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## Analysis Of Christopher Alexander's Book “The Timeless Way Of Building”

“Architecture should speak of its time and place but yearn for timelessness”. (Frank Ghery)

One of the most interesting treatise of Christopher Alexander is “The Timeless way of Building” that was first published in 1979. The author of the book Christopher Alexander himself is an architect. Besides an architect, he is a lover of mathematics and science. He got his childhood education in sciences and after earning bachelor’s degree in architecture, he pursued his education and got master’s degree in mathematics and then PHD in architecture from Harvard University. As an architect he search for the beauty and in sixties, he tried to look for a “view of design”, how to design, what to design and how science and mathematics contribute to design. He felt the need of a theory to support the “view of design” from which product can be obtain. He looked for that theory and presented it in his book “Timeless way of building”.

Christopher searched for architecture for human which is made from the proportion of nature, building materials and context and which is an extension of nature. He talks about how nature is stabilized in beautiful and poetic way though natural processes. The way used by nature is stable while nature itself is continuously changing according to changing situations. He suggested that building should also grow like nature and growth of building depend on the “life of inhabitants” and not on the principles of construction. When this “life” is happy, free and at peace then it make human able to become a part of the place as much as the place become a part of human.

The book is framed in an unusual architectural text in which Alexander described his concept in headlines that provide overview of his whole theory and then detailed description added under the headlines. It provides a poetic viewpoint of built environment in a precise and concrete way. His theory is based on language pattern that are used to discuss and create architecture. This language pattern is the main core of book, outlined in chapters 1 to 10, and supported with specific examples for better understanding. Black and white photo illustrations and thumbnail sketches are used in the whole book, some of which are given references while some are just visual representation to support the text. The book is arranged in “three parts” and each part explored many theories. One part of the book consists “complexity theory”, one part is related to the “architectural and city planning theory” and one part is “spiritual treatise”. In introductory part of book Alexander described that there is only one way of building that is “timeless” and this way is more essential and indispensable. Timeless building never get old with the passage of time but the more it gets older the more it adds value to it, it sustain and grow according to

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circumstances with the passage of time. Three parts of book is named as “The Quality”, “The Gate” and “The Way”. In the starting part he defined the quality that is nameless and undefinable but exists and still recognizable. This quality is self-generated and cannot made. The building with this nameless quality should not separable from nature but be a part of it.

Quality without name does not mean that it is ambiguous or not specific but this quality gives the feeling of aliveness, as a whole, as comfortable, as egoless, as eternal and free. None of these individually define quality but collectively gives the quality without name that frees people from inner conflicts. This quality dependent on people inner feelings and emotions, if something feels good then it is good. Some places adhere this quality and some are not. The key to recognize this quality is the “pattern of events” which are happening on a particular places. These patterns define the character of town, building or place and influenced by the inhabitants. These events are not specifically human events but includes events like wind blowing, water bodies, and weather patterns etc. Pattern of events are created by culture and transferred by the culture. Pattern of events are linked with the pattern of space and they does not cause pattern of space. When they interrelate with each other they make slightly different arrangement at every place. It is defined as;

Patterns are either dead or alive. Alive patterns let the inner conflicts of people to resolve themselves while dead pattern let the people in inner conflicts and feeling of being alive is diminished. Patterns are also repeated but repetition is dependent on the context. In every context these patterns possesses unique character. This same character is also possess by the nature that this character cannot raise without the existence and perception of death, like the leaves of trees that are repeated but none of them are similar in shape and they also fell down after specific time for the growth of new leaves in their place.

The second part of book “the gate” is the heart of Alexander’s theory. It is more convincing part that defines the pattern language. It illustrates the use of pattern language by giving the example of barns that how similar language of barns are used but in a unique way. This pattern language is obtained through existing examples of patterns that are required to discover and used with some modifications feasible in different context. “Pattern language are finite system of patterns that allow us to make infinite system of unique patterns appropriate to different context”.

Function of patterns are to identify the problems and provide solutions that fits in the specific context. Pattern language provide a framework in which patterns enable to solve a specific problem by balancing two conflicting forces. It has the following generic form.

- Context - system of forces

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## - Configuration

Patterns created relationship between context and system of forces that arise into that context and suggest configuration that allow these forces to resolve themselves.

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