

# **Evolution of Furniture Design in India: Impact of Culture, Market & Technology**

**Dr. Sandeep Sachan\***

Associate Professor, National Institute of Fashion Technology, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

sandeep.sachan@nift.ac.in

**Abstract:** The key areas of focus of this research include culture, market dynamics, and technical improvements as it follows the developments of the furniture design in India. Furniture, as an important element of the residences of people, is their gateway to societal norms, economic trends, and values over time. This paper concentrates on how urbanisation, globalisation and technical progress have led to the transformation of traditional Indian furniture, which has traditionally been crafted and rooted in cultural identity, towards more modern, modular and multipurpose forms. Three trends in contemporary furniture that this study examines are sustainability, user-centred design, and customisation. This paper brings out the amalgamation of traditional beauty and modern practicality through a review of the literature and analysis of the current trends in design to identify the main forces that drive this transformation. The research points to a well-rounded approach combining cultural legacy, commercial requirements and technical efficiency as the way in which to go with Indian furniture design in the future.

**Keywords:** Furniture Design, Evolution, Culture, Market Trends, Technology, Modular Furniture, Sustainability

## **INTRODUCTION**

Modern furniture design has its roots in ancient Indian civilisations. The simplistic and utilitarian designs of Indian furniture made of local materials, such as cane, bamboo and wood, have been found in archaeological artefacts of the Indus Valley Civilisation (2500-1500 BCE) [1]. These early designs were reflective of the lifestyle and environmental conditions of the time and were more concerned with practicality. The design of furniture evolved throughout the ages in response to new dynasties and empires, each possessing a distinct cultural environment, aesthetic taste and technical abilities.

It evolved more elaborate forms of furniture, including low stools (bajot) and plain wooden beds (charpoy), in the Mauryan and Gupta periods (322 BCE-550 CE) [2]. Such materials as teak and rosewood were widely used. Characteristic of Persian and Islamic influences introduced intricate workmanship, such as inlays of bone, ivory and precious stones, and geometric and floral patterns, during the Mughal Empire (1526-1857 CE) [3]. The art of Indian

furniture was at its best during this period of artistic and decorative splendor. The arrival of the western styles, new materials and increased manufacturing processes during the British colonial era dramatically altered the direction of Indian furniture. The fusion of British practicality and Indian workmanship led to designs of furniture which were more structured and geometric in form [4]. These influences did not eliminate traditional furniture traditions in rural areas, which safeguarded local knowledge systems and craft.

Indian furniture is not only a piece of furniture but also social classes, cultural norms, and religious beliefs. Modern minimalist residential layouts and the traditional low-seating arrangement such as bajot and peedan reflect these values. Wahab et al. (2014) note that furniture embodies both the social identity and way of life of a person [5], whereas Bose (2019) states that it embodies the cultural identity and social status of a person [6]. As we view these positions, it becomes evident that the philosophical and abstract aspects of the furniture design in India transcend beyond the practical uses of the furniture. An equivalent argument is furthered by Lee and Moon (2010), who argue that furniture ought to support the symbolic and emotional roles of design by enforcing the immaterial principles in Eastern philosophy [7].

The influence of modern market forces and technical advancements on furniture design development in India is ever rising. Modular, versatile and customisable furniture has been increasingly demanded by the requirements of the fast urbanisation process, the evolving tastes of customers and space-limiting factors. The modern designers are combining the traditional handiwork with the mass production and international style. In order to attract consumers both domestically and internationally, contemporary designers are re-exploring the traditional forms in a less environmentally-friendly and minimalistic way. The Krishbox series by Shashank Mehta combines modern minimalism with ancient hand-caning techniques [8] and the Sikar line by Navkar Furniture modernizes the traditional Rajasthani motifs. These are some of the ways that cultural heritage is being redefined by technical innovation and design-led marketing strategies.

Indian furniture is also characterized by the use of local materials which are locally produced and have sustainable uses. This indicates their cultural thinking and their interest in the environment. The flowing lines and organic forms embody the creative tradition and spiritual attitude of India, which is opposed to the geometrical strictness of the Western styles.

However, the concern of originality and cultural maintenance has emerged due to the constant alterations in furniture design due to mass production and globalisation. Cultural influences, business forces, and technological progress have been proactive in influencing the history of furniture design in India. The current influences are remaking aesthetics, production and usefulness, although past ideals are still influencing the identity of design. To maintain the unique nature of Indian furniture in a world which is increasingly globalised there is a need to balance between innovation and cultural continuity, as it is an ongoing process.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- To investigate how Indian furniture design has changed throughout time, emphasising the impact of shifting lifestyles and cultural customs.
- To examine how market trends and technical developments have affected modern Indian furniture design, paying particular attention to sustainability, practicality, and flexibility.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The main data related to this research was a search in the literature published earlier on the same subject of Indian furniture design in academic journals, books and internet databases. Relevant research were selected in order to understand the evolution, cultural influences, market trends and technical changes in the furniture design.

One of the credible sources through which data were obtained included academic journals, research papers and articles that were founded on design. To find out trends and patterns in the evolution of furniture design, the research adopts a descriptive and analytical research method that entails critical analysis and interpretation of data in a number of sources.

The process includes:

- Study of traditional and modern furniture.
- Socioeconomic and cultural will be looked at.
- Next generation trends in the industry such as multipurpose and modular furniture.
- The impact of sustainable practices and technologies.

In making this approach we might get to know more of the causes of the changes in the design of Indian furniture which are interdependent.

## **RESULT**

Furniture is crucial to many facets of human life, both past and now. They ensure human existence by contributing to the ecology. This applied art form from several domains requires material and manufacturing knowledge. Thus, furniture design requires collaboration. Instead, it is multidisciplinary and covers more areas. This combines design, manufacturing, business, and marketing. Research, ideas, design methodologies, theory, practicality, comfort, and aesthetics are explored while examining furniture as physical products, materials, and created forms [9]. Industrial and furniture design are comparable. Industrial design and furniture creation rely on large manufacturing and mass customisation, therefore digital fabrication, craftsmanship, assembly, and packaging are important. Furniture-related industrial design includes ergonomic work seats, collapsable tables, and modular storage units. Industrial manufacture aims for uniform or planned quantitative outputs, not site-specific furnishings. How furniture adapts to varied contexts is fundamental to furniture design. Selecting furniture for a space starts with its intended purpose and activities. The purpose of a space determines its appliances, fixtures, and accessories. Think about any home's family room. How would you pick between watching TV or talking? You want a seated element, right? Each piece of furniture in a space emphasises its main purpose. By properly situating furniture, a space may look and feel balanced. Many elements have influenced furniture design, including:

### **Utility**

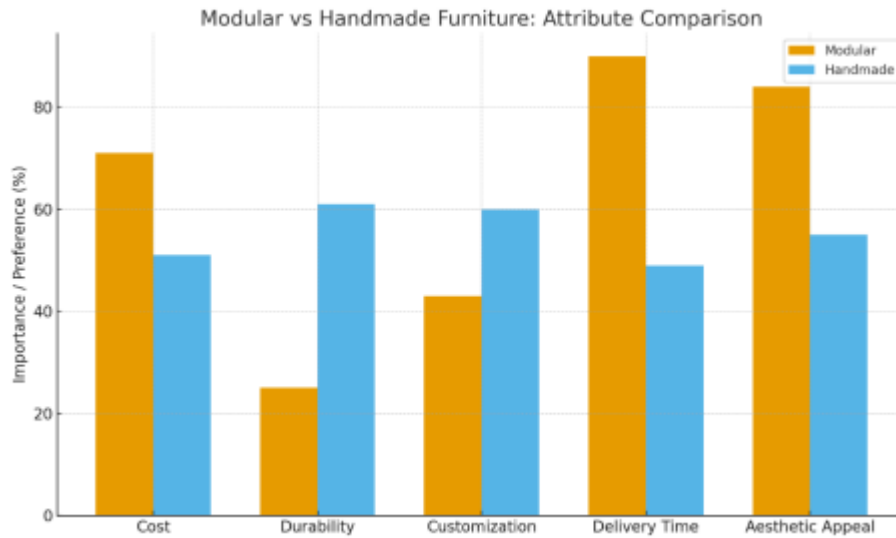
Furniture may formalise rooms. A room may seem well-balanced and put-together with the correct furniture placement, making even empty areas more appealing. Interior designers may express their creativity while designing useful rooms by starting with beautiful and cutting-edge furniture. Furniture design is important since it forms the foundation of every room. Multitasking intrigues us culturally. Why does our furniture lag? Multipurpose furniture may be handy. Many modern multipurpose furniture items are available. The market revolution is invisible to everyone else. As house floor space decreases, versatile, well designed furniture is needed [10]. Multi-utility may be achieved by applying the following design ideas to furniture:

- **User-centred design:** It comprises creating a product with the needs, wants, and preferences of the end user in mind. Making functional, aesthetically pleasing, and ergonomically sound furniture is the goal of this method [11].
- **Modular design:** Making furniture that is easy to assemble and disassemble is an important feature of modular design. This method is useful for making pieces of furniture that may be placed in different rooms. Designers use this technology to create furniture that is lightweight, compact, and simple to build, making it ideal for smaller settings like flats and offices [12].



**Figure 1: Two typical examples of multipurpose furniture design are a study table with a shelf (shown on the right) and a sofa-cum-bed (shown on the left).**

Modular furniture is becoming more popular as a result of its adaptability and ability to save space.



**Figure 2: A comparison of handcrafted and modular furniture. (Adapted from [13])**

Modular furniture is becoming more popular among consumers as a result of its adaptability to modern living spaces, low prices, and ease of assembly, as shown in Figure 2.

### External trends

According to [14], the following are some of the patterns that are considered to be among the most prevalent in modern furniture design:

- Over the course of the last several years, there has been a trend toward the adoption of minimalist furniture designs. The principles of simplicity, clean lines, and pragmatism are at the core of modern design.
- Metal, wood, glass, and stone are some of the materials that are being combined by designers in order to create one-of-a-kind and unique masterpieces. As a result of this trend, it is now quite feasible to get furniture that has a diverse assortment of textures and finishes.
- The use of vivid colours that are striking to the eye is becoming more common in the field of furniture design, especially for the materials used for upholstery. One of the most well-known characteristics of contemporary designers is their ability to create eye-catching furniture and home décor products by using brilliant colours and patterns that are appealing.

- The concept of customisation has been more prominent in the realm of furniture design over the course of the last few years. Designers are creating goods that may be personalised to meet the specific preferences and needs of each individual purchaser.

It is clear from all of this that the product development cycles of the furniture sector are highly influenced by the preferences of consumers as well as the transitions that occur in society.

## **Culture**

When it comes to the design of furniture, cultural preservation is an essential component for many different countries. One facet of space culture that varies from one culture to another is the way in which space is used and the concepts that are associated with it. Intercultural encounters have the potential to change not just how individuals see space but also how they utilise it. For instance, open kitchens are a good example. In the living area, they place a high priority on activities such as sitting and eating [15]. In addition, the social and physical status of a civilisation may be inferred from its furniture. The shifting socio-cultural structures of users have an effect on the arrangement of furniture; thus, the wishes and wants of users fluctuate according to the socio-cultural structures under which they are situated. Think about the people who will be utilising the furniture or the area before you go out and purchase it or decorate it. Both the consumption patterns and forms of users are reflective of the cultural traits of society. For as long as it is used often, a piece of furniture has the potential to become popular in any community. According to ÖZSAVAÖ (2016), the fast growing communication means, which include mass media and social media, make it possible for the design that is sought for all over the world to go viral in an instant.

## **Environmental impact**

Even convenience comes at a cost. The creation of furniture involves the use of a great number of synthetic materials, and these materials contribute to pollution both during and after the product's useful life by contributing to pollution. When it comes to synthetics and plastics, the majority of fossil fuels, such as oil, are used. There is, however, a limited amount of these priceless natural resources, and the depletion of these resources might potentially result in the destruction of whole ecosystems. Additionally, the manufacturing of dangerous greenhouse gases is generated by a number of these materials, which include paints, lacquers, varnishes, inks, colours, adhesives, and adhesives. All of these products make their way into the

manufacture of furniture from time to time. Additionally contributing to the degradation of the environment is the furniture industry's usage of these fundamental materials [16]. The following is a list of the many ways that designers of furniture have been attempting to make their products more environmentally friendly:

Choosing materials that are more environmentally friendly on purpose: source is the most important factor, and while there is no material that is perfect, there are some that are better for the environment than others. In an attempt to lessen the impact that their operations have on the environment, a number of companies are transitioning to the use of organic raw materials. This is due to the fact that organic resources are commonly available, economical, easily recyclable, and do not need lengthy transportation routes [17].

Upholstery: Upholstery and covers are often applied to pieces of furniture that are designed to be used as seats or beds. This is a frequent practice. Europeans finally became proficient in the craft of wickerwork, which originated in the East and offered a framework that was both long-lasting and airy for loose cushions. Mouldable plastic forms and bags holding plastic balls that are able to respond to the shifting postures of the body have taken the place of the upholstery [18]. At the end of the day, there is no one sector that is capable of solving all of the issues that are associated with sustainability and the interdependencies that exist within this very complex system. Consequently, the promotion of worldwide business collaboration is an aim that is of the utmost importance. On the other hand, there is a rising awareness of the need to decrease our influence on the environment, both as people and as a company, and there is a concentrated effort to discover inventive methods to achieve these objectives. Without a certain, this provides us with optimism, and it is assisting us in the process of constructing our own sustainability goals via the formation of fruitful relationships and the comprehension of how to According to We Design Green (2017), there are three primary areas in which the furniture industry can continue to lessen the effect it has on the environment:

- To begin, limiting the depletion of natural resources and transitioning to raw materials that are more environmentally friendly
- Developing products that are more durable over time or that are simpler to recycle after they have fulfilled their intended function
- Cutting down on the amount of waste and energy used in the production process1.

## **INTERIOR DESIGN**

The process of constructing a place inside a structure that protects people from danger while simultaneously satisfying their fundamental needs is referred to as interior design. It is the creative, scientific, and commercial planning of a sustainable, practical, and expressive solution that enriches the design of the space. This planning takes into account the necessity for health and safety while also making purposeful decisions on aesthetics. Inside design encompasses all of the fixed and moveable ornamental things that are essential components of any human home. These objects are considered to be part of the interior design realm. At one point in time, a significant portion of the items that are now shown in museums and galleries were really used for the purpose of decorating homes [19]. The first known practitioners of interior design were the ancient Egyptians, who lived in mud homes that were quite simple in style. Animal skins, basic textiles, abstract paintings depicting biographical and spiritual themes, sculptures, and painted urns were some of the items that they used to decorate their otherwise unremarkable furniture. The massive golden decorations found on King Tutankhamen's tomb as well as other Egyptian tombs have brought to light the need for even more elaborate public displays of wealth and power that are commensurate with the Egyptian aristocracy. The Egyptians were the ones who first invented the art of interior decorating and accessorising, but the Romans and Greeks were the ones who extended it. They did this by constructing public structures with dome roofs, which promoted a sense of civic pride. The vases that the Romans and Greeks carried into their homes helped to decorate them, and the mesmerising mosaic floors, wall paintings, and frescoes allowed each space to have its own distinct personality. Following the Renaissance, Europe was dominated by the intricate and complex Baroque styles that originated in Italy.

An outstanding example of a work of Baroque interior design is the French palace of Versailles, which has spiralling columns, stained glass, and intricately painted ceilings. Additionally, the palace is constructed out of coloured stone and marble. It was European interior designers who were responsible for the first widespread adoption of the Rococo style in the 18th century. These designers got their inspiration from Asian porcelain, floral patterns, and furniture that was inlaid with exotic materials such as mother-of-pearl and ivory. [20] The Neoclassical style arose in the second part of the 18th century, deriving influence from the legendary design aspects of ancient Rome. It was also responsible for popularising the use of velvet, satin, and silk in richly coloured fabrics. In the early 1800s, there was a significant

increase in the amount of freedom and eclecticism that was present in interior design in both Europe and the United States [21]. A number of contemporary interior design trends emerged and passed throughout the course of the subsequent two centuries, including Art Deco, Art Nouveau, Victorian, and the industrial Bauhaus (Brathwaite-West, 2020). These are only a few examples of the numerous trends that occurred. As the twentieth century came to a close, the dominance of big-box, high-end businesses in the interior design industry was being challenged by a flood of periodicals and amateur designers. These two factors posed a significant danger to the industry. For those who are familiar with the history of interior design, Elsie de Wolfe is a well-known person. Wolfe may be regarded the first professional interior designer in concept, despite the fact that the term "interior designer" had not yet been coined. This is due to the fact that she was the first artist to get remuneration for designing a house in the early 1900s.



**Figure 3: Interior design early 1900**

A little over a century ago, interior design became a legitimate occupation. Interior design has come a long way in the last century, from its humble beginnings as an art form to the complex, specialist disciplines of today [22]. As we've seen, interior design evolved from a need to coordinate with building construction long before the field had widespread renown. But as the middle class expanded and elaborate building soared in popularity throughout the industrial revolution, so did the field of interior design. Current interior design practises have the ability to improve people's lives since they aim to make the most efficient use of available space while also considering user comfort and practical design considerations [23]. Interior design is often associated with more esoteric concepts like flair and imagination, but few realise that it also involves certain scientific principles. As a general rule, there is a body of unspoken "rules" that professional interior designers follow while working with certain concepts and materials.

Aesthetically beautiful interiors are the result of careful balance of space, line, forms, light, colour, texture, and pattern [24].

## **Space**

The ability to work in three dimensions is a boon for interior designers. You have the option to fill or leave this three-dimensional area unfilled, depending on your desired functionality and design requirements. Either positive or negative space is possible. Space that does not include any objects (or spaces between them) is called negative space [25]. In contrast, positive space has all of these things and more. In order to create an inviting environment without being either crowded or too sparse, interior designers strive to find a middle ground between the room's negative and positive areas.



**Figure 4: Horizontal, Vertical, and dynamic lines may define a space and direct the viewer's gaze.**

## **Line**

Through the use of lines that are produced by the furniture and the structural framework of the space, it is possible to achieve the goals of creating harmony, unity, and contrast. With the use of information obtained from The Interior Design Academy (2004), we are able to investigate the following consequences of different kinds of lines:

- It is via the use of horizontal lines that stability, formality, and effectiveness are communicated. When creating a room, interior designers often make use of horizontal lines as a means of elongating the space and drawing attention to a feature that is already there. If, on the other hand, you rely excessively on horizontal lines, the space will seem uninteresting and boring.

- In order to generate ideas of authority and independence, elements that form vertical lines, such as windows and doors, are used. Use of vertical lines is beneficial in a variety of settings, including dining rooms, foyers, and offices; nevertheless, it is essential to use caution so as not to make people feel anxious.

In addition to zigzag, curved, and diagonal lines, dynamic lines also feature diagonal lines. Stairs are a wonderful illustration of these lines because of the life and mobility that they portray compared to other lines. We are more likely to pay attention to dynamic lines because of the visual attraction they possess. The presence of an excessive number of dynamic lines in a particular region, on the other hand, may constitute a visually overpowering situation and obstruct the vision of other lines, both horizontal and vertical.

### **Form**

Geometric and natural forms are the two main categories into which most shapes fall. Geometric shapes often contain sharp lines and square edges that give the impression that they were manufactured by humans, in contrast to natural forms that are more organic and seem to have been formed by nature. In addition to being open, which means they may be gazed into, forms can also be closed, meaning they contain no other elements.

### **Light**

Considering the intended uses of the room is essential when planning the lighting scheme. Here, it's important to consider both the amount and the quality. In addition to its functional role, light has the ability to shape the ambiance of a room by defining its colour, line, and texture. Lighting is another tool that each competent interior designer knows how to use to accentuate and enrich a space (Academy, 2004).

### **Colour**

Interior design relies heavily on colour theory, which is an independent scientific discipline. It may alter the perception of space size, establish the mood, and define unity. Never discount the power of colour psychology, which every competent interior designer can tap into to great effect. Furthermore, colour has the ability to change the way a room seems, either making a small room seem bigger or a large room seem smaller [26]. It has the potential to visibly decrease tall, foreboding ceilings or elevate low, oppressive ones. In a dark space, it may provide a warm glow, while in a very bright environment, it can soften the contrast. The

psychological and physiological responses of our bodies might be triggered by the memories and emotions evoked by certain colours.

Colours and colour temperature affect the atmosphere of an interior space and have an emotional and psychological impact on those who see it. The warm side of the colour wheel represents colours that are cosy, welcoming, and energising. Calming and soothing is the impact of colours that are on the cold side of the colour wheel. Colours that are too cold could make people feel down in the dumps. Neutral hues, which fall somewhere in the middle between warm and cold, are often considered to be background colours that are both pleasant and inconspicuous. This is due to the fact that these colours have a less emotional impact and may convey an air of professionalism and utilitarianism. Colours that are too neutral could seem dull and uninspiring.

### **Texture**

Texture describes the feel of an object's or surface's surface. Even though it's easy to overlook, this detail can really make the room stand out. Interior designers use a combination of different textures, such as smooth, gritty, and shiny, to give a room a subtle impression of depth, similar to how they blend different colours and patterns. Whether it's furniture, accessories, or fabric, texture may elevate its visual appeal by bringing attention to detail and adding intrigue. A feeling of openness is essentially achieved. "Academy" in 2004.

### **Pattern**

When combined with colour, pattern can do the same thing that texture does: make a room seem more attractive. Patterns created by repeated designs are common in wallpaper, soft furnishings, carpets, and textiles. Patterns come in a wide variety of styles, from striped to geometric to pictorial to organic to motif to animal prints. "Academy" in 2004.



### **Figure 5: Different Types of Patterns**

All of the aforementioned components are still cornerstones of interior design philosophy. But that doesn't mean other forces don't have an impact on them. As a matter of fact, it's not out of the question to base decisions on market trends and desires when it comes to things like room colour and pattern.

### **CONCLUSION**

The constantly evolving world of the Indian furniture design is influenced by culture, business issues, and technological advancements. Due to urbanisation, shifting lifestyles and space constraints, the traditional furniture, with a strong foundation to workmanship and cultural identity, has gradually adapted to the time to fit the needs of modern times. The influence of the changes in the industry and preferences of the customers is demonstrated by the growing demand on the modular furniture, versatile and customisable furniture. Technology breakthroughs such as the digital fabrication, improved materials and efficient manufacturing processes have also had a significant influence on the design and manufacturing processes. There has also emerged a new emphasis on sustainability and an aim to encourage the consumption of sustainable resources and ethical production processes. Even though this may be changing, cultural factors continue to play a significant role in aesthetics and user preferences in the design. The key to the future of Indian furniture design lies in integrating modern practicality and technical efficiency with traditional Indian values. The furniture business is destined to be stuck between conserving tradition and innovation.

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