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Intelligent industries pushed the quality button

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It wasn't customers who took the initiative to want quality. Entrepreneurs with business ingenuity, as well as visionary industries seeking an edge in the customer's mind, surprised them with quality they were not expecting. But today, customers have already lapped up the new that businesses offered them. They've reversed industry's dominance over them. Its quality customers want (QCW), and customers have learnt to command it, making industries bend backwards to provide QCW.

Changing service rules: Let's go back a century to see how industry raised the quality sense of the customer. In 1907, 19-year-old Jim Casey borrowed \$100 to found a six-bicycle messenger service that later went on to challenge United States Post Office (USPO), in existence since 1775. Calling the company United Parcel Service from 1919, UPS totally surprised people with faster and quality home delivery couriers. Just imagine, up to 1906 nobody even bothered to think beyond the Post Office to receive parcels. This quality business model educated American masses that an alternative beyond USPO is possible. It kicked off customer expectation. Sensing opportunity, competition then

jumped in with differentiated services. From here, courier service ballooned into a big industry, compelling the Government's \$65.71 billion USPO to downsize every year by closing down post offices. Conversely, the top three courier companies continue to grow like UPS with \$53.1bn, FedEx \$39.3bn, and DHL \$52.76 in 2011. Today, UPS alone delivers over 15 million packages every day to 6.1 million customers in more than 220 countries. To stay in business, industry has no choice but to provide better QCW.

World Wars raised the quality bar: Two bloody World Wars that claimed ~80 million lives contributed tremendously to industrial quality upgradation. Quality obsession was tremendous to win the war. The Allies were not prepared for Hitler's war weaponry aimed to prove Germany's technological power. America had to beef up research to make weapons of higher quality. From 1942 to 1945, Allies vs Axis was purely a quality fight of weapons superiority. Hitler's ultimate dream was 1000 years of worldwide Nazi rule. Even the simple fence pillars of Auschwitz concentration camp were well built although they were rapidly constructed in 1940. The conclusion we can draw from historical evidence is that defence industry during the World Wars also raised quality bar.

Japanese changed European auto industry rules: Even dropping the atom bomb in World War II could not crush Japan's human collective ingenuity to come out from the destruction. They have taken a single point value addition to the world which is quality. Europeans invented the automobile, the Japanese invested in QCW.

I remember during my business trips in the 1980s to the US, I was fascinated with Japanese cars booming in US markets. But Japanese cars had a hard time entering Europe as protectionism discouraged a Japanese manufacturing hub here. My French auto dealer would say, "Careful, if you have an accident you have to wait 2-3 months for Japanese spares. Also, insurance cost is exorbitant." In those days, Europe was selling a bare-bones car; you had to pay extra for option of accessories such as air conditioning, music system and other features. Industries regulations were galore, you had to drive the first 1,000 km at a certain speed, service it after 1,500 km, pay for the second service starting 5,000 km and so on. In one fell swoop of ingenious quality, the Japanese handed over the car keys to the buyer. Fully loaded with all features, the car offered free service after 10,000 km and you could drive at whatever speed from Day One. The Japanese simply showed customers how to increase their "want," established QCW in Europe and changed the rule of the market.

QCW for push-cart or BMW? One day in Kolkata, I found a flamboyant person driving a sophisticated BMW convertible. Alongside him was a push-cart with a front-puller, a back-pusher and three people in the centre holding the merchandise. Both the rich and poor were enjoying Kolkata's winter breeze under the open sky. Which customer's requirement should the QCW of this road be based on, the BMW convertible that needs a smooth road or a dirt road that would be fine for the push-cart? Living with extreme tolerance in India's diversity, we've not been able to appreciate quality at the mass level. These past 60 years the common man's been dependent on different party politicians claiming to represent the poor, There's no single point of good and bad, as laid down in non-Hindu, one-God religions, so it's difficult to identify the quality that politics requires in this multi-cultural society. Similarly it's difficult to imagine what collective QCW to apply. Without commonly set standardised norms,

it's clear that business houses have a great opportunity to drive the QCW delivery model.

Indian masses require advanced small machine for livelihood generation: In developed countries, invention through industrial design for different types of machines has raised the livelihood and lifestyle of the masses even during the Great Depression. India's masses similarly require modern portable machines incorporated with mechanical and digital engineering for their livelihood. The backbone of the country's working class strength is the small farmer to independent entrepreneurs in multiple domains. This young generation of self-employed workers has huge urge to grow in life but in the absence of proper machines to ease their work they cannot earn more.

For developing such engineering products, we cannot always go to developed countries to get designs as they don't understand the diverse quality definition of India's common people. It is time for the Indian industry to lead the way in raising the exceptional quality bar for masses of India. Indian workers quality consciousness has risen from influence of globalisation. The Indian industry need to provide these evolved workers high quality standard machines that "reduce effort, increase comfort". "Reduce effort, increase comfort" is a framework for engineering products I'd established and wrote about in my book *Jalebi Management*. Engineering products manufacturers can apply this framework for designing products this workforce can use. This will make the workforce more skilled with the consciousness of a new kind of QCW that the Indian industry can provide them. Doing so can change the face of the country's economy in next decade by developing poor people's working skill. Is it not the time for Indian industry to raise the way UPS and Japanese did?

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