CHAPTER II

VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS:
DEFINING THE TERRAIN
Part I

What are Voluntary Organisations?

Before we begin an examination of the five voluntary organisations we have chosen in order to discover their vision of social transformation towards enhancing liberty for their target-groups, and their relationship to the state, a close examination of the terrain of voluntary activity may be a useful exercise.

Voluntary activity is non-statutory activity. Voluntary organisations are non-state undertakings accommodating a complex variety of subjective perceptions and interventions for effecting social transformation.

It may be useful to examine writings on voluntarism, in order to discover and appreciate the variety, the amorphousness and complexity of this terrain. This backdrop will help us to understand how this field of activity can amalgamate religious and charitable groups as well as those which are offering a critique of the state, and a challenge to its structures. It will help understand how some voluntary activity may help the State in facilitating the delivery of its development planning and how a cross section of voluntary activity may challenge the very same
development programmes. This will also help us to understand the state response to the various kind of voluntary activity within the state.

As people's groups and citizen's activity they embody an element of people's participation just as voting at election time, or standing for elections do. The pluralists see them as indispensable for democracy. They represent too, the vitality and strength of the democratic fabric of a nation.

According to Elridge and Nilratan:

This field abounds with many different terms - voluntary agencies/organisations, non-government organisations (NGOs), private voluntary organisations (PVOs), community (development) organisations, action/social action groups, non-party groups, micro/people's movements. No single term will adequately cover the whole field and all are open to some form of limitation or distortion.

Further,

The term 'non-governmental organisation' is potentially open-ended and could include religious, educational and cultural associations, hobby and lobby groups, business organisations, peasant organisations, trade unions and other groups whose composition is not necessarily targeted towards the poor and disadvantaged nor concerned specifically with their advancement and empowerment. The term 'action groups' is open to similar problems and can logically, include landlord senas and other reactionary groups. 'Community organisation' conveys the cooperative dimension involved but implies a 'whole community' approach rather than one focussed specifically on the needs of the poor. Prof. Upendra Baxi's term 'Organisations of the Rural Poor' (ORP) comes near the mark, though there is an increasingly urgent need to include the urban poor in social action. Perhaps simply 'poor people's organisation' would most adequately .fill
the bill? However, definition of 'the poor' poses obvious problems.... The question of whether such organisations are controlled and managed by poor people rather than merely on their behalf is crucial.

This quotation offers an evidence of the amorphousness of this terrain. It is also the rationale for beginning with a sound notion of what voluntary action is. Examining the views of several authors on the subject is a sound way to explicate the issue.

The arena of voluntary organisations is characterised by amorphousness and complexity. In its widest understanding, the entire arena of society which is not covered by the compulsory regulation of the state is the area of voluntary activity. Barker speaks of the:

the community organized, or rather constantly organizing itself, in a number of voluntary associations for a variety of purposes (religious, cultural, recreational, charitable, economic, and whatever else may be comprehended under the general designation of 'social', which adorn and supplement, and may even stimulate or anticipate, the activity proper to the purpose of the legal organisation.

Speaking of voluntary self-help he further says:

But on a broad view the method of voluntary self-help by the concerted effort of a voluntary association is neither individualism nor collectivism, in the ordinary sense of those terms; it is a happy bridge between them. The essence of the method is a spirit of 'voluntary community' which marries voluntas to communitas; and the essence in turn of that spirit is the power not of force but of persuasion.
According to Lord Beveridge:

The term "Voluntary Action" .... means private action, that is to say action not under the directions of any authority wielding the power of the State. A study of Voluntary Action .... would be as wide as life itself, covering all the undirected activities of individual citizens in their homes as well outside their homes.

Stephen Hatch has pointed out that "it is necessary to define them as .... not established by statutes or under statutory authority". 6

Beveridge also quotes A.F.C. Bourdillon:

A voluntary organisation properly speaking is an organisation which, whether its workers are paid or unpaid, is initiated and governed by its own members without external control. 7

Stephen Hatch's discussion is relevant:

Voluntary organisations .... do not share an essential characteristic which marks them out from all other kinds of organisation. Nevertheless .... for all practical purposes they have to be distinguished by a process of exclusion, by drawing boundaries between them and all other kinds of organisations .... However, it is not altogether satisfactory or satisfying since what falls within the boundaries may appear little more than a rag-bag. And it is difficult to say much about rag-bags except that they are rag-bags.

Jai Sen has also pointed out that "one of the most important distinguishing characteristic of the 'voluntary sector' is that it is a mixed bag". 8 And, says Sen,

This condition of difference and variety has taken place for obvious reasons. One is the result of people entering such work for differing reasons; secondly as a result of these differing perceptions, leading to very different encounters
with reality and to very different lessons on how to move forward; and in particular what kind of an 'organisation' - in the sense of organised effort, not necessarily an institution - is required to achieve this. 10

The field requires further investigation in order to find a meaning and patterns.

Even within the broad rubric of 'non-statutory' activity or organisations, we can further eliminate those, the membership of which carries a degree of compulsion - such as the family, caste-group, the church and the State.

Michael Banton has pointed out:

Associations are usually contrasted with involuntary groupings serving a greater variety of ends such as kin groups, castes, social classes and communities .... Sir Henry Maine stressed the movement of relations based on status, as determined by birth, to relations of contract deriving from the free agreement of individuals. Voluntary organisations become more common and significant as societies advance in technology, complexity and scale. 11

Similarly David Sills would exclude from the fold of voluntary organisations those built around the economic interests of any group. He terms them "making a living" associations which include business firms, trade associations, production, marketing and consumer cooperatives, professional associations, production and labour unions. 12

Another characteristic of voluntary associations has been the unremunerative quality of work done. Jai
Sen says:

The use of the term 'voluntary' as used in the 'voluntary organisation' has generally two connotations: the first concerns the manner and motivation of association: the , and usually means some element of conscious material negation.

So also, Rudolf Heredia has pointed out:

What is voluntary must essentially be .... free from the 'economic compulsion' of the profit motive and self-interest.

David Sills also pointed out that in such organisations:

Volunteer (i.e. non-salaried) members constitute a majority of the participants.

Also, AFC Bourdillon has pointed out:

A generation ago, 'voluntary' was normally used to denote 'unpaid'. A 'voluntary worker' was someone who gave unpaid service to a good cause, and the group which was formed to run this good cause came to be known as a 'voluntary' organisation. The group took its name, in fact, from the outstanding characteristic of the workers upon whom it depended. In recent years there has been a significant shift of meaning here. Now a days many of the most active voluntary organisations are staffed entirely by highly trained and fairly well-paid professional workers. The distinctive 'voluntary' character of such bodies is the product of not the kind of workers they employ, but of their mode of birth and method of government. A voluntary organisation properly speaking is an organisation which, whether its workers are paid or unpaid, is initiated and governed by its own members without external control.

Today, an increasing number of voluntary organisations are attempting specialised interventions, for example, water resource management, technology
appropriate for rural areas, improvement of soil condition etc. These tasks demanding specialisation, cannot be sustained at a level of purely unpaid work. Marcus Franda too, has pointed to voluntarism undergoing changes in response to newer compulsions.

However, in recent years, there has been a trend towards greater professionalisation of voluntary work leading one to say that voluntarism is the difference between what an individual gets and what he could get in the market for his skill and training. 17

Madeline Rooff's observation on voluntary societies is:

To a greater or less degree they receive personal help from voluntary, that is unpaid, workers but many of them, today, have salaried officers in key positions. 18

The fact of the voluntary organisations being independent of government control may permit it to be less regimented and bureaucratised than the government effort through its departments or agencies. Says Heredia:

What is voluntary must essentially be chosen and as such be free from what is ascribed by social status or prescribed by organisational procedure, free from what is autocratically and hierarchically centralised rather than democratically controlled. 19

However, we must hasten to clarify that the word "organisation" too indicates that there is a degree of formality in the association or group. There is the presence of rules and regulations. As Stephen Hatch
points out:

It is necessary to define them as voluntary organisations, as...being organisations not simply informal groups.20

David Sills has characterised voluntary organisations as:

An organised group of persons (i) that is formed in order to further some common interest of its members, (ii) in which membership is voluntary in the sense that it is neither mandatory nor acquired through birth, and (iii) it exists independently of the State.21

However, the above explanations seeking to define voluntary organisations as bodies created by individual effort, comprising of people who have cohered together on their own volition, at no, or low wages, does not still fully outline, a voluntary organisation. A voluntary organisation has to have a "normative" content. Says Hatch,

Participants in voluntary organisations are always animated by a mixture of motives, but there is, in most of them a strong moral element.22

Beveridge prefaces his important study on bodies giving Mutual Aid and Philanthropic Aid in the book Voluntary Action, by saying:

This study is confined to Voluntary Action for a public purpose — for social advance. Its theme is Voluntary Action outside each citizen's home for improving the conditions of life for him and for his fellows.23
AFC Bourdillon, in the introduction to the edited work *Voluntary Social Services: Their Place in the Modern State* had stated:

A 'voluntary worker' was someone who gave unpaid services for a good cause, and the group which was formed to run this good cause came to be known as a 'voluntary' organisation.

Altruism, benevolence and charity, self-abnegation, inspired by religion or by the humane core of man's heart has motivated organised and unorganised action and effort in order to alleviate human misery in various forms. We must also try to understand that the dominant generally acknowledged understanding of voluntary organisations carries with it the special weight of altruism, welfare, and action motivated by social consciousness. Welfare of the poor and deprived sections (interpreted not merely in material terms), appears to be the agenda of the voluntary organisations.

This weight of welfare and others-regarding action is clear in Beveridge's now famous explanation of voluntary action as:

....action inspired by one or other of two main motives — Mutual Aid and Philanthropy. The first motive has its origin in a sense of one's own need for security against misfortune, and realisation that, since one's fellows have the same need, by undertaking to help one another all may help themselves. The second motive springs from .... social conscience, the feeling which makes men who are materially comfortable, mentally uncomfortable so long as their neighbours are materially uncomfortable: to have social conscience is to be unwilling to make a separate peace with the giant
evils of Want, Disease, Squalor, Ignorance, Idleness, escaping into personal prosperity oneself, while leaving one's fellows in their clutches.

India has had a long tradition of voluntary activity. Writers have referred to the voluntary nature of Indian society. Voluntary service activity was extensively performed by charity, religious and philanthropic organisations. With the advent of independence the fledgling state accepted the task of social welfare and recognised the cooperation of the voluntary organisation in this task.

However, the advent of the social welfare state in England was eventful. The responsibility of the State for the weak, indigent, sick, old, the unemployed and the mentally deranged was conceded gradually and reluctantly over a long period of time. State action was perceived as interference and a challenge to the idea of laissez-faire individualism. Says Rooff:

For a great part of the 19th century the prevailing social philosophy denied the responsibility of the community for the welfare of its adult citizens. Until the 1870's Individualism dominated thought, and laissez-faire was widely accepted as the proper role of the State.

State assistance to the increasing number of poor also caused the burden of a poor tax to fall upon communities and sometimes this was unequally distributed:
Communities with a large number of paupers frequently had few wealthy, merchants, which meant that the poor tax had to be collected from the householders of more modest incomes. ³¹

People desired that "the State should not interfere with private economy so that the manufacturer could reap the profits of production". ³²

Thomas Malthus in the "Essay on Population" (1798)³³ disapproved of poor relief because it tended to encourage paupers to have more children to get relief for them and tended to raise the price of food, which again impoverished the entire working class. ³⁴

Initially social welfare came only through the medium of voluntary charity and philanthropy or under the influence of churches, monastaries. Later hospitals run by donations from the aristocracy administered to the old, the sick, the orphans, the women.

From the 12th to the 15th century the relief activities of the church were supplemented by the charities sponsored by guilds of working men for mutual self-help. They often extended help to the needy in times of drought or famine.

But the decline of feudalism which led to freeing of workers from duties towards nobility also led to a loss of social security, specially felt in the periods of need, sickness, old-age, etc. By 1531³⁵ the first
constructive measure of the government for the relief of the poor was made.

Rooff points also to the contribution made by the growth of learned societies which discussed issues and instituted studies. She says:

There was certainly a new spirit abroad in the late 18th century which gathered strength in the 19th, and prepared the way for the extension of the social services in the 20th. It showed itself in a gradual widening of sympathy for the less fortunate members of the community.

Also individuals like Robert Owen were taking the initiative to set up welfare schemes for mill workers in Lanark. Cobbett and Carlyle too were writing on social conditions. Novels with a social purpose were becoming popular. Rooff points out:

Miss Gaskell, Kingsley, Dickens, Disraeli and a number of lesser artists like Mark Rutherford portrayed the wretched conditions of the labouring poor .... their readers gradually becoming sensitive to the sufferings of the oppressed.

Further more, to explicate the concept of voluntary organisations, it may be worthwhile to look at some classifications which have been attempted in earlier years. David Sills refers to an investigation made by Sherwood Fox in 1953 where he examined the functions performed by some five thousand associations and based a classification upon the distinction between Majoral, Minoral and Medial organisations. Majoral associations are those which service the interest of the major
institutions of society: business, professional, scientific, educational, labour and agricultural associations. Minor associations serve the interests of any significant minority in the population: women's clubs, church associations, hobby clubs and above all ethnic associations. Medial associations mediate between major segments or institutions in society. For example, parent-teacher associations mediate between the family and the school system. Social welfare organisations mediate between those which provide financial or other aid to the under-privileged population. Veteran's groups mediate between war veterans and the government, and voluntary health associations mediate between scientists and the public, as well as between individuals suffering from a particular disease and the medical profession.

Constance Smith and Anne Freedman have pointed out that voluntary associations have been classified on a variety of basis: (i) their size; (ii) their internal political structure; (iii) their independence or dependence on outside control; (iv) their societal functions; (v) source of their support; (vi) their location; (vii) class and characteristics of their members; (viii) intimacy of contact among members; (ix) bases of the incentives; (x) beneficiary of the associations activities—prime beneficiary may be the membership, the client, the public or the owners.
However, any attempt at classification will meet with a difficulty of adjusting within it, the dynamic and evolutionary nature of voluntary organisations. Understanding of the facts of reality may deepen and intensify and evolve. It may comprehend interdependencies and interlinkages and thus alter the nature of the voluntary intervention or action or activity. A group which began with a charity motive, or with a developmental project in mind, with a totally apolitical comprehension of the nature of its objective, may later evolve into an organisation with a political understanding of its task, a struggle orientation and an objective of challenging delimiting structures. Thus the intervention at the social welfarist level may develop towards a deeper understanding of complex interrelationships over time. 42

Dunu Roy points to a linear movement in the "counter ideology" which exists in society, which calls for a change in the entire structure of society. He explains its progress as passing, not necessarily in a linear fashion, through the following stages:

Thus, through the agency of the counter ideology, conceptions develop from charity to development, from development to organisation, from organisation to politics and from politics to political education.... 43

Of voluntary organisations, D.L. Sheth says:

.... some of them have begun to view development as struggle; they are taking up new programmes of
imparting relevant information, skills and knowledge to the people. Some of them have started organizing the people with a view to compelling the government to implement its own schemes intended to benefit the poor and legislation intended to protect people's economic and political rights. They are also working to ensure people's participation in the decision-making bodies in charge of these schemes. Issues like bonded labour and minimum wages have begun to attract their attention. An awareness is growing among them that development is not possible if the problems of power structures are ignored.

M.J. Joseph too speaks of the process of evolution in these groups. He describes:

three stages – the stage of social welfarism, stage of radical nationalism, and finally the stage of socialist orientation. Of this the first marks a typical social work approach in which action groups involve with community not as political activists but as social workers at the micro-level. Often various charitable and philanthropic groups operate with such a welfarist orientation. Action groups and voluntary agencies in this stage of development subscribe to the notion of state directed welfarism; they usually adopt an apolitical stance and are disinclined to examine the linkages between a local problem and the nexus of exploitation embedded in the broader structures. Hence at this stage, action groups tend to advocate conformism and mobility within the confines of the system. Their actions are only instrumental in promoting such mobility. They neither encourage mobilisation of oppressed masses nor do they erode the legitimacy of the state structure in general and bourgeois capitalist hegemony in particular....

In contrast, action groups with a radical nationalist approach generally start building mass movements from the base. In this second phase of their development, action groups stand for fundamental democratic rights of the people including the right of self-determination which is perceived as attainable only outside the frame-work of the existing state structure. Such action groups engage in building alternative structures by mass mobilisation no doubt, but they do not shake themselves out of bourgeois reforming which they had imbibed in themselves consciously or unconsciously. Hence there is no clear-cut break with the capitalist legacy in the case of action
groups that are radically oriented, but anchored in nationalist commitments. It is in the third stage of development that action-groups achieve this break-through. Here their radical socialist orientation enables them to develop a vision of an alternative social order seen through the linkages between micro-level conflicts or struggles and the systemic contradictions at the macro-level.

However, Elridge makes a valuable suggestion:

"... it is more important to use such categories as a tool for creative understanding of the motive forces underlying groups, structures and actions rather than attempting the frustrating exercise of classifying each and every voluntary action group."

Since our purpose is to examine the agenda of voluntary organisations, to understand their vision of social transformation towards enhancing liberty for their target group, and their relationship to the state, it may be useful to perceive voluntary organisations as organisations with an agenda for social change and transformation. We may classify them based on the vision of change they have, i.e., classify them on the basis of the kind of transformation they wish to achieve. This may range from achieving no change in the system, i.e., making no attempt to alter the status quo, to aiming at challenging the structures of the state.

1. Thus some activity may make no impact and bring no change or transformation in the system; or the change wrought may be temporary and transient. This kind of isolated acts of transformation can come through charity and philanthropy.
2. Some activity which aids the state in its effort at social transformation, i.e., helping the administrative endeavour to implement poverty alleviation programmes, helping in unravelling bottle-necks, facilitating implementation of governmental programmes.

3. Some activity may press for social transformation within the politico-legal system of the state, i.e., pressing for implementation of state laws, e.g., Equal Remuneration Act, Minimum Wages Act, etc.; pressing the system for social transformation which can be wrought within the system, e.g., demanding law against misuse of amniocentesis tests; pressing for imaginative use of available judicial, legal opportunities for bringing about transformation, e.g., the use of social action litigation to force employers to pay labourers their minimum wages, or pressurising the state to desist from certain actions perceived as adverse to poor, e.g., through writing of letters to press, publishing reports, fasting in protest against a project or action, e.g., Amte against the Narmada Dam, Bahuguna against the Tehri Dam.

4. At the other end of the spectrum lies activity which has the objective of bringing about structural transformation within the state. This implies changes in the economic arrangements of
society as well as in the political arrangements, which preside over the socio-economic. Political ideas which lean towards this kind of transformation, and which challenge the legitimacy of the state flow from the Naxalite stream.

The Naxalite stream, or the CPI (ML) is a breakaway group of the Communist Party of India, and advocates a programme of annihilation of the class-enemy. Their means are violent.

Part II

Voluntary Organisations and the Indian State

In this chapter we will attempt to identify the tendencies and trends in voluntarism in India and the perception of the Indian State to voluntary organisations in post-Independence India. This backdrop is important within which to locate the investigation of the five voluntary organizations chosen for a close examination.

The state of voluntary sector is described by Kirtee Shah:

A great diversity - in origin, nature, character, ideological stance, background and way of functioning, characterises the voluntary sector in India. On the one extreme there are traditional, good-intentioned welfare oriented philanthropists, not given to or bothered about social contradictions ... and on the other extreme are those who believe in nothing less than fundamental
societal restructuring. They are Gandhian and Marxist, religion-based, industry promoted wings of political parties, survivors of long defunct political and social movements, and young professionals in search of alternative 'clients' and new challenges. Some are foreign trained and influenced. Some are totally indigenous. Some thrive on foreign funds. Others refuse to touch them. Some are content to deliver services to the needy. Others believe that delivering services is not an end in itself but also a means to organise people to help themselves.

In pre-Independence India, voluntary activity had grown around religion - such as the activity of the Ram Krishna Mission, the Christian Missionaries; around charity - such as the establishment of schools, hospitals, endowments and trusts; and around Gandhiji and his idea of constructive action in the field of rural development, economic and social uplift, removal of untouchability etc.

D.N. Dhanagare has pointed to the tendency of diverse movements to be conflated within the National Movement:

Whether it was Mahatma Jyotiba Phuley's attempt to mobilise the bahujan samaj (masses) against the hegemony of the elite Brahmans in Maharashtra, or the Arya Samajists campaign for Shuddhi (purification of those who had been converted to different faiths); whether it was a scavenger's union mobilised by the Peasants and Workers Party under Muzaffar Ahmed's leadership in Bengal, or Maharishi D.K. Karve's crusade for women's upliftment in Maharashtra, whether it was Gandhian Swarajashrams in Gujarat which undertook constructive activities including the upliftment of Hariijans, or Godavari Parulekar's work of conscientising the Warlis of Thane district in Maharashtra; all these formed an integral part of the mainstream national movement and political processes.
Owing to the close identification of the Indian National Movement with Gandhi, the idea of voluntary participation and constructive work was seen as important for citizen involvement with the task of nation-building.

J.D. Sethi points out:

India has a long tradition of voluntary organisations engaging themselves in rehabilitation, relief and social work in the fields of health, education, rural development, women's uplift, anti-untouchability programmes etc. These organisations got stimulated during the struggle for independence and for initiating genuine constructive work for the uplift of the poor and downtrodden. For Gandhi the two were inseparable parts of political and economic struggle and development.

For Gandhi, service in the real sense of the word was possible outside the State machinery. The socio-economic and moral regeneration which Gandhi visualised as a natural concomitant of independence, he foresaw emerging only through voluntary activity. He had envisioned the Indian National Congress disbanding itself and taking up a new role of service to the people as a Lok Sevak Sangh. While this suggestion was not accepted, nevertheless the Gandhian strain was perceptible in three separate strands in the Indian polity in the post-independence India.

A strand emerged, of those workers of the Indian National Congress who had joined the government. The Gandhian ideals were accepted by them as unquestionably
good, worthy of emulation and emerged as something of national ideals.\textsuperscript{53}

On the other hand were the many Gandhian workers who became associated with the promotion of the Gandhian ideals of \textit{khadi} and handicrafts development, which the government had accepted as a part of its responsibility.

According to Rajni Kothari,

A whole range of "constructive work" activities of the Congress movement were continued in the form of non-governmental agencies to whom both grants and legal entitlements and centres were provided by the government. Gandhians and others who could not or did not wish to join the government or the ruling party spearheaded these agencies and both worked closely with governmental programmes meant for diverse social strata (from harijans and tribals to illiterates, women in distress and slum-dwellers) and for setting up important sectors of a mixed economy (handicrafts, and village industries, rural development agencies, credit cooperatives, educational institutions etc.) and retained a degree of autonomy in their functioning. To this was added a later generation of "social work" agencies in the rural areas, agencies working for community development, \textit{panchayati raj} and other bodies as well as, still later, more radical programmes like adult education through voluntary bodies meant to "consciencise" the people and employment guarantee schemes.\textsuperscript{54}

There was yet another strand of workers aspiring to give shape to the Gandhian principles of social and economic restructuring through practical service and the implementation of Gandhi's almost revolutionary notions of Trusteeship\textsuperscript{55} and Sarvodaya\textsuperscript{56} The important plank of this strand was the Bhoodan Movement.\textsuperscript{57} At one time it held out a great promise for a peaceful transformation
of rural society and was a unique example of voluntary initiative of such a size anywhere in the world. 58

The government policy of promotion of khadi and handicrafts was written into the planning document and was largely accepted as an indication of the government's positive attitude towards voluntary activity. The objective of it was to give shape to the Gandhian economic ideals of economic self-sufficiency for Indian villages and encouragement of cottage industries for that purpose.

Sewashram at Wardha, Maharashtra had been set up by Gandhi himself and it served as an example of the economic and social change which he had visualised in the Indian rural setting. Later other experiments, along Gandhian lines had been carried out by Harivallabh Parikh at Rangpur, Gujarat (1940) and at Gandhigram Rural University at Madurai (1940). 59

To understand the perception of the State to voluntary activity at the dawn of independence, we must also make note of some other successful efforts at rural development by voluntary effort.

One effort was Dr. Stephen Hatch's experiment in rural development carried out in Martandam, Trivandrum (then Travancore), in the 1920s, under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association. The Rural Development Demonstration Centre at Martandam Undertook
activities like encouragement of cottage industries, literacy campaign, training of rural workers, establishing cooperatives, fostering innovative technologies such as improved methods of raising poultry, bee-keeping, dairy, cow-rearing, weaving etc.

Yet another instance was the rural uplift programme initiated by Rabindra Nath Tagore and Dr. Stephen Elmhirst at Sriniketan, near Shantiniketan in West Bengal in 1922. The major projects included village level health workers, village oriented education, village health cooperatives, boarding school for boys to enable them to be trained in cooperative activities, raising gardens, keeping poultry and dairies, learning crafts etc.

Yet another effort at community development was conducted at Gurgaon district in the 1920s by the Deputy Commissioner of the area F.L. Brayne, through efforts at improving agriculture production, increased village sanitation, basic education and the encouragement of cooperatives.

Other efforts at rural development in pre-Independence India were the Firka Scheme of Rural Development initiated by the undivided provincial government of Madras, the Baroda experiment of Rural Reconstruction initiated by Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III of Baroda, assisted by his Dewan V.T. Krishnamachari
and the Nilokheri experiment with the resettlement of refugees from Pakistan under S.K. Dey.

In the climate of the immediate post-Independence period with new state which professed to be interventionist, voluntary activity independent of the State, was perceived in a favourable light by the government. A Planning Commission circular to all States emphasised the necessity of 'pooling and coordination' of experiences, and suggested that:

the principal officers concerned with the Community Development Programmes should join together for a few days to consider common problems and review the experience already gained in different states and on particular projects like Etawah, Nilokheri, Faridabad and elsewhere.63

In fact, Albert Mayer's successful work at Etawah 64 was looked upon as a practical experiment which was to be incorporated in the delivery system of the administration of Uttar Pradesh.

Thus voluntary action was treated as an avenue to facilitate the welfarist role of the new State. The democratic orientation and welfarist inclination of the new government had been vocalised in the development policies, in the text of the Constitution with its guaranteed Fundamental Rights and a comprehensive enumeration, of Directive Principles, in the programmes of social welfare and in the Panchayati Raj idea envisaged. The effort, in toto, was towards creating a
more responsive system, an effort towards attempting to "transform the machinery which was at one time devised to look after the function of revenue collection and maintenance of law and order into a Welfare Administration."\footnote{65}

According to V.T. Krishnamachari, the then Planning Minister:

There should be a change in our outlook also. We have to adapt ourselves to the new concept of the welfare State. We should approach our task in a new spirit. We should give up the idea that we are here to force our programme and plans on the villagers. It is for the villagers to tell us what they want and for us to assist them \ldots.\footnote{66}

The Bharat Sewak Samaj was conceived as a non-political and non-official national platform for constructive work, and to provide:

\ldots a common platform for all who wish to give their share of time and energy to developing the people's own effort in relation to the National Plan and, at the same time \ldots intended to assist in the development of existing voluntary organisations.\footnote{67}

The primary objects of the Samaj were to find and develop avenues of voluntary service for the citizens of India to:

a) promote national sufficiency and build up the economic strength of the country;

b) to promote the social well-being of the community and to mitigate the privations and hardships of its less favoured sections; and

c) to draw out the available unused time, energy and other resources of the people and direct them into various fields of social and economic activity.\footnote{68}
Social Welfare was seen as the natural constituency of voluntary organisations and it was in the field of social welfare that its role was seen as salient.

A major responsibility for organising activities in different fields of social welfare, like the welfare of women and children, social education, community organisation, etc., falls naturally on voluntary agencies. These private agencies have long been working in their own humble way and without adequate state aid for the achievement of their objectives with their own leadership, organisation and resources. Any plan for the social and economic regeneration of the country should take into account the service rendered by these private agencies and the State should give them the maximum cooperation in strengthening their efforts. Public cooperation, through these Voluntary Social Service Organisations, is capable yielding valuable results in canalising private effort for the promotion of social welfare.

The important role of voluntary organisations was also emphasised by the Balwant Rai Mehta Report (1957) which had given shape to the idea of Panchayati Raj as a new system of local government. It said:

Today in the implementation of the various schemes of community development, more and more emphasis is laid on non-governmental agencies and workers and on the principle that ultimately people's own local organisations should take over the entire work.

The Ashok Mehta Committee set up in 1977 to review the Panchayati Raj system commented on voluntary organisations:

Of the several voluntary organisations engaged in rural welfare, a few have helped the Panchayati Raj institutions in micro-planning exercises. They prepare comprehensive area development plans, conduct feasibility studies and cost/benefit
analysis, explore ways and means to induce local participation in planning and implementation. AVARD (Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development) also provides consultancy services in project formulation and assists its member agencies with technical support. Voluntary agencies, if they have requisite expertise, proven standing and well equipped organisations, can assist Panchayati Raj Institutions in the planning process. They can be particularly involved in the formulation of projects and schemes. They can also help create strong public opinion in support of measures aimed at social change.

Perusal of the Plans gives a clear indication of the role the Indian State expected voluntary organisations to play in the newly constituted State. This role was seen initially in the field of social welfare, and later on in the area of rural development as well.

In the First Plan there appeared to be a recognition of the potential energy that inheres in voluntary activity. Effort was made at encouraging the growth of voluntary activity. The following extract from the Plan makes it clear that the State envisaged a harmonious relationship with voluntary organisations:

As voluntary social welfare organisations develop and can assume greater responsibilities, it should be possible to entrust to them an increasing number of functions which at present have to be undertaken by government agencies. In securing public cooperation, the association of non-official representatives in bodies such as development committees, project advisory committees, etc. in district administration and in community projects is of a great value. This association should, however, be extended by affording greater opportunity for practical work and practical participation to voluntary organisations.
The Plan also mooted a "Board set up by the Central Government to which a great deal of administrative authority was given". The objective of the establishment of the Central Social Welfare Board (and subsequently State Social Welfare Boards), was to aid voluntary organisations to run their programmes on a systematic and continuous basis, and assist them in providing improved and consistent service. They provided grants-in-aid to the organisations already in existence and financial assistance to newly established ones.

Further, a fund of Rs.4 crores was provided as grant-in-aid to voluntary social service organisations for "strengthening, improving and extending the existing activities in the fields of social welfare and for developing new programmes ....".

However, in the later Plans, the allocations greatly increased. In the Fifth Plan, the funding for voluntary organisations in the field of social welfare was Rs.15.97 crores. In the Sixth Plan, funding of voluntary organisations was Rs.44 crores. In the Seventh Plan, social welfare through voluntary organisations was funded to the tune of Rs.41 crores.

The role of voluntary organisations in the field of social welfare was recognised from the First Five Year Plan. But that they could have a role in the arena of
development was recognised only from the Sixth Plan onwards. In the Sixth Plan social welfare was linked with poverty alleviation Plans to assist the poorer sections.

Social welfare is basically supplemental to the needs of the most deprived and the real benefit to them should come from the general sectors. The National Rural Employment Programme and the beneficiary-oriented Integrated Rural Development Programmes would contribute substantially in this regard, besides agriculture animal husbandry, irrigation and other economic activities.

The Plan saw the role of voluntary organisations in effecting decentralisation of the implementation of the anti-poverty programmes in order to make them responsive to the local problems, needs and potential. The Plan mentions that:

Greater use of such institutional devices as registered societies or corporations at the district level offer a means of accomplishing this.

The Plan also spoke of the effective organisation of a Rural Resource Corps:

The governing body of these agencies could serve as a forum for the direct representation of the target group beneficiaries .... The representatives of local credit, educational and voluntary agencies on these bodies would facilitate coordination and encourage wider participation.

The Plan also made reference to "the promotion of purely non-governmental organisations, "formal" or informal in nature which could motivate and mobilise the people in specific or general developmental tasks".
The Plan recognised and outlined some institutionalised activity which was already in existence with the objective of motivating and mobilising the people in various aspects of developmental tasks. These were youth and women's organisations operating at different spatial levels, voluntary organisations engaged in developmental work in an area or specific activity, organisations of specific beneficiary or interest groups like self-employed women or farmers for economic objectives like marketing, organisations of farmers into cooperatives for improving land and water management, religious, social or cultural organisations like the Rotarians, Jaycees or Lions, and professional organisations or institutions which take up study, research and social action programmes as part of their social commitment.

The Plan also further identified some activities in which "the awareness and conscious participation of the people is critical for success". These were related to renewable sources of energy, family welfare, health, water management and soil conservation, social welfare programmes for the weaker sections, implementation of Minimum Needs Programme, preparedness for disaster and disaster management.

In all these, the Plan spoke of encouraging people's participation "in an organised way through
local groups and associations of voluntary organisations". 84

Further, the Plan spoke of:

supplemental action by voluntary agencies in promoting activities for self-employment as well as development of the rural poor [for] optimising the results of Plan programmes by enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of services provided by governmental functionaries and by motivating the concerned beneficiaries and rendering suitable guidance to them in the formulation of viable projects and sources of funding. 85

An Expert Group under M.S. Swaminathen, set up by the Planning Commission made suggestions for steps to strengthen the implementation of the programmes for alleviation of poverty in February 1982. Some of these are pertinent for the role voluntary organisations are expected to ideally play in this task. It recommended:

....voluntary agencies are among the most important means available for enlarging the contribution of the people, mobilising human resources for constructive tasks, and expanding the total effort for development. They are also often well suited for undertaking innovative projects, testing new possibilities through pilot projects, and enlisting the cooperation of individuals with special skills and experience who are willing to give their time and energy and experience in the service of the community....

It should be emphasised that, in the very nature of rural development, in each field, there are activities of which some aspects or components could be assigned with advantage, for implementation through competent voluntary agencies which might be already at work or whose formation or development could be encouraged. In designing each programme, therefore, the Planning Commission and the concerned Central Ministries and Departments in the States should make a special effort to mark out those components and areas of action which can be
'passed on' with the necessary administrative and technical guidance and financial support, for implementation mainly by appropriate voluntary agencies. 86

However, it was the Seventh Plan which examined very closely and in detail the role that could be carved out for voluntary organisations in the area of rural development in cooperation with the State. While being a recognition of the good work the voluntary organisations had been involved in, it was also an implicit criticism of the government's own shortcomings in "delivering development." 87. It also outlined vast areas of future cooperation between voluntary organisations and the State.

The Plan outlined a mechanism which would facilitate administrative and financial relationship between the voluntary organisations in rural development and the State. The Plan conceded that:

There has been inadequate recognition of their role in accelerating the process of social and economic development. These agencies have been known to play an important role by providing a basis of innovation with new models and approaches, ensuring feedback and securing the involvement of families living below the poverty line .... Voluntary agencies have developed expertise and competence in many non-traditional areas to plan their own schemes instead of expecting government to do so. 88

More specially, the role which the voluntary organisations were expected to play in implementing development included: 89
To supplement government effort so as to offer the rural poor choices and alternatives;

To be the eyes and ears of the people at the village level;

To set an example. It should be possible for the voluntary agency to adopt simple, innovative, flexible and inexpensive means with its limited resources to reach a larger number with less overheads and with greater community participation;

To activate the delivery system and to make it effective at the village level to respond to the felt needs of the poorest of the poor;

To disseminate information;

To make communities as self-reliant as possible;

To show how village and indigenous resources could be used, how human resources, rural skills and local knowledge, grossly underutilised at present could be used for their own development;

To demystify technology and bring it in a simpler form to the rural poor;

To train a cadre of grass-root workers who believe in professionalising volunteerism;

To mobilise financial resources from within the community with a view to making communities stand on their own feet; and,

To mobilise and organise the poor and generate awareness to demand quality services and impose a community system of accountability on the performance of village-level government functionaries.

The specific programmes and areas in which their participation was expected were:

1) Integrated Rural Development/Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme/TRYSEM;

2) Implementation of land ceiling and distribution of surplus land;

3) Enforcement of minimum wages to agricultural labourers;
iv) Identification and rehabilitation of bonded labour;
v) Development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes;
vi) Supply of safe drinking water: repair and maintenance of water supply systems with community support;
vii) Afforestation, social forestry, development of biogas and alternative energy sources (solar and wind energy, improved chulhas);
viii) Promotion of family planning;
ix) Primary health care, control of leprosy, TB, blindness, preventive health programmes using village resources;
x) Programmes for women and children in rural areas;
xii) Consumer protection promotion of cooperatives;
xiii) Promotion of handicrafts and village and cottage industries;
xiv) Promotion of science and technology;
xv) Legal education;
xvi) Rural housing, improvement of rural slums;
xvii) Environmental and ecological improvement; and,
xviii) Promotion and encouragement of traditional media for dissemination of information.

This close relationship between the government and the voluntary organisations marked "a major shift in policy and direction with emphasis on developmental work and people's participation in rural areas".91
The Plan also made some recommendations regarding the process by which an institutional arrangement could be worked out to facilitate the tasks of voluntary organisations in the form of setting up Consultative Committees at the level of the Centre and the States. The purpose of these would be to serve as forums for voluntary organisations to bring their problems, explain their position to the Government. Another recommendation was to prepare panels of experts at State and District level, who would be available to voluntary organisations to assist with professional advice.

The Plan also proposed a financial outlay of Rs. 100-150 crores to be spent in collaboration with the voluntary organisations in the developmental field over and above the outlay on social welfare. It also suggested that there should be a Code of Conduct which should apply to agencies receiving these grants.

This climate of encouragement and support, and the financial assistance coming through bodies like CAPART had helped in the growth of the voluntary sector. Consequently there was a growth of many a voluntary effort working in backward regions attempting to meet immediate physical difficulties of a specific region or area, such as paucity of water resources, or poor agricultural production, inadequate opportunities of income-generation, acute poverty, malnutrition, etc. Attempts were made to facilitate the government's own development
mechanism to be more efficient and responsive, to remove bottlenecks, to press for relief measures and infrastructure like roads, seek efficient and honest implementation of governmental programmes like the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), create income-generation projects, avenues for marketing, etc. Financial support was easily forthcoming from the government. Issue-specific programmes like environmental upgradation, promotion of alternative sources of energy etc. too were sponsored.

The importance of voluntary organisations lies primarily in their ability to deliver some incremental advantage to the poor and the deprived. Since interventionist groups are, apart from their immediate objectives, also likely to be committed to a general social improvement as well, there are also accompanying efforts at conscious social change directed upon issues like women's education, increased opportunities of participation of women and dalits in the schemes they generate. Community participation, conscious decentralisation, development and organising people around immediate issues like pani panchayats may be emphasised in course of performing their major developmental activity. They may also engage in imaginative experiments in resource conservation, cooperative farming, or water management.
The Eighth Plan has also reiterated the importance of voluntary action and identified certain areas where it plays an important role. These are rural development, training of rural youth, promotion of safe drinking water, rural housing, promotion of science and technology, wasteland development, health-care, family welfare, education, welfare for women and children, programme for scheduled castes and tribes. The government sees the potential of a voluntary organisation growing if their "professional and managerial capabilities are built up in a systematic manner...." The Plan also envisages a nation-wide network of NGOs. It states that in order to facilitate the activity of this network, three schemes relating to the creation/replication/multiplication and consultancy development have been worked out by the Planning Commission.

The Eighth Plan has also spoken about the general recommendations of a Task Force which had been set up by the Planning Commission to study and develop appropriate self-managing institutions for integrated development at the village/block and district levels. Recommendations have included the setting up of village institutions with the entire community's membership for the purpose of development, and the identification of the existing voluntary agencies with a good track record that they can be replicated and the setting up of a national grid
of voluntary institutions at the central level to provide them with a forum. 94

The Plan envisages voluntary organisations as "catalysts" in the process of overall development of an area which will be possible through a three-pronged approach - generation of awareness, inculcation of appropriate skills and convergence of developmental programmes. 95

Participation of non-governmental organisations has been mentioned favourably in fields of education, 96 prevention of environmental degradation, 97 integrated development of rainfed areas, 98 agricultural extension, 99 drinking water projects, 100 rural sanitation, 101 and women's development. 102 In the ongoing welfare programmes their important role has been reiterated. 103

The State patronage and support to voluntary activity which was evident in the Seventh Plan must be seen along with patronage and support to voluntary activity extended by international agencies. The World Bank and its agencies are funding many development programmes through voluntary agencies because, as smaller non-bureaucratised bodies, voluntary organisations are seen to be more efficient. Their close association with the local populace and its specific requirements, give them a democratic participatory character as well.
A commentator states that international agencies giving aid for development agencies,

.... have long endeavoured to set up collaborative relations with NGOs, particularly since the 1960s. These relations have been inspired by an ideological blueprint, such as helping a newly independent country to develop a pluralistic society (a view widespread in the United States) or advance social democracy (a motivation common in Europe—particularly among the Scandanavian countries). Pragmatic considerations have prevailed with aid agencies that look at NGOs in a functional way, that is, as more efficient conduits for development inputs. Some relationships have been structured through specialised institutions and procedures; for instance, the European Community and most bilateral aid agencies have substantial programmes for NGO projects. The World Bank carries out a policy dialogue and operational cooperation with NGOs. 104

Suresh Sharma points to:

the incontestable fact: perhaps nearly half—firm estimates are difficult, but it could be anything between 200-300 crores a year—of money spent in the voluntary sector is provided by foreign funding institutions. 105

Talking about finding too, Prema Vishwanathan states:

In 1989 the government's coffers yielded as much as Rs.250 crores annually, while external assistance amounted to an even higher figure—Rs.350 crores to Rs.450 crores, according to the estimates of the Parliament. If one includes donations by private and corporate donors, the money pouring into the voluntary sector was in the region of Rs.700 crores to Rs.800 crores a year. 106

Some commentators upon the voluntary sector have viewed the proliferation of voluntary organisations as a direct consequence of the increased patronage by the State and the aid-giving agencies. Yet another conse-
quence they point to, is an influence upon the "nature" of voluntary activity, by the proliferation of voluntary agencies which are "not rooted to the soil" but are professional agencies, drawing membership from the middle class, emphasising efficiency. Harsh Sethi points out:

Very few of these groups are actually involved with the base communities in a day-to-day sense. Even the professional groups who work in the field do so more as managers of development programmes, and rhetoric of participation apart, have little in common (if not contempt for) the poor with whom they work. 107

Rajni Kothari is concerned over the increasing popularity of the NGO term and frame-work. He not only regrets the absence of social orientation in the term, but also sees it as an effort to colonise anew the hinterland of India. He sees it as a ploy of the state for bypassing bureaucratic structures of a government department, and consequently to "privatise" the state in order to facilitate the transnational capital to enter into the informal economies of the rural areas, e.g., in the field of dairying, wasteland development, forestry, etc. 108

However, that there were vastly different perceptions to the closer alignment between voluntary organisations and the state had become clearly apparent in the Seventh Five Year Plan. These became singularly clear in the reactions to the government's draft legislation
in 1986 of setting up National and State Councils and a Code of Conduct/Ethics for the voluntary organisations.

One group saw this emerging close relationship with the state as good and useful for their projects and work and as recognition of the work they had been hitherto involved in without fanfare and publicity. They saw no conflict between the increased state support being made available, and the voluntary "non-governmental" nature of their work. In fact they aspired for an atmosphere of more non-bureaucratised functioning.

While they may have been critical of the government's delivery system, its inability to deliver the goods, and may talk of mobilising rural people to obtain their rights, yet they see the role of voluntary organisations as an additional input, which can bring its skill and resources to improve the system. For them the State recognition adds a legitimacy.

That many of the voluntary organisations do not view their task at hand, in any way at variance with that of the State indicates their close relationship with the State. Their dynamism, efficiency, smallness, geographical proximity to the local and the grass-roots, are their claims to be better and more effective delivery mechanisms than the State itself. Franda quotes from the proceedings of a seminar attended by 28 leading voluntary organisations of India, in which,
among the conclusion was the statement that the government "should not only appreciate the importance of Voluntary Organisations but also encourage them (and use them) for promoting programmes like Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Village Industries, and so forth". 112

However, ranged against the proposed Draft Bill on the Council, and Code of Conduct were those voluntary organisations and their supporters who saw this as evidence of the government's desire to regulate and coopt the voluntary sector. They saw it as a regulation of voluntarism, which is essentially a "non-State energy". 113

This proposed bill was also seen by some organisations as another in the line of State actions which had attempted to compromise the independence of the voluntary sector, the chief characteristics of which were autonomy and flexibility. Amendments to Foreign Contributions Regulation Act, 114 and the setting up of the Kudal Commission 115 to investigate the working of some Gandhian Organisations were two recent outstanding instances of the State attempting to stifle the independence of voluntary organisations.

Kothari opposed the proposed legislation seeing it as the government's move to coopt the voluntary sector. He points out:

It is argued that a statutory bill and code of conduct are inimical to the spirit of voluntarism,
that they will stifle the independence of NGOs and their capacity to highlight the plight of the poor and marginalised sections and oppose government policies that contribute to such a plight, that they will increase rather than decrease governmental interference .... and that they will, by driving a wedge between those who accept joining the council and those who do not, polarise rather than bring together the NGO sector.

Critics of the Code also point to the peculiar situation where only rural development organisations, and only those which were registered bodies, could obtain membership of the Council.

Jai Sen points to the inherent contradiction in attempting to legislate and to regulate the field of voluntary action where there is tremendous complexity and subjectivity of approach in intervention:

This condition of difference and variety (in the voluntary sector) has taken shape for obvious reasons. One is the result of people entering such work for differing reasons; secondly, as a result of these differing perceptions, leading to very different encounters with reality and to very different lessons on how to move forward; and in particular what kind of 'organisation' — in the sense of organised effort, not necessarily an institution — is required to achieve this. The consequence of all this is that the so called "voluntary sector" as a whole does not have any singular logic or motive, unlike — for instance — the private sector with its logic of profit .... But it is also a fact that it is easy to forget this variety in the climate of today's debate, where institutional voluntary work has become a dominant form because of its scale and compatibility and 'fit' with the dominant society. This has taken place even while we know, within ourselves, the importance and vitality of other more flexible, less institutionalised and often individual forms of voluntarism in our country.
An important concern in the argument against the proposed legislation was to draw attention to the presence of people's action, also voluntary in nature and origin. Though it does not take the shape of an agency or institutional format, it is an expression of ideas, opinions and feelings of people.

Kothari points out that:

"... the social thought on which voluntary effort is based has to move out of the paradigm of developmentalism that is inherently both statist and corporatist. This is a severely delimiting conceptualisation. The new concept that is emerging is built around the rights and liberties of various sections of people...." 118

Jai Sen suggests, a categorisation to clarify the terrain:

The terms "voluntary" and "voluntarism" should be used only in situations where there is no registration, license, legitimisation, protection or constraint by the State. All organisations in the development field hitherto called "voluntary" but who are registered or otherwise associated with the State should henceforth be called "development organisations" .... or any other name. 119

While the proposed legislation on the Code of Conduct and Council was eventually dropped, nevertheless the debate generated did highlight some important issues which have added to the understanding of the voluntary sector.

The questions may be posed: "Is development totally dissociated from mobilising activity?", "Will a development organisation be dissociated from mobilising
activity?", "Will a development organisation be committed to preservation of status quo or be to willing to subscribe to change?" If so, "what kind, and what degree of change?"

Here we may examine the situation of contradiction implicit in the State-voluntary organisation relationship. Elridge and Nilratan point out that the relations between the two are characterised by a blend of cooperation and conflict and hint at a possible explanation for this. They point out:

Essentially, this is caused by contradictions arising from the necessity to mobilise people to demand rights and services and dependence on government for numerous good offices. No doubt NGOs also hope to influence the mainstream formulation and implementation of official developmental programmes while welcoming greater access to funds and other benefits. At the same time, they fear loss of identify and grass-roots links.

Here we must refer to our earlier discussion on the possible evolution in perception of voluntary organisations to the task at hand. The vision of a voluntary organisation may be an evolutionary one. It may evolve from relief, to development to politics as its understanding deepens and interlinkages are comprehended. An organisation may thus move from development to mobilisation.

Sethi has pointed out that developmental activity may be a way of making an entry into an area:
Constructive work activity has a value in providing an entry point for more radical work or in generating cadres for organisational or political activity.

However, Nilratan and Elridge in their study of voluntary organisations in Bihar point out to the difficulty, in practice, for voluntary organisations to integrate the developmental as well as mobilisational aspects. They point out:

Most social workers and activists see a vital need to integrate the two modes of action, or at least deny that one can be pursued without the other. In practice, very few groups achieve this ideal and most tend to emphasise either developmental or mobilisational aspects but rarely both.

Part III

The Grass-Roots Organisations

Partly because of the close relationship in which voluntary organisations had been placed with the Indian National Congress-led Indian National Movement, and partly because of the State sponsorship of voluntary organisations in social welfare, and later in developmental activities, there has been a continuing association between the voluntary organisations and the State in India. However, there did remain individual and group initiatives, which, inspired by different ideals and impelled by differing motivations, struck out
a path independent of the State. Commentators on the Indian socio-political scene have pointed to the appearance of a new kind of mobilisation which became evident in the period of the late sixties and early seventies.

People's initiative in this period was influenced and inspired by a unique radicalisation. The agitations, protests, strikes in the period, and later the Emergency issue highlighted not only the ferment among the people, but also highlighted a new kind of voluntary people's activity. This was totally independent of State support, taking up issues of the poverty and survival of the poorest and the most vulnerable sections of the community and intervening in the basic problems of their life and living — wages, food, health, literacy, inquiring into causes of marginalisation and powerlessness, etc.

Rajni Kothari locates this new initiative, and new voluntarism in the context of the "people's resurgence" in this period, which saw the people active and forthcoming in voluntary action.

These initiatives have been described by different authors as 'non-party political formations', 123 'grass roots initiatives', 124 'people's movements', 'people's organisations', 'social action groups', 125 'action groups', 126 etc. Commentators on social mobilisation are
anxious to clarify the difference between voluntary organisations which are closely related to the State and people's voluntary activity. Kothari calls the former passive voluntarism, in effect cooperating with the government and business houses through agency work. 127

He points out that passive voluntarism:

raised no awkward questions of a structural kind, on the whole kept away from politics .... and hardly ever took mobilisational roles, at any rate, not of a confrontational nature 128

He describes the new voluntary activity as:

something that is sui generis developed from among the people, with a different kind of role than that of the government inspired agencies which still followed a development model that had, in fact, failed to deliver the goods. 129

Kothari draws a picture of the emerging trend in voluntarism:

Some of these actions and movements are of a struggle type, against injustice and oppression. Others are of a moderating and corrective type, as a part of renewed religiosity, of the assertion of tradition and above all, intervention in regard to nature .... There is underway a tremendous assertion of traditional identities and of regionalism. I am talking about new kinds of action groups that emerged from the mid-60s to the late 70s, who thought about development and technology in different ways and who thought of mobilising social groups in different forms. I have in mind the emergence of non-party political formations. These are not merely voluntary organisations; these are voluntary organisations that intervene politically on behalf of the poor, on behalf of the landless, adivasis, dalits, women and children and many other oppressed groups. 130
This was a people’s mobilisation, in different geographical areas, around different issues which were disparate, diverse and apparently quite unrelated, and was led by young middle-class activists, or by local leaders.

However, this phenomenon of new voluntarism has been described as a 'trend' or 'tendency' because, despite the multiplicity and variety of these subjective endeavours they spring from a common concern, working for and with the exploited strata with a view to transform society.

This new kind of activity in the arena of voluntarism has been led by young middle class activists. Kothari has referred to:

the emergence of a new class of mediators in the political process, generally called the activists, upper and middle class in their social origin but identifying themselves with the lower orders of society.

According to Sethi:

These groups are organisations composed mainly of sensitised/radicalised middle class youth, working for and with the oppressed and exploited strata with a view to transform society....

Sheth too points to the same phenomenon:

The change in the nature of grass-root activity and initiatives in India came about in the early and middle seventies when the middle class educated youth began to go to the villages and tribal belts in sizeable numbers to work with and for the poor.
The diverse issues raised by them may include the issue of non-payment of minimum wages, access to resources like land, water, forest produce, caste oppression, bonded labour, health, alternative science, environment, women, civil liberties, etc. But the commonality at the core of all of them is a concern for the poor and economically deprived.

According to Sheth:

...they all share a common perception about the ... sources of misery of the 'left out' as a consequence of the prevailing model of development. 135

Says Kothari:

It is with the plight of these rejects of society .... that 'grass-roots' movements and non-party formations are concerned. 136

While it is easy to comprehend the economic core in issues like mobilising for minimum wages, the issue of bonded labour, access to forest produce, etc., the novelty of these groups lies in the fact that they approach all issues: environment, health, literature, science, theatre, education and culture from the framework of the economic position of the poorest. They would like to demystify science in order to make it available to the common man, demystify the health and medical structure to enable it to be viewed from the viewpoint of the poorest and holistically, approach environmental issues in relation to the survival needs
of the poorest, of the tribal or the hill dweller. Their agenda thus embraces the need of the common man.

They are able to pose issues in a way that exposes the anti-poor bias in the established way — whether it is the expensive, complicated health system which ignores simple requirements of the poorest, the knowledge system (where specialisation and complexity may ignore traditional wisdom), or environment where commercial interests hold the common man’s survival needs to ransom. They have also been described as being part of a movement of alternatives which questions the wisdom of the established way and suggests alternative perceptions which may be more sustainable as well as more just to the poorest. Alternative views may be seen in handling science or environment or even development.

Says Sheth:

The emphasis of their programmes vary very widely from raising the level of material life/natural life, to raising consciousness, to demanding a rightful share of the national cake, to working for self-reliant economic social and cultural developments in the local and regional settings. But almost all grass-roots workers are in their different ways in search for an alternative to the present model.

Examples of such groups are, in the people's science movement — Medico Friends Circle, the Jamkhed experiment, the Patriotic People's Science Movement, ASTRA (Application of Science and Technology to Rural Areas), consciousness and awareness raising — the Kerala
Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP); in the politico-organisational field — the Shramik Sanghatana in Dhule, the Bhoomi Sena in Thane, the Chattra Yuva Sangharsh Samiti in Bodh Gaya, the Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samiti in Bihar, the Ryotu Coolie Sangham in Andhra Pradesh, Kanakapur Raiyat Sangha in Karnataka.

Within this category of grass-root groups may be included other groups which may be vocalising concern with the environment and ecology movement — such as the Dasholi Gram Swaraj Mandal in the U.P. hills, the Manu Rakshana Koota in Karnataka; those in the women’s movement such as the Stree Shakti Sanghthana (Hyderabad), Manushi (Delhi), Saheli (Delhi); those in the civil liberties movement like the People’s Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR), People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), the Citizens for Democracy (CFD).

To these could be included lawyers active in rendering free legal support to the poor sections, popular theatre which puts forward the people’s perception, upholding their interests, professional groups willing to look beyond their immediate economic gain and uphold the principles of justice. It may even include committed journalists attempting to unravel complex issues to highlight the real situation of the oppressed groups.
Moreover this new category of voluntary organisations have drawn sustenance from, as well as helped foster support for

... a new genre of 'movements' that, while having an economic content, are in practice multidimensional and cover a wide terrain - the environmental movement, the women's movement, the civil liberties movement, movements for regional self-determination and autonomy ... and the still small and feeble but slowly gaining movements for peace, low military budgets and an anti-hegemonical stand vis-a-vis our neighbours. 138

Thus apparent in the civil society is a new kind of voluntary activity which he sees as social voluntarism, springing from the people and identifying itself closely with them. Rajni Kothari sees it as

in the parlance of the national movement, a shift back to what is known as rachna (constructive work) from vikas (progress) or 'development' as conceived by the government. 139

He contrasts the two broad categories of voluntary activity and organisation - those who implement the government scheme and those

formed in the late sixties and early seventies, formed by people who were critical of the pattern of growth that we had embarked upon, who wanted to directly reach out to the poor, the landless the delits, the adivasis and others. 140

The uniqueness of the initiative lies in the fact that they are:

agencies that are formed by a larger and more holistic spirit of social voluntarism (not agencies of some external body). For we need to remember that, believing in statism and statist view of development, we have undermined whatever was
already there in terms of the volunataristic base of Indian society as well as the new volunatarist thrust that had come up during the national movement. \[141\]

However, the earlier voluntary activity, with a relatively 'apolitical' stance serves a purpose too. D.L. Sheth points out:

This is not to deny the fact that these non-political developmental organisations are of significant help in providing succour and relief to the poor in times of man-made calamities. They perform this task in a manner, that left to itself, the development — bureaucracy of the government cannot. \[142\]

Kothari also sees a role for the voluntary organisations of the developmental type. He points out:

I have no doubt that there are many voluntary organisations of the developmental kind that have done good work and there is much scope for this type of work — work conceived not as an appendage to a government programme but as an independent role to be played in the development of the country which cannot be played by government institutions. \[143\]

However, Sheth apprehends that apolitical groups — are subject to the official governmental policies which either keep them in a state of permanent mobilization for enlisting their support to the regime. \[144\]

Thus while commentators on Voluntary Organisations attempt to distinguish development volunatarism and new volunatarism; between volunatarism as it was developing in a close relationship with the State, and the people's organisations which accommodate a degree of dissent
against the State; nevertheless a core similarity needs to be pointed out. They both share a normative essence which is a characteristic of voluntarism. The constituency of both remain the poor, the weak and the deprived groups. The similarity however ends here.

The whole perception of the new voluntarism towards the issue of poverty, its genesis, its persistence, and poverty alleviation, differ vitally. It comprehends wider linkages of the apparent economic denial and is able to perceive the power dimension at the root of deprivation. From this flows their different perception of social transformation which tends to make a very sharp divide in the voluntary sector, splitting it as it were, into two groups. The development voluntary organisation is usually willing to work within the state established system, facilitating its implementation, while the activists’ voluntary organisation tries to push back through available means the structures delimiting the poor. Essentially this New Voluntarism is a voluntarism mixed with activism. It may be seen as an enriching of the arena of voluntary activity by bringing into the fold new insights, new strategies of working and new visions of social transformation.

Upendra Baxi’s distinction between voluntarism and activism will make the issue clear. Thus:

Voluntarism may be seen as typically oriented to the service of the victims of the state and civil
society, the principal goal being existential amelioration of victim groups. Its ideology does not question why the victims groups become and remain so... 145

And on the other hand,

In acute contrast activism seeks to empower the victims. It is based on some manifest or latent critique of the organisation of the distribution of power in society. The critique is based and finds its raw material, in the pathology of power.... Activism is thus characterised by a militant and radical interrogation of power in the title of "justice". In helping people understand that their exploitation is due to social, political, human arrangements and institutions, activism seeks to remove the culture of faith. 146

It may be asked, "What is the rationale for the changed nature of voluntary activity?" The answer that the query begets is : It is a combination of many inter-related phenomenon that has contributed to the rise of this social mobilisation. The period of the late sixties and early seventies had been characterised by a disappointment with the inability of the prevailing model of development to deliver the goods, and by a resultant despair and occasionally radicalisation among the sensitive youth. There was also dissatisfaction among the academia in the Third World, with the inability of the prevailing theories of development to explain the poverty and underdevelopment in their part of the world. The period saw the appearance of fresh theories which attempted to fill this lacuna.

India like many other developing nations, had been influenced by these post-war Western theories.
Prominent among these was W.W. Rostow's "Stages of Economic Growth" which upheld that development universally proceeds through five stages - traditional society; preconditions to take off; take off; drive to maturity; age of mass consumption. Implicit in the idea were certain presumptions that development was a universal and linear process of evolutionary progress in which there are definite stages through which all nations have to necessarily pass; that the Western nations had already travelled on the path of growth and were in a higher stage of growth.

The ideology of the dominant pattern of development was that development was equated with economic growth and economic growth was viewed as progress. A critique of these notions came from the later American emergencia school which linked the development of the west to the underdevelopment of the colonial nations. Hermassi points out:

The central idea of the neo-Marxists is that far from being independent occurrences, the development of the industrial countries and the underdevelopment of the poor countries are opposite phases of the same historical process... the historical process of the expansion and development of capitalism throughout the world simultaneously generated and continues to generate both economic development and structural underdevelopment.

Moreover, the promised "trickle down" of economic growth implicit in the growth model of development adopted in
India had failed, raising questions about the possible structural impediments of the process. 148

Within India there was a glaring evidence of the ineffectiveness of the growth model. As D.L. Sheth highlights, the scenario was grim. There was rampant poverty. The successive governments had been unable to meet the needs of the poor. Apparent also was the widening divide between the rich and poor and the obvious disabilities arising from ill-planned industrialisation. Out-migration from the rural areas, the appearance of urban slums, the rampant unemployment, the degradation of the environment both from consumer-bred wants and survival needs were other symptoms of failure. Gross and glaring discrepancies in 'development' were apparent. In Sheth's words:

It is astounding that a programme of colonial type exploitation of the primary producers (the vast population is of tribals artisans, small and marginal farmers and landless labour) by a small urban industrial elite, and its client class of a dependent rural elite, has passed muster as a programme of rural development for as long as three decades now. 149

The model of development based on a Theory of Modernisation adopted in post-Independence India had clearly been unsuccessful. The social mobilisation evidenced in the rise of the new voluntarism has been perceived by some authors as organisational responses to the ill-effects of the developmental policies of a State which appears to have lost its elan. Commentators on
the issue also point out that existing voluntary organisations evolve, changing their perception from an uncritical understanding of social issues to a political and critical perception. Harsh Sethi has pointed out:

Having confronted misery in its starkest forms, they are forced to ask the questions: "Is all this suffering necessary?" "What causes it?" "How come it is only the poor who suffer?" "Can social problems be dealt with by charity?" Then starts the process of internal turbulence and debate. This debate is both internal and external, and very often individuals and organisations change through the process of open-ended questioning.

Scholars writing on the subject, primarily Kothari, Sheth, Sethi, perceive the rise of these action groups, grass-roots organisations, as a consequence of the harmful developmental policies of the government, and the changing nature of the state.

Says Kothari:

There is a growing concern that the state has not been able to function as an instrument of liberation and enfranchisement of the poor and deprived, of the excluded peripheralised and the various minorities.

And the state has tended to acquire the nature and role of an adversary of the people. Kothari states it thus:

Today the state is seen to have betrayed the masses, as having become prisoner of the dominant class and their transnational patrons and as having increasingly turned anti people.
Harsh Sethi views the appearance of these initiatives as an indictment of the State, of political parties and the political process.

The State (in a welfare sense) is seen as having reached a point of exhaustion unable to replace the destruction of the livelihood systems, subsistence economies, and the natural environs of the poor. The parties are seen not only as corrupt and inefficient, but essentially as brokers responding to only those with some entitlements - in a sense as feeding upon the miseries of the oppressed. The dominant political process is seen as having acquired the character of a market contributing to only a further fragmentation, manipulation, cooptation and repression of any who dare to resist, much less protect....

Sheth sees the State as having lost its autonomy to the forces of the market:

Intervention on behalf of the poor to restrain the market forces from destroying the local subsistence economies and their natural environs (which at least provided food and shelter to the poor) has come to an end.

After having seen the nature of voluntary activity in the period of the seventies in terms of its historical conjuncture we now focus our attention on the issues interventions, modalities of working and objectives they uphold.

The initiatives of these groups cover diverse fields - drinking water, irrigation facilities, payment of minimum wages, caste oppression, gender oppression, empowerment of communities, resistance to vested economic and social power, issues of ecology and environment, issues of survival and social forestry in
hill areas or tribal areas. Their constituency has been the poor, the dalits, the women — what D.L. Sheth has termed, "the untouchables" of development. 155

Kothari elaborates on the issues taken up by these groups:

... problems of the ethnic and religious minorities, of the forest people affected by environmental degradation, of people in the northeast and lately, of various 'nationalities' asking for regional autonomy. There are others who concentrate on important aspects of bonded labour, child labour, women's labour, migrant labour, and the labour of those who have been displaced from their homelands by various development projects (dams, thermal plants, 'social forestry' projects) ....

At one level the grass-roots groups are a critique of the government; they are also a critique of the existing political parties especially the left. The grass-root groups have taken up the issues of poverty, marginalisation and deprivation which in a sense is the historic constituency of the traditional left groups. Says Sethi:

It is a reality that the political parties, in particular the Communist Parties, have not been able to organise large sections of the working classes; rural poor, women, urban unorganised sections, why even fair chunks of the organised sector working classes. So what do these classes and strata do? It is this gap between the party and the class that the various action groups and voluntary agencies seek to fill. 157

Commentators have pointed out that the appearance of "a set of non-State actors" 158 had become inevitable
because the left parties have been interested in taking up issues only of the organised working class (to which this largely unorganised group does not belong) and because the parties have been coopted into the political system of elections and political parties.

The activists, while working in their chosen field can take various forms of initiatives and several forms of intervention. These may range from investigation and writing of well-documented reports highlighting various issues of deprivation, marginalisation, backwardness, and publicising the various localised struggles of people against marginalisation, or the erosion of civil and democratic rights. The activists could help to organise support services in the field of health and medicine which would be helpful for the poorest groups. They could concern themselves with the actual search for technical solutions to problems like water and fuel scarcity. They could concern themselves with the issue of economic empowerment of a community, or of a particularly vulnerable group within it, like the women or the dalits. They could actively involve themselves supporting or organising a group or community for struggle against oppression, against powerful castes, landlords, State power — and very often a combine of the three.

This activity which though in appearance close to the politics of the left and radical parties, has yet
kept a separate identity from those parties. Some of these groups may be fronts of left parties. They may have some links with the IPF, CPI (M) or the CPI (ML) groups. At this extreme end of the continuum that comprises of people's voluntary activity attempting social transformation, the dividing line between non-party activity which may have a political agenda and party — activity of the left-radical type becomes blurred. Perhaps the only clear difference that can be pointed out is the participation of left political parties in election; and their desire to wield State power. Non-party groups on the other hand do not aspire for State power. Instances of groups which are involved in politico-organisational work are the Bhoomi Sena, Shramik Sanghathana, Chetra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini, the Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samitis — to name but a few.

Thus it is clear that there are many kinds of organisational initiatives and interventions which "precludes any possibility of putting this heterogenous collection of organisations and activities under a single rubric".

It has been pointed out that in course of their activity, these activist groups concentrate their attention not only on the specific issue at hand (which may have social, economic or political overtones), but
take up a wide comprehensive approach to the issue, stressing a holistic perception. Their initiatives will endeavour to understand and establish wide inter-linkages

seek[ing] to cover the ecological and cultural issue as well, including a sustained attack on sources of 'internal' decay and degeneration such as drunkenness, filth and insanitary conditions of the environment and neglect and exploitation of the children.

The consequences of this kind of voluntary activity which not only dissociates itself from the State but offers a stern critique of its development and its policies have been far reaching and significant. Not only has it pushed to the centre-stage issues of the marginalised, and forced the government to make some responses, it has helped to alter the content of politics by pushing into it issues which were once considered as having no relation with politics — issues of environment, technology, migration and displacement, health, housing and education, women's issues — by relating them to poor, their life and survival. Thus it has pushed back the frontiers of politics.

Further, it has approached these issues in a 'political' way, i.e., in a way that is meaningful for the distribution of power in a system. They are able to comprehend development in a 'political' way, and as they challenge establish systems and status quo and vested oligarchies, they are willing to comprehend development
as 'struggle'. They are conscious that their constituency, the poor are without economic bargaining power.

Baxi points out, that these activist groups are "on talking terms with state power".

The activist typically believes that there is a realm of politics outside the arena of competitive party politics. The activist, typically shuns party politics, but is not one bit averse to the practice of politics, ideological politics, combining, but certainly going beyond, the configuration of ideologies latent or patent in party politics.

Kothari has used the term "redefinition" of politics to comprehensively describe the novel issues, the novel treatment of the issues these groups have upheld and the notion of social change these groups would perceive. Redefinition embraces all the possible transformation which their altered vision may influence. Baxi has used the term "new politics".

Kothari's understanding of "redefinition" of politics includes prevention of depoliticisation of the masses, looking at politics beyond merely legislative and electoral politics, including new subjects into the content of politics and offering them new arenas of controversy and struggle. Newer issues would include issues of environment, civil liberties, women's issues, peasant movements, peace movements as well as movements for regional self-determination and autonomy.
Redefinition of politics would like people to be centre-stage in the issues that concern them. This would prevent the decline of politics into an activity of professional politicians and political participation into a farce of periodic elections. It would also prevent the present trend of seeking techno-managerial solutions to problems of the people.168

Says Kothari:

On the whole, it would be a mistake to think of these action groups, either logically or empirically as one has thought of political parties. As I see it, their role is neither antagonistic nor complementary with the existing parties. It is a role at once limited (in space and expanse) and more radical - non competitive with parties, but taking up issues that arise from not merely local and national but also international forces at work. The individual effort is by and large expressed in micro terms but it deals with conditions that are caused by large macro structures.169

In course of their working these groups imbued with social voluntarism may throw up notions of alternatives - alternatives in the handling of science, and technology, alternative life styles which are balanced and non-exploitative, alternative development which is sustainable, participative, non-exploitative, and which does not create dependency patterns.

However these micro initiatives have not yet (and in fact are not expected to - given the fledging stage they themselves are in) been able to offer a complete alternate frame-work of development.170 However, as
Baxi points out:

Thus we have a variety of critiques and reconstructions: the feminist and the ecological being the most prominent. We have also a whole variety of concrete social alternatives, participation and protest to injustice, health, education, to mention a few salient forms of new politics.

D.L. Sheth has commented on the unique style of interaction of the activists with their groups:

the new change-agents and grass-root organisations are devising new forms of political action through peaceful protests, sustained sensitisation, mutual learning and training of cadres, and a long-term process of close identification of language and life-style between the people and the change-agents. They are in short creating a kind of non-electoral politics which has economic and cultural content...

Thus their objective and agenda of change would cover not only politics, but the social, cultural arena as well as modes of participation and interaction. For example, the issue of democratic working and gender equality would be assimilated in their notion of change, as would be democratic participation. The issues would be seen not as isolated phenomenon, but in their complex interlinkages. As an example, Harsh Sethi points to the example of Jamkhed where a comprehensive health-care project attempts a new approach to health:

To begin, there is the accent on the central role of the community and not on the doctor. In addition there is a strong evidence of a learning process ...that health-care cannot be handled within the realm of medicine alone. There is need
for income and employment generation as also cleanliness and nutritional awareness. Thus the Jamkhed project has got involved in both developmental and educational tasks which is new for 'health-care experts'. Linked to this is the more recent wage question. Thus there is a process of moving from a specific professional intervention to a more general one covering many more areas of existence than just health. 173

The all-comprehensive objective of this complex maze of voluntary interventions and assertions at the grass-roots would be to push the poor to the mainstream discourse, and alter the State's perception of them. Says Kothari:

They have to be seen as part of the democratic struggle at various levels .... as attempts to open up alternate political spaces outside the arena of party and government, though not outside the State, rather as new forms of organisation and struggle meant to rejuvenate the State and make it again an instrument of liberation from the morass in which the under-privileged and the oppressed are trapped. 174

With the vision of transformation they embrace, these groups (which arose because of the weakness and ineffectiveness of the left parties and their programmes of reformation and change), have been termed as the non-traditional left.

What are the implications drawn from this brief examination of the grass-roots voluntary organisation?

At the simplest levels they are expressions of dissatisfaction with the prevalent situation. Even though they take up divergent issues, the common
underside of poverty which they share, makes them a united critique of the state's development policies.

They reflect the fact, that inspite of 'social engineering' efforts by the state, in practice much still remains to be done. Their purpose is to alter the situation as it prevails. They also generate some suggestions for alternative patterns.

Finally, these grass-root groups should not be perceived from the point of view of "associational richness and plurality in democracy", but as dissenting voices raising issues of economic survival, criticism of the State, and a struggle for change.

They are being perceived by some scholars of the Indian political system as bearing a potential for acting as agencies of transformation towards a more equitable, more harmonious system.

However, despite the appearance of a new strain of voluntary organisations, those organisations which were built around traditional concerns like relief charity development, etc., continue to exist. It will be useful at this juncture to examine some classification schemes suggested by some authors in order to facilitate the understanding of the prevailing scenario in the field of voluntarism.
Harsh Sethi has suggested the following organisational classification:

a. **Development and Charity Groups.**

b. **Action Groups** involved primarily in the processes of conscientisation, mobilisation, organisation of the oppressed without an explicitly stated political perspective (very often such groups pose as being non-political or even anti-political).

c. **Political Groups** carrying out tasks very similar to action groups but formed with reasonably clearly defined political perspectives and goals.

d. **Pre-Party Political Formations** Political groups formed with the purpose of graduating onto the level of political parties.

e. **Support Groups** carrying out specialised tasks of bringing out journals, documentation and resource centres, lawyers' forums, etc. working in tandem with some other groups and/or political parties.

George Joseph and John Desrochers list the following types (approaches) of Action Groups:

a. Charity and Welfare.

b. Development:

1. with or without community participation,
2. with or without conscientising dimension.

c. **Conscientisation and people's organisations:**

1. with or without development programmes (SPAG or NPPF),
2. transformative action groups.

d. Politics:

1. non-party political groups,
2. front organisations and political parties.

*SPAGs stands for Semi Political Action Groups, and TAGs for Transformative Action Groups.*
It may be pertinent here to refer back to an earlier classification in which we had placed voluntary organisations in a continuum.

1. Those working within the system, making no effort to transform structures;

2. Those which understand the transformation along the path directed by the state, aiding the state in its programmes, i.e. attempting to work for a better and more efficient implementation of laws made by the State, aiding the State in its programmes of better and more efficient service, prevention of leakages, etc.

3. Those which are working for change within the system. They may press the State to make enabling legislation (e.g. for elimination of harmful techniques of working in an industry), or prohibitory legislation to prevent harm to a group (e.g., covering the misuse of amniocentesis tests), or they may press the state for implementing legislation (like minimum wages or abolition of bonded labour). They may use available political and legal avenues for obtaining their demands from the state, e.g. through civil disobedience, dharnas, protests, or through social action litigation. The avenues it uses, and the amendments it demands are within the system.
4. Those which are willing to challenge/change the political, economic structure of the state in quest for social transformation.

The activities of the voluntary organisations in development fall in the second category of classification.

The action groups, or the non-party political formations have a vision of "redefining politics". Their agenda for change can be adjusted within the legitimate modes of protest available to the organisations - political pressure, passive resistance, litigation, etc. However, at the extreme end of the "non-party political formations" spectrum, there may be groups which are influenced by violent modes of struggle.
CERTIFICATE

THIS is to certify that Ms Pooja Juyal has worked under my Supervision for her thesis entitled CIVIL LIBERTIES AND THE STATE IN INDIA: A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF SOME VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS being submitted to the Kanpur University for the award of the Ph.D. Degree in Political Science.

I further certify that:

(a) the thesis embodies the work of Ms Pooja Juyal herself;

(b) Ms Pooja Juyal worked under my Supervision for about three and a half years; and,

(c) Ms Pooja Juyal has put in over 200 days attendance in the Girī Institute of Development Studies, Lucknow as required by Ordinance 9 of Kanpur University.

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CIVIL LIBERTIES AND THE STATE IN INDIA:
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NOTES

1. Philip Elridge and Nilratan, Voluntary Organisations and Popular Movements in Bihar, Mimeographed paper (not dated), p.3.

2. Ibid., p.4


4. Ibid., p.277.


And: "In a totalitarian society all action outside the citizen's home, and it may be much that goes on there, is directed and controlled by the State". See p.10.


8. Hatch, op.cit., p.27.


However a sales depot or a cooperative venture may be started around an economic interest, aiming to function in a way that is economically profitable to the target group. This activity may be a means adopted by a voluntary organisation to economically strengthen and empower the poorer groups.


However, Stephen Hatch points to the danger of dwelling only on the 'voluntary' nature of an organisation. "The fact that an organisation is established voluntarily does separate it from all organisations, but not from commercial organisations", Stephen Hatch, *op.cit.*, p.8.


Also, Eldridge and Nilratan point out: "Thus the term voluntary organisation raises the problem that most organisations could not function without paid staff, even though general levels of remuneration in the voluntary sector are well below what can commonly be obtained in the public or private sectors, with longer and more unpredictable working hours". See, Philip Eldridge and Nilratan, *op.cit.*, p.3.


K.D. Gangrade points to the characteristics of voluntary organisations in the Indian context. "It is registered under an appropriate Act to give it a legal personality and an individual liability may give place to a group liability. The Acts under which organisations may be registered depending on the nature and scope of the activities are the Societies Registration Act, 1860, the Indian Trusts Act, 1882, the Cooperatives Societies Act, 1904, and the Joint Companies Act, 1955." K.D. Gangrade,


22. Stephen Hatch refers to a distinction made between organisations by Amitai Etzioni in A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organisations (Free Press, 1961). Hatch points out that "in normative organisations the involvement of participants is moral, and [in] utilitarian organisations the involvement .... is calculative. More crudely, some participants take part because they believe in an organisation, others because it serves their purpose". Hatch, op.cit., p.32.


25. Friedlander and Apte point out: "As human societies began, the feeling of belonging and the readiness to provide mutual protection were just as influential as the selfish desire to dominate weaker human beings". Walter A. Friedlander and Robert Z. Apte, Introduction to Social Welfare (New Delhi : Prentice-Hall of India, 1982), p.8.


29. See, First Five Year Plan, Government of India, Planning Commission, New Delhi, 1952.

30. Rooff, op.cit., p.4.


32. Ibid., p.19.

33. In his book Malthus explained that while the food supply increased only in arithmetic progression, the population grew in geometric progression, and
that agriculture, therefore, was unable to feed, a steadily increasing population—a situation he claimed, that made war, famine, and pestilence—necessary to stem this dangerous growth.

34. See, Friedlander and Apte, op.cit., p. 19.

35. This was followed by the statute of 1536, Artificers of 1562, Artificers of 1572, Artificers of 1577. The Poor Law of 1601 established the principle that the local community had to organise poor relief for its residents and provide sustenance for the unemployed and children, and work to the able-bodied. Then in 1795 came the Speenhamland Act. In 1834 came the Poor Law Reform.

Says Rooff, "Poor Law was administered as a disciplinary measure rather than as an instrument of relief", op.cit., p.3.

Said Disraeli of the Poor Law 1834, "To be poor in England was a crime". See Friedlander and Apte, op.cit., p.22.

36. One such was the Association for the Protection of Social Science, founded in the late 1850s. This took part in several investigations in the field of public health, which influenced legislation. Rooff, op.cit., p.7.

37. Ibid., pp.7-8.

38. Ibid., p.8.

39. Ibid., p.7.

40. See, David Sills, op.cit., p.366.


42. D.N. Dhanagare refers to Nalini Nayak, "...action groups start off more modestly with either straight-forward economic or even welfare/relief programmes. Those action groups that are sincere and honest in admitting the growing contradictions they encounter while pushing such programmes ahead, are forced to raise questions of propriety and adequacy of their 'welfare-action' and thus develop
their own self-critique. Through such a self-appraisal, action groups discover that there is no alternative but to launch organisational and organised activity". See, "Action Groups and Social Transformation in India: Sociological Issues", in C.Lakshmanna et.al., eds., Social Action and Social Change (New Delhi: Ajanta, 1990), p.33.


46. Philip Elridge, The Political Role of Voluntary Organisations and Action Groups in Gujarat, Mimeographed paper (not dated), p.3


49. Ibid., pp.27, 40 & 46-48.

50. D.N. Dhanagare, "Action groups and Social Transformation in India", Lokayan (New Delhi), 6/5, p.41.


52. Mathew Zachariah points out that the role outlined for the Lok Sevak Sangh was ".... this body of servants derive their authority and power from service ungrudgingly and wisely done to their master, the whole of India.

1. Every worker shall be a habitual wearer of khadi .... be a teetotaler .... have abjured untouchability .... be a believer of the ideal
of inter-communal unity, equal respect and regard for all religions and equality of opportunity and status for all irrespective of race, creed or sex.

2. He shall come in personal contact with every villager within his jurisdiction.

3. He shall enroll and train workers from among the villagers....

4. He shall keep a record of his work from day-to-day.

5. He shall organize the villagers so as to make them self-supporting ad self-contained through their agriculture and handicrafts.

6. He shall educate the village folk in sanitation and hygiene and take all measures for prevention of ill-health and disease among them.

7. He shall organise the education of the village folk from birth to death along the lines of Nayee Talim..." See Mathew Zachariah, Revolution Through Reform (New Delhi, Vistaar, 1986), p.21.

53. However even among them, the most significant and basic departure came with the jettisoning of the Gandhian ideal of development through self-reliance in favour of a planned economy influenced by the influential post-war development theories with their emphasis on economic growth.


55. Trusteeship was seen as providing a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production was to be determined by social necessity not personal whim or greed. It did not recognise any right of private ownership of property, except in as much as may be permitted by the society for its welfare. Under State-regulated trusteeship an individual would not be able to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction in disregard of the interest of the society.
56. The Sarvodaya Movement which Vinoba Bhave had guided for many years since Gandhi's death was an expression of revolutionary Gandhism with three major aims – to change the hearts and minds of the people so that they may pursue the truth; to enable people to practice a life style which will enable them to pursue the truth; and, to change social structures enough so that new decentralized structures that facilitate personal pursuits of truth within a nurturing community are possible. See, Mathew Zachariah, op. cit., p.20.

57. Bhoodan, given expression by Gandhi's spiritual heir, Vinoba Bhave, called for surrender of property rights in favour of the village community.


60. Ibid., p.54.

61. Terry Alliband has highlighted that "Sriniketan's programme was one of the earliest pioneers of collection of research data on social and economic characteristics of villages .... [when] government officials had little interest in rural community research .... and most universities assumed little responsibility for improving village life". Alliband, Ibid., p.32.

62. However, Alliband points out to some major flaws in this "development by decree". He says : "When the government agent was there, Brayne's projects were carried out by compliant villagers not eager to offend the "Sahib". But as soon as they left, villagers reverted to their traditional patterns", Ibid., p.17.


64. Albert Mayer's successful Pilot project at Etawah (U.P.) of the early and mid-fifties aimed at revitalization of Uttar Pradesh's villages through "a system of village-level-workers (v.l.w.) who were trained to provide technical assistance, adult education and community organisation in order to facilitate greater agricultural production, new village infrastructure such as primary schools and
improved housing, and modern village social economic institutions such as pre-schools and producers' cooperatives", Alliband, op. cit., p.38.


66. Ibid., p.19.


68. Ibid., p.151.

69. Ibid., p.617.


71. Ibid., p.386.

72. First Five Year Plan, Planning Commission (New Delhi), p.150.

73. The Central Social Welfare Board was set up in 1953.


75. First Five Year Plan, (Abridged Version), Planning Commission, Government of India, (New Delhi), p.239.

76. Under welfare of the handicapped for scholarship, research and training, sheltered employment and grants-in-aid to voluntary organisations Rs.4.83 crores was sanctioned. Grants-in-aid to voluntary organisations through Central Social Welfare Board were Rs.9.32 crores and grants-in-aid to All India voluntary organisations and for creches, day-care centres for children of working mothers received Rs.1.82 crores. From Sixth Plan Outlay: Social Welfare and Centrally sponsored Schemes, Sixth Five Year Plan, Planning Commission (New Delhi), p.436.

77. Voluntary organisations received under the following heads, the following funds: grants-in-aid through th Central Social Welfare Board Rs.16.75 crores; Scholarships, research and
training, sheltered employment and grants-in-aid to voluntary organisations for welfare of handicapped Rs.12.03 crores, grants-in-aid to All India voluntary organisations Rs.2.75 crores; for promotion and strengthening of grass roots level women's organisations Rs.1.97 crores and for creches, day-care centres for children of working mothers Rs.9.75 crores, Ibid., p.436.

78. Grants-in-aid through the Central Social Welfare Board Rs.20 crores; scholarships, research and training, sheltered employment and grants to voluntary organisations Rs.20 crores; grants-in-aid to All India voluntary organisations Rs.1.00 crore. Figures from Seventh Plan Outlays - Social Welfare and Centrally Sponsored Schemes, Seventh Five Year Plan, 1985-90, Planning Commission, Government of India (New Delhi), p.317.

79. Sixth Five Year Plan, op.cit., p.432.
80. Ibid., p.432.
81. Ibid., p.92.
82. Ibid., p.182.
83. Ibid., p.183.

The Plan also recognised some "success stories" in the field of Voluntary Action. These were the Jamkhed Project in child and health care in Maharashtra, Bharat Agro Industries Foundation Programme in animal husbandry and social forestry, Lijjat Papads in the field of cottage industry and Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Ahmedabad, see p.183.

84. Ibid., p.183.
85. The Plan spoke of the added incentive given to business houses engaged in voluntary action by exempting from Income Tax, under 35 CC and 35 CCA, expenditure incurred by them on certain permissible items of rural development. Ibid., p.183.
87. According to Jaitley: "The underlying rationale for this shift has been the recognition that the national programmes for rural development like the IRDP, have not had the desired impact and that the benefits have not reached those for whom these programmes were designed, namely the rural poor, in


89. Extract from Chapter 2, Ibid., pp.68-70.

The Plan also laid down certain criteria which had to be fulfilled in order that voluntary organisations could qualify to help the state with its programmes:

1. The organisation should be a legal entity.

2. It should be based in a rural area and be working there for a minimum of 3 years.

3. It should have broad-based objectives serving the social and economic needs of the community as a whole and mainly weaker sections. It must not work for profit but on no profit no loss basis.

4. Its office bearers should not be elected members of any political party.

5. Its activities should be open to all citizens of India irrespective of religion, caste, creed, sex or race.

6. It should have the necessary flexibility, professional competence and organisational skills to implement programmes.

7. It declares that it will adopt constitutional and non-violent means for rural development purposes.

8. It is committed to secular and democratic concepts and methods of functioning.

90. Ibid., pp.68-70.


92. The Ministry of Rural Development has set up a body to deal with the voluntary bodies: The Council for Advancement of Peoples Action and Rural Technology (CAPART). The CAPART was set up in 1986 by merging two existing organisations, namely Peoples Action for Development (India) and the Council for Advancement of Rural Technology. The CAPART channelises funds to the voluntary organisations
for implementing rural development programmes, and to this end a portion of funds available under different anti-poverty programmes, like the Integrated Rural Development Programme, Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme, National Rural Employment Programme, Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas, Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme, Low Cost Sanitation, etc. is made available to CAPART for being given to voluntary organisations. More specifically, the CAPART has been established "to encourage, promote and assist voluntary action in the implementation of projects for enhancement of rural prosperity" and "to strengthen and promote voluntary efforts in rural development with focus on injecting new technological inputs in this belief". From Department of Rural Development, Annual Report, 1986-87. See, Shriram Maheshwari, "Voluntary Action in Rural Development in India", Indian Journal of Public Administration (New Delhi), Vol.XXXIII, No.3, July-September, 1987, p.65.


94. Ibid., p.39.

95. Ibid., p.39.

96. Ibid., pp.284-290.

97. Ibid., p.93.

98. Ibid., p.12.

99. Ibid., p.12.

100. Ibid., p.380.

101. Ibid., p.280.

102. Ibid., p.395.

103. Ibid., pp.409-411.


105. Suresh Sharma, "Voluntary Efforts and International Funding", Lokayan Bulletin, (Delhi), 5/2, p.87.

The charge of foreign-funding of voluntary organisations working with the poor as a part of the imperialist strategy to delay 'revolution' by defusing local problems of the poorest strata have been made by some left groups. This charge made by Prakash Karat was countered by Harsh Sethi. Prakash Karat, "Action Groups/Voluntary Agencies: A Factor in Imperialist Strategy", The Marxist (New Delhi), April-June, 1984, and Harsh Sethi, "The Immoral Other: Debate between Party and Non-party Groups", Economic and Political Weekly (Bombay), 2 March 1985.


108. Kothari has termed these non-governmental organisations set up by the government to pre-empt bureaucracy, as GONGOs (Government Organised Non-Governmental Organisations).

He offers the National Dairy Development Board (NDBB), the Society for Promotion of Wasteland Development (SPWD), as instances of GONGOs. See, Rajni Kothari, "The NGOs the State and World Capitalism" in Walter Fernandes, ed., Voluntary Action and Governmental Control, op. cit., pp.11-34.

109. In fact, Sanjit (Bunker) Roy, who was appointed Consultant (Voluntary Agencies) for Rural Development in the Planning Commission for the Seventh Five Year Plan had, in his articles been pleading for a greater recognition of the voluntary sector and the setting up of an autonomous Council of voluntary agencies at the national level, to establish a code of conduct for voluntary agencies acceptable to the Central and State Governments and also to set up a forum of State Government officials and village level voluntary agencies. See, Bunker Roy, "For Prime Minister, A Word of Advice", Mainstream, (New Delhi), 9 March 1985, p.18.


113. The Seventh Plan, as we have seen had outlined avenues of close cooperation between State and voluntary organisations. This extended role of voluntary organisations in development programmes has been viewed with suspicion. Some critics have even seen it as "a part of the larger effort to jettison the developmental responsibilities of the State, and hand over schemes to non-official agencies for implementation, i.e., privatise the state". Editorial, Lokayan Bulletin (New Delhi), 4:3/4, p.4.

Also significant are the observations of Upendra Baxi in "For Bunker, A Word of Advice", Mainstream, 6 April 1986, pp.28-31. He argues for the establishment, of a more liberal, open environment and greater accountability of the Government. He is against increase in powers of the State which will be inevitable if the National Council of Voluntary Agencies comes about.

114. In 1976 the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) was enacted in order to keep a track of those who received foreign funds for fear that they may be misusing them.

One hundred and forty two voluntary organisations were named by the Government of India as those which would now require prior permission from the government before accepting any foreign contribution.

In 1985, the Foreign Contribution Act was made stricter in order to ensure better control. All foreign money received by a voluntary organisation had to go through only one account and a report had to be presented to the Home Ministry every six months.

See, Fernandes, op.cit., p.7.

Also see,"On Threats to the Non-Party Political Process", Lokayan Bulletin (Delhi), 3/2, pp.37-49. And Suresh Sharma, "Voluntary Efforts and International Funding", Lokayan Bulletin (Delhi), 5/2, pp.85-100.

115. Kudal Commission had been set up to inquire into the working of the Gandhi Peace Foundation.


120. Elridge and Nilratan, op. cit., p.5.


He also views constructive work as offering "the possibility of experiment with alternate style of doing things and with different organisational modes and processes", p.101.


125. See Rajesh Tandon, "Growing Stateism" in Seminar (New Delhi), No.348, August 1988, p.17.

126. See George Joseph and John Desrochers, Development Human Rights and Action Groups (Bangalore : Centre for Social Action, not dated).

128. Ibid., p.368.
129. Rajni Kothari, "Voluntary Organisations in a Plural Society" in Politics and the People, op.cit., p.421
135. Ibid., p.257.
139. Rajni Kothari, "Voluntary Organisations in a Plural Society", in Politics and the People, op.cit., p.421.
140. Ibid., p.421.
141. Kothari, Ibid., p.420. Walter Fernandes also explains: "On one side are the traditional organisations that have been implementing economic programmes. On the other side are the activist groups". Walter Fernandes, "Threats to the Voluntary Sector : An Introduction" in Walter Fernandes, ed., Voluntary Action and Governmental Control, Monograph, No.28, (New Delhi : Indian Social Institute, 1986), p.4.
143. Kothari, "Voluntary Organisations in a Plural Society", op.cit., p.420


146. Ibid., p.37.


148. Says Kothari : "Distributive justice was not built into the nation-building design and the development model". See his "Decline of the Moderate State" in State Against Democracy, op. cit., p.29.


151. See Kothari, "Voluntary Organisations in a Plural Society", op. cit., p.415.


156. Kothari, "Voluntary Organisations in a Plural Society", in Politics and the People, op. cit., p.422.


158. Says Kothari ".... they .... involve actors and modalities that are neither part of the State apparatus nor part of the prevailing party space". "The Grassroots Phenomenon", op. cit., p.403.
159. The Bhoomi Sena emerged in 1970 in the Palghar District of Thana, Maharashtra in response to the oppression of adivasis by the local elite. It identified adivasis land illegally usurped by money-lenders, engaged itself in seizing crop grown on this land. It graduated to setting up of credit facilities and digging of wells. Organisation of Shibirs (camps), setting up of Tarun Mandals, campaigns against alcohol and bonded labour, reduction of expenses in marriage, issues relating to minimum wages, panchayat elections, were other activities taken up. For details see, G.V.S. De Silva, et.al., Bhoomi Sena : A Struggle for People's Power (mimeo.) (Bombay : National Institute of Bank Management, 1978).

160. Shramik Sangathan is a movement that has been organising the farmers in the Shahada region of Dhule district in India since 1972. This region is dominated by the adivasis population. Issues taken up have been land alienation of the adivasis by the non-adivasis, wages, fighting against repression and atrocities, issue of dalits and women. See, "Shramik Sangathan, Dhulia District India", in Mohammad Anisur Rahman, ed., Grass-roots Participation and Self-Reliance (Oxford and IBH Publishing Company, 1984), p.60.

161. The Chattra Yuva Sangharsh Samiti came up in Bihar in 1975. It was proclaimed by J.P. as a national organisation in September 1978. Around the period of the Emergency its membership was very high. The CYSS has been closely associated with carrying out a struggle on issue of impact of dam projects in Bhagalpur and Singhbhum, issues concerning fishing and forest rights. But its major effort has been concentrated in the struggle against the Math (temple) land-owners of Bodh Gaya on behalf of the landless Musahars. Some success was achieved. See, Philip Eldridge and Nil Ratan, Voluntary Organisations and Popular Movements in Bihar, Mimeographed document (not dated).

162. The MKSS or the Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samiti is a group with CPI (ML) connections. It is active in the areas of Jehanabad and Gaya in Bihar attempting to organise the poor peasantry around issues of wage and other manifestations of exploitation. The group was banned in 1986.

163. Sethi, "Redefinitions ...." in Uncertain Alternatives, op.cit., p.94.
164. Kothari finds this "reminiscent of the freedom struggle in which liberation and swarajya were sought not just from an external power but from the "enemy within" as well". See "The Grassroots Phenomenon" in Politics and the People, op.cit., p.403.

165. The new change agents and grass-root voluntary organisations view rural development as essentially a struggle for establishing the economic and political rights of the poorest among the poor .... They demand direct intervention of the State - specially the judiciary and the 'fourth estate' - to protect the rights of the poor and ameliorate their situation and at the same time organise the people themselves for struggle. D.L. Sheth, "Grass Roots Initiatives ...." in Economic and Political Weekly, op.cit., p.261.

Says Kothari, "Non-party political organisations need not necessarily be apolitical: an organisation may be politically oriented and yet not work as a party". See "Voluntary Organisations in a Plural Society" in Politics and the People, op.cit., p.424.

166. Upendra Baxi, op.cit., p.49.

167. Ibid., p.40.


169. Kothari has pointed out that these groups believe in "redefining not just the meaning of politics but also concepts like revolution and transformation", "The Grassroots Phenomena" in Politics and the People, op.cit., p.40.; Kothari's contention must be reiterated that the appearance of these non-party political formations itself was related to the decline of political parties as upholders and mediators of the interests of the poorest. See, "Voluntary Organisations in a Plural Society", in Politics and the People, op.cit.


Says Sheth "Such a conception of politics can be best described as societics—political activity of individuals and organisations addressed to transformation of consciousness and organisational forms, especially of the non-state organisations in society which only ultimately may lead to the transformation of the state itself". See "Alternative Development as Political Practice" in Alternatives, op.cit., p.168.


It may be relevant to quote Kothari's view of the holistic view of the new voluntary organisations: "... there is the redefining of the area known as public opinion and knowledge and information.... It is thinking of knowledge beyond specialised knowledge, knowledge as social knowledge, knowledge as something that integrates and not divides, knowledge to think of society itself and its problems a holistic way". See his "The Phenomenon of Two Indias, State Against Democracy", op.cit., p.229.


176. George Joseph and John Desrochers, op.cit., p.44.