

PRASHANT KAPOOR

PRINCIPAL INDUSTRY SPECIALIST, GREEN BUILDINGS, IFC. WASHINGTON



Good design is sustainable design. Great design is resource-efficient, taking into account the comfort of occupants through low-cost, practical solutions such as less glass on the façade and natural ventilation”

An internationally recognised thought leader and expert in bioclimatic design, Prashant Kapoor is a passionate advocate for sustainable solutions that align the interests of developers, financial institutions, governments and homeowners. He is known as the entrepreneur who created EDGE (Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies), a universal standard software application and certification system to mainstream resource-efficient building growth in emerging markets. Since 2010, he has provided guidance for IFC’s global green building programme on both the regulatory and voluntary fronts. Under his leadership, IFC has created a Green Building portfolio of commercial and residential buildings that totals \$2 billion (approx), both directly and through financial intermediaries.

All his present achievements notwithstanding, Kapoor’s career started humbly as a site architect for a traditional dance village outside of Bengaluru after he acquired his architecture degree from the Manipal Institute of Technology. A motorcyclist at heart, it was his passion to understand rural India and the concerns of its inhabitants that triggered off his fascination with vernacular architecture.

“While working on the building material for the project, a group of us became interested in which was the ‘lesser evil’. We knew there was something wrong with the general consensus at the time – that clay tiles and bricks were natural materials and, therefore, ‘environmentally friendly’. These clay tiles were using up so much top soil in the villages around us. This really whetted my interest in understanding sustainable choices and the truth behind our assumptions of what is ‘green,’” he recalls, throwing light on his early influences.

Kapoor also holds a master’s degree in energy-efficient building from Oxford Brookes University (UK). Presently, he works at IFC (International Finance Corporation), a member

of the World Bank Group that focuses on private sector development – leading their global green-building program. Prior to joining IFC, Kapoor worked as a director at WSP Consultants in London, where he led the planning of Masdar City – an innovative zero-carbon city under construction in Abu Dhabi; developed a strategic plan for Dubai, including designing a new green building regulatory system; and created various pathfinder low-carbon property programs.

He is inspired by India’s iconic architect Charles Correa, who he hails for introducing bioclimatic contemporary architecture. As he says, “Correa believed that beneath and beyond the strata of function and structure, materials and texture, lie the deepest and most compulsive layers of all.”

Kapoor also holds high in his estimation the Odissi Gurukul in the Nrityagram campus designed by Gerard da Cunha. “Natural raw faces of stone fill its walls, suspended with strength that counters the giving gestures of the dance form it houses. Here the spirit of Oriyan temples re-conjures the magic of thousands of years,” he describes evocatively.

Insisting that mindsets must change, Kapoor observes that Green design is mostly ignored because it is considered too expensive. “That is changing. The exhilaration comes at that precise moment when a developer recognises the opportunity of Green design and how its value can be captured,” he points out. Kapoor believes that India has technologies to keep, and technologies to let go. “Ceiling fans, for example, which originated nearly 300 years ago as cloth-covered frames called ‘punkah’, are a technology to keep.

“Clay bricks, on the other hand, which date back to the ancient civilization of the Indus Valley, are a technology to leave behind,” he maintains. “Unfortunately, the opposite is happening. Knowledge of which technology works in which context is important. Architects have a central role to play.”

PROJECT

Graylingwell Park carbon neutral development in UK.