Religions and Development
Research Programme

Mapping Faith-based Development Activities in Contemporary Maharashtra, India

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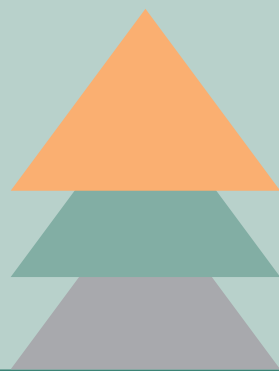
Research Programme

The Religions and Development Research Programme Consortium is an international research partnership that is exploring the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction. The programme is comprised of a series of comparative research projects that are addressing the following questions:

- How do religious values and beliefs drive the actions and interactions of individuals and faith-based organisations?
- How do religious values and beliefs and religious organisations influence the relationships between states and societies?
- In what ways do faith communities interact with development actors and what are the outcomes with respect to the achievement of development goals?

The research aims to provide knowledge and tools to enable dialogue between development partners and contribute to the achievement of development goals. We believe that our role as researchers is not to make judgements about the truth or desirability of particular values or beliefs, nor is it to urge a greater or lesser role for religion in achieving development objectives. Instead, our aim is to produce systematic and reliable knowledge and better understanding of the social world.

The research focuses on four countries (India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania), enabling the research team to study most of the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African traditional belief systems. The research projects will compare two or more of the focus countries, regions within the countries, different religious traditions and selected development activities and policies.

The consortium consists of six research partner organisations, each of which is working with other researchers in the four focus countries:

- University of Birmingham, UK: International Development Department, Department of Theology and Religion, Centre for West African Studies, Centre for the Study of Global Ethics.
- University of Bath, UK: Centre for Development Studies.
- Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi.
- Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan.
- University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
- Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan.

In addition to the research partners, links have been forged with non-academic and non-government bodies, including Islamic Relief.

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Working Paper 28

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Summary

Despite apparent commitment to secular political and development models, over the last six decades in India, the presence of religion in the public sphere has expanded. While religious organizations' involvement in welfare and charitable activities has a long history, the objectives of the religious reform movements and faith-based organizations that emerged during the colonial era were to strengthen their respective faith communities, drawing clearer boundaries between them, fighting against perceived 'social evils', and gaining legitimacy vis-à-vis the colonial state. The nationalist struggles and coming of independence significantly changed this social context. After independence, a state-centred development model, while it did not displace religious organizations from some of their traditional spheres of operation, deterred further growth in the numbers of FBOs.

The new communitarian and religious consciousness that has emerged since the 1980s has, however, resulted in growing numbers of FBOs that participate in the so-called 'secular spheres', including education, health and community development. Little systematic information is available on the extent and characteristics of these organizations and their activities. This preliminary study therefore sought to 'map' the scale and characteristics of FBOs and to provide an overview of their engagement in development activities in contemporary India. Limited resources led to a focus on the cities of Pune and Nagpur in Maharashtra, an Indian state with a large Hindu majority and a number of religious minorities - a typical religious demography. Using a snowball sampling approach, and despite definitional difficulties and the contentious nature of the label 'faith-based' in India, 133 organizations were identified and interviewed. While this is not necessarily a representative sample, it reveals some of the organizations' key characteristics.

68 of the organizations were Christian, partly because they were easier to locate, working as they do mainly in education and health and being professionally organized. Hindu and Muslim organizations were harder to locate, but 30 and 18 respectively were identified and studied. Seven out of ten of the organizations in all the religious traditions are small, operating within the city where they are based, with one in ten also operating elsewhere in the State, more than one in ten elsewhere in India and five (mostly Hindu) having an international presence. Most of the Christian organizations see themselves primarily as missionary organizations, despite their involvement in welfare and development activities, whereas most of the organizations associated with other faith traditions regard themselves as faith-based charitable/development organizations (and a few as cultural organizations). Their activities encompass education, health, emergency relief and community development, while more recently

some have prioritized the empowerment of marginalized groups, including women and Dalits. While all are registered and many can access government funds to supplement their own fund-raising, their relationships with government are not close. Most are guided by a non-discriminatory humanitarian motivation, but a small proportion are right-wing and sectarian in nature, devoted to advancing the cause of Hindutva through their development activities and associated with exclusionary approaches and fomenting religious hatred.

1   Introduction

The post-colonial Indian state visualized economic development as a modernizing process. Development and secularization were to go together, one strengthening the other. In keeping with the classical post-War theories of 'modernization', secularization was regarded as an essential part of the process of economic development. 'Traditional' societies like India were to consciously work to get rid of their 'old' ascription-based hierarchical structures and identities in order to facilitate the process of modernization and economic development. Once 'take-off' was achieved, the process of economic development was to also facilitate the creation of conditions for the emergence of a modern secular society, in which religion would slowly be privatized and would lose its hold over the public sphere. As had presumably happened in Western Europe, the citizens of modern and democratic India would draw their identities from their individual worth and not from the status of caste and religious community into which they were born. Even while they recognized the historical specificities of South Asia and the enduring hold that faith had over the people of the region, the mainstream political leadership of independent India aspired to a modern and developed nation, with a scientific and secular outlook.

Experience of the last six decades of economic development and democratic governance has completely defied this expectation. While India has witnessed a steady pace of economic development and the social and political institutions of the country have become more participatory, the presence of religion in the public sphere has also expanded. The most obvious evidence of this is the increased presence of religion-based political formations in the political arena and the rise of religious identity movements among different religious groups. Faith communities have been quite successful in reorienting themselves to the emerging contexts and challenges of modernization. The new communitarian and religious consciousness has also resulted in a growing participation of faith-based organizations (FBOs) in the so-called 'secular spheres', such as education, health and community development (see Bano and Nair, 2007).

A good amount of scholarly research has been done on religion and democratic political processes or religious conflicts in India (for a survey see Mahajan and Jodhka, 2009). The development activities and other aspects of the 'secular' non-profit sector have also been documented (see, for example, Sethi, 1993, 1998; Kudva, 2005; PRIA, 1991; Webster, 1995, 2002). However, we know very little about the nature of work that FBOs have been operating at the 'grassroots' and their participation in development activities. Based on an empirical survey carried out in two towns in Maharashtra (Pune

and Nagpur), this paper provides a broad and preliminary mapping of some of the faith-based organizations in those locations.

This mapping report is part of a wider research programme on the relationships between religions and development. Similar mapping studies of FBO activity in development are being carried out in Pakistan, Tanzania and Nigeria. These studies aim to provide background information on the nature and role of FBO activity in each context in order to inform other research under way. Initially we had aimed to carry out a broad national overview of FBO activity in India and then to complement this with a more detailed study at the state and district level. However, considering the size of India, the limited time available and the paucity of existing databases and studies documenting FBO activity in the country, we limited our study to two locations in Maharashtra: Pune and Nagpur. We thus regard this study as preliminary: it provides an impressionistic and partial overview rather than a comprehensive mapping. We do nonetheless use our data to comment upon the relevance of existing typologies and definitions of the term 'FBO', as well as to raise questions and issues for future research.

Maharashtra was chosen for field study for several reasons. Demographically, Maharashtra closely resembles India as a whole (see below). Along with Calcutta/Bengal, Bombay/Maharashtra was the region where religious reform movements, such as the Arya Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj, first emerged during the colonial period. Many of these movements eventually became institutionalized in the form of organizations and establishments, which began to engage themselves with issues of development, such as education and health (for instance, the Ramakrishna Mission). Moreover, during the post-independence period, religion-based politics has been quite active in Maharashta. Cities like Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur continue to be important centres of religious organizations and religion-based political activity.

The paper has four sections. In the remainder of this introductory section we discuss issues around defining the term 'FBO', as well as efforts to classify FBOs in terms of typologies. Following this, we outline the historical context of the development of the faith-based development sector in India. The third section presents findings of the empirical work undertaken in the two cities of Maharashtra. The fourth and concluding section provides some reflections on the FBO sector in India.

1.1 Defining the term 'FBO'

The literature that attempts to define the term 'faith-based organization' tends to concentrate on two main questions. First, to what extent is it possible to distinguish 'faith-based' from 'secular' organizations? And second, what sorts of organizations are included within the category of 'FBO'? With respect to the first question, the distinction between religious and secular organizations might seem obvious, but is in fact difficult to maintain in certain contexts and for certain organizations. Berger, for instance, argues that instead of a dichotomy, we should talk about the 'pervasiveness' of religion in different organizations because this "highlights the nonexistence of purely secular or religious NGOs and conceives of organizations' religious identity in degrees of 'religiosity' rather than in absolute terms" (2003, p. 25). She highlights the fact that religious values often motivate members of so-called secular organizations and that organizations may exist in a context where the secular and the religious are not clearly demarcated. Moreover, it is often difficult to distinguish between religious and secular NGOs on the basis of, for instance, their mission statement or their name. While this might reflect the fact that religion is not very fundamental to the aims of an organization, Berger also reminds us that some FBOs are reluctant to

> use the term 'religion' in describing themselves and their activities…due largely to the potentially negative connotations associated with religious references as well as legal obstacles that arise when applying for public funding (2003, p. 17).

These issues are certainly relevant to a consideration of faith-based activity in India, where accusations of the 'Hinduization' of civil society, in particular, can mean that individuals and organizations often avoid overt identification with religious values and rhetoric in order that they are not aligned with the Hindu Right. As we discuss below, the 'secular' trajectory that India has followed since independence in 1947 does mean that identification with faith traditions in the public sphere takes on a unique meaning that is fraught with moral and political tensions. Nonetheless, despite the contentious nature of the label 'faith-based' in India, it is methodologically useful, since it points to the existence of a range of social welfare and development activity that has not been adequately mapped and studied.

The second question regarding how we define the term 'FBO' requires us to think about what sorts of entities should be included within the category: do we adopt an 'inclusive' or an 'exclusive' definition? The working definition of FBO being used in the overall research programme is '*organizations engaged in development or humanitarian activities that explicitly claim a religious motivation*'. This

broad or 'inclusive' approach is also found in the following definition (from *Defining Faith Based Organizations,* in *Faith in Action, Examining the Role of Faith Based Organizations in Addressing HIV/ AIDS*), where FBO is defined as:

> …a general term, used to refer to religious and religious based organisations, places of religious worship or congregations, specialised religious institutions, and registered and unregistered non-profit institutions that have religious character or missions (Global Health Council, 2005, www.globalhealth.org).

Berger, by contrast, in her study of religious NGOs that are represented at the United Nations, restricts her definition. Preferring to use the term 'religious NGO', rather than the more general term FBO, she defines religious NGOs 'exclusively'

> as formal organizations whose identity and mission are self-consciously derived from the teachings of one or more religious or spiritual traditions and which operate on a nonprofit, independent, voluntary basis to promote and realize collectively articulated ideas about the public good at the national or international level (2003, p. 16)

In designing the methodology for this study (see Section 3.2 for a more detailed discussion) and considering its status as exploratory and preliminary, we chose not to have a very precise definition of the term 'FBO'. We treated all those organizations involved with some kind of welfare or development-related work and operating under the banner of a faith tradition as FBOs. Some of these are working as independent establishments, others operate from places of religious worship, such as churches and gurudwaras (Sikh temples). Though we did not make registration with local authorities a criterion for the selection of organizations, all those we studied are registered with the relevant local authority as charitable and/or development organizations. Registration is considered to facilitate their work and also the collection of donations, because specified donations for charitable work are exempt from income tax.

1.2 Types of FBO

Over the last two decades or so the attitude of social scientists and development practitioners towards religion has undergone a significant change. The once-dominant theory of secularization is no longer seen as the only possible path to social change (Casanova, 1994; Juergensmeyer, 1993; Wilson, 1992). Development theorists and practitioners have also begun to recognize the critical role

that religion plays in the lives of the poor and their notions of well-being (Narayan et al, 2000). Moreover international donor agencies have over the years begun to see faith-based organizations as potential partners in their attempts to reach the poor and the needy (see Clarke, 2005; Clarke and Jennings, 2008).

Gerard Clarke (2005, p. 12) argues that the term FBO includes a complex set of actors in development, which are inadequately understood because they come in a variety of organizational guises and have differential effects (both positive and negative). He identifies five different types of FBOs that operate globally:[1]

1. Faith-based representative or apex bodies, which rule on doctrinal matters, govern the faithful and represent them through engagement with the state and other actors.
2. Faith-based charitable or developmental organizations, which mobilize the faithful in support of the poor and other social groups, as well as fund or manage programmes, which tackle poverty and social exclusion.
3. Faith-based socio-political organizations, which interpret and deploy faith as a political construct, organizing and mobilizing social groups on the basis of faith identities but in pursuit of broader political objectives, or alternatively promote faith as a socio-cultural construct, as a means of uniting disparate social groups on the basis of faith-based cultural identities.
4. Faith-based missionary organizations, which spread key faith messages beyond the faithful, by actively promoting the faith and seeking converts to them or by supporting and engaging with other faith communities on the basis of key principles.
5. Faith-based radical, illegal or terrorist organizations, which promote radical or militant forms of faith identity, engage in illegal practices on the basis of faith beliefs or engage in armed struggle or violent acts, justified on the ground of faith.

While Clarke's typology can be a useful starting point for research on faith-based organizations in general, it is intended as a framework to accommodate the diverse range of faith-based activity in development globally. When applied to specific countries, the relevance of such broad typologies seems to be rather limited and they are unable to adequately capture the nature of FBO activity in development in particular locations. Clarke's typology is useful in highlighting the sorts of faith-based organizations that might participate in development work, but should not be taken as a model that is generally applicable. Thus, one way of using typologies such as Clarke's is to test them against the

actual situation in particular contexts, rather than taking them as a blueprint for FBO activity in general. Such a process of 'testing' a broad and general model in a specific context can raise interesting questions about the nature and role of faith-based activity in different places and how and why it varies from location to location.

As discussed in more detail in Section 3, the empirical research that we carried out in Maharashtra for this mapping report was partial and preliminary, and as such did not enable us to radically revise Clarke's typology within an Indian context nor to devise an 'Indian' typology for FBO activity in development. While we had hoped to use, validate and develop a suitable typology, this proved complex and progress was limited. However, from the outset we felt that Clarke's typology needed to be revised in two ways. We used this revised typology in our interviews to ask organizations to categorize themselves. In doing so we learnt something about how the organizations that we studied saw their main focus of activity. First, we decided to leave out the fifth category 'faith-based radical, illegal or terrorist organizations' due to its obvious sensitivity in the region, its high degree of subjectivity (i.e. how do we decide what is 'radical' or 'terrorist'?) and because it seemed unlikely that organizations would themselves choose this category to define their activities. Second, we included a further category 'faith-based cultural organizations' to reflect the fact that this is the primary way that many 'faith' organizations in India depict their focus of activity, even when engaging in what we might also class as development work (e.g. education, health). What is meant by cultural in this context is a broad conception of religio-cultural activities that can include the promotion and practice of various activities, from worship and chanting to traditional dance and art forms. While we also encouraged the organizations to classify themselves according to an alternative designation of their choice, none actually did so. The provisional typology that we employed was as follows:

i.   Faith-based charitable or developmental organization
ii. Faith-based socio-political organization
iii. Faith-based missionary organization
iv. Faith-based cultural organization
v.   Any other faith-based organization

In addition to asking the FBOs to classify themselves according to the above types, we recognized the need to follow this up with some preliminary discussion about the meaning of these different categories, both as they have been employed within the academic literature and how they are understood by the organizations themselves. We begin this reflection in Section 3 but realize that this is a matter for further exploration and discussion.[2]

2 Faith organizations and development in India

2.1 The historical context

Notwithstanding the ideological orientation of its modern elite, religion has always remained an important factor in contemporary India's quest for development and social change. It was, in fact, the 'modernist' impulse unleashed by the British colonial rulers that played a critical role in shaping the contemporary religious formations in the subcontinent. The colonial state gave concrete identities to religious communities and drew boundaries where previously only fuzzy differences existed. Census classifications/enumerations, colonial history writings and ethnographic accounts of local communities formed the basis for structuring knowledge of the 'natives' (Appadurai, 1981; Cohn, 1987; Breckenridge and van der Veer, 1993). Similarly, Orientalism, one of the western articulations of 'eastern' civilization, "gave religion a privileged status as the foremost site of essentialized difference between the religious East and the secular West" (van der Veer, 2002, p. 173). One of the more recent examples of this "essentialist othering" of India can be found in the writings of Louis Dumont and his theory of the Hindu caste system (Dumont, 1980). As van der Veer has rightly argued,

> ….orientalist privileging of religion is not based simply upon an acknowledgement of the importance of religious institutions in the colonies of the subcontinent; rather, it is directly dependent on modern understanding of religion related to the nationalization of religion and its new location in the public sphere (van der Veer, 2002, p.173).

At a more historical and sociological level, the social reform movements that emerged during the colonial period among different communities provided the basis for religious revivalist movements, which in turn played an important role in the re-working of religious boundaries and community identities (see Oberoi, 1994; Thapar, 1989). It was around this time that religions in India began to engage themselves with what we would now describe as 'development activities'.

Influenced by modern western ideas of equality, liberty and rationality, the 'reformers' campaigned against 'social evils' and pressed for women's rights. Besides building schools, colleges, dispensaries and hospitals, members of the newly emergent middle class were concerned with social reforms, especially the abolition of child marriage and polygamy, improvement in the social status of women, the promotion of women's education and remarriage of widows. Though it began in Bengal during the mid-1820s under the leadership of the social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy, by the 1840s this form of voluntarism had spread to western India, to Bombay and other urban centres. From the 1870s,

institutions such as the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, Satyashodhak Samaj and Indian National Social Conference began to emerge from these social movements[3].

The voluntary efforts of the Christian missionaries played the role of a catalyst in spurring development-related activities. Their activities continued in this phase, especially in the fields of education, health, relief and welfare of the poor and neglected sections of society. Roman Catholic missionaries appeared in India during this time and their organized efforts began in 1885. Missionaries belonging to several congregations, such as the Baptists and the Anglicans, participated in charity and reform activities. The three main Islamic movements, under the *Deoband*, *Firangi Mahal*, and *Aligarh* schools of thought, also emerged during the late 19th century. The reasons for their emergence were to protect Islamic interests from western-educated Hindus who were rapidly gaining the status of an indigenous elite; as a reaction to Christian missionary criticism of Islam; and as a response to British cultural and political hegemony.

This reaction to the growing activities of Christian missionaries was not confined to Islamic movements. The newly emergent Hindu and Sikh middle classes also saw a threat to their religious identity from missionary activities in the context of the growing influence of the colonial power. Though the colonial rulers did not directly patronize the churches, mission activities expanded considerably with the establishment of colonial power in the subcontinent. Related activities, especially education, were also seen by the native elite as part of the Christian mission. It was to these 'modern' features of Christianity and the colonial state that the newly emergent elite responded by forming religious organizations and initiating internal reforms. This was not an innocuous development. These reform movements, in a sense, prepared the ground for the nationalist movement for independence from colonial rule, as well as having a political logic of their own.

Many students of Indian society have pointed to the fact that these religious reform movements turned out to be the defining moment in the development of contemporary Hinduism. Newly educated upper caste Hindus evolved new ideas and concepts to enable Hinduism to counter the churches and their activities among the poor and marginal social groups. Through the anti-colonial nationalist struggle, they not only wished to produce an India that would have a Hindu majority, but would also be based on an ideology that would give cultural hegemony to the Hindu faith (see Anderson and Damle, 1987;

Copley, 2000, 2003; Hansen, 1999; Ludden, 1996; Sharma, 2003; Zavos, 2000). It was around this time that ideas such as *seva* (service) and *sangathana* (association or organization) were brought into the mainstream of Hinduism (Patel, 2007) and it was only with the acceptance of these ideas that Hindu leaders could begin to set up faith-based organizations, which oriented themselves towards the development of marginal sections of the religious community. This new found concern for the development of traditionally marginalized groups was also born out of the growing significance of demographics: the Hindu elite did not want to lose the 'lower' caste population to Christianity. Thus many of the currently active faith-based organizations in India emerged during this period.

At another level, the presence of religion in the public sphere increased along with the spread of colonial modernity. This point is well argued by van der Veer:

> Although the legitimizing rituals and discourses of the colonial state were those of development, progress, and evolution and meant to be secular, they could easily be understood as essentially Christian. The response both the state and the missionary societies provoked was also decidedly religious. Hindu and Islamic forms of modernism led to the establishment of modern Hindu and Muslim schools, universities, and hospitals, superseding or marginalizing precolonial forms of education. Far from having a secularizing influence on Indian society, the modernizing project of the secular colonial state in fact gave modern religion a strong new impulse (van der Veer, 2002, p. 179).

A similar observation has been made by Rudolph and Rudolph, two of the most active and involved scholars of contemporary Indian society and politics. They write:

> Modern social science…. asserted that religion would fade, and then disappear with the triumph of science and rationalism. But religion has expanded explosively, stimulated as much by secular global processes … as by proselytizing activity. Contrary to expectations, its expansion has been an answer to and is driven by modernity…
> (Rudolph and Rudolph, 2008, p. 99).

2.2   Post-independence

After independence, the post-colonial Indian state declared itself to be secular, though not indifferent to religion. However, even when it recognized religion and religious communities in various ways, religion and religious community organizations were not expected to play any role whatsoever in the process of social and economic development. On the contrary, the Nehruvian understanding of development

was very close to the one propounded by classical modernization theory. The First Five Year Plan document states this quite explicitly:

> The pace of economic development depends on a variety of factors which constitute the psychological and sociological setting within which the economy operates. A major element in this setting is the community's will to progress and its readiness to develop and adopt new and more efficient methods and processes of production…. Certain forms of economic and social organisation are unsuited to or incapable of absorbing new techniques and utilising them to the best advantage[4].

The state made massive investments in sectors like education and health and opened a large number of secular institutions as part of its development agenda. This process continued with much enthusiasm for more than three decades[5]. Religious organizations were not expected to participate in the development process. Although there were no attempts to stop them from doing the work they were already doing, with the rapid expansion of the state in different spheres, their influence and importance declined.

However, in the 1980s and 1990s the Indian development discourse experienced some interesting shifts. Indian society, like the Indian social sciences, witnessed many new trends during these two decades. The emergence of so-called 'new social movements'[6] during the 1980s raised political and ideological issues that had hitherto been only marginal to Indian public life. Perhaps for the first time in the post-independence period, there was a general feeling of unease and doubt about the paradigm of development that the Indian state had adopted after gaining independence from colonial rule. Planning for development had not been a very successful enterprise in terms of the promised growth rates. More importantly, perhaps, the Nehruvian philosophy of state-centric development had strengthened bureaucratic control over the economy and produced a rigid license and 'quota raj', which came to be seen as counterproductive for economic development[7].

In the 1990s, the Indian state introduced a new framework of economic development centred around economic liberalism and the free market. Pressed hard by the compulsions of the changing global economy and rising import bills following the 'first' gulf war, the Government of India initiated a process of economic reforms. Though initially intended to deal with the immediate challenge of the balance of payments, the reforms turned out to be the beginning of a new phase in the economic history of India. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War around the same time revived the

confidence of advocates of a free market economy. From a direct player in the field of economic development, the Indian state began to see itself as a facilitator and regulator of economic change[8]. Apart from encouraging private enterprise, this shift in economic philosophy created a new political space for the voluntary sector. Non-governmental and faith-based organizations (NGOs and FBOs) began to play a much greater role in the field of social development.

These changes paralleled certain new trends in the social sciences. The 'old' modernist theoretical perspectives gave way to a variety of 'post-modernist' ways of imagining the world. Although not everyone in social sciences quickly converted to these new ways of looking at things, their presence was felt virtually everywhere. The language of development discourses and the politics of social change witnessed many shifts. From class analysis, the focus moved to questions of culture, from revolution to empowerment, from politics to governance, from production to consumption.

The connection between the rise of new paradigms in the social sciences and the emergence of new social movements was not entirely accidental. Rather, these discourses supported each other and were in many ways mutually constitutive. This was true in terms of their criticisms of the modern state, which invariably projected it as a villain. Both seemed to emphasize a greater role for civil society institutions, which, in effect, meant opening up spaces in the sphere of development for the non-profit sector.

2.3   NGOs and development in India

As mentioned above, until the early 1980s, the development discourse in India was mostly state-centric. It was only in the 1980s that the non-governmental or non-profit sector began to acquire some visibility. This, however, is not to suggest that it was absent earlier. As discussed above, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a large number of organizations, mostly religion-based, had emerged in different parts of the subcontinent. Motivated by the modern ethos of western culture, they mobilized for internal reforms within their respective faith communities and set up institutions intended to strengthen their social and cultural resources. However they were not identified with 'development' until the new language of 'civil society' became fashionable during the 1990s.

The non-profit sector has also been growing over the years. A recent survey by Srivastava and Tandon (2005) estimated that at the turn of the century the total number of organizations that could be included in the category was somewhere around 1.2 million[9]. As expected, these organizations are quite diverse and heterogeneous in terms of size, origins and activities. While some of them have a national or even global presence, a large proportion are relatively small in size. More than half are based in rural areas and nearly half are unregistered. Nearly 88 per cent of them are so small that they employ only one or no paid workers. However, at a macro level, the non-profit sector is quite large and it generates employment for a large number of people. In 1999-2000, the sector engaged nearly 2.7 million paid employees on a full time basis and another 3.4 million as full time volunteers. Viewed in the light of the fact that the total number of employees of the central government of India at the time was nearly 3.3 million, this number is quite impressive. The survey also found that the sector generates more than half of its resources from its own work, with foreign funds contributing only around 7 per cent. The rest of the money comes from individual donations and other local sources. In terms of their activities, the largest proportion (26.5 per cent) was involved with religion in one way or the other, while pursuing some form of social and cultural activity. The other areas of work of NPOs included community or social service (21.5 per cent), education (20.5 per cent), sports (18 per cent) and health (6.6 per cent) (Srivastava and Tandon, 2005).

3 Faith-based organizations in Maharashtra: field study

3.1 Regional context

Historically, Maharashtra has been an important region of India for religious activities. As mentioned above, along with Bengal, Maharashtra emerged as an active centre of Western education and religious reform movements during the nineteenth century. Names of early reformers like G.K. Gokhale, M.G. Ranade and Joti Ba Phule are quite well known to students of Indian history. It was here that Bal Gangadhar Tilak successfully transformed the Hindu religious festival of Ganesh Puja into a political event and a source of mobilization for the nationalist struggle against British colonial rule. Tilak's politics transformed a religious activity into a political action and provided a new meaning to Hinduism and its rituals. As an offshoot of these movements, faith-based organizations also emerged in large numbers in this region, which has also been a vibrant educational and cultural centre, home to several institutions of higher education. These were the main reasons for choosing Maharashtra for this preliminary 'mapping' of the FBO sector.

In terms of its size, Maharashtra is the third largest state in India, second only to Uttar Pradesh in terms of its total population. As noted above, in terms of its religious demography, the state resembles the country as a whole (see Table 1). As per the 2001 census, Maharashtra had an overwhelming Hindu majority (80.2 per cent) with Muslims (10.6 per cent) and Buddhists (6 per cent) as its prominent minority populations. Christians too have a presence in the state, at around 1 per cent of the total population. Though small in proportional terms, Maharashtra is also home to the largest number of Jains, Zoroastrians and Jews in India. The presence of cities like Mumbai and Pune have made Maharashtra one of the most urbanized and industrialized regions. Against the national average of around 27 per cent of the population living in urban centres, 42.4 per cent of Maharashtra's population was urban in 2001.

Maharashtra has also been an active centre of Hindu right-wing politics. Hindu organisations like Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Janasangh and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) were present in Maharashtra from the time of their birth. In fact the head office of the RSS is located in Nagpur, a town in Maharashtra. The person who shot at and killed Mahatma Gandhi in 1948 was a member of RSS from Maharashtra. Gandhi's murder by an RSS man provoked a popular backlash and attacks on RSS offices in different parts of the state. Though outfits of the Sangh Parivar[10] continued to be strong, the BJP did not gain much ground in the state until the middle of the 1990s. In fact it was with the rise of

Table 1: Population of religious communities: India and Maharashtra

Religion	All India Population		Maharashtra	
	No.	**%**	**No.**	**%**
All religions	1,228,610,328	100.00	96,878,627	100.00
Hindus	867,578,868	80.45	77,859,385	80.36
Muslims	158,188,240	13.43	10,270,485	10.60
Christians	24,080,016	2.34	1,058,313	1.09
Sikhs	19,215,730	1.86	215,337	0.22
Buddhists	16,947,992	1.50	5,838,710	6.02
Jains	4,225,053	0.41	1,301,843	1.34
Others	6,639,626	0.64	236,841	0.24
Religion not stated	727,588	0.07	97,713	0.10

Source: Census of India 2001. **http://www.censusindia.gov.in**

Shiv Sena that right-wing Hindu politics flourished in Maharashtra, changing the course of State politics (Vicziany, 2002, p. 43).

Shiv Sena was founded on 19 June 1966 in Bombay by Bal Thackeray, who has since been its patriarch. He was a professional cartoonist for the English language daily, *Free Press Journal,* which he left in the late 1950s to start his own weekly magazine in Marathi, *Mamrik* (literally essence). Through this weekly he tried to propagate the idea that, though Maharashtra had become a separate state, it was still dominated by the outsiders. This, he argued, was particularly so in the city of Bombay where outsiders, particularly those from the South, were taking away all the jobs, leaving local Marathis unemployed.

Apart from raising the issue of local Marathis, the sons of the soil, versus outsiders, Bal Thackeray attacked communists and Muslims. The communists, he argued, obstructed the development of industry by mobilizing labour, thus hindering the growth of new jobs. They were, he alleged, anti-national. He also attacked Muslims and argued that only Hindus could be true nationalists in India. The Muslims, he argued, were loyal only to Pakistan. Shivaji[11], the symbolic source for the Sena, was projected as someone who had fought against the Muslim rulers all his life (Gupta, 1982).

Shiv Sena re-emerged on the Maharashtra political scene during the 1980s in a different *avatar*. It quietly buried its nativist identity and took the form of a Hindu communalist organization with a rabid anti-Muslim and anti-Dalit[12] stance. Using communal rhetoric it again tried to appeal to the lower middle classes from an upper and middle caste Hindu background. In one of its statements, one of its spokespersons said

> Being a Hindu is not a crime: being a savarna (upper caste Hindu) is not a sin, being a Dalit is not a merit. Muslims and Christians should not retain a sense of being separate as a minority (Palshikar, 1999, p. 11).

This new rhetoric helped Sena to spread beyond Bombay and other cities. It began to attract rural voters and spread to different parts of the State. It was able to exploit local level contradictions to its advantage and produced a new kind of what Hansen described as 'vernacularized Hindutva' (Hansen, 1996). It entered into an electoral alliance with the BJP in 1989 and eventually formed a government with it in 1995. Apart from participating in electoral politics, Sena also has a strong criminal base in urban centres like Mumbai. It works as a parallel state in disputes over property. Shiv Sena also participates actively in anti-Muslim riots that break out in cities like Bombay at regular intervals. In fact the rise of Shiv Sena has further marginalized Muslims in the State of Maharashtra.

Communal politics in the State of Maharashtra has been responsible for frequent cases of Hindu-Muslim riots and terrorist bombings, mostly in urban centres. These invariably lead to large scale destruction, particularly of Muslim-owned property. In the absence of a viable state response, the rehabilitation work is left to community-based and faith organizations.

3.2   A note on methodology

Pune and Nagpur are two of the major urban centres in Maharashtra. Pune emerged as an important centre of social and religious reform activity during the nineteenth century and continues to be a well-known centre of higher education and learning today. With a population of around 4.5 million, it is the eighth largest city in India. Nagpur too is a fairly big city with a population of 2.1 million. It was the thirteenth largest urban conglomeration in India in 2001. Both cities have strong presence of religious organizations working for development.

Unfortunately, no comprehensive list of such organizations is available anywhere. A visit to the office of the Charity Commissioner, one of the official bodies that registers non-governmental organizations in Pune, confirmed that no comprehensive list is available. The published directories of development organizations generally list only secular NGOs, or within wider lists it is difficult to identify FBOs from their names or mission statements alone. Moreover, it is only recently that faith-based organizations have begun to present themselves explicitly as development agents, possibly reflecting broader shifts that have taken place with respect to the 'NGO-ization' of civil society and also the reconfiguration of charity and welfare work (typically a mainstay of religious organizations) as 'development'. Owing to the complexity of identifying 'FBOs', we proceeded through our contacts in the two cities. However, our informants were only able to introduce us to the organizations of which they knew. We thus approached a diverse array of informants who were familiar with the area, ranging from university professors to local taxi drivers.

Though as a result the representation of FBOs selected for mapping was quite uneven, we were able to locate organizations from almost all the faith traditions (see Table 2) and overall were able to obtain information on 133 organizations. The easiest to locate and study were the Christian organizations. They work primarily in education and health, fields in which they have been working for a long time. They are also run professionally. Many of them consciously associate themselves with marginalized groups and can, therefore, more easily be seen as development actors than other organizations. Though Christian organizations are over-represented in our sample, they are not the only ones we mapped. The most difficult to locate and interview were the Hindu and Muslim organizations, which often suspected our intentions and only agreed to interviews very reluctantly. Nevertheless, we were able to study a good number of such organizations. As evident from Table 2, as many as 30 Hindu and

18 Muslim organizations were contacted. The differences between the Christian and Hindu/Muslim FBOs can perhaps be attributed to the differing nature of the faith traditions: Christianity has a long history of professional social engagement, which is nearly absent in the other faith traditions. We also contacted some organizations associated with Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs and Parsis.

Table 2: Classification of FBOs mapped by religion

	Number	**%**
Hindu	30	22.6
Muslim	18	13.5
Christian	70	52.6
Sikh	4	3.0
Buddhist	6	4.5
Jain	4	3.0
Parsi	1	0.8
Total	**133**	**100.0**

Before visiting, we almost always tried to arrange an interview with a member knowledgeable about the organization concerned. However, in some cases we just visited the premises and spoke to whoever was willing to speak to us. After seeking consent to interview, we followed a two page interview schedule with a total of 21 questions (see Appendix 1). Though most respondents were comfortable with participating in the research, not everyone was happy with the official looking schedule. The most contentious question was about the sources of their funding. In some we had to abandon the interview half way through. Most of our respondents were full-time employees of the organization concerned and a large majority of them were men: of a total of 133 respondents, only 17 were women, reflecting the male-dominated character of the sector in India. The fieldwork for the study was carried out in two phases in 2007, with a first visit in the month of April and a second in August. While most of the data were collected with the help of the semi-structured interview schedule, during the interview we also discussed some questions that were not asked in the schedule. The interviews were conducted in English and Hindi. Though the local language of Maharashtra is Marathi, our respondents were quite comfortable with English and/or Hindi.

3.3   Size, spread and organizational structure

As with the non-profit sector in general, the FBO sector is quite diverse and varied in character. While some organizations have a pan-Indian presence, many are local. As is evident from Figure 1, a large majority of the FBOs identified are small organizations with a single branch, functioning locally. While this seemed to be the case with organizations from all the faith communities, it was particularly true of Muslim and Sikh organizations. Some of the Christian and Hindu organizations, in contrast, had multiple branches. The extent, significance and explanation of these differences were not explored further at this stage, but should inform the research questions for the next phase of this research. Why are the Muslim and Sikh organizations predominantly small, while Christian and Hindu organizations apparently grow into larger organizations with a wider reach? Is there something inherent in these traditions that favours large organizations which function in multiple locations?

Among the relatively large organizations studied were the Ramakrishna Matha, Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangh, Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Mathas and Deep Griha Society. Ramakrishna Matha, for example, is a 'reformist' Hindu organization with a large number of branches in India and abroad. It was set up by the renowned Hindu reformer Swami Vivekananda and was registered with the local authorities in 1901. Management of the *matha* is vested in a board of trustees, who must all be Hindu monks. Apart from working in different parts of the country, the *matha* has centres in Bangladesh, Argentina, Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, the UK, the USA and South Africa. Its activities include education, health, relief and rehabilitation, and "propagation of Indian cultural and spiritual heritage". Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangh is a Buddhist organization that was established in 1979. It has 22 branches and runs a medical project, a balwadi (kindergarten) project, sports, creche activities, sewing classes and adult literacy classes.

Figure 1: FBOs studied by religious tradition and number of branches

Number of FBOs by religious tradition and number of branches

Legend: ■ Single ■ 2-5 ■ 6-10 ■ 11-25 ■ More than 25 ■ Not answered
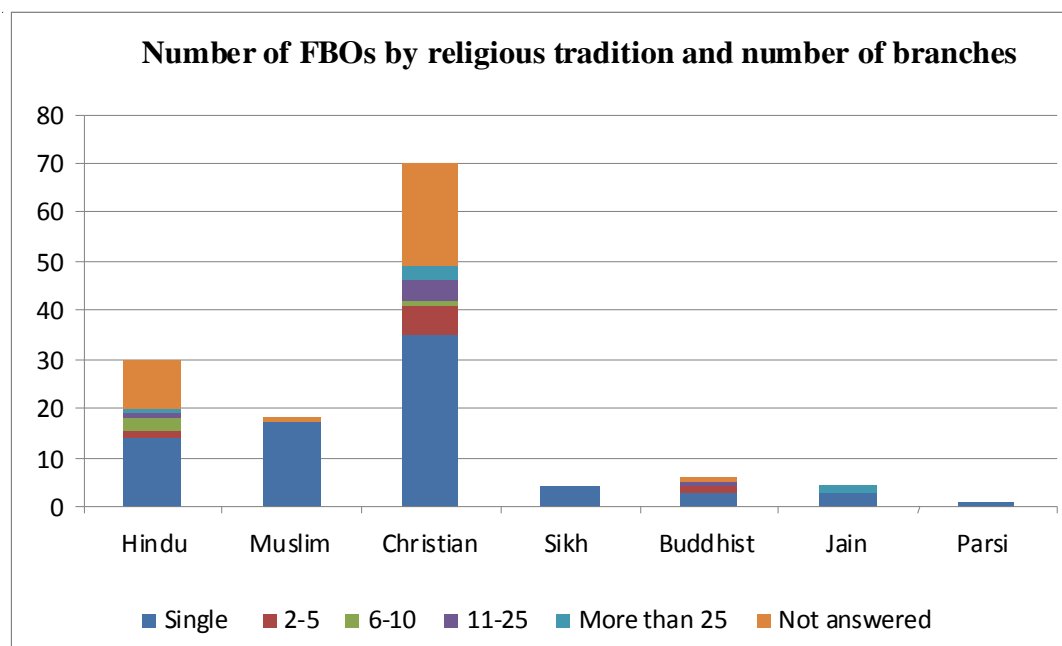
In terms of the spread of their activities, a large majority of the FBOs identified focus their activities locally: as many as 70 per cent reported that their primary sphere of activity is the city in which they are located, where they work through local schools, hospitals or other institutions. However, nearly a third also operate elsewhere in the state (11 per cent) or in different parts of the country (16 per cent). Further, among the organizations we studied, five had a global presence. There are some differences between the faith traditions in terms of the geographical spread of activities. For example, most of the globally active FBOs are Hindu. In contrast, none of the Muslim organizations have a national or global reach.

All the organizations are formally registered with the State Government of Maharashtra, under different legislative provisions. More than 80 per cent of our respondents stated that their organizations are professionally organized. They invariably have a board of trustees, a list of office bearers, a brochure and a written constitution. They also have someone working in the office and a list of activities. However, their organizational structure varies, particularly with their size and spread. The bigger organizations seem to have more formal management structures, with professional accounting

systems, and more varied sources of funding than the smaller organizations that work locally. There is a clear difference across the faith traditions. The Christian and Buddhist organizations are professionally organized, with formal constitutions and office bearers with defined roles and duties. In contrast, the Sikh organizations, which all operate from the premises of a gurudwara, are quite loosely structured. The Muslim organizations too are not very professionally organized. They are also more oriented to their own community and seem hesitant to interact with the outside world. The Hindu organizations were in between in organizational terms, some of them being well structured while others have quite a loose organizational structure. Explanations for these differences were not explored at this stage of the research, but the questions that they raise do suggest avenues for shaping future research in this area.

Faith-based organizations in India are less likely to be individual-centric than the non-profit sector in general (see Srivastava and Tandon, 2005)[13]. Only around 7 per cent of those studied appear to be so, while the rest seem to be under the control of some kind of community body. A good number operate from independent premises, although the size of buildings they own and/or work from vary significantly.

3.4   Trajectories of origin

Faith-based organizations have proliferated globally since the 1980s. However, as discussed above, India has a long history of faith organizations actively participating in the public sphere and demanding state action for reform and development. Of the 133 organizations surveyed, more than a quarter were set up during the colonial period, during the nineteenth century or the first half of the twentieth century. Interestingly these older FBOs are associated with all the faith traditions. However, the major growth in the FBO sector has occurred since the 1980s, when the non-profit sector in general was expanding in India. Nearly half of the organizations we studied were set up during this period. With the exception of Buddhist and Sikh organizations, which were all set up during the post-independence period, the pattern of growth was quite similar in all the faith traditions. Interestingly, none of the organizations had been set up during the 1950s, the first decade after independence, when, as discussed above, the Nehruvian state was presenting the secularization agenda as part of a state-centred development process. It was the growing popularity of identity-based movements in different parts of the country and a general decline of secular ideologies that created the conditions for the expansion in numbers of FBOs.

3.5   Classification of FBOs

3.5.1 Types of organization

Faith-based organizations are not homogeneous. Apart from the diverse faith traditions with which they are associated and their differing origins and trajectories, they can also be classified on the basis of various other criteria. One way of doing this is to look at their general orientation or the manner in which they present their priority activities.

As discussed in Section 1.2 we based our classification of FBOs on the typology developed in Clarke (2005), adapted in the Indian context to include the four categories that form the basis of Figure 2. We asked each organization that we visited to classify itself according to this typology. As already noted, the majority of the organizations that we studied are Christian (68 of 133). Most of these organizations prefer to describe themselves as 'missionary organizations', with only two considering that their primary field of activity is 'faith-based charitable/development' work. While they do participate in community work and education, they do not see themselves as 'development NGOs'. However, recently, increasing numbers of Christian organizations in India have begun to refer to themselves as 'development organizations'. This shift from 'missionary' and 'charitable' priorities to self-representation as 'development' organizations, however, appears to be more about legitimacy and discourses in evolving local and global contexts than any change in their primary purpose or activities. This preliminary exploration of the self-categorization of Christian FBOs raises questions important for future research, to which we were only able to pay cursory attention at this stage.[14]

Of the 55 organizations overall which classify themselves as 'faith-based charitable/development organizations', 25 were Hindu, 16 Muslim, 2 Christian, 3 Sikh, 6 Buddhist, 2 Jain and 1 Parsi (Figure 2). The main activities of these FBOs are organizing blood donation camps; spreading awareness on HIV/AIDS and providing facilities to HIV/AIDS patients; organizing medical camps; helping the poor by providing income and employment generating assets such as sewing machines; helping the physically disabled by providing them with wheelchairs and other aids; and organizing and participating in relief and rehabilitation work during disasters.

## Figure 2: Community-wise typology of FBOs
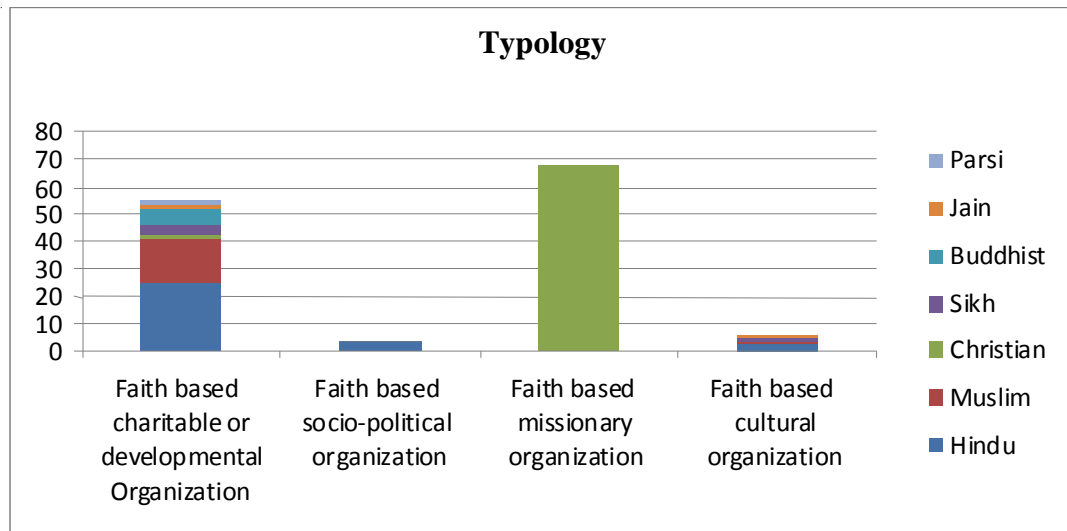
A few other organizations presented themselves as socio-political bodies that also participate in development or relief work. These were mostly right-wing Hindu organizations, which saw these activities as part of the larger project of building or strengthening the Hindu nation[15], "the promotion of *dharma* (faith) and *rashtra* (nation)", as one of the respondents proudly said. Several organizations classify themselves as 'faith-based cultural organizations'.[16] Although they too emphasize the promotion of their faith and cultural tradition, their politics is non-antagonistic vis-à-vis other faith traditions.

3.5.2 The primary activities of faith-based organizations

There is a marked difference in the focus of activities between organizations depending on their religious orientation. Most of the FBOs concerned with empowerment of the marginalized come from the Christian and Buddhist faith traditions. For different historical reasons, they have been closer to the poor and marginal groups in Indian society, particularly in Maharashtra. Many of the Buddhists in the State of Maharashtra are Dalit converts, inspired by their leader B.R. Ambedkar[17]. The Christian organizations are also the most diversified in terms of their work. Many of them are active in the fields of health and education. In particular, we recognize (although did not have the capacity to map at this stage) the importance of Catholic (Jesuit) schools, which partly depend on State funding and fees but also have close links with church congregations (see also John, 2008). It is to these schools that most non-Marathi speaking Maharashtran middle class families aspire to send their children. The Jesuits themselves have historically tried to target Dalit groups, although this is becoming less tenable.[18] The

Hindu organizations focus more on issues of health and work, based on a general notion of the social and spiritual upliftment of the religious community and nation. The Muslim organizations, most of which are offshoots of madrasas, almost exclusively focus on educational activities[19]. The smaller communities, such as Sikhs, Jains and Parsis, work with a general notion of community development or providing service to humanity at large.

Figure 3: Primary focus of FBO activities
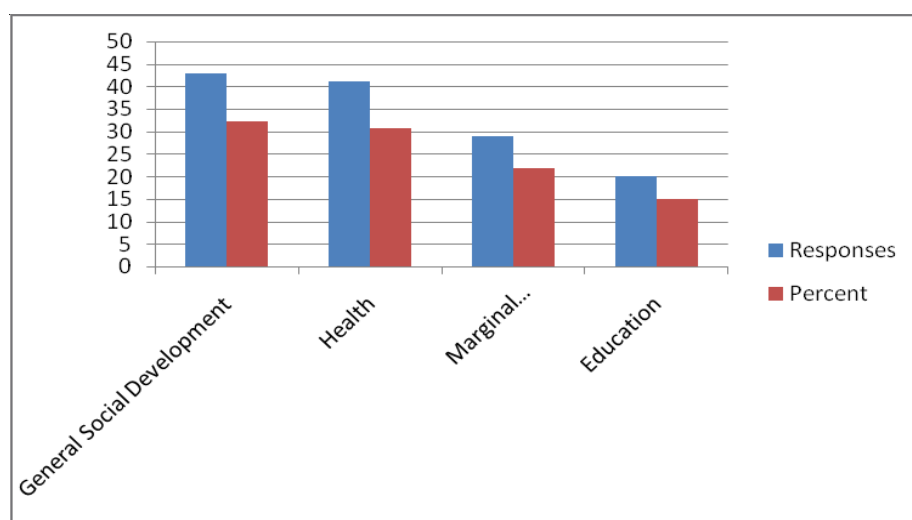
Note: 'general social development' implies for the general good of society, where society is viewed as an abstract category. The term 'marginal' refers to those organizations that focus specifically on socially marginalized groups like the Dalits or Scheduled Tribes.

3.6   Funding sources

As mentioned above, questions related to funding caused the most difficulties. Some of the respondents refused to reveal their sources of funding and found the question objectionable. However, we were able to develop a broad understanding of the subject in the course of our interaction with respondents.

The FBOs surveyed generate their funding from a variety of sources. Only 11 per cent depend on a single source of funding. As many as 77 per cent told us that they have multiple sources of funding (the rest did not tell us about their funding sources). These sources include individual donations, mostly from members of their own faith community. In addition, many FBOs generate their own resources through running educational institutions and hospitals. Their involvement with development activities opens up the possibility of receiving funds from the State Government of Maharashtra and

the Government of India. For example, Jnana Parbodhini, a Hindu FBO working in Pune, has its own resources but also received funds from the government for projects related to watershed development. Another organization received funds for doing research projects in psychology and culture. Similarly Bahujan Shikshan Sangh, a Buddhist organization with its head office in Ahmednagar, gets funds from the Social Welfare Department of the Government of Maharashtra. Their main activity is providing education to children from the poor and socially marginalized groups. Women's Development and Educational Centre, a Christian organization set up in 1995 and working with HIV/AIDS patients, also gets funds from the Government of Maharashtra. Sadhu Vaswani Mission, a Sindhi (Hindu) organization established in 1933 in Pune, has received funds from the State government for specific projects. Several other organizations also receive funds from the central government.

Interestingly, only a small number of our respondents reported that their organizations receive foreign funding. Amongst them, the Missionaries of Christ Jesus, a Christian FBO based in Pune, is funded by Benefactors, a Spanish organization. Their stated priority activity is empowering the marginalized. Deep Griha, another Christian organization, receives funds from Inter-Aid, a French organization, and from various church-affiliated institutions in the U.S.A. and U.K. Dragon Palace, a Nagpur-based Buddhist FBO, received a one-time donation from a Japanese institution for building the Dragon Palace. Their activities include propagation of the Buddhist religion and support for the physically disabled and senior citizens.

Foreign funds received for development-related work have generally been viewed with suspicion in India, both by the state and by many political organizations. In fact, in 1976, the Government of India enacted the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) with the intention of regulating the acceptance and utilization of foreign money. This Act applies to all kinds of voluntary organizations, both faith-based and secular.

We also asked our respondents a question about their perceptions of their relationship with the government. Interestingly, only 28 per cent reported that their relationship with the state system is cordial and active. However, none reported it as hostile. A large majority reported either that they have no relationship (11 per cent) or that their relationship is cordial but passive (41 per cent). This shows that, even though some of the faith-based organizations take funds from the government, the faith-based sector works quite independently of the state system.

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4   Visions and values

What are the visions and values of faith-based organizations in India? What motivates them and guides their activities? Is there a common pattern across faith traditions? Or do their ideologies differ significantly? These questions are not easy to answer and would require more in-depth studies of faith based organizations than were undertaken in this preliminary study. However, a historical understanding of the growth of the FBO sector and the mapping work presented above provides some tentative answers to these questions.

We can broadly identify three sets of values and visions that appear to guide the activities of different FBOs in India. First, as is apparent from their formal statements about their activities, they are guided by a general humanitarian and universalistic value of serving humanity on the basis of a non-sectarian perspective. The second set of values appears to be 'right-wing' and sectarian in nature. The third set of values can be seen as 'internal consolidation of the community' and gaining legitimacy for the religious community from the larger society.

As shown in Figure 3 above, even though all the organizations identified have a clear communitarian identity, in the sense of being part of a specific faith system or tradition, many of the FBOs surveyed had broader humanitarian goals. Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Matha's booklet *Embracing the World* articulates this universalism in the following words:

Everything that exists is a part of God or the Universal Consciousness. To experience Divinity in everyone and everything is the real goal of each of us in our journey through life. A tangible way of achieving this is to practice selfless service….

The brochure also lists a large number of development activities that the *matha* has been doing in different parts of the country, including building houses for the poor, village reconstruction, pensions for destitute women, homes for the aged, providing free food to the poor, special projects for *adivasis* (tribal people) and various educational institutions and hospitals.

A similar set of values guide the Christian mission organizations. A good example of this is the Pune-based Sarva Seva Sangh (an organization that aims to serve all people). Set up in 1979, this FBO primarily serves marginalized groups. It has been working with poor women to develop their capacity to obtain better employment and provides health-related services to the poor. It claims to be

completely non-sectarian and open to all. In its brochures Sarva Seva Sangh "pledges to serve people, irrespective of religion, caste, creed, region etc".

A subset of these organizations, although motivated by universal values, work more like professional development NGOs, even though not all of them are run by development professionals. The Deep Griha Society, affiliated to the Protestant church, is a good example of such an organization. Its religious affiliation is rarely foregrounded and some of its core activists are non-Christians. Even its name does not reveal its church affiliation. Its stated objective is "empowerment of the marginalised through capacity building and sustainable rural and urban development programmes". As the brochure of the organization states:

> Deep Griha – meaning 'Light House' – is an independent charitable organisation working to better the lives of people in the slums of Pune. Through a range of family welfare programmes encompassing education, health, awareness building and self-help projects, DGS helps thousands of beneficiaries within Pune and several nearby villages.

Most of the FBOs included in the second category are Hindu majoritarian in orientation. Although they too use the language of universalism, they closely work with right-wing political formations, which have a sectarian and exclusionary social and political agenda. A good example could be the Sadhu Vasvani Mission, which calls itself a "humanitarian organization [which] strives to serve humanity in various fields, educational, medical, moral, social, cultural and spiritual". The mission runs several hospitals and educational institutions and has programmes like 'village upliftment' and 'promotion of vegetarianism'. However, it also identifies itself as a Sindhi[20] organization and among its activities it lists the promotion of the Sindhi language. A closer look at the Mission clearly reveals its agenda of creating "a world-wide Hindu community" (Patel, 2007).

Some other organizations are more explicit about their sectarian orientation. For example, the Pune-based Patit Pawan Sanghatana (PPS) was set up by the right-wing Hindu organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), in the late 1960s. This and similar organizations work directly under the control of RSS, which tries to mobilize the youth from different sections of the Hindus and train them to be a part of the militant Hindutva movement in order to fight for a "Hindu nation". As Kanungo argues, one of the objectives of such organizations is to bring Hindus together and produce a sense of

unity, an alternative vision to hierarchical Hindu society (Kanungo, 2002). Similarly Patel, who has worked on the organization, gives a vivid picture of its values and organizational strategies:

> It propagates a simplistic and highly communal version of the Hindutva that could appeal to poverty stricken, deprived youth to organize against what RSS perceives as common threats to Hinduism. It campaigns against corrupt politicians, bureaucrats and the police force. Among its more direct political and symbolic actions are the assaults on anti-Hindu politicians and media persons. It also participates in all the agitational campaigns of the Sangha Parivar conducted in Pune city. Its eclectic concerns are related to its extremely localised base and constituency and to its religious and 'moral' understanding of the rights of the Hindu community (Patel, 2007, p. 16).

Another study, of schools run by the parent organization of PPS, the RSS, in Chhattisgarh, found their pedagogical programmes extremely disturbing. In the name of promoting Hindu religious values, it found, the schools were inculcating hatred for Muslims among the Hindu children (Sundar, 2004).

While the right-wing exclusionary agenda is an important part of faith-based activity carried out in the name of development in India, this is certainly not the dominant trend. Most organizations fall in between the two extremes of completely universalistic or completely sectarian. These middle-of-the road organizations are more narrowly focussed: they either represent a smaller religious community or are run by a particular Hindu sect. For example, the organizations run by smaller religious groups, such as the Christians and Sikhs, do not have a strong political agenda like the right-wing Hindu organizations. Most of them present their religious identity strongly, but tend to be oriented towards the work in which they are engaged and rarely politicize their activities. Their main concern is with presenting their religious community in a positive light through charitable work. The Sikh FBOs in Pune, for example, work from the premises of the gurudwara, presenting the virtues of the Sikh religion to the local population, where they are a tiny minority, through their activities.

5 Concluding remarks

Religious activity in the public sphere is deeply embedded in the social, political and historical context of a given society. In India, for example, colonial rule and the associated policies transformed the manner in which different faith communities looked at themselves and others. Though Christianity had begun to spread in the subcontinent well before colonization, the establishment of British rule and the new activities that the church initiated during the nineteenth century in the subcontinent provoked a response from other religious communities, who began to see Christianity not only as a threat to their religion but also as a 'model religion' for restructuring their own faith communities. The policies of the colonial power and its choice of religion as an important marker for classifying the Indian population for the purposes of administration and representation also had far-reaching implications and played an important role in shaping religious groups' involvement in the Indian public sphere. The social and religious reform movements of the nineteenth century and later the nationalist mobilizations amongst Hindus and Muslims completely transformed the political sociology of the two major faith communities of the subcontinent. The new cultural and political elite, trained in the Western system of secular education, paradoxically began to play a much more active role in shaping the religious and social agenda of their respective communities. It was in this context that the 'native' faith communities began to set up formal organizations, which were later to be registered and sanctioned by the state system. They also began to get involved with providing modern services, such as western education and health care, to the masses at large, and also campaigning for women's rights and social reforms.

The primary objective of the religious reform movements and the faith-based organizations that emerged during the colonial period was, thus, to strengthen or consolidate their respective faith communities, drawing clearer boundaries between religious communities, fighting against the perceived 'social evils' in their communities, and gaining legitimacy and respect vis-à-vis the colonial state. The nationalist struggles and coming of independence significantly changed this social context. Though religion continued to be an important social reality, and the secular Indian state did not decry its practice, it was not seen to be of much relevance in the process of nation-building, at least during the initial years of planning for development. The numbers of faith-based organizations did not grow during this period. It was after the 1970s and during the 1980s and 1990s that their numbers began to grow again.

This was also the period when India was experiencing an important political and ideological shift in relation to notions of development and secularism. The state-centric model began to give way to a more pluralistic notion of development. New categories like 'civil society' and 'citizenship' began to be invoked by the social movements emerging from India's 'grassroots'. These movements brought with them a new language of democratic participation. Democratization did not necessarily go well with the classical notions of modernization and secularization. Some of these movements institutionalized themselves in the form of new types of organization. While some acquired the character of political parties, many took the shape of NGOs. This shift created a new space for religious activity in the public sphere. With secularism having lost its ideological appeal for the post-Nehruvian political elite, religion re-entered India's public sphere in many different ways.

Thus, as we have tried to demonstrate through this field study, the faith-based sector is quite diverse in India. It has its own historical trajectories, while its growth and orientation are also closely linked to developments and changes taking place in the wider society. While some FBOs have a global presence and link their activities with larger political processes at the national and international levels, a large number are small in size and work locally. The focus of their activities is also quite limited. Their most important work has been in the fields of education, health, emergency relief and community development. More recently, some of them have begun to get involved with empowerment of marginalized social groups, including women, and other development projects. They are legally registered and mostly have a constitution and set of office bearers, although the extent to which they are professionally organized varies, mainly with size.

The most contentious aspect of the FBO sector in India is the value orientation and political ideology of some FBOs. While most faith-based organizations work rather quietly in the fields of education, health and community development, welcoming all, a few try to use development to consolidate their politics of social exclusion and hatred. The latter mostly tend to be majoritarian organizations working for a strong Hindu nation, which spread hatred of Muslims. Globalization seems to be helping them. For example, in the name of development, organizations like RSS and Vishva Hindu Prishad have started mobilizing money from the thriving Hindu diaspora living in the West (see, for example, Bhat and Mukta, 2003). The money raised is often transferred to militant Hindu organizations that organize riots and violence against minority religious groups, especially Muslims.

Much faith-based development activity is important and positive, producing effective and meaningful engagement of FBOs with marginalized people. However, it is important to recognize the fact that faith-based development activity in a religiously plural society like India can be quite a contentious process, with some organizations pushing an exclusionary political agenda in the name of development.

Notes

[1] Other scholars have discussed possible typological classifications for FBOs. Chaves (2002) and Bradley (2008), for instance, discuss 'organizational' typologies, as does Clarke (2005), whereas Sider and Unruh (2004) are interested in different types of FBO according to the way that faith manifests itself within them. It is notable that the majority of these studies have emerged in a North American context, where faith-based organizations have a high profile and prevalence. Most do not focus on developing countries or 'development'. Since it is not our aim in this study to develop a typology for India, we will not discuss these studies in any detail but simply draw attention to the fact that this is an emerging area of scholarly analysis. See also Chambre (2001) and Netting (2004).

[2] This research is to be followed up by more in depth study of selected FBOs and NGOs in particular locations and will attempt to follow up some of these tricky perceptual/definitional issues.

[3] The enactment of the Societies Registration Act 1860, was another hallmark of voluntarism during this phase of history. Getting registered with the state gave organizations recognition and legitimacy. The British colonial government and later the Government of India after independence added several other Acts under which non-profit organizations can be legally registered. Besides the Societies Registration Act, 1860, they can be registered/ incorporated under any of the following: the Public Trust Acts of various states, such as the Bombay Trusts Act, the Rajasthan Public Trusts Act; Section 25 of the Indian Companies Act, 1956; the Co-operative Societies Act, 1904; the Trade Union Act, 1926; (PRIA, 2001). Separate registration under Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 1976 is required for those receiving foreign contributions.

[4] See http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/welcome.html.

[5] For a broad overview of India's development process, see Frankel, 2005; Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987; Harriss-White, 2004.

[6] Unlike the 'old' social movements, the so-called New Social Movements (NSMs) were movements of the post-industrial economy, cultural in their orientation, inspired by identity-related issues and with the objective of expanding ideas about the normative. NSM researchers in the West have typically been working on "urban social struggles, environmental or ecological movements, women's and gay liberation, the peace movement, and cultural revolt linked primarily to student and youth activism" (Boggs quoted in Pichardo, 1997, p. 413). Though the context is different, the term 'new' has also been used for social movements that emerged in India during and since the 1980s. These include environmentalist movements and movements of women, farmers, dalits and other marginalized social groups around questions of identity and dignity.

[7] See Khilnani, 1998; Jodhka, 2001.

[8] For a broad overview of economic liberalization in India, see Corbridge and Harriss, 2000.

[9] The research in this paper is based on the output of a study undertaken by the Society for Particiaptory Research in Asia (PRIA). The PRIA study used five criteria for including an organization in its study: 1. it should have some organizational/ institutional identity, whether or not it is legally registered; 2. it should be private (i.e. institutionally separate from government); 3. it should not be distributing profits: even if a surplus is generated, it should be ploughed back into the work of the organization; 4. it should be self-governing, autonomous, and independent of government and private business control; and 5. it should be based on the voluntary participation of people contributing time and effort without compensation. The list of their organizations included schools, clinics, orphanages, sports clubs, cultural organizations, social service providers, research and training institutes, and development organizations. They used a survey method for collection of data (PRIA, 2003).

[10] 'Family of organizations' associated with Hindu nationalism, including the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

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[11] Shivaji Rao Bhosale was a seventeenth century ruler in the Maharashtra region who fought wars with the local Mughal rulers. He is often used as a symbol of nationalist pride by the right-wing Hindu organizations in the region, including the Shiva Sena, literally 'the army of Shivaji'.

[12] Though the category Dalit has been in use for quite some time in the State of Maharashtra, it became popular during the 1990s with the consolidation of autonomous Dalit social movements in different parts of the country. The word literally means 'down and grounded' and is used as a collective category for the ex-untouchable communities. The word Dalit is preferred to the word 'Harijan', popularized by Mahatma Gandhi, as a category for self-description by politically conscious and active members of the Scheduled Castes (the official list of ex-untouchable communities identified for special quotas in jobs, educational institutions and legislative bodies by the Indian government).

[13] Individual-centric organizations are those whose control and vision revolves around an individual, who invariably is also the founder of the organization.

[14] Traditionally, religious organizations have been heavily involved in education, but it appears that they do not necessarily perceive this as a 'development' activity.

[15] The Hindu right wing has had a long history in India. As we have tried to show in Section 2, the Hindu revivalist movement began with religious reform movements during the 19th century. However, it took a more organized form with the establishment of Rashtriya Sawayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925. Over the years, a plethora of sub-organizations have evolved around RSS. The structure and ideology of these organizations resembles those of right-wing and fascist groups (Jaffrelot, 2005).

[16] This category is not included in Clarke's typology (2005) but was important to include in the Indian context because it reflects the way that some of the organizations that we visited think about the nature of their primary activity.

[17] B.R. Ambedkar was perhaps the first educated leader of India's ex-untouchable population. He was also actively involved with India's freedom struggle and, as Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, played an important role in framing India's Constitution. He also became the first Minister of Law in independent India.

[18] The engagement of religious organizations in education will be examined in more depth in a further research project.

[19] Madrasas are traditional schools run by mosques.

[20] Sindhis are a Hindu community of migrants from Sindh, Pakistan. They are mostly concentrated in Maharashtra.

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Appendix I

Interview schedule

1. Name of the organisation ……………..…………………………….…………..………..

2. Address: …………………………………………………………………………..……..

3. Origin (Date of establishment)

………………..dd/…………..…...mm/………………y

4. Legal (Registration #)

Apex Body? …………..……………...   If yes, how many branches?

5. If Branch, of which Apex Body

………………………………………………………………………………………………

7. Type:
  i.   Faith-based charitable or developmental organisation ☐

  ii.   Faith-based socio-political organisation ☐

  iii.   Faith-based missionary organisation ☐

  iv.   Faith-based cultural organisation ☐

  v.   Faith-based any other organisation (name it)
      …………………..………………………………………………………………

8.   Vision:……..…………………………………………………….……………………
      …………………………………………………………………………….…………...
      …………………………………………………..…….……………………………
      ………………………………………………………………………………………
      ……………………………………………………………………………………...

9.   Mission/Goals:…………………………………………………….………………
      …………………………………………………………………………….…………
      …………………………………………………..…….……………………………
      ………………………………………………………………………………………

10.   Organisational Structure:
      …………………………………………………………………………….…………...
      ……………………………………………..…………………………………………..

11.   Membership, if any, number:
      …………………………………………..……...……………….…………………
      …………………………………………..……...……………….…………………

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12. Geographical Spread

…………..……………………………..……………………………..…………….……………..………...…

13. Sources of Funding

14. Relationship with the Government

        i. Does the FBO receive funds from the govt.?

       ii. Criteria for receiving funds?

      iii. If yes, what?

15. Main Focus of the FBO

16. Activities

	Activities/Programmes	No.

17. If there is an evolution/change in activities since inception. Describe

18. Who are the major beneficiaries (socio-economic/religious

    group/inclusive/exclusive)?

19. Literature/Publications

20. Networking activities of the FBO?

21. Role religion plays in the Organisation

        i. Is religion essential to the activities of the FBO?

       ii. Is religion non-essential to its activities

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