

MGC's Lipman. Instead, he says, it's usually a question of placement. "When I'm designing a house, I focus on where to place the kitchen, the master bedroom, the study, and the living room, based on different qualities of the sun's energies as it passes overhead," he says, noting that Vedic rules pinpoint living rooms in the central west portion of the house as more convivial, kitchens in the southeast corner for better digestibility, and master bedrooms in the southwest corner for being more conducive to rest. Although linked more to spirituality than to religion, all Vedic homes also have a meditation room in the northeast corner to strengthen the effect of meditation or prayer. And they all contain a Brahmasthan, or a silent central core, which literally translates into "establish wholeness."

The latter, explains Lipman, is not at the home's entrance, as some might assume, but rather at its center, acting as the home's axis, to harmonize with the universal laws of nature. "If we look at the things nature established, from largest to smallest, they each have a central core, and all the activities move around it. For example, a galaxy has a black hole; a solar system has a sun; cells in the body have a nucleus. This is one way nature maintains coherence. And when we use those same principles in architecture, we experience greater coherence in our houses."

Another important Vedic distinction, says Lipman, is the spatial relationship of each room to the others. "For instance, if you were to say you want your living room to be 24 by 36 feet, we might adjust those numbers to something like 23.9 by 37.5 feet so they'd resonate with the laws of nature and the solar system," he says. "Think of it as like tuning a violin. When a violin is perfectly tuned, the strings have this wonderful harmonic relationship, and if one string is slightly out of tune, it just doesn't sound right." When the rooms in a house are perfectly tuned, he adds, "It just feels better to live in."

Although studies suggest as many as three million Americans meditate daily, and at least 60 percent of the U.S. population has experimented on some level with alternative sources of medicine, convincing home buyers and builders to think Vedic has been a challenge, considering the lack of documented evidence to substantiate claims of better health, greater family harmony, or increased financial prosperity. Nevertheless, there are some preliminary studies to suggest Vedic's orientation hypothesis might be right on target.

One scientific test conducted by the University of Milan School of Medicine, published in 2001 by the *Journal of Affective Disorders*, placed patients with similar degrees of bipolar depression in wings with both east-facing and west-facing windows, and found that those assigned east-facing rooms recovered, and were released, four days earlier. Another study, this one conducted by rural Iowa physician Veronica Butler, MD, showed patients who slept in north-facing beds suffered significantly more depression and anxiety than those who didn't. And there are even unrelated, nonscientific studies citing more burglaries to homes facing south than to those facing any other direction.

Vedic proponents believe such studies will one day prove useful to potential home buyers, offering valuable, nonstructural information about a house's history, such as divorce statistics, health issues, and financial pitfalls that have befallen its former owners. It will also give architects the tools to avoid inadvertently drawing such personal misfortunes into their plans. "At the moment, architects don't keep these statistics, because it doesn't occur to us that we have any way to influence that," says Lipman. "But just think about it. If you spend enough money, you can get a good wine cellar and a large swimming pool and exotic wood doors with fantastic hinges," he says. "After you spend all that money, is your marriage going to be better? Are you