

**THE SRI LANKAN VERNACULAR:
STUDY OF ITS INTERPRETATIONS IN THE
CONTEMPORARY FORMAL ARCHITECTURE.**

A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Moratuwa.

As a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science of Architecture.

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R.M.GANGA RATNAYAKE.

Department of Architecture.

University of Moratuwa.

May 2000

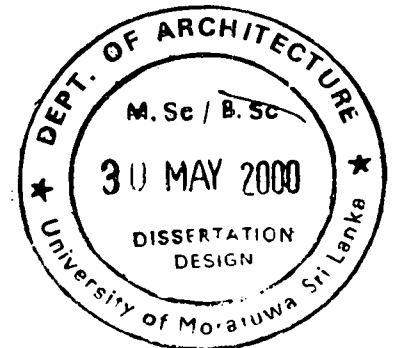
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ABSTRACT.

The spread of globalization and the development of modernity are creating a new global order in which tradition may be perceived as losing its relevance. Thus majority of present day architecture has lost its momentum with tradition or its history. That remains to lose the sense of belonging to a place.

In this context many progressive architects have investigated 'the contemporary relevance of the rich vernacular tradition'. They discovered 'the vernacular' as one source of tradition, which could be re-employed in the development of contemporary practice.

It is evident that many of these architects have produced an innovative body of work that demonstrates meaningful reinterpretations of vernacular architecture. Most of them are related to the place and time that not all are happy hybrids of the aesthetic and the symbolic.

Thus research aims to investigate such architect's works in order to identify the ways of re-employing or reinterpreting of the vernacular in the contemporary practice.

Thus the author explains that a useful understanding of such interpretations will guide to develop a meaningful contemporary architectural practice in future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

I express my deep gratitude and thanks,

for the encouragement given for the selection of this subject at the inception to, Archt. Vidura Sri Nammuni, Senior Lecturer, Dept. of architecture.

For the guidance, encouragement and valuable comments given throughout the study to, Dr. Ranjith Dayarathne, Senior lecturer, Dept. of Architecture.

For the guidance and valuable discussions which led the study to its purpose, to

Architect Chris De Sarum, Senior Lecturer, Dept. of Architecture,
Architect Vijitha Basnayake, Senior Lecturer, Dept, of Architecture,
Architect Prasanna Liyanage and Architect Thusitha Liyanage.

For producing this document by word-processing to my friends, Samudini Chanaka, Dilini, Preethika, Nandana, Neeluka, Jagath and Upul.

For guidance, encouragement and love given me throughout the study, to my parents, brothers and to my friend Milinda.

Finally, I sincerely offer my thanks to everyone who assisted me to present this dissertation.

Ganga Rathnayake.

May 2000.

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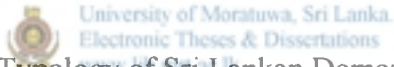
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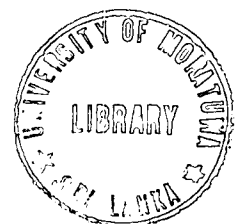
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Chapter One



CHAPTER ONE.

INTRODUCTION.

1.1. THE ISSUE.

Since the middle of the 20th century, architects have become increasingly interested in vernacular architecture. As a result, the modern movement attempts to break down our narrow concepts of vernacular forms. Its importance was rediscovered, as 'the origin' of informal form making processes.

The term 'vernacular architecture' suggests that it is design by non-professionals or craftsmen, not an architect. It is based on the knowledge of the traditional practice and techniques, hence forms are built as a result of an unselfconscious process. They are made of predominantly local materials, which reveal a high regard for craftsmanship and quality.

These built forms are constantly re-arranged and improved by many generations, hence they fit in well with local climate, flora and fauna. Thus vernacular habitats express a closeness of contact with its dwellers, their way of life, attitudes and beliefs.

However 'vernacular' has its limits, though it fits in to different situations. Does that mean vernacular act as a shared vocabulary of architecture? If so, why doesn't it exist or remain in our modern culture?

We have seen, with the great institutionalization and specialization of modern life, some of dominant characteristics of vernacular buildings loose force. As a result, this shared practice of architecture no longer exists today.

In fact the design process starts out by being self-conscious, only professionals involve for designing. Instead of wisely sheared, the architectural language became specialized and private.

Rapoport describes that,

“tradition as a regulator has disappeared notably in our own culture for number of reasons”

Rapoport, A. 1979, p6



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The main distinct reason is the great number of building types, which are too complex to be built in the traditional way. The second reason is loss of their common value system and sheared hierarchy due to rapid change of culture and life styles. As a result ‘designers’ and ‘public’ loss of goals, shared by them.

“This result in the disappearance of what spirit of corporation which makes people respect the rights of adjoining people and their buildings and ultimately the right of the element as a whole”.

Rapoport, A. 1979, p6

It is an inevitable fact that present society has entered in to a new cultural phase, and people had to change their values and life styles. Thus present industrialized world has lodged it self in the ideas of modernity

due to the development of new materials and building techniques during the last half century. In fact many modern forms are largely based upon a functional creed and materialistic out look of the sophisticated technology.



Fig. 1: Modern commercial building.
Design with total disregard to local traditions.

With the modernization it is evident that many alien built forms or models from the industrialized world, simply have been transplanted in the country. It can be commonly seen every where with the same commercial appearance with glass skinned curtain wall structures, steel skeleton frames, plain steel claddings, etc.

Not only the commercial or industrial buildings many such domestic built forms are being constructed in the country with total disregard and insensitive to basic design principles. Therefore such forms dismay the standard of taste in contemporary architecture.

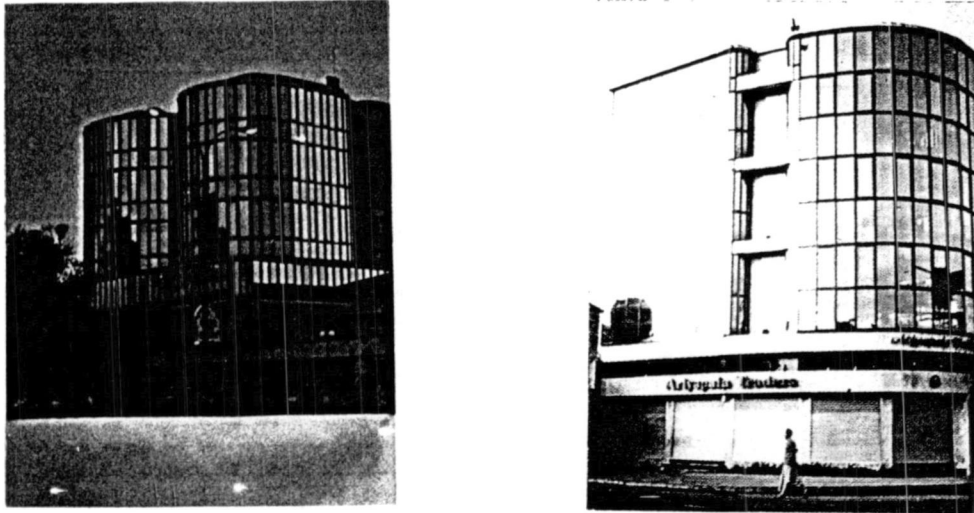


Fig. 2 : Modern commercial buildings.



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 With monotonous appearance
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 Of sophisticated materials.

In fact they are inappropriate in these localities and lose the respect and fulfillment of the needs of the dwellers. This remains to lose the sense of belonging to a place or the cohesive identity of the region. As a result the modern man is dissatisfied with most of his built forms.

Christopher Alexander also describes that,

“so long as the people of society are separated from the language which is being used to shape, these buildings can not live”

Alexander, C. 1979, P 190

In this context, architects turn to look back on the wisdom of traditional built forms. They investigate ‘the vernacular’ as one source of

tradition, which would be re-employed or reinterpreted in the development of contemporary practice.

1. 2. RATIONALE.

As a result of specialization of architecture, majority of the contemporary built forms stand merely on their own, as an individual piece of architecture. They do not fit in well with the physical setting or conditions of climate, and neither sympathetic or satisfy there dwellers.

Architects discovered that, as we could not live without memory, such contemporary dwellings also need something to be identified as ourselves. It is a fact that they should represent the present complex needs, but at the same time they need to be replenished with self, regional and national identities.

In this context, the success of our traditional vernacular built forms are carefully examined and appreciated as past resources that represent deep understanding of space, climate and culture. They also could be regarded as a source for innovations.

It is, therefore evident that, during the last three decades, many leading architects have identified the phenomenon of 'the contemporary use of vernacular'. A number of significant regionalist's works in different part of the country, demonstrate several ways of dealing the vernacular

with modernity. Many of these architects have produced an interesting body of work, that is difficult to ignore.

Charles Correa describes that,

“we must understand our past well enough to value it- and yet also well enough to know why (and how) it must be changed. Architecture is not just a reinforcement of values- social, political, economic. On the contrary, it should open new doors –to new aspirations”

Correa, Charles. 1998, p61

It is hoped that, through an innovative process, architects could discriminate these essences of learning content in vernacular, which could be reinterpreted to fit in to contemporary values and life styles.

Thus,

“architects should react wisely to the vernaculars , not simply copying the elements that even could erode the initial meanings , but creatively and thoughtfully reinterpreting and transforming the essence to achieve a masterpiece.”

Hatmoko, A. U. ; Djokomono, I. 1999, p 169

! 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.

In this new global civilization, the definitions of individual and collective identities become highly complex. It is a fact that, ‘a notion of identity’, have always been related to traditions (or past). Indeed, present architects have attempted to define that tradition should be tackled in a

new profound way. Thus tradition was recognized as 'a heritage' that is continually evolving with the time.

Therefore, vernacular was discovered as,

“artifacts of the past, properties of the present and resources for development of the future”

Hatmoko, A.U.; Djokomono, I. 1999, p167

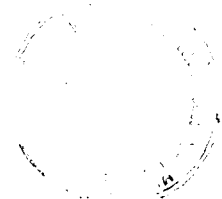
Thus architects need to discriminate which past principles of vernaculars are still appropriate and valid for today's reality. Hence they need to investigate, how best to incorporate these with modern building requirements and present construction methods.

Indeed this research aims to investigate the essence of fundamental characteristics or qualities of traditional vernacular that provide physical and visual comfort appeal directly to our senses.

Finally it is expected to rediscover such qualities and analyze, how these are interpreted to generate a meaningful contemporary architectural idiom. Thus hope to investigate contemporary architect's work, where work anchors upon 'vernacular' as freely discovering ways of re-employing tradition in the contemporary practice.

1.4. METHOD OF STUDY.

In the process of learning from 'traditional vernacular' first, it is important to do an in-depth analysis by observing traces.



Here, the contents of traditional vernacular forms are carefully investigated by analyzing the annotated diagrams drawing etc. These are used in order to trace the abstract qualities and character of domestic vernacular forms, that shows profound interest in it.

Thus in such a way, it is hoped to discover the essence of fundamental principles of Sri Lankan traditional vernacular, in chapter four.

Secondly the study attempt to analyze the interpretations of vernacular for contemporary formal architecture, in the final chapter. By the way, the investigation of the interpretations of vernacular can be identified in several ways, indeed some ways are explore deeper then only looking at the skin of 'vernaculars'.

There are three basic ways, which can be identified as doing incorporation. Some initial approaches emphasize the adaptation of traditional elements in to modern forms while some others approach, transform the characters and identify the ways they are combined to make new forms. Final approach is rather abstract, indeed tries to interpret contemplative essence of vernacular to make innovations for present architecture.

Each type of interpretations which anchor upon vernacular are analyzed and reexamined by using successful exemplary works that have been done by known contemporary architects. Thus, the configuration of

space, form and shaping of such precedents are investigated to trace that, 'how the contemporary practitioners try to interpret vernacular, in present formal architectural practice?'

1.5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY.

Sri Lanka has had a rich vernacular tradition that enriched many generations throughout the history. Many such vernacular settlements have disappeared slowly, due to the complexities of modern life and regarding attitudes of the building practice and tradition. In fact this type of vernacular settlements is often in opposition to that of the modern.

The complex learning content that is replenished in vernacular attracts many contemporary architects' attention and becomes a fruitful object of studies.

Basically the prior study area limits to identify the traditional vernacular dwellings of Sri Lanka, in a profound way. Thus mainly, the peasant's dwellings of pre colonial and Dutch influenced vernacular forms are selected as resources for the study. Here the author does not investigate the high style or elite residences.

The second study area comprises of vernacular interpretations of contemporary formal architecture of Sri Lanka. Thus the author does not study the contemporary dwellings that are designed by non-professionals.

In fact the author predominantly selects the contemporary architect's works; that anchor upon interpretations of vernacular. For the purpose of studying, such interpretations are categorized in to different patterns.

The study is mainly focused on selected types of successive domestic exemplary works of contemporary architects that provide an insight into distinctive local taste, in the contemporary context. Finally in order to manage the scope, the study is focussed mainly on domestic architecture.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE SELECTED PERIODS FOR STUDY.



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- * There is hard to find any trace of domestic dwellings of peasants, in early kingdoms (Anuradhapura, Pollonnaruwa, Yapahuwa and Gampaha) of Sri Lanka. In fact they would have been predominantly built out of perishable materials.
- * But some of the peasant's dwellings of Kandyan period, are still standing as living exemplary works, and provide resources for the study. (pre-colonial.)
- * During the period of colonization, the Portuguese who were the first invaders, that erected some domestic buildings in Colombo. But they have not made a stronger influence upon our indigenous building tradition.
- The Dutch were the first to create an enduring impression in our local traditions of domestic architecture. They adapted their own

architecture to suite with the indigenous conditions of locality and climate. Later such architecture; is considered as typical Sri Lankan architecture. Thus Dutch influenced peasant's dwellings can be identified as 'colonial vernacular'.

- * The strong influence of British has introduced their architecture, these were mere duplications of those that existed in their homeland. Such architecture is often in opposition to that of local architecture neither fits in well with the conditions of climate or locality.
- * The Buddhist revival was one of the significant occurrences that appeared against the colonial rule in the early 19th century. It became a powerful force, which united the country against European cultural influence. Thus the country was granted independence in 1948. In mid 19th century, the newly independent Sri Lanka was suffering its pangs of 'nationalism'. People reawakened with the ideas of cultural and political identities of the country.
- * At this juncture a significant event occurred in Sri Lankan architecture. Indeed 'the national architecture' of the country with its local or regional identities was discovered. Thus the architecture that exists since the mid-fifties up to today, have been categorized as 'contemporary'.



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Chapter Two

CHAPTER TWO.

THE NATURE OF CONTEMPORARY FORMAL ARCHITECTURE.

2. 1. INTRODUCTION.

Birds naturally built their nests. In the same way, people always seem have known intuitively, how to produce the habitats they need. The term 'vernacular' is used for such habitats, which results in an organic process, involving society as a whole. Those fascinating dwellings are not the products of any single architect, but the products of an entire community, working continuously through many generations. This is a tradition, which exists throughout the entire world, specially in Asia.



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There is a sort of modern or rather contemporary model of tradition, in contrast to this process, which started with the Renaissance in Europe. It is the result of a selfconscious process where a peace of architecture is clearly the outcome of an individual's effort. By the end of the last centurery, it has spread all over the world.

For many Asian societies 'industrialization' has not yet closed the accesses to the fascinating rich world of the past. Thus in Asia, architects live with both these traditions, as the exemplary works selected in this research so clearly express.

Most often the contemporary and traditional models are quite in opposition to each other. But within the selfconscious framework, where

the individual position of the architect is more significant, he finds ways and means to synthesis these opposing interests. It is one gesture of contemporary practice that speaks of 'contemporary use of tradition' which the work represents the contemporary sensibilities and yet replenishes with the specific regional and local traditions.

Charles Correa describes that,

“in India, handloom cotton fabrics have always been a marvelous example for me of something which is very traditional and yet speaks clearly to our modern sensibilities”

Correa, C. 1998, p11

2.2. Formative trends in Architecture



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The unawareness of each other, in early 'contained civilizations' in the world led to preserve each other's national, regional and individual identities. Hence such stable civilizations express their architecture, of matching richness and depth.

Since then the world has drastically changed with the revival of technology, in physical communication. As a result of the cross cultural relationships, the world became one entity or a universal village.

Gradually the west European civilization became the most powerful and dominant world civilization. Their strong influence had spread to the older Eastern part of the world. The effect of western

civilization, had caused to degrade the national and regional traditions of the older eastern civilizations.

This loss of interests on local architecture is clearly seen in our architecture of colonial times. Indeed they express the architecture of Portuguese, Dutch and British. However they reflect our colonial past, but we never identify ourselves in it. We know that the colonial architecture does not reflect our aspirations or life style, but they represent the western culture and way of life. Hence as a nation we do not admire colonial architecture, indeed it symbolises a break in our own history.

In this context the local identity of many nations of the eastern world had to give way to Western civilization. However as a long-term benefit, their amazing technological advances were shared with the nations of the East.



2.2.1. TOWARDS A MODERN ARCHITECTURE.

In the 19th century at Europe, 'the industrial revolution' had produced a strong base for establishing an intellectual and aesthetic revolution all over the world.

During inter war period, the establishment of 'Bauhaus' resulted in a wide exposure in creative arts. It led to carrying out tremendous new experiments in the architecture, as well as other arts. This resulted in a new architecture being born. With this the 'modernism' was firmly established. In the mean time many progressive architects formulated a

new modernized world or architecture, based on the advertisement of modern science and technology.

After world war two, the shift of power distorted the vision of modern architecture. This deculturalisation of modernism brought a new aproch to architecturel design. What is now known as the international style. This style of architecture ignores the invirmental context or disinterest in the climatic conditions.



Fig. 3: The international style architecture.

Central Bank building - left.

Ceylinco House - right.

In the mean time, it resulted a bogus modernism, which represent the commercial exploitation of novelty or merely the wish to be in the fashion. Thus the international style has caused to loose much of the original dynamism of modernism.

“It consists of a few flashy tricks and the use (often the wrong use) of a number of fashionable materials”

Richard, R. M. 1962, p12

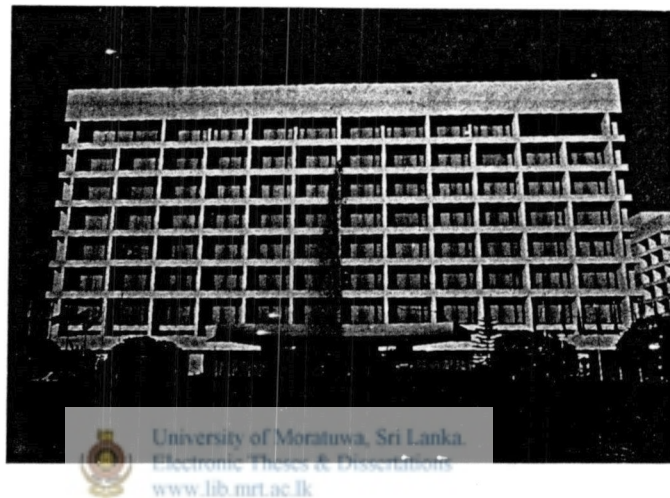


Fig. 4: Hotel Lanka Oberoi.

Clean cut international style exterior.

By the way this approach has no cultural references. Hence it has nothing to do with any body's traditions. Thus traditional materials or local technology are not required.

Due to the influence of such alien style of architecture, once again our countries

“denied the opportunity to express our originality and our identity and fashion our destiny. This lack of opportunity to be original is

the key to our underdevelopment, which is reflect in the poverty of our present day architecture”.

Wickramasinghe, S. 1988, p20



Fig. 5: The Liberty plaza shopping complex.
The International style architecture.

2.2.2. THE CRISES OF CONTEMPORARY FORMAL ARCHITECTURE.

Today with the availability of mass media, the cross cultural exchanges became increasingly meaningful and beneficial. Great ideas and creative arts from anywhere in the world can be transmitted quickly and convince across the cultural boundries. These new value and life style of the contempereary world culture, generates exciting new possibilities and solutions.

With the sophisticated technology of computers the inter-net and other computerised media, add richness to our expectations and new life style. However sometimes these trends bring disturbing consequences.

In Asia, most often we have misidentified this contemporary culture as 'western culture' which is more related with the stylistic life style of Coca- Cola, Mc Donald's and blue jeans. However it belongs to all of us in today's' world which continuously appear with the involvement from everywhere around the world.

Historically it was the west that first generated the new ideas and inventions in relation to rapid change of life style and attitudes. Hence still they have a strong assertive sense for today's architecture.



But in the West, they have made a serious effort to formulate new inventions of architecture based on their eastern culture with the sense of sense of intense local or regional identities. Hence as an eastern region, the common acceptance of contemporary culture has formulated a new perception for today's architecture in Sri Lanka.

By the way it is important to notice that, in early 20th century many architects have developed their own ability or creativity in relative isolation. Hence it was developed as a so-called formal profession, which empowered with the individual's effort.

But, only in recently architects have begun to develop a significant effort on each other. As a result,

“practitioners in different countries in different circumstances becoming aware of each other’s experiments and being influenced and stimulated by them”

Richards, J. M. 1962, p91

In fact it is one gesture that many architects have been consciously dealing with specifics of locality, during the last couple of decades.

2.3. THE AWARENESS OF REGIONALISM.

In Sri Lanka, quite a number of architects’ stress the urgent need for the formulation of national or regional identities in design. However the idea of regionalism has first begun to surface as a counter trend to the force of modern architecture, and as a manifestation of identity. Thus regionalism attempts to find out a wider reaction against the monotony of modernism.

“Regionalism by the very definition is committed to find truthful responses for geographical locality and also it is simply returning to architecture which is true to its people and namely the continuity in a given place between past and present”

Chris, A. 1986, p22

Regionalism is committed to find unique responses to a particular place, culture, climate and history. It enables to reflect the self-confidence of a country, continuing with local traditions. Hence the awareness of

regionalism becomes the motivating factor, in the study of our history or the traditional architecture.

The explorations of regionalism can be identified in different interpretations, commonly labeled as post modernism, Neo vernacular and Neo rationalism. These interpretations could be recognized as mere fashionable styles towards regionalism.

The trends of using semi replicas of traditional elements as signs became a popular trend of contemporary buildings. These extracted elements such as pillars, roofs, details were merely applied as a fashionable dress over a building. One of the best examples is the traditional hat or the Kandyan hip roof, placed on top of the sophisticated modern built forms.




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Fig. 6 :
Supreme Court complex, Hulfisdorf.
Kandyan roof has continued as a purely cosmetic device.



Fig. 7 :
Kandyan hat on a two
dimensional sign, Kotte.


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Neither of these local crafts nor materials is genuine or incorporated in to the built form. This approach to regionalism is commonly known as 'kitsch' or 'pastiche'. These approaches do not make a convincing regionalism or a cure for regionalism. Thus it degrades the soul of architectural tradition of the country.

“At its best regionalism penetrates in to the generating principles and symbolic sub cultures of the past and then transform them in to forms that are right for the changing social order of the present. It is a matter of sensing beneath the surface of memories, myths and aspirations that gives a society a coherence and energy and providing these with an authentic expression in architectural arrangement.”

William, C. J. R. 1986, p27

True essence or meaning of regionalism lies in a creative base, which penetrates in to the lasting fundamental principles in the tradition. Indeed it aims to produce architecture with certain timeless character which fuses the past and present, regional and universal. Hence architects do not pastiche the past, but grow from it.

2.4. CONTEMPORARY USE OF TRADITION.

In the 20th century with the development of tourism, the regionalism was resurfaced in an explorative form. Architects are turning to discover the past hence 'vernacular architecture' was emphasized as a source for inspiration. These vernacular structures or the 'architecture without architects' provide many basic lessons for architects.

These are indigenous dwellings, which were built by local craftsmen who used local material and technology. They are well adapted to the particular environmental setting and the climate. Such dwellings,

“are imbued with cosmological and religious values, social and political structures, sensibility and attitude towards time and space”

William, S. W. L. Beng, T. H. 1998, p21

Hence they reflect their society's collective images and accumulated values and attitudes.



Fig. 8: Simple indigenous dwelling.
Which are built by anonymous
local craftsmen.



Fig 9 : Predominantly local materials and simple
Technologies are utilized in construction.

Infect the architectural language is deeply embedded as an aspect of tradition, in vernacular dwellings. Such firmly set traditions assure the

continuity of vernacular setting, through craftsmanship, materials and technology.

Form and symbolism of vernacular are known empirically by their makers, hence they are in a grip of a tradition. As a result, forms of vernacular do remain the same for centuries, while change occurs in an incremental manner.

2.4.1. TRADITION AND CONTINUITY.

‘Tradition’ is difficult to define in a totally satisfactory way, but the term ‘tradition’ comes from the Latin verb ‘tradotransdo’ which means ‘to pass on to another’.

Edward Shills described it as,



“anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present. It makes no statement about what is handed down or in what particular combination, or whether it is a physical object or a cultural construction; it says nothing about how long it has been handed down or in what manner, whether orally or in written form”

Edward, S. 1998, p12

Roland De Silva says that,

“tradition in the present context means artistic or literary principles based on accumulated experience, and continues usage”

De Silva, R. 1991, p11



However all these definitions imply that 'tradition' means continuity or something handed down or transmitted from one generation to the next. Thus it is a process of evolution through trial and error by which is most appropriate to its context will survive and remain accepted. Hence tradition does not form within a short period of time, but it is constantly renewed and enriched by many generations.

Indeed our architecture is not formed by an effort of one man, it is the result of the double process of preserving and transmitting. Therefore the resultant product which is wisely experienced and suits its functions better, because it is well adapted with the physical setting and also flavored with culture and beliefs.

Curtis describes that,

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"tradition in the obvious sense of a visible past inheritance and can only be partly helpful, for reality today is different. The architect must find what is right for the present circumstances and if he is sufficiently probing and profound he will make a valid addition to the stock of forms. There is no place for passeisme or for a bogus revivalist sentimentality"

Curtis, W. 1989, p234

2.4.2. INVENTIONS OF VERNACULAR.

"The terms 'traditional' and 'vernacular' have also been used interchangeably because tradition is vernacular. This is because the

quantities that we associate with tradition are also found in the vernacular”

Upton, D. 1993, pp 9-165

Vernacular is thus seen as traditional which maintains certain limitations. It is widely seen as stable and authentic, while representing enduring values.

Bernard Rudofsky argues that,

“vernacular architecture does not go through fashion cycles. It is nearly immutable, indeed, unemployable, since it serves its purpose to perfection. As a rule, the indigenous building forms and construction methods is lost in the past”

Rudofsky, B. 1964, p14



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But, present studies of vernacular architecture tend to stress continuity and authenticity. Instead of limiting the vernacular for the so-called traditional environments, many architects in Asia have attempted to define ‘vernacular’ in new ways.

Tradition and vernacular are recognized as heritage for future innovations. Hence they are seen as an important resource, which could be incorporated or interpreted for today’s architecture.



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Chapter Three

CHAPTER THREE.

TRADITION AND THE ROLE OF VERNACULAR

3.1 INTRODUCTION.

Since the middle of the 20th century many researchers have become increasingly interested in vernacular architecture. Many vernacular building types or settlements have never been seriously studied before.

This trend of 'a discovery of traditional vernacular' was given strong support through the exhibition of 'Architecture without Architects'. Bernard Rudofsky has organised it, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1963. Earlier Rudofsky drew his attention on an entirely different topic, about 'the history of clothing'. Although his perspective in history of clothing was similar to his viewpoint on vernacular built form.

The history of clothing was documented brilliantly in his exhibition named 'Are our cloths modern' in 1948. Rudofsky pointed out that knowledge of clothing and fashions is primarily concerned with dress of the ruling class, such as emperors, nobles and princess of church. But clothing of common people, peasants or other ordinary is harder to find out, and not recorded seriously. However he derived through knowledge and perception about the simple clothing of the common people. This



research of folk clothing serves as a parallelism to architecture, according to his point of view.

The history of high style architecture is well documented through the buildings of the ruling classes. Many of these building such as palaces, castles, houses, etc still survive or have been reconstructed or preserved. However simple, primitive or vernacular dwellings of common people (peasant and ordinary folk) are harder to find. In the present age these traditional vernacular dwellings exert a strong fascination and offer a fruitful area for research and study.

3.2.1. ATTRIBUTES OF VERNACULAR

It we look up the word 'vernacular' we find meanings such as 'anonymous', 'indigenous', 'spontaneous', 'popular', 'primitive' or folk based. However one could suggest, these terms illuminate in a preliminary way, what is called 'vernacular'. In broader sense, we can argue, though these terms look alike, each has a distinct true meaning of its own.

The dictionary define 'anonymous' as of unknown authorship, and 'folk' as masses of the people in the lower culture and originated or widely used among common people. At the same time 'indigenous' as 'naïve of the land untouched by exterior or alien influence', 'spontaneous' as self originated or acting without external cause and 'popular' as pertain to a place. In fact 'primitive' is defined as isolated and self-contained.

Either of these terms or primitive is not a satisfactory term for identifying the vernacular form of architecture. Many architectural critics also have suggested a satisfactory definition of vernacular is more difficult. (At the moment, these terms are not being analysed further, this is discussed later in this chapter.)

It seems that primitive dwellings, vernacular architecture, architecture without architects, all these are terms that have been classified the structures beyond the sphere of the professional field of architecture.

3.3. TRADITION IN FORM MAKING PROCESS.

Rapaport, Redfield and many other architectural critics have pointed out the meaning of 'vernacular', as it apply to form making process.

Most societies tend to follow two kinds of significant processes related to form making. In simple cultures building skills were learned from an informal process through imitation and correction. Built form was created, by responding to a firmly set tradition. These cultures could be called as 'unselfconscious'.

In contrast to this process, the firmness of the tradition dissolves in the 'self-conscious' cultures. The form making is taught academically according to explicit rules.

3.3.1. UNSELFCONSCIOUS PROCESS.

Christopher Alexander explains that, in unselfconscious cultures,

‘Building skill are learned informally, without the help of formulated rules’

Alexander, C. 1967, p46

There is an accepted way to make buildings and also there is a wrong way. But there are generally accepted remedies for specific failures. Therefore building habits were accepted and maintained beyond question by all builders.

Because of the existence of such a firmly set tradition, the same physical form was built over and over again for a very long period of time. In such cultures the most visible feature of architectural tradition is the wealth of myth and legend attached to building habits.

In the unselfconscious culture that the form maker not only makes the form, but inhabits it. Hence there is a special closeness of contact between builder and form. It leads to a constant improvement and constant rearrangement of unsatisfactory details of the form. The immediate reaction to any failure emphasizes the ‘home static’ nature of the process.

In such cultures;

“rigid tradition and immediate action may seem contradictory. But it is the very contrast between these two which makes the process self-adjusting”.

Alexander, C. 1967, p52



It results in a 'self organizing' process, even both form and context change continuously, yet stay mutually well adjusted all the time.

3.3.2. SELF-CONSCIOUS PROCESS.

"The development of architectural individualism is the clearest manifestation of the moment when architecture first turns in to a self-conscious discipline".

Alexander, C. 1967, p57

In the self-conscious culture, the way forms are made is very different. Unlike the self-organizing process, now the reaction to failure becomes less and less direct. Construction is no longer in the hands of dwellings.



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The 'individuality' or the self 'image' of architect has a deep effect on the form making process. Each form is seen as a brainchild of an individual architect, which its success is his achievement.

However, self-conscious culture does not manage to produce clearly organized, well fitting form in its own way. As a result the homeostatic structure was broken and the tradition no more plays a major role.

3.3.3. GRAND AND FOLK TRADITIONS.

Most societies tend to follow two kinds of traditions. Jo Tauna explains that,

“the great, high or classic tradition which is continuously examine itself and is handed down through schools, treatises and professional institutions”.

Tauna, J. 1989, p161

Rapoport further describes, that,

“buildings of grand design tradition are built to impress either the populace with the power of the patron or the peer group of designer and cognosti with cleverness of the designer and good taste of the patron”.

Rapoport, A. 1969, p2

However in grand design tradition, building habits are being taught, and learnt by automatically or unselfconsciously. And pt represents the culture of elites.

On the other hand, the little, low or folk tradition is,

“the direct and unselfconscious tradition into physical form of a culture, it needs and values as well as desires, dreams and passions of a people”.

Rapoport, A. 1969, p2

The folk tradition spontaneously preserves itself without any apparent effort at refinements in comparison to high or classic tradition. Within this folk tradition we may distinguish vernacular and primitive dwellings.

3.4. GOOD FIT BUILT FORMS.

What is the characteristic of process, which create good fit built forms? Where do we find it? However 'Fitness' is a mutual relation and acceptability between two entities, the built form and its context. Hence 'good fit forms' posses both internal harmony and harmony with its context.

These built forms are most apparent in simple unselfconscious cultures. In those cultures, the form was well adjusted through a long period of history. It acquires more opportunity to become self-adjustable and flexible for required functions.

"As these buildings have been constructed over and over again, adjusting and changing, when a misfit occurs would have made them perfect fit"

Alexander, C 1967, p 47

If we look at a peasant farmhouse or at an African mud hut or at an igloo, this relation of good fit is not hard to find. In African tribe communities, grouping of Musqum huts reflects the social order of their inhabitants.

'Each man's hut is surrounded by the huts of his wives and his subservient, as social customs require and in such a way, moreover, that these subsidiary huts also form a wall round the chief's hut and there by protect it and themselves from wild beasts and invaders".

Alexander, C. 1967, p31

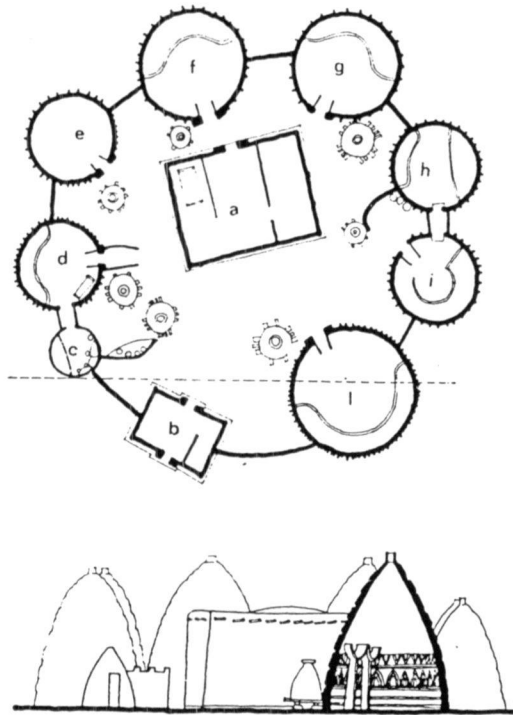


Fig. 10: Musgum: schematic plan and
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 Section of a family enclosure.
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 (Cameroon)

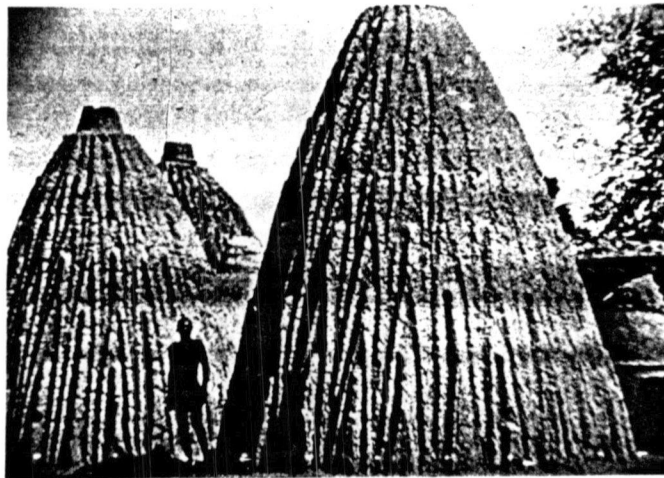


Fig. 11: Musgum: huts and granaries of a family farm with
 inverted Vs modelled on the exterior walls (Chad).

This example shows how the settlement pattern is well adjusted or incorporated with the social, physical, psychological requirements of their sub culture.

3.4.1. PRIMITIVE SETTLEMENTS.

Both primitive and vernacular terms are used within a broader category of folk tradition. But Redfield pointed out on alternative way of drawing a distinction between 'primitive' and 'vernacular'. The primitive is defined as kind of societies that isolated and self-contained.

Redfield describes that,

“there is a connection between vernacular and high style buildings, while this connection does not exist in primitive cultures which have on knowledge of an outside high culture”.

Redfield, R. 1933, pp 68-69

Rapoport further points out that, in primitive societies

“There is no technical vocabulary, because there is little specialisation beyond age and sex-although some specialization in religious knowledge is occasionally found”

Rapoport, A. 1969, p2

Hence, such societies are known as 'preliterate', that kind of societies, everyone knows to build, everyone built for him, and help his neighbour to build. There are of course, prescribed ways of doing and not doing things.

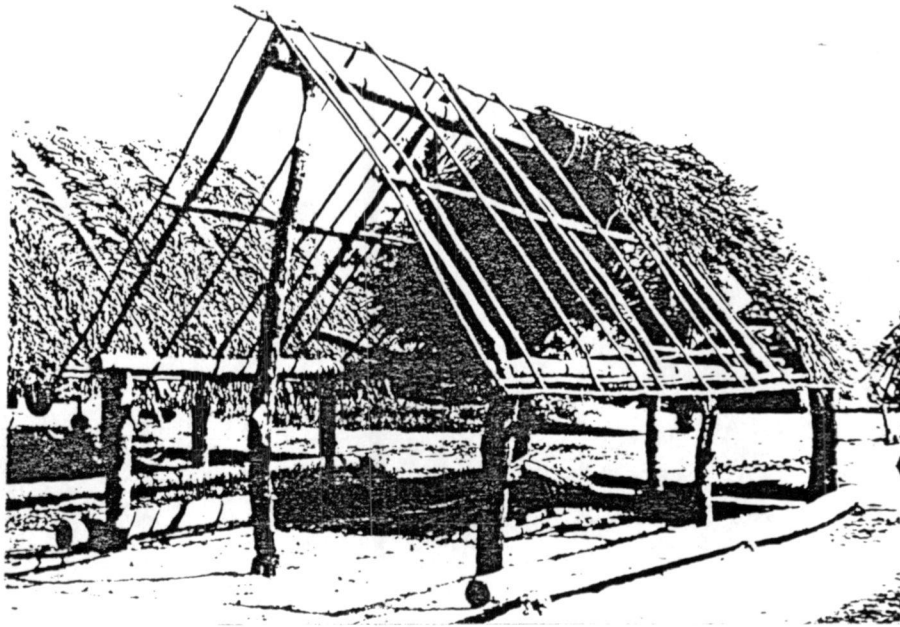


Fig.12: Frame work of a hut under construction. Steward Island, Solomond Islands. (Melanesia)



Fig.13: Betsimisaraca: View of a mountainous region with slopes cleared for cultivation and the village in the valley. (East coast Madagascar).

As a result some of the forms persist for very long periods of time and it is finally adjusted until it satisfies most of the cultural, social, contextual and maintenance requirements. As a result, in those societies, all the models are basically identical but properly fit its locality.

3.4.2. VERNACULAR DWELLINGS.

The term 'vernacular architecture' is one of the most commonly used, but complex term to synthesise. On one hand, the vernacular could be looked at as a product oriented viewpoint, on the other process-oriented viewpoint. However both served a useful understanding of the term.

Paul Oliver explains that,

“vernacular architecture comprises the dwellings and all other buildings of the people. Related to their environmental contexts and available resources, they are customarily owner or community-built, utilizing traditional technologies. All forms of vernacular architecture are built to meet specific needs, accommodating the values, economies and ways of living of the cultures that produce them”.

Oliver, P 1997

Which refers to what Oliver had described above; vernacular settlements cover a range of living patterns from tribal communal dwelling to urban spontaneous housing.

Amos Rapoport in his House form and Culture, (1969) further defined the term vernacular architecture. He did not define what

vernacular is, but he attempted to differentiate the vernacular dwellings by design process, which served further understanding of the term.

To him;

“vernacular design is one of model adjustment, with more individual variability than that of the primitive design”.

Rapoport, A. 1969, p5

He contended that vernacular has additive quality and thus more often open-ended. Rapoport further explains, when a tradesman builds a farmhouse for a peasant,

“they both know the type in question, the form or model, and even materials... what remains to be determined are specific family requirement, size and relation to site and micro climate”

Rapoport, A. 1969, p4



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Fig.14: Bezanozano: basic model of the dwelling remains same. (Madagascar)

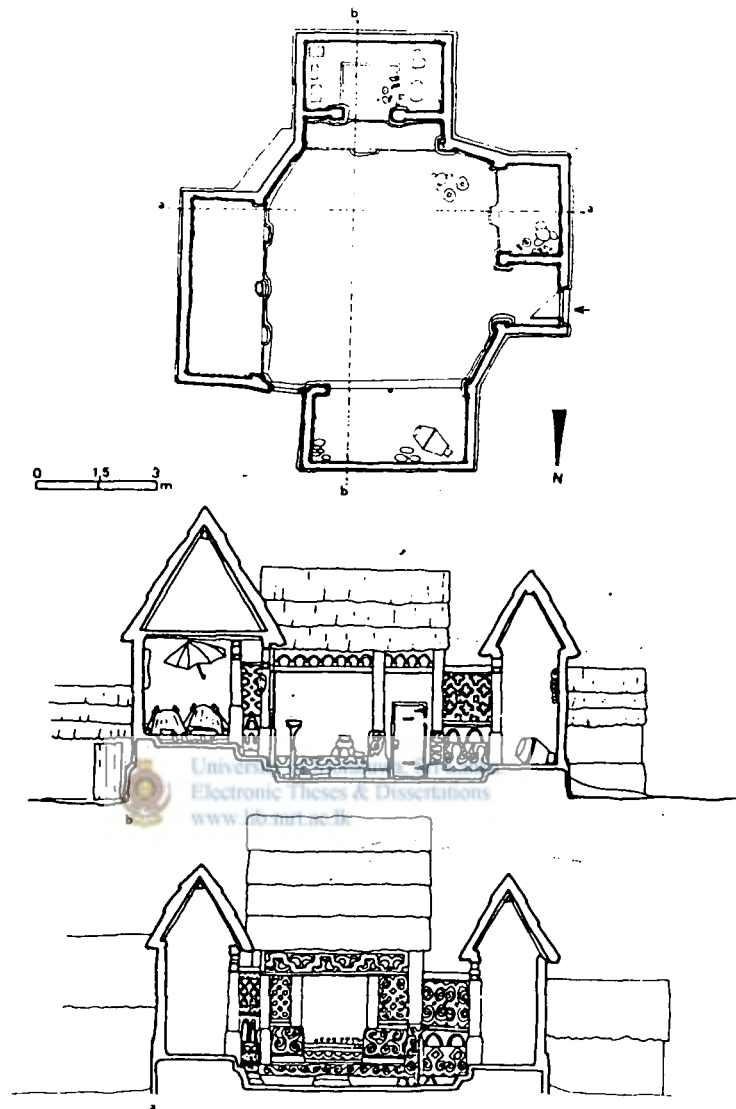


Fig. 15: Ashanti vernacular architecture: Traditional courtyard House. (Ghana)

Hence, the basic model is adapted and adjusted after agreeing on what is wanted. Therefore individual innovations and aspirations that are modified specimens but not the type or form.

We can describe therefore, that the each detail of vernacular dwellings, are understood to every man and woman, and each has deeper heartfelt meaning. Because each detail of modification is based on some person's experience and his sensitive craftsmanship.

3.4.2.1. PRE-INDUSTRIAL VERNACULAR.

Rapoport identified the 'vernacular dwellings' within the broader category of folk tradition. He further tried to differentiate 'pre-industrial vernacular' from 'modern vernacular'. Pre industrial vernacular appeared as a result of 'consequence evolution of primitive buildings'. Modern vernacular appeared as a result of the building produced by society, rather than intensions or abilities.



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However vernacular has its limits, though it fits to different situation. Does that means 'vernacular' act as a shared vocabulary of architecture? If so it is harder to avoid the question that, does the modern vernacular means today's spontaneous settlements?

If we compare and apply Rapoport's idea it is difficult to find a single relationship with today's spontaneous settlements; though ordinary people build them. Probably they are not wisely experienced or not properly suited to its functions, cultural or contextual needs as well.

To think intelligently about vernacular we must rid off the different term, which are commonly used instead of 'vernacular'. Hence such terms



as anonymous, indigenous, spontaneous and etc, should be re analysed and clarified. (Such terms have discussed in the beginning of this chapter)

In fact a large number of vernacular buildings have been constructed by unknown dwellers. But sufficient numbers of builders are known by name; and make the term 'anonymous' unsuitable.

Similarly the term 'indigenous' is often not suitable. It is quite clear that many vernacular built forms are influenced or even conditioned by contact with other societies. As a result the meaning of self-born or self-originated is not suitable. Therefore the term 'spontaneous' is also inappropriate.

Finally we can conclude the fact that, all of them have some relevance, but each is so single minded.



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To come to a deeper understanding of vernacular architecture, we must analyse the thread of continuity, which runs through all vernacular architecture, respect for tradition, craftsmanship, the use of locally materials and method. Climate, environments, culture, social conditions and attitudes as we have seen modify all these.

As a result none of these 'explanations' can stand on their own, without engaging all of the other.

3.4.2.2. MODERN VERNACULAR.

There is no argument that today the dwellings, which are built by non-professionals, are not similar to those of the vernacular dwellings of

the unselfconscious cultures. These houses are built by spontaneously and often illegal. Hence those dwellings have become a problem, rather than a model for solution. Urban squatter settlement remains a significant example for this.

However there is a modern folk idiom, which is not easy to define, although not exclusively one of type.

Rapoport explains;

“most of the folk architecture in contemporary America has been in terms of new types, the motel, the diner, drive-ins of all types all of which originated outside the design professions and have as it were come up from ‘below’”.

Rapoport, A. 1969, p7



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If we try to analyse the seeds of these styles, we can prove that they have originated from a humble folk idiom of architecture. But these forms are not presented the folk idiom any more, because they are refined with conscious aesthetic striving or stylistic interests.

Rapoport describes that,

“The forms themselves have been those currently fashionable and commonly used”

Rapoport, A. 1969, p 7

As a result, in modern folk idiom, the forms are designed for popular taste not by it. Therefore, it is impossible to create forms in the traditional manner, but it represents some of the characteristics of



vernacular, because it shows some commonly held values. This applied not only to many fields such as clothing, music, literature and etc.

In just the same sense think parallel about 'fashion industry' today. Yet it is also true that to some extent 'new styles' are originated or inspired from humble folk dresses. But these styles no more represent their folk character. In fact they are more refined and flavoured to specific updated passions of the high society. Some of these high styles became much more common, than others and they become a fashion resulting in everybody sharing the same. Thus it no longer becomes a fashion anymore. Bell-bottoms and denims are better examples to clarify this transformation.

Although we can understand this perception about 'clothing' is somewhat similar to the viewpoint on contemporary folk idiom of architecture.

One of the best examples is the trelliswork on the peasant's houses of Sri Lanka. Architect Geoffrey Bawa has picked this detail of trelliswork, he had refined or made it elegant and introduced through many of his early design works. (Eg. Ena de Silva's house, Benthota beach hotel) As a result 'trellis work' became popular and was interpreted as a fashion by every one. But nowadays, it is not yet appreciated as the latest fashion.



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Chapter Four

CHAPTER FOUR.

SRI LANKAN TRADITIONS FOR DOMESTIC VERNACULAR.

4.1. INTRODUCTION.

Sri Lanka has had a rich vernacular tradition. It is enriched by the strong philosophy of Buddhist life, for more than 2500 years. Buddhist philosophy and attitudes to life play an innumerable role in shaping the social and cultural traditions in the island.

Simplicity and impermanence nature of life generates a basic foundation for life. Hence Sri Lankan traditions are mainly based on the principles of care, gratitude, thrift and sharing resources.



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Hence, the organization of settlement patterns and dwellings express the way in which the local traditions link with everyday life and aspirations of dwellers

4.2. VERNACULAR SETTLEMENTS.

In Sri Lanka, there are very few planned settlements, but majority of settlements that has come in to being in non-professional processes. Thus it is undeniable that 95% of the Sri Lankan settlements could be categorized as belonging to the vernacular.

The Sri Lankan early rural settlements mainly display two distinct settlement patterns, which are recognized as, 'tank fed villages' and 'rain fed villages'. There are similar elements could be identified in both these settlements as unique components of Sri Lankan vernacular.

Ranjith Dayarathne describes, that

"in the absence of organized professional intervention in creation settlements, these consist of the extensions, divisions, modifications and consolidations of everyday places that came into being and existed on the basis of spontaneous activities of the ordinary people."

Dayarathne, R. 1999. P178

4.2.1. THE POORANAGAMAS AND JUNGLE VILLAGES.

These are the earliest jungle villages prevalent in the north central province. These are commonly known as "pooranagmmas" (meaning old villages). Such settlements are essential tank -fed. Hence they came into being placed where a tank to collect water, which exists in a higher elevation of the settlement space. The low and was preserved for agricultural purposes.

Each and every family in the village shared responsibilities to sustain the agriculture livelihood by ensuring the sustenance of tank. Thus the surrounded area (catchment area) was left as jungle space.



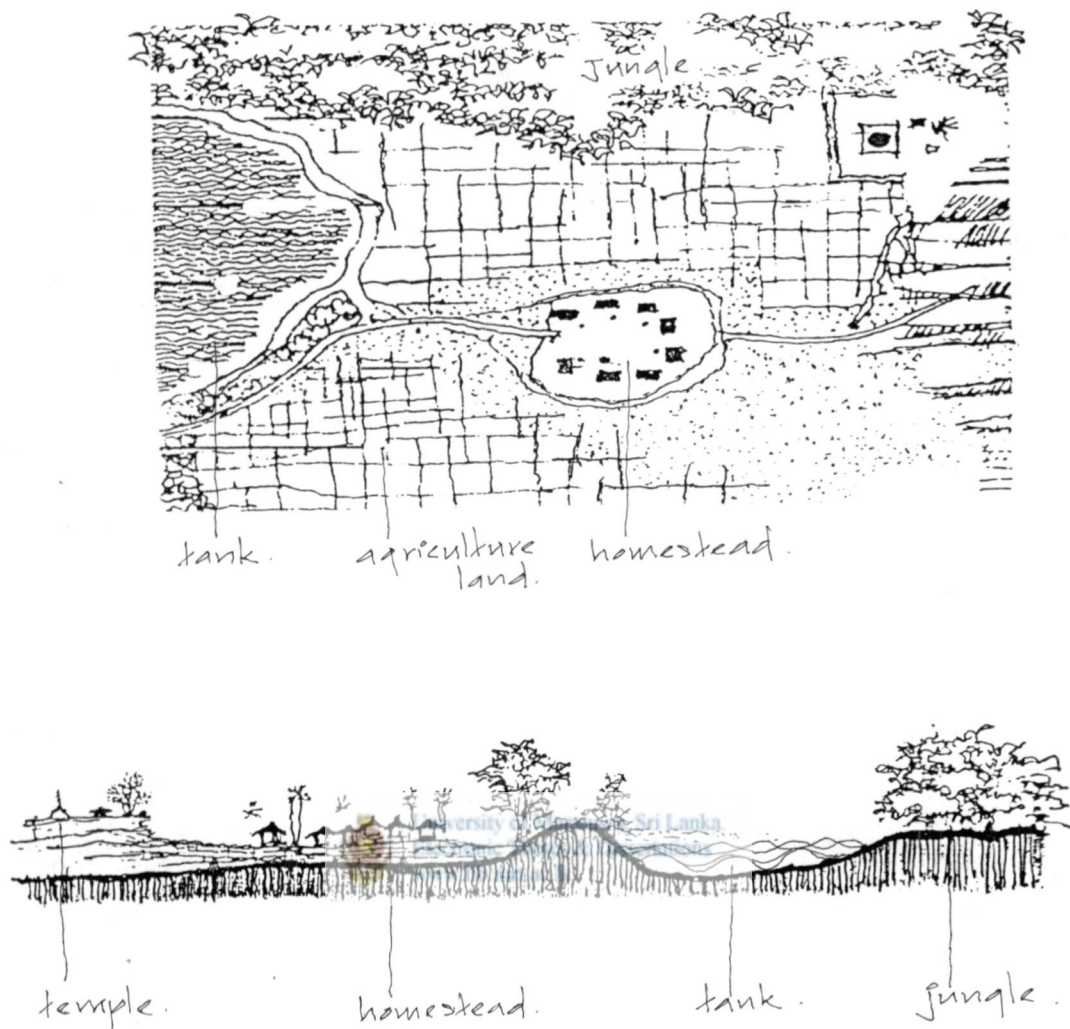


Fig. 16: A Tank-fed Settlement.

The in-between unproductive land was used to form a collective homestead. The individual dwellings were faced to the central area that formed a communal space, which enclosed and defended against the wilderness. The dwellings were small and consisted of a minimum inner enclosed space for privacy and a large outer verandah for all other purposes. There were grannies of commonly known as 'bihi' of each

family, constructed as a separate unit which symbolized their collective wealth. A fence surrounding the homestead protected it from the wild animals and other intruders.

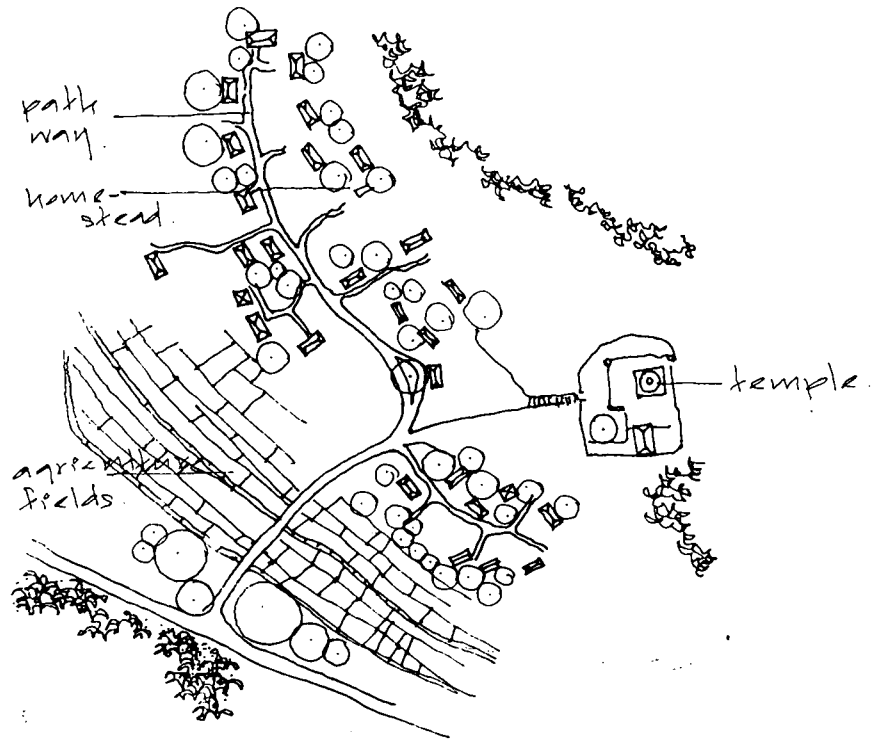


Fig. 17: The homestead: Granaries of each Family, symbolized the individual and collective wealth.

4.2.2. THE RAIN-FED RURAL SETTLEMENTS.

(Central hills and western wet Zone)

In these rain-fed rural settlements, the agricultural activities were relied upon the seasonal rains. Hence tank is not a visible feature in such settlements. According to the seasonal rains, a cyclic cultivation method is carried out and it maintains the richness of soil. The arrangement of dwelling space took a different shape in rain-fed settlements, but similar pattern could be identified in the collective settlement spaces.



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Fig.18: A Rein-fed settlement.

The dwellings of these settlements were constructed in the high ground, in a dispersed manner. The routes or paths proceeding from a central village square, commonly known as 'Gamgoda' The low and surround the built areas, left as agriculture land.

In these settlements, each dwelling surrounded by a cultivated land, known as 'watta' or 'home garden'. It provides fruits, vegetables, herbal plants, and timber for building purposes. The land beyond the agriculture fields was reserved for the forest. It was considered as the source of life of the settlement system, which also provided the fauna and flora and firewood for the dwellers.

In all settlements, of the Sri Lanka, the Buddhist temple is one of the significant features, which situates on a high land of the settlement.

4.3. SETTLEMENTS AND ITS AFFENITY WITH BUDDHISM.

Sri Lankan Buddhist philosophy and attitudes to life are strongly linked with settlement development. Hence in an ordinary Sri Lankan villages predominate consist of the components of 'weva', 'Daagoba' and 'ketha' (paddy fields). Dagoba, rises above all built elements of the settlement which symbolizes the strong religious presence and influence in the settlement space.



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Ranjith Dayarathne explains that, the Buddhism is both as a religion and philosophy.

"Its central doctrine is to enable the layman to realize the nature of life as being constituted of suffering or 'dukka' and to cultivate a way of life and practices that will make it possible to quire the status devoid of such suffering 'Nirvana'."

Dayarathne, R. 1999,p177

Ananda Coomaraswamy says that 'nirvana' is to be obtained,

"By freeing the mind from all attachment and desire"

Coomaraswamy, A. 1979, p40

In such a way, Buddhism presents a number of concepts that useful the laymen to achieve in to a practice of balance living. In the wards of

Buddha, the laymen are expected to avoid both extremes of asceticism and self – torture. He is expected to follow ‘a middle way’ by performing,

"good actions without regard to reward and without thought of an I or a My"

Coomaraswamy, A. 1979, p40

Sinhalese culture, which derived from ‘Buddhism’, provides the peasant, the wisdom of life. It enriches their values and beliefs, in fact guides their actions. As a result the settlements and dwellings are conceived in the vernacular process, express the Buddhist concepts of life.

The settlement pattern and way of life are organized in such a way by respecting flora and fauna, animal life and vegetation. Though the life is considered as sacred by the peasant, he acts or dwells on it with utmost care and respect. Even the little waste he produces was reused as a fertility to nourish the ground.

Indeed the land and many other resources were shared with each other and also preserved for the future generation.

4.4. TRADITIONS FOR DOMESTIC VERNACULAR.

In the traditional system, the house or the shelter was not an isolated unit but it was a component that incorporated with the survival and performance of the settlement.

The traditional shelter has existed in Sri Lanka for more than 2000 years, which occupies a strong affinity with Buddhism. Hence tradition for peasant’s dwellings are mainly based on the concepts of simplicity.

peasant's dwellings are mainly based on the concepts of simplicity, modesty and impermanent nature of life.

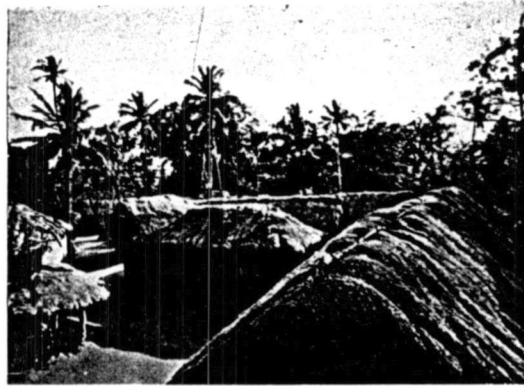


Fig.19: Simple, peasant's dwellings.

As a result, ordinary dwellings were part and parcel of nature, that
“ the materials were borrowed from the nature and returned
to the nature”

De Silva, N. 1990, p2



Fig.20: simple construction methods and local materials
symbolize the impermanent nature of life.

But the religious buildings and the buildings of rulers were considered as permanent and therefore more sophisticated and elaborate. The construction of the peasant's dwellings in a traditional form was related with a series of rituals and taboo. Dwellers believe that the performance of such habits bring prosperity and blessings for occupants by all gods and deities.

4.5. CONSTRUCTION OF DWELLINGS.

The traditional concept was to,

“live in and around the open areas of the house and not within the enclosed compartments of the house and it was the most suitable solution for Sri Lankan climatic conditions”.

De Silva, N. 1990, p2



Fig.21: Peasant house – locally available materials of jungle poles and cadjan, are used for construction.

Hence, traditional vernacular dwellings were built in this nature. The practical solutions, which were used in such dwellings made them properly suited to its micro and macro environments.

The common materials of earth, jungle poles and thatch are selected from the locality for construction of such dwellings. In fact, these are low cost shelters, because commonly available materials, simple technologies, community labor were utilized for construction. The wattle and daub construction was the most popularly used in the traditional system.



Fig.22: Interior of a Cadjan house.
North of Anuradhapura.

- Roof - Roof was considered as a special feature, because it had to withstand heavy rain and wind in the monsoon and the hot sun throughout the year. The breathing nature of the roofs and the high insulating capacity of the covering materials controlled the heat in inner apartments.

Verandah - The small windows of inner rooms and the verandahs with long eaves kept the hot sun away. The gap between the wall and the roof provided proper ventilation and diffused light in to the rooms.

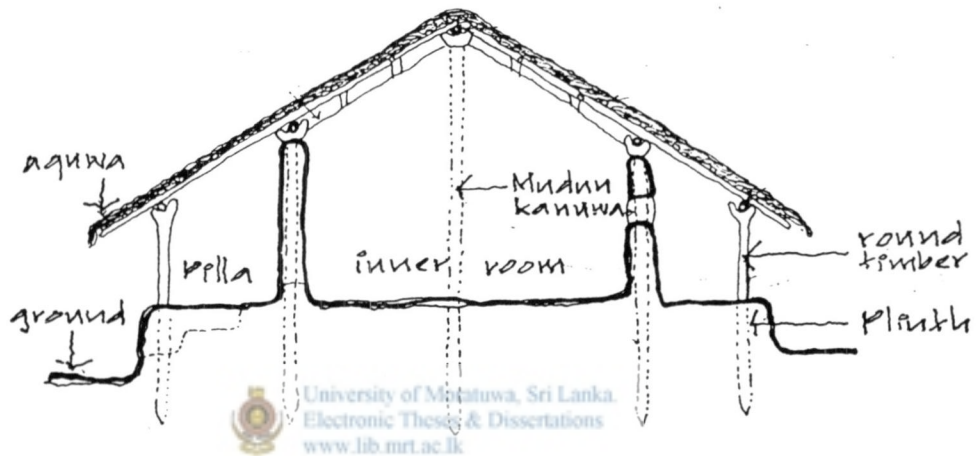


Fig.23: Detail section of a peasant house.

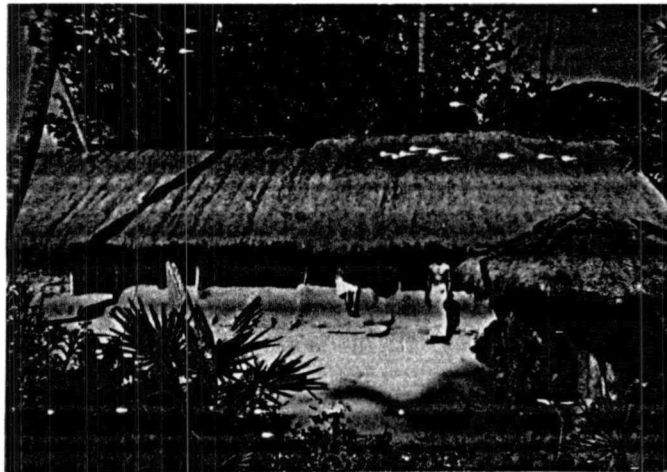


Fig.24: The high plinth of a peasant house.

Plinth - The high plinth or 'pila' prevented the rising dampness during rainy days, also prevented from coming vermin, ants, and reptiles.

Hence dwellings were designed in such a way that they were cool and comfortable to live in this hot climatic region.

Nimal de Silva describes that,

“the maintenance of the shelter by applying cow dung on the floor and walls, something white washing, thatching the roof and cleaning the house and etc, were aimed for the festivals, hence the house was well maintained”.

De Silva, N. 1990, p2



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4.6. A TYPOLOGY OF SRI LANKAN DOMESTIC VERNACULAR.

The different type of the dwellings of the traditional Sinhalese folk could be broadly categorized as follows.

- 1: Simple peasant's dwellings
(primary level- without a courtyard)
- 2: Kandyan type peasant's dwellings.
(secondary level- with a courtyard)

4.6.1. SIMPLE PEASANTS DWELLINGS.

Ananda Coomaraswamy describes that, in traditional societies,

“the great simplicity of ordinary life must always be kept in mind.

The house was a one-storied timber and mud wall building with thatched roof”.

Coomaraswamy, A.1979, p31

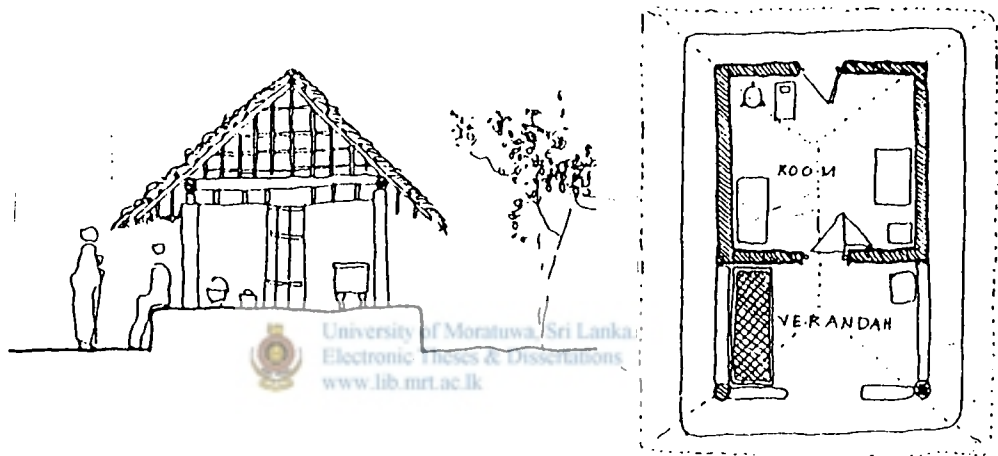


Fig.25: Simple peasant's dwelling.

The earliest simplest peasant's dwelling is a single roomed house, with and an open verandah in front. The house was built on a raised platform where in the front verandah it served as a pila that transformed to a sitting platform. Front verandah utilized as a public area where entertained the visitors and deliberated various ceremonies. At night it was the sleeping area of the master of the house and grown mail children.

A small door faced to the verandah provided the access to the inner room. For the purpose of acquiring privacy, the room was rather dark, having unglazed small windows or apertures. Cooking, sleeping of

females and small children and other private activities were take place in the inner room.

In later periods, there were several types of folk dwellings, which evolved out of this simple form. Some of them contained one room with two verandahs, while other preferred two rooms with two verandahs at front and rear.

In fact front verandah is predominantly utilized as the public realm, where the men's domain of the dwelling. The rear or the back verandah is devoted for food preparation and other related functions for cooking.

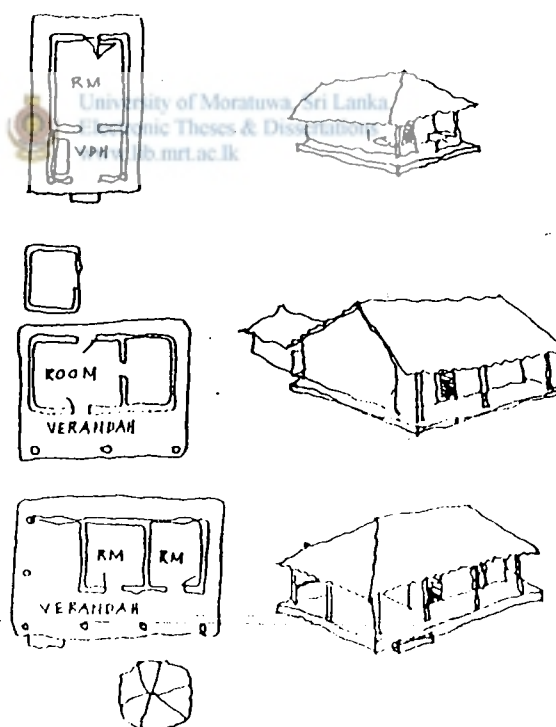


Fig.26: Some typical verandahs of traditional Vernacular dwellings

4.6.2. KANDYAN TYPE PEASANTS DWELLINGS.

At the Kandyan type, the dwellings became more permanent in construction and decorative in its refinement. The organization of spaces became rather complex, indeed number of rooms arranged about an inner square, within which, again was a square yard (courtyard) open to the sky. It was the focal point of the dwelling.

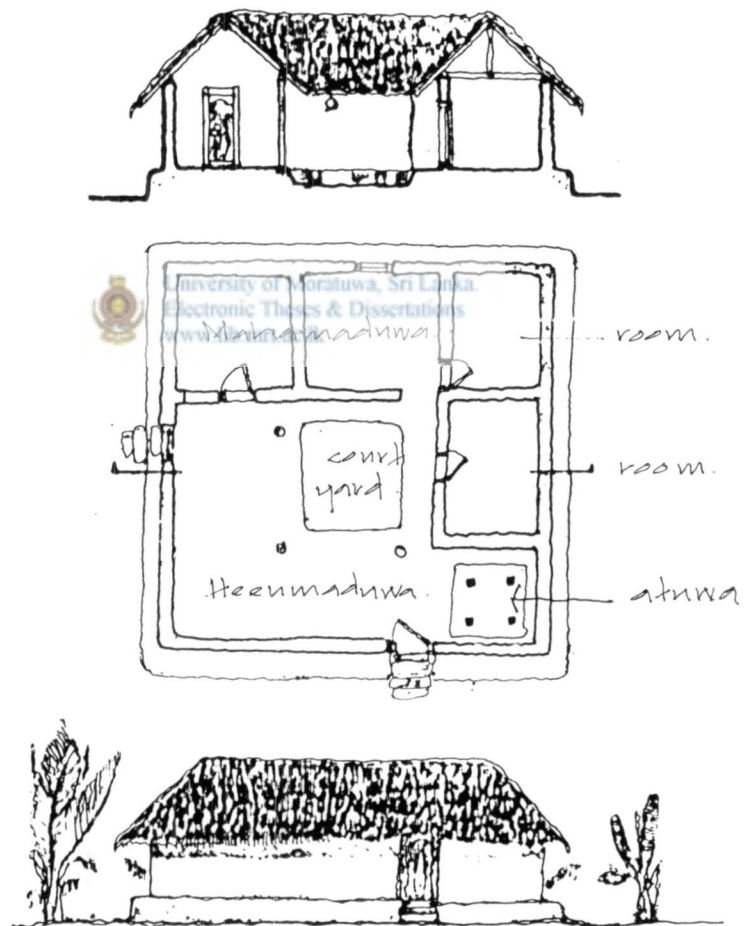


Fig.27: Traditional house- Kandyan farmers.

Vijitha Basnayake describes that, such

“inward looking houses were mostly found in the hill country with one or more courtyards. The rooms were located and entered through the verandah, that was found around courtyard”.

Basnayake, V. 1978, p.23.

They performed all the domestic activities within an enclosed space. Part of the verandah is called ‘mahamaduwa’, and the other ‘heenmaduwa’. Mahamaduwa performs the major living space, where mostly visitors and relatives are entertained.

Heenmaduwa was used for activities such as food preparation and women’s living. It was also used as a dining and sleeping area during the night. The ‘atuwa’ or the paddy storage was placed in the heenmaduwa, while displaying their wealth. One room of the house left as a kitchen, but some instances their was a separate structure for kitchen.



Fig.28: Kandyan, peasant’s dwelling :
with a separate structure for kitchen.

“The house could be enlarged by the addition of other courtyard surrounded by their own set of rooms, and in this way there often grew up quite a larger house consisting of several associated but independent parts, occupied by the families of near relations or of married sons or daughters”.

Coomaraswamy, A. 1979, p 62

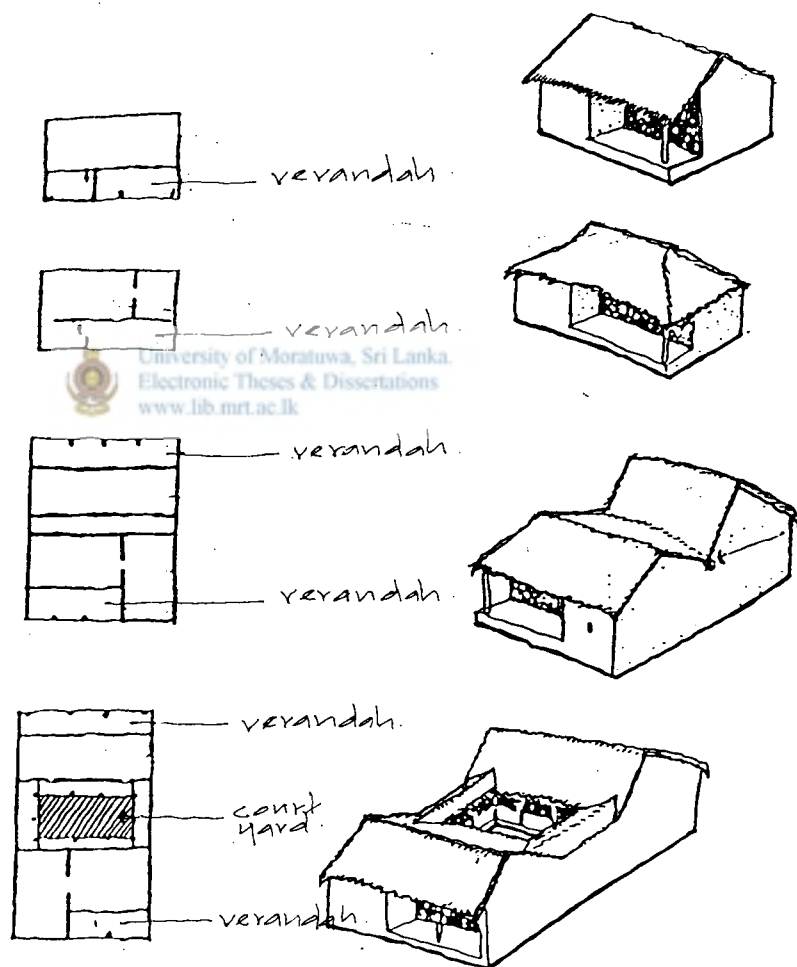


Fig.29: development of the traditional courtyard.

Source: Devos, A. SLIA. Journal. No. 100

Indeed this is the beginning of extended family or joint family system.

For such dwellings the wattle and daub construction was also used with varieties of systems as, sun baked bricks (moda gadol), mud walls (tappa bammba), rubble packed mud walls (ketagal bitti) and laterite block walls (cabok) walls left as fareface or finished with a coat for refinement of lime.

Cadjan, straw and burnt clay tiles are used for roofing to suite availability of materials in the locality and the social standings of the occupants. Comparatively large windows with timber frames and details are emphasized the better taste and refinement of the craftsmanship. Terra-cotta tiles were made from burnt earth as a flooring material.

Though the dwellings became a complex organized body of work, yet the simplicity and modesty of materials can be identified.

4.5. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF SRI LANKAN DOMESTIC VERNACULAR.

While looking at the vernacular forms in general terms, as 'mere artifacts' tells us very little, it may be interest to view them in new profound way.

Indeed the nature or essence of such forms represent the shared vision of society, which more specific to their culture, in fact able to

capture their hopes and dreams, containing special local ways of doing things.

The followings are some of the important principles, which affect on the nature of domestic vernacular.

1. Identification of center and openness.
2. Harmony with nature.
3. Articulation of transition space.
4. The sense of human scale.
5. The level of permanence and sophistication.

These are investigated in order to trace the abstract qualities and characters of peasant's dwellings, which show a profound interest in them.



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4.5.1. IDENTIFICATION OF CENTER AND OPEN NESS.

The traditional way of living pattern strongly related with the concept of live 'in and around out doors'. Thus the open space acquired a central position at formation of individual dwellings and their gathering as a cluster.

As I explained before, in Sri Lankan rural settlements, the peasant's dwellings were arranged by leaving an open space at center. This central space is commonly known as 'Gamgoda' which, more often recognized as living or communal space in the village where the granaries (storage space) were built up.

The central space of the individual dwellings, were linked up with the series of rituals or mythical and religious beliefs, that brought blessings to the occupants.

In simple Kandyan peasants dwellings were formed around a small open courtyard that commonly known as the 'medamidula'. The idea of articulation such space in the center is flavored with customs and religious beliefs of sacred cosmos of 'mandala'.

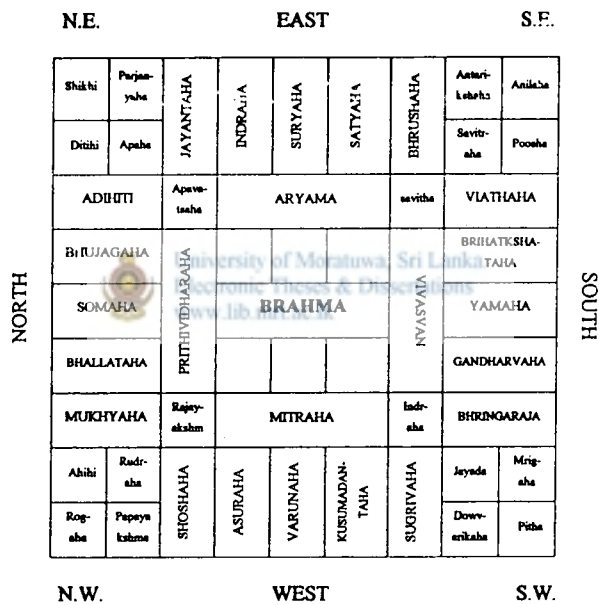


Fig.30: The square frame 'mandala'.

The center is called as 'the invisible center of Brahma' which identified as the meeting point of all centrifugal and centripetal energies of land. It left bare open to sky, while opening the dwelling for natural flows of air and light.



Indeed courtyard symbolized the concentrated communal space, which sheared between family members and guests, by the way providing a strong identification of center and sense of openness.

4.5.2. HARMONY WITH NATURE.

In creating the domestic vernacular forms, attitudes towards nature and site can be identified as important aspects. Predominantly the Buddhist way of life helped peasants to cultivate 'the attitudes of harmony with nature, rather than conflict or conquest'.

Thus attitudes towards nature could be identified as 'symbiotic'. Here,

"man and nature are in a state of balance, and man regard himself as responsible to god for nature and earth and as a steward and custodian of nature".

Rapoport, A. 1969, p75

In fact, the vernacular dwellings, treated with great care and sensitivity contributed to their locality. Thus it is inevitable to achieve a proper balance or harmony between dwellings and their, biophysical environment. Indeed the way such forms fit in well with the nature expresses this attitude through choice of siting, materials and spatial configuration.

Dwellings were formed in such a way that, they consisted of minimal enclosure space for privacy, by the way majority of public or communal spaces open out to the landscape or nature.

Open out verandahs with a raised plinth, defines the building edges, by raising it from the rest of the surrounded ground. It can be seen that such outward verandahs often provide panoramas of surrounding landscape that generates a sense of openness.

The use of locality available materials, their colours and textures, that all related to the landscape, in fact dwellings were part and parcel of nature.

4.5.3. ARTICULATION OF TRANSITION SPACE.

‘Transition space’ convey’s the process of spatial experience from one state of mind to another. Thus it can be identified as a dynamic spatial field, which able to flow freely in-between a certain inner and outer realms.

In fact an intermediate space is formed by stretching inside space towards the out side and at the same time, out side space penetrates to the boarder by creating an area of transition.

In traditional domestic forms the outer verandah has being extended as a transition space, that links the inner private realm, with the outer public realm. It can be identified as an in between zone, neither fully opens out to the landscape or totally encloses from the landscape.

In fact front verandah acts as a breathing space for visitors, at the same time it symbolizes a buffer zone that limits the admission to inner compartments.

Such intermediate zone in the traditional Sri Lankan dwellings manifest fluidity between outer openness and inner enclosure thus creating a strong spatial experience of arrival by transforming the mind set from one realm to another.

4.5.4. THE SENSE OF HUMAN SCALE.

‘Scale’ is a relative term that deals with particular dimensions of an object in relation to another.

Hassan Fathy describes, that

“man is the center of architecture and also the measure, because he is the part of nature, who sees and feels the forces of nature, when built forms are introduced with the human scale, always there is a spirituality”.

Fathy, H. 1973 , p22



Fig.31: A peasant's dwelling. : Closely related to the human scale.

The traditional dwellings can be identified as products of entire community that the dwellers so much involved in its construction and constant maintenance. Thus forms are built in such a way that it can be manageable by occupants with reachable and tangible characteristics. Indeed the dwellings are closely related to the human scale.

Thus most of such dwellings provides a harmonious proportions in terms of length, width and heights in relation with human scale. In fact dwellings were friendly and familiar in its nature, at the same time provides a down to earth character.

4.5.5. THE LEVEL OF PERMANENCE AND SOPHISTICATION.

The traditional dwellings demonstrate the Buddhist attitudes, underlying the building practice. The nature of materials and the level of refinement of dwellings could be identified as important factors that demonstrate the Buddhist views of 'simplicity and impermanent nature of life'.

The materials required for construction earth, grass, thatch, timber and etc. which borrowed from the nature, and simple technologies utilized to put it together. In fact most of the time raw materials did not undergo complex processes of transformation. Thus they conserved the original nature of the materials, conceiving the modesty in construction.

The use of natural textures and colours of finishes and less sophisticated refinement of elements demonstrate the charm and vitality of the dwellings.

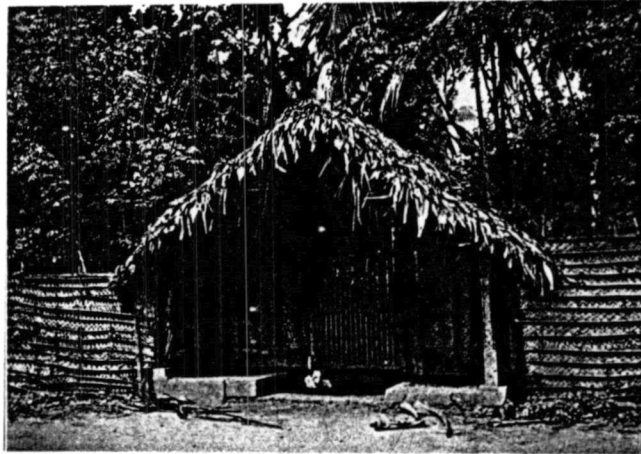


Fig.32: Gateway in Jafna. - Locally available simple range of materials were utilized.



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In such a way, the dwellings were well accepted the reality or the harshness of climate. 'The process of decaying' was accepted as a fundamental fact by dwellers, that ultimately every human being, flora and fauna and physical thing have to face.

4.6. THE ARCHITECTURAL TRADITION DURING THE COLONIAL OCCUPATION.

Sri Lanka has had a rich indigenous architectural tradition fashion through out a long civilized history, right up to the beginning of the colonial times. Gradually national, regional and individual traditions of the country had to give way to the dominant western civilization.

It was the Portuguese, the first invaders, who set foot on the island as early as year 1505. Their main area of interest was in-terms of consolidating and developing the trade. Thus unless a few buildings at Colombo, Portuguese does not make an enduring affect, on Sri Lankan indigenous architectural tradition.

In comparison to Portuguese, The Dutch left a more substantial legacy in architecture.

“The maritime zone under their control, slowly but steadily yield to the pressure of the colonial influences. New religious beliefs and customs were introduced along with newer forms of culture, new built forms to meet the requirements and needs both the colonial masters and locals were introduced”.

Silva, K. M. De. 1981, p62



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4.6.1. THE DUTCH INFLUENCED DOMESTIC VERNACULAR.

It can be noticed that the Dutch were the first invaders, who did an enduring effect on indigenous architectural tradition. Instead of replanting, the Dutch adapted and transformed their own architecture, to harmonize with the indigenous way of buildings, with local material and craftsmanship.

“In fact that they all built by local craftsmen is demonstrated by the proportions of these buildings in-terms of length, width and height is similar to the system of measurement use in the village”.

De. Vos, A. 1982, p24

It can be noticed that the Dutch left a lasting impression on specially the domestic architecture of Sri Lanka. In fact many of Dutch features were inspired and adapted by peasants for their dwellings.

In traditional way, customs and beliefs were act as some of major components that governed the house form. But in this period it is evident that the house form was largely influenced by Dutch customs, since the positioning and configuration of form cannot be explained by the traditional astrological way.

The roofs built by the Dutch who were adapted by peasants were more steeply pitched to heighten the elevation. At the same time, larger windows, doors and taller columns were incorporated to the simple vernacular dwellings which they became complex organism more permanent in construction.

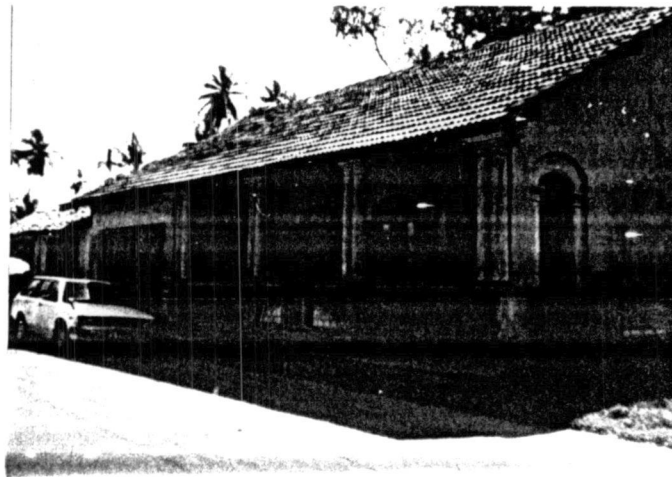


Fig.33: Dutch influenced dwelling - dwellings became more permanent in construction.

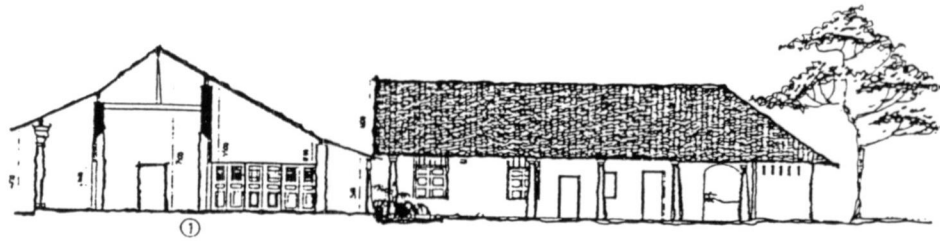


Fig.34: typical Dutch influenced house.
Larger doors, windows and taller
columns were incorporated to the dwellings.

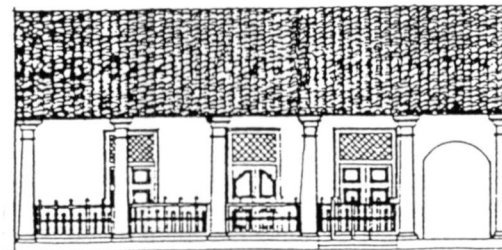
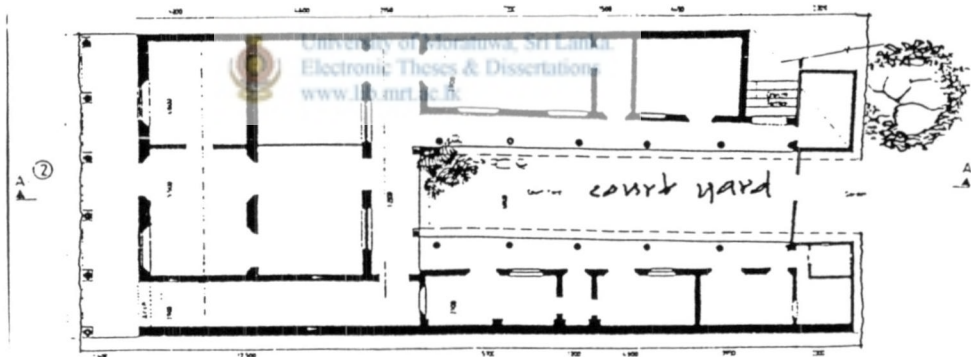


Fig.34: A typical Dutch house.

In comparison to traditional indigenous dwellings, more spatial segregation or verity of spaces could be identified in Dutch influenced vernacular dwellings. The living and the dining spaces were new features that were adapted from original Dutch dwellings. Unlike the traditional way, the main living areas moved in-doors due to the need for privacy and security thus resulting in larger doors and windows. Instead of narrow traditional verandah, a much larger verandah could be identified, with timber railings, while ensuring the privacy.

In such a way Dutch influenced vernacular architecture could be identified as a more meaningful hybrids of indigenous and imported types.

But, British were the most powerful who displaced the Dutch at the end of the 18th century and finally extended their rule over the whole island. It made a drastic change in every sphere of society. British adapted their western concepts and forms directly to the Sri Lankan context, which had the effect of loosing our interest in traditional architecture.

In fact it symbolizes a total disregard or a break in our own history or local vernacular traditions.

“It is therefore clear that the architecture of the Dutch in Sri Lanka was a more successful adaptation of European models to the requirements of a warm climate (than that of the British during their role in Sri Lanka) and influenced by local lifestyles, local craftsmanship thus became traditional”.

De Vos, A. 1982, p20



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Chapter Five

CHAPTER FIVE.

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE VERNACULAR IN CONTEMPORARY FORMAL ARCHITECTURE OF SRI LANKA.

5.1. INTRODUCTION.

We could recognize our tradition as a heritage. Hence the vernacular could be seen as a one source of our tradition, helps us, to create future developments of architecture. Investigating these traditional vernaculars for today's architecture is more complicated than is usually thought. Hence an architect should react wisely to the vernacular. Although he needs to decide which past principals are still appropriate for today's reality, and how best to incorporate these with contemporary requirements with current technology. More or less the aim is at innovation, rather than duplication for creating a meaningful contemporary architectural idiom.

A number of resent regionalist works in different parts of the world, have been strikingly successful in this respect. This chapter attempts to show the process of learning from vernacular, to produce meaningful Innovations.

As Charles Correa says,


“old architecture, specially the vernacular has much to teach us, it always develops a topology of fundamentals common sense”

Correa, C.1987, p 14

It is hoped that, architects could learn from principals and precedents of vernaculars, therefore, they could transform and reinterpret the essence in more creative and thoughtful manner.

5.2. AN EXPERIMENT IN MODERN REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE.

In traditional vernacular architecture, the logic of construction was easily understood to everyone. In fact the architecture directly represented the method of construction employed and the materials used. At the same time they represented the technical and significant norms which related to building habits

However the  evaluation of material science tend to change these 'transparent' technologies and norms. Quality of work is no more judged by the skill and craftsmanship of construction but more by the skill of installation and workmanship. Materials are no more, close to people's hand. Hence figuration in architecture become less to do with a response to material.

This rapid transformation caused to produce the issue of homogenization that modern building technologies and materials appeared to produce. As a result many architectural critics debated the issue of self, regional and national identities as well as cultural continuity in architecture

In the late 20th century, many architects in the west developed a new approach to architecture. They sought out ways to enrich their buildings to give them a more personal and regional feeling. Hence international architecture have a tendency to develop regional characteristics.

It is in this context, that we have identified the phenomenon of 'the modern use of the tradition' by many leading Asian architects. This challenge was embraced by a few individual architects who are known as the 'pioneers' of modern architecture in Sri Lanka.

5.2.1. PIONEERS OF MODERN REGIONALISM.

Each of these architects tried to address the physical and technological climate of the period, yet made concerted efforts to incorporate local building traditions. The early works of these pioneers however show a strong affinity to modern movement. Also they reflect western concepts of space and new technology at the time.

It is said that recognition of the vernacular to be a representative architecture was first proposed by an Englishman, Andrew Boyd in the 1930's. The first Sri Lankan to be inspired by his work was Minnett de Silva. She has introduced an innovative approach in modernizing the built tradition in Sri Lanka. Many of her innovations have been made to synthesis indigenous tradition, with architecture designed for a modern way of living.

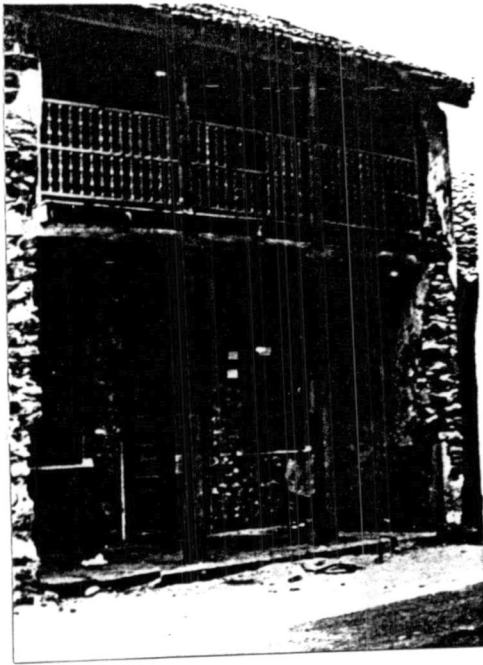


Fig.36: House by Andrew Boyd.
At West coast, Sri Lanka.



Fig.37: Ena de Silva's house, Colombo,
by Minnett de Silva.

On Minnett's invitation came Ulrik Plesner, a Danish architecture who later joined Geoffrey Bawa to continue the vernacular trend. These four architects are known as pioneers of modern Architecture in Sri Lanka,

due to their pioneering efforts in different ways to revive a truly Sri Lanka architecture. Their experimental works, provided a strong base in establishing an ongoing experiments in modern regional architecture

5.3. A TYPOLOGY OF INTERPRETATIONS OF THE VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE.

The idea of 'regionalism' and a growing public awareness of a rich vernacular tradition in Sri Lanka have led to a new trend in contemporary formal architecture. As a result, many leading architects have been increasingly interested in the phenomena of 'the contemporary use of the vernacular'.

The strong and meaningful identification with local condition, together with the introduction of the contemporary approaches to plan configuration, spatial relationship and visual complexity has provided the basic in modernizing tradition.

In fact the recent out standing works of a number of architects provide a positive response in generating innovative and visually exciting solutions. These works demonstrate several ways of dealing with the vernacular and the notion of tradition.

“ It remains critical in understanding how an architecture, that aspires to evoke in various manifestations operate in these societies”.

William, S. W. L. ; Beng, T. H. 1998, p 23

These works could be broadly categorized under four approaches.

Approach 1 : **Regenerating the traditional vernacular.**

Approach 2 : **Reinventing the tradition.**

(Adapting elements of traditional vernacular form)

2. a : A strong affinity to post modernism.

2. b : A strong affinity to vernacular.

Approach 3 : **Extending the tradition.**

(Transform the vernacular characters in a modified manner)



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Approach 4 : **Reinterpreting the tradition.**

(The use of contemplative essence of vernacular for contemporary architectural idioms)

After; William, S. W. M.; Tan, B. H. 1998

5.4. APPROACH 1 :REGENERATING THE TRADITIONAL VERNACULAR.

In Sri Lanka, the impact of present day mass tourism has brought a major socio cultural influence for today societies. To attract the increasing number of tourists, people often use vernacular heritage or semi-replicas of traditional forms and elements. Holiday resorts, motels and cabanas are

some of the building types that are commonly developed to fulfill this need.



Fig.38: Traditional forms and elements use to attract tourists.

In many parts of Sri Lanka, the standard hotels which provides tourist amenities are one of the most prominent symbols of this influence. Because of the commercialized use of traditional forms caused to degrade the true meaning of cultural heritage.

David Harvey has critiqued these mere imitations of traditional architecture as being,

“a state of such near perfect replication that the different between the original and the copy becomes almost impossible to spot... with modern building materials it is possible to replicate ancient buildings with such exactitude that an authenticity or origins can be put in to doubt”.

Harvey, D. 1992, p289



Fig.39: Tourist resort : Traditional forms are Utilized to attract tourists : Mexico.

In many parts of Sri Lanka, these works borrow their contents from fruitful sources of traditional architecture. However, there fine craftsmanship and less representation of luxury finishes, are based on a traditional approach. But they are distinguished from kitsch. On the one

hand they display the wisdom of traditional craft, on the other, they genuinely reinvigorate (encourage) the traditional vernacular.

As a result of these admiration's for the vernacular, has resulted in the preservation of an architectural language which evoke the vernacular.



Fig.40: Traditional vernacular forms and materials used for tourists attraction: Mexico.



Fig.41: The Novotel Beng is an interesting addition to the lower star category of resort architecture.

5.5. APPROACH 2 : REINVENTING THE TRADITION.

Many practitioners commonly used this approach, based on using elements of the past and combining them in new ways.

Hobsbawm defines the term ‘invented tradition’ as taken to mean,

“a set of practices, normally governed by overtly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past”.

Hobsbawm, E. 1983, p1

Tradition, is not static or a set of fixed attributes. It is a series of layers transformed over time. Hence architectural forms have never remained stagnant as a ‘pure’ cultural product.

However throughout the history there has been a transformation in architectural tradition. Some traditions were sustained for a long period of time. Some indigenous traditions are always contested with foreign forms (external forces) and become a potential model for generating even more transformation.

In Sri Lanka the socio economic and cultural exchange of European in 19th century, resulted in the ‘exposure’ of reinvented tradition. Certain types of foreign architecture mixed with the local vernacular types, and some new forms have eventually gained acceptance.

The Dutch influence of vernacular forms are good examples which synthesize the way that the alien Dutch forms were adapted and incorporated to local context.

5.5.1. APPROACH . 2a : A STRONG AFFINITY TO POST MODERNISM.

KARUNARATHNE HOUSE. (CASE STUDY 1)

5.5.1.1. INTRODUCTION.

Much of the Minnett de Silva's works has been based on finding workable synthesis of traditional and modern architecture .In one of her explanations, she describes her flair and interest of local art and crafts that,

“my parents had kept our roots intact for my generation, but I now had to interpret this in architecture. I decided to live in Kandy, it being the center of Ceylon and the heart of our national tradition.

Once that decision was taken, I went back to the craftsman I had known since my childhood days. Once more I got to know the dancers, the ‘Dumbara’ mat weavers, in fact all the artisans in the different crafts and decided to introduce their work in to contemporary modern art to establish, the principal of all artist-craftsman being involved with architecture”.

De Silva, M.; Devos, A. Sirivardana, S. 1999, p125

The contour hugging split level house in Kandy, built in 1951, which is a good example for her early work.

The site is on one of the southern hills around the town of Kandy. It slopes from the north and the house seems to be carved out of the hillside. The southern flat court that over looking the town provides a beautiful panoramic view of the town, the Kandy Lake and the surrounding hill. The house is places on the Southern slope, as a narrow strip running from west to east.



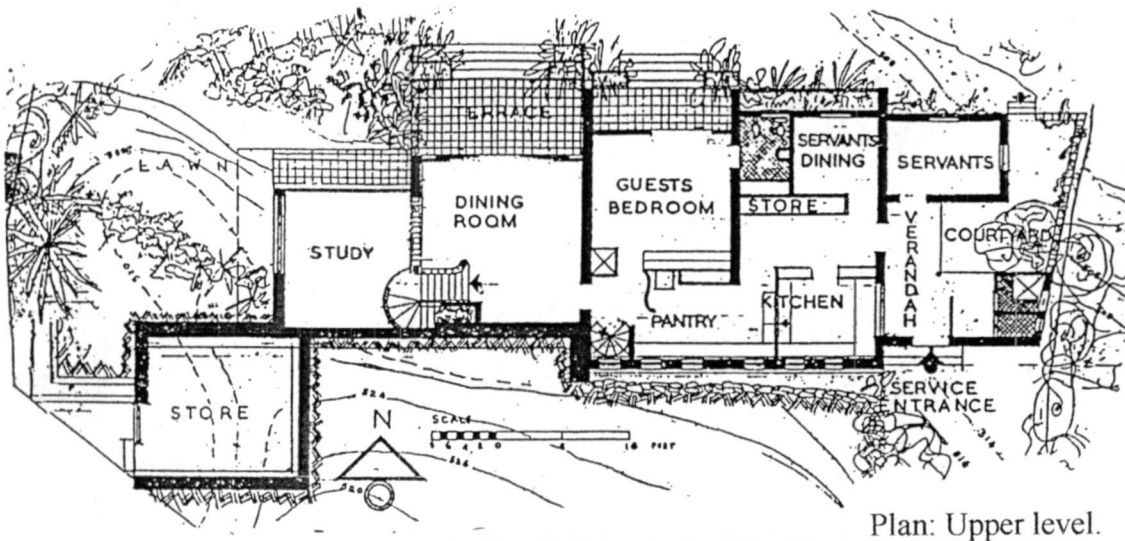
Fig.42: Karunaratne House; 1947-57.

The contour hugging split level house in Kandy.

5.5.1.2. THE ARCHITECTURAL COMPOSITION AND THE ASPECTS OF TRADITION.

The house was designed for a contemporary Buddhist family, in satisfying their social and cultural needs. Religious functions, parties are

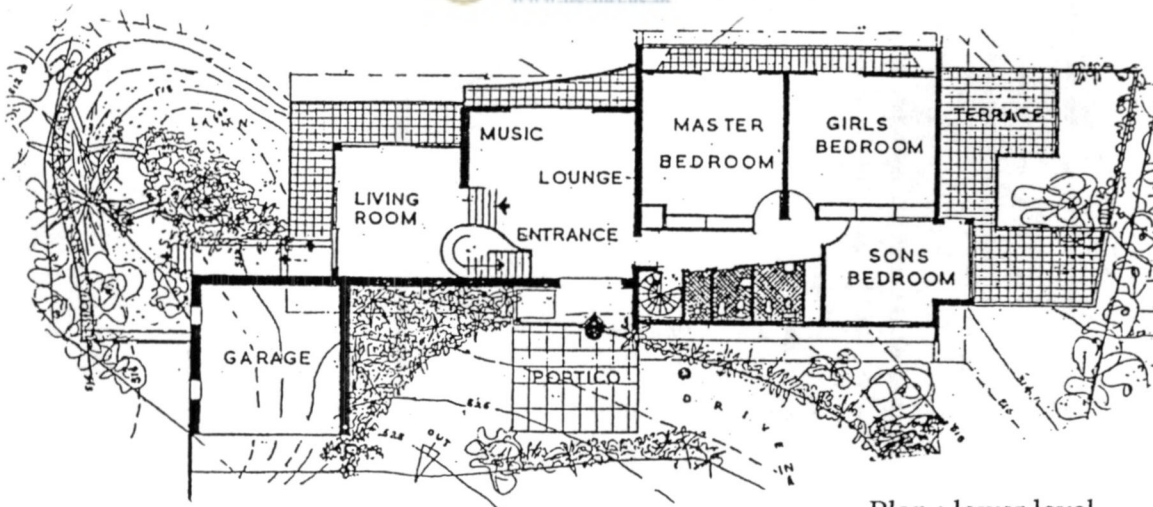
frequent in the house, always there are number of relatives present. In fact the house was designed in such a way that the space within the house can be expandable.



Plan: Upper level.



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Plan : lower level.

Fig.43: Karunaratne house; plan configuration.

Clear spatial segregation could be identified.

The configuration of plan and spatial relationships of the house predominantly express an affinity with the strong attitudes of modern lifestyle. Unlike the traditional concept of 'live in and around open spaces', here the living apartments are more introverted in nature and acquired more privacy.

The living room is the main focus of the house, which overlooks the entrance lounge from a slightly higher level. When the glass sliding doors of the entrance lounge slide back, the living room and entrance lounge become a single entity, and creates a front verandah for the living room. Both living and entrance lounge merge into the stair well and it merges in to the study, which at a half landing level. Staircase leads in to the dining room and dining terrace.

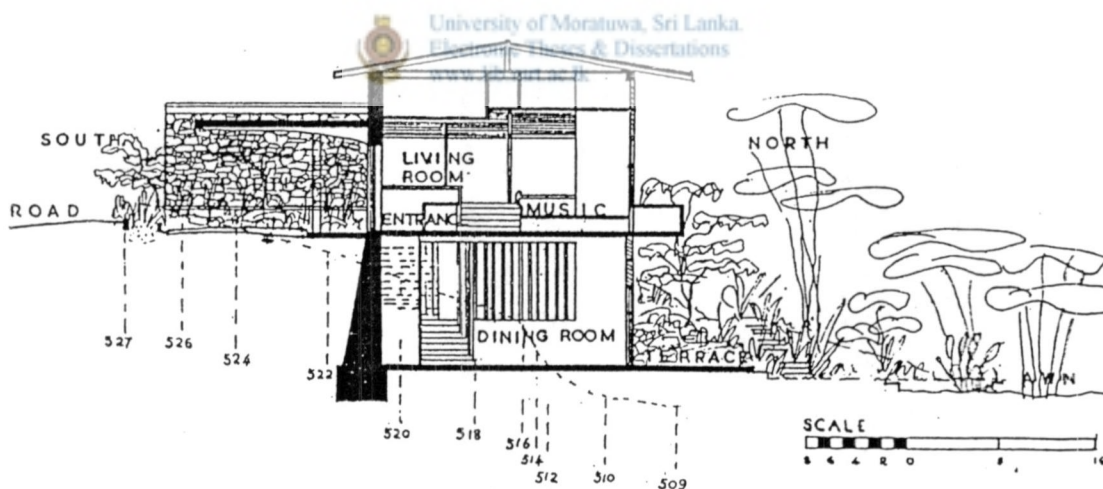


Fig.44: Karunarathne house : Cross section.
House seems to be carved out of the hillside.



The family unit at the upper level of the house is linked with the living room, through a corridor while ensuring privacy to the private realm. From the corridor there is a direct service staircase to the kitchen and pantry on the lower ground floor level, allowing for easy and direct contact with service areas.



Fig.45: Rooms have been designed as enclosed verandahs.

note: The narrow balcony.

The wide sheltering outer verandahs in addition to inner rooms have been a significant feature, in the traditional vernacular dwellings. But here the element of 'outer verandah' has been transformed in a distinct manner. Thus the modern living or sleeping room has been designed to have the advantages of the open verandah, at the same time, to have facilities for being enclosed. Thus all the rooms have been designed as

enclosed verandahs. In fact they can be as open as a verandah by the sliding of glass doors, which can be drawn together in inclement weather or for privacy or safety.

a) THE USE OF MATERIALS.

Rather than using simple traditional technologies and methods, here the Karunarathne house expresses more solidity and conscious refinement in its construction. The construction is of reinforced concrete beams and floor slabs. Both traditional and modern materials have been incorporated for the design.



Fig.46: View to the living room at higher level than lounge.

Note : glass wall at half landing level, on the left wall mural.

Local timber was used for all wood works and used them in a natural state exposing the knots and faults. Rather than using traditional

half round clay tiles, the timber roof has been covered over with asbestos corrugated roofing sheets, because of the strong wind, which would dislodge the tiles.

It could be noticed that the extensive use of glazed openings and glass brick walls that seem to be within the international style framework, in fact inappropriate for most of the tropical conditions of the region.

a) **SHAPING.**

Unlike the trend of traditional societies, the craftsman has been completely isolated from the trend of modern life. But in this house architect, craftsman and the artist have worked together. Thus the extensive use of traditional arts and crafts always exists in Karunaratne house as a part of architecture.

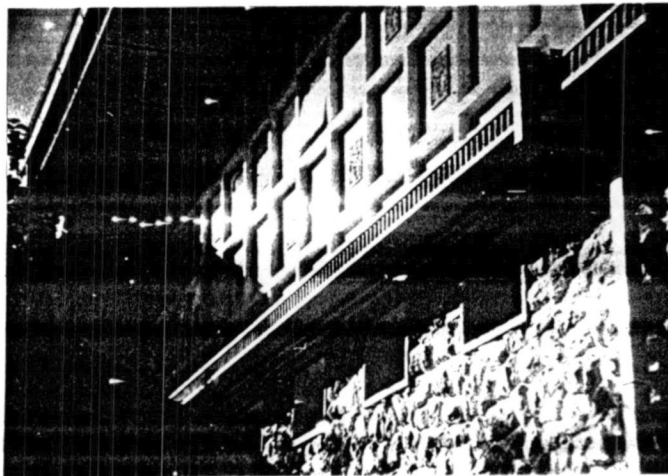


Fig.47: Panal walls in-set with carved terra-cota tiles.

One the most distinctive feature in the residence, is the decorative panel wall to the entrance façade, which constructed in reinforced concrete with decorative panels. Painted panel walls, inset with carved tera-cota tiles were a feature of traditional architecture.

The interior paneling consists of 'Dumbara' woven mats (manually) that each mat is woven in different patterns and colours based on traditional styles. All, these traditional craft work brought into this house, is authentic in its use. They add a richness of feeling and a human touch to this modern house.

5.5.1.3. THE INCIDENCE OF VERNACULAR.

Here in the Karunaratne house, the architect's attempt has been made to synthesis indigenous traditions with architecture, designed for contemporary society. However the plan configuration, spatial relationships and the visual complexity of the house has mainly emphasized, direct contemporary approach.

Thus in comparison to simple vernacular forms more elaborated and complex, spatial arrangement and form composition could be identified while far more appreciating contemporary way of life style.

But architect seeks out, ways to enrich the intimate character of the house by using whatever the materials and means were suitable – both modern and traditional. Thus the way materials were used in vernacular

tradition was identified in order to synthesis them with modern taste, while preserving the regional feeling.

The way of using, enclosable verandahs and long overhanging eaves and the conditions of materials are predominantly derived from the notions of traditional vernaculars. Instead of mere copying such elements architect has reinvented them and used them in new ways to refresh the modern architecture.

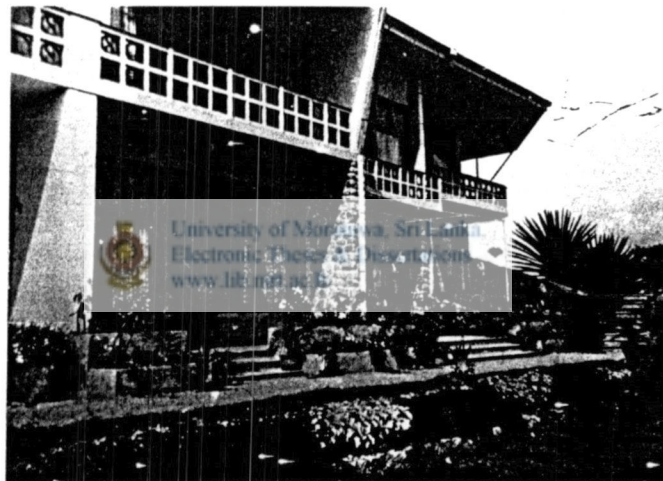


Fig.48: Close up of the garden front showing terraces.

Note: The long overhanging eaves.

Although the architect has used a modern architectural idiom that far more related to 'post modernism' yet she has tried to create a sense of historic legitimacy. More or less the house does not represent a direct application of vernacular characters or its contemplative nature, indeed a kind of hybrid architecture can be identified as a new vigor for the design.

5.5.2. APPROACH 2b : A STRONG AFFINITY TO VERNACULAR.

POLONTHALAWA HOUSE. (CASE STUDY. 2)

5.5.2.1. INTRODUCTION.

The Danish architect Ulrik Plesner while having a partnership with Geoffrey Bawa, has designed an exciting residence at inner suburbs of Kurunegala in 1967.

The architect has skillfully crafted a residence that gently embraced the undulating landscape. The most outstanding qualities about the house is the way architect deals with giant natural rock boulders on the site, and the manner in which he incorporate them in to the design.



Fig.49: The entrance pathway.

note: the way rock boulders are
Incorporated in to the design.



5.5.2.2. THE ARCHITECTURAL COMPOSITION AND ASPECTS OF TRADITION.

Architecturally the house draw much inspiration from traditional vernaculars, thus the house was designed in such a way that it is a part and parcel of nature. The house was largely designed on site and its organic configuration of plan has respectfully inserted the building in to the site to exploit the natural rock boulders.

In the hand of architect, the building is inevitably a deference to nature. When looking at the residence, one has a feeling that the natural setting, trees and giant rocks are more important than the building.



Fig.50: Giant rock boulders are essential features of the house.

At the same time one senses that it represents a conscious approach, modern approach in configuration of plan and the spatial

relationships of the house. In comparison to traditional dwellings more spatial segregation could be identified at the residence but each segment is closely linked with each other, acquiring a better spatial orchestration.



Fig.51: natural landscape elements of trees, rocks and etc. have respectfully incorporated to the design.

The entrance to the house is provided through a paved narrow winding pathway that ends up with stone steps at the front lobby. As an intermediate space, it defines by using large rock boulders and serves the same purpose of traditional verandah by acquiring a sense of arrival.

The frame view through the rock boulders of the entrance lobby overlooks the living from a slightly higher level. A narrow shimmering pool flushed with the rock surface has an instinct to move visitors into the

main living space, which is the main focus of the house that opens on both two sides.



Fig.52: Entrance is through a small pavilion.
note: stone paved pathway.

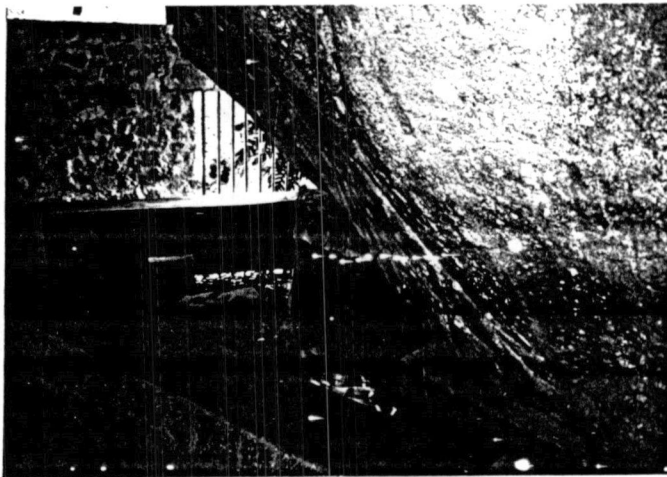


Fig.53: A narrow shimmering pool at the entrance lobby,
Flushed with the rock surface.



The dining space merges with the living that linked with the inner private rooms through an intermediate loggia like space. The master bedroom has been skillfully designed that it rests over a giant rock boulder, which is accessed from a narrow stair ensuring the adequate privacy and security.

Service area has separately linked to the living space, as a distinct wing while providing an easy access from the entrance.

a) THE USE OF MATERIALS.

It can be evident that, simple materials have introduced to the design either their minimal refinement or sophistication. In fact the traditional concept of 'minimalism' or impermanent nature of the dwelling is not harder to find.



Fig.54: Simple detailing and modesty of materials could be identified.

The residence is deliberately designed by using traditional materials unless the giant RCC. Ridge beams of the roof that rest on the on boulders. Wide span timber beams of the roof are supported by polished coconut palm trunks.

Instead of having glazed curtain walls or windows, simple vertical timber poles have utilized for openings while ensuring the security. At the same time, allows maintaining a great visual link with surrounding landscape.



Fig.55: Instead of glass windows, simple vertical
Timber poles were utilized.

b) **SHAPING.**

It can be identified that the detailing of the residence is straightforward and simplified while a muted colour palette is used throughout the building.

The traditional principal of 'inevitable harmony with the landscape' has been skillfully achieved in to the design in such a way, that the natural elements are so much part of the sensitive design. In fact certain areas of the house are defined by using large rock surfaces.

The use of bare rubble walls and rock surfaces create a rustic appearance to the residence, while bearing or withstand the harshness of the climate.

5.5.2.3. THE INCIDENCE OF VERNACULAR.

Here, in the Polonthlawa house architect attempt to borrow, much ideas and inspirations from traditional vernacular dwellings. Thus he well synthesized them with the functional and spatial needs of the modern life style. In fact the spatial arrangement, predominantly cater for acquiring present complex needs regards of privacy, security, accessibility, spatial segregation and etc.

But the architectural language predominantly emphasized the strong affinity to vernaculars. Thus the architecture has appreciated the vernacular components and used them in a rather modified manner, but not abruptly destroying the true characters of them.

Here the use of materials plays a significant role in achieving an intimate quality to the residence. Thus the nature of materials, and the ways of using them with the contemporary design seem to be meaningfully identified by the architect.



Fig.56: Modesty of materials and simple construction technologies could be identified.



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The simple wide overhanging gable roofs, as a significant element of the vernacular dwellings, that inspired the architect to use it, to the design in a modified way. Thus a number of deep overhanging roofs at different levels have been used and carefully proportioned to enhance the effect of the entire house on the observer. In fact the spaces of the residence are closer to the human scale, which could be identified as a fundamental characteristics of traditional vernacular dwellings, that architect achieved in a distinct manner

It can be evident, that the use of heavy RCC ridge beams, of the roof degrades the lightweight appearance of wide span gable roofs. More

or less they trace the notion of the postmodern architecture, which is in opposition to the approach of vernaculars.

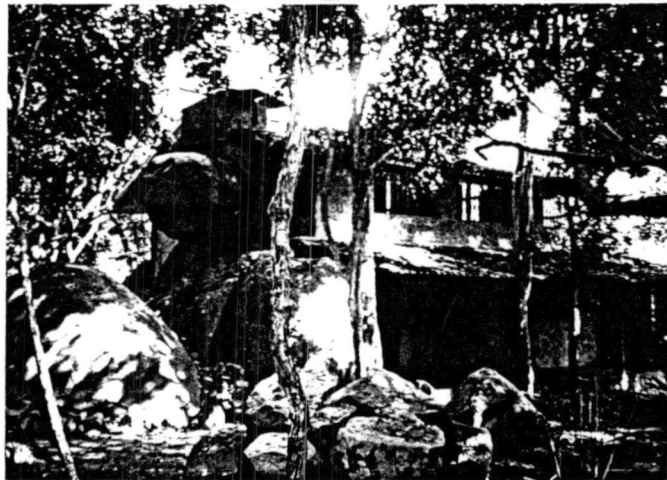


Fig.56: modesty of materials and simple construction

technologies could be identified.
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Fig.57: Giant RCC ridge beam rest on the natural rock boulders.

5.6. APPROACH : 3

EXTENDING TRADITION.

(Transform vernacular characters in a modified manner.)

In the recent past, this approach has been commonly known as “modern regionalism”. Architects of such works are not directly quote elements from past resources. Instead they are adding certain features and characters of traditional vernacular in an innovative manner.

Hence, this approach apparently continues in holding much of the earlier architectural vocabulary. In recent years, many innovative Sri Lankan architects are searching for new solutions in blending the traditional vernacular characters that fulfill the complexities of contemporary needs.



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Sri Lankan architect Geoffery Bawa is one of a pioneer who has exercised a formal architectural language, which inspires from the vernacular forms and available craft technologies unique to Sri Lanka. What is remarkable is that not only the locals, but also the Asian architects have been greatly influenced by Bawa’s extremely delicate and inimitable work.

Although in most cases, the language of such architecture talks the exquisite nature or characters of past, such as modesty, gentleness, openness and etc, while using available craft technologies. Indeed they seek out ways of continuity with local traditions.

However David Lowenthal's idea, gives further insight of such trend of works, that

“ there is nothing wrong with such manipulations: difficulties arise only if antiquarian reverence compels us to claim that we are reviving a wholly an authentic past, the true version of bygone times that brooks no alternatives. Quite to the contrary, the utility of the past inheres in its many-sidedness, in being all things to all people. It's the flexibility, not the fixity, of the past that makes it so useful in enhancing our sense of ourselves: our interpretations of it alter according to the perspectives and needs of present and future moments.”

Lowenthal, D. 1998, p184

5.6.1. CASE STUDY: ENA DE SILVA HOUSE.

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5.6.1.1. INTRODUCTION.

This house is one of Geoffrey Bawa's most significant early works, for a friend, Ena de Silva. Thus throughout the design and building stages, there was a close corporation between client and architect. The beginning off such work, is described by Bawa,

‘ I remember talking to Ena, seeing around her all the things she liked and all she wanted were brick walls and a roof. The plan came about largely because she, and consequently I, wanted a private compound which was not interfered with by the neighbors”

Taylor, B. B. 1995, p46



Fig.58: Ena De Silva house : View
through the living from patio.



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Thus this residence can be noted that it is urban a congested in location, yet feels rural and free in spirit.

Even in the context of a dense urban area, this house clearly illustrates of the intimate use of space, where architecture and landscape are in an indivisible continuity.

5.6.1.2. THE ARCHITECTURAL COMPOSITION AND ASPECTS OF TRADITION.

The spatial composition of the residence has been achieved in such a way by extending the imagery of a typical Kandyan peasant's dwellings.



In fact the traditional form has been transformed in such a way to accommodate the complex aspirations of the modern life styles.

One could be noticed that the sensitive way of achieving 'the sense of openness' in a residence within a limited site area. Thus the whole plot area was well incorporated to the design, that each and every corner was considered as an essential ingredients of the design.



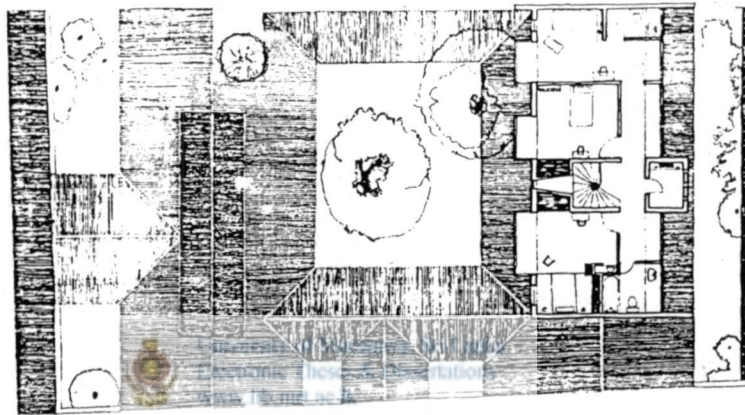
Fig.59: The main focus of the house is
The large center courtyard.

In fact majority of the built up areas of the house is concentrated towards the outer periphery of the site leaving a large courtyard of the site. In comparison to the traditional courtyard dwellings, a much verity and segregation could be identified in arranging the spaces around the courtyard.



Section

Cross section.



First floor plan.

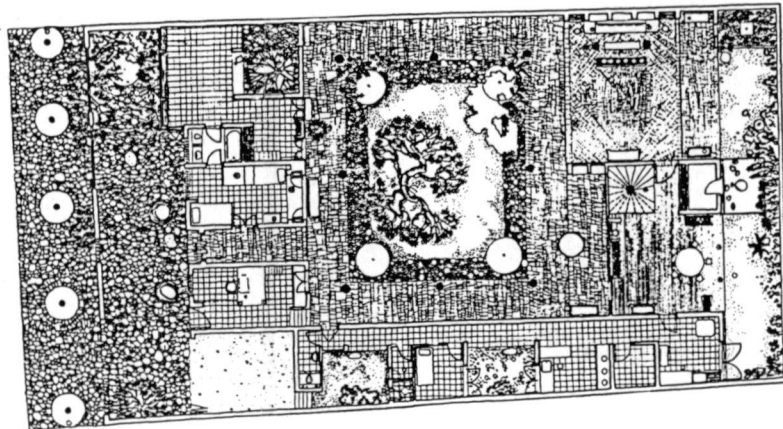


Fig.60: Ena de Silva's house.

First floor plan and Ground floor plan.



Fig.61: Stretch of open yard at rear.

note: carefully proportioned

verandah.



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The front forecourt, which opens to the front yards, generates an intermediate space between outer public realm and the inner private realm.. The heavy front door opens to the narrow tunneled passageway while providing an attractive vista of the patio, celebrating a great sense of arrival.

Meda midula being the central space of the house where all the other activities such as living, dining, loggia, guest areas and pantry have organized around.

The patio, inner verandah and public realm of the house are richly layered while maintaining a dramatic flow of spaces. The inner verandah

around the patio, is mainly used for relaxation, at the same time provides a core for the circulation of the house.



Fig.62: Attractive vista of the patio.

Note: The large Plumaria tree at the center.

The guests quarter is arranged in the proximity of the main entrance, which opened to the inner verandah at an elevated level. The strip of service areas of the house placed along the East periphery of the site providing a clear distinction from living quarter.

It can be noted that the upper level of the house predominantly serves as a private domain of the house that acquired more privacy and security.

The manner of using the lattice windows for the upper private quarter has greatly influenced from the traditional dwellings. They have



designed in such a way that lattice windows could be fully opened towards an intimate landscaped courtyard.



Fig.63: The great view of the carefully landscaped patio: from upper private rooms.

a) THE USE OF MATERIALS.

It can be evident that majority of the building materials were traditional in fact they were local-except for the very little glass that was used. The walls are of brick and plaster, and used reinforced concrete supporting frame for the main structure of the house.

In the traditional Kandyan peasants dwellings the courtyard mainly fulfills the functional requirements of the dwellers. (inner living area / supply light and air) But here the courtyard has treated as a part and parcel

of the entire residence that celebrates its beauty thus it is carefully landscaped to acquire a great intimate character.



Fig. 64: Carefully landscaped patio

The ground floor paving is of granite cut and uncut, merge with the textured patio with pebbles and stones. The large Mango and Plumaria trees incorporate to express a dramatic interplay of light and shade at the patio, which inspires feeling of great tranquility.

b) SHAPING.

The residence demonstrates a simple architectural language that respects most of the local traditions. Thus detailing could be identified as very simple or understandable.

Louvered or lattice windows, doors, stairs and columns are of local timber that used them with minimal sophistication by conserving the

modesty of materials.

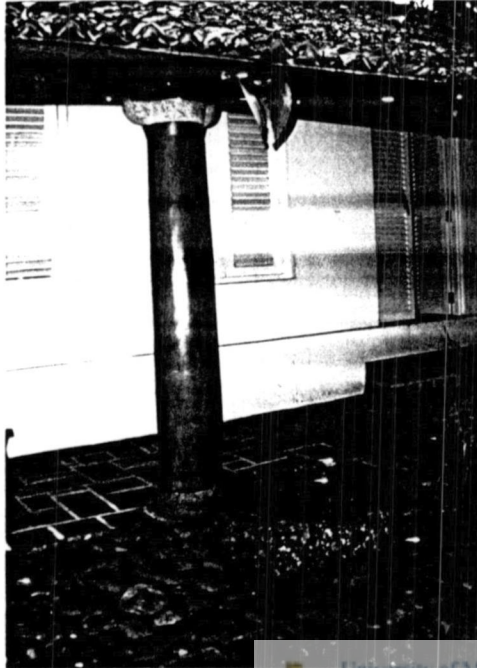


Fig.65: modesty of materials and simple detailing could be identified.



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Fig.66: Roof of the entrance court, rest on a stone pillar.
note: the rustic nature of materials and simple details.

It is evident that, salvage relics from traditional buildings were used as part of the design features. The richly intimate rooms with simple furniture and splendid collection of traditional sculptures and crafts give a strong sense of engagement with the elements.

Views are carefully selected and framed through the openings and windows showing a sensitive interplay of landscape and architecture.

5.6.1.3. THE INCIDENCE OF VERNACULAR.

The residence can be noted for its blend of modern sensibilities and traditional vernacular forms and features.

Delightful center courtyard is the most outstanding feature of the residence that provides a great sense of center and openness. It is far more inspired from the concept of Kandyan vernacular dwellings. (Courtyard type) But the complex organization of spaces around the center courtyard and their special relations could be identified as modern, that well flavored with present day aspirations or needs.

Also, it can be noticed that the architect has extend the simple vernacular roofs, thus a number of gable or lean to roofs have been amalgamated in such a way to create a splendid complex composition of roofs.

Built up spaces carefully proportioned to enhance the effect of the entire house on the observer. Thus a great sense of human scale could be

identified as one of the fundamental characters of vernacular, which was inspired.

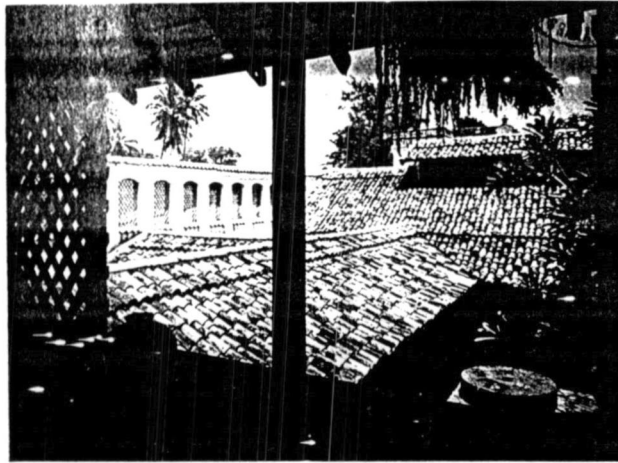


Fig.67: Complex composition of gable roofs.
note: note the monitor roof.



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Fig.68: Roofs are carefully proportioned
to acquire a great sense of
human scale.

The architect respectfully incorporated the house in to the site; thus it can not discriminate from the landscape. The nature of materials, their natural colours and textures are in harmony with nature. Thus such allusive vocabulary of architectural details and modesty of materials could be identified as the essential characteristics that were inspired from traditional vernacular dwellings.

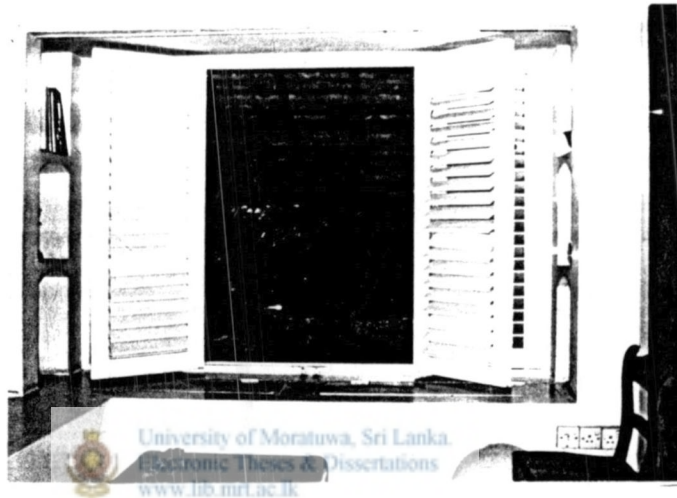


Fig. 69: Simple details of timber louvered window.

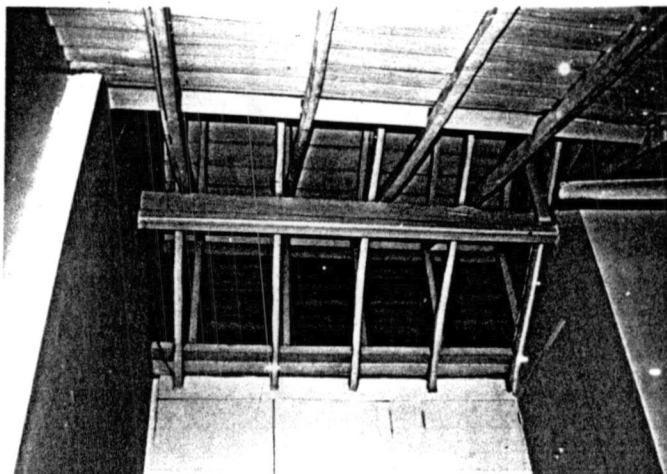


Fig.70: note the simple timber details of monitor roof.



In such a way, Ena de Silva's residence continues to hold much of essence of the earlier vernacular architectural vocabulary. Therefore it demonstrates an inventive architectural language, which seeks out continuity with local vernacular traditions.

5.6.2 CASE STUDY: 4 - PARANAGAMAGE HOUSE.

5.6.2.1. INTRODUCTION.

One of primali Paranagamage's most striking works is her owned residence in Moratuwa, which is noted for its blend of modern sensibilities and traditional elements.



Fig.71: Paranagamage house.

Note the simple composition
of the house.

This residence demonstrates a rare, sensitive architectural perception of a simple and understanding at the same time falls with complex intense of delight. Paranagamage's house is suburban in location, that composition of form is juxtaposed with huge 'Mara' trees as a picturesque composition.

5.6.2.2. THE ARCHITECTURAL COMPOSITION AND ASPECTS OF TRADITION.

The residence is identified as an exercise in the continuity of vernacular spirit within the contemporary context. Thus the residence does not attempt to extend an imagery of vernacular forms, but predominantly enhance a contemporary approach in form configuration and spatial arrangement.

It could be seen that the skillful composition of simple form of the house has well exploited the present complex needs of the dwellers, within most of a limited site area.

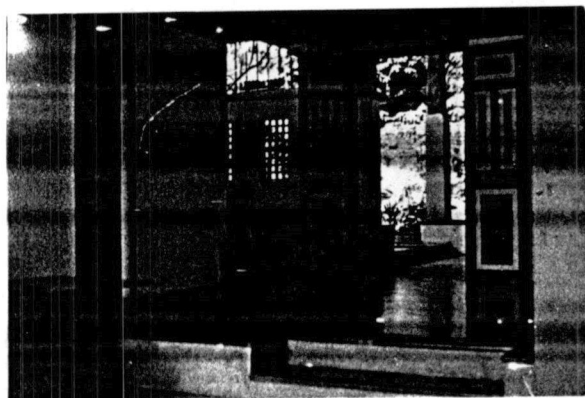


Fig.72: low height entrance lobby.

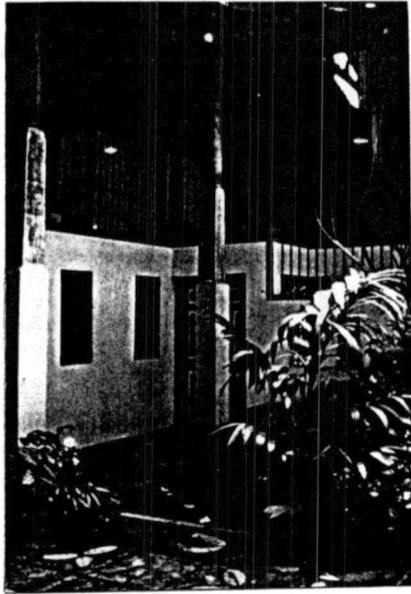


Fig.73: Double height open verandah acts as a transition space.



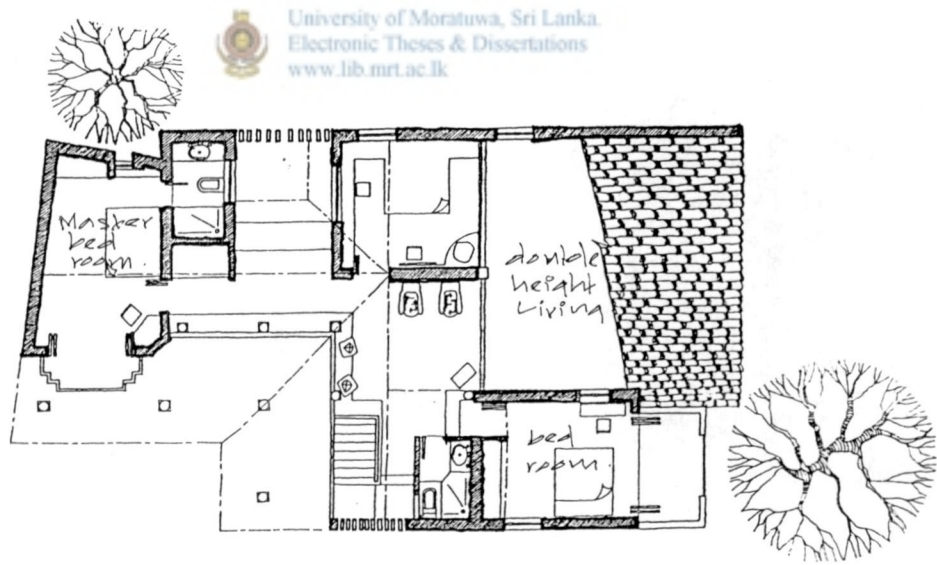
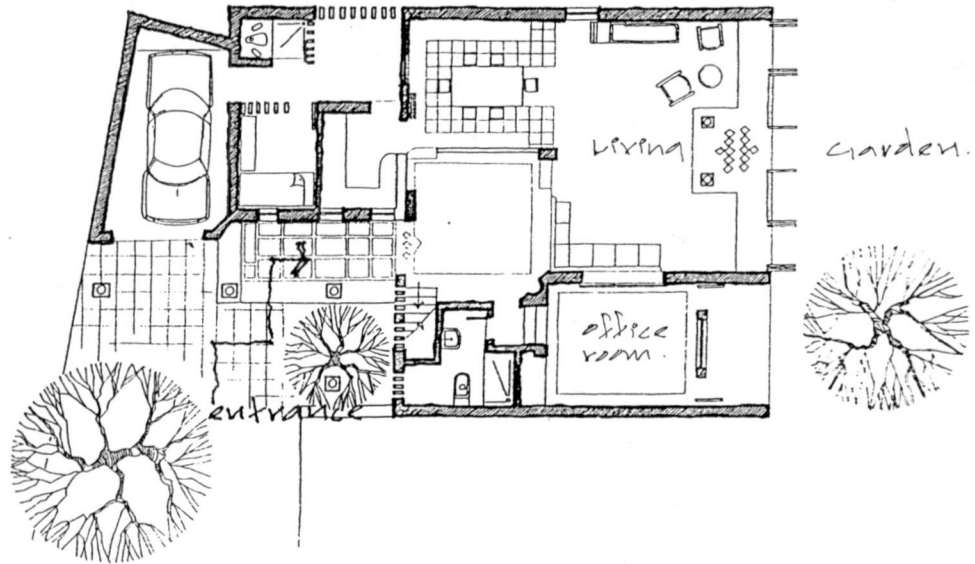
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The house is entered from a double height open verandah to a low height lobby, giving a frame view of the living area through the main entrance door.

The focus of the house is the modest living area which overlooks a small landscaped garden with mature trees, ferns and epiphytes which obscures the roofs of neighboring houses in the low land beyond.

The double height outer verandah of the residence direct to the intimate entrance lobby, which leaving, dining and office spaces are placed around. The service areas including kitchen, kitchen yard, servant's

area and even the carport has organized as a separate wing that extending from the dining area.



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Fig.74: Paranagama house : Plan configuration.

Ground floor : above

Upper floor : below



The upper level, predominantly being discovered as a private realm, where acquired more privacy and security. The upper bedrooms and family area are arranged in such a way by acquiring a double height space for living quarter at ground level.

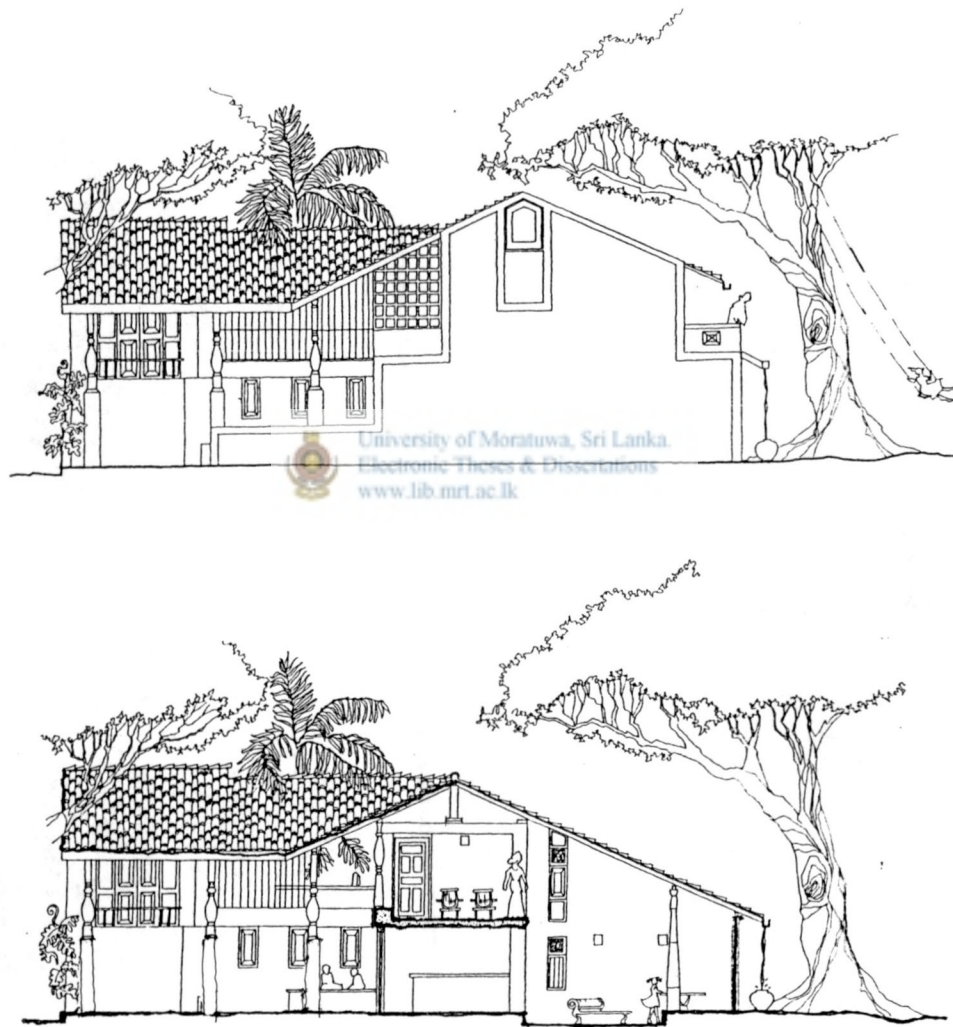


Fig.75: Front elevation : above

Cross section through living: below

The double height volume overlooked by the family room at 2nd story level. It is intended to connect the children's activities with those of their parents by opening of this space between the first and second story.

The family room is the center of gravity of the upper level that provides an informal contact among the family members. The raised children's bedroom in the same room approach with few steps provides for privacy, while maintaining visual contact with the family room. The master bed room has arranged at the extreme end of the upper level where the opposite corner to the living quarter, acquires a feeling of immense calm.

a) THE USE OF MATERIALS.



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It can be noticed, that simple range of local or traditional materials have been employed in construction, unless the limited use of glass and steel works.

The extensive use of timber work could be identified, while enhancing the vernacular characteristics of both modest and subtle.

The house has rough white plaster walls and smooth cement polished floors. Simple range of natural colours are provided by using blue and white painted doors and windows and a bright yellowish orange, for the ceiling of entrance lobby and office spaces.



Fig.76: Simple range of materials was utilized. Note: Blue and white painted doors and metal grill.



Fig.77: Sitting and office area.
note: used a simple range of colours.

b) SHAPING.

The residence has designed in such a way to exploit the relationship between inside and the outside. But unlike the courtyard

dwellings, here 'the openness' has acquired by treating the facades of living areas in a minimalist aesthetic with unobtrusive metal grills and foldable timber doors. They permit direct visual connection with the landscape, while allowing fresh air to draw across the house.



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Fig. 78: Living area overlooks the garden.

Note: sensitive detailing of the façade.



Fig. 79: Unobtrusive metal grill ensures a great relation with out side.

It can be noticed that, windows and the columns of the house are antiques brought from old houses and recycled. The tall antique columns of the front verandah provide support for a wide extension of the eaves.

5.6.2.3. THE INCIDENCE OF VERNACULAR.

The residence is noted for its blend with of modern sensibilities and characteristics of traditional vernacular. But the composition of space or form does not attempt to extend the traditional vernacular imageries. Though the residence searches for contemporary solutions that fulfill the complexities of present needs, while exploiting local technologies and materials.



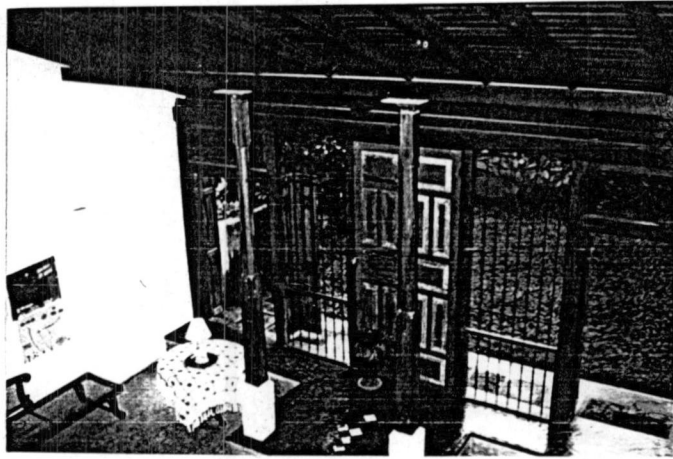
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Thus the nature of materials and their level of refinement or sophistication plays a major role by conserving the essence of vernacular characteristics of both modest and subtle.



Fig.80: simple timber detailing could be identified.

The living area, is the focus of the dwelling, which acquires a double height volume. Though the architect has used modern proportions for the living quarter, yet the house has expressed an intimate character with a great sense of belongs.



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 Fig 81: Living area is emphasized by
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 using a double height space.

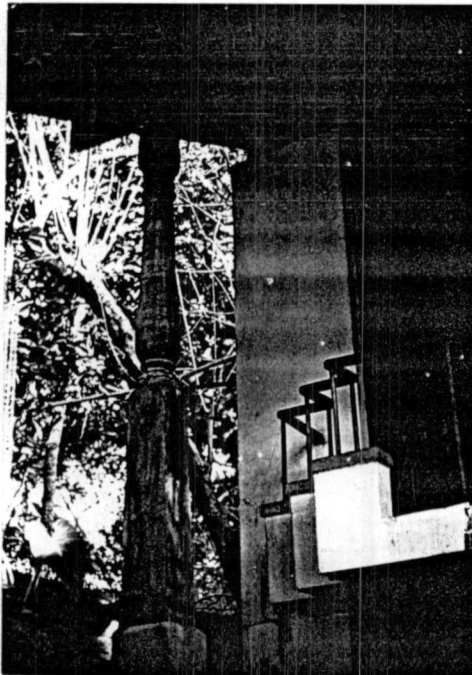


Fig 82: Wide extension of roofs
 projected the front
 verandah from sun and
 rain.



Simple roof and its wide extension of eaves act as a dominant feature of the residence while acquiring a strong relative sense of human scale.

In such a way Paranagama house demonstrates a concern for distilling essential characters from vernacular, by using them in a modified or moderated manner. Thus the work is profoundly identified as 'evocative traditional vernacular'.

5.7. APPROACH : 4 REINTERPRETING TRADITION.

This approach attempts to capture the deeper layers of the tradition, thus aims to retranslate the meanings, which belongs to a particular tradition.



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Instead of regenerating or transplanting the element, this gesture of architecture modifies the fundamentals abstracted from the past; indeed predominantly a modern idiom is used.

It can be seen that most of the exemplary works in this category shear a common contemplative characters of tradition, that are transformed in freshen up ways. Indeed it expressed of both the past and the present through an abstract manner. Hence such works devoted to place and history, but simply preserved from becoming an intolerable burden of the past.

It is significant that, throughout history

“the best work has always combined a sense of tradition with a keen awareness of there own contemporaneity. One needs only to

look at Frank Lloyd Wright's transformation of Meso-American forms or Luis Barragan's use of Mexico's Hispanic past and deep cultural roots to see this approach exemplified"

William, S. W. L. : Beng, T. H. 1998, p121

Most of the works in this category aim for a new critical awareness of minimalist works. Thus their simplicity have delightfully achieved with an image of confident modernity.

In fact most such works acknowledged the past and present simultaneously, through interpreting the quality of deep rootedness with a keen awareness of contemporary idioms.

5.7.1. CASE STUDY : 5 -LUNAWA HOUSE.



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5.7.1.1.INTRODUCTION.

This house is an exquisite creation, which was designed in 1982. The site is promontory of land, located on the shores of a lagoon at Moratuwa, South of Colombo. It is surrounded by mangroves on the edge of a lagoon and with a brief views of the ocean makes the living in a suburban context.

The descriptive term for the house, could be identified that of 'a small coastal fortress'. The house is organized around an open sky courtyard, with a floor level pond, which was surrounded by high protective walls. The open stairs lead to a roof terrace, it offers wonderful views of the ocean beyond.

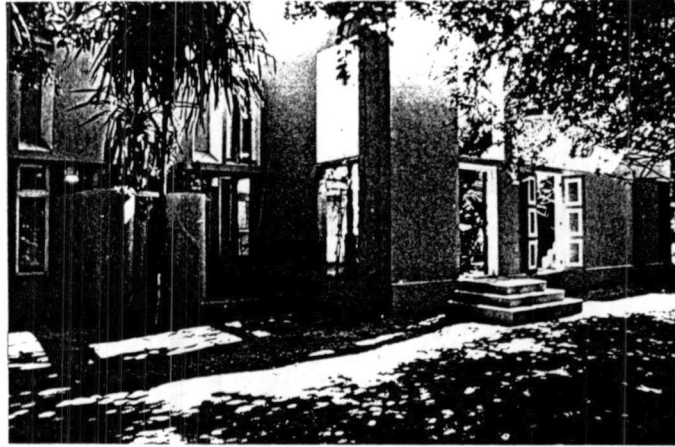


Fig.83: Lunawa house : expresses more
solidity in construction.

The house itself creates an image of shelter due to the solidity of construction, in rough plastered brickwork and stone reinforces.

5.7.1.2.THE ARCHITECTURAL COMPOSITIONS AND ASPECTS OF TRADITION.

Though the Lunawa house is significant for its contemporary sensibilities, yet acquires a great allusive sense of the vernacular.

But the residence neither attempts to extend the image of traditional vernacular forms nor attempts to extend the traditional architectural vocabulary. Thus it predominantly serves as a contemporary mode of dwelling, that expresses language of architectural modernity.

It could be noticed that each space of the house has being arranged in such a way to exploit the present day passions and aspirations of the modern lifestyles.

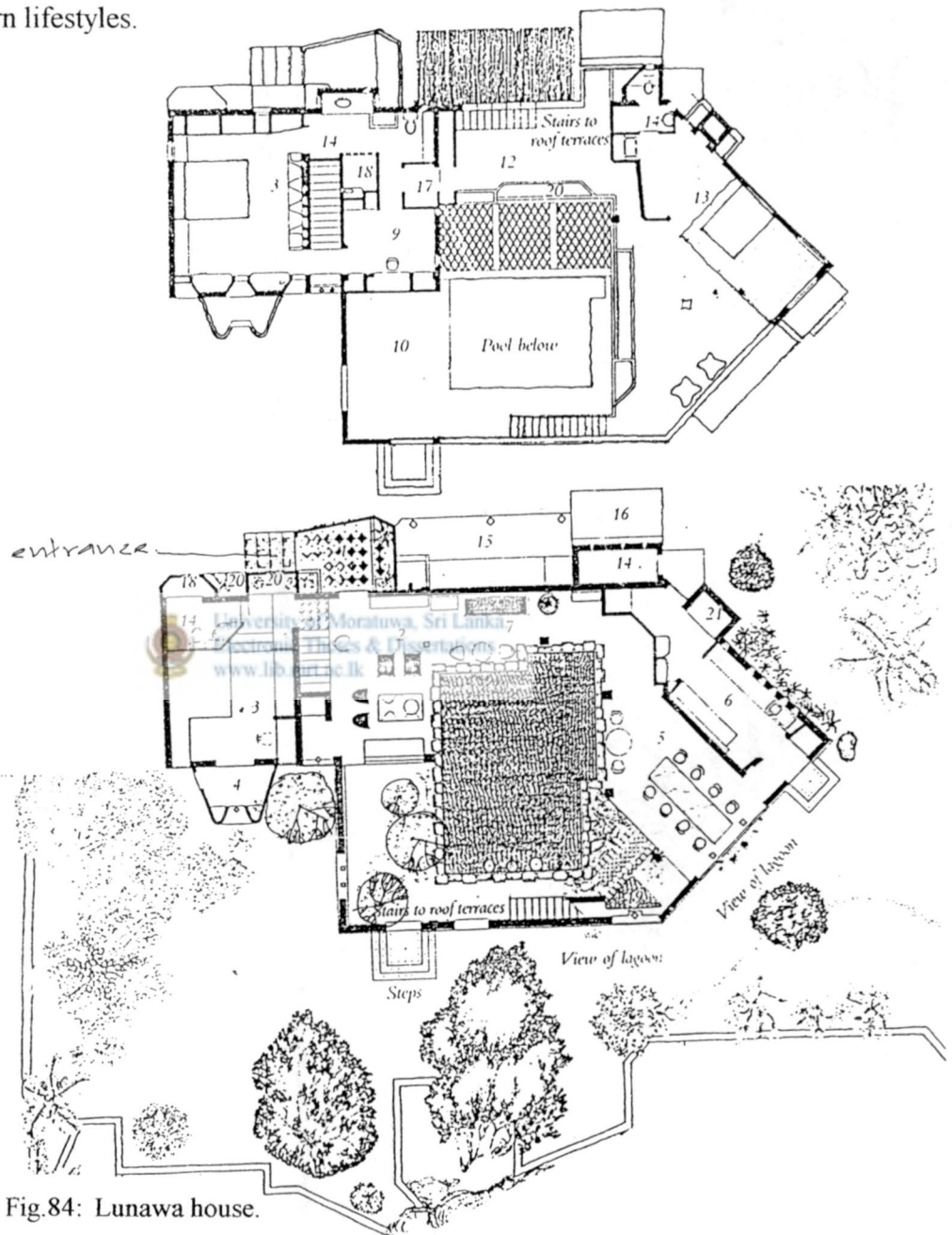


Fig.84: Lunawa house.

Upper floor plan : above

Ground floor plan : below



The semi-enclosed entrance lobby holds the position of a transition space to the individual or private domain. All the subservient spaces of the house, dining area, loggia and living area placed around the central reflective pond, that mainly invite the public functions such as entertaining of visitors, gatherings and etc.

As the main focus of the house, it opens out to the sky enhancing the characters of liveliness, pleasure and openness of the core area, while representing an enjoyable space with natural flow of lights and air. It is an interesting to experience that, during the different times of the day, the pool changes its colour with the conditions of natural and artificial light.



Fig.85: dining and sitting areas placed around the central reflective pool

Though the Lunawa house continue to express a modern spatial arrangement, yet the house embarks a strong sense of the 'center and the openness'. But it is one of the fundamental characteristics of traditional vernaculars that exploits in an abstract manner, neither copying the

traditional image of the courtyard dwellings nor representing their vernacular language.

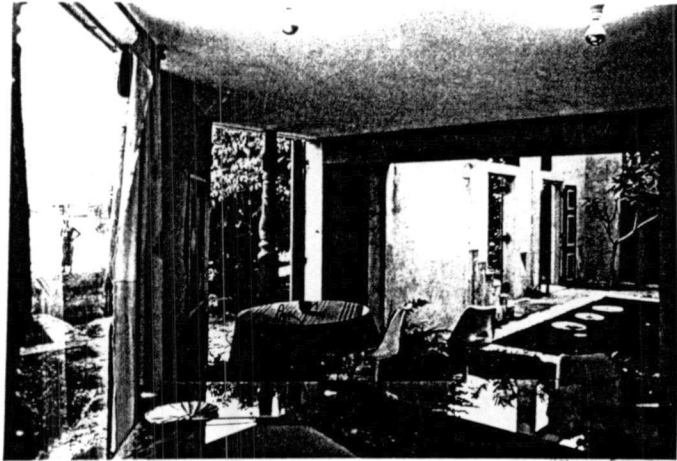


Fig.86: Sun light is filtered through a pergola above the pool creates a great sense of openness.



Fig.87: The upper terrace overlooks the tranquil lagoon.

The spaces arranged around the reflecting pool, are interlinked with each other and emerge as a continuous public realm of the residence.

The upper floor is predominantly left as a private realm of the house. Thus an enclosed area or the most private rooms are arranged in the Northeast corner. The private domain is grouped in combination with landscaped roof terrace, providing a great panoramic view of the surrounding.

a) THE USE OF MATERIALS.

The unique expression of this house form lies in its exposed column and beam concrete structure. In addition a small range of natural colours and materials is used, including blue and white painted doors, rough plaster walls, white painted cement floor and timber columns. It can be noticed that very little glass is used.

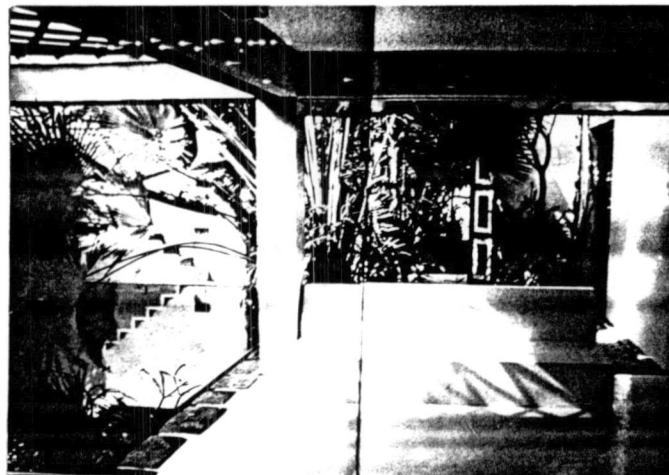


Fig.88: Both modern and traditional materials were sensitively incorporated by ensuring the simplicity.

Here the architect has well orchestrated, the modern RCC. column and beam structure with traditional elements of pillars and timber doors from an old demolished house.

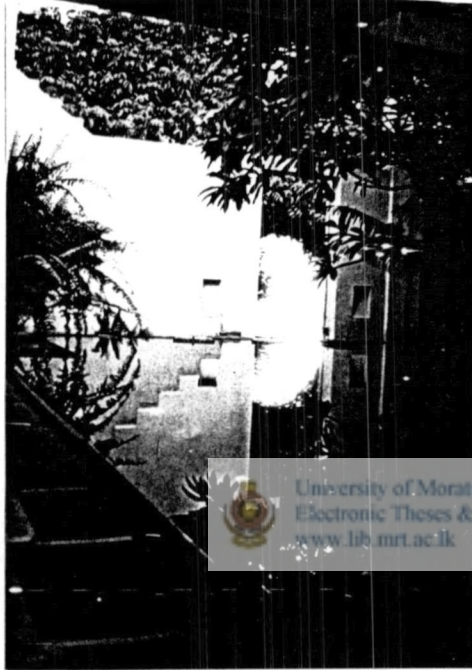


Fig.89: Construction details are simple and understandable.
note: carefully framed view through the reflective pool.

b) SHAPING.

Here the architect mainly has introduced of flat roofs of reinforced concrete, instead of borrowing the gable or lean to roofs, from traditional architectural vocabulary of roofs.

Windows with projecting boxed type of RCC, sunshades can be commonly noticed that provide an adequate protection from sun and rain. Thus maintain the solidity of construction.

5.7.1.3. THE INCIDENCE OF VERNACULAR.

The residence is noted for its strong modern appearance of architecture, that simultaneously fuses with the allusive sense of the past or traditional vernaculars.

Thus in contrast to traditional language, the Lunawa house represents a rather contemporary idiom of architecture with planer wall surfaces and reinforced concrete frame structure. Though it synthesized the present day aspirations of people and demands of materials and construction methods, yet continue to express intimate characteristics of vernacular of the past.

On one hand, it could be noticed that intimate quality is largely based on the nature of materials and the way they incorporate for the design.

In fact here the architect skillfully plays with the modern materials in order to ensure the less refined materials. Thus detailing also simple and understandable. In such a way within the idea of modernity, the architect continues of reinterpret the vernacular characteristics of modesty and simplicity.

On the other hand, it could be noticed that the intimate quality is largely based on the 'openness' or the 'symbiotic' nature of the dwelling. In fact the Lunawa house is in a great harmony or balance with nature. The skillful play of solids and voids allows the house to emerge with natural setting, by providing frame views, vistas and glimpses of nature.

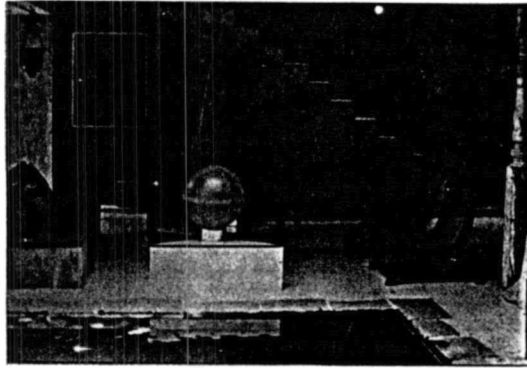


Fig 90: Loggia and other public areas acquire a great sense of openness.



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Fig.91: Open pool enhances the symbiotic nature of the house.

It could be identified the traditional concept of courtyard of Kandyan peasants dwellings has transformed in to a courtyard pool, by



replacing it with sheet of water. The central reflective pool can be experienced not only from the public realm of the ground level, but also from the upper family areas. In fact such an openness and close relation to water (central pool and lagoon) and lush vegetation enhance the pleasurable living in a tropical climate.

Though it represents a modern language of architecture, yet within the house there are moments of immense stillness and overall there is a sense of timeless.

Thus the work is profoundly identified as ‘reinterpretation of traditional vernacular’ neither copying elements from past nor extending the traditional vocabulary of architecture.



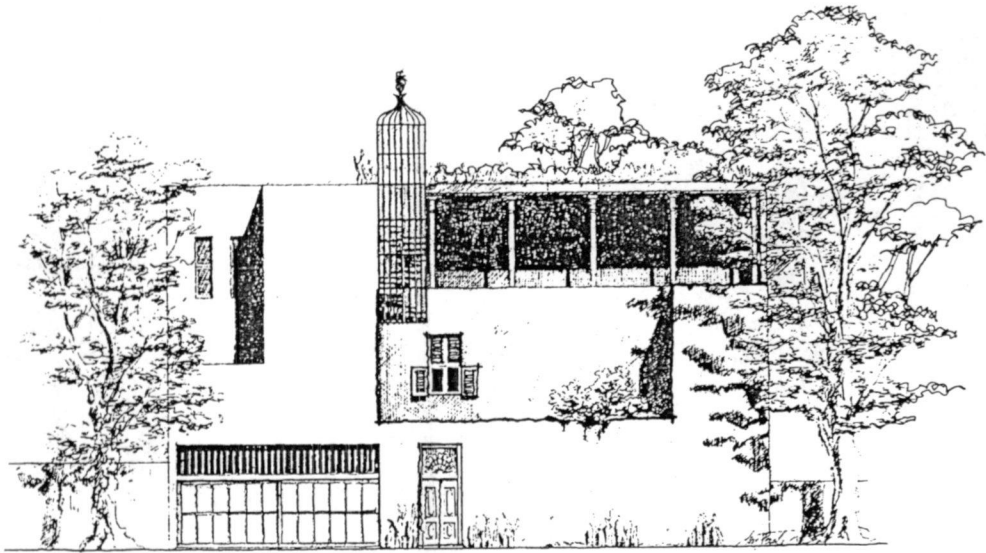
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5.7.2. CASE STUDY: 6 - JAYAKODY HOUSE.

5.7.2.1. INTRODUCTION.

The Jayakody house is an urban house, located in the inner suburbs of central Colombo. The architect Geoffrey has immediately grasped the potential of the site.

However he designed a fascinating house, which appear to express a diverge impression from his formal vocabulary of architecture. The house presents a demure front to the site. Therefore the street elevation is modest and retrains in its detail, while revealing little of the interior.



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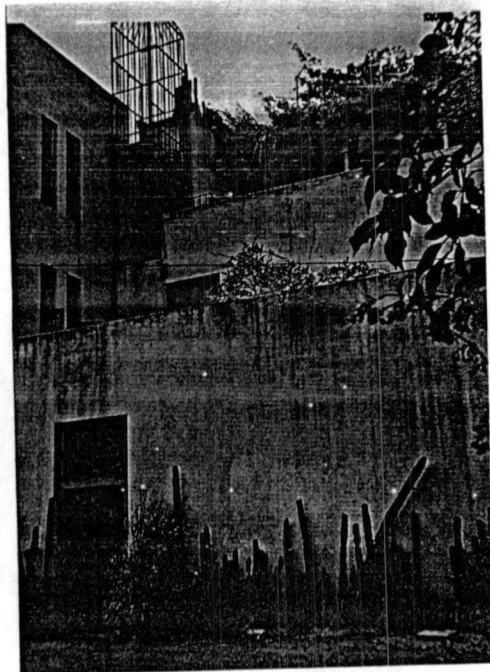


Fig.92: Street elevation is modest and restrained in its details.

5.7.1.2. THE ARCHITECTURAL COMPOSITION AND ASPECTS OF TRADITION.

The Jayakody house is noteworthy for its approach for a reinterpretation of the meanings belongs to tradition.

However the residence does not express an approach based on using elements of the past or reinvented tradition. Instead and invigorating modern idiom is used. In Jayakody house it is significant that, the overall composition of the spaces is much engaged in the ideas of architectural modernity.

Thus the sequence of the spaces are handled in a sensitive manner, that they've been superbly orchestrated. The simple composition of internal space and form creates a link series of enclosed and open spaces that make way up to the upper terraces.

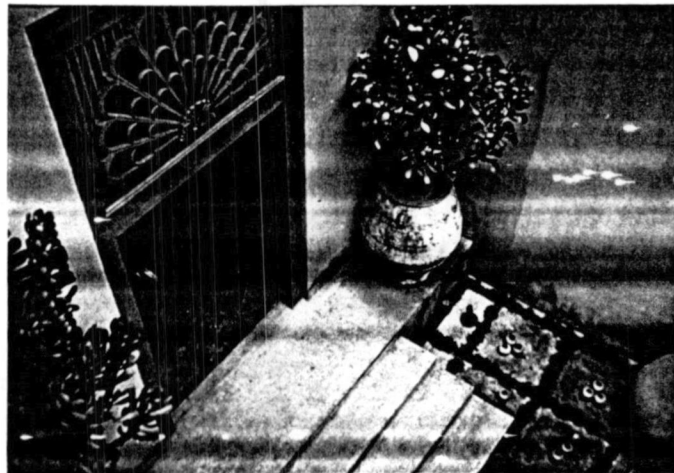
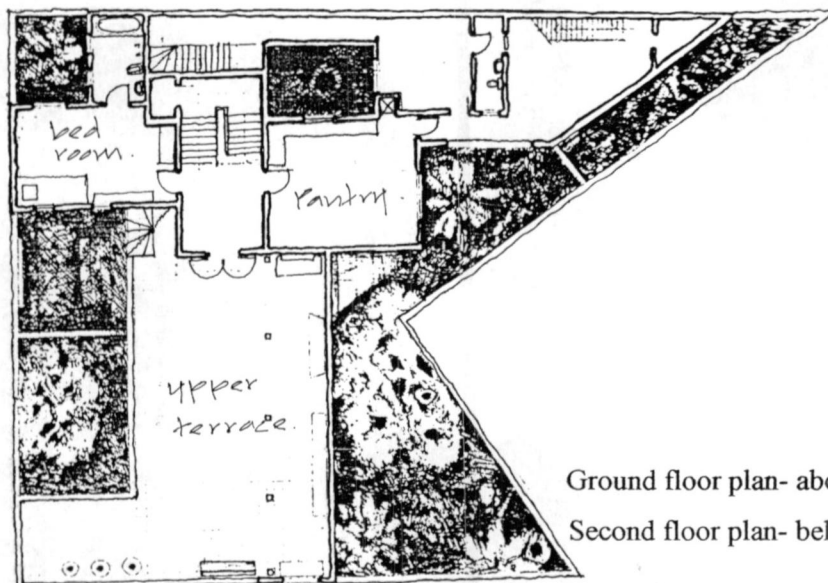
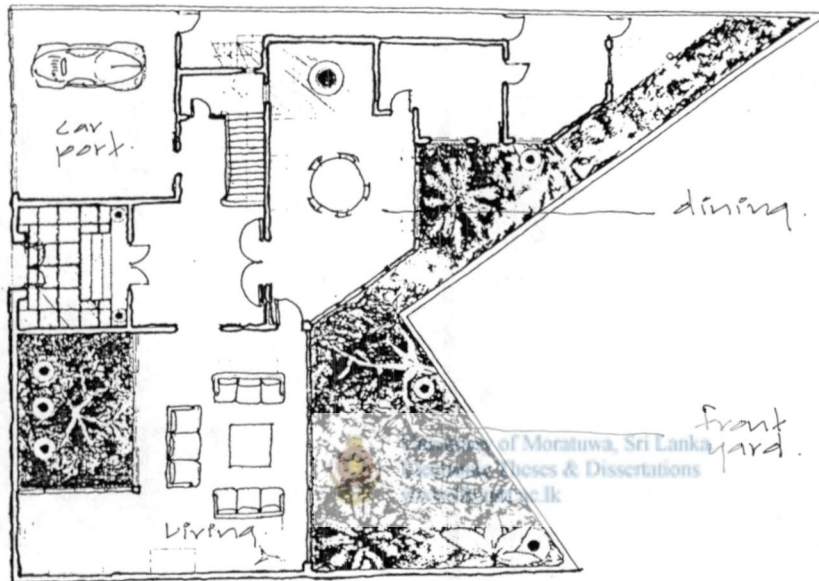


Fig.93: Beyond the entrance gate is a high walled courtyard.

The house turns inwards and focuses on two triangular courtyards of the awkward plot of land. The entrance from the narrow street opens in to a high wall courtyard that creates a space of transition between the public and the private realms. An open-air entry directs to the intimate entrance hall that directly links with the living and dining areas.



Ground floor plan- above
Second floor plan- below

From the living room the visitors have views of all three courtyards, providing a naturally ventilated space with efficient cross breezes moving through the house from the peripheral courtyards.

A huge earthen jar is placed at the internal courtyard adjacent to the dining area, creates a delightful vista in to the living space. In such a way living room as the focus of the house, has acquired a great sense of openness. Thus it could be noted that unlike the spatial arrangement of traditional courtyard dwellings, here the residence has been employed many smaller courtyards, instead of having one central yard. In fact a single space overlooks one or more courtyards.



Fig.95: View of the living room from entrance hall.

Note: It has view at all three courtyards.

At the ground level of the Jayakody house, a strip of a service quarter is arranged along the North west periphery of the land, including the kitchen, pantry, kitchen yard and even the car port.

The overall spatial arrangement has acquired a great sense of privacy by carefully segregating the activities of the house.

The second level is predominantly a serve as the private realm of the house, where the bedrooms are placed. The upper level roof terrace is a distinct world, a retreat from the noise and the dust of the city.

At the top level the architect has created a small swimming pool of emerald green tiled, that sparkles in the sun. In fact family members, for their pleasure activities mainly use the tree top level.

More or less in the hands of a skilled designer the Jayakodi house brings a new vigor, for the contemporary way of lifestyles.



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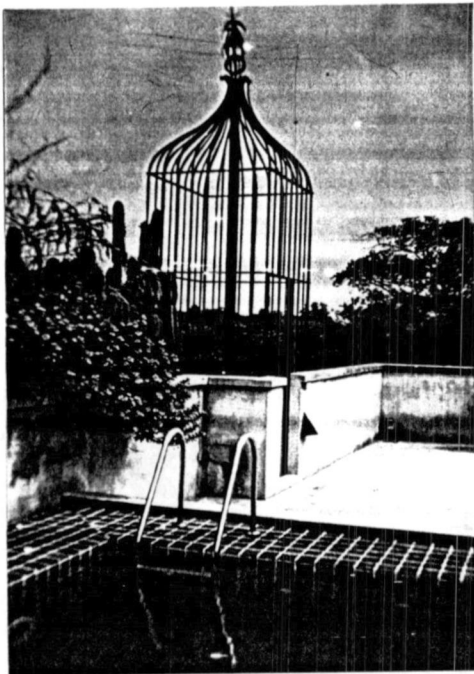


Fig.96: Bathing pool at tree top level.
note: the simple detailing.



Fig.97: The roof terrace.

note: Provide a great panoramic view of the surrounding area.



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a) **THE USE OF MATERIALS.**

The sensible use of colours, textures and the quality of the Jayakody house, that more similar to the Luis Barragon's later work,

“where the abstract development of paints and sun washed colours is primarily concerned with the poetics of architecture”

William, S. W. : Beng, T. H. 1998,p124

The Jayakody house is an ideal exemplary work of the architect Geoffrey Bawa that shows his sensitive ability in handling the both traditional and modern materials. The traditional materials are employed in a new refreshing manner by skillfully fusing with the modern materials of steel, glass and reinforced concrete.

In fact materials and detailing are essentially simple and marked by an apparent modesty.

b) **SHAPING.**

Here the architect expresses a great ability of utilizing the light and shade to define spaces. Thus he manipulates light and colour in a new dynamic synthesis.

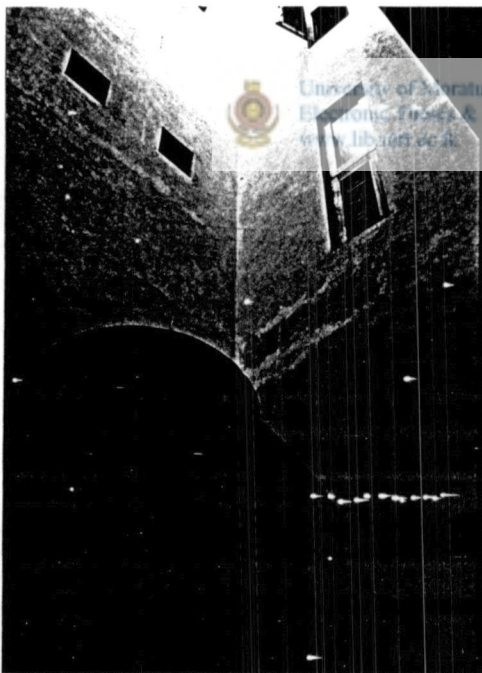


Fig.98: A huge earthen jar is lit by natural light filtering down an internal court.

One of the most attractive feature is the tall light well, painted in cobalt blue which permits sunlight to filtering down in to the dining room,



while lighting the huge eathern jar placed below the light well. The unadorned walls are left for the play of patterns of sunlight and shadows of trees.



Fig.98: Tall green painted doors provide entrance to the living.

Tall green painted doors with peacock fanlights and huge antique mirror in the entrance hall of the house replaced from a great 18th century house. Splendid collection of such traditional crafts expresses a strong sense of engagement with elements.

The roof terrace an accessed from a lower terrace via an external stair. It is delightful to notice that the external stair enclosed in a steel frame that apparently looks like a birdcage. In the lower terrace the roof of

the loggia is supported on antique columns. They are salvaged from a demolished mosque.

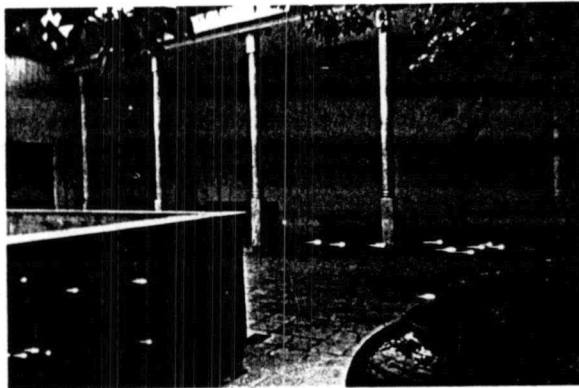


Fig.99: Roof terrace and verandah.



Note: roof of the loggia is supported on antique columns.

5.7.2.3. THE INCIDENCE OF VERNACULAR.

Robert Powel describes, that

“a measure of the passing of time it reminds one of the garden of the Paiazzo Querina Stampalia in Vanice designed by Carlo Scarpa. One is reminded too of a description of Scapa’s work, that he had the ability to create architecture that was simultaneously incredibly modern and incredibly ancient. This could equally applied to this house designed by Bawa”.

Powel, R. 1998, p50

In Jayakody house a rather humanistic interpretation of modernism could be identified in combining the contemplative essence of vernacular traditions. Thus it can be noted that a vast number of moods and memories that related to past, as well as present, are concentrated in to a single house.

It is significant that the residence shows a laconic quality where less is taken to be definitely more. Thus the house represents a notions of vernaculars in fact 'the minimalism' is a fundamental essence of traditional vernacular dwellings.

It is noteworthy that with in a strict sites boundaries the external and built up spaces of the house are in a great harmony, indeed they create a single harmonious entity.



Fig. 100 : The dining space overlooks the internal court and the out door courtyard.
Note: acquired a great sense of openness.



Fig.101: Front courtyard.

Note: materials and detailing are essentially simple.



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That the house demonstrates, in the most poetic manner, that simple pleasure of openness, light and materials have power to move the mindset of the perceiver.

Thus architect does not discard the essential characteristics of traditional vernacular architecture, but they are transformed in refreshing ways. In Jayakody house, he simultaneously acknowledged of the past and the present through an abstract manner. Though within the modernist statement, yet the house represents a strong intimate sense of belongingness.

It is fact that the spatial arrangement does not relates or extends the traditional 'form' or 'image' of vernacular dwellings.



Fig.102: The rear service stair.

Note: modesty of materials.

But materials and detailing are essentially simple and marked by an apparent modesty. Therefore proves an abstract relation with vernaculars while ensuring that simplicity can be both stunning and practical.

Thus overall feeling of immense calm and sense of timeless could be identified as most significant characteristics of the house.

**Analysis of the prototypes: their interpretations
of vernacular, in relation to architectural expressions.**

Type	description.	Architectural Expression	Remarks in relation to contemporary Interpretations of architecture.
<p>APPROACH 1</p>	<p>Regenerating the Traditional vernacular.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often use vernacular heritage, or semi replicas of traditional forms of traditional forms and elements. • Display the wisdom of traditional crafts. • Evoke contents from traditional sources to attract tourists. • Distinguish from 'kitsch' agglomeration of vernacular details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History and cultural forms are commercialized. • Change the genuine meaning of cultural products. • Authenticity or origins can be put in to doubt.
		<p align="center">General remarks on the interpretations of vernacular.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Most preliminary way of interpretation of vernacular * Resulted to preserve the vernacular language of architecture through ensuring a perceived historical continuity. 	
<p>APPROACH 2</p>	<p>Reinventing tradition 2a) case study 1</p>	<p>KARUNARATHNE HOUSE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More solidity and permanent in construction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional details and elements are used merely for decoration.

2b) case study 2

- Often use of traditional arts and crafts.
- Dignity of building, restricts the physical relation to landscape but extensive use of glass openings, provide a strong visual link with surrounding.

POLONTHALAWA HOUSE.

- House that gently embrace the undulating landscape.
- * Natural landscape elements (rock boulders/ trees) are part and parcel of the design.
- Deep overhanging roofs protect the open verandahs and pathways.
- Has rather organic and primal quality.
- Modesty is achieved by using local materials with natural colours and textures.
- Bulky rcc. Ridge carries the weights of the roof.

- Finishes, materials and technology indicate a very strong affinity to post modernism.

- Demonstrate an attempt at a creative incorporation of vernacular elements.
- * Less concern has taken to produce precise details.
- Enhance the quality of improvisation.
- The heavy rcc. Beams and roof supports, trace the notion of post modernism.

General remarks on the interpretations of vernacular.

- * Unlike the approach 1 , mere replication of traditional forms is not a characteristic of approach 2.
- * In approach 2a , certain qualities of vernacular has acquired by using traditional elements in a creative manner.
- * But vague tendency towards modernism caused to degenerate the qualities of impermanence and modesty.

APPROACH 3

Extending tradition Case study 3

ENA DE SILVA HOUSE.

- Intimate center courtyard displays the center and sense of openness.
- Carefully proportioned spaces acquired the relative sense of human scale.
- The sensitive interplay of landscaped and architecture has acquired a great harmony.
- Using local materials, their natural colours and textures prevents modesty.
- Deals with the climate through the use of deep overhanging roofs.



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- Architectural language that seeks out a continuity with local traditions.
- Demonstrates a skillful handling of traditional features in a moderated manner to suite modern sensibilities.

Case study 4

PRIMALI PARANAGAMAGE HOUSE.

- A simple range of natural colours and materials employed by acquiring both modest and subtle.
- The details are done in a minimalist aesthetic by expressing an allusive vocabulary of architectural details.
- The interlacing of the inside and the outside acquired a harmonious balance.
- Double height intimate front verandah acts as an intermediate space and generates a grate sense of arrival.

- The work which is profoundly evocative of tradition.
- The residence is noted for its blend of modern sensibilities and traditional vernacular characteristics.
- Indeed the house is an exercise in the continuity of vernacular spirit, within the contemporary context.

- Less enclosure facades are protected by wide extension of the eaves.
- Though the roof acts as a dominant feature, yet acquires a relative sense of human scale.

General remarks on the interpretations of vernacular.

- Unlike the approach 1, this is an approach that is inventive in accommodating a modern lifestyles and exploiting, local technology and materials.
- * Architecturally, such approaches draw much inspiration from vernacular traditional forms and features.



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Ena De Silva's house is one of the best examples that consolidate many earlier attempts at extending the imagery of a typical Kandyan peasant's dwellings.

APPROACH 4

**Reinterpreting tradition
Case study 5**

LUNAWA HOUSE.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses a language of architectural modernity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No attempt to extend the traditional vocabulary of architecture. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents more solidity in construction, but a simple range of colours and materials are employed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though it serves modern sensibilities, yet acquires a great allusive sense of vernacular tradition. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express a modern spatial arrangement yet embarks a strong sense of 'center and openness'. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It tries to understand the traditional typology and attempts to modify the representational systems it has inherited. |

- Less outer verandahs, but acquires a great harmony with nature.
- The modern Rcc. Column and beam structure is fused with the traditional elements of pillars; timber paneled doors and etc, in a refreshing way.
- The central pool as the main focus of the house, has inspired from traditional vernacular dwellings, which is transformed in a refreshing manner.
- Instead of traditional gable roofs, Rcc. Flat slabs can be observed, thus roof does not acts as a dominate feature.

Case study 6



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JAYAKODY HOUSE.

- An invigorating architectural idiom is used.
- Overall composition of the spaces is much engaged in the ideas of architectural modernity.
- Street elevation is modest and restrained in its details, while revealing little of the interior.
- By having number of smaller courtyards, the entire living areas of the house, has acquired a grate sense of openness.
- The traditional materials are employed in a refreshing manner by fusing with modern materials of steel, glass and reinforced concrete.

- The spatial arrangement does not extend the 'image' or 'form' of the vernacular dwellings.
- * Instead a rather humanistic interpretation of modernism could be identified in combining the contemplative essence of vernacular traditions.
- * The residence shows a laconic quality where less is taken to be definitely more.
- * Combine a sense of vernacular characteristics of modesty, simplicity and its symbiotic nature of its own contemporaneity.

- Detailing is essentially simple and understandable.
- Overall simple pleasure of openness, light and materials can be identified as most significant characteristics of the house.

General remarks on the interpretations of vernacular.

- * Unlike the approach 2 and 3 this is an approach which based on using contemporary idiom of architecture.
- * Thus instead of reinventing or extending the traditional vernacular image, this approach attempt to recover deeper layers through fundamentals abstracted from tradition.
- * Thus approaches of 2 and 3 are recognized as primary level approaches that tend to abstract initial images and meanings of vernacular, that can be identified as tangible.
- * But the approach 4 (reinterpreting tradition) could be identified as intangible and abstract.
- * Thus reinterpreting tradition could be recognized as 'secondary level' approach that more meaningful with keen awareness of its own contemporaneity.
- * Geoffrey Bawa's Jayakody house is one of the best examples, that synthesis such an approach.
- * It is significant that most of the works in this approach shears a common laconic quality, where minimalism is greatly appreciated.
- * The fundamentals of openness, and close to nature, is also transformed in refreshing ways.



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Conclusion

Conclusion.

In this competitive world, architects are continually confronted with new design directions. It is interesting to notice that only in recent years architects have begun to have a noticeable influence on each other.

In fact many progressive architects curiously investigate the issue of loss of a sense of place in majority of today's formal architecture. Hence their attention is gradually being focussed on the refreshment of contemporary formal architecture with intimate characteristics.

As a result their innovative works are concerned with the understanding of a specific identity that acquaints with its temporal and geographical context. This is not an easy task for architects, where working in a new global environment, with the complex attitudes of individual and collective identities.

How ever a notion of identity has always been complexly related to traditions, that carries a connection of backwardness, past or history. Infact their works attempt to embrace the positive features of tradition, in their search for new answers

.Thus they need to be;

“adapted , transformed and integrated in to our fast evolving value system”

William, S. 1993, p.9

In this sense the vernacular tradition was identified as a one source which could be utilized for the contemporary practice, in order to re-employ a strong intimate identities in a peace of architecture.

The works, which selected in this research, are some of the tangible manifestations of such impulses. Within a larger framework of concerns, such works are categorized in the last chapter of the study that is for identifying the general ways and means of their formal interpretations.

By investigating such interpretations, the author has discovered that, certain fundamental characteristics of traditional vernacular, are transformed, consolidated or modified in refresh ways. On other hand some fundamental characteristics of vernacular, can be identified as abandon.



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The author argues, that such works have abandon the idea of replanting or copying the elements of traditional vernacular, Thus they does not seems to be interested in replicating the traditional vernacular forms with modern building materials that authenticity or originals may be put in to doubt.

Thus it is fact that return to the kind pre industrial era is unthinkable or meaningless. Therefore, such architect's works represent new profound ways of dealing with vernacular for contemporary practice, while answering the challenges of the time, space and people.

While analyzing them, some interpretations of vernacular could be identified as preliminary level while another approaches can be

categorized as secondary level or ways, which explore deeper than only looking at the skin.

The most preliminary level works of such interpretations attempt to embrace elements or meanings which embedded in the traditional vernaculars by using them in a modified manner. But, they essentially differ from the regressive approach to the traditional vernacular or the approaches of kitsch or pastiche.

Thus it can be seen that mainly vernacular elements of central courtyard, outer verandahs and gable roofs have been promoted or incorporated in a modified manner. Yet ensuring a keen awareness of its own contemporaneity.



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Ena de silva's house can be identified as one of the striking exemplary work of such an approach. It could be seen as far more refreshed and innovative piece of architecture that inspired from a simple kandyan peasant's dwelling. (Courtyard)


An articulation of carefully proportioned spaces, with a central courtyard and the extensive use of local materials and textures of the house seek out continuity with vernacular traditions. The use of deep over hanging roofs and open intimate verandahs could also be identified as elements that are inspired & transformed from vernaculars. Thus such works continue to hold much of the earlier vocabulary of architecture.

At the secondary level approach a number of architects intensely interest to combine, traditional images with their own highly personal aesthetics and their attitudes of mind. They have found more meaningful ways to extend the presence of vernacular traditions in a more abstract manner.

Though designed with a severe modernist restraint, yet they are strongly anchored in traditional vernacular qualities.

Here the author argues that the best exemplars of such an approach concern of distilling essentials or contemplative essences of vernacular, which can be briefly conclude as;

* **Share a common laconic quality.**

 There is a simultaneous acknowledgment of the present complex needs, and the ideas of appreciation the statement of minimalism. Thus such works express a trend where less is taken to be definitely more.

* **Modesty of materials.**

Though an invigorating idiom is used for many of such works, yet continue to hold the true nature of materials. Therefore not only the traditional materials but also modern materials are employed in a refreshing manner while restraining in its details. (without exuberance or exuggeration)

* **Modesty scale and sense of openness.**

It is significant that most of such works express a modern idiom of architecture, yet spaces are skillfully proportioned to acquire a great sense of human scale. These works also demonstrates, in the most poetic manner possible; that simple pleasures of openness & light have a lyrical power to more the inner self.

* **Simplicity can be both stunning and practical.**

Material & details are essentially simple.

It is noticeable that within the self-conscious situation, architects find freedom to synthesis such sense or qualities through their contemporary practice.



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In the works of Geoffrey Bawa, Jayakody house is noteworthy for sensitively evoking such intimate senses of vernacular through appropriating the language of architectural modernity.

More or less all such meaningful interpretations embark, certain ways and means of fusion of such intimate qualities will open new doors for a meaningful contemporary practice.

Thus,

“It is the flexibility, not the fixity of the past that makes it so useful in enhancing our senses of ourselves: our interpretations of it alter according to the perspectives and needs of present and future moments.”

Lowenthal, D. 1993, p184

It is noteworthy that convincing synthesis of the best of vernacular and modernism are rare, but, Geoffrey Bawa , Anura Ratnawibushana, C. Anjalendran and few other skillful architects have produced and interesting kind of domestic works, that are difficult to ignore.

Robert Powell also points out that,

“the best exemplars of contemporary houses are being established by the synthesis of the traditional vernacular and modernity.”

Powell, R. 1996,p11




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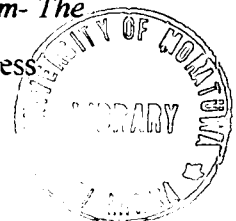


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