Role Sharing and Collaboration between Governments and NGOs in National Development

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"Never doubt that a group of thoughtful, committed individuals can change the world.Indeed it is the only thing that ever did"

Margaret Mead

Voluntarism in India

- Two fountainheads
  - Charity (paramartha)
  - Service (seva)

    More an extension of religion

What is missing

- A sense of common fate
- Trust in people's capacity
- Sense of equality

Early voluntarism

- Enlightened Christian missionaries (Religious)
- Ramakrishna Mission (Religious)
- Tagore's Sriniketan in Bengal (Rural Development)
- Spencer Hatch of YMCA (Martandam, Kerala) (Rural Development)

Voluntarism and social transformation

- Raja Rammohan Roy (Women's upliftment)
- Iswarchandra Vidya Sagar (Women's upliftment)
- Dayanand Saraswati (Religious reform and education)
- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (Religious reform and education)
- Mahatma Jyotibha Phule (Fight against caste)
- Ramaswamy naicker (Tamilnadu)
- Narayana Guru (Kerala)
- Panduranga Sastry Athavale (Swadhyaya movement)

Gandhian voluntary action

- Ambulance corps in South Africa (Boer war)
- Champaran – political struggle combined with constructive action
- Basic education
- Harijan welfare and removal of untouchability
- Sanitation
- Leprosy eradication (HLNS)
- Handlooms and Handicrafts

Post-Independence India

Government support to Gandhian concepts and Institutions
Example:
- Harijan Seva Sangh
- Khadi and Village Industries Commission
- Khadi and Village Industries Board
- Sarvodaya movement
- Bhoodan Movement

Voluntarism with professional inputs

- Bunker Roy – SWRC (Tilonia)
- Dr Anil Sadgopal – Hoshangabad education project
- Dr R S Arole – Healthcare, Maharashtra
- ASHA - Education
- Rajendra Singh – Watershed development
- Anna Hazare - Watershed development

Voluntarism and social activism

- Left wing movements   (eg: Rythu kuli sangham)
- Labour movements (Sankar Guha – Neogy)
- Environmental movements (Narmada Bachao Andolan)

□   Religious revival movements (Hindu & Muslim organizations)

State and NGOs

1947 -1970s	:	State collaboration
1970s-80s	:	JP movement (confrontation)
1990s-	:	Development work

                                   - collaboration

                                   - collusion

Ideological activism

                                   - adversarial

                                   - collusion

Governance reform

                                   - adversarial

                                   - limited collaboration

State's felters

□   Clampdown during emergency

□   Attempts to stifle voluntary societies through over-regulation

□   Not enough incentive for contributions (limited tax exemption)

□   FCRA as a means of corruption and control

□   State support tainted by corruption

Governance and human rights
Three key goals

Goals	Components	State Action
Human Dignity	Freedom from child labour, drudgery, hunger and public defecation	Strong policies, effective laws. Resources
Accessible justice	Local courts, fair processes, just compensation for rights violations, and speedy resolution	Rule of law, local Courts, Judge-population ratio, procedural changes, accent on rights of poor
Opportunities for vertical mobility	School education, primary healthcare, basic amenities-water	Resource allocation, sensible policies, effective delivery systems, accountability, decentralization

Political process vs Civil society

Nature of society	Role of Political Process	Role of Civil Society
Mature Democracies	Solution	Specific Advocacy
Flawed Democracies	Problem	Movement for Reform
Dictatorships	Non-existent	Movement for Democracy

In a sane democracy

- ☐ Political process should resolve the crisis
- ☐ Parties, elections and public office are the route to reform
- ☐ In India a vicious cycle operates

Distortions of state power

- ☐ Positive power restricted
        Negative power unchecked
- ☐ All organs are dysfunctional
- ☐ Crisis is systemic

☐ Political process ought to be the solution

But has become the problem itself

Flawed political process

☐ Institutional rigiditiesSystem of alibis

☐ Change of players *vs* rules of the game

☐ Over-centralization

     – Vote   →   Public good

     – Taxes   ←   Services

     – Authority   ←   Accountability

☐ Incapacity to institutionalize innovations

Flawed democracies - elections

Macro perspectives	Micro perspectives
Disaggregate volatility	Oligopoly of parties
Broadly reflective of public opinion	Local voting irregularities and fraud
Ruling parties and powerful candidates are voted out	Only players change, no change in rules of game
Rejection vote common	Issues and candidate merits are largely irrelevant

What is wrong with electoral process?

☐ Illegitimate and unaccounted money power (10-50 times legal ceiling)

☐ Criminalization of politics (700/4072)

☐ Voting irregularities

☐ Caste and divisive impulses

Key reforms

Electoral reforms	Funding
	Criminalization
	Voting trregularities
Electoral system	Proportinal representation
	Separation of powers
Decentralization	Local governments
Rule of law	Judicial reforms
Accountability	Right to information
	Citizen's charters
	Independent crime investigation

Civil society's role
☐ Mobilize people for reforms
– Local
– NationalStrengthen democratic processesAdversarial and collaborative

Illustrations of engagement

☐ Election Watch - Non partisan activism
impact on criminalization (facilitatory + exposure)Candidate disclosures - Adversarial activism
☐ Right to information - Advocacy and mass mobilization
☐ Funding reform - Collaborative activism

Approaches to citizens' activism

☐ Collective informed assertion

- ☐ Wide dissemination of information
- ☐ Effective mass communication
- ☐ Strategic intervention

Dangers of status quo

- ☐ Fiscal collapse
- ☐ Anarchy
- ☐ Authoritarianism
- ☐ Balkanization
- ☐ Unfulfilled potential
- ☐ Avoidable suffering

Future of voluntarism

- ☐ Public service contractor (education, health care, slum resettlement etc.)
- ☐ Collaborator with state (community participation, watershed development etc.)
- ☐ Social innovators (new technologies, organizations and services)
- ☐ Social critics and policy advocates (child labour, environment etc.)
- ☐ Building civil society institutions (electoral reform, right to information, decentralization, police and judicial reform etc.)

Key requirements

- ☐ Inspiration
- ☐ Leadership
- ☐ Legitimacy
- ☐ Funding
- ☐ Linkages

State's role in future

- Rule of Law
- Public Order
- Justice
- Education
- Health care
- Infrastructure
- Natural resources development

Civil society's role

- Make the state do its job
- Take charge of areas un-addressed by state and market
- Assert people's sovereignty and community control
- Build a framework for social cohesion and a sense of common fate

"The punishment suffered by the wise who refuse to take part in the government, is to suffer under the government of bad men."

Plato