

MY JOURNEY WITH KONKAN RAILWAY

My journey started with KRCL on my joining the Organization on 3rd August 2005 on deputation from Western Railway. I was posted as Chief Operation Manager (COM). I was entrusted the work of monitoring of running of trains on Konkan Railway section, jurisdiction extending from Roha (the last station of Central Railway on line towards Goa) to Mangalore (the last station of Southern Railway on line towards Goa/Mumbai).

My journey has been a roller-coaster ride.

I worked as COM for 21 months.

The challenges faced while working as COM:

- Very less freight traffic
- Dependence on adjoining railways
- Inexperienced Staff
- Inadequate staff
- Almost nil training facilities
- Concept of Distance Inflation

I was granted permanent absorption in Konkan Railway w.e.f. 15th November 2007. I was selected as Director (Operations & Commercial) by PESB and I took over the charge of the post of Director (Operations & Commercial on 7th May 2008. The biggest challenge was to 'Improve Revenues'.

I was entrusted the additional charge of the post of Managing Director with effect from 1st September 2009 in addition to my duties as Director (Operations & Commercial). I was on a mission mode to turnaround Konkan Railway into a profitable Organization. The simple strategy was to cut down the expenditure and increase the revenue to come out of red. Both the strategies were very challenging. Officers and staff were not inclined to cut down the cost and adopt the austerity measures. So, I had to take the lead.

The first note signed by me as MD on 1st September 2009 was for a self-imposed cut in my salary.

"I would like to have ten percent (10%) voluntary cut in my salary from 1.9.2009 till further. Kindly arrange for my salary accordingly".

This was my commitment and dedication to Konkan Railway. I had taken the pledge to make Konkan Railway a profitable Organization.

When I was entrusted the charge of the post of Managing Director, the financial position of the Corporation was dismal. Keeping in view the financial position of the Corporation, I had to take some bold decisions on various issues concerning human resources, projects, open line etc. My decisions made life uncomfortable for many people. I had hit the basic level of comfort, with respect to draining out of the system financially and taking decisions on ad-hoc basis or purely on favouring some over the others.

I had the cut in my salary up to March 2010.

KRCL became profitable in 2009-10.

However, due to onetime cleaning up of Balance Sheet; provisions were made for impaired projects and provision for Pension Fund were made. This purging brought the Balance Sheet of 2012-13 to loss of (235Cr.)

Again, I decided to have a 10% cut in salary starting from April 2013. The cut continued till March 2014.

The total amount of cut in salary was Rs. 3,00,736/-

I took over as Managing Director on regular basis w.e.f. 25th November 2010 on my selection through PESB.

The post of MD was elevated as Chairman & Managing Director w.e.f. 5th March 2013

THE TURN AROUND:

Railways have two main distinct revenue streams. One is Freight which is earning stream and Second is Passenger which is a loss-making stream. In fact, tariffs of freight traffic are based on the principle of 'what it can bear' (commodity value is guiding factor for fixing the tariff) and the passenger fares are kept low because of social and political compulsions.

We were not getting enough freight traffic. The passenger traffic was predominant with unending demand for more and more passenger trains. We were afraid of increasing the passenger trains on the section with an anticipation of saving paths for Freight trains to improve are bottom-line.

I decided against this conservative approach and opened up, for taking more and more passenger trains. I adopted the strategy of higher volumes of traffic as the additional revenue would at least compensate my high fixed cost. At the same time, I decided to take up traffic facility works to keep on increasing the capacity. It was for the anticipated freight traffic.

To increase the availability of the system most of the time for running of trains the monitoring was done for repairs and maintenance. Preventive Maintenance was the buzz word. This strategy gave us more paths to run additional trains.

One more strategy for passenger trains was adopted to increasing the number of coaches per train. Running of passenger trains full load, utilising the full hauling capacity of the engine.

Konkan Railway is a single line section. On a single line section if the passenger and freight traffic have differential speeds the capacity of running trains decreases. Therefore, there was a need to speed up the speed of freight trains. I decided to double head the locos for freight trains. This strategy gave us immediate dividends.

Konkan Railway have 80 tunnels. Long tunnels have air-quality monitoring system. When a Passenger train passes through a tunnel, second passenger train cannot be sent in the tunnel unless air quality is adequate. This was a big bottleneck. As whenever freight train was crossing a tunnel, the loco while struggling to pull load was releasing lot of smoke. The next passenger train used to wait for tunnel ventilation system to clear the smoke. The moment we over powered freight train the amount of smoke was reduced to negligible as two locos were able to pull freight train through the tunnels easily and much faster.

Increase in the passenger traffic gave rich dividends as the total revenue started showing improvement year over year. This reduced our cost of running a unit train on Konkan Railway route. Fixed cost was taken care off.

Growth of Passenger Traffic

Particular	Unit	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Passenger Trains Run	Number	10563	11372	12421	13714	14901	16839
Number of Coaches	Number	178897	190604	211840	238014	253133	278326
Earnings	Crores	276	299	339	384	459	546

Growth of Freight Traffic

Particular	Unit	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Freights Trains Run	Number	4610	5501	5548	6549	7042	5772
Freight Earnings	Crores	302	301	333	343	418	359

ROLL ON-ROLL OFF (RO-RO) SERVICE:

It is a signature service of Konkan Railway. The loaded or empty trucks are loaded directly on wagons. The drivers go along with the truck. The Ro-Ro Service runs between Kolad (First station of KR near Mumbai) and Surathkal (The Konkan Railway Station in Mangalore). The distance of 730 Km covered in 24 hours. By road, journey time was 96 hours due to many Ghat sections. Truck driver saves on time and wear & tear of the trucks. It was estimated that Roll On-Roll Off services helps the Nation in saving of diesel to the tune of 45+ lakh litres in a year. For loading of trucks the low bottom wagon (Railway code DBKM) was used. These wagons are used for transporting army trucks and tanks. Indian Railways gave us about 80 such wagons. One rake consists of 40 wagons, so, we could have two rakes for Ro-Ro service.

Ro-Ro Earnings: -

Year	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Earnings in Crore	22.1	25.85	35.64	50.09	67.20	73.30

All these efforts of increasing in revenue and restricting the expenditure we could Turn-around Konkan Railway.

Konkan Railway made net profit in 2009-10 for the first time during its operational phase since 1998.

Year	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Net Profit	11	2	19.2	(235) *	13.11	39.39	130

*In the year 2012-13, Konkan Railway made a loss of ₹ 235 Cr. This was a notional loss as I had resorted to take one time hit of bad investments which were not yielding the results. It was an exercise of cleansing of our Balance Sheet. Additional provision of ₹ 139.92 Cr. was made towards Employees' Pension Fund. In fact, it was found that actuary was not taking the right figures/parameters for calculation. We changed the Actuary on realising that. The option was to stagger the hit in 4-5 instalments over next 4-5 years, but I decided to take one-time shock rather than spreading to many years of sufferings.

The capital expenditure on projects like ACD and SkyBus, which were not giving earnings, was considered as impaired assets. The amounts of ₹ 8.82 Cr. (ACD) and ₹ 23.34 Cr. (Sky-bus) were deemed as impairment of assets.

Impairment of Assets and one-time provision of Employee Benefit Liability are exceptional items specifically made in the financial year 2012-13. Thereafter, we had no problem in regard to financial health.

KR EFFORTS ON BOND REDEMPTION:

Another focus area for me was the Debt. So far Konkan Railway was surviving on doles from Indian Railways. For me the situation was far from comfort level. I knew so many cases that companies making good profit but got into trouble just because they could not service the debt. So, it was important to be able to survive and service the debt without getting help from Indian Railways. On this my Financial Directors were not with me on same page. They felt we are a social organization and doing service to people, so what if we take loan from Indian Railways, Infact it should be considered as subsidy. But, I was determined not to take assistance from Indian Railways or Market for servicing our debt. I felt unless and until we learn to stand on our feet we cannot be the best and will not be innovating in improving our efficiency and cutting down of our cost.

(₹ in Crore)

Particulars	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Redemption	250	321	58	73	401	638
Interest	163	131	133	132	119	112
Total	413	452	191	205	520	750
Indian Railway support	297	308	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Konkan Railway Efforts	116	144	191	205	520	750

Till 2010-11, Konkan Railway was seeking cash assistance from Indian Railways thereafter, it has been Nil.

STAFF WELFARE:

Konkan Railway is having approximately staff of 5000. During five-year period total of 3112 employees were promoted.

A total of 979 candidates were recruited through various Recruitment Process during the same time. Most of the recruitments were from Land Losers. Land loser are the people who had given their land helping Konkan Railway in construction, as a goodwill gesture a decision was taken voluntarily to recruit staff from land losers. The decision was taken while Konkan Railway started its Operation Phase.

Special Awards in the name of the former CMD/MDs were introduced. The Special Awards are being given away during the Foundation Day Celebration (15th October) every year.

For imparting various training to Officers, staff, employees' children and spouses, 'Gurukul' – Knowledge Hub was started at Konkan Rail Vihar, Nerul, Navi Mumbai.

As a First on Indian Railways, AC running room was constructed at Goa and Surathkal stations.

Supervisory staff, who are regularly on move and are required to deal with lot of Data, were provided with Laptops with internet facility.

Training for Customer Care for frontline staff (TTEs) was started. My idea was to develop expertise in this, imparting training to TTEs. I knew Indian Railways were sending TTEs to a Private Organization for Training. We had collected the curriculum and had further improved it. We had added the case studies based on the actual incidents happened in trains. We had added the role play and used to video record it used to play back so that TTEs can improve upon their behaviour and conduct. I saw huge potential in this venture. But for the lack of support from my officers, I could not take it further.

A five-day Workshop cum Training was started for Senior Supervisors and Officers. It was for better day-to-day communication and effective drafting of business letters and writing reports.

Many other initiatives like Senior Counsellor/Psychologist was appointed. Special care for chronic alcoholic were taken through counselling and monitoring their performance. Extending the services of Homeopathy for chronic diseases. Women's Day and Children's Day Celebration by calling eminent personalities.

Sports: For the first time on Konkan Railway, we started Annual Sports Meet for Officers and Staff. The running shield in the name of Ex. MD Shri. Gokhale started. This practice is followed on other Railways. On my parent Western Railway, it is well awaited event of the year and the trophy/shield name is Pant Shield.

Similarly, annual Inter-Regional Girls and Boys Meet and camps were started.

Konkan Railway Welfare Organisation (KRWO): On the lines of Indian Railways Welfare Organisation established KRWO to promote welfare schemes such as providing all possible assistance for acquisition of houses for KRCL employees on 'No Profit No Loss' basis.

Konkan Railway Co-operative Credit Society (KRCCS): In 2012, initiated KRCCS to help the staff by providing soft loan as a welfare measure. It has been a great success and the scheme is very popular. Through the Society, Konkan Railway is extending its welfare arm to discourage the staff from taking loan from the money lenders.

Celebrating the Birthday: An innovative scheme was introduced for employees. An amount of ₹ 1000/- is paid to the staff and officers on their birthdays as a gift from KRCL. This was to say that You are important to the Company & we care for you.

INTRODUCTION OF UNIQUE SCHEMES FOR PASSENGERS:

Shravan Seva: was introduced for Senior Citizens travelling over Konkan Railway. This Scheme includes extending a Helping Hand to them by an Attendant to carry their luggage at boarding/alighting points. This service was rendered as respect to senior citizen, free of cost.

KR Sarthi Seva: was introduced for the benefit of physically disabled passengers. In this service, wheel-chair along with an assistant is provided free of cost.

Diet & Diabetic Meal: Flagship trains of Konkan Railway are Konkan Kanya Express and Mandovi Express. These trains run between Mumbai and Goa. They carry lot of Tourists both local as well as foreigners. These trains are having pantry cars. And since we are authorised to have our own catering policy we have different Menu in these pantry cars. The catering on these services have always been an appreciation point for us. While interacting with passengers I could feel there is a demand for Diabetic meals and also diet meals. Both were introduced. The lot of variety was added in the menu. Both the services were highly appreciated.

PROJECTS:

Konkan Railway was outsourcing the survey work. I insisted that this activity should be done in-house. There were three reasons:

- Many times, it was noticed the quality of survey was bad and needed lot of corrections in that process we were losing precious time
- KRCL was having large pool of Engineers and many had the past experience
- Once we become strong it could have been a revenue stream for Konkan Railway

In-house survey was conducted successfully:

1. Rail Connectivity to Jaigad
2. Chiplun -Karad new Line
3. Doubling of Konkan Railway
4. *Electrification Survey of Konkan Route*: The survey report was appreciated by Railway Board and the same had become the benchmark for other Zonal Railways.
5. Kudgi Super Thermal Power Project
6. Gadarwara Super Thermal Power Project
7. Rourkela NHPCL extension of Power Plant Survey and DPR
8. Vaibhav wadi-Kolhapur new line

We bought new latest equipment and software for survey work.

For Electrification survey we had called Quotations we received quotes of 3 crore and above. I decided that this survey should be done in-house. After initial resistance things settled in right perspective. The final cost for the survey was only 35 lakhs. By creating a survey team, we could save lot of money and time for execution of projects.

INSTITUTES:

Looking to our strengths we thought of starting following Institutes:

1. **“George Fernandes Institute of Tunnel Technology”**- It was inaugurated on 23rd October 2015 at Madgaon. There is no such institute in India and Asia. It has lot of potential to become World Class Institute for Tunnel Technology. It can become an independent Profit Centre for KRCL. Tunnelling is the core competency of KRCL.
2. **“Ram Krishna Hegde Institute for Skill Development”** – established at Udupi: On 16th November 2015, the foundation stone was laid for the construction of Ram Krishna Hedge Institute for Skill Development. The Institute was planned to provide skill development to youths, having hostel facility and library facility. The training imparted will help in employment generation for the youths.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:

Though Konkan Railway was not making profit, but some schemes were thought of which we could implement without incurring cost to the corporation. To name some schemes:

- Computer Training to villagers at Stations by providing released computers
- Telemedicine service at stations falling in poor and backward districts: we could examine the patients for Cataract, we could take ECG etc Doctors of Mumbai were roped in for this service
- We adopted the Lake in Goa for restoring the ecology- the target was to get back the migratory birds which were coming to the lake every winter before Konkan Railway was constructed cutting across the lake. This was undertaken with the help of the Forest Department Goa.

Once we started making profit we added many more schemes:

- Training to Auto and Taxi drivers of major stations with the help of Tourist Departments. After a week's training they were given certificate by the Tourism Department to act as a Guide in his local station.
- Toilets were constructed in schools along the Konkan Railway Route
- Two Vans were converted into library to visit various villages along the KRCL route
- Two vans were converted into Computer Labs visiting various villages to impart Computer Literacy. Released computers were used. IT staff of Konkan Railway was giving the training.

FOR THE ENVIRONMENT:

- Solar Park was created at Ratnagiri
- Solar Panel installed on Station Rooftops and on isolated Gate Signals
- Compost plants were installed at Karwar, Goa and Ratnagiri stations: It was noticed the various trains running over Konkan Railway having Pantry Cars used to dump the waste anywhere along the route. We started a novel scheme of paying ₹ 50/- per bag of 20 kg Trash to Pantry Cars at Madgaon and Ratnagiri stations. The scheme was a great success. The trash was segregated and fed to the Compost Plants.
- Bio-toilets
- Water harvesting was started on few stations of Karnataka by roping in an NGO
- Medicinal Plants were planted on slopes and vacant lands. The guidance of Krishi Vidyalaya, Dhabol was sought in selection of these plant species.
- For our stations and offices, we started buying furniture from Forest Corporation dealing with manufacturing of furniture. Earlier we were buying steel furniture which used to corrode very fast as Konkan Railway is close to sea.
- Implementation of e-Office system developed by NIC, a major step towards paperless office and contributing to Green environment.

ACCOLADES:

During my journey of KRCL many Awards, Recognitions & Trophies were received/earned: -

Turn Around Trophy:

For Turning Around loss-making organization into a Profit-Making Organization We won “BRPSE Turnaround Award 2012”

Rajbhasha Shields:

- For the first time awarded Indira Gandhi Rajbhasha Award 2012-13 SECOND PRIZE for KRCL commendable work in implementation of Official Language. I received the award from Hon’ble President of India. KRCL received this award for three years during my tenure.

S.N.	For the Year	Award	Remarks
1	2012-13	Indira Gandhi Rajbhasha Puraskar (2 nd Prize)	Received by me as CMD/KRCL on 14 th Sept 2013
2	2014-15	Rajbhasha Keerti Puraskar (3 rd Prize)	Received by me as CMD/KRCL on 14 th Sept 2015
3	2015-16*	Rajbhasha Keerti Puraskar (1 st Prize)	Received by present CMD/KRCL on 14 th Sept 2016

* My tenure as CMD/KRCL was upto November 2015.

- Karwar Region was awarded First Prize and Rajbhasha Shield by Town Official Implementation Committee, Madgaon during 2013-14
- Ratnagiri Region was awarded First Prize and Rajbhasha Shield declared by Town Official Implementation Committee, Ratnagiri during the year 2013-14.

HR Award:

Received “HR Leadership Award” in the year 2014 during the Global HR Summit in Mumbai

IT Awards:

- KRCL bagged the “CSI” 2011 Award of Excellence in information Technology” awarded by Computer Society of India.
- “The Great Mind Challenge for Business Awards 2009” received in November 2009 from IBM India South Asia.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE RATING BY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISE (DPE)

Year	Rating
2011-12	Excellent
2012-13	Excellent
2013-14	Excellent

MOU rating by DPE

Year	Rating
2009-10	Good
2010-11	Good
2011-12	Very Good
2012-13	Good
2013-14	Very Good
2014-15	Very Good
2015-16 *	Excellent

*I was CMD till November 2015

Negative Side of my Journey:

I made many visible and invisible enemies during my journey of KRCL. I had to be tough. I was determined. I had a mission to take KRCL to new heights. I had to implement the austerity measures. Every austerity measure started with me. I had a very less willingly support as everyone had to moveout of their comfortable zone. The Union, my colleagues, Non-workers and some politicians became my critic. I had to answer many complaints. In the process I suffered. I got little support from my seniors. Sometimes I feel if you are honest, hardworking and straight forward, then there is no place for you in the society, especially in Government service. The people who are basically, non-workers and manipulators, get promotions, recognitions and whatever they want. I can name plenty of such persons. Today, though I am satisfied with what we could achieve for KRCL; I am a deeply hurt man.
