



RAHUL KADRI

KADRI CONSULTANTS

“OUR BUILDINGS GET A SOUL BY HARMONISING WITH NATURE, OUR HUMAN NATURE AND NATURAL SYSTEMS.”



1. Project: Club Mahindra, Tungli

Here to change people's lives, architect Rahul Kadri's design understanding evolves with time and project; for he believes change is constant. "We are constantly doing new types of buildings and questioning our beliefs in the face of what works and what doesn't, to create more meaningful places," discloses Kadri, who has trod this path for more than 20 years. A successful building, according to him, is designed to suit the geographic and social context through thoughtful response to the region's climate.

An alumnus of Academy of Architecture in Mumbai, Kadri specialised in Housing with a Master's degree in Urban Planning from the University of Michigan, USA. While there, he served as a researcher for the university's Architectural Research Laboratory and contributed towards the Energy Cost Avoidance project.

Kadri garnered some global experience by working with Gillis Judson Wade Architects and the Center for Environmental Structure, Berkeley, California. These endeavours led him to leave footprints offshore in the form of a school in Shasta, California, and a single family house in Napa County. He also assisted in the design of office furniture for Herman Miller & Co. Moving back to India, he worked with architect PK Das and contributed to the office building for the Handloom Association of the State Government of Orissa.

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Now, as a director of Kadri Consultants Pvt Ltd (the firm started in 1970 by his architect father, IM Kadri), he makes sure that each project focuses on the people who will thrive in the space, and integrates living systems that express the local context. Stemming from these values, the firm has designed some remarkable projects such as Fortune 2000 at Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai; the interiors of Hongkong Bank building; The Oberoi at Bengaluru; resort for Club Mahindra Holidays at Coorg; townships for Tata Chemicals, at Babrala, UP; and educational institutes like National Judicial Academy at Bhopal and Sona College of Engineering and Technology at Salem.

Kadri insists on looking beyond FSIs and availability of land. He stresses that building communities and planning cities that create 'maximum joy' need to be the focus. Elaborating on the housing crisis in the city, where 60% or more live in slums, he says it's not a crisis – but rather, a lack of integrated thinking. "If Maharashtra could plan with a density of 10,000/sq-km, then we would need only 5% of the land to accommodate all the people with all the industry, commercial activity, schools, gardens, roads, transport systems, everything. Imagine, good planning can help free up 95% land for agriculture and forest," he points out, adding that such densities in urban centres will also result in an accelerated economic benefit.

A defining project from Kadri is the Symbiosis Knowledge Village at Lavale in Pune. He reveals, "The idea was to inspire students by the architecture, so that they feel the spatial beauty in their hearts and create new possibilities in their minds, inspiring interaction."

This project uses solar energy for heating and street lighting. The rainwater is harvested, while the top soil has been protected by planting almost 400 indigenous trees. The classrooms have longer sides facing north and shaded corridors on the south, hence cross-ventilation discourages the use of air-conditioning wherever possible. The bricks used for creating a second wall for convection cooling are sun-dried, compressed earth bricks made at site.

Kadri's sensitivity to local architecture is apparent in the Club Mahindra resort in Coorg. The structure stands at the edge of the scenic property and benefits from the influences of the ingenious local Kondava architecture. The resort has courtyard structures that are connected with a passage and lead to the front of the house. Another interesting feature from the Kondava culture is the four inner slopes of the roof, which allow rainwater to flow down to the base pool for the storage of water that can be utilised for secondary purposes. The existing trees defined the polygonal pool in the resort, and it was just one of the many interventions that prevented the unnecessary felling of trees.

It's no wonder that, with such a humane approach to design, clients keep entrusting scenic locations in his able hands. When the National Judicial Academy had to be designed on a 60-acre plot overlooking two lakes in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, the client (Supreme Court of India) relied on Kadri's expertise to build this training academy. A major task at hand was to restore a part of the site [that was initially used for quarrying] to its pristine state. The buildings are set in gardens, with the main academy complex consisting of 11 courtyards of differing scale, openness and character.

Kadri finds his inspiration from architectural heroes like Christopher Alexander, Charles Moore, Laurie Baker and Frank Lloyd Wright. "Our buildings get a soul by harmonising with nature, our human nature and natural systems. Creating places that uplift the soul is our main purpose. Everything is to serve that purpose alone," says Kadri, who is also the VP of Save the Children, a non-profit organisation set up by his mother (the late Vipula Kadri) to empower the underprivileged through education, vocation and healthcare.

Throughout his practice, Kadri has learnt to stay focused on the cause at hand and not get swayed by the myriad opinions of different stakeholders in a project. This Green crusader believes that, "It is the architect's prime responsibility to clearly articulate and, with great charisma, ensure that the true vision of the project is realised." ■

2&3. Project: Symbiosis Knowledge Village, Pune