

## Entreprise is this NRG's stepping stone to success

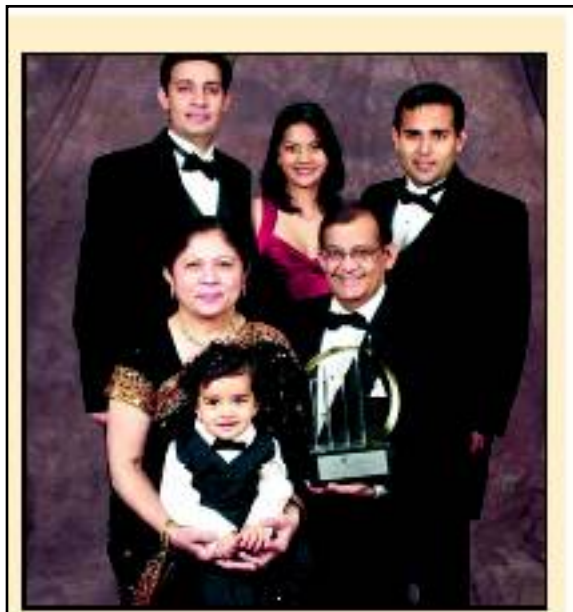
**HIRAL DHOLAKIA-DAVE**

The Vietnam War Memorial in Washington DC. Mirror Memorial at the Kennedy Space Centre, which honours the 24 astronauts who gave their lives in space exploration. Both revered monuments. And, both have a Gujarati connection.

It is Manu Shah, a Gujarati entrepreneur in the US, who provided the black granite used to build them.

Hailing from Mandvi in Kutch, he's the only Indian on this year's Ernst & Young 'Entrepreneur of the Year' list announced recently. And it's no wonder he's a Gujarati. After all, it was Gujarati enterprise that made Manu Shah take plunge into business of supplying natural stone, create a niche by providing black granite to a number of public memorials in the US and go on to expand his venture to the extent that 80 per cent of new homes in the US have stone in some form from his warehouse. Though when he landed in the US in 1967 with a debt of \$3000 — the amount he borrowed towards his education from a community organisation in Mumbai — he harboured the ambition to create jobs for his brethren back home.

His wife Rika, who was a school teacher, started the business from the basement of their home. In 1982, the couple shot to fame when they were contracted to supply granite for the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington D.C. "I quit my job, took over my wife's business and got into expanding it," he says. His business now provides employment to 40,000 people in India and a 100,000 worldwide with India being one of their largest suppliers. From granite accessories at Mandalay Bay hotel and casino in Las Vegas to stones at Space Mirror Memorial at the Kennedy Space Centre, which honours the 24 astronauts who gave their lives in space exploration. And this is just a tiny part of his business, which is aiming to hit sales revenue of \$240 million this year. Temples, Home Depot stores, millions of homes, the list runs long. "Natural stone remains the most visual part of a home. People realise value of stone that's the reason it forms building block of anything and everything," he says.



Manu Shah (sitting, right) with his family