

Aarefa Johari - Home Sweet Home

www.hindustantimes.com. August, 18, 2013. Technically, tailors Sheetal and Shankar Malkar live in a slum. But to look at their home, you would never think it. The couple rebuilt their cramped 150-sq-ft room in Bhandup's Sai Vihar settlement last year, turning it into a two-storey structure with their workspace and store on the ground floor and a bedroom-cum-kitchen above.

In true Konkan style, the tiny balcony lends a splash of bright colour.

As a notified slum, Sai Vihar's residents are eligible for housing in Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) buildings, but they say the home they now have is better in design and construction quality.

"A flat would never allow us a separate workspace," says Sheetal, 36.

The Malkars' home was built by Amar Mirjankar, a popular informal contractor in the area.

He has no formal training in engineering or architecture; in fact, he grew up in the Sai Vihar slum and has studied only till Class 10. But for 13 years, he has designed and built numerous concrete homes in the area.

"I make homes based entirely on the residents' personal and professional needs. The focus is on maximising space and keeping costs low," says Mirjankar, 38, who worked with a network of informal masons, electricians, plumbers and painters to build the Malkars' house for R4.5 lakh.

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