

AN EXPANSE OF GREEN AND WATER

By Nandhini Sundar | Photographs by Mahesh Chadaga



It was a long winding road, lined by rubber wood, a road that appeared endless. With the picturesque Chittar Lake flanking one side while the other hosted thick rubber wood plantation, we were happy the road seemed endless, feasting our eyes on the serene beauty before us. But come to an end the road finally did but only to take us to yet to another captivating feature, an arresting reception area welcoming us to the charming resort **Anantya**, situated close to the historic town of Kanyakumari.





With its curved tiled roof, water bodies, the absence of walls blurring the demarcation between the exteriors and inner spaces, the reception area, placed amidst a thicket of rubber wood trees, heralded what was further in store in this charming green resort. The vernacular sentiments were loud in the décor, be it in the furniture, in the cement flooring or the structure opted. Designed by **Benny Kuriakose, of Benny Kuriakose Architects**, Ananya is totally earthy and rustic in its appeal.

Tucked away as they were, almost imperceptibly amidst the rubber plantation in the sprawling campus, the cottages were placed in front of the picturesque lake, affording a view of the watery expanse not just from the relaxing gazebos in the individual gardens but also from the interiors of the room when perched on the bed with a book. The cottages displayed similar vernacular inclinations in design, the entrance hosting an attractive Kerala porch with its antique doors, the walls made of exposed bricks, the curved roof tiles and yellow oxide flooring teamed with old world charm furniture.

Greenery is further brought into the interiors through a glass-enclosed back drop for the bed. An open bathroom concept is also incorporated with a glass partition connecting the bathtub to the bedroom and thence to the watery expanse of the lake through yet another glass wall. While stone washbasins bring in the outdoor rustic flavour, the abundant natural light filtering into the interiors and the visual connect to the landscape effortlessly give the feel of being outdoors even when relaxing in the comfort of the room.

The vernacular theme is carried across the resort, reflecting in the garden spaces too in the form of clay pot lamps, with the restaurant and spa incorporating strong vernacular flavour in décor and structure. The open restaurant sans walls overlooks the lake, the watery expanse seeping into the eatery through its copious visual presence. The rustic décor of the restaurant houses many antique elements that include ancient cooking utensils, urulis, grinding stones, storage cans for keeping grains and mosolis. The exquisitely carved wooden partition along with its accompanying antique lamps, further accentuates this old world flavour.

Overlooking not only the lake but also surrounded by attractive lily ponds that line the path leading to it, the restaurant appears magical at night, the clay pot floor



lamps in the garden blinking like grounded stars, boldly seeming to compete with those spanning above, the ambience totally romantic, irresistibly inviting to enter and indulge.

Given the Kerala ayurvedic massages offered in the spa, the structure too has been lent a Kerala flavour. Thus, Kerala style brackets support the roof, while intricate wooden jalis feature under wood rafters and thatched roof prevails in a portion of the spa to drop the temperatures in the interiors. The sentiments and intention of the design was loud and clear, keep it green so that it not only resonates the environment it is tucked in but also respects the green sensitivities of the location.



Says Lakshmi Ashok, Director, Anantya resorts, whose ideas were essentially given the structural form, "we were dealing with an abundant space, set as it is in a 1000 acre rubber plantation, and this abundance in space was sought to be brought into the structure and interiors. Thus the reception was placed in a wooded expanse while the cottages were designed to get the view and feel of the lake. Lily and lotus pools mark the resort, a reminder of the feature of Kanyakumari. A blending of the rustic with the tones of Kerala was brought in, fusing finely with a twinge of contemporary style. Vernacular sentiments are equally prominent, with even the outdoors emitting this flavour through the ancient jolis spouting water in the prevailing water bodies."



Having indulged in a sumptuous authentic South Indian meal complete with poryol, beetroot kichodi, rasam, porippu payasam, a dash of caramel banana custard, it was time for a luxurious ayurvedic massage to soothe the tired nerves. If the food served was mouth-watering, the massage was one of the very best I had indulged in, prompting me to wish that it would continue endlessly.

If you thought pampering of the body and mind was the only thing the resort offered, the next day early morning was a certain surprise. A spectacular trip through the 1000 acre rubber plantation not only left me and my companion enchanted, but also with more knowledge on rubber and its source. A visit on the way to the campsite where the more adventurous could lodge in tents only added to the novelty. When the time ultimately came to part and move homeward, it was certainly done with reluctance.

Photographs by: Manish Chhabra