

[Building a House, Rishi-Style](#)

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"Every inch of the earth," architect Bakshi notes, "is in perfect harmony with cosmic order. When we disrupt a part of the earth, we disturb this order. From this perspective we have no right to disturb the earth by putting a building on it." Yet, modern man needs shelter to live and work. How can we achieve that without disturbing the harmony of the cosmos? India's traditional science of architecture has an answer. Sthapatya Veda shows how to incorporate the naturally occurring cosmic order into the design of a building and re-establish the inherent order that was disrupted by raising the building. It structures the home as a vessel for cosmic consciousness in which your life and being will naturally expand, according to modern-day Sthapatya Veda architect, Mr. Deepak Bakshi. Not only in up-scale India, but in middle-America this ancient system of design and construction is being used to engineer some of the most high-tech and harmonious homes.

Sthapatya Veda comes out of the Atharva Veda and is one of the twenty-seven branches of Vedic science. It was passed on orally for centuries from father to son until written down on palm leaves in the Middle Ages. Sthapatya comes from sthapana, which means "establishment." Bakshi tells us that "Here we are trying to establish the relationship between the owner of the building, the building itself and the Cosmic Power. This relationship can be achieved.

"Sthapatya Veda is created out of the marriage of two branches of Veda. They are: Ayurveda [medicine] and Jyotish shastra [astrology]. Ayurveda contains the knowledge of the science of health and the human body. Jyotish shastra contains the knowledge of man's relationship to the universe, and the ever-changing effects of the universe on man. Sthapatya Veda combines the needs of the human body and the environment in one holistic science. It was in full practice in India five thousand years ago."

Now, a new company called Homes for Life (HFL) in Fairfield, Iowa, USA, is offering this time-tested technique to home builders as part of their architectural design services. Bakshi is their resident director of architecture. There is no extra charge if HFL is doing the house design. But they also offer Sthapatya Veda to other architectural firms wishing to implement it in their designs. HFL charges a fee for this service based on the size of the job and number of hours involved. Hinduism Today has learned of two other sources for this knowledge in the West: through Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation (TM) community, also based in Fairfield, and a company called Design Build Associates in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Building on the Vedas

Chances are, you could not distinguish a Homes for Life residence from any other US house just by looking at it. But reports from owners and visitors to these homes say that you can feel the difference upon entering. Mr. John Stanley had an award-winning, 3,500 square-foot home completed in 1994. He remarked, "The house is so well-suited to our own physiologies. It's magical-like living in a temple. I still walk around, kind of amazed that we put together this house. It's about as close to perfection in the relative as I've ever encountered."

Homes-for-life are unique in several ways, as president Keith Cobb describes, "We are taking a holistic approach. The design, construction, materials, orientation and power systems all have to go together." Some unique aspects are their efforts toward energy self-sufficiency through solar, wind and other systems, and the use of ecologically-minded construction materials. For example, the new home of John and Petra Stanley in Fairfield is constructed of earthen walls. Earth dug on site was formed into 29-inch-thick pressure-stabilized blocks with a four-inch insulated central cavity. Perhaps most significantly, the home was designed and oriented according to Sthapatya Veda. Indeed, even the self-sufficiency and earthen walls are a modern implementation of Vedic guidelines for living and home design. Deepak explained, "Earth is a very important element, because it has a very high state of pure consciousness. Once you design a building with Sthapatya Veda, the consciousness will elevate. But it has to have a fabric to hold it. The human body can transcend because we have the five elements present in our body. Likewise, the building can transcend if it has the presence of the five elements and is designed with Sthapatya Veda." Mr. Stanley recalled, "When the walls went up, it literally felt like Mother Earth coming up and holding you in Her bosom."

The Background of the Bakshis

From 1968-71 Deepak studied at the Ahmedabad School of Architecture, in India. From 1975-80 he completed a course from the Royal Institute of Architects at Polytechnic of Central London. He did a two-year thesis on Sthapatya Veda there. Since 1973 he has worked on the design and building of over a dozen homes, three temples and a 70-acre community center for TM.

Deepak moved his family to Fairfield in 1993 to join in the Vedic-living programs of the TM community-and contribute his knowledge. He felt it was the best of the East in the West. His wife runs a successful ayurvedic restaurant and his children attend the TM schools.

He laments that as yet he has had no Indian clients, "I would like to give them back their heritage-give them access to the knowledge of the country they are from. Then the power should be even more."

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Sidebar: Basic Vedic Building Codes

The vastu-purusha mandala is a blueprint of the form assumed by existence, also of the laws governing the cosmos as applied to all beings and all existence itself. It illustrates how, according to ancient texts, Brahma forced the undefined purusha, or cosmic man, into a geometric form. In the same way, the architect brings disordered existence into conformity with the basic laws that govern it. This can only be achieved by making each monument, from the hermit's retreat to the layout of a city, follow exactly the magic diagram of the mandala. Firstly, a sthapati would ask you for your birth time and place. This gives your jyotisha, or astrological chart. From this, all details of the dimensions and precise placement of the different elements of the home are determined by applying the jyotisha to the vastu-purusha mandala.

The foremost concern is harmony between individual, building and the natural cosmic order. Structural matters are the last considerations. Integral to it is the orientation to the cardinal points. Some basics are: 1) The entrance faces the east. A southern entrance is avoided as it is said that Lord Yama, the God of death, lives there. 2) The kitchen is best placed in the south-east corner-most exposed to the sun's energy. This is said to increase the appetite and quality of digestion. 3) The bedroom is placed in the north, furthest from the energetic sun-side. 4) The central place of the house, called brahmastan, should be unobstructed by columns or walls. The flow of energy focuses here first, then radiates to the various other parts of the home. The vastu-purusha mandala can be applied in a similar way to the development of the entire property in terms of placement of the buildings, driveway, garden, utilities, etc.