

BOOK REVIEW

Kasam, Meenaz, Tansons, Emily and Handy, Femida. (2016).
Philanthropy in India: Promise to practice. New Delhi:
SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd. (Hard Cover), pp: 229,
Price INR 750/-.

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India is a unique country where multiple religions, castes and classes live together along with their customs, beliefs and practices. Personal, religious and social charitable trusts have increased day by day, channelizing their money and other resources for the good and so-called good causes. It is partly true that the Indians in philanthropic endeavours go beyond their own ethnic and family circles. It is also a fact that Indian Business organizations like Tata Trust and many others have a tradition of undertaking socially responsible acts, but their approaches have typically been informal, charity based or strategically self-serving. The Indian Government is now encouraging a more structured mechanism of channelizing corporate energy and enterprise towards responsible distribution of wealth in the communities in which they operate. The recently passed Companies Act 2013 clearly prescribes that private corporations of a certain size should spend at least 2 percent of their average net profit on corporate social responsibility activities (The Companies Act 2013, Government of India). This reflects the existing mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending for central public sector enterprise (CPSE), which was 0.5 percent in 1980 and increased to 1 percent in 2012; and at present it is 2 percent to align with the new Companies Act. There is no doubt that the Act alongside broader global trends, has awakened India Inc. to pay more attention to CSR. Although it has also stirred some concern that mandating CSR will result in funds being put to political or business promotion use, increased corruption and wastage, and develop an inclination towards tangible, short term 'Band Aid' issues that are easy to capture and report. But Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (New Delhi) and the Government of India, in turn, have set-up structures to address those issues.

The book under review correctly mentions that in India, philanthropy is often seen as an answer to many of the country's widespread social ills such as hunger, disease, illiteracy and

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unemployment. As a result, a large numbers of NGOs (non government organizations), religious congregations and charitable trusts have been raised for the service and welfare of the needy. In the *Foreword* of the book, Dr. Noshir H. Dadrawala rightly mentions that today, philanthropists are not just looking for the 'feel good factor'; they are looking for measurable impact and a sound return on their social investment. They are also looking for innovation and are willing to provide 'risk capital'. In the Introductory note of this book, the authors have written that India is at an interesting crossroads, as its poorest and wealthiest populations have grown at each end of the spectrum. On the one hand, there are millions of Indians who do not know what they will eat tomorrow, where they will stay, what medicines or treatment they will provide to their children and elders when they are sick and so on; whereas on the other hand, millions are millionaires and they do not know the appropriate and judicious ways of spending their money. Sometimes, they are mobilizing money and other resources to reduce extreme poverty in India and across the world.

This book is organized into six chapters. In the first chapter "The practice of philanthropy" the authors ask practical questions like: What shapes the practice of philanthropy in a country like India? Does philanthropy in India come from a deep-rooted background of religion and tradition, or it is the combination of modern and foreign influences over various periods of time? Moreover, the practice of philanthropy during colonization, industrialization, independence movement, teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, and philanthropy in independent India are covered in the first chapter which help to understand the evolution or stages of development of philanthropy in India.

An elaborate explanation has been observed in the second chapter regarding the inception and working of public charitable trusts, religious trusts, and Bollywood celebrities running charitable trusts and the linkages with the mainstream of philanthropy in India. In chapter three the authors turn their focus to philanthropic actions at the individual level. This chapter also attempts to shed light on the various reasons for which individuals get involved in philanthropy. It also describes, through different case studies, how these middle class individuals also try to give money for a charitable cause at least once a year; and how contributions can help to uplift society. In chapter four, "Corporate Giving", the authors have tried to examine the practices of family owned companies whose traditional practices of meeting employees shifted away to contemporary forms of philanthropy or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). This chapter also throws light upon the development of CSR activities by the corporate sector in India and how the four models of CSR give a clear idea on their implementation or corporate action.

“Diaspora Philanthropy”, which is the fifth chapter of this book, is where the authors have tried to explore the significance of Indian Diasporas and the Diaspora members (mainly immigrants) who have a desire to help their counterparts back in India. Finally, in chapter six, “Trends in Philanthropy” the authors examine how traditional charitable practices have given way to various new philanthropic practices. How corporate leaders like Azim Premji (Wipro), Indian Americans - Vinod Khosla, Manoj Bhargava, etc. came forward to sign the Giving Pledge in 2013, for education, environment and poverty eradication in India. Thus, the book under review has been derived using a structure for conceptual ethos which has facilitated the authors to encompass within the field of manuscript a large number of associated components relating to chronological era, adopted by the case studies, its outcomes and the ensuring recommendations proposed on the backdrop of the findings of the empirical exercises.

Summarizing the strengths of the book, it may be endorsed that the authors have done a good review of literature to support the data they have presented. One gets a clear idea that the authors have done a rigorous consultation with experts in the field of philanthropy and tried to link the role of religion, history, politics, cultural elements and government regulations in the evaluation and practice of philanthropy across the whole country. Aspects like growth of charitable trusts in India, the working of NGOs in India, the very important aspect of epithetical help provision to the society, and the coming together of the corporate world for the growth and development of society, all help to enlarge our understanding of the growth of philanthropic activities in India. Moreover, in the different chapters some real life practical examples have been described in the form of case studies about how children are being forced into begging, and how ‘Aseema’ a public charitable trust is trying to uplift slum dwellers and spread education in collaboration with NGOs.

In a similar vein, the innovative fund mobilization by national-level social welfare organizations who try to collect funds and provide sponsorship for children in arranging nutritional food; contribution of CRY and HelpAge India have also been explained in detail so that the contributors and middle class donors may get a clear idea about whether their money and help is going to the deserving person or not. Diaspora philanthropy as another important aspect of this book covers the philanthropy of the Indians who migrated to foreign countries for various reasons and after getting established started sending money back to their families in India. Thus, the book beautifully describes the changing ways of people who are getting oriented towards philanthropy - long term change through giving and helping the society

for any unexpected change, rather than charity - immediate aid for a person in distress. Finally, the speculations provided in the book seem promising and can prove to be real page turners in the history of mankind and social development.

In hindsight the book has certain shortcomings. Although the book tries to explain the prospects and consequences of philanthropy, no clear cut difference between charity, philanthropy and social responsibility have been pointed out thoroughly. Moreover, the authors have also not dealt with any standard definition of philanthropy. In the world context, if we see the pioneers of philanthropy/charity or social responsibility, Christianity or the Christian congregation comes first. In India, Christian congregations have been at the top for many decades in leading educational reforms for minorities. But in chapter one, under the sub heading religious underpinnings, the authors have attempted to examine how the religious congregations like Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains have engaged in the giving of '*daan*' (financial help) to spiritual guides, the unfortunates; and the helpless, in order to cleanse one's wealth and reduce excessive disparity between the rich and the poor. However, realizing the need for undertaking an empirical survey to identify the key and central issues associated with philanthropy in India, all the three non-Indian authors (two are hard core educationists and one is a devoted CSR practitioner) have tried their level best to give the right shape to this book.

The authors have missed out some moral and important guidelines in the concluding part of this book for promoting philanthropy among the citizens, like 1) teaching of moral education to children at a very early stage of their lives, which should be done with full attention and dedication by adults so that these children could become better future builders; 2). people who are coming forward and trying to help should and must be given a clear idea of where their money and aids are being used for; 3) philanthropy should be encouraged in universities and colleges so that the present young generation may be inducted into its values and importance; 4) philanthropic help should be used to connect people from slums and villages with the help of NGOs and other such organizations, so that they can be provided good education which can let them develop and prosper in the society. Moreover, the Government of India, under clause 135 of the Companies Act 2013, has recently prescribed a formula-based amount that companies must invest in CSR - a brief explanation could have been given in this book. Overall, the book has been formulated based on an empirical study carried out by the authors including their personal reflections on the topic. The primary objective was to identify the consequences of Indian philanthropy by the use of case studies on 'venture philanthropy' or

‘philanthropic-capitalism’. These initiatives have been channelized by a willingness to experiment and try new approaches with a focus on measurable results. This can result in the growth of several social entrepreneurs and social enterprises across the country.

CSR is a buzz word and a very much contemporary issue for the management domain. It is a key agenda in 21st century business in India and across the world. Therefore, any empirically-based research or book on philanthropy, charity or social responsibility is surely going to be an asset for further research and learning. This book takes a wide angled view of current religious and secular practices of philanthropy and its influences. However, the authors can think more on current issues of CSR and their management in the Indian perspective and re-visit the venture of philanthropy in India. Then only, this book could be more helpful for the students of Business Management / Rural Management as a reference.

Finally, my hearty congratulations to the authors, Ms. Meenaz Kassam, Ms. Femida Handy, and Ms. Emily Jansons for their efforts & unique contributions through this book.