



PRécis

Journal of Public Relations Society of India, Chennai (for private circulation only)

June, 2014

Digital is the way forward for PR and Branding - suggests Kiruba Shankar

Addressing the members and students at the Gyan Haksar - M. Gopalakrishnan Memorial Lecture organized every year by the Department of Public Relations, Stella Maris College and the Public Relations Society of India, Chennai Chapter, on 5th March 2014, Kiruba Shankar, CEO of Business Blogging, a Consultancy Firm helping various businesses to grow by effectively leveraging the huge business potential that can be tapped through Social Media networking, said: "If you don't know how to promote yourself online, then you have no business promoting other brands!" - and that "the secret lies in developing good digital PR"! Also an author, columnist and speaker of repute, Kiruba Shankar must have left many among the audience wondering, at the end of his speech, whether they have really mastered the art of digital communication adequately enough to make a mark in their profession!

The mood for the evening was set even as Kiruba Shankar started his



Chief guest Kiruba Shankar welcomed by PRSI Committee Members at the Stella Maris College campus (L to R) Ramya K. Prasad, R.K.Dharan, Kiruba Shankar, V. Ramesh Kumar and T.V. Gopal.

lecture on a humorous note, evoking hearty laughs from the audience, even as he slipped into the interesting theme of his talk for the evening. He mentioned that the PR consultants of Samsung had once come up with a master stroke in handing over the Samsung Note 3 to Ellen Degeneres, hosting an Oscar event, and asking her to take photographs using it. The digital medium was used beautifully and all the actors in the photograph had indirectly endorsed Samsung! Kiruba Shankar also cited some of his personal experiences which reinforced his belief in the power of digital media. "It is crucial for people to start realizing the impact of digital media, especially because it is swift and also because it is a communicative medium". He observed that "a company should focus on even the most minor thing and try to turn it around into something quite major. It's one thing to understand about being quick, but connecting your online and offline media seamlessly is quite another thing."

Kiruba Shankar spoke about three main goals for Public



V. Ramesh Kumar, V. Kalidoss, Ramya K. Prasad and R.K. Dharan watch as the Chief Guest, Kiruba Shankar, lights the lamp.

Relations, in the context of digital media. The first one was "Search" – seeing whether your client can be 'searched or found'. This can be done by collecting information and giving out press releases to the print and digital media. The second goal is about "Being Social". Once a company announces a good news, the PR professionals 'need to amplify that news digitally'. The third goal is "Advocacy" where PR plays a role in 'advocating' or helping to make the brand influential.

Kiruba Shankar believes that the collective knowledge of the audience is always higher than that of the speaker and that's how he threw up an interesting challenge to the audience! He split the audience into several groups, each represented by both the students and the PR professionals and suggested that each group should come up with thoughts on how the recent digital trends can be of help to PR firms and their clients. Each group was given just five minutes and there was a silent observer meticulously



Ramya K. Prasad, HOD, Dept of Public Relations, Stella Maris College, delivering Welcome Address.

jotting down the ideas that were spewing forth! The task was tough, because the working groups had to also provide good examples to show how best their ideas are, or whether they can be easily implemented. The 'working'

completely online. Many, in fact, do so already.

The third group focused on Info Graphics as a platform by which statistical information from Surveys and the Segmentation of Target

Audience can be uploaded as Info Graphics make the presentation of such information easy to digest, instead of going through paragraphs of text. The reason why Info Graphics work brilliantly is because of people's limited attention span. Smaller and crisper information receives more attention from people. The fourth

team spoke about the use of QR Codes on online profiles. Mobile Apps now are what web sites used to be ten years back.

The fifth team spoke about the power of 'story telling' in digital PR. Kiruba Shankar said the idea of 'taking one through a journey behind the scene', in the formation of a brand, does wonders. Another group came up with the idea of opinion polls for elections. Just as brand names hide most aspects, most of the candidates hide behind their party names and it is only recently that the credibility of the individuals has begun to be taken into consideration. If done scientifically and without bias such steps may do a lot of good.



Kiruba Shankar receives a sapling from R.K. Dharan as Ramya K. Prasad looks on.

groups cranked up their brains and indeed came up with some fascinating thoughts!

The thought brought out by the first team was about Samsung's excellent online advertising on its screen savers to show how their phones conserved battery. Kiruba Shankar added by saying that initially the company was propagating the brand and the audience were bombarded with advertisements from all the different media. He noted that people are generally 'sick and tired of such kind of advertising'. Great brands succeed when they start promoting the category. The second group came up with an idea on how Customer Relations can be done

Kiruba Shankar observed that when some persons have their own 'branded email', people look at them differently, as it infuses professionalism. "If you don't know how to promote yourself online then you have no business promoting others' brands" said Kiruba Shankar - and the secret lies in developing a good digital PR. It is only when people start 'dirtying their hands' and start trying out things on their own - like starting a blog, joining Pinterest, doing a podcast and such - it will help them a great deal to become good PR practitioners in a digital world.

During the course of a very engaging question and answer session, when asked about the strengths and weaknesses of our nation, Kiruba Shankar explained, in the context of India's efforts at digital development, how one and half years ago BJP had hired two expert digital practitioners, gave them sufficient help with funding and asked them to build the BJP's brand online. He said that this example can be taken for India at large. "Does India have a Cyber Cell to take good care of its brand image online? Sadly no!" he reflected. But he also said that youngsters are very smart and they will take the best out of what the medium can offer and then will also move on to the next big thing.

Yes, may be there's a solid message in it for Young India! The change is already happening, and rapidly too! It wouldn't be too long before our PR fraternity also spruces up its digital



Veteran and P.R. Guru R.K. Baratan reminisces about the initiatives of M. Gopalakrishnan and Gyan Haksar and how they nurtured the roots of PR education in those early days.

talents to far higher levels and preens up the profession with the dazzle of the digital age! Thanks for the alert, Kiruba Shankar!

National PR Day: Dual Events

◆ V.S. Ramana presents L&T's Panchangam Calendar ◆ S. Viswanathan speaks on Politics, Elections and Communications

PRSI Chennai Chapter had a two-in-one programme to celebrate the National PR Day with two key speakers. V.S. Ramana, Past Chairman, PRSI Chennai and S. Viswanathan, eminent Journalist and Publisher of Industrial Economist. Daniel T. Dass, Past Chairman, Chennai Chapter set the mood for the evening presenting the PR Code of Ethics.

Speaking about the significance of the evening, Dr. Sundari Krishnamurthy said her mind went back in time to 1975, when Mr. Gyan Haksar used to brief the fresh batch of students in Stella Maris on the Code of Ethics from Athens. Ethics are integrated within the total educational process. She was also reminded of Mr. Sam Black, Public Relations Guru from U.K., who visited Stella Maris College and the ITC Group which used to help in conducting programmes in the then newly opened Chola Hotel. He had begun his speech saying he hated Public Relations being referred to in its abbreviated manner as PR, because he thought that PR also connotes and denotes Press Relations! So he would opt to say



Past Chairman, PRSI Chennai, Daniel T. Dass presents the PR Code of Ethics as Members renew their pledge.



V.S. Ramana's presentation on L&T's very special Panchangam Calendar.

'Public Relations', with his trade mark accent. He had said Public Relations is about 99% doing and 1% talking. Then Sundari introduced both the speakers in her inimitable style, lacing it all with her keen observations.

Ramana spoke about the uniqueness of the Panchangam Calendar that L&T brings out every year. The calendar has earned huge admiration for the way the Indian mythology was interestingly woven into brand building. It was also about shaping the perception in the minds of the public about what L&T was all about. Recently a calendar was brought out with sports as the theme appropriately built in with the same approach using episodes from Indian mythology

providing a linkage. That calendar was released by the famous cricketer from Chennai, Mr. Krishnamachari Srikkanth.

Ramana said PR had a role in preserving Indian values, culture and traditions. There is

no country which does not have its own mythology or folklore or some such thing which reflects its ancient culture. Indian mythology is replete with stories that show its culture. Many big organizations, like L&T, have their own beliefs, ethos, values and traditions.

He referred to a remark of Mr. Kishore Biyani of the Future Group in a note about how Dr. Devdutt Pattanaik was appointed as their Chief Belief Officer. How many companies have a person with such a designation as CBO? This shows that India is capable of 'connecting its management with mythology and making it relevant'. The art and science of management need not necessarily be equated with the West. Various burger and pizza kings came to India. India is unique indeed and it has a different equation.

"It is Lord Krishna, not Mr. Philip Kotler, who is the 'management guru' who guides the Indian Management", said Ramana and then he shared with us some relevant quotes he had picked up. One by Mr. Mritunjay Athreya said Indian management is indigenous with its Vedic management style shaped by the Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas. The current Chief Belief Officer of the Future Group, Mr. Kishore Biyani, says mythology does shape the management of organisations. Professor

Mr. J.N. Thakker connects the two words – Mythology and Management beautifully, and merges it into one as “Mytho-Ment” - further linking it to nine different elements. He relates how the management format is segmented: the wise people, the administrators, the businessmen and the servants and so on. This system was followed then and there are equivalent functions now.

Planning strategies and policies are very much detailed in the Vidhur Neethi: *Sama, Dana, Bheda and Danda*. It is also about the four aspects like planning, staffing, controlling and communicating. The Vidhur in Mahabharat is typically what communication professionals need to be - being unbiased - and communicating the right things.

L&T started this value based Panchangam Calendar 13 years back. Not many companies can take on such a challenging task as it needs certain calibre and capability to pick on - and stay with it. What is not, cannot be projected. Lucky that an organization as large as L&T could pick up a concept like this and say we will stay with this, and stay with it this far for 13 years! It is in a way a projection of the company's base in Chennai, also known as the cultural capital. It cannot be synonymous with the rest of the organizations and cannot be linked with a Bombay headquartered format.

The reason why L&T has kept it going for 13 years is that the Indian cultural values and ethos match with the corporate philosophy. To find a new theme every year is not easy. But the support from the business associates has been a major strength. L&T has this typically deep rooted culture and that is why a linkage with this could be tapped. It is because of the company's value systems and customer orientation that the customers have stayed with the company for 35 years. L&T adopts an international approach to doing business but is still typically Indian. Even at the global level with a multinational outlook the company is still connected with the Indian ethos and believes in fine values.

L&T also has a January-December calendar apart from the Panchangam Calendar. It was an extra expense for the company, but this kind of calendar was more remembered by everyone who received it. The first year the theme was purely on building institutions and this was dedicated to the

Satya Sai Trust. The company used to give contributions to this Trust. It had become a collector's issue.

Every year L&T produces two calendars with a huge team working on them. In the second year the theme was on 'building temples of faith' and the calendar took one through the various projects across various religions and faith. If a sheet was on the 'Tirupati Project' it had various other Projects in Tirupathi on the page. Special sets of images were selected that were earlier not available for public viewing. This calendar was a combination of all the temples and religious places. L&T also took on projects that were State-related - what could be called as ‘State Deities’!

There were many more other such projects, in Gujarat (featuring Dwarakanath Temple); Uttar Pradesh; Andhra (Puttaparthi); Mumbai-Pune Express Way; Orissa; West Bengal; Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. The corresponding portraits included Ma Annapoorani, Durga, and other such images which connected with the place. For the next year the theme was on devotion and faith.

Then the team changed the 26 sheeter calendar into a 12+5 one and now the concept was about Mother India. It featured the works done by the late Mr. Rajam. There were a lot of contextual linkages. “Masters of the Universe” – the Navagrahas which have their own specialities. Surya - symbolising fire. On matters like these, there was a lot of research to be done even in incorporating the characteristics of the navagrahas. Moon and water went well when illustrating a water project. Indriyan, Vaayu and Varunan were all among the subjects to cover the 12 months.

Next L&T picked up ‘Dasavatharam’ which also revolved around the principle: evolve, reinvent and reincarnate. If an organization stagnates, it is going to die. What was relevant for yesterday's markets may not be relevant today. Vishnu’s ‘dasavatharams’ were the major highlights and a big hit! Next in L&T's focus was music. The inspiration came from a musician who had the 12 chakras or the melakarthas. That all

the Raagas came in 72 formats, neatly segmented into 12 chakras came in handy and helped in putting a nice format with music as the theme. So L&T went to work with the theme - 12 chakras of music, mind, body and soul. L&T's themes for calendars were so widespread that the team working on those couldn't put them all together!

One can just make a reference in passing - Yogasana as a science for betterment to elevate oneself. Organization's growth also is nothing but elevating its energies to higher levels. Panchalingas. The 12 Cosmic Suns. Indian mythological creatures. These were myths, but L&T picked up on quite a lot of such interesting myths and established ‘a connection’ with the organization's identity and its operations and performance.

L&T could come up with such exquisite creations with the help of talented artists – like Mr. Maniam Selvan and Ms. Jyothi (who were present and honoured on the special occasion). L&T picked on such themes because there was “no other civilization as India's that connects as strongly”. They had also released one with an appropriate theme in the year of Olympics when various child-illustrators helped with mythological visuals of various Gods playing some game or the other.

With so much to say about the massive effort that goes into these very special L&T Panchangam Calendars, even Ramana perhaps ran out of breath and time! But thanks, Sir, you and your team deserve all the kudos for what is really an exceptional effort that takes L&T's PR to a very high level. It is brand building at its cultural best, and so home brewed and therefore so unique! Thank you, our PR needs such exceptional initiatives!



Maniam Selvan receiving a sapling from Chief Guest S. Viswanathan as V.S. Ramana applauds.

Chief Guest Mr. S. Viswanathan

Unwinding the history of Politics, Elections and Communications through 62 years!

S. Viswanathan, who was the Chief Guest on the occasion of National PR Meet, said he had 'special feelings and nostalgia, being there with the PR professionals, as he had been one of the earliest members of PRSI, and had worked closely with Baratan and others. He recalled how they had travelled together to Trichy to 'carry the message of PRSI' about 40 to 50 years ago. He was also associated with other professional bodies like the Advertising Club, Printers Association and the Press Club but PRSI was 'particularly special' because he was about to plunge into publishing business and he realized that the one major tool that was essential for him was PR.

Launched in March, 1968 his publication Industrial Economist has earned a niche for itself. The publishers introduced Awards for Corporates on various parameters and also extended their initiatives to other regions.

Sharing his experiences and observations, Viswanathan said he had been writing on agriculture for quite some time and had visited UP, Bihar and other states and also the Southern region of California and Illinois. He was disappointed that 'the best of the brains' had moved to services and industries but not agriculture. So he set up a Foundation for Agriculture. TATAs, Mahindras and others were soon associated with it and the initiative proved to be useful. There is a constant interaction with University of Wisconsin and NUS.

Talking about the impact of Communications on the Elections, Viswanathan said starting with the elections in 1952, for the first span of 15 years the process was very simple. Communication was simple because newspapers were not many and literacy rate was just about 18%. Radio was also not very prominent. Addressing the people or speaking to them in street corners also did not offer many possibilities. Moving further another five years, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and



S. Viswanathan shares his rich observations with PRSI members.

others would address meetings in the Marina Beach. Communication was not a great issue for Congress, because they were a majority.

In 1962, a very interesting event took place. Viswanathan was to be a polling officer in Thiruvannamiyur. Along with five others, he was taught about how to handle the crowd. He had to sign and load all the ballot boxes on a truck to Saidapet. This was the time showing the beginning of a big change in communication. DMK made excellent use of the medium of Cinema. They aligned with Rajaji and formed what was known as the Tamil Nadu Formula. They tried dividing the seats among the parties opposed to Congress. There were several issues like shortage of rice and scarcity of water in the mid-1960s. There was also a strong anti-Hindi agitation. With all such problems and with the powerful speeches from Rajaji, DMK defeated the Congress Party.

Moving on to the 1970's - literacy rate has been improving. Voter turnout also improved to about 55%. The major mode of communication during the 70s-80s was through newspapers. Mr. Adityan had mastered the art of news presentation in a simple, elegant language. Viswanathan described how Kalaignar Karunanidhi struck hard bargains on seats for Assembly Elections in Tamilnadu and Pondicherry, depriving Congress of any seat much to the dismay of Indira Gandhi.

Though for the first time in history, Congress found no representation in the Assembly, Indira Gandhi took her revenge in 1977 when MGR got elected, and later in the 1980 general polls. Later, Congress and AIADMK under MGR worked together. DMK, as is known, could not get back until the demise of MGR. Viswanathan stressed on the fact that all through this phase, apart from newspapers, messages were mainly communicated through the powerful medium of films and it was very useful because the films reached the masses in large numbers.

Around the year 1982, the literacy rates had improved, the reach of newspapers expanded, television made its debut after the Asian Games, and under a liberal regime, over the next ten years, TV and Telecom sectors expanded at a good pace. For the politicians, it became a bit easier to reach out to the masses. The assassination of Indira Gandhi led to Rajiv Gandhi coming to power. He lost his base due to Bofors related issues and after his assassination in 1991, Narasimha Rao came to power and then the 'liberalization wave' started.

The 1990s saw a massive change with the communication process reaching people on a huge scale. Street corner meetings, posters and such media lost sheen and TV was well established. NDTV in particular had a great reach. It did have what we see today as a cacophony of discussion but was more

decent. Still the problem was that there were very few national leaders who had a command over the country. Vajpayee was one exception. In other parties there was a dearth of speakers who could command attention all over.

Coalition also came into being with the regional parties focusing more on local issues. The earlier advantage of nationally recognizable leaders was lost. For example, Janatha Party Government



Politics evolved in south with film as the medium of communication : Reviving some memories !

had a wonderful set of people in 1977. Morarji Desai, Jagjeevan Ram, Vajpayee, George Fernandes and L.K. Advani - so many of them were able to make presentations and were recognized all over the country. Regional newspapers also had by now become the major mode to reach people. That is how the English newspapers lasted too.

Through 1990's the number of constituencies increased to 521. There was an explosion in the number of candidates too, with 8668 in the fray. Electorate size also increased to 51 Crores. Powerful orators like Vaiko and Vajpayee could sway the masses. Literacy rates had further improved which touched 67% by 2004. Voter turnout also had increased gradually to about 58%.

The number of newspapers and circulation also expanded. Thanks to Times of India and a few Hindi newspapers, there was an explosion in the reach of these newspapers.

We are only familiar with what is happening now. We have the longest period of voting record this time from 7th April to 12th May handling about 83 crores of voters. In the last election

there has been an increase of ten crore voters – a staggering 81 crore Indians were eligible to vote. Political parties worked hard to get youngsters registered. This election made a tremendous effort in this direction. All political parties must be given credit for this and especially BJP because they started their campaign earlier. Greater credit goes to the Election Commission. They have been campaigning hard for months, checking if people had their names on the voters' list, they gave forms to enlist voters. It was a marvellous job by them to ensure the eligible voters voted, but in spite of all this effort, including the strong communication efforts, the turnout in Mumbai was actually poor. Apathy of middle class, and the urban middle class is a matter of concern.

The Social Network, a new phenomenon in communication media, has helped in reaching the new generation, which has been apathetic to elections in the past. Communication's greatest success is the ability to seek out new men and women. AAP made use of this and was able to gather lakhs and lakhs of people. Success of Arvind Kejriwal in winning a large number of seats in Delhi was due to excellent communication. Narendra Modi, started campaigning in September. This was nothing new because back in 1970, Pramod Mahajan and Arun Jaitley and other leaders made successful campaigns through IT. If one could recall, the Hindi belt came under BJP hold because of their communication skills. We can also say that TV has done a good service.

Narendra Modi made the best of social media. It has been a great improvement. Look at the electronic voting machines. See the efficiency of the machine - the percentage of voting is known, how many people voted is known and by the evening news and results can be made known in a few hours. Even USA and many European countries are not able to do so. Many mature democracies are not

able to do so.

Viswanathan went on to say: "As PR professionals, what we can do to correct some of the problems which persist? One – how to minimize the influence of money power. You and I cannot contest elections. Many cannot put in even the deposit money. But often in some constituencies, money is reported to be freely distributed. Giving, or promising freebies also has become a method to get votes. How can the election commission stop it?"

Secondly, we have the problem of criminals in politics. It takes even 20 years for the cases to come up or be decided. It is a concern that criminal elements are there in every party. How could this be controlled? As PR professionals, we should raise our concerns in some forum.

I would like to conclude by saying that 2014 has been very exciting in all our lives. Elections are followed on a different basis. This election has been something very different. Also with multiple participants from Tamil Nadu, it was not easy to predict".

Yes, Viswanathan, the whole world was watching with amazement how the country and its Election Commission could pull off such a massive election spread over such a vast area and over such a long period. And yes, the next one would involve even more of the state-of-art communication technologies. Maybe the electorate would vote with a mobile in his hand! The politicians who are contesting may not even know how to throw some money to catch a vote! More excitement awaits?



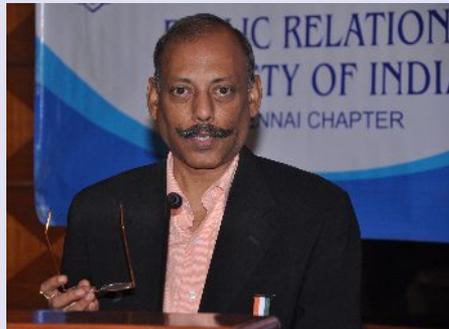
Ms. Jyothi, artist, who also worked with the Panchangam Calendar, receives a sapling from Chief Guest S. Viswanathan. Also seen in the picture is V.S. Ramana.

Communication through Art can help bring in changes, says Rahool Saksena

Introducing Rahool Saksena, who addressed the PRSI Chennai Chapter members at its regular meeting held on 15th May 2014, Dr. K. Sundari, Vice Chairperson raised our anticipation on what he is going to talk about with such an unusual topic. She said Rahool Saksena “transforms every day mediums and material into unexpected art forms” and that this quest for transformation creates a rock solid foundation for multiple possibilities and that he could be seen as one who “takes principle of change to the next level and sparks the change”. She said it is his calling to engage and inspire. As the speaker began his presentation, it was quite evident that here was someone who was giving art a whole new dimension.

Saksena started his talk by raising a question: “Can anyone give me an idea of what art of change is about?” and after the members made a point or two, he elaborated on his view that the interesting question can be viewed in two parts. The first one is to bring in change and to bring out art - that is a process and discovery. The second part is to bring in change through art. His presentation dwelt on this theme and deftly he explained how to send out appropriate messages and communications through the route of art, which unfolded through a series of slides showing interesting visuals and messages to bring out one or the other relevant themes of change. He said everyone is creative and that it is a question of finding one's own spark and what it is that one is best at.

He had a series of interesting questions for the audience bordering on riddles! “How would you put a giraffe in a fridge?” the answer for which he provides even as we blink: “Open the fridge and put the giraffe in”! That simple? The next one: “How would you put an elephant in a fridge?” and we wonder. Wow! That's a mammoth task! He has a simple answer for that too – “Take the giraffe out, and put the elephant in”! He had a few more questions in the genre. But then, perhaps



As Rahool Saksena drives home a point during his presentation on how Art can be used for Change.. and to Communicate.

to console most of us, he said, according to Anderson Consulting Worldwide, 90% of managers who undertook test with these kind of questions had failed! But in contrast, many children - under six years of age, answered some questions correctly, which proved that top managers are no different from a 4-year old! He said this also proved how 'conditioned' we tend to be. Ahem! Let's move on!

Saksena says art of change is all about 'passion and purpose' and not about profession. As far back as in 1978, he was offered a membership at Indian Bonsai Society and he was proud that he was the youngest to be offered this membership. His presentation took us through various slides showing his creative and unconventional use of different materials and the different things that could be made from an object, by simply reinterpreting objects differently and giving them a new lease of life. It is just a matter of looking at any material and employing it for a purpose, but from a different perspective.

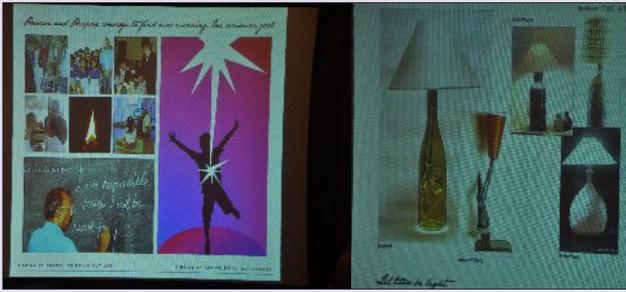
He was once approached by *Indian Terrain* and was asked to do something interesting to showcase their new product range. His work was designed in such a way that the fabric itself is highlighted through shades. An important innovation was for Radio Mirchi, where he put real treated chillies into a bottle and it was a gifted on Diwali for Radio Mirchi. Here, unlike other corporate gifts, to think

differently and create something to show what Radio Mirchi was, was the challenge. He had even presented a personal gift made from nuts, bolts, coins and spoons to Mr. C. K. Ranganathan, an avid bird-lover and the gift meant a lot to him.

Murugappa Group commissioned him to design something unique to be presented to the President of Hungary and the Prime Minister of Mauritius. He designed a picture of a peacock embedded with the seven businesses of Murugappa Group – with a fusion of various metals and other mediums such as gold, copper, silver, brass, stone, mirror and lacquer.

He further listed several such unique, impressive works done by him. There was one with fiberglass pieces that he made for a company to signify lasting relationships and he produced one with birds with pieces of fiberglass to symbolize lasting relationship. There was another with fiberglass - that of a mother kangaroo with its young one pouched in its belly symbolizing shelter - that was used by the company as gift for their stockholders and well-wishers. *Air-Asia* has desired something unique to be put up on their corporate office wall to communicate what *Air-Asia* stands for. Yet to be executed, he plans to communicate a message just by using rice, chilly and hot spices which represent Asia, in a simple manner.

Saksena said he had been in communication business for a long time and this had its own limitations, not letting him break free. So he felt it was necessary for him to enter some completely uncharted territory with no mentors, no guidelines and no benchmarks. It has been quite a journey which offered interesting challenges. A company of Birla Group asked him to design something that would stand for trust, which was proposed to be presented to the CEO of Citi Bank. He came up with an idea of creating something based on Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. He designed a fused glass of pink lotus representing Brahma,



Passion and Purpose converge to find new meaning. One common goal
- Rahoool Saksena.

Sudarshan Chakra representing Vishnu and Trishool representing Mahesh and each had a story on its own! He had designed a Dollar Note with the life story of Vinoth Dham (father of Pentium) which was well received.

His creations have also ventured into the 'dark markets' of Sri Lanka where he designed a table for a night club in Colombo. The table was designed with Carlsberg beer bottles embedded on the table with a glass placed over it. He had made a glass – with its fused mosaic representing the universe for an expo freight company – aptly signifying its business beyond borders. He had also conducted workshops such as the one on branding for GO IP logo, blending the logo into a painting, signifying change - and thus engaging people.

He shared his thoughts on how 'art of change' can be taken further. He cited his own experience in Dakshina-Chitra when he was commissioned to interact with a group of master craftsmen from Kerala and to inspire them to revive the art form to bring the required change. He had to communicate with them through art because of the language barrier. Yet he could explain to them the power of eco-friendly and handcrafted objects. He was challenged now and then by the craftsmen but by the time workshop had ended, he was able to show them how large organizations welcomed, for gifting, items made of such materials. He has also handcrafted palm leaf etchings (Patta Chithra) of DakshinaChitra architecture as a souvenir for the tourists.

He conducted a workshop where more than 1000 children participated. His idea here was to involve the whole community of children across the world, with one set making something

and another adding on to it and so on. It culminated in a 'display of lights' created by children, which went across to various parts of the world. This lamp was called as 'Roop Ki Rani' or 'The Kidney Moon' which was auctioned in Kuala Lumpur and the money

thus collected was used for kidney patients. He proudly says that involving children "creates a collective feeling of bonding, sharing and evolving".

Another such humbling experience was when his creation for The Banyan Foundation was appreciated. It is a real self-sustaining eco-system, which has an actual garden growing inside the bottle. It is symbolic of what banyan stands for - 'shelter and harmony'. It was also auctioned a few years back and the money received was used for the inmates of the Banyan foundation. He also recalled his experience with

It is no wonder that Rahoool Saksena's exquisite creations are seen in many places. His work has been noticed and widely acclaimed in the art world and finds frequent mention in the media. We hear his work at Rashtrapathi Bhavan too has been commended for its excellence.

Bella Ciao, a restaurant in Chennai, where he voluntarily suggested an idea of erecting a Christmas tree within the premises. He called it 'The Giving Tree' constructed out of waste materials such as Coca Cola bottle caps, broken pet bottles and other left over materials from the restaurant. He was overwhelmed when orphans from Indian Council of Children's Welfare came to the restaurant just to get a glimpse of his Christmas tree. These children who had never even seen a pizza in their life left the premises blessed with gifts and donations.

Later, he was invited by another firm to make a similar tree for them, which he named 'The Tree of joy'. It provided an opportunity for the under privileged children to be involved in the making of the Tree, with the participation of expats as well. It helped the

children to interact with others from privileged sections of our society, giving them a feeling of inclusion. The proceeds from the tree go to help these children.

He recalled his experience of working for *Action Aid* India. He was requested by the Chief of the organization to create something sensational for the carnival in Goa. He came up with the idea of a gigantic wax candle, which he made in collaboration with orphan kids from Asha Deep Foundation. The candle that was 11 feet tall was lit in a beach in Goa on the eve of carnival. He explains it as a "goose pimple moment". The candle was wowed by the crowd, who were ready to contribute for the cause the Foundation stood for.

Saksena's exquisite pieces have a deep meaning and are almost always for a cause and a purpose. He stresses on the importance of 'touch and feel' and how children are the best medium of expression. All his experience with people has led him to look at three aspects. The first is that children find a clear purpose and spark at an early age. Secondly, they believed in what they saw and what others could not and lastly they had the guts and persistence to follow their dreams.

Saksena concluded his talk outlining his current project for the army soldiers in Kashmir. He has come up with an idea of constructing a permanent installation called 'Spirit of Strife' which is about 'the conquest of human spirit' that would inspire even the bravest of brave men who lead a tough life in army fighting the enemies, weather and solitude. He proudly says this will be the first citizen-collective initiative of India for the army, navy and air force. He would like public support and contributions in any form for his current initiative.

Saksena's presentation perhaps marks the first time a topic had been covered by a speaker almost entirely with the use of visuals, highlighting the importance of visuals in communication. The way he applied art to fruitful purposes to bring about a given change through unconventional creative ideas was well appreciated by the audience. May be PR can pick up a few useful tips from Saksena's calling!