

# Architecture

## CHENNAI

AC Q2  
2021



THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS, CHENNAI CENTRE

IIACC NEWS, DATA, EVENTS & UPDATES

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2021

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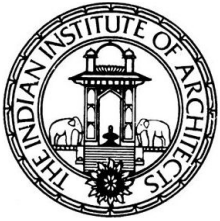
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Architecture CHENNAI  
is the Quarterly Publication of  
The Indian Institute of Architects, Chennai Centre.

The Publication hosts a collection of works & articles  
that may address any topic that furthers the cause of  
Architects and Architecture in Chennai.

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Architecture Chennai, the Quarterly Publication of IIA Chennai Centre, is a splendid effort to bring about the essence of the architectural works, articles, views, aspirations, latent skills of the members and issues of public interest. The magazine will enhance the connect amongst the members of the Centre and help in building relationships with an effective mode of communication & sharing information.

The enterprising Editorial team has put together a well laid out magazine, rich in content with a variety of topics and features of interest. I am sure it will be a pleasure to the readers apart from spreading awareness & understanding among the members.

Chennai Centre, under the dynamic leadership of Ar. Kurian George and the team, are contemplating several initiatives involving the members to articulate on issues of interest and concern for the fraternity and society to be rolled out in the coming months.

As we slowly come out of this traumatic experience of the pandemic, with loss of lives and livelihoods, it is encouraging to see members, who are safe, coming forward to offer solace to those who are in need of help. Let us revitalize ourselves and treat those around us with empathy.

Wishing the publication an excellent reach and the members a happy experience.

Let us hope for better days ahead.

**Ar. C.R. RAJU**, FIIA  
President, IIA

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## CO-EDITOR'S NOTE

It's almost over a year now, due to this pandemic the word positive is being considered taboo and at the same time, everyone is searching for positivity. Here we at IIACC bring positivity in the form of a publication that we believe is full of positive energy. This is our first edition of a publication which we are looking forward to bring out every quarterly.

Through this publication, we at IIACC look forward to engaging with the city and its citizens. Re-Imagining Chennai is a way in which we try to do that.

A mixed bag of projects submitted by architects of the city and articles on different facets of architecture brings richness and variety.

The Editorial team of Architecture Chennai has left no stone unturned to bring out this publication. We hope you enjoy it. Please give us your feedback.

Happy reading!!!

**Ar. MUZAKKIR C.M. BIJLI**, AIIA  
Co-Editor

The pandemic is testing our mental and physical well-being and has pushed us into a realm of confinement and solitude. As Shakespeare once said, "Sweet are the uses of adversity". The situation we are in presents an opportunity to develop qualities of patience, courage, resilience and wisdom. It is inspiring to see the innovative operating methods adopted by fellow architects to overcome these isolated times.

Architecture Chennai, a publication initiative by IIACC, brings to light some of the works, articles and thoughts that further the cause of Architects and Architecture in Chennai. Consistent efforts have been put in by the IIACC Editorial Board to usher in conversations between architects and the city's various stakeholders. We invite all readers to voice out and share their thoughts and aspirations for our city.

It has been a wonderful experience putting this publication together. Hope you enjoy reading it!

Stay safe and stay healthy.

**Ar. PRASHANTH C. RAJU**, AIIA  
Co-Editor



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# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Greetings!!!

We are presently passing through a very difficult period. Each day brings to us tidings of sorrow and suffering. Many of us have lost near and dear ones to this pandemic. I convey my heartfelt condolences to each one of you who has had to suffer such irreparable losses. My heart aches for the countless who continue to suffer the effects of this pandemic.

Our studios are not the same anymore, neither are we as individuals the same anymore. However, we must recall that this is not the first time humanity has undergone such suffering, and certainly, this will not be the last. We will survive this tribulation as well as many more that may come.

It is with lifted spirits founded on rays of hope in endurance and deliverance that the Executive Committee of Indian Institute of Architects Chennai Centre (IIACC), and the Editorial Board, brings to you the first issue of Architecture Chennai.

The IIACC will be engaging with Chennai through various initiatives to promote a deeper understanding of the architecture of the built environments of Chennai and the various acts and events that have resulted in the Metropolis being what it is today. A photography club and a sketching club have already been conceived. These clubs will engage with a different part of the City each month. Documentation of such events will feature in the pages of Architecture Chennai. The first event of the Photography Club was organized for 3rd April 2021 however, the anticipated resurgence of the pandemic led to its postponement. We look forward to rescheduling these engagements in the near future.

Who we are today is a result of our history and how we have lived thus far. But who we are going to be is based on the capacity of our thinking. It is our intention to understand our City not only by looking back in time, but also looking forward into the future. To understand the Metropolis of Chennai from multiple points of view, we sought the vision of select individuals from different walks of life besides Architects, including Artists, Anthropologists, Historians, Journalists and select citizens who are sensitively connected to the City.



These diverse points of view may help broaden our understanding of the Metropolis and certainly provoke us to deliberate more. Such provoked thoughts could even be at variance from the thoughts expressed in this publication. The section "Reimagining Chennai", in this issue, focuses on Marina Beach, its meaning and relevance to the City and its visions for its future.

To further discuss the state of Architecture in our City, "Architecture Chennai" will engage in conversations generated by works of Architects practising in Chennai. Though primarily intended to provoke conversations based on works in Chennai, the publication will also discuss works done outside the City by Architects based in Chennai. Should the circumstances so present themselves, we are consciously open to breaking these restrictions as well.

Messages in words or images are faster to compose and will reach a larger audience in a shorter period of time compared to built environments of significance which, most likely, will take a lot longer. Through this publication, it is our effort to discuss and provoke more discussions on the advancement of Architecture. As Architects, it is equally our prime effort to sensitize the thinking world around us to the cause of Architecture, as it is, to design and direct the construction of meaningful built environments. Articles in this publication discuss and intend to provoke thought to precisely this end. Through this quarterly, we hope to reach the people who are actively engaged in shaping the City.

The Executive Committee of IIACC and the Editorial Board of Architecture Chennai join me in stimulating conversations with you through this issue and look forward to receiving your feedback.

Stay safe and boost our fight against COVID-19 and its variants.

Sincerely,

**Ar. KURIAN GEORGE VATTAKUNNEL**, FIIA  
Chairman, IIA Chennai Centre

# RE- IMAGINING CHENNAI: MARINA BEACH





**Ar. C.R. RAJU**, FIIA  
Principal Architect, CRR+  
President, IIA

The infinite ocean, the rhythm of the never-ending waves, the myriad colours of the sunrise emerging, the ingenious catamarans floating, the expansive golden sands caressed by the lullaby of the tide are all that we behold of the Marina, a gift of nature to the city of Chennai.

It is replete with the history of the region and has been a momentous witness to the political, social and economic trade that has happened over centuries with so much heritage around it. Our generation has enjoyed its many facets but has also seen a lot of intrusions and degradation. It is our responsibility to understand its legacy and make amends for the benefit of the future.

The Cooum river which was a freshwater river and part of the social fabric of Chennai has been polluted all the way leading to the sea by indiscriminate encroachments and development. The mouth of the river is a part of the Marina and there is an urgent need to restore this major resource and revitalize the Marina by enhancing the public spaces which are currently shrinking. This can also promote eco-friendly leisure and recreational activities.

The heritage buildings along the stretch of the Marina need to be conserved and further intrusions are to be avoided to help maintain the serenity of the public spaces. A heritage and public space policy can be evolved for the Marina by the administration with inputs from all stakeholders.

The pristine beauty of the Marina can be enhanced by the removal of unnecessary structures, better positioning of the hawkers creating an eco-friendly environment for all to cherish leaving the vast stretch of the sandy beach free for the public.

The Marina is a huge lung space in Chennai.  
It's time to take care of our lungs.



## Ms. PARVATHI NAYAR

Contemporary Visual Artist

Several years ago I was part of an Indo-German Public Art project focussed on the rivers of Chennai, whose specific aim was to raise public awareness about the Cooum. We hoped to realise this initiative as an outdoors arts project on Marina Beach, close to where the Cooum meets the sea. Unfortunately, in the end, we did not get permission; instead, we presented an extremely well-received critique of the initiative called the Damned Art Project at the Lalit Kala Akademi.

However, it remains a powerful vision in my mind: a largescale curated outdoors exhibition of contemporary art on the famous beach of Chennai. I feel that it would serve multiple functions – of bringing into public discourse issues pertinent to the people of Chennai and allowing Chennaites an interaction with such ideas through harnessing the power of Public Art. Contemporary art created for the public in public spaces has both universal reach and impact.

From this vision in my mind, I would go a step further: to create an outdoors arts arena in Marina Beach where a series of events could be held the year around – Public Art installations, outdoor theatre, poetry readings, art workshops. It would be a marvellous use of the space and add to the vibrancy of Chennai. As a city, Chennai feels deeply the lack of a central arts centre, a place where those in the arts and those interested in the arts can present their work, mix, mingle and exchange ideas. There is no reason why the imagination for such a space could not extend to a full-time Arts Centre on Marina Beach.



## Mr. RAJESH RAMASWAMY

Chef

My vision of the Marina, and what I wish it to become, over the next twenty years, is of a place that embodies all that is precious in the constant interplay between a metropolis and mother nature.

I want the Marina to become a shrine to ecological and cultural sensitivity, to an artistic sensibility in design and execution, and overarching inclusivity where people of all faiths, beliefs, persuasions, abilities and socio-economic segments find common ground.

I would love it to be a place that has solutions and facilities for all and democratizes access: for kids and elders, the feeble and the able, the natives and migrants...in short, a melting pot, where all the walls we construct around us, are broken down gently by the sea-breeze. And I want it to be secure and well-policed at all times of the day, and night, because there should never be a curfew on the ocean. The best way to ensure greater security, though, is by having more people (of the right kind) attracted to and using the beach.

I definitely want it to be a place that can engage the citizenry through a diversity of uses, from public art and sculptural zones to reading rooms, creches, fitness centres, senior-citizen parks, open auditoria, conservation zones, regulated food and beverage outlets, a fish and fossil museum, a cultural centre, an indigenous immersion zone to celebrate and chronicle the original fishing communities of the coast.

I want this to be imagined and executed through a conservation architect's lens, only to ensure that, in the name of development, we don't create another Ranganathan Street (or the Marina as it is). Of course, since the Marina will belong to the people, all sections will be consulted on how to build and protect its sanctity. And the development will be a green ode to the blue beyond, making the Marina, not just a statistic as the second-longest stretch of beach, but a reality as the 'living room' where Chennai meets itself, makes friends, finds family, and finds a shared purpose with Mother Nature.



## Ar. KURIAN GEORGE VATTAKUNNEL, FIIA

Principal Architect, Kurian George Architects  
Chairman, IIA Chennai Centre

Chennai is naturally blessed with several beaches of varied character. Whereas most of these beaches are frequented by people from the immediate neighbourhood, the more popular ones draw beachgoers from neighbourhoods far and wide.

Marina Beach is more than just a beach in Chennai. The identities of Chennai and the Marina beach are inextricably intertwined. The Marina beach is the place where the state and the people assemble for events of importance to the City. Marina Beach is an iconic symbol of the City.

The road along Marina Beach, Kamarajar Salai, is one of the major roads of Chennai. It would be good to reimagine this as a Boulevard, segregating high-speed vehicular movement from pedestrian movement using a landscape strip between the curb and pedestrian pathway on both sides.

A parallel beach lane running the length of the beach with two or three connections to Kamarajar Salai to provide for vehicular access to and from the beach would eliminate the requirement to park on the edges of Kamarajar Salai. Vehicular parking could be restricted to parking bays provided for the purpose, away from the beach lane.

The space between the boulevard and the beach lane could be developed as a Coastal forest to address the effects of Tsunami, using trees to soften the destructive force of the waves. The Coastal forest would also reduce the erosive effect of salt and sand on the edifices of historic significance

that edge the proposed boulevard. Bus-stop bays too could be recessed into this forest space thus eliminating Bus Stops on the Kamarajar Salai.

The already-planned Chennai Metro Rail (CMRL) Stations of Chepauk, Thiruvallikeni and Lighthouse could be well connected to Marina Beach with shaded pedestrian pathways. If well-conceived and executed, it could be preferred over an equally well planned and provisioned last-mile vehicular connection alternative.

Certified hawkers and food vendors could be given facilities in appropriate locations. Equal consideration could be extended to the Fisherfolk, provisioning their stalls with hygienic facilities including water supply, drainage and electricity.

Adequate video surveillance combined with sensitised patrolling will address safety requirements.

A promenade could be realised as an extension of the coastal forest beyond which the beach could extend till it reaches the water's edge.

The coastal forest could become a preferred recreational space for the Citizens of Chennai. Besides continuing to be the place to congregate, it would not be difficult to visualise Marina Beach as a peaceful respite from the hustle and bustle of the City, an oasis that shelters from the blazing sun and an essential and rejuvenating green lung for the City.

## Dr. MATHANGI KRISHNAMURTHY

Asst. Professor, IIT Madras

Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences

Marina to me has always signified the opposite of a city, in its vastness and promise of the vastness beyond the shores. It is what you see in its generous expanse as you fly into the city and the plane circles back and forth, such that you watch mesmerized from the window, partly petrified if the plane will find land to land upon. It has also signified the promises of childhood; of sand, of the geographically delightful fact of it being one of the longest stretches of beach this side of the world, of cotton candy, of piquant green mango slivers and chilli and salt. So I engage with Marina as all of the above, but also most importantly, as representing the continued promise of a truly public space. In its promise of a multi-usage space lies also its representational worth of egalitarianism and public voice.

My vision for Marina would be for it to continue to hold open spaces of addressal and soapboxes (sans microphones), performance venues (eco-friendly ones), and many many spaces of play replete with public art signifying the present and historical roots of the beach. In other words, I would want for it to remain a public and experimental venue, changing with the times. The operative word here is experimental, with access for bodies of all sorts, shapes and persuasions. Perhaps Marina could be our collective vision for it means to be happy together, every now and then.





**Ar. PRAMOD BALAKRISHNAN**, AIIA  
Principal Architect, Edifice

Well, a city is a reflection of its public spaces. Most are designed and some natural. Marina is the latter. And for so long it has remained the most equitable public space of Chennai.

It though has been encroached in time by memorials for leaders. And those have taken a decent chunk. The fear is that these might increase with time.

My vision for the marina going forward is to restrict any development or structure in this area. Layer the requirements that are needed for the public parallel to the coast. So that at the edge of the road you maintain what you have and then a layer or zone for licensed hawkers. The next layer would be seating areas in front of these hawkers and then it just expands into sand till the waters. This limitation of human-built intervention will allow for multiple uses by the public as and when required.

So leave the marina alone, please. It's the only public space that Chennai has of any value.





## Mr. SRIRAM VENKATAKRISHNAN

Historian & Heritage Activist

Touted as the second-longest urban beach in the whole world, the Marina in Chennai is certainly a thing of beauty. Not many know that it is a relatively recent physical feature of our city for it came to its present expanse only after 1875. Work began on the Madras Harbour that year and owing to sand accretion to the south of the construction, the sea receded, gifting us a wonderful beach. It speaks volumes of the egalitarian nature of our people that the space has not been parcelled off as plots for housing the rich.

In the respect we are lucky, for the city has a lung where its people can draw fresh air with no fee to be paid. The Marina has suffered threats to its existence – there was once talk of a railroad cutting across it and then in recent times there were some vague rumours of construction on it but thankfully it has all come to nought.

Successive governments have lavished money on Marina beautification schemes and yet it remains a space that could do better. One of the reasons for its degradation is the inability of the authorities to control hawkers on the sands. While a beach completely devoid of stalls would be alien to an Indian city's character, it cannot be denied that regulation and discipline are musts. There has to be strict enforcement of approved stalls and predefined locations. The public too must respond by practising self-control when it comes to disposing of garbage. It is also necessary for State Governments and city administrations to realise that the fishermen community have been around the beach long before the British. They lend character to the space and so all talk of relocating them elsewhere needs to be dropped. They too can be trained to respect the sanctity of the beach even as they live by its side.

# TRIPLE O STUDIO

The Marina that we know is an encapsulation of Chennai's past and present. With its rolling waves and endless stretches of sand, it is a sparkling tribute to pleasure, politics and public life all the way from Madras to Chennai. About 150 years ago, the waters washed up to kiss the edge of the road. Today, the shores of the longest beach in India extend vast and wide between road and water, making room for thousands of visitors every day.

Over time the small fishing villages that called this beach home paved way for royal colonies and stately offices. This later changed into a landscape that hosted the salt satyagraha, the independence protests and joint radio assemblies. A few years later, the Marina was synonymous with running trams, decorated statues, joy rides by the ocean and superstar movie sets. Today it presents itself as a scene of visitors and vendors, an oasis of calm on one side and a flurry of activity on the other. The view of the Marina has been ever-changing but the idea of what it means to the city is etched in stone.

The Marina of 2050 will see transformations beyond our imagination. The effects of Global Warming are inevitable - the ocean level will rise; the waters will make inroads through Ennore and the Buckingham Canal wherever possible or it will outright flood and drown land areas close to the shore. The radial growth of Chennai from the semi-circular shore will shift as the coastline advances. The urban pressure will lead to the erosion of the beachfront from a public place to a coastal road. The biodiversity in the coastal belt will bear the brunt of this change as local ecosystems are dismantled. Indigenous settlements will be displaced. Basic resources will be monetised.

Critical infrastructure will come into place, taking room in the horizon. As we steadily inch towards a future where fresh water will only be a dream, desalination plants, retaining walls, watchtowers and airbuses will become the bureaucrats' opportunity. The beachside will sit strong at the epicentre of all politics. A visit to the beach may no longer come with the same carefree spirit - it is likely to be regulated with many eyes on the visitor with rules, viewpoints and protocol.

The beach today is predominantly occupied by the fisherfolk who are dependent on the waters to make daily bread or by the affluent sections of society where a beachfront property is not a necessity, but an object of leisure. This socioeconomic urban contrast will no longer be visible as the waves of

change take over land, however, one community will be forever obliterated, robbed of food and shelter, with no measures to protect them in place. Post the Tsunami, the victims were honourably rehabilitated. But these people who were largely from the fishing community were sent to areas that were no longer in sight of the ocean, taking away the opportunity to use a specific and contextual skill set, hacking blindly at generational indigenous knowledge. History may repeat itself.

We often expect dystopia to crash land upon us like a Tsunami. But it works simply in minute changes and choices made over an extended period of time. The Marina that we see is nothing like the Marina that used to be. Tomorrow will not be vastly different from today. But 30 years hence, the world will have been irreversibly altered.

## MARINA 2050

A: Voila! Welcome to Marina 2050, the second-longest beach in the world!!

B: Wait, what? Are you sure this is the beach road? All I see are these giant cylinders and rectangles, with that rhythmic click click click. Where is the sound of the ocean?

A: Oh, these are our desalination plants. But also our chief military base. Most of the country no longer has any water so people are constantly trying to rob us. The Anidas were put in jail last week for smuggling water from the port. We need this as the city's first line of defence, you know - like ACs in the summer- you can't imagine one without the other.

B: But the view...??

A: Oh, don't worry about it. The government has come up with the Chennai Ocean View programme. Tendering has started. They are building hollow land mounds over these industries. Many trees will be planted. We're going to go all guns blazing to go green, pun intended, get it? Hahaha oh, we're almost at the gate - pull out your ID?

Machine: Beep beep beep: -180, -72.

Welcome new user 34495i39.

You have 180 hours left at the beach this year.

Welcome back user 496u59n.

You have 72 hours left at the beach this year.

Please give 24000 to the desalination counter for a day's extension.

B: What was that about? You have allocated days to visit the beach? This is unheard of where I come from! It's so eerie having a machine keeping track of what I do.

A: Oh well. We're used to it. This works on many levels. First, allocated time means that everyone in the system is accounted for and gets an equal amount of 5 days at the beach per year. Of course, the guys with money outright buy more days but at least the money goes towards making more clean water for us.

Second, the ID protects the fisherfolks' rights and access zones. Their indigenous and generational knowledge helps the desalination operators to determine what parts of the water to use in what seasons, helping them work with and around ocean biodiversity.

These machines are your tickets to move through the city. They are located inside every building, public and private transport, shop and market, and allocate points based on

your carbon footprint. Lower footprints get higher points which give you discounts for water purchase that year. That's the biggest reason why everyone does it.

B: I see the merits but it seems a little surreal to me.

A: Speaking of surreal - here's Marina like never before. Hop on.

Machine: Beep beep beep: Airbus ticket 02 numbers.  
Welcome new user 34495i39.

You may enter for Kannagi Statue to Light House.

Welcome user 496u59n.

You may enter for Kannagi Statue to Light House.

B: Oh my goodness - an airbus? Are we going to be suspended midair and above the ocean?

A: Strap in for the ride, we're right in time for sunset too!  
It is a thing of beauty.

# WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE MARINA?

We are excited to see your vision for the Marina beach.

Architects and students of architecture from Chennai are invited to submit one image that depicts their vision of the Marina beach. The image can be a sketch, a section or even a collage. Any form of representation is welcome. Shortlisted entries will be featured in our forthcoming publications and on the IIA Chennai Centre website.

Along with the image (**7.625" x 7.625"**), please send us a Word document with the title and text describing the image (max. 100 words) by **5 pm on Thursday, 15 July 2021** to **[iiaccpublications@gmail.com](mailto:iiaccpublications@gmail.com)**

# A MUSEUM OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

## DIAGRAMMAR

Principal Architect: John Verghese Mathew  
Design team: Katheeja Talha  
Client: Tamil Isai Sangam  
Project Type: Museum Interiors  
Location: Rajah Annamalai Mandram, Esplanade, Chennai  
Area: 3,165 sqft  
Interior Contractor: Innovative Interiors  
Photography Courtesy: Sreenag Pictures

“Thol Isai Kalanjiam” is a museum that houses an eclectic collection of old musical instruments with a primary focus on South Indian folk, temple and classical traditions. Many of these are rare and not commonly seen or played now.

The museum is housed on the upper floor of the Rajah Annamalai Mandram building, itself an architectural landmark of the city of Chennai dating back to 1953. The building houses the Tamil Isai Sangam a trust which runs a music college and the 860 seater auditorium within the same premises. The Sangam and its patrons had accrued a collection of vintage musical instruments across genres and regions, with a strong focus on south Indian traditions. The brief to the architects was to create a gallery that would allow them to share their singular collection to the public in keeping with their aim to promote the continued study and patronage of classical music and Tamil music in particular.



- 1 ENTRANCE
- 2 PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS
- 3 TEMPLE INSTRUMENTS
- 4 ANNOUNCEMENT INSTRUMENTS
- 5 WIND INSTRUMENTS
- 6 HISTORY OF TAMIL IGA SANGAM
- 7 CARNATIC CONCERT INSTRUMENTS
- 8 STRINGED INSTRUMENTS
- 9 KHANDUSTANI, FOLK AND FOREIGN INSTRUMENTS



PLAN

MUSEUM OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS













SECTION

MUSEUM OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS



The design intent was to create a space that put the focus on the collection of musical instruments themselves while creating a cogent spatial experience for the visitor to guide them through the various displays. Stylistically the effort was to create a space in keeping with the mix of traditional and modern elements used in the existing building with a strong acknowledgement to the heritage of the patrons of the institution hailing from the Chettinad region.



The project is housed in three existing halls on the upper floor of the existing auditorium building with minimal civil intervention to the existing space limited to repairs and refurbishment. Creating a narrative journey for the visitor is a key aspect of the design with a primary route established by the introduction of a colonnade of reclaimed Chettinad columns sourced from Karaikudi. The colonnade, as a spatial element reinforces the idea of the procession culminating in a modern re-interpretation of the verandah and thinnai as a place for pause at the furthest end where the largest display is a re-creation of the Carnatic 'kutcheri' stage.

The material palette was restrained to keep the highlight on the instruments on display. The existing terrazzo and red oxide floors were retained and repolished to their former resplendence along with the existing wooden doors and windows. The cases are all made from a combination of polished wood and glass and with two cases using old door frames from Chettinad. Traditional textiles of the region, woven mats and printed imagery form the backdrop to the instrument displays.

The primary challenge was creating a narrative structure as the design concept that would help in configuring the space, grouping the instruments into displays that fit along with this narrative. The other main challenge was in mounting the instruments sensitively to highlight them in their most natural positions. Bespoke mounts had to be custom fabricated in metal for each individual instrument.





# INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH IN ARCHITECTURE

**Ar. PHALGUNI SHINKAR**

Architect

*"Big breakthroughs happen when what is suddenly possible meets what is desperately necessary." - Thomas Friedman*

Pandemic has stimulated thoughts that should be put into steps taken in the wake of striking a balance between surging cases and depleting economy. Anxious about the prospectus one needs to build to get into the field as a practising architect; if we try and look back at the knowledge gained during the course of five years, we find that we are exposed to what we can refer to as attributes of a "building". Right from building material and construction techniques to basic design to technical skills that enable us to perceive them and presumably, knit them with the existing contextual fabric.

Although our knowledge enables us to ideate all that is beyond our imagination but, somewhere we fail at surpassing it into reality. One of the probable reasons is our inability to envisage the shortcomings in the fast-changing world. The digital technology that has percolated in all spheres of life, knowingly or unknowingly we are succumbed to electronically serviced and globally linked world. All our actions in physical space are coupled with that in cyberspace. This is alarming, as architects we need to realize that we are dealing with a world that is so intricate and complex, it necessitates a whole range of discipline. Nonetheless, we are uniquely suited to work with larger interdisciplinary teams. This idea of gathering like-minded people from different disciplines is critical if we want to make efficient design in the diversity of landscapes, we have created for ourselves.



The seed of this cohesive working was planted as a Bauhaus idea where complementary relationships between various artistic fields were welcomed in response to Germany's anxious motivation to reunite creativity and manufacture through rejuvenating design. To elaborate upon this, let us look at an example. Neri Oxman is a designer who works at the confluence of Biology and technology. Oxman's goal is to augment the relationship between built, natural and biological environments by employing design principles inspired and engineered by Nature and implementing them in the invention of novel design technologies. She coined the term - 'Material Ecology' which considers computation, fabrication and the material itself as inseparable dimensions of design. This thought of amalgamating these disciplines to create a radical approach is revolutionary.

This reinforces the fact that it is the need of the hour that we start engaging sufficiently with the strands of digital networks. Apparently, harness them to find solutions for design challenges we face today with a fore glimpse. To expedite the process, it is essential to generate this discourse right from the foundation. These years of teaching and learning will open up avenues and direct towards a design approach that is comprehensive in nature.

Quoting Buckminster Fuller - *"You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."* To device a new system in reverence to the existing pattern we need to adopt the changes and subsequently adapt to it. Profound research and an open mind would be prudent.

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# VINOD RESIDENCE

## MURALI ARCHITECTS

Design Team: Murali Murugan, Seethapathi,  
Deepak Muthukumaran, Sadham Hussain,  
Bharthy, Twinkle Esther, Aruna Angelin  
Client: Mr. Vinod  
Project Type: Residence  
Location: Vinayakapuram, Coimbatore  
Year of Completion: 2020  
Photography Courtesy: Binsan Oomen Baby

This sculpture has been positioned in a residential zone in Coimbatore, with a rustic yet futuristic parametric façade. Privacy being the most vital factor, the façade gets a rustic double skin. Search for newness with composite construction techniques gave way for this. This was a crucial step in coming out of the indigenous way and breaking into novelty.

The façade brings out the dynamic side of the bricks. They unveil its frozen state in a new dimension, parallelly its sturdiness is also set out by its genuine exposed skin. It is not just the façade that speaks out for itself, but also the well-ventilated interiors, where the play of light creates statements in every face of the inner brick walls.

This introverted house cuts down the visual interaction with the outside, but it opens up spaces towards the inside into many pocket courts on various levels and a large central court that brings in a lot of sunlight and lights up the interior. It is a balanced mix of contemporary and traditional architecture, conceiving new values that respond to regionalism and a new future. This house plays with multi-level floors connecting through open courtyards and glass floors, creating space within a space. The massive inclined walls on the entrance welcome the user warmly and boldly.







GROUND FLOOR

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. ENTRY        | 8. OFFICE ROOM  |
| 2. WAITING ROOM | 9. OFFICE ROOM  |
| 3. OFFICE ROOM  | 10. OFFICE ROOM |
| 4. OFFICE ROOM  | 11. OFFICE ROOM |
| 5. OFFICE ROOM  | 12. OFFICE ROOM |



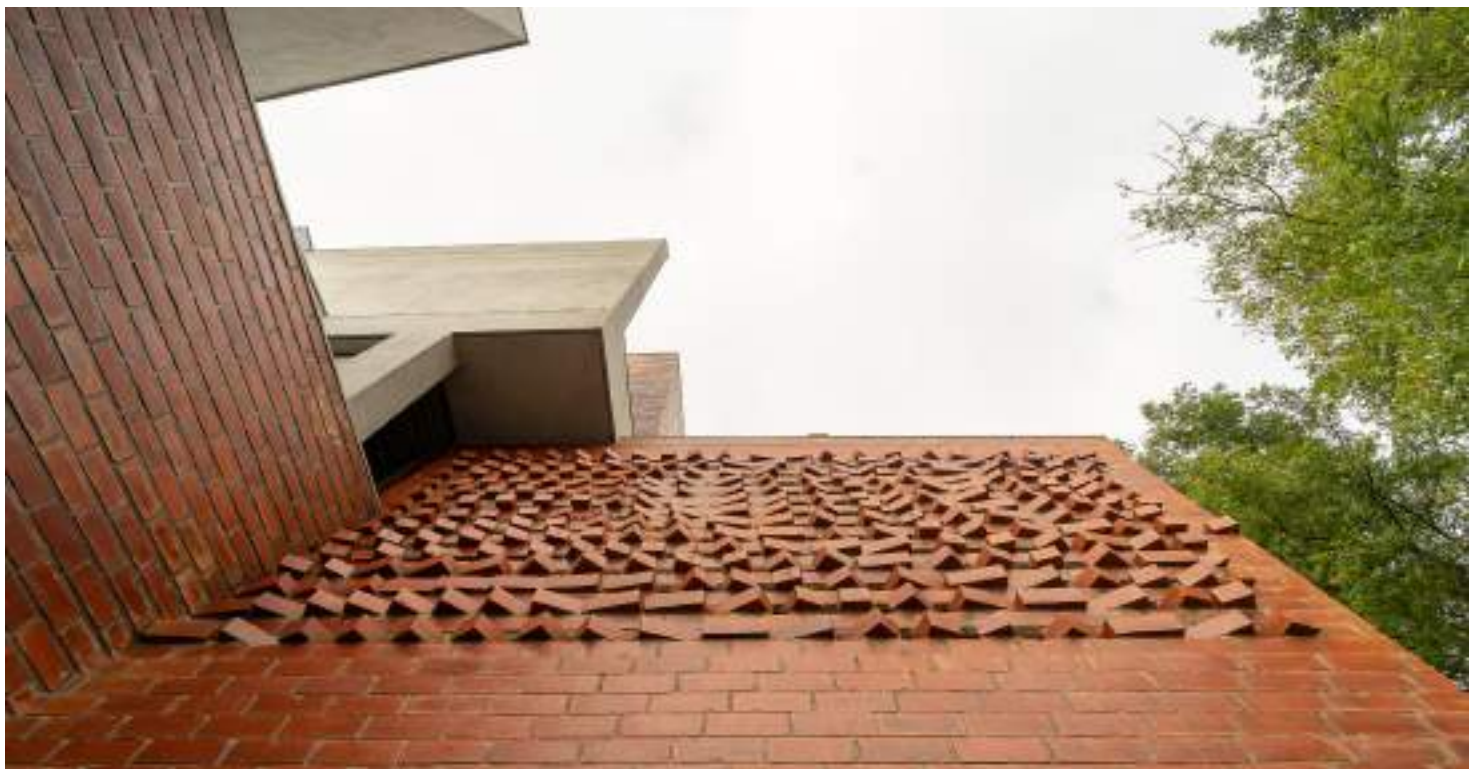
SECOND FLOOR

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. ENTRY        | 8. OFFICE ROOM  |
| 2. WAITING ROOM | 9. OFFICE ROOM  |
| 3. OFFICE ROOM  | 10. OFFICE ROOM |
| 4. OFFICE ROOM  | 11. OFFICE ROOM |
| 5. OFFICE ROOM  | 12. OFFICE ROOM |



THIRD FLOOR

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. ENTRY        | 8. OFFICE ROOM  |
| 2. WAITING ROOM | 9. OFFICE ROOM  |
| 3. OFFICE ROOM  | 10. OFFICE ROOM |
| 4. OFFICE ROOM  | 11. OFFICE ROOM |
| 5. OFFICE ROOM  | 12. OFFICE ROOM |

















On the ground floor, the double-height living room near the entrance is surrounded by green courts on two sides and gives a fresh welcoming feel to the user. Leading to the dining is the central courtyard with puja and levelled inbuilt seating. The dining, kitchen, and gym area open out to a large sky court with a swimming pool, and this court adds a serene beauty and offers a lot of visual interconnections between spaces on various levels.

The mezzanine floor compasses a guest room and a family lounge for them to spend their time together. Apart from this, there is a beautiful and serene reading nook lead from the mid-landing. As it is adorned with greenery and a swing, it makes it the right place to get lost in nature while reading.

The first floor accommodates two bedrooms. One is a master bedroom with a landscaped court and private balcony on either side and the other a daughter's bedroom with an elongated bay window with a featured inclined wall in the bedroom.

And this brick dream house stands up with numerous characters speaking out for themselves and a lot more to unfold in the future!









36  
VINOD'S

DWARAKA







# A TALE OF TWO CITIES: KOTTURPURAM AND KANNAGI NAGAR

**Ar. ZOYAB KADI**, AIIA

Chief Advisor & Master Planner, Triple O Studio

November 2015 was certainly “the worst of times”. At the far end of Kotturpuram’s TNSCB colony, the Adyar river takes a lazy sluggish ninety-degree turn on its last stretch to the sea. It doesn’t flow so much, as drags itself along. It is an apologetic river that doesn’t seem to be following any natural contours but has rather chartered its course by excusing itself around obstacles that come in its way. Over decades its shallow contents have allowed its banks to be bullied; not only forcing it to make adjustments to its wayward course but also to surrender large chunks of its catchments to dense illegal occupation. One such settlement used to be at Kotturpuram. But more on the river later.

Up until the mid-seventies, Kotturpuram was a dead-end location, somewhat like a comet tail of all those glittering academic institutions at the head of its solitary main road. Where it ended abruptly were massive concrete pipes spanning the river, laid for the specific purpose of bringing water to the thirsty city from some distant source. A precarious catwalk attached alongside served as a feeble link to the rest of the city.

On the seaward side of Kotturpuram were a few grand estates and a peaceful Housing Board colony, occupied mostly by staff connected to those various academic institutions. Behind and beyond, where the road couldn’t reach them, were a patchwork of barren fields spiked by countless palmyra trees. There was even a rustic village attached. The other side was in sharp contrast.

Here the road dipped ominously (it still does) by more than a floor height into, what used to be, an unattractive, mosquito-infested swampy land with a jungle of thorny bushes, and a messy cluster of miserable huts. Its occupants were recent rural migrants.

As a student of architecture, with our college at the head of the road, and later with my brother moving into the housing colony, I was quite familiar with the area and had witnessed, first hand, all the changes taking place.

I knew of Chitharao from my college days. He used to be a resident of Kotturpuram. He was a small-time building contractor, who got along more by his genial nature than by any particular skills of his trade. He had moved here during the late sixties as a single migrant teenager; marrying a few years later and setting up a family.

With native wisdom that comes only to the oppressed, a survival instinct had taken him to seek protection from the local slumlord. An uneducated man, he understood the unspoken paradox of urban economics; the existence of a delicate equilibrium between the formal and the informal sectors. The former was far beyond his reach, but the latter could somehow be managed. The slumlords’ diktats were clear and non-bureaucratic. Under his strict tutelage (and terms, of course), whosoever could reclaim a patch of the swamp became entitled to build upon it. Urban governance somehow has a way of balancing itself.

For Chitharao, bagging small contracts in the nearby colony was not too difficult. Commuting by bicycle was not too tiring nor time-consuming. But more importantly, he could tap into the large pool of labour available within his colony to undertake the diverse aspects of a building site. An uncomplaining man, he often used to worry about the precariousness of his location. His annual nightmare were the monsoon rains when the river would sneak in like a thief from one side and a deluge would cascade down from the higher ground on the other side, submerging and destroying his meagre possessions. The sword of Damocles regularly fell on their material wealth. It could only be a matter of time before it started claiming human lives.

Then in the late seventies, a swanky bridge was put in place, ensuring the place was no longer a dead-end. The comet tail had gone. Next, the Government stepped in to replace the shantytown with neatly laid out tenement blocks. With improved connectivity, skyrocketing prices and booming real estate, Chitharao's fortunes rose for a while. And although the entire neighbourhood generally underwent a major facelift, nobody paid much attention both to the river's catchments that had begun to shrink drastically and to the monsoon runoffs that had begun to be channelled through narrow streets. The background for a tragedy was being put in place. All that was needed was for the Adyar river to rise.

And rise it did - devastatingly. Once or twice every decade, Chennai's annual rainfall goes beyond the average. November 2015 was one of those fateful years. Not only were the rains copious, but were uniformly distributed geographically across the city. The runoffs had nowhere to run. And then without sufficient warning, the locks of the city's reservoirs - under the assumption of doing a larger good - were thrown open. The Adyar river, whose capacity to handle such a deluge had long since been whittled away, rose like a furious anaconda, slashing left and right. Like Noah's Biblical floods, the angry waters respected neither channels nor boundaries. Cars, two-wheelers, compound walls, trees and lamp posts were tossed around like toys. While within homes, heavy furniture and appliances began defying gravity and started floating around, losing all their utility value. Within hours, the entire low lying TNSCB tenements just sank under the onslaught by nearly two floors. The tragedy had come to pass.

The horrors of a flood are impossible to imagine or to narrate. What was now making little islands out of the buildings, was not water at all, but a lethal combination of sewage, mud, toxic fluids and a fearful variety of creepy crawlies that are rarely seen on the surface; seeking out every little crack and crevice to relentlessly push in their vile contents. Shelves and cupboards, furniture and fittings, pots and pans, food and eatables, clothes and valuables - everything got covered with an evil slime.

As Chitharao rushed his family onto the already crowded terrace, his building experience terrified him with a single thought - what if the lower floors buckled under pressure and got washed away? But by the collective power of thousands of prayers, such a calamity did not happen. It was another 24 hours before the waters receded, the rains subsided and the sun came out. There was nothing left to salvage from his ground-floor house. Then basic human needs began to bother them - thirst, hunger, change of clothing and above all, money. The only saving grace was there were no invalids or helpless children in his family. He could see what a huge problem it was for those with this additional burden; they just became grounded and immobile.

Then, as time ticked away heavily, and as has happened so often in the past, the citizens of Chennai rose gallantly to the occasion, bolstering the efforts of the army and the police. Rescue, rehabilitation and relief works started on a war footing. A helicopter, rubber dinghies, lifeboats and even earth moving equipment were pressed into service. The entire area was evacuated, depopulated and shifted to schools and temporary shelters on higher ground. Community and soup kitchens were quickly set up. Food packets, water cans, essential medicines and spare clothing began to arrive by tempos, cars and two-wheelers. The ugly side was also exposed as political parties vied with each other to garner all the credit and make capital out of a human tragedy, by stamping relief materials with their party symbols.

Back in the tenements, it would take a week before the squelch, slush and debris could be cleared and the place disinfected. By the time the waters receded after a couple of days, Chitharao and his family had made up their minds. They were not going to take this anymore. With hardly anything in their pockets, the family took the plunge to move out.

So, when the Government stepped in with an offer of voluntary resettlement at Kannagi Nagar, Perumbakkam, off OMR, just a little beyond the IT hub, the family grabbed it with both hands and closed eyes. The timing was just right. On the surface, it looked like a God-sent opportunity. The terms were not too stringent. The only issue was that Chitharao was neither familiar with the area that they were going to move into nor with any of their new neighbours. But they didn't foresee that as a major impediment.

More than four years have elapsed in the new colony. Our professional links have kept us connected. The family have adjusted to a smaller space and the poor quality of their environment. But Chitharao is a troubled man. All his geniality has gone. He finds work hard to come by and to execute what little that he gets. His labour force is non-existent. He is worried about his family all the time. Unlike before, when only the thoughts of flooding gave him nightmares, now he is worried about multiple things.

To find out whether he had jumped from a frying pan into the fire, our social initiative 'Madras Inherited' began probing into his routine and about the locality in general. It became crucial for us to have some background information about the place. The strategy was to interact with school children; because they represented a wider social spectrum; were collectively easier to interact with; and their views could be trusted to be honest, unbiased and uncoloured.

Broadly, the Kannagi Nagar scheme was conceived about two decades ago, based on three objectives. First, to remove all illegal occupants from the banks of the city's waterways and rehabilitate them here. Second, it was meant to resettle coastal families that had been displaced by the 2004 Tsunami. And third, it was meant to decongest and eventually evacuate existing tenement colonies and exploit their enhanced commercial value.

In hindsight, the project had taken off with dud ammunition and a very callous building program. It appeared from the very start that the idea was to 'pack in' as many families as possible. Climatic considerations were ignored and even flouted. The units were so insensitively designed that even a gust of fresh air would be a luxury. The site was a flatbed of a dried-up lake, that sometimes got flooded by the overflow of the Buckingham Canal to its east. The quality of its groundwater was toxic and fit neither for consumption nor for construction. The terrain of clayey soil was unfit for tall structures and would be expensive to re-stratify. The site was poorly connected with the rest of the city and offered scope neither for employment opportunities nearby nor for any gentrification by value addition to neighbouring real estate. Worst of all, it grossly violated the stipulations of CRZ III, which forbade the construction of predominantly residential development in an ecologically sensitive area. So, all in all, the project had nothing positive going for it. But all that is now in the past.

What came up were row upon row of nondescript blocks, and except for the scale, not much different from any of the earlier TNSCB projects. Theoretically, all planning and building parameters had been satisfied. To avoid discrimination and maintain social parity, it was a one-size-fits-all type of project that took no account of the human factor.

Chitharao had soon discovered that nearly all his neighbours hadn't known each other before coming here. They had not only come from different localities and backgrounds but had lived differently and done different things. Most of them had been unable to go back to their old ways and were helpless and didn't know how to start anything new. Their remoteness and disconnect from the city were proving uneconomical. It was like being stranded on an island without resources. A new generation had come up without learning any family skills. Piece by piece the ingredients for the assembly of an explosive bomb had come together on their own.



And who better to paint this picture than the schoolchildren!

Madras Inherited<sup>01</sup> set to work. With the go-ahead from the local school principal, they devised a simple, well-crafted and imaginative exercise and called it 'The eyes of Kannagi Nagar'. The students were asked to elaborate on a mental picture of their locality through text and diagrams. The result that came out forcefully through simple, stick human figure diagrams was, on the one hand, a poignant and macabre scenario of gang wars, drug peddling, murder, rape, arson, theft; events that the children had witnessed. But equally, on the other hand, there were lofty and aspirational themes of kids dreaming of joining the police force, of becoming scientists and sportspersons.

We could now begin to grasp why Chitharao is such a troubled man. But here is something to cheer for. The Government is attempting to empower the people to douse the fire they had jumped into so many years ago. Artists of international repute have been roped in to bring pride and prestige to the area by converting it into an Art District. Ironically, the cost-saving blank walls have come in handy as giant canvases for some inspiring subjects. It is hoped that Kannagi Nagar's economy will see an upswing with the inflow of people and tourists from outside and the disrepute attached to its name will be redeemed.

But Mother Nature had dark plans. As the floods had thundered into Kotturpuram in 2015, Kannagi Nagar offered itself as a victim to a global tragedy, Covid-19, in 2020. All the safeguard measures that the authorities routinely dished out were impossible to fulfil here. It is a cruel irony that having created a ghetto in the first place, they were now asking them to pretend that the tragedy could be warded off by following basic precautions like social distancing, washing hands and seeking fresh air.

But this time there is no higher ground to run to.

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# RAJESH RESIDENCE

**Ar. BALAJI SRINIVASAN**, AIIA  
Architect

Principal Architect: Balaji Srinivasan  
Client: M. Rajesh  
Project Type: Residence  
Area: 1,200 sqft  
Contractor: Mani  
Structural Engineer: Southern Structural Consultants  
Kitchen Consultant: Veneta Cucine  
Photography Courtesy: Balaji Srinivasan, M. Rajesh

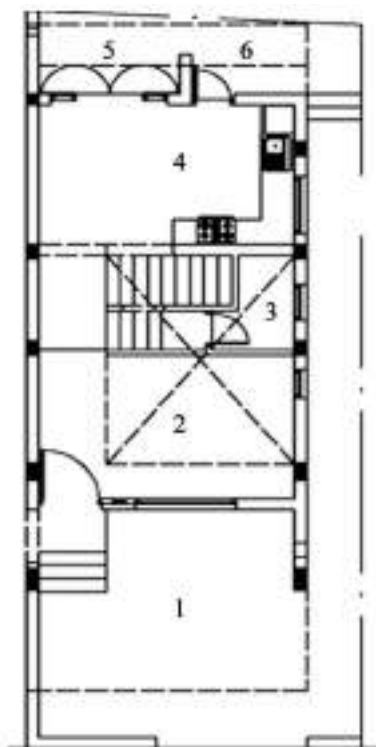
An architectural illustrator wanted to build a house in a small plot of 20 ft x 50 ft to live with his family. The site was constrained to have no openings in the south. However, the eastern (road) side and roof will be the main source of light and ventilation considering the future developments of the community. Having seen the developments happening in the neighbourhood where they have boxed up the entire built-up area without considering ventilation or lighting, the client wanted an open, well-lit and well-ventilated house now.

In order to achieve this,  
the design concept of “*Touch me not*” was evolved.

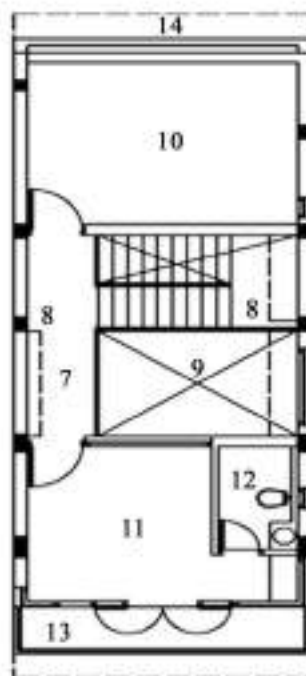
*When horizontal (slab) and vertical (wall) planes touch each other, they create enclosed spaces/volumes. By separating them as free-standing planes by the intervention of openings (light), it allows spaces to weave into each other connecting to the outside thereby creating a sense of continuity throughout the house.*





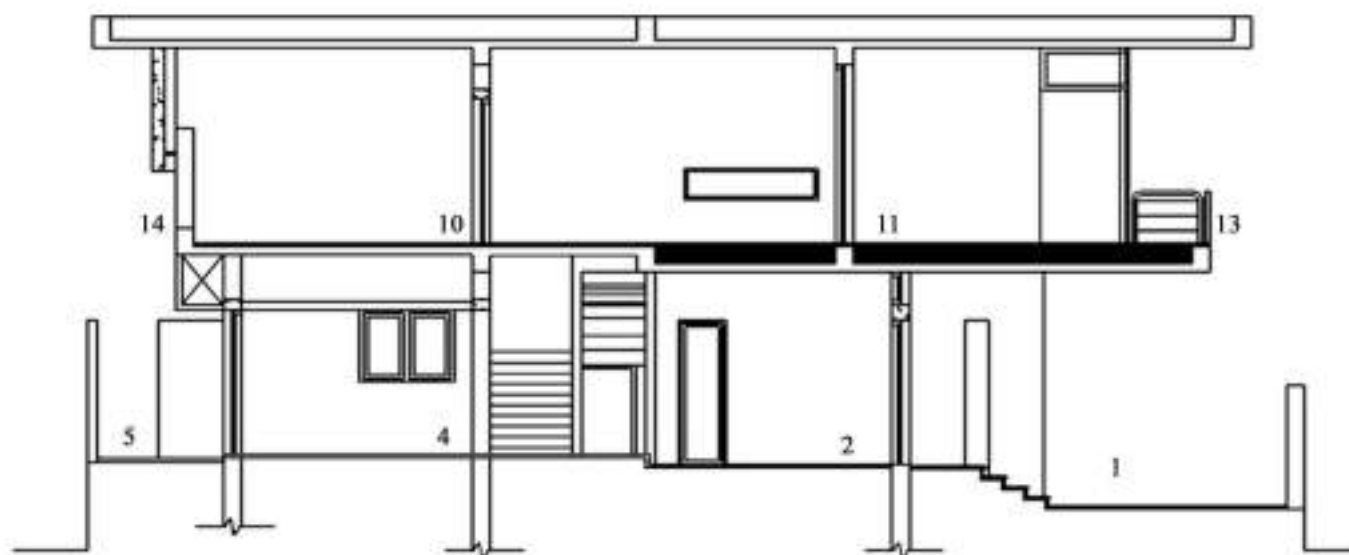


Ground floor plan



First floor plan

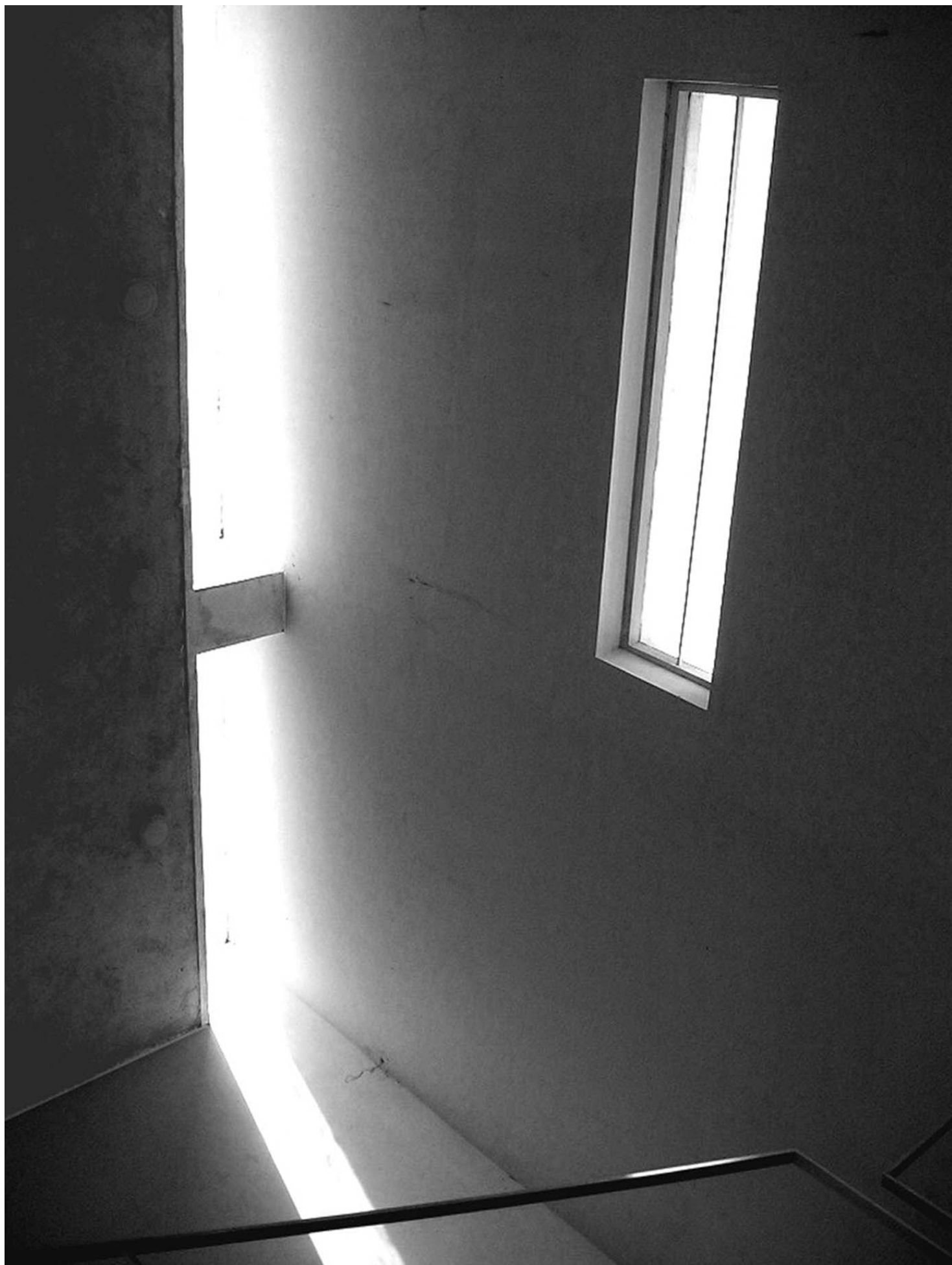
- 1 Porch
- 2 Living
- 3 Powder room
- 4 Dining & Kitchen
- 5 Dining court
- 6 Serviceyard
- 7 Passage
- 8 Roof light
- 9 Living below
- 10 Study
- 11 Bedroom
- 12 Toilet
- 13 Balcony
- 14 West wall detail







Sections were derived as a composition of free-standing planes, openings and windows according to the function of spaces. Details were developed to add to the concept of “touch me not” like free-standing handrails, recessed skirting (wall and floor separated), compound walls as free-standing walls, etc. The interiors are a mix of exposed concrete ceilings, plastered white walls and ceilings, and black kadappa stone flooring with patterns of light from wall and roof openings.



# MINIMUM LIVING STANDARDS FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

**Ar. AKHILA RAMESH**

Architect & Founder CEO, Nivasa

## CONTEXT

COVID-19 has brought into the limelight the abject conditions of migrant workers. Most workers live cheek by jowl, in cramped, damp and dim quarters, sometimes even 20 to a room, with hardly 1.0 sqm per person. The conditions for our metro workers are also, sad to say, abysmal. Even prisons in India allocate 3.71 sqm per sleeping barrack.<sup>01</sup> Psychologists have established that overcrowding leads to uncivilized behaviour, aggression, addictions, mental health and physical health issues. Workers' lack of awareness on sanitation, health and hygiene compound the problem multi-fold.

Article 21 of the Indian Constitution states that no person should be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by the law. The Supreme Court has included the right to shelter as a part of the right to life under Article 21. It has elaborated that the right to shelter must include adequate living space, clean surroundings, sanitation facilities, electricity and civic amenities. It has further held that the right to shelter is not a mere roof over someone's head but it should be a home where the person has opportunities to grow physically, mentally, intellectually and spiritually.

The second-largest economic activity after agriculture, construction in India accounts for nearly 65 per cent of the total investment in infrastructure.<sup>02</sup> One construction labour "camp" serves as a 'home' to migrant workers for a period of a few months to 3 years before they move on to the next labour "camp". The boom in the construction industry in Bangalore

and other cities of Karnataka is sustained by almost 15 lakh migrant workers from distant states like Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.<sup>03</sup>

Construction is the deadliest sector in India, with an average of 38 fatal accidents a day.<sup>04</sup> Migrants from the decimated agricultural sector, escaping from poverty and disease at home are sucked into a labour economy that is characterized by exploitative labour practices, unsafe working environments, and inhuman living conditions with little access to basic amenities and near-complete social exclusion.<sup>05</sup> The situation is alarmingly the same in all the cities. There is ambiguity in what the law states for minimum livable conditions, and even that is ill-followed. The current generic solution of shoddy sheets as walls and roofing does not qualify as a thermally comfortable and sociologically acceptable solution.

The Building and Other Construction workers (BOCW) Act 1996, which is followed by the contractors for migrant workers, states that free temporary housing that shall have separate cooking, bathing, washing and lavatory spaces must be provided for workers by them. It does not specify the kind of materials that are acceptable to be used, thermal comfort, how many workers per room, how much area per worker per room, how much air volume per worker per room, or how much ventilation and natural light.



So far migrant workers have been every city's Invisibles. Covid has accentuated how they have simply not been on the radar of the government or the elite or the common man. Recently, the cabinet has given the nod for Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC) for migrant workers. This is commendable. Still, there is a huge segment of developer-driven projects that provide housing for their workers at the site of construction. Also, there are many development projects like SEZs, IT Campuses and infrastructure happening in the outskirts of major cities. These are projects where staying in ARHCs may not be practically possible for workers, due to their long working hours, and the long travel time and expenses these may entail. The developers and contractors house the workers in land rented out by them, for the duration of such projects.

The real cost/ opportunity cost of the land and availability of suitable land near the workplace are major challenges in the implementation of ARHC. With BOCW constituting the bulk of the migrant workers in urban areas, by enabling dignified housing within the construction site itself or nearby the project site a big group of organised BOCW workers' housing can be taken care of. These can be formalized as a separate model under ARHC vertical as Model 3. This will take the load/ pressure off Model 2 of ARHC too so that it can focus on other sectors of migrant workers.

Currently, these have 250-3000 workers living in temporary quarters that are inhumane and undignified. There is no possibility for physical distancing with rampant overcrowding in cramped, dark quarters. Moreover, there is no proper maintenance of such camps, which lead to short term and long-term health problems in workers.

The living conditions of these workers have been extensively studied by Nivasa, an Architectural NGO based in Bangalore. Nivasa's work in Bangalore has also demonstrated that overall health, productivity and happiness in workers increase due to good housing conditions. Nivasa has arrived at design and process guidelines that can ensure the betterment of shelter and living conditions. These have been derived from their experience as well as the study of similar guidelines mandated by the Governments of Malaysia, Singapore, and UAE, and based on National Building Code, Neufert's data, BOCW Act and Inter-State Migrant Workers' Act (ISMW). The minimum standards for the design of housing and setting up labour camps are meant for policymakers to include the same to make the laws robust. Investors in real estate could also mandate minimum conditions for livability to other stakeholders. The expected outcomes of process manuals and process improvements for new and existing sites for contractors to follow, minimum design standards for setting



up housing communities and arriving at a benchmarking system for rating camps are oriented towards policymakers, investors, project managers, developers and contractors to adhere to in their projects.

There must also be a benchmarking system by which the contractors and developers are rated for providing and maintaining humane and dignified living conditions for the migrant workers.

### THE ASK/ THE REQUEST

1. These guidelines with inputs from relevant teams to be part of all Government of India's own construction projects – Light House Project, Affordable Housing Project, Metro, infrastructure projects (Guidelines will be updated to suit each of these project requirements).
2. Tender documents and contractual agreements with contractors to have a separate section on design, construction and maintenance of living quarters for migrant workers.
3. The guidelines be made a part of BOCW and ISMW Acts.
4. Training of government projects teams with respect to co-creating construction labour communities to be initiated.

This is most urgent, relevant and important.

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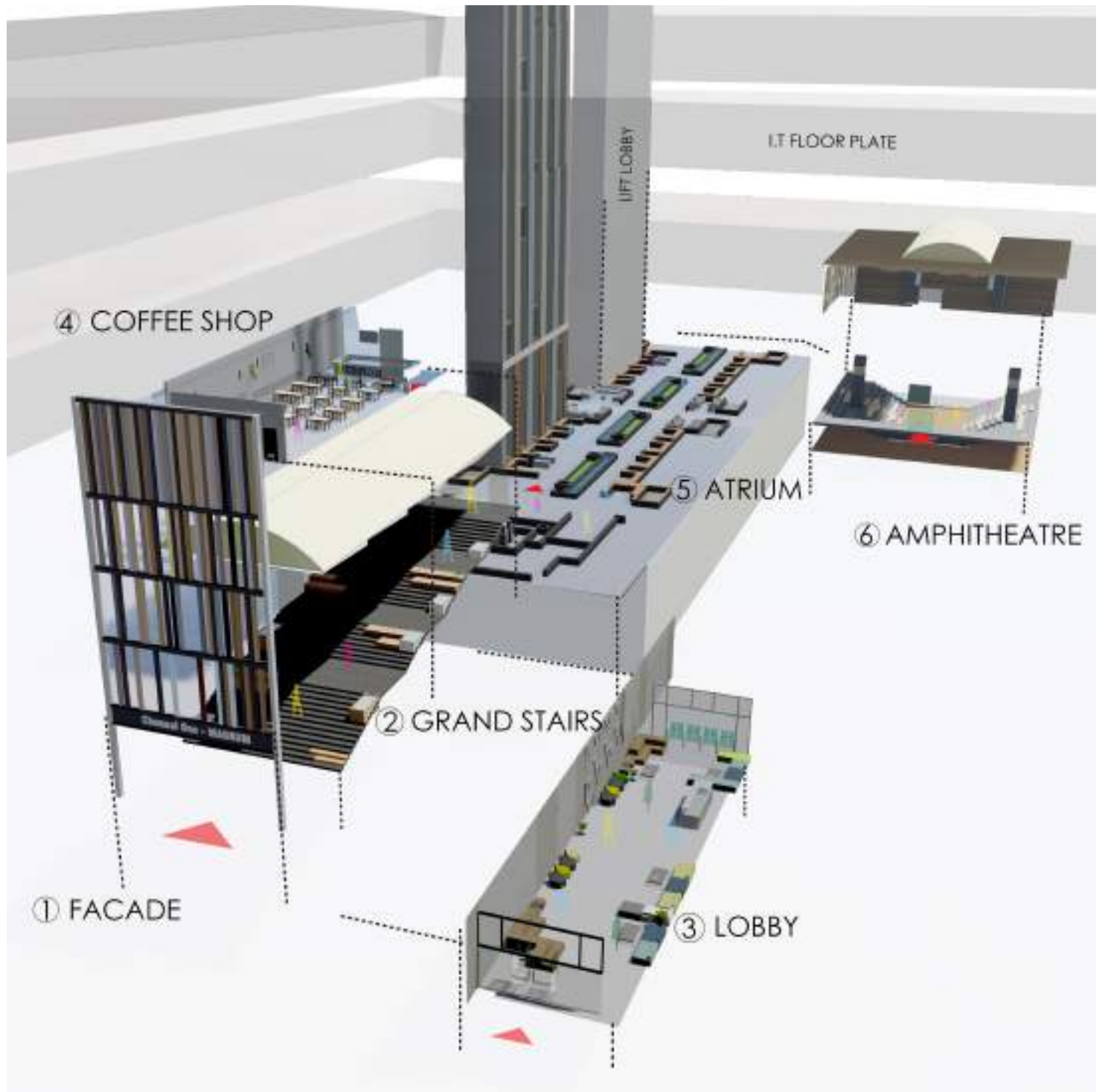
# SPATIAL INSERTS @ CHENNAI ONE

**A+V**

Design Team: V.S. Vigneswar, Swathi Kunimbedu,  
Rukmini Thiagarajan  
Design Assistants: Shunmugam, Meenakshi, Nivedita,  
Jithin, Ganesh, Bharath  
Project Type: I.T. Park Commercial Interiors  
Location: Pallavaram-Thoraipakkam Radial Road, Chennai  
Area: 50,000 sqft  
Photography Courtesy: Binsan Oomen Baby

CHENNAI ONE is a 3.8-million sqft I.T. park located on the Information Technology corridor of Chennai, O.M.R (Old Mahabalipuram Road). It is one of the most successful and sought after I.T. parks in Chennai. A+V was hired directly by the owners of the property to design a series of spatial inserts in the I.T. park to revitalize the user experience of the facility.

The design process started with identifying key nodal spaces which could add maximum VALUE to the 5000+ daily users of the building. These spaces or elements were interface points where the multiple tenants of the building could congregate or have chance encounters. The identity of the building was also determined by these designed elements, which were connected through the design language and material palette. The spatial inserts range in size from a large 500-seater amphitheatre to a cafeteria designed in a residual area under the grand stairs.

















## DESIGN IDEOLOGY

**Façade:** It was the face of the project from outside and had to gel with the expectation of a glass façade for I.T. parks. The installation was designed as a series of aluminium fins of multiple colours which bridged the two glass blocks and also acted as a signal point for the building entrance. It was kept porous and inviting to signify the welcoming aspect of the project.

**Grand Stairs:** The entrance to the atrium was through a large staircase which was designed with tensile roofing to bring natural light. The walls were organised with a series of light elements, wooden panels and artwork. The flooring was distinguished with two different materials to highlight the movement pathway and spaces for people to sit.

**Lobby:** The entrance lobby for each block was on either side of the grand stairs. The lobby was designed with a porous false ceiling in re-cycled MDF strips. Staggering lighting patterns were evolved to give a sense of movement. The walls were treated with custom-designed wooden panels at different levels and a world map in stainless steel.

**Coffee Shop / Café:** A café was designed in the unused residual space below the grand stairs. The theme of the café matched the rest of the design. The décor and design of the café give a relaxing and warm feel with strip wooden ceiling, wicker lamps and custom wooden furniture. The furniture and décor were supplied by Annai Design Studio.

**Atrium:** The main atrium between both the blocks was a very special area. The design integrated water bodies and indoor vegetation to provide seating spaces and a visual highlight to the entire facility. The atrium is the central aspect of the entire project and is visible from all floors. The lifts on either side were clad with reflective elements to expand the feel of the space. Additional natural light floods the space through the tensile roof above and completes the ideal picture of a recreational space for the tired I.T. employee.









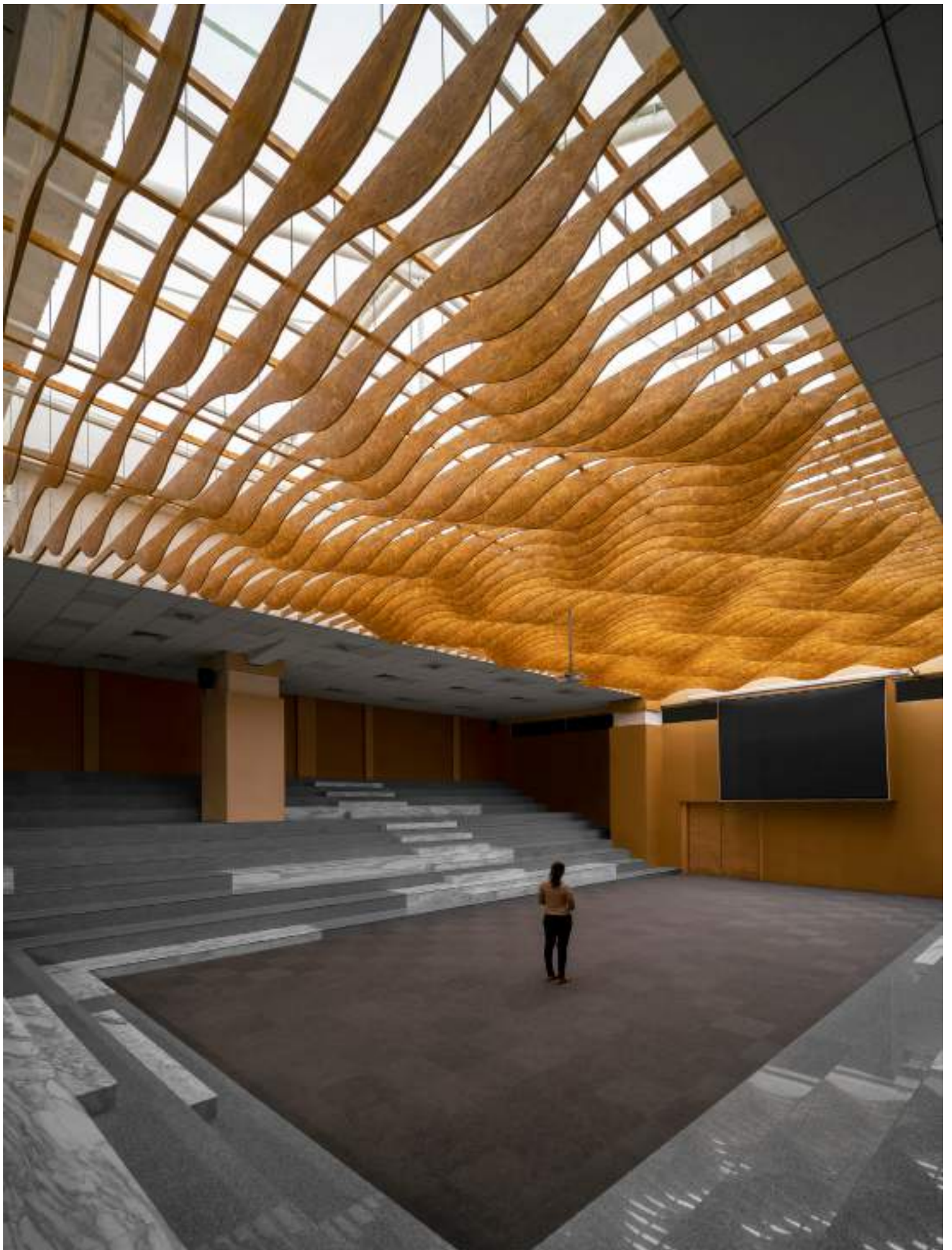


Amphitheatre: An extension of the atrium was designed as a closed amphitheatre. The seating was made in a series of steps with different stone patterns to highlight the movement and seating points. A central skylight was designed with CNC cut MDF baffles which gives a constant illumination to the space throughout the day without glare. The amphitheatre hosts various events for the tenants and also serves as an informal hang-out or congregation space.

## THE SUCCESS

The designed spaces have re-vitalised the entire facility. The users use the spaces not only for transition but also as a place of congregation during and after office hours, to hang out & socialise. The introduction of natural light and indoor vegetation add tremendous value to the project. The entire interior design is entirely sustainable from the choice of materials to the energy usage. It is a low-cost project which has a high impact. This made the client very happy. The user experience of the facility and the marketing of the new blocks have been significantly enhanced due to the designed spatial inserts. The design has created a place of happiness amongst several constraints, which were turned into opportunities to add value to the lives of several people.







# TEACH – LEARN – UNLEARN – ARCHITECTURE

## Ar. S. DEEPALAKSHMI

Associate Professor, Sathyabama Institute of Science & Technology - Chennai

*With the everlasting relationship between Art and Architecture...  
With the exemplary work by various Architects...  
With the awe and astonishment Architecture has created in  
and around the world for centuries...*

Researchers are curious and are always in an interrogative mode with sufficient research questions and opportunities concerned with different architectural styles, architectural practices, and design pedagogy. Architectural education is equally in the spotlight seizing many research scholars' attention. In recent years with the increase in the number of architecture schools and students joining this course, 'Teaching' architecture, becomes a challenge. On the other hand, the hardship faced by students is altogether a different experience with the new architecture language which they come across.

Architecture in India is practised for centuries whereas formal, structured Architectural education started with the first school Sir JJ School of Architecture in Mumbai. Though governing bodies like the Council of Architecture, AICTE (All Indian Council for Technical Education) framed curriculum and guidelines for teaching architecture, learning architecture has always remained with multiple choices and without any boundaries. It was more of explorative and experiential learning which made this field interesting and innovative.

Deliberating the technical side of architectural practice and curriculum on a lighter note, the spotlight moves on to the main picture of this article, Teacher and the pedagogy, in architectural teaching and learning. Many students enter this

stream of education without any experience or idea about this field. Many have a vague idea or don't have an idea of what to do after completing this course. In this scenario, it becomes the responsibility of a good 'mentor' to be motivating and encouraging to take up architecture either as a passion or as a profession. They should be supportive to the student who enters this course with many dreams after his senior secondary, without any clue about the subjects. At this stage, his early semesters become very crucial. Though every semester has its demands the lower semesters especially I – IV semesters are challenging as well as critical. It can encourage or discourage a student and his interest and his performance in the upcoming semesters and future ventures.

With many schools of architecture coming up nationally and internationally, teaching pedagogy plays a vital role. Experienced MENTORS on one hand and bubbling young TUTORS on the other, 'teaching' architecture gets a new dimension which can be rephrased as 'learning' architecture together. In today's context, the word 'teaching' has lost its sanctity and 'MENTOR' is a tough position to attain in the school of architecture among the students. Though decades move on 'methodology changes' – there are certain practices that remain 'constant'. The synonym of the word constant by itself is so unique and rigid it remained for years together so firm, so strong.



Using visual medium for teaching architecture subjects has always held a unique place in Architecture schools.

For example,

- Sketches on OHP sheets projected on the white walls
- Manual sketches using colour and white chalks by our staff on black / green boards
- Travel photographs by our staff members
- PowerPoint presentation with images taken from the internet
- Short films and movies

Irrespective of the subject handled by different staff members, many examples quoted were from movies.

CINEMA played an important role and acted as an important medium to convey various ideas and theories of Architectural subjects. Response from students for the same was always positive. Cinema has always been one of the interesting mediums to teach any architectural subject be it History, Architectural principles, Conservation, Construction Techniques / Design Studio or Site analysis and landscape, etc. When basics and underlying concepts are taught to them on a lighter note, in a simpler manner, a deep understanding or capacity of questioning or thinking is kindled within them. Further strengthening the quality in the higher semester will happen on its own. Beyond entertainment in this digital era movies and other digital medium has become an important tool/medium for education as well.

Design thinking in Architectural education is an integrated platform where creativity and rationality need to be blended holistically. This could be done simply with 'MOVIES' as a visual medium. Using this as basic tool students' creative skills can later be developed and enhanced through various exercises which enhance their imagination.

On a concluding note, I would like to end up with the following quote written by year 8 pupils.<sup>01</sup> Irrespective of whether it's teaching higher secondary kids or college students, appreciation and gratitude are the biggest source of inspiration for any teacher at any point in their lifetime. Dedicated to all the GOOD and GREAT teachers who have tried and continuously trying to give their best.

---

#### **A GOOD TEACHER**

Descriptions by Year 8 pupils

is kind  
 is generous  
 listens to you  
 encourages you  
 has faith in you  
 keeps confidences  
 likes teaching children  
 likes teaching their subject  
 takes time to explain things  
 helps you when you're stuck  
 tells you how you are doing  
 allows you to have your say  
 doesn't give up on you  
 cares for your opinion  
 makes you feel clever  
 treats people equally  
 stands up for you  
 makes allowances  
 tells the truth  
 is forgiving.

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#### **REFERENCES**

*01. Research into Teacher Effectiveness - A Model of Teacher Effectiveness - Hay McBer, a research report by DFEE published in June 2000.*

# ANAND RESIDENCE

## STUDIO D CUBED

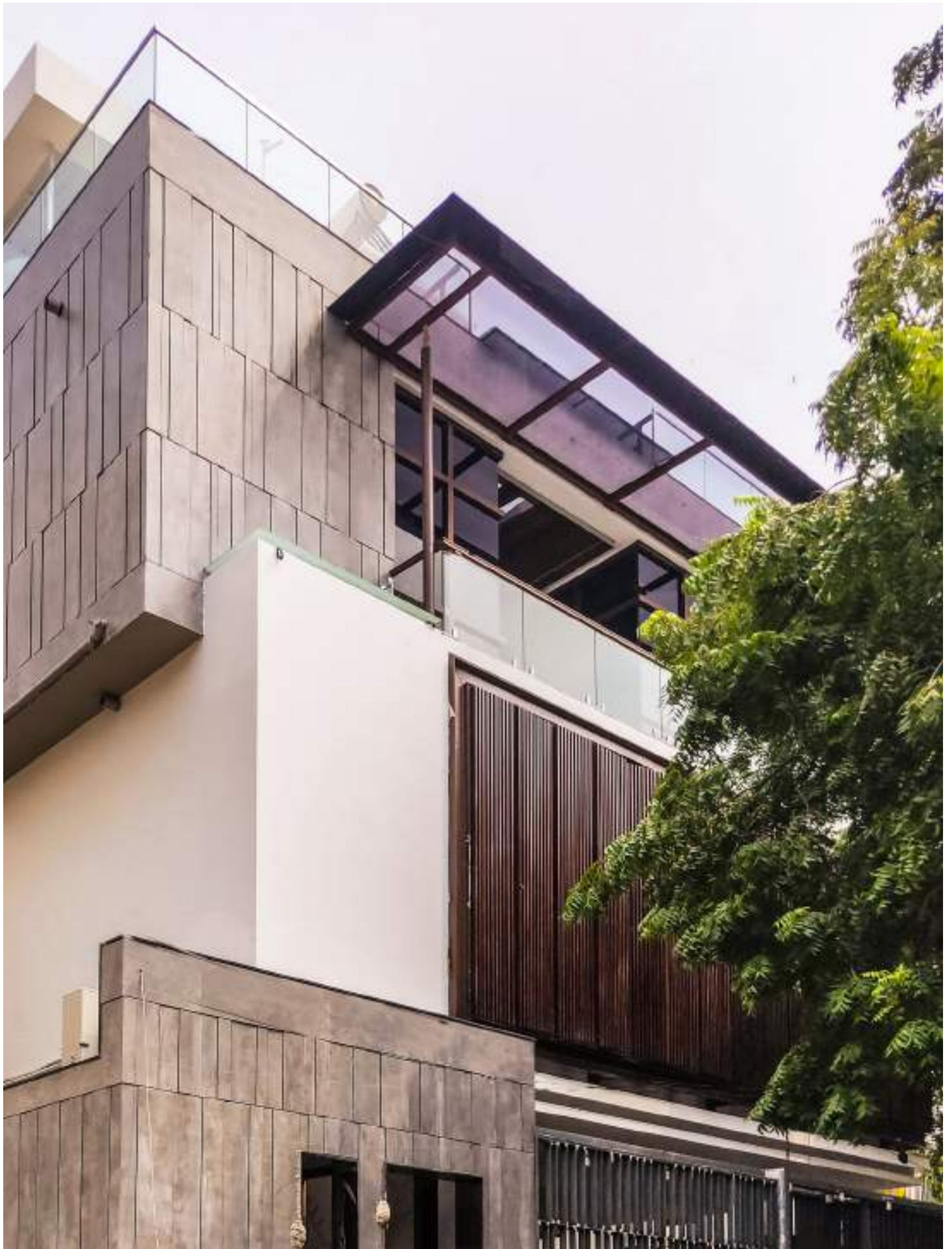
Design Team: Arvind Ram, Jude Rajith, Nivetha S.,  
Adithya Ramesh, Pavithraa Guna, Mohan Raj  
Project Type: Residence  
Location: Anna Nagar, T-Block, Chennai  
Area: 5,000 sqft  
Year of Completion: 2019

The Anand residence is built on a plot measuring 80 ft x 48 ft, boxed in by residential buildings on all sides. The brief was to design a residence for a nuclear family of five. Starting from a clean slate with a little specific requirement, the design process began with a basic block and progressed into a stacked residential structure inspired by verticality.

### SPACES

The ground floor consists of common spaces such as the car park, formal living, dining, kitchen, a guest bedroom, maid's living and all other services. The double-height formal living and courtyard bring in ample daylighting. As one of the site constraints is adjacent residences surrounding the site, cut-outs in the plan create spaces for courtyards and double-height spaces with skylights.







The first floor houses private and semi-private spaces such as informal living, two bedrooms, the main kitchen and dining. The informal living and dining areas are sky-lit and the double-height space from the ground floor provides visual connectivity with the floor below. A walkway bridge connects the informal living with the dining area.

The second floor has a bedroom and recreational spaces such as a gym, swimming pool deck and barbeque space. The double-height space from the first floor visually connects this floor with the family room and dining space below. A walkway bridge connects all the spaces.





GROUND FLOOR PLAN

1. Entrance  
2. Reception  
3. Waiting Area  
4. Examination Room  
5. Treatment Room  
6. Storage Room  
7. Restroom  
8. Office  
9. Conference Room  
10. Kitchen  
11. Bathroom  
12. Parking



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

1. Entrance  
2. Reception  
3. Waiting Area  
4. Examination Room  
5. Treatment Room  
6. Storage Room  
7. Restroom  
8. Office  
9. Conference Room  
10. Kitchen  
11. Bathroom  
12. Parking

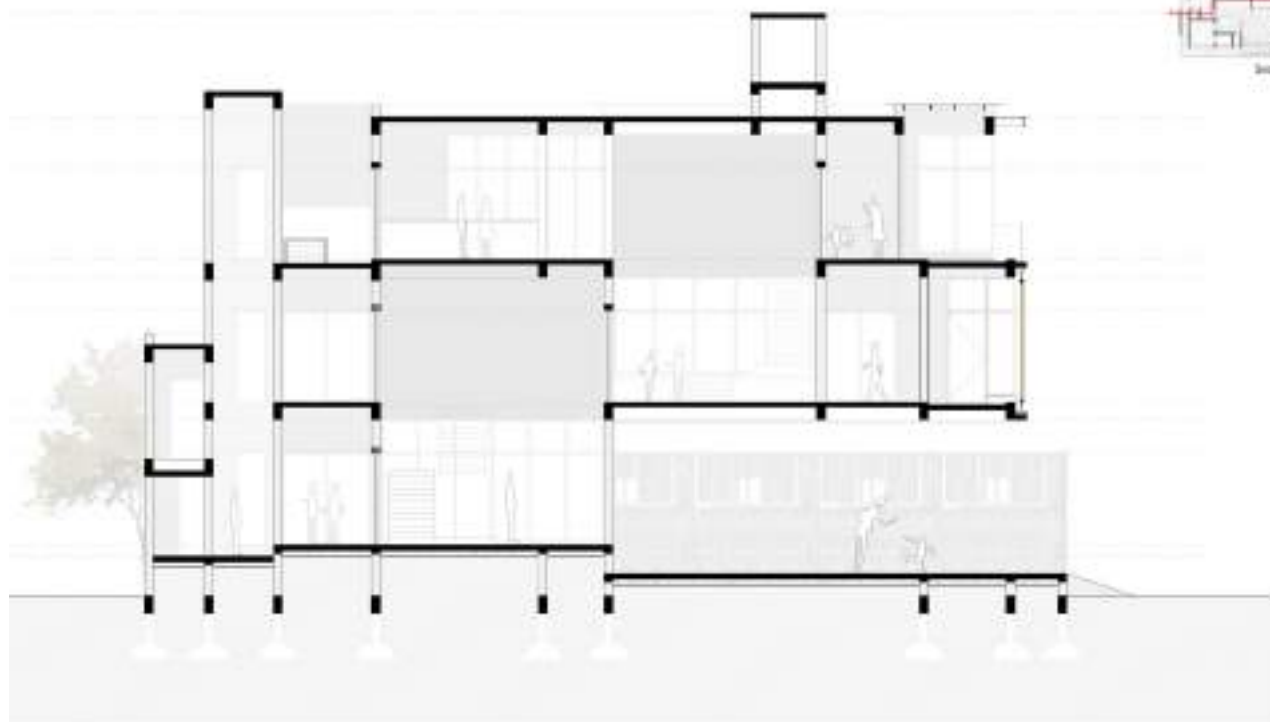


SECOND FLOOR PLAN

1. Entrance  
2. Reception  
3. Waiting Area  
4. Examination Room  
5. Treatment Room  
6. Storage Room  
7. Restroom  
8. Office  
9. Conference Room  
10. Kitchen  
11. Bathroom  
12. Parking



SECTION - AA







## MASSING

The design process began with a basic block. Spaces were created by the pushing/pulling of the basic block on each floor. Volumes were cut out from the basic block to create double-height spaces and a courtyard to provide ample daylighting and openness to the spaces within. This resulted in each floor not being isolated from the other. Play of volumes through cut-out spaces and walkway bridges enhance visual connectivity and easy circulation.





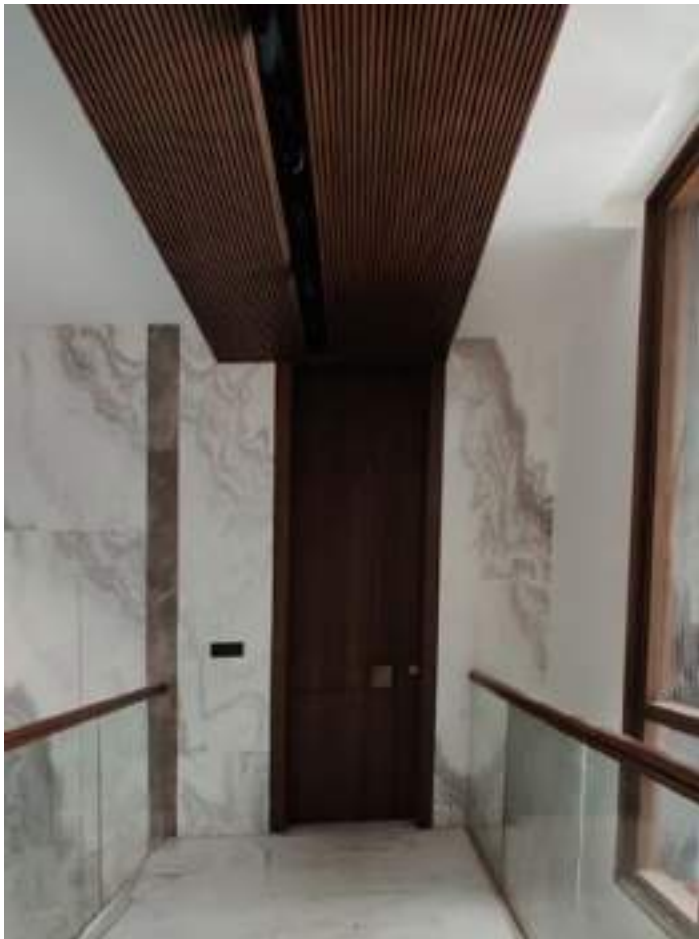




## INTERIORS

Taking note of the client's wish, the interior colour scheme of each room was different. A white scheme for the master bedroom, a dusky pink scheme for the daughter's bedroom, the son's bedroom in blue and the other master bedroom had a tan scheme. The materials used were predominantly, teak wood, white and grey marble, antique brass finish metalwork, which ranged from lighting to furniture.





# RE-THINKING URBAN HOUSING

**Ar. PRAMOD BALAKRISHNAN**, AIIA

Principal Architect, Edifice

When I look around and see the language of urban housing, bhk apartments as they are more commonly called, I feel depressed and rue the opportunities that have been lost.

Beehive blocks rising in monotony with no relation to the other except it rises from the same earth it shares. Some of the insides are similar to many such hives it's just the skin that attempts to have gone to a beauty parlour.

Do people live here or are they housed here as warehouses do for so many other products?

Have we reduced the human to a product that is devoid of emotion, relationships and desires beyond being housed?

Did we not lose so much that was so part of a community that respected each other, shared spaces and offered so much as a built and unbuilt fabric that allowed so much to continue to grow and change as a collective.

We need to review this absolute block printing across the city with the skin being more important than what it holds. Be it public or private housing the intangible requirements of the dweller gets scant respect.

The battle now is to give more than 100 amenities in a development. The unsuspecting resident is not aware of the financial burden of maintaining these over time.

How many benefit from it. Does it help in creating communities of residents?

Well, this though addresses the market at the high-end level much less said about over 90% that we don't cater to but require so much that we along with other professionals and administrators can improve both their living and the city fabric. It's time we as architects looked at building environments that sustain human bonding and create new communities and give more credence to spaces that allow and nurture this.

Everyone needs to find a way to stop looking at the building as an object but as a living, nurturing, dynamic and owned collective space. Architects are not service providers or problem solvers or product designers but we are a part of a team that creates the canvas that keeps human values and the culture of living, a trellis to grow on.

Give this a thought when the pencil meets the paper or the mouse wriggles its tail. Before one embarks on the next project.







# VANAM SCHOOL

## TRIPLE O STUDIO

Design Team: Anupriya Subbian, Tahaer Zoyab,  
Kevin Sheldon, Aishwarya G.

Client: Dr N. Mahalingam - Sakthi Group

Project Type: Institution

Location: Thoraipakkam, Chennai

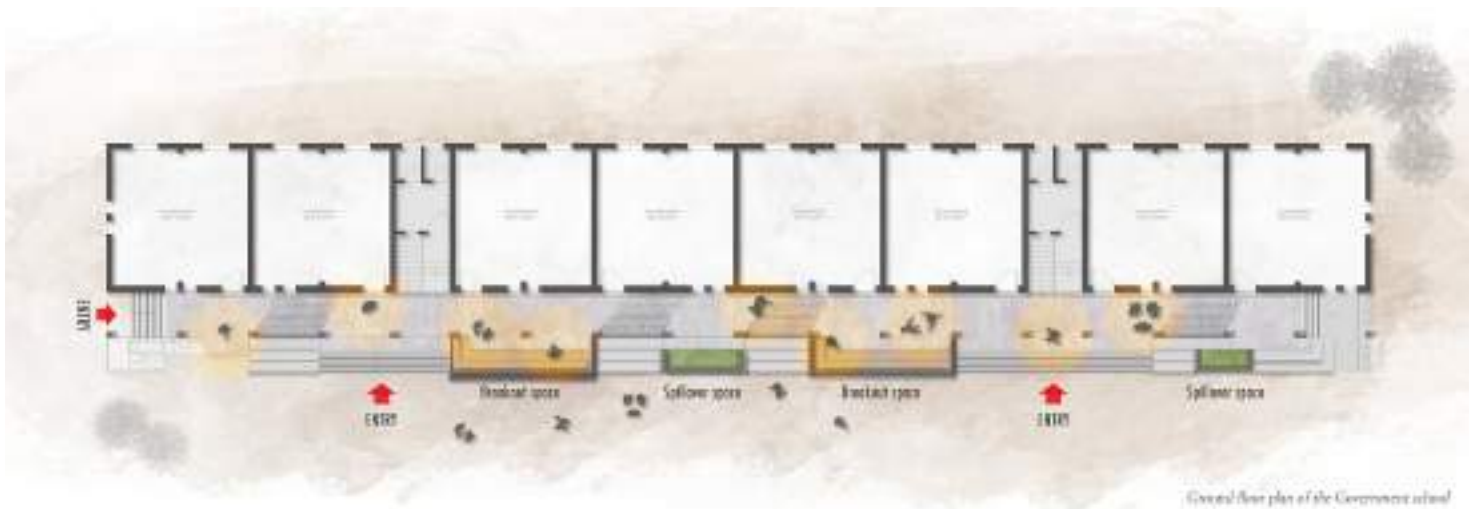
Area: 11,000 sqft

Structural Engineer: Keerthi Foundation

Photography Courtesy: Triple O Pixel

Vanam (tamil, noun: forest of abundance), a government school in Thoraipakkam, Chennai stands tall against a background of stark contrasts, negotiating the aspirations of a primary school with the disparities of site reality. Located adjacent to the dilapidated old yellow primary school, the new school was sculpted into its present form from a pre-existing site plan for which the plinth had already been created. The main focus was to break through the rigidity of the existing plan, to create vibrant spaces of learning, being, and playing for the children.

The architecture of the building is celebrated in the many opportunities that it creates along the sectional plane. The regimental layout of a linear school is broken into small pockets of activity that feed into each other. Each space functions in independent unity with the next space on one side while at the same time exploring its unique relationship with the site context on the other side. There is a conscious effort in ensuring that the building embraces its immediate surroundings. The aim is to induce a sense of porosity between the structure and the context with built surfaces where kids can stand, walk, climb and run.















The first step towards designing energizing spaces was getting the basics in place. Terracotta Jalis were planned throughout as a cost-effective way of bringing in daylight, shadow patterns and ample cross ventilation inside. In between the Jalis, clear openings were introduced on the ground level and simple grilled openings were assembled on the first-floor level to bring a sense of lightness to the structure. Steel windows that had to be used as per fire safety codes were painted in colours to give kids from different sections a sense of attachment and ownership.

Throughout the structure, the design attempts to humanize scale, with kids at the centre of all planning. The modular classrooms which house many students together were modelled to have higher ceilings along with terracotta ventilators. The long connecting corridor which is the primary space of indoor play was brought to a 7' height to closely respond to the height of the children. At the front of the building, the plinth is pulled out as an invitation to make steps that lead up to the school, to create break spaces where children enjoy lunch and to make room for their little games and extracurricular activities.

Schools are built out of more than brick and mortar. They represent stories, amplify voices and create memories. The design for Thoraipakkam School attempts to celebrate building over the building by making spaces that capture energy to show intention. It is an effort to make strides towards levelling the playing field of building government schools- regardless of budget, site constraints, and social perceptions of what a government school is and deserves. It is an opportunity to step out of the planning plane and into a playing plane, to open doors to show possibility.

















# THIRD MASTER PLAN FOR THE CHENNAI METROPOLITAN AREA

Collated & Authored by

**Ar. KURIAN GEORGE VATTAKUNNEL**, FIIA

We thank the following Architects/Members of IIA, for participating in the various discussions on the subject.

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*Ar. Vergis Oomen, FIIA*  
*Ar. Tara Murali, FIIA*  
*Ar. Sheila Sri Prakash, FIIA*  
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*Ar. Babu Venkatesan, AIIA*  
*Ar. Pramod Balakrishnan, AIIA*  
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*Ar. Anusha Thati, AIIA*  
*Ar. Vasudevan T.J., FIIA*  
*Ar. Harish Raman, AIIA*  
*Ar. Arun Raja Mohan, AIIA*  
*Ar. Suresh Babu Karupannan, AIIA*  
*Ar. Senthil Mani, AIIA*  
*Ar. Mani Valluvan, AIIA*  
*Ar. Nitesh Khatod,*  
*Ar. Shilesh Hariharan, AIIA*  
*Ar. Sathya Shankar, AIIA*  
*and the rest of the EC of IIACC*



The CMDA has commenced preparatory studies for preparing the 3rd Master Plan for the Chennai Metropolitan Area covering all sectors of urban development. The World Bank under Tamil Nadu Housing and Habitat Development Project (TNHHDP) is funding some of the preparatory studies for the 3rd Master Plan. **'Assessment of Master Planning Process and Capacity for Chennai Metropolitan Area'** is one such study that is awarded to M/s. Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP, Chennai.

As part of the study, the technical team of the consultant M/s. Deloitte, had approached IIA Chennai Centre for a discussion on participation in the Master Planning process, capacity building and drawing of proposals.

The Indian Institute of Architects Chennai Centre sees the Third Master Plan as an opportunity to reconceive Chennai not only as an extremely livable city but as a Metropolis that is revitalised, alive and sustainable by planning. IIACC has expressed that it is very keen to be actively involved by providing assistance in the preparation of the Third Master Plan for the Chennai Metropolitan Area in all stages, including ideation and formulation of draft-TMP, analysing and providing feedback during draft revision stages, and also in implementation monitoring.

Further to discussions amongst the Members, IIACC presented its collated ideas concerning the subject matter in an Online Meeting.

It was also the Centre's observation that the vision and intent of the preceding Master Plans were quite different from its operative content. It should be the focus of the Third Master Plan that its vision and intent should find successful addressal in the operative content and further success in effective implementation and monitoring.

We share here a brief on the observations given as a response to the invitation from Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP and as requested by Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, which we think will be pertinent for consideration as we approach the Third Master Plan.

## **1. LEGAL & REGULATORY FRAMEWORK GOVERNING MASTER-PLANNING**

Necessary Legal, Policy and Regulatory frameworks should be put in place to "allow for" rather than "restrict" potent, pragmatic and implementable plans with strong vision intent and operative content. Further, supportive frameworks which will allow for more appropriate implementation, monitoring and analysis with appropriate checks and balances should be put in place.

### **a. Land Classification**

It is our contention that a new system of Land Classification is required.

i. Presently land use classification is done by CMDA as well as by the Revenue department.

ii. Land Use Classification followed by the CMDA is different from that followed by the Revenue Department.

iii. The Revenue Department follows land classifications dated from 1895.

iv. The Land use classification followed by the CMDA finds its origins in the Town and Country Planning Act.

v. The land use and ownership categories which comprise the classification followed by the Revenue Department clash with the classification followed by CMDA rendering the processes of approvals for development with confusion and delays.

vi. Land classification especially within the CMA should be reclassified under one system.

vii. The Chennai Metropolitan Area must be analysed and influence zones delineated for Water bodies, ecologically sensitive zones, environmentally sensitive zones, geographically significant zones, forest zones etc in the Land-Use-Masterplan. Revival of such zones should be ideated on an incentivized basis. These should include river cleaning and environmentally sensitive edge development in all these zones. Sensitising citizens should be the prime concern along with revival since it is only with the participation of the citizens that any initiative can be truly sustainable.

viii. The idea of a clean city must be prioritised. Litter, Garbage and Sewage management should be reimagined with a strong vision and operative content. Such a plan must be powerfully implemented and monitored meticulously.

ix. Existing Zones of Urban, Industrial, Agricultural usage must be identified and analysed for revitalisation and connectivity.

x. Urban Zones could be reimagined as mixed-use zones. It is a well-discussed principle globally that Mixed-Use Developments promote better Neighbourhoods. This principle should be discussed and analysed at length and in-depth. The Land Use Zones envisioned in the Tamil Nadu Town & Country Planning Act provides for Mixed Residential





Use Zones along with Primary Residential Use, Commercial Use, Light Industrial, Open space & Recreational use, and other use zones. The National Building code also envisages Mixed-use in addition to various other usages in its Land Use Classification. A study of the preceding master plans will reveal an already increased emphasis on Mixed-Use. It is our opinion that Mixed-Use Developments must be further promoted in the Third Master Plan for Chennai. We are also of the opinion that the usages included in the Mixed Residential use should be broadened to include residential, commercial (offices and retail), light industrial (low decibel, non-polluting, non-disturbing), open space & recreational use etc.

xi. Existing Urban Zones of Special Character including Historical, social, cultural, architectural etc. must be analysed for preservation, conservation and revitalisation. The fact that Chennai does not suffer from a dearth of land resources makes it possible to preserve, conserve and revitalise such existing Urban Zones of Special Character.

xii. Existing Urban Zones of less Special Character must be analysed for revitalisation along the lines of the vision for the Third Master Plan.

xiii. New Urban use Zones for further growth of the city must be identified and developed keeping extrapolated future requirements in mind.

xiv. Industrial & Agricultural Zones should be carefully planned based on appropriate parameters.

## **b. Land Ownership Records**

Land Ownership Records must be actively regularised and updated in the Revenue & Master Plan.

i. Presently, the revenue department records purchase and sales of property but CMDA has opinions and processes by which all land registered as purchased cannot be developed.

ii. Normally Land that cannot be developed will not have as much fiscal value as land on which development can be done. However, this is not the case presently.

iii. The presently available zoning maps are not really usable and lack land usage, ownership type and other necessary information about specific plots.

iv. In fact, it would be of great advantage to the citizen should accurate and reliable data be easily accessible regarding land.

## **c. Master Plan Rules**

The Tamil Nadu Town & Country Planning Act presently prescribes rules for processes to be adopted while preparing the Master Plan. These rules may need to be reinterpreted or modified to allow for more collaborative processes.

## **d. Equity in the revitalisation of the Metropolis**

A revitalised city that is sustainable by planning will not only be an extremely livable city but a Metropolis that is alive. Landowners whose land may need to be acquired to achieve this revitalised and sustainable city should be compensated to a higher extent than the actual value of their land to compassionately ensure their ready acquiescence.

## **2. POLICIES OF CMDA & POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PROCESS OF PREPARATION OF MASTER PLAN**

a. We believe that the City of Chennai will greatly benefit from a plan that is environmentally, socially and economically equitable in intent, vision, as well as operative content. To achieve this a scientific as well as more inclusive and participatory process of making the Master Plan must be adopted at all stages including ideation, formulation of draft-TMP, analysing, finalisation and implementation. It is also important to ensure that sufficient time periods are provided for each stage of the process. Such a process which will include Collaborative-Workshops will surely lead to the realisation of a city that genuinely has a great quality of life.

b. We are further of the opinion that Master Planning for Chennai should be approached as a Multi-Tier process. While it is important to approach Planning at the Metropolis (macro) level, it is equally important to approach Planning at the Neighbourhood (micro) level. Whereas all aspects of any Masterplan will need to be addressed at the city level, the requirements of various neighbourhoods are different and planning must demonstrate this sensitivity. One size cannot fit all. Regulations governing development must be addressed at neighbourhood levels and must in turn inform the city level strategies and plans. Existing Urban Neighbourhoods with special character, Existing Urban Neighbourhoods with less special character, Urban Neighbourhoods that are ecologically/ environmentally sensitive, New neighbourhoods etc need to be addressed specifically with respect to planning and Development Regulations. Preservation, Conservation and new development could be driven with appropriate overall sensitivity besides fiscal sensitivity which is also important.

c. Planning of Transportation is of paramount importance since without a perfectly planned and implemented transportation system, an inordinately long commuting time would destroy all that the other efforts of the Master Plan intend to achieve. Commuting at the city and intercity levels need to be addressed at the macro levels ensuring that various parts of the entire city are efficiently and conveniently connected internally to each other and externally to other cities ensuring speed, efficiency and convenience for all modes of transport. It is simultaneously, and perhaps more significantly, important that the last mile connectivity is successfully addressed at the micro-levels including shaded and safe pedestrian paths other than adequate and undeniably convenient public transport systems for connecting the last mile. The entire public transport system should work on a singular ticketing platform so that one ticket would allow seamless travel between all forms of transport for commuters from origin door to destination door ensuring that the short distances in between are pleasurable to walk given safe and shaded pedestrian paths.

d. Rethinking the Process

i. Open invitation could be extended to various technical and professional bodies including IIACC, IIATN, ITPI, etc. besides the citizens to indicate interest to participate in the preparation of the TMP.

ii. Relevant sets of matrices could be scientifically prepared to address the multifarious conditions that, generally and particularly, would require to be understood at the outset of the preparation of the TMP. These matrices could be made available publicly and suggestions invited.

iii. Data collection could be carried out to correctly and comprehensively understand those finalised matrices.

iv. Changes implemented in the preceding masterplans could be scientifically evaluated and analysed including changes implemented in Metro Rail routes and the related development regulations and other major implementations.

v. Collated Data and Analysis Reports could be made available publicly to interested participants.

vi. Inputs could be invited from interested participants on various aspects of the TMP. Concerned departments of the Government together with delegations from various interested parties could develop a cogent and comprehensive vision of the city in terms of TMP.

vii. The draft vision of the city, represented as a realisation of the TMP could be prepared and made available to experts as well as the citizens of Chennai in a comprehensible and clear manner. This would include drawings, images, physical models, Digital representations, Virtual Reality representations of the city as realised as an outcome of the TMP. Response forms inviting objective as well as subjective responses could be made available.

viii. Objective, as well as subjective responses from the Citizens, could be digitally analysed and collated. The collated responses could then be studied and addressed transparently.

ix. The Third Master Plan, thus collaboratively and scientifically developed, could be the best possible Plan for Chennai. It would also be truly representative of the aspirations of and for Chennai in being drawn from the combined expertise, knowledge, and wisdom of the Government, Professionals, Experts and Citizens.

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING OF PLAN POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

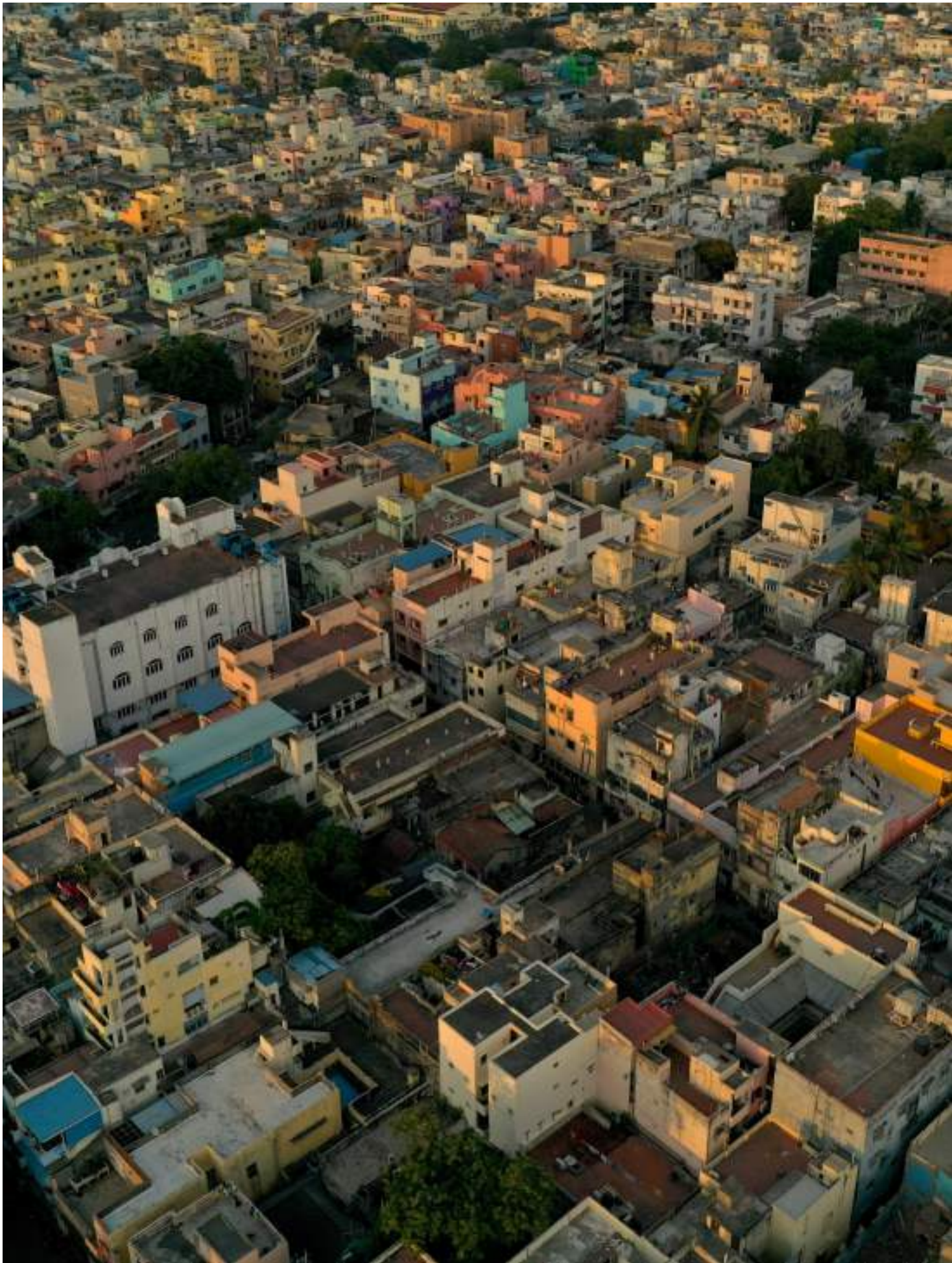
a. Vision intent, operative content, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and modification are aspects of Planning that have to be contemplated together at the time of ideation and formulation of Plan Policies and Strategies. However, as it has been evidenced while the vision intent has appeared eloquent the rest of the aspects have been found wanting.

b. The process of planning has to be constant and provision must be made for a dedicated and collaborative group to be constantly engaged in the process.

c. The entire process must be participatory too. Once the lay inhabitants of the metropolis including the marginalised inhabitants are sensitized to their Metropolis and they get to understand that their well contemplated and implementable ideas are going to be heard, their voices may become an asset to the entire process of planning. This will also lead to higher levels of compliance.

d. Only such constant dedicated multi-tier engagement in the process, combined with openness to receive contemplated ideas from an open participatory process, will ensure appropriate implementation, monitoring, evaluation and modifications to adapt to variations encountered.





#### **4. TECHNOLOGY USE IN CMDA - SCOPE FOR IMPROVEMENTS**

Statutory processes involved in the development and availability of reliable and accurate data concerning the same must be comprehensively addressed.

##### **a. Digital mapping of land**

Required effort should be made to ensure that the mismatch that exists in most plots in CMA between physically available land extents and the extents on record is eliminated. This update will include area extents as well as dimensional attributes in terms of lengths, angles etc. The use of digital technology such as GIS mapping may require to be considered.

##### **b. Digital methods for statutory processes**

i. Processes should not be restricted to specific software  
Presently, an outdated version of specific CAD software is required to be used to engage in the digital statutory processes for Planning Permission. It is presently not possible to purchase a license for that version of the software. Hence, to engage in the process of online Planning Permission, one has to come into possession of that software by some means other than purchasing a license or engage someone with prior possession of the specific software.

Statutory processes should allow for use of a variety of software rather than restrict usage to specific software. Plug-ins should be developed by Statutory bodies for use in all software presently available for use.

##### **ii. 3D BIM representations**

Presently, 2-dimensional representations are required for planning permissions, building permits, completion certificates etc. It may be appropriate for statutory bodies to step up their game and to look at 3-dimensional representation. Statutory bodies may also look at Building Information Modelling (BIM) capturing information found necessary as the requirement for all new built environments. BIM can retrospectively be done for the existing built environments. Thus 3-dimensional data allowing a better understanding of the city will be available making it advantageous to further planning and evaluation exercises.

#### **5. URBAN RISK MANAGEMENT AND RESILIENCE BY PLANNING (TMP)**

##### **a. Zoning & Planning**

By ensuring that urban fabric, industries and agricultural zones are appropriately located and by ensuring that catchment areas, water bodies including lakes, rivers and sea are monitored and their edges are designed for all foreseeable disaster conditions, it is possible to achieve a state of readiness to address possible events.

Learnings from initiatives from around the globe can be analysed and if found appropriate adopted for implementation to mitigate risk and increase resilience.

Further, if provision is made for a participatory approach, new ideas will find a way to pour in for use in planning against disasters and their effects.

##### **b. Disaster Management**

As in other aspects, in this aspect too, there has been considerable laudable eloquence in the vision and intent of the preceding Master Plans. However, the operative content, implementation and monitoring may appear not comprehensive to the extent expected.

The neighbourhoods of Chennai will benefit from predesignated locations and agencies to approach in the event of Disasters. It should be ensured that all in the neighbourhoods are familiar with these predesignated locations and agencies.

The number of natural disasters has increased over the years and the devastation has been increasingly felt especially on the marginalised people.

##### **c. Comprehensive Solutions & Humane Standards**

It is of great importance that the Third Master Plan envisages and implements complete solutions of humane standards for inhabitants of the Metropolis considering the various natures of disasters that the city faces and has possibilities of facing.





## **6. CMDA - COLLABORATIVE POLICIES WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

- a. Collaborative policies and openness are a must. Various institutions naturally have varied focuses. Whereas some are more focussed on the social aspect, some may be more concerned about the administrative aspects, while some may be focussed on the economic aspects, there would be others that are balanced too.
- b. Collaboration with other institutions will ensure that the best human resources available with various institutions and organisations will be available to the process.
- c. It is also simultaneously true that an inclusive process will have an increased administrative as well as an organisational burden. The advantages, however, far outweigh the disadvantages.
- d. The CMDA should actively open itself to collaborating with other organisations not only during the formulation of particular policies and regulations but as a continuous process. Such continuous processes including data collection, evaluation of implementations, formulation simulation and examination of policies etc. must happen under a participatory framework that is based on inclusiveness and openness.

## **7. CMDA CAPACITY**

- a. The CMDA presently employs Town Planners, Civil engineers, and Draughtspersons.
- b. The Development Authority and in turn the Metropolis will greatly benefit from increasing its capacity to provision for Collaborative processes and Participatory processes by including intellectual resources such as Architects, Anthropologists, Economists, and experts from various fields pertinent to the planning and implementation processes.

## **8. IIACC - POTENTIAL FOR PARTICIPATION IN TMP**

The Indian Institute of Architects Chennai Centre reiterates its supportive stance concerning the processes of city planning and implementation in general and in particular to the Third Master Plan.



# CHENNAI



IDENTITY OF CHENNAI | *Digital sketch by Ar. Swetha Amarnath*



# SKETCHES & PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHENNAI ARCHITECTS

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING,  
ANNA UNIVERSITY, CHENNAI

*Photo essay by Ar. Jeyaradha Jayaram*





# OPERATING METHODS ADOPTED BY ARCHITECTURAL FIRMS DURING THE PANDEMIC

**Ar. ANTONY S.L. MORAIS**, AIIA  
Hon. Secretary, IIA Chennai Centre

The pandemic has brought about several changes in our lifestyle and working methods. Many of us have explored and devised innovative ways of operating our practice, balancing work and coping with all that is happening around us. Work from home, remote monitoring, virtual meetings, usage of new software etc., have become the new norm.

A few architects share their experiences and the operating methods they adopted in response to the conditions imposed by the pandemic.



## **Ar. Periyannan K., AIIA**

APDO - Periyannan Associates  
Chennai

At APDO – Periyannan Associates, an architectural firm in Chennai, we are involved in vernacular practice and restoration activities in the Chettinaadu region, besides handling architectural projects in trend.

Before this pandemic itself, we were prepared for such situations & was proven during the Chennai floods. We had already been used to the 'work from home' concept on Saturdays (Our office work was restricted to five days a week). Also, we have our panel of Architects as Associates, who work from remote locations, eligibility being having worked in our firm for a minimum period of two years as a Junior Architect.

During this pandemic, we remained closed from March 15, 2020, to date. As we were already used to the WFH concept, we easily switched to the new mode and got adapted quickly.

As the Chief Architect, I used to travel frequently to the Chettinaadu region, since the geography of our practice is around Trichy, Thanjavur, Madurai, Pudukkottai and Karaikudi. Now, having moved to my native, Valayapatti, my travel is more towards Chennai to visit ongoing projects. I have been handling the operations remotely from Valayapatti since June 2020, thanks to technological advancements and internet connectivity. Moreover, this pandemic made me stay close to the restoration sites.

Regarding site visits, we minimized physical visits in the initial stages and slowly started to manage through conference calls & video calls. We educated the site engineers to switch over to online mode too.

The client handling has also been addressed in the same way. We limited client meetings at the office and rather started online discussions. We have a good, understanding clientele who are socially responsible too.

Even meeting the trade people & vendors happen over virtual meetings. Earlier too, we used to request the marketing executives to send e-catalogues through email. We avoid collecting printed product information/literature. This continues even now.

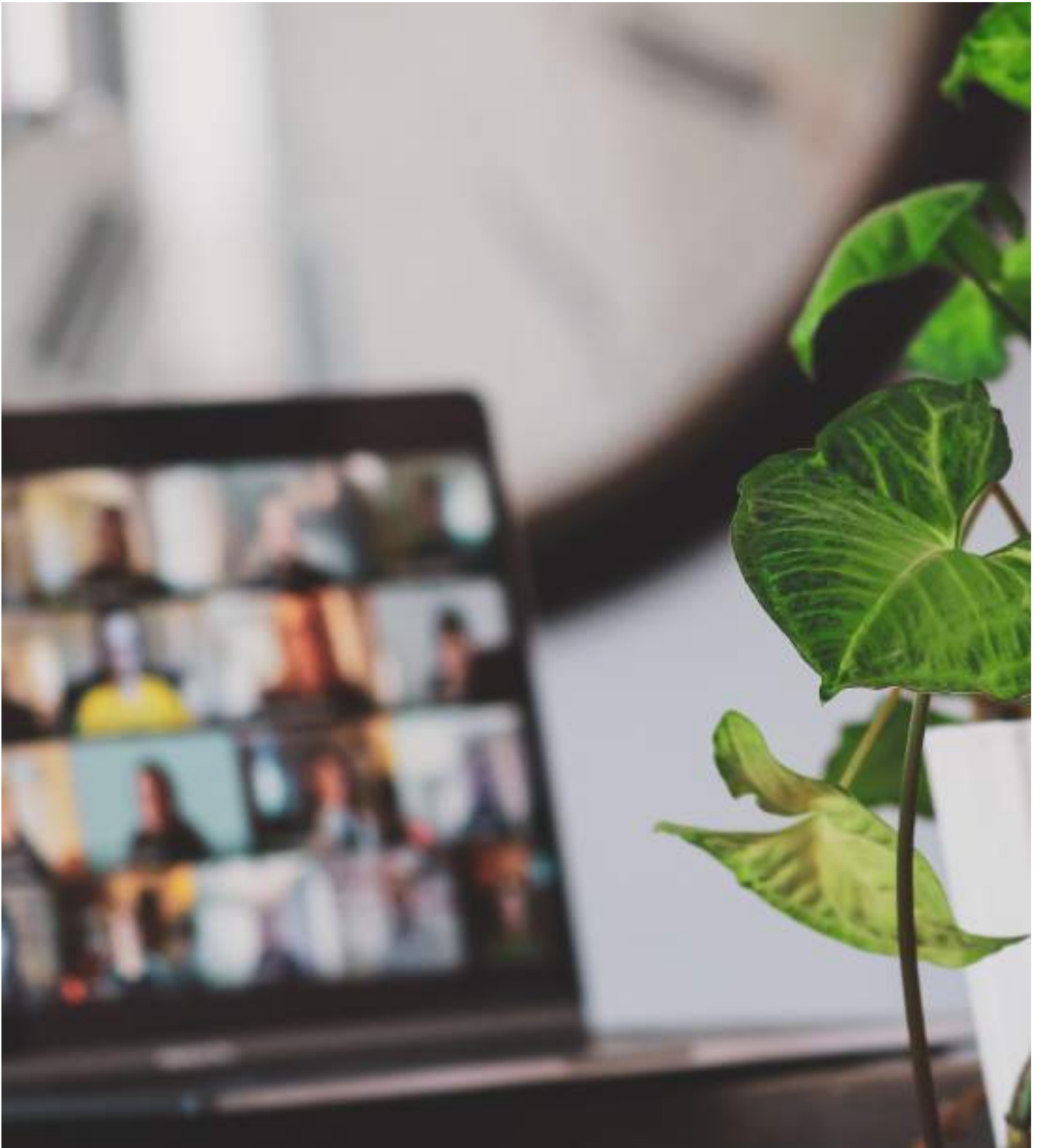
New projects, new clients, new builders – everyone has been updated about our communication mode and standard operating procedures.

The online mode helped a lot in involving myself with the academic schedules and reviewing students works as good as physical reviews. The financial aspects and accounting are being done online as well.

The availability of technology, high-speed internet connectivity, smartphones, e-mails, text messages, Whatsapp sharing, conference calls, Whatsapp & Facetime video calls, web conferencing, Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft team meetings etc., have made our professional practice effective during the pandemic.

We are better equipped now, to face any such challenges in future. But we pray that these hard times come to an end at the earliest. To save the society at large. To design & create conducive environments to face such situations. To be accountable in our profession (I mean, physical involvement will always be better than online consultations).

Stay Safe!



## Ar. Ravikumar Narayan, AIIA

RaA Landscape Architects  
Saidapet, Chennai

In the past 13 months, we worked from the office only for 4 months. For the remaining 9 months, we worked from home.

Generally, we have a meeting in the morning in which the entire team joins and shares all the work done the previous day and the work ahead. All trending news on landscape design, competition announcements and any system issues are also discussed. We could call it a '**Binding Meeting**' as it brings us all together in the morning. This helps in cross-learning, right from the interns to the senior architects as everyone come to know about all that the office is handling. We continue these morning meetings as virtual meetings. The works done by all is shared on a common folder in the cloud by the end of the day and I review it the following day morning and share my feedback at the morning meeting. Recently, we have added two more meetings within our team, one at 12.30 pm and the other at 5.30 pm. These meetings help to clarify any doubts or share updates on the projects that come in during the day. Our Studio Director organises these meetings and the workflow goes smoothly.

Saturday is a '**learning day**' at our office. As far as our clients are concerned, our working days are from Monday to Friday. We use Saturdays to meet vendors as a team and have elaborate discussions to understand the products to the best possible extent. The same continues nowadays on the virtual platform. This way, the vendors are also happy and we also prepare ourselves with whatever questions that we have concerning our project requirements.

For **Site management**, we rely entirely on WhatsApp for all updates. Site engineers post their queries with a snapshot and we respond with the required sketches or drawings.

We started a few projects during this period for which we couldn't make direct site visits and had to rely on site photos. In such cases, we exactly mark the viewing angles (numbering the photo angles) that we require to be photographed in the site plan and get the photos taken accordingly.

We have participated in a couple of competitions too during this pandemic apart from me being part of several thesis reviews online.

I have been reading a wonderful book called '**Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World**', authored by Cal Newport. It got me thinking that during our earlier days before mobile phones, when life was on drafting boards, we used to do focused work which gave us a sense of fulfilment with a holistic nature of any given project. Now with CAD, everything is done in parts and pieces, which denies us of that sense of achieving completeness in a drawing. The very reason for me to work early in the mornings is to do some focused work without any distraction from phone calls.

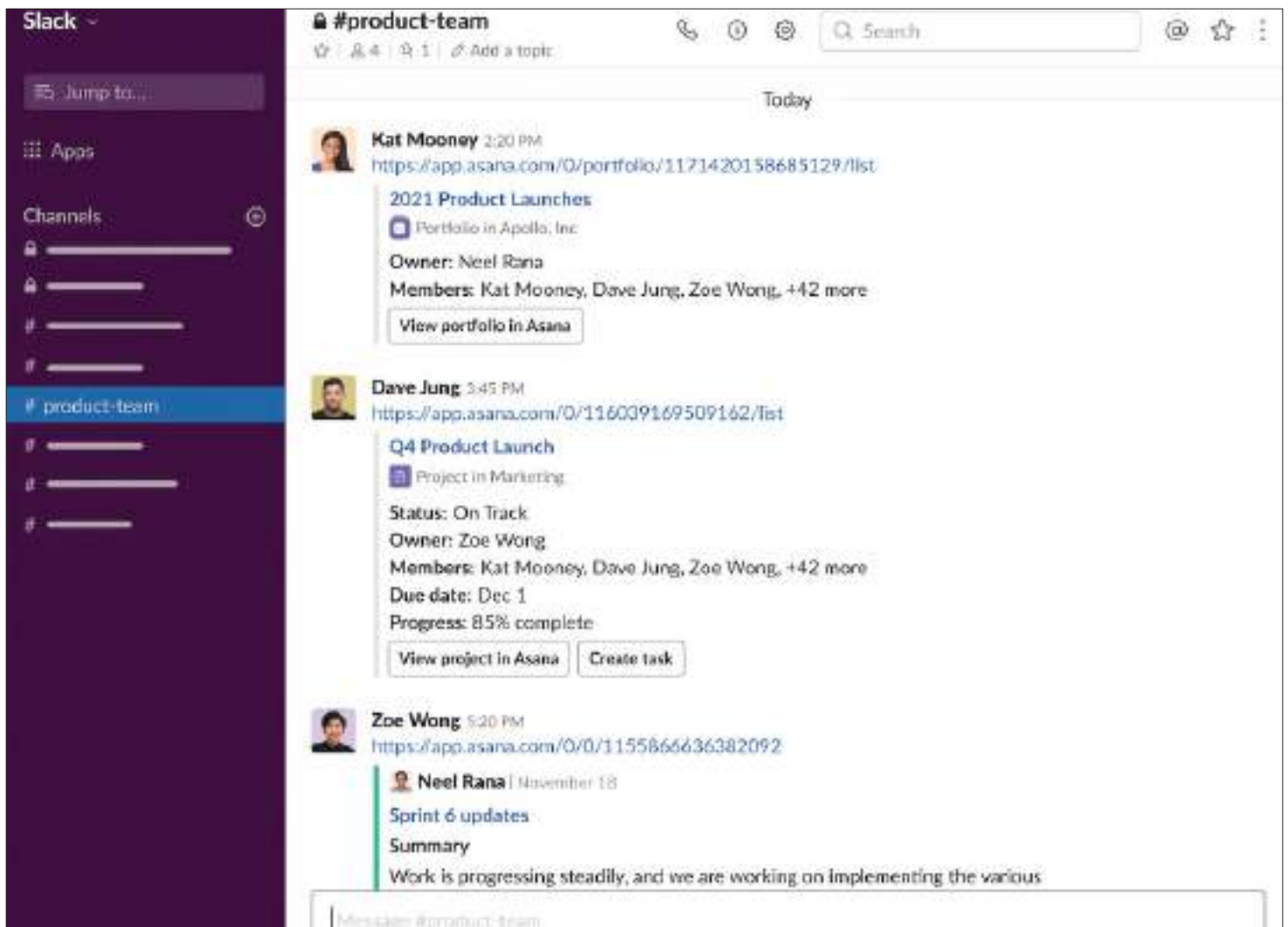
This lockdown has been a big boon to me as I can work at a stretch on a project with full focus. I relish this deep work. Especially, the time between 3 pm to 6 pm is ideal during the lockdown time as there are very few calls.

Regarding systems, I and my Studio Director can access the server from our place. The Studio Director will share the respective work accordingly. So, access to the whole data is restricted to two of us. Most of the people who work from home have their laptops. For the rest, we have asked them to take our office systems to their homes and they use them for the work. Among the 18 staff members, around 12 can work full-fledged without any system issues. With this remote working scenario, we are able to achieve a work efficiency of about 75%.

We have checklists for all work typologies which becomes handy in carrying out work smoothly. That reduces our overall time spent reviewing the drawings. In general, if we have a systematic approach towards work in our offices, migrating to virtual work becomes easier.

Now we feel a lot confident about handling work from remote places to an extent that we can take up projects from anywhere across the Country. Once we explore the possibilities in securing the data, I think we can expand our workforce to a greater extent with this remote working concept.





## Ar. Aravindan Rangan, AIIA

Arvind Varuna Associates  
Adyar, Chennai

At Arvind Varuna Associates, we continue to work from home during this lockdown, as we did last year as well. For starters, many of our colleagues do not have computers at home. So, in a planned manner, desktops have been taken home before the lockdown day.

We use an app called '**Slack**' and have created various project channels, similar to Whatsapp groups. Using Slack, avoids us frequently getting into Whatsapp, which is a huge distraction. We have observed a considerable increase in productivity amongst us. We share the image and PDF files through this app for internal team discussions.

Zoom is extensively used for review meetings, presentations and client meetings.

One is often used to check working drawings physically on a plotted drawing. However, we have to do with reviewing them as PDF files upon which we manually draw and edit using a stylus on our tablets. It is a struggle to work this way, as according to us, there is no substitute to working and collaborating in physical presence. But given the situation, this is the best-case scenario where one is mentally occupied and productive.

## **Ar. Senthil Kumar K., FIIA**

Senthil Kumar & Associates  
Manapakkam, Chennai

We share the projects among our colleagues and make them interact with the clients. This increases their responsibility and commitment towards the projects despite working from home. I review the designs, fine-tune and pitch in wherever required to solve the issues.

The contractors, site engineers and supervisors share the progress of the work at the site with the architect and their team on regular basis. They are given the liberty of calling the architects on their mobile phone and clarify their doubts. We give utmost importance to their calls.

Many times, mere sketches & freehand drawings solve any doubts. Instead of an incomplete CAD drawing done by a draughtsman, a clear sketch by the architect can convey more in these pandemic times.

In these pandemic times, all consultants take their own time in issuing the drawings. We cannot blame them. So, we plan in advance the schedule of drawings to be issued to the site.

The drawings given by the consultants are correlated mostly by myself and senior colleagues. Discrepancies are then noted and changes are made from both sides. This process takes time. Better to work with known consultants who are flexible & from whom you can extract work, instead of going with consultants suggested by clients. We make sure that we work with a team with whom we are comfortable, especially during these pandemic times. This includes appointing contractors who have worked with us and knows our style of working and can read our drawings.

During this lockdown, we have got the time to revamp our website and we are working on that as the online presence has a good reach. Work is very comfortable in this setup, but site visits are a bit difficult. If the client insists on a visit, we ask the client to arrange the vehicle, so that they take care of the pass and relevant permissions and we just need to take care of our COVID-19 precautions.



## Ar. Malli Saravanan, AIIA

WeBe Design Lab  
Chennai

Initially, we found it difficult to adapt ourselves to work amidst this pandemic. We always make it a point to constantly stay in touch with our team and enquire about their well-being. That provides some moral support to everyone. During the lockdown, we work from our homes, coordinating work using Zoom and Google platforms. We use it for even taking polls within our teams on certain project works.

When the cash flow took a hit, we had a conversation with our team, discussed openly with everyone and came up with a model wherein the work on a particular project was evaluated and if there was work for only two weeks in a month, then the salary was paid for that two weeks and the remaining two weeks was taken as a holiday.

We were paying quite an amount on the office rental. So, we vacated the office and that savings on rental took care of the salaries for at least five of our staff members. Later, last December, we moved into a smaller office space with lesser monthly rental. The space was chosen to accommodate only 75% of our total strength as we are always going to have a few who work from home. Last year, we provided our staff with office systems and they worked from their respective homes. Now, all have got themselves their own systems and we access data through our server or shared Google Drive.

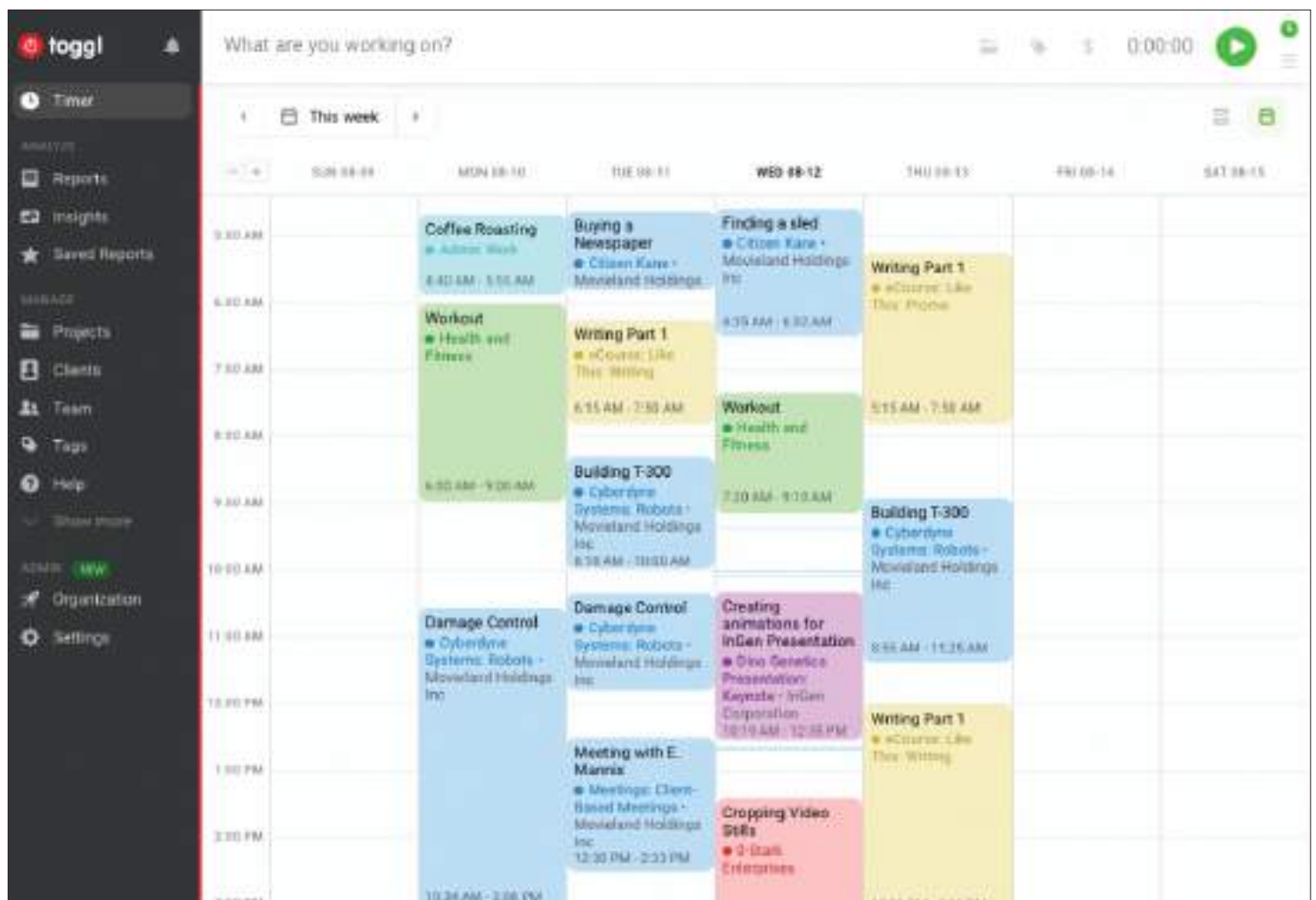
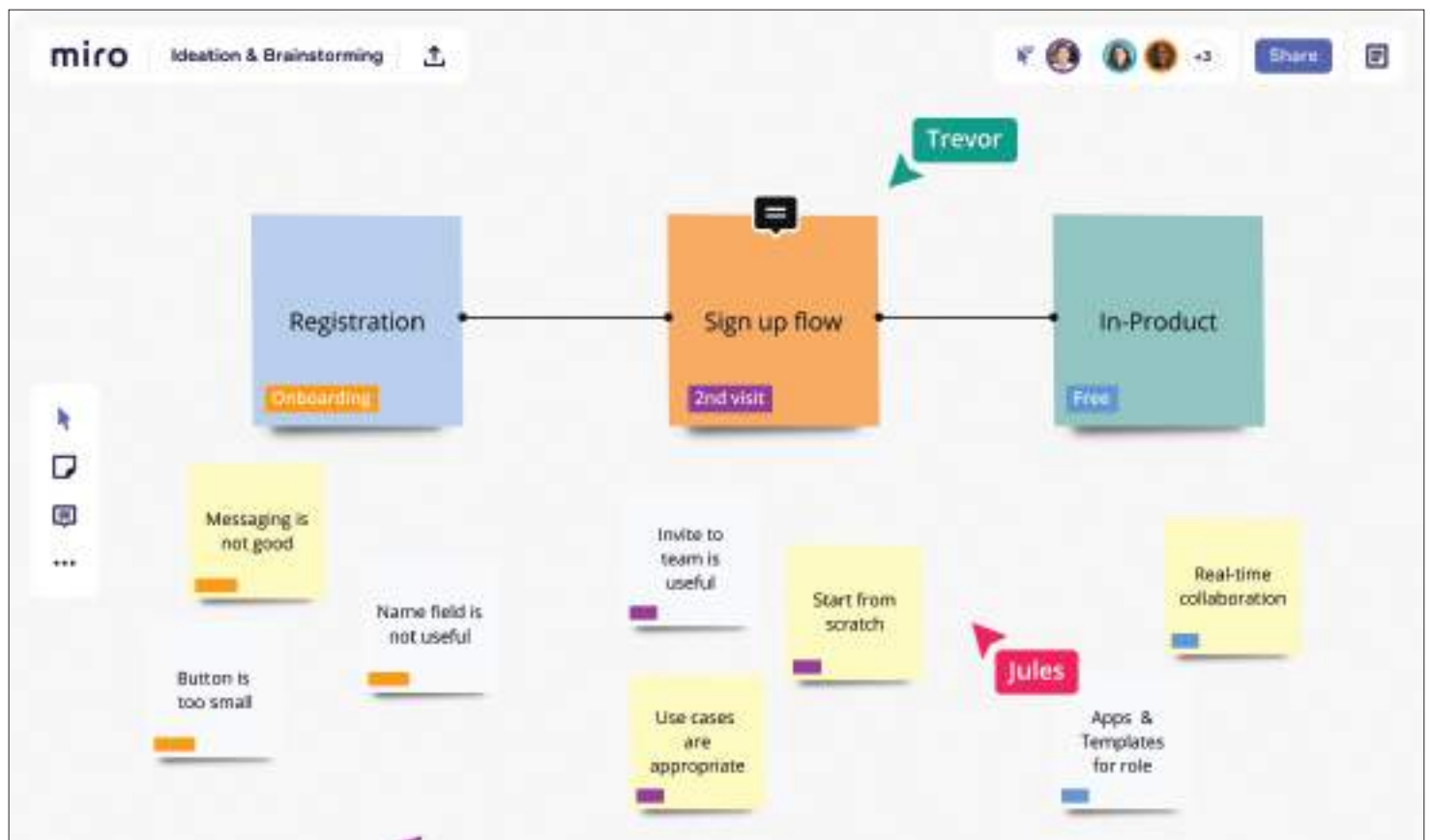
Zoom and Google Meet are our widely used tools. For brainstorming sessions, we use an online whiteboard tool called '**Miro: an Online Visual Collaboration Platform for Teamwork**'. A very flexible tool for moving around and using sticky notes. As far as work follow-up, we don't have a strict timeframe, but rather create flexible deadlines based on the nature of work.

We also use '**Toggl**', a time-tracking tool called to track all of our work on a daily basis.

The reports are monitored on a weekly and monthly basis. This also helped us in evaluating our performance levels and work efficiency from time to time.

The good side to this way of practice is focus, efficiency and faster work. The bad side is the deep focus, being drained out, without any physical interactions with colleagues. Wednesdays, have always been an event day for our team and we used to come together for an eventful evening. We continue to do so, but now virtually.





# Ar. Prasad N. Yadav, FIIA

Yadav Architects

Alwarpet, Chennai

During the last lockdown, everything was in confusion as we had not come across a pandemic situation in our lives. There was panic and we were lying low till the situation got slightly better. We majorly work on Institutional projects and as the Institutions were closed, we didn't have much pressure on the work front. The classes were being held online. After everything opened up, we were able to finalise a couple of tenders and work was going on till this second wave.

Four parallels needed to be handled during the second wave lockdown.

## 1. OFFICE WORK

We had a discussion with staff about how to handle the work from home situation. The technical staff were given the liberty to take whatever hardware they required for working from home. The clerical staff were not pressurised much as no major correspondences were happening. We started working out a pattern, meeting everyday morning via zoom, organising the work based on priorities, discussions and feedback. After the virtual meeting, I coordinate with every individual staff on a one-to-one basis, either over the phone call or via Zoom. But the overall work output was lesser as the level of understanding of some of the juniors was a bit difficult as the vocabulary of the younger generation differs from mine. That's where my daughter, Ar. Esha helped me out in coordinating the work with juniors.

## 2. STATUTORY APPROVALS

We got a couple of approvals from the Corporation before the lockdown. The authorities are also held up at the moment with the Covid duty and everyone understands the pressure faced by GCC.

Need to admit that this lockdown helped me in brushing up my software tech skills. The efficiency of office work during these tough times was about 60%. Clients are not complaining and at the same time, my staff are also cooperating. But we hope to get back to the same working scenario as how we were before COVID-19, as it is essential to have social interaction between the team and clients.

## 3. SITE COORDINATION

When the in-situ work was allowed during the lockdown, with the cooperation of the contractors we were able to do some work at the site. We didn't pressurise the workforce much as there was no major deviation in the work schedule. In all our new contracts, we have introduced separate chapters on COVID-19 protections, apart from the SOPs given by the Government. Severe penalty clauses have been included to ensure compliance. Proper barricading within the Institutional campuses was ensured. The management committee meetings and site meetings were held under open sheds within the site premises, created primarily to adhere to COVID-19 protocols.

## 4. CLIENT COORDINATION

Except for some private works, all Institutional works and non-Governmental works are lying low. As for the private work, we do presentations on the virtual platform. We were able to finalise a couple of bungalow projects through the virtual platform itself.

A person with glasses is seen from the side, working on a laptop in a dimly lit office. The background is dark with some blurred lights, suggesting a server room or a modern office environment at night.

# SHARE YOUR STORY

We at IIA Chennai Centre would like to hear your story!

We request you to share your firm's standard operating methods and the way your offices operate during this pandemic and lockdown scenarios. Your experience could be a source of inspiration to our community of Architects.

Please send your notes by **Thursday, 15 July 2021** to [iiaccpublications@gmail.com](mailto:iiaccpublications@gmail.com)



# IIA CHENNAI CENTRE: NEWSFEED

**Ar. ANTONY S.L. MORAIS**, AIIA  
Hon. Secretary, IIA Chennai Centre

# KNOW YOUR DCR

## TNCDBR DISCUSSION SERIES

The IIA Chennai Centre has planned a series of discussions on the Tamilnadu Combined Development & Building Rules, 2019 as part of the 'Know Your DCR' series. The first session on the topic 'LAND', was held online on 6th March 2021, facilitated by Ar. Babu Venkatesan, EC Member - IIACC. The Panelists were Ar. Jamal, Ar. Kurian George & Ar. W.Anand. The sub-topics covered were Title to property, Ownership

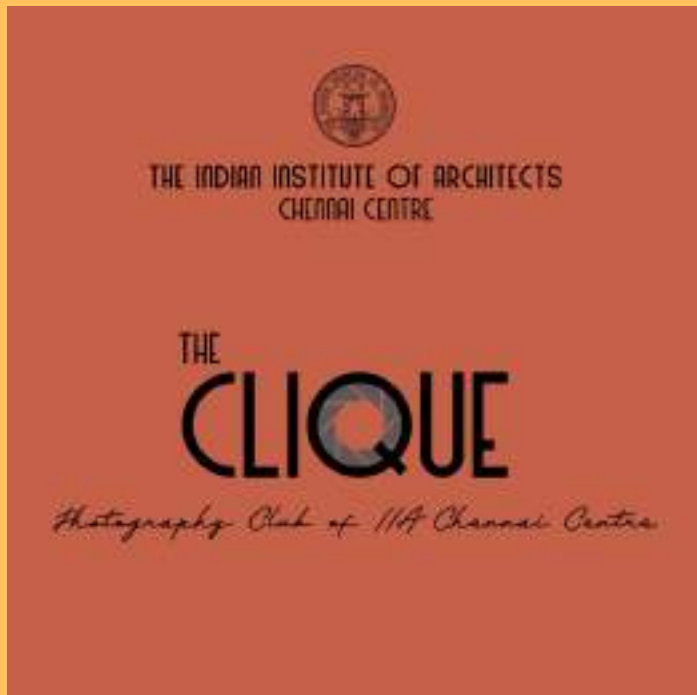
Documents, Land Classification & Checklist for Architects. The online program was well attended and quite a few queries from our Members were addressed by the panellists.

The second session of the series (LAND; Part 2) will be held in June. Details will be mailed to Members shortly.

# PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB

## OF IIA CHENNAI CENTRE

IIA Chennai Centre has launched 'The Clique', a Photography Club through which Architects and Students of Architecture will come together and explore the Architecture of Chennai through Photography Tours and Workshops. The Programs will start rolling depending on the Covid situation and Government Guidelines.



# THIRD MASTER PLAN

## FOR CHENNAI METROPOLITAN AREA

The CMDA has commenced preparatory studies for preparing the Third Master Plan for the Chennai Metropolitan Area covering all sectors of urban development. The World Bank under Tamil Nadu Housing and Habitat Development Project (TNHHDP) is funding some of the preparatory studies for the Third Master Plan. **'Assessment of Master Planning Process and Capacity for Chennai Metropolitan Area'** is one such study that is awarded to M/s. Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP, Chennai.

As part of the study, the technical team of the consultant M/s. Deloitte had approached IIA Chennai Centre for a discussion on participation in the Master Planning process, capacity building and drawing of proposals.

IIACC has expressed that it is very keen to be actively involved by providing assistance in the preparation of the Third Master Plan for the Chennai Metropolitan Area in all stages including ideation and formulation of draft-TMP, analysing and providing feedback during draft revision stages, and also in implementation monitoring.

Further to discussions amongst the Members, IIACC presented its collated ideas concerning the subject matter in an Online Meeting. This issue features a separate article showing IIA Chennai Centre's response given to the Invitation from Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP and as requested by Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, which we think will be pertinent for consideration as we approach the Third Master Plan.

# JOIN IIA

Download the membership forms from the link below.  
**[www.iiachennai.com](http://www.iiachennai.com)**

## **STUDENT MEMBER**

Any person desirous of becoming a Student Member, shall forward his application to the Council of the prescribed form, the prescribed Entrance Fee and the current year's Subscription, which amounts will be returned in case of non-election.

## **FELLOW**

Any person qualified under Bye-Law 4 (a) and desirous of becoming a Fellow, shall forward his application to the Council of the prescribed form, duly endorsed by one Fellow and two Associates of the Institute, and accompanied by the form of Declaration, the prescribed Entrance Fee and the current year's Subscription, which amounts will be returned in case of non-election.

## **ASSOCIATE**

Any person qualified under Bye-Law 4 (b) and desirous of becoming an Associate, shall forward his application to the Council on the prescribed form, duly endorsed by one Fellow and two Associates of the Institute, and accompanied by the Form of Declaration, the prescribed Entrance Fee and the current year's Subscription, which amounts will be returned in case of non-election.

## **REINSTATEMENT**

Members whose membership has lapsed can use this form to apply for reinstatement.



# CALL FOR ARTICLES PAPERS AND PROJECTS

The Editorial Board of IIACC invites Architects (academicians, practitioners and students) to send in their articles, papers and projects that may address any topic that furthers the cause of Architects and Architecture in Chennai.

To be accepted for publication, please send us the following information.

1. MS Word document with text only (300 - 500 words). Please include the references and captions for photos, if any.
2. Folder with all images, drawings and photos (min. 300 dpi), numbered according to the captions in the text file.
3. Photograph of the author/s (minimum 300 dpi).
4. Author biodata – Maximum 50 words.
5. Letter of authorization.\*

Projects, essays, articles (1000 - 2500 words), book reviews (600 - 750 words), research papers (2000 - 5000 words) and interviews in the areas of architecture, planning, urbanism, pedagogy, heritage, technology, ecology, theory and criticism, visual design, practice or any other relevant subject pertaining to the built environment of Chennai.

For a design project, please include the "Fact File" with the following details: Project Name, Type, Location, Design team, Client, Plot area, Total built-up area, Structural consultants, Contractors, Project completion. Please provide the photo captions and credits, where necessary.

*\* We must receive a letter of authorization from you that the article/project/work in its entirety is your original work. Additionally, if any part or part of the article is quoted or referenced from other sources, we require you to confirm that adequate acknowledgement has been made for the same. We also require you to confirm that all drawings, photographs and project information is shared by you and any claim of copyright or other infringement including incorrectness, defamation.... etc. is entirely your responsibility and that the Publication and all persons associated with it are completely absolved from any responsibility towards any claim.*

Send your entries by **5 pm** on **Thursday, 15 July 2021** to **[iiaccpublications@gmail.com](mailto:iiaccpublications@gmail.com)**



IIACC NEWS, DATA, EVENTS & UPDATES

**[www.iiachennai.com](http://www.iiachennai.com)**

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