



Vaastu shastra in the Modern Age: Perceptions in Spatial design

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Abstract: Vaastu Shastra, an ancient Indian architectural doctrine rooted in Vedic texts, continues to shape spatial design perceptions in the modern age. This paper explores the intersection of Vaastu principles with contemporary spatial design practices, focusing on its role in fostering harmony between humans, nature, and the built environment. Through a comprehensive literature review and grounded theory methodology, the study examines diverse perspectives on Vaastu Shastra, ranging from its philosophical underpinnings to its practical application in construction and interior design. Key findings highlight the importance of directional alignment, elemental balance, and cultural heritage in Vaastu-guided design. Moreover, the research elucidates how designers, architects, and homeowners navigate the complexities of integrating Vaastu principles with modern design trends, sustainability goals, and client preferences. Through comparative analyses of design approaches and stakeholder perspectives, the paper offers insights into the evolving scope and challenges of incorporating Vaastu Shastra in contemporary spatial design practices. Ultimately, it underscores the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation in shaping the future trajectory of Vaastu-influenced design in India.

INTRODUCTION

Shelter- one of the major necessities for humans, it's the foundation upon which our well-being rests. The spaces we inhabit profoundly impact our physical health, mental clarity, and emotional harmony. Within this context, the art of designing a space emerges as a crucial tool for crafting environments that cater to our multiple needs and solves the problem areas in the interiors. In Indian culture for architecture and space designers- "The Vaastu Shastra" is predominantly implement in the design. The energy created within the structure depends on several factors but as per the study 5 elements are directly or indirectly interconnected for the development of positive and negative energy such as Prithvi (Earth), Jal (water), Agni (fire), Vayu (Air) and Aakash (Space). It is a philosophy approaching the human's functionality and well-being. It is a concept related to religions. It is an argument topic in India since centuries. People has different perspective over the Vaastu.

BACKGROUND

Vaastu Shastra, an ancient Indian architectural doctrine, traces its roots back to the Vedic texts, particularly the Vedas and the Sthapathya Veda. Originating over 5,000 years ago, Vaastu Shastra embodies a holistic approach to design and construction, emphasizing harmony between humans, nature, and the built environment. The term "Vaastu" derives from the Sanskrit word "Vaastu," meaning dwelling or building, and "Shastra," referring to scriptures or teachings.

Vaastu Shastra, translating to "science of dwelling" in Sanskrit, is an ancient Indian system of architecture aiming to create harmonious built environments [1]. Its origins trace back to the Vedas and Shilpa Shastras, possibly thousands of years old [2]. Core principles involve directional alignment, balancing the five elements (Pancha Bhutas) within the structure, and incorporating sacred geometry [2]. Historically, Vaastu Shastra guided the construction of temples, palaces, and homes, aiming to promote health, prosperity, and well-being for residents [1, 3].

In contemporary India, Vaastu principles are still applied when building homes and offices, although modern architectural styles and space limitations can pose challenges [2]

People have varied perspectives on Vaastu Shastra: some hold strong, traditional beliefs in it, others view it as purely scientific, some appreciate its climate-responsive and ergonomic benefits for health, while others interpret it through a spiritual or philosophical lens. As Vaastu shastra is a philosophy for architecture and interior design. For a building to lay its foundation there are various activities and respective stakeholders. The Real estate owners, Architects, Designers, Clients, spiritual or cultural

advisors. To design a building, it involves multiple people like client, the designer and priest [by the client's belief. There are spatial designers with various style and creative ideologies. Vaastu holds a prominent preference among India citizens, influencing their choices in various aspects of life, particularly in matters related to their homes and living spaces. This research paper is about the perspectives on Vaastu Shastra. In Indian designing this is a major argument.

Climatology and Vaastu principles harmonize in designing living spaces, optimizing building orientation, layout, and materials based on local climate insights. This synergy enhances energy efficiency, thermal comfort, and indoor air quality, aligning with Vaastu's aim of fostering harmonious living environments. Designers regulate indoor temperatures through ventilation and shading techniques, reducing reliance on artificial systems for a healthier atmosphere. Aligning windows and doors to capture breezes enhances natural ventilation, promoting better air circulation. Integrating climatology with Vaastu ensures spaces honor tradition while responding effectively to local climates, offering users a comfortable, sustainable living environment. This gives a view why different regions in India have a different building

LETERATURE REVIEW

After reviewing the research paper by Shanta Dash and Mahendra Joshi, it has been observed that Vaastu Shastra has a stronger emphasis on the cardinal directions and the placement of architectural elements, whereas Feng Shui places more importance on the balance of yin and yang [Yin represents qualities such as darkness, stillness, femininity, coldness, and passivity, while yang represents qualities such as brightness, activity, masculinity, warmth, and assertiveness].[4]

The analysis also delves into the philosophical and psychological underpinnings of Vaastu Shastra, demonstrating how its principles are grounded in ancient Indian traditions and belief systems. This includes the concepts of prana (life force), the five elements, [Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Space] and the importance of aligning spaces with cosmic energies. Vaastu Shastra advocates the optimal placement of buildings, rooms, doors, windows, and other architectural elements to facilitate the smooth flow of positive energy (prana) and minimize the impact of negative energy.[4]

Reena Thakur Patra's research "Vaastu-Shastra in Perspective on Technology" examines ancient Indian architectural knowledge and compares it with the works of contemporary philosophers of technology. The main findings of this study are as follows: Vaastu-Shastra is a concept of instrumental understanding, sensory understanding, theoretical and scientific understanding, which describes its own philosophical research. The magazine compares Vaastu-Shastra with the philosophies of Carl Mitcham, Albert Borgmann, Don Ihde and Michael Polanyi. Mitcham's concept of technology from ancient times to the present sees technology as object, knowledge, and action with three techniques of "being together". Borgmann's analyses of the pervasive influence of technology on human life from a different perspective - philosophically, socially, historically, and scientifically, reflecting how we have embraced the world both individually and collectively. Vaastu Shastra is told through its culture and heritage. Culture is a society's way of life, people's behaviours, and religious expressions. Heritage comes from human culture, which is the part of human life from which we learn who we are and how we live and pass on our values to the next generation. [5]

From the research paper by H. Fazeli & A. Goodarzi [The principles of Vaastu as a traditional architectural belief system from an environmental perspective], It has been observed that Vaastu Shastra, an ancient Indian architectural science, emphasizes the importance of environmental principles in design and construction. The environmental features that influence Vaastu principles include the Sun Rays, Magnetic Poles, Geopathic Zones, and Concentric Zones. The Sun Rays play a significant role in determining the auspiciousness of directions. The north direction is served as the purifying direction, while the south direction has energy-giving properties. The shape of the building is crucial in the energy flow pattern, with the northeast section built lighter and in a lower level compared to the southwest. Vaastu Shastra guidelines aim to create spaces that harmonize with nature and universal forces, emphasizing the deep connection between traditional architecture, environmental elements, and cultural beliefs.[6]

The research paper titled "Application of Vaastu Shastra Principles in House Construction by Home Dwellers" provides several observations on the application and utilization of Vaastu Shastra principles in house construction by home dwellers in Udaipur, Rajasthan, India. In this research study 200 home dwellers from newly constructed localities were undertaken to identify their level of faith in Vaastu use and also to judge the physiological and psychological effects of Vaastu application on the lives of home dwellers in 2019.[7]

1. Orientation of Plot: The study found that 32.00% of the respondents had their houses facing East, followed by 25.50% with North-facing houses, 24.50% with South-facing houses, and 18.00% with West-facing houses. [7]

2. Shape of the Plot: Most of the respondents (79.50%) had rectangular-shaped plots, while 16.00% had square-shaped plots and only 3.50% had round, circular, or oval-shaped houses.[4]

3. Duration of Stay: Almost half of the respondents (49.50%) had been residing in their homes for five years or less, while 33.50% had been staying for six to ten years, and 17.00% had been living in their homes for 10 to 12 years.[7]

4. Familiarity with Vaastu Shastra: The study found that 91.50% of the respondents were familiar with the term Vaastu Shastra, while 8.50% were not. [7]

5. Level of Faith in Vaastu Shastra: The study found that 29.00% of the respondents had full faith, 26.00% had partial faith, 25.00% had average faith, 15.00% had low faith, and 5.00% had very low faith in Vaastu Shastra principles concerning house construction and interior designing.[7]

6. Application of Vaastu Shastra Principles: The study found that 82.00% of the respondents had applied Vaastu Shastra principles in house construction from plot selection to Gruha Parvesh, while 15.00% had made alterations in accordance with Vaastu Shastra principles in the construction of kitchen, toilet, septic tank, or boring point, and furnishings of rooms in ready-built houses. [7]

7. Consultation with Experts: The study found that 52.00% of the respondents had consulted architects, 46.00% had consulted civil engineers, 78.00% had consulted contractors, 7.50% had consulted Vaastu Shastri, 60.00% had consulted astrologers/ jyotish, and 46.00% had consulted any other experts during the construction of their houses.[7]

8. Consultation with Interior Designers: The study found that only 35.00% of the respondents had consulted interior designers in furnishing their homes, while 65.00% had designed their homes on their own as per Vaastu norms.[7]

9. Application of Vaastu Principles in Selection of Plot: The study found that 80.50% of the respondents had applied the principle of living in North/East/West direction houses, and 95.50% had applied the principle of living in rectangular or square-shaped houses.[7]

10. Application of Vaastu Principles in Beginning of Construction: The study found that 89.00% of the respondents had done Bhumi Poojan in the North-East corner, 74.50% had built their bore well/underground water storage tank in the North-East corner, 77.00% had built their septic tank in the North or West direction at least two feet away from the plinth of the house, and 64.00% had dug their foundation work from North-East to South-West corner.[7]

The research paper by Reeta Gupta [Comparison of Vaastu Shastra with Modern Building Science] highlights that Based on Indian philosophy, Vaastu shastra is applied in construction encompassing various sectors like housing, commercial spaces, and temples. Five fundamental principles include orientation, site planning, proportional measurements, Vedic architecture canons, and aesthetics. Stresses the significance of cardinal directions for optimal solar radiation benefits in building placement. Emphasizes sustainable development and cultural respect in site selection. Explores the blend of science and technology, technoscience, and the embodiment of science in technology. Views Vaastu-Shastra to understand traditional technical instruments and civilizations, aiding in technological reconstruction. Considers design as an evolutionary learning and inquiry process, fundamental to Vaastu-Shastra. Discusses the importance of practical wisdom and craft knowledge in dealing with practical challenges. Advocates for a balanced approach in Vaastu Shastra, integrating natural, cultural, and technological aspects for sustainability. Argues that technology reflects cultural practices and vice versa, emphasizing the cultural hermeneutic of technical action.[8]

From this research paper by Priyanka Borodai [Vaastu shastra- A Holistic approach in modern architecture], It has been observed that, Vaastu Shastra, an ancient Indian science, seeks balance and harmony between gods, nature, and people, fostering peace, prosperity, health, and happiness by eliminating negative energy and promoting positive vibrations. Traditional architectural principles, including environmental factors like sun rays and magnetic poles, guide the design process to align buildings with nature. Vaastu planning aims to imbue structures with universal positive energy, enhancing occupants' overall well-being and prosperity. Proper room orientation is crucial to optimize energy flow and avoid negativity. Implementing Vaastu principles promises improved quality of life, health, and relationships, fostering a stress-free environment. Despite modernization, Vaastu remains relevant, offering guidelines for creating positive living or working spaces in harmony with nature and tradition.[9]

METHODOLOGY

Grounded theory, a qualitative and comparative research method, was employed to generate theory directly from empirical data. This approach includes data collection, coding, and analysis to identify concepts, categories, and emerging theories from the data. Grounded theory aims to understand social phenomena by systematically identifying patterns and relationships. In this study, grounded theory was applied to analyze themes uncovered through primary research. Insights into the concept of *Vaastu* emerged during interviews, allowing us to deepen our understanding. Our knowledge and research formed the foundation for completing the project.

We conducted a qualitative study, supported by a literature review using sources like Google Scholar and Taylor and Francis, to map relevant data. From this review, we identified key findings and developed targeted questions for each stakeholder group. A comparative analysis of responses allowed us to examine the perspectives of both current and older generations. This method proved valuable for understanding generational viewpoints and capturing diverse perspectives on *Vaastu*.

SCOPE

The scope of Vaastu Shastra for designers, whether they choose to follow its principles or not, is influenced by various factors including cultural heritage, client preferences, sustainability goals, and evolving design trends. Designer who chooses not to follow Vaastu Shastra may have greater creative freedom to explore innovative design concepts and experimental architectural styles. By deviating from prescriptive guidelines, they can push the boundaries of design and challenge conventional notions of spatial arrangement and aesthetics. Ultimately, the scope of Vaastu Shastra in the future will be shaped by the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation, cultural heritage, and global design trends.

LIMITATIONS

Designers who do not follow Vaastu may risk overlooking cultural heritage and authenticity in their designs, particularly in regions where Vaastu forms an integral part of local identity. Ignoring cultural context may lead to the loss of opportunities for meaningful engagement with local communities and traditions. Vaastu Shastra, like any architectural tradition, may evolve over time to adapt

to changing societal norms, technological advancements, and design trends. Designers committed to following Vaastu principles must remain vigilant to evolving interpretations and incorporate contemporary sensibilities into their designs.

DISCUSSION

1. Comparison of Interior Designers with Vaastu Shastra.

Four designers (Priya, Dhruv, Anjali, Rahul) were interviewed and agreed on the importance of Vaastu Shastra in their designs. However, there are different levels of experience and approaches

Experience: Priya (10 years) and Dhruv (20+) show good understanding of Vaastu techniques, while Anjali (newbie) can study. Rahul (12 years old) emphasizes the strategic use of Vaastu.

Client Focus: Everyone puts the customer's perspective first, but the approach is different. While Priya and Rahul focus on Vastu integration, Dhruv and Anjali focus on customer preferences and easy integration of Vaastu elements.

New adaptation: Dhruv and Rahul adapt to Vastu and new formats. The need for adaptation must be known. Dhruv suggests using spaced splits while Rahul uses strategic tool placements. Anjali sees Vastu as an opportunity for creative solutions.

Communication: Priya assumes most clients are familiar with Vastu, while Dhruv and Rahul tailor their communication based on the client's knowledge. Anjali is upfront about her learning process and explores client interest.

Overall Approach: Priya emphasizes the benefits of Vastu for wellbeing and aesthetics. Dhruv focuses on a respectful collaboration, finding a balance between client vision and Vastu. Anjali sees this as a learning experience and Rahul uses Vastu strategically with a modern twist.

Observations:

Experience plays a role in confidence with Vastu. Senior designers (Priya, Dhruv) seem more comfortable integrating it, while newer designers (Anjali) are still learning. All designers find a way to balance Vastu principles with client needs. Adapting Vastu to modern spaces is a common challenge addressed by Dhruv, Rahul, and Anjali. Communication styles vary depending on the client familiarity with Vastu. There's a spectrum of approaches, from Priya's strong emphasis on Vastu to Anjali's focus on client preferences with a touch of Vastu. This comparison highlights how interior designers in India approach Vastu Shastra, balancing tradition with modern needs and client preferences.

2. Comparing Architects Approaches to Vaastu Shastra

The Three Architects [Kavita, Viraj and Aditya] understand the importance of Vaastu Shastra in their work. However, the level of experience and the weight given to the principles of Vaastu varies

Experience: Kavita (15) and Viraj (18) are very knowledgeable about Vaastu, while Aditya [modern] is to study.

Philosophy vs. Tool: Kavita and Aditya see Vastu as a tool to fit in, while Viraj sees it as a basic design concept.

Client Side: Both follow the client's needs, but the approach is different. Kavita and Aditya strike a balance, while Viraj looks for a solution that respects Vastu and the client's perspective.

Challenges and Solutions: The couple tackles issues like space constraints. Kavita suggests changes, Aditya seeks collaboration with experts, and Viraj seeks Vastu-friendly alternatives.

Advantages: Everyone believes Vastu can improve work and aesthetics. Kavita focuses on design concepts, Aditya values unity and Viraj believes in holistic living.

Communication: Everyone gathers information to understand the customer. Kavita explains the benefits, Aditya is honest about his studies and Viraj uses courage and knowledge.

Observation:

Experience plays a big role in Vastu confidence. Top designers (Kavita, Viraj) prefer to use this as their main point. Everyone finds ways to combine Vastu principles with client requirements, approach from functionality and aesthetics are considered. The communication style depends on the client's understanding of Vastu. This comparison shows how Indian designers approach according to Vastu Shastra to meet traditional and contemporary needs, the needs of clients and their own design goals.

3. Comparing Common people Approaches to Vaastu Shastra

All three people from Hyderabad [a real estate agent, a Priest, and a homeowner] take Vastu Shastra seriously but have different views based on their profession and background.

Explanation: The Priest

(68 years old) of depth wisdom and many generations. Real Estate agent (42yr) is aware of its importance in the market, but Homeowner (32yr) has personal beliefs about its positive effects.

Belief system: Family experts consider Vaastu as a science related to religion. Real estate agents see this as a psychological factor that influences buyer perception. The Homeowner believes it creates a calm and balanced environment.

The purpose: The family priest emphasizes the creation of a sacred space and the flow of energy. Real estate agents will find this a marketing opportunity to attract buyers. The lords of the house value peace and well-being which he values.

Importance: Family Priest recommends Vastu expert for minor and major renovations while considering Jathagam for customization. Estate agents suggest that you consider both Vastu-compliant properties and those that can be modified. Homeowners can use general principles or consult with experts, depending on the scope of their renovation. Science vs. mythology Real estate agents know both science and the lore. Households focus on good results, regardless of the source.

CONCLUSION

In-depth knowledge of Vastu is linked to religion and culture. Each person has their own role (Practitioner - the importance of faith; Agent - Give priority to aspects of Vastu which are related to its market value), home owner - personal life). Although the definitions are different, they all agree that they have a positive effect on mental health. There are many different ways to solve this, from talking to experts to using general methods. This comparison allows us to see how Vastu Shastra has many methods in Hyderabad. It is a mixture of religious beliefs, traditions, functional design principles and visible approaches to life. Understanding these different perspectives allows us to better understand the role of Vastu in Indian society.

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