



STATE BANK OF INDIA OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION
CHANDIGARH CIRCLE
C/O State Bank of India, Local Head Office, Sector 17, Chandigarh
Contact Nos. : 0172-4567134-133-135, Fax:2670812 Email: sbioa.chd@sbi.co.in
www.sbioacha.org

Circular No. 2019/32

Date: 23.11.2019

TO ALL OUR MEMBERS:

MARKETING OF THIRD PARTY PRODUCTS
UNAUTHORISED DEBITS TO THE ACCOUNTS OF CUSTOMERS
HARASSMENT & VICTIMIZATION OF OFFICER (WHISTLE BLOWER)

We have sent a communication to the Circle Management, on the captioned subject, the contents of which are self-explicit.

A copy is enclosed for information

Comradely yours,

(Deepak K Sharma)
General Secretary

TEXT

2019/09/64

21.11.2019

The Chief General Manager,
State Bank of India
LHO Chandigarh.

Dear Sir,

MARKETING OF THIRD PARTY PRODUCTS
UNAUTHORISED DEBITS TO THE ACCOUNTS OF CUSTOMERS
HARASSMENT & VICTIMIZATION OF OFFICER (WHISTLE BLOWER)

We request your kind attention to the various communications addressed by us to your good self on the captioned subject. To us it has been a matter of grave concern for reasons which are not only obvious but even alarming. We have been witness to the fact as to how the Frankenstein of Cross Selling has resulted in our officers being forced to resort to unethical practices some of them being:

- Forced selling of insurance and MF products
- Making offer of pure banking services conditional to purchase of cross selling products
- Not educating the customer properly about the cross selling product being sold to him
- Unauthorized and multiple debits of the premium amount from customers' accounts.

The list is only indicative. An in-depth study will make many a skeleton tumble out of the cupboard. Most of the officers, who feel repressed by being forced to resort to such unethical practices, have been raising their voice and letting their frustration known at various fora. Some have even submitted representations in writing, sometimes signed under their name and sometimes in the form of anonymous complaints, in an effort to not only highlight the impending consequences of such unholy practices, but to warn the authorities of the risks associated, both financial and that of reputational loss.

On our visits to various branches across the length and breadth of the Circle we are shocked and dismayed at the display of antagonism by our members on this subject. Officers have openly expressed their disillusionment on this score, but at the same time have even expressed fear of being victimized should they raise their voice officially in the forums available to them. **Their fear gains legitimacy when recently we witness one such officer falling victim for having objected to multiple unauthorised debits to his personal account and to his spouse's account on account of renewal premium of PAI.** A sequence of victimization and harassment was unleashed against the officer by frequently transferring him from one centre to another in quick succession. The harassed poor fellow had to seek justice from the Court of Law which ruled in his favour and ordered the Bank to reconsider the decision and hold his transfer orders in abeyance. It is matter of huge embarrassment and mortification for the Bank when an officer loses faith in the grievance redressal system of the Bank and has to seek justice elsewhere, a point that needs serious introspection.

We have been making persistent efforts to bring to the fore the ills of this practice by making it an agenda of discussion in all meetings, besides the protracted correspondence emanating from us on the subject. We have made unrelenting efforts to highlight as to how cross selling is the main agenda, and at times the only agenda, of discussion in P-review meetings and how the officials of SBI Life and SBIMF are invited to such meetings. It is even more shocking when we learn that transfers orders are issued on the recommendations of the officials of SBI Life & SBIMF. These very officials on visits to branches and some officials posted in RBOs are openly threatening officers with serious consequences including transfers to remote areas/ stoppage of 4-in-1 and other perks or withholding the sanction of staff housing loans, should they not meet the cross selling targets assigned to them. **Even the newly created FI&MM network is not left alone. It is pertinent to mention that the target customer group of the financial inclusion initiative of the government is from the lower income group and special low cost insurance products have been designed and rolled out for them, but even they are being compelled to purchase the products of SBI Life which carry a hefty premium.**

Such pressure to achieve the targets leads to adoption of unethical practices bringing reputational loss to our great institution. To lure our staff into promoting such business financial incentives in the shape of gift cards, lavish parties, foreign trips and rat-race of becoming number one have transformed the benign intended business proposition named Customer-Value-Enhancement into a mis-selling monster. We attach herewith a CD with some of the videos/photos which are viral on social media for your kind perusal. Many such videos are too unpalatable to share even among our colleagues and peers. Such functions are setting a very bad precedent before the future generation in our bank and the morale of the human resources is at its lowest ebb.

The issue of unauthorized debits to the accounts of customers in the branches under the control of Regional Business Office, Rohtak were specifically pointed out by us vide our letter No. 2019/09/05 dated 24.01.2019 (copy enclosed) in addition to deliberations in ZNC and CNC meetings. We were assured by the Circle Management in the CNC meetings that the bank does not approve unethical practices. Instructions were also issued to all the participants not to indulge

in mis-selling failing which strict action will be taken. However a total silence thereafter on the part of the senior management and the patronage showered upon the erring officials is not in good taste as also sends a wrong message among the staff.

The least we expected was that the complaint lodged by the victimised officer/his wife, a reference of whom was made above, would be considered and handled within the parameters of the Whistle Blower Policy and various guidelines/directions issued by Govt. of India and Central Vigilance Commission in respect of providing protection to the Whistle Blower. Therefore, actions taken by the management against him are violative of the very tenets of the policy framed to protect such courageous & innocent employees. Bank, being a State as per Article 12 of the Constitution, is duty bound to deliver on this assurance and protection provided.

We most humbly place before you that in the absence of any immediate resolution to the issue of transfer of the victim, we will be forced to take up the matter with the CVC, Govt. authorities, outside forums for not granting protection to a whistle blower available as per statute. The order passed by the Hon'ble Judge in this case needs to be imbibed in letter and spirit.

Sir, we have never faltered in extending whole-hearted co-operation to the management in all the initiatives despite lots of problems being faced by our members on account of acute staff shortage and unresolved pending issues since long but **the humiliation, harassment and victimization of officers is not acceptable at any cost.** We sincerely hope that a cognizance of the concerns expressed above will be taken seriously and suitable & visible remedial measures will be initiated at your end to cancel the transfer order under reference. It will not only serve the ends of justice but also help to raise the morale of the officers serving in the Circle, especially in Rohtak Module so as to protect our beloved Bank's Image of "**MOST PATRIOTIC/TRUSTED BANK OF THE NATION**" with strong ethical standards.

Yours faithfully,

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(Deepak K Sharma)
General Secretary