

## CULTURAL APPROACH TO ARCHITECTURE

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**Abstract:** "Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by human as a member of society." Architecture and Culture are interrelated. This paper aims at understanding the cultural approaches to architectural spaces and changing scenario of the same from the past to present. The paper also discusses about the diminishing role of culture in modern context and globalization of the design and material usage. Further discussions are regarding the value of design and its importance in creating better spaces for users. The discussion, in fact rotates around culture as an important influence for creating built spaces and the changing role of the same from past to present and the factors for these changes.

**Keywords:** Architecture, Culture, Built spaces, Settlements, User

**Introduction:** The poetic, the imagination, dreams, love, desire, synthesis, subjectivity, culture, art, philosophy, religion, spirituality, value, ethics, intellectual development, tradition, vernacular culture, local ritual, the sense of belonging in a place or space, and the connectivity to the memory and history, are all named as elements of what architecture traditionally provides for a culture, but which architecture is faced with losing in its increasing commodification and specialization, and its increasing role in global economic production. Architecture as a discipline is on the verge of disappearing, as "culture" (art, philosophy, and literature) is on the verge of disappearing as other than a commodity for a consumerist society. (John Hendrix, 2012) He also discusses that the future of the cultural role of architecture is cautionary, and the changes need to be made in order for there to be hope for a future for architecture.

Edward Burnett Tylor writing from the perspective of social anthropology in the UK in 1871 described "Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by human as a member of society."

Culture is the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. Rapaport (1969) defines the cultural elements forming the house as; religion, language, family structure, child raising methods, settlement patterns, land division and land owning systems, nutrition habits, symbolic and traditional systems, status

defining methods, social identity, cognitive maps; privacy, intensity, territoriality, behavioural organization in a house, working, and trades.

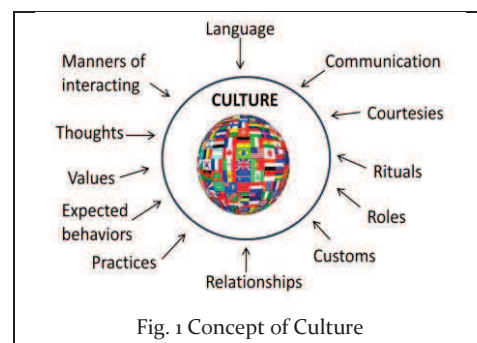


Fig. 1 Concept of Culture

Source: [www.dfwhcfoundation.org/cultural-and-linguistic-competence-in-patient-care](http://www.dfwhcfoundation.org/cultural-and-linguistic-competence-in-patient-care)  
Singh R.Y (1994) describes that environmental factors in the early stage and socio-cultural-economic factors in conjunction with the former in later stage determine the rural settlements existence and growth.

Singh R.Y (1994) talks about Indian versus other settlements as not only Indian villages differ from others in some respects such as form, size, shape and internal structure but have regional variations too. The varied environmental conditions in conjunction with cultural variations and many thousand years of living history have enriched diversity of settlements ranging from different parts of the country. The occupants ethnic diversity is no less varied, nor the manners and customs. From Neolithic up to the modern age, the spatio-temporal variations are met with conspicuous absence of similarity.

The diversity leads to differences in many aspects as

- (i) Morphology in relation to caste sectors only in India
- (ii) Morphology in relation to religion and ethnic groups: Hindu, Muslim, Christian
- (iii) Morphology in relation to the type of village: compact, disperse
- (iv) Morphology in relation site of village: river, hill etc.
- (v) Internal structure of layout of houses in various types of villages, settled according to different models, hamletization
- (vi) Based on livestock raising, poultry farming
- (vii) Semi-nomads and nomads of Central Asia are distinct in spatio-temporal and functional frame work.
- (viii) Kibbutz and isolated chaks of individual farmers
- (ix) Building materials

The village also differ in the type of institutions, associations, tribal panchayats, party based organisations and the infrastructures regarding all these separately and combined. That is why, a Japanese village different from Indian or Italian or Canadian or Brazilian village on the one hand, and Israeli and East Siberian village on the other.

Indraganti (2010) conducted a study to get insight over the climate sensitive architecture. The study was in context to Maraikal village in Telangana region. The attempt was to analyze the vernacular settlement as a part of huge development project. The form and structure of Maraikal is due to evolutionary process and sharing of knowledge. In addition, this place reflects about different types of physical and non-physical determinant forces like climate, geology, economics, socio-cultural, values, technology and administrative factors.

Architecture, in the modern context or in the present era is more towards built spaces without relevance to socio-economic-climatic-traditional aspects. Irrespective of location, we find buildings with similar designs, materials etc. Settlements in the past have a character, identity and reflects their values, tradition, festivals, beliefs, occupation and in fact their culture. Their spaces are more livable and they have a living character and differ with climate, geography, occupation and various other aspects. They are homes but not houses, they need a shelter to live and not a slum to stay and in fact every home is manmade heaven. This applies for a small home of a peasant, a slave, a farmer or a home (bungalow) of a businessman, or a home (fort/palace) of a ruler or

king. There are different hierarchies of occupations and people may be poor or wealthy, they may belong to economically weaker sections, lower income groups, middle income groups or higher income groups as differentiated in the modern era, but everyone needs a space to live in, secure and safeguard themselves from various natural and also manmade disasters.

Can we imagine an architecture that is both beautiful and contributes to the common good? Given our complex world burdened by environmental degradation and social inequity, the question of architecture's contribution to humanity's well being is not an obvious one, but it seems to have urgency that it lacked during the earlier, more optimistic phases of modernity. (Alberto Perez- Gomez, 2012) He also questions, should architects design comfortable hospitals more concerned with business than with healing, or well-detailed prisons that will never hold the real criminals that destroy the environment or exploit and decimate the economic and social fabric of the world? The argument and also the question posed by Albert Perez-Gomez, needs a real thought process in the modern era and designs are meant for users and architects are for designing best spaces and give the best product for the user. User perception plays an important role in the design of spaces for them.

According to Nikolaos-Ion Terzoglou (2012), says that in order to evaluate the possible cultural roles of architecture, we have to consider the complex and ambivalent nature of architecture as a scientific discipline. He also states that on the one hand, architecture has to deal with materials and structural technology, in order to build a solid system in space intending to serve human needs. On the other hand, this functional-material-structural order must express immaterial ideas and symbolic meanings, so as to communicate intellectual superstructures, social values, cultural identities, ethical world views. This double claim produce tensions, controversies and culturally determined conceptual dualities within the discipline of architecture. Balancing the imbalance is the need of the hour. The most important aspect in the modern era is to create balance between cultural perspectives with fast moving technology and innovations. The new materials and technology is changing the scenario of the built form, thus resulting in to universal designs, which may be applicable to the location or may not be applicable.

The designs have more or less become universal in nature with urbanization, industrialization and more and more innovations in the construction industry. Buildings are more comfortable with artificial ventilation, lighting, air conditioning, heating systems and are not sustainable.

Alberto Perez- Gomez, (2012) states that, in order to transcend the static production of architectural forms and reclaim the complex nature of architecture, we need a re-establishment of the dialectical tensions, interactions and relations between spiritual culture and material civilization within architectural theory, education and praxis. The idea is to come up with a new conception of architecture as the major cultural realm where technology and the humanities meet and confront each other. Alberto Perez- Gomez, (2012) also concludes in one of his article, Architectural Creation Between “Culture” and “Civilization” that “bringing together technological means and human intensions, architectural space is the key to a dynamic communication of ideas, concepts and values in everyday life. Those ideas, concepts and values can give meaning to the life of man and enhance its quality and cohesion. That is the cultural aim of architecture.”

A work of architecture is seen as an objective reality with components and parts that everyone can observe, perceive, and agree upon. In turn, emphasis is placed up on the common properties of architecture and its universal principles leading to the suppression of multiple view points, thoughts and voices. In turn, emphasis is placed upon values, preferences and cultural aspirations of people as individuals and in groups leading to the production of culturally and socially responsive visual voices. (Ashraf Salama, 2012 in his article Architectural identity demystified- Visual voices from the Arab World)

Amos Rapoport (1998) points out that therefore, it might be time to begin to analyze and synthesis the many housing studies already in existence and carried out in many places, cultures and periods. Such a synthesis would enable us to develop and clarify concepts and to emphasize what I call “lateral linkages” and theory development- both in our own research and teaching. In connection with the latter, the time has come to encourage students (and institutions) to work on these topics, rather than on ever more empirical studies.

Based on metaphysical perspectives, which are

oriented by phenomenological directives, while focusing on the question of being and existence, architecture seems to be intimately connected with the existential dimensions that ground the seems to be intimately connected with the existential dimensions that ground the inner-wordly nature of our human condition. It is in this sense that “being-in-the-world is essentially graspable as a mode of “being-in-architecture”. (Nader El-Bizri,2012) Architecture at the beginning of the twenty first century requires more thorough development of its capacity for allegorical representation if it is to continue to expand as a form of human expression. Allegorical representation in architecture requires the symbolic enactment of the relation between mind and nature, between reason and that which it perceives. Architectural compositions are capable of enacting allegories of perception, linguistic structures, conceptual structure sin logic, philosophical and theological structures, social relations, ethical and moral values, and dramatic and performative structures. (John Hendrix,2012).

**Conclusion:** In the contemporary world the contested meaning of culture, as it pertains to both architectural discourse and production, raises many uncertainties, not least how the term has been variously allied to certain principles of architecture to further an ideological position. Whether considered through the lens of innovation or tradition, culture in the modern world is the subject of intense debate in which conflicting claims are made about its accumulated meanings over time and its potential as a “construct” for advancing new representational paradigms. (John Hendrix, 2012) Through history, architecture has played a key role in the expression and communication of the ideas, beliefs, and values of a culture or society. Buildings functioned as texts, as compositions, signifiers, symbols, and allegories of religious, philosophical, historical, and political structures of knowledge (John Hendrix, 2012)

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ever more empirical studies.

Culture plays a major role in defining spaces, which differs from place to place. Culture is variable, it is not fixed. It changes its course, as we see in the impact in the modern world. There are lots of areas, where the research is lagging and very few areas were studied to understand the concept of cultural impact

on architectural spaces. The settlements which were existing, the settlements which were transformed, the settlements which were abandoned, the settlements which were transformed in to urban settlements and most of these settlements have their own character and culture. So, the research continues with research of each settlement ahs lot to give to the human.

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