

# An Extension of Traditional Living Spaces Through Sense of Place

(Preserving the Sense of Place in Residential Living Spaces through Traditional Architecture)

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## ABSTRACT

Extending traditional living spaces through a sense of place, focusing on the integration of architectural, cultural, and environmental elements to create integrated and meaningful residential environments. Through qualitative analysis and case studies, the report highlights the importance of enhancing connections to places, both physical and emotional, to promote well-being, sustainability, and a sense of belonging. Additionally, it discusses practical strategies and design approaches that can be used to nurture and enhance a sense of place in a variety of living environments. Ultimately, this report contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between human experience and the spaces we inhabit. This research paper examines the expansion of traditional living spaces through the lens of sense of place, emphasizing the integration of architectural, cultural, and environmental elements to cultivate coherent and meaningful residential environments.

Traditional living spaces, deeply rooted in cultural heritage and local identity, provide a backdrop for everyday life, fostering a profound sense of belonging and connection with the surrounding environment. Through case studies, site visits and engagement with traditional households, this study examines how architectural features within residential buildings contribute to the creation of a sense of place. By exploring various dimensions of sense of place, including cultural tradition, natural environment and community identity, this research explores the ways in which individuals and communities can enhance their lived environments beyond the confines of physical structures.

**Keywords-** Sense of Place, Social Impact, Historical Significance, Traditional Spaces, Dwellings, Modern Architecture

## INTRODUCTION

Traditional living spaces embody the essence of a community's identity, but with rapid urbanization and modernization, these spaces are often at risk of losing their distinctive character and sense of place. The concept of "sense of place" represents the emotional connection between people and their environment, which is rooted in shared experiences, customs, and the natural world. In response, architects and urban planners are exploring innovative approaches to preserve and enrich traditional living spaces while fostering a strong sense of place. The purpose of integrating cultural, historical, and natural elements into the residential environment is to foster a deeper sense of connection and belonging for residents. This research paper deals with various aspects of preserving traditional architecture in residential spaces by enhancing the sense of place. We consider how cultural traditions, the natural environment, and architectural design principles can be used to preserve the authenticity and integrity of traditional living spaces while meeting the needs of modern society. Through the analysis of case studies, theoretical frameworks and practical strategies, this article aims to highlight the importance of maintaining a sense of place in the evolving context of residential architecture. Traditional living spaces are more than just a building. This is a place full of stories, memories, and a strong sense of community. But as cities grow and change, these special places face challenges. We need to find ways to keep them special while making them functional for modern life. This is where the idea of "sense of place" comes into play. It's all about the sense of belonging and connection that people have with their surroundings. This feeling comes from tradition, history, and the natural world. Architects and urban planners work hard to preserve these traditional spaces while improving them for today's needs. They use old

traditions and local designs to create homes and areas that feel like home. In this research paper, we want to delve deeper into how we can keep traditional living spaces alive.

Traditional living spaces have a special place in the vibrant tapestry of South Indian culture. Whether it's a charming courtyard house in Tamil Nadu or a stately Nalukettu house in Kerala, these spaces are steeped in history and community spirit. But as rapid changes are taking place in the cities and towns of South India, these precious spaces are in danger of losing their unique charm and sense of belonging. In this situation, the concept of "sense of place" becomes important. A sense of place refers to the deep emotional connection people feel with their surroundings, which is shaped by shared traditions, cultural history, and the natural environment.

To protect these precious living environments, South Indian architects and urban planners are adopting innovative approaches that respect tradition while adapting to modern needs. Inspired by ancient architectural styles, local materials and sustainable practices, they aim to create homes and neighbourhoods that resonate with the spirit of the region. This research paper aims to explore the complexities of preserving traditional South Indian architecture through the lens of sense of place. By exploring the theoretical framework and practical examples, we seek to explore strategies that ensure these living spaces are vibrant, inclusive, and deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of South India. By gaining a deeper understanding of how culture, history, and environment shape these spaces, we can work toward building communities where all residents feel a deep connection to home.

## I. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF TRADITIONAL LIVING SPACES

Traditional living spaces have a fascinating historical background that reflects the rich cultural elements and values of South Indian society. For centuries, South Indian architecture has incorporated elements such as courtyard plans, porches, and semi-open gathering spaces. These facilities are carefully designed to accommodate family gatherings, social events, and religious ceremonies, and to create a sense of unity and shared identity among residents. For example, the courtyard design allows for a central space where families can gather for meals, celebrations, and socializing. The porch (Etra) provided a transitional space between the inside and outside of the house and offered a place to relax and socialize with neighbours. These traditional living spaces were not just physical structures, but symbols of community cohesion and cultural history that were passed down from generation to generation. Understanding the historical significance of these elements helps preserve this heritage and incorporate it into modern designs to ensure that South Indian architecture continues to reflect its rich cultural history while meeting the needs of modern life.

## II. UNDERSTANDING “SENSE OF PLACE” IN ARCHITECTURE

In architecture, "sense of place" refers to how people feel about buildings and spaces around them. It is the emotional and psychological connection we have with our surroundings. When it comes to traditional South Indian homes, this feeling is closely linked with design features that remind us of culture and the natural world. For example, consider planning a yard. It's like having a central area where families can gather for events and spend time together. It creates a sense of unity while ensuring privacy. An example is a balcony. It is an intermediate space that blurs the boundary between inside and outside. You can sit there and enjoy the breeze and feel connected to your home. These architectural elements play a huge role in creating a sense of home and a connection to one's roots. Architects and urban planners can use this understanding to design spaces that resonate with the people who live in them and make them happier and healthier overall.

### III. ECO-FRIENDLY PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINING SENSE OF PLACE IN INFORMAL SOUTH-INDIAN DWELLINGS

Adopting eco-friendly practices in South Indian informal households is important to keep the sense of place alive. Traditional architectural features such as courtyard plans, and semi-open gathering spaces are now good for keeping the home cool and naturally lit. This means less need for things like air conditioning and artificial lighting, making it eco-friendly. In addition, using local materials and traditional building methods not only makes the house feel more authentic, but also reduces your carbon footprint. Greening these homes will help protect the environment and ensure a sense of place for South Indian communities for years to come.

### IV. THE EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF PRESERVING SENSE OF PLACE IN INFORMAL SOUTH INDIAN RESIDENCES

Maintaining a sense of place is very important in informal South Indian settlements as it keeps the culture and sense of community alive. Courtyard houses have always been a big part of South Indian family life. They have these central open spaces where families gather and rooms that connect to each other, creating a sense of belonging and tradition. But with cities growing so fast and everything becoming more modern, these traditional homes are under threat. If we do not maintain a sense of place in these homes, we risk losing our cultural identity and the close communities that come with it. By making sure these homes still feel like home through architectural changes and things to include everyone, we can help keep that sense of belonging and connection strong. It's all about ensuring that future generations can still appreciate and enjoy South Indian architecture like we do.

A sense of place in South Indian homes has a huge impact on how people feel and interact with each other. Traditional features such as courtyards, verandas and semi-open spaces are important in bringing people together and creating a strong sense of community. Research shows that when people live in places that make them feel connected to their surroundings, they have more friends, feel happier and like their home more. For example, imagine a traditional South Indian home with a courtyard where families gather for meals and celebrations. This space not only brings everyone together but also gives them a sense of belonging and identity. Likewise, verandas and semi-open spaces provide opportunities to socialize with neighbours and connect with nature. By keeping these traditional elements intact, South Indian homes can become warm and welcoming places that improve the overall well-being of the residents.

### V. TRADITIONAL IMPACTS OF SENCE OF PLACE IN MODERN SOUTH-INDIAN HOMES

In modern South-Indian homes, maintaining a traditional sense of place has significant cultural, social, and psychological implications for the occupants. Elements such as courtyard planning, veranda's and semi-open gathering spaces, which are deeply rooted in South-Indian architectural tradition, play a crucial role in fostering a sense of community and identity. For example, courtyard planning creates a central space for family gatherings and social interactions, upholding traditional values of togetherness. Verandas and semi-open spaces serve as transitional zones that connect indoor and outdoor living, promoting socialization and connection with nature, which are essential aspects of the South-Indian lifestyle.

By incorporating these traditional elements into modern home design, residents can maintain a strong connection to their cultural heritage while adapting to contemporary living. Studies have shown that living in an environment that fosters a strong sense of place can lead to increased satisfaction with one's living space, improved mental well-being, and enhanced social connections. Therefore, while maintaining the traditional sense of place in modern South-Indian homes, residents can continue to experience the enriching and rich aspects of their cultural history while enjoying the comforts and conveniences of modern life.

## VI. STRATEGIES FOR INFUSING SOUTH INDIAN TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS INTO MODERN DESIGNS

Infusing traditional South Indian elements into modern design is a delicate balance between preserving tradition and meeting modern needs. Architects and designers must carefully consider how to combine traditional architectural forms, materials, and spatial arrangements while integrating modern technology and sustainable practices. For example, the courtyard plan, which is characteristic of South Indian architecture, can be used as a central gathering space in modern homes. By optimizing light and natural ventilation, these courtyards create a comfortable and pleasant atmosphere that reminds residents of traditional life. Similarly, balconies and semi-open gathering spaces can be seamlessly integrated into contemporary designs, blurring the lines between indoor and outdoor living.

One strategy is to incorporate traditional South Indian elements into modern designs using local materials and traditional building techniques. For example, the inclusion of traditional wooden patterns and tiles in the modern interior can add originality and cultural richness to the space. In addition, integrating modern technology such as solar panels and rainwater harvesting systems into traditional architectural forms can increase sustainability without compromising tradition.

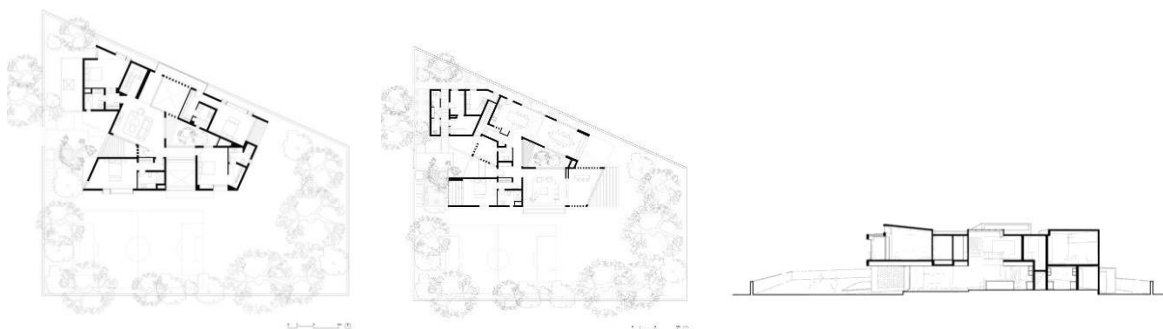
Another approach is prioritizing performance and compatibility in design. For example, modern homes have flexible living spaces that easily transition from private to communal areas, reflecting the multi-purpose nature of traditional South Indian homes. By embracing innovation while respecting tradition, architects and designers can create modern homes in South India that seamlessly blend tradition and modern living.

Overall, infusing traditional South Indian elements into modern design requires a thoughtful and holistic approach that respects the cultural heritage while responding to the growing needs of the population. Striking a balance between tradition and innovation, these houses serve as a vibrant expression of South Indian identity in the modern world.

Here are some of the case studies which acts as an extension of traditional living integrating in modern architectural housing through sense of place.

### 1. The Brick House Project, Bangalore

The Bangalore Brick House project stands as an exemplary case study in the synthesis of traditional architectural techniques with contemporary design principles. Originally conceived as a modest two-bedroom residence, the exigency for expanded living space prompted the development of a more capacious dwelling, all while retaining the essence of the original structure. Notably, brick was selected as the primary building material, not only for its aesthetic warmth but also for its inherent minimalism, a crucial consideration in the design ethos.



Eliza Higgins, a key member of the Collective Project design team, elucidates the project's adept negotiation of the juxtaposition between traditional construction methods and modern geometric expressions. This delicate balance is deftly mediated through the strategic integration of porous jali screens and the interplay of light and shadow facilitated by partial brick projections. Furthermore, the design adeptly leverages the existing foundation and angled

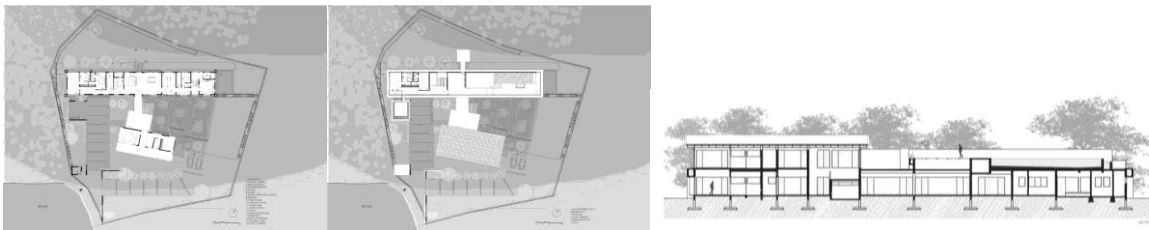
plinth of the original brick house, seamlessly incorporating them into the new architectural configuration, thereby fostering a sense of narrative continuity and historical homage.

Central to the project's spatial narrative is the inclusion of a small triangular courtyard, emblematic of the site's historical lineage and serving as a symbolic bridge between past and present. Beyond its symbolic resonance, this courtyard serves as a functional connector, facilitating fluid transitions between interior and exterior realms while also fostering visual connectivity between public and private spaces within the residence. In sum, the Bangalore Brick House project epitomizes the potential of architectural innovation to harmoniously coalesce with traditional craftsmanship, yielding spaces that are not only aesthetically captivating but also functionally adept at meeting the needs of modern living.



## 2. The Skew House, Kerala

Situated on an expansive one-acre plot, this residence seamlessly blends modern tropical design with traditional architectural elements. The layout of the house maximizes the plot's dimensions, creating a spacious and well-distributed arrangement. Responding to the family's requirements, the design emphasizes distinct guest and family spaces, resulting in two distinct blocks connected by a semi-private living area.



The utilization of traditional Mangalore roof tiles, complemented by plywood inner linings, serves to insulate the interior spaces from the intense summer heat. The material palette is intentionally minimal, featuring steel, wood, and exposed concrete as primary elements. However, select additions such as exposed clay brick walls and natural mosaic marble flooring enhance the overall spatial quality. Nestled amidst Kerala's scenic rubber plantations, the house maintains privacy while offering picturesque views of the surrounding landscape. The architectural layout considers traditional directional principles, evident in the alignment of the guest block along the axis of prayer, resulting in a slight skew in the overall configuration aptly named "The Skew House."



Interior spaces are characterized by ample natural light and ventilation, facilitated by the strategic placement of open spaces and large windows. The entrance veranda, accentuated by the gentle slope of the Mangalore tile roof, sets the tone for the well-proportioned interior spaces. Upon entering the family block, one is greeted by a spacious living and dining area, followed by a linear progression of rooms including bedrooms, a kitchen, and utility spaces. The linear arrangement not only enhances natural illumination and ventilation but also contributes to the overall coherence of the design.

A notable feature of the residence is the staircase, crafted from wood, steel, and exposed concrete, adorned with traditional wood carving patterns. This staircase serves as a focal point, leading to the first floor where additional bedrooms and a linear pool are located. Strategically placed louvered shutters on the south-facing facade mitigate glare and heat, creating a dynamic interplay of light and shadow throughout the interior spaces. Overall, this residence exemplifies a harmonious fusion of modern functionality with traditional aesthetics, creating a timeless architectural expression deeply rooted in its cultural context.

## VII. KEEPING THE SOUTH INDIAN TRADITIONAL HOME FEEL WHILE BEING ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY

Maintaining the traditional feel of South Indian homes while also being environmentally friendly is entirely feasible through smart design and lifestyle choices. Using locally sourced and renewable materials, such as clay tiles or bamboo, not only adds authenticity to the home but also reduces the carbon footprint associated with transportation and production. Passive design strategies, like orienting the home to maximize natural light and airflow, can significantly decrease the need for artificial heating and cooling, lowering energy consumption and costs. One great example is courtyard planning, which has been a staple of South Indian architecture for centuries. By incorporating courtyards into modern home designs, residents can benefit from improved natural ventilation and daylighting, reducing the reliance on air conditioning and electric lighting. Verandas are another traditional feature that can promote sustainability. They provide shaded outdoor spaces that encourage outdoor living and reduce the need for energy-intensive indoor cooling. Furthermore, integrating green spaces and eco-friendly landscaping practices into South Indian homes can enhance their environmental performance. For instance, planting native species and implementing rainwater harvesting systems can help conserve water and create a more resilient landscape. By incorporating these green elements, residents can enjoy a connection to nature while also contributing to biodiversity and ecosystem health.

Overall, by embracing traditional architectural elements and eco-friendly practices, South Indian homes can maintain their cultural identity while minimizing their impact on the environment. This balance between tradition and sustainability not only preserves the sense of place within these residences but also ensures a more sustainable and resilient future for generations to come.

Here are some of the case studies which acts as an extension of traditional living integrating in modern architectural housing through sense of place.

### 1 The Deck House, Tirumala Hills

The site chosen for the deck house lies adjacent to the Tirumala hills in Tirupati, amidst the plains, with the Sesha-chalam range extending from the east towards the southwest. Positioned within a residential layout off the main road, the surroundings exhibit sporadic development. The client's vision for the 15000 square feet plot encompassed integrating the residence with social and office spaces, alongside accommodating a multipurpose play-court, a 'Zen' garden, and flowing water features, reflective of their lifestyle preferences.



Architectural articulation distinguishes between various programmatic spaces, with material choices reinforcing these differentiations. The lower levels feature limestone cladding, evoking a grounded container-like aesthetic, while the concrete volume above creates a juxtaposition, visually hovering over the clad container. A wood screen clads the home theatre volume on the first floor, mediating between the two blocks. The concrete plane serves as a datum, offering both occupation space and protection against the harsh sun and glare, facilitated by rib beams providing thermal shielding on the overhead plane.

The incorporation of gardens and landscape elements as extensions of living spaces underscores the design philosophy. Each element, from the water body to the Zen Garden and play-court, is strategically positioned in a striated manner from east to west, with the water body flowing from west to east, intersecting different zones. Notably, a Buddha statue crafted by local artisans adorns a levitated platform, while rocks sourced from the site accentuate the Zen Garden, symbolizing a harmony between nature and human intervention. Considering Tirupati's intense sun and heat, the house features a compact footprint, allowing ample space for landscaping to envelop the structure. The spatial layout revolves around two distinct blocks bridged by a spacious dining area and united under a hovering roof. While one block accommodates bedrooms and bathrooms, the other hosts public areas, the kitchen, and servant quarters. The spatial configuration draws inspiration from traditional courtyard houses prevalent in southern India, facilitating seamless communication between different functional zones.



The architectural treatment of the container's perimeter adds depth and functionality, with wooden louvers on the west providing relief and connectivity with the outdoors, while the expansive deck on the north and east serves as a welcoming focal point. This cantilevered space not only connects the interior spaces with the outdoors but also serves as a venue for client meetings, overlooking the dramatic vista of the Tirumala hills. Moreover, the entrance to the house, marked by a spiral staircase, embodies a transitional space mediating between the interior and exterior realms, reflecting the essence of the residence.

## 2 The Traditional Affinity, Kerala

The 3500 sq. Ft. site, nestled in a secluded enclave away from the bustling city of Kozhikode, epitomizes a desire for cultural connection within its architectural expression. The design ethos reflects a deep-rooted regional identity, evident in the spatial language and form that resonate throughout the urban landscape. A climate-sensitive approach informs the design, with sloping roofs and expansive overhangs strategically positioned to mitigate the impact of heavy monsoons common in Kerala.



The incorporation of semi-permeable spaces like patios and expansive verandas capitalizes on the tropical climate, blurring the boundaries between indoor and outdoor realms. Linear horizontal lines and vast cantilevered roof forms gracefully envelop the existing trees, while large expanses of glass further integrate the house with its natural surroundings. The open-plan layout fosters a sense of continuity and connection, with sliding bi-fold doors demarcating living spaces while embracing panoramic views. Segregating public and private spaces, the ground floor encompasses communal areas like the living room, dining room, and entertainment room, while the upper level offers private retreats in the form of bedrooms and a covered terrace.



The central hall emerges as the focal point, housing the dining, open kitchen, and family sitting areas. Ventilated from all sides, it serves as the 'lung' of the house, facilitating airflow and enhancing comfort. Structural elements, primarily composed of steel members, imbue the structure with a sense of lightness and sharp aesthetics. Meticulous detailing is evident in the integration of materials like slab, bricks, and windows, ensuring both functionality and visual appeal. The roof features sound heat and water insulation, while custom edge detailing enhances its architectural character. In essence, this project embodies a harmonious blend of traditional Indian family values and contemporary design principles. It offers a luxurious yet authentic living experience, redefining the notion of luxury through diverse spatial encounters.

#### VIII. WHAT WE NEED TO DO TO KEEP SOUTH INDIAN TRADITIONAL LIVING THE SAME WAY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Preserving South Indian traditional living for future generations requires coordinated efforts across different sectors. Community engagement and education programs play a crucial role in raising awareness about the cultural significance of traditional homes and instilling pride in architectural heritage. For example, local workshops and heritage tours can educate residents and visitors about the unique features of South Indian architecture, fostering appreciation and a sense of ownership. Government policies and regulations also play a vital role in preserving traditional living spaces. By offering incentives for the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, governments can encourage property owners to maintain their traditional homes rather than demolishing them for new development. Additionally, implementing regulations that promote sustainable construction practices, such as green building standards and heritage conservation guidelines, can ensure that new developments respect and integrate with existing traditional neighbourhoods. Architectural firms and developers have a responsibility to prioritize the integration of traditional elements into their designs. By collaborating with local craftsmen and artisans, they can uphold traditional craftsmanship and skills while incorporating modern technologies and materials. For instance, integrating traditional themes and materials like terracotta tiles or carved woodwork into contemporary designs can create a sense of continuity with the past while meeting the needs of modern living. By valuing and safeguarding South Indian traditional living spaces, we can ensure that they continue to serve as cherished homes and cultural landmarks for future generations. This involves not only preserving physical structures but also nurturing the intangible aspects of cultural history, such as community traditions and social practices. Ultimately, by working

together to protect and celebrate our architectural heritage, we can ensure that South Indian traditional living remains vibrant and relevant for generations to come.

## IX. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research findings underscore the enduring relevance and significance of preserving traditional living spaces in South India through the lens of sense of place. Through an exploration of architectural elements such as courtyard planning, veranda, and semi-open gathering spaces, it becomes evident that these features play a pivotal role in fostering social interactions, community cohesion, and a profound sense of belonging. Case studies such as the Bangalore Brick House, The Skew House, and The Traditional Affinity house exemplify how traditional architectural principles can be seamlessly integrated into modern designs, striking a delicate balance between preservation and contemporary innovation. Moreover, the social and psychological impacts of preserving sense of place in informal South Indian residences are profound, as evidenced by studies highlighting increased social connections, improved mental well-being, and greater satisfaction with living spaces. Strategies for infusing South Indian traditional elements into modern designs offer promising avenues for maintaining cultural identity while embracing sustainable practices. By prioritizing eco-friendly approaches, such as utilizing locally sourced materials and passive design strategies, informal South Indian dwellings can sustain their sense of place while contributing to environmental conservation. It is imperative to recognize the importance of community engagement, education initiatives, and policy interventions in safeguarding South Indian traditional living spaces for future generations. By fostering appreciation for architectural heritage, incentivizing preservation efforts, and promoting sustainable construction practices, we can ensure that these invaluable cultural assets continue to serve as cherished homes and cultural landmarks. Ultimately, the preservation of sense of place in South Indian residences not only honours the rich tapestry of cultural history but also fosters a deep sense of connection, belonging, and well-being among inhabitants, thus enriching the fabric of society.

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