

# Interview with D. Udaya Kumar, the designer of the Indian rupee sign

by Chinmoyee Deka - Saturday, June 13, 2015

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Udaya Kumar Dharmalingam is a well known personality who has designed the Indian Rupee sign in 2010. Presently he is an assistant professor at IIT Guwahati. He has completed his PhD in Design from Industrial Design Centre IIT, Bombay and was awarded the first "PhD in Design" from the Institute. Apart from this he has achieved countless number of awards and honors since his childhood for his outstanding activities. A few of these awards include "Young Alum Achiever Award", IIT Bombay; "Young Achiever Award", St. John's International Residential School; "Lifetime Achiever Award", Lions Club International, Chennai. He has also done extensive work in print medium and he was involved in many projects such as identity design, posters, brochures, books, covers, illustrations, information graphics, certificates, banners, hoardings, etc.

In an extensive interview with Uday Kumar, Team *Gonit Sora* takes a quick peek into the life of the professor.

## 1. [Image Source](#)

***You are currently working in the Department of Design, IIT Guwahati which uses some of the cutting edge technology used around the world like the Oculus Rift. How has been your experience and how important it is according to you to use such state of the art technology for research?***

I have seen only one student use this technology for his Master's Thesis project on Game Design. It is good to see students using the latest technologies to develop and execute their projects, we hope many students will follow suite. It is certainly important to be update with the technological developments around the world and to use them to create technically sound and innovative projects.

## ***2. You have spent a lot of time in IIT Guwahati. You are not originally from this part of the country. How have you adapted to the culture change? Did that ever affect your work?***

The change of place or culture has never affected my work it has only enhanced and enriched my thought process. Exposure to different culture and traditions help you to broaden your thinking and mindset in fact one becomes versatile in my opinion.

**3. *Let us talk about the field of Design now. What are the different careers in the field of Design?***

Design is a broad term it is associated with every field from arts, architecture, sciences, engineering to medicine. The careers most design schools nurture the students for can be broadly put under Industrial Design, Communication Design, Interaction Design, Architecture and Fashion Design.

**4. *In India, where Engineering, Law and Medicine are still the leading professions in terms of the sheer number of students opting for them, do you think the field of Design has something to offer the students that they might be attracted to this profession?***

The field of Design has a bright future especially in our country where there is plenty of opportunity to design. As compared to the past decades, design education has come far away there are more design schools and institutes, more design entrepreneurs, professionals and firms and more industrial absorption of design students. I only see the design graph moving upwards.

**5. *What are the recent developments that have taken place in the field of Design that other institutions in India should adopt?***

Most design institutions in our country are not behind they are nearly the same. In comparison to institutions around the world yes, we need to improve a lot like having more specialized design programme, facilities and faculty members. For this to happen, there should be more design awareness and exposure in our country.

**6. *Tell us something about your childhood. What made you enter the field of Design? You have a political background, with your father being an MLA. How was the environment in your house?***

My political background had nothing to do with my upbringing or education; my father had never spoken about it to us. He kept his profession and family separate; none of the siblings were involved in any such activity. We were given the freedom choose what we wanted to become and be ourselves that made us more responsible. I think that is one of the best things my parents have ever given to me. My school La Chatelaine laid the foundation of my art and design career. I followed my passion and made it to School of Architecture and Planning, Anna University to do Bachelors in Architecture and Master's M. Des and PhD from Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay.

**7. *Students usually always see the serious side of their teachers. Why don't you share with our readers some amusing anecdote during your time at IIT Guwahati?***

There are plenty to share here is one, as usual I went to take one of my elective class in the morning upon reaching the classroom, I noticed the room was decorated. As soon as I entered the room there was a chorus, 'Happy Birthday to you sir' with a delicious chocolate cake and gifts. I knew it was my birthday but not much happened in the morning other than the phone calls. This was a pleasant surprise, we all had a wonderful time.

### **8. *What future plans do you have?***

My future plan is to excel in design education, motivate youngsters to spend their time productively and achieve their goals. Secondly, contribute to the nations growth and development through design.

### **9. *Finally tell us something about your design of the Indian rupee. How did you zero in on that design? We are sure that there is some very interesting story behind that design.***

It was never an overnight design it took me a long time to arrive at the concept. I made several scribbles of the symbols got feedback my friends and faculty members at Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay. After their feedback and suggestions, I chose four and further worked on it and submitted the final designs.

The symbol denotes Devnagiri letterform 'Ra' and partly Roman capital letter 'R' (without the vertical stem). It is derived from the word Rupiah in Hindi and Rupees in English both denote the currency of India. I blended both the scripts to make it a universal symbol. The symbol represents lots of other things too. It symbolic represents our tricolor flag flying high at the top. It also represents the arithmetic sign 'equal to' to denote balanced and stable economy.

### **10. *Do you have something to say to our readers?***

A quote from Mahatma Gandhiji, "*The future depends on what you do today*"

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