

INTERIORS

Spectacular creativity of Upasani Design Cell, Bobby Mukherji, Partho Ranjan Das, Lalit Hira, Franco Poli & Brand van Egmond

Shibani Kashyap opens the door of her gypsy-decor home





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Cover: Hotel Design
Photograph: Sameer Chawda;
Coordinated by Sumisha Arora



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LIFESTYLE

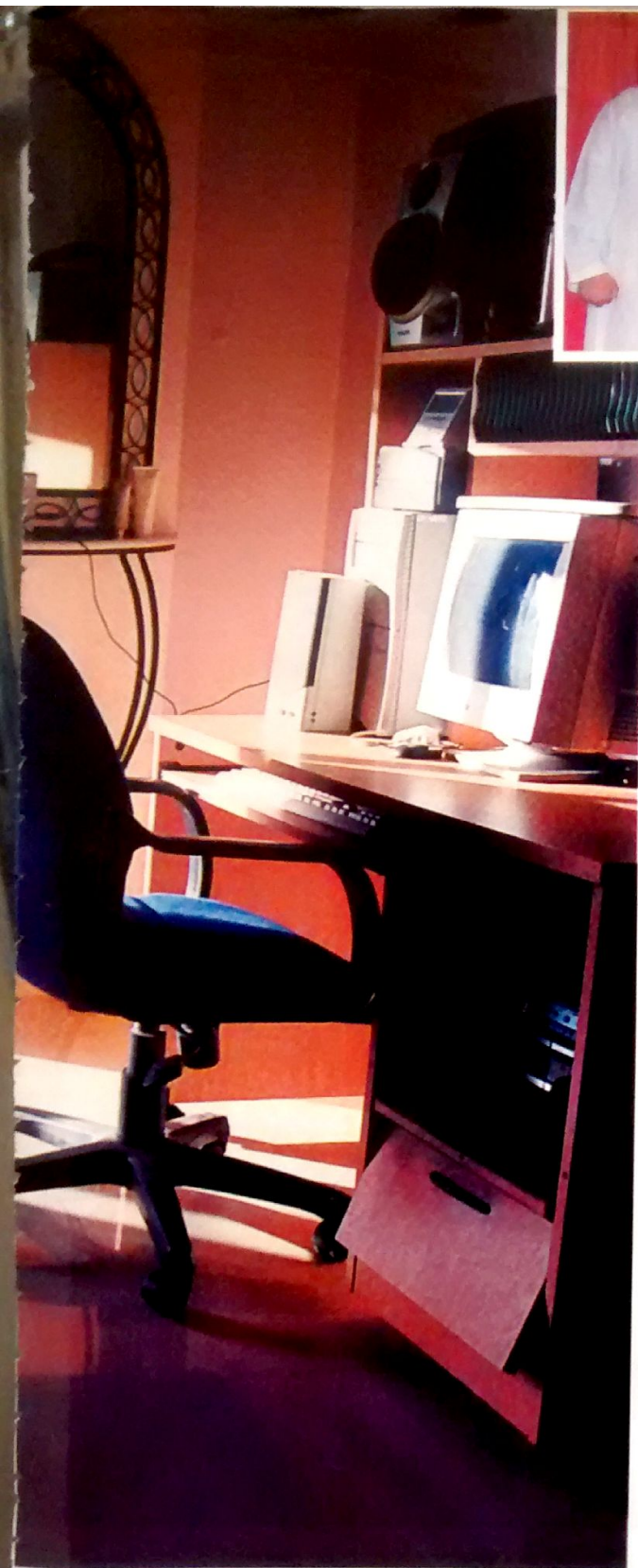
Bharthi Prem designs a home that satisfies the physical and psychological needs of the Srihari family.

Layered Perfection

Beena Srihari's happiest memories revolve around a childhood that was spent at her grandfather's home in Handalagera, a tiny hamlet near Bangalore. She vividly recalls a large central courtyard around which all the family rooms were built; a magical place for a child! Half a lifetime, marriage and two kids later, Beena saw her chance to recreate that magic when she and husband Srihari Boregowda, bought a 4,800 sq. ft. plot in Rajarajeshwari Nagar in Bangalore. "We loved the natural landscape of the hilly terrain formed out of Vrishabavati valley and above all, the peace

TEXT: DEBBIE RODGERS; PHOTOGRAPHS: MAHESH BHAT, COURTESY THE ARCHITECT

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Prem Kumar, a civil engineer with management background, and Bharathi Prem, an architect trained under K Jaisim and Sathya Prakash, started the firm Bharathi Prem Associates in the year 2000 with a vision to create beautiful spaces, with personalized and total effort in serving space and shelter needs. So far, they've handled various challenging projects in residential, educational, recreational, commercial and spiritual areas with the help of a young and enthusiastic team of architects and designers.

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and tranquility accentuated by the famous temples around the area," says Srihari.

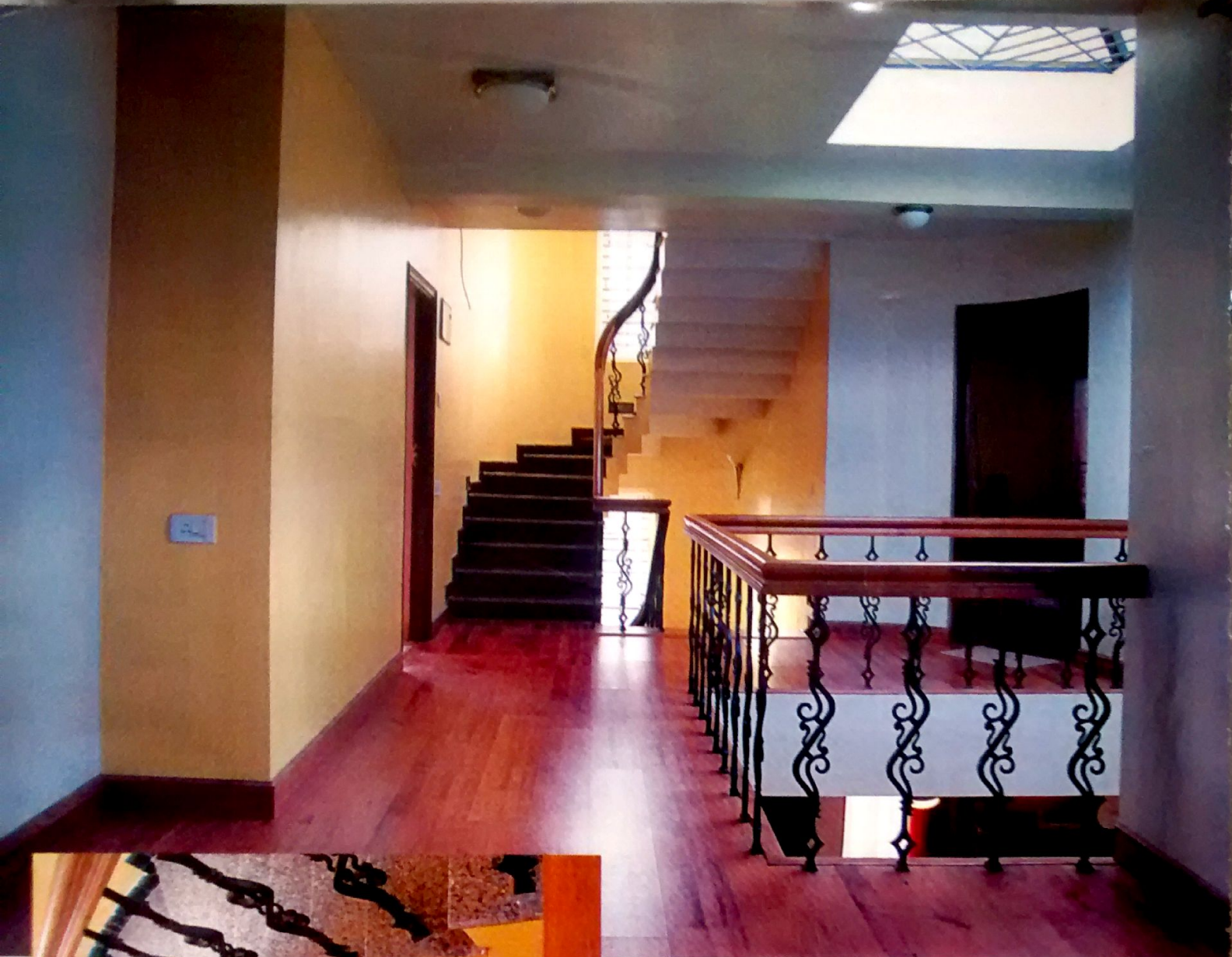
Architect Bharathi Prem, who was involved right from the selection of the property, faced a conundrum. Srihari and Beena wanted to "blend an old courtyard home with the economy of a duplex apartment, incorporating the tenets of Vastu". Twelve months and an equal number of drawings went into the planning stage. A further year was spent on construction, with Beena overseeing the entire project, "to save money and because I don't trust people very easily!", she admits, in all honesty.

The result is Trayee (pronounced as try and means Holy Trinity). The façade of Trayee, with its layered Mangalore tile look, gives no inkling to what lies inside. But the curiosity is piqued as you step under the pillared awning and see the studded, panelled, faux rural main door. Red oxide verandas, festooned with pillars, envelope the house in a warm



embrace, giving the home its ancestral expression. Not surprising though as both the wood for the pillars, and the stone bases, were brought from Beena's family farm in Handalagera.

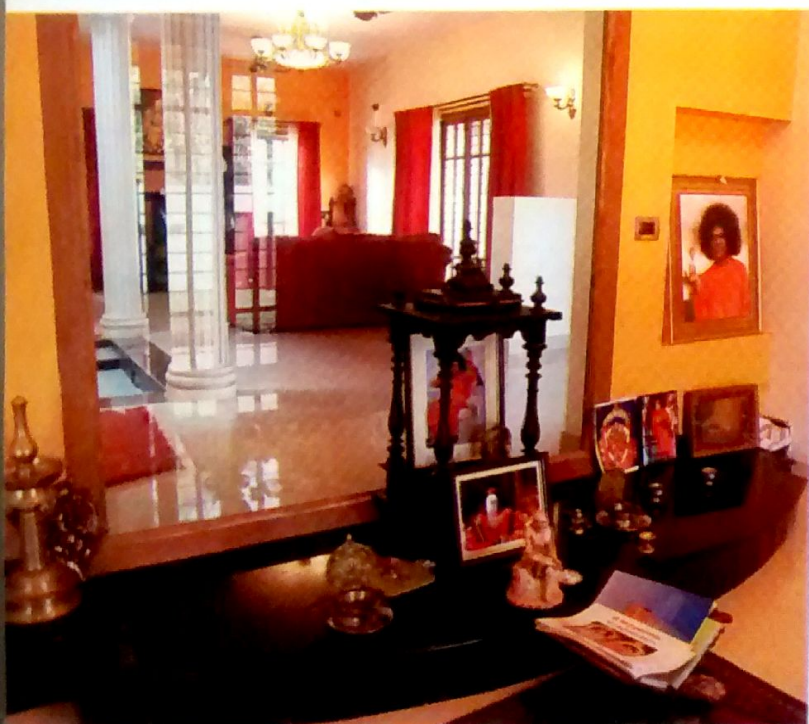
The first contrast comes as the village door swings open to reveal a mango coloured niche framing a mirror and stand. Step inside and you immediately notice that there are practically no dividing walls. The centre of focus is a 4-pillared, miniature courtyard, modeled on the *navagraha mandala*. The 11-foot white POP pillars are a classic example of the architect's penchant for "using the ordinary in an extraordinary way." Soaring 21-ft. high, the 10' x 10' square is topped by a skylight that can be opened, so that 16-year-old Sunayana, 11-year-old Sahana and their friends could have a rain dance if they so wished! Alternatively, they could convert the 2-ft. deep base of the courtyard into an aquarium. For the moment, it lies empty. The backdrop to this conversation piece is a golden yellow wall that flaunts



an exquisite Tanjore painting done by Beena, below which is a stark wooden loveseat that just begs the company of silk cushions.

Emphasizing Bharathi's philosophy of simplicity and free flowing forms, a sea of cream vitrified tiles flows outward from the *mandala*, seamlessly connecting the mango "mood" hall, lounge and dining spaces, morphing into yellow and black Jaisalmer diamonds as it hits the open-plan kitchen. Being able to communicate with family and guests, as she potters around the spacious kitchen with its fitted teakwood cabinets, built in cooker and concealed lighting, was one of Beena's main requirements.

Just beyond the main door, and visually connecting the hall and dining, is a glass-walled puja room. "We wanted the light from the puja room to spill in to the living space," says Srihari. All the rooms on this level open onto the running verandah and the garden beyond! The puja room also extends onto the same lawn to accommodate the family



during *bhajan* evenings. An electronic burglar alarm system takes care of security.

Across from the hall lies the master bedroom. This 16' x 14' space boasts of a toned down bay window with an attached skylight that was meant to be a breakfast bay, but now serves as Beena's studio. Stained glass adorns the door of the en suite bath (a feature repeated in the baths upstairs) and an unusual natural Sierra stone floor. One sees the same feature in the girls' washrooms, though only in the bathing area.

Outside the bedroom, hugging the golden yellow wall, is a curving staircase that connects to the next level. Along the stairs and embedded into the wall are foot lights that combine practicality with aesthetics.

The stairs give way to a wood-panelled floor that flows into the study area. At the head of the stairway is a cast iron railing that affords a view of the hall below. To the immediate right is Sunayana's bedroom flaunting a deep magenta that the teenager refers to as "calming and relaxing"! The most eye-catching



feature here is a beautiful triangular bay window that opens onto a rockery (below is the garage). Sunayana tells us that her own private garden was the one feature she insisted on having. To the right of the study is young Sahana's bedroom sporting sunset orange and yellow on the walls. Though she is unhappy about the size of her room, no doubt the youngster will learn to appreciate her private balcony overlooking the island and moat in the garden below.

To the left is the music room with its high, angular roof and to-be-installed acoustic panelling. This is Srihari's retreat as he is an avid musician. This room will double up as a guest bedroom. A door from here (and another from the study) leads onto the expansive terrace with its terracotta tiles and as yet unbroken view. This area has already seen some action, confides Sunayana, with a bonfire for the New Year's bash! An additional terrace one level up holds the water tanks and the manually maneuverable skylight of the *mandala*.

An interesting feature in Bharathi's design is the liberal use of skylights. At Trayee she has used it in the study, the girls' dressing areas and washrooms too. One also notices the attention to detail, like the boundary wall lights ensconced in geometrical concrete shades, or the carved wooden shelves sporting brass lamps along the veranda. "Every minor detail, from the position of a switch to the size of the furniture was measured and taken into account before executing the work," she reveals.

It says much for Bharathi's resourcefulness that she was able to accommodate, at the nth hour (when the house was being plastered), a basement that the family suddenly realized they would need. Accessible from the main gate as well as from the house, the 6-ft. deep basement area could have been transported straight out of a story book! 12 cantilevered stone steps lead to a miniature garden complete with a wishing well (that is actually a rainwater harvesting receptacle), and staggered stone shelves on the walls for potted plants.

Srihari, founder and director of Canarys Automations Ltd., is satisfied that his home "reflects the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual layers embodied in each one of us." ■