

The Quintessential Chartered Accountant – Cut nose - Spite face!

The recent times have seen a torrent of emotions on the functioning of the ICAI. I chanced to hear an illustrious industry finance doyen and a senior member of the fraternity sound extremely critical of our profession. Whilst I am confident that this gent meant well and was truly concerned about where we were heading, his speech did more than merely stir me. It actually set me thinking on a couple of perspectives that are open to discussion, debate, missives, missiles or what I would simply summarise as valuable feedback.

I am neither defending nor am I in acceptance of what the propositions and criticisms are (these are also reflected in an unending stream of critical mails), albeit to say that these need to be measured and more importantly reflect elegance and grace at all times for there would be no greater folly that to cut off one's nose to spite one's face!

Those who are critical of the present state of the profession perhaps have very little insights on the plurality of the landscape that ICAI seeks to serve. This can be quite a daunting task. The needs of a member in an area like Tirupur or Meerut are very different from an urban metro like Bangalore or Delhi. In our zeal for growth, we have perhaps failed to recognise this mosaic that exists. This diversity calls for Branch level strategies rather than a one size fits all approach.

The CA course content should be the only constant while all other strategies should explore unique approaches to Branch development for student enrolment, training methodologies and professional development strategies. These initiatives need to address the needs of the local markets we seek to service and grow for member and client benefit

Our critics need to remind themselves that we are a microcosm of the society we inhabit. The facile and the sometimes thoughtless remarks and references to our value systems and allegations of improper conduct should also be viewed in the context of the human capital indicators of the country. These indicators include corruption indices, difficulty in doing business in the country, complexity of laws, etc. It is time we shed our watch dog, blood hound image and be the lions - the movers and shakers who can change the face of the landscape that we operate in.

Satyam continues to haunt us as we are constantly reminded of this and beaten up and battered by everyone and his companion. Let us stop for a while to remind ourselves that Paramalat, Barings Bank, Olympus, Enron, Freddie Mac, Ponzi schemes did not occur in India. These are all stories of individual greed just as Satyam is. May be its time we turned back and make an attempt to silence our critics. Professional Ethics is a slight misnomer for in my view Ethics are personal and intimately wired in our brains and hearts. A whole profession cannot be blamed for an individual's story

The mails and outpourings reach a crescendo closer to the council elections and shortly thereafter. Seldom have I heard someone implore the brighter and the better of us to come forward to be part of the council. This must be a sustained effort to bring in more talent to lead this profession. Leadership that can understand real issues, talk and most importantly walk the talk!

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