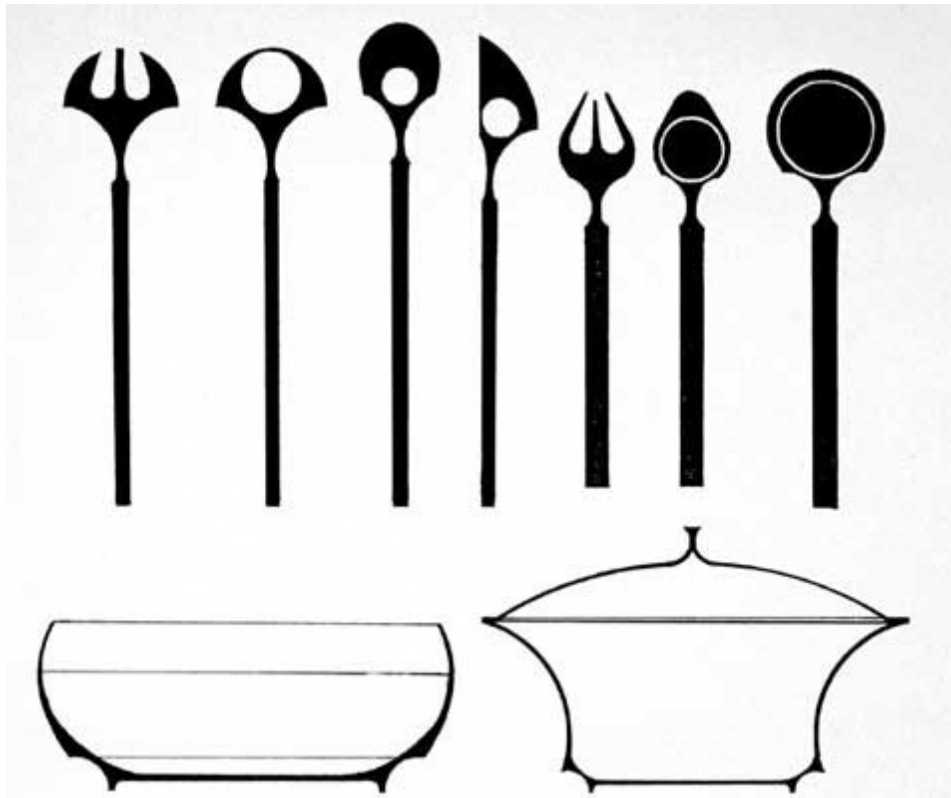


## Memory Lane 6

*NID days*

Inimitable Design Maverick  
Padmashree Dashrath Patel



- pl. see : • [Dashrath Patel Profile, Interview and Artworks"](#)  
• [Dashrath Patel Museum, website](#)  
• [Works by Dashrath Patel](#)

“Rao, Can you read that telegram on the table and tell me what it says, I am busy”, Dashrath Patel was doing something no doubt. But I was surprised how a telegram became unimportant. Much later I came to know that Dashrath, indeed had a problem of reading in English. Once he stormed into Kumar’s Cabin, when I and Athavankar were sitting with him asking, “Kumar, which is to do with villages 'Urban' or 'Rural' ?” *He had child like freedom and never cared what others would think of him.* He did what he felt. A highly right brain person, he

was always full of life and energy. First time in my life I realized that it is possible to reach significant heights and positions in our Society in spite of not having literary talent. He was one of the four directors of NID at that time.

We knew him as a photographer and ceramic designer. He was our informal 'guru'. He was like a friend. He would provoke us with questions. He had a great sense of 'form'. We came to know from Dr. Panubhai Bhatt that he was sent to France as he was good at painting but not doing well with formal studies. Panubhai used to say he is a good painter. Dashrath Patel, first (and only till now?) Padmashree designer, went into all fields of design with comfort. Ceramic Design, Photography, Graphic Design and Exhibition design. He got a chance to learn from top people from each field. He picked up photography from world famous photographer. [Henri Cartier-Bresson](#). He designed tension structures for an exhibition by working with Frei Otto ([www.freiotto.com/](http://www.freiotto.com/)) the architect 'guru' of tension structures and director of 'IL' (Institute of Light Weight Structures) at Stuttgart.

Dashrath was a very unusual person. You rarely come across such people. He was single. But, it was no secret that beautiful celebrity dancer 'Chandralekha' who used to come to NID, all the way from Chennai to meet him, had a close relationship with him. There were jokes about him on his original ways of thinking. Once he visited Czechoslovakia, brought all round projection system. "I am going to project 365degrees" he started telling everybody. Somebody asked him, 'But Dashrath Bhai' there are only 360 degrees in a circle, how can you have 365degrees?. He said, "what do you mean? There are 365 days in a year so also the degrees". When I reflect on this: both 365 days in a year or 360° in circle have only arbitrary origins. A person from other planet can ask why not 365° in a circle?"

Above everything Dashrath had guts to think big. (This is what I learnt from him) He demanded 'Red square' from Russia for 'Indian exhibition'. The secretaries in the Ministry were worried. They felt the request will be rejected. But to their surprise Soviet Union accepted his proposal.

He left NID in frustration. But he became an activist in Chennai along with Chandralekha for a social cause! When he got invited by Smithsonian Institute in Washington, in his interview to Media, he said, 'USA as a developed country has little Future as it has already developed, whereas India has a better future as it is

still developing! One can see a prophecy in that remark. But Dashrath had guts to say such things in Public!

His last exhibition in Mumbai, with his life work was indeed a great event. He personally called me, for which I was grateful! His wisdom came through in his later years. When he was invited to IDC to inaugurate a degree show he said, "we as designers are always thinking of our own achievements! We should think of what we have done for poor man in our country!"

Dashrath is no more! His memories fill my heart with a feeling of loss!"

Do see and hear him on the you tube.(thanks to people who have put it up)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W\\_Qnrju157o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_Qnrju157o)

\*\*\*