THINK INDIA (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN:0971-1260

Vol-22-Issue-4-October-December-2019

Corporate Social Responsibility Towards Women Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

Today women are making their presence felt in every field. Making general statements on the correlation of the impacts of social development and the situation of woman is very difficult because the political, economic and cultural framework differ greatly from one country to another. However, discrimination against woman manifests in itself in most traditional as well as modern societies. As CSR deals with corporate's responsibility towards society, talking about women workforce become equally important. Corporate world now recognizes women in every possible area in which it functions. Society's development without development of women is unimaginable. Corporate social responsibility towards women empowerment can become ray of hope in many ways right from changing attitude towards women in the society to making women independent financially, physically and socially. The motive behind joining CSR with women empowerment is to provide solutions to women related issues. Every project needs finance from society which can be amply supplied by big business houses but society should also become instrumental in developing women's status

Keywords: Discrimination, Society, Empowerment, Development

1. INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment is relatively associated with the meaning of “Power”. The “Power” enables the women to define themselves. The Indian society still looks towards the society to grant them power or empower them in various ways. Women empowerment is to empower women in various ways to sustain herself in different fields like finance, social, culture, law, Industry and politics. Over the past decade, gender equality and women's empowerment have been explicitly recognized as key not only to the health of nations, but also to social and economic development. Corporate social responsibility is operating a business in a manner which meets or excels the ethical, legal, commercial and public expectations that a society has from the business. Educational attainment and economic participation are the key constituents in ensuring the empowerment of women. Corporate Social Responsibility of multinational companies can provide education as well as information on political, legal and economic issues and awareness on health aspects too through their programmes. Women will then have access to well paid jobs, or enhance their ability to influence changes to create a better society. The present study is an attempt to find out the need for

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ISSN:0971-1260

Vol-22-Issue-4-October-December-2019

focus on Women Empowerment through corporate social responsibility and the role of various corporate organizations in empowerment of women. Empowerment of women needs the contribution of dedicated personals, committed people, generous funding agencies and strong

political will. Therefore in order to draw the attention of these people and agencies, some empirical evidences and linkages between different factors related to women empowerment are needed to establish a strategic plan. The present study is an attempt to find the need for focus on Women Empowerment through corporate social responsibility and corporate social responsibility of selected Multinational companies towards women empowerment. Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Women, Empowerment, MNC'sWomen in India now participate in all activities such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology, etc. Indira Gandhi, who served as Prime Minister of India for an aggregate period of fifteen years was the world's longest serving woman Prime Minister

The Constitution of India guarantees to all equality (Article 14), no discrimination by the State (Article 15(1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16), equal pay for equal work (Article 39(d)). In addition, it allows special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children (Article 15(3)), renounces practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)), and also allows for provisions to be made by the State for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. (Article 42). The feminist activism in India picked up momentum during late 70s. One of the first national level issues that brought the women's groups together was the Mathura rape case. Female activists united over issues such as female infanticide, gender bias, women health, and female literacy. Since alcoholism is often associated with violence against women in India, many women groups launched anti-liquor campaigns in Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and other states. The Government of India declared 2001 as the Year of Women's Empowerment (Swashakti) and to mark the occasion, National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was announced. Though we talk enough about development and growing opportunities provided to woman but in reality, it shows different picture. The male-female work force participation gap is much more wide in urban areas in comparison with rural areas. Over the years, the male-female work force participation ratio is increased systematically for rural areas up to 1998 and then decreased in 2002, whereas for urban areas, the male-female gap remains more or less stable around 3.4 up to 1993-94 and is increased to 4.46 in 1998 and is decreased to 3.81 in 2002. However, it does not include women who are involved in their daily household work

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In developing countries like India CSR gained popularity only in the new millennium, though business houses particularly those like the TATA had an early orientation towards service to society. In the words of Jamsetji Tata, the founder of the Tata group, "In a free enterprise, the community is not just another stakeholder in business but is in fact the very purpose of its existence". Approximately two- third of the equity of the parent firm, Tata Sons Ltd is held by

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ISSN:0971-1260

Vol-22-Issue-4-October-December-2019

philanthropic trusts through which it utilises on an average about 8 to 14 percent of its net profit every year for various social causes which even at the beginning of the new millennium had amounted to 1.36 billion rupees. In India, as there is a wide gap between sections of people in terms of income as well as socio-economic status, an ideal CSR should contain both ethical and philosophical dimensions (Bajpai, 2001).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be seen as a comprehensive set of policies, programs, and practices which combines business operations, supply chains, and decision making processes of the company and embrace responsibilities for present and past actions as well as sufficient attention to future impacts. CSR is a concept where voluntarily companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their communications with their stakeholders (Green Paper, 2001)

3. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women in order to enable them to realize their full potential Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc. TABLE 1 Indicates the CSR initiatives of Women empowerment in all the aspects related to the improvement of the social, economic, political, and educational and health aspects of women.

CSR INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

AREA	INITIATIVES
Gender Discrimination	Conducting awareness campaigns for preventing exploitation at Workplace
Education	Motivate deserving women in sports, defense, education and politics.
Health	Encouraging girl child education
Financial Assistance	Encouraging women's savings and credit groups

TABLE NO 1

4. OBJECTIVES

- To undertake campaigns for weaker section of women (poor, illiterate, handicap, etc).
- To stress on overall development of women
- To provide financial assistance to needy women.
- .To motivates deserving women in sports, defense, education, politics and so on.
- .To protects the right and interest of women.

REMARKABLE CSR CAMPAIGNS OF COMPANIES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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ISSN:0971-1260

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HUL's SHAKTI: SHAKTI means 'Strength'. Project SHAKTI is HUL's initiative to upliftment of standard of living in rural India by creating income-generating capabilities for under-privileged rural women by providing a small-scale enterprise opportunity, and to improving rural lives through health and Hygiene awareness. Project SHAKTI is taken up in rural areas only whereby women are the Distributors for HUL products and are called "Shakti Ammas". This identity is ushering prosperity in their lives and most importantly self-respect.

Project DRISHTI: Where Whisper helped to restore eyesight to 250 blind girls through corneal transplant operations in which P&G contributed Re 1 for every pack of whisper sold Project open minds to support and educate children across the Australia, ASEAN and the India (AAI) region. For every large size pack of Vicks Vaporub, Whisper, Ariel Power Compact, Head & Shoulders and Pantene purchased by consumers during November 1999 to January 2000.

Avon: Avon Cosmetics' commitment to women runs deeper than the boundaries of business. Women are the heart of Avon's success and Avon continues to support and understand their needs through Avon's Breast Cancer Crusade. The goal of the Avon Foundation Breast Cancer Crusade is to improve access to quality breast health care for under-served, uninsured and low income populations, and to support biomedical research focused on prevention and improved methods of Diagnosis and treatment to Cure and prevent breast cancer.

Aditya Birla Group has also encouraged formation of Women Self Help Groups(SHGs), where extensive training in different vocations is given in the areas of creating bamboo products, knitting, weaving, dyeing, rangoli, candle making, handicrafts, fashion designing, beauty treatment, goat rearing, bee-keeping, rope making, mushroom cultivation, coconut plantation, etc.

The Adhunik Group has undertaken many programmes so as to empower rural girls and women by improving their social condition, and thereby making them economically independent. Vocational training is given on soap making, envelope making, phenyl making, domestic food products, candle, paper envelopes, stitching, tailoring and embroidery, mushroom cultivation, pattals (plates made of leaves), incense sticks preparation, papad preparation, fishery and vermi-compost making so as to facilitating them to start their own enterprises for income generation.

Mahindra &Mahindra's rural initiative named Nanhi Kali is a national girl child sponsorship Programme for the needy, underprivileged girls who are at risk of dropping out of Government Schools. These girls receive special sponsorship so as to finance a range of education requirements extending right up to improvement of the government schools they go to. This program provides direct support to educate the girl child by distributing text books, uniforms, exam fees, learning material, etc.

Jindal Group, women empowerment initiatives have been undertaken across the areas of literacy as well as providing training to enhance livelihood generation opportunities amongst women. They provide women with the primary help in starting with the production facility. This in turn helps them in supplementing their family incomes. Jindal Group is also involved in various awareness

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ISSN:0971-1260

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programs on issues of gender parity, sexual harassment, and domestic violence and also in various skill development programs to help in upgrading traditional and new skills.

Vardhman Spinning and Weaving Mill, Ludhiana, are involved in the training and deployment of female workers and have taken several steps for the safety and welfare of female workers such as hostel facility near the factory, med

CORPORATE INITIATIVES TOWARDS WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

CORPORATE	**EMPOWERMENT**	**WOMEN INVOLVED**	**IMPACT**
ITC	Poor rural women assist to form microcredit	40000	Micro enterprises(Sustainable economic opportunities)
HUL	Shakti Ammas	43000	SHG (economically empower rural women)
TATA STEEL	Rural development society	45000	SHG (encourage to enter enterprise)
VEDANTA ICICI BANK	Skill development Rural and Self employment	30000 No of SHG	SHG (develop by group companies) Imparted training

TABLE NO 2

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ISSN:0971-1260

Vol-22-Issue-4-October-December-2019

Thus many companies were seriously concerned about women and were actively involved in the empowerment process. Training was provided as it was required for skill development and enhancement.

CORPORATE, PERSONAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN

- Working women with children have difficulties finding adequate child care in their area. Time off and absenteeism is big issues for working mothers.
- Gaining co-worker acceptance of women in non-traditional roles is a serious problem. Many of our executives are uncertain how to manage women.
- Women executives still face the problem of less delegation of authority that is why they play passive role in decision making process which effect in demoralisation of women
- Women at work place face worst problem of sexual harassment after being sincere and talented they pay price to remain in job.
- Even though women are highly qualified and competent but they still have to depend on the family decision to take up any career before marriage as well as after marriage.
- India being on the path of development still struggles with the social issues relating to women such as female infanticide, illiteracy, dowry, child marriages, inequality of gender, child labour, In equal property rights, prostitution, trafficking and other serious problems.

5. SUGGESTIONS

- Government can encourage the larger corporate industries to adopt the nearby villages and shoulder the responsibility of development of that area.
- Corporate can make an effort to make small women groups and train them in various areas. These small groups then take the responsibility of training further smaller groups thereby creating a network of trained women.
- Country like India should specially advocate for corporate social responsibility as it can be possible remedies for many issues like illiteracy, poverty, child labour, unemployment and rural development.
- Women related issues need important attention from government, society and especially from corporate sector. Corporate social responsibility is more than a topic to discuss about it is changing fate and face of society but it should be adopted by all the business houses voluntarily. World celebrates women's day on 8th March but it should not be a day's celebration as women form the foundation of stronger social development.
- Women empowerment should be core issue for the entire world, after all behind every successful man there is sacrifice of woman.
- Corporate should undertake more number of campaigns like DRISHTI and SHAKTI for women empowerment.
- Frequent and regular women training and development programmes.
- Regular updating of programmes conducted for women in rural areas.
- Creating a Rural Women Empowerment fund so as to provide easy finance to the women in rural areas.

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ISSN:0971-1260

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- Corporate can provide finance to overcome some unsolved issues if properly utilize India is developing in all possible areas but there are certain areas where development is almost stagnant gender discrimination is one of them Women related issues at work like sexual harassment though comes under legal framework but it can be stopped by corporate if internal control within organization gives due importance to women related rules.
- An attempt should be made by the corporate to bring about attitudinal change in rural areas towards women .It is necessary to connect the rural areas so that every area is able to take advantage of the new initiatives.

6. CONCLUSION

The emphasis on women's empowerment and the field of women's empowerment are rapidly growing. While there have been laws regarding gender equality for decades, today awareness of its importance (both in terms of the enormous opportunities for business and society and the enormous risks and costs of failing to take proactive steps) is reaching a critical mass. There are many reasons for this, among them: the strong evidence of women's workforce participation increasing GDP and economic prosperity, the equally strong evidence of the remaining gaps and barriers to women's equal opportunity, and significant generational and cultural shifts, recently highlighted by the emergence of the "Me Too" movement. Indeed, equality of treatment and opportunity for women is now considered a central component of internal company, supply chain and CSR best practice by a wide range of the world's major corporations. There are thousands of organizations around the world implementing women's empowerment practices, varying greatly in their scale, budget, design, implementation, evaluation, and impact. Corporates can definitely empower women right from encouraging them to get education till getting respectable livelihood to become productive citizens. Corporate can encourage women empowerment and gender equality not only externally but also internally by giving a fair share to women workforce and looking after and catering to the needs of women.

7. FURTHER RESEARCH

Corporate social responsibility for women empowerment can become a beam of hope in many ways right from changing attitude towards women in the society to making females independent physically, financially and socially by practicing some more measures such as: A country like India should especially advocate for corporate social responsibility as it can be a possible remedy for many issues like illiteracy, poverty, child labor, unemployment, and rural development. Women related issues need important attention from government, society and especially from the corporate sector, India is developing in all possible areas but there are certain areas where development is almost stagnant and gender discrimination is one of them.

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ISSN:0971-1260

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