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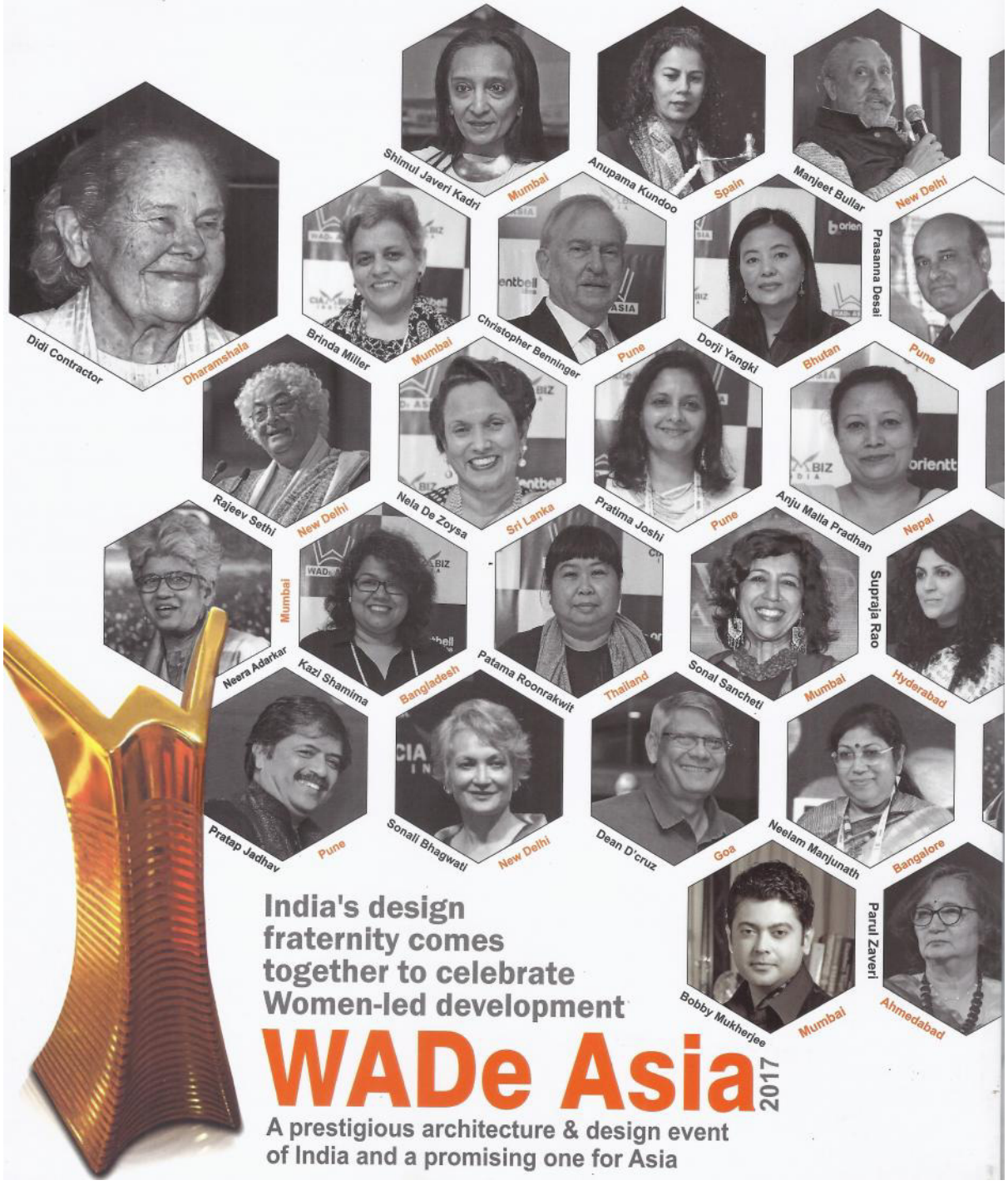


India's design fraternity comes together to celebrate Women-led development

WADe Asia 2017

A prestigious architecture & design event of India and a promising one for Asia

COUPLES AS WORKING PARTNERS

#BUILDINGWITHLOVE, A WADe ASIA INITIATIVE

In Architecture & Design, we often come across successful firms which are run by couples who are working partners as well as life partners. This interesting panel discussion at WADe Asia 2017 brought together three successful couples **Neilesh & Bhavya Kenkare**, ARCH-AID, Mumbai, **Rajiv & Sabeena Khanna**, Studio KIA, Gurgaon & **Ashwin & Anjali Lovekar**, Lovekar Design Associates, Pune, to find out what worked best for them, balancing family and work and challenges, moderated by ace Interior Designer **Payal Kapoor**, from Visions, New Delhi. **SURFACES REPORTER** presents some extracts from the discussion in this issue.

WORKING TOGETHER - GOOD AND BAD

Starting on a lighter note **Ar. Neilesh Kenkare** said that life partners working together mean that the entire money comes in the same house and you get to work under the same boss 24 hours be it office or home. It's easier to maintain the family and work time as he and Bhavya have family time while they work as well as work while they are having family time. He gives an instance on how being architects if they go out for dinner to some restaurants more than eating they are looking here and there at the ceiling at the carvings, looking at the floorings to get some interesting cues for their next project together.

"My perception that women always have stronger eye for detailing which men don't have". - Neilesh Kenkare

Agreeing to **Neilesh**, **Bhavya** said that there is a lot of fun and lot of togetherness, lot of bonding that happens when people work together as couples. She was very lucky to be able to work as a family as **she could take her daughter Soumya to sites along with her which not only helped her to see the growing phase of her child but also gave the child a fantastic exposure.**

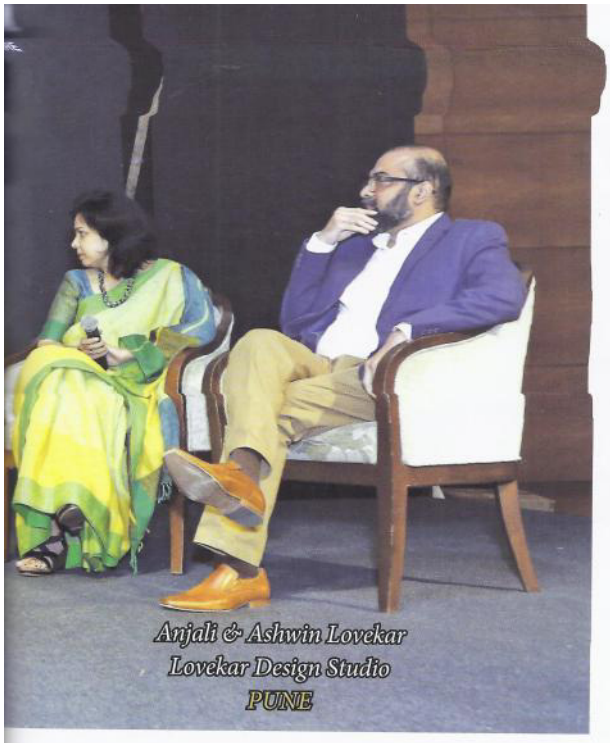
HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH CLASH-OF-OPINION?

Bhavya says at times one partner has to be ready to take the backseat whether it's in design or talking to the clients or getting the approach across. Working together not only helps in growing as a professional but as an individual as well.

"Knowingly or unknowingly there have been phases of being grown together and we accept each other's virtues, we accept each other's merging and bonding, the negatives the positives and make the best out of it".
- Bhavya Kenkare

Working together professionally helps in bringing out the individual selves in each individual. People do think differently as the approach can be different so at times the projects are done differently depending on the clients or projects. So you learn to respect the differences and appreciate the togetherness which is the learning process in itself which magnifies the whole bond.

Ar. Anjali Lovekar says that all architect couples more or less share the same professional and personal journey. The only disadvantage that she feels as a working couple is that often they bring back work at home which hampers the family life



Anjali & Ashwin Lovekar
Lovekar Design Studio
PUNE

as the work pressure can be felt in home surrounding as well. She further says that there maybe difference in opinion but they always work in the interest of the project. **Often having different point of view can be advantageous as the clients get more options to choose from for the same project.**

"Working together one learns, when I should step in and when I should step out. It is like a beautiful dance in rhythm and then there are no egos. - Anjali Lovekar

Ar. Ashwin Lovekar says that he and Anjali started working together while they were in the final year of architecture. They started learning on the job and it has been 30 years now. **According to him over the years of togetherness they have blended in so much that they do not find pros and cons in their relationship or partnership. They are always there to fill in for each other's absence.** Their bonding has reached a level of being independent and being professional at the same time.

"One of the biggest pros I would say is if my wife was anybody but an architect it wouldn't have been that good because we both are crazy people and only another crazy person who will be sharing life would be able to appreciate and live along and I am sure **I WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO WORK WITH OR STAY WITH OR LIVE WITH SOMEBODY FROM OTHER PROFESSION."**

Ar. Rajiv Khanna agreeing with Ashwin says that the journey of life and work has been smooth while supporting each other and playing a part in each other's lives in a very strong way. **WHILE WORKING, THE VISION IS VERY CLEAR AND THE DECISIONS ARE TAKEN COLLECTIVELY** because there is not only design but there is also technology that also takes in.

DO YOU UNDERLINE RESPONSIBILITIES OR DEFINE ROLES?

Ar. Sabeena Khanna says that life partners in the same profession helps in maintaining the compatibility. She and Rajiv fill in for each other and after 3 decades of being together they do not take in any pros or cons professionally or personally. She even says that often when they go out they often start seeing the buildings or designs more professionally than enjoying the moment as it comes naturally to you because you are immune to appreciate finer things in life and that happens all the time. **Talking about defining roles she says there may be division of work depending upon the project but electronic sessions and client interactions are done collectively.**

"We don't work differently we work for each other and that is how the team works. We know when there is difference of opinion but there is a way to reach fast solution". - Sabeena Khanna

ARE WOMEN BETTER AT DETAILING?

Ashwin says that he will not go with the common belief that men are not good with details and men are not good with colours. One of my client asks me, "what have you got to do with colours? I ask why? Do you think I am colour blind? We take pride in our sense of colour. When we look at design we look at the design. Neilesh however believes women have more eye to detail.

HOW DO EMPLOYEES FARE IN YOUR FIRMS?

According to Anjali love and trust are the most important thing to maintain a bond in any relationship be it family or between employees. She shares an instance that when the girls working in her firm has any issue they come directly to her and they collectively find out a solution to solve the issue. It is the reassurance that matters which they give to their team as well as clients.

Payal Kapoor blended the session beautifully with opinions from all while concluding with some important comments.

Working with women designers in their firm is a major advantage as there is low rate of attrition as they get the best work comfort, believes Ashwin. Women should take their profession seriously and look at the different aspects of life. Ashwin and Anjali often take married women who want to restart their job after few years of break due to marriage and children. It's like a rehabilitation process for these girls.

According to Neilesh women today are strong headed, know their profession and are not dependent.

Sabeena gave closing comment to the lovely session saying if you are an architect couple just go for it. Don't lose your individuality angle. Come up with your individualities and compatibility.

Stay in touch with us through ***www.wadeindia.com*** and **surfaces.in** for more information related to the discussion.