



of his native colleagues home for a drink, it was upon the verandah that Muriel generally arranged things; and after dinner, it was upon the verandah that the memsahib, already sketching out her entry for the day's journal, felt herself to be most truly amidst the romance of Old India. In short, the verandah was a sort of bridge: it linked the rigid and the conventional life of the imperialist with the lost liberties of home; it linked the rose-petals of the drawing room with the dust and dang fires of the land outside...

Verandahs evolved into a successful solution for efficient climate control in the hot and humid tropics. It prevented the sharp rays of the sun from directly striking the walls of the living accommoda-

tion. Suspended bamboo chilmans and fragrant vetiver tatties made

**"The verandah evolved as an efficient climate control solution for the hot summers. It prevented direct sunlight from striking the walls of the house and kept it cool"**

the torrid summers more tolerable. During the monsoon, lashing rain

was prevented from entering the doors and windows while the occupant could continue using the verandah for semi-outdoor activities even as it poured the proverbial cats and dogs.

The relevance of the verandah continues to this day. It is here that a visitor perceives the first impression of a home. A welcoming warmth, a guardian Ganesh, toranas and rangoli set the mood of the house. Verandahs can be colonnaded or arched as the ambience demands. Flooring is best kept to humble red-oxide or natural stone such that the dust carried in by footwear does not show up imprints. Sited adjacent to drawing and dining rooms and separated from them by folding doors, verandahs provide a conveniently

expandable entertainment space. Garden furniture in cane, wrought iron or park-bench wood, lanterns, swings and hammocks, birdcages and aquariums find a naturally appropriate place on a verandah. Simple accessories like a magazine rack, footwear shelves, umbrellas stands and a decorative box to contain garden implements add utilitarian value to the space.

Gardens drift gently into the verandah. Pergolas in front, fragrant creepers, ornamental house plants in urns, cascading ferns in hanging baskets, bonsai's, statuary, wind chimes and bells are ways of extending formal indoor spaces into the garden in a delightfully transitory manner. Sip your steam-

ing cuppa on a misty winter dawn let a magazine lure you into mid-morning siesta; meditate to Megh Malhar as monsoon clouds gather savour a sundowner will Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. Create a verandah to pamper your sensibilities. Its spatial quality and timelessness makes this the most romantic part of the house.



**Yeshwant Kamamurthy** is a consulting architect. Please send your queries with detailed drawing to [property\\_times@indiatimes.com](mailto:property_times@indiatimes.com)

# Romancing the verandah

The etymology of the word "verandah" is fascinatingly curious about which even Hobson Jobson is ambiguous. Hop-scotching into English from Portuguese, Sanskrit, Persian and Hindustani this all familiar word is formally defined by the Oxford dictionary of architecture to mean "a light open gallery, with a sloping roof carried by slender columns or posts, attached to a building, often in front of the windows of the principal rooms, affording shelter from the sun as well as a pleasant seating area with access from French windows."

The origins of the verandah lie in traditional Indian architecture. In the various forms of the court-

yard houses, the peripheral covered space served basically the same purpose of what the colonials came to turn inside out and institutionalise as an essential feature of vernacular domestic architecture. Writing in the Stones of the Empire, Jan Morris has this to say about the verandah: "It was in some ways the most important part of the bungalow, fulfilling all sorts of socio-economic functions. First, it was the one place the imperialists had just for messing around. Everything was easygoing about the verandah. Its furniture was meant for lounging. Its floor was covered, if covered at all, with the memsahib's least valuable carpets, or with Chinese matting. Its pictures and trophies were beloved

rather than precious. Funny old chairs lay round about, bamboo couches, rocking chairs sometimes, or sofas with wide arms for the accommodation of glasses. Potted plants were everywhere, and here the little dogs of the household were indulged, lying around on sofas or begging tidbits at breakfast.

And secondly, the verandah was the place where the British woman, in particular, could feel some tentative personal contact with the alien world of India outside. Here hawkers and tradesmen might bring their wares, without actually entering the house proper. The watchman sometimes slept upon the verandah; the tailor was often to be seen cross-legged there in the afternoon. When Mr Tapworth felt obliged to bring one

