

Dirty Waters

Bratin Chattopadhyay worked as a plant supervisor for a medium sized chemical company in S city. His job consisted of overseeing the production of the newly researched chemical products of the company. After months of intense research, Bratin's company recently produced a new variant of truck lubricant oil which could be produced at a competitive price but had greater performance efficiency than its competitor's products. The company decided to hold the manufacturing of this lubricant at its unit which stood close to the well-known lake, Moti Sarovar. It had already applied for permission to dump industrial waste into Moti Sarovar. Several other chemical plants were also releasing waste into Moti Sarovar.

Last Tuesday, Bratin went on a plant visit to the unit manufacturing the new lubricant. The plant unit was well maintained and all machinery was working in order. Bratin was highly please with the operations of the unit. However he also wished to see Moti Sarovar, the beautiful lake situated just behind the plant complex. This visit left him surprised.

On the waters of the lake, he found a huge population of water birds which were feeding on the fish from the lake. Nearby he also found settlements of a population of people which have sprung up around the banks of Moti Sarovar, mostly migrant workers and labourers who were also found fishing in the lake. Bratin was concerned as the fish from the lake could be contaminated due to industrial chemical waste present in its waters. This could harm the health of the bird population and also people who were consuming as well as selling the fish for their livelihood.

Bratin was concerned as he knew that that government has granted necessary permission to his company to release industrial waste into the lake. He knew that an additional stage in the production process would have reduced the wastes and also recycled some of them, but this would mean an additional cost burden on his company. This additional process would increase production costs and may affect the comparative costs of the new product in the market. Predictive financial calculations have shown that this new truck lubricant could be produced at comparative costs in the market. Bratin's company has just recovered from a mediocre performance for several quarters, and everyone is anxious to see the new product do well. The company is expecting a lot of orders for the new product and morale of the employees are also high as they are expecting sizable bonuses.

Bratin is concerned about the environmental impact of the new product and its resultant waste and decides to talk to his boss, Sudhir Seth, about his worries. Sudhir replies: "The government has given a green signal to dump industrial waste into Moti Sarovar. The government must have checked all environmental issues about Moti Sarovar before granting them the permit. Moreover there were other chemical companies also which were dumping their wastes into Moti Sarovar.

Bratin, you should not be worried about this matter. At this point, building the additional process would require costly interruptions in the production process and might destroy the competitive advantage of their product. No one in the company would want that. Bratin, I warn you not to cause any trouble in the production without any solid reason. The company doesn't like troublemakers. You wouldn't want to have to find a new job."

Bratin was upset with this reply from Sudhir. He could foresee the benefit of this new product but at the same time was concerned that the short-sightedness of his company might hurt them in the long run. The Vice President of Operations will tour the plant next week, and Bratin considers approaching him with his concern. Bratin is unsure of what to do, but he feels he should do something.

What should Bratin do to solve this problem?

Developed by

Prof Anuradha Pandit,

St Kabir Institute of Professional Studies

Email Id: anuradha@skips.in