



Newsletter Issue 32 – November 2024

From our Desk

BA on Traditional Knowledge Systems

One lingering impact of colonialism has been the blind adoption of western practices. In our pursuit of Westernization, we have lost a precious repository of traditional knowledge. Everything traditional was dismissed as backward and redundant, while modern practices were adopted without regard for cultural context. As a result, the present generation is almost completely unaware of traditional knowledge systems, viewing them as exotic or optional. Sustainability was deeply ingrained in the Indian way of life; it was second nature to Indians. One example is the use of mango wood in funeral pyres across India. Mango wood, rich in sap, burns even when freshly cut. In Gujarat, a particular community still follows the practice of planting a mango tree sapling when a child is born, which can then be cut upon their death.

Architecture, too, has suffered under the pressure of blind westernization. Traditional knowledge regarding construction methods, practices, and materials has nearly vanished. Knowledge about timber and timber construction deserves special mention here. Ancient architectural texts like *Manushyalaya Chandrika* and *Tantra Samuchaya* have been inadequately translated into English, leading to an unfortunate loss of ancient wisdom. For traditions to endure, traditional artists must be provided with work and recognition. Today, society values quantity over quality, and traditional craftsmen are not given the respect they deserve.

The term “vernacular architecture” itself is a misnomer, often relegated to an elective subject. Moreover, the importance of traditional knowledge systems and their intrinsic relationship with sustainability are often overlooked in architectural curricula worldwide. The solution, however, is not to create a binary of “traditional

vs. modern” and pit them against each other. Sustainability must become the norm, with the best practices from each approach identified, isolated, and blended seamlessly. The future of humankind depends upon our ability to make these choices.

Recent Highlights

Conversation with Femke Bijlsma

An insightful conversation was held with architect Femke Bijlsma of Kossmann.dejong, Netherlands, one of today’s leading museum designers specializing in experiential space design on 22 October. Femke, a gifted storyteller, captivated the audience with her passion for design and anecdotes on creating immersive environments. She highlighted the importance of crafting spaces that offer users different depths of experience.

The office event attracted a diverse group of attendees, including students, architects, academicians, journalists, cultural enthusiasts, and some of Chennai’s most notable figures in design. The session concluded with a dynamic Q&A, adding depth to an already enriching experience.





BKA Hosts the 6th Edition of the Insider by NASA

In the 6th edition of The Insider, a flagship NASA India initiative, 30 architecture students were given an exclusive opportunity to engage with Dr. Benny Kuriakose at BK&A office on October 12, 2024. This unique event allowed students to immerse themselves in a rich learning experience, gaining insights into both traditional and innovative architectural practices as well as learn about the functioning of the office.



Guest of Honor at Hindustan University Symposium

Dr. Benny Kuriakose graced Chiaroscuro 2024 as the Guest of Honor at the annual symposium hosted by the School of Planning, Architecture and Design Excellence (SPADE). This year's prestigious event centred on



Inauguration of CIKS at Mohamed Sathak AJ Academy of Architecture

Dr. Benny Kuriakose inaugurated the Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems (CIKS) at Mohamed Sathak AJ Academy of Architecture, delivering a keynote address on the importance of preserving Indian knowledge systems. His insights captivated both students and faculty, sparking meaningful discussions on the role of cultural heritage in modern education.



Meet Our Designs

Paramankheni House

Nestled along Chennai's East Coast Road, Paramankheni House is set on a tranquil 3-acre plot between two fishing villages. Designed to reflect its serene surroundings, the home features Mediterranean blue windows and a steeply sloped roof, with an open-plan layout that maximizes natural light and cross-ventilation. All bedrooms and living areas offer uninterrupted sea views through strategically placed windows, while each bedroom includes an open-to-sky bathroom and the ground-floor room boasts a private courtyard with an outdoor shower. A spacious beach-facing verandah and garden provide inviting relaxation spaces, complemented by eco-friendly touches like cement flooring and reclaimed doors. With a private beach on one side and lush greenery on the other, Paramankheni House embraces a calming seaside palette that perfectly fits its coastal setting.

[Learn more](#)





What's New?

Inauguration of Kodava Ain Mane at Dakshinachitra

The Kodava Ain Mane was inaugurated as the 19th house at Dakshinachitra Cultural Museum on October 23, 2024, with Ju Seong Kyu, Managing Director of Mobis India Foundation, in attendance. Benny Kuriakose & Associates conserved and transplanted this heritage structure and meticulously documented, dismantled, and transported every wooden element of this ancestral Kodava home to ensure faithful preservation. Traditionally central to Kodava family gatherings and ceremonies, the Ain Mane now enriches DakshinaChitra's collection, celebrating Kodava heritage, customs, attire, and cuisine.



BK&A Recognized on the D List 2024

Benny Kuriakose & Associates has been featured once again on The D List 2024, presented by Hansgrohe. Recognized as a premier platform for honoring design visionaries, The D List celebrates those reshaping urban landscapes with exceptional residential, commercial, and hospitality projects.

[Read more](#)

Juror for the Kohler Bold Design Awards Jury

Dr. Benny Kuriakose joined a distinguished panel of jurors for the Kohler Bold Design Awards 2024, alongside renowned names like Carl Almeida, Hiren Patel, Neelkanth Chhaya, Rahul Mehrotra, Sandeep Khosla, Shahira Fahmy, and Sheila Sri Prakash. Known for celebrating innovative ideas, sustainability, and transformative design, the Kohler Bold Design Awards received 2,300 entries, which the esteemed jury

An evening that celebrated India's design and architecture community



(L-R) Sandeep Sarangi, Saurabh Singla, Nischal Abhaykumar, Mallika Khanna, Sanchit Arora, Amitha Madan, Raghav Kumar, Harshith Nayak, Anu Chaudhuri, Avinash Ankalge, Wangchuk Dorji, Nishant Patel and Kiron Cheerla

In an evening that brought together India's top architects and designers, the Kohler Bold Design Awards (KBDA) 2024 celebrated the visionaries and extraordinary talents shaping the future of design and architecture. Held at Mumbai's Liberty Cinema, the event highlighted the industry's most innovative and sustainable projects across 13 categories, cementing the KBDA's position as a prestigious platform for design excellence. This year the awards

and architecture landscape. In this 4th edition, we were astounded by the sheer number of exceptional submissions, showcasing the incredible talent of our design community.



(L-R) Carl Almeida, Hiren Patel, Ranjeet Oak, Kulbhushan Jain, Rahul Mehrotra, Sheila Sriprakash and Benny Kuriakose

"Traditional knowledge systems were entirely utility-based; everything served a clear purpose. In losing sight of that wisdom, we've overlooked invaluable lessons in sustainability passed down by our ancestors."