

CIB Mumbai Chapter Meeting **A Report**

Always looking for ways to encourage maximum participation and involvement from members of the CIB Mumbai Chapter, its Convenor, S. Venkatesh experimented with conducting the November Chapter meeting at any member's work place. Considering each one's busy schedule and time crunch, this experiment was seen as a good idea. Thus on November 18, 2016, Venkatesh took the initiative to host the month's meeting at Siemens Ltd. Head office premises at Mumbai. His detailed planning, periodic reminders and constant contact paid off. The meeting room at the multinational's premises was official yet welcoming. It provided opportunity for a close-knit, interactive and meaningful discussion.

Since several newly joined members were attending the meeting for the first time, Venkatesh went through the customary, yet necessary time of introductions. He then placed the Agenda before the group of 10 members. The purpose of the agenda was simple: *Revisit the core purpose of the Mumbai Chapter and see if in the fast-changing economic and political situations sweeping the world over, if CIB's role is still relevant and what can it do, if it is to play a role in business and industry.*

Projected on the screen were the bullet points:

Definition of Ethics:

- Legal versus Ethics
- Rules versus Ethics

Role of Mumbai Chapter:

- What should we do?
- How should we do this?
- How can you help?

It seemed a good idea to all present that instead of reinventing the wheel to answer these questions; the team should reflect on CIB's existing framework and pick up from there. The reflections brought out the following thoughts:

CIB is a fraternity of persons from business and industry that come together with a common intent—to encourage one another that it is possible to remain competitive while being ethical; the operative word being 'encourage'. If the purpose of CIB is to be an 'encourager' then it should refrain from playing the role of an 'activist'. This point became particularly relevant because several business persons had been asking, "What do I gain from being a part of CIB?" or "How can CIB help me in my business?" or "Can CIB help with my excise problems?" and similar such questions.

The reflection further yielded that meetings of the present kind that the Chapter was conducting on a monthly basis; Round Table deliberations; speaking forums; and other events were the kind of things that CIB was already involved with and should continue. The benefits of such forums were considered:



- It provided an opportunity for business persons to share from their heart the challenges that they were going through in the struggle to remain competitive while walking the often lonely road of ethicality.
- It gave opportunity for others to share their own experiences and learning—those of success and failure.
- It created a platform to look at best business practices and learn from them so that the same could be considered or emulated at another setting.
- It provided scope for business persons to network and see how at an individual or corporate level, help and advice could be offered.

To the definition of legality or rules versus ethics, someone shared that being ethical is not equal to following the law or staying legal. Another submitted what CIB believes and has often advocated. “Ethics is doing what is right.” This brief response covered a wide spectrum of white, black and all the grey in between. If one’s moral conscience (and it can be said that there is always inherent good in all men) looked beyond ‘what is ethical’ to ‘what is right’—bearing in mind the wide gamut of not just profitability in business but even its employees, society at large and the environment—it would be a safe plumb line to go by while making decisions.

This further prompted another to say that ethics is also being able to take responsibility for one’s mistakes.

Other indicators of knowing that you are doing what is right were highlighted:

“Do you feel good after you make your decision?” asked one business person.

“The barometer of doing what is right is your own assessment,” said another.

One member who is part of the banking sector revealed how there were several challenges and ethical dilemmas that one faces when it comes to say, utilization of funds. There is a target and often one has to make decisions that do not let

your conscience rest in peace. Yet there is the risk of being a non-performer where it can be said, "If you don't do it, someone else who can, will fill your place." In such a dilemma how does one stand firm? The quiet response was clear—such decisions require courage and conviction. Someone gave an example of how his friend stood firm in his conviction and courageously took his stand. "He resigned," he continued, "and is now working in a better organization with a greater responsibility."

The MD of a small-scale industry while citing his own experiences with corrupt regulatory officials shared how planning the foreseeable gives you an edge and puts you in control. "What is not within your control is what forces one to succumb," he said honestly.

The members of the CIB Mumbai Chapter then reflected on the way forward and agreed that striking a balance between small meetings and larger Round Table deliberations was the practical way forward. The importance of a small core team consisting primarily of



persons from business and industry was also re-emphasised. Several were urged to see how they could give a small amount of their time per week, even if via conference calling, to help put the wheels into accelerated motion.

Within the hour, a sense of having had a useful, enriching time of fellowship pervaded the room. Each left with the feeling of being happy that they had come. Before closing the meeting, Venkatesh announced that the next meeting would be at the IofC flat on the Worli Sea-face on the second Saturday of the month, which in this month fell on December 8, 2016.