

# A RENDEZVOUS WITH VERNACULAR



Director, MSAJAA, Faizal Abdul Cader presenting the memento to Mr. Kuriakose

**M**ohamed Sathak AJ Academy of Architecture (M.S.A.J.A.A), is a School of Architecture which believes that Architects are catalysts for society and culture to evolve. Located on Rajiv Gandhi salai (OMR), Chennai. Under the guidance of Professor A. Mohamed Haris, the school is approved by Council of Architecture (COA) and Affiliated to Anna University.

The Academy is a prominent learning and interaction centre in Chennai and periodically hosts informative sessions with well known architects and designers. On 13th February, 2013, the academy organized a guest lecture by Mr. Benny Kuriakose, a prominent practitioner and advocate of Vernacular Architecture from Kerala.

Mr. Benny Kuriakose delved into the various techniques that he has seen being used in vernacular architecture over the years, and how each one of them is specifically responsive to the climatic conditions of the site and the financial, aesthetical and psychological needs of the building users. The designer favours earth houses, as is evident in his building repertory, and defended their longevity by quoting- "Give a kuccha house a

good hat and good shoes, and it will last forever."

His formative years in architecture were deeply influenced by the eco friendly vernacular building style of the very influential architect based in Kerala- Ar. Laurie baker. His contribution in the revival of vernacular influences is impressive and inspirational for the current generation of architecture students.

The buildings of Benny Kuriakose have taken a similar sensitive approach, and respond to the hot and humid climate prevalent in South India with large sloping roofs, ample number of courtyards, wide veranda spaces where lazy tropical evenings are spent lounging, and beautiful awnings and overhangs. The roofs he uses are more dominant than the walls in elevation, and often hide them completely. Thatch, mud tiles, terracotta tiles and a variety of other shingling materials available in the market have increased the aesthetic potential of these sloped roofs exponentially, making clients more forthcoming about using them.

In the tropical heat ridden climate of south India, no number of courtyards can be too many- the architect stood by this philosophy in his design of Institute of Palliative Medicine,





Students before the question answer session



Mr. Kuriakose delivering the lecture



The auditorium



Prof. Haris interacting with Mr. Kuriakose



Prof. Haris, Advisor, MSAJAA addressing the gathering

Calicut. He has provided between 30-40 courtyard spaces, in a bid to ensure excellent light, ventilation and a home-like soothing environment for the terminally ill patients residing there. In the construction of a wing of IIT-madras, he has provided 8 feet long roof overhangs, erasing the necessity for separate sunshades. Since 2006, when he shifted base to Chennai, he has undertaken many projects in the city and often uses recycled materials in them. In an Injambakkam residence, the staircase is built using

recycled wood, while another residential project exclusively uses recycled woodwork and fixtures.

The Academy believes in learner centric, interactive approach to teaching. Along with regular classes, the school organizes lecture by eminent architects and designers from varied domains regularly.

Further details of which will be available in the college website [www.msajaarch-edu.in](http://www.msajaarch-edu.in).