iSSUE : RELIGIOUS SPACE|DESIGN|PERCEPTION

sPACE : DELHI
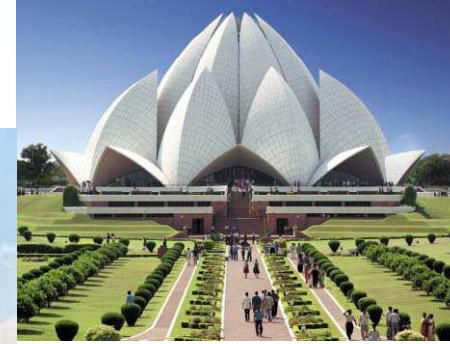
oBJECT : BAHA'I TEMPLE

tIME : late 20th century

Form|look---why should it be a defining characteristic for a particular type of building.

Who made these denotions that an office building should look like this, a temple looks like this, a parliament should look like this?

Yes at the very beginning they were designed with such features but the condition ,the parameters then were different and hence should not be taken or regarded as a SYMBOL/SIGN for a particular type of space.

For instance, temples when they were first built, the parameters were that it should be visible to pilgrims from a distance so that they know they are on the path to God (this led to the designing of shikhara and vimana).

If we see a shikhara we get to know there is a temple, we see a minaret and a dome we know there is a mosque, we see a cross we know there's a church.

 NOW, the shikhara gets hidden between two buildings. The dome gets noticed only after the imam's call. THIS was not the purpose these elements were used for. These structure were supposed to be the highest in the city skyline. What is the point of making a shikhara if it is not even visible from a distance? It no more acts like a marker.

 But majority of architects have not gone to this depth and are still designing the conventional way which I would say is not even conventional as they are not relating to the thoughts behind the design.

What we have been doing now is taking the elements(which in past had a specific purpose), making a composition with them ,so that it "LOOKs" like the "TYPE" we are building, without giving a thought to the reason of choosing particular elements for an architectural typology.

 In designing the **Baha'i temple**, some thought have been given to the design-the form of the religious centre rather than just picking up elements(shikhara, minaret, dome, cross) and amalgamating them. Instead, why not go and look out for some more real connections ,thoughts related to the religion and design of space which connect people with that religion.

What I perceive on seeing the Baha'i temple and thinking of temples-church-mosque in general, I see the presence of a dome, a shikhara, a cross in the lotus petals on such a massive scale which appear to me as a converging point of all religion which is the intended purpose of Baha'i religion. The architect here did not define the space by looking at the conventional designs but he moved a step ahead and looked at the theory-idea behind the religion. So instead of picking up the different elements from each religion, he picked up something(lotus flower) which is a common feature in all the religions and then designed on that concept. Hence, instead of designing something religiously familiar(conventional form of religious space), he designed something religiously identical(the form which is present in all the religions).

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