

SHELL HOUSE

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A sweeping, sunken driveway is flanked by walls, with green lawns dotted with waterbodies and trees, unfurling from the ground level at the top of the walls. The approach beckons, luring you in anticipation of what's next and also accords a sense of arrival to this bungalow. An additional element of drama is incorporated when the space is lit up at night.

Leaf-shaped motifs in stainless steel, 18 inches long, are embedded in a precise row along one edge of the driveway. When the lights at the base of the wall are turned on, a measured focal point is created on each leaf, drawing attention to the subtle detailing. 'The credit for this goes to the coordinator at the site, since we hadn't planned the way the lighting adds to the aesthetics,' says Dipen Gada of Dipen Gada & Associates.

Dipen Gada designs a home in Vadodara on a 94,000 sq ft plot, using concrete to advantage. With a footprint of 140 ft x 48 ft, the home enjoys enviable views from all its rooms.



The living room is connected to a semi-open double height courtyard which functions as a sit-out for the family. It is protected by a dot matrix geometric screen while a Buddha sculpture sits at one end, its calm composure pervading the space.





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Dipen Gada

A short flight of steps at the end of the driveway leads to the entrance of the house. The exterior is white, with horizontal timber-textured cast concrete walls. 'Concrete as a building material has a history which goes back more than 1000 years. It ages well and provides solidity, without overpowering other materials. It is also visually cool,' says Dipen.

'Rather than locating the house at the front of the plot, which would have meant cutting down several mango, palm and coconut trees, we've used the long, narrow space at the back of the site for the structure,' says Dipen. Retaining the trees also meant that a buffer would be in place, in the event that any development took place at the front of the plot in the future. 'We also decided not to have a swimming pool, which would have been an unnecessary expense. The home is just for a family of four, not for entertaining, so we didn't want to add to the maintenance.'



Unlike most homes, there is no 'porch' or 'canopy' which extends outside the bungalow. The entrance is aligned with the living spaces, the entire structure encased by a large rectangular 'shell' which functions as a sheltering canopy in places. The path to the main door has lily ponds on either side, with mushroom shaped stone fountains which rise from the water when in use. A champa tree shares the lily pond with the fountains.

Large open spaces and concrete walls are the order of the day in this bungalow.

The ceilings are 11.5 ft high and the interiors enjoy cross ventilation, with all rooms appearing to run on into the outdoors. Stemming from a freehand sketch, a 16-ft-high leaf in cast concrete, treated in parts in German silver, rises from the ground floor to the floor above. Located at the heart of the house, it is connected with all the areas in the home. 'It wasn't easy to cast this leaf,' recalls Dipen.

Kota stone in its many avatars, both textured as well as mirror polished, has been used extensively within this home, often juxtaposed for



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effect. 'I prefer using kota, over more expensive materials,' says Dipen. 'It is Indian, neutral in colour, cost-effective and challenges the creativity of the designer.' Together with the concrete, it contributes to the humble, unpretentious material palette. The aesthetic, however, is very much of today.

Three lamps shaped like inverted cones are suspended in the stairwell. Four, five and six feet long respectively, they have been customised in-house and are made of 4 mm metal plates, laser-cut with motifs from the world of music – casting intricate shadows on the walls, when lit. 'Except for the concealed lights, everything was designed especially for this site,' says Dipen.

The dining table is located in a double height space, with lime green upholstery on the dining chairs. A seating arrangement alongside is in a happy, yellow ochre. The fans overhead are designed to provide breeze on two sides. The living room has a swing, ubiquitous to traditional homes. Having found its way into folk songs and art, the swing is woven into

bungalow



the very fabric of life in Gujarat. The living room is connected to a semi-open double height courtyard which functions as a sit-out for the family. It is protected by a dot matrix geometric screen while a Buddha sculpture sits at one end, its calm composure pervading the space.

Above the living room is a semi-covered terrace with a ceramic tile flooring in a rustic look. A round dining table encourages meals and conversations while overlooking the greenery outside. As expected, the bedrooms are large, with one en-suite bath in IPS and kota. Appointed with a Jacuzzi, it provides all

the luxuries of modern living.

Pergolas, courtyards, verandahs, terraces, water bodies and landscaping provide all the bells and whistles for this home – but with a parsimonious use of materials which contributes to an uncontrived aesthetic. ‘We are moving towards an architectural style in which the interiors are functional and stripped of unnecessary frills,’ says Dipen. ‘And I’m happy with how the house looks at different times of the day as well as at night.’ Yes, because the lights don’t just come on at night...they present a carefully orchestrated scene. 

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