Chapter - 3

VOLUNTARY AGENCIES FOR WOMEN:

TYPES AND OBJECTIVES

Voluntary agencies are the sheet anchor of human society, and may well be described as important catalysts of social change.1 The role and realities of voluntary action in social welfare have differed from generation to generation, and from place to place.2 'The missionary seal of religious organizations, the commitment of government organizations to the public interest, the profit-making urge in business, the altruism of "the social superiors", and the motive of self-help among fellow men, all reflect in voluntarism'.3 Referring to the diversity of voluntary agencies, Etsioni observed that there was hardly a goal, 'from watching birds ... to spacing birds ... which has not been pursued by some association'.4

1. Milton Esman observed that three advantages flowed from the involvement of voluntary agencies in the implementation of development programmes: (1) a sense of solidarity (2) opportunity to interact with agencies of development/government, and (3) participation in decision-making. See 'Politics of Development Administration' in John Montgomery and William J. Siffin (eds.), Approaches to Development: Politics, Administration and Change (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p.149.


Voluntary action projects the social milieu. In times of yore, men who asked Cain's question, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' perhaps thought only of close relatives and near neighbours. The concept has changed since then. Earlier, the focus was on the individual, or at the most on the family, but now it has shifted to social groups, or to mankind as a whole. Voluntary work is no longer a matter of providing succour to the socially or economically backward or physically disabled persons. It has come to be interpreted as an organized attempt at helping the rehabilitation of the individual needing assistance in his readjustment to his surroundings, and his integration into society. There was a time when voluntary service was synonymous with honorary or paid service, and when the paid worker enjoyed scant respect. But with new social awareness, the expression 'voluntary' has come to be used for organized social work under private management.

Since life has become more complex these days, man has come to experience a crisis not only in his outward relationships but also in the entire field of his 'thinking, feeling, acting and reacting'. This has led to an increase in social work activities. Although voluntary efforts continue to be identified primarily with activities stemming from good will towards human beings, there has been a clear shift in emphasis 'from the religious motivation and philosophic thinking to scientific approach'. Two factors are said

to have contributed to the change in the role of social work 'from an act of amateur individual charity to the science of a professional group'. The first is the phenomenon of poverty amidst plenty, and the second is the spread of democracy laying emphasis upon respect for the dignity of each citizen, and equality of opportunity for all. These factors have led to 'the multiplication of social work agencies and professional social workers who are employed to provide statutory and voluntary social services as a matter of right to the people in need of such type of service'.

Voluntary action, says Lord Beveridge, is an action outside each citizen's home for improving the conditions of life for him and for his fellows. It is that action which is not directed or controlled by the state. 

Of late, the term 'voluntary' has come to be accepted as more accurately descriptive of certain services and social service agencies than the earlier term 'private'. It now signifies 'the voluntary associations of citizens to provide services, to secure contributions in support thereof, and to effect legal incorporation to fulfil societally approved purposes'.

To some, voluntary agencies mean organisations of volunteers; to others, it is made up of non-officials who raise voluntary resources, both human and material, in the service of the common people. The *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* describes


a voluntary association as an organised group of persons (1) that is formed in order to further some common interest of its members; (2) in which membership is voluntary in the sense that it is neither mandatory nor acquired through birth; (3) that exists independently of the state.\textsuperscript{12} To these characteristics a few more can be added. It is an agency (1) in which social work constitutes the central professional discipline of those employed; (2) that carries out its functions through an organisation that includes a governing body of citizens, self-selected or chosen by the membership, or representatives of special community interests; (3) that may receive financial support from various sources including the general public (contributions), selected groups of contributors (bequests), earnings (fees), and the government (tax funds) that operates in a geographic area defined for its specific purposes, and registered under prescribed acts.\textsuperscript{13}

In organisation theory, voluntary organisations have been characterised as non-authoritarian, commitment-producing entities that rely basically on the normal and idealistic values shared by the organisation members.\textsuperscript{14} D. Paul Chowdhury holds that voluntary action, by its nature, is local. Apart from the benefit of group thinking, an agency system helps in pooling the resources


\textsuperscript{14} Mohit Bhattacharya, 'Voluntary Associations, Development and the State' in The Indian Journal of Public Administration (special number) op. cit., p. 383.
and efforts of many individuals for the utilisation of community's resources.  

Sometimes a national or state level voluntary organisation is established to work for the welfare of a certain group of people, and this is followed by the opening of branches or local units of these organisations in different parts of the country.  

Voluntary organisations are variously classified: as expressive and instrumental by Jacoby and Babchuk, as majoral, minoral and medial by Sherwood Fox, as Corporate-type and Federation-type (esp. with regard to religious organisations) by David L. Sills, and as eight-fold in nature by Wright and Hyman. The classifications have been made on a variety of bases: (i) their size, (ii) their internal political structure, (iii) their independence or dependence on outside control, (iv) their societal functions, (v) sources of their support, (vi) their location (vii) the class and characteristics of their members, (viii) intimacy of contact among members, (ix) bases of the incentives - material, solidarity, or purposive, (x) beneficiary of the association's activities.


Whatever be their form, voluntary agencies have traditionally been pioneers in identifying needs, experimenting with methods of meeting these needs, and educating public opinion. It has also been argued that such organizations are flexible, able to undertake new work or use new methods without seeking fresh statutory powers and are able to concern themselves with minority causes in a way which would be difficult for government bodies with their strict rules of public accountability.  

The question is, how does a voluntary agency differ from a public agency? The former results from a natural impulse to help the aggrieved; the latter is the outgrowth of a welfare state system. The former usually has a humble origin; the latter is started amidst much fanfare and publicity. A voluntary agency is governed by a board which provides it a structural basis and an ethical code. The governmental agency, on the other hand, is managed in accordance with state laws and regulations. The former derives its financial basis both from public contributions and government-aid; the latter depends entirely on tax funds. The former is personalistic in character, and susceptible to modification or adaptation; the latter has an impersonal character, and sometime becomes a victim of bureaucratic apathy or bungling.


21. Shankar Pathak debunks the myth of human touch to voluntary organizations. In his view, there might have been a grain of truth in this when these organizations were the result of spontaneous, humanitarian motives and catered to a manageable small local community, raising the entire material and human resources from within the community. He argues that the spirit of voluntarism is weakening. Social Welfare, Health and Family Planning in India, op. cit., p. 33.
Voluntary agencies often remain impervious to political changes and pressures. On the other hand, statutory agencies are influenced by changes in the bureaucracy and the government. It may also be noted that the degree of services rendered by voluntary workers is usually greater than operational costs. This is an advantage that is likely to be abused as it is likely to lead people to expect that voluntary agencies should do without any paid or professional personnel altogether.

Although both voluntary and governmental organisations endeavour to create a social welfare system which promotes individual and social well-being, ensures equitable relations among human beings and tackles social issues, it is often argued that the former are more at liberty to try out new methods and techniques. In India, for example, voluntary agencies have taken up lost causes, and persisted in their effort until statutory organisations were established to undertake the particular services. The work of Thakkar Bapa for the well-being of Adivasis or that of Maharishi Carve for the education of women are recent examples of the manner in which persistent work by individuals against all odds has led to a change of attitude in large groups and communities.23

It has also been felt that certain kinds of redemptive work can be done well by voluntary societies. It is not easy for

23. Ibid., p. 122.
statutory agencies to inspire or to use religious enthusiasm as voluntary agencies do. 'Where flexibility, experiment, supplementation or an exceptional degree of self-devolution are necessary, there is a strong case for the voluntary society, though this need not preclude state co-operation."

Obviously, the role of voluntary agencies in generating social awareness among people cannot be denied. They can inculcate a sense of responsibility among citizens, goad them to work together for improving the social health of the community, and lead them on to the path of service towards others. The report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India highlighted the contribution of voluntary agencies to the cause of social welfare. It stated interalia: 'Voluntary organisations may opt for several alternative roles according to their objectives and composition. They may be innovational and experimental activities in fields where government has not entered. They may co-exist with a public sector and the private sector for social development because they may have some advantages over the former, or they can provide the government with a supportive base, i.e., they can work like agents of the government at local levels and operate programmes of the government as their own'.

The advantages of voluntary agencies, should not, however, make us oblivious of their shortcomings. They have often been described as 'extremely pliant', 'easily founded', and 'free to adjust like amoeba-like fluidity to a flood of problems beyond the scope of ken or other institutions, or any combination of them'.

They usually work on 'too small a scale' and with 'too little resources' to meet daily needs. They function in a sporadic manner, and fade out after initial success. It has also been argued that they are 'ill-equipped', 'understaffed' and 'unstable', and that they 'sweat their employees' for want of adequate resources. Besides, they are 'built up on strong personalities, often flamboyant personalities, and too little on principles'.

The general belief that voluntary agencies stay away from the humdrum of politics has also been challenged. Field studies carried out in the U.S. Germany, Mexico, Italy, and Britain, as reported in The Civic Culture show that voluntary agencies 'play a major role in a democratic political culture'. To be fair to voluntary agencies, it needs to be stated that although they cannot remain immune to politics, not all of them imbibe the evils which characterise the political domain.

Of late, much emphasis has been laid on studying the relationship between voluntary and governmental agencies, and the ensuing interaction between them in terms of their roles both in the past and the present. It is argued that a clear demarcation of

roles between the two is essential to avoid conflict or duplication. But, in a country like India, where one finds organisations catering to different sets of problems, with varying degrees of efficiency - and where the enormity of social issues evokes a permanent solution, the suggestion is not quite feasible. The Report of the Committee on the status of Women in India ruefully noted that the existing relationship between the voluntary and the governmental agencies has not been satisfactory, and a number of complaints have been voiced on both the sides. It admitted that voluntary agencies have a surveillance role to play to see to what extent social legislation and the government have contributed and can contribute to social welfare. The Report further stated that voluntary agencies complained of lack of involvement with government programmes since they were not consulted at the planning stage.

To meet the welfare needs of people, it was essential that voluntary and governmental sectors must co-ordinate their efforts at all levels. The government, of its own, must change its policy, and involve these agencies at the policy planning level. It must also create opportunities for voluntary workers to acquire technical


C.P. Bhambhani is of the view that the anti-state feature of voluntary agencies in India is a borrowed theme from the western capitalist societies. At best, the voluntary societies in India can supplement state efforts, they cannot supplant or supersede the efforts of social reconstruction launched by the state. Voluntary agencies, he says, are a footnote in Indian development, and the problems of development of India require more of state intervention, and not less of it. 'The Modern State and Voluntary Societies' in The Indian Journal of Public Administration (special number), op. cit., p. 398.
and organizational competence with a view to improving the managerial and professional competence of their workers.\textsuperscript{31}

In some European countries, Councils of Social Service Agencies have brought about a better relationship between the services and the needs of the community.\textsuperscript{32} The rural community councils in England have stimulated self help and community effort in rural areas.\textsuperscript{33} Such councils in the U.S.A. plan co-operative programmes of social work. In 1955, seven previously autonomous organizations of social workers were brought together with a view to broadening their basis and intensifying their work.\textsuperscript{34} India has yet to make an experiment in this regard. The Western idea of a 'Community Chest' — an effective system of getting funds for voluntary agencies has not attracted sufficient adherents.

\textsuperscript{31} Towards Equality, op. cit., pp. 343-44.
\textsuperscript{32} A.R. Wadia, op. cit., p. 65.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 65.
\textsuperscript{34} The seven organisations were: American Association of Social Workers, American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, American Association of Medical School Workers; American Association of Group Workers; National Association of School Social Workers, Association for the Study of Community Organization, and the Social Work Research Group.

Every society evolves its own patterns or modes of social well-being depending upon the nature of its polity, its religious and cultural heritage, and its socio-economic structure. Voluntary social work in India has always been an integrated part of the cultural and social tradition. Its worthiness is 'more deeply engrained in our social consciousness making it a core process of our social existence'. It is believed that the service of mankind is the greatest virtue which can lead one to the realisation of the Absolute. Service is distinguished from kindness or compassion. While the former stems from an attitude of selflessness, the latter is tainted with ego as the sevake (one who serves) remains conscious of the fact that he is the giver and the other is the receiver.

Although modern social work is rooted in ancient tradition it assumed new dimensions in the 19th century in response to the western challenge, the rise of new social classes, the emergence of new socio-economic problems, and the scathing attacks of utilitarians and baptists on Indian life and thought. It received as much impetus from humanism and humanitarianism, the

36. See Editorial The Indian Journal of Public Administration (special number) op. cit., p. VIII.
philanthropic activities of 'ladles bountiful' as from the socialistic and democratic currents in the West. These developments coupled with societal needs gave birth to organized social work.

It needs to be mentioned that Indian society of yore had a built-in mechanism in its social institutions viz. joint family, caste, community, village councils or charitable bodies, which catered to the needs of the sick, the poor, the disabled and the maladjusted. The structure of society was well-suited to serve the welfare of all classes except the depressed castes. The caste, whether in the looser form of a number of persons related to one another by blood, or in the closer form of a professional guild, assured to each man the assistance of caste fellows throughout his life, and met his day-to-day needs. Caste associations worked as para-communities which resembled in many ways with voluntary associations or interest groups 'familiar to European and American politics'. During the Pre-British period, village-meeting and caste served as the non-voluntary associations for the people. 'Beyond them lay an inscrutable earthly ruler and the inscrutable forces of nature, and of God'.

The decline of traditional social institutions, the increase in population leading to greater social mobility, the changed socio-economic milieu, and the growth of new urban centres

and industries not only upset the applecart of rural self-sufficiency but also gave birth to new social problems such as unemployment, juvenile delinquency, family maladjustments, exploitation of women and child labour, poverty, and hunger. As the prevailing social structure could no more cope with the new problems and take care of all the aggrieved members of society, the need for systematized welfare programmes came to be felt.

This led to the establishment of homes for widows, old men, orphans, leprosy patients, and the destitutes. Balwadis, child guidance clinics, educational institutions, family counseling centres, hospitals, and other welfare institutions also came into being. From the establishment of Indian National Social Conference founded by Ranade in 1887 to the foundation of Indian Conference of Social Work (presently known as Indian Council of Social Welfare) in 1947, Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies endeavoured to mitigate social evils by launching new programmes, and focused attention of the authorities and the people on basic social issues.

Voluntary agencies tried to remain active in the pre-independence period of Indian history. However, due to the lack of any state policy on social welfare only sporadic efforts could be made to meet social needs. It has been observed that neither the

number nor the scope of such voluntary effort was adequate to solve the mounting problems of millions of poor people. Some of these institutions closed down as quickly as they were raised owing to lack of resources. Likewise, the standards of efficiency suffered from a shortage of qualified voluntary workers. Moreover, these agencies were mainly confined to urban centres where they were financed by middle class or upper class families. The schemes they formulated were 'a mixture of various types with the limited and isolated aim of providing relief against a particular distress'.

After independence, the Government of India entered into the arena of social welfare services, envisaged the need for an integrated social policy, and sought people's participation in the formulation and implementation of developmental goals. As voluntary agencies could not solely rely on private philanthropy after the extinction of landlordism and princely states, the government had to shoulder greater responsibility by way of financial assistance. The First Five Year Plan laid out that any attempt for the socio-economic regeneration of the country must take into account the services rendered by voluntary agencies, and that the state should give them maximum co-operation in strengthening their efforts. The Plan made a provision of Rs. 4 crores to be utilised for assistance to voluntary agencies, and recommended the establishment of a Board.

to evolve administrative modalities in this context.\textsuperscript{42}

The Central Social Welfare Board was set up in 1953 to provide financial aid to voluntary agencies, evaluate their programmes and projects, survey their needs and requirements, co-ordinate their welfare activities and promote the establishment of voluntary welfare agencies in areas where such organisations did not exist. The special areas entrusted to the Board were the welfare of women, children and the handicapped. By August 1954, social welfare advisory boards had been established by all state governments in consultation with the Central Social Welfare Board. The functions of these boards were to act as a media for exchange of information between the field and the Centre and vice versa; to invite, receive, examine and recommend to the CSWB, applications for grants-in-aid from voluntary welfare institutions; to supervise and report on the working of institutions; to advise and assist the CSWB in sponsoring new welfare programmes; to co-ordinate the activities of various departments of the state government, and to undertake similar activities as might be conducive to the fulfilment of these objectives.\textsuperscript{43}

To begin with, the CSWB encouraged the growth of voluntary effort in a dynamic way. By the end of 1958, it had sanctioned Rs. 128.54 lakhs by way of yearly grants-in-aid to 6339 institutions.

\textsuperscript{42} For details, see Government of India: The Planning Commission, \textit{First Five Year Plan} (New Delhi, 1951).

\textsuperscript{43} For a critical study, see Rajinder Kumar Jain, 'The Origin Organization and Function of the Central Social Welfare Board' (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), Panjab University, Chandigarh, 1984.
and 103.3 lakhs as long term grants to 585 institutions. By 1960, it had rehabilitated or revitalised about 6000 voluntary agencies in different regions of India, and imparted to them 'not only a new life but a new seal and impetus in execution of social welfare programmes for different groups'.

However, during the next decade, the CSWB seemed to have lost its initial drive and dynamism. This is evident from the fact that only 734 new voluntary agencies were established during 1963-1973 as compared to the previous decade when the number of such agencies had gone up from 3000 to 6000. Besides, the welfare activities were incongruous with societal needs both in quantitative and qualitative terms. The Grants-in-aid sanctioned by the Board were not wholly consumed. 'The measures intended for the promotion of voluntary effort have not achieved the desired results', lamented the study team on social welfare and welfare of backward classes.

Even after the Board acquired the status of a Company (1969) it did not resume its vigour of the fifties. Various opinions have been expressed about its activities since then. Keeping in view its


46. Ibid., p. 416.
limitations and lacunae as also the gigantic tasks it is expected
to perform, one cannot be sceptical about its functioning or disparage
its contribution to the domain of social welfare. In her welcome
address at the eighteenth conference of Chairmen of State Social
Welfare Advisory Boards, Mrs. Sushila Rastogi, Chairman, CSWB
stated that the number of voluntary agencies aided by the CSWB
had registered an increase from 7,000 to 10,000, and that the
establishment of a Voluntary Action Bureau in the office of the
CSWB in Delhi, in 1982, followed by similar bureaux in 17 states,
had advanced the cause of social welfare.47

It would be pertinent to mention that the basic objective
of establishing Voluntary Action Bureaux was to create awareness
and better civic sense among the people, to mobilise public opinion
through small mohalla meetings, involve youth in building correct
social attitudes and galvanise 'people's movement' against rampant
social abuses. 'Our endeavour is to render preventive to
rehabilitative services to women and children in distress specially
in dowry cases - and social crimes', said Mrs. Sushila Rastogi.48

Although the government circles describe the CSWB as a
catalyst of social change,49 the need is to rejuvenate it by
accelerating its pace and area of work, by keeping it above regional
and parochial biases, by employing the services of trained
personnel, by formulating schemes which benefit the women in

47. Proceedings of the Eighteenth Conference of Chairmen of
(cyolo styled copy), pp. 2-3.
48. Ibid., p. 3.
49. Ibid., p. 69.
streets and slums, by locating new avenues of finance, and by co-ordinating voluntary and governmental efforts.

III

There is a plethora of voluntary agencies in the Punjab which operate at various levels, cater to different segments of women, and were established at different periods of time. Some agencies which aim at the amelioration of women are national in character. These organisations have a broad basis and outlook, and carry on a vast range of activities. Among them the oldest is the Indian Federation of University Women (regd. 1921) which came into being to watch the interests of literate women. Five years later, the All India Women Conference was founded with a view to making women conscious of their rights and civil liberties, and to bring them into the mainstream of national life. This was followed by the Association of Moral and Social Hygiene in India (estd. 1928; regd. 1936) which was later known as Association for Social Health in India. Its aim was to develop moral character of the women folk.

In the following decade not much was done in the field of women welfare as the country was engaged in the struggle for freedom from the British Raj. There was a spurt of women welfare agencies after the attainment of the desired ideal in 1947. The most

important among them was the All India Women's Central Food Council (estd.1950; regd.1954). It maintained work centres for poor women, organised cooking classes and kitchen-garden competitions, distributed milk and served mid-day meals to school children through its agency named Annapurna.

The majority of the aforesaid organisations have a regional basis in the Punjab. No agency, however, exists which caters exclusively to the interests of Punjabi women as is the case with some other states. The All Bengal Women Union in Bengal, the Andhra Mahila Sabha in Andhra Pradesh, the Mothers and Children Welfare Society in Bombay, and the Indian Women's Indian Association in Madras, are working for the welfare of women.

The absence of regional agencies for women in the Punjab is compensated by local initiative which has yielded a number of organisations whose work remains confined to the areas in which they operate. In Jalandhar alone, there are about a dozen bodies which work for the welfare of women. Among them are Nari Niketan, Seva Sadan, Mahila Upkar Sansthan and Mahila Kalyan Kosh.

Voluntary agencies for women welfare can be further classified in terms of their rural or urban character. Most of these agencies have entrenched themselves in cities. Ironically, the agencies which deal exclusively with the women folk in rural areas have their headquarters in cities and their branch centres in rural areas.

The Bhartiya Grameen Mahila Sangh, for example, has its state office in Chandigarh, and the Jalandhar district headquarters in the city itself.

51. These days, Mahila Upkar Sansthan and Mahila Kalyan Kosh exist only in name.
Besides, there are women wings of political parties, vis. Panjab Pradesh Congress (I) Mahila Wing, Bharatiya Janata Party Mahila Wing, Panjab Istri Sabha (CPI), and Istri Akali Dal. These bodies aim at making women conscious of their political rights. But they generally become active when a political issue affecting women crops up.

Some organisations of women are primarily concerned with their spiritual upliftment. They are not registered bodies, and do not seek recognition that way. Prominent among these agencies are: Arya Samaj Istri Sabha, Gita Adhyayana Kendra, Sanatan Dharam Istri Satsang, Radha soami Satsang Sabha, Rajnsh Jagriti Sabha and Babbar Istri Dal. Rooted in Indian traditional lore, these organisations serve like mini clubs in which religious observances lead to increased social activity.

Of much recent origin are the women wings of local clubs like Lions and Rotary which provide succour to the poor and deserving women, as and when needed. The motto of the Lions Club is 'Make your Fellow man feel needed', and that of the Rotary Club is 'Service above Self'. The former was established in Jalandhar in 1963, and the latter in 1951. Both the clubs have been rendering useful services to the people by organizing free mass immunisation camps, vaccination camps, eye-operation camps, and general medical relief camps. Besides, they have been giving scholarships and books to deserving students, financial assistance to the handicapped, and sewing machines to poor and needy widows. They have been holding declamation contests, variety shows and music competitions to encourage the youth to reveal their talents. It may, however
be noted that the women wings of these clubs work sporadically, and seek much publicity for their welfare activities, however infinitesimal these may be. Our field study has shown that they remain on the look out for the arrival of a VIP in the city, so that they can make a show of their philanthropy in his presence by distributing blankets, sewing machines or knitting machines to women at a well-orchestrated function.

In contrast, there are organisations which were born of genuine human feeling, or what the psychologists would describe as 'the caring instinct'. Prominent among them are the Vichitra Sahaik Sabha, founded in Jalandhar in 1924, the Pingala Ghar in 1951, and the Apahaj Ashrama in 1953. Since its inception, the Vichitra Sahaik Sabha has been actively engaged in the task of rehabilitating widows irrespective of caste, creed, or colour. At present, it maintains a home for widows, a free dispensary, an eye hospital, and a free maternity centre. It also runs an industrial school for girls where fee is charged. Although the Pingala Ghar and the Apahaj Ashrama are not meant exclusively for women, they provide adequate facilities to the physically and the mentally handicapped, as also to those who have no one to look after them. Besides running a charitable dispensary, the Apahaj Ashrama has, in its premises, six male wards, one female ward for destitute couples, a T.B. ward for male and female patients, and six rooms for female inmates. In comparison, the Pingala Ghar has a much bigger campus, and provides many more facilities. Founded by Sarup Singh Bawa, it is now being managed by the Anath Seva Society. Apart from having a
separate female ward for the mentally sick, and six separate community halls for the crippled and destitute women, the Pingala Ghar runs a hospital and two dispensaries within its premises. Inmates get food, clothes, and other necessities of life, free of cost, and without any discrimination. The Pingala Ghar has a tailoring Centre, a candle-making unit and a crafts centre for the training of poor girls and widows. Besides, it gives ration in the form of flour, ghee, sugar, and cereals to poor families, and helps them to meet the marriage expenses of their daughters. The Pingala Ghar is thus doing a yeoman service to the suffering humanity, with due emphasis on the welfare of women. Like other voluntary agencies, it meets its expenses from public donations, and grants from the Central Social Welfare Board and the Punjab government.52

There is only one organisation in Jalandhar with a sound international footing. Established in 1948, the district branch of the Indian Red Cross Society is doing good work in the field of maternity and child welfare. It is, at present, running a health centre in the city, and two sub-centres at Rahon and Banga. Besides, it maintains 26 trained dal centres in rural areas where a large number of labour cases are conducted. These centres provide medical aid to expectant mothers, and attend to family planning work.53

52. Based on personal observations and interviews with the officials of Pingala Ghar and Apahaj Ashrama.

53. Other welfare activities of the Indian Red Cross Society are: relief of soldiers, sailors, airmen and other military personnel; prevention of disease; relief of the sick, suffering and wounded persons; relief of the poor and downtrodden people for marriages of their daughters; blood transfusion service; help to sister charitable institutions; opening of eye camps and polio camps; training in first-aid and home-nursing, etc.
Many more types of organisations for voluntary action may be attempted as it is as vast an area as the human mind can think of. But the increase in types of these organisations, may lead to misjudgement and confusion. The types and objectives of the four voluntary agencies under study may be discussed as under.

1. **ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL HEALTH IN INDIA (ASHI)**

The social health of a society depends on the mental well-being of its people. Moral depravity, exploitative attitudes, flesh trade and similar evils act like a malignant cancer and retard the functioning of a social organism. Social health cannot be restored by constitutional safeguards, legislation or statutory measures alone. A sea change in social attitudes and individual thinking of the people is also necessary.

It was with this aim in view that the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene (presently called Association for Social Health) was established in 1928. Miss Melisent Shepheard, Miss Melisent Shephered, Miss Melisent Shephered, Miss Melisent Shephered, Miss Melisent Shephered, Miss Melisent Shephered, Miss Melisent Shephered, Miss Melisent Shephered, Miss Melisent Shephered,

54. Miss Melisent Shephered, a British woman, was one of the first five students at Josephine Butler House in Liverpool where she learnt the laws relating to the medical aspects of the problems of prostitution and rescue work. She was closely associated with the Association of Moral and Social Hygiene (now Josephine Butler Society) in England. In 1928, when Dr. Ross Westcott, a Christian Social worker in India, wrote to the Association in London asking for a woman worker to undertake an independent investigation into the 'tolerated vice areas', Miss Shephered came to India and made her headquarters at Calcutta. With her initiative, the Bengal Suppression of Immoral Traffic and Brothels Act was passed and similar laws were enacted in Bombay, Punjab, and other provinces. After 20 years of untiring services, she left for England in 1947. For more details, see Social Health, Vol. IV, No. 4 (October 1966), pp. 2-4.
a representative of AM8H in London, was invited to come to India to carry on the work in a more comprehensive and systematic manner. She came on a contract for three years but continued to stay till 1947. With the help and co-operation of local leaders, she established vigilance associations and branches of the AM8H first in Calcutta, and later at other places.55

The Jalandhar district branch of the AM8H was established with the object to undertake and encourage the study of problems relating to women, to arrange conferences on specific problems such as the prevalence of immoral traffic in women and children, to mobilise public opinion for the enactment of social laws, to encourage the establishment of institutions for women caught up in flesh trade, and to train social workers engaged in this task; to remove the pinpricks in human relations and maintain high standards of morality; to mobilise public opinion for the rehabilitation of homeless women; and finally to eradicate prostitution and other evils.56

In the course of time the name of the AM8H was changed to the Association for Social Health in India. The question may well arise: Was it a genuine attempt at making a substantial improvement in the very nature of the organisation? It would be worthwhile mentioning that ordinary people had the impression that the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene was an organisation that dealt exclusively with prostitutes and morally degraded women.

55. Ibid., pp. 2-4.
Hence it could not attract a substantial following. The new organization intended to cover this lacuna and give a face-lift to it by broadening its area of work and involving people from all walks of life.

However, the basic tenor of its objectives derives a lot from the parent body. As before, it aims at eradicating prostitution, raising the moral standard of women, and encouraging healthy family relations. But certain changes and amendments have been made in the original aims and objects of the Association.

Firstly, the new regulations lay more stress on establishing, maintaining, and assisting protective homes and other institutions for the rehabilitation of women and children in moral danger. The establishment of a short stay Home in Chandigarh is to serve the needs of these women in the region attended to in the past.

Secondly, the ASHI proposes to establish and maintain health clinics for the prevention and control of sexually transmitted diseases. It also aims at educating women in this regard.

Thirdly, it aims at establishing and maintaining family life institutes or counselling centres for the promotion of healthy family life. Besides, it intends to set up craft and training

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57. ASHI (Punjab State Branch), Memorandum and Rules and Regulations (Chandigarh, 1979), pp. 1-2.
58. Ibid., pp. 1-2.
centres for the purpose of improving the economic condition of backward classes and weaker sections of society. 59

2. BHARTIYA GRAMEEN MAHILA SAMITI

More broad-based than the ASHI but less active is the Bhartiya Grameen Mahila Samiti, popularly known in its abbreviated form as the BGMS. It is a non-political and non-sectarian body. 60

Registered in August 1955, the Punjab state branch of the BGMS was established in 1961 at the initiative of the Maharani of Patiala, and the then Chief Minister of Punjab, Sardar Partap Singh Kairon, who extended it help in financial and other matters.

Due to the assiduous efforts of Sardarni Ram Kaur Kairon, its first Chairperson, the BGMS established itself on firm foundations. However, with her resignation in 1964 began a dark period in its history. Mrs. Ram Krishan, the successor to Mrs. Kairon could not hold office for more than two years. During her term the BGMS became somewhat dull, if not dormant. 61 Towards the end of 1969, the state branch of the BGMS was revived and re-organised under the Chairmanship of Girija Devi Pavate, wife of the then governor of Punjab. However, due to the non-availability of sufficient funds, it could not establish its separate office. At the district level the work of the centres was also hampered as the district samitis failed to raise the requisite contribution of 25% from the public. 62

59. Ibid., pp. 1-2.
60. BGMS (Punjab State branch), Constitution and Bye-Laws, (Chandigarh, 1976), p. 3.
During 1970-71, the state government sanctioned a grant of Rs. one lakh to the BGMS for enabling it to cope with its financial problems. In the first week of January 1971, it established an office of its own at Chandigarh and undertook the task of forming Samitis in various districts. By 1972, the Samitis were functioning in the districts of Amritsar, Bhatinda, Ferozpur, Gurdaspur, Jalandhar, Kartarpur, Patiala, and Sangrur. More such Samitis were established a year later in Ropar, Hoshiarpur, and Ludhiana. At present, the BGMS has 59 centres in the districts, and an equal number of sub-centres covering 300 villages in the Punjab.

The aims and objectives of the BGMS as stated in its Memorandum are as follows:

(i) To federate existing organizations working for rural women, and to take steps to establish new Grameen Mahila Samitis and Mandalas in the districts, tehsils and villages of the Punjab.

(ii) To secure better living conditions for rural women and to satisfy their immediate educational, health, social and economic needs.

(iii) To assist in all the constructive work undertaken in the state under the Five Year Plans so that rural women can play their legitimate role in national reconstruction.

63 Ibid., pp.1-2.
(iv) To assist in improving the working conditions of the rural house-wife so as to lighten drudgery, and create more time and leisure to devote to creative work, cultural activities and recreation.

(v) To encourage rural women to participate in the civic life of their villages, and to contribute to the advancement of rural community in all spheres of life.

(vi) To vocalise the aspirations of rural women through properly constituted bodies who can draw the attention of the government and other public authorities to the removal of disabilities or the redressal of grievances, and to represent them in all matters from the community, the village, the tehsil, the district to the state level.

(vii) To co-operate with other national organizations in tackling rural problems pertaining specially to agriculture, cottage and small scale industries, rural health, housing and home-science extension.

(viii) To undertake such measures that will help the creation and assertion of local leadership, and to organize pilot projects to encourage rural women to become training-conscious.

(ix) And, finally, to take steps for the fulfilment of the aforesaid objectives including the collection and distribution of funds through publicity, meetings, conferences, seminars and other such measures.64

Voluntary organisations like Nari Niketan and Seva Sadan don't have a national footing but work strictly to meet local needs. These were born as a response to the challenges thrown up by the partition of India. Imbued with missionary zeal that compares well with some prominent Christian institutions in India, these agencies have contributed to the cause of women welfare in a silent way without much fanfare and publicity.

Nari Niketan was founded in Jalandhar in 1955 to rehabilitate the forlorn or divorcee women who could not be accommodated in the Gandhi Vanita Ashram where a scheme for the maintenance of displaced or destitute women from West Pakistan under the rehabilitation programme of the Government of India was already running. Appalled by their misery, some prominent citizens of Jalandhar led by Lala Avtar Narain Gujral approached the Municipal Committee of Jalandhar for help. The Committee agreed to give a maintenance grant of Rs. 25/- per month per woman for fifteen women. But that amount was just not enough for food, clothing and boarding. To meet this situation, Nari Niketan was started in a rented building in Basti Qusan, Jalandhar. Later, with the help of Mehar Chand Khanna, the then rehabilitation Minister of Punjab, the institution purchased 800 yds. of land on the Hakodar Road to build its own premises. More donations were raised to purchase an

66. The Minister himself contributed an amount of Rs. 15,000/- for this noble cause.
adjacent area of 2300 yds, and to construct a double-storied building with 25 rooms, a kitchen, a hall, and a vast open site in the centre. 67

To begin with, Nari Niketan had seventeen members on its management who controlled it for about two decades. But, in 1980, it was handed over to a Trust. The main objective of Nari Niketan is the moral, social, cultural, and economic betterment of women and children, without any distinction of caste or creed. It also aims at developing the overall personality of women belonging to the weaker sections of society so that they can live with dignity. 68

Nari Niketan provides residence for the upkeep of such women and children who seek its help. It professes that no woman, destitute or forlorn, should feel lonely, and no motherless child should remain unwanted in society. Another object of the Niketan is to make the poor women stand on their feet by opening centres for their technical education, and by providing them educational and other facilities. It also aims at creating conditions which could instil new confidence in them, shake off their inertia and inferiority complex, and give them a respectable place in society. 69

Apart from providing free institutional care to the aged and the infirm women who have no source of livelihood, and who have no one to support them, Nari Niketan also intends to look after illegitimate children coming through the panghura. Another object

69. Ibid., p. 1
of the Niketan is to raise funds to fulfil the aforesaid objectives.70

4. SEWA SADAN

The achievement of freedom by Indians was tainted with sorrows and tears of destitute refugees from across the border. The influx of a vast mass of humanity contained a large number of widows, orphans and unclaimed children. Although the Government of India did its best to help them in a number of ways, it required the help of voluntary agencies to complete this gigantic task. In Jalandhar, Kusum Trivedi, wife of the then Governor of Punjab, Chandu Lal, took the initiative in this regard. She managed to get adequate donations from philanthropists and sought the services of spirited men and women to establish a society, now known in its popular form as Seva Sadan. It was originally registered as Smt. Kusum Trivedi Refugee Relief Fund Society on 28 November 1951.

The aims and objects of the Sadan are to help destitute women and children by:

(a) establishing Homes for their residence;
(b) providing them with food and clothes;
(c) training them in arts and crafts;
(d) enabling them to earn their livelihood;
(e) arranging suitable partners for grown-up girls;
(f) undertaking the construction of Working Women Hostel and rendering assistance to the needy for rehabilitation.71

70. Ibid., p. 1.
All the four voluntary agencies under study cater mostly to the poorer sections of society, provide residential homes, technical training, educational or job facilities to women for their moral, physical or mental well-being. Their object is to restore confidence in women who have fallen a prey to social conditions, economic pressures or other such hazards, and those who have developed a resigned attitude in the face of hardships.

Nevertheless, these organisations differ from one another in many ways. Nari Niketan and Seva Sadan are local agencies stationed in Jalandhar City. On the other hand, the ASHI and the BGMS are national in character, and have established branches at union, state and district levels. While Nari Niketan deals mainly with the problems of socially backward, destitute or deserted women, the ASHI is concerned with the women in the family. It endeavours to resolve the psychological maladjustments between the husband and the wife. Hence, it is an institutional arrangement for enhancing understanding between life partners, and for improving human relations in the family.

While Seva Sadan and Nari Niketan are concerned more with satisfying the physical needs of women (viz. food, clothing and shelter), the ASHI directs itself to their moral development by eradicating prostitution, immoral trafficking and similar evils, besides resolving marital disputes. Again, while the Sadan and the Niketan confine their welfare activities to their inmates, the ASHI imparts education in community health, and maintains clinics for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases.
The main difference between Sava Sadan and Nari Niketan lies in the fact that while the former provides institutional services to girl students and working women, the latter admits only widows, orphans or homeless women. The BGMS differs from them as it does not maintain any Home for rural women, although it does provide them with educational, technical and other services.

It is therefore clear that voluntary agencies are operating for the upliftment of women both in rural and urban areas. The objectives of these associations are quite inter-related as they all intend to guide, train, or rehabilitate women in society, and to see that they get the respect they deserve. One, however, feels the need of a state-level organisation in the Punjab that would tackle the problems of all categories of women, in a comprehensive manner.