

Split – level Living

Mezzanine floors have a distinct advantage in residential space

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In the US Mezzanine floors have been a design feature of homes for half a century now. They were created in the 1950's a natural solution to the need for space in American ranch houses, which were hither to single-storeyed and built on tight budgets.

In India, too, mezzanine floors have caught the imagination of the urban elite. And builders are going all out to suggest this innovation for various reasons, the major one being cost saving. As Tariq Vaidya, Head Advisory Services and Asia Pacific Research, Knight Frank puts it., "Of course, the objective of the builder is to get a good return on his investment. Something he can do by utilizing the maximum saleable area within the building. Moreover, mezzanine floors are independent spaces that can be leased out at ground floor rentals, which are the highest in a building. Hence, it is definitely cheaper to build a mezzanine floor rather than construct a normal one".

In the UK, a large number of departmental stores are using a loophole in the British law to construct mezzanine floors in order to get more rooms to showcase their products.

"Stores have realized that by putting an extra floor in their superstores they can double the size of the retail area, and escape the need to apply for planning permission because there is no visible change in the building from outside. Asda, which is now owned by the US giant Walmart, plans to build 40 mezzanine floor in the UK to expand rapidly without having to bother with talking to local authorities." wrote Paul Brown, Environment Correspondent, The Guardian early last year:

In India too, the law regarding mezzanines has been abused time and again in fact, a while ago, the New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) pulled up a few offices in a posh up market locality for the misuse of mezzanine space.

REALTY RATES	
UPCOMING MALLS IN SOUTH DELHI	
Mall	Price range (Rs. /sq. ft.)
Amazon Regalia	7,000-15,000
Ambi Mall	10,000-20,000
Centurion Mall Jasola	7,000-14,000
Rectangle One	6,500-14,000
Southern Park	6,500-15,000
The India Mall	23,000-33,000
The rates are indicative only.	
Source: Propertiesindia.com	

"Legally, mezzanine utility is supposed to be for storage purposes. Some companies have, of course, gone a step ahead and built a pantry of canteen there, Says Pankaj Jain, Head Corporate Leasing, Realistic Realtors. And of late mezzanines floors are being used by companies to accommodate back office like typists and accountants. But could India go the way of the UK where accounting to Brown, the construction of mezzanine floors was leading to the closure of more and more specialist shops – adding to the 13,000 which have closed between 1997 and 2002'.

Says M.M. Das, Superintendent Engineer (Building) MCD, "Before 1983, if a building was sanctioned as a commercial one, then it could have a mezzanine After 1983, mezzanine floors were not allowed even in commercial spaces."

Offices apart, many builders are going in for mezzanines in residential homes as well. Here the height of the house is one-and-a-half times the normal height, but it accommodates rooms at different levels. For example, when you enter the house, one short set of stairs may lead to living spaces upstairs while the other may go to areas down below. At the sunken level you could have the garage, living rooms, and kitchen and on the higher level, the bedrooms. Hence, even though room heights may be three-quarters of the normal, you have actually constructed more rooms.

Sometimes builders extend the landing halfway between two floors in order to create space for a room. This room which normally sits over the porch for garage can be used as an extra bed-room or a prayer room. Also by, having the mezzanine only a short flight of steps up, an open-styles family room can be created, a lathe Hindi teleserial, which over looks the hall below.

A home with a mezzanine floor has several advantages. For those who like the feeling of unrestrained space, this demarcate spaces purely through differences in levels. And because you are playing with differences in height, mezzanines also create a feeling of visual Interest and openness. As, Jain points out, you can pack in more just by increasing the height of the house by 50 per cent.