



THE ORIGINAL HOUSE IN KERALA (LEFT) WAS TRANSPORTED TO GURGAON WHERE IT NOW STANDS IN ALL ITS GLORY (RIGHT)

Built in Kerala, brought to city

Architect Pradeep Sachdeva Loved The House So Much That He Carted It Across 2,500Km To Gurgaon

Vineet Gill | TNN

Situated among its plain and modest surroundings in the quiet village of Sadhrana – a 30-minute drive from the city – architect Pradeep Sachdeva's house stands out. But the features of this two-storey building – the sloping and shingled roof, the antique timbre and stone exteriors – seem decidedly out of place here. For all its idyllic air and general attractiveness, the house still seems like it doesn't quite belong to this setting. It would have fitted better in a slightly more tropical climate perhaps, and that too many years ago. It is almost as if someone hauled the whole structure up from where it originally was, and dropped it here, in this village in Gurgaon. Well, it just so happens that someone actually did.

Until about last year, this 350-year-old structure stood in the Mepral village in Kerala and was the ancestral home to Sachdeva's friend and fellow architect, George Oommen. It was after Oommen decided to emi-

grate to the US, and was this close to selling the place for scrap, that Sachdeva thought of bringing it, piece by piece to this village in Gurgaon.

"It was the year 2010. George said that he might bring the house apart and sell the wood. And on a whim I said I will have it. I came up with this idea of shifting the house to my farm, and retaining its look and feel," Sachdeva said.

The old house was made of timbre and laterite – a type of stone found in Kerala. "The stone bit was built separately here. And the construction team disassembled all the timbre, every nut and bolt, and brought it here," he said. It took three semi-trailer trucks to get the timbre slabs, pillars and some old stone tiles here, and a special team of seven people, well-versed with the old craft of house-making, was also brought over: "We found a team of these traditional carpenters in Kerala, the last of a vanishing breed, and brought them here to reassemble the pieces."

The stone parts were separately constructed, faithful to the original



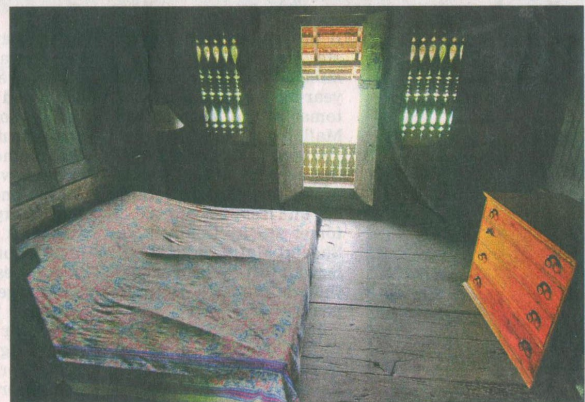
Photos: Shashwat Malik

RETRO HOUSE: The old-style locks and the wooden furniture lend the house an antique look

blueprints, and it took weeks to oil and polish the old timbre. "It was like a jigsaw puzzle. It took about a month and a half to build the stone base. The wood pieces were put together in about eight weeks." And then, after some plumbing and wiring work, the old house found a new home.

Things inside the house have been appropriately arranged; everything has an antique feel to it, even the specially selected and recently bought furniture.

An old and rusty spiral staircase connects the first floor – a stone replica of the old building – to the second, which is entirely made of wood brought from Kerala. There are old-style locks and hinges stuck upon the squatting door frames. Creaking timbre floor panels lead to two small



bedrooms, one of them furnished with a four-post bed. It all conveys a sense of a different place in a different time.

"It is just a beautiful house, and liv-

ing in it has a certain feel to it. It is more rooted in the culture where it came from, unlike a lot of modern architecture we see in Gurgaon," Sachdeva said.

