

Lecture Abstract

RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR ARCHITECTURE OF KERALA - INDIA

The Blend of Classical and Vernacular Tradition in Wood

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Religious practices in India, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrians, etc., their architectural manifestations, a cursory review of religious structures of different faiths, adaptations made therein, abstractions of principles as can be drawn from ritual paths, symbolism and spatial organization of form, secular architecture of Kerala, a special regional expression in wood, a close symbiosis in both the types, commonalities as well as differences.

Hinduism as a philosophy and doctrine, important junctures in its development, essential architectural manifestations of the religious belief system, general understanding of principles, plan organizations, constituent parts of the form and structure, iconography, etc., the Indian temple order in various regional styles and their architecturally discernible forms.

Temple architecture of Kerala, south Indian temples in general, Kerala temple form as distinct from the Dravidian mode, analysis with respect to the location in settlement, the role of religion in daily life and practices, the concept of the neighborhood temple, the idea of prime deity, temple complex as a place of sociocultural interaction, a meaningful trinity of religion, society and culture in daily life.

Physical attributes of the temple, ancient concepts of building sciences, understanding the physicality of the temple complex as well as the building itself through analysis of form, plan organization, sections and elevations, details, rituals and their associated meanings, study of the temple terminology in Indian terms and in the Malayali language, art and architecture of temple construction through ancient texts, building of temple structures, site selection to conservation, prescribed methods and use of thumb rules, secular architecture based on different communities, courtyard house types, relationship to ancient rules.

Wooden architecture of Kerala, its distinct position in the Indian context, the background of classical architecture, temples in wood with a minimum use of laterite stone for plinths and selected walls, region locally rich in timber, secular architecture: homesteads in the rural setting and detached houses in compounds in urban settings, courtyard as a substantial central space of symbolic nature which acts more as an organizing element rather than a social space, sophisticated construction and articulation techniques similar to those of the classical and religious architecture of the region, use of wood in making of the entire form.

Construction and details, strong religious-cultural bias in plan organization, roof design dictating the form, roofs follow strict rules of the typology with an intricate vocabulary of wooden parts, formulae and calculations for the roof structure, the order of the roof: the multi-piece beams, roof overhang, cross ties and through ties, the dormers, the doors and the partitions etc., the logic of construction and joinery, ornamentation not as appliquéd but as a matter of fashioning and articulation of the material, dominant presence of the rafters and free columns, wooden slats at the periphery create a somber atmosphere, a number of typological variations in secular architecture as well as religious where the essence of form remains the same.

