**Ceremonial Sweets**

**National Institute of Technology, Wakayama College**

A: Hello, everybody. Before beginning our topic, I want to ask you some questions about sweets.

  What do sweets mean to you?  Some of you may think that they are something pleasant to eat or make.  Others may consider them a purpose in life.

   Then, how about "ceremonial sweets"?  For example, *arare* at *hinamaturi,* that is, sweet rice crackers at the Doll festival, birthday cakes, and Christmas cakes.  At festivals and other celebrations, sweets were and are served in all times and places.

   Today, we will talk about “ceremonial sweets,” or "sweets in celebration."  First, we will explain why ceremonial sweets have been loved for many years.  Next, we will examine the similarities between "making sweets" and "*monodzukuri*," which means manufacturing products.

Then, we will explain how both sweets and toys enrich our lives and offer something more than just functionality. Finally, we suggest how looking at "ceremonial sweets" can change the attitude of Kosen students toward *monodzukuri*.

B: As you know, sweets for celebratory events differ depending on the country and season.  In Britain, “mince pies” are eaten at Christmas, and people celebrate New Year in Japan with *kagami mochi*. Each sweet strongly reflects the history, culture, and environment of a country.

For example, three spices used in “mince pies”, cinnamon, clove, and nutmeg originally represented the three gifts given by the Magi to the baby Jesus.  “Kagami mochi” mediates between god and people.  It derives from the tradition that at the special time of New Year people ate *mochi*, a rice cake, to hope for year-round happiness.

C: Although each country has different history and culture, there are similarities between ceremonial sweets.  Firstly, sweets celebrate people’s happiness and wishes for long lasting happiness. A person who eats sweets also receives the considerateness of the person who serves the sweets.  By tasting this special sweetness, we can feel “waku waku,” the feeling of pleasure and excitement in our hearts, which gives us a great deal of happiness.  Therefore, “ceremonial sweets” have a special power to deliver a person’s affection to others and to make everyone happy.

A: Then, what is the feeling of pleasure and excitement that sweets evoke?  Before eating, we enjoy the aroma and appearance, and imagine the taste.  By stimulating all our senses in this way, sweets can grab our hearts as well as our stomach.

   However, people would become bored with sweets if they always looked and tasted the same.  So, to stimulate the feeling of pleasure and excitement continuously, we should develop our skills.  The reason that sweets are loved everywhere is that sweetmakers have never neglected to accumulate and develop their skills.

B:   Although *monozukuri* literally means "making things," it has a deeper meaning similar to the concept of craftsmanship. As such, there are some points in common between making sweets and *monodzukuri.*Firstly is the procedure, from choosing appropriate materials, through making recipes, to the final production.  The other is continual accumulating and developing of skills. The fact is that throughout history both sweets and products have been made with the highest skills.

   However, the requirements of sweetmaking and *monodzukuri* are quite different.  That is, sweets are made to enrich our hearts by giving pleasure and excitement.  On the other hand, the purpose of *monodzukuri* is to offer us a more convenient and more efficient life.

C:  Nowadays in particular, more and more goods pursue functionality. But, is functionality all we need?  Let’s consider toys, for example.  It is true that some toys may be functional, such as educational toys.  Nevertheless, children aren't interested in what isn't fun to play with.  Like sweets, toys give us pleasure and excitement and enrich our hearts. That’s why children show an interest in toys and like playing with them.

   In short, toys require both manufacturing skills and the giving of pleasure and excitement.  Functionality, however, is not always needed.

A:  Unlike other products, sweets and toys are not directly connected to increasing productivity or making daily life more convenient.  Nonetheless, the manufacture of both involves accumulating and developing skills in order to give us pleasure and excitement.

B: That’s very interesting. By the way, I heard that both of you went to Kyoto to learn how to make *wa-gashi*, a traditional Japanese sweet.

A: Yes, we did. It was a fascinating experience, and we could make beautiful and delicious *wagashi*.

C: Then we found that *wa-gashi* artisans make each *wa-gashi* with their whole hearts to let customers enjoy their sweets.

A: According to them, they care a lot about giving pleasure to people through *wa-gashi.*

In the same way, toymakers are also dedicated to giving people enjoyment. So, in addition to the pleasure we get from toys and sweets, we may unconsciously recognize the heart that these artisans put into their products.

B: So far, we have considered the factor of “sweets” in “ceremonial sweets”. Now, let's think over the factor of “ceremony.”

Through “ceremony,” that is, feasting and celebrations, we become aware of our gratitude to gods and other people, and we realize the feeling of the giver expressing his or her gratitude to us. We concluded that we respect the providence of the gods and affection of the givers more in these events.

   In this respect, “ceremonial sweets” which make us feel deep affection for the givers of the sweets and gods are quite different from the sweets we usually have.

C:  Until a few decades ago, “ceremonial sweets” were handmade, but now, they are made in massive numbers by machine.  Unfortunately, however, because they are now so easily produced and bought, it seems that sweet makers and their customers have gradually lost their appreciation of “ceremonial sweets."

   Nowadays we can make “ceremonial sweets" conveniently.  However, in addition to this convenience, we must also integrate the wishes and hopes of makers and customers more than ever.  This is not only true for sweet-making but for engineering in general.

B: Well, we have just referred to toys as an example of *monodzukuri*. It is because all toys have things in common such as giving pleasure and excitement, the enrichment of our hearts, and the accumulation of the maker's skills.

Then, what factors do “ceremonial sweets” and toys have in common? In our opinion, it is to let us have a dream. Both of them can allow us to have hope for the future or to visit a new and different world. We conclude that the real goal for a person engaging in *monodzukuri* is to produce things which let us have a dream for our future.

A:  When we enjoy “ceremonial sweets,” we should relish our happiness and appreciate having celebrations all year around.  As Kosen students, we should also try to be involved in an activity which people can have a dream in, that is, an activity which people can expect a promising future by means of *monodzukuri*. A lot of fields can be thought as stages for kohsen students.

However, it is not easy to accomplish, so we Kosen-sei have to gain more experience. We will gain experience and accumulate skills slowly but steadily. We will definitely utilize what we have learned from “ceremonial sweets.”

And if you are a Kosen student, please take a look at “ceremonial sweets” around you. As we have discovered, there are some important lessons in terms of engineering and *monodzukuri*.