



## I Don't Do Design For Clients. When I Design, I Am The Client.

... Shaan Zaveri



### ARCHITECT'S VOICE

*Thirty – six years old Shaan Zaveri has an extremely unusual background. Technically, Mr. Zaveri is not an architect though he has designed buildings of different scale and size. He says he is an “architect by interest, rather than by profession. Architecture is in my blood, so to speak.*



Mr. Shaan Zaveri of Terra Ventures Ahmedabad.

*Mr. Zaveri comes from a family of architects. His father Anand Zaveri, his aunt Mana Sarabhai and cousin Mischa are all architects. His grandfather, Gautam Sarabhai designed over 50 buildings in Ahmedabad, though technically, he wasn't an architect.*

*Mr. Zaveri does not design buildings for clients; he only develops his own properties. As he told us, “I don't do design for clients. When I design, I am the client.” We met Mr. Zaveri in his Terra Ventures office in Ahmedabad. Excerpts:*

#### Tell us something about your projects?

I target the very premium range of luxury homes and offices for development. Typically our properties are more expensive than the usual ones.

My first project '399' was a luxury apartment. '426', another project, won an award for the best high rise building in Ahmedabad. '399' is not just built but also maintained by us. I am proud not just of the building but also it's immaculate maintenance. Currently I am doing '129', a large weekend-homes project about 30 kilometers from Ahmedabad.

The names '399', '426' and '129' are simply the final plot numbers given by the authorities and have nothing to do with numerology.

We are different from the conventional developers who build something only to sell it off and forget about it and then move on to something else. Clients, normally will have to do a lot of changes, after they move into a place offered by such developers. On the

other hand, we give an end to end service to our clients, whereby when the client says “I want a house” and we reply, “Just bring your suitcase.” Our philosophy is to create an environment where we have full control.

We work with the client from the beginning so, this saves them from a lot of destructive designing that often follows taking possession of the house. When you move into a badly made house, you say, “Let's remove the flooring, let's remove the windows, let's remove the plumbing, let's remove the electrical...” till there is nothing left of the original house. . . As compared to this, in our case, post handover there is nothing to be done. Even the interior decorators who work on our projects find that they have nothing to do, except to buy the furniture and place it.

The idea is to go to an extent wherein the client is serviced and facilitated *forever!*

#### But surely the requirements may change after some time?

Of course, if the flat was resold, then in such extreme cases there will be changes. But the level of finishing and quality of our buildings is of a standard that most people feel hesitant to remove. So, even in cases of resale we have found that people by and large don't really make any changes.

#### What next?

The next is that we will provide fully furnished units. We will be the single point contact for everything a client has in his home; everything is sourced through us – the refrigerators, the T.V's, air conditioners, the mattresses and furniture; and all of this is at no extra cost.

This way it becomes easy for the client because if anything goes wrong he has only

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one person to contact.

#### What about Vaastu? Especially, since Vaastu has so much to do with a home.

I can't say I am terribly familiar with Vaastu, but I have worked with clients who are also Dr. Rao's clients and he makes sure that whatever we do follows Vaastu principles.

I don't have a quarrel with Vaastu but I have a quarrel with people who want to blindly follow Vaastu without looking at all the other considerations. Wherever possible, I will do everything that is possible to look after the Vaastu angle... If you have a large field and in it you have to build a single house, I would have no problem with Vaastu, but sometimes you may be given a 2000 square yards plot with the commercial requirements of fitting in X number of units of Y size on each floor. Then, in such a case, you have to accommodate the commercial angle also.

#### Do you see Vaastu as a “customer satisfaction” issue?

No! No! .Not at all. I would say, definitely, wherever possible, I would like to be 100% Vaastu compliant but there will be cases where the site compulsions put restrictions and make it impractical or even impossible to



Mr. Zaveri's prestigious '426', which was awarded the best high rise building in Ahmedabad.



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implement Vaastu principles completely. Look, if I can do both I am the happiest, but sometimes that is not possible.

Let us take a case of a building with multiple blocks. Certain times what happens is that you have four apartments in a building and all four are absolute mirrors of each other. Then, if one of them is Vaastu perfect the others automatically become the exact opposite. So, if one is right from the Vaastu angle the other three just cannot be right. Therefore, unfortunately, as a developer, there are certain constraints which are beyond your control and the idea is that you work within the constraints and deliver the best that is possible.

I think Vaastu was divined or came about at a time when the constraints facing a modern architect did not exist. For example, in the ancient times, when Vaastu was conceived there were no commercial compulsions or considerations; there were no high rise buildings, land was not an expensive resource and there was no manmade energy on tap and nor were there any of the modern day conveniences .

### So, the modern inventions and life style have made Vaastu redundant?

Sometimes, Vaastu and modern requirements don't go in the same direction; therefore they are not always aligned. Some people will say, unless the house meets my Vaastu requirements I won't take it. In our case over 25% of the clients insist that somebody must take responsibility of the Vaastu compliance angle of the construction.

But sadly, I have found that different Vaastu consultants have different ideas of what the correct Vaastu solution is.

If someone were to ask me whether my projects are Vaastu compliant, the answer would be that overall it follows basic Vaastu principles but as far as each respective unit is concerned Vaastu compliance will differ with every person's point of view. So, I request clients to get the issues examined by a professional Vaastu consultant.

If in the Vaastu consultant's opinion making certain changes will help overcome any inadvertent Vaastu problem in the structure, we will willingly make the changes. If the changes suggested by the Vaastu consultant can't be done we will reluctantly admit that we can't help because, once a building is made there are certain changes that are not possible to do.

### Would you say that as compared to earlier

### times, Vaastu awareness has increased?

I would say Vaastu awareness has always been there. In the ten years that I have been in this business demand for Vaastu has always been there.

When you develop a property there are numerous considerations: aesthetics, salability, practicality and yes, also Vaastu. In my opinion, it is not a matter of one issue over the other. Rather, I would say that each of these issues deserve equal importance. It is only after all these have been put in the correct perspective that you have a product.

### Should Vaastu be part of the curriculum for Architects?

Why not! I think there are many things that should be added to the curriculum for Architects. Unfortunately, a lot of designers - whilst they design - don't put themselves in the shoes of the developer or the contractor or the occupant, with the result that they only see their viewpoint and not what will eventually take shape. There are many consequences to this. There are many things you think when designing a building and many different things you think when you build a building. In my case, I do both. At each stage everybody thinks what they are doing is fine and what everybody else is doing is not so fine. ■