

Chapter 16: Modern Architecture in NEPAL

16.1 PRETEXT

Nepal has preserved an expansive **variety** of architectural styles, all linked by similarity of constructional pattern and materials; integrated into a **homogeneous** complex by their underlying purpose.

Architecture flourished in the **Malla period**. The Malla dynasty was the ruling Kshatriya dynasty of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal from 1201 to 1779. The Malla period was a golden one that stretched over 600 years, as they presided over and flourished the Newar civilization of Nepal Mandala which developed as one of the most sophisticated urban civilization in the Himalayan foothills and a key destination in the India-Tibet trade route.¹ There were three kingdoms Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhadgaon who were in a competitive environment with different rulers trying to outdo each other. While variants of the **Pagoda style** are predominant, there are few in the borrowed **Sikhara style**. Buildings were mostly temples, palaces and building of public use. Residences were based on courtyard planning.

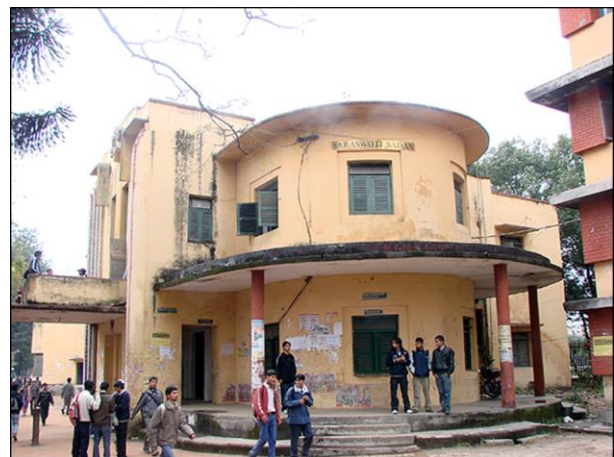
There was an extensive use of Bricks; Sun burnt and kiln on wooden posts and beams, intricately carved wooden windows and doors. Symmetry was a preference; axial and radial.

During the **Rana Period**, for the first time, the 19th Century western monumentalism was brought to Nepal. Building, mostly palaces were built in the **Neo-classical style** that borrowed elements from the Greek and Roman Architecture. **Kishor Narsingh Rana** and **Kumar Narsingh Rana** were the two main Engineers of the time.

16.2 CONTEXT

Modern Architecture in Nepal starts from about the time the **Sarashowati Sadan** (2000 B.S.) was built, which is a milestone in the history of Modern Architecture in Nepal. It was designed by **Bed Prasad Lohani**; the first to introduce **concrete** structure in Nepal.

Ranjana Hall (2009 B.S.) is another example. He played with variety of elements in his buildings like; RCC, RBC, dome etc. His buildings are **simple**, **functional** and structurally **stable**.



Sarashowati Sadan²

¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malla_dynasty_\(Nepal\)#cite_note-1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malla_dynasty_(Nepal)#cite_note-1)

² https://4.bp.blogspot.com/-tdcOqHqm4pE/Vwtp0F1RI5I/AAAAAAAAAE54/9XXR_TY7tw4F-eSQy8BSIJS-h5dbKEAA/s1600/trichandrampus-p1.jpg

Other individuals who have played significant role in the development of Modern architecture in Nepal are; **Prabhinga Man Singh Pradhan** (Amrit Science Campus), **1962**, **Shankar Nath Rimal**, **Robert Weize**, **Shiva Raj Panta** (Vrikuti Mandap 2015 B. S.), **Ganga Dhar Bhatta**, **Bhubaneswor Lal Shrestha**.

-Post Office Building, Sundhara **by Indian Cooperation Mission**

-Ministry of Health, Maitighar **by Louis I Kahn**

-Narayanhiti Palace, designed by a team of Stain, Ar. Benjimin Polk and Chatterjee from an Indian firm based in Calcutta. S. N. Rimal was the Site Engineer.

-Laboratory school (1965) is also designed by Ar. Benjimin Polk

16.3 NEPALI CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTS

16.3.1 Shankar Nath Rimal

Shankar Nath Rimal (born 5 March 1935) is a Nepalese civil engineer and architect who standardized the modern **Nepalese flag**. He has also designed many prominent buildings and monuments in Nepal. Sahid gate of Sundhara, Ramananda gate of Janakpur, Bhaleshwar temple of Chandragiri hill and Solatee hotel are some of the prominent structure he has designed.³

He is the eldest son of Devendra Nath Rimal And Sita Devi.

Schooling: Preprimary – Nandiratri School, Naxal

Secondary – Durbar High School (SLC in 1950) along with brothers; Gauri Nath and Durga Nath

Shankar Nath joined Engineering despite the family's wish for him to be a doctor.

He received Colombo Plan for Electrical Engineering and later shifted to **Civil Engineering**.

He graduated from Calcutta University in 1957.

Started professional work as assistant Engineer in the public works department.

In 1959, left for Germany on a yearlong training in Dtckechooff and Widman K. G.

In 1961 Started his own firm” Shankar Nath Rimal Engineers and Architects P. Limited.”

Spent his life on creative domain which led him to the threshold of **perfectionist**.

He spared time for creative works in the form of **sculpture** and **painting** in water colour, oil etc. The paintings are rather abstract and fresh with bold use of colours. His sketches contain minute details. He has also expressed his emotions in some of his miniature sculptures. He has displayed his skills in other specilized fields such as Project Writing, **Structural Details**, **Working Drawing** and **Landscape Design**.

HIS PHILOSOPHY

- **Spiritual Quality** in designs
- **Heterogenity** over homogeneity

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shankar_Nath_Rimal

- Redefine Nepali Architectural Space
- Use of Modern Technology
- **Faithful** use of elements
- Emphasis on **purity of form**
- Cost Effective

HIS VIEWS

- One must be fully engaged in his work to be successful
- Originality comes from philosophy, which is also essential to achieve sustainability
- Architecture is an applied art; point where art and science meet to form a different new
- Planning, Aesthetic and Structure should be given equal importance; without Planning it cannot be functional; without Aesthetic it cannot be satisfactory and without structure it will fail.
- Better locally available materials with local workmanship while use of modern material should be in a simplified way.

HIS WORKS

Include Gateways, Hotels, Industries, Public Buildings, Institutions, Museums, Library, Auditoriums, Temples and numerous Residences.

- The memorial arc Nepal Smarak Dwar 1958 Sahid Gate or Shahid Gate (English: Martyr's Gate) is a monument in Kathmandu, Nepal. As of 2016, there are five statues in the gate. Four men, namely Dharma Bhakta Mathema, Gangalal Shrestha, Dashrath Chand, and Shukraraj Shastri, who are considered martyrs since they stood against the 104-year-old Rana Regime, have their statues above their arms established here. On top of all is a statue of former King Tribhuvan, who, in B.S. 2007 (A.D. 1950) cooperated with people to get democracy in the country.⁴ Later the statue of Tribhuvan was transferred from the Gate and to the Narayanhiti Museum.



Sahid Gate⁵

⁴ "Former king's statue to be moved from Shahid Gate to Narayanhiti". The Himalayan Times. 2012-01-02.cited in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahid_Gate

⁵ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahid_Gate#/media/File:Arch_and_Dharahara_tower_\(2971502239\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahid_Gate#/media/File:Arch_and_Dharahara_tower_(2971502239).jpg)

- **Narayanhiti Royal Palace** - Engineer Incharge of construction (1961-1972), in which Mangal Sadan, Naniging and Darbar Parisar are his own creation.
- **Hotel Soaltee**, Kalimati, 1962, along with G. D. Bhatta
- Royal Nepal Academy, Kamaladi, 1964



Hotel Everest International, New Baneshwor, 1969⁶

- Tikapur Town Planning (Pop. 25000) - 1973
Space contiguous with the surrounding; Dynamic; Interwoven house blocks and green zones
- Janakpur Cigarette Factory - 1964
- Yagna Shala Building, Pashupati Nath Temple Complex
- Taragaon Cultural Tourism Centre
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs Building, Singha Darbar - 1969
- Amrit Science Campus, Chhinalata Guthi, Nepal Art Council, Rastra Bank, Bhairahawa
- NIDC Arcade, Mercantile Corporation show room, Hetaunda Flour Mill, Tikapur Hospital
- Staff Housing for Bansbari Shoe Factory, Clock Tower at Janakpur, Temple at Devaghat
- Lumbini Development Trust; Library, Museum and Auditorium Building, Reuki Training Centre, Pokhara, Bishnu Mandir, Singapore, Pashupati Nath Temple, Patan, Medicare Hospital, Balkhu, Nepal Temple, USA

Residences

- **Pangre Ghar** (Mr. Khagda Bahadur Singh), Pulchowk
- **Khutte Ghar** (Mrs. Angur Baba Joshi)
- **Shanti Sadan** (Her Late Highness Shanti Singh)

⁶ <https://miyamotointernational.com/hotel-everest-nepal/>

Pangre Ghar, 1964, Pulchowk

He designed this residence for Me. Khadka Bahadur Singh, then Home Minister during the reign of King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah. The design is an expressionist building having influences from constructivism and modern principles of Le Corbusier. As name “Pangre Ghar” meaning Wheel House, the architect the four columns of ground floor as wheel and the above two floors are cantilevered. This made outer walls free to have openings all around as ribbon window. It was reinforced concrete construction where all materials were brought from outside the country; says Shankar Nath Rimal.⁷



Pangre Ghar, 1964⁸

16.3.2 Ganga Dhar Bhatta (Halabe)

Born in 1936, He is the **First Nepali Architect** (B. Arch Degree, from India).

Upon Completion of bachelor degree (1961), he joined **Bhawan Vibhag** (the Department of Building) as an assistant Engineer. At the time there was no position for architects.

Upatyaka Nirman Samiti was established to work out on development plans. He was a pioneer in promoting Architecture in its modern form in Nepal. He drew the first **Kathmandu Valley Map** based on the photographs taken from Plane taken by Late Tony Hagen. He was inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright’s Organic Architecture.

HIS PHILOSOPHY

- **Architecture and Society** should go hand in hand
- The ingredients of a good building; **Honesty, Sincerity, Seriousness** and **Hard work**.
- Form should satisfy function
- Building should respond to its surrounding⁹

⁷ https://engineerspost.com/2021/07/22/12065/?fbclid=IwAR1veg8sVjNjIFvC3gUL_jcv0sl87yE5SbtXd-yrleOhtXAzWNFQ_2tx9TE consulted on 5th June 2022

⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/pulchowkNews/photos/a.124267039124923/369010424650582/>

⁹ <https://spacesnepalblog.wordpress.com/2018/06/12/nepals-first-architect/> consulted on 5th June 2022

HIS WORKS

- Hotel Soaltee, along with S.N. Rimal
- City Hall, Exhibition Road

Features:

Use of R.C.C enabled to construction of Abstract Gateway

Dynamic Building form, inspired from the Clubs designed in Russian Constructivism by Konstantin Melnikov; entry stairway leading to the first floor, large openings in front façade; stairway standing on a shallow pond brought about that dramatic effect etc.



City Hall, Exhibition Road¹⁰

- Master Plan and pavilion design of **Dasarath Stadium**
- **Police Club Building**, Exhibition Road
- **Rastrya Panchayat Building:**
Comissioned through Design Competition. Consisted of five buildings; The Assembly Hall, Secretariat Building, Library Building, Multipurpose Hall and Restaurant. The 90 ft. dia Assembly hall was never built.
- **Jeewan Kunj**
- **Green Houses**, Godavari Botanical Garden
- Sarboccha Adalat (The supreme Court), Science Block of Trichanda College, Rani Pokhari designed under Bhavan Vibhag

16.3.3 Carl Pruscha

Austrian Architect

Assigned to prepare the **Master plan** of Kathmandu Valley (60s), influenced architectural trend in Nepal. The communal institutions were the visible pivotal points forming centers of the compact towns and villages.

He translated the prevailing rules to incorporate them into more modern and technical context. Architecture as the appropriate response he helped to recover the lost methodology to unite techniques and Discipline in construction.

The environment; existing forms and functions, was the basis on which he produced contextual yet new and refined spaces. He assimilated the spirit of the place and the rules

¹⁰ <https://spacesnepalblog.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/23.png>

presiding over spatial transformation. He made aware the bond between Architecture and Urban Planning.

He made great attempts in merging his buildings into the surrounding, physically while he intentionally avoided any features suggestive of Nepali architecture, yet managed to design buildings in harmony with the place.

HIS PHILOSOPHY

- Architecture is a response to a higher need – man’s need for shelter and his need to satisfy definite spiritual impulses along with physical shape
- Great respect for climate and adaptation of building to the landscape
- Adopted simplicity in construction and used technology within the grasp of the local workmanship.
- A **timeless architectural vocabulary**, one that cannot be dated by stylish feature.

HIS WORKS

- **Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA)** building at Tribhuvan University (T.U.), Kirtipur, 1972

His design for the CEDA building was an attempt to blend physical, cultural and spiritual landscape of the valley while maintaining its contemporary expression. Using the existing terrace landscape, he created an eight-story building which merged with the site so well that it looks like a continuation of man-made nature into man-made building. His choice for the building material narrowed down to bricks as it was a predominant building material since many centuries, giving Kathmandu valley its unique position among all Asian towns. Structural Engineer Mr. Zenon Zielinsky who was then working for Ford Foundation in Calcutta, contributed by designing a special prefabrication system for concrete panels that replaced the use of wood for ceilings and floors.



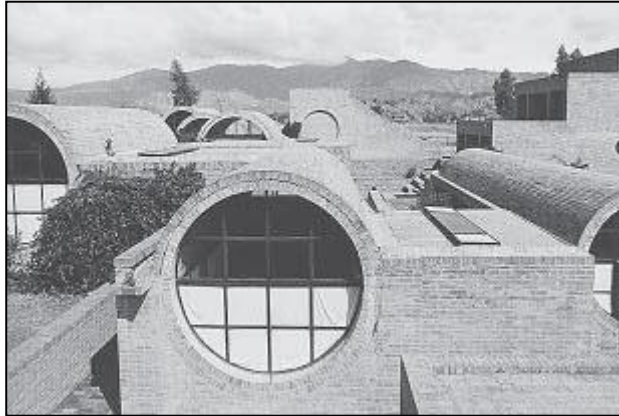
CEDA Building, 1972¹¹

- **Taragoan Museum**, Baudha, 1971

A central small plaza was created with the cluster of 16 small units grouped around a communal building, for which the brick vault commonly used for pilgrims’ lodging was selected instead of the pitched roofs commonly found in the valley. The building was constructed outside of the large stupa of Boudha, one of the most important centers of the northern Lamaism. As Pruscha was continuously experimenting to evolve a new form of

¹¹ <https://spacesnepalblog.wordpress.com/2017/01/30/carl-pruscha/> consulted on 5th June 2022

architecture using bricks. Gradually, he was successful to prove that it was truly possible to build traditional and modern both at the same time.



Taragoan Museum, Baudha, 1971¹²

16.3.4 Ar. Robert Weize

Robert Weize initiated the development with the masterplan of Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur and some of its earlier buildings.

Hotel De L' Annapurna by Robert Weize (1950-1980)

He was among the first foreign architects to Nepal.

He reintroduced local architectural scale and sloping roof style, evoking two very significant characteristics of traditional architecture of the valley.

Works by Robert Weize (1950-1980)

Hotel Annapurna, Durbar Marg (1959), Fishtail Resort, Pokhara (1976), Hotel Malla

Hotel Yellow Pagoda, Kantipath, Royal Hotel (Bahadur Bhawan), Army Headquarters

Geodetical Observatory in Nagarkot, Japanese Embassy Staff Quarters, Jawalakhel

Soviet Embassy, SOS Children's Village, Sanothimi

Architect in Chief for the preparation of Master plan of Tribhuvan University Complex and design of its library and science block

¹² <https://spacesnepalblog.wordpress.com/2017/01/30/carl-pruscha/> consulted on 5th June 2022

MasterPlan of Lumbini by Ar. Kenzo Tange

In 1970, the International Committee for the Development of Lumbini was set up. This committee initiated the preparation of the Master Plan for Lumbini, which was conceptualized by Kenzo Tange. The Kenzo Tange Master Plan was finalized and approved in 1978. The Kenzo Tange Master Plan covers an area of 5 x 5 mile with the central square mile being the Sacred Garden within which is the designated UNESCO World Heritage property. Of the Master Plan, a 1 x 3-mile area which includes the following three zones: the New Lumbini Village, the Monastic Zone and the Sacred Garden - are part of the Lumbini Project Area. The 1 x 3-mile Lumbini Project Area was expropriated and brought under government ownership in the 1970s.

The design of the 1 x 3-mile Lumbini Project Area is based on geometric shapes and the notion of the path to enlightenment. The entrance is placed in the North in the New Lumbini Village, from where the visitor enters the site to begin the journey from a location of worldly” activities. Then the visitor proceeds to the Monastic Zone for knowledge and spiritual purification, before reaching the Sacred Garden for enlightenment. The three zones are connected by a canal which is part of the central link. The area outside the 1 x 3-mile Lumbini Project Area within the 5 x 5-mile zone is the Buffer Zone, which protects the three zones.¹³



Lumbini Museum¹⁴

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3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shankar_Nath_Rimal consulted on 5th June 2022
4. https://un.org.np/sites/default/files/doc_publication/LumbiniBrochureFinalMay2013%20%282%29.pdf consulted on 5th June 2022

¹³ https://un.org.np/sites/default/files/doc_publication/LumbiniBrochureFinalMay2013%20%282%29.pdf

¹⁴ <https://visitsnepal.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Lumbini-Museum-nepal-960x1149.jpg>