3 LOCAL ARCHITECTURE

Why Study of Local Heritage Is Important

A historical building or a typical example of local architecture gives us a sense of wonder and makes us want to know more about the people and the culture that produced it. It has architectural, aesthetic, historic, documentary, environmental, archaeological and even political and spiritual and symbolic values: but the first impact is always emotional, for it is a symbol of our cultural identity and continuity — a part of our heritage.

— SIR BERNARD FEILDEN

ACTIVITY 3.1

LISTING INTERESTING BUILDINGS

Class : XI
Time : Classwork and homework

- Make a list of at least 20 different types of buildings in your town/city/locality.(Groups can focus on different parts of the town)
- Indicate the importance of each.
- Complete the list with the address and routes to each building.

In every region of India a distinctive style of architecture developed. Lakshmi Narayan Temple, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh

Tomb of Salim Chisti in marble commissioned by Akbar, Fatehpur Sikri, Agra

Student sketching at a heritage site

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ACTIVITY 3.2

DOCUMENTING A HISTORIC BUILDING

Class: XI and XII
Time : Classwork and homework

Why are building styles different in every state and region of India?

Design a documentation card (see sample below) for one building from the list prepared by you in Activity 3.1 that you find interesting. The card should assist you in further research in crafts, skills and techniques of building.

Brick temple, Vishnupur, Seventeenth Century, West Bengal

Unique clay-tile work, Vishnupur, Seventeenth Century, West Bengal

Documentation Card for Buildings

- Name of the building:_____
- Address :_____
- Location :_____
- Ownership :_____
- What is the function of the building? :_____

  _____

  _____
- Has the function changed over the years?_____

  _____

Draw the building	Draw its unique features

- What are the present surroundings of the building like?

  _____

YOUR NAME: CLASS:

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ACTIVITY 3.3

INTANGIBLE HERITAGE AND BUILDINGS

Class : XI and XII
Time : Site visit

In continuation of your documentation made in Activity 3.2 investigate the following.

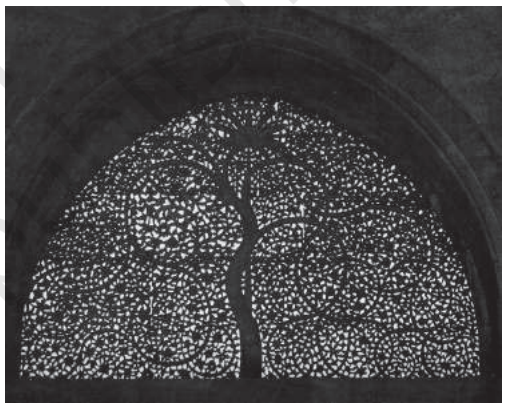
Significance of the Building

- Why is this building famous?
  (Is it a tomb, a fort, a palace, a religious building or the residence of an important person?)
- Who built it? Was he or she famous at that time?
- Is the monument associated with any legends?

Development of the Building

- How old is the monument?
- Was the monument built in stages with additions by different people at various stages in history?

Jali, *Sidi Sayyid Mosque, Ahmedabad, Gujarat*



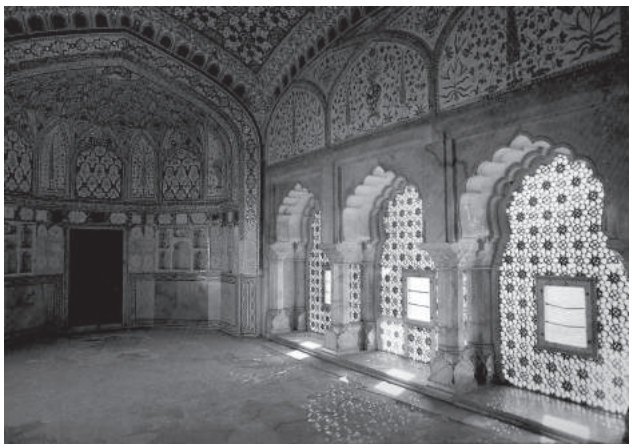
Materials Used in the Building

- What materials were used to build it?
- Where did these materials come from?

Functions of the Building

- What was the building used for?
- Did the use of the monument change with time?
- Have any repairs or alterations taken place? Can you tell which change is the oldest and which one is the latest?

Painted Palace, Amber Fort, Jaipur, Rajasthan



The Building and Its Social Relevance

- Is the structure unique? How does it compare with others in your city in terms of the way it looks and its function?
- Does the monument give you any clues about the social life of the days when it was built?
- Looking at the building how do you think life then was different from or similar to life today?

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ACTIVITY 3.4

MATERIALS, QUALITIES AND FUNCTIONS

Class : XI
Time : Site visit

Visit one important building of your locality. List the different materials used to build the selected building. Make a chart with the list of different objects, materials, the associated craft specialisation and their usage or function.

Object	*Material*	*Crafts Skill*	*Why Material Is Used*
1. Door	Wood	Carpentry	Durability, availability

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Taj Mahal, Agra, Uttar Pradesh

ACTIVITY 3.5

STORIES IN STONE

Class : XI
Time : Classwork

India has a wide variety of stone, each preferred by the architect/mason/house builder for its special qualities.

- Can you guess which materials were used to build the Taj Mahal?
- Describe the colour of the stone.
- Describe the texture of the stone.
- Does the stone feel hot or cold?
- Do you know how the stone can be cleaned?
- Any clues on where the stone may have come from?
- Was it locally available or did it come from another part of the country?
- Can you guess if the stone was expensive or cheap at the time the monumental was built?
- Is the same stone used today to build houses or buildings?
- Why was this stone used to build this monument? Give three reasons.

Limestone

Limestone varies in colour, texture and origin. The rocks consist mainly of the mineral, calcite. Both plant and animal life contribute to their formation.

Sandstone

Sandstone is a sedimentary rock formed by the action of wind, water and ice. Sandstone has been used in many historical buildings in India.

Granite

Granite can be both an igneous and a metamorphic rock. It is hard and tough and widely used for construction.

Basalt

Basalt is a volcanic rock that is found the world over. Its colour varies from a dark grey with a greenish tinge to almost black.

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What skills are required to make the doors and pillars of a traditional home?

ACTIVITY 3.6

DOORWAYS

Class : XI
Time : Classwork and homework

Chettinad door, Tamil Nadu

In India, there are a variety of wood available that are excellent for carving. The range of wood runs from dark, warm brown or rose-wood to soft mango wood. Wood can be preserved with oil and polish or decorated with paint to make its surface both more durable and cheerful.

The entrance, or doorway, to a house or to place of religious importance has a deep significance in India. It is the door that welcomes, the door that opens into the home, the door that the public encounters and hence its special significance. The horizontal beam above the door, under which you pass, often carries the figure of a deity, or a message or a sign placed there to bring prosperity and blessings to all those who pass through the entrance.

Create a Chart on 'Doorways of My City'

- Study gateways and doorways to public and private buildings in your locality and the market.
- How are the doors designed and decorated?
- Draw pictures/take photographs of different kinds of doorways and mention the building to which it belongs — home, shop, etc, the materials used to make the doors and types of decorations.

Entrance to a village house, Orissa

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ACTIVITY 3.7

SECURING THE HOME

Class : XII
Time : Homework

The Indian metal worker has created over the centuries a variety of locks to secure the front door of a home or public building. Some are designed to be humorous, in the form of dogs, horses and even a scorpion. These locks were used on doors and trunks and had ingenious locking mechanisms and keys. It was as if the metal worker was striving to make each object more endearing to the owner, however mundane the function of the item may have been.

Traditional door lock

Choose one topic from below and make an album of interesting and unique

- door locks in your region
- weathercocks on the roofs of houses
- gates/doors of different designs
- gate/shop signs.

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ACTIVITY 3.8

PERFECT HOUSE

Class : XI
Time : Homework

India has traditional house styles or vernacular architecture that differ from region to region. Try and connect with the historical past by exploring the traditional homes in your state and investigate the histories of the families that live in these houses. The architecture of a place can be influenced by various factors.

- Climate
- Availability of building material
- Lifestyle or functions

Look at the pictures on these two pages. Choose one and answer the questions given below. Try analysing objects just by looking and observing.

1. Region to which the building belongs
2. Climatic features
3. What is the function of the building?
4. List the materials used in the construction of
   - Foundation
   - Ceiling
   - Walls
   - Brackets
   - Doors
   - Floor
   - Roof
   - Pillars
   - Windows
   - Courtyard
5. Identify the various skills and crafts involved in its construction (stone masonry, carpentry, painting etc.)
6. If rural homes are designed to suit the environment and climate, how are these buildings designed to provide shelter from the climate?

Different types of rural houses made of natural, locally available materials

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A. Traditional round house in the Kutch region of Gujarat. The round shape reduces the surface exposed to the sun, cold winds and sandstorms.

B. A mountain house in Jammu and Kashmir—livestock such as sheep and yaks are kept in the lower floor of the house which helps to warm the living area.

C. A stone house in Rajasthan—stone keeps the house cool in summer and warm in winter.

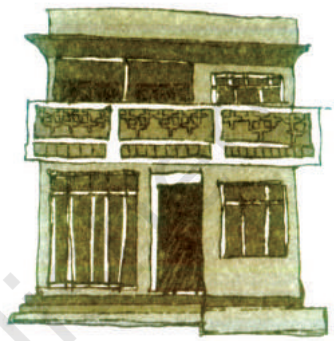
D. A bungalow built during British rule—these houses were usually surrounded by verandahs that protected the house from the hot sun and the monsoon rains and allowed cool breeze in.

E. A traditional house in Kerala—Kerala has two monsoons in a year. The roofs of these houses are sloping to allow rain water to drain off.

F. A grand mansion in Goa—built a few hundred years ago at the time when the Portuguese ruled the State. This majestic house gives us a clue that some Portuguese people lived in great luxury and style in Goa.

G. A thatched house in Meghalaya—the house has a sloping roof to allow rain water to drain off and the entire structure is built on wooden stilts to keep it safe from flooding rain water.

A



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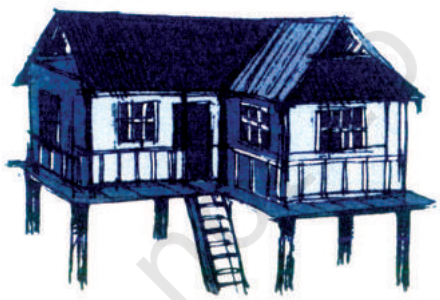

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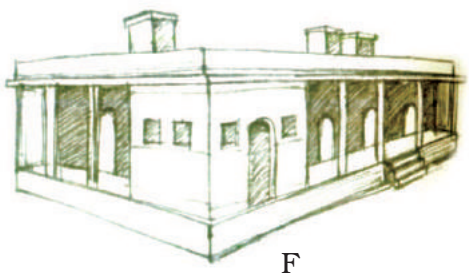

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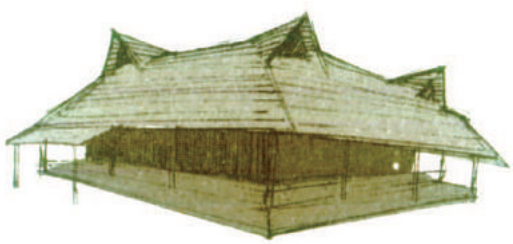

E

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ACTIVITY 3.9

LEARNING FROM THE MASON

Class : XII
Time : Classwork or site visit

Invite a mason/architect to class or visit them at a building site. Ask the mason/builder/architect questions such as:

1. How long has he or she been practising the craft?
2. How did he or she learn the craft?
3. Does the craftsperson live with others practising the same craft?
4. Which area of the city does the craftsperson live in?
5. Would the craftsperson like his or her children to learn the craft skills?
6. Write the step-by-step processes involved in making the craft.
7. What type of buildings do they make?
8. What materials do they use?
9. Why are different materials used for various functions?
10. Make a scrapbook of the information you have acquired.

Clay-tile roof, Madhya Pradesh

Thatched roof, Orissa

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ACTIVITY 3.10

WELL-DESIGNED TRADITIONAL HOMES

Class : XII
Time : Class tour and homework/holiday homework

Make an album of regional styles of rural architecture of your region

1. Record the climate of your region.
2. Identify traditional houses of your region of different communities.
3. Draw a plan of a traditional house.
4. Make a model of it.
5. Interview the owners and investigate the family's history in relation to the house.
6. Describe the plan of the house and how each space is used.
7. What materials are used in the construction of this house?
8. Give reasons for the use of each type of material.
9. Explain why rural houses are built the way they are.
   - Shape of roofs
   - How is the house maintained/repaired/restored after monsoons, winter, summer?
10. How is the house decorated? or What are the decorative elements in the house and what is their function?
11. Using the sample documentation card provided on page 32 create a documentation library of the vernacular architecture of your region with your classmates.

Thatched house, Assam

Interior of a home, Bihar

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Documentation Card for Vernacular/Traditional House

- Name of the building : _____
- Address : _____
- Location : _____
- Ownership : _____
- What is the function of the building? _____
- Has the function changed over the years? _____
- What are the present surroundings of the building like? _____

  _____
- List the materials used in its construction
  - Foundation :
  - Floor :
  - Ceiling :
  - Roof :
  - Walls :
  - Windows :
  - Doors :
  - Courtyard :
  - Others :
- List its unique features

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

Draw the building

- Identify the various skills and crafts involved in its construction (stone masonry, carpentry, painting, etc.)

YOUR NAME: CLASS:

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