

# **Group Dynamics and Office Politics**

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## **Abstract**

Roma has been accustomed of changing offices after every two years due to frequent transfer of her husband nature of job. Being a North Indian relocating to Sothern India was a daunting task as the new work place is totally a new scenario. The culture of the city, traditions, language all are alien to her. She has been quite adaptive in her prior work places but at this new work place she had to bear the opposition as with her joining the stability of employees who had been there for years without much productivity becomes questionable. With stability lethargy creeps in automatically as people lose the passion to prove themselves. Roma was well aware that after every two year she needs to prove her credential and this ignited the fire to be proactive and diligent. The employee had laid back attitude as management was soft towards the employee performance indicator. The working style of Roma did not gel well with few and especially with Meena, a lady in her late thirties, who considered Roma to be her staunch opponent. Meena was there since last eight year in the office. Being of same age and belonging to same part of the state i.e. North India the jealousy was further fueled. Will Roma be able to work in this atmosphere? What will be the group dynamics with other members of the department and how others will respond and react to this changing dynamics was to be seen.

**Key words:** Office Politics, Group dynamics, Stability of tenure

## **1.0 Introduction**

### **Roma: new member of the organization**

Roma, in late thirties joins a new organization. Being spouse of a service man she had the privilege of serving different organizations in her career span: precisely ten organizations in fifteen year of her career. This was both advantageous and disadvantageous for her. Working in different tiers of cities expanded her depth of understanding and

adjustability. Non permanency of job furthered her to prove herself at every single organization adding wings to her persona. But her passion was most of the times attributed to be her attitude by her peers in most of the organizations. The peers were unable to adopt the proactivity she carried as it dis-balanced their equilibrium of working in a stable manner.

The scenario was repeating itself in this organization too which was culturally, linguistically alien to her roots. Will Roma be able to get the support of her colleagues. Will Roma be able to make her place in new atmosphere.

## **2.0 Organization**

The organization was established by Mr. Ganapat Rao, Chairman and Mr. Ramlingum Raju in early

### **2.1 New member joins the organization:**

The organization was an established name in the field for the last thirty year. Most of the employees were working in the organization for the last seven to eight years. The management was cooperative with not much hassles about cut throat competition unlike private organizations and was approachable with not much deliberation on employees proving themselves every time. Roma joins the organization in this scenario. The dynamics of work place was subtle, easygoing unlike her. She is proactive and her proactiveness and zeal to work with enthusiasm instigated director of the department to diversify operations in new areas using Roma's talent. She was made in-charge of most of the official work and liaisoning. Her work spoke volumes which gradually gained popularity across the whole group. Within a year she was offered hike in salary. She was offered the position of Additional Director which she politely refused owing to her family responsibilities.

### **2.2 Dynamics with colleagues:**

Being human jealousy and insecurity is part of our system barring few exceptional people. It was apparent that her popularity was not taken in right

stride by each one. One of the prominent was Meena, a colleague in same department of Roma's age. Meena was working in the organization since last eight years. She enjoyed the work but as permanency was there Meena carried a laid back attitude. Her personality was of domination and proximity to immediate superior Naresh furthered her attitude. Meena and Roma having same years of experience, same age further propelled the animosity. With growing Roma's popularity Meena's domination and monopoly was shattering day by day. Meena's coterie was playing their part in fueling the jealousy. The growing enmity behind the scenes was surfacing. The bosses refrained themselves from assigning joint work to both of them. Though Meena enjoyed the favors being close to immediate reporting superior, the chair was not in a position to offer full support to Meena. It was not clear if it was fear of position or diplomacy which restricted Ramesh to support Meena openly though both had years of bonding between them .

### **2.3 Promotion of immediate boss Naresh:**

Within six months of Roma's joining Naresh was promoted and shifted to new department with hike in perks and salaries. But his aura was still felt in the parent department. He maintained a professional vibe with Roma though it was uncertain whether he was a true professional, or had dubious intention. The dilemma always played in Roma's head.

### **3.0 Incidents:**

#### **3.1 Orientation:**

With the training of old batch completed it was time for new batch to join the organization. Since the time of Roma's inception it was Roma who was handling the events. This time she requested Director to divide the work among each member. This motive was to divide the work or showing supremacy to others was questionable. The work was divided by Director but it was divided in such a manner that Roma's zone of work was assigned to Meena. Again the brows were raised whether it was done accidentally or intentionally; the work division was ambiguous. With much uproar and negativity the orientation was conducted but it demeaned the atmosphere of the department.

#### **3.2 Meeting Day 1:**

The final blow in the brawling conflict between the two ladies was surfaced open in the meeting room. The two year flame burning in the heart of Meena blasted within five minutes of starting of meeting. Meena used this perfect pedestal for surfacing her emotions. She hysterically blasted for continuous half-an-hour with her friend Sheena supporting her allegations in between. Meena blamed Roma of divide and rule policy. The accusation was not restricted to Roma only. Meena blamed each one present there of ignoring her and being a victim of Roma's influence.

It was questionable why all the sane members kept quiet. It was fear of Meena, short tenure of Roma, or they didn't wanted to sharpen the axe as already it was rife. Roma's silence was also creating mystery. Roma was outraged by Meena's allegations but more so she was aghast of everyone's silence. Was her cultural, linguistic differences kept everyone at bay or was it her instability of tenure which led everyone to keep quite. Why everyone kept quiet was baffling her mind. Is it her out group status the reason for everyone's being silent spectator in the whole incident.

Roma was perplexed, amazed as her two years of sincerity, diligence was shed away in fifteen minutes by a lady whose insecurities made her to behave in unprofessional manner. This was in utter dismay to Roma who was feeling the pinch as why the director did not voice in support of her. Is it her adaptability, short tenure or fear of Meena's dominant nature which left everyone to keep mum on the issue?

#### **3.3 Meeting Day 2**

Today again Meena had started within five minutes of the meeting. But this time the accusations were pointed towards **Shanti** who was once an ally of Meena. The accusations flared off with Shanti being called as cunning, shrewd and posing innocent by Meena. But this time the director Mr. Nagarjuna intervened and tried to save Shanti from Meena's accusations. This was an utter surprise for Roma. She was not able to understand why Nagarjuna was intervening today and did not speak anything the day before. What was in his mind? These questions were raising doubts in Roma's mind.

#### **4.0 Joining Of New Director**

Within fifteen days of this ugly fiasco a new director Mr. Ramesh in par with Nagarjuna joins the department . Ramesh has been made in charge of administrative duties and employees are now supposed to reporting to him. With his coming the first thing he tried to maintain was discipline. The members understood that though new Director Mr. Naresh appears easy but he means business. Within one week all started coming in time. Punctuality was maintained. Meena too started being submissive and interacting with all members. Even with Roma she started to interact but it was too much for Roma. She didn't acknowledge advance welcome moves of Meena. In an incident Sheena was asked to go on a sabbatical leave for two months from the director . Meena was all alone with no one on her side to lean on or she can use to play her games on. But she never raised her voice in support of Sheena who had supported Meena in meeting. The dynamics had changed. Meena understood her monopoly was gone and this new boss Naresh was a not a person who can be dominated.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

Changing scenarios changed the dynamics of employees and now the rest of the employees too started coming out of Meena's circle. Roma's work was further acknowledged but still Nagarjuna was in fear of Meena or he wanted to subdue the animosity of the department was unclear. Why Roma was assigned projects but was never acknowledged in public though Nagarjuna praised her in private, why Meena was praised and feared these questions were in everybody's mind.

After six months of joining of Ramesh, the new director, the time had come for Roma to leave. She was still working with few days left in her kitty but she was totally demotivated. She was working as she couldn't say no to anyone. Was she misfit in this culture of selfish attitude era or her pro-activeness made her look like self-centered person. She was constantly introspecting looking for answers. Will her leaving be felt in organization or her work would be forgotten in days .Only time could answer such dilemmas.

## **6.0 Prelude**

**Roma:** A woman in her late thirties with no financial dependability. She is fierce, sincere in her work. Constantly changing jobs she has to prove what she

has done in last two years makes her grab the opportunity to work. She is not cunning and shrewd. Her drawback is she easily gets provoked and pressurized by others which lets her to act as per the others unknown intentions which makes her get used by others for their personal gain . This is due to the fact that is engrossed in her own problems and not is able to think beyond that which ultimately results in provocation by others to achieve their ulterior motives. She thinks that hundred percent truth is right. Contrary in management one needs to give half-truth. She needs to understand that there is no straight line in life. Hard work and dedication are just not sufficient to survive. A lit bit of co-optation is required in every place as politics is omnipresent.

**Meena** –A woman in late thirties like Roma. She has been in the organization for last eight year. She is dominant in nature and knows how to get her work done as she is a close ally of immediate superior Naresh. She had enjoyed a supremacy in department before joining of Roma. She had left the organization last year citing salary increase issues. She joined another organization after that but left within months and sat idle for one year. Unable to cope with any other organization she joined back recently with Roma with salary raise. She had the capability of dominating the director Mr. Nagarjuna. It was unclear why Nagarjuna was bearing her knowing her attitude and unreeling attitude towards work. She used the Naresh's closeness to get her favors. She was financially dependent on her salary as her husband had meager income and was suffering from illness. She had a son to look after with her parents living nearby off and on support her.

**Sheena**-an ally of Meena . She is a divorced middle aged women. Both Meena and she come together on Sheena's vehicle. Being alone she finds solace and emotional comfort in Meena. She does a lot for Meena and is always ready to raise her voice in support of Meena. Whether Meena reciprocates the same is questionable as when Sheena was asked to take a sabbatical Meena was as comfortable without Sheena as she was in her presence. She belonged to a wealthy family with a daughter with ample support from her family members.

**Nagarjuna** –a man in sixties who was associated with college for last eighteen years since its inception. He was a man who praised Roma in private but always tried to cover the shortcomings of

other employees who didn't do their part. But for dissemination of work he relied on only on few. He had only a year to retire. He can change like chameleon and to save his skin can easily blame others. His reputation and rapport with management was not very cordial in comparison to other directors. He had daughters who had settled down and had no financial responsibility to take care. Still his greed for chair was obvious

**Shanti**—an ally of Roma in beginning but took sides with Meena later on. She was naïve and could easily be trapped in anyone's words. She was sincere to her work but afraid to take sides. After Meena's true color showed she left her and again became ally of Roma. She was living alone with her kids and mother for the education of her kids. Her husband was wealthy but was in his hometown. She was a lady who had fears in her mind and couldn't take stand.

**Naresh**—departmental head, a man in his late twenties. He was hard working but why Meena and

Sheena didn't work even being close to him was questionable. He knew how to play his game well and on the surface he appeared fair. But he wanted his presence felt in parent department even after his promotion to new department. His motives were ambiguous.

**Ramesh** – a man in late forties. He was associated with organization for last ten decade. He was shifted to Roma's department as management felt under Nagarjuna the department was not growing and adequate information was not being given to management. He was man of few words but was firm in his approach. With him discipline was maintained in department. A lot of positive changes occurred in department and all were now engrossed in their work. Though Meena tried to create scene and Sheena complained against Roma Ramesh discarded and insisted on doing work. He took action on complain against Sheena by trainees and sent Sheena on sabbatical leave. He was assertive.

#### Organization Chart

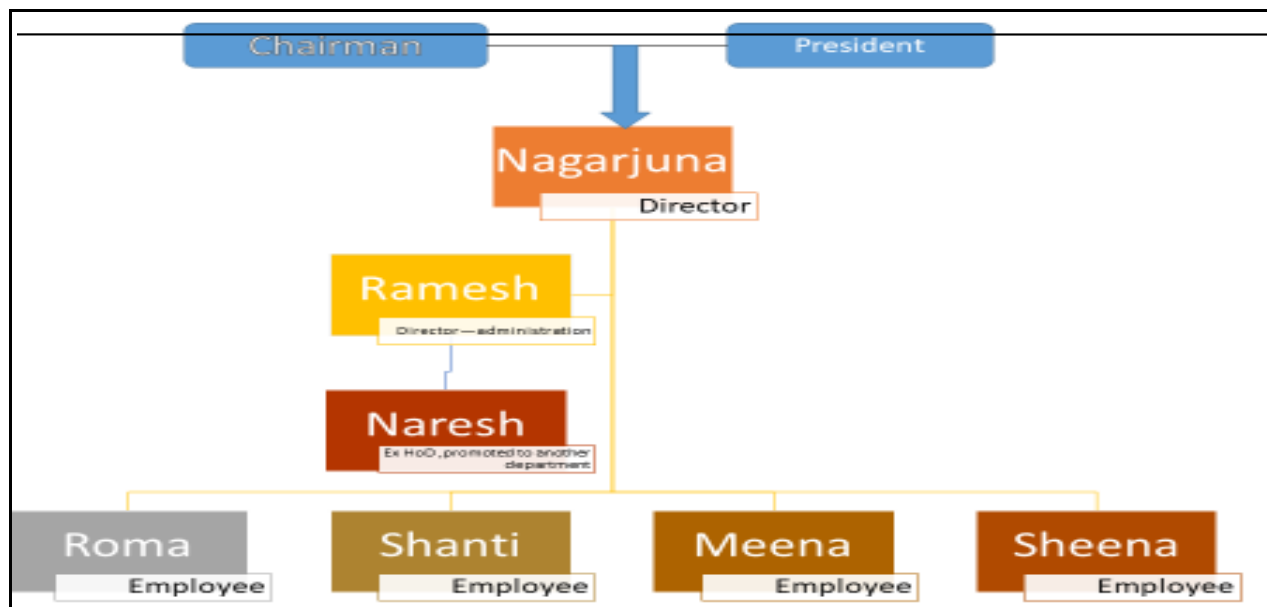


Fig 1 : Organization Chart

#### 7.0 Potential uses and teaching objective

The case has been developed for teaching in Organization Behavior Curriculum. It can be used in the MBA and PGDM course for teaching courses in

- Psychological Contract
- Stability of tenure

- Adaptability
- Office politics
- Group Dynamics among employees
- Personalities at work place and their Behavior

### **7.1 The teaching objectives are**

1. To understand the issues a new employee faces on joining an organization
2. To understand the group dynamics among members of the organization and how it changes and influences the equilibrium between all members
3. To understand why people behave in a certain manner in an organization and how it is related to their family background and personality.
4. To understand the expectations of employees from superiors and their support required

The case has been developed to bring the group dynamics complexity and office politics when equilibrium is disturbed with the joining of a new member of different clan, tradition and state. The case can be taught to MBA students in Organization behavior course.

**Author :** The author has presented research papers in International Conferences like KJ Somaiya , Mumbai , IIM Calcutta ,IIM Indore ,SIMSARC ,Management Development Institute Gurgaon ,NIRMA University. Papers are published in Symbiosis journal SAMVAD and Scopus journal. Author is external reviewer for SIBM SAMVAD journal and was Convener of the International Conference organized by Vishwa Vishwani School of Business, in 2019. Along with academics author has been instrumental in organizing and conducting various workshops like Email writing workshop for TCS pre-placement drive in State Technical University of Bhopal, MP, resume building, mock press Conference which has imparted administrative skills and has trained students for SSB in SRT test and GD. Author is Ph.D guide for Balaji University.