

The Incredible Lightness of Being... Together

In a home filled with light and free of partitions, love transforms into a space that's just right for the two of you. That's what Vasu Dixit and Bindhumalini Narayanaswamy discovered by living in a home without walls or doors or rooms. **By Divya Shreedharan**

Vasu Dixit and Bindhumalini Narayanaswamy's home in BTM Layout in south Bangalore is at the top floor of a four-storeyed building. The flat is just over 600 sq feet in area. But it is one unconfined, open space, built on many levels, with windows all around and above, even a little glass ceiling tucked away in a corner. And as sunbeams stream through the entire space, it transforms into something suspended in luminescence.

Vasu and Bindhu are both alumni of the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad. Vasu is a video filmmaker and lead singer/writer of folk-rock band Swarathma. Bindhu is a graphic designer, artist and trained Carnatic singer. The

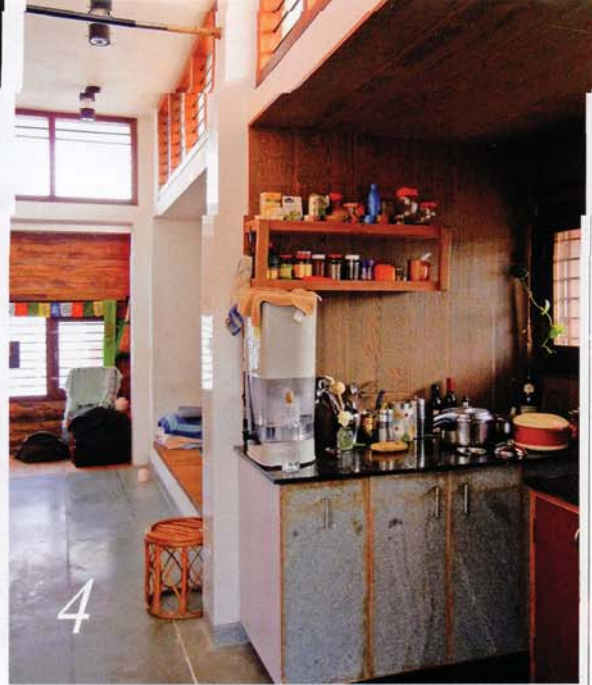
couple married two and a half years ago and moved to this home last year. They have rented it from architect and urban designer Guru Prasanna, who designed and owns the entire building. Guru created the little flat as an experiment in design, or rather, an exercise in quirkiness.

DOOR NOT DISTURB

For instance, there's no front door but a wooden shutter weighing approximately 90 kg. A punching bag hung on the other side acts as a counter weight. Pull the shutter up and the punching bag slowly descends to greet you. Then walk up steps of stone and wood, inlaid with geometric shapes. First, you see a metre-long ledge with windows along one side and a tiny skylight. Guru has painted one wall a deep, warm red, which glows softly in the diffused light. Vasu and Bindhu have strung up Tibetan prayer flags across the area and laid colourful coir mats on the wooden floor. The



Photos by Bindhumalini Narayanaswamy




wooden floorboards can be lifted up reveal a roomy storage space. Another alcove to the right has similar hidden storage. Here, the wall is painted with squiggly shapes in yellows, reds and beiges. Beside the second alcove is a tiny kitchen with a small cooking and washing area with shelves. The couple don't have a refrigerator but use a 'mitti cool' unit. Mitti cool, the brainchild of a potter/clay craftsman from Gujarat, is an innovative natural cooling system made of mud/clay. The couple use it to store dairy products, candy and sometimes drinking water.

Across from the kitchen is the living or entertainment area. There is a cement-and-stone ledge looking out over the stairs. Incidentally, there is no bedroom in the flat, just a 'bed space' you climb into. Basically, Guru built a wooden hollow square-like structure and laid a mattress on top of it. This 'bed space' overlooks the kitchen and has no railings or posts. To get to it, there are wooden stairs on the right. Climbing takes a bit of practice but Bindhu and Vasu say they have not fallen out of bed, even once!

ZEN UP ABOVE

The flat sits beside an expansive, Zen-like terrace. That is where Bindhu practises her singing and where Vasu strums his guitar. "Moving here has changed us both. Earlier, I would paint

dull, dark shades. Now I freak out on colour. For both of us, it's very liberating to sit on the terrace. I can sing to the breeze, the wind, the sun, the clouds, even the smoke and blare of the traffic, down below," laughs Bindhu. Vasu, on his part, enjoys sitting back and, well, yelling his lungs out.

Living in this home, says Bindhu, challenges their sense of what is conventional, yet leaves them content. "We're just a minute away from the bedlam of one of Bangalore's busiest traffic junctions, but up here, life comes to a standstill," she muses. In this self-contained space, loneliness transforms into healthy solitude. "When we fight, there is literally no room we can escape into or even, shut each other out. We're forced to resolve our differences. Living here has made us re-learn ourselves, and our connection with each other," she adds. After all, love isn't measured in square feet. 



1. Vasu (far left) and Bindhu (far right) with friends.
2. A view of the expansive terrace the flat opens out into.
3. That's not a window, but the skylight above the first alcove. The red wall and the Tibetan/Buddhist prayer flags can be seen.
4. In the foreground is the kitchen though the two alcoves or niches are also visible. There is so much sunlight streaming in that Vasu and Bindhu hardly need to use artificial light.
5. A glimpse of the kitchen can be seen in the background to the left. The 'bed' is located on top of the cube/square-shaped structure made of cement and wood.
6. The Mitti Cool natural cooling system made of clay. Pour water into the opening on the top. It slowly soaks into the entire structure and cools whatever is stored inside.