

History of Architecture and Culture – 5

Lecture - 2

Understanding Classicism

Before we study neoclassicist architecture, basically we need to understand the terminology. It is neo-classicist-architecture. Neo means new in Latin so we need to understand what classicist architecture is. So something new architecture. So we need to understand what classicist architecture is. Classicism in architecture developed during the Italian renaissance, in the earlier period of notably in the writings and designs of Leon Battista Alberti and the works of Filippo Brunelleschi. I'm sure you would remember the lectures of history of architecture and culture 3 and in renaissance architecture, I'm sure you remember Filippo Brunelleschi and his famous dome for Florence cathedral which marked the start of Renaissance architecture. His works and some of the other people designs Leon Battista Alberti and that period, classicism developed. It was simple revival or easier understanding of the famous Greek and Latin and Italian examples which were built in Athens, Rome and other cities. So you take those examples, we study about them and then you learn the concepts of how they built, why they built, the usage of materials, the usage of technology which they had and most of the buildings that were built during the renaissance age emulated these buildings and these buildings were much bigger than the predecessors but they pretty much had the same basic area as of that very classical architecture which Greeks and the Romans developed. So this style of architecture where the emulated the classical architecture of Greek, roman, and similar time period buildings was called classicism and classicism placed emphasis on symmetry, proportion, geometry, orderly arrangements of columns, pilasters, lintels and the regularity of parts.

Symmetry- I don't have to explain symmetry, the similarity of one side of the building to the other side of the building they have to be symmetrical, they have to be same like a mirror image with the mirror in between.

Proportion systems are very important in classicism because that is the basic element which holds the classical architecture together. Each and every element has certain proportional system. Doric column is certain meters high. If the column is certain meters wide. So that proportion cannot go wrong. If the columns are certain height and the numbers of columns on the pediments have to be certain in such distance and some of the proportioning features, proportioning systems also comes from secret geometry of the Greeks where they take the golden rectangle and the concepts of nature and they try to get the proportional systems into it.

Next is geometry- the idea of equality and geometry is very important. We cannot have one column big and one column small, the distance between one column and difference between another columns cannot be different. It has to be orderly arranged. And then they had pilasters. Pilasters are nothing but columns which are attached to the walls and even if it is a plane wall, you cannot leave a plane wall in classical architecture, you need to have columns jetting out of the walls which will give us let's say visual look of columns being placed on the wall and it gives us the visual strength. They had lintels. Lintels means horizontal components support on two columns. They had regularity of parts. Which means the elements kept repeating at the good intervals, they had the regular rhythm or a meter in their architecture. It means the architecture is almost entirely predictable. We can always draw one part of the building if you see another part of the building. That is how regular the buildings were. Understanding classicism - As they

demonstrated in architecture of classical antiquity in particular, the architecture of ancient Rome. The use of semicircular arches, hemispherical domes, niches and aedicule's (little buildings) is a common framing device in both classical architecture and Gothic architecture. An aedicule's frame treats a window or a niche in a section of wall as if it were a building, sometimes with columns or pilasters flanking the opening. Sometimes you would have seen a window which has two little columns on the side which has base and on top of this column is a triangular pediment. Sometimes we see that occurring in most of the classical and neoclassical architecture. That is called an aedicule. This style quickly spread to other Italian cities and then to France, Germany, England, Russia and elsewhere. Building off of these influences, the 17th century architects Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren firmly established classicism in England.

Origin of Neoclassicism

Let us talk about origin of neoclassicism. The architecture of neoclassicism seemed to have emerged out of two different and related developments which radically transformed the relationship between man and nature. The first was a sudden increase in man's capacity to exercise control over nature which by mid 17th century had begun to advance beyond the technical frontiers of the renaissance. During the renaissance age there were a lot of developments which were made by many scientists and even more development came during the neoclassicist era because like I mentioned earlier in the previous lecture this was the age of enlightenment and in the age of enlightenment, people started to make inventions, discoveries and it was the age of revolutions. The industrial revolution started here, the steam engine was discovered, there were trains and the tracks, there were machines to do things, the spinning jenny was invented, there were lot of invention and discoveries that

happened in the middle of 17th century which means there is an increased capacity of human being to exercise control over the nature. We had machines to do things and a lot of things got influenced by this development.

The second was a fundamental shift in the nature of human consciousness, in response to major changes taking place in society which gave birth to a new cultural formation that was equally appropriate to the lifestyles of the declining aristocracy and the rising bourgeoisie. There was a shift in the nature of consciousness because a lot of things were happening in the society because of enlightenment in lot of things were going on parallelly, it gave birth to new cultural context where people were taught of equals to each other, the aristocracy the bourgeoisie the rich people, previously it was the rich people who had all the class and had all the resources and everything. Now a lot of people were becoming richer because thanks to the industrial revolution, thanks also to the change in mentality of people where people were taught of, they had secular ideas, people had lot of revolutionist ideas, an idea were accepted and ideas were encouraged soon neoclassical architecture became an international style because it spread from Italy to France and from France to Germany, to England, to Russia and to lot of places. Although each country had distinct character in their neoclassicism, it was prevalent in France, Germany and England. The style was present throughout almost throughout the European region but locally the styles were little modified to suit their own purposes and their own ideologies. The neoclassist architecture in England was a little different from France and Germany. The one in Russia was different from England and France so it happens because each and every region has different kinds of people and different minds working on project as well as different climatic conditions and different materials are available in their locale so that automatically happens in architecture which also

gives us reinforcement to one more thing. They didn't just copy a particular style which was born in Italy. They didn't just copy neoclassist style in one place and copied and put it in other. They kind of evolved the style to suit their own needs. That is another big improvement in architecture. Because previously people just used to copy things and now copying the idea was there but they had to influence their own ideas and their own practical reasons to modify it based on their requirement.

Here is a look at neoclassical building and take a look at formal elements the columns, the columns that support the pediment, the grand entrance windows accentuated on the either side by pilasters, corners, slope roof, chimneys, sometimes it was even exaggerated to look like little houses themselves. Here you can have a better look at what is happening. This is one part of the building which has a window and this window is actuated by two piers on either sides and it has an arch and two piers have a pediment on top which creates a meaning to itself. Circular windows and semicircular arches. This is very predominant in neoclassical architecture. Look at the way they build steps, at the entrances the steps were mostly grand, they always ended with elements which is so grander in appearance. They had balconies and verandas highly orderly, we can clearly even if i erase out this particular portion of the building you can clearly draw this portion by looking at this portion because that is how orderly the building looks. That is a reason why the neoclassicism because it is always derived from classicism. Look at the way building is symmetrically positioned because even if i draw a line here and if i remove all this portion, we can clearly tell what's going to happen in here. It's going to be exact mirror image of this or it will change perhaps here and there but pretty much the mirror image of what is happening one side will be pretty much what is happening on the other side also. Here is another look at some of the

sketches of neoclassicist buildings, you can see flat roofs lined by beams, grand staircases, huge arches and columns and mirrors that are decorated but the formal elements can have curtains and again formal feeling here. Look at how orderly the whole thing is. Even though ornamentation which happens, the ornamentation is minimal when compared to Rococo and Baroque styles, ornamentation is classical. Similar to this house, this building it has a portico supported by four columns and the wall on other side has a pediment, entablature and has everything, steps, this gives a grand everything to the house, again formal arrangement of windows symmetrical even though pair up it everything looks orderly and symmetrical. The architects of the 18th century searched for a new style. Their motivation was not simply to copy the ancient architecture but to obey the principles on which their work had been based. In its purest form it is a style principally derived from the architecture of classical Greece.

Let us quickly look at some of the features of neoclassical architecture: neoclassical or new classical architecture describes buildings that are inspired by the classical architecture of ancient Greece and Rome. These buildings are not copies of the buildings that were made during classical architecture of ancient Greece and Rome but buildings that are inspired by the classical architecture. Regular neoclassical building is likely to have one or more of these features, which are listed on the screen right now. Symmetrical shape, tall columns that rise up to the full height of the building, triangular pediment and domed roof. Here we have symmetrical shapes, tall columns that rise up to the full height of the building, triangular pediment and domed roof. Remember these four features and I'm going to go back to the previous slide, so yes, what all do we have in this building? we have columns that go all the way to the roof, yes, we have triangular pediments, yes, we don't have a domed roof here, we don't know because we don't know what is going on in the

back area, we don't have a section of this building, and it for sure has a symmetrical shape because if I draw a mirror on one side, it is exactly the same as the other side. So neoclassical architecture has at least one or more of these things which are columns that go up to the top of the building, tall columns, triangular pediments, domed roof and symmetrical shape.

Features of Neo-Classical Architecture

Take a look at these pictures here. Here you can see columns and this is what the pilaster, they have a column width inside the roof, this is what the pilaster, they have columns and pilasters even if they don't have projection kind of a thing here they still have a triangular pediment and they are symmetrical, again symmetrical, triangular pediment, columns that go till the roof, long cylinder columns. Here you can see these features that keep repeating and look at the ornamentation detail how they have derived and all these ornamentation detail simplified the classical elements and they have tried to make this into a neoclassical building.

Let us look at the characteristics of neoclassical architecture: neoclassical buildings are characterized by clean, elegant lines and uncluttered appearances. Clean, elegant lines and uncluttered appearances. Do we see clean appearance, uncluttered? There is no clutter here and we have very clean and very elegant lines that gives us the sense of nice and clean look as supposed to very cluttered appearances of Baroque and Rococo style previously in Baroque and Rococo the lines to be very cluttered because there is lot of décor features on the buildings itself. So compared to Baroque and Rococo this is highly uncluttered so in neoclassical architecture, orders are used structurally rather than as a form of decoration. This is a very important aspect because classical orders, orders means columns here are used

structurally rather than as a form of decoration here i.e. if you see in this picture, these columns it has ionic order, these columns are not here for decoration they are here because they are carrying this huge beam and the pediment and the roof of this room. So these columns are very structural columns, they are not decorative columns as in the classical age. Columns are free standing, supporting entablatures. Columns are free standing as in columns are not supported like any other like wall, it doesn't have pier like appearance as we used to have in medieval architecture. Columns are free standing and they support entablatures. Entablatures are these elements. Roof lines are generally flat, horizontal without towers and domes. Usually towers and domes kind of split the elevation of any building in the medieval era. In any church towers and domes were very important to because culturally people were able to relate it better because neoclassical architecture, we don't have towers and we don't have domes, the roof lines are generally flat. Here again in this building, look at the roof lines, flat,... flat,... flat,... flat. The facades tend to be long and flat. Even the facades of the building, they tend to be long and again they are flat too. Even in other examples, the facades are long and again they are flat, they don't have circular, they don't have multishape facades and this kind of architecture. There is a classical proportion maintained on the exterior of the building. If you see the picture here, there is a classical proportion which is maintained which means the distance between these two columns this and this one, the proportion between the height of this column and distance between these two columns is certain proportion and all the proportions are maintained properly and above this arch will be the window and the number of arches here will be the same as the number of windows and will be the same of the number of smaller windows over here and there is a certain order on the exterior of the building and the décor is minimum on the exterior. If you look at the exterior of the

building the décor is minimum as against the Baroque and Rococo element.

Next, quickly look at the neoclassical architecture in England: In England, where the rococo had never fully accepted, the impulse to redeem the excess of baroque found its first expression. Between 1750 and 1765 the major neo-classical proponents could be found in residences. England never had the famous rococo style it had baroque here but rococo did not fully emerged in the British culture but whatever baroque was already there, it had to be out because the people have changed, people have evolved from baroque to neoclassical architecture now. So between 1750 and 1756 some of the houses some of the houses started to became in common place and there were three famous architects who explained who were the key proponents of neo classical architecture in England. They are James Stuart, George Dance and Thomas Hope. James Stuart employed Greek Doric order as early as 1758. George Dance designed newgate gaol in 1765, a superficially Piranesian structure, followed neo-proportional Palladian theories of Robert Morris. Thomas Hope was more inclined towards Greek revival. he designed a household furniture and interior décor based on Greek revival architecture in 1807. These three people were the key proponents of neoclassical architecture in England and let's go into neoclassical architecture in France.

Neoclassicism first gained influence in Paris, though a generation of French art students trained at the French Academy in Rome. As we studied earlier in the previous lecture. Look at the architects associated; the main person is Claude Perrault. He gave the concept of positive beauty and arbitrary beauty. Positive beauty is the role of standardization and perfection and arbitrary beauty is expressive function as may be required by a particular circumstance or character. So he gave the

concept of positive beauty and arbitrary beauty and there is another person called Abbe'de Cordemoy. He challenged Vitruvian principle because the Vitruvian principle was like the bible for all the architects. the utilias from utas and venustas, utility and commodity which is utility aspect of the particular object from formitas, the structural integrity of the building and venustas the beauty. the three trio was challenged by Abbe'de Cordemoy. He says the first principle is correct positioning and proportioning of classical orders is the first principle. The second principle is the appropriate disposition of classical orders; the third is notion of fitness which warned against the inappropriate application of classical elements to utilitarian or commercial structures. These three were his fundamental ideologies where in you look at first principle is correct proportioning of classical orders, the second principle is their appropriate disposition, and the third is notion of fitness which warned against the inappropriate application of classical elements to utilitarian or commercial structures. Look at another neoclassical architectural idea i.e. Newton's senator created by Bull. There is another architect Jacques Germain Soufflot. Soufflot was a French architect in the international circle that introduced neoclassicism. His most famous work is the Pantheon in Paris, there is a pantheon building in Paris and he was the architect of pantheon building, this building was originally a church dedicated to Saint Genevieve. He recreated the lightness, spaciousness and proportion systems of classical architecture or Greek architecture. Look at some of the neoclassical architecture which these people built. Soufflot like all the architects of his day, considered the classical idiom essential. His famous principles were strictness of the line, firmness of form, simplicity of contour and rigorously architectonic conception of detail. These were the principles by which Soufflot reside.