

ECOLOGIC

Home Automation With Smart Phone Apps

The biggest advantage of automation is that it could save us from the 'phantom load', defined as the energy used by our TVs, computers, microwaves and other electronic devices that have been switched off but are in standby mode as we never unplug these devices

The Internet of Things (IoT) is a reality and it seems the concept of 'B-IoT' or the Building Internet

of Things is at your doorstep! But what does this really mean for the average homeowner? As a closet futurist, eco junkie and architect, I am excited as saving energy through efficiency and conservation through automation is finally possible.

A lot of luxury homes jumped at the first opportunity of automation — remote controls to draw and close blinds, set up mood lighting. They even had stairwell lights and night lamps turning on or off with movement sensors. But is this what a smart home is really about? Not really. A smart home by today's definition is one that can observe, record a behavior pattern

and also automate it. In other words, the data become the knowledge for automation. Automation is great. It takes out the mundane routine and frees time for other useful 'brain activity' — giving people time to do things they would otherwise like to do!

Google Nest's technology can 'figure out' the settings on your thermostat and automatically set it once it senses you are in the room. That's not all. You can also manually control aspects of heating and cooling, through the smart phone app. So, irrespective of distance or geo position, as long as you have a smart phone app that controls lighting, cooling, plumbing systems and are connected to the internet you can be on vacation, and still control all that is happening back at home. Forgetting to switch something off is a thing of the past!



Remote control your home with smart phone apps • Express

The biggest possible savings from automation could be saving us the 'phantom load': the energy used by our televi-

sions, computers, microwaves and other electronic devices that are switched off but are in stand-by mode. The recom-

mendation of energy groups is that we unplug those devices, but this is never the case. In most cases these switches are

in hard to reach places and we never completely switch these off. Automation can cut power to those phantom load appliances saving money on your monthly bills. The stats show

Smart phones will soon control air-conditioners, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, microwave ovens, even baby-sit or operate doors in homes via the internet

that 7% of power used in the US was from these phantom loads alone!

Our electricity boards have made the good old meter an ingrained part of our lives. They have introduced smart meters that can indicate the power consumed in each of the three phases (R-Y-B) of supply. Power

for lighting, air conditioners, electrical gadgets and pumps can be connected intelligently so that the 3 phases are almost equally loaded. Importantly, the power consumption in each phase can be monitored. With power consumption data we can make smart choices for our homes — decide if that old air conditioner needs to be replaced or whether we can consider investing in a solar panel to run our refrigerator during the day.

Imagine, smart phones will soon control air-conditioners, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, microwave ovens, even baby-sit or operate doors in homes through the internet. The future is connected by data and it is indeed smart!

(The writer is an architect, urban designer, dancer and chief designer at Shilpa Architects)



PAVITRA
SRIPRAKASH

@pavisriprakash