in the same area atop a mound encircled by steps. Water, they proposed, would flow down the steps into a pool situated in an area landscaped with trees 'to create a peaceful, serene environment conducive to a meditative mood.' After the many proposed schemes were described to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Works and Housing with models, the decision was taken to return to the former idea of placing the statue under the chhatra.

By July 1981, after several additional designs for the statue had been submitted to the Working Group, the Minister for Works and Housing informed the Group that it was no longer necessary for it to continue deliberations. Shortly thereafter, the sculptor was called to initiate work to create a 16 ft. statue of Gandhiji in a meditative pose.

Contesting the Definition of National Symbols vis-à-vis Imperial Structures

To this juncture, the debate had been shaped largely by the interests of Parliamentarians, expressed in the Lok Sabha and in the appointed working groups and committees. The views of professionals and artists were welcomed at one point by the Prime Minister but rejected at another by Parliament. The professional elite of Delhi did succeed in stalling decision-making on the issue of where to place Gandhiji, but Parliamentary committees excluded their input when taking the decision to cast Gandhiji in a meditative pose.

As Parliamentarians saw it, representations of colonial power that had outlived their authority were obstacles to building a symbolic landscape for the nation-state. Symbols of nationalism if set on the central vista had to 'fit' somehow with material representations of imperialism. This was a problem the professional elite recognized in terms of symbolic structure, aesthetic values and architectural principles. The majority of Parliamentarians, on the other hand, were less concerned with symbolic congruity and more with repopulating a public space with representations of their own account of political history.

Several years later in 1989 after a plaster cast of the statue was completed and the casting of the bronze model remained, newspaper reports appeared announcing the Government's intention to install Gandhi on the imperial pedestal after removing the chhatri and its supporting pillars. This instigated a reemergence of opposition from architects, artists and writers. Members of non-governmental organizations concerned with heritage conservation also entered their protest.²¹ The Conservation Society of Delhi appealed to the Prime Minister: 'The chhatri forms an integral part of the central vista which is a 'Conservation Area' in the Delhi Master Plan, and as such, it should not be demolished.' (1989:1) The Conservation Society organized a panel discussion to review the problem with concerned residents of Delhi and later reported in their newsletter: 'The hall was packed, and the discussion went on animatedly for an hour and a half. Only two voices were raised in favor of demolition [of the canopy] and the sense of the house was decidedly for retention of

²¹ See Conservation Society of Delhi, Newsletter, 1989.

the canopy.' (1989:1) After the June 27th announcement and subsequent press reports written by concerned citizens in July and August, professionals of Delhi stalled further action once again.

Almost three years later, the Minister of Urban Development of the Congress Party Government of Narasimha Rao called members of non-governmental heritage organizations and architects, artists, journalists and other professionals of Delhi to a meeting to discuss the issue. Again most participants agreed that Lutyens' canopy should not be destroyed to create a place for Gandhiji. Instead, most members argued, the statue of the swaraj leader should be placed in another spot on the central vista or elsewhere in Delhi. The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), a non-governmental organization concerned with heritage conservation, qualified its position in a memorandum distributed to members, professionals and government officials in Delhi. Stressing the importance of retaining all architectural heritage, INTACH stated: 'Any move to demolish it [the canopy] will be sheer vandalism establishing a precedent for similar state action at other places.' (INTACH 1992) The Conservation Society of Delhi and the Chairman of the Urban Arts Commission concurred on this point. The empty canopy, on the other hand, would carry an important political message. INTACH's memo suggested:

In so far as the canopy is concerned, it will be best to leave it as it is, the void symbolically highlighting the victory of the people of India over imperialism. The emptiness of the canopy will for all time powerfully dramatize the exit of British imperialism and the commitment of the people of India to democracy. A properly designed plaque can be affixed at the base of the canopy describing in Hindi and English the entire context, namely, the architectural composition and its extension, the installation of the statue of King George V by the British as a symbol of imperialism, the circumstances in which it was removed in the 1960's, the dilemma over the installation of the statue of Mahatma Gandhi, the symbolism behind the decision to leave the canopy empty and the rationale on which the statue of Mahatma Gandhi had been finally installed. Indian and foreign tourists and men, women and children from all over India visiting the pedestrianized landscape of India Gate, years, decades and centuries later, will, reading the inscription, get enlightened about the great dilemma faced by the nation on this issue. The empty canopy will thus say much more than a demolished canopy or a canopy with something incongruously introduced under it. (INTACH 1992)

Taking a different view, a former Director General of the National Museum in Delhi considered the empty canopy a dangerous place.

'In the whole of India,' he emphasized, 'this is the most important spot.'²² The vacancy, he warned, would invite political mischief; with shifts in party politics, ruling party members may attempt to install their founder or prominent figure under the canopy. He added that if the government could not ensure that the canopy would remain empty, he would be in favor of removing the columns and the top of the chhatri and sitting Gandhiji on the pedestal. As an alternative, he was also in favor of removing the canopy altogether and situating Gandhi elsewhere on the central vista.

While the debate was intensifying during the summer of 1992, the Minister of Urban Development appointed the Chief Architect of the Central Public Works Department to Chair the Central Vista Committee, a governmental body created to draw up a plan for the canopy and Gandhiji's statue. According to the point of view of the Chief Architect, the structures on the central vista were originally situated along axes which have become integral to the aesthetic beauty of the landscape and to planning concepts outlined in the Delhi Master Plan. A statue of Gandhiji could not be placed off any of the established axes. He echoed the argument of the earlier Working Group that to situate the statue behind the chhatri along the established axis would also be problematic because Gandhiji would not 'fit with the composition' of the other monuments and buildings. He pointed out that the larger imperial structures would only belittle his symbolic power.²³

The extended debate over Gandhi's place on the central vista took a resolute turn when the issue was incorporated into plans for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the clarion call for India's Independence from British rule. By then, communication between governmental and non-governmental participants was confined to correspondence by letters and press releases. Print correspondence, in other words, was the only means through which non-governmental organization members and professionals of Delhi could express their views to government officials regarding the making of a national space on the central vista.

Plans for the celebration of the 50th anniversary or 'Golden Jubilee' of the Quit India movement took center stage by June of 1992. Although organized by the Government, the process of plan-

²² Interview with Director General of the National Museum, Indira Gandhi administration (summer 1992).

²³ Interview with Chief Architect, Central Public Works Department and Chair of the Central Vista Committee in Rao Administration (summer 1992).

ning functions to commemorate India's struggle for Independence from British rule was greatly influenced by the All-India Freedom Fighter's Association, an organization comprising approximately half a million veterans of India's swaraj movement. In letters to the Prime Minister and other Ministers in late 1991, this group proposed that the Government of India organize several functions on August 9, 1992 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the initiation of the final phase of the struggle for independence. They considered the 9th of August 1942 the most significant single day of the final phase of the movement. The weekend of celebrations was to be accompanied by interpretations of significant historical events of this period in the state and national press.²⁴

Translating the significance of the movement today, the All India Freedom Fighters Federation (AIFF) recommended that the main function of the celebration take place at the Red Fort in Delhi, the bastion many freedom fighters sought to reach and symbolically recapture during British occupation. By the end of June, the AIFF had passed a resolution in a meeting of its Working Group to propose that the India Gate Hexagon be named 'August Kranti Park' (August Revolution Park). This recommendation, falling in line with their interest in entitling space as part of the celebrations, was communicated to and accepted by the National Committee of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations in early July.

Since the AIFF was aware that plans to install Gandhi's statue had been underway for some time, the organization proposed that Gandhiji be situated within the hexagonal park. The Government agreed and in mid July announced in the press their intention to inaugurate 'August Kranti Park' during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations on August 9th. Upon hearing the news, members of INTACH and the Delhi Conservation Society expressed opposition to the plan by issuing statements to staff reporters of Delhi newspapers encouraging the Government to reconsider naming the park 'Swaraj Chowk' rather than 'August Kranti Park.' The Pioneer summarized INTACH's views: 'The Trust feels that the name should be avoided as first it is a combination of Hindi and English and second, Kranti (meaning revolution) can, in this age of violence, be misunderstood by the younger generation.'²⁵

²⁴ See *Hindustan Times* (Delhi) 8/8/92 and 9/8/92; see also *The Sunday Times* (Delhi) 9/8/92.

²⁵ *The Pioneer*, 15/7/92.

In a letter to INTACH in July, the secretary of the AIFF (and former member of Parliament) responded to INTACH's criticism about the choice of words for the park's name. He wrote:

That the name has an English word PARK in it need not disturb any intelligent person, especially here in Delhi which has a sprawling Buddha Jayanti Park, so named by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. I am sure you will agree that the late Panditji had a better sense of language and culture than any of us . . .

The resounding call given by Mahatma Gandhi in 1942—DO OR DIE—remains, to my mind, the most revolutionary (KRANTIKARI) slogan to this day. And it would just not do to invoke the name of the Father of the Nation to shun the word KRANTI.

Let me add that 'SWARAJ' came only after, and as a result of this KRANTIKARI clarion call which roused the nation for final assault in our long drawn freedom struggle.

Throughout the known millenniums of human history revolutions have taken place, succeeded, failed, aged and petered out but nobody ever thought of calling them by any other name. French Revolution is called so even today and it is not long ago that the French celebrated its 200th Anniversary all over the world. It was one of the bloodiest revolutions that history has known but today it invokes not an image of violence and bloodshed but of Liberty, Fraternity, Equality.²⁶

The former Member of Parliament added that his proposal for the park's name had 'the sanction of more than 400,000 living veterans of the freedom struggle' along with the approval of the members of the Golden Jubilee Committee.

INTACH's rebuttal continued. In a letter to the Prime Minister several days later, an INTACH member argued that if the name 'Kranti' must remain in the title of the park, it should not be narrowly defined by the word 'August,' which suggests that the revolution began in 1942 and not, as the INTACH member argued, much earlier in the mid 1800s. He then outlined a conception of the meaning of the park's name and the symbolic values it should express:

This stirring story [of events since the defiance of 1857] could be described as the story of a revolution, but not of an 'August Revolution' merely. The Hexagon could be called 'Kranti Chowk' (Revolution Square), resonant with the music of such names as Vijaya Chowk and Chandhi Chowk [other squares in Delhi]. However, the mural representation of this freedom struggle within the Hexagon area, disposed around a statue of Mahatma Gandhi as proposed by INTACH ought to be called 'Swaraj Darshan.' Such

²⁶ Letter from AIFF secretary to Director of INTACH, 20/7/92.

a designation would be a tribute to the unique Indian concept and attainment and continuing process of Swaraj: which embodies, not only the idea of a political revolution, but also the moral and spiritual goals of self-mastery and self-realization which were at the heart of Gandhiji's Satyagraha. Neglect of these goals has caused so many revolutions to flounder in this century, a fact of which we could usefully remind both ourselves and the rest of the world.²⁷

To the former Member of Parliament and Secretary of the AIFF, the INTACH member wrote in a similar vein that the name 'August Kranti Park' was 'too incomplete a designation of the full story of swaraj.'²⁸ The INTACH member added that the revolutionary process could be represented by panels of significant episodes of the struggle situated within the park: 'the heroic defiance of 1857 and 1942; the shame of Jallianwala Bagh in 1919; the tragedy of India's partition in 1947 and the glory of Independence in the midst of this tragedy; the powerful symbolism and significance of the Dandi March of 1930; Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's heroic leadership of the Indian National Army in Southeast Asia during the 1940's; the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi and its secular and spiritual significance transforming the tragedy into hope.' 'The canopy was,' the argument followed, 'until King George's statue was removed from under it, a Samrajya Darshan, a view of Empire or Imperialism. Facing the empty canopy now, situated in the space of Kranti could be a vision of the meaning and story of India's Independence: Swaraj Darshan.' The AIFF offered no reply to this letter.

On August 2nd, the first press report outlining a more comprehensive plan for the park appeared in a leading newspaper. The article described the elements to be developed in the proposed 'August Kranti Park.' A statue of Gandhi would be installed directly behind the imperial canopy along the Rajpath axis within the hexagonal park. This would take place on Oct. 2nd, Gandhiji's birthday. A memorial of the freedom struggle would also be erected nearby within the newly landscaped park.

As August 9th approached, INTACH and the Delhi Conservation Society held a meeting to compose another letter to the Prime Minister. Their letter acknowledged with appreciation the Government's decision to follow appeals by non-governmental organizations and professionals in Delhi to retain Lutyens' canopy and place Gandhiji's

²⁷ Letter from INTACH to the Prime Minister, 24/7/92; see also INTACH letter to AIFF Secretary, 28/7/92.

²⁸ Letter from INTACH to AIFF Secretary, 28/7/92.

statue elsewhere on the central vista, even though, as they noted, the decision came after 'years of prevarication.' They stated, 'Delay is to be preferred to haste in matters of symbolism which are likely to shape the consciousness of the nation for centuries to come.'²⁹ Again, they sought to put forth a proposal for a Swaraj Darshan memorial and urged that the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) open up the process by taking design plans from private landscape architects and non-governmental heritage organizations. The organization's letter to press reporters deplored what it called 'undue haste to develop the India Gate Hexagon area in the context of the fiftieth anniversary of the Quit India Movement.'³⁰

The August 9th Quit India Celebration was composed of three primary functions which were convened by the Prime Minister, the Minister for Human Resource Development and prominent freedom fighters. The morning function took place at August Kranti Maidan (Park) in Bombay, at the site where Gandhi issued the call to 'DO OR DIE' for the freedom struggle fifty years ago. In the afternoon, the Red Fort in Old Delhi was the site of more speeches commemorating the events before and after the Quit India resolution was taken by the Indian National Congress. By evening, the Ministerial delegation reached the hexagon area behind the War Memorial and, after a similar set of speeches, formally inaugurated 'August Kranti Park' by unveiling a granite-based plaque and dedicating the park to the nation.

Although the decision to create August Kranti Park with Gandhiji as its centerpiece was announced, government officials and concerned citizens of Delhi expected that the process of making a pedestal for the statue, creating a memorial of the freedom struggle and landscaping the park would involve still more time. In fact, shortly after the Golden Jubilee celebrations, the Minister of Urban Development announced that Gandhiji's statue would not be installed by October 2nd because of delay in preparing the pedestal. Nevertheless, the opinion of government officials and private organization members was that the problem of where to place the finished statue of Gandhi had finally been resolved. Only issues regarding the shape the memorial would take and the landscaping of the park remained.

²⁹ Letter from INTACH and Conservation Society of Delhi to the Prime Minister, 8/8/92.

³⁰ Letter from INTACH to press reporters, 5/8/92.

Conclusions

The debate over creating a national space on the central vista expanded beyond Parliamentary sessions and committee deliberations to meetings and correspondence between government officials, private professionals and members of non-governmental organizations. Such an expansion covered almost four decades; to many participants, this was a protracted period of time. If this is to mark a transitional period in the methodology of representing power and a muddling through new problems and conflicts, it could also be considered a period of creating as well as revising contested terrain. Contests over the choice and shape of representations of the nation-state, or 'heroes' of nationalism, and over the entitlement and fashioning of public space both delayed decision-making and defined chosen spaces as 'controversial' and 'important.' But after these extended contests had stalled the making of concrete decisions, actions were taken in the name of a new national time frame. The 50th anniversary of the clarion call for the Quit India movement became a rallying point for approving a proposal and laying a foundation stone. The anniversary celebration became the nation's time, a time which warranted the placement of national symbols in space.³¹ The naming of this space, taken up amidst the remembrance of the Quit India Movement, carried well the theme Parliamentarians had been developing during the course of the debate.

Beyond these time-space coordinates, the debate not only portrays attempts by Parliament members to build symbolic landscapes and win legitimacy for the political elite; moreover, it develops the meanings of a historical iconography that will be projected to the public. Although input was registered by non-governmental professionals, to contribute to the definition of the meaning of Gandhiji and the park, non-governmental debaters had to conform to plans promoted by Parliamentarians to translate this national space in contradistinction to imperial structures and symbolic values. Certainly this iconography, as Guha (1988) would point out, credits the political elite with the achievements of swaraj. But in doing so, it formulates

³¹ Time-space indicators are crucial dimensions of symbolic representations and processes not only in state-related activities, as Herzfeld (1991) demonstrates, but in everyday life (see de Certeau 1984) and literature (see Bakhtin 1981). See Herzfeld's (1991) discussion of time-space contestation and the monumentalization of private life in old Rethemnos.

nationness out of a reconstruction of how the past before nationalism—represented by Lutyens' canopy—is reconciled with the present since nationalism—represented by Gandhi, the proposed memorial and the name of the park. On this landscape, the past, distanced as the 'other,' will bring the present closer to the 'self' (see Ohnuki-Tierney 1990:1–2). Material symbols on the central vista will communicate a political transformation in which the national self is purged of the colonial other only to accept representations of this other as part of a common material heritage.

Prakash (1990, 1992) has argued that the explicit anti-colonial stance of nationalist historiography has tended to fall into or revise the Orientalist categories it seeks to overcome. Likewise, the canopy, Gandhi and the memorial will complete a series of oppositions between the colonial past and the national present. The public icon of Gandhiji, though symbolically representing the break with domination, will reproduce at least one Orientalist essentialism.³² Gandhiji in meditative pose (a pose chosen by a few Parliamentarians but opposed later by members of heritage organizations) will project the Orientalist view of the spiritual, non-violent, inward-looking essence of India which was once contrasted with the rationalist, materialist, this-worldly essence of the West. So although Parliamentarians intended that Gandhi would give the nation a sense of itself, such a national icon will more likely stand for an elite essentialism of itself.

Participants in the debate, while refiguring the colonial past, also reproduced a space of power and symbolic authority designated by colonists. After Independence, Parliamentarians sought to remove colonial icons from landscapes in Delhi but in following, identified as important spaces many sites, such as the central vista, where imperial icons had once been situated. Parliamentarians and non-governmental participants struggled with the presence of the imperial canopy after deposing the King, debating whether to haul it off or accommodate it in the new scheme; but heritage organizations managed to argue successfully to retain the structure. As a result, the colonial past was, in revised form, incorporated as a material backdrop to a reproduced space of power despite problems of symbolic incongruity. The representation of Gandhi did not 'fit in' but could be interpreted in contradistinction to imperial heritage to become a centerpiece of this space.

³² For a discussion of Orientalist views of India, see Inden (1986, 1990).

Concluding his introduction to *Colonialism and Culture*, Nicholas Dirks (1992:23) remarks that the postcolonial world is one in which we may live after colonialism but never without it. More specifically, this debate demonstrates that what is postcolonial about national symbols is the result of a double-sided problematic. On the one side, political and professional elite in Delhi have set up an interpretation of the colonial past and the national present by using material structures and icons which have inscribed and will continue to mark a public terrain. On the other side, a rather less self-conscious refiguring occurred. Though the imitation of western practices of statue installation was acknowledged by Nehru and the creation of a meditative Gandhi was verbally opposed by heritage organizations, to the Parliamentarians who promoted these schemes and practices, their own postcolonialism was less obvious. The debate shows that out of a conflictual decision-making process, a national icon and public space will be produced without much broad-based input or support. While some participants in the debate argued for ridding the central vista of the trappings of the colonial past, such a symbolic opposition on this landscape will ultimately reproduce parts of the same cultural frame.

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