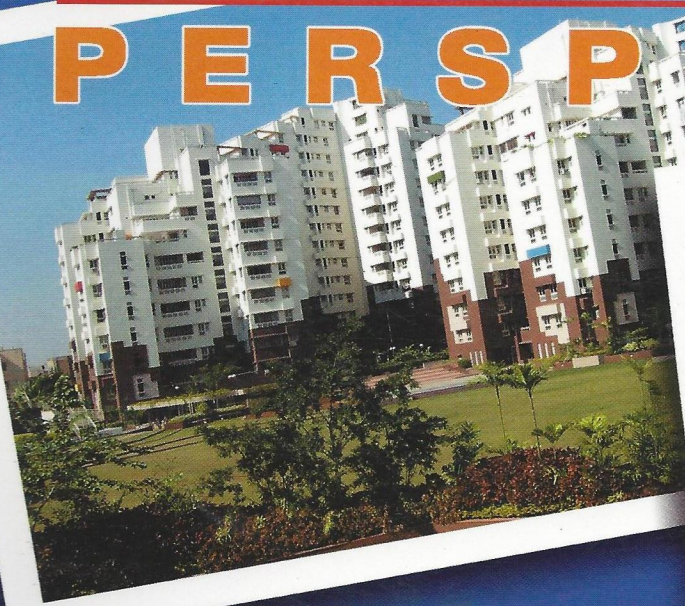
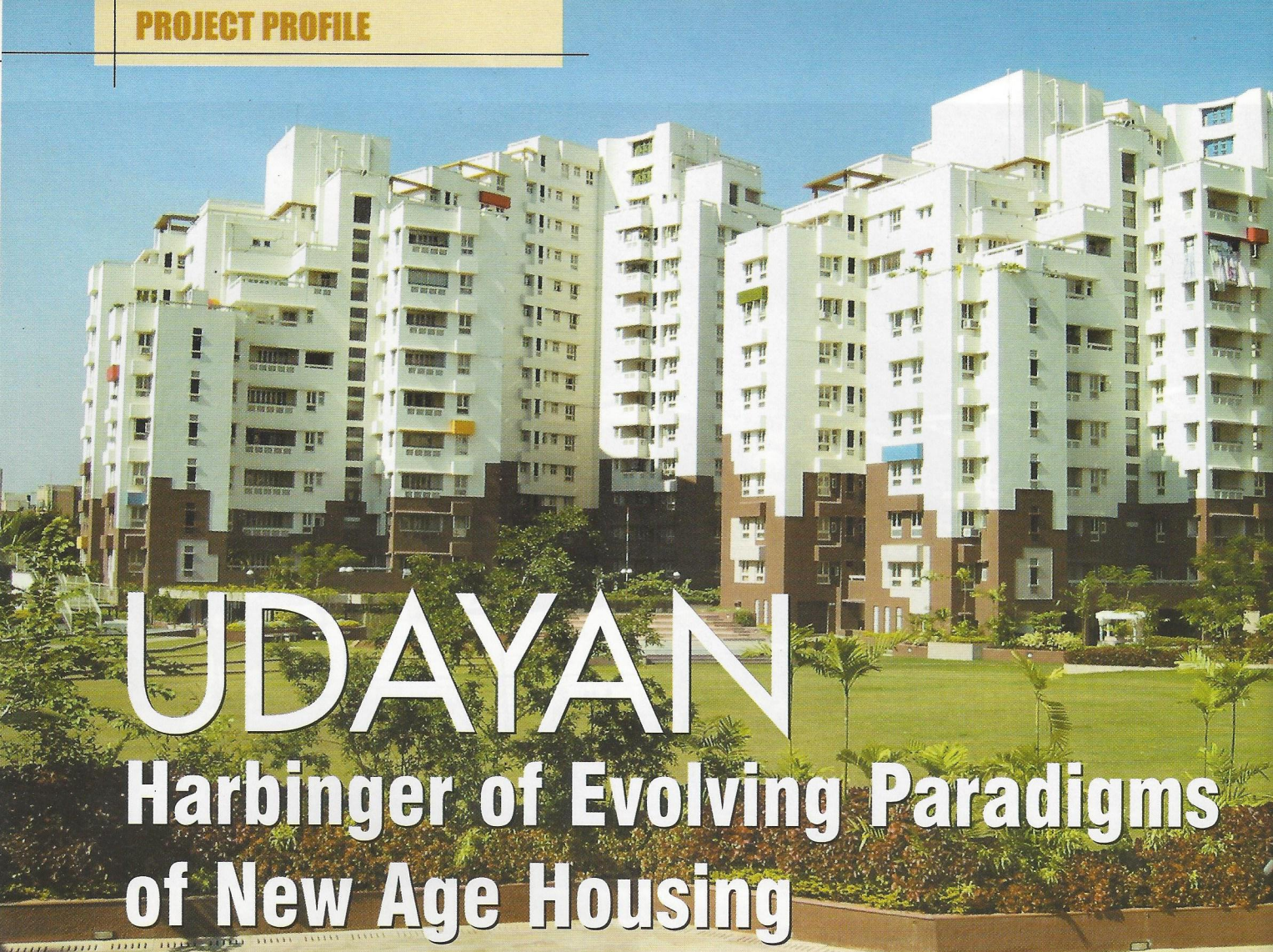


# ARCHI DESIGN

## PERSPECTIVE



CHANGING FACE OF KOLKATA



# UDAYAN

## Harbinger of Evolving Paradigms of New Age Housing

By Pratyush

**K**olkata is fast emerging as a path-breaker in terms of urban development. Suddenly there is an upswing in construction activity in the urban sector, especially in housing development. Since independence, housing has been of prime concern to the nations' growing needs to address the twin issues of population and economics. And indeed, in this arena, Udayan is a trendsetter in experimentation and the openness as well as implementation of new ideologies.

The brainchild of Bengal Ambuja Housing Development Limited (BAHDL) - Udayan answers the call of "housing for all". BAHDL - a joint enterprise of the West Bengal Housing Board and Gujarat Ambuja Cements Limited, was formulated to supplement the efforts of the Hous-

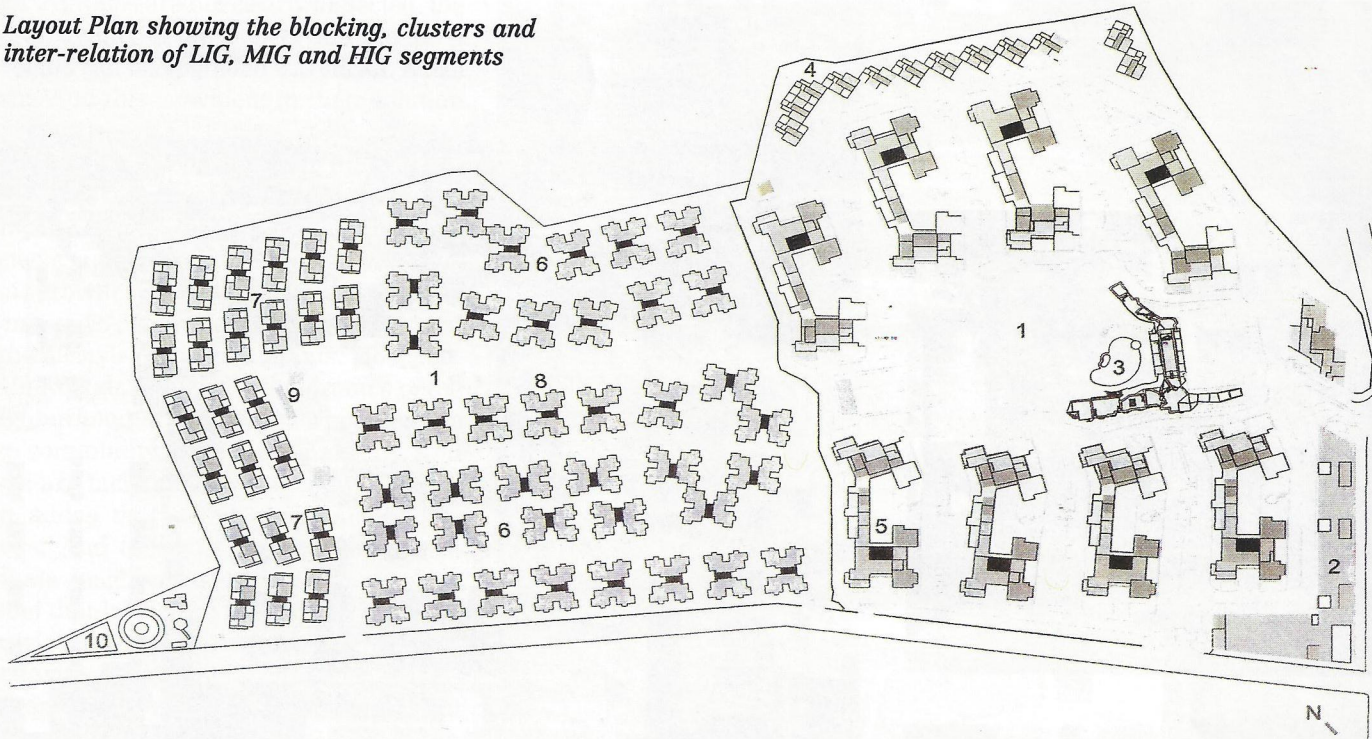
ing Board to meet the demand of West Bengal. Going beyond its role as a supplement, BAHDL has given a prototype in the face of Udayan, which has set example in approach and provides solution to mixed income group housing problems. So far, private developers have only looked at the profitable high-income group of clients. Hence, usually the responsibility to accommodate the lower income groups fell largely on the government. Shortage of funds or lack of support infrastructure have resulted in sub-standard low-housing development, that compromise on the quality of construction and space as well. A lot of low-income housing has been confined to "poor architecture" and this is what BAHDL seeks to reverse. And in Udayan, it has proved that it can be done effectively!

Through its unique planning,

BAHDL conceived Udayan in a manner so as to accommodate low, middle and high-income groups in the same complex, without clearly demarcating the class differences. It also devised a cross subsidiary scheme, where the profits generated through the sale of high-end houses would be used to upgrade the standards of the low-income segments of the complex. This would make a designed, aesthetic and livable LIG accommodation economical as well. Harsh Neotia, Managing Director BAHDL points, "The main aim was to provide good quality housing, within an affordable budget."

Udayan, located in South Kolkata on a 25.75 acre plot, has been conceived by the Grand Master of Indian architecture, B. V. Doshi. The project has been detailed and executed by the Ahmedabad based Mandala De-

*Layout Plan showing the blocking, clusters and inter-relation of LIG, MIG and HIG segments*

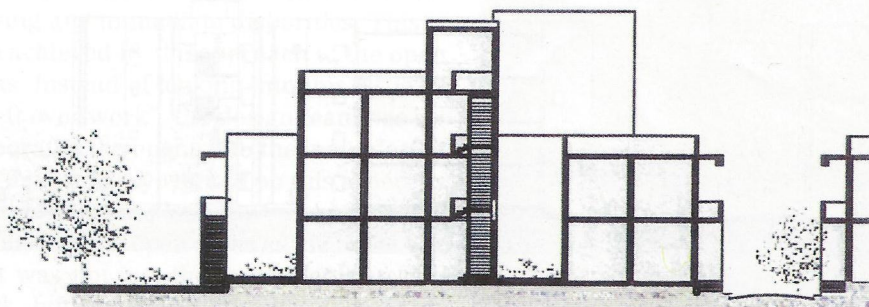
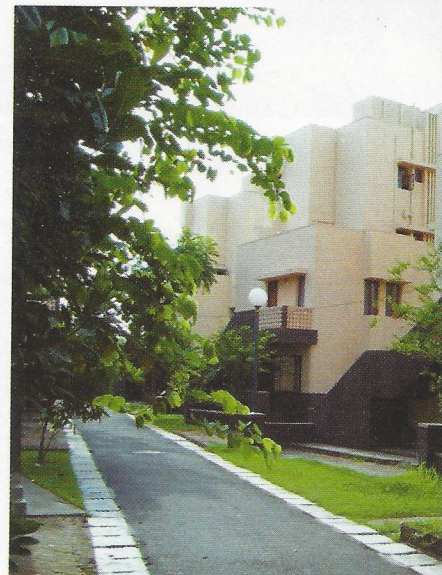
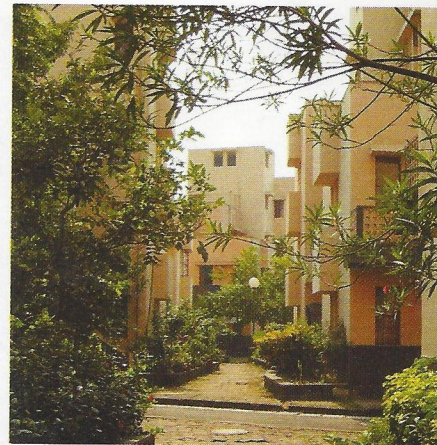


sign Services headed by the team of Neelkanth Chhaya, Kallol Joshi and Sohan Nilkanth. Situated on one of the arterial Eastern Metropolitan bypass, Udayan was an interesting challenge and an opportunity as well for the design team to address their personal architectural concerns and beliefs.

The first impressions at Udayan are largely of happy co-existence. Though various income segments are housed on one side, it is apparent that the thought and concept behind each of these segments is unique. Although each income segment has been addressed keeping in mind their specific needs, they have not been isolated. The lifestyles of each group have been catered to. So if on one hand, the LIG sections are designed along a system to streets punctuated by public ar-

reas, the MIG area is based on clusters and courtyards providing larger public spaces that cater to other facilities like car parks etc.,. The HIG units are more lavishly designed, catering to the taste of the "high society". With large open spaces and blocks that are placed on a more relaxed environment, the residents feel ensconced in familiar surroundings. But neither the architectural expression nor the financial background of any group delineates the other.

The LIG segment (Utsarg) is designed as a 3-4 floor unit, stepped in sections so that higher floors achieve terraced spaces. A typical LIG block is an aggregate of two set of houses on the ground and first floor, stepping up to just two and one house on the second and third floor, creating terraces. The exposed external



*Long Section & views. LIG*



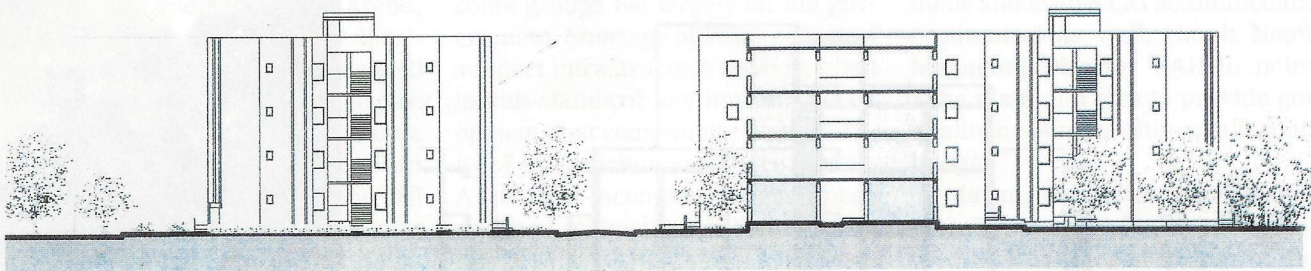
*views MIG*



staircases highlight these blocks. MIG units (Utsav) are 4 storied buildings configure to incorporate forecourts, courtyards and "aangans". Each block comprises of four 2-bedroom apartments, and a central staircase. Car parks and a hierarchy of open spaces - forecourts, bye-lanes and central courtyards mark the planning of Utsav. The HIG units (Udayan) are 15 storied buildings, stepping in sections

to create terraces designed to meet varied family size and amenity requirements, providing 10-15 types of apartments. The lifestyles needs are reflected in the support infrastructure as well - recreational areas, clubs, swimming pool. These high-rise stepping buildings are indeed a majestic sight !

"In housing projects cutting across various income sections, when the



*Site Section MIG*

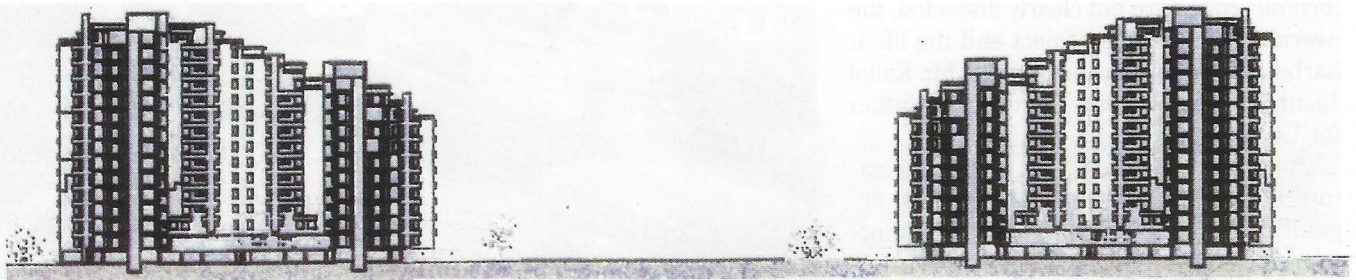
income groups are not clearly dissected, the overall quality of the project and the life it harbours can be upgraded", avers Mr. Kallol Joshi. And this is evident in their solution for Udayan.

The essence of Udayan lies in the very nature of Kolkata, a city that has grown organically along "Hooghly". Often misinterpreted as unplanned, inhinged growth, "organic growth" is actually "growth stemming from needs", where every element is vital to the lifestyle of the inhabitants. Most people in Kolkata realize the importance of the neighborhood. Every neighborhood has its own community, its own life patterns. And these are facilitated by the chowks, haats and addas that define these neighbourhoods. And these form the essence of a Kolkata neighborhood. And this was the model that lay before the architects. If this lifestyle was what almost all segments identified with, the residents had to be provided something they could relate to. But Udayan's expression could not just rely on a set example. There was scope and a need for improvement. If a Kolkata street typology was employed, it was to go beyond the typical boring passage. If the chowks and addas were to be incorporated, they had to step above the filth and confusion one would normally associate with them. And this is where the creative teams' research and understanding of the Kolkata lifestyle helped them elevate the native typology into elements that bind the entire complex.

The success of Udayan lies as much in the treatment of the unbuilt as in the built, the approach to both has been developed after careful understanding of human settlement needs and habits that are specific to the region. The architects clearly understood that in cities, interaction amongst residents would be focused around their immediate blocks. This probably explains the hierarchy of the layout, where MIG forms a buffer between LIG and HIG, thus removing any immediate disparities. This is also achieved by the approach to the open areas. Instead of looking into this issue as a "left over work", the design team has incorporated the opens into the main design and have actively worked on this aspect as it binds the complex. "Our emphasis was as much on the open areas as the built. For us it was not just the space between two block, but the possibilities it could generate if treated appropriately", says Neelka-



*The continous central open greens*



*Cluster Section HIG*

nth Chhaya. The open spaces that have been landscaped are opportunities for the residents to interact and explore. The courts and chowks also harbour a sense of familiarity for the inhabitants. This also generates a good microclimate. The climatology of the place is such that cross ventilation is a must. The architects have responded well to the studies of wind direction in their block orientations. The block are so grouped or clustered, that they don't simply enclose space, but allow it to flow through. Apart from a unhindered wind movement, this approach also provides a central open green space through the entire project where all public functions like clubs, community halls are designed to be shared by all segments, thus a collective appraisal of life standards.

Another feather in Udayan's cap is the incorporation of the rich cultural bank of people- artists, sculptors, etc. And here lies another role of the open greens ! The central open spaces and many other focal points in corners, courts etc are home to many unique sculptures created by

artists from West Bengal especially for Udayan. In an attempt to provide talented artists a platform to exhibit their works, the architects in association with the BAHDL arrived at a unique plan. Young artists from Shantiniketan were invited to the site for an interactive artist workshop.

BAHDL provided the infrastruc-



ture for this workshop, which has yielded a series of sculptures in a variety of materials that reflect the spirit of the complex. Images of families, children and the city were the most common themes. Interestingly, some of the sculptures in the central open space are designed to double as play areas

for children apart from adding beauty to the area. Folk artists also find expression on blank wall surfaces! "Constant exchange of ideas with the immediate clients (BAHDL) helped realize many concepts and we were lucky to have such liberal clients in BAHDL, to be open minded to our suggestions" avers Sohan Nilkanth.

The basic premise while designing a housing scheme obviously revolves around designing and incorporating good as well as functional spaces - built and unbuilt; providing a value addition to the residents life quality. Sometimes, these lofty goals are lost in the design process where certain other things like expression, marketability etc., take precedence. Udayan, has fortunately proved, that it is possible to avoid such pitfalls - where basic design principles are not forsaken for expression

or marketability, and yet the latter are achieved; Udayan is indeed a role model in context to contemporary housing schemes. Where the architectural context highlights and supports the social aspects of society, Udayan indeed provides "housing for all".



*Views HIG*