



CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) AND TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACTS

India is home to the world's second-largest tribal agglomeration. In the post-independence period, the Indian government placed a premium on rapid industrialization to boost economic growth and employments. To provide the industry with raw materials, extensive mineral, oil, and gas extraction began. Many private ventures are promoted to boost revenue, employment, and foreign currency reserves. However, what became of the indigenous people who were dispossessed in the name of progress and who lived in and around mines, gas fields, and oil fields? They became environmental expatriates as a result of their eviction. Corporate juggernauts turned these tribal people into aliens in their land. What role should the corporate sector play in ensuring the genuine growth of these unfortunate people? The purpose of this descriptive, qualitative study is to revisit CSR for tribal development and to propose appropriate methods to make it more humane.

KEYWORDS: CSR, Tribes, Sustainable Development, society, Economy.

1. INTRODUCTION

India has second largest tribal population of the world. Since the time of antiquity, these indigenous people living in different part of the country. Though they are mentioned in our Epics but they are most neglected and deprived section of the society. Even in British colonial administration they are most disadvantaged section of the society. As they were kept aloof from the mainstream society the developed their unique culture, customs and traditions which further broadens the gap between mainstream society and tribal communities (Channa, 2020). So, from pre-independence period, the concept of 'We and They' was developed (Bhattacharya et al., 2021). After independence of the country these aboriginals are termed Scheduled Tribes (STs). There are 705 tribal communities comprising 8.6% of total population (Register General of India, 2011). Though the country came out of the clutches of British colonial masters, till the day the indigenous communities are in the abject of maldevelopment. The newly formed country's government started to absorb them in the mainstream society. In post-independence period, while the government has undertaken several developmental programmes for the socioeconomic upliftment of the tribal communities (Basha, 2017) at the same time for the economic development of the country government had initiated large scale industrialization and urbanization. In this economic development programmes, the participation of private sector was also encouraged. Rapid industrialization and urbanization invite ruthless destruction of forest and extraction of minerals. The tribal people of India used to live in lap of nature. Three to four decades ago few tribal communities practiced settled agriculture and maximum of rest of the tribal communities

lived in and around forest. They earned their livelihood by collection of leaves, fuelwood, fruits, tuber, roots from the forest. Further, their culture and traditions are greatly inspired by the surrounding nature. Maximum of their festivals are related to environment and its conservation. As they lived in the abundance of natural resources, they become the worst victim of developmental process. The so-called developmental process wreak havoc specially on the tribal communities (Battacharya and Pal, 2022). The mining projects, dam projects, road and rail projects, industrial expansion have direct impact on tribal life. The land they possess, the forest they use for centuries now perceived by the national policy makers as the property of the nation. In the name of development, assimilation and mainstreaming, these ill-fated tribal people are evicted from their natural habitat (Gadgil and Guha, 1996). It was mainly the business tycoons, policy makers and people from elite class who are beneficiaries of all these projects. Being evicted from their habitat they have not only lost their livelihood but also lost their rich culture and traditions thus become developmental refugee. With the loss of culture and traditions, now they have to fight every day to retain their tribal identity. Land alienation, cultural loss, loss of traditions and customs, socioeconomic deprivation have made them expatriate on their own land.

Largescale mining activities, establishment of mega steel and other mineral industries are done mostly at the cost tribal communities. As per ministry of Tribal Affairs around 8.54 million tribal people are displaced within 1951 to 1990 whereas only 2.12 million tribes out of 8.54 million have been rehabilitated (Mohanty, 2005). Further this kind unplanned



and unwise evictions have destroyed their livelihood. Specially life become miserable for the Primary Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). But the companies, let it be private or public enterprises they should have ensure that adequate socioeconomic securities have been provided to these displaced and distressed tribal people. Though the several companies have started some programmes for their socioeconomic upliftment and cultural preservation under Corporate Social Responsibility (Henceforth, will be mentioned as CSR) but are these enough to cater the need and aspirations of those ill-fated tribal people? The present research paper spotlights on currents status and role of CSR in tribal development in India. Further, this research article also provides some suggestive measures for protecting the socioeconomic and cultural traits of the tribal communities through CSR scheme.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present paper spotlights on the problems faced by the tribes due to developmental projects and current status of CSR projects in this regard. Further it analyses the effects of CSR projects on the tribal people. The current research also tries to provide some suggestive measure for enhancing effectiveness and acceptability of CSR projects towards positive end.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

For pursuing the present research, we have adopted descriptive research methodology. The study is mainly based on secondary data collected from various reports of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, other govern reports, relevant books, journals and other literatures.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data is collected from various secondary sources. These data are further analyzed to get desired result.

5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Conceptualizing CSR:

The term Corporate Social Responsibility was first coined in 1953 by American economist Howard Bowen. It is the mechanism by which the corporates or giant companies take the responsibility in lieu of impact of their business operation on the environment and on the people affected by it. It is a type of compensatory measures offered by the companies to the affected people to restore their socioeconomic condition (Hanano, 2019). In the age of globalization, the corporate attitude and behaviour is within the purview of environmental awareness, human rights, values and ethics. The impact of all these corporate works has detrimental cross cutting effect in the society. It is difficult for a government to pay attention to all the issues so the initiative started to involve big corporate sector to become stakeholders. The Government of India introduces the Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 along with Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility policy) Rules, 2014 by which India became the first country in the world to give the concept of CSR in legal mandate. According to this amendment, Indian or Foreign companies having net worth of Rs.500 crores or net profit of the company 5 crores

per year, are required to spend 2% of their annual profit as CSR. Proper guidelines are also provided in this regard by allocating sectors for spending such amount (Verma, 2022).

In reality it is not true that all companies are performing as per the guideline of CSR to uplift their reputation. It has been found all over the world that several companies are adopting Greenwashing mechanism to uplift their reputation in the name of CSR. Some popular Greenwashing mechanism are fake and misleading Public campaign about their works and its impact, by outright false claim, highlighting some positive traits while suppressing whole negative impact, dodgy certification by manipulating some environment NGOs. For example in the name of Sustainable Forestry Initiatives (SFI), companies are accused of illegal cutting of endangered species and human rights violation. In countries like India due to lack of stringent laws, corrupted politician and bureaucrats make the success of CSR under question and also a matter of concern.

5.2. Development vs Displacement and Distress

The wheel of industrialization, urbanization, minerals and gas extraction, large power plant project, large dam project ruthlessly run over the marginalized people who are mainly the tribal people. The maximum tribal communities have close interaction with the nature. Their symbiotic relation with the nature is reflected through their sociocultural practices. It has been found that around 7000 plant species are used by the tribal communities of the country which have immense food and medicinal value and also important for ecological balance (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2021). Commercial forestry and reduction of forest cover also have destroyed the tribal livelihood mechanism. But large-scale displacement is caused by big projects. According to Xaxa Committee Report, 2014, 25 per cent of tribal population are either displaced persons (DP) or project affected persons (PAP). Interestingly, the expert committee on prevention of tribal land alienation and restoration pointed out that 47 per cent of the tribal population are evicted illegally from their habitat. According to a report of Amnesty International in 2016, one in six of the 870000 displaced due to coal mining in last 40 years is a tribe (Chandran, 2016). India is the third dam building nation of the world. The mega dam building projects accelerates the tribal dislocation. More than 85000 families are displaced on account of Sardar Sarovar dam and more than 25 million people are affected in Narmada Valley Project (Indispend, 2014). According to Census 2011 report, 55 per cent of the total tribal population is now residing outside of their traditional habitat. Moreover, there is 10 percent reduction in total number of tribal farmers where as there is 9 per cent increase in tribal agricultural labourers (Register General of India, 2011). This large-scale displacement is not for education opportunities or change in economic status, rather they were forcefully evicted due to developmental projects and industrialization. Displacement from their natural habitat not only threatens their livelihood but the problems are multifaceted.

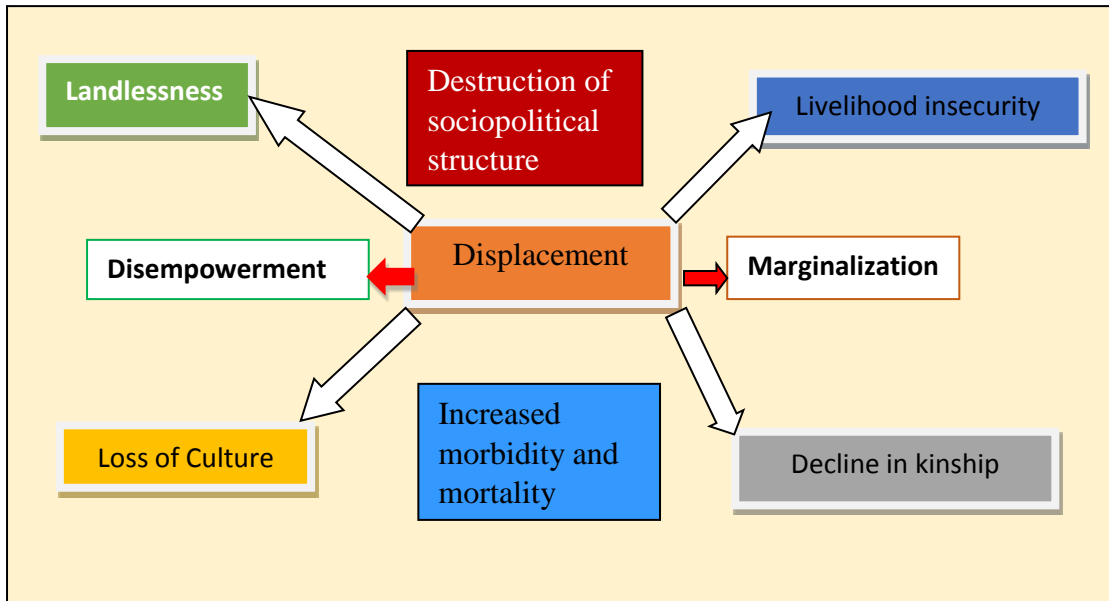


Figure1: Impact of displacement.

Uprooted from their traditional habitat causes landlessness which is directly related to their food insecurity and livelihood insecurity resulted in further marginalization. Displacement also destroys their age-old sociopolitical structure. There is partial or complete loss of culture as it is directly related with surrounding environment of their traditional habitat. For example, their rich culture of using several ethnobotanical and ethnomedicinal for food and curing several diseases are partially become obsolete due to change in habitat. Further with due course of time these oral knowledges are completely faded away. Instead of traditional liquor, the cases of foreign liquor addiction are increasing at alarming rate which causes deterioration of health and family relationship (Bhattacharya and Kumar, 2022). Further, food insecurity, lack of diversity and livelihood security exacerbates malnutrition and poor health among the tribal people. It is also widening the gap of health inequities. According to NFHS-4 survey report, 55.9 percent of tribal women of Chattisgarh, 75 per cent of tribal women of Jharkhand and 63.3 percent of tribal women of Odisha are anemic (Nadimpally, Venkatachalam and Fatima, 2019). Interestingly, these three states are major tribal hub of the country and also witness highest degree of tribal population displacement for several developmental and industrial projects. Mortality rate of under-five tribal children is shockingly high. Even, these development induced displacement causes degradation of gender relationship (Bhattacharya & Pal, 2022).

5.3. Role of CSR in alleviating crisis

While in the name of environmental protection and conservation, the government is imposing restriction on access to forests and forest products, on the other hand million acres of forests are cleared for mining and industrial activities. The main beneficiaries of all these projects are the corporate tycoons. So, these corporate sectors should have obligatory positive role to ensure that impacts of their projects on the

displaced people specially on the marginalized tribal community can be neutralized as much as possible. In India, several companies like TATA Steel, NUOVCO cement, National Mineral Development Corporation, Mahanadi Coalfields Limited are running several projects for improving standard of life of the tribes and development of the tribal habitat area. For example, MCL has established Anganwadis for the education of the tribal children. Further it runs 'Ahar Mandal', a farming project for providing nutritious food to the tribal people. Another project 'Sikshit Sunderhatto', is an initiative taken by NUOVOCO under company's CSR scheme to promote formal education and educational awareness among the tribal people (*Funds Allocated to NGOs for Tribal Welfare*, 2021). But these efforts are not adequate enough to cater the needs and to alleviate distresses of the tribal community. Some inclusive and integrated planning is the need of the hour. The planning must be in accordance with the tribal world view. Moreover, it should not be planning from above rather it should be planning from below. While pursuing rehabilitation and resettlement programme, the following points should be taken into account—

- 1) The resettlement should be as far as homogeneous with their traditional habitat.
- 2) Care should be taken to keep intact their socio-political structure.
- 3) Proper planning for resettlement should be with minimum alteration of their activities.
- 4) Alternative employment scheme should be in accordance with their world view and aspiration. Efforts should be given so that they can retain their traditional occupation.
- 5) Curriculum should be restructured as per their need and aspiration (Pal et al., 2022).
- 6) Adequate skill development training should be provided to enhance their employability skill in alternate occupation.

- 7) Measures should be taken for their cultural preservation.
- 8) Their rich knowledge on ethnobotanical and ethnomedicinal plant should be documented and it can be used for generation of alternative employment.
- 9) Proper reparation amount is to be given so that they will not face any hardship.
- 10) Strict Government supervision and intervention to ensure sustainable development of the displaced tribes.

- 11) Ensuring education for the displaced tribal children.
 - 12) Till the process of rehabilitation and resettlement is completed, they should be provided nutritious food at free of cost.
 - 13) Proper medical facilities should be provided specially to the tribal women and children at free of cost.
- A model CSR plan should look into each and every aspect of tribal life and their sentiment.

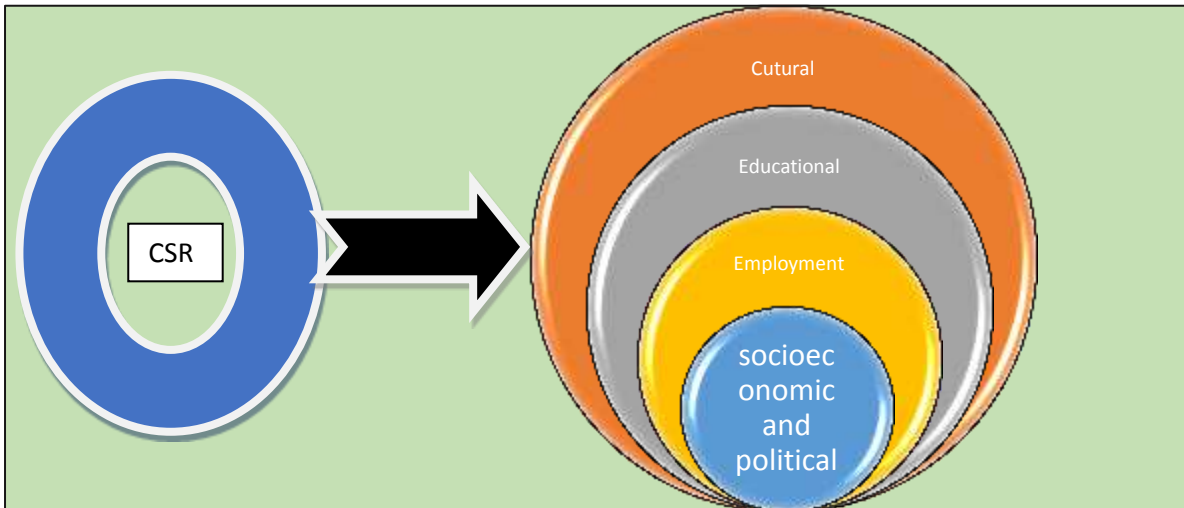


Figure 2: Model CSR plan for Tribal development.

We should remember that the tribes are the important stakeholder of the Indian society. Without their proper involvement in the developmental process, the country can not

attain the goals of sustainable development. Before taking any project, the following aspects should be taken into account—

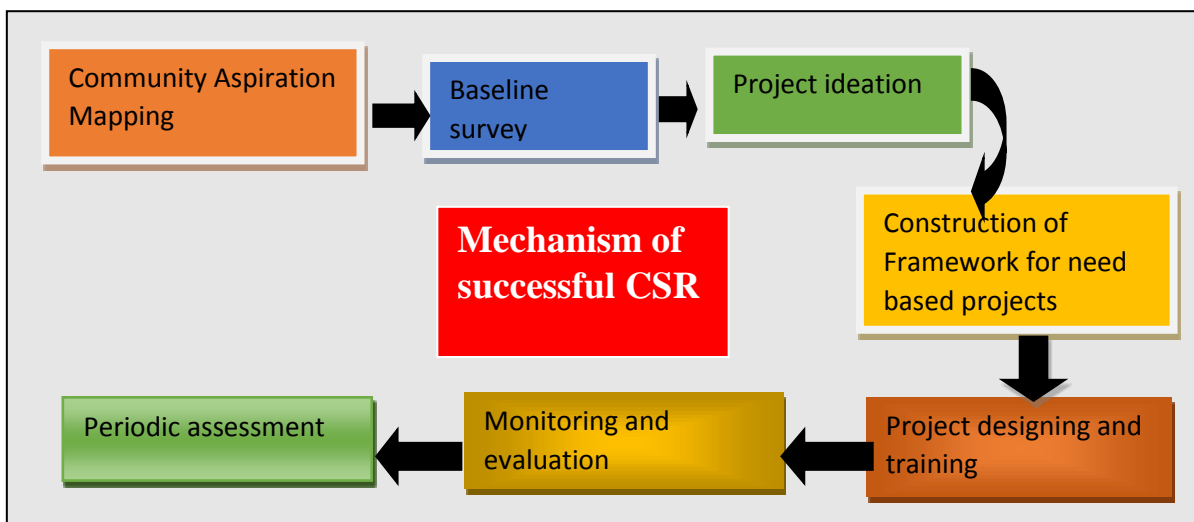


Figure 3: Mechanism of successful CSR.

6. CONCLUSIONS

It is needless to say that the tribal people are the integral part of Indian population. But unfortunately, even in this 21st century, they are the most deprived and marginalized section of the society. The roller of industrialization, urbanization ruthlessly shattered their sociopolitical structure, economy and culture. Denied of anything and everything, these ill-fated displaced and project affected tribal people are now

suffocating for their very existence. These people of the nature, now become burden of the society. Being a welfare state, the government cannot avoid its basic responsibility towards attainment of equality in the society. The success rate of CSR has already been seriously questioned. Utmost endeavor should be taken by the government for minimizing the pain, agony of the DP and PAP tribes. Along with government, the corporate sector should be assiduous towards



desired goals. Here, the government along with NGOs should play the role of concierge to protect the interests of the tribes to attain the goals of sustainable development.

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