

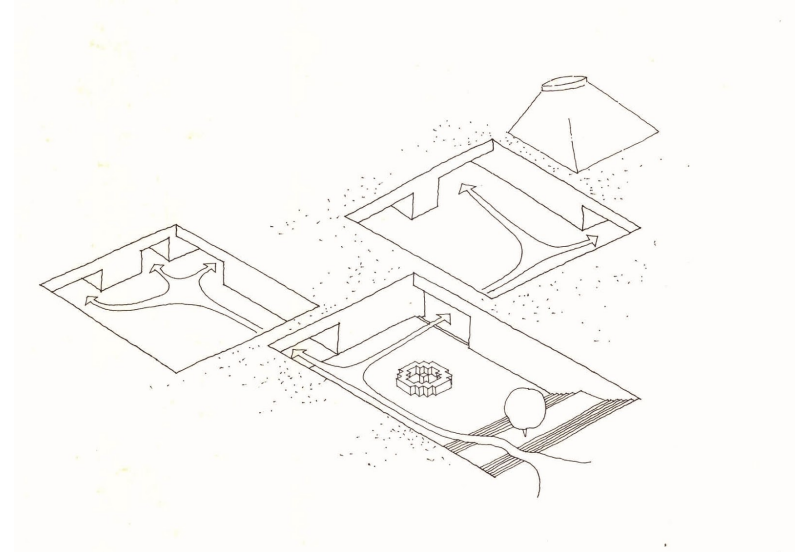
“Soul is rewarded by merging with the all-pervading principle of the universe”

- Charles Correa

Experiencing architecture is not about looking at the building as an object but reading the energy flux and acting along the energy field through space. Correa, a strong believer in critical regionalism in his own way believed that the complex and ambiguous relationship between humans and nature was central to Indian culture and architecture. His piece of architecture was and is always experiential rather than only picturesque.

Correa had this love towards the sky and the stimuli it provides that he kept on integrating it in his buildings and insisted on the rapidly changing Indian urban world to look back on the values we held for a long period. Indeed he's right, throughout our human history the sky has always had a sacred value on the back of our mind. It's considered as the abode of the supernatural force that any civilization had. Multiple gestures like looking up to the skies at times of sadness seeking for hope, celebrating success, lifting the heads up etc. concretizes our belief of sky is the abode of the supernatural power either we believe in or not. The same applies to the buildings of the age-old civilizations where the gods sit on top of the hill, the towers of temples accentuating our vision towards the sky and a feeling of superiority. These are the paradigm of power either mythical or superiority that has been constant in all societies.

Ignoring all these mythical values just because they are mythical in a country like India makes anyone obsolete among the public. Because in India, even if it is a metropolis, you find sacred gestures like yantra, rangoli, temple, or only an idol sitting under a tree everywhere. These are an integral part of the public spaces through which we communicate our notions to the non-manifest world in our day to day lives and can't be ignored or forced to be removed overnight. Architecture too is generated by these mythical beliefs but explores a more profound world than the manifest world it exists.



Bharath Bhavan, Bhopal @ArchDaily

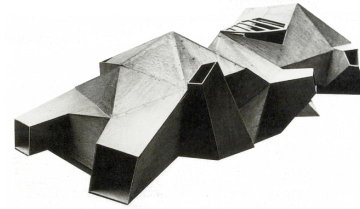
Movement from one space to another always meant something to us, where we're heading, in what way we're heading, what we encounter while we move along. In India, the relationship of built-form with open to sky space is intangible. Open to sky spaces house the best activities like early morning, late evening activities in Indian culture and climate. These open to sky spaces leaves with many options and an infinite number of variations for one to use like gathering, cooking, sleeping at night, etc. These activities can be found in various examples like Banni villages, Mughal buildings namely Red Fort, Fatehpur Sikri, Southern Temples. But ultimately it's the weaving of these open to sky spaces with shaded walkways, positive and negative spaces traversed in an ambling path. Correa quotes this meandering pathway as a "universal Impulse" with deep sacred routes from religion. Very much similar to religious encircling in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity which is a very similar ritual in all religions making it more universal rather than religious as it's common to all humankind. Similarly, in buildings like Gandhi museum, Bharath Bhavan of Correa's a series of courtyards, the play of positive and negative spaces are tailored where the eyes can rest from the tireless show of the exhibits in these museums.

Exploring the deep roots of mythical values that have been followed and mostly taught blindly all these generations Correa used them in a subtle way visually but in a hefty way theoretically, Correa blended the mythical Indian image and values with his way of contemporary architecture when the modern architectural drift was dropping in India. His ideas of Empty center, Axis Mundi, Cosmos are quite a few examples to explain what he was doing in the modern age after Le Corb left behind India with a concrete capital.



Ancient Indian step well tanks

Correa preferred Human experience over Photogenic experience because printed image dramatizes 2D patterns, but it's quite incapable of communicating any sense of the ambient air and the dynamic light throughout the day which generates the feelings that are central to our beings. Correa stressed much on courtyards which he referred to as Empty center or "Volume Zero", which exerts a gravitational pull towards it and connects the ground to the sky which he technically calls "Axis Mundi". Axis Mundi is the column of the universe that connects the earth to the sky. Ancient step-wells are an inverse model of the mandala which is the axis Mundi connecting earth with the sky. This axis Mundi or connection with the sky are primordial in all civilization so is the water in those tanks which is the giver and taker of life.



Hindustan Lever Pavilion @architexturez

But there were occasions where Correa was just like others falling prey for the global movements like the famous Deconstructive architecture in the '80s for a short while. He quoted, " This way lies madness". He didn't want to do buildings like the Hindustan Lever pavilion as he thought the more he does things like that, the more they are the same. But apart from the style, Mahendra Raj did a great job in providing structural solutions for such structures that were way too complex for the time in an antiquated country like India.

Perhaps it's not hard to accept. Every space emits various information and ideas that are perceived in different ways by different beings but these emitted energies have exerted extraordinary powers on us and on the architecture we build. Thus quoted Charles Correa "Soul is rewarded by merging with the all-pervading principle of the universe".