



ARCHITECT'S VOICE

This month Vaastuyogam interviews Pavan Bakeri of the Ahmedabad based Bakeri Group. Set up in 1959, Bakeri is one of the oldest real estate developers in India. The company has in its fold a team of skilled architects, civil engineers and contractors. It was the first one in India to be awarded the highest PA-1 rating by CRISIL for SAKAR-III project in October 1995. The Bakeris brought the corporate brand buildings concept to Gujarat by bringing in the Sakar Series of branded corporate communes.

The Bakeris have introduced affordable housing schemes, with the aim to be able to reach out to all sectors of society. They have experimented with new forms of architecture and built more than 11 million square feet of exceptional architecture, that symbolizes the city and its beauty.

The group has actively contributed towards society as conscious, corporate citizens by participating in tree plantation programs, developing public gardens and by building traffic islands that add to the beauty of the city. Through event sponsorship, Bakeri group believes in keeping the art and cultural and traditions alive. Jeevan Sandhya, a home for the elderly, has the Bakeri group's active participation. Revitalization of Heritage monuments in the city is one of the tasks the group strongly vouches for.

We met Mr. Pavan Bakeri at his **Sanskrit** office near Old High Court, Ahmedabad. Given below are excerpts from the interview:-



Mr. Pavan Bakeri

"Our philosophy is not to take away from the city, but to give back to the city. We don't maximize our return on investment, but we optimize it."

Vaastuyogam: Let us begin with congratulating you on the golden anniversary of your company.

Pavan Bakeri: Thank you very much.

On his company

I'll begin with my grandfather Late Shri Ratilal Dharamsi Patel... He graduated from Pune Engineering College in the mid 1920's. My father Anil Bakeri is an engineer and so am I. At Bakeris we have a strong emphasis on

"It is observed that Vaastu design comes out better, more functional and efficient..."

- Pavan Bakeri



Sakar VII - Ashram Road

engineering in construction. Our buildings are built solid. The trend nowadays - at least in the last five to ten years - is to clothe buildings well so, cosmetically, they look very nice. But if you look at the core of the building, it leaves a lot to be desired. But what we believe is that we build the buildings such that they live for 60/70 years. And that is what the IS code specifies.

As far as the architecture goes we believe in open and transparent architecture, without any frills but very functional. That is our architectural style. We don't believe too much in ornamentation. Our buildings are characterized by lots of open spaces, large window openings. Our design is very contemporary. This kind of design requires very high level of workmanship.

When you enter into any of our buildings, you will not know why you are feeling good – but you will.

Our philosophy is not to take away from the city, but to give back to the city. We don't maximize our return on investment, but we optimize it.

On Town Planning

We need to have a long term vision for our cities. Unfortunately we only plan for five to ten years ahead. Our town planning schemes envisage what will happen only up to ten years and that too they are woefully inadequate by

the time they get implemented; in fact when they get implemented five of the ten years are already over.

We need to integrate out town planners with transport architects/planners. All of this is very important because there must be an integrated approach. But what we do here is that we give the matter to town planners who have no idea of urban transportation issues and computation of commuting time.

If you go to Shanghai today, they know exactly what Shanghai is going to look like in 2050. They know here the schools are to be put up, where the shopping complexes will be etc. How the city is going to grow and what will be needed. Whether the model will be relevant in 2050 is not the issue. The point is that they have one and that is a good start.

As far as Ahmedabad goes I think the planners have learnt from the folly of the past fifty years and now if you see the developments of the last five years, many good things are happening to Ahmedabad in the new town planning schemes. Things are certainly improving.

On the "S" in Bakeri project names.

The first project that my father put up on 1st October in 1959 was called Shubam. That project turned out to be a very good project for



us, and so, from then onwards we have us, and so, from then onwards we have remained with the letter "S" for the names of our projects.

On the bad/poorly constructed buildings

The problem is that, firstly, many builders try to maximize profits; trying to extract every ounce of profit from a particular project/plot of land. This obviously results in a building that performs poorly at all the desired levels. Secondly, the persons who habit that place are not very functionally and aesthetically demanding. I say this because that's why they go ahead and buy such a place, even though it was neither well planned nor well built. In fact, such buildings are also poorly maintained. So it's a two way story. The first part of the story is that at the design stage these buildings are poorly designed and at the execution stage they are not executed well.

The second part of the story is at the usage level. One could say that these buildings are collectively disowned.

On Vaastu and Dr. Ravi Rao.

I was told by our office that when Dr. Rao came to Ahmedabad in early 1994, the first Vaastu rectification project he did in the city was our Sakar complex on Ashram Road, opposite Town Hall. In fact we consulted him routinely for Vaastu rectification for our many sites that were under construction at that time. And in fact we changed a lot of things. Over the time, some of the clients started demanding Vaastu compliance, so we have become Vaastu savvy, and gradually began to look after the Vaastu fundamentals ourselves. And, so the need for Vaastu rectifications diminished.

I personally have picked up working knowledge of the more important aspects of Vaastu. I am familiar with those parts of Vaastu where there is an overall general agreement; the parts about the entry, the kitchen, bedroom etc.

Vaastu has a lot to deal with magnetic forces and thermal forces. It is a very scientific thing with a lot of logic to it. But now, because of the many technological advances some of that logic has got clouded in incongruity. We have seen that, even if you do not believe in Vaastu, but you design as per Vaastu, the design comes out better and more functional and efficient. This would be true for at least two thirds of the cases.

If you ask me, Vaastu does not have a direct impact on income generation. Vaastu promises peace of mind and that you will think rationally. And because you have peace of mind and because you think rationally you tend to take right decisions which help you in your business.

On a personal note, I recall showing Dr. Rao the drawings of a plot that was in my name and situated on the bank of a river- between Gandhinagar and Ahmedabad- where I was

to build my own house. He came up with some excellent suggestions and a very good plan for the house. In the end I wasn't able to build the house at that time because there was a town-planning scheme that was coming up there. Now the scheme is in place and I may eventually build the house there. Unfortunately the suggestions/changes Dr. Rao had made are no longer valid because the town planning scheme has altered the plot layout entirely. But I do remember that interaction very well.

What is unique about Dr. Rao is that he also brings in Astrology to add up to the Vaastu and so he makes a complete solution. So he balances both the sides and goes into depth of the problem, especially with the angle of the person involved. For Dr. Rao Vaastu is not just an objective science but a subjective science and I think that is the difference of approach between him and the other Vaastu consultants.

On buying Vaastu perfect plots

Unfortunately buying Vaastu perfect plots is not a child's play. It is not always possible to get one. Another thing is that even when we know a plot to be entirely Vaastu perfect we go ahead and buy it when our presence in that location is strategically important. But we keep in mind the property will need Vaastu corrections.

While on the subject of Vaastu perfect plots I'll share one experience of a Vaastu perfect plot with your readers. We have a scheme

"Suramya VII", in which Dr. Rao himself has bought a plot. He had told us that this plot was excellent from the Vaastu angle. The project indeed turned out to be blockbuster project for us. We had absolutely no problems with that project. None at the approval stage. None at the selling stage. The whole thing went off very smoothly. I am a man of science and I asked him, "Why is it like this? Can you explain to me the logic?"

On Vaastu as a part of the curriculum for architects and engineers.

If Vaastu is to be included as part of the curriculum of engineering courses, then you will have to really do your homework and present it as a science. This means anything you say has to be explained why. You will have to explain the how and where and why of the things. And probably someone like Dr. Rao may have to do that.

You see the problem with the ancient Indian sciences is that we have not been able to work upon the developments of the past. These sciences were passed on orally and that's where the issue lies. Western science came into its own only after the Guttenberg printing press. The Western Sciences had a system of documenting what they were doing and disseminating that.

Unfortunately ancient Indian sciences are based on oral traditions. So there has been no documentation as such with the result that the entire thought process of those days has been lost and we have not been able to build up on the experiences and knowledge of the previous generations. ■

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Serendeep Mansions - Ultra Luxury Homes

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