

# Quality as Craftsmanship

Prof. Dinesh P. Chapagain

*(Submitted to published in New Business Age, Nepal, 2012 August)*

Some people perceive quality as only craftsmanship and nothing else. For the name of some famous craftsman, people spent millions of Rupees. Millions of people travel round the world each year just to visit and admire the wonderful creations of craftsmen. The art galleries are filled with thousands of valuable paintings and sculptures made by great creators like Michelangelo Buonarroti, Pablo Picasso, Leonardo Da Vinci, M.F. Hussain, Lain Singh Bangdel, Kiran Manandhar and others. Each year thousands of expensive and commercial movies are made in Hollywood, Bollywood and other parts of the world with famous stars like Will Smith, Eddie Murphy, Leonardo DiCaprio, Aamir Khan, Shahrukh Khan, Hritik Roshan, Rajesh Hamal and others. Thousands of theaters are famous for showing great performances of Michael Jackson, Freddie Mercury, Elvis Priestley, Beatles, Lata Mangeskar, Mukesh, Narayan Gopal and others. Millions of people spent lots of money to get entertainment attaining their performances. People love to spend for acquiring spaces on famous buildings created by famous architects like Alvar Aalto, Leoh Ming Pei, Anant D Raje, Hafeez Contractoor, Ranjan Shah and others. Moreover, lots of hand made products crafted by famous craftsmen or crafts institutions of the world get much more value than the similar products manufactured in a mass production. There are customers who value craftsmanship and visualize quality on it. These statements simply open the discourse on "Quality as Craftsmanship". Craftsmanship is of course one of the most important dimensions of knowing quality.

Expression by "craftsmanship for quality" by a famous quality guru of United Kingdom, Mr. David Hutchins, President of D H Innovation, London, has made a little bit comfort to those who wants to understand this dimension. He says, "Craftsmanship is one dimension of Quality but it is not the only one. If we use the concept of **the big 'Q'** and **the small 'q'**, where the big 'Q' represents the reputation of the organization as a whole in the community and the small 'q' refers to the quality of the products themselves, 'craftsmanship' will be the dominant factor for the small 'q'. A craftsman by definition is responsible for the quality of his or her work. Craftsmanship for me is the ability of the craftsman to be trusted to do a job without supervision to the best of his ability and where he has full control of the PDCA Cycle as applied to his work."

On the other hand, a veteran quality expert from Philippines Ms. Zenaida T. Velso, Vice President Treasurer of Asia Pacific Quality Organization, Philippines defines craftsmanship differently. In her own words she writes, "I would like to define Craftsmanship as a series of activities that results in the making of a thing of value, e.g. a thing for use in daily life, and which can include household items, decorative items, items used in medical and dental fields, etc. even cars and similar products, anything that is crafted. .... **Quality of Design** (how design is arrived at quality of concept and market research), **Quality of Conformance** (how article

conforms to design and includes quality of workforce, equipment used), **Abilities** (Maintainability, Reliability, etc. to show whether the article is maintainable, performs its function as in cars), and **Field Service** (includes the service provided by the "maker", and how these meet the expectations of customer)."

Similarly, A well known quality and management expert from Nepal, Mr. Ramesh Man Singh, President of Network for Quality, Productivity and Competitiveness-Nepal (NQPCN), Kathmandu thinks differently on the impact of craftsmanship on quality. He says, "When we say craft, I see lot of dedication and passion, and the love and creative expression of **the craftsman who derives more pleasure and satisfaction out of his work rather than thinking about creating customer satisfaction**. As customers, if we can empathize with the craftsman and perceive value and satisfaction at the craftsmanship, then, I think that is quality."

Thus, quality experts working in different environments and contexts think differently for craftsmanship and its relationship with quality. Let us examine now what the English dictionary says about craftsmanship. Oxford dictionary defines craftsman as skill in a particular craft as - the quality of design and work shown in something made by hand, and artistry as a piece of fine craftsmanship. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines craftsman as a worker who practices a trade or handicraft, creates or perform with skills or dexterity especially in the manual arts. These two definitions from well known English language dictionaries have cued few expressions which are important for understanding the meaning of craftsman and craftsmanship. They are- design, handmade, creativity, skills and dexterity. Just for simple understanding, one can say that craftsmanship is the skill and ability to creatively design and made products by hand which is not clumsiness or awkward to others. Here, the paintings, sculptures, movies, art performances, structures and many others will be encompassed within this definition of craftsmanship. Even, the quality understanding comes into this definition. The outputs produced by craftsmanship should not be clumsiness or awkward to people rather it should attract people who loves to pay for it. This understanding of craftsmanship as quality also validates the combined opinion of quality professionals, too. craftsmanship is a small 'q' of total 'Q', it is auto-humanization, it is design and total creation, it is skill, passion and inner satisfaction for its creator. It is agility, and furthermore, it touches the heart of customers to pay. Thus, we may understand this dimension of quality as craftsmanship.

Pre-historically, we find craftsmanship in people producing stone axes to hunt animals for livelihood to their families. In ancient times, before the medieval era, buildings, fabrics, primary agricultural tools and clothing, war weapons, sculptures and paintings were the main products of craftsmen. And, the craftsmanship was predominant component of quality- fitness for use. It was around the beginning of the 20th century that the industrial revolution began to reach critical mass in shaping global consciousness, as well as in shaping a new economy. This new economy was based on a number of revolutionary ideas, among which were several new ways of thinking about quality. The idea of quality was no longer rooted in the creativity and skills of craftsmanship but had become inextricably tied to the idea of factory output. Previously, the craftsman created quality with the art of his mind, heart and hands. Now, after the industrial and information revolution the science of progress and technology enabled the creation of relatively

low-cost, quality products via mass production and efficient delivery and services. The very nature of economic activity is shifted from the personal to the systematic and team work. Specialized skill gave way to compartmentalized science. Handcrafted goods gave way to machined products. In short, the era of craftsmanship was eclipsed by the era of management-ship and engineering.

Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the craftsmanship of yesterdays and days-to-come for quality understandings. Let us surf at some of the examples of famous craftsmanship which are termed as wonders of the world and which were loved and given recognition by many people of the world. The historian Herodotus (484 – 425 BCE), and the scholar Callimachus of Cyrene (305 – 240 BCE) at the Museum of Alexandria, had made early lists of seven wonders. Presently, their writings have not survived, except as references. The seven wonders included that time were Great Pyramid of Giza, Hanging Gardens of Babylon, Statue of Zeus at Olympia, Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, Mausoleum of Maussollos at Halicarnassus, Colossus of Rhodes and Lighthouse of Alexandria. Today, the only ancient world wonder that still exists is the Great Pyramid of Giza. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, some writers wrote about lists with names such as Wonders of the Middle Ages which were Stonehenge (UK), Colosseum (Rome), Catacombs of Kom el Shoqafa (Egypt), Great Wall of China, Porcelain Tower of Nanjing (China), Hagia Sophia (Istanbul), Leaning Tower of Pisa (Italy), Taj Mahal (India), Cairo Citadel (Egypt), Ely Cathedral (UK), and Cluny Abbey (France). In 2001 an initiative was started by the Swiss corporation New7Wonders Foundation to choose the New7Wonders of the World from a selection of 200 existing monuments. Despite lots of criticism, it is said that more than 100 millions of voters voted for selecting the Seven Wonders of the World and the results were announced on 07-07-2007 in Lisbon, Portugal. The list includes Great Wall of China, Petra of Jordan, Christ the Redeemer of Brazil, Machu Picchu of Peru, Chichen Itza of Mexico, Colosseum of Italy, Taj Mahal of India and Great Pyramid of Giza/Egypt. The *Deshyamaru Jhya* and the pagoda style temples of Kathmandu in Nepal are also attracting tourists on the basis of their craftsmanship. Millions of people liked the craftsmanship of these structures, visited them several times in their life and admired their artistic creations. Thus, it may not be wrong to say that many people perceive quality as craftsmanship.

Let us look now at the understanding of actual craftsmanship in service industries. How hospital, educational institutions, and like industries can deliver quality services and attracts customers? In hospitals, after all adequate ultra-modern equipments and infrastructures installed and overall quality service of all staffs at it, the ability, skill, passion and dexterity of doctor that counts the most to become famous and which may attracts the minds of its customers, i.e., patients. The quality education as demanded by the society is outcome of the craftsmanship of teachers irrespective of modern infrastructures and curriculums in educational institutions. The aircraft pilot whose craftsmanship- passion, experience, skill and precision works that carries the life of so many travelers who travels without having any doubts. If all these are not quality then what it is? Hence, individual's craftsmanship is quality parameters of any types of industries- manufacturing or service delivering.

The four stakeholders of quality as understood by everyone are suppliers, customers, regulators and watch dogs. Here, in this case of "Quality as Craftsmanship", suppliers are craftsmen themselves who really designs and works or produce products for their satisfaction rather than marketing for their creation. It captures the niche market and the customers are attracted by the

suppliers' craftsmanship. Customers of craftsmanship are specific target group who may be willing to pay much more than the cost of production. Government of all country or any other agencies as quality regulators always motivate craftsman to produce their arts and crafts as an aesthetic and cultural heritages of the nation, but of course, taking precaution that it does not deteriorate societal and environmental health. Civil societies as watch dog also promote healthy arts and craftsmanship considering them as an image building for the nation. Thus, craftsmanship of any country survives in a win-win environment and is auto-motivating dimension of quality.

Some people take craftsmanship is the only one dimension of quality but many people understand craftsmanship is one of the most important dimensions of quality. Craftsmanship is an inner strength of a maker or a group of makers as an aptitude, ability and dexterity of producing products or delivering services to satisfy him/ herself or themselves, and eventually to capture the minds of some specific customers. Craftsmanship is required for a full cycle of design to work to produce quality.