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Don't rubbish garbage

Poonam Bir Kasturi's project DailyDump tries an eco-friendly approach to garbage management at your own home

Photo: Sampath Kumar G.P.



GREEN FINGERS Make manure at home and help save the environment

As you make your way on a tree-lined lane in Indiranagar to Poonam Bir Kasturi's house terracotta pots of all shapes and sizes on the roof and in the garden encircle you.

You go down the spiral staircase to Poonam's shed. You pause to look around this National School of Design alumna's studio-garage – books on architecture, Irfan Habib, Frieda Kahlo, Impressionism, photography to Gandhi are stacked. The ceiling has inscribed hose-pipes twined around like a bhumi-charkha. And on the walls are eye-catching posters of the pots in earthy reds and browns. Short haired, clad in a long skirt and with glasses nestled on her nose, Poonam says she was one of the founding members of Srishti School of Design, and Industree Crafts. Both organisations work with craftspeople to design and make crafts for urban customers, living in the country and abroad. She has also help set up PlaynSpeak, which, again, sells 'thinking' and imaginative craft-based products both for the office and

domestic space. She says these have been designed to poke fun at the values and ways of human beings.

Surreal landscape

Plastic mixed with rotting vegetables and paper dripping with tea and masala – that’s what our city’s landscape looks like. Mountains and valleys piled with non-segregated garbage greets us the moment we set foot outside our homes. And so, that’s where Poonam’s one-year old project, Daily Dump of PlaynSpeak makes you sit up and take notice of the last thing on everyone’s mind – garbage.

Instead of going to a nursery for manure, you can work your green thumb right from home, and then sit back and watch the fruits of your effort sprout in your garden.

Poonam, who has been working on how design can intersect with communication, has, with the help of her students and peers, created an eco-friendly sustainable garbage bin.

Poonam says the idea was to design for the community and the self and see how we can make a difference.

It is not an ugly red plastic-bin mass-manufactured in factories , but one that uses an ideal Indian material, moulded and shaped from potters’ wheels. The project provides livelihood to 40 potter families in Palamner village.

Plastic failed miserably as a viable option because it was unsustainable.

She has even designed a handbook to pre-handle frantic calls from customers that “the compost smells” and “there are worms crawling”. It lists out all the possible problems and their solutions in an easy-to-grasp tabular format.

But there are reluctant customers who don’t want to segregate their wastes giving excuses like “the maidservant will not follow it”, “flies will swarm” or “it is too expensive.” “I am in the process of finishing an illustrated children’s book,” says Poonam.

“But these are dark books” – not happy childhood stories that paint a rosy picture of life. “It has four stories about a cow, a plastic bag, a banana and rag pickers and how they are linked together. Children who read it will get four perspectives and facets to hone their cognitive abilities.” And she says excitedly: “I will make about 100 copies and sell them to schools and colleges, for I know that there is no point in stocking them in bookstores. But I’ll also make it available for free online – I don’t believe in this control of knowledge. It is not some rocket-science technology that we need patents. It should be there for all to see and utilise.”

Poonam says she is working to try and get Hopcoms, flower shops, residents’ associations, parks, malls, hotels blocks and offices to try and implement the zero-waste strategy. When you ask her about basic environmental-friendly architecture being taught in architecture or design schools, she has some alarming news. “Four or five years ago I carried a survey on this and found out that not even one college has this course in their syllabi.”

Poonam has had about 700 customers buying her pots on everyday – “even an eco-friendly *maami* came to my shop and picked one up. You could even tell she must have had a small place, but it makes me proud that such people are doing their bit, and not just aesthetically conscious home-makers.” There are also people who can come to the users’ homes and work

the pots on a weekly basis at an added cost.

Poonam has not advertised or sought sponsors – “I am putting some money from the consultancy I do. The website www.dailydump.org was from where word got around and we also stock the products at the nursery at the Association for Physical Handicapped in Jeevanabhima Nagar.”

Contact Daily Dump at No. 2992, 12 A Main, HAL II Stage (Near Café Coffee Day). Call 9916426661 or 41152288.

AYESHA MATTHAN

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