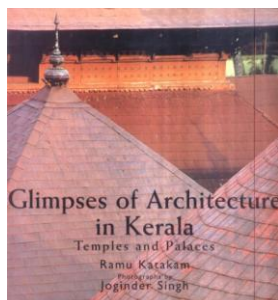


BOOK REVIEW



Glimpses of Architecture in Kerala: Temples and Palaces

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It's not always that one finds a book that visually allows you to traverse through the traditional heritage of a region and gain a sense of the place of that region without having to visit the place physically.

This book is about the temples and palaces in Kerala; a unique region of India. Kerala is a gloomy yet peaceful and touching place where history and religion are pervasive and present in all walks of life. Its architectural heritage and the buildings, particularly of the high tradition of making palaces and temples show how a vernacular tradition has evolved interacting with environmental forces fashioned by culture, religion and customs over the years. Kerala had become so ingrained in this rich past and its society has been enriched through these buildings across the centuries. This book amply demonstrates this fact.

The book identifies the soul and sense of Kerala which it presents to the reader through a series of colourful images. By doing so, it gives the reader a sense of the region to understand its defining character, space and form instead of a comprehensive record. Nevertheless, its representations of the places such as *Padmanabhapuram* palace, and *Sri Ramaswamy Temple*, *Thripprayar* are rich in every sense of inspiring the readers to appreciate the sensitivity expressed by the makers of those vernacular buildings.

As the author says, although outwardly the temples are similar, each has its own identity. The variations in Idols are fascinating. Buildings are decaying and arts works are peeling off. Nevertheless, restoration and preservation of these buildings have not been taken seriously. The author adds personal experiences of getting to the places making it more readable and more imaginable. Although the book is not seriously examining every detail of a building or their constructions, it offers as the titles says, 'glimpses' in to their appearances and inner chambers thus producing a collage of spatial experiences to be expected in and around the buildings. Undeniably, read the book and you will be most likely tempted to visit the places. This is perhaps what the author experienced and expected others to experience too.

This book was expected to draw attention to these magnificent works of architecture so that the future generations will have the opportunity to admire the works of their forefathers. In that sense, this book has achieved what it has set it to do.

Revathi Prasannan, a native of Kerala but lived in Bahrain, graduated as an architect from the University of Bahrain and now works in the United Arab Emirates.