CHAPTER-III

NGO’s AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT:
A CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WOMEN’S MOVEMENTS AND GENDER ISSUES

III. EMPOWERMENT: THE CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW

IV. NGO’S - A CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING
I. Introduction

It was the women's movements throughout the world in the early 1970's and late 1980's that contributed a number of development paradigms and concepts to the field of women's studies. It was also during this period the roots of empowerment movement were developed and strengthened. Empowerment as a movement has a strong institutional and organizational background. The historical emergence of the empowerment goes back to the era of women liberation movements around the world. The 20th century witnessed the emergence of women's voice for gender justice by internationalizing struggles for equality of women and other oppressed people. These types of women's struggles against subordination were followed by the movements based on the values of the freedom, self-determination, equality, democracy and justice (Aginihotri and Majumdar 1995).

The term empowerment is constituent of the most important word power. It was the power asymmetries in the society by gender that gave way to the male exploitation over female and for the persistence of women's subordination. During the post war period around the world and during the struggle for national freedom in India, women as an oppressed class raised their voice against the injustices waged against them during that time. This, however, gave way for formation of many successful women organizations,
forums and associations. Such an organization that had huge success in India and worldwide was the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, founded by Ela R Bhatt (Bhatt 1998).

Such voluntary organizations of women were the first and the foremost in raising the voice against the emancipation and the exploitation waged in the society. The emergence of United Nations Organisation (UNO) in 1945 contributed much scope for the discussion of women's inequalities and the debates on women's issues by considering 1975, as 'International Women's Year'. Internationalizing women's issues during 1980's was a significant milestone in producing literature and theorizing women's studies elsewhere. This also led to the publication of much literature in an international level on the issues of women's labour and their economic contribution especially by economists and sociologists (Akerkar 1995). Later on the literature grew to discuss the different approaches and concepts for the framework of feminist ideology. Within the paradigms and concepts that were given by the feminist thinking, the concept of empowerment was more fundamental and proved to be most powerful strategy to achieve the well being of women (Karl 1995).

During the 1990's, thinking on gender1 became very powerful and for the first time, its measurement was discussed in the most pioneering UNDP's human development Report 1995. The same report brought out Gender

1 Gender is the term, which is often used to differentiate with the word sex. While the gender is seen as the socio-economic and culturally constructed inequalities between women and men, sex is used to indicate the biological differences between the same.
Empowerment Measure to evaluate the empowerment status of women. Somewhere the term is treated as the buzzword because of its non-theoretical background, now, it has been theorized to give the full meaning in terms of per capita income, health and school enrolment ratio with the percentage of women's political participation (UNDP HDR 1995). With the invention of these measures, much of the debates and discussions by the researchers, scientists and academicians were started and contributed a lot for the critical evaluations of the theories and methods involved in the measurement of these indices of GDI and GEM. In this chapter, we will discuss the evolution and emergence of the women's movements in India, the upcoming concept of gender and the various important issues of gender. The chapter will also discuss conceptual emergence and understanding NGO's and empowerment and conceptualizing the both in the context of present research.

II. Women's Movements and Gender Issues

With the start of women's liberation movements in different parts of the world, the literature was produced on the various grounds of feminist theorizing and conceptualizing on the various issues of women's development. The feminist movements indifferent countries gave the different ways to think about the emancipation and exploitation of women. The theories that were built to analyze these issues in Latin America, Asia and Africa were more significant in this respect (Stein 1997). The most important approaches of that direct contribution of feminist thinking were
Women in Development (WID), Gender and Development (GAD) and Women and Development (WAD).

The history of economic thinking reveals that the voice being raised against female exploitation goes back to the middle 18th century in England as the emergence of industrial revolution; the children and women were exploited for low wages in the factories (Boserup 1971). The civil rights movements in US, Africa and China that started in early 19th century followed the later movements in the world such as anti colonial movements in India, Africa, and China were treated as the main roots of empowerment movements and international women’s movement today. The women’s movements in India were the direct result of social reform movements (Gulati et al 1995) and the anti colonial movements. Despite this, women’s movements were much influenced by the national freedom movement in India.

In the context of present discussion, it would be more meaningful if we go for a brief look at the women’s movements in India at the very backdrop of the women’s empowerment movements. The contribution of India’s freedom struggle for the women’s movements was very seminal. Even though the nationalist consensus symbolized in the fundamental rights resolution of Indian National Congress, 1931, postulated freedom, justice, dignity, and equality for women as essential for the nation building. The constitution gave these rights to women even during the post independence; the colonial rule did not accept the fact that these facilities would be given to the women.
In the contemporary India, the resurgence of women’s movements as Agnihotri and Majumdar (1995) say, can be seen under the light of:

1. The crisis of state and government in the 70s going into the emergency;
2. The post-emergency upsurge in favour of civil rights;
3. The mushrooming of women’s organizations in the early 1980s and the arrival of women’s issue on the agenda;
4. The mid 1980s, marked by fundamentalist advance; and
5. The 1990s, when the crisis has deepened with regard to state, government and society.

According the researchers, in India, the mid 1980s have seen an onslaught on the existing rights of women in the name of ‘tradition’ and ‘culture’ and positioning of women’s images which emphasize their reproductive role as only natural, historical one. These decades in India have marked the end of the every kind of onslaughts and acceptance of existing social order. Women’s movements, in turn mounted all kinds of pressures on government. Despite experiencing major transformations it has grown immensely. The main concerns of the movement were laid in the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI), 1974. The committee raised the serious doubts about the development models that not only ignored the caste, class and ethnic history, exaggerated the influence of religion, culture and social attitudes on gender role prescriptions and questioned the invisibility of women in diverse areas and pleaded for the reflection of real life issues of women (P. 1870).

---

2 Ibid, p. 1869.
3 For the detailed discussion on judiciary and social attitudes on women in the colonial India, see Kannabhiran (1995)
During the 1980's and 1990's, with the modernization and the globalisation, the mode of women's movements in India adopted the international approaches and frameworks, which actually occurred as the result of the modernization and the globalisation process. Among the important approaches practiced so far in different parts of the world including India, are to be discussed as follows.

**Women in Development (WID)**

In 1970's some of the women aid agencies argued that development programs ignored and excluded women. It was Ester Boserup's famous book *Woman's Role in Economic Development*, which came in the year 1970, played a key role in this respect and argued that the modernization has not benefited women and has excluded them from the development process (Young, 2002). This began a hot wave of thinking about not only women's familial roles but also their economic contributions. This debate was executed by putting women into the potential small industries and handicraft units.

By 1980's with the increasing concern of waste and failure of development efforts, WID advocates shifted from exposing the negative effects of development planning and programmes on women to how much the development effort was losing by ignoring women's actual and potential contributions. Later women raised some issues, which too ignored women's dual roles that are their productive and reproductive activities. This led to the
dilemma of the intensification of women’s work burden. Meanwhile with the emergence of the structural adjustment programmes, their occurred a cut in public expenditure that really went against the ideology of WID.

Gender and Development (GAD)

In the mid 1970’s, a much of the criticism emerged from the analytical work of feminist scholars in the Institute of Development Studies. Using the concept of gender (socially constructed inequalities between men and women) and gender relations (socially constructed form of relations between men and women) they analysed how the development strategies reshape these power relations. GAD theorists highlighted unequal relations, violence against women. Most of the GAD theorists were social feminists and criticized the economic theories of gender analysis and argued for the need to give economic value to women’s unpaid domestic work (Ibid P. 323). They also criticized WID of treating women equal but still experiencing gender differences.

Women and Development (WAD)

In the 1975 women’s conference, the government of India’s country paper revealed that despite the prevalence of gender differences, there existed wide disparities between the women of diverse class. It showed the results that expressed large segment of women pushed into ever-greater poverty while their middle class and educated sisters benefited. For majority
of WAD activists, gender equality was a subject of least interest. Then came what is known as the Development Alternatives for Women in a new Era (DAWN) network in India, on behalf of the most of the third world countries, that demanded for the development of women who basically lacked the means of livelihood.

Convergence of Three Approaches

By the late 1980’s, the three approaches converged and women’s empowerment became a great demand. Activists of WID/GAD/WAD apposed the assumption that women could be used to carry out the policies designed without their active participation, argued that women should be integrated into all aspects of development process. Many of the scholars in UNDP took up these views and began to call for a focus on human development rather than economic development alone⁴. This led to the much debate in 1990’s and most of the women activists started to think that why the 30 years of activism been partially successful – while world’s most apex agencies just pay lip service to importance of gender equality – while the closer analysis shows that from the micro level to the institutional levels women are not treated as well as men.

In the 1995 UN women's conference in Beijing, China, women activists from world over tried to create a platform for the action by governments to a series of strategic actions to achieve gender equality and empowerment, and

⁴ Op cit, p. 324.
urged the thousands of Non-Governmental Organisations to implement the same. By the mid 1990's till the date, there is a wide range of NGO's activism to reduce gender inequalities in India, and the strategic efforts to empower women with the same notions of the ideologies of women's movements and the three approaches of WID, GAD and WAD.

III. Empowerment: The Conceptual Origin

In earlier section, we discussed that the way the women's movements emerged and contributed the various concepts and the paradigms, among which empowerment is of much significance. Now we will try to trace here, the conceptual understanding of empowerment at the present context of our research. We understood the arrival of the concept empowerment in development literature, during the early 1990's, particularly in India. For the last one decade, the literature on empowerment has grown in such a length and term that it is being used in every context that it has been treated as the buzzword by the media.

Let's once again go back to the women's movements in 1970's. There are the studies such as Batliwala (1994), Singh Roy (1995), Beteille (1999) among others, that present the analysis of the concept of empowerment within the background of women's movements. The historical origin of the empowerment concept goes back to the writings of the American Community psychologist Paulo Freire. Freire's writings on empowerment
included the ideas that how gender is constructed socially, how the gender relations are shaped and how men and women are gendered through class, race, religion and culture and to challenge the oppressive behavior that pressurize for a change. (Batliwala 1994).

By 1980’s, there were a bunch of feminists criticized the Freire’s strategies on the ground that of they did not make an expected changes in the living conditions of women. Another important thinker, who thought about women’s practical and strategic interests, was Molyneux. According to him women’s practical needs were nothing but the basic human needs that inevitable for our survival such as food shelter, education, improved technology etc, to fulfill these needs he suggested the need to analyse women’s subordination abolition of the sexual division of labour, to reduce the burden of domestic core and the male violence against females it is from these ideas the notion of empowerment came into being and more practically adopted by the DAWN network in south India.

What we mean by Empowerment?

There is a huge amount of literature that deals with the ideological understanding the term empowerment and what actually it means. Empowerment as Andre Beteille puts it, “the idea of empowerment may be invoked in virtually any context: in speaking about human rights, about basic needs, about economic security, about capacity building, about skill formation or about the conditions of dignified social existence (Beteille 1999).
According to Singh Roy (1995) the important component of the word empowerment is the term *power* and the power is widely defined as one’s capacity to influence or control others. But Srilatha Batliwala has the following interpretation of the term power “as a control over material, intellectual resources, and ideology”. The material assets over which control can be exercised may be physical, human, or financial, such as land, water, forests, people’s bodies and labor, money, and access to money. Intellectual resources include Knowledge, information and ideas. Control over ideology signifies the ability to generate, propagate, sustain and institutionalize specific sets of beliefs, values, attitudes, and behavior – virtually determining how people perceive and function within given socio-economic and political environments (Batliwala 1994).

In the third world countries, the living situations of women are very vulnerable that are characterized by the acute poverty. Increased male dominance and patriarchal system of society, where lack of decision-making powers and lack of control over resources tend women to suffer from a range mental and physical health disorders, which may pose a grater danger to women’s well being (Banerjee 1998). In such situations, we need to explore a suitable definition of empowerment. Here, Batliwala has a definition, which reads as, *the process of challenging existing power relations, and gaining control over the resources of power*, may be termed as ‘empowerment’. Gender has been characterized as the combination of the power relations, which are
unequally distributed between men and women that is too in favour of men. That is why there is a strong reason to control the sources of these power relations, this is what the definition provided by Batliwala conveys.

According to the findings of the present research, there is the prevalence of gender disparities, greater gender deprivations, feminisation of poverty, low status of women. In such situations, there is a need to derive a suitable meaning of empowerment. For this reason we can have a definition that follows as below:

Empowerment is process that distributes the power to the poor women, who are in the state of destitution and deprivations, by which they were lacking the powers, and by gaining empowerment they could control their own living, and hence could enhance their level of well being.

There are a number of studies on empowerment that provide various definitions but in varying contexts. Here an effort is made to provide a sensible definition they could work successfully in the context of NGO roles of empowering women. The UNDP human development report 1997 provides the space for the development and empowerment of women and the contributing roles of Non-Governmental Organizations (UNDP HDR 1997). In this respect, the role NGO’s in empowerment of women lie within the framework UNDP’s human development method. Within this framework NGO’s are expected to work for the empowerment of women so that the overall well being could be achieved.
Most of the NGO strategies have been characterized by either micro credit as an empowering strategy or any other entrepreneurial efforts, which end up with the unsuccessful results. The studies such as Geetha Rao (1999) have shown that the micro efforts to empower women have failed to achieve the expected goals. In her study the author has tried to show the women members of self help groups of two NGO's and comparing their organizational activities, particularly with respect to micro credit as their main strategy; concluded that micro credit alone can't empower women. This study shows the urgent need to adopt a perfect combination of empowerment strategies that well accepted by the community for the overall development.

IV. NGO's – A Conceptual and Theoretical Understanding

In this section, we will study the conceptual emergence, development and organization of Non-Governmental Organizations and arriving at the theoretical framework of NGO’s in the present context of our study. The interrelation between empowerment and NGO’s is more important aspect of the present study, since the latter directly executes the former. This relationship will be the main backdrop for the analysis of the NGO roles in relation to the empowerment of women.

'NGO’s: A Conceptual Framework

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO’s), the name itself says about the nature of the organizations that keep themselves outside the
governmental relations and execute for the welfare of the society. NGO's across post independence India as well in Karnataka came into existence in the 1980s (Kudva 2005). Nearly two and half decade, NGO's have been working as the important actors in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the development programmes in India and in many developing countries. Now, let us discuss conceptual framework of NGO's.

**Conceptual Emergence:**

There is very less amount of literature on the conceptual development of the term NGO. The terms such as voluntary organizations, non-profit organizations and non-governmental organizations are used synonymously to the by various authors and practitioners (Garain 1998).

There is a tremendous increase in the number of NGO's of various types, particularly in the developing countries during the last two decades. Most of these NGO's are engaged with the development at the grass roots level. There a number of studies that give way to our understanding that the social movements were the important roots to the origin of the NGO concept (Bhose 2003).

According to Garain (1998), some of the general factors that cause for the origin of the NGO's are:

a. Societal conflict and tension;

b. The need to respond more effectively to the crisis situations (like manmade or natural disasters) in the face of breakdown of traditional structures, namely government machinery or community services;
c. Ideological and value differences with the government’s policy in planning and implementing development programs;
d. The realization that the country neither had the will nor the capacity to cope up with the age old as well as the emerging socio-economic problems; and
e. The determination to help people at the grass roots level to get organized and involved in ongoing governmental development programmes.

For the third world countries the origin of NGO’s is very much connected to the history of a respective country, particularly with the circumstances that are emerged during the post independence period\textsuperscript{5}.

Evolution of NGO’s in India has been of voluntary action to uplift the under privileged in various filed of social action. Up to the 19th century, voluntary action took the form of charity and welfare. Most of the times the voluntary actions took place during the occurrence of natural disasters. There were also great social reformers like Buddha, Mahavira and Basava who revolted against the ill effects of caste - system and ritual ridden society\textsuperscript{6}.

In ancient and medieval period, voluntarism was in practice in the areas of education, cultural promotion, medicine and relief during the natural calamities such floods, droughts, famines and foreign invasions. During such

\textsuperscript{5} The word ‘NGO’ has been used every where and often in all contexts by the world agencies such as the United Nations, The World Bank and other apex agencies. Hence in the present study the term ‘NGO’ is synonymously used to the ‘Voluntary Organisations’ that aim at the community development and empowerment.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid, p 91.
circumstances widely practiced philanthropy was much in practice. During the modern period, particularly, during the British period, there was steady growth of public associations, first in presidency towns and later in rural side. Even in the British era, there was the steady growth of public associations, organizations that were formed exclusively for the purpose of promoting social, educational and cultural advancement. Religious ideology was a guiding factor for many organizations for undertaking social reform activities. Christian missionaries introduced the systematic approach in their social welfare as well as in the social reform activities. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's contribution towards social reform and the establishment of Ramakrishna Mission were the important organized services to the needy and helpless.

It was during the period of national struggle for freedom; Mahatma Gandhiji gave an institutional form to his ideas of village self-government and village self-sufficiency on the line of swadeshi for national reconstruction. Gandhiji's approach inspired and motivated a large number of people to make it a life mission to implement his ideas to improve the conditions of less privileged rural poor (UNESCO 1989 in Garain 1998). Post independence era saw a phenomenal growth of NGO's. Evolution of NGO's during the post independence era provided a distinctive phase for the growth of NGO's.
During the 1960s the second important phase of NGO's was started. The growing realization of governmental policies for the development of poor and the failure of the same to achieve the expected goals. Hence some of the first phase NGO's started to realize that they have set the roles that are different from the governmental roles. This was the period when the government activities meant for the development of disadvantaged were based on the planning commission initiatives, which actually were replaced by the NGO sector as the main nature of their work.

The third phase begins by the beginning of 1970s. During this period it became clearly visible that the government machinery and the political parties, particularly the activities of left parties, which are treated as the champions of the working class failed to bring the changes in the vulnerable conditions of the people. This gap provided the best opportunity to the NGO's that were just to existence with the growth oriented approaches. Now, for the three decades, it is estimated that there are between 20,000-30,000 NGO's in India, which is named as 'the NGO capital of the world' (Kudva 2005).

Conceptual Understanding of NGO's

As we discussed earlier that generally Voluntary Organizations, Voluntary Sector and Non-Governmental Organisations are used as the synonyms in the most circumstances. According to several studies it is a bit difficult to provide a definition of an NGO.
Bhose (2003) provides a definition given by the National Conference on the Role of Voluntary Organisation in Health Care In India that reads as:

_A voluntary Organisation is a social service and a development institution motivated to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged in society, either through direct services to the people or through facilitative/indirect services to other voluntary organization or government, non-profit making and not undertaken to be fully funded for its maintenance, directly or indirectly by the government._

By the above definition, we can draw suitable meaning of NGO. Voluntary organizations are non-profit making agencies that are constituted with a vision and with a commitment to achieve development and upliftment of the poor, marginalized, unprivileged, underprivileged and needy. These groups which work with quicker attentively to the problems unless like the government bodies, are flexible and timely in action and facilitating filler self-reliance to the target group with complete participatory approach in development process.

**NGO Sector in Karnataka**

The state of Karnataka, about which we discussed in the second chapter, has considerable inter district variations. Two extremes, within which all other districts fall, are Bidar that can be compared to Rajasthan and the Dakshina Kannada, which is about the same developmental level as Kerala (Kudva 2005).

Unlike the neighbor states of Kerala and Tamilnadu, Karnataka has not seen the sustained political atmosphere on the basis of mass movements on a

---

_This section has been drawn largely on Kudva (2005)_

70
large scale (Rajasekhar, D., 2000). The state has active and heterogeneous voluntary sector with a number of rural development oriented NGO’s. Two decades ago there were 500 active rural development organizations in the state. These organisations vary in size from MYRADA (Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency) one of the largest rural development NGO’s in India with an annual estimated budget of over Rs. 200 million and a staff (permanent and temporary) of more than 400 to small action groups scattered across various villages and districts.

As Kudva (2005) thus gave the account of NGO sector, of which, the number of funded organizations has however, increased at only about 5 per cent annually between 1991-2000, though funding focus is different from that of the state. A study of funding under FCRA classification for the period 1998-2000 shows that activities broadly failing under the rubric of “welfare” account for a little over a quarter of all receipts. Relief funds varied by year, based on when major disaster like cyclones or earth quakes hit while rural development activities account for about 15 percent and building construction activity between 11-14 percent in the same period. This is in contrast to state funding, 40 percent of which went to rural development followed by 18 percent for social justice and empowerment work, and another 13 percent for activities related to human resource development, like education (p. 16). This can be seen in the table 3.1.
Table 3.1
State funded NGO distribution by sector, Karnataka and India, February 2004 - December 20041

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>679</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>6,467</td>
<td>2,074</td>
<td>2,944</td>
<td>1,038</td>
<td>6,49</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>15,445</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>709</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>6,541</td>
<td>2,074</td>
<td>2,944</td>
<td>1343</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>16,533</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kudva (2005)

1 Includes NGOs funded by the state.

2 'Others' includes labour, Nonconventional Energy production, Textiles, Sciences and technology, Agriculture, road Transport and Highways, Statistics and program implementation in February 2004, it includes three other categories: small-scale industries, computer & IT, and NGOs funded through NABARD.
There are a number of NGO headquarters, urban oriented NGO’s and support groups mostly based in Bangalore, which work across a range of issue areas. A study of 102 social action groups and 215 activists by George Joseph provides a clearer picture of the NGO sector in Karnataka in 1995. Most of these groups (64%) started in early 1980s, a small percentage (8%) came up in the 1990s, while the rest were started in the late 1960s, and early 1970s following the all India trend closely. Three-fourth the groups are registered as societies, 12 percent as Trusts, while the rest had no legal entity.

Apart from rural development NGO’s that are often limited to certain geographic areas and organized around the particular issues and target groups, there are number of urban groups and initiatives working on various issues. Some of the these groups have emerged in response to specific problems, which include: Child labor, communication skills, lack of urban services, the problems of low income settlements in migrant communities and so on.

---

8 Op cit, p. 20.
NGO network in Karnataka

There are dense of informal networks that exist in the NGO sector at national, regional and local levels. Karnataka has strong formal networks and federations of NGO's involved in rural development, and increasingly in the urban areas as well. The best known amongst these is the State level Federation of Voluntary Organisations for Rural Development in Karnataka (FEVORD-K).

District level networks include:

- The Kolar Voluntary Organisations’ Network (KOVON)

- Mysore Town and Rural Integration (MYTHRI)

- Forum of Voluntary Associations in Dakshina Kannada (FVODK)

- Federation of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development In Dharwad District (FEVORD-DWD), and others in Bellary and Tumkur districts.

FEVORD-K is one of the well-known state level rural development NGO networks that started in 1981. It was incorporated as a formal society in 1982. As far as possible it does not interfere in intra-or inter-NGO differences,
nor subscribe to any particular ideology. Its main objectives are to promote cooperation and understanding amongst member NGO's, strengthen existing NGO's through appropriate training initiatives

Towards a Theoretical Framework

In the development literature not much has been written on NGO theorisation. Even then we can trace a limited studies on theoretical developments, which explain the emergence of voluntarism. Deshpande et al (2004) bring certain studies on the subject.

1) Mancur Olson's theory of collective action gives some basis for formulating a theoretical background. He argued that voluntary collective action is high for small interest groups, low for the large groups, low for the large groups and intermediate for the middle ones. Olson's work discusses the formation and sustenance of groups and this differs across of his group. He develops from the loose ends of the traditional group theories to a new theory of pressure groups, consistent with the intra-group logical relationship. The basic point of view expressed here, is high for small interest groups.

2) Sociologists take another theoretical stand and a good review can be found in Jonathan Turner's theory or social interaction. Taking a clue from Parson's work on the structure of social action, Turner has tried to conceptualise a theoretical model of social interaction. The synthesis of the theoretical construction is presented as follows:

1. The greater are the needs for ontological security, facility and trust among individuals is an interaction, and the greater are their efforts at framing the interaction.

2. The level of farming activity is an interaction revolving around account making and taking is primarily a function of needs for a sense of facility as influenced by needs for thrust, whereas the level of framing activity revolving around claim making and taking is primarily a function of needs for a sense of ontological security as these influence the level needs for trust.

3. The degree of categorization of an interaction is a primary function of the extent to which account making and taking

76
are successful in meeting needs for facility and a secondary function of the extent to which claim making and taking are successful in meeting needs for ontological security and trust.

4. The degree of normalization of an interaction is a partial function of the extent to which claim making and taking are successful in meeting needs for the ontological security and trust and a secondary function of the extent to which account making and taking are successful in meeting needs of facility.

5. The routinisation of an interaction is a partial function of the extent to which claiming and accounting are successful, both directly and indirectly through their effects on other structuring process, in meeting needs for facility, security and trust.

From the above five step model of social interaction starting with need, framing categorization, normalization and finally, routinisation of the
interaction process. At each of these five stage models the major determinants are spelt out.

Another important and interesting exposure is from Batten's work on "Non-Directive approach in group and community work" Batten prefers to divide the approach into two simple groups, namely, 'directive and non-directive' approaches. After reviewing the pitfalls of directive approach he approaches the other segment by 'defining non-directive action' almost on the same line as the voluntary actions. The necessary conditions indicated in his work are:

1) Wants are unfulfilled,

2) Number of actors are dissatisfied,

3) They have either no access to resources or are stopped from that,

4) They have enough knowledge to take decisions,

5) Skills and equipments (even social) are either available or can be developed, and

6) There is a strong incentive.
In the early years of independence, we had the strong Gandhian background and social groups were formed for selfless work. The changing scenario on the economic front alienated the economically weak groups almost facing the group formation on the basis of ontological security. The radical movements in parts of the country were more an outcome of the reaction to the force authority applied from above and the structure of the polity. There are inter-mixed political currents and more specifically the social group oriented politics, which has to be understood before framing a political theoretical structure. In any case, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), Social Action Group (SAG), Self Help Group (SHG) or Voluntary Agency (VA) it has to primarily a voluntary action group.\footnote{This section is drawn on Deshpande et al (2004), pp 47-49.}

**Individual**

- **Demographics**
  - Age/life stage
  - Race/ethnicity/Religion/Socio-economic Class
- **Background**
  - Family History
  - Education/Literacy
  - Marital Status
  - Attitudes/Values
- **Situations**
  - Living Conditions
  - Decision making

**Needs**
- Lack of Power
- Lack of Income
- Lack of Education
- Lack of Healthcare
- Lack of Childcare
- Lack of Support
- Lack of Protection

**NGO Activities**
- Progressive Orgs
- Gras-roots Orgs
- Lending/Credit Groups
- Women's Groups

**Project Purpose(s)**
- Education Non-Formal
- Consciousness Raising
- Income Generation
- Credit/savings
- Advocacy and Human Rights
- Policy Reforms
- Divorce/Child support
- Property Rights

**Empowerment Process**

**Group: Positive Organizational Changes**
- Increased membership
- Improved Leadership
- Improved Leadership Allies
- Etc.

**Group: Positive Situational Changes**
- SHGs, Water, Sanitation, Nutrition Etc.

**Individual: Positive Internal Changes - values/attitudes.**
- Sense of Confidence
- Sense of Control
- Sense of Entitlement
- Sense of Participation Etc

**Individual Positive situational changes**
- Control Over Resources
- Decision-making Powers
- Greater Mobility Etc

**Individual: Negative Situational Changes**
- Divorce/Separation
- Exposure to Repression
- Etc.

Figure 3.1 NGO facilitating of Women Empowerment Process
The figure 3.1 can be seen in the context of:

1) Historical Circumstances
2) Developmental Policies – Local/ National/International
3) Specific cultural, political, economic and social organization of society
4) Gender discrimination, lack of equity and status
5) Many factors that affect health and one another
6) Emerging networks of women’s organizations
7) Other unique local conditions

With the background of women’s low status and the vulnerable situations, the figure 3.1 highlights the process of empowerment by the NGO intervention. The model is adopted from Stein (1997) indicates the empowerment is the process that is executed by the Non-governmental efforts at the grass roots level. We can now, see the model by the step wise analysis as below.

At the first phase, we have individual women who are waiting for their empowerment and are experiencing the negative situations of demographic characters and they experience the problems of age, ethnicity, and the discrimination based on the socio-economic and religious practices. The literature in development studies also bears the evidence that these types of inequalities tend to prevail in the society and prevent women’s development (Jejeebhoy 1997).
In the background, women have their family history, their educational status, marital status and their attitudes and values that show the negative characters and always tend to be low in progress. At the same time, women have the situations that account for women’s backwardness and that are their living conditions, the decision-making powers, the sense of powerlessness and prevailing nutritional status, which treated as the best indicator of health.

In the second phase, needs constitute an important aspect of the basic needs. Empowerment basically entitled to the women who lack power. The powers that determine any types of human capabilities are regarded best with respect to women’s status. Lack of income, decision-making powers, lack of education, lack of support determine the way women are deprived and discriminated. This gap creates the opportunity to the external intervention to reduce the gender inequalities and discrimination.

At the third phase, it gives way to the NGO intervention, which is further regarded as the ultimate strategy to empower women.

In the fourth phase, we have most of the NGO strategies that include the alternative purposes to reduce the inequalities. These may include education for the adults, destitute women and children. These also include the various income-generating activities, facilitating credit to SHG group members and enhancing savings activities. Awareness generating activities
among women has been quite helpful in empowerment of women, which almost every NGO strategies include in one or the other ways (Sengupta 1999).

The fifth phase is the imitation of empowerment process among the groups. Here, the participation counts a lot in the process of women's empowerment. The empowerment can be achieved through the diverse strategies, mostly through the micro credit that gives the empowered women a sense of power possession in the sense that they could be able to exercise their powers to control the resources.

In the final phase, the empowerment results in various outcomes that are distributed in different variables. The end results generally show the positive changes in each aspect of women's living. There would be improvement in each field of intervention as a result of empowerment. Increased membership and improved relations between allies increases the strength of the groups.

In the present research, the NGO facilitation of empowerment process, it is conceptualized that the end results are seen through the UNDP human development indices. Most of the NGO strategies use micro credit as an important tool to empower women. As we have understood throughout our discussion that empowerment process has not having certain theoretical background, and even NGO's too not facilitate empowerment project, which has a base of a strong theoretical background.
There exists a huge literature on NGO organization and women's development but it is very less if we search for the evaluating literature on NGO\textsuperscript{11}. Evaluation of strategies is a recent phenomenon that is treated as a result of scientific social research. On the basis of such scientific research methods; the evaluation literature is coming up in the development studies. It is also opined that the literature on theorizing and evaluating NGO performance of empowerment strategies is also in its imitation and it growing now. It poses a lot of problems in starting up an action of building a theoretical framework.

While we deal with the NGO strategies that aim at the reducing socio-economic inequalities and cultural norms and traditions, it would be a qualitative in nature and would go beyond the measurement initiatives. The qualitative aspects of research pose a lot of problems in evaluating the NGO performance since it is not properly theorized and the subject would be entirely qualitative in nature. These are the important problems while we go for the evaluation of the NGO performance of their community development and empowerment. Apart from theorization and evaluation of NGO's, there are several aspects that are needed to be investigated and studied more scientifically would include the identification of the important development strategies that really give some scope for the scientific thinking on evaluating NGO performances.

\textsuperscript{11} Viswanath (1993)