

## Core Philosophy

### LESS BUT MEANINGFUL

Keep fewer pieces, but let each tell a story (handcrafted, artisanal, or heirloom)

### CALM OVER CLUTTER

Prioritise open spaces and natural light

### FUNCTION FIRST

Every item should serve a purpose or bring genuine joy

Strive for serenity, openness, and authenticity

Celebrate craftsmanship without overwhelming the senses

Let space and simplicity elevate your decor

# More or Less

AS SPACES SHRINK AND ECO-AWARENESS RISES, URBAN INDIANS ARE EMBRACING MINIMALIST DESIGN



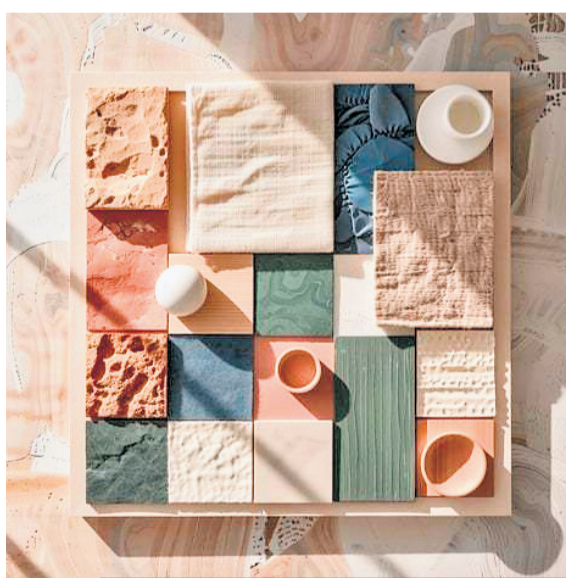
By SAYONI BHADURI

There is a hush settling over India's most stylish homes. A quiet luxury that shimmers across lime-plastered walls, the grain of teak, and the scent of raw wood and linen. It is not austerity masquerading as design; it is a distinctly Indian aesthetic awakening. Minimalism, long celebrated abroad, has arrived home—not imported from Scandinavia or Japan, but born of India's own sensibilities, where poetry is found in restraint and meaning in materials that have always been ours. Indian minimalism is its own originality. Minimalism is primarily seen as having less things and a space that is not as cluttered. It doesn't necessarily mean cutting back on colour or texture.

The concept isn't new to India—it's intrinsic. From monasteries in Ladakh to the earthy austerity of South Indian *agraharams*, our architectural vocabulary was shaped by climate, craft, and clarity. Today, that sensibility is being rediscovered, albeit with a global polish.

Among the most telling symbols of this quiet return is the Chandigarh Chair. Originally designed by Pierre Jeanneret in the 1950s, it has seen a remarkable global resurgence in minimalist and modern interiors. Its simple teak frame, cane seat, and clean geometric lines embody the essence of understated elegance. Today, it's celebrated as a timeless icon of functional beauty—bridging Indian craftsmanship with mid-century modern design. From art galleries to chic apartments, the Chandigarh Chair has become a symbol of authenticity and quiet sophistication in minimalist decor worldwide. On its heels is the Kerala Planter's Chair. A colonial-era relic with elegant teak arms extending like wings—meant to rest a planter's

wearily legs—it is now finding its way into the living rooms of design-conscious homeowners from Mumbai to Milan. Equally resurgent is the *chowki*—a low, unadorned wooden seat that once anchored rural households. In contemporary homes, it morphs into a minimalist coffee table or a meditative perch. Then there's the *muda*, the humble cane stool from the Northeast—light, stackable, sustainable—now reimagined by global design studios for boutique hotels in Bali and Kyoto. The *charpai*, too, deserves mention. Once an everyday object of repose in India's courtyards, it's now a statement piece in global design catalogues. Designers in New York and Copenhagen are embracing its simple geometry and handwoven jute or cotton ropes—proof that craftsmanship, not ornamentation, defines enduring style.



## Materials & Textures

USE NATURAL MATERIALS  
wood, cane, jute, linen, khadi, or cotton

Handcrafted finishes (slight imperfections) bring authenticity

Mix matte and natural textures—clay pots, brass bowls, stone surfaces

But in the thicket of concrete jungles and swiftly rising builder flats, a quiet design revolution is taking shape—one that doesn't scream for attention but whispers of restraint, proportion, and purpose. Indian minimalism, once a philosophical undercurrent, is reemerging as a sophisticated aesthetic for the urbane class. "The Indian version of minimalism is a reaction to the tendency to keep many different artifacts, objects, furniture pieces, rugs, and lights, which can lead to a lot

of clutter," shares Sarah Sham, Principal Designer, Essajees Atelier. We are a maximalist nation naturally favouring beautiful, bright colours, varied textures, and a blend of materials across our food, clothing, and lifestyles. "We live in joint families. We have so many different influences. So, unless it's extremely intended, I don't think minimalism has been successful the way the West has honed," says Apoorva Shroff, Founder and Principal Designer, Lyth Design.

Internationally, Indian minimalism is gaining quiet momentum. Boutique design houses are collaborating with Indian artisans, finding common ground in *wabi-sabi* and the Gandhian aesthetic of simplicity. The *jaali* screen, once a practical element for light and ventilation, is being reinterpreted as modern art installations in galleries from London to Los Angeles.

In a country that is dynamic and driven by culture, minimalism does not mean eliminating personality, it means creating harmony. The *haveli* courtyards of Rajasthan or the open verandahs of Kerala are examples of spatial minimalism designed for climate and social life. Floors, often lime-washed and polished, served as both functional and aesthetic surfaces, a practice mirrored today in lime-plastered walls, Kota stone floors, and handwoven textiles. Minimalism in Indian homes was never about sterility or blankness; it was about mindful curation. A clay lamp, a brass vessel, or a carved wooden bench carried generations of craft knowledge. "Minimalism in India is not emptiness; it is presence, purpose, and a conversation with history," explains Raseel Ansal Gujral, founder of RGA Design, and co-founder Casa Pop and Casa Paradox Luxe. "Indian minimalism is about peace amidst colour; adherence to tradition with space and the function with beauty," adds Anjaleka Kripalani, Interior Architect and Founder of Angie Homes. It's about making intentional choices, paring down visual noise, and letting quality pieces take focus. "I believe minimalism in India is less about restraint and more about clarity. It allows design to breathe within the richness of our environ-



## Colour Palette

STICK TO EARTHY TONES  
off-whites, beiges, terracotta, muted greens, indigo, or grey

Add small pops of colour via textiles, cushions, or pottery—think maroon, mustard, or teal

Avoid overly bright contrasts or heavy prints

ment," says Shalini Chandrashekar, Principal Designer & Co-Founder, Taliesyn Design & Architecture. Taliesyn's Cabin House project was designed as a simple box for a family of three that drew on the quiet elegance of old Bengaluru homes. It features earthy materials, exposed cement, and warm timber to create depth without excess. Japanese Zen has long influenced contemporary global minimalism. Its essence lies in simplicity, asymmetry, imperfection

(*wabi-sabi*), and attention to the present moment. In South India, the *Thachu Shastra*, Kerala's traditional carpentry and architecture system, conveys remarkably similar principles. Both Zen and *Thachu Shastra* celebrate deliberate emptiness—the spaces between objects are as meaningful as the objects themselves. A courtyard is not a void; it is a living room under the sky. A *tatami* mat or a polished teak

Turn to page 2

"True minimalism refines rather than denies; it distills intention until what remains is essential and eloquent. Minimalism is the spiritual counterpart of maximalism—the same vocabulary, spoken in a lower register."

RASEEL ANSAL GUJRAL,  
Interior Designer, founder RGA Design, and co-founder Casa Pop and Casa Paradox Luxe



Continued from page 1

“Minimalism is deeply personal, and it’s about surrounding yourself only with things that serve a purpose or bring joy.”

**JASMEET SOOD**, Country Home Furnishing Retail Design Manager, IKEA India



floor invites barefoot presence, a connection to body and earth.

Today’s modern Indian home celebrates tactility, stillness, and the gentle rhythm of daily life. Imagine a Studio Lotus living space: sunlight streaming across a teak bench by Phantom Hands, Kota stone underfoot, linen drapes swaying with the wind. Every detail is deliberate, each surface a study in light, air, and quiet. This is not a lack of luxury—it is luxury distilled.

When Niharika Anand, a Delhi lawyer moved into her Gurugram apartment, she did something that startled even her interior designer—she left entire rooms bare. “I wanted my home to feel like a pause,” she says. The living room glows in natural light that slides across walls painted in ivory. A low linen sofa anchors the space; a single wooden bench sits beneath a framed window, flanked by a potted palm. Everything feels quietly intentional. From the sun-bleached villas of Goa to the compact apartments of Chennai, a new Indian aesthetic is emerging—rooted in light, texture, and mindfulness. Urban density, compact homes, and fast-paced lifestyles have accelerated the appeal of minimalism. Decluttered spaces restore focus, creating emotional and functional equilibrium. Modular furniture—a sofa unfolding into a bed, a breakfast counter expanding for guests—illustrates how minimalism accommodates modern versatility. Indian minimalism is also accessible. First-time homeowners and city dwellers are embracing compact, decluttered, and functional interiors that reflect personal values rather than possessions. Sustainability dovetails naturally with minimalism: fewer, better things, locally sourced materials, and long-lasting design contribute to mindful living. Yet, as Sham points out, sustainability is not synonymous with minimalism; one can create a sustainable maximalist space just as easily. Digital access, e-commerce, and social media have democratised minimalist design. Products once exclusive to global markets are now within reach of Indian homeowners, allowing international inspiration to merge seamlessly with local craft. Platforms such as Pepperfry, Urban Ladder, IKEA, and even Amazon enable urban homemakers to experiment with style and material without leaving their homes. In Bengaluru, tech professional Karan Mehta and his partner, Shruti, embody this shift in their one-bedroom apartment. Their dining area features a handcrafted teak table paired with cane chairs sourced from a local carpenter. “We wanted pieces that breathe,” says Shruti. “Everything here has a story—nothing was bought to fill space.”

Across India, homes are doing a Marie Kondo. The rise of minimalist design isn’t a passing aesthetic—it’s a cultural recalibration. Homeowners are discovering that restraint can be as expressive as ornamentation,

that simplicity has its own kind of luxury. Ikea’s Life at Home Report states that for 50 per cent of Indians, home is their favourite place to be, and 63 per cent of Indians shared that they feel positive about their current life at home. The new generation of homemakers is driven by functionality, compact living, and mindfulness. They want spaces that are easier to manage and reflect their values, not just their possessions.

“Minimalism in India is about enough,” says Gujral. “Enough history to remember, enough silence to listen, enough beauty to endure.” A handwoven rug, frayed yet potent, tells the story of generations. A single carved antique, quietly luminous, holds centuries of craft and contemplation. Even a faded carpet, softened by footsteps and stories, becomes a visual *haiku*: nothing more than necessary, yet everything that matters.

In Kochi, artist Alisha Thomas has created a home that could easily be mistaken for an art installation in motion. “I want my home to feel like it can breathe with the sea,” she says. Bamboo pendant lamps sway gently with the coastal breeze; woven mats replace carpets; art leans casually against walls instead of hanging. The palette—white, beige, and the occasional wash of blue—feels elemental. There’s no false ceiling, no unnecessary furniture. The space is alive in its stillness. Perhaps what sets Indian minimalism apart is its emotional intelligence. It is never cold or impersonal. Instead, it resonates with cultural memory, familial rituals, and tactile familiarity. “Minimalism is about presence, not absence,” explains Jasmeet Sood, IKEA India. “It is about surrounding yourself only with things that serve a purpose or bring joy.” It is also a state of mind: intentional consumption, thoughtful placement, and appreciation for craft.

Take for instance Jaipur designer couple Rachita and Aditya Singh, who take cues from the timeless quietude of traditional Rajasthani *havelis*. Their home is built around sunlight and shadow, its white lime walls and sandstone floors left unpolished to reveal texture. A lone *charpai*, draped in handspun khadi, sits in the courtyard. “We wanted to reinterpret Indian design, not erase it,” says Aditya.

As India’s design language matures, so too does its relationship with space. Homes are no longer curated to impress but to express—to reflect lives that crave stillness amidst the city’s crescendo. In that sense, the new minimalism isn’t about less. It’s about more of what matters. Even in Mumbai, where space dictates creativity, the philosophy has found new expressions. Architect Rehan Contractor’s Bandra studio is a study in fluid minimalism. His recent project—a 500 sqft apartment for a filmmaker—features a foldable dining table, modular seating, and walls that



**Decor Elements**

Focus on 1-2 statement pieces per space—a Madhubani painting, brass urli, or handmade lamp

Incorporate plants for freshness—money plant, bamboo, or snake plant

Use subtle ethnic touches like block-printed cushions or dhurries

Limit religious or cultural motifs to key focal points instead of crowding every wall

The home décor market is projected to expand at a CAGR of 15-18 per cent over the next five years, reaching an estimated value of \$15-18 billion by 2028

What sets Indian minimalism apart is its material intelligence. Designers instinctively draw from tactile, locally available materials like lime plaster, Kota tiles, timber, or cane to carry the weight of regional identity

**Furniture**

Choose low-profile, functional furniture—inspired by Indian charpais, daybeds, or wooden chests

Avoid bulky pieces; opt for clean lines and simple silhouettes

Use multi-purpose items (e.g., a trunk as both storage and a table)



**Lighting**

Embrace warm ambient lighting—diffused lamps, diyas, or pendant lights in natural finishes

Avoid harsh, cold lighting

double as projection screens. “In Mumbai, minimalism is about adaptability,” he says.

Indian minimalism isn’t about stripping away identity. It’s about refinement, not denial. Designers like Ashiesh Shah and Shantanu Garg are proving that clean lines and cultural soul can coexist. Shah’s homes often echo *wabi-sabi* philosophies through Indian eyes—geometric brass inlays, hand-chiseled stone, and clay vessels that feel both ancient and futuristic. Garg’s Jaipur projects reinterpret Rajasthani opulence through the lens of restraint—plaster arches softened to near-whiteness, sculptural wooden furniture left unpolished, the grandeur existing quietly in texture rather than ornament. In the furniture world, brands like Casegoods, Josmo, and Tiipoi are redefining the narrative of “Made in India.” A Casegoods console in reclaimed rosewood can sit beside a Danish lamp and feel perfectly

at ease, while Tiipoi’s brassware makes the mundane—like a *thali* or *lota*—feel museum-worthy. It’s craftsmanship that whispers, not shouts.

In the early 20th century when the world was recovering from the ravages of the two world wars, the geometric precision of the Bauhaus and De Stijl movements, and the ‘less is more’ ethos of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, offered solace and was a symbol of renewal, rational living, and material honesty. This led to the evolution of minimalism as a concept. The globally-recognised design aesthetic made its entry in Indian design around early 2000s. What sets Indian minimalism apart is its material intelligence. Designers here instinctively draw from tactile, locally available materials like lime plaster, Kota tiles, timber, or cane to carry the weight of regional identity. “We’re naturally drawn to warmth, craft, and texture, so even our minimal-

“Modern homemakers are looking for interiors that not only reflect their aesthetic values but also align with their environmental and ethical priorities.”

**AMIT PAI**, MD, Poltrona Frau India



“The Indian version of minimalism is a reaction to the tendency to keep many different artefacts, objects, furniture pieces, rugs, and lights, which can lead to a lot of clutter.”

**SARAH SHAM**, Principal Designer, Essajees Atelier



ism has layers,” says Mita Mehta, founder, Interior Stylist and curator, Mita Mehta Studio.

The use of colours is another sign of Indian minimalism, moving away from brown, beige, white and the infamous millennial grey. For decades, Indian design celebrated abundance: ornate furniture, carved teak, patterned fabrics, and vivid colours that mirrored the country’s sensory richness. But as urban life has grown more hectic, digital noise more constant, and homes smaller, a quiet counter-movement has emerged. Minimalism, in this context, feels less like a visual choice and more like a psychological one.

At its core, this trend is a response to clutter—physical, emotional, and cultural. The modern Indian homeowner, often balancing demanding work lives and shrinking personal time, is craving clarity. A pared-back home, stripped of excess, becomes an act of self-preservation. Clean lines, open layouts, and natural materials evoke calm, allowing the mind to reset. As Delhi-based architect Amrita Verma notes, “People don’t just want a beautiful home anymore—they want a peaceful one. The design has become an extension of mental health.” There’s also a generational shift at play. Millennials and Gen Z Indians, raised in a world of consumption and visual overload, are now consciously opting for curation over accumulation. Economics and sustainability, too, are shaping this minimal turn. As urban real estate tightens and environmental awareness grows, the idea of “less but better” resonates more deeply.

The rise of visual platforms like Instagram and Pinterest has amplified the beauty of blank space, the poetry of proportion, and the appeal of natural light. The quiet luxury of linen drapes and clay vases has replaced the spectacle of chandeliers and gilded mirrors. In a more urban

environs, cramped living spaces and expensive real estate, has drawn people to the ‘less is more’ philosophy of minimalism.

“Urban density, *bijou* homes, and fast-paced lifestyles have changed how people live,” explains Mehta.

As cities grow denser and routines become more fluid, people are learning to value spaces that adapt to their pace. “With home being more than a place to rest—as a place to work, invite people over and more, minimalism seems ideal, as a versatile style that is ready to evolve with every new activity,” shares Punam Kalra, Creative Director of I’m the Centre for Applied Arts. Minimalism helps manage this complexity by reducing visual noise and allowing flexibility. It also creates emotional space, which feels essential in today’s overstimulated world. On the other hand, frequent migrations in the urban population seeks the practical side of minimalism, making people choose quality over quantity. “True minimalism refines rather than denies; it distills intention until what remains is essential and eloquent. Minimalism is not the opposite of maximalism. It is its spiritual counterpart—the same vocabulary, spoken in a lower register,” explains Gujral.

The next wave—Indian Minimalism 2.0—will blend global sensibilities with indigenous materials, crafts, and cultural context. Antique fragments, handwoven textiles, and artisanal craft will continue to dialogue with modernity, ensuring spaces are both relevant and emotionally grounded. Minimalism is not just aesthetic—it is philosophical, civilisational, and personal. The quiet revolution in Indian homes is a return to tradition. Every lime-plastered wall, teak bench, terracotta floor, and handwoven textile is not decoration—it is civilisational memory, lived and contemporary.

