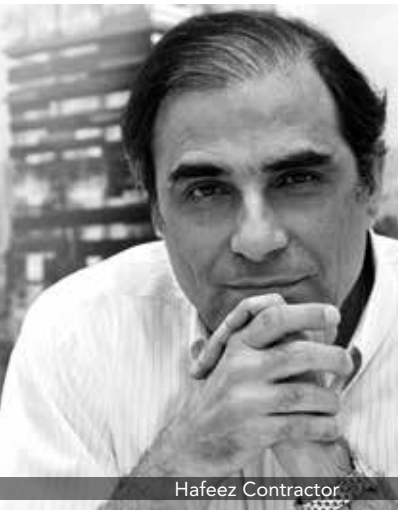


TRACING THE **HERCULEAN** **IMPRINTS** OF A NOVEL **DESIGN VISIONARY**



Hafeez Contractor

Architect Hafeez Contractor has influenced the skyline of much of the built environment of modern India, with an unmistakable identifying stamp. He has successfully designed and executed works for a gamut of clients from large real estate developers, public sector undertakings, large corporations and institutions to bungalows, residential complexes and shopping malls. His substantial experience and his large and proficient team put his practice in a coveted position of being better equipped to successfully deliver designs for jobs of any scale, nature or complexity. Furthermore, a subject close to his heart is social housing and his dream is to provide a house for every Indian.

TEXT & PHOTOS COURTESY: Hafeez Contractor

“Architecture should be honest and must respond to the spirit of the time characterised by distinct ideas, disparate missions, contrasting convictions and divergent preferences. It is this enduring belief that has brought me to where I am today.” - Hafeez Contractor

Hafeez Contractor’s passion for creating structures that embody functional and aesthetic qualities has evolved the urban built landscape of the country through intriguing and revolutionary ideas while executing a spectrum of architectural projects. Today, Hafeez Contractor heads the largest architectural firm in India, set up in 1982 with a dedication to design excellence, efficient delivery and sophistication in building technology, having grown from a modest three-person firm to a team of over five hundred adept members. Moreover, the firm has to its credit impressive numbers

over 2500 clients and 7.2 billion square foot of ongoing projects in 100 cities and 5 countries. The outstanding chart of work includes some of the tallest structures on the subcontinent, The Imperial Towers, Mumbai, one of the tallest residential buildings in the world, 23 Marina, Dubai, and one of the best cricket stadiums in the world, DY Patil Stadium, Mumbai.

His practice is based on a core philosophy, a strong advocate of the vertical growth of cities, judicious land use and the need for sustainable, compact cities to maintain a perfect harmony between increasing population and limited land resources. Apart from commercial construction projects, he has invested in researching and conceptualising ways to resolve the pressing needs of the urban fabric with proposals for public spaces and slum



redevelopment. These include West Line Freeway Project earlier the 'The Western Waterfront Development', Mumbai, a scheme that attempts to rejuvenate the urban environment and the introduction of the Slum Rehabilitation Scheme as a response to the issue of slums in Mumbai. Currently, he is empanelled with the housing boards of several Indian states, including Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and others.

The firm prides its unique design concepts and bold execution, while remaining responsive to the clients' diverse requirements and solutions are crafted appropriately to the needs of each client. Hafeez Contractor himself designs every project, and forwards it to his extremely well qualified and experienced associates, for further development. They, with their teams, focus deeply on the design potential of each work, converting them into a built reality, ensuring quality and timely delivery from the drawing board to the project completion stages, of each project. Below are two such projects that exemplify the ethos of his design practice.

Manipal University Jaipur Holistically Integrating Student Community through Architecture

The university is located near Dehmi Kalan village, Tehsil Sanganer, Jaipur district. The land parcel for the entire University development project is approx 185 acres, and the plot is naturally divided by the NH8 Express Highway into three parcels resulting



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1. An external view of the energy efficient built complex

2-3. The design reverberates features of Rajasthani architecture such as double walls, chajjas & jaali and bright coloured building facades

3. An interior view of the gym designed as a vivid recreation space

in the separation of the academic and residential areas which are envisioned to be connected by a pedestrian underpass allowing the seamless movement of students. The sites are further divided into two parts due to the presence of a High Tension Electrical Line, creating a



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5. Evening ambience of the rotunda for community gathering and the axial avenue between the Clock tower and Mandir

6. Entrance portals for the New Academic Building mirroring traditional regional architectural features

7. Shaded courtyards and embankment promoting natural daylight and ventilation

natural divide, which has been embraced as a central axis that serves as a major connection as well as provides for open spaces to the campus. On the University side, The New Academic Block is placed along this central axis.

The design appears to capture a glimpse of the bygone era by incorporating features such as the Rajasthan courtyard for shading purposes and bright coloured building facades emulating the colour of the sand. Elements such as the double walls, *chajjas* & *jaali* work differ for each of the façades and were designed by carrying out detailed climatology studies.

The residential side of the campus sits on a site of 56 acres, and it comprises of approx. 3000 student rooms, food court, faculty housing, service areas and several areas of recreation. The Girls and Boys Hostels are aesthetically separated; by creating a Grand Avenue like the Las Ramblas of Barcelona. The driving idea behind the design was to create a thriving community based on the concept of "The Medieval Maze" consisting of shaded streets and corridors, narrow deep & shaded courtyards and pergolas for screened circulation. Thus, the design has manifested itself with interlocking streets and courts, narrow skewed views, compact blocks, compressed movements.



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The kikad trees that filled the land were judiciously replaced and the campus is now landscaped with several hardy species like Bougainville and yellow Alamonda. The project has been awarded LEED INDIAN-PLATINUM rating for Energy Conservation and Environment Design 2016, the National Education Excellence ASSOCHAM Award 2015 under the category 'Best University Campus' and the Indo Global Architecture Education Excellence Award, Dec 2015 among others.

BITS Pilani, New Academic Block Spatially Harmonising the Existing Old with the Contemporary New

BITS Pilani, Rajasthan had floated a design competition for the construction of the New Academic Block (NAB) as part of their overall expansion plan to double the capacity of their campus in terms of Infrastructure and Students. Among the various esteemed participants, Architect Hafeez Contractor was selected to design this project and bring forth his unique vision. Set in a historical background, BITS Pilani, Rajasthan built in the early 1900s is a centre for excellence and learning. The institute desired the modernisation of its infrastructure and desired to increase its student intake from 3500 to 5000 students while also modernising all its existing facilities. The first task was the construction of the New Academic Block envisioned and designed as a visual link between the grand old Clock Tower that sits atop the existing Academic Block on the North End of the campus and the Saraswati Mandir that adorns the South End forming an important visual axis. In



between these two important landmarks lay a recreational ground admeasuring an area of almost 50,000 sq.m, this was the only large parcel of land available for any significant construction of academic space.

The approach adopted was to deliberately place the building on a subterranean level so as not to disturb the important visual axis that has successfully existed between Clock Tower & the Mandir for more than fifty years. The form emerged organically from the ground and new interlocking spaces were created with a central winding pathway leading from the Clock Tower to The Mandir. The terrace has large skylights at irregular intervals to provide natural sunlight as well as break the monotony at the ground level. A Grand Rotunda (50 m dia) was created, housing 1500 students for gatherings and forms a fusion between the traditional architecture of the Piloni Campus through a narrative of arches along the Clock Tower and contemporary seating with ramps along the new building. The only “Above the ground” structures are four Grand Archways having Rajasthani style arches which are symbolic with the existing architecture of campus leading down to the new contemporary building.

The building is designed according to LEED Gold Standards and has a 65,000 sq.ft green roof having flora & fauna. The embankments created by excavation are also greened with Wadelia Creepers requiring less maintenance. The building houses academic space

for over 2500 Students and even today remains invisible above ground and needs to be discovered by a person visiting for the first time. Apart from the New Academic Block, the design also entailed the renovation and new construction of student rooms, faculty houses, construction of student mess, infrastructure development, etc. All of the above work is being carried out keeping carefully in mind the harsh Piloni climate that varies from 0 – 50 degrees in Winter & Summer as well as bearing in mind the cultures, architecture and way of life here.

The unique “one window facility” based on the project profile, enables the firm to collaborate with other eminent consultants, both Indian and International, to provide consultancy for structural, engineering, landscaping, or any other services the client may require. This allows the firm to focus on their core competence of conception, creation and realisation of notable design projects. ●

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Ar. Hafeez Contractor completed his architectural studies at the Academy of Architecture, Mumbai and graduated from Columbia University, New York, in 1976-77. He is the winner of over 75 National and International Awards for excellence in contributions to architecture, including CWAB Architect of the Year (2006 to 2013) and has twice had been included in India Today’s Most Powerful Indians List.

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 www.architecthafeezcontractor.com

8. Central avenue overlooking the Mandir flanked by the builtscap with cantilevered projections