Gender based Symbolism in Architecture

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Abstract—Do tall skyscrapers are symbol of Phallus designed by male bastion architects. Do they want to proclaim that they are supreme on Gender scale? If so then what do the female figurine Caryatids proclaim while holding the Pediments in the temples of Athens some two thousand years ago. Erotic temples of India during 10th -13th century represented the sexual positions as given by Vatasyan in his famous book called Kamsutra. This paper examines some of the aspects of Gender based Symbolism in Architecture.

Keywords— Erotic Architecture, Kamasutra, Obelisks, Temples.

I. INTRODUCTION

AUTHOR Aaron Betsky in the paper "The Man-Made World" from his book Building Sex: Men, Women, Architecture and the Construction of Sexuality convey that the society is still divided and there is male superiority in the modern urban architecture [1].

He claims that the tall skyscrapers are phallic symbols, which have been made by male, to assert their supremacy over female. On the other hand, parks, gardens, and shopping malls which have been made by male, to assert their supremacy over female.

But do the buildings proclaim high about their superiority over other in terms of domination?

II. THE OBELISKS

The obelisk called TEJEN in ancient Egypt means protection or defense from evil forces. The word obelisk is derived from Greek word obeliskos meaning a projected object for roasting over fire. The Greek obelisks were monolithic stone with quadrangular base, placed upright and topped with a square pyramid. Pointed pyramid had the function of perforating the cloud and dispersing negative forces. These obelisks were placed in pair in front of temple. It symbolized the Sun God ‘Ra’. It was believed that the God existed within the structure [2].

The symbolic representation of obelisk considering it as phallus is filmed in adult movie by famous film maker Andrew Blake. A lady masturbating close to obelisk is symbolism of obelisk as phallus [2].

The question is “Are all projected objects phallus?” Can it be symbolically represented in place of phallus? The answer is “No”. Similar projected objects are minarets, often free standing and in Islamic Architecture a minaret is attached with a mosque.

III. THE ORDERS

Orders are column adoring the Greek and Roman temples and Public places. While Doric style temple has strong masculine order, the ionic has feminine order. The Caryatids, in Athens close to temple Parthenon has sculpted female figurine serving as column supporting entablature on their head. The Caryatids used to dance with basket of live reeds on their head, and this symbolism was crafted in the temple at Athens [3].

IV. HINDUISM AND SYMBOLISM

The Shiva lingam a cosmic pillar within a female genital yoni is worshipped by Hindus. The union of Lingam that is phallus and yoni that is vagina represents the indivisible two in oneness of male and female, the passive space and active time from which all life originate. A natural Shiva lingam made of stalagmite in western Himalayas is an important pilgrim for Hindus. For a sincere devotee, the Linga is not merely a block of stone. It is all-radiant talks to him, raises him above body-consciousness, and helps to communicate with the Lord. According to some scholars, worship of Shiva Linga in effect means worship of the reproduction function. For, they say that the other meaning of the Sanskrit word ‘Linga’ is gender in general and phallus (the male reproductive organ) in particular. They believe that the base of the Lingam corresponds to the Yoni which mean vagina or the female reproductive organ. Correspondence of Linga and Yoni in a Shiva Linga is therefore interpreted as the representation of the process of copulation. Scholars further say that the Kalash (container of water) that is suspended over the Shiva Linga from which water drips over the Linga also correspond to the idea of intercourse.

Connecting the origin of Shiva Linga to the early Indus Valley civilization, scholars opine that tribes of the Indus Valley took to the togetherness of Lingam and Yoni in a Shiva Linga as the point of energy, creation and enlightenment.

The existence of human life started through pre-historic period and had sexual life under cave or tree to get indulgence. Primitive man revealed sexual materials on wall period and had sexual life under cave or tree to get indulgence. Primitive man revealed sexual materials on wall and roof. After very hard labour they achieved lucrative life. Architecture is related herewith both term i.e. sex and shelter which finally represents to gender. Any period it has been proved to be creative for gender that they became...
successful more based on gender symbolism.

V. KAMASUTRA

Vatasyan a Hindu Philosopher lived during 4th-6th Century in a Hindu Kingdom and wrote a book Kamsutra. This book is about human sexual behavior. It is a practical guide about sex. According to his philosophy of life “in childhood a child should learn how to make a living, youth is a time of pleasure and as time passes one should concentrate on living virtuously” [1].

VI. THE TEMPLE

The form and space of a typical Hindu temple represents a sequel of organized events. Indian temples of 10-13th century depict the symbolic sexual act on the façade of temples. Sex in life could be blissful only if there is an inner accord between body, mind and soul. The temples of Khajuraho are famous for their erotic sculptures. Khajuraho is a one of the biggest tourist attraction in India. The Khajuraho temples have two major tourist attractions – architecture and sculptures. While the architecture displays the best of medieval Hindu style, the sculptures represent the best of human skill, perfection and knowledge of human anatomy. The range and complexities of these sculptures truly make the Khajuraho temples a stone spectacle on earth. This temple is used as a laboratory for understanding the dynamics of nature’s opposing forces—masculine and feminine, lunar and solar, active and passive. The mithunas refer to the sensual and erotic lovemaking couples that the temples are famous for. These sculptures were a symbol of fertility and auspiciousness. The heavenly beauties form the major chunk of the sculptures at Khajuraho. These ladies can be seen involved in various sexual activities and in different poses. Konark Sun Temple is famous for its erotic sculptures. The outer side of temple is full of engravings, images of sex, passion, and copulation.

VII. THE PARK

Although the parks and gardens are feminine forms, but in Haesindang Park of South Korea(also known as Penis Park) is noted for its number of erect phallic statues. The collection created by Korean artists is on display in the form of "hanging arrangements to three meter tall trunks of wood", for joy, spirituality and sexuality. Korea is a very clear example of a strongly patriarchal society, one which can be expected to generate strong son preference that will influence fertility decisions.

CONCLUSION

Symbolism in Architecture is the personal understanding of an author which cannot be universalized. A positive symbolism will be appreciated while negative will be an object of critic. Architecture is very creative and thinking process for human being.

REFERENCES