

# JIMMY AND DELNA MISTRY

THE ARCHITECT, INTERIOR DESIGNER, HOTELIER AND PROUD INNOVATOR IN THE DESIGN SPACE, AND HIS WIFE DELNA MISTRY, WELCOME HELLO! INTO THEIR PALATIAL PENTHOUSE ON TOP OF DELLA TOWER, IN MUMBAI'S DADAR PARSEE COLONY. THE IMPRESSIVE STRUCTURE, HARKS BACK TO HERITAGE IRANIAN DESIGN. WE GET A GLIMPSE INTO THE MIND OF A CREATIVE ENTREPRENEUR, WHO WISHES THE CITY OF DREAMS HAD BEEN DEVELOPED WITH NOT JUST A COMMERCIAL BUT CULTURAL SENSITIVITY



Evenings are well-spent outdoor with laughter.



A reflection of ancient Persian architecture, The tower, which is built as per international standards, offer spacious flats & modern amenities



Modulated in monochrome, the black and white elements in Jimmy Mistry's residence gives a grandeur feel to the space

**We see in your residential building, a great resurrection of Zoroastrian figures...like a re-owning of your heritage (such figures can only be seen around Fire Temples and old Parsee neighbourhoods like in Tardeo, etc). How proud are you of your Parsee roots?**  
**Jimmy:** "I'm super proud of my Parsee roots; I've been deeply invested in the community since the beginning. I started a Parsee resource group as a community NGO way back in 2006. I worked with the priest and his family to provide them with medical and educational support; we also started working with the youth of the community. My 'Cultural Heritage Award' was the turning point and got me fascinated with architecture – the simplicity, yet grandeur of architecture when I studied in Iran – was something completely different, and hence I decided to recreate Persian architecture from ancient Iran in this glorious tower in Dadar, Mumbai."

**Delna:** "Yes! We all are very proud Zoroastrians! We try to include some value system in our kids,

mainly, to try wearing their sudreh-kasti on a regular basis, going to Agiary, our fire temple on all good occasions and as often as possible. We mostly try going as a family together."

**Your home has a grand, larger-than-life feel... how long did it take to put together and what are some truly special areas that you are particularly happy with?**

**Jimmy:** "Yes, it's taken a lot of planning. The home was done about 10 years ago, but the design knowledge required for planning a small home is quite different from the requirements of planning a large house and we did a lot of research and homework. There are a lot of special elements in the house; but most important is, even though it's large, it's still a home. There are a lot of design elements that make it custom-built for us; like you see a lifestyle change from a formal living room to a family living room, from my black and white combinations with hints of gold and a touch of red, to the beiges, to the family living room. The home has all the facilities and features which were absolutely 'in' to have when



The reception lobby of JRM residence, (above and right)



we made this house – a home theatre, spa, gym, salon, guest bedrooms, private swimming pool, which is not just a plunge pool size but a proper heated pool with a counter wave/current machine... it is a huge pool, then we have three terraces, so there are a lot of specialties. I love my greens and natural plants within the house, every nook and corner has tonnes of natural plants. The artistic

exterior also continues within the building; one of the terraces shows the 27 nations that were ruled by Persia. The house overall has many interesting areas, like I love huge bathrooms, I still spend most of my personal time in my bathroom! So all in all the house serves its purpose and binds us together as a tightly knit family."

**Delna:** I didn't really have too many

inputs on the making of our home. By and large, Jimmy understands design and details and he provided all that I need as per my requirements, likes and preferences."

**Do you entertain frequently by the pool? Few people in Mumbai can throw poolside parties!**

**Jimmy:** "Yes, I do entertain but the frequency of entertainment has

reduced. But yes, we've had many functions and parties. Our most talked about is our Diwali party; more than 250 guests attend the party with live music and all these terraces are put to use! It is definitely a luxury to have a swimming pool, hence these parties definitely have a charm of their own, as in Mumbai people are not used to having home pool parties." ▶



The fondest memories are made when the family is gathered around the table



The Mistry family rejoice in their beautiful living room

**Delna, how did you meet Jimmy and eventually what qualities of his did you most find attractive?**

**Delna:** "Jimmy's dad was posted in Nagpur, that's when we met. He was just about 17 years old, it is since then I know him. Then he moved to Mumbai and in a few years, we got married, at the age of 21. He was a college-going lad when we met, but even at that age/stage, he was doing part-time jobs. What drew me to him was his sincerity; he has a loving and caring nature. He was working hard even back in the 1990s."

**Also, do you both manage a healthy work-life balance?**

**Delna:** "We both love doing what we do! He is very passionate about his work, his dreams and his ambitions. I love to take care of my kids, our home – which is a huge responsibility. We both don't interfere in each other's work, of course, major decisions are taken together. His working hours are very long, earlier I got affected, but now I quietly accept it, and realise we need to support him rather than crib! Sundays, no matter what, we are together."

**Delna I believe you took out several years to raise good children, rich in values?**

**Delna:** "I can proudly say our kids are well-mannered and humble human beings. Being around Jimmy has shown us all that it is important

to love whatever you are doing, and do it to your best capacity, with honesty and passion."

**Jimmy, you have said, "I didn't get into the business of design but the business got into me. The hunger for innovation fuels me constantly."**

**Jimmy:** "Yes, I have risked some new directions, taken up offers and new opportunities. As soon as I was a little saturated with my interiors and master planning of mass housing townships, I felt like I might not be able to use my creativity in the manner that I want. Hence I ventured out into the Della Enclave which is the second home township I worked on, along with an adventure park and a small resort. That was a modern concept then, we ended up setting up India's first 'extreme' adventure park and along with that, we mixed three businesses together; that was the second innovative concept that I felt was a need of the hour. After that we came up with the concept of D.A.T.A, a theme-based 'glamping' project, which is the Della Training Academy. Set up in Lonavala, it provides guests with access to counter-terrorism and jungle survival techniques in an ambience rich in luxury. You will only see such a concept with the Della Enclave resort property. Where our adventure park goes we struggled initially with the online sales of tickets. Things started



The right dressing room is a need of every woman. Mrs. Mistry has a soothing ambience to prep herself before everyday hustle



The master bedroom of Mr & Mrs Mistry captures the true essence of luxury

off very slowly, but now we have matured and are doing well. There are lots of ideas that don't work at once, while some don't work at all. There's another idea I've been working on, it is to design and create an experience of dining in the sky, but I haven't got to finish this."

**How popular a trend are holiday or 'second' homes in our sluggish market scenario?**

**Jimmy:** "Where second homes go, they are in a tricky stage right now. However, I would share that second homes already developed are not in trouble because they were commissioned by buyers. Markets are sluggish, however the usual financial profile of a second home buyer has less to do with investment, more about enhancing a lifestyle. Hence resources are not an issue for this group of buyers."

**Which Adventure Park have you created in India? Jimmy:**

"So far we've only created Della Adventure; there is scope for many such parks. People have tried to create adventure parks on smaller scales. However, you need complete domain experience across multiple domains; that's where we scored as our USP. Besides, a standalone adventure park does not work so well, it has to be supported by a resort and it has to be supported by people living in the area, and hence the combination of second homes, adventure parks and a resort has worked out well for us. Domain expertise needs to be in recreational areas like dirt bikes, mountaineering, fox flying and many more. Structural engineering specialization and extreme safety measures need to be considered as a basic design brief before constructing any adventure ride. We also need to have domain expertise other areas. We hope to add adventure parks in Bangalore, Hyderabad, Goa etc."

**Today Mumbai's oldest neighbourhoods are fast losing classic old bungalows and low FSI structures in art deco style,**



The penthouse is made as per international standards which include a large swimming pool with a terrace, gymnasium, play area, high-end electronic security, health spa and a salon

**to characterless concrete...**

**Jimmy:** "A detailed masterplan, and aesthetic planning of Mumbai should've been done decades ago. However the strong eye-opener still remains, that our current developments of 2018 do not have any provisions for aesthetic approval and even today, all projects are merely based on the FSI FAR calculations. Hence only commercial forces determine the development of Mumbai, aesthetics have no role to play. We truly have no guidelines, unlike London where FARs are directly proportionate to the aesthetic appeal shown by the design committee, buildings get FARs based upon that. I firmly believe that the landscape of the city should not be ruined. If you're designing in an area which has got art deco buildings, you cannot suddenly come up with a concrete block. For example, Bandra Kurla Complex has only glass buildings, typically a concrete structure with a sudden government design should not be allowed there. Every area needs to be sensitive to

its surroundings. A classic example is Nana Chowk, Mumbai, which is surrounded by old buildings; it had a certain canvas and suddenly a skywalk cropped up there, all metal, very insensitively designed."

**What are you most excited about, next?**

**Jimmy:** "My most landmark architectural design is the Della Tower; however I'm the most excited about a 21 story residential tower that I'm designing with Anthony Gody's inspiration. Hardly anywhere in the world has Antony's architecture been replicated! If this project follows its path, I'm sure we are going to win."  
**You must have heard of New York city's 'The Shed', a centre for all creative expression, it brings together artists in fields ranging from hip hop to classical music, painting to digital media, theater to literature, and sculpture to dance in an unprecedented movable structure that adapts to support all kinds of inventive work under one roof.**

**Jimmy:** "The Shed is a super-interesting concept to bring in collaborative artists and creative thinkers at a common platform and create collaborations. I feel it would be fantastic to have something like that in a much smaller version in the city of Mumbai, it would give our artists a space to do whatever they need to do, look at how our artists have beautifully painted a few walls along Bandra Kurla Complex, on the freeway and how beautiful it looks and really upgrades the area. In Bandra there are areas where painted streets and houses do appear. I think if there's a single space where all artists can come together it will be a dream come true for a city like Mumbai and it would definitely give an avenue for the artist to demonstrate what they are capable of doing. Such a space would also be an appealing ground for new artists who are aspiring to learn from their peers."

INTERVIEW: SANGEETA WADHWANI  
PHOTOS: