

THE HOMES MAGAZINE FOR MODERN LIVING

# Livingetc

January 2024 ₹150

INDIA EDITION

*7th anniversary  
issue*

**HAFEEZ CONTRACTOR +  
SEEMA PURI**

**SONALI RASTOGI +  
DEEPANJALI CHAWLA**

**PINAKIN PATEL +  
ASHIESH SHAH**

**SANDEEP KHOSLA,  
AMARESH ANAND +  
DHAVAL SHELLUGAR**  
FARAH AHMED MATHIAS,  
JATIN HUKKERI,  
OOMMEN THOMAS,  
IESHA PAREKH SHELLUGAR,  
THOMAS JOSE PARAMBIL  
AND JUHI PATEL

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It's the  
**ULTIMATE**  
design  
**REUNION**

where mentors and mentees come together to share a story of camaraderie, creativity and courage – one that has informed their way of thinking. Join the conversation between design powerhouses and their equally stellar mentees, from Sandeep Khosla and Amaresh Anand with Farah Ahmed Mathias, Dhaval Shellugar, Jatin Hukkeri, Oommen Thomas, Iesha Parekh Shellugar, Juhi Patel and Thomas Jose Parambil; Pinakin Patel with Ashiesh Shah; Sonali Rastogi with Deepanjali Chawla to Hafeez Contractor with Seema Puri

# THE HOMECOMING

A glimpse into the incubator of talent, Khosla Associates led by the two design powerhouses, Sandeep Khosla and Amaresh Anand

WORDS PRAGNYA RAO PHOTOS ANEEV RAO

It's like a house party at your friend's. You are on the couch and the doorbell rings for the first time, so your friend graciously opens the door. Broad smiles, warm hugs and conversations flow. Until it rings again. And this time, the friend of your friend does the job, followed by broader smiles, warmer hugs and conversations you can no longer decipher. The only difference is that it's neither a house nor a party. It is what this motley crew refers to as "No 18" — the expansive studio of Khosla Associates in Bengaluru. It definitely has been home to this bunch in its current form or its previous avatar in Domlur. As Sandeep Khosla and Amaresh Anand welcome their mentees, it's pretty evident, it truly is a homecoming for all.

"I remember on my first day in the studio, I had to draft a cross section of a lamp — there I was, a 25 year-old, independent woman who'd worked in New York but terrified as if I was about to write my board exams!" recalls Farah. And to think, "I had to constantly tell Farah, who was interning at the time in our Domlur studio to keep her volume down," says Sandeep with a laugh. Something tells me it will be a while till we will be able to contain the din in the room right now. I suppose it's fitting given Amaresh is the resident DJ, a skill everyone seems to enthusiastically vouch for. "Of the many things that I remember about my first ever site trip



Seated in front, Thomas Jose Parambil, Juhi Patel, Sandeep Khosla and Farah Ahmed Mathias; Standing, from left, Dhaval Shellugar, Jatin Das, Isha Parekh Shellugar, Oommen Thomas, Amaresh Anand

to Mysore with him was the music he introduced me to,” says Thomas Jose Parambil.

The guest list today is glitzy — Farah Ahmed Mathias, Dhaval Shellugar, Jatin Hukkeri, Oomen Thomas, Iesha Parekh Shellugar, Juhi Patel and Thomas Jose Parambil. “Sandeep and Amaresh are the stalwarts of our industry. It felt like working not just for the finest but celebrity architects of our country,” reminisces Dhaval with a grin. The latter not only met Farah at the studio, who he went on to establish the hugely successful FADD studio but also on a serendipitous evening met his life partner Iesha, who coincidentally is also a Khosla Associates protégé. “This was our second home,” she says, a thought echoed by the rest. It was a revolving door of sorts with each of them overlapping their time at the studio with the rest, and nurturing their relationships as they moved forward. “We may have sown some seeds of inspiration, but they have flourished with their own drive, ambition, and talent. What I appreciate about them is that they have striven to find their own, individual voices,” says Sandeep with obvious pride.

“Over time, I feel the relationships have naturally transitioned from respect (from mentee to mentor), mutual admiration to beautiful friendships,” says Amaresh, “and working with Sandeep for me is like working with my brother.” It feels almost like a family that has come together for lunch, picking on each other, laughing away at old jokes, catching up. Like that time when Dhaval sat for hours with Sandeep’s kids, who were 8 and 10 years old then, teaching them to make scale models of a sculptural bookshelf that they wanted to surprise the latter with even though in Jatin’s words, “I used to be the chief model maker during my time.”

Khosla Associates has long established itself as the incubator for talent, but the truth is that Sandeep and Amaresh too started their journeys with legendary mentors each, with the former’s first gig in India being that at Charles Correa’s office. “I feel there is a mutuality to the process of incubating talent, as it is usually architects with a certain sensibility who also want to work

*“We may have sown some seeds of inspiration, but they have flourished with their own drive, ambition, and talent”*

with us. Building a community is not intentional but it’s just in our nature to care for people who work with us,” philosophises Amaresh. It is this humility and warmth that both Oomen and Juhi recollect as being the most enriching quality in their initial years at the studio. With people coming from different parts of the country to work here, it naturally became a home away from home for everyone, where meals were had together, festivals were a time for blow-out celebrations coupled with endless nights of working on submissions. This too seems like one of those days, where Sandeep and Amaresh ensured there were endless cups of coffee, everyone’s favourite sandwiches, and where new memories made. Looking at how effortless the afternoon was, it’s hard to believe that they have walked into the studio almost a decade later. “We absolutely need to party together, my place — and Amaresh will DJ,” announces Sandeep to loud approvals from the Khosla crew. Guess the more things change, the more they don’t.

## SANDEEP KHOSLA AND AMARESH ANAND

KHOSLA ASSOCIATES

Having started his studio in January 1995 in a tiny room in his brother’s office with a few drafting boards, barely a computer with email, and no cell-phone, to Amaresh joining the firm in 1998, the duo has gone on to become the most recognisable architects in the country today. With a strong belief that, “We are only as good as our last project,” they are always inquisitive, thirsty to explore new ideas and innovate.

### DESCRIBE EACH OTHER IN FIVE WORDS

SANDEEP KHOSLA Patient, empathetic, sensitive, humble and obsessive.

AMARESH ANAND Caring, warm, dependable, talented and intelligent



From left, Amaresh Anand, joined Khosla Associates as a junior architect before making his way to being the co-founder and principal architect, and Sandeep Khosla, founder and principal architect, Khosla Associates

**WHAT'S A TYPICAL DAY AT THE STUDIO LIKE?**

SK My time is divided between 3-4 days at the studio and a couple of days a week working from my home office when I am not travelling that is. That time is reserved for design on my drawing board. Amaresh and I catch up a few times a week in the studio to brainstorm on projects and have lunch together and catch up on our lives.

AA There is never a typical day for me. Each day is exciting in its own way. Some days are more challenging and you do your best.

**WHAT'S YOUR LASTING IMPRESSION OF YOUR MENTEES?**

SK Each one of them I have to say, were very hard working and driven. They were willing to go through the rigour and demands of our studio with a smile even when things got tough. I might have had my closest and longest interactions with Dhaval from FADD studio and Oommen Thomas of Aviot. Although working in different time periods, they were my 'go-to' boys as they were always so reliable.

AA I think what stood out for me about this group is how inquisitive and how willing to learn they were. When faced with challenges, they worked even harder showing both responsibility and leadership. While we often hire people for the talent and creativity they show, but it is these qualities that keep them with us [khoslaassociates.com](http://khoslaassociates.com)

**FARAH AHMED MATHIAS AND DHAVAL SHELLUGAR**

FADD studio

After her stint in New York, Farah moved to India in her creative pursuit joining Khosla Associates as an intern. It is here that she met Dhaval where they worked on the same team for almost 18 months and found their working style complementary. After working for about a year and a half she moved to Milan for her Masters in interior design and on her return. Dhaval continued at Khosla Associates heading diverse projects gaining invaluable experience that gave him the inspiration, drive and confidence to eventually set off his own.



Dhaval Shellugar and Farah Ahmed Mathias of FADD Studio

On her return, Farah was keen on starting her own design studio. Dhaval and Farah recognised that their design sensibilities were a lot alike and decided to start a practice together and that was the birth of FADD Studio.

**WHAT IS YOUR EARLIEST MEMORY OF SANDEEP AND AMARESH?**

FARAH AHMED It's a bit of a mixed bag because I knew Sandeep from a yoga class. Ofcourse, for me he is a hero and I was in one of awe but it was also funny because I first saw him while I was doing a headstand in the yoga class! And for Amaresh, he

*“Over time, I feel the relationships have naturally transitioned from respect, mutual admiration to beautiful friendships”*

was initially an enigma and then became the approachable boss.

DHAVAL SHELLUGAR I came across their work in 2006 during my final year in college when 'Shiro' was launched in Mumbai in an old abandoned textile mill. The sheer scale and the materials used in the bar project was very surreal, almost a fantasy.

**WHAT DO YOU CHERISH THE MOST ABOUT YOUR TIME THERE?**

FA The fact that with zero experience, I was given a chance to explore a new world that ultimately became mine too.

DS I was really blessed to work on the important award winning projects of the firm – the experience helped me a lot in my personal trajectory. It has also propelled me to achieve bigger goals. [faddstudio.com](http://faddstudio.com)

**JATIN HUKKERI**

WDA

Having started as an intern at Khosla Associates in 2007, Jatin returned as a junior architect in 2009 and stayed on for a year after that before starting out on his own. Today, WDA led by Jatin is the name behind almost every new and exciting hospitality project, and is known to craft spaces that stays sensitive to context where purposeful design is at the heart of everything. “We now super-specialise in hospitality architecture and interior design,” he says.

**WHO WAS YOUR MENTOR?**

Mostly Amaresh, partly Sandeep.

**WHAT STRUCK YOU THE MOST WHILE WORKING WITH THEM?**

Their attention to detail, and the ability to charm all spaces in the most minimalistic yet cheerful manner, all of it while enjoying the process of design was something that has left an ever-lasting impression on me.

**YOUR FIRST PROJECT WITH THEM?**

As an Intern, it was Hard Rock Cafe in Bengaluru.

**WHAT IS THE ONE THING ABOUT AMARESH**

**THAT STILL MAKES YOU SMILE?**

His sense of timing – he is an early bird and used to get to the office by 7.50AM and would call us too for design-related discussions. Most of us could barely make it on time but he always did! [wdaspaces.com](http://wdaspaces.com)

**OOMMEN THOMAS**

AVIOT ARCHITECTS

He started his journey at Khosla Associates in 2013 as a team leader across a multitude of projects before starting his own firm four years later. Aviot Architects is a sustainable design-led practice that seeks to create a balance between the built and unbuilt environment, and its user, operating with a simplicity that focuses on doing more with less.

**WHAT DO YOU RECALL ABOUT WORKING WITH SANDEEP AND AMARESH?**

I was quite inspired when Sandeep shared his design ideals with me and I must admit being captivated by Amaresh's meticulous attention to detail and skills at drawing.

**WHAT WORDS WOULD BEST DESCRIBE THEM?**

Commitment, love for art and architecture, hard work, teamwork, professionalism and ethics to name a few.

**WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST PROJECT WITH THEM?**

A weekend home named 'Retreat in the Sahyadris'. [aviotarchitects.com](http://aviotarchitects.com)

**IESHA PAREKH SHELLUGAR**

TAP DESIGN INC

She began her journey at Khosla Associates as an intern for 16 weeks in 2012 moving on to explore different aspect of design and business before ultimately setting up her own design practice in 2020, TaP Design Inc with Sneha Talati.

**WHAT WERE SOME OF THE MOST VALUABLE LESSONS YOU LEARNT WHILE WORKING WITH THEM?**

## CONVERSATIONS

The importance of working drawings I would say. I hated them during my college days but when I saw the kind of drawings being produced at Khosla associates, I learnt to look at them as artworks instead of technical drawings. And the significance of joinery details and its impact on the conceptual design.

### WHAT IS YOUR FONDEST MEMORY?

What I cherish the most is when in 2014 I had contacted Sandeep to guide me for my thesis project on colours in contemporary spaces of India. The long conversations, visits to projects designed by them and insights of how, when and why they started using applied and natural colours in the spaces they design, it gave my confidence and courage to be bold with my choice of colours, textures and palettes.

### WHAT WAS THE BEST THING ABOUT WORKING WITH SANDEEP AND AMARESH?

I am where I am because of them. The power, the courage, the sensibility towards work. If it could make such a big difference to my life having worked there for such a short span I can't begin to imagine what it would have done for people who worked there for many years! [tapdesigninc.com](http://tapdesigninc.com)

### JUHI PATEL YELLOW DOOR ARCHITECTS

Having joined Khosla Associates in 2009, she worked there for three years before starting Yellow Door Architects with Joshua John in 2014, where they prioritise the integration of natural light, recognising its vital role in enhancing the ambiance and well-being within spaces.

### HOW HAS WORKING AT KHOSLA ASSOCIATES INFLUENCED YOUR DESIGN THINKING?

It has significantly shaped my design journey, impacting my aesthetic sensibilities emphasising the importance of context. This is where I grasped the principles of simplicity and elegance, discovering how to integrate Indian context into design through elements such as texture, art, lighting, locally sourced materials, and environmental sensitivity.

### WHAT WAS A TYPICAL DAY LIKE AT THE STUDIO BACK THEN?

It would involve team discussions with Sandeep and Amaresh elucidating design concepts, introducing new project details or materials, and diligently working on drawings while adhering to deadlines.



IESHA PAREKH  
SHELLUGAR

Co-founder, TaP  
Design Inc

THOMAS JOSE  
PARAMBIL

Principal Architect,  
Thomas Parambil  
Architects

JUHI PATEL,

Principal Architect,  
Yellow Door Architects

JATIN HUKKERI

Creative Director,  
WDA

OOMMEN THOMAS

Founder and  
Principal Architect  
Aviot Architects

*“I feel there is a mutuality to the process of incubating talent, as it is usually architects with a certain sensibility who also want to work with us”*



Standing, from left: Jatin Hukkeri, Isha Parekh Shellgar, Juhi Patel, Farah Ahmed Mathias, Amaresh anand, Sandeep Khosla and Thomas Jose Parambil; Sitting, from left: Dhaval Shellugar and Oommen Thomas

**WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST PROJECT WITH THEM?**

The Aura Spa at the Park Hotel in Hyderabad, was one of the initial projects that I worked on. The intricacies involved, spanning from conceptualisation to execution, provided me with immense joy and a sense of privilege, working on a project of such exceptional quality. Instagram: @yellowdoorarchitects

**THOMAS JOSE PARAMBIL**  
THOMAS PARAMBIL ARCHITECTS

Having started as an architectural intern at Khosla Associates in 2012, Thomas came back to the studio as a junior architect working there for a little over two years. He moved on to explore and try his hand at other things before starting his own practice in 2017, where he focuses on creating sensitive spaces that respond and inspire.

**WHO WAS YOUR MENTOR?**

It was Amaresh. I had the privilege of working on his home for which we made multiple physical models of the house. It was quite exciting, I must say!

**WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THEM?**

Amaresh is the details-man. His eye for it is amazing. He drafts out drawings the old school way and that has always amazed me while Sandeep's understanding of colour and space is on another level. It is something I always wanted to develop for myself.

**WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST PROJECT AT KHOSLA ASSOCIATES?**

Amaresh's house was my first with him while a home in Mysore was my first project with Sandeep. [tparchitects.in](http://tparchitects.in) ♦