



## General Article

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# Volunteer Organizations: History, Structure and Role

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Initially voluntary activity began as a social service but now it has been accepted as an occupation. Now a day voluntary organization has got their place not only in the society but also in the government. There are more than 25 lacs public registered NGO's in the country. More than 2 lacs public trusts are registered in the office of Charity Commissioner of Gujarat. According to the report of the World Bank, 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the century of the NGOs. There is an approach of people centered development in recent time. If we see the historical background, we can find many ideologies of their field. Development of society resulted in development of these ideologies. Different approaches like Humanisms, Secularism, Intellectualism, Democracy, Socialisms, Intellectual, and Human Rights have been developed. The important thing is not only the fulfillment of necessities of people but also to change their condition, for this, we have to implement social process. There are five main bases of the people centered development viz. (1) Awareness (2) Social organization (3) Participation (4) Self-Reliance and (5) Sustainability<sup>1</sup>. These main five bases should be taken into consideration for the development of the people. In recent times NGOs are working mainly in seven fields viz. kids and women welfare; handicaps and aged people welfare; social defense; scheduled castes/tribes; adult education and non-formal education; health and family welfare; and environment persecution. Now a day, we can find different types of organizations which are working in the field of social service. These organizations have been developed in different phases, and perform different roles. The rise, development and spread of NGOs are being categorized into three phases viz. (i) Pre-Independence period. (ii) Post-Induce period till 1970. (iii) Post-1970 period<sup>2</sup>. Now let's try to understand the rise, development and spread of social organizations form its historical point of view.

## HISTORY

### Service in the form of Tradition

The feeling of help is seen from the beginning when man started to live in group. In past time, weak people help handicaps, orphans, and widows. They got help either from the family or society. The family or society took the moral responsibility of these people. The merchants in the different regions were connected with different kinds of religious and charity activities mainly to sustain their profit.

Different religion has also promoted the "Feeling of help". In Islam there is a tradition called 'Kherat' to promote the feeling of sacrifice. In Christianity the Christian Missionaries have tried to help to satisfy the necessity of weak, poor, deserted, handicaped and orphans without any partiality. In Sikhism, we can see the traditions of 'Sangat' and 'Pongat'. In Hinduism. Bhagavat Geeta says "Do your karma without expecting the fruit". These kinds of ideologies and values encourage the social service.

### The Efforts did by the Saints

By taking the inspiration from Religion, the saints like Narsih Mehta, Kabir, Ramanuj, Vallabhacharya, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Raidas, Guru Nanak, Dadu Dayal, Sundar Das, Mirabai, Surdaas, Tulsidas, Gyaneshwar, Namdev, Lord Buddha, Lord Mahavir etc. worked for the welfare of people to develop the values in them as well as to remove the defects of Hinduism's caste-system. Their hearts have always been full of mercy towards backward class people. They heard the painful voice of these kinds of people and fought for the rights of helpless people during their lifetime. In our caste system the Harijan have been categorized as untouchables. Because of this the Harijans had to live in very painful situation. Narsih Mehta went to their homes for preying and singing the songs of God. He tried to remove the defects of caste-system

prevailing in Hinduism. He talked about the equality of man by entirety and impartiality. It was during this time the social revolution was started.

### **The efforts did by the social reformers**

During the British Rule the westernization resulted in the beginning of social reforms. Western thoughts of individual freedom, English Education, activities of Christian Missionaries and many other forces created a vigilant reformer class in India. The Indians who got English education were dissatisfied towards their traditional values and organizations. Because of this a new concept of human-relations was established and organizations on the basis of wit and logic were developed for the establishment of these new values; the social reformers started the social reformation.

One of the social reformers was Raja Rammohanray who established Brahmosamaj. He started the religious and social reformation. He worked for reformation in female life, for removal of satipratha, daughter selling, polygamy, girl-child killing and child-marriage. He revolted against the contemporary society and started educational reformation. Thus, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, RajaRammohan Ray's contribution was awesome in the field of social reformation. Moreover Mahaveer Govind Ranade (founder of Prathna Samjaj), Jyotiba Fule, Keshavchandra Sen, Dayanand saraswati (founder of Arya Samaj), Rabindranath Tagore, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Smt. Anny Bescent, Swami Ramkrishna Paramhans, Swami Vivekananda etc. contributed greatly in the field of social reformation. They started a revolution against child marriage, pardah-system, satipratha, denial of widow marriage, noble birth mentality, denial of female education, girl child killing, untouchability, cast system, inequality of male & female etc. By these efforts of social reformers the process of change in traditional organization became faster.

### **Gandhiji's Efforts for Social Service**

Gandhiji has made a great influence on voluntary organizations of Gujarat. Gandhiji gave same importance to the freedom movement and village development. He believed that if we want to develop the country we have to develop the villages and at the same time we have to put pressure on the development of the very last man. Gandhiji talked about 'Sarvoday', in which everything is included. He used to think deeply for the removal of social attitude, traditions, beliefs male-female inequality. He used his followers to work for the development of villages. That's why

Gandhiji started creative activities as a part of public revaluation in which there were different kinds of programs.

By taking the inspiration from Gandhiji's thoughts many Gandhian followers started to work in these sectors. There was a great opportunity for the idealistic and thoughtful youngsters. The youngsters who were working in this sector belonged to the middle class families and they were students. Most of them came from cities. They voluntarily accepted to stay in villages for creative activities. Babalbhai Mehta, Thakorbhai Ravishankar Maharaj, Jugatram Dave, Dahyabhai Nayak, Nanubhai Bhatt etc. have feeling for the country and the wind of freedom movement aroused a great feeling in people. The contribution of the voluntary organizations of Gandhian-Era was awesome in the fields of Khadi, fundamental education and at some level in the field of village industry. These workers are still giving their contribution in social work after Gandhiji.

### **Welfare efforts**

After independence a large number of people were suffering from poverty, starvation and different kind of diseases. The Government accepted the responsibility of social welfare works. The Government introduced a well structured format of five years plan for their development and it was also implemented. The way, the objects of the programme were decided and designed was very careful but the implementation of the programme was very weak. The benefit of the programme did not reach to the people because of the complicated provisions of government schemes. Rajiv Gandhi rightly said that the one rupee released by the central govt. becomes 1 paisa in the process of reaching towards the poor people.

After independence there were many organizations working with Gandhian thoughts in small and dispersed areas. There was a need of financial add for development of these kind of social activities. On the other side, the Government was unable to reach to everyone. That's why the organization was patronized. As a result many organizations came into existence. There organizations had nothing to care or to think about the Gandhi's and Vinoba's thinking about development. They gave more importance to the economic condition. As a result most of these organization left the basic values and become self sufficient. In the post independence period the failure of Government system and other helping forces were the optional resourced for development of voluntary organizations?

### **The Approach of Dutiful people towards social justice**

By the experiences of decades after independence the voluntary organization as well as the thoughtful persons felt in the process of development. A lot of changes occurred in the types of voluntary organizations after 1970. During this time the interference of Government was increased in economic, social and other activities. After 1970 there also came human rights talk. The reforms taken place into the constitution after the independence now showing their effects. At this time people from different society started to work for their own society. That's why some thoughtful persons started to think differently from the ordinary way. They started movements for the human rights and social justice and also started to work for poor people at the grass route level. On the other hand highly educated and well trained youngster voluntarily left their career and tried to bring professionalism in voluntary activities. These organizations had to face constant struggle with government as well as with the established doctrine. As a result, these organizations have converted and established a network which exists since last two decades and helping these organizations.

### **Development of professional social work**

Industrialization and urbanization resulted in increment of the problems of people like psychological, social, economic, political and educational problems. There was necessity of scientific method for solutions of these problems. Firstly the social work began in England and America in 19<sup>th</sup> century. The object of social work was to help the people who are in problem and in that way that they can solve their problems themselves.

A person is most important in the field of professional social work so such person does not count as a shortcoming. But making study of related different things as aspects it is tried to reach the main root of the problems, so a person, crowd and class are helped by special method. For this different types of systems are used. These are-people's service work system, crowd work system and class work system, social function work system and integrated system. The social work was started in 20<sup>th</sup> century in India. In Gujarat seven colleges are serving for education of professional social work. But it is fact that the social work was originated in western countries so its ideology is same to it while it exactly fit with our Indian

culture. As compared to other social subjects, social work subject is not fully accepted yet in India.

### **STRUCTURE**

Generally organization mean the class of people that is gathered to work with it's main aim. It has five symptoms viz. (1) the class of different people (2) wish to get same aims (3) pre-assigned work (4) logical emersion and (5) trueness in reference to time<sup>3</sup>. Before many years a person called social worker if he gives his/her service without any cost. An organization established by their own worker and functioning as self will called volunteer organization. Volunteer organization is a group of such peoples that gather as government approved institution to pay their service for village development with pre-arrangement besides they are responsible to them where they provide service. Volunteer organizations are soundly related to human development concentration and different matters of social service without that it is hard to gain its main aims for volunteer organization. If we see the voluntary organization in broad sense we will find that their activities, approach ideology, method, forms, skill and planning's are different from one another. Some voluntary organizations are very big whereas some are small. Some organization work with the people at the grass route level whereas some organizations inspire the people to be conscious for their rights and for their demand of justice, some believe in stereotypes copying and growing whereas some believe in experimenting and explaining. Thus, the vividness of the voluntary organization is very much spread<sup>4</sup>.

There are different kinds of voluntary organization in our society. By taking their main activity we can differentiate these organization in, Religious and Caste Based organization, organization working for the human welfare, the clubs and cultural organizations working for their own enjoyment etc<sup>5</sup>.

Social organizations were differentiated mainly into four types- organizations which have been patronized by the state or the government and which have been frozen in their own ideologies; organizations which have been foreign patronized by the state and getting aids; organizations which are getting foreign aids or else creating their own instruments and fighting against the government; and organizations which are getting foreign aids and working professionally by ending their own autonomous identity<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, we can see many characteristics of the organizations working at social sector. They are

different in each and every characteristic for examples their size, members, frame, financial matters, external affairs with state and Government, ideologies, mottos and programmes. We can also differentiate them in following types-

### **Non-Government organizations**

The organization which works by getting help from Government is known as NGO. They work as per the rules and policies of the Government. They rarely play any role against the government in the matters like policy making. In past they were known as voluntary agent or voluntary agency in place at NGO's. The Journey, from the voluntary organization to the NGO, means the compromises in the values and behavior.

### **Voluntary Organizations**

The voluntary organization is a group that puts pressure on the working method of missionaries and on certain ideology. The persons with equal goals design the organization to implement their own ideas. These persons are very sensitive and working with new values for the issues like human rights and social justice for this they have to work against the Government. These organizations work in constant struggle. They work mainly by taking foreign aid or by creating their own sources.

### **People's organizations**

These organizations are people's own organizations, in which there is not any interference of any external personal. People found these types of organizations for their own welfare. These organizations work completely under control of the people; everyone can be a part of it.

### **Community Based Organizations**

The organizations which are working at social level have realized by their own experience that these should be organized at caste level for the welfare of the particular caste and works for their own problems. These types of organization can work by taking in the view all necessities of their caste or society. Organizations only give support to these kinds of groups. In this way Caste Based Group arise at caste level and by using their own resources they do social activities at caste level.

### **Government Organizations**

These type of organization put pressure on the works of social development. Government rarely does any direct work. It works indirectly by using the organizations as it's medium and sometimes it

creates sectors for some special programmes. Organizations can also be classified as following-

### **Traditional Organizations**

These organizations works to prevent the natural and traditional resources in which they do works like cast for rights of tribes over natural resources.

### **Religious Organizations**

There are different religious organizations e.g. Sikh, Buddh, Jain, Christian, Islam etc. which are working for the poor and helpless people and give service and aids to them. They are engaged in the activities like education, services, drinking water, social welfare etc. The organizations which have been inspired by the religious are doing these kinds of activities.

### **Social Movement**

These are the organizations working for the rights of SC/ST, females, rehabilitation, RTI, Education and of living. They, by the movements, work to bring a change in the society as well as in the organization and in administration.

### **Membership Association**

Such organizations are being governed by their members who work as a representative of particular group or society. They work on the advice of a particular group and also for the interest of particular group (for e.g. rural peasants. farming peasants, female laborers, groups of customers etc.); particular occupation or business (for e.g. Bar Association, Engineer's Association etc.); and social and cultural organization (for e.g. Nehru Yuva Kendra, Sports Club, Drama Group, Lion's Club etc.). The organizations working for their own welfare and small saving Groups can also be included in this category.

### **Intermediary Associations**

These types of organization work personally or broadly for public interest at state level, for example between people and the Government or Judiciary and between people and police. These may be of different types, for e.g. support, mobilization, philanthropic, network etc.

### **ROLE**

When state and central government do not get success in bringing total welfare at that time the voluntary organizations come in the scene. In this group workers are included. The people who are connected with voluntary organizations are

more concerned with the society and its problems than with their own family problems. These organizations have different characteristics like flexibility, progressiveness and freshness. Because of these they become very much effective toward their goals. Though these organizations are engaged in progressive and creative works yet they must be ready for struggle against the government. There are many organizations which are engaged only in the creative works and they never come in the struggle against government.

The main role of the organizations is to help the government in designing the development programmes for the last people on the basis of reality. And if according to that Government implement programme, the role of the organization is to see that the implementation must be fair. The organization will have to work as the vigilant workman of the society. They also have to perform the role of researcher and according to that we can bring changes in the programme by keeping in view the local conditions. It is the duty of these organizations to invent new technology and also to see the process of its spreading and marketing. The identification of the concerned issues, in the changing sphere, its different factors, its effect on the people etc. all these works are related with the voluntary organizations. In short, they have to do struggle, co-operation and equal criticism<sup>2</sup>.

### **The delivery of the services**

After independence India has implemented the approach of social welfare. The government has designed and implemented many programmes and policies for poverty abolition and for development of backward classes. These programmes have been implemented by voluntary organizations. In the past, the organizations were getting donations for their work but it was on very basic level. Because of this, the Government has started to give donation to these organizations so that they can spread the area of their working. Second thing is that the Government never engaged itself directly in social work. Government uses these kinds of organizations as a medium to provide its services. The organizations are more effective in providing the services to the last people in compare to the state and administration, although they have some limitations. The organizations which are engaged in the creative activities and in the delivery system never come in a struggling role although they have some necessary and important grounds of struggle in their working areas. But at the same time, we will have to accept it that beurocracy is also not successful in providing the services. That's why the

organizations have to work in this area also, but it is also important that they prevent their values.

### **The establishment of the social justice**

The organizations which are working with the new principles also play a vital role in social justice. There is no visible change in the condition of poor, withered, exploited, suppressed and the backward class of the society even today. The social and political power is becoming more centralized. In this scenario it is the responsibility of such organizations to get control over the power of government. Such institutes should have the commitment to do something essential for 'the last men', who are neglected and deserted somewhere. To improve the condition of deprived class of the society the states, politicians, government, various development institutes, Naxalites, various approaches and elite class people have not been succeeded. All these formal institutes of the society are mostly dead, reactive and confined to the conservative beliefs, whereas NGOs are more flexible, progressive and innovative, because of that more creativity is generated. This special quality adds objectivity in their work. The objectivity is must to study the situation on the ground level. Along with that critical rationality is also needed for analytical study. The organizations should take care of objectivity and critical rationality by themselves.

Radical progressive organizations are engaged in the struggle of obtaining rights as well as placing new paradigm of progress for the suppressed, downtrodden *dalits-adivasis* (tribals) and poor class of the society. Such organizations should manage their work in terms of struggle as well co-operation with the government.

The role of formation and progress:-

Today the layman is being neglected due to the change of economic policy with globalization and liberalization. As a result NGOs are compelled to work for the development of *dalits*, tribes, women, tenants, workers, caravans, child laborers and various fields of environment. NGOs are supposed to do their work of progression among such people and have to set successful examples.

### **As a forcing factor by monitoring government/ power**

It is the duty of such organizations to examine the convenience of the programs run by states and if necessary to create pressure to make some changes in them. Along with government policies and various roles they also have to plan out new designs and strategies. These organizations

can help government to form programs for the distant man on the base of concrete reality or they can find out some possible options also.

The actual role of the NGOs only could be checking the power. When the state-power starts to work against the people, it becomes the responsibility of NGOs to get control over the power. The state-power is not aware of the actual situation on the ground earth. So they have to be occupied constant in presenting these actual situations on upper level. Sometimes it becomes necessary for NGOs to create a forcing group against government to bring change in the policies of the people for whom they are working. This is not possible without networking. Therefore all the NGOs create a pressure against government in a unity. Thus it is the major function of NGOs to monitor the government or the power.

### **Public awareness and public organizations**

The experiences of various organizations come to the conclusion that till the people themselves won't become aware of their problems; the solution can not be possible. Because of this such organizations are making the people (victims) aware with their problems.

NGOs are working in the direction where people would have their own organization and make an effort for themselves. In this attempt there is a noticeable result also. Many such local public organizations are working nowadays. Such organizations should try for the priority of public participation in government policies and programs so that people can have maximum benefit of the policies and programs.

The role of social organization is alike the foundation of building. Apart from these roles there are mainly other six functions of them. Some organizations play more than one role also. On the bases of problems and small needs of groups some functions of organizations are mentioned below.

### **Development and operation of Infrastructure**

This is one of the progressive and welfare-oriented function that NGO plays. In this function they have pre-decided and quite clear role. To buy land and build house on it, to create the sources of water, to construct public toilets etc. activities are included here. In this function the community oriented activities which leads towards economical development are taken up. Many government programs are also being executed by these organizations. Some foreign helping institutes are also connected with this reason which directly helps in development and operation of infrastructure.

### **Support for innovation and demonstration of model pilot projects**

The organizations are free to make any change for achieving better result in their work. After selecting particular area, some development oriented works with innovative methods are being taken up. For that organization works freely according to the needs and the time period of execution. These organizations which have capacity to work more speedily and efficiently than government organizations do not face any limitation of authority or power. These organizations demonstrate model pilot projects before government.

### **Facilitating Communication**

The organization is quite aware about the problems and needs of the people. They can check the possibility of success for new projects. In this significant role before government, they can communicate at policy deciding level. They are aware of the culture, problems, attitude, capacity etc of the people at local level which really proves helpful. They communicate in two-ways.



They communicate information from people to government and government to people in upward and downward way. It is not just mechanical process of giving and taking but a mature analysis is also part of it. The feelings and thoughts of local people are included in it. They also make people aware with the planning and executions of government. Parallel to this (horizontally) a new network comes into existence in which such information is transmitted to all similar institutes.

### **Technical support and training**

The organizations develop their competence in special field. By giving training they even make their co-workers more committed for concerned issues. Along with that they also bring awareness among CBO (community base organization) and government by providing them training and try to connect people of various fields by organizing training.

### **Research, Monitoring and Evaluation**

This is the noble role of organization. Various social issues are documented in it.

Therefore they can present the actual information before people and government organizations. Along with that, by effective and co-operative attention and evaluation they also discuss the process and the result before public and co-workers.

### **Advocacy for and with poor**

The organizations present issues on behalf of poor community. By this they influence government policy and programs. For example they influence government planning by putting forward model programs in special public gathering.

From the last few years a positive role is being created for such organizations. Government also appoints them in their commission and committee. Many organizations have played vital role on working upon some national issues like community integration, gender awareness, environmental problems etc. Some leaders of prestigious institutes have also raised their voice on global issues. They advice on related issues, for example activities like global movement against child labour also create impact on international institutes like World Bank NGO committee.

For public they publish case studies and researches and distribute also. Thus the organizations play the role of ideal lawyer for poor.

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