



REVIEW ARTICLE

IMPACT OF CRITICAL REGIONALISM IN INDIAN ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

The first impression of a country's culture and traditions is created from its people and architecture: India is a country having vast history resulting in great diversity and plurality in its cultures and traditions. India's core is its spirituality and related ancient myths, making it possible for various schools of thought to originate and co-exist simultaneously. After rampant destruction happened in world wars, Indian architecture over thousands of years of existence is a sequential progression with many interventions that served as modifiers. Hence architecture in every era in Indian history is a manifestation of its time and yet is embedded in its past. The concept of modernism developed in 1920's, was an era where it was difficult to grasp Indian architecture, as it was used with numerous aesthetic developments, following the spirit of the day. Starting with the efforts made by the European, through "modern architecture" as a rebellious and pioneering force started to make cautious headway in India in the early 1930's. Meanwhile realizing that our ancient past cannot be ignored in architecture since "*ancient past is our living present*", hence architects like Raj Rewal, B.V. Doshi, Le Corbusier, Laurie Baker and others attempted to merge modern architecture with fundamental credentials of Indianness bringing about a "*modern Indian*" architecture.

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INTRODUCTION

People have got a tendency to consider innovative building technology as a hallmark of modern architecture because traditions are usually viewed as an antonym of modernity. *Critical regionalism* is one such contemporary architectural concept emerged in 1980's which enables internationalism and regional essence goes hand in hand. "*It is an approach towards an architecture which struggles to counter placelessness and lack of identity of the international style, but also rejects the whimsical individualism and ornamentation of postmodern architecture*". Critical regionalism is not just vernacular or traditional architecture, it is an intelligent and progressive approach towards design to mediate between local and global languages of architecture. *Imitation* is a word which defines critical regionalism beautifully. It means the process of achieving some new, innovative out of a thorough understanding of the principles under precedent i.e. understanding their connotations. Alexander Tzonis's, Liane Lefaivre and Kenneth Frampton idea of critical regionalism is not inert or closed. The modernist technique of defamiliarization is used to embody provincial features in an

unfamiliar light. "*Defamiliarization* is an artistic technique of presenting to audience common things in an unfamiliar or strange way in order to enhance the perception of the familiar". Thus for Jameson "the notion of *ostranenie* has yet a third theoretical advantage in that it permits a new concept of history; not that of some profound continuity of tradition characteristic of idealistic history but are of history as a series of abrupt discontinuities, of ruptures of the past, where each new.... present is seen as a break with the dominant artistic canon of the generation immediately preceding..."

Critical regionalism in India

In the early fifties, progressive approach towards everything gave the Indian architects a prospect to design and build, however, in the late sixties, saw the emergence of questions on identity, on how well did forms adopted depict Indian cultures, its social ethos, regional styles, materials, and climate. But, in the early seventies, these questions got weaker, in early eighties and nineties, they totally got swapped by a very dangerous contentment. Collective thought towards holistic approach was lacking. In around 1970's, the architects in India realized the lack of Indian-ness feeling in its architecture, which marked their steps towards Indian traditional architecture for inspiration. This going back to roots marked the commencement of new chapter in the evolution of the Indian architecture.

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Architects and their approach towards critical regionalism in India :

The drive towards modernization blinded the architects of the nation to the necessity of mediating the impact of a universal civilization with elements derived indirectly from the individualities of a particular place. The light, nature, topography, climate, abstractions - religious, mythological and symbolic --- the much different shades of 'a sense of the place's all screamed to be noticed. In the late twenties, architects like Joseph Alien Stein, Charles Correa, Raj Rewal, B.V.Doshi, Romi Koshla, AGK Menon, Snehal Shah, Achyut Kanvinde and many other architects had worked with this concept and are still working.

Ar. Raj Rewal architectural theory is "Building should respond to complex demands of rapid urbanization, climate, and culture. The base of designing housing is the traditional architecture of India and a dual concern for building's expressiveness by means of incorporating historical precedents into urban design." The state trading corporation tower, NewDelhi, British housing commission housing, new Delhi, Asian games village, new Delhi, hall of nation Pragati maidan and many other designs are great examples of his architectural theory.

Ar. B.V.Doshi applied the modernist concept in Indian context leading to the evolution of contemporary Indian architecture. "Le Corbusier was like a guru to me," he says. "He taught me to observe and react to climate, to tradition, to function, to structure, to the economy, and to the landscape. And because he was my guru, I decided that I could not copy him." A thorough understanding of the past and reliable relationship with the present was the only way that India could create a sustainable future for herself, was their belief. Sangath in Ahmedabad, NIFT Delhi, IIM Banglore and many others are his designs explaining his beliefs beautifully.

Ar. Charles Correa's attitude to "critical regionalism" is very natural; he naturally creates a built environment which imitates the traditional as well modern element composed in a much-amalgamated way. "He was not adopting the philosophy of critical regionalism at a conscious level but at a subconscious level". He was naturally persuaded towards the ancient, traditional and vernacular architecture from the very beginning, simultaneously, he also understood the present context of buildings, the present needs, and desire of people. He wanted to establish the new identity of independent India through architecture. Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Ahmedabad, national craft museum, Vidhan Bhawan, Bhopal, Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur are some of his designs.

Ar. Karan Grover—"*Architecture is about the place, rooted in its context and culture.*" *He's the first Indian architect to win* U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) "Platinum" Award for the greenest building in the world. He always inspires to practice green architecture. His works reflect his apprehension with the heritage and built landscapes of India. Goa Assembly Building at Porvorim, Goa, CII-Sohrabji Godrej Green Business Centre, Hyderabad, and District Office Complex at Bagalkot for Government of Karnataka are some of his designs.

Ar. Smita and Habib khan — the term "contemporary vernacular" was devised by them in 2009 and it has become the fundamental philosophy of all their works. They adopt an

architectural style which is organic, contextual, traditional and yet fits into the contemporary framework.

Sp+a associates believe that "India's vast breadth of socio-cultural environments requires multifarious means of engaging with the country's varying contexts. Type, Program, Design and Building processes are subservient to the immediacy of each project's unique frame of reference." Their practice "questions the nostalgia involved with the static 'museumification' of craft and tradition as well as the nature of what today comprises the 'regional' in contexts amplified by their place in global and regional networks." This attitude allows the practice to look at traditional project types, bulging their social history within the: Neemuch, Madhya Pradesh examples of current socio-economic forces. Shiv temple, Pune, Urban Amphitheatre, Ahmedabad, Jetavana Sakharwadi, Maharashtra, and many others are great designs which depict their beliefs.

Ar. Snehal shah remarkable range of projects and variety of designs is that he has deliberately placed himself between the past and the future. Dr. George Michell, art, and architecture historian says, "Snehal's intense interest in architectural history, especially of western India, the region from which he hails, has sensitised him to traditional stone and timber constructional techniques, rigorous geometric codes of design, and local environmental conditions, especially the scarcity of water in an arid landscape. Returning to India thus equipped, Snehal has over the last 20 years embarked upon an ambitious repertory of private and public buildings that testifies to a unique cosmopolitan sensibility and refined aesthetic."

Conclusion

Seizing modernism and latest technologies, we are so much fascinated, that a blindfold has appeared in on our eyes stopping us from realizing the importance of our regional, cultural and traditional relevance, the importance of our own identity. In today's age of Globalization, the revitalization of a culture's heritage and traditions through architecture is a means to resurrect local identities and encourage a psychological sense of belonging. Paul Ricoeur's question: "How to be modern and to continue the tradition, how to revive an old dormant civilization as part of universal civilization" is a big query, one of the reasons behind abandoning our modern traditional architecture and adopting modernism. This research paper is to bring up the importance and need of critical regionalism in India, ways how it can be adopted in a defamiliarised manner through examples of some of the architects of the late twenties - early twenty-first series and their design theories. Many of their designs are great examples of bringing our identity back through the means of vernacular architecture in modern framework, through traditions principals using modern techniques, through green architecture in regional context using modern technologies, also designing buildings using the connotations behind regional ethos and principles, through understanding human emotions and their connectivity with spaces and environment and bringing that out beautifully in modern framework And So on gives a perfect answer to Paul Ricoeur's question. Critical regionalism should not be adopted at our conscious level but should be accepted at subconscious level keeping our own individuality.

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