Chapter VI

Conclusion
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CONCLUSION

This study on “democracy and civil society in Kyrgyzstan; relevance of Indian experience” highlights, how democratic process in Kyrgyzstan has helped the civil society to grow. On the other hand civil society is furnishing necessary input for the well functioning of nascent democratic system in Kyrgyzstan. The present study focuses attention on the embryonic civil society emerging in Kyrgyzstan within the liberal democratic framework it adopted since it’s independence on 31st August, 1991.

Democracy is attached with certain values which are very important for the state and the people at large. The underlying idea of ‘democracy’ encompasses different values such as liberty, equality, fraternity, justice etc. These together constitute the bedrock of democracy. Now a days, democracy means the sovereign power resides in the people, irrespective of religion, caste, class, creed, colour, sex, education etc. They have an inalienable right to rule over themselves or to be ruled in the way they like.

The democratic idea has a sweeping influence in recent times in Central Asia where the countries were previously under authoritarian dispensation. The Central Asian countries which were under the Soviet Union before 1991 and now, known as C.I.S. Countries are passing through a transition. It is a transition from communism to democracy, from communist political system to a liberal political system, from state controlled economy to market oriented economy. Kyrgyzstan is no exception to it.

Civil society is the voluntarily organized self-generating autonomous institution acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, preferences and ideas, to exchange information, to achieve collective goals, to make demands on the state, to improve the structure and functioning of the state. It is seen that, in ‘mature’ democracies the relationship between state and civil society is often mutually reinforcing.

The role of civil society in a transitional Kyrgyz society is very important because the newly adopted liberal democratic political system is not strong enough to face the crisis of leadership and legitimacy after decades of authoritarian rule during the former Soviet Union.
Here civil society guides and creates a conducive atmosphere for the inexperienced general people, simultaneously legitimizing the democratic governance of the country. Here social organizations and networks provide a vital channel of communication between the individual and the state, and those involved in social activism are drawn into the process of policy formation and political activism. Kyrgyzstan being a democratic welfare state provides a framework within which civil society can flourish. It has also helped a more comprehensive set of conventions and practices which allow associations and groups to flourish. The political elite led by first president Askar Akaev and many others show their tolerant attitudes and acceptance towards the legitimacy of social organizations and associations functioning in Kyrgyzstan.

The genesis of democracy and civil society in Kyrgyzstan has their roots in the historic past. Multi-ethnicity and nomadism had been the very nature of Kyrgyz society. Some Kyrgyz scholars like Rakhat Achylova say that 'democracy' and 'civil society' had long roots in cultural heritage based on kinship and communal way of life of Kyrgyz people. But many other scholars observe that 'democracy' and 'civil society' in true modern sense did not exist in the past history of Kyrgyzstan. It took a long process for the people of Kyrgyzstan to taste the fruit of modern democracy.

The Tsarist incorporation gave the Kyrgyz people a new pattern of agriculture and settled farming. The decades long Soviet rule gave the Kyrgyz people some sort of training for political participation in the communist system, though it was completely different from the Western model of liberal democracy. The Soviet era bestowed a separate identity to Kyrgyz people by drawing the boundary of Kyrgyzstan. By doing so, it consolidated the Kyrgyz unity created a ‘we’ feeling among them which enhanced the prestige of the Kyrgyz people.

The Soviet legacy had a varied influence on Kyrgyz socio-cultural, economic and political life, both positive and negative. A new stage of economic and cultural life of Kyrgyz people begun. There had been extensive national development, an increased standard of living for all layers of society, the growth of villages, towns, cities, modern agricultural and industrial development, increased livestock production and education and the flourishing of state sponsored Kyrgyz culture, including the arts and written literature.
However, during the Soviet rule Kyrgyzstan remained dependent on the centralized power of the Communist Party, its ideology and the totalitarian Soviet political system. As Kyrgyz nomads were passive in politics and prior to the Soviet rule there was nearly non-existence of any concrete civil and political institutions, the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan was mostly dominated in early Soviet years by ethnic Russians. The national delimitation policy of Soviet Union created the new borders dividing the people into separate ethnic groups.

Under the totalitarian Soviet rule, there were large scale disruption of socio-religious, cultural, political and economic life of the Kyrgyz people. Traditional Kyrgyz society was replaced by a different collective form of existence. The establishment of small communal farms, which in the beginning coincided with the former rural and tribal communities eventually led in the 1960’s to their amalgamation into larger collective farms (Kolkhozes) and state farms (Sovkhozes). Private property was liquidated; all wealth was concentrated in the highly centralized state. Nomadism was forcibly replaced by settlement. Islam as a religion came under the general fire directed against supernatural beliefs. Education in mother tongue and the use of the Arabic script were considered anti-revolutionary. Latin script was introduced in place of Arabic. Later Cyrillic script replaced Latin. These developments brought drastic structural and psychological changes, threatening to undermine the Kyrgyz’s cultural and spiritual life.

After coming to helm Gorbachev, General Secretary of Soviet Communist Party declared the economic restructuring as a priority before political reforms. But, he was not able to make real economic reforms till the end of 1985. On the other hand his policy of ‘Glasnost’ allowed greater liberty to the people through all types of political and social rights. Numerous discussions were held relating to past Soviet actions, on their rights and status. Citizens under Soviet rule were compared with the citizens of other democratic countries of the world. The first two years of reform were spoiled by Gorbachev in turning the entire country into a debating club. Freedom of speech and the press, the right to assemble and demonstrations etc., within short time put tremendous pressure on the political system which was functioning under the controls of C.P.S.U. over all spheres of life. The reforms eroded the authority and monopoly of the party and the debates delegitimised the political system which automatically led to the disintegration of Soviet Union without creating any political alternative.
Failure of Gorbachev’s policies of ‘Perestroika’ ( Restructuring) and ‘Glasnosts’ (Openness) paved the way for the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union in the year 1991. Kyrgyzstan declared it’s independence on 31st, August, 1991, thereby it emerged as a sovereign entity in the comity of nation.

Historically, till the collapse of Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan had remained as an inactive entity from the view point of modern democracy and civil society, which this study reveals is a relatively new one and started to take their roots only after independence. Kyrgyzstan adopted its own constitution on 5th May 1993. The Constitution provides for a secular and democratic political system, guaranteeing economic, political, legal and social equality to all its citizens, irrespective of ethnicity, religion, language, creed, colour, etc., thereby creating enough space for the development of democracy and a vibrant civil society in Kyrgyzstan.

Free and fair election is the main instrument of popular control in a representative democracy. Regular elections make the politicians responsible to the people who are the real power in a democratic country. In Kyrgyzstan free and fair elections are held on the basis of universal suffrage Kyrgyzstan Constitution ensures a free and fair election to the office of the President, to the Parliament and to the bodies of self-government. There is a Central Election Commission in Kyrgyzstan which is formed by parliament, composed of non-partisan individuals and in charge of supervising the entire electoral process. The Parliamentary and Presidential election held in 1995 and 2000 respectively has shown wide participation by the general public.

Political pluralism is one of the most essential features of modern democracy. In Kyrgyzstan there are many political parties to articulate and aggregate the demands of various sections of the society. The presence of political parties like Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan (P.K.K.), National Unity Democratic Movement, Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (S.D.P.K.), Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan (D.D.K.), Asaba, Democratic Party of Free Kyrgyzstan (E.R.K.), Father Land (Ata-Meken) and many others are strong evidences of multiparty system in Kyrgyzstan. All the political parties are immensely contributing for the healthy and smooth functioning of democratic political system in Kyrgyzstan.

The existence of various organizations and associations and their constructive role in shaping democracy and civil society in Kyrgyzstan cannot be undermined. Though
independent N.G.O’s and associations have taken new root in Kyrgyzstan, but these have been well protected under the constitution of the land. Their activities have been spread to almost all spheres of social, cultural, economic, educational and religious life of the people. They are committed for the all-round development and upliftment of the people of Kyrgyzstan.

Media and Press are regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy. These stand as the custodian of civil, political and other rights of the citizens. Kyrgyzstan being a democratic republic allowed the media and presses to play their effective role in shaping the destiny of the country. The “Law on Mass Media” adopted in 1992 in Kyrgyzstan, was an important landmark in the history of Kyrgyzstan. It opened the way for the liberty of press and media. At present many newspapers and magazines are published in Kyrgyz, Russian, Uzbek, German and Dungan languages. There are many state owned and independent TV and Radio stations in Kyrgyzstan which are bringing the Kyrgyz people nearer to modern ideas of rights and liberty, democracy and liberalism.

In Kyrgyzstan rights of the citizens are protected. The state is not only concerned about the Kyrgyz people but is also equally concerned with the ethnic minority rights. Kyrgyzstan is a land of many ethnic groups, like Kyrgyz, Russian, Uzbek, Ukrainian, German, Tatar, Kazakh, Dungan, Yukagir, etc. The constitution of Kyrgyzstan guarantees basic human rights and freedom to every citizens. Article 15, of the Kyrgyz constitution which also deals with citizenship rights, gives adequate protection to minority cultural rights. It also says that all persons in the Kyrgyz Republic shall be equal before the law and court. No one may be exposed to any discrimination, infringement of rights and freedoms, on the basis of origin, sex, race, nationality, language, creed, political or religious convictions or by any other public or personal conditions or circumstances. First President Askar Akaev was also committed to build a healthy multi-ethnic Kyrgyzstan where every ethnic minority group can feel secured and participate in the mainstream of the nation. The Kyrgyz government is also adopting various favourable policies for the development of ethnic minorities.

After independence, Kyrgyzstan has adopted the policies of economic liberalization and privatization. Economy is the backbone of every country without which a country can not perform it’s obligations towards its citizens. So, a healthy economy can provide a healthy atmosphere for the political system and civil society of the country. Kyrgyzstan’s shift from
a state regulated economy to a market oriented economy gave people the right to ownership of private property. It decentralized the economic decision making process from the centre to the regional and local level. Now, the local Akims are exercising great deal of liberty at the local level with regard to economic reforms. The economic transition has attracted foreign investment, private entrepreneurship and freedom in economic decision making process of Kyrgyzstan. Thus, political democracy is moving side by side with economic liberalisation in Kyrgyzstan.

Being a modern democratic welfare state, Kyrgyzstan provides a wide range of basic services to its citizens, especially to the poor, orphans and old aged persons. Articles 26, 27, 29, 30 and 31 of the Kyrgyz constitution deal with many welfare measures to be taken by the state for the all round development of individual and society. These articles basically deal with orphans, old aged persons, poor, labourers, so far their material assistance, pension, wage and working conditions are concerned. Articles 32, 33, and 34 deal with education, housing and health respectively. The welfare measures taken by the Kyrgyz government for the poor, down trodden and disadvantage groups of the society has helped to make their life secured and dignified and enable them to participate in the nation building process of the country.

The political system under Soviet regime was basically a closed system and there was no scope for the international community to have any impact on the internal administration of the Soviet Union. The unexpected disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the independent statehood granted to Kyrgyzstan provided opportunities to foreign countries especially Western countries like U.S.A., U.K., Germany, France and other countries like Japan, France and Korea to invest capital in the economic reform process of Kyrgyzstan, and thereby could influence the socio-economic and political policy of Kyrgyzstan. There are large numbers of internationally based non-governmental organization (N.G.O’s) to exercise considerable influence on the development of independent political organizations. These are providing financial support, leadership training, creating awareness about human rights among the people there by integrating the people of Kyrgyzstan with the noble ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity etc. which are the roots of democracy and civil society.
In spite of the existence of various favourable factors mentioned above it cannot be said that
democracy and civil society are smoothly functioning in Kyrgyzstan. There are many
constraints and challenges on their ways.

The disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 and subsequent formation of a loose alliance of
former republics in the form of Commonwealth of Independent States created a host of
problems for Kyrgyzstan. Having no experience of managing an independent state, the
Kyrgyz leadership faced challenges like regionalism, inter-ethnic conflicts, rise of Islamic
fundamentalism, criminalization and corruption, economic decline, refugees and security
issues etc.

Under the Soviet Union regionalism was suppressed to a large extent. But now, in
independent Kyrgyzstan the growth of regionalism is clearly visible. Historically the country
is divided between the north and the south. While the north is relatively well off and
responding quickly towards economic reforms, the south is marked by relatively, more
backwardness and inclined towards traditional identities. It is seen that southern region is the
breeding-ground of Islamic fundamentalism in Kyrgyzstan. The central leaders have to
appease the regional leaders without whom they can not carry forward important policies of
the government. Regionalism, tribalism, family and clan identities are important challenges
to the unity and stability of the political system in Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyzstan is a land of many ethnic groups. It is composed of Kyrgyz, Russian, Uzbek,
Ukrainian, German, Tatar, Tajik etc. They have made Kyrgyz society much more pluralistic
and tolerant. But in the past few years some ethnic conflicts have occurred in Kyrgyzstan.
Economic decline and recession in Kyrgyzstan, growth of nationalism, adoption of new
language law, citizenship law, land ownership law, a spurt in cultural and religious
revivalism and the break out of ethnic riots in Osh (1990), created a psychological
atmosphere of uncertainty resulting in mass exodus of Russians and other minority groups
from Kyrgyzstan. The ethnic riots and the consequence followed from them have put
question mark on the functioning of democratic political system and civil society in
Kyrgyzstan.

The rapid increase of the activities of Islamic fundamentalists, especially in southern part of
Kyrgyzstan has been a great concern for the Kyrgyz leadership. In recent years Islam as a
religious tradition and a form of cultural identity has acquired new meaning in Kyrgyzstan. It has taken the shape of religious extremism in the name of Islam. Some extremist organizations in Central Asia, i.e. Islamic movement of Uzbekistan (I.M.U.), Hizbut-Tahrir are spreading religious extremism in Kyrgyzstan, thereby, causing communal tension, social and political instability in Kyrgyzstan. It has also put great challenges on the Kyrgyz leadership and their commitment of a secular and democratic Kyrgyzstan.

Though Kyrgyzstan was committed to become a corruption free, democratic country with transparent economy in early years of independence. Later on it failed to progress much towards this end, because politicians and bureaucrats misused their power and authority. Corruption and criminalization grew at an alarming rate. Many high level politicians and bureaucrats were found to be involved in corruption scandals. The reform process also helped many of them to accumulate huge black money. The general and presidential elections held in 2000 revealed the extent of criminalization, corruption and nepotism in the politics of Kyrgyzstan. Such phenomena are putting limitations upon the democratic political set up and civic society in Kyrgyzstan.

After independence Kyrgyzstan followed free market-oriented led reforms. It introduced its own currency, Som, in May 1993 and implemented privatization programme in 1994. After some initial booms, the economy subsequently declined. The process of privatization was not transparent. The slow down of Kyrgyz economy followed by decrease in production, high inflation, mass unemployment, corruption and criminalization. Acute poverty has provided impetus to the growth of regional, ethnic and religious cleavages. Falling economy has, thus become a major obstacle to the growth of democracy and civil society in Kyrgyzstan.

In the initial years of independence then President Akaev was committed for strengthening of democracy and civil society in Kyrgyzstan. During these years he visualized that simultaneous development of political, economic and social reform can be achieved. But when his reform programme was challenged by the communists and other nationalist groups, he wanted more power to push forward the reform process in 1994. The political development after mid-1994 showed a trend towards authoritarianism. He took many drastic actions which were seen as anti-democratic and authoritarian by many observers. He disbanded the parliament, forced the resignation of the government, cowed the judiciary,
shut down the opposition press, set up a new electoral commission and announced new parliamentary elections in 1995. The general and presidential elections held in 1995 and in 2000 respectively, were characterised by infringements of the freedom of the media and intimidation of opposition leaders. Some political observers are of the opinion that problems like growing regionalism in politics, resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism, economic recession and growing unemployment are influencing the democratic development of Kyrgyzstan, creating conditions for the political elite to justify increasing authoritarianism in Kyrgyz politics. But this trend has undermined the idea that Kyrgyzstan is the "Island of Democracy" in Central Asia.

Kyrgyzstan also faced the problem of refugees. Thousands of refugees are stated to have fled to Kyrgyzstan from neighbouring countries. Majority of them were from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Many among refugees were spreading Islamic extremism, creating law and order problems, and further intensifying socio-economic and political problems due to lack of shelter and sanitation, poverty, drugs addiction, drugs trafficking, prostitution, and inter-ethnic tensions etc.

Besides, these, other important problems for Kyrgyzstan are border and security issues. It has border disputes with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and China. The rise of Islamic extremism especially in neighbouring Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, cross-border terrorism and drugs trafficking etc. have seriously threatened the integrity and sovereignty of Kyrgyzstan. The role of China, Russia and later U.S.A. has intensified in the Central Asian regions. The terrorist attack in the United States on 11 September 2001 and the subsequent U.S. campaign against the Taliban (in Afghanistan) in October 2001 changed the entire scenario in the Central Asia. Kyrgyzstan also allowed the anti-terrorist coalition forces to be stationed in Bishkek’s Manas international airport. Even after the ouster of the Talibans in Afghanistan, the U.S. shows no sign of withdrawing from Central Asia. It has taken the plea that it would prevent a possible return of Taliban and Al-Qaeda and other Islamist extremists in the region. But the larger aim of U.S. is a permanent presence in Central Asia by ensuring it’s access to energy resources and strengthening it’s foothold in the backyard of Russia and China. Many political observers visualize that the long term presence of U.S. forces in Central Asia is not likely to contribute to regional stability in the long run. So, Kyrgyzstan is not out of that problem.
It is seen that challenges and limitation before Kyrgyzstan are many but these are not beyond solutions. In a transitional society like Kyrgyzstan, development of civil society in a short span of time is a quite difficult task. The steps taken by former President Akaev are inadequate as civil society cannot be imposed but should come from within. It is also a long term process.

Like Kyrgyzstan India is a multi-religious, multi-linguistic, and multi-cultural country. Like Kyrgyzstan it has also many constraints and limitations in the functioning of democracy and civil society. But inspite of all constraints India has emerged as a vibrant democratic country whose experience has larger relevance for the multi-cultural, multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic and multi-religious Kyrgyz society. That is why India has been taken in the study as a reference model for Kyrgyzstan to follow.

India is an established democracy. The development of civil society in India throws many fascinating insights which can help the newly independent countries of former USSR in their transition to democracy. Kyrgyzstan, one such post-Soviet country, can learn much from the experience of India.

India presents a unique case so far as democracy and civil society are concerned. Though the institutions of civil society existed in ancient India, it remained dormant over a long period of time. Gradually it came into prominence during the British regime when different associations came into being. After independence it’s momentum became very wide-spread. The legacy of civil society got more reinforced when the constitution of independent India came into force. The constitution of India unequivocally focuses on individual rights and guarantees liberty, equality, fraternity and justice.

In fact there is enough scope for democracy and civil society to play it’s due role in India. Over the years India has developed into a largest functioning democracy in the world. The harmonious existence of diversity in terms of religion, language, caste, ethnicity and region over a long period of time is a pointer to the successful functioning of democracy. In this context, the extent of civil society in the sphere of politics, social movement etc. also makes it a unique nation among democracies.
India as a democratic society allows fair political participation. Irrespective of religion, caste, region every citizen in the country can play his or her active role in politics. In this sense political process in the country has become more democratic. This has helped people over the years to associate themselves with the political process. Regular elections help in this regard where people exercise their sovereign rights to choose their representatives. The existence of a multi-party system incorporates people with different ideology, opinion and programme etc. Though India does have a Hindu majority population, its liberal polity has prevented the minority groups from being overshadowed in the country, who are also well represented in different fora of the country. Past and present experience shows that people from religious minority groups have occupied even the highest position of the country.

As stated earlier, India is a multi-linguistic country. There are as many as twenty one recognized languages which have been included in the 8th schedule of the constitution. Though Hindi is spoken by a significant portion of Indian population it does not hamper other regional languages to develop.

Other important aspect of Indian democracy is secularism. Here state does not interfere in the affairs of religion, which also implies that state is not supposed to give patronage to any particular religion. This enables India to develop into a multi-religious society with equal respect and tolerance among the different religions.

Mass Media which is considered as the fourth pillar of democracy has occupied a prominent place in India. As a tool of public opinion it has developed into a vibrant mechanism for providing free and fair, impartial and reliable information to the people of the country.

The Constitution of India has made various provisions for the preservation of political, social, economic, cultural and religious rights of her citizens. It has given legal equality to every citizens irrespective of ethnic, religious, caste, creed and colour identities. The provisions of Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of States Policy have made political democracy and social democracy go side by side in a harmonious way in India.

The independent and impartial nature of judiciary in India is considered the soul of democracy, guardian of the constitution and protector of the rights of the individuals. A novel system has come out in the judicial process of India, which is called judicial review. It
means when an arbitrary law is passed by the parliament or the state legislature, the judiciary has the power to review and determine validity of the law. In recent years, the concept of 'judicial activism' has also emerged in India. Now a days, the judiciary has shown more activism starting from legal, social, political, religious issues to scientific and environmental issues.

India also has made efforts to create a welfare state, committed to the development and social security of its people in general and vulnerable sections in particular. It has made various economic, social and political provisions for the development of the disadvantage groups and weaker sections of society like, women, children and old aged persons etc, so that they would not be deprived of their basic human needs and rights.

Over the years a large number of associations have come up to play their due role in the Indian society. Many voluntary associations are now actively associated both in cultural and development sphere whose primary concern is to penetrate the areas where government is not able to do things effectively.

This is not to say that there is no constraint to democracy and civil society in India. Inspite of all the constraints posed by religious, castes, languages, ethnicity etc India has emerged as a vibrant democratic country whose experience has larger relevance for Kyrgyzstan.

The proposed study has dealt with the evolution and development of the institutions of civil society and democracy in Kyrgyzstan and India tracing from the history of both the countries prior to their independence. But the major emphasis has been made in the study of these institutions after independence. The proposed study has also examined the essential factors conducive for the smooth functioning of democracy and civil society in both the countries. The study has covered the challenges and limitations like language, religion, ethno-political, economic and social factors in the way of democracy and civil society in both the countries. Besides, attempt has been made to see how far Indian experience can be helpful to Kyrgyz society, which is also a country of diversity.

From the beginning, three hypotheses have formed the basis of the research. The first is that "As Indian experience shows, the existence of a democratic state provides a conducive environment for the smooth functioning of civil society."
After independence, India adopted a sovereign, secular, democratic republic. Its constitution has made various provisions for strengthening of democracy which has ultimately created a conducive atmosphere for the smooth functioning of civil society. In a totalitarian or authoritarian country, independent ideas, movements and formation of various associations are suppressed. The Indian democratic state has given enough space for political, social, cultural and linguistic pluralism to blossom. Regular elections, existence of multi-party system, free media and press, constitutional guarantee of political, civil, economic, cultural and religious rights, existence of independent and impartial judiciary are making the Indian democracy more vibrant which has ultimately provided a conducive environment for the growth of civil society. Since India's independence from 1947 till today many associations and voluntary organizations have been playing very constructive role for making Indian democracy more successful. When there is national crisis, the civil society in India has stood firmly with the state as it happened at the time of war with China and Pakistan. But when the state encroaches upon the sphere of the civil society, it threatens the legitimacy of the leadership and of the state, as was experienced during the Emergency declared in 1975. Excepting few occasions, Indian experience shows, democracy and civil society can flourish side by side. Civil society can smoothly grow within a democratic state and vice versa.

The second hypothesis is that “there are socio-cultural, economic and political constraints which stand in the way of effective functioning of democracy and civil society.” As we have examined the nature of socio-cultural, economic and political constraints and challenges in both the countries i.e. in Kyrgyzstan and in India are strong obstacles in the way of effective functioning of democracy and civil society in both the countries.

So far as Kyrgyzstan is concerned inter-regional rivalry, inter-ethnic conflict, growth of Islamic fundamentalism, economic recession, growth of authoritarianism, refugee problem, border and security issues etc are the major constrains.

As far as India is concerned, regionalism, casteism, communalism, corruption, criminalization and cross-border terrorism are the major impediments.
The third hypothesis is that "the institutions of civil society in both the countries are at different stages of development due to historical reasons, yet Indian experience has lot of relevance for Kyrgyzstan."

In the context of India the institution of civil society is very old. It was present as early as the Vedic period. It remained dormant over a long period of time especially during the mediaeval period. But under the British rule gradually various associations came into being. After independence the institutions of civil society got reinforced. Presently, there are multitudes of associations working throughout the country. They are helping the democratic political system of India to flourish.

So far as Kyrgyzstan is concerned the idea of democracy and civil society came to be accepted soon after the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991. Since there was no freedom movement, Kyrgyzstan did not experience growth of civil society networks prior to independence. Prior to that under the Tsarist rule and even during the Soviet-period there was no scope for Kyrgyz people to develop institutions of civil society. But in case of India, independence was the fruit of many years continuous struggle by its people. Even prior to India's independence the British had generally made the Indian people acquainted with various democratic and civil institutions. India is today the largest functional democratic country in the world. It has acquired a vast experience since independence, whereas the idea of democracy and civil society in the context of Kyrgyzstan is relatively a new one. Both the countries are at different stages of development due to historical reasons. In spite of vast differences in terms of maturity in democracy and civil society institutions, Kyrgyzstan has some similarities with India, in terms of democratic political set up and pluralistic society. The problems for both the countries are many. However, despite many problems, India has emerged as a vibrant democratic country whose experience will have great relevance for a multi-cultural, multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic, multi-regional and multi-religious Kyrgyz society.