Jimmy Mistry is a man of many passions. From selling modified bikes to furniture and architecture, his rise has been meteoric

Not a conformist

THE road leading to Della house is less of road and more of a dirt track. It’s hard to imagine that this is the place that houses a crack architect-cum-interior decorator. But then Jimmy Mistry does not believe in stereotypes. He never studied for a degree in architecture. Instead, he took a rather unusual way. In college, Jimmy used to sell modified bikes. He learnt a lot from that first business venture of his, he claims, from paying Octro to transport a bike from one state to another, to more important things like returns from investments. A little while later, furniture caught his fancy and he set up a furniture agency. This required him to work a lot with architects. But then as he puts it, he got tired of architects making all kinds of demands on him and decided that he might as well do their job himself.

And thus were sown the seeds which would finally give rise to Della Tecnica. In a span of 10 years Della Tecnica, which started out with Rs 2 lakh, six people, is now a Rs 150-crore company which employs 900 people. “My biggest passion is speed,” says Jimmy Mistry, managing director of Della Tecnica Architects and Interior Designers. The firm boasts of an impressive list of clients including DSP Merrill Lynch, CNBC Star India, Taj and the UB group. From designing and constructing malls to doing up Vijay Mallya’s yacht, Della Tecnica believes in setting the latest trends.

Such a meteoric rise, and you’d think Jimmy’s satisfied man now. “Not at all!” he exclaims. “We want to be a Rs 500-crore company in the next few years.” Not hard to imagine for a man who is driven by speed whether it be with wheels or his business.

We move on from his firm to his office, which is imposing in a bizarre kind of way. There are lifesize cutouts of models in constructors’ attire which adorn the stairways. Just when we wonder what these are doing here, he explains that these were used in a show, where his work was showcased in the backdrop of models wearing unique architecture-related outfits. As we go into his office in the top floor at Della house, we find CCTVs displaying every thing that’s happening in his company. It does seem that he is a control freak. But ask him the question and he says with a grin, “Not really, but I like to be in control.” He explains that if he is on the lookout, it is because: “all that’s here has been built from scratch, and I have nothing else to fall back on, so I need to know exactly what’s going on in my organisation.”

The office also seems to have made an abundant use of glass. So is that another way to keep watch on his organisation? Jimmy tells us that it actually is exactly the other way around. “Glass symbolises transparency,” says Jimmy, adding that he wants everyone in his organisation to see what the other person’s doing. So does steel also symbolise something deeper, we wonder. “Steel symbolises cutting-edge technology,” he says, as he starts talking about the design philosophy. “We need to get under the skin of an organisation before designing for them,” he says. Corporate design is being taken to the next level, where each client has a different set of demands. Everything, from furniture to lighting to even dustbins make a difference to an office environment, he explains.

Besides architecture his other passion is his community work, the Parisi. He is the founder of an NGO called the Parsi Resource Group (PRG). “While there are media reports of the Parsi community dying out, instead of issuing counter-statements, I’ve put together an organisation to prove it isn’t,” he says. The PRG helps the Parsi youth, tries to motivate them and also finds them jobs. It helps out the priests monetarily with a medical claim policy. And while he is dead serious about his organisation he is not averse to bringing in the fun element as well. The PRG, for example, is organising a bike-rally on Sunday where about 400 youngsters will drive through Mumbai, visiting all the important Parsi-baghs. “You will see a whole lot of vintage bikes there,” he boasts. And despite having given up a career in bikes for architecture, Jimmy’s love for bikes is perpetual. As he says, “It’s my first love.” And strangely enough giving up a career in bikes might have actually helped him given that his success as an architect means that he can afford the latest bikes. And he says it’s his way of taking “revenge and a way to incentivise my work.”

As one leaves Della House and navigates the potholes one can only admire Jimmy who is probably (when he is not jogging) chilling on that terrace garden of his: complete with a bar, state-of-the-art music system and a pool full of turtles!

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