RESEARCH ARTICLE

TRACING THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN ARCHITECTURE IN TWENTIETH CENTURY: A CRITICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this research is to trace the development of Indian Architecture in 20th century. The review of the literature explores various works that analyze the progress of architecture since. the 1920s to date. The focus on traditional architecture started to decline in the 1930s. Neoclassical designs were incorporated with traditional designs, which would be viewed as modern by Indians due to their uniqueness. Modernism has changed with time based on the period of the day. Both Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to converge Indian and Western Tradition in Post Independent Indian Architecture, However modem architecture came into full swing from the 1970s pioneered by Correa. Ultimately, Indian identity in architecture is realized in modem India by taking into consideration the overall infrastructure and not only the building.

Key Words : Modernism, Art, India, Architecture, Neoclassical.

The Indian subcontinent has always been known for its architectural might, which traces back to ancient times. Prior to the 20th century, India's architecture remained traditional in nature. However, since the dawn of the 20th century, the aspect of modernism in the development of its architecture made it difficult to grasp on the way to go so as to adapt to the changing times. Numerous stylistic developments emerged and associated themselves with modernity, but they merely went along with the spirit of the day. The concept of modernism in Indian architecture started with the coming of the Europeans in the 1920s. In the 1930s, this concept slowly and surely started to become a driving force in architectural innovation in the country. Any western practice and thought were viewed as being modem as the country did not have a uniform architectural focus prior to the 20th century. Le Corbusier and Bauhaus are viewed to have influenced the aspect of modernism in Indian architecture and the ensuing Art Deco movement. The Art Deco movement was influenced by exotic and regional motifs which at the period were viewed as modem. Anything western in general was perceived to be modem, including neoclassical architecture. However, looking at modernism closely in the lens of the Indians, it was aimed at approaching the world positively and improving for the better and being inventive. Architects from Britain enjoyed great freedom as they were not bound to regulations, which were the case back in England. The concept of modernism has since impacted the architectural designs, and this essay seeks to explore the changes that have taken place impacting the contemporary architecture in India to attain its identity.

According to Sreekanth, in his article "The development of Modernist architecture in India,'' he provides an analysis of trends that took place in Indian architecture while pursuing modernism. He states that, when the British came to consolidate their power in India, the appearance of public buildings became an area of great interest not only for the incoming British architects but also for the local elites who were specialized in architecture. The British architects to demonstrate the mighty of the European culture were the pioneers behind the Victoria Station and the University of Bombay (Dahunsi and Mittal 53). The wave of British architecture increased when the center of administration was moved to Delhi from Calcutta. Herbert Baker and Edwin Lutyens in 1912 were tasked with designing New Delhi's new government buildings. As a result, they came up with a monumental urban street complex which to the Indians, was very alien to them. It was characterized by great geometry of avenues and axes, and on top of that were other two asymmetrical official buildings which neighbored the viceroy's palace (Dutta). Decorations were made drawn from Indian architecture, including slender windows, open verandas, chhajjas, and lavish colonnades. The palace belonging to the British viceroy incorporated Indian architecture such as Buddhist dome. Despite infusing their European styles with the Indian ones, their efforts were viewed as modem in their day. It took 20 years for the seat of government to be open for operations in 1931.

The major neoclassical moment of India went beyond the 1930s due to the previous efforts in the 1920s in the Indian Institute of Architects. Their works could not last for merely a few years, and hence, this peaked in the 1930s led by Claude Batley, a Briton. He was focused on Greco-roman theories while infusing them with Indian classicism (Chakrabarti 22). He championed for a conservative school with proponent individuals emerging from it, such as Sudlow Thompson. He was behind the New Delhi's Supreme Court, which he used similar art as that of Lutyens-Baker. By the time of independence, the country had merely 300 architects, while the rest of the population was 330 million and only one institutions. Most students who had the ability to pay for their overseas studies went to the United States. This contributed to the next generation of architects, and they were free from the influence that the British had on Indian architect schools. Such professionals included HabibRahman, who went to MIT Boston and other Harvard graduates and graduates from other American universities, and this was a new phase for Indian architecture as they came with novel ideas. The country also made use of foreign architects from other emerging countries, including Germany. Chandigarh was built by Le Corbusier, which had been invited by Nehru himself.

It would not out of context to discuss the pioneering role of Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru in the development of a pattern of Modern Indian Architecture. Tagore's commitment to reconcile two spheres of civilization widely separated, which above all was the characteristic mark of the epoch, and constituted it's most important task was appreciated in 1913 by the Chairman of the Nobel Committee. Even though the honour was bestowed upon him for Literature, he was eager to reconcile the best of Indian and the Western culture and tradition in every sphere of arts. Tagore's unique experiments in architecture at Santiniketan, in north-western Bengal – a place where he lived the most creative phase of his life in, formed the backdrop to realize his ceaseless ideas in education and the arts.

Rabindranath made Santiniketan his base for activities in 1901. His original intention was to implement the ideas on alternative ways to educate. He decided to choose the ashram created by his father, Debendranath for this significant project, given his attachment to Santiniketan. While this required him to take up residence there, he was not predisposed to experiment in architecture. However, he could not avoid dealing with built and landscaped space, as he regarded the school as his "tangible poem". He commented that the institution must be viewed not as a "pedagogical laboratory" but a "work of art". The development of the school, and later his university, Visva Bharati, in Santiniketan, can be traced through two distinct stages within Tagore's lifetime - that up to 1918 and, thereafter, till his demise in 1941. Of the seven houses that he built and inhabited here, the first two - Dehali (c.1904) and Natun Bari (c. 1906), are from the first phase. The other five houses - Konarka (c. 1918), Udayana (c. 1919-28), Shyamali (c. 1935- 36), Punascha (c. 1936) and Udichi (c. 1938-39) are built in the complex called Uttarayan, The latter represent the exceedingly apparent ideological and aesthetic rigour coincident with Visva Bharati's own development in these decades. It is rightly said that through Udayan, along with Konarka, Tagore establishes that Indian identity in architecture need not be narrow, prescriptive &

simplistic derivation. (Saptarshi Sanyal, The Poets Home, International Journal of Arts and Sciences, 2015, Pg.600). He attempts to demonstrate how the contemporary architectural language of India could ne grounded in intellectual syntheses from the best in the west and east, and be progressive at the same time while continuously referencing the varied Pan-Asian architectural heritage.

 Regarding revivalism through architecture, it is indeed true that Tagore was in direct contact with E.B. Havell and A.K. Coomaraswamy, the turn of the century's most vigorous Indo-art revivalists. Coomaraswamy is credited with an elucidation of terminology in historic Indian architecture and also wrote several essays connecting the textual and architectural meanings of the traditional Indian house. What is overlooked, however, is that like Tagore, their transcending of western readings of Indian architecture enabled them to be liberal in thought, having greatt respect for independent, original and individual thinking. (Saptarshi Sanyal, The Poets Home , International Journal of Arts and Sciences, 2015, Pg.605).

Nehru believed that architecture was important in building a cultural vision of a new, democratic and egalitarian society and a new citizen, and that the radical modern movement in Europe with its socialist roots was a model of inspiration. As discussed by Ram Rahman in his Article `Drawing up the Capital' in Indian Express Nehru encouraged young Indian architects to move to Delhi, many of whom joined government institutions which were being set up then. Delhi also had a lot of open land between its medieval ruins on which to build. Chandigarh was conceived, planned and designed by European and British architects led by the visionary Le Corbusier, but Delhi's buildings after Independence were ail designed by young Indian designers. Habib Rahman, Achyut Kanvinde, Durga Bajpai, Charles Correa were ail American trained and unusually, Delhi became the site where both European and American modernisms took root and created a unique mix of style and approach to materials. Architects trained under Corbusier also moved to Delhi in the early 1960s bringing that influence and use of bold concrete (for instance, JK Chowdbury in the IIT). Under that early impulse, Delhi became the site of some very important experiments in modern architecture over three generations in public buildings, factories and housing, home to one of the most important collections of this tradition in the world. Unfortunately, this has not been regarded as heritage and worthy of recognition and also preservation and conservation.

Nehru's direct impact on India's modern architecture is little known. Habib Rahman had a personal experience of working with Nehru between 1949 and 1964. Nehru had greatly admired Habib's memorial to Gandhi in Barrackpore which he inaugurated in 1949 and had organised his move to the CPWD in Delhi. The design was inspired by multiple religious styles but built in poured concrete. In Delhi, Habib designed the mazar (tomb) of Maulana Azad in 1958-59 — a modern structure but with stylistic roots in tradition.Nehru's direct design intervention came in the Rabindra Bhavan buildings (1961) which housed the three Akademies — Lalit Kala, Sangeet Natak and Sahitya, conceived by Azad before his death. Nehru pushed Habib to develop a design vocabulary which was rooted in Indian traditions, but pointed to a new future. Nehru even rejected Habib's first design which looked like an office building. So, Rabindra Bhavan used Delhi stone, cast concrete jaalis and a vocabulary of stylised arches referencing Tughlaq traditions.

Charles Correa, who had attended MIT Boston, came back to the country in 1958, and his impact was felt since them. He is credited to have bridged modern India's architecture with the traditional one. He was even named as the greatest architect in India in 1983 by RIBA (Luxford). He had a prolific career and was able to design close to 100 buildings in India. He championed for low-income housing as well as luxury condos and maintained a universal approach in his work. He, therefore, ensured that he has respect for local conditions and tried to meet the needs of the locals and had a great acknowledgment of his country's soul and spirit in art. In his efforts, he was able to design Ahmedabad's Indian institute of management. He designed it as having a dense of streets and squares and courts with different levels. Its dormitories were built in a diagonal manner in a manner to obtain prevailing breezes (Lang 62). They had bold bricklayers and had an archaic mood. Correa also demonstrated an interest in traditional architecture and especially Islamic architecture, and was quite attracted by Ranakpur's Jain temple.

In the 1970s, however, modem Indian architecture developed. This was seen through a successful infusion of outdoor and indoor space, which compared to the clumsy blocks, was far much an improvement.

This was also seen through the use of local products known as polychromy (Curtis). Buildings were made to attract natural light from the sun while being well ventilated to fusion the indoor climate with the outdoor one. As innovation improved, there was an adaptation of screens, steps, and spatial transitions. Some designs Correa came up with endeavored to adjust to various heritages and climates, including the Andamans, Kovalam Beach, and Goa. He endeavors to adhere to the local cues. He also makes use of local masonry and concrete. Together with many other architects who, with their works, contributed to modern Indian architecture, modernization has been adapting to the changes in time. Since the 1970s, modern Indian architecture has seen great improvement from the focus in heavy concrete and bricks to the smarter and lighter body of buildings. Modern local and oversea materials are purchased to fit into the widths of buildings while buildings are made with strong foundations and skeleton. This is in an effort to incorporate outdoor climate by making use of both outside air and natural light. This makes such buildings cost-effective and can be built on a massive scale as long as the design will not create clogging of undesirable air in the building (Curtis).

The move from traditional to modern architecture in India has been characterized by the desire to embrace the values of society. During the 1930s, neoclassical architecture was viewed in the modern lens due to the fact that it was unique to India. It also made use of traditional Indian architecture infusing itself with the rest of the Indian architecture and hence eliminating some of its alien features. The presence of British architects during the period when India was opening for the rest of the world contributed to a change in the approach of the then architectural designs (Sreekanth). Charles Correa set a platform from which modern architecture could base on. He introduced low-income housing from which other architects have been able to innovate more, bringing about the contemporary architecture seen in smart cities.

Compared to the past i.e., traditional architecture placed much focus on buildings but not on the overall infrastructure. Cities like New Delhi are experiencing issues with infrastructure since they focused mostly on buildings. However, smart cities and smaller cities have become an example from which they incorporate modern architecture and infrastructure to create harmony with nature around them. This has been the differentiating factor between the last half of the 20th century and the 21st century (Mezentsev and Gavrikov 43). Architecture impacts the socioeconomic imprint of the city as traditional architecture in India has been used for economic purposes while maintaining them.

Architects in modern India are embracing their values and seek to maintain their unique approach in art. They have realized the need to join social movements through which they can voice their concerns when authorities do not place the needs of the people and the need to realize harmony between the architecture and environment (Sreekanth). Such an effort is vital in halting urban areas from degrading due to unfavorable policies.

In conclusion, India has come a long way to achieve modern architecture. It had, in the past, focused on traditional architecture, which was always cumbersome to undertake when compared to the modern one. Since the coming of the British, the Indian elites opened their minds to the vast nature of architecture and sought to improve from that. They were able to incorporate their traditional building designs with European ones. In due process, they were able to find their trajectory in modern art. Modern Indian architecture has realized its place in the society and it has been incorporated in many urban areas, it has also been able to focus on overall infrastructure rather than the building alone and hence creating harmony with nature.

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