

Your home, your world

## Cheer at home

Devika Banerjee is confident that world class interiors can be created — in Calcutta



**I**NTERIOR architecture is about combining functionality and aesthetics in harmony with the environment. Success depends on finding the right balances in this fusion.

Tanjore paintings and bronze Natarajs do not mix with Scandinavian-style furniture re-

produced in Beckbagan from a three-year-old magazine. What goes down well in Alipore, may not in Sealdah. Yet we see it all the time. A tub in the bath even if no one is keen to soak. A carpet in the living room that acts as a sponge for humidity and pollution.

Calcutta's strength is its low skyline, the cleansing breeze

from the south and the remains of the "second city of the Empire". Creativity in this city is second to none. Execution — grudging but speckled with brilliance. For all the obituaries that have been written, Calcutta continues to be a thriving hub of the East — and no one can take that away.

Every area has its distinct personality. Only Regent Street sepa-

rates London's Soho from Mayfair. Just as Elgin Road forms the North-South divide on Chowringhee. Similarly, no two buildings are exactly alike. Each has its own distinct features depending on when it was built and

doors. If street-level noise or East-West heat and glare are a bother, simple double glazing can be very effective. Choice of material, similarly, should have a synergy with the surroundings. No point in having lots of teak pan-

family and friends. What about children — their ages — pets, if any. A home is to be lived in and loved. That is the Designer's mission.

Almost as important is the cost-effectiveness of any interior architecture. And its maintenance and manageability factor. In the west, people manage their lives and homes without servants. We are headed in the same direction. One-time investments in design, technology and material can translate to easier maintenance, less hassles, greater comfort.

A significant part of our lives at home are spent in the kitchen or the loo. Yet there is a widespread tendency to treat these spaces such that you don't feel like spending in there — a minute more than you have to. A cheerful bathroom and a pleasant handy kitchen will, I hope, find more takers.

Execution is probably the hardest part — where things can go terribly wrong and often do — when in the wrong hands. The best of design and material can get all fouled up. Having just finished my first job in Calcutta — an MNC office on Park Street — I can vouch that it can be done. Back-breaking and exasperating it may be but Calcutta can deliver world class interiors. Mind-sets resist change fiercely. Inputs are not easy to source. But Calcutta can do it.

# Calcutta Plus

THE ECONOMIC TIMES  
Calcutta 8 — 15 March 1996



The Bedroom and the Living space: Aesthetic, tasteful and no more the privilege of the rich only

for whom. Its present identity is shaped by the people who live there. Middleton Mansions is not the same as Sunny Park.

Interior architecture should start with the environmental heritage and characteristics, highlight the strengths, camouflage the shortcomings if necessary. If a dwelling has twelve feet high ceilings and an eight foot tall door, wouldn't it be a shame to create a POP false ceiling at eight feet with glass and aluminium

elling in a room where cricket umpires would have taken out their light meters, using material just because they are "in" (read, granite) can be quite counter-productive.

Having selected the features to build on and material that empathise with the surrounding, the designer then needs to factor in the family background/ personality — their needs, their preferences. Are they into formal entertaining at home or is it mainly