

society is a "vast ensemble of constantly changing groups and individuals whose only common ground is their being outside the state and who have ... acquired some consciousness of their externality and opposition to the state (1986:15). Bayart also maintains that civil society is a "society in its relation to the state ... in so far as it is in confrontation with the state" (1986:111).

In the case of India, Gupta feels that "the conceptions of civil society in India seem to have gone further than in the West in denying the validity of the state altogether... (1997:307). Beteille also confirms this view and states: "Unfortunately, a great deal of the recent enthusiasm for civil society in this country has been driven by a negative, if not a hostile attitude towards the state... (1999:2588). It is precisely this oppositional definition that tends to minimise the co-operational efforts that do exist between civil society and the state.

Because of the multitude of civil society organisations that work in congruence with the state, civil society cannot be considered simply in terms of its opposition to the Indian state. The corollary, however, is not that all civil society organisations should co-operate with the state; rather some civil society organisations that have similar interests in common with the state, more so than other organisations will be able to co-operate more. It must be realised as Oommen supposes that "the issue is not state versus civil society but the type of state and the quality of civil society" (Oommen 1996:193).

One of the central themes highlighted here is the notion that alongside this potential opposition to the Indian state, co-operative measures between these two spheres can exist. Moreover, I argue that groups within civil society can encourage state accountability in the name of democracy through co-operative means.

With this in mind, developmental NGOs, considered to be one set of actors within civil society, and their relationship to the Indian state will be analysed. In other words, this paper confines the scope of the investigation on civil society literature by analysing the significant role of a specific set of non-governmental organisations and their collaboration with the Indian state.

NGOs AND THE STATE IN INDIA

Development NGOs in India have grown rapidly and this rise shows little sign of abating. Jain writes: "Today, India has a vibrant NGO sector. Although there has been no complete census of NGOs, their total number is roughly estimated at 100 000 of which only 25 000 to 35 000 are active" (Jain 1997: 128). There has been an enormous increase in the number of NGOs during the past fifteen years due to increasing poverty rates, widely spread illness as well as increased funding and a "weakening governmental delivery mechanism" (Jain 1997: 29).

Traditionally, the state has been one of the primary actors that has attempted to develop society. However, according to Desai (1996), Nandy (1989) and Kothari (1988) it is currently failing to promote adequate solutions and implement efficient development initiatives for the marginalized people within Indian society. NGOs may be filling the gaps left by the state. Sharma states: "In such a situation of the state's ineffectiveness, indifference and disenchantment the NGOs--either with the state's patronage and sponsorship or independent of it--would emerge