

COVER
FEATURE



Dr. Benny Kuriakose
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INSPIRING VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

What is your journey in the recent past and where do you see yourself in the near future?

For the last twelve years, I am doing the Muziris Heritage Project. It is a great experience in dealing with the conservation of three synagogues, two forts, historic buildings, setting up various museums, putting up new infrastructure etc. My journey continues and I hope to do more socially relevant projects in the future. The idea to balance the conservation of historic buildings and the design of new buildings will continue.

Comment on the government's plans to format the designing industry?

Doing the Muziris & Alappuzha heritage projects taught many lessons too. Government is like a machine with no feelings or emotions and works according to the rules. But it is the Government which does the biggest real estate projects in India and if properly done, can change the architecture scene in India. Many artists do not want to work with Government because Government do not pay for research, quality and creativity. It goes with the person who quotes the lowest financial bid. There is no wonder that our public spaces are very badly designed. Muziris and Alappuzha heritage projects have taught be many lessons, I would say that it was not at all easy.

In which the way you have specialized in your niche?

I have specialised in Conservation. About 50% of our practice is conservation and another 50% will be the design of new buildings with inspiration from vernacular architecture. Conserving old buildings, the greenest architecture that one can do, since one is recycling the whole building. Both the conservation of buildings and taking lessons from our own heritage in designing new buildings, have not become part of the mainstream architecture in our country.

Encapsulate your views...!

In India, we have to produce outstanding quality of architecture. Although, more than 100,000 architects pass out every year, the quality of our public spaces and the public buildings is of much lower standard. The whole profession has to make a serious attempt in improving the quality of architecture in the country and it is the responsibility of the profession.

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PHENOMENAL
ARCHITECTS
AND INTERIOR
DESIGNERS