

Machine Supervisor and Commonsense

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Whether paper making is an art or a science is a controversial subject. Observations of facts and deducing a general principle therefrom tend to bring it in the domain of science. Consequently this has given rise to scientific methods which find very good applications in the preparation of pulps,—such as development of new methods for pulping raw materials like bamboo, bagasse, straw, etc. finding out improved ways of bleaching, of perfecting appliances for getting maximum recovery. Again there are certain spheres which come exclusively under science—like research work, testing methods and quality control. But there are certain areas where individual skill still plays a predominant part and machine house is one of them where paper making comes closer to art than to science.

In the very beginning I want to apologise to those stalwarts in the line who are busy thinking of ways to revolutionise the industry. To say anything derogatory to them is the last thing that I ever intend to do. This is simply to boost up the drooping spirit of the young men in the line who haven't had the good luck of possessing a bachelor's or a master's degree in science, in view of the present day craze for science in our country. The fact that the country is still short of food after fifteen years of planning and development, with the best scientific brain behind it, shows that the application of science in India lacks something; that food is the prime necessity for any country does not need a great scientific brain to realize but a simple commonsense.

To tell the truth, to be a good machine-man one need not, of necessity, be a science graduate. On the other hand, diligence,

commonsense, ready wit, strict vigilance and agility are what are considered essential prerequisites. No doubt the achievements of science in this branch are beyond any dispute. There are established formula, fundamental laws of physics, chemistry and mathematics, and general rules which any supervisory staff can ill-afford to be ignorant of. But their application in the machine house depends to a great extent on the commonsense of the machine-man. The fibre length index or wetness tests are quite handy in giving the direction in which one should proceed; but with different raw materials the machine-man has to judge for himself what figures will give him the best results. Again, the sheet formation, which is the most important thing in machine house, has lot to do with the individual skill and experience of the machine-man, notwithstanding the common rules about slice velocity, shake length, frequency and consistency of the stuff. It is a very interesting thing that no two machine-men follow the same details. To have a well-formed and good water-marked sheet the machine-man has to rely mostly on his own commonsense than on any hard and fast rules.

Moreover many problems, which have no precedence or any mention in paper making books and magazines, often crop up for the solution of which one must not apply any ready-made formula which in all probability will land him into troubles. On the other hand, he should try to locate the cause systematically even when it goes against some of his preconceived ideas. It is with an open mind that he should approach a problem. Dogmatism comes in the way of getting at the truth. Analytical mind is a great help to a machine-man but

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quick decision is the most essential thing required of him. He cannot afford to weigh the pros and cons of a particular action. Every minute he is losing he is making broke. Practice makes perfect and constant application to different sorts of problems brings perfection in the trade.

Again, every machine-man has to work with three or more machine crew in our country. The whole process requires a sound team-work among the machine crew with the machine-man as the leader. It is easy to handle inanimate objects like machine, wire or felt but very difficult to handle human beings with complex mental mechanism. There are books on human

relationship or industrial psychology but the subject is looked upon with disfavour in our country for inexplicable reasons. None-the less it is an accepted fact that the best efforts are put forth if the men are rightly motivated. Here again the machine-man has to fall back upon his commonsense. Different individual needs different approach and the machine-man has to decide about the efficacy of a method in a particular case.

But this need not make anybody conclude that sound knowledge of scientific principles is a disqualification. On the contrary, a science graduate with a sound commonsense is the need of the hour.