

Vol 3 Issue 5 June 2013

Impact Factor : 0.2105

ISSN No : 2230-7850

Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal

*Indian Streams
Research Journal*

Executive Editor

Ashok Yakkaldevi

Editor-in-chief

H.N.Jagtap

IMPACT FACTOR : 0.2105

Welcome to ISRJ

RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2230-7850

Indian Streams Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

International Advisory Board

Flávio de São Pedro Filho Federal University of Rondonia, Brazil	Mohammad Hailat Dept. of Mathematical Sciences, University of South Carolina Aiken, Aiken SC 29801	Hasan Baktir English Language and Literature Department, Kayseri
Kamani Perera Regional Centre For Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka	Abdullah Sabbagh Engineering Studies, Sydney	Ghayoor Abbas Chotana Department of Chemistry, Lahore University of Management Sciences [PK]
Janaki Sinnasamy Librarian, University of Malaya [Malaysia]	Catalina Neculai University of Coventry, UK	Anna Maria Constantinovici AL. I. Cuza University, Romania
Romona Mihaila Spiru Haret University, Romania	Ecaterina Patrascu Spiru Haret University, Bucharest	Horia Patrascu Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania
Delia Serbescu Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania	Loredana Bosca Spiru Haret University, Romania	Ilie Pinteau, Spiru Haret University, Romania
Anurag Misra DBS College, Kanpur	Fabricio Moraes de Almeida Federal University of Rondonia, Brazil	Xiaohua Yang PhD, USA
Titus Pop	George - Calin SERITAN Postdoctoral Researcher	Nawab Ali Khan College of Business Administration

Editorial Board

Pratap Vyamktrao Naikwade ASP College Devrukh,Ratnagiri,MS India	Iresh Swami Ex - VC. Solapur University, Solapur	Rajendra Shendge Director, B.C.U.D. Solapur University, Solapur
R. R. Patil Head Geology Department Solapur University, Solapur	N.S. Dhaygude Ex. Prin. Dayanand College, Solapur	R. R. Yaliker Director Managment Institute, Solapur
Rama Bhosale Prin. and Jt. Director Higher Education, Panvel	Narendra Kadu Jt. Director Higher Education, Pune	Umesh Rajderkar Head Humanities & Social Science YCMOU, Nashik
Salve R. N. Department of Sociology, Shivaji University, Kolhapur	K. M. Bhandarkar Praful Patel College of Education, Gondia	S. R. Pandya Head Education Dept. Mumbai University, Mumbai
Govind P. Shinde Bharati Vidyapeeth School of Distance Education Center, Navi Mumbai	Sonal Singh Vikram University, Ujjain	Alka Darshan Shrivastava Shaskiya Snatkottar Mahavidyalaya, Dhar
Chakane Sanjay Dnyaneshwar Arts, Science & Commerce College, Indapur, Pune	G. P. Patankar S. D. M. Degree College, Honavar, Karnataka	Rahul Shriram Sudke Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore
Awadhesh Kumar Shirotriya Secretary, Play India Play (Trust),Meerut	Maj. S. Bakhtiar Choudhary Director,Hyderabad AP India.	S.KANNAN Ph.D , Annamalai University,TN
	S.Parvathi Devi Ph.D.-University of Allahabad	Satish Kumar Kalhotra
	Sonal Singh	

**Address:-Ashok Yakkaldevi 258/34, Raviwar Peth, Solapur - 413 005 Maharashtra, India
Cell : 9595 359 435, Ph No: 02172372010 Email: ayisrj@yahoo.in Website: www.isrj.net**



CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRACY

UPENDRA KUMAR SINGH

Post Doctoral Research Worker Ex. Asstt. Prof.(Ad Hoc), Kamla
Nehru College, University of Delhi. Presently – Principal, Saran Central
School, Chapra(BIHAR).

Abstract:

In a representative democracy the governors are answerable to the governed for their actions and omissions. When democratic representatives perform well, they receive their public's support. But when they fail to discharge their responsibilities, they face opposition and criticism of the people.. It is not merely elections or universal adult franchise that defines the process of representative democracy. While the constitutional framework and human rights guarantees can form the grammar of democracy, it is always people and the ethical quality of the political process that make democracy work. Unfortunately, one of the tendencies of representative democracy is that it turns into the elective despotism of party government. This is because the elected representatives who run the federal and state governments do hardly need to go back to the electorate for every major decision, once the elections are over.

KEYWORDS:

Society , Democracy , Omissions , Elections .

INTRODUCTION:

An active and diverse civil society, in such circumstances, can play an estimable role in helping advance democracy and championing the voice of the masses. Little thought, however, has been devoted to the possibility that 'civil society' may also have effects detrimental to democracy. The present article aims to dispel the widespread assumption of 'civil society' as unmitigated blessing for democracy coupled with efforts to highlight the contribution that it can make to the workings of democracy. The article no doubt is inspired by the recent happenings in the context of the sharp debates which have been going on for quite sometime in India about the desirability and possibility of the role of civil society in a democracy. However, the issues taken up are general and they have been of considerable significance across the world.

Civil society is among most widely discussed and frequently deployed concepts in contemporary political science. Hardly any other social science concept can claim as impressive a career in the recent past as civil society. It is the new buzzword of the time. It has become a popular concept and from the cloistered walls of academia, the term has now fully penetrated our everyday discourse. Conceptually, however, civil society proves to be diffuse, hard to define, empirically precise, analytically vacuous and ideologically laden. This is due to the fact that the term has been defined in several ways; the most common understanding of civil society is as an intermediate sphere between individual/ family and state, though the exact ingredients of this sphere vary (Kumar 1993; Calhoun 1993; Chandhoke 1995). For Hegel, for instance, the bureaucracy and corporations were part of civil society as against the ethical state. For Tocqueville, civil Society was a space of voluntary associations which replaced primordial community; properly speaking, it was the base for political society, defined as government of the people (Kumar 1993). For Gramsci, civil society was the arena where consent was elicited rather than coercion exercised, but in either case it was not separate from the state . while for Harbermas, civil society is represented by the public sphere, where deliberation and reason, rather than ascription or inherited ideas dominate (Calhoun 1993). A

political economy approach locates civil society in the sphere of property and thereby class, as against the claimed universalism of citizenship in the political sphere.

Thus civil society is still a somewhat controversial term precisely because of ambiguities associated with it. Some claim that civil society is a specific product of the nation-state and capitalism; others see it as a universal expression of the collective life of individuals, at work in all countries and stages of development but expressed in different ways according to history and context. Some see it as one of three separate sectors; others as intimately interconnected or even inter-penetrated by states and market. Thus given the range of views, a consensus is impossible. However, one of the keys to move forward may be the definition provided by Schmitter, for whom "Civil society can be defined as a set or system of self-organized intermediary groups that (1) are relatively independent of both public authorities and private units of production and reproduction, that is, of firms and families; (2) are capable of deliberating about and taking collective actions in defence or promotion of their interests or passions; (3) do not seek to replace either state agents or private(re) producers or to accept responsibility for governing the polity as a whole; and (4) agree to act within a pre-established rules of a civil, i.e. 'mutually respectful nature". Civil society is mainly based on the four characteristics- dual autonomy, collective actions, no usurpation and civility.

How civil society can contribute to Democracy.

Civil Society plays a crucial role in helping advance democracy in many ways. On the basis of the vast literature provided by political theorists like Adolf Bibic, Graziano, Luigi, Ljubljana, Schmitter, Larry Diamond, Wolfgang and others, it is possible to derive five major functions through which civil society contributes to strengthening of democracy.

1. Control of State Power

In a democracy, governance is the process of exercising different forms of powers (Social, political, economic, legal and administrative). The real challenge in a democratic process is to ensure that the process of governance is not subverted. By way of observing political processes, providing information to various publics and, if necessary, also mobilising these for or against particular political decisions, civil society holds government obedient to the democratic rules of the game as well as responsible and responsive to social consensus.

Recently Anna Hazare led civil society, namely, India Against Corruption, powerfully expressed anger against corruption, even as its own proposed solutions border on unreasonable daftness. When Anna was arrested, it signified that government was becoming dangerously arbitrary and arrogant. But the state seemed to assert supremacy of its institutions. It may not be denied that the state needed to regulate the protest for logistical purpose or law and order but state's use of every beaureaucratic means at its disposal to thwart a non-violent protest showed its arrogance and arbitrariness. There is no scope of arrogance in a mature democracy like India, and in this case state had to come on back foot. And that led to unconditional release of Anna and his team followed by an indefinite fast unto death movement for Jan Lokpal Bill and its culmination resulted in passing the 'Sense of the House' resolution.

2. Interest Mediation

While the central mechanism for the representation of social interest to the political system have traditionally been political parties, civil society plays an important supplementary role. It compensates for the deficiencies of the interest representation that result from a number of functional constraints political parties face, such as vote maximisation and electoral cycles. As a result, the plurality of social interests is likely to be represented more fully, specifically and continuously by the civil society. Take for example, the demand for reservations or quotas in government jobs in India by various castes and tribes. In a caste-ridden society like India, there are big sammelans (rallies) organised in the name of castes such as Kurmi mahachetna rally, Kushwaha Sammelan, Tel Pilawan rally, Lathi Bhajawan rally, Gharib rally, Chanrawarnshi Samaj rally, Rajput rally etc. These caste based rallies, though do not form the part of civil society in its strict senses, yet, they act as a supplementary channel for the representation and mediation of social interests. Civil society thus contributes to a more differentiated system of governance, which in turn is more consummate with the increasing social pluralism of contemporary societies. It allows for a wider spectrum of interest to be articulated, aggregated and mediated and thus for decision making processes which closely reflect social reality.

3. Social Integration

The state itself is not homogenous entity, and one faction of the state may mobilise society against other faction of the state. No political community is sustainable unless the society forming its basis is held together by some measure of social integration overarching the differences among, firstly the individuals and, secondly social groups and thus containing the disruptive potential generated by these differences. Civil society contributes to social integration in a twofold manner. First, it provides a space for individuals to combine on the basis of a shared interest, belief or passion. The coexistence of numerous social groups, which is inherent to the pluralism of modern societies, leads to the second moment, through which civil society contributes to social integration. India has 4,693 communities, 415 living languages and several religions and its experience in holding all these together far predates the European Union. Civil society in India is crowded with human right activists, NGO leaders, academics and intellectuals, high profile journalists, celebrities. They have their common and shared interest at one hand and antagonistic views and interest on the other. It is not necessary that the members of a particular civil society are of one opinion always on a particular issue. Societies are usually characterised by a number of deeply entrenched cleavages which give rise to social conflict and, in the most cases, threaten the integrity of society. It is with regard to such fault lines that civil society has a mitigating effect also. The same individuals that come together in one association on the basis of one interest, differ along with many other interests and passions. This is a function of multiple nature of their identities. Associations thus also confront a significant degree of differentiation among their members and in the name of one interest, bridge differences and social cleavages along with other interests. By way of cross-cutting social cleavages, civil society diffuses their explosive potential and contributes to the integration of society as a whole. Thus the pluralism in civil society is a guarantee that the state will not be controlled or swallowed by one interest.

4. Political Socialisation

Ever since, Tocqueville, it has been emphasised that associations may be considered as large schools, where all the members of the community go to learn the general theory of associations. Immediate and frequent participation of individuals in the associations of civil society inculcates citizens with an understanding of the workings of democracy and training of their skills therein. This perspective emphasises the more direct democracy building character of civil society by generating civic education. To a significant extent, the vibrancy or vulnerability of a democracy depends on whether or not the dispositions like tolerance, pragmatism, trust, willingness to compromise, co-operation, bargaining and accommodation are present in it or not. Civil Society is an important agent to anchor a democratic political culture in the broader populace.

5. Service Provision

It is the function of the state to provide all goods and services to the populace. However, state has its own limitations given the fact that it lacks sufficient resources to fulfil all the necessary services to the people. The contribution of civil society can make to the material output of an overall social and political system. Generally, this output comprises a vast range of goods and services necessary, if not essential, for individuals, sections of the population or the social and political community in its entirety. The majority of these individuals and social needs are satisfied through the combined activities of the public sector of the state and private economic markets. However, situations occur frequently, in which the state and the market are limited in their capacity to provide for a range of public goods. It is in such situation that the civil society has an important compensatory function.

How Civil Society can be Harmful to Democracy

If we are to understand the complex relation between civil society and democracy, the political context must be reintroduced. Putnam and other Neo-Tocquevillians have failed to recognise that civil society not only has the potential of strengthening a democratic regime, but may also weaken the same regime. In order to understand whether a civil society is likely to weaken or strengthen a democracy, we must analyse civil society in relation to the prevailing political institutions. Princeton professor Sheri Berman gives a cautionary account of civil society in Germany. He argues that civil society flourished in inter-war Germany. But this associational life did not strengthen democracy. Rather it exacerbated the divisions within the country. Hence civil society could fragment rather than integrate, a society. Notwithstanding these facts, systematic explorations of the democratically dysfunctional aspect of civil

society, is yet not surfaced fully in scholarly literature, and it has so far been rare. Some of the down sides of civil society can be enumerated as under :

1. Political Co-optation:

Many a time, both political actors and civil society organisations enter into close relationships or even alliances with one another. Thus political actors try to strengthen their own anchorage in society to increase their legitimacy. An alignment with incumbent government enables civil society organisations to receive preferential treatment when it comes to the distribution of public funds and other resources, access to information, and co-operation with the state administration. Recently on Jan Lokpal issue, the government had tried to diffuse Anna effect through other civil society organisations which had its backing. Thus political co-optation sacrifices the ability of civil society to impartially control the compliance of state and political actors with democratic norms and procedures.

2. Replacing Political Parties:

Civil Society groups in new and emerging democracies constantly grapple with what are intrinsically political issues. The international community has promoted civil organisations, assisted them, and supported their expansion and development, often building on the ruins of discredited political parties. Increasingly resources are being channeled to programmes that develop civil society to the exclusion of political parties and political institutions such as parliaments. Many private and public donors feel that it is virtuous to be a member of a civil society than a political party and that participating in the party activity must wait until there is a certain level of social development. There is grave danger in such an approach. The neglect of political parties, and parliaments, can undermine the very democratic process. Without strong political parties and political institutions that are accountable and effective, that can negotiate and articulate compromises to respond to conflicting demands, the door is effectively open to those populist leaders who will seek to bypass the institutions of government, especially any system of checks and balances, and the rule of law.

3. Civil Society is Warm and Fuzzy

“Civil Society everywhere is a bewildering array of the good, the bad and the outright bizarre”. The idea that civil society inherently represents the public good is wrong. Although many civic activists may feel they speak for the public good, the public interest is a highly contested domain. For example clean air is a public good, but so are low energy costs. The same would be said of free trade versus job security at home or free speech versus libel protection. Struggles over the public interest are not between civil society on the one hand and bad guys on the other but within civil society itself. The idea that civil society represents public good always is wrong in another way, too. Take the example of Rashtriya Swyam Sevak Sangh in India (Neera Chandhoke includes it in Civil Society organisations) and Ku klux Klan in America; do they inherently represent public good? Don't they promote the interest of a particular caste, religion or group of people? People in any society associate and work together to advance nefarious as well as worthy ends. If one limits civil society to those actors who pursue high minded aims, the concept of civil society becomes a theological notion, not a political or sociological one.

4. Civil Society's Dependence on Government for Funding

A real civil society should not take money from the government. In democratic countries especially like India, however, the rules are different. Many civil society groups receive government funding. In parts of Western Europe, the government support for civil society is widespread including among groups that take on the government, such as human rights and environmental organisations. Even in united states, governmental funding of civil society is much more extensive than many people realise. In such circumstances, the role of civil society as being a watchdog of democracy remains doubtful because if civil society organisations are to function as an efficient control mechanism over the exercise of state and political power, their crucial organizational property is autonomy from both the state apparatus and political society more broadly.

CIVIL SOCIETY – THE WAY FORWARD.

Thinking about the issues in this way helps us to pose an actionable set of questions instead of

organising in the abstract over which side is correct – whether civil society is contributive to democracy or harmful one. What can we do to revive this third sphere if we believe it is an important transmission mechanism. The first thing we need to do is to strengthen the pre-conditions for a healthy civil society in all three senses by attacking all forms of inequality and discrimination, giving people the means to be active citizens, reforming politics to encourage more participation, guaranteeing the independence of associations and the structures of public communication, and building a strong foundation for institutional partnerships, alliances and coalitions. Inequality is the poison of civil society. Things like support for childcare and a living wage – which are not usually seen as civil-society building interventions, may be the most important areas of all.

Second, we need to support innovations in associational life that encourage citizen action to operate in service to the good society, rather than as a substitute for politics, market reform and the demands of democratic state building. For example, we need to build stronger links between policy groups, organizing groups, service deliverers and the media; we need to link associations across different interests and agendas and got progressive organizing out of its silos (issues and identities); we need to encourage a more democratic relationship between grassroots constituencies and those in the nonprofit sector who claim to speak on their behalf. We need to reduce the costs and risks of citizen participation (for example, making it easier to organize at the workplace), and we need to honour and connect different forms of participation so that service doesn't become a substitute for political engagement, as is happening among many younger people.

Third, Likewise in other countries, in India, too, it's also important to make room for surprises – like the potential political effects of self help groups like Alcoholics Anonymous and Weightwatchers (the largest category of voluntary associations in America with over 25million members), or the boy scouts and mosque associations in Lebanon (which turn out to be among the most progressive), or burial societies in South Africa (which played a major role in the fight against apartheid), or labour unions in France and Brazil which have given an important stimulus to new and less hierarchical forms of transnational organising.

CONCLUSION :

After reaching soaring and unprecedented popularity in the last two decades, the concept of civil society is currently the object of considerable scrutiny, cynicism, and even disdain. While civil society does good to the health of democracy, sometimes it also introduces “grammar of anarchy” as Pratap Bhanu Mehta invokes B. R. Ambedkar, in this connection. However Mehta fails to remember that Ambedkar also insisted that if democracy was to be maintained 'not merely in the form but also in fact', it was not enough to depend on periodic elections; there must also be a place for mass mobilisation. And, who will be the harbinger of this mass mobilisation? Certainly it will be civil society organisations. Legal scholar Nirja Gopal Jayal insists that while democracy depends on civil society 'a strong civil society can also exist within a democratic framework guaranteed by the state'. Thus there must be a strong complementarity between the civil society and democracy for creating societies that are just, true and free.

Civil society is not inherently virtuous or contributive to democracy. Its democracy building functions are partly shaped by the internal levels of democracy and civicness. Hence we need a more differentiated concept that accepts that civil society could actually be uncivil society if we are to improve our understanding of civil society's democracy building functions. In addition, we need to take political context into consideration. The state is the enabler of civil society, but it can also restrict or control civil society organisations. Thus state – civil society relationship constitutes a crucial piece in the civil society and democracy jigsaw puzzle. Talking specifically in terms of the role of civil society in India at present it can be said that it has lost its initial euphoria because of the government's opposition, internal bickerings coupled with frustration among the members of Anna Hazare team and disenchantment of the people with the stand of the government and the direction of the movement. And yet a civil society movement like Anna's can be helpful in considerably mitigating the evils which have come to afflict democracy in general and democracy in India in particular. At best it can be said that as long as civil society acts only as a monitoring body for the democratic government and does not attempt to cross the line, it is surely a boon for the nation and democracy at large.

¹Quoted by Jayanta Dhanpala in his speech at the Citizen's Movement for Good Governance on 9th Feb'2011, Source: “THE NEED TO ENERGISE CIVIL SOCIETY”, http://groundviews.org/2011/02/10/the_need_to_energise_civil_society/

- ² John Samuel, "Towards democratic governance", http://infochangeindia.org/indexzphp?option=com_content&task=vie...
- ³ Paul Hirst "Representative Democracy and its Limits", *The Political Quarterly*; vol.59 No.2 April-June 1988
- ⁴ Thomas Carothers, "Civil Society: Think Again", *The Learning Curve*, (Washington; Carnegie Endowment, 1999), <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/pdf/CivilSociety.pdf>.
- ⁵ Chris Allen, "Who needs Civil society", *Review of African Political Economy* NO 73:329-337, 1997
- ⁶ K. Kumar, "Civil Society: an enquiry into the usefulness of an historical term", *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol.- 44, No. 3, pp 375-395.
- ⁷ C. J. Calhoun, "Civil society and the Public Sphere", *Public Culture* 5, pp 267-280.
- ⁸ Neera Chandhoke, *State and Civil Society: Explorations in Political Theory*, New Delhi, Sage, 1995.
- ⁹ P Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci", *New Left Review* 100.
- ¹⁰ Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question", in D. McLellan (ed), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, pp 63-75, Oxford University Press.
- ¹¹ Philippe. C. Schmitter, "The Consolidation of Democracy and Representation of Social Groups", *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 35, No 4/5 (March/June 1992) PP. 422-449, here P.240
- ¹² Sheri Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic", *World politics*, April 1997.
- ¹³ Ivan Doherty, "Democracy Out of Balance: Civil Society can't Replace Political Parties", Source: www.ndi.org/files/1099_polpart_balance.pdf
- ¹⁴ Thomas Carothers, "Civil Society: Think Again", *The Learning Curve* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment, 1999), <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/pdf/CivilSociety.pdf>.
- ¹⁵ Omar G. Encarnacion, "Civil Society Reconsidered", www.jstor.org/stable/20434002

Publish Research Article International Level Multidisciplinary Research Journal For All Subjects

Dear Sir/Mam,

We invite unpublished research paper.Summary of Research Project,Theses,Books and Books Review of publication,you will be pleased to know that our journals are

Associated and Indexed,India

- * International Scientific Journal Consortium Scientific
- * OPEN J-GATE

Associated and Indexed,USA

- Google Scholar
- EBSCO
- DOAJ
- Index Copernicus
- Publication Index
- Academic Journal Database
- Contemporary Research Index
- Academic Paper Databse
- Digital Journals Database
- Current Index to Scholarly Journals
- Elite Scientific Journal Archive
- Directory Of Academic Resources
- Scholar Journal Index
- Recent Science Index
- Scientific Resources Database

Indian Streams Research Journal
258/34 Raviwar Peth Solapur-413005,Maharashtra
Contact-9595359435
E-Mail-ayisrj@yahoo.in/ayisrj2011@gmail.com
Website : www.isrj.net