

Product and Design Identity of India

India is a melting pot of different faiths and religions. Modern and traditional, rich and poor, new and old, all coexist in India. Customs and rituals are an integral part of the Indian way of life. Indian culture has a long history of aesthetic sensitivity and design explorations. With nearly 5000 year old culture, India is today the world's one of the most tradition rich country. This also brings in infinite treasure of knowledge resources and practiced wisdom. This is being constantly used and practiced in the daily life.

With a population of over one billion, India can be aptly called a land of people. Over sixty percent of these people live in more than half a million villages. Along with agriculture, craft is the major secondary source of income for them. The rich craft heritage of India is unique and diverse as its customs and traditions. Each part of the country has its own unique cultural ethos, which is manifested in the handicrafts of that particular region. In India, craft is the 2nd largest employment sector providing employment to 30 million people of the country. Here, the products are evolved and perfected as many of these crafts are practiced through generations. Beauty and creativity forms an integral part of the product along with its function / utility. While serving the local needs, craft sector also shares more than 20% of export market.

A vast majority of the Indian population comprises of middle-income group segment, which in-fact, itself is larger than the entire European market. These people, though positive in temperament, tend to become conservative and conscious in embracing new changes. This major market segment is therefore a highly cost sensitive segment. Production criteria that affect the product's performance, quality and finally but most importantly the cost of the product, are therefore dominating the industries and also its design. These, coupled with the diversity of socio-cultural, religious, lingual, geographical and environmental factors, the challenges that the country and its people offer to the designers are enormous and extremely complex. Many internationally successful brands have faced failure in the Indian market while some others had to make specific changes to suite the Indian psyche. McDonald, for the first time, has opened a wholly vegetarian outlet in India and made changes in its food items to suite the India taste. 'Bajaj' – the scooter (two wheeler) manufacturing Indian company's success lies in understanding these vital factors.

Indian economy is primarily a service – process oriented economy rather than the material or products oriented one prevalent elsewhere. Large number of small-scale industries and auxiliary units in the country create enough competition among them, for constant refinement and up gradation of their products. Indians by nature are highly enterprising and they find ingenious and amazing ways to make the most of whatever resources and skills at their disposal to earn their daily living. Design is the way of life in India. The solutions

that are 'people centric' –the one that generates new employment opportunities en-cashing the existing skills of the people, improves the standard of living while preserving the values of traditional society, are more likely to achieve success.

With it's more than 55% of population under the age group of 15 – 55, India today has one of the largest highly qualified knowledge workforce. In the present '*Information Technology*' (IT) age, India is today uniquely poised to explode with its 'Glocal' (Global + Local) designs that combine the traditional knowledge with the contemporary needs, to serve the world market that is increasingly shifting towards the mass-customization era.

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