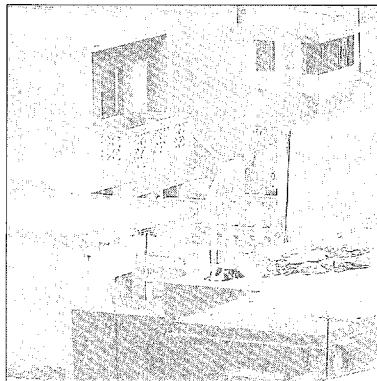


# ARANYA COMMUNITY HOUSING

*INDORE, INDIA*



■ This project brings the attention and talents of a signature architect to bear on the problems of housing the poor and improving social harmony at a time of rising social strife.

Aranya replaces the insensitive grid plan so frequently associated with sites and services projects with a more suitable urban design, and attempts to provide an architectural vocabulary suitable to both the socio-economic circumstances and the climate. With the architectural vocabulary developed by the architect and a small utility core, opportunities are provided to build incrementally and affordably. The architect's demonstration units, while following standardised requirements for utilities and foundations, can be varied endlessly and provide a rich and provocative statement about low-cost housing.

But perhaps more important than the design goals this project has achieved are the social goals that it promotes, by creating common spaces where Muslims, Hindus, Jains and others in these neighbourhoods can mix, the project promotes co-operation, neighbourliness, tolerance and cohesive social relationships. In addition, it actively provides a socio-economic mix that allows for cross-subsidies and financial viability.

This is an unusually sophisticated scheme that should be widely studied. In a world of intolerance and strife, it is a beacon of enlightened and socially responsible architecture.



■ Indore is a commercial city with an acute housing shortage. Its many slum settlements are unplanned and crowded, consisting of clusters of huts forming neighbourhoods with small shops and streets that accommodate various social, economic and domestic activities. There are usually no utility services and virtually no infrastructure in these settlements, which adversely affects the health and environment of the inhabitants. In 1983, the Vastu-Shilpa Foundation was entrusted with preparing a master plan for the development of a new township in Aranya, situated on the Delhi-Bombay highway, six kilometres from the centre of Indore.

Aranya township, with a net planning area of 85 hectares, was designed as a site and services project laid out in six sectors that converge on

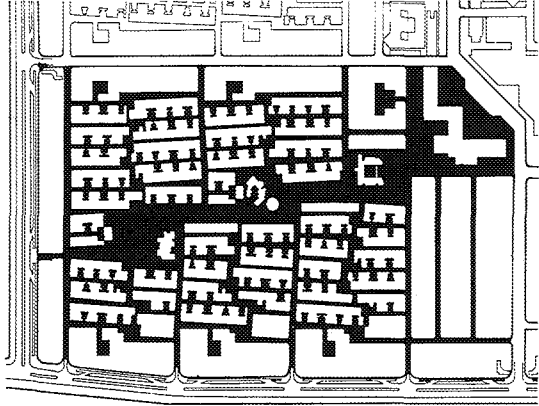
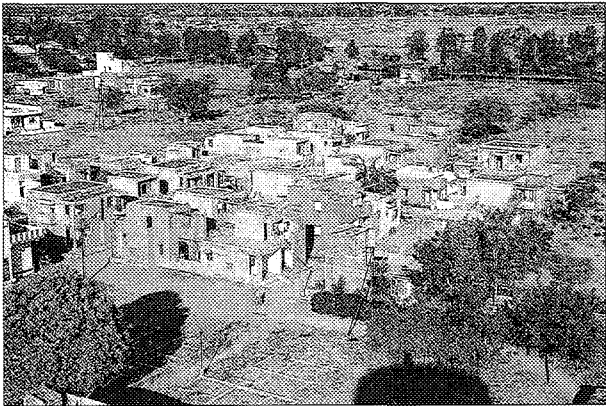
a central spine, known as the Central Business District. The plan was informal, imitating that of the slum settlements: the town centre consists of four clusters of shopping, residential and office complexes, and at the end of the central spine, two mixed-use clusters. Residential clusters that open on to a street are comprised of ten houses, each with a rear courtyard for use as a play and service area. Open spaces and pedestrian pathways intersect and connect the clusters to the central spine. Internal streets and squares are paved, and the major roads and arteries that link the town centre to other parts of Aranya are tarred.

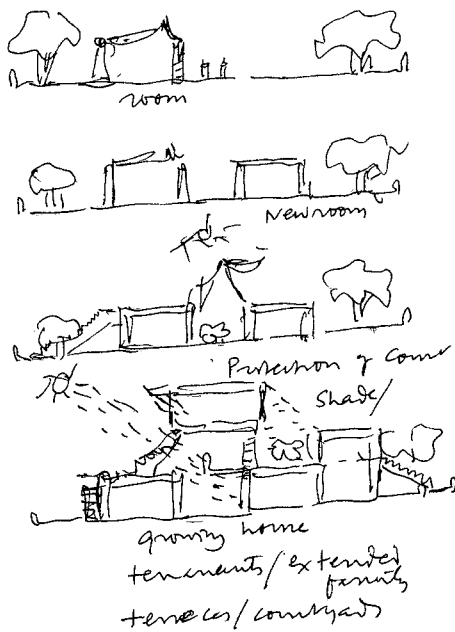
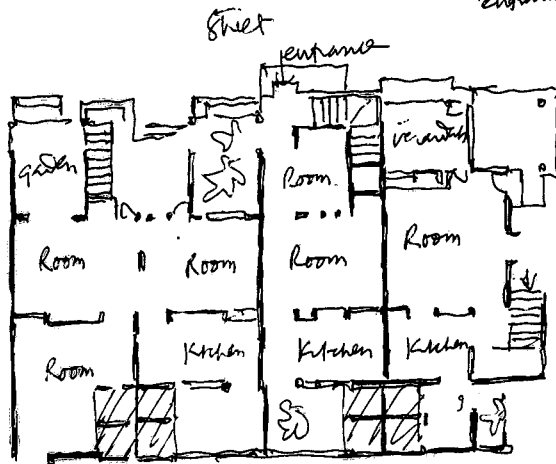
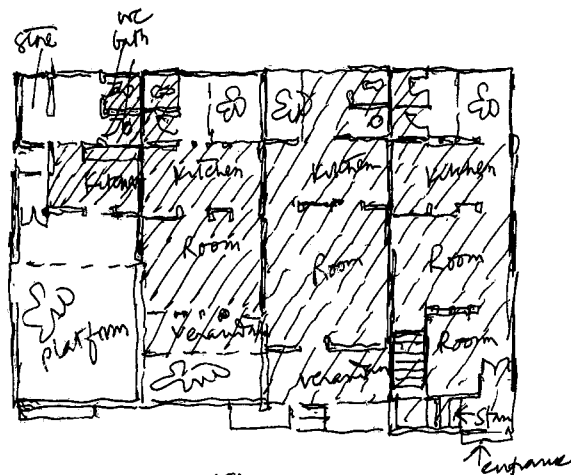
The Vastu-Shilpa Foundation used a computer-aided design program to create the most efficient, cost effective, and low-maintenance technology for the utilities. Every 20 houses are

*Streets provide active outdoor spaces for the residential clusters*

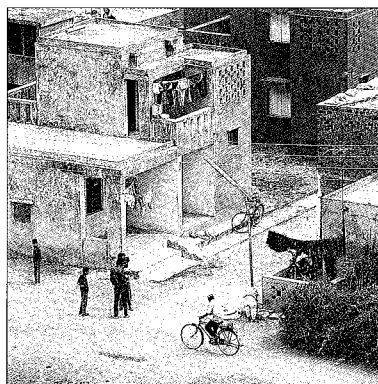
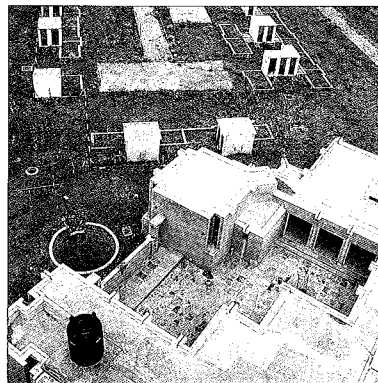


*ABOVE: Over time, residents decorate and alter the demonstration houses;  
 BELOW, L TO R: Demonstration houses were built as the first phase of the project; sector plan*





Indira / Aranya  
Socio-economic-cultural  
Study



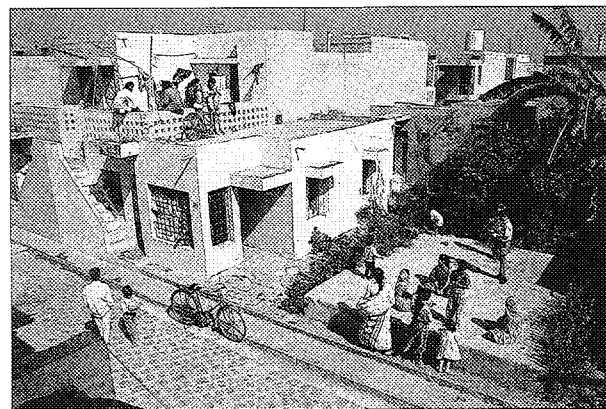
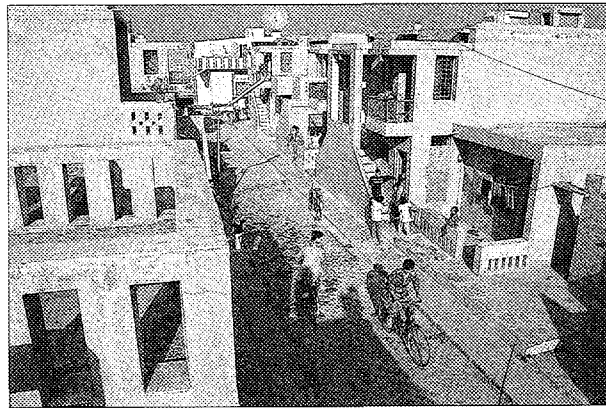
LEFT: Sketches by Balkrishna Doshi of Aranya floor plans and socio-economic culture; FROM ABOVE: Layout of foundations; service cores containing different sanitary elements are provided for each plot; outdoor spaces

connected to one septic tank. Three reservoirs, each serving two sectors, were built at the high points of each and interconnected to provide water for the entire area. Overhead electricity distribution was installed for the higher- and middle-income groups, and an underground network was installed for the lower-income areas.

The site plan integrates a variety of income groups. The poorest groups are located in the middle of each sector; higher income plots are along the periphery and the central spine of the settlement. A hierarchy of payment schemes reflects the income levels of the various groups, and makes available a variety of site and service options that can accommodate the financial resources of such a mixed community. The demonstration houses, designed by Balkrishna Doshi, illustrate the array of available options, from one-room shelters to more spacious houses, and emphasise a sense of family and neighbourhood while striving to encourage adaptation and personalisation according to individual needs and resources.

For most of the income groups, only a house plot was sold. The lower-income groups were provided with various options, including a site and plinth, a service core and one room, depending on how much they could afford. Owners were free to use any material for their house construction and decoration; brick, stone and

*BELOW: Street/house interface; public spaces provide a place for social gatherings in each cluster*





cement are all available locally. The down payment was based on the average income of the family, and the loan balance paid in monthly instalments. A monthly maintenance charge of two rupees was fixed for all plots owned by the lower-income groups.

The potential population of each of Aranya's six sectors ranges from 7,000 to 12,000. All of the plots have been sold, and commercial and institutional groups have begun to build in the town centre. The 80 houses designed by Doshi and the streets that define those houses are noteworthy. The remaining plots have been developed by their owners, built and embellished in a personal manner that does not follow Doshi's models. A number of the original owners have either sold their plots or are offering them for sale through a broker. The resale price of a 35-square-metre plot is currently 700 dollars, ten times its original price.

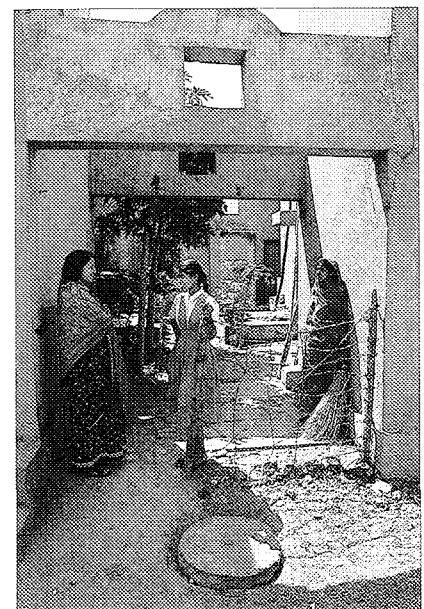
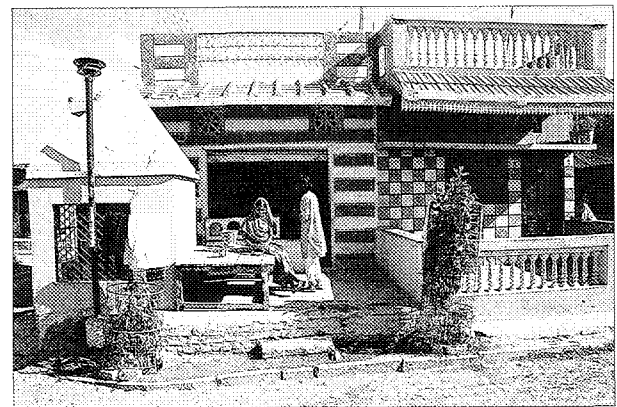
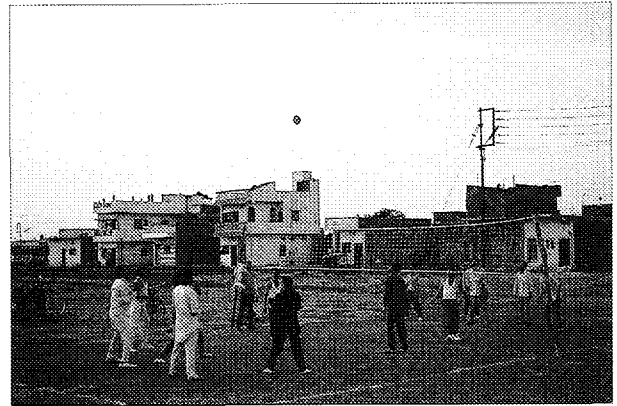
Nevertheless, the impact of Aranya is one of tolerance between income and ethnic groups. It appears to be a thriving and vital community where a family can live in their own house, in a friendly atmosphere – conditions that are not typical in slum settlements. *SA-R*

*Completed 1989 and ongoing*

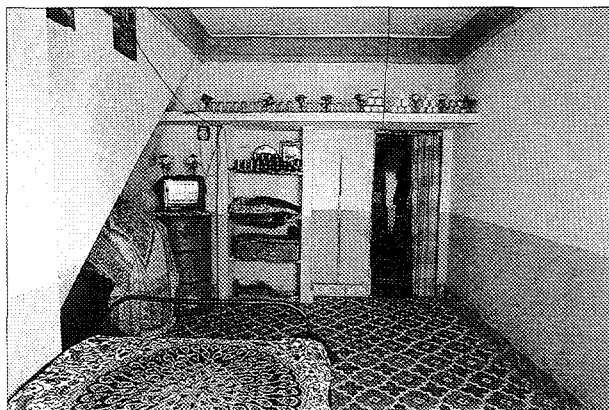
*Architect: Vastu-Shilpa Foundation,*

*Balkrishna V Doshi*

*Client: Indore Development Authority*



*FROM ABOVE: Larger public spaces are used for outdoor activities; new buildings are decorated according to owners' tastes; spaces designed between houses provide areas for social interaction*



ABOVE: Terraces and balconies act as intermediary spaces between the house and street; LEFT: House interior