RELEVANCE OF SIGN AND SYMBOLISM IN THE MAKING OF ARCHITECTURE - CASE STUDIES

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3.0 RELEVANCE OF SIGN AND SYMBOLISM IN THE MAKING OF ARCHITECTURE - CASE STUDIES

Architecture essentially is a product of culture with its values, beliefs and structure transformed into built forms by designers for a people that constitute a society. Any society has evolved its own social systems with patterns of behavior that necessitate spatial settings. The very notion of culture in the earlier days is bound up with the mid-nineteenth-century world of industrialization, urbanization and colonization. The Culture meant; what was most elevated, sensitive, essential and precious; the most uncommon in our society. Culture was viewed therefore, as the product of an evolutionary process culminating in European bourgeois society which also provided a bulwark against the vulgarity and incoherence of the industrial city. However around 1900 AD anthropologists and progressive intellectuals began to use the plural cultures as a challenge to the Eurocentric attitudes bound up in the early sense of the word. The new usage reflected the emergence of ‘cultural relativism’; the notion that each culture is coherent and valid in its own terms. Although this is clearly less elitist and ethnocentric, the assumption that culture is a stabilizing influence carries over from the early definition.
A culture is assumed to be enduring, traditional, structural; it is a process of ordering, not disruption; it does not normally survive abrupt disruptions. Anthropologists and folklorists, who shared these assumptions, typically denigrated cultural mixing, instead sought out the ever-shrinking number of isolated cultures; those seemingly remain untouched by modern influences. Eurocentric cultural definitions and civilizations based on philosophies that are mostly an expression of the then prevailed societal conditions in Europe gave diminished importance to individual which resulted in expressions of idealized societies. In terms of architecture, it gave rise to abstract built forms and cities that comprise of very large conglomerations of people sharing the same habitat but with no common beliefs and values. Though, the abstract built forms were initially invigorating to eyes, later these failed to sustain interest and meaning in its users.

Architecture is an embellishment of the needs and desires of people manifested through the response of its designer to a set of spatial criteria in order to decipher their values and culture with its systems. Moreover, it remains more than a social art and responds sympathetically to the societal structures; a form of non-verbal communication which symbolically evokes meaningfulness in its users. Though the role of symbols in every culture; both civilized and pragmatic, has been established through studies world over; only detailed case studies would establish the relevance of signs and symbols in architectural communication even in non-traditional societies; both textual as well as cosmological.
3.1 CASE STUDY 01: PURITAN ARCHITECTURE AS A SYMBOLIC EXPRESSION OF THE WORKING OF GEIST THROUGH MAN

The Colonial Puritans of America are an appropriate ‘faith community’ with its cultural expressions manifesting their faith based on their religious text in the physical world. American Puritans broke off from the traditional orthodox ‘papacy’ and are known to have a strong religious and scriptural basis in the derivation of meaning for their life and architecture. They chose to manifest ‘purity’ and symbolically expressed the ‘higher spiritual realities over mundane physical life’ even when the later lead to paradoxes in their life apparent, thereby qualifying themselves as an ideal sample for a non-traditional, textual society.

Studies on the reasons for the fall of Modern Architecture and the emergence of Post Modernism establish the universal human desire to express cultural identity by encoding their architecture and landscape with religious and cultural symbols.[3, 9, 55] Culturally structured and symbolically coded architecture of today forms the heritage of tomorrow and the basis for future architecture in establishing a meaningful continuum. Culturally charged built forms provide the right symbolic setting to perform the ‘daily choreography’; be it routine or ritual, and to ‘act and reenact’ the past in the present. Puritans are no exception for they chose the medium of architecture in order to communicate the spiritual realities; the shear basis of their ‘election’ and puritan life to the Church in specific and to the watching world in general. Further, through their life and built forms; by ordering and patterning these,
they symbolically manifest the working of the Universal Geist as expressed through their text of faith.

The role of religion in shaping the architectural landscape of any culture is well-established and religion with its symbolic systems and structures makes its manifestation in its respective architectural expressions.[55, 57-59] The influence of the consumerist ethos, industrial and capitalist spirit in the later American folk architecture is also conclusively established.[60] Modern social science observed that the Protestant ethic and spirit of capitalism are very much intertwined in the Western Society and an 'understanding of meaning' is essential to unfold human actions in such a society.[61] Weber approached the Protestant doctrines and the political force of Karl Marx from an intellectual background and he found both these are promoting a practical economic end. He separates off capitalistic enterprise from the pursuit of gain, because the desire for wealth has existed in most times and places which has almost nothing to do with the capitalistic working. Capitalism in essence is the operation of buying and selling of goods in a rationally organized administration aiming to accrue wealth and engage it in leisurely pursuits. In a rationalized capitalistic enterprise, two important things are therefore implied: a disciplined labor force and a regularized investment of capital necessary for the industry. The essential capitalistic character is distinctively moral and functions under an unusual self-discipline. This kind of worldly asceticism; the practice of the denial of physical or psychological desires in order to attain a spiritual ideal or goal, of Puritanism is elucidated through the concept of 'calling'.
The notion of ‘calling’ was introduced by the Reformation which refers basically to the idea that the highest form of moral obligation of the individual is to fulfill his duty in worldly affairs. The idea of ‘calling’ was further developed and strictly followed by the various Puritan sects: Calvinism, Methodism, Pietism and Baptism. The central notion of Calvinist doctrine is predestination; that some human beings are chosen to be saved from damnation, condemnation and poverty, while others are not, but predestined to be poor, damned or condemned by God. This doctrine establishes that God has eternally chosen those whom he intends to save. In modern usage, predestination is distinct from both determinism and fatalism and is subject to the ‘free decision’ of the human moral will. This doctrine also teaches that salvation is due entirely to the eternal decree of God. It is from this understanding of the predestination that the capitalist spirit was born. This led to the formation of two very important aspects of their behavior pattern. Firstly, it becomes obligatory to regard one-self as chosen; lack of certainty being indicative of insufficient faith. Secondly, performance of 'good works' in worldly activity became accepted as the means by which such surety of calling could be demonstrated. Eventually materialistic success came to be regarded as a 'sign manifest' of the One being the elect, through calling. The result of such an understanding morally permits One for the accumulation and display of wealth so far such accumulation was combined with a sober industrious career in the effort to build-up the puritan utopia; an ideal commonwealth whose inhabitants exist under seemingly perfect conditions. However, accumulation of wealth was condemned if it is spent in a life of luxury and leisurely self-indulgence. It is further argued that Calvinism; the theological system of Calvin, marked by strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the depravity of mankind and
the doctrine of predestination supplies the moral energy and drive for the capitalist entrepreneur. This doctrine having an 'iron consistency' in the bleak discipline which it demands of its adherents thereby, Calvinist ethic introduced an activism into the believer's approach to the worldly affairs; a drive for mastery in a zealous quest to achieve virtue in the eyes of God. Thus, the religiously cultivated man is the one who makes his behavior in tune with the intrinsic harmony to the cosmos; the great Geist. Every such religious doctrine teaches people to behave in a particular orderly way in order to have a peaceful, blissful and a problem-free life in this world that springs from the concepts of purity.[13] They legitimize this blissful life by way of necessary structured ideas and socially accepted behavior patterns that are based on authoritative texts of the religion since it is deeply concerned about the human life and behavior which manifest in the total sphere of life; be it work, ethics, economic or social life.[62] In this respect all religions have their functions which work toward one goal structured in the conditioned behavior patterns, architecture or the like so as to facilitate one to live harmoniously to oneself and to the society. The life manifest of the Colonial Puritans by way of their built forms is no different which vividly expresses their faith; the working of the universal force through man in transforming the elect through their ascetic Puritanism.(Figure 3.1)

Figure 3.1 Pilgrims Settlement; in harmony with nature even in the absence of basic facilities
3.1.1 Settlers and their culture

The Puritans who settled in New England in the Seventeenth Century established a profoundly self-conscious way of life that embraced every aspect of their lives including their dwellings and architectural landscape. Though the Colonists brought with them the English cultural heritage which is evident in their writings, laws and architecture they also had particular principles; social and religious, that were deeply opposed to Elizabethan standards.[43] In their earnest effort to create an ‘ideal commonwealth’ signifying their own purified ideas of godliness, they amended many aspects of their English heritage in order to symbolize more accurately the ‘puritan ideals’ that has a biblical basis. It is of no wonder that the Puritans discovered architecture and site planning as provocative didactic tools. Their architectural landscapes manifested a non-European expression of their believes and fears which signified a microcosm of God’s exacting structure for the universe that constantly reminds them of the desired puritan way of life.

Many of the Puritans were fervent separatists who sought to purify the Church of England by creating a religious commonwealth that respected biblical injunctions, facilitating the working of the Spirit through man. In this continuing American theme, they strived to celebrate ‘self-confidence and pride’ in part from fear of not being able to follow their own ideals. The Puritan goal of manipulating material life for spiritual ends deeply penetrated every walk of their lives. The Puritan leaders established a system that linked most aspects of daily life with more abstract issues of religious sentiment, social order and family bonds in which process they began a tradition of prior ordained, symbolic dwelling forms that established a continuum through many American housing types. Further, thanks to the belief in the sanctity of the hierarchy
that existed among them based on predestination, they were also convinced of the binary oppositions like; rich and poor, sinner and elect, slave and master, that gave meaning to them.[31, 55] Therefore, it facilitated them to live a highly structured, logically explained and strictly enforced hierarchical life, right from the church to family. Yet, each of them had freely chosen to obey or if necessary to dissent, since they are bestowed with the faculties of a rational soul. The tension of ‘choice’ on one hand and rigid laws and duties on the other, created a perilous set of paradoxes. They, in their incessant self-doubt; their suspicion of their own senses and emotions, buttressed themselves with visible signifiers; their architecture, landscape and every design that is a symbolic visual expression; an ‘image’ of the ordained model. So they intentionally created an environment in which the houses and towns signified their concept of divinely ordained structure for family relations and social life because the creation of such a world gave them joy and meaning to their lives.

Truly, the conditions in New England were primitive and of lacking which affected both their social life and architecture. Puritans suffered during the first winter in their habitations; dugouts, wigwams, hut or bent saplings covered with thatch or grass that offered only minimal protection. Such houses were partly adaptations of Indian dwellings. They also made the crude, one-room, windowless ‘wattle and daub’ huts similar to the ones inhabited by poor English cotters in Yorkshire. Second major group of Puritans arrived in New England in 1630, in which year almost one thousand settlers swarmed the area around Massachusetts Bay, turning the sparsely inhabited region north of Plymouth Colony into the center of New World Puritanism.[43, 63] As the Puritan population steadily increased, the wealthier and powerful among them; the merchants and politicians, sought to construct more permanent wooden frame
houses. In a sense, they were laying out 'company towns' with 'investment value' and as a 'symbolic expression' of social hierarchy that signified various levels of blessing. Their private architecture and public town planning worked as a coherent unit in signifying the Puritan beliefs and concerns.

The Puritans' sense of special status in God's eyes was deeply rooted, so too their model of Christian City: "the city on a hill" on which the eyes of every other people are fixed. Winthrop's city was foremost a religious symbol as the architect envisioned the legacy; the "New Israel" or "New Jerusalem" as per the description in Revelation 21. 2 and 16:

*I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband... The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia (2,200km) in length, and as wide and high as it is long.[54]*

In Massachusetts, the holy commonwealth needed a definite form, a 'visible signifier' which necessitated them to impose a defined order on a seemingly chaotic reality around. It seemed possible only in disciplined groups in towns and cities under the authority of a minister and a governor. A notable source for Puritan planning in New England is an anonymous document called *The Ordering of Towns* which proposed a townscape of six concentric circles set within a square six miles to a side.(Figure 3.2,3) The meeting house; *Old Ship House*, at the center determined the size of the township, for no one was allowed to live more than one and half miles away.
from it, in order to assure regular attending; signifier of a life of constant fellowship. Town records provide numerous cases of people being required to move closer to the town center superscripting even private property by the public order.

The model town was intended to be an agricultural settlement with a tight core comprising of home lots, located in the center of the village along with the meeting house. (Figure 3.4,5) Each family’s possessions of arable farmland, grazing pasture as well as common fields surrounded this nucleus of buildings. The right to establish a new town is obtained from the Massachusetts Bay Colony General Court, which evidently followed *The Ordering of Towns* in its decisions. Allotments were based on the ‘position and wealth’ of a family in a community, so that the land divisions and the size of houses varied considerably, signifying the Puritan structure.

The meeting house was always the first prominent building to be erected, which was a consistent pattern throughout the settlements. (Figure 3.6) As opposed to Anglican churches, with their steeples and elegant Baroque ornament, the meeting house was an unpretentious structure for they had no faith in the right to consecrate buildings. They considered the congregation as the church not the building in which they assembled for worship. Since church building was not considered sacred, it was used as a stage for many public functions. Next to the meeting house, found the place for house of the minister and homes for the prominent families in quite semblance to the layout of a cosmological city. [12]
Houses of gods and their appendage structures are normally decorated richly with iconographic details depicting religious myths and knowledge. Such ornamentation, beyond encoding knowledge also served to declare their delight in celebrating built forms. Even the Puritans displayed an attitude for ornamentation, especially on the built forms of the blessed; the ministers and the wealthy, for which the Parson Capen's house bears witness. (Figure 3.7)
Figure 3.5 _Puritan Home_
Simple, straightforward and elegant in design and construction

Figure 3.6 _The Old Meeting House_
The center of Puritan City

Figure 3.7 _Parson Capen House_, _Topsfield, 1683 MA_

The early colony houses are surprisingly varied in appearance, symbolic of the regions in England from where they originated. These vary from one-room, framed cottages; sixteen to twenty feet square, with stone or brick fireplaces, houses with kitchen and a lean-to added to the rear, creating the familiar _salt-box_ appearance, to ten foot by forty foot _log houses_ with two hearths. Other primitive structures are
adopted from English cottages and barns. Gradually, more people were able to afford wooden frame houses retaining their social hierarchy. By 1630s, as these pilgrims in progress who first erected one-room or two-room thatched cottages progressed, they began constructing more substantial fairy houses of solid timber. The hall and parlor house type was the most commonly constructed in New England. Though the carpenters deviated from the Baroque fashions and adapted their designs to the climate and materials, they essentially followed the deeply rooted religious and social beliefs. No wonder, theologians often used architectural metaphors to instruct their congregation regarding God's intricate structure of the universe.[64] Thanks to the bountiful supply of wood and its high thermal resistance, it became an accepted practice to finish the exterior with clapboards, always laid horizontally and left unpainted. Wood shingles replaced English tradition of thatch for roof coverings, especially after several early fires. Use of vivid colors for contrast was evident in puritan houses.

The 'fortress-like appearance' of the Seventeenth Century colonial house also characterized it from contemporary English dwellings. Its door was a solid barrier of several layers, studded with pieces of metal. Such heavy, defensive doors were unknown in England. Windows were few and small in size for ensuring efficiency and economy in operational costs. Oiled paper was used in windows while later; a few brought English leaded casements. These Puritan preferences signify a peculiar attitude toward the world outside that was gradually altered in the next century. Nature was not considered a teacher; gentle and inspiring, to instruct the puritans of universal values. Therefore, walls of the house were decidedly made a barrier to the outside, signifying discontinuity between interior and exterior domains.
Interior of a New England house has all the more symbolic features that are objectified transformations of distinctive ideals of the Puritans. The family lived according to the rules and performed the duties of their covenants in the interiors. Moreover, it was considered the duty of every individual to oversee the salvation of everyone else either by way of subordination or coordination in the community. Thus self control, essential to be instilled in each individual is enforced by the group. Composure and concord are especially difficult under the camped living conditions for few families are composed of fewer than six people, with at least one servant or apprentice among them. Puritans considered it important to live together sharing the same space for that was considered most pleasing to God promoting virtuous living, good work and industriousness.

Architecture aided the delicate duties of self control and industriousness in the Seventeenth Century colonial house consisting of very rarely more than two downstairs rooms. The hall or keeping room is the central activity square of the family which served as the place for cooking, eating, making soap and candles, spinning yarn and weaving homespun cloth, sewing shoes, repairing tools, keeping accounts and also reading scripture. It is here men and women, children and servants worked together under each other’s watchful eye. This is the case ordained even in larger estates where the focus was on the hall which is central to domestic production. Parlor was another downstairs room in a typical two-room house. It is in the parlor the bodies were laid in state, honored guests were received and the family treasures brought from England were displayed though they chose to be ‘Puritan’ in all other English traditions. The parlor often contains parent’s bed and its emergence marks the
beginning of separation between the 'public and private', 'intimate and formal' that was just beginning to reshape their house forms and social life of families. Though the parlor was a space for certain domestic functions and also intended for parental privacy at night, it was never a place where one could withdraw from the intensity and scrutiny of the communal life. Though, smaller rooms for service and storage gradually appeared in New England Puritan houses these were never allowed to be used as personal retreat spaces. The cellar, often simply a hole in the underground part of the house with sloping sides and dirt floor, provided a place to keep milk and potatoes from freezing; which was never the practice in England, but the Puritans kept on adding more storage spaces in contrast to the biblical stand of 'accruing treasure in heaven'. In due course of time, kitchen was shifted to the middle of the lean-to and the hall was transformed into a family sitting room and a general workplace. Most houses have up stair chambers that served as bedrooms and general storage areas. Even in one-room houses, there is an upper chamber which children and servants reached by an extremely steep staircase. Around their simple bedding would be piled up all sorts of barrels, skins, bags of grain, yarn, spinning equipment and lumber; that archaic team of odds and ends.

Architecture signified a spirit of joyful humility and one could find adornment even on the austere forbidding houses with weathered clapboards and tiny windows. Long before delicate shapes and formal plan of the Georgian era became fashionable, the Puritans introduced purely decorative features into the frames of their houses and by 1650s, curved brackets; gracefully incised, supported many overhangs. Handsome decorative drops; pendills, in opulently round shapes hung from corners for which the
Parson Capen's house at Topsfield is a standing testimony. Such details were purely decorative; signs of the carpenter's skill, a counterpoise to the boldly exposed structural elements. In due course, more and more signs of Puritan's delight in display appeared within the house. The few furnishings were often carved into elaborate rounded forms. Cupboards and chests were painted in vivid polychrome with the owner's name surrounded by hearts, flowers and geometrical designs. Even the walls were vividly painted in red, green and purple. Sometimes dots of color were applied with sponge, although this exuberant practice was more common after 1700.

The New England Puritans took great pleasure in these decorations which they have derived from rural folk traditions, in order to signify paradise indoors. Puritan houses, like their lives, depicted order and playfulness, solemnity and exuberance, delicate detail and forthright structure. The puritan spirit found artistic expression in a manner that was characterized by a wonderful sense of simplicity of form and directness in planning. The reason underlying their religion and architecture is the attitude; not to rely on current or previous fashions, but to create a strong and simple directness of approach, to the elemental truths embodied in spiritual life and in the creation of architecture. Just as the group created an elaborate 'morphology of conversion', in which each stage of God's grace was signified through a set of signs, the New England colonists leaned toward literalness in the houses they built and the towns they planned. (Table 3.1) Their architectural forms revealed God's will, at the same time testified to human fallibility and proneness to temptations. Puritan's earnest desire to make their beliefs more substantial in correct behavior and even in the
architecture of homes and larger community plan encompassed a deep-seated doubt about their ability to act as they should without constant spatial reminders.

Table 3.1 Symbolism of Puritan architecture in USA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spiritual message</th>
<th>Manifestation in Physical form</th>
<th>Graphical representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blessing</td>
<td>Wealth accrued, Ornamentation, Nearer to the meeting house</td>
<td>Puritans took pleasure in decorations and symbolically represented paradise indoors. Larger, wooden houses, Larger windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy and peace</td>
<td>Order, playfulness, solemnity and exuberance</td>
<td>Polychrome interiors and furniture, brightly painted in red, green and purple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purity, Truthfulness, Hard work</td>
<td>Forthright structure, simplicity of form and directness in planning, less inspiration from nature</td>
<td>Direct structures with delicate details, smaller windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power, Authority</td>
<td>God/Meeting House-centered lay out, Height, Ornamentation, Size and span of building, Steeple, reminiscent of obelisk, signifying power, Closer to the Meeting House</td>
<td>Concentric plan with Meeting House at the center, Nobles and the rich at closer proximity to Meeting House, taller structures, Ornamentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The combination of self-confidence and self-doubt and the tension that existed between the two made manifest its imprint in the Puritan built environment; the architectural landscape, would remain an important signifying aspect of their culture in specific and the American culture at large, for generations to come. The study thus, establishes that puritan architecture is a symbolic expression of the Geist as described in their text of faith that defines their life and culture. It is also the responses of designers to a set of needs; spatial and emotional, physical and spiritual, signifying their societal structures. Thus, architecture is more than a social art; a provocative didactic tool, enabling to communicate non-verbally to the watching world. Further, it establishes that the religiously cultivated Puritan man is one who makes his behavior in tune with the intrinsic rhythm, harmony and the order of the cosmos, since he is in
constant striving to facilitate the working of the universal force through him. Thus, he strives to depict God's will and divinely ordered new world order in his entire life; the progressive journey to Zion. Puritans' lives had many paradoxes emanating from a combination of self-confidence and self-doubt. Yet, the tension between the two and their faith defined their life and architecture. Thus, architecture of the non-traditional Puritan society signifies their faith as their choices are expressed by way of built forms and remains a symbolic spatial communication.

3.2 CASE STUDY 02: ARCHITECTURE OF COSMOLOGICAL SOCIETIES AS SYMBOLIC SPATIAL EXPRESSIONS

Modern architectural expressions apparently lack relevance and appropriate continuity with the culture and heritage of its people, largely due to the absence of symbolic relationships which unify built forms to the respective cultures. It is ironic to learn that even through preservation efforts contemporary designers generated built forms, social and economical conditions detrimental to the very existence of the people for whom these projects are conceived, culminating in forcing out the residents which makes them lament:

"Beneath the stucco of tourism lies a fascinating, tolerant, laid-back western town... We have made peace with Santa Fe style, for you have to, if you are going to live here and stay sane".[65]

More importantly, such architectural expressions gave rise to destructive stresses, anxieties, crimes and illegal activities that spoil the very enjoyment of being in a civilized community. Studies proved that crimes are facilitated by an increased
breakdown of social mechanisms that once kept it in check and gave support to police activity. Moreover, crime rate cannot be controlled just by an increased police force.[50] Although the heterogeneity and abstractness of modern habitats and other built forms may be intellectually desirable, these in effect crippled our ability to agree on joint actions required to maintain the social framework that is essential for the survival of any society. On the contrary, primitive societies having shared beliefs, values and notions of a coherent culture and their symbolic habitats with cosmological and religious basis, worked well. Many studies conducted elsewhere reiterate the success of traditional cosmological models over the times.[12, 45, 55, 66]

In search of freedom the designers of modern architecture gave expression to their responses. These winds of change which caused free expressions also sowed the seeds of destruction by way of unhealthy and unsafe environments. The internal noise of some of these modern habitats is too disturbing that they had to be pulled down, even at a high social cost.[50] At this crucial juncture, designers have to turn around and take cognizance of the plural cultures which were once labeled primitive. Surprisingly, these echoed definite order and structured relationships that make them work well in harmony with nature. In order to understand the dynamics of such coherent societies and their community spaces, the ‘civilized’ had to look into the mud houses in African Sudan or to the Neolithic Settlements in Hacilar, Turkey, or the Sinhala houses of Sri Lanka.[9, 36, 50, 67] A turn in the thinking and an enquiry into the definition and classification therefore, was unavoidable. In search of spaces that are inherently defensive and enabling the lives of its users, architecture of the primitive had to be explored. It is here, the normal reasoning doesn’t found to work
and therefore, it brought forth an inevitable need for a super reason; the spiritual or cosmological basis, for interpreting these spatial expressions. The basis of the reasoning had to be founded in religion at large and the odds need to be levelled out seeking a rationale that is relevant. In pursuit of the primitive mind and their world, Durkheim and Levi contributed their pioneering efforts which paved the way for a deeper understanding and interpretation of their cultural expressions and for the appropriation of these to the contemporary needs.[31, 68]

Emil Durkheim proposed criteria and basis to identify the simplest and most primitive religion which he defined through studies on the elementary forms of religious life as 'a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them'.[41] Even the most primitive forms of religious systems have the elaborate, present-day system since all religions are basically the same. The basic religious structures are very well found in societies whose simplicity of organization is nowhere exceeded. Secondly, it must be explainable without the introduction of any element from a predecessor religion. Although he is not concerned to bring out which religion is authentic and which is not, explains religion from the social point of view with its influence on the society and its cultural expressions in order to nurture the three basic elements of all religions; beliefs, practices and community. Further, these elements are examined in detail to establish the important role played by religion in the primitive societies in ascribing values to some things, concepts or ideas and nomenclate these as sacred or profane which becomes a norm for future generations. In all religions, a power that
controlled its collective consciousness is evidenced and men as symbol-making animals ascribe value to symbols and passes on to their generations. Symbols possess a power to integrate as well as disintegrate individuals, families or the societies by way of classification. The religions that are largely defined by supernatural, cosmic and mysterious orders and beliefs also fashioned all their respective cultural expressions in signifying relationship with their collective consciousness.

Therefore, all religious representations are manifestations of the collective consciousness that are also evidenced in all their cultural products. Rites and rituals are ways of acting and reenacting religion in the midst of assembled groups and it’s very propose is to evoke, maintain or even recreate the needed mental setup in those individuals and groups in a way to give them fresh, personal experience that makes them feel acceptable. Even the contemporary church in all its cultural expressions displays every characteristics of primitive religious realities, almost in strict adherence to Durkheim’s theory; signifying expressions that could be traced to their practices which unites its members as a church within a set of doctrines and dogmas which are performed within symbolically charged settings; architecture of their built forms. Their values, norms and structures; the cultural systems, are passed on to generations by their forefathers continued, even continues to mould their cultural expressions. Transfer of these values happens through their rituals; enacting and reenacting of these since, in the absence of experiential knowledge for individuals symbols become mere marks of identity with lost meaning.[68]
Levi-Strauss, on the other hand, accepted both religion and magic as forms of science, since each consists of the essential components; event and structure, and emphasized the need to treat both these equally valid in the evolution of knowledge.[31] He presented the radically different view of social structures in 1945, as a ‘model in the human mind’ with its basic idea borrowed from Roman Jakobson’s ‘theory of distinctive features’ which states that the human capacity to ‘encode and decode’ sound patterns into meaningful speech forms depends on a ‘capacity to discriminate sounds as bundles of binary oppositions’. He appropriated the theory of ‘binary oppositions’ in ‘structuralism’ that forms the basis for semiotics; the study of signs where sign is a union of signifier and signified or is anything that stands for anything else. He applied the theory in anthropological purposes proving that many of the nonverbal elements of human culture such as cosmologies, art styles, architectural designs, layout of villages and the like could be broken down into sets of culturally distinctive features which are recognizable as binary oppositions. These, as in the case of phonology, is the ‘matrix combination of sets of such distinctive features’ which determines the characteristics of a cultural feature in any particular ethnographic setting.[57] The pioneering proposal gave fresh impetus in the understanding and interpretation of the architecture of built forms and enabled designers to translate messages embedded in relationships. He, by not rejecting myth as unscientific; which on the contrary is an expression of the unobservable realities in terms of observable phenomena, located it at the very core of all forms of religious expressions since these give forms to the cultural products, even the respective architecture. Further, beauty intrinsic of miniatures is derived out of the virtue of its dimensional relationships provides a basis for the choice of cosmological models by primitive communities. The
proposition about miniaturization is extended even to the natural size, thanks to the implied reduction in scale since concretization in any medium always involves giving up certain dimensions of the object, be it physical or temporal.[31] Thus, a fair basis for understanding the concretized cultural expressions; otherwise classified as useless, is offered through the structural semiotics which is a big leap in the establishment of meaningful architecture.[57, 69] Moreover, it could be concluded from these studies that since the genesis of communicative architecture is in symbolism, symbols are the means that facilitate communication in built forms. Therefore education in architecture shall equip the students to perceive, understand and interpret symbols in an effort to create meaningful architecture.

3.2.1 Cosmological Societies

People of a culture have shared values, notions of good and bad, and ideologies on the basis of which they agree together for collective actions and generate cultural products that are signifying expressions kernel to their societal existence. A coherent culture, be it primitive or traditional possesses a well-established structure by which its cultural elements are organized. Its people's behavior too is patterned and regulated by the common knowledge and the structures existing in their minds. Moreover, these generic societal orders are symbolically manifested in their daily choreography and in all other cultural products. Further, studies conducted construes that cultural constructs are evident in their respective architectural forms; be it residences, palaces or cities. These symbolic architectural expressions in other words consists the 'frozen-culture' or 'text in built form', which non-verbally decipher relevant information. Conversely, it is important to understand
the order and system of a society in an effort to interpret its built forms. This structuralist stand paves a reasonable way to understand, interpret and reinterpret the symbolic architecture; primitive or traditional, that is time-tested for the advantage of contemporary cosmopolitan civilizations.

3.2.2 Cosmological Models

Religion is an expression of the human desire to communicate with God their Creator and studies have established that man possess a natural worshiping nature. God is the image of man's ultimate holy desires and an embodiment of unattainable by him. Words often fail in such intimate, ecstatic spiritual communications where symbolism succeeds. Symbolism often makes spiritual knowledge easy to understand and imparts deeper meaning in the members of a coherent culture. In addition, it adds certain beauty by way of miniaturization and mysticism to religion in speaking of an unseen world to be received by faith. Humanity throughout history have used more permanent materials to erect magnificent structures not to live in, but to worship gods; images to which they long to be conformed since it is within these places of spiritual contemplation that one experiences the most profound life-experiences. Symbolism facilitate the experience of such splendid spatial and spiritual experiences for its receptors as evident in Christianity, Hinduism, Islam or Buddhism.[70] Symbolism may be described as 'good fit' between perception and cognition, form and content; the seen physical and the unseen spiritual. What good fit as suggested by Kant means:

certain essential relationships are conserved or mapped from one medium to another, in architecture, from the way an environment is used or to its perceived form.[69]
Cosmological models are miniaturized representations of the cosmos as envisioned in various cultures; the ultimate embodiment of order and beauty, unattainable to man. It represents a divinely ordered organization par excellence of elements that are the regulated existence of balanced exercise of forces; a vivid depiction of the creative genius, which evokes adoration and worship through effective parallelism. Moreover, any miniaturized representational form which is a composition derived from the signified naturally acquires acceptance and beauty.[31]

3.2.3 Understanding Kandyan Landscapes through Symbolism

Landscape of the royal capital of Kandy was located in the central highlands of Srilanka during the early years of the Nineteenth century where symbolic relationship between a discursive field and landscape as a signification system could be best evidenced in its geographic and temporal contexts. It is important to note that a learned Singhalese is perfectly conversant with the details of the system of ‘mythical geography’ and the ‘cosmological basis’ as embodied in its cultural landscapes whereby he relates himself to his family, village, nation and the cosmos at large which might seem meaningless to an external person just as the Britishers exclaimed; “have we fought all these days for this place!!”, unless it is understood without the personal bias, as the Singhalese perceives it.[71] The context is derived mostly from the enormous literature available on both kingship and architecture of royal capitals in South and Southeast Asia which serves as the basis of the discourse of kingship and its relationship to Kandyan landscape; a cultural product of a highly textualized society, where the authority assumed is from the texts that served as the basis of their customary laws.[9, 64] The discursive field of kingship which concerns
the understanding of the Kandyan landscape is composed of two different discourses on kingship; firstly the ‘Asokan mode’, that is based upon the story of Emperor Asoka who reigned in ‘Pataliputra’ during the Third Century BC. Secondly, the ‘Sakran model’ composed of a set of beliefs that formed the core idea; king, the ideal ruler, modeled after ‘Sakra’ who is the king of the gods. While the first discourse contained beliefs necessary to model king as pious, righteous, and One fully devoted to the fostering of Buddhist religion and welfare of his people; an ideal humane One, whereas the second discourse on the contrary, portrayed the king as divine ruler, a god-king.[9] Both these discourses are legitimized by the precedent provided by and association with political and religious texts of authority.

While the Asokan discourses facilitated the production of a landscape dominated by religious structures and public works dedicated to the benefit of the people, the Sakran, on the contrary, signifies the divinity of the king through a symbolic architecture of poignant palaces. These mythical cities modeled after the heavenly ones deliberately deciphered a divine image to its beholder. In a cosmological society possessing a deep understanding of symbolic significances, both these discourses successfully signified and concretized their texts of authority. Throughout the entire history of Kandy both the discourses with their distinct perspectives is seen intertwined and kings adopted elements of both, in befitting manner, in order to signify their cherished ideals. This syncretism is materialized in the Kandyan landscape composed of the balance between religious buildings and palaces until king Vikrama abandoned Asokanism during early nineteenth century. He expressed his ideals by concretizing the same through an enormous rebuilding
program in Kandy where the architectural elements and spatial locations functioned as tropes that allegorically signified the discourse of Sakran kingship. In the cosmological cities also functioned as the ‘culturally charged stage’ for the performance of their rituals consisting of mythical events that are indispensable for the continued existence of the cosmic culture. Rituals, in a way derive their communicative power from the symbolically charged city context and remained effective in its religious roles whose production and interpretation depended on the practices in the service of power. In the highly textual Kandyan society, authority vested with those who controlled interpretations of the regulatory texts. They assumed the responsibility for defining the society’s cultural identity through the writing of its history which is the recorded memory of the past. Thus, memory of a people could be effectively manipulated through the historical recordings in order to control their responses. The recorded memories thus formed a core factor in the Kandyan politics of power. So too, traditions are selectively maintained or invented for a variety of social, cultural, religious and political purposes, especially by the power-positions for they are a part of the continuing social conceptions rooted in the past. Although, such an attempt creates a sense of unity, it is achieved by the past influencing the future, even at the cost of minimized diversity and complexity. In a way, it attempts to generate an intentional, if not a less desirable imposed unity by the denial of rich and varied expressions and experiences. The Kandyan society is believed to be formed of members divinely ordained to guard their religious traditions who set their king at the zenith of this responsibility. The notion is based on their texts containing the teachings of Buddha about the world of gods and proper rule by kings.
Mandala is the most admired symbol of Buddhist religion which symbolises the universe with its energy and the cycle of life and death. Each object in Mandala has significance and represents some aspect of life that serves a key role in the production of their traditional wisdom and knowledge. Their traditions are transmitted through oral, written or visual media and these, to a great extent, are controlled by the rulers who often used such to project their ideals. So too, the narratives of the valorous kings of the past written by the Buddhist sangha were often incorporated into the ritual practices and designs of Kandy which in turn legitimised the rule of the kings. The written texts contributed to the basis by which the king’s behavior and his
city are interpreted since, he consciously modeled himself and his city in strict adherence with the textual accounts of Sakra and the city of Gods, represented by the cosmic Mandalas, and his palace occupied the central mount; 'Mount Meru', the abode of gods.[9] This symbolic modeling exalted the position of king and ascribed him the image of a god. By way of parallelism, his kingdom represented those of gods and his palace symbolized the abode of gods. Although Buddhism is devoid of any creation myths, it does have a detailed description of cosmology that depicts the cyclic world systems that are created, destroyed and recreated; a symbolic depiction of which is seen in the concentric Mandalas.[8] So too, the depiction of water symbolizing the Ocean of Milk and the process of creation represented symbolically through the churning of the Ocean of milk, by way of waveform in the palace walls. Further, the Kandyan landscape, through the symbolism of both creative power of cosmic waters and the stability of cosmic mountain sought unification in the Hindu myth of celestial Ganges visible in the sky as Milky Way.[9, 73] The belief in the causal efficacy of parallelism transformed their Mandala-based cities into representational microcosms in every respect and a proper understanding of the Kandyan landscape solely depends on the clear knowledge of its basic symbolic cosmic model, and the texts that determine its cultural expressions.

3.2.4 Comparative Evaluation

Although, both Kandyan architectural forms manifest a cosmic order and a definite system of textual canons and principles which are their acclaimed efforts to identify themselves with the cosmos and thereby establish a harmonious life, the Sakran example depicts the use of such cosmic model for the purpose of establishing
authority by the king, through parallelism established in terms of architectural forms, metaphoric and metonymic readings. Often, such laborious and resource-consuming efforts could not get the support of nobles or even the common people and created problems for the king in due course. In both cases the basic cosmic models; both graphical and textual, are followed in its architectural forms which enabled spatial communication to signify and get harmonized with the universe. Breaking an established order in creating another, furthering the pursuit of creativity is seldom observed in these traditional processes. They remained more or less consistent in the outward expression manifesting a pseudo unity thanks to the adherence to cosmic models which exert deep-rooted religious influence and impart meaning in its people. The semiotic approach therefore, enables in understanding and interpreting these symbolic cultural products of such textual societies from where one could draw valuable lessons beneficial for the contemporary world.

Although the civilized society as the cherished ideal is promoted in all times, in reality, modern architectural expressions almost failed to generate coherence and continuity. But, coherence and continuity is quite common a norm in cosmological societies. Also, a fair basis to understand such a structured cultural expression is offered through structural semiotics to understand the concretized expressions of a culture otherwise classified as useless. It paves the way for a big leap in the establishment of a meaningful architectural continuum. Breaking an established order in the pursuit of creating another is facilitated by relevant reinterpretation of the symbols of a society. Yet, the adherence to cosmic models is prevalent even in the contemporary world pursuing change where logically it doesn’t fit, thanks to its
deciding influence in shaping the entire cultural products and lives of men. Semiotic approach thus, enables the contemporary designers in understanding and interpreting these cultural expressions in order to draw from them valuable lessons in their relentless, creative efforts to instill uniqueness and harmony in the architecture of built forms, rightly through symbolism. Therefore, training in architectural education shall devise appropriate pedagogy and tools for instruction that are symbolic and facilitate the understanding of symbolism.