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**INDEX**

No.	Title of the Paper	Authors' Name	Page No.
1	A Historical Study Of Women Sufis In South India	Mrs. Salma N. S.	1
2	A Study of Educational Development of Tribal Women an Indian Perspective	Prof. Vikas Vasram Ade	5
3	Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Movement for Women Empowerment and Its Impact on Society	Dr. Dashrath Dnyandev Kamble	13
4	Dr. Kamala Sohoni: The pioneering Woman Scientist of Maharashtra	Dr. Abhidha Dhumatkar	17
5	Moving Towards Women Empowerment Through Seventy Third Constitutional Amendment Act	Dr. Mrs. Anjali Gaidhane	20
6	Ecofeminism in the Context of India with Reference to Environmental Movements	Dr. Tanaji Pol	24
7	Ecofeminism: Concept and Nature	Vandana Kakade	28
8	Ecofeminism: The Feminism of Ecology	Smt. Asha Padmakarrao Bamane	31
9	Feminism and Media: Femvertising- Women Empowerment in advertising.	Ms. Shilpa Suryawanshi	34
10	Feminism and Representation of Women Indentites in Indian Cinema	Prof. Bhavana Singh / Prof. Minu Paul	38
11	Feminism: Concept and Nature	Dr. Rakshase Sidharth Gunaji	47
12	Five Feminist Economists: Who Change the Way We See the World	Dr. Ankush L. More	56
13	Hashtag Movements in Feminism	Sharvari Shailesh Sawant / Sakshi Jeevan Asawale	62
14	History of Feminist Movements Worldwide	Dr.M.P.Khobragade	67
15	Image of Women in Indian Media, Psychological Perspectives and Feminism	Mrs. Aditi V. Yadav	70
16	Impactful Role of Brave Women for Freedom Struggle in India and Their Contribution-Commemorating 75 years of India's independence	Mrs. Monika H.Pawar	75
17	Raziya Sultan The First And Only Muslim Female Ruler Of Delhi	Dr. Anjali R. Andrew	79
18	Role of Corporate Social Responsibility: An overview of Women Empowerment	Dr. B. B. Rahane	82
19	Role of Self - Help Groups in women empowerment through Microfinance: Socio - Economic Development and Employment.	Mr. Vipul Manohar Tandel	89
20	Significant Contribution Of Women In India's Freedom Struggle	Rutuja Sharad Raut	98
21	The Empowerment of Women in India: Role of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar	Dr. Lata Digambar Dhende	102



Role of Corporate Social Responsibility: An overview of Women Empowerment

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Introduction

Majority of the India's poorest population lives in villages and these villages are neglect and underdevelopment with poor chronic people. The problems of malnutrition, hunger, ignorance, ill health, high mortality and illiteracy among women are most chronic in rural areas. This is not only because of shortage of natural resources but also because of negligence in our planning process and investment paradigm. India has the potential to meet these challenges in rural areas. However, the efforts of Governments may not be sufficient to provide basic facilities to its people. It is being increasingly endorse that development and welfare of a society is not only the responsibility of the Government alone, but many more stakeholders need to be participate to attain the development goal. The corporate sector has a significant role to play in ensuring private investment flows to those rural areas that have been left out of the progress so far and also to work for women empowerment of rural areas in general. Over the decades, as a outcome of arising concern of globalization and development issues, the perception of the role of corporate in the broader social reference within which it works, has been changed. Corporate considers them as an integral part of society and accordingly work in a social responsible way that goes beyond economic performance. As a result of this shift from purely profit to profit with social responsibility, many corporate are endorsing the term "Corporate Social Responsibility. It is essentially a concept whereby companies decide voluntarily to contribute to the society to make it better and environmentally cleaner. Generally, CSR is understood as "the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development by working with employers, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life, in ways that are both good for business and good for development. A widely quoted definition by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development state that "Corporate Social Responsibility is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large". Thus, the meaning of CSR has two fold. On one hand, it exhibits the ethical behavior that an organization exhibits towards its internal and external stakeholders. On the other hand, it denotes the responsibility of an organization towards the rural environment and society in which it operates. CSR is regarded as tool through which companies give something back to the society. It involves providing innovative solutions to societal and women empowerment challenges. But the challenge for development professional and business community is to identify CSR priorities and the areas of interventions which are meaningful in the context of rural development sector. Therefore, there is a need to study and understand how corporate enterprises are using CSR initiatives and impact of CSR actions on women empowerment and socioeconomic development of rural people.

Keywords : CSR intervention , sustainable development, women empowerment, globalization

Literature Review

Historically, CSR has been viewed as developed countries' phenomena. As such a large body of literature on CSR practices has merged in the context of developed countries. However, literature on the theory and practices on CSR in the developing countries remains meager. Hardly a few studies have looked at CSR practice in India. Different researches at different points of time and classical Indian literature have emphasized the CSR practice of corporate entities in India. A long back Kautilya in his 'Arthashastra' mentions traders' responsibilities to the local society. In ancient India,



such responsibilities were voluntary and not mandatory. Khan and Atkinson conducted a comparative study on the managerial attitudes to social responsibility in India and Britain. The study shows that most of the Indian executives agreed CSR as relevant to business and felt that business has responsibilities not only to the shareholders and employees but also to customers, suppliers, society and to the state.

A study on iron ore mining industry in Goa shows that many large mining companies have their own initiatives towards environmental and social development. However, a structured CSR policy and planning is missing especially among the small and medium players in the industry (Conway, 2003). Arora and Puranik reviewed contemporary CSR trends in India concluding that the corporate sector in India benefited immensely from liberalization and privatization process, its transition from philanthropic mindsets to CSR has been lagging behind its impressive financial growth. Verma and Chatham found that roads, pollution and power are the major concern of corporate CSR activities as compared to least concern area which is communication and education. Another study by Dutta and Durgamohan (2009) found that education takes the first place followed by health and social cause. Similarly, a survey conducted by CSM, the perception of companies towards various parameters of CSR has been brought forward

The above findings of different scholars at different points of time impose that they have rightly observed and underscored the CSR practices and performance of companies in India. But little attention have been paid on this aspect that do the companies consider rural people as stakeholders? If yes, what CSR initiatives being taken for rural development? How the Corporate entities implement development programmes as a part of their business strategy? Finally, what is the impact of CSR programs on socio-economic development of rural population in India?

The Study

In an effort to understand the answers to the above questions, the present study was undertaken in 14 public and private Indian companies.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study were:

1. To study and understand the CSR initiatives being taken by selected public and private Indian companies for women empowerment and rural development;
2. To examine the corporate approach to work and their mode of action for implementation for CSR initiatives
3. To assess the impacts of CSR actions on women empowerment and socioeconomic development of rural population in India.

Methodology:

To study the above objectives, 72 public and private Indian companies have CSR initiatives activities in Palghar district. 10 public and private Indian companies and NGO's have been selected. While selecting these companies, efforts were made to select them from a variety sectors to get a comprehensive picture. Thus, the selected companies were from different industrial sectors like pharmaceuticals, metals, technological, engineering. The methodology of the present study relied on the web based research, review of print literature to understand CSR practice within the context of rural development in India. For the purpose of analysis CSR initiatives for rural development were classified under six areas: livelihood, health, education, environment, women empowerment and infrastructure.

Limitations

The main limitation of this research is that this study has only focused on a small sample of Indian companies. Secondly, information collected from print literature, websites of these companies and no primary data were collected directly from the stakeholders through interviews or surveys.



Results And Discussion

The CSR Policies and initiatives

The study shows that all surveyed companies present themselves as having CSR policies and practices. A substantial number of companies reflect their CSR philosophy or social, environmental and ethical objectives in mission statements, vision documents, organizational policy and plans. However, even though surveyed companies have CSR policies and objectives but no link was observed

Table – 1 Number of companies taking CSR initiative for women empowerment and rural development for Palghar District

Sr. No.	CSR Initiatives for Rural development	Number of Companies taking CSR Initiative
1	Lively hood	02
2	Health	02
3	Education	02
4	Environment	02
5	Women Empowerment	01
6	Infrastructure	01

Source : National CSR Portal ; compiled by author

Table-1 shows number of companies taking CSR initiatives for rural development including women empowerment in Palghar district. It is interesting to note from the Table-1 that education, lively hood, health and environment takes the top priority of the companies surveyed, followed by infrastructure and women empowerment. About 50 percent of surveyed companies take CSR initiatives in the area of infrastructure and 57 percent in environment which includes planting of trees, awareness generation on environmental issues etc. It is also astonishing to note that even though the Central and State government has separate departments for education, health and women empowerment, these three issues is often prioritized under the CSR banner of both public and private companies in India. The details of various CSR initiatives undertaken by the companies are presented in Table-2.

Table2 :- Detail of CSR Initiatives of Indian Companies for Palghar District

Sr. No.	CSR Initiatives for Rural development	LAKH	Women Empowerment
1	<u>NEON LABORATORIES LIMITED</u>	286.00	No
2	<u>VIRAJ PROFILES LIMITED</u>	254.79	No
3	<u>HINDUJA GROUP LIMITED</u>	235.00	No
4	<u>SIEMENS INDUSTRY SOFTWARE (INDIA) PRIVATE LIMITED</u>	160.05	No
5	<u>PANASONIC LIFE SOLUTIONS INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED</u>	148.20	No
6	<u>NXTDIGITAL LIMITED</u>	116.39	No
7	<u>FINOLEX INDUSTRIES LIMITED</u>	92.00	No
8	<u>ASK INVESTMENT MANAGERS LIMITED</u>	87.85	No
9	<u>ROCHE DIAGNOSTICS INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED</u>	74.40	YES
10	<u>KARAMTARA ENGINEERING PRIVATE LIMITED</u>	57.07	No
Total (INR Lakh)		1,511.75	



Source : National CSR Portal <https://www.csr.gov.in/companyprofile.php?year=FY%202019-20&CIN=U24100MH1982PLC027493>

Table 3:- Detail of CSR Initiatives of Indian Companies and their Thematic Area

Company	Thematic Area	CSR Initiatives for Rural development and Women Empowerment
Roche Diagnostics India Private Limited	Water Conservation (Rainwater Harvesting)	Safe drinking water
	Women Empowerment	Women empowerment
	Promoting Health Care including Preventive Health Care (Provide Comprehensive Healthcare for Tribal)	Health care
Panasonic Life Solutions India Private Limited	Ear & Eye Screening camp for Tribal Student- Ashram schools/ZP Schools -Jawhar	Health care
	"Science Lab(consumables) -2 schools "	Education
	Holistic Development Project -Jawhar (2 villages- Sambarpada&Kashtipada)	Livelihood enhancement projects
	Holistic Development Project -Jawhar (2 villages - Waganpada&Shivkordyachiment)	Livelihood enhancement projects
	Hearing Aid distribution for Deaf & Mute student (10 student)	Education
	Holistic Development Project - Jawahar (one village- Gavandpada)	Livelihood enhancement projects
Ask Investment Managers Limited	Model Village Programme	Rural development projects
Karamtara Engineering Private Limited	Ex-gratia payment is made to temporary / casual workers/ daily wage workers over and above the disbursement of wages, specifically for the purpose of fighting COVID 19	Livelihood enhancement projects

Source : National CSR Portal ; compiled by author

The Corporate Approach to Work and Mode of Action

So far as Corporate Social Responsibility approach adopted by the companies in concerned, it is observed that most of the companies have adopted CSR approach into their overall business strategy. Therefore, they have been successful in achieving the objectives of both business and social development. Their approach to work is not mainly relief, welfare and service delivery but it is empowerment of women, education and overall sustainable development oriented, which have long term benefits. CSR interventions by these companies are philanthropic in nature, contributing in the form of financial assistance, assets and facilities.

This study reveals that companies implement CSR programs with respect to rural development through four types of institutions which are given as below:



1. CSR activities implemented directly by the company through its own (i) CSR division, (ii) Human Resource Department (iii) Local management of manufacturing unit;
2. CSR activities implemented through a foundation;
3. CSR activities implemented through partnership with NGOs, academic institutions, international agencies;
4. CSR activities implemented through partnership with Government.

The study shows that out of 10 companies surveyed, one company implemented their CSR initiatives directly through dedicated CSR divisions which are responsible for planning and implementation of such activities. For another two companies, CSR initiatives are implemented through local management of manufacturing unit and Human Resource Department (HRD). Many companies like Neon Laboratories, Viraj Profiles Ltd, Hinduja Group Limited, Panasonic Life Solutions, Finolex Industry, Roche Diagnostic India Pvt Ltd, have implemented their CSR initiatives through other agencies for rural development. Most of these agencies encourage participation of local communities while planning and implementation of their CSR activities. It is also interesting to note that such agencies implement their programmes in partnership with government departments, a good example of Private Public Partnership (PPP).

Present study also reveals that only one company who have direct involvement for implementation of CSR initiatives. In such an arrangement, the company provides finance, infrastructure, whereas the NGO provides grassroots level support for implementation of CSR activities.

The Impact of CSR Programs on Rural Poor and Women Empowerment

The impact of CSR programs reflected by a sample of 10 prominent companies in Palghar were classified under six areas: livelihood, health, education, women empowerment, environment and infrastructure.

Livelihood: Karmatara Engineering Pvt Ltd has Ex-gratia payment is made to temporary / casual workers/ daily wage workers over and above the disbursement of wages, specifically for the purpose of fighting COVID 19. Holistic Development Project -Jawhar (one village- Gavandpada) and Holistic Development Project -Jawhar (2 villages- Sambarpada & Kashtipada) was supported by Panasonic Life Solutions India Private Limited. Abhinav Janseva Association helps to Rural Development & Poverty Alleviation. Finolex Industries Limited's Financial assistance for sanitation facilities.

Health: The study shows that many companies organize a number of health camps to create health awareness and sensitize people on health related issues like: immunization, blood donation, water purification tablets. Roche Diagnostics India Private Limited has Promoting Health Care including Preventive Health Care (Provide Comprehensive Healthcare for Tribal) Panasonic Life Solutions India Private Limited has funding for Ear & Eye Screening camp for Tribal Student- Ashram schools/ZP Schools -Jawhar. Roche Diagnostics India Private Limited Promoting Health Care including Preventive Health Care (Provide Comprehensive Healthcare for Tribal) Neon laboratories conduct C.S.R activity relating to combat of Diseases. Neon Laboratories program on C.S.R activity relating to eradication of extreme Hunger and Poverty. JSW Foundation Tackling child malnutrition among the Anganwadi Children in Jawhar Taluka of Palghar District (Sudrirha Bharat Abhiyan)

Education: Panasonic Life Solutions India Private Limited provided "Science Lab(consumables) -2 schools. Neon laboratories C.S.R. activity relating to promotion of Education

Women Empowerment : The present study shows that one companies organize a women empowerment program like: immunization, blood donation, water purification tablets. Funded by Roche Diagnostics India Private Limited. Sakhya Women's Guidance Cell working on Women's Development & Empowerment. Neon Laboratories C.S.R Activities relating to Social Projects for women empowerment. M/s Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Limited and M/s Samhita Social Ventures Private Limited Strengthening more than 990 Anganwadis of Vasai and Palghar Taluka in



Palghar District, Maharashtra. WCD Dept, Integrated Child Development Services Commissionerate , Rajmata Jijau Mother-Child Health & Nutrition Mission and Fight Hunger Foundation ; Collaboration on reduction of malnutrition in the areas of Mokhada, Vikramgad ,Jawahar block of Palghar District and Dharni Block of Amravati District as identified as high burden district by Neeti Aayog.

Environment: For sustainable management and development of natural resources, many companies have been working for tree plantation, watershed management, waste management, wind farm etc. For example, Roche Diagnostics India Private Limited has Water Conservation (Rainwater Harvesting) people and spread awareness about the crucial importance of water conservation among millions people.

Infrastructure: Abhinav Janseva Association helps to Rural Development & Poverty Alleviation . Model Village Programme : Rural development projects supported by Ask Investment Managers Limited. Out of 10 companies surveyed only six companies are providing different infrastructure facilities like construction or development of roads, electricity, water facility, sanitation, school, health centre, community centre, etc.

Conclusion And Recommendations

The conclusion of this study is that social responsibility is regarded as an important business issue of Indian companies irrespective of size, sector, business goal, location of the company. Because Indian companies are realizing that without socio-economic development of the local communities, there can be no stability and sustainability for doing business so as to compete with the global market. The study shows that all surveyed companies present themselves as having CSR policy and practices. Most of the companies which design and implement CSR initiatives in the vicinity of their works cover entire community. A wide range of CSR initiatives ranging from income generation activities for livelihood, health check-up camps, mobile health services, education, women empowerment, adult literacy, agricultural development, provision of drinking water, management and development of natural resources, infrastructure facilities being carried out by these companies. Though the approach to work is generally shifting from philanthropic to welfare and sustainable development but no link was observed between the company's CSR agenda and Millennium Development Goals. Many companies promote and implement CSR initiatives through Human Resource Department, foundation or in partnership with NGOs, but do not have full fledged CSR department. CSR initiatives being implemented by the Indian companies for rural development have a positive impact in overall development of society, women empowerment and their business. However, following points must be considered to continue on sustained basis for the betterment of both the people at large and the business.

1. All the companies must align the CSR goals with the national goals set up under the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).
2. The company should have a dedicated CSR division with well qualified, trained and experienced professionals from social science i.e. Geography, Social Work, Sociology, Rural Development and Development Studies and management background for better implementation ,planning and evaluation of CSR initiatives.
3. CSR programmes being implemented by Indian companies should be based on the women empowerment and wellbeing of the local people so that their participation in the programme can be enhanced. Moreover, it is necessary to create jobs and economic activity in rural community with a view to uplift the masses.
4. CSR performance of the company should be evaluate through social audit which should be conducted by an external agency.
5. Government should play the role of motivator, enabler, facilitator rather than director of corporate social responsibility.
6. Government can encourage economic players to consider ethical, social and environmental criteria..



7. A annual report on Corporate Social Responsibility should be prepared to highlight the company's commitment for women empowerment and overall sustainable community development .

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