

Book Review

Prasad, Anirudh and Sudeep Kumar (2016). *Beyond business: Mapping the CSR and Sustainable Development Initiatives of Tata Steel*. Xavier Institute of Social Services, Ranchi. xv, 260p. Rs. 650/. ISBN: 81-904112-8-4.

The house of Tatas has been engaged in the development of society at large through their various programmes and activities much before the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) came into being as an integral part of a corporate house. The Tata Steel was founded by JRD Tata whose contributions stand out uniquely and illustriously in the history of industrial entrepreneurship in India. The establishment of Tata Steel in Jamshedpur is considered as one of the earliest indigenous challenges to the British entrepreneurship in India. The book under review, however, is not about the achievements of Tata Steel as an industrial house; rather it is a discussion about the CSR activities of Tata Steel and its contribution to socio-economic development of the Jamshedpur region.

The book is organized in six chapters. Chapter I “The Philosophical Foundations of Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility” deals, as the title suggests, with the general theoretical background on sustainable development and corporate social responsibility by industrial houses.

Chapter II “Contributions of Tata Steel Towards CSR and Sustainable Development Theory and Praxis” mainly discusses how the Tatas have envisioned CSR and have implemented the various policy decisions and schemes under the praxis of the Clause 3A of its Articles of Association and the ‘Tata ethos’, which is the Code of Conduct of the Tata house. However, contrary to the name of the Chapter, the Chapter basically discusses some of the initiatives taken by the Tata Steel towards sustainable development at micro level. This Chapter has not generated any discussion that would be academic interest except some information about some innovative vision of JRD Tata such as measure of Gross National Happiness establishment of Population Foundation of India. Moreover, it is mentioned that the “house of the Tatas has always promoted...trusteeship and today more than 85 per cent of the profit go to the trusts” is difficult to believe in the absence of any citations for the source. The Chapter also discusses about the genesis and growth of Tata Steel Rural Development Society (TSRDS) which, of late, has become of vehicle of CSR for the company.

Chapter III “Methodology and Sample Profile” describes the methodology used to evaluate the sustainable development efforts made by Tata Steel under the CSR programme. According to the author, the methodology for evaluation was adopted keeping in mind the inadequacy of earlier studies which were bereft of any philosophical, theoretical and scientific basis.

Chapter IV is on “Mapping of CSR & Sustainable Development Initiatives of Tata Steel”. This Chapter presents few case studies of CSR practices and sustainable development approaches of Tata Steel, Jamshedpur at selected centres on micro level. It presents the case studies in five zones covering 35 villages. This Chapter seems to form the core of the entire study. Here, the study is presented in micro detail including individual case studies which makes this chapter a lengthy one. Study of each zone is done both from the perspective of the company and the individual beneficiaries followed by a summary of the evaluation.

Chapter V entitled “Studying Sustainability: Idalbera revisited” reports about a resurvey of Idalbera village in 2014 which was already covered in the baseline survey of 2011. The purpose was to check the sustainability of the initiatives of TSRDS in the village. The resurvey found that though the situation has improved a lot since the baseline line survey in terms of socio-economic conditions, infrastructural and industrial development there are certain areas such as health,

sustainable development etc. which calls for more intervention. The authors feel that the beneficiaries are still on dependent stage and not self-reliant even after fifteen years of launching of various CSR and sustainable development programmes.

Chapter VI is the “Conclusions and Recommendations”. Here the authors present the overall findings of the evaluation and made recommendations to make TSRDS initiatives more sustainable. On a broader perspective, the authors are of the opinion that though TSRDS has implemented hundreds of development and social welfare programmes in the service villages of its industrial zone, except for programmes on health services, agriculture, income generation through SHGs and skill development trainings, the others could not continue for long due to ‘ad-hoc’, ‘stereotype’, ‘short-span’ and ‘scheme based’ nature. The reasons for these, as attributed by authors, is lack sincerity among TSRDS employees and administrative problems in the TSRDS set-up. Lastly, the authors made some 22 recommendations for which identified the areas where improvement is required to make the TSRDS and CSR programmes more sustainable.

Overall, the book is a good attempt to study the CSR and sustainable development programmes taken up by Tata Steel in the mining and other effected areas. As stated earlier, the findings could have been presented in a crispier manner with identification of core problem areas which could have enhanced its effectiveness. Also, there are few repetitions and spelling errors which could have been avoided. However, these minor shortcomings don’t demean the uniqueness of the study and the reviewer feels that the study could be extended to the neighbouring state of Odisha where Tata Steel has taken up lot of initiatives especially in Joda, Kalinganagar and Gopalpur areas through TSRDS.

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