



## FAMILY AFFAIR

The place is quieter now, with her two older children, Aryan and Suhana, studying in Los Angeles and New York. But for Khan it always echoes with their laughter spilling from the many memories of them cycling around and running with their dogs in the garden. “We would all play a game of dog-and-the-bone together,” she says. These days the space is noisy again with AbRam’s baby talk and his non-stop rides on his toy-scooty and electric cars. “This is a house with no rules. I have never had any decrees for homework or mealtimes. I was always home when my kids came back from school. It is important for me to just be there for them.”

“Everyone in my family has contributed towards making this space their own,” shares Khan. Suhana’s love for ballet still influences the selection of photographs and art in her space. Until recently, *Breaking Bad* themed wallpaper adorned Aryan’s. AbRam has a favourite pillow that never leaves his side. As for Khan, she loves the over-scaled silhouettes—a jade Ganpati, a pair of four-foot tall black vases from Paris, a life-sized marble Radha-Krishna sculpture and a huge canvas of Subhash Awchat’s reclining clown. Her husband, of course, can never have enough of the movies. The entrance to their home theatre is lined with tall vintage posters of *Sholay*, *Mughal-E-Azam* and *Ram Aur Shyam*, as well as Charlie Chaplin’s walking stick framed lovingly in place. The auditorium is a cosy affair, with mahogany velvet walls, 42 burgundy leather recliners and every Shah Rukh movie till date available on loop. The house has several volumes of books everywhere, juxtaposed randomly with a riot of accents curated by her from stores in Dubai, antiquing afternoons in London, design fairs like *Maison & Objet* in Paris and *Salone del Mobile* in Milan, and other finds both vintage and contemporary.

## PRIZED POSSESSIONS

Bits of nostalgia pepper the home—photo frames of Khan’s mother, Shah Rukh’s father and the three children; a glamorous award night photo of the couple framed in silver; and a cast-iron antique basin from a forgotten place. Greco-Roman art, crystal decanters and stone lamps merge with armour-finished walls and a Gandhi bust gifted to her husband. A Ravinder Reddy sculpture—the famous disembodied head—sits in the middle of everything. Mannat is about these little draughts; the paraphernalia that tell the stories. Like a foot-long paintbrush that belonged to MF Husain, displayed in a handcrafted wooden frame in the den. Or, grander still, the stunning Husain that covers an entire wall at the entrance reception: a stark black horse outlined against a white canvas and sheathed in acrylic. It was a gift, albeit unsigned, from the late artist to her husband when he acted in his directorial venture *Gaja Gamini* in 2000. “It

was nearly a year later, when Husain-saab visited us at home, that I found the opportunity to have him complete it,” she explains. The artist proceeded to scrawl his signature in bright red at the top right corner, an unusual sight and a complete conversation starter for any visitor to Mannat.

There are also idiosyncratic statement pieces placed in odd corners with an almost strategic nonchalance. Well over a decade ago, Danish fashion photographer Marc Hom shot Angelina Jolie sitting on a black chair—an image that is now iconic to her. That leather-bound ‘Smoke’ armchair by Maarten Baas made in the Netherlands by Moooi sits at the side of a bedroom. Under the arch of the stairway, is a striking abstract expressionist painting. Very Jackson Pollock. “I was looking specifically for something in black-and-white. It’s possibly one of my favourites (art works) in the house,” says Khan. It was specially commissioned from Chennai-based Jean-Francois Lesage of Vastrakala fame. Next to the Lesage is a two-door checkerboard lacquered beech cabinet, an original from historic French cabinet maker Moissonnier. It looks almost lyrical, like a set of quavers, sitting perfectly in the niche of a double-height window draped in sheer Roman shades. The formal living room sequesters itself completely with a double-height see-through wall constructed with a matrix of bolts. “It’s what I love the most about this house,” says Khan, “high ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows and natural light filtering everywhere. You can breathe here.” With all these accoutrements in place, the gently weathered grand wooden stairway lined with classical carved wood balustrade is easily Mannat’s pièce de résistance. It draws all the attention and leads the way up from the formal living room to the gym, terrace and home theatre.

## HOME AND AWAY

There are other homes the Khans own across the world. Their weekend home in Alibag is a retreat as much as a well-guarded secret. Questions on their London pad are met with the gentlest of shrugs. As for the beach house in Dubai, “starkly minimalist and completely open to the sea” are the only hints she lets slip. “When I come back (to Mannat) at the end of each day, I can shut the world out. It’s an amazing feeling for me—to return to the people and the things I love the most,” she says. Sentimentality flavours her conversations around Mannat, probably the only home to which the Khans have grudgingly allowed some outsider access, perhaps because it is intrinsic to their shared histories. It was the first proper home in Mumbai for a couple of Delhi migrants who struggled through the odds to make it. This was where life took off, where their children grew up. It’s their safe space, away from selfies, headlines and the noise of the outside world. ■