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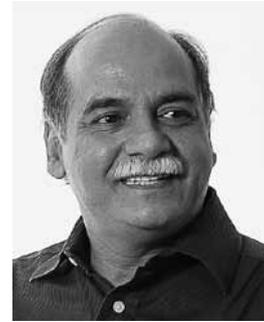
## PROJECT REVIEW

# MOMENTOUS MEMENTOES



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he is the Activity Chairperson, Industry Programmes and Projects. He is also heading the institute's Centre for Training of Trainers.



**Anil Sinha** is a senior graphic designer and the head of the Communication Design discipline at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad. He has been a faculty at the institute for the last twenty-five years

and has also headed the institute's Outreach Programmes division, Industry Programmes and Projects cell, and the Integrated Design Services and Design Consultancy Services wings at NID.

*Designing of Mementoes* was a project executed by the Design Consultancy Services cell of the National Institute of Design (NID) for its client, the Rajya Sabha or the Council of States, one of the two Houses in the Parliament of India. The client was represented by a parliamentary committee headed by the Vice President of India, Mohammad Hamid Ansari. The project brief that was sent to the Institute mentioned that it was customary for



**Fig. 1:** The exteriors of the building

the Chairman/Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha to give away mementoes to several dignitaries of national and international stature. Also, the members of the Rajya Sabha, on their retirement, are supposed to be presented with mementoes that recognise the selfless and dedicated service rendered by each of them.

Currently, the Rajya Sabha does not have any particular design specification for these mementos. Therefore, handicraft items available in the local markets are purchased and given away as mementoes. Thus, the objective of this project was to create a unified and consistent image through standardisation of these mementoes. It was also specified that the proposed mementoes need not be in the form of plaques, but they could be in the form of modern design objects. This project was undertaken by a team comprising two NID faculty members—Shashank Mehta and Anil Sinha.

On determining the trajectory that the design team should follow in order to successfully complete this project, it was agreed that as the first step, the design

team would focus on one of the categories only. The following categories were agreed upon during the first meeting with the client, and accordingly mementoes would be designed for these categories. Mementoes to be given to —

- 1.** Various dignitaries on different occasions
- 2.** Members of parliamentary delegations from foreign countries
- 3.** Delegations of members of the Indian parliament visiting foreign countries
- 4.** A member of parliament of the Rajya Sabha on his/her retirement

While executing the design project, the design team undertook extensive research to finalise eight design alternatives that were then presented to the committee as a first presentation of the project.

In order to accomplish this project successfully, NID first differentiated between what is a trophy, a memento and a gift. A trophy is a reward for a specific achievement, and usually afterwards serves as proof of merit. A memento is an object or an item that serves to remind one of a person

or a past event, it is a kind of souvenir. A gift is something that is given voluntarily without payment in return, to show amity towards someone, honour an occasion, or as a gesture of gratitude. It is more personal in nature.

It was observed that foreign delegates kept mementoes they received on international visits in the museums of their respective countries. This being the case, NID thought of making a memento that would best depict India as a country. Handicrafts were one of the options. Terracotta, wood carving, and lost wax casting were some of the craft techniques explored by the design team. However, it was felt that handicraft items are largely associated with gifts and traditions. A memento has to be associated with a particular place, it should depict contemporariness, and most importantly it should differentiate itself from gift items. It must serve as the memory of someone's visit or felicitation. The client insisted that the memento should be durable and strong, as most mementoes or souvenirs tend to break off or get damaged within a short span of time. The committee members also mentioned that they would require 200 mementoes for the international delegations, and about 20–30 for retiring members every year. Therefore, the memento should be designed in such a way that its method of production ensured perfect quality—an aspect that is difficult to come across in craft objects.

The prospective memento should depict India as an economically and technologically developing country. Towards this end, the design team looked at creating mementoes based on the design of monuments such as the India Gate and the Gateway of India. But, it was found that most monuments depicted only one aspect of India. For instance, the India Gate is mainly associated with the soldiers

who sacrificed their lives during the First World War. In this context, it has to be pointed out that NID wanted to differentiate between the mementoes given to the Rajya Sabha by foreign dignitaries. None of the other monuments matched completely with the image of the Rajya Sabha, democratic principles and the image of India the team intended to project. Ultimately, the team thought about those landmarks that stood for Indian democracy. Finally, the team contemplated on the creation of a replica of the Indian parliament as the basic design for the proposed mementoes. This is because democracy forms the underlying principle of the Indian political system, and the Indian parliament is an edifice that aptly symbolises this truth. Besides, the people can easily relate to the impressive monument of the Indian parliament, and it also stands out as an identity for India. The design team also decided to incorporate the Ashok Chakra into the memento design of the parliament building because it symbolises continuous progress.

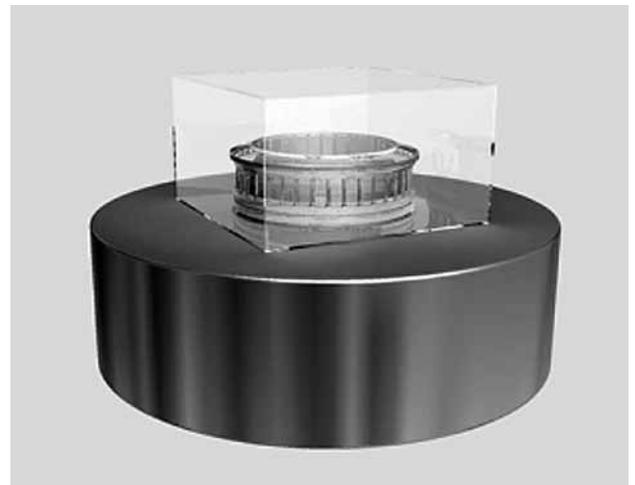
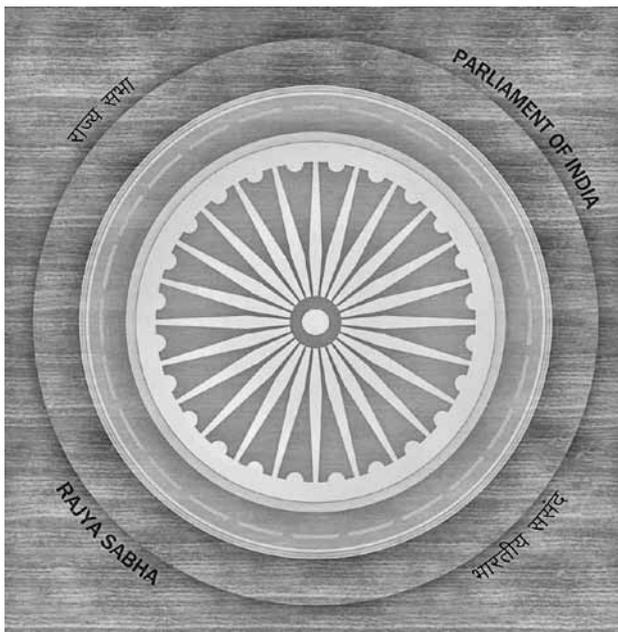


Fig. 2: The appearance of a closed structure

The design team considered different ways of presenting the parliament building using different mediums, processes and materials. A design that captures only the exteriors of the building (Fig.1) was not considered to be highly convincing as it would merely resemble several replicas of other



**Fig. 3:** The words 'Rajya Sabha' written in English and Devnagri



**Fig. 4:** Prototype showing the top view with the Ashok Chakra in the centre

renowned buildings. On similar lines, a round image of the parliament bound inside a cube made it appear like an enclosed structure (**Fig.2**).

Through this model it was difficult to capture the enormity of the entire monument. Also, the Indian parliament is based on a democratic system of functioning and every Indian citizen has a right to know about various parliamentary proceedings. This being the case, an enclosed portrayal of the structure would not convey this aspect of transparency. The parliament building is huge in size and proportion. It is always viewed at eye level. Its enormity and circularity had to be depicted. The building is so vast that its circularity can be viewed from the top only. In order to capture the psychological weight, the structure of the monument was kept as low as possible. The design team realised that all these concepts could be justifiably depicted only in a three dimensional representation of the parliament building.

The three dimensional replication of any monument within the crystal cube through the laser etching technique is widely used. In order to create a

replica of the monument that is different from such commonly available design of souvenirs, the design team decided to create the memento in the shape of the parliament building itself. To depict both the exterior as well as the interior of the parliament floor, it was decided that a transparent material would be used. Therefore, the design team decided to use acrylic in order to convey a sense of transparency. This proposed memento in acrylic would be given away to foreign dignitaries. Depicting the Ashok Chakra as the centre of the parliament floor and the creation of pillars was a challenge, as far as creating all these in acrylic was concerned. The words: 'Parliament of India' have been presented on the top of the acrylic circle. Also, the word 'Rajya Sabha', written in the Devnagri script finds a place on the circle (**Fig. 3**). Though it was possible to create this conceptualised form in crystal, making the same in acrylic posed a few budgetary constraints. However, it was decided that acrylic would be used in the memento keeping in mind the said constraints. Due to this, changes and refinements were made in order to make the design more production worthy.



Fig. 5: The steel prototype with the screen printed image of the parliament building and the citation on its sides



Fig. 6: The acrylic prototype

The prototype of a memento made in steel was also presented to the clients. The Ashok Chakra in the centre would be laser etched (Fig.4). Each pillar depicted on the screen printed image of the parliament building corresponded to the circular rim that has spokes of the Ashok Chakra in the centre (Fig.5). This prototype was like a description of the parliament building that creatively transformed the two dimensional projection into a three dimensional view. The Ashok Chakra was creatively integrated at the top of the memento. The citation was incorporated on both sides of the memento (Fig. 5). In case this prototype was finalised by the client, the memento created on the lines of this prototype would be given away to the retiring officials along with a citation. Looking at the cost constraints, the design team explored the use of aluminium as its base instead of steel.

The two prototypes (Figs. 5 and 6) were shown to the client and the latter preferred the acrylic one because it was an authentic depiction of transparency and openness seen in the democratic political practices of India. Besides, it also looked elegant as a replica of the parliament building and was not at all cumbersome to handle. Impressed with the elegance of design, the parliamentary committee felt that the same memento could be given away to the retiring members as well. With a little more flexibility in terms of budget, the same memento could be made in crystal. This would enhance the aesthetic appeal of the design, and the same could be presented to the foreign dignitaries. Accordingly, the design team submitted the prototypes and design drawings to the clients. Presently, the clients are looking for prospective vendors and fabricators who can manufacture these mementoes in the required quantities on the basis of the finalised prototypes. 🐞

## PROJECT REVIEW

# CRAFTS OF JHARKHAND: AESTHETICS AND BEYOND



**Shirsendu Ghosh** was a former faculty of Graphic Design at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad. An NID alumnus, he was also the former Activity Chairperson of the Institute's Outreach Programmes division. Currently, he is the Associate Professor and Dean of Postgraduate Programmes at the Indian Institute of Craft and Design, Jaipur.



**Gayatri Menon** is the coordinator of the Toy and Game Design discipline at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad. She takes courses in Design Overview, Design Methodology, Colour and Form, and Game Theory and Design to name a few. Menon is interested in creative methods of exploring the field of design, and is pursuing her PhD in this area from the Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai. She has presented papers and conducted workshops at several national and international fora. She has been invited as a tutor to creativity workshops held in Italy, UK, and Germany. She is also a visiting faculty at various design schools in South Africa and Canada.

The necessity of establishing a craft resource and research centre in the newly formed Indian state of Jharkhand was at the crux of this project conducted by the Outreach Programmes unit of