

CIB on wings



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India
Initiatives of Change
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Editorial

It has been often said that “Change is the only constant.” This expression is true as can be seen in the constantly changing environment around us—be it in the political, business, environment and a host of other spheres. But trying to ignite behavioural change, with values as the guiding principle, is by far not the easiest in the context of all the other change we see around.

Thus on hearing of programs done by IC-Centre for Governance (IC-CfG) and Initiatives of Change (IofC) with management personnel of Coal India Ltd.; and their efforts to stir within participants the potential they each carry to bring positive change, not only to their working environment but to Coal India and the nation at large, I spoke with one of the facilitators who has been consistently present for the programs done over the past two years. What he had to share was inspiring.

CIB is therefore very glad to carry this report for you in the hope that you too, on reading this, would be inspired. Disruption, Volatility and Uncertainty are not the only images on today's global canvas. Hope and Reason have their space too.

Editor



Uncovering Polished Stones

Coal India Ltd., a public sector organization, is one of the largest employers in India. The number of employees they have in various parts of the country is huge. Because Coal India is so spread out and also because of its long history, especially with the coal mafia, the organization has several challenges, especially in the context of ethics.

Now some people from the Company decided that something needs to be done about this because huge quantities of coal was siphoned off to private dealers with the help of the mafia instead of to the government owned firm. It was realised that such illegal operations could not be done without the tacit help from corrupt officers within Coal India. An Apex Body for ethics was formed. This body began searching for those who could provide the right inputs to the Coal India staff. The objective was to spread the message of the importance of ethics throughout the organization, starting from the top. This Apex Body looked at various agencies. Finally they considered IofC too; and with the help of IofC's associate organization, IC-Centre for Governance (IC-CfG), the Coal India



Apex Body was convinced that the tools employed by IofC were right and effective to accomplish their objectives. The experience of senior members within IC-CfG, who have themselves handled public sector organizations, was another important factor in this selection. These IC-CfG members have experienced IofC and its impact in Public Sector Units (PSU).

Regardless of the department or division that each individual worked for, each was capable of following a value system that they themselves were able to create. This value system could then help guide them during the time of making challenging decisions.

To begin with, around two years ago, a few conferences were held at Ranchi, the capital of the State of Jharkhand for middle and senior level managers of Coal India. A team from IofC was invited to conduct these conferences at the Indian Institute of Coal Management (IICM), a beautiful centre in that city. Ranchi can also be likened to the coal capital of India. These officers were handling a lot of the administrative machinery of the organization, which also was the most corrupt. At the conference, which was attended by 45 to 50 officers we told them that regardless of the department or division that each individual worked for, each was capable of following a value system that they themselves were able to create. This value system could then help guide them during the time of making challenging decisions. Decisions guided by value-based principles would not only help in the work-place but also at home with the family. This in turn would help realize that each of us has a stake in making our life more useful to the organization with a bigger perspective of how it will affect the whole nation.

Such sharing was a very new concept for all those present at the conference. They were so used to a regular routine life of going to work in the morning and returning home in the evening that initially it was a big challenge to widen their horizon. It was important to get through that it is a bigger world than what one is used to living in just now. Our attempt was to make them understand how they could address that bigger world. How they could become active participants in that wonderful world that was presently beyond their horizon. In the initial stages, most people viewed us suspiciously and with apprehension. They were not sure where we come from and what our motives were. It took time to gain their confidence.

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Our approach was simple. We mentioned two steps that could help us be better individuals. One was to get them to identify a value system and the other was how to sustain it. We told them that to set up a value system, each individual must do that himself. However to sustain it, our encouragement was for them to take time out each day in quiet reflection and contemplate where each person's life was heading. There is a saying that a life not examined is not worth living. To practically illustrate this, we cited the example of how the computer conducts a virus check regularly to ensure that it is not infected; and in the event of it detecting a virus, the Anti-virus deals with it. In much the same way, we too can do a virus check

on ourselves each day. This approach interested several people so that by the second day, we had them asking us to tell them how they could do this. Since we had several friends from IofC, both from the rural as well as the metros of India, who had come to support the event, we drew on what these friends could share from their own personal experiences and the effect that examining themselves brought in their work place, their villages and in their homes. This led us to conduct sessions on "Inner Governance". During these sessions, each was encouraged to reflect on how, instead of being governed by external forces, we could be governed by one's inner strength. By request, these sessions were also conducted in Coal India's Headquarters in Kolkata. At this time some of their higher management personnel attended including their Apex Body for Ethics. The Apex Body members were called from all over the country and asked to attend this session. Our approach was to impress upon them through personal sharing, how being governed by one's inner strength and values is far more effective than being governed by any other external agency. Codes of Conduct, Statutes, Anti-corruption laws, etc. can be likened to these external agencies.

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In the past two years, since the programs with Coal India first started, we have been doing at least six programs a year. In each session we have about 45 to 50 participants. Now there is a request that the programs we conduct be extended to the personnel from the collieries too. When this

happens, the efforts will have to be more concentrated than it is now.

To provide a glimpse of what we do in a session, I will share about what we did at the most recent program in Ranchi that was held around a month ago. In this program, senior managers from different locations all over the country attended. While these managers had come for a program on a different theme, we were asked to conduct a full-day session. We started off by saying that each person is potentially a very powerful person and has the ability to do a lot; if s/he believes in themselves. In such a case, ordinary people have been found to do extra-ordinary things. This, we undergirded with examples of people from the rural areas, the slums and the industrial areas. Through these examples, delegates could see how people who chose to change themselves not only created a different environment in their homes, among their family members and neighbours; but also made a difference in their work environment. In the work place, the sharing showed the change in relationships with their superiors, their colleagues and with workers; and how this made a huge positive impact on the entire organization.

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Following this period of sharing, we provided a good length of time for everyone, in quiet reflection, to contemplate on what they had heard. We then gave each an opportunity to share their thoughts. One person shared how he felt about his boss. "He knows nothing," he said. "He discards everything I tell him only to later pass it off as his own idea. This is very frustrating." He and others sought advice as to how to deal with situations

like these. Now there is always a temptation to give such advice to people. So we curb these temptations by saying: We cannot give you advice as to how you should deal with your situations. The greatest advisor is within you. If you take time out, like all of us have done, you will find within yourself how to govern your decisions. Regardless of which religion, caste, background or culture one comes from; we all have this inherent power to govern ourselves by what is right. This can be largely achieved by spending time in silence and focusing on three aspects.

The first is to find out if there is a higher purpose to our lives. If so, we must connect with that. The second aspect focuses on how we can correct ourselves. It may not be possible to correct everything that we have done, but we can take hold of opportunities for restitution, wherever we can. Apology is a great way of bringing restitution in relationships. The third aspect is to find out our role in achieving our bigger purpose in life. Contemplating on our role will generate ideas, where no idea is bad but worthwhile. Big things always start from simple thoughts. This we exemplify by sharing very simple steps. A person who decides to stop drinking alcohol, for example, can be instrumental in bringing huge change to the entire village. There have been cases where villages that were formerly known for brewing alcohol have



now been transformed into agricultural centres. Examples like this made our delegates recognise how small thoughts can have far-reaching impact. By the end of the session, we could see that everyone was very excited and ready to try this out.

Because Coal India is so vast and it is a great challenge to cover their numerous locations, we have been asked to train some of their dedicated trainers, who in turn can carry on the work. However such an exercise requires not only a minimum of two-weeks with the potential trainers but more importantly should involve people who are willing to apply these principles to the heart rather than the head.

In order to keep the encouragement on the boil, those who have attended these programs are included to a Whatsapp group. Brief stories and comments from individuals not only reveal the impact the program(s) have had on the individuals but it also serves as a constant encouragement when real-life examples are shared.

"Over the past two years, is there a noticeable impact on the behavioural change of personnel in Coal India?" asked the writer of this Report.

"Huge!" said Dr. Amit Mukherjee who has consistently been a facilitator in these programs. "In fact the former Secretary of the Ministry of Coal, Govt. of India, acknowledged that apart from the other steps that were taken, the programs run by IofC have contributed to the huge change in the behaviour within the management of Coal India Ltd. He also acknowledged that corruption too has dropped to a very great extent. However, we all recognize that there is a long way to go. What we hope is that the higher management of the Corporation, even when there are changes at the top, can continue to see the value in these programs for sustained effectiveness."

*As narrated by Dr. Amit Mukherjee, Jamshedpur. Dr. Mukherjee is also the
Convenor of the CIB Jamshedpur Chapter.*

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