

CHAPTER - IV
TRADE UNIONS IN M.S.R.T.C.

Growth and Development of M.S.R.T.C.

The growth and development of the Maharashtra Road Transport Corporation is very fascinating one. An attempt was made to study the historical aspect of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation. For this purpose, it has been divided into two periods:

- a) Earlier period or Old period,
i.e. Before Nationalization;
- b) Current period,
i.e. After Nationalization.

1) Earlier Period or Before Nationalization:

Before the Nationalization of the road transport industry, there was a monopoly of private operators in the road transport. The roads were not well constructed even in city areas and the position of the roads in village areas was too rough. The private operators make appointments of agents to get more and more passengers. There was competition in that field to get the passengers. Passengers sitting in one bus were largely shifted to another bus before the journey was to be started. Sometimes, rates too were decreased to attract the passengers.

The vehicles used for the purpose of transport were

of the old models like 'Dodge' or 'Ford'. No comfortable seats and other services were provided to the passengers. As there was no limit on the passengers to be transported, beyond the capacity of the vehicle, they were taken in the vehicle. Sometimes, passengers may travel by sitting on the roof of the vehicle. There was no framed and pre-prepared timetable of the vehicles. Due to the absence of timetable, buses were taking too much time to reach from one place to another place. Halting time had also no limitations. Vehicles were stopped for hours together at one place for waiting for government officers or rich class of people. The mechanical position of the vehicles was always too poor. So, there was no guarantee about the reaching of vehicle to a particular expected place.

For the purpose to remove the defects in passenger road transport industry, which are mentioned earlier, the Government of Bombay suggested a best scheme for setting up zones. Bombay Province was sub-divided into 14 zones. The zones should have been operated on the basis of Department of Road Transport in Hyderabad State. In the year 1946, at the time of Kher Ministry, when Morarji Desai was the Home Minister and the transport department was under his own control. The need for re-organization was felt. At the same time, the profit motive was kept in mind.²

Due to these drawbacks in road transport industry, the government decided to make the nationalization of the complete road transport business under the control of Bombay State Transport. The important features of the scheme that all the transport services should operate under the control of a single transport

unit for the purpose of uniformity in administration and higher efficiency. Thus, the government entered in the road transport business for giving the surety that the transport services are rendered in the interest of the public and the profits earned to be re-invested back into the transport business to make the expansion and to provide better services to the passengers.

2) **Present or Current Period i.e. After Nationalization:**

After Independence of India in 1947, the State Transport Department was immediately started on 1st April 1948 for the purpose of making re-organization of the transport scheme chalked out. It was the first Department in the country and of the commercial character,³ i.e. profit making character.

In the initial period, the department had to cope up with a number of difficulties and problems like procedure, finance, employees, etc. For taking the decisions quickly and properly, high power committee was set up. Though the working of the Committee was quite satisfactory, Government felt that there will be no use of nationalization of transport industry unless and until the management is entrusted to a statutory board with all powers. Therefore, according to the Road Transport Corporations Act, 1949, the Government of Bombay started the Bombay Road Transport Corporation from 17th November 1949. The Parliament passed another Road Transport Corporations Act in 1950 and according to this Act, Section 3 constituted a separate Corporation for various districts.⁴



The Corporation started to work with 35 vehicles, first in Poona Division and the first bus was started on the route from Pune to Ahmednagar on 1st June 1948. Upto March 1952, it had developed to 11 divisions with 1946 being the total number of the vehicles. Belgaum, Bijapur and Hubli, these three divisions were transferred to Mysore State from 1st November 1956, for re-organization purpose. One pocket was handed over to Rajasthan on 1st January 1957, while Bombay State had taken over the operations of Saurashtra State Road Transport Corporation, Nagpur Transport Services and the State Transport of Marathwada.

The Corporation developed step-by-step. It had tremendous development. It had 26 divisions with 8,866 vehicles, employing 64,232 employees with 9,342 routes in every city and village, by making transport arrangement of 27.20 lakh passengers daily.⁵ Now, the transport business is 100% nationalised.

After Nationalization, the number of buses, routes and accommodations were increased. It has made tremendous growth in transport industry. Now-a-days, MSRTC has monopoly in passenger transport in Maharashtra and is a largest transport industry of its kind in the world.

3) Trade Unionism in M.S.R.T.C.

a. Labour Conditions Prior to Nationalization:

The condition of labour prior to nationalization of the passenger transport industry in Maharashtra in the year

1948 was precarious. Motor transport services were operated under different small private operators owning only one or two buses and having no security to workers for their services. Service was not a career for any one of them, it was merely a living for existence. The labour of this industry was disorganized, with the result that the concept of fixed and graded pay-scales, weekly offs, fixed hours of duty, leave rules, medical facilities, etc., were unheard of. Due to the scattered position of the labour, they could not organize any union for collective bargaining.

Nationalization caused to bring a large group of workers in the industry under central control. They were given opportunity to organize themselves in trade unions for betterment of the employees.

b. Labour Conditions after Nationalization:

Trade Unions started functioning in Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation since 1950 and the State Transport Workers Union, which later named itself "The Maharashtra State Road Transport Workers Federation", was recognized at State and Divisional levels upto the year 1967 as the only recognized Union. There was also another Union named "State Transport Kamagar Sabha", which had a majority in some of the divisions, was also recognized for local issues from 1958. After the merger of Road Transport Corporations from Vidarbha and Marathwada in the year 1961, the Unions functioning with these units were

also given recognition. In the year 1965, the various Unions functioning under the name of State Transport Kamagar Sabha, Bombay; State Transport Employees' Union, Aurangabad; and State Transport Mazdoor Union, Thana; were amalgamated to form into one State-wide trade union named as the 'Maharashtra State Transport Mazdoor Sabha' and started agitations for recognition as State level, which was given to it on 1st April, 1967, and at the same time, continued the recognition of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Workers' Federation.

From the date recognitions were given to two Unions at the State level, the Union rivalries started and these continue till this date and the history of labour relations in Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation has become the history of union rivalries between these two State-wide Unions on important issues, not on the grounds of the principles for the welfare of the workers but on the grounds of opposing the schemes sponsored by the rival unions. The best example of it is regarding dearness-allowance on par with the cost of living index, accepted by the Maharashtra State Workers' Federation, but not by the Mazdoor Sabha. Sometimes, the Mazdoor Sabha also does not participate in the joint meetings.⁶

Later on the MRTU & PULP (Maharashtra Recognition of Trade Unions and Prevention of Unfair Labour Practices Act) came into force on 8.9.1975. As per the provisions of the said Act, the Union should seek the recognition from an Industrial Court. M.M.K.Federation and P.R.M.K.Union got the facilities,

which are provided to the M.S.T.Workers Federation (INTUC) and M.S.T.Kamagar Sanghathana in the year 1977. In 1985, the Chalak-Wahak Sanghathana has also got all the facilities which are given to other Unions. Later on, the Caste-Tribe S.T.Karmachari Sanghathana approached the industrial court and got the same facilities from 12.9.1985.

In addition to the above, there are five other registered Unions functioning in M.S.R.T.C., which are as under:

1. The Association of Technical Supervisory Staff;
2. Alpasankhyank S.T.Karmachari Sanghathana;
3. M.S.T.Suraksha Karmachari Sanghathana;
4. M.S.R.T.Engineering Staff Assocaition;
5. Yantriki Karmachari Sanghathana.

At present, M.S.R.T.C. is having 12 Unions. The multiplicity of the Unions have displayed the objectives of trade unions. As the number of trade unions increased, the working of the Unions became so complicated and has created an unhealthy atmosphere in the field of industrial relations in the M.S.R.T.Corporation.

It is, therefore, suggested that there should be only one union for maintaining industrial peace in the industry by taking policy decisions quickly.

REFERENCES

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4. Ibid., pp.10-11.
5. Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation : 'MSRTC Diary 1980'.
6. Shelke, K.B., op.cit., pp.97-101.

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