

## 60-SECOND INTERVIEW

**MOULSHRI JOSHI,**  
**PARTNER AND CO-FOUNDER, SPACEMATTERS**



SpaceMatters, the multidisciplinary, research-based design practice helmed by partners and co-founders Amritha Ballal, Moulshri Joshi and Suditya Sinha, won an open national competition to design the Baha'i House of Worship at Bihar Sharif. We find out from Joshi what the design for the country's second Baha'i temple entails.

#### What is the design language employed at the Baha'i House of Worship?

The concept for the Baha'i House of Worship at Bihar Sharif draws from Baha'i teachings and the design brief – both emphasise light, celebration, joy, perfection, and a house 'belonging to the land from which it has risen'. The design needs to offer a setting for the experience of the divine, while being anchored to its surroundings and the local Baha'i community. The architecture of the edifice is an exploration of the universal sacred geometry as expressed in nature. The essential form of the Baha'i House of Worship is a nine-sided dome. The relief work on the dome draws from the Madhubani folk art of Bihar and the ubiquitous fractal patterns found in nature. A complex combination of arches and squinches rises up – creating playful patterns and apertures filtering light, culminating in an oculus.

#### How have you ensured that the structure is a socially-responsive one?

In Bihar, brick is the ubiquitous material of choice – visible in the ordinary, as well as monumental architecture such as the magnificent ruins of Nalanda. While bricks are abundant, the skill and resources to undertake a technologically precise construction remains a challenge at the location. We see the project as an osmosis, an opportunity to make a two-way knowledge transfer – between rural artisans and cutting-edge technology; not frequently encountered in rural contexts of this region. This is a chance to build something exceptional within and with a rural community. In the overall campus, use of materials such as terracotta, mud and jute in collaboration with indigenous artisanal skills is integral to the community asset building mandate of the project.

#### Elaborate on the sustainability features that have been incorporated into the design.

The main edifice envelopes a circular hall accommodating about 210 people in a fixed seating arrangement, and 500 people at full capacity, who face the cardinal direction – Baha'i Qiblah – while praying. To cool this space, we are employing passive cooling, relying on a low-cost system that utilises the geothermal heat sink of the surrounding earth to cool the edifice from below. The building skin is being engineered for maximum thermal comfort, and the natural lighting optimised for minimal heat gain. The native tree cover will be increased substantially, with sacred groves that are integral to the experience of the site. We are developing a plantation scheme to support the habitat of native bird species. The water pools are an important visual and micro-climate element. Our approach is to construct a sustainable living system hosting a combination of bacteria, nematodes, insects and fish. Our philosophy is to respond through local and slow, ecologically restorative solutions. The planning of the ancillary facilities draws in the rural character of the surroundings into the campus; reducing the contrast between inside and outside while learning from the vernacular intelligence of the traditional rural forms. The focus is on organic forms, clustered around trees and community spaces to design a space truly for the people.

# ARCHITECT and INTERIORS INDIA

Volume 12 | Issue 08 | November 2020 | ₹100

ITP Media (India) Pvt Ltd

Fortune 2000, 103-A & 103-B, C-Wing, 1st Floor,

Bandra Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai 400 051, India

T +91 22 6154 6000

Managing director S Saikumar

Group publishing director Bibhor Srivastava

#### EDITORIAL

Editor Mitalee Kurdekar

T +91 22 6154 6037 mitalee.kurdekar@itp.com

Contributor Bindu Gopal Rao

#### ADVERTISING

Director Indrajeet Saoji

T +91 93202 85997 indrajeet.saoji@itp.com

South India

Director Sanjay Bhan

T +91 98467 22377 sanjay.bhan@itp.com

#### STUDIO

Head of design Milind Patil

Contributor Sanjay Bandre

#### PRODUCTION

Deputy production manager Ramesh Kumar

#### CIRCULATION

Distribution manager James D'Souza

T +91 22 61546006 james.dsouza@itp.com

The publishers regret that they cannot accept liability for error or omissions contained in this publication, however caused. The opinions and views contained in this publication are not necessarily those of the publishers. Readers are advised to seek specialist advice before acting on information contained in this publication, which is provided for general use and may not be appropriate for the readers' particular circumstances. The ownership of trademarks is acknowledged. No part of this publication or any part of the contents thereof may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form without the permission of the publishers in writing. An exemption is hereby granted for extracts used for the purpose of fair review.

Printed and Published by Sai Kumar Shanmugam, Flat no 903, Building 47, NRI Colony, Phase-2, Part-1, Sector 54, 56, 58, Nerul, Navi Mumbai 400706, on behalf of ITP Media (India) Pvt Ltd, printed at Indigo Press India Pvt. Ltd., Plot No. 1C/718, Off Dadoji Konddeo Cross Road, Between Sussex and Retiwal Ind. Estate, Byculla (East), Mumbai-400 027, India, and published at ITP Media (India), Fortune 2000, 103-A & 103-B, C-Wing, 1st Floor, Bandra Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai 400 051, India

Editor: Mitalee Kurdekar

To subscribe, please visit [www.architectandinteriorsindia.com](http://www.architectandinteriorsindia.com)

 When you have finished with this magazine, please recycle it

**ITP**  
MEDIA  
GROUP

Published by and © 2020  
ITP Media (India) Pvt Ltd  
RNI No: MAHENG/2009/33411