

**Understanding Design**  
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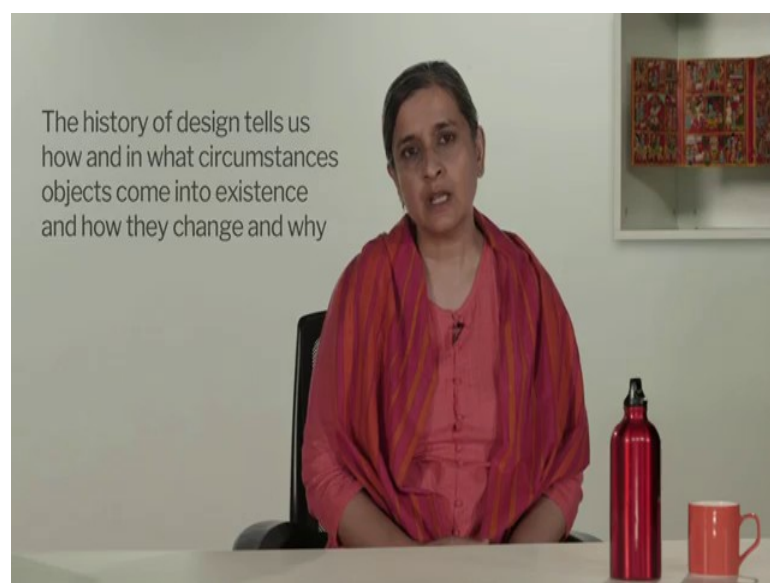
**Module – 01**  
**Start of Section 4**  
**Lecture – 04**  
**The evolution of design**

These video links are all available on the course platform. So, you can watch them again whenever you like. So, at the core of it, what our story teller and all those design experts in the video were saying is, that design is more than surface treatment.

And it goes well beyond mere “prettification”. It is certainly not about some “making things look nice”, but a process that is present from the very inception of the project. As an activity, design is as old as humanity itself. But as a profession it is much more recent. To learn about its evolution, let us look at the timeline of design.

Thank you for inviting me over Nina. I am a historian of design and I teach at the school of design in Ambedkar University Delhi. The history of design is a bit like the story of the king who found his feet getting dirty and the old women who made leather slippers for him.

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History tells us how and in what circumstances objects come into existence and how they change and why. Let us see how this happens with one familiar object, say the orange squeezer.

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Perhaps the earliest example would have been this wooden device, which was handmade.

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With the introduction of new materials and technology we have this version in steel. Here, the design takes care of straining the seeds and collecting the juice.

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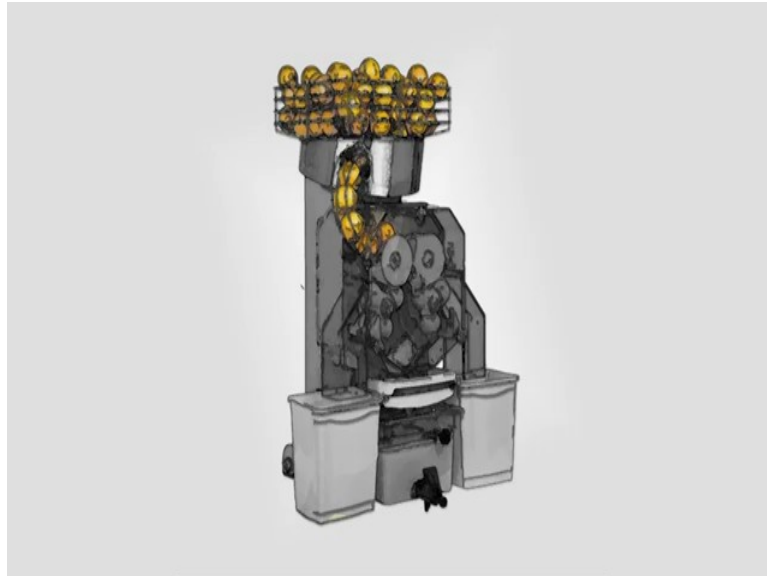
When more juice is needed and the number of oranges many, then this device reduces the effort.

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Making it easier and more efficient, the electric squeezer eliminates human labour all together.

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And a device like this one has been designed for industrial production of large quantities of juice. Designers can also be playful.

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For example here is this clown juicer for children to learn to make juice by themselves. Design can also be provocative.

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Here we have juicer by the French designer Philippe Starcke who says his juicer is for starting conversations and not for making juice at all.

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Sometimes the juicer is done away with altogether because people have no time and want readymade juice.

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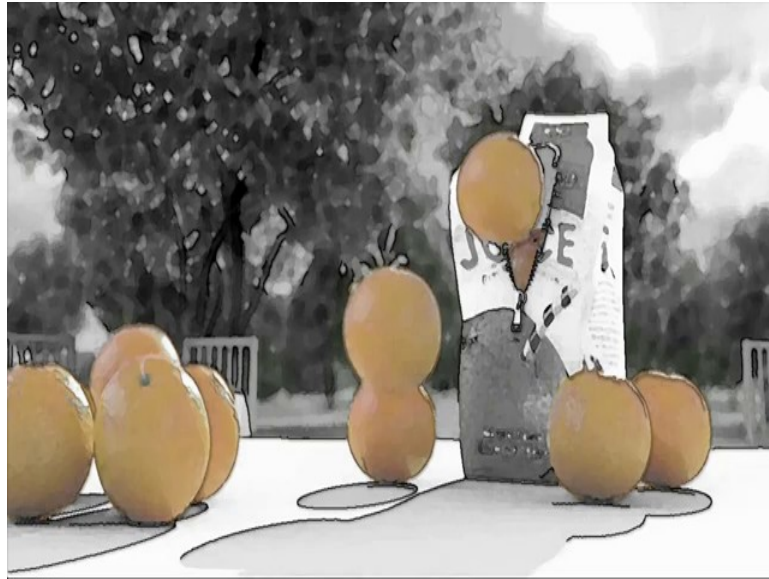


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Or may be technology steps in and dehydrates the juice into a powder for more convenience and longer shelf life.

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Some designer then use their skills to package such juice. Others may be hired to advertise them and to promote them as a health foods for happy families following a modern life style. So this is how the everyday orange squeezer has changed, with new material and technologies. And designers from many specialisations play a role in creating this product and the lifestyles surrounding it.

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All of us become familiar with these products, we buy them, use them, and in the process build cultures around design. In this way design shapes culture and is also shaped by it. So far, we have been speaking about history as an account of how things change.

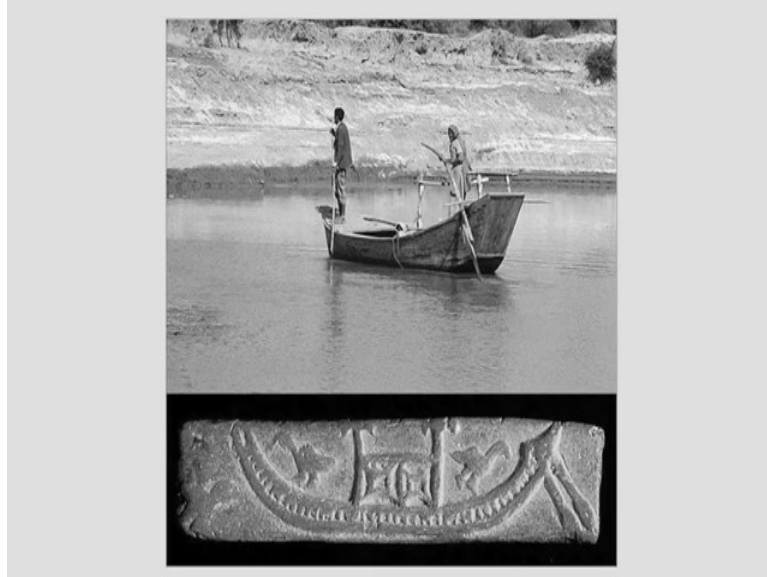
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However, an interesting aspect of design in our subcontinent is that it is not always about how things change, but also about how they remain the same, sometimes for thousands of years.

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Look at this boat on the Indus River today. Archaeologists have found a seal from around 4500 years ago, depicting a boat very much like this one, on the very same river.

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The motifs on this pot, being painted by a woman in Kachh resemble pot shards from the Indus Valley excavations.

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This dosa grinder, which almost every household in South India had till recently, corresponds to what archaeologists has found in house sites in Harappan settlements.

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Clearly there are deep continuities, when we look at such objects we can think of history as a dialogue between the past and the present.

And remember that the women who designed the slippers for the king? She was creating the future as well. So the act of designing in the present, is both about having a dialogue with the past- even as we initiate a dialogue with the future.