

Practicing Phenomenon And Relations In Architecture

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Abstract - This paper enquires the basic fundamentals of our profession to rethink, redefine relocate the same. This conveys the understanding of (a) History-Presence, (b) Memory-Thought, (c) Appearance-Reality, (d) Ritual-Retreat as a process of the mental cycle of perceiving architecture as a parallel dimension of living. It is these four points which manifest as a process - contact (i.e. "a") - movement of thought (i.e. "b") - image making (i.e. "c") - setting moods (i.e. "d").

Key Words: History-Presence, Memory-Thought, Appearance-Reality, Ritual-Retreat.

1. INTRODUCTION

To ring a subtle nuance, to provoke a certain feeling of joy and to evoke a legitimate sense of refuge we intend as an architect to set up a journey or a search or a study of certain facts of which explanation is a question itself and in accordance with a combined sense of meaning with the associations in the form of relation. Phenomenon and relation can't be seen separately as two in practicing architecture or while perceiving the built-unbuilt; rather, should be seen as a dual manifestation. Phenomenon and relation in architecture become the process of observational and application approach towards design. In this paper, we will first look at the understandings of the phenomena and relations with the help of studying "Rāmghāt [1], Ujjaini [2] "(Rāmghāt settlement) as it acquires a perfect setting that represents itself as an atmosphere where we will find almost every essential to study and understand. It truly presents a window into an ambiance with a variety of built forms with varied functions ranging residential, leisure, spiritual, commercial, religious etc in synergy. Our Study begins with knowing a brief background of the Ujjain city, and then we will enter the target site (i.e. the Rāmghāt settlement), with the help of architectural representation techniques of drawing making and sketching and photographing to convey the idea. By putting the Rāmghāt settlement site as our case study I try to explain four points on 'phenomena and relation' in architecture and thereafter I will try to convey the presence of these ideas in the design of one of my Architectural projects.

About the project - The project is built for the people of mental disability [3], a place for them for collective living, in the project I have tried to achieve the following points, which I am going to talk about further in this paper. The

points I have tried to discuss with the help of discussing life at the ghat-settlement [4], in order to create or to evoke a certain ambiance of peaceful, sensual and relaxed living with a sense of cosmological balanced atmosphere too. (The project is in design stage currently).

2. UJJAIN AND THE RĀMGHĀT

On this beautiful and rich history of Mālṡā (Part of present Madhya Pradesh, India), Ujjain weaves the richest thread as it possesses a quality of history. As stated by D.K. Samantha in his books the - "sacred complex of Ujjain".

Where, he talks about the geographic location, trade, culture, religion, and language of Ujjain. "Āryāvartta of the olden days comprises the land between the Himālayas and the Vindhya ranges. Actually, the vindhya separate the country into two sections, Āryāvartta and Dakṣiṇātya or Deccan. Mālṡā is at the juncture of these two, with the maximum portion belonging to the former. This traditional division has its bearing on the cultural elements of these areas. They differ in language too. Mālṡā is again at the center of the subcontinent. From Historical, political and administrative points of view, Mālṡā has enjoyed a distinct identity for long. Attracted by the fertile land of the region, waves of invaders and ethnic groups have settled down in the area. It has a diverse population including tribals, peasants, and urban communities." [5]

Ujjain had a central positioning to the ancient trade routes of India, from south to north and east to west. During Mauryan period Ujjain was the main trade center dealing in diamonds, rubies, and other precious stones, gold, and conch-shells. Ujjain retained its prosperity even after Mauryan period, as it was the capital of Mālṡā, during Parmāra rule. Muslims invaded and stolen the wealth and prosperity of the city, but it regained prominence during Marāṭhā rule.

Ujjain is one among seven sacred cities of India as - "Ayodhyā Mathurā Māyā Kāshī Kāncī Avantikā Purī Dvārāvātī caiva saptai'tā mokṣa-dāyikaḥ" [6]: meaning (Ayodhyā) (Mathurā) (Haridwār) (Varānasi) (Kāncī) (Ujjain) (Dwārka) are the givers of liberation. And hence we know the cultural significance of the city Ujjain. Also, there is some description in the texts from Chinese and European travelers who define the city, its beauty, and political importance, at that time. "Ujjain is said to exist forever and hence an eternal city and is known by the

names of Kanakśṛṅga (House with gold colored or plated tops), Kuśasthalī (place where a special variety of grass grows), Padmāvātī (full of lotuses), Kumudvatī (abundance of flowers), Amravātī (place where the immortal lives), Viśālā (great/large in size), Pratikalpā (existed in various periods), Ujjainī (name in commemoration of lord shiva's triumph over the demon tripurī), and Avantikā (capital of Avantī)". [7] Ujjain is also famed for various temple complexes, associated folklores, city walls, built gates of various time period and styles. Ujjain to my view also embarks the language of various stages of the evolution of human settlements and change of urban form due to political and natural calamities.

3. CITY AND POETICS

"If you do not enjoy the glances, c., you are defrauded'... if you have not seen these beauties, you might as well have been blind, or not existed at all...'He who has not seen Rome has not seen anything' conveys a similar idea." [8] Various ancient scriptures also speak about the importance of the place as a sacred groove (Mahākālavān), tales of various kings [9] who ruled or said to have some associations. Some of the Miniature paintings found also portray the city map showing different temples of importance and various yātrā mārg or religious procession paths, they perhaps must have been made to give the pilgrims who once arrived the city precinct.

4. GHĀTS

Ghats are the most powerful expressions of Indian culture, its just water as an element of life meeting with stone steps and a place to reach; it's the space which provides crossing over. This material sense which stone and water evoke is immeasurable. Ghāts are our symbolic homage to the natural might of river, the water. These sometimes claim and reclaim its territory time and again. Construction of few steps to facilitate reach of the human being in the realm of water have, not only the functional aspect but a gesture of defined movement, in a particular pattern. In totality making it a place of "tirtha." [10]. The whole aquatic world and the ambiance of the variety of water properties presenting sheet over stone slab making it look like a natural pool, touching the edge of the stone, forming a transparent sheet over some stone sculpture, and waves striking the banks, sometimes reflecting, sometimes blurry due to air movements.

5. RĀMGHĀT

Rāmgḥāt is the place named after an epic tale in rāmāyanā, where lord Rām performs the after death rituals of his father. So we can see how important this event in history is, and what importance should this have in Indian culture. RāmGḥāt presents a perfect setting as a collective complex of different built masses, different style, functions, and

time of construction. So it creates an ambiance which is again seen as a play of phenomenon and relation in architecture.

6. PHENOMENA AND RELATIONS

Architectural Practice to my view is to establish relations through the understanding of contextual phenomena. An idea and its achievement through the "appear" of the appearance. It may not be one unity of things, rather a united presence of many unities; coexisting in a phenomenon relating at the same time to evoke a meaningful juxtaposition of Architectural elements standing together and where the phenomenon dances in the gaps of collective relations. This Ghāt cluster is not about representing one single cosmos, but it represents a thousand cosmos in a thousand ways, by a thousand people in a thousand different time and their ways in the entire chronological timeline. It is just not the tolerance within, but tolerance without.

Not only religious but a man's quests to his own self. The Ghāt settlement is not just a story of one man finding oneself, but also of so many losing their own self. It's about submissions, loss of identity, salvation, and a gesture of giving without the sense of being remembered. Interiority-Exteriority of the cluster- the aimless aim of people, cultured and composed, fine-tuned and off-tuned. Intentionally meaningful; in the sense of direction towards self-salvation, or perhaps the salvation of the near ones. Exteriority is already history, as it requires the other and the other is already the history in the presence of exteriority. But the only interiority is of the self, of the person in presence. The heritage of geometry, proportions, and principles in the "Vastu Purusha mandala" [11] has passed on a bit and is still in practice up to this date. Does it mean the original version of the passed on trait has something timeless or classic? The Ghāt gives us an immeasurable sense of place for humans, a source of crossing over, rinsing of our sins, doing good deeds, meeting and interacting with high-level souls so as to ensure salvation. Not just a human interaction but an interaction with celestial bodies through the means of rituals, by feeding fishes, by irrigating certain plants, by bathing in the river, by rubbing various types of soils/cow dung over the body. What are they doing? Are they involved in architecture itself, or becoming parts of each other's interiorities or living together in a common psychological space? Everybody is a stranger and has come for the same purpose but all share small things, make relations, and sometimes carry them as lifelong relations of righteousness not just because of interactions but because of the purpose and place, the memories of the architecture becomes the identities of their relations. Such a beauty of Architectural power it demonstrates for us to learn. Is it all done by the architects? Or it's all of the people, culture, or the mind that it took this shape?

Each building in this cluster cross boundaries with one another, each having its own cosmology interacting with the cosmology of the other, making in between cosmographs, which provides a unique experience in itself as it is not a leftover rather to my belief is access to all the cosmos. So, is it a medium? Or, meaning? Each entity has become an expression of several interiorities in common expression and hence the boundaries are always questioned as they become provisional and people customize according to their own insightful cultural, contemporary fluctuations.

7. HISTORY-PRESENCE

The Ghāt was created by the people out of their own interiority or the internal space. The creation of the Ghāt was a response to the contemporary activities of the past, but still we do take part of the extensions of the interiority of those people, their creation is still a space for us to come together irrespective of our differences, rather it unites and makes people participate in the various acts of learning through phenomenon. Painting, Sculptures, literature all are gestural and complete the blanks of Architecture, The huge immeasurable rock walls, beams and all the other elements of architecture are incomplete without the crafting, chiseling of the detailing of the same, it's not just carvings but the presence of history, the history of culture, people who built, purpose, it carries a strong message, as beautifully said "Medium is a message"[12] the medium here in itself becomes the message of the past. The medium in this form is just not the information but it is a message. Gesture, to my mind, comes with a very subtle as well as primitive sense or the origin of things as we perceive them. The message may not be clear but the gesture is readable, and hence makes a message to pass on. The message may not be exact but it initiates a quest of knowledge in itself. If we look at the newborn it does not understand the language but it definitely does the sound, gesture of the hand and so on. So when we understand the importance of the presence in architecture we do understand how to ring a subtle nuance? What strings plays what sound and hence helps in the rational attitude of practice? Is the Understanding of historic presets helps placemaking? Is this presence of history in the setting adds some sort of age in the atmosphere? Or, does the addition of age to building help make the atmosphere where people feel more secure?

8. MEMORY-THOUGHT

Memories are static, they are already present in us, and there is a cultural memory, of which an ambiguous image we all carry in ourselves. Which is a part of our common interiority? Or can be better said as a part of our common consciousness. Memories are records we have in ourselves and the medium of contact with them are feelings, and once this phenomenon of memories and feeling relates the

result becomes a thought. A mix of feelings and a sense of haziness towards the experience create desires, dreams, as well as a quest. Every moment of trance in our daily life is a moment of thought. A dream of complete abstraction, the deep-rooted relations with our emotions and memories. Ghāt presents to us a complete reflection of a cultural dream, but does it evoke one's memories? Does it make a person mesmerize? Is it a place timeless? Does it really acquire the revelations of gods? Does it evoke its presence as a construction by light as a material? Do people who come and use the space feel no sense of time? Is this place absorbs a part of the identity of one, and lead to another level of consciousness as a spiritual experience?

9. APPEARANCE-REALITY

Existence resides in duality and can be traced when in motion. Continuity is inseparable from the Identity. This delusion of appearance and reality evokes interest in the architecture. Without interest, a space seems dead and boring. The actual play of appearance and reality in perceiving things makes it what it is an experience. In space various phenomenon takes place, but without any relation, they are nothing from macro to micro level. It can be easily understood by imagining one person doing some action by subtracting all the other things in space, in almost nothing. Does the person even exist? Or the activity he is doing, would he realize he is even doing something? This is what makes this appearance so special, for the phenomenon to exist. And the relations of something as it would apparently exist in some place or space. Space these days, even in modern science is not a philosophical subject but something real, its properties being studied and observations being made.

As we understood the memory-dream as the role of thought, so we can also see the appearance-reality as an extension to it. Do we realize the presence of observational tendencies worldwide? We notice that the knowledge of the time, through the sun-moon positioning has always been important to man. As we see the buildings are not just a matter of function, leisure, aesthetics, and status; but also have a presence of astronomy. A symbolic essence of the machine, which enhances the machine character as an indomitable aesthetic, automation and intelligence till date. Anything in space affects the space and hence it generates a different variety of cosmic atmosphere which we never realize. From the scale of the atoms to the planets and galaxies, it exists. And we need to understand this more in detail so as to shape our form with the help of proportioning and massing.

10. RITUAL-RETREAT

Some silpasāstrās [13] reflects upon the relation of cosmic forces to the symbolic representation in architectural forms and image making. Water and fire are the two main

elements in the making or has believed to be evocative properties in the rituals in Indian traditions. Some silpasāstrās [13] reflects upon the relation of cosmic forces to the symbolic representation in architectural forms and image making. Water and fire are the two main elements in the making or has believed to be evocative properties in the rituals in Indian traditions. First elements to an artist/architect given, is a point and the line. The whole cosmological monograph and the tradition of making of the form take the storytelling attitude. The vertical line represents the fire as it has the nature of rising up and the horizontal represents water as it flows, the diagonal represents wind, movement, and dynamism. The earth is symbolized by a square, and the final element ether is not symbolized as it is invisible. Fire and Water are both complementary elementary but the union of both brings balance. The qualities achieved through the elemental lines are related to the emotional experience (rasās), and hence more harmonious proportions bring order.

RāmGhāt has an iconic architectural mix of temple complexes and substructural complementary spaces, in rhythm for the functional as well as symbolic manifestations. Here we look at some of the structures which are a platform for the number of activities. Used for rituals, at times shelter from rain and sun. The structures are standing from centuries, still carrying the role of salvation to the people from the worldly affairs. Architecture presents the cosmic worldview which results as the variety of experiences “rasās”[14] each rasās has its own emotion of joy, anger, etc. That can be said as the manifestation of the “atman”. The Mind and the body are able to strengthen each other through the balance of rasās Ayurveda says the rasās affects the three humors or dosha in the body Kapha(mucus), Pitta(bile), Vaat(Wind). Rasās are the experiences or tastes, so as it is observe that in other fields like music, dance, theater etc we have these rasās, but how does one relate architecture as “Anger of form”, “Beauty of form”, “Joy of form”, “Wonder of form”, “Fear of form”, “Depression of form” etc. Each place presents a context, and an architectural setting in it is reflective of habitants. Can they be emotive?

Can these architectural forms also relate to different types of energies which define a set of emotions or moods? Can the form be the manifestation of different types of culture and personal backgrounds? Can this understanding of moods and the contextual needs help achieve a comfortable atmosphere?

11. PRACTISE

Today, the Architectural design has become a contemporary asset. Architects have a sense of commercial or industrial attitude; they produce a module or a prototype and carry the same trait of so-called

“modern design”, without a fraction of modernistic attitude. Architectural practice most of the times have less character for the place or the context rather reflect the hedonistic self-imposed values of the architectural practice. While looking at the Ghāt we come across a wide spectrum of built typologies, of different times, interiorities making it “other” yet “United” we see that the time before these was built (in India) was an era of geometric construction, which took care of precise proportioning systems, strictly followed. Special agencies were assigned the monitoring of the same. Errors in the construction were believed to bring wrath to the inhabitants. So the process was very careful, delicate and composed as we see the ethics coming in design for public good. From the times of “Dholavira”[15] to the City Planning of “Jaipur”.

Insights of the Project-This project was briefed, in a single line “This should be a place where people would feel happy” by the organization. In this project, I have tried to achieve what I called in this paper as the “Phenomena and relations”. Just like what we observed in the Ghāt settlement, the cluster of so many micro cosmoses, balanced and composed in them. I have also tried to abstract each or our building into micro cosmoses, to evoke cosmic balance and to propose an overall atmospheric relation with the cosmic phenomena. The in-between spaces too are very special because that is where the cosmic dances are played, on the space lattice where the mass exist cast an impact on surroundings. The in-between space relates the various spaces functionally and metaphysically. This project also reflects some glances of the philosophy of phenomena and relations through various means of expressions. Material and light as a medium of paint, cosmic balance as the intention of creativity presents to us one step further towards relating architecture with the celestial forces. Adding and subtracting some of the old principles and establishing architecture with more precise forces of universes and to initiate research in the field where we explore buildings with relation with the cosmos. Our buildings are the shape of our mind, and our mind is the shape of a cosmos. Why don’t we think of relating the buildings with the cosmos to establish order?

Mentally disable people in their old age are helpless, we need to think beyond. Their worlds are jargon; they live in a different state of consciousness. They are special, as humans we need to think a lot, making climatologically sound buildings, functionally relevant, sensory stimulating is very important which we all should take very carefully but to establish order inwardly require a lot of research. At this point my ideas perhaps vague but I strongly feel – there are dimensions still in the universe which we need to connect, there are forces which affect our minds in relation to the masses, materials, and enclosures we live. We are a global community now, we are at a time in the

human evolution where we can connect to each other any time we want to, we should we should exchange our views and try to find the dimensions “not yet manifested”.

12. CONCLUSION

This paper raises significant and most foundational questions which we need to be cleared upon in our practices. We may call ourselves modernists or postmodernists in this era, which to my observation is mostly post cartoonist era where we are carving our spaces irrespective of the answers to our basic theories. We need to research more into basic questions of History-Presence, Memory-Thought, Appearance-Reality, and Ritual-Retreat not in isolation, but in relation. Once we are clear of them we are able to find the right proportions, right ratios, and right material for Architecture. I strongly believe we have much to learn from the ancients, they had the precise proportioning systems for buildings and towns. We have the results of their experimentations on basis of which they were practicing architecture. Our time is crucial, we are building ruthlessly, and we are working for our greed madly. I strongly believe we need a radical change in the way we practice architecture. We need a change in our education patterns somewhere or the other, sometime or the other we will have to stop this and will have to look at the account of what we have done. Maybe we will not, but our generations will. We not only have to think about activity, climate function, but also about cosmic relations because it's no more a philosophical subject it has become a subject of modern science, and we architects have to update our knowledge, to get more close to the absolute knowledge and understanding of our relative existence.

The way this paper has developed, concludes that the setting of RāmGhāt does not present the perfect proportioning of four dualities but yes up to an extent it goes close to it. It carries the traits of the same in it. Perhaps, the time when it was built, was some of the last day's people of this culture carried the traits to design their habitats in relation to the cosmic phenomenon.

We need to research more in these fields of studies to initiate direct dialogue among the people. In my project also I have tried to achieve all these dualities, based on my knowledge and understanding of them. It's a personal experimentation, but we need to do it collectively. And discuss all our observations in order to raise the level of our profession from mere post cartoonist times to the much more mature practices. And contribute these observations for global practices.

One last question I put before I close, If we understand the scale by which we map or measure spaces in our mind If we understand our scale do we understand our measurements? will we be able to understand the essence

of the measurement, to understand function as phenomenon and relations collectively?

REFERENCES

- [1] Rāmghāt is one of the most prominent ghāt of Ujjain, It is said, that Lord Ram performed the afterlife rituals of his father dashrath hear. Also, it is important because of the holy baths on various auspicious occasions like simhastha (Kumbh) etc.
- [2] Present day Ujjain situated in Madhya Pradesh, India.
- [3] Primarily - Cerebral Palsy (abnormal development or damage to the part of brain that controls movement, balance, and posture), Autism (neurodevelopment disorder characterized by impaired social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, and restricted or repetitive behaviour.), Down Syndrome (Genetic disorder, delays physical growth, mild to moderate intellectual disability), Mental Retardation (Neurodevelopment disorder characterised by significantly impaired intellectual and adaptive functioning).
- [4] Built forms at the edge of Rāmghāt including various chatris, sarai, temples, dharamshalas, residences, Shops, Kunds, etc.
- [5] D.K. Samantha - “sacred complex of Ujjain”. (P.. 6-7)
- [6] Arvind Sharma, A city in a Khandtoakavya : Ujjain in the Meghaduta of Kalidasa, (Journal of South Asian Literature, Vol. 25, NO. 1, The city in south and southeast Asian literature) p. 128
- [7] D.K. Samantha - “sacred complex of Ujjain”. (P. 14-15)
- [8] H.H. Wilson, op. cit., p. 28
- [9] ...Kings from Samrat Vikramaditya...Chandapradya... to Asoka... Jai Singh etc.
- [10] Tirtha is a spiritual concept in Hinduism, particularly as a “pilgrimage site”, states Axel Michaels, that is a holy junction between “worlds that touch and do not touch each other”.
- [11] Vastupurusha Mandala is a metaphysical square plan that illustrates the vastupurusha pinned down by Brahma and 44 gods. It shows of the positioning of different spaces according to the gods, so as to ensure a perfectly balanced environment.
- [12] It's a phrase by Marshall McLuhan meaning that the form of a medium embeds itself in any message it would convey, creating a symbolic relationship by which the medium influences how the message is perceived. The phrase was introduced in his book “Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man”

[13] Silpasāstrās describes arts, iconography, the proportions of a sculptured figures, and various rules of temple design. Classified into four categories civil architecture, temple architecture, sculpture and painting. It reflects upon the planning stage to the execution stage along with the material.

[14] “The nine rasās are the essential aspects or energies that define a set of emotions and moods.... Knowing the nine rasās help us understand why a certain mood comes

and stays even though it’s original cause may be long gone and how to use that knowledge in achieving more emotional control...” Extracted from the book “The Yoga of the Nine Emotions” by Peter Marchand.

[15] One among the largest Harappan cities, situated in Gujarat.

ANNEXURE FOR FIGURES



Fig -1: Ujjain Master Plan

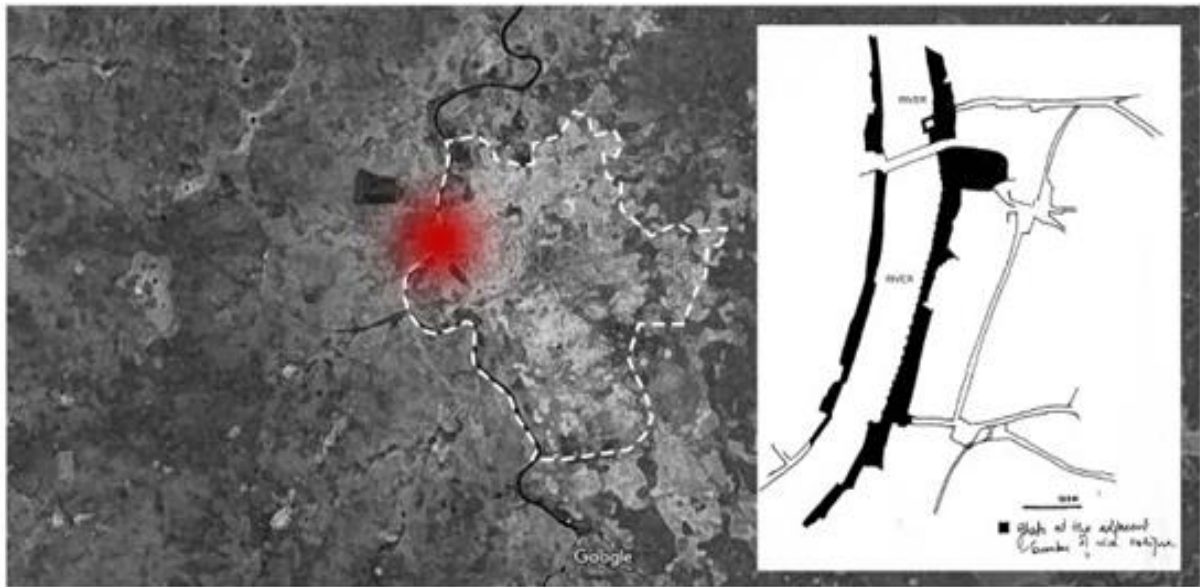


Fig - 2: Ujjain, and the Ramghat Settlement



Fig - 3: Pictures of Ramghat