

## PAPER 2:

### CRAFT AND ARCHITECTURE:

Before 1750, everything was made by hand; craft was not a separate concept from any other kind of production. With the invention of mechanization, mass production, and factories came also the invention of craft as a paradigm in itself, in juxtaposition to industry. This shift was evident in modernism. With the technologies blooming to replace craftsmen, crafts are viewed as ornaments on a building, either façade or lavish interiors. The approach to craft has become such that very rarely the craftsmen are involved in the construction processes as opposed to the olden times. The handwork is challenged by newer three-dimensional printing technologies and the focus has shifted from the designer to the design-maker. However, the skill of these craftsmen, if viewed as a legacy cannot be replicated via a machine and if not instructed properly, the outcome can become a simple three-dimensional extrusion without emotion or depth. At this point we can hopefully understand craft in a different way and redefine it for current and future production.

“craft is not a movement or a field, but rather a set of concerns that is implicated across many types of cultural production.”

This craft can be now categorised as Medieval craft, Ancient Age and Prehistoric Era, depending upon the when these structures were made. It is essential to understand what Craft is in the contemporary age? Is it just reduced to a symbol or a sculpture?

For instance, In the recent building of Sagrada Familia, by the late Architect, Gaudi, there is an immense involvement of sculptures that depict stories of the church which adorn all the ceilings and columns. Every element including walls, clerestories, columns and ceilings are supported with these sculptures. The sculptor, Etsuro Sutoo, works hand in hand with the architects and has an equal say in dealing with the dynamics of a space.

In Raj Rewal's World Bank regional Mission, Lodi gardens he involves craftsmen to traditionally work in the red sandstone to give it the same emotion through tactility as well as visibility. He equips the craftsmen with modern tools and brings about a paradigm shift in the working methodology of the craftsmen so as to give better results.

Craft may not necessarily mean an addition to architecture, infact it is a new branch called 'Craft Architecture' which is evolving. What craft means to Architecture today, in the modern age and how it can add to regionality can be further explored.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Theorisation on Modernism and its many rightful implications have dominated architectural research as well as questions on form and functionality of an ideal structure. In opposition, many post modernists and retrograde theorists have suggested that with modernism came its subset-internationalism which has reduced our cities to high chic glossy images. The age of Globalisation has further led us to the use of mass-producing machineries that create 'one kind of elements' that simply get added on to adorn structures. India, having a rich cultural and historical identity has slowly started to resort to these means of 'easy building and convenient' costing strategies. However, the question remains if the replication of certain local Indian architecture will essentially be successful in reviving the history and culture or will it be a pastiche effort?

## THE TWO THEORIES:

### A. KENNETH FRAMPTON'S THEORY OF CRITICAL REGIONALISM:

Kenneth Frampton suggests a new definition for 'arriere- garde' wherein he says, "the architecture must remove itself from the optimisation of the advanced technology and the ever-present tendency to regress into nostalgia of history."

For this he provides a new theory called critical regionalism that draws on the functional aspect of modernism while pertaining to its regions' aspects. Thus, he makes his point that architecture must respond to the site in a way that the site itself becomes a part of the architecture and it governs how the architecture is made. This remark on architecture is made because he brings up a concept of a 'global village and 'world culture' both of which destroy boundaries of a place and the culture that is a part of it. These definitions bring up a new style that suits anywhere, that makes all cities look alike, commonly mistaken to be 'modern'.

He writes six points to create an architecture of resistance viz.

1. Culture and Civilization 2. The Rise and Fall of the Avant-Garde 3. Critical Regionalism and World Culture 4. The Resistance of the Place-Form

In these points he mentions how the advancement in technology has led us to destroying the cultural impacts the civilisations have faced and with easy, available technology for designs, it becomes easier for the architect to paste, on the façade, a symbol, which he can justify as a local element. However, in doing so, the architecture cannot really belong to the place, Frampton argues. Instead, upon entering into a structure, the place/ context must begin, rather than ending.

In order to achieve the above, he also gives ten points as a 'provisional polemic'. In those, he mentions that a critically regionalist structure cannot be determined by a style and most certainly cannot be called 'vernacular'. He believes that vernacular comes with bourgeois aesthetics and a structure must be utterly cautious of its form, the way it expresses itself within a locality that it cannot have the influence of history in order to be an architecture of the present, but through it's built and construction must respond to the local.

This is where the discourse of the second theory starts.

### B. SUHA OZKAN'S REGIONALISM WITHIN MODERNISM:

It is extremely crucial to note that Ozkan speaks about 'regionalism' and 'critical regionalism'. She allows flexibility in her theory to include all architects and gives an umbrella term for such

type of an architecture. However, with this, as opposed to the specificity in Frampton's theory, it has a threat of 'anything goes' approach. For instance, she provides categories to better understand architecture of regionalism. The two broad categories are: Vernacularism and Modern Regionalism. She includes vernacularism as a part of regionalism, contrary to Frampton because there is a conservative attitude that is a branch within architecture and a second attitude which is interpretative. Hence, to deal with the present-day technology, she introduces 'neo-vernacularism'.

**Similarities** between Ozkan and Frampton are seen when Ozkan brings about a branch of regionalism – modern regionalism which further segregates as concrete and abstract. Concrete regionalism allows copying regional expressions such as symbols, fragments or even entire buildings, which Frampton completely disregards. This also may be the reason why Frampton put the term "critical" before his theory. However, Abstract Regionalism takes up values of the place and the architect's interpretation of what local means which somewhat fits in the polemic provided by Frampton. It also states the wide spectrum of architecture that lies between thoughtful eclecticism and unmindful pastiche. To a certain extent, in the realm of Abstract Regionalism, both these theories seem to agree that it isn't necessary for the structure to look like those which were built in the past, yet it is inevitable for it's built to respond in the same way as the local structures, in order for it to be called Regionalist. Both theories clarify that the term (Critical) Regionalism cannot itself become a style but is a collection of values within the structure that help it respond better to the climate, context, microclimate such as light and wind and also to the traditional patterns of living followed in the region.

#### JORN UTZON'S BAESGVARD CHURCH

The church is an insert in a local street of Copenhagen. The church is made up of white precast concrete panels used as cladding on the façade and glass pitched roof tops that act as skylights. The panels were chosen to adapt to the colours of the town, to make the structure look like any other structure in the neighbourhood. Only its tall height gives it away as a landmark. The interior form of the church has a completely different feel and it takes inspiration from the architect's dream of 'clouds of heaven' – his interpretation of a church. The trees he uses are the local birch and their slender trunks cast a shadow on the precast concrete tiling that create abstract patterns in the daylight. The skylights are placed exactly above the corridors supporting the Nave which capture all the sunlight. Hence, the orientation of the church is such that it aligns itself to the sun path for almost all days of the year. The visitor cannot understand the interior depth of the church unless she visits inside.

#### CRITICAL REGIONALISM FOR INDIA:

Post independent India had accepted the regionalist view as architects like Correa, B.V Doshi, Raj Rewal designed with the location in mind. The degree of influence of critical regionalism on postcolonial Indian architecture has varied over the course of time as a result of economic, political and social changes. When we argue about nation building through architecture, the example of Chandigarh comes to mind. Nehru invited Le Corbusier to paint a new face of a 'modern' india, which indicated that an identity of a nation is bound to change with political agendas. In the same time frame, there were projects which challenged this modern project and hence a quest for finding a regional identity came into being.

This could possibly explain why critical regionalism took over Indian architecture predominantly in the post- colonial era. There was a need to revive the cultural identity which was being erased in the name of modernity, while tactfully maintaining an abstract relation with the regional approach.

## HYPOTHESIS (CONCLUSION) :

1. **Critical Regionalism could create an identity for Indian structures.**

India has a rich history and a variety of cultural and traditional practices that could be reflected in the structures we build. India is still known as a land of villages and yet contemporaneity for India is a result of heavy influence of the western world and their methods of building. For instance, huge skyscrapers completely devoid of emotion, layered with glass reaching the top. In India, we believe in community living and social integration in spaces since ages. Community spirit is fostered within the culture and thus the traditional spaces predominantly have courtyards, verandas and corridors that connect on the outside that lead to interaction. This is lost when we create structures side by side that barely respond to each other, in total isolation.
2. **Symbols as a means of generating regional identity:**

An architectural symbol is ineffective in its relation to an identity (bard studio) since a symbol might represent contradiction in its meaning. For example, the Hiranandani Complex malls with Greek columns cannot be denied as symbols, but their identity only relates to the aspirational middle-class consumer of India. Their definition for 'contemporaneity' cannot be wronged. Thus, symbols alone cannot constitute as 'regional' architecture. They could be used for enhancement.
3. **The site as a governing principle for design: countering placelessness -**

we must create through architecture a "place- form", that would contradict the imposition of the western world on the regional culture. Thus, adapting towards being 'local' would simply mean that architecture could be more empathetic towards the local user. Hence, I argue that the place in which the structure is built would determine the abstract qualities a structure would have. Hence, the question, where can such a regionalist structure be built? For instance, if a structure were to be built in BKC, Mumbai, what would be considered local for the site? The place already exists as a global village, one that could be uprooted and placed anywhere and it would still manage to fit in. This, I argue is the doing of the international style, adaptable to all, universally.
4. **Identity of a (Indian) nation vs identity of a region:**

Architecture itself is a part of an identity. The notion of being 'modern' diminishes architecturally when we analyse at the macro level. A striking example would be the Kanchenjunga Apartments in Mumbai exemplify how 'critically modern' Mumbai is whereas most of Mumbai still has illicit developments and slums in Dharavi which suggest otherwise. So as whole, even architecturally, the identity of housing in Mumbai could still be seen as a progressive community housing.
5. **Factors for the rise of the Critical Regionalism in India:**

One of the factors that caused India to adapt to a 'global' style is the liberalisation of the Indian economy. This stems from Indira Gandhi's effort of centralisation which also provoked a number of regional parties to be formed thus securing the political support. During liberalisation, economy became more market and service oriented. Privatisation allowed for foreign investors to establish their ground on the Indian soil and thus there was a large mix of 'Indian and Non- Indian'. This is also true for many more nations across the world; however, the scope of research and resources find pragmatism in limiting to the Indian context.
6. **Climate as a point for Regionalism:**

While considering a critically regional structure, Climatic conditions should be one of the factors of utmost importance yet that remains the case for any piece of architecture, not necessarily regionalist. Therefore, a sensitive approach to climate and weather cannot become the sole criterion of judgement of regionalism. However, it is vital that the direction of light, wind and other similar factors should be considered while inclining towards the regionalist approach.