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ARCHITECTURE AS BUILDINGS FREE OF SERVITUDE

AN ANALYSIS OF LOUIS .I. KAHN'S PHILOSOPHY

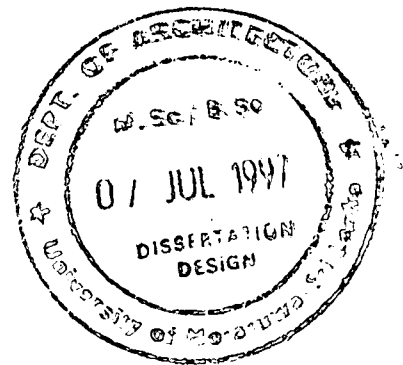
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University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka.
**A DESSERTATION PRESENTED TO
THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE
UNIVERSITY OF MORATUWA
SRI LANKA
FOR
THE M.Sc (ARCH) EXAMINATION**

71592

72 '97'
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UNIVERSITY OF MORATUWA
JUNE 1997.**



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the encouragement and inspiration given to me by Architect Vidura Sri Namuni.

My thanks is also due to Prof. Nimal De Silva for the valuable suggestions and constructive criticism.

To Architect Chris de Saram for having guided me and for having lent me his books.

To Kapila for his assistance, support and encouragement.

I wish to thank Joyce for having patiently typed my dissertation. Without her it would not have been possible.

To Nali, my husband, for his patience, support and encouragement.

To my parents for having inspired guided and sustaining me with their prayers throughout my years at university.



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Architecture comes from a need in man to make a world within a world. It is a need to make of a psychologically meaningful world in the vast and incomprehensible world that nature has created. Building is the manner in which 'man' creates a psychologically meaningful world. But not all of man's buildings satisfy this need. When man loses sight of the need of a building, he creates buildings that are in servitude.

The thrust of this dissertation lies in establishing a way in which to ensure that all building that man create become architecture, and to ensure that Architecture is interpreted only as buildings free of servitude. As such its genesis rests in seeking ways in which to define the role and purpose of building and of Architecture to man, and more importantly at discovering a way in which to create buildings that are free of servitude, thereby revealing Louis Kahn's philosophy in its essential meaning.



Man creates his building to facilitate his psychic needs for identity and for wellbeing. His buildings as such, form points of reference of his beliefs and values. This enables man to form a bond with his natural surroundings. Architecture is a building that is such a point of reference, it helps man to live.

A brief look at our built environment would no doubt reveal that there exists a grave crisis. Disorder, monotony, lack of creativity and of beauty, and lack of psychological stimulation characterises it. It is an environment that architecture has not found expression in. It is an environment in which buildings are in servitude to man's material needs. It is an environment that deprives man of his reason for living.

With the dawn of the new century a moment away, we must urgently seek ways in which to bring meaning, beauty and order back into our built environment. We must re-discover ways in which to give expression to architecture in our buildings. We must desperately search for the reasons we are faced with such a crisis, discover ways in which to free our buildings of servitude and thereby establish a way in which to create an environment that ensures man's psychic wellbeing.



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Architecture is defined today in numerous ways. None seem to be able to give it a definite meaning nor to indicate a definite way in which to create a work of architecture. Instead it's discovery is left to chance, to trial and error, to circumstance and time, but neither way seem to be fruitful as it does not allow for consistency. As such much of our built environment demonstrates failed attempts, while just a handful of buildings created spontaneously by a few architects reach the desired height of a work of architecture.

Why is architecture so evasive of modern man? The ancient men, the primitive men seemed to be able to create wonderful works of architecture. Why is modern man, with his advanced knowledge, with his innovative ideas and technology, new designs and

materials, unable to make buildings that are meaningful in a psychological sense. It seems that modern man in his quest for advanced technology and for material gain, has forgotten the reason why he builds, forgotten the role and purpose of building.

Nature and time produces men who like Rishis' point to man a way out of the crisis situation he finds himself in from time to time. Louis I Kahn - a legend of modern architecture is such a man. He having perceived the reason for the present crisis, he indicates a way in which to bring meaning back into our built environment. He defines architecture and puts it into its proper perspective, and spells out a step by step process to creating a work of architecture. A process aimed at ensuring that the original inspiration that brought about man's buildings, do not get lost in the labyrinth of the design process, circumstance and time. A process that inspires greater personal artistic statements and ensures the psychic-wellbeing of the occupants. It is a philosophy that enables us to understand the concept of architecture as buildings that are free of servitude, and to create an inspiring architecture.



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Definition of Terms: The term 'architecture' finds its definition in Kahn's philosophy. It has been defined by Kahn as a spiritual quality that exist in the mind. A spiritual quality that is embodied in buildings.

The term servitude, literally means bondage or slavery, a state or condition of being completely dominated by something or someone.

For the purpose of this study the term 'servitude' has been expanded to define a building that is primarily dominated by man's expressions of his material gains, his power, his innovative ideas and his advanced technology.

A building in servitude does not possess the ability to fulfill man's psychological needs



nor is it capable of motivating and inspiring man. It is instead buildings that demonstrate a pseudo-impression of wellbeing.

Thus a building in servitude is taken as one which does not possess the attributes of architecture. The experience or feelings evoked by a building in servitude is not psychologically satisfactory as it is not capable of motivating and inspiring man.

The phrase building free of servitude indicates a building that possesses the spiritual quality of architecture. A building that primarily fulfil man's need for psychic wellbeing. A building that motivate and inspire man to live meaningfully. These assumptions have been made for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of Kahn's definition of architecture, and is not without shortcomings.

Assumptions:For the purpose of understanding the concept of Architecture, and the definition of it as buildings free of servitude, a distinction is made between a building and a work of architecture. A work of architecture which is described by Kahn is a building that is high in the spirit of Architecture and is assumed to be a building free of servitude while a building that does not possess the spiritual quality is assumed to be a building in servitude.

Intention of the Study:The main intention of this study is to discover what qualities constitute a building that is a work of architecture. The intention of this study is also to reveal Louis Kahn in his most vital role as a prophet of architecture, to highlight his philosophical contributions. This study intends to highlight and to discuss Kahn's definition of architecture. It also aims at revealing the way to creating an architecture that is inspiring and motivating by analysing his philosophy and discussing the precious 'gemlike' statements with which he expresses his concepts.

To bring out the true meaning of building and discover the qualities that make a building a work of architecture, this study intends to analyse their role and purpose to man. Seeking thereby to discover the reasons man builds in order to understand what essential qualities a building should possess, if it is to inspire and motivate man, and to become a work of architecture.

Finally this study intends to look at ways in which architecture becomes a symbolic expression of man. An expression of his need to live in this world. A symbolic expression of his understanding of it in the form of building and artifacts. Symbols that enable him to live meaningfully in his material surroundings, demonstrating that architecture is in fact a symbolic quality that makes a building a work of architecture.

Methodology: In an attempt to examine the concept of Architecture as buildings free of servitude, the bulk of the material presented is derived through literary surveys that touch on similar ideas. In order to understand Louis Kahn's concept of architecture, various papers presented by him, numerous lectures and interviews given by him have been examined together with the articles and books written on Kahn.

In order to analyse the concepts of 'buildings free of servitude' and 'buildings in servitude' books and articles that touch on similar concepts and on parallel thought processes have been referred to. The concept of buildings free of servitude has been examined with the use of Norberg Schultz' definitions of buildings and architecture.

The information gathered from literature surveys have been stated and interpreted in general and also in personal points of view. This has been done to establish and re-interpret the concept of Architecture as buildings free of servitude in a logical manner.

The concept of architecture as buildings free of servitude comes from Kahn's definitions



of architecture and of a work of architecture bolstered by an observation made by Lethaby that architecture does not exist in the modern world.

The first chapter examines the role and purpose of building. It discusses the concept of buildings free of servitude and buildings in servitude under two separate parts. They explore and analyse man's reasons for building and the role and purpose of buildings attempting thereby to understand the significance of a building to man.

The second chapter aims at revealing Louis Kahn's philosophy, his work and his definitions of architecture. It also attempts at discovering the design process and concepts expressed in his philosophy by examining his poetic statements. This chapter also attempts to discover the true meaning of architecture and the qualities that make a work of architecture.

The final chapter culminates with an analysis of Kahn's philosophy. It examines Kahn's ideas and concepts to establish a connection between his theory and 'inspired' built examples by other architects thereby seeking to establish Architecture as buildings free of servitude.

This essay has been developed around Kahn's concept of 'Architecture' as a spiritual quality and a work of architecture as a building that is high in spirit.