State Of Reflection: Architecture In India And Nation-building

“Great buildings are those that have expanded our sense of human possibility — they shape our very experience of who and where we are in the world. Buildings are not just inanimate objects; they are occasions for human contact, they frame our understanding of place and this makes them a living part of our world.” writes Paul Goldberger. The fundamental aim of architecture is to design shelters and associated built spaces, enriching the experiences of the people, and improve their lifestyles. Being an integral part of our surroundings, architecture is in constant dialogue with the people, the intangible factors, and the unbuilt spaces. A complex relationship exists between these elements. Collectively they have a significant effect on the larger precinct like the community and the nation. The outcome of the design is holistic, impacting a broad range of factors like the environment, politics, social strata, creating a ripple effect. These are long-term consequences as the process of designing and occupying a structure is for decades. Today design needs to provide identity to the pluralist cultures, environments, and principles of India.

Politics of Architecture: Self-assertion and Promises.

Architecture around the world is a reflection of principles, context, and ambition of the state and architect. National architecture has always had a symbolic meaning for the people affected by the design style, choice of material, location, etcetera. Internationally cities are developed keeping in mind various political, economic, social, and environmental factors. Politics and architecture have always been intertwined. With the shift in dynamics, the relationship between them has changed over the years. In the post-colonial era, the role of a city was certain. They acted as a center for potential growth and national vision. It was, furthermore, the ground for political arrangements and events that envisage the aspirations of an independent nation. But with globalization, the need for identity and global consumerism has led way for a modern design outlook. With an international style of architecture built space has become a new platform to narrate national strength and ambitions.

Capital complexes and government functions have steered the way for policymakers to showcase their authority and reinforce the ideology of power concentration. The structures help to depict the national vision and the dogma of the policymakers. For example, Sri Lanka’s capitol complex was built on an island on the outskirts of its capital city Colombo. This kept all the government functions away from the city but more importantly, it was built during the civil war. The structure is not just a government building but, also communicates the stand of the administration on the conflict; indicating their neutrality in a civil war. It can also be noted in Capital complexes of the USA, National Assembly of Dhaka, and other developing countries.

Renaissance: Architecture styles in India.

Architecture in India after independence was a way to represent India’s move towards Modernism and westernization. It was taking shape through the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and the founding members of the democracy. Each city was developed with a different vision and

style. The government-commissioned German planner Otto Koesnigsberger to plan India's first Industrial city Jamshedpur. This led the way to the planning of other cities like Bhubneshwar, parts of Kutchh, and Calcutta. Architects like B.V Doshi, Charles Correa, Le Corbusier, Loius Kahn bought different styles and visions for the development of India. These architects had studied in the West and presented their philosophies of Western movements like Bauhaus and Brutalism, intertwined with India's ideologies.

When India put forward its design model for Chandigarh, it was a step towards creating a modern urbanscape. It was an attempt to do away with the past and embody a new and hopeful future. It was a promise towards creating a healthy, self-resilient, and productive society; that provides hope and helps in fulfilling all the necessities of the people.

Urban planning and building design play a significant role in the development of citizens. Architecture was a way to reframe identity and ideas. When historical relations where forgotten architecture was politicized, modern planning became a beacon for aesthetics only to profoundly impact the social and cultural premises. But today numerous organizations and design bodies are taking lead to identify problems in urban areas and finding appropriate solutions. Various models are developed to encourage community participation, allowing the citizens to provide their feedback on architecture and master planning. This model was adopted internationally and across various states in India like Bengaluru.

"The question to be discussed is, not in what style, but by what method the new city should be built - the method of the modern architect, with pencil-trained mind and hands or the method that has given us Westminster Abbey, Saint Sophia, the Taj?" questions EB Havell, an art historian, and former educator.

Shifting design sensibilities: Role of architects and Development Agenda.

Like buildings and landscapes, people play an active role in nation-building. Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and lack of essential services have always presented a constant threat to the national fabric. As populations migrated and new businesses emerged in India the need for housing, markets and offices grew exponentially. With the growth in real estate and propping of high-end impersonal living, the gap between communities and people widened. The scope of architecture has increased today where they play various roles. Architects not only design buildings but have roles to conserve and preserve history, uplift the society, conserve the environment, and envision future growth.

The Sustainable development goals 2030 have been mapped; Resilience is the key to attain them globally. Urban resilience is the ability of communities, cities, systems, and businesses with an area to survive adversities, adapt, and thrive. Cities are likely to encounter multi-hazards due to climate change and resource shortage. Various goals in the SDG's focus on sustainable living and resources which can be achieved if there is contextual sensitivity, resilient development, and collaboration between varied stakeholders. Designing along the guideline of the SDGs will ensure that the spaces created thereafter are prosperous and healthy for the people and the communities. With urbanization on the go, it is necessary to read between the lines and focus on deeper issues of land use, style of living, mass housing, and flexibility in spaces. Architects in India and internationally are seeking solutions for mass housing like Ar.

Alejandro Aravena through his concept of Incremental housing. These solutions help in improving the social equation of the people. Humanitarian works by Japanese architect Shigeru Ban have also emphasized the need for socialist architecture.

Conclusion: Challenging the way ahead.

The way of living and culture has changed over the years; the wave of technological advancement and rapidly growing environment has lead India to adopt various practices and let go of some. The question here arises; what is the effect of these advancements in India concerning the population and land use? What is the plan of action and the vision? Do these innovations fall in line with our goals? It is necessary to adopt changes responsibly that will benefit us rather than changing everything where we lose our identity and traditional know-how. The idea is to overcome our difficulties rather than import problems of the west through their solutions.

The state of architecture is questioned and challenged at every step with a growing economy and population. This has uncovered opportunities across the nation for mass housing and other essential services. As cities are expanding, the existing infrastructure is becoming redundant and needs to be revamped and designed efficiently. The society is questioning the architects and their motives while designing public spaces and infrastructure. In the past decade architects were influenced by the glass and designer buildings of the West but today many designers have realized the potential and need of India. The designs today are contextually appropriate and has created an opportunity for the field to explore ideas and technologies that will work for the Indian context. When speaking of context, it includes the social, economic, environmental, and political context. The idea of locally built is being aggressively promoted.

It is time to develop an “Indian Sensibility” where work and explorations are carried out after understanding the merits of our tradition and culture, and at the same, it integrates contemporary values. With several developments in all the fields, architecture must convert information into knowledge systems. The need of the hour is to stay true to our needs and past while working actively towards developing a nation that communicates to people and shapes our society.