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Mining industries, deforestation and CSR policy in Chhattisgarh: An Overview

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Abstract
Currently, some states, particularly those abundant in natural resources, are undergoing a significant surge in industrialization, and Chhattisgarh is including in this trend. Over the past twenty years, Chhattisgarh has been one of the most sought-after investment locations in India, leading to a significant growth in the state's industry. The state's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) at current prices, is estimated to increase from 3,44,955 crore in the year 2019-20 to 3,50,270 crore in 2020-21, which is 1.54 percent more than previous year. State's gross domestic product is much better compared to a decline of (-) 7.7 percent at national level (GOCG, 2021). The primary areas of industrial expansion and operations include power plants, metals and minerals, and cement facilities. The sectors make a significant economic contribution through minerals (Rs. 11,125 crores, equivalent to US$ 1.53 billion), power-generating capacity (13,076,27) MW, and cements including 42.41 million tons of limestone. All of these numerical data demonstrate the consistent annual increase in industrial growth in Chhattisgarh. To facilitate the development of enterprises, an incalculable quantity of plants and trees are being felled. Consequently, there are significant adverse effects on the surrounding ecosystem and populations. Nevertheless, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy serves the purpose of evaluating the environmental consequences and taking appropriate measures to safeguard the well-being of impacted families. Despite its implementation since its inception, this policy has not achieved the objective of environmental preservation. This study presents an analysis of industrial operations and environmental degradation in Chhattisgarh, as well as the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The purpose of this article is to analyze the correlation between industrial activity and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. This paper's methodological approach is grounded on both primary and secondary data, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

Keywords: Industrialisation, environment degradation, corporate social responsibility

Introduction

In 1 November 2000, the state of Chhattisgarh was separated from Madhya Pradesh with the aim of achieving socio-economic development and decentralising administrative authority. In response to demands by political parties and people's organizations such as Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha for an autonomous state, the state was established under the Madhya Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2000. This would shift the balance of development in their favor. Indeed, it may be argued that this was not the sole motive behind the establishment of the new state. The consolidation of natural resources necessitated the establishment of a political body to enable more efficient economic consumption of the resources.

The sustained dependence on natural resources has considerably contributed to the economic expansion observed over several decades. Clearly, growth is the primary driver for generating livelihood opportunities; nevertheless, its dependence on heightened resource use has resulted in numerous adverse externalities. The present framework of resource-driven economic development posits a correlation between the presence of natural resources and the acceleration of economic growth. Naturally occurring resources are essential for the economic progress of a nation and are vital for their inherent worth in ensuring fairness and sustainability throughout generations. Throughout the years, there has been a rising consciousness of environmental problems worldwide and a mounting worry about the exhaustion and deterioration of the organic resources. This worry led to the conception of sustainable development objectives, which endeavour to eradicate poverty, safeguard the environment, and guarantee universal peace and prosperity by 2030. The sustainable development discourse has highlighted the direct and indirect influence of human activities on the environment. It is now widely agreed that persistent economic growth and human well-being are closely linked to the advantages derived from the environment. An understanding of the crucial trade-offs between the management of ecosystems and environmental resources is necessary for successful policy interventions aimed at achieving future sustainable economic and social development (GASAB, 2023).

The sustained economic development of any country is heavily dependent on the crucial functioning of natural resources. These resources must be utilized in a sustainable way to ensure that future generations can also benefit from them as mentioned in Agenda 21, Rio +20, SDGs. Incorporate nature into decision-making processes. In recent years, the excessive exploitation of natural resources has led to detrimental effects on the environment. Consequently, concerns about climate change and global warming have been subjects of extensive discussions and deliberations worldwide (GASAB, 2023).

Nevertheless, at the core of economic expansion, industrialization is spreading beyond individual governments. Despite numerous Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) signed by the government to build new industries, the current environmental issues have not been adequately addressed. An insufficient acknowledgment of the current environmental issues resulting from industrialization is evident. Instead of implementing appropriate measures to decrease environmental impact, such as conducting impact analysis, evaluating the company's operations, and reviewing regulations, the

government is expanding industrialization throughout the entire state. On the other hand, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is attempting to manage environmental impact, but it is not successful.

Background

To harness the natural resources, numerous programs have been devised since the colonial administration, and perhaps during the reign of the ruling monarchy. From a historical perspective, we can consider the case of the Bishnoi community in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. In 1730, the monarch issued a directive to fell numerous trees that were encircling the Bishnoi village. In order to ensure the safety of the Bishnoi community, a total of 363 persons, including Amrita Devi and her two daughters, were slain. Therefore, a substantial number of cast members were required to construct the site. In accordance with the king's directive, the quantity of trees was cut without considering the livelihoods of the surrounding residents (Meena, 2019, p.16). During the colonial era, numerous British policies were implemented that resulted in the deterioration of forests and inhibited economic development. In India, British forest policies were designed to align with the imperial objective of maximising capital gains from its colonies. Increasing the state revenue was achieved by means of timber supply, sale and pricing, forest taxation, international trade, forest ownership, property rights, and other related channels. The imperial administration prioritised the exploitation of forest resources while neglecting the need of conservation and environmental consequence. The British government had exclusive ownership, control, and decision-making authority as its monopoly. Throughout this era, a vast amount of natural resources, such as forests and land, were duly utilized under the pretext of development. However, the underlying cause of this was the commercial exploitation carried out by the federal government. The rationale behind this decision was to meet the global need for timber and realise possible financial advantages from the forests. Therefore, they establish stringent regulations imposed by coercion to bring forests within the jurisdiction of the state. The majority of measures implemented during the colonial era exhibited a custodial approach, prioritizing the forests over the well-being of the dependent population (Balaji, 2002) [1]. Below, I will analyze significant colonial policies on forests and lands, focusing on their goals and their impact on the environment and social welfare.

With the aim of constructing a railway network that needed substantial amounts of wood for sleepers and inexpensive engine fuel, the colonial strategy began with the forest charter of 1855 (Kumar, 2010). The forest charter of 1855 was developed by Lord Dalhousie with the aim of regulating wasteland in India by transforming its status into government property. The Indian Forest Act of 1865 was subsequently enacted. The Indian Forest Act of 1865 was implemented by the British government subsequent to the forest charter of 1800. The main aims of this Act were to facilitate the coordination of forest operations by the state through the assistance of the imperial Forest Department (FD). Witch of establishing a state monopoly over forest resources. British colonial authorities in India converted the existing decentralized forest management systems into a centralized one and established a bureaucratic organization called the Forest Department (FD) to fulfil their need for timber and income. The bureaucratic framework of the FD, characterized by its hierarchical operational procedures, was not responsive to environmental and societal demands but rather aligned with the specific criteria of the colonial administration (Kumar and Kant, 2005) [8]. To consolidate forest operations under efficient management, the colonial administration implemented the Forest Act of 1878. Through the implementation of this Act, the British Administration acquired complete control over wastelands and forests. The Act separated Indian forests into three primary classifications: reserved forests, protected forests, and village forests. The primary aim of this Act was to institute a systematic and efficient management of the Indian forest. Subsequently succeeded by the Indian Forest Act of 1927. The legislative measure sought to expand the jurisdiction of the state over forests while simultaneously reducing the significance of individuals' entitlements to forest utilisation.

Several policies regarding natural resources were implemented throughout the post-colonial period. The primary goals of postcolonial forest policies were to promote the sustainable utilization of natural resources and minimize too intensive exploitation of forests. Optimizing the yearly income generated by the forest was also a crucial requirement for the country. Another consequence of the Two World Wars was the increased exploitation of forests (Balaji 2002) [1]. Successive to independence, three forest strategies were established: the forest policy of 1952, the National Commission on Agriculture in 1976, and the Indian Forest Policy in 1988. Continuation of colonial policies with minor adjustments constitutes post-colonial forest policies. Specifically, the Indian forest policy of 1952. The phenomenon of persistent forest degradation and deforestation occurred from the colonial to the postcolonial era (Rishi, 2007) [16]. The formulation of the National Forest Policy in 1894 was based on the recommendations provided in the Dr. Voelcker study titled 'Improvement of Indian Agriculture' in 1893. It was the initial official strategy that prioritised the commercial exploitation of forest products, state custodianship, and permanent cultivation. This program effectively incentivized the Zamindars to transform the unutilized forests into agricultural land in order to boost the state's revenue generation. In essence, woods were regarded as means of generating fiscal income for the state. In addition, many regulations were implemented to optimize the use of forests and natural resources. Most of the forest policies during and after colonialism focused on exploiting forests for generating income. Forest deterioration did not give rise to any environmental or social implications that could have been mitigated. The Indian Forest Policy of 1988 and the Joint Forest Management strategy of 1990 acknowledged the involvement of local communities in the conservation and management of forests (Behera and Engel, 2006, Singh, 2008).

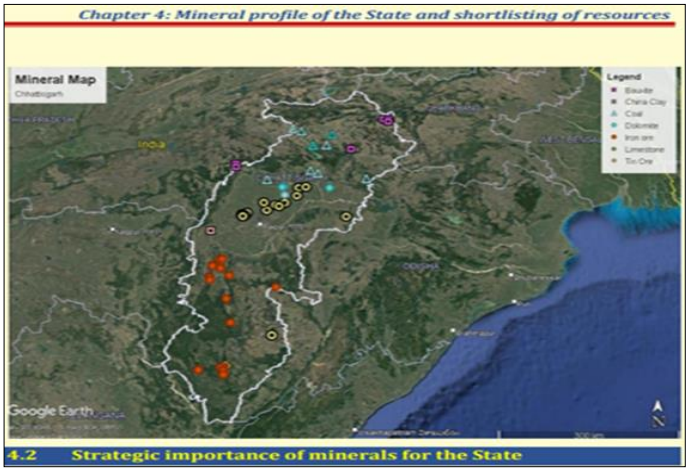
Natural resources in Chhattisgarh

Chhattisgarh is a mineral abundant state with 29 distinct mineral kinds. Mineralogical resources play a crucial role in the economic and industrial progress of the country. Through ongoing exploration and development of the natural resources in the state, the government is estimating new reserves of minerals, resulting in a progressive increase in the state's revenue.

Table 1: Details of mineral reserves available in various districts of the Chhattisgarh State

Sl. No.	Mineral	District
Major Minerals		
1.	Bauxite	Balrampur-Ramanujganj, Jashpur, Kabirdham, Kanker, Kondagaon and Surguja
2.	Coal	Balrampur-Ramanujganj, Korea, Korba, Raigarh, Surajpur and Surguja
3.	Diamond	Gariaband
4.	Gold	Balodabazar-Bhatapara
5.	Graphite	Balrampur-Ramanuiganj
6.	Iron Ore	Balod, Dantewada, Kanker, Narayanpur and Rajnandgaon
7.	Limestone	Balodabazar-Bhatapara, Bastar, Bemetara, Bilaspur, Durg, Janjgir-Champa, Kabirdham, Raigarh and Raipur
8.	Moulding Sand	Durg
9.	Running Moulding Sand	Rajnandgaon
10.	Tin Ore and Tin Metal	Dantewada and Sukma
Minor Minerals		
11.	China clay	Rajnandgaon
12.	Clay(Mitti)	Balod, Balodabazaar-Bhatapara, Balrampur-Ramanujganj, Bemetara, Bilaspur, Dhamtari, Durg, Gariaband, Janjgir, Jashpur, Korba, Korea, Mahasamund, Mungeli, Raigarh, Raipur, Rajnandgaon, Surajpur and Surguja
13.	Corundum	Bijapur and Sukma
14.	Dolerite	Gariaband
15.	Dolomite	Balodabazar-Bhatapara, Bemetara, Bilaspur, Janjgir-Champa, Mungeli and Raigarh
16.	Fireclay	Korba and Raigarh
17.	Flag Stone (Farshi Patthar)	Balod, Balodabazaar-Bhatapara, Bastar, Gariaband, Mahasamund, Raipur and Rajnandgaon
18.	Granite	Gariaband, Kanker, Kondagaon, Mahasamund and Rajnandgaon
19.	Limestone (LD)	Balod, Balodabazaar-Bhatapara, Balrampur-Ramanujganj, Bastar, Bemetara, Bilaspur, Durg, Janjgir-Champa, Kabirdham Korba, Mahasamund, Mungeli, Raigarh, Raipur, Rajnandgaon and Surguja
20.	Quartz	Bilaspur, Jashpur, Mahasamund, Raigarh and Rajnandgaon
21.	Quartzite	Durg, Mahasamund and Raigarh
22.	Quartzite -Silica	Rajnandgaon
23.	Soapstone	Kanker
24.	Stone	Balrampur-Ramanujganj, Bastar, Bemetara, Bijapur, Bilaspur, Dantewada, Dhamtari, Gariaband, Jashpur, Kanker, Korba, Korea, Mahasamund, Mungeli, Raigarh, Rajnandgaon, Sukma, Surajpur and Surguja
25.	White clay	Rajnandgaon

Source: GASAB, 2023



Source: GASAB, 2023

Fig 1: Details of mineral reserves available in various districts of the Chhattisgarh State

The current documented forested area in the state measures 59,772 square kilometers, accounting for 44.21 percent of the total geographical area. Forests that are reserved, protected, and un-classified account for 43.13 percent, 40.21 percent, and 16.65 percent of the whole forest area, respectively. Within the state, there are three National Parks and eleven Wildlife Sanctuaries, which collectively span an area of 4361.4 square kilometers and 3577.8 square kilometers, respectively. Forest ecosystems can be categorized into three principal kinds based on species composition (Shrivastava & Shrivas, 2020) [17]. Shrivastava, A. K., Shrivas, R. K. (2020) [17]: Evaluation of Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) output in three Forest Divisions of Chhattisgarh, considering the impact of Climate Change.

Table 2

S.No.	Forest Type	Area (Sq. kms.)	% of G. Area	Biodiversity Status
1	Mixed Forests	34230	25.32	Very Rich
2	Sal Forests	19682	14.56	Rich
	Teak Forests	5858	4.33	Fairly Rich
Total		59,772	44.21	

Source: Shrivastava, A. K. & Shrivas, R. K., 2020 [17]

Mining Industries in Chhattisgarh

Indeed, Chhattisgarh is among the most mineral-rich states in the country. The State contains over 28 different types of minerals, including much valued gemstones such as diamond, iron ore, coal, tin ore, bauxite, and gold. Alongside its diamond and gold reserves, the State is renowned for its sole operational tin mine and one of the highest quality iron ore deposits in the world, located in Bailadila in Dantewada district. Among the major producers of coal, dolomite, bauxite, and iron ore, Chhattisgarh stands out as the only producer of tin concentrates. Approximately 36% of the country's tin ore, 18% of iron ore (hematite), 17% of coal, and 11% of dolomite resources are accounted for by the State.

Important mineral occurrences of the State are bauxite in Bastar, Bilaspur, Dantewada, Jashpur, Kanker, Kawardha (Kabirdham), Korba, Raigarh & Sarguja districts; china clay in Durg & Rajnandgaon districts; coal in Koria, Korba, Raigarh & Sarguja districts; dolomite in Bastar, Bilaspur, Durg, Janjgir-Champa, Raigarh & Raipur districts; and iron ore (hematite) in Bastar district, Bailadila deposit in Dantewada district, Chhote Dongar deposit in Kanker district, Rowghat, Chargaon, Metabodeli & Hahaladdi deposits in Rajnandgaon district, Boria Tibbu deposits in Dalli-Rajhara area, Durg district. The Bailadila-Rowghat hill ranges in the State are credited as one of the largest iron ore deposits in India. Limice is found in Bastar, Bilaspur, Durg, Janjgir-Champa, Kawardha (Kabirdham), Raigarh, Raipur, and Rajnandgaon districts. Quartzite is found in Durg, Raipur, Rajnandgaon, and Raigarh districts. Talc, soapstone, and steatite are found in Durg and Kanker districts. Other minerals found in the State are corundum in Dantewada district; diamond and other gemstones in Raipur, Mahasamund and Dhamtari districts; fire clay in Bilaspur, Raigarh and Rajnandgaon districts; fluorite in Rajnandgaon district; garnet & marble in Bastar district; emerald and gold in Raipur district; granite in Bastar, Kanker & Raipur districts; quartz/silica sand in Durg, Jashpur, Raigarh, Raipur & Rajnandgaon districts; and tin in Bastar & Dantewada districts (GOI, 2014). In addition, prominent industry leaders including as Ambuja, Birla, Essar, Jindal, J K Lakshmi, Lafarge, L&T, NMDC, Vedanta, and others have a significant presence in the State. Prominent industries that have garnered investment in the State include Steel & Allied, Cement, Power, Aluminium, Mining, IT/ITeS, Defence, Food Processing, and Electronics.

During the fiscal year 2020-21, mineral revenue constituted 18.45 percent of the overall receipts of the State. The revenues generated by the non-ferrous mining and metallurgical sectors experienced growth rates of 18.59%, 24.41%, and 1.40% correspondingly from 2017-18 to 2019-20. However, in 2020-21, there was a significant decline of 10.61% compared to the previous year, 2019-20. The main sources of mineral revenues are royalties, dead rent, surface rent, and rates. Further revenues consist of those received from the District Mineral Foundation Trust (DMFT) and the National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET). Disaster Management and Rehabilitation Team (DMFT) is employed to create and implement strategies to restore and alleviate the hardships experienced by individuals residing in close proximity to mining sites (GASAB, 2023). Mineralogical elements are highly prized natural resources. Due to their limited availability and non-renewable nature, their exploitation is driven by long-term national objectives and strategies. The exploration and development of minerals are intricately connected to the economic growth and upward mobility of the local community. Nevertheless, it is crucial to uphold a state of coordination and equilibrium between conservation and development, since it directly affects both the environment and societal structure. However, a clear equilibrium between mineral exploration and environmental conservation does not exist. Extensive mineral extraction is currently taking place, resulting in the cutting of millions of trees since the launch of mining operations in the state. Thus, the intensification of natural resource exploitation has resulted in extensive deforestation across the entire state. The purported CER is functioning solely to provide the data and provide a response to the governing authority. Examples of fallacies surrounding CER can be observed in the Ultra Tech cement factory Hirmi, Shri Cement plant Semradih, Century Cement Rawan, and other facilities situated in the Balodabazar district of the state, where the CER policy is being disregarded. A variety of mining industries have been established in various regions of the state to extract minerals. The regions of North and South Chhattisgarh are rich in mineral resources, characterised by lush forests. For the purpose of mineral exploration, mining corporations have cleared thousands of trees.

Deforestation in the state

Although Chhattisgarh is a region abundant in minerals, including iron ore, it is also home to some of India's most valuable forests. Nevertheless, the competition for the extraction of these commodities is depleting these forests. According to the most recent estimate from the Chhattisgarh forest department, a minimum of 4,920 hectares of forest area have been redirected for iron ore mining in the central Indian state in recent years (Niyogi, 2021) [15]. The Rowghat mine, located in the Matla reserve forest that covers both Kanker and Narayanpur districts, has garnered significant attention because of its deforestation impacts. Rowghat possesses the second most substantial mineral deposit in the state, with an approximate reserve of 731 metric tonnes of

iron ore. (Niyogi, 2021) [15]. The Chhattisgarh forest department reports that approximately 4,920 hectares of forest estate have been redirected for iron ore mining operations throughout the years. Between 2001 and 2023, Chhattisgarh saw a loss of 53.5 kha or tree cover, which is equivalent to a 2.0% decline in tree cover observed since 2000. Additionally, there was a reduction of 25.3 Mt of CO2e emissions.

Three hundred and fifty-five hectares of forest in the Dantewada area have been designated for diversion to accommodate the Bailadila iron ore mine project deposit 13 at Kirandul. The development of this project is a collaborative effort between the National Mineral Development Corporation and the Chhattisgarh Mineral Development Corporation, which is headquartered in Raipur. Much like Narayanpur, this region is characterized by its mountainous terrain and dense forests. The local population strongly opposes it due to their reverence for one of the hills, Nandraj (Mangobay, Sep. 2021).

The present concern is to the Hasdeo Aranya forest zone situated in the Sarguja district of Chhattisgarh. For the second phase of the Parsa East Kente Basan (PEKB) mining project, around 250,000 trees are expected to be cut down in the Pendramar forest of Chhattisgarh. This operation will cover an area of 1.136 hectares in the Hasdeo Aranya forest region (Mishra, 2024). Tree felling is being conducted on 32 hectares of the planned 74.130 hectares of forest area for this mining operation. Prior to 2007, RVUNL mining firm had previously been allocated 762 hectares of land (ibid). The Government justifies allowing this mining by citing the presence of a 350 million tons coal reserve in this area, which is sufficient to fulfill the whole coal requirement for the connected 4,340 MW power plants for over two decades. Hence, it is unnecessary to designate and utilize any additional mining reserve lands for mining purposes (ibid). Nevertheless, the government and PEKB mining businesses have disregarded the Environmental and Social Impacts of this project. Notwithstanding the protests by thousands of local communities and organizations under the Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan and Hashdeo Bachao Andolan against this mining project, the government seems indifferent to the adverse effects on the wildlife and local residents.

Sources: Frontline, Dec. 29, 2023, https://frontline.thehindu.com/environment/chhattisgarh-new-deo-sai-bjp-government-restarts-controversial-adani-coal-mining-in-adivasi-areas/article67686944.ece

Fig 2: Deforestation and protest by local community in Hashdeo Forest region

Although the Forest Development Corporations (FDCs) have been founded in the state to engage in forest-based economic operations, their main objective is to conserve, develop, and enhance the productivity of the forests. Thus, in 2006, the state-owned Forest Development Corporation (FDC) in Chhattisgarh state initiated the process of removing almost 40,000 hectares of dense natural forests, which encompassed around 20 million trees. The objective was to substitute these areas of natural forests with teak that is farmed for economic purposes (Nandi & Garg, 2007) [13]. Thus, the process of deforestation is ongoing throughout the entire state, particularly in mineral-rich regions such as north and south Chhattisgarh. To bolster economic growth, the state government is entering into several mining-related Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). On the other hand, it is significantly impacting the forest, wildlife, and other endangered species. Nevertheless, the government is currently unable to fulfill its promises and commitments in terms of forest conservation, biodiversity conservation, protection of wildlife, environmental protection, sustainable resource use, and ensuring the livelihood of local communities. Instead, there is a significant exploitation of natural resources and prospecting of minerals, which is a profoundly important problem in the current setting.

Role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporative Social Responsibility (CSR) is an outcome of the legislative standards set by the Government. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to the organizational obligation towards the advancement of society and the environment impacted by the operations of enterprises. The firms Act, 2013 has established section 135, The Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility) Rules, 2014, and Schedule VII, which mandate that firms must meet their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) obligations. Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) is an internal component of corporate social responsibility (CSR) that has a crucial function in safeguarding and advancing the environment. Corporate social responsibility refers to the evaluation of a company's performance not just based on its financial gains, but also on its ability to effectively manage and mitigate its social and environmental effects. Although the concept of companies "doing good" is not novel, the contemporary version of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) originated in the 1950s and developed in the 1960s, shaped by social movements advocating for racial equality, workers' rights, and environmental integrity. In due course, the environment gained significant attention.

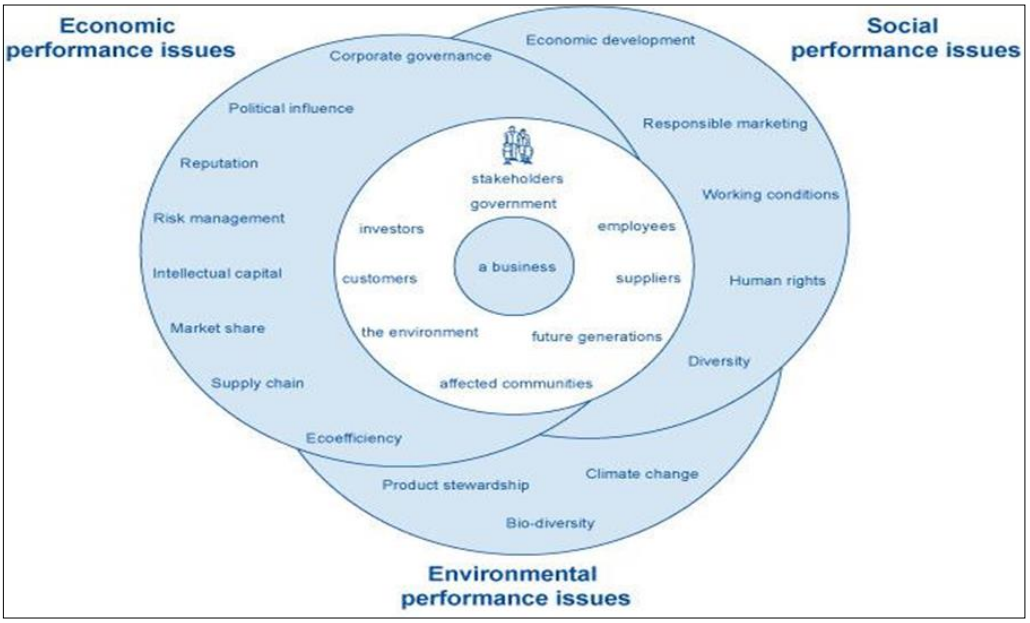


Fig 3: United Nation Industrial Development Organization, 2020

Nevertheless, when comparing CSR welfare activities with environmental deterioration, it becomes evident that the environment has been deteriorating considerably more than preservation and conservation. However, under the auspices of CER, corresponding measures and strategies have been implemented in the targeted areas. The Forest Conservation Act of 1980 specifies that central authorization is required to engage in sustainable agro-forestry in forest lands. Infraction or absence of a permit was regarded as a criminal offence. Its major objectives were to restrict deforestation, preserve biodiversity, and protect wildlife. Despite offering promise for forest protection, this Act did not achieve its intended goal. Increased deforestation and loss of biodiversity and wildlife occurred due to the rural population disregarding the rules and persisting in using the forests for their existence (SFR, 2011). The Indian Forest Policy of 1988 acknowledged the involvement of local groups in the protection and management of forests to enhance community livelihoods (Behera and Engel, 2006). The fundamental goal of this forest policy is to preserve the environmental stability and ecological equilibrium by conserving forests as a natural heritage asset. The National Forest Policy of 1988 marked a substantial and deliberate change in emphasis from economic interests to prioritise the biological function of forests and participatory management (Balaji, 2002) [1]. Community-based forest management is a potent strategy for enhancing rural livelihoods and promoting sustainable forest resource management (Hoare, 2010). Similarly, the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 is a robust framework that promotes the safeguarding of biological diversity, the sustainable utilisation of natural resources, and the fair distribution of related advantages. Section 7 of this Act mandates that individuals must notify the State Biodiversity Board in advance before accessing a biological resource for specific reasons. (1) Individuals other than those covered under sub-section (2) of section 3 are prohibited from accessing any biological resource and its related knowledge for commercial use without informing the relevant State Biodiversity Board in advance. However, such access is subject to the regulations outlined in clause (b) of section 23 and sub-section (2) of section 24 within the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 (BDA, 2002).

Nevertheless, despite the presence of protective measures, natural resources such as forests and land are still being exploited by current mining firms for the establishment of underground mining operations. Both the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) are granting approval to such projects. These entities are the central and state government bodies that offer Environmental Clearing (EC) for certain projects. Only a few numbers of significant projects are obtaining Environmental Clearance (EC) due to their crucial role in generating cash for the government. These authorities responsible for granting environmental clearance are affiliated with the government.

Conclusion

Our observations revealed instances of mining activities that deviated from the prescribed mining plan and operations conducted without the necessary approval. Our investigation revealed that a significant proportion of stone crusher licenses were being operated without obtaining environmental approval. Hence, numerous mining enterprises are continuing operations in the state without obtaining environmental clearance and social effect assessment, resulting in extensive deforestation. The corporate social responsibility strategies that perpetuate environmental and social degradation are ineffective. Furthermore, these Acts aimed at safeguarding the environment and conserving biodiversity are equally ineffectual. Being the highest governing body, the state government is signing several Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) for mining projects that go beyond environmental standards. Hence, a vast number of trees are being felled in the state. Therefore, I contend that the government is indifferent to environmental depletion while being aware of the facts. What is the rationale behind the government prioritizing economic growth? The state administration should urgently address the issue of environmental degradation.

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