



PURE ENERGY

GOOD EARTH ORCHARD BY GOOD EARTH HOMES IS A SERIES OF VILLAS ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BANGALORE that uses eco-friendly technology to create an uncluttered ambience for jaded city-dwellers. Nandita Srinivas observes how its residents as stake-holders are committed to a greener future



Better infrastructure is a much-cited topic in Bangalore these days. So far, it's not been adequate to support an ever-swelling population, resulting in a chaotic, unrestrained crop of buildings and social alienation for a fee: Housing alternatives, be they apartments, gated communities or residential layouts are mushrooming at a rapid pace, while soaring land prices have led to real-estate developments on the city's fringes.

Amidst the array of residential options, a few projects demonstrate larger social concerns beyond immediate eco-

nomics, and sensitivity to the residents' lifestyles as well as qualitative design excellence—all of which are rudimentary to a housing project. Good Earth Orchard by Good Earth Homes, is one such example. With its social and ecological concerns, it fosters a sustained community with a difference. "At Good Earth, we have been experimenting with

The housing project is an attempt at sustainability, giving its residents an opportunity to interact as a commune



Tree clusters characterise the landscaped houses while grass mounds and herb bushes lend an old-world charm to the space

housing alternatives. Our attempt has been to create vibrant communities of like-minded people who believe in an eco-sustainable future, offering them an ambience that evokes psychological and social security while retaining individuality" says Jeeth Iype, promoter of Good Earth.

Good Earth Orchard is a community of Go homes off the Bangalore-Mysore highway, just after the town of Kengeri and the outer ring road intersection. The houses at Orchard are designed in clusters of 13 to 18 around landscaped spaces, like 'the glade', 'the grove' and 'the meadow' or along shaded lanes, such as 'the boulevard'. Undulating grass mounds and lotus ponds amidst herb bushes with their subtle scents characterise each cluster, besides the chikoo groves and the coconut avenues that were already present on site.

In the unrelenting struggle and competitiveness of city living, social bonding among people seems to be fast depleting. Good Earth Orchard reinstates the concept of a neighbourhood, thereby developing a close-knit community. Individual dwellings at Good Earth also have several sustainable ecological measures built into its design. Good Earth Orchard articulates a sense of architectural romanticism with a focus on function and the user's Lifestyle. These two focus areas—of community living and eco-friendly sustainability—have been the pivotal attraction for homeowners at Good Earth Orchard. "The Orchard brings in old-time charm

Its low-rise structure, sprawling design, sustainable technology and community-driven approach was its prime attraction

through its design. The methods they've developed to make it sustainable, while retaining the community concept got me interested", says Prakash CJ, a software manager at Dell and an owner at Good Earth Orchard.

"We have not offered green technology as a selling tool here but have integrated it to blend and augment the user's lifestyle through the architecture and overall design of the place. We have been practising these eco-sensitive methods all along. Since we firmly believe in them, we were keen to bring together a community that truly trusts, adopts and works towards a sustainable future," explains Natasha Iype, architect at Good Earth Orchard.

Good Earth Orchard's residences are designed such that they are well-suited to outdoor and semi-outdoor living. The houses are designed around a courtyard with verandahs. The interior spaces within a house have minimum walls and flow into each other. The double-height staircase is an integral part of the house, and connects the two floors. The spacious bedrooms too, overlook the open courtyard. The house is designed to allow adequate light and cross-



Exposed brick and stone is used in the exteriors while stone, clay and wood are used to dress up the interior spaces



ventilation. Natural textures, warm tones, with space for individual expression, make each house unique.

"Although we limited the residential designs, we encouraged owner participation very early in the design process. This gave each of them opportunity to personalise spaces while we were able to ensure that overall, the units blended well with each other architecturally. Be it an antique wood panel which became the window pane of a courtyard or teak columns of a verandah extension, we have worked with every owner to make it 'their home'," says Natasha.

For Anuradha Prasad, another owner at Good Earth Orchard, this was the most attractive proposal. Wary of high-rise apartments, she took a liking to the project because of its low-rise, sprawling design, community approach, and most importantly, the eco-friendliness that it offered.

Every house comes 'green-ready' with the eco-substantive techniques built into it. The option to plug in and determine the extent of usage rests with the owners. The green methods percolate through the project at many levels.

The materials and finishes used are a blend of the natural and the easy-to-maintain. The exteriors use exposed brick and stone, while stone, clay and wood are used for the interiors of each house. Woodwork polished with natural enhancers such as cashew-shell nut liquid and linseed oil, gives it a rustic look. Large windows, wide verandahs, thermally conducive materials and hot-air channels reduce the



Large windows, wide verandahs, thermally conductive materials and hot-air channels reduce energy consumption in a house



Owner participation was encouraged in each house, which meant personalising each space to blend with the architecture

necessity for artificial light and ventilation. Provisions for tapping photovoltaic panels for power and solar heaters have also been made. Common areas and streets use energy-efficient lighting such as CFL and LED.

Decentralised waste-water treatment and an efficient garbage-disposal system ensure waste management. Rain-water harvesting and recharge, water recycling and reusing water for gardens mark the management of water. Going beyond manicured lawns, each residence has plants that are indigenous, edible and have medicinal value. A conscious effort has been made to integrate traditional craftsmen in carpentry, stonework and masonry in the building process.

While all these are significant efforts towards sustainability, their real measure as an adoptable model is yet to be proven. Says Natasha, "At Good Earth, our belief is that communities generate a strong sense of belonging while also enabling a collective sense of security and responsibility for nature. We foresee a future where many such communities are collectively responsible and keep growing, each germinating into a new bio-rich eco-zone."