

## Dual Tones

The stone house and the mud house by Revathi and Vasant Kamath share points of similarity inspite of being totally different.

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**R**evathi and Vasant Kamath share a sensitive attitude towards architecture. This attitude involves considering the craftsperson as a resource, and drawing upon his creative talent, using sustainable technologies, keeping alive local traditions and construction practises and exploring architectural designs.

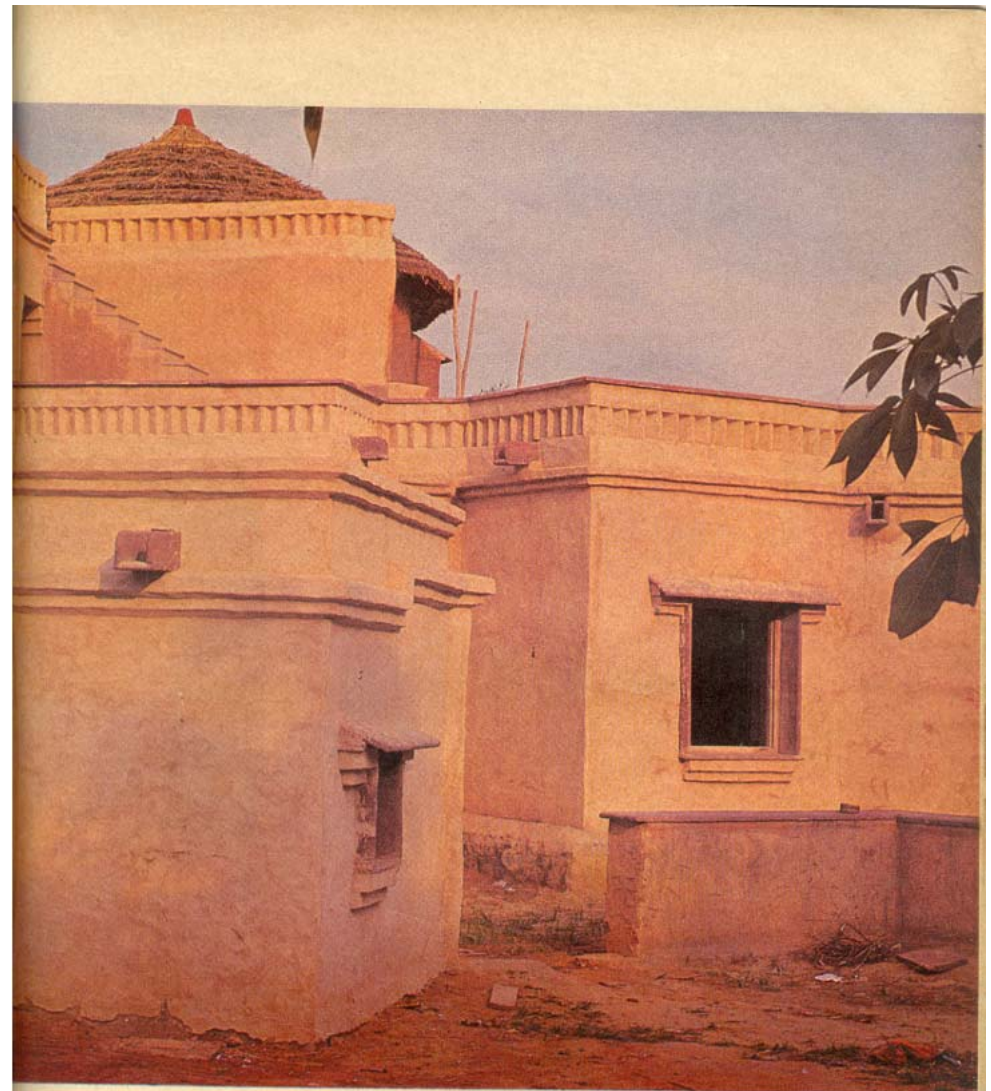
Revathi and Vasant refer to the two farm-houses as the mud-house and the stone-house. The two are totally different yet there are points of

similarity – in terms of attitude, an approach to building and sensitivity to local construction practices, tradition and history.

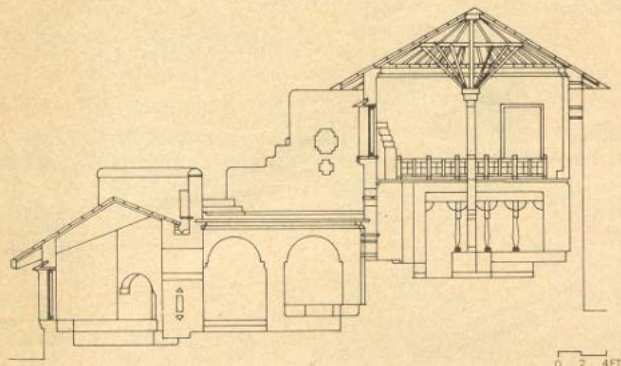
The farm-house, designed by Revathi, was to be a weekend retreat for Amit and Nandita Judge, the 'Stencil' garment apparel entrepreneurs. It was to have large living/entertaining spaces, a couple of bedrooms and spaces interlocking with the landscape as outdoor 'rooms'. Nandita was particularly taken up with the idea of 'mud' house.



**Above:** The volume of the mud house is articulated by the corbels, arches, niches and jalis  
**Left:** The house responds to the rise and fall of the land

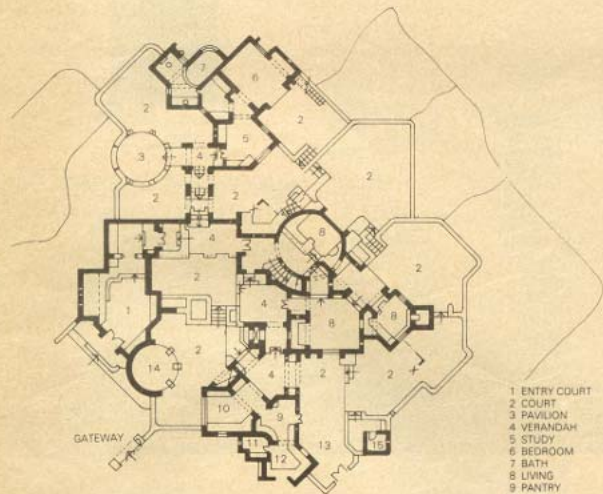






SECTION THROUGH THE LIVING ROOM

0 2 4 FT



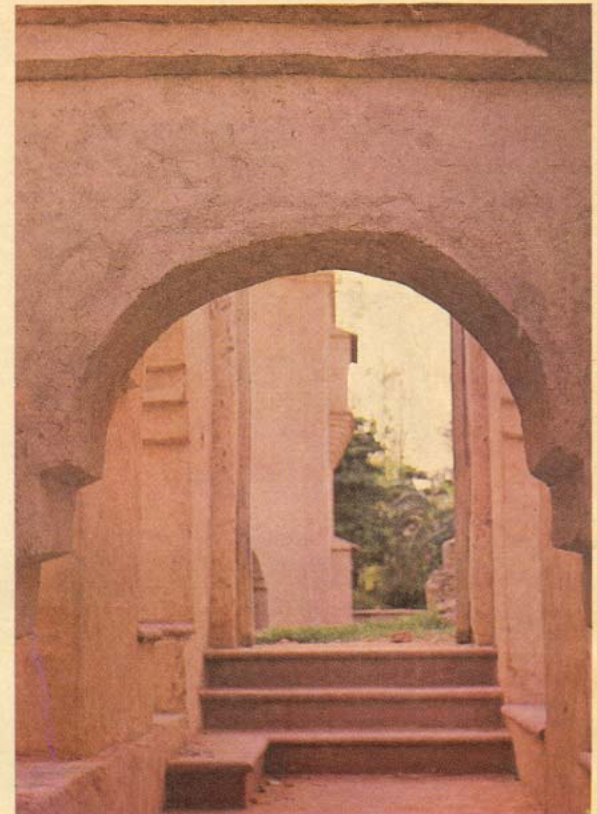
GROUND FLOOR PLAN

0 4 BFT

- 1 ENTRY COURT
- 2 COURT
- 3 PAVILION
- 4 VERANDAH
- 5 STUDY
- 6 BEDROOM
- 7 BATH
- 8 LIVING
- 9 PANTRY
- 10 DINING
- 11 STORE
- 12 KITCHEN
- 13 KITCHEN COURT
- 14 DINING HUT
- 15 TOILET



Above: Movement and transition spaces suggest a graceful informality  
Right: Interconnected courtyards at different levels



transition spaces are generous and suggest a gracious informality.

The visual and tactile texture is sensuous. The fluency of the surface suggests the shaping of forms and spaces in ways explored in mud building traditions around the world. Mud brick arches and corbelled openings with sandstone slab roofs and floors are predominant in the mud house made from the earth on site with considerable savings in cost.

In many ways this project seems to highlight both the advantages and the drawbacks of mud construction today. It has worked very well as a weekend retreat, weathering the cycle of the seasons satisfactorily

for the past six years. But when the owners decided to move in they wanted a higher level of finish and the secure enclosing of spaces. These changes are currently underway. The mud finish is being covered by the use of a ferrocement layer over the existing finish which allows the building to retain its original character. The newly laid polished stone flooring seems a little incongruous against the character of these walls. Mud though a viable alternative to a way of building, has also to "fit" a different kind of maintenance. In this case, mud construction was perfectly acceptable as a weekend retreat, but not as a residence.

### The Mud House

Situated on a higher level the house seems to flow along the surface, adjusting itself to the rise and fall of the land and reaches out to form courts and enclosed spaces. These spaces are a treat for children with their different shapes, heights, light intensities. The experience of moving up and down many levels, and changes in direction are a pleasant surprise with different views. Movement and





**The Stone House**

Designed around the dreams and desires of a lady with a strong interest in the crafts, Ms Kamal Singh, the "stone house" was also built as a retreat. It seems to emerge as part of the landscape, by its proportions, scale and massing the monuments and architecture in stone one sees dotted in and around Delhi, often in park settings.

The composite construction utilises random rubble masonry contained, defined and framed by brick at all

corners and openings. The technique, says Vasant Kamath, who designed this house, was suggested by the local building practice where the farmhouse is situated.

The site, which slopes down towards the curve of a seasonal stream, suggested orienting a house towards it, with a wrap-around verandah forming the transition between inside and outside. The formal arched entrance is at mid-level, leading to the living spaces and to the sleeping spaces and roof terraces. A brick dome caps the two

storey dining room. The visual weight of the dome is counterpointed by a stone finished watertank "Chatri" pavilion.

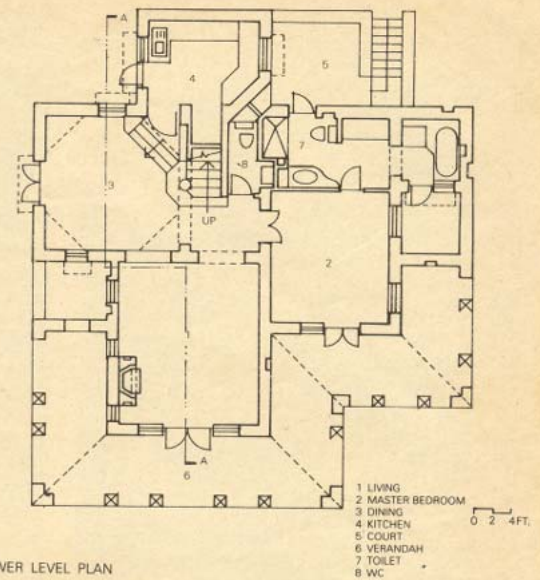
Scale, proportion and form are combined in a memorable composition. Traditional forms are adopted skilfully for modern needs in a deliberate search for a language reflecting a modern sensibility, but rooted simultaneously in adopting traditional forms. The way the building meets the sky, the way rainwater flows to the ground, the articulation of parapets, floor



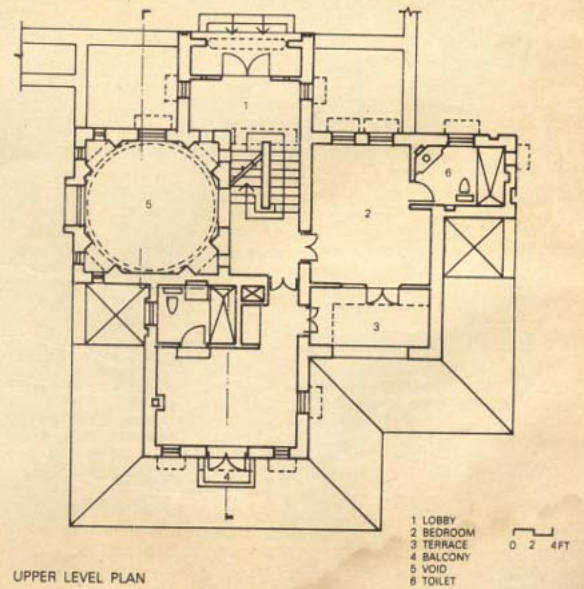
The stone house emerges as a part of the contextual landscape of Delhi

levels, doors and window cills and sunshades suggest a careful unity. The composition imparts meaning by suggestion, association and memory. There is a conscious effort to acknowledge the memory, if not the revival, of regional and indigenous traditions using locally available materials and resources.

The way commonplace building material is used portrays an essence of

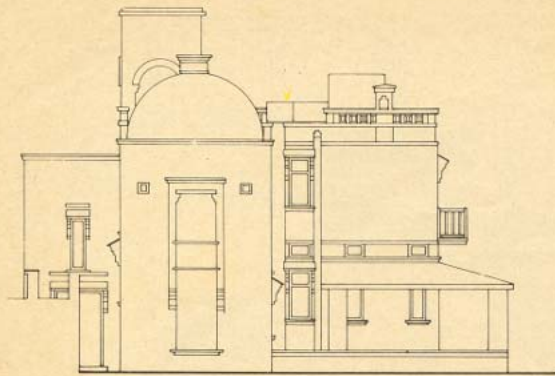


LOWER LEVEL PLAN

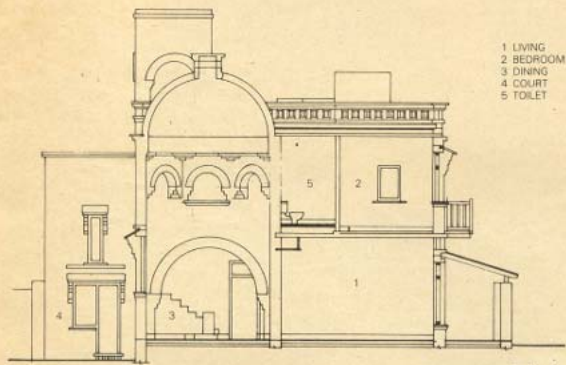


UPPER LEVEL PLAN





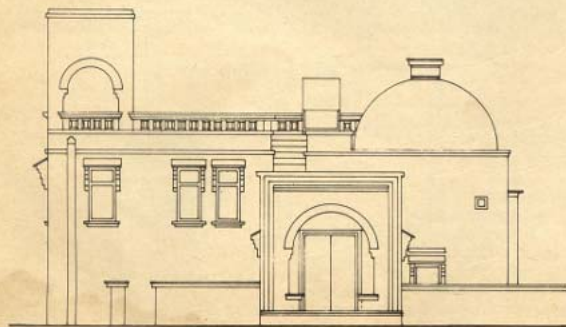
DINING SIDE ELEVATION



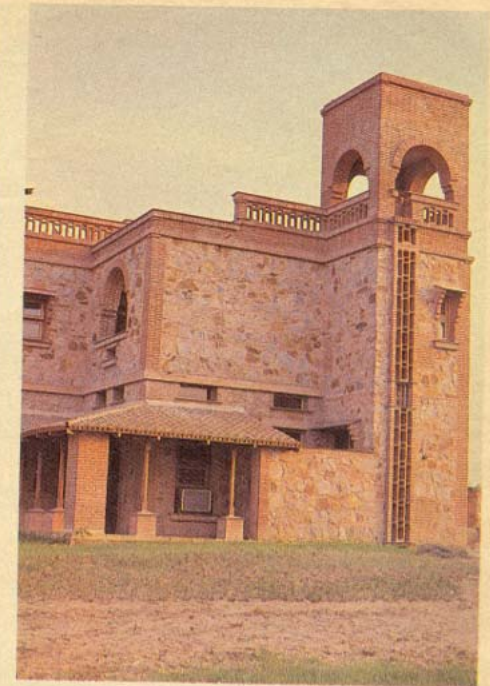
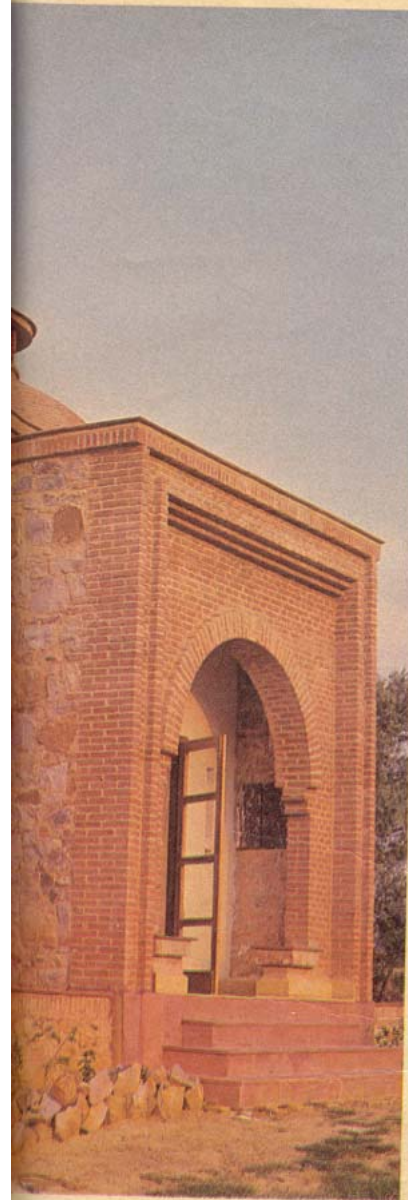
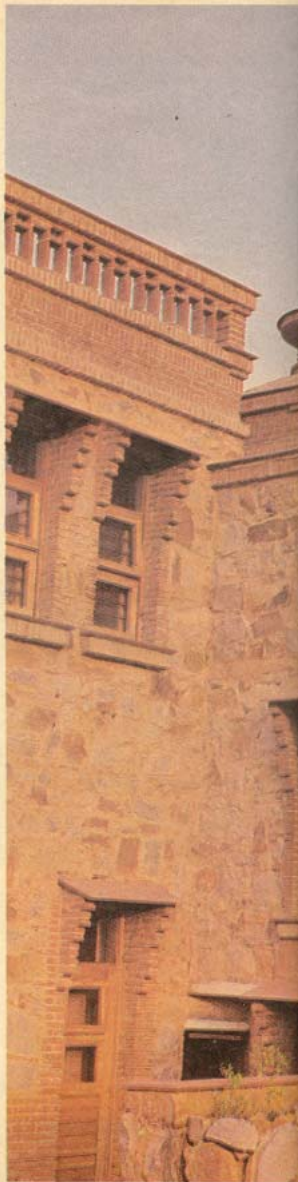
- 1 LIVING
- 2 BEDROOM
- 3 DINING
- 4 COURT
- 5 TOILET

SECTION A-A

0 2 4 FT



ENTRY ELEVATION



Above: Brickwork forms the corners while stone forms the larger wall surfaces  
 Left: Brick tile arches and corbelled brackets form the design element

artistic enterprise. The design language echoes the past, flowing naturally, yet aiming at the future.

Revathi and Vasant Kamath through their architecture utilise resources positively more so people and the place. They acknowledge traditional skills which have value and meaning in a fragmented environment.

These buildings display a creative vision of options and possibilities. Machine processes need not eclipse humane ones. Instead a synthesis of technology and tradition by broadening the parameters of the selected means. In this way, they illuminate the value basis underlying design thought – or the lack of it – in architecture today.

Photographs the architect





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