

Edifice of the old guard HE'S EASILY one of India's

foremost architects, and his buildings like the Shiv Sagar Estate complex, the Nehru Centre, Grand Paradi and the Otters' Club dominate Mumbai's skyline like few others. So next month attending the launch of 'The Architecture of IM Kadri, by Kaiwan Mehta, will be a slew of heavy weights from the architect's legion of friends and admirers. For starters, Rajya Sabha MP Sharad Pawar will preside over the function, and the guests of honour

will be Deepak Parekh and Shirish Patel. But there will be others too. The Kadris, both IM and his late wife Vipula, were foremost amongst the city's intelligentsia, and very much part of an illustrious group comprising artist MF Husain, actor Dilip Kumar, Barrister Rajni Patel, and city elder Nana Chudasama. That the above were also married to graceful and hospitable women made it something of the primus groups of its time in Mumbai. Elegant soirees and sit

down dinners, where chiffons and crepe de chines and crisp kurta pajamas were the order of the day, and Chivas Regal served as the

conversation would turn to art, and politics, and culture. But of course, this was 30 years ago and along with the old guard,

who have taken over their mother's activities, and son, architect Rahul Kadri, along with his (Kadri's) grandchildren including the actress Athiya Shetty, are all expected

the book launch next month will be

grandchildren of this circle: NCP leader Supriya Sule, BJP

spokesperson Shaina NC, Kadri's daughters Mana Shetty and Isha Mehra

attended by the children and

Bombay in 1994

to be present.
And going by the names, it appears that the more things change the more they stay the



(L to R) Then Chief Minister of Maharashtra Sharad Pawar and Governor Dr PC Alexander, when IM Kadri was appointed Sheriff of



IM Kadri, the 86-year-old engineer by degree and architect by practice, talks to Ornella D'Souza ahead of the launch of the book tracing his architectural journey, The Architecture of IM Kadri by Kaiwan Mehta Architect Iftikhar M Kadri pioneered and religious problems ripping it he put his heart into the project and sea-facing terrace-garden apartapart. The struggle reflected in the created a masterpiece. ments in India with his very first structure spiraling upwards to indiarchitectural project, Brighton cate the sky's the limit. All that You were appointed Sheriff of Apartments. Other projects, the Nehru envisaged for India - art,

Bombay in 1994. cascading The Oberoi Bangalore, culture, tradition, science, re-search... this building holds. It only got me recognition. You see, the ornamented Taj Krishna Hy-derabad, the latticed Nehru Centre, two things have spoilt Bombay: the Rent Act and the Repair Board. As the perforated Haj House, the lou-The ornate jaali facade of Sheriff, I wanted to address these isvered Shivsagar Estate where IMK

actor Suniel Shetty, speaks to Or-nella D'Souza about his practice. You are an engineer by degree and architect by practice. (Laughs) I assumed the 'BA Civil' tag on architects' nameplates was the qualification to become an architect. Within 15 days of the course, I realised I was in the wrong place. But my elder brother convinced me to get the degree. I met businessman Phirozshah Dubash at a dinner party in Bombay. He gave me the opportunity to design my first building, Brighton, on Napean Sea road, in 1960. It was an instant success. With Brighton, I was also the builder and sold the flats! This experience and my training as engineer, helped me grow as an architect. So I'm an engineer but have no degree in architecture. And neither my

Architects, his firm is located, reflect

his fascination with Mughal archi-tecture. Before the book The Architec-

ture of IM Kadri by Kaiwan Mehta

hits stands this week, this 86-year-old

ex-sheriff of Mumbai, founder of a

school for underprivileged girls in

Ahmedahad and father-in-law to

find their way into your buildings. Well, my family home in Ahmedabad, is a beautiful haveli, Diwan House, with carvings, arches, jaali, motifs, chhajjas, verandahs, courtyard gar-

offices?"... But I took it slow.

clients or I felt I needed one.

Was the field of architec-

ture competitive in the '60s?

People told me I was mad to start my

own practice with big firms such as

Gregson, Batley and King and Mas-

ter Sathe & Kothari already in busi-

ness. "You have no godfather, no de-

gree, do you know against who you

are competing? Have you seen their

Elements of Mughal architecture

dens. I spoke Urdu at home and studied Urdu literature at my school, Jamia Millia Islamia, whose structure, by architect Karl Malte von

mid-day Teature

tilletter His man of MARRACHARDER THE Nehru Centre at Worli, Kowloon Mosque

ality. So Islam Gymkhana has no signboard and the governor's bungalow, Sahyadri, has a small plaque solely for postal purposes. Similarly, my design for the Nehru Centre spells Nehru minus a plaque or his statue. India was largely agrarian when the aristocrat

Panditii came in power. I

couldn't imagine him sit-

ting on the ground. So

the Centre is 45ft off the

ground (Nehru on a ped-

estal), raised by a gar-

in Singapore, IM Kadrl points to the

Ramada Hotel that earned a place in the

What is your most challenging

Nehru Centre. Now, I don't name my

buildings. Like humans, my build-

ings are recognised by their person-

making of 135 ft mural at Dubai's

Guiness World Book of Records

Heinz, I found unique.

project?

den, (India's agricultural base). Nehru held India together, despite linguistic

'His generation held the idea of beauty as important'

the idea something's missing. Your craftsman didn't agree with your non-traditional use of marble for Otters Club. I wanted the structure to appear like a pebble taken out of the sea... When I showed the drawing to the crafts-man, he protested, "Sanghemarmar ki tauhin hai (This is an insult to mar-ble)." I asked him if the dilapidated

intention?

Happy Home and School for the Blind resembles the

Braille script. Was that the

That's right. The solid-and-hollow

jaali is not totally porous. It gives

marble buildings in Rajasthan look beautiful even today. When he said yes, I said, "Assume this (Otters Club) is already dilapidated. Create a small portion of the building. If you don't like it, we'll use marble your way." He made it, we viewed it from a distance, and he said, Bura nahi lagta

hai, saab". Then,

Bombay in ten years. Had this been implemented, Mumbai would not have a single jhopad patti today.

sues. I was already on a state commit-

tee for redevelopment and even sub-

mitted a report on how to rebuild

What are your thoughts on modern architecture? Whatever the style of architecture, four rules must be met - fulfil the client's requirement, visualise in a way your client has not envisaged, assign at least one element to make the building noticeable on the cityscape and do not repeat the design. Aside Karl Heinz, who were your other influences?

Whenever Heinz visited Jamia to oversee the work of the upcoming university buildings, I followed him like a puppy. Seeing him at work made me want to become an architect at age eight! I'm most influenced by Oscar Niemeyer for his Brazilia. His concrete flows like poetry - beautiful, smooth and functional. Kahn is an original thinker: I don't consider Corbusier

> That is what my works to do. ornella.dsouza@ dnaindia.net @_oregano_





UNDAY READ www.mumbalmirror.com/others/sunday-read

He came from a generation that considered architects as city and nation builders; he also believed that their work had to contribute to the betterment

mkhana (1963) orli's Shivsagar (67). His influer

iconic Nehru Centre to the stunning Haj House, IM Kadri's work receives a fitting tribute in a book by Kaiwan Mehta

elative Value IM Kadri (86), Suniel Shetty (55) and Mana Shetty (50)



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that he's working in real estate, I am expe-

The launch of Suniel's family venture dealing in luxury villas was an outcome of Kadri's impact. "Just like Dad, it is important for Suniel that the outdoor has

to be indoors — green energy and land-scape has to be present within a space," says Mana.

Growing up with Kadri was all about finding the beauty in art and architecture. "When we would travel, I'd be huffing

His (Kadri's) work is like a

blockbuster Bollywood film. It

has a great introduction. After

a story opens, you reach an

interval point, and then you go into climax

Vipula's dream has become a common passion project that the family silently works on together. After her sudden death in 2007, Mana along with her siblings Rahul and Isha carried the baton forward, with Kadri's quiet, unwavering support, in memory of her "indomitable spirit and passion."

The family seems fluent in these languages of art, architecture, philanthropy. and puffing, thinking about my designer boots and Dad would keep telling me to look at various structures and buildings," laughs Mana, who is a proprietor of an interior design store in Worli. "I am not guages of art, architecture, philanthropy, fashion and film, polyglots who absorb these idioms of expression through their close bonds. "It's part of our lives, be it setting up a structure, home or making a educated as an interior decorator. But I feel that the sense of style is innate because I have grown up with it. It has helped me evolve as a designer." "Like me," adds Kadri, "Mana draws very well. She has a sense of proportion." Mana turns to Dad, almost reminding him, "Well, I was a fashion designer for film," says Kadri. Suniel shares the senti-ment. "I think waking up every morning ment. "I think waking up every morning and creating something new is exciting for us. A mundane nine to six job is not our thing," says the actor.

Daughter Athiya, who made her film debut last year with Hero and quickly earned the tag of a fashionista ("she's greatly influenced by her nani," says Mana), follows on that path. "I was fascinated to see her on the screen; I thought 25 years." She attributes her sense of style

shalla, follows on that parell. I was issued nated to see her on the screen; I thought she would be shy and reserved. But she surprised me," says Kadri, of his grand-daughter. "My grandson (Ahan), on the other hand, is ready to go any day in cinema. I can't wait for him to make a mark."

Suniel, choking up at her memory. He was very involved in the promotion of the NGO from the outset. "I learnt so

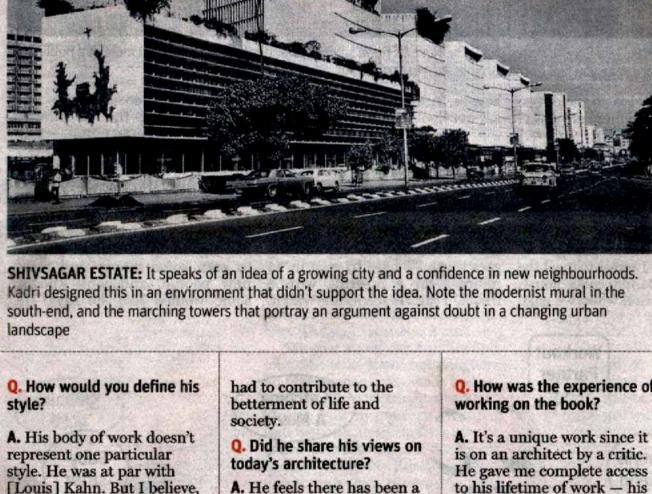
much from her."

Vipula's dream has become a common

principles of the Nehru Centre. The tower represented a new nation's aspirations; the jaali was inspired by the rose that

> Pandit Nehru wore with his bandgala

NEHRU CENTRE: The jaalis and diagrid are structuring



to his lifetime of work - his plans, blueprints and research. Working on the stories and interpretation behind his work was memorable. It was a challenge, but offered me valuable lessons. The Architecture of IM Kadri by Kaiwan Mehta published by Nivogi Books (₹2,995).

HAPPY HOME SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND: It incorporates a jaali façade that is modern, yet ornamental. The pointed arches emerged from medieval architecture but were modern in use and proportion in the way they lifted the building off the ground. ALL PICS COURTESY: THE ARCHITECTURE OF IM KADRI, NIYOGI BOOKS

loss of ethics. He believed architecture should make life easy and better for

people. This is evident in his plans where he never compromised on elements like a garden. He felt that the user as well as the client deserved the best. Economic viability of projects was crucial.

an architect, though. His buildings are crude and overpower, espe-

cially the ones in Chandi-garh. Certain works of

monumental scale make

the viewer feel insignifi-

cant. But the Taj Mahal

makes you feel like its

fourth dimension.

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The reputed architect's work, says Suniel, is like a blockbuster Bollywood film. "It has a great introduction. After a story opens, you reach an interval point, and then you go into climax. Without realising it, he has used the language of cinema," he elucidates. hanks to his architect-father-in-law, Iftikhar M Kadri, actor Suniel Shetty reckons that he has always law, Ittikhar M Kadri, actor Suniel Shetty reckons that he has always been inspired to look at all his film sets rather differently. "If you see all his work — and I am not just saying that because it's him — it's extraordinary," says Suniel, pointing to Kadri. "I have learnt to see everything from an architect's point of view — the thought behind the set and the light. I started getting more involved with every design of the film." Kadri, now 86, is responsible for few of the most recognisable structures in the city (or in Suniel's words, "a gateway to South Bombay") — the Shivsagar Estate, The Happy Home and School for the Blind, Ceat House, Otters Club, Jivan and Manek as well as Grand Paradi Towers. Referring to Kadri's self-designed sprawling apartment, on tony Napean Sea Road, where wife Mana joins him, Suniel cinema," he elucidates.

A book, The Architecture of I M Kadri, penned by architecture theorist and editor, Kaiwan Mehta, celebrates the work of his extraordinary contribution to his oeuvre. The volume will be launched on April 7 at Worli's Nehru Centre (anoth-"His work has always fascinated me,"
continues the fond son-in-law. "Whenever
he has worked on anything he has always he has worked on anything he has aways kept in mind the light and ventilation and nature. Only if the exteriors work for him will he say yes to designing a building." Suniel draws Kadri's attention to the unique structure he designed for the unique structure he designed for the Oberoi Hotels in Bangalore, which was planned according to the direction of an expansive Rain tree's branches. Flipping through the pages of the hardbound vol-ume that has the structure's original pro-totype, Kadri recalls, "When I visited the site for the first time in the late 1980s, it was a jungle. But there was this one beau-tful tree. I thought to myself that this tree Road, where wife Mana joins him, Suniel observes, "Today, you're on the fourth floor of a building and have parked your car and walked into a house. Here, you are up in the sky, in your own individual up in the sky, in your own individual villa, nobody can look into the house. Thirty-five years ago, if one thought like that, it's outstanding. It's truly a Swapnalok (the apartment's name) in the middle of the concrete jungle that this tiful tree. I thought to myself that this tree has to be preserved and it became the focal point of the project. In fact, I was very particular that nobody disturbs the tree because if it went, then my entire-concept would have gone."

Kadri's passion and vision has influenced the entire family. "But Suniel the city has become. Kadri turns to Suniel and Mana and explains, "You know why this building is built this way? Because this is a hill. Everybody else floored the hill, just cut it

[Louis] Kahn. But I believe, through him, we will be able to find others who've made similar contributions to the cityscape. His training as an engineer reflected in the clarity of thought that marks his designs. He came from a generation that considered architects as city and nation builders; they also believed that their work

Q. How was the experience of working on the book?