

Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Work Profession in India

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ABSTRACT

The theme of corporate social responsibility assumes pivotal significance in today's changed business environment. It is the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development. The historically the concept of corporate social responsibility is very old however; in India it has a long journey from philanthropy to public private people partnerships. The social investment and initiatives by some of the corporate houses in India is beyond the corporate governance as a large chunk of deprived, vulnerable, poor and backward population and areas are being benefited by them directly and indirectly. While corporate governance is about promoting corporate fairness, transparency and accountability, the social investment by corporate houses has improved its overall brand image and business performance. Corporate social responsibility has gained much importance in the changed business environment in India. A large number of big corporate houses have set up their Trust and Development Foundations for initiating CSR activities. There has been progressive increase in social investment by the Corporate Houses in the country. MNCs like Tata Group, ITC, Ranbaxy, Infosys, Microsoft, Dr. Reddy's Laboratory, etc. have endeavored to create a better social order by investing hugely in social development. However, Tata Group may be said to be the pioneer in the field as it has comparatively larger social investment. Against this backdrop, present paper purports to review the corporate social responsibility and social work profession in India.

Introduction

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) occupies a noticeable place in the global corporate agenda as a result of a socially conscious market environment. Leading corporate houses and public sector establishments of the country have been engaged in philanthropic activities by giving sponsorships, donations, allocating funds, establishing institutions etc. for the welfare of people including religious establishments. Thus, CSR has

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emerged as a central business agenda, developing into a business megatrend with a global outreach. In the recent years, a growing number of companies are adopting various CSR initiatives - the voluntary incorporation of social and environmental issues into a company's business model and operations (European Commission 2001) - in an attempt to meet the needs and expectations of a range of stakeholders, including but not confined to the company's shareholders. In Indian context, the significant development in this market driven society can be traced in making CSR as mandatory act for certain profit making companies. CSR is the new buzz word which has created new hopes and expectations amongst a diversity of stakeholders. Its effective operationalization is also demanding newer approaches and innovative modus operandi from its implementers. From the voluntary corporate philanthropy to mandatory corporate social responsibility, India has played a vital role in assuming a partnership role in the social sector. CSR is seen as major funding source for the social sector. Among all the fields of social sector which promise scope, education and health stand out distinctly. The third sector is also looking with optimism towards corporate world for funding social sector activities especially in view of receding government funding (Bhatt, 2014: 4).

The social work profession is more close to CSR activities of corporate houses because of its various components, such as - rich field work exposure and training. Social work professionals have been equipped with knowledge, understanding, skills and field experience to be engaged in CSR activities. Social work education has also started gearing up to respond this new area as a challenge to acquire the space. A good number of social work educational institutions have started new courses, training and consultancies in the field of CSR.

Meaning and Definition of CSR

The term 'CSR' can be best understood by three words: 'corporate,' 'social,' and 'responsibility.' In broad terms, CSR refers to responsibilities that corporates have towards society within which they are based and operate, not denying the fact that the purview of CSR goes much beyond this. The concept of CSR has different meanings for different people and different organizations and different countries view this concept from different dimensions and perspectives. Thus, definitions of CSR range from basic to most demanding from specific reference to a number of necessary activities to demonstrate responsibility to a general call for a comprehensive, integrated and committed pursuit of social and environmental sustainability (Aras & Crowther, 2009). Some of the notable definitions of CSR are as follows:

- CSR is “a conscientious business should embrace economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities” (Carrol, 1994:5).
- It is “the concept that an enterprise is accountable for its impact on relevant stakeholders” (European Commission, 2001).
- CSR is “an integration of stakeholder’s social, environmental and other concerns into company’s business operations” (European Commission, 2002:2).
- It is “a process of managing the cost and benefits of business activity to both internal (workers, shareholders, investors) and external (institutions of public governance, community members, civil society groups, other enterprises), stakeholders” (World Bank, 2002).
- CSR is “the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development working with employees, their families, to local community and society at large to improve their quality of life” (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2002).
- It is an “obligation of decision makers to take actions which protect and improve the welfare of society as a whole along with their own interests” (Davis & Blomstrom, 1975:23).
- CSR is an “obligation of firm to use its resources in ways to benefit society, through committed participation as a member of society, taking into account the society at large and improving welfare of society independently of direct gains of the company” (Garriga & Mele, 2004).
- It is “related to ethical principles that ought to govern the relationship between the corporation and society” (Eels & Watson, 1961).
- CSR is “concerned not only to economic and legal obligations, but also certain responsibilities to society which extended beyond these obligations” (McGuire, 1963).
- It is “bringing of corporate behaviour up to a level where it is congruent with the prevailing social norms, values and expectations” (Sethi, 1975).
- CSR means “overseeing the operation of an economic system that fulfil the expectations and needs of people” (Frederick, 1960).
- It refers to “going beyond the occasional community service action as it is corporate philosophy that drives strategic decision making, partner selection, hiring practices and ultimately, brand development” (Michel & McComb: 2002).
- CSR means “pursuing those policies, to make those decisions or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the

objectives and values of our society" (Bowen quoted in Maignan & Ferrell, 2004: 3-19).

In a nutshell, CSR is a normative concept which proposes what business ought to do as well as descriptive concept having the essence of what socially responsible business organizations have been doing for the fulfilment of its economic, legal, ethical and discretionary (or philanthropic) responsibility to society, thus making corporation/firm/company socially responsible which strives for profit, obeys the law, becomes ethical and turns into a good corporate citizen.

Rationale for CSR

The purpose of business is profit which must be the goal, the justification for corporate existence and not viewed as a result (Handy, 1972). Here, the argument is that business has economic goals of maximization of profit through maximization of sales and wealth. But, as per social school of thought, "In fact, if the primary or over-riding purpose of business is to make a profit, then the free enterprise system should and will be self-destructive" (Adam, 1973:150). In this way, there is debate about the CSR having arguments against the CSR and arguments for the CSR. These are being presented in ensuing paragraphs:

There are many arguments against the CSR. Business organizations are basically economic organizations supposed to supply goods and services for utmost satisfaction of consumers, so their success is measured in terms of their turnover, growth and profit. The involvement of business organizations in resolving social issues makes their purpose and strength diluted. The personnel who run the business organizations lack perceptions, knowledge and skills regarding social concerns/problems. In contemporary times, corporate houses command a lot of power and strength, so there is no need to involve them in CSR. The executives of corporations are not accountable towards the public, but they are only accountable to their owners and shareholders. Hence, they do not have public perception of resolving social issues by industry. The other argument is that Government has been taking initiative regarding areas of social action programmes of industry by issuing directives, so there is no justification for voluntary initiative. Social action programmes undertaken by marginalized companies/corporations would certainly make them out of business. The corporations cannot take decisions on what the society wants, it is the responsibility of government and its elected representatives to set goals for the society, deal with externalities and to meet different interests.

The arguments which support CSR are equally too many. The first argument is that the long run interest of corporation can be fulfilled through

societal activities. The involvement in CSR creates a favorable image of corporation/ firm in public which attract shareholders. The corporation/firm becomes socially responsible since it cherishes democratic values, develops strong consumer loyalty, and provides scope for the utilization of employees' talent in constructive manner leading to the creation of sense of pride for itself and for the related associates. Further, the profit is not the sole criterion of judging the success of corporation/firm, the other criteria are growth, service, health and progressiveness. For CSR, there is some liberalization in rules and regulations by the Government, since CSR suggests the cooperation of business and government in solving problems of society as well as of environment. The confidence and respect of public towards business organizations take place due to CSR activities of company leading to have image of a socially responsible business company. Above all, industry can get more power due to involvement in social activities because responsibilities and power go hand to hand. As compared to government, business community is better in using resources, talents and energies efficiently in delivering results. So it is perceived that business a community is better placed in solving the problems of society. The issue of morality and ethics involved on the part of industry is major one. A democratic socialist society needs investment from individuals and institutions so that power can be widely distributed for preserving democracy and socialism. Knowing that any business is a part society, it is the obligation to resolve social issues through its technical, financial and managerial resources. Through social responsibilities, a more stable environment for long term profitability can be established.

Effect of Globalization to Confer Importance to CSR

The process of globalization has brought several changes and new developments. Due to these changes and new developments, corporate have been compelled to give importance to CSR. Due to globalization, large scale industrial changes (in the forms of size, management systems, financial and technical arrangements etc.) have taken place leading to new concerns and expectations from various stakeholders. There is also an increasing influence of social criteria on the investment decisions of individuals and institutions both as consumers and as investors. There is more concern about damage to the environment caused by economic activities. Due to development of modern information and communication technologies, transparency in business houses, masses, shareholders, consumers and other concerned stakeholders.

There is paradigm shift in the religion of social responsibility itself i.e. from 'passive adaptation' to 'dynamic creativity' and from on 'ethical concept'

making enterprise follow the 'trusteeship principle' and become a respectable 'corporate citizen' and from evolving into 'growth concept' making powerful enterprises follow the 'statesmanship principle' and to assume the role of 'change agent'. Thus, due to these factors, business organizations are bound to generate and sustain 'goodwill' among stakeholders and community in the present intense competitive situations by achieving economic goals and social responsibility objectives simultaneously. In this way, the CSR strategies of business organizations are mainly driven by showing respect to societal values, increase in number of investors, creation of business interventions, enhancement of reputation of firm/company, satisfaction of customers, better stockholder relationship and savings in overall cost (Sharma & Kiran, 2012: 530-531).

The Indian Scenario

India has a rich legacy of social responsibility. It has a between social justice and human rights. The premise of CSR can be traced in religious scripts as mentioned below:

- In *Artha Shastra*, the concept of *Shreshtha dharma* has been described, which can notes that the better off one is in society, the higher should be one's sense of responsibility.
- According to *Shantiparv* in Maharashtra, protection of public has been the prime responsibility of king/elite class. This can be taken as synonym to the role of corporate in contemporary times.
- The theory of *Rina* (debt) brings out that whatever individual takes from society for his growth and development; he is supposed to repay it to society at one point of time. This repayment rule also applies on corporate, since business organizations draw many things from community. Consequently, it is the social responsibility of organizations to repay back to society.

In contemporary parlance, business is expected to raise and sustain its image with three segments (a) direct 'external' stakeholders, customers, dealers and investors; (b) direct internal stakeholders - workers, executives and promoters; and (c) community and society at large(Bhatt & Francis, 2005: 97).

After independence, CSR perspective in the forms of social standards to be expected by companies has already been enshrined in Indian Constitution. On the basis of Constitutional commitments, central and state laws have been passed. International instruments such as Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions and Conventions on the Rights of Child have given directions to policy makers and law framers about social and environmental parameters.

1. *Affecting Corporate Governance*

Many developments and changes have taken place in corporate governance globally. Consequently, in India:

1. The Indian Companies Act, 1956 has been amended for making provisions encompassing best corporate governance practices; and
2. Requirements of Corporate Governance have been given in clause - 49 of the Listing Agreement implemented by SEBI which is based on the recommendations of Kumarmanglam Birla Committee on corporate governance.

2. *Sensitivity towards Environment Protection*

Recently, in India, sensitivity towards environmental issues has increased in a big way leading to bring several provisions of protection of environment through environmental legislation. Environment Protection Act, 1986 basically concerned to air and water pollution as well as related to hazardous activities. The officials of company are liable for offences committed under this Act. In addition, civil society organizations have expressed pressures on higher standard of environmental performance. This has given pace to the CSR Movement.

3. *Emphasis on Indian Industries on CSR*

In this era of globalization, Indian industries have adopted CSR as strategy of business for getting access to global market through sustainable development. Social Development Council has been set up by Confederation of Indian Industries in the year 1995 for the purpose of: (a) ensuring the availability benefits of the economic reforms to poor and unemployed people; and (b) facilitating the image of industry as a concerned group for holistic community development and building up strength partnership across the sectors of better governance, accountability and empowerment.

These purposes are to be met through: (a) sensitization of industry on social development; (b) giving meaning to the impact of social responsibility on business; and (c) channelization of the economic benefits to reach the unreached.

Social Development Council has been concentration on the areas of: (a) community development for livelihood programmes; (b) disaster management; (c) education and literacy; (d) population and health including HIV/AIDS; (e) physically challenged; (f) vocational training; and (g) women empowerment.

The above description makes it clear that mindset of industry has changed leading towards strengthening of CSR activities ensuring industry's participation in social development.

4. CSR Guidelines of Government of India

- (a) **Voluntary Guidelines:** In December 2009, the first Corporation Week was concluded and at this time Ministry of Corporate Affairs has issued voluntary guideline for responsible business. The objectives have been: (a) to add value to the operations and contribute towards the long term sustainability of business; and (b) to enable business to focus as well as contribute towards the interests of the stakeholders and the society.
- (b) **New Mandatory Provisions for CSR:** Replacing old Companies Act, 1956, New Companies Act, 2013 has been enacted on 29 August, 2013. The aims of this act have been: (i) Improving corporate governance; (ii) Simplifying regulations; (iii) Enhancing the interests of investors; and (iv) Legislating the role of whistle blowers.

Salient Provision of the Companies Act, 2013

The present Act contains 470 sections out of which 180 sections have provisions of presiding of rules making the Act more of rule based legislation. This Act has introduced the provisions of spending on CSR activities making CSR mandatory Section - 135 of the Act mandated that every company having: (a) net worth of Rs. 500 crore or more or; (b) turnover of Rs. 1000 crore or more or; (c) net profit of Rs. 5 crore or more will have mandatorily spend 2 percent of their average net profit for CSR activities. The salient provisions of the Act are as follows:

1. Mechanism of Implementation

The company shall constitute a CSR Committee of the Board during any financial year. This committee shall be constituted by three or more directors out of which at least one director shall be an independent director. The report of the Board under clause 134 (3) shall disclose the composition of CSR Committee.

The mandate of this committee shall be:

1. Formulation and making recommendation to the board, a corporate social responsibility policy indicating the activities to be undertaken by the company as specified in Schedule-II.
2. Recommending the amount of expenditure to be incurred on the activities referred to above.
3. Monitoring the Corporate Social Responsibility policy of the company from time to time.

The Board shall do the following after taking recommendations of CSR Committee.

1. Approve the CSR Policy for the company and disclose contents of such policy in its report and also place it on the company's website;
2. Ensure that the activities as are included in CSR Policy of the company are undertaken by company; and
3. Ensure that the company spends in every financial year, at least two percent of average net profits.

If the company fails to spend the stipulated amount, the Board shall in its reports specify the reasons for not spending the amount.

2. CSR Activities as per Schedule VII of the Act

The Act makes following provisions regarding CSR Activities:

- Eradicating extreme hunger and poverty.
- Promotion of education.
- Promoting gender equality and empowering women
- Reducing child mortality and improving maternal health.
- Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other disease.
- Ensuring environmental sustainability.
- Employment enhancing vocational skills.
- Social business projects.
- Contribution to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund or any other fund set up by the Central Government or State Governments for socio-economic development and relief and funds for welfare of the Schedule Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and women.
- Any other matter as may be prescribed.

The Act makes provisions for the company that it shall give preference to the local area and areas around it where it operates.

The Draft CSR Rules further provide guideline/ manner in which the company can undertake CSR activities and incur CSR spend:

- (A) Setting up of Not-for-Profit Organization:** The Company can set up this organization in form of Trust, Society or Non-Profit Company for facilitating the implementation of CSR Activities. The conditions to be fulfilled by company are: (1) Specification of projects/ programmes to be undertaken by such organization; and (2) Establishment of a monitoring mechanism to ensure that the allocation to such organization is spent for intended purpose only.

(B) CSR Programmes through Not-for-Profit Organization Not Set Up by Company: This provision has also made where CSR activities may be undertaken by any Not-for-Profit Organization which has an established track record of at least three years in carrying out activities in related areas.

(C) Provisions of Collaboration or Pooling of Resources: The Company can collaborate or pool their resources for joint CSR activities.

(D) Project or Programme Mode: CSR activities of company shall be conducted in project or programme mode focusing on integrating business models with social and environmental priorities and process in order to create shared values.

3. *Additional Conditions*

1. CSR activities should be taken up within Indian territory, activities outside India can be taken up as CSR activities.
2. Activities undertaken in pursuance of the normal course of business of a company cannot be taken up as CSR activities.
3. Activities exclusively done for the benefit of employees and their family members can be taken up as CSR Activities.

Relationship of CSR and Social Work Profession

The poor, weak, sick and other vulnerable people in every society right from ancient time were looked after by joint families, caste, communities and religious institutions. But, with the passage of time, due to the process of development, expansion of urbanization and growth of industrialization, malfunctioning appeared in the area of interaction between the individuals, families, groups and environment. This scenario has compelled the establishment of welfare agencies and in order to support the functioning these agencies as well as process of welfare, a system of scientific assistance was developed and in this way social work came into existence which attempts to help the individuals, groups and communities to get clear insight of the problems and then try to improve them. It also attempts to mobilize social forces to resolve those social and economic situations that lead to ill health, mental suffering, frustration and social behaviour. Values enshrined in social work professionals are very much related to the philosophical base of corporate social responsibilities. These values are as follows:

- **The Value of Service:** To help people in need and to address social problems

- **The Value of Social Justice:** Providing opportunities for meeting the problems created by social injustices and if need be challenging social injustices.
- **The Value of Dignity and Worth of Person:** Recognition of dignity and worth of single individual. The corporate social responsibilities are also related to the improvement of quality of life of persons recognizing importance of individual in social milieu.
- **The Importance of Human Relationship:** Meaningful human relationships and through the fulfillment of corporate social responsibilities, relationship between industry and community in terms of inter-relationships between owners and managers of industrial organizations and people of community come into harmony have given central importance.
- **The Value of Integrity:** Behaving as trustworthy manner. In case of corporate responsibilities, industrial organizations show that they are concerned with the quality of life of people.
- **The Value of Competence:** Development of competence among people in general to cope their problems by helping them professionally.

In addition, there are some common issues between CSR and social Work profession to be addressed which are as follows:

- Promotion of general welfare of society and providing services for living conditions conducive to fulfilment of human needs.
- Providing appropriate services in public emergencies to a greatest extent possible.
- Action to expand choice and opportunity for all people with special regard for vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed and exploited people and groups.
- Engagement in development of competence seeking to ensure that all people should have access to opportunities and make independent choices.
- Promotion of conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity.
- Preventing and eliminating the conditions of exploitation of and discrimination against any person, groups or class.

Leading corporate houses of the country such as - Tata, Birla, Bajaj, etc. have been engaged in philanthropic social work by giving sponsorships,

donations, allocating funds, establishing institutions etc. for the welfare of people including religious institutions. The present form of professional social work is bringing social workers more close to CSR activities of corporate houses because of their different kinds of experiences, rich field work exposure and training. The social work professionals have been equipped with knowledge, understanding, skills and field experience to be engaged in CSR activities which are envisaged in schedule VII of the new Companies Act, 2013: (a) Eradication of extreme hunger and poverty; (b) Promotion of education; (c) Promotion of gender equality and empowering of women; (d) reduction of child mortality and improvement of maternal health; (e) combating of diseases i.e. HIV, AIDS, Malaria etc.; (f) Ensuring environment sustainability; (g) Enhancing employment through vocational skills; and (h) social business projects etc. For the fulfillment of these activities, social work professionals have diversified roles and competences which are being presented in the following Table 1:

Conclusion

To conclude it can be said that CSR is the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development. The idea of being a socially responsible company means doing more than comply with the law when investing in human resources and the environment. The CSR approach seeks to motivate companies to assume responsibility for problems and challenges that used to be addressed by state regulation. The social work profession is more close to the concept of because of its various components, such as - rich field work exposure and training. Social work education has also started gearing up to respond this new area as a challenge to acquire the space. A good number of social work educational institutions have started new courses, training and consultancies CSR. Thus, needless to say that CSR and social work profession are closely related to each other. However, these institutions should further review their syllabus and provide more learning opportunities to the students by field work placements in CSR activities of industrial organizations. They can also engage themselves in research activities.

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Table 1
Roles and Competences of Social Work Professionals Regarding CSR

<i>Roles</i>	<i>Knowledge</i>	<i>Skills</i>	<i>Attributes</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator • Trainer • Counselor • Change Agent • Mentor • Consultant • Catalyst • Conscience keeper • Leader • Motivator • Manager • Networker • Spokes person • Knowledge Manager • Monitor • Disseminator • Negotiator • Peacemaker • Strategist • Evaluator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human process at individual, groups and organizational levels. • Human Psychology. • Philosophy, tools and techniques of Human Resource Development. • Organization theory. • Individual and organization learning. • Research methods, tools and techniques. • Tools of individual team and organizational assessment. • Training methods and media. • Organization development formulation and intervention. • Communications • Negotiation Process. • Conflict dynamics. • Measurement and assessment. • Community needs and consumerism. • Environmental and Sustainable development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.Communication • International relationships • Leadership • Training • Facilitation • Negotiation persuasion • Using diagnostic tools and techniques • Appraising • Analyzing • Documentation • Research Tools preparation and administration • Organizing • Presentation • Preparing • Writing Reports • Networking • Enabling and empowerment • Competence building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationality • Maturity • Development orientation • Patience • Perseverance • Commitment • Quality orientation • Work orientation • Non-Judgemental • Visionary • Action orientation • Transparent • Accessible • Tactical • Open • Clarity • Resolving attitude • Participatory orientation • Honesty

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