

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Harvard Grad's Fascinating Journey from Architecture to Fashion Entrepreneurship

Chennai, India – Entrepreneurship is a tough, lonely journey, and a career change is an added obstacle. But Shilpa Ahuja's success story is an inspiration for anyone who wants to follow their passion, for she left her stable career in architecture to become a fashion entrepreneur. A Harvard University alumna, today Shilpa is the founder and editor-in-chief of ShilpaAhuja.com, India's most-read fashion blog with a team of 7, over 120,000 social media followers and over 250,000 monthly unique visitors. With fashion trends at its helm, the blog includes fashion news and advice, a Q&A section, an original comic series and the world's first truly trend-based online store. The blog has also collaborated with some of the world's top brands in fashion and lifestyle.

As a creative person, Shilpa's childhood hobbies included creative writing and art. At the age of 13, Shilpa collected articles from her school classmates to create her first handmade "magazine", which then became an annual tradition for her, and the first inspiration for ShilpaAhuja.com.

When the time came to choose a career, Shilpa, like all Indian kids her age who get good grades, was expected to become a doctor or engineer. Fashion is always considered an unintellectual career choice and is never encouraged by parents or society.

Her experiences at Harvard University changed her life, where she went to pursue her Master's degree in design. "I met brilliant students studying liberal arts, languages and writing who spent their summers developing apps and creating startups," she mentions. Inspired, Shilpa rediscovered her passion for fashion and entrepreneurship.

She began to follow European fashion houses and gained new skills like photography, graphics and web designing. She took formal classes on writing at MIT and management at Harvard Business School.

Back in India, Shilpa became frustrated with her 9 to 5 jobs, which never satisfied her multifaceted personality, despite being amongst the top-paid employees in the firms she joined. Finally at the age of 30, she quit her job to start her venture.

For most Indian women, being married means the end of their careers, but for Shilpa it was a rebirth of hers. Her husband encouraged her to bring her entrepreneurial dreams to fruition. "Most Indian middle class couples buy a new car, we wanted instead to invest our savings in our startup," says Shilpa. "The middle class mentality makes us risk-averse, which was the hardest thing to change about myself." Sightseeing aside, the couple discussed exactly what her new venture should be on their honeymoon in Greece. This led to trying new ideas and failing a couple of times before the blog was even conceived.

The beginning of her new journey was the toughest part. Quickly burning financial savings and self-doubt met with pressure from friends and relatives, who discouraged her from pursuing a new profession full-time. "Job offers in architecture were still pouring in, and my friends would ask - what's the harm in giving that interview?" Shilpa recounts.

That's when Shilpa realized, if she wanted to be a fashion entrepreneur, she needed to stop being an architect first. She deleted her profiles from online job search portals and converted her portfolio and architecture consulting website, ShilpaAhuja.com, to a fashion blog. "I began to learn as much as I could about the latest in fashion world," she says. The blog started as a platform for sharing her views on the latest fashion shows and learnings about the fashion world.

"I loved the idea of being a fashion outsider, looking in. I thought to myself, 'Fashion shows are often extreme, or show unwearable looks. If I could pick out the trends from these that an average girl could wear next season, she would find that really useful,'" Shilpa continues.

The idea took off and Shilpa made fashion trend predictions her expertise. Her audience of 20-something working women loved that. The blog extended its reach on social media and ShilpaAhuja.com added many more features like travel guides, a men's fashion section, a weekly newsletter and wedding fashion. The blog's traffic grew 1000 times in 6 months and Shilpa grew her team. Her readers began to send in personal style related questions. This resulted in an Ask Shilpa page where she replies to readers' questions with her recommendations.

The success of ShilpaAhuja.com makes it seem like a smooth journey, although it was anything but. As soon as the site started getting nearly 100,000 visitors per month, technical hurdles came up, especially speed and uptime issues. "India may seem like a land of coders from the outside, but I couldn't find a talented one for my website," Shilpa says. She learned new skills herself, including IT, server management, SEO and online shopping integration to build a multi-author site spanning more than 100,000 pages. "We're still on the lookout for a good coder!" she laughs.

"I learned the lesson that if you try, you have a chance of succeeding, but if you never try, you have no chance! There's a high chance that your startup may fail and you may end up losing your life-savings, but you'll gain more business knowledge than any Ivy-league B-school can provide. And if you still feel unsure, remember that if I can learn to code, you can do what you set your mind to!"

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About ShilpaAhuja.com:

ShilpaAhuja.com strives to inspire and spread confidence through fashion and lifestyle. The fashion blog publishes runway collection reviews, fashion trends and advice, shopping and outfit ideas, travel guides and cultural dialogue. ShilpaAhuja.com has featured and collaborated with Dior, Ralph & Russo, Versace, GAP, MAC and Nike. The blog has also extended its reach to newsletter subscribers, a [Q&A page](#), and has even introduced its very own [comic series, Audrey O](#). Their readers hail from 50+ countries including India, US, UK, Europe, Canada, UAE, and their social media following exceeds 120K followers. ShilpaAhuja.com is a team of 7, and currently receives more than **250K visitors per month**, making it **the most-read fashion blog in India**.

For further information, please contact:

Sahana G

Website: www.ShilpaAhuja.com

Office: (+91) 44-4270-7986

Email: press@shilpaahuja.com

LinkedIn: <https://in.linkedin.com/in/shilpaahuja>

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