The Role, Concept And Work Of Civil Society (Cso) In India: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The term 'civil society' can be traced back to the works of traditional Greek and Roman philosophers like Aristotle and Cicero. As a matter of fact, Aristotle is credited with the very first practice of the term. The term, which at that period of time was taken, as synonymous to political institution, has developed a completely opposite meaning in today's discourse and is referred to, as an independent body, distinct from the state. The modern idea of civil society saw its genesis in the Scottish and Continental enlightenment era of the late eighteenth century. An idea of civil society being parallel but distinct from the state was developed by the political theorists' right from Thomas Paine to George Hegel . According to them, civil society was a domain, where involvement of citizens takes place in agreement with their interests, desires, and wishes. Reflections of this changed school of thought could be seen in the changed economic realities like rise of bourgeois, private properties, and market competition.

KEYWORDS- Civil, Society, properties, competition, economic, association, role etc.
CONCEPT OF CIVIL SOCIETY:--

Introduction

Civil society is generally defined, as the space, which is outside the realm of family, market, and state. There is no single definition of civil society. It means differently to different authors. As per Sussane Hober Rudolph "civil society… includes the idea of a non-state sovereign sphere; empowerment of citizens; trust building associational life; interaction with, rather than subordination to the State". Dipankar Gupta defines civil society, as "not a thing but a set of conditions within, which individuals interact collectively with the state. The World Bank has adopted a definition of civil society that was developed by a number of leading research centers, "the term civil society refers to a wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious, or philanthropic considerations. Civil society organizations (CSOs) therefore refer to a wide of array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations."

CIVIL SOCIETY IN INDIA:--- India has a long tradition of civil society activities and movementsgoing on since centuries. The roots of civil society in India can be traced to the Vedic times. Various religions in India like Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam, Buddhism, and Jainism-all stress on behavior that is ultimately beneficial to society and mankind. The concept of 'giving' for others is very much embedded in our religions. We have 'Daan' in Hinduism, 'Dasvand' in Sikhism, and 'Zakat' in Islam connoting benevolent giving. In medieval period also, voluntaryorganizations were actively involved in welfare activities pertaining to education and health.In the 19th century, the popular mobilization vis-à-vis CSOs took place, which saw the emergence of various social groups like 'Brahmo Samaj,' 'Arya Samaj,' 'Theosophical Society,' 'Ramakrishna Mission,' which were behind different reform movements in India. Active participation of various NGOs and voluntary organizations was witnessed duringIndia's struggle for freedom. Voluntary sector gained momentum under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. He mobilized masses and created a space for civil society, which successfully carried out the movements like Satyagraha (truth and non-violence), non- cooperation, and civil disobedience. His school of thought continued to inspire people even after independence, reminiscences that can be seen in movements like Chipko movements led by Sunder Lal Bahuguna or more recently anti-corruption protests by Anna Hazare, socialaudit movement by the rural workers and such others.

According to Dr. Ramesh Sharan, CSOs in India can be classified under following types:
1) Voluntary groups influenced by Gandhian thought.
2) Professional rural development agencies
3) Civil and political rights groups
4) Missionary organizations
5) Students, workers, and women movements associated with political parties
6) Independent social movements of dalits, adivasis, women, and environmentalists.
7) Movements of minority groups (Muslim, Christian, Buddhist)

Functions of civil society are :----
Though civil society peacebuilding efforts in developing countries have been involved in influencing positive change, their possible remains greatly undocumented and inadequately tapped in developing countries. The continued existence of conflicts, corruption, bad governance, poverty, and all the injustices that cause these vices in developing countries callfor more civil society engagement with the local, national and international actors in establishing just relationships. Self-awareness of civil society actors in terms of the existing opportunities for change is instrumental in building more solid and strategic alliances for a positive change. Though some of the opportunities discussed here may be used to undermine peacebuilding efforts, this essay explores and demonstrates how theseopportunities enhance the civil society organizations' peacebuilding functions.

Protection.:--- Linking the protection function to Galtung's notion of negative peace, Paffenholz and Spurk assert that the protection function involves international accessory watchdog activities, the creation of zones of peace, humanitarian aid, and civil society initiatives for human security. Paffenholz and Spurk further contend that the protective function normally involves international NGOs directly or indirectly supporting local or national civil society groups much as local civil society groups may on their own engage in protection functions or support agencies of the state. They give examples of civil society organizations involved in protection functions such as the Peace Brigades International, communities in the Philippines and Colombia that negotiated zones of peace, and the churches in Mozambique that got involved in demobilization campaigns to reduce the number of weapons that were a security threat after the UN had completed its demobilization process.

Monitoring.:-- Opportunities for civil society involvement in the monitoring function include the increasing realization by states of the indispensable role of local, regional, and international civil society groups in the management of public affairs. Such a realization is contributing to the emergence of different civil society groups and, bringing these civil society groups closer to the states and thus, making their monitoring function easier.

Social cohesion.:--- According to Paffenholz and Spurk , this function "is to help groups learnhow to live together in peaceful coexistence " since conflicts normally involve the destruction of relationships and trust between parties in the conflict. The civil society organizations have an advantage in supporting this function due to the trust the public tend to have in them mainly due to their impartiality and neutrality in conflict. Though some civil society groups may not be or may not be perceived as impartial or neutral in conflict situations, they still enjoy the trust and confidence of many conflicting parties. Civil society groups like religious organizations have a great potential to perform the social cohesion function. Heynes for instance argues that though religion has been in some cases a source ofconflict, it remains a key player in peacebuilding work due to many people (especially in developing countries) finding their identity in their religious groups. Religious leaders carry messages that have a universal appeal, making it easier to positively contribute toward the rebuilding of relationships. The political neutrality and impartiality of civil society groups likechurches, international relief agencies and local NGOs makes them more acceptable than political belligerents during and after conflict situations.

Intermediation and facilitation:-- The Universities therefore serve to provide avenues of theoretical frameworks that can greatly reinforce the intermediation and facilitation function by civil society organizations. The Universities also provide an opportunity for training professionals who can bring a new dimension of profession intermediation and facilitation. Universities provide a pool of peace professionals who can offer training and advice to civil society groups. Universities have conducted research on peace work and

different peace activities and professionals have put together a lot of literature on peace work. The existence of writings on peacebuilding by multiple professionals.Many others provide a rich basis for further debate on peace issues and theories that civil society organizations can use in their intermediation and facilitation function.

Service delivery.:-- The increasing international and national trust in civil society organizations and appreciating their role in service delivery in developing countries is a stepping stone for the enhancement of this function. The World Bank appreciates the civil society as one of its key partners in working with governments to end poverty and promote sustainable development.

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN INDIA:---
1) Policy Advocacy CSOs are engaged in policy dialogues with government in areas of poverty alleviation and empowerment of the disadvantaged sections. These organizations help the government in not only framing the policies in these areas but also help policy execution and policy monitoring and review. 'Save the Children India' is a NGO that works towards the restoration of the rights of children.
2) Protection Role Association for Protection of Democratic Rights helps provide legal aid to those who have no access to courts of law. Usually such types of CSOs enable legal services and protect the citizens against the repressive attitudes.
3) Promotion of Transparency The CSOs have enabled the enactment of RTI Act, 2005 and Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013.
4) Mobilization of the Citizens and Resources These organizations involve communities in development works by engaging them in planning and designing the same. This even helps the government to back track some of its policies that are not people friendly. They have used community resources to undertake initiatives like building community infrastructure, houses, toilets, and in providing basic services like water, electricity etc.
5) As an Active Partners in development NGOs like 'Asha,' 'Pratham' are actively involved in providing education to the children in rural areas and slums in the country. NGO like 'Rural Health Care Foundation' is providing health care services to the people in rural and remote areas.
Most of the CSOs don't have adequate funds to carry out their work, as the people they serve lack the capacity to pay. Hence, they depend on receiving funds from the government/non-government bodies/international institutions. Now, with a simultaneous cut in the international funding, the problem of financial inadequacy of CSO's is only increasing. There exists a huge shortage of professional and trained personnel in the voluntary sector. Most of the personnel are unqualified and unskilled. insufficient salaries do act, as a deterrent in appointing of a skilled work force. Also, professionally qualified and trained persons have a preference and leaning to work in high profile cities and offices than a backward and underdeveloped region. One of the issues plaguing CSOs is the accountability issue in their own operation and working. Accountability and intelligibility,

especially, in financial matters are found lacking. There have been increasing incidences of misuse of funds by these organizations. In January 2017, the Hon. Supreme Court of India called for an audit of nearly 30 lakh NGOs. This move was taken in the background of the NGOs failing to give an account of expenditure made out of the moneys they had received. The partnership of CSOs with the management has helped in successful implementation of many welfare and developmental programmes. CSOs have also successfully engaged with government in formulating various national level policies. But this interface between the CSOs and government seem to be clouded with an overbearing attitude of governmental officials, bureaucratization, and inertia that has led to a gap in the interface between the two. The opportunities for civil society groups to perform their peacebuilding functions remain enormous. However, it is imperative for civil society groups to realize that these opportunities have the capacity to become obstacles to peace building as well. Exploiting the potential of the identified opportunities in performing their peacebuilding function will largely depend on the civil society groups' readiness and capacity to coordinate their efforts, support comprehensive and sustainable peacebuilding efforts, respect and work with all actors at all levels to avoid imposing solutions, remain flexible in their functions and be ready to let their mistakes and successes inform their current and future work.

CONCLUSION:-- Civil society is a vast and diverse group around various organizations within it. It plays significant role in representing the interests of depressed and oppressed classes, mobilization of resources, policy advocacy, and regulating and monitoring state action. It has become one of the key instruments of good governance worldwide. With involvement of stakeholders, there is always a space for inclusiveness. Prof. John Keane (founder of the Centre for the Study of Democracy in London), a British theorist stated the emerging consensus that civil society is a realm of freedom correctly highlights its basic value, as a condition of democracy. Where there is no civil society there cannot be citizens with capacities. It enables the citizens in choosing their identities, entitlements, and duties within a political-legal framework (paraphrased). The CSOs have been facing issues like inadequate finances, untrained and unskilled staff, lack of accountability, and strife with the government that eventually leads to a very minor achievement of laid down goals. Having a platform for discourse and dialogue between the CSOs and government, skill development and capacity building through various programmes , and also by having a provision of social and performance audit of the Organisations can resolve such issues.

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