

VĀSTU- ŚĀSTRĀ—a Sustainable Design Methodology

R. Jagannathan

Principal, K.S. School of Architecture, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

*Email: principal@kssa.edu.in

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ABSTRACT

The vedic Indian ancestors of ours not only used planning and architecture as a knowledge system to define living spaces, but also created it as a micro representation of the larger cosmos. The designing process incorporated the synergy of human system with the subtle impacts of the environment. This planning and design methodology popularly known as VāstuŚāstra, is a holistic approach to developing an integrated space.

Towards achieving this concept, the ancients developed the technique of settlement planning and architectural design. The Śāstra defines the role of a planner / architect as that of ‘Sakṣhi’ – that is, a witness, for the marriage between the site and its owner. It is so said because; the planner / architect have to achieve a harmonious relationship between the site and its owner through the process of ‘architectural design’, at the physical level, mental level (mind) and the psychic level. At the physical level, this is achieved through the right usage of scale. At the mental level, this harmony is achieved by working the right proportion using the Vāstu-Puruṣa Maṇḍala, and at the psychic level, this is achieved by balancing the body energies along with the earth energy grids.

1. Introduction

The entire earth system and the various creatures on this earth is made up the five elements, viz., water, fire, air, space and earth. It is that the proportions of the elements vary from creature to creature to make the specific being. This delicate balance has to be maintained for the sustainability of the earth system. Space creation involves defining a given piece of space for the physical and emotional requirements of the user. Hence, this process of space defining is a very sensitive process, as any distortion in this could affect the proportion of elements in the end user’s system causing a disturbance in the network – the maṇḍala. Thus, maintaining this balance is of critical importance.

2. Planning Methods Of The Ancients

The settlements were planned and the living spaces designed based on the methodology as advised in the various treatises of the VāstuŚāstra. Spaces so evolved had to be in consonance with all the three aspects of any given space as well as the human body, viz.- physical, psychological and vital. Thus, the resultant space achieved a synergy between the space and the people which is achieved by the right proportion, materials, color choice, orientation and the time.

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3. The Physical Level

The word ‘Vāstu’ etymologically means ‘the place where people dwell (ol fūrçk. kuls=), from the root ‘vas’ to ‘dwell’ (nivāse). The place may either be the ground or land on which people reside, or the house and other buildings people build for their use. The word ‘vāstu’ refers both to the site on which buildings are raised and to the buildings themselves. (Uṇādi-sūtra 1.75) (ol fūrçk. kuls=)

As per the Āyādi system, once the site is selected, the scale based on the mukha tala of the presiding deity of the proposed settlement is taken and āyādi analysis is performed. Based on this analysis, the area of the settlement has to be increased or reduced so as to agree with the āyādi series. In order that a perfect result may be achieved, a site must be selected whose dimensions are not in opposition to the 'gains', 'losses', 'asterisms', 'matrices', 'ages', 'solar days', and 'lunar days' nor to the asterisms of the founder nor to his name or to that of the place itself.

Having completed the āyādi study and the auspicious proportions for the settlements is achieved; the next level of the planning stage is to be taken up.

5. The Psychic Level

This is the most sensitive part of the work of the planner / architect, for this involves the understanding and harnessing the vital energies from the cosmic plane and the telluric energies. The energies of the cosmic plane are drawn into the given settlement or house site by establishing the Vāstu-Puruṣa Maṇḍala (Figure 1) and energizing the Marma-sthalas of the Vāstu-Puruṣa.

The Maṇḍalas help in achieving this. They guide the planning and positioning of the various elements on the site. They provide answers to the locations of a kitchen as well as a Parliament house. The Maṇḍalas are also used in Indian dance and to perform various sacrificial rituals. The various forces are to be defined in a given site as per the detail shown in Figure 1.

While designing, due care must be taken to ensure that the Marma-sthalas-the nerve centers or the vulnerable points of the VāstuPuruṣa are not put to Pain. Therefore, structural members like columns, walls, fire places or anything that can cause pain to the VāstuPuruṣa must be avoided. The Mayamata says: 'The wise man must avoid tormenting his limbs with the limbs of the house, for otherwise, innumerable sorrows will be fall the limbs of the owner of the house.' The Marma-sthalas (Figure 2) or the nerve centers that are likely to hurt the VāstuPuruṣa are identified by the diagonals on the Maṇḍala diagram. The central diagonal lines, if drawn from the plots of Vāyu to Agni, and from Pitri to Īśa, are termed as Vaṃsa, the backbone lines.

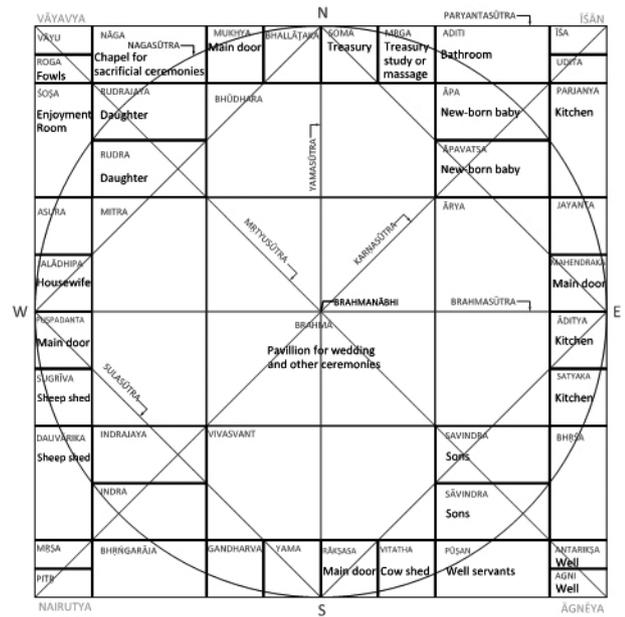


Figure 1. Mandala with cells (Source: M.Sadasivam (Ed.). Viswakarma Vastu Shastra. Saraswati Mahal Library Society)

The Maṇḍala is a celestial graph and has plots or quarters in it, which are created by equal sub-divisions on both sides. Some of these plots or quarters represent divine forces, while others represent demonic, animals, plants and other qualities/adjectives. The architect is to harness these

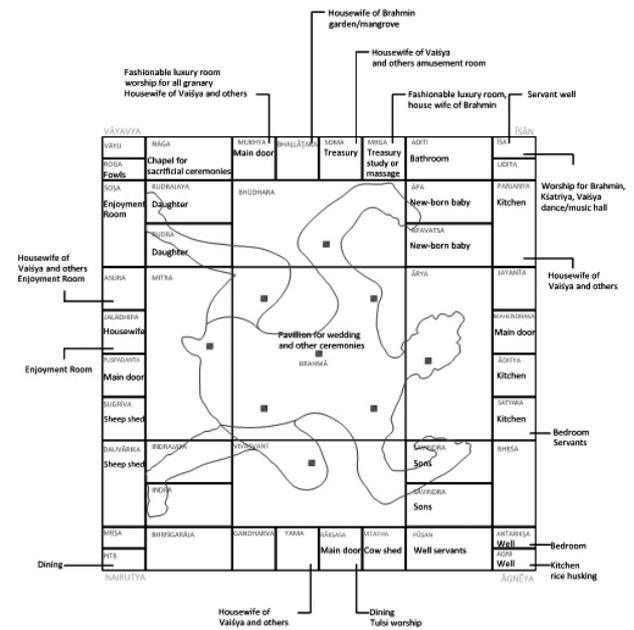


Figure 2. Vaastu purusha Mandala (Source: M.Sadasivam (Ed.). Viswakarma Vastu Shastra. Saraswati Mahal Library Society)

The intersection of the Vāṃsa and Sira Lines create the Marma-sthalas or the nerve centers, totaling nine in all. The super-imposition of these diagonals and nerve centers over the VāstuPuruṣa indicates that five of the Marma-sthalas or the nerve centers, fall on the plots allotted to Brahma, over the right and left shoulders, heart, spine and left thigh, and the other four fall on the plots allotted to Āryaman-the head, Bhūdhara-the left arm, Vivasvant-the right thigh and Mitra-the testicles. The method of locating the Marma-sthalas in a given site is

indicated in figure. These Marma-sthalas are then energized during the Sun, Moon and Earth periods. On the completion of the energization of the Vāstu-Puruṣa Maṇḍala, the space so set out becomes a fine receptacle for cosmic energies.

As for telluric energies, the Viśwakarma VāsthuŚāstra advises the architect to avoid Land which is filled with thorny plants, heat, plants that do not support leaves, snake mounds, bones and rocks.

oT; kI. Vdo{S pfrXeo{K nkdSA
oYehdul ek ä kHej fLx. KropAA24AA (M.Sadasivam)

The research work of the German physician Dr. Ernst Hartmann discovered certain electro-magnetic radiations emanating from the surface of the earth. This forms a grid running at every two meters interval in the north-south orientation and at two and half meter interval on the east-west orientation. They are termed as Hartmann's Grid and are technically known as Bio-Electro-Magnetic Grids (BEM Grids). Further research has revealed that there twenty different types of these BEM Grids normally four are important for man. It was further understood, through the studies, that these four types of BEM grids are unsuitable for human habitation. However, they are suitable for other creatures like snakes, cats etc., while cows and horses find them unsuitable just as the human beings.

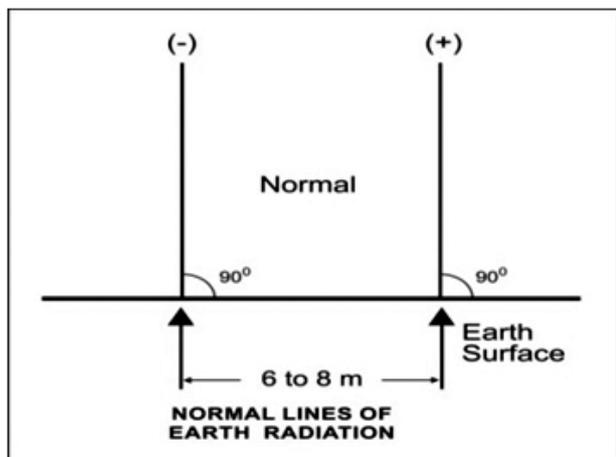


Figure 3. Normal Lines of Earth radiation (Source: Personal notes of Dr. Earnest Hartmann)

The different types of Magnetic Grids that are found on a land whether in the Cardinal Directions or the Diagonal Directions are:

1. *Major Grids*: are the largest and having the most intense energy radiations that can be found (Figure 4). They have 12 lines of Radiation which radiate out vertically from the surface of the earth. If you get two Major grids intersecting in a place, then we have what we call an 11 x 11 Grid.

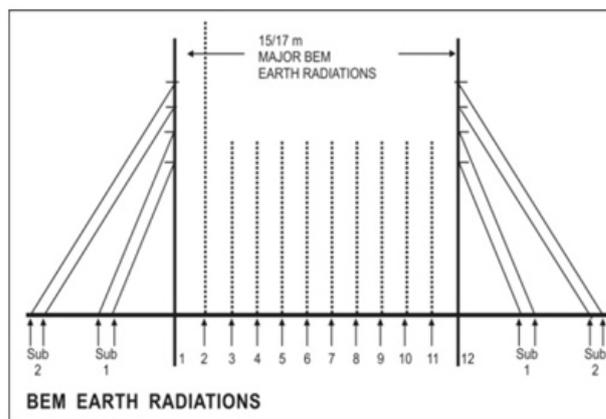


Figure 4. BEM telluric radiation (Source: Personal notes of Dr. Earnest Hartmann)

2. *Principle Grids*: are the next largest in size. Their number of Grid lines - also emanating vertically, from the Earth's surface is lesser, they are only 10 in number (Figure 5). When on a site we find two principle grids intersecting, it is considered the most ideal dimensions and proportions, and is referred to as 9 x 9 Grid - the VāstuPuruṣa Maṇḍala of 81 squares!

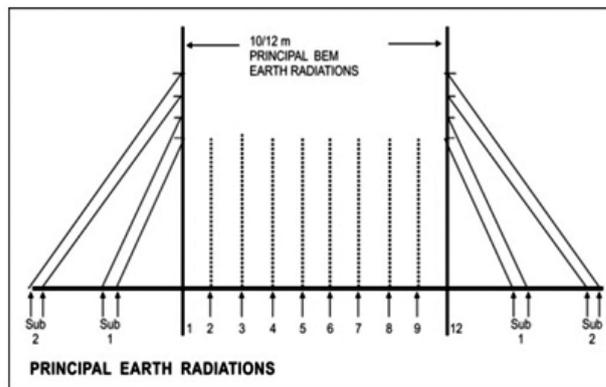


Figure 5. Principal BEM radiation (Source: Personal notes of Dr. Earnest Hartmann)

3. *Normal Grids*: In contrast to the other two, the Normal Grids have only two lines of radiations, both emanating vertically from the Earth's they have no other lines in between. Each line strangely has a (-) or (-)(Figure 3)
4. *Subsidiary Grids*: These grids are pretty close together, and are often referred to as the Hartmann Grids found in the Cardinal Directions and as in the Diagonal Directions (Figure 6). These are found in a bunch of 26 but do not emanate vertically. Half of these emanate at angles, from the earth's surface, towards one side and the other opposite side. This grid is used as the smallest modular unit cellular housing or the small village or roadside temples, etc. It must be noted that the ancient

śāstras also list such locations of snake mounds as places not suitable for human habitation.

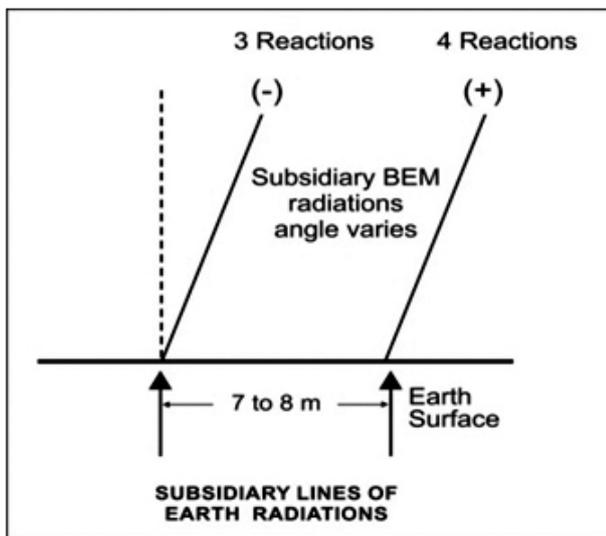


Figure 6. Subsidiary BEM radiations (Source: Personal notes of Dr. Earnest Hartmann)

6. Conclusion

The planning and design methodology based on the VāstuŚāstra facilitates and supports all human endeavors

of life and living. It represents extension of all evolutionary processes extended through the human mind, energies and body. Human architecture is also concerned with ordering spaces, time and forms so as to establish harmony with the world 'within' and 'around'. The innermost causative force 'Puruṣa', the external universal force is 'Vāstu', the world of energies, 'Maṇḍala' (networking) – hence the Vāstu-Puruṣa Maṇḍala – an instrument of networking and harmonizing human systems with eco-cosmo systems.

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