Polity & Governance · GS - II

“In the Indian governance system, the role of non-state actors has been only marginal.” Critically examine this statement.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2016	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
12.5	~200 words

Answer Hint

Civil society; NGOs; self-help groups; private sector; community participation; social accountability; service delivery; regulatory challenges

Model Answer

Introduction

Non-state actors include civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community groups, private enterprises, cooperatives and citizens' collectives. Their role in Indian governance is significant, although uneven across sectors and regions.

Contributions of Non-State Actors

- **Service delivery:** NGOs and charitable organisations support education, healthcare, nutrition and disaster relief.
- **Community mobilisation:** Self-help groups and community organisations promote livelihoods, women's empowerment and local development.
- **Policy advocacy:** Civil society groups raise awareness about rights, environmental protection and social justice.
- **Social accountability:** Citizen campaigns, public hearings and social audits can expose corruption and improve implementation.

- **Innovation:** Social enterprises and private organisations develop technology-enabled services and new delivery models.
- **Local governance:** Community participation can strengthen Gram Sabhas and the implementation of rural development programmes.

Why Their Role May Appear Marginal

- Government institutions retain primary responsibility for legislation, taxation, regulation and public welfare.
- Many organisations face funding constraints, limited geographical reach and uneven professional capacity.
- Weak coordination can result in duplication or gaps in service delivery.
- Some groups may lack transparency or accountability.
- Private participation may prioritise profitable services over the needs of vulnerable populations.

Way Forward

- Establish transparent partnerships with clear roles and measurable outcomes.
- Strengthen social audits, disclosure and accountability mechanisms.
- Build the capacity of community organisations and local institutions.
- Protect legitimate civic participation while enforcing lawful regulation.
- Ensure that partnerships complement, rather than replace, the State's responsibilities.

Conclusion

The role of non-state actors is not merely marginal; they contribute to service delivery, innovation and accountability. Their impact can be expanded through transparent collaboration and a capable, responsive public sector.