

Future belongs to Innovation, Inquisitiveness and Our Willingness to Comply with the Law

“A new era has arrived wherein the future will always belong to innovation, inquisitiveness and a will to learn and abide by the law and rules. Our accountancy profession is not an avocation but a public service. Our signatures should be used for what is just and what is right, and what we believe to be just and right to the best of our knowledge and sensibilities,” says the author as he shares his views on Indian accountancy profession and the ICAI standing tall at 70. “A strong compliance to the Code of Ethics of the ICAI is what differentiates a Chartered Accountant from other professionals” the author adds. Read on...



CA. Subodh Kumar Agrawal

The author is Past President of ICAI and former President of SAFA. He can be reached at subodhka@gmail.com or eboard@icai.in



As the ICAI completes its 70th year of glorious existence and celebrates its Platinum Jubilee on 1st July 2019, the Indian accountancy profession stands tall at the forefront of the knowledge economy, leading by example. Widely acknowledged by the Indian polity as the veritable partner in nation-building, the Indian accountancy profession enjoys a very high status today as *conscience keeper* of the Indian economy, *backbone* of financial discipline and *harbinger* of national growth. Much of the credit for this exalted position

of Indian CA profession goes to the visionary leadership of ICAI, who have been shaping the present, while preparing the profession to face the future with panache. Let us pay tribute to our predecessors in this profession, who have so far deftly steered the profession through all changes and challenges of their respective times.

With each passing year, the Indian accountancy profession and the ICAI has recorded a phenomenal growth and brought about remarkable improvement in the quality of

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the profession. New layers of lustre have been added to the decade-old tradition of integrity and excellence through its continued service to the Nation. Every year, the CA professionals have strived to raise their bar of excellence in the best interests of the economy of our Nation leaving a distinct mark in the inspiring journey of the ICAI. They have continued to share the vision of the profession in their endeavours so that our profession remains relevant, inspiring and guiding all the time. Our professional colleagues will have to inculcate the basic values to make the CA profession keep its head held high. As Chartered Accountants, we should always live by a set of core values that motivates us to do the right thing and be vigilant and accountable.

During my tenure as the President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, I always found my professional colleagues driven by commitment and hard work - they always showed their keenness to accept the challenges of their times and to respond to them in the most appropriate manner. The key values like foresightedness, hard-work and commitment have helped me in my professional endeavours and these have still been guiding light in my professional pursuits. I believe our responsibilities go beyond the Financial Results. These are basically the key to success in any field of life.

With the passage of time, phenomenal changes have

occurred in the Professional scenario and these changes are getting reflected in all professional spheres. Information Technology and automation are going to be a key disruptor and enabler in the context of commerce and economy of our Country. And this must be true for all jurisdictions alike. Learning the contemporary IT skills would always be the key driver for success in the times to come. Let us not go too far. That era has already arrived. Future will always belong to innovation, inquisitiveness and a will to learn and abide by the law and rules. I have one suggestion for our young colleagues— always follow the basics— abide by the law. And please remember that our accountancy profession is not an avocation but a public service. Our signatures should be used for what is just and what is right, and what we believe to be just and right to the best of our knowledge and sensibilities.

Among many other duties undertaken by a Chartered Accountant, a mention may be made of service as an arbitrator for the settlement of disputes and those connected with insolvency work the duties of a trustee in the realm of bankruptcy.

As all of us are aware, the CA Profession has been the exemplification of ethics and integrity. ICAI and our professional colleagues have always taken the righteous path and have been respected by the society for reinforcing the ethical fabric of the Country. Ethics don't have to be forced

but this has to be part of our life - this has to be in our basics. If our inbuilt conduct is ethical, all other things that follow will be just and right. A strong compliance to the *Code of Ethics* of the ICAI is what differentiates a Chartered Accountant from other professionals.

The future of audit is going to be different in a digital society. There are challenges too. The three changes – evolving smart and digital technology, continued globalization of reporting/disclosure standards and new forms of regulation – are also major challenges for the profession. In fact, the UDIN movement of ICAI will go a long way in protecting and preserving our professional identity and standing. But despite all developments in IT and automation, audit will always require human intervention. Machines will not be able to replace the values like *professional scepticism, opinion and professional judgement*, which changes and transforms a mundane task to a strategic one.

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With their financial expertise and business acumen, coupled with deep-rooted values of integrity and professionalism, Chartered Accountants will add value to a plethora of business. So, the accountancy profession will grow and will keep on growing in the years to come. There will always be an abundance of professional opportunities for our professional colleagues. We are required to continue to scale up our competencies, especially in terms of quality, which has remained a consistent focus for our *alma mater* since its inception.

Capacity-building of CA profession will not be complete unless we consider the needs of the Small & Medium Practitioner's (SMPs) and their fundamental requirements. Only the strengthened SMPs will be able to capitalise on the opportunities of their times. There is a need to look beyond the assurance services. The profile of business and

economy is changing and, therefore, the profession will need to keep pace with changes in the economy and structure its course curriculum and Continuous Professional Education, which is responsive to changes all around.

I would ask my young professional colleagues to remain focused, responsive and ethics-driven. There is no substitute for hard work. Believe in your *alma mater*, which is capable of responding to the needs of our times. The Indian CA profession is already global and it is ready to take up the global economic cause. Meanwhile, members and firms require to get the professional dexterity relevant for the overseas market. "*There is no elevator to success; you have to take the stairs*". So, succeeding as a Chartered Accountant calls for a well-rounded set of business skills and personal attributes – (i) Communication skills, (ii) Commercial awareness, (iii) Ethics and Professionalism and (iv) Analytical skills.

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As members of the CA profession, we need to ensure our contribution to our Country being the partners in Nation-building. We need to continue to create the positive impact on our economy. We are working in every sector of our economy and the role of Chartered Accountants is all encompassing - so in the success of every sector of our economy lies our contributions. The profile of Chartered Accountants has changed corresponding to the changes in the economy and the rising demand for Chartered Accountants justifies our relevance in the market.

Another important agenda before our profession today is to empower our young members as well as our women members. As everybody is aware, our professional CA course is gender neutral and I am happy to note that female students and members are increasingly doing well and picking up the professional nuances quite smartly. With the course offerings being gender neutral, all get an equal opportunity. Let our inner strength be in the right place which, in association with the hard-earned professional credentials, will always yield success.

Indeed, the Indian chartered Accountancy profession will be the valued trustees of world class financial competencies, good governance and competitiveness. ■