While the Government, with all its ramifications and tentacles, is making a massive effort to release and rehabilitate the bonded labourers and to make them viable economic agents, its capability is understandably limited. Probably, it is the destined role of the people's organisations, like a myriad of voluntary organisations, research institutes and non-governmental organisations working in India at the grass-roots level to transform the destiny of these unfortunate millions. These voluntary organisations, alongside the government, may make an attempt to stem the tide of forces that have been creating and perpetuating poverty and debt bondage. The plan scheme to involve voluntary agencies through grants-in-aid in the task of the eradication of the evil of debt-bondage, with a view to meaningfully rehabilitating the bonded labourers and promoting higher levels of utilisation of available infrastructure, resources and services, is a welcome step for the development of voluntary action in India. It signals the awareness that in spite of the resources being released and the agencies being created to carry them to the 'target-group', the benefits have come to a very small percentage of eligible beneficiaries. It is recognised that voluntary agencies can play a very creative role in motivating people and supervising the distribution of the rehabilitation assistance, with a view to
ensuring its proper utilisation. They can also play a very useful role in matching schemes to local conditions and supplying knowledge of various local factors affecting their success. The term 'non-governmental organisation' has been used in a broader sense here. While it comprises organisations registered under various Trusts and Charitable Acts, it includes also unregistered groups and organisations willing to accept the responsibility for the welfare of bonded labour with or without the aid of governmental agencies. It includes various research institutes, youth organisations, organisations of beneficiaries, religious organisations, professional bodies-registered or informal. Voluntary agencies have shown a remarkable performance in the field of identification and release of bonded labour. Now, through Supreme Court's directions and Five-Year Plans these agencies have been engaged in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the schemes for the welfare of bonded labour. This is not an easy task. Both the governmental agencies and the voluntary bodies have to prepare themselves for a broader partnership and more meaningful participation in the nation-wide effort to eradicate debt bondage. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse voluntary bodies' role and significance in India's massive effort to liberate the bonded labourers, and to rehabilitate them meaningfully.

1.00 Need and Relevance of Non-Governmental Organisations

Non-Governmental Organisations work at the grass-roots
level, reflecting the needs and aspirations of the people who are poor and exploited. These bodies play an important role in the reconstruction and transformation of the society. The bonded backwardness is aptly said to be in bonded minds, which have to be trained and educated to improve their skills and resourcefulness and to cultivate consciousness to fight for their rightful opportunities. As such bonded labourers require millions of trainers and technicians, social engineers and leaders, having concern for bonded labourers and their cause, with technical expertise and wherewithal to improve their production resources, and to forge a social organisation benefitting the modern way of life and giving back human dignity, self-respect and the purpose of life to the millions who have been denied their basic human rights as well as opportunities for fulfilling the basic needs of life. No government, howsoever benevolent, can cope with myriads of hydra-headed problems faced by bonded labourers in a hardened, hierarchical, archaic and basically exploitative socio-economic atmosphere. A number of voluntary organisations, non-governmental organisations and other action groups of political, non-political, non-party, social, religious and other nature have been working in the field of the abolition of bonded labour. Although these bodies can ill afford to take the governmental jobs in the eradication of the pernicious practice of bonded labour, yet they can contribute massively at the execution level of the government operated schemes. They can play an important role in informing and
motivating the target groups and in carrying out supplemental action for improving their income by focusing on the improvement of the bonded labourers' resource-creating skills. They can help in the identification of eligible individuals, organise such individuals for group action, improve their information about government sponsored schemes and official procedures. These agencies can provide follow-up and liaison services etc. The main responsibility for the resources transfer has to remain with official and financial institutions. They can help in guiding and scheme formulation processes. Universities and professional institutions, for example, can help in block and village planning exercises. Voluntary agencies may contribute supplementary funds to oil and lubricate the movement of schemes which often get blocked because of the rigidities of official programmes and procedures.

In fact, the Government and its agencies themselves realise their own limitations and the relevance and importance of voluntary organisations at various junctures of the delivery stage of the programmes of the Government. The Labour Ministry has from time to time issued directions to State Governments to give due weightage to the newspaper reports and complaints made by voluntary agencies and to provide necessary protection, encouragement and support to voluntary agencies in order to ensure their active involvement and co-operation in the programme for the welfare of bonded labour.¹ The Supreme Court, has also stressed the importance

of the social action groups in fighting the malady of bonded labour, time and again. The apex Court deserved in \textit{Pasivagowry v. State of Andhra Pradesh},

It is now recognised on all hands that it is only through the active involvement of voluntary agencies and social action groups that the problem of identification of bonded labour can be solved. A member of AMARE (a local non-governmental organisation) shall be included as a member in every district in Andhra Pradesh in order to secure vigorous and effective implementation of programmes of identification and rehabilitation of bonded labour.

The Labour Ministry recognising the role of voluntary agencies in the welfare of bonded labour sent a proposal to the Planning Commission for launching a plan scheme for encouraging the involvement of voluntary agencies in the promotion of welfare of bonded labour, as stipulated in the 20-Point Programme of 1986. The Planning Commission accepted the proposal and a scheme, "Involvement of Voluntary Agencies in the Identification and Rehabilitation of Bonded Labourers" came into force on 30.10.1987. The scheme is being executed through the Council For Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART). Through this scheme the non-governmental organisations selected by CAPART or the concerned State Government are given grants-in-aid as managerial subsidy to meet their administrative expenses in various activities relating to bonded labour. The expenditure under

2. \textit{Rahima Mukti Morcha and Meeraia Choudhary Cases}. \textit{op.cit.}

the scheme is shared equally by the concerned State Government and the Central Government. The Central share is passed on to the CAPART, who passes it on voluntary agencies concerned. The State share can be obtained either by the voluntary agencies directly or through CAPART. The scheme has not gained momentum yet. So far only four voluntary agencies have been provided grants-in-aid at the rate of Rs 2500 each in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. No doubt, the voluntary agencies can play a very important role. They can become catalytic agents to energise the bonded labourers. Voluntary action need not run exactly along the lines parallel of the plan programmes. But it must not merge with them or become dependent on them. Voluntary agencies should build-up alternative power and act as a watch-dog so that the process of planning changes in the favour of the downtrodden. This principle has been recognised by the IPEC recently launched by the ILO in six developing countries including India. Major component of the IPEC is to encourage, promote and support voluntary agencies in implementing action oriented programmes at the field level.

2.00 Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in Promoting the Welfare of Bonded Labour

The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act is a very progressive and effective piece of legislation. It recognises

the existence of debt bondage, and legislates for its abolition. It has been welcomed by every section of Indian society as a timely and desirable law. The Act should, therefore, have started a uniform, unified and massive movement for the eradication of debt bondage. Here, the administrators, the courts, the target groups, the social action groups and the politicians should have stood together on one side against the exploiters. But unfortunately this has not happened.

The bonded labourers themselves are ignorant and submissive. They are not aware of the avenues open to them to get rid of exploitation and injustice. They on their own are neither ready to come forward nor have the capacity to fight. The masters are invariably influential. They have the power structure in hand. They have easy access to and good rapport with the government machinery. This creates a fear psychosis in the bonded labourers as the instances of retribution are not uncommon. The role of administration in general, and of the police and the magistracy in particular is lackadaisical. The moment any committed officer initiates action to help the bonded labour, he is transferred. Amdist apathy and hostility of vested interests, the only ray of hope is the efforts of informal agencies like social action groups and research institutes. These agencies are playing a vital role in the identification and release of bonded labourers. They are struggling case by case before the Supreme Court for the enforcement of the rights of bonded labourers.
The revolutionary approach of the Supreme Court i.e., directly interfering and directing the State Governments to implement the release of bonded labourers, gave a high hope for the future of bonded labourers. But it was short-lived. Cases of 'public interest litigation' are becoming fewer and fewer. In fact, the bonded labour issue is highly political in nature. It needs a strong organization and determination on the part of victims to break the chains of bondage. This role can be played only by social action groups and voluntary agencies having missionary zeal and devotion.

Broadly speaking, voluntary agencies can perform a number of functions to ensure the proper implementation of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, and the related laws and programmes. These agencies can conduct an all-India survey of the incidence of bonded labour. They can prepare lists of the areas and groups which are badly affected by the practice of bonded labour. They can insist on the authorities to constitute and activate vigilance committees in these high incidence areas. They can urge the administration to take up the release of bonded labourers in accordance with the priority lists. These voluntary agencies can stress and ensure the formulation of vigilance committees at every district and sub-division. These vigilance committees, consisting of members of local social action groups, can ensure that the identification, release and rehabilitation of the bonded labourers are done systematically. They can bring to
light extreme cases of bondage which have not been detected during official surveys. They can help the administration to initiate court proceedings against the offenders. This approach would make a substantial dent in the practice of bonded labour. The voluntary agencies can help in the selection of appropriate schemes of rehabilitation, channelising credit, and training of beneficiaries to secure useful skills. They can inform and sensitize the target groups about their rights, the government schemes for their benefits, and the procedure to approach them. Thus, the voluntary groups should undertake a systematic programme to organise and mobilise the bonded labourers.

In fact, ever since the heady days of the euphoric law viz., the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, researchers, social activists, and voluntary organisations have taken up the cause of bonded labour.

3.00 Social Movement Against Debt Bondage in British India

The seeds of the social movement against the exploitative system of debt-bondage in India were sown during the British regime. In 1812, in Wynad district in Malabar the custom of forced labour led to an uprising. In 1820, a government official was ghoseed by armed tribesmen in protest against the civil custom of selling slaves off the land they habitually tilled and of separating slave families by sale. The coolies in Assam tea gardens also dislayed a
remarkably wide range of resistance - active and passive, individual as well as collective.  

The Palghat district of Kerala had a very high incidence of bondage. In the early thirties, this fact led to an organised movement of agricultural labour, which continued up to the early sixties. However, a more mature, stronger and better organised movement against debt bondage arose in the forties viz. The Tanjore Uprising. It directly attacked the bonded labour system and led to the enactment of the Pannaiyal Act 1951. The Act laid down that if a landlord wanted to get rid of a Pannaiyal, he had to pay six months' wages to the labourer. In the fifties and early sixties, a large number of Pannaiyals were evicted by the landlords by paying six months' wages. In the areas where the movement was weak, the Pannaiyals were released without any payment. But the movement uprooted the bonded labour system from the Tanjore district and the released Pannaiyals joined the mainstream of the rural proletariat. Another movement which had debt bondage as one of the main issues arose in 1947 in the Telangana region. This was a militant movement. It had a much greater impact on the tenancy situation in the state than on uprooting the bonded labour system. These instances of organised protests testify to the role of organised movements in releasing the bonded labourers.

4.00 Role of Research Institutes, Non-Governmental Organisations in Post-Colonial India

The incidence of bondage is quite high in India's

8. Bonai, G.re.fir... pp. 267-68.
rural scene. Liberation of bonded labour is not the main purpose of the trade unions or grass-roots organisations working among the deprived sections. However, sporadic efforts have been made by the research institutes, social activists and non-governmental organisations for the cause of bonded labourers. But these efforts have proved a drop in the ocean and have not taken the turn of an organised movement. In this Chapter, an analysis has been made of the various efforts made by research institutes, social activists and voluntary organisations to ameliorate the condition of bonded labour, of the extent to which these efforts have proved successful, and of the causes of their failure.

4.10 Role of Research Institutes

With the advent of the seventies, the regional movements for the liberation of bonded labourers caused an awakening among the elite to the sad plight of the bonded labour. A number of studies were conducted by the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, the National Labour Institute and a large number of individual scholars who brought to light the prevalence of bonded labour in various regions of the country. This was followed by the enactment of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976, which is one of the most important pieces of legislation for the eradication of debt bondage. This Act led to a number of attempts and efforts on behalf of administration, judiciary
and social action groups to ameliorate the condition of bonded labour.

4.11 Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration

The Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, for a long time, has been seriously concerned about the incidence of bonded labour in different parts of the country. The problem of bonded labour, ways to eradicate it, and steps for rehabilitation etc., have formed a part of the training courses conducted at the Academy. As early as 1973-74, surveys, investigations, and fact-finding reports on bonded labour prepared by the trainees helped to focus the attention of the Government, the National Labour Institute and various thinkers and social activists on the problem.

In 1989, the National Commission on Rural Labour gave a project to the Academy in order to:

(a) make an assessment of the nature and incidence of bonded labour in different parts of the country;

(b) assess the steps of the Central and State Governments to identify, release and rehabilitate the bonded labourers;

(c) assess the non-governmental organisations' efforts to identify, release and rehabilitate the bonded labourers;
(d) look at the newer forms of bondage and the non-traditional areas where the problem now occurs as well as to examine the nature of bondage of women and children;

(e) examine and assess the level of the implementation of the Act and the problems faced in the implementation and the need for amendment; and

(f) suggest remedies for improvement in the process of identification, release and rehabilitation of bonded labourers. Above all, suggestions were asked to improve the quality of life of the released bonded labourers.

This project has been entrusted to the Academy, recognising the work done by the Academy in the field of bonded labour and with the following objectives:

(a) to sensitise the probationers to the problems of the most vulnerable sections of the society and to help them to understand the nature of socio-economic conditions which perpetuate bonded labour in order to equip them better to find viable remedies for the problem;

(b) to generate, as a result of the project, more data and information that would be useful for better decision-making on the subject;

(c) to contribute to the body of knowledge and experience
that may be valuable on the subject, to generate new approaches to the rehabilitation of bonded labour, and to help the formation of better organisations, new lobbies and forums that would intercede on behalf of the bonded labour.

Besides, seminars and workshops have been conducted by the Academy to analyse the structural causes for the existence of the phenomenon of bonded labour, to sensitise the young administrators to the plight of bonded labourers, and to stress the need to identify, release and rehabilitate them. In these seminars and workshops, the field and grass-roots activists, administrators, legal experts along with the probationers have been actively involved. This strategy has helped to highlight the experiences of the grass-roots activists in the release and rehabilitation of the bonded labourers. This knowledge could be used to frame future solutions for the problem. It has enabled the grass-roots level workers and field administrators to share the actual problems involved in the work with bonded labourers and to suggest measures to overcome them. This method has brought to light the administrative and legal problems in the field work of eradication of the bonded labour and has enabled to find out policies and measures to deal with the problem effectively. It has enabled the experts to suggest amendments in the law and procedure to strengthen the work of the grass-roots level activists and administrators. Thus,
these research activities, deliberations and exchanges of ideas carried under the auspices of the Academy have helped in the formulation of effective administrative measures and to strengthen the efforts of social activists and legal experts at the amelioration of the plight of bonded labourers.

4.12 National Labour Institute

The immediate response to the promulgation of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act was that different State Governments denied the very existence of bondage in their respective states. Then the National Labour Institute, through the strategy of Rural Training Camps, came forward to identify the bonded labourers. This intervention somewhat changed the situation which is briefly discussed below.

Ever since its inception in 1974, the National Labour Institute has organised motivation-cum-education camps for generating awareness among the bonded labourers, agricultural labourers and marginal peasants in different states. The camp proper is preceded by a pre-camp survey of the area by a National Labour Institute's team with the object of acquainting itself with the socio-economic characteristics of the area and the problems of the under-privileged, and selecting participants with potential leadership qualities. In the process, they also identify bonded labourers. Rural Labour Camps exclusively for bonded labourers were also held. In
1976, in a pre-camp survey in the Nalanda district, a number of bonded labourers were identified. The details of these were submitted to the Bihar government. The Bihar government had a fresh survey conducted by the Labour and Social Welfare Department of Patna University and claimed that they were not bonded labourers. The National Labour Institute staff revisited these villages and furnished detailed biodata of each one of the bonded labourers. Subsequently, the Bihar government freed these bonded labourers. These freed labourers have not relapsed into bondage - this has been confirmed by a follow-up camp held in 1983. Similarly, in June 1976, several bonded labourers were identified in the Ratlam District of Madhya Pradesh and the Palamu district of Bihar. Apart from the release of some bonded labourers, these camps led to an incipient effort to mobilise support for freeing the bonded labourers and for a rise in the minimum wages. However, the resistance from exploiters' lobby was firm. The employers denied work to the freed bonded labourers. To maintain and boost the morale of the released bonded labourers, repeat camps were organised for the released bonded labourers. The repeat camp proceedings revealed that some of the released bonded labourers had been involved in the rehabilitation schemes. They were provided with some land, livestock and some amount for consumption. By this time, the self-confidence of the released bonded labourers had considerably increased. When they had attended the first camp they were completely submissive and totally inarticulate. But
in the repeat camp there was no folding of hands, no bowing of heads and no mumbling. They were better dressed in the repeat camp. In the first camp confidence, fright, oppression, sufferings and a little wonderment were visible but the repeat camp gave a look of serious purposefulness in their eyes. These camps sensitised the bonded labourers to the need to reduce expenditure on social ceremonies, and to settle their disputes through arbitration, and they were made conscious of their rights under the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, the Minimum Wages Act and other welfare laws. The camps have had a beneficial impact on the rural scenario. The exploited labourers have come to realise that their true liberation lies in empowering themselves by creating their own organisations. They have become conscious of their rights and have developed a sort of commitment to the liberation ideology. They have been mobilised to chalk out their own action plan. But these areas are still dominated by big landlords and money-lenders, who continue to violate the welfare enactments. The dream of the total eradication of debt bondage is still far from realisation.

4.13 National Institute of Social Action

The National Institute of Social Action was established in 1985 in Andhra Pradesh. It is a rallying point for nearly 200 voluntary organisations and institutions working all over

10. The beneficial impact of such camps has been recognised even by the Supreme Court in Bandhua Mukti Morcha Case, A.I.R. 1984 S.C. 802 at 827-28 and in The Report of the National Commission Rural Labour, p. 103.
India, particularly in Andhra Pradesh. This Institute is leading a campaign against social evils such as untouchability, child marriage, dowry etc. Above all, it is fighting against the evil of the jogini-system (child prostitute). The joginis are young girls, who are declared married to the village gods and are then forced into sexual slavery. This system is unique and has no similar example in the world. Whereas prostitution in general is optional, but, in this case, sexual slavery is imposed. The welfare programmes undertaken by the National Institute of Social Action for the joginis include getting them into orphanages, rehabilitation homes, special housing colonies, schools and occupational training schools, encouraging older joginis to become social workers to help the younger ones, and getting government officials to intervene when the village leaders seek to initiate them into sexual practices. Even the marriage of some of the joginis have been performed to bring them back into the mainstream of the society. Recognising the role played by the Institute in the release and rehabilitation of the joginis, the UNICEF has set up a Child Labour Cell at the Institute.

4.20 Role of Some Voluntary Organisations

A number of social activists, social action groups and voluntary organisations are working at the grass-roots level for the welfare of bonded labour. Examples of the field performance of some of those agencies are being given below with a view to measuring and assessing the effectiveness and
4.21 Antyodaya Ashram

This Ashram is situated in the Lalghar district of Bihar. The Ashram workers identified over 300 bonded labourers and demanded help from the district administration to secure their release and rehabilitation. However, the district administration refused to accept those as bonded labourers. This led the social workers to the doors of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court directed a team of six I.A.S. Officers to find out if they were bonded. After detailed investigations, this team came out with details of 2500 bonded labourers in the area. All those were released on the intervention of the Supreme Court. This is an instance of successful release of bonded labourers through an activists' organisation supported by administrative and judicial measures.

4.22 AWARE

The AWARE is a non-governmental organisation active in Andhra Pradesh. It has contributed a lot to identifying, releasing and rehabilitating the bonded labourers in its project area. The AWARE is a well-organised group. It has 800 full-time workers and 1,245 part-time workers living in tribal and Harijan villages, who closely supervise the progress and failures of bonded labourers. So far the AWARE has successfully released and rehabilitated about 10,000 bonded labourers. The Central Office of AWARE has a special bench dealing with the problems

II. This part of the Chapter is heavily based on information provided by the various functionaries of NGOs and the pamphlets published by the concerned NGOs.
of these liberated bonded labourers. Their complete bio-data has been computerised and to monitor their life conditions, periodical inspections are conducted by the AARE teams. If the bonded labourers face some problem, the cluster development officer immediately provides them with needed help.

The AARE has a legal department with eight full-time lawyers, 26 investigators and 52 legal workers. These workers organise legal training camps in which officials like the District Collector, Superintendent of Police are invited. The presence of such officials in the camp and their close contact with the tribals and downtrodden sections of the society give a tremendous moral boost to these unfortunate creatures.

In 1978, the AARE plunged in a formal way into the fight against the malady of bonded labour. A systematic programme was chalked out to organise a smooth and strong transition. This programme plans to rehabilitate the bonded labourers, to make the masses conscious of the evil of bondage, to organise the bonded labourers, and to provide alternative employment to guarantee the true liberation of bonded labourers. This programme is dynamic. It is a process of self-liberation - a liberation, which underlines social justice and individual dignity.

To give a concrete shape to this liberation scheme, the AARE has adopted the following methods. On the information or suspicion that there are bonded labourers in a particular area, the AARE volunteers undertake a survey of the whole area to
find out the bonded labourers. A meeting of the village association is called to explain to them the contents of the bonded labour abolition laws and the related laws. The AWARE cultural troops tour villages to disseminate information on the point. Such propaganda creates an atmosphere of fear among the keepers of bonded labour. It also provides courage, knowledge and support to bonded labourers. In the meantime, the AWARE volunteers through individual surveys collect complete bio-data of the bonded labourers.

This bio-data is produced before the village association and a decision is taken to help the bonded labourers. The landlords are appealed to release the bonded labourers unconditionally. On an average, only ten to fifteen per cent of landlords voluntarily release the bonded labourers, others become resistant. In such cases, a memorandum is presented to the District Magistrate for the release of bonded labourers. Unless the District Collector is determined and dynamic, the problem is never solved in favour of the bonded labourer. If justice is denied, then bonded labourers en masse along with the social activists take to the path of protest marches and demonstrations.

While the district administration deals with the case, the AWARE selects the rehabilitation scheme according to the needs and desires of the bonded labourer. In case he gets rehabilitation assistance from the administration, the AWARE volunteers help him to acquire or improve the skills required
to generate employment. In case he is denied justice by the
government officials, the AMARE itself provides the bonded
labourer with rehabilitation assistance, not in cash but in
kind. The AMARE has created a fund of Rs 80 lakh exclusively
to provide immediate assistance to the released bonded labour-
ers, and rehabilitation in deserving cases. A number of times
committed officers have supported the AMARE in solving the
bonded labour problems. But generally, the lower bureaucracy
is un-cooperative and partisan. There is also a constant
conspiracy of the landlords to get rehabilitation assistance
through false identification, misguiding officials etc.

Keeping in view the concern of the AMARE for the cause
of bonded labour, the Supreme Court in 1983, directed the
AMARE to probe into the conditions of bonded labour in and
around the city of Hyderabad. As a result of the AMARE's report
and the Supreme Court's directions, 3105 bonded labourers were
released and sent back to their homes. Again the Supreme Court
directed the AMARE to probe into the exploitation of bonded
labourers and atrocities on Harijans in Andhra Pradesh. At the
directions of the Supreme Court, many volunteers of the AMARE
have been nominated into different vigilance committees consti-
tuted under the provisions of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition)
Act. In recognition of the AMARE's sincere efforts and commit-
ment for the cause of bonded labour, the AMARE Chairman is
nominated as a member on the National Committee for Implementation

of Legal Aid Schemes. The **AWAKE**'s efforts in this field have been able to cut a small portion of the iceberg of the problem. Much more has to be done and there are miles and miles to go. Anyhow, these efforts show the **AWAKE**'s concern for the victims of human slavery.

4.23 **Ban Vasi Seva Ashram**

The Ban Vasi Seva Ashram has been working for the last 35 years in the Sonpar region of the Mirzapur District, Uttar Pradesh. One of the wings of the Ashram - **AGRINDUS Family Welfare Project** - was started in 1968 with a view to developing a consensus among the rural population on the small family norm through comprehensive rural development programmes. The Ashram has taken up five villages in four blocks of the region for intensive development, and in the other 100 villages efforts have been made to help ten to fifteen per cent of the families. The people in the project area have become aware of the power of locally generated leadership, and the political pressure they can build up for their own benefit. They no longer want individual charity; they want funds for development. Selection of projects, their execution and management, knowledge of new skills and setting-up of new forms of social organisation have taught them that money-lenders, contractors, liquor merchants, local officials and politicians are not gods. This attitudinal change in the minds of the rural, down-trodden, uneducated people is a big step towards real development.
The Agricultural Finance Corporation of India (AFC) has published a 167-page report on the Ashram's performance, which shows the locally-generated tremendous social and economic change and development in the area. On the indebtedness of the families in the project area the AFC report says that the number of families going to moneylenders fell by 60 per cent and the number of families indebted to them fell by two-thirds. The debt incurred for social obligations also fell by two-thirds and that incurred for consumption fell to a quarter and the average amount to a one-fifth. The rack-renting usury, the greatest social evil in the area, has thus been given the hardest blow. Moneylenders have abnormally lowered their interest rates on their own under the pressure of market forces. The community Panchayats decide the disputes. In 1979, 60 cases were filed against the moneylenders, who used to grab the land and reduce the borrowers to bondage. All except two were won. A sustained campaign has led to the closure of twenty-five liquor shops in the area. The contract labour system in the rope-making activity has been replaced by the co-operatives of tribals, where pedal-operated machines are used. It has multiplied the labourers' productivity by eight times. In fact, the lower power structure is being transformed. The hopeful results of the Ashram activities in the project area indicate that once the motivation is built-up, people are organised and proper facilities are made accessible to them, economic and social development takes
place. The Banvasti Seva Ashram's performance is, no doubt, a drop in the ocean. But it suggests that, in the present circumstances, the masses themselves might rise for socio-economic change by increasing their participatory assertiveness.

4.24 Bhoomi Sena

The Bhoomi Sena literally means the land army. It is active in the Adivasi villages of Thane District's (Jungle patti) forest land. Its founders started their work in the early sixties. At that time, this area, without a communications network, was an island of feudalism—bordering on slavery—in the midst of an ocean having the capitalistic mode of production. Perpetual starvation, seasonal migration of workers in search of work to survive, illiteracy, disease and bondage were a fact of life. In 1970, the Bhoomi Sena was formally established. It is an Adivasis' organisation, which is forging the tribals and the other poor in the region into a united force determined to struggle against the exploiters. The objectives of the Bhoomi Sena include liberating bonded labourers, pressurizing the government into providing employment to tribal workers, securing the minimum wages and getting land released from moneylenders, raising political consciousness among the Adivasis, and introducing social reforms into important fields.

To achieve these objectives, the Bhoomi Sena has concentrated on the mobilisation of the people, instead of any dominant intervention from outside. The people are asked to make an investigation of their social customs and the rationales behind them. This is ensured through village level organisations of the youth (Tarun Mandalas), which become the platform for discussions at the village level. This strategy has organised the tribals, and they have become more aware of their rights. This awakening has led to the fading away of the bonded labour system, a success in the minimum wages struggle, and the fear of exploiters has largely disappeared. This enhanced consciousness has substituted militancy and self-confidence for submissiveness, fatalism and gratitude for "charity". The movement is rapidly spreading throughout the Adivasi belt and is maturing through struggle and reflection. This leads one to the conclusion that for proper implementation of the welfare laws some spadework is necessary, which in the present socio-economic milieu only voluntary and social action organisations can perform.

4.25 Bandhua Mukti Morcha

The Bandhua Mukti Morcha under the leadership of Swami Agniveesh has done yeoman’s service in promoting the welfare of bonded labourers in different parts of the country. The Morcha is a well-organised non-governmental organisation. It has thousands of volunteers working at the grass-roots level.
for the identification and release of the bonded labourers. Its headquarters is situated at Delhi. It has established its units in various states where the incidence of bonded labour is high.\textsuperscript{15} Besides, various rehabilitation centres have been established by the 'Mukti-Pratishthan', a sister organisation of the Bandhua Mukti Morcha, where the released bonded labourers are provided with skill-formation training for self-reliance. Attempts are made to raise bonded labourers' social consciousness and cultural awareness to ensure their psychological rehabilitation.\textsuperscript{16} So far the Morcha activists have been successful in the identification, release and rehabilitation of thousands of bonded labourers. Besides, this organisation is raising general public opinion against the evil practice of bonded labour. For this, apart from propaganda at the grassroots level in the high-incidence areas of bonded labour, seminars and workshops have been organised. The Morcha has been testifying to the cases of bonded labour even at the international level, e.g., before the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the UN Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, the UN Anti Slavery Committee and the ILO.

Keeping in view the contribution of the Morcha in the field of welfare of the unfree people, President of the Morcha Swami Agnivesh has been appointed a member of the Board of trustees of the United Nations Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms

\textsuperscript{15} These units have been established in Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
\textsuperscript{16} Some of these rehabilitation centres are working at Delhi, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Virat Nagar, Rajasthan, and Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh.
of slavery. The fund is administered by the Secretary General of UN, with the advice of board of trustees, comprising five persons with relevant experience in the field of human rights and contemporary forms of slavery in particular. The main purpose of the fund is to assist representatives of non-governmental organisations from different regions, dealing with issues of contemporary forms of slavery, to participate in the deliberations of the working group on the issue by providing them with financial assistance. Another proposal is to extend through established channels of assistance, humanitarian, legal and financial aid to individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery.\textsuperscript{17}

The Morcha has established close links at international level with a number of non-governmental organisations working for the cause of the bonded people.

The most important contribution of the Morcha is the continuous struggle it has been waging for the release of bonded labourers working in stone-quarries in Faridabad. The volunteers of the Bandhua Mukti Abhiyan Samiti identified a number of bonded labourers in these quarries. They succeeded in liberating 250 bonded labourers from these quarries. In January 1981, the workers in these quarries organised themselves as the 'Khan Majoor Union' under the persuasion of the Morcha volunteers. In February 1981, Swami Agnivesh, addressed a letter to

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{The Tribune}, Jan. 1, 1993.
the Supreme Court stating the inhuman conditions under which the labourers from different states were working in stone-quarries in Faridabad - many of them were bonded labourers. The Horcha, availing itself of the dedicated services of Mr. Gobinda Mukhoty, Senior Advocate, tenaciously pursued the legal battle in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court appointed two advocates as Commissioners to visit the stone-quarries and to ascertain the validity of the contents stated in the letter. The report of the Commissioners confirmed the allegations made in the petitioner’s letter.18

On the basis of this report, the Court ordered the release of 150 bonded labourers. It also appointed Dr. Patwardhan to conduct a socio-economic survey of the lives and conditions of work of the quarry-workers. In December 1984, the Court delivered its judgement. It held the Haryana Government and the Central Government responsible for the situation. It gave 21 directives to State Government to ensure the proper implementation of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act and other labour welfare laws. It further appointed Mr. Laxmidhar Mishra to look into the situation. The quarry owners in connivance with the officials of the Haryana Government ignored the court directions. The labourers organised protest rallies and marches. Swami Agnivesh filed a contempt petition against the stone quarry owners. Subsequently, the Supreme Court appointed Dr. Mahaveer Jain to look into the Faridabad situation. Dr. Jain in his report recorded the lack of basic amenities for the labourers. He

mentioned total failure of the Central and State Governments to carry out the 21 directives of the Supreme Court. On the basis of this report, the Supreme Court disposed of the case with stricter instructions to the Haryana Government to implement the Court directions.19

The efforts of Swami Agnivesh to secure the release of bonded labourers in stone quarries in Faridabad, to carry the legal battle to the portals of the Supreme Court are the most admirable ventures to ensure the welfare of the bonded labour. Although the efforts of the Morcha and the interference by the Supreme Court have resulted in the release of a number of bonded labourers, yet the power structure and vested interests have not been broken. The conditions of bondage still prevail in many parts of the country.

4.26 Chhattisgarh Krishak Mazdoor Sangh

The Chhattisgarh Krishak Mazdoor Sangh has been active in the rural areas of Madhya Pradesh. While working in this area, the Sangh identified about 500 bonded labourers and submitted their bio-data to the District Collector, Raipur. A copy of such information was also sent to the Director General of Labour Welfare in Delhi and the Government of Madhya Pradesh. The District Collector appointed a Tehsildar to inquire into the matter. The Tehsildar in the presence of the landowners examined the alleged bonded labourers and reported that there

were no bonded labourers in the area. Consequently in 1983, the Chattisgarh Krishak Masdoor Sangh put up the case before Supreme Court by a Writ Petition No.13300. The Supreme Court appointed a two-member inquiry committee to verify the allegations in the writ petition. The report of the commissioners stated that there was absolute callousness on the part of the entire district administration in the investigation of the cases of bonded labourers. The report asserted that the inactiveness, and non-cooperation of the district administration had stalled the whole process of the identification, release and rehabilitation of the Kamias (the local name for bonded-labourers) in the region. On the basis of the report, the Court issued orders to the Government in August 1984 to release 893 bonded labourers and to provide for their rehabilitation.

After the orders of Supreme Court, fresh bonded labour surveys have been conducted by the Government of Madhya Pradesh and the district administration. The non-governmental organisations and the State administration have identified more than 5000 bonded labourers in the area. Although some of the bonded labourers had been provided with full assistance under the 'Centrally Sponsored Scheme For Rehabilitation of Bonded Labour', but the bulk of them was not provided with any help. This lapse on the part of the administration, compelled the non-governmental organisations to help the bonded labourers. A vigorous campaign was started in the area to organise and unite the labourers under the banner of 'Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha'. The Morcha has
attained popularity in the region because of its honest and sincere struggle for the rights of the small and marginal farmers and landless labourers. The labourers organised protest marches, hunger strikes in the state against the inactive approach of the administration.

In the mean time, the Supreme Court issued new directions to provide meaningful rehabilitation to the released bonded labourers. Six voluntary agencies were identified to help in the rehabilitation process. These agencies established their own rehabilitation centres to provide technical training, to raise social consciousness and cultural awareness among the released bonded labourers. The 'Muktí Nikshan Programme' of these organisations has been termed a unique and successful experiment. The overall efforts of these agencies have resulted in the release of almost 6000 bonded labourers.

But differences of opinion, different ways of understanding the problem, and different approaches to work have affected the proper implementation of the rehabilitation programme. The absence of proper rehabilitation and the 'employment boycott' adopted by the landowners have compelled the released bonded labourers to migrate to other areas in search of employment. Although in 1989 the Supreme Court directed the State Government to provide an interim immediate relief of Rs 200 per month per bonded labourers, till his effective rehabilitation. But this direction too has not been followed seriously. Thus the process of the identification, release and rehabilitation of bonded labourers in the Raipur district of
Madhya Pradesh presents a mixed picture of successes and failures of the social organisations. But the number of identified bonded labourers shows that the right approach can lead to the identification of more and more bonded labourers in the country. It also shows that the bonded labour belts and the areas of high incidence need special programmes for the rehabilitation of bonded labourers.

4.27 Fellowship of Professional Workers

In 1979, the Fellowship of Professional Workers began its efforts for rural development in the Mehaboobnagar district of Andhra Pradesh. While making house-to-house surveys to formulate and implement the schemes for rural development, the activists of this group identified several bonded labourers. They realised that the problem of bonded labour was deep-rooted in the rural economy, and that to shatter its foundations, governmental efforts should be supplemented by people's mobilisation. Thus, the activists of this group dedicated themselves to the cause of bonded labourers. A vigorous campaign was started to inform the bonded labourers of the avenues open to them to get their release. They were made to understand that the government had started a plenty of schemes for their meaningful rehabilitation. But this propaganda device did not yield much. Some of the bonded labourers were afraid of repercussions, some were reluctant on moral grounds and some others felt they had no alternative. But many were
ready to come out on the payment of the debt.

Thus to gain the confidence and faith of the people, the activists on their own repaid the debts of some of bonded labourers and secured their release. These bonded labourers were given rehabilitation assistance by this organisation. The masters also liked this strategy as they got their money back in addition to all the work they had extracted from the bonded labourers through years. In the meantime, this organisation continued to disseminate information about the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, related laws and welfare programmes. Slowly and slowly people have realised that they can get out of the bondage with the help of the administration without paying anything and in addition they can also get some financial assistance for their rehabilitation. Much to the displeasure of landlords, more and more bonded labourers in the areas are coming forward to avail themselves of the benefit of governmental rehabilitation schemes. The masters have started threatening the labourers as well the social workers with dire consequences. Unmindful of the threats, the organisation is continuing its efforts to identify and release the bonded labourers. The experience of the Fellowship of Professional Workers indicates that once the masses understand (through non-formal education) their rights, they become courageous and start claiming their rights.

4.28 **Gandhi Seva Ashram**

The Gandhi Seva Ashram is a voluntary agency working in
Sheopur Kalan of the district of Morena in Madhya Pradesh. During their fieldwork, the activists of the Ashram found out many cases of bonded labour. A list of the bonded labourers and the culprits was handed over to the Sub-Divisional Officer. He proved to be a sincere and honest official. Keeping in view the socio-economic oppression of the victims, the Sub-Divisional Officer decided to have court camps in the villages and localities where the victims lived. The labourers and their employers were intimated in advance that they were to present their cases in camps only. All the villagers participated in the proceedings and everyone was allowed to speak out freely. The force of truth and public pressure presented the real picture. The employers as well as labourers admitted in the open courts the existence of bondage. The amount of outstanding debts varied from ₹3000 to ₹15000 from case to case.

In these village camps, within 15 days, 40 bonded labourers were released. The employers were given two options i.e. either to face prosecution under the Bonded Labour Act or to make good the loss of the payment of wages to the labourers under the Minimum Wages Act. Except in one case, every employer preferred a settlement under the Minimum Wages Act. Employers paid the amount determined by the administration to the labourers. That money was deposited in the bank accounts of labourers held jointly with the Gandhi Seva Ashram. This village camp strategy did not create any social tension. The
Gandhi Seva Dal by its efforts organised the labourers of the area. This ensured them employment in their own areas, as employers had no option but to employ them, there being no other labour available. The land of the labourers encroached by the landlords was returned to the labourers. They were accorded actual possession of the land. The labourers were sufficiently protected by the Gandhi Seva Ashram’s activists. The administration issued gun licenses to the activists of this voluntary agency for their safety. The amount deposited in the bank catered to the immediate requirements of the labourers. Thus, the labourers started living happily. The experiment of the Gandhi Seva Ashram shows that the efforts of a voluntary agency combined with the positive action of a committed administrator can play a remarkable role in the abolition of the bonded labour practice.

4.29 Lal Jhanda Bhatta Kandroor Union

This union of brick-kiln workers was established in 1970. It is a well-organised and well-knit union. At present almost one lakh brick-kiln workers are members of this union. This union is active in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and the Union Territory of Chandigarh. The main objects of this union are to ensure better working and living conditions to the brick kiln labour and to ensure the payment of the minimum wages in time. The union has so far secured the release of a number of bonded labourers from various kilns in the area. The
methodology adopted is to get the help of the police to secure the release of the bonded labourers kept in bondage by the use of criminal force. But this strategy does not help much as the police and the bureaucrats are generally biased in favour of the employers. The second most used method is to get the release of bonded labourers through the activists of the union. The union could not do much for the rehabilitation of the released bonded labourers, because of their migratory character. The stress has been on ensuring the implementation of labour welfare legislation and the payment of the minimum wages.

4.30 Maitri

The Madras Association for Information, Training and Improvement (Maitri) was set-up in the 1970s to serve Sri Lankan Tamil repatriates. During a survey of 200 families in Ten India Coupes, the Kodiakanal branch of Maitri found that they were suffering from inhuman exploitation and wanted to be settled somewhere else permanently. The Maitri started exploring ways and means of extricating them from the coupes in 1985. But somehow the contractors got the information and they became more cruel and stricter with these labourers. Thus the Maitri submitted a petition to the Sub-Collector of Kodaikanal to get these labourers freed. The Sub-collector, convinced by a personal inquiry, ordered the release of 44 families in the N.M.K.Coupe.

The contractors used all kinds of pressure to intimidate the Sub-Collector. Impervious to all pressure, he stuck to the
law. To bring to fruition the efforts of Maitri and to uncover long-hidden exploitation in the distant forests immense support sprang spontaneously from all quarters. The media gave wide coverage to the intransigent attitude of the administration and the sufferings of the bonded. Legal experts, with the help of Swami Agnivesh, began the battle for the cause of the downtrodden in the highest court and fought bravely whenever offensive moves were made by the opponents. Prestigious local educational institutions like the Kodaikanal International School, Bhavan's Gandhi Vidyashram, Presentation Convent School played a commendable role in helping the bonded labourers in their struggle against the exploitative system.

The Supreme Court appointed a three-member Commission to inquire into the conditions of the Coupe labour. The report of the commission confirmed a gross violation of the Bonded labour System (Abolition) Act, Labour welfare laws, and human rights of the labourers. The Supreme Court ordered the release of all bonded labourers and directed the Tamil Nadu Government to rehabilitate all the families in a viable manner and in accordance with their own wishes. A non-governmental organisation 'Young-India' was directed to help the State Government in the formulation and implementation of the rehabilitation schemes.

It is only through the persistent struggle of social activists that repatriated bonded labourers have made whatever

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little progress has been possible so far. They are determined to see that history does not repeat itself and that every promise for their rehabilitation made by the Government is fulfilled.

4.31 **Nehru Yuvak Kendra**

The Nehru Yuvak Kendra is a non-governmental organisation active in the district of Dehradun in Uttar Pradesh. The social customs of polygamy and 'bride-price' prevalent in the region compel men to borrow money for the payment of the price of the bride. The brothel keepers of Meerut and Delhi advance money to men in the area. In return, they hand over their wives to these brothel keepers for prostitution. The local activists of the Nehru Yuvak Kendra through their persistent struggle and mobilisation of the masses have made a remarkable dent in the male and female bondage. They have tried to break the inextricable link between bondage and prostitution in the area. Though over 19,000 men and women have been released from bondage, the process of rehabilitation has not been very effective. A number of released bonded labourers are still waiting for rehabilitation assistance. They are suffering because of widespread corruption and misappropriation of rehabilitation funds.

4.32 **People's Union for Democratic Rights**

This Union was established in 1980, with the object to secure the human rights of the downtrodden, poor and exploited masses of the country. This is a well organised union,
having its branches in all states. The grass-roots level workers of the Union bring to light the cases of extreme exploitation of the poor. For a number of times, the group has knocked at the portals of the highest court of the land to demand justice for the exploited people. The group has secured the historic judgement in the Aged Case, which has become the foundation stone of the anti-poverty movement launched by the judiciary. This group has been actively involved in the identification, release and rehabilitation of over 6000 bonded labourers in the Raipur district of Madhya Pradesh. There this group has started its own rehabilitation centre for the released bonded labourers under the 'Muktiniketan Programme' initiated by non-governmental organisations of the area.

4.33 Sambhav

The Sambhav is a non-governmental organisation founded in Rohibank, a tribal village in the Puri district of Orissa. The organisation has a two-fold objective to fight the marginalisation of land and discrimination against women. This organisation is active in the parched and desolate hill tract where tribal people are struggling for survival. The forests have practically vanished because of the mindless felling of the trees. The annual cycle of floods and droughts causes devastation in the area. Sambhav launched mass contact programmes and educated the villagers about the inter-dependence of

water, forests and land. The organisation has developed a
'nature farm' on a 40-acre plot. Volunteer teams have been
formed in 70 villages to guard the forests. A number of
programmes have been organised for women to make them economi-
cally independent and to ensure a higher status for them in
the family and society.

4.34 Shram Jivi Sangathana

The Sharam Jivi Sangathana was established in the Thane
district of Maharashtra in 1971. This Sangathana has 22,000
members which include freed bonded labourers, landless labour-
ers, and small and marginal farmers. Since 1982, this organisa-
tion has actively participated in the process of the identifi-
cation release and rehabilitation of bonded labourers in the
Thane district. So far, the organisation has secured the
release of over 1200 bonded labourers. This group has worked
a lot to sensitise the administration and to mobilise the masses
in the area. The vigilance committee of the district was acti-
vised at the group's instance. Most of the members of the
vigilance committee themselves were quite ignorant of the
provisions of the Bonded Labour Act.

The activists of the group identified on their own
a number of bonded labourers in the area and secured their
release through the involvement of the district administration.
The Sangathana also supervises the rehabilitation process of
the bonded labourers. It ensures the availability of government
rehabilitation assistance to the bonded labourers. Besides, the Sangathana itself imparts training in skill formation to the labourers to ensure their proper rehabilitation. It has started a number of co-operative economic activities such as co-operative diarying, co-operative farming, brick-kilns etc., and has integrated the assistance given to the released bonded labourers with the poverty-alleviation programmes. The continued struggle of the Sangathana for the release and rehabilitation of the bonded labourers demonstrates that a social action group, with the help of honest administrators, can work successfully for the rehabilitation of the bonded labourers.

4.35 South Asian Coalition of Child Servitude

Today, three lakh children are employed in the carpet trade. Beautiful and artistic carpets are woven out of the blood and tender bones of these child labourers. India, Pakistan and Nepal are among the largest producers and exporters of hand-knotted carpets. The total exports of South Asian carpet are worth $1.500 crore annually. These carpets are woven by the one-million child labour in the area. Eighty-five percent of the children are below 14. The South Asian Coalition of Child Servitude is a non-governmental organisation. Its main object is to highlight the plight of child bonded labourers at the international level e.g. before the United Nations Human Rights Commission, ILO, UNICEF etc. The ILO and UNICEF have
been requested to exert pressure on the carpet exporting countries to export carpets not made by child-labour. The coalition organises seminars and workshops and has launched a vigorous campaign against child servitude in the carpet industry at the South Asian regional level. In India, the activities of the Coalition are being supported by the Committee for Eradication of Child Labour in Carpet Industry and the Asian Cultural Forum on Development. The Coalition has initiated a consumer awareness campaign in the Western countries, to call upon the consumers not to buy child woven carpets. It has also decided to send a people’s inquiry commission comprising of retired judges to study and highlight the plight of child labour in the carpet industry in the South Asian countries. Besides, this organisation with the help of the Committee on Eradication of Child Labour, has taken steps to release the child bonded labourers. So far these organisations have rescued 4,000 children from bonded labour. Whereas most of them have been sent back to their homes with the help of the district administration, the remaining ones have been provided with skill-formation training in the rehabilitation centres to make them economically viable and self-reliant.

4.36 United Artists’ Association

It is a non-governmental organisation which had been active for the last 25 years in Orissa. The Association has

provided yeoman's service to tribals and fishermen in Orissa. In 1989, the Association began its activities among the fishing community in some 15 coastal villages of Orissa. Its activists mobilised the poor and encouraged them to identify and solve their problems on their own. The major problem in Siandi (the project village) was that the bread winners of the 20 Nolia families (a local community) were working as contract boatmen in the neighbouring villages, a form of bonded labour where in return for a loan usually of Rs 1500 to 3000, a fisherman pledges his services to a boat owner. The loan can be repaid only on a particular day in a year i.e. Dola Poornima, which falls just before Holi. The repayment system has been devised in such a way that it becomes difficult for the bonded person to become free. The Association's activists through persistent propaganda raised awareness among the fishermen. They were encouraged to take up community-fishing. For this purpose a community boat and a net were purchased. The money for this came from the British Charity Action Aid. In a year these fishermen were able to earn a big profit. Out of their earnings, 8 bonded labourers were freed in 1990. Some assistance was provided to rehabilitate these released bonded labourers. The remaining money was used for buying another net and to construct a community centre. The success of community fishing in Siandi village has inspired the fishermen in the neighbouring villages to take to community-fishing and prawn farming. Besides, the mobilisations and organisation of the villagers has led to the ban of alcohol consumption in the
village of Siandi. The villagers have become aware of the fact that their hard-earned money is going into the pockets of liquor contractors. This decision shows the determination of the Siandi's poor to augment their success without squandering their newly found prosperity.24

The above discussion shows that a number of non-governmental organisations, groups, research institutes and social workers are providing yeoman's service to the bonded labourers. Although a number of bonded labourers have been identified and released, yet the backbone of the power structure and vested interests has not been broken. The conditions of bondage prevail in several pockets of the country, although the phenomenon of bondage has been brought to light. The reasons for the poor success of voluntary action are numerous. The voluntary organisations need to get their own house in order and improve their image. The resources problem is sometimes acute. While some organisations are groping for ideas to utilise the funds with which they find themselves glutted, others feel suffocated for want of resources.

These organisations have taken up their activities in isolation and have adopted different approaches, strategies and methodologies. Therefore, the efforts for the welfare of bonded labour have remained sporadic. These agencies have failed to launch a vigorous movement against the evil practice of bonded labour. There is a great need for focusing the strength of voluntary bodies through collective action. To develop

the capabilities of voluntary agencies for managing the complex process of the identification, release and rehabilitation of bonded labour, there is a need for joint action. The issue calls for the free and frank discussions so that some degree of clarity can emerge to guide practical action.

The non-governmental organisations could not achieve great success in the rehabilitation of bonded labour. To uplift the poor, the voluntary organisations should pursue a four-pronged strategy. They should aim at economic upliftment, human development, and achieving social and economic rights. Whereas, these three objectives are meant for progress at the macro-level, the fourth objective should be to provide a wider base to these activities so that these may lead to a micro-level social transformation. However, most of the non-governmental organisation have not adopted this strategy. Some organisations have not set forth their objectives clearly. Thus, they have failed to give a sharper direction to their work.

Most of the non-governmental organisations have adopted a strategy of confrontation with the Government. They have depended mostly on the utilisation of their own services and expertise. It might be justifiable for voluntary agencies to apply new methodologies of action. Such an initiative is the very soul of voluntary action. But they should adopt a policy of co-operation with the official financial and banking agencies. They should lay stress on activating the services of various official and non-official agencies and co-ordinating...
their activities. There is a need for the exchange of experience gathered in the process, so that official agencies can also prepare themselves to meet a newly recognised area of need.

The policy of the mobilisation of the target-group should aim at self-reliance or a clear decision by the target-group to move fast towards self-reliance. These groups should be encouraged to evaluate and review their progress. They should be encouraged to disseminate their experiences. Needless to say, instead of adopting an approach that will make the released bonded labourers dependent on non-governmental organisations' assistance or will compel them to relapse into bondage, these organisations should work in a way so as to progressively make themselves redundant for the target-groups with which they have been working. This will be possible only when the target-groups become economically viable.