

RESEARCH NOTE

**Classification of Gandhian Non-Governmental Organizations with a Focus on  
Organizational Culture: Case Studies from the Northern States of India**

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北インドにおけるガンディー系非政府組織 (NGO) の考察—組織文化の視点から

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**要旨**

本論文は、北インドで活動するガンディー系 NGO を定性的に比較研究するものである。ウッタール・プラデシュ州、ビハール州、ジャルカンド州、西ベンガル州、チャッティシユガル州そしてオリッサ州にある 22 のガンディー系 NGO から収集したデータを用い、NGO の組織文化や開発に対するアプローチ、生き残りのための戦略を基軸として、これら NGO を 3 つのカテゴリに分類することを試みる。さらに本稿では、3 つそれぞれのカテゴリ特有の組織的特徴を比較分析し、NGO が直面する組織的そして開発における制約を精査して、それぞれがどのような生き残りのための戦略を取っているのかを明らかにする。北インドのガンディー系 NGO は「conventional」、「fusion」及び「transforming」という 3 つの典型的なカテゴリに分類することが可能であり、急速に変化する開発の言説に適応して組織を持続させることができるかどうかは、カテゴリ各々の持つ特徴、つまり NGO の組織文化、が重要な要素となっていることを示して、本稿の結論とする。

**Abstract**

This qualitative study provides a comparative overview of the Gandhian NGOs in Northern Indian States. Utilizing the data collected from 22 Gandhian NGOs from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Chhatisgarh, and Orissa, this paper attempts to classify these NGOs into various categories according to their organizational culture, development approach and strategies. By categorizing Gandhian NGOs, the present paper provides a framework to understand their organizational characteristics, the constraints faced by them, and the strategies they are employing for survival. The study concludes that Gandhian NGOs in Northern India

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can be classified into three distinct categories: “Conventional”, “Fusion”, and “Transforming”, and that the characteristics of each category, in other words their organizational culture, play a critical role in determining whether Gandhian NGOs can adapt to rapidly changing development discourses and sustain their organizations.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1-1. General Backgrounds**

Although India has seen unprecedented economic growth and a reduction of the poverty rate during the last decade, it still remains a country with a population of millions who are poor and deprived, especially in the rural areas [World Bank 2008]. To tackle rural poverty, the Central Government, together with State Governments, has introduced various long-term and short-term programs. However, it has been documented that these efforts have more often than not failed to reach the needy in rural areas [Sainath 1996]. On the other hand, while there are plenty of criticisms, programs implemented by a part of civil society widely known as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), are said to be effective for the alleviation of poverty as well as for the empowerment of the disadvantaged groups in India [Edwards 2007: 275].

Civil societies have a long and rich history in India; however, NGOs truly emerged only after the nation’s independence. Furthermore, the majority of NGOs, which believe in promoting the development of people, emerged during the decades of the 1970s and the 1980s [Kaushik 2008: 69]. The 1970s saw a radical approach to tackle poverty through the mobilization of the rural poor. These movements were inspired by radical leftist thought and the more peaceful struggle of Jaya Prakash Narayan against the totalitarian policies of the government, which was later, called the “J.P. Movement”. The cadres who were actively involved in the J.P. Movement were the pioneers in the trend towards the formation of NGOs [Ohashi 2007: 43]. The 1980s and the 1990s saw a further increase in the number of NGOs in India, which stressed development through a professional approach, sound management, and accountability to stakeholders [Riddell and Robinson 1995]. While it is difficult to grasp the exact number of NGOs operating in India, an estimate shows that anywhere between 1.2 million to 1.5 million NGOs exist in India [Goel and Kumar 2005: 43]. The classification of NGOs in India is also complicated as it depends on their size, approach, philosophy and other characteristics. However, Raina has broadly categorized Indian NGOs into two sets: Gandhi influenced voluntary groups (Gandhian NGOs) and professional rural development agencies

(Development NGOs) [Raina 1997]. The present paper deals with the characteristics, challenges and structure of the Gandhian NGOs. It should be stressed that the term “Gandhian NGO” is rather complex. In the present paper, Gandhian NGOs are those who themselves describe their NGOs as a Gandhian organization and are active members of the Association for Rural Development (AVARD). AVARD is a network of voluntary organizations that follow Gandhian philosophy [Singh and Sevens 2007].

Gandhi influenced NGOs of India (Gandhian NGOs hereafter) stress the Panchayat Raj rule by promoting village cottage industries and agriculture [Jha 1961]. Also known as Gramin Swaraj, Panchayat Raj is the self-reliant and almost “republic village” envisioned by Gandhi [Jha 1961]. Understanding the importance of giving autonomy to the village in order to efficiently implement government schemes and let people participate in the decision-making process, the government of India introduced the Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI) Act in 1992. The Gandhian NGOs believe that this PRI system gives the decision-making power to the villagers and thus the villagers themselves are the primary players in the development of their villages. Since the introduction of the PRI Act, the Gandhian NGOs have been actively involved in implementing and strengthening the system. Thus, this has been one of the key features of their organizations. Another key feature of the Gandhian NGOs is the ashram facility within the organization [Jha 1961]. The ashram is a room and board facility for communal living for the leader of the organization, staff, and sometimes even for beneficiaries. This facility also acts as a resource center for promoting Gandhian philosophy in the village.

Since the main focus of the Gandhian NGOs is the betterment of the downtrodden population of the society by stressing self-reliance, many of these NGOs tend to hesitate to take funding from the government and foreign agencies. However, as we will observe in the present study, circumstances have changed and some of these NGOs do take both government and foreign funds. Traditionally, the Gandhian NGOs had placed priority on the development of the village through cottage industry, agriculture, and advocacy. However, some NGOs have now ventured into projects similar to “Development NGOs”. In order to support these new ventures, the Gandhian NGOs are now forced to be more fund-conscious like the Development NGOs. Under this constraint, Gandhian NGOs have to make crucial decisions for the sustainability of their programs and organization. In order to achieve sustainability, some NGOs, which were mainly pursuing the recognition of basic human rights through advocacy and Panchayat Raj Institution, have now begun to venture into income generating programs (IGP), formation of self help groups (SHG), microcredit programs, microfinance programs

and so forth. At the same time, there are a few organizations which refuse to abandon their original ideology and endeavor to maintain their identity.

In order to understand the reasons behind the major transformations within certain Gandhian NGOs while also addressing why other organizations have opted to hold steadfast to their fundamental approach, we have to understand the different organizational cultures among the Gandhian NGOs. The organizational culture often refers to the style of management of an organization or commonly held values and beliefs within an organization [Hudson 1995]. The focus on organizational culture is extremely important to understand the overall characteristics of an organization [Lewis 2003].

### **1-2. Organizational Culture**

Handy has introduced four general types of organizational culture: club, role, task, and person cultures [Handy, 1988]. In the club culture, the organization is headed by a dominant charismatic leader, who runs the organization as a “one-man show”. In this culture, staff do not have clear roles in the organization and have little to say in the decision-making process. Contrary to the club culture is the role culture, in which clearly defined roles and rules are given to all members of the organization. In this culture, individuals are role occupants with particular job descriptions specifying requirements, responsibilities and boundaries. Handy’s third culture is the task culture, in which teams of people with different skills tackle different tasks as necessary. The task culture emphasizes plans rather than procedure. The final culture is the person culture, in which persons themselves are the main resource of organizations serviced by minimal structure. In this culture, individual professionals who possess a special talent have tenure and high status.

Handy’s framework provides a definition of organizational culture in general terms. Hudson on the other hand proposes three levels of organizational culture to understand the cultural dynamics and differences within and between organizations [Hudson 1995]. According to Hudson, visible representations, group behavior and underlying beliefs are the three levels of organizational culture. Infrastructures, such as NGOs with well-equipped buildings, are visible representations, making decisions and dealing with crises are group behavior, and following certain beliefs, such as a Gandhian approach or a development approach, are underlying beliefs

In the present paper we will investigate the current state and changing strategies of the Gandhian NGOs of Northern India in a qualitative manner by observing these groups with an emphasis on the organizational culture. Furthermore, this paper will classify Gandhian NGOs into different categories

according to their organizational culture, approach and strategies. Gandhian NGOs are often labeled as having a homogeneous organizational culture distinct from the Development NGOs [Gangrade 2008]. Thus, there is a tendency to conduct comparative research on Development vs Gandhian NGOs. However, this paper argues that the Gandhian NGOs do not necessarily have a uniform organizational culture and hence cannot be categorized into a single category. Although there is some research comparing Gandhian NGOs to the Development NGOs, there has been little or no attempt to undertake comparative research among the Gandhian NGOs. Furthermore, there is very little research on the issue of organizational culture in the NGOs of India. Therefore, the present paper sheds light on the prevalence of different organizational cultures among Gandhian NGOs in India, supplementing the previous research on Indian NGOs.

### **1-3. Methodology**

The present paper is based on data and information gathered through primary research, undertaken during visits to 22 NGOs by the author in six states: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, and Orissa. The visits took place between August 2007 and January 2009. These six states were chosen as they suffer more from poverty than any other Indian states, and Gandhian NGOs are very active in these states [Ohashi 2008]. Twenty-two NGOs in the present study were recommended by the Association of Voluntary Action for Rural Development (AVARD) as they were prominent and credible organizations working in Northern India. The data and information obtained included: annual reports, financial records, board-meeting minutes, project proposals, etc. In addition, information was gathered from several meetings with staff and beneficiaries, workshops, and direct observation by the author. For privacy reasons, the names of the organizations have not been mentioned. Instead, codes have been used to identify these organizations. Three case studies that represent different characteristics of the Gandhian NGOs will be presented in this paper. These case studies will be coded as BR-3, OR-5, and CG-8, which will represent the NGOs from Bihar, Orissa, and Chattisgarh respectively.

### **1-4. Different Gandhian NGOs**

In this section, we will discuss characteristics of different types of Gandhian NGOs from their basic profile and their organizational culture. Table 1 presents the basic profile of the 22 NGOs studied in this paper:

Table.1 Basic profiles of 22 NGOs

| S.N. | Organizational Style | Code  | State | Establishment | Major areas of interventions   | Full-time staff (M/F) | Caste of the majority of staff | Age of the chief functionary | Approximate annual budget (Indian Rupees) | Decision-making style | Major sources of income                     | Ashram |
|------|----------------------|-------|-------|---------------|--|-----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|--------|
| 1    | Conventional         | WB-1  | WB    | 1980          | PRI, health, village development, relief   | 22 (17/0)             | GC                             | 61                           | 20 Lakh                                   | Top-down              | Government                                  | Yes    |
| 2    |                      | WB-5  | WB    | 1960          | PRI, village development, sanitation, agriculture                                  | 5 (5/0)               | GC                             | 59                           | 11 Lakh                                   | Top-down              | Membership, government                      | No     |
| 3    |                      | UP-3  | UP    | 1984          | PRI, family planning, women's Empowerment  | 4 (4/0)               | GC                             | 65                           | 8Lakh                                     | Top-down              | Government                                  | yes    |
| 4    |                      | BR-8  | BH    | 1985          | PRI, livelihood promotion  | 7 (5/2)               | GC                             | 66                           | 9 Lakh                                    | Top-down              | Government                                  | Yes    |
| 5    |                      | BR-5  | BH    | 1984          | PRI, health, village development, water shedding                                   | 9 (8/1)               | GC                             | 61                           | 10 Lakh                                   | Top-down              | Local donations, government                 | Yes    |
| 6    |                      | CG-2  | CH    | 1990          | PRI, tribal development, handicrafts   | 11 (8/3)              | GC                             | 67                           | 10 Lakh                                   | Top-down              | Local donations                             | Yes    |
| 7    | Fusion               | CG-1  | MP    | 1982          | PRI, environment, CBR  | 27 (19/8)             | GC                             | 70                           | 30 Lakh                                   | Top-down              | Government, Foreign Donors                  | No     |
| 8    |                      | BR-3  | BH    | 1972          | PRI, SC development, relief, livelihood  | 18 (13/5)             | GC                             | 60                           | 20 Lakh                                   | Top-down              | Government, foreign donors                  | Yes    |
| 9    |                      | BR-11 | BH    | 1983          | PRI, Women development, village development, livelihood                            | 23 (18/5)             | GC                             | 70                           | 35 Lakh                                   | Top-down              | Government, foreign donors                  | No     |
| 10   |                      | CG-3  | CG    | 1979          | PRI, advocacy on rights,   | 7 (5/2)               | GC                             | 57                           | 10 Lakh                                   | Top-down              | Membership fees, government                 | Yes    |
| 11   |                      | UP-7  | UP    | 1995          | Integrated child development, PRI  | 26 (16/10)            | GC                             | 46                           | 90 Lakh                                   | Top-down              | Foreign donors                              | No     |
| 12   |                      | UP-4  | UP    | 1988          | Integrated village development, women's empowerment, child development, livelihood | 30 (18/12)            | GC                             | 44                           | 75 Lakh                                   | Collective            | Foreign donors                              | Yes    |
| 13   |                      | OR-3  | OR    | 1990          | Tribal development, health, PRI  | 16 (10/6)             | SC and ST                      | 50                           | 50 Lakh                                   | Collective            | Foreign donors, revenue from its activities | Yes    |
| 14   |                      | OR-2  | OR    | 1991          | Microcredit, livelihood, tribal development  | 22 (14/8)             | ST                             | 41                           | 200 Lakh                                  | Collective            | Micro finance                               | No     |
| 15   |                      | OR-5  | OR    | 1998          | PRI, village development, tribal empowerment, SHG                                  | 30 (17/13)            | ST                             | 46                           | 70 Lakh                                   | Collective            | Foreign donors, micro credit                | Yes    |
| 16   |                      | JH-4  | JH    | 1995          | Handicrafts, women's empowerment SHG, PRI  | 32 (20/12)            | ST                             | 53                           | 150 Lakh                                  | Collective            | Foreign donors, revenue from its activities | Yes    |
| 17   |                      | CG-2  | CH    | 2000          | Tribal development, handicrafts, PRI   | 12 (8/4)              | ST                             |                              | 45 Lakh                                   | Collective            | Micro credit, foreign donors                | Yes    |

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| S.N. | Organizational Style | Code  | State | Establishment | Major areas of interventions                               | Full-time staff (M/F) | Caste of the majority of staff | Age of the chief functionary | Approximate annual budget (Indian Rupees) | Decision-making style | Major sources of income                      | Ashram |
|------|----------------------|-------|-------|---------------|--|-----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|---|-----------------------|--|--------|
| 18   | Transforming         | CG-8  | CH    | 1983          | PRI, SC and ST development, bonded labor issues            | 12 (9/3)              | GC                             | 35                           | 40 Lakh                                   | Collective            | Government, foreign donors                   | Yes    |
| 19   |                      | UP-6  | UP    | 1987          | Education, handicap issues, livelihood                     | 4 (3/1)               | GC                             | 42                           | 10 Lakh                                   | Collective            | Revenue from its activities, government      | No     |
| 20   |                      | BR-10 | BH    | 1980          | PRI, women's empowerment SHG, awareness raising on rights  | 8 (6/2)               | SC                             | 46                           | 15 Lakh                                   | Collective            | Revenue from its activities, government      | Yes    |
| 21   |                      | CG-9  | CG    | 1986          | PRI, women's empowerment livelihood, anti-alcohol movement | 17 (13/4)             | SC                             | 47                           | 40 Lakh                                   | Collective            | Government, foreign donors                   | Yes    |
| 22   |                      | JH-6  | JH    | 1977          | PRI, advocacy on tribal rights, livelihood                 | 5 (3/2)               | SC                             | 44                           | 15 Lakh                                   | Collective            | Government, foreign donors, SHG micro credit | No     |

Source: Based on the field work carried out by the author

Denotes:

BR=Bihar, U.P=Uttar Pradesh, W.B=West Bengal, OR=Orissa, JH=Jharkhand, CG=Chhattisgarh, GC=General Caste, SC=Scheduled Caste, ST=Scheduled Tribe, Lakh= 100,000 Rupees

From the information given in Table 1, even though all of the organizations were labeled as “Gandhian NGOs”, three distinct types of organizations can be conceptualized. Based on our findings, it can be concluded that Gandhian NGOs can be further classified into three different categories: “Conventional”, “Fusion”, and “Transforming”.

Conventional Gandhian NGOs retain most of the core values of the Gandhian approach to development: promotion of Panchayat Raj Institution and village development through cottage and agricultural development. Although this type of NGOs seeks domestic and foreign funds for short-term projects, their key philosophy is the idea of self-reliance. Table 1 shows that Conventional Gandhian NGOs were established much earlier than Fusion NGOs and the age of the chief functionary, who seems to be in the same position for a rather longer period of time, is much higher. In addition, the size of the budget and the number of staff tend to be smaller for Conventional Gandhian NGOs. The funds to run the organization are raised from the government and through membership fees, while some organizations get a part of their funds from foreign donors. Most of the staff in this category of NGOs are male and from the General Caste group. The decision-making style of the Conventional NGOs is found to be top-down. This suggests that the Club organizational culture, as analyzed by Handy, can be observed among the Conventional Gandhian NGOs. In other words, these NGOs are run by charismatic leaders who run the organization as a “one-man show”.

Unlike their Conventional counterparts, Fusion Gandhian NGOs operate as professional Development NGOs, while retaining some of the Gandhian philosophy of development. These organizations, from their inception, stress Gandhian values, such as Panchayat Raj Institution and cottage industry, while also offering diverse income-generating activities for community development. Most of these NGOs were established after 1990 and the average age of the chief functionaries tends to be younger. The majority of their funds come from foreign donors and from the income-generating activities of the organizations. Compared to other categories of NGOs, the Fusion NGOs have a higher annual budget and larger number of staff. Unlike their Conventional counterpart, the staff from Fusion NGOs has a diverse background. The majority of the staff in many of these organizations are from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The Fusion NGOs also have a higher number female staff than their other two counterparts. The collective decision-making style is observed for many of the Fusion NGOs, reflecting the prevalence of both role and task organizational culture.

Finally the third category, the Transforming Gandhian NGOs, is for those who were, until



recently, operating as Conventional Gandhian NGOs, but are rapidly trying to transform themselves into professional Development NGOs. The reason for this transformation is a realization of the changing environment in terms of approach to rural development. These organizations feel that the Gandhian approach to development is now somewhat outdated, and that drastic measures are necessary for the survival of their organizations. This transformation usually occurs when an organization experiences change in the upper-level management, as personnel from the older generations are replaced with new personnel from the younger generations. This fact is reflected in Table 1 as most of the chief functionaries in this category are younger and have served a fewer number of years in the position. Other characteristics of this category are similar to those of the Conventional NGOs, however the decision-making style is strikingly different. These NGOs have adopted a collective decision-making style and they are trying to transform the organizational culture from a club culture into a role one. In other words, Transforming NGOs are trying to convert themselves from a Conventional to a Fusion NGO.

In the following part, case studies of the three different Gandhian NGOs are given: BR-3 as a Conventional Gandhian NGO, OR-5 as a Fusion Gandhian NGO, and CG-8 as a Transforming Gandhian NGO.

## **2. Constraints, Strategies, and Organizational Culture of Three Types of Gandhian NGO:**

### **Case Studies**

In this section, a detailed profile of three different types of Gandhian NGO will be presented followed by the constraints faced by these NGOs. We will further explore what strategies they have taken to overcome these constraints. In addition, we will analyze the organizational culture of the three types of the Gandhian NGO in order to better grasp the differences between them.

#### **2-1. Organizational Profile**

##### **① BR-3 (Bihar)**

This NGO was established in 1972 to tackle the issue of the socio-economic imbalances in the locality. The organization first introduced a comprehensive package to benefit the most backward castes in the area.

From its inception, the organization has conducted many activities to tackle the issues faced by the most backward castes, stressing Panchayat Raj. The organization was very active in advocating

the rights of oppressed people like Dalits by holding mass rallies and other campaigns. Since 2003, however, the organization has also ventured into emergency relief and income-generating activities. For example, it has recently started work on a flood mitigation program with the support of the United Nation's Children Fund (UNICEF). It has also started a bee-keeping program to generate incomes in the area with the support of the Government of India. Despite BR-3 undertaking these development activities on an ad-hoc basis, the focus of the organization is on advocacy and promoting Panchayat Raj Institution.

In order to achieve the organization's mission, BR-3 is staffed with 18 full-time employees. The majority of the full-time staff is male and from the high caste local elite and only a few are from the Other Backward Castes (OBC). The average age of the full-time staff of BR-3 is higher than in the other organizations that were studied. The governing body of the organization has 19 members, who are also male and from high castes. The approximate budget size of the organization is RS. 2, 000, 000, and the major donors are Action Aid and UNICEF. The organization also accepts donations of money and goods, especially for emergency flood relief activities.

According to our conceptualization, BR-3 falls in the category of the Conventional Gandhian NGO, as it is an old organization that primarily pursues PRI with guidance from a charismatic leader, has a lower number of staff with very few females, does not have diversity in its organization, and has a strong Club organizational culture.

## ② **OR-5 (Orissa)**

The OR-5 organization was established in 1992 with the goal of empowering the oppressed members of the local population, mainly the tribal people of the area. The organization aims to establish a sustainable society by emphasizing the active participation of the poor, ST, and SC.

OR-5 is undertaking various projects on tribal development, such as empowerment of women, mainstreaming of school children who drop out of full-time education, vocational training, an integrated nutrition and health program, Self Help Group (SHG) promotion and micro enterprise activities, sustainable and organic agriculture, and advocacy on tribal rights. Besides these activities, the organization also sensitizes the tribal people with regard to various government development schemes and facilitates their access to such schemes.

The organization has 30 full-time staff and 60 part-time volunteer staff. The number of female staff is 13, and the majority of the staff consists of young people recruited from the local tribal groups.

There are eight board members in the organization with a high ratio of females and tribal people. Unlike its other counterparts, the practice of inclusive management can be seen as it has created a six-member “Core Committee” consisting of upper-level staff and the board members. This mechanism also helps bridge the gap between the board members and staff.

The approximate budget of the organization is RS. 7,000,000 and is estimated that it will increase to RS. 10,000,000 within three years. The major donors are the Government of India, Christian Action Research and Education (CARE), Concern World Wide and the Christian Children’s Fund (CCF). The organization has two buildings and both serve as an ashram, where food and accommodation are provided free to the tribal people who come from distant villages to the Block Headquarters in order to access various government schemes.

OR-5 is a comparatively newer organization with a younger leader and more diverse staff. Furthermore, it also has a larger annual budget and pursues both PRI and income generating activities. In addition, this NGO has both role and task organizational culture. Thus, according to organizational profile and organizational culture, it can be categorized as a Fusion NGO.

### ③ CG-8 (Chhattisgarh)

The CG-8 organization was established in 1983 to tackle the issue of bonded labor in central Chhattisgarh. Although it is still active on the issue of bonded labor, it has recently taken an integrated approach to the development of ST, SC and marginalized people of the society.

The major activities of the organization include programs for income generation, education, health, women’s development, implementation of Panchayat Raj Institution, bonded labor and disabled persons. Recently, like the development NGOs, it has ventured into SHG programs. Although it has not completely abandoned its advocacy programs on bonded labor, a tendency to favor diverse income-generating activities through the formation of SHG and the promotion of microcredit (MC) is more apparent.

The organization has 12 full-time staff and approximately 100 volunteers, and the majority of the staff is from the local ST and SC. The governing body of the organization has seven board members; four of them male and three female. These members are all from SC, ST and OBC. The annual budget of the organization is approximately RS. 4,000,000. However, the budget is expected to shrink due to the completion of some donor-funded activities. The major donors to the organization include: Action Aid, Global Fund for Women, and Church’s Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA). It

has one office building and two field offices, while an extension center in Raipur, the capital city, has also recently been established.

CG-8 is an organization, which is trying to transform its organizational culture from a club one to a role one. It is also trying to include income-generating activities while also focusing on PRI. As can be seen in its recent leadership change, it is attempting to transform the organization as well as its development approach. Thus, CG-8 can be categorized as a Transforming Gandhian NGO.

## **2-2. Constraints Faced by the Gandhian NGOs**

Jain has observed that uncertain funding, both from domestic and foreign donors, and a lack of devoted and qualified human resources are the major problems faced by Indian NGOs, including Gandhian NGOs [Jain 2008: 133].

All three of the organizations in our study cited obtaining adequate funding as the major obstacle for their organizations. This is especially true for BR-3 and CG-8. Both of them stated that they are constantly seeking grants to support their ongoing projects. For example, during the emergency flood relief project, BR-3 relied on UNICEF as its main source of support, and this reliance on an external party is contradictory to the Gandhian philosophy that they practice. In fact, BR-3 is constantly searching for sources of funding to support their activities. This is because BR-3 is not able to rely solely on internal resources to finance their activities. CG-8 faces a similar concern as several of their funding sources have phased out or are in the process of phasing out, thus forcing them to seek new donors to support their programs. Unlike their counterparts, OR-5 stated that they are satisfied with their current financial condition, which is mainly due to the fact that OR-5 has several donors committed to long-term projects.

A lack of sufficient funding is not the only constraint faced by these organizations because there is also a lack of qualified and dedicated human resources. All three of the NGOs studied stated that it was extremely difficult to find qualified and dedicated personnel for their organizations. The reason is actually related to funding, as these organizations cannot provide a high enough salary to attract top talent due to funding constraints. A qualified person can demand a higher salary, or simply opt to seek work in an urban area, thus forcing these organizations to hire individuals with either limited skills or a lack of motivation. As the secretary of CG-8 puts it, "Why would the qualified want to work in the village? They will find jobs in the big cities. We have no option but to hire unemployed graduates or post-graduates who have no idea what rural development is."

Rural development professionals and individuals with post-graduate degrees in Rural Development (RD) who possess such skills are not very keen on working in rural areas. They prefer to pursue employment in urban areas with larger NGOs or donor agencies. In some cases, RD professionals join a village-level NGO in order to gain experience, and after gaining some experience, seek new opportunities outside the rural area for a higher salary. This scenario was prevalent within the OR-5 organization. The secretary of OR-5 complained, “After investing so much in these young fellows, they would simply go to another organization. It is outrageous, but we cannot pay as much, so they abandon us. I guess that is natural.” The investment that the secretary was referring to is the experience provided by the NGOs as well as their training programs.

Besides rural development professionals, some of the key qualifications these organizations seek are staff with good computer and proposal writing skills. To have personnel with these skills is critical because funding from donor agencies largely depends on the quality of proposals written by the staff of the organization. Thus, individuals who possess excellent proposal writing skills, especially in English, are in high demand because they could be a key factor in the financial sustainability of the organization.

While not a constraint per se, yet another challenge these NGOs face is the changing ideology, needs, and approach of development, though this has not received as much attention. Organizations that fail to address changes in the development discourse tend to become isolated from the donor community and struggle for financial sustainability. The prevailing approach to development in India is the empowerment of vulnerable sections of the community through the promotion of income-generating activities along with a rights-based approach [Mikelsen 2006]. Some NGOs, like BR-3, fail to accept this changing ideology of development. Thus, they are usually ignored by the donor community, which directly results in financial constraints.

### **2-3. Organizational Culture and Strategies to Overcome the Constraints**

We have discussed some of the constraints faced by Gandhian NGOs in the preceding section. In this section we will discuss their strategies and organizational culture to mitigate these constraints.

#### **① Strategies to Overcome Financial Constraints**

We discovered that the most prominent constraint faced by these organizations is financial sustainability. To overcome this constraint, different organizations have adopted differing strategies.

While CG-8 and OR-5 have decided to introduce vigorous income-generating activities through the formation of SHG and microcredit programs, BR-3 is lagging far behind in such activities. CG-8 and OR-5 stress that income-generating activities, such as SHG formation are not only demanded by the beneficiaries, but also by the donors, especially external donors. The CG-8 secretary explains, “The donors now fund the programs which address the income-generating activities and formation of self help group. There is little or no money for advocacy these days. How long can you go on by just shouting slogans? You have to give income-generating opportunities to the beneficiaries.” Although CG-8 has not abandoned its advocacy work, it is now concentrating more on the formation and strengthening of the SHG. This implies that CG-8 is transforming its organizational culture. On the other hand, OR-5, from its inception, has had an organizational culture of blending income-generating activities with advocacy because they realize that successful income-generating activities and SHG will be the keys for survival in times of funding uncertainty. Unlike CG-8 and OR-5, BR-3 does not seem to have a clear-cut strategy to address their funding concerns. This lack of a fund-generation strategy on the part of BR-3 will continue to put their organizational sustainability in jeopardy. This is mainly due to their organizational culture of empowering the community principally through advocacy. Thus, they do not have a culture of undertaking income-generating activities and SHG formation just to attract more government and foreign funds. One of the upper level management personal of BR-3 states, “We do not beg for money from the government and foreign donors for the sake of the sustainability of our organization. It is not our organizational culture because J.P taught us that way.”

Besides pursuing income-generating activities, these organizations have increased cooperation with the local government as a means to overcome financial constraints. With an increase in public schemes for rural development, the local NGOs are favored as the delivery mechanism by the government [Jain 2008: 137]. This partnership results in more programs for the NGOs. However, all of the surveyed NGOs are more or less hesitant to receive such programs for fear that they will be portrayed as the agent of the government and will lose the culture of being an independent NGO representing the locality.

## ② **Strategies to Overcome Human Resource Constraints**

We have observed that human resource constraints are another major issue for Gandhian NGOs. All of the NGOs viewed the lack of qualified personnel in the organization as a major issue. To tackle

this issue, CG-8 and OR-5 have recently started human development programs, especially giving in-house training to their staff on proposal writing and computer skills. However, the success of these programs is offset by the fact that many of the newly-skilled staff end up leaving their current organization to pursue more profitable opportunities. CG-8, like OR-5, has had similar issues of experienced staff leaving in order to pursue other employment opportunities once they obtain a good level of experience and skills. BR-3, on the other hand, does not have a well-defined human resource development policy, and relies mainly on external consultants when producing project proposals. The BR-3 secretary admits that reliance on external consultants is a necessity, but not by choice because “the sentiment of the project differs when an outsider writes proposals for you.”

As Jain has observed, lack of qualified personnel in a rural NGO is due to the low level of remuneration, inadequate allowances for travel, and a lack of job security [Jain 2008:134]. In addition to these factors, not having a voice in the decision-making process of the organization is yet another reason. This is especially true for BR-3, which has a club organizational culture, where the decision-making is done mostly by the secretary and the voices of the junior staff are usually not heard. An interview with several lower-level staff members of BR-3 confirmed Jain’s observation and Handy’s club organizational culture. Thus, in some cases, the very leaders of the organizations, much influenced by the organizational culture, were the main culprits in hindering the human resource development process. Interestingly, employees of OR-5 did not share the same level of dissatisfaction with their job as their BR-3 and CG-8 counterparts. This is probably because OR-5 has a role and task culture, where all of the staff have a particular role and responsibility and also have been actively involved in the decision-making process of the organization. In addition, it has a culture of being more transparent in its governing and management system than its counterparts.

### ③ **Strategies for Adapting to the Changing Environment**

Adapting to a constantly changing environment is the most essential element for sustainability for all organizations. Gandhian NGOs take different strategies according to their organizational culture to face the changing environment in the development arena. Most development agencies now require NGOs to be inclusive, gender sensitive, and introduce proactive development programs. In the case of BR-3, upper-level management team, who are also the founding members, are still actively managing the organization as they have always done, with no attention paid to these new developments. BR-3 lacks a culture of accepting and adapting to the changing environment. On the other hand, secretaries

of both the CG-8 and OR-5 organizations are actively addressing the changes in the approach to community development. The secretary of CG-8 stresses, "How long can one organization solely keep on shouting slogans against the government and only promote Panchayat Raj? One should also think about how to uplift the livelihood of beneficiaries." CG-8 has started income-generating activities in the villages for the past few years in an effort to meet the needs of their beneficiaries. The secretary further adds that while advocacy work, such as pressuring the government to free bonded labor, is an important issue, providing income to the villagers is equally, if not more, important. Being the newest of the three organizations studied, OR-5, from its inception, has blended advocacy and income-generating programs, and includes SHG, microfinance, and tie-ups with government schemes as major components of its development approach.

### **3. Summary and Conclusions**

The present paper presented three different kinds of Gandhian NGOs of North India with the aim of understanding their characteristics with a focus on organizational culture. It also reviewed the constraints faced by them, and presented the strategies they are employing. The study reveals that Gandhian NGOs can be classified into three distinct categories: "Conventional", "Fusion", and "Transforming". Conventional NGOs are primarily involved in promoting the Panchayat Raj Institution and advocacy rather than income-generating activities. These NGOs were mostly established in the early 1980s and the age of their secretaries is high. The budget size and the staff numbers in these NGOs are low, and inclusive management and gender sensitiveness are not practiced. In Conventional Gandhian NGOs, a charismatic leader makes all the decisions and runs the organization as a "one-man show", reflecting their club organizational culture. In addition, Conventional Gandhian NGOs are not keen on changing their culture. Fusion Gandhian NGOs are increasingly stressing income-generating activities for rural development, while also promoting the Gandhian approach, Panchayat Raj Institution and advocacy. Fusion Gandhian NGOs are characterized by placing an emphasis on inclusive management and human resource development. They reflect a role and task organizational culture where everyone is given particular responsibilities and are also responsible for various decision-making processes. These NGOs were established after the 1990s and the age of their secretaries was comparatively younger. The budgets of Fusion Gandhian NGOs are comparatively larger, and they have a higher number of female staff. Finally, the third classification of Gandhian NGOs, the Transforming Gandhian NGOs, are those organizations



which, until recently, were operating as Conventional Gandhian NGOs, but are rapidly trying to establish themselves as professional Development NGOs by introducing vigorous income-generating programs. The major difference between Fusion and Transforming Gandhian NGOs is the timing of the inclusion of income-generating programs in their activities. While Fusion Gandhian NGOs had included income-generating programs from their inception, Transforming Gandhian NGOs tend to include such programs much later. This is because Fusion Gandhian NGOs are relatively young organizations and they are aware of the development discourse. On the other hand, most Transforming Gandhian NGOs were set up in the 1980s and their approach was a Conventional Gandhian one. However, these Transforming NGOs also realized that merely focusing on Panchayat Raj Institution and advocacy was not sufficient for survival, and thus changed their approach. Thus, Transforming Gandhian NGOs are trying to alter their organizational culture into one similar to that of Fusion Gandhian NGOs.

The case studies of the three different NGOs demonstrate that all of these organizations face similar financial and human resource constraints, but took differing approaches to mitigate those constraints. This difference in approaches is due to the varied organizational cultures. To overcome their financial constraints, Fusion and Transforming Gandhian NGOs have placed more stress on income-generating activities through the promotion of SHG and microcredit, while Conventional Gandhian NGOs do not have concrete plans to mitigate such constraints. The Fusion and Transforming Gandhian NGOs emphasize human resource development as the key to their success. Conventional Gandhian NGOs on the other hand seem to address human resource constraints reluctantly or on an ad-hoc basis, either relying on charismatic leaders to propel them to success or relying on external sources to overcome their staff limitations.

Like other qualitative researches, while we can draw certain conclusions, the findings from the present study have to be taken cautiously as it limits itself to Gandhian NGOs of Northern India. It would be more appropriate to undertake additional research in different parts of the country in order to better understand the phenomena of Gandhian NGOs, especially since India is a large and diverse country. Nevertheless, it can be concluded with certainty that Gandhian NGOs are not uniform. They differ in approach to development, differ in their strategies to obtain financial sustainability, and they differ in their attitudes towards human resource development. Overall, these organizations have different organizational cultures, and it is these differences that influence/determine their organizational sustainability and effectiveness in meeting the needs of their clients.

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