

In conversation with the Man who draws India: Ar. Hafeez Contractor

Gateway College of Architecture and Design Sonapat hosted a 3 day event 'Archventure' from 30th March to 1st April 2018. Archventure was initiated by Gateway College in 2009 as a convention for 1st and 2nd year students of various colleges and now has become a custom to be executed every year with an intention to increase the interaction among the students and learn. The event focuses on sharing knowledge and building a new ideology which helps in clearing conceptual understandings as well as building relationships between individuals.



ARCHVENTURE is the only platform in the North zone that calls many individuals on one dais to perform and refine themselves through competitive spirit. This is an event for tapping talented students from different institutions. Here people gather, interact, learn, and gain in an inspiring manner. It is an amalgamation of art, design, creativity and an endeavor of achieving the same in a practical manner.

To fulfil this ideology of the convention Ar. Hafeez Contractor, a famous and successful architect of the present century was invited to address the students. Hafeez's footprints are indelibly stamped across India's built environment. He has shaped and changed Urban Built Landscape of the country through his provocative and unpredictably revolutionary ideas in executing wide range of architectural projects irrespective of their size, nature and complexity. He has mastered the art of design efficiency, cost effective design and has reinvented himself with time.

Apart from his success as an architect in the field Hafeez has got over 100 National and international recognitions for excellence in design and contribution to architecture. Not only was he stated as "The Man who draws India" by New York times but also has been awarded Padma Bhushan by Government of India for his works.

Taking opportunity of the potential of Archventure Ar. Hafeez Contractor was invited to share his success stories, philosophy and wisdom with the budding architects and widen their perspectives through an interactive session.

Ar. Hafeez's talk comprised of two parts. The first part of the presentation focused on the learnings from the field to be a successful architect while the second part was focused on sensitizing the students for sustainable development. In the first part Ar. Hafeez discussed "***What is not taught in the College***".

He gave **eight dictates** to the students to make their mark in the field and *get the job*. He supported his dictates with good set of examples to elaborate on the points.

First dictate: *What Client wants.* He stated that it is important to provide what client wants or aspires else you may lose the client/job in no time. He gave the example of his client Osho and his International meditation Resort in Pune. How he deciphered his clients aspirations from a stamp sized photo from a magazine and few words written on a chit of paper.

Second dictate: *How to beat the arithmetic?* Supported by the example of a housing project where the client was fixed with the room sizes and he as an architect had to solve the issue of providing balconies and circulation with the limited area left.

Third dictate: *Give free advice.* He stated that “Your talent has to be known. You have to be known”. To project your talent one must not hesitate to give free advice. He showed his project for Narayana Murthy co-founder of Infosys, Center for Excellence in Pune. Another example was the Imperial towers in Mumbai, a successful story of slum redevelopment.

Fourth dictate: *Reinvent Yourself.* He believes that one must not leave the project because there is no scope to do much in it. NIFT Mumbai on a linear site with time and site constraints was another successful example.

Fifth dictate: *Speed.* He said that the client wants Speed, Money, Constructability and economy. If You are able to deliver the requirements at a faster speed you have won the battle.

Sixth dictate: *Options.. Options.. Options..* He stated that we have to learn a lot from the concept of “Salesman dance”. Best of our designs would be trashed and we have to be ready for that. We have to be prepared for more and more ideas for one project to win the competition.

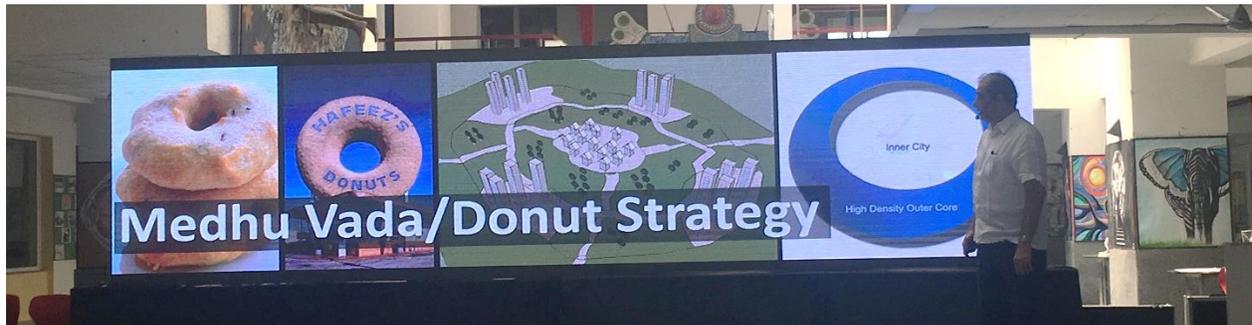
Seventh dictate: *Embrace Change.* He stated that no project situation is perfect and the things are bound to change. We must have the ability to embrace the change and come up with the solutions to tackle them.

Final dictate: *Now or Never.* Never say no to a client. Its an inverted pyramid. Small becomes big, Scope becomes no scope. He showed his project of DLF phase V in Gurugram, a large scale development. Where he fought his way to convince the authorities to plan for high rise towers instead of row houses to provide lush green space in the center of the city.



With his final dictate he marked the end of the first part of his presentation. He had shared his experiences from the field and gave the students an idea of how things happen in the market. As mentioned earlier the second part of his presentation was focused on sustainable architecture.

He started by mentioning that **“Land is a precious commodity that cannot be produced”**. He said that the environment is the center of everything. Cities are expanding endlessly. Cities are eating farm land and farm land are eating forests. We need compact high density cities for better taxation which would further help in better infrastructure. He shared his idea of development which he called **‘Hafeez’s Donut’**. This concept was about preservation of land with development. According to Ar. Hafeez if we don’t pressurize the inner cities with more population and infrastructure and rather create a green buffer around it and then create new high density outer core around it, we can create cities with better economic viability and livability.



The Donut Strategy: Inner core city with lesser FSI surrounded by green buffer and outer high density core with higher FSI.



Emphasizing on the global warming he stated that ***We don’t inherit the Earth from our ancestors, We borrow it from our children.*** He said that we need to *Ask the Right Question*. Every architecture style was a result of changing times and with the present need and time we need to come up with a New Architectural Style which he called as **“Zero Waste Architecture”**. He further focused on the need of sustainable and green architecture and discussed that how even a small detail of placement of a kitchen or toilet and compact designs can help in cost and material reduction, another small way of sustainable development. Moving further in his discussion he mentioned how compact designs are important as land is a limited resource. Thus to cater to such a huge population and to fulfil the dream that *every Indian must have a house* we need to utilize the full potential of the land, try to build in the new style of ‘Zero waste architecture’.

After this wonderful and inspirational talk with the students Ar. Hafeez Contractor had an interactive discussion with the students. He answered their questions about the market, philosophy and future of architecture. The students were mesmerized and excited with the conversation.



The day ended with the prize distribution in the presence of all the eminent authorities, faculties and the students.

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