

Memory Lane 7

NID Days

*Designer with a precision, Benoy Sirkar
and the story behind IA symbol.*



Benoy Sirkar joined NID, when we were students at NID. He came with an American flare! He was a student of 'Paul Rand' the well known designer of 'IBM' symbol!

One of Paul Rand's quotes say:

"Don't try to be original, just be good".

To say this needs great maturity!

Like a 'Zen Master', Paul Rand also said,

"Everything is Design, Everything!"

Benoy Sirkar had the fortune of working with such a thinker!

Paul Rand has many books to his credit. His well known book "Thoughts on Design!" still adores my book shelf! He introduces to a methodology of play in design in his article 'Design and the Play Instinct', in *Education of Vision*, 1965 edited by György Kepes. I came across 'Tangram' the great Chinese puzzle for the first time in this article, which I use extensively in Education of Children!

With a 'Guru' of that calibre, it is no wonder that Benoy Sirkar was a 'Master of Precision' in graphic design. He was quite friendly with us. With his radical thoughts on religious chauvinism, he would say, "why do we have so many languages in our country. It only seems to be creating fights. Every body in India should learn English and that would solve all the problems!" such thoughts especially from a Co-Bengali were not very well appreciated by the 'Bengali Group at NID!'

Benoy Sirkar took up the task of designing IA symbol and Kumar Vyas was working on the colour scheme for Indian Airlines! Benoy Sirkar was playing with I and A. He would put the '3' bars in combinations, one with a slope, see

it for hours as if it has a life of its own. He would come and ask us, "Hey, what do you think? Does it look like IA". With a great hesitation we say 'No!'. Our class was next to his cabin! He would go back with little disappointment! He went on working to extract 'IA' with minimal bars! We came to know that it was 'Parasutti,' the well known Architect invited by NID for Airport Design, who suggested Benoy Sirkar to pull out the middle portion of the 2nd bar. It made 'A', visible and brought in the 'movement'. Benoy Sirkar had a great heart to appreciate the suggestion and incorporate into the symbol. We also heard that, Gautam Sarabhai, Chairman of NID at that time suggested to change the slope and make the vertical bar at the end! It is amazing such a (great) simple symbol took shape with quality brains participating in the process. But for Benoy Sirkar it was just a starter. He simulated various graphic conditions to see the symbol in movement. He would blur the symbol in dark room in photography studio to simulate how the symbol will look as the air craft takes off. He was like a scientist reminding one of the legendary 'Laszlo Moholy Nagy' of Bauhaus! He and Kumar would sit together, discuss and debate to work out the whole scheme of corporate identity : the symbol, Logo and colours to be used on air craft as well as letter heads, Stationery and Transport vehicles. It was a great learning for us to see top designers of the country working at close quarters.

I was upset and felt sad when 'IA' symbol was abandoned disregarding the depth of Identity it had acquired for Indian Airlines with the intervention of immature political leadership! But IA symbol will be remembered as a pioneering leap in bringing new graphic design culture in to the country.
