

# EDITORIAL

## Wanderer

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I started my career as an engineer in India in 1970. I could have never imagined buying a home with my income then. I moved to the United States where all my friends owned a home. I was excited at the possibility that even I could afford one if I wanted. It was easy. All I had to do was produce proof of employment to any bank and the latter would qualify me and lend me a home loan in accordance with my annual income. My father built two homes back home towards his retirement all from his savings. This was not the case here.

I bought my first home in the U.S. in 1978. It was a modest split-level home in a low-middle-class neighborhood. I was thrilled to own a home. My parents in India were amazed at my success and thought I must be very rich. Since then I have changed my dwelling four times in progression to my income.



I have to admit that I like the place where I live now. There are woods and gardens, and I regularly see birds and geese and deer. I walk among trees and shrubs. But do I need such a large house of which I use only a fractional part? And do I need to own it? Now that I am retired and our children are on their own, I have started liking the idea of the capricious billionaire, Howard Hughes, who could buy any mansion he chose but preferred to live on a secluded floor of a hotel. Somehow the idea appeals to me, though many find it bizarre.

Not having grown up rich, perhaps I have never had the opportunity to develop a taste for opulent and wasteful space. I also like the feeling of freedom of not having to look after a structure that evokes no strong passion for me. Of course, I know others who like to lavish their care on curtains, carpets and

colossal chandeliers. I prefer some free time to read or listen to music.

My industrious neighbors take punctilious care of their garden and front yard and I can only look on with admiration. I cannot emulate them. In truth, I would not. Such punctiliousness would take too much of my time and attention. I have to sadly reflect that life is a matter of choices. If I have to choose between the perfect home and a decent-enough home, the balance is loaded on the side that lets me pursue my stronger interests.

The investment of time and effort, besides the expense, would have barred other, dearer pursuits. A friend told me the other day that the fact that poor people largely play football, middle-class people choose tennis and rich people prefer golf, shows that affluence reduces the object of your affection – the size of the ball.

Age or experience may have jaded me enough to transfer my affection to something even smaller, the printed word. I don't need a massive edifice to read the few books and magazines I read.

I need no more than a tiny table for my laptop to write the few things I write. And there lies the supreme reason for my aversion to a commitment to a permanent home. No home is perfect. Worse, no home is perfect enough – just as Elizabeth Taylor reportedly said, about her seven divorces, that no husband was perfect enough – for lifelong attachment. I would like a modest variation of the so-called American Dream: a home not bought but just occupied.

Live in it, make use of it and enjoy it. Perhaps, in my lazy soul, there still lurks a craving to be unanchored, an undying spirit to be free to wander.