The contribution of human resources management in general and collective bargaining in particular is profound in a service-oriented industry like Indian Railways where the quality and effectiveness of the former determine the very survival and growth of the latter.

In practical sense, most of the organisations arrange for the collective bargaining meetings after receiving and scrutinising the charter of employee grievances or demands. Sometimes, Personnel Manager or General Manager arbitrarily dispose the issues without giving due weightage to employees' version. In many organisations, the managements mostly arrange the meetings on an ad hoc basis and irregularly, depending upon the degree of severity of issues. Managements, sometimes, conduct collective bargaining meetings as a delaying tactics of settlement of issues. Consequently, the workers' representatives, resort to direct action at the initial stage itself. This results in loss of millions of mandays, property and production. Managements at this stage seriously conduct collective bargaining meetings, settle the disputes and completely forget about collective bargaining until
the next industrial disputes. Thus, collective bargain-
ing in most of the organisations is an ad hoc machinery for settlement rather than for prevention of industrial disputes.

The state of collective bargaining in Indian Railways is quite contrary to its nature. The collective bargaining in Indian Railways is well planned and permanent as railway administration meets the recognised trade unions continuously in fixed intervals under the two machineries viz., Permanent Negotiating Machinery and Joint Consultative Machinery irrespective of the presence and severity of industrial disputes. Further, the collective bargaining machinery in Indian Railways works at three levels and provides for reference of unresolved issues both to arbitration and adjudication. Negotiating machinery in Indian Railways mostly prevents the disputes and settles them as and when it is necessary. Further, the machinery is comprehensive, in the sense, that all types of employee problems are discussed in the meetings. Thus, the negotiating machinery in Indian Railways is a model and a guiding star to all other organisations in the area of collective bargaining.
Effective functioning of negotiating machinery results in employee job satisfaction which in turn maximises employee contribution to the organisation. The employee contribution may be in the form of increase in punctuality of trains, reduction in accidents caused due to human failure, increase in asset utilisation, increase in passenger satisfaction about the railway service etc. Effective functioning of negotiating machinery in Indian Railways, therefore, results in increased performance of Indian Railways. Similarly, the success of negotiating machinery also results in better performance of South Central Railway.

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viii

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ANANTAPUR
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( E. SHOBHAN BABU )