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## **An old home gets a new beginning**

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Ancestral homes always have beautiful sepia-toned memories attached to them. For the younger generation it brings back images of summer holidays spent playing with siblings and for the generation that has spent almost their entire life living in it, there is a story to tell about every room. Good times or bad, a home has been a part of every family's story.

However, the growing trend is to break down these houses and build modern structures or sell them because a family is unable to take care of the house. Pradeep Sachdev, an architect from the city, chanced upon one such traditional house in Kerala that was over 300 years old. The family was unable to maintain it and wanted to sell it to someone who would preserve it. The first floor of the house which was a granary was made of wood and they were afraid that people were interested in the house only for the timber.

Pradeep bought the house and took it upon himself to transport every beam, rafter and tile of the original house to Haryana and rebuild the wooden structure of the first floor on a plot of land neighbouring the Sultanpur bird sanctuary.

The entire process of transporting the house has been documented in a film directed by Sudhesh Unniraman titled 'A house from Kerala' that was screened at the India International Centre on Thursday.

As iron nails were not used over 300 years ago the wooden structure was built like a large jigsaw puzzle with each piece fitting into another. Every part that had to be dismantled with care, labelled, transported and reassembled.

Over the years a few tiles had been damaged but over 80 per cent of the wood was fit enough to be reused. A traditional carpenter who understood the craftsmanship had to be employed to knock, shake and cajole every rafter out.

Pradeep wanted to make his house a living space and therefore made a few changes like incorporating a toilet in one of the rooms and building a spiral staircase.

The film echoes sentiments of various people who have seen their homes destroyed and the timber used to make either furniture or burnt as firewood. The discussion that followed after the screening of film saw people praise Pradeep for his efforts but it also raised many important questions about whether the wood would survive in the new ecosystem.

Answering a question about how expensive the process was, Pradeep said that the cost of transporting the house was less than that of constructing a modern house of similar size in the same location.

Pradeep says although many in Delhi at first thought that transporting of the house was probably a mad thing to do many in Kerala have done the same to preserve a part of their heritage and let the memory of the house and the craftsmanship live on for a few more generations.

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