

Refurbishment of Navalar Villa, Nallur Jaffna

Posted on



A restored Jaffna residence transformed through light, ventilation, and landscape, framing outdoor living at the heart of the home.

Designed by architects Chinthaka Wickramage and Shanthini Balasubramaniam, Navalar Villa in Nallur draws inspiration from the vernacular architecture of the Jaffna Peninsula's towns and villages, while celebrating the region's rich cultural heritage. A dilapidated old manor house on the Jaffna peninsula, with warped roof beams, warped door windows, and many structural defects, was presented to the architects for refurbishment by clients who were returning to Sri Lanka after escaping to overseas due to the 25-year-old North East civil war in Sri Lanka.

The architects decided to replace all warped roof beams and door windows during the refurbishment, introducing cantilevered bay windows on the swimming pool side, a novel idea to create an interesting three-dimensional composition on the swimming pool side elevation, to be overlooked from the upper floor over the ground-floor veranda areas. Public areas of the villa are located centrally, while bedrooms are oriented to provide the best possible views of the swimming pool and rear garden.



The dining room reflects the villa's philosophy of tropical living.

This house asks how one lives an outdoor life. How does one work with the light, the wind, the environment, and foot traffic in a specific space? How do you frame the surrounding environment within the architecture? The outside environment is something you can almost feel, with the air passing through and it so immediate.

The house is unified by a double-pitched roof, supported by basic concrete and steel supports, and is composed of brick masonry walls and wooden, glazed wall planes, rendered seamless with painted plaster on the exterior. Glass-timber door windows become operable facades for controlling the interior climate, tuning with the long

tropical monsoon and framing views of the rear garden.



Sunlit timber stairs connect airy living spaces across the villa.

The extended roof eave is carefully cantilevered to provide protection from the sun, wind, and rain.

In contrast upper floor is more private and intimate. Bedrooms provide spaces to sleep, rest, read and reflect. The upper floor is positioned in mutual tension with the guarantee of simultaneous intimacy and isolation so essential to the domestic interior.

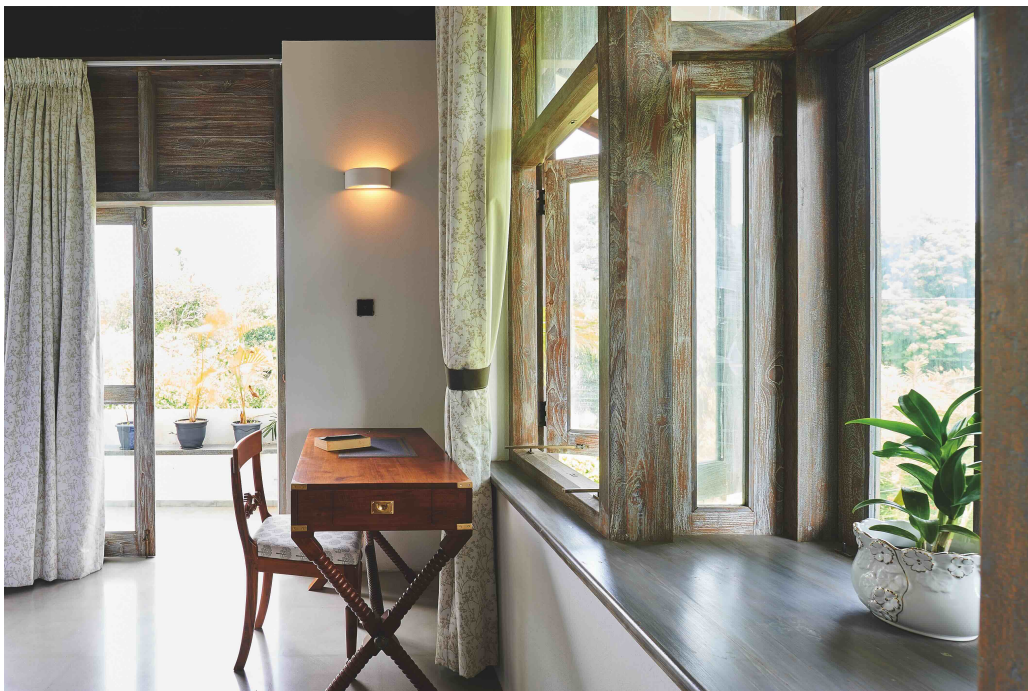
The combination of materials and landscapes, along with the 'thin' section, facilitates cross-ventilation and allows the house to maintain its own cool microclimate in otherwise extreme hot and humid surroundings of the Jaffna Peninsula. Special architectural features of the villa include dark timber-columned verandas, white brick masonry walls, raised 'thinnai plinths' as built-in seats, and steeply sloping clay-tiled roofs. The garden is landscaped with lush green vegetation, using native trees and foliage. Decorative floral panels, held by a steel skeleton framework, were introduced to the car porch entry gable to celebrate the 'sense of entry' to the residence. Colorful recycled antique door and window panels, salvaged from old Jaffna houses, were introduced to the staircase cantilevered landing, overlooking the swimming pool side, as a feature wall. Raised podium 'thinnai' at the entrance veranda and under the staircase landing give a certain Jaffna vernacular flavor to the otherwise contemporary-styled Jaffna residence in Nallur, the Hindu religious cultural hub of the Jaffna peninsula.

Refurbishment of Navalar Villa, Nallur Jaffna



Bedroom suite at Navalar Villa.

The interior is tastefully furnished with easy chairs in the verandas and four-poster beds in the bedrooms. Alternatively, patterned triangular gable end panels were installed on the two gable ends of the long elevation, giving a contemporary modern aesthetic to the otherwise traditionally inclined residence, in line with the vernacular architectural idioms of the Jaffna peninsula. Special lighting design incorporating timber columns fixed 'up and down lighting' was introduced to supplement for the lack of originally available lighting fixtures of the residence. Existing cut cement floor which was in very bad state, was tiled over with pressed-cement tiles, maintaining the original residence interior ambiance. Calicut clay-tiled roofs, white-painted walls, dark timber columns, cement-handled ceiling soffits, and gray-washed doors and windows give a certain contemporary aesthetic to the otherwise traditional residence.



A tranquil study corner framed by timber windows, filled with light, breeze, and garden views.