

Enclosing the verandas with screens of intertwined palm leaves transforms the space. From an open passage between garden and house, the veranda becomes a self-contained room, cooler and earthier with the smell of matted leaves. When the skies occasionally clear for a short while, shadows have a different quality. Sunlight filters through chinks and cracks in the screens making speckled patterns on the floor. Afterward, when the rain starts again, the space turns back into a haven where people sit listening to the drumming on the tiles overhead.

The palm screens convert the veranda into a protected gathering place where children and adults alike spend their time playing, working, and talking. Kavita recalls the following:

Grandmothers tell the children stories and reminisce about their youth. Children play games, one in particular called “five shells,” which consists of each person taking it in turn to throw five seashells on the ground, and then toss one shell in the air and pick the rest up in different combinations, catching the falling shell as it comes down. Games like these occupy children for hours and keep them from getting under the feet of the adults as they work!

When the rains finally end and the palm screens are removed, the family again spreads into the yard; the veranda reverts to an open passage. All of India rejoices at the end of the monsoon in January.

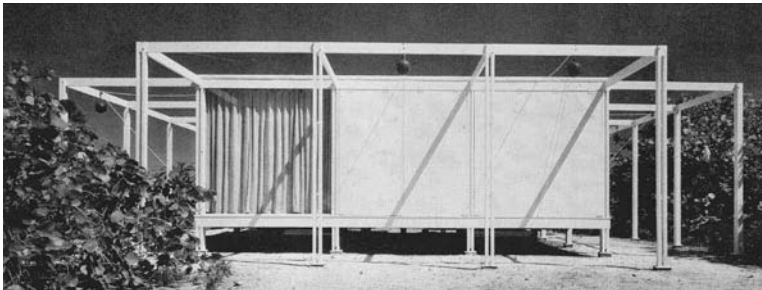
People celebrate the festival of “Pongal” marking both the withdrawal of the rain and also the harvest. These festivities are spread over several days and are linked with major house cleaning and burning of junk, symbolizing the destruction of evil. The family gets rid of all the useless things by throwing them into a bonfire that is lit before sunrise to symbolize a new beginning, getting rid of the old. The women and young girls trace decora-

tive designs or *rangolis* on the floors. On the day of the Pongal, newly harvested rice is cooked in homes to celebrate the generosity of the gods. Boys beat little drums called *Bhogi Kottus* and the young people dance around the *kollam* (rangoli pattern) with intricate steps.

Rodrigues's memories of family life illustrate how the traditional interrelation of house design with the rhythms of nature offers rich opportunities for the celebration of life in a place.

A FLORIDA GUESTHOUSE

A more up-to-date version of the adjustable screen is architect Paul Rudolph's design for a guesthouse. Lifted on stilts, and with an open plan, the scheme is typical for a warm and humid climate. What sets it apart is the surrounding cage with screens, adjustable for sunlight and ventilation.



Florida Guest House:
Design by Paul Rudolph with
surrounding cage and
adjustable screens.
(From *Solar Control and
Shading Devices*
by Olgay and Olgay
1957, 120f.)

