

THE CONCEPT OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SMART VILLAGE IN INDIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Maruthi M.*

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ABSTRACT

India is a rural country from ancient times, with the village as one of the most significant study areas of the social perspective of the Indian life structure. 2011 census reveals that 69% population that is 833 million people lives over 6,49,000 villages in India. Surveys conducted between 2014 to 2024 says that the village population is gradually decreasing and reached 63%, besides urbanization and developmental activities it is noticed that the majority of the Indian population still lives in a village atmosphere. Rapid development in transportation and communication facilities enlarged village territories. Today in India more than 4000 villages are listed with more than 10k population. Beyond numerical majority, rural India is facing a lot of problems due to which developments are awaited in the rural parts of the country in turn country's development. Beyond all the obstacles and social complications traditional Indian society needs to readdress all the challenges and complications. Government of India (GoI) mandated corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities to the companies. The "Companies Act 2013" which was evolved from a philanthropic act to strategic means towards rural transformation to the new horizons. CSR is one of the most powerful instruments ever through which we can expect something for the village and in turn from the village. Under the CSR concept companies adopt villages and address all the issues regarding economic and social concerns with a legal framework. Government machinery also keeps an eye on companies' CSR actions as evidence of good governance.

KEYWORDS: Population, Village, Development, CSR, People, Government.

Objectives of the Study

- To understand the socio-economic conditions of villages in India.
- To explore the socio-economic causes and consequences for village backwardness in India.
- To find out the CSR actions towards villages benefits.
- To find out necessary suggestions for policymakers in CSR future developmental plans.

Methodology: The present article is based on secondary data. The information depicted in this article is derived from various books, articles, theses, journals, surveys, newspapers, reports of various authorities, and internet sources.

Introduction

"The continuing commitment by business

to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large as far as Corporate Social Responsibility is concerned." - Lord Holme and Richard Watts

Thanks to Lord Holme and Richard Watts for giving the meaning to CSR by giving meaningful above lines; in fact, it's true (Making Good Business Sense). The Indian villages are known to be a hub of various problems with reference to the socio-economic background. Every individual village has got its own problems like poverty, unemployment, and traditional drawbacks. Caste and gender discrimination is common. The CSR "Adopt village" concept inspires to do something for our villages and village people. The very concept of CSR might not be eliminating all problems of villagers but enable them to bring progressive

* Dr. Maruthi M., Principal, Shri K M Mamani Government First Grade College, Savadatti, Belagavi.

changes in village life. The CSR framework helps to address the issues of clean drinking water, access to health facilities, education, agriculture, civic sense, and other things. CSR emerged as a new effort from the public side; the government laid down vast legal guidelines to conduct actions like education, health and sanitation, safe drinking water, soil conservation and management, scientific and progressive agriculture, rain water harvesting, proper child care schemes, women leadership in social and economic enterprises, caste equality, right to information, eradication of corruption, transportation and communication, and strengthening the Panchayat Raj system as a center of power decentralization in a rural setup. Since independence, the Government of India (GoI) has introduced so many programmes and policies to ensure socio-economic justice to all its citizens to meet nation development. CSR is the part of that effort and tries to bring quality and sustainable development in rural India which might not convert villages into cities but smart villages. CSR adopts villages and throws light both on economic and social issues at all levels within a legal framework. Government should keep an eye on CSR's actions as evidence of responsible governance.

Socio-Economic Conditions of Villages in India: Socio-economic conditions of Indian villages can be classified by a conversion of traditional material farming to a more related, albeit imbalanced economic system. The village poverty is declining and physical transportation and communication like roads, electricity, and internet, mobile and digital access are improving. Major gaps remain in education, high-quality housing, and income distribution with scheduled castes/tribes facing the lowest though improving indicators.

Socio-Economic Factors and Consequences of Village Backwardness: Rural backwardness in India is a comprehensive issue deeply rooted in a blend of socio-economic and structural factors that have persisted despite by and large countrywide fiscal growth. Low income level, Social Disparity, Agrarian Distress, and Suicides leading to mass migration to cities are the real consequences of village backwardness. While more than 63% of India's population lives in rural areas, these regions often experience lower standards of living. The majority of the nation's poor reside in village India. Causes for the village backwardness can be examined as below:

I. Economic Factors

- Agriculture and allied activities are the

backbone of the Indian rural economy.

- Traditional ways of cultivation, inadequate irrigation, and over-dependence on irregular monsoons lead to low agricultural productivity.
- The standard size of operational holdings has declined, rendering many farms economically unviable for contemporary, mechanical, or high-yield farming.
- There is no scope for diverse industries or non-agricultural employment opportunities in Indian rural areas, causing over-dependence on agriculture and creating high levels of hidden unemployment.
- Due to limited access to formal banking systems, a large proportion of farmers go to moneylenders who charge excessive interest rates, leading to "indebtedness" that drags for generations.
- Limited access to electricity, paved roads, and transportation hampers economic activity and connectivity.

II. Social Factors

- The lower literacy rates and lack of skills are the major hurdles for rural people to adopt the ability to achieve new technologies or transition to higher-paying jobs.
- Rigid, caste-based social structures often restrict economic mobility and lead to the marginalization of specific groups, particularly Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- The conventional attitude of rural India stops rural women from accessing education, economic resources, and decision-making powers which hamper overall community development.
- Glorification of customs and high expenditure on social ceremonies are considered to be a pride of honor in the countryside which (marriages) leads to increased debt.

III. Environmental and Personal Factors

- Frequent floods, droughts, and cyclones damage crops and livestock, causing sudden, severe, economic setbacks.
- Poor sanitation, limited healthcare, and malnutrition diminish the working capacity of the rural population.

The Smart Village Concept: The smart village concept is lateral thinking towards rural and national development. The term "Smart Village" refers to a modern developmental approach focused towards the rural community that leverages technology, innovation, sustainable practices, local participation, and data-driven

approaches in improving the quality of life for village residents.

Sociological Perspective of CSR for Smart Village: CSR can not only refer to the compliance of human rights standards, labor, and social security arrangements but also to the fight against climate change, sustainable management of natural resources, and consumer protection. Government of India (GoI) introduced the Companies Act 2013 which made corporate social responsibility mandatory for companies in India. The act evolved from philanthropic into a planned driver for rural change. The sociological perspective of CSR for smart villages is not only installing technology into a rural life but justifying rural-urban inequality promoting socio-economic transformation, empowering marginalized groups, and healthy rural community structures.

Key Sociological Roles of CSR in Smart Village Development

- Connection between Rural-Urban Gap
- Empowerment of women
- Strengthening local governance
- Fostering social capital and stop migration
- Eco-sustainability and Conventional Knowledge

Core Focus Areas of Smart Village Initiatives

- **Sustainable Agriculture:** Promoting organic farming, vermi-composting, and high-yielding seeds.
- **Digital Education:** Upgrading government school infrastructure with smart classrooms.
- **Livelihood & Skill Training:** Training in tailoring, IT skills, and livestock management.
- **Renewable Energy & Infrastructure:** Solar-powered lighting and, in some cases, solar cold storage.
- **Water Conservation:** Watershed management to increase groundwater levels.

Some of the CSR-Driven Smart Village Initiatives

- **Dhanora, Rajasthan:** Known as India's first smart village, altered by the Eco Needs Foundation with CSR support for water management, sanitation, solar power, and internet connectivity.
- **HCL Samuday (Uttar Pradesh):** Focuses on holistic development (agriculture, health, education) across 765 villages, creating a replicable model for economic and social development.
- **ITC Limited (Mission Sunehra Kal):** Focuses on water conservation, sustainable agriculture,

and livelihood, benefiting millions in water-stressed areas.

CSR Key Initiatives and Projects in Karnataka: CSRSmartVillage projects in Karnataka are basically focused on transforming rural areas through scientific methods of agriculture, digital, technical infrastructure, education, and sanitation. Key players like HDFC Bank through Parivartan scheme, State Bank of India, Paripurna Saahas and HCL Foundation, Wienerberger India, Godrej Properties & IIHS, Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Program (SVEP), Smart Ragihalli by Indian Institute of Science Bengaluru, and various private corporations are investing in holistic rural development to foster self-reliant communities.

- **Smart Schools:** 12 schools in rural Karnataka were transformed into smart schools, with 300+ government schools planned for smart upgrades (computers, projectors, etc.).
- **Solar Solutions:** 30 villages received solar street lights and solar study lamps.
- **Digital Advisory:** Training farmers in using IFFCO KISAN for agricultural updates.
- **SBI Gram Seva Project:** Focused on transforming villages in Karnataka, specifically highlighting work in Pethalur village in the Gadag district.
- **Paripurna (Saahas & HCL Foundation):** A project in 145 Gram Panchayats across 4 districts (Udupi, Dakshina Kannada, Ramanagara, and Ballari) to establish sustainable waste management systems, including dry waste collection centers.
- **Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Program (SVEP):** A project implemented by Sanjeevini KSRLPS in Mysore, Koppal, Bengaluru Rural, and Ramanagar to encourage rural entrepreneurship.
- **Smart Ragihalli by Indian Institute of Science Bengaluru:** Aimed at creating a self-sufficient and sustainable village near Bengaluru through suitable rural technologies.

Impacts of CSR Initiative

- These initiatives have led to Smart villages increasingly utilizing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for development.
- Increased income for over 12,000 farmers due to better agricultural practices. Significant improvement in rural education and sanitation.
- Enhanced waste management, with districts like Dakshina Kannada achieving high rural

dry waste coverage.

- Empowerment of thousands of women through self-help groups and skill training.

Some Suggestions for Policy Makers

- With respect to facilities like education, water, health, and sanitation, the sensitive role of government in CSR has facilitated the development of many CSR programs and policies for villages.
- It is the duty of a responsible government to bring modifications in its legal system and make CSR more responsible at the village level.
- CSR actions should have self-responsibility while dealing with sensitive issues like religion, environment, and community harmony.
- Focus on women and child upliftment in villages in a scientific manner.
- Create awareness about the government's programmes and policies.
- Civil supply and distribution system should be channelized in a justified manner.
- Maximum utilization of human and natural resources at the village level.

Conclusion

Corporate Social Responsibility has emerged as a benchmark of rural life. It is more than a business which can bring sustainable growth in a village and make it competitive with its counterpart. The challenge for us is to apply fundamental business principles to make CSR sharper, smarter, and focus on what really matters. This can be done by: Focusing on priorities, allocating finance for relating CSR as an investment from which returns are expected, optimizing available resources by ensuring that efforts are not duplicated and existing services are strengthened and supplemented, monitoring activities and establishing a close relationship with associates such as NGOs to ensure that initiatives really deliver the desired outcomes, and reporting performance in an open and transparent way so that all can celebrate progress and identify areas for further action. A long-term perspective by organizations and public responsibilities in terms of charity to liability brings change in society and helps society to generate.

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