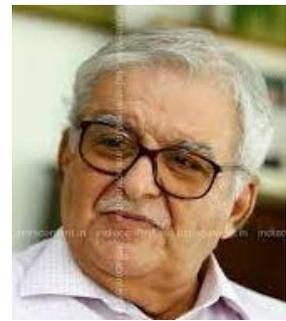


01 November 2022

Tribute to Dr J.J. Irani



(Recipient of the ISQ Jamsetji Tata Award 2005 and Former Tata Steel MD)

In Memoriam - Dr Jamshed J Irani

Dr. Jamshed J Irani a doyen of India's Quality movement and Steel industry passed away on October 31, 2022 late night after 86 years of life contributing to the society in the Yagna spirit.

Dr. Irani led the first group of business leaders from India for a one-week TQM Study Mission to Japan in the year 1989 organised by the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers (JUSE). I was fortunate to have planned and organised that mission on behalf of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) as a key mile stone in India's Quality Journey. It was followed by many other such missions. It was a great learning opportunity for me to interact with him during those days. Dr. Irani was present at the 1st Quality Month in India organised by the CII in 1989. He became the member of the National Committee on Quality formed under the aegis of CII and Chaired by Dr. V. Krishnamurthy in 1986. As Secretary to that committee, I had many interactions with him and admired his clear thinking and simplicity of approach.

At ISQ we celebrate his life during which Dr. Irani made enormous contribution to India for which he was hugely respected. ISQ was privileged to award Dr. Irani the Jamsetji Tata Award in 2005 and by accepting it he enhanced ISQ image.

Dr. Irani's humane approach along with immense technical and management wisdom enabled Tata Steel to be the leader in the steel industry and crusader for Quality movement. Tata Steel has continued in his tradition being the first and only integrated steel company in India to challenge and win the Deming Prize in 2008 and the Deming Prize in 2012. It was a privilege for me to have been associated in that journey.

Dr. Irani developed a line of successors who continued to support the Quality movement in India. Tata Steel is the largest contributor (amongst all entities in Asia) of papers presented at the Annual Quality Congress organised every year by Asian Network for Quality (ANQ) in various countries. ISQ as member of the ANQ is privileged to process these papers and receive support for its various activities.

Even in 2021 Dr. Irani advised ISQ on selection of award winners and on aspects of building leadership team. I fondly remember many personal interactions with Dr. Irani over the years and it was always a humbling and enlightening experience.

On behalf of the ISQ and the Quality community in India it is my privilege to offer homage to the departed soul with a prayer for peace and equanimity.

By Janak Mehta,

President ISQ

Tribute to Dr J.J. Irani

My Encounters with Dr Irani.

Dr. Irani is no more. I reminisce about some of my encounters with him, for they taught me a lot.

It was 1977. Our company was selling a consumable to Tata Steel (TISCO then) which I believed did not really work. We then developed a superior product as replacement, which would be priced four times as much, but would, we hoped, save a lot more for TISCO in fewer scrapped ingots. I met up with Dr Irani. (He was designated General Superintendent, I think). With disarming candour I told him that our product did not work. That a new one, four times more expensive, would pay back in saved ingots, and I explained the technical reasons.

JJI: Will you guarantee the performance of this new product?

Me: (With a deep sigh) No.

JJI: Why not?

Me: Because you can afford to lose a few ingots, but we cannot afford to pay for them.

Dr Irani decided to buy the product. He said he wouldn't have bought the product if I had offered a guarantee.

In the event, in the next few months, the product worked, and all was well!

1997: I was heading an 8-member team doing a week-long CII/Exim Award assessment of Tata Steel. Dr Irani was MD. Day one, a Monday, started with meeting him. His mother had passed away just two days earlier, and here he was, fully in attention. To our condolences, he replied: "She's in a better place," and carried on ever so normally. His company needed nothing less than his whole devotion. Nevertheless, Tata Steel did not win the award in this round.

2002: My company, SRF, was having its annual meeting in Bangkok, and Dr Irani was chief guest. Tata Steel had already won the CII/EXIM Award in 2000. "Ramanathan didn't give us the award," he quipped, "but we got others to do the assessment and we got the award." This was of course his way of underplaying the fact that under his leadership Tata Steel had made stupendous progress.

In my talk, when I reminded him about the 1978 incident of the expensive product, he walked up to me and chided me: "What did you think? That I wouldn't remember it?"

I had interactions with him in CII events, and when ISQ conferred the Jamsetji Tata Award on him in 2005. He would come and be supportive of some programs I was doing for Tata Quality management Service. Every time was a new learning experience.

Dr Irani is no more. But I can hear him laughing: "I am in a better place."

By N. Ramanathan