

Nature and architecture | literature review



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The human race has reached the zenith of excellence in the paradigm of technology. With their advancement they have nestled an utter disregard for the only thing which has taken care of the human race since the beginning of time. When man was born, nature had already created an environment for the healthy and unhindered survival of humankind. Now that we have learnt so much about ourselves and the different elements of nature, we have an unreasoned intent to cut out nature from our dwellings. In the recent times, we hardly find any living element in our modern interiors. Bold usage of architectural elements like steel and glass has turned our houses into boxes and vaults which does not even allow natural ventilation. With the introduction of bio mimicry, we have settled for lifeless inanimate dummies which are inspired from nature, but we still could not take a bold step toward making our homes more penetrable yet secure, so as to cut down on resource consumption. It is obvious that natural ventilation and lighting reduces consumption drastically.

I imagine what life would be like in the age when the human race came into existence. There were trees, which were abundant. Man must have found shelter under them. Then there were threats, the different species of wild animals. Man had to build a protective shelter to keep the wild threats away. Thus started the fight between nature and humans, trying to keep nature out of the house they lived in. with time, we learnt to tame many forces of nature. Now we almost feel invincible as a race that can control the weather that we experience inside. But now, we have come to a stage where we have started to eliminate the natural necessities for human survival. We see the effects of such acts in phenomena like global warming, ozone depletion etc.

and also their aftereffects which are diseases that kill the human himself. I don't intend to say that the first fight to keep the wild away from the home was not just, but at some point in time, the human progressive intent to dominate or put governance against natural forces should have been shunned or stopped totally so as to keep a balance in ecology of places. The broader term that incorporates both the human society and natural ecology is Landscape.

Landscape is the term which incorporates a lot of subjects, along with nature and architecture. Now, the change from a green to an apparently morbid look of the cityscape is not just because of the people cutting down trees and building over them. There is a deep connection between the nature of contemporary landscape and the different aspects of human knowledge. The subjects like art, literature, geography, social sciences are vividly influential to dictate landscapes (Benson, John F and Roe, Maggie H, 2000). So a landscape (which captures nature and architecture and is a medium to link the two) is governed by the whole system which runs the universe. It is not the department of public health or the environment department of our country that is going to keep it balanced and save nature for us. Nobody can. To change the morbid landscape back to green, we need a paradigm shift of ideas throughout. According to the researches of Thomas Kuhn, the natural sciences are more of hypothesis, which answers to most of questions in its paradigm. For example, the Copernican theory on the movement of planets, even if it is presently proven to be true, was initially not accepted as Ptolemy's deductions of the planetary motions seemed to answer more questions. But with advancement of physics and optical knowledge, new

devices were made and new questions were raised. These questions seemed to be answered better by Copernican theories. This was a literal paradigm shift in the world of natural sciences. Books were rewritten, theories and corollaries redrawn (The structure of scientific revolutions, Thomas Kuhn, 1962). We need such a huge change in the outlook toward nature. Now, when we talk about such huge changes, there should be reasons enough to justify them, and there are. Firstly, the term ' Global Warming' has been dominating our media since many days now. From all the initiatives taken by our governments, we are all aware of the fact, that cutting down of trees are in some way connected to the heating up of our planet earth, but very few actually care about it or are actually taking steps to prevent the cutting down of trees. Secondly, there is increase in the ozone depletion and it is increasing daily. The ozone depletion does not only affect the humans, but also affect the natural ecology as it destroys the natural ecological systems by killing many organisms which cannot survive the dangerous ultra violet radiations. The list goes on and would definitely be a chapter in my dissertation.

Significant Environmental Issues

There are many options/issues and most of them so far suggested are varying degrees. These options/issues are as follows:

1. Ozone Layer Depletion
2. Global Warming
3. Loss of Biodiversity
4. Climate change

5. Exploitation of natural resources
6. Land degradation
7. Nuclear issues
8. Hazardous waste
9. Water pollution
10. Acid rain
11. Over population
12. Deforestation
13. Desertification

(Khan, MD. Zulfequar Ahmad, 2013)

All these issues lead back to the root of all problems, humans trying to capture or tame nature. The inquisitive minds of the human race have deciphered the codes of nature and learnt a lot about it, and used and combined natural elements to invent ways of taming nature itself.

Everything that is happening is all abiding the laws of nature. So if it is all going wrong, then there are two possibilities- one that we are not going in the right direction, or our knowledge of nature is flawed right at the foundation level of scientific studies. The latter is more unlikely to happen. Whereas the first is very possible, if we think that we have been walking the wrong path right from the beginning. Imagine, if the human who had built a house for the first time in history of human enlightenment, had not cut down a whole tree to build his house, and cut branches only enough to build his house, and had let the rest of the tree to live, we would be living in a very different landscape right now. Trees were abundant. If we suppose that a family generally has three members, and can fit into one house, and if we

also suppose that to build a house one needs branches from ten trees (to leave the trees alive even after building out of their woods), we can still have shelter for every person on this earth (considering the present population of earth is 7. 5 billion extrapolating the data from 2012, and the number of trees on earth is 400 billion and at least 80 billion are trees from which houses can be built).

It would be unjust to the people who are working to revive nature from the current disastrous state that it is in, if I say that people do not care at all about nature. There are various green rating systems these days like USGBC, IGBC, LEED, GRIHA, GREENECO etc. that rate buildings on the eco-friendly approaches in design. With the participation of the new generation of architects in achieving these ratings, people's houses are becoming more sustainable and there are great reductions in resource consumption in proportion to the increase in number of buildings.(4)

References:

1. Benson, John F and Roe, Maggie H, 2000. Landscape And Sustainability, Page- 3.
2. Kuhn, Thomas, 1962, The structure of scientific revolutions.
3. Khan, MD. Zulfequar Ahmad, 2013. Global Environmental Issues and its Remedies, International Journal of Sustainable Energy and Environment, Vol. 1, No. 8.

(http://www.ijsee.com/IJSEE_Vol.%201,%20No.%208,%20September%202013/Global%20Environmental%20Issues.pdf)

4. <http://in.usgbc.org>