
Book Reviews

Corporate Social Responsibility and Rural Development - Theory and Practice, Dilip Shah, ABD Publishers, New Delhi, 2022. Pp. xi + 226. ₹1895.00.

The book under review deals with issues on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) which have generated a lot of academic and professional interest in India particularly after mandatory CSR under Company Act 2013. The book is divided into two parts. Part One deals with theoretical aspects of CSR. Part Two deals with case studies of pioneering companies which have implemented CSR with zeal and compassion. These case studies provide real insights into the practices for implementation of CSR and monitoring and evaluation of projects for maximising the benefits to the target groups. Part one includes 7 chapters and 8 chapters (7 of them being the case studies) are included in Part two. The book has the foreword from a distinguished academician, Professor Subhash Sharma.

The book traces the history of evolution of CSR activities. The concept of CSR has been evolving since the seventies and till date. There is no single, uniform, all acceptable comprehensive definition corresponding to different CSR practices, a large number of codes/conventions, principles and standard have been evolved. The landmark in the history of CSR in India is Comprehensive CSR in 2002. This survey was the first systematic survey to ascertain the predominance of corporate social responsibility in India. The CSR trends in late 2000, had already picked up new dimensions, social business based on model of micro credit, self-help and stakeholder-centred management have grown to become large and successful business promoting stakeholders interest. The Government also attempted to establish CSR as a regulatory step quite early through tax relief for rural development. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs in 2009 released the document of voluntary guidelines for CSR with an objective of developing a broader vision of CSR for the Indian corporates. But these guidelines were still too broad to carry the CSR further in a real sense. Further guidelines for Central Public Sector Enterprise for CSR were issued in 2010. Finally, the Companies Act of 2012 was promulgated which replaced the Company Act of 1956 giving legislative status of CSR after the long process.

The highlights of 2012 amendment includes (1) Mandatory CSR for the specific industries were defined by financial criteria; (2) 2 per cent of net profits for allocation of CSR; (3) Constitution of CSR Committee by the companies; (4) Formulation of CSR Policy by the Companies; (5) Structure of CSR Activities (focus area included nine categories and 65 activities); (6) Scope of CSR activities; (7) Non-inclusion of spending on employees welfare; (8) The geographic reach; (9) Budget and reporting of the CSR; (10) Process of disclosure reporting; (11) Penalty of non-disclosure or non-

compliance of CSR. It was expected that the law would bring uniformity and greater accountability in terms of outcomes.

The book reviewed the working of CSR in the light of legal provisions and their compliance. It found many loopholes in the compliance of CSR Act. These include appreciation and application of CSR provisions, appointment of CSR Committee, declaration of CSR policy and separate report of CSR in annual report of the companies etc. The author suggests many steps that can plug the loopholes. The study found that mandatory CSR Act has started playing its positive role in contributing to rural development. It further presents several issues concerning CSR for development. The relevant parts of CSR clause 135 of CSR Act and CSR policy have to include the focus on rural development in CSR activities. The author has critically reviewed CSR and rural development and identified ways to overcome the issues for rapid and ethical use of CSR provisions and funds to promote rural development.

One of the difficulties that NGOs need to be registered and their sufficient number has to be identified to work with CSR companies. The author finds that there are many perceptual gaps of understanding, approach and style of working between CSR corporate and NGOs that include syndrome of distrust between them. The book suggests ways to bring about meaningful participation and engagement of NGOs and CSR companies.

Part two presents seven case studies of organisations in relation to their CSR activities which include (1) Tata Group, (2) Excel Model, (3) Infosys, (4) Shroff Foundation, (5) Reliance Foundation, (6) The development efforts for rural economy and people (DEEP) and (7) Deepak Foundation. These case studies indicate that different companies have adopted different approaches to their CSR activities and implementation of their selected projects. They also adopted different methods for monitoring and evaluation of outputs and outcomes. These case studies are very insightful and useful in further improving the implementation and intended benefits to target groups. As there are not enough number of credible NGOs which inspire the trust of CSR companies, several of these companies have set up their own trusts and NGOs to implement the projects under CSR. The Tata Index is the pioneer in monitoring the implementation and impact of its CSR activities. This index has been a guiding force for other agencies involved with the CSR. The author has brought out the critical areas of concern in implementing the CSR activities.

It is a well-researched book and reflects the author's long and varied professional experience. It should be useful to practitioners, academicians, corporate sector, media and research scholars. It will inspire more case studies of CSR companies.

*P.S. Management Consultants,
Ahmedabad – 380 009.*

U.K. Srivastava