

## Shipping Industry at Crossroads – Compliance to 2020 Low Sulphur fuel – Challenges & Alternatives (?) - A Hobson's Choice



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### **Abstract**

There has been steady reduction in the Sulphur content of fuel as per Regulation 14 ever since MARPOL Annex VI – Prevention of Air Pollution from ships was adopted in 2004. The step wise reductions began from the year 2010, 4.5 %, then 3.5%, (m/m), both globally and in Emission Control Areas (ECA) from 1.0% to 0.1%(m/m). The new agreed Sulphur cap which will be enforced globally from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 has been pegged at 0.5%(m/m) in compliance to Regulation 14 of MARPOL Annex VI. This has been hailed as a significant reduction from 3.5%, which is currently in place. To the ship owners it has been a “*Hobson's choice*”, why? does he have a choice at all? Notwithstanding above, the challenges are many for him to operate his fleet without pitfalls, in the wake of many uncertainties, which are, availability of compliant fuel, consistency across all the bunkering facilities, formulation of standards by the International Organization, behavior of low Sulphur fuel yet to be understood by the operators, technology yet to be fully evolved, are engine manufacturers of both propulsion and auxiliary engines, fully seized of the impact of such a fuel on engine components, namely fuel pumps, fuel injectors, fuel filters etc. The list will also include even boilers.

What strategy the ship owner will adopt will defer from ship to ship, as every *ship has her own soul*. **It will be tough** call to make choice between, low Sulphur fuel, use of Exhaust Gas Cleaning System (Scrubber), Liquefied Natural Gas(LNG), low Sulphur Marine Gas Oil (MGO), other alternative fuels such as ethanol and methanol, but unlikely to be available in the immediate future. The paper tries to highlight the challenges and possible ways of mitigating these challenges, without influencing his decision or arguing in favour of one option over the other.