

## Jugaad, An Introduction

By Musafir

*Jugaad* is an ancient Indian management technique which signifies attaining any objective with the available resources at hand. The practitioners of *Jugaad* use the combination of present knowledge and innovation in utilizing whatever resources may be at hand without asking or waiting for additional resources. The resources can consist of any of the 5Ms. The 5 Ms stand for manpower, material, money, machine and mind. Mind is an important resource since *jugaad* requires dissecting and learning the system very quickly. According to a famous adage, when Nikita Khrushchev visited India, he was amazed to see India functioning despite the wide-spread chaos and poverty. He allegedly quipped, "Though I am a communist and an atheist, I have started believing in God after realizing that a chaotic country like India can truly function."



**A family of six commuting on a scooter**

India managed to exist and function long before Nikita Khrushchev's visit to the land of mystique. I have seen the miracles of *jugaad* with my own eyes. Even the poor in India living on an income of a dollar a day do arrange decent marriages for their daughters and manage to give them gold jewelry as marriage gifts. They just believe in getting things done.

Once the transmission of my father's car broke in a remote village of India. Not knowing what to do, my father went to a local blacksmith for help. The blacksmith (not a car mechanic) dismantled the transmission and found a broken gear inside. He took a piece of scrap metal and crafted a gear for the transmission. Lo and behold! We were on our way within three to four hours. The total cost of repair was close to three dollars.

The practitioners of *Jugaad* are often called *jugaadis* or *jugarists*. These *jugaadis* can perform any kind of job everything from arranging for a driver's license (without ever driving a car), getting a permit to do business, and obtaining gas cylinders for cooking meals, to solving production problems on the factory floor. The *jugaadis* never say 'No.'

They just get the work done. *Jugaad*, a Hindi colloquial word is a science, art, tradition and philosophy in itself. The term *jugaad* can also mean alternative arrangement, a quick fix through the use of an unconventional but innovative method.



**Constraint is a state of mind**

### Dabbawalas of Mumbai and Six-Sigma

The operation of the Dabbawallas (carriers of lunch boxes) of Mumbai is an amazing example of *jugaad*. It is a 120-year old logistical system that entails collecting 175,000 hot lunch boxes (*tiffin*) from homes from every corner of sprawling Mumbai and delivering those *tiffins* to the right persons before their lunch time and returning those lunch boxes to their individual homes before the customer arrives home in the evening.

According to a *Forbes* 1998 article, one mistake for every eight million deliveries is the norm. How do they achieve virtual six-sigma quality with zero documentation? For one, the system limits the routing and sorting to a few central points. Secondly, a simple color code determines not only *tiffin* routing but *tiffin* prioritizing as lunches transfer from train to bicycle to foot.



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