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Fundamental principles of vāstuśāstra

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Introduction

All of the Indian traditional sciences were developed and processed under precise observation, experimentation and psycho analysis. But when it turned to the practical phase from its scientific, the ancient teachers have foreseen the possibilities of crooked usage and questions upon their scientific thought progression. So they documented such on the basis of religious believes which led to a discipline in following the science without a mistake. Some started practicing them without the proper knowledge of science and used it to cover their ignorance. This picturised Indian scientific thought superstitious.

The change of today's architecture is from modern to traditional. Concrete, as a medium we have been very much used to since 1960 doesn't have the compatibility to survive in our climate nor does have a reliable sense of direction suitable for a pleasurable habitat. These motivate us to fetch back our indigenous traditional ways. Cement does have the ability to be easily used to make any kind of structure which made it the most popular medium in the field of architecture. But we could see that it doesn't have the capacity to sustain for more than a certain time. While three or four generation stays in a house made up of wood, not even an upcoming generation could see a concrete house.

The development of Indian architecture can't be seen via the perspective of modern engineering because the modern engineering was developed outside our country, especially according to the climate of the Western's. The temperature of those regions is around 5 to 15 degree Celsius. So the cement provides them the possibility of converting light energy to heat energy by absorbing maximum amount of sun. They also ignite coal inside their homes to get enough warmth. In India the average temperature is about 30 degree Celsius, sometimes it rises up to 55 degree. This is the reason why Indian traditional architecture have a relevance as it is suitable and sustainable for our climate and also because it would be useful for the coming generations. This paper is an outlook on the periodic relevance of ideas the ancient teachers left behind us.

Vāstu in ancient time

The ancient sages of India had great forethought. They knew that one of the basic needs of man, shelter if taken care of carefully in accordance with the principles of, man would be stronger to face life's complexities. They studied the various energies coming from man and his environment and came out with certain basic rules that went into the various aspects of construction. They studies not only the various known energies like solar, electrical, magnetic, gravitational etc, but many of the energies still unknown to modern man. The wise men of great intuitive and intellectual powers. Many of the great temples and palaces of India and bear testimony to the greatness of this ancient science of architecture. The most significant texts with insights on Vāstu are 'Mayamatham', 'Maanasaaram' and 'Samaraangana Soothradhaara'. Maanasaaram widely acclaimed as a text which states that the Earth we live in should be considered as the primary Vāstu (dwelling). 'Aayam' is a factor which has been mentioned in all of these texts. They say that each and every plot has its own life and one must consider certain formulas and accurate proportion when it comes to construction.

Fundamental Principles of Vāstuśāstra

Environment as the first manifestations shelter has always played significant role in the process of man's evolution.

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Technology of construction as well as the geometrical patterns and sacred symbols are all derived from nature and its dominant laws. The laws of nature are basically beyond the physical tangible forces that used to constitute the principles of classical physics and contain all the intangible energy fields emitted from the earth as well as the other heavenly bodies, such as the sun and moon. The principles of ancient science of architecture including vāstuśāstra denote the great knowledge of ancient civilization over the universe, its order and its analogy to the human body, which seems to be the sum experiences of traditional societies over generations. Therefore along with the cultural consideration, a great number of principles in ancient architectural design were a response to the surrounding.

Principles of Pañcabhūtas

The principles of vāstu are based on pañcabhūtas (the five basic elements the cosmos is made up of water, air, fire, sky and earth) weight and measurement. The ideal combination of pañcabhūtas brings in a magical harmony like the one we experience in pañcāvādya where all the five musical instruments play together. This help to intensity the positive energy level at home. Weight too has an important role. The distribution of weight is a matter of serious consideration. Measurements also have to be well balanced and properly ordered. Space has to be used in correlation with its use. Too much space or too less space would not serve the purpose. The science of vāstuśāstra considers the world to be comprised to these five basic elements. Vāstu experts believed presence of life on earth is a result of the balance of these five elements which are present on earth which is now proven by the modern world scientist.

Earth: The position of earth is third in order from the sun. Presence of electromagnetism makes it a large magnet in the space with the North Pole and South Pole as enters of attraction. Every living and non-living organism on earth is influenced by its magnetic field and gravitational pull.

Water: Water is in a liquid form and its represented by rain, ocean, sea and river. It forms a portion of every flora and fauna.

Air: Air is considered as the foundation of life and is a supreme source of life. The comfort value of human beings is directly depends on the balance of humidity, temperature, pressure, flow and the composition of the air and its contents.

Fire: Fire is symbolized by light and heat which forms an indispensable part of day and night, climatic conditions, radioactivity, energy and vigor.

Space: The space or the sky shelter all the above four elements of nature. It is the primary conductor of all the sources of energy, for example light, sound, social energies namely emotional and psychological and cognitive energies namely intuition and intellect.

There is an unseen relationship amongst all the above five elements. Thus various human conditions can be improved by considering the effectiveness of these five basic natural forces while designing the buildings. The role of vāstuśāstra is to combine these elements of nature and balance them with the man and the matter. Taking advantage of the gift bestowed by the nature to make a pleasant living and working conditions thereby promoting spiritual well-being and enhancing health and wealth leading to prosperity and happy living.

Principle of Vāstupuruṣamandala

Vāstupuruṣa is the deity responsible for the strength and happiness in the site. There are three positions for the Vāstupuruṣa viz., Nīthya vāstu, Chara vāstu and Stira vāstu. These position indicate the various seasonal changes on the permanence of the structure. The mythological story of vāstupuruṣa is an excellent example of narrating principles to an ignorant in very effective way. The vāstupuruṣa inside vāstumandala lies with head towards north-east and limbs towards south-west. The east-west central line is brahmasūtra, north-south central line is yamasūtra, north-east to south-west line is karnasūtra and south-east to north-west line is mrtyusutra. In fact the line passing from mūladhara to sahasrara of vāstupuruṣa are the important directions seen by the vāstu text.

Concept of Direction

Directions like east, west, north, south have great significance in the construction of a house. The house should be designed in such a way that direction having positive energy minimized. The parts of the house in relation to their purpose must be situated in accordance with properties of the directions. When part of a house facing certain direction is considered to be suitable for disposing of refuse including faces, another direction is considered to be safe for the use of fire, water etc. A room built facing the wrong direction can cause trouble.

The smooth entrance and exit of energy through the house is a matter of vital importance. Sufficient light, water, air and the serenity of the terrain are also essential factors. Directions are related to life styles. At which direction the head has to placed while lying down, from which direction the fire is to lighted the direction to which the toilet be placed all such minute details must be taken care of.

Houses to have certain marmas (highly sensitive and vital points in the body) as we have in our human body. They too have to be taken in to consideration while building a house. They even include compound wall, gate and the surface of the land. The house should be in concordance with the configuration of vāstu, prathama (primary), dvitīya (secondary) and bāhya (external) vāstu.

Principle of site selection

To prepare a site for build a home, the site is then leveled and the impurities are removed. The material excavated at the time of digging, foretell associated implication, would indicates a fear of fire, bricks are a harbinger of wealth, bones may bring destruction and snake indicate a fear of theft. Various methods of locating the shalya or bonds and other impurities hidden beneath the earth are described in the text Samaraṅganasūtradhāra.

According to one method nine groups of Sanskrit alphabet ascribed in the eight cardinal direction and the centre. The householder is asked to the name a divinity, a tree and a flower. The direction of the shalya, its type and the depth at which it is present is derived from this query. Another method for shalya shodhana or the removal of impurities is by observing the shakuna pretence. For example the architect observes the part of the body of the vāstupuruṣa. The householder touches at the time of divination. By correlating the omen limb of the vāstupuruṣa, the type and the depth of the shalya is predicted.

After the impurities beneath the soil are removed, the site is leveled and irrigated, and coated with cow dung and urine. The content of ammonia in the fermented cow urine and

dung, is an efficient disinfectant. After ploughing the site, the architect sows various seeds mixed with cow dung and sees them germinate. This is followed by the ritual consecration of the site, conducted to take possession of the land.

Deities in vāstupurusa mandala

There are 53 deities in and around the vāstumandala may be representing energy levels inside an independent mandala. Each name of devata as well the area occupied by deities are easy way giving directions to the illiterate to design a building by allocating different room for different purposes. In this universe the basic constituent of all living and non living beings is same, so there is nothing wrong in comparing human body to a place where a shelter is being made to protect the same human body. This means that all the constituents in both cases may have similarity.

One more thing to be noticed is that, if you examine the name of devatas those mentioned in the east side of vāstumandala represents deities of dusk. Deities on north show devatas of birth and on the south reflects deities of death. This shows that the vāstupurusa mandala itself is a prototype of universe comprising of all activities in vicious universe.

Conclusion

Generally it is natural instinct of living thing to take refuge in some shelter at sunset after engaging in various activities during the day. What they seek securities and peace. When we look at the nests of various birds we come to realize that it is not only human but all living being wish to have a secure habitation. It is to these space they come after finding food, take rest, share their happiness and sorrows, and mate for the survival of their spaces.

Humans are endowed with superior intelligence and wisdom with this faculty, man has always tried to shape nature to ensure the securities. Man who used to find shelter on and under the trees over the rocks, on plain ground, on caves and on meadows later began to make huts cottages and mud houses using rocks, stones, sticks, mud and water. Now he constructs huge multi stored buildings and is even planning to erect building in other planets.

The present vāstuśāstra is the result of close analysis of history of habitation and its developments. Every culture in the world had its own way of determining the exact spot where the house is to be built and its construction methods. In India, beginning from Varāhamihira, numerous sages have contributed to vāstusastra. Vāstu is take different streams join together to form a great river and there have always been experts in the field. Different school of vāstu were developed in India. But all of them had a single objective to make a habitation from which man would benefit from nature and nature would benefit from man. In other word, neither should harm one another.

The approach of Indian vāstuśāstra emphasizes that man and nature should maintain a complementary relationship, like mother and child. Man should fashion his habitation without disturbing nature. Proper understanding of the centuries old Vāstu Śāstra will be helpful for the construction suitable for the modern days.

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