This conference has been called Design with India and *not*
Design in India.
This is not by accident, but intentional.
Design is a powerful process that needs to be understood as a way
of seeing, doing and bringing quality to action.
India is a complex country by any standards with a diversity of
culture, practices, people, language and everything else.
So this conference is a conversation between the two.
Between Design and India.

Though Design has been in India for more than 50 years, it remains
a nebulous concept with both Business and Government. When
asked "Do you use Design?" "Yes," they say "We use it for
branding our tourism campaign", or "For giving form to a new
vehicle" or "For creating a new retail outlet."
And they are using Design – but they are only using Design halfway.
The reasons for this phenomenon run deep. It is not enough for us
designers to find fault with Business and Government, and complain
about their knowledge (or lack of it) about Design, or their attitudes
about Design and designers. We must acknowledge that it is only in
the recent past that Design is being seen as a process that is beyond
functional disciplines, that it can dramatically change the quality of
action, product, and experience. It is only now being seen as
'serious business'. And this process is agonisingly slow.

> "Design is …..damn it….about the purchasing department.
> The training department. The finance department.
> Design. About services as much as lumps. About HR and IS
> department as much as about new product development.
> And about $0.79 items as much as $79,000 items. Those
> are the terms-of-reference with which I approach this
> Very Big Idea."
> Tom Peters - Re-imagine!

So perhaps India should have explicit focus on Design at the highest
levels of Government (the PMO? the Planning Commission?)? And
every company board should have a designer on it?

My contention is that if Design has to serve the concerns of the
economy, the environment, the society and individual citizens, then
it needs government, business and public involvement. It needs to
be acknowledged and used as a powerful process to address
everyday problems we face – be it "Which transportation solutions
to adopt for the country?" or "How to educate our children?".

Innovation is not just about inventing new
products and services; today it is to a greater
degree also connected with other ways of doing
business or changes in organizational structure.
Index 2007 Magazine

When New product development is discussed in
most management schools in India the IDEO
shopping cart film and the Apple i-Pod are the
favourite examples. Students are not exposed to
the great water works of Tamil Nadu and the
administration systems of Tipu Sultan. So it's not
their fault that they think this thing called
"innovation" like everything else came from
Harvard or Wharton.

Accepting that Design is more than just designers, we need to address the following important question:

India's relationship with Design

What is its current relationship?

- Design is seen primarily as a product or branding function. (and not a strategic function)
- Design is looked at as one more discipline (and not as a way of integrating the many disciplines).
- It is seen as a last stage, dressing up function (and not as a common thread that runs through needs research, solution ideation and development, marketing, re-design and so on).
- Its understanding of the 'stakeholder' is limited to a narrow set – typically of 'users' or customers (and not as a powerful way of understanding the needs of the multiple stakeholders including pre-production, lifecycle impact, indirect implications for larger society etc).
- It is largely a "Western" import (and not seen as a process to help us find creative solutions by engaging with our own culture, our own histories).

An example will help illustrate these points.

According to the much-acclaimed Goldman Sachs BRICs report, India is forecast to become the third largest economy in the world, after China and the USA, by the year 2050, overtaking all other developed economies.

It is nice to read such reports, with visions of a grand future for our country. The hard reality on the ground today is that the present is full of seemingly unresolvable problems.

Depending on who I talk to these days, India today seems to have two stories. The first story is about our reality. This is the reality of inequity and illiteracy, of poverty and unemployment, of scarcity and depravation. The second story is about our potential. The potential to create economic, social, cultural and ecological wealth for all our citizens and for the world.
Time to Unlearn – if you want to transform our destiny, we will have to change what we teach and how we teach.
Azim H Premji, India Today Nov 27 2006

Let me talk specifically about Bangalore. Thomas Friedman put this city on the global radar; the city has delusions of being India's Silicon Valley.

The roads today in Bangalore are over-crowded with cars that are too big for them. Very often there is only one person in the car. The 'other Bangalore' – my gardner for example – needs to use

overcrowded and often unreliable buses to get to work. Pollution is a visible high. Other problems like waste disposal, water availability and usage, housing and so on all exist visibly for everyone to see and experience. But is there a co-ordinated approach to understand the picture, engage with all stakeholders, find, test and implement good solutions? The answer is "No".

The 'business' imperative vs the 'India' imperative

Let us restrict our focus to the transportation issue. Never before in the history of this country did we have this present set of circumstances come together in this configuration – the size of the roads, the conditions of the roads, the number of people, the number of companies selling the cars, the size of cars, the car-finance companies, the fuel crises, the aspirational values of nuclear families, the security requirements of government (each official entourage has a number of vehicles), the lack of public transportation vision, lack of political will to implement a public transportation system, and the dismal management of public systems.

Sure, the issue is complex. Maybe Design alone cannot solve the transport problems of Bangalore. But Design can facilitate a solution that will be bold, holistic and contextual – and most of all 'successful'.

Finding contextual solutions is important. We can learn a lot from how economies in other parts of the world grew, but it is downright dangerous to think that we can import that lock, stock and barrel for India.

While our Indian automobile manufacturers are working hard to design Indian cars for India, it is also a fact that too many cars on Indian city roads are choking our streets. From the car manufacturers' point of view, with other players flooding the market, they would have been foolish not to have built a vehicle that could take on that competition. So as a business the "design solution" is to build a great vehicle in India, sell it to Indians, and do India proud!

But India as a whole also suffers as a consequence! This conflict between the business imperative and what I call the "India imperative" is something that we are facing in many contexts.

New problems need new approaches

India has many problems. Education, Transportation, Housing, Water, Agriculture, Infrastructure, Technology, R & D, Economic inequality, and so on.

Our "traditional mindsets", market research, private-public partnerships, induction of technology and other similar approaches

Tata, M&M auto finance arms eye foreign mart. Market analysts have estimated Tata Motors to sell 300,000 units of the Rs one lakh-car during the the initial year of the launch. By 2010, one million one lakh cars are estimated to be sold in the domestic and international markets.
Business Standard: June 27, 2006

Global car designers eyeing India
"With almost every global carmaker showing up on Indian roads, international car designers are coming to India to set up shop "
The Hindu Business Line: November 10, 2006

"Technology is transformed overnight; mentality takes generations to alter. Who can blame us for thinking technology will cure all that ails the workplace. It's so much easier to acquire."
Maverick - Ricardo Semler

used in the past are unlikely to help solve these massive current problems. We need to go beyond all this.

In fact it is our current predominant belief that since our growth is going great, we can fix everything without changing the way we look at things. This attitude can be shortsighted. To solve these problems with sustainable solutions, we need to "unlearn."

Design thinking is a great way to facilitate this unlearning. Design allows the space to appreciate the contradictions and pulls in a given premise and provides the courage to tread in areas that are risky and uncharted. Design thinking actively encourages looking at multiple points of view, involving conflicting stakeholders, and generating solutions that are win-win. It uses but goes beyond the 'specialist' bias that other disciplines bring to the table.

The inherent momentum of the business world often ignores or underplays the need to gain cross-disciplinary insights. Competition and bottom line growth is a mind-set that can be positive but can also be very limiting. And in this present time in our country, its important to generate wealth through new means, and more importantly wealth that will flow down to diverse components of Indian society.

Going back to our transportation problem. Design may bring together the following stakeholders to analyse, discuss and brainstorm the problem – children of different ages and economic backgrounds, a bus conductor and driver, a transport policeman, an old lady who uses buses, the vehicle manufacturers, officials from the municipal department, the transport ministry, truck drivers, road cleaners, a doctor, a pavement dweller, and a roadside vendor.

Such a group, which may be 'unusual' or even 'impossible' for a business organisation to work with (and accommodate their points of view), will be able to explore the problem in a more comprehensive and realistic way – and thus provide rich insights for finding solutions that are contextual, effective and implementable. And such a group will be very easy for Design to work with.

You may think this is unrealistic, it can't happen, it will never happen. Not true. It is already happening – in other countries, as well as to a small extent in India. But we need to accelerate the adoption of such approaches.

To do this, here are some questions that I hope this conference will engage with:

1. How do we equip Indian decision makers with design thinking?

Design thinking is a combination of systems thinking, ethics, ways of seeing, doing, testing, observation, research and empathy. To become such a thinker one needs to experience cognitive shifts and

"What now matters is the design and delivery of value. That needs design thinking. That needs creative thinking. Judgment thinking alone is not going to be enough. Most people, in business and elsewhere, have done very well on judgment thinking. Such people are rarely aware of the need for 'design thinking'. They find it difficult to conceive that there is a whole other aspect of thinking that is different from judgment thinking. It is not that such people are complacent. It is simply that they do not know that there is another aspect to thinking."
—*Ed*ward de Bono, *Why So Stupid? How the Human Race has Never Really Learned to Think*, 2003

"Just as industrial manufacturing can create ecological havoc, industry's more innovative engineers are able to dream up socially responsible ways to solve these problems before they occur. Like eco-friendly chemist Michael Braungart, whose creations include snack wrappers that dissolve into soil-enhancing fertilizer and popsicle sticks that harbor native plant seeds and the nutrients to make them grow."
www.wie.org/business

critical inquiry. It is a result of active processes and requires reflection, experimentation and reinterpretation. It develops the courage to live with risk and ambiguity.

Such thinking is essential if leaders have to cope with the rapid pace of change that we are witnessing in India today. We have reached a state in our development as a country, where, if we become smart, we can avoid the mistakes made by the developed world when they were negotiating their economic growth path.

No easy task. But design pedagogy can help make this happen. Educators and experts all over the world are now acknowledging the efficacy of design pedagogy to help bring about transformation in organizations and individuals – especially people in leadership positions. How do we make this happen in India?

2. Apart from 'practice' what roles should Indian designers take on?

First, designers need to evangelize Design, and may need to work a certain % of their time away from their practice – in areas such as Design education, Design advocacy and so on.

Secondly, designers will need to work collaboratively on projects that deal with larger 'social' issues – issues that are beyond the 'business' imperative but rather address the 'India' imperative.

For example three different business magazines recently reported on the emerging agricultural retail sector. Their perspective, however, was limited to the 'business' imperative. Designers, if they had got involved, could have researched, suggested, ideated and clarified to make possible the presentation of "brutal facts" in a creative manner that allows for more effective, long term decisions to be taken.

So perhaps some designers do need to consider including advocacy into their practice, and to make it pay, they will need to find new networks of collaboration.

3. How can Government and Business help bring in Design thinking?

There are many ways. Some thoughts:

- The Government can create a new category called Design on its already existing portal BAIF. I hope that after this conference you will see Design listed in that left hand column when you enter the page –Industry.

- The Government can ask design schools (and we have a lot of them being set up today) to work on a collaborative

"You can't transform a group structure without having the leadership go through some sort of transformation" asserts Richard Barrett, author of *Liberating the Corporate Soul* and creator of one of the most widely used means of assessing the level of consciousness (or ways of thinking) of an individual or culture.
The way out is literally unthinkable with the iron reasoning of the corporate machine. The first step is a new way of thinking – a new consciousness or worldview that enables us to recognize how everything is interdependent and how connection to a larger purpose is critical for personal and professional success."
www.wie.org/business

" Leadership does not begin just with vision. It begins with getting people to confront the brutal facts and to act on the implications"
Good to Great- Jim Collins

"We should not underestimate the crucial importance of leadership and design joining forces. Our global future depends on it. We will either design our way through the deadly challenges of this century, or we won't make it. For our institutions - in truth, for our civilization - to survive and prosper, we must solve extremely complex problems and cope with many bewildering dilemmas. We cannot assume that, following our present path, we will simply evolve toward a better world. But we can design that better world. That is why designers need to become leaders, and why leaders need to become designers."
—*Richard Farson*, *Management by Design*, *2000*

design/innovation audit to draw out insights from the change happening in its priority areas.

- The Government can experiment with introduction of design thinking at different levels in its structure - clerks, lower rung staff, middle and top management. This can be followed up by programmes that will enable them to innovate to become more transparent, authentic service providers to the public.

- Business can engage design services to come up with better, more equitable, more sustainable solutions. They can definitely stop the "silo" culture within their organizations. They can also put pressure on Management schools to include design thinking as part of the curriculum. For this some support needs to be provided to faculty and the system to understand how to teach for the fluid, fuzzy parts of design and the nitty gritty, hard tasks of implementation of innovation.

4. How can Design help people honestly say "Proud to be Indian"?

Many Indians today are faced with the challenge of handling the pulls of tradition and yet belonging to the globalised world. Even the rural household watching MTV faces this challenge.

I cherish the rich culture that I have grown in. It is painful to see fellow Indians looking to other lands to find themselves, their skills, their values. It is essential to nurture the ability to be able to learn from everywhere without losing the spirit of self. Rather than be *like* Singapore or China, we need to remain solidly Indian. And yet be a part of the Global community – whose borders are getting more and more irrelevant.

No, those who turn good into great are motivated by a deep creative urge and an inner compulsion for sheer unadulterated excellence for its own sake. Those who build and perpetuate mediocrity, in contrast, are motivated more by the fear of being left behind.
Good to Great - Jim Collins

Again social scientists, businessmen, politians, artists, NGOs, and Government need to sit across the table to find new ways of approaching this. Design can help facilitate this.

In summary, the time is ripe to evolve and define a new relationship between India and Design.

I hope that this Conference will be a starting point for the kind of changes we need (and are capable of achieving) to make "*Hamara Bharat Mahaan*".

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