Design will not be a Virus

A. G. Rao

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Since some time I have been thinking of the problems of practicing designers. Many consultancy offices in design closed down and some of my students complained that we, the senior lot have not done much for spreading the 'Design'

I thought of solving the problem in a most creative way. I had a bright idea to invent a 'Design Virus' which can spread like a 'computer virus'. It can be powerful and self-sustaining. This seminar 'Design Enables' has given me an opportunity to present my thoughts more seriously.

I believe good design is concerned with enhancing the 'Quality of life' the terms 'Quality can encompass multiple dimensions of life and cater to the varied segments of Society.

In a country like ours there is a majority of population with lesser incomes whose basic needs like employment, education and nutrition are not fully satisfied. There is a sizeable segment of middle income group whose comforts are yet to be taken care of. Privileged richer sections are looking for satisfying their desires.

Physical nature of these 'needs, comforts and desires' are more obvious. But there are psychological and spiritual dimensions of these 'demands' as well. Design can play a vital role in articulating and satisfying these demands with 'Quality' as the idiom.

I would like to site an example here. Two years back we had presented a new tool kit for bamboo in a workshop called 'Get up' to 30 participants at Guwahati for trials and feedback. The group comprised of craft persons, entrepreneurs and Govt. officials. In the feedback session '3' persons expressed that the tool bag need not look so posh and a 'cheaper' wooden box can be given. When I asked about the background of these three persons, it turned out that all three were business entrepreneurs. Then we asked a craftsman a react. He said that he liked the tool kit and did not mind the 'cost'. He added, the attractive look gives him the importance when he goes to Delhi for demonstrations.

In fact while designing we had come to the conclusion that for a craftsman tool kit is what a laptop is to an engineer or designer. It is his/her workstation. We took extra care to give the bag an exclusive identity.

So the psychological and spiritual demands can cut across the 'income' groups and perhaps Design can play a key role in articulating and satisfying them with 'Quality' as the main concern.

The problems for the design community seems to be the 'opportunity for design' and how to find it. So far design profession has by and large depended on organized Industry for this 'design opportunity'. In the Postmodern Scene organized big industries are offering less and less creative opportunity' to design. Creative assignments to professional designers in house as well as out-house have come down drastically. Globalization is posing new challenge to 'design community' all over the world.

But in a developing country like ours there is a vast scope for 'creative design' in unorganized and small scale sector. To convert this 'scope' to design opportunity we have to become innovative.

For this

Designers need to acquire entrepreneurship skills
Designers need to acquire financial management and marketing skills
Designers need to understand Banking, Shares and Markets.
Designers and Design Institutions, need to learn ways and means to educate Decision-makers' like Bankers, IAS officers, Politicians who play a key role in informal sectors.
Designers need to combine "Design with Technologies"
Designers will have to acquire computer and communication skills, as there is little choice in this matter.

With the increasing demands for 'Education and Communication' Design will spread, but with 'enhancing 'Quality of life' as the main goal.
 I believe, 'Design will not be a virus'.

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