

# Pravina Mehta

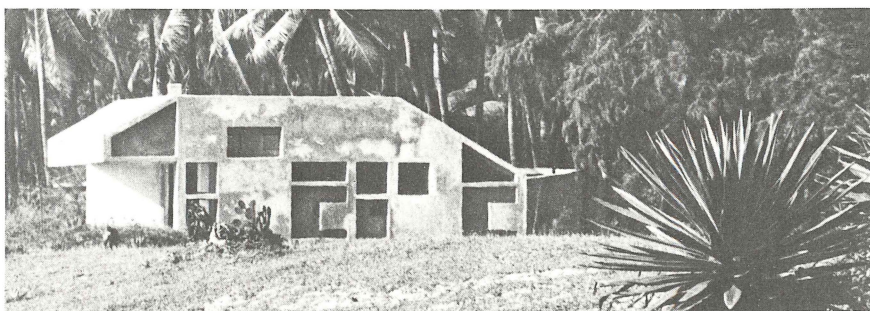
*Architect Pravina Mehta's interests are wide and varied: from design to politics (for which she was imprisoned in 1942), to traditional dance and Indian art.*

*She obtained her bachelor's degree in Architecture from the Illinois Institute of Design and also holds a master's degree in Planning from the University of Chicago. She worked for two years in Washington D.C. and then returned to practice in India. She has designed single family houses, high-rise apartments, factories and restaurants. She worked on the First New Bombay Plan (with Shirish Patel and Charles Correa) to have it adopted by the Government in 1971.*

Pravina Mehta strongly feels that there should be "a common concern for today" among professional planners, and says that "a society which is committed to egalitarian values and to social justice should not allow gross inequalities to emerge in the housing facilities for the different sections of the population". She is outspoken. In a male-dominated profession, she feels that she very seldom comes up against prejudice, and sums up her attitude by saying that "when a woman is truly committed to her career, when there is an inner compulsion, then she ceases to regard herself as a woman but only acts as a professional."

Bombay is a city she feels concern about. "There is much to be done to improve Bombay, but this can only be achieved," stresses Pravina, "when there is co-ordination between city-planners, the public and social-scientists. Architects must interact closely with social-scientists in the location of housing for lower income groups. In an environment where resentment exists due to growing disparities, the location and distribution of housing becomes an important factor in urban planning. In Bombay, where diverse groups co-exist, housing, sanitation, water supply and other facilities are not the only problems. There are social and psychological issues as well. The problems created by diversity should not be solved by destroying it, but by giving scope for the various life-styles our culture is capable of yielding." She heads a research unit which is involved in these issues.

Pravina Mehta's main preoccupation is with the re-establishment of the link between architecture and the other arts. She feels that this interaction is missing in contemporary Indian building, and that "we should seek inspiration from our own rich heritage. The rhythms one finds in our traditional dance forms can be translated into the language of concrete and mortar."



*Credits: Text by MIMAR's editors. Patel House photographs courtesy of Associated Architects, Bombay. Factory photographs: Stella Snead.*



# Patel House, Kihim

*Uma Patel House, Kihim, Colaba, Maharashtra, India (1962).*

The house is used as a weekend and vacation home. Its facade, facing the sea, has a cantilevered awning over a verandah, to provide both view and shade. The other facades have deeply recessed windows on the outside. The counter recesses formed inside are used for storage and are integrated with the built-in furniture. On the fourth side is the courtyard which is entered through a traditional carved wooden door leading to the rear verandah. Inside the walled courtyard is the utility area and a staircase which leads to the terrace at the top of the building.

This house reveals Le Corbusier's influence on this Indian architect's work. Built almost twenty years ago it retains its originality.

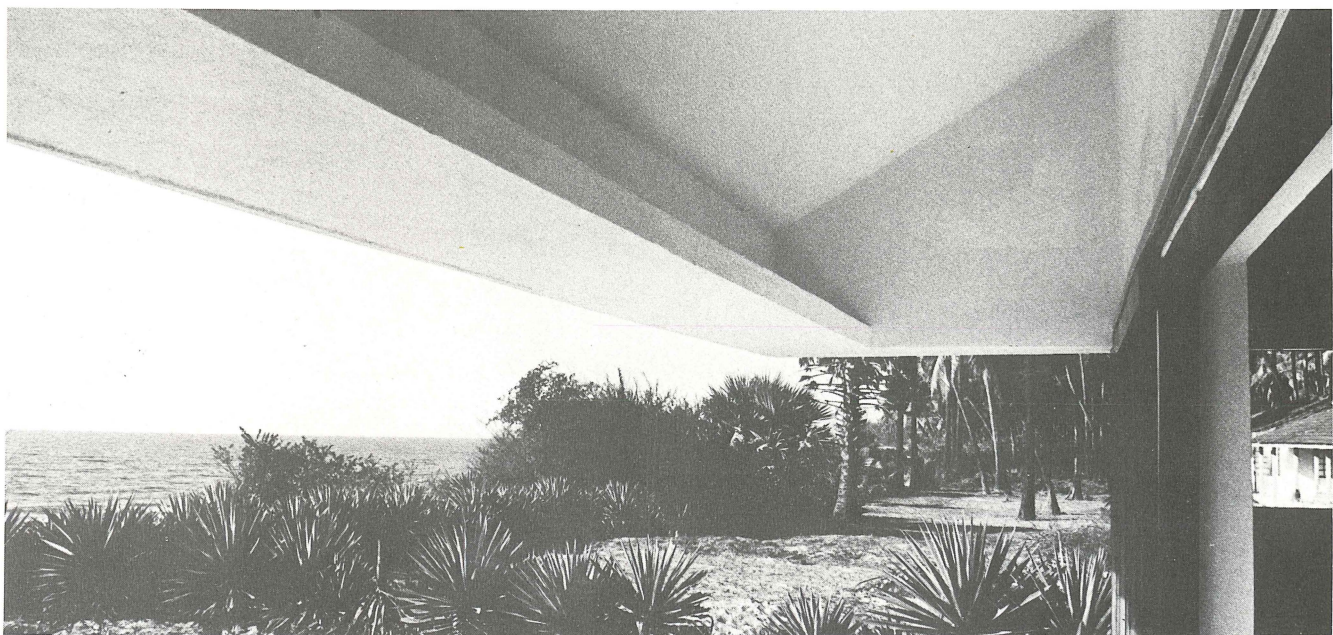
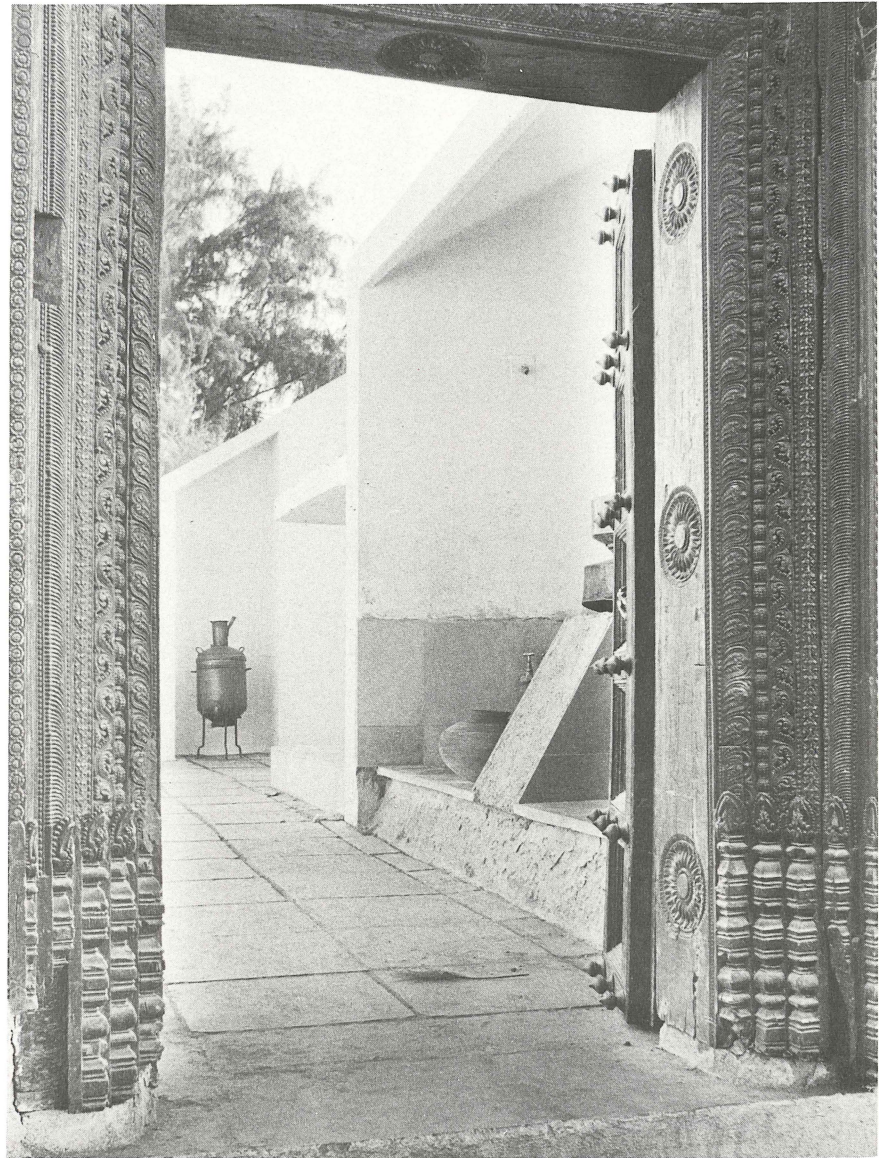
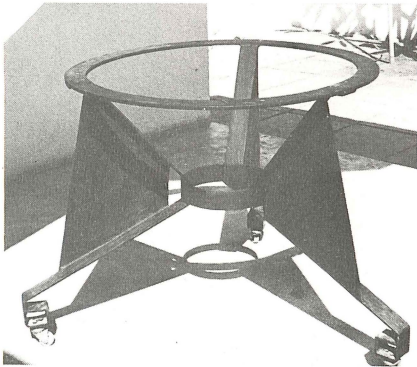
*Left, below: Exterior view.*

*Left, bottom: Interior of dining room.*

*Below: Table stand in the courtyard.*

*Right: Courtyard entered through a carved wooden door.*

*Bottom: Concrete canopy.*





# Factory, Chinchwad

**Factory Chinchwad, Maharashtra, India (1962).**

The J.B. Advani Oerlikon Electrodes Factory was built using standardised components and modules. It was an inexpensive structure which used simple labour intensive construction, fabricating its elements on site. Its functional requirements of lighting and ventilation are met by a rhythmic arrangement and positioning of windows in an attempt to avoid monotony and repetition.



*Right: Ribbed columnar structure carries standard sized concrete roofing elements.*

*Below: Side elevation.*

*Bottom: Main entrance with spiral staircase to offices above.*

