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NGOs IN INDIA: HISTORICAL ROOTS, MEANING, CHARACTERISTICS AND TYPES- A NARRATIVE AND CONCEPTUAL ACCOUNT

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2.1 Introduction

The real condition of women in India is not good even after 65 years of her independence. The different initiatives of the Central and the State Governments in this field have not yielded much satisfaction. Here, the NGOs may play a vital role and provide many opportunities for the women. The Non-governmental organisations, with their participatory approach, people's mobilising capacity, closeness to grass-roots and better insights into the needs of the people have emerged as alternative development agents. The voluntary sector has evolved as a viable 'third sector' which is next to the government sector and the private enterprises. They have emerged as a viable institutional framework to serve as catalyst for development and change. Most of them aim at building self-reliant development. They recognised that when people set their own goals, develop their own approaches and take their own decisions, human creativity and local problem solving skills are released and the resulting development is likely to be self-sustaining. Women are assisted for income generation in a number of ways by the NGOs. Considering the real condition of women in the country and their importance after the establishment of grassroots democracy, NGOs are rendering their services with a voluntary spirit. Here, NGOs may emerge as the favourable institutions, as they are considered to be capable of overcoming the limitations of the state and the private enterprises in responding to the needs of the women. NGOs typically operate on a small scale with flexible approaches, and they have proved that they can successfully overcome the problems faced by women in the process of development and empowerment.

If it is so, it is very necessary to understand every side of the NGOs starting from its meaning, history, types, and characteristics and so on.

2.2 Voluntary organisations and NGOs

The Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) (hereafter NGOs) are relatively new phenomenon. But, individuals are surrounded by organisations all through their lives, whether they like them or not. The term organisation includes a galaxy of institutions such as hospitals, schools, factories, offices, armed forces and so on. The NGOs are groups of persons organized on the basis of voluntary membership without state control, for the furtherance of some common interests of citizens. Generally, Voluntary Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisation are treated as one, and the same. This is not true. All NGOs are not necessarily voluntary. There exists a large number of caste & communal organisations, educational and philanthropic organisations with a wide spectrum of activities. The broad definition holds that every organisation which is not part of a government and which operates in civil society is an NGO. They are also sometimes influenced, controlled or sponsored by the government and private business houses. NGOs include people's organisations such as professional associations, community groups, labour and trade organisations, peasant and women organisations, youth clubs etc. and include all educational, cultural and religious institutions and cooperatives. Although a vast majority of NGOs is formally independent and have nonprofit ethos, however, there are many NGOs working in the voluntary sector initiated by consultancy firms for profit and they are commercially oriented. Therefore, the term NGO in India has been used to denote a wide spectrum of organisations, which may be non-governmental, quasi or semi -governmental, voluntary or non-voluntary, partisan or non-partisan, formal or informal, non-profit or profit oriented bodies, with a legal status and registered under any of the Acts. The NGOs have a legal status, they are registered under an appropriate Act, and the specific Act under which they have to be registered, depends upon the nature and scope of their activities and objectives. On the contrary, VOs, the term widely used in India, usually referring to those organisations which are voluntary in spirit and with non-profit making objectives and exist as a legal entity, registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act, or Charitable and Endowment Trust Act or corresponding

State Acts, covering only a limited areas of action. There exists however, a large number of VOs working at the grass-root level which remain formally unregistered. Registered VOs are, thus, limited and constitute a small proportion of NGOs. An NGO is a much broader concept than a VO. In other words, all VOs are NGOs but not vice versa. The involvement of various agencies in the nongovernmental sector, such as trade unions, cooperatives and Panchayati Raj bodies, has tended to blur the identity of those, which can be strictly defined as voluntary organisations. There has been inadequate recognition of their role in accelerating the process of social and economic development.

The term 'Voluntarism' is derived from the Latin word 'Voluntas' meaning 'Will'. Thus, voluntary organisation may be regarded as associations, which are formed to fulfill the wishes and aspirations of its members. There are many scholars who put forward a number of definitions of Voluntary Organisation and are as follows:

Bourdillon (1945) argues that voluntary organisation is the product of the blood, sweat and toil of a few individuals, which are known for their persistent efforts for achievement of their sincere aspirations.

D. L. Sills (1968) defined voluntary organisation as a group of persons, organized on the basis of voluntary membership without state control, for the furtherance of some common interest of its members.

Johnson (1981) examined the definition of voluntary organisation based on the following factors: (i) Method of formation (ii) Method of government (iii) Method of financing and (iv) Motives with the pursuit of profit excluded.

Lord Beveridge (1979) 'a voluntary organisation is an organisation where its workers are paid or unpaid, governed by its own members without external control.'

Michael Banton (1968) defines it as a group of organized for the pursuit of one interest or of several interests in common.

Professor Inamdar (1987) defines a voluntary organisation and says 'development to be of durable use to the community has to nurture a strong desire and impulse for community development among its members, to be

economically viable, to possess dedicated and hard-working leadership and to command resources of expertise in the functions undertaken’.

Sarkar (2005) defined voluntary organisation, as ‘an organized group in order to promote some common interest of its members and it is voluntary, self-governing, self-financing, and non-profit in its orientation’. He further argued that ‘voluntary’ refers to spontaneous initiative of the organisation for addressing the social and economic inequalities. This does not refer to whether workers will be paid or unpaid. On the principle, the salary of the staffs in a voluntary organisation is lower than the others as the concept “voluntarism” is attached with it. ‘Self-governing’ indicates that the decision for the organizational constitution, policy and service is not within the domain of state control. ‘Self-financing’ refers to at least some of its revenues drawn from voluntary sources. ‘Non-profit’ means the motive of the members will be the welfare of the public and profits will be used to strengthen as well as to fulfill the objectives of the organisation.

Smith and Freedom (1972) argued ‘voluntary association’ as a structure that is formally organized, relatively permanent, secondary grouping as opposed to less structured, informal ephemeral or primary grouping.

In a nutshell we can conclude that Voluntary Organisations are spontaneous in their origin whereas NGOs may also be government sponsored. After observing the definition of voluntary organisation it is necessary to understand the meaning of NGOs and is as follows:

2.3 Meaning of NGOs

Many authors use the term Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in a loose sense as collective noun to cover enormous variety of widely different activities and preaching widely divergent objectives. A non-governmental organization is any non-profit, voluntary citizens’ group, which is organized on a local, national and international level. NGOs represent a variety of different interest, and multitude of Non-Governmental Organisation activities makes defining the concept of NGO difficult. Since the beginning of nineteen eighties,

the activities of NGOs have been growing worldwide in terms of their size and scope, their number and volume of aid. It has been argued that this new popularity of NGOs is due to their specific characteristics such as: flexible and experimental interventions due to their small size and learning process approaches; their low costs and effective work at the grass roots level especially in remote areas; their relationship with the beneficiaries is based on voluntarism which is the main factor allowing NGOs to achieve meaningful participation; furthermore, NGOs recruit highly qualified and motivated staff on the basis of shared values and a belief in the social mission of the NGOs (Vahlhans, 1994; Baru, 1998; Rajasekhar, 2000).

Baylis and Smith (2005) (eds.) argues that as a result of pressure, primarily from American groups, the United Nations Charter contains an article providing for the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) the consult with NGOs (Article 71). The ECOSOC statute and the way it has been applied embodies six principles: (i) An NGO should support the aims and the works of UN. This has been interpreted very broadly and it is very rare that objections are made to the political purpose of NGOs. (II) Officially, an NGO should be a representative body, with identifiable headquarters, and offices, responsible to a democratic policy-making conference. In practice, many highly prestigious NGOs, particularly development and environment NGOs, are not membership organisation. (iii) An NGO cannot be profit-making body. Individual companies cannot gain consultative status, but trade federations of commercial interests are recognised as NGOs. (IV) An NGO cannot use or advocate violence. A few guerrilla groups have been accepted as national liberation movements, but this is distinct from and of higher status than being an NGO. (v) An NGO must respect the norm of 'non-interference in the internal affairs of states'. This means an NGO cannot be political party, but parties can, like companies, from international federations. In addition, NGOs concerned with human rights should not restrict their activities to a particular group, nationality, or country. (Exception was made with respect to anti-apartheid groups) (vi) An International NGO is one that is not established by intergovernmental

agreement. This is a technical legal expression of the property of being non-governmental.

Duggal (1988) defines NGOs in the following manner: (i) they are registered as public trusts or societies; (ii) the different programmes adopted by the NGOs are welfare ones and sometimes government funded too; (iii) NGOs as a rule do not generate their own funds completely but rely on external financial assistances from government agencies-both national and international; (iv) they are private organisations, but their nature makes them somewhat different from what one generally expects from a private sector. Thus, they are not supposed to make any profit.

Maxine (1997) opines that NGO is a term used rather loosely to refer to any organisation that is not a direct division of a national government.

Rajasekhar (2000) defines the term NGO that undertakes voluntary action, social action and social movements. He further argues that the following characteristics of NGOs make them distinct organisations: (i) Voluntary formation, (ii) Working towards development and amelioration of suffering, (iii) Working with non-self-serving aims, (iv) Relative independence.

According to the World Bank, "a Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) is a private organisation that pursues activities to relieve suffering, promote the interest of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development". In other words, NGOs are legally constituted organisations, operate independently from the government and are generally considered to be "non-state, non-profit oriented groups who pursue purposes of public interest" (J. Mathew and J. Verghese, 2011).

2.4 Characteristics of NGOs

The NGO-sector has often been described as extremely diverse, heterogeneous and populated by organisations with hugely varied goals, structures and motivations. It is, therefore, not an easy task to find a common definition of the term "non-governmental organisation". It cannot be based on a legal definition given the wide variations in laws relating to NGO activities, according to which

an NGO may have, for instance, the legal status of a charity, non-profit association or a foundation.

The term "NGO" can nevertheless be used as shorthand to refer to a range of organisations that normally share the following characteristics:

- NGOs are not created to generate personal profit. Although they may have paid employees and engage in revenue-generating activities they do not distribute profits or surpluses to members or management;
- NGOs are voluntary. This means that they are formed voluntarily and that there is usually an element of voluntary participation in the organisation;
- NGOs are distinguished from informal or adhoc groups by having some degree of formal or institutional existence. Usually, NGOs have formal statutes or other governing document setting out their mission, objectives and scope. They are accountable to their members and donors;
- NGOs are independent, in particular of government and other public authorities and of political parties or commercial organisations.

Bhose (2003) put forward the following characteristics of NGOs:

1. Voluntary: They are formed voluntarily. There is an element of voluntary involvement in the organisation. NGOs are built upon commitment of a few persons.
2. Legal status: NGOs are registered with the Government under the Societies Act, Trust Act, and a few under Trade Union Act etc. NGOs are also registered under Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. This is to get entitled for obtaining funds from abroad.
3. Independence: NGOs are independent in planning and implementation of their programmes. They are not bound by the hard and fast rules as Government institution.
4. Flexibility: NGOs are flexible in intervention. They are not bound by red tapism and bureaucratic obstacles. In the name of audit objections, they won't cease people's initiatives.

5. Prompt decision-making: NGOs take quick decisions in response to the needs of the community. As decisions are taken quickly, their services are delivered timely to the people. NGOs could overcome the constraints of cumbersome procedures and act readily to the community demands.
6. Non-profit oriented: NGOs are not run on profit motives. The surplus and gains from economic projects, if any, are distributed to the members or stakeholders. They are re-used for development purposes.
7. Not self-serving: NGOs are constituted not for the benefit of the promoters. NGOs serve the poor and impoverished for their nurtured by the response and co-operation of the people. This offers a great deal of mental satisfaction to the NGO members which inspires them to do better and more.
8. High motivation: the members and the staff are endowed with high motivation and inspiration to work for the cause of poor. Their hours of work are not clock bound. They strive tirelessly to achieve their purpose for the benefit of the target groups.
9. Freedom in work: NGO workers enjoy their maximum freedom in their fieldwork, in organising the community and carrying out the development schemes. Such freedom becomes a source of motivation to accomplish the task inspite of their less remuneration. They are not pinched by their bosses for petty mistake.
10. Value driven: NGOs are driven by social values and humanitarian principles and hence they try to promote a value-based society.
11. Catalytic: NGOs facilitate the communities towards social actions but they do not dilute and distort themselves in the process of intervention.
12. People-oriented: People are the heart of NGOs. They plan things with the people and implement the same through the people. Thus, they learn the best from the people and replicate the same with other groups.

NGOs are not self-serving in aims and related values. Their aim is to act in the public arena at large, on concerns and issues related to the well-being of people, specific groups of people or society as a whole. They are not pursuing the commercial or professional interests of their members.

Though these common characteristics can help describe the notion of the term "NGO", it must be borne in mind that their size as well as their scope of activities can vary considerably. Some NGOs consist of a rather limited number of persons; others may have thousands of members and hundreds of professional staff. In functional terms, NGOs can focus on operational and/or advocacy activities. Operational NGOs contribute to the delivery of services (such as in the field of welfare), whereas the primary aim of advocacy of the NGOs is to influence the policies of public authorities and public opinion in general. Generally, NGOs follow four clear-cut strategies and these are Charity, supplementing welfares of the state, encouraging people's participation and implementing programmes launched by the government for the larger benefit of the communities.

2.5 Types of NGOs

The term NGO is used to denote those organisations, which undergo voluntary and social actions and social movements. However, the NGOs have to work within the parameter of government legislations and policies formulated for them (Murthy and Rao, 1997).

Bhose (2003) classifies the NGOs under the following heads:

1. **Charity NGOs:** Their activities are transitory in nature and believe that giving something to the poor is like giving the same to God.
2. **Relief and Rehabilitation NGOs:** Being affected by natural calamities like flood, fire, or epidemic diseases or by man-made catastrophe like war, genocide etc., some NGOs are involved in providing relief and rehabilitation programmes fall under this type.
3. **Service Providing NGOs:** Service providing NGOs are inspired by welfare concerns and they largely provides service for the poor and marginalized.
4. **Economic Development NGOs:** According to them economic gain is the social gain. These types of NGOs believe that rise in income of the poor and the marginalized will bring about their economic development.

5. Social Development NGOs: These NGOs believe that social awareness and people's involvement will bring about development and, hence, focuses more on the social facets of the community.
6. Empowerment NGOs: These NGOs enable people to gain power and authority so that they can access and control over resources easily. They try to enhance the number of powerless becoming powerful.
7. Network NGOs: These NGOs try to unite association of NGOs into a single platform and perform their function collectively.
8. Supporting NGOs: These are newly emerging NGOs which provide a varied of support functions to different grass-root NGOs.

Rajasekhar (2000) classified the NGOs under four broad categories. They are as follows:

- (i) Operational or Grassroots NGOs: Grassroots NGOs directly work with the oppressed section of the society. The grassroots NGOs could be either local based, working in a single and small project location, or in multiple project areas in different districts, states and regions covering a larger population. The Operational or Grassroots NGOs can again, be divided into:
 - (a) Charity and welfare NGOs,
 - (b) Development NGOs, and
 - (c) Social action groups.
- (ii) Supporting NGOs: The support based NGOs provide services that would strengthen the capacities of grassroots NGOs, Panchayati Raj Institution, cooperatives and others to function more effectively.
- (iii) Umbrella or Network NGOs: Network NGOs are formal associations or informal groups of grassroots and or support NGOs, which meet periodically on particular concerns.
- (iv) Funding NGOs: The primary activity of these NGOs is funding grassroots NGOs, support NGOs or people's organisations.

Nandedkar (1987) classifies NGOs into ten categories. (i) Individual Practice of Dharma (ii) Religious institution (iii) Individual based philanthropic activities (iv) Social service and cultural associations (v) Professional and consultancy

associations (vi) Functional association (vii) Front-line associations (viii) Action groups (ix) Citizen groups (x) Protest groups.

Green and Matthias (1997) classify NGOs in the context of 'activities' and 'operational areas.' As per activities they identified six types of NGOs and are as follows: service oriented NGOs, research NGOs, supportive NGOs, NGO for policy advocacy, funding NGOs and co-coordinating NGOs. On the basis of operational areas, they are identified as community-based NGOs, National NGOs and international NGOs.

Korten (1990) classified four types of NGOs on the basis of strategies of development. They are Relief and Welfare Organisation, Community Development Organisation, Sustainable Systems Development Organization and People's Organisation. Three stages or generations of NGO evolution have been identified by Korten's (1990). Three Generations of Voluntary Development Action. First, the typical development NGO focuses on relief and welfare, and delivers relief services directly to beneficiaries. Examples are the distribution of food, shelter or health services. The NGOs notice immediate needs and responds to them. NGOs in the second generation are oriented towards small-scale, self-reliant local development. At this evolutionary stage, NGOs build the capacities of local communities to meet their needs through 'self-reliant local action'. Korten calls the third generation 'sustainable systems development'. At this stage, NGOs try to advance changes in policies and institutions at a local, national and international level; they move away from their operational service-providing role towards a catalytic role.

Shah and Chaturvedi (1983) divide NGOs in three main categories: techno-managerial, reformist, and radical. Hirway (1995) classified NGOs in Gujarat into welfare-oriented, development organisations, and empowering NGOs. Iyengar (1998) classified NGOs in Gujarat into four categories: Gandhian, service delivery organisations, professional organisations, and mobilizational organisations.

The term 'voluntary' was used mainly to denote the work done by those volunteers who were not paid for their works. In the context of welfare activities, voluntary means "without the spur or compulsion of economic

motives". In other words it is a "self-propelled action", self without a claim for compensation.

Voluntary action may include a wide range of activities: (1) Charity, (2) Relief, (3) Services, (4) Welfare, (5) Rehabilitation, (6) Development of socio-economic environment around human beings, (7) Development of human beings. The father of community development movement, Thiru S.K. Dey made the following observation about voluntary action: "There are four estates today as guardians of whatever democracy we still claim in India - the executives, legislatures, judiciary and the press. A fifth estate is an imperative. It is "people". People are amorphous in character and, therefore, they cannot be mobilized except through voluntary organs and of their own. The fifth estate, therefore, can be rightfully called "voluntary organs of the people".

The World Bank has identified two main categorizes of NGOs namely Operational NGOs and Advocacy NGOs. The main purpose of the former is the design and implementation of development oriented projects. Operational NGOs can also be classified as national organisation, international organisation, community based organisation, etc. On the other hand the very purpose of advocacy NGOs is to influence the policies and practices of international organisations (J. Mathew and J. Verghese, 2011).

2.6 Typology of NGOs in India

The types of NGOs that exist in the length and breadth of the country based on various parameters can be outlined as follows:-

Manoranjan Mohanty, Anil K. Singh (2001) has classified the NGOs/VOs of India in nine broad groups on the basis of the following parameter/basis:

(i) Organisational forms/Legal status (Types of VOs and NGOs – Societies (Society for the Improvement of Weaker Sections, Tamil Nadu), Foundations (Family Planning Foundation, New Delhi), Trust (Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, Madhya Pradesh), Cooperatives (Chhotnagpur Catholic Mission Cooperative Society, Bihar), Business & commercial organisations or enterprises (Rajasthan Consultancy Organisation Ltd.), Panchayati Raj

Institutions (All India Panchayat Parishad, New Delhi), Trade Unions (Textile Labour Association, Gujarat), Citizen's Groups Citizen Uplift Society, Maharashtra)

(ii) Sources of Inspiration-Ideological/Political Economic/ Religious affinities/ Philosophical base/ Social Reforms (Types of VOs and NGOs - Gandhian VOs (Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi), Jaya Prakash Narayan Inspired VOs Marxist/left/Radical Groups/ Naxalite groups (J.P. Seva Samiti, UP Chandra Sekhar Azad's Hindustan Socialist Republic Association), Acharya Vinoba Bhave's rural transformation groups Christian Missionaries and church based group Islamic/Buddhist/ Sikh/organisations/ temple based developmental VOs (Antyodaya Lok Karyakram, Bihar Holy Child Society/Holy Cross Social Science Centre, New Delhi Anjuman Himayat Islam or Calicut Islamic Cultural Society, Kerala/Tirumal Tirupati Devasthanam, Andhra Pradesh), Vivekananda/Ram Krishna Missions (Ram Krishna Mission, Calcutta), Sri Aurobindo Societies (Sri Aurobindo Education Society, New Delhi), Rabindra Nath Tagore Societies (Tagore Society for Rural Development, Calcutta, West Bengal), Social Reformist groups inspired by Raja Ram Mohan Roy/Jyotiba Phule/Ranade/Gokhale/D.K. Karve/ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar etc. (Brahmo Samaj/Satya Shodhan Samaj/ Prathana Samaj/Servants of India Society/All India Seva Samiti Ramabai Ambedkar Shikshan Prasarak Mandal, Maharashtra);

(iii) Period of Establishment/Origin (Types of VOs and NGOs - Pre-Independence/Old generation VOs (All India Spinner's Association), Post-Independence/New Generation VOs (Most of the Contemporary development VOs) ;

(iv) Area of Operation (Types of VOs and NGOs - Rural-Based VOs (Gram Vikas Sanstha, Rajasthan), Urban-Based VOs (Ahmadabad City Social Education Committee) ;

(v) Form of Control/Governance (Types of VOs and NGOs - Self-controlled/Managed VOs Private VOs (those controlled privately &

Independently by their founders or nominees (Large number of VOs), Government sponsored (Gongos) Quasi autonomous NGOs (Quangos) Business sponsored VOs (Bongos) (Khadi & Village industries and National Children's Fund/National Institution of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), Political Party Sponsored organisations (Phngos) or based on the ideologies of Political parties (Tata Agricultural Institute and Gandhian Inspired Deen Dayal VOs/ Research Centre, New Delhi), Donors-sponsored organisations (Fungos) (Catholic Relief Services/CARE-India), NGO-sponsored/subsidiary NGOs (Action Aid/Terre des Homes);

(vi) Functional diversity (Types of VOs and NGOs - Single function VOs (National Institute of Rural Development, A.P.), Multi Function VOs (Social Welfare and Human Development Society, Delhi) ;

(vii) Size (Types of VOs and NGOs – Small (Village Committees/Rural Youth Clubs), Medium (Block/Dist. level organisations), and Large sized Organisation (Umbrella Support organisations) ;

(viii) Specialised Foundation/Sector Specific Dominant Functional role (Types of VOs and NGOs - Needs based Clientele groups/ professional and consultancy VOs (Population, Health) Medical, legal etc.(Family Planning Association of India/ Medical Council/Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI) Bar Council), Advocacy and Information Dissemination Organisations (Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)), Research and Evaluation VOs Service Delivery organisations (Legal Aid/ consumer protection services/Micro credit groups etc.) Networking and alliance building / support organisations/Fund raising VOs (Ashoka Foundation/Family Planning Foundation of India), Training and Capacity building VOs (Centre for Agrarian Research training and education, Ghaziabad, U.P.);

(ix) Target Group (Types of VOs and NGOs - Youth Clubs (Nehru Yuva Kendra/Youth for Unity and voluntary action, Bombay), Women's Organisations (Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Gujarat, All India Women's Conference, New Delhi), Farmer/Peasant Organisation Artisan

Groups (Bharat Krishak Samaj), Scheduled Caste Welfare organisations (Harijan Sevak Sangh, New Delhi), Scheduled Tribe Welfare organisations (Bharatiya Adaiamajati Sevak Sangh, New Delhi), Child Welfare and Development VOs (Indian Council of Child Welfare), Aged Welfare Organisation (Age Care India, New Delhi, Helpage-India), Physically Handicapped/ Less Abled Persons Welfare VOs (Association for Physically Handicapped, Bangalore, All India Federation of Deaf/Blind Relief Association, New Delhi), Drug/Alcoholics addiction centers (Association for Social health in India, New Delhi);

(x) Sources of Funding/Degree of Autonomy & Independence (Types of VOs and NGOs - Community voluntary source funded VOs (Most of the grass-roots VOs.), Government funded VOs (National Children's Fund (NCF), NGO-funded VOs (Caritas-India, Oxfam-India) ;

(xi) Levels of Operation (Types of VOs and NGOs - Grassroots/local/ peripheral VOs (Village committees Mahila Mandals/Local Literacy Clubs), National/Intermediary Groups (Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD) New Delhi, International NGOs (Lion's Club/Red Cross Society/Amnesty International) (Manoranjan Mohanty, Anil K. Singh, 2001).

2.7 Brief history of NGOs in India

Voluntarism is a phenomenon of long cherished tradition established in ancient India and proclaimed by the people to share skills, ideas, philosophy, expertise, services, resources, assets and knowledge among the members of different communities living together across the country. Voluntarism is the central core of social action in a democratic society. Voluntarism manifests through organizations, associations, individuals and organized civil structures such as Voluntary Organisations (VOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), cooperatives of different types and micro-credit organisations outside the governmental bureaucratic machinery.

Voluntarism had always been a part of Indian traditions. Even during the Rig Vedic period, they were the main source of welfare and development.

India has a long history and tradition of voluntary action, providing services to the sick, needy and destitute. Rather, it is a part of our cultural heritage and is a way of life. Voluntarism in India is as old as the emergence of organized society itself. It originated as a pure philanthropy of charity and this motivation sustained the voluntary efforts all through history in the ancient and medieval period. The voluntary efforts in the process of welfare and development have undergone evolutionary changes with changing emphasis on various experimental development programmes in India. The history of voluntary action is an integral part of the study of evolution and changes in the Indian society.

Though the term NGO became popular in India only in the 1980s, the voluntary sector has an older tradition even at the time of independence. During the 1980s NGOs became more specialized and the voluntary movement was fragmented into three major groups. The first group includes those traditional development NGOs, who went into a village or a group of villages and ran literacy programmes, encouraged farmers to experiment with new crops and livestock breeds that would bring more money, helped the weavers and other village artisans market their products and so on (e.g. the organisation run by Baba Amte leprosy patients in central India). The second group of NGOs was those who researched a particular subject in depth and then lobbied with government or petitioned the courts for the improvements in the lives of the citizens (e.g. Centre for Science and Environment). The third groups were those volunteers who saw themselves more as activists than other NGOs did (e.g. Narmada Bachao Andolan) (J. Mathew and J. Verghese, 2011).

The efforts and initiatives towards the welfare and developmental activities, which originated outside the state structure and within society, came into prominence during the colonial period. The agents of these activities would call themselves 'Voluntary Organisations' whom we treat as 'Non-Governmental Organizations' nowadays. The history of voluntarism in India may be broadly divided into the following phases:

1. Voluntarism in the Pre-Independence era.

2. Voluntarism during the post-Independence era.
3. Voluntary organisations since the early 1990s to till date

2.7.1 Voluntarism in the Pre-Independence era

Voluntarism in India has a long history. Voluntarism in early days had its genesis in charity, philanthropy and relief activities. In ancient and medieval India, charity on a voluntary basis outside the activities of state and on the basis of religious channels were being operated freely and extensively in the fields of education, health, cultural promotion and scour in crisis during floods, famine, droughts, other natural calamities and epidemics. The history of India reveals that in the early days the responsibility of assisting the individual-in-need was generously shared by the communities and the rulers. The kings, the chiefs and kind-hearted rich persons used to provide free kitchens and necessary materials during floods, famine, droughts, natural calamities and epidemics. They used to be happy to provide shelter to the homeless. The rules of Dharma Shastras were restricted to the directives of the emperor. Religion emphasised on the value of charity, philanthropy and mutual help. The developed welfare-statism was evidenced during the Maurya and Gupta empires. The state would come to the rescue of the community in extreme contingencies of helplessness and destituteness. During the colonial period, voluntary efforts received a boost with new religious, cultural, political and social surroundings. The Laissez Faire policy of the British Government in economic, religious and social matters left no other avenue of development open to the 'natives' than resort to the 'self-help' form of voluntarism. This policy proved to be a positive catalysis to make voluntarism stronger. Schools, colleges and institutes were established by educational societies set up by English-educated natives and affluent businesspersons, traders and zamindars.

Prior to the nineteenth century, family, kinship, caste and the village community were the main institutions to meet the needs of the poor, destitute and downtrodden. The fact that in the nineteenth century, voluntarism gained new stimulus because some Europeans and educated Indians started some welfare measures in different fields. During the British rule, voluntary

organisations proliferated by leaps and bounds and people from different walks of life actively participated in various fields of social action. They, with a great enthusiasm, were engaged in various welfare activities of society, literary and relief works. During the early British rule, the Christian Churches initiated welfare activities by establishing hospitals, dispensaries, educational institutions in different parts of the country. English educated natives, affluent businessmen, traders and members of aristocracy extended their support in this respect (Inamdar, 1987).

The very idea of voluntarism in India totally changed with the reform movements. The introduction of western ideas and Christian faith by the end of the eighteenth century precipitated the widespread emergence of religious and social reform movements in India. Social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Dayananda Saraswathy, Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar, Kesava Chandra Sen, Ram Krishna Paramhansa, Sayyed Ahmed Khan, and Swami Vivekananda had focused their social actions against the rigid social evils and practices like Sati, Child Marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage and other caste-directed practices etc. Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1815 started Atmiya Sabha in Calcutta, which was one of the earliest voluntary associations in India. The other prominent associations originated during this period were: the Unitarian Committee (1822), Brahmo Samaj (1828), Dharma Samaj (1830), Widows Remarriage Association (1850) and so on. Many literary and educational institutions e.g. Royal Asiatic Society (1834), Dhyan Prakash Sabha (1840), took shape at this time.

The second half of the nineteenth century had witnessed a gradual evolution and growth of voluntarism in India. A mushrooming consciousness of middle class in the forefront of a socio-political and economic awakening was aroused during this time. The establishment of the Friend-in-Need Society (1858), Prathana Samaj (1864), Satya Shodhan Samaj (1873), Arya Samaj (1875), National Council for Women in India (1875), Indian National Social Conference (1887), The Rama Krishna Mission (1898), further strengthened the voluntary movement in India. The enactment of Societies Registration Act, 1860 was another major boost to voluntarism during this phase of history.

Roman Catholic missionaries appeared in India during this time and their organized, systematic and philanthropic efforts began in 1885 and participated in various charity and reform activities and promoted the establishment of voluntary institutions in the length and breadth of the country. The wave of Swadeshi Movement marked the beginning of mass involvement inculcating the spirit of consolidating voluntary actions through self-help and autonomy, institution building in education, agriculture, industry, business and fostered economic production, particularly of industrial goods through swadeshi and boycott of imported goods from Britain. A cooperative movement, which started during this period, includes Gokhale Education Society, Servants of India Society (1905) and Servants of People Society (1921). The introduction of Mahatma Gandhi into the Indian political scene changed the heart and face of the national movement and of voluntarism as well. This period marked the beginning of a more principled and value-based voluntary action in India (Manoranjan Mohanty, Anil K. Singh, 2001).

Gandhiji propagated remaking of the nation on the basis of swadeshi, self-government and self-sufficiency. It is believed that Gandhiji gave a new impetus to voluntarism in India. He started Charkha (spinning wheel), Khadi (hand-woven cloth), Gramodyog (village industries), basic education, etc. The voluntariness and sharing, cooperation, mutual aid, decentralisation, non-violence, self-reliance, self-help and moral action were the fundamental principles of his programme. He also founded Harijan Sevak Sangh, Gramodyog Sangh, Hindustan Talim Sangh, Adivasi Seva Mandals, etc. Influenced by Gandhiji's principles Rabindra Nath Tagore started Sriniketan, (West Bengal) in 1921, The Marthandam Project (1921) in Kanya Kumari district in Tamil Nadu by Dr. Spencer Hatch, Gurgaon Project (1927) by F.L Brayne, Baroda Rural Development Project (1927) by Raja Sir T. Madhav Rao, and the Dewan of Baroda started Rural Reconstruction Centres (RRCs) in 1932 (Manoranjan Mohanty, Anil K. Singh, 2001).

2.7.2 Voluntarism during the post-Independence era

In the first phase after independence, the legacy of the Gandhian era

influenced voluntary action to complete the unfinished and unfulfilled tasks that were undertaken before independence. Many prominent followers of Gandhi inculcated Gandhiji's spirit of voluntary efforts in the post-independence era. The most notable among these prominent followers were Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Jaya Prakash Narayan, Thakkar Bapa & others. Vinoba Bhave in his enthused attempt to transform rural India came forward with the idea of Bhoodan and Gramdan Movements in 1951 and 1952 respectively. These were responsible for expedite voluntary efforts in India.

The first two decades of independence till the mid- 1960s are believed to be the phases of an intense process of nation-building. The various works of the missionaries gained further diversification in their activities after independence. With the introduction of the planning in the year 1951 and with the launching of the community development programmes, the voluntary organisations redefined their role in the process of nation-building, particularly in the process of rural transformation and development. The National Extension Service (NES) was launched in our country in October 1953 for development with the self-help strategy. The year 1953 was a turning point in the history of voluntary efforts with the formation of Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) with the primary objective of the promotion of voluntary organisations in social welfare and development. The establishment of CSWB also marked the beginning of government funding to the voluntary organisations through the Grant-in-aid. The creation of CSWB brought revolutionary changes in various faces of voluntarism in the country. This period witnessed the fast growing phenomenon of 'networking' of voluntary organisations and the formation of national federations, providing a common platform for voluntary action in India. For instance, Association for Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD) began in 1958 as a consortium of major voluntary agencies, coordinating voluntary efforts in rural development in the country.

During the late 1960s, the country was trapped by the crisis of economic stagnation and political instability. This period was marked by devil droughts, floods and famine (1963-67) and increased deterioration of misery in the rural

areas. The economic and political circumstances during this period inspired the new generation to enter into the voluntary sector. An alternate and integrated rural development began to be experimented during the late 1960s. The Nehru Yuva Kendras, which were established at the grass-roots level, offered opportunity to rural youths to participate in community services. Youth Clubs and Mahila Mandals operated in rural areas were involving themselves in extensional services and developmental programmes.

During the Third Five Year Plan, the government recognised voluntary efforts as a tool of public cooperation and sought more cooperation from voluntary organisations, particularly in the rural development programmes. During the mid-1960s, many foreign NGOs entered the Indian scene to work in the voluntary sector for organising relief and rehabilitation work necessitated by severe drought (1965-66 & 1966-67) and famine. Foreign funds started flowing in during this period and thus, changed radically the character of the voluntary sector in the country.

During the early 1970s, the government launched the minimum needs programme covering aspects such as rural education, health, water supply and sanitation, roads, rural electrification, housing, nutrition, rural energy etc. Various new programmes were launched covering these aspects of Minimum Needs Programmes.

It was in this period that more people focused work with target groups e.g. women, children, landless labourers, artisans, small and marginal farmers, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes etc. This became the basis of voluntary efforts. Different area and target group programmes such as Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Development Agency (MFALDA) were integrated into a new programme called Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) which was launched on 2 October 1980. With the changing programmes and emphasis on development, the voluntary sector in the country was marked with increasing numbers, scope, sectoral specialization and professionalism throughout the 1970s and 1980s. As a result of national movement, patriotism, nationalism, Swadeshi spirit, a deep faith in the power and wisdom of the

common people came into existence and the same led to form a few organisations (Lalitha, 1975).

2.7.3 Voluntary organisations since the early 1990s to till date

There has been a steady growth of voluntary organisations in India since the post- independence era and continuing even today. The Seventh Plan Document (1985-90) pronounced a greater involvement of the voluntary sector particularly in the process of rural development. The government helped voluntary organisations in successive plan periods in the rural development programmes. The government provided funds to voluntary organisation for rural development through People's Action for Development of India (PADI). The foundation of CAPART (1886) was another milestone in the history of voluntarism in India and it became the supreme developmental agency for voluntary action in rural development. Since then, there has been an unprecedented growth of voluntary organisations in the country working in rural development programmes. During the 1990s, with the growing recognition and support of the government and the international donor agencies, the increasing volume of funding by them and the changing paradigm of the concept of development with more emphasis towards people's involvement in various development projects have contributed to a more rapidly growing voluntary sector. In fact, voluntarism in India has undergone rapid revolutionary changes and the voluntary sector has become a distinct third sector in the civil society. The GO-NGO partnerships got an upward thrust in this period; NGOs' focus is more on Self Help Groups, Micro Credit and Livelihood. NGO participation is ensured in policy formation and programme implementation.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, on the eve of the country's independence, said that the state would strive to eliminate poverty, ignorance, disease and inequality of opportunity (Rao, D.N. 1999), hence started Five Year Plans. During the First Five Year Plan, Central Welfare Board was established by the Central Government under the Ministry of Social Welfare with the objective of providing financial help, coordination, training, technical guidance and

consultancy to the NGOs involved in activities for the upliftment of women and children. The Central Social Welfare Board established state level Social Welfare Advisory Boards in order to reach out to the local NGOs (Lalitha, 1975). The National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development (NIPCCD) were established to promote NGOs and their main aim was to provide training, support NGOs activities and promote liaison between government and NGOs (Garain, 1994). First Five Year Plan allocated four crores of rupees of the voluntary sector (Sarkar, 2005). During the Third Five Year Plan the National Advisory Committee for Public Cooperation (NACPC) was formed and as the public cooperation got institutionalized, NACPC steadily lost its credibility in the eyes of small and comparatively new NGOs (Roy, S. 1987)

In the Sixth Five Year Plan, NIPCCD changed its focus and became the apex body for train the functionaries and to coordinate, monitor, evaluate the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme of Government of India. From the middle of the Sixth Plan, numbers of initiatives were taken and consultative group of voluntary agencies in each state under the chairmanship of either the Chief Secretary or the Development Commissioner were established (Garain, 1994). In the Seventh Plan, for the first time, NGOs were given the freedom to plan their own schemes and follow the methodology they thought best (Roy, S. 1987). In the Eight Five Year Plan, it was proposed that the grants-in-aid would be given to the voluntary sectors for innovative experimental schemes. In the field of health and family welfare, NGOs were expected to help in raising and promoting the small family norm by means of motivation and education of women, provision of prenatal and postnatal care, etc. (Sarkar, 2005). During the Ninth Five Year Plan, it has been realized that NGOs are actually complementary in nature. Both the sectors have their own strategies and strong points. Both the sectors are to work on a reciprocal basis (Sarkar, 2005).

Not only the history, but it is very difficult to draw exact number of NGOs which are operating in Indian soil. PRIA (Participatory Research in Asia) estimated that there are around 1.2 million NGOs working in India. These groups involve as many as 19.4 million people, many of whom work on a

voluntary basis. This is equivalent to 2.7 million paid employees and 3.4 million full-time volunteers. The PRIA surveys shows that there were more voluntary sector institutions in rural areas than in urban areas. According to the source, in India, 16.6% NGOs are private funding organisations, 32.4% are government aided ones and 51% are self-generated ones (S S Srivastava, Rajesh Tandon, 2005).

In May 2007, the Government of India has approved the National Policy on the Voluntary Sector as the first step in a process of evolve a new working relationship between the Government and the voluntary organisations and the main objectives of the policy is to-

1. Create an enabling environment for voluntary organisations that stimulates their enterprise and effectiveness and safeguards their autonomy.
2. Enable voluntary organisations to legitimately mobilise necessary local and foreign financial services.
3. Identify systems by which the government may work together with the voluntary organisations, based on the principles of mutual trust and respect, and with shared responsibility.
4. Encouraged voluntary organisations to adopt transparent, accountable systems of governance and management.

Through the Policy, the government commits to encouraging, enabling, and empowering and independent, creative and effective voluntary sector with diverse form and functions, so that it can contribute to the social, cultural, and economic advancement of the people of India. It recognises that voluntary sectors has contributed significantly to finding innovative solutions to poverty, deprivation, discrimination, and exclusion, through awareness raising, social mobilisation service delivery, training, research, and advocacy.

2.8 Table No. 2.1 : Evolution of NGOs in India

Period	Activities
Pre Independence	Social welfare, Constructive work (inspired by Gandhian philosophy) very much in line with independence movement.
1950-1970	Social welfare, Govt. funded and managed NGO like Khadi Industries. India's five year's development plans came into existence, Most of the development works were rested with NGO's.
1970-1990	Civil Society space started increasing from 70s, NGO's started highlighting that why govt. programme not yielding positive results for poor and marginalized, presented new model for development with people's participation. With this new model NGO's covered vast program areas like education, primary health care, drinking water, sanitation, small irrigation, forest regeneration, tribal development, women's development, child labour, pollution safety etc. later on many of these models were included in govt programme and policies.
1990-till date	GO-NGO partnership got a boost in this period; NGO focus is more on Self Help Groups, Micro Credit and Livelihood. NGO participation is ensured in policy formation and programme implementation.

(Source: (Source: PRIA, 2002)

2.9 Table No.2.2: Basic Facts on NGOs in India

Total Number of NGO	1.2 million
Rural Based	53%
Urban Based	47%
Unregistered	49.6%

(Source: (Source: PRIA, 2002)

The above table shows that 53% NGOs in India are rural based. The most surprising fact is that 49.6% NGOs in India are unregistered.

2.10 Table No. 2.3: Estimated Number of Non-Profit Organisations

States	Rural	Urban	Total	% of Rural
Maharashtra	49399	46602	96002	51.5
Meghalaya	8407	350	8757	96.00
Tamil Nadu	46070	42619	88689	51.95
West Bengal	54970	32116	87086	63.12
India	627850	554541	1182391	53.1

(Source: PRIA, 2003)

India has possibly the largest number of active non-government, non-profit organisations in the world. There has been a sharp increase in the number of new NGOs in the past decade in India. According to a government study, there were only 1.44 lakh registered societies till 1970. The maximum increase in the number of registrations happened after 2000. A recent study commissioned by the government showed that there are about 3.3 million NGOs in India by the end of 2009 i.e., one NGO for less than an average of 400 Indians (J. Mathew & J. Verghese, 2011).

2.11 Table No. 2.4: Non-Profit Organisations in Different states

Sl. No.	States	Total (in Lakhs)
1	Maharashtra	4.8
2	Andhra Pradesh	4.6
3	Uttar Pradesh	4.3
4	Kerala	3.3
5	Karnataka	1.9
6	Gujarat	1.7
7	West Bengal	1.7
8	Tamil Nadu	1.4
9	Orissa	1.3
10	Rajasthan	1

Source: Yojana, November, 2011

2.12 Table No. 2.5: Size of NGOs in India

Category of staff	Percentage of NGOs
One or less paid staff	73.4
Between 2-5	13.3
Between 6-10	4.8
Above ten paid staff	8.5

(Source: PRIA, 2002)

It is clear from the above table that 73.4% NGOs in India have only one or less paid staff. Only 8.5% NGOs in India they are carrying out their activities with more than ten staff.

2.13 Table No. 2.6: Sources of Funding in India

Sources	Percentage of Total Fund (app.)
Local (peoples and Corporate Contribution)	80%
Government	13%
International	7%

(Source: (Source: PRIA, 2002)

It is very clear from the above table 80% funding in India are coming from the contribution of the local people and corporate sector. The contributions of governmental and international bodies are 13% and 7% respectively.

2.14 Table No. 2.7: Types of Funding in India

Types	Percentage of Total Fund (app.)
Self-Generated	51%
Loans	7.1%
Grants	29%
Donations	12.9%

(Source: PRIA, 2002)

In India 51% fund are self-generated. Loans and grants contribute 7.1% and

29% respectively. In India 12.9% funds are generated from the different sources of donations

2.15 Table No. 2.8: Dominant activities in India

Type of Activities	Percentage of NGOs
Religious	26.5%
Community/Social Service	21.3%
Education	20.4%
Sports/Culture	17.9%
Health	6.6%
Others	7.5%

(Source: PRIA, 2002)

The different activities of NGOs include religious, social service, education, culture, health and so on. In In 26.5% NGOs are doing different activities in the field of religion. Social service and educational activities include 21.3% and 20.4% respectively. In India 6.6% NGOs are carrying out their activities in the health field.

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