

Reviving the Essence of History in Modern Architecture

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Abstract: India has diverse architectural styles which are the result of different climatic conditions and availability of resources. Adapting the features of the environment in the building and blending it with nature not only helps in comfortable living but also helps in conserving nature. Adapting new techniques and material set aside the traditional material and techniques. It is observed that the building built in historic period are more lasting than the building built in modern era i.e. the life of new building is less than the life of the one of historic period. This proves the sustainability of historic techniques and materials. Also, these techniques and building are the identity of the city. It is observed that every different part of this globe has a different and unique traditional history in terms of buildings, material, techniques, culture etc. Adopting modern architectural techniques has resulted in the loss of the identity of the city. Traditional architecture is the identity of the city and also blends with nature i.e. it does not harm the environment. Traditional architecture is the study and implementation off various generation which have proved its strength with still standing structures and so adopting these traditional techniques will not only preserve the identity of the city but also preserve the environment which in return will save us from various threats like flood drought, landslides, storm, etc.

Keywords: Heritage, traditional practices, climate responsive, climate change, architect's role, climate and architecture, identity of the city, cultural identity, Indian diversity.

1. Introduction

Architecture is the built-up environment which is consciously or unconsciously accepted by humans. The house we live in, the workplace we spend most of our day, recreational places like gardens, parks, clubs, religious spaces, etc. are all architecture which is connected to human all the time. And therefore, we can say that architecture influences most of the activities of human life. Therefore, designing the space with comfort of human (user) without developing any disconnection with the surrounding is what is good architecture.

Traditionally, the spaces were designed with the context of nature, climate and human activities which results in the least additional facilities and more smooth flow of daily human activities. After Industrial Revolution and technological advancement, these traditional practices are diminishing gradually and non-environmentally friendly techniques came into practice which requires additional facilities like artificial lightening, artificial air conditioning, artificial heating, etc.

which are not only harmful for human health but also to the nature.

In traditional practice, the basic elements of a building i.e. walls, roofs, openings, doors, windows, flooring were the solution of all the possible discomfort for the human but in today's practice these elements are just the enclosure part and to provide the comfortable environment other elements like air conditioners, heaters, chimney for flow of smoke, artificial lights etc. are introduced in the building which produces various gasses harmful for human health and nature both and also adds to an extra expense in the application of all these artificial comforts and their maintenance.

Being connected to nature gives the feeling of oneness. Nature nurtures the sense that everyone is unique, and at the same times a part of the total. In Nature we feel more familiar with our thoughts and feelings. As in traditional practice, architecture is connected to nature and so the human life, there was a stability in thoughts and more fruitful results were obtained from the work. Today, when the architecture disconnects humans with nature, there is a need for vacations to some hilly area or on beach side or somewhere where they are disconnected with their daily routine and connected to nature and feel peace. And being disconnect to nature during the working time, the results also gets affected and also the mood and mental status of the person.

India is an invaluable repository of traditional architecture which responds to its climate and geographical and sociocultural expressions. This vast resource of traditional knowledge is continuously being threatened by technology and fast acceptance of western culture and architecture. India is losing its identity which is in its traditional practice which makes it unique in itself. And this loss is making it unsustainable in ecological and economical manner.

Sustainable design practices with maximum human comfort and minimum energy use has always been an important part of traditional practices of India which does not harm the nature as well and so this traditional architecture helps in saving the environment and if these techniques are brought back in modern architecture of India the major issue and threat of climate change can be solved.

Most of the countries in the world are composed of various communities which have their own cultural and architectural

identity. During history several communities emerged because of natural changes with their unique style of settlement and architecture. and also, many disappeared because of natural and political reasons. Though many communities emerged and disappeared but the architecture which developed during their time says the whole story of their living, culture, political powers, traditions they follow, etc. i.e. it becomes their identity which introduces them to the next generations.

The Indian sub-continent is endowed with, perhaps, the richest and the most diverse stock of cultural and architectural heritage, with a significant proportion of them constituting living monuments. India has an overwhelming number of heritage structures. The Indian traditional architecture is the outcome of prevailing topology, extremes of climate, social culture and beliefs of the region. When we study about the traditional architecture of any region, we automatically get to know about all these aspects as in earlier time construction of any building was a part of its surrounding and reflection of every element in the surrounding can be seen that building. In traditional architecture, buildings were constructed to provide human comfort with locally available material and construction techniques in response to the geographical and climatic conditions and so, with diverse geographical and climatic conditions, India is rich in its heritage with uniqueness in itself. This diversity in architecture is also because of various political aspects. Every traditional building tells something about its time, ruler, and the practices which were followed during that time. After industrial revolution, globalization and development of various building material, gradually the western tradition took over the traditional Indian culture.

Heritage is a broad concept and includes the natural as well as the cultural environment. And Indian heritage is the ocean of natural techniques which provides the best solution related to human comfort. These sustainable practices are not only good for climate and human comfort but are also durable and the heritage monuments standing high today are the proof of their durability.

The identity of the city can be seen in urban image construction and development of the city. The personality and character of a city is the result of centuries of growth in the course of which new elements are constantly juxtaposed with the older ones. Old buildings and older areas of the city should be looked upon as assets rather than liabilities because they represent the history of communities, embodying their culture, traditions, and way of life through urban patterns. In this way, cities depict the dynamic aspect of life inter-twined with function and culture. There are more than 3000 historic towns in India. Most of these cities have their core areas of strong architectural and urban character which depicts their way of life. These areas have been places of life, values, culture and many social components which are missing in new towns of today. And each village and community has its own architecture style and traditions which can be seen in their settlement patterns. Few examples for the identity of the communities are:

1) Meena tribe of Rajasthan

The houses of Meena tribes are of the mud wall and thatch roofs. The walls are thick and have only one entrance. There is a central courtyard around which are the rooms. These living rooms are also used for storing food grains and family possession and contain niches for the family deity. Kitchens are also constructed separately and are made up of thatch shed outside the living room to keep the heat away from the living spaces. Courtyard contains cots which are used as living quarters for men. The cattle shed is behind the courtyard with separate entrance which is also used for the storage of food grains and fodder.

2) Bhil tribe

In Bhil villages, boundaries are marked with a bundle of grass tied with trees along the roads and pathways. The village is composed of three to forty families set in cluster form. The son, when grown up can build a new hut near the hut of his father but generally a distance of 70 to 230 meters is there between the houses forming the cluster of homes of related families. The Bhil construct their houses are situated on the tops of the hills with their fields around it to maintain security for their crops. When the fields are spread over long distance, Bhils adjust their homes according to the field. The cluster pattern of house covers an area of about 3 to 4 square kilometers. Most of the houses are two-storied structures, rectangular in shape with timber frame and bamboo walls having a clay, water and cattle dung plaster which have cooling properties and also protects from insects. The entrance is the only opening as there are no windows, a rear entry for use of the resident family may be built in for exclusive use. The roof is of thatch, bamboo and teak leaves, which requires annual replacement.

3) Adi and Aptmai tribe of Arunachala Pradesh

Adi and Aptmai tribals' homes are wooden stilt huts which support the climate of Arunachala Pradesh and Assam. Constructed at a height from the ground these houses are less prone to flood and high rainfall. They build their house on a slope to save from strong water currents. Walls are made up of wood which helps in trapping the heat inside the house which is better for cold regions. The space between the ground and the hut is the space for a canoe for the emergencies.

4) Bhunga tribe of Kutch

Bhunga houses result in very good functional and structural response of the size, location, orientation and planning. The Bhunga homes are made up of thick mud walls keeping the interior temperature comfortable in summers as well as in winters. The paintings on exterior and glass designs in the interior portray their culture. In the Bhuj earthquake of 2001, very few Bhungas' houses were damaged which was because of poor quality of construction material and improper maintenance of the structure.

A. Saving the identity of the city

As the heritage is the identity of the city, community and of the individual, it is therefore the responsibility of every citizen to protect and conserve their identity i.e. the heritage. Heritage

monuments and building are not the only heritage which is to be saved but the identity i.e. the culture, practices, tradition, construction practices, architecture elements, activities, etc. all together. And therefore, it is the responsibility of all the citizens to conserve their identity. Some of the ways in which the identity can be saved are:

1. **Increasing the knowledge:** To save the identity, the heritage, it is important to know about the heritage and its greatness. Unless people are aware about their heritage, its importance, its richness it is difficult to take action to conserve it. With change in education system from the time of the britishers, traditional culture and culture has started to vanish from the school customs and western culture started to influence the education system. And therefore, it is important to bring back the cultural educations to the generations are connected to the tradition and learns about it.
2. **Replacing the western culture with traditional where ever possible:** Adopting the traditional practices in daily activities can eventually increase the condition of lost heritage in the present time. Many daily activities are influenced by western culture and eventually they become the habit so it is important to replace them and make our cultural practices our habit.
3. **Spreading awareness:** It is important for everyone to understand the importance of the heritage and for this people who understand this can make other people also aware about it then eventually spreading the it with some results.
4. **Use to traditional materials and techniques:** Use of natural material and techniques in all the regular activities and making them our habits can increase the demand of traditional practices and will bring them into practice again.
5. **Study of ancient texts:** Study of ancient not only will help in preserving the ancient practices but also has various methods and techniques which we are unaware about today. Western culture is followed since decades so it is not easy to replace it in the few years.

B. Problems in reviving the traditional practices

1. **Lack of natural recourses:** Availability of natural resources has reduced due to various human activities and hence it is quite difficult to totally depend on them for living. Resources were abundant in ancient period as they were the only source of livelihood but with the generation of artificial resources, natural resources have started depleting which makes it difficult to use them only.
2. **Reducing land and increasing population:** With the increase in population, demand for shelter has also increased which resulted in the over use of land. traditional structures were not very high but with the requirement of space to live multistoried structures came into existence which are made up of non-environmentally friendly materials and the machineries used for its construction also contributes in climate change and environmental degradation.
3. **Lack of time:** In traditional practices, as the structures were constructed manually with lots of detailing and carvings,

they took lots of year for construction and today, in fast working era where time is a major resource it is difficult to construct in years.

4. **Readymade availability:** Since everything is available in the market in vast quantity now, it is difficult to convince people to use the products that are generated naturally as it is time consuming.
5. **Lack of skilled labors:** With vanishing traditional techniques, artisans also started to follow the new western culture and thus, their traditional skills are not transferred to next generations which resulted in vanishing of their skills and decrease in the no. of people with traditional skills.

C. Role of an architect in conserving the identity

Some of the ways in which an architect can help in reviving the heritage and save the identity as well as nature are:

1. **Learning:** One can only take action against anything when he is aware about the topic, its importance, problems, solution and their role in conducting it. So, while learning it is important that upcoming designers know about their heritage, its importance and the richness of it. It is important to feel proud about our tradition then only one can thing for conserving it. With learning of modern practice, it is also very important to learn about the traditional practices and its significance. To become the identity savior, it is important to learn about various details about the traditional practices and how they can be implemented in today's life.
2. **Project analysis and briefing:** While establishing the firm in any city, study of the city's traditional practices and their importance can help in developing the project according to the tradition and since traditional practices are sustainable, inculcating them in the project will automatically help in conserving the nature. While starting any project, study about the traditional background, settlements, projects and practices of the site location can help in inculcating those study in the upcoming project. Some time it is difficult to make the client understand about such practice but an architect, as a designer of the elements of the city it is his responsibility to brief out the importance and benefits of such practice to them and to the nature also.
3. **Site analysis:** Site analysis plays an important role in designing as the designing outputs are the results of the analysis. analyzing the site with traditional context also should be done to relate it with the traditional practices and get the solutions for designing from the traditional practices which are environmentally friendly instead of modern practices which are against the nature. For such purpose the study of history of site and its surrounding has to be done.
4. **Designing:** While designing also inculcating traditional practices plays a major role in the output as what we design is what is going to decide the identity of the project and hence the identity of the city. Elements used in traditional practices reflect the practice and tradition of their era and hence while designing it is important to understand the importance and role of every element that is added or is

inspired from the traditional practice. For this purpose, it is important to study every element of traditional practice and role it plays in its eras and then figure out that how it can affect the design and the context when it is added in modern practice according to the requirement.

5. *Material selection*: Materials used in traditional practices were naturally occurring and building made with these materials were in the harmony with nature. Materials being the most important part of the building can add a good amount of pollutants and can harm to nature more therefore, choosing of material precisely is very important. With industrial revolution and development of new materials took place which were produced chemically and were against the nature. Using traditional materials will help in controlling the emission of carbon dioxide and providing natural thermal comfort without using or minimum use of additional assets. Use of locally available is what we learn from traditional architecture as they response to the local climate and thus it will not harm the nature is used in the building. It will reduce the pollution produced during the production of manufactured materials and in their transportation.
6. *On site activities*: On site activities causes various harms to the nature and also to the people working on it and living nearby. Traditionally, on site activities were carried out with manual work or with equipment that are made of natural material like wood, stone etc. and thus does not add to pollution or contamination of nature also it does not include machinery. Reusing those techniques with some innovation can help in reduction of pollution and save the natural conditions of the site and the surrounding.
7. *Finishing*: Finishes used in traditional practices were made up of natural material or were the part of construction itself and therefore does not harms the nature and maintains the harmony with good presentation. Using of such materials for the finish can save the natural condition.

2. Conclusion

Before industrial revolution, the human activities were in harmony with nature and thus do not harm the nature. But with the development of new manufactured material, machineries, and techniques, all the traditional practices started to vanish and non-environmentally friendly methods started to flourish. Traditional practices are the sustainable solution to today's climate change and hence they should be inculcated in today's practices also. Realizing the change and our contribution to it, it is the responsibility of every citizen to act is response to save the climate and nature to create the healthy living environment for us and the future generation. By analyzing the regular activities and their contribution in climate change we can change or adopt any alternative of that activity and can take a step to save the nature. Inculcating the traditional practices in day-to-day activities can help in saving the identity of the city and the community. To apply these practices in today's activities it is important to know about them, their importance and how can they be implemented in today's practices. As the built environment is the major contributor in climate change, an architect, the creator of that built environment plays a very important role in destroying the environment and hence possesses a great responsibility in saving the nature and the identity of the city. An architect is the person who introduces a new element in the nature so it is her responsibility to make sure that the element does not harms the nature and blends with it in every aspect.

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