

CSR AND ETHICAL FINANCE: A FOCUS ON THE INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM (IKS)

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ABSTRACT

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) represents a comprehensive framework of philosophical, ethical, cultural, and socio-economic principles that have evolved over centuries in India. Core concepts such as Dharma (righteous conduct), Seva (selfless service), and Ahimsa (non-violence) provide a strong moral foundation for responsible business practices. This paper examines how Indian Knowledge Systems support Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and ethical finance by encouraging sustainable decision-making, transparency, and the triple bottom line approach. The study analyses the CSR initiatives of Reliance Industries Limited to demonstrate the practical application of IKS principles in contemporary corporate governance. So, an organization needs to align traditional IKS with modern technology and innovation in order to promote integrity and work ethically. In this research paper, focus is on Reliance Industries which used IKS based CSR strategies and Ethical Financing for their companies to make a long-term survival and growth.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge System, Corporate Social Responsibility, Ethical Finance, Dharma, Seva, Ahimsa

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian civilisation has historically emphasized the pursuit and preservation of knowledge. Ancient texts such as the Bhagavad Gita describe knowledge as a purifier and liberator of the self. Indian Knowledge Systems were traditionally transmitted orally and embedded within ethical, social, and spiritual practices. Concepts such as Dharma, Seva, and Ahimsa guide moral conduct, social responsibility, and sustainability, making them highly relevant to modern CSR frameworks.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Muniapan B. (2013) “The Dharma and Karma of CSR from Bhagavad Gita”

The authors focus on hermeneutics, qualitative research involving the study, understanding and interpretation of the BG concept of “dharma” (duty) and “karma” (action) in view point of CSR. Bhagavad Gita provides thoughtful insight on development of individual leader’s self-conscience of his dharma (duty) and karma (action). As per insights of BG< CSR should begin with ISR (Individual Social Responsibility) in order to go beyond concept of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). A corporate leader must know the social responsibilities of Dharma and Karma in order to work ethically for organisation which will help ensuring transparency ultimately leading to good corporate governance and ethical code of conduct for achieving CSR.

Nair (2019) “Ethical Finance”

Focusing on CSR extension towards financial disclosure rather than Non-Financial Disclosure. As per Companies Act, 2019 Financial disclosure is mandatory to improve financial transparency and provide useful information to various classes of investors. Firms are held accountable for ensuring financial

transparency by following legal, regulatory and accounting policies in order to inform investors about financial reporting.

Chavan, S. (2020) “The study of Corporate Social Responsibility in the perspective of Bhagavad Gita Karma Yoga and Gandhian Trusteeship Theory”

The theory of Gandhian trusteeship and Karma-yoga, insights how Indian social thought provided antecedents towards modern CSR ideas influencing owners to see wealth as a trust for society rather than solely private property. Karma Yoga path of work dedication without expecting for results and doing selfless action to serve humanity. In this paper case study of Bajaj Group an Indian conglomerate to demonstrate how company applied principle of trusteeship.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach based on secondary data collected from academic journals, research papers, and corporate sustainability reports. Reliance Industries Limited has been selected as a case study to analyse the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into CSR practices.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

CSR of Reliance Industries

Reliance Industries uses more strategic and holistic model for CSR. Reliance Foundation was founded in 2010 by Nita Ambani, chairperson of the Foundation. It is one of the largest private foundations in India and operates in various areas, focusing on rural transformation, education, health, disaster response, sports, arts, and culture. The foundation's mission is to promote sustainable development initiatives that create a significant social impact in India by channelizing funds. Through the Dhirubhai Ambani Scholarship, Reliance has offered financial support to meritorious students for over 25 years.

FINDINGS OF RELIANCE FOUNDATION

Reliance Rural Development Trust focuses on Construction of roads and check dams in villages.

Reliance Foundation focuses on various skill development Courses related to tailoring, computer hardware in order to train women and young youth with skills.

TABLE SHOWING INITIATIVES OF RELIANCE FOUNDATION IN DIFFERENT AREAS

RURAL TRANSFORMATION	COVERAGE
Access to drinking water	972 villages
Improved Crop varieties	18000 farmers
Water Harvesting Capacity	285 lakh cubic meters

EDUCATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT	COVERAGE
Scholarships for higher education	12952 youth
Educational reach	4.42 million (children, students, youth)
Skill Training	14298 youth

5. FINDINGS

The study finds that the CSR initiatives of Reliance Industries align strongly with Indian Knowledge System principles. Ethical conduct, selfless service, knowledge dissemination, women empowerment, and transparent governance are consistently reflected in corporate practices.

6. CONCLUSION

Integrating CSR with Indian Knowledge Systems strengthens ethical finance and sustainable corporate governance. Ancient values such as Dharma, Seva, and Ahimsa provide enduring guidance for modern business practices. The case of Reliance Industries demonstrates the successful alignment of traditional ethics with contemporary corporate responsibility.

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