

# BUILDING WITH MIGHT

Architect **Rahul Kadri** is a force to be reckoned with, and his buildings are even more so. He gives **TRENDS** an insight into the true mission of architecture and how he works towards achieving it, brick by brick

Text **TINA THAKRAR**

There are numerous facets to the architectural prowess of award-winning, socio-cultural and eco-conscious architect and urban planner Rahul Kadri. The most telling one is that he spearheads IMK Architects, founded by his father I.M. Kadri in 1957, and during this time, has amassed decades of experience, a portfolio of over 150 large-scale projects across India and overseas, and a notable client list comprising the Taj Group, JSW Energy, The Supreme Court of India, Symbiosis Society and Club Mahindra.

In the 1990s, in the newly liberalised Indian economy, Rahul took over the reins of his father's practice. At the time, modern technology was making inroads into the architecture and construction industry, and concerns about climate change were arising. At a time when sustainability was an incipient idea, the firm was already developing green building concepts and tapping into the potential of architectural solutions that would last generations.

From his first independent project, which was an engineering college in Salem, to the biophilic, site-sensitive Symbiosis International University in Pune, to his ongoing educational, residential and hospitality projects around the country, Rahul has remained steadfast in his focus on social consciousness, urban ecological sensitivity, climate and context, social models, and innovation. Whether it's standalone buildings or city masterplans, he hasn't wavered from his attempts to rope nature into his designs.



*“We constantly seek to make places where people and their activities will thrive. What interests us is how human aspiration to do certain activities relates to geometry of space.”*

– Rahul Kadri, *Partner & Principal Architect, IMK Architects*



(Top) Auric Hall, Aurangabad, 2019  
(This image) Club Mahindra Madikeri Resort, Coorg, 2010  
(Right) Symbiosis University Hospital & Research Centre, Lavale, Pune, 2019





(Left) Symbiosis International University, Lavale, Pune, 2008  
(Below) A render of the ongoing Sona Vistaas, Bengaluru

*“Functional spaces are used by the end users to perform to their highest capacity. Form is perceived by everyone, and creates lasting memories and a sense of belonging to the place. All building planning starts with functions, but form also needs attention.”*

– Rahul Kadri, Partner & Principal Architect, IMK Architects

As with most globally-renowned architects, this organic connect can be traced to Rahul’s formative years. Although architecture had an overarching presence during his childhood, he never truly considered pursuing it until his teenage years, when his father introduced him to his buildings on drives around the city of Mumbai. This, coupled with his education at Sherwood College in Nainital, surrounded by vibrant landscapes, towering mountains and lush forests, infused within him a deep passion to create buildings and spaces in harmony with their natural context. To see this newfound passion through, Rahul got a graduate diploma in architecture from the Academy of Architecture, Mumbai, and a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Michigan, USA.



## BUILDING CONVERSATIONS | *Dialogues*

(Below Left) A render of the ongoing  
Treeshade Housing Society Pvt. Ltd, Mumbai  
(Self-redevelopment)

(Below Right) Club Mahindra Madikeri  
Resort, Coorg, 2010



*“Today, students are not only more aware and impressionable, but also more competitive, curious and socially exposed. It is our responsibility as architects to create a comfortable and optimal learning environment for them.”*

– Rahul Kadri, *Partner & Principal Architect, IMK Architects*

“I was influenced by the work and writings of Christopher Alexander. His books spoke about human behaviour and geometry, how design affects what we do, how patterns link to patterns of behaviour. That way of thinking really grew on me and I have been growing that way of thinking ever since.”

After graduation in Michigan and before returning to India to join his father’s firm in Mumbai in 1989, Rahul made the intrepid move of walking right up to Alexander’s door, and expressing a desire to work with him. As luck would have it, he was hired for six months, and that experience became the chassis for what is now a successful and inspirational career in architecture and urban design.

Educational institutes are the mainstay of IMK Architects since its inception, but the firm has also developed expertise in healthcare, which has become increasingly technical and challenging. The idea is

for these buildings to be future-proof and malleable enough to fulfil modern society’s growing demands.

“We have designed buildings in almost all verticals of a design office, but what I now wish to design are buildings or spaces that are tailor made for the citizens of Mumbai. It could be a public park that provides recreation for the surrounding neighbourhood or helps self-redevelopment of an old residential society completely on its own, without being at the mercy of a builder,” he says, throwing light on his affinity for people-centricity in his designs. He aims to create more buildings and spaces where the designers are empowered, and the users thrive.

As a way to support and strengthen communities beyond the medium of architecture, Rahul is an active member of multiple charitable projects across the country. He is the Managing Trustee of Save The Children India, Vice-

President of The Pride India (Planning Rural-Urban Integrated Development through Education), and Trustee of the Kadri Foundation, a non-profit trust that runs a school for under-privileged girls in Ahmedabad. “We firmly believe that education is the core component in any process of empowerment. It has been our constant endeavour to try innovative models that bring the joy back into education.”

He shares this belief with his wife Shimul Javeri Kadri, a multi-award-winning architect, speaker, jurist, teacher, and country-wide propagator of women’s rights in education, civic society and design. The two work in their own practices, but continue to share the mission to build sustainably, practically, contextually and in harmony with natural elements. However, their autonomous approach is reassuring, in that they’re able to make twice the impact in the architecture milieu. **H&DT**