

Bauhaus Exhibition 1922: New Weapon of Anti-Colonial Resistance in India

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Abstract : The development of the original Bauhaus occurred at a time in the beginning of the 20th century when the industrialization of Germany had reached a climax. The cities were a reflection of the new living conditions of an industrialized society. The Bauhaus can be interpreted as an ambitious attempt to find appropriate answers to the challenges by using architecture-urban development and design. The core elements of the conviction of the day were the belief in the necessary crossing of boundaries between the various disciplines and courage to experiment for a better solution. Even after 100 years, the situation in our cities is shaped by similar complexity. The urban consequences of developments are difficult to estimate and to predict. The paper critically reflected on the central aspects of the history of the Bauhaus and its role in bringing the modernism in India by comparative studies of the methodology adopted by the artists and designer in both the countries. The paper talked in detail about how the Bauhaus Exhibition in 1922 offered Indian artists a new weapon of anti-colonial resistance. The original Bauhaus fought its aesthetic and political battles in the context of economic instability and the rise of German fascism. The Indians had access to dominant global languages and in a particular English. The availability of print media and a vibrant indigenous intellectual culture provided Indian people a tool to accept technology while denying both its dominant role in culture and the inevitability of only one form of modernism. The indigenous was thus less an engagement with their culture as in the West than a tool of anti-colonial struggle. We have shown how the Indian people used Bauhaus as a critique of colonialism itself through an undermining of its typical modes of representation and as a means of incorporating the Indian desire for spirituality into art and as providing the cultural basis for a non-materialistic and anti-industrial form of what we might now term development. The paper reflected how through painting the Bauhaus entered the artistic consciousness of the sub-continent not only for its stylistic and technical innovations but as a tool for a critical and even utopian modernism that could challenge both the hegemony of academic and orientalist art and as the bearer of a transnational avant-garde as much political as it was artistic, and as such the basis of a non-Eurocentric but genuinely cosmopolitan alternative to the hierarchies of oppression and domination that had long bound India and were at that moment rising once again to a tragic crescendo in Europe. We have talked about how the Bauhaus of today can offer an innovative orientation towards discourse around architecture and design.

Keywords : anti-colonial struggle, art over architecture, Bauhaus exhibition of 1922, industrialization

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