

# Civil Society and the Indian State: From Nation-Building to Resistance in a Shifting Democratic Terrain

**Anshul Bhardwaj**

Research Scholar, Faculty of Public Administration,  
Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, India

**Abstract:** *This article traces the evolving relationship between public administration and civil society in India—from its early post-independence idealism to its contemporary struggle for space and legitimacy. It examines how civil society has historically engaged with the state, influenced welfare and rights-based legislation, and acted as a vehicle for citizen participation and accountability. Yet, in the face of increasing regulatory restrictions, shrinking civic freedoms, and donor-driven depoliticization, civil society finds itself at a critical juncture. Drawing from historical, institutional, and conceptual sources, the article evaluates the achievements and limits of Indian civil society while mapping out future pathways for reclaiming its democratic role. Ultimately, it argues that a revitalized, unified, and assertive civil society is essential not only for developmental justice but also for the preservation of constitutional democracy in India.*

**Keywords:** Civil Society in India, Public Administration, Democratic Governance, FCRA and NGO Regulation, Rights-based Campaigns, Political Participation

