Application of Chanakya Neethi in Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) Strike

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Abstract

On 5 Oct 2019, a strike has been called by RTC Joint Action Committee (JAC) with above 48000 employees on 5th October, 2019 in Telangana state, with various demands including RTC merger with the state government of Telangana, revision of the pay scales which was pending since 2017, filling up of various vacant posts of drivers and conductors etc. Initially Government has asked the RTC employees to join the works by leaving the strike, but they were reluctant to join unless their demands got fulfilled, and they have done Sakalajanula Samme, Rasta roko, Vanta varpu etc. Government also given warning many a times to the employees to join, otherwise the employees will be losing the jobs, even then the employees did not turn up to their jobs. As the employees did not get positive reply from the Government of Telangana, the employees, come down and they wanted to stop the strike, after one and half months, by reducing the demands and some other modifications, but the Government became rigid and not accepted to the talk the JAC. Though the strike ended on 28th November, 2019, the RTC employees requested the government to take back them to work before the end of the strike and the CM of Telangana has given some incentives also to the employees. The total scenario gives us about the leadership style which can be adopted by the leaders in tough situations. This case deals with how the CM of Telangana has resolved the issue and he got admiration from the employees from a negative sign. The Chief Minister of Telangana dealt that issue by applying Chanakya Neeti Principles. Chanakya described the qualities of a good leader, in his writings he also mentioned what sort of decisions should be taken by the leader if uncertainties occur in the kingdom. The objective of present case is to highlight how Mr K Chandrasekhar Rao has implemented Chanakya's principles to solve the issue of Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) Strike, and also how he has managed the issue so that the attitude of employees of TSRTC has changed from negative to positive.

Keywords: Sakalajanula Samme, Rasta roko, Vanta Varpu, Chanakya Neeti, Leadership.

Introduction

The world is uncertain. Problems will have no pre-definition. There will be a question in the minds of people "How to deal with the uncertainty?" many management Gurus have identified various leadership traits to address the issues of uncertainty. The present case deals with the Telangana State Road Transportation Corporation strike and the leadership qualities shown by the Shri K. Chandrasekhar Rao, Chief Minister of Telangana.

Case study

Telangana, the 29th formed state of India is considered as one of the fastest growing states in India. TSRTC officially founded on 2014 after the bifurcation of Telangana state from Andhra Pradesh[1]. Over 48000 employees With 26 demands the public transport utility

started strike on 5 Oct2019. The main demand of TSRTC employees is merging of the TSRTC with the government of Telangana State hence they are treated as the government employees in all the aspects[6]. One of the main reasons for their primary demand is the decision taken by the Government of Andhra Pradesh in terms of merging APSRTC with Government.

The present Telangana's Road Transport Corporation was initially established as NSRRTD (Nizam State Rail & Road Transport Department), as a part of Nizam State Railway in the Hyderabad State, in 1932, with 27 buses and 166 employees. Later that has been changed to Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport

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Corporation (APSRTC) on 11 January 1958 with the Road Transport Corporations Act 1950. After the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh into Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, TSRTC started its own operations as a separate entity from 03.06.2015. Later Telangana State Government established the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC), on 27.04.2016, under the Road Transport Corporation Act, 1950. TSRTC has 49200 as their employees. TSRTC serves around 89.4 lakh passengers per day, and has three zones and the services operations happens through 96 depots

Figure 1: Bus stand in one of the depots of Telangana at TSRTC strike



TSRTC has divided the total zone in to three which includes Hyderabad(Hakimpet), Karimnagar (Rampur) and Greater Hyderabad (Uppal) which is further divided into 13 regions, they are successfully operating 10,460 buses from 364 bus stations and 97 Depots. TSRTC buses will travel on 3,687 routes, approximately with a fleet of 10,479 under its wing.

On 2 October 2019, the state Government set up a 3-member committee of IAS officials for considering the demands of the employees, but it could not resolve the issues of employees, so the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of the TSRTC employees' union finalized to go on strike from October 5, 2019. The strike started in the period of Navarra, which had huge impact not only on the public in terms of transportation but also the government in terms of revenue. Initially the employees boycotted their duties, for their demands and waited for the call from the government.

On 8 October 2019, The Telangana Government has given an ultimatum to the employees who were in strike to join before 8 pm of 8 October, otherwise they would be dismissed. This ultimatum did not impact the TSRTC employees who are on strike and only around 155 employees re-joined for the services before that deadline. These circumstances forced the

Telanagana State Government to extend the Dasara vacations for educational institutions from October 14 to October 21

The Government was not in a mood to talk to JAC or employees either to satisfy their demands or to pay the salaries for the month of September. The state government wanted to solve the issue of transportation by hiring private persons holding licences to drive heavy vehicles to act as TSRTC bus drivers on daily wages. Many private people were recruited for this purpose with the test by the transport department and the private people were given the permits to drive the buses. With this move the state government could able to operate approximately 60-80 percent of the buses in the Telangana districts but it were only 50-60 percent buses in the Greater Hyderabad area.

On 13 October, 2019, to increase the pressure on Telangana State Government JAC has announced a State-wide bandh on October 19. The Opposition parties also have shown consent and extended. They wanted to get the support from the people also for that they wanted to organise 'Rasta rokos' and human chains on October 15, they wanted the help of students also in the form of rallies. On October 17, they have planned a Dhoom Dham (protests by cultural teams) and two-wheeler rallies on October 18.

Figure 2: RTC employee's protests with Vanta varpu(Cooking at Road)



This has become an advantage to the opposition parties in Telangana and those parties started countering the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) from all sides which has become a major challenge to Shri. Chandrashekhar Rao since Telangana has been separated from Andhra Pradesh in 2014. On 19 October 2019, with the help of entire opposition parties of Telangana, Students' unions, trade unions, the JAC had called for Shutting down of entire Telangana state, which was the first jolt and shutdown against Chief Minister Chandrashekhar Rao, who is considered as stalwart of leading many protests during the Telangana separation agitation.

On 26 October, 2019, the state government announced that TSRTC had no money for making the salary payments to the employees for the September month as the employees themselves trying to cut the own branch where they were sitting as a result of strike. Mr Chandrasekhar Rao said even government of Telangana has not enough money to bail out RTC due to the economic slowdown.

On 28 October 2019, the High Court asked whether government will be able to pay Rs 47 crore for satisfying at least some of the demands of employees so that they can end the strike. But, the government replied that it cannot pay the said amount as it has already paid more funds to the Corporation than what it owes. Many people who are part of the strike got arrested.

Figure 3 : Arrests of protesting RTC employees, JAC leaders and political parties



JAC leaders, opposition parties, employees, and families of employees criticised the adamant behaviour of the Chief Minister of Telangana. Many Television channels approached even the families of TSRTC employees and the state witnessed many employees committing suicide and some employees died because of negative updates they were getting from the government regarding the strike. Once chief minister made a point to press that the employees who are in the strike will be considered as "self-dismissed" as over 48000 went on strikeout of 49200 and only 1200 returned to work.

On 30 October 2019, JAC along with the opposition leaders of Telanagana Government organized a public meeting in Hyderabad, threatened the Government with Million March, similar kind of agitation took place at the time of the Telangana separation agitation movement. They seriously criticized adamant attitude of the Chief Minister and also autocratic style of his functioning.

Figure 4 : Million March protest



Due to these continuous protests, threats, and strike, CM of Telangana state Mr Chandrasekhar Rao, ordered the officials of TSRTC to hire more private vehicles, buses and drivers to run under the Corporation. Also he gave hints to the striking employees of issuing permits to private operators. He also confirmed that the Corporation will not remain same, but the proposal of total privatisation has been ruled out. The TSRTC lost around Rs1 Crore to Rs 1.5 crore per day due to the TSRTC strike. Even then, the Corporation has managed to operate transportation services partially with the help of private and temporary staff.

1 November, 2019, Telangana state government rejected the Demand of Corporation merger with the Government, as if they do so, the remaining 56 other corporations also will come up with the same demand. Chief Minister also confirmed that the employees who were not joined on the work will be considered as 'Self Dismissed'. With these consequences, some of the employees got depressed which lead to death. JAC leaders and opposition leaders blamed the rude behaviour of the state government for these deaths. The employees also suffered financially as they were not paid salaries for the months of September and October. But the Chief Minister pointed the position has come due to their own decision and said that the employees as they cut the very branch they were sitting on.

Figure 5 : JAC Leaders along with TSRTC employees



On 5 November, 2019, The State Government of Telangana was in a feeling that if the employees don't end the strike and resume to work, they will be losing their jobs. One of the government officials shared that the Government was in a mood to privatise 5,000 routes and they also told that Telangana might become a RTC-less State. The High Court directed both the parties to have talks but no talks held between the Government and JAC. High Court has set a 'Final Deadline to sort to issue by 5th of November, 2019 but nothing happened by that time.

On 8 November, 2019 The High Court gave directions to the state government to have discussion with the JAC and employees who are on strike to resolve the issue which prevailed over the one-month. On 1 November, 2019 Even the court was also not happy

with the information provided by the Government with respect to the Corporation in this case.

On 18 November 2019, Telangana High court confirmed that it can neither tell government to hold discussion with the TSRTC Striking employees nor declare the strike as illegal. The High Court closed the case and referred the case to labour department and advised them to provide an amicable solution within two weeks. As the employees were strike for more than 45 days, they have set aside their prime demand of merging with the government and they have asked to government to have talks with them for the remaining 25 demands. The government called the strike of TSRTC employees as illegal, but the high court did not agree to call the TSRTC strike illegal[14].

On 22 November 2019, due to frustration, around 20 people died, among those several committed suicides, the others died of depression related stroke. Prof C Ramachandraiah of Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS) felt that The Striking employees have shown willingness to re-join to work, without getting anything from the strike as they were helpless at that moment due to adamant behaviour of State Government, but the other departments in the State Government like municipal workers will also get the same treatment in the future for their problems, he also felt the treatment would be more authoritarian and repressive.

On 23 November 2019, The Telangana State Government has taken a decision to privatise 5,100 RTC routes in Telangana state, which are suffering from losses, but the writ petition has been disposed by the High court.

On 25 November 2019, TSRTC JAC wanted to put a full stop to their 52-day strike. JAC leaders called the RTC employees to re-start their duties from 6 a.m. of 26 November 2019. Also they requested the temporary drivers and conductors, who served TSRTC in the strike period and requested not to attend duties from the next day.

On 28 November, 2019 around 48000 employees of TSRTC (along with their families) who were in strike got a huge relief in a big relief as Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has taken a decision to call the employees to resume their work from 29November2019. They were asked to report to their work in the first hour and this has ended the 55-day strike, the biggest strike in the transport across the State.

While talking to employees after offering a lunch also to the RTC employees, He accepted for the raise of the ticket fares by 20 paise, which helps Corporation in getting additional revenue of Rs 752 crore per year. In press conference, he also announced sanctioning of Rs 100 crore to TSRTC which can be utilized for immediate working capital and gave offer of jobs to the dependents of RTC employees who lost their life in strike. He also advised the

employees not to stay in unions so that they can go ahead on their own doing productive work. He advised a new system where employees can join a Workers' Welfare Council but not the unions and confirmed there will be two employees from each Depot while creating such council. He lashed the union leaders for misleading the TSRTC employees and criticised political parties for misleading the TSRTC employees.

The other benefits announced by the Chief Minister are

- Retirement age has been increased from 58 to 60
- Payment of salary for September, October and November that means no pay cut for the strike period
- Bus passes for children of TSRTC employees
- Three months of child-care leave for women employees
- Women employees will not be given night duties
- Rest rooms, changing rooms and also new uniforms
- Full job security
- Bus routes not being privatized
- Rs 1,000 crore allocation for the budget of corporation.

He addressed the employees and told that he will be expecting only hard work from the employees which leads to profits, and he promised he will be taking care of the needs of employees. In this way Chief Minister of Telangana became a darling to RTC employees from adamant.

Figure 6 : TSRTC employees after discussions with Telangana Chief Minister KCR



Conclusion

Finally KCR is a leader, boss and diplomat, as he

knows how to get his work done with a weapon called "Sakala Janula Samme" which he used at the time of Telangana separation movement and he knows how to counter and attack the people who hold same weapon with his strategy, because he is a Real LEADER.

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