

Vaastu : An Ancient Approach Towards Sustainable Development

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Introduction :

Indian philosophy, culture and religion always have deeper thought in ecological balance, harmony and rhythm. The most important concept of Vedas is 'Ritu'. 'Ritu' is the supreme divine law to control, regulate and govern all activities of earth and universe. The Vedas, Gita, Upanishads, Purans etc contains the original and earliest message for the preservation of environment and ecological balance. Nature has never been considered as a hostile element to be conquered or dominated. Atharva Veda say "Mata Bhumi Putroham Prithivyah" means earth is my mother and I am his son. The more broader and developed concept is seen in "Vaastu shastra" where Panch Maha Bhoot Tatwa (Five great element) space, air, fire, water and earth are considered essential, fundamental and interconnected web of life. In human body nose is related to earth element, tongue to water element, eyes to five element, skin to air element and ears to space element. We have another great concept of Panch Maha Kosh, Annamaya Kosh, Pranmaya Kosh, Manomaya Kosh, Vigyanmaya Kosh and Anandmaya Kosh.

'Kamadhenu' was the wish fulfilling cow and shall be considered as a prototype example of sustainable development and Biodiversity conservation. Our great sage further extended this to assign animals as vehicles of the god. Similarly trees also symbolizes the planets and deities. The concept of Panch Pallav significantly indicates importance of different plant essential for the survival of human race.

Urbanization is not new concept but does exist in Sindhu Ghaati civilization, Maya civilization, Ramayan, Mahabharat and Budha time. These Civilization have also a large scale urbanization, to fulfill desire of human beings. For sustainable urbanization, the concept of Vaastu Purush was introduced. Rules of Vaastu are relevant with modern concept of sustainable development and Biodiversity conservation.

Adapting Vaastu :

Technological solution for sustainable development always overlooks social, cultural, religious and local traditions. Technology is not always a solution to man made problem. For life to exist and remain sustain we have to explore all possibilities of creating a living environment which is self sufficient ecological balance, socially and culturally stimulating. The 'Vaastu Shastra' provides golden rules to establish harmony among settlement, nature and people and it has potential to change the patterns of existing living system. The term sustainable development is a development that is likely to achieve lasting satisfaction of human needs and improvement of the quality of human life. A sustainable system is that which survives or persists. This concept of sustainable development is very close to "Vaastu Shastra". The golden rules of Vaastu are above the polity. Vaastu Shastra includes village, town, major cities, metropolitan center including all aspects of human life that are known or that to be known. Vaastu simply could be described as a discipline that educate to behave with "Vastu" (defect) like human being and that is why the concept of Vaastu Purush comes in.

Origin of Vaastu :

The story goes like that when Lord Shiva was engaged in a combat with demon 'Andhaka'. Lord Shiva perspiration fell to ground. The Vaastu Purush was born out of this. Being hungry, Vaastu

Purush start eating that came in his way. 45 Gods went to Lord 'Brahma' (the creator) who advised them to hold being face down. These 45 gods are gathered together to press him down. Lord Brahma blessed Vaastu Purush being honoured. This story must be understood in modern context. Head of Vaastu purush lies in north east direction and his feet are in south west direction (Fig. 1).

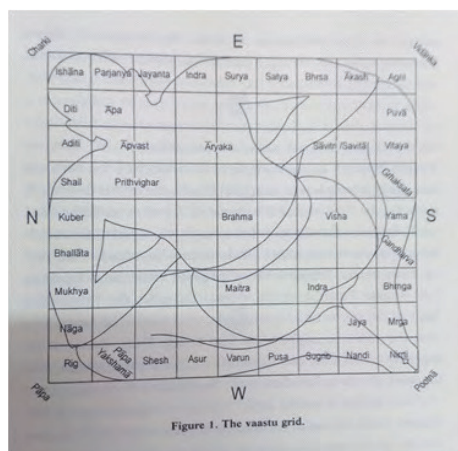
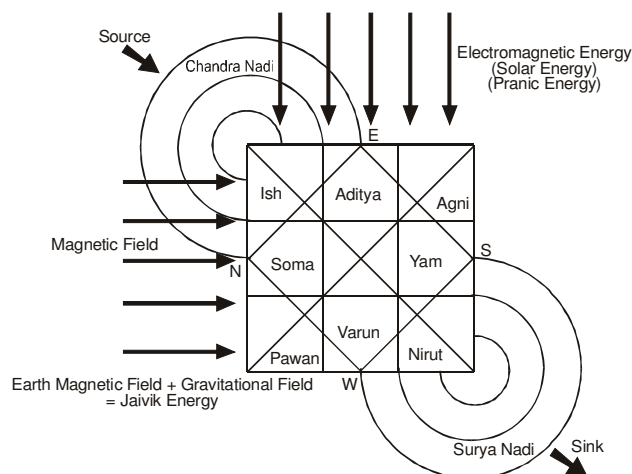


Figure 1. The vaastu grid.

Vaastu Purush in modern scientific terms takes care of earth's magnetic field, Gravitational field, electromagnetic field and their inter relation (Fig. -2). It will be worthwhile to mention that in astrology (in horoscope) only four elements are present and space element is missing but Vaastu we take care of all five elements. It has to be understood that elements are basic constituents for life to exist and remain sustainable.



How Vaastu can help to achieve sustainable development :

Vaastu Shastra is to facilitate a harmonious relationship between human beings and the environment, which leads to sustainable development. Modern criteria for sustainable development may concisely be stated as follows.

1. Rate of exploitation of renewable resources must not exceed the rate of natural regeneration
2. The absorption capacity of nature for harmful emission (such as CO₂ emissions or toxic wastes) should not be overstrained so that the eco system remains intact.
3. The effects of anthropological influences on eco-system must not abolish the limiting effect of their natural bounds.

Developments are connected with ecology, economy and social compatibility. The five principles of the Vaastu Shastra are as follows.

1. **Doctrine of choosing land and orientation:** This includes guide lines for choosing proper land for different activities of (such as industry, education health, town planning) states by examining soil, size, shape, taste, colour, smell, vegetational features of the land. There are eight cardinal direction, N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW and if include 'Aakash' and 'Paatal' then there are ten directions.
2. **Vaastu-Purush- Mandal :** There 42 deities are on Vaastu-Purush-Grid. Each deity is specific and only those work are allowed on a particular grid which are in accordance with the nature of owner of grid. The most important deity is Brahma. Initially it was circular but it could be superimposed on square, rectangular shape etc.
3. **Proportionate measurement :** The measurement are divided into six categories -measurement of height, breadth, width or circumference measurement along plumb lines measurement of thickness and measurement of interspaces.
4. **The six canon of Vedic architecture :**
5. **The aesthetics of the building :**

Comparing concept of sustainable development and Vaastu, explicitly implies that Vaastu has much deeper concern of sustainable development. Vaastu Shastra has been described as a body of knowledge, which has been sustained, developed and modified by successive generations of architects through many generations.

Vaastu Practical Examples :

Ancient Indian sites such as Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro (Now in Pakistan) are the great examples of Indian civic art and refined civic sense essential for sustainable developments. The 'Arthashastra' gives great importance to the orientation of element in the city planning. Designer of Chandigarh, Le Corbusier, a French architect has also followed Vaastu Purush mandal. The pink city Jaipur has also been based on Vaastu Purush mandal.

Conclusion :

In order to bring harmony between development and nature, concept of Vaastu could be used to achieve high quality living environment. We could not blindly follow the developed countries criteria of energy consumption based development pattern. Each society has its own ecological, cultural and social problems. Sustainable development needs the contribution of local people, citizen groups, business group and government that can make realistic development plans.

Our main object is to facilitate a harmonious relationship between human, building and environment which leads to sustainable development. Vaastu has become more relevant for modern human because of the surrounding became more important due to climate changes, pollution etc. Vaastu shastra is a kind of planning of human settlement based of earth gravitation, electromagnetic and geothermal energy pattern.

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