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of
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Argument

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G Shankar ARCHITECT, 56 The Organic Builder

For a lover of Sylvia Plath's poetry, he is a diehard optimist. And that's what helped him endure daunting odds in the cut-throat world of builders. Shankar believes that if one has to build a home on a hill, it should be of it and not on it, a philosophy championed by the famous architect and designer Frank Lloyd Wright. A critic of 'manipulation of nature' to raise buildings, Shankar brought back to centre stage open courtyards, puja rooms and even mud houses. In Kerala, where he began his career in the early 80s, Shankar shunned marble floors and concrete roofs that had caught the fancy of the *nouveau riche*, and stunned people with attractive homes built of locally available materials, at low cost. As a people's architect, Shankar had to wait for years before he received widespread appreciation. An alumnus of Birmingham Institute of Design, he refused to be lured by commercial interests. His institution, Habitat Technology Group, has built homes and offices across the world, winning acclaim for green buildings.



"Poor people need architects too. They too must have access to technology"

CNR RAO SCIENTIST, 80 The Alchemist

A busy little junction near the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, where Rao began his career as a chemist over half a century ago, is now named after him. Rao went on to become the grand old man of Indian science, acquiring great clout and advising prime ministers, building the foundations of nanotechnology in India and institutions like the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research. One of the most decorated Indian scientists alive—notably with the Bharat Ratna last year—he is not known to be the most decorous. His shrill criticism of 'idiotic politicians', his barbs against Bangalore's infotech culture and allegations of plagiarism in his research papers have made him a figure who looms over the field of Indian science, a big man who believes in the promise of small technology.

