

A&B

INTERVIEW

Francine Houben, Mecanoo Architects

TRIBUTES

Oscar Niemeyer
Lebbeus Woods

COMMENT

Cities and Political Power by Charles Correa

ARCHITECTURE

Dadamiyan Masjid by Hiren Patel Architects
Bellad House by Khosla Associates
Hut-to-Hut project by Rintala Eggertsson Architects
Sharma Residence by Artech Consultants

RESEARCH

Indigenous Building Practices of Himachal by DICRC, CEPT

YOUNG DESIGNERS

Studio Decode, Bengaluru
Future Spaces Organisation, Surat



The house sits low, voluntarily refusing to dominate the landscape.

Postcard Architecture

Architecture of situation and site, the Bellad House in Hubli by Khosla Associates inscribes a seamless flow of interior and exterior space, within its contemporary vernacular envelope, such that the separation between the two vanishes, creating a precise and tranquil language that imparts an rich sense of place.

Text: Shalmali Wagle

Images & Drawings: courtesy Bharath Ramamrutham

“I had an idea,” Frank Lloyd Wright wrote in 1935, “that the planes parallel to the earth in buildings identify themselves with the ground and do most to make the building belong to the ground. I began to see a building primarily not as a cave but as a broad shelter in the open, related to vista; vista without and vista within.”

The fundamental elements that give buildings meaning, more often than not, come from the unparalleled canvas of nature. Some of the finest experiences are sculpted when architecture refuses to attempt distinction as an insertion and instead performs, at once in multiple layers, as inside and outside; as architecture and environment, as function and beauty, as envelope and atmosphere. With an illusion of a boundless expanse, even within the constraints of its one-acre wooded property, the Bellad House,

Hubli by Bengaluru-based Khosla Associates juggles architecture and the environment not as ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of one another, but as precincts of possible relationships, within which the two conform to and change in order to accommodate each other.

The context is somewhat reminiscent of a classic postcard illustration; an unspoiled backdrop of rich green tapestry, unending miles of rustic simplicity and acres of flourishing plantation. Within this postcard-like panorama of undulating hills, soaring ‘Gulmohar’ trees and picture-perfect houses, the deceptively simple residence is unarguably a photographer’s delight. The entrance driveway winds in indolently from the northeast corner of the site to culminate at a free-standing tile-roofed entrance portico. The portico faces an imposing red laterite wall with alternating horizontal ribs of local stone.



The entrance driveway lazily winds in to approach the residence.



A contemporary vernacular language.

*"The first visual of the site was that of towering old 'Gulmohar' trees with peacocks strutting around; and at that instant itself we knew that the plan of the house had to weave itself around this natural environment."
- Sandeep Khosla*





Effortless merging of interior and exterior.



The 'verandahs' look into a central courtyard.

The concept of a single-level residence that centres around an unusually large 3000sqft open core, allows the luxury of space, proposing a dialogue between the built-up areas and the open space. The use of vernacular sloping roofs complementing its low structure with an expanse of terracotta clay-tiles ensures a tacit agreement with the natural surroundings. Precise and tranquil, contemporary in spite of its flow derived from vernacular language; the Bellad House is crafted using materials that are regionally appropriate and aesthetically timeless. Its simplicity celebrates the site and climate not by drawing attention to itself, but by blending seamlessly with it.

The spatial anatomy of the 11,000sqft residence follows an open plan philosophy characterised by a composition of textures, colour and courtyards. The programmatic requirements of five bedrooms, a family room, a formal living and dining are effortlessly accommodated, moulding themselves as per the needs of the family and with the luxury of large rambling open spaces. Adhering to the principles of Vastu, the ancient Indian science of energy flow and placement, the more private spaces of the house are located in the west and the more public ones in the east. A typical feature of native vernacular architecture, a central courtyard forms the heart of the space and is flanked by rooms and generous 'verandahs' on all three sides. The south and west wings comprise of bedrooms that lead to bathrooms

overlooking respective landscaped courts. A water lily and fishpond with stepping-stones fit perfectly between the two children's bedrooms. Further, the prerequisite of a dedicated public space for use during political visits forces the fourth level of the 'verandah' to extend along the north façade such that it creates access through two separate entrances. Bold colours, high ceiling, simple furniture and tranquil water bodies look into the courtyard, forming comfortable spaces of interaction and providing a visual connectivity that between the spaces.



Simplicity in finishes and furniture.



Bold colours add an element of surprise.



The vast central court directs the flow without regimentation.



Structure and Nature conform to accommodate each other.



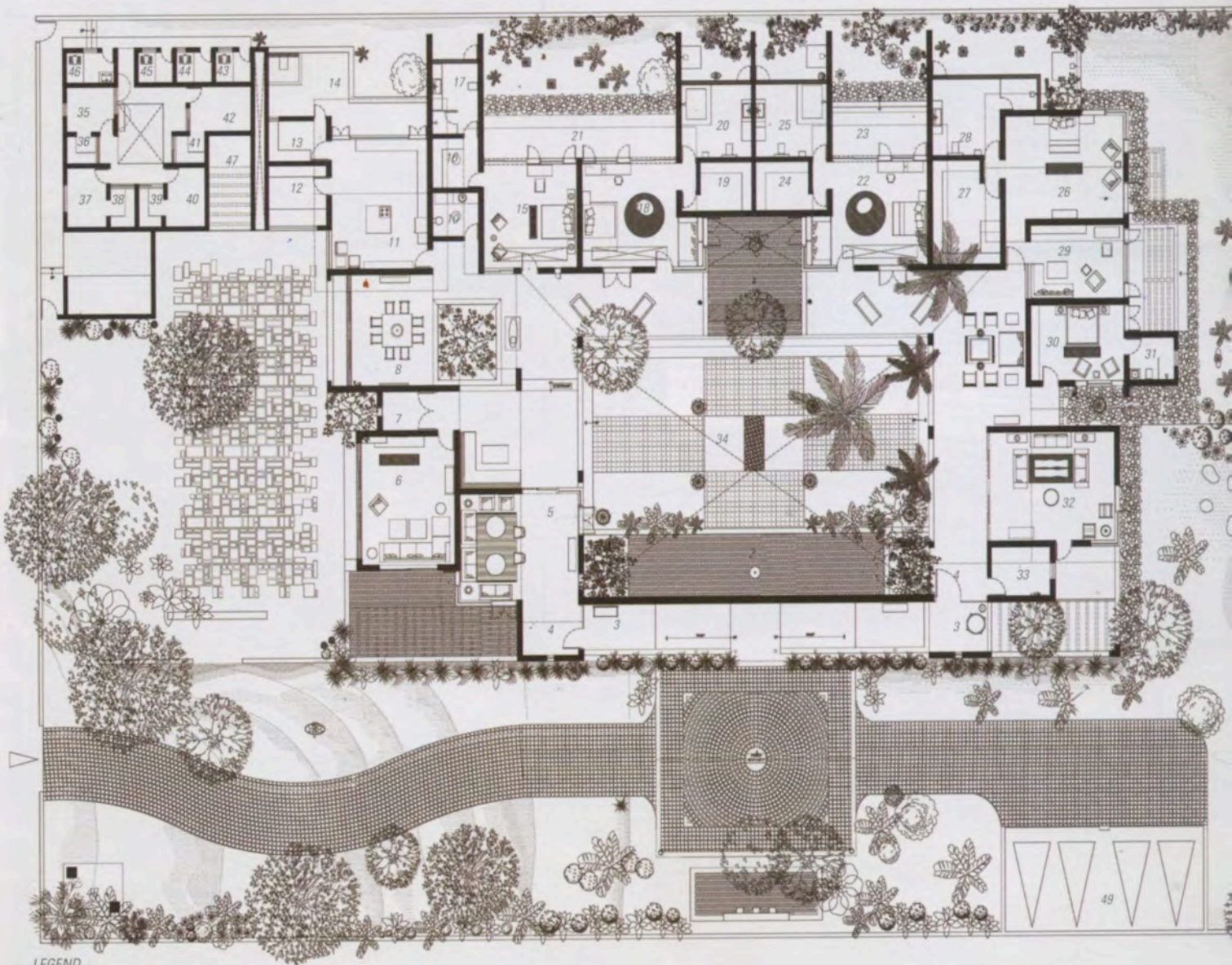
Comfortable spaces with a visual connectivity between them.

The strategically located courtyard segregates the various areas within the house without obvious regimentation, highlighting the flow and movement within the space. The 12ft-deep 'verandah' creates a gentle buffer between the 'inside' and 'outside', acting as a fluid container that contours itself around the various primary functions and resulting in the crafting of undisturbed permeable zones for reading, dining and contemplation.

Traversing with ease between the public and private zones of the house, the 'verandah' enhances the ventilation within the building by lowering the indoor temperature by around 4-5 degrees. The pitched, doubly tiled roofs sheltering the 'verandah' are supported by angled wall braces that allow the rain to run off into harvesting pits. While vents in the bedrooms and closets help hot air escape through the roof and thick walls, thereby keeping the heat out, dormer windows face the north and bring

soft daylight into the bedrooms, thereby making the climate an essential factor in the design.

Hidden from the entry points, stretching behind a laterite stone wall, is the vast courtyard intended primarily as an ode to the elements of life, verdant greenery, flowering plants, and serene water-lily pools flank its periphery, providing an antidote to the otherwise dusty and hot environment. The earthy material palette comprising of local natural stone, wood and terracotta, is occasionally broken by the bold background created by the 'Neel' blue walls within the court. The landscape establishes a seamless connection between the built and natural environments, creating the tropical ambience in and around the house in support of the overall architectural style. The dining pavilion opens out to a landscape garden on its outer face and a secondary intimate court on its inner face.



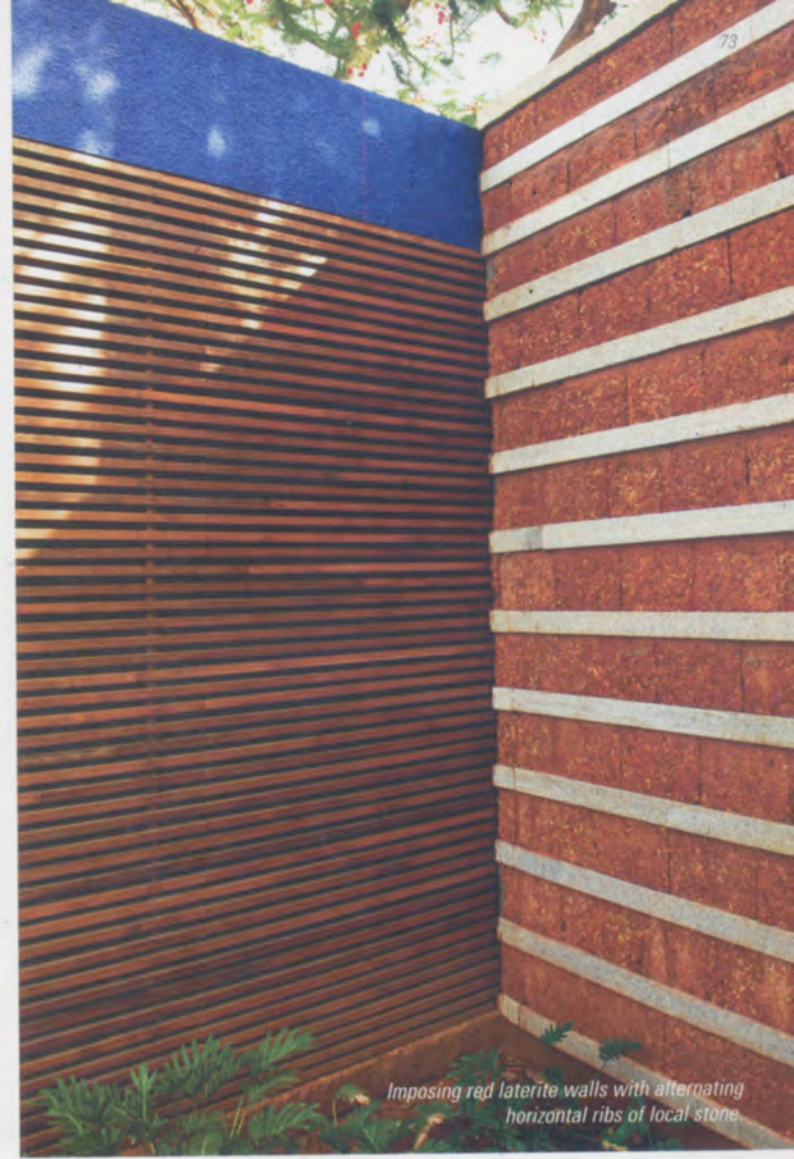
LEGEND

- | | | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 1 Porch | 10 Powder Room | 19 Closet | 28 Bathroom | 37 Servant's Room - 3 | 46 Bathroom |
| 2 Water Body | 11 Kitchen | 20 Bathroom | 29 Study | 38 Kitchen | 47 Kennel |
| 3 Verandah | 12 Store | 21 Verandah | 30 Guest Bedroom | 39 Kitchen | 48 Sump Tank |
| 4 Foyer | 13 Utility | 22 Child's Bedroom - 1 | 31 Bathroom | 40 Servant's Room - 4 | 49 Garage |
| 5 Living Room | 14 Deck | 23 Verandah | 32 Living Room | 41 Kitchen | |
| 6 Family Room | 15 Father's Bedroom | 24 Closet | 33 Cloak Room | 42 Servant's Room - 2 | |
| 7 Pooja Room | 16 Closet | 25 Bathroom | 34 Landscaped Courtyard | 43 Bathroom | |
| 8 Dining Room | 17 Bathroom | 26 Master Bedroom | 35 Servant's Room - 1 | 44 Bathroom | |
| 9 Landscaped Courtyard | 18 Child's Bedroom - 2 | 27 Closet | 36 Kitchen | 45 Bathroom | |

FLOOR PLAN



The water body and the 'Neel' blue walls within the court.



Imposing red laterite walls with alternating horizontal ribs of local stone.



The ambience in and around the house complement the architectural style.



The dining pavilion opens out to the landscape.

Imbuing day-to-day activities with poetry and awe, the design addresses both pragmatic needs as well as the psychological yearning for comfort and contemplation. The house is best experienced through the senses. Tactile, expressed through an eloquence of aesthetics, the use of materials and colour, and the logical design of space; the architecture fits perfectly within its landscape, embracing it and becoming a part of it. Just as delicately as it rests, daylight becomes a building material, greenery becomes an interior fabric, and nature becomes the atmosphere. Threaded together with light and atmosphere, an effortless choreography of warmth and grace, the house is an epitome of one of Charles Moore's most influential principles: Architecture is about feeling, and about place; its function is to enrich human emotion and enhance a sense of place. ■

FACT FILE:

Project	:	Bellad House
Location	:	Hubli, Karnataka
Architect	:	Khosla Associates
Design Team	:	Sandeep Khosla, Amaresh Anand, Praveena A, Dhaval Shellugar
Structural Consultant	:	Manjunath & Co.
Electrical Consultant	:	Uma Consultants.
Plumbing Consultant	:	N.V. Rao & Co.
Landscape Consultant	:	NC Design, Bali



Warm and cosy interiors.



The wooden flooring in the interiors adds to the earthy elegance.



The bathrooms look into respective courts.