

Green Architecture

While the design of 'Green' buildings may be a specialist field altogether, effecting 'environmentally responsible design' is deemed to be an obligation of all architects of the 21st century. Considering the dominant role played by the building industry in the alteration of our natural environment, how prepared are we to take on this role called for by us?

To begin with, we need to come to a common ground on our understanding of the terminology. The terms 'green', 'eco-friendly' and 'environmentally responsible' are often loosely referred to as pertaining to the same subject matter. There is however a fundamental difference. While the first two terms refer to the ecological component of our environment, the latter refers to a more holistic consideration of it.

In our daily lives we interact with three main environmental systems. These are the social system - *cultural, religious and community based*; economic

system - *the workings of commerce and trade*; and the ecological system - *which comprises of the natural environment*. The workings of these three systems are intricately inter-linked and are highly susceptible to changes in each other. Some call this the 'integrated environment'. The term 'environmentally responsible design' brings into the picture the consideration of all these three environmental systems.

Any act of building, even a clay hut, can be considered to be going against the notions of eco-friendly design since it alters the state of the environment directly and indirectly. But man defines his environment and himself by the edifices he builds. So the matter in question is how buildings can be designed and constructed, with the least impact on the environment.

In this issue, the articles featuring the Elle Adventure Park, Dunvila Cottage and the work of Brinda Somaya investigates an interesting mix of architectural



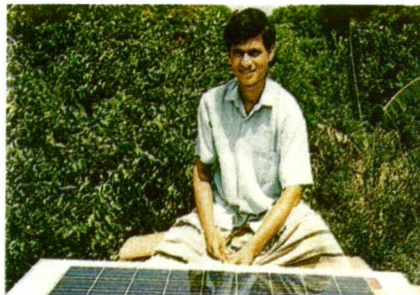
design and the lifestyles they promote. The Media Centre at Pelawatte, is presented as a pioneering project engaging traditional and modern technology to address aspects of ventilation, cooling, lighting, waste recycling and utilising Solar power.

The Practice Profile looks at the work of Architect Vijitha Basnayake, who as the author says 'does not claim to be a green architect'. His unconventional style of architecture is probed to identify and discuss several main characteristics of environmentally responsible design.

Also included are two enlightening articles on energy efficient design and the use of Solar Power as an alternative source of power. The latter article shows how the yet unilluminated parts of Sri Lanka

Globally, the architectural profession is making greater strides in its endeavour to make the industry more environmentally sustainable. Locally, 'saddled' with a vernacular architecture that was more attuned to environmentally friendly building techniques, a definitive modern green consciousness is yet to get off the ground.

In spite of the above, commercial pressure has the power to dictate or entice us in our choice of materials and method. Amidst these pressures we need to go back to the drawing board and reconsider the ideas and components that make up our buildings. More than anything else, this calls for a review of our personal viewpoints and professional attitudes.



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