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# A small house turned in to a huge living space

Published – February 02, 2013 07:16 pm IST

HEMA VIJAY



Tradition blends with the new in this charming revamping of an old family house

A.R. Narayanan needed to create more space in his 30-year-old, 1,200 sq. ft house to house his son, daughter-in-law and three grandchildren who were planning to move in after their return from Saudi Arabia. By the time architect Goutam Seetharaman of the Centre for Vernacular Architecture was through with it, the house had 4,000 sq. ft of space spread across three floors. “The brief was to make the house so interesting that the grandchildren find it irresistible,” says Seetharaman.

The architect had to demolish the old ceilings and walls but he retained most of the foundation, an open well that has never run dry through the years, and the huge mango tree in the 60' by 40' plot. In fact, the tree now rises right through the car park and out into the verandah, the house built around its girth, making the verandah an enchanting place for adults and children. Seetharaman also salvaged the old hardwood doors and windows, scrapped the paint off, and gave them a coat of natural polish before reusing them.

On the ground floor, Seetharaman fashioned a courtyard at the far end of the living room to bring nature indoors. The living room leads into the older couple's bedroom, a kitchen and a sprawling pooja room, while the other floors house the rest of the family. A staircase leads up from the living room right up to the terrace, flanked by a rubble wall along its entire length, which becomes a unifying design element for the house. The architect has given the house a tiled roof with coconut wood rafters and glass tiles that stream in beautiful patches of coloured sunlight. Marble, wood, flipped kota stone with the rough edges exposed, and terracotta tiles have been used as flooring, with the variations creating interesting textural effects.

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