

Generosity of spirit. For those who know me, I have a brief answer, 'No, I'm not getting maudlin in my dotage.' This is not about things in general but one man in particular, and it seems particularly apt to mention it now, as the world publicly acknowledges and applauds his greatness as an architect, with the award of the Pritzker Prize, what's broadly recognized as the Nobel Prize of architecture.



My B V Doshi story has nothing to do with architecture. There are myriad of those in e-space and print. I'm walking back in memory to the first time I met the great man. I was advised that it was an interview the editor must do herself, so off to Ahmedabad I went, to meet an unassuming, khadi-clad, septuagenarian. We spoke of ships and shoes and sealing wax and ended speaking of my dream of working in craft and design. He waved an expansive arm at his garden, and said, "You see that ? I have so much space. Come ! Set up a workshop here. Follow your dream." More used to people who asked me either how I planned to pay for it, or what money I could possibly make in an unorganized market, small wonder that I was blown away. And continue to be so, over the years.

In another discussion on the commercialization of life in general and the praxis of architecture in particular, he said, "I've done it, I've stuck to my principles and I've still made money. Anyone can. They must just have the will."

IFJ felicitated the great man and his work, when he turned 80. We screened the 'Doshi film' as it was (and is?) known, and he addressed us, sharing thoughts and experiences. Again, we were all touched by who he was, rather than what he had accomplished. Always supportive of an initiative he considered worthwhile, he insisted on sending us a video message at the start of our IFJ Seminar on Social Housing last year. He need not have done it. He just chose to share his genius, his goodness and the blessing of his words and presence with us. And that's the magic of Doshi. It's who he is. For me, the Pritzker is something that also happened.

I look forward to hearing from you.
Please send your thoughts to me at sylvia@ifj.co.in