



Down To Earth

ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BENGALURU, PALMGROVE BY GOODEARTH OFFERS RESPITE FROM THE frenetic pace of life in the city. Melding gracefully into a charming vista of swaying palms, it attempts to rebuild our fractured ties with nature

Over the last few years, sustainability has steadily moved from the ambit of alternative practitioners to the mainstream. Long before all this attention, GoodEarth has addressed sustainability concerns with a vision that not only aims to craft ecologically responsible buildings but ultimately aspires 'to create a society which is environmentally sensitive, economically sensible and socially secure'.

Located on the outskirts of the city off the Bengaluru-

To foster an interactive relationship with nature, the landscaping scheme eschews a highly manicured look

Mysore Road, the firm's housing projects exude an appeal far more alluring than the extensive list of low or no-carbon features it offers. Their holistic designs take into account factors that resonate deeply with the human spirit, crafting beautiful



Natural textures, warm tones, with space for individual expression, make each home unique and personal. Brick, stone, clay and wood enhance the aesthetic appeal and ensure well-insulated, comfortable rooms



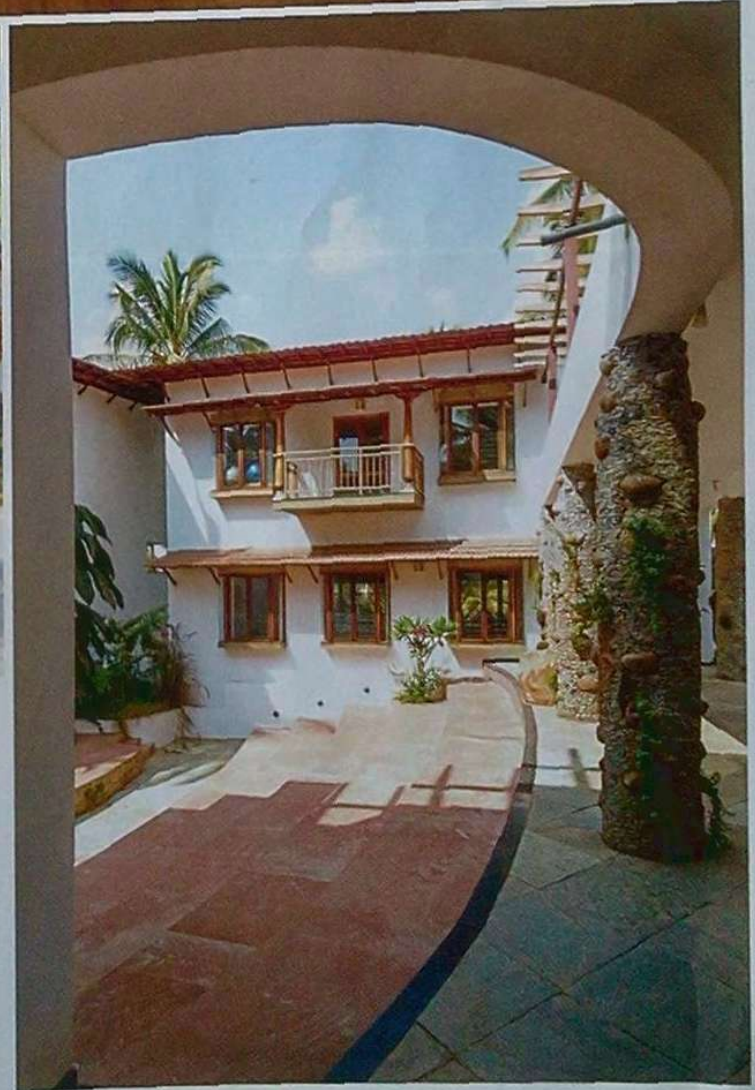


environments that foster communion with nature and encourage healthy interaction between the inhabitants of the community.

PalmGrove, one of the organisation's latest developments, was built on a site that was originally a coconut and areca nut plantation. A community of 46 homes, the project is set among swaying palms within eight acres of gently terraced terrain.

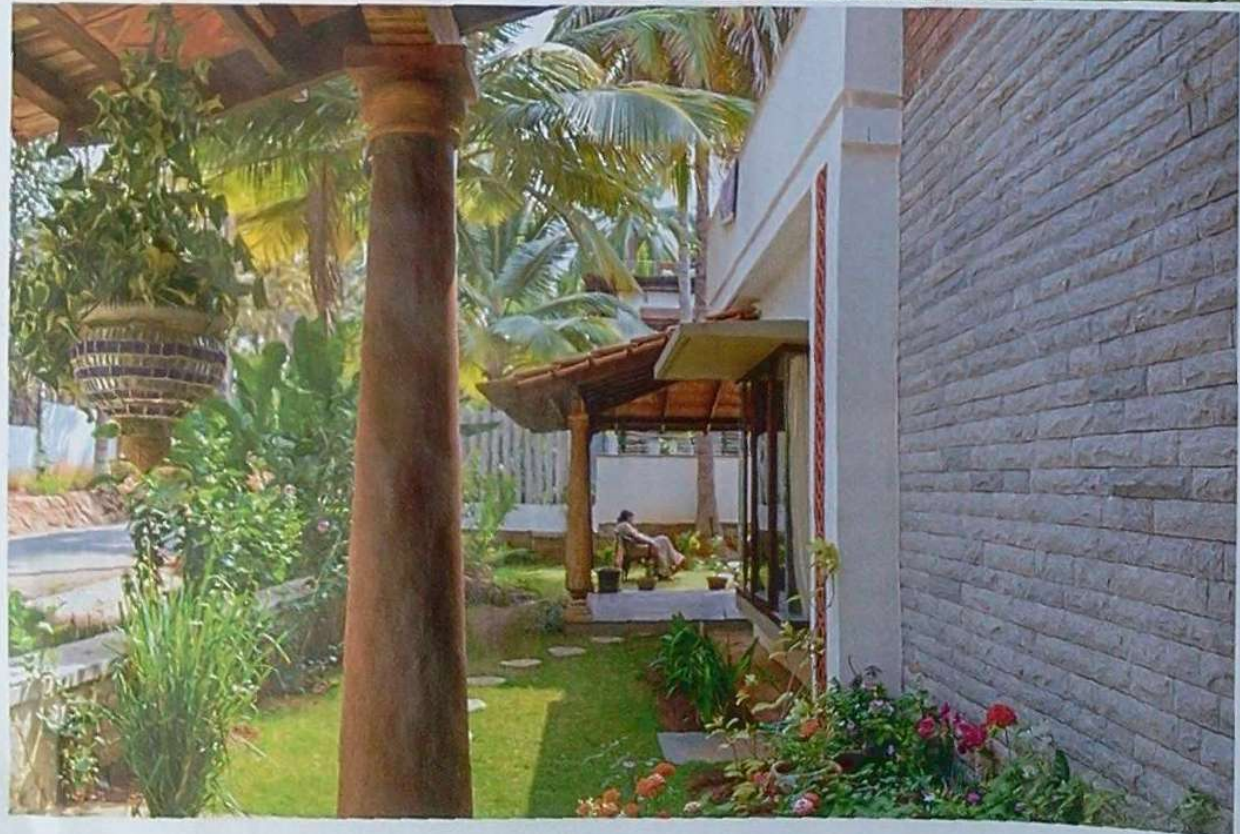
The houses at PalmGrove are designed along a slope in four clusters around landscaped courts. Delineated by lanes flanked by palm trees, the clusters are distinguished by landscaped features which include undulating grass mounds, streams and ponds amidst the subtle scent of herbs, flowers and exotic plants. Spaces are designed with children and elders in mind so that their joy in the biodiversity of nature is not compromised.

Retaining much of the original topography, the layout was devised to reduce the paved areas and



incorporate many of the existing trees in the landscaping. Houses take on the unique terraced character of the landscape and are built on multi-levels. Spaces within the homes are efficiently planned and the area wasted in circulation is saved by reducing the number of walls. Light pools are created through a play of single and double height spaces.

Maintaining a low density for the houses, the carbon footprint of PalmGrove is greatly reduced by utilising less than the maximum permissible area allowed to build. As a result, the use of material resources is reduced, ensuring a



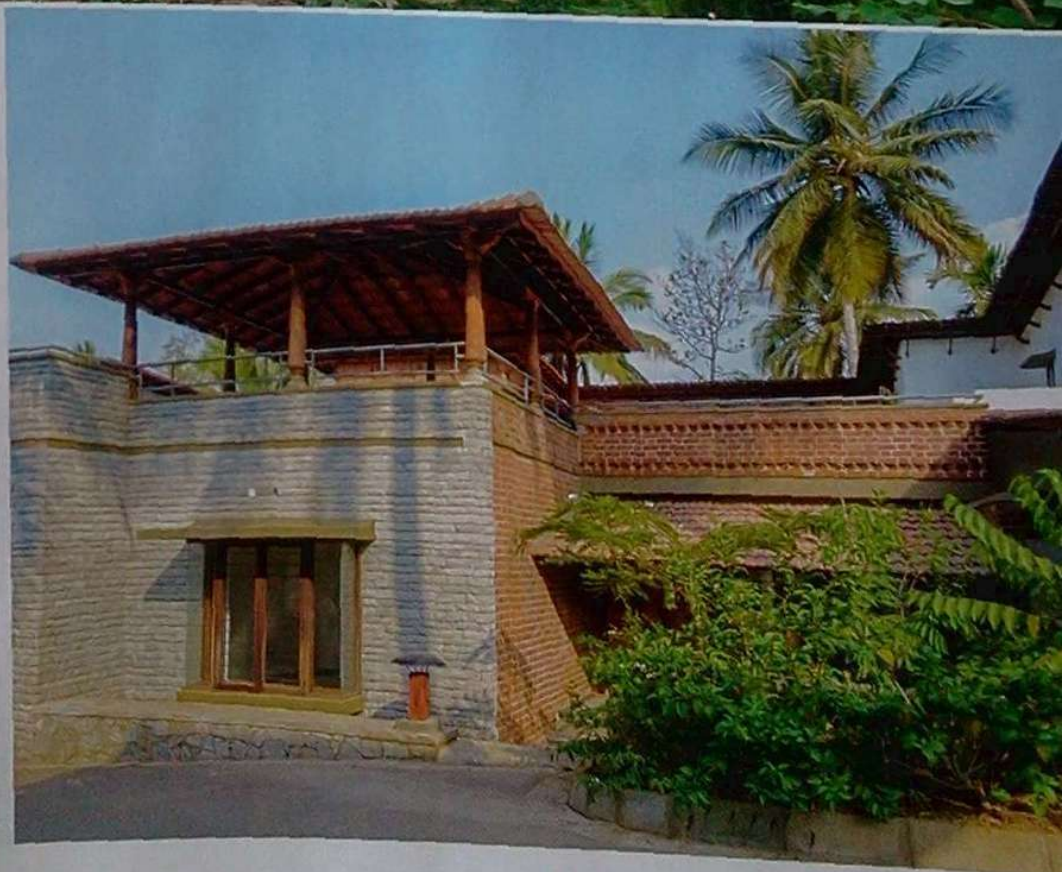
Large, strategically placed windows open out to bring in the tropical landscape. Featuring verandas and private garden courtyards, the homes emphasise a connection to nature

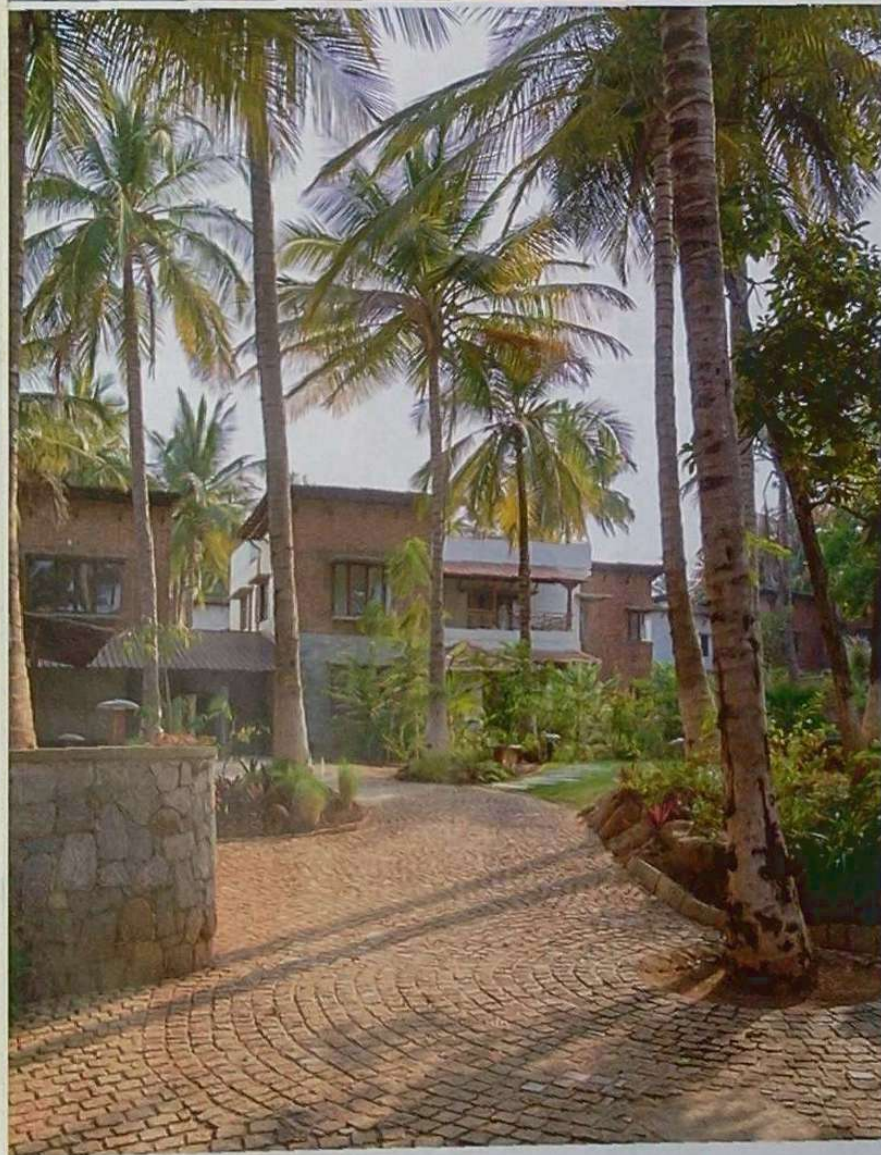
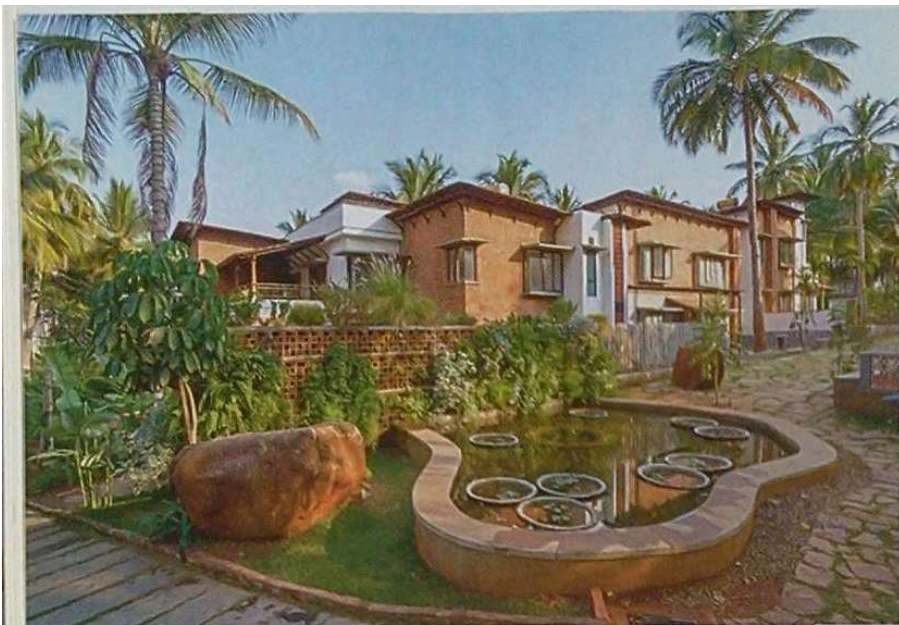


lesser burden on the land.

A combination of energy-efficient and locally-available materials used for construction of these homes helped in reducing the transportation and manufacturing cost. Burnt brick, which has excellent load-bearing properties and minimises the use of steel and cement, has been used extensively in this project. It is a material that breathes and helps keep homes cool. Stone, another locally-available material with excellent insulating properties and aesthetic beauty is featured extensively in the building facades. Today, building with stone is a craft that is slowly disappearing with the increasing dependence on factory-made synthetic materials and GoodEarth aims to revive its use.

Wood, a warm, intimate material has replaced high energy consuming





Homes are designed along a slope in four clusters around landscaped courts with different themes

steel and aluminium for doors and windows and is used even for floors in some spaces. Rather than using precious forest trees, recycled wood—from houses that were demolished, from packaging cases, and from plantation timber—was used wherever possible.

Wood and clay have been primarily used for the floors—materials that offer better insulation and comfort than synthetic floors and also age beautifully. The roof is insulated using a double layer of concrete and cellulose fibre-bitumen sheet thus creating a lighter form and less use of concrete. The paint used is distemper, which is lead-free and low in volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

All the homes are designed to offer adequate natural light and cross-ventilation. Large windows, wide verandahs, air channels to release hot air, and thermally conductive materials reduce the necessity for artificial light and ventilation. Rainwater is harvested and the ground water recharged through well spread out percolation channels across the property.

Rina Sen, a resident, recalls the participatory nature by which the architects designed her home, remarking that it always felt like interacting with family rather than a corporate developer—one of the many reasons PalmGrove manages to nurture an intimate sense of belonging within the community.

