

IT'S CARVED IN STONE

GAUTAM SUNDER
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He's one of the true torch bearers of Indian culture and tradition — ingeniously evolving with the times, making modern and ancient meet half way and reincarnating his ancestors' beliefs and principles. And he does it all with the deft touch of a knife and chisel.

Sthapati K. Dakshinamoorthy finished his sculpting course over 30 years ago — but did he imagine then that he would go on to become one of India's foremost temple architects, creating masterpieces across the world that would popularise our rich heritage?

"As a kid, I was inspired by my father who himself was a sculptor — Sthapati S.K. Achary, who designed the world famous Vivekananda Memorial in Kanyakumari. I used to be able to paint, sketch and sculpt meticulously well even as a school student and was quite surprised by how well I took to the art. I later understood that it was in my DNA. My ancestors were the pre Vedic race of Vaastu Shilpis, spoken of in the *vedas*, *puranas* and *itihasa*, and it was upto me to keep up their legacy," says Dakshinamoorthy.

He started his profession in 1983, aware all the while that the concept of temple architecture was in decline. "One needs dedication, love and involvement to make it in a

field like this. When we take tours to remote areas or overseas, we forget about families and relationships, and focus whole-heartedly on the work at hand. The application of nature's principles in art is a language in itself that will live on forever, no matter where we go or reside," he remarks, sagely.

But Dakshinamoorthy is also humble enough to admit that even after decades of experience, he is still learning and trying to reach the levels that the ancient legendary sculptors once immortalised. "Even with all the advancement in science and technology, our skill levels still fall below their prestigious works. These monuments are the true remnants of those times, and I'll do all I can to preserve them," he muses.

The founder of Vivek Vedic Architects, Dakshinamoorthy also oversees the operations of the Vaastu Vedic Research Foundation, which was left in his charge by the renowned heritage expert Dr. V. Ganapati Sthapati. His main motive is to continue their international research in securing the future of ancient relics, and finding a balance between modern science and ancient principles.

"But we need a lot of funding to continue our work. When we go abroad to work, people are in awe of our culture, and we are paid a lot of respect, especially when I quote from our literature. One of my more memorable experiences was when I was constructing the Sri Venkateshwara temple in the UK, with granite. We carved it from stone and transported it to England. We are sure that the monument will find its mark in history," he says.

Sthapati K. Dakshinamoorthy, who hails from a family of temple architects, has evolved with the times, combining the traditional and contemporary expertly

