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**Pinching the INGO Phenomenon: Putting Perspectives into Practice**

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# PINCHING THE INGO PHENOMENON: PUTTING PERSPECTIVES INTO PRACTICE

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## Abstract:

Voluntary agencies in general and International NGOs (INGOs) in particular have a history of involvement in a wide range of social welfare and development work which dates back to early twentieth century. In this respect the organizations originating from the developed countries have firmer foundations than their counterparts in most developing countries. The aim of the paper is to take a stab at the existing literature that relates to INGOs in developing nations and to offer important insights into their roles. In the process the paper also derives a four-role framework for the INGOs by combining some of the handpicked theories and putting them into practice with the help of case studies from India, representing the developing world which has, for decades, remained the focus for most of the INGOs' activities. India is of interest for this purpose because of its intractable problems of rural poverty and the apparent limitations of government programmes on poverty alleviation.

## 1 Introduction

*“Theory cannot just be picked up: they have to be searched for, chiseled, shaped, pounded, recognized and reoriented. Creating coherence out of existing bits of theory is like getting an inside straight in poker. Theorizing is a creative act. Whether one is asserting that a theory of a kind exists (how remarkable!) or inventing one that claims to be new (thus running afoul of the encapsulated wisdom of the ages- if new not true; if true not new), one gets into trouble whichever way one goes”*

(Wildavsky, 1989:29)

In quest for a convincing justification for the existence of the International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and activities they are involved in; here is an attempt to review several hitherto existing theoretical perspectives that deal with voluntary action. This effort is expected to raise immensely important theoretical questions which will trespass into the territory of the political philosopher, historian, development researcher, organization theorist, management theorist and other disciplines as well. Studies on voluntary sector invariably become multi-disciplinary in order to seek answers to the great questions they invoke. The stance adopted in this paper is that theory is of immense importance for all practical purposes.

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Applying an appropriate theory may be the most practical asset available while deciding issues in organization and management, for, we never govern or manage in the absence of intellectual influences. For the methodological convenience, it is best to make our theories overt or else we are simply in the state what Henrik Ibsen describes in his play "*Ghosts*":

It is not just what we inherit from our mothers and fathers that haunt us. It is all kinds of old defunct theories, all sorts of old defunct beliefs and things like that. It is not that they actually live on in us, they are simply lodged there and we can not get rid of them. I have only to pick up a newspaper and I seem to see ghosts gliding between the lines. (1881:Act2)

The substantial attention to context and theory in this context is intended to contribute to what Billis (1993:2) has called 'usable theory': ideas that make sense and can be utilized by those whose business it is to cope with the complexity and chaos. Such usable theory will be of assistance in designing the platform for any social science research.

One test of good theory is that it has practical implications... relevant theory, however, is not the same as useful techniques...What good theory does is to show how to analyze an organization or an organizational problem so that judicious selections of specific techniques can be made (Perrow, 1970:vii)

In the subsequent sections presented is an account of theoretical perspectives to understand the INGOs- the very reason why they exist and the uniqueness of their interventions. Towards the end, we have tried to operationalize some of the handpicked theories and put them into practice with the help of case studies from India, representing the developing world which has, for decades, remained the focus for most of the INGOs' activities.

## **2 Theories on the Origin of NGOs and INGOs**

The globalization of developmental issues and the corresponding transformation and globalization of voluntary activism correspond to the phenomenon called "global civil society" or "turbulence in world politics" (Rosenau, 1990) paralleled by the emergence of a multi centric world consisting of thousands of non-state, non-sovereign global actors that coexist in a non-hierarchical relationship with the state centric system (Hermann, 1991:1083). International NGOs may be the most significant expression of this turbulence. They have expressed the transformation that many social movements have undergone: national actors aiming at national political influence are becoming transnational actors, thus fundamentally changing their relationship with traditional, national and state-centric politics. But the question remains, can the emerging INGO phenomenon be adequately conceptualized in terms of social movement theory that has evolved from theorizing social movement activism at national levels? If this is the case, one can see INGOs as the continuation on a global level of what social movements are on a national level. If social movement theory fails to account for the emerging INGO phenomenon, further development of social movement theory will be justified along with conceptualization and theorization of INGOs (Finger, 1994:48).

Social movement theory, though universal, got the currency in the sociological theory of collective behaviour and collective action developed by the Chicago School of sociology. According to this theory, collective action can be triggered in various ways depending essentially on the theoretical framework to which collective action can occur either as a result of relative deprivation (Gurr, 1970:17) or as a strategy to articulate common interests (Olson, 1965:7) or as a response to economic or political conflicts. Given these historical foundations, social movement theorists have mostly been interested in the promoters of collective action. Locating these historically, social movement theorists

have observed profound changes that also suggest new social movements. Empirical observations of emerging new characteristics of country-specific social movements have not generally led to a search for alternative social movement theories. Nor has the emerging transnational phenomenon led experts to examine critically and update the existing theories. One must, therefore, view INGOs in terms of globalization of development in general and changing relationship to state-centric politics in particular.

### **3 Theories on INGO Movement**

#### **3.1 Linear Theories of Social Movements**

Linear theories state that social movements, whenever they emerge, are unique and must be analyzed as such. The uniqueness of a movement is related with the fact that the process of development is linear and produces unique social effects. So social movements are related with the social effects caused by development.

Claus Offe (1985:829) is of view that social movements are the means to help the political system evolve and adjust to the new required means brought about by industrial development. He states that political system is the regulator between the economic system and the civil society. So it holds the key to managing the process of industrial development and its societal consequences. He assumes that, as industrial development progresses, the political system will have to extend its regulatory activities more and more into the economic system as well as into the civil society. His view of social movement is a functionalist one in which social movements have basically two functions: firstly, they contribute to the politicization of the civil society and secondly, they help the political system become more attentive and adapt to the new challenges brought by industrial development. In other words, social movements help the national political system to adapt, evolve and to some extent, learn as they bring up new issues, politicize them within civil society and prepare the grounds for the political system to integrate them. Offe's theory is not necessarily confined to social movements. Many other groups, actors like national and International NGOs can also function to open up new political space. Many NGOs see their main role as helping the governments take up new issues. This theory is, however, limited to national politics because political space is always opened in an existing national political system. INGOs, though, may affect some political system, they do many other things also. They define politics above, below and beyond nation-state where the national political system can't simply move in and take over. But his approach remains confined to the nation-state which some INGOs precisely seek to overcome in practice and theory.

Georgen Habermas (1981: 33) sees social movements as both as expansion of alienated social reality and a healthy reaction against it. He states that, the more the technical rationality invades the life world, the greater the chance that citizens will react in a social movement (the life world includes the everyday socio-cultural reality in which individuals live). Yet the chance is also greater that the citizens' reaction will be irrational. So in Habermas' concept, social movements are basically a healthy yet irrational reaction against the so-called colonization of the citizens' life-world as well as an attempt to reestablish the autonomy of that life-world. Striving to autonomize the life-world to liberate from the domination by technical rationality is a socio-political and socio-cultural struggle. Autonomization of the life-world is necessarily accompanied by a strengthening of the political system which Habermas identifies at the national level. Inspired by Marxism, Habermas sees the evolution of the society in terms of labour on one hand and interaction on the other. In between, the political system masters this evolution in fields, labour and interaction. Moreover it ensures that technical rationality does not invade the life-world. An overwhelming technical rationality is synonymous with a weakening of political system. If it happens, social movements come to the fore. But Habermas' theory

is not necessarily limited to social movements. It can easily be applied to NGOs. Nor his theory is limited to the national level given its level of abstraction. However, in practice, Habermas' theory remains limited by the fact that the political system he envisions in which social movements strive to restore the autonomy of the system and of the life-world is practically a national system. In Habermas' view it is particularly obvious that the primary function of a social movement is to strengthen the political system to restore its autonomy level. As explained in a lot of empirical works INGOs vary marginally but pursue this function.

### **3.2 Cyclical Theory of Alain Touraine**

Touraine's theory (1985:751) intensively analyses the social movements in terms of political cycles. He views social movements as striving for political power at the national level. Social movements, if they want to be a part of the modernization process, must strive for political power at the nation-state level. To deserve the label, a social movement must be struggling to participate in national political process. He rules out pressure groups which only struggle for their interests, national movements which are prehistoric in the sense that they fight to establish the nation-state system and cultural movements whose main aim is to conceptualize a value change not as a political struggle. Had he been aware of the INGO phenomenon, he would certainly have ruled it out also. While defining social movements, Touraine assumes that all social forces must struggle to participate in power at the nation state level. The application of Touraine's theory to INGO phenomenon appears to be limited. Some national NGOs have been striving for political power at the national level to use the political system as a means to act upon society in general, and to solve specific problems in particular. INGOs do much more than that the geographical limitation of Touraine's theory and its conceptualization of social movement as a purely political form of activism and its reference to national politics alone ill suits his theory to account for INGOs (Finger, 1994:51).

### **3.3 Resources Mobilization Theory**

This theory assumes that it is rational for citizens to participate in the political system which is simply the steering system of society and not necessarily the nation-state as referred to by Marxists. Society is basically an aggregate of rational individual actors and not necessarily, as Marxists view, a structured mass of potentially responsible and autonomous citizens who always remain defined relative to nation-state. For Resource Mobilization theorists, society is made up of multiple organizational structures. Social movements, then, are organizations like all others that involve rational individuals. The historical origin of this theory stems from the conceptualization of consumers' movements and public interest groups in the United States. According to this theory, social movements are organizations that help rational actors participate more effectively in the political system than in other kinds of organizations or in purely individual capacities. They mobilize various sources and compete with lobbies and political parties. This theory strongly calls for the participation in the national political system. So it is difficult to apply this theory successfully to the INGO phenomenon. Even if one could stretch resource mobilization theory to view INGOs as a form of resource mobilization, there is no international system to lobby rather national NGOs can be captured by this theorization. The fundamentally functionalist definition of INGOs neglects the political dimension of social movements theories (Finger, 1994:54).

All the social movements theories discussed so far have strong bias that makes it difficult to use them as models for theorizing NGOs in general and INGOs in particular. After 1970's some authors like Richard Falk (1995), David Korten (1990), Rajni Kothari (1989), Ashis Nandy (1989), Dhirubhai Sheth (1987), Judith Tendler (1982), Lisa Aubrey (1997), Peter Bowden (1990), etc have written about

global social movements. All of them share a similar analysis of the phenomenon as they all extrapolate national social movement theory to the phenomenon they see globally.

### 3.4 The Third System Theory

The Third System theory got the currency out of the observation that there is a generalized development crisis all over the world. The crisis is multidimensional: economic, financial, ecological, social, cultural, ideological and political simultaneously (Nerfin, 1986:6). The way things have developed has posed a threat to security of common people in facing the overall development crisis. Third system theorists observe a growing movement that is seeking control over the crisis that threatens everybody's security. It is therefore a movement of all people who suffer in one way or the other from the current development crisis whether economically, socially, culturally or ideologically. The movement is highly diverse because of its being a global phenomenon.

Third system activism takes various forms. Some vital forms are the realization of immediate projects, advocacy and holding people responsible for their acts and decisions. David Korten (1990, quoted in Finger, 1994:56) sees the citizens' movements as playing four critical roles: *advocacy* which includes redefining policies, transforming institutions and helping people define, internalize and actualize a people-centered development vision, *System monitoring*, *protesting* that facilitates reconciliation with justice and *implementing* development programmes. The third system theorists perceive a fundamental opposition between the oppressors and the oppressed. This reveals their orientation towards Marxism. This fracture between the oppressors and the oppressed is said to be the result of a political problem, the bad management of human affairs. The fundamental opposition which more and more divides each society is more profound than the traditional gaps. The two Indias, the two Americas, the two Chiles, the Hollands and finally the two Worlds: the one of the developed and the other of the underdeveloped are the better examples. This fracture translates into further underdevelopment, maldevelopment and other poisoned fruits of bad management human affairs everywhere on the planet. Logically enough, the solution to the problem as defined by the third system theory has to be sought on political level most immediately by focusing on today's politically most significant factor that is people. In Nerfin's terms,

“In contrast with government power..., there is an immediate and autonomous power...Some, among the people, become aware of it, get together, act and become citizens. The citizens and their associations or movements when they neither search nor exercise governmental or economic power, constitute the third system. By contributing to make visible what is hidden, the third system is an expression of the people's autonomous power.” (Finger, 1994:57)

The term “third system” reflects the fundamental emancipatory idea that the oppressed people on this planet must move out to become citizens. Either they should organize themselves for this or they should be motivated by some external sources to do so. The association with the expression “third world” is more than deliberate. Both these terms recall the third estate of the French “ancien regime”. Before the revolution of 1789, French society was divided into these estates: noblesse, clergy and the third estate, i.e. the majority (Finger, 1994:57). Alfred Sauvy (1952) was the first to use the expression “third world” in referring to the periphery. However, third system is conceptually closer to the “third estate” than “third world”. The concept of third world is geopolitical as it concerns countries. The two other concepts are socio-political as they concern people and it is people where the third system stems from. And a better management of human affairs is achieved by third system politics. The third system politics leads to “people centered development” characterized by the following basic principles.

- Sovereignty resides with the people who are the real social actors of positive change,
- To exercise their sovereignty and assume responsibility for the development of themselves and their communities, the people must control their own resources, have an access to relevant information and have the means to make the government officials accountable and
- Those who assist the people with their development must recognize that it is they who are participating in the people's agenda and not vice versa.

Therefore, third system politics is all about increasing people's participation in decision making at all levels of society.

The third system theory has the potential to conceptualize the nature and the role of International NGOs (INGOs). Unlike the social movement theories, it concentrates on people as the link between global and local levels instead of focusing on citizens' participation in national politics. People seek a political expression of this linkage. INGOs are the most typical actors encapsulating the link between the global action and the citizens. Third system theory comes much closer to explain what INGOs are all about in the sense that, through INGOs people (citizens) can find a means to express themselves on a global level. That is why INGOs draw their legitimation from citizens who no longer refer to national boundaries. Nerfin says that, the third system can achieve global relations in two ways: (i) through the UN system and (ii) by networking. NGOs are claimed to be more representative than national governments. Empowering NGOs as relevant factors within the UN system began in the late 1980's (Kladermans et. al., 1988). The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) process is considered to be the best example of this approach to global relations. Facilitated by modern communication technologies, NGO networking favours more democratic participation.

Third system is about citizens participating in global decision-making. Social movements on a national level and INGOs on a global level share similarities. The former functioned as key factors to get citizens' voices heard at the national level. In the third system theory INGOs function as global social movement organizations expressing people's needs and interests and seeking participation in global decision making. Third system theory considers INGOs to be beyond traditional lines of North-South or East-West conflict because of its people oriented approach.

Recent debates within social and political theory reveal growing interest in issues of trust as a basis for social organization, civil democracy and economic prosperity. The notions of trust have been central to the development of communitarian ideas, to attempts to create a moral economics based on normative cultural values and to the British government's efforts to find a third way between state intervention and laissez-faire. This notion of trust has shifted a concept most usually applied to relations between private individuals to one applied more generally to relations within the public sphere and specially to public institutions. But the range of literature dealing with trust is fraught with competing definitions from different perspectives. Given the different usages and the often abstract character of the academic debates, trust can be a difficult concept to pin down conceptually and to analyze empirically. Here we seek to specify some of the debates by exploring issues of trust in the context of the voluntary sector (in UK). Forms of voluntary associations are frequently cited as prime examples of the kinds of trust based relations typical of civil society and linked with attendant values of democracy, equity and inclusiveness. However, voluntary organizations are rarely examined in any kind of institutional detail in this context. They just provide a throwaway line within discussions of trust or community as desirable models of association while remaining fairly unexamined on their own terms.

The relationship of voluntary organizations to the issues of trust is in fact a highly problematic one. Rather than providing a model of trust relations within civil society, voluntary organizations encounter the "problem of trust" in distinctive ways (Seligman, 1997). One means of thinking about this problem is in terms of a distinction between trust -as pertaining to ethical relations which are not conditioned by an external framework of controls, and confidence- referring to relations which are secured by contract or other regulatory forms and which proceed on the basis of rational expectations. This aspect of trust is connected to the core ethos and social objectives of many charities and other voluntary organizations. However relations of confidence, particularly on the part of funders depend on the efficiency of organizations in delivering certain services in a more narrow institutional or procedural sense. Relations of trust and confidence may vary significantly between different interests for example, between corporate sponsors, public funding agencies, individual donors and client groups.

### **3.5 Trust, Confidence and Voluntary Organizations: Theoretical Perspectives**

The concept of trust potentially describes social relations which run across conventional distinctions between private and public spheres of action. Fukuyama (1995: 23) uses "trust" as shorthand for the kinds of social capital, the collective values, social networks and cultural ethics which underpin economic cohesion and growth. Seligman (1997:21) develops a dual conception of trust to refer in different contexts to a relationship between private individuals and to institutionalize forms of trust in the public sphere. What both accounts show that, the kinds of social and economic interaction go beyond conventional models of civil society: especially given changing forms of contemporary governance which do not conform to easy distinction between public and private (Tonkiss et. al, 1999:259). The notion of voluntarism is crucial to Seligman's understanding of trust. In this sense, trust is distinct from social relations secured by contract and underpinned by confidence in abstract systems of law and institutions (Luhman, 1988 in Tonkiss et al, 1999:259). Seligman's thesis is that trust is rendered problematic in the translation from private and informal relations between individuals to its public and institutional forms in a sphere hedged about by contract, law and mutually assured exchange. Fukuyama in contrast begins with an already publicized conception of trust, defined in terms of " the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest and cooperative behaviour based on commonly shared norms ( Fukuyama, 1995:26). Uslaner (1997 in Tonkiss et al, 1999: 259) identifies generalized trust with a notion of social capital: linked to shared values, distinct from self-interest and forming a basis for collective action. Some common features emerge from these different accounts which are relevant to our analysis.

- trust relations are characterized by voluntarism,
- trust is linked to shared values and
- trust relations are separate from and potentially incompatible with relations of confidence based on contrast and constraint.

The pioneers of the theory of trust agree that a primary means for the generalization of trust is through secondary associations which mediate between the private realm of the family and the public realm of the state. While relations within the family and to the state are given or compulsory in nature, the civil realm is characterized by voluntarism. Such an emphasis on civil and voluntary associations as an institutional framework for social solidarity has a long pedigree in social thought, being central to Durkheim's work (1957). NGOs exemplify the acts of association that Fukuyama sees as the basis of wider forms of trust. Fukuyama (1995:62) holds that there are three broad paths to sociability: the first is based on family and kinship, the second on voluntary associations outside family and third on the state. He also holds that those societies which show a propensity for spontaneous sociability represented by NGOs also tend to be economic prosperity such as: USA, Japan, Germany, Canada, etc.



NGOs represent a network of "moral communities" that alone can generate the kind of social trust that is critical to organizational efficiency (Fukuyama, 1995:309)

### **3.6 Extension Ladder Theory of Public Policy and Welfare Administration**

Natural acts which are beyond human control and acts of state or community which are of human making provide a challenge when these adversely affect human well-being and offer an opportunity in order to promote social environment for security and freedom for individual or group development. Nature has endowed human beings with resources but occasionally it causes calamities like flood, famine, cyclone, etc. In such cases, the state should act in collaboration with voluntary organizations not considering itself as dominant or subordinate player. Between state and society, the relationship is one of mutual trust, confidence and cooperation. The two may be holding conflicting views about their roles. Both have their respective strengths and weaknesses and each should complement the other. This is expressed in the extension ladder theory of public policy and welfare administration (Simey, 1930, quoted in Jagannadham, 1985:15). The extension ladder theory says that highly conscientious and sensitive individuals feel the hardships and miseries of the people around them and take initiative on their own to relieve them through individual or group efforts. Such efforts get organized and provide a demonstration effect for others to emulate. With the course of time the efforts to relieve the hardships of the affected groups get organized. This may result in private abuse of public funds or degeneration may set in among the organizers of public trusts. The law of diminishing benefits may set in and corruption may vitiate the distribution of charity or philanthropy. These call for state regulation or social control cooperativization. The most significant aspect underlying the theory of extension ladder relationship is that individual or societal initiative may in course of time lead to state regulation or nationalization of social services. The state may step in when the management requirements of these organizations exceed the capacities of private societies or where the private management situation calls for public regulation or take-over by the government. What were initially private social services organizations may with the lapse of time become public governmental organizations.

### **3.7 The Theory of Parallel Bar Relationship**

This theory states that quite often, the two agencies, voluntary associations and governments through its departments provide relief or services simultaneously. This relationship is called parallel bar (Simey, 1930 quoted in Jagannadham, 1985:15). To put it in another way, state and NGOs operate simultaneously in the same field such as disaster relief, education, health care, etc. The client will be given the option to choose whose service they are going to avail. This approach is a modification of the "market" approach with a view to softening the rigours of commercial competition, particularity for those who are in need but could not afford to pay for the services. There may be cases of overlapping and duplication and redundancy in service under the parallel bar theory. This calls for supervision and coordination at the local levels by supplementation of services and at higher levels by regional alignment in the form of grouping of services. This approach requires further exploration in aspects such as mobilization of resources and organization and supervision.

### **3.8 Voluntary Action in Modern Democratic Theory**

Modern democratic theories from the classic nineteenth century works of Alexis de Tocqueville and J S Mill to the very recent theorists of communitarianism and civil society have accorded very significant roles to voluntary actions in democracies. While other theories may describe what exists in the voluntary sector, Tocqueville and Mills proposed what ought to be the relationships between the state and voluntary organizations (Douglas, 1987:49). As expressed by Tocqueville (1961) and Mill

(1859), voluntary associations help secure freedom, limits government's power and influence over the freedom of citizens, educate citizens and develop character. From Tocqueville and Mill we learn that such organizations release energies in society and because of the diverse interests which they express voluntary organizations are sources of originality and social progress. They are 'civilizing' agents assisting people to take responsibilities for their own affairs. Tocqueville and Mill view voluntary organizations not simply as desirable features in democratic societies but as necessary and essential to the health of democratic societies (O'Ferral, 2000:87). Recent democratic theorists have sought to recover Tocqueville's and Mill's key insights into the role of voluntary associations in democratic society. These theorists are associated with what became known as 'the liberal-communitarian debate' and with proponents of 'civil society' and 'third way'.

### **3.8.1 Liberal Communitarianism**

Communitarians have accepted liberalism as an essentially progressive political philosophy but wish to balance the 'me-istic' forces with a fair measure of resumed 'we-ness'. They see the individual as embedded in social existence and membership of community as the most important sustaining source of moral voices other than the inner self (Etzioni, 1995:26). In the wake of the extreme individualism associated with the 'new right', political theorists have been exploring the possibility of rediscovering or reinventing a public civic polity which would emphasize public and collective responsibilities, ethical, moral and social virtues as well as social cohesion. The arguments made by communitarians for the significance of collectives, institutions, human relations and that ethical values are not simply located in the individual rather are to be found expressed in the social relationships of individuals in associations. These are profoundly important in respect of a normative theory of voluntary action. Communitarianism relies upon voluntarism in society. The absence of coercive power means that people are free to choose whether to engage in certain activities, hold certain views or even whether to continue to be a community member. Despite the lack of rigour in their definition of 'community', communitarians provide a normative perspective and offer insights into how public policies ought to operate in western democracies in respect of voluntary actions (Crawford, 1996:260). Implied clearly is a shift of theoretical focus towards voluntary social relationships and away from state intervention as a means of both distributing public goods and benefits and of regenerating moral values and commitments. This is presented as an alternative to more state regulation and enforced codes. Etzioni (1997) speaks the need to rearrange the intellectual-political map by leapfrogging the old debate between 'left wing' and 'right wing' thinking, suggesting a third social philosophy. He states,

“A major sociological function of the community is to reinforce the character of the individuals... The significance of voluntary associations in this context has often been highlighted as protecting individuals from the state and as intermediating bodies that aggregate, transmit and underwrite individual signals to the state. In terms of the moral infrastructure, the very same voluntary associations often fulfil a rather different function: they serve as social spaces in which members of communities reinforce their social webs and articulate their moral voice. That is, they often constitute sub-communities within more encompassing communities”

(Etzioni, 1997:187)

Related to communitarian thought in recent years have been new political theories which have been concerned with 'civil society' and the 'third way'.

### **3.8.2 Concept of Civil Society**

Vaclav Havel has been the most influential theorist and practitioner of the concept of civil society. His continuing stress on both responsible citizenship and a pluralistic civil society can be seen as central to the commitment to democracy embedded in his thought (Carter, 1998:69). Havel's most important contribution to recent democratic theory is his focus on the cultural and social context of politics and in particular his willingness to assert the importance of ethical values. He stresses the value of voluntary association by projecting that the whole world will be crisscrossed by a network of local, regional, state-wide clubs, organizations and associations with a wide variety of aims (Havel, 1990:6). One connecting theme between Havel's writings in 1970's and the 1990's can be summed up in the phrase "civil society". This is not a term Havel himself usually used in his period. His preferred concept then was 'anti-political politics'. But it was widely used by East-European intellectuals in the 1980's and taken up in the West to denote a distinction between power and the creative possibilities inherent in a plurality of groups and organizations developing autonomously from below. In liberal democracies civil society is envisaged as a network of associations creating social ties between individuals and fostering organizational and political skills. It is therefore both a source for political initiative and a check on state oppression (Carter, 1998:71). Havel's concept of civil society suggests the value of plural spheres in society as opposed to an overriding commitment to a single public sphere of politics. Carter notes the similarity, though arrived at quite independently and in different contexts, of Havel's thought with what Tocqueville who also celebrated decentralization of power to local government, valued a network of voluntary organizations fostering variety and initiative and had a view of responsible citizenship which required a degree of participation.

### **3.8.3 The Third Way**

Anthony Giddens has explained the phenomenon of the proliferation of NGOs as the "third way". The "third way" refers to a framework of thinking and policy making that seeks to adapt social democracy to a world which has changed fundamentally over the past two or three decades. It is a third way in the sense that it is an attempt to transcend both old-style social democracy and neo-liberalism (Giddens, 1998:26). Third way thinking is very positive about the role of NGOs in contrast as old-style democrats were inclined to be suspicious of voluntary associations.

The third way recognizes the limits of the government in the social sphere, but also the need for government, within those limits to forge new partnerships with the voluntary sector. Whether in education, health, social work, crime prevention or the care for children, enabling government strengthens civil society rather than weakening it and helps families and communities improve their own performance. All these demonstrate the state, voluntary sector and individuals working together to strengthen the range of such partnerships (Blair, 1998:14). Giddens also emphasizes the partnerships which should exist between the government and agencies in civil society to foster community renewal and development. The fostering of an active civil society is a basic part of the politics of the third way. Civic decline is real and visible in many sectors of contemporary societies. Government must play a major part in renewing civic culture. State and civil society should act in partnership, each to facilitate, but also to act as a control upon the other. Giddens also notes that activity in the voluntary sector has expanded but government should help repair the civil order amongst social groups where it is weak through encouraging local voluntary initiative and social entrepreneurship. Voluntary organizations are perceived in "third way" thought as vital social capital (Giddens, 1998:69).

Proponents of communitarianism, of civil society and third way are essentially attempting to rescue western democracies from the perceived decline in civic participation or to restore a sense of voluntary citizenship in the new democracies. These recent theorists have enriched our insights into the value of

voluntary action in democratic societies. Enabling and enhancing voluntary action is perceived to be an important means of addressing the decline in the moral order in the liberal democratic societies. In addition, voluntary organizations are seen as key actors in 'civil society' not only helping to articulate a 'moral voice' but as more effective means to deliver public benefits and services compared to the governmental agents. Voluntary organizations are seen as partners for an 'enabling state'. They are effective expressions of the pluralistic nature of society and are an essential balance to the uniformity of state action. (O'Ferrall, 2000:5).

### **3.9 Explanatory Theories of Voluntary Action**

The major theories developed in recent decades to explain the voluntary or non-profit sector, have been summarized recently by Helmunt Anheier (1998:41-52). There are five theories which seek to explain why NGOs/INGOs exist. They may be briefly described as follows:

#### **3.9.1 Public Goods or Heterogeneity Theory**

Weisbrod (1977, cited in Hansman, 1987: 28-29), who might be seen as the founding father of non-profit economics, suggests that NGOs produce 'public goods' which can not be provided through the market because they can not be withheld from individuals who refuse to pay for them. He offered the first general economic theory of the role of nonprofit enterprise suggesting that nonprofits serve as private producers of public goods (in economists' sense of the term). Governmental entities, Weisbrod argues, will tend to provide goods only at the level that satisfies the median voters. Consequently, there will be some residual unsatisfied demand for public goods among those individuals whose taste for such goods is greater than the median. Nonprofit organizations arise to meet this residual demand by providing public goods in amounts supplemental to those provided by the government.

A lighthouse is a good example of a public good which either must be provided by government or on a voluntary basis. The public sector can and does provide public goods using taxation as a funding mechanism. NGOs, even where the public sector provides public goods, may augment these to cater to diverse or heterogeneous demands or choices which the government would find difficult to justify in taxation and public expenditure terms (O'Ferrall, 2000:80). Weisbrod's theory captures an important phenomenon. Many INGOs provide services that have the character of public goods, at least for a limited segment of public. This is specifically true for those INGOs that collect private donations to deliver specialized services such as: hospitals, child care, day-care centres, schools, etc.

#### **3.9.2 Trust or Contract Failure Theory**

According to this theory, developed by Hansman (1987:29), NGOs exist because of instances of contract failure or need for trust. He argues that nonprofits of all types typically arise in situations in which, owing either to the circumstances under which a service is purchased or consumed or to the nature of the service itself, consumers feel unable to evaluate accurately the quantity or quality of the service a firm produces to them. In such circumstances, a for-profit firm has both the incentive and the opportunity to take advantage of the customers by providing less service to them than was promised and paid for. A nonprofit firm, on the other hand, offers consumers the advantage that, it is constrained in its ability to benefit from providing low-quality services and thus have less incentive to take advantage of their customers than do the managers of a for-profit firm. Nonprofits arise or, rather, have a comparative survival advantage over for-profit firms where the value of such protection outweighs the inefficiencies that evidently accompany the nonprofit form.

The contract failure theory explains why particular kinds of goods are produced by voluntary sector rather than by the private sector. It argues that when consumers feel unable to evaluate accurately the adequacy or quality of the goods, they choose voluntary organizations as suppliers rather than profit making firms. Consumers distrust for-profit firms for such goods because they may provide inferior quality goods and pocket the additional earnings thus made. The opportunity to do so does not exist in case of the non-profit concerns as they are forbidden by law from garnering the extra profit. An enlightened consumer thus protects his/her interest by opting for the voluntary organizations.

This emphasizes the 'non-profit distribution' constraint and the fact that governance structures of NGOs suggest trustworthiness. Because this theory suggests, in essence, that non-profits arise where ordinary contractual mechanisms do not provide consumers with adequate means to regulate producers, it has been termed the “contract failure” theory of the role of nonprofit organization.

This theory might explain NGOs and INGOs operating hospitals, schools, day care or homes for elderly, providing relief, etc.(Ben-Ner, et al, 1993:27-58). In India most of the NGOs operate to meet the need of the vulnerable and those who cannot protect their interests. A modern welfare state is expected to provide them, but India has failed to do so. Patel (1998:48) cites three reasons for such failure. First, the state lacks resources. Therefore, voluntary organizations frequently supplement the supply of such goods. Second, often, negligent public servants fail to perform their duty, even when they have no material gains to derive from this. Of course, there are corrupt officials who can and do subvert enacted policies and reap unauthorized profits from them. In either case, those who are too weak to assert their rights are left out. Third, the weak and the vulnerable do not often know how to access merit goods. Some times they even have to be convinced of their benefits. These are the tasks that typically a voluntary organization is capable of and predisposed to performing. A vast majority of NGOs and INGOs operate/exist in India to address this shortcoming of the public system.

### **3.9.3 The Value-Expressive or Supply-side Theory**

Eastle James (1987: 398) has defined the Non-profit Organizations as “organizations that are legally prohibited from earning and distributing monetary residual.” Such organizations combine three important attributes: (1) they are legally and structurally non-profit, (2) they provide “socially useful” services and (3) they are philanthropies deriving a large part of their revenues from tax-deductible contributions. James also suggests that those motivated by values or an ideology such as religious bodies use NGOs to achieve their goals. Accordingly, greater the competition of ideological and religious bodies in a country larger is the voluntary sector. He observes that universally, religious groups are the major founders of non-profit service institutions. The religious motive for founding voluntary organizations provides a supply-side explanation for where non profit sectors are found, why the non-profit form is used, which services are provided by NGOs and how they may compete effectively with a public or secular profit maximizing alternative. The value expressive character of NGOs according to this view is what distinguishes them from business or government institutions. Thomas H Jeavons (1992:404) has argued that, what is most significant in distinguishing between the different sectors is the initial and essential purpose of the organizations within them. He sees NGOs existing primarily to give expression to social philosophical, moral or religious values of their founders and supporters.

### **3.9.4 Voluntary -State Complementarity or Interdependence Theory**

Lester M Salamon (1987) developed a 'new theory' that NGOs were 'partners in public service' with governmental agencies because the NGOs' weaknesses correspond well with government's strengths and vice versa (Salamon, 1987:113). It makes sense in this theoretical perspective to use NGOs and

INGOs to carry out government purposes. Widespread reliance upon the NGOs is not an anomaly but exactly what one would expect. Salamon suggests that instead of demoting the NGOs to derivative role, it should be seen as 'the preferred mechanism' for providing collective goods, with government assuming the residual role. He has usefully identified four failures of NGOs which justifies government involvement.

- philanthropic insufficiency- which concerns the inability of the NGOs to generate sufficient income,
- philanthropic particularism- which describes the tendency of voluntary organizations to focus on particular sub-groups,
- philanthropic paternalism- where those in control of resources can choose whom they serve and
- philanthropic amateurism - which relates to professional service provisions.

Salamon states,

“Potentially, at least, the government is in a position to generate more reliable stream of resources to set priorities on the basis of a democratic political process instead of the wishes of the wealthy, to offset part of the paternalism of the charitable system by making access to care a right instead of a privilege, and to improve the quality of care by instituting quality-control standards. By the same token, NGOs can personalize the provisions of services, operate on a smaller scale than government bureaucracies, reduce the scale of public institutions needed, adjust care to the needs of clients rather than to the structure of government agencies and permit a degree of competition among service providers.” (Salamon, 1987:112)

Under these circumstances, neither the replacement of the voluntary sector by the government nor vice-versa makes as much sense as collaboration between the two. Viewed from this theoretical perspective the voluntary sector as the preferred mechanism for providing collective goods has certain inherent limitations. Hence extensive collaboration between government and the non-profit sector emerges not as a logically and theoretically sensible compromise.

### 3.9.5 Social Origin Theory

This theory developed by Salamon and Anheier (1998) argues that the size, and financing of the NGOs depends upon the type of welfare regime in a country in which they operate. They are seen as part of a complex set of historical relationships among social classes, party politics, government regulations and the influence of interest groups. Such a theory is particularly interested in the cultural and political embeddedness of NGOs in any particular society (Salamon, et.al. 1998:225). Banton (1968:357) has defined voluntary associations as groups organized for the pursuit of one interest or several interests in common. They are seen as an indicator of social evolution in the development from undifferentiated to differentiated societies. Hamer (1981:113) suggests that it is possible to see certain attributes in these historic forms of solidarity that may provide key to understanding certain pre-conditions for forming modern cooperatives and self-help associations.

Each of these five explanatory theories of voluntary action offer important insights into why NGOs and INGOs exist in mixed economy based democratic societies. It is helpful to identify what are often seen as 'unique competencies' or 'roles' of INGOs. Kramer (1987:245) has identified four such attributes or functions.

- **The vanguard role** whereby INGOs innovate, pioneer or demonstrate programmes or services.

- **The advocate role** whereby INGOs act as pressure groups to advance interests or views
- **The value-guardian role** which sees INGOs promoting citizen participation, developing leadership and protecting minorities
- **The role of provider of services** which neither government nor business are able to assume directly or fully

These attempts may describe what exists in the INGO sector and why the INGO sector exists.

#### 4 Putting theories into Practice: Case Studies from India

In an attempt to understand the roles- devised from the discussed theories- of INGOs in India, we formulated the theoretical assumptions about the INGOs' roles in India and designed the tool for collecting the information about them. We have used both the primary (through checklists, interview schedules and structured questionnaires) and secondary (project reports, annual reports, media reports and various other documents of the concerned INGOs) sources to collect the desire data for this study. Instead of doing a survey of the mushroom number of INGOs operating in Orissa<sup>1</sup>, we settled for six INGOs through a fine mix of purposive sampling and snowball technique. For the empirical investigation we selected Orissa units of six INGOs: CARE, OXFAM, ActionAid, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Lutheran World Services (LWS India) and Concern World Wide. Clearly given the range of projects funded and/or implemented by the INGOs in Orissa there was considerable variation in relation to size, duration, objectives, level of funding and approach. The six INGOs selected for the study share certain common characteristics such as: all are involved in activities in rural areas of Orissa, all are explicitly concerned with poverty alleviation and the Regional Head Offices of all of these INGOs are located in Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Orissa.

The concern of this case study based research was to assess the roles played by the INGOs, more in reaching their goals of assisting the developmental aid, how the benefits have been distributed, whether the benefits are cost-effective, the prospects for sustainability and the potential for replication. The main purpose of the assessment is not to provide detailed statistical analysis of the programmes undertaken by the INGOs, but to understand their approaches, strategies, philosophies and roles in contributing to the upliftment of the poor and the deprived.

##### 4.1 Operationalizing the theoretical assumptions

The following table explains the assumptions made out of the available existing knowledge about INGOs, the variables derived for the purpose of exploring from the realities and the research questions have been interfaced.

<b>Theoretical Assumptions</b>	<b>Variables for exploration</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>
INGOs are involved in developmental aid rather than structural transformation of the society	Mode and approach of operation	Vanguard Role of INGOs
INGOs constitute a parallel stream for development with justice	Relationship and Partnership with local government and NGOs, Empowerment of target population	Advocate Role of INGOs and Value-guardian Role

<sup>1</sup> Orissa is a state located on the east coast of India. Its social and economic backwardness has attracted the voluntary sector for many reasons. To add to the misery the state is always plagued by frequent occurrence of natural calamities

INGOs have innovative approaches to various means of social justice	Cost effectiveness of the projects/benefits Equitability in the distribution of benefits/services	Role of INGOs as the providers of services and Value-guardian Role
The activities of INGOs and the state are not mutually exclusive .Rather they are complementary to each other.	INGO-Local Government Relationship	Advocate roles of INGOs
INGOs have constituted a major part in the third sector to fill up the gap created by the public and the private sectors.	Administrative and technical Efficiency, Globalization of the local issues, Sustainability of the benefits and services, Accountability	Vanguard Role and .The role of being the provider of services
INGOs influence the media at local and international to globalize the local level issues/problems. The exposure of the rural/local problems to the international bodies helps in fetching more attention and funds	Networking , Media Campaign Globalizing and Internationalizing the local issues	Vanguard Role

#### 4.2 Roles of the INGOs

In an attempt to understand the four-fold role of INGOs the study offered empirical evidences in support of the roles that the INGOs play in development sector. For the purpose, the *vanguard role* is operationalized in terms of the INGOs' efforts to globalize the local issues, *advocacy role* in terms of their role as pressure groups to influence policies of the government concerning the poor and the disadvantaged, *value guardian role* in terms of their role to build the capacities of the local communities/groups and empower them and lastly the *role of service providers* in terms of the wide range of services that they provide.

As vanguards, the INGOs attempt to identify and bring the problems to the notice of the outer world. These are, for all intents and purposes, done by raising the flags in national/international forums and conferences to invite concerns from donors and funding agencies. Oxfam conducts various researches and studies on Health, Education, Forest – Joint Forest Management (JFM), Community Forest Management (CFM), Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP); displacement, micro credit, drought mitigation, disaster and disaster preparedness. ActionAid India's approach to Rural Development (ARD), a document formulated after an international workshop in 1989, provided significant strategic inputs and helped ActionAid's understanding of poverty and its approach to reduce it In 1999, after a review of its past experiences at the global level, ActionAid evolved a document: 'Fighting Poverty Together' (FPT). The FPT provides a comprehensive framework for undertaking poverty eradication work through a rights-based mode of development work. Following these two exercises, the Asia Regional Office has drawn up the ActionAid Asia Strategic Plan reaffirming its commitment to internationalize the needs of the poorest and most marginalized people in promoting and securing their rights.

The other major role, advocacy, has been called the quintessential function of the voluntary sector. By their own measure, INGOs have been more successful in raising issues and educating the public than



in shaping the details of public policy or the operations of governmental agencies. The foremost step in policy advocacy is creating an issue and interjecting it into the political agenda. Oxfam (India) Trust and CRS have been instrumental in globalizing issues such as disaster mitigation, social forestry and women empowerment and thereby influencing the local government in making policies for these issues. Since 1999 Oxfam has been associated closely with the Orissa State Disaster Mitigation Authority (OSDMA) in its statewide programme on disaster preparedness. LWS carries out advocacy, research and development missions in the area of disaster management under the UN and Government of India programmes. Being a part of the larger network of United Evangelical Churches Of India (UELICI), LWS is involved in research and planning, capacity building and advocacy campaign with a specific focus on impact of cyclone, relief codes, coastal eco-system, Coastal Regulation Zone Management (CRZM) and development policies in coastal Orissa and to undertake capacity building of communities in documentation of a coping mechanism, traditional knowledge systems of the coastal communities.

As value guardian INGOs strive to empower the people, ensure equity of benefits among the target population and continue as pro-poor in their approach. Empowerment has long been recognized as something, which is hard to measure. In India the INGOs' evaluation measures empowerment along four dimensions: capabilities, choices, assets, and rights<sup>2</sup>. INGOs strive to benefit the poor and the marginalized through a rights based approach. ActionAid has adopted a unique 3-Level initiative for the empowerment of people: supporting members from the marginalized communities to form groups, imparting livelihood training, legal aid and literacy to community members and pressure exerted by community based groups on the State to enact and enforce laws, policies and programmes in their favour. The process of people's empowerment has been initiated at these three levels. Building Alliances in Civil Society is seen as one of the very crucial factors in the INGOs' role as value guardians. For community based action to take place it is imperative that the community builds its own organizations. CARE's Small Economic Activities Development (SEAD) programme enables the economic and social empowerment of women through nurturing existing and new income generating or economic activities of poor households. CARE's goal was to enable sustained economic security for one million women from low-income households by the year 2005. The Sustainable Tribal Empowerment Project (STEP) is an integrated process oriented project of CARE that has been working with the tribals to significantly improve health, education, income and food security. The tribals are encouraged to play a greater role in their own development by helping them choose from a variety of options and partners that can help them improve their livelihood. Oxfam Western Orissa Programme (OXWORP) is another case of a successful intervention aiming at people's empowerment. Oxfam has been supporting community-based initiatives for about two decades now. These organizations (CBOs) are located in the drought prone districts of Kalahandi, Nuapada, Bargarh and Bolangir of Western Orissa. Some of the major activities of these CBOs are - campaigns on livelihood issues, physical natural resource management, campaigns on ownership rights on land, water and forest, forest protection, savings & credit, etc.

The specific problem areas or target groups selected by an INGO serve as a basis for their service delivery and community support through their individualization of groups that are often overlooked or that may have low priority for government or the market. Like a brand name, specialization contributes

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<sup>2</sup> For example; **Capabilities**: the way women's health and education enabled them to make decisions. **Choices**: the kind of opportunities available to women through the institutions of family, state, market and community level. **Assets**: extent of ownership and control over productive assets and property. **Rights**: what rights are available to women and how much can they actually use them?

to the preservation of organizational identity and enables an INGO to claim jurisdiction over a domain such as the underprivileged, poor children and women, people living with HIV/AIDS, disaster affected people, the aged, etc. Though an INGO may not have any necessary monopoly, its specialization and experience in certain fields of operation are major sources of its legitimacy and credibility and are expressed in the structure of both service provision and advocacy. LWS' initiatives in seven districts of Orissa: Bolangir, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Nuapada, Puri and Sambalpur- providing improved varieties of seeds and low-cost appropriate equipments and encourages the farmers to take up new crops like oil seed, pulses, vegetables, etc in addition to their traditional crops. CONCERN has been providing training to local NGOs in Eastern Orissa and selected farmers on use of advanced technology in agriculture and nursery to increase their operational capacity and to ensure sustainability of the programme respectively. In 2001, CARE's Agriculture & Natural Resources programme drafted a sector strategy and initiated the Western Orissa Rural Livelihoods Project (WORLP)<sup>3</sup>. The project covers four districts of Orissa- Bargarh, Balangir, Kalahandi and Nuapara- spanning over 290 watersheds in a period of 10 years.

INGOs, working increasingly with and through local NGO partners, claimed an advantage over Government and multi-lateral operations in being able to respond to local people's priorities and provided participatory processes in their work. Our discussions in this article reveal that most INGOs focus on social development including health, education, natural resources management, gender equity, micro-credit, etc. Emergency relief is also a priority area. Further HIV/AIDS is given the attention as a problem that needs to be addressed at grassroots levels too. INGOs tend to have advantages of scale over local NGOs in terms of the number of projects they design, fund, evaluate and operate, both within a country and across the countries. Such factor would make them attractive at a time when official donors, bilateral/multilateral agencies and national governments are seeking increased involvement of NGO sector in developmental efforts.

## **5 Conclusion**

The four-role framework provides a platform for assessing the wide range of roles that the INGOs perform in the broad domain of development. It also helps in identifying the competencies that the INGOs have developed over a period of time which can be leveraged for forging working partnerships and avoiding duplication of efforts. INGOs have, in recent years, been considered by scholars, donors and many outside governments as a positive alternative to government-led approaches to development in most of the developing nations. They are no longer viewed solely as implementers of development projects/programs, but as a vehicle that may usher in a new overall approach to the problems of development. (Riley, 2002:71). Through larger networks, we can see the role of INGOs as increasingly moving away from the traditional direct service delivery function towards a greater emphasis on building of partnerships with and enhancing the capacity of local NGOs and CBOs, so that these local civil society actors can pursue their own agenda in holding governments accountable, influencing policy, demanding efficient public services, and in providing essential and appropriate services.

The literature on the role of INGOs is particularly very scattered and hitherto existing literature also makes us believe that not many attempts have been made at the academic level to explore this area of research. It is unusual for the INGOs to disseminate detailed information about their activities. Though a large number of evaluative studies are conducted every year, either at the behest of the donors or on

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<sup>3</sup> WORLP is a "watershed plus" project in which CARE is engaged in capacity building and project management with Natural Resource International as the lead

the initiatives of the implementing agencies, evidence on the impact of INGOs' intervention is surprisingly limited. The reports which receive a wider circulation tend to concentrate on operational concerns related to programme goals or strategic orientations. Theoretically and methodologically there is great potential in the study of INGOs. A careful analysis can not only help to extend this relatively new area of people oriented research but can also contribute to developing new insights on development issues and models.

The theoretical perspectives discussed so far provide a potent room for exploration of the research agenda that might focus on some the unresolved issues.

- Classification and taxonomies of INGOs and their service programmes
- Assessing the impact and effectiveness of the INGOs' intervention
- Determination of size and scope of the INGOs in different thrust areas of intervention
- Development of valid and reliable indicators for service delivery goals such as access, accountability, adequacy, continuity, choice, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and equity.
- Comparative case studies in different fields of services on any of the above mentioned variables.
- Continuous Impact Analysis of any specific project
- Cost benefit analysis of direct service provisions
- Case studies of different modes of funding
- Studies on influence of the type of problem conditions, population at risk and technology on the structure and function of NGOs in general and INGOs in particular
- Studies focusing on how different types of voluntary organizations adapt to changing circumstances and to answer why some organizations succeed better than some others.

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