CHAPTER 9: PRESENT DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED IN
THE APPRAISAL SYSTEMS IN SEMI-GOVERNMENT
ORGANISATIONS

9.01 The performance appraisal of managers (officers)
in Semi-Government organisations in Maharashtra is
being done annually. This is considered as a reasonable
period for assessment of the managerial performance.
The annual assessment can be co-related with the
approved annual plan which includes the physical and
financial targets scheduled to be achieved during the
year which is normally the financial year viz. from
April to March next year. The annual performance
appraisals are called Confidential Report and are kept
confidential. Only the adverse remarks given in the
appraisal report are communicated (if so mentioned
specifically) to the appraisee. It is observed that
the organisations are experiencing difficulties in
the administration of their present appraisal formats.
The same are discussed below.

9.02 Appraisal Interview

The organisations are generally relying on the
written formats and it is only in organisations like
The State Industrial & Investment Corporation of
Maharashtra Limited (SICOM) where the appraisal
interviews are held and the written formats are
discussed. But there is little emphasis on the
appraisal interview and during the short time of
the interview, the appraisee is told what has been his performance during the year and what the management thinks of him and what it wants to do about his award/promotion/transfer.

Whereas it is correct to appraise the appraisee once in a year and to take organizational decisions based on the written format, the appraisal interview is of little value. If it is told to appraisee that his performance has been bad as seen from the written format, he is in most cases in a mood to disagree. He invariably finds out excuses/ reasons (which would tend to make him free of the responsibility for failure) and is sour for the findings told to him. Thus it does not serve the intended purpose of improving him. All that happens in such cases is that he develops instant animosity towards the appraising officers and develop attitude which are detrimental to the organisation. He takes recourse to political and other manoeuvrings immediately, defeating the very purpose of appraisal interview. It is, therefore, desirable to do away with appraisal interviews in the Semi-Government organisations.

9.03 **Attribute coverage.**

Presently the columns in the appraisal format of the different Semi-Government organisations do not cover all the essential attributes required of the
officers. A study of this aspect has been dealt with in a separate chapter. Because of this aspect, the officer does not get fully known for his managerial personality and managerial potential. The appraisal, therefore, becomes incomplete. This has been taken care of in the format recommended by the author.

9.04 Misinterpretation of terms.

Often, the meanings of the attributes are not perceived or not correctly understood by the appraisees. These are interpreted differently than the intended meanings e.g. the column "Is he amenable to discipline?". This column was answered as 'No' in respect of a appraisee who was amenable to discipline thinking that 'amenable' is a derogatory term. The term 'initiative and Drive' is not understood with its appropriate shade with the result that its impact gets missed while assessing the appraisee. Against the column 'integrity' one appraiser wrote 'integral'. It is presumed that he intended to write that the appraisee had the 'integrity' whereas he wrote the word 'integral'. Such answers to the columns make the column either meaningless or inconclusive and in effect render the appraisal ineffective because of the inconsistencies that get introduced in the appraisals. It is, therefore,
necessary to impart training to the officers in the organisation regarding writing the appraisal form. During the training, the meanings of different terms be brought home to them by giving illustrative examples. This would enable them to write the reports effectively and go a long way to reduce the element of subjectivity.

9.05 Inconsistencies in the same report.

There are reports with 'inconsistent' answers inconsistent to the managerial personality of the appraisee on the whole. The following example is cited. In one report, the columns were filled in as below.

(1) Leadership quality = Poor
(2) Intelligence = Average
(3) Initiative and drive = Can forcefully complete the assignment
(4) Creativity = Average
(5) Ability to tackle emergencies = Average
managerial ability = Average

The answer to the 3rd column is not in harmony with the rest. Therefore, there is something wrong somewhere. It is, therefore, difficult to make out the assessment of the appraisee in such a case.

To nullify the effect of such inconsistencies, the review of a report and additional review by a senior officer are considered necessary.
In another case, all the earlier columns filled in indicated a high rating for the appraisee whereas in the end against the column 'Fitness for promotion' it was written that he is 'unfit for promotion'. Such appraisals make it difficult for the organisation to come to conclusions making it imperative to refer the issue back to the appraiser. Much time gets elapsed when the issue is referred back to the appraiser with the result that the appraisee suffers before the clarifications/modifications reach in the proper hands and the report is corrected. In many cases, it has been observed that the clarifications further complicate the matter. It is expected that the three level appraisal reduces the gravity of the effect of such inconsistencies and harmonises the appraisal as a whole.

9.36 Delay in appraisal.

It is observed that in the Semi-Government organisations, the report writing is treated as an annual ritual. The officers have told that they do not find time to write the reports. In fact in some organisations for a reporting year 'April to March next' the forms are not available up to even 'May'. Reminders are then sent to officers to expedite
submission of the reports giving them some last dates. This creates a situation of hurried report writings. There cannot be any concentration for the report writing. Hardly 5 to 10 minutes get assigned to writing a report with the inevitable introduction of inconsistencies and inadequacies in the reports. It is, therefore, vitally important that the blank forms (with names and brief bio-data of the appraisee) are available to the appraisers in December when nine months for the reporting year are completed. The three months from January to March can be utilised to apply mind and keep suitable jottings ready for the appraisals of the subordinates to be written in the first or second week of April. The principle of writing timely reports must be followed invariably.

9.07 Bias and prejudices.

Human beings, as they are, have their bias and prejudices. Whereas the report are to be written unbiased and dispassionately, the situation ceases to be so. The prejudices shadow the performance of the appraisee and the report written gets infiltrated by this. I have seen several reports which testify to this. The organisation find it very difficult to wipe out the effect of this malady. The only remedial measure for this is the three level appraisal.
If there are any feelings of animus in the mind of the first report writing officer, these get offset to some extent when the reviewing officer reviews the appraisal of the appraisee. These get further offset when the appraisal is further reviewed by the senior officer/Departmental Head/Chief Executive (depending upon the rank of the appraisee in the organisation). Similar situation occurs if the first reporting officer deliberately boosts up the appraisee because of any form of bias or personal relations.

9.08 **Isolated instances.**

In some appraisals, it is observed that a few isolated instances are taken cognisance of by the appraiser. Unless the isolated instances are consequential to a basic character of the appraisee, these should not affect the appraisal. Thus if such isolated instances get cited in the appraisal and are not supported by valid overall justifications, it becomes very difficult for the organisation to wipe out the effect of such remarks. In fact I have come across several such reports during the course of my scrutiny of the appraisal reports of the engineers with different ranks. The unsubstantiated remarks go to spoil the report of the officer with the result that the appraisee suffers, if the reviewer
and the senior officer do not exercise proper care for verification of these cited instances. In such cases it is necessary for them to go through the previous appraisals of the appraisee for co-relation and then only arrive at valid conclusions.

9.09 Inconsistencies for different appraisal periods.

It has been observed that in some cases, if appraisals of an individual are seen over a period of two to three years, they are at variance even if they are written by the same reporting officer. Whereas it is granted that the performance of an individual can vary from year to year (it need not be consistently good or consistently bad), the basic characteristics of an individual rarely vary to a large extent. The organisations are finding it difficult to rely on such appraisal when the appraisal is rated quite differently by the same appraisee in respect of basic characteristics like intelligence, leadership quality, etc. This has been my observation also when several appraisal reports were examined by me. The remedial measure for this is the integrity of the reporting officer. He has to consider writing the report as a sacred job to be done judiciously. Further the three level appraisal would take care of this aspect during review and second review by the senior officer.
9.10 **Working under different officers.**

After observation of appraisal reports and having interface with officers in other Semi-Government organisations, I have felt that the appraiser often takes different shapes when working under different officers. He gets different evaluations. If some appraiser is branded as an average or below-average officer continuously for a period of two to three years, he has less chances of improving his evaluation, if he continues to work under the same officer. The organisation finds it difficult as to what to do about the appraiser. The appraiser does not get promoted. He looses all further hopes about it. It is, therefore, very necessary that he is transferred to a different section/department or a place where he is given the chance of working under a different officer. He has then chances for improvement while working under the control and guidance of a different officer. It is, therefore, suggested that officers in such cases be transferred immediately and placed under a different officer, if reports for two consecutive years are bad. In fact the policy to transfer every officer in the managerial cadre, after 3 to 5 years' period should be followed scrupulously by the organisation. This would also go to even bring out the unbiased appraisals in respect of these officers who get unduly boosted up in their appraisal due to over-satisfactory relations with their immediate superiors.
9.11 Appraisal from an inefficient superior.

This is a common problem faced by many Semi-Government organisations. How to value the appraisal from a reporting officer who himself is branded as inefficient? Although it is not that an inefficient superior cannot make intrinsic evaluation but there is a good probability factor that he could. It is likely that some of them will try to compare the performances of the appraisees with his own, and render the appraisals non-realistic. This situation can be corrected if the principle of transfers after every 3 to 5 years is adhered to and performance appraisals over a series of years (with at least 2 different reporting officers) are seen at the time of consideration of the appraisee for promotion.

9.12 Merit ranking.

In the present appraisal format, the attributes of the appraisee are mentioned in a descriptive manner. The grades given in format merely classify the appraisee as Excellent, Very Good, Good, Average or below-average etc. Relative ranking is thus absent. It is, therefore, not possible to place relatively different officers of the same rank.
This is very often required by the organisation when the promotions are required to be done on merit-cum-seniority basis and not merely on seniority and seniority-cum-merit basis. This necessitates ranking of the appraisees on a precise basis, which is possible only if the assessment is arrived at a quantitative basis. In the format developed by the author this aspect has been taken care of as will be seen from the format given in a subsequent chapter.

9.13 Non-realistic appraisals

In some Semi-Government organisations like Maharashtra State Electricity Board, Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation, there are strong trade unions, associations of officers of various categories. When some appraisal reports contain adverse remarks which are communicated to the appraisee, representations are received from the appraisee, the union/association of which the appraisee is a member, as soon as the adverse remarks are communicated to the appraisee after the appraisal reports are finalised. Many officers have, therefore, developed tendencies to write reports in such a way that in bad cases the remarks made are not 'that bad' so as to get communicated to the appraisee. This saves their skin. At the same time, such appraisal reports
cease to be realistic. This tendency to write fake reports in respect of the appraisees whose performance is unsatisfactory has to be curbed. For this purpose, it is necessary for the organisation to train its officers in report writing and also boost up their morale by lending its full support to them in the event of any trouble arising out of such appraisal.

9.14 **Training and Development aspect.**

This aspect is missing from most of the appraisal formats of the Semi-Government organisations. Training - basic and refresher type, is the need which is now universally acknowledged. A person who has been imparted training is bound to do his job in a better way than his counterparts who have not been given any training. The organisations are sending their officers for training at random without knowing the organisational and individual needs. Even senior officers are required to be sent for refresher courses so that they get equipped with latest technologies and methods, and they are with the times. Besides formulating a rational and need-based policy for training and development of an individual, it is
considered necessary to include this aspect in the appraisal format itself so that every year this issue is live for the appraiser. This point has been taken care of in the format developed by the author.