



"Why did he choose not to live with my mother and me," Nathaniel puts forward some of the reasons that drove him to make the film about his father.

While the two aspects of Kahn's life -- one of personal and the other of the professional -- are intertwined in the film, it works for its maker like a conduit through which he comes to terms with what he is, the illegitimate son of Louis I Kahn.

Asked how he feels about the fact that the most extravagant work of Kahn sits on the soil of the world's poorest nation, he remains unperturbed.

"Why should the poorest country not deserve the best architecture of the world?" he argues.

Designing a capital was a hugely expensive project, but Nathaniel's argument is clear-cut, "How can you put a price on a national symbol? The building may be expensive but Louis Kahn was underpaid, the Government of Bangladesh still owes my father's office money. He was a man who did not do jobs for money."

As for the defacement that the building and its surrounding has suffered over the last few years, he feels that it is not his job to talk to the government about the structures that came up flouting the master plan. About the effort of the architects of Bangladesh he is full of praise. "What I was so moved by was that how the architects of Bangladesh, unlike architects of other countries, who only worry about their own work, are worried about the works of others that symbolise Dhaka and Bangladesh," he points out.

While talking about the works of his eminent father he has all the emotions in the world in store. But there are observations that clearly bring to the fore the principles that guided the famous man. "What he was interested as an architect was not so much as designing nice houses for rich people. He was an emigrant, he came to America

with nothing, without a dollar in his pocket. Philadelphia is the city he came to, he could go to the museum for free, he went to school for free, he went to college for free on scholarships. The best things in life should cost nothing. The buildings that he built were libraries, scientific research institutions, institutions of higher learning, schools..." he clarifies.

About Bangladesh's assembly building too he has some enlightening words. "He envisaged the assembly as a sacred place. This is a Jewish architect, it's amazing that your country chose a Jewish man... he contributed to you, you contributed to him. This is a model of how different types of belief systems in the world get along; it is a symbol of collaboration between very, very different cultures. The Tajmahal took twenty three years to build, so did this building. Unlike modern structures this has the quality of timelessness..." feels Nathaniel.

Nathaniel as well as the film throws light on the shadowy patches of his father's creative route. "When he was young, it was the time of glass and steel and he tried to design that way, but they seemed soulless to him. In 1950, he, at the age of fifty, took a tour of Europe; he, at that age, goes to Rome, Greece and Egypt. He encounters the ruins in those places. What he decides to do is to build modern buildings with the spirit of the ancient ruins. And suddenly his architecture changes enormously, he starts to build structures that function as modern buildings but have this timeless quality as well as monumentality."

Unfortunately, the film spends little time with the most elaborate structure of Kahn, which is the parliament building of Bangladesh. Though it accompanies emotional testimony by Shamsul Wares, an eminent architect of Bangladesh, the film's sudden jump from Nathaniel's boat ride on the Buriganga to the moats of the Parliament building is misleading. It gives an impression as if Kahn's grand creation is surrounded by nothing but empty space and waterways.

Perhaps the creator felt it would recreate the way Kahn had envisaged it when he had come up with the vision. His son's words seem adequate in putting things in context. He says, "It is something that grew out of the land, emerged out of the water. He had to acknowledge water as the building was being built in a deltaic region." In the film, the vision of the son seem to lead the viewers back to the vision of the father.