

REDEFINE to CREATE.



The recently concluded Shenzhen Design Week underscored several common sense ideas which when developed to conclusion really seem so simple.

The most interesting to me, was the fact that a city can define itself. Shenzhen has defined itself as a 'City of Design'. This has then attracted over 6000 design professionals and institutions to relocate to the city from various parts of China, further reinforcing this and making it real. The city was then accredited by the United Nations as a city of design and finally, the official Belt and Road design initiative was conducted in this self-defined city of design, as the best vehicle for this important enterprise. And it was a great initiative with design professionals and those like myself, who work in design, converging on the city from several countries.

Now here's the interesting thing. Shenzhen itself, despite being a part of a country with magnificent cultural history and traditions, is only 30 years old. It was created out of a couple of fishing villages since it was on the Silk Route and had an important location.

Even given the fact that such things are more possible with the, shall we say, existing management of that great country, than in a democratic country of some penury, such as ours. However, surely it is still possible to establish a city, as the Sahara people tried valiantly to do with Aamby Valley, and then dedicate and define it to a purpose larger than itself ?

India can certainly find enormous scope to create hubs or cities dedicated and defined as the headquarters of droplets of our vast cultural heritage. India too can hope for 'A city of Handloom', 'A city of Craft' and 'A city of Design', in the new millennium. This will itself then generate a culture around the definition, even allowing for the fact that there is no way to contain the enormous body of say Indian handloom, into a single space. But this could be considered a sort of headquarters or secretariat for that body, giving it a kind of focus and gravitas, moving it away from the villages and into the centrum of a city. This will then certainly devolve into commercial benefit for the city, the industry and the country.

Our country stands on the shoulders of a splendid legacy of art, architecture and handicraft. It shouldn't really be such an onerous ask. Should it ?

I look forward to hearing from you.
Please send your thoughts to me at sylvia@ifj.co.in