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LEISURE SPACES

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

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The rejuvenation center of Isha Ashram is just the place to connect with yourself.

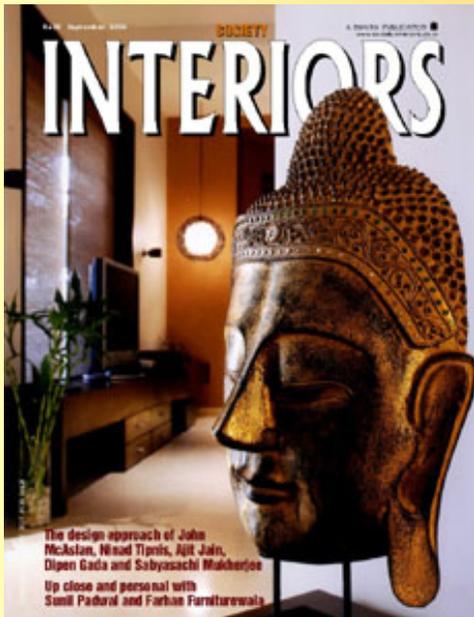


Renewing contact with one's own inner self is what Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev aims for through the Isha Yoga Center for inner and physical healing. "Everyone wants health and well-being True health fundamentally means to be in tune with nature; both the inner and outer." In the lap of lush Velliangiri hills in Coimbatore, the Center spreads across 150 acres within the Isha Ashram premises.

The rejuvenation villa has an ancient *kutir* flavour and the lush landscape inside the arcane wood fencing with

cactus, hand-picked shrubs, shady trees and a vibrant pond with multi-coloured fish aims at soothing the fevered spirit. The gates open into a space that is essentially organic in its look and feel. Sadhguru's sense of aesthetics is expressed through designs of the painting on the walls using vegetable paints or the use of granite and antique finish on wood.

Swami Suyagna, in-charge of programme administration, informs, "This place was initially a cowshed and when the idea of Rejuvenation Center came up, Sadhguru identified this spot as it is right outside the ashram premises and has an awesome view of the mountains." Ma Ujwala, in-charge of the Center, elaborates, "The cowshed is now the reception, office and the meditation hall. There was a small house with a verandah, a large room and a kitchen and store. We extended the veranda for the waiting area and doctor's consultation room. The kitchen and the main rooms are now massage rooms." The store has the steam bath facility while the massage rooms have bamboo partitions creating different areas.



The doctor's room finds a bamboo partition and iron-ring-links window grille that is an 'Isha-special'. The Isha Furniture unit has manufactured



the furniture where a team of designers and craftsmen make the furniture generally using waste materials. Swami Nandiksha, in-charge of the design fabrication team, says, "Waste material is recycled and this helps in conceiving innovative patterns." The tiny niche in the waiting area comes alive with dry foliage but what really catch the eye are the granite vestiges embedded in the wall.



The sun bathing area upstairs has a partially open roof of Mangalore tiles. Granite slabs are best suited for sun drying of mud and banana

packs. This spot affords a breathtaking view of the lush hills surrounding the ashram.

The rustic reception finds a granite seater, terracotta-tile pin-ups, foliage and a ceramic pot. Aztec and Maya cultures have inspired the motif on the wall while a serpent motif has been extensively employed as wrought-iron figurines, granite carvings and wall paintings.

The practice hall has Sadhguru's portrait and low-lit accent lamps. The corridor, too, has only accent lights creating a soft ambience. The sloping



roof of the corridors dressed with Mangalore tiles are supported by rough granite columns interspersed with granite seaters from where one can view the invigorating mountains. The Lebanese architect Marwan who worked on the project says, "The design and antique finish is intended to make the look more organic in

keeping with the holistic rejuvenation packages that are offered here. The project came into shape layer by layer. We have used railway sleepers extensively to add to the look. They are embedded in the pathway, used as partition material and also clamped on the ceilings." The motifs in Isha are inspired by rural design culture which Sadhguru wants to revive, "and the stone columns and stone pots, thick walls with rough plastering and half-cut walls are all part of the rural elements of design you see here," says Marwan.



The center, being with in the ashram premises, has the added advantage of accessing the *teerthakund* near *dhyanalinga*, a pond

where a linga made of 99.8 per cent solidified Mercury (*rasa*) is immersed. The linga, two feet tall and weighing 683 kg, is under five-feet deep water, which is said to impart miraculous healing to those who take a dip. Says Sadhguru, "The *Rasalinga* was consecrated in a particular way, fundamentally to open up one's receptivity and stabilize *pranic* imbalances in a person." This 'pool of dissolution' is embedded 30-feet deep in the earth and the structure lays emphasis on natural beauty, organic materials and earth colours. Huge monolithic stone blocks form its walls and an imposing flight of stairs, which would last a minimum of 5,000 years. The ceiling is painted with vegetable paints by Chithra Rekha from Kerala.

The cottages, named after the great Indian rivers, provide accommodation to the people coming to the center. Furnished with basic utilities like a



cot, dressing, storage facilities and attached bathroom, they are sleek and artistic.

Ayur Rasayana in the form of massages, mud baths, facials and walks in the surrounding forests help rejuvenate the mind and body. Life enhancing yogic practices, diet and daily doses of herbal tonics create a sustainable rejuvenating experience. At Isha, *relax, renew, revive and rejuvenate* is the mantra.