

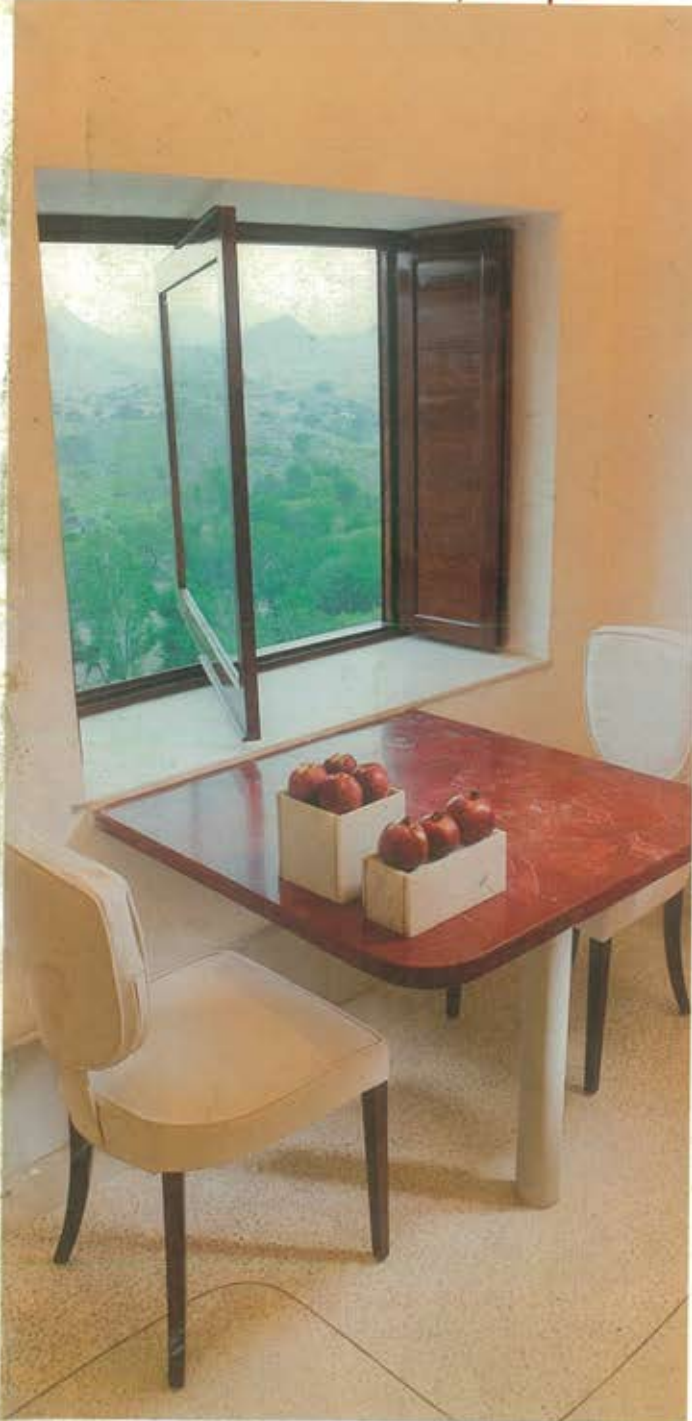
INSIDE OUTSIDE

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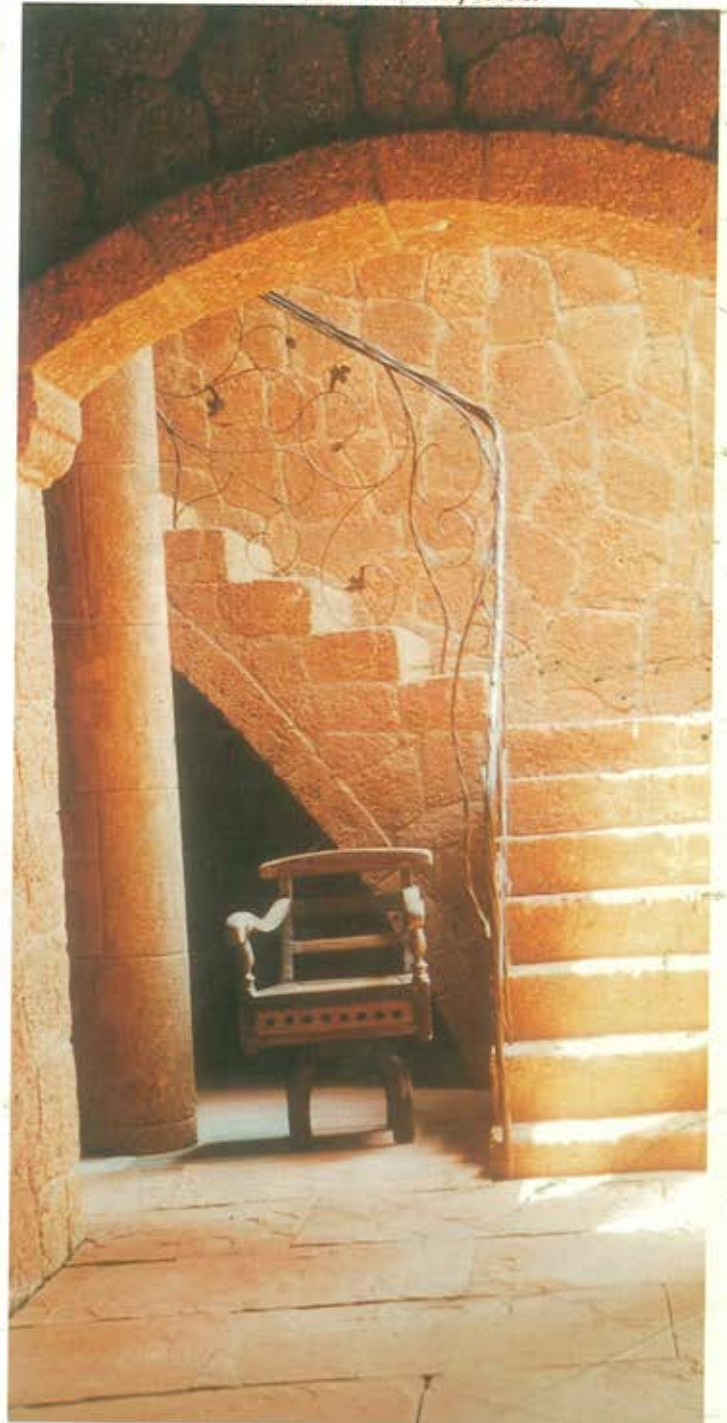
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THE INSIDE OUTSIDE DESIGNER OF THE YEAR 1999
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GOD IS IN THE DETAILS



A dark green niche in Rahul's living room displays a collage of family photographs, and opposite, a tulusi sits on a granite platform on the parapet wall of the terrace, with the church in the background.

TEXT: LATHA WARRIER

PHOTOGRAPHS: PRAKASH KANEHARE

Is less boring?

Not if one was to ask Goa-based architect Rahul Deshpande who not only believes in architectural minimalism but goes on to make the most of it, focussing on the details instead.

- We feature his own home, an office and two buildings for D-Link India Ltd

designed by him.

Rahul Deshpande prides himself on having happy clients and his wife, he points out, is one of them. The house that Rahul built for his wife Shilpa, a chartered accountant, besides earning him brownie points at home, is an epitome of all that Rahul believes in as an architect. The use of basic elements of design to the best possible advantage, absolute freedom in his work, attention to details and most importantly client satisfaction, are all showcased in the Deshpande residence.

Situated in an apartment building in Merces, Goa, the Deshpande home is spacious,

open and yet paradoxically private. In keeping with Rahul's belief in using only the most basic of elements in architecture, the design revolves around the use of a straight line. As a result, the apartment is starkly simple and the distinctly linear arrangement makes for a visually neat and no-nonsense look.

Another trademark feature of Rahul's work, which comes across clearly in his design for his house, is the incorporation of natural elements present around the site. The terrace opens out onto the lake, and palm trees are within easy reach. Huge french windows in the living room, which open out onto the terrace help beckon





these elements into the house. A niche in one corner of the living room adds a touch of green, heightening the effect of the beautiful surroundings. The green corner forms a backdrop for old family pictures which connect the family with their past and makes for an interesting conversation piece as well. Simple cane furniture complements the serene and scenic natural beauty. The room is conspicuously uncluttered, and the marble floor combined with Jaisalmer stone acts as a unifying feature for the rest of the house.

The living room flows into the dining area, and simple Jaisalmer stone borders demarcate the separation. Similarly the dining room opens out into the kitchen where the stone border spills across the floor and marble lines cut across it to maintain the linear look. From the dining room one spies a blue niche in the wall, which adds colour to the kitchen,



Opposite Above: The Deshpande living room complements their simple lifestyle. In keeping with the natural and serene surroundings the living room is uncluttered with simple elegant cane furniture. The huge french windows provide a scenic view of the palms and lake outside.

Opposite Below: The living room flows into the dining area. Simple Jaisalmer stone borders demarcate the separation.

Above: Shilpa, Rahul and baby Raveena on their terrace overlooking the lake and the palms.

Left: The dining room flows into the kitchen. The blue niche in the wall adds colour to the kitchen and provides a contrast to the green in the living room.



Above: The spacious kitchen with platform and cabinets with pull-out wire shelves.

Right: The storeroom with neatly arranged shelves, is accessed from the kitchen.

Opposite Above: Rahul's simplistic approach of using linear, horizontal lines is evident in the master bedroom. The colours set a tone of tranquillity.

Opposite Below Left & Centre: The dressing table in the master bedroom interspaced between two walk-in closets.

Opposite Below Right: A maximum use of space has been achieved by vertically housing the washing machine, the dryer, the ironing board and cabinets for storage of detergents and linen.



provides a contrast to the green in the living room and holds potential to evolve into something exciting.

The kitchen, which Rahul created with great care to inspire his wife to spend more time in it, is again large, uncluttered and functional. Adequate storage space has been provided, and an adjoining service room, which is tucked away in a corner, is where the major washing, storage and cleaning takes place. All over the house small private spaces have been created to make adequate provision for storage and work, including a storeroom, a laundry room and a puja room. The master bedroom contains a dressing area flanked by two huge walk-in closets with shelves, drawers and plenty of space. A carry over from the time Rahul spent pursuing his Masters in the US, the walk-in closets are merely an extension of Rahul's penchant for neatness and order.





THE OFFICE FOR EDC

The same keenness for order predominates his other projects as well and Rahul makes no bones about it. 'If there is one essential ethos that an architect must observe it is the need to create order out of chaos,' admits Rahul frankly.

A clear example of this is his project for the Entrepreneur Centre and a room for the Minister of Industry at the Economic Development Corporation (EDC). His brief was simply that the end product should not look like just another government office, and should encourage business. In Rahul's reckoning this meant several things. As a financial interface the office would have to emanate strength and confidence and would have to have a crisp atmosphere. In order to disasso-

ciate from other government offices, an air of transparency would have to be built and the colour scheme would have to be one that reflected both power and purity.

White and red were the obvious choices. The use of plenty of glass and mirrors lends a feeling of transparency to the office while straight bold lines and strong massive furniture help create a subtly authoritarian ambience that at the same time welcomes fresh entrepreneurs and yet allows no laxity. The Minister's chamber on the other hand was a complete contrast. Solemn and soothing, the chamber was designed to offer solace to people seeking counsel, while upholding the dignity of the occupant's post. Strong lines were used to draw one into the office and the Minister's table was so designed as to create a feeling of a central source of power emerging from one point.

Opposite Page: A feature that is continuously used in the design is the combination of glass and mirrors to provide transparency and to create a sense of openness and depth.

Above: A mirrored glass wall is used to enhance the entrance, create an illusion of depth and effectively display the name of the firm.



The use of plenty of glass and mirrors lends a feeling of transparency to the office while straight bold lines and strong massive furniture help create a subtly authoritarian ambience that at the same time welcomes fresh entrepreneurs and yet allows no laxity.

Opposite Above: An attempt has been made to portray a sense of power in the minister's cabin. The minister's table appears to rest on the edge of a triangular form, an illusion contributed by the use of black granite in combination with black duco. The walls look imposing with the use of teakwood skirting and jambs. The backdrop is illuminated by a square latticed window with translucent acrylic sheet, which filters in diffused natural light.

Opposite Below: A view of the conference room with large clear glass windows which bring in the outdoors.

Above: Repeated right through the design is the use of grooves in the veneered partitions and doors in the form of straight lines to symbolise authority. White is the colour used for the walls and ceilings. A beige ceramic tile flooring is interspersed with terracotta squares.



BUILDINGS FOR D-LINK INDIA LTD

Implicit faith in the architect is common to all Rahul's clients. Consequently a sketchy brief is usually what Rahul starts out with. In the first of the two buildings that Rahul built for D-Link India Ltd, the only criteria were that the structure should not create an eyesore on the traditional Goan landscape and that it should not look like a boring factory shed. With Rahul's keenness to assimilate natural features and use them to highlight the design, this posed no problem at all. Taking into consideration the existing trees, slope of the land, the presence of a shrine and the general morphology of the nearby buildings, Rahul created a structure that would retain a distinctly Goan identity but reflect the essentially mod-

ern nature of a computer factory. By dramatically experimenting with the roof and walls of the otherwise rectangular structure, the building both blends into the adjoining village skyline and yet, on closer scrutiny is surprisingly modern.

For the second building of D-Link, which was poised to bring in the new millennium, the approach had to be different. The need was to create something that was futuristic and yet retained the spirit of Goa. Allowed complete freedom, Rahul wanted the building to reflect technological sophistication. Naturally the ideas had to be new, the latest materials had to be incorporated and as a concerned citizen, an energy conscious approach had to be adopted. The resultant design was an interplay of mass and voids, the effect of which was highlighted by a combination of ceramic vitrified tiles with locally

Opposite Above, Below & This Page: Front view of the building - An exquisite interplay of mass and volume. The vertical bands of glazing merge beautifully with the interplay of tiles and laterite in the facades. Contemporary, ceramic tile clad-walls in juxtaposition with exposed laterite-walls, have been carefully worked out in the two shorter elevations. The wall clad with ceramic tiles envelope the laterite cladding behind, which meekly surrenders to its modern counterpart. The huge curved metallic roof was intentionally designed to accentuate the form of the building and also for climatic reasons. The curvilinear form and the metallic shining texture effectively reflect maximum radiation, reducing the heat intake of the building.

Opposite Centre: Architect Rahul Deshpande and KR Naik (MD, D-Link).



Above: A one-point perspective of the D-Link Lobby. The Lobby being a significant part of the establishment dealing with information technology is given a very futuristic identity. The triangular form is used as a strong design concept, a sense of continuity is maintained through this triangular form through various design elements.

Below: The recreational area which also houses the dining for the staff has been zoned near the old building because of an existing tree and small shrine.



The existing shrine and tree which form an integral part of the recreation area. The shrine adds a spiritual experience to the cascade of water which emerges at the same level and flows gently as a water curtain into the trough below.





available laterite stone. A huge curved and silvery metallic roof accentuates the modern look of the building while also deflecting heat. A break in the roof, not visible to an onlooker from the ground, conceals the air-conditioners and keeps the walls free of eyesores.

While stretches of lawn and landscaping combine the two distinctly different buildings, Rahul was reluctant to allow the uniqueness of either building to be destroyed by a corridor. Instead an underground tunnel was created with glass ceilings that let in adequate light and yet are camouflaged from direct view.

His belief that 'God is in the details' is seen in the meticulous landscaping, which hides the utility area and the parking spaces and which goes on to enhance the recreational area for

the staff, planned as a place of rejuvenation and freshness. The canteen opens onto stretches of green lawn on one side and envelops the shrine on the other. A lawn-like effect has also been brought inside by the use of green ceramic tiles. Surrounded by water, the shrine with delicate granite steps leading to it, helps to add to the serene and spiritual feel of the place.

Trained as a Civil and Structural Engineer, Rahul believes it could be precisely his lack of training as an architect that has contributed to his success. 'I have always had to put in more into every project,' he admits candidly. Minus any readymade formulas to adopt and unwilling to be known by any single style, Rahul can dare to be different, creative and uninhibited. Understandably his clients do not find his work boring. **O**

Opposite Above: The Old D-Link complex: A contemporary interpretation of a vernacular idea. The imposing roof is undoubtedly the most impressive element of this building. The roof planes dive down at different angles to meet the sloped vertical walls and skilfully hide the roof edges.

Opposite Centre: The staff dining area with huge sliding glass partitions — a sense of openness with the surroundings. The green flooring provides continuity with the adjoining lawn.

Opposite Below: Extensive landscaping — places for rejuvenation.

Above Left: The exterior units of the split AC are concealed in the cut-out of the curvilinear roof.

Above Right: The depression linking the underground service between the old and new D-Link complex was a laterite quarry, which was cleverly designed to produce this connection. This idea avoided long corridors that usually occur during extensions.

