



Smt. B.K. Sokhey has assumed the charge of Director (Finance) of NBCC on 16th August 2019. A B.Com (Hons.) from the prestigious Shree Ram College of Commerce of Delhi University and a Fellow of the Institute of Cost Accountants of India, she started her career with Peerless General Finance. After serving there for approx. two years (from 1987 to 1989) she joined NBCC as Accounts Officer in the Finance Department at Corporate Office, New Delhi, on January 15, 1990.

Smt. Sokhey has, to her credit, more than 33 years of rich experience of working in different capacities in all the areas of Accounts and Finance. She has wide exposure in Treasury Management, Corporate Accounts, Tendering, Merger & Acquisition, Investor Relations & IPO Management and has played a key role in the development and introduction of ERP system in NBCC.

Smt. Sokhey is the first woman to hold the charge of a full time Director in NBCC's history. In addition to her present assignment as Director (Finance) in NBCC, Smt. Sokhey is also one of the Director on the Board of Real Estate Development & Construction Corporation of Rajasthan Limited (REDCC), a JV Company of NBCC and looking after Financial matters & policies of JV.

Smt. Sokhey has always strived to foster the philosophy of equal opportunity employer and has contributed towards creating an exclusive workplace in NBCC.

Q1. If any, what challenges have you experienced as a woman during your overall career?

Ans. Women continue to encounter challenges when it comes to advancing in the workplace-and in many facets of life and career. But it is all about building a cultural workplace which fully engages and supports all employees. Since the start of my professional career, my family has been a strong support and has truly motivated me to do better and better. My journey with NBCC has been a gender-neutral one as our organisation has always supported and upheld the rights and stakes of women employees at all levels. This is the reason that we have female employees at almost every senior level and position of the executive hierarchy. However, networking opportunities is one of the challenges which helps in career advancement and knowledge sharing remained neglected due to family obligations. Thus, I would say, it depends on the company's work culture ethos, practice of good corporate governance that ultimately determine the working environment status of its employees, irrespective of gender.

Q2. What are the challenges to female leadership? What advice or suggestions can you give to women walking the path of empowerment?

Ans. Since time immemorial, the society at large has looked upon its women folk as those, meant to primarily attend to household duties and responsibilities. As a result of this social stigma, women in general, covertly face this challenge even today which hinders their progress towards achieving their goals, be it leadership or else. Fighting gender stereotypes that men would do better than women always act as 'block' to their journey up the ladder in workplace or elsewhere. However, silver lining is that, there are a large number of women in today's professional and social world who are holding successful leadership role and inspiring confidence among the women folk in general and hence things are fast changing.

As far as my take goes in this regard, I would suggest women should stay optimistic, be self-motivated and learn time management

skills. It is vital for women to put into practice, the traits of decency, morality, ethics, honesty, courage, positive attitude and be truthful in performing their duties. These traits not only contribute to one's career advancement but also establish mutual trust and help making them principled, moral and ethical human beings.

Q3. How would you characterize the opportunities for women professionals of India in recent times?

Ans. There has been quite an evolution. Decades ago, it was uncommon for a woman to have an important position in any reputed organisation of India. But, today, more and more women are assuming important board and executive roles. I attribute this change to the growing global conversation on the diversity issue highlighting the value that women can bring, to a company and its board. The second factor is opportunities which is constantly opening up for women for high-end education, skill development, training- be it any field. This has immensely contributed to having larger number of qualified women coming into all professional domains. The social infrastructure of the country is changing. Taking examples and inspiration from rich history of India, we today have strong women personalities leading in various sectors such as Engineering, HR, Finance, Administration, Governance etc. We now experience a push for greater women representation in almost all fields of life and living which indeed is overwhelming.

Q4. Can you offer some practical tips for women seeking directorships?

Ans. Women seeking directorship must prepare themselves comprehensively, right from the word 'go'. Education and experience in their interest area, knowledge in micro and macro matters of the industry are the key. I religiously pursued these things all along, dreaming high which led me to move up, in workplace. Indeed women need to challenge themselves to move into top level management jobs.

Women must take initiatives to reach higher in the corporate hierarchy. Women who seek board positions should continuously work on building their business knowledge base in order to be able to add value to the corporate mission and vision.

Q5. What were the critical success factors for you in moving up in the workplace as a woman?

Ans. I believe "Consistency is the key". Being consistent in delivering the best and keep learning is what makes one unique and different from others. Apart from this, self-awareness is woman's superpower. Knowing yourself, your strengths, interests, values, grabbing opportunities for improvement, coaching and becoming proactive are what make one shine brighter.

Q6. This year's budget has come with a number of positive updates for Infrastructure sector. According to you, what more improvement required in this arena to strengthen ease of doing business?

Ans. India's Union Budget 2021 is focused on providing a much needed stimulus to the economy and Hon'ble Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman has attempted to address the core problems being currently faced by the economy. It is a progressive Budget on multiple counts, including health, sanitisation, new institutional structures and the infrastructure needs of the economy.

In terms of real estate, we welcome the proposal to extend the additional tax exemption available to first time affordable home buyers until March 2022. This will boost end-user demand for affordable homes. Affordable housing projects can also avail a tax holiday till March 31, 2022, which is a supply side stimulus that will aid real estate developers.

The government will likely focus on investing in building robust infrastructure and productive assets, which will be key in realising India's self-reliance ambition. Infrastructure is one area where India needs to scale up significantly to compete with its peers globally.

Further, Government is also committed to improving ease of doing business and Hon'ble Finance Minister specifically expressed the government's vision of 'Atmanirbharta' or self-reliance.

Personally, I would like Government to continue to work on the ease of doing business along with some measures proposed in the budget my own area. To focus on construction industry where main cause for delay in initialising any work is the approvals from various statutory authorities required to be sought from different offices before taking up the work. A single window system should be devised and powers may be given to concerned Municipal Authorities for according all approvals through a committee which may have representatives from other statutory authorities also e.g. Airport Authority of India, Ministry of Environment and forest, State Environment Authority/ Forest Department, Fire Department, Traffic police/ UTTIPEC etc.

Similarly, the process of acquisition of land for the projects is a time consuming process and projects are delayed considerably on account of this reason. This process should be made easy and time bound by making firm rules of acquisition in this regard.

The projects in Delhi suffered due to restrictions imposed during every winter due to pollution from construction related activities. The firm guidelines suggesting measures for dust mitigation e.g. 12m high barricading all around the plot, covering of structure above 12m height with green cloth, wheel cleaning facility at all exit points, sprinkling of water during excavation etc. needs to be made mandatory during construction/execution of projects. The work should not be stopped by any authorities, if these guidelines are meticulously being followed in the projects. Or else the labour payments for the period of ban be borne by client since it becomes difficult to remobilize the labour leading to further delay in work.

Q7. The whole world is passing through tough times due to the outbreak of COVID-19. How NBCC has supported the Government and society hard-hit by lockdowns and COVID-19 ?

Ans. COVID-19 pandemic threw all activities completely out of gear. Organizations across, also got impacted heavily.

Taking active part in ensuring implementation of all Covid-19 measures and guidelines issued by Government of India from time to time in the organization, our Finance Head ensured uninterrupted finance activities by finance staff so that payments/receipts/ disbursement of funds etc. are in no way hampered even while working from home by the staff.

NBCC and its Subsidiaries contributed Rs.6.04 Crore from its CSR Fund to PM Cares Fund for fight against COVID-19. Along with this, the Employees of NBCC also contributed their one day salary to PM Relief Fund, as solidarity to support the initiatives of Government in fighting Covid-19.

Apart from above, the other notable activities which were undertaken during the lockdown period at different sites of NBCC India Limited such as East Kidwai Nagar, ITPO, IIT Bhubaneswar, etc are as under:-

1. At East Kidwai Nagar, complete sanitisation of site, labour camps, washrooms, etc is done on regular intervals. To help the stationed labourers at site, the designated HRM and Admin Staff ensured complete medical care at Site. Not only Sanitation by way of Cleanliness was ensured at site but also Construction Labourers and their families were provided with all facilities of Preventive Medicine, Medical Checkup, Thermal Scanning, PPEs (Mask, Hand Gloves, etc) at the time to inculcate the sense of belongingness and oneness. It was further ensured that no stationed labourers faced difficulties of food items during the strict lockdown period. To that end, they were given dry Ration Bags comprising essential household commodities on weekly basis and packed foods were distributed wherever providing of dry rations seemed not feasible.
2. The following 04 hospital construction projects and 01 Real Estate Project of the Company were made ready as Covid Care centre for the treatment of Covid-19 to help GOI for noble cause:-

(i) MCL, Talchar, Odisha	: 200 Beds
(ii) ESIC, Bhita, Patna	: 500 Beds
(iii) ESIC, Parel, Mumbai	: 300 Beds

(iv) ESIC, Baltikuri, West Bengal	: 300 Beds
(v) NBCC Square (Real Estate), Kolkata	: 300 Beds
TOTAL BEDS MADE AVAILABLE	: 1600 Beds

Q8. To transform India into a 'New India' by 2022, NBCC has pushed its boundaries by attempting bigger projects to capitalise on huge opportunities in the real estate sector. Which innovative projects are there in your pipeline in the forthcoming days?

Ans. As India inches towards being the third largest economy in the world by 2030, Infrastructure and Real Estate sector are the key drivers for the Indian economy and NBCC is well placed for a quantum jump in line with India's emergence as a global economic powerhouse and "New India" by 2022.

Being a nation builder & developer, there is a huge window of opportunity for us to offer new projects in the Infrastructure and Real Estate sector, which will boost the regional, social and economic growth.

Due to unique expertise Projects based on Self-sustainable Redevelopment are large value significant opportunities for NBCC having major value addition to the Nation at large. Redevelopment of properties has been identified as one of the key strategies to overcome Commercial & housing shortage as well as to monetise vacant land lying with government and state agencies. This model ensures that no funding support is required from the Govt. agencies for redevelopment of these properties.

As these Redevelopment projects are USP of NBCC and very unique in view of its execution on self sustainable basis, these projects contribute immensely in terms of commercial and residential inventory simultaneously fulfilling the Govt. need for housing and office Infrastructure (GPRA & GPOA).

In addition to above, as most of you are aware, NBCC is also playing a very vital role in the Indian Real Estate sector by getting appointed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India as a Project Management Consultant for completing the stalled real estate projects of Amrapali in Noida and Greater Noida to provide relief to around 46000 home buyers.

In a similar way, NBCC has also shown its keen interest and submitted resolution plan for providing dream houses for approx.22000 home buyers in JP Infratech project (case is currently pending in Hon'ble Supreme Court).

Q9. NBCC won the prestigious "The Energy and Environment Foundation Global Green Building 2020" Award in Platinum Category for project "Mahatma Gandhi International Conference Centre, Niamey, Niger, Africa. Garvi Gujarat Bhawan, the 'first eco-friendly' state bhawan in the national capital is another milestone in NBCC's journey. What more eco-friendly and cost-effective projects are you planning to make our Nation proud?

Ans. Being a Navratna and leading construction CPSE, NBCC is committed to contribute to Nation growth by developing sustainable and world class infrastructure.

For providing a clear picture, I will take you little back to NBCC's history, this journey started from Redevelopment of New Moti Bagh project on self-sustainable basis without any budgetary support.

Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, Govt. of India, had entrusted the work of Redevelopment of Moti Bagh in 2008, which is a fine example of planned work of mini SMART city. It is the illustration of lush green Self sustainable Sub-City along with all modern amenities and extra social infrastructure. NBCC could mobilise funds for this project by monetization of part of the land and after meeting all expenditure the balance funds were deposited in the consolidated fund of India.

The GPRA at New Moti Bagh, New Delhi has successfully achieved the Green Building Standards required for the IGBC Green Homes Silver Certification under the IGBC Green Homes Rating System in January 2014.

Continuing with the legacy of successes and special feat achieved at New Moti Bagh, NBCC has made it mandatory to incorporate

sustainability features such as Zero Waste, Dual piping, Rain Water Harvesting, Use of Solar Energy, Smart Electricity metering, LED/Energy efficient fixtures, etc. in all the future projects.

Besides the above, these redeveloped colonies will be aimed for "Net-Zero" waste township i.e Zero waste, Zero sewage, Zero discharge, Zero litter and with bio digester toilets.

NBCC has also recently shifted to EPC mode of tendering as per Govt. guidelines to avoid cost over-run in major projects.

We are also proud to say that NBCC is providing service to all major eminent institutes of the nation which includes IIT's, NIT's, IIM's, AIIMS. NBCC is also executing Border Road and Border Fencing works PMGSY works in remote and difficult terrains.

After realising the need for research and development in the current environment, NBCC started a joint research and innovation centre with IIT Roorkee. This centre would be extensively carrying out research, training, workshops and would look for constant innovation in construction technology and adoption of green/smart features in construction. The joint research and development centre shall have initial validity of five years where NBCC would sponsor research project worth Rs 5 crore to IIT Roorkee.

Q10. What advice would you give to the Young Women CMA professionals who are just starting out in their career?

Ans. I believe that women today take their professional lives more seriously from the very beginning and work hard to develop their skills right from the beginning of their professional career. One must be willing to listen, learn and invest in oneself at the start of one's career. Gaining important traits and habits can lead to long-term professional success such as becoming proactive in taking any initiative, learning how to communicate effectively, setting goals for oneself, channelizing energy towards productivity, facing hurdles and learning from them, focusing on Time Management, Self Management and becoming more aware about one's own Culture. All these traits will support a good head start. I would also suggest young females to be perseverant in seizing growth opportunities and staying inspired to keep themselves driving towards success.

Q11. What are the various ways your organization can integrate with our institute for the diverse avenues in professional development matters?

Ans. Integration of NBCC with CMA would surely act as key catalyst for growth of employees and open doors to new initiatives. Initiatives such as organising joint seminars and conferences on subjects of professional interest, active participations in various conferences related to financial as well as non- financial matters, arranging for guest lectures and empanelment for campus placement to provide job opportunities to freshers etc can be mutually planned and taken into consideration for mutual growth and benefits.

Q12. Last question, what are you looking forward to in the future?

Ans. Institutional environment is changing fast and so is the opportunity. Increasing needs and aspirations will allow more women to succeed, making a significant impact in years to come. There is no denying that women are breaking boundaries and refusing to accept status quo in themselves, their organisation or their region. They are today willing to go outside their comfort zone - professionally and personally, particularly when taking on new challenges that would benefit organisation. Women now are quite confident on their own abilities. Therefore, I look forward to a future that holds a huge promise for women. However, they need to be skilled, mobile and tech-savy. Being a Finance head of the organisation, some of the policy changes and system reforms are also in my 'to do' list which I believe, could be important support elements for the future.

Swami Vivekananda quote/says "All power is within you; you can do anything & everything." **MA**