

# Kept to the Basics

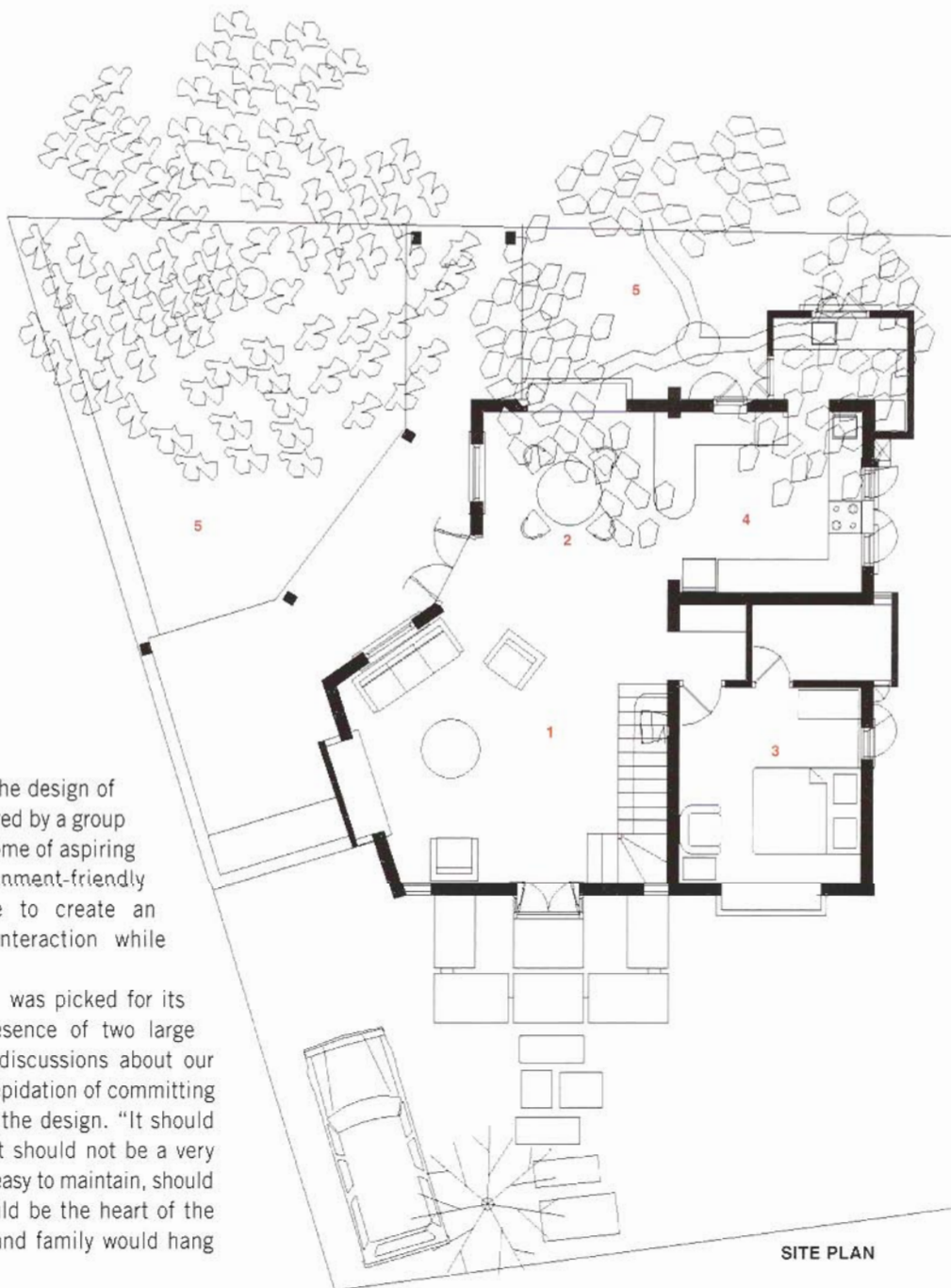
Bangalore

Jeeth & Natasha Iype, Bangalore



Prior to the design of our home, was the design of the community, 'Good Earth'. Conceived by a group of friends, the community is an outcome of aspiring to live in a sustainable, environment-friendly neighbourhood. An attempt was made to create an environment, which enhanced social interaction while retaining the privacy of its inhabitants.

The site on the outskirts of Bangalore, was picked for its trapezoidal shape, and the soothing presence of two large canopied rain trees on it. After endless discussions about our lifestyle, present and future, and some intrepidation of committing our ideas to paper, we began crystallising the design. "It should be a verandah with a house attached", "it should not be a very large house, and yet be spacious, should be easy to maintain, should have one large informal space, which would be the heart of the home, where all of us, including friends and family would hang



out". We were also quite clear about the materials we wanted to use—bricks, local stone, wood, terracotta and Mangalore tiles, were clear choices, so a lot of the design was built around them.

The house is oriented to a private rear courtyard, facing north-east, walled with a mosaic of rubble and mud plaster, with the tree as the focus. The front, which is in the west, has fewer openings, into the living area. The walled courtyard was a response to the need for a courtyard, which is easier to maintain as compared to an internal courtyard, which also needs a larger house. We kept the bedrooms basic, indulging in an attic in the children's room, and a closet in our bedroom. Our bathroom faced one of the trees, so we planned to have a walled terrace, so that we could enjoy the tree from the bath, which eventually evolved into a built-in bathtub.

We started building with a basic plan, and a clear understanding of the language we were going to use - exposed



Top: The front façade  
Centre: A private rear courtyard  
Above: The informal family room



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

- |                       |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Living room        | 7. Study         |
| 2. Dining             | 8. Toilet        |
| 3. Bedroom            | 9. Closet        |
| 4. Kitchen            | 10. Attic above  |
| 5. Courtyard          | 11. Terrace      |
| 6. Childrens' bedroom | 12. Bath terrace |

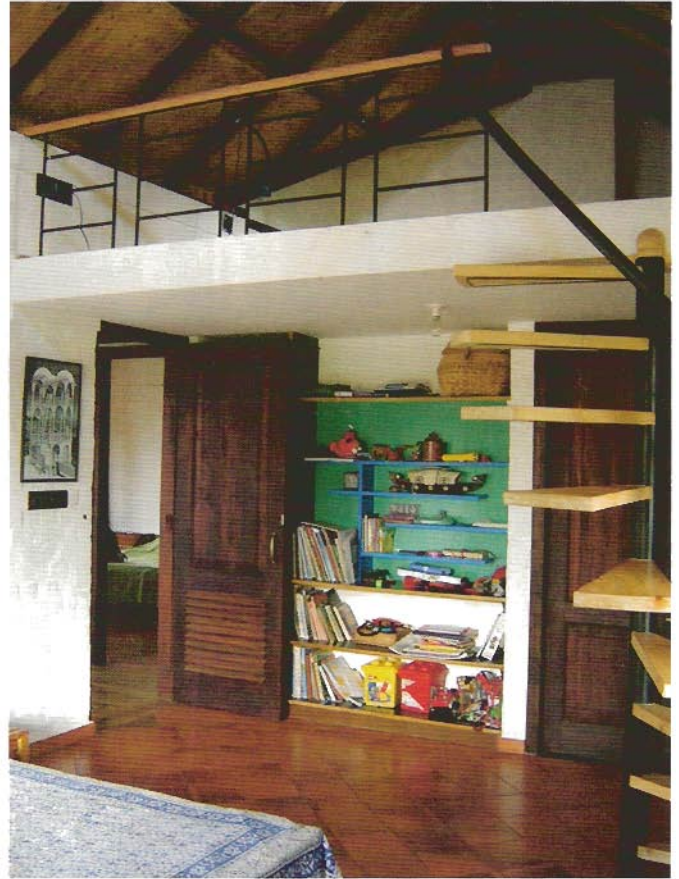


A glimpse of the interiors

bricks, and 'chapti stone'. There was also some clarity on a minimalist look – no ornamental brickwork. A lot of the details evolved on site, in collaboration with the masons. The niches, the slits at the staircase landing, the parapet wall, the courtyard wall, were all designed on site, the skill of the masons contributing a lot to the detail. The woodwork, in the roof too was worked out with the carpenters. Their expression of the vernacular often contradicted our 'controlled ornamentation'. Some of the decisions

were made after experiencing the space, like the spiral stair in the children's room, the staircase railing, which created some delay in the finishing, but still, the house was finished in one-and-a-half years' time.

The finishes were the most debated upon, in terms of practicality versus 'look and feel'. Slate and sandstone in the bathrooms, took precedence over ceramic and granite. Bathroom walls were painted with polyurethane paint, as opposed to tiles. The kitchen uses



Left: An open kitchen flows into the dining area  
Above: Spiral stairs lead to the attic

granite top and terracotta mural tiles on the walls, except for the cooking area, which is clad with a slab of teak stone, yellow oxide with slate inlays in the verandah, and blue oxide in the bathtub.

After having designed a number of houses for other people, it took controlled effort, not to put in all our ideas into this house, although there were many which did not fit into this context. The finality of actually building something we had been talking about for so long was quite overwhelming at that time.

And today, as we share a cup of tea in the courtyard, our children play in the hammock, one can enjoy the space, and leave all those other ideas for another time, another place. ☩

**Consultants** *House of Consultants (Architecture)*

*R V Achari, Shilpi Design (Structure)*

**Project management** *Stanley & Naveen (Good Earth Estates)*

**Plot size** *3000sq ft*

**Year of completion** *2005*