

RAHUL  
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# ARCHITECTURE IN INDIA

SINCE 1990

PICTOR

Architecture in India since 1990 | Alternate Practice

aesthetics and sensibilities championed by Baker and the other numerous pioneers of innovative technologies. Vishwanath has managed to make their application work in the face of changing middle-class aspirations in urban centres such as Bengaluru. In many ways her work is closest to the sensibilities, values and challenges that engaged Baker. Vishwanath balances pragmatic requirements with elegance and an ecological sensitivity at a scale that her peers were unable to achieve. Her approach is a systemic one, wherein the ecology of building spans environmental concerns (the appropriate as well as frugal uses of materials and water harvesting) and a social ecology of craftspeople and collaborators that facilitate the scales at which she is able to work. If anyone in the next generation extends the legacy of Laurie Baker it is clearly Chitra Vishwanath.

Meanwhile, Ashok B Lall in Delhi has bridged the gap between various practices emerging from this landscape of resistance. His disciplined approach to reconciling the formalism of modernism (without being weighed down by its aesthetics) with the looseness of the vernacular (and its inevitable hybridism) in combining different material as well as building elements and infusing these with rigorous performance criteria makes his work seminal in the debate about India's sustainable design. In building the DA World Headquarters (2006) in New Delhi he has invented new spatial configurations for shading, integrating airflow mechanisms and natural forms of

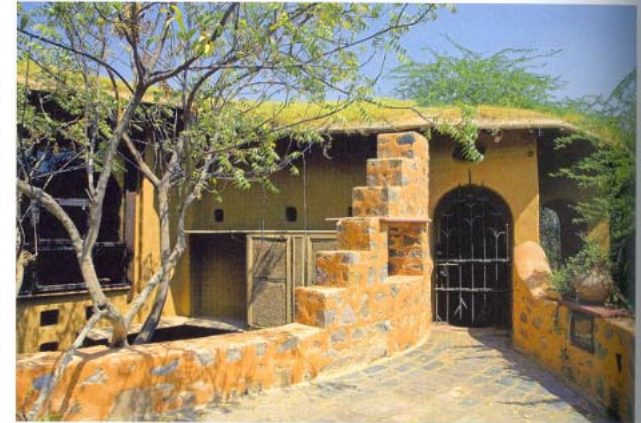
**Kamath House** by Revathi and Vasant Kamath. Their mud house, an embodiment of the architect's building philosophy, sits on what was once a mining site and is now topped by

a bamboo roof. The house roof is covered with grass, thereby producing oxygen and absorbing heat while atomisers spray the courtyard and circulate air.

insulation to create a sustainable and energy-efficient building without the mechanical 'fixes' that characterise global green architecture. Passive cooling, recycled material and touches of visual delight are all seamlessly orchestrated into this project. Revathi and Vasant Kamath also bring to their work this balance between the integrity of alternative materials and new technologies, and architectural rigour. The several houses, resorts and institutional buildings they have built in and around Delhi demonstrate this skill, and the maturity and coming of age of the alterna-

tive practitioner outside the mainstream. Their project for Nalin Tomar's House in Hauz Khas village (1990) demonstrates not only design and construction expertise, but also a sensitivity in intervening in a historical context.

This approach also flourishes in other places facing severe resource and financial constraints, creating new aesthetic sensibilities. Social NGO Manav Sadhna crèche for slum children (2006), designed by Anand Pandya, demonstrates another level of engagement with recycled material for both construction and



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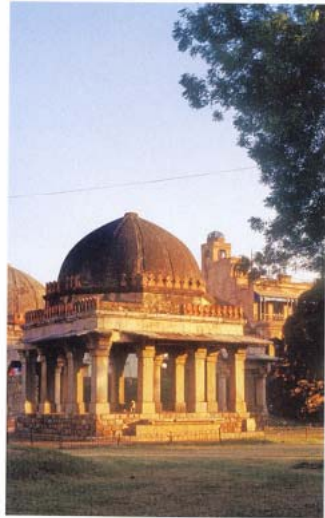
# NALIN TOMAR HOUSE, New Delhi

Kamath Design Studio

This residence is located overlooking the medieval Hauz Khas monument in the Hauz Khas Village in New Delhi. Built on a tight plot of land, the strategy was to build vertically on the basis of a multiple-level plan. Using local Badarpur sandstone, the façade and other interior details express a visual continuum in the language of the neighbouring monument. The 0.75m wide staircase provides the basic module for the house, which at entrance level accommodates the study and bedroom, separated by a level difference. A few steps from the study lead to the kitchen and dining room.

The first flight of stairs, with a fountain on the landing, leads to the living room, which has a view of the monument. The next level leads to the guest bedroom, bathrooms and finally to the terrace. The tree-of-life motif has been utilised extensively in the metal grilles, inlaid terrazzo flooring, lintels and the arches through-

out the house. Local crafts and traditional techniques have been widely used in the interiors, which are designed with mirror work decorating the niches. All in all, this is an elegant, contextually successful solution that incorporates the traditional idioms of building effortlessly into this contemporary house.

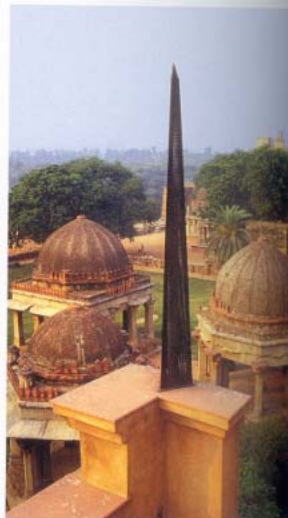


**Site context and surroundings**

Responding to the distinctive context of the medieval monuments adjoining the plot was a key concern—and the orientation, architectural vocabulary and texture of the building demonstrates a deep understanding of this historic landscape.

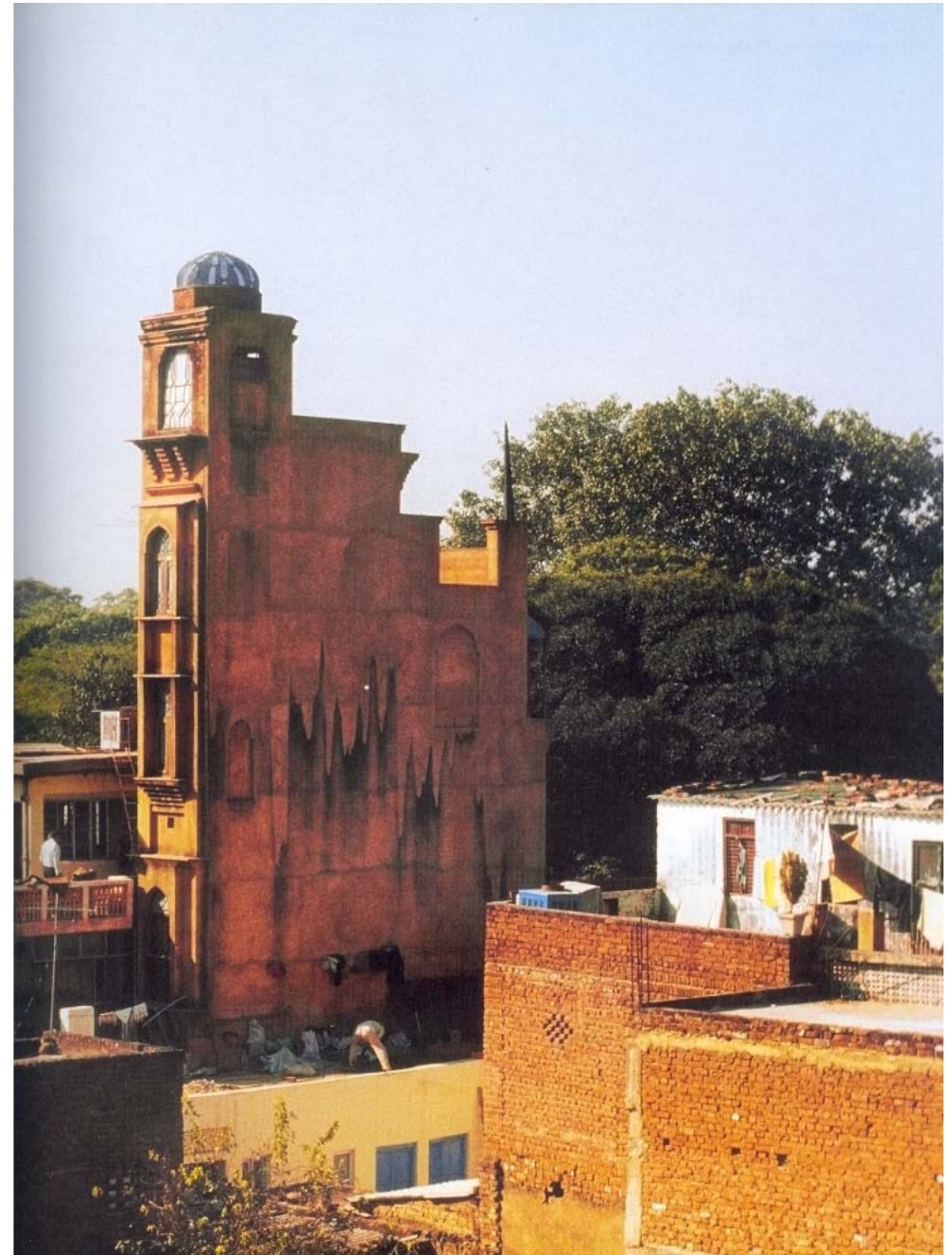
**View of Hauz Khas monument and gardens**

The terrace with its high stone parapet overlooks the monuments outside.



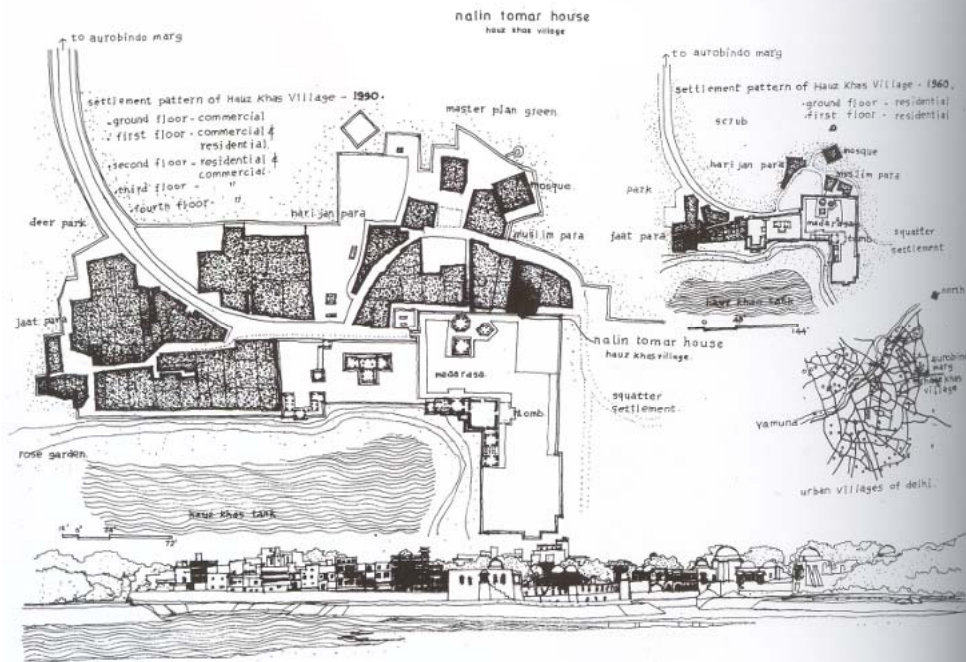
**View of house and its surroundings**

A narrow and linear plot resulted in the house being situated vertically and towering over the neighbouring properties in the Hauz Khas area.



**Annotated site plan**

The location of the house can be seen at different scales across the city of Delhi.



**The living area** The use of archways and wall niches continues the idiom of the neighbouring monument, while the use of traditional crafts and textiles give a distinct character to the space.

**Building section** A series of split levels connected by a central flight of stairs governs the basic spatial planning of the house. These levels alternate

between functional areas and leisure pavilions that visually open onto the monument complex.

