



## Ritual and Ceremony During Construction



### Introduction

In this article, instead of giving Vaastu tips, I shall dwell upon some of the rituals and ceremonies that - as per Vaastu - punctuate the construction process. I do so because I have noticed that many of these practices are disappearing or are followed only in drastically reduced formats during the construction process.

It is the architect - according to Vaastu - who is responsible for these ceremonies. However, any effort towards exploring indigenous architectural practices is thwarted by the unfamiliarity of the architect with the subject.

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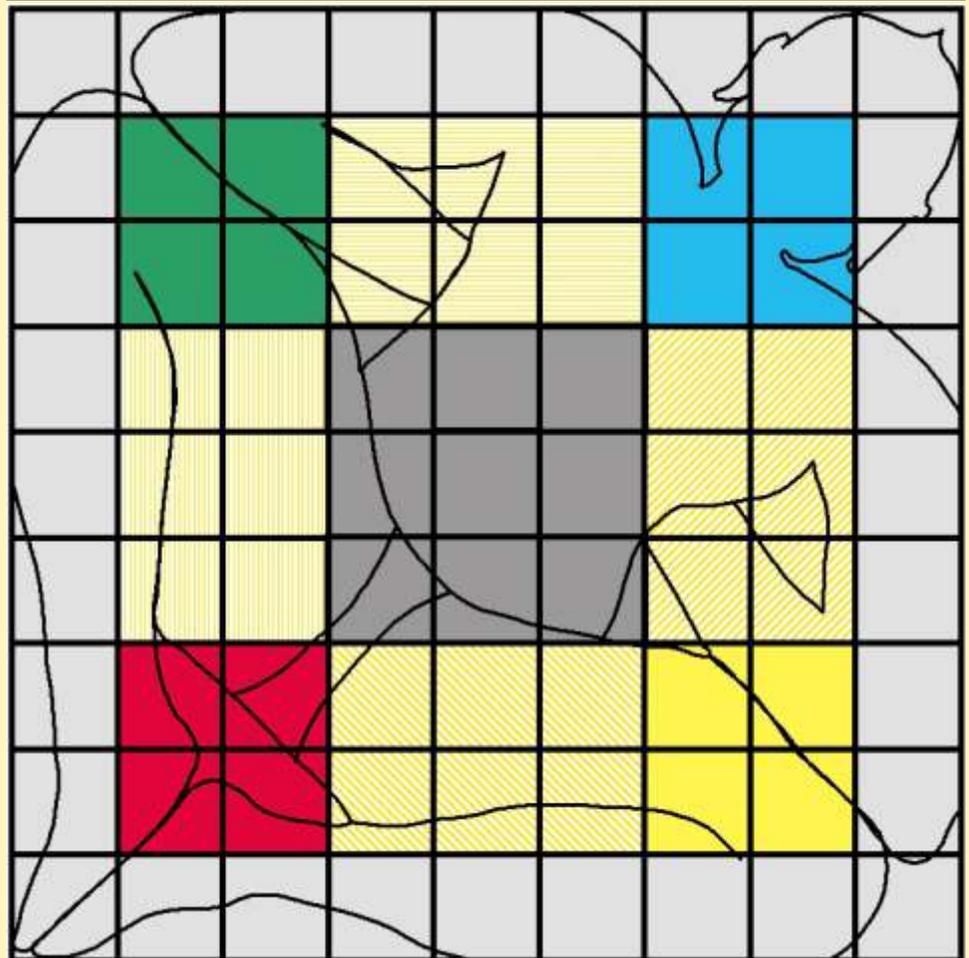
### Vaastu Guidelines

There are numerous guidelines prescribed for choosing a piece of land that would bring happiness, growth and prosperity; these examine the size, shape, sound taste, color, smell, vegetation and topography of the land. Prescribed also are some easy and practical soil tests, which are conducted on the site to examine its compactness, fertility, porosity, oxygen and clay content.

Calculations are made before the commencement of the work on site to determine the date and time for the various stages of the construction.

Each stage of the construction process begins with a ritual ceremony that is conducted at an auspicious time. Both the architect and the householder should participate in the ceremonies, which are

The Story of the Vaastu Purusha



### The Vaastu Purusha

*(Vaastu Purusha ( Vaastu = Earth ; Purusha = Energy) The Vaastu Purusha is the embodiment of a complex multi-layered pro-environment philosophy . It mediates between man and nature during the construction process and the aggression on earth that is thereby caused. The out is the sublimation of the energies of cardinal directions. The Vaastu Purusha is a metaphorical story and must be read in context with the Vedic scriptures.)*

The presiding deity of Vaastu is called the Vaastu Purusha. The Vaastu Purusha is responsible for providing the strength and happiness in a defined space. There are many stories regarding the Vaastu Purusha and his origin. The most popular appears in the Brihat Samitha and runs as follows:

According to the Hindu mythology, during the Kritayuga, there was a war between the gods and demons. Lord Shiva was engaged in a fight with a ferocious demon Andhaka. In this fight, drops from Lord Shiva's perspiration fell on the ground and from this was born the Vaastu Purusha. The Vaastu Purusha kept growing incessantly, both in length and breadth and started torturing the gods. The gods feared that their very existence was in peril and prayed to the creator Lord Brahma for getting relief.

The benevolent and far - sighted Brahma devised a plan. Accordingly, the many gods - along with some others - attacked the demon and having trapped him and laid him on the ground, from behind and forcibly folded his hands, made him fall on his knees in a crawling position. The demon, reduced to such a weak condition, prayed to Lord Brahma, who appeared before him. Lord Brahma, taking pity on him pronounced him as the Vaastu Purusha. Lord Brahma also promised immortality.



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undoubtedly an integral part of the construction program and indirectly ensure a disciplined pursuit of the building norms.

#### Universal approach to nature

Irrespective of geographical location, clan, creed or religious practice there prevails a universal tradition paying respect to nature by conducting rituals and ceremonies - especially before embarking on auspicious projects. Some practices involve the participation of priests, others may not. However what is central to these rituals and ceremonies is that they are to be performed with purity of the heart and thereby inculcate a positive approach to the task at hand.

**Each stage of the construction process begins with a ritual, ceremony that is conducted at an auspicious time. Both the architect and the householder should participate in the ceremonies, which are undoubtedly an integral part of the construction program .**

#### Limitations of Science v/s Vaastu

We must remember that science is tied down by its limitations when coming to terms with the forces of earth, wind, water and space as well as the invisible magnetic currents active in the underlying layers of the globe that manifest themselves in the cardinal directions.

It is the business of Vaastu to re-engineer all these forces mentioned above at a

particular parcel of land, such that it nudges fate in a favorable direction.

Vaastu is compendium of practical & proven practices that dexterously manage the harmonious interaction between man and environment. It is the contention of Vaastu that any disrespect to nature and any violation of nature's laws is meted out an equivalent punishment.

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#### Vaastu Purush Mandala

25 VAYU	26 NAGA	27 MUKHYA	28 BHAL-LATA	29 SAUMYA	30 MRGA	31 ADITI	32 UDITI	1 ISA
24 PAPA-YAKSMA	RUDRA-JAYA						MITRA-JAYA	2 VATAPAR-JANYA
23 SOSA		RUDRA	PRTHIVIDHARA			APA-VATSA		3 JAYANTA
22 ASURA		M I T R A	BRAHMA		A R Y A M A N			4 MARUTA
21 VARUNA								5 MAHENDRA
20 PUSPA-DANTA			VIVASVAT			SAVITRI		6 SATYAKA
19 SUGRIVA		INDRA						7 BHRISA
18 DAU-VARIKA	INDRA-JAYA						SAVITRA	8 ANTA-RIKSA
17 NIRRTA	16 MRSA	15 BHRINGA-RAJA	14 GAND-HARVA	13 YAMA	12 GRHAK-SATA	11 VITATHA	10 PUSAN	9 AGNI

The word Mandala means "the astrological chart that relates the layout to the orientation." Each of the divisions in the Mandala is called a "pada" and has a presiding deity associated with it. The extent allotted to each of the deity differs but not their relative position.

The Vaastu Purush Mandala is the architect's "square pad" where his concepts crystalize. Further, the Vaastu Purush Mandala provides the grid that facilitates the inception of the design. Each of the lines and divisions of the Mandala hold within them, layers of meaning within which the intricacies of design unfold.

The Vaastu Purush Mandala adopts the shape of the site and this functional attribute of the Mandala, active in the mind of the designer, in its ideal form of a square, acquiring a different shape in reality, is a primary example of its inherent flexibility. Not only does it adapt to the site constrains, but it also adopts the parameters of design requirement of varied environments, be it hot and dry Rajasthan or wet and humid Kerala, as well as the variations in building materials, functional requirements and the social and political context it is used in.



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### Consequences

Structures built in violation of nature's principles as propounded by Vaastu can/may/will unleash woes upon the perpetrators/occupants which may take many forms. As a starting point, these buildings remain trapped in endless cycles of renovation or sometimes even remain unfinished for years due to the obstructive behavior of the plot. Though modernist thought-frame may not approve it, the

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solution is to humbly surrender to natural forces and seek their blessings.

Over these two instalments of this article, we shall discuss rituals and ceremonies that ideally should accompany the construction process.

### Agencies involved in the construction process

Different agencies are involved at the different stages of the construction process. There is a whole army of people that get engaged in the construction of building. Some are involved in the initial excavation of the earth, others are involved in the planning that is done prior to the construction process, yet others handle brick work, plumbing, painting, carpentry and cabling etc.

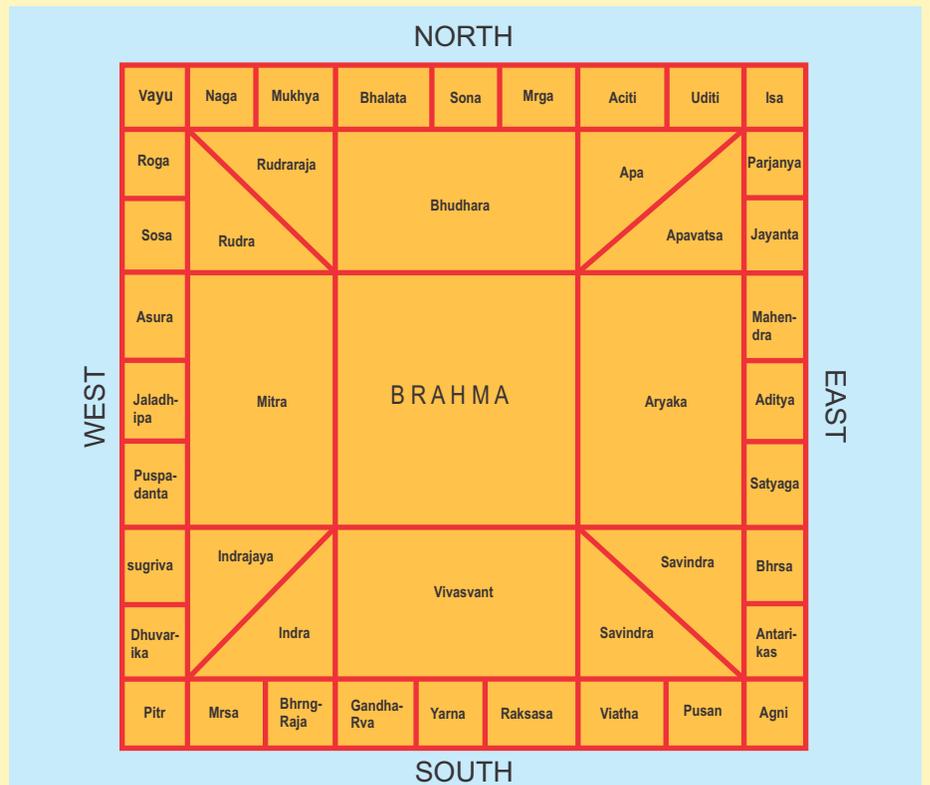
All of these people are not to be treated as mere servants or casual workers but as a blessed clan. You are to look after them well and pay their honest dues punctually and respectfully. Over and above, the commercial terms you are to engage with them in such manner that they harbor no grouses. Also, at all times sufficient care must be exercised to ensure their safety at the site to avoid accidents. Any failure to do these things may jeopardize the fate of the future occupants of the buildings as

well as the building itself. For the innocent occupants, it is like sitting in a defective vehicle whose break may fail anytime and endanger them all.

As a final act of courteous discharge of responsibility all the people who have worked on the site must be invited for a sumptuous meal and they must be fed well. Vaastu has laid down rules in minute detail about these feeding ceremonies. As a rule of thumb, these feeding ceremonies must be done just prior to the handing over of the structure to the occupants and must be held on an auspicious day and time. It has been specified that the meal should have two dishes over and above the usual fare and at least one of these must be a sweet dish. Over and above this, the architects, designers and other senior layer professionals involved in the construction should be felicitated and given a rich pair of clothes.

It must be borne in mind that the whole construction process is keenly observed by the Vaastu Purush who can and will deal with any intransigency with an even hand and without mercy. ■

*In the next instalment I shall deal with rituals & ceremonies designed to appease the gods and seek their blessings during the construction process.*



The Paramasayika diagram indicating the position of the deities responsible for keeping Vaastu Purush on the plot