

HYBRID OF EASTERN AND WESTERN IDEALS IN ARCHITECTURE.

SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SRI LANKAN CONTEMPORARY BUILDINGS.



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Preface .

The way of acting and reaching in the face of a problem differs from person to person. This manner again varies according to the region or locality he lives in the world. The diversity of dealing with these situations is prone to vary, depending on man's way of thinking. Accordingly he adapts himself or thoughts through experience, in order to suit his cultural pattern. When the different cultures are taken into consideration, they can predominantly be divided into two.

- **Western culture.**
- **Eastern culture.**

Though there are so many cultures, distinctive from each other , for a convenient study of these , the division shown above is of extreme importance.

The scholars from various countries have put forward their theories and opinions regarding these two types. In the initial study of this book, an attempt has been made to study these cultural divisions and also to see the differences between them.

The emergence of art and the earth run parallel with the existence of mankind in the world. Its antiquity and universality are closely attached to the man's behavioral pattern .The activities of man, in response to the gratification of his time senses, created a greater impact on art and it was further developed being fused with man's desires wishes, thoughts etc.

The wide expansion of art in later periods took different forms and branches such as music, drama, movie and the like, and they flourished through the ages under the influence of multi cultures the world. Therefore, arts became a mirror reflecting the thoughts, beliefs and norms of people who were firmly rooted in different cultures. In the same manner, they serve as a medium expressing the cultural virtues of the west and east.

Though, at the beginning, art was confined to a particular framework, it started merging with all the cultures, owing to the development of international relations. The fusion may have been a resulting factor from the influence of the prevalent rules or colonialism. The various arts that came into existence in later stages were reflective of the mixture of thoughts from the west and east. Therefore it paved the way for an emergence of a more meaningful art. Comparatively arts that flourished without being limited to a particular frame or pattern were able to present to the world something more meaningful than before. This breaking away from the conventionality resulted from the man's inherent quality of being conscious and curious of his surroundings and fellow beings.

One can define architecture as another form of art. Therefore architecture like other branches of art displays its own peculiar features gathered from its relevant cultural construction. In other wards architecture is another medium showing both western and eastern concepts. An approach to the study of architecture is therefore a means of identifying the concepts of the west and east.

If the "built environment" is to be suited to a society it has to be constructed in such a way that it conforms to the wishes and thoughts of that society. When something new creeps into a particular society from the world outside, it undergoes gradual transformation along with the beliefs, concepts and attitudes of that society. Therefore its suitability or aptness to another society is determined by its readiness, flexibility and liability to change.

Introduction.

0.1 Topic explanations.

From the very beginning, man showed a tendency to live in social groups rather than being isolated from his fellow men. Therefore he made a collective attempt to understand the world around him. The motive behind this attempt was to raise the living standards of them. As a result he improved his own experiences rendered by five senses, which were thoroughly exposed to the external happenings in his environment.

With the advancement of man's intellectual powers, some people sought to view the world from philosophical angles and their knowledge was not restricted to the experiences rendered by sensory organs. Depending on the human potentiality within the communal groups, they were actively involved in moulding their hypothetical ideas into philosophical doctrines.

Their philosophies were nourished especially by the religious faiths and morals believed by the communities. (Especially the religious faiths formed the basis for the philosophical thoughts.)

The environment and the experience were the determinery factors to distinguish one's individual way of reasoning from others. Therefore there was an apparent distinction between the philosophical conceptions existing those days. While certain societies, communities and races gave their priority to contemplate on things of more intellectual kind, the thinking process of the majority was shaped by the experiences compatible only to their sensory perception. In other wards the immediate concern of the latter was merely to satisfy their senses. Therefore there was a clear difference among societies and also within the societies.

“Therefore human knowledge is not absolute; it is relative to the sense faculty, the mind and the culture; it is something created by man throughout the ages various societies, and it is not extraneous to man. It is not something to invented by man (Nalin Silva, 1991 iv)

It has been revealed through studies that the geographical factors have contributed in a lot creating the divisions as western and eastern.

The philosophical thoughts that were passed down from the Greek and Roman civilization were nourished by the Christian virtues thereby creating a body of mixed beliefs and views. But in the latter part of the 15th century these beliefs again underwent another change. These were recognized as eastern and western doctrines and different from medieval thoughts. These doctrines at the beginning were widely spread throughout the entire world. But later some under certain circumstances found expression in the body of eastern philosophies because of their eastern elements and they were known as eastern concepts.

The hypotheses followed by the nations of the west and east were manifested in their activities, arts and traits. Since there existed a close relationship between man and arts, the architectural traits can be traced in practice of different works of arts. But the 16th and 17th centuries were a marked era for these hypotheses to spread among the other countries due to the arrival of industrial revolution and world explorations. As a result of this, the clashes between the old and the new hypotheses were inevitable. But some nations / countries readily embraced the new things whereas the others attempted to maintain their identity through resistance. Those who willingly exposed themselves to new cultures were of the opinion that they would not mind the advent of new things from any culture if they serve the purpose. This is characterized even in the art and architecture.

Sri Lanka is another eastern country highly influenced by the colonial rule, foreign invasions and affairs. In the first phase of this period language and customs were enriched by this influence but later the other branches of art also joined the mainstream. Architecture is also another form of art subjected to change.

0.2 Importance of the study.

During colonialism some Sri Lankans had the privilege of learning architecture in western countries and applying what they gathered in the practice of architecture at home. They used certain elements in local buildings. As a result of this it is clearly seen that the elements of both western and eastern countries have been combined together in the same building. After the introduction of the open economy and new technologies, this inclination could be seen in architectural constructions. But a close observation of these buildings reveals that these elements have not been combined meaningfully. Further, it can be understood that the inclusion of such elements has been done only for the sake of using the techniques of architecture and not to create any aesthetic beauty meaningfully. Only a few architects have achieved the real purpose of using architectural features in buildings and the majority of them have made desperate endeavors to impress and satisfy the demands of the clients and users. It is a fact that every piece of art should be utilized in a successful way. It should convey some sort of message to the society; In other words any careless or meaningless application of an architectural piece would undermine and distort the essence of architecture. If architecture is used with a clear and correct vision its service and usefulness to the society is immeasurable.

0.3 Aim of the study.

The aim of this dissertation is to study and illustrate how both eastern and western theories have been combined together in the same building and how they reflect the ways of thinking of the people of different groups. Finally its aim is to show the reflection of these ways of thinking in architecture as an art.

From the beginning, this study is carried out on the basis that architecture is a mode by which the independent expressions of aspirations and benefits of the people are reflected.

0.4 Scope and limitations.

Where the combination of theories are concerned buildings can be seen all over the world which are influenced by small-scale theories. But those minor theories (Both similarities and differences) have not been taken into consideration here and this study is highly concerned with the combination of eastern and western theories.

In the process of this study the available sources from India and Sri Lanka and examples from western countries have been mostly used. (Examples from Japan, China and other south Asian countries have not been taken into consideration). While doing this priority is given to the Sri Lankan Buildings, which are designed by the architects.



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0.5 Method of work.

At the initial stage of the dissertation (Chapter one) the fundamental differences in the thought process of the eastern and western people with the identified elements of thought process are discussed.

In the second chapter the discussion is extended as to how these thoughts were expressed to the people in the most heartening form through art from the ancient time. As art is an essential component of every society, most of the thoughts have been expressed in this manner.

The third chapter discusses how these eastern and western ideologies were expressed through architecture which has been considered as another important section of art.

In the fourth chapter, the discussion shows how both eastern countries and western countries were influenced by each other and the reasons why they were influenced.

The fifth and final chapter shows how these eastern and western ideals were combined in same building with examples selected from Sri Lanka.



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