

The role of corporate sectors in preserving archaeological and cultural heritage in India

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Abstract

At present, in India, companies are funding different projects, vital for social and cultural development, in order to meet the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) norms. West Bengal, in the eastern part of India, has a deeply rooted culture and a rich archaeological heritage. It is a hub of tribal cultures. Along with the urbanization process there is a need to sustain our culture, societal values and preserve our cultural heritage, particularly when these parameters are changing rapidly. The present paper aims at highlighting the role of the corporate sectors in the preservation of archaeological and cultural heritage with the help of the newly adopted CSR principle.

Keywords: Archaeological heritage, preservation, tribal culture, corporate responsibility.

Introduction

India has a very rich and unique cultural background since the ancient times. In many parts of the country one can find ancient temples, rock cut caves, palaces, forts, and also numerous dilapidated structures of great historical significance. These heritage objects are tangible in nature and hold immense importance at the local, regional or national level. Heritage thus can be referred to as anything what a person wants to conserve or to collect and, in due course of time, pass onto the future generations.¹ The heritage artefacts are not only tangible, but also intangible, like, expressions of verbal art, celebrations, rituals, tradition etc., specific to a community or a region.

So, heritage can be defined as that entity, tangible or intangible, man-made or natural, which has not been created by the current generation of mankind, but has been received by the virtue of inheritance.²

According to UNESCO's Convention on the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage (16 of November, Paris, 1972), the importance of preservation of cultural heritage should be recognized for the benefit of the future generations of human beings. The convention mentions "considering that deterioration or disappearance of any item of the cultural or natural heritage consti-

¹ Peter Howard, *Heritage: management, interpretation, identity*. London, (New York: Continuum, 2003), 12.

² Ravi.B. Kumar, "Indian Heritage Tourism: Challenges of identification and presentation." *International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Systems*, 2 no. 1. (2009): 123.



tutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world". With a view to manage this heritage it is needed to provide the necessary skills and expertise of the formally trained management professionals, as well as the informal and traditional managing of such resources.³

The corporate sector which governs the economy of a country is immensely busy in calculating and reaping monetary benefits. It often ignores the society in which it operates and often brings in negative impacts on the society. In view of solving this issue, the concept of social responsibility of business, better termed as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), has been evolved and its earliest evolution may be dated as early as 1930s.⁴

Many consider an organisation to be a moral agent, who operates in the society, and has been established to perform specific social tasks, and hence it can be held responsible to the society for its activities.⁵

The definition of Social Responsibility specifies that, in order "to fully address the entire range of obligation that business has to society, it must embody the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary categories of business performance".⁶

Keith Davis has formulated a model (managementinnovations.wordpress.com) which lists out 5 propositions describing the ways and needs for the businesses to adhere to their social obligation that is to take any necessary preventive action for the welfare and improvement of the society, as well as that of the organization.⁷

Proposition 1: Social responsibility arises from social power - it has been observed that businesses can influence the society, and also have power to regulate it. Thus the business can be held responsible for the development of the society and should fulfil its social responsibilities.

Proposition 2: Business shall operate as a 2 way open system, with open receipt of inputs from society and open disclosure of its operations to the public - it is important for the business houses to understand what must be done to improve and sustain the social conditions. Similarly the society should also be

³ Kapila D. Silva, and Neel Kamal Chapagain, eds. *Asian heritage management: Contexts, concerns, and prospects*. (New York: Routledge, 2013): 10-11.

⁴ Archie B. Carroll, "A three-dimensional conceptual model of corporate performance." *Academy of management review* 4, no. 4 (1979): 497.

⁵ Odies C. Ferrell, John Fraedrich and Linda Ferrell. *Business ethics: Ethical decision making & cases*. 6 edition. (USA: Houghton Mifflin, 2000): 143-144.

⁶ Carroll, "A three-dimensional..." 499.

⁷ Keith Davis. "Model of Corporate Social Responsibility." Available: <https://managementinnovations.wordpress.com/2008/12/06/keith-davis-model-of-corporate-social-responsibility/> [accessed January 14, 2017]. (2008).

willing to listen to the business reports regarding the activities undertaken by the business houses to meet the social responsibilities.

Proposition 3: The social costs and benefits of an activity, product or service, shall be thoroughly calculated and considered in deciding whether to proceed with it - before undertaking any project, the business organisations should consider the economic, social and technical feasibility and also the long-term and short-term consequences of all of their activities on the society.

Proposition 4: The social costs related to each activity, product or service shall be passed on to the customer. According to this proposition, the costs of maintaining socially desirable activities can be passed on to the customers in certain cases where such activities may be socially beneficial, but financially not viable for the businesses.

Proposition 5: Business institutions, as citizens, have the responsibility to become involved in certain social problems that are outside their normal areas of operation - This proposition states that business institutions may take up the obligation of solving the social problems for the benefit of the society, even if they are not directly associated with the business process.

CSR in India

Under Section 135 of the Indian Companies Act (2013), the public or private companies who have net worth of Rs.500 crores or above, turnover of Rs.1000 crore, or above, or average yearly net profits of Rs.5 crore above are supposed to spend 2% of the net profits before tax on Corporate Social Responsibility. One estimate says about 8,000 to 9,000 companies qualify for this 2% CSR, spent each year, with accumulated CSR, spent to the tune of Rs.16,000 crore, or so in the areas, as specified by Schedule VII of the Act (csrtimes.com).⁸

Although most of the companies in India are trying to avoid spending money on CSR activities, some very socially responsible companies are taking up serious social problems and try to improve the current social conditions. As per the provisions of schedule VII of the Indian Companies Act, the activities which may be specifically considered by the companies as a part of their Corporate Social Responsibility Policies are as follows (ebook.mca.gov.in):

- (i) Eradicating hunger, poverty and malnutrition, [“promoting health care including preventive health care”] and sanitation [including contribution to the Swach Bharat Kosh, set-up by the Central Go-

⁸ Companies Act, 2013. Available: <http://ebook.mca.gov.in/Actpagedisplay.aspx?PAGENAME=17923> [accessed January 20, 2017].

CSR Activities by Tata Group. Available: <http://www.tata.com/article/inside/tata-steel-samvaad-jamshedpur> [accessed February 16, 2017].



vernment for the promotion of sanitation], and making available safe drinking water.

- (ii) Promoting education, including special education and employment, enhancing vocation skills, especially among children, women, elderly and the differently abled and livelihood enhancement projects.
- (iii) Promoting gender equality, empowering women, setting up homes and hostels for women and orphans; setting up old age homes, day care centres, and such other facilities for senior citizens, and measures for reducing inequalities faced by socially and economically backward groups.
- (iv) Ensuring environmental sustainability, ecological balance, protection of flora and fauna, animal welfare, agro-forestry, conservation of natural resources and maintaining quality of soil, air and water [including contribution to the Clean Ganga Fund, set-up by the Central Government for rejuvenation of the river Ganga].
- (v) Protection of national heritage, promoting art and culture, including restoration of buildings and sites of historical importance and works of art; setting up public libraries; promotion and development of traditional arts and craftsmanship;
- (vi) Measures for the benefit of armed forces veterans, war widows and their dependents;
- (vii) Training to promote rural sports, nationally recognised sports, Paralympic sports and Olympic sports;
- (viii) Contribution to the prime minister's national relief fund, or any other fund set up by the central government for socio-economic development and relief, and welfare of the schedule caste, tribes, other backward classes, minorities and women;
- (ix) Contributions or funds provided to technology incubators, located within academic institutions, which are approved by the central government;
- (x) Rural development projects;
- (xi) Slum area development.

Usually the CSR programmes of corporates in India mainly focus on various projects related to education, water, poverty alleviation and almost every other potential focus areas listed out under schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013. These programmes hold priority over heritage conservation issues, indicated under point (v) of schedule VII. It has been noted that CSR projects rarely include initiatives regarding protection and preservation of cultural heritage. The impor-

tance of engaging communities through art and culture is not being put forth systematically and corporates are not aware about the benefits of carrying out such programmes. This domain thereby holds huge potential for executing successful CSR programmes, which will help the society in a holistic manner.⁹

CSR activities in the regions, where we have historical heritage sites, can boost the industries that are dependent on heritage and culture, particularly tourism and hospitality sectors. The initiatives can focus on creating awareness on the heritage sites in the region, evaluating and establishing the importance of such sites, setting up of management frameworks and maintenance. The CSR programme can also provide a platform for the generation and management of intangible cultural heritage resources, through training, skill development, capacity building etc.

CSR Activities related to preservation of historic and cultural heritage by different companies in India

In 1999, Coca-Cola India's bottler Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt. Ltd. (HCCBPL) had set up a plant in Kaladera, Rajasthan. The western part of the state of Rajasthan consists of the Thar Desert. Kaldera, although located on the eastern part of the state and far away from the desert, faces the problem of water scarcity, as it is faced by the desert areas of Rajasthan. Coca-Cola India, as a part of their CSR activity, took up a project on implementing traditional water systems, so as to recharge groundwater aquifers in Rajasthan, involving local communities. The company had also engaged itself in educating and raising awareness on water conservation, with the help of local authorities, government and the community of Kaldera. This initiative also included restoration of Sarai Bawari and Kale Hanuman ki Bawari - historical step wells (over 400-year-old), thus providing water to the people of the community. After the restoration of these step wells, on the one hand, the local residents enjoy a number of benefits with the increased water reserve and greater supply for their daily and other agricultural activities. And the company, on the other hand, has been able to generate goodwill among the customers, and also reap advantage of water storage for its plants. Thus this programme shows a unique corporate-community engagement model, where both sides involved enjoyed the benefits in their distinct ways.¹⁰

9 CSR-First year in retrospect, (2015). Available : <http://www.csrtimes.com/community-articles/csr-first-year-in-retrospect/ERJdtjXqAY> (accessed February 10, 2017).

¹⁰ Barnali Chaklader, and Neeran Gautam. "Efficient water management through public-private partnership model: An experiment in CSR by Coca-Cola India." *Vikalpa* 38, no. 4 (2013): 98-100.



Tata Steel Ltd set up a Tribal Cultural Society, in the 1990s, which is devoted to the sole purpose of preservation and promotion of tribal culture.¹¹

As part of its efforts to highlight the issues faced by tribal cultures, the Tribal Cultural Society organises 'Samvaad', a four-day tribal conclave in Jamshedpur, every year since 2014. This conclave seeks to:

- a. Create a common platform for tribal communities to come together.
- b. Bring the collective wisdom of the tribes under one roof, so as to stimulate a valuable exchange and multi-dimensional discussion of ideas.
- c. Document and record and hence, preserve a body of knowledge comprising of cultural heritage and cultural identity.
- d. Understand the issues and problems of tribal communities and spread awareness on the heritage and cultural legacy of this community, which is nowadays threatened by modern lifestyles. (tata.com)

Tata group of companies has taken initiatives in the various fields of safeguarding of traditional art expressions and crafts, refurbishment of architectural heritages, revival of different forms of music and dance, particularly belonging to the tribal communities in the regions of Jharkhand and Bihar, two very significant locations of tribal communities in the eastern part of India. Their main aim is to ensure that culture and traditional art forms are transmitted to the young generations. (tata.com)

Scope and Challenges of CSR ahead in the state of West Bengal in Eastern India

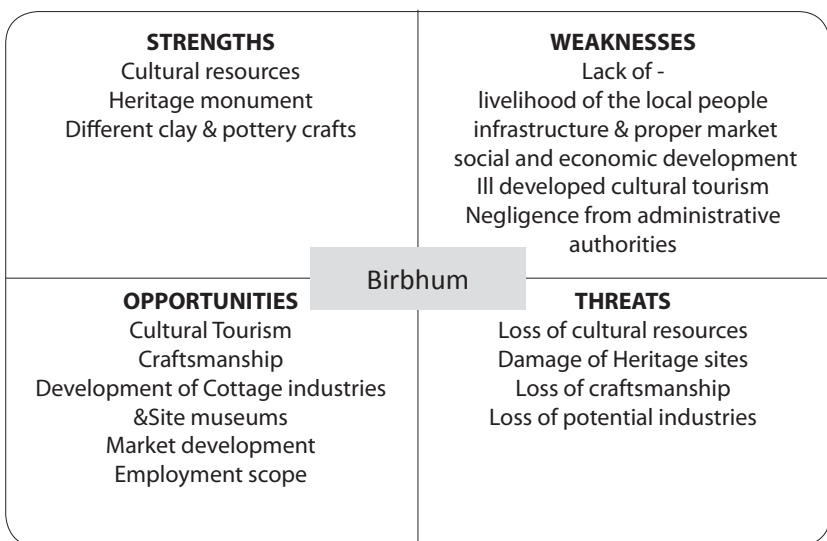
West Bengal, an eastern state in India, is a historically and culturally rich region, consisting of a wide variety of built structures, like terracotta temples, places and other historic heritage sites. It also houses a very rich intangible cultural heritage. It is this cultural treasure which unfolds the challenge of sustainability for the present generation. The scope of CSR, in different parts of West Bengal, in this respect is huge. It is important to strategically select the areas which have historic buildings and other structures, and involve the community in different programmes. The companies often carry out CSR activities with the basic philosophy "do good as easily as possible", which leads to the simplest activity of writing a cheque. If we evaluate such activities, then it will show that little was done toward achieving the quantifiable goals for the social issue and also business.¹²

¹¹ Preserving art for the future. Available: <http://www.tata.com/article/inside/tata-group-art-conservation> (accessed May 1st, 2017).

¹² Philip Kotler, and Nancy Lee. *Corporate social responsibility: Doing the most good for your company and your cause*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2008.

A framework is required to be developed, which will not only be meant for the sustainability of the temples, but also for the surrounding region and more importantly the people residing in that region. For identifying the scope of CSR activities, we can form a plan district wise in West Bengal. We may begin with the environmental sustainability, which ultimately leads to cultural sustainability. Through the preservation of heritage buildings one can have the scope for economic development, which will undoubtedly fulfil the core objective of CSR programme in its fullest way. Let us take district of Birbhum for example.

Scope for CSR in Birbhum district - Birbhum is a significant temple town in Eastern India, dominated by several brave kings since the early times. We can find the remnants of various human cultures since the ancient times. Culturally rich and studded with a number of temples and heritage sites, and also endowed with significant tribal culture, Birbhum poses to be a prospective area for CSR activities. The SWOT Analysis of the region highlights the factors which need to be considered by the different companies, which can successfully launch CSR programmes for the benefit of the district as a whole. In general, tourists are aware of the famous town Shantiniketan, where the great poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore lived. Tourism has developed considerably in Shantiniketan, due to the town's cultural legacy being directly linked to Tagore. But very few people are aware of the beautiful terracotta temple in and around that region. These temples, such as the temple of – Supur, Surul, Jaydev Kenduli etc., are located in the interiors of the surrounding villages. It is important that these locations are highlighted and brought to the notice of the corporate, who regularly engage in CSR activities.





There is a great scope for developing cultural tourism in this region. Similar activities of restoring the heritage monuments, as had been taken up by Coca-Cola India in Kaldera, can be initiated by the corporate as part of their CSR scheme. Since this region is the home to the tribal people specifically the Santhals, a similar Tribal centre can be developed, as we have seen Tata Steel India doing in Jamshedpur. The CSR activity can be planned in such a way, that it is beneficial for both sides. Thus we could move towards a unique corporate-community engagement model, which would be mutually advantageous.

Challenges for CSR activities - The primary challenge for the companies would be a proper identification of the potential areas. The companies in West Bengal involved in CSR programmes mostly ignore these national heritage conservation issues, promotion of traditional arts and crafts, and traditional skills and techniques development, indicated under point (v) of schedule VII.

Conclusion

Corporate Social Responsibility is multi-dimensional in nature.¹³ It is difficult to study and analyse the several domains and disciplines, but in order to understand CSR and to apply its concepts fruitfully we must consider the multiple perspectives. For the present research only one district has been considered as case study. But in West Bengal, almost all districts have such potential areas which need to be highlighted. The corporates interested in CSR programmes must conduct an initial survey and pinpoint the appropriate heritage sites which can be developed under their CSR scheme. Corporations are neither fully responsible for all sorts of problems of the world, nor do they have immense capability or resources to solve all of these. Each company can therefore identify a particular set of societal issues, which it can solve with its limited resources and expertise, which in turn will provide greatest competitive advantage to it.¹⁴ Though the big companies are involved in social development projects in West Bengal, still there are numerous regions which are neglected. This paper is a preliminary study of the scope of CSR programmes, particularly in those places which have national and cultural heritages, and in future the study will encompass other regions in details, and also highlight the prospects of such activities. It is important that the neglected heritage sites are focused, so that the companies are also aware of it

¹³ Rajiv Kashyap, Raza Mir, and Ali Mir. "Corporate social responsibility: a call for multidisciplinary inquiry." *Journal of Business & Economics Research (JBER)* 2, no. 7 (2011): 55-56.

¹⁴ Michael E. Porter, Mark R. Kramer, "Strategy & Society: The link between competitive advantage and corporate social responsibility." In *On Competition: Harvard Business Review Book*, edited by Michael E. Porter. (Harvard: Harvard Business Press, 2008): 479-506.

and funding can be brought in those areas which will help to generate the required structure for sustainable development.

Rezumat

În prezent, în India, companiile finanțează diferite proiecte, vitale pentru dezvoltarea socială și culturală, pentru a respecta normele privind Responsabilitatea Socială Corporativă (CSR). Bengalul de vest, în partea de est a Indiei, are o cultură înrădăcinată și o bogată moștenire arheologică. Este un centru de culturi tribale. În rezultatul urbanizării este nevoie să ne menținem cultura, valorile societății și să păstrăm patrimoniul nostru cultural, în special atunci când acești parametri se schimbă rapid. Prezentul articol vizează evidențierea rolului sectoarelor corporatiste în ceea ce privește conservarea patrimoniului arheologic și cultural, cu ajutorul noului principiu al CSR.

Cuvinte-cheie: Moștenirea arheologică, conservarea, cultura tribală, responsabilitatea corporativă