PREFACE

Road transport is vital to the economic development and social integration of any country. With a land area of 3,287,240 Kms. and an estimated population of more than 125 Crores; road transport in India is both a necessity as well as a convenience. Easy accessibility, flexibility of operations, door-to-door service and reliability have earned road transport an increasingly higher share of both passenger and freight traffic vis-à-vis other transport modes. As per the data up to March, 2010, out of total land passenger requirements of the country, 85.2% are met by road transport while the remaining 14.8% are carried by railways at present.

Buses take up over 90% of Road Public Transport in Indian cities, and serve as a cheap and convenient mode of transport for all classes of society. In India, investment in Road Passenger Transport system is treated as a part of public provision of services whereby one of the key objectives has been to meet the social obligations of an affordable, safe and reliable bus service to the country people.

In India, the Road Transport Corporation Act, 1950 enabled State Governments and Central Government to take initiative for establishing the Road Transport Corporations. Similarly, the Motor Vehicles Act, 1950 was subsequently amended to make special provision for State Transport Undertakings (STUs). This Act was further amended in 1969 for promoting “State Monopoly” in passenger road transport services. Henceforth, The Indian Road Transport Industry through Bus is dominated by the publicly owned State Road Transport Undertakings, abbreviated as STUs. Thus, Passenger Road Transportation System in India has been organized in four forms viz., Public Corporations, Departmental Undertakings, Municipal Undertakings and Government Companies. These four types of set up basically fall under the broad category of State Transport Undertaking (STU), even known as State Road Transport Undertaking (SRTU).

Further, in this cut-to-throat competitive era, with increased concern for economic well being of the organization, more and more organizations are emphasizing on the
qualitative aspects of the work life of the employees; and showing concern about ensuring better Quality of Work Life, henceforth QWL, of their real assets who are ultimately taking care of the bottom line of any organization. This may be because of expected linkage between employees perceiving a better quality of work life in the organization and feeling satisfied and displaying greater work motivation. Consequently, their job involvement would also be higher. This becomes even more relevant when we talk about the Transport Industry in general, and the Passenger Road Transport Industry in particular; wherein the operative level occupies more than 85% of the total manpower strength of a typical transport unit. Yes, in a typical Public Road Transportation Unit, the Operative Level Staff – the real revenue generators – the frontline staff – represent the single largest cohort.

Considering all these, the present research study is focused on assessing the perceived quality of work life (QWL) and job involvement of the Class-III-operative staff (Drivers, Conductors, Driver-cum-Conductors and Mechanic) of one of the largest STUs in India, that is, the Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation (GSRTC). Out of GSRTC’s the total staff strength of 40,670; these categories – Drivers, Conductors, Driver-cum-Conductors and Mechanics occupy nearly 87% (35200). The Quality of Work Life and Job Involvement of these Class-III-Operative (Frontline) staff of GSRTC – the Drivers, Conductors, Driver-cum-Conductors and Mechanics (Workshop & Maintenance staff) requires a careful study, as they are the ‘real on and off-the road soldiers’ fighting for the glooming bottom line leading to economic wellbeing of GSRTC. They are the real revenue generators by executing various schemes, policies and decisions in the best possible way. Considering all these, there is a need to assess the QWL and Job Involvement among these staff, and ensure at least a satisfactory level in it, as research studies have suggested that improvement of QWL seems to be an indispensable ingredient to increased productivity in any sort of organization.

So, my present research is an attempt to study and analyze the QWL concerns and Job Involvement extent among this single largest cohort in GSRTC. I have undertaken a study on perceived QWL and Job Involvement among Employees, to be precise the Drivers, Conductors, Driver-cum-Conductors and Mechanics (Workshop &
Maintenance staff), of selected two divisions – Nadiad (the largest division) and Bharuch (the smallest division) of GSRTC. By adopting the Communication approach of Cross-sectional Descriptive Research Design, I have collected the opinions of 400 respondents from 16 Depots of the selected 2 divisions of GSRTC, through a structured questionnaire, to be precise, a Pre-coded Interview Schedule.

For having insights into the operational performance of GSRTC as a whole on various performance measures, the published database of GSRTC viz. the Annual Reports, Cumulative Costing Results, and the Cumulative Operational Results of GSRTC for the period of last 12 years – 1999-2000 (March, 2000) to 2010-2011 (March, 2011) have been studied and analyzed. The Road Transport Year Book of various years, published by Transport Research Wing, Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, Govt. of India, have also been studied thoroughly.

During the exploration stage, several in-depth interviews and discussions were conducted with the key informants of GSRTC at the Central Office, Ahmedabad as well as at the division level; for understanding the working of GSRTC, the present state of affairs, the views of these key informants regarding various aspects of working of GSRTC, the concern areas etc.

Required primary data have been collected from 400 respondents from 16 Depots of 2 Divisions of GSRTC – Bharuch and Nadiad divisions, through a Pre-coded Interview Schedule. The collected primary data have been analyzed by applying measures of central tendency, frequency distribution, cross tabulation, chi-square test, one sample t-test and measure of correlation; through the use of software packages like Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel.

Findings of this hitherto study are significant from various points of view. The study is expected to give useful inputs to the Society, GSRTC, Employees of GSRTC and to the knowledge domain as follows:

**Contribution to the Society:** The present study would reveal the existing level of availability of quality of work life of the targeted employees as well as their job involvement level in GSRTC. So, the society – the general public would become aware that how hard these employees have been trying to provide utmost quality services to
them and under what kind of working conditions, they are fulfilling their obligations. This might appeal to the sentiments of general public also, and thereby decrease the chances of frequent hostile verbal encounters with these employees, by developing an empathetic orientation among the general public. They may start looking at these employees with due respect and regard, that is missing most of the times, and that would certainly be a welcome sign.

**Contribution to GSRTC:** The present study would identify the basic realities of the favorableness/unfavorableness of the working environment at GSRTC from the view points of these employees – the real revenue generators. This will assist GSRTC to redesign their work places to increase the convenience and comfort of these employees. It may even trigger appropriate people policy measures to ensure better quality of work life to these employees. This study would also help to capture the job involvement level of these employees – an essential input to the operational efficiency of GSRTC. So, appropriate measures can also be initiated in the direction of improving their job involvement, and consequently the financial viability of GSRTC.

**Contribution to Employees:** Through this study, this largely neglected single largest cohort of GSRTC – the Drivers, Conductors, Driver-cum-Conductors and Mechanic Staff of GSRTC – would get an opportunity to voice out their sentiments regarding their work life. This will certainly be a morale booster for them as in pretty long service tenure in GSRTC, through this study, they are being asked about their opinions regarding various facets of their working life. Simultaneously, this study may lead to increased accountability on the part of these employees, as they would come to know about their own involvement levels in their jobs. They may start behaving more consciously and demonstrate organizational citizenship behaviour, and thereby improve the operational efficiency of GSRTC by achieving customer (passenger) delight, optimum utilization of the available resources etc.

**Contribution to Knowledge domain:** The present study, being the first ever primary data based research on quality of work life and job involvement of employees of a State Transport Undertaking – GSRTC, would certainly enrich the existing knowledge database pertaining to this topic. Being a novel research, this would add a
new dimension to the already existing literature on the subject of study; and will surely put an important brick to the sound and strong knowledge building.

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(Mehul G. Thakkar)