

# Feng-Shui and Vaastu Shastra

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**Abstract**—*Vaastu Shastra is the ancient Indian science of architecture, which governs town planning and designing of man-made structures. It can also be defined as an inquisitive science of architecture that encapsulates the forces which act upon a given space through flow of positive energy. Apart from the Vedas, the word 'Vaastu' in Sanskrit means 'dwelling', and in the modern context it covers all buildings. There are two main theories which have come to existence over a period of time. These are: Theory of Mother Goddess and Theory of Holism in Vedanta, Yoga and Ayurveda. This research paper tries to emphasize the various philosophies prevailing in today's Vaastu such as: Prasada Vastu, Jivatama, Brahmasthana, Siddham, Shaki, Panchaboota and Triguna. These philosophies assist in the organization of spaces on this existing plane of Vaastu.*

*Feng-shui is an ancient art and science developed over 3,000 years ago in China. It is a complex body of knowledge that reveals how to balance the energies of any given space to assure health and good fortune for people inhabiting it.*

*A lot of resemblance between Vaastu and its Chinese counterpart Feng-Shui, has been observed. Both of them recognize the existence of positive and negative forces except for the fact that the latter attaches too much importance to gadgets, like fish tanks, flutes, mirrors and lanterns.*

*Towards the end, this paper discusses about Bhopal Gas Tragedy, one of the greatest setbacks in 1983, which was also a result of Vaastu failure. While many people still strongly believe in Vaastu, the common consensus is that it's an ancient science, which was useful in conditions prevailing in ancient times, but makes little sense today. Thus, by the paper we convey the multi-dimensional analysis and validation of transnational architectural sciences highlighting their impact on one's life.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Vaastu as being called today was known as the Vaastu Shilpa Shastra a few decades ago. There are at least sixteen known texts written in Sanskrit and a host of local texts in different languages. These are known for in-depth analysis of all aspects of building and sculpture.

Traditional towns and cities have been described in great detail in the mythology and history. The discipline in the design as well as the dominant aesthetic metaphor employed in the design has been very distinct to the Indian sub-continent with multiple styles differing from region to region. The traditional knowledge and expertise is recorded both in the form of texts (known as Vast Shilpa Shastras) as well as oral

knowledge and skills which continue to be a living practice generally known as the vernacular or folk idiom of building. Architecture in this country goes back a long way, with the existence of planned towns such as Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, Dwaraka, Kanchi, Ayodhya and Kashi.

There are a few theories that have come to existence over a period of time. Some of these theories have been recounted below.

## 2. THE THEORY OF MOTHER GODDESS OR BHOOMI

The land / *Bhoomi* possess vibrant stillness, which is anchored in the soil, which is energy of the male principle. Though the Earth is considered a primary mother goddess, in the Indian tradition the male and female are inextricably linked. The movement from stillness to bliss is the secret of creation. The still centre within the earth is male / *Shivam* and the energy that is the energy of creation of manifested reality is *Shakti* / female.

## 3. THE THEORY OF HOLISM IN VEDANTA, YOGA AND AYURVEDA

The philosophies of India constantly shape and re shape the fundamental belief that the human being is part of a larger cosmic order which is controlled by a 'primary intelligence'. This intelligence is called God or *Atman or Brahman*. Every action, every thought, form and results is a part of the *Brahman* and His plan. Therefore the disturbances in the mind or the body of an individual can be healed or harmonized through an orderly intervention into the total system (soma, psyche, spirit). This is further extended in Ayurveda, where the controlled use of herbs, oils, massage, diet and meditation can bring back most problems of balance to a state of subjective harmony. In *Vaastu*, this movement of disorder to order is achieved through the application of several types of design parameters. They are namely: *Ayadi* or beneficial calculation, *Pada Vinyasa* or modular planning, alignment of philosophy and design, local building materials, relationship with the environment and finally the aesthetics and symbolism employed in the designs which are culturally relevant.

## 4. PHILOSOPHIES IN VAASTU

### 4.1 Vastu, Vaastu and Prasada Vaastu

The Earth is a primary substance or vastu. The life force contained within the earth is called Vastu by the tradition. All objects that occupy the earth and contain this life energy, in turn is also called Vastu by the tradition. Each substance or Vastu is placed on a plane of support. This plane is called Vaastu. Vaastu can be further explained as a living / dwelling space. 'Vas' means 'to be' or 'to live'. Vaastu is the individual site meant for building as well as the built form. More specifically the built form is known as Prasada Vaastu.

### 4.2 Jivatama and Parmatama

The energy that lies in its unmanifested state in all universal space is known as Paramatman. This name denotes the live energy residing in every particle of universal space. The energy that exists within the human organism (which is also Vastu), is Jivatama. The Jivatman has to be in alignment with the larger collective order, the Paramatman.

### 4.3 Centering or Brahmasthana

In the science of Vaastu the centre of the plot is referred to as Brahmasthana. In the building it is important to create a centre, which grows into the total form. For any meaningful action to emerge, the weight and energy of the form has to be anchored in the centre.

### 4.4 Siddha

Land, water body, forest, tree, stone and other forms that are naturally sacred or holy are said to be Siddha. Land, water body, forest, tree, stone and other forms, which are not auspicious or endowed with beneficial qualities, are said to be Asiddha.

### 4.5 Dvaitam Advaitam

There are two paths (of devotion / worship) to achieve the ultimate state of dissolution or the sublimation of the Jivatman with the Paramatman – Dvaitam and Advaitam. Dvaitam is the path of the I and the Thou, Advaitam is the path of Thou in the I.

### 4.6 Shakti/ Shivam

Shivam is the infinite consciousness suspended in blissful stillness/ Satchit Ananda. It is out of this stillness that the first desire 'to be' is born. Shivam is without end, infinite and formless. He is without color or variety. In the end he destroys everything and brings it into himself. Shivam is the male principle.

Shakti is the energy of creation. Shakti during the process of creation is called Kundalini Shakti and is the movement of coiled energy from its resting place in the Mooladhara Chakram at the base of the spine to the Shasrara Chakram at the top of the head. This is seen as the fusing of Shakti and Shivam.

### 4.7 Panchaboota

In the process of creation as Shivam manifests into the glories of Prapancha / universe of forms/physical manifestation, the energy then moves through the five elements / Panchaboota – fire, air, water, ether and earth. Each element has its own characteristic and nature. In an act of creation, the manifested objects become subservient to the cosmic order of Panchaboota.

### 4.8 Triguna

Each physical form is a composition of 3 gunas. Satvika, Rajasa and Tamasa.

- Satvika - pure illumined intelligence of the consciousness, meditative quality.
- Rajasa - vibrant, energetic, active, inner urge to achieve
- Tamasa - inertia, aggression, tenacity to hold back for action outside.

Rajasa being powerful is positive, but when the system demands a great deal of aggression to get something done Tamasa is required. When the context needs to be understood with tranquillity then Satvika must be predominant. Hence all the Gunas have their relevance and their inherent strengths. In Vaastu the three Gunas are characterized by the three shapes of:

- Circle (elongated circle or ellipse) - Tamasa
- Octagon (elongated octagon, pentagon, polygon) - Rajasa
- Square (rectangle) – Satvika

The energy contained within the square and rectangle is the most stable, restful and in equilibrium. This is considered suitable for residences and places of learning. The energy contained in a polygon is in movement. It is suitable for centers of energetic activities such as offices, as well as educational institutions. The energy contained in the circle is very high and is considered aggressive. It stimulates the occupant to a very high degree (or the opposite and creates inertia or immobility). This is suitable for stadia, entertainment centers, amphi theatres, council chambers, and sometimes for religious centers such as prayer halls and temples.

## 5. THE BASIC PREMISE

A person does not inhabit this earth alone. He/she lives amidst other natural forms and in touch with energies and elements that are perceptible and beyond perception. He/she inhabits a space. He/she is also vibrating and alive. The outer space is

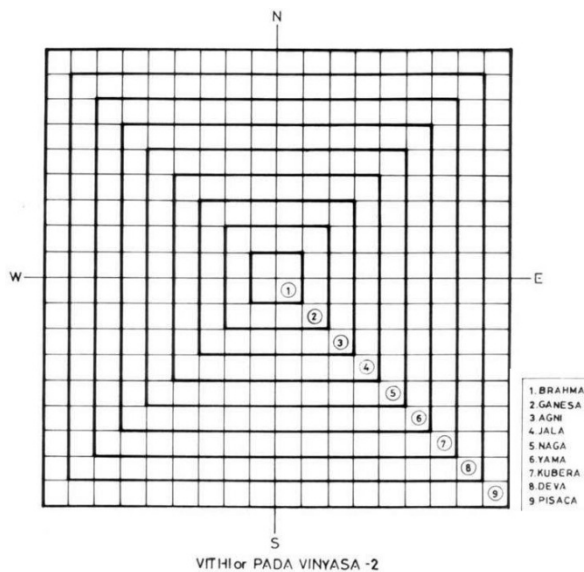
also alive and throbbing. The three rhythms are not always in consonance.

To create consonance between the three and thus create harmony and well-being is the attempt of the *Vaastu Shastras*. In creating a resonance between the outer space, inner space and cosmic space, the *Shastras* have brought into operation the concept of rhythm and time. The application of an ordered rhythm in visual space creates a form, which is capable of evoking a spiritual response in the occupants.

In the design of buildings or villages there are three main principles that the designer has to be conscious of. They are namely – ‘*Bhogadyam*’ or utilitarian value. ‘*Sukha Dharsham*’ or aesthetics, and ‘*Ramyam*’ or psychological well being (spiritual satisfaction). The designer has to achieve a harmony between the built space and the natural environment, as well as create a feeling of well-being in the user through the employment of ‘*Pada Vinyasa*’ or modular planning and ‘*Ayadi Porutham*’; or sacred measure calculations.

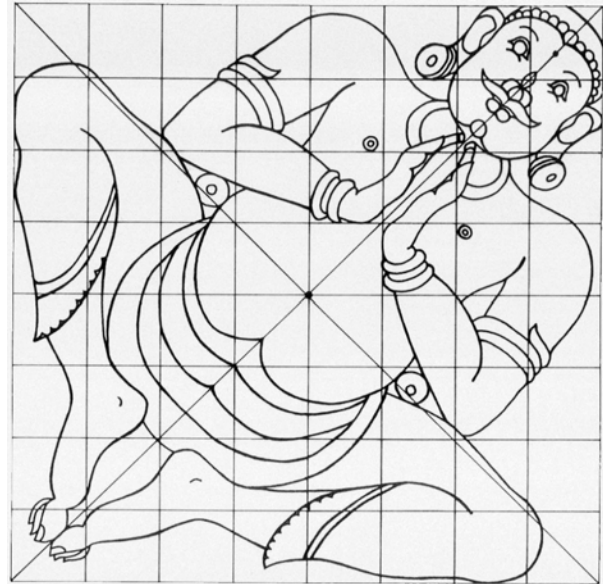
### 6. VAASTU PURUSH MANDALA AND PADA VINYASA

*Pada Vinyasa* is the method by which a site of land is divided into a uniform grid. By this method, more manageable units are created, within which the design may be conveniently laid out. The planning principle known as *Pada Vinyasa* has relevance in the design process for several reasons. One is its practical application. The other comprises of meanings and qualities that have been invested into the physical form of the earth which have a powerful impact on the psyche and spirit of human beings.



An important axis that runs through the building is the central axis of the *Brahma Sutram*. This is usually the East-West axis.

The North-South axis is known at the *Soma Sutram*. The central point where the axes cross is an extremely significant point since this is the place of the focusing of energies. All inter-sections of the *padas* or modular lines (energy rays) are treated as live energy paints. And as such, planning is carried out with great care so that the lines of energy are not cut or reduced in any way.



The *Vaastu Purusha* is considered to be awake when he is oriented towards the cardinal points, and is said to be asleep when oriented towards the non-cardinal points like the NE, SW, SE, and NW. During the period of *Dhanur* (December-January), *Mina* (March - April), *Mithuna* (June-July), *Kanya* (September - October), it is considered inauspicious to begin building activities.

During the period of *Mesha* (April - May) *Vrishabha* (May - June), *Kataka* (July - August), *Simha* (August - September), *Tula* (October - November), *Vrichika* (November - December), *Makara* (January - February), *Kumbha* (February - March) it is auspicious to build. The spin is clockwise and around its own centre. Similar to the *Vaastu Purusha*, all living beings are also material in their origins. Hence, they too are earth substance. It can be said that we too are earth or *Bhoomi* and the energy within us is *Vaastu Purusha*. When the earth is dormant, the *Vaastu Purusha* is considered to be asleep. At this time it is not beneficial to begin house-building activities. The *shastras* state that this ‘wrong’ time could lead to negative effects on the residents. One must learn about the cycles of the earth before beginning auspicious acts. The face of the *Vaastu Purusha* is oriented towards the position of the sun, says the text. On the opposite side will be placed the feet of the *Vaastu Purusha*. His left hand will be placed below, the right hand above.

## 7. COSMOLOGY IN VAASTU

Every aspect of each of the directions must be understood by the designer as well as the occupant so that the built form blends with the natural environment.

### 7.1 Brahmasthana

This is the centre of the plot. In the design it is important to create a centre for the building, which grows into the total form. This growth out of the centre is comparable to the 'experience of centre' that is spoken about in the field of traditional dance and music where creative action is brought out from the centre. For any meaningful action to emerge, the weight and energy of the form is anchored in the centre.

### 7.2. Brahmapada or Veethi

This is the central area of the total form, which includes the central point. In the process of design the *Brahma Pada* is considered to have very high concentration of energy of the total form.

### 7.3. Deivika Padam

This is the first concentric space around the central *Brahma Pada*. In this space the energies are considered to be fairly high and so the allocation of passages and rooms for collective rather than individual use such as dining, family rooms are recommended here.

### 7.4. Maanusha Padam

The second concentric space, this space is considered to contain energy which is fairly comfortable for human activity and therefore all activity rooms such as kitchen, bedrooms, study areas, Puja and rooms for individual use may be placed in this part of the layout.

### 7.5. Paisaach Padam

The final concentric space which can contain the storage areas, outer verandah, external walls, outer walkways as also activity areas such as bedrooms and work rooms. In general *Manusha* and *Paisaacha* may be considered together for all special activity areas.

In the final built form, the outer peripheral rooms would contain the specialized activity such as sleeping, cooking, storing, bathing while the inner areas would be for relaxing and conversing. This does not mean that a living room cannot be on the outer side but it certainly means that a bedroom cannot be in the centre. Even from the practical aspects of fresh air and sunlight this principle is very sensible.

### 7.5. Prakara Beejam

In the temple complex the position of the garbhagruha is considered the most important. This position is seen as the *moolasthanam* of the complex. Taking this as the basic unit the rest of the complex is laid out as multiples of the module. Hence, if the *garbhagruha* is taken as  $x$  then the *prakaram* will be  $1X$  on either side of the sanctum, and in front there is a projection of the module up to  $3X$  which forms the *mukhayamam* of the temple. In this rectangular form the *garbhagruha* is like a seed that constantly expands outwards to form the 1,3,5,7 prakaras.

### 7.6. Colors

Traditionally there were only five colors (*Panchavarna*), namely red, yellow, green, blue, and white. Black is also used, but only to enhance the other colors. Shades of colors were not used until recently. The traditional colors were made of natural materials and possessed certain properties that were intrinsic to the material.

- *Maroon / Kaavi*. The color of the earth, and also of auspiciousness.
- *White*. Traditional paintings used a great deal of white. It is the color of the moon, purity and piety though it also denotes sorrow and widowhood in certain contexts.
- *Blue*. The color of the sky and the waters. This is an oft-used color to indicate vastness and eternity.
- *Green*. The color of plants, prosperity and fertility. Green is used for creating a feeling of aliveness and fulfillment of earthly pleasures.
- *Yellow*. Yellow ochre Arc colors denoting birth and growth. They are associated with spring. Yellow is also an auspicious color, and is employed to represent spiritual awakening.
- *Black*. It is often used to indicate counter religious symbols such as black magic rites and worship of the lesser gods. It is also used to represent austerity and penance. Black in a limited application ensures the containment of negative vibrations in an entity, hence black thread, beads, and bangles and so on.

### 7.7. Ayadi Poruttam

There is a technique of checking the width of a building, its perimeter, or its module, for benefits which are recommended by the *vaastu* texts. There are usually 6 or 11 types of calculations, which are carried out for the benefits, known as *shadasayadi* or *shodadayadi* respectively. a suitable number is chosen for the width, perimeter or basic module of the building. It has been found to be very effective in bringing about positive energies into the building, as well as in creating well-being among the occupants.

Vaayuvya NORTHWEST		NORTH		Eeshanya NORTHEAST	
WEST	Granary Cowshed/ Kennel Toilets Guest Bedroom	Treasury		Entrance & Porch Pooja Room Meditation Room	EAST
	Dining Hall Study Room Additional Bed room	Courtyard		Bathroom (No closet) Store room (Oil, Ghee etc)	
	Master Bedroom Wardrobe Dressing Room Store Room (Tools etc.)	Bed room		Kitchen	
SOUTHWEST Nairuthi		SOUTH		SOUTHEAST Aagneya	
Vastu Shastra for Buildings					

## 8. IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

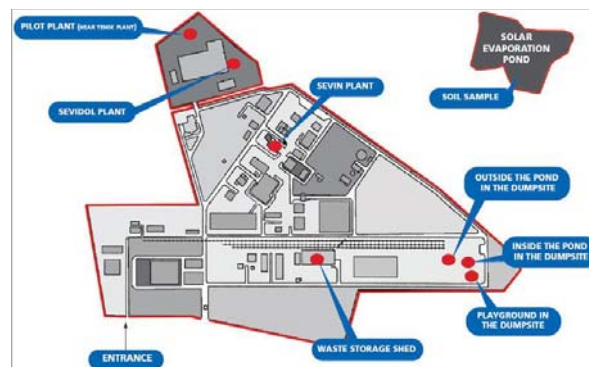
There are some important considerations that should be kept in mind while designing according to the Vaastu. These are understated:

- Never have any toilet in NE area of your building/property
- Never keep kitchen in NE direction
- Never make a bore well in SW direction
- Never sleep while your feet towards South
- Always sit while facing North or East while in Business/Office
- Do not sit directly below a beam or similar projection.
- Try to keep kitchen in SE direction if not then NW
- Master bed room in SW
- Girls bed room in NW
- Try to keep pooja room in NE direction even if it comes in Family room, kitchen
- Never keep the Pooja room in master bed room

## 9. VAASTU FAILURE BUILDING:

### Union Carbide Factory, Bhopal

- The plot is Polygonal, which brings financial losses.
- Factory is situated on the plot which is truncated both from North East and North West.
- All the Methyl Iso Cyanate (MIC) tanks from where the killer Gas leaked were situated in the Center (Bramhsthan) of the Plot.



- The Plot is extended in South West and South East these are also considered inauspicious.
- The slope of land from North east to south west is a cause of Financial Debacle of its own kind.
- The Tube well and water supply is from South West which is most inauspicious.
- There is downward shape in the South West direction.

## 10. COMPARISON OF VAASTU SHASTRA TO

### Feng shui

- Feng Shui is a science incorporating astronomy, geography, the environment, the magnetic fields and physics. Vaastushastra has clear-cut definitions- Vastu means abode or a house & shastra means science or technology, i.e. it is the scientific method of house construction.
- Vastushastra considers a house to be a living soul, having prana. Feng-shui scripts denote water, fire, wood, gold and earth as the basic five elements forming the entire universe with wind as the special quality attainable by these elements.
- Feng-Shui considers a land having reddish or yellowish soil as a good geomantic land. Vastushastra considers a land with white & yellow colored soil for house construction. Red colored soil is tolerated in Vastushastra, but a site with black soil is prescribed for construction purposes, as such lands are prone to water-logging problems- a kind of environmental pollution.
- Feng-Shui insists that a body of water should flow in front of the main entrance of the house. There is no preferred direction of water flow as Feng-shui allows positioning of the main entrance in any directions, depending on the birth year of the owner of the house. Vastushastra on the other hand considers water flow in the direction N.E. to the Vastu as a beneficial factor with lunar-shaped (Chandrakar) N.E. directional flow as a pointer to frame & prosperity.

- A major discrepancy in both these disciplines pertains to the direction of ventilator openings. Feng-shui considers N. as evil & prefers S. direction for window openings. In contrast Vastushastra dictates the position of windows should be in the N.E.or N.E. directions only.
- Feng-Shui attempts to offer the households protection against yellow dust and sand which the Chinese mainland receives from the deserts situated on the N. border of that country. Vastushastra follows scientific logic in selection of the window directions, in the sense that it considers the beneficial effects of early morning sunlight.
- Location & design of rooms in Feng-Shui are based on the traditional Le-Shu grid of nine squares which assigns different directions. In Vastushastra the location of rooms are designated in the Vastu Purush Mandal, consisting of nine squares as influenced by the journey of the sun in its various phases.
- There are also differences between the two ancient arts. In Vastu Shastra, the North direction is generally regarded as auspicious because it is regarded as a source of magnetic energy. The East direction is also regarded as auspicious because this direction is the source of solar (sun) energy. In contrast, in Feng Shui, the North direction is generally regarded as inauspicious. This is because in China, the North direction is where the sands and cold winds from Mongolia blow from. In Feng Shui, the South and Southeast direction is generally regarded as auspicious as the warmth of sun can be felt from these directions.
- In Vastu Shastra, the cooking stove in the kitchen should generally be placed on the right while the sink should be placed on the left. In Feng Shui, the basic principle on the cooking stove and sink is that they must not be facing each other.
- in Vastu Shastra, sleeping with head pointing to the South or East directions is considered auspicious while as in Feng Shui, the sleeping direction should generally be in accordance to the person`s auspicious directions.
- In Vastu Shastra, big or heavy furniture like sofa, TV, radio equipment, etc should be placed at the South or Southwest sector of a house. This will leave more space in the North and East area - considered to be auspicious. In Feng Shui, this furniture should generally be placed at the North sector, directly opposite the auspicious South sector.

## 11. OVERCOMING VAASTU DEFECTS THROUGH

### Feng Shui

#### 11.1. Pakua mirror

A pakua mirror is used to ward off wrong vibrations entering a building mostly through the main door. A pakua mirror consists of a round convex mirror mounted at the center of an Octagonal shaped pakua. In the pakua all sectors are represented with their respective colors and symbols. A pakua mirror is to be installed outside only. It should never be used inside a building.

#### 11.2. Mandarin doves

The doves are made out of high quality wood and conform to the stipulated guide lines of Feng Shui masters. The pair consists of male and female. They should always be kept together one by the side of the other not one facing the other. The ideal place to keep the mandarin doves is the South West master bed room.

#### 11.3. Crystal

Natural quartz crystals are energy enhancers. The crystal which is cut at different angles to reflect light all round energizes an area. Keeping crystal pyramid enhances purity, concentration and absorbs negativity.

#### 11.4. Wind chimes

Wind Chimes are very useful Feng-Shui gadgets. Install silver /white color Five Rods metallic wind chimes in west of your house/ room/ office to get family happiness and mental rest, a golden /yellow color metallic wind chime in Northwest of your house / office/ room will entrance foreign travel/ new opportunity, & helpful people.

#### 11.5. Mirror

If a corner is missing then a correction is called for. To find the missing corner divide the plan to nine equal parts as shown below. Ideally no corner should be missing in a house or a apartment. But sometimes it is the case with houses and more so in case of an apartment.

North West	North		North West	North	North East
West	Centre	East	West	Centre	East
South West	South South	East	South West	South South	East

Any missing corner defect can be rectified by this method. However make sure that the mirrors are installed properly. Firstly a mirror used for this purpose should be of high quality

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without any distortions. Secondly you need a mirror which is of shoulder width and at least six feet in length. Two such mirrors are required.

So, above described are some of the methods in which Vaastu Shastra and Feng-Shui can overcome each others defects and hence depend upon one another.

## 12. CONCLUSION

So, Vaastu Shastra can be defined as an inquisitive science of architecture that encapsulates the forces which act upon a given space through flow of positive energy. Vastu refers to 'abode' or mansion and Shastra or Vidya means science or knowledge, so Vastu Vidya is the sacred holistic science pertaining to designing and building of houses. While many people still strongly believe in Vaastu, the common consensus is that it's an ancient science, which was useful in conditions prevailing in ancient times, but makes little sense today. While some swear by it, many think that Vaastu has become obsolete with the rise of modern cities with sewage systems, multi-storied buildings with air-conditioners, exhaust fans in kitchens, advanced water systems and so on.

Finally, it may be worth noting the words of Indologist and Vedacharya David Frawley: "India is a greatly favored land in terms of cosmic beneficence according to the Vaastu aspect of its geographical location. The Himalayas, or Meru Parvat, oversee the whole of India in the likeness of the prime *sahasrara chakra* in the human body".

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