



NANO: The people's Car – A Design Story from India

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NANO

The People's Car - A Design Story from India

by

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- It is becoming increasingly evident that cars have become the leading examples of 'emotional design.'
- They are 'objects of desire' and their utility value is second to the pride in owning them and their symbolic value.



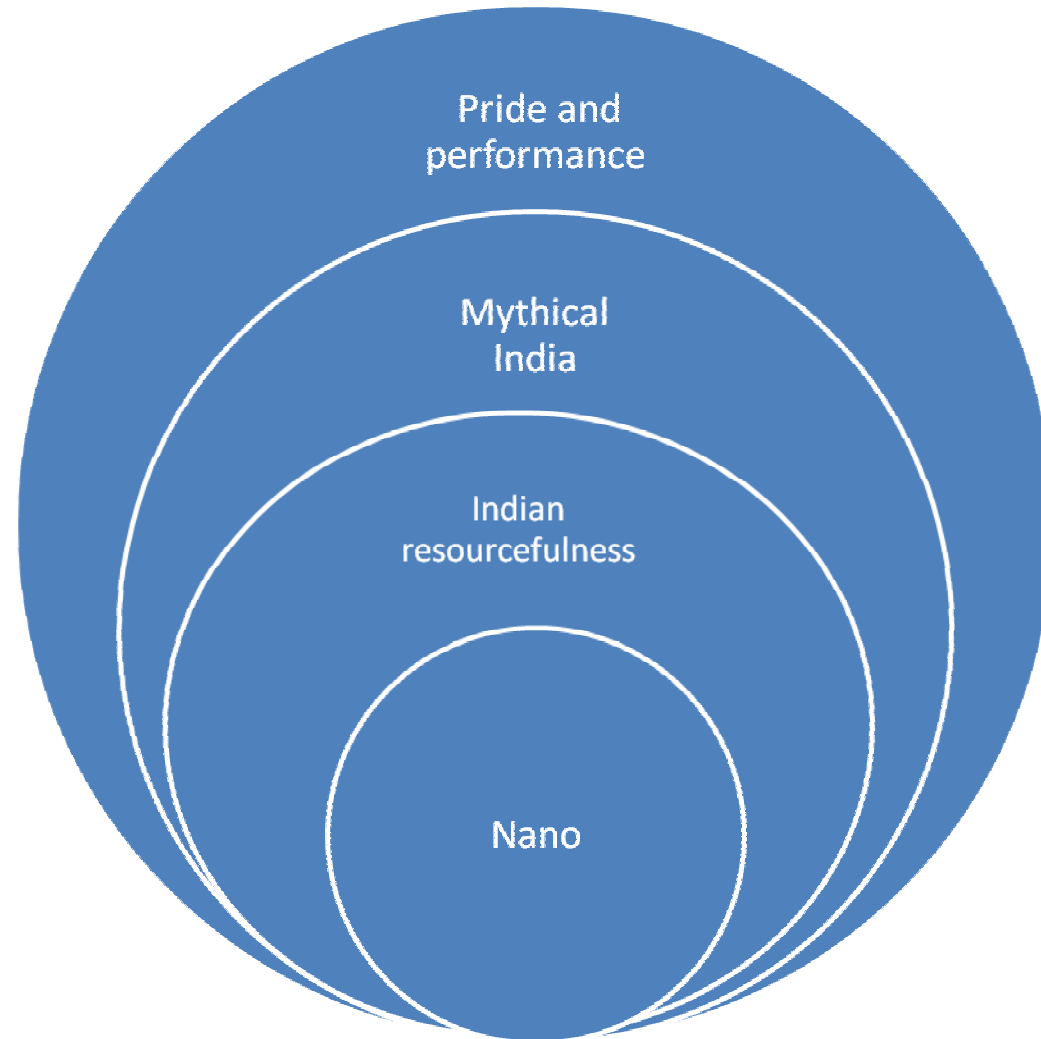
- This presentation will explore the automobile design in India in relation to the emotional quotient of the average Indian.
- The aim being, to understand, how design 'sells' to the average Indian.
- What are the implications, images, and the reference points that could possibly influence the acceptability of a car design in India.
- This presentation will take the Tata Nano as a case in point.



- The presentation is influenced by semiotic approach to design.
- The presentation will highlight the significance of semiotic concepts in understanding the value of a design in a given socio-cultural context.



The Nano playing field



Discourses of New India

- Elevated life planes
- Upward mobility, increase in aspiration
- Changing landscape of financial offers
- A new Indian pride
- A global smartness/bold/adventurous zeal
- Equal opportunity
- Mythical India: unshakeable residue

Indian Pride

The wheel of dharma
is the ~~unstoppable~~
energy of life

A man's karma is to
forever turn the
wheel of life
towards a better future for all



Level-playing India



Nano: stirring the social, political, emotional, economic fabric!

- What is the Nano all about?
- Is it about the cheapest car in the world?
- Is it about the most cost-effective design for a car ever?
- Is it about its size, its fuel efficiency, its technological engineering?
- Is it about the Tata Motors? Is it about India?

Essential India in the small car

- A reflection and a refraction of modern India's ability to **exist and manage the chaos**
- **Youthful**
- Car **as a child** – you can ‘own’ a child’
- Can be maneuvered and driven into the **cultural template** – not formidable
- **Fulfilling aspirations/dreams** – owning a car, growth in social status, marital eligibility....

The **Design Challenge**: comfort of the old with the style of the new



Overall structure
of the Maruti Zen,
but the cost of
Maruti 800

The roomy
interiors of
the
Ambassador

Designing Nano: conduit to exhilaration

- Cost-effective
- Quality control
- Sophisticated and economical
- Performance with low-cost car-parts, and small-size body
- Design with a 360 degree view – economy, aesthetics, comfort
- Inclusive, warm, welcoming – product appeal



Indian Resourcefulness

Resourcefulness: an entrenched Indian value it is a **transformative** ability that helps to maintain an unfazed personality



Naivety and hope mark the Indian world view very strongly – Sudhir kakar

The **syntax** and the **paradigms** of Indian cars

Stately, officious,
tough



From the 20th cen,
Morris Oxford era to
-
Luxury cars and
SUV's

Practical, ease,
economical



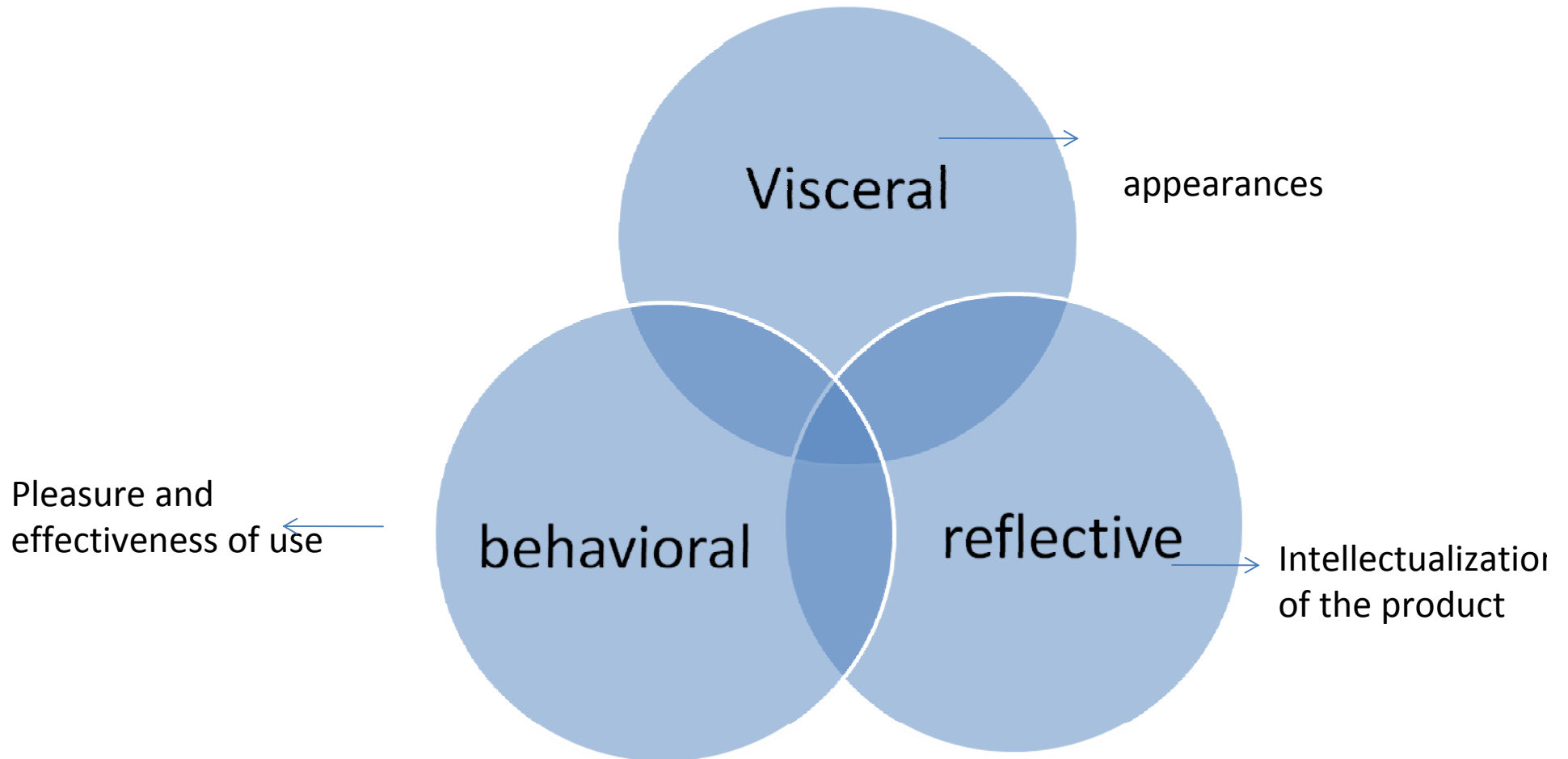
21st cen, Cars
for the middle-
class
Masses (Maruti
zen, Fiat,
indica, santro,

**Design
revolution-**



21st century
Small car
revolution

Emotional Design



Nano: the 'emotional design'

- A signifier of **Indian resourcefulness**: **transforming** for comprehensibility
- A signifier of the **eternal Indian belief in 'karma'** – the wheel of time turns with the deeds (the state politics)
- A signifier of the **'savior' – of pride**, of human conditions
- A signifier of a **child seeking attention, love**

The Nano effect

- Euphoria
- Hope/Optimism
- Inter-state rivalry (competition to bring the Nano)
- Catalyst for change /harbinger of economic prosperity

Nano: the divine child

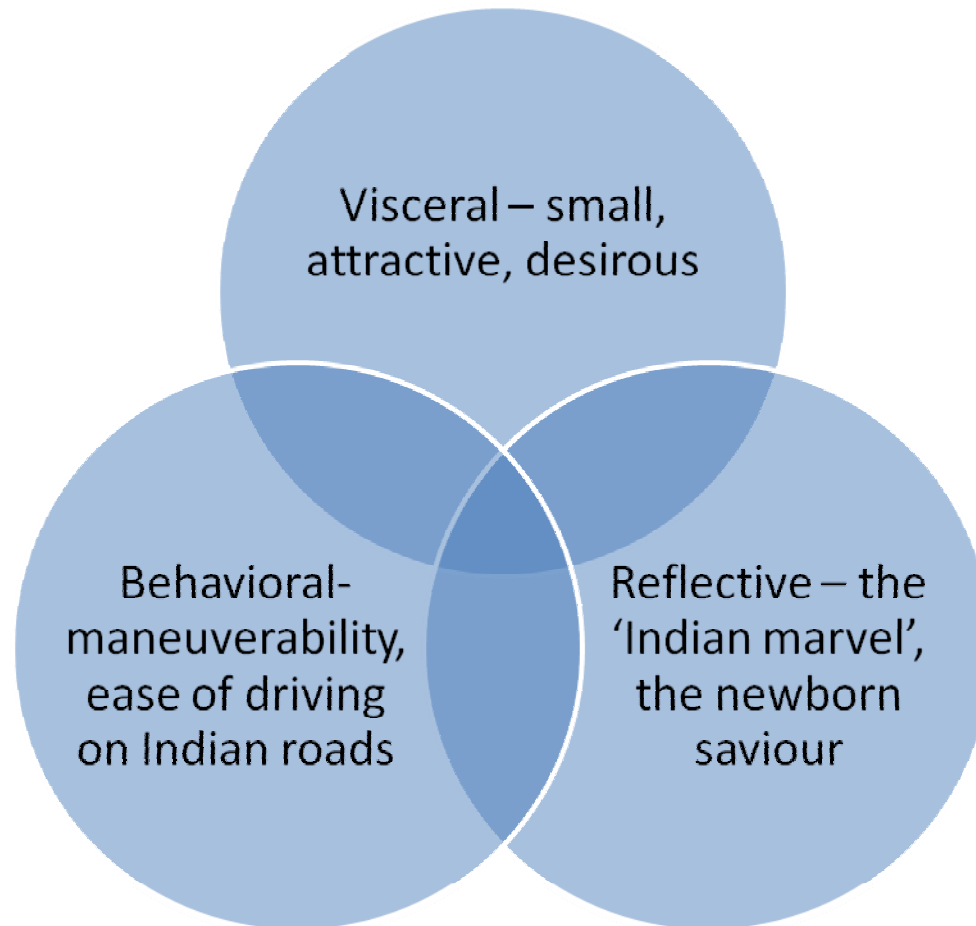
- The savior
- The delightful, playful and lovable
- Small and sprightly
- The child god

Nano and the Krishna Myth



The Indian imagination today is still deeply influenced by these myths-
Sudhir Kakar.

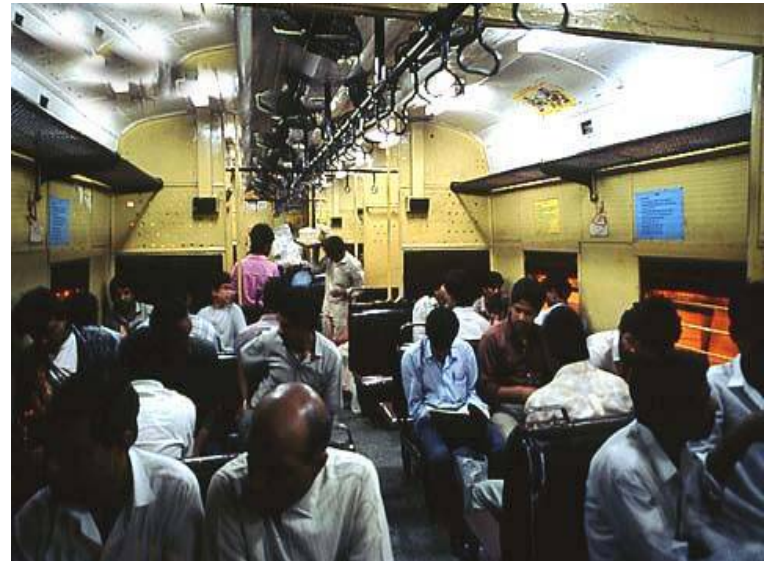
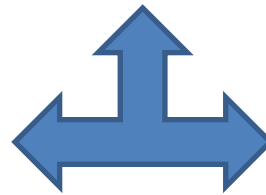
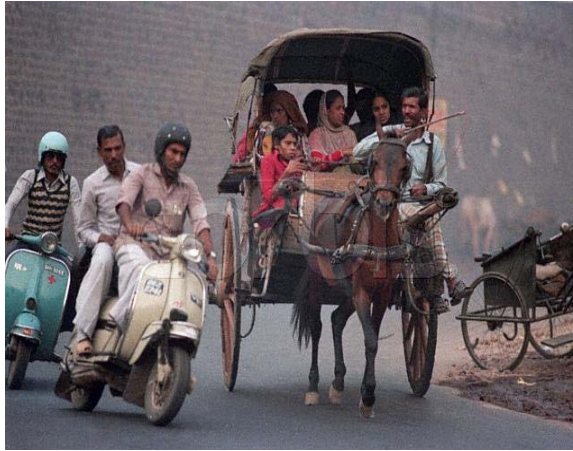
Waiting for the Nano



What does it all mean?

- Design is no longer merely an organizational or a corporate issue. **Nano has become a subject of national debate.**
- From **semiotics to the politics of design** – appropriation of car design as a symbol of state power.
- Nano is more **than a mode of transportation** – but it is designed as a vehicle for **social transformation** – (from a **two-wheeler to a four wheeler**).
- Nano may very well become a **design model for emerging markets** – since the whole world is waiting for the ghost to become a reality....

A universal car dream



Excitement over the newborn



Thank You