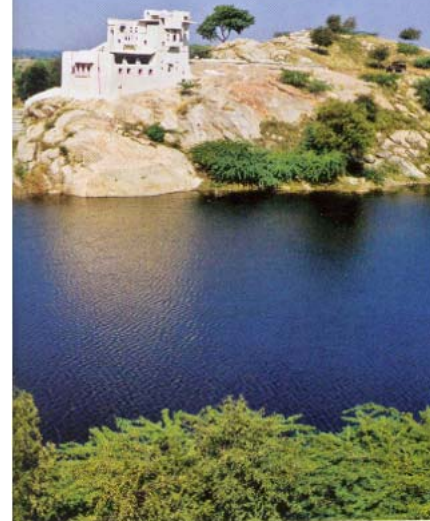
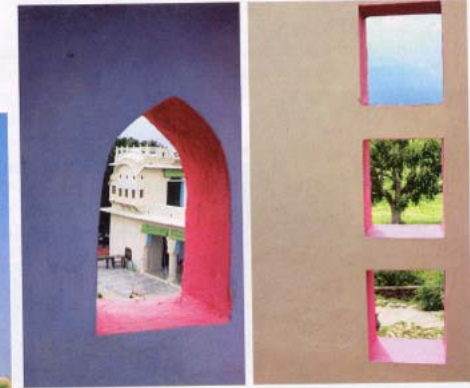


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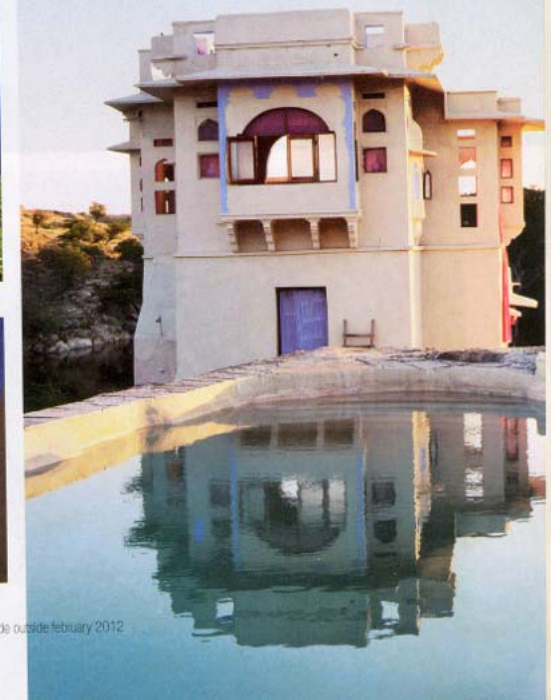
Revathi and Vasant Kamath adhered to a strictly green methodology in creating the Lakshman Sagar resort, previously the 19th century hunting lodge of the Thakur of Raipur. With a minimal intervention objective, the architects ensured that even existing walkways were used by the labourers on the site, without creating new ones, finds out Devyani Jayakar.

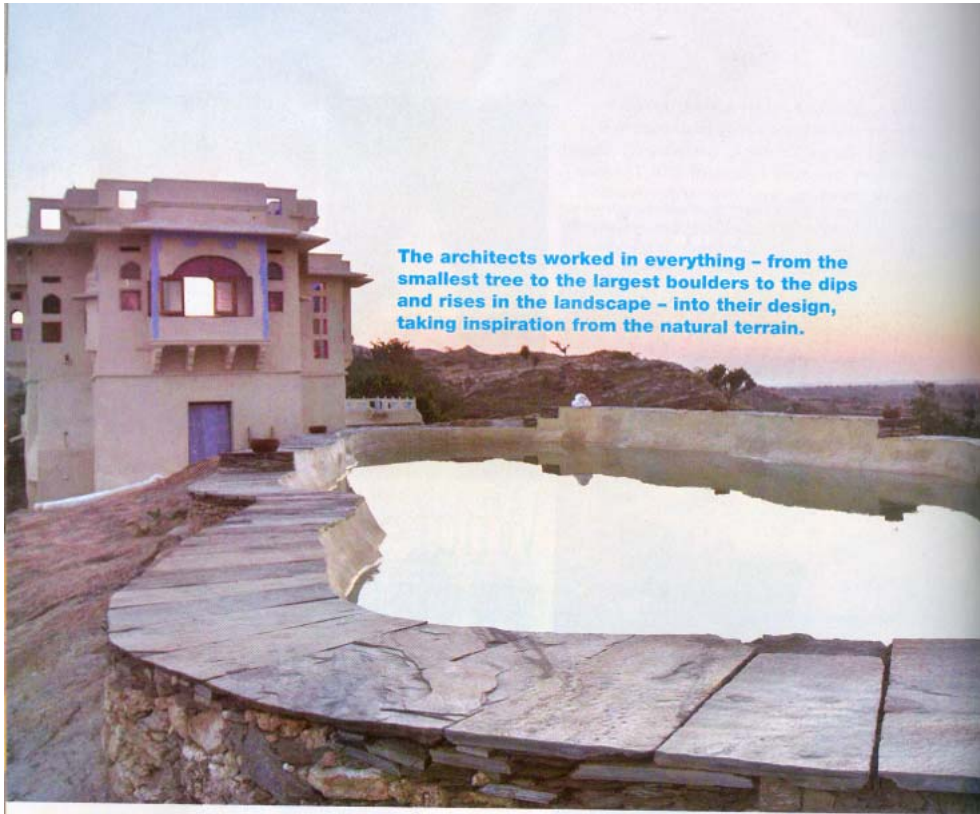


PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY LAKSHMAN SAGAR RESORT

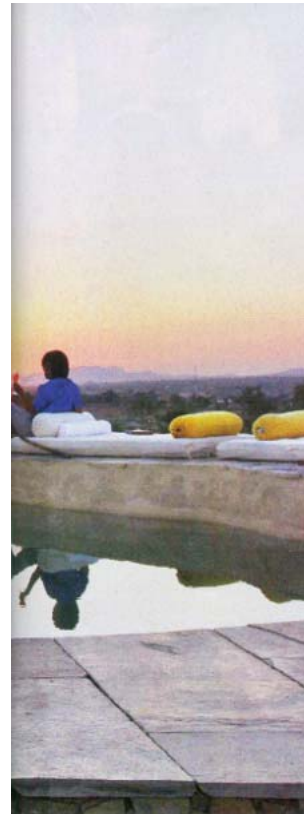


What Shade is your Green?





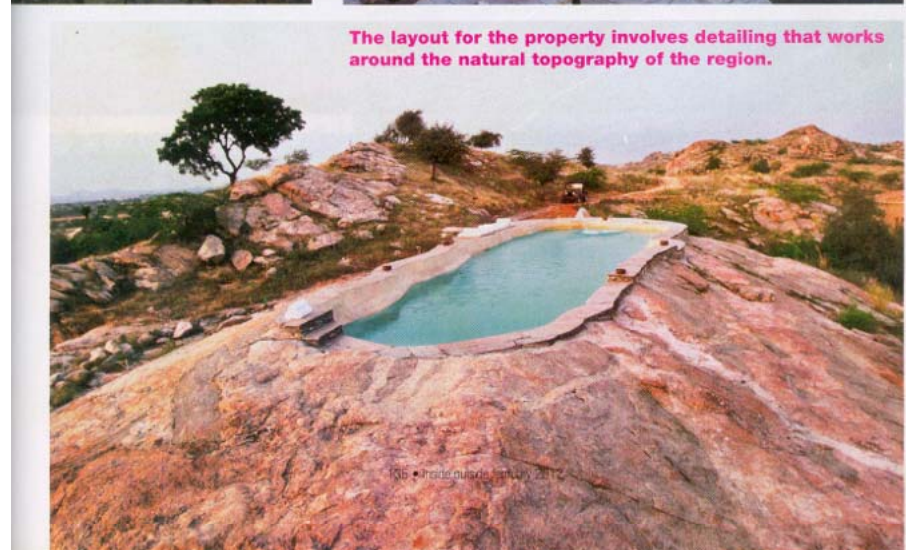
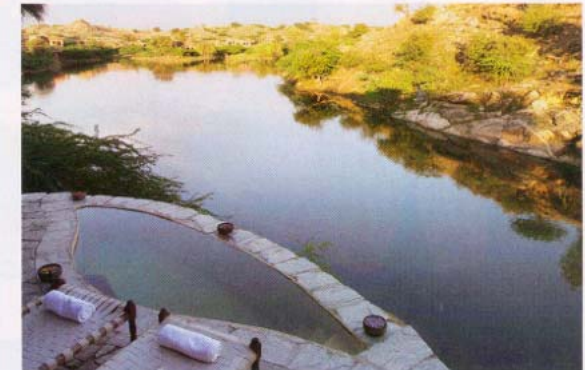
The architects worked in everything – from the smallest tree to the largest boulders to the dips and rises in the landscape – into their design, taking inspiration from the natural terrain.



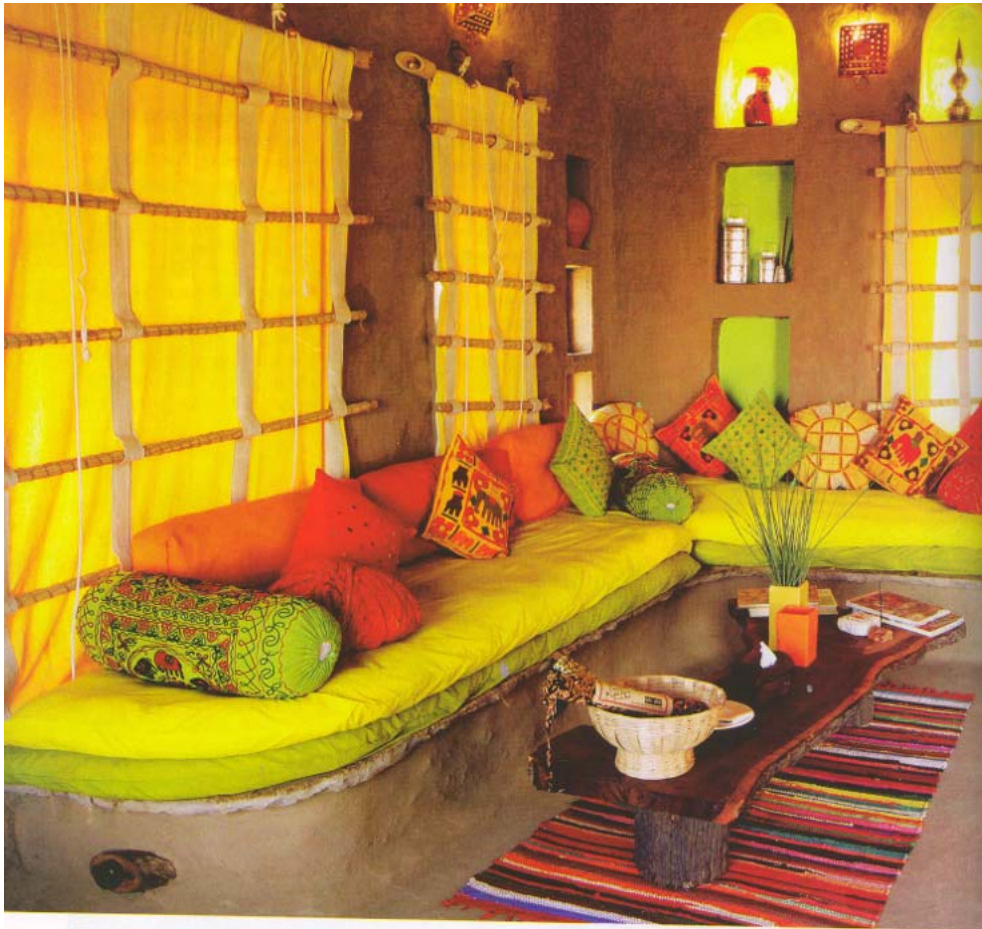
Being 'green' is no longer a 'nice to have,' but expendable option in architecture and design...it has long become mandatory. Any project to the contrary is rather like proclaiming that one subscribes to slavery...or child marriage...or sati...or some such ignominious evil.

To some, 'green' connotes bleeding-heart nouveau hippies, who seem more concerned with plants and animals than people. Often, it's a threat to a way of life that can only, possibly, mean having to manage with less of everything...with the inevitable implications of parsimony and austerity.

But sustainability means more than all of this. It refers to human and financial issues as much as environmental ones. The systems perspective inherent in sustainability encompasses cultural impacts as well as ecological ones, financial constraints as well as physical limits, and heritage and



The layout for the property involves detailing that works around the natural topography of the region.



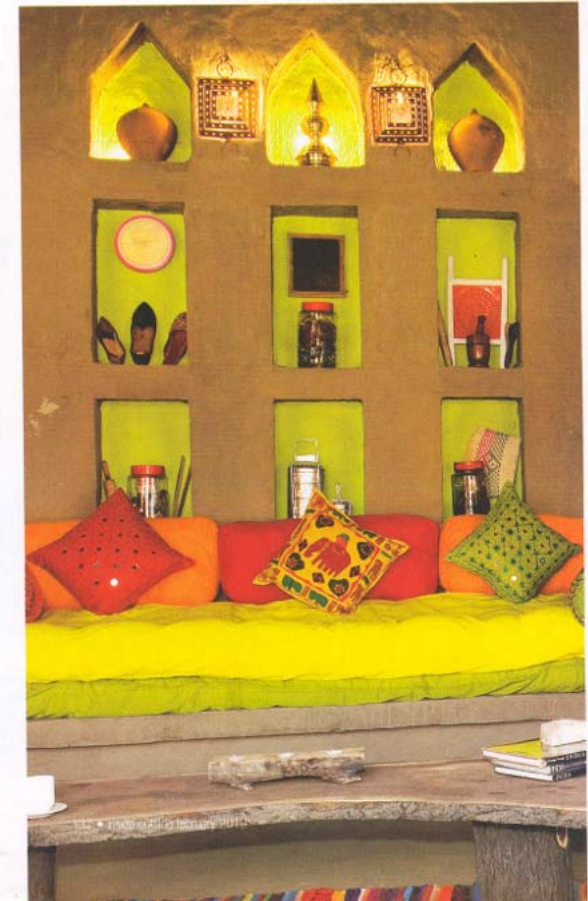
legacy as well as a perspective about the future. The most agreed-upon definition of sustainability comes from the Brundtland Commission (created by the United Nations in 1983 to reflect about ways to save the human environment and natural resources and prevent deterioration of economic and social development) and dates back to 1987:

(Use and) development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Put simply: Don't do things today that make tomorrow worse.

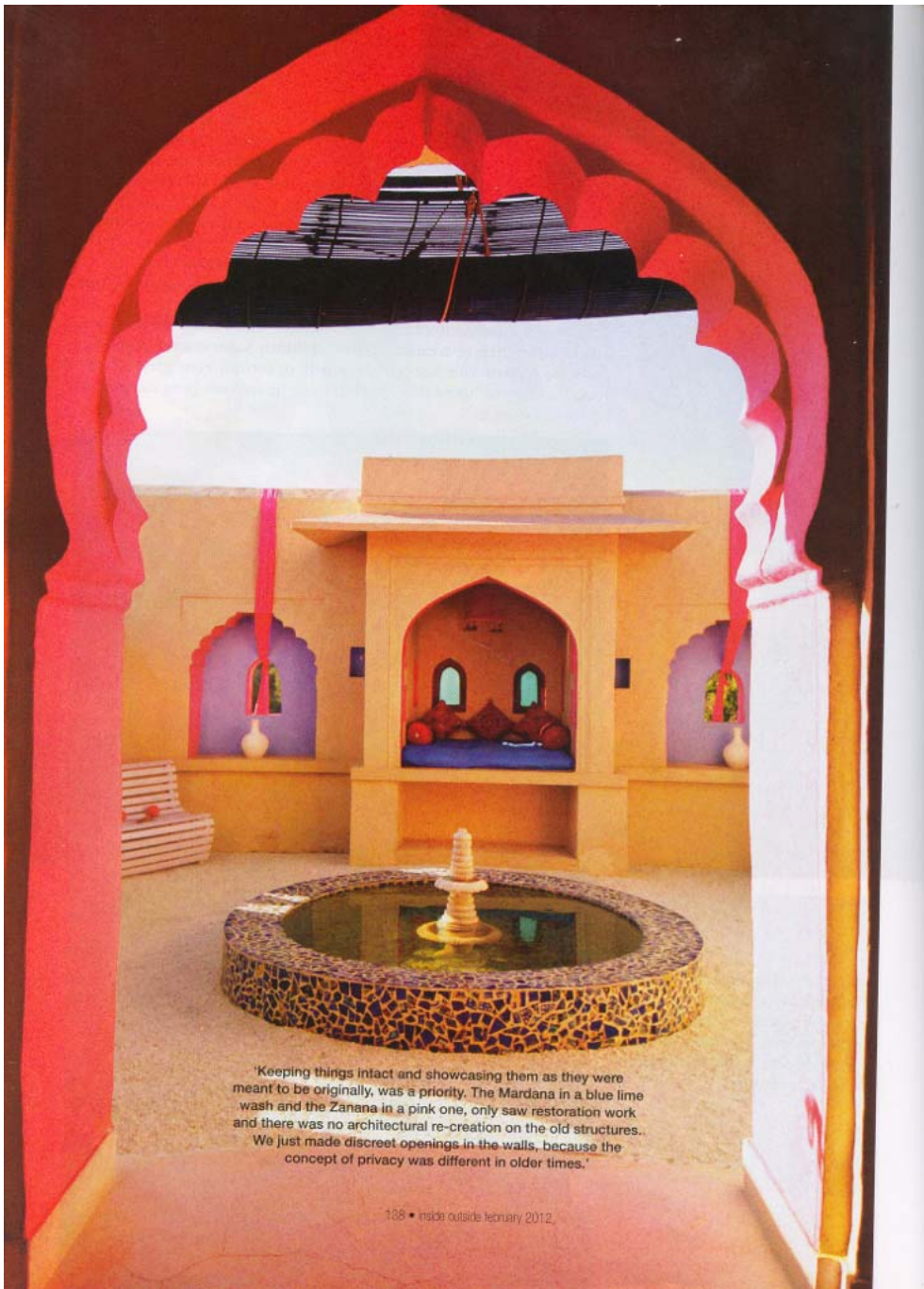
There, that doesn't sound so half-witted, or scary, or dangerous, does it? It sounds like common sense.

So common sense is exactly what Revathi and Vasant Kamath have employed in their re-creation of the Lakshman Sager resort...and how! Some projects may be just 'greenwashed', or actually even grey. It's not rocket science to figure this out. But here, 'green' has been carried out to the nth degree.



Stone, mud and wood are the primary materials used for construction, thus putting forth a property that belongs and blends in its surroundings.





'Keeping things intact and showcasing them as they were meant to be originally, was a priority. The Mardana in a blue lime wash and the Zanana in a pink one, only saw restoration work and there was no architectural re-creation on the old structures.. We just made discreet openings in the walls, because the concept of privacy was different in older times.'



Vasant and Revathi Kamath.

Sprawling over 32 acres at the fringe of the Badlands of India, Lakshman Sagar resort encapsulates centuries of history and local Marwar tradition. (What are 'Badlands'? They are a type of dry terrain where softer sedimentary rocks and clay-rich soils have been extensively eroded by wind and water. Ravines, canyons and other such geological formations are common in Badlands. Often difficult to navigate by foot, Badlands may have a spectacular colour display that alternates from dark black/blue coal stria to bright reds.)

Built in the late 19th century as the hunting lodge of the Thakur of Raipur, Lakshman Sagar used to host visiting noble families and British emissaries. Today it continues to uphold hospitality and traditions, though with a conservationist view of the heritage and surroundings, all manifested through the detail in the architecture, design and cuisine at the resort.

MINIMAL INTERVENTION

As a brand, Sewara believes in blending into its natural surroundings with the architecture and design of its properties. The same ethos is evident at Lakshman Sagar, where the layout for the property involves detailing that works around the natural topography of the region.

After many painstaking but ultimately rewarding site visits, Revathi and Vasant, flag bearers of green architecture in the country, ensured that everything at Lakshman Sagar was designed around the natural flora and fauna of the area. They worked in everything – from the smallest tree to the largest boulders to the dips and rises in the landscape – into their design, taking inspiration from the natural terrain.

'Keeping things intact and showcasing them as they were meant to be originally, was a priority. The Mardana in a blue lime wash and the Zanana in a pink one, only saw restoration work and there was



To reduce the carbon footprint, all materials used for construction and design were locally sourced from the immediate surrounding areas. Use of materials such as marble and glass were kept to a minimum.



no architectural re-creation on the old structures. We just made discreet openings in the walls, because the concept of privacy was different in older times,' says Revathi.

'The cottages were carefully located so that they did not block each other's view of the lake,' says Revathi. 'But they have thatched roofs, which will hopefully be replaced with green ones at some time in the near future. However, we've used eucalyptus logs from the trees growing nearby – we feel eucalyptus trees are not really suitable for this area as they change the ecology by using up water from the subsoil, destroying other vegetation.' Moreover, during the entire construction process, the site was run in a manner where the natural landscape was not manipulated or destroyed. Instead, labour was asked to use the natural pathways that were already there and locally-sourced donkeys were used to carry the materials onsite.

'The entire process of creating Lakshman Sagar saw the coming together of man and nature in the most harmonious way possible,' says Vasant.

LOCALLY SOURCED MATERIAL

Minimal intervention has been addressed even in the kind of materials used for construction and the method in which work was done at the site. Stone, mud and wood are the primary materials used, thus putting forth a property that belongs and blends into its surroundings. To reduce the carbon footprint, all materials were locally sourced from the immediate surrounding areas. Use of materials such as marble and glass were kept to a minimum. Instead, Sewara used local stones such as katla (slate in its crudest form) and bhilwara (red stone) for this property. The wood from trees such as kikar, which is indigenous to this area, and also eucalyptus and neem have been used instead of steel or RCC wherever possible.

Amongst many other materials, limestone from a local quarry for masonry instead of cement and sun-baked bricks made by locals from nearby villages were used as much as possible for construction. Bricks that





Ashtrays, tissue boxes and the faucets in the sink have been made from the remains of the rocks used for construction.



Materials have been used in their rawest possible form.

weren't sun-baked were used only for specific waterproofing purposes. Even those were locally sourced. 'We try to involve clients as much as possible, by getting them to source the material as well as locate artisans. This makes the whole process more meaningful for them,' says Revathi.

ENVIRONMENTALLY AMIABLE PRODUCTS

At Lakshman Sagar, there has been an attempt to use materials in their rawest possible form. There are very few materials and designs that are alien to the area. Instead, everything has been derived from what was available at the site itself and in the immediate surrounding areas. Ashtrays, tissue boxes and the faucets in the sink have been made from the remains of the rocks used for construction. Table tops in the cottage living room area, coasters and venue signages have been made out of the leftover wood. All of this reiterates Lakshman Sagar's identity as a destination that is sustainable and environment friendly.

ZERO KILOMETRE CONCEPT

The style and interiors of Lakshman Sagar were inspired by an understanding of the local life in Marwar and the Pali District. And through that, the zero kilometre concept comes into play.

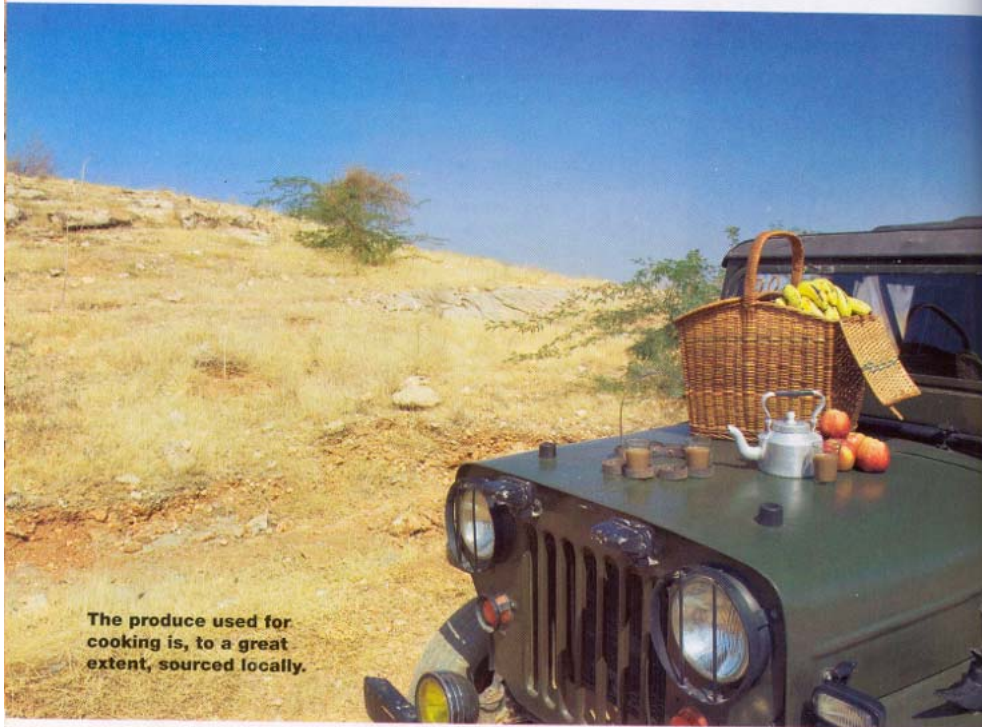
Be it the colours used on the property, the Zanana tables inspired by local Rajasthani women, or light fittings made of milk cans, a conscious effort has been made to draw out the otherwise unexplored nuances of the local culture for the traveller in an otherwise heritage-oriented tourist circuit.

All furniture has been inspired by products, used and produced by the people of that region. In doing that, it makes the experience at Lakshman Sagar more consciously local, moreover rejecting the need for importing – as a result, reducing the carbon footprint of the property.

Sewara continues to uphold the zero kilometre way of functioning in its daily running of Lakshman Sagar, whereby even the produce used for cooking is, to a great extent, sourced locally.



RESORT



The produce used for cooking is, to a great extent, sourced locally.

Philosopher Tony Fry says that designing for sustainability requires a whole new way of thinking. And as television presenter Kevin McCloud points out: 'We are the problem, we are the patient and the victim, we are the potential solution. And the solutions, I think, as they come, when they come, will be creative and breathtaking, and not at all to do with technology. Some of them will be cultural change and the pursuit of different happinesses and joys. If people are happier, they want less.'

Do happier people really want less? Raising the subject is rather like throwing a Molotov cocktail into the room. Everyone erupts in argument. It's certainly a contentious definition of 'happy'. The diklat 'If you are happy, you will want less,' unequivocally links renunciation with happiness. But while it's debatable, it may still be in sync with 'green', as we understand it today. 