

Reviving essence of Art:In the era of technology

Neha Pandey

*Assistant Professor, Asmita College of Architecture,
N. H. English Academy Campus, Asmita Enclave, Mira road East,
Thane, Maharashtra 401107, India.*

ABSTRACT

Time is the most mysterious dimension of the physical reality and human consciousness. Our common understanding of time seems to have evaporated under the scrutiny of science, and there are, indeed, several very different theories about time in physics today. And there are also vastly different scales of time, such as cosmic time, geological time, evolutionary time, cultural time, and human experiential time. And we all know how flexible and varied experiential time may be depending on the human situation, or horizon, that happens to provide the measure for the passing of time.

Architecture is not only about domesticating space, it is also a deep defense against the terror of time. The Aesthetics or the language of beauty is essentially the language of timeless reality. The purpose of this paper is to look at the aesthetic characteristics embedded in Indian culture, that has been revived in today's era of technology. To comprehend this, the paper first derives aesthetic characteristics from traditional Indian factors and creations such as fabrics, food, artwork, dance, culture, beliefs, livelihood & architecture, that defines the authenticity & essence of the place. The framework of the aesthetic characteristics sheds light on how the aesthetic values of the past have been passed down to aesthetics of today's world. The paper further highlights that a place is more than a geographically definable entity accentuated by historical and visual landmarks. Indian creation stories and other spiritual myths are repeatedly portrayed across the genres of art and life, and the resemblances of life and love to these stories are imbued with aesthetic beauty. With the regional study of an outstanding example of a riverfront associative cultural landscape, the paper highlights aesthetic values of a place has evolved through interpretation and representation of spiritual and religious iconography.

Keywords: Art- Architecture- Aesthetics-Time- Indian-Culture- Tradition- Characteristics- Authenticity

INTRODUCTION

Unity in diversity-these are not just words, but something that are highly applicable to a country like India that is incredibly rich in culture and heritage. A few quotations or statements cannot describe the pedestal that India holds on to the world map because of its colourful and unique culture. From the times of Mauryas, Cholas and Mughals to the period of British

Empire, India has always been famous for its traditions and hospitality. The warmth in the relations and euphoria in celebrations make the country stand out distinctively in the global fraternity. The country's liveliness and generosity attract several tourists to its vibrant culture which is an amalgamation of religions, festivals, food, art, crafts, dance, music and many other subtle things. Everything, from the culture and values to customs, rituals and traditions, is 'special' in this 'Land of Gods'.

This paper focuses on how cultural values influence the aesthetic features of an area as big as a state or as small as a locality. Also, highlights the prevailing connection between design and culture and its major influence on every development around.

The visual appearance of any city is a critical factor for its success which is often influenced by the sociocultural aspect of the context where it is widely used. The product can vary from small artifacts to an automobile or a structure, yet the context in which it is used would define aesthetics governing it. Hence, the paper discusses about the research housing the region of western Himalayas to understand how socio-cultural factors (culture, values, tradition, customs, rituals etc.) are being reflected in a society and how to translate those factors efficiently on any new development in that vicinity. Any new development around seeks inspiration from the cultural values, beliefs, rituals and behaviours practiced in the society.

Understanding the culture

Culture represents a set of dynamic, dialectic and coherent body of beliefs and practices that is congruent with a historical period. Culture initiates diversity and it is revealed everywhere in the place from a small artifact to a big structure, from food to fabrics produced and consumed in a society. Cultural values can be incorporated in the products by providing certain features or design elements representing the values of their society.

To understand another culture one needs to understand oneself in relation to it. It is important to point out that the first condition of cultural sensitivity is an understanding of the humanistic principles embodied in culture. To this end, a broad knowledge of arts and sciences and, indeed, a broad range of life experiences are necessary. The more background a student brings to the study of architecture, the more flexible and open to multiple viewpoints will the student be.

The development of a cross-cultural point of view can be facilitated in a school of architecture through discussion and through field experiences away from school. Evolution of a cross-cultural attitude, analytic skills, and discussion of regionalist values and their implication for architectural design form the background for design exercises which synthesize and test ideas by application to specific cases.

Field research requirements include the documentation and analysis of urban forms, street types, building types, architectural details, and construction methods. Equally important are analyses of use patterns, private and social rituals, and non-visual sensations such as noise and smells. Furthermore, investigating other cultural manifestations such as language, food, art and craft traditions in order to enhance their cross-cultural awareness. Personal reactions are most important, as they change over time and lead to their own special understanding of the place.

The Regional study which follows field research is the context for the synthesis of regional analysis, architectural problem solving, and the personal interpretation which each student brings to the design process. On the level of urban design, understanding of the fabric of a traditional city as a two-dimensional pattern and as a system of three-dimensional spaces is a precondition for its transformation.

At the level of architectural design, each one of us inevitably has a different attitude about the organization and vocabulary of his/her building. Solutions usually include relatively literal representations of indigenous styles and contemporary interpretations of local forms, materials and details. The most ambitious projects are generally the most abstract in expression, relying upon historical principles of spatial typologies and architectural composition and upon subtle adjustments to the city and its movement patterns. Avoidance of a nostalgic or sentimental view of the past is a common goal, to be achieved in part from the necessity of dealing with the buildings in a real physical and socio-political context at scales ranging from urban design through construction details.

Region of India

Embedded in the heart of India is region of western Himalayas, a land where cultures have evolved and religions emerge. The greatness of the region lies not only in this confluence, but also in the emergence of cultural and religious traditions along some of the greatest rivers in the Indian sub-continent – the Ganga and the Yamuna. Throughout history, great cities have emerged and established along great rivers. Within India, the Ganga and the Yamuna have nurtured a culture because of which religious faith, rituals, culture and intellectual enlightenment have evolved in places along the two rivers.

The Heritage Arc in the Region housing the largest riverfront settlement provides an opportunity to explore the state in all

its glory. The Heritage Arc signifies heritage in terms of cultural, historical and natural aspects. Moving on this arc from one end of the state to the other, takes explorers through Agra region, Lucknow region and Varanasi region, with several exciting destinations along the way. These regions define the quintessential Uttar Pradesh. The Arc takes one through a kaleidoscopic journey of monuments, architectural wonders, pilgrimage centers, spiritual experiences and wildlife. The Heritage Arc is a veritable treasure trove of sights to see and experiences and provides a close look at the celebration of life in this vast state.

Regional Study

Regional Study has many advantages as a conceptual framework for design education, not the least of which is its emphasis on process over style. Architecture of a region reflect its time, place and culture and that it links the past, the present, and perhaps the future. In a time characterized by alarming worldwide homogeneity on the one hand and by apparent eclectic diversity on the other, regionalism focuses on sets of values and attitudes that have conditioned architecture throughout its history and that are independent of style. The ability of architecture and urban design to draw inspiration from and contribute to the particular special qualities of its context is a fundamental source of its meaning and richness. In terms of education, therefore, regionalism encompasses not only an architectural theory, but a study of culture as well. "By culture we mean not only the arts, literature or aesthetic canons of societies, but, more importantly, the underlying codes of operation on which symbolism, ethical priorities, behavior patterns and systems of knowledge are based.

Examination of existing vernacular building traditions is a starting point for theoretical considerations of regionalism, insofar as architecture is seen to embody values and processes particular to a culture. The history of interpretation and transformation of indigenous traditions is revealing of its persistent timeless qualities as well as its ability to sustain change.

Reliance on vernacular traditions as a source of essential architectural vocabulary can imply a somewhat static definition of cultural values. "By definition, critical regionalism is a recuperative, self-conscious, critical endeavor, and nothing can be further from the vernacular in the initial sense of the term. A highly self-conscious process of analysis and reinterpretation of the traditions which, however, can facilitate an architecture which "mediates" between the homogenizing tendencies of modern design thinking and the particular identities of culture.

Regional Study & Architecture

While definitions of regionalism have been explicitly proposed by theorists, regionalist values are implicit in the work of many practicing architects. Analysis of the work of such disparate figures as Hassan Fathy of Egypt, Luis Barragan of Mexico, and Tadeo Ando of Japan, to name just a few, illuminates the variety of inspirations to be found in vernacular building traditions, landscape, climate, technology and culture. At the same time, their work addresses more general architectural issues and thereby gains importance beyond the borders of a region. For example, Fathy seeks to revive ancient building practices and materials and to emphasize continuity within his culture. He avoids nostalgia through his rigorously disciplined design process, by which he responds to climate, economics, and programmatic requirements. In contrast, Luis Barragan has been strongly influenced by European Modernism. The abstract compositional formality of his work is given scale and humanity through the use of colors, materials, and landscape forms indigenous to Mexico. Tadeo Ando, on the other hand, relies almost entirely on abstract qualities of space and ritual to achieve connection with the cultural history of Japan, while his unrelentingly severe use of concrete and glass is an uncompromising statement of twentieth century technology.

In the work of practicing architects, the interaction of contemporary issues and timeless qualities drawn from local culture is an appropriate subject of analysis for regional study in search for authenticity.

Thus, while vernacular architecture is regional, regionalist architecture need not be in the vernacular. Regionalist values can be defined in terms of theory related to building practice; these values are inseparable from interaction with more general architectural issues facing the world community and with the personal visions of builders. The unique mix of these three factors defines a dynamic and evolving regionalism.

The second category of consideration for the educator is the teaching of skills which are specific to a regionalist approach. The ability to "read" and analyze vernacular landscapes, urban forms and building typologies is implicit in the discussion above.

A skill of a different kind is the ability to "read" culture, particularly as it is manifest in built form. To read culture one must first have a cross-cultural viewpoint. With a cross-cultural viewpoint one recognizes that even in the United States the sub-cultures of Maryland, California, Texas, and Iowa are distinct from each other, despite commonalities. As Amos Rapaport points out: "Given a certain climate, the availability of certain materials, and the constraints and capabilities of a given level of technology, what finally decides the form of a dwelling, and molds the spaces and their relationships, is the vision that people have of the ideal life'.

The tendency to generalize and categorize in the definition of cultural characteristics can lead to a static conception of

society rather than to the more factual view of a society in continual evolution. The regionalist response must be to recognize the vitality inherent in indigenous conditions and values and to enlist universal architectural ideas and personal vision in the search for regional expression. Furthermore, the tendency of professionals to generalize for convenience in problem solving can get in the way of accurate perception of and empathy with the issues involved.

Authenticity

The Authenticity of a place is derived from the Individuality of its people & the culture they follow. An individual has specific colour and form preferences and that also varies in different times of a day as well as in different seasons. Combinations of many individual likings form a group identity, e.g., Nagas are identified with black and red stripes. Rajasthani women can be identified with their black barfi-bandhni, whereas Rajasthani men can be identified with coloured head gears etc. Principles to retain the identity, specific practices followed by a community forms a culture and thus with retention and changes in time makes a tradition.

The Region housing the largest riverfront settlement is preserved by several factors each contributing to its growth in its own way. The area in the past and in the present, is an exceptional testimony to living traditions to be seen to be believed in religious faith, rituals and myriad festivals, traditional and ancient forms of worship and belief that are still practised in the varied expressions of asceticism, spiritual and meditative exercises, education, music, dance, handicrafts and art forms, passing from one to other generations.

A Place is more than a geographically definable entity accentuated by historical and visual landmarks. On an emotional level, place is a mental construct different for each of us, and, in the case of childhood dwelling places, tied from youth to personal experience. Obviously, there are some recurring points of similarity that tie long-time inhabitants of a locale to a place in a collective way. This collective heritage is often the product of shared work and recreational patterns, common ethnic and economic bonds, shared social and spiritual values, actual or invented historical identities, and even broadly shared experiences of human struggle and natural disaster. These regionally situated commonalities, in turn, produce shared mental attitudes, sensibilities, and associations.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper concludes that even in this modern era of technology, the factors that most evidently contribute to rejuvenate time of any place are its cultural and traditional peculiarities, ethnicity, and communalization of religion, psychosocial factors, language, economic factors, and

geographical conditions. The paper concludes how these factors together foster and sustain an Indigeneity of a region.

The paper also wind up with highlighting the present scenario where due to fast communication, modern technology, exchange of information and material there is a constant struggle to expand beyond own socio-political boundary as well as the need to retain the identity intact. For this a balance is to be made. The paper suggests, when we are absorbing good elements from other cultures, we need to know our own roots as to Who are we, where from we come, what was our struggle to become what we know at present; we need to know our root, which lies in time.

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