

COVER:

THE WORLD OF INDIAN ARCHITECTURE

LE CORBUSIER'S INDIA

In India, having learnt various things from nature, lifestyle and its classical architecture, Le Corbusier left behind the plan for the new city of Chandigarh and ten works of architecture. On this cover, at the center are the main entrance, portico and the hyperbolic tower of one of his representative works, the Chandigarh Assembly Hall. The enamel painting on the gigantic door, portraying the movement of the Sun, various animals gathering around the symbolic Indian tree, man and his relationship to Life, Nature and the Cosmos, growth and harmony, in a mythological way expresses the thought behind his work in India. As one progresses beyond this door, one arrives at a foyer with columns, illuminated by mysterious light from above. Here, moving clock-wise around the base of the hyperbolic tower, one enters the Assembly Hall, dramatically lit at specific periods by the Sun and Moon. From the cover page, by delving into the background and relationships of this creation, begins the introduction to Indian architecture.

When Le Corbusier visited a step-well near Ahmedabad, he observed a dynamic relationship created between water, movement of heavenly bodies of the Sun & the Moon and architecture on this earth. On the way, the form of the hyperbolic curved cooling tower of the Sabarmati thermal power station fascinated him. From the 'chatri' of Indo-Islamic architecture, Le Corbusier evolved the concept of the parasol in various ways. He has also learnt many things from observing animals and trees, the people and their ways of life. Again, influences of Indian formal and spatial concepts can be traced to the abstract forms of the astronomical observatory in Delhi, the Jantar Mantar, the fore-space & porch to the doorway of local dwellings etc. He was probably interested in the path from the phenomenal world towards the ultimate truth, as symbolized in the Hindu temple, and in the vertical link existing between earth and sky in Buddhist and Hindu architecture. In his work in India, not relying on the authority of the past, nor taking the easy route of glorifying modernism, had he not set his eyes on the universal theme confronting man and Architecture?

Further, as one aspect of Indian thought, is a poem of Tagore quoted from 'Gitanjali'. The verses rhythmically sing about the joy in the oneness of the individual cosmos and the universal cosmos, the eternal cycles of life.

(Text: Terukazu Nii)

“The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.

It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow.

I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.”

Captions:

(from left to right, top to bottom)

‘Chatri’ (parasol), Fatehpur Sikri

Cooling tower of the Sabarmati thermal power station

Jantar Mantar Astronomical observatory, New Delhi

Subterranean step-well that reflects the movement of the Sun and the Moon

Assembly Hall, Chandigarh (architect: Le Corbusier)

Turban

Horns of oxen, Gujarat

‘Pol’ house, Ahmedabad

Under the banyan tree, Bodhgaya

Mythical diagram portraying the movement of the Sun and the Tree of Life on the gigantic enamel doorway

The South Indian Hindu temple symbolizing Mt.Meru

Photo credits:

Vastu- Shilpa Foundation (power station, enamel doorway)

Eiji Kitada (oxen)

Terukazu Nii (all excepting the above)

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