

THE ROLES OF TRADITION AND VERNACULAR IN POST-COLONIAL ELITE DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF CEYLON (SRI LANKA)

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Abstract

Following a brief stint of independent-rule from 1948 under a class of post-colonial third culture, a political breakthrough came in 1956, when a faction of local-elite with a strong nationalist agenda came into power in Ceylon. Within this politically-induced backdrop, several nascent Ceylonese architects felt the urgency for a new architectural identity for the nation. The domestic architectural rubric they derived on behalf of the country's newly-defined elite stratum is referred to as Modern regional architecture in the tropics (MRAT), which in another sense could be postulated as Designed-vernacular. MRAT was based on Architectural Modernism, and epitomized in its making the essence of the country's proverbial indigenous architectural tradition of Kandyan vernacular. Furthermore, the selective-traditions of colonial-Dutch and colonial-British of hybrid parentage were incorporated to the formula. This modus operandi was further-enhanced through traits obtained from the local arts and crafts movement by the rubric's proponents such as Geoffrey Bawa. This rubric gradually culminated as an immense success over the years, to become the flagship elite domestic-style of the island. Moreover, it became the ideal manifestation of the immutable position of country's

core-oriented elites while securing its posterity.

Conversely, a lone contemporary counterpart challenged this position by embracing a socialist agenda and attempted to realize it through an expressionist modernism, with the emphasis on the international-style technology. By the exclusion from his designs, the elements of tradition and vernacular- which by that time had become a quintessential part of the representational repertoire of elite domestic architecture- Valentine Gunasekara strived to disseminate the notion of a more equitable society, perhaps somewhat less-successfully.

The paper attempts to adduce the triumph of the cross-fertilized MRAT, as against its relegated modern expressionist counterpart, in order to discern the respective roles played by tradition and vernacular in the scenario.

Keywords: *Tradition, Vernacular, Postcolonial, Elite domestic architecture*

Introduction

The contemporary global architectural milieu is shrouded by ambivalence due to precarious architectural practices instigated by capitalism and globalization. Homogenizing forces of the mass-media and built mediocrities of the international fashions have relegated traditional continuity (Lim and Beng, 1998: 12-18). Hence, in such a context, questioning the respective roles of tradition and vernacular in contemporary global architecture becomes imperative to determine future prospects.

If this reproach is directed at Sri Lanka, addressing its post-colonial period becomes indispensable; where reverting back to vernacular tradition with the essential patronage of its elites was explicitly spawned. The two most celebrated domestic architectural rubrics of Sri Lanka's post-colonial period could be discerned as vernacular-biased *Neo-Regionalism*, and *Expressionist Architectural Modernism* –which dwelled on innovative technology. Hence, postulating reasons for the apparent relegation of the latter by the former antithesis is of crucial importance, in adducing the pivotal roles played by tradition and vernacular respectively.

Tradition in Architecture

The word “*tradition*” originates from the Latin verb “*trado-transdo*”, which means is “*to pass on to another*”, or “*to transmit possession*”. Tradition is thus seen as a dual process of preservation as well as transmission (Beng, 1994: 21). According to T.S Eliot (in Beng, 1994: 21), a true sense of tradition is a sense of the timeless and the temporal together.

“*Tradition...cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves in the first place, a historical sense, which...involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence...*”. Although the definition of tradition is commonly perceived to be a set of fixed attributes, many repudiate this view and believe it to be a series of layers transformed over time (Lim and Beng, 1998: 54). Hobsbawn postulates the notion of “*invented tradition*”, which includes both traditions that are gradually invented, constructed and formally instituted as well as the ones to emerge in a less easily-defined manner within a short time frame. He defines tradition as “*...taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past*” (Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1983: 1). Throughout history, discontinuities in architectural traditions have been prolific¹. In traditional societies, cultural processes and external forces take a long time to be considered as “*established*”. Once this is completed, they sustain for extended periods of time (Lim and Beng, 1998: 55). Williams (1980: 39) however, disseminates that, what may pass-off as “*cultural traditions*” or the “*significant past*” is actually selective traditions². Hence, it could be perceived that traditions are always contested, transformed, resisted and invented over time. It could be affirmed with a great number of examples from around the world that, in traditional societies, age-old architectural forms have reached high sophistication. Albeit their slow denigration, they remain more expressive and sympathetic to the aspirations of the people than any contemporary contender. The expressions of

these surviving traditions attain vigor and conviction through their local craftsmen practices, which truly celebrate their devotion, contemplation and commemoration (Lim and Beng, 1998: 54). On the other hand, in the field of architecture a dichotomy exists in the form of 'grand design tradition' and, its antithesis, the 'folk tradition'. Rapoport postulates that the monument-buildings belong to the grand design tradition, and are erected to impress either the populace in terms of the power of the patron, or peer-group of designers and cognoscenti with the cleverness of designer and good taste of patron. The folk tradition in contrast, is said to be the direct unselfconscious translation into physical form of a culture; its needs and values, as well as desires, dreams and passions. "The folk tradition is much more closely related to the culture of the majority and life as it is really lived than the grand design tradition, which represents the culture of the elites" (Rapoport, 1969: 2)³.

Vernacular Identity imbued in Tradition

Culture is generally conceived as "the way of life". It can be best-defined through its specific characteristics; namely, "the accepted way of doing things, the socially unacceptable ways and the implicit ideals" (Rapoport, 1969: 47). It plays a seminal role in the construction of society; which could either be culturally homogeneous or heterogeneous. Both these situations could possibly find an enhanced degree of sophistication owing to the existence of sub-cultures within a given culture⁴. Culture imbues various traditions relating to the assorted functions of human life. In other

words, culture ensures that its citizens abide by different sets of rules set by tradition, with relation to the performance of these functions respectively. Such rules ensure that whatever underlying factors⁵ behind them are preserved, and then transferred for posterity, while manifesting a unique identity with relation to a given function. The notion of identity has always been intricately-related to traditions; as lingering on to numerous traditions is what gives a society its identity. Douglas and d' Harnoncourt (in Lim and Beng, 1998: 54) postulate that, "To rob a people of its tradition is to rob it of inborn strength and identity". Since making buildings is a basic necessity of the human repertoire, different cultures from around the world have primordially developed their very own built traditions. Since every society essentially entails a "high" culture that influences "other levels" of cultures, as suggested by Bottomore (1993: 116)⁶, in terms of building traditions, this distinction could be further-elaborated – high culture chooses "grand design tradition" whilst other cultural levels are relegated to "vernacular tradition". Hence, Vernacular becomes a *modus operandi*, with a unique identity of its own. "Implicit in the term 'vernacular' is the notion of building as an organic process, involving society as a whole" (Lim and Beng, 1998: 10). Perceived as "architecture without architects" as suggested by Beng (1994: 19); edifices of vernacular are not merely perceived to be the brainchild of any individual architect, but the product of an entire community as a whole; working through its history (Lim and Beng, 1998: 10). Vernacular structures are invariably built by local craftsmen of anonymity with local techniques and materials, reflecting society's accumulated wisdom and collective images. They are imbued with cosmological and religious values, social and political structures, sensibility and attitude towards time and space. Moreover,

their forms and proportions, craftsmanship and decorations manifest symbolic propensities and hence, are meaningful (Beng, 1994: 19). As Lim and Beng (1998: 11) suggest, "There is hardly any need or scope for "improvement" in the various vernacular languages of housing generated indigenously around the world...".

Manifestation capabilities of the elite domestic form

The elites in society are an *organized-minority*, which tends to dominate the 'unorganized masses' in terms of an array of practices (Mosca, 1939: 53). These could be attributed to their superior intellectual and physical qualities possessed by nature, to inherited or acquired powers, essentially in economic and political spheres (Bottomore, 1993: 102). Through these superior qualities, elites tend to stay at society's forefront manifesting their prestige, leading way for masses to follow, while striving to further-widen the existing gulf between the two strata. This generic nature of elites as a whole is true, irrespective of their location in the world, whether in a primitive society or the most advanced. In the olden ages, apex-status of elites was manifested through their *royal, noble, cleric, aristocratic* or *bourgeois* positions in society, and in the contemporary world, they prevail in the forms of *intellectuals, managers of industry* or *bureaucrats*, making these elite-positions real determiners of most life aspects of masses (Bottomore, 1993: 404).

The elites rule, they manage, and are the ideological think tanks that manipulate society, while masses merely go along with what is imposed up on them with minimal resistance. Hence, the elite facilitate new political and

economic changes in society, or alternatively, these changes take place because of them and their self-centered actions⁷. On the other hand, Pareto's economic dimension (in Bottomore, 1993: 2) postulates that, economics is a vital aspect that constitutes elitism. The elites epitomize their political power to achieve the economic edge over masses or alternatively, the reverse takes effect, as Mandel (1982: 18-25) points out as it happened through human history. Policies of the so-called "governing or political elites"⁸ as Pareto (1960: 1423-1424) refers to them, always strive to reinforce the best interests of its allied-elites of "close coalition", as Bottomore (1993: 277) suggests. This is achieved through a concretization of an inequitable system that in turn makes and sustains them, with the intension of assuring its posterity. With dawn of the 20th century, it could be perceived that, merely the elites possessing some combined degree of economic as well as political edge, and occasionally the intellectual edge, became particularly capable of social influence. These abilities consigned them at the elite-apex as the "political" or "governing" elite, along with their immediate circle. The bureaucrats, managers and intellectual elites who merely possessed what their given names suggest, were relegated to immediate lower elite strata. However, coalition between the apex and this stratum is what keeps the system in tact. The sub-elite stratum (the middle class) forming the liaison between the ensemble of elites and masses could be conceived as a different and less-influential group altogether (Bottomore, 1993:5). This Western-derived structure of elitism was subsequently imparted on the Ceylonese context via five epochs of Western colonialism.⁹

Since political and economic arenas are the *raison d'être* behind elitism as affirmed earlier, they also make elites the most sensitive their periodic changes in comparison to the masses.

Domestic building on the other hand, is a basic human necessity, which articulates the lifestyle of its dwellers. Then again, life style is a reflection of various traditions imbued in a given culture. As Rapoport (1969: 46) elaborates, "The house is an institution, not just a structure, created for a complex set of purposes. Because building a house is a cultural phenomenon, its form and organization are greatly influenced by the cultural milieu to which it belongs...". Hence, socio-economic changes are best-manifested in the unique built traditions of its elites. This built tradition exposes itself best, though a degree of great intimacy in the physical form of elite dwelling, as it could be derived through the discourse on the notion of "home" by Rybczynski (1988)¹⁰.

Roles of tradition and Identity in Architectures of post-colonial Ceylon

After the Dutch-held maritime regions were handed-over to *British East India Company* in 1796, which was followed by the fall of Kandyan kingdom in 1815, the British colonial project in Ceylon instigated (Mills, 1964). Since the early 16th century to this point in time, Ceylon had merely remained one of the conspicuous penetration outposts in the Portuguese-Dutch created Seaborne Empire. The radical capitalist economic policies and gradual democratic reforms imposed by British colonists spawned a new peripheral status for Ceylon within the British Empire; with its hinterland centered upon London (Perera, 1994: 126-127). Consequently, Ceylon that had managed to sustain a modest level of globalization to this point in time, suddenly started to feel its effects more rigorously. Albeit the feeble launching

which mainly dwelled on the traditions of the expelled Dutch predecessors, the British building program perpetuated, and by the time Ceylon was granted its political independence in 1948, the island had experienced three distinctly identifiable phases of British architecture (Lewcock, Sansony and Senanayake, 2002: 249-301). Phase-3 of British architecture is perceived to be the one where British finally made their mark by curtailing the hybrid Dutch influence of the prior era to a meager level. In the domestic architectural scene, this was largely realized through the burgeoning influence of the 19th century colonial bungalow they had painstakingly developed in the subcontinent, to a point of culmination by their concluding years (King, 1984).

Some scholars believe that, the European Colonial projects affected new paradigm shifts throughout the whole of Asia, and the unequal socio-cultural as well as economic exchanges resulted in the emergence of "re-invented" traditions in hitherto unforeseen scales. Certain types of hybrid architectures which relegated local cultural identities emerged and eventually gained acceptance with time (Lim and Beng, 1998: 55). Hence, the colonial bungalow could be adduced as an example of such. Phase-3 saw its finale by attempting to rationalize an ideally-functional and comfortable colonial domestic building for the tropics in the form of *Public Works Department's* bungalow-influenced *Tropical Colonial style* (Pieris, 2007: 49-50). This almost paralleled with Modernist propagations of the *Tropical School of AA*, which strived to derive a streamlined *Tropical Modernism* for the world's dry and humid zones (Fry and Drew, 1982); a further evolution of CIAM 8's Modernist avant-garde. According to Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger's postulation (in Lim and Beng, 1998: 55), a colonial power had to invent "tradition" in order to create a sense of

historical legitimacy.

The Ceylonese equivalents of the discourse emerged in the forms of *Indic styles*, and *pseudo architecture*, which were largely delimited to monumental and civic buildings as Pieris (2007: 2) and Robson (2004: 43-45) affirm. By this juncture, the peripheral position of the newly-independent nations had been concretized through neo-colonial practices of the central Western-core (Perera, 1994: 332). These attempted ideological impartations of architecture could be conceived as a desperate measure to form a patronizing relationship between the core and periphery. These tendencies prevailed in Ceylon after independence, under the auspices of a so-called "post-colonial third culture". They, who had assumed political power from the British, resembled their foreign predecessors in every conceivable manner (Perera, 1994: 257). However, a political breakthrough came in 1956 when a faction of local-elite came into political power in Ceylon having been equipped with a strong nationalist agenda. As a reactionary force against the bitter memories of colonialism, they adopted left-wing socialist slogans. Moreover, the newly-liberated different ethnicities of the island, who had been previously suppressed by the colonial heel had to be unified under one national identity; circumventing the propensity for future tension (Perera, 1994: 258). Within such a backdrop, several nascent Ceylonese architects felt the urgency for a new architectural identity for the nation¹¹. Anoma Peiris draws a valid analogy with *Calud Levi-Strauss's* appropriation of the terms *bricoleur* and *engineer*, and the two mainstream approaches of post-independent Sri Lankan architects (Pieris, 2007: 150-152).

Neo-Regionalism: The *modus operandi* of a Bricoleur

Ceylon's post-colonial architects were essentially educated in the Western-core¹². It was a context where, the core institutions had monopolized peripheral architectural education. It is also evident that clients of these architects were essentially, the country's elites or sub-elites of some form. From such an ensemble of postcolonial Ceylonese architects, Minnette de Silva, a former AA (Architectural Association School of London) trainee, was the pioneer to adopt a synthesis between vernacular and modernism with due emphasis on sociological experiences of Ceylon's rural life. Clearly depicting her stance, she coined the term "*modern regional architecture in the tropics*", as early as the 1950s (Tzonis and Lefaivre, 2001: 31). Minnette's work overtly manifested the problems of post-coloniality, which was exposed as a "*precarious balance of Eastern and Western cultures than merely an aesthetic resolution*" (Pieris, 2007: 50). Geoffrey Bawa, who qualified few years junior to Minnette, also from the AA, appropriated an approach that resembled Minnette's. Both started-off with Tropical Modernist ideology coupled with the referenced vernacular building practices by their immediate colonial practitioner predecessors (Scriver and Prakash, 2007: 33-37). The incorporation of timeless and unconscious hence, backed this approach with authenticity. Clifford (1987: 121-130) describes this as the "*savage paradigm*"; a colonial discussion of a climatically-appropriate native architecture with the desire to rescue authenticity out of destructive historical changes. This approach according to Lico (in Pieris, 2007: 10) was not merely delimited to Ceylon, and also found its use in other countries of the Asian region.

Bawa drew inspiration from a range of regional architectures from Europe, Ceylon's own colonial past as well as its pre-colonial examples of both grand and folk design traditions. Especially in his domestic projects for influential economic or political elites, vernacular recurred overtly. The type of vernacular he picked up was largely from the hybrid manor houses¹³ of the Kandyan elite apex as well as its sub-elites. This spawned an incongruous degree of familiarization in his architecture, which was lacking in the projects of his contemporaries. However, many perceive that Bawa's architecture "...has a western aesthetic sensibility and provided a utopian comfort zone for a clientele facing the many disruptions of post-colonial change, of urban growth, and industrialization" (Pieris, 2007: 9).

As Rykwert (1982: 31) tells us, "Memory is to a person what history is to a group. As memory conditions perception and is in turn modified by it, so the history of design and of architecture contains everything that has been designed or built and is continually modified by new work...." Hence, "....There is no humanity without memory and there is no architecture without historic reference". Analogously, Eliot (in Beng, 1994: 10) disseminates that, "The past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past...the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show".

Lim and Beng (1998: 10) further-concretize the above notion by affirming that, "If one does not hear the past clearly and honestly, it cannot become part of one's work. Architecture, like the other visual arts, is in the final analysis the domain of the intuitive mind and eye" (Lim and Beng, 1998: 10).

Alternatively, it is possible in-deed, to seek synthesis of traditional and contemporary

(appearing as binary oppositions) through Art¹⁴. However, such a synthesis should not be of janus-faced nature with the schizophrenic coexistence of two opposing ideas, but one single gesture which should simultaneously be contemporary and timeless as well as "ethnic" and "modern" (Lim and Beng, 1998: 10). Hence, elucidation of these affluent disseminations affirm that, this is what exactly Bawa's architecture was all about. Working with the scarce resources available to him, and with no striking innovation, he had undoubtedly played the role of a bricoleur; in deed of a very clever one¹⁵. The lure of picturesque along with nostalgic propensity and romanticism of the period had undermined the full potential of technological innovations in architecture. The ideal stepping stone for Neo-Regionalism was astutely conceived by Bawa as the elite domestic realm of postcolonial Ceylon. The architect himself hailing from an elite background may have caused such an intuition. By recreating environments imbued with elite associations of both indigenous and hybrid-colonial conditions of familiarity, the vernacular had concretized the immutability of its elite stratum of patronage. Hence, as Pieris (2007: 10) suggests, a potential restructuring of the country's postcolonial social sphere was made feeble by this rubric, and consequently the socio-economic mobility of the masses was largely hindered. The hybrid local identity it catered for, again, was favored by the country's Westernized and semi-westernized elites who themselves were products of colonial hybridity as Bhabha (1994) postulates. Other than its limitation to an elite clientele, the style was further-limited by the rigidity of the colonial structure as well the ever-prevailing ethno-religious nationalism. The masses meanwhile were either caught up in this nationalist zeal or lost in capitalist and homogenizing practices of the international

style. Neo-Regionalism's public acceptance eventually came with the auspice of the state-implemented civic projects and with the ideological transformations they instigated. The rubric in fact, suffered a paradigm shift from Bawa's own facile objectives as Pieris (2007: 11) suggests, into a whole different plane; with its "revivalist, traditionalist and chauvinistic forms" eventually making it conceivable to the masses. It was regionalism – rigorously backed by the political sphere – which heightened its focus on identity; not the neo-vernacular in its original form devised by its pioneers. Regionalism was then oriented towards an international audience for eventual laudability, and hence failed miserably in the attempt of much-needed decolonization.

Expressionist Architectural Modernism: The modus operandi of an Engineer-Bricoleur

"To rob a people of opportunity to grow through invention or through acquisition of values from other races is to rob it from its future" (Lim and Beng, 1998: 54).

This Modernity-instigated Western line of thinking could indeed be perceived as the motto behind Valentine Gunasekara's architecture. He took inspiration from America, epitomizing exposure of his study tours¹⁶, and sojourns in California. Henceforth, he deviated from tropical modernist school quite early in his career after assimilating its essence. Freedom of spaces, tectonic qualities, and the rigorous modular articulation of form of his structures were borrowed from mainly American experiments. Gunasekara chose to

relegate the industrial aesthetic of the European avant-garde to the appropriation of landscape-centered American counterpart. In the affluent works of Euro Saarinen, Louis Kahn, Charles and Ray Eames, he saw an effort to mould new technologies into an aesthetic that resonated with a specific geography; that he conceived to be a definitive break with the colonial past. As Pieris (2007: 13) suggests, *"The plastic curvature of concrete, experimented with in tropical climates by South American modernists, suggested an approach that could parallel the linearity of the prairie style that had emphasized the expanse of the American geography...."*

Seminally, *"...The reference to ancient monuments of Incas and Mayas in Californian Modernists suggested ways in which he might approach and reinterpret Sri Lanka's historic architecture. For Gunasekara, the undulating softness of the tropical geography and interweaving of form and space in the ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa would be parallel sources of inspiration"*.

To Gunasekara, the emerging middle class (i.e. new class of local professionals, graduates from newly-formed Sri Lankan universities etc.) – the new sub-elite of Sri Lanka – appealed greatly; as he perceived them to carry the vitality for self-definition, essential to appropriate economic growth and thus, social mobility. Although, it is their cultural expansion that paved the way for general cultural expansion in Sri Lanka, they never got off to a position where they could threaten the immutable position of the country's elites¹⁷. In a rapidly globalizing world, Gunasekara recognized the changing Sri Lankan lifestyles in the process of assimilating western values. However, he managed to maintain aspects that prompt family gatherings and hospitable spirits, in order to make home life desirable. He

stressed on the importance of culture to the development of the human spirit and exposed its essential factors of faith, family, community and personal identity (Pieris, 2007: 13-14). However, Gunasekara's ideology was largely dogged by the hybrid Sinhalese-Catholic culture that he wholeheartedly admired. He perceived this culture to be more liberal than the majority's Sinhalese-Buddhist counterpart, and also found it to be on par with a desirable sense of Socialist communality that De Silva (2009) attributes to Catholicism. Despite the fact that his earlier house designs greatly resembled tropical modernism, he endured a metamorphosis that evolved through modernist expressionism to the final form of deconstruction towards the end of his career¹⁸. One conspicuous factor that could be identified in retrospect was his sectarian devotion to technological experimentation. Sri Lanka's engineering profession of the 1970s – according to Sri Lanka Institution of Engineers' *Innovation and Self-reliance; Kulasinghe Felicitation Volume, History of Engineering in Sri Lanka*, 2001 Volume – was enduring an innovative phase, and Gunasekara became one of its great beneficiaries (Pieris, 2007: 13)¹⁹. With relation to his projects, Gunasekara not only played the part of bricoleur – picking up various seminal architectural influences from an array of mainstream world-wide practices of the time – he knew exactly what engineering tools to epitomize for each job, to a level of efficacy; making his approach a one belonging to an engineer-bricoleur. Albeit its groundbreaking approaches, the rubric overtly rejected tradition, perceiving it as a backward step to progression as it is connoted by Lim and Beng (1998: 13). However, architectural modernism that he based his broader aims on had a share of flaws of its own, especially with regard to the postcolonial tropics²⁰.

Conclusion

Sri Lanka is a nation with a primordial Sinhalese-Buddhist culture and its accompanying traditions. Sinhalese built traditions (both grand and folk design traditions) have been time-tested throughout various quantum leaps in world globalization history that pertained to the island. By analyzing the success of Bawa who acknowledged such traditions in his architecture as against Gunasekara who repudiated and in turn, became unsuccessful, the immutability of country's dominant culture and traditions articulates itself. Within the absence of a panacea for ever-prevailing East-West cultural clash, beneath a veneer of appropriated Western cultural attributes of the hybrid-elites, the fervor for indigenous prevails. Furthermore, the different degrees of political auspices received by Bawa and Gunasekara elucidate the factor's seminal role in publicizing a certain architectural rubric among the masses. Hence, masses are manipulated and influenced by the governing elite in society – the ones who rule them in collaboration with its immediate circle. Owing to the intuition gained via his elite upbringing, elite domestic realm was astutely epitomized by Bawa as a stepping stone for Neo-Regionalism to gain future acclaim. Art for art's sake never seemed to have worked in Sri Lanka. Albeit being aimed at the betterment of society, art is ultimately political. The Sri Lankan elites of influence did not embrace a rubric based on vernacular tradition due to their genuine belief of it as the one that best-represents country's cultural identity, within the process of fulfilling their social responsibility as elites. The surviving feudal elites after independence were rather obsessed with creating a nostalgic niche of their own, through a rubric that best-epitomized the defunct design traditions

of Ceylon's medieval and colonial periods from their past heydays. It also appealed to elites who were the progeny of country's latter social mobility, as it was conceived as the ideal means of artificially-aligning themselves with their old counterparts to gain public legitimacy.

Henceforth, it is discernible that just because a certain architectural rubric threatens the posterity of the elite system, it would logically not succeed in a context with a strong cultural base, without the familiar traditional archaic as the vernacular.

End Notes

¹ Architecture has not remained "pure" anywhere, as there have always been hybrids (cross-fertilizations) of indigenous and imported. The two have been diffused, hybridized, and in the process, synergized. Hence, such types in their respective forms, in a given time frame, are potential models for even more similar transformations.

² *"From a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded....Some of these meanings and practices are reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture"*(Williams, 1980: 39).

³ The authentic meaning behind folk tradition could be discerned as, *"... the world view writs small, the "ideal" environment of a people expressed in buildings and settlements, with no designer, artist, or architect with an axe to grind (although to what extent the designer is really a form giver is a moot point)."*

Folk design tradition represents itself in the form of vernacular; which again could be classified as primitive and other forms, where the latter could again be divided into pre-industrial and industrial (Rapoport, 1969: 2).

⁴ This is facilitated owing to factors such as religion, occupation and cast-system etc.

⁵ These underlying factors could be religious, symbolic, biological and environmental etc.

⁶ In every society which is complex, there is a number of 'levels of culture' to be found, and it is utmost vital for the health of the society that these levels of culture inter-relate to each other. Yet, the manner and the taste of society as a whole should be influenced by the society's 'highest culture' (Bottomore, 1993: 116).

⁷ It has to be noted here that political changes may also occur due to social revolutions. In that case

it referred to as 'circulation of elites', where a faction of elites within the political class itself, replace the apex.

⁸ From the ensemble of various types of elites in a given society, the governing elites tend to possess the greatest level of power, which places them at the centre of high cultural influence. Governing elites could either be an absolute monarchy, a certain form of collective government (democracy, socialism etc.) or any combination of varying degree of the two. The extent of high cultural access made available to the other elites, by the governing elites, varies in different contexts. In most Western contexts after Modernity for example, high culture has not been a jealously-guarded condition. Conversely, in the East, it has always been delimited either to the royal family alone, or to the immediate circle of aristocrats surrounding them.

⁹ The quasi elite structure that sprung up by deliberate-intermingling of Eastern and Western counterparts during Portuguese and Dutch rules was jettisoned in the late 19th century. This was achieved via a Ceylonese appropriation of a fully-fledged British elite structure analogous to the one above. Roberts (2005: 147-148) affirms this point through his discourse of the late 19th and early 20th century British Ceylon's newly-acquired western-type liberal occupations (such as lawyers and civil servants etc.), which began to be addressed as "genteel professions". This ideology in fact, survived though the postcolonial period to the present day in Sri Lanka.

¹⁰ The fact that the elites are the pioneers to have historically developed a degree of intimacy with their dwellings than any other social stratum, further-contributes to the concretization of this view.

¹¹ Anoma Peiris postulates that, the task facing Ceylon's postcolonial architects was twofold. On one hand, the need for constructing a sense of geographic belonging against a former history of colonial expression, European Modernism (inculcated to them through their core-based architectural education), and nascent chauvinist nationalism of the region as a whole, was prevalent. On the other, they needed to reconcile their only training – the one in modernism – to the design of tropical environments (Pieris, 2007: 150-152).

¹² This was owing to the fact that Ceylon did not have any architectural schools of its own at the time.

¹³ These domestic buildings drew mainly on the indigenous vernacular belonging to folk design tradition, as well as for certain traits of grand design tradition.

¹⁴ The Renaissance's architects and artists such as Michael Angelo, Borromini and the others, successfully-mediated strong beliefs and practices of the Roman church with the mythic imagery of ancient Greece and Rome.

¹⁵ Consequently, this rubric culminated to become the flagship elite domestic-style of the island by the 1970s and 80s. Moreover, it became the ideal manifestation of the immutable position of

country's core-oriented elites in the top ranks. It also assured through architecture, the posterity of the elite-made system.

¹⁶ Gunasekara received the Rockefeller Foundation Travel Grant in 1965 and travelled the US. (Pieris, 2007: 152)

¹⁷ Despite the potential to become such a counterforce, with time, they merely became the stratum that formed the liaison between the elites and masses; exactly the function of "sub-elites" throughout world history.

¹⁸ This could be affirmed via a chronological evaluation of personalized houses completed by him throughout his carrier.

¹⁹ Pre-cast concrete, thin shell structures and industrial methods had attained a point of culmination, and such techniques were appropriated into his repertoire. The close partnership with engineer Jayati Weerakoon made such inovations plausible. (Pieris, 2007: 152).

²⁰ Although its bold formal expression undermined the colonial metropolitan identities that had previously been hegemonic in Asian cities, it never quite won the hearts and minds of the peoples of the region. This stance could in-deed, be blamed on a fallacy, which inculcated the notion of modernism as an "identity-free" rubric.

The separation of values from identity-which lay at the heart of the humanist project appeared incongruous when introduced to diverse and contested geographies, and proved ineffective at many levels.

The critique of modernism by that time was on the rise. As per the emerging post-modernist school, "Modernism; the aesthetic of the European avant guard, is..... an empty universal shell devoid of history and culture, a tool of top-down economic policies whether socialist or capitalist. Its monolithic forms cast deep shadows subjugating a diminished urban citizenry. It was a utopian project that somehow misfired. At the core of its problematic was a Eurocentric humanism, shaped by enlightenment ideology, reinforced by early twentieth-century colonialism and disseminated as an apolitical and universal value" (Pieris, 2007: 1).

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