



## Laurie Baker: Life, Work and Writings

*Gautam Bhatia*

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Laurie Baker was born in Birmingham, England in 1917. He graduated from the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design with architecture at the age of 20. He moved to India in 1945, and was initially a part of the World Leprosy Mission, which aimed at the conversion of once used asylums into hospitals which would shelter the people suffering from the disease.

In a meeting with Mahatma Gandhi that happened in 1943, Gandhi told Baker that his knowledge of western architecture would be of very little help in India, where the rural areas needed more attention than the cities. Gandhi gave Baker his idea of building houses, saying that the materials needed to build a house should be acquired from within 5 miles of the site. This idea was to have a great impact on the architect's life a few years down the line.

During his architectural career in India, Baker became renowned for building beautiful houses with local materials. These low-cost houses were aimed at clients from the lower class and the lower-middle class. To further spread awareness about cost-effective housing in India, he founded the Center of Science and Technology for Rural Development. The Government of India recognized Baker's outstanding contributions to the country's architecture by awarding him the Padma Shri in 1990.

This book, *Laurie Baker: Life, Works And Writings*, delves deep into Baker's life and gives the readers a comprehensive view of him.

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