AN INVESTIGATION OF THE POST-MODERN IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

The research articulates the 'Post-Modern' as the combination of the conscious cultural movement of Post-Modernism – in reaction to some perceived inadequacies of Modernism, and the effect/affect of the socio-cultural conditions of the post-industrial age of information revolution and globalisation, or post-modernity. Based on recent trends in World architecture, the research establishes the continued relevance of the Post-Modern in the present era, but identifies that the narrative of Indian Post-Modern architecture is not suitably documented. With this understanding, the qualitative research investigates the evidences of the Post-Modern in Indian contemporary architecture through case studies and illustrative examples, especially focussing on instances from the 90's to the present. A tripartite approach of research is adopted, where the first tactic is the researcher's primary reading of the instances in the light of Post-Modern theory and architectural practices. This is supported with the second tactic involving inspection of the architects' stated/revealed intentions, and a third tactic involving a few alternative readings from participants of focus group interviews. The close readings of eleven case studies inspect two aspects, namely: a 'presence of the past' through Post-Modern historicist and neo-vernacular strains, and a 'return to communication' through inspecting kitsch as a conscious strategic strain, the many ways of employing architectural rhetoric, and the possible reinscription of meaning in the face of indeterminacy. A more expansive narrative is presented with about seventy additional exemplary cases illustrating the diversity of the strains in both the site and the nature of application. Through these, the research attempts to (re)initiate a narrative of the Post-Modern in Indian architecture – though it neither claims to be the sole, authentic narrative, nor an exhaustive one. The research indicates a possible tentative categorisation of practices based on intentions, as revealed explicitly/implicitly, rather than on physical/visual characteristics. In turn, the Post-Modern tactics and tropes being employed in connection with these intentions are identified through the instances, indicating their relevance. The research also looks at the points of convergence and departure between the Western and the Indian experience of the Post-Modern in architecture.