



Research Article

Available online at www.journal-advances-developmental-research.com

Journal of Advances in Developmental Research

ISSN: 0976-4704 (Print), e-ISSN: 0976-4844 (Online)

J.Adv.Dev.Res. Volume 2, No.1, June 2011

Volunteerism in Indic Faith-Based Voluntary Organisations

Samta P. Pandya

Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, Maharashtra, Email-
spandya@tiss.edu

Abstract

This article is based on a study of volunteerism in ten Indic faith-based voluntary organisations. Using a multiple unit case study design, findings have been forwarded for aspects of the study such as volunteer profiles, factors initiating volunteer association, duration of involvement, nature of work, factors motivating sustenance and implications of volunteer involvement for volunteers, organisations and society at large. Overall the study revealed that the characteristics of volunteerism in Indic faith-based voluntary organisations can be viewed as parallel to the collective style of volunteerism. Further, it generates both bonding and bridging types of faith-embedded social capital. Bonding is indicated particularly in the dimension of the sense of *communitas* and bridging is displayed in the dimension of spreading the message.

Key Words- Voluntary organisations, society, faith, bonding, bridging.

Introduction

Faith and faith-based voluntary organisations play a quintessential role in contemporary civil society. This reverts from the modernist stance of relegating faith to the private realms alone. As a social institution and in its organisational form, faith has made several public assertions. The face of the assertion has manifested both in an integrative and disintegrative fashion. The disintegrative form has at times overridden the integrative, negating thereby the moral values embedded in faith and its power to change human consciousness. Faith-based voluntary organisations are very typically characterised by an adherence in the form of individual association and involvement – called volunteerism. This association and involvement generates a social capital spearheaded by faith – faith being a precursor to the involvement also enabling a benchmarking of individual identities embedded in faith. In the Western context, church-based volunteerism exemplifies this stance.

In the Indian context, faith-based voluntary organisations have been extant since the 18th and 19th century socio-religious reform movements. There are faiths that have their origin in the Indian subcontinent that are characterised by Indologists, historians and sociologists as Indic faiths. They subsume Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism, largely the core content matter of Indological studies (qualified thus by German scholars like Helmut, Humbach, MaxMueller, Winternitz and Win). Indic faith-based voluntary organisations are those that draw their Indological leanings from Indic faiths¹. Similar to the Western context and church-based volunteerism, these organisations are also characterised by individual association and involvement – called volunteerism or *seva*. However, this dimension is sparsely frequented in terms of literature.

This paper has been developed from a study that has explored this aspect of volunteerism in Indic faith-based voluntary organisations – the multiple facets and nuances. The areas of study are profiles, motivating factors, duration of

involvement, nature of work, factors motivating sustenance and implications of volunteer involvement for volunteers, organisations and society. The orientation and quality of social capital thus generated through faith as a constitutive component and volunteerism as a lever has thus been assessed.

The findings reveal that volunteerism in Indic faith-based voluntary organisations is akin to the collective style of volunteerism discussed in the conceptual literature as characteristic of churches and similar other faith-based voluntary organisations². It generates both bonding and bridging types of social capital³. Bonding social capital is prevalent in the implications of the portrayal of the spirit of community/ *communitas* and bridging in terms of spreading the message of the organisational ideology and teachings of the teacher/ *seer*. The effect of this bridging nature of social capital depends on the core content and orientation of the message. Faith as thus emerging as the fulcrum of social capital generation. This builds into the body of existing knowledge of styles of volunteerism and volunteerism and social capital in the Indian context.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework has been constructed by concepts of civil society and individual and institutional actors therein; social capital, volunteerism as a dimension of individual actors, voluntary organisations as institutional actors and the associational culture as mobilising social capital. Faith-based voluntary organisations as a distinctive typology have been explored in-depth with its multiple nuances – faith being the prime arena of deliberation. The definitions and concepts have been linked to knit the theoretical framework in the form of first and second order links. Volunteerism has been defined as “work for other people, organisations or society as a whole that is carried out in an unpaid non-compulsory way and within an organisational context”. Theoretical perspectives on volunteerism have been explained through the economic model of volunteerism, the socio-demographic model encompassing the collective and reflexive styles of volunteerism and the psychologistic model. The economic model encompasses literature pertaining to cost-benefit analysis of volunteer activities, econometric studies weighing the ‘purity’ of altruism involved in volunteerism from the macro-economic viewpoint of national income generation and studies looking at volunteer labour from the demand supply standpoints.

The socio-demographic model examines the objective-structural and subjective-motivational aspects of volunteerism. Within that model, two distinctive styles have been cultivated. The collective style is rooted in communal orientation. The prime motivation is an obvious sense of duty and responsibility to a local community or more abstract collectivity. Very often this prototype is embedded in a religious tradition of benevolence and altruism, or inspired by a co-ordinating ideology or meaning system. Dedication to the common good is a highly esteemed asset to which deviating individual motivations are easily subordinated. In a reflexive volunteering framework, the interaction between individualised biography and volunteer experience are intensified. The self-reflexive biographical quest becomes the driving force for primarily self-centered volunteer attitudes. The motivations of reflexive volunteers chiefly arise from experiences of biographical discontinuity both caused by unintended life crisis and by actively chosen biographical re-orientations. Literature on volunteerism in the psychologistic vein focuses primarily on motivational studies. Studies on volunteer motivation have used several theories of motivation as backdrops. Being an investigation of volunteerism in Indic faith-based voluntary organisations, this study draws from the collective style of volunteerism. This style has been derived from volunteerism in churches and similar other faith-based organisations.

The following chart summarises the theoretical framework by linking the concepts that formulate it in the form of first and second order links (Chart 1).

First order Links

Civil society, which is the third realm in the social sphere (state and the market being the first two) comprises of individual and institutional actors. Their stake in the civil society processes is the Archimedean standpoint for the generation of social capital. Social capital signifies associational norms and culture that generate social intangible assets so as to facilitate collective action with implications at all systemic levels. Volunteerism is a specific manifestation of the ‘culture’ of individual actors in civil society and in effect instrumental in generating social capital. Similar contentions hold for institutional actors and in effect voluntary organisations. Faith-based voluntary organisations are a prominent typology of voluntary organisations. Through the definitional continuum volunteers are aligned to voluntary organisations producing thereby an associational culture.

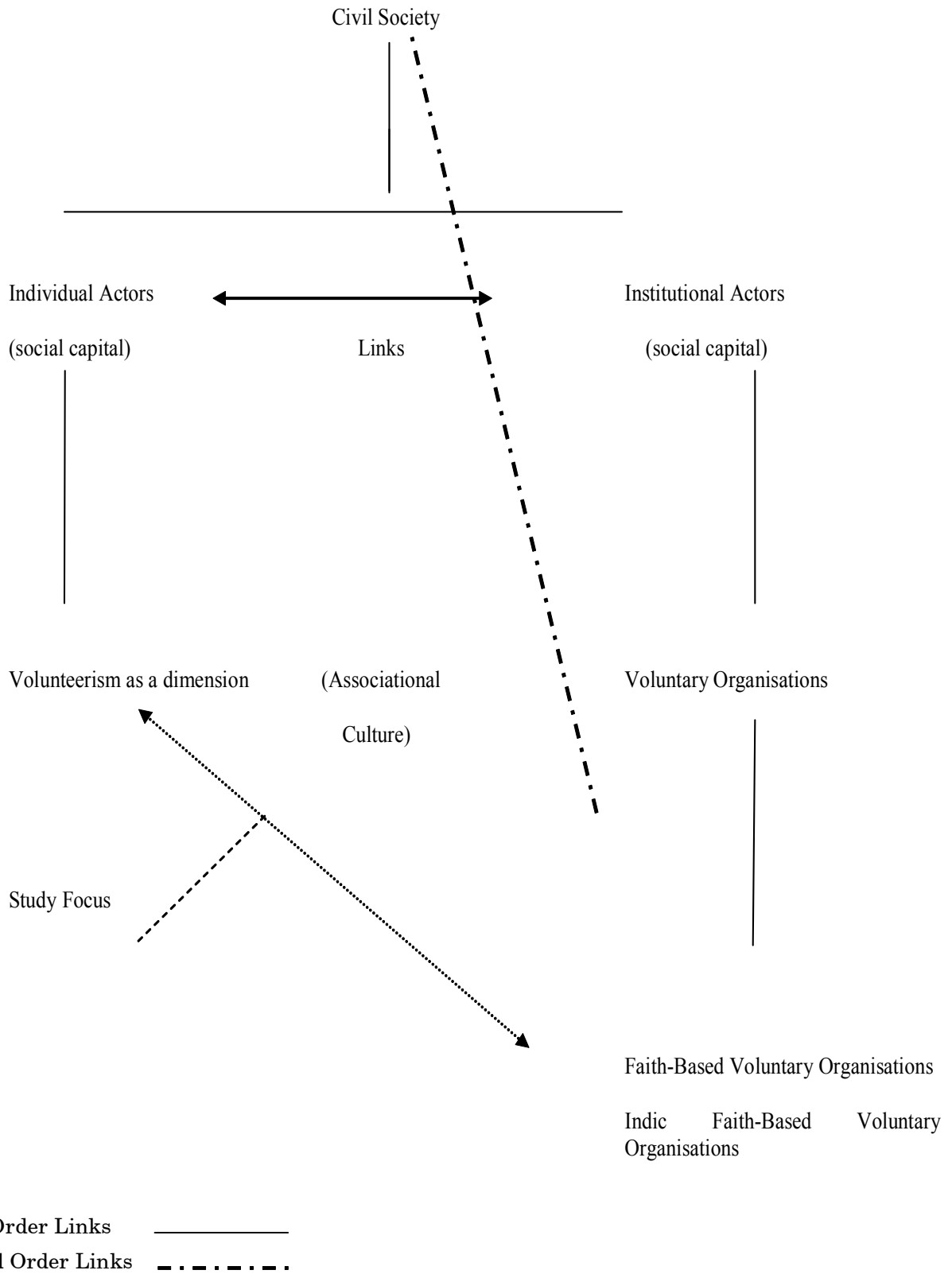


Chart 1: Summary of the theoretical framework

Whether this volunteer culture is derivative of organisational typology (that is, faith-based voluntary organisations) is the *summum bonnum* of the present investigation. The key to the puzzle lies in making the connections between the changing structures of associational life in general, the particular effects of individual organisations and factors in the external context; and, interactions that defy easy categorisation or generalisation, since all the variables in the equation are mutually dependent. Following this line of argument, one would expect a necessary correlation between characteristics of associations and their normative effects.

Second-Order Links

This investigation into ‘associational culture’ in effect highlights the links between faith and civil society. Faith in civil society can play an integrative and disintegrative role. This study attempts to examine these dimensions from an organisational standpoint through the prism of volunteerism.

Review of Literature

In the global context, there are some studies displaying the interconnections between volunteerism, faith and faith-based voluntary organisations; both from the objective-structural and subjective motivational standpoints. Faith has been extended in literature to denote religiosity and religious engagement. Faith-based voluntary organisations in the Western context also encompass churches and congregations. Among the initial works, two researchers⁴ have studied, adopting a single unit case study design, the aspects of tithing in church goers- ‘tithe’ as being the tenth part of annual income given for church related activities- intra church and social outreach. In terms of studies with volunteerism and religiosity as the focus the first study was in the context of US voluntary organisations⁵. Another study has explored parallel contentions surveying volunteers in Liberal Protestant Churches⁶. One study has, in course of in-depth interviews with churchgoers belonging to the Evangelical Lutheran tradition highlighted the “giving” and “caring” aspects proposed in the evangelical traditions as instrumental in enhancing community involvements⁷. One researcher has traced philanthropic tendencies among Moerman churchgoers in San Francisco- surveying for factors inspiring community involvements⁸. The findings

revealed teachings inherent in Catholicism as effecting the involvement. Surveying a cross-section of student volunteers in the US, a study has proposed a religiosity-based voluntarism as inspiring community service involvements – volunteerism⁹. Drawing evidence from fundraising literature, another research has indicated that volunteers active in religious organisations are also more likely to give and volunteer than those who are not active¹⁰. This study was based on comparative data of volunteers in religious and secular organisations in Chicago. A team of researchers have through a survey of volunteers in US based congregations revealed a trilogy between embedded religiosity, the congregation floated ethics of praxis and manifestations of volunteerism in related human services¹¹. In a large-scale survey of ‘Giving and Volunteering in the US’ evidence of a similar relationship between volunteering and religion has been cited- that the likelihood of volunteering increased with frequency of church attendance¹². One research has surveyed six Protestant denominations in the US to study variations in tithing objectives and service involvement¹³. A team has examined how faith, measured as religious denomination influences volunteerism due to the value base embedded in religious traditions¹⁴. Studying volunteers in religious congregations, there is an interpretation of the relationship between volunteering and religiosity more directly- pointing out that volunteering can sometimes be interpreted as an extension of beliefs¹⁵.

A group of researchers have, through a large-scale random sample survey, observed variations in tithing objectives and volunteer involvement - ranging from obligations arising from overt religiosity to deep rooted faith-based motivations¹⁶. Surveying Churchgoers on the England countryside, another team has established a positive correlation ($r=0.86$) between frequency of church participation and rural community attachment¹⁷. Employing the survey method, a group has studied the spirit of voluntarism among Churchgoing Protestants; conceptualising it as religious capital¹⁸. With special reference to eight Catholic organisations in Great Britain, a study has ethnographically examined how religious involvement influences engagement with the larger community¹⁹. A team has established a teleological connection between religiosity and volunteering- religiosity as indicated by frequency of religious attendance²⁰. The latter studies have examined the underlying dynamics of how religious engagement affects volunteering²¹. They have used survey data

to examine differences in the amount and pattern of giving to secular charities in response to subsidies by self-identified religious and non-religious participants²². A qualitative study has proposed that individual motivation is the core of actualisation and continuity in voluntary work both from the standpoint of theoretical research and practical volunteerism²³.

Literature in volunteerism in the Indian context however has not exclusively explored the connection between faith and volunteerism; although general NSS evaluative studies on volunteer engagements have discerned religiosity as a motivational element^{24,25}. Three organisational level studies have explored the dimension of faith-based volunteerism- expressed as 'seva' or selfless service. Adopting the historical-materialist approach and the historical method of investigation, one study has analysed the Ramakrishna Mission with reference to its ideological leanings translating into the practice of "seva" – service to humanity; discussion being undertaken in the context of a historical tradition of continuity maintained with the tenets of social service in the faith²⁶. Developing upon the contentions further, the researcher has proposed that the mission's social service activities are a manifestation of the social stake of a faith-based organisation within the purview of modern Hinduism^{27,28,29}.

Extending the discussion in a comparative study adopting the historical and ethnographic method, he has further presented the connection between the extensive promotion and practice of seva (service) within the contemporary Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the invocation of Vivekananda³⁰. The connection has been examined through the dialectical relationship between the first two leaders of RSS- Keshav Baliram Hedgewar and Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar and the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. An ethnographer has, employing the case study method, examined the mechanics of institution building within the Mata Amritanandamayi Mission. Devotees of the Mata tend to attribute the phenomenal growth and spread of this organisation in the course of the last two decades to the miraculous power of their guru. She has further explored the ethic of seva or selfless service propagated by the Mata through interviews with her devotees and disciples. The ethics of seva, a vital component of spiritual striving among Mata's devotees is crucial to the spirit of institution building in the Mata Amritanandamayi Mission and indispensable to its success as a fast growing and increasingly popular guru organisation in

contemporary India. She has further elucidated the rationale for seva in the Mission, the forms of seva rendered by devotees and disciples and means by which their seva effectively contributes towards the organisations' institutional expansion and growth³¹.

Whereas on the one hand the importance of faith-based organisations in the Indian context is not negated³² they have been sparsely explored especially in their contemporary manifestations. Studies focusing on contemporary Indic (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism and their associated sects and cults) faith-based organisations are generally limited^{33,34,35} with varied focus (ranging from ideological explication, social influence and space, perspectival adherings translating onto initiatives)³⁶, descriptive intent and employing primarily the case study approach^{37,38,39}.

Objectives

The broad objective of the study is to explore the multiple nuances of volunteerism in Indic faith-based voluntary organisations from the perspectival vantage points of volunteers and organisational executives. Specifically, the study has attempted:

- To study the organisational profiles of Indic faith-based voluntary organisations.
- To examine the volunteer profiles and factors initiating volunteer involvement with the organisations.
- To study the duration of involvement, nature of volunteer work involvement and factors motivating sustenance of volunteer involvement with the organisations.
- To understand the implications of volunteer involvement for volunteers, organisations and society at large.

Key Study Concepts

The two key concepts of the study are volunteerism and Indic faith-based voluntary organisations.

Volunteerism

Volunteering is defined as "work for other people, organisations or society as a whole that is carried out in an unpaid non-compulsory way and within an organisational context"⁴⁰. A team of US based researchers offer a more flexible approach to assessing volunteer activities⁴¹. They distinguish four key dimensions, which are approached as a continuum from the purest to the broadest definition of volunteering. These key dimensions are – free choice, nature of remuneration, structure or context under which the volunteer activity is performed and intended beneficiaries. The

conceptual understanding of volunteerism can be broadly categorised into comprehensions derived from the economic model of volunteerism, the socio-demographical model discussing the objective-structural and the subjective-motivational levels of analysis when examining the present state of volunteering; and literature on volunteerism in the psychologistic vein with a focus on volunteer motivation. The economic model encompasses literature pertaining to cost-benefit analysis of volunteer activities, econometric studies weighing the 'pureness' of altruism involved in volunteerism from the macro-economic viewpoint of national income generation and studies looking at volunteer labour from the demand supply standpoints. Literature on volunteerism in the psychologistic vein focuses primarily on motivational studies. Studies on volunteer motivation have used several theories of motivation as backdrops. The socio-demographic model examines the objective-structural and subjective-motivational aspects of volunteerism. According to literature subscribing to the model, the structural context of volunteering consists both of the individual life situation or the subject relevant reflection of social structures and relations and the institutional or organisational setting in which volunteer action takes place. Volunteering has to be interpreted in reference to both the individual-biographical consequences of broader socio-structural transformations and the organisational changes restructuring the volunteer field.

The subjective-biographical dimension refers to the (changing) relationship between volunteers and their commitment and pays attention to the volunteer's changing motivations, attitudes and cultural orientations. The objective-structural dimensions refer to a complex interplay of changes in the constitutive environment of volunteering. Literature in this model also examines the managerial and training aspects of volunteer activity. The two emergent styles herein are the collective and reflexive styles of volunteerism. Collective volunteer efforts are rooted in communal orientation. The prime motivation is an obvious sense of duty and responsibility to a local community or more abstract collectivity. Very often this prototype is embedded in a religious tradition of benevolence and altruism, or inspired by a co-ordinating ideology or meaning system. Dedication to the common good is a highly esteemed asset to which deviating individual motivations are easily subordinated. In a reflexive volunteering framework, the interaction between

individualised biography and volunteer experience are intensified. The self-reflexive biographical quest becomes the driving force for primarily self-centered volunteer attitudes⁴². More akin to the collective style of volunteerism particularly characteristic of churches and similar other faith-based organisations, volunteerism in Indic faith-based voluntary organisations has been studied according to the following constructs and from the perspectives of organisational representatives and volunteers. The rationale for adopting to study from the twofold perceptions of organisational executives and volunteers is primarily to obtain a holistic understanding from different vantage points. Such a stance has been adopted in two earlier studies in the Western context^{43,44} and one in the Indian context⁴⁵. Further the perceptions of organisational executives would provide a cumulative picture on various accounts under investigation and the volunteer perceptions would provide the individual viewpoints and stances. Volunteerism in Indic faith-based voluntary organisations has been studied from the perceptions of organisational executives and volunteers according to the following areas of study.

Indic Faith-Based Voluntary Organisations

Faith-based voluntary organisations have been defined as formal organisations whose identity and mission are self consciously derived from the teachings of one or more religious or spiritual traditions and which operate on a non-profit, independent voluntary basis to promote and realise collectively articulated ideas about the public good at the national or international levels⁴⁶. The constituencies encompassed by faith-based voluntary organisations include congregations, denominations, organisations with spiritual orientations and organisations with religio-political orientations. The term Indic faiths denote systematised faiths (possessing a systematic body of literature and adherence patterns) or organised religious systems that have their origins in the Indian subcontinent and constitute the core subject matter of Indological studies. They are pronounced as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism^{47,48}. Further it has been re-iterated that Indic faiths can be broadly understood to be subsuming Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism accommodating the related schisms as depicted in the schools, sects and cults that are also visualised in their contemporary manifestations and reflected in organisational adherences and patterns⁴⁹. Indic faith-based voluntary organisations have been

defined as those drawing their ideological leanings from Indic faiths, that is, faiths having their origins in the Indian subcontinent. These leanings are specified in their vision, mission or organisational literature. As most of these organisations are headed by teachers or gurus and/or their disciples⁵⁰, their ideological leanings basically translate into the ideology, vision or mission of the organisations. They are registered as either societies, or trusts or both. They have a combination of religio-spiritual and welfare and developmental or social outreach activities and are important actors of the civil society.

Methodology

Research Design

The design for this study is a multiple unit case study design, which is descriptive and exploratory combining primarily qualitative data and some quantitative data.

Sampling Design

A three-stage sampling procedure has been followed. At the first stage ten Indic faith-based voluntary organisations were selected through selective sampling. The selection was done keeping in view the initiatives of the organisations and the engagement of volunteer resource. The geographical limitation of the study was restricted to the city of Mumbai for feasibility purposes. The sample for this study thus comprises of five organisations within the purview of Hinduism and its various tenets, one organisation within the purview of Jainism, two organisations within the purview of Buddhism and two organisations within the purview of Sikhism.

At the second stage organisational executives were selected within each of the organisations through selective sampling. Organisational executives in the case of Indic faith-based voluntary organisations were members of the monastic order or executive level members of the organisations. Out of the 30 organisational executives interviewed, 15 belonged to the monastic

order and were also the executive level members of the organisation. At the third stage volunteers were the respondents identified from each of the organisations through simple random sampling. A total of 100 volunteers from the organisations comprised the sample.

Design for Data Collection

Data collection involved three stages in terms of accumulating organisational information, interviews with organisational executives and interviews with volunteers. To record information about the organisations, an organisation information sheet was designed. For the organisational executives' perceptions on volunteer engagement, an interview guide was designed. For the volunteers, the tool for data collection was the interview guide containing guiding questions followed by tables to tabulate the data after the interviews so as to be able to systematise the qualitative data appropriately.

Analysis Design

For the purpose of analysis in this study, as the defined unit of analysis is volunteers in Indic faith-based voluntary organisations, findings on volunteer profiles, factors initiating association, duration of involvement, nature of work, cost – benefit of volunteer engagement, factors motivating sustenance and implications of volunteer involvement for volunteers, organisations and society have been forwarded.

The study of the organisational profiles of Indic faith-based voluntary organisations has been made according to the following guidelines: historical context in which established and year of establishment; registration; branches and networking; vision, mission and objectives; ideological leanings and nature of faith leanings; organisations' perceptions of social problems; benefactors and beneficiaries; faith-based and social service activities; and, nature of volunteer

Areas of study

Volunteer profiles	Duration of involvement	Implications of involvement for volunteers
Factors initiating association	Nature of volunteer work involvement	Implications of involvement for organisations
	Factors motivating sustenance	Implications of involvement for society

engagement basically in terms of activities wherein deployed and training.

Analysis of volunteerism has been according to the following areas of study:

Results and Discussion

Organisational Profiles of Indic Faith-Based Voluntary Organisations

In terms of the historical context of establishment, six organisations were started by the visions of the teacher/seer associated with a particular faith and with the chief mission of spreading the message of the teacher/ seer drawing from and encompassed under the faith in question. Five of these organisations were within the purview of Hinduism and one was a Buddhist organisation. This corroborates the proposition that faith-based organisations are headed by teachers or Gurus and/ or their disciples, their ideological leanings basically translating onto the ideology, mission and vision of the organisation. One organisation within the purview of Jainism was started by the teacher/ seer along with a few devotees to serve the members of the Jain community. One organisation within the purview of Buddhism was started by Buddhist members interested in consolidating the tenets of faith under question. Of the two organisations within the purview of Sikhism, one was formed by the Central Gurudwara Co-ordination Committee to facilitate the spread of faith through social outreach work. Another organisation was started due to the vision of the teacher/seer to portray the accommodative stance of the faith.

Largely organisations within the purview of Hinduism and one Buddhist organisation were interested in spreading the message of the teacher/seer drawing from tenets of the faith. Organisations within the purview of Jainism, Sikhism and one Buddhist organisation were largely set up to consolidate the said faith and build a sense of *communitas* within the faith community through social outreach. In terms of ideological leanings, all the organisations draw from the traditional faith tenets of Indic faiths under concern modified by the teacher/seer so as to facilitate propagation.

Further the endeavour is also to signify a philosophy of praxis drawing from a particular faith. This parallels the contention that the ideological bottomline of these organisations is “faithfulness”⁵¹.

Volunteer Profiles and Factors Initiating Volunteer Association

The volunteers in Indic faith-based organisations under study were educationally and occupationally well settled. As their basic needs were met, they could engage in “higher spiritual pursuits”, “seek beyond” and therefrom engage in social service activities that involved reaching out. The data revealed that a majority (61%) of the volunteers were adults in the age range 40 – 50 years. Twelve percent of the volunteers were in their early adulthood, 18% of the volunteers were in their late adulthood and 9% of the volunteers were senior citizens. Fifty-six percent of the volunteers were men and 44% were women. Hence men were more in number than women. A majority of the volunteers (50%) had graduate level qualifications, 29% were post graduates, 3% of the volunteers were professionally qualified graduates and 17% of the volunteers were professionally qualified postgraduates. Hence 99% of the volunteers had minimal graduate level qualifications with 46% volunteers as post graduates. In terms of occupational profile, 40% of the volunteers were homemakers, 59% of the volunteers were in paid employment – that is 23% were in service, 23% were self employed (mainly in business) and 13% were independent professionals (mainly doctors). One percent of volunteers were retired from service. Thus volunteers belonged to the well-to-do socio-economic class. The reason for this is that as volunteering is a volitional activity, it signifies an initiative that transcends the self. Only when the basic needs are met can such engagements be envisaged that involve reaching out. There is a class homogeneity among volunteers. Those with higher education are consistently more likely to volunteer. Further those who are professionally qualified are also more likely to volunteer. Volunteerism is common among those who belong to the dominant social group.

Viewing the picture pertaining to factors initiating association and involvement of volunteers, family links (generally contact initiated by consanguine and conjugal relations) and faith

(construed as religious belief, religious mindedness, religious inclination, spiritual inclination, and belief in God) emerged as key factors. Family links portray the untold socialisation processes through which religiosity and faith-basedness is instituted in individuals. The other factors that emerge as initiating factors are organisational ideology (which is generally faith-based drawing upon singular or multiple tenets of a particular faith interpreted by the teacher/seer), teachings of the teacher/ seer (transferred orally or in written form through organisational literature and publications), community links (reference to the geographical community of residence which also is the uniform community of similar faith) and friend networks (generally serving as informal initiators). Self-interest (an inner quest or a self directedness towards exploring tenets of faith through service), experience of self-enrichment and an inner quest for faith and spirituality are intrinsic factors that initiate volunteer association and involvement with Indic faith-based voluntary organisations. Further activity oriented opportunities where service can be offered and a contact with and propagation by members of the monastic order are also initiating factors. Being faith-based organisations faith, organisational ideology based on faith and teachings of the teacher/seer emerge as natural initiating factors. Family links portray the untold socialisation processes through which religiosity and faith-basedness is instituted in individuals. Community links as an initiating factor was characteristic of a Buddhist organisation.

Duration of Involvement, Nature of Work and Factors Motivating Sustenance

Examining the duration of involvement in terms of number of years of consistent volunteer involvement, time devoted, prospects of continuity/ conditions determining continuity, the following dimensions emerge. The perceptions of organisational executives on the duration of volunteer involvement were that it was long term and regular. The prospects of continuity were that it was perceived to be a lifelong connection as it emerged from within.

Further factors propelling continuity were identified as the charisma of the teacher/ seer, self enhancement experienced by the volunteers as a propensating factor, dimensions of spirituality and

organisational ideology (based on faith), work being viewed as a moral duty arising out of faith (satisfaction derived therefrom which the organisation with its ideational set up further promoted) sense of satisfaction and *communitas* (feeling of ownership towards the faith community and hence the organisation) and social networks developed therefrom (as a source of fulfilment). Majority of the volunteers had between 15 – 20 years of consistent volunteer involvement. Twenty-three percent of the volunteers had between 10 – 15 years of consistent volunteer involvement and 22 % of the volunteers had between 20 – 30 years of consistent involvement. The general trend across cases was that of weekly engagements. Thirty percent of the volunteers devoted time once a week, 19 % of the volunteers at least once a week, 25% of the volunteers for twice a week and 14% of the volunteers said that they devoted time once or twice a week. Volunteer perceptions on prospects of continuity/ conditions determining continuity were that it was perceived to be long term and continuous. Dimensions such as “routine”, “about inner self and hence lifelong”, “not short term because it is a spiritual connection”, “part of existence”, “part of self”, “lifetime devotion to the teacher/ seer”, “about yoga and life hence lifelong”, “till association with faith continues”, “God’s work and hence lifelong”, and “lifelong since it gives strength and peace of mind” were cited.

Examining the nature of work in the light of roles performed by the volunteers, ideological leanings of the volunteers towards work/ service, factors influencing ideological leanings and training along with organisational executives’ perceptions on costs and benefits of volunteer engagement, the following dimensions emerge. According to the organisational executives, the roles played by volunteers were of varied nature and generally in all the activities of the organisation. The involvement was then a combination of will and expertise. Volunteers proposed that they were involved in tasks that were of both routine and co – ordination nature. Volunteers of two organisations proposed that they were engaged in expertise oriented and specialised service delivery. In case of expertise oriented volunteers the expertise was generally derived from the qualifications of volunteers. In the case of specialised service delivery specialised training was provided.

In terms of ideological leanings towards work/ service, the organisational executives perceived the view of volunteers towards their work as a service out of belief in the organisation and its ideology (which is faith – based) performed under the guidance of the teacher/ seer and offered to him, as a moral imperative arising from a code of conduct prescribed by faith (dharma), service to faith community thereby enhancing the spirit of *communitas* and work viewed as participation in the services of the mission and its larger goals.

Volunteers proposed the following dimensions in terms of their ideological leanings towards their work/ service:

- ❖ As a task taken up out of interest
- ❖ As a moral imperative arising from a code of conduct prescribed by faith
- ❖ As divine work (service to God through service through humankind)
- ❖ Inspired by the teachings of the teacher/ seer and offered to him
- ❖ As a service to society inspired by the ideational set up of the organisation
- ❖ Service to community (faith community) and in effect society
- ❖ For propagation of faith, that is, as an instrumentality to permeate faith-basedness in society.

With respect to training, one organisation claimed to have program-based training as they offered specialised services. Nine other organisations claimed to have no formal training. Among them one organisation proposed that training was not required as volunteers were professionals offering specialised services. However all the organisations proposed that their ideology and teachings of the teacher/ seer provided an informal training that endowed the volunteers the requisite inputs for work. The arguments forwarded were that faith-based activities promote an untold socialisation with the normative and ideational set up of the organisation as a base. Further organisational literature opens up a perspective to work inspired by the organisational ideology. A study of the organisational ideology and imbibing the philosophy in practical life was viewed as training in itself. Further belief in the teacher/ seer and willingness to work was seen as a driving force and childhood socialisation into tenets of faith and accompanying services were precursors to involvement. Volunteers of one organisation also claimed that no formal training was required as it was the work

of God and the willingness to work should emerge from within. Another organisations' volunteers claimed a spiritual preparedness as a precursor to involvement. Volunteer work was perceived to be a natural outcome of the willingness to work and commitment to faith and faith community. They thus suggested an informal training culture through the following aspects – faith-based activities, teachings of the teacher/ seer, organisational ideology, religious classes offered informal training to build into the sense of *communitas* towards faith community through service, networks within the organisation and faith oriented inputs.

Organisational executives of nine organisations proposed that there were no costs to volunteer activity. One organisation suggested training costs as the services offered were of specialised nature. All the organisations perceived intangible benefits of volunteer engagement to the organisation in the following manner – as a resource base to be able to reach out better through them enabling growth of the organisation and realisation of its motto, spirit of *seva* and message of teacher/ seer gets passed through them, contribution to functioning – benefit of expertise, increased outreach and support, efficiency improvement, human resources collaboration in organisational mission and securing community foothold thereby aiding organisational building. Further they also perceived benefits for the volunteers in terms of self-enrichment and spiritual gain.

In terms of factors motivating sustenance of association and involvement, the following dimensions emerge. The organisational executives across organisations identified organisational ideology, teachings of the teacher/ seer, sense of identification with the organisation, charismatic powers of the teacher/ seer, experience of self-growth through association and involvement, faith, sense of *communitas* (bonding towards the faith community), experience of satisfaction and social networks formed through the organisation as motivating sustenance of volunteer involvement. The volunteers across organisations identified the following factors as motivating sustenance of volunteer involvement:

- ❖ Organisational ideology
- ❖ Experience of self growth through association and involvement
- ❖ Identification with the organisation
- ❖ Teachings of the teacher/ seer

- ❖ Organisational activities and scope to offer services therein
- ❖ Derivation of normative satisfaction (moral satisfaction of having fulfilled duty) through association and involvement
- ❖ Understanding and identification with one's faith
- ❖ Development of social networks through the organisation
- ❖ Self-interest and explorations
- ❖ Familial involvements
- ❖ Charismatic powers of the teacher/ seer
- ❖ Sense of moral obligation towards the organisation due to experience of self growth
- ❖ Sense of *communitas*
- ❖ Faith, continuous activity-engagement through the organisation and a genetic connection with faith

Viewing the aspects of duration of involvement, nature of work and factors motivating sustenance further in terms of profiles and factors initiating volunteer association, the following dimensions emerge. With respect to profiles, due to the on an average graduate level qualifications of volunteers, the roles played are all pervasive (even co-ordination level work is given to volunteers). Due to the stable nature of the socio-economic profile, the engagement is regular and long term. Faith, organisational ideology and teachings of the teacher/ seer as factors initiating association are associated to prospects of continuity; ideological leanings towards work/ service, factors influencing the leanings and motivating sustenance. Faith, organisational ideology (as inspired by faith) and teachings of the teacher/ seer as emerging therefrom, serve to initiate, provide a perspective and sustain. An experience of self-growth through association and service involvement likewise provides the initiation and further promulgates the volunteers into continuity and sustenance. This is also perceived to be an intangible benefit for the volunteers. Further these initiating factors also serve to provide a continuity and sustenance and an ideological leaning towards work/ service by constructing a sense of *communitas* (sense of belongingness towards the faith community) and in effect an instrumentality to permeate faith-basedness in society.

This dimension re-asserts the conceptualisation of bonding and bridging types of social capital generated through the fulcrum of faith. Bonding social capital is more inward looking

and tends to re-enforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups. It is characterised by a specific reciprocity and mobilising solidarity. Bridging social capital is oriented towards external linkage to assets and information diffusion and can generate broader identities and reciprocity. Volunteerism in Indic faith-based voluntary organisations generates both types of social capital. There is a dual focus – inward in terms of 'building a sense of *communitas*' and outward in terms of 'spreading the message'. The eventuality in terms of the shape of the outcome and effects – integrative and/ or disintegrative depends upon the core content of the message and the modus operandi of delivery in case of 'bridging type spreading the message' effect and the consolidatory endeavours and the modus operandi of effecting the cogency in terms of the 'bonding type building a sense of *communitas*' effect. Thus in terms of the duration of involvement, nature of work and factors motivating sustenance, faith, organisational ideology (based on faith) and teachings of the teacher/ seer drawing therefrom emerge as key factors in the constructs propelling continuity, influencing ideological leanings towards work/ service and motivating sustenance. Further, self-growth and moral satisfaction as experienced by the volunteers emerge from the faith-based and spiritual prowess of the organisation to ensure the same.

Implications for Volunteers, Organisations and Society

Implications for Volunteers: Personal gains, self-growth and actualisation through volunteer involvement; volunteer involvement as enabling the exploration of self-identity and meaning; satisfaction gain through involvement; involvement as enabling the strengthening the base of one's faith community (and understanding of faith and its tenets); volunteer involvement as a source of activity engagement; imbibing the teachings of the teacher/ seer that lead to self-growth; involvement as enabling the propagation of the teachings of the teacher/ seer; engagement as promoting an understanding of a perspective to work/ service inspired by faith; involvement as enabling the cultivation of altruism, faith – basedness and as an avenue for social service; development of social networks through the involvement; engagement as

providing a spiritually productive leisure time activity; involvement as promoting a feeling of *communitas*; feeling of fulfilment of duty through volunteer involvement and an experience of upskilling through the engagement/ involvement were cited as implications of volunteer involvement on self by volunteers and organisational executives across Indic faith-based voluntary organisations.

Implications for Organisations: Service contribution; spreading organisational message; contribution to organisational development; enhancing organisational image; contribution to organisational effectiveness; collaboration in organisational mission; generation of a human resource base for the organisation; support; an accompanying sense of duty towards the organisation and facilitating enhancement of organisational outreach were cited as implications of volunteer engagement for the Indic faith-based voluntary organisations.

Implications for Society: Spreading organisational message; contribution to society, social welfare and development; instrumental connection between self-identity definition through the organisation, collaboration in organisational mission and in effect contributing to society, social welfare and development; permeation of a sense of direction in society; collaboration in organisational mission as a locus to contribution to society, social welfare and development and spreading organisational outreach and message; spreading message of the teacher/ seer and thereby societal transformation; theistic existentialism (everything dedicated to mankind, society and God inspired by the theism of the teacher/ seer); instrumental link between theistic self realisation through contact/ involvement with the organisation and the teacher/ seer, spreading the message of the teacher/ seer and in effect contributing to society, social welfare and development; facilitating enhancement of organisational outreach; utilitarian connotation to contribution to society, social welfare and development (wherein individual volunteer benefits would arithmetically add up to being consolidated societal benefits); suggesting a spiritual path to development; displaying the practical relevance of the faith – based tenets of the organisation through social service; spreading an approach to social interventions inspired by organisational ideology; constructing organisational identity as an integral part of society; portrayal of the spirit of community/

communitas; facilitating childhood socialisation into faith thereby contributing to society, social welfare and development and consolidating organisational stance in the larger societal set up were cited as implications of volunteer involvement with Indic faith-based voluntary organisations for society at large. Portrayal of the spirit of community/ *communitas* was viewed as an implication by Jain, Buddhist and Sikh organisations. Spreading organisational message through volunteer involvement was largely viewed as a prerogative of organisations within the purview of Hinduism and to some extent Buddhism.

Conclusion

The characteristics of volunteerism in Indic faith-based voluntary organisations can be viewed as parallel to the collective style of volunteerism. Further, volunteerism in Indic faith-based voluntary organisations generates both bonding and bridging types of social capital. Bonding is indicated particularly in the dimension of the sense of *communitas* (characteristic of Jain, Sikh and Buddhist organisations) and bridging is displayed in the dimension of spreading the message (characteristic of organisations within the purview of Hinduism and Buddhism). On both the counts the eventuality in terms of the effects, whether integrative or disintegrative, depends on the content of the message and the quality and orientation of bondedness and bridging. Portrayal of the spirit of community/ *communitas* was viewed as an implication by Jain, Buddhist and Sikh organisations. Spreading organisational message through volunteer involvement was largely viewed as a prerogative of organisations within the purview of Hinduism and to some extent Buddhism. Patterns of convergences are seen in the profiles, initiating factors, duration of involvement, nature of work, factors motivating sustenance and implications for self. The divergences largely emerge in terms of implications for society that are seen in the categories of bonding and bridging types of social capital as discussed above.

Faith, organisational ideology (as inspired by faith) and teachings of the teacher/ seer as emerging therefrom, serve to initiate, provide a perspective and sustain volunteer association and involvement with these organisations. With faith as the key fulcrum of social capital generation (manifested through volunteerism in Indic faith –

based voluntary organisations) it has implications in terms of being a key constitutive thread within the larger civil society fabric – re-asserting and re-affirming the space of faith as an institution in the structural and institutional schemata of the civil society fabric – reverting from the modernist stance of relegating faith to the private realm alone.

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