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Title : *Impact of Non-Government Organisations on Agricultural Development by Shri R.S. Deshpande, Mimeograph Series No. 36, July 1993, pp. x + 169, Rs. 150/-.*

An Overview

India has a long tradition of voluntarism. The principles of self-help and development from within, were the key words at the time of independence. Over the last four and half decades there is a continuous attempt to incorporate this in our development philosophy. The planning process attempted it through the plan periods starting with the 'Community Development' approach of the first plan to 'Building up People's Institution' in the eighth plan. At the same time different voluntary agencies are working in the country for various causes.

Broadly, one can visualise four distinct phases in the development process after independence, namely : (i) community development phase; (ii) area development phase; (iii) phase marking the technological change (iv) target group specific programmes. All through these phases people's participation was rather implicitly assumed but not made clear explicitly both in design as well as in the administration of the programme. During the past three plans the need for involvement of people as an essential component for sustainable development was earnestly recorded. During this period there was also a good growth in the network of voluntary organisations in the country. It was just coincidental that some of the exemplarily performing NGOs were also highlighted. The theme worldover was that the 'voluntary people's participation' as an emerging development alternative. The failure of bureaucracy to reach the un-reached was quite visible in the developing societies and especially in India. The programme formulation and implementation mostly remained alien to the masses and development participation by different social groups was taken for granted.

The spirit of voluntarism emerged in the third world countries and especially in India on the background of the struggle to free the society out of colonial legacy. Further, the impulses generated out of the deep stirrings of consciousness originating out of deprivation, have helped in creating suitable work atmosphere for NGOs. These groups formed on voluntary basis assume different names under different contexts starting from an easy expression of 'voluntary organisation' to an ideologically linked, 'social movement'.