CONCEPT NOTE

The South Asian geographic region shares a common cultural landscape which is also evident in its vernacular architecture, arts and crafts. The built environment is representative of traditional beliefs and values which have related the human body to the earth and the sky, and is therefore full of meanings for each individual and for the community who have built it. The conscious act of participation of the community in the rituals and seasons of its planning, construction and maintenance hold important ecological lessons for a sustainable future. The conscious use of locally available resources for living and occupation, and measures for the continuity of these resources can be understood as useful approaches in the conservation and sustenance of the social, economic and physical environment. Vernacular architecture is representative of local cultural identities, unlike contemporary practices in modern architecture which generates forms which could be anywhere and everywhere.

The rejection of vernacular architecture by the States in South Asia has many reasons, of which perceptions of modern as against backward, formal as against informal, rich as against poor and pucca as against kutcha, have played an important role in the formulation of policies, regulations and standards which prohibit its continuance. In spite of this, vernacular architecture continues to be the most popular form for the masses in villages and as informal settlements notified as ‘slums’ in urban areas. Unfortunately traditional materials are being replaced by cement & reinforced concrete. The materials of construction in vernacular architecture are stone, mud, bamboo, timber, thatch and grasses, some perishable and in need of frequent maintenance and renovation. Rural housing schemes such as the Indira Awas Yojana, and others, do not permit the use of these materials or the traditional methods of construction. Because vernacular architecture is easily and quickly constructed, it has been accepted as temporary emergency shelters. This has been the case in Bhuj (Gujarat, India), Kashmir, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia, after earthquakes or tsunamis. Depending on the geographic region, the techniques of construction are rammed earth, sun dried mud brick, dhajji deewari, leepa, taq, wattle and daub and others. Some techniques have been documented, published and made freely available on websites. Ironically, nature based high-end tourist destinations have also employed vernacular architecture with success. But vernacular architecture has a marginal recognition in education, mostly for its energy efficiency, and practically none in professional practice.

The ICOMOS Charter on Built Vernacular Heritage (Mexico,1999), recognises that the conservation of vernacular architecture requires a different approach, “with the involvement and support of communities; and legislative, administrative and financial support of governments, in recognition of the rights of people to their traditions.” The current approaches to conservation of built heritage cannot be applied to vernacular architecture.
OBJECTIVE

The objective of the conference demonstration and exhibition*, is to examine the challenges that vernacular architecture faces today, to evolve strategies for its continuity and adaptation for the future, in the South-Asian Region – including India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Maldives; by bringing together architects, artisans, craftsmen, designers, entrepreneurs, educationists and government stakeholders for the purpose.

Alongside this event, a student competition is planned on, *The transition of vernacular settlements: innovation, adaptability, diffusion and continuity*

The Demonstrations, Exhibition* and Conference are broadly divided around the predominant local materials that define the vernacular of the regions comprising South Asia. These are confined to:

1. Mud and Brick
2. Bamboo, Thatch and Grass
3. Stone
4. Timber

The same materials lend themselves to be expressed in different regions in different cultural ways giving specific and unique identities to each. Transfer of knowledge over generations in their application in planning and architectural aesthetics can today be defined as the civilization of the region.

Therefore, selected representations of the same material from different cultural regions are demonstrated, displayed and presented here for sharing the challenges faced in each cultural region and to find common grounds for solutions. The challenges faced could be from regulatory frameworks, diversion of materials for different purposes, inadequate representation in the budgetary and other planning processes, paucity of expertise in the field or any other similar reasons.

CONFERENCE THEMES

The themes of the conference, in relation to the traditional building materials of vernacular architecture, will be

1. Documentation and conservation of vernacular architecture
2. Adaptation and innovation in techniques of construction for the future of vernacular architecture
3. Policy, legislation and regulations changes needed for the continuity of vernacular architecture
South Asian Vernacular Architecture
Challenges to its continuity and Strategies for its Future
Conference, Demonstration & Exhibition
Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, 11th-13th December 2015

IMPORTANT DATES
- Call for Papers to be sent out by 30th July 2015
- Abstracts to be submitted by 15th September 2015
- Acceptance of abstracts by 1st October 2015
- Full paper submission by 15th November 2015

Abstracts and Papers may be e-mailed in pdf. file format to manjusha.misra@gmail.com, coordinator for the conference.

REGISTRATION:
A registration fee of Rs. 5000/- has been determined for full participation and Rs. 1500/- for student participants and accompanying guest participants.
The details for registration will soon be published on the event website.

PUBLICATION:
The procedures will be documented and published.
Selected papers will be published by the International Journal of Environmental Studies, Routledge, in its Monograph on South Asian Vernacular Architecture.

POST CONFERENCE:
A follow up committee from the main organising team will coordinate for implementation of the strategic outcome of the event.

DEMONSTRATION AND EXHIBITION:
The demonstrations and exhibition are all day events open to public on all three days at the IGRMS, Bhopal. The exhibition is open for one month from day of inauguration.