

FAQ's

1. Write a few lines on Agraharams

- An Agraharam or Agrahara is the name given to the Brahmin quarter of a heterogeneous village or to any village inhabited by Brahmins. Agraharams were also known as Chaturvedimangalams.
- Agraharams: The name literally means "a garland of houses". It originates from the fact that the agraharams have lines of houses on either side of the road and the temple to the village god at the centre, thus resembling a garland around the temple.
- According to the traditional Hindu practice of architecture and town planning, an agraharam is held to be two rows of houses, on either side of a road that runs North to South, with temples of Shiva and Vishnu at either ends

2. Discuss the planning aspects of the Agraharams

- The evolution of this particular architectural typology may also speak about the social position of the Brahmin community. Even though these migrant Brahmins wielded power in the caste ridden society, they were always a minority when compared to the local indigenous population. Moreover, when they moved into a new place and made their settlements, there was always a tendency amongst the members of the communities to settle together to ensure safety.
- Another reason behind this was that in most cases the early migrants to a particular place may be the members of a same family, and thus when they settle down in an alien land, they automatically evolved into a close knit community whose principles were based on strict religious norms.

3. Describe a single dwelling unit of the Agraharam

- The agrahara were usually followed a linear planning, quite in contrast to the arrangement of rooms around the courtyard as in the traditional Kerala houses.
- The planning and architecture of these two housing patterns have evolved over time taking into consideration various parameters like the local climate conditions, availability of local building materials and the skill employed in the construction.
- The courtyard has some religious association too, traditionally in Vastu, the open courtyard in a house is considered as the 'devasthanam', The most sacred place assigned to the gods and hence construction are not allowed there.
- The sacred tulsi planted and worshipped in the center of the courtyard.
- The court has provisions of taps for ablution and also outlets for water drainage which takes the rainwater outside.

- Another courtyard, larger in size is seen next to the kitchen and toilets which functions as a washing and bathing space.

4. Write about the cultural aspects of Agraharams

- The sense of sharing the spaces is then best exhibited in the design of the puramthinna; the long connected verandah's running in front of all the agraharams. The puramthinna was an interstitial space which connected the street and the interiors of the house and this was also the place where religious as well as philosophical debates were held. The culture of living together and sharing has also played an important role in the everyday life of the inhabitants of the agraharams.
- They have bhajana madhoms (prayerhalls) which also was a place where the people from the settlement gathered for the festivals and during important occasions.
- The agraharams were introvert settlements, often open to the members of the particular caste group, however within the introvert settlement there were designed built and open spaces that well catered to the needs of the settlers
- The streets were also a part of the life of the Brahmin communities as many of the important religious functions and marriage feasts were conducted in the streets.
- Arippodikolam'- a painted prayer. It is believed that drawing a kolam in front of the house brings prosperity. Moreover, they provide food for insects and birds.

5. Discuss the construction methods of dwelling units in Agraharam

- All houses shared a common wall and were made of 'Cheekkal katta', a strong locally available building material, these blocks were cemented with lime plaster and the plinth in which the house stood was made of large granite blocks, which were laid in a special manner, which is very efficient that the centuries old houses had not been affected by the earthquakes.
- In old days the roofs were thatched and the supporting pillars and mezzanine floors were made of timbre. Later thatch roofs were replaced by Mangalore tiles