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HYPOTHESIS (ES)

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RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

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APPROACHES AND VIEWS TOWARDS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

DR. DHANANJAY AWASARIKAR ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SURYADATTA INSTITUTE BAVDHAN

ABSTRACT

Almost in all the workshops, seminars and conferences, very loud comments are passed, quite often, on the topic of 'Corporate Social Responsibility. The word 'Corporate Social Responsibility' can roughly be defined as an obligation of a Corporate Organization to protect and enhance the society within which it operates. It can also be defined as the Ethical Behavior of a Company towards the Society, at large. The broad areas of Corporate Social Responsibility include Ecology and Environmental Quality, Consumerism, Community Requirements, Relationship with the government, Minorities and Disadvantageous Persons, Relationships with Labors, Relationships with Share Holders. The approaches towards Corporate Social Responsibility include Social Opposition, Social Obligation, Social Responsibility and Social Contribution. Moreover, arguments for Corporate Social Responsibility include Public Expectations and resultant Image, Dominance of the Competitors, Favorable Environment Rules and Regulations, Maintenance and Development of Goodwill, Appropriate Utility of Corporate Resources, Courteous Social Responsibility cover Loss of Profit Maximization, Dominance of the Competitors, Favorable Environment leading to Corporate Success, Overcoming Government Rules and Regulations, Maintenance and Development of Goodwill, Appropriate Utility of Corporate Resources, Courteous Social Behavior Augmenting Profits. This Research Paper studies the conceptual understanding of corporate Social Responsibility and tests various views and approaches towards the same.

KEYWORDS

social opposition, social obligation, social responsibility and social contribution.

INTRODUCTION

orporate Social Responsibility is one of the major trends in modern business. Almost in all the workshops, seminars and conferences, very loud comments are passed, quite often, on the topic of 'Corporate Social Responsibility. The idea of Corporate Social Responsibility emerged for the first time in the year 1953, sixty-three years earlier.

Sometimes, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is roughly interpreted as an Academic Discipline. This means that it is a coherent body of knowledge addressing a central theme. Prime focus of Corporate Social Responsibility is on the relationship existing between the business and wider society and also as to how it can be managed, quite effectively, in practice. Moreover, Corporate Social Responsibility can also be presented as a Management Approach that is a technical and instrumental response to the overall business environment.

As a matter of fact, Corporate Social Responsibility should ideally be treated as a field which includes both the Academic and Practitioner perspective. Furthermore, the overall constituents related to Corporate Social Responsibility get affected either favorably or adversely because of the very existence of the Corporate Organization, in itself and moreover its performance, in the society. The society, just referred to, consists of different elements like Customers, Employees (also termed as Internal Customers), Creditors, Competitors, Suppliers, Shareholders, State Government, Internal Groups, Community Groups, to mention a few.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

India has the world's richest tradition or heritage of Corporate Social Responsibility. In India, this concept predates back to *Mauryan History* where the great philosopher like *Kautilya* emphasized on Ethical Practices and Principles while conducting business. In fact, it is practiced since ancient times, though not in the formal form, but, no doubt, in informal form of charity to the poor, the needy and the disadvantaged people from the community. India has a Penetrated Culture of 'Sharing and Caring' as the same is reflected through several scriptures at various places which highlight the significance of sharing one's earning with the deprived members of the society.

Further, in the words of *Dietrich Bonheoffer*, "Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility." In other words, actions towards Social Responsibility can surely spring only when the society, as a whole, is really ready to accept Social Responsibility, as a concept and also in principle. *Carroll* views Corporate Social Responsibility as a Multilayered Concept that can be divided into four interrelated Responsibilities, namely, Economic Responsibilities, Legal Responsibilities, Ethical Responsibilities and Philanthropic Responsibilities and further comments that it is a concept whereby the Companies integrate Social, Environmental and Health concerns in their Business Strategy and Operations and also in their interactions with the stakeholders on a voluntary basis. The Social Responsibility of Business encompasses the Economic, Legal, Ethical and discretionary expectations that society has of the organization at a given point in time. According to *Donaldson T., and L. E. Preston*, who are pioneers of Stakeholder Theory, Corporate Social Responsibility is based on the Stakeholder Theory of the firm, which contends that companies are not managed purely in the interests of their shareholders alone. Rather, there is a range of Stakeholders that have a legitimate interest in the Company as well.

Amaeshi pointed out that the precise nature of Corporate Social Responsibility is understood in different ways, with differences in understanding or representation of the concept relatable to different paradigms and concerns. Although there are several contested notions of what Corporate Social Responsibility should be and how it should work, there is some agreement upon what it broadly entails. A number of concepts and issues are subsumed under the heading of Corporate Social Responsibility, including Human Rights, Environmental Responsibility, Diversity Management, Sustainability and Philanthropy meaning that it is a complex area with an interdisciplinary focus.

In a study conducted by **Brammer, Jcakson and Matten** and titled as 'Corporate Social Responsibility and Institutional Theory; new perspective on Private Governance' it was concluded that Corporate Social Responsibility is not only a voluntary action but beyond that. Regulation or Governance is necessary for enhancing Corporate Social Performance of businesses through Corporate Social Responsibility.

European Union describes Corporate Social Responsibility as the concept that an Enterprise is accountable for its impact on all relevant stakeholders. It is the continuing commitment by the business to behave fairly and responsibly and contribute to Economic Development while improving the quality of life of the work force and their families as well as of the local community and society at large. Narayan Murthy, the Founder of 'Infosys,' states that Corporate Social Responsibility is to create maximum Share Holders value working under the circumstances, where it is fair to all its Stakeholders, Workers, Consumers, the Community, the Government and the Environment. According to Das Gupta, today Corporate Social Responsibility has gone beyond merely 'Charity and Donations' and is approached in a more organized fashion, it has become an integral part of the Corporate Strategy.

After detail scrutiny of Annual Reports and Balance Sheets of leading Corporate in India like BHEL, Indian Airlines, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd., Maruti Suzuki India Ltd., Hidustan Unilever Ltd., IBM, Tata Steel, Reliance Industries, HSBC India, Standard Charted Bank, Max New York Life Insurance Company, SAP India, Oil and Natural Gas Commission, ONGC, Infosys, to name a few, it is comfortably and empirically inferred by the Researcher that they are involved in Corporate Social Responsibility Programs in many areas like Education, Health, Livelihood Creation, Skill Development, Empowerment of Weaker Sections of the Society, Promotion of Culture and Rural Development, Disaster Management, Adoption of Villages, Provision of Medical and Sanitation Facilities, Building of Schools and Houses, Arrangement of Teaching Schedules Vocational and Business Skills for making villagers Self-reliant and Self-sufficient, Joining hands with Tribal Development Department for Upliftment of Tribal, Improvement of Agricultural Productivity for raising standard of living of poor farmers, Coordination

of Projects, for example, 'Drishti' for visually challenged Indians from the Economically Weaker Sections of the Society, Initiation of 'Green Movement,' Short-term and Long-term Rehabilitation of Victims of Natural Calamities or Acts of God, etc.

There is a real need to create awareness about Corporate Social Responsibility among the Public at large in order to make such initiatives practically highly effective. It is quite difficult for any one Organization to bring about desirable change as it is required on a very massive scale. It may necessarily not, at all, be out of place to suggest over here that fruitful and beneficial partnerships or collaborations among different Corporate Houses, NGOs and the Government should be encouraged so that overall Social Development of India should result at a fast rate.

DEFINITIONS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

After undertaking review of pertinent literature related to the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility, one can certainly arrive at a number of definitions of this word. It is not thought fit by the Researcher to include all such definitions in this Research Paper. However, for the purpose of conceptual clarity a few definitions of this word are included in the following lines.

As a matter of fact, there is no unanimity among Academicians, Practitioners, Management Consultants and Practioners as regards the definition of the word 'Corporate Social Responsibility.' This kind of opinion differentiation exists basically because of varying approaches and angles to look towards this concept. At the same time, there are different perceptions of the same concept among the Governments, Private Sector as well as Civil Society Organizations.

The word 'Corporate Social Responsibility' can roughly be defined as an obligation of a Corporate Organization to protect and enhance the society within which it operates. It can also be defined as the Ethical Behavior of a Company towards the Society, at large.

Corporate Social Responsibility is also defined under Institutional Theory which states that Corporate Social activities are not only voluntary activities but they are a part of interface between business and society.

RESEARCH PAPER OBJECTIVES

The Research Paper Objectives are as follows.

- 1. To Develop Conceptual Understanding about Corporate Social Responsibility
- 2. To Test various views and Approaches towards Corporate Social responsibility

RESEARCH PAPER METHODOLOGY

The Methodology adopted for writing the research Paper is as follows:

- 1. Review of literature was done through books and a website (The details about the books and the website are given at the end of the Research Paper in the section titled as 'Categorized Bibliography.')
- 2. Several inferences were arrived at and personal views were formed after applying logical interpretations of Secondary Data, collected as above.

AREAS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The following main areas have already been identified towards Corporate Social Responsibility. However, there is no attempt on the part of the research paper writer to conclude that the Corporate Social Responsibility is, in fact, strictly restricted only to those areas mentioned in the research paper. Thus, in other words, these areas are undoubtedly suggestive and not, at all, exhaustive, in practical nature.

(A) ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

This area broadly includes the following:

- Pollution Clean-up and Prevention
- Dispersion of Industries
- Appropriate Utility of available Land and its Beautification

(B) CONSUMERISM

This area includes the following:

- Truth in Lending and in Advertising
- Fair and Ethical Business Practices
- Product or Service Guarantee or Warrantee
- Believable Service Before and After Sales
- No sale of harmful products
- No sale of food items injurious to human health

(C) COMMUNITY REQUIREMENTS

These include the following:

- Proper Utilization of Expertise and Competency of Eminent Personalities for resolution of local problems
- Appropriate Aid with Health-care facilities
- Provision of adequate educational facilities
- Service in voluntary Groups

(D) RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT

This relationship covers the following:

- Strict restrictions on lobbying
- Dominance or consequent control of business through political influence

(E) MINORITIES AND DISADVANTAGED PERSONS

Services to these include the following:

- Provision of Training to unemployed people
- Ensuring equal employment opportunities without bias or prejudice
- Deliberate location of plants and other offices in minority areas
- Encouragement of purchases from minority businesses houses

(F) RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE LABORS

These relationships cover the following:

- Improvised conditions for Health and Safety
- Provision of sufficient Day-care Centers
- Provision of options of flexible Working Hours

(G) RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE SHARE HOLDERS

These relationships include the following:

- Provision of Public Seats on the Board of Directors
- Transparent Financial Disclosure.

APPROACHES TO CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

1. SOCIAL OPPOSITION

Some Corporate take firm stand that they do not, at all, owe any Responsibility towards the Society, at large. They try their all the best to cover up or deny this kind of behavior through their strong justification which is interpreted by some other corporate houses, as totally Unethical or Illegal, especially those who admit their Responsibility towards the Society.

2. SOCIAL OBLIGATION

On the other hand, some Corporate admit and undertake Social Responsibility as a part and parcel of their Social Obligation. In other words, they follow all the provisions of relevant and prescribed Statutes or Laws those are applicable to their Organizations. At the same time, they do not intend to go beyond these provisions.

For example, they do install all the safety equipments as are ideally imposed by the Law. However, they do not incur additional expenditure for the purpose of installation of better safety equipments.

3. SOCIAL RESPONSE

Some Selective Corporate, indeed, go beyond the Legal Boundaries and they tend to be relatively more socially Responsive or Sensitive towards shouldering their social responsibility.

For instance, they take an active part in socially beneficial activities. But, at such times they take adequate care that after undertaking cost benefit analysis, benefits are more as compared to the actual costs incurred. No doubt, this stand seems quite rational as well as practical in character.

4. SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION

Some Corporate treat themselves as responsible citizens and they contribute maximum to the best of their capabilities in almost all the projects meant for improvement and betterment of society, at large. No doubt, they believe in deep social effort in serving the overall community.

ARGUMENTS FOR CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

1. PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS AND RESULTANT IMAGE

In order to meet ever expanding or increasing expectations of the public at large, the Corporate must necessarily possess deep conviction, determination as well as dedication for overall welfare of the public at large. Moreover, proper recognition and subsequent consistent responsible practice of Corporate Social Responsibility definitely helps to create positive and lasting longer impact on the Public Image. On the other hand, if the expectations of the public at large are not met, may, necessarily, not, at all, be fully, but reasonably, there does lie a great threat to goodwill or reputation. This is not a good sign for the Corporate either for stability or growth, particularly, in the long run, as the same attempts at long run viability.

2. DOMINANCE OF THE COMPETITORS

If Corporate Social Responsibility is not properly recognized and effectively practiced, the competitors, especially the leading competitors, may assume the same. As a result, there is a danger of losing of initiative efforts and influence, in the short run in the society.

3. FAVORABLE ENVIRONMENT LEADING TO CORPORATE SUCCESS

Through continuous practice of Corporate Social Responsibility, the Corporate can certainly create favorable as good as stable environment within the society. The existence of such kind of environment really ensures future success for the Corporate.

4. OVERCOMING GOVERNMENT RULES AND REGULATIONS

If it is perceived that the Corporate is meeting expectations of the public at large, the Corporate can go beyond the clutches of costly, cumbersome and restrictive rules and regulations of the government. Undoubtedly this benefits the Corporate in the sense that the level of autonomy automatically rises, thereafter.

5. MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF GOODWILL

The responsive or sensitive social areas where other social institutions miserably fail to shoulder their responsibility properly either because of its no recognition or their own restrictions or limitations, the Corporate can dominantly interfere in such areas to shoulder the responsibility in order to resolve social problems. No doubt, this ultimately helps to maintain and develop goodwill.

6. APPROPRIATE UTILITY OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

The Corporate, as an enterprise, is a very strong reservoir of capital and expertise. This, in itself, amounts to tremendous potential which can comfortably be offered for service of the public, at large. When this is done in the best interest of the public at large, unknowingly, there is an appropriate utility of Corporate resources which would be underutilized otherwise.

7. COURTEOUS SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AUGMENTING PROFITS

If the Corporate would apply its unique or exceptional, innovative and creative skills towards shouldering Social Responsibility and solving significant and serious social problems, in turn, the society would give handsome returns in the practical form of augmented profits to the Corporate, over a period, simply out of courtesy or reciprocity.

8. ASSURED SURVIVAL AND STABILITY

If social problems are not resolved in time, they may get aggravated with the passage of time. The society living with enormous problems is naturally and normally not expected to respond, quite favorably to the Corporate. In case, the nature of the problem is severe, no desirable response from the society may endanger the survival of the Corporate, especially, in the long run.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

1. LOSS OF PROFIT MAXIMIZATION

Indulging in socially beneficial projects involves investment of precious resources of an organization like Money, Manpower, Time, etc. As a matter of fact, this investment is not, at all, a waste and therefore it should be treated as a fruitful or productive investment. However, some corporate interpret this kind of investment as diversion of precious organizational resources, as they feel that shouldering social responsibility is not consistent with their Vision, Mission or Objectives. They also think that such kind of investment would reduce proportionate percentage of rightful gain of their share holders. Furthermore, this situation may dilute the level of faith of the share holders; consequently, the capability to raise the finance in future may get affected, quite adversely.

2. COMPROMISE OR SACRIFICE OF INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The overall level of monetary investment necessary for running socially responsible programs may be relatively very high. If the same investment is done for a project which possesses potential to yield relatively better rate of return either in near future or in long future, there can certainly be rise in the level of resultant profits. As a result, the corporate is not ready and willing to compromise or sacrifice their additional investment opportunities at the cost of social responsibility.

3. LACK OF ESSENTIAL SKILLS

A specific Corporate House may necessarily not possess all the skills fundamentally essential for effectively and efficiently dealing with any social issue. At the same time, the same is also not expected out of a Corporate House. Besides, hiring of external services for such desirable skills is not an easy as well as an economic task, always. So also, some Corporate are not ready to accept and shoulder Social Responsibility.

4. PURPOSE DILUTION

As per the view of some Corporate, concentration on the objectives related to Social Responsibility may dilute the basic objectives for which they actually exist and may deviate their prime attention from main objectives to ancillary objectives which need not be achieved. When this view turns prominent, Social Responsibility undoubtedly plays second fiddle to the main objectives of the Corporate.

5. NO SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Prima facie, any Corporate can certainly and ideally not be held accountable for the outcomes of social programs, irrespective of the fact whether or not they are either right or wrong in the light of existing social or moral principles, good or bad in practical consequence, for the society. Moreover, a specific Corporate House may not enjoy the credit even after successful running of any social venture.

6. PUBLIC SUPPORT - A MAGICAL PHENOMENON

Public support is, more often than not, experienced as a magical phenomenon in the sense that sometimes public, at large, supports a Corporate for a social campaign having ordinary objectives whereas it does not support for a real noble or a charitable cause. In other words, the public, at large, may be well split on the issue of giving support to any social adventure undertaken or even initiated by a corporate firm. Thus, for want of consistent or reasonably stable results, in practice, some Corporate arrive at a decision not to indulge in Social Activities, at all, as a Practical Policy or Corporate Philosophy.

7. LACK OF SOCIAL POWER OR INFLUENCE

All the Corporate are not powerful or influence-able in the society, as a whole, to the extent required for successful running of a Social Project. As a result, in spite of existence of an intention to undertake Social Responsibility, as a project, they do not find themselves in a socially sound as good as comfortable position to initiate any thing in the direction of any activity which is directly or consequently related to social welfare.

PERSONAL VIEWS OF THE RESEARCHER AS REGARDS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

A few months back, there was an interesting and curiosity arousing article in one of the leading daily newspapers namely Times of India about statutory contribution of the leading corporate towards Corporate Social Responsibility. In this article, a list of some leading Corporate was given who have not contributed towards Corporate Social Responsibility in the last financial Year 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016, as it was required statutorily.

Thus, on one hand, indeed, there are a number of Corporate who are contributing even more than the statutory limit and at the same time, on the other hand there are a number of Corporate who are not contributing even what is required as per statutory limit. After learning about inconsistency among corporate about Corporate Social Responsibility through sensational news, several *inevitable and unanswered questions* emerged as follows.

Whether or not Corporate have any Social Responsibility? Whether their approaches towards Corporate Social Responsibility are correct and legal in their nature?

This implies that all the Corporate do not have unanimity as regards not only the concept but also the practices of Corporate Social Responsibility. In other words, already this concept has consequently led to the emergence of several approaches which are described earlier.

After careful and thoughtful study of all the approaches, described above, of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility, the ordinary member of the society may develop a deep and considerable confusion whether or not the Corporate really has the Social Responsibility. No doubt, his confusion is quite understandable, rational as well as logical.

However, the Research Paper writer is of the firm view that the Corporate does have Social Responsibility for the following main reasons.

- 1. The Corporate act only within the four parameters of the society and not, at all, out of the periphery of the society. Therefore, they do owe the Responsibility towards the Society.
- 2. The fact of very existence of the Corporate, in itself, is basically because of the existence of Society, as a whole. In simple words, if the society would not exist, the Corporate, too, would cease to exist.

Furthermore, the arguments passed against practicing of Social Responsibility are intelligently needed to be curbed out and overcome through persuasion and emphasis of its different benefits.

RESEARCH PAPER LIMITATIONS

- 1. As the Research study for this paper is based on Secondary Data, all the limitations of Secondary Data have direct and deep impact on various views formed and inferences arrived at by the Researcher in this Research Paper.
- 2. As the Research study for this paper is purely of Academic Orientation, some sort of adaptation to prevailing factual conditions is ideally necessary before its direct application in practice.
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- 4. Various views expressed in this Research Paper are partially based on Social Observations of the Researcher and his Experiences during Social Interactions with many people on a number of occasions. As a result, full concurrence with all the personal views as well as personal opinions of the Researcher is certainly not possible, in practice.
- 5. Different areas of Corporate Social Responsibility mentioned in this paper are suggestive and not at all, exhaustive in their nature.

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