CHAPTER - II
VOLUNTARY - ACTION IN INDIA

2.1.0 Nature and Concept of Voluntary Action

The term 'voluntarism' is derived from Latin world 'voluntas', which means 'will'. The will assumes various forms of impulses, passions or desires of man. The concept of voluntarism is based on humanism - human-life, human service, human-welfare etc. It is based on the philosophy of equity and treating the whole world as the 'family of man'. It has no room for differences of caste, creed, colour, race region and religion. Rather it is based on the principles of peaceful co-existence inspite of these disparities and differences.

The term 'voluntary-action' is normally used to denote someone who volunteer himself for unpaid services with no self-profit motive to a good cause. Man is a social animal. His gregariousness is known by the fact that he always lives in-groups such as family, clan, kinship, tribe, community and society. Mutual-aid and self-help are the instruments through which a man fulfils his basic needs and can also use them for solving some of his problems. This is more important at the time of disaster and natural calamities like flood, famine, fire,
epidemics etc. 'People's-action', is therefore spontaneous in nature and come together around a common interest, common need or common problem. Very often 'voluntary-action is equated with the work of non-official social-service agencies operating in the community. In fact, the term 'voluntary-action is a concept to be equated with the concept of 'JANASHAKTI', a phrase used by 'Vinobaji, in his exposition of the philosophy of 'SARVODAYA' (well being of all). Form of operation is of secondary importance 'Voluntary action is undertaken by an individual, organisation or institution which is native to the people concerned and which works without interference or direction from outside. Action taken by the 'Lok-Samitees' (People's associations) organised by the Community itself without an executive or legislative compulsion for some common good or to decide their own needs and priorities, they too could be rightly regarded as voluntary.

The second characteristic of the voluntary action is its decentralised nature. Sustained and enduring voluntary action, sensitive and responsive to the local needs and problems, needs organisations which are indigenous, decentralised and non-statutory with direct participation of the beneficiaries of the target groups of the programmes. Voluntary character of the organisation is, further, determined more by the mode of its birth
and methods of the governance than by the paid or unpaid staff.

In India, quite a few professionals, social work educators, practitioners and social scientists have addressed themselves to the theme of voluntary action and have used terms like voluntary action, voluntary-organisations, social action or social activism interchangeably. Options differ on its meaning, scope, function and relationship with other forms of organised actions. Voluntary-action may be 'unorganised', 'organised' and institutionalised. It may be regarded 'unorganised' as it may occur in fitful spontaneity, it may assume an 'organised' form in its being a sustained or a regular activity of individual and groups. It may also be institutionalised in its being an organised function of voluntary and non-official associations/organisations of societies.

In the developing countries including India, voluntary-action is a three-stage process. First, it is based on social conscience which has been defined by 'Beveridge' in his work 'voluntary-action' as, "the feeling of discomfort on the part of the people in comfort about the people in discomfort" (Lawani, 1999). Second, voluntary-action has emerged from social consciousness generated by organised interest groups of people who are committed to 'people-centered-approach'. Third, organisations of various target groups, particularly from among the weaker-
sections, have emerged. The membership of these groups or associations generally cuts across traditional boundaries of caste and occupational groups. There is the need for building up local initiative and leadership to take advantage of large number of rural-development programmes currently in operation as well as the new ones to be launched. To understand the relative roles of voluntary-action and NGOs in the changing socio-political context in the country, it is necessary to know their connection. The expression 'voluntary-action' is usually related to social change and protest against prevailing system. Whereas NGOs - the most widespread form of voluntary-action; are service-oriented entities. They deal primarily with the vulnerable groups of people. Even among NGOs one can discern two types; those that are 'social-change-oriented' and those that confirm to the status quo. Even among the latter, some are 'development-oriented' and other continue to remain conventional. It is true that all NGOs have their origin in voluntary-action but once the action gets institutionalised into constitution and bye-laws and governed by the board of management, the edge of social-action gets gradually blunted and become conformist to the system.
2.2.0 Voluntary-Action in India

India has got a unique tradition of voluntary action. Voluntary-action in India is certainly as old as the emergence of organised society itself. In the beginning it was motivated primarily by religious belief and was centered around philanthropic and relief-action. Religion emphasized the virtue of 'Dan' i.e. free gift, which encompassed different forms of social service. Giving cash assistance to the needy, imparting knowledge, providing food and shelter to the pilgrims, care of the sick and the destitutes were considered to be the righteous acts. Institutions like 'Mathus' and temples were responsible for the religiously inspired forms of services. Social-institutions like caste and joint-family were concerned with the care of the handicapped, the destitute, the widow and the aged. The social workers that have contributed a lot to the welfare of the vulnerable people created a history of social work. In fact, the personalities involved in charity and philanthropic social work not only did an excellent job. Rather they became the moving institutions and organisations of voluntary social work. Social reforms by way of social-action were the main focus of social-work during the ancient period. During the struggle for independence, voluntary-action got absorbed in the spirit of
nationalism. This spirit and the influence of great men like Tagore and Gandhi etc. led to the emergence of a number of voluntary organisations (Vos) which in the later years (after independence) took multifarious activities apart from relief and charity work. The following discussion would help to know the historical development of 'voluntary-sector' or NGOs in India.

2.2.1 Voluntary-action before independence

India has a glorious history of charity and organised voluntary work for public and social good. Before the 19th century this charity on a voluntary basis took-place mainly during emergencies like famine, floods, epidemics etc. Similarly, in the field of education, medical services, cultural promotion people volunteered their services and expertise. Planting trees along the ways and roadsides for the benefit of travelers and digging tanks and wells for drinking purposes were common and tangible forms of voluntary action. 'Voluntarism' gained new stimulus in the 19th century. The dawn of the 19th century can rightly be said as the beginning of the social reform movement in India. Voluntary action was evident in three directions namely, religious reforms, social-reforms and voluntary work. Social-reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), Devendranath Tagore (1817-
1905), Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1933), Ram-Krishana Parmahansa (1836-86) and Swami-Vivekanand (1863-1902) had focussed their voluntary efforts against the evil customs and practices to usher in radical reforms. Large number of people volunteered to work with them. Their voluntary and selfless services were instrumental in organising public opinion against social and caste directed practices such as Sati, dowry, untouchability and several other disabilities. The reformers initiated a number of movements with a view to eliminate these age-old practices. As a result of the efforts of the reformers, a number of associations such as - Atmiya Society founded by Ram-Mohan Roy in 1815 in Calcutta, Brahamo-Samaj (1828), Prarthana Samaj (1864), the National Council for women in India (1875), Indian social conference (1887), Ramkrishana Mission (1897), the Widow's Remarriage Association (1850), Widow's home in Mysore (1907), Depressed classes mission (1906), and Gokhale Education Society - originated in different parts of the country, attracting many people to voluntary work.

VOs have proliferated and have actively taken-part in various fields of social-action during the British-period. The enactment of the societies Registration Act of 1860 is a 'landmark' in the history of the 'NGO-sector' in India during this period.
The 'Friends-in-Need Society' was the first known NGO under this Act. The act is still operative in the country with minor amendments and adoption by the central and stage governments.

In the beginning years of the 20th century focus of the social-work was extended to promote a spirit of nationalism and a feeling of brotherhood among the people and train a band of men who would be prepared to give-up every thing and devote their entire life to the service of the country, in a missionary spirit. The approach of the voluntary activists was secular and it sought to solve the national and social problems on a rational basis. The emphasis was on improving the conditions of women, problems of untouchability, establishing co-operatives and rendering relief-work to the vulnerable groups of society. The coming of Mahatma Gandhi to the political scene, in the beginning of the 20th century, gave a fillip to 'principle-based' voluntary-work in India. Rural reconstruction was his mission. Mahatma Gandhi's movement for national independence was rooted in the ideal of social reconstruction, self-help and the upliftment of the poorest of the poor through voluntary-action. Pandey 1991 pp, 45) recognised, "voluntary-action in India has been grounded partly in a Gandhian response to development and partly in a struggle
against the hegemony of macro-organisations (political parties, trade unions etc.) Which often discourage people's participation". Gandhiji call for voluntary-work during the 1920s and 1930s for the upliftment of the rural poor. It drew large number of committed persons to work for the disadvantaged communities. Many other political leaders, social-reformers, professionals came to follow him to volunteer their services for the upliftment of rural people. As a result a large number of organisations came into existence between 1920 and 1947. Most of them were engaged in ameliorative work to relieve distress rather than developmental work to bring about long-term changes. However there were important exceptions, to this pattern which were to provide alternate models to non-governmental grassroots work in later years. These were the Martandam Rural-Reconstruction centre in Trivendrum, set up by christian missionary organisation, the YMCA, and the various projects for rural regeneration, such as, the Sewagram project and Anand Niketan Ashram, Rabinder Nath Tagore's Sriniketan institute of Rural Reconstruction, the Gurgaon experiment by F.L. Bryne (1920), the rural-reconstruction programme in Baroda (1932), the Firka Development scheme by T. Prakasham, the Etawah Pilot Project by Albert Meyers and the Nilokheri Experiment by S.K. Dey etc.
Though each had a different approach to rural reconstruction, they all believed in long term development rather than temporary alleviation. They emphasized self-help to develop self-reliance in communities, changing attitudes and social consciousness through education to make a long-term impact and integrated development of the community by simultaneous efforts on many fronts. Prior to independence, the growth and working of voluntary organisations was also greatly influenced by the freedom movement. Three major national forces namely, the secular nationalism as preached by the Indian National Congress, Hindu Nationalism by Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim nationalism of the Muslim-League, too exerted its own influence to the development of 'voluntary-sector in India.

The Christian Missionaries have also played a significant role in the growth of 'voluntary-sector' in India before independence. They were in fact, the pioneers in setting up orphanages and institutions for old and infirm. Uplifting the poor from their miseries, conscientising them, establishing hospitals, dispensaries and other welfare centres including rehabilitation centres, constructing roads, helping women to come up, were all part of missionary work. Their contribution in eradicating
untouchability and eliminating various disabilities was vital and timely.

2.2.2 Voluntary-Action after Independence

A sudden spurt in the growth of organised voluntary-action was witnessed soon after independence. Since independence it has moved in different directions due to the changing milieu. One estimate shows that the increase was five folds during 1953-80 (Jain, 1995). The impact of Gandhian ideology in the field of voluntary-work was evident in the genesis of many voluntary-organisations. The followers of Gandhi and others, who could not or did not wish to join the government, established a number of 'Non-government-organisations (NGOs) to work closely with the governmental agencies. Such agencies organised handicraft and village industries, rural-development programmes, credit cooperatives, educational institutions and retain a degree of autonomy in their functioning. To these were added a later generation of social work organisations, in the rural areas, in community development, panchayati Raj and other bodies and still later more radical programmes like adult education through voluntary-bodies meant to 'conscientize' the people. However,
there has been a significant change over the years in the character of these organisations.

During the 1950s, several NGOs were created in response to crisis such as drought, floods and famines to provide relief and rehabilitation. This period show the rise of philanthropic, Charity-oriented organisations, particularly of the religious stream of NGOs, predominantly christian missionaries efforts as well as NGOs inspired by other religions such as the Ramkrishana Mission. But, in 1960s, there came a shift in the activities of the NGOs. A large number of NGOs started as charity and relief work in the wake of droughts and floods turned to developmental work, for long term solutions to the problem of poverty. Many realised that 'development', had to replace 'welfare'. Their emphasis, therefore, shifted from charity to promoting self-reliance. As a result, a new set of more 'struggle-oriented groups', struggling on behalf of the poor, the landless, the tribals, the bonded labourers, came into existence. Others came about due to a disenchantment with official developmental efforts which they felt were too slow or too corrupt or unable to reach the most needy. Thus, in this phase (1947-60), most of the NGOs were conformist in their approach, working within the established social-framework and containing and resolving the conflicts within the existing socio-
political structure. This phase marked the growth of social consciousness among the educated, for many professionals—economists, sociologists and doctors gravitated to the 'NGO-sector'. It also reflected a growing impatience not only with the government's slow functioning and its development strategies which had failed to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, but also with the apathy and the dependent mentality of the masses who waited for the government, to solve all their problems rather than take any initiative themselves. It was this new orientation i.e. public recognition of the effectiveness of NGOs in grass-roots development and official support extended to it by the government and international agencies led to the rapid multiplication and involvement of NGOs in rural regeneration.

The 1970s witnessed the emergence of a new breed of NGOs in development, several of whom took-on the challenge of translating the concept of equity, social-justice, community participation and integrated development. NGOs began to implement community based programes specifically targeted to the poor. These programes were the outcome of local initiatives, knowledge and expertise and were grounded in field reality. Through these community based, people oriented programmes,
NGOs were able to demonstrate alternate, feasible and effective models that were successful in reaching the unreached and serving the unserved.

The 1980s were characterised by a significant shift in ideology. Two significant development occurred in the 'NGO-Sector' during this period. First concomitant with the growth and diversification of NGOs, there was a growth of professionalism. A new breed of young professionalism, the social entrepreneurs, began to provide professional services to NGOs. An important outgrowth of such professionalisation was the emergence of support groups also called intermediary organisation that carried out specialised tasks such as training, research, publication and documentation. Second, as the successful experiences of NGOs enhanced their credibility with the government, NGO's leaders began to interact with policy makers and to play an important role in policy advocacy. It had become increasingly clear that fundamental changes in attitudes, values, social-structures and perhaps political thinking itself were necessary to address question of social-change. Thus empowerment, conscientisation and participation became important NGO's strategies during this period. A growing constituency of women's NGOs began to incorporate the gender factor, along with class, caste and
economic concerns in their grass-root initiatives and to combine the twin strategies of struggle with 'development' to address the problems of poor women. NGOs are now increasingly influencing public polity on pressing global issues such as reducing population pressures, alleviating poverty and stemming environmental degradation. With increasing awareness of the structural dimension of poverty and better understanding of the complexity of health, population and environmental problems that conventional practices have failed to address, NGOs are likely to become increasingly involved in sensitizing policy-makers at the micro level. Thus 1990s are likely to witness an increasing engagement of several streams of NGOs involved in welfare, development and political-activism in public policy debates, on the global issues. As these trends gain momentum, NGOs of the North and South addressing population, health, environment, human rights and women's concerns would require to forge new alliances to address shared concerns. At the national level too, the recent shift in policy toward democratic-decentralisation in several states of India with a promise of transfer of power and delegation of authority to the states and district level, could provide new opportunities for 'NGO-sector' to work for the democratisation of institutions at the district and village level.
develop new allies within the system and form coalitions to broaden the base of, political economic and social participation.

2.3.0 NGO-Govt. Relations

With the attainment of independence in 1947, India was declared to be a 'welfare-state'. The government of India assigned a more activist role to the states in the reconstruction of the Indian society. Administration was made the vehicle to implement state policies and programmes pertaining to development. Besides, it has encouraged 'voluntary-sector' to participate in social welfare programmes of the center as well as the state governments, under the 'grants-in aid programmes, since the very first five year plan. The plan (1951-56) stated, "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 private 'voluntary-sector'. Any plan for social and economic generation should therefore take-into account the services rendered by this sector and the state should give them maximum co-operation in strengthening their efforts. Public cooperation through these voluntary social service organisations is capable of
yielding valuable results in channelising private efforts for the promotion of social-welfare".

To encourage 'NGO-sector' to undertake social-welfare programmes, government set up autonomous bodies like Indian Council of Social Welfare and Central social-welfare board (CSWB). The central government established the CSWB in 1953, with the main object of assisting 'voluntary-sector' in organising welfare programmes for women and children and for the physically handicapped. The board also supplies technical and financial aid to NGOs, engaged in social-welfare programmes. The CSWB, in collaboration with the state governments, organised 'state social welfare boards (SSWB) in each state and union-territory. The result was that government began to provide grants to the NGOs to enable them to carry out their new developmental tasks, but the quantum of funding till the mid 1960's was not very significant and NGOs were not accorded any official status in the implementation of development programmes. However, with the growing disenchantment with the government's development strategy in contrast to NGO success in reaching the poorest and the governments' own realisation that it could not handle the enormous task of alleviating poverty 'single-handedly', NGOs were given an increasingly important role from the third
five year plan onwards. Third five-year plan (1961-66) regarded voluntary-action as an aspect of public-cooperation. In the fifth plan (1974-79), grants-in-aid has soared to rupees 83 crores from 4 crores in the first plan, but till now the tendency of political decision-makers and the development bureaucracy was to equate the work of NGOs with only 'welfare activities and charity work'. The importance of involving the NGOs in the country's decentralised development was realised by the planners and policy-makers only after the 70s. Planning commission itself also has realised that the task of development was so large and complex that the state alone would not be able to accomplish it. Hence, in Dec. 1977, the planning-commission constituted a committee under the chairmanship of B. Shivraman to evolve a strategy, which would entail active and meaningful participation of NGOs in development programmes. It was also assigned to look-into the question of how the NGO's action could be optimally utilised in the formulation and implementation of block-level plans of programmes for rural-development. In 1978, the committee produced a short report positively recommending the involvement of NGOs in block-level planning. As a result, much emphasis was given on the involvement of NGOs in the process of rural-development in the sixth five-year plan. The sixth five year plan
clearly stated about "the promotion of purely 'Non-government organisations' (NGOs) formal or informal in nature, which could motivate and mobilise people in specific or general development tasks" (Draft sixth plan P. 182). The sixth five-year plan (1980-85) identified 'new areas' in which NGOs as 'new-actors' could participate in rural development. The 'new-areas' where awareness and conscious participation of the people is critical for success, were identified as:

a) Optimal utilisation and development of renewable sources of energy including forestry through the formation of renewable energy associations at the block level.

b) Family welfare, health and nutrition education and relevant community programmes in this field.

c) 'Health for all' programmes.

d) Water-management and soil-conservation.

e) Social-Welfare programmes for the weaker sections.

f) Implementation of minimum needs programme.

g) Promotion of ecology and tribal development.

h) Disaster preparedness and management, and

i) Environmental protection and education.
It was realised that the task of educating and mobilising the people for participation in plan implementation could be more effectively accomplished through institutionalised action. Sixth five year plan proposed for the promotion of some following forms of organisations:

(1) Youth and women's organisations at different spatial levels for promoting eco-development and environmental protection.

(2) NGOs engaged in general development work in an area or a specific activity.

(3) NGOs of specific beneficiary or interest groups like self-employed women or farmers or of people who have common economic interest.

(4) Professional organisations or educational institutions which take up study, research and social-action programmes as part of their professional or social commitments.

To bring about a more systematic and formal association between the government and NGOs, the central government in 1982, considered setting up consultative groups of NGOs for implementation of schemes under the 20-points programme. Freedom from Hunger campaign office which came-into being under the ministry of Food and Agriculture during Bihar famine in 1963-67, became people's action for development India (PADI) in
1973, through which government channellised funds to NGOs. It was PADI, which made the very early and modest beginning in the process of involving NGOs in rural-development projects. Aimed at improving rural-conditions by way of innovation and introduction of appropriate technology along with the support of NGOs, a new organisation of 'Council for Advancement of Rural-Technology' (CART), was formed in 1983. Very soon i.e. in 1986, both CART and PADI merged and found new incarnation in 'Council for Advancement of People's Action for Rural Technology (CAPART). It was formed for the purpose of encouraging, promoting and assisting 'voluntary-action' in the implementation of projects for enhancement of rural prosperity.

Further, in 1984, a national seminar on the 'Role of NGOs in rural-development' sponsored by 'Fredrich Elbert Foundation' and attended by about thirty NGOs and officials of the planning-commission and GOI, recommended the inclusion of a chapter on NGOs in the seventh five-year plan. During the same year i.e. in 1984, 'Bunker-Roy' a consultant to the planning-commission on 'voluntary-agencies' proposed to include the recommendations of the seminar in the Seventh five-year plan. As a result, the recommendation of the seminar were included in the draft of seventh plan. The separate section n the seventh five-year plan
document to involve NGOs in rural-development and poverty-alleviation is remarkable. Infact, the seventh plan document is a landmark in the history of voluntary-action in rural-development. The Seventh Plan (1985-90) proposed that serious efforts will be made to involve NGOs in various development programmes, particularly in the planning and implementation of the programmes of rural-development... More specifically role of NGOs in the implementation of development programmes is to:

(1) Supplement government efforts so as to offer the rural poor choices and alternatives.

(2) Be the eyes of people at the village level.

(3) 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'.

(4) Disseminate information,

(5) Make community as self-reliant as possible.

(6) 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.

(7) Demystify technology and bring it in a simple form to the rural poor.
(8) Mobilise financial resources from within the community with a view to make rural communities stand on their own feet.

(9) Train and cadre grass-root workers who believe in professionalising voluntarism.

(10) 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. (Draft Seventh Plan, PP 66)

Similar emphasis is also evident in the approaches to the Eighth plan document. The Eighth plan (1992-97), stated that, "NGO-sector' operate over a wide range of activities, including the government's antipoverty programmes, training of rural youth, promotion of safe drinking water, rural housing, promotion of science and technology (S&T), wasteland development, education, welfare of women and children and programmes for SCs and STs. Eighth plan accepted that" voluntary efforts will no doubt continue to grow in coming years. But it can accelerate if the environment is made more congenial to its growth". If the professional and managerial capacity of NGOs, are built up and managerial capacity of NGOs, are built up in a systematic manner, it can make tremendous contribution in bringing about people's-participation both in financial terms and through beneficiary support. Generation of awareness, inculcation of
appropriate skills and convergence of developmental programmes is essential pre-requisite for the overall development of an area. In this NGOs can act as a catalyst and can organise beneficiaries, involve people in planning and development and provide the necessary support to make development a reality." (Draft Eighth Plan, PP. 39). Emphasizing on the role of NGOs in rural-development the Eighth plan document proposed, "a nation wide net-work of NGOs will be created. In order to facilitate the working of this network, three schemes relating to - the creation, replication, multiplication and consultancy, development had been worked-out by the planning-commission. Efforts will be made to evolve a system for providing 'one window service' to NGOs working in the areas of integrated development.

In the Ninth plan social mobilisation will receive a special thrust. Initiative will be taken to build and strengthen the organisations of the poor with the objective of enhancing their capabilities. In this process NGOs would have to play an important role in empowering the poor through advocacy, awareness-generation and social-mobilisation. As social animators and rural organisers they would help the poor to form SHGs in order to take advantage of the policies and programmes
being implemented by the government for their economic betterment. A voluntary-organisation or a technology group could lend support to group activities by ensuring training, technological-upgradation and convergence of various schemes (Draft of Ninth Plan, PP. 33). It is proposed in the Ninth Plan that the PRIs, the NGOs and the community would work in tandem to bring about greater development at the local level and conservent reduction in poverty levels.

Voluntary action in India thus is of great historic importance and is the product of social, ethical, economic, political, democratic, cultural and religious values and considerations. Its recorded history is around 150 years old. Today, India has a vibrant 'NGO-Sector' Although there has been no complete census of NGOs, the number of NGOs working in different fields of social service, social welfare and rural development may be more than 25000. (Tripathi, 1991). If rural Mahila Mandals, youth clubs and other small voluntary groups are added to this, the total number might exceed three lakhs. According to the information available with the Ministry of Rural Development, there were in the seventies around 60000 Mahila Mandals and 90000 youth clubs working in rural areas. The states of West-Bengal, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu and Rajasthan had the largest number
of rural development agencies in the seventies and benefitted from it. This was primarily due to the availability of grants-in-aid from C.S.W.B. and PADI (now CAPART). The number is on increasing during the past 10-15 years due to rising awareness and social concern widespread poverty and deprivation, weakening governmental delivery mechanism, democratic spirit and increased funding.

2.4.0. Economic Reforms and NGOs in India

In the first half of the 1990s, the Indian economy has brought in two major policy changes namely a package of economic reforms to make the country go global and decentralisation to involve people in the formulation and implementation of development plans of local significance. Panchayati Raj and decentralised planning process have been viewed by policy-makers, administrators and development practitioners as part of a new vision of development from within which it conceives of grassroots organisations such as NGOs, as instruments of voluntary people's action capable of enhancing democracy, social-justice, self-reliance, sustainability and the elimination of exploitation in development programmes. Hence the advocates of the system hope that when planning and development start from bottom-up through people's participation, the problems of rural development and poverty
would get a better deal. But economic reforms and decentralisation in the planning process have been viewed virtually as independent prices of policy initiative. It can be argued that the former enhances the scope and significance of the latter especially in matters of rural development, given the diminishing state or alternatively an expanding market. An expanding market and a contracting state leaves many rural development issues unattended, as the market, by nature, may not be a substitute for the state: the state on the other hand stands reduced in terms of functions and resources. It is also argued that the package of economic reforms does not have a human face and may add further to the already skewed distribution in income and wealth. The progressive dismantling of subsidies, price support, tax-concessions, public distribution system etc. may spell gloom for the rural masses and marginal groups. The market is a regime which upholds the principle of the survival of the fittest in which vast sections of the population with little productive assets at their command or the minimum skills and technology support, can not find a place in the competitive environment. Funds for certain programmes under rural development and poverty alleviation may be dwindling under sever resource crunch and fiscal deficit of central and state governments. Similarly, decentralisation of the planning process does not necessarily provide for change of the scenario while decentralised planning and institutions may be more
susceptible to local participation and control by the same token, they may be captive to the local structure of power. A number of case studies of actual decentralisation measures have expressed fears that decentralisation might undermine efficiency and carry with it corruption to the grass-root level.

In view of the above considerations, government policy should consist of promoting the 'NGO Sector' which economists have called the 'third sector' when the state (the first sector) itself is diminishing (As the economy goes global, market-oriented and private) and the profit motivated private sector (the second sector), though expanding, is concerned little with rural development, the role of the 'third-sector' assumes special significance. The diminishing state and expanding market scenario in India demands promotion of the third sector through State policy, mass propaganda and awareness in order that its capabilities are fully utilised. In our programe of rural development in the context of decentralisation, with expanding market and declining state, the goal should be to combine outside and local funds, personnel and expertise which will also regulate and energise total economic behavior in better ways that the government and market can provide independently. This implies the importance, an explicit recognition and promotion of NGOs in all realistic programes of rural development. The emerging development challenges could be partially addressed through
the promotion of Non-government organisations (NGOs). Unfortunately, neither in the design of the decentralisation programme nor in the package of economic reforms, adequate steps have been taken to facilitate the involvement of NGOs in rural-development.