

Timeless Living | Houses Under the Sun

Essay by | Prof. Christopher Charles Benninger

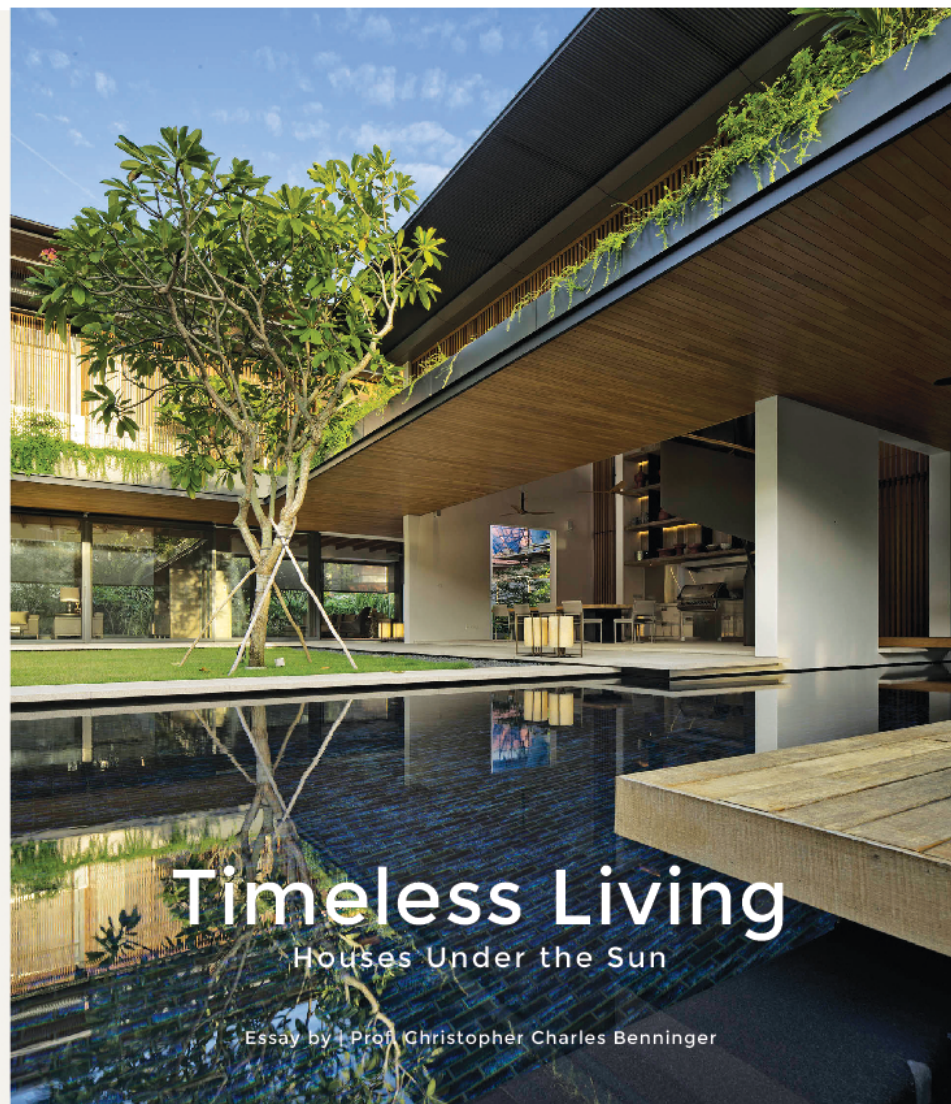
The book takes you on a journey of exploring 33 different but interesting residential projects across Singapore, Australia, United States of America, India and Sri Lanka, each one of them distinct in their style and concept. You will be taken by surprise in this journey by looking at not only contemporary style but also those offering a hint of traditional segments. You will see how a project is carved out of its own site, each differing in geography and topography, bringing out the best of it. The book provides an insight into how the modern home looks like, how much has been transformed, and how much still remains. So, let's together begin this journey and evolve together, creating a benchmark in architecture.



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What were the challenges you faced with the site being contoured?

The contour was seen more as an asset than a challenge – a feature to play with, that eventually enhanced the design quotient of the house. Any difficulties faced were purely logistical and involved access to and from the site.

What are the pros and cons of designing in a contoured site as compared to a plain one?

The portion of the plot, where the house rests now, was picked specifically for its friendlier slope as opposed to the rest of the site.

This also allowed the design to develop with interplay of levels and a juxtaposition of spaces that framed and led the user to different vantage points.

How did you develop your concept of five elements?

The story begins where the Five Elements meet - The Earth and The Sky, with Air, Water and Fire in-between - molded from the earth and open to the vast surround, allowing the outside to step in.

The House embodies and echoes the natural elements which could not be ignored. A clear balance has been maintained between the sensibilities of design and the context – accentuating a desire to build in an organic fashion.

What/Who was your inspiration behind the design?

The design evolved as a direct response to the site at hand – the shimmering lake and the resolute Sahyadris in the distance – all the while respecting the requirements of the client.

A perfect family retreat house, what are the elements that together create this perfection?

The 5 Element House, specifically, has been designed to capitalize on its surrounding. An edgeless cantilevered swimming pool, in line with the dam, breaks forth and juts out towards the crystalline lake, an invitation for the water body to enter the house; a vast pervasive expanse yet seemingly only a stone's throw away.

Taking advantage of the site and the surround, the design evolved from a cohesive single unit to a structure that spreads out in blocks, akin to a jigsaw, with built and unbuilt spaces interlocking to create a whole. The unbuilt open spaces act as natural extensions that exist as distinct entities which seamlessly merge to convey the duality of space. As the extensions branch out in the form of bridges, the disparate blocks come together, effectively eliminating the sense of distance one would expect to feel in a space of this scale.

How important it is for the user to have a place that delves into nature?

It has become almost mandatory to break away from the monotonous ritual of life in the city. A simple retreat, that allows one to re-align with oneself and rejuvenate, within the folds of nature, is of paramount importance.

Rising high and at the level of the Sahyadris, the story begins where the Five Elements meet - The Earth and The Sky, with Air, Water and Fire in-between - molded from the earth and open to the vast surrounding, allowing the outside to step in. The design allowed the world outside to grow along and within the spaces of the structure itself. “The abode exists in tandem with the elements around it – a subliminal nod to nature itself.”

The textured and subdued wintergreen walls grow warmer in tone under the sun and mimic the tones of earth; which not only blends in with the landscape but gives the impression of a mass that has grown and emerged from the land on which it rests. Each level responds to the contour which gives rise to a dynamic and playful mix of risers and landings - a homage to the hills. The footprint ensures that the site has been altered to a bare minimum.

A simple and earthy palette of materials and tones – limestone (Shahabad & Kadappa), sandstone, slate, teak wood, terracotta tiles, exposed brick, cement plaster, mild steel - complement and respect the site and its surroundings.

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Segregated into numerous zones – the master block, the kids block, the living block and the guest block – the house takes

into account the family's requirements and their professional inclinations. Each zone spills out into an informal space – the aangan (a small courtyard), the pool, the lily pond – that ensures the continuity and flow of spaces from the interior to the exterior. A divide between the guest block and the living block acts as a magnet and the true entrance of the house – enticing and pulling the user in, towards the view of the lake and the range – bringing forth an element of surprise in the form of the silhouette that is the house itself.

The living area acts as the fulcrum of the house, asserting itself as the warm welcoming safe haven, while the remaining three zones provide privacy, and are reserved to retreat or retire at night. If the living area is the heart of the house, then the ‘aangan’ is the soul. The ‘aangan’ is envisioned as an informal yet deeply personal space for the family of four.

An edgeless cantilevered swimming pool, in line with the dam, breaks forth and juts out towards the crystalline lake, a vast pervasive expanse yet seemingly only a stone's throw away. As a direct response to the site – the altitude and the prevailing climatic conditions – currents of wind are allowed to flow through the numerous openings and are directed along the two main axes of the site – from the ‘aangan’ to the entrance and from the pool to lily pond.



FACT FILE

PROJECT TITLE
5 ELEMENT HOUSE

LOCATION OF PROJECT
PAVANA, MAHARASHTRA

BUILT UP AREA
10,000 SQ.FT.

ARCHITECTURE FIRM
STUDIO PKA

PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT
PURAN KUMAR

DESIGN TEAM
PREETHI KRISHNAN
SONALI NIMBALKAR
REVINA SONI

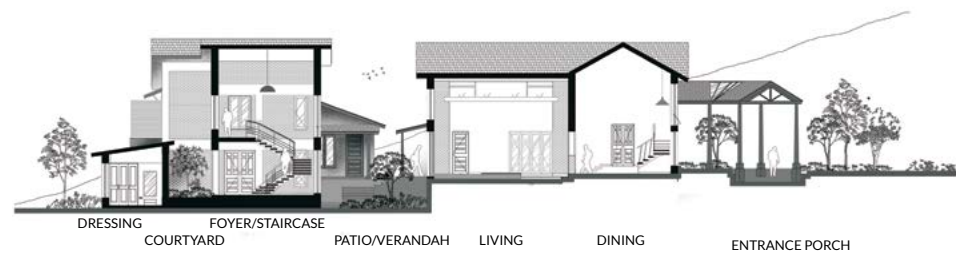
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER
RANAVAT BUILDCON

CIVIL CONTRACTOR
MEHTA ASSOCIATES

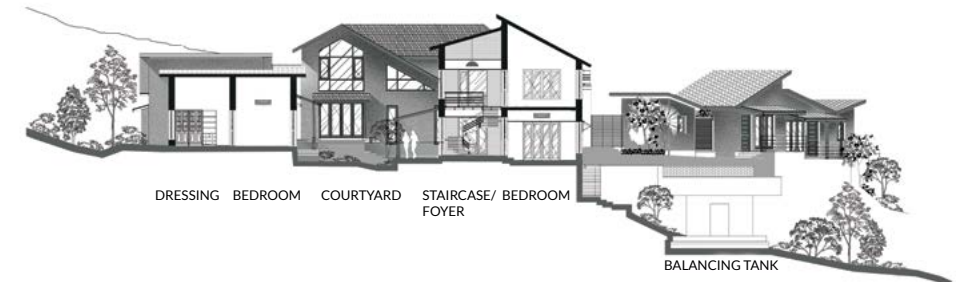
LANDSCAPE CONSULTANT
OIKOS ECOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS

PHOTO CREDITS
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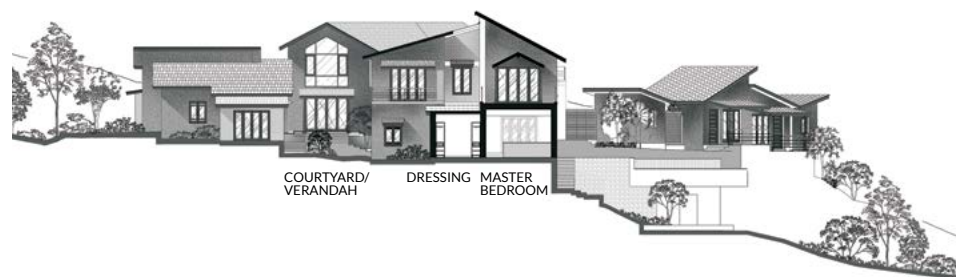
YEAR OF COMPLETION
2017



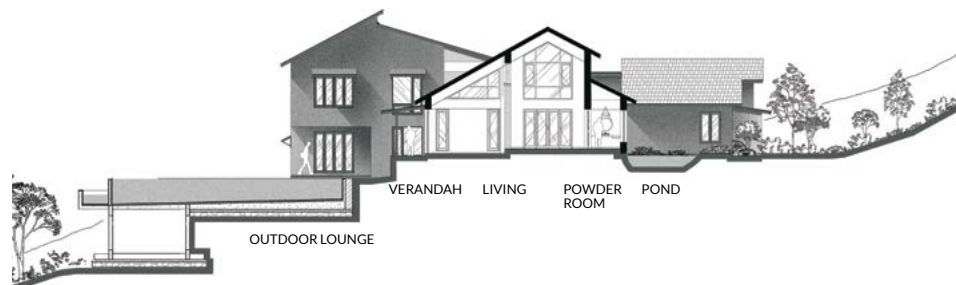
SECTION AA



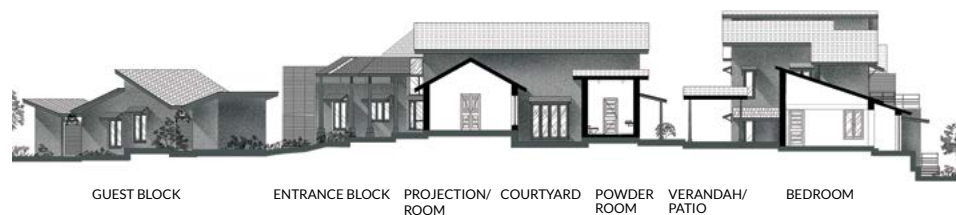
SECTION BB



SECTION CC



SECTION DD



SECTION EE

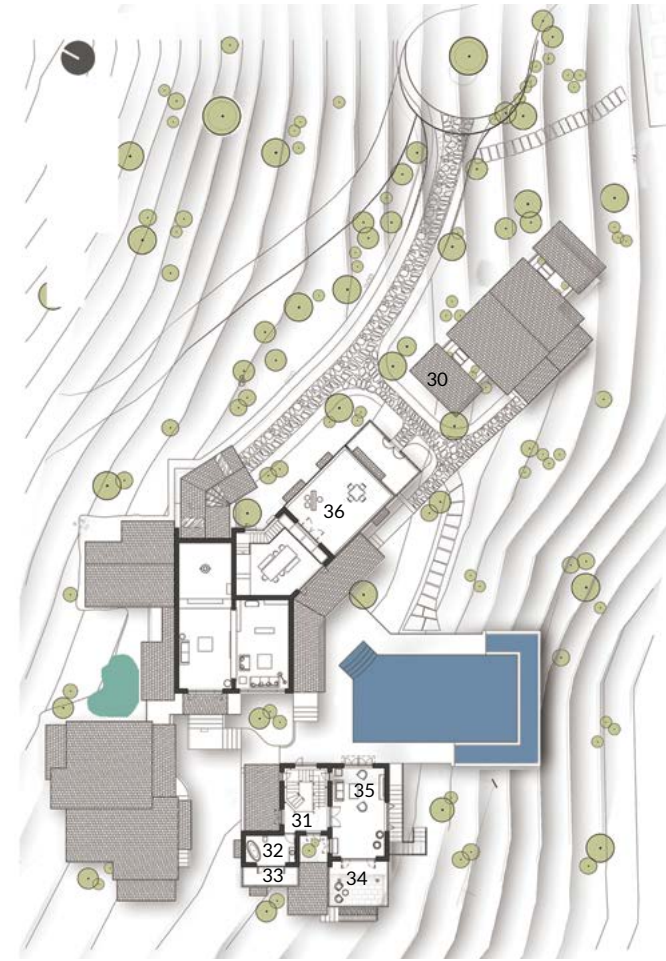


ABOVE | PERCHED ON A HILLTOP OVERLOOKING PAVANA LAKE, THE HOUSE IS A DIRECT RESPONSE TO THE PRISTINE LANDSCAPE.

LEFT | SECTION DETAILS



LOWER LEVEL PLAN



UPPER LEVEL PLAN



MATERIAL SPECIFICATIONS

FLOORING : LIMESTONE, SANDSTONE, SLATE

INTERIOR FINISHES : CEMENT PLASTER, PAINT, TERRAZZO FINISH, EXPOSED BRICK

LIGHT FIXTURES : CUSTOMISED

KITCHEN FIXTURES : FRANKE

SANITARY WARE & CP FITTINGS : KOHLER, JAQUAR, HINDWARE

FURNITURE : CUSTOMISED

SOFT FURNISHINGS : CUSTOMISED

LEGEND

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. ENTRANCE FOYER | 19. MASTER DRESS |
| 2. ENTRANCE LOUNGE | 20. MASTER BATH |
| 3. LIVING ROOM | 21. COURT |
| 4. DINING | 22. BEDROOM-1 |
| 5. DRY KITCHEN | 23. PATIO(BEDROOM-1) |
| 6. WET KITCHEN | 24. BATH/DRESSING |
| 7. UTILITY | 25. BEDROOM-2 |
| 8. POWDER ROOM | 26. DRESSING |
| 9. PROJECTION ROOM | 27. BATH |
| 10. EDITING ROOM | 28. PATIO(GUEST BLOCK) |
| 11. PATIO | 29. GUEST BEDROOM |
| 12. POND | 30. GUEST BATH |
| 13. DECK | 31. FOYER |
| 14. POOL | 32. POWDER ROOM |
| 15. THE AANGAN | 33. BALCONY |
| 16. FOYER | 34. DECK |
| 17. LOUNGE | 35. DEN |
| 18. MASTER BEDROOM | 36. TERRACE |



ABOVE | THE DESIGN ALLOWS THE WORLD OUTSIDE TO GROW ALONG AND WITHIN THE SPACES OF THE STRUCTURE ITSELF.

BELOW | THE POOL BREAKS FORTH AND JUTS OUT TOWARDS THE LAKE, A VAST PERVERSIVE EXPANSE YET SEEMINGLY ONLY A STONE'S THROW AWAY.

OPPOSITE | FLOOR PLANS & MATERIAL SPECIFICATIONS



THE NIGHT ONLY ADDS TO THE DYNAMISM OF THE HOUSE AND THE SCENERY AROUND.



ABOVE | AN EDGELESS CANTILEVERED SWIMMING POOL IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE TAKES THE BREATH AWAY.

BELOW | THE LIVING AREA ACTS AS THE FULCRUM OF THE HOUSE, ASSERTING ITSELF AS THE WARM WELCOMING SAFE HAVEN.

OPPOSITE ABOVE | THE SEAMLESS CONNECTION OF THE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE.

OPPOSITE BELOW | THE HEAVENLY VIEW FROM THE LIVING BLOCK OF THE HOUSE, PENETRATING WITH NATURE.



ABOVE | VIEW OF THE KID'S BLOCK AND MASTER BLOCK ON EITHER SIDE WITH THE LIVING BLOCK.

BELOW | VIEW OF THE GUEST BLOCK SURROUNDED BY NATURE.

OPPOSITE | THE VIEW OF THE LIVING BLOCK FROM THE POOL DECK.

