ROLE OF RESIDENTS, NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND QUASI-PUBLIC AGENCIES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN INDIA

by

Randhir B.Jaix,Ph.O
Professor,
University of Delhi
INDIA

ROLE OF RESIDENTS, NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

Introduction:

In any polity a citizen is more directly affected by the government at the local level than at the central or state level. It is at this level that a citizen comes into direct contact with the administration for obtaining the basic services that are essential to his very existence — services like law and order, public health, police and security water supply, electricity, traffic control, roads, street building, markets, schools and all other utilities that are necessary to improve the quality of life. In the case of developing countries like India, which has about 72% of its population living in the rural areas, and a significant proportion of urban and rural population barely existing at below poverty line, the role of local government assumes greater importance.

The main objective of local government is to promote public safety, health, convenience and general welfare of its citizens so that they are able to live and work in a healthy environment. No other government organization is so closely connected with the day to day life of the people and the community as the local government is. Not only is it responsible for providing basic amenities to the citizens in general but it has also to play an increasingly important role in the welfare and development of the more deprived section of the population and take active steps towards developing and implementing programmes for poverty allegations and provision of employment of opportunities and minimum of living standard above the poverty line. The democratic and socialistic character of India which professes equal opportunities and freedom of expression for all, makes the people at once the subject as well as the instrument of development. This premise coupled with

the failure of centrist policies of development have put a greater
obligation on the governmental agencies at every level to make people's
involvement in administration an important component of governance and
development action. The failure of both the urban and rural government
in India to respond adequately to the challenges of welfare and
development has given the issue of peoples/community/public citizens
participation an entirely new dimension. Peoples' participation and
involvment in the context of present day local governments both in the
urban and rural areas is no longer merely a liberal ideal but a
compelling necessity.

This paper is concerned with an analysis of the role that the
citizens, non governmental organizations and the various public agencies
play in the administration of the socio-welfare activities of the local
governments in India, both in the urban and the rural areas. Inter-alia
it also attempts to evaluate their efficacy and make suggestions for
further improvements in this direction. However, to begin with, it
is necessary to have a brief description about the structural
organisation of local government institutions in India.

I.Local Government in India:The Structural Organisation

In India the structure of local government consists of three
different components. These are (a) the district administration (b)
the urban local self government institutions and (c) the rural local
government institutions. In India, neither the local government nor
the urban or rural local self government institutions have an independent
constitutional status. Although in 1989 the Congress-I Government,
led by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, tried to give both the
local urban and rural government institutions a constitutional status,
but as the constitutional Amendment Bills could not get through the
parliament, the attempt failed. With the change of Government in 1989,
the matter seems to have been shelved for the time being. Since local
government is a subject under the state list, therefore, the local
administration at the district and the self-government institutions
both in urban and rural areas are the creatures of the state governments,
and carry out only those functions and responsibilities which are
specifically delegated to them under the state legislations. Thus the
composition and functions of local government institutions may vary

from one state to another in the twentyfive states and the seven union territories existing in the federal system of India.

(a) The District Administration:

The district is the basic unit of administration in India. Every state is divided into several districts. Each of such districts is headed by a district collector or a district commissioner, who is responsible for all the administrative and land revenue matters, controlling, directing and coordinating all the functions of law and order, police, revenue, development and other duties assigned to him by the central and state governments from time to time. The policing functions are performed by a police force headed by a Superintendent of Police and assisted by scores of subordinate police officials. For general administrative purposes, a district is divided into sub divisions, under the charge of a sub divisional officer, and for land revenue administration, into Tehsils, under the charge of Tehsildar. The local self government functions are entrusted to separate self-governing institutions both in the urban as well as rural areas.

(b) The Urban Local Government:

The structure of urban local self government in India consists of a number of different institutions in various cities and towns. These are (a) Municipal Corporation: (b) Municipalities (c) Notified Area Committees (d) Town area Committees (e) Cantonment Boards and (f) Autonomous Development Authorities, like Improvement Trusts or the Development Authorities. The cantonment boards are specific bodies, which are partially elected and partially nominated and are set up only in cantonment areas. The other types of local institutions are constituted in urban areas only on the basis of the criteria of size, population, occupational composition and financial liability of the towns and cities. In 1985 in India, there were 73 Municipal Corporations, 1774, Municipalities, 803 Notified and Town Area Committees and 51 larger degree of autonomy and tax powers, Municipalities have lesser autonomy, smaller jurisdiction and are subject to comparatively detailed supervisory control and direction by the state governments. The Notified Area Committees, which are governed by a special provision of the State Municipal Acts are set up in growing towns not yet fit to have a municipality. The Town Area Committee is constituted in a small town having pronounced rural characteristics. The later two types of urban bodies are limited in their powers and functions and the state's

control over them is more persuasive than in the case of municipalities.
The autonomous development bodies like the Improvement Trusts or Urban
Development Authorities have been created in almost all urban areas
in India largely after independence as a response to the challanges
of rapid urbanization needing greater urban reconstruction and
development. Despite these institutional structures, however, almost
all the urban areas lack behind in the provision of basic services due
to the excessive growth and expansion of population. In most town and
cities, civic services exist almost in primitive conditions and the
systems of public sanitation, drainage, street lighting, waste disposal,
sewerage and transport are in a deplorable condition. The urban local
governments have not been in a position to cater to the need created
by the dynamism of urbanization.

(c) The Rural Local Government:
      The present structure of rural local self government is based on
the Balwantrai Mehta Committee Report of 1957, which recommended that
the Government should divest itself completely of certain duties and
responsibilities in respect of development and devolve them to a body
which will have the entire charge of all development work within its
jurisdiction, reserving to itself only the functions of guidance,
supervision and higher planning. It suggested a three tier structure
of rural administration, consisting of (a) Village Panchayat at the
lowest level, (b) the Panchayat Samities, constituted through direct
elections from the Village Panchayats and (c) Zila Parishads (the
District councils), consisting of Presidents of Panchayat Samities,
M.L.As and M.Ps representing the area, and the district level officers,
with the collector being its Chairman, and one of his officers working
as its Secretary. The Panchayati Raj institutions (as those bodies
have since been called) were introduced in almost all the states in
India since 1960s. But after initial enthusiasm, partial successes
and promising performances, these institutions began to deteriorate
rapidly. The system of Panchayati Raj was reviewed by the Ashoka Mehta
Committee in 1977, which outlined some of the reasons for the decline
of panchayati Raj institutions viz: haphazard programmes,
non-performance, rise of vested interests, lack of political will on
the part of the central and state governments, lack of adequate financial
resources etc. Instead of the present three tier structure, the
Committee recommended a two tier model of Panchayati Raj. The argument
was that the first point of decentralisation in respect of rural

administration below the state level should be the district. The revenue
district assures the administrative competence and high technical
expertise required for rural development. The tier at the district
level will be known as the unit of planning in most of the states and
is not to·be the basic unit of devolution, but merely an executive
committee of the Zila Parishad i.e. the District council. The
suggestion for the creation of Mandal panchayats consisting of a cluster
of villages (which were to be the implementing bodies) as second tier
in the model, covering a population of 15,000 to 20,000 would alone
be able to ensure a balance between technological requirements and
possibilities of popular participation in decision making. However,
these recommendations did not come into effect as the Report was not
implemented, and the Panchayati Raj System. Continues to function,
more or less in the some moribund state under the laws formed by the
various state governments in 1960s.

II.Need for Citizen Involvement and Participation in Local Government
in India

   As the people's dealings with local government are more closer
and more frequent, public administration at the local levels assumes
critical importance. The efficiency and effective functioning of local
bodies and the standards of services provided by them depend not only
·on the organisational procedure, financial capabilities, tax
administration and technical and administrative competence of the
municipal personnel, but also on the interest, understanding and
cooperaion of the citizens. Well informed citizens, conscious of their
responsibilities can respond quickly to the steps taken for improving
the services and promoting social and economic development and cooperate
with the administration in its tasks. Good leadership and enlightened
participation of the people, civic pride and consciousness are the
prerequisities for building up a sound and responsible administration.
Involvement of citizens in the affairs of the local body make officers
and elected councillors responsible to the needs and aspirations of
the people. It makes them active and encourages them to give their
best in the service of the people. [1]
   However, the very idea of people's involvement in local government
raises a number of issues. First and foremost, is the very meaning
of peoples' involvement. Citizens' involvement is not limited to the

simple act of working in the municipal elections, wherever these are
held. It is also not restricted to attendance at public meetings or
participation in advisory committees, special board and commissions
and public authorities, although all of these are part of effective
involvement. As generally observed citizens' involvement then refers
to the process of providing all residents of a local government, full
and equal opportunity to influence those government decisions that effect
the quality of their lives. In practical terms, it would mean (a) that
people identify what do they want the local government to do, (b) they
have an opportunity to communicate their views (c) they can participate
in the decision making process and (d) they can evaluate the actions
of their representatives. People's involvement thus not only effects
the quality of public decisions but also provide the local authorities
information which will forewarn them of the likely problems and pitfalls
that could inhibit the progress of implementation. It also helps improve
the finances of the local body by increasing people's willingness to
pay for the progress and projects which they are going to cater to the
basic needs of the community, and motivate them to solve their own
problems.

III.Peoples' Participation in Urban Development

(a) Community Development in Social Welfare Activities in Urban
Government in India:

        In most local governments in India, social welfare activities,
if any, are largely handled either by the education department or
directly by the executive branch itself. Earlier such activities have
originated in programmes as the welfare of beggars, rescue homes, night
shelters, lepers asylums etc. In more recent times, attempts have been
made by some urban bodies to develop social work attitudes or the part
of the administration on the one hand and community action and
participation on the other. This has been the starting point of a few
experimental projects in urban community development in some of towns
and cities in the country. Urban community development has now emerged
as possible form of intervention to solve some of the problems of the
city government in general and of the slums in particular. It involves
two fundamental ideas: the development of effective community feeling
within an urban context and the development of self help and citizen
participation in seeking community integration and change. [2]

In India, the earliest beginnings for providing some form of social welfare services by the urban bodies go back to 1948, when the Delhi Municipal Committee set up an Adult Education Department. The first urban community development project was initiated in 1958 in Delhi with the assistance from the Ford Foundation. This implied a new approach of community organisation and developing local initiative in community activities through self help and such assistance as could be obtained from the municipal departments. These progrommes were subsequently initiated in Ahmedabad (1962), Baroda (1965) and Calcutta (1966). In Delhi, the programmes was further supplemented and extended in 1966 with the addition of the pilot projects in urban community development sanctioned by the Government of India in the Ministry of Health, Family Planning and Urban Developments. The Department of Urban Community Development functioned under a Director who was responsible both for the old projects having about 15 community organisers as well as for the two new projects spread in four localities. In the same year, 14 pilot projects spread almost all over the country, were sponsored by the Union Ministry of Health. These projects were conceived as exceptional outside agents, who were to define the most urgent needs in the service areas and the most appropriate mode of intervention, and then were to undertake the task of stimulating the indispensable participation of the forces, public and private. In other words, they were to act as catalysts in developmental process whose major actions were to be the state, the local body, voluntary organisations on the one side and the local population on the other. An evaluation study of Urban Community Development projects sponsored by the Ministry of Health has revealed that such urban community development projects have been able to make appreciable headway by sensitising people to their needs and problems, bringing their aspirations and discontentments to surface, arousing their interest and enthusiasm for improving their conditions of living and mobilizing the support and assistance from various governments and voluntary agencies. [3]

The Third Five Year Plan mentioned the need for each city to mobilize its own resources to help create bold conditions for its citizens and placed emphasis on the need for and the potentialities of urban community development. During the last years of the Third Five Year Plan (1967), the Government of India proposed to start 50 pilot Urban Community Development (UCD) projects in selected cities with a population of above one hundred thousand. Initially, it was

decided to start 20 pilot projects. However, in the face of a lukewarm response from the states, by 1976 only 13 projects could be started. Five of them were located in Gujarat alone. While some of the UCD projects, those in Kanpur, Hyderabad and Surat, which started during the Fourth Plan, are still continuing, other UCD projects were started in the last few years started in Pune, Aurangabad, Patna, Bhubaneshwar, Visakhapatnam, Alleeppy, Jaipur, Agra and some other cities. In Gujarat, UCD projects are in operation in 18 towns and cities. Andhra Pradesh has the country's two most successful UCD projects in Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam, UCD is designed to function as part of the local body and is viewed as a link between the people and the Municipal Corporation. The staff is given scope to develop activities according to the felt needs of the people and are given a mandate to cover activities normally not covered by the local body. The aim is to create in problematic urban areas stronger communities with their own leaders who could plan, finance, and carry out self help projects. To bring this about, local voluntary organisations are strengthened and bustee level (locality level) agencies/ committees are established. The project activities are guided by the assumption that any neighbourhood, no matter how poor, can do something to improve itself by its own efforts; and that any approach for outside help should be restored to only after it has exhausted its own resources fully. In the context of general resource constraints and in a situation of competing priorities in other sectors and fields; and recognizing the limitations of voluntary efforts in effectively reaching out to large numbers in a sustained manner in diverse roles and services, the urban community development project appear to be useful instruments to reach out to organise, deliver services to and, finally, integrate low income communities with the mainstream of city life.

(b) Role of Voluntary Agencies and Citizens'
     Groups in Urban Development:

The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) bemoaned the inadequate recognition of the role of voluntary agencies in accelerating the process of social and economic development. These agencies have been known to play an important role by providing a basis for innovation with new models and approaches, ensuring feed back and securing the involvement of families living below the poverty line. However, the plan document listed programmes and areas in which voluntary agencies could help only in the rural sectors. The existence and role of such bodies in urban areas is not mentioned and, therefore, not recognized.

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Local governments and their agencies are unable to appreciate the wide variety of roles that non government voluntary agencies can play at different levels like (a) assisting the weak in obtaining service and the state in effectively delivering them (b) providing professional services in research, project formulation and implementation; (c) monitoring effects of development actions (d) highlighting their contradictions (e) generating alternatives (f) advocating causes (g) protecting and upholding values (h) organising people to acknowledge their internal, dormant potential and strengths and ascertain their rights (i) strengthing democratic values and institutions and (j) facilitating participatory processes through education and intermediation.[4]

The watch dog role, the corrective role, the change agent role, the educator role, the intermediary role, the innovater role, and the service provides role are predominant in the list of priorities of voluntary agencies. The governments perception, however, does not seem to see beyond their role as provider of relief, welfare and service. The newly conceived role, it appears, is that of the deliverer of government sponsored services and implementer of government-sponsored welfare and development schemes. Whereas the official image of the role is that of an agent of the government, an agency's own image is that of the agent of the people.

It has also not been often recognised that some of the most important innovations and ideas in the various development fields in post independence India have emerged from the voluntary sector. The environmental movement in India is one example: Raj and Mabel Arale's work in Jarnkhed, Maharashtra reading to an alternative low cost and appropriate model for delivery of health services to the rural masses is another. The consumer movement is almost voluntary. The Lok Adalat idea, which the formal system is in the process of adopting is at innovation of voluntary agencies. SEWA's pioneering work in organising self employed women, Sulabh International's success in designing a self paying mechanism for public amenities (public conveniences and bathrooms), and Solunki's Pani Panchayat are some more examples of innovative ideas with larger applicability originating in the voluntary sector.

(c) Recommendations of the National Commission on Urbanization:

    The National Commission on Urbanisation appointed by the Government of India, in its report in 1888 noted that in order to strengthen participatory processes and meaningfully involve the non government voluntary agencies in city governance and development action, many attitudinal institution, operational and procedural changes are needed. The task is neither easy nor can it be done in isolation. The commission, however, made some recommendations, which it believed, could set the tone and initiate the process:

1) Strengthen the municipal corporations and municipal bodies by (a) holding popular elections wherever local bodies are superseded (b) facilitating the entry of positive leadership (c) improving the financial positions of local bodies and (d) making necessary changes in laws governing the working of the municipal bodies, systems and procedures to enable them to utilise the skills and resources of individuals, groups agencies and institutions in planning execution and monitoring of developmental activities.

2) Initiate urban community development projects through the municipal bodies in cities with a population above 50,000 with necessary changes in their organisational structure, mandate, financing arrangements and institutional linkages. Design UCD projects as effective vehicles to reach out to motivate, service and organise the urban poor and as agencies for coordination and convergence of service delivery and poverty alleviation schemes, and projects and programmes of different government and semi government agencies.

3) Ensure adherence to participatory and consultative procedures prescribed in the law but neglected or circumvented in practice by cultivating attitudes and evolving tools and methodologies which in responsible/concerned planning and implementing agencies. Ensure that the mendatory public hearing before finalisation of a city development plan is effectively gone through without any one in any way benefiting from the process. Proper methods of communication and information sharing and appropriately designed consultation platforms would lead to useful feed back for planners and education for the people.

4) Recognize the existing role and work of non-government voluntary agencies in the urban areas and create facility/support arrangements on the CAPART model for urban projects and works of non-government agencies. This facility should finance study, research, advocate action, demonstration projects and other innovation, relevant efforts of urban based, non government voluntary agencies.

5) Encourage, assist and facilitate networking among NGOs working in various sectors at regional and city level for information and experience-sharing.

6) Facilitate entry and encourage role by the NGOs at the macro-policy formulation and programmes design levels. The Planning Commission, the Urban Development Ministry and many other agencies of the government have started inducting into their service senior and experienced workers from the NGOs. This arrangement needs to be further strengthened at the central government level and encouraged at the state and the city level. The interaction, diologue and outcome will be mutually beneficial.

7) Establish at national level an organisation that could provide a focus for voluntary action. In the rural areas, such a modal function is performed by the Council for Advancement of Peoples Action and Rural technology (CAPART). There is a need to set up a National Urban Council for Citizen Action (NUCCA) at the national level. This would be the modal agency to which citizens' groups could relate, which would promote voluntary action and which, at central level, would channalise funds to voluntary agencies working in urban settlement. Much of NGOs thrust would be in the area of poverty allevation. It would thus work in close contact on the one hand, with the urban poverty allevation division of the ministry and on the other, with voluntary action groups, thus acting as a bridge between government and the people. In order that the pitfalls of excessive bureaucratisation may be avoided, the NUCCA should be headed by a renowned social worker, who may be basically a political person, but who has known reputation for voluntary work. Great flexibility should be allowed to the NUCCA in matters of procedure and rules. In fact it should be given a free hand to evolve procedures as it goes along instead of the routine accountability which hamstrings such organisations. There should be a stringent annual review of its working by a small committee to be set up by its affiliated voluntary action groups, with a representative each of government and the NUCCA also being members. This committees report should normally be accepted by government unless there are strong grounds for its rejection. So long as the NUCCA moves in the direction of encouraging citizens' action, does not misappropriate or misapply funds, and has a policy, instead of just a string of adhoc decisions, it should be left unfettered, even in the matter of making mistakes, for it is only freedom of

action that will inspire citizens' actions.

At the state level also, it would be neccessary to set up a State Urban Council for Citizen Action (SUCCA), in each State on the lines of the one proposed for the centre and also for bringing together, under one umbrella, of all the departments, concerned with urban planning and development.

At the city level, also there would be a need to set up a Forum for Citizen Action (FOCA), to enable non-governmental voluntary agencies to play watch dog, facilitate promotional, educational, advocacy and innovative roles and to activate citizen participation in the urban development field in general and in city development in particular.[5]

However, the above recommendations of the National Commission on Urbanisation are yet to be implemented. Even if some of these institutions as recommended are established, it will take some years before the impact of such steps could be evaluated. There is no doubt, however, that a strong political will is necessary on the part of the Governments at all levels to make full use of the voluntary efforts of the people in urban development and social welfare.

(d) Citizens' Involvement in Police/Security Activities:

In many countries, the cooperation of citizens and voluntary organisations has been enlisted in dealing with traffic problems. For example, Hongkong, the U.K., and other countries have successfully experimented with the system of traffic wardens. This has provided an institutional means for citizens' participation in dealing with traffic problems. Apparently, the system has not only augmented the resources of the traffic police but has also been able to step up discipline at the road. In India, as well, in many urban centres the traffic warden scheme has been tried. In Calcutta, with the help of voluntary organisations Traffic wardens have been recruited. They are given some orientation training before they are involved in traffic management. In a distinctive uniform, they help traffic police during rush hours. Towards, short term and long term traffic planning, they reportedly make a valuable contribution in their periodical meetings with traffic authorities. In the sprawling and ever expanding metropolis of Delhi, the traffic warden scheme has been in force for more than a decade, and has been a mixed success with regard to its efficacy. The scheme is likely to prove more useful if some distortions crept out in its operation are somewhat removed.[6] Recently the Police

Administration in Metropolitan City of Delhi has come out with a new
scheme of Neighbourhood Watch System, where residents of particular
localities are actively associated with providing security to the people
in different neighbourhood areas. The experiment has evoked mixed
successes in different localities.

(e) Peoples' Cooperative Efforts at the Local Levels:

At the local government level in India one of the few activities
in which people have cooperated themselves is with respect to the
institution of cooperative housing societies. Because of the continuing
shortage of dwelling units in most urban areas in the country,
cooperative societies for group housing and apartments have found to
be very effective means of solving this problem to some extent. The
history and growth of the cooperative housing dates back to the beginning
of this country, but the progress till 1980s was negligible. The
progressive era of housing cooperatives began only after 1950s when
it emerged on the first five year plan in 1951. The growth of this
movement is synonymous with the economic growth and development of the
country achieved in the subsequent decades in successive five year plans.
The progrees can be judged from that while during 1959-60, 5564
societies were functioning in India with a membership of 0.32 million,
and having a working capital of Rs.530 million, in the 1988's, the number
of such societies have gone to 34000, with 1.86 millions as members,
and Rs.1240 million as their working capital. The organisational
structure of the Cooperative Housing movement took a definite shape
in the year 1969, when the National Cooperative Housing Federation of
India (NCHF) was set up at the instance of the Government of India in
the Ministry of Works & Housing, for coordinating and guiding the housing
societies in the country. The cooperative housing structure in the
country consists of mainly of two tiers. At the grassroot level, Primary
cooperative societies are formed by the people. At the state level
these societies are affiliated to the apex cooperative housing finance
societies. The apex bodies channelise founds through their primary
societies within their jurisdiction. There are at persent 22 apex
cooperative housing societies in the country, and at the national level,
the National Cooperative Housing Federation of India (NCHF). All these
Apex Cooperative Housing Finance societies are eligible to become the
member of NCHF. The cooperative housing societies have made significant
contributions in the house construction programmes of the country. It

is estimated that have constructed so far about 0.6 million housing
units and another 0.6 million units are estimated at various stages
of construction.[7] Such a movement needs to be sustained on a more
continuing and endurable basis in order to provide people some of the
basic housing facilities so important for the existence of people in
the society.

IV.Peoples' Involvement in Rural Local Government[8]

Having discussed some of the efforts of citizens' involvement in
local urban development, it will be appropriate to analyse some of the
channels of peoples' participation in the rural development and social
welfare in India. This can be studied under (a) Community Development
(b) Panchayati Raj institutions (c) Cooperatives and (d) the Voluntary
Organisations.

(a) The Community Development Programme:

As a part of strategy to bring about socio-economic and cultural
transformation in the rural areas, a massive community development
programme was launched throughout the country in the year 1952. This
programme drew its inspiration from the experiments of the Albert Mayer's
Etawah Project in the state of Uttar Pradesh (1948), and S.k. Dey's
Nilokheri Project in Punjab (now in Haryana) (1950). On the basis of
experience derived from these pilot schemes, the Community Development
Programme (CD) was launched throughout the country in the year 1952.
Initially it covered 55 CD projects comprising 27,388 villages and a
population of 16.4 million, but within a short time the need was felt
to extend it throughout the country. Hence a less intensive programme
known as national Extension Service was formulated, which was put into
effect on 2 October, 1953. The CD programmes were variously described
as "the all round rural development programmes" aimed at material
development by rousing the urge among the rural people for creating
better living conditions, with infrastructural facilities provided by
the state; "the aided self-help programme" or people's programme with
government participation, etc. It was assumed that as the programme
caught on and became acceptable to the rural people it would move from
officially motivated self-help to self-motivated self-help. The goals
of Community Development were: (a) to increase employment and increase

production by the application of scientific methods of agriculture, including horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries etc., and the establishment of subsidiary and cottage industries and (b) self-help and self-reliance and the largest possible extension of the principle of cooperation, and (c) the need for developing a portion of the vast unutilised time and energy in the countryside for the benefit of the community.

These expectations were conditioned on the assumption that the desired changes could be ushered in the village with the help of an administrative machinery capable of providing infrastructural facilities and technical know how. This would increase the growth potential of the rural society, resulting in economic prosperity, which would in turn generate processes to minimise, if not completely eliminate poverty and social and economic inequalities. However, these expectations came to be belied as there was no recognition of the fact that a new social order based on the values of democracy, secularism and socialism could not be easily implanted on a caste-bound feudal and hierarchical society without shaking off the age old values and beliefs of people, and reorganizing the available socio- economic structure. The blending of centralized planning with the parliamentary form of government had created opposing pulls within the Indian polity. [9]In fact the logic of centralized planning was antithetical to people's participation. If the goals of development and its means were already determined by centralized planning, the role of bureaucracy, in the absence of a cadre based political party was to mobilise people for putting their energies and efforts for realising the same. Participation in its real sense was an eyewash, if not a total farce in this model. The main drawback of the CD Programme was that conceived purely in administrative terms, it remained primarily a bureaucratic activity where the officials were 'target oriented' and showed little sensitivity to the social process generated by economic programmes. People's participation was substituted by bureaucratic mobilisation, directed towards achieving set goals of development. Also development programmes were not conceived in response to the 'felt needs' of the people. Thus participation in true sense was lacking in determining development priorities. Besides the human and material resources were most inadequate considering the scale and magnitude of the task that was to be accomplished. In community development, there was greater dependence on the government for material resources and these were not supplemented by popular contribution, as was expected. Despite these shortcomings, however, the CD Programmes

did succeed in shaking up the rural society from its extreme passivity and inertia and gave it a momentous start. For the first time, after centuries, it brought the people closer to the government through its bureaucratic apparatus, and aroused political consciousness. It also familiarized people with many new concepts and techniques of agricultural development. Moreover an awareness was generated that facilities being made available by the states as social policy, could be used for general, good, if access to them is not restricted by the influential and the government – socially, politically or economically.

(b) The Panchayati Raj Institutions:

The establishment of a three-tier system of rural local self-government with full powers to assume responsibility for local development was the core of the Balwant Raj Mehta Committee recommendations. Rajasthan was the first state in India to introduce Panchayati Raj system on 2 October, 1959, which was followed by a number of other States, including Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh. There were two main variants of the model of Panchyati Raj adopted, depending upon whether grater authority was delegated to Samitis (groups of villages) or Zila Parishads (the districts). By 1970s, Panchayati Raj system had come to be introduced practically in all parts of the country. The new institutional set up was intended to be an experiment to involve the poorest of the poor in rural areas in the process of self-consciousness for national reconstruction and channelise his energies in the refashioning of community life.

The Panchyati Raj institutions have been in operation in almost all States in India for nearly three decades. There have been a number of variations in their structure of decision-making, implementation and resource-allocation, staffing pattern, training and recruitment of staff and the degree of autonomy allowed to different units. A number of research studies have been conducted by various scholars in the functioning of the system on an empirical basis. Many of the scholarly works in this area have pointed to the limited extent of the involvement of people in decision-making at grass-root level, the interactional resistances between the official and the non-official functionaries, the paradoxical resistances and tensions of the system in operation, the problems of caste-elite domination and political influences, and more significantly the non-achievement of developmental

goals. While the Panchayati Raj institutions have acquired stronger roots in some states, like Gujarat and Maharashtra, these have not made any impact in other states because of a number of reasons. Amongst them were the postponement of elections to its various bodies for years, declining and inadequate material and human resources, tensions between the officials and political leaders, and the lack of the very premise of popular participation in development programmes, which has been the raison d'etre of the entire concept.

The Asoka Mehta Committee which was set up in 1977 by the Janata Government which came into power after the short aberration of nineteen months of emergency regime imposed by the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, to review the Panchayati Raj institutions at various level had noted that the system had passed through three distinct phases: the phase of ascendency (1959-64); the phase of stagnation (1965-69); and the phase of decline (1969-77). The Committee proposed some structural and organisational changes to revitalise the PR system. But with the fall of the Janata Government in 1980, the recommendations were put into cold storage. All the same, it is doubtful, whether the proposed changes by the Asoka Mehta Committee would have made any deeper impact on the relationship between State and Civil Society in the absence of the realisation that the decentralisation of power had more deeper cultural problems rather than merely the organisational and managerial efficiency of the PR institutions. Since 1980 until 1989, when a new proposal to revitalise PR institutions by giving them a constitutional status was initiated by the Rajiv Gandhi Government, the PR institutions virtually remained under suspended animation. However, as noted earlier, the attempt failed because of the non-availability of the requisite parliamentary support.

V.The Participation Crisis: Growth of Development Bureaucracy:

Since the early 1970s, a number of special rural development programmes were initiated by the government in order to cater to demands of various target groups in the rural areas under the ruberic of Integrated Rural Development and the Poverty Alleviation Strategies. These could be classified as (a) Sectoral programmes (b) Employment oriented programmes (c) Area programmes and (d) Target-group oriented programmes. Sectoral programmes were farmer oriented, and aimed at intensive agriculture development through improved technology.

Employment oriented programmes fell into two broad categories (i) Target group oriented schemes, such as SFDA, MFAL, DPAP, TADP, HADP, DDP and WUDP, and (ii) continuous employment/income providing schemes, e.g., Rural Work Programme, Crash Schems, Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme, Employment Guarantee Scheme, Food for Work Programme and National Rural Employment Programme. Of late, Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) and self Employment to Educated Unemployed Youth (SLEEUY) were launched to provide gainful employment to at least one person in every family in rural areas and opportunities for self-employment in urban areas respectively. Training of Rural Youth for Self-employment in urban areas respectively. Training of Rural Youth for Self-employment (TRYSEM) was also expected to prepare 0.2 million youth for self-employment every year. However, most rural employment programmes are operated as relief measures rather than permanent solutions to either employment or poverty problems, and offer low wages. The schemes being grant based, were thus of only ad hoc nature.

With the introduction of these programmes, a vast development bureaucracy has replaced elected panchayats. No elections were held to village panchayats in most states in the last 12-14 years, and even where they have been held, the Panchayats have not been endowed with any worthwhile development functions and resources. The pre-condition for any development scheme being undertaken in a village today is not community contribution as in the past, but government subsidy. Unless government subsidy is forthcoming, the bureaucracy has little incentive in pushing a development scheme. There are no longer any village sponsored schemes which are fundamental to the concept of community development. there are now only centrally sponsored village development schemes. These schemes have necessitated an elaborate system of central guidelines and approval. To further its control, the central government has fostered a District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) in each district, which is a registered society headed by the Collector. Central grants for rural development are channeled directly to DRDA, by passing not only the Zila Panchayats, but also the State Governments. [10]

One of the argument for the replacement of elected panchayats by the bureaucracy was the belief that panchayats could not be expected to emancipate the poor, dominated as they were by powerful elements. However, it has been noted that despite total direction and control being in the hands of bureaucracy, poverty groups have only peripheral

access to IRDP resources, child development services or nutrition. The rationale of Antyodaya approach was to meet the poor in person rather than an abstraction. The poor are still eluding the bureaucracy. It is the rural rich which are more aligned with development administration. The nexus between the rural rich and the bureaucracy is also being backed up by the MLAs and the MPs. The institutional arrangements for development thus continue to be top-heavy without the pillars of public support. Today democratic decentralisation is practically non-existant.[11]

(c) Cooperatives: The Institutional Innovation for Economic Participation:

Although the cooperative movement in India had started in the beginning of the 20th century, in the present context, the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) envisaged all agricultural families to become members of village multi-purpose cooperatives. After the Third Five Year Plan (1961-66), the cooperatives spread in India in a big way. To give support to the cooperatives, National Cooperative Development Corporation and Agricultural Refinance Corporations were established in the year 1962 and 1963 respectively. By 1965, cooperatives accounted for 1/3rd of short term and medium term loans and long term credits for land development, irrigation wells and pump sets. In 1972, a number of multi-purpose Farmer's Service Societies came into existence for helping the weaker sections of the rural areas backed up by the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development. In practice, however, these societies did not actually benefit weaker sections or small and marginal farmers or agricultural laboures. Only in some areas of Maharashtra and Gujarat did the cooperative movement succeed in certain spheres to involve people in the development process. While Panchayats were envisaged as representing political participation, cooperatives were to provide a companion institution for economic participation by the people. However, cooperatives too are now being supplanted by Corporations (another administrative body) in almost all spheres—handlooms, milk, credit marketing, Scheduled Caste development and even women's development. Field evidence by various studies has confirmed that the share of the weaker sections in cooperative credit continues to be low. In terms of statistics, India has a large number of cooperatives (.3 million with over 110 million members), but they do not add to a movement. If anything, there is stagnation.[12] Panchyats

and cooperatives apart, the local population is not considered fit to be associated with development in an advisory capacity. While there are a number of advisory committees in the towns and the cities, and in various Ministries/Departments of the Government of India as well as State Governments, there are no advisory committees in the programmes for rural development—be it nutrition centre, fair price shops or any thing else. In short, while there has been a sporadic showering of the development assistance from above, but in the absence of community involvement these showers have failed to generate a development process, where people whould be on the march with initial assistance from the State. In the words of a critical observer, "All that has been generated is dependency. The resulting development is grass without roots.[13]

(d) <u>Voluntary Organisations in Rural Development</u>:

Realizing the importance of participatory development, the Sixth Five Year Plan Document (1980-85), emphasized the importance of non-governmental organisations, formal and informal in nature, as new actors, which could motivate and mobilise people in specific or general developmental tasks and meet the new demands of the growing sphere of developmental activities. The new areas where awareness and conscious participation of the people is critical for success were identified as:

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

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

c) 'Health for all' programmes

d) water management and soil conservation

e) social welfare programmes for weaker sections

f) implementation of minimum needs programme

g) disaster preparedness and management (floods, cyclones etc.)

h) promotion of ecology and tribal development

i) environmental protection and education.

The new actors sought to be associated with these tasks were (i) youth and women's organisations at different spatial levels, particularly for promoting eco-development and environmental protection (ii) voluntary organisations of specific beneficiary or interest groups like,

self-employed woman, or farmers or of people who have common economic interest such as marketing (iii) voluntary organisations engaged in general developmental work in an area or a specific activity (iv) organisations of the farmer's living in command area of irrigation projects, catchment areas in the hills, and watershed areas in unirrigated regions into cooperatives for improving land and water management without affecting the individuality of holdings (v) religious, social or cultural organisations or clubs (Rotary, Jaycees, Lions etc.) which often undertake developmental activities in selected areas (vi) professional organisations or educational institutions which take up study, research and social action programmes as part of their professional or social commitments.

In the field of rural development in India, a number of voluntary organisations have come into existence at the national level during the past two decades. These fall into three categories: (a) The Techno-Managerial Voluntary Agencies, which work on the premises that the process of rural development can be accelerated through modern management techniques and technology (b) Reformist Voluntary Agencies, which try to bring about changes in the social and economic relationship with the existing political framework, and (c) Radical Voluntary Agencies, which seek to challenge the existing production relations. Their attempt is to organise the exploited against the exploiters. They also undertake some economic, health or educational programmes as an 'entry point' to mobilize masses for political action. [14] Included in this category are also the voluntary organisations and movements started for the purpose of protection of environment like the 'Chipko Andolan' led by Sunderlal Bahuguna, Narmada Valley Protection Movement or Sulabh Sauchalya movement. By the very nature of functioning, such non-governmental organisations (NGOs) get a much more practical, people-based view of environmental issues that the State, with its unimaginative, inflexible structure could ever get on its own. Thus the viewpoint of NGOs as the eyes of the State in terms of the grass-root monitoring of environmental quality needs to be properly recognized.

The Seventh Plan (1985-90) envisaged a more active role for the voluntary organisations so as to make communities as self-reliant as possible. These were expected to show how village and indegenous resources could be used and how human resources, rural skills and local knowledge grossly underutilized at present could be used for their own development. Further these were to be utilised to demistify technology and bring it in simpler form to the rural poor, to train a cadre of

grass-roots workers who believe in professionalizing voluntarism, to mobilize financial resources from within the community and to mobilize and organise the poor and generate awareness to demand quality services and impose a community system, of accountability on the performance of village level government functionaries.

The recent years in India have seen a considerable shift in the government attitude to the NGO/Voluntary sector. Earlier the relationship tended to be one of patron and supplicant, the state as the grant-giver drawing the parameters not only for performance requirements, but also for the structural and spending patterns to achieve these ends. This is now acknowledged to have often imposed conditions that were unrealistic and to have deterred many from seeking government support. However, this changed thinking has failed to percolate down the line, particularly at the field level where day to day cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sectors must become a reality if the development objectives are to be realised.

The nature and character of voluntary agencies have also undergone a noticeable change. In the past such agencies adopted a religion-oriented mass approach in an informal atmosphere, stressing on programmes of education, medicine and social reforms in their action plans. The services provided by its members were honorary and free of cost to the beneficiaries. At present, the agencies adopt nationalism-oriented group approach in a formal atmosphere, the objective being socio-economic development of the specified target group through paid, wholetime and formally trained workers. They raise funds from the masses, take interest in government/international aid and collect token fees for services rendered.[15]

Many of the voluntary agencies to-day are being sponsored by industrial houses, for publicity and image building, or for sentimental and emotional reasons for the welfare of one's own place, caste, or community or for availing of the tax benefits granted by the state or for economic benefits accruing to the industry on a long term basis and realisation of social responsibilities of industry. However, to be more effective, these need to have proper coordination at the town/district/state level with one another.

VI.Concluding Observations

The foregoing analysis of India's experiments with participatory democracy highlights the importance of a number of social actors and institutions which can effectively perform the role of mobilising people for development. There is no doubt that in both the urban and rural local governments, individuals and non-governmental bodies how played a significant role in the organisation of social welfare activities. The quasi-public agencies like the public sector enterprises have mostly been conspicuous by their absence at the local level. If at all such institutions have existed mostly in metropolitan towns, these have been established by the Central or State Governments under their own statutes, and in practice have been mostly controlled and operated by respective governments. These agencies have hardly been assisted by local residents except in some form of advisory bodies of citizens or nominated persons, which would meet very infrequently. Similarly the development authorities in urban areas, like the Improvement Trusts or City Development and Planning Authorities have functioned more or less as arms of government power rather than service agencies. It is in these institutions that stand in need of urgent. Citizen involvement in their day to day functioning. There are a number of other activities at the local level, where NGO's and voluntary peoples' bodies can effectively participate with the community, e.g. in the provision of water supply, removal of slums, Sanitation, minor irrigation schemes and access roads etc. They can also help generate income pruducing projects for women and the landless: manage government health programmes, especially in relation to family planning to check the population growth. They could also provide literary courses and give extension advice or marketing assistance to marginal farming and finishing communities.

Similarly the NGO's can play a significant role in India in the creation of self-help capabilities in poor communities and engage in advocacy, education and training of unemployed population in some form of creative activities for gainful purposes.

However, in order that these NGO's and voluntary organisations could function smoothly, there is a need for an appreciation of their roles or the part of the government. So far the relationship between the NGO's and government in India has been one of mutual suspicion or has been dominated by some vested group interests. An atmosphere of mutual trust and has many needs to be created if these agencies have to per person at their optimum level. The government may be justified, to create appropriate safeguards and establish detailed guidelines for the functioning of these voluntary bodies. At the same time they have

to be given some appropriate freedom and material and other support
to enable them to function in a spirit of service and dedication. Care
would have to be taken to avoid the emergence of interest groups with
conflicting objectives and dominant sectional interests. Some kind
of incentive schemes would have to be developed by the government for
inspiring the improved performance of these bodies.

In India, people's participation in development and social welfare
activities at local level has been an intergral process of socio-economic
and political change since Independence. The institutional, managerial
technological, infrastructural, participative and human development
service oriented changes have also affected its rural and urban social
structure in terms of occupational diversification, social mobility,
reduction in income disparities and changes in values and social
relationships for integrated social living. Other factors, such as
leadership, social consciousness organisation and political awareness
have also affected the process of participation. Experiences in India
have demonstrated that State by itself can neither bring about
technological or societal development nor can mobilize people to accept
the processes of change initiated by it. Even if the State does succeed
in physically delivering the minimum or the basic needs through
centralised planning and bureaucratic implementation, at the human plane
people are unlikely to acquire the necessary capabilities and quality.
Technology is an aid but not a substitute for the people's conscious
activity as individuals, as groups, as large collectivities. A
reorganisation of power structure of the State from village and city
levels onwards which institutionalises political participation of the
masses, their role in policy-formulation, decision-making, economic
bargaining, political and economic management, and which brings the
dominant elite under the framework of community discipline is essential,
if the basic goals of development and social welfare —— transformation
of the outlook of the people, inculcation of the spirit of self-reliance,
generation of habit of cooperative action through popular bodies and
all these three goals to lead to enlightenment, strength and hope are
to be realised.

In most comprehensive sense of the term, participation implies
the restoration of interaction, communication and dialogue between the
forward looking sections of the elite at the top or people in authority
and the people below impatient for a new socio-economic order on the
ground. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that the state in India
should establish appropriate institutional mechanism to enlist
spontaneous cooperation and support from the citizens', the

non-governmental organisations and other quasi-public agencies to contribute to the gigontic task of securing the people a modicum of the quality of good life, which it is unable to so alone by itself not with standing the enormous physical, material and technical resources that it might possess. In a democratic system, persuasion rather than coercion is the strategy that should permeate all levels of administration in social welfare activities and this can be best possibly achieved through voluntary individual and group efforts of the citizens themselves, which at this stage of India's development certainly need to be fostered, encouraged appropriately guided and supported by all local government institutions.

NOTES:

1. Government of India, Ministry of Health and Family Planning, Report of the Rural-Urban Relationship Committee, (1966), vol.1., pp.109-110.

2. Subhash Chandra, "Urban City Development and Community Service" in A. Datta (ed.), Municipal and Urban India (New Delhi, Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1980), p.209.

3. Central Institute of Research and Training in Public Cooperation, Evaluative Study of Urban Community Development Projects (New Delhi, CIRT, 1972).

4. This section and the next draw heavily from Government of India, Report of the National Commission on Urbanisation, vol. II (Faridabad, Government of India Press, 1988).

5. Ibid.

6. For a detailed study of the scheme, see M.Z. Khan, "Traffic Wardens: The Delhi Experiment in Police, Public Cooperation", in The Indian Journal of Criminology and Forensic Sciences (New Delhi), vol.III, No.3 & 4, (July-October 1983), pp. 130-134.

7. For a detailed study of Housing Cooperatives in India, See M.L. Khurana, Organisation and Management of Housing Cooperatives (New Delhi, NCHS Federation of India, 1986).

8. This section is based on the authors' earlier study on "Participation and Development! Emergent State Civil Society, Relations in India", a paper presented at the ICCDA Conference at Paris in April 1990.

9. See H.R. Chaturvedi and Subrata K. Mitra, Citizen Participation in Rural Development (New Delhi, Oxford & IBH, 1982), p.9.

10.L.C. Jain, B. Krishnamurthy and P.M. Tripathi, Grass Without Roots (New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1985), pp.197-98.

11.Ibid., pp. 205.

12.Ibid., p. 207.

13.Ibid., p. 210.

14.Ghanshyam Shah and H.R. Chaturvedi, Gandhian Approach to Rural Development (New Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1983), pp. 7-8.

15.For details see Kishore Chandra Padhy, Rural Development in Modern India (New Delhi, B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1986), p.389.

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13.Ibid., p. 210.

14.Ghanshyam Shah and H.R. Chaturvedi, Gandhian Approach to Rural Development (New Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1983), pp. 7-8.

15.For details see Kishore Chandra Padhy, Rural Development in Modern India (New Delhi, B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1986), p.389.