

Chat Time

Ar. Bankim Dave

The National Vice President of Institute of Indian Interior Designers (I.I.I.D.) for the term 2008-2010, Architect Bankim Dave is a multi-faceted and multi-talented personality. His design ideology and skills apart, he is a very good orator too. His sharp wit and ready responses to situations make him a very dynamic event host!

A practicing architect and interior designer from Surat, Bankim is a third generation architect! His Architecture qualification is also backed by a Bachelor's degree in Science followed by a Diploma in Civil Engineering. He is a partner of M/s. Ramanlal Dave & Sons – the first Architectural firm in Surat. Bankim has designed the Social Science Bhuvan for the South Gujarat University, Rotary Eye Hospital at Dondaicha, Family Physicians hall, Showrooms and several high end residential bungalows and industrial buildings.

Bankim is registered with Council of Architecture – New Delhi, Fellow of The Indian Institute of Architects and is also registered as a government approved valuer. He is on the Advisory Committee – Composite Project of Science Centre, Museum, Art Gallery & Planetarium, Surat of Surat Municipal Corporation. His write up on "Buildings of Surat City & District" is published in the Official Gazette of Gujarat State. Bankim is a visiting faculty to Department of Architecture, S.C.E.T. and School of Interior Design, Surat.

Bankim is the Founder Chairman of Surat Regional Chapter of IIID, which received "The Best Chapter of India" award in its first term when Bankim was Chapter Chairman. The Surat Centre of The Indian Institute of Architects received "The Best Centre of India" award for the term when Ar. Bankim was its Chairman. In the same year, he received a "certificate of appreciation for the outstanding contribution for the year 2005" from The Indian Institute of Architects.



Q You started your career in the late 80's. How do you co-relate your experience with the present times?

I have always believed in the saying that "Change is inevitable; it's the direction that counts". Manual skill is taken over by the Technological skill; pencils replaced by Mouse, drawing boards by P.C., ammonia / blue prints by Plotters. Sketching, psychographs and isometric views - everything has shifted from manual skill to technological skill. With the vibrant variety of media and internet just a button press away; there is a drastic change in the planning and designing as well. The understanding of space in reference to the surrounding and environment, the use of eco-friendly material, use of local material even in the modern design and working under the strict constraints of the by-laws has become challenging for all designers today. We are in a Global world; everything and anything you get to design has to be in tune with the modern trends and of course has to time-bound; as these days because of media and Internet even the Clients are well informed. Working in 80's and even till late 90's, one had to invite separately Carpenter, Painter, Electrician, Plumber and other allied technical staff for executing large and small interior jobs. Now that process is redundant; it is replaced by one single agency known as "Turnkey Contractor". Green buildings are a new upcoming challenge not only for architecture, but even for interiors. In 80's, you could perform and if you failed, you could try and perform again...but now it is "Perform or Perish".

Q What is your vision for your practice in the coming five years?

"If you refuse to accept anything, but the best, you very often get it" has been my motto always. I remember the words of Thomas Jefferson, "I am a great believer in Luck and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it." True - at least for me. So be "In Touch"; be in touch with the latest developments by attending seminars, workshops, exhibitions, C.E.P. etc. and continue to accept and implement that is required. Practicing and implementing green building concept, both in the architecture and interiors is up on the agenda. Presentation of design, details, drawings and documentation should be at par with international standards.

Q As the Vice-President of IIID, what are your views on the need for propagating good interiors in India?

Cohesiveness and fellowship between Indian designers; thereby encouraging more interaction would lead to a better understanding and imparting of knowledge and information. Exchange of ideas, briefing on new developments and grooming the young designers would lead to better designs. Even today, we have our distinct identity region-wise; in this global competition we need to have a design that can be called "Indian". We have heard and known about European, Scandinavian, American, Italian furniture; have you ever heard "Indian furniture"? Mary Fox Linton - an interior designer remarked, "You just have to look around India for five minutes; all the design you need is right here. What more inspiration could you ask for?" So we need to strengthen our base and I believe our base is Education in Interior Designing, uplifting and encouraging local crafts and setting up of Research Centres.

Q What do you think of Indian interiors position in the global market?

I repeat here, we need to establish our identity. We need to be a cohesive force to make our presence felt. We perhaps are far ahead in terms of talent, intelligence, innovation, vision, but we lack in documentation, presentation, opportunity and marketing as well. We need to spread our wings beyond the boundaries of our country. No country perhaps must be having as many qualified professional Interior Designers as we have in India. Further, we have more Interior Designers than the Furniture / Product Designers. May be at Institute or at the College level; we should emphasize on having more International Exchange programmes, which would help us know the trends and their policies.

Q How, according to you, better design can help in decreasing global warming?

One of the major aspects of environment friendly designs is to reduce energy consumption in buildings. This is possible through an efficient planning of electrical and mechanical utilities and better equipment selection. Our country is blessed with solar energy almost through the year; then why not start with the most basic - use of



solar panels for heating water, solar energy for cooking and solar energy for lighting in gardens and other public spaces...? This would result into considerable energy saving. Simple strategies would be to orient the building in the appropriate direction to maximize or minimize sun exposure (depending on the region and site location); reduce electrical loads through careful building design, glazing selection, lighting design and landscaping; utilize renewable energy resources to meet energy demands; and promote solar energy usage. In almost all my projects, we promote solar energy and rain water harvesting; we plan to reduce waste which in turn reduces cost and is better for environment; we optimize use of interior spaces through careful design so that overall building size and resources used in constructing and operating the building is kept to a minimum and of course, we try and use durable and recyclable material.

Q What are your perceptions about the present status and future of design education in India?

Presently, design education is unduly biased in favour of "Western master architects", thus unnecessarily encouraging design under influence rather than focusing on individual potential based on understanding of materials and climate. We need to develop a research base for rethinking design solutions, for adapting/ executing modern materials and technology - in the Indian context. Much inputs are required in terms of educating design students for cost-effective yet sustainable, environmentally sound practices.

Q What are your views on heritage conservation and your efforts on that front?

Most heritage conservation projects remain on paper in absence of adequate authority and public support. Heritage conservation has to be a multi-pruned effort on part of civic authorities, architects, general public. It must not be viewed in isolation as a mere exercise in preserving the monuments, but also to conserve and integrate it in the urban cityscape making it a space for raising consciousness and educating people in a reposeful environment.

On the local level, through the involvement of the IIID and due to repeated letters to the Surat Municipal Corporation, hoardings in front of Naginchand Library - a heritage building in chowk area - were removed to allow a view of the frontage.

Q What kind of limitations do you face while executing your design?

A designer and particularly an interior designer has to be a good administrator and manager. In a city like Surat, you don't find contractors and traders having a professional approach and it is doubly difficult to find a qualified person for a particular job. They are all skilled by experience; but reading and executing interior plans and details is a problem even today! Thus on-site explanation and detailing is a must. Turnkey contractors are scarce. Further, even today we have no set system of entering into any kind of Agreement / Contract with the clients.

Q What are your views on Green Design? Have you taken any initiative on that front?

Everybody knows that the air we breathe in approximately every fourth second stuffs our lungs with dust particles and poisonous gases. Getting into a traffic jam is a common experience in every city. Skyscrapers and slums co-exist disgustingly.

Greenery is confined to the green colour of walls and high trees tossing their heads at the touch of wind has become a rare sight. We have stripped the earth naked and stuffed it with concrete and steel. Man's urge to live a comfortable and peaceful life is being transformed into a nightmare. The time is right for all of us collectively to think, understand and practice "Green Architecture / Design". No doubt the important issues of sustainable design, universal design, and socially responsible design have to be given prime importance.

Q Would you like your next generation to go into the field of interiors or you would you like to give them a choice?

I would give them a choice, of course. You should not



force anyone to take up a profession / business without one's inclination towards it. Interior Designers will definitely be in more demand in near future; as the awareness spreads that for designing interior spaces you need a specialist - "Interior Designer".

Q As a leading design professional with an international exposure, what are your views on Insite magazine?

IIID is growing at a rapid speed and INSITE in its tender age has gone a step ahead. Truly a mouthpiece of IIID and perhaps the only magazine which speaks of its members, their works and presents the innovation and experiments done by others in the World, INSITE is almost synonymous with the words - "*a complete magazine*". Your editorial is always thought-provoking. Kudos and compliments for the job well done.

Q If you were to define yourself in one word, what would it be?

Perfectionist

Q Moving on to things less formal, if you were to start your career all over again, what would you choose as your vocation?

Architect - but with the expertise of a "Motivator" and the oratory skills of a "Lawyer"!!

Q If you were allowed to design some famous monument, which one would it be?

"The Gateway of India". Taj Mahal and other wonders of the world have been considered masterpieces of timeless Architecture. The Gateway of India needs that timeless touch; may be slight change in scale, subtleness of details and fine tuning of design. Spaces around it must be designed to provide a setting, with extensions into the Arabian Sea as a backdrop. It would be redesigned so that it serves a cultural and physical presence befitting the strengths and vastness of India.

Q What are your hobbies?

Reading good speeches and developing oratory skills.

Q Which designer's work inspires you the most?

Nitin Killawala's down to earth approach, Sanjay Puri's "wow" effect and Karan Grover's panache'.

Q Tell us about your most memorable and challenging assignment?

Designing of ENT hospital on 2nd & 3rd fl. of an old building with an audiometric consulting on first floor and linking all giving a homogeneous effect. Dealing with leakages, dampness, weak structures and the most shocking was the toilets had sunks upto 1 mt.; it was a task to fit in attached toilet with every ward. Other interesting work was that of a General Hospital we did at Dondaicha (Maharashtra); executing with a contractor, who could not understand both English and Gujarati and I can't speak Marathi. All facilities were required and both the budget and area provided were tight.

Q Last but not the least; allow us to reproduce few images of your projects which depicts your design ideology.

Aesthetically beautiful, practically convenient and also keeping fidelity to the user's need are the prime factors - we consider as our design tools. But, originality backed by creativity giving freshness and design rich & conducive ambience is our concern always. We try to achieve design excellence, creating distinctive and imaginative solutions for our Clients - integrating our skills. Our design palette is a fusion of effective detailing used to enhance the quality of design, appropriate use of materials and innovative style backed by completion within time frame and budget. ☐