

THE ROLE PLAYED BY CORPORATIONS IN INDIA IN PROMOTING WOMEN'S LITERACY THROUGH CSR POLICY

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ABSTRACT

Women are at the foundation of every development process, their ability to work, give, and nurture deserves special recognition. Traditional Indian culture has been preserved by women for millennia however the state of women has deteriorated throughout history. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is one of the most impactful social impact policies in documented history, and among the leading ways of making a positive social impact on the lives of women to reverse this deterioration. Corporations can positively impact women's position in India and take effective steps to empower them through targeted CSR policies. India has a long standing history of CSR having an impact on women particularly their literacy rates. This paper researches upon and seeks to understand the role played by such relevant CSR policies on the lives of women in India.

Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a self-regulatory business model that allows a firm to be socially accountable to itself, its stakeholders, and the general public. Corporate social responsibility is a wide notion that varies based on the firm and industry. Businesses can improve society while enhancing their brands through CSR programmes, philanthropy, and volunteer actions.

According to the 2001 Census, 65.38 percent of Indian males and 54.16 percent of Indian females are literate. India's literacy rate is not uniform. Women's literacy rates are lower than the national average in 12 states and union territories. The lowest female literacy rates are found in Bihar and Jharkhand (33.57 and 39.38 percent, respectively). India's female population is estimated to be nearly half illiterate, according to these data. This is not a small number by any stretch of the imagination! Most of these women live in rural and tribal areas, as well. Women in the literate category have not completed secondary school.

Why are women less likely to be educated than men? India has long been a patriarchal, male-dominated society, with males given greater significance. Males leave their households and have better access to school as a result of cultural division of labor. Due to financial constraints, poor families prefer to send only their sons to school and not their daughters. Women are less educated than males because education is prioritized for the boys or sons in the household, who are seen as the family's future. Girls were traditionally supposed to stay at home and take care of household tasks. As a result, girls' education was discouraged.

Legislation, Policies And Budgets - Several states have laws and practices that limit girls' access to education on an equal footing. Even rules and programmes that appear to be gender-neutral might result in girls being excluded from school, typically due to prevailing social norms. These include laws and policies that allow child marriage, permit discriminatory school admission criteria, such as excluding pregnant girls, and restrict girls' freedom of movement

Background

Women's status in India has undergone significant transformations over the span of documented Indian history. The ability of women to work, give, and nurture are some qualities that require a special mention. Women have suffered a lot yet she continues to retain qualities that make her unique. Women have done great service by preserving age old traditions; they have maintained the traditional Indian culture.

Women's education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only contributes to the development of half of the world's human resources, but also to the improvement of life quality domestically and internationally. Educated women not only tend to promote the education of their girl children, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population.

Women had access to education during the Vedic period, but this right had gradually been taken away from them. In India, however, there was a renaissance of interest in women's education during the British period. Various socio-religious movements led by notable figures such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar stressed women's education in India at this time.

Gender was crucial to India's colonial experience. The condition of Indian women drew the reformist enthusiasm of missionaries, colonial lawmakers, and metropolitan liberals from the establishment of Sati in the 1820s to later debates over widow remarriage and the age of consent. Women and the family were also powerful symbols for Indian conservatives, reformers, and later

nationalists, conveying a variety of distinct class, community, and national identities.

The position of women is influenced by familial relationships, socioeconomic class, and the ideology of the social 5 group to which they belong. It is passed down through the generations through historical institutions and culture. Gender and class interactions are both part of a historical inheritance. Patriarchy is one of the beliefs that underpin our inheritance. This is a word in which inequality and hierarchy are implicit, and it is a notion and institution that has been examined in a variety of ways in sociology and feminist literature.

Discrimination against women and girls is a pervasive and long-standing problem in Indian society at all levels. Despite relatively strong rates of economic growth, India's progress toward gender equality, as assessed by its place on rankings such as the Gender Development Index, has been unsatisfactory. Crimes against women are on the rise, especially violent crimes including rapes, dowry deaths, and honour killings. These changes are concerning since, with growth, comes knowledge and income, as well as a likely decline in loyalty to conventional institutions and socially dictated gender roles that stifle women's progress.

History of CSR- Gandhi's trusteeship approach

Mahatma Gandhi was a firm believer in the trusteeship model, in which one's riches must be ploughed back into society. CSR can be defined as attaining business success while upholding ethical ideals and treating people, communities, and the environment with respect. Gandhi's concept of Trusteeship is the contribution of corporate houses to social well-being. Trusteeship is a theoretical construct that aims to reshape the relationship between indigenous enterprise and the nationalist movement. The fact that Gandhi was able to persuade businessmen to join the independence struggle despite the costs demonstrates the effectiveness of Trusteeship as a political mobilization tool.

Csr Laws In India

The Companies Act, 2013, a successor to The Companies Act, 1956, made CSR a compulsory act. Under the notification dated 27.2.2014, under Section 135 of the new act, CSR is compulsory for all companies- government or private or otherwise, provided they meet any one or more of the following fiscal criterions

- The net worth of the company should be Rupees 500 crores or more
- The annual turnover of the company should be Rupees 1000 crores or more

- Annual net profits of the company should be at least Rupees 5 crores.

If the company meets any one of the three fiscal conditions as stated above, they are required to create a committee to enforce its CSR mandate, with at least 3 directors, one of whom should be an independent director.

Discussion

Some projects done for promoting women's literacy through CSR are as follows:

Digital Sakhi Project - The Company's flagship CSR Programme – 'Digital Sakhi' – aligns itself to Government of India's vision of creating a Digital India where the focus on financial literacy has been on digital modes of payments. In order to ensure community interest and participation in the Programme, they believe financial literacy should be combined with livelihood creation. In addition to providing rural women in communities with access to formal finance, the programme allows them to pursue entrepreneurship and sustain their livelihoods through it.

Targeting the Hardcore Poor Programme - For ultra-poor women-headed households, Bandhan Konnagar's flagship programme offers micro-enterprises (in the form of farm, non-farm and mixed assets, not cash) as well as confidence-building and enterprise skills training, as well as marketing and financial literacy. For the time being, they are also provided with a subsistence allowance to cover their daily expenses.

Women Empowerment Initiative - This initiative provided poor women with a variety of gainful employment opportunities, as well as capacity-building and financial assistance in the form of loans and grants. In the Financial Year 2019-20, 29,184 ultra-poor women in the core catchments have access to sustainable sources of income through non-farm livelihood options.

Theoretical Justification For Csr:

Several hypotheses have been proposed by social scientists to explain the importance of companies in enhancing the wellbeing of the society in which they operate. Rather than focusing solely on shareholder interests, multiple stakeholders' interests should be considered. It contends that in order to be more efficient and legitimate, the business should serve and accommodate a larger range of stakeholder interests.

The Truth Behind CSR:

Despite the fact that many corporations accept the wide view of CSR, they are impeded by a lack of coordination and rationale connecting their numerous programmes. Despite the fact that

numerous studies claim that CEOs are becoming more involved in CSR, it has been discovered that CSR programmes are usually originated and handled in an uncoordinated manner by a range of internal managers, often without the active involvement of the CEO.

Some Successful CSR practices:

1. Use of gender lens when considering and designing CSR initiatives- The best practice that is arguably the most relevant to a CSR program is to view all aspects of it through a gender lens. If this practice is observed, hypothetically, all subsequent best practices should fall into place. All of the case studies presented in this paper exercise this best practice to some extent.
2. Integration of the Women's Empowerment Principles⁶ and UN Sustainable Development Goals⁷ company-wide and across CSR programming - The incorporation of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG5: Gender Equality is becoming more ubiquitous. WEPs, or company-specific women's empowerment principles, are commonly recognised in large, established companies. Kellogg Company, for example, has created a customised Women's Empowerment Index in collaboration with CARE to assess the impact of some of their initiatives.
3. Women's initiatives address multiple priority areas, to leverage complementarities, address interrelated issues and maximize impact - The development of programmes that address women's empowerment across various domains, leveraging and taking use of interrelationships and complementarities among projects, is a widespread and typically organic best practise.

Conclusion

Many of the companies and entrepreneurs have been involved in philanthropy for many years. Through the construction of temples or the establishment of dharamshalas, the wealthy always sought to establish a social network. Donation or daan has a unique insight: the donor must separate himself from both the donation and his attachment to its subject, and is therefore not expected to monitor its outcome after it has been made. According to some, corporate social responsibility (CSR) should not be required by law. But actually the first three to five years should be mandatory, however. As a result, the momentum will continue to build on its own. According to the draught Companies Bill of 2009, corporate social responsibility spending was linked to net profit. Because of tax breaks, profits are expected to decline.

Many companies are spending millions of dollars to address issues of women's economic empowerment across their value chains. Yet It appears that few companies design their women's economic empowerment programmes to have a lasting impact, and even fewer companies measure and report on that impact. The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), Dalberg, and Witter Ventures published a report in October 2014 that found that only three of the 31 corporate-funded programmes studied had empirical evaluations that included quantitative metrics beyond programme size.

Companies must develop coherent CSR strategies in order to maximise their positive impact on the social and environmental systems in which they operate. This should be an essential part of every CEO's and board's job. CSR programme alignment must begin with an inventory and audit of existing initiatives. They should measure the impact of a programme on women and on business from the beginning and incorporate existing measurement frameworks, such as the GRI Standards and the Sustainable Development Goals, into the development of social impact goals and reporting requirements.

To ensure women are empowered, the government and the public sector need to play important roles to enable their welfare in various sectors. Whether it's providing free cooking gas and education schemes or enabling women to leverage technology. Then only women will be able to raise their economic condition, status and empower them to seek gender equality in the society.

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