CHAPTER II

“NOT ME BUT YOU”

VOLUNTARY SERVICE SPIRIT OF
NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME

This chapter deals with the NSS motto “NOT ME BUT YOU” which is generally considered the spirit of volunteerism. It examines the development of organised voluntary service. The ‘United Nations Volunteers’ clarify misconceptions about volunteerism. It also discusses the background of voluntary service traditions in different stages of history and stresses the development of volunteerism in India, culminating in the formation of NSS. The study approaches volunteerism and benefit to the campus and community from a developmental perspective.

Volunteerism is one of the basic expressions of human behaviour arising out of long-established ancient traditions of sharing and reciprocal exchange. At its core are relationships and their potential to enhance the well-being of individuals and communities. Social cohesion and trust thrive where volunteerism prevails. Volunteerism is not only the backbone of civil organizations and social and political movements, but of many health, education, housing and environmental programmes and a range of other civil society, public and private sector programmes worldwide. It is an integral part of every society.
Volunteerism is deeply ingrained in almost all communities around the world which are systems characterized by solidarity, compassion, empathy and respect for others, often expressed through the giving of one’s time. Volunteering also expresses the desire to act on one’s feelings about justice and fairness in the face of inequality and to foster social harmony based on a shared interest in the well-being of one’s community. In most languages, there are words to express the concept of volunteerism: for example, *Shramadan* in Sanskrit language of India and *Ubuntu* in the Bantu languages of South Africa. Inspired by indigenous traditions they describe the principal ways by which people collectively apply their energy, talents, knowledge and other resources for mutual benefit. The volunteering act is well known throughout the world, even if the word as such is not. A popular saying of South African Volunteerism as follows:

Each individual’s humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others. Ubuntu means that people are people through other people. It also acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being.

Volunteerism is universal, representing enormous reservoir of skills, energy and local knowledge for peace and development. In modern sense, voluntary social service is a non-profit, non-wage and non-career action to address the felt needs of an individual or a group. Anyone who contributes to a
cause, helps a neighbour, a fellow citizen in distress or any person in need, is a volunteer. Volunteerism takes different forms in different situations. All religions promote voluntary social service. The inspiration for shaping such an attitude emanates from their sacred scriptures. There are five characteristics for volunteerism. Firstly, it is the notion of reward. Fundamentally, while volunteerism may include some payments, the key distinction between volunteering and paid employment is that the volunteer should not be undertaking the activity primarily for financial gain and that any financial reimbursement should be less than the value of the work provided. The second element concerns the notion of free will. Volunteering must be based on free choice. Volunteering and compulsion are incompatible. Third is the issue of the beneficiary. The beneficiary of the voluntary effort should be clearly defined and identified and should be one other than the volunteer’s immediate family. This would allow mutual aid but rule out caring for relatives. Fourthly is the issue of organisational setting. Traditional definition only recognized volunteering through formal or non-profit sectors. However, today a broader framework inclusive of the informal sector, government efforts and the private sector, exist in volunteerism. Finally, traditional volunteerism only considered long term and continuous involvement. Today a wider approach including short term activities appear under purview.

Based on the above assumptions, the United Nations General Assembly in 2001 adopted a working definition of volunteerism. As per the UN definition, the voluntary action should be carried out voluntarily, according to
an individual’s own free will, and not as an obligation stipulated by law, contract or academic requirement. The action should not be undertaken primarily for financial reward but for the common good. The action should benefit people outside the family or household or else benefit a cause, even though the person volunteering normally benefits as well.

There are a number of misperceptions that cloud proper understanding of the universality of volunteering, despite largely contradicted by a growing body of empirical and anecdotal evidence. These illusions need be erased in order to reveal the true extent of volunteerism and to analyse contributions to global issues. One of the main misconceptions is that volunteering occurs only through legally recognized, formal and structured NGOs, usually in developed countries, with some type of agreement between the volunteer and the organization.

Another misconception is that volunteerism takes place only in the civil society sector. This is not true. Volunteer action is universal; it does not happen exclusively in one “sector” rather it permeates every aspect of life. Many public sector services, in Kerala, for example, rely on volunteers: Pain and palliative Care services, Student Police Cadet, National Cadet Corps etc. all rely on volunteers. Volunteerism is also found in nationwide government social programmes in such fields as immunization and literacy. Since 1988, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, spearheaded by national governments, the World Health Organization, UNICEF and Rotary International, has immunized more
than 2.5 billion children against polio\textsuperscript{5}, thanks to the unprecedented cooperation of more than 200 countries and 20 million, mostly local volunteers. It shows that volunteerism can bring down distress of the people and indirectly promote community development.

Moreover, the private sector’s volunteer engagement has grown steadily since the mid-1990s, much of it under the framework of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The sector employs a significant proportion of the world population; many of whom volunteer. Volunteerism is an important expression of CSR with over 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies having formal employee volunteer giving programmes. Volunteerism is the preserve of the well off and well educated, those who have disposable time and income. In fact, an expanding body of empirical research indicates that volunteerism is prevalent among the poor who undertake voluntary work to benefit themselves and their communities. Their assets, including local knowledge, skills, labour and social networks often play a critical role in surviving stresses and shocks.\textsuperscript{6}

Volunteerism is the domain of amateurs who are unskilled and inexperienced. This misunderstanding arises from the perception that professionalism, both in knowledge and behaviour, is exclusively associated with a paid job. But in reality, there are professionals like lawyers and doctors, who chose to bring their experience to volunteer action, for example, doctors come to Amritha Institute of Medical Sciences in Ernakulum, from USA and other advanced European countries, for doing complicated surgery as a
voluntary service. Another wrong assumption is that women make up the bulk of volunteers. The feminist movement in the 1970s depicted volunteering as an extension of women’s domestic work outside the home. While women are predominant in areas such as volunteer care of children and older persons and hospice work, men dominate sports, the environment, fire and sea rescue.

Yet another misconception is that young people do not volunteer. Contrarily, young people are not a passive group waiting for resources and opportunities to be handed to them. They actively engage in the development of their societies in a vast range of actions, for example, the involvement of NSS volunteers in the aftermath of the 2004 Tsunami in Kollam and Alappuzha districts. It is also the case, however, that many young people find participating through formal organizations less appealing than in the past. There is still another misunderstanding about volunteerism that volunteering takes place face-to-face. Significant new developments in digital technology mean that volunteerism is not limited to activities that entail face-to-face contact. The new technologies with which people connect are possibly the most significant development in volunteering. Rapidly evolving mobile phone technologies and the spread of the Internet are enabling larger numbers of people from broader cross-sections of the population to volunteer.

Some people have a wrong notion that volunteerism should be off-limits for state intervention. This view is far less widespread than a decade ago, as is evident by the growing number of policies and laws adopted by governments,
especially since 2001. Most are aimed at encouraging volunteer action and safeguarding the rights of volunteers. However, there are instances of states trying to control volunteer action and using it for their own political purposes. Volunteerism, for example, can be a means of compensating for insufficient services, making up for the inability of the state to deliver services. Thus, NSS could be considered a complementary agency for filling local development of the state. Finally, a sizable number of people believe that volunteerism is free. Though the service is free, it requires infrastructural expenses to ensure the effective functioning of the voluntary organisation, which needs fund. For example, funds for home for the homeless project ‘NSS Bhavan’, were collected from NSS volunteers, teachers and the public.\textsuperscript{10}

Volunteerism as an expression of civic participation is often associated with religion, which, like volunteerism, is strongly value-based. All major religions acknowledge the benefits of giving in terms of justice, humanity and kindness, as well as self-fulfilment. Studies show that religious people are, generally speaking, more engaged than non-religious people.\textsuperscript{11}

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) involve large numbers of volunteers. Many focus on people living in extreme poverty such as the Chilean Hogar de Christo, a Jesuit organization promotes social inclusion of the poor. The religious organisations helped flood relief and Perimon and Kadalundy accidents as well as 2004 Tsunami in Kerala.\textsuperscript{12}
History of Volunteerism

Volunteerism has been a part of every civilisation. The volunteering spirit is inherent in all human beings. It is not something learnt over time. The social environment and institutions play a vital role in facilitating the growth of volunteerism in individuals. It is an act of will and those who have it, will find a way and a place to do it. The place is as wide as the world and the ways are as many as the stars of the sky. The wide scope of voluntary service is manifested in the activities of NSS in the campus as well as in the community. NSS is the symbol of student youth volunteerism in the higher education sector. According to Antonio Gramsci (1860-1937), the exponent of absolute historicism and praxis,

Actions and Organisations of volunteers must be distinguished from the actions and organisations of hegemonies of social blocs, and judged by different criteria.

Further Gramsci observes that volunteers are non-elite and their actions are organic expression of social masses. However he did not approve the typical fascist theme that the modern Italian history was the creation of volunteers, voluntary action of the youth, which divided people, to a nation. Though Gramsci appreciates the spirit of volunteerism, he rejects the totalitarian approach of fascists. The cited statement and comments show that youth volunteers have a definite role in building the nation. In this context, one can analyse the role of the NSS student volunteers in India. It is an historical fact
that NSS student volunteers in prime youth, have been contributing substantially for community service and their personality development. As the actions of volunteers are organic expressions, it would be deep rooted in sincerity and commitment. As a result, its output would be phenomenal for the campus and community.

It seems highly necessary to revive the attitude of unselfish neighbourliness, in an ever more individualistic, me-me centred world. Certainly, in all pre-industrial societies and still in many third world nations, the mutual self-help is vital for survival of rural communities, e.g. for harvests, to build homes for the aged and invalid, to maintain roads etc. Perhaps mainly in the 19th century, industrialization, the generalization of money as a means of exchange, the "de-socialization" and anonymity that accompanied urbanization undermined such solidarity and mutual assistance. The spirit of volunteerism declined in the wake of industrialisation in 19th century Europe. The generalisation of money as a means of exchange and the deserialization and anonymity that accompanied urbanisation undermined solidarity and mutual assistance.\textsuperscript{15}

Organised volunteerism resurfaced in 1920 as an antidote to the horror of World War I. That summer, a group of Austrian, English, French, German and Swiss volunteers, some of them former soldiers, and thus ex-enemies set to rebuild a village near Verdun destroyed in a battle that cost more than a million lives.
From that international voluntary work camp sprang the first modern voluntary service movement, an organization, still active, known by its French name and acronym, Service Civil International (S.C.I.) which soon had young brothers and sisters as volunteers, spread in the 1920s and 1930s. At that time, it was often seen as means of building friendship among youth of different European countries. It was also used in countries like U.S.A. and Bulgaria, during the severe economic crisis following 1929, as a means of giving unemployed youth social work, bed and food. That it could be diverted from pacifist international ideals was, unfortunately, demonstrated by the *Hitlerjugend Arbeitsdienst* labour brigades in Germany, and similar schemes in other totalitarian countries.

In 1934, S.C.I. sent four European volunteers to work with the poor in India, a pioneer team that was ancestor to the British Volunteer Programme, US Peace Corps, *Deutsche Entwicklungsdiens* and other North-to-South long-term volunteering actions, which in turn preceded the UN Volunteers programme. World War II saw, in some democratic countries, volunteering take the place of military mobilization for conscientious objectors. In the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s young volunteers played an important part in the reconstruction of Europe, and the establishment of cross-border friendships, in projects that ranged from rebuilding central Warsaw and war-damaged villages in Western Europe to spanning Yugoslavia with the Bratsvo-Edinstvo (Brotherhood and Unity) highway.
But the Cold War threatened to freeze the heart and mind out of volunteering, and use it as a tool in superpower competition. Thanks to UNESCO Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (1948), volunteers from East and West were soon, albeit symbolically, jointly "rusting" the "Iron Curtain". In early 1960s, Arthur Gillette (1938- ), a New Yorker showed how alternative service affected volunteers and the peoples with whom they work, and drew guidelines for future international voluntary work. “One million Volunteers the Story of Voluntary Youth Service” was a monumental work by Gillette, published in 1968 by Penguin Books. He worked in international voluntary work camps in the U.S.S.R., G.D.R and Hungary and he could testify that they were not sleazy propaganda exercises, and the genuine exchanges and arguments took place, while real friendships were formed. The volunteers from the East also travelled West. In short, volunteerism assumed a status beyond boundaries.

Emancipation from colonial rule inaugurated national volunteer movements throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. Some were tiny and fragile; in Nigeria, the Lagos Voluntary Work camps Organization was so poor. It could not afford postage stamps and volunteers delivered invitations to potential student volunteers on foot. Other operations were huge: in 1970’s and 1980’s, the student volunteers formed the backbone of the volunteer force that undertook blood donation initiatives in Kerala.

Long-term volunteering to assist developing countries took off in the
1960s and soon came calls to depoliticize it. To ensure volunteers not used as “soldiers” in the Cold War, the creation of a U.N. volunteers corps was advocated. Already in 1950s, UNESCO had successfully used small volunteer teams from the U.S.A. and Jordan at its regional adult education centres in the Arab States, e.g. Sirs el Layyan, Egypt and Latin America (Patzcuaro, Mexico). In 1970s, began the UN Volunteers programme.

The history of volunteering concerns two end-of-the-century aspects. First is the resurgence of volunteering in the ex-socialist countries. In the industrialized countries, increasing numbers of qualified retired professionals were finding satisfaction and enrichment by offering their services, abroad as well as at home.

When neo-liberal state withdraws from duties to the most disadvantaged members of a society, the volunteers have to rise to the occasion and compensate the deregulated governmental irresponsibility by doing the social service to fill the gap, for e.g., in India the voluntary service activities of NSS. Volunteering has played a crucial and positive role in the life of the people. For example, voluntary organisations like Gandhians engaged in the activities of prohibition of alcoholic drinks and promotion of Swadeshi (indigenous products). Notably, the NSS organisers have been working with the environmental-developmental voluntary agencies to sensitise and empower people at grassroot level to address developmental gaps, as a complementary alternative. Voluntary works are the hallmark of every society in all ages. For
instance, Americans have philanthropic sense as the pioneer travellers westward. Many historians believe the earliest instances of history of volunteerism in America began when colonists had to form support systems in order to survive challenges of relocation. During the American War, volunteers got together to raise funds for the war efforts, and organized boycotts of various Great Britain products showing both philanthropic attitude and patriotism.19

While most volunteers of eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries found their assignments through church, in the twentieth century mainstream volunteer organizations began to flourish. The first example of this is the establishment of Rotary Club in 1910. The Lions Club and Kiwanis were not far behind, as they were both established before 1920. Organizations initiated the sole purpose of helping other organizations find their way.

During World War II, many volunteer organizations went to work supporting both servicemen and civilians in a variety of areas. In the 1960s, volunteerism focused on a different kind of war, a liberal one against poverty, inequality and violence around the world. The history of volunteerism in America continues as a new generation of world changers emerge cherishing philanthropic efforts. The twenty first century causes include green economy, animal welfare and equal rights regardless of race, gender and sexual orientation. It is a great era to be alive, as many are devoting time and energy toward improving the welfare of those around them.
Since the International Volunteer Year in 2001, perceptions of volunteering in China, development and function in strengthening social capital, and its recognition by the government have advanced rapidly. A decade on, most of China’s provinces and municipalities recognise the importance of volunteering, both through policies, regulations and administrative support. At national level, the National People’s Congress, the Office of the Spiritual and Civilization Development Steering Commission, the Communist Youth League and the Ministry of Civil Affair acknowledged the importance of volunteering.

There is now a rich network of government and non-government entities involved in volunteering social needs. Particularly, volunteering has grown positively in both public and government perceptions. Volunteering has become part of the mainstream social activity. Much of this is the result of the mass events, in response to disasters; poverty relief activities and community services also played their part. The year 2008 was Year of Volunteering in China for huge impact of two different events that saw extensive volunteering. Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan, witnessed how volunteering mobilized people to respond to natural catastrophes. Meanwhile, the Beijing 2008 Olympics, Shanghai 2010 Expo and Guangzhou Asian Games showed China the positive spirit of volunteering with as many as 4.2 million officially registered volunteers in different ways in the three events. On a smaller scale, grassroot community volunteering has also developed, building on the foundation of the first such groups established in the late 1980s. These involved people of all ages, and helped build social cohesion, particularly, in municipal areas.
In Asia, Africa and Latin America organised modern voluntarism was a response to colonisation. Emancipation from colonial rule gave birth to national volunteer movements throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. However, India has a rich tradition of volunteerism rooted in ancient sacred scriptures like *Upanishads* and *Bhagavat Geetha*.

‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’, a Sanskrit phrase, means the whole world is one single family. The original verse is contained in the *Maha Upanishad* 6.71-73. The above verse is also found in the in 1.3.71 of *Hitopadesha* (12th c. A.D.) and 5.3.37 of *Panchatantra* (circa 3rd c. B.C.). It is not just about peace and harmony, but also about a truth that somehow the whole world has to live together like a family. The spirit of this phrase is that human beings are kith and kin. Therefore, helping any human being is helping one’s own closest relatives. Ultimately, it amounts to promotion of voluntary service. The same concept is found in Sangam (300 - 100 B.C.E) Tamil *Purananuru* poem *Yaadhum Oore, Yaavarum Kelir* which means, ‘every country is my own and all the people are my kinsmen.’ The spirit of the cited phrases can be identified in Indian foreign policy and tolerant and secular policies. Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, former director of the Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, believes that the Gandhian vision of holistic development and respect for all forms of life; nonviolent conflict resolution is embedded in the acceptance of nonviolence both as a creed and strategy- an extension of the ancient Indian concept *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. Another phrase used to promote volunteerism was *Nishkama Karma*, selfless action performed without any expectation of results, and the central tenet of
Karma Yoga path to liberation (Nirvana). The two phrases referred above promote volunteerism that is central message of Bhagavad Geetha.

India has a long history and tradition of voluntary action, providing services to the sick, needy and destitute. It is a part of cultural heritage and way of life. Voluntarism in India is as old as the organised society itself. It originated as pure philanthropic charity and the motivation sustained voluntary efforts all through history in the ancient and medieval period. The voluntary efforts in the process of welfare and development have undergone evolution with changing emphasis on various experimental development programmes in India. Free food supply in temple, churches and mosques were regular features of Kerala social life during emergency. NSS voluntary activities similar to the cited adds kindness quotient. To the youth in the competitive world it is sufficient to neutralize the impersonal climate of competition based value system of English education.

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 religious channels operated freely in education, health, cultural promotion and assistance in crisis during natural calamities such as flood, famine, droughts, and epidemics. The voluntary efforts in the early phase were limited in scope and were marked in rural community development such as digging wells, planting trees etc. History reveals that the community and the rulers shared responsibility of assisting the individual in need. The kings
provided free meals during famine and sheltered homeless. For example, rice gruel was supplied in Kerala free of cost in times of drought, famine, flood etc. The Dharma Sastras restricted the directives of the emperor. All religions emphasised the value of charity, philanthropy and mutual help. The developed welfare-statism emerged during the Maurya and Gupta empires.

The state would come to the rescue of the helpless. The kings responded with royal charity goods during famine and natural calamities. The voluntarism found its most human expression at the time of natural calamities. The communities pooled their resources to help the needy. Philanthropy was widespread and philanthropists came forward with their ardent belief in ‘dhana dharma’ (offering charity doles). During the colonial period, voluntary efforts received a boost with new religious, cultural 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 the ‘self-help’ form of voluntarism. Educational societies established schools and colleges by English-educated natives, affluent businessmen and traders. For example, Farook College Kozhikode was established by volunteer group belonging to the said category at the close of the British colonial period. In terms of scope and range in development activities, laissez faire occupied the largest portion followed by voluntary action through philanthropy, association and individual actions, while the state intervention was minimal.
Prior to the nineteenth century, family, kinship, caste and village community were the main institutions to meet the needs of the poor and downtrodden. In the nineteenth century, voluntarism gained new stimulus. The history from nineteenth century onwards has tangible linkage with voluntarism in India. Voluntary organisations proliferated and actively participated in various fields of social action during the British rule. They were engaged in social welfare activities, literary and relief works.

The dawn of voluntary action was the emergence of 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 during the first half of the nineteenth century (1800-1850). Social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Dayananda Saraswathy, Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar, Kesava Chandra Sen, Ram Krishna Paramhamsa, Sayed Ahmed Khan and Swami Vivekananda focussed social action against the rigid social evils and practices like Sati, child marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage and other caste-directed practices. Raja Ram Mohan Roy spearheaded the social reform movement with the formation of Atmiya Sabha in 1815 in Calcutta, one of the earliest voluntary associations in India. The other prominent associations originated during this period were: the Unitarian Committee (1822), \textit{Brahmo Samaj} (1828), Dharma Samaj (1830) and Widows Remarriage Association (1850). Many literary and educational institutions namely Royal Asiatic Society (1834) and \textit{Dhyan
Prakash Sabha (1840) were established. ‘One religion, one caste and one God’ was the voice of various associations.

During this period, the voluntary organisations based on a ‘reformist approach’, worked for the eradication of social evils, religious dogmas, caste rigidity, untouchability, human bondage and inhuman treatment to women and children deeply rooted in the social fabrics of the era. The secular western education played a crucial role in the process of social reforms. Many individuals and organisations influenced by modern western thought began mobilising people against the prevailing social disabilities. The work of Christian missionaries that began at the end of the eighteenth century, took concrete shape in augmenting voluntary action during this period. In the beginning, missionaries confined their activities to purely evangelical work. American Missionaries had started schools in Naga villages as early as in 1830s. They also taught villagers tea cultivation. The advent of Christian missionaries dates back to 1845 when Lutheran Missionaries started their activities, particularly, in rural and tribal areas. They participated in charity, reform activities and services in the fields of education and health. Eradication of untouchability and other social evils were part of missionary works during social reform movements. Later they ventured into new areas. The reform movements inspired volunteers to work for the rights of deprived and backward classes in British India.
The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a steady growth of voluntarism due to continued efforts of the reformers and the growing socio-political awakening. Organised voluntarism evolved during this phase. British colonial rule consolidated over the political and economic life of the Indian society. A growing middle class consciousness arose in the forefront of socio-political awakening during this phase. The first war of Independence and establishment of Indian National Congress in 1885 marked the era. The spread of national consciousness and emergence of self-help as the primary focus of socio-political movements largely influenced the course of voluntarism. The period witnessed consolidation and institutionalisation of socio-religious movements. Large number of reform associations originated in different parts of the country attracting many people to voluntary work. The establishment of the Friend-in-Need Society (1858), Prathana Samaj (1864), Satya Shodhan Samaj (1873) and Arya Samaj (1875) further consolidated voluntary reform movements in India. The other prominent organisations, which emerged inculcating voluntary spirit for the service of the poor and the neglected, were National Council for Women in India (1875) and Indian National Social Conference (1887). The Ram Krishna Mission found in 1898 actively involved in amelioration programmes. Educational societies and associations became widespread during this period.22

The voluntary organisations gained prominence and the process of institutionalisation prompted enactment of the literary, scientific and charitable organisations. The enactment of Societies Registration Act 1860 was another
hallmark of voluntarism. Voluntary efforts of the Christian missionaries continued in greater proportion in education, health, relief, welfare of the poor and neglected sections of the society. Roman Catholic missionaries appeared in India during this time and began organised efforts in 1885. Missionaries of Baptist, Anglican and Westeeyan congregations initiated charity and reform activities. Apart from educational and health care services, missionaries organised tribes to protect themselves from exploitation, land alienation and defended them, upholding their rights of land tenure. Uplifting the poor, establishing hospitals, schools and constructing roads were some major missionary activities. They promoted establishment of voluntary institutions in the length and breadth of the country. The period also witnessed emergence of trade union organisations. The spirit of voluntarism with high moral and ethical values gained wide social recognition during this period. However, voluntarism had limited scope confined to education, health, medical relief and social welfare in the country.

In the turn of the twentieth century, religious fervour gave way to rationalist principles. Gopal Krishna Gokhale’s Servants of India Society (1905) laid the foundation for secular voluntary action in India. The Swadeshi Movement swept the country during the initial decades of the twentieth century and initiated mass involvement strengthening voluntary action through self-help and autonomy through institution building in education, agriculture, industry, business and fostering economic production, particularly, industrial goods through Swadeshi and boycott of imported British goods. Cooperative
movement also started during this period. Several national educational societies were set up to expose emerging middle class to secular western thoughts and ideas. Notable among them were Gokhale Education Society, Servants of India Society (1905), Servants of People Society (1921) etc. Some organisations aiming at the emancipation of women and backward classes were also established e.g. Depressed Classes Mission (1906), Mahila Silpasrama (1907) and the All India Seva Samiti (1914). The second decade of the twentieth century witnessed World War I. During this period, economic hardships led to the growth of revolutionary movement in India. During 1915-16, Home Rule (Swarajya) Leagues started by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant asserted self-government or Swarajya movement in India. Mahatma Gandhi’s emergence into Indian political arena during 1916-17 changed the complexion of the national movement and voluntarism. The period marked beginning of value-based voluntary action in India.

Gandhi propagated national reconstruction based on swadeshi, village self-government and self-sufficiency. He gave new impetus to voluntarism. His model society was based on values of non-violence, justice and freedom. He reinforced the strength of voluntarism in the economic aspect of national life by decentralisation of political authority to the Gram Panchayats (Village Councils). He stated that India lives in villages and concentrated his efforts on villages. His strong adherence to social ideals and practical approach inspired conscientious workers towards voluntarism. Gandhi began networking organisations and played a vital role of the chief propounder of voluntary
efforts in rural development in India. He started ‘constructive work’ during 1922-28 that entailed among others Charkha (spinning wheel), Khadi (hand-woven cloth), Gramodyog (village industries), basic education (Bunyadi Taalim) and removal of untouchability. Development of craft villages and village industries were his main thrusts. ‘Gandhi’s Constructive Work’ became part of the mass national movement for political freedom and he insisted political freedom to go hand in hand with social responsibility.

The fundamental principles of Gandhi’s Constructive Programme were voluntariness, sharing, cooperation, mutual aid, decentralisation, non-violence, self-reliance, self-help and moral action. Inspired by Gandhi’s ideology, voluntary movement in India gained further momentum and a large number of organisations based on Gandhian Constructive Programmes emerged. Gandhiji founded Harijan Sevak Sangh, Gramodyog Sangh, Hindustan Talim Sangh and Adivasi Seva Mandal. Many other specialised organisations All India Spinner’s Association (1925) and All India Village Industries Association (1934) were active in this period. Gandhiji’s call for people’s participation at the grassroots level enabled voluntarism to penetrate villages. Many outstanding individuals motivated by a strong desire for rural upliftment undertook experimental projects for the development of rural people in different parts of India. Rabindranath Tagore was convinced that real freedom could come when people are independent of fear and hunger. His experiment in rural reconstruction at Sriniketan, West Bengal in 1921 aimed at making villagers self-reliant to develop their own resources.
In the initial phase after independence, the legacy of Gandhian era influenced voluntary action to fulfil the unfinished tasks undertaken before independence. The efforts to spread khadi and village industries not only became an important area of voluntary effort but also government responsibility. Following the demise of Gandhi in 1948, a number of freedom fighters and ‘Constructive Work’ followers joined voluntary organisations The Sarvodaya Samaj and a coordinated organisation named Sarva Seva Sangh were established for constructive works. Many Gandhians inculcated spirit of voluntary efforts in the post-independence era. Notable among them were Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Jaya Prakash Narayan, Thakkar Bapa and others.

Vinoba Bhave, in his attempt to transform rural India, came forward with the idea of Bhoodan and Gramdan movements in 1951 and 1952 respectively, giving a new impetus to voluntary efforts. He started the Bhoodan (land gift) movement in Pochampalli (Telangana in Andhra Pradesh). The essential characteristic of the movement was that the surplus lands were to be donated by landlords and redistributed to landless peasants. Similarly, his Gramdan Movement (village gift) started in Mangroth village in Uttar Pradesh involved community action with the land ownership vested in the village community. He widened the concept to Shramadan (gift of labour) Sampatidam (gift of wealth) and Buddhidan (gift of mental abilities) further for realisation of Sarvodaya (welfare of all). Vinoba Bhave, thus, built a powerful voluntary movement leading the peaceful transformation of rural society.
Thakar Bapa also contributed to the history of voluntarism in education, health and tribal development. After independence, social welfare and development that were main responsibilities of voluntary sector, shifted to government sector. The government launched massive relief, welfare and developmental programmes aiming at the upliftment of weaker sections of the society in which the voluntary organisations now played a supplementary role. Jawaharlal Nehru, the chief architect of independent India, carried the tradition of voluntarism further incorporating possibilities for voluntary actions in the government programmes.

The first two decades of independence until the mid-60s, were considered the phase of nation building. Both, social reform based voluntary organisations and the stream of Gandhian Constructive Work organisations joined hands in sharing the government responsibilities, national reconstruction and nation building. The missionary work gained further diversification after independence. With the introduction of the planning model in 1951 and the launching of the community development programmes, voluntary organisations redefined their role in nation building particularly, in rural transformation and development. The community development programmes with effective participation of people, provided voluntary efforts fresh impetus and voluntary organisations continued their innovative experiments in rural development with renewed vigour. In India the National Extension Service (NES) was launched in October 1953 for development with the self-help strategy.
In the early decades of independence, a democratic process of development with the goals of nationalism and secularism inspired by the Constitution of India dominated the scene. A sudden growth of organised voluntary action was visible during this period. The voluntary movement in India marked overall progress with growing professionalism in the organisational approach. It is estimated that about 11 percent of all voluntary organisations were set up before 1951 and the remaining were established in the post-independence era.25

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 promotion of voluntary organisations in social welfare and development. Further decentralisation took place with the introduction of a three tier Panchayati Raj in 1958. By the end of first decade after independence, Balwant Ray Mehta Committee reported on the adoption of democratic decentralisation as a means for promoting local action for development. The report stimulated voluntary efforts in development under the aegis of CSWB and the Panchayati Raj institutions.26

During the 1950s, Farmer’s Unions were formed to generate interest in the community development projects. This phase was also marked by cooperative movements in various sectors and the formation of federations to facilitate solutions to the common problems of the farming community. The period witnessed the fast growing phenomenon of ‘networking’ voluntary
organisations and 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 Indian rural development. In the early sixties, the emphasis in planning was laid on agricultural development. This was followed by programmes specially designed for the weaker sections and special areas such as drought prone, hilly, tribal and coastal areas. The governmental efforts were to re-orient the community development programmes through special area projects with a beneficiary approach serving the weaker sections such as small and marginal farmers, sharecroppers, landless labourers and artisans. The approach shifted from the community to agricultural production during the Third Five Year Plan (1961-66). This approach led to the introduction of Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) in 1961 and Intensive Agricultural Area Programme (IAAP) in 1964. The voluntary efforts made gradual evolutionary changes according to the changes in the governmental experiments in approaches and programmes in the development process.

The developmental programmes for rural services with ‘trickle down’ theory of developmental approach did not succeed. The National Extension Service also did not help increasing agricultural production to the desired level. During the late 1960s, India witnessed economic stagnation and political instability. The period was marked by massive droughts, floods, famine (1963-67) and rural misery. Student movements gained momentum during 1967-69. It
was in this context the National Service Scheme (NSS) was formed in 1969\textsuperscript{27} provided impetus to voluntarism with young students motivated to work voluntarily for the benefit of weaker sections of the society upholding the objective of education through social service. The development preceding the formation of NSS reveals that, it was intended to respond positively to the national questions of complimenting the state machinery for community service, acquiring knowledge and enlightening educated youth, ultimately to empower them for dedication to the nation.

The NSS motto "Not Me But You", reflects the essence of democratic living and upholds self-less service. The NSS teaches students appreciate other person's point of view and to show consideration to other living beings. The philosophy of the NSS is well doctrined in the motto, which underlines the belief that individual welfare ultimately depends on the welfare of the society. Therefore, the NSS volunteers shall strive for the well-being of the society.

“Not Me But You” is the catching card of the NSS, which inculcates the spirit of voluntary social service among students and teachers through sustained community interaction and bring out academic institutions closer to society.

In the process creating awareness of social responsibility, the NSS put the students in the right track of equipping themselves for full voluntary dedication in the service of those who provided the sinews of the nations with the national goods and services, essential to the society instead of
wasting their studentship merely in indulging intellectual acrobatics, in
time with the vision and dream of Mahatma Gandhi.\textsuperscript{28}

Volunteerism brings benefit to both society and the individual volunteer. It made important contributions economically as well as socially by building trust and reciprocity among citizens. The United Nations Volunteer is the U.N. organization that supports sustainable human development globally promoting volunteerism and the mobilization of volunteers. It serves the causes of peace and development enhancing opportunities for all-round participation. It is universally inclusive embracing volunteer action in its diversity. It values free will, commitment, engagement and solidarity volunteerism.\textsuperscript{29}

The NSS activities have been continuing the spirit of Gandhian reconstruction programme reasserting India for Indians. The best examples are ‘Elaneer Pandal’-boycotting of multinational soft drinks and promoting tender coconuts in the campus and re-discovering the relevance of paddy cultivation in Kerala, a gesture for encouraging food security.\textsuperscript{30}In Kerala while thousands of hectors of fertile land is left uncultivated, tons of rice and other consumer items are imported. Here comes the importance of the dissemination of the message of \textit{Swadeshi} and dignity of labour by the NSS. The NSS is not just preaching but practicing it engaging themselves in voluntary promotional activities. One may conclude that the NSS is a creative minority responding to the challenges of the age by personally involving student volunteers in constructive activities upholding its motto ‘NOT ME BUT YOU’. This message is swimming across
currents of the evil effects of globalization, deeply rooted in self-centrism and profit making.

**Volunteerism and the Development Experiences of Kerala**

One has to analyse Kerala’s social structure in the context of development experience, to identify renowned specificities of Kerala, yet, inadequately recognized. In the first place, compared to most other states, the linguistic homogeneity of Kerala is substantial: 98 percent of the residents are native speakers of Malayalam. This makes communication at the grassroots level an eminently viable project.

Kerala people share common origin myth and collective memory notwithstanding the fact that Kerala is an amalgamation of three separate parts—Travancore and Cochin (the two erstwhile principalities) and Malabar—the Malayalam speaking part of the former Madras presidency. This imparts unique ethos to the Kerala society, lacking in several other Indian states.31

While Kerala is unilingual, the state is utterly multi-religious. The major religions in Kerala Hinduism, Islam and Christianity coexist in equilibrium because of their numerical size and socio-economic standing. Further, Kerala Christianity is pre-colonial while Kerala Islam is a pre-conquest phenomenon. This historicity and rootedness makes it nearly impossible to stigmatise Christians and Muslims as ‘outsiders’. This produces a social ethos which
reduces communal conflict, which in a way postulate the development of movement like NSS.

Missionary influence initiated early developments, particularly, in the sectors of education and health. This had a demonstrative effect on all communities to start programmes in these fields. The caste and community associations of Kerala are not only identity-seeking but also development-promoting instruments.

The incomplete \textit{varna-jati} system, particularly, the absence of \textit{Vaishyas} provided an opportunity to Jews, Muslims and Syrian Christians to fill this structural vacuum. This rendered entrepreneurship a caste-neutral enterprise, largely facilitating individuals and families to pursue economic activities.

The absence of rural-urban dichotomy and the pattern of dispersed village habitat made the location of economic and social infrastructural facilities in Kerala a viable proposition providing for ready-made catchment areas. This provided considerable economies of scale for infrastructural facilities.

Again thickly populated Kerala was always in the forefront of spatial mobility. The proverbial Malayali diaspora encouraged not only spatial mobility but social and ideological mobility also. While a substantial section of the Kerala immigrants settled at the destinations, the tendency to repatriate
one’s earning to Kerala is widespread among Malayalis. This provides for an instant visible economic prosperity in Kerala.

Another aspect is that the prevalence of hypergamy between Nair women and Brahmin and Kshatriya men created an ethos of caste fluidity and facilitated circulation of wealth among these social categories. Further, matriliny among Nairs, the dominant caste of Kerala, not only provided for certain juridical advantage to Nair women but also created a social milieu which rendered Kerala women socially visible and legally conscious.

Kerala’s is a ‘movement society’ par excellence; protest is ubiquitous and even institutionalized. This character of Kerala reflected in the higher education sector which some time hindered NSS activities. Kerala is famous for its literacy movement, agrarian movement, Left movement and science movement. However, even the lower caste women’s right to cover breast and the right to grow moustache by lower caste men were achieved through organized protests. The tendency to wrest one’s rights through struggles substantially contributed to the social development in Kerala.

The advent of printing in Kerala came through missionary initiative, the stupendous spread of press is the result of competition between different political parties and communities. One can clearly identify newspapers and magazines by their communal and political views. This led to the creation of an intellectual ethos that promoted intense debates of ideologies. In the rural
areas, the coffee shops played an important role in spreading ideas among the poor.

Finally, crystallization of two political blocks ensuring stability to both governance and opposition allow continuation of development projects without much interruption. It seems that there is a broad consensus regarding the shaping of Kerala society among all political parties.

**Benefits of Voluntarism**

The concept of social inclusion grew out of concern for poor, and the marginalized. Social inclusion places people at the center of policy-making. Its ultimate goal is to enable them to improve their own lives through realization of opportunities. The World Bank definition of social inclusion is that it is a process, which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy standard of living and wellbeing.

The 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen affirmed that the most productive policies and investments are those that empower people to maximize their resources and opportunities. It called for a society where every individual has rights and responsibilities. Five years later, at the special session of the General Assembly in Geneva, governments recognized volunteerism as an additional mechanism promoting social integration. They agreed on the need to raise public awareness about the value
and opportunities of volunteerism to facilitate an enabling environment for individuals and other factors of civil society to engage in volunteer activities and private sector to support such activities. The recognition of volunteerism as a path to inclusion signified a move away from the perception of a gift relationship, whereby one side gives and the other receives, towards a reciprocal relationship in which both sides benefit.\textsuperscript{32}

At an individual level, volunteering helps people to overcome feelings of personal isolation and reduced self-worth. Volunteers encounter others face-to-face or, increasingly, online in circumstances that help enhance feelings of belonging and contributing. Volunteerism reduces stress in life and combats lonely feeling. People who are excluded often experience a sense of shame and failure. Through volunteering, people may tackle some of the underlying causes of social exclusion such as lack of employment, education and health.

Volunteering can improve employability by enhancing a person’s vocational and social skills.\textsuperscript{33} Contacts arise through social networks that people form through volunteering. They may secure useful references and even find a job. Individuals who have experienced poverty and homelessness may work with others in need as a way of elevating their own status. Through volunteering in counselling, advising and supporting others, people are able to move from being service recipients to empowering service providers. Identities expand as people see that they have something to give to their community by
volunteering. The element of recognition of people’s volunteer contributions is an important aspect of belonging.\textsuperscript{34}

According to the World Bank World Development Report for 2007, employment is a critical area in any discussion of youth inclusion. In this respect, volunteerism helps young people improve their employment prospects enhancing job-related skills. There is much anecdotal information to show how volunteering can play a valuable role in the transition from schooling to paid employment in both developed and developing countries. A survey in the United Kingdom found that 88 percent of unemployed respondents believed that volunteering would help them get a job. Research on the extent to which volunteering enhances employability skills needs greatly expanded that policy can be informed by robust empirical evidence. A China Youth Daily survey of 1044 employers shows that more than 60 percent of them prefer a candidate with volunteering experience in the remote western region of China. Employers said that values they sought in their employees were dedication, integrity and good communication skills displayed in volunteering service. The vast majority of the employers who employed former volunteers said that they were satisfied with their performance.\textsuperscript{35}

Volunteerism also has a significant positive impact on community well-being. It creates ties among people, increases social capital and contributes many social factors that create healthy societies in which people enjoy living. A stronger community sense also inspires volunteering. As such, this creates a
virtuous cycle in which volunteers strengthen community ties inspiring more people to volunteer. “Community” includes not only people living in close geographic proximity but also people with common needs, assets and interests. Another concept related to community well-being is resilience: collective capacity to engage and mobilize community resources to respond to change.\textsuperscript{36}

Volunteer action in response to disasters is perhaps one of the clearest expressions of the human values that underpin the drive to attend to the needs of others. It is also among the most visible face of volunteerism. People’s immediate reaction to a disaster is often to assist those directly affected. In many instances, this takes place spontaneously, outside any organized setting. However, the contribution of volunteerism extends far beyond immediate response.\textsuperscript{37}

The nature and frequency of disasters is changing with climate change, rapid urbanization, food insecurity and increasing conflicts. Disasters wipe out valuable progress in development over many years. Growing awareness of this connection has led to a move away from dealing with disasters simply as humanitarian emergencies and treating them as development issues. Reducing disaster vulnerability, especially, of people living in poverty, is now a major policy consideration in many countries. The 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction gave considerable impetus to the paradigm shift. The overarching goal of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 is to build resilience of nations and communities to disasters. It recognized that the most
effective resources for reducing vulnerability are community self-help organizations and local networks.

Managing disasters effectively begins and ends with communities. A key term, widely used today, is “resilience” which encompasses the ability of communities to prevent, prepare for, cope with, and recover from disasters. Those located in hazardous environments are not helpless prospective victims of events outside their control. They may have limited livelihood options but given opportunities, they can reduce their vulnerability.

Volunteering and Wellbeing

One has to consider how the contributions of volunteerism affect society. The success of a country has long been assessed primarily based on Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, the direct relationship between economic growth and social progress has been challenged. Critics call for alternative concepts and new indicators. Actually, this criticism is not new, as the above quote of Robert Kennedy 1968 shows. The 1975 Dag Hammarskjold Report states that development is an integral, value loaded, cultural process encompassing the natural environment, social relations, education, production, consumption and well-being. This concern has moved from academic circles into public debate and now is increasingly relevant at the highest levels of policy-making, because of the recent global crises affecting economy, society and the environment.
The 2009 Commission report on Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, also known as the Stieglitz Commission, represented a key moment in the evolving debate about what societies should achieve. It was established at the French initiative to identify limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress and to consider alternatives. Headed by prominent economists Joseph Stieglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean Paul Fitoussi, the influential initiative concluded that GDP should not be dismissed. However, as an indicator of market activity, it fails to capture many factors that contribute to human well-being and societal progress.

The volunteerism report, 2011 has highlighted the universal nature, and underlying values of volunteerism and the significant contributions to some of the contemporary global issues. People engage in volunteerism as a means to inclusion, one of the key slogans of the Government of India, to achieve sustainable livelihoods, to manage disaster risks and to prevent and recover from disasters. It has also seen how voluntary action can significantly contribute to the cohesiveness and well-being of communities and of societies as a whole. With massive social upheavals affecting most of the planet, there has never been a greater need to recognize and promote actions that lead towards a global harmony characterized by justice, equality, peace and wellbeing.

This report does not claim that volunteerism is a panacea that can be “programmed” to put to right the injustices of the world by itself. A key point,
and one that features prominently in inter governmental legislation for decades, is that volunteerism should not replace state responsibility. However, governments and other stakeholders of civil society, the private sector and international development agencies do have vital roles to play in promoting and nurturing an environment in which volunteerism can flourish. In this context, it is to be noted that NSS is the apt agency to disseminate the message of the benefit of volunteerism in the campus and the community.

At the same time, care should be taken not to overprescribe how citizens should engage in volunteerism. Such action could remove the spontaneity of volunteer action and impact negatively on the moral values. It is essential to understand and appreciate volunteerism in terms of the focus that it places on people-centred approaches, on partnerships, on motivations beyond money, and on openness to the exchange of ideas and information. Above all, volunteerism is about the relationships that it can create and sustain among the citizens of a country. It generates a sense of social cohesion and helps to create resilience in confronting issues covered in this report.

The moment has come to ensure that volunteerism is an integral part of any new development consensus. The United Nations Secretary General has highlighted how ignoring social marginalization, vulnerability and the uneven distribution of resources, weakens the trust for collective action. It shows the fact that volunteer action at grassroots is a key way for the income poor to engage in sustainable development practices at local level. It goes to suggest
that the forty three years of voluntary service by the NSS in the campus and community in Kerala justifies its continuation with a renewed vigour and vitality. As such, this needs be supported. It is evident that volunteerism is a powerful and underexploited, resource to address development challenges. Its close links with the green economy, in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, must not be overlooked.

Volunteerism is a very old tradition and attitude, yet it is novel, and potentially fruitful, approach when thinking about development policy. In a world experiencing unprecedented change, volunteerism is to be a constant life style. Even if its forms of expression are evolving, the central values of solidarity and feelings of connectedness with others remain as firm as ever and are universal. People are driven into volunteering by their passions and self-interest and also by values, norms and belief systems. With East-West distinctions becoming increasingly irrelevant, volunteer action is a renewable global asset with potential to make a real difference in responding to the most pressing concerns of the world. The cited UN Volunteerism Report, 2011, asserts volunteerism as an integral part of any new development consensus.

The motto of NSS ‘Not Me But You’ critically examined the spirit of voluntary service in the community development perspective. The universal appeal of volunteerism as a non-profit, non-wage and non-career action to address felt needs of the society with individual free will is widely accepted. This attempt, to a large extent, could clear misconceptions about voluntary
service. There exists a wide misunderstanding that the corporate houses, professional groups, government agencies, women organisations and United Nations Organisation have nothing to do with voluntary service. Volunteerism as an inherently creative human behaviour is appreciated and held high over years. Though the traditional oriental cultures like India, South Africa, West Asia and China have been practicing it, organised volunteerism, with a professional touch was initiated only in 1920. Faith based organisations actively involved in voluntary service in almost all countries of the world. Notably, majority voluntary organisations have been active during emergencies and natural calamities. Like other Third World Counties, volunteerism in India was part of the reform movements and anti-colonial struggles. Gandhian reconstruction programme is a glaring example of organised volunteerism in the beginning of the 20th century. Analysing the nature of activities before and after independence by Mahatma Gandhi and his followers, a genetic link can be identified between Gandhian ideology and NSS. It is established beyond doubt that the Govt of India have drank deeply from the Gandhian concept of education and socio-economic models of development. It was in this context that a student centered national level voluntary organization National Service Scheme (NSS) was formed in 1969. It was to lead the students of India in right track for the benefit of students and the community at higher education centers.

The voluntary service initiative of NSS was a great success in the higher education institutions of Kerala. It was made easier by the prevalence of linguistic homogeneity, common myth of origin and multi-religious character.
It was also augmented by the Christian missionaries and absence of rural-urban dichotomy. The existence of thick population, printing and reading culture and the crystallisation of two blocks of political parties promoting volunteerism also contributed significantly for embracing volunteerism in Kerala campuses under the banner of NSS.

Volunteerism aims to enable people to improve their lives through realisation of opportunities. The 1995 World Summit for Social Development affirmed the importance of empowering people to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities. Voluntary actions help people to overcome personal isolation, reduces stressed life and loneliness. The wellbeing of the people has been considered by the UN report of 1975 as a major component of developments along with education, production, consumption and social relations. To conclude, the motto of NSS ‘Not Me But You’ has been proving that it is a pragmatic and progressive initiative of the educational visionaries and statesmen of India.
References


