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**DAILY EDITORIAL
ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

Changing Role of Civil society

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CHANGING ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

In Context

- Some Civil society Organisations have come under the increasing scrutiny of the government over their activities .

About Civil society

- Civil society refers to the space for **collective action** around **shared interests**, purposes and values, generally distinct from government and commercial for-profit actors.
- Civil society includes **charities, development NGOs, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations**, professional associations, trade unions, social movements, coalitions and advocacy groups.
- The term became popular in political and economic discussions in the 1980s.
- It has the power to influence the actions of elected policy-makers and businesses.

Brief History of Civil Society in India

- India has had a long tradition of voluntary service, rooted in the concepts of **dharma (duty) and daan (giving)**.
- These were part of the teachings across all religious sections, encouraging people to help others in need.
- Therefore, voluntary contribution in the country took shape through the social and religious movements of serving others.
- It also gave rise to many organizations for the service of the disadvantaged, such as **Brahmo Samaj (1828), Theosophical Society (1879), Ramakrishna Mission (1897), and Seva Samiti (1914)**.
- The most powerful civil society movements in Indian history, which were led by citizens, were **Swadeshi movements of 1905**.
- **Chipko Movement**, saw people protesting against deforestation by hugging trees to stop them from being cut
- It also gave rise to the society movement that contributed to the **Right to Education Act in 2009**, which provides for free and compulsory education to all children aged six to 14 years in India.
- The **Anti Corruption Movement** for Jan Lokpal Bill of 2011, led by Anna Hazare brought together a huge number of people, making it a one of its kind event in decades.

Role and Functions

- **Service provider** (for example, running primary schools and providing basic community health care services).
 - ♦ Work by civil society could broadly be elaborated as service delivery to enable access to basic goods and services by citizens
- **Advocate/campaigner** (for example, lobbying governments or business on issues including indigenous rights or the environment)
- **Watchdog** (for example, monitoring government compliance with human rights treaties)
- **Building active citizenship** (for example, motivating civic engagement at the local level and engagement with local, regional and national governance)
- **Participating in global governance** processes (for example, civil society organisations serve on the advisory board of the World Bank's Climate Investment Funds)
- **Supporting other organisations in research**, capacity building, and networking;
- **Drafting policy action plans and legislation:** Many CSOs today focus on stronger consultation and collaboration mechanisms with the government to support policy action plans and legislation

- **Research and evidence.** With the growth of research and evidence in the policy landscape in India, civil society plays a significant role.
 - ◆ CSOs gather relevant data from the grassroots, implement and refine programs, and drive decisions rooted in evidence.
- **Innovation:** Civil society in India is seen as a key player to develop and scale innovative models of change.
 - ◆ Given the diverse range and scope of CSOs, they have a unique strength to pilot test models, share good practices, and replicate through example.
- **Focus on substantial issues:** Civil society in India also continues to provide formal and informal platforms to facilitate dialogue on key issues, be it the state of affairs, role of citizens, or government policies.

Challenges Faced by Civil Society Organizations

- Civil society is governed by a **complex legal and regulatory framework**.
- They face multiple challenges.
- These include **transparency and legitimacy** with respect to the level of information expected of them and the degree of scrutiny that they are subject to, specifically around funding.
 - ◆ This issue is exacerbated by the tightening of regulations.
- A high portion of **financial sources** are **external grants and donations**, this increases the dependency of organisations and often questions their sustainability.
- There is also **more competition within civil society** now.
- The **coronavirus disease (COVID-19)** has also posed serious challenges to civil society in India.

Conclusion

- The nature of civil society is evolving, in response to both technological developments and more nuanced changes within societies.
- Today, civil society in India has expanded immensely, covering a wide range of work.
- Therefore, it will be crucial for all stakeholders to support the civil society in regaining their strength and overcoming the existing challenges.
- Despite its complexity and heterogeneity, the inclusion of civil society voices is essential to give expression to the marginalised and those who often are not heard.
 - ◆ Civil society actors can enhance the participation of communities in the provision of services and in policy decision-making

DAILY MAINS QUESTION

Civil Society in India have evolved with time and with changing requirements. Discuss

