

CLEVER USE OF SPACE
UNDER TILED ROOF

HOUSE SHAPED LIKE
TAMIL LETTER 'PA'

WOOD, STONE AND
ATHANGUDI TILES



GRACEFUL Traditional lines, new home PHOTOS: K. V. SRINIVASAN

'An airy, bright, friendly and easy-to-maintain traditional Kerala-type house with lots of natural material' was the basic agenda set for this house. So, the house was given a central open courtyard, but closed off from the built space because of issues of mosquitoes, rain and security concerns.

The house is in the shape of the Tamil alphabet 'pa', and all the living spaces overlook the green courtyard, which is filled with frangipani, water heliconium, palms and a linear lily pond right along the courtyard's midrib.

An assortment of sloping roofs rise over the terrace, with terracotta tiles laid over traditional wooden rafters. Rather than staying close to the terrace floor as is typical of traditional Kerala houses, these roofs slope well upwards, leaving a 1,500 sq ft area beneath that ranges in height from 3 feet to 15 feet. This creates a warm, interesting and cosy attic space, large enough to host TT and pool tables, gym equipment, and even a shooting range. The sloping roofs and the space beneath it also serve to shield the house from the sun's heat.

The built space spans 4,500 sq ft, with the rest of the three-ground plot devoted to greenery. Incidentally, the backyard garden is larger and more imposing than the front yard, with a sprawling, roofed, sit-out. "We practically spend most of our waking moments here," say Ambili and Krishnan Sitaraman. The wooden *charupadi* (meaning inclined step) in the front verandah also offers a nice transient space.

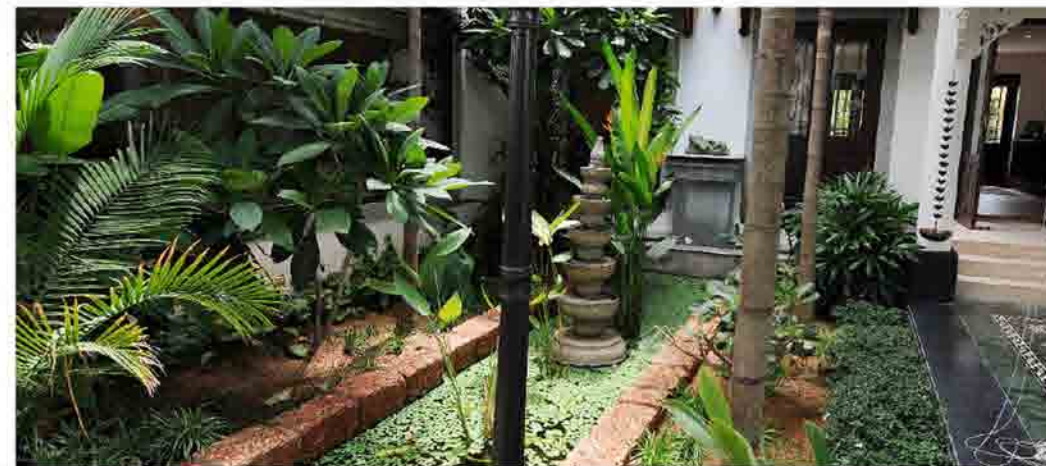
Beautiful hard wood and vividly coloured Athangudi tiles floor a good part of the house, while unpolished granite paves the car park and natural laterite stones dominate the garden area. Within the house, restored antique furniture and salvaged wooden pillars add to the traditional ambience. The other plus points include strategic skylights that channel natural light into the house, while split floor levels add variation to the inner spaces.



LIGHT & AIRY Large spaces breathing with wood and windows



HEMA VIJAY SUNPROOF Series of tiled roofs keep out the worst of the heat



BACKBONE The green courtyard is the home's fulcrum



TILE TALE The Athangudi appeal never fades