

Contemporary Indian Architecture

AFTER THE MASTERS

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Day-Care Centres, Dakshinpuri and
Seemapuri, New Delhi

Architects: Vasant and Revathi
Kamath
Grup India Limited (design
associates)

Client: Delhi Development Authority

Consultants: Patel and Associates (structure)

Contractor: Eastern Construction Corporation

Year of Completion: 1982

Area: N/A

The Delhi Development Authority, among other large municipal corporations in India, has adopted the policy of resettling the population of inner city slums on large suburban tracts of serviced land. The day-care facilities provided here include supervision and primary education to the children of low-income working people who commute daily to the city from these colonies on the fringes of Delhi. The building at Dakshinpuri is organized around a 3 x 3 metre planning module in a matrix of chambers, corridors and courts. The order and proportion of spaces is determined by a basic masonry vernacular. Modules are interconnected by semicircular arches which provide a visual continuity through the interior. The manipulation of different levels gives each module an identity which separates small group activities such as story-telling and games without using walls. The modular order extends to the semi-protected outdoor areas on the south side of the building and the entrance pergola on the north. The building is of two storeys. The ground floor is used for the activities of infants and toddlers; the upper level for older children in primary classes.

The detailing of the exposed brick exterior is decoratively handled. Rain water is channelled off the roof through traditional *khal-parwalas* (tiled reveals) set into the wall. A corbelled band of brick gives the structure a cornice. Flat and semicircular arches frame small unglazed windows enclosed with wooden shutters. The dimly lit arched spaces within have a cave-like feeling which is loved by the children.

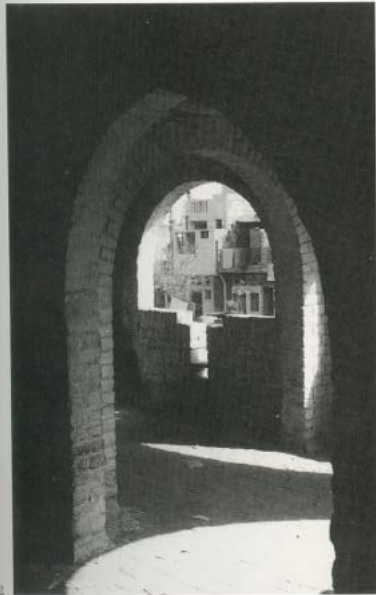
Two similar day-care facilities in the Seemapuri resettlement colony are also small buildings built of brick. The first structure at Seemapuri is covered with four barrel vaults of varying lengths, placed next to one another and supported on intermittent brick piers and a continuous load-bearing perimeter wall. The vaults on both edges are interrupted in the middle, they form courtyards on either side and bring light to the central space. In the second instance, larger interior chambers were required for combined activities. To span this large space, brick domes spanning a square of four modules were used, they give an entirely different character to this building. The domes were economically built without any shuttering using the traditional, mason's techniques revived by Hassan Fathy — the Egyptian champion of low-cost vernacular architecture 'for the poor'.



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1. Entrance through exterior court.
 2. Semi-enclosed teaching space.
 3. General view, Dakshinapuri centre.
 4. Day-care at Seemapuri with parallel vault construction.
- Overleaf*
5. Facade view, resourceful use of traditional brick details
 6. Children at play
 7. Arched portico

