

"A man is
great by
deeds, not by
birth"
-Chanakya

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Case Study

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Rajanna – Ethical Dilemma

Guda Sridhar¹

¹ Associate Professor, Marketing Management Area, Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode, IIMK Campus
P.O, Kerala – 673570, India, E-mail: drgsridhar@iimk.ac.in , Phone: +91- 495 - 2809104

RAJANNA'S ETHICAL DILEMMA¹

Abstract

This case highlights a typical ethical dilemma of, Gudigantala Rajanna. On one side, he had to uphold the values that his parents nurtured in him since childhood and on the other side he had to keep his promises to the voters. After becoming a ward councilor and incessant pursuit of getting drinking water facility to his ward, he was in a dilemma to consider the bribe from the person who was awarded the contract.

Pedagogical Objectives

The objective of this case is to help understand and analyze various ethical decision-making strategies

Case Positioning and Setting

This is an ideal case to start a course on ethics, be it for an undergraduate or a post graduate program or a training program. This case gives scope to elicit several ethical decision-making strategies which generally form the larger part of these course sessions.

Keywords

Ethics, Ethical Decision Making, Approaches to Ethical Decision Making

¹Characters and names in the case are disguised for confidentiality.

Gudigantala Rajanna was born to government school teachers and lived in the outskirts of Warangal, Telangana State of India. His parents taught him the importance of being honest, kind-hearted and hardworking. Right from his young age, he wanted to serve the society in a meaningful way. After completing graduation, he took up social work and started campaigning for clean drinking water, a perennial problem in his municipal ward.

Rajanna, who had been living in his ward for 32 years, had friends across ages and was hailed to be a simple and honest person. He observed that the ward grew from about 5000 population to 15,000 in the last five years i.e. 2011-16. Such sudden increase was attributed to new academic establishments (schools and colleges) that came up recently. As the land value increased and the disposable income grew due to increased economic activity in the ward, construction of houses and apartments increased and had an adverse impact on the ground water tables. In the last five years i.e. 2011-16, the problem became acute to the extent that several households had to purchase water on a daily basis.

About five years back in 2011, in a community meeting, Rajanna was encouraged by the local Member of Parliament (MP) and Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), to join politics. Both the politicians belonged to the same political party. About two years later he contested for the Ward Councillor position from his ward and won by a huge margin. Many attributed his win to the election promise of providing better drinking water facility in the ward.

Over the next four years, he took relentless efforts in highlighting the water problem of his ward. His co-councillors cautioned that his style of working was not in line with the way the system functioned in a Municipal Corporation. At each stage the bureaucracy let him down by way of hurdles in his efforts to provide drinking water facility in the ward. Nevertheless, his efforts paid off when Municipal Corporation granted him a budget of Rs. 80,00,000 to lay municipal water supply pipes and build a water harvesting facility in his ward.

However, even two months after the contract was awarded, the work did not start. When Rajanna went to the contractor and enquired about the commencement and completion of work, he replied, "Dear Rajanna, my workers are busy for the next eight months and they cannot take up new work now". However, he added, "if you allow me to take a 5% cut from the sanctioned amount, I would be able to somehow manage and complete the work in this financial year and enable you to achieve your election promises".

Rajanna was stuck. On one side he wanted to live on the principles and morals taught by his parents. On the other side he had his election promises to be kept. Rajanna was lost in his own thoughts contemplating on the right course of action.

Research Office

Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode

IIMK Campus P. O.,

Kozhikode, Kerala, India,

PIN - 673 570

Phone: +91-495-2809238

Email: research@iimk.ac.in

Web: <https://iimk.ac.in/research/publicationmenu.php>

