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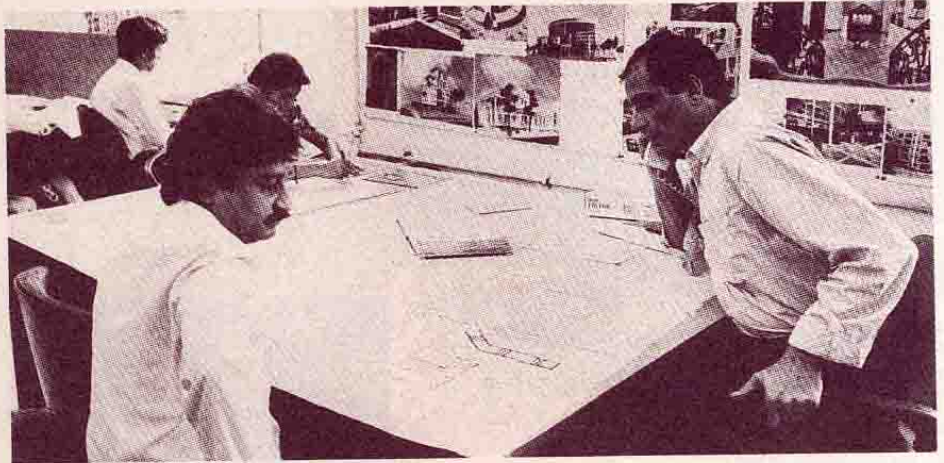
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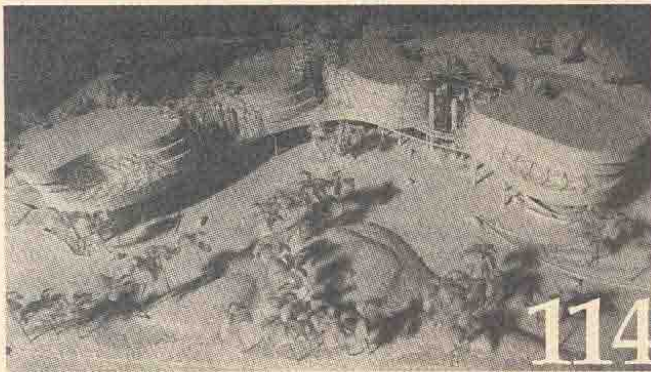
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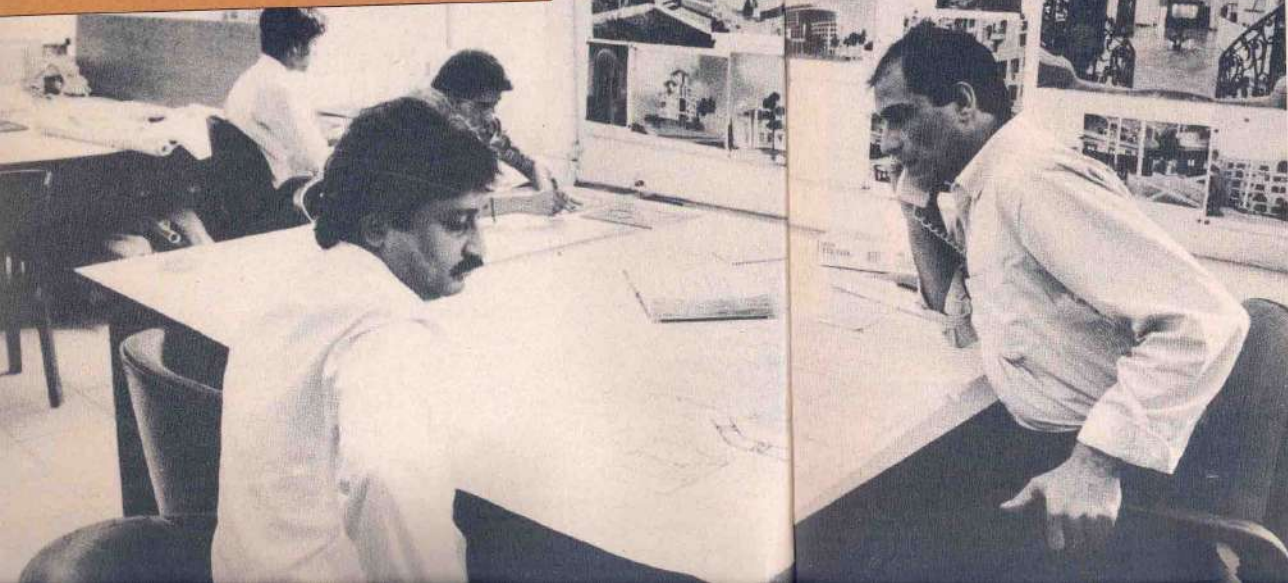
The author has a soft corner for Hafeez and his buildings — especially the 'tops'; which look out-of-place in the general scenario. A humorous anecdote, in a good vein.

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The Business of Architect Hafeez Contractor

Prakash Rao investigates the office hierarchy and financial structure of Hafeez Contractor's studio and interviews two staff-members to know their opinions about Hafeez's organisational policies.



architect, there is a sincere openness and a communicative directness about Hafeez that reflects in his body language and the manner in which he conducts his business of architecture. "You see, in our office, the key word is flexibility and accommodation, specially towards the client. This gives us a resilience to adapt and change with the times. Nothing else. There is nothing hard and fast here except hard work." Hafeez remarks. There is no denying that. I have seen the assistants and architects, including Hafeez, work late into the night, combining an enthusiastic busy-ness and a youthful casualness. When I enquire if they don't have any office timings? Hafeez smiles and replies, like some Tao saying, "We have no office timings because we have very strict office hours," and after a philosophical pause, explains "our work output and the deadlines are our strictest timings."

In his office at Bank Street, Bombay, Hafeez sits on the upper floor, uncabined and easily approachable, to one side of a huge table (almost the size of a conference table) which is covered with a clean, white sheet of drawing paper edged in brown gum strips. The table faces the stair leading down to the lower floor. This strategic position gives him a grandstand view of his open mezzanine studio and down the staircase gallery to the entrance door and the reception. I notice how the open office plan, the high ceiling, the white walls, the tall windows, and the diffused fluorescent lighting gives the space an airy and softly bright quality. The neat, uncluttered, white paper on his table bounces back the light into the spacious studio and onto the huge colour photographs of completed projects and perspectives that decorate the wall behind the table.

Seated here, Hafeez waves out to clients entering his office and meets them across the neat white

Internal Working Method

- Hafeez is the single point of command. He meets the clients, originates a design concept and assigns the project to an associate.
- Each associate is the nucleus of a core-group consisting of one or two architectural assistants and a draughtsman. The associate coordinates with Hafeez and the client, on all aspects of the different projects assigned to him.
- When a large project is assigned to more than one associate, then each associate brings with him his group, whenever required for this large project.
- If more draughtsmen are required, they are borrowed from other groups to work after 6.30 pm on overtime payments.
- In Hafeez's absence the administration-in-charge Mr E N Chinwala oversees office-discipline and administration.
- The administration-in-charge has two assistants to assist in accounts and administration.



both affable and business like. And even if a client must wait when someone else is being attended to, he is often seated at this table and not in some far and aloof reception area. To one side is a stock of tracing papers and a clutch pencil which he uses to draw out sketches of proposed elevations or plans to explain it to his client.

I ask Hafeez if he has an organizational hierarchy, a reporting structure. "No. Not really," he replies, "everybody is in charge of their own things - the projects and clients allotted to them. Often they don't even know what the other is doing."

"But what happens in your absence," I persist, "any particular associate takes over, like, say if a new client walks in?"

Terms of Associate-ship

- Starts as a trainee architect assisting an associate.
- Appointed an associate in the firm if found promising.
- In first year of associate-ship is paid 5 percent of the gross fees, less direct expenses on the project, like consultants' fees but not the establishment costs for interior designers and 7.5 percent for architects.
- Generally in the second year of associate-ship (but not necessarily the second year as a rule) he gets 10 percent of the gross fees less direct expenses.
- Then in stages he moves up to 15, 20 and a maximum of 25 percent, depending on his performance.
- The associates are also paid a monthly salary ranging from Rs 3000 to Rs 5000.

Insider Views

Architect Rachana Amin, A Senior Associate in the firm, says:

"It is the atmosphere here that encourages hard work even from young architects who work late into the night. Nobody sits in a cabin here, nobody dictates to anybody. There is, in fact, no architect who has left Hafeez to work elsewhere, they will just not be able to work anywhere else. Besides Hafeez's one-to-one relationships with his associates and architects are excellent.

Hafeez's working methods are also very different and encourage individual initiative. I have worked with Gherzis and Romesh Pathare. They are of the old school. Their concepts and ideas are very definite and those are more or less imposed on you. But here with Hafeez, though he has a definite style, he only gives you a very basic concept and lets you work it out. So you don't end up doing working drawings for a concept already worked out in detail by him, which is what is happening to my friends working with other senior architects. So within the general Hafeez style, the individual architects and associates develop their own personal styles, which we, within the office are able to distinguish. Besides, when you work with Hafeez, you are exposed to all the aspects of the profession right from getting the perspective and model organised to sanctions and permissions, working drawings, execution, supervision and all."

Architect Anupam De who recently joined the firm says:

"Before one joins the firm, one is in awe of Hafeez because of the success stories one has heard of him and despite the criticism by some college professors. In fact one is afraid that as a senior, successful architect, he may act arrogant and try to jack you. But then, once you join, you are impressed by the one-to-one equation he strikes with you. Even when you have just joined him as a trainee architect, he listens to you. He is open, he is informal. But when it comes to work there are no compromises."

"He is told to wait till I come back," Hafeez says matter-of-factly. "But sometimes," he continues, "a senior associate like Arshad or Rachna may take the initiative and meet him. Actually, it is very flexible, and as the situation arises it is taken care of without any rigid rules of protocol in these matters."

"But if there is no hierarchy, what do you mean by senior associate?" I ask.

"Senior, not in the sense of a management level. The other associates don't report to them. You see, here, it is like the associates are running their own professional businesses in my office. Of course the designs they develop and their business relationships are under my overall control because I allot the projects to them

and I am responsible to my clients ultimately. So when a customer comes, I meet him, discuss with him a rough idea which I then delegate to an associate to develop. He then keeps interacting with me and makes changes that I want, develops it further, till a final concept evolves."

Here too, Hafeez uses the tracing sheets and his clutch pencil to suggest changes in the associate's design. He takes the associate's drawing, places the tracing paper on top and sketches on it, in bold strokes, the modifications in plan or elevation. Every few minutes he meets one or another associate, sometimes with the client. Often, it is a phone call or a visit by a client that triggers off a meeting with the related associate to over-

see the design development and to measure progress.

"What is the profit sharing arrangement with your associates?" I probe.

"I wouldn't say profit sharing," Hafeez explains, "because then the question of expenses come into the picture and the whole thing becomes ambiguous. More correctly, it is a percentage of the gross fees. So an associate may get 5 percent, 10 percent, 15 percent, 20 percent or even 25 percent of the fees on the projects allotted and handled by him - it varies from one associate to another. In addition, an associate may get Rs 3,500, Rs 5,000, Rs 7,500 or may be Rs 10,000 as monthly salary."

"But, it can also happen that a junior associate earns more than a senior because he has been allotted a bigger, better job. It is luck, to some extent; although I make it as objective as possible by taking into consideration the associate's past experience, his output, his approach and the work pressure on him before allotting him a job."

There are 3 senior associates and 15 associates working with him, each assisted by a junior architect and a draughtsman. He is the only architect to have effectively used the associateship arrangement, so creating an incentive driven, hardworking team, with a low staff turnover. "That has never been a major hassle with me. Often my relationship with the staff has remained good even after they have left and I have given them jobs which I couldn't handle. And even those who have left and set up independent practice by stealing jobs from me have regretted afterwards." He continues, "I believe that life is very long and that there is so much scope that rather than fight, it is best to concentrate your energies on work. If someone decides to leave for better prospects and to set up independent practice, I don't see it as a problem at all. Rather than react negatively, I look at the positive side in that every time he goes to a prospective client and shows his portfolio of projects handled by him when working under me he will be also indirectly advertising me, my firm." □

Opinions

Prakash Rao talks to Hafeez's acquaintances, and business - associates in the construction industry, who have seen the Hafeez success story at close quarters.

Surendra Hiranandani

Hiranandani Constructions Pvt Ltd,

"I definitely feel that Hafeez has matured. In fact, I just mentioned this to one person last Sunday. Six years ago I used to give him only selected works but today I am able to give him a lot more because he has become much more practical and understands the needs of the client better and looks at the economics in terms of the size of the flats, or like say he does not now unnecessarily go too high, he'd rather do two twenty storied buildings instead of one forty storied structure. So in that sense he has definitely sobered down or in other words he has become more experienced, may be.

His designs of course, have their typical style. In fact compared to other architects, I think he is very versatile, and over the years has developed an uncanny feel of the market demand, the popular taste. It is sheer hard work and a refusal to isolate himself in some ivory tower that has enabled him to design market friendly architecture. In that respect I don't think there is anybody else who has been on the field, has worked as hard and moved around so aggressively as he. And that explains why he can design low cost housing for Bharat Petroleum and also some rich interior or individual home.

Earlier his buildings did command a premium on rates; and even today his name does inspire confidence in the customer in that he is assured of above-average quality and design standards. It is like a known devil's product; like some sort of a branding of the product, you know. So if Colgate brings out a Colgate Ultra or Colgate Total it carries with it the Colgate reputation, the confidence that it will be of some standard. So is it with Hafeez's buildings. Of course, the quality of the building also

depends on the developers and things are becoming more and more complicated today because people are not satisfied with only the building, they want good construction, good landscapes, good 'outdoors', good streetscapes . . . good everything. So people have realised that an architect is not everything for a building. He is not actually responsible for the quality of construction. He can persuade the client on this score but beyond that he has no control. But Hafeez has over the years understood the guidelines of design, which can make the construction 'idiot proof' and this makes it easier for me to work with him, because those specifications are incorporated in the design and the design does not transgress them. It means we have learnt certain ways of designing and constructing the building to make it leak-proof, durable, easy to construct. So these aspects are incorporated in his design - like double walling, the way you do your awnings, terraces, parapets, toilets.

Other architects, at least some years ago, would have refused to listen to us on these matters taking it as an interference in his design. Hafeez of course listened and understood that there are certain ways of doing things to make the construction fool-proof and he incorporated them into his designs.

Hafeez's work is constantly growing and so has his office been expanding. There is always some problem before he buys the neighbouring office, then there is some relief for 6 months may be but the space becomes tight again. Of course with expansion, one tends to lose out on personal interaction with Hafeez but then you get his experience: I mean if a new material has come out he has probably already just tried it on some project or knows about it enough to advise me on it. If he is doing

many jobs then in order not to seem repetitive he has to be innovative and experiment with new materials in varied uses continuously; so if a product fails in the Indian market because it is not suitable for the conditions here, he knows about it. And that helps us, we get the feedback. So the two are two sides of the same coin.

Again the greatest advantage of working with Hafeez is the hours of work he and his staff put in. While with other senior architects you may have the same level of emotional interaction, the physical hours that one can interact with Hafeez is far far greater than any other architect I have come across. And considering the nature of a developer's work, this becomes necessary.

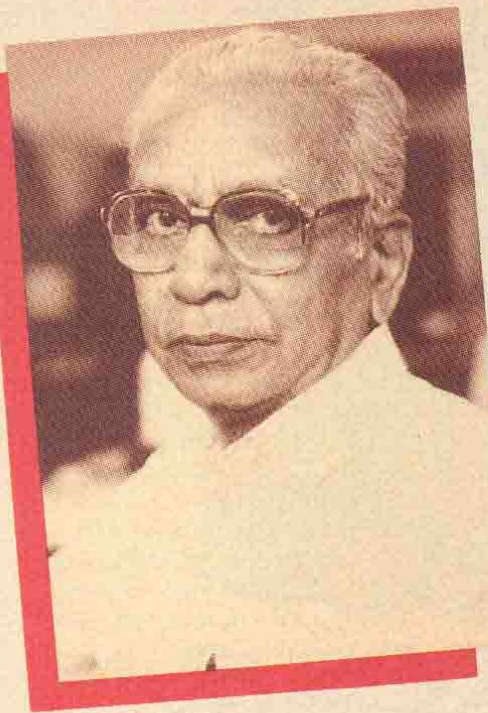
But on the other hand, the limitation is that as he concentrates on the aesthetic side and has a high volume of business he has neither the time nor the ability or infrastructure to go to the municipality to get approvals and put together all the paperwork. So one has to appoint another junior architect to handle all these, which may not always be possible."

C K Gumaste

Hon Director, Academy of Architecture, Bombay and Practicing Architect

"It is important that residential blocks look attractive and Hafeez realised that very well"

Hafeez was an excellent student - studious and creative. He used to go deep into the subject whether it was designing exhibition panels, housing or anything. Once we had given him an assignment concerning the redevelopment of the VT to Flora Fountain Hawkers zone. Hafeez suggested one-way traffic and maintaining the hawkers because he saw it as a social pro-



blem, a need. Now I observe that whatever was suggested by him then, in 1978, has been implemented by the traffic department today. Of course, there has been no attempt at solving the hawkers problem.

Again Hafeez was the only student, atleast in those days, who prepared his thesis in 120 sheets ie 120 drawings. Which student will do that? It was excellent.

Yes, people do call him an elevation architect. But he has definitely made people aware that apartment blocks can look different, interesting. He has reached out to the common man. Like in Thane, Vashi and other areas people still ask who is the architect of a building - Is it Hafeez Contractor? So he has started a trend. Builders who had already hired other architects to do the plans and get it approved now approached Hafeez to apply 'cosmetics' to their buildings and give it a glamorous appearance. But then we must realise that we live in a world of advertisements and packaging. It is important that buildings look attractive and Hafeez realised it very well.

Even the building at the Worli sea face, Vastu. Initially when I saw the design, I thought it was just imagination, more a scholastic exercise than a practical form. But when I saw the completed building I was stunned. So was I im-

pressed by his design of the reservation area in VT station - the station that I had to go every day as a student at JJ and whose interior, like those of other government offices, was wretched. So I don't accept the criticism that Hafeez is only an elevation architect.

In fact by designing the spaces used by the common man very differently and impressively, he created a design awareness at their level. The builder's flats at Thane, Kalyan and the railway station reservation space at VT are used by the common man, and it would be wrong to generalise and say that Hafeez designs only for the rich. He designs for all.

Besides, he showed the builders that there is something called quality even in residential flats. Earlier the builders only thought of how to earn maximum from every square centimeter till Hafeez insisted that they spend more on quality and then of course, get back more through increased selling price. In the process he has changed the city's buildingscape both internally and externally.

And the comment that his forms have become cliched does not hold water when you understand that he designs for his builder client and for the buyers. So his forms at Kandivali where the buyers are rich Gujaratis are more decorative and very different from the simple, sober forms that he designs at Kemp's Corner or say Napean Sea road. Hafeez's builder clients demand it from him. And unless you are a Charles Correa or Balakrishna Doshi you go along with your client.

Plus, because Hafeez has been successful, the sheer volume of his business may make his forms appear repetitive and cliched and more so in buildings where he has been invited later as a cosmetic architect. But in buildings planned by him the layout and forms are so much better.

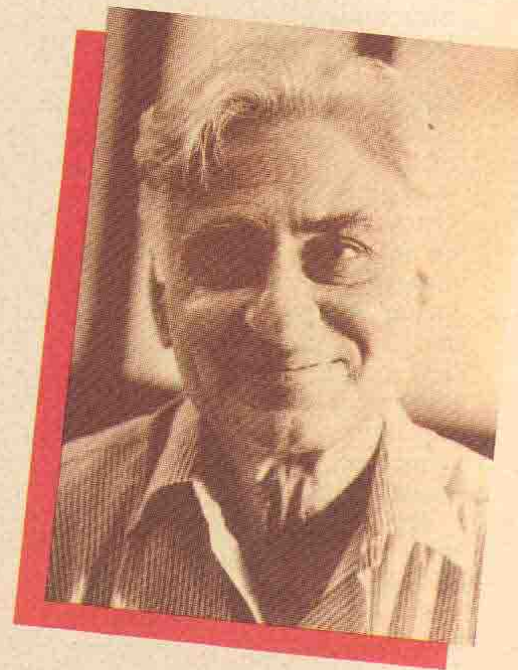
And finally, the question of good or bad architecture in the case of housing will come from the people who stay in them. And I think people like his buildings. In fact in Thane everybody enquires if Hafeez Contractor is the architect. So much so that all builders want him associated with

their projects in some way or the other.

Ratan K Lalkaka

Ex Bharat Petroleum

"My first contact with Hafeez was when my ex-company, Bharat Petroleum, bought a plot in Maker Towers. Being a public sector company, we invited quotations for planning and designing the interior of the office. Hafeez then was not very well known; he was still new. He bid for it and he gave us samples of what he could do - the various schemes. The team who assessed these submissions were, I think, impressed by what Hafeez presented and by his promise of a time schedule. He did a splendid job working from scratch and all within eleven months.



He is extremely hard-working. I remember, when our company planned a housing complex at Kandla and appointed him as our architect, Hafeez was in a way a captive with me because there was only one flight in the morning and we could return only the next day in the same flight. So we were together for 24 hours. And he worked right through. No detail was too small for him. We reached Kandla airport at say 8.30 or 9 am and were at the site in twenty minutes.

From then on he worked non-stop, only punctuating his day for lunch or dinner. And he sketched everything from the steps to where the plants ought to be, the way a window opened, where a latch has to click, the toilet facilities, where the shades would be . . . everything. Besides Kandla is very hot in summer, he planned double walls so that it remained cool inside. He did it all very well.

I think, as an architect he is brimming with ideas. And really practical ideas too. Some people say that his structures that protrude into the sky are ugly. But to many he is a very innovative architect. And more than an architect, he is a great draughtsman. He does detailed and wonderful sketches. It is a pleasure working with him."

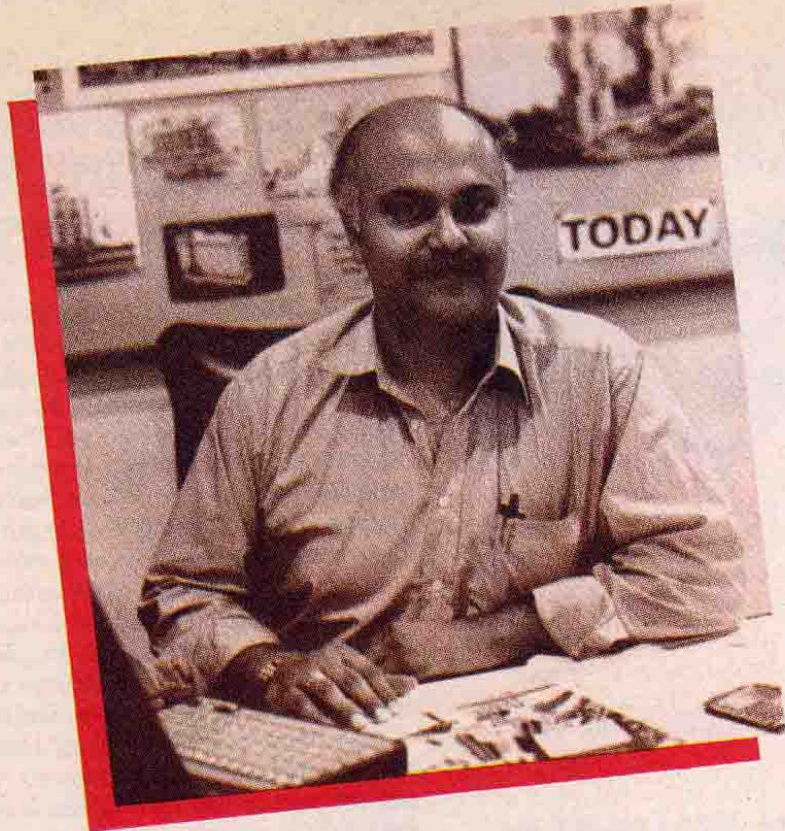
Sailesh Mahimtura

Structural Engineer
Mahimtura Consultants Pvt Ltd

"Hafeez tries something new every time and keeps me really busy. His designs take a lot of engineering products which we can now standardise. But now that he has gone on-line (we had computerised much earlier), it is easier for us to do what he asks faster and much more efficiently. The best results come about when Hafeez, his client and I co-ordinate and interact continuously. If the client is the cut-and-dry type, it doesn't work.

Normally his buildings emerge from their plans, rather the plans and elevations are worked out together. But there are some builders who want to exploit his name. They come to him with passed plans and ask him to 'put on' an elevation. It is then that such things happen, what is called 'cosmetic architecture.' Of course, the trend is changing now, because he is now looking into the corporation angle himself, in the sense that he has appointed sub-consultants who look into these aspects. So it is less of those dress-up jobs.

The other aspect is the criticism that his dome tops and crescent-shaped balconies have become cliched now. I think Hafeez too has realised that there are a lot of



people copying him, and doing it rather badly. He knows that before their misdeeds stick on to him, he must run away from the trend and create absolutely new designs. Which is what is happening. In fact he is coming out with some very new designs which one wouldn't recognise as Hafeez's.

I think his marriage has done him good; he has sobered down. Actually I think, the work he has done for some of the corporate clients like Bharat Petroleum and the Tatas has helped him a lot in the way he does the drawings and in the style he puts up the buildings. And the NRI scheme has given him a strong base. Hafeez I am sure has much greater potential than what he has realised to date.

Many architectural firms too have had their hey days. But once they reached a level, their enthusiasm waned, either because they felt they had made enough money or their interest and commitment dwindled with age. But in the case of Hafeez, the zest is still there. He has made money, he has a name, but he wouldn't like to rest on his laurels. He works very hard. He takes up jobs that he does not really need to. He makes no bones about ringing up a client and asking for a job. That is his plus point. He has not let success bloat his

ego; he still remains open, accessible and down-to-earth.

He also knows that if he must survive on the top in this glamour-world of the builders' architects, then he must strive to give something new, something the people will like.

Most architects considered (and some do so even today) it demeaning to work with builders, even while they themselves stayed in buildings constructed by these builders. But it was neither the Government nor the corporate sector who provided substantial housing; it was the builders. And I think it was our folly as professionals involved in the field not to have understood them and educated them. It was to a great extent Hafeez who showed the builders that improved quality (better specifications) and good construction may mean higher costs, but it is a worthwhile investment because it can also mean higher profits through an increased selling price and a goodwill for the builder who thinks long-term. Fortunately, now this awareness is slowly (we wish it was faster) percolating down into such aspects as good concrete, good construction and a good outdoor ambience."

Mario Miranda

Cartoonist

“I have seen some of the houses that he is doing in Goa now and I am glad that he has captured the spirit of Indo-Portuguese architecture without losing out on his own style.

Even his buildings in Bombay have a characteristic style which I quite like. It is different. And the fact that so many other architects are trying to copy it, itself speaks of his success, though many may not agree with me.

The building tops he does have a typical flavour, which as a cartoonist I like to draw but I wouldn't say they are humorous or funny.

And Hafeez as a person is very nice, very relaxed and great fun to work with.”

Shobha De

Writer

“The only buildings I consider beautiful in Bombay are the ones that the British have left behind. The other buildings that are termed modern seem totally out of context in the city's scheme of things.

I would have at least considered them humorous if they reflected the popular taste or the loud, kitschy show-biz culture. But it seems like some very ambiguous architecture which does not belong to any architectural style or period - it is not art deco, not art nouveau, not leggo.

It is something I am very puzzled about; that except for the few funny looking buildings, none of

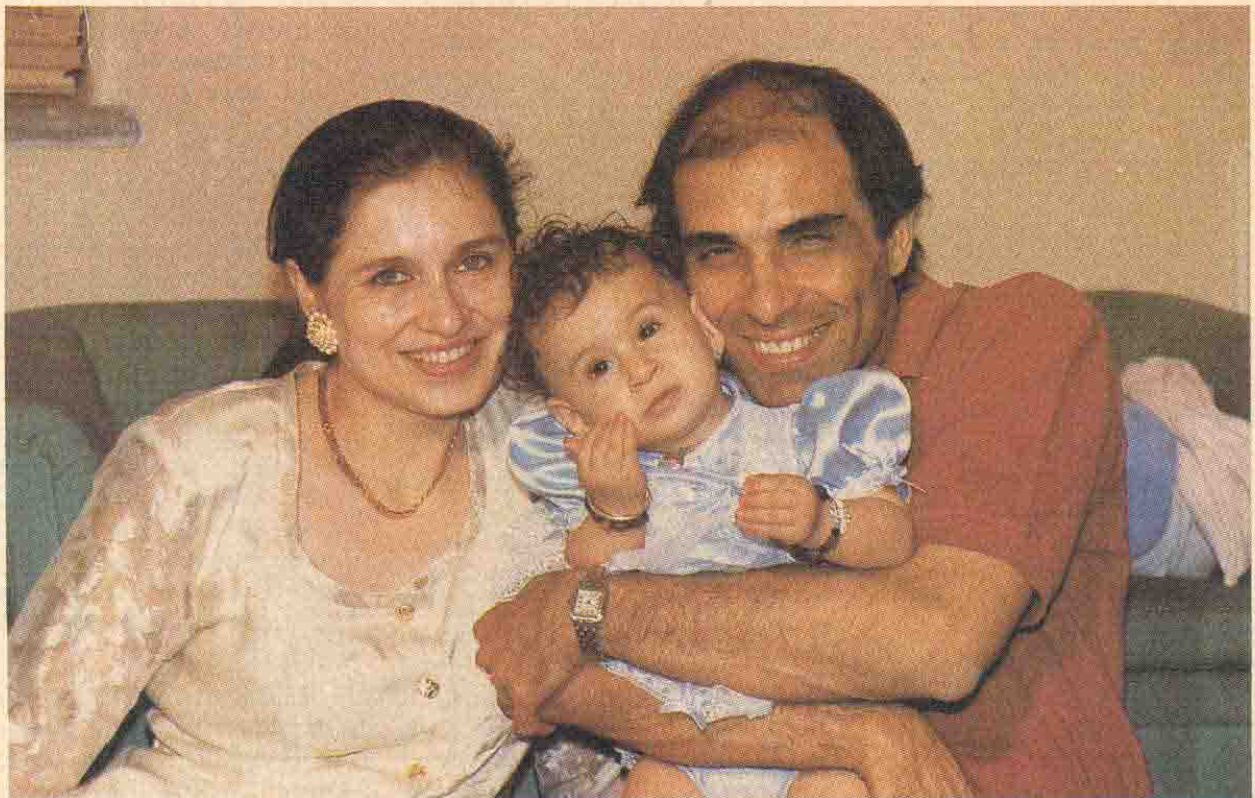
the leading architects who have made Bombay their home have given the city any building that we Bombayites or even they themselves can be proud of.”

Nana Chudasama

Ex-Sheriff of Bombay

“I am glad that there is some sort of an awakening in the architecture of the city and a moving away from the box-like constructions that the city had seen for many years.

Of course the best part of it is the landscaping that now comes with the buildings, creating a much better outdoor environment, even if it means little higher prices.”



The better-half talks! An insight into the amusing facets of Hafeez's personality - something only his wife could do! Hafeez comes across as a very loving and lovable hubby - passes the “Acid Test” with flying colours!

Pearl O'Connor
Design Consultant

"He loves his buildings. He says that I am only his third wife. It is the clients, first, his buildings, second and then me.

And now besides work, he has Zoish, our little daughter to play with. He is still learning how to entertain a child, how to come down to that level, do stupid things and make her laugh. But she adores him. Whatever he does, she likes."

"He works hard. But he doesn't really bring work home as such; other than phone calls. He does spend a lot of time on the phone, though.

Yeah, once in a while if he gets an idea, he does his doodles or sketches or whatever you call that. And then in terms of describing his new project which he is always excited about. He is always in love with his latest building like the New Bombay project that he is now doing where he has got nine plots out of ten.

Again we have not been entertaining people who are work-oriented, in that sense. It is only recently that we started entertaining people. Earlier he didn't like it when people came home, and the house wasn't equipped either. But its okay now; we manage. But with Hafeez, you know, he expects a ready-made house, in an instant. While I am the sort of person who likes to look around and find something exactly like I want, he picks up something he likes, which is nice for the situation he has in mind and he may not consider whether it suits the house. And then when I ask: where do I put it? He says, 'Ah, find a place for it' . . . and then: 'You are a useless designer', he'll say. So, it goes on. It is fun.

Recently, he bought the large screen television and the laser disc . . . and now its absolutely the ultimate for him. He loves movies and watches them every night after dinner. I remember him coming out of the cinema theatre after watching Batman-absolutely dazed. That city in the movie, he thought,

was the ultimate. 'The whole world should be like that,' he had said. I told Hafeez that if the whole world was so, it would be terrible.

Surely some of his buildings have been influenced by the movie. He loves his buildings. He says that I am only his third wife. It is the clients, first, his buildings, second and then me. And sometimes he says he wants to be a muslim to get a fourth wife. So I tell him: Hafeez, if you took so long to get me, I don't think I have anything to worry.

And now besides work, he has Zoish, our little daughter to play with. He is still learning how to entertain a child, how to come down to that level, do stupid things and make her laugh. But she adores him. Whatever he does, she likes.

Food, of course, has never been a problem with him. He has a preference for Chinese food when he is out for lunch. At home he wants bland preparations - chicken, dal, vegetables, chapati . . . often very similar food every day. He doesn't particularly wants variations in food. Sometimes the cook gets fed up and says, 'Kitna din wohi banawoo?' And when I tell him that, he says, 'What's your problem, I am the easiest person to look after, you can cook the same thing every day.'

But he is very specific about his clothes. He loves blue and is very specific when he goes to a shop: 'blue and white striped, buttoned-up cotton shirts.' His choice, so, is reduced to say three from which two are rejected because the stripes are too broad. I have not been

able to buy him a tie that he likes.

Hafeez cannot understand my liking of old furniture, old things. There are certain old things that you just don't get now. Besides you know how the Parsi tradition is of maintaining old, beautiful furniture. And with a parsi name one tends to imagine a home like that. That is what I explain to him, that I would like my daughter grow up in this Parsi tradition and as a part of the community. Modern things are also nice but I tend to think that these will not age and be nice after a period of time. Hafeez has no sentimental attachment to old things or old furniture. If it is a beautiful piece, he likes it; the fact that it is old is irrelevant. But for a long time he also felt that it shouldn't be something that others have used. I had to tell him that with such things it will always be something that others have used. But it will be redone. It wont be as if something comes in a tattered, as-it-is condition.

Earlier when I first moved into the house it was all odds and ends. Everybody from his office used to tell me: oh this piece, it went slightly wrong in that person's house; and that one just wouldn't fit in the corner at that site and so on. And with Hafeez it was often, 'Accha theek hai, ghar bhej dho'. So the house didn't work; visually definitely not, and not practically either. Gradually he realised this, now that he was coming home daily for dinner. So last year we finally decided to do it up, although there is much to be done." □

Hafeez, as a person — without the ‘pancake’ (of his pompous building facades) and the ‘spotlights’ (which he’s always facing in the world of architecture) — discovered by Prakash Rao.

Hafeez is middle-aged now, but retains his boyish enthusiasm. He is tall, slim and his cheeks seem tautly drawn and slightly hollowed because of his high cheek bones. His neat figure and a casual friendliness suggest neither the over-ambition nor over work which, we know for sure has steered him to success.

As a child, Hafeez went to a boarding school which had a strict matron who fined and punished students if their shirt buttons were missing. But Hafeez designed a way out when his buttons were missing; he carved them out of chalk and stuck them to his shirt. If he designed buttons by necessity, he sketched forts for fun; he designed guns, time bombs and all kinds of security systems for the fort. He also drew dams and bikes. His text books and note books were full of sketches instead of notes. His teacher, an old Parsi lady, did not think he would be much successful in life and vocation, though one day she confessed to him, “I think you will be an architect!”

Hafeez did not know about architecture then. When he passed out of school, he didn’t do too well and couldn’t get into the JJ college of architecture. So he decided to join the army. After all, he knew all about forts and how to defend them! He was selected but his scheming aunt who was not too pleased about the prospect of an army-man in the family, tore the letter of admission. Hafeez, a bit disillusioned, joined Arts. His cousin, whose wife taught him French, was an architect. Hafeez went to his office and saw a boy drawing the detail of a window. He commented that the drawing was wrong as the window wouldn’t open. His cousin, surprised with his criticism, gave him an axonometric drawing to do, which Hafeez did remarkably well. Then he asked him to design a small house which he did too. He advised Hafeez to give up everything else and take up architecture.

Another cousin who knew Mr Dallas, had him talk

to the principal of the Academy of Architecture, who said that he would be selected only if he fared well in the entrance test. Hafeez got an A+. He was in architecture.

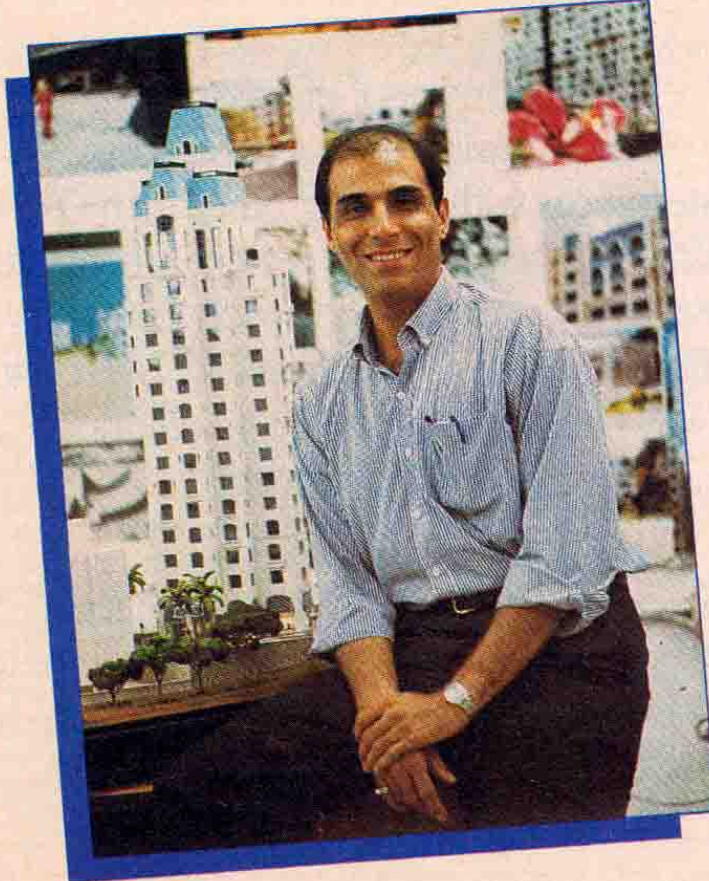
Through college Hafeez worked hard. While his entire class would pin up their drawings during submissions in one room, Hafeez’s drawings and model would occupy an entire room: he would submit 150 drawings and models that measured 20ft x 20ft His college works were exhibited at the Jehangir Art Gallery, a rare opportunity. Here he met Dallas again for the second time, and when

asked about his future plans, Hafeez confessed to him that he wished to go abroad but did not have the money and if he borrowed from the trust he required a guarantor. Dallas, volunteered to be one. Hafeez went abroad and returned after a year and returned all the money.

“I worked hard when I was in Columbia University,” Hafeez recollected, “We had a tough professor, Stan, reticent and niggardly in making appreciative comments. He rarely said ‘good’. I think all teachers should be like him, like an army officer. One evening he came to the class room. It was at 8.30p.m. and I was not in. Finding some boys present, he gave them a design assignment to be completed in the morning. They did. When I got to know about it the next morning, I was upset. I told him it wouldn’t be fair to evaluate

that assignment as all weren’t present. He said, very calmly: “Listen, at Columbia, we don’t just teach you. We expose you to the world. Consider it like an architectural job. You lost because you were not in town,” that really opened my mind. I realised then what life, work and competition was all about. Academy had taught me the basics of architecture but it was at Columbia that I learned about life and profession.”

During the last year of his study at Columbia, they were given an assignment to redevelop large districts of





the city. Hafeez was asked to redesign the red-light district. He told Stan that he would require the long corridor, for his presentation. He enlarged the drawings so that the street buildings were seven feet high and he pasted an entire street length right along the sides of the corridor. It felt as though one was walking through the street. Over this, he superimposed his design so that it was clear what was old and what was the new redevelopment that Hafeez had in mind. Stan walked through it, and at the end of the corridor, turned to Hafeez and said, 'good' in his characteristic minimal style. Hafeez was deliriously happy.

"When I returned, I joined my cousin who is an architect," Hafeez said his boyish grey brown eyes lighting up. "I was everything there: when my cousin was not in, I was the boss. And when the peon was not in, I swept the office. I learnt a lot there. But then we had a difference of opinion over the colour scheme of a building and the client liked my idea. I used to work long hours there. One evening a client came at six and said he wanted the drawings to submit to the municipality the next morning. I sat through the night and submitted all of them the next morning. My cousin did not like this - my way of working. He did not want to expand his practice and his office. So I separated."

In order to start on his own, Hafeez had to look for

a place. But he had only rupees twenty five hundred in his bank account. A client helped him out with a storehouse in an old building. It was large but Hafeez carved out of it a small space for himself. He set shop with three young boys. When his staff increased to sixteen, his client gave him more space. And when his work increased, he occupied the entire floor and also built a mezzanine. In the beginning the client never charged him; later Hafeez paid him rent. He was lucky.

"My first building to be completed was Karias in Pune," Hafeez recollected. "I have often designed buildings free for the builders when I approached them for a chance to work on their projects. My engineer once took me to a builder whose architect had already designed a building, which I thought was not very good. I told the builder, I can design a much better building. But he said he wanted all the plans the next day. It was a Friday and it was close to twelve. So I told him he couldn't do anything with the plans that day or the next day, a Saturday. So, I asked him time until Monday. I worked through the night on Sunday and went home on Monday morning at 10.30 to have a bath. I had done all the plans, elevations and even a perspective. And on Monday at two in the afternoon, I showed him the drawings. He liked them and I got the project. There was no looking back then." □

**TATA STEEL CONGRATULATES
HAFEEZ CONTRACTOR ON HIS CONTRIBUTION
TO THE BUILDING INDUSTRY.**

Chintamani Bhagat
Architect, Bombay

"Children of a lesser God"

Hafeez Contractor, in his inimitable style, refutes all charges made against him by Chintamani Bhagat. What follows is a volatile discussion about Hafeez's designs, attitudes, imitators and the implications of the current trends in the building industry.

Let's take, for instance, a hypothetical architect - let's call him Mr HC; and a hypothetical newspaper called the TOI, for whom Mr HC designs a building which depicts a whole array of fantasies-even a space rocket headed for the moon!", said Projjol Datta, at a student's convention a few years ago.

The real estate boom in the country - even more so, in Bombay - has created and refuelled untold wealth into the business of building, and has created, in its wake, the relatively new-found style of builder's architecture. Holding post at the helm of this company is architect Hafeez Contractor, who has, in the last decade, become the builder's icon-whose mere mention around a construction project promises multifold increased profitability. While purists put forth strong recriminations to the aforementioned's designs, buildings like Vastu, World Seaface, have become the most talked about residential projects in the city. It wasn't Hafeez Contractor's first, but was instrumental in revolutionising the commercial building aesthetic - one way or the other, and ultimately triggered off a whole host of imitations and inspirations.

"At least it's different" is one opinion that fore-closes any arguments expressed against the designs. While the staying power of a building like Vastu is very questionable, Contractor makes no bones about his design philosophy. Every art and craft, and especially architecture, symbolises a contemporary school of thought, and architecture is the perfect barometer for monitoring common belief. Hafeez Contractor comes across loud and clear in a philosophy that can be loosely termed 'Consumer Architecture.'

Builder's architecture was underdeveloped, had nothing to speak of. That scenario has changed rapidly - the competition is stiff, and a building has to be upto a minimum standard. Now, after the success of residential projects, I'm doing hospitals, hotels, commercial complexes, corporate buildings - although the majority by far are still residential.

It is gratifying, though to be imitated - the inner circle who did only corporate or institutional work are now taking on builder's projects - the sheer quantum of work that builders command in the market has seen to that.

What was the basis, do you think, on which a builder would sign you on - what did you have to offer that some other architect wouldn't?

Well, it happened very easily. When I came into the market and started doing some work, it caught the fancy of some people, and I immediately got more work. I was able to offer a kind of fantasy in an otherwise drab scenario, while working within the unbelievable constraints of builder's architecture, which is akin to trying to create while walking a tightrope. In comparison, corporate and institutional work is a cakewalk. The constraints are few, and more important, is the ability to offer something of universal appeal. It is easier to impose a personal preference on a specific, known, end-user, but it is supremely difficult to gauge what a residential project should look like.

What is the final authority then? Do you gauge the success of a design by its commercial success?

is as good as God- it's his building, and it is my duty to make him happy with what I build for him.

But, consider this: the building is for sale, to people whose preferences are not known. Do you think a builder is in the best position to judge what is good for the ultimate users? Both in terms of aesthetic, and more so in terms of other design factors like the planning, light, ventilation, etc? Don't you think that the architect is in a better position to create a habitable environment because he is better aware of the factors that make it possible?

Absolutely, but in a consumer oriented market, the ultimate authority is the client: he is basically an extension of the end - user, and it is possible to create an environment that people would like to be a part of, by following his thought pattern. And the success of this practice has proven that beyond doubt.

In the same vein, it is necessary to apply an analogy: one has often heard the comparison between the building aesthetic and the art of dressing, to create a pleasing appearance. But it is also important to realise that making a building becomes a social statement; one cannot make a building change its clothes; it's going to hang around there are 70-80 years atleast; isn't it necessary to have a stronger guiding force than the demands of the marketplace?

Yes, but, It is important to understand that the architecture of an age best symbolises the thinking of

the people. If our buildings are loud, then, it's because that's what our society is all about - a combination of several factors, which our art portray brilliantly.

A combination of a nouveau-riche society, strong cultural past, and finding its own voice - the hurry to make a statement, in a basic consumerist age?

Absolutely. The emphasis, the bottom line, success as architects, has to do with being able to provide variety. The ability to create any style of building or interior to suit the client- not to fit into one line of development alone. I can do simple, rural or rich, commercial offices or structures in an international style, residential buildings that capture the imagination of every person that our diverse social structure has. A natiyam dancer may be better at his art: but do the Bharatnatyam well enough to compete yet do the cha-cha-cha, and the ballroom waltz. I'm more versatile and will be more successful.

On a more personal note, what has influenced your design work, or who has influenced you over the last decade or so?

I got influenced very easily - actually, it's hard to portray the general trend in my work. In my early years, I was influenced by Corbusier, later

Venturi - I am very easily influenced, by any building, painting, patterned fabric, saree, whatever. It may not always show in the work, but I change my design parameters constantly. It is a sign of my flexibility, really, I am very accommodating in that aspect - I have no rigid thoughts. I do not support the belief that one need be true to a specific style, like for instance, the modernist school of thought portrayed. Today, our construction technology is such that we can create new, unseen forms, and that is what becomes appropriate. And, I do a whole range and scale of projects into which I can dovetail my various influences, and yet make it palatable.

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A *Bharatnatyam dancer may be better at her art: but if I can do the Bharatnatyam well enough to compete, and yet do the cha-cha-cha, and the ball-room waltz, then I'm more versatile and will be more successful.*

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There is one important point to consider while we're on influences. We have an urban design level scenario that is very often cast aside by our method: our architecture is absolutely site-specific. Take Vastu, for instance. What do you think would be the repercussions on the area if every site around was to be handled differently, flexibly, as you put it? Don't you think that different time-zones, different influences, and correspondingly different aesthetics might create a 'bhel-puri' of sorts?

That is what this era is all about: in fact, handled properly, an area like the one you mentioned will become a tourist attraction. If it was in a rural area, I would do it differently; contextually, to what is palat-

able in that area. But in Bombay, the prevailing architecture when I started work was so drab that it needed a jolt just to create an awareness that a different aesthetic is possible, to make people look up and take notice. A good building is a monumental task in the kind of constraints that one has to work in; in a city like Bombay, much more difficult than any other art form. It's a pity that no one has given the architect his due for his efforts at trying to create within those constraints. To create something sculptural which has a plan that works, in a time schedule and which also satisfies all or Municipal Byelaws is a greater achievement than any art!

In that aspect, let's talk about the planning of a building. What are the criteria or parameters that you set for the designing of a residential building: the size of an apartment has shrunk manifold over the last few years, how have your designs changed in keeping with that?

The parameter that is most important, is the planning of the room. It is important to see to it that no space is wasted in the eventual layout of the room. Things like passages are more important: in their own way, they are necessary, and it isn't correct to minimise or eliminate them altogether. Their really isn't any such thing as an ideal plan for a condominium, it tends to vary from project to project. What is suitable in Carmichael road, isn't in Borivli, and so on.

With the trend of selling superbuilt-up area, in which the builder charges for the staircase, the landing, the duct walls and even the projections, don't you think that internal planning tends to get neglected - the profits are assured anyway, and so the onus on a space-efficient plan is reduced, and more effort is put into these external facade treatments, which ultimately cost the buyer more money, yet do not assure a well-planned flat? Ultimately, isn't that the direction that all these buildings should be taking-trying to achieve a level of perfection within the exercise, with minimum loading, and maximum space utilisation? How does one actually design the building with a general set of parameters in mind?

Actually, the design goes hand-in-hand. We do not have a premeditated aesthetic feature when the plan is being done, but as we progress with the plan, the general elevation derives its shape. And more so, parameters set by the people are so varied that any ideal becomes questionable. And I think you're wrong there - there are several builders who still sell actual built-up area, there is no heavenly loading involved.

The plan invariably comes first. In my opinion, it is impossible to do these structures with a premeditated aesthetic or form in mind, which is how corporate or institutional work is done. Here, you can't afford a single mistake, which is why the elevation is derived from what is possible within the parameters of the plan.

It's the packaging, then, that's more important - the fantasyland elevations, and the amenities, and the sales strategy, not really the content - and isn't all this packaging possible only because of ultimately

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Our roots are so varied and so disconnected that it is impossible to achieve a synergy that creates true heritage. I don't think we have any heritage at all, at least not one we can relate to the contemporary. Our architecture - loud, and more than a little brash is a direct representation of our society, it is the Ganpati and Govinda architecture that is prevalent in the minds of the people. And it will get better or worse, change, only as we, as people, change.

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higher profit - how else is it possible to incur the extra costs involved?

Well, the land cost today is also much higher, so there is no question of higher profits. And cost of construction is a miniscule part of the overall project, so the extra costs in relation become as good as negligible. It is the competition that has generated this sales strategy - anything less would not be acceptable to the buyer.

While being caught up in this quagmire of work, how do you take time out to do non-commercial work for offbeat clients like the Osho ashram in Poona, for instance?

As I've always maintained, I give my clients 60 percent of the credit for any work I do. That is what makes these buildings, especially like the Osho ashram, possible. Even if the client has a seemingly crazy requirement or request - I will try my hardest to make it possible. That is simply the root of my success.

How have you managed to build while, say confronted by a heritage zone?

Actually, the manner in which our heritage committees enforce these rules is extremely shortsighted and sometimes purposeless - inappropriate, so to speak. I have done a building once when I had a hard time trying to get a clearance from them, upon which I submitted a scheme wherein my building was constructed at a height above the heritage building. This way, I achieved the objective of a landmark on the cityscape without really disturbing the streetscape. Even so, I had a very hard time.

It is necessary, in this emerged scenario, to fuel architectural criticism - constructive criticism. Baseless opinions should be cast aside, and a general created, of the conditions under which buildings are done, and how they can be improved. Unless people are educated with every aspect of a building and the process involved in making it, we are not going to achieve a higher standard. Our roots are so varied and so disconnected that it is impossible to achieve a synergy that creates true heritage-like England, for instance - without providing the atmosphere for the awareness. I don't think we have any heritage at all, at least not one we can relate to the contemporary. Our architecture - loud, and more than a little brash is a direct representation of our society, it is the Ganpati and Govinda architecture that is prevalent in the minds of the people. And it will get better or worse, change, only as we, as people, change.

In his words, Hafeez Contractor's work is an architecture of the people, by the people and for the people. Varied opinions have been cast on his particular method of operations, but for now, buildings are being churned out at a mindboggling rate. It is not an area of work that can be ignored and is going to increase voluminously. Where all this will lead is a billion dollar question - considering real estate prices, that is - but in the meanwhile Hafeez Contractor opens up Pandora's Box, lets the cat out of the bag and sets the ball rolling.

RESIDENTIAL

His residential schemes dot the Bombay skyline. They are fanciful, they appeal to the masses and they spell 'millions' for the builders.

He tops the pink and blue facades with contemporary versions of the Renaissance, the Gothic, the Raomanesque - abstract impressions. He makes them attractive, often too eye-catching. That, presumably, is the secret of his success as a builder's architect.

Overall planning of projects in terms of lay-out is worked out well, taking into consideration all aspects of colony development including landscaping, playparks, vehicular accesses, pedestrain pathways, and other necessary social infrastructure - hospitals, schools and banks. Planning of apartments is simple, with many amenities, use of good materials and good interior finishing.

All the projects featured in this issue are done by the firm 'Architect Hafeez Contractor', unless otherwise mentioned.

Photographs of perspective - drawings and models are courtesy the Architect, unless otherwise mentioned.

Karia Builders:

Since 1983, Karia builders have been changing the face of residential buildings; with several projects in Pune and Bombay.



Konark Estates, Pune

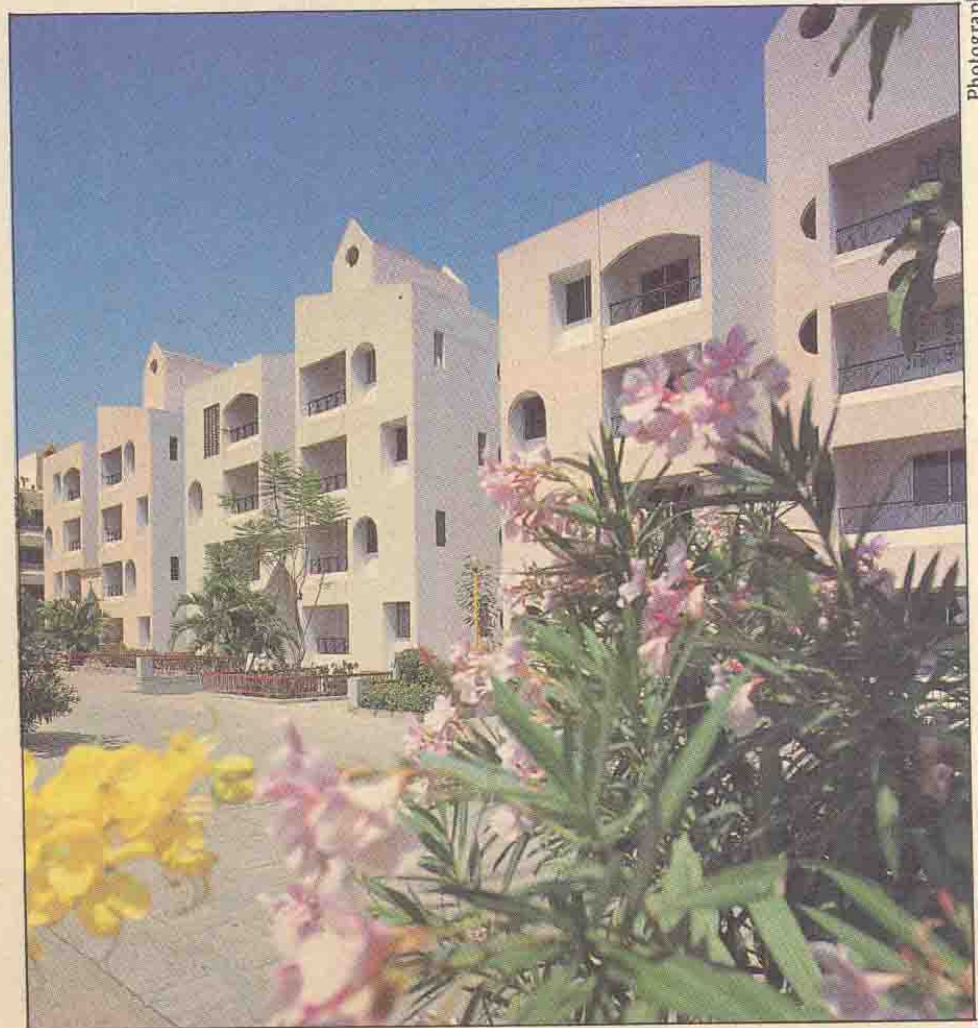
A group of 11 buildings located in the heart of Pune, opposite Poona Club. All buildings equipped with lifts. Exclusive garden with lush green lawn, air-conditioned health club and swimming pool.



Photographs Noshir Cobhai

Konark Nagar I Viman Nagar, Pune

A sprawling township proudly called 'Mini Bombay' comprising of 103 row houses and 18 buildings having 256 flats of 1/2 Bedrooms and 54 shops situated in the fast growing Viman Nagar area. Buildings with all modern amenities and lifts. Row houses with private gardens and parking. Wide pathways, tennis and badminton courts are few of the exclusive features.





Konark Nagar II

Viman Nagar, Pune

As one good idea follows another, Konark Nagar II comes up after the successful completion of Konark Nagar I at Viman Nagar, Pune. Flats, with 1/2 bedrooms with lift and all other modern amenities. 28 row houses with private terrace, garden and parking.

Karia Projects:

Developers: Karia Builders

Structural Consultants: Y S Sane and Associate

Konark Nagar:

Associate Architect: Rajesh Gaitonde

Konark Poonam:

Associate Architect: Rajan Gajjar

Konark Indraprastha:

Associate Architect: Sunil Gambhani

