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## BUILT ON TRUST

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# BUILT ON TRUST

Mitaram Jangid, promoter, and Bhushan Nemlekar, director, Sumit Woods, have a reputation for being transparent in their dealings and delivering projects in good time

BY JAYASHREE KINI MENDES

▲ Bhushan Nemlekar and Mitaram Jangid.

Sometimes the most innocuous work can lead to something bigger and better. What started out as contracting work for promoters Mitaram Jangid and Subodh Nemlekar some three decades ago, has turned into a flourishing real estate business that has earned them many accolades. Today, Bhushan Nemlekar has stepped into his father's shoes as director and continues doing the steady work with Jangid.

Few would know that at a time when larger and well-known developers continue to stay a private business, Sumit Woods is a listed company. The company wanted to stay transparent in its business dealings, while it built its business on solid ground.



▲ Arcenciel at Mulund (W) is expected to be completed by 2023.

**RISING IN TANDEM**

To become a seasoned player, it's necessary that one tests the waters first. Capability to match up to expectations will only enhance trust in your abilities. The team of Jangid and Nemlekar (sr) knew that well. Jangid says, "Nemlekar (sr) and I were working in construction. The idea of becoming entrepreneurs struck us when we realised that there was a dearth of contractors who would take on contracting jobs and finish it on time, with quality construction. So, we took up one such job in the suburbs of Mumbai and very soon found ourselves swamped with work. Other similar and larger contracts came our way."



WE BELIEVE THAT REAL ESTATE IS A LOCAL BUSINESS. THE GOVERNMENT IS TALKING ABOUT VOCAL FOR LOCAL. WE HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING THIS FOR YEARS.

MITARAM JANGID

**SOME READY FACTS**

**Total developments completed:** 3.5 million sq-ft  
**Under construction:** 1.2 million sq-ft

**BRANDS USED:**

- Cement:** ACC, Ambuja Cement
- Lighting:** Philips, Lافit, Hybec
- Steel:** Tata Steel, Metro
- Flooring:** Designer Italian Marbles
- Tiles:** Qutone, Kajaria
- Paints:** Asian Paints
- Pipes:** Prince Pipes
- CP Fittings:** Toto, Grohe, Kolher, Jaquar
- Switches:** Legrand, Anchor
- Wires:** Polycab
- VDP/ CCTV:** Godrej, Hikvision



▲ Garden Grove in Borivali (Mumbai) helps residents connect with nature.



▲ Subodh Nemlekar co-founded the company with Mitaram Jangid, before handing it over to his son, Bhushan Nemlekar.

The team executed several projects for MHADA, municipal corporations, and other developers.

In the 80s, most of India was slowly developing. The population was growing at a faster pace than earlier and building homes was the need. The duo decided to explore newer opportunities and in 1997 ventured into Goa. But it did not dispense with Bombay (as it was then known). Over the years, Sumit Woods was completing projects across prime and sub-prime areas of Bombay – right from Borivali to Sion to Mulund and as far as Virar also.

The team was not averse to taking on projects that were also new to them. Around the same time, new formats of developments were coming up, and Jangid says, "we learnt the art of venturing into new types of development and were quick learners".



▲ Garden Grove is a completed project in Borivali at Mumbai.



▲ Sumit Bells III in Goa are bespoke villas that have been crafted carefully and will be a delightful place to live.

#### MOVING AHEAD

The idea of growth is inherent in man. So it's with any business. After having learnt the ropes of the contracting and construction business, it was only a matter of time before Jangid and Nemlekar build their own projects. The timing too was right. Not only did they have the experience, but also the wherewithal and the discernment and the means to carry out the end-to-end development.

But prudent as they were, they did not rush into projects. Jangid says, "We started small as we wanted to be surer of ourselves. So we started with a three-storey building and then having gained the trust of buyers moved on to high-rises."

Adding to the present developments, Bhushan Nemlekar says, "Earlier we built formats that were common across the city. A 1-BHK with a WC and bathroom. But when we realised that the city is all about going vertical, we went the same way. As we were first-generation developers, we gathered all the expertise we could so that there was no room for error. We also realised that demands of people kept increasing as they realised they could get more by paying a little more. We adapted to the circumstances."

Jangid recalls with some mirth, "Some of the our earlier did not even have parking space. And no one complained. There was no elevator and people did not miss it. With passing of time, even a three-storey building occupant wants an elevator, parking space, and several other modern amenities."

Then gyms, gardens, courts, are some of the demands from new-age buyers. What the conservative duo were most amazed at was the willingness by buyers to pay a higher premium to live in such apartments and move on from a simple lifestyle that was the hallmark of the 80s, mainly in upper- and middle-class Indians.



RERA WAS SET UP  
THREE YEARS AGO.  
WE HAVE BEEN  
FOLLOWING RERA IN  
SPIRIT LAST 30 YEARS.

**BHUSHAN NEMLEKAR**

#### BUILDING RIGHT

But then it's not only the cost of apartments that skyrocket. Suddenly, land became a scarce commodity in expensive Mumbai and the team at Sumit Woods found the escalating cost of land acquisition alarming. But then if you need to get on with business, one has to pay the price.

It was not mindless purchase and development the team wanted to do. Nemlekar says, "With the concept of sustainability getting popular, we did not want to be left behind. We worked on those concepts right from scratch and came up with the most affordable sustainable offerings that we could do with our projects. Right from AAC blocks to LED lights to rainwater harvesting and among other things have been adopted in our ongoing projects – be it in Mumbai or Goa.

The company also takes pride in the fact that none of their customers have had any complaints on the quality of their work. "Strong foundation and structure, not to forget quality materials and fittings have been our forte. Over the years,

we have discovered that most of our fittings continue to be used for years by our buyers," says Jangid.

Design too has played a crucial role in their projects. While they seek professional help from architectural firms, the prudent team at Sumit Woods also take assistance from in-house architects. "We want our projects to stand out and while professional architects do bring that to the table, we want to know for certain that we too are value-adding as our instinct tells us and bringing a novelty to the developments," says Nemlekar.

Modern facilities for Sumit Woods would include making room for modern gadgets. Thoughtfully, the company makes provisions for all amenities within the apartment for its buyers.

#### PRUDENT MATTERS

For developer's today, the main vexation is land acquisition. Given the cut-throat competition for a prized land, it's no wonder that many are either exiting the business or going in for joint developments. Similarly, finance is another concern. Over the years, a large number of banks had decided to put off lending to real estate firms and that has caused a setback to many.

The team at Sumit Woods has always been cautious and reserved in taking decisions when embarking on a project. Not for them the flamboyance and ostentatiousness that comes with grand projects. Jangid and Nemlekar have always main-

tained that land parcels should be in the vicinity of schools, colleges, medical facilities, and other locations that buyers are prone to visit for daily needs. Nemlekar says, "We have been careful to select and buy the right land parcel for our projects. Then based on the location, and the expected price of the apartment, we have built homes to suit the pockets of middle-class families. For instance, our projects in BKC and CST in Mumbai have smaller apartments because our buyers did not want to compromise on the location, while willing to



▲ Sumit Lata at Sion (Mumbai) has been thoughtfully designed.

▼ Sumit Lata has been built with carefully chosen materials.



**1.2**  
mn sq-ft under  
construction



▲ The Monarch is a 17-storied under construction project.

live in smaller apartments. We made it for them."

It is this concern for customers that compel the duo to proudly say that even when the market has been unkind to developers, they have sold more than 100 apartments in 1.5 years, which speaks much of their promises made.

Perhaps, they are one of the few developers who have seven ongoing projects – four in Mumbai and three in Goa.

Ask them about the reasons they did not venture to other cities, and Jangid says, "We believe that real estate is essentially a local business. Since most developers have two or three or four ongoing projects at a time, it helps in easy procurement of materials and saves on energy resources. With the government talking about Vocal for Local, we have been following this philosophy for many years now."

In terms of procurement too, Sumit Woods has for long

scouted for local goods and procured them for their projects. "We work closely with our vendors to ascertain that the products are eco-friendly and durable, while maintaining the right price to suit everyone's pocket," says Jangid.

#### FIRST TIME RIGHT

As pithy sayings go, one enjoys one's job the most when they enjoy what they do. This is apt for Sumit Woods. At a time when commercial developments became quite the rage, the real estate developer did not get carried away. It stuck to building what it does best – residential and villas. Nemlekar says, "Basically, we are redevelopment specialists. Though we have constructed residential buildings, we would prefer not to venture out of our comfort zone. Our success in residential is good enough for us."

Having been in the industry for more than three decades has helped the team at Sumit Woods understand some basic premises. One of them is achieving financial closure of a project before embarking on it. Nemlekar says, "Buyers want to see timely completion. On our part, we work with several banks to ensure smooth development. Even if sales are slack, the project must be completed on time. Our clients are mainly referral and it works very well for us."

In fact, the company does a dipstick to check whether the next location and the kind of development would go down well with its clients. It's only after that it begins work.

Sticking to the deadline is no small feat. As a listed company, Jangid and Nemlekar know their responsibilities. A quarterly analysis of the situation helps them rectify any inadvertent incorrectness in financial matters, schedules, etc. Nemlekar says, "RERA was set up three years ago. We have been following RERA in spirit last 30 years. It's also the reason you won't hear any damaging news about us in the regions we operate."

While they have everything working in clockwork order, they wish that authorities would also do so. Both Jangid and Nemlekar say that getting approvals quickly is a time-consuming process. "Now that certain approvals are available online is a good thing. But then bureaucracy does tend to stall things sometimes. Moreover, banks too are cautious about lending freely. So sometimes we have to pay for someone else's mistakes," says Nemlekar.

Ask them how they are coping with today's times, and they say that joint developments and redevelopments offer assured monetary gains. "Since we are a transparent company and not in disrepute, it helps us in our business. Our customers are satisfied and that is what helps us sleep well," they say in unison. **CW**