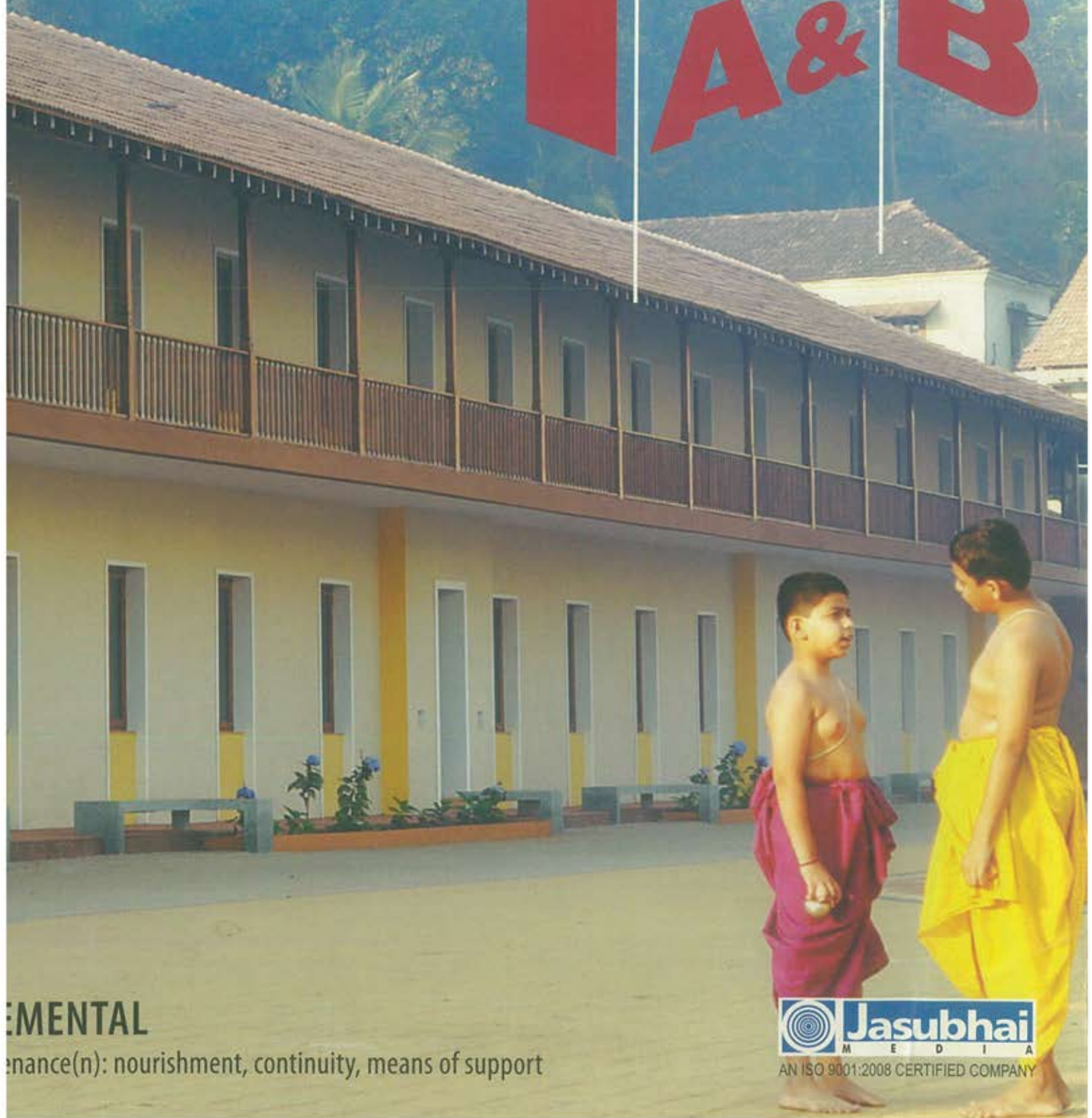


INDIAN
ARCHITECT AND
BUILDER

EXPLORE

I A & B



MENTAL

ence(n): nourishment, continuity, means of support

 **Jasubhai**
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A Piece of Memory

The enigma of a temple complex in Goa and a residence in Belgaum draws from an inherent understanding – of involvement, interaction and experience. Goa-based Rahul Deshpande & Associates explores the common ground between architecture and fragments of familiarity.

Text: Maanasi Hattangadi

Images & drawings: courtesy Rahul Deshpande & Associates

"We make our buildings and afterwards they make us." – Winston Churchill, 1924.

No one can look at buildings without looking at people in them. A long-standing thread of recognition of the way one would interact with architecture is directly linked to its making, extending to create a depth that endlessly enriches the structure. It conveys a feeling of relating, and establishing that renders it possible to connect deeper to the building – a belief of architecture's role to be rooted in more than perceived. In his two recent projects, the architecture of Rahul Deshpande, Principal Architect, Rahul Deshpande & Associates, makes one see, revealing rather than interpreting the context. The architecture stems from unique temporal dimensions of memory and familiarity and translates as its single poetic objective. Both approaches, one of inclusiveness, one of intent – mark the way the space was thought about and the way it looked – by listening to the real.

architecture





In tranquility stands the temple complex devoted to Lord Manguesh, responding to its locale.

Of Inclusiveness

The Mangueshi Temple lies at the heart of the small hamlet of Mangueshi on the Panaji-Ponda road. The Temple is dedicated to the family deity of Gaud Saraswat Brahmins – a revered centre of worship for not only them, but also a source of inspiration for spiritual pursuits for many a tourist who travel from afar.

Soaking in a history that dates back to 1744, and the quiet of the pristine countryside, the architecture embodies ethos as an aesthetic. The Temple complex is within a courtyard enclosure, at the core of which is the main Lord Manguesh temple and the two minor temples of Lord Mulkeshwar and Kalbhairav. The complex epitomises years of culture, rituals and an atmosphere where people of various traditions can mediate, pray and stay in tranquillity. It accommodates traditions and forms in three 'agarshalas' (dormitories), a 'tulsi vrindavan' (basil platform) and a magnificent 'deep stambh' (tower of light) rising in the centre across a built-up area of 2000sqm.

The temple grew through a continuum of renovations. Rahul Deshpande explains, "The passage of time brought to fore newer needs which the existing infrastructure could not cater to. Piling on the list that called for attention was the need to streamline the haphazard flow of tourists and devotees."

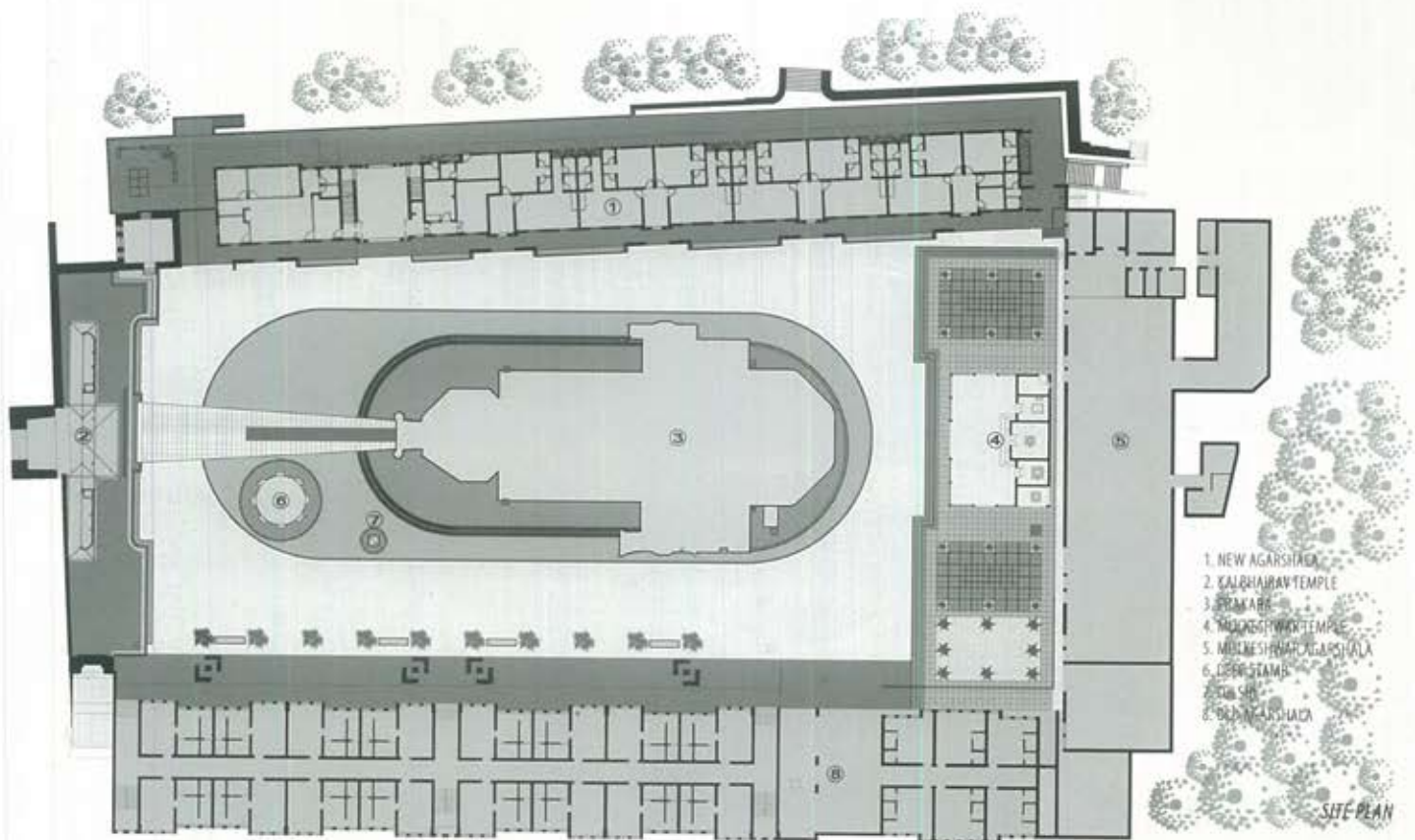
Familiarly, the Temple follows an organised chaos. The idea of architecture related to the sacred place is more felt than designed. Designing the site where his own family deity rests was where the essence of its architecture lay. "The brief," he says, "was simple. Upgrade the infrastructure. Demolish the old dilapidated Agarshala, build a new one and give a complete facelift to the complex. Better it, to make it the best."



The entrance, the Kalbhairav temple and the main temple before renovation.



The entrance is marked by the Kalbhairav temple adjoined with open roof tiled structures.



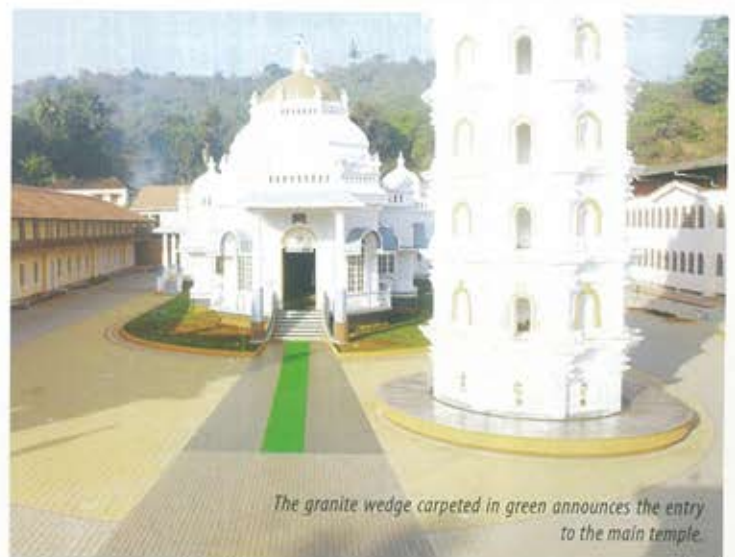
One might start designing in the most conventional way – starting with an organisational idea. But the volumes of the building speak of Rahul Deshpande's childhood memories of coming to the temple. The whole idea perhaps was not to be bound by traditional limits, but to explore greater nuances of a personal instinct that guides one around. The spirited response took shape under three principles – a sense of territorial order, a visible hierarchy of structures and creation of a climate of calmness and reverence. With the first phase of upgradation complete, Rahul explains, "We wanted to maintain a sense of order without being rigid. By the creation of a virtual linearity, we succeeded in producing a flow map that was smooth, functional and pleasing."

The Kalbhairav temple, flanked by open roof tiled structures on either side, greets one at the entrance of the temple complex. Without limiting the view of the temple, the designers have organised the chaos of the basic etiquette of removing shoes and cleansing of hands and feet, carried out before entering the temple complex. Disbanding the earlier feeling of shoes having taken over the space, a rising slab conceals shoes lined up in open-end storages for easy access. The architecture grows inward. The initial approach was to restructure the existing notion of the 'prakara'. Stretches of land are contoured to their functions – steps lead to the temple square and a wedge-shaped granite flooring partly carpeted in green blatantly catches attention as a symbolic welcome to the main temple.

Here, the architecture interacts. The divide was between the existing and the natural flow of events. The resolute element of the structural style of the sloping gradient that hindered the progress when the 'rath' was pulled was resolved. The premise of the prakara was chaotic in absence of a systemised solution; it was recomposed with informal encounters with architecture. Thus, providing a backdrop to grander elements of design. The architects have



Based on the tradition of purification ritual, the open roof structures accommodate a shoe stand and place to wash.



The granite wedge carpeted in green announces the entry to the main temple.



The seating arrangements and landscaped corners contribute to the ambience conducive to praying and relaxing.

used the rituals to trigger subtle and well-timed alignment of landscaping and interspersing structures to carve a path and orchestrate the devotees' way around the temple complex.

The air is tranquil and quiet. The landscape observes unaffected by the inflow of worshippers. Its designing determines the architectural identity and purpose as much as the main temple itself. It abstains from opulence and seeks to ensure comfort of every visitor. Benches attached linearly to patches of green hug the periphery of the complex, affording a moment to meditate, pray or just drink in the view. The easy wanderings in the temple square are marked with coloured paving tiles, patterned at the edges like a 'rangoli'. Landscaped lawns are fringed at the edge of the temple complementing the flowering greens of shrubs, perennial flowering plants used in the rituals of the temple placed in the design. The planning strategy also layered aesthetics across quintessential elements of the sacred rites. The modest setting of the

deep stambh was framed in a raised circular platform to bring in lightness and the holy plant of Tulsi in the Tulsi Vrindavan was re-enclosed in a shell of glass and granite bringing about a trim, contemporary minimalist look.

Tying everything together in one design gesture, the architect updated the Kalbhairav temple, the Mulkeshwar temple and the agarshalas to settings that were contemporary but approachable too. Each was given the attention and detailing it needed. The delicate interventions introduced the inlaid fabric within the former structure not as a replacement but as co-existent. The plurality of the planning is echoed in Rahul's words: "The elements of modernity introduced had to co-exist amicably with the traditional characteristics of the temple complex. The architectural interventions of the smaller temple structures, the agarshalas, had to be addressed. The incompatibility of the co-existence in the prakara had to be addressed. The incompatibility



Landscape elements are carved out in the layout.



The paths were laid in a mosaic pattern with different coloured tiles like a 'rangoli'.



The Tulsi Vrindavan was rebuilt artistically.

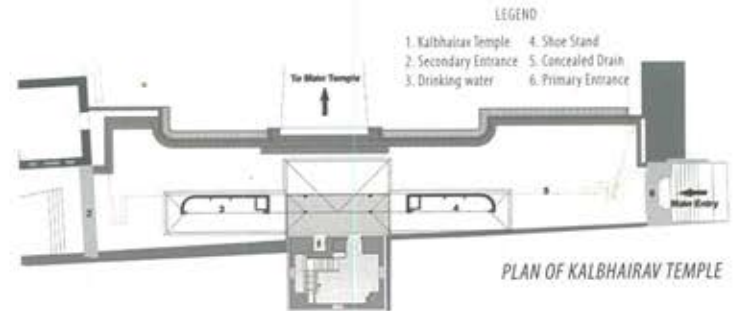
"The final outcome was an approach where, 'the context and expression are contemporary, but the language still vernacular' – Rahul Deshpande

which were screaming visually had to be toned down. The magnanimity and dominance of the main Lord Mangesh had to be highlighted while the character and the attitude of the minor temples had to carry a character of being subdued and subservient to it."

The Kalbhairav temple in its original state was a motley of ornamented architecture and as Rahul explains, "The deity seemed imprisoned behind a hideous grill door". An order was restored by breaking down the existing concrete roof and manipulating the roof as an extension of the tiled roof of the shoe stand. The interiority was civilised by minimal intervention in the flooring, columns and seat of the deity and simplicity in granite and vitrified-tile flooring. The collective impulse is to breathe in balance to the existential multiplicity.



The design evokes a clean aesthetic in the temple square.



One of the restorations for Kalbhairav temple was a skilful manipulation of breaking down the original roof and extending the new roof on both the sides.

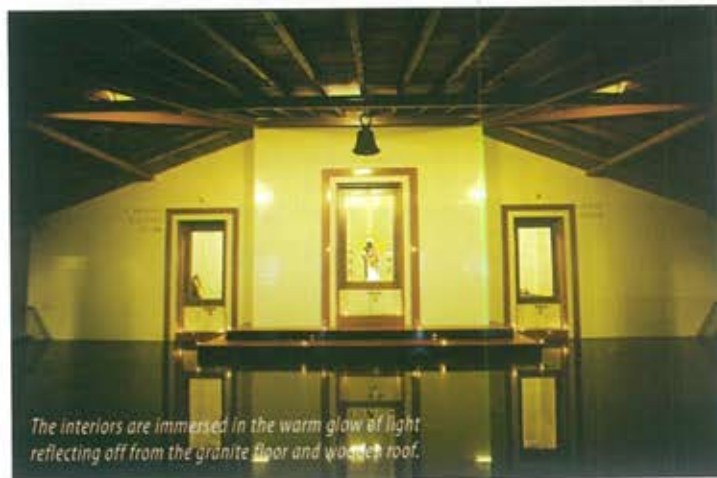
Stark memories of incensed smoke occupying the corners of Mulkeswar Temple amidst the praying devotees inspired Rahul Deshpande to break the elementary framework of the structure to avoid the constraints of the original fabric and recreate it. The values are embodied in its open layout and the muted material palette. Peripheral columns hold up an expanse of wooden Mangalore-tiled roof. Underneath, the interiors are relatively subdued with the wooden ceiling bouncing off a warm glow onto the jet-black granite and add to the lighted aura of the deity. Florally engraved doors enclose the sanctified space opening out to a semi-open area outside. Symmetrical steps leading down give way to landscaped platforms. The green insert composed of plants believed to be preferred by the deities is multi-perspectival with an inclination to invoke and educate.



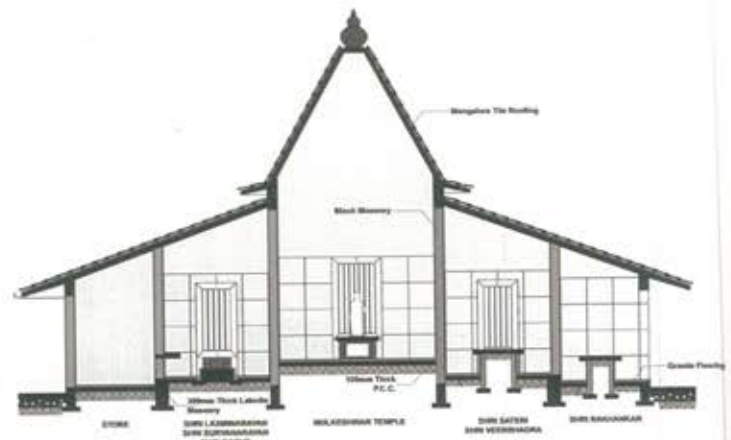
The Mulkeswar Temple before renovation.



Steps and seating arrangements envelop the Mulkeswar temple.



The interiors are immersed in the warm glow of light reflecting off from the granite floor and wooden roof.



SECTION - MULKESHWAR TEMPLE



PLAN - MULKESHWAR TEMPLE

- LEGEND
- 1. Store Room
 - 2. Shri Laxminarayan
 - 3. Shri Suryanarayan
 - 4. Shri Sateni
 - 5. Shri Venkbadra
 - 6. Mandapa
 - 3. Mulkeswar Temple



The former Mulkeswar Temple was demolished entirely to avoid the claustrophobic constraints.



The new agarshalas boast of a contemporary aesthetic and a roof on the lines of Goan architecture.

The agarshala linear block, as indicative subtly in the exterior, containing the accommodation fans out to house an administrative block with an office on one side and stores and meeting rooms on the other. Celebrating the luxuriance of space, inactive kitchenettes, dark and dingy passages were sliced into new arrangements – air-conditioned compact rooms with attached restrooms and airy corridors connecting the 13 suites and 13 regular rooms. As Rahul says, “A dark narrow, never-ending claustrophobic passage, with rooms on either side is definitely what I wanted to avoid in the new agarshalas. The experience of staying around the deity had to be refreshing and stimulating.”

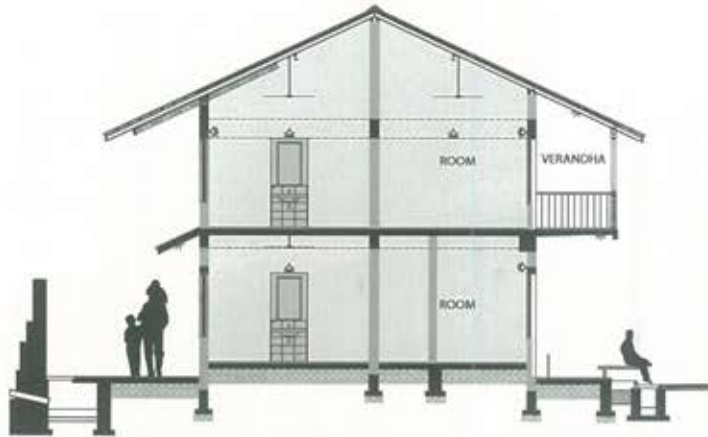
Annexed to the Mulkeshwar Temple is the Mulkeshwar Agarshala; a requisite space until the dramatic arrival of the contemporary outlook of the main agarshala. “The old and new agarshala were poles apart. Prior

to the renovation, the agarshalas brimmed with countless windows. The drainage pipes and electricity lights hung aimlessly on the façade,” recalls the architect. In harmony with the meaningful idea of aesthetic combined with function, the refurbishment reflects a design process of wrapping the services in a new shell replete with finishing the concrete ceiling with tiled roofs; extending as the coherent reinterpretation of the structures around. Stolid and stark, the semblance of the agarshalas is outward looking, embodying visual connections from everywhere.

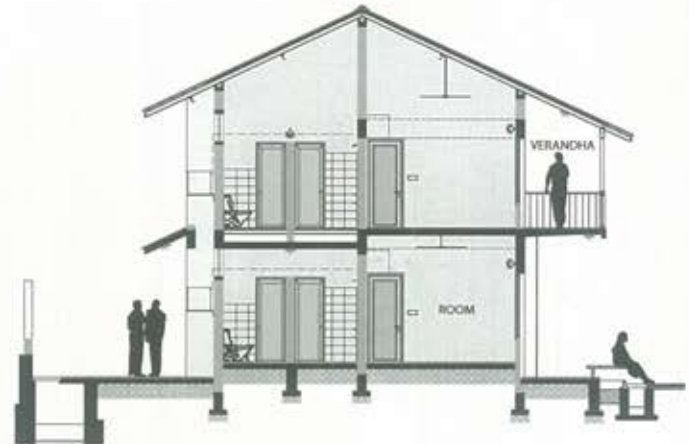
The materiality partially veils the sharp contemporariness found in the newness. The expression is adaptable to the exploration of wood to render “a bucolic and traditional appeal”. Dyed in warm overtones of wood, the wooden columns, the railings and the eaves sit beautifully in their artisanry.



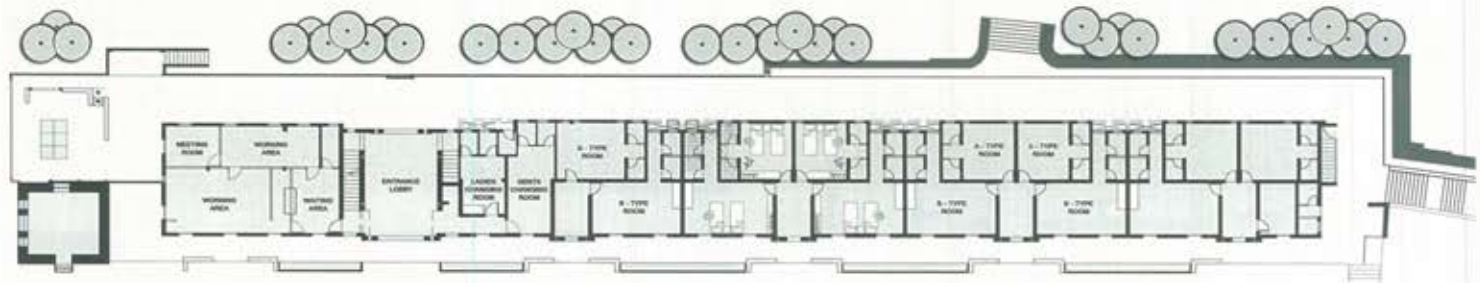
The detailed aspects of the agarshala include a cantilevered balcony to observe rituals, and wooden railings and columns made of the finest wood - Sal - and simple finishes.



SECTION 1



SECTION 2



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Everything about the two smaller temples and agarshalas seems new and exciting. It all lies in the detailing, the change does not contradict the Temple's ethos but the impact is there. Spaces are interactive and inviting. The design gently unfolds into a recreation-cum-community centre, inscribing multiple activities through swings, chessboards and niches to enjoy the pervading peace. Framing the whole idea are the principles of temples that the architects invoke – "Looking at it, pages of history roll back to the one which describes how temples, centuries ago, were important places of informal learning and social gatherings."

As one walks back, the powerful sense of unity is visible. The scale seems wider and albeit with a contemporary feel, the reference to the traditional seems evident. Concerted efforts, made to adopt symbolic designs and traditions, are pointed out by Rahul; "Be it the window grills representing lord Shiva or the shape of the eaves board which represents the trifurcated 'bel' leaf, the leaf offered to lord Shiva in rituals - they all harbour religious significance. The rangoli patterns adorning the doors of the agarshalas as



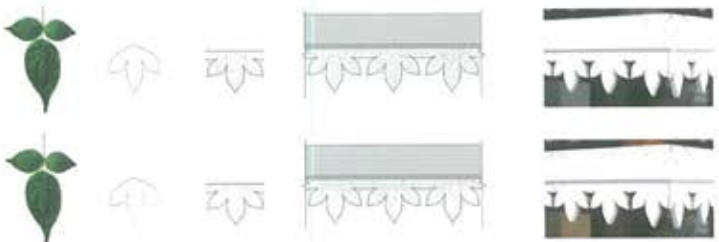


Symbolic patterns can be found on the grill relating to Shiva's love for dance as the shape has motifs of the Ganga, the moon, a coiled snake around neck, and the instrument that Shiva used to dance to when played.

well as the tile formation in front of the main temple too form striking patterns. In a touch of symbolism, the temple of the deity Kalbhairav, known to be the protector in the night, has black granite fitted onto the walls with floral tiles festooning the deity." It not only amplifies the feeling of reverence but also of ownership – by the deity and the worshippers. Silent corners come alive at night sublimely awash in bluish-white light tinged with flickering yellows. The surrounding remains a space in motion and as an understanding, the lighting was imbued highly anticipating the assembling of devotees at night to perform the post-sunset rituals. The favoured colours of Lord Shiva - blue on white punctuated by the luminous greenery - highlight the startling piece of sculptural form of the Main Temple. The walls of the smaller temples and agarshalas gather pools of light and glow in their incandescence. The immersive experience is softened by evocative simplicity of earthen lamps twinkling from niches impressed in a pattern in the walls, along the steps, trailing the deep stambh, tulsi vrindavan, landscaped platforms and paths.



DESIGN FOR THE GRILL



'Bel' leaf offered to Lord Mangesh and its manifestation as a design element into the eaves board.



Soft light from earthen lamps illuminate the surroundings at night.



The recreational area behind the agarshalas.



The walls of the Agarshala are focused in incandescent yellow glow.



The earthen lamps are placed in niches and apertures in the walls, Deepstamb and along pathways.

The design continues like a discovery - each manoeuvre reveals its subtleties as one gradually explores. The domestically scaled forms break down obvious associations and make something more of them. The renovation is versatile, synonymous of new experiences. It follows the simplicity of the physical, cultural and temporal context but the vibe follows a pragmatic methodology in design. "The need for modernity lurked from every corner," says Rahul. "The final outcome," he adds, "was an approach where, 'the context and expression are contemporary, but the language still vernacular'". It underlines the site-responsive sensitivity of the architects to largely dictate the form and function integrating the quality of the former traditions. It could have been just another sacred place to be seen but engaging with these narratives, it is representative of much more - a thought emphasised by a devotee's remark to him, "There is no one residing at Mount Kailash anymore; who would? When you have bettered it at Mangueshi." The project is best understood through its details, encompassing and inclusive of the former yet comfortably contained by Rahul Deshpande's own connects to it. Each space offers a measured understanding of its essence and its elements. And that power of connection makes it finite.

FACT FILE:

Project	:	Revitalisation of Mangueshi Temple Complex
Location	:	Mangueshi, Ponda - Goa
Architect	:	Rahul Deshpande & Associates
Principal Architect	:	Rahul Deshpande
Structural Design Team	:	Rahul Deshpande, Anil Palekar, Archana Mahambare Karpe, Nisarg Gaude
Client	:	Mangueshi Devasthan
Project Management Consultancy	:	Rahul Deshpande & Ranjeesh Gopal
Contractor	:	M/s Omkar Constructions Co. and M/s Pankaj Electricals & Engineering Services
Cost of Project	:	₹500 lakh
Year of Completion	:	January 2010

Of Intent

A suburban context in Belgaum nestles in it the quiet and picturesque house of Pankaj & Vaishali Bhatkande. Past the wooden gates, the driveway is carved alongside a generous landscaped garden. Centred around a rising palm tree, the stretch of green dotted with shrubs and sculptures embraces a sense of openness and tranquillity. The low-slung form of the house with sloping roofs unassumingly overlooks the peace. Balancing the built and un-built, the serene and still environ seeps in; inscribing an absolute idea of the architecture. Designing more than the usual peripheral and contextual concerns, Rahul Deshpande brings in a perceptual outlook that sets the experience of living. Pankaj Bhatkande, having known Rahul as a childhood friend, commissioned this dream house and this association layered the personalised tenor of the design. The thought expanded beyond a brief, but was poised around the personality of Pankaj Bhatkande. Elaborating on it, Rahul says, "Pankaj, since our graduation, diversified in many businesses and worked 24x7, carrying with him a lot of stress. I wanted the house to be a stress buster, a stress reliever where spaces would be welcoming, soothing and calming. The whole ambience had to be therapeutic".

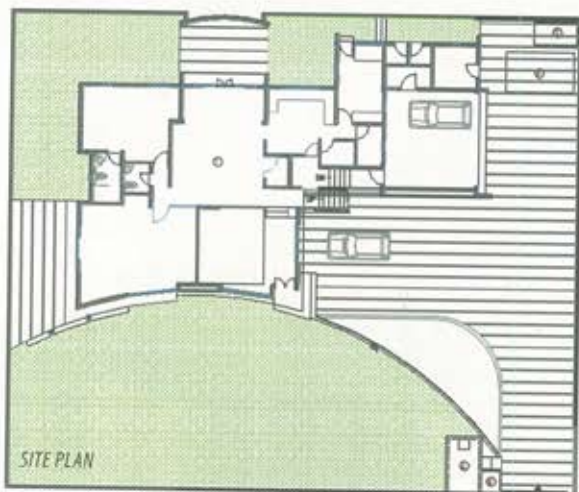
A sweeping arc pronounces the front façade of the house. Its lean profile encloses the porch encompassing ambiguous settings within the view – the beckoning open lawns and a flight of low steps lined by potted plants and artifacts ascending to the entrance of the house. The lush green of this landscape provides a stark contrast to the whites in the broad horizontal form of the house. Comfortably in a double-storey layout, the dwelling enfolds the formal sitting, living-dining, studio, kitchen, powder room, pooja, guest bedroom, garage and servants room on the ground floor and the master bedroom, kids' bedrooms and music room-cum-gym on the first floor in an open-ended exploration of 700sqm plot area.



The playful contrast of green manicured lawns and white walls lends a soothing environment.



Set within a picturesque context, the low horizontal form of the house invokes peace.



- LEGEND
1. GROUND FLOOR PLAN
 2. SOAK PIT
 3. SEPTIC TANK
 4. SUMP TANK
 5. PUMP HOUSE

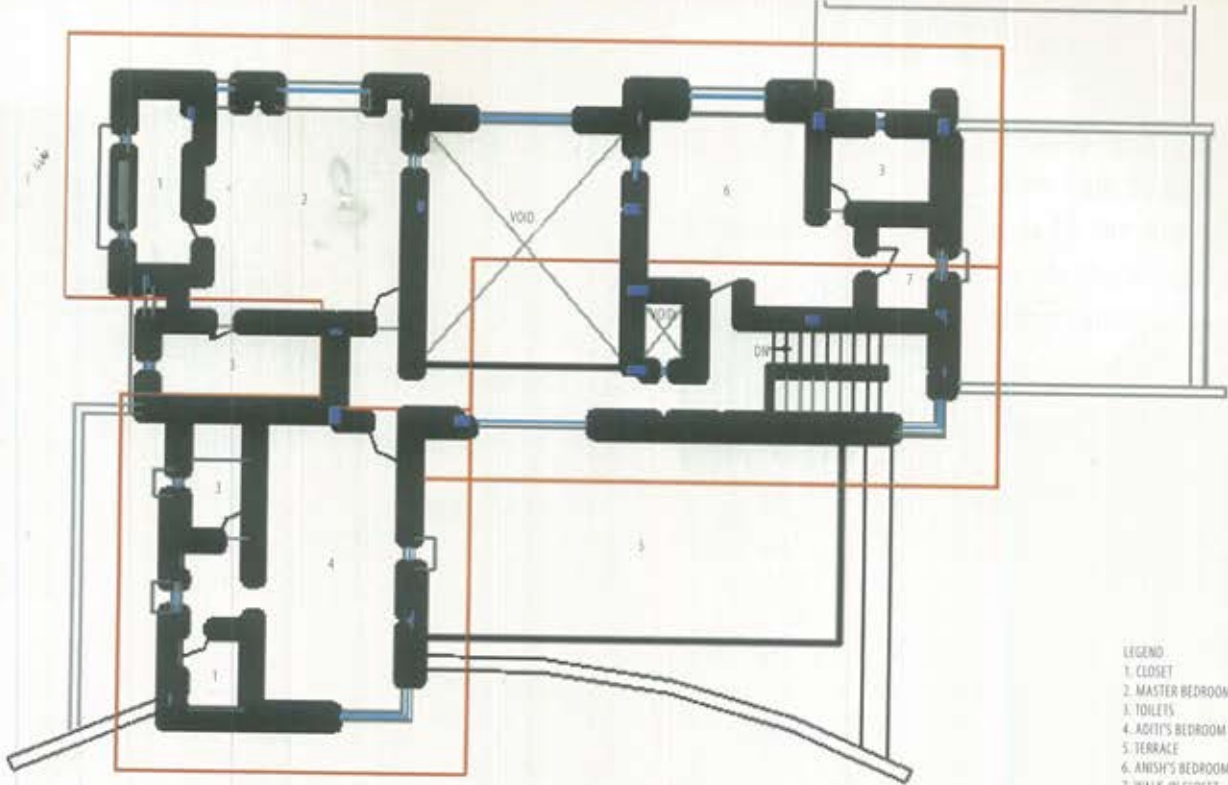
Upon entering the house, the deliberately simplistic detailing is obvious in the characteristic formal sitting room to the left. Easeful and independent, the sitting room in an alcove-like gesture is staggered at a lower level but maintains a visual connect to the house over a short wall and eventually recedes out to the main living room through a short flight of steps. The main level acts as a kind of podium and the design progressively reveals stairs winding to the first floor from the garage entrance. The volume amplifies as one reaches the main living-dining room. Light floods in through the large window which captures the ever-changing colours of the day in the backdrop of coconut palms in the rear garden. Soft shades of furnishings and paintings conclude the relaxed picture. The circulation plan allows all rooms to orientate towards this nexus. Interlocking with the rooms like the study, pooja, guest bedroom, kitchen in the south-eastern corner, the living-dining as the architects put it, "virtually acts like a courtyard or chowk."



Simple lines and silent materiality complete the aesthetic of the house.

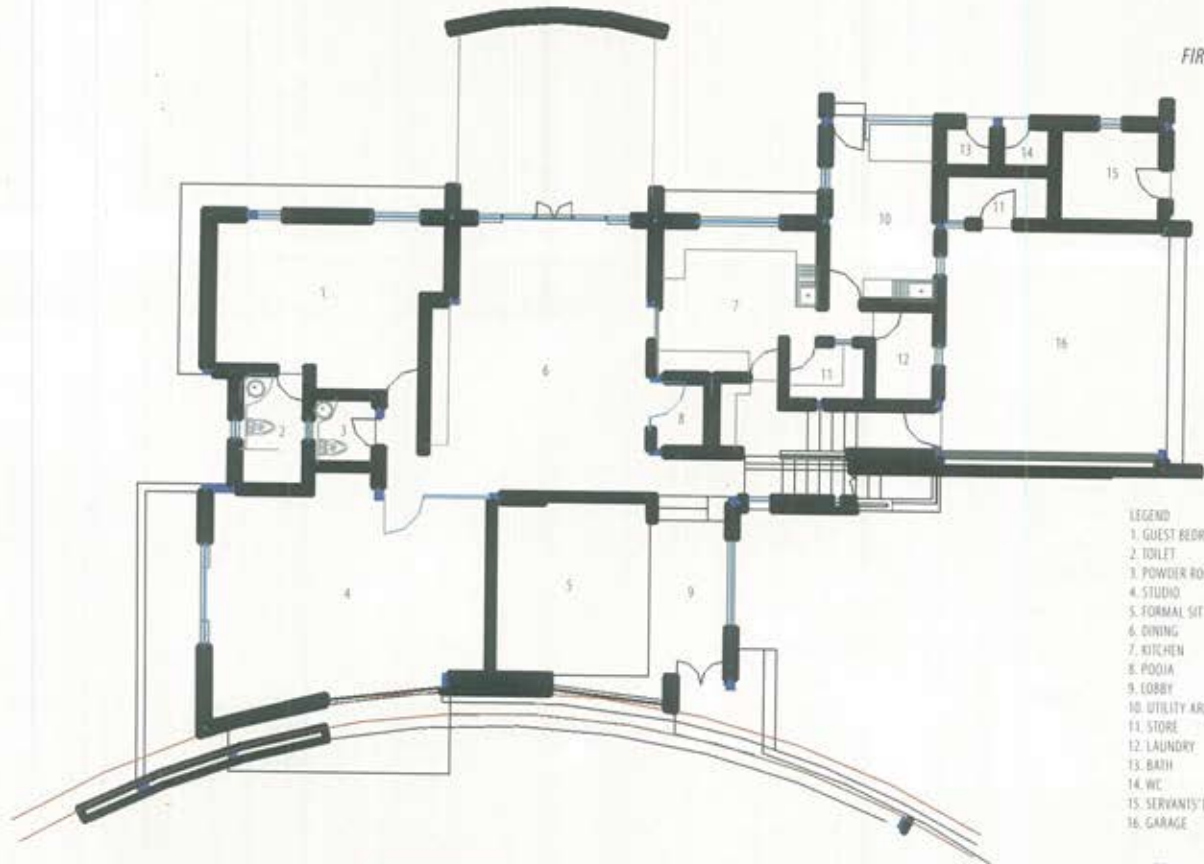


The plan unfolds slowly; an arc frames the porched entrance to the house.



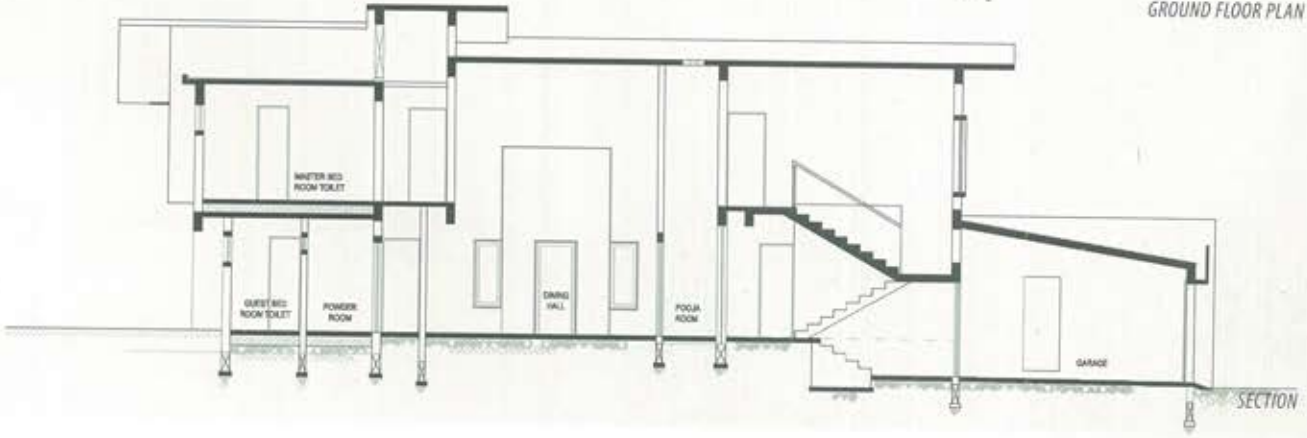
- LEGEND
- 1. CLOSET
 - 2. MASTER BEDROOM
 - 3. TOILETS
 - 4. ADITI'S BEDROOM
 - 5. TERRACE
 - 6. ANISH'S BEDROOM
 - 7. WALK-IN CLOSET

FIRST FLOOR PLAN



- LEGEND
- 1. GUEST BEDROOM
 - 2. TOILET
 - 3. POWDER ROOM
 - 4. STUDIO
 - 5. FORMAL SITTING
 - 6. DINING
 - 7. KITCHEN
 - 8. POOJA
 - 9. LOBBY
 - 10. UTILITY AREA
 - 11. STORE
 - 12. LAUNDRY
 - 13. BATH
 - 14. WC
 - 15. SERVANT'S ROOM
 - 16. GARAGE

GROUND FLOOR PLAN



SECTION



Extending visual connections to the outside, glass windows look out to the surroundings.



The entrance is gradually stepped leading unhurriedly into the house.



Situated a level lower, the formal sitting room is intimate and connects to the rest of the house through a low wall and a short flight of steps.



The living-dining space is characteristically spacious and opens out into other spaces.

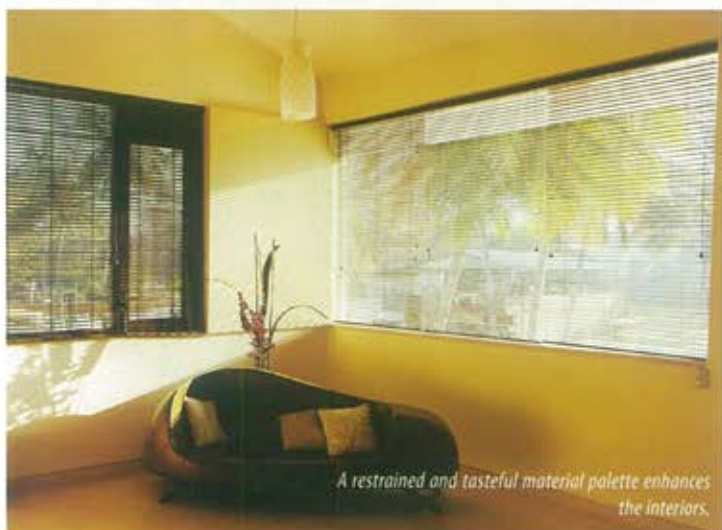
"Earlier Pankaj would carry a lot of stress back home and get cranky. Now I am surprised to see him smiling by the time he is in the bedroom to take a wash: I want to believe it's the house which brings that smile". – Vaishali Bhatkande



The studio, clad in vibrant materials comprises of a small bar, home theatre and seating.



Light filters in through the wooden trellis out on the deck.



A restrained and tasteful material palette enhances the interiors.

As the radius extends back to the rooms, interstitial spaces compose climatic order inside. Continually present, the externalised spaciousness is illustrated in the strategising rationale of the architect, "An important design intervention is that the vistas from the rooms are so manipulated that the visual noise of the surrounding structures is cut off by strategically landscaping the garden and the boundary walls. Though the house is within the city an implicit feeling serenity is unconsciously imposed. Therapy in action." Meandering on the other side, one comes across the kitchen in the southeast corner; its position principled by Vaastu. In large view of the activities, the kitchen is internally framed by a store, laundry, wash area, independent entry for the domestic help and modern appliances.

On the fringes of the living and dining lies the studio teamed with washed wooden shades in the flooring and panelled walls. Asserting a divergent aesthetic, the studio inclusive of a small bar, home theatre and seating amidst warm and vibrant photographs and paintings, injects an unwinding feel. Leisurely, the design moves out to a shaded wooden deck replete with a wooden trellis interacting playfully with the incoming sunlight. Peace finds one unexpectedly in the niches and corners of the house – in the form of soft light and greens that the planning envelops.

The upper floor accommodates the bedrooms, a music room-cum-gym. Each room's dynamics are an insight to its occupant's lifestyle wherein little details chosen by the designer transpire as an imprint of their identity. The kids' bedrooms are distinctively vivid according to their preferences. The master bedroom is hermetic, reviving comfort and well-being in the southwest discretely. It boasts of an elegant appropriation of space with a walk-in closet and large washroom and subdued material palette.



The interiors embrace an understated luxury and airy quality effortlessly. But there is a certain element of grandeur lent through tactile, textured and modernist furnishings and paraphernalia. To complete the look and bring a homely feel without being too overtly contriving, Rahul invited architect and interior designer Bakul Joshi who, the architect mentions, was also instrumental in providing vital inputs in the overall architectural planning.

The overlay evolves to contain fluidly intersecting areas and voids – not only shared by placid cocooned spaces. The multi-utilitarian levels merge into a coherent spatial effect of extraordinary balance of ease. The building acknowledges the context wholesomely in its modest demeanour – blurring the boundaries between indoor and outdoor. The architects believe that, “the attitude of the house negotiates effectively between an outward looking



*Each bedroom reflects its occupants' preferences.
(above and side)*



The master bedroom is luxuriant in space with a walk-in closet and large washrooms.



Pauses and corners to relax and rest are interspersed with the everyday activities - a homelier feel to the space.

house and an inward looking house as and where the spaces and context so demand. At no juncture do you feel boxed in as the corners of the house open out, as if to release the tension built up at every corner." Concurring with the notion, Vaishali Bhatkande elaborates, "Earlier Pankaj would carry a lot of stress back home and get cranky. Now I am surprised to see him smiling by the time he is in the bedroom to take a wash: I want to believe it's the house which brings that smile".

The depth of architectural prospects is not unusual but the design solidly grounds the house's presence in a regenerative concept. When moving through the house, the design wraps a skilful manipulation of scale, mass, clean simple lines and heightening dramatic views always in tandem with the sensory experience. The effect is atmospheric than a specific focus. A dialogue between intent and space, the house slowly uncovers a possibility where spatial order retreats and perceptual idea of architecture begins to take shape.

FACT FILE:

Project	:	Residential Bungalow For Mr Bhatkande
Architect	:	Rahul Deshpande & Associates
Principal Architect	:	Rahul Deshpande
Client	:	Pankaj Bhatkande
Interior Design	:	Bakul Joshi
Structural Design Team	:	Rahul Deshpande, Neela Mayekar
Project Management Consultancy	:	Rahul Deshpande.
Cost of Project	:	₹100 lakhs
Year of Completion	:	March 2010
Construction Duration	:	18 months

Personification of Space

Everything that is relevant has a place to take shape here. The architecture of both the projects is characterised by sifting through layers - of memories on one hand and interpersonal relationship on the other to define its spirit - a journey that moves from one state to another, from one condition of site to the next. Marginal and minute as its influence is, it does not promise an alternate path but threads in another perspective. Embedded in this fabric, the links are less literal than what architecture tends to be but find their stories in a new kind of involvement- where it neither rejects history nor ignores contemporary truths, where the architectural narrative sets up a gentler rhythm towards ones' life. Projects that remind one of how architecture is woven in everyday life.