



Romi Khosla delivers the Keynote address  
at the Inside Outside Mega Show, Chennai.

TEXT: GEETA DOCTOR



# The Future of our Cities

'This is the future, technology at your fingertips!' exclaims a team of sharp suited salesmen as Romi Khosla sits on a comfortable sofa in a mock-up cabin at the Inside-Outside Mega show at Chennai.

At the press of a button, the blinds slide down the glass windows on two sides of the fake room. Pinpoints of light flash from the false ceiling, soft music wafts through the area as the salesmen demonstrate how the plasma television comes alive, more lights snake across the walls and floor and the mood changes with the music that surges through the room. 'You can create an instant hotel lobby in your bedroom,' says the salesman. Another surge of electronic ripples by pressing the right buttons and it is morning once again.

'Is this what Romi Khosla's future is going to be like?' I ask myself as he languidly detaches himself from the sofa, nods at the salesmen and heads for the auditorium. He wears his hair long, scraped back from a handsome face in a grey ponytail and has an easy way with all the people who come to shake his hand.

As he climbs onto the podium to face an audience of professionals, architects and designers who have come to listen to him talk about 'The Future of Our Cities' a new Romi Khosla emerges. His is a stirring call to action.

'It's not about architecture, it's about the way you are going to live,' he tells us as he unveils his plans for a new direction to urban planning.

'Any solution for the future direction that our cities are going to have to take must come out of our own country. We are not planning for the future. We are not reflecting enough about our future. We are driving into a future that nobody is interested in which is why I have tried to come up with a plan for the Future of our Cities that I have called "Natural Cities".'

He warns us that with so many multi-nationals eyeing Asia as their next target we will soon forfeit the right to decide what we need to do and instead give in to the demands of a global approach where maximising profits and commerce tend to become the main parameters to progress.

