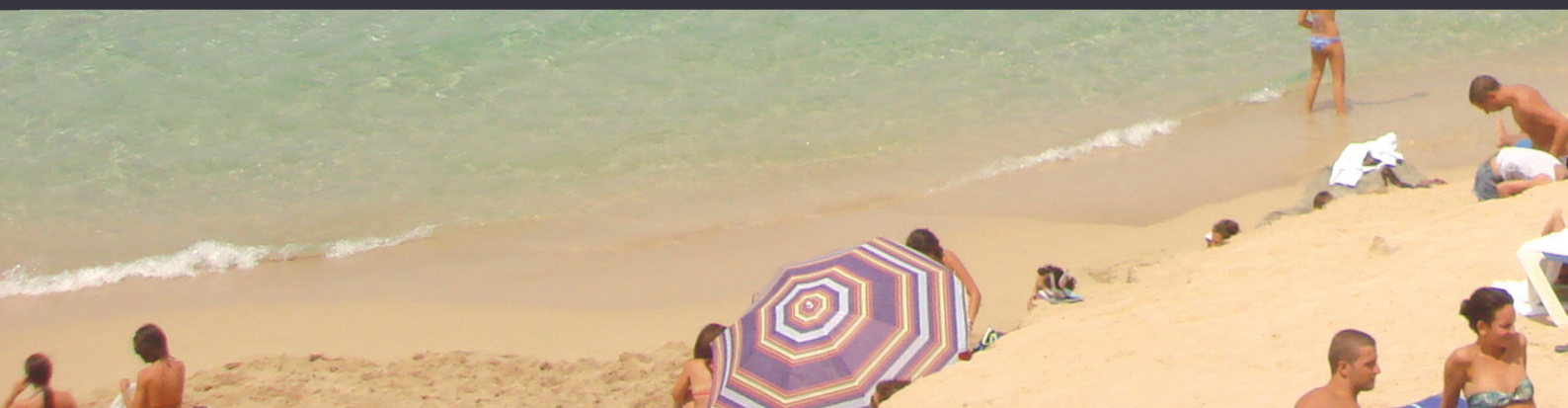


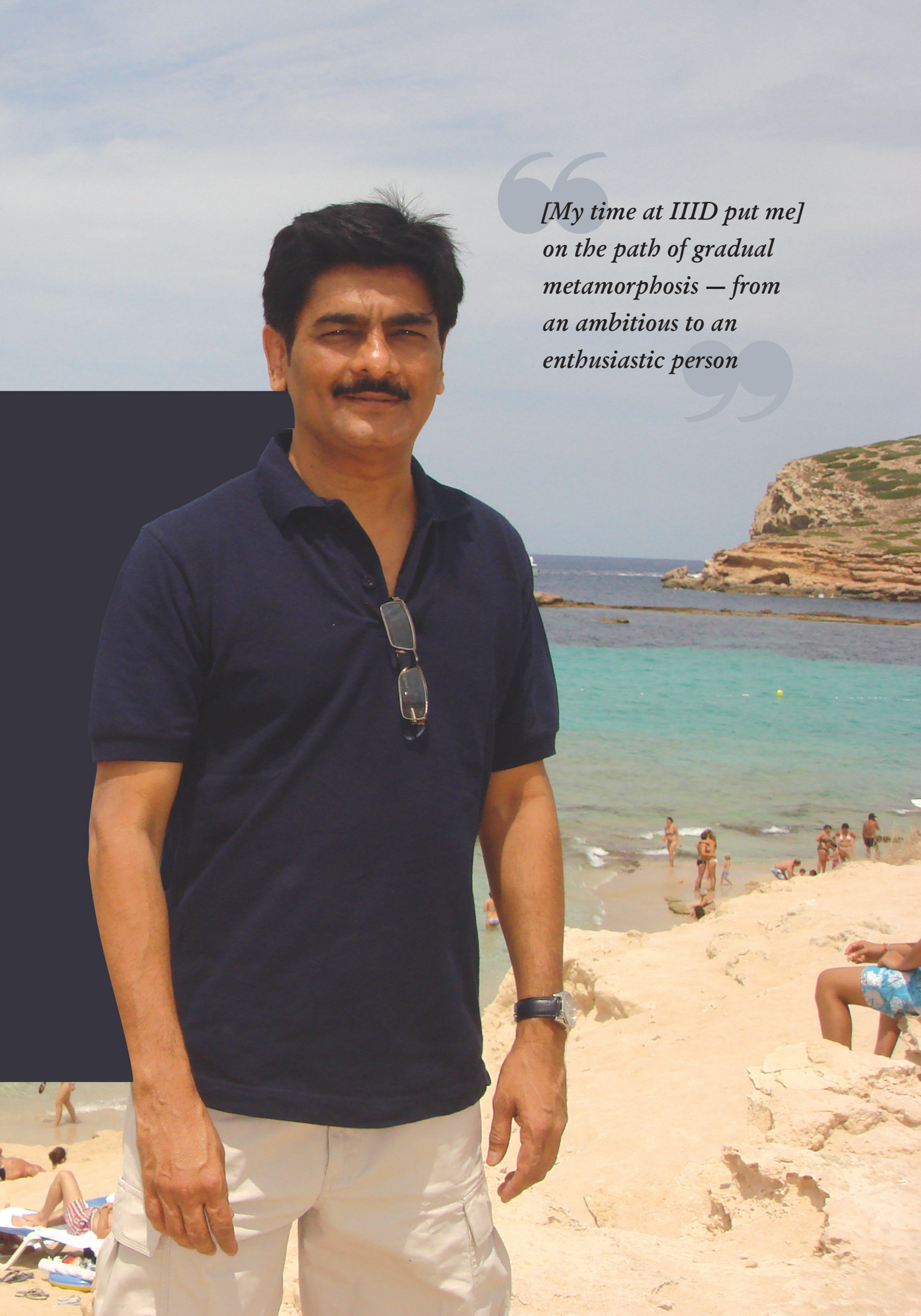
'DESIGN is a Continuous Process'

Bankim Dave, the outgoing president of Institute of Indian Interior Designers (IIID), is a multi-faceted personality. Apart from his design ideology and skills, he possesses a sharp wit and great oratory skills.

A practicing architect and interior designer from Surat, Dave is a third-generation architect and a partner of M/s. Ramanlal Dave & Sons — the first Architectural firm in Surat! Registered with the Council of Architecture, New Delhi, Dave's body of work includes a range of projects spanning sectors.

In this interaction with INSITE, he speaks of the metamorphosis he underwent during his time at IIID, where the Indian interior design community is placed, and the status of design and design education in the country.





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It's been a long eventful journey since you took over as IIID president to now, when you relinquish charge to Nitin Saolapurkar. How has the journey been?

I have spent 12 years as a member of the IIID Executive Committee. For me, it is a time to look back into the past, on the road that I treaded in the last two years as the President and EC member of a very prestigious apex body of the country. It is here that I realised what the expression "excavation of the self" means. Whatever and whoever I am today was very much within me, but without the love, care and affection showered on me by the fellow members, the real self would have remained smothered within. During this period I found myself on the path of gradual metamorphosis – from an ambitious to an enthusiastic person. No one not in my situation can appreciate my feeling of joy, happiness and satisfaction of having served IIID. I am an active Rotarian, a past District Secretary. The experience helped me organise, harmonise, understand and plan the two-year term and set goals. It has been a learning experience. I had the opportunity to meet people of varied interest and skills while the President's official visit helped understand Chapters/ Centres better.

What was your vision for IIID when you took over? Do you think you have been able to fulfill it?

Better governance with administration that is transparent, prompt and approachable; updating record, bye-laws and various guidelines; and – foremost – getting recognition for IIID. It is for members to comment whether we have been able to achieve the same or not. In the proposed amendment to the Architects Act 1972, it is recommended that one seat on the Council of Architecture be provided to IIID. We have published amended bye-laws, sent various guidelines in the form of Treasurer's Manual, Managing Committee & its meeting etc.

As the IIID President, how do you feel the Indian interior design community is placed in terms of the global market?

We need to establish our identity. We need to be a cohesive force to make our presence felt. I feel we are far ahead in terms of talent, intelligence, innovation and vision, but we lack in documentation, presentation, opportunity and marketing. We need to spread our wings beyond the boundaries of our country. No country must have as many qualified professional Interior Designers as India does. We have more Interior Designers than Furniture/Product Designers. May be, at institute or college level, we should emphasise on having more international exchange programmes, which would help us know trends and their policies. Globally the term Interior Architects is used; here we are known as Interior Designers. It is also time to streamline the syllabus in tune with international standards.

In 2007, Business Week put NID, Ahmedabad, and the Industrial Design Centre at IIT, Mumbai, on the list of the world's top 60 schools. What do you feel about the status of design education in India today?

The two names are titans among design schools but there are many others. Our education facilities and the environment around is in itself a catalyst for design education. Mary Fox Linton, an interior designer, said: "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?" India is almost at par with the world but it is time to add more faculties to design education. Exchange of ideas, briefing on new developments and grooming young designers would lead to better designs. Design cannot be taught; it is an outcome of one's knack, experience and insight; vision can be developed, skills nurtured



Ar. Bankim Dave loves working on high-end bungalows and residential interiors. Seen here is one of his projects – A Bungalow in Surat



Ar. Bankim Dave believes that designers must keep in mind the client's requirements. Seen here is a Bungalow in Surat.

and willingness tutored. So we need to strengthen our base and I believe our base is education in Interior Design, uplifting and encouraging local crafts and setting up of research centres.

How does IIID plan to contribute in imparting formal education in the field of interior design?

IIID has its own set of syllabi; three-year diploma in Interior Design and four-and-half-year degree in Interior Design. Our syllabi are accepted and run by few schools and colleges in India. We have also set up an Education Committee for a period of five years to study, research and monitor education in Interior Design. We, at our IIID head office, in Worli, Mumbai, also organise workshops /seminars. After Lighting, we are now planning to tackle various services. We are planning to organise an orientation workshop for faculties teaching interior Design.

As Chairman of APSDA, what are your plans to create awareness about design, within the member countries of APSDA?

In the recently concluded APSDA General Assembly at Goa, all member countries shared the opinion that we need cohesion. It was felt that "cohesiveness and fellowship between the designers of the member countries will encourage more interaction and lead to a better understanding and imparting of knowledge and information". We also decided to participate in each other's country's apex body's national convention/conference and make a presentation of the design in a particular country. Also, to organise an exhibition of works of designers of all member countries at such national events. It has been agreed to start an exchange programme. For example, a team of five professional IIID members will visit Australia for 15 days, during which time the Australian Interior Design Association would

organise visits to design sites, designers' offices and product manufacturers. IIID would do the same when they come calling.

What are your thoughts on IIID's flagship event SHOWCASE?

SHOWCASE is a national programme of IIID and needs to be nurtured and guided accordingly. Today, IIID has a pan-India presence, thanks to its 28 Chapters/ Centres and huge membership. We have highly successful national events like Convention, Anchor Awards, Copper Awards, Godrej Innovations Awards, lighting workshops, an enviable publication like INSITE, and a pulsating website. SHOWCASE needs to gain that status. SHOWCASE has to be different in many ways than the other popular interior product exhibitions. We need to add pavilions that will impart information on design, may be an interactive pavilion where at a given time one can meet a famed designer; pavilions on Green materials/sustainable design; foreign products pavilion; pavilion where works of designers are displayed etc. SHOWCASE has to be planned for pan-India in advance with dates and venues announced.

Where do you see architecture heading in the next few years?

Change is not to be denied. The transformation of our cities is not only probable, but also necessary. The time demands it, but we must do it innovatively and not simply for the sake of change. With the global climate changing, the time has come to be socially responsible, use sustainable designs, recycled materials and nano materials, and create not only Green buildings but also green interiors. The designer needs to become a learner; he must attend seminars/ workshops and educational programmes to remain updated.

Do you feel the words green architecture have become just lip service these days?

Everybody knows that the air we breathe in, stuffs our lungs with dust particles and poisonous gases. Traffic jams are common. Skyscrapers and slums co-exist disgustingly. Greenery is confined to the green colour of walls. We have stripped the earth and put in 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 or design. The issues of sustainable design, universal design and socially responsible design have to be given prime importance.

Any advice for would-be architects and interior designers?

Work experience is very important before one jumps into the profession. To convert education into a practical format, one needs work experience. Explore, research and adapt newer material and design trends. Attend as many CEP (Continuous Education Programme), seminars, workshops and conferences to update and keep in touch. Design is a continuous, never-ending process.

We know you are a third-generation architect and interior designer. Please share with us details of your education and your initial working years.

My grandfather, late Ramanlal Dave, was an architect in a British firm in Karachi. After Partition, he set up his own practice in Surat. My father, Tarun Dave, joined him and started an architecture firm – Ramanlal Dave & Sons. I am an architect, a Science graduate and hold a Diploma in Civil Engineering. Till I joined my firm,

we had never done any interiors. Interior was a new concept and I added the word Interior Designers to the firm.

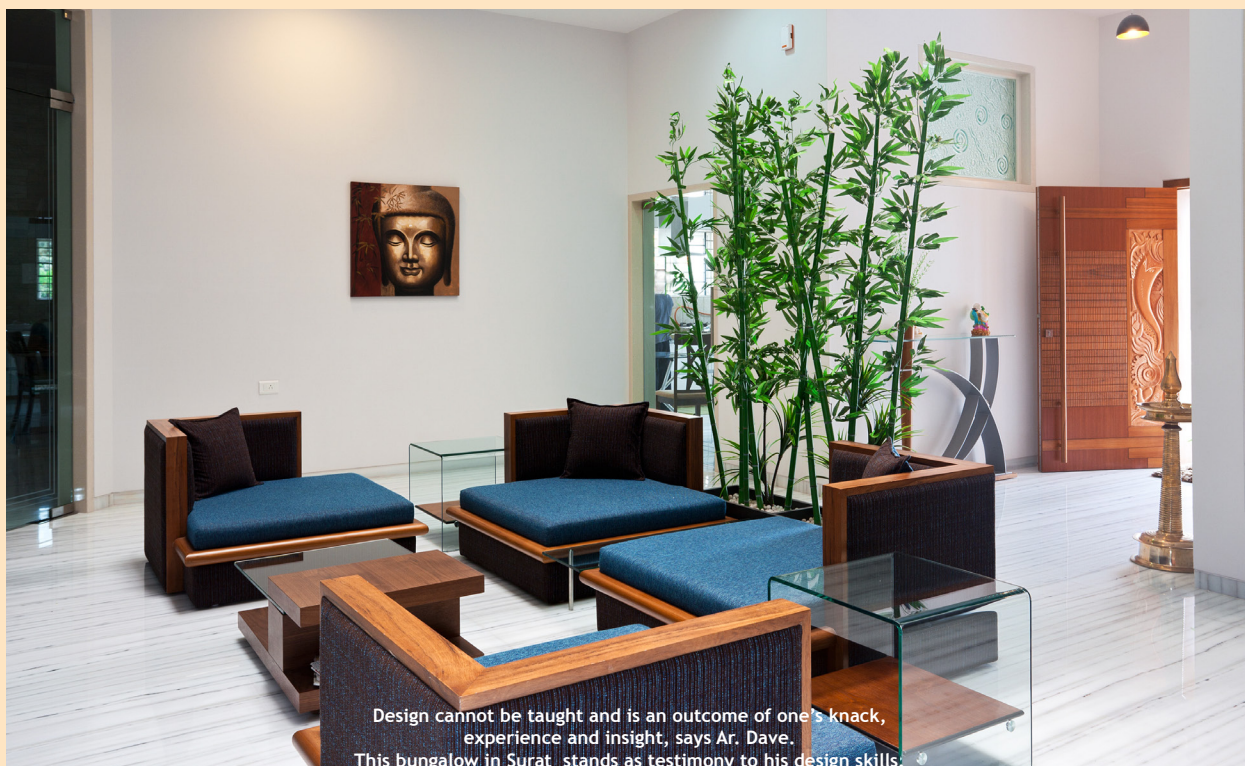
You started your career in the late 80s. From then to now, there have been humongous changes in the field. How do you view modern day architecture in India?

I have always believed in the saying that "Change is inevitable; it's the direction that counts". Manual skills have been run over by technological skills, pencils replaced by a Mouse, drawing boards by computers, ammonia/blue prints by plotters. Sketching, psychographs and isometric views – everything has shifted from manual skills to technological skills. With a vibrant variety of media and Internet just a click away, there has been a drastic change in planning and designing. The understanding of space in reference to the surrounding and environment, the use of eco-friendly material, use of local material and working under the strict constraints of bye-laws has become the challenge for all designers. We are in a global world; everything and anything you get to design has to be in tune with modern trends and has to time-bound.

Till late 90s, one had to sign up carpenters, painters, electricians, plumbers and other allied technical staff for executing large and small interior jobs. Now that process is redundant; it has been replaced by turn-key contractors. Green buildings are a new challenge not only for architecture, but even for interiors. In 80s, you could perform and if you failed, you could try and perform again. Now, it is "Perform or Perish".

Please tell us about the design philosophy that you follow. Would you say you have any influences?

We try to achieve design excellence, creating



Design cannot be taught and is an outcome of one's knack, experience and insight, says Ar. Dave. This bungalow in Surat stands as testimony to his design skills.

distinctive and imaginative solutions for our clients. Our design palette is a fusion of effective detailing used to enhance the quality of design, appropriate use of materials and innovative style with a concern for completion within time frame and budget. Aesthetically beautiful, practically convenient and also keeping fidelity to the user's needs are the prime factors. Originality, backed by creativity is always our concern. My architect father, his dynamic approach and meticulous working has had an everlasting influence on my life. I am also inspired by Nitin Killawala's down-to-earth approach and his simple but yet effective design solutions.

Architects and designers often find that they have to bow down to client's wishes. Have you ever felt pressed-in by limitations while executing your design?

Design is the brainchild of a designer; it is a blend of various skills, vision and experience and one always designs keeping in mind the client's need and requirements. If the design is adaptable by the client, where is the question of coming under pressure? The designer has to be an advocate of one's own design; one must know how to convince and express, which requires a strong design vocabulary.

Your body of work spans a lot of sectors. Do you have any particular favourite?

I love designing high-end bungalows and residential interiors are my favourite. It is here that you come in contact with the entire family, their lifestyle, their likes and dislikes, and get an opportunity to witness from close quarters the values and traditions they follow. This is very interesting as we get to learn many things over and above experiencing life from various view points.

Share with us the one memorable assignment that stands out in your mind over the last many years.

The designing of ENT Hospital on the 2nd and 3rd floor of an old building with an audiometric consulting on first floor and linking all floors, giving a homogeneous effect, as the floors were connected only through a common staircase of the building. Dealing with leakages, dampness, weak structures and the most shocking – toilets had sunk, upto 1m, was quite a task. The other interesting work was a general hospital we did at Dondaicha (Maharashtra) – executing it with a contractor, who could not understand either English or Gujarati (I can't speak Marathi) was a challenge. Can you believe that working in India I had a translator and an interpreter who would convert the colloquial building terminology?

If not a designer, what profession do you think you would have chosen?

May be a "motivator" or a lawyer, but I would always prefer to be an architect, one with the expertise of a motivator and the oratory skills of a lawyer!



Ar. Dave says that originality backed by creativity is always his concern. Seen here in Prime Bank in -----

As a leading design professional, what do you feel about INSITE magazine?

IIID is growing at a rapid speed and INSITE, from its tender age, has marched with equal enthusiasm to be a wonderful design magazine. It is truly the mouthpiece of IIID and perhaps the only magazine which speaks of its members, their works and presents innovations and experiments done by others in the world. INSITE is almost synonymous with the words "a complete magazine". Kudos and compliments for a job well done.

Tell us about your family and a regular day in your life.

I live with my parents, a loving mother who is passing through a bad health phase, my father who is an architect and is still active in the profession, and my better half Tejal, who is visiting faculty at Department of Architecture (teaching Sociology). My daughter, Parish, is currently in Kelowna, Canada, as a Rotary International Youth exchange student for one year in Class 11. My day starts at the gym at 6.45am, followed by performing puja. At 9.30am, I am on site visits. My office timings are from 10.30am to 6.30pm. After that, I go for material selection for clients and after reach home at 8pm. The time from 11.30am to 1.30pm is dedicated to studio (no visitors); 4.30pm to 6.30pm are visiting hours. Thursdays I have a Rotary meeting; my attendance record is cent percent since I joined Rotary in 1989. Three days in a week, I go to School of Interior Design as visiting faculty.

On the lighter side, tell us about your hobbies. What interests you apart from design?

On the lighter side, enjoying all worldly pleasures. On the real side, reading good speeches and developing oratory skills. ☐