

Living Space as a Reflection of Maturity of the Yoga Practitioners

Aleksandra Mitić*

*International Society for Scientific Interdisciplinary Yoga Research
Belgrade, Serbia*

Abstract: *In this paper, we searched for the answer whether internal development achieved by the yoga practice influences the creation and establishment of external space in which we reside. We study external space, its rules arising from the yoga philosophic perception of existence. The discipline of yoga establishes internal order, i.e. internal developmental architecture that, according to Patanjali, has eight levels. We can conclude that direct external space decoration IS mainly reflection in the mirror of the internal (dis)comfort and (non)established balance.*

Key words: *yoga, sacred architecture, energy, tidiness*

Introduction

According to the old and preserved text on architecture *De Architectura* (Vitruvius), a good building should have beauty, stability and utility and therefore the architecture is often viewed as a way of finding the right balance between these above mentioned principles and making sure that none of the traits predominate. Architecture is a multidisciplinary since it comprises science, art and philosophy. Speaking of the architect's specific style one often mentions his 'philosophy'.

Yoga is the discipline of self-improvement (Nikić, 2010), i.e. method that consolidates philosophy and 'architecture' in a specific way. By the symbolic consideration, we can perceive Patanjali's eight-folded path of yoga (*ashtanga*) as a specific statically defined structure that enables reliance on the way of self-development on all levels.

Yoga architecture

Yoga is a way of refining physical, emotional, social and spiritual dimensions of being. Refining presumes rearrangement of perception through gaining knowledge by using the methods of yoga. The new perceptions and created philosophy of life provides awakening and strengthening of support in oneself, which provides security and increase the degree of self-esteem (Nikić, 2011). The interior, therefore, can be seen as a source of emergence of the beauty of hidden potentials, which are seen as the light frequency of the internal temple of the energy source of self.

In Indian architecture the word for home is *manushyalaya*. The literal translation of this term is a human temple, which means that a house is not only a shelter where one sleeps and eats but also a sacred, spiritual place.

Development of the sacred spaces has been observed in people who practise yoga. Maybe the need for external harmony is reflection of internal balance. It was noticed that yoga instructors bring more harmony and balance into their living space. Their space exudes clean energy, every single thing within that space is chosen

* Corresponding author: saskamitic@gmail.com

purposefully. Yoga practitioners realize that the path towards *samadhi* (enlightenment) level is the journey towards their own center, i.e. Essence. That is the journey in which relative “I” becomes aware of the beauty and possibility of the absolute “I”. *Samadhi* is the moment of self-recognition, awareness of unity and harmony (Nikić, 2011). That insight, based on the principle of reflection in the mirror, influence that they increasingly contribute to the harmony of their external space. Yoga improves level of consciousness in practitioner. Then they don't feel the need for harmony, but they are directly creators of it (Nikić, 2010). Self-development is the process.

Developmental dimensions

Deepening its internal, psychological and emotional world, there develops a tendency to throw out or give all unwanted items, pieces of furniture, clothing, and there appears a need for accurate definition of the space in which they live, without much details, and desire for harmony and ultimate functionality. For yoga practitioners, space and time are important. By increasing the level of consciousness, the time is seen as the continuity of NOW, because we create the past now and we also create the future now. Space is the place where transformation happens, the space in which a bud becomes a flower. In the space we live, we should choose peaceful and ventilated place for the yoga practice (*asana, pranayama, gangs, the wise, hides, dharana, dhjana*). This determines the holy place (the place with the stated importance) in already sacred space of the household (Nikić, 2010). We are surrounded by cosmic space saturated by the time and different forms of energy. Yogi recognizes internal space, where Patanjali's stairs are the building that leads to self-development, and outer space, where the light of concurred awareness reflects in creativity, maintenance and decommissioning.

In the ancient science *Vastu Shastra (Majan)*, system known as the “sacred architecture”, internal space is connected with energy centers (*yoga chakras*). Therefore, *Vastu* recommends imagining *purusha* in the space, with feet turned to the south-west and head to the north-east.

The south-west side where the feet are corresponds to the *Muladhara chakra* and represents the earthly symbol and connection with the earth which needs to be strong, stable and well-rooted. *Swadhisthana chakra* is located in the lower abdomen, this part is related to the principle of water and anything in connection to the water should be built in this part of the house. *Manipura chakra* is located in the navel region and is connected to the solar plexus. It is connected to the central part of the temple which is always open and empty to receive cosmic energy. It is believed that *pursha* breaths through this part of the body, i.e. that home (flat, house, cottage) gets the energy through this point. *Anahata chakra* is located in the centre of the chest and is associated with breathing and lungs, but also with love. *Visuddha chakra* is located in the throat which generates sound that echoes through the space. *Pursha* pronounces OM which echoes through his entire body from inside out. *Ajna chakra* located between the eyebrows is associated with the *Akasha* space. On the north-east side, on the crown of the head the *Sahasrara chakra* is located, and that is the corner where room for yoga practice (*asanas, pranayama, dharana, pratyahara, dhyana, kriyas, bandas, mudras*) should be. Energy tunel (*sushumna nadi*) that is named ‘dandam’ in *Vastu*, or the spine of the house (projected by the straight line, which depends on the position of the front and back entrance) ensures free flow of *prana* (energy) in all parts of the house.

Sacred architecture

The geometric centre of the plot is considered to be the centre of the human body – naval (region of the solar plexus). The north-east side of the plot symbolically represents the head, the south-west is the base, foundation. The left side of the plot can be viewed as *Pingala* (energy channel), the left side of the body, carrying the solar *prana*, and the right side is *Ida Nadi*, a carrier of lunar *prana*. The center of the plot is the place of the greatest accumulation of energy, as the solar plexus in human. Therefore, any construction is avoided in that area. That part is left open for the compression of cosmic energy. There is a principle that heavy constructions are to be done on *Pingala* side, and light construction should be undertaken on *Ida* side.

Conclusion

This paper is only one link in the chain of researches that emphasize the importance of the wisdom of yoga knowledge and architecture. In the "sacred architecture" of all traditions, even in modern Western architecture, the design necessarily includes the non-material needs of those who will live in them. The importance of emotional fulfillment, the possibility of achieving social contacts, space planning for achieving psycho-physical recreation, spiritual needs of atheists, believers, esthetic needs, the needs for nature, are legitimate demands placed upon the architect during design now. Besides the roof above the head, health requires fulfillment of the other needs mentioned above that must not be omitted. Yoga millennial knowledge of the existence of principles: of the construction, maintenance and decommissioning may still be in the minds of architects during design. By maintenance we keep the fight against the process of entropy, providing a basis that what we have built survives as long as possible in harmony with people and nature. Yoga knows no separation. It still reminds us of the experience and understanding of unity of everything that exists. The temples which were built remind us on yantras and mandras by their structural basis, while all the time keeping in mind the energy dimension of existence and the need that space ensures its smooth space of circulation (movement). It was designed and built in order to suit the people, without losing the sight nor for the moment from its key relation with the Universe and the principles of its functioning. Practicing yoga can change the angle of perception of reality as well as the relationship towards the time and the direct area in which we resides. We can call that process a process enriching, as well. Space and time get the new meaning, as well as significance for the individual who resides in it. Therefore, we can confirm that the living space is a reflection of our interior and the level of consciousness from which we perceive reality.

References:

1. Curtis, W.J.R. (1996): Modern Architecture since 1900. Phaidon Press.
2. Schimieke, M. (2002): The most powerful Vasati tools to balance spatial energies. EAVS.
3. Stapati, G. (2005): Building Architecture of Stha-patya Veda. Dakshinaa Pub. House.
4. Nikić, P. (2010): Povezanost suštinskih i joga kompetencija. U: P.Nikić, ur. *Zbornik radova "Joga-svetlost mikrouniverzuma" sa Međunarodne interdisciplinarnе naučne konferencije "Joga u nauci - budućnost i perspektive", 23-24 septembar 2010, Beograd, Srbija*. Beograd: Joga Savez Srbije, str. 27-37.

Received: August 17, 2011
Accepted: September 23, 2011