

MY SPACE : GAURAV NANDA

MORPHOGENESIS UNCOVERED

DESIGN DESTINATION : JOHANNESBURG

HOME REVIEW

VOL 12 ISSUE 9 SEPTEMBER 2013 TOTAL PAGES 142

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TEXTURAL SHAPES
BY OPOLIS ARCHITECTS

FORTIFIED PLEASURE
AT THE SPIT BANK FORT

A DAZZLING JEWEL

URBAN STUDIO'S BRIGHT STAR IN JAIPUR

An ancestral home gets restored using sensitive detailing and a blending of a century old style with contemporary expressions. In the process is rediscovered a humble beauty called 'Janakee Sadan'.

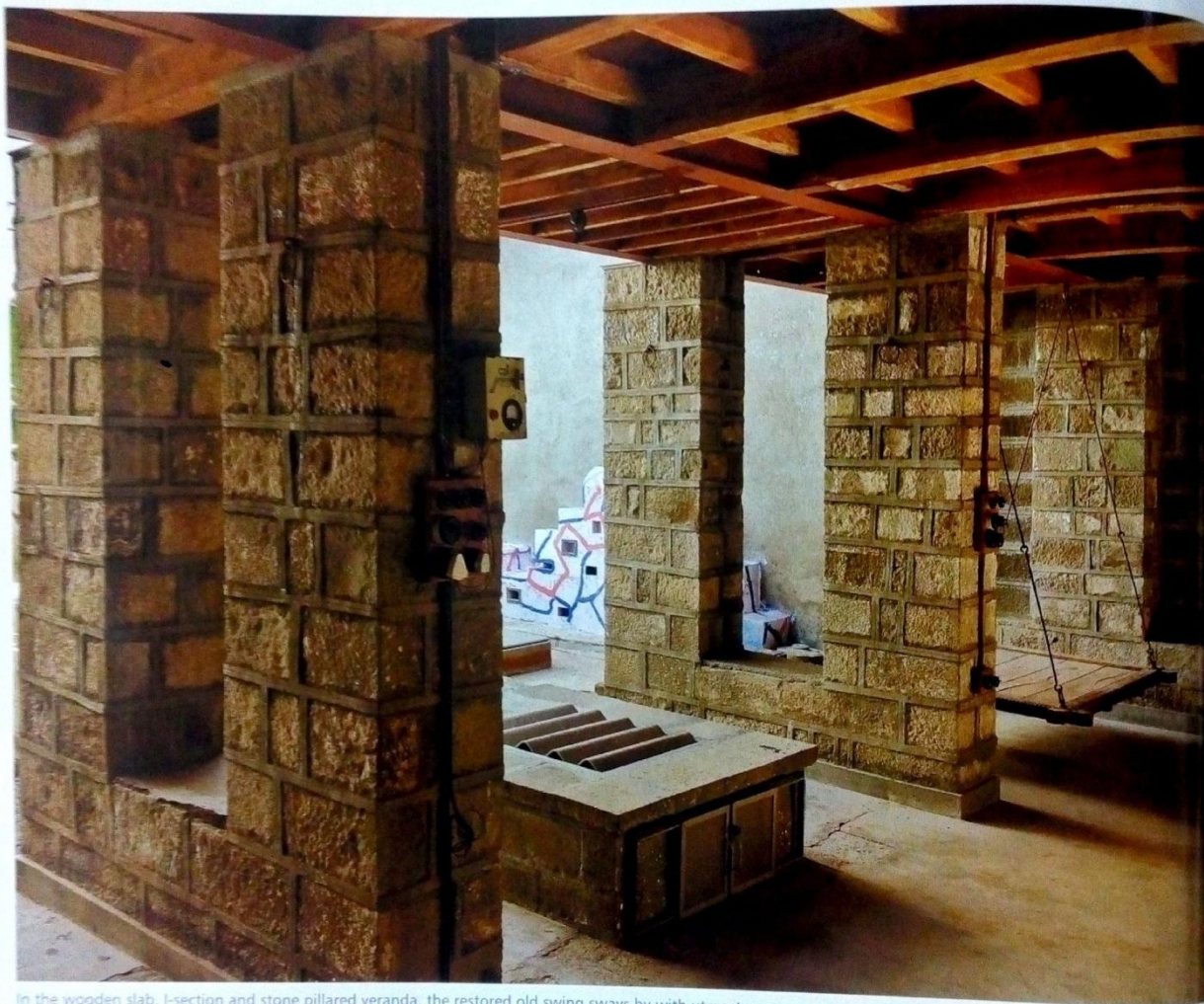
Text By K Parvathy Menon
Photographs Hemant Patil
and Artha Studio

ANAMNESTIC ARCHITECTURE



The furniture as ancient as Janakee Sadan was refurbished and used in the apartment. Open to the central court, the interiors are graced with a flurry of patterns caused by the changing light.





In the wooden slab, I-section and stone pillared veranda, the restored old swing sways by with utmost ease, making us question, 'is the swing new or the space old?'

The phrase 'never judge a book by its cover' comes to mind when we see the unassuming grey façade of the ancestral house, Janakee Sadan, standing with quiet confidence on the streets of Sangamner, Maharashtra. Witness to innumerable tales of love and loss, the house is a grand old lady adapting to the changing times; her doors still open wide, welcoming both the known and unknown alike into her confines.

The owners of Janakee Sadan wanted to restore the amaranthine building neglected for over two decades and approached the Pune based design firm Artha Studio for the task. As a gesture of philanthropy, the owners gave part of the house to a local NGO on lease and funded the entire restoration project, hence the project brief had to accommodate the many requirements of both the NGO and the family.

Bearing in mind the building's 150 year old history the goal of the design team, led by Architect Saurabh Malpani, was to extend the existing structure by subtle means. According to the architects, "Reuse of old and existing material found at the site made the project cost effective. The present structure is now an outcome of old and new spaces, materials, crafts and modern day technology."

The compact plan has the NGO activities restricted to the new annexe positioned at the rear end. **The fore structure is the old house, restored and re-planned; beginning at the entrance veranda, it ushers one into the discussion room composed of white rough plastered walls and stone flooring with a painted skirting within a wooden post and beam edifice.**

It is like stepping into a chapter from history as we walk past the wall niches and cupboards painted to match the yellow skirting which seem to whisper secrets in hushed tones. **A staircase abundantly sunlit by tall windows leads us to the first floor and a large open multi-purpose hall on the second floor topped by the newly added steel truss roof erected at the commencement of project.**

These rooms, similar in construction and style to the volumes below, look out into the interior courtyard, abound with activity.



The covered gathering space next to the courtyard at the old building end is right out of the pages of history. The raw materials of the past make their presence felt in a natural way.



Once the grain store, the vaulted basement, now converted into an art gallery is no less than a masterpiece with its customised 'kadaee' finish, which resonates with the ever alive character of the original structure.



Facing the central court, the dining nook is cosy and welcoming, in the warmth of various wooden elements enveloping it.

"A very strict architectural language was followed while working on the old part of the project. Traditional details were respected for the purpose of reuse of materials, electrical design and aesthetics," say the architects about their design approach.

The central courtyard is not just the spatial barrier between the old part and the newly added studio apartment, but also a transition zone between the two distinct areas. It has benches, semi covered areas, turbo ventilators aerating the vaulted basements, jharokhas and colourful stepped structures for children to play in. The walled enclosure overlooked by verandas on both sides, is the meeting point of the past and present; an example of experimental thinking and the visual connector of all spaces in Janakee Sadan.

The Artha team says, "Of all spaces the courtyard and veranda around, is our personal favourite due to its informal sagacity." And it is not hard to understand why. The playful atmosphere of the partly stone paved court with a single Champa tree as a landscaping element is infectious, touching souls through its dynamic simplicity and openness, bringing smiles to faces.

The studio apartment for the family at the rear end is a new addition entered through a veranda from the courtyard and an ectype of the old house. Here almost every structural part has an element from the old. Say the architects, "Debris from the old brick bat coba and lime were used for the foundation while extra stones from the basement staircase and from the fallen part of house were used as load bearing pillars for the new studio annexe," share the architects.

Ascending the stone staircase, we step into the cosy interiors draped in old teakwood salvaged by the restoration team. The rectilinear plan has the living area doubling as a bedroom, kitchenette and dining nook laid out in continuity. A non RCC roof, insulated with air cavities and covered with bamboo mats from inside, compliments the teakwood and stone flooring of the linear space.





A continuous opening along the entire length filters in light and adds to its spatial beauty. The architectural vocabulary of Janakee Sadan is a reflection of a building technique founded in the past and was a time consuming operation. "Time was not a constraint as the clients wanted the best and the most cost effective approach. So the timeline was open as most of the work needed master masons and experienced craftsmen," add the architects.

On the streets, the façade merely smiles at you, but when you step within the bosom of this grand old lady, standing since the 1860's, you drown in its history laden beauty. The walls, old and new, together speak to you of past wonders and future aspirations in a perfectly balanced style reminding us of the architectural master hands that brushed the restoration and refurbishment without compromising on the essence of the house; Janakee Sadan now standing in unabashed glory is a virtual fruit of a labour of love!

✉ arthastudio@gmail.com
www.arthastudio.com