

# “We also make steel”

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**O**n a cold December day in 1988, when Doordarshan was still the queen of Indian TV, a refreshing and highly inspiring commercial ran on the national network that portrayed shots of happy employees, customers, students and common Indians who were involved in helping the country grow and prosper. That unusual ad was from Tata Steel and had a humble but triumphant tagline: “We also make steel”.

That seminal ad captured the essence of Indian philosophy, philanthropy and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in a 15 second spot. It also encapsulated the vision of one of India’s greatest industrialists, the venerable JRD Tata. In 1988, when I believe the ad first ran, Tata Steel was honored as the first integrated steel company in the world outside of Japan to be awarded the Deming Application Prize for excellence in Total Quality Management.

This column is not about the Tatas or about steel, but about CSR. In India, the Tatas with 350,000 employees and current group revenues exceeding \$63 bn, 61% of it coming from outside India—personify CSR and philanthropy more than any other corporate group.

The top six philanthropists in terms of percentage of net worth given to charity in 2007 according to Forbes, were Intel’s Gordon Moore at (63%), Microsoft’s Bill Gates (42%), investor George Soros (41%), TV tycoon Ted Turner (39%), space entrepreneur Alfred Mann (27%) and real estate tycoon Eli Broad (23%).

Why is CSR so important? Because many MNCs are now revenue-wise bigger than the GDP of some countries. “If you compare corporate sales and GDP of 100 largest economies, nearly half of them are corporations,” writes Willie Cheng in his just-released book, *Doing Good Well*.

Cheng’s book is an exhaustively researched tome on CSR and philanthropy. His credentials? Former managing director of Accenture Singapore, managing partner of Accenture’s communications and high-tech practice in Asia, ex-chair of Singapore’s National Volunteer & Philanthropy Center, and chairman of the Lien Center for Social Innovation. The hardcover book, published by John Wiley, is available on Amazon: [www.amazon.com/Doing-Good-Well-Sense-Nonprofit/dp/0470823895/ref=sr\\_1](http://www.amazon.com/Doing-Good-Well-Sense-Nonprofit/dp/0470823895/ref=sr_1).



**RAJU CHELLAM**

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SMBs in northern Europe are consciously looking at green alternatives as a normal business practice. Over the next few years expect this trend to accelerate worldwide. And companies that don’t have policies to specifically care for the needy, or protect the environment, or respect animals, or enhance our biodiversity, will not—and should not—survive in the tough global economy.

It makes business sense too. Investors who put their money on socially responsible firms will technically be investing in higher quality companies. A managing director who promotes ethical values and environment friendly policies is less likely to get hit by lawsuits and bad publicity.

[amazon.com/Doing-Good-Well-Sense-Nonprofit/dp/0470823895/ref=sr\\_1](http://amazon.com/Doing-Good-Well-Sense-Nonprofit/dp/0470823895/ref=sr_1).

In India, the top 10 industrial houses have revenues that contribute to over 10% of India’s GDP. Globally, governments alone can not solve the earth’s problems. Corporations have to step in. They have the reach of multilateral agencies such as the WHO and WWF. All they need is awakening of their social conscience. That seems to be happening now.

The example that large conglomerates set in philanthropy will have a cascading effect on SMBs as well, globally and in India. According to AMI Partners, there are some 4 mn SMBs (companies with up to 999 staff) in India. About 98% of them are small businesses that employ fewer than 100 staff.

The writer, a former Dataquest editor, is currently vice president (Asia-Pacific) with Access Markets International (AMI) Partners, based in Singapore. He can be reached at [maildqindia@cybermedia.co.in](mailto:maildqindia@cybermedia.co.in)

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