

Shrikant Joshi Endowment Fund – 2006

Traditional Bamboo House Construction at Baviyoor

To revive and reinvigorate the traditional knowledge and essential dwelling patterns in harmony with nature in the lower reaches of North Eastern Slopes of the Nilgiris which is home for the Alu Kuruma community the traditional way of building the Bamboo House was initiated by the people of Baviyoor village.

A team of experts who have in the past have built the Bamboo House for their families who have not since had the opportunity to build another Bamboo House came together to plan and build a Bamboo House with the basic simple yet fully spacious place. The purpose is not only the revival and demonstration of the techniques to the younger generation but also to provide a place for the youth to train and learn the cultural activities and traditional rituals like music, dance, bamboo craft, honey hunting and marriage and death ceremonies.

Traditional Way of Building a Bamboo House and the amenities around it

The size of the house usually depends on the family size. Each house is at a reasonable distance from each other with space around the house for growing vegetables, chillies, bamboo, greens and medicinal plants.

The Bamboo House built in Baviyoor has been modeled in the traditional style with the following features which are unique to the architecture.

The main door is East facing to allow generous amount of sunlight and also helps in rising early. The small loft above the cooking place called *Attal* is built to store seeds in mud pots. This is a proven method to keep seeds without pest attack. It is also used to store firewood.

The roof of the Bamboo House is thatched using grass collected from the nearby areas. The only other material used is bamboo. Earthwork is done with the soil from the building area and stones are also collected from areas in the vicinity. The roof is built low to protect against rain and wind which may dislodge the roof. The thatched roof also keeps the house warm in winter and cool in summer.

A small foyer on one side of the house provides space for the people to play their traditional wind instruments called *Buhiri and Qualu*. It not only provides entertainment but also helps in keeping vigil against straying wild animals.

There is a separate fire place at the back of the hall which keeps the house warm and the traditional musical instrument set called *Arekol* are hung above. The smoke from the fireplace keeps the musical instruments in good condition to play.

The space in front of the main door is extended to make a sit out called *Dhinne*. This place is used by women during menstrual periods. The *Dhinne* also accommodates guests to sit down to have a relaxed conversation.

Traditional incense called *Dhupa* (Canarium resin) is smoked in the house regularly to keep it free from insects and pesticides.

Other traditional facilities like *Beesu Kallu, Oralu, Onakkai, and Perangi Kal* are yet to be added. Bamboo vessels like *Biduru Ande, Darisi, Kukke, Goode, Mora, and Sede* will be added in the coming festival season.

Different techniques are used for joineries and wall building but surprisingly the tools used are sickle and large knives. The binding/tying is done with forest vines and no nails are used anywhere.

The walls are plastered with mud and the flooring is made with rammed earth. The doors and windows are also made with bamboo.

This house has generated enormous interest in the community especially among the younger generation who are keen to learn and continue the rich traditions and culture of the Alu Kuruma indigenous community.

The floor plan of the house is given below.

