The Discovery of Architecture

A discourse on ancient values and indigenous reality

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Architecture is an ancient discipline, and the results of its thinking and endeavor provide us with some of the most lasting examples of our culture.
This discourse started as a dialogue between two architects who had been teaching and building for a few decades, mainly in the Indian sub-continent.

We developed a four part analytical matrix to derive syntactic clarity for our intuitive understanding of architecture.
Our understanding of the world around us starts with the self – not as ego but as potential for universal action.
Self as Community

to maintain cosmic order
we start with
an in-depth understanding
of the interdependent nature
of self and community
Confronting the contemporary realities of mass poverty, the very large numbers of people in cities.
a building industry largely working with pre-industrial technology there still exists a large repertoire of indigenous crafts and traditional building techniques

and yet a majority of the population still living in rural areas
within the discipline
of scarce resources
of elementary construction techniques
of bio-climatic imperatives
Mother & Child Care Center
Bagnan, West Bengal
The Act of Building with the Awareness of an Evolving Universe

“For the great majority the critical relationship between the building process and the context for its application will continue to be defined by the parameters set by human tolerance and compassion”
Rediscovering architectural principles appropriate to our time and place.
SOS Children’s Village Bhopal
Our understanding of the act of building is that even as it is transformative in nature, it is cosmic in dimension.
The commonly held belief in ancient societies and among primitive people is that a tool transforms the person using it as much as it transforms the object on which the tool is used.
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blending handicraft with contemporary building practices in an economical manner
Having become aware of the material dimension of architecture, with the passage of time the awareness shifted to the ethical basis of action – the passage from life to death, and rebirth as a possibility of the renewal of life.
Maintenance as Renewal

“Understanding the process of renewal can provide the key to sustainable design and produce a built environment which actually improves with age.”
The development of Buddhism – Post Vedanta. Moving from one to zero, from monism to *shunyata*

learning values of an ancient society

Budhha Memorial
New Delhi
A shelter for the image of the enlightened being is created by the devotion and skill of the humble artisan
working with masons and scholars who have preserved tradition

realizing the power of construction practices enlivened by devotion and discipline created by time honored iconography
From classical iconography to the development of a contemporary expression – From intuitive understanding to refashioning the syntax for a sustainable architecture in the Himalayas

The experience of building Dolma Ling – self-built by the nuns – to our architectural language designed for easy maintenance.

The plan form – with public areas centrally rising up the sloping site facing south – and the nuns private rooms extending into sheltered south facing gardens between the residential wings.
Applying Buddhist principles to develop an architecture which mediates between climate and place

Dolma Ling Nunnery
Dharamshala
“For a person who builds, either as an artisan who works with real materials on a site, or an architect/designer who works in the imagination, the experience of construction makes them aware of the building as more than an inanimate assembly of materials and enclosures.

The construction of a building is only one phase in its life.

Once complete and as the building ages, its behavior also matures. This behavior is expressed in the language of architecture, and this is most evident in the task of renewal, whether on a daily basis or seasonal or annual maintenance.”
North face of nuns housing
The sheltered gardens between the Nuns housing wings North side access and utilities (services), and south side with rooms receiving sun in winter.
The learning experience – Nuns debating in the central courtyard of the Nunnery – The linear spread of the nuns residential quarters attach through the classrooms placed at the junction with the central spine of community activities.
dialectical debate as practiced in Tibetan Buddhism for training the mind to penetrate the nature of reality
To sum up
“All architecture emerges from our perception of the world around us and our desire to derive meaning from our day-to-day experience. The interdependent nature of self and community, therefore, is the beginning of this enquiry, which is directed by a focus on evolution, as opposed to mere survival.”
“The mythical celestial architect Vishwakarma, whose name translated literally means ‘universal action’, gives us a clue about the act of building and its universal potential. We need to realize this potential by cultivating a vision for an architecture which goes beyond construction and appearance.”
“The conjunction of time and the built environment gives us a critical tool for understanding the relation between inhabitation and architecture. The process of design, at its best, connects the archetypes in our unconscious with perceived reality in the conscious mind. From this connection design develops into a diagnostic activity which reveals the play of materials and energy and leads to an understanding of change as embodied in the built environment.”
“Our enquiry assumes the form of a spiral when we consider the growth of knowledge and its application to our everyday existence. We, therefore, attempt to discover architectural beginnings in the exploration and understanding of our native realities, regardless of which part of the planet we inhabit.”

Regeneration with Learning
Symbolic Representation of ‘Saraswati’
our goddess of learning

Initiating the establishment of the National Museum of Architecture