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Kalpana Apartments

Studio Naqshbandi

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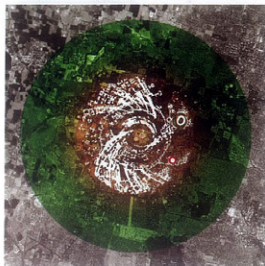
Location	Auroville, Tamil Nadu
Team	Mona Doctor-Pingel, Arusha Shridhar Drouin, Ojas Vyas, Prakash Raj, Niharika Sanyal
Site Area	2.96 Acres
BU Area	75,345 S.Ft.
Design Year	2011-12

The design of this Apartment and Community Centre was commissioned to Studio Naqshbandi around August 2011. It was to be located in sector 1 of the residential zone of Auroville, which has a relatively low development density till now.

Satyakam Karim and Devasmita Patnaik had long been associated with Auroville. Having just returned from France to reside permanently in Auroville, they wanted to help alleviate the housing crisis that Auroville was constantly facing by providing a substantial seed grant (25% of the

total project cost) from their private resources to start a multi-cultural community – the densest development of Auroville at the time. It was to house about 130-140 persons in 52 apartments of varied sizes, ranging from studio space to three bedroom apartments for families.

The first phase included a laundromat, some offices, guest rooms for friends of Kalpana residents and a common space for meetings / exhibitions and covered parking. In the second phase a community center was planned which



included a swimming pool, a gym, a home theater, an open air amphitheater, a sports area for badminton and table tennis along with a restaurant around a common plaza.

One of the major challenges faced in designing residential apartments in Auroville, where most buildings are naturally ventilated, is the minimal ambient sound level (as opposed to a normal Indian city), which makes a normal conversation in the privacy of homes heard by neighbors and surrounding public spaces. Added to this was the multi-cultural aspect, where each culture's threshold of acceptance of noise could greatly vary. The concept evolved around a lively internal street which was to be fully pedestrian and landscaped.

It was consciously chosen to create a layout which was flexible and based on a modular system. This would make each person feel that their apartment was slightly different from others, giving them a sense of identity. This would be achieved with a 2.26 mt bay in plan that carried all the service ducts, space for air-conditioning outdoor units (in a way they didn't disturb the neighbors), gas bottles, bathrooms and kitchens along this spine. The bedrooms and living spaces were to alternate on two sides, giving privacy to the neighbors.



The long axis of the building was to be oriented North-South. Almost every house was to have a courtyard or terrace. Overhangs were to be provided for all openings. The location and size of openings were as per detailed studies of the sun path diagram for 12° N latitude and North-East monsoon.

A combined system of Aerocon and Earth Blocks/ Porotherm hollow blocks had proven to be a well-performing section with detailed data logging conducted by the studio in existing buildings in Auroville. Hurdli hollow blocks with sand filling for sound insulation were to be used for the roof.

Waste water was to be recycled through biological treatment and used for gardening via drip and sprinkler irrigation only. Natural ponds were proposed for rainwater harvesting, and no air-conditioners would be used.

Balconies were proposed to have bio-ponds which could be used as natural dish-washing machines.

In consultancy with a Baubiologist, the electrical layout was to be designed to create minimum electro-smog at places of rest and long hours of work.

Previous Page: Render; Kalpana Apartments

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Far Left: Galaxy masterplan of Auroville with Greenbelt demarcation

Left: Site Plan and Context

Special consideration was to be given to ceilings of covered balconies and leakages of sound from floor and walls between neighboring apartments.

Common laundry, community terraces with kitchen gardens and meeting areas, landscaped areas for socializing, playgrounds, with 6 – 7 dedicated office spaces.

Architects worked with Auroville based experts to introduce the use of probiotics culture into mortar, concrete, paint and wood finishes to ensure a bio-film. That would lead to a greatly enhanced indoor-climate and reduce fungi formation and termite infestation in a biological approach, without the use of chemicals.