



Guiding Spirit to Shipping Industry

Sagar Sandesh

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Gender Equality at Work- Views by Mrs. H.K. Joshi, CMD SCI



Mrs HK Joshi- CMD SCI

Gender Equality is not only a fundamental human right - one of the core values of United Nation, but an essential prerequisite for building a sustainable world. There's no dearth of capability in women but they do not get enough opportunities to shine and prove themselves expressed by Mrs. HK Joshi, the SCI's first woman CMD.

Mrs. H.K. Joshi joined the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) as Director (Finance) in February 2015 prior to which she served with ONGC for 31 years. The Maharatna PSU gave her a rich and diversified experience of over three decades including about two decades of association with ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL - overseas arm of ONGC) which looked after its international business acquisitions. She had started her career as a lecturer in the Delhi University, before she joined the corporate world. Mrs. Joshi's entry into the Maritime Industry turned out to be a true challenge being the first woman CMD in a predominantly male-oriented industry. There is an internal support which comes naturally when the formative years of one's career are spent with the organization/ industry which had not been the case for her since her growth trajectory had been with ONGC and she was labelled

as an 'outsider'. This coupled with the losses for 3 consecutive years from 2010-11 to 2013-14 immediately prior to her joining on account of a bleak market scenario in shipping made the task even more daunting for her. New to the shipping industry, having come from the Oil sector, she found herself battling the high tide. Undeterred by the challenges that she encountered she overcame the internal resistance to change and to being an 'outsider' taking it in her stride as she accepted this as a normal human behavior. She was determined to contribute against all odds for the betterment of the company. **A self-starter, an avid learner equipped with her strong background and grooming helped her to take on the challenge and learn the nuances of the Industry and achieve a turnaround and build a financially strong and robust SCI on the foundation of financial prudence, cost savings and strategic vision. She however is filled with optimism and positivity towards all and expresses her heartfelt gratitude to the Government of India and to the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways who had the faith in her capability and who believed in her.**

It is gratifying to note that SCI has done admirably well on all fronts and the performance and financials under Chairmanship of Mrs. Joshi have been exemplary breaking decade old records. While the company did capitalize on the market upswings, prudent financial management along with micro planning and a visionary outlook helped to sustain the company in the midst of the pandemic. **Among the many path-breaking initiatives that have been taken by the Company, in her tenure, the company got its first Business Continuity plan (BCP) well**

ahead of the lock down and it was smooth sailing for the company thereafter. Winning the "Shipping Company of the Year" award from TMS was another exhilarating first considering that the company received this international recognition for the first time in its 60 years. which was remarkable. The Company set a new benchmark, and created history in the national as well as the global maritime, when for the first time an SCI product carrier, manned by an 'all-women officers' team sailed from Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) to Vadinar in Gujarat loaded with 50,000 MT of Mumbai High Crude Oil, a difficult voyage by itself. The journey of the "All woman crew" wasn't a one-time event and they continued on their next voyage to Panna Oil Field where the vessel will load Crude again for discharge at Vadinar demonstrating the seriousness of the initiative as a routine business operation for SCI. This is a big cultural change.

The 'All-Women Officers' Sailing' was the first such initiative taken by a shipping company in the maritime history of the world - a 'national' carrier commanded and manned by a team of Indian Women Officers, all certified in India".

A distant dream, the smooth execution of the 'all women officers' sailing' from the conceptualization of the idea to its successful culmination, has been the result of a relentless perseverance of SCI, as a whole, against all odds in form of procedural intricacies and, lately, the pandemic obstacles. The historic feat achieved on the eve of International Women's Day celebrates the empowerment of the women not only in the seafaring profession but of the entire maritime industry too, a



Mrs HK Joshi - on Board

clear indication of the integration of diversity and inclusion in the sector - a major transformation and change in perception from the male dominated sector.

SCI's percentage of women seafarers compares well with the global average of 2 percent and is almost double. The conceptualization of the idea of an all-women officers' team sailing required courage and risk taking ability for putting the ball in motion due to the associated risk and responsibility. The capability of the organization was never in doubt, but to lend fructification to the idea was a challenge which was overcome and the event got executed to perfection with the concerted efforts of the entire SCI Team.

It was time to demonstrate and showcase the capability of women, affording them the visibility that they deserved and to empower them through a 'show of confidence' in their abilities. **Women can do it. All they need are opportunities and a bit of support at times.** When I look back, I knew I would be able to lead a company before I was even given the opportunity, but it took time for general acceptance and realization. I hope the Industry now drops any bias that it may have had for an outsider

considering I have the courage and determination of a seafarer and I relate perfectly to them. We should not deny women an equal opportunity and an equal platform. If women's capabilities are doubted, then, inclusivity and diversity can never be promoted in a workspace.

A precedent always makes the successive action easier and I would believe that this feat would have truly served its fruitful purpose if it reposes confidence in women and opens up and provides them the deserving opportunities while the entire maritime sector regards them with due respect and recognition and acceptance as one of their own. We also need to appreciate and acknowledge all those who believed in me and resolved to execute and turn the distant dream into a reality showcasing the Organization's potential and commitment to provide equal opportunities.

Women Leadership comes with a lot of responsibility. A misstep can lead to the leader being perceived as a 'negative' role model and result in blocking the path for those who follow in suit.

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I have been able to excel and perform and continue to break age old records for the company despite holding three key positions, CMD and Director (Finance) of SCI and the Managing Director of India Ports Global Ltd (since September 2020). The company has done exceptionally well despite the pandemic challenges due to the farsightedness and strategic dexterity. The COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent lockdown did not disrupt the operations or the functions of the company and we gained much more momentum during the time. Our vessels were also COVID-free, which speaks volumes of the safety measures adopted and the crew change managed effectively, leading to recognition by the Nautical Institute for effective crew management by the SCI – a major achievement. The adverse situation though unprecedented was maneuvered effectively. **SCI Team is a force to be reckoned with and the human asset is the real asset of the company.**

Women's economic empowerment has been an Agenda for the UN's Sustainable

Development 2030 and SD Goal 5 has a two pronged agenda, not just promote gender equality and empower all women and girls, but also to address obstacles to gender inequality, including undertaking reforms to give women equal rights to economic and other resources. The World Maritime Day 2019 theme viz. **"Empowering Women in the Maritime Community"** emphasizing the importance of **gender equality** was in line with **these Sustainable Development Goals** and to highlight the contribution of women within the maritime sector. The UN Theme for the IWD 2021 viz. **Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world.** celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) during the Maritime SheEO conference held in November 2020 announced a maritime leadership programme for women which would sponsor a number of women from developing countries and will include training, mentoring



Mrs HK Joshi with Lady Officers

and networking opportunities promoting and supporting gender diversity in the maritime sector. This is a very welcome initiative to groom women for leadership positions which should churn out substantial women leaders going forward for an equitable growth.

The opportunity should

be used to rebuild from this crisis inclusively, equitably and sustainably, as opined by the IMO Secretary and put women's leadership and contributions at the heart of resilience and recovery and the sector may be managed such that all talent is used across the gender divide.

There is an urgent need for equal future for the humankind in the Post COVID-19 world which will pave the way for the possibility of a better world and we cannot afford to lose time. Rather the time to act upon it is now.

Pirates have kidnapped fifteen crew members from a chemical tanker in the Gulf of Guinea.

De PoliShipmanagement confirmed that its vessel, Davide B, was attacked about 210

nautical miles south of Cotonou, Benin at approximately 1500 UTC on Thursday.

Initially, the company reported that contact had been established crew who took shelter in the citadel of the ship.

Pirates Kidnap 15 from Chemical Tanker in Gulf of Guinea



Chemical Tanker MT Davide B, was attacked about 210 nautical miles south of Cotonou, Benin

An update said fifteen crew members had been kidnapped.

Six others remain on board and are reported safe and unhurt. Security personnel were on scene attending the ship.

"De PoliShipmanagement are greatly concerned about the attack on its vessel and seafarers. The company's main priority now is to establish contact with the missing crew in order to secure

their earliest and safe release. De PoliShipmanagement's Emergency Response Team are liaising with all relevant authorities who have been notified immediately after the incident which occurred at appx. 15.00 UTC on Thursday. The company are in close contact with the families of the seafarers to support them in this extremely difficult time," the company said in a statement.

The MT Davide B is a 2016 built chemical tanker which was on a commercial voyage from Riga, Latvia to Lagos, Nigeria at the time of the attack. The vessel is flying the Maltese flag.

"For the time being De PoliShipmanagement will not be providing any further information in order not to jeopardize the safety of those involved," the company added.

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