

Mona Doctor-Pingel

STUDIO NAQSHBANDI

It was 1987 when, in her third year at CEPT, Ahmedabad, Mona Doctor-Pingel went to Auroville for the first time. She was there to meet German architect Poppo Pingel, a name Laurie Baker had suggested when he met her at NASA Chennai and learnt of her interest in low-cost housing. This visit, she says, marked the beginning of an “unexplored territory of architecture that comes from life’s inner aspirations and the context of the landscape around.” She kept coming back, eventually settling there in 1990 and setting up Studio Naqshbandi five years later “to experiment and explore the many facets of architecture, interior design and landscape”.

For the Master in Appropriate Technology, Flensburg University, sustainability is not a discrete layer that you add to life, but life itself. The inside-outside relationships that her creations enjoy – take the absolutely charming Temple Tree Retreat at Kulilapalayam, Auroville, for instance – are deliberate (or should one say, natural), as Doctor-Pingel likes to see the built-form complete within its milieu rather than in isolation. Another key guiding principle is the creation of healthy buildings, taking into account factors like electromagnetic fields, use of natural materials and earth energies.

Though most of Doctor-Pingel’s work is centred around Auroville – “I would rather take up challenging and interesting projects here, than regular construction work” – she is working on an Integral Yoga Centre of a management university in Surat and a residential project in Bengaluru.

Besides teaching at various architecture schools and hands-on workshops for design students, the architect is also part of a US-India collaborative research programme to promote innovation in building energy efficiency contributing to significant reduction in energy use in both nations.

Currently, she is also working on a series of monographs on the works of pioneering architects of Auroville, who have dedicated a major part of their life and work to this living experiment. The first in this series, on Poppo Pingel, was released at CEPT by BV Doshi. 



INSPIRATIONAL STRUCTURES

- ◆ Golconde dormitory, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.
- ◆ Padmanabhapuram palace, near Trivandrum.
- ◆ Deir el-Bahari and mortuary temple of Hatshepsut in Egypt.
- ◆ Gandhi Ashram, Sabarmati, Ahmedabad, by Charles Correa.
- ◆ Taj Mahal, Agra.
- ◆ Palitana temple complex, Gujarat.
- ◆ Borobudur, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.