

A tribute to Lawrence W Baker (Laurie Baker); the king of low cost housing; who left us at the age of 90.

Not too many people in Nashik, know of a legend of low cost housing in India was actually a Birmingham (UK) born who came to India accidentally on board British war ship a during world war II. It was once again a coincidence that he met the father of our nation Mahatma Gandhi, who as nicely put by Mr. Baker, changed the course of his journey.

Mr. Baker came back to India, after his initial stint of World War II, in year 1945 with the British Missionaries to work with the patients of Leprosy. It was during this stint he met his wife Dr. Elizabeth Jacob .After their marriage they shifted to Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala and lived there till his last days.

An architect by profession soon took over the painful job of designing houses and making them especially with locally available materials. He built so many houses with his concept that even 10 architects put together do not finish in their entire carrier. After the devastating earthquake of 1991 he was even invited by the people of Utrakhand to make low cost housing which are Earthquake resistant. People of Utrakhand can vouch for the quality construction that he had designed which withstood the 1999 Chamoli earthquake.

Architecture was not just a profession but it was a passion for Mr. Baker. He enjoyed discussing his small and large projects with every one that had come in contact with. His philosophy has always been to use locally available materials and use them properly. One of the rarity in this profession, he was a one man army of Architecture. It was indeed visible even in his house, office. He was heading the organization COSTFORD which is a force by itself to reckon with as far as the low cost housing is concerned. To his coworkers and people whom he knew he was "DADDY" Yes Daddy you will be missed immensely.

I* had the privilege of meeting this legend at his residence in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala during the Mumbai Flooding of year 2005. As I was looking for an architectural design for my upcoming Institute of Hotel Management. Once again it was accidentally that I came across the name of Mr. Laurie Baker. So I immediately got in touch with Mr. P.B.Sajan, an associate of Mr. Baker, who guided me to visit their offices and also arranged a meeting with him during my stay there. At the age of 88 then, he was full of vigor and enthusiasm. I had the privilege of staying at the guest house of Centre for Development Studies which was designed by Mr. Baker's team and buildings on the campus are about 30 years old and till today look flawless. I was so impressed with the legend and his associates that we immediately jumped and joined hands in designing what we have on Mumbai_Nashik Highway (NH3) in Rajur Bahula a Complex called as "SURAJKUND" – Housing AMRO INSTITUTES. His vision is still not completed at Surajkund but soon it will be completed as the construction is in progress.

Yes, Padamashri Mr. Baker, you sure will be missed by the entire team of AMRO INSTITUTES.

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