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The pandemic is forcing many to rethink their high-end decor and over-the-top lifestyle



Ridhi Kale/ India Today Home 

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A hotel by architect Sanjay Puri in Nasik, Maharashtra.



There was a time when being eco-friendly meant settling for expensive designs low on aesthetic value. But now that couldn't be further from the truth. In a post-Covid world, with people looking at doing more and living in harmony with nature, the talk around sustainability has once again gained momentum. But what are the trends and how has going green adapted to the new

"More and more clients are asking for sustainable designs these days and there is a shift from luxury living to a more sustainable lifestyle," says architect Nilanjan Bhowal, principal architect, Design Consortium. But what does that mean? "Sustainability is using whatever resources you have, keeping in mind that future generations should be able to use these resources too, as well as the ethical and social impact of your choices. This is in contrast with conventional luxury, which is personal and excessive and has a very limited period of time usage," he says. The key points to remember are reduce, recycle and regenerate. "Reduced consumption, water and carbon footprint, recycling whatever you can, and employing techniques like water harvesting and getting electricity through solar panels as regenerative tools," he adds. In fact, harnessing solar power is something that can be retrofitted into any home. "For instance, in Delhi you can run your home on less energy through clever design. During most of the year you can harness the solar power for electricity. Delhi also has a grid system where you can sell the extra electricity generated," says Bhowal. He has found that several clients love displaying their eco-home as proud, ethical citizens. Besides solar panels, one can also install low-flow fixtures in the bathroom and kitchen to conserve water, LED lights to lower energy consumption, external double-glazing on the east and west glass surfaces and overhangs on windows. "An epoxy coat on the entire terrace, when painted white, not only makes it waterproof, but also insulates and reflects heat," he adds.

Back to the Original Plan

The crux of sustainability lies in using resources in a sustainable way. "For years I have been telling people to ditch that Italian marble and to introduce ventilation, bring in natural light into their homes. Everything else is just décor. Post the pandemic everyone is talking about air and light as compared to asking for more space coverage," says Sonali Rastogi, founding partner, Morphogenesis. "Initially when we used to design offices, the norm was to have desks 1.8 metres away from each other. Slowly this distance started reducing with offices wanting to pack more people in. Today, they have been forced to go back to the original plan," she adds. Sustainability is becoming a way of life—locally sourced material, right thermal value, waterproofing the ceiling and passive architectural thinking are all ways forward. "Learning sustainability from this pandemic and socio-cultural suitability, however, is the need of the hour," says the architect.