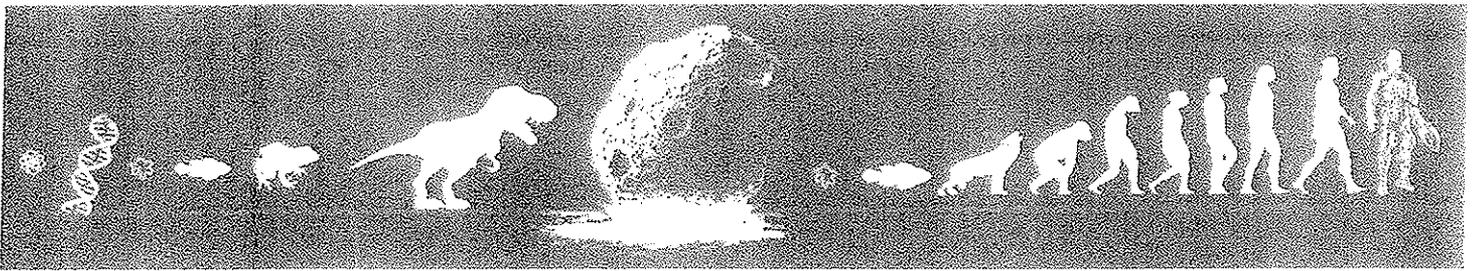


# A Perspective on the Home Market in India

By ARIF SHEIKH, executive director, House Full International



**D**arwin may have had the natural world in mind when he conceived his theory, but hey, he could well have been referring to the hybrid housing products that have changed the way we look at home ownership today.

The modern home gives to its spaces a feeling of being alive; it is a new and exciting concept in home fashion that has great style and yet is affordable. Designers develop liveable floor plans for the lifestyles of today, while reflecting upon and refining their

best ideas. Today's homes offer function, and openness to the outdoors (utilizing raw materials such as wood, concrete and glass) – providing an organic feel, both aesthetic and comfortable, that is compatible with the modern way of life. The concept of the modern home is characterized by a freedom from confinement and a strong connection to the outdoors.

Specialization in modernist architecture, homes with clean lines, open living spaces that flow into one another, a prominent indoor-outdoor relationship, and a progressive use of materials



Ancient hut



Modern House



are more in demand and sell faster. A focus on geometry and angular shapes is a hallmark of modern design. Above, light streaming through a soaring window creates an artistic statement and calls for attention to the interior architecture.

New home "species" have arisen out of developers' need to survive in a market made up of increasingly sophisticated and discerning buyers, brimming with an appetite for variety and new lifestyle experiences. No longer is the latter content with conventional terraces, bungalows, or apartments. Now they want gated communities with facilities; homes where they can be one with the environment; resort-style living; stratified units with gardens – you name it, they will go for it.

Space management has become a critical factor while going about the interior design of modern dwellings. This has resulted

in the evolution of what is known as modern design. Modern design occupies minimum space. Computer chairs, computer desks, magazine racks and retracted wheel systems are examples of the modular furniture.

The modern style is a clean, streamlined design that borrows its architecture ethos from the 1930s, with roots in the Bauhaus School of Design and Scandinavian design. It is characterized by polished surfaces, strong geometric forms, asymmetry. Expansive, unadorned windows are a key feature, with the exterior landscape. For colours, the modern style allows objects in the design to take centre stage. The modern style is predominant in a modern home with furniture and fabrics sporting neutral tone-on-tone

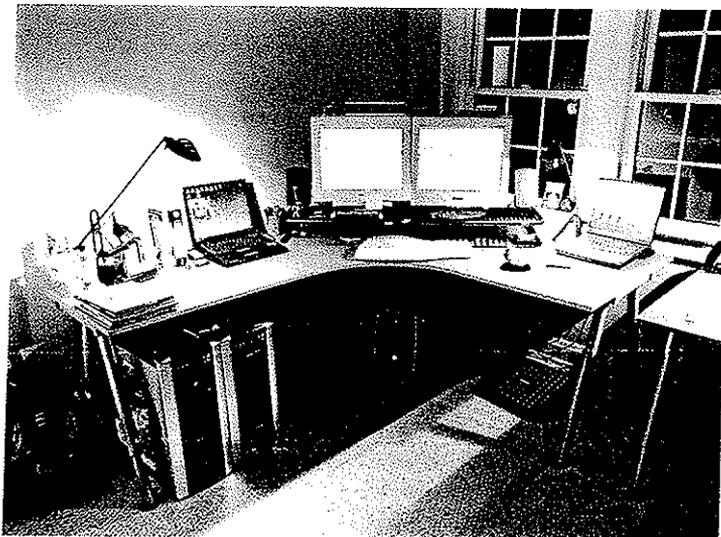
The strength of a person's attitude is his interest. In this sense, an interest is a manifest power – the force an attitude has towards manifestation in a person's behaviour. Moreover, interest consists of an active tendency, strength towards the realization of goals, and, thereby, gratification of desires. Thus, interest has both direction (the attitudinal goal) and magnitude (its power), and is, therefore, a vector. Interests are activated attitudes: goals a person actually seeks.

Selecting a perspective on our perception and interaction is called intentional humanism, which is oriented towards ourselves and underscore the freedom of creating our world, our space, and our home. The individual's dynamic psychological field forces perceived objects – interpreted sensations – into conformity with his belief structure, personality, and superordinate goal.

When we look at the degree of lifestyle satisfaction of individuals, we find that those who feel “individual freedom is respected” and “serious effort is rewarded,” have a high degree of lifestyle satisfaction. Meanwhile, many others who feel “individual freedom is not respected” and “serious effort is not rewarded,” are dissatisfied with their prevalent lifestyle.

## HOME OFFICES

The home office is becoming more of a necessity with the penetration of computers and the Internet in million homes

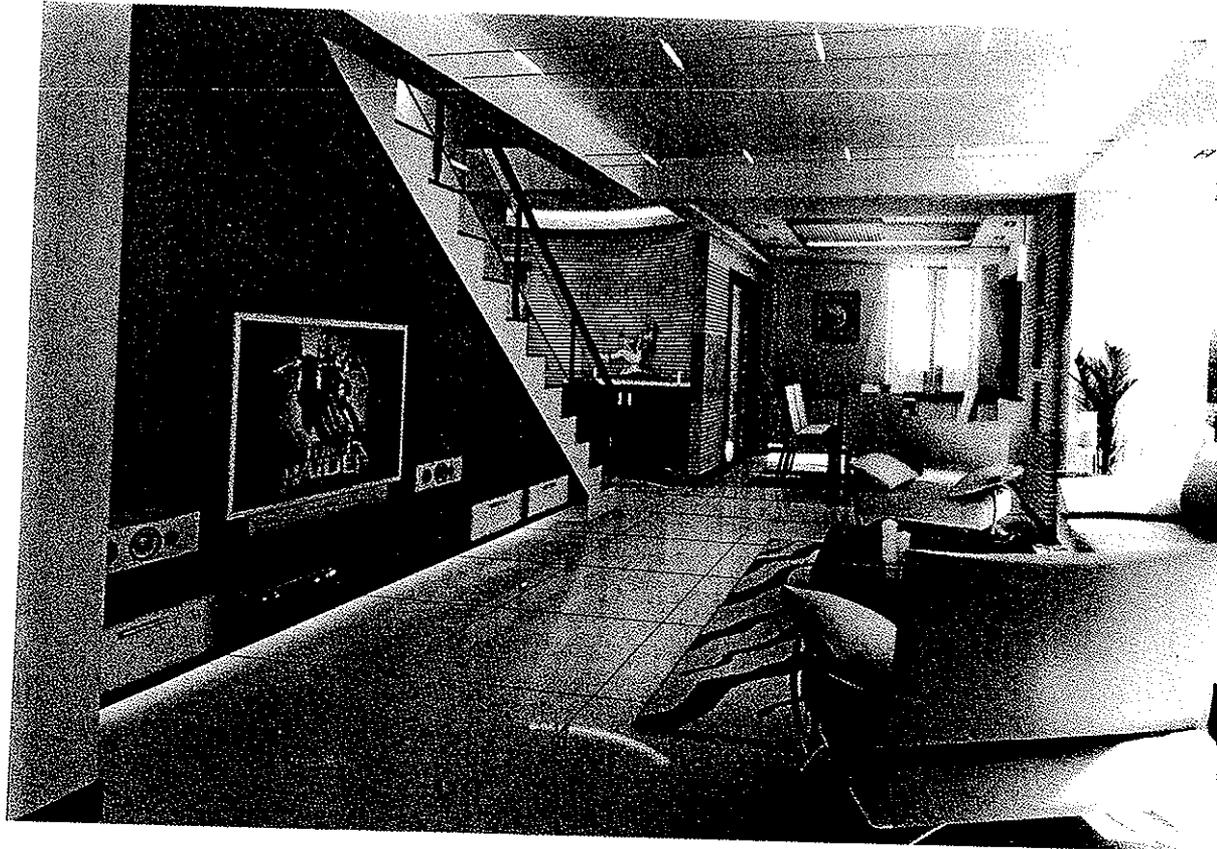


...the market means... more sophisticated and discerning buyers. No longer... content with conventional terraced bungalows, or apartments. No... they want gated communities... facilities; homes where they can... one with the environment; resort style living; stratified units with gardens; and suchlike.

across the country. Not only are stay-at-home moms finding telecommuting jobs, many are also starting home-based businesses.

It is a growing trend. Thousands of Indians are choosing to work from home. Many cite the increased flexibility that a home office provides and the time saved in long commutes as reasons. A home office requires more than a phone, a fax and a computer. When contemplating making the move or even setting up a handy place to work from within the house, it is time to create a comfortable office space.

Besides, having a home office is no longer just for those who work from home. A home office is the ideal space for conducting personal business like paying bills, researching the Internet, as well as providing storage for things like files, pens and paper. It also provides a congenial workspace for children to study and do their homework. Home offices can be workspaces tucked away in a large closet – writing desks nestled in the kitchen, in the corner of your family room, or even in the guest bedroom. There are a multitude of workspace options to choose from. There is no need to box oneself into the conventional office arrangement. For a home office, it is style and function that should be kept in mind.



## TECHNOLOGY

Technology has dramatically changed the family road trip and promises to un hinge family relationships in unknown ways.

People on the whole have responded by becoming defensive, desperate to prove the usefulness of the latest gadget they have purchased and how it saved them from some horrible fate. Addiction to technical novelties has become the new phenomenon of modern civilization. A lot of people spend too much time walking around stores that sell electronic goods, carefully examining everything from cell phones and iPods to fridges and washing machines. This addiction may become as strong as gambling when people aim all their efforts at getting hold of new devices, which are usually not cheap at all.

Underpinning such trends is the increased use of technology throughout the home and the garden, which ultimately adds to the property's value. Customers now ask for incorporating smart home control into designs, from intelligent lighting and multi-room audio with easy controls and iPod integration, to

waterproof, surround-sound home cinema commissions for their garden complete with subwoofers disguised as plant.

It is more important than ever to match technology with aesthetics. Trying to create a room that does the job of *Star Trek* and yet contains as much technology as possible is not easy, but it can be done. At the same time, it is important to make it flexible. Screens, plasma or digital, change dimension and fit together and the furniture does not start to

## MODERN HARDWARE

An assortment of innovations and adaptations in hardware. Chrome or nickel plating and the use of new techniques to chemically age or powder-coat hardware. Homeowner dozens of choices in finish and material (composites such as stainless steel, aluminium or polymer coating) allow a further range of opt

hardware is now cast or machine-stamped, although forged pieces are still very affordable.

Since the early part of the century, hardware has been increasingly standardized. Modern conversion door sets are designed to install pre-drilled doors with standard back sets. Electrical switches conform to a limited number of configurations. Screw threading and size is limited, so even the local supermarket may provide a solution for weekend warriors doing home improvement. Yet, standardization has not diminished the creative impulse; an enormous range of decorative styles, shapes, sizes and finishes is available, and even the most meticulous of designers can find something to suit their needs.

The international style emphasizes new technologies and materials; it has eliminated most decoration that is not utilitarian. The forms are geometric, and the roofs are typically flat. Glass is used in unconventional ways, sometimes even rounding a corner. Colours are simple and tend toward white or

grey, and materials are usually manmade, although wood is sometimes used as well.

#### DESIGN TRENDS

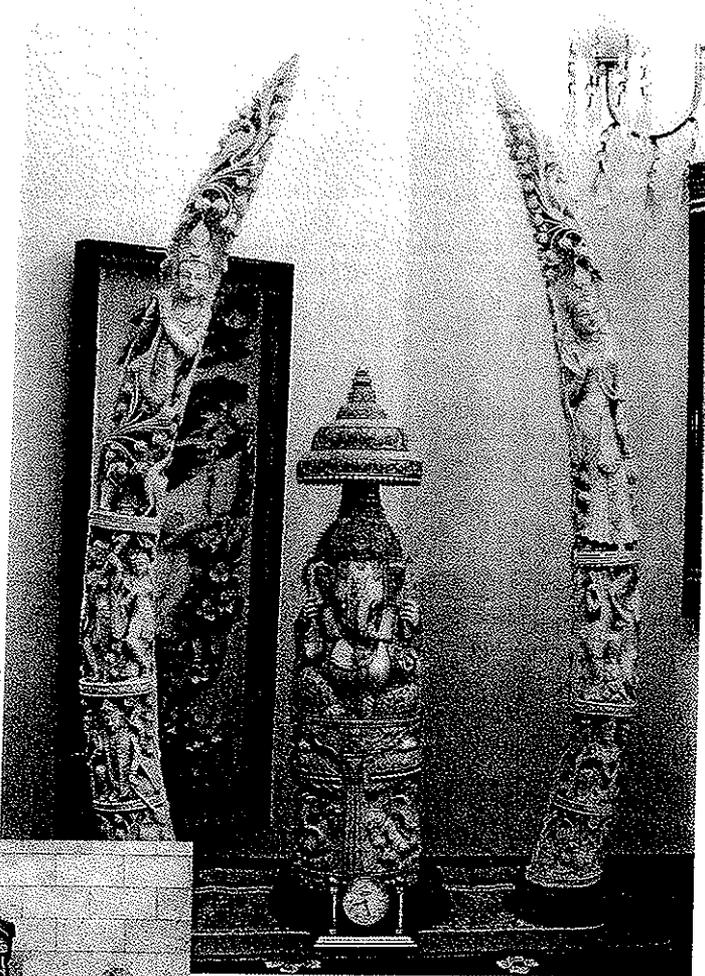
Furniture prices are getting competitive and generate less profit. At the same time, the degree of knowledge and the competence of furniture store staff seem to be decreasing.

What is missing is the creation of retailing concepts for a "whole" living feeling at home. Consumers are more "research wise" and "media wise" than in the past, and this is reflected in their purchasing behaviour. There is faster information that enables direct comparison, and at times consumers are better informed about the product they want to buy than the shop assistant.

The potential is in the increasing strength of the furniture retailing business as a sales channel of home fashion and lifestyle. This envisages a role change from furniture selling to "home interior consultation". The future is in creating emotion



Photographs: Vinod Aggarwal



experiences, not merely selling products. Definitely, the home fashion territory is a consumer-driven market.

**These aspects are emerging:**

- Space in urban areas is getting contracted and consumers are looking for multi-functional furniture.
- There is a growing need for comfort as well as long-lasting products, criss-crossed by a pattern bespeaking a

familiar seeking-one's-roots tendency.

- As a sense of one's roots gains ascendancy, the brief on house design is to perhaps have space for the family photo when

creating living spaces. It is important that a piece blends with a new one.

- Consumers want to satisfy pent-up desires for sophisticated colours used in unexpected combinations.
- In homeware fabric, the demand is for more choice in quality/quantity available. Traditional crafts are in demand, with its talent for appliqué, knotting and embroidery.
- There is an interesting combination of "ethnically inspired" looks – one can see African embroidery, and so on.
- To some extent, there is rejection of perfectionism. Consumers are looking for personal connection with the artefact, though human hands have touched it and especially for them.
- Colour palettes become more relaxed and fabrics have earthy textures due to shift in consumers' mind.
- About 50 per cent of the palette is decided by vintage, but is completely saturated the marketplace in the present but is updated so it looks new when placed on the wall. And there are always one or two colour palettes that are lifestyle-driven.
- Luxury is transitioning – it is no longer just opulent. It may still get attention, but not appeal any more.
- Adventure and experience are a big portion of luxury homeware.
- New categories making inroads include youth furniture, casual dining, home entertainment, and occasional seating.

In the last few years, people have started spending on furniture and furnishings in a manner similar to how they have traditionally done with their clothing aspirations. People change their home furniture like they change their wardrobe in obedience to changing fashions. For them lifestyle fashion is evolving as a mix of aesthetics, comforts, colours and textures. Brown sofas are outdated; people need lively colours like red and red. A few years ago, consumers rarely demanded

**Colour and design trends seen in 2005**

Furniture and creative ideas are still the key winners in the home design arena. However, the focus is shifting towards accessories and soft furnishings and evolving from traditional to contemporary.

home furnishing products, but now they are aware about new products and brands in the market. Yet, brand awareness in this segment is relatively still low. Many companies are adding two to three products in their product lines every year, and many are learning to work with innovative concepts. For this segment to grow meaningfully will require proper planning and strategy, more efforts, and a better-informed customer universe.

### AESTHETICS: NEW BUT IN THE OLD OLD VIA

It is about appreciating beautiful things and aspiring for a certain lifestyle. Fundamentally, it invites one to live one's life surrounded by stylish products. The art and accessories in a modern interior are extremely important and must exhibit striking shapes or forms to make a statement. Special pieces are called out with spotlights for visual impact.

"Sleek," "smooth" and "polished" are some of the words used to describe surfaces in a modern interior. Concrete, granite, and linoleum are used for flooring; and chrome and stainless steel are common accents on furniture and in the kitchen. A lacquered finish on kitchen cabinetry is common.

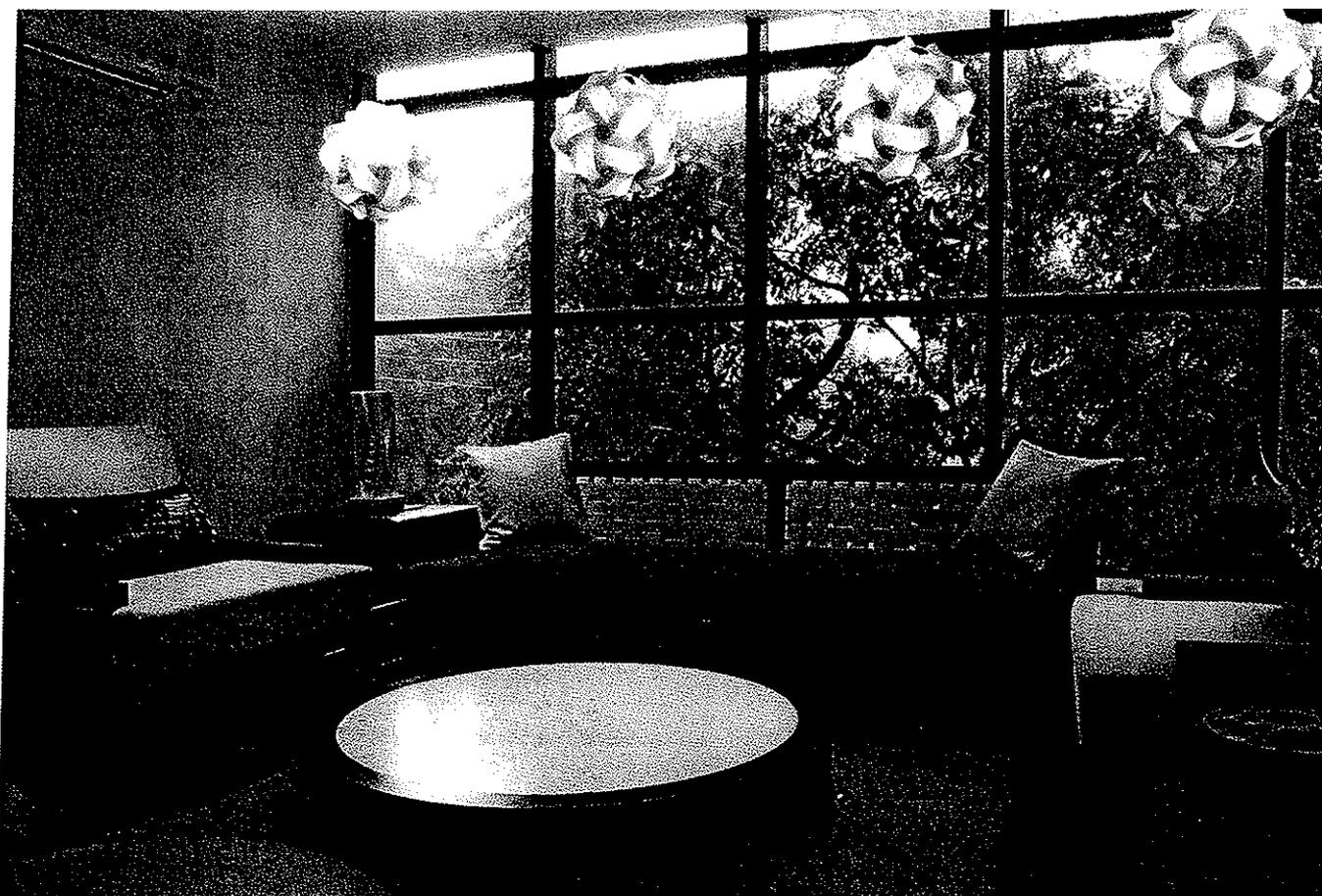
The water in the bathroom evokes memories of the sea, ocean, shells and fish, and hence, these are major patterns in the design making of bathroom accessories. Bed-and-bath items are also combined by designers.

The bedroom we are talking about could be that of an adult child, of two adults, or of two children, and the look of the bedroom in a house acquires a unique character. The aesthetic of a room has to be relevant to the psychological and physical requirements of its occupant(s).





Photographs: Vinod Aggarwal

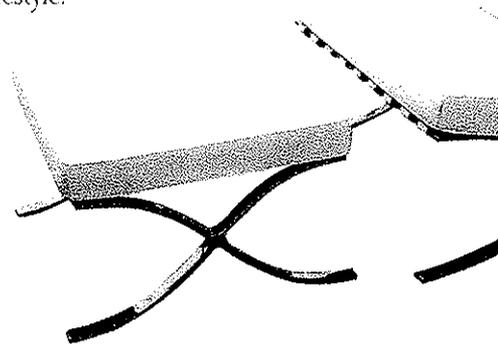


## FASHION INDIANASTYLE.COM AWARENESS

Interiors are becoming more and more inspired by fashion, and interior trends are reflecting fashion's current looks, though in a more diluted and less transient way. Glamour is one of the key inspirations this season. It permeates all aspects of design, from kitchens to winter gardens. Colours are stronger and bolder, with striking colour and material combinations becoming quite typical. A good representation of this is distressed antiqued mirror work surfaces.

There is a marked preference for hard metallic and glass materials over wood, symbolizing the machine age that we are living in. Chromium and stainless steel have become an inevitable part of modern furniture. Even sinks, drain boards and fireplaces are being made from these metals. They are easy to maintain and more durable than wood.

Tabletops made from glass add a sparkle to homes and is not for its delicate nature, it could be put to various use. Stainless steel floor lamps with enamelled interiors and bulbs are novel features that transform the place drastically. Stylish door stoppers and stainless steel mirrors, programmable LED capsule message clocks, and glow bricks that use solar energy for recharging, are becoming popular as urban life moves toward a digital lifestyle.



Another trend is the vintage or retro look, using iconic pieces of furniture such as the Swan Chair and the Barcelona Chair. This look has always been in fashion with designers and architects, and appears set to remain a firm classic.

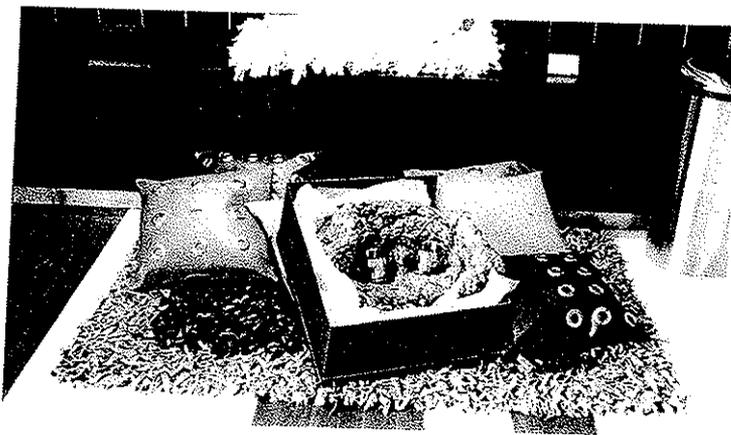
Imagine how boring life would be if we all lived with the same home design! Thankfully, we individuals have exhibited our own tastes and ways of expressing our personalities.

Interior design is the process of shaping the experience of interior space, through the manipulation of spatial volume as well as surface treatment. Whether humans perish or adapt, is largely dependent upon the ability of modern and affluent humans to acclimatize to living with nature in a decentralized, re-localized fashion.

The Earth is in a condition of ecological overshoot. Directly stated, rising levels of population, environmental decline and resource depletion have exceeded the replenishment capacity of the Earth.

In modern home furnishings, there is great stress on ecology and ergonomics, which takes into account the requirements of the human body. The ergonomically built furniture is safe and healthy, and helps you to take care of yourself.

The essential parts of all design styles are concept, colour, proportion, balance, ergonomics, and function of the design. Although all styles differentiate their usage of each of these, they are all an integral part of the overall look and feel of a space. Designers incorporate the seven elements of design to create and enhance style: form, mass, shape, line, colour, texture and pattern. Interior home improvements include any repair, remodelling, construction, or maintenance task, from the attic down to the basement.



### Learning from the past for a future

- For colour and texture, metals and glass wood will be popular used for make
- Colour focus is on the emotional for cold and other and the mix.
- There is a shift from dark to lightish tones.
- Leather, fur, and both genuine and become more popular.
- The contemporary look continues to sometimes mixed with traditional wo
- Bent plywood, tan and light material laminates in rich colours are all in
- Furniture is getting clever, but with co
- Biophilic is more popular and high
- Combination chairs are getting bigge

For retailers, the brief is to not just extend about products, but also provide ideas for display as well as for display concepts. Of course, delivery time should be shorter to avoid losing business. Sound logic is a way to rotate and churn out fast-changing styles. Suppliers with a broader and deeper product range in terms of creating prompt response mechanisms. Delivery price should be 50 per cent of the market price (MOP) for a balanced relationship. Quality must be equivalent to determined market needs. The Indian logistics market is about seven billion dollars, and nine per cent of this is outsourced.

For brands, survival in the global market — with quotas — depends on using benefits of product design, marketing and production point of view in an increasingly volatile market demand equation. A round of talks at the World Trade Organization meant to level the playing field for developing countries negotiations collapsed acrimoniously in July, 1994, what was a real opportunity and a long-standing

Nevertheless, there are promises yet whose fulfillment tomorrow — provided we retain what we have learned to learn the same things again, and never miss the chance to have to learn still.

## DO IT YOURSELF

People are often curious about how certain home improvements are going to affect the value of their homes. Definitely, certain improvements add value to homes.

Do it Yourself, or DIY, is a term that is used by various communities, to describe a practice wherein people create things for themselves without the aid of a paid professional. Many DIY subcultures explicitly critique consumer culture, which emphasizes that the solution to our needs is to purchase things, and instead encourage people to take technologies into their own hands.

The phrase "Do it Yourself" along with its acronym is also commonly used where a layman endeavours to complete a project without the physical aid of a paid professional. There is also a community of people who use the term DIY to refer to fabricating or repairing things for home needs, on one's own rather than purchasing them or paying for professional repair. In other words, it is home improvement done by the householder without the aid of paid professionals.

The home improvement DIY scene we know today is actually a reintroduction (often to city and suburb dwellers) of the old pattern of personal involvement in home or apartment upkeep, making of clothing, or maintaining of cars, computers, websites, and any material

aspect of living. The DIY industry has grown markedly since the 1980s, as it has become a popular weekend pastime for people who want to improve their living conditions (and the value of their house) without the expense of hiring someone to do it. There are many different types of supply materials and tools.

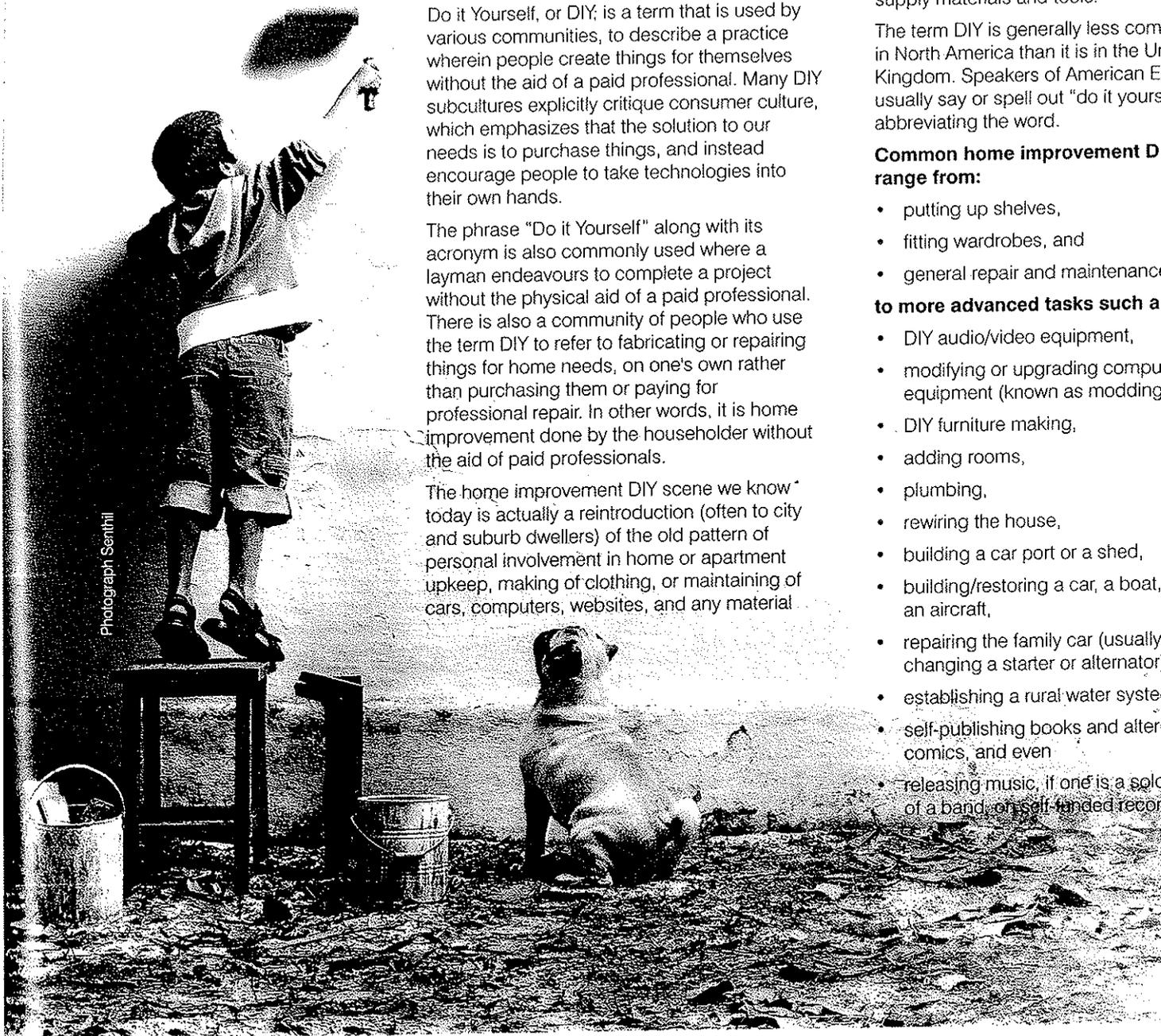
The term DIY is generally less common in North America than it is in the United Kingdom. Speakers of American English usually say or spell out "do it yourself" rather than abbreviating the word.

**Common home improvement DIY tasks range from:**

- putting up shelves,
- fitting wardrobes, and
- general repair and maintenance

**to more advanced tasks such as:**

- DIY audio/video equipment,
- modifying or upgrading computer hardware and software equipment (known as modding),
- DIY furniture making,
- adding rooms,
- plumbing,
- rewiring the house,
- building a car port or a shed,
- building/restoring a car, a boat, or an aircraft,
- repairing the family car (usually involving changing a starter or alternator),
- establishing a rural water system,
- self-publishing books and alternative comics, and even
- releasing music, if one is a solo artist or of a band, or self-funded recording.



Photograph: Senthil