

Theory of Architecture II

Lecture 2

Meaning in Architecture – 1

“Architecture as an artistic vehicle of expression, symbolism and communication”

Architecture is a language on which we live either consciously or unconsciously. It is a language that we understand because we inhabit it i.e. to achieve a piece of architecture requires engaging process of thinking, drawing, designing.

Again we get into the idea of vehicle as a tool i.e. architecture as a tool that is used as expression like a painter uses his painting (pallet) to express his feelings. In architecture we have had meaningful ways of expressing their ideas and philosophies.

So, let us go through this in a systematic manner.

How do we get inspired? The very first thing for any Human Being to get inspired is from “Nature” because we live in it, we enrich nature by living well. So, we get the best from nature i.e. by expressing through our language the best of those feelings by seeing rain, we sing about rain and would also take the example of cinema. The greatest movies artistically made in India is **Pather Panchali** by **Satyajit Ray**. There is a scene in the movie in which **The Megha Malar** that’s a name of raga, that raga is being played in the background when it rains. The background score and the music was by **Pandit Ravi Shankar**. He is a foremost exponent during that time in India in the field of music. So, he plays that particular raga in that particular scene, Why? Because **Ragha Malar(Megha Malar)** it enhances the feeling of rains.

You know that as kids we enjoy rain, Why do we enjoy it we do not know. Is it the feeling that we get because what passes on us, we do not know. But this has to be expressed, How do we express it? So, we run into the water, we jump around, we enjoy it the way we want. So, during that scene when the kids i.e. in that movie the two kids get into the water and run. During that scene there is a sound that comes behind that music that is played in Ragha Malar.

When somebody interviewed Pandit Ravi Shankar why he choose that particular raga because he said that this raga sounds fantastic during that scene in rains. You can always hear that raga anytime you will still enjoy it but it is enjoyed much more during the rains. That is how the mind of an artist works because he understands and gives the best interpretation by his creation. Even without his saying some people are able to understand it. Some artistic people are also able to understand it, it is not meant for that too. Perhaps it is named as Megha Malar because it enjoys the conglomeration of two clouds which is Megha. So, that is an example but the core idea is how do we get inspired by nature.

What have architects done through these years, how are they been expressing by inspired by nature, how do they do that, lets see through some examples.

This is a very contemporary example you see the building, you also see the inspiration from which where it came to. Actually you don't need architecture interview or the architecture interpretation for this. It is quiet evident also but how does it work, what happens goes like this. This is a Scottish exhibition and Conference Center in Glasgow in Scotland. So, Glasgow is the second last city in Scotland and Edinburgh being its capital. Foster & Partners have designed this building and it is kind of evident from the pic right now that is being shown. It is inspired by the very popular "Rodant" called as Armadillo. It's a ant eater family

(in nature you see there are so many examples). This Armadillo has got a very interesting texture , very interesting outline, very interesting form. But how he has used it and why he has used it. You can use a snake for a building, can use any kind of flower for a building but why an Armadillo? Because Armadillo was quite popularly seen and understood also one of the easily seen rodent in the outskirts of Scotland area. So what is used is he has used as a symbolic icon i.e. a memorable icon of that land. This is highly appreciable because the architect is also from United Kingdom. He was very much able to understand the context in why it is used. This shows he is a master. You see how a living organism is used as an inspiration for a creature like this.

This time not shown the example of inspiration because its too much evident. The photograph as such says from how it is developed. It is very easy to derive the inspiration. It is a flower i.e. a lotus flower, the architect of the building Mr.Sahba. He has expressed the divinity of the buildings function by his expression. He has made use of it through the elements of architecture whether it is a wall or the roof well we are not able to say that now, so that's the beauty of architecture. You don't need to stick to the elements of architecture because we know that we have a wall, a roof and a floor. But when it comes to expression in architecture, you don't need to actually stick to the norms of it. This is the beauty of architectural creation. So we have the liberty to go beyond our point.

We see a temple for baha'i what we call the baha'i faith. A baha'i faith has been there for in a very closed group for a long time now in the middle east area of Asia and also an upcoming faith with non-violence as its basic idea. They use predominantly white as their color and they do have their scriptures. All their

buildings are expressed as a inspiration from flowers. So the flowers bloom without any noise. They are the greatest creations to inspire any poet or any architect, but they also have a great form. There is also a example of Matrimandir in Auroville , this mandir is literally a golden flower waiting to bloom. It is a globe and is full of golden petals. So to say of each of 1.5 mts of diameter.

Here you see how a natures organism is used as an inspiration and takes you to the next level. Visiting these temples, there is one temple in India in New Delhi and is also a popular tourist spot. You may not actually understand the faith of it but the whole building is iconic there and it tells you how it is directly hitting you with their faith. Its about a flower as silent and as beautiful as a flower that is how their faith is. So this is an example how nature inspires architecture.

Meaning in Architecture – 2

This is another very popular example by architect Jorn Utzon. This is the famous **The Sydney Opera House** on the banks of river Parramatta in Sydney. I have personally visited this place and this is really one of the fine architecture also very well placed in a kind of peninsular area. You take yourself from the edge of the land and go into getti like place then at the end of peninsula you have got this building. This building is viewed from nearly like five or six view points even from that Sydney bridge. This is a very fine example of how architecture can be a great way of expressing thing. Can you believe this now is iconic representation of their country Australia. So a simple building with the greatest intention to bring it as an artistic expression is now the icon of their country. This is also inspired by sea shells because the shells are from the shore areas and this country is of great beaches “The Bondi” beach for example in Sydney and they got finest shells to say. This building Utzon was saying that even without visiting the site because it

was a competition project back in 1952 so he has designed in that way. See how it inspires.

This is another example of a “Bahá’í Temple”. So the Bahá’í faith as I was talking about the previous example was the Bahá’í example was of a flower. So that was of a full waiting to bloom and half bloomed this one. But this one is expressed differently. Again this is another flower waiting to bloom. Again see how the architects have used the same concept of a flower waiting to bloom into different expression. Do you think this building and the lotus flower looks the same. No it doesn’t, that is when the character comes into mind. So this is how architects express. They have the same language, they use a same topic or theme but their expressions are totally different. It may be through materials or it may be through forms, it may be through any way they want it. So that is what we are going to go through all these examples.

This is the idea of light how the unity, again they say that the unity in the delicate form of a translucent glass. This building is done with fiber glass and translucent glass because during the nights with the lights inside it takes you to the different divine feeling that is the intention of the architecture here.

Another good example would be a popular **The Olympic aquatic Center**. The aquatic center again is was the competition project and you know that the China being the largest populated country and the greatest economy in the world during that period. So when they won the bid to host the Olympics of the centenary they had to express their in a grand air. That’s another intention of architecture through their architecture. So how do they do it ? They bring in the best architects all around the world put them into competition and they take the best out of them. So what happens in the Aquatics Center ? The Aquatics Center is mainly main for

aquatic events like swimming, water polo and diving events and how do they do it , leave it to the architects (Clients leave it to the architects the corporation of Beijing) . So what the architects PTW architects of Australia they do it is they derive an idea of water cube i.e. they derive the whole idea by seeing the ice cube. They see an ice cube and they want to visualize themselves in. What happens when we put several ice cubes in a box and how do they behave. So atleast from the outside point of view it should look like a ice cube or a water to be melting basically speaking. Their idea was to have this and slowly they developed their concepts and then that has now come to a building like this. See the kind of colors they have used they dint use red or yellow because they distortly against a cool color so they have used from light purple to dark blue. Here what happens is you have a fantastic architecture it's a very simple design also with fabrics with poly fiber fabrics. Now the idea was the block of bubbles i.e. from ice cubes they have become bubbles and then the idea was water inside as well as water outside. Water inside is for play and water outside is for viewing purposes. So it is actually designed to reflect the symbolism of "Traditional Chinese square houses"

So why not it is a bubble shape, why it is not like several bubbles on one on one because it is not needed i.e.double height is not needed , that intention was that and not only that they wanted to reflect the Chinese historicity (the context of having square houses in older part of china). That is how it is .

Again in the same picture you will be see another building behind is a birds nest. Such a wonderful building it is. This is one of the most symbolic buildings and most photographed building as well in the world right now. This was also a competition winner by "Jacque Herzog Pierre de Meuron" of Europe. They have been some of the great expressionist architects of this century and they have been inspiring a lot.Imagine the kind of structures I would also add another picture of it

and of the structure. So the whole thing looks like a niting , its a nit by a concrete beans and concrete columns. Again can you say it is a wall –no, can you say it is a roof-no, I don't think it is. So that is when the expression you know comes out of its way of doing things.

See how beautifully it is designed. So you have got a place like a birds nest. It also means to say that it is protective. It protects the people inside and it also like very warm because Beijing has a very cold climate. And yes it is very warm and fantastic architecture again. The whole of the top part is covered but yet you won't see it the all the side parts are like open and translucent. This is a very fine and expressionist architecture.

Expression of simplicity from nature we go on to abstract philosophies, abstract because that is a very popular word. There are somethings which is very strong i.e. which are very tangible. Tangible in the sense that you can see it, you can feel it directly like for example, you see it you see a color and you know that it is a warm color and cool color because we understand it directly. But how do you express something like a formula like phenomenal heat. So heat is different because heat is felt so that is kind of intangible Lets say.

How do you express something which is abstract? So simplicity for example, how do you express simplicity. When you leave out all decoration outside then it becomes simple. Like put a box and you don't decorate that, for example the previous example was the birds nest. So it was full of I won't call it a decoration but its full of elements the lot of things for eye to get distracted to. But when you want simplicity what happens is that unity is must be there. So you got simplicity here.

We got a box with simpler elements. Mind you this is done back in 1925 when new materials were not coming into the mode and the lot of new things better things had to be done through forms. This is done by none other than the master Le Corbusier. This is done as a villa that is what is called a private bungalow in UK parlance. This is a private villa done for one of its relatives and see how he is taken out all the unwanted expressions, unwanted decorations. There are simple lines very simple lines easy to sketch, easy to remember. The idea is to be easy to remember because the outline form is very simple. The plan is also a very fantastic plan, very simplified and functional plan. This idea is to express his ideas of simplicity, his ideology of simplicity is an exemplary building of the moment called modernism because modernism mostly dwelt on how to remove decorations (unwanted decorations). Because the previous movement was Rococo and Baroque where too much decoration was involved. It becomes sour and boring. Because we do not see, we do not appreciate it all the time. But the minimalist attitude like this was very welcome then in the 1920s. We still have certain aspects of these in our buildings.

In other ways of expressing in different shapes. You see a dome, you see a cylinder twisted, you see they are put together gets supposed. And with the use of new materials like concrete, reinforced concrete and because of the climatic conditions so we need to use it. So we do use it for the longevity and durability of architecture and how they have expressed their ideas into this **Oscar Niemeyer** was a master of concrete. So one of his disciples is done this on the name of Oscar Niemeyer. See how this is expressed, how do you call this building? This is **Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao** is the most photographed building of the world today, Why? Because of the expression so nobody would actually get how this building is designed, how did they conceive it, how does a person conceive such a sculpture building of course beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Most of the people

may not like the way it is done because for them conventionally the building has to have a wall, straight wall. It should not have any sharp edges but again the feeling of architecture that is very important. The artistic way of doing things is very important to an expressionist this way.

Meaning in Architecture – 3

Architect **Frank Gehry** from US is been a pioneer in bringing these kind of architecture. He is inspired by a fish ,the form of a fish.

I would also show you different poses or different angles of this building where you really get idea of fish and why. Because this building abuts a huge water body. Of course you will connect a water body with fish and what can be more expressive than a fish. Definitely because it is live it comes out live because the fish moves and jumps and things. You would know even with a dead fish outside will see a form in it. So definitely he is inspired by the idea of fish.

He could have done in concrete but why did he choose such a metal cladding because the cladding contains the texture of it which actually looks like the texture of fish. So that kind of shining, that kind of texture, that kind of form and he has gone a very close to the very abstract idea of fish. He dint design like a fish there are buildings which are designed exactly like a fish I have seen them. But no that is not that is not the direct way of doing things. But an architect of his caliber so that it is more imaginative. That's why I say the reader must have his own interpretation. He may even interpret it as something else which architect never intended to but that enhances the beauty of architecture(the experience of architecture) so that's the idea.

See another expression, I was talking about the abstract expression. So this is designed by **Frank Lloyd Wright**. This is one of his most talked about building

because this is in urban context. You see it was right in fifth avenue, New York. So this is one of the most busiest commercial premises in New York. This is fifth avenue towards your right side and then to the left is the 89th of the east street of New York.

This is one of the most important corners of New York city and he was assigned to do this building. And what he does is a cylindrical building which grows like a tub kind of building. What he has done is he has done a central skylight inside the court. This is basically a museum. So the architect intended to have it not as the conventional space. He didn't want plain floors for that he made the floors to move. How did he make it move? Because he created a ramp all around the building. This path what you actually see is ramp. So this whole building is like a ramp. The gallery is not in one floor it is actually a moving floor. So basically you keep moving on a ramp and then you get to see go to the top. That part is so beautifully intense. There were a lot of criticisms about this building about not growing because it doesn't let them group as it stopped somewhere. We cannot keep growing like this because it comes out of the building line of the urban area. So it was criticized but nevertheless is one of the ways of expressing things.

Because the architect intended to do it as a temple of spirit in his own words. This is what he used. He said that because it is going to house a lot of arts as that was the period when art was put in a pedestal. It is not supposed to be only for some people it is supposed to be for, it is supposed to represent a country also. So there were a lot of American artists they were coming out and trying out new movements so all their works were they needed spaces to express them. They needed galleries, these buildings are past their artifacts. So that is how it was.

And later in the year 92 architect Gwaveth sehgal from United states. They won a competition for additional building. So this building was later added to it and gwaveth sehgal see their intention because master building is already done in that corner so they dint want to repeat that. They had their own individuality, so what they did was they actually created a box which reflected the grid pattern of the whole city of New York. Also acts as a very subtle background for the masters creation in the front. This was kind of respect and homage to the master architect. See how their intention has become, how the expression , he could have done the same thing. He could have repeated the same thing but he dint. So that's how Gwaveth Sehgal and partners behaved.

In Indian examples we see that some of the Indian examples would help us to. When we talk abstraction, abstraction in Indian context everything is abstraction. We see in epics we see the characters like Arjuna, Krishna, Bheema and Dharma everybody stands for philosophy. They are all symbolized they are people who stand for somec certain value, certain ethics. So its all abstraction. The whole idea of festivals they are all abstraction. We express that through different ways, different rituals but its all abstraction. So India is really a place to really expose deep inside the abstraction. There are lot of inspiration to get from those abstraction. That is way of doing things.

One of the masters of Indian Contemporary architecture is **Charles Correa** and this building is Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur. Jaipur is a place it is already a beautiful city designed with abstraction of navagrahas in mind. So the architect has taken that into ideas and he has redesigned this.

There are other examples of how to express building as an expression of status, power and symbol. So you see the good examples of British colonial architecture

coming to an end with their buildings of power like for example The Viceroy House now its called as **Rashtrapati Bhavan**, this built back in 1910 started in 1911 with the inauguration of Delhi. In 1929 they choose the tallest point in whole of delhi the Raisina Hills to build their powerful architecture like symmetry access somethings the Vijay Chauk for example this expresses status and power symbol.

The other example could be **The Chandigarh**. There is a Capitol Complex for two different states Harayana and Punjab, now it's a union territory in itself. See how it's a power of the democracy that they wanted to express. So he has taken the sickle, you can see the shape of the sickle. The sickle is the tool that they use for the harvest i.e. farmers use for harvest and he wanted to symbolize the commoners life inside so he has taken the symbol of sickle and he has expressed that through his architecture. Le Corbusier and the master the kind of grandave that it got, that kind of context it got its really amazing. You can also see the open hand symbolism there. So again he symbolizes so many things it also looks like a bird which is about its flying but uts actually the open hand, the open hand of the democratic country.

Further down south in India the very good examples that we see is the expression of wealth. You see what is called as Natukottai Chettiars, they are the business clan people they go abroad and then they make a lot of money. And how they express their wealth is by building their own mansions in the remote areas of Tamil Nadu. They express through lot of decorations, lot of interesting spaces. This building is almost this palace is suppose to be the palace or villa or private villa holds like about nearly 200 or 300 rooms because they have a very big clan and they like to host people. So this is how they do it. So architecture can be expressed as a way of seeing nature, appreciating nature, way of appreciating life and expressing for

different meanings. It can give the meanings to the population, the government or as an individual for divine purposes or for any artistic purposes.