CHAPTER I

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The contemporary society is characterized by a large number of complex organizations. These organizations have emerged with the purpose of fulfilling varied needs of individuals and groups, and maintain social equilibrium in the society. The dependence of human beings on these organizations is also high simply because it facilitates growth and development. The widely recognized fact is that the existence of organization is essential for the survival and effective functioning of human society. However, it is also true, the organizations are responsible for many of the ills besetting contemporary society (Pfeffer, 1997:4) and they are perceived as a blessing as well as curse at the same time.

In the social science discipline, the term 'organization' is used differently to mean different things. It is generally used to mean an 'association' of human group or 'associational group'. In a specific sense the organization represents 'bureaucracy' like government administration, business corporations and industry. In a broader sense, it covers various organizations such as political organization, economic organization, educational organization, religious organization under the broad category of 'social organization'. Thus, the term 'social organization' is used widely for innumerable organizations of the society.

The systematic study of social organization is first initiated in the discipline of sociology, although it has a relatively short history. The sociologists mainly looked at

social organization as an arrangement of parts with in society and their interdependence in groups and societies. The sociological understanding of social organization helps to understand the existence of social arrangement with in society to fulfil the needs of society and their inter-relation with each other and the society. Max Weber's theory of social organization deals with the functioning of social organization in society. According to Weber "Associations" are a basic category of social organization of which the "rules restrict, or exclude, those outside of it" and whose leaders and executive staff enforce the rules and regulations (Weber, 1978:33). Thus, Weber approached the study of organizations from the point of view of power and authority relationships in political structures and public bureaucracies.

The US sociologist A. Etzioni has classified organizations into three broad categories such as government agencies, for profit business, and a diverse group of 'third sector' organizations such as Non-Profit Organization (NPO), Voluntary Organization (VO), Action Group (AG) and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) (Etzioni, 1981). The present study deals with 'third sector organizations' especially the NGOs. The numerical strength of NGO is huge and diverse in the world. There are variable estimate of NGOs in India. According to the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), the total number of NGOs in India in 2001 was one million (Tondon, 2002:30). Raina, however, cites a figure of 200,000 Indian NGOs (Raina, 2004:12). The statistics complied by the Home Ministry indicate that in 2000-01 nearly 20,000 organizations were registered under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 1976. These NGOs address various issues of people and operate at local, regional and national level. In spite of this predominance, "the sector has received very limited

attention from academic researchers and social analysts" (Sheth and Sethi, 1991:51, also see Dwivedi, 2002). The existing literature on NGOs mainly focuses on the success stories of a handful of organizations involved in developmental activities (Patel, 1998, also see Kamta, 2000). The literature especially on NGOs are either praised or maligned for their contribution from different ideological perspective. The present study is an attempt to explore the contribution of NGOs in Dalit Empowerment in Gujarat with special reference to Four NGOs which the scholar has identified based on their involvement in the dalit empowerment activities in Gujarat. The purpose of the study is to contribute to the body of knowledge of Social Work Discipline, Professional Social Workers, Social Work Educators and NGOs involved and interested in the dalit empowerment work.

Concepts and Emergence of NGOs

The term Non-Government Organization emerged mainly from the literature of International Institutions. NGOs were recognized in Article 17 of the 1945 United Nations Charter and over the years many have granted the formal observer status with in the UN bodies. A key World Bank Operational Document—1995's Working with NGOs—defined NGO as 'private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide the basic services, or undertake community development'(World Bank, 1995: 7). Most international institutions' literature recognized the term NGO but hasn't provided any comprehensive definition which could include a wide range of non-governmental organizations (Pandey, 1991). Sarkar and Mukherjee, (2000:125) endorse this view "NGOs are difficult to define since NGOs are not a homogenous category".

However, in general NGOs are defined as private, voluntary and non-profit organizations independent of any government, and funded by individual and corporate donations, or receive grants from international agencies and governments. They are known by different terms such as NGOs, voluntary organizations (VOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), people's organizations (POs), public service contractors (PSCs), non-profit organizations (NPOs), etc. The first term, NGO, is the most widely used as the 'umbrella organization' with in which the later ones can be included depending on the scale of operations (Korten, 1990).

Korten (1991) further explains, the Voluntary Organisations (VOs) having a social mission, committed to shared values, and function as market oriented non profit business serving public purposes. The other such as People's Organisations (like the self-help groups) having member-accountable leadership, the organization representing the interest of the members. Then there are some 'Government Non-Governmental Organizations' (GNGOs) which are created by the government and they act as an instrument of the government to implement government schemes and programmes such as Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Development of Women and Child in Rural Areas (DWACRA) comes under the category of GNGOs in India.

Fisher in her definition of NGOs includes the 'Grassroots Support Organisations' (GRSOs). "GRSOs are nationally or regionally based development assistance organisations, usually staffed by professionals, that channel international funds to

grassroots organisation's (GROs) and helps communities other than their own development" (1993:5).

A term most synonymous to NGOs is 'voluntary agencies', referring to grassroots level organizations. The term voluntary agency gives an impression of being an agent of, acting on someone's behalf (Pandey, 1991). In the Indian context two more new terms have been used for NGOs viz. Non-Party Political Formation (NPPF) and Action Groups (AG) (Kothari, 1984, Dhanagare, 1988). However, these terms add very little to the meaning of NGOs but provide some classifications.

Sundaram's (1986) comprehensive definition of voluntary organization helps to understand the clear meaning of NGOs and locate NGOs in the context of present study. According to him, it is an organization which, whether its workers are paid or unpaid, is initiated and governed by its own members without external control. The NGOs having Trust and Society form are governed by Trustees, often referred to as Governing Body members who are volunteers and do not draw any salary or remuneration. The above brief discussion provides the insight that the term NGO can include various kinds of organizations. For the purpose of present study, the NGOs can be defined as 'registered voluntary institution or organization manages own affairs with the help of independent executive council and paid staff and implements developmental programmes for the benefits of the people at local, district and state level. The study has considered those NGOs that are also involved in the empowerment of dalits and other marginalized communities'.

As there are different definitions of NGOs, there are several classifications or types of NGOs in India. The different scholars have used different criteria for these

classifications. Shah and Chaturvedi (1983) divide NGOs in three main categories: techno-managerial, social-reformist and radical. Elliot (1987) outlined NGOs in three types: Charity Work, Development Work, and Empowerment Work. Korten (1990) distinguishes three generations of NGOs: the first generation of NGOs are relief and welfare NGOs, which are more predominant in the developing countries and often keep close working relation with state and international funding organization for recognition and financial support and do not involved in political activities. Second generation NGOs are development NGOs involved in local community development work and organize community people to solve their local developmental issues like water, land-issues, public health, indebtedness, agriculture, etc. The development NGOs makes community people self-reliant at the same time, they challenge local traditional elites. Third generation NGOs explicitly focus on administrative and political constraints and engaged in people's mobilization and conscientization. Their focus is on networking and co-ordinating various peoples organization against states repressive policies and building up wider social movements (Korten, 1991:115-27). Hirway (1995) classified NGOs of Gujarat into three types such as welfare-oriented (including health and education), development organizations and empowering NGOs. Iyengar (1998) classified NGOs in Gujarat into four categories: Gandhian, Service Delivery Organizations, Professional Organizations and Mobilizational Organizations. Garain (1994) divides the voluntary sector into three kinds of NGOs. 'First, 'Corporate NGOs', which are heavily government sponsored such as the National Dairy Development Board and the Wasteland Development Board, which have marginalized the issues of the poor to promote capitalist development. The

Second are 'development oriented NGOs', which rely on government patronage, and hence, do not question government policy, and programmes and further the state's capitalist interests. The third are NGOs which profess a 'development with social justice orientation, and are often in conflict with the state and elites for organizing the poor for their rights' (Garain, 1994: 344-5).

Besides ambiguity in definition and classification, the NGOs also varies in terms of size, structure, ideology, strategies of functioning, sources of funds, etc. There are several reasons behind the emergence and proliferation of NGOs in India. These include long tradition of voluntary service for the upliftment of underprivileged section, Christian Missionaries institutions and church extension programmes, Gandhian liberal reformism, failure of state as welfare state/developmental imbalances, breakdown or gradual deterioration and decline of existing structures and institutions of modern nation-states, socio-political movements of 1970-80s, rise of neo-liberal political economy, emergence of international development donar agency, emergence of middle-class intellectuals turned social activists and animators and professional individuals and groups act in the interest of Human Development for personal gain, advantage and employment, etc (Dhanagare,1988; Baviskar,2001; Dhabi,2004). However, despite of heterogeneous character NGOs contributing significantly to the benefits of the society.

Contribution of NGOs in India: Overview

The NGOs are bestowed with noble features such as less bureaucracy; spirit of voluntarism; non-profit making; effectiveness in reaching out to the masses; ability to operate in remote and inaccessible areas; in the forefront during natural calamities

and; above all, effective in delivering goods at the grassroots level (Pattnaik and Panda, 2005). Similarly, it is driven by values like altruism, philanthropy and voluntarism, whereas the primary objectives of government and private sectors remain to govern and making profits, respectively (Brown and Korten 1989, cited in Fowler 1992:22). Thus, these features and values make NGOs different in comparison to other formal bureaucratic organizations as far as achieving its objectives are concerned. It puts moral responsibility on them to address the diverse issues of the disadvantaged society and mitigate exploitative practices of the society.

The role of these NGOs is to inspire people to get organised and form an alternative force to keep the society and state machinery on track. In the recent past, the events like India Social Forum, World Social Forum brought to our notice the increasing presence of NGOs at different levels, i.e., local, national and global, cutting across issues. Further, the phenomenal rise of NGOs and their contribution for the society made scholars to look at them as the agents of social change in the contemporary India (Dhanagare, 1988; Beteille, 2001).

Especially in India, the importance of NGOs is well understood. The NGOs are considered as an alternative approach to the rural development and uplifting the deprived sections. There are various examples, which substantiate that the NGOs have played major role in the welfare and development of poor and weaker sections of India. The literature on NGOs shows several positive cases of NGO intervention. In fact NGOs are involved in performing various activities such as providing educational and health services, drinking water, relief, charity and welfare services, increasing people's voice in decision making, engaging in developmental work in

economic, ecological and infrastructural areas, self-help group for women, social awakening, community development activities in urban and rural areas, etc. There are number of studies highlighted the positive contribution of NGOs in the welfare and development of weaker sections of society (Jain, 1994; Bava, 1997, Kamta, 2000; Bhose, 2003)

There are several good examples of positive contributions of NGOs in India. The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) of Ahmedabad, Gujarat is one such prominent NGO contributed for the economic empowerment of women. It has organized thousands of poor working women under the guidance of Ela R Bhatt and mobilized them to run a co-operative bank, which encourages saving and fulfils their credit requirements for consumption, trading and production purposes. Its annual turnover runs into crores of rupees (Baviskar, 2001:6). Similarly, In Andhra Pradesh a local NGO, 'Women's Thrift Co-operatives' (WTC) works on small savings and credit programmes has over 33,000 women members with 101 WTC's in less than a decade of its inception. Their combined saving till 31 December, 1998 was Rs. 26 million, with no external grants or loans. WTC provides loans to its members with minimal interest for household expenses including house repair, education, healthcare as well as investment in agriculture, livestock and small credit and loan programmes.

In the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, the Ralegansiddhi village observed remarkable change by the NGO led by Anna Hazare an ex-serviceman. This organization is based on Gandhian ideology and works for rural regeneration through people's self-help group and participation. Similarly, 'The Social Work and Research Center', Eklavya, Disha, Ganter, Shramjivi Sanghatna, Vanrai, etc are some of the

NGOs playing effective role for the betterment of vulnerable and weaker sections of India (SinghaRoy, 2001; Pawar, 2004). These positive contributions of NGOs indicate that the 'Non-Governmental Organization' has emerged as a viable institutional framework to serve as a catalyst for development and change and play effective role in meeting the needs of poor and vulnerable sections of society (Jain, 1994).

The most important contribution of NGOs in India and elsewhere in the world is to raise consciousness against the varied forms of exploitation and injustice. In the recent times, the emergence of many grassroots micro movements protesting against the local social repression to state hegemony and development policies are due to the issues raised by the NGOs. These NGOs employ people-centric strategies and tools such as intense campaigns, people's mobilization, advocacy and effective networking to strengthen movements against exploitation. This radical role of NGOs characterized them as a social force that facilitates collective action and people's mobilization for human rights and social justice. However, looking at the heterogeneous character of NGOs in different parts of the country, scholars may pose serious questions, such as, have NGOs really been an effective force? How and why? Etc (Pattnaik and Panda, 2005). The present study also based on similar curiosity like above and proposes questions such as how NGOs perceive dalits problems? Do they contribute to dalits empowerment? How? Thus, to examine these questions, the proposed study has been designed and located in the following theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework

The current theories of NGOs are highly rooted in the discipline of economics. Noteworthy among these are: First, the heterogeneity theory explains unsatisfied demand for public and quasi-public goods in situation of demand heterogeneity leads to emergence of NGOs. Second, the supply side theory explains NGOs are a reflection of demand heterogeneity served and created by entrepreneurs seeking to maximize non-monetary returns. Third, the trust theory/contract or market failure theory explains Non-distribution constraint makes non-profit more trustworthy under conditions of information asymmetry, which makes monitoring expensive and profiteering like. Fourth, the stakeholder theory introduces the tripartite relation between NGOs, target group and stakeholder (funding agency). This theory emphasizes the role of stakeholder to decide and exercise control over delivery of services of NGOs. Fifth, the interdependence theory explains zero-sum competitive relation between voluntary sector and government. It puts emphasis on frequent pattern of public-private partnership for providing better services to the people. Sixth, the social origin theory explains the size and structure of the non-profit sector are a reflection of its 'embedded ness' in a complex set of relationships, classes and political regime. It moves away from micro-economic model of NGOs and put interdependence theory in the context (see Salamon, 1999; Anheier and Seibel, 1990; DiMaggio and Anheier, 1990; and BenNer and Guil, 1993, Weisbrod, 1977; Anheier and BenNer, 1997, Kingma, 1997, Steinberg, 1997). The above mentioned theories have potentials to explain the emergence and functions of NGOs in the society. However, they have inherent limitations and weaknesses to understand the

phenomenon of NGOs in different socio-cultural setting and less applicable universally (Anheier, 2003).

For the purpose of present study, the two theoretical perspectives such as New Social Movement Perspective and the Structural Social Work Perspective have been adopted as theoretical framework to understand the contribution of NGOs in the dalit empowerment. The potential of these theoretical frameworks for the study is described below.

New Social Movement Perspective

In the 1960's and 1970's, the European and American societies witnessed to emergence of various social movements addressing the issues of humanity, identity, cultural and non-material aspects. The goals and values of these movements were universalistic in nature and directed towards the protection and promotion of humanity and providing better life condition. Contrary to the classical and neo-classical (old) movements such as agrarian movements, working class movements, trade union movements and so on, these new issue-based New Social Movements (NSMs) did not engage in the ideological discourses of Marxism and class-revolution. The NSMs for practical reasons avoids the idea of revolution and overthrowing of capitalism, capitalist and system of governance of the state. The ideological and value orientation of the NSMs are 'new' and distinctively practical and non-rigid in the approach. However, the NSMs reject and protest against the capitalist led idea of growth and development, and stand against the state repression and exploitations.

The main proponent of NSMs theory, French sociologist, Alain Touraine writes, "The central meaning of these new social movements is that they reconstruct a more

complete and complex image of the subject. They introduce emotion into rational action, solidarity into efficiency; they replace the aggressive ideal of men's domination of nature by the defense of creativity of individual, who try to safeguard their own complexity, their roots as much as their project" (Touraine, 1987: 221). In his view, the NSMs is a collective action, organised around a issues of social conflict, which strives to protect human being from the varied exploitative practices and engaged in the transformation (ibid). Thus, The NSMs are context-specific and issue-bound. They are generally responding to issues pertaining to everyday life of the people and not to the economy or state (Cohen, 1985). The newness about NSMs is that they oppose the tyranny of the state /government in power without questioning the very existence and legitimacy of the State. Also, these do not intend to directly take over power from them by overthrowing the regime. The intermediary institutions (i.e., NGOs) play a significant role in the growth of these movements and also in bringing these movements into fruition (Gupta, 1999:237-38).

In India, the rise of NSMs is due to the developmental problems, issues of socio-cultural identities of people, civil liberties, human rights etc addressed by NGOs, nonparty political forums, grassroots popular initiatives, and a single issue based anti state movements (Oommen, 2001).

There are multiple social actors of NSMs such as students, intellectuals, middle class, social activists, victims of socio-cultural oppression and development projects irrespective of their socio-cultural background play lead roles in these movements. They adopt different means such as scholastic writings, community organization and

mobilization, protest, strategic interventions, media, etc. for achieving goals and values of NSMs.

The important aspect of NSMs is that these generally evolve in grassroots politics and grassroots collective actions and take the help of existing intermediary institutions such as NGOs, voluntary associations, non-party political forums, social action group, etc. These intermediary institutions are backbone of NSMs utilizing different strategies and methods to highlight various issues of people and strive for people's development and empowerment. These intermediary institution- NGOs are considered as agents of NSMs. It plays effective role in the emergence of social movement and when social movements get institutionalized and consolidated these result in formation of various new institutions/groups and influence state politics, policies and decisions. Thus, there is close connection between NGOs and social movement and they seem to complement each other (Pattnaik and Panda, 2001:10). Sarkar (2005:103-125) has also shown, many social movements such as naxalite movement, tebhaga movement, movement against casteism, women's movement, environmental movement and so on led emergence of NGOs. This New Social Movement Perspective is potentially useful theoretical schema to understand the NGOs efforts in the contemporary society. It has significant relevance to the present study to examine contribution of NGOs in the dalit empowerment. The structural social work perspective of social work discipline is another important theoretical perspective; the relevance of it to present study is discussed below.

Structural Social Work Perspective

This perspective is a potentially useful theoretical framework for the present study in social work discipline. The structural social work is one form of practice in connection with radical change and emancipation that fundamentally strives for mitigating discriminatory practices and brings structural transformation. It originated in the mid 1970's, under the leadership of Maurice Moreau (Moreau, Frosst, Frayne, Hlywa, Leonard, & Rowell, 1993), that links individual and group problems to broader discriminative practices, inequality and injustices of the society. Unlike, conventional social work practice, it holds responsible social structure, rather than individual deficiencies as the root cause of people's problems (Gil, 1998; Healy, 2000). There are two-fold goals of structural social work. First, it alleviates negative effects of structural exploitation on the people, and second, simultaneously transforms social structure through social reforms and social change initiative (Galper, 1980: Gil, 1998; Mullaly, 1997; Payne, 1997). To achieve these goals, the structural social work adopts and applies a holistic approach and involves both service provider and service user in the process of intervention to overcome the injustices and oppression.

The structural social work practice works at two levels. First, working within the system (known as radical humanism) includes direct practice with service users and working to radicalize and democratize the organization in which it is practiced. Second, working outside the system (known as radical structuralism) aims to change material conditions and oppressive structural patterns (George & Marlowe, 2005:7).The structural social work, apart from this, also highlights and helps in understanding the multiple and intersecting forms of oppression of the society

(Mullaly, 2002) through the critical consciousness-raising. This critical consciousness-raising further encourages people to identify reason and take action against the root causes of oppression.

The structural social work helps oppressed people to reduce their alienation and sense of powerlessness and gain control over all aspects of their lives (Moreau, 1990; Mullaly, 2002). The central aim of structural social work is empowerment of the oppressed and discriminated sections of the society. To achieve this it evolves and applies various approaches, strategies and methods. The NGOs are the major instruments and initiators of structural social work practice. Thus, keeping in view the objectives of the present study, new social movements and structural social work perspectives provide relevant theoretical framework to understand the contributions of NGOs in the dalit empowerment. In the next section, the socio-economic condition of dalits has been discussed to illuminate need of NGOs intervention in dalit empowerment.

Dalit Situation in India

According to Human Development Report (UNDP, 1997) the 'Deprivation encompasses deprivation in years of life, health, housing, knowledge, participation, personal security and environment. When these different kinds of deprivation interact, they severely constrain human choices (ibid: 25). India is one of the developing countries of the world suffering from human deprivation. It ranks as low as 115th position in the Human Development Index (HDI) among all the 162 member nations of the United Nations (UNDP, 2001). Similarly of the 90 nations with a high concentration of human deprivation (Human Poverty Index), India ranks as high as

55. In India, after sixty years of Independence, the adult literacy rate is 61.3 per cent, the people live below poverty line is 26.1 per cent, the sex ratio is (per 1000 male) 933, the infant mortality rate (per 1000 live birth) is 67 and the 21 per cent of the total population are undernourished. Thus, India's progress in Human Development Index is slow and it varies among different social groups in India (Thorat and Mahamallik, 2006).

The status of dalit (Scheduled Castes) is lower in the Human Development Index of India and they also suffer worst due to the horrendous practice of Untouchability and caste-based discriminations. In this regards Oommen writes, "If discrimination against women, linguistic communities and Adivasis is based on one or another dimension, discrimination against Dalits is multi-dimensional – economic, social, political, and cultural. Domination over them is cumulative. The most visible sites of domination and discrimination against them are found in Bharat or rural India (Oommen, 2004:156)". They are at the bottom of Human Development Index. Their lives, which have been conditioned by the highest incidence of poverty, illiteracy, ill health, unemployment, powerlessness and various other forms of human deprivation, have pushed them to the edge of the social margin (Singha Roy, 2001:84-86).The dalits (Scheduled Castes) represent only 16.02% i.e. 166.67 million of the total population of India as per 2001 Census but they have highest level of deprivation compare to higher caste population. In 2000, about 35% of rural dalits live below poverty line; the casual labour among dalits is highest 61.4% without any job security and decent mode of employment. The literacy rate among dalit is low as 47% in rural areas and 66% in urban areas of India. The low literacy rate further affects their

representation in higher education and secondary and tertiary sector employment. Similarly, it is also found that the vast majority of dalits deprived of access to basic essentials of life especially safe drinking water, food, housing, minimum clothing, medical care, secured livelihood, etc (NSSO, 2001; Thorat, 2004).

The deprivation of dalits is also continuing in urban areas. The total 18.7 per cent of the dalit population live in urban India but the majority of them represent in unorganized sector and surviving on meagre income. According to Mander, "Eighty-Four per cent of urban SCs work as unskilled labour in the unorganized service sector, e.g., as loaders, brick-kiln, quarry workers, etc" (Mander, 2000: 148). Some of the SC communities for the instance Bhangi (Scavenger) still perform their traditional occupation of sweeping and scavenging in the cities. Moreover, they are highly represented as sweepers and sanitary workers in Class IV position of government services. (Chaplin, 2002). The overview of dalit situation in India shows that the prevalence of multi-dimensional discrimination and marginalization of dalits in Indian society. It also shows that even after Fifty-nine years of Independence the caste-system and caste-based discrimination are practiced against dalits and majority of dalits are the victims of caste-based discrimination. Thus, it is the responsibility of state, civil society organization and conscious-sympathetic citizens of India to protect and prevent dalit from all forms of discrimination and exploitation.

In fact, after Independence, the free Indian state abided by the Socialist-Secular-Democratic values and intervened in favour of poor in general and Scheduled Castes(SCs) and Scheduled Tribes(STs) in the particular in a variety of ways such as the provisions of reservation of seats in the educational institution, employment, and

politics. The Constitution of India has enacted several legal provisions for the removal of untouchability and discrimination against dalits. There is a device of the Special Component Plan (SCP) in the form of separate budgetary mechanism for the socio-economic development of dalits. Similarly, the state has given special preferences to dalits in Health, Education, Rural Development, Slum Improvement and Anti-Poverty Programmes. But, despite these provisions, the studies have shown that these various measures of dalit welfare and development have only succeeded up to limited extent and the majority of time it failed to protect the human rights of dalits. (Galanter, 1991; Nandu Ram, 1988; Krishnan, 2002; Shah, 2002).

Similarly, it has been also observed that the reservation policy although created miniscule better-off sections among dalits but the majority of dalit population don't even qualify to avail reservation facilities due to educational backwardness. Thus, their representation is far behind their prescribed quota of 15.6 per cent. The studies have also shown that the practice of Untouchability and Atrocities are the major reasons of Human Rights violation of dalits in India. (Navsarjan, 1997; Shah, 2002) The atrocities against them are more visible at the countryside in various forms such as murder, grievous hurt, arson, rape, etc. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes brings out annual statistical reports on atrocities shows a constant increase in the incidents of atrocities against dalits in all the states in India. According to the Commissioner for SCs and STs, there are three main causes of atrocities: (i) Unresolved land disputes related allotment of government land or distribution of surplus land to the landless SC/ST persons; (ii) tension and bitterness created on account of Non-payment or underpayment of minimum wages prescribed
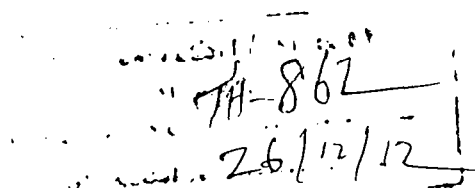
by the state government, and (iii) resentment against the manifestation of awareness amongst the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes about their rights and privileges as enshrined in the constitution and various legislative and executive measures. Moreover, the lack of will among administrative officer to implement protective legislations and provisions in favour of dalits are the main cause of perpetual incidences of atrocities against Dalits. According to the National Commission for SCs and STs the maladies such as delays in reporting, refusal to register complaints, delayed arrival on scene, half-hearted investigation, failure to cite relevant provisions of the law, soft treatment of accused person from influential sections, failing to make arrest on consideration of modification, poor quality of prosecution, protracted and high percentage of acquittals, etc. are responsible for high rates of atrocities against dalits in India. Thus, despite of various constitutional legal provisions the state has not been able to protect the life of majority rural dalits from the perpetual caste-based discriminations and atrocities.

The multi-dimensional deprivation of dalit community is basically the main reason for the formation of present study to explore and examine the phenomenon of 'social initiatives and efforts' for the benefits of dalit community. As already described that the government initiatives have its own limitations to work for the liberation of dalit community and do the complete justice with the majority of the dalit population, it is essential to find out and examine the initiatives of civil society organizations especially Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) towards the empowerment of dalit communities. The literature on NGO sector reveals there has been phenomenal growth of NGOs in Gujarat and in India (see Kamta, 2000) as well as other parts of

the world (Kramer, 2000). Most of these organizations claim to be at the service of the oppressed and marginalized communities (Choudhary, 2000, Seth, 1997, Sheth & Sethi, 1991). The form of services provided by these organizations varies a great deal. These organizations have played and continue to play an important role in responding to the needs of the poor and marginalized communities at various times and situations (Dabhi, 2005). However, there is a meager literature available on the contributions of NGOs addressing the issues and multi-dimensional deprivations of dalit communities in India. Thus, keeping in view, the limited academic literature on the subject, the proposed study has been designed to explore and highlight the contributions of NGOs in the dalit empowerment in the state of Gujarat. The next chapter, therefore, will make an attempt to review the relevant literature on the theme 'NGOs and Dalits' in India.

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