

**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY & SOCIAL WORK : A  
PATHWAY TO INCLUSIVE GROWTH**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Profit maximization and wider societal responsibilities have been at odds in the debate over corporate social responsibility (CSR) for many years. From legal compliance to ethical and humanitarian concerns, scholars have offered a variety of viewpoints on corporate social responsibility. CSR in India has a strong foundation in traditional business practices. But a major change occurred with the economic reforms of 1991. CSR evolved from voluntary altruism to a compliance-driven, strategic approach, integrating corporate accountability with economic growth. There are still issues, such as unequal CSR budget allocation, poor planning, and inefficient implementation, even with statutory frameworks like the Companies Act of 2013. By standing out for underrepresented groups, including social justice ideals, and making sure that CSR projects significantly advance sustainable development, social workers play a critical role in CSR. They have difficulties in corporate-driven decision-making processes, nevertheless, and their importance is still underappreciated. This study looks at how corporate social responsibility (CSR) has developed in India, the effects of economic liberalization, and the function of social workers in CSR implementation. It seeks to*

*demonstrate how corporate social responsibility (CSR) may be used to advance social justice and sustainable economic growth while boosting corporate accountability.*

**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Economic Liberalization, Social Workers, Sustainable Development

## **INTRODUCTION**

For decades, the debate on business-society relations has centered on corporate social responsibility (Klonoski, 1991). Keith Davis significantly shaped this discourse in the 1960s by questioning businesses' societal obligations and the feasibility of ignoring them (Davis, 1960). Despite various definitions, CSR remains ambiguous (Makower, 1994). One view limits corporate duty to profit maximization within legal and ethical boundaries (Friedman, 1970; Levitt, 1958), while the other emphasizes broader societal responsibilities (Andrews, 1973; Carroll, 1979; Davis & Blomstrom, 1975; Epstein, 1987; McGuire, 1963). CSR definitions vary from fulfilling basic responsibilities to a comprehensive commitment to social and environmental sustainability (Aras & Crowther, 2009). It involves integrating stakeholder concerns into business operations (EI, 2002). CSR manages business impacts on internal (employees, investors) and external (communities, governance) stakeholders (World Bank, 2002). (Carroll, 1994) highlights economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities, while (Garriga and Meie, 2004) emphasize using resources to benefit society, fostering social welfare beyond direct corporate gains. The concept of corporate social responsibility is deeply rooted in India's business landscape. It has long been an integral tradition, particularly

among family-owned enterprises with a strong sense of community commitment. Historically, CSR has played a crucial role in shaping the interactions between businesses, government, and society (Sundar, 2000; Shrivastava & Venkateswaran, 2000). It is a concept that highlights how businesses are not solely driven by profit-making but also bear a moral responsibility to contribute to the well-being of the society that supports their growth (Garriga & Meie, 2004). When businesses engage in CSR initiatives, they gain recognition and accolades from both national and international business communities and forums, as these efforts play a direct role in fostering economic growth (Sharma, 2011).

### **ECONOMIC REFORMS AND CSR**

The 1991 economic reforms marked a pivotal shift in India's economic landscape, transitioning from a state-controlled system to a liberalized, privatized, and globalized economy. These reforms significantly influenced the evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India. Given the economic transformation and rapid industrial growth in specific sectors and regions, studying CSR perceptions has become a crucial area of research. Before 1991, India operated a closed economy with protectionist policies, state control, and restricted foreign investment, leading to bureaucratic inefficiencies and slow private sector growth (Panagariya, 2008). High import tariffs and foreign exchange controls hindered trade and technological progress (Balasubramanyam & Mahambare, 2011). By the late 1980s, mounting fiscal deficits and a severe balance of payments crisis necessitated the adoption of liberalization, privatization, and globalization (LPG) reforms, reshaping India's economic framework (Joshi & Little,

1996; Dhar, 2018). Before 1991, CSR in India was voluntary and philanthropic, influenced by Gandhian ideals, with industrialists like Tata and Birla funding education and healthcare (Mohan, 2001). It focused on charity and employee welfare rather than business integration (Arora & Puranik, 2004). CSR aligned with government policies but lacked regulations and reporting frameworks (Sundar, 2013). With economic controls limiting private sector growth, CSR remained informal. The 1991 reforms shifted CSR toward a strategic and compliance-driven approach (Balasubramanian et al., 2005).

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CSR PRACTICES BEFORE AND AFTER 1991**

Criteria	Pre-1991 CSR (Philanthropic Model)	Post-1991 CSR (Strategic & Regulatory Model)
<b>Nature of CSR</b>	Voluntary and philanthropic	Strategic and business-integrated
<b>Government Role</b>	State-driven, focused on public sector enterprises	Market-driven, with legal mandates for CSR
<b>Corporate Accountability</b>	Limited or informal reporting	Mandatory CSR reporting and disclosures
<b>Key CSR Activities</b>	Charity, religious donations, worker welfare	Sustainable development, education, healthcare, and environmental protection
<b>Regulatory Framework</b>	No legal mandate for CSR	Mandatory 2% spending under Companies Act, 2013
<b>Global Standards</b>	Localized CSR practices	Alignment with UNGC, GRI, ISO 26000
<b>Corporate Participation</b>	Limited to large industrial families (Tata, Birla)	Widespread participation across industries, including MNCs
<b>Stakeholder Engagement</b>	Focused on employees and local communities	Broader engagement, including shareholders, customers, and global partners
<b>CSR Implementation</b>	Discretionary and unstructured	Integrated into corporate strategy with designated

**Note** - The table is a synthesized comparative analysis based on existing literature, government policies, and CSR trends in India before and after economic liberalization (1991). It is not directly taken from a single source but is compiled from multiple references.

## **ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN CSR AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Social workers play a pivotal role in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by acting as intermediaries between businesses and communities, ensuring that corporate initiatives foster social well-being and contribute to sustainable economic growth. Their deep understanding of community needs allows them to design CSR programs that address critical social issues such as poverty, education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability. By advocating for marginalized communities, social workers help corporations implement ethical business practices that go beyond profit-making to create long-term social impact (Midgley & Conley, 2010).

One of the key contributions of social workers in CSR is their ability to integrate social justice principles into corporate strategies. They ensure that businesses adopt fair labor practices, promote workplace diversity, and respect human rights. Additionally, social workers facilitate participatory approaches, engaging local communities in decision-making processes to ensure that CSR initiatives are both effective and culturally relevant (Pawar, 2014). Moreover, social workers contribute to sustainable economic development by implementing skill-building programs, vocational training, and microfinance initiatives, which empower underprivileged groups and enhance their economic opportunities. Their involvement in policy advocacy and social impact assessment further strengthens corporate accountability, ensuring that CSR efforts lead to meaningful and measurable change.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has long been a subject of debate, oscillating between the perspectives of profit maximization and broader societal obligations. However, the 1991 economic reforms marked a paradigm shift, transitioning India from a state-controlled economy to a liberalized and globalized one, significantly impacting corporate accountability and CSR practices. While CSR has evolved from voluntary philanthropy to a strategic and compliance-driven framework, there remains a gap in understanding the role of social workers in ensuring that CSR initiatives contribute

meaningfully to sustainable development and social welfare. Social workers serve as vital intermediaries, advocating for marginalized communities, ensuring corporate accountability, and facilitating participatory decision-making in CSR programs (Midgley & Conley, 2010; Pawar, 2014). However, their role remains underexplored, and they face significant challenges in monitoring CSR initiatives and integrating social justice principles into corporate strategies.

This research seeks to examine the impact of economic liberalization on CSR, the relationship between economic growth and corporate responsibility, and the challenges social workers face in CSR implementation. By addressing these issues, the study aims to provide insights into how CSR can be leveraged to promote social equity and sustainable economic development in India.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. To examine the impact of economic liberalization on shaping Corporate Social Responsibility in India.
2. To examine the role and challenges faced by social workers in the CSR field.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Before 1991, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India was primarily philanthropic and voluntary, with businesses engaging in social welfare activities without legal mandates. CSR was largely shaped by Gandhian principles of trusteeship, where industrialists like Tata, Birla, and Bajaj invested in education, healthcare, and rural development (Mohan, 2001). The public sector dominated the economy, and CSR initiatives were often aligned with government-led social programs (Kumar, 2006).

Under the Nehruvian framework, CSR followed a state-driven model, emphasizing social justice, equitable growth, and public welfare. Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) played a significant role in community development, but private corporations had minimal CSR engagement beyond philanthropy (Sundar, 2013). There was limited corporate

accountability, and CSR was not integrated into business strategies. However, the 1991 economic reforms transformed CSR, making it more structured, compliance-driven, and aligned with global best practices (Balasubramanian et al., 2005).

The 1991 economic reforms led to the transformation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India, shifting it from a philanthropy-based approach to a strategic, market-driven model. With increased globalization and economic liberalization, Indian companies had to compete internationally, leading to a greater emphasis on corporate governance, environmental sustainability, and social welfare (Gupta, 2007).

MNCs operating in India introduced global CSR standards, pushing Indian firms to align with ISO 26000 and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) guidelines. Indian companies like Tata, Infosys, and Reliance embraced structured CSR frameworks, integrating sustainability into corporate policies (Chatterjee & Mitra, 2017).

The studies conducted by (Navarro Espigares, 2006), (Dobers & Halme, 2009), (Mittal & Gupta, 2015), and (Lee-Davis, 2017) have propagated that CSR activities of the organizations have a positive impact on increasing the nation's growth rate

The intent behind the mandatory CSR spending under companies act 2013 was to mandate profit-making corporations to contribute a portion of their earnings toward societal welfare and economic development (Khandelwal & Swarna, 2014). Given the government's limited resources to drive rapid economic growth, corporate involvement is essential in achieving sustainable development goals.

(Behnam & MacLean, 2011) argue that CSR reporting often serves as a superficial public relations tool, allowing companies to enhance their image by showcasing commitments and fabricated achievements to comply with regulations, while lacking genuine implementation of their stated initiatives.

CSR activities are considered one of the powerful strategic tools in marketing because it increases the brand image and brand perception (Hartanto et al., 2019)

(Hancock & Bauman, 2012) and (Netar, 2017), have illuminated the positive relationship between rural development CSR activities and the income of the economy.

(McGrath, 2011) has depicted the positive relationship between education and skill development among the different strata of society and their literacy. (Acharya, 2006) and (Netar, 2017) have propelled the tremendous impact of livelihood enhancement projects in reducing the unemployment rates across the under-exploited or rural areas.

(Tai-Kei & Coates, 2002), (Valor, 2005), (Gallardo, 2009), and (Hartanto et al., 2019) have depicted that investment in community development projects results in human development.

As per (Lee,2016) several challenges remain for social workers when working with the business sector, including social workers' unfamiliarity with business operations, the business sector's and clients' narrow understanding of the role of social workers, and divisions involved with cross-sector communication and decision-making processes.

Despite the need for and appropriateness of social work's engagement in economic development, the way that social workers work in or with the business sector remains mostly unknown. (Midgley, 1996) formulation of this issue from 20 years ago remains apt: There is still a great deal of uncertainty as to how social work can make an effective contribution. Many social workers doubt that the profession has the experience and skills to introduce programmes that will be compatible with economic development activities,

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study is primarily based on secondary data obtained from government reports, CSR reports published by companies, past research studies, and scholarly articles from reputed journals. By drawing from these diverse sources, it provides a comprehensive analysis of CSR trends in India, integrating both empirical data and theoretical perspectives.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Liberalization and Its Influence on CSR**

The 1991 reforms marked a shift from a socialist-oriented, protectionist economy to a more open and market-driven model. Before these reforms, businesses operated under the License Raj, which imposed strict government controls on industries, trade, and foreign investments (Pawar, 2010). The post-reform period saw a significant relaxation of regulations, allowing Indian firms to expand and compete globally. The removal of trade restrictions enabled companies to enhance their profitability and efficiency, creating more financial capacity for CSR initiatives. The transition towards market-driven growth led businesses to adopt corporate responsibility not just as philanthropy but as a strategic tool for brand building, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability (Chakrabarty, 2012).

## **2. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Its Effects on CSR**

With liberalization, FDI inflows into India surged, with multinational corporations (MNCs) entering the market and bringing global CSR standards. Foreign companies introduced policies aligned with international labor rights, environmental sustainability, and ethical governance. Indian firms, in turn, had to align with these global CSR norms to attract investment and maintain competitiveness (Chatterjee, 2009).

The Companies Act of 2013, which mandated 2% of profits towards CSR activities, was a direct result of these changing global norms. It institutionalized CSR within corporate strategy, emphasizing education, healthcare, environmental protection, and community development as priority areas (Jha, 2010)

## **3. Privatization of State-Owned Enterprises**

The economic reforms led to the disinvestment of public sector enterprises (PSEs), reducing state control over industries and increasing private sector participation (Bhattacharya & Hossain, 2011). This shift demanded stronger corporate governance mechanisms, as businesses now had to demonstrate ethical accountability to investors, employees, and consumers. With increased privatization, companies focused on transparent operations, sustainability reporting, and corporate ethics, ensuring long-term profitability and stakeholder trust. CSR became a critical aspect of corporate governance,

with firms integrating social responsibility into their mission statements, annual reports, and operational frameworks (Jha, 2010).

#### **4. The Rise of Shareholder Activism and Stakeholder-Centric CSR**

Post-1991, shareholder activism increased, pushing companies to be more transparent and responsible. Investors began evaluating companies not only on financial performance but also on social and environmental contributions (Rao, 2014). This led to the rise of stakeholder-centric CSR models, where businesses engaged with employees, communities, suppliers, and the environment in decision-making processes. The integration of Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) metrics further strengthened corporate accountability in India (Sharma, 2011).

#### **5. Increased Corporate Financial Performance and CSR Funding**

Post-1991, India's GDP growth rate accelerated from 3.5% to over 6%, increasing corporate revenues and profitability (Sharma, 2011). This allowed businesses to invest more in CSR activities, not just as a compliance requirement but as a strategic tool for brand differentiation, risk management, and social impact. With financial stability, large corporations established dedicated CSR departments, aligning their social initiatives with business goals. For example:

- ITC launched its e-Choupal initiative, benefiting rural farmers.
- Tata Group invested heavily in education and skill development programs.
- Reliance Foundation focused on healthcare and women empowerment (Rao, 2014).

#### **6. Growing Focus on Sustainable Development and Social Responsibility**

With globalization, climate change, labor rights, and ethical sourcing became critical CSR areas. The rise of socially responsible investments (SRI) pushed companies to integrate sustainability into their supply chains and operations (Gupta, 2007). Additionally, government initiatives like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and

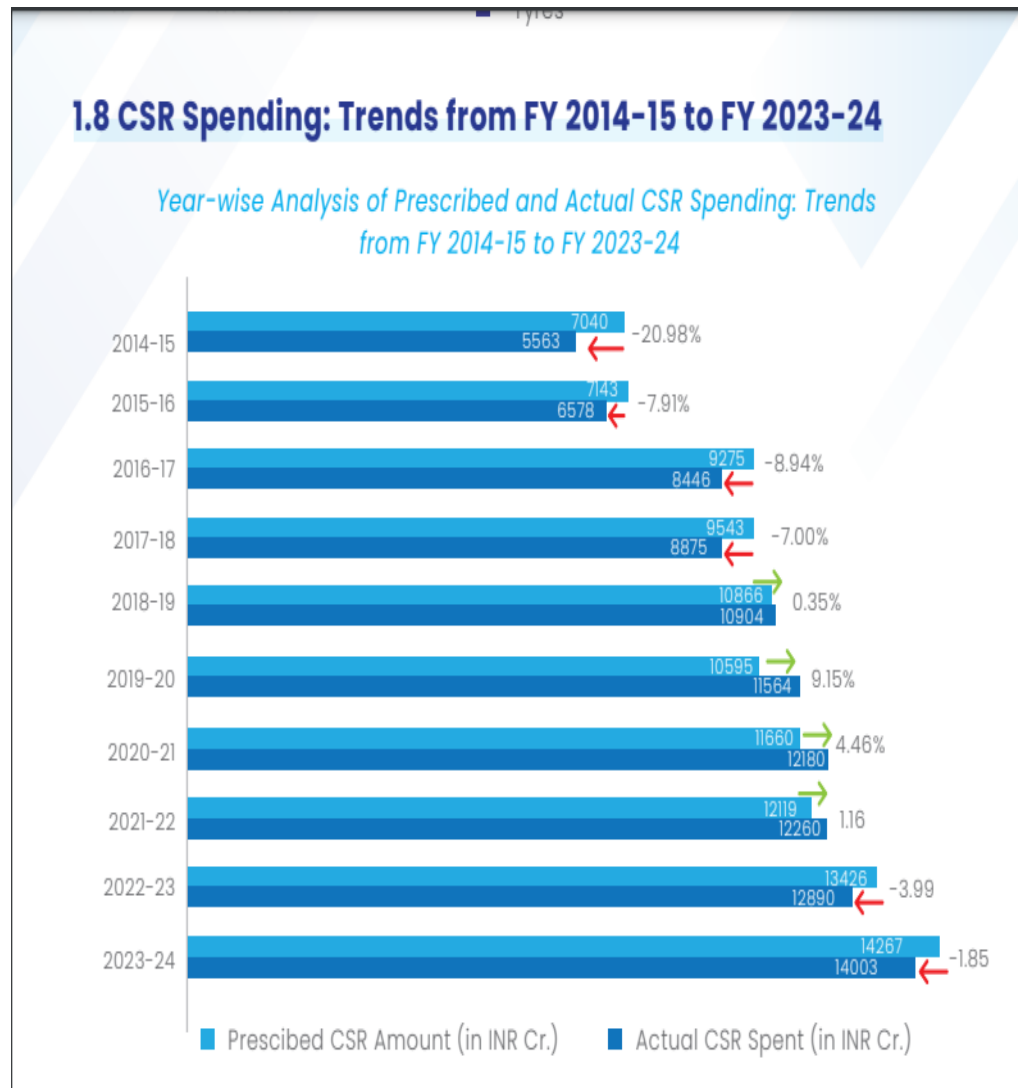
Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) frameworks promoted responsible business conduct. Many firms adopted ESG reporting, ensuring long-term economic and environmental stability (Viswanathan, 2008).

## **7. Navigating CSR in India: A Decade of Progress and the Road Ahead**

With the introduction of the Section 135 of the Companies Act in 2013, India set a global benchmark by mandating Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for large corporations. Over the years, CSR in India has moved beyond just fulfilling statutory obligations, evolving into a more strategic effort to create long-lasting social and environmental impacts.

According to data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, the total CSR spending rose from ₹10,065.93 crores in the fiscal year (FY) 2014-15 to ₹25,932.80 crores in FY 2021-22. The number of companies eligible for CSR contributions has varied over the years, peaking at 25,181 in FY 2018-19 before declining to 18,623 in FY 2021-22. This fluctuation indicates changes in corporate eligibility and participation in CSR activities. These figures demonstrate a growing trend in CSR spending, highlighting the increasing role of corporate entities in contributing to societal welfare and sustainable development in India. The Economic Survey 2023-24 highlights a significant milestone in corporate India's journey towards societal betterment. Over the eight years from 2014 to 2022, companies have collectively spent Rs. 1.53 lakh crore on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. This substantial investment reflects a growing commitment to not only meeting regulatory requirements but also making a meaningful impact on various social sectors, paving the way for a more developed and inclusive India. The Economic Survey 2023-24 reveals a remarkable 53% increase in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending by Indian corporates. This shift from mere compliance to robust governance highlights the growing commitment of corporate India towards societal betterment. The enhanced contributions are a testament to the significant strides being made towards a developed India. The average actual CSR spend per company increased to INR 54 Cr in FY 2023-24 from INR 22 Cr in FY 2014-2015.

Out of the 301 companies having CSR commitment of INR 1 Cr. or more, for FY 2023-24 and which are listed on Bombay Stock Exchange or National Stock Exchange and having availability of CSR data in disclosures as per Section 135 of the Companies Act, as of 15 September 2023 only 48 % companies are spending more than legal requirement on CSR activities for example Reliance has spent 60 crore more than prescribed budget.



Source- The India CSR Outlook Report (ICOR) 2024, a flagship publication of CSRBOX



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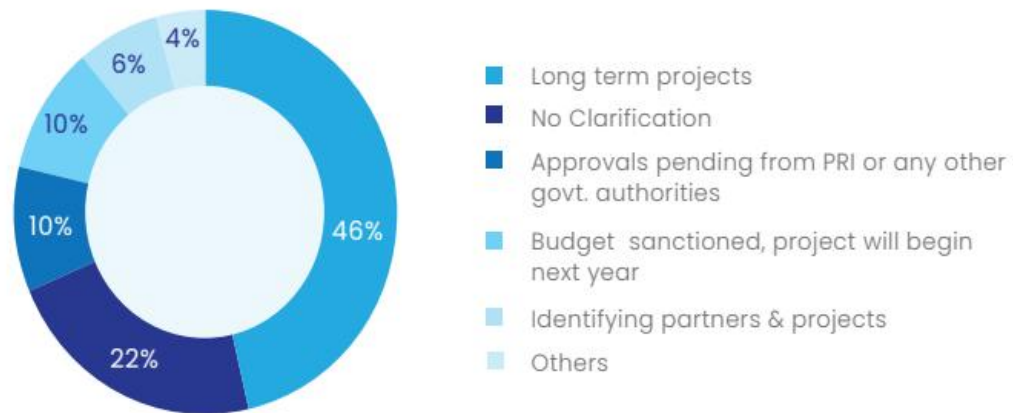
Further, In fiscal year 2023-24, 68 companies in the cohort of 301 companies reported unspent CSR funds. These companies cited reasons for not fully utilising their CSR fund allocations. It is to be noted here that during the COVID-19 years (FY 2019-20 to FY 2021-22), CSR spending went beyond compliance, as the corporate sector played a critical role in supporting pandemic relief efforts and health infrastructure.

Source: CSRBOX Research Desk

## 1.6 Reasons Behind Unspent CSR Funds

In fiscal year 2023-24, 68 companies in the cohort of 301 companies reported unspent CSR funds. These companies cited reasons for not fully utilising their CSR fund allocations.

### Understanding Unspent CSR Funds: Key Reasons for Underutilisation (n=68)



Source- The India CSR Outlook Report (ICOR) 2024, a flagship publication of CSRBOX

CSR spending in India has risen since Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, with some companies exceeding mandates. However, fund distribution remains uneven, favoring education and healthcare over gender, sustainability, and human rights. Developed states benefit more than underdeveloped regions. Poor planning led to unspent CSR funds in 68 companies in FY 2023-24, while short-term projects and weak impact assessments limit effectiveness.

To address these issues, stronger governance and transparency are crucial. Companies must adopt a long-term strategic approach, enhance impact measurement frameworks, and ensure equitable fund distribution. Collaborative efforts with government bodies,

NGOs, and local communities can enhance CSR's impact, making it a true driver of sustainable and inclusive development.

### **8. CSR: A Key Driver of Economic and Social Development in India**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a vital contributor to India's economic and social progress. The Companies Act, 2013 (Section 135) mandates CSR spending, encouraging businesses to support infrastructure, education, healthcare, and environmental initiatives. CSR fosters economic growth by investing in rural electrification, sanitation, and employment-generating skill programs. It also supports MSMEs, artisans, and startups, boosting local economies. In social welfare, companies fund education, vocational training, healthcare, and women empowerment programs, enhancing financial literacy and gender equality. During COVID-19, CSR played a crucial role in strengthening healthcare infrastructure, providing food relief, and supporting vaccination efforts. Additionally, corporate investments in afforestation, renewable energy, and waste management contribute to environmental sustainability. CSR in India has evolved from a compliance requirement to a strategic development tool, aligning with government initiatives like Skill India, Digital India, and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth.

A notable example is that over a five-year period, Coal India Limited (CIL) and its subsidiaries invested ₹2,625.26 crore in CSR, with an emphasis on ITI adoption, skill centers, and youth training. While ₹617.97 crore supported livelihood and education initiatives to increase employment and self-sufficiency, ₹1,271.84 crore enhanced healthcare, sanitation, and nutrition in mining communities.

ITC's CSR initiatives spanned 27 States and Union Territories, impacting over 300 districts through diverse programs. In social forestry, the company afforested 31,000 acres, benefiting 176,000 households. Its water stewardship efforts enhanced water security across 136,000 acres through efficient water-harvesting structures. To promote biodiversity conservation, ITC revived ecosystems covering 150,000 acres, while climate-smart agriculture initiatives supported sustainable farming over 2.34 million acres. The

livestock development program helped improve livelihoods for families engaged in animal husbandry.

TCS CSR efforts empowered 35,400 women and supported 210,000 self-help groups. Education initiatives benefited 250,000 children, while vocational training equipped 14,400 youth, achieving a 68% placement rate. Sanitation projects built toilets for 115,000 people, and health programs reached 560,000 beneficiaries. TC also developed zero-waste-to-landfill models and promoted Hindustani Classical Music through the ITC Sangeet Research Academy

### **CSR, SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

The integration of social work into the business sector may appear unconventional, but it is gaining significance in corporate responsibility. Corporate social workers are increasingly acknowledged for their role in guiding organizations to incorporate social and environmental considerations into their business strategies. From supporting corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives to managing sweeping organizational changes, the role of social workers in corporate environments is becoming increasingly prevalent. Microsoft's 2021 CSR report highlights a team of experts, including social workers, who enhance technology access, support employee well-being, and promote diversity and inclusion. However, they face several challenges in this space:

- Social workers in corporate settings often have restricted influence in shaping CSR strategies, as key decisions are driven by business leaders rather than social development experts.
- Some companies treat CSR as a branding exercise rather than a commitment to sustainable development. Social workers may find it challenging to ensure meaningful impact rather than just fulfilling compliance requirements.
- Social workers in corporate settings face lack of recognition or understanding of their role, leading to professional isolation and difficulty integrating social work ethics within a corporate framework.

Social work and corporate social responsibility are interdependent. (Verma, 2016) stated that business does not exist in isolation, and it depends on society for its survival. It requires producing goods and services demanded by society and making a profit to keep business viable. However, it does not licence the business house to evade its obligation towards society, and this obligation does the business increase its reach to all the stakeholders like community, employees etc. (Verma, 2016) also mentioned that the philosophical base of social work and CSR is common, making them closer to each other and keeping the social worker on the added advantage compared to other professionals.

(Ross, 2009) sustains that social work is a profession that stands for social justice and protection of human rights for individuals, communities and societies. As such, it has an invaluable knowledge and skills set that can inform debates and practice in the area of CSR. It is beneficial to hire specialists trained in the field of Social Sciences, because these professionals have the skills to diagnose community needs and find viable solutions for qualitative intervention to successfully implement the project that the corporation proposes. On the other hand, those who have been trained in the field of Social Sciences can be an important support for the company's leadership in shaping corporate policies. Corporations are increasingly engaging in areas traditionally managed by social workers. Given their expertise in working with vulnerable populations and understanding community needs, social workers can play a vital role in shaping effective corporate initiatives. Since social work aligns with the core values of CSR, fostering collaboration between the two fields presents a valuable opportunity for driving sustainable social change.

The commonalities that bring CSR, social development and social work together are:

1. **.Dignity and worth of every individual of the society:** Social work and CSR respect the individuality of any person.
2. **.Focus on the development of individuals, groups and communities:** The activities undertaken in CSR are for the development of individuals,

- groups and communities. Social work, CSR and social development also focus on the same.
3. **Marginalized Sections are primarily focused:** The development and empowerment of weaker and marginalized sections.
  4. **Responsibility towards society:** The more benefit you draw from society, the more your responsibility towards it becomes. Therefore, CSR is also a responsibility to cater to the needs of society. Social development is the manifestation of the same responsibility.
  5. **Improvement in social functioning:** People cannot achieve in their lives if their social functioning is adversely affected. Through their CSR initiatives, corporations make efforts to improve the social functioning of individuals. Moreover, it is needless to say that improving the social functioning of individuals is one of the important objectives of the social work profession.
  6. **Integration of national development goals:** National development goals are meant to ensure the creation of a just society and extension of the developmental opportunities to each section of the society. These developmental goals are cherished and supported by the initiatives of CSR. The social work profession also endeavours to promote these cherished national development goals.
  7. **Supporting the government initiatives for development:** The government has been running and supporting schemes for the welfare and development of the various sections of society. The present form of CSR is mooted to support and supplement the government roles. Social workers have been engaged with the government and even implemented these development schemes.

Due to their rich experience in the developmental field, the social workers make them more suitable than any other professional for undertaking CSR activities. Now, companies have also been realizing it. Therefore, they have started recruiting social workers into their CSR department.

## CONCLUSION

Since economic liberalization increased corporate financial capacity in 1991, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has evolved from philanthropy to a strategic instrument for sustainability, stakeholder involvement, and reputation. While privatization improved corporate governance and accountability, the Companies Act of 2013 formalized CSR. CSR's position was further strengthened by shareholder activism and ESG standards. But problems still exist, such as unequal funding distribution and poor budget use. The effectiveness of CSR can be increased by bolstering governance, impact evaluation, and fair resource distribution.

The integration of CSR with social work and social development highlights the alignment of values such as dignity, empowerment, and national progress. Corporations are increasingly recognizing the role of social workers in designing and executing CSR programs, given their expertise in community engagement and sustainable development. However, challenges persist as CSR strategies remain largely corporate-driven, with social workers often having limited influence in decision-making processes. Many companies treat CSR as a branding tool rather than a genuine commitment to social transformation. To maximize CSR's effectiveness, businesses must adopt a more inclusive approach by integrating social work principles, empowering professionals in decision-making, and focusing on long-term sustainability rather than short-term compliance. Stronger collaborations between corporations, NGOs, and government bodies can further enhance CSR's role as a catalyst for inclusive and sustainable

development. Moving forward, CSR must evolve beyond regulatory obligations to become a transformative force in shaping India's social and economic landscape.

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