

# *Adding Sheen to the Sparkle*

Known for exploring creativity and innovation whilst embracing new technology, Sanjay Kothari, Vice Chairman of the KGK Group, is an avid traveller with high tastes in fashion. As a diamantaire of repute, he has scripted glorious chapters in the gemstones and jewellery domain

BY PALLAVI SINGH



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Based in Hong Kong, Sanjay Kothari is the Vice Chairman of the KGK Group and spearheads the century old establishment ensuring a global presence. Dynamic and passionate, he marks the entrepreneurial enthusiasm of the family's fourth generation in taking the venture to attain newer milestones. Under his patronage, the company has taken the leap of faith from mining to manufacturing and from marketing to distribution as well as retail in the domain of gemstones, diamonds and jewellery. The group's erudite stature in the industry achieved through its journey marks the acute business acumen of Mr. Kothari, which now has presence throughout the gem and jewellery industry pipeline—from mines to brands. In 30 years of him being the driving force of the group, he has not only accelerated the growth, but has also built a meritocracy for the enhancement of the company. His first initiative with the group involved establishing diamond manufacturing in Mumbai. Since then he has developed many verticals, including international sales and marketing, jewellery manufacturing, gemstone mining, jewellery retailing and real estate. He has revamped the group's IT and corporate identity making it a true global conglomerate in every aspect. As a business honcho, Mr. Kothari envisaged the need for the group to have an imbued ethics of management and professionalism. Under his administration, there was a complete transformation of management operations that is at par with global standards. With over 12,000 employees, the KGK Group is gaining momentum to emerge as a globally renowned group.

**Tell us about the origin of your journey as an entrepreneur.** I started taking interest in the family business rather early, and joined it formally in 1986. I underwent a rigorous training where I learnt the end-to-end process of diamond manufacturing, post which I mastered the skill to craft a diamond. At the time I joined, KGK had a small setup apropos diamonds which I began to expand by first setting up a diamond processing unit in Mumbai, with the objective of augmenting the diamond segment of KGK that my father, Navrattan Kothari, had initiated. Thereafter, I shifted base to Hong Kong to boost the group's





Mr. Sanjay Kothari with Shriji Arvind Singh Mewar of Udaipur

diamond sales and marketing operations in the Far East, mainly in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, China, Korea and Thailand.

**KGK has had an amazing success story since its inception in 1905. Let us know about your business interests? What is the USP of the company?**

I principally enjoy exploring creativity and believe in innovation along with embracing new technology across the spectrum ranging from products, people or the system in itself. KGK has emerged as one of the few conglomerates covering the entire spectrum of mining, sourcing, manufacturing and distributing coloured stones, diamonds and jewellery for over a century. With years of hard work and foresight, it has achieved the vertically integrated standing of mines-to-brands in gems and jewellery industry and has been sharing direct benefits with its patrons.

**As the third generation leader, what are your plans for the company going forward?**

Since its inception, KGK has been consistent in its expansion. We plan to follow the same path in order to widen its global footprint, the core

“The bond with the patrons is strengthened with every passing year and stronger presence has been established across commercial centres in the world”



Mr. Navrattan Kothari & Mr. Sanjay Kothari receiving the prestigious JNA Award from Mr. Chan Sai-Cheong, Executive Director, Chow Tai Fook Jewellery Group Ltd.



(From left to right) Mr. Sanjay Kothari, Mr. Sergey Ivanov, Mr Evgeny Polyansky, Mr. Vithal Ramani, Mr. Sandeep Kothari and Mr. Yuri K Okoyomov launching a facility in Vladivostok

objective being not only to augment the business but also adhere to its commitment of giving back to the people and communities that make its endeavours possible.

**The most exquisite stone you have ever come across?**  
The clearest and biggest Blue Aqua Gemstone of 10,000 carats.

**What are some of the gems that would turn heads at Baselworld 2019?**  
Gemstones in shades of nude will be trending at Baselworld 2019, enabling women to choose jewellery as they choose beauty products what with a shift in focus from the bright, traditional colours to nudes. However, spring colours combining the multi-colour hues of a peacock and the



Mr. Sanjay Kothari with his brother Mr. Sandeep Kothari

**TAKE 5 WITH SANJAY KOTHARI**

1

**FASHION BRANDS**

Shanghai Tang for suits, shirts & jackets; Raghendra Rathore for *bandhgallas*; Pal Zileri and Canali for suits; Hermes and Ferragamo for ties.

2

**FAVOURITE WHEELS**

Redefine your style with these giant machines: Aston Martin Rapide; Porsche 911; Ferrari 488; Rolls Royce Phantom and Bentley.

3

**TRAVEL DESTINATIONS**

The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa in Gulmarg; Italy for its colonial look and history; stay at Kempinski Hotel Beijing; Budapest, Venice and Prague in Europe.

4

**MUST HAVES FOR A MAN**

A high-flying corporate must opt for the following options: A wrist watch; a classic white shirt; a black blazer; a pair of black brogues; and a tie.

5

**FOOD JOINTS**

Meraaki Kitchen in Jaipur; Bistrot De Venise in Venice; King's Joy restaurant in Beijing; The Table in Mumbai; and Mirabelle in Rome.



Mr. Sanjay Kothari with Malaika Arora Khan



Mr. Sanjay Kothari with his wife Mrs. Manju Kothari

“Hard work fuelled by passion and aspiration has no substitute. If you remain focussed and work hard towards your goal, nothing can defeat you”

rainbow will also be in vogue. Rubies and emeralds will remain the all-time favourites while sapphires in fancy colours such as purple, pink, blue, orange and green will be popular. Besides, baguette-frenzy cut with cluster settings and other innovative cuts will be trends to watch out for at Baselworld 2019.

**KGK Group has expanded its diamond-cutting operations to South Africa. Kindly throw some more light on your newest facility overseas.**

KGK has for many years been one of the leading manufacturers in South Africa investing in state of the art cutting and polishing facilities. In 2017, the Group commenced operations in Namibia with a factory that is committed to implement robust beneficiation programmes to attain the essential objective of growing manifold in the region. The production has begun and a comprehensive skill development plan has been put into place to augment the skills of about 100 Namibian employees by 2020. KGK is equipping this factory with up-to-the-minute infrastructure that will be at par with any manufacturing facility across the globe. KGK has over 25 years of experience in manufacturing in South Africa along with an understanding to establish a competitive and a sustainable facility. The diamonds manufactured by KGK in Namibia will be distributed to its clients worldwide and this factory will soon apply to qualify for forevermark.

**What is that one achievement that you are proud of?**

I am proud of all the milestones that KGK has achieved in the past. I am glad that my teaming up with my younger brother Sandeep Kothari under the astute guidance of my father Mr. Navrattan Kothari has resulted in KGK's invincible growth. The multifaceted truth and extended family legacy of KGK shines through the efforts of generations and is bound to scale new heights in the years to come.

**Who or what has been your inspiration in life?**

My father Mr. Navrattan Kothari has always been my inspiration. I have always admired his approach to conduct business without losing on his principles and ethics. His attitude to adopt cultural changes without harming the roots is equally inspiring. His principles and passionate approach is evident. Me and my brother Sandeep Kothari continue to conduct our business in accordance with the highest principles of faith, respect and integrity set by our father and forefathers.

**What are some of the key learnings you've had in your journey as a businessman?**

To be adaptable to constant changes is the key to go a long way in business. Besides, one should also be optimistically open minded and a forward thinker.

**If not an entrepreneur what would you have been?**

If I were not an entrepreneur, I would have definitely been a musician. My endearment for Indian classical music and 'tabla' in particular is a manifestation.

**Hard work is bound to be rewarding. What are the awards that have been bestowed on the Group?**

It gives us an utmost sense of pride that KGK is among the handful of global companies who are preferred buyers of De Beers, Alrosa, Rio Tinto and Dominion Diamond Mines.

**What is your advice to young entrepreneurs?**

Nothing succeeds like success and in order to be successful one has to really work hard. I truly believe that hard work fuelled by passion and aspiration has no substitute. Alongside, it is also very imperative to keep your fundamentals intact. Nothing comes easy but one has to make it happen by subscribing to self-acquisition. ■