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## **SARASWATI COMMERCIAL (INDIA) LIMITED**

CIN: L51909MH1983PLC166605

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# **WHISTLE BLOWER POLICY**

## **WHISTLE BLOWER POLICY**

(Approved by the Board of Directors of the Company on January 30, 2019)

### **1. PREFACE**

As per Section 177 of the Companies Act, 2013 and relevant Rules thereon, every listed company and the companies belonging to such class or classes shall establish a vigil mechanism for their directors and employees to report their genuine concerns or grievances. Further, regulation 18 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 {SEBI (LODR) Regulations} inter-alia provides for a mandatory requirement for all listed companies to establish a vigil mechanism called 'Whistle Blower policy' for directors and employees to report concerns about unethical behaviour, actual or suspected fraud or violation of the company's code of conduct or ethics policy. Further SEBI (LODR) Regulations also provides that the company should devise an effective whistle blower mechanism enabling stakeholders, including individual employees and their representative bodies, to freely communicate their concerns about illegal or unethical practices.

The Company has adopted the Code of Ethics & Business Conduct, which lays down the principles and standards that should govern the actions of the Company and its employees. Any actual or potential violation of the Code, howsoever insignificant or perceived as such, would be a matter of serious concern for the Company. The role of employees in pointing out such violations of the Code cannot be undermined. Accordingly, this Whistle Blower Policy ("the Policy") has been formulated with a view to provide a mechanism for employees of the Company to raise concerns on any violations of legal or regulatory requirements, incorrect or misrepresentation of any financial statements and reports, etc.

### **2. OBJECTIVE**

The Company is committed to adhere to the highest standards of ethical, moral and legal conduct of business operations. To maintain these standards, the Company encourages its employees who have concerns about suspected misconduct to come forward and express these concerns without fear of punishment or unfair treatment. This policy aims to provide an avenue for employees to raise concerns on any violations of legal or regulatory requirements, incorrect or misrepresentation of any financial statements and reports, etc.

### **3. POLICY**

The Whistle Blower policy intends to cover serious concerns that could have grave impact on the operations and performance of the business of the Company.

The policy neither releases employees from their duty of confidentiality in the course of their work, nor is it a route for taking up a grievance about a personal situation.

#### 4. DEFINITIONS

- **“Disciplinary Action”** means any action that can be taken on the completion of /during the investigation proceedings including but not limited to a warning, imposition of fine, suspension from official duties or any such action as is deemed to be fit considering the gravity of the matter.
- **“Employee”** means every employee of the Company
- **“Protected Disclosure”** means a concern raised by a written communication made in good faith that discloses or demonstrates information that may evidence unethical or improper activity. Protected Disclosures should be factual and not speculative in nature.
- **“Subject”** means a person or group of persons against or in relation to whom a Protected Disclosure is made or evidence gathered during the course of an investigation under this Policy.
- **“Whistle blower”** is someone who makes a Protected Disclosure under this Policy.
- **“Whistle Officer”** or **“Whistle Committee”** or **“Committee”** means an officer or Committee of persons who is/are nominated/ appointed to conduct detailed investigation of the disclosure received from the whistle blower and recommend disciplinary action. Currently, the Company Secretary is nominated as Whistle Officer. The Committee, if appointed, should include Senior Level Officers of Personnel & Admin, Internal Audit and a representative of the Company / Division/ Department where the alleged malpractice has occurred.
- **“Company”** means, “Saraswati Commercial (India) Limited” including entities over which the Company has management control.
- **“Good Faith”**: An employee shall be deemed to be communicating in ‘good faith’ if there is a reasonable basis for communication of unethical and improper practices or any other alleged wrongful conduct. Good Faith shall be deemed lacking when the employee does not have personal knowledge on a factual basis for the communication or where the employee knew or reasonably should have known that the communication about the unethical and improper practices or alleged wrongful conduct is malicious, false or frivolous.
- **“Policy or This Policy”** means, “Whistle Blower Policy.”

## 5. SCOPE

Various stakeholders of the Company are eligible to make Protected Disclosures under the Policy. These stakeholders may fall into any of the following broad categories:

- Employees of the Company
- Employees of other agencies deployed for the Company's activities, whether working from any of the Company's offices or any other location
- Contractors, vendors, suppliers or agencies (or any of their employees) providing any material or service to the Company
- Customers of the Company
- Any other person having an association with the Company

A person belonging to any of the above-mentioned categories can avail of the channel provided by this Policy for raising an issue covered under this Policy.

**The Policy covers malpractices and events which have taken place/ suspected to take place involving:**

1. Abuse of authority
2. Breach of contract
3. Negligence causing substantial and specific danger to public health and safety
4. Manipulation of company data/records
5. Financial irregularities, including fraud or suspected fraud or Deficiencies in Internal Control and check or deliberate error in preparations of Financial Statements or Misrepresentation of financial reports
6. Any unlawful act whether Criminal/ Civil
7. Pilferage of confidential/propriety information
8. Deliberate violation of law/regulation
9. Wastage / misappropriation of company funds/assets
10. Bribery or corruption
11. Sexual Harassment
12. Retaliation
13. Breach of IT Security and data privacy
14. Social Media Misuse
15. Breach of Company Policy or failure to implement or comply with any approved Company Policy

**The Policy should not be used in place of the Company grievance procedures or be a route for raising malicious or unfounded allegations against colleagues.**

## **6. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- To ensure that this Policy is adhered to, and to assure that the concern will be acted upon seriously, the Company will:
- Ensure that the Whistle blower and/or the person processing the Protected Disclosure is not victimized for doing so
- Treat victimization as a serious matter, including initiating disciplinary action on person/(s) indulging in victimization
- Ensure complete confidentiality
- Not attempt to conceal evidence of the Protected Disclosure
- Take disciplinary action, if any one destroys or conceals evidence of the Protected Disclosure made/to be made
- Provide an opportunity of being heard to the persons involved especially to the Subject

## **7. ANONYMOUS DISCLOSURES**

Whistle blowers are encouraged to put their names to their disclosures. However, individuals may raise concerns anonymously.

As compared to concerns raised where whistle blowers have chosen to identify themselves, the Company will decide to take up an anonymously expressed concern based on the following factors:

- The seriousness of the issue raised;
- The credibility of the concern; and
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

Whistle blowers are, therefore, strongly encouraged to share their identity when making the disclosure.

## **8. PROTECTION TO WHISTLE BLOWER**

1. If one raises a concern under this Policy, he/she will not be at risk of suffering any form of

reprisal or retaliation. Retaliation includes discrimination, reprisal, harassment or vengeance in any manner. Company's employee will not be at the risk of losing her/ his job or suffer loss in any other manner like transfer, demotion, refusal of promotion, or the like including any direct or indirect use of authority to obstruct the Whistle blower's right to continue to perform his/her duties/functions including making further Protected Disclosure, as a result of reporting under this Policy. The protection is available provided that:

- a. The Whistle blower has chosen to identify themselves
- b. The communication/ disclosure is made in good faith
- c. The Whistle blower reasonably believes that information, and any allegations contained in it, are substantially true; and
- d. The Whistle blower is not acting for personal gain

Anyone who abuses the procedure (for example by maliciously raising a concern knowing it to be untrue) will be subject to disciplinary action, as will anyone who victimizes a colleague by raising a concern through this procedure. If considered appropriate or necessary, suitable legal actions may also be taken against such individuals.

However, no action will be taken against anyone who makes an allegation in good faith, reasonably believing it to be true, even if the allegation is not subsequently confirmed by the investigation.

2. The Company will not tolerate the harassment or victimization of anyone raising a genuine concern. As a matter of general deterrence, the Company shall publicly inform employees of the penalty imposed and disciplinary action taken against any person for misconduct arising from retaliation. Any investigation into allegations of potential misconduct will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures already taking place concerning an employee reporting a matter under this policy.

Any other Employee/business associate assisting in the said investigation shall also be protected to the same extent as the Whistle blower.

## **9. RESPONSIBILITIES OF WHISTLE BLOWERS**

- a) Bring to early attention of the Company any improper practice they become aware of. Although they are not required to provide proof, they must have sufficient cause for concern. Delay in reporting may lead to loss of evidence and also financial loss for the Company.
- b) Avoid anonymity when raising a concern.

- c) Follow the procedures prescribed in this policy for making a Disclosure.
- d) Co-operate with investigating authorities, maintaining full confidentiality.
- e) The intent of the policy is to bring genuine and serious issues to the fore and it is not intended for petty Disclosures. Employees are expected to avoid invoking their rights under this Policy to settle personal scores or to give vent to their malicious intentions. Malicious allegations by employees may attract disciplinary action.
- f) A whistle blower has the right to protection from retaliation. But this does not extend to immunity for involvement in the matters that are the subject of the allegations and investigation.
- g) Maintain confidentiality of the subject matter of the Disclosure and the identity of the persons involved in the alleged Malpractice. It may forewarn the Subject and important evidence is likely to be destroyed.
- h) In exceptional cases, where the whistle blower is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation carried out by the Whistle Officer or the Committee, he/she can make a direct appeal to the CMD of the Company.

**10. RESPONSIBILITIES – WHISTLE OFFICER, HEAD – PERSONNEL & ADMINISTRATION, POLICY PROCESS OWNER AND WHISTLE COMMITTEE**

- a) Conduct the enquiry in a fair, unbiased manner
- b) Ensure complete fact-finding
- c) Maintain strict confidentiality, especially of the whistle blower's identity (if available)
- d) Decide on the outcome of the investigation, whether an improper practice has been committed and if so by whom
- e) Recommend an appropriate course of action - suggested disciplinary action, including dismissal, and preventive measures
- f) Record Committee deliberations and document the final report

**11. RIGHTS OF A SUBJECT**

- a) Subjects have the right to be heard and the Whistle Officer or the Committee must give adequate time and opportunity for the subject to communicate his/her say on the matter
- b) Subjects have the right to be informed of the outcome of the investigation and shall be so

informed in writing by the Company after the completion of the inquiry/ investigation process.

- c) Subjects have no right to ask for or be given information about the identity of the whistle blower, even if it is available.

## **12. ACCESS TO REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS**

All reports and records associated with 'Disclosures' are considered confidential information and access will be restricted to the Whistle blower, the Whistle Committee, Whistle Officer, Head – Personnel & Administration and Policy Process Owner. 'Disclosures' and any resulting investigations, reports or resulting actions will generally not be disclosed to the public except as required by any legal requirements or regulations or by any corporate policy in place at that time.

## **13. RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS**

All Protected Disclosures in writing or documented along with the results of investigation relating thereto shall be retained by the Company for a minimum period of 05 years.

## **14. REPORTS**

A quarterly status report on the total number of complaints received during the period, with summary of the findings of the Whistle Committee and the corrective actions taken shall be reviewed by the Audit Committee.

## **15. COMPANY'S POWERS**

The Company is entitled to amend, suspend or rescind this policy at any time. Whilst, the Company has made best efforts to define detailed procedures for implementation of this policy, there may be occasions when certain matters are not addressed or there may be ambiguity in the procedures. Such difficulties or ambiguities will be resolved in line with the broad intent of the policy. The Company may also establish further rules and procedures, from time to time, to give effect to the intent of this policy and further the objective of good corporate governance.

## **16. DISCLOSURE OF THE POLICY**

The Company shall disclose this Policy on its website i.e. ([www.saraswaticommercial.com](http://www.saraswaticommercial.com)). The necessary disclosure, if any, about the policy will also be made as per the requirements of LODR Regulations and Companies Act 2013.

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