

NEWSLETTER Vaastuyogam

Connecting Vaastu to the 21st Century



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EDITORIAL



Welcome to the May 2013 issue of Vaastuyogam.

I am overwhelmed at the response to my initiative, "Dr. Ravi Rao's Vaastu Tips" wherein I have been giving simple, easy to follow, Vaastu guidance for householders and businessmen. I hope readers will take advantage of these tips and implement them to the extent possible.

In the 12 Jyotirling article of this month we take an in-depth look at both the Kedarnath temple and the ancient city of Varanasi. Varanasi is known by other names like Kashi and Banaras as well. We have chosen to refer to the city by the name Kashi, the name by which it is known in the scriptures. It is hoped that this series will induce people to visit these ancient and revered shrines of ancient India.



and request them to continue doing so.

I acknowledge that this magazine is as much a reflection of the comments and advice of the readers as it is the work of my Vaastuyogam team.

Thank you and happy reading!

I, and my Vaastuyogam team, thank all the readers who give us their valuable feedback

ARCHITECT'S VOICE

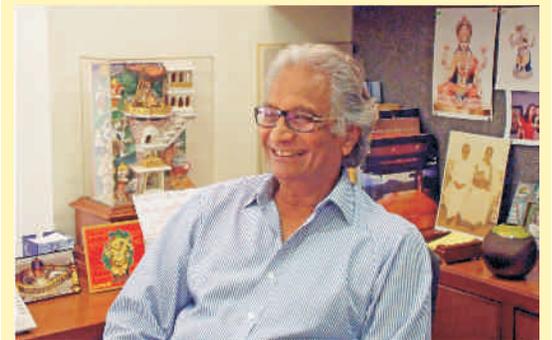
Architect Jitendra Mistry "Public Spaces begin the moment you come out of your home into the street" - Part 2

Renowned Ahmedabad based architect Jitendra Mistry speaks about Public Spaces, Urban Design and the automobile culture.

(This is the second of a two-part series. The first installment of this series was published in our April 2013 issue.)

Brief synopsis of first part of the series

In the first part of the series Mr Mistry had begun with the remarks that public spaces begin the moment you come out of your home into the street adding that public spaces begin from where you begin from your home and include every outdoor



Architect Jitendra Mistry

space you utilize like the streets which you walk on, the connectivity to the temples, schools, colleges and the playgrounds and work places. In this issue Mr. Mistry speaks about roads, the connect between planning and the citizens and concludes that involvement of the citizens, a firm and unbiased commitment by the Government, the intelligence and vision of the planners and most critically the realization that you cannot get this thing right by working in isolation.

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“Public Spaces begin the moment you come out of your home into the street” - Part 2

- Architect Jitendra Mistry

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ARCHITECT'S VOICE

This is the second and concluding part of our interview with Architect Jitendra Mistry.

Roads

Making a road is not just drawing a line on a piece of paper. Several factors have to be taken into account. I give you an example of SG Road with which I am familiar as I live at SG Road . Another road was being planned

We will require a higher, more intelligent and intimate level of planning than I see available now. Nevertheless, no matter what it is that has to be achieved, it can be done provided there is involvement of the citizens, a firm and unbiased commitment by the Government, the intelligence and vision of the planners and most critically the realization that you cannot get urban planing right by working in isolation.



Architect Jitendra Mistry

Mr. Jitendra Mistry, is an architect having taken his degree from USA. He worked under the guidance and direction of world famous architect Dr. Walter Groupis at the Architects Collaborative Inc., Cambridge, USA.

Founded in year 1968, by Mr Jitendra Mistry, Mistry Associates provides complete professional services in the fields of Architecture, Master Planning & Interior Designing. Mr. Mistry has designed several projects for Educational Institutes, Hotels, Commercial Buildings, Industrial Estates and Private residential houses.

parallel to within one kilometer of S.G Road. I was startled when I got to know this and wrote to the planners. I told them, look at the way the world is developing and the thinking that you people are pursuing. You are putting another thoroughfare within just one kilometer of another. By doing this you are not doing anything else but segregating that one stretch that will fall between the two thoroughfares. Already SG Road has split-up and divided the place between Ring Road and Bopal into two parts. And now when you want to come up with another parallel road within a kilometer please think about it. It would be better to push it a little further. Luckily, my point was understood and the present Sardar Patel Ring Road was pushed about 4 kilometers from SG Road.

Discipline, Self Discipline and Law

There are three aspects to roads : They are discipline, self discipline and law.

Today, the traffic systems have taken over our mind because we accord tremendous priority to automobiles, which is fine but we must devise overlapping systems that protect pedestrians and also make driving a smoother and more pleasant. The streets and roads our biggest and most crucial public spaces; we must maintain them and use them with a sense of social responsibility.

If you go to London and other European cities there are no circles and roundabouts as in physical circles and roundabouts; the roads have only lines drawn upon them but

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ARCHITECT'S VOICE

people follow them without fuss and by dint of habit. This type of discipline we cannot even dream of here. The people in Europe use the Metro and travel by trams. And why do they do this? It is because of the draconian restriction on car parking that if one were to take a car he would have to think twice about where he would be parking the car. Does he have his private arrangements? No? Then he is in for it.

On the other hand, over here, people can park their vehicles in front of a shop, restaurant, in fact anywhere and get away with it. The result is that even broad roads get reduced to narrow streets on account of three tier parking. Our Prahlad Nagar Road is the worst example of this. Worse still, the



Congested Traffic, Ahmedabad



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roads are dug up and are no less than death traps and this makes for further shrinking of the space available for traffic.

Laws can induce discipline provided they are implemented aggressively and with an even hand. In India, the law is good but it is either implemented selectively or not at all. There is a law that might say 'NO PARKING' but there will be over ten cars parked there and yet there will be nothing done about it. But before we are quick in condemning the car parkers let us put the question whether we have provided for parking. The answer is no and so we compel people to violate the law. We must also understand that we are not born undisciplined but have reached this stage because of the system of traffic policing.

There is also a question of self-discipline which we have yet to cultivate. Take the example of the three-wheeler rickshaws. Invariably, we will make the rickshaw wait outside the shop for a few minutes till we finish our business, never mind if it is a parking zone or not. I will give you an example. It was the last day of one of my trips to Boston. I was in a hurry and so when I went to pick my laundry I parked my car in front of the laundry shop. When I went inside

the shop the lady managing the laundry refused to give my clothes. She said politely that I was not supposed to park the car outside the laundry, and that she would deliver my clothes after I parked the car in the correct place. Can you imagine such an incident happening here!

Connect between Planner and citizens

I was working in Boston with The Architects' Collaborative. At that time a city planning exercise including open spaces, connectivity etc was organized into a big sized mobile model which went from community to community to community which was then followed by an open question & answer session. This got the community involved and the people put across their concerns. The town planners in turn elaborated upon the logic and the compulsions that propelled their planning choices. The questions and comments made by the people had nothing to do with the width of the road or the heights of the buildings that were to be put up but were about the play-grounds and the connectivity to them and about the fate of the existing public spaces and about heritage places being disturbed by the new roads.



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ARCHITECT'S VOICE

This is the level of connect I am looking forward to in town planning, but I know it to be a far-fetched idea not just for Ahmedabad, but the whole India. This is in such stark contrast of the practice here of putting up some pictures on the AUDA and Municipal Corporation walls and asking people to go there to see the pictures and make comments.

Conclusion

I opine that it is not just the large spaces of the city that should be termed as public spaces.; even streets – broad or narrow - where pedestrians should also be termed as public spaces. By ignoring pedestrians, we only focus all energies on large open grounds and call them public spaces yet without any thought about connectivity for the pedestrians.

On another different, yet connected – note let us begin to save our public spaces and let the city breath with new 'Mantra' of environment and green development with esthetics. This we have ignored so far.

The renewal of lost spaces like the Old Ahmedabad City with its pols and gardens should be taken up on a priority basis and we must ensure that the old city can breathe again.

As far as western Ahmedabad is concerned, especially the newer suburbs of the city are a case of hurried and unmindful planning without a thought for what a city and its people really need.

We should see to it that our citizens should become apart in every town - planning exercise. We must caution ourselves that we will be unable to solve any of today's problems if we concentrate on isolated relations, such as between man and nature, man and building, man and networks & man and society. Instead our town planning model should be circulated in various communities of the city to get their comments.

I wonder if it is a big move for us but this will help to get their involvement and will be a help for planners to remember the issues related to people and their life. It is not as if



Aerial view of London traffic

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- Architect Jitendra Mistry

Laws can induce discipline provided they are implemented aggressively and with an even hand. In India, the law is good but it is either implemented selectively or not at all. There is a law that might say 'NO PARKING' but there will be over ten cars parked there and yet there will be nothing done about it. But before we are quick in condemning the car parkers let us put the question whether we have provided for parking.

our planners are not intelligent or lack vision but we have many factors working against them whilst they do their work. This can only be remedied by firm and committed governance.

For an environment of better town planning we will require a higher, more intelligent and intimate level of planning than I see available now. Nevertheless, no matter what it is that has to be achieved, it can be done provided there is involvement of the citizens, a firm and unbiased commitment by the Government, the intelligence and vision of the planners and most critically the realization that you cannot get urban planning right by working in isolation. ■