

On India's Moment of Truth (Jack and Suzy Welch's column in the aftermath of the terrorism incident in Mumbai in Business Week (December 15, 2008))

In 2003, I was at the New Delhi residence of late Prime Minister Shri P. V. Narasimha Rao, an associate of my late father in India's freedom struggle to make a case for that nation adopting six sigma as a national movement. After listening intently to me explain what six sigma was in terms of the natural laws of karma, natural variability, and assignable causes, he asked, *you mean we should adopt the Gandhian model?* That model Gandhiji articulated in the thirties and forties is as follows:

*"A customer is the most important visitor on our premises.
He is not dependent on us. We are dependent on him.
He is not an interruption in our work. He is the purpose of it.
He is not an outsider to our business. He is a part of it.
We are not doing him a favor by serving him.
He is doing us a favor by giving us an opportunity to do so."*

Sounds like Gandhiji was advocating six sigma, doesn't it? We helped establish national six sigma excellence awards in India in 2005 to which a number of well-known private-sector companies submitted entries for consideration. None of these was from the Government sector. My six sigma presentations and proposals several years ago to the Principal Secretaries of the Government of Maharashtra in Mumbai, National Productivity Council & National Manufacturing Competitiveness Center, both of the federal Government in New Delhi, and India's University Grants Commission that looks after the standards of colleges and universities in India, have not resulted in any action. Unless the Indian society embraces six sigma and Gandhiji's model, the myriad of problems including the inept response to the recent terrorism incidents will likely continue. That India will eventually see the light, is my conviction based of the theory of rise and decline of cultures I developed allowing me to predict the imminent rise of China and India in the early nineties.

I recall reading about India nearly defaulting on financial obligations in the early nineties when Prime Minister Rao had to put forward two stark choices to the people of India; either open up the economy or face doom. This, after the nation's gold was deposited with the London's central bank. Perhaps, the recent incidents in Mumbai will serve as a wake up call of similar gravity to embrace six sigma.

This said, I subscribe to what Hon. Mr. Hu Shih, former Chinese Ambassador to the United States, once said to have remarked, *"India conquered and dominated China culturally for 20 centuries without ever having to send a single soldier across her border"*. If you wish to produce many products at competitive prices, China may well be the place, but if you seek wisdom, perhaps you should consider what India has to offer. India has benefited tremendously and will continue to benefit from what the United States has to offer but the US too has much to learn from the Indian wisdom: Vedas, Upanishad, Bhagvad Geeta, Yoga Aasanas, Pranayam, meditation, and on and on. Many of the contents of these works are philosophical but there are practical benefits from understanding the wisdom in them. They provides a fundamental understanding of the basis of human existence, shed light on interfaith understanding, racial & (inter-caste) harmony, and global peace. Yoga Aasanas, Pranayam, and meditation offer Ingenious approaches to improving health, reducing stress, improving concentration, and reducing healthcare costs. You realize these are some of the most significant challenges contemporary societies are facing. It may be premature to give up on India in favor of China.