

## **How accurately does architecture reflect prevailing ideology? Do all successful ideologies require architectural support?**

An ideology is a set of beliefs that affect our outlook on the world. Our ideology is our most closely held set of values and feelings, and it acts as the filter through which we see everything and everybody. When many people believe in one thought and it manifests in their actions, they represent an ideology. As far as architecture is concerned, it is a physical representation of an idea that a society holds.

The pyramids in Egypt aptly reflect their beliefs and ideology. As per the beliefs of this Ra cult, the soul of a dead king ascended into the heavens and travelled alongside the god in a sun-boat as he made his daily journey across the sky. The Egyptian name for the Great Pyramid reflects exactly this, "the Horizon of Khufu," implying that Khufu could use the pyramid as a means to climb into heaven. Thus, the king is the human incarnation of the rising sun and the Great Pyramid his dawn. The sun ray design is evidence of their belief, stemming from the growth of the Ra cult. Soaring upward, the pyramid intentionally directs the eye—and more important at the time, the king's soul—to heaven where it will accompany Ra each day in his passage across the sky. As part of this conception of the afterlife, several boats have been found buried near the Great Pyramid, presumably for Khufu's soul to ride in his flight to join with Ra. Furthermore, it was believed that death was an extension to a journey towards eternal life. In order to become a "being" of the afterworld, it was important the pharaoh's physical body be safeguarded and recognizable by his spirit, this in turn, lead to the process of mummification. The process itself consisted of being embalmed then wrapped in fine linen. Once the process of mummification was complete, the pharaoh was buried with his most prized possessions such as jewellery, funerary statues, and items that would aid him in his afterlife.

The Taj Mahal incorporates and expands on design, traditions of Persian architecture and earlier Mughal architecture. The tomb, a masterpiece in memory of Emperor Shah Jahan's wife Mumtaz Begum, was completed in 16 years between 1632 and 1648. The rich interior and exterior decorations have maintained the ideology of a Mughal Tomb and great care was taken to perpetuate the Islamic codes of monumental art and

architecture. All the Mughal constructions in India during their dominant rule followed the “Charbagh” formula, which is an Islamic concept of Paradise- A fountain surrounded by gardens which is another magnificent feature of the Taj Mahal.

Architecture also reflects political ideology. The Rashtrapati Bhavan which is considered prestigious and an esteemed artefact, is also the official residence of the President of India. This prominent building with an indo-saracenic design is enveloped by exceptional political and cultural annotations and displays India’s political power. Interestingly, this magnificent structure has been constructed by the use of local materials.

Another example would be Maratha architecture in India; although not as graceful as other architectural styles in their era, the Marathas excelled in their fort architecture. Forts were a prime defence mechanism in Maharashtra against invasions since the ancient times and are known in the local language as ‘killa’. The basic ideology of the Marathas was to prepare space for war and they had no time to indulge in building too many temples. They rather focused on fortification of their palaces which their architecture clearly reflected.

Le Corbusier, inspired by the automobile, modern materials and technology is probably the most influential modern architect who introduced a fascination with the designs of engineers. In the 1950’s, Le Corbusier aided the planning and construction of the new capital of Punjab, Chandigarh. His works in Chandigarh symbolized India’s future and its engagement in the modern world. His “Open Hand” also known as “La Main Ouverte” signified “peace and reconciliation. It is open to give and open to receive”. The largest of such structures which Le Corbusier created is a 26 meter high Open Hand Monument in Chandigarh.

We believe that certain ideologies do require architectural support. Buildings give form to our beliefs or ideologies and keep us aware of our place in this system. It is just a way to reassure ourselves that the belief system works and everything is fine. Moreover, having buildings that support one’s beliefs increases the prominence of that particular ideology.