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MODERN HOTEL DESIGN: CLASSICAL YET CONTEMPORARY

Design Forum International (DFI), is a professional consultancy firm with expertise in Architecture, Urban Design & Town Planning and has projects in Delhi, Kolkata and Bengaluru. The projects by DFI include Luxury Condominiums, Group Housing, IT Parks, Hotels and Resorts, Institutions and Retail and Township and Villas. **Anand Sharma, Partner, Design Forum International**, discusses hotel architecture in India and its evolution.

Anupriya Bishnoi



Tell us something about the hospitality projects you have done.

We have done a lot of projects in the hospitality segment. Some of our contributions are: Svelte : A branded luxury segment hotel, part of the much acclaimed and respected Select City Walk, New Delhi. It's a 110 keys property.

Serviced suites @ Merchant Plaza Gurgaon—Merchant Plaza is designed as a contemporary neighbourhood shopping and commercial hub and a great example to explain mixed use hospitality development. The scheme is a blend of elements designed to please the five senses—Vision, Hearing, Touch, Fragrance and Taste. Merchant plaza has been conceptualised to address three distinct end-uses—Retail, Commercial and Hospitality.

Giving priority to the exclusivity of the end-use, the access points are segregated by means of separate lifts and staircases. The drop-off points are also separated,

well-defined and earmarked for the respective zones of the development.

Nandvilaas—Nand Vilaas has been designed using classical elements that recreate a pure and old world of Rajasthan. The heritage of Mewar architecture is carefully balanced by the contemporary interiors.

How is hotel architecture different in India from abroad?

Travel in India is on the rise, volumes being the key. Abroad, specifically the West, has matured and is to some extent on the decline as far as emerging trends in architecture goes.

On a macro level, while hotel design is a lot more about the experiential approach in India, in the West it has gone further on that curve and is leaning more and more onto the functional. The focus on multi-cuisine restaurants, health and multiple places of recreation as a part of hotel design reinforces this theory.



Anand Sharma



From a design element, which aspect of a hotel is the most important and why?

There can be two schools of thought and each relevant in their leaning—emphasis on public spaces or the private space; the lobby and restaurants or the room. Speaking from an Indian standpoint and therefore representative of the current trends, the public spaces are more important since they form the 'experience', the differentiator; the influencing perception of a guest. Therefore, increasing focus on arrival, the reception, the waiting area, lobbies and so on.

How are you bringing sustainability in your designs?

Evolutions in current architectural practice also include a re-commitment to community and public service, and an abiding interest and concern for our cities and landscapes. Both find articulation in 'smart growth' initiatives, inventive real estate investment and development schemes, urban redevelopment, and trends in the historic preservation

of cities and buildings. Additionally, cultural preservation is seen as equally important to building fabric preservation and conservation. Sustainable design takes these concerns further in advocating a beneficial relationship between the built and natural environments.

What are the latest designs in hotels?

The design trend is leaning towards bringing a lot of contextuality into the hotel built-environment and the built form. Sensitivity to the local culture, the local connect, is manifested in the use of materials, bringing local craftsmanship to the fore and trying to find a fusion which marries design sensibilities with regional flavours. The Oberoi hotels' Udaivilaas and Rajvilaas are a strong case in point.

What or who have been your inspirations?

History and culture are the biggest inspirations that can be. We, the architects, are dealing with built forms and those two cast the longest shadows on the way built form transform from being brick and mortar to creative expressions of the region's ethos, the long winding trail of history echoing through the designed spaces.

How have Indian hotels evolved as far as design elements are concerned?

Like in any other creative form, architecture swings back and forth between classical and contemporary. The best hotels of the 1950's till 1970's are rich embodiments of legacy left past, be it the Mughal, Rajputana or the Colonial. It gave way to the modernism and neo-classicism by the way facades and spaces were treated.

We seem to be going into times in which increasingly the hotel design is reflecting a mosaic of the two—spaces which are as much steeped in tradition as they are modern in outlook and visibility. Therefore facades respond to the city scapes around while interiors borrow from the classical and the vernacular. We are seeing the emergence of an architecture style which is a melange of the two, the modernity of the times sitting cosily with the centuries old craftsmanship of stone and wood, in a way mirroring the entire Indian society and mind-state.

History and culture cast the longest shadows on the way built form metamorphoses from being brick and mortar to creative expressions of a region's ethos