

Vāstu Architecture, Harmonious Habitat and National Growth

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This paper focuses on the untapped potential of Vastu architecture for creating harmonious habitat and a strong nation.

Housing would acquire an abbreviated and truncated meaning if it is interpreted as providing merely a shelter. A house is much more than a shelter and a roof over one's head - it is a home, a structure which the ancient Indian architecture saw as an organic entity which can be a catalytic factor in growth and stability in life, a space which embraces us, sustains our peace and happiness, offers us comfort and shelter, and become the pivot for our physical, mental and spiritual growth.

Sri Aurobindo wrote:

"Indian sacred architecture of whatever date, style or dedication goes back to something timelessly ancient and now outside India almost wholly lost, something which belongs to the past, and yet it goes forward too, though this the rationalistic mind will not easily admit, to something which will return upon us and is already beginning to return, something which belongs to the future."

- Sri Aurobindo, *The Renaissance in India*

Vāstu: Traditional Indian Architecture

Vāstu Shāstra is an ancient Indian system of designing and construction. It aims at establishing a dynamic balance between Form and Energy so that harmonious conditions are created for the inhabitants. The Masters of Vāstu Architecture studied the subtle yet extremely powerful forces of the Universe, their movements, currents, attributes and their effect on all facets of human life. Equipped with this knowledge they used their profound insight to formulate architectural rules aimed at designing such building which would be in harmony with the natural forces, their flows and frequencies, and that any work done in those building would manifest as riches, peace, and prosperity. These rules cover all aspects of housing from selection of the site to final construction of the building, are valid even today and continue to produce positive results.

Vāstu buildings have harmonious energies. They promote stability, prosperity, happiness, and mental peace for the occupants and owners. For Vāstu any building is an altar raised to the Divine Self, a house of the Cosmic Spirit, an appeal and aspiration to the Infinite.

Vāstu goes beyond designing and architecture. At a higher level it deals with the subtle effect of the design on the environment and people by taking into consideration the radiations from Sun, other planets and various ground field forces. Its aim is not merely to design beautiful and comfortable buildings, rather it aims at designing such buildings which can have a positive influence on the happiness, prosperity and well being of the residents.

The Vedic and the Agamic traditions have always held that the microcosm is but a reflection of the macrocosm. A dwelling is an ecological unit, a microcosm which reflects the macrocosm, it is influenced by the same elements, and it follows the same rules. The principles of Vāstu architecture are the applied aspect of this philosophy, a highly refined method of creating a living space which is a miniature replica of the cosmos as perceived by the Vedas. Vāstu Architecture is about emulating the attributes of the Cosmic Space, about bringing the divine sentinels of Cosmic Directions into our homes, about creating Harmony by creating a living environment where the forces of nature are balanced and at peace with each other.

The guidelines and rules of Vāstu Shāstra have been laid down clearly in several ancient texts, but the principles upon which they have been formulated are steeped deep into mystical Indian philosophy of Vedas, Yoga and Tantra. It may be speculated, however, based upon several observations, that these principles are deeply connected to the cosmic rays of the sun, the movement of Earth, and geomagnetism.

The Antiquity of Vāstu Tradition

No irrational tradition can survive indefinitely. The survival of Vāstu for several centuries is a testimony to its authenticity and practical utility. The earliest reference to Vāstu is found in Rgveda where the sage offers a prayer to 'Vastoshpati', the Lord of Vāstu, for protection, happiness and prosperity. (Annexure A)

The earliest application of Vāstu Shāstra may be said to be in the construction of ceremonial alters for Vedic rituals. Shulbhsutra - the Vedic geometry was used to calculate and design these alters. Numerous passages of Katyayan, Baudhayana and Apastambha Shulbha deal with the size of sacrificial altars and their method of construction. The Shrautasutras, Grihyasutras and Dharmasutras contain detailed instructions for performing the vedic rites and the associated architectural aspects, like the construction of the vedi and selection of the place for performing the rites.

It is difficult to pinpoint the historicity of Indian traditions because of their oral origin. These traditions have given more importance to the core teachings rather than to their historical records. Consequently, little is known about the age of the treatise and the personal lives of the authors.

Notwithstanding these problems, the richness of the building and design tradition of Vāstu cannot be denied. Matsyapurana mentions the names of 18 sages who are said to have established the science of Vāstu. These sages have been revered in history as seekers of truth and unravellers of the mysteries of the universe. (Annexure B)

Though a major part of the Vedic literature is lost, a good number of Vāstu texts survive. Some of the more important and established Vāstu texts are listed in Annexure C.

The fundamental Principle of Vāstu Architecture

Vāstu Shāstra has a strong similarity to the principles of Yoga. Just as the Prana flows freely through the body of a yogi, so is a Vāstu house designed to allow free flow of Prana within. The geometric centre of the plot is equated with the human naval, the NE is the head, and the SW is the base. The left side of the plot is the Pingala nerve or the carrier of Solar Prana, and the right side is the Ida nerve or the carrier of Chandra Prana. The centre of the plot has the highest concentration of energy. It is therefore called the Bramhasthan and no construction is encouraged on this spot.

The right – Ida- side supports all creative and life promoting activities, and the left – Pingala - side supports all heavy, difficult, and worldly activities. A Vāstu architect plans more open area and light construction on Ida side and heavy construction on Pingala side. This maintains a dynamic equilibrium of energy in the structure, for any serious disequilibrium will manifest as disharmony in life.

For example, disequilibrium in a house will cause mental tension, chronic illness, emotional unrest, financial problems, distrust and misunderstandings with family members, separation, or even a loss of life.

Disequilibrium in an office will cause low sales, reduced profits, problems with enforcement agencies, low staff retentivity, litigations, shortfall in targets and missed deadlines.

A disequilibrium in a factory causes losses, mechanical problems, breakdowns, loss of production, severe financial problems, labour troubles, fire, burglary, penalties, personal and family problems, accidents, and in extreme cases, fatal accidents.

Vāstu Shāstra also firmly believes that each building - whether it is a house, a godown, a factory, or an office - is an organic whole where indiscriminate extensions, alterations or mutilations should not be carried out.

The Highest Benefit of a Vāstu shelter

Our Earth is a living planet. It breaths, vibrates and sustains life. But it is also exposed to a constant pressure from a multitude of forces of vast magnitudes which put the Earth's Life Force constantly under stress. Some of the harmful forces are listed below.

Geopathic Stress and Telluric Lines

Geopathic Stress is caused when the natural vibrations of the Earth are disturbed. This happens mainly by narrow paths of running water about 200 to 300 feet below ground, certain mineral concentrations, fault lines and underground cavities. Under normal conditions Earth emits natural beneficiary waves of 7.83 Hz frequency usually called

Alpha waves. This phenomenon has been confirmed by NASA. A geopathic stress causes a change in the frequency of these waves

Telluric Lines are grid-like lines which cover the entire surface of the earth. The two famous lines are the Hartmann's grid and Curry's field. The crossing points of these lines are found to be detrimental to health, especially when intersecting with underground water veins.

The most common effect of Geopathic stress and Telluric lines on human life is seen as susceptibility to cancer, asthma, heart problems, miscarriages, long term mental illness, low response to medical treatment, insomnia, birth of physically deformed children, long-term stress in relationships and a general instability in life. Offices and factories tend to suffer from personnel and productivity problems, schools have high absenteeism, children find it difficult to concentrate, commercial stores don't get customers, and patients in hospitals tend to suffer the most.

The other harmful forces are the huge amounts of electromagnetic radiation and energy particles from the space, the fluctuating magnetic field of the Earth, the oscillating magnetic poles, Corialis Force, Chandler's Wobble and the effect of changing moon on human emotions.

Vāstu Shāstra is the only system of architecture which promises homes with harmony. Therefore it is logical to say that Vāstu homes would shelter the residents from the harmful effect of these negative natural forces

Vāstu architecture and Housing

It has been observed that those families who live in houses with Vāstu defects tend to suffer from psychological problems, relationship problems, chronic illness and serious setbacks in life, and when the Vāstu defects are removed or treated the problems also disappear.

The housing sector stands to benefit immensely if there is a blend of modern architectural techniques and skills with rules and guidelines of Vāstu architecture. Modern Architecture excels at scientific usage of space, designing energy efficient buildings, harnessing solar, wind and geo-thermal energy. But it stops at the physical and aesthetic level of building designing because unlike ancient Indian architecture, modern architecture is clueless about the subtle forces of nature and the immense benefit which the society can gain by harnessing them.

Houses designed on Vāstu principles would offer a healthy and a secure life for the housewife, a protection from emotional traumas and a meaningful existence for her self, her husband and her children. A family will have good income, good social and personal life, recognition in professional fields, and a strong family bond.

Incorporation of Vāstu principles in designing townships and housing projects will not escalate the cost if done carefully; however, if it does so, it would be very marginal, and that would be a small price to pay for the immense benefits that would follow.

Value Addition: The profile of the real estate customers and the investors has changed considerably over the past few years. Now we find them more educated, suave, and quite aware of the benefits of Vastu Architecture. Therefore, inclusion of Vastu principles in a property design would amount to extra value addition, and the customer would have a preference for such property.

Vāstu Architecture, Corporate World and Indian Industries

The Corporate world can benefit from Vāstu principles to enhance their employees' productivity and have better interpersonal relationships.

Of particular interest would be the application of Vāstu principles in designing the layouts of industries.

India has suffered huge losses from the sick industries. According to the report of Board for Industrial & Financial Reconstruction, Ministry of Finance, Department of Economic Affairs, Government of India, on 31.12.2003 the net worth of sick industries in India was Rs.54650.90 crores, their accumulated losses were a staggering Rs.103277.55 crores. These industries involved 23,35,757 workers (Annexure D). This is a terrible human tragedy, a terrible loss of manpower, and a staggering financial loss to the nation.

There is no doubt that most of these sick units must have tried their best to turn around, but experience shows that industries which suffer from critical problems in spite of their excellent management and infrastructure have one or several major Vāstu faults in their design and layout. Industries are highly susceptible to Vāstu faults because they are exposed to heavy loads of machinery, raw material, finished goods, brute mechanical action of the machines like cutting, piercing, shearing, drilling, bending, very high temperatures of furnaces, heat treatment plants, welding activities, movement of heavy vehicles, goods, people etc .It has also been observed when the Vāstu defects are removed the problems disappear.

Vāstu is, however, not a cure for all problems, nor is it a substitute to hard work and careful planning in life. It would be naive to assume that if Vāstu principles are utilized then success in life would become a foregone conclusion in all cases, because Vāstu principles work within the framework of natural laws, they aim at creating ambiances where hard work and sound planning yields quick results. The society should watch out for unscrupulous elements who are misguiding people at large in the name of Vāstu Architecture.

Sick Building Syndrome, Green Architecture and Vastu Architecture

The West has already begun its crusade against Sick Buildings. In 1974 the concept of Bau-biologie was propagated in Germany under Dr. Anton Schneider. In a broad sense the term Bau-biologie may be understood as the science of holistic interactions between life and living environment. The building environment has an effect upon the health of the occupants, and baubiologie uses this knowledge to build healthy homes by defining certain principles of where and how the buildings should be located, the selection of building materials, defining the parameters of desired moisture content, noise pollution,

light, lighting, colour, use of harmonic measures, proportions and shapes and so on (Annexure E).

The concept of Bau Biologie is thirty years old, and it works at the physical level of building sickness. Fortunately, we have inherited the knowledge of Vāstu which is ancient and proven, and works at a much deeper level.

The global energy crisis has initiated a move towards Green Architecture. Perhaps we will be left with no other choice if we want our children to survive. Already work has begun in India by TERI and some individuals. Our buildings need to be integrated with nature. Man cannot be separated from his environment, he belongs to it. There is a holistic bond between the two of them. Also, all life stems from the Earth and therefore it is imperative that we make it a point to integrate our buildings and other constructions with Earth and our environment.

The modern technology and architecture have great common sense, practical vision, will to innovate, and Vāstu has its ancient wisdom, a philosophy of directions, space and measurements. A fusion of Green Architectural techniques, Bau biologie and Vāstu principles may well pave way for a revolution in real estate development and housing.

A word about Vastu and modern Architecture. At no point has it been suggested in this document that Vāstu Architecture should replace modern planning and architecture. It would be cynical to suggest that. Modern technology is unsurpassed in the history of the world in fields of space management, construction techniques, grand visions, initiative and a will to innovate and take on challenges headlong. What is being suggested is that the principles of Vāstu architecture should be profusely used in designing townships, colonies, co-operative housing, industrial areas, individual houses and factories without compromising on the efficiency of modern architecture.

An appeal to Government agencies, ministries, builders and promoters

There is a global renaissance in faith, religion, traditional arts and crafts. In India the traditional performing arts and handicrafts were patronized by the Government soon after Independence, but the patronage of traditional knowledge has remained a dream. The tradition of Vāstu Architecture has been carried down by a succession of scholars, and in the current scenario has made its presence felt purely upon its own merit. Vāstu is a living science and a great hope for our tomorrow. No other method of designing and construction is as deep, profound and philosophical as Vāstu. A correct interpretation and application of tenets and Vāstu postulates combined with modern architecture can go a long way in alleviating the pressures of modern living. It is the call of the hour to patronize and utilize the traditional sciences like Vāstu architecture which are relevant in modern times and can contribute in a positive manner to the creation of a better life for all. May we look forward to sacred spaces in all Indian houses where families feel safe, secure and comfortable, where human intelligence can think better, where our children can learn how to aspire high and actually reach there. Various community buildings like schools, primary health centres, village offices and community centre and even middle and high income housing while retaining their cost effectivity in terms of structural, functional and aesthetic sufficiency can be built on these principles.

Vāstu should not be viewed through tainted glass of religious or political fanaticism. It is a school of architecture which has its roots in the Vedas which belong to all humanity, because what is good belongs to all. Therefore, incorporation of Vāstu principles and rules in designing and construction of housing projects and public buildings would not

amount to patronization of a religious concept, and would be within our country's secular policy. In any case, adherence to Vāstu architecture is a choice, not a rule.

We are a nation with a glorious tradition and heritage of culture, knowledge and learning. Our time has arrived. The Planning Commission's document "India:Vision 2020" is already published. Hon. President Dr. Abdul Kalam has also projected a vision of India being a super power by 2020. Today we are an emerging economy, we have a large pool of scientists, a giant technological workforce, self sufficiency in food grains, and an overall development in core sectors. The Age of brute force is over, this is the age of Knowledge. Let us utilize the knowledge of Vāstu Architecture to harness the subtle energies of Cosmos for creating habitats, commercial and industrial zones, successful centers of higher education and scientific research, create environments where everyone of us performs well and grows, creates wealth and contributes to the growth of the nation. We are a nation of a billion people which is committed to success, and this juggernaut will not stop anymore.

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Annexure A
Prayer to Vastoshpati

ॐ वास्तोष्पते प्रति जानीह्यस्मान् स्वावेशो अनमीवोभवानः । यत्त्वेमहेप्रतितन्नोजुषस्वशन्नो भवद्विपदे शं
चतुष्पदे ॥ ७-५४-१

वास्तोष्पते प्रतरणो न एधि गयस्फानो गोभिरश्वेभिरिन्दो । अजरासस्ते सख्ये स्यामपितेव पुत्रान् प्रति नो
जुषस्व ॥ ७-५४-२

वास्तोष्पते शग्मया संसदा ते सक्षीमहिरण्मया गातुमत्या । पाहि क्षेमउत योगेवरन्नोयूयम् पात स्वस्तिभिः
सदा नः ॥ ७-५४-३

अमीवहावास्तोष्पते विश्वा रूपाण्याविशन् । सखा सुशेव एधि नः ॥ ७-५५-१

1. O Guardian of the Homestead: bring no disease, and give us happy entrance. Whate'er we ask of thee, be pleased to grant it, and prosper thou quadrupeds and bipeds.

2 Protector of the Home, be our promoter: increase our wealth in kind and steeds, O Indu.
May we be ever-youthful in thy friendship: be pleased in us as in his sons a father.

3 Through thy dear fellowship that bringeth welfare, may we be victors, Guardian of the Dwelling! Protect our happiness in rest and labour. Preserve us evermore, ye Gods, with blessings.

4. VASTOSPATI, who killest all disease and wearest every form, Be an auspicious Friend to us.

(Translations courtesy Ralph T.H. Griffith)

Annexure B**Names of Vastu Masters mentioned in Matsyapurana**

1. Bhrigu
2. Nagnajit
3. Shaunak
4. Atri
5. Vishalaksha
6. Garg
7. Vashishtha
8. Purandara
9. Vasudev
10. Vishwakarma
11. Bramha
12. Aniruddha
13. Maya
14. Kumara
15. Shukra
16. Narad
17. Nandisha
18. Brihaspati

Annexure C

List of Vastu Texts

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Vishwakarma Vāstu Shāstr | 8. Manasara |
| 2. Samarangana Sutradhar | 9. Manushyalaya Chandrika |
| 3. Mandana Sutradhar | 10. Kashyapa Shilpa |
| 4. Rajasimha Vāstu | 11. Aparajita Priccha |
| 5. Deeparnava | 12. Vishwakarma Prakash |
| 6. Shilparatna | 13. Sanatkumara Vāstu Shāstra |
| 7. Mayamata | |

Vāstu principles are also found in the following Agamic and Pauranic literature:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Karnikagama | 6. Matsya Purana |
| 2. Suprabhedagama | 7. Vishnudharmottar Purana |
| 3. Vaikhanasagama | 8. Bramhanda Purana |
| 4. Hayasirsha Tantra | 9. Bhavishya Purana |
| 5. Agni Purana | |

This list is by no means the exhaustive list. In addition to these texts, Vāstu principles are also available in various other books

Annexure D
BIFR Report
Detail of Sick Industries as on 31.12.2003
Source: <http://bifr.nic.in/geninfo.htm>

S.No	Industry	Total Cases	Networth Rs. in Crores	Accumulated Losses	Workers
1.	Textiles	867	7501.23	15728.12	623753
2.	Metallurgical	762	8962.63	16684.70	202669
3.	Paper & Pulp	270	1350.39	2348.23	67699
4.	Chemicals	331	4111.46	7177.60	63114
5.	Engineering	16	196.23	1048.79	36999
6.	Electrical equipment	210	3253.54	6672.03	64414
7.	Cement and Gypsum	79	1795.88	2568.18	25533
8.	Vegetable Oils & Vanaspati	245	1544.79	3962.10	34086
9.	Electronics	82	547.96	1028.82	13921
10.	Food Processing	205	1649.68	2436.47	39639
11.	Drugs	162	1921.38	3916.66	33079
12.	Transport	76	716.69	1474.79	38246
13.	Jute	53	124.54	878.34	149924
14.	Glass & Ceramics	104	917.75	1566.16	35227
15.	Sugar	51	789.05	1120.57	36388
16.	Rubber Goods	79	448.12	872.25	12809
17.	Leather & Leather Goods	52	802.50	1375.32	10985
18.	Fertilizers	43	3007.50	7358.49	20100
19.	Timber Products	19	60.70	159.88	3952
20.	Miscellaneous	1042	14948.88	24900.05	823220
	Total	4748	54650.90	103277.55	2335757

Annexure E

Principles of Bau-biologie

1. A building site shall be geologically undisturbed.
2. Residential homes are best located away from industrial centers and main traffic routes.
3. Housing shall be developed in a decentralized and loose manner interlaced with sufficient green space.
4. Housing and developments shall be personalized, in harmony with nature, fit for human habitation and family oriented.
5. Natural and unadulterated building materials shall be used.
6. Walls, floors and ceilings shall be diffusible and hygroscopic.
7. Indoor air humidity shall be regulated naturally.
8. Air pollutants need to be filtered and neutralized.
9. An appropriate balance of thermal insulation and heat retention is needed.
10. The air and surface temperatures of a given room need to be optimized.
11. A heating system shall feature radiant heat using as much (passive) solar heat as possible.
12. The total moisture content of a new building shall be low and dry out quickly.
13. A building shall have a pleasant or neutral smell. No toxins shall outgas.
14. Light, lighting and color shall be in accord with natural conditions.
15. Protective measures against noise pollution as well as infrasonic and ultrasonic vibrations need to be human oriented.
16. Only building materials with little or preferably no radioactivity shall be used.
17. The natural balance of atmospheric electricity and ion concentration shall be maintained.
18. The Earth's natural magnetic field shall not be altered or distorted.
19. Man-made electromagnetic radiation shall be eliminated (or reduced as much as possible).
20. Cosmic and terrestrial radiation is essential and shall be interfered with as little as possible.
21. Interior and furniture design shall be based on physiological findings.
22. Harmonic measures, proportions and shapes need to be taken into consideration.
23. The production, installation and disposal of building materials shall not contribute to environmental pollution and high energy costs.
24. Building activities shall not contribute to the exploitation of non-renewable and rare resources.
25. Building activities shall not cause a rise in social and medical costs.
