

An exclusive look inside the AIS Glass Villa, Goa designed by Sameep Padora with interiors by Tarun Tahiliani – Architectural Digest, Sept 2019

Brilliant architect Sameep Padora meets fabulous fashion designer, Tarun Tahiliani and the two come together for the first time to design the AIS Glass Villa overlooking the backwaters of Goa



The glass façade by AIS Glasxperts (the architectural division of Asahi India Glass Limited) shows some pioneering use of glass by keeping out excess heat, light and sound, ensuring efficient energy consumption, while beautifully reflecting the sky and trees around the property

They're unlikely allies but they work together like a charm. In a freewheeling conversation among themselves, Sameep Padora and Tarun Tahiliani talk about the making of this magnificent home in Goa, their individual, whimsical flourishes to it, and the innovative use of glass by Asahi India Glass.



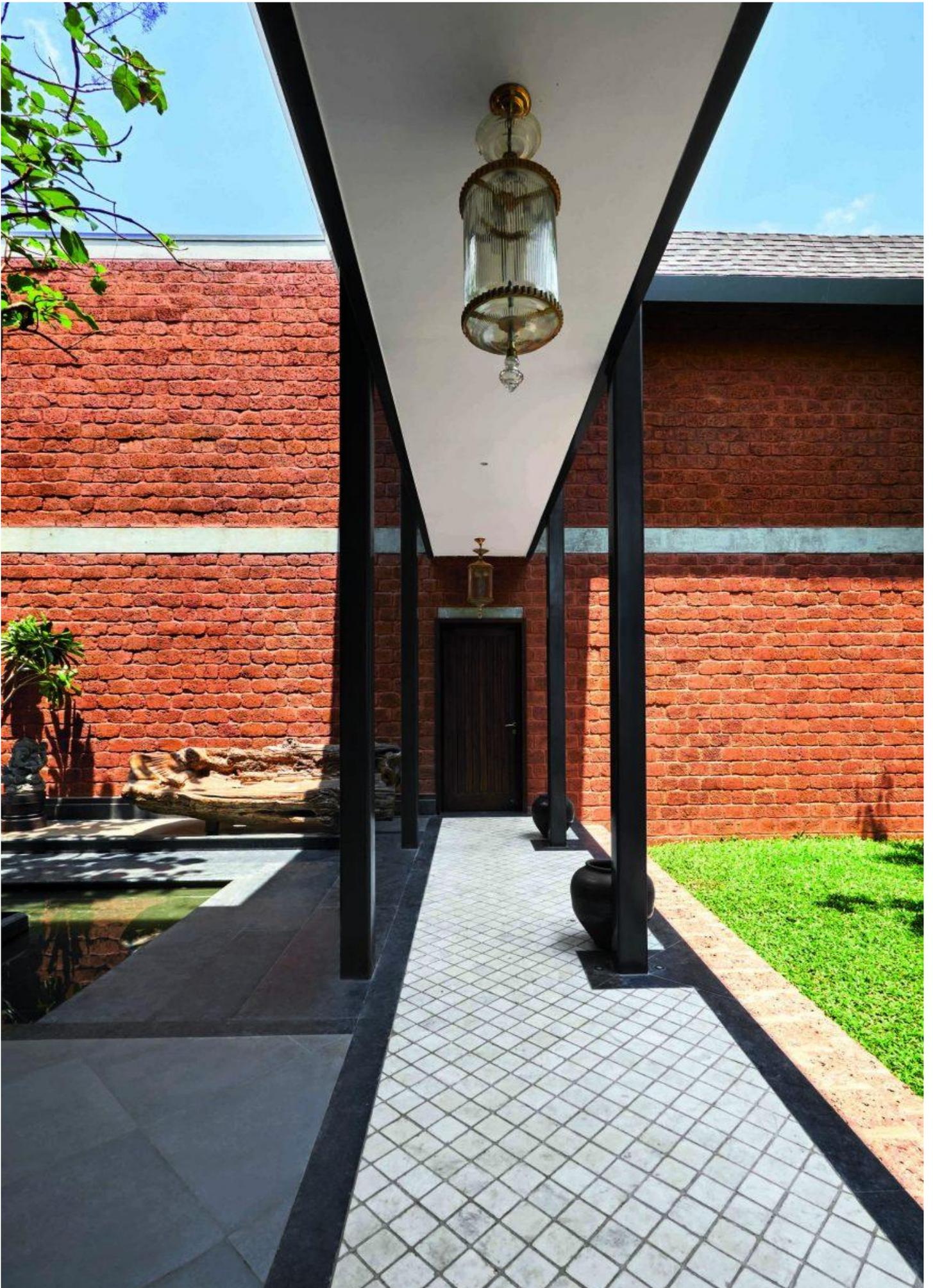
Fashion designer Tarun Tahiliani and architect Sameep Padora came together to design this Goa home in laterite and glass

Goa Glass Villa

Tarun Tahiliani: Let's make this an architectural truth or dare. Sameep, tell us, when we started, was this collaboration an odd request? We didn't know each other. There was no existing friendship. And the lines were not fully defined. There was always a grey area. Now that it's complete—without too much heartburn—what did you think of our collaboration?

Sameep Padora: Yeah, it was interesting because the image I had of you in my mind, before I knew you, was completely different. You're flamboyant and much more out there than we are. We've always been a bit under the radar in a sense.

TT: Poor thing, suddenly found himself!



A covered path allows one to walk around the internal periphery of the home, in contrast to the open-to-sky courtyards. The classic handi lights just past the entrance are another contrast to the modern laterite structure

SP: It's true! But I have to add, your sense of humour is amazing. I'm not sure if it's common knowledge, but I had no idea about this side of you. It took me completely by surprise. I feel like you need humour to make a connection. Anyway, tell me why you chose us.

TT: Well, you designed Indigo Deli for my cousin Malu (Malini Akerkar). It's in the middle of a mall (Palladium), which is spectacular. It's an igloo-meets-spaceship [design]; how does someone even do that in wood? I ate there quite often because of fashion weeks. And then it was also about glass and how one could use it. We have a banal view of glass; for instance, you put it in a window. But glass used in the auto industry is so sophisticated. And architectural glass is very relevant to us in tropical climates. We want air conditioning, but we don't want to hide the outside. We want to look out at the beautiful monsoon. So there were many reasons why I was interested in working with you on this. I'm a classicist. I like to move the wheel a bit, but I felt that you like to move the wheel a lot. I realised there would be challenges along the way, but I figured this could really work.

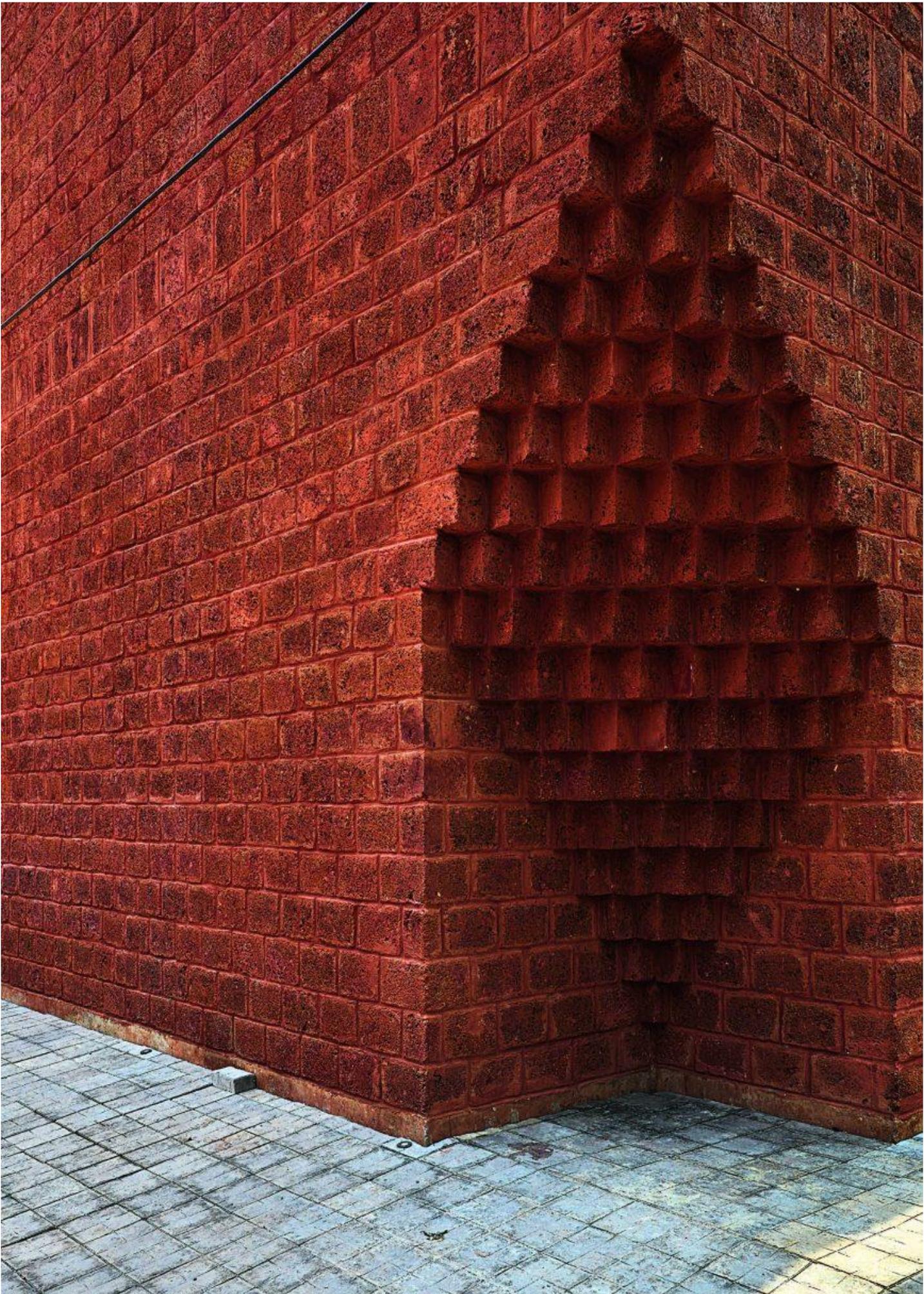


Tahiliani and Padora with Bindu Vadera and Jahan Tahiliani

SP: I never mentioned this to you, but I had a fledgling interest in fashion once, long ago. I actually had to design and tailor a shirt for a project, and I thought, "Boss, this is just too much!"

TT: Oh! So you said it's too much to make a shirt, let me go to Harvard instead!

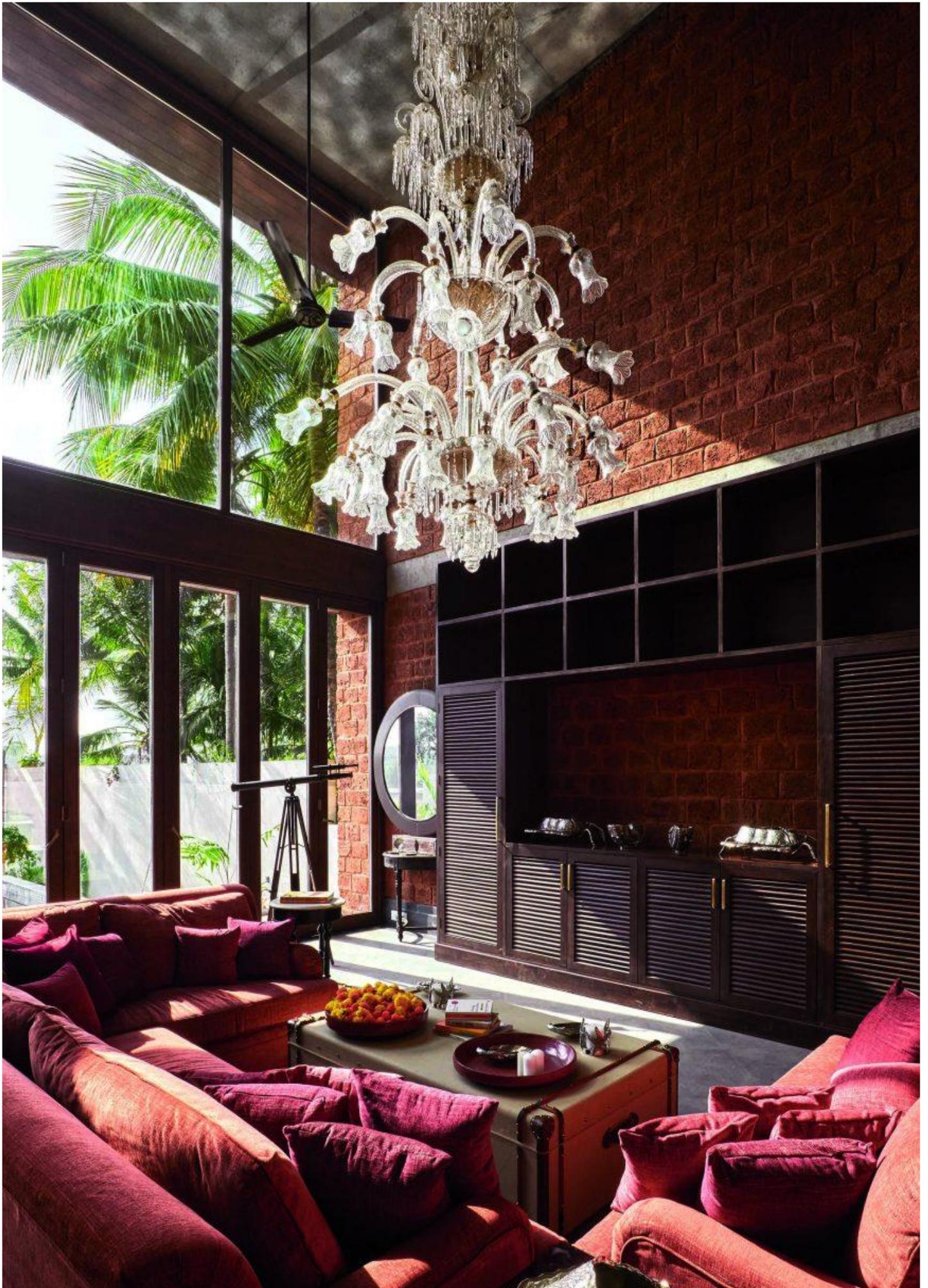
SP: Something like that!



The architect used the negative space of this corbelled laterite corner at the entrance to reflect a church's steeple—an uncommon interpretation of a common sight in Goa

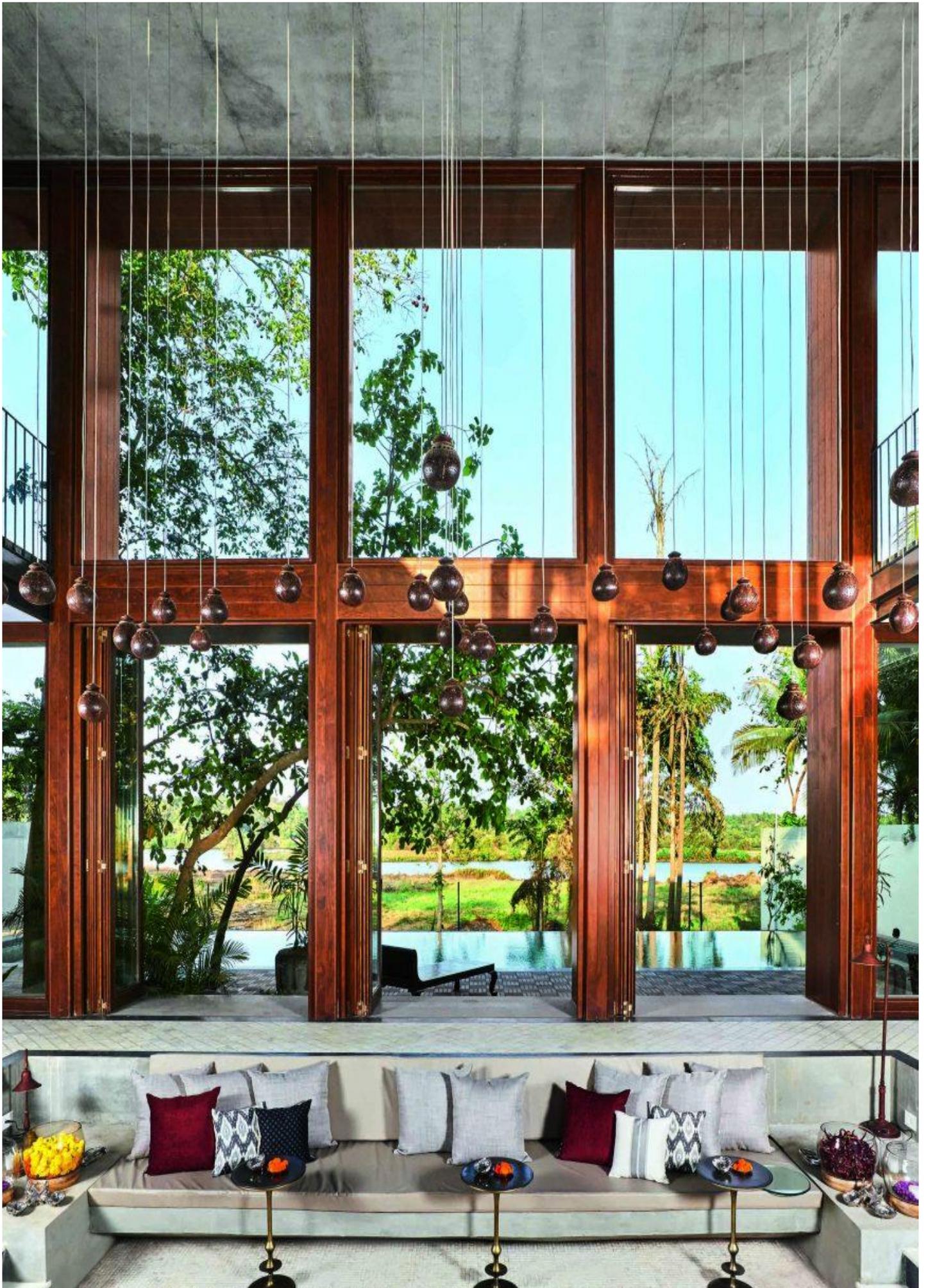
TT: Well, I also had an interest in architecture. Way back, when I went to the Delhi School of Architecture, they said, "Sorry, if you haven't done physics or chemistry, you can't do it." I couldn't understand things like electricity. And chemistry? No chance! So I suppose I got swept into doing different things, like fashion. But even today, when I go past a magazine stand, I always buy architectural magazines.

SP: Tarun, you are a shaukeen (connoisseur). You have a distinct signature. Do you see it in this house, now that it's done?



A larger-than-life chandelier hangs from a 20-foot-high ceiling in an all-red living room—from the laterite walls to red upholstery to a carnelian table. The round mirror and telescope were sourced from antique stores in Kochi. The glass doors fold back to bring in the outdoors

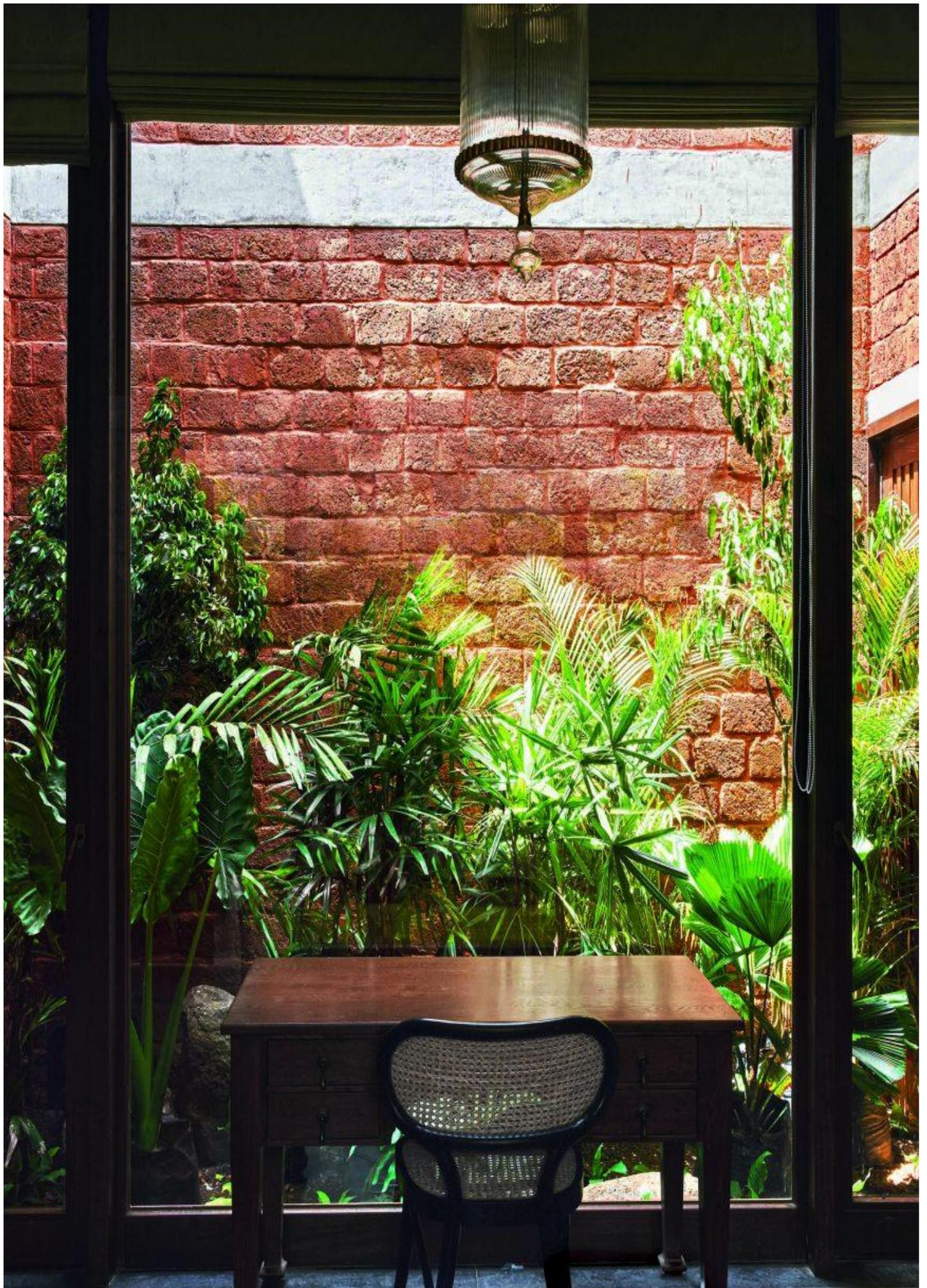
TT: Well, yes, like the 16-foot tall chandelier. But I don't think that you have to be shaukeen with material objects—you can be shaukeen with nature. If you see Bevis Bawa's garden in Sri Lanka, there's nothing more shaukeen than that. My first house had a reference to Geoffrey Bawa's Lunuganga courtyard. I was young and said things like, "make the ceiling 26 feet high." I wanted the experience of living in an indoor-outdoor way. Being shaukeen could mean having the wildest plants; it could be in the scale of things, like the fact that we could have 23-foot-tall glazed doors in this house; or that the master bedroom has trees growing through it. It's organic and sexy. It's very shaukeen but it's not in the way Versailles or a palace in Rajasthan would be. It's a different kind of shaukeen.



Seen from inside, the infinity pool and the backwaters beyond create a beautiful backdrop for the “sunken lounge”, as Padora refers to it. The tall glass facade allows uninterrupted view of the outdoors

SP: You know, the fact that there were trees on the site and we just built around them—initially I really thought that you would resist that. But you didn't.

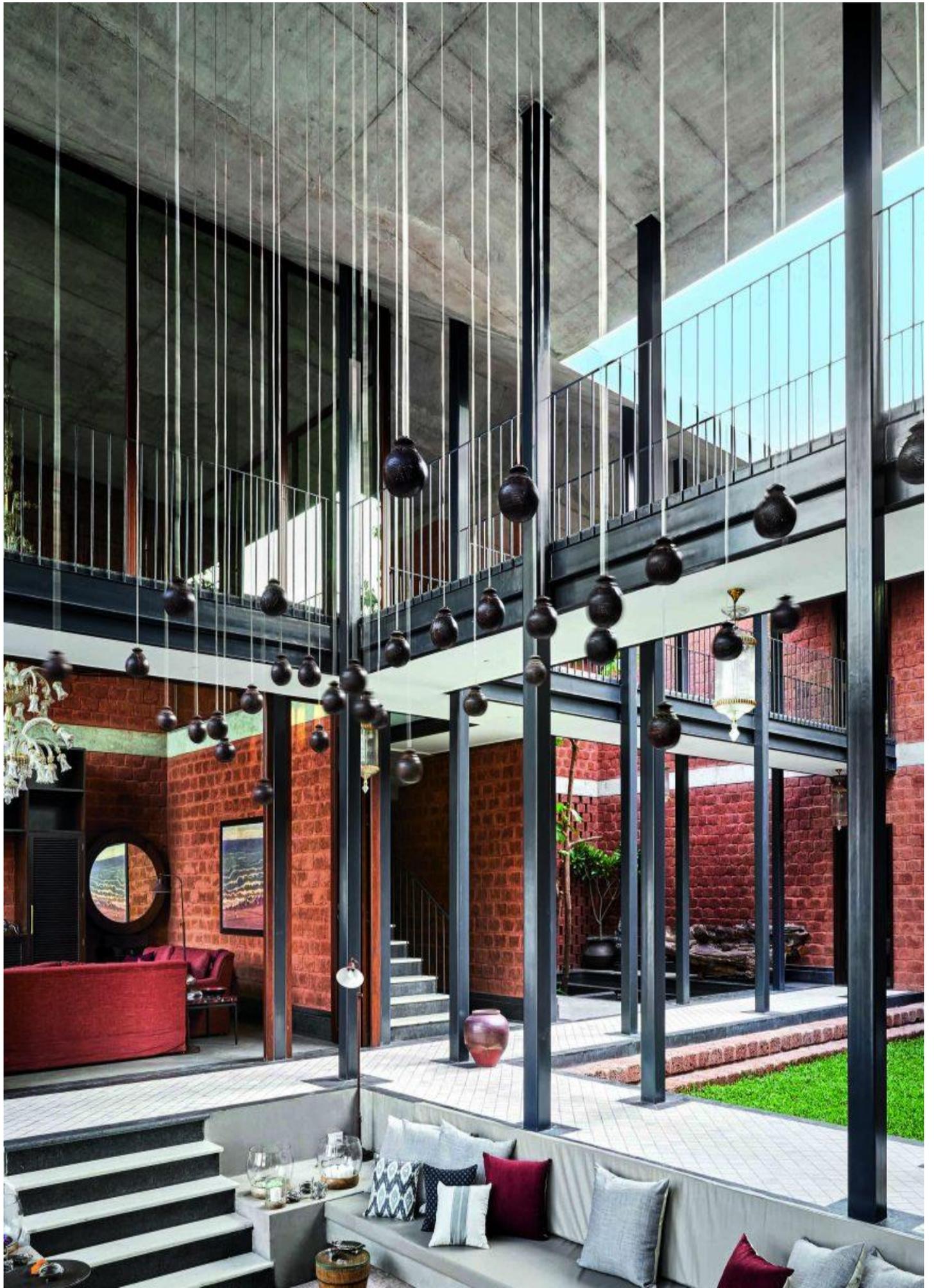
TT: Because it's beautiful. We wait for decades for a garden to grow. There's a certain organic way in which Indian people have always done things, especially in rural India. They follow things and go around it. It's quite normal.



The bedrooms in the house come with their own private gardens. With sunlight flushing in through the roof alone, the natural foliage is lit brilliantly from the top, the green of bamboo and palms set against the red of laterite walls

SP: Was there anything we disagreed on?

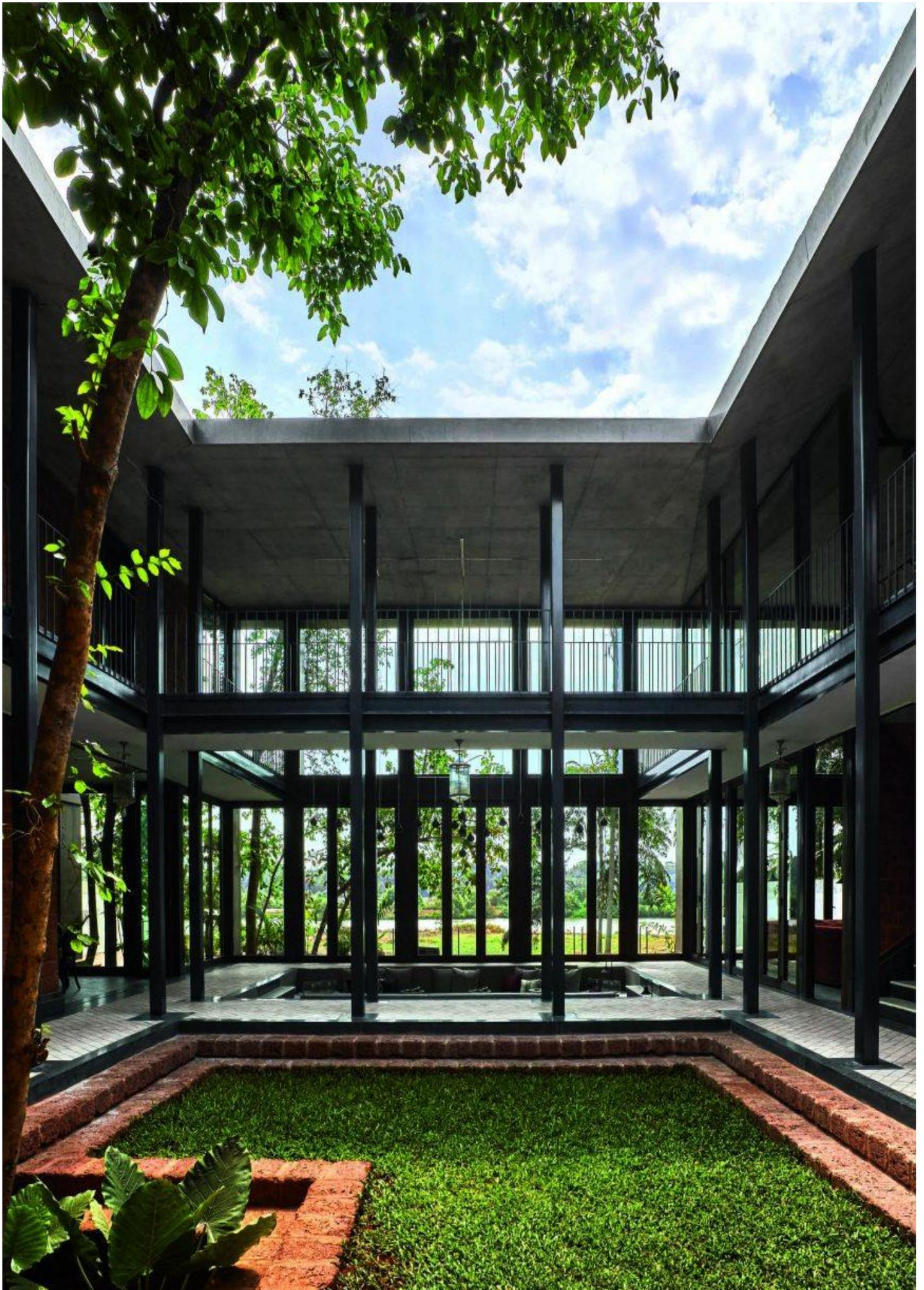
TT: Our biggest disagreement was about the roof. It's stunning but I said only the birds are going to see it. You know, we're going have to fly a drone to know that there's a beautiful—very expensive—addition up there; you all wanted to build it in wood. But there are far too many things we agree on—the bamboo growing between the two bedrooms; that each bedroom has its own courtyard, which is open to the sky. I like the sunken pit where you can just lounge, the beautiful big decks, the teak tree growing in a part of the house with the water trickling down into the well underneath. There is a bench placed close by, where you can meditate and just hear the sound of water in the house. I like things to look lush in the tropics. You know, we grew up with this whole English idea of pruning gardens and putting rose bushes. When I finally had my own garden (which was on the first anniversary cover of AD), I said only one thing: "I want it to look wild and it has to be local and tropical."



View of the sunken lounge with the entrance courtyard beyond, a seating area to the far left with a one-piece wooden carved sofa, and the main living room to the immediate left. Earthen lights hanging from the tall roof add to a sense of depth and volume in this double-height courtyard area

SP: That's what I'm talking about. For me, what really worked is your imagination and storytelling. When you talk about the architecture, it's less about rooms and courtyards and more about the sequence of events that would occur in these spaces, the way people would inhabit it.

TT: Houses are built to be lived in. A lot of people treat it like a showpiece and it becomes clinical then. When I was younger (and wilder), we would live in homes in Goa. Days turned into nights and nights into days, people would spread out in the home, it was languid and sexy. People make a space their own, in many different ways. You've designed this house, but if you were to live or spend time in it, you would find your own spaces and corners that you would personally love and feel close to.



The view from the far end of the home—the courtyard, the sunken lounge, followed by the infinity pool and backwaters outside, all of it woven together in a rhythm created by the colonnade

SP: That's true. I really like the room on the first floor where the roof comes really low. It frames the courtyard outside and gives it an intimate scale. I would spend a lot of time there. Despite the expanse of this home, that's a corner you would find me in.

TT: And while I love the bedrooms and their open-to-sky courtyards, I think I would be spending a lot of time on the deck outside. With a view like that, who wants to be inside?



A walkway, lit by fluted pendant lights, connects the bedrooms towards the back of the home to the living area and balcony in the front of the home. This walkway feels like a bridge connecting islands