Analysis of Literature on Social Action

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The paper attempts an analysis of the literature on social action in India from 1940 to 1995, in order to identify the process of its development, the current trends and the future possibilities. The author observes that the changing social characteristics of social workers, together with the reorganisation of the work and market situation of social work, suggest that the scale of militancy in the profession will decrease rather than increase. Social action as a method, therefore, will remain on the periphery rather than become a central method.

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The field of social work continues to be a mosaic with varied patterns. The indigenous and the imported models continue to coexist, the latter a hybrid variety with a good deal of imported elements incorporated in it (Pathak, 1989). Whether social work is a profession continues to be a question on which divergent views are expressed. Most writers would probably place social workers in the ranks of the 'professionals' or perhaps — following Etzioni (1969) — the 'semi-professionals'. The fact is often ignored that keeping this status in view the relationship between social work and social action becomes a search for political modes and styles compatible with professionalism. This is not an easy task since the perception on compatibility are likely to raise debates about the role of the profession itself. The history of social work and the use of social action, as a method, reflect this dilemma.

It is a familiar theme in social work conference to highlight the lack of 'social commitment' on the part of social workers in general and social work educators in particular. The social commitment is generally assumed to imply involvement of social workers with macro issues and using their power (howsoever defined) to remedy the prevailing social injustice in society. This, in general, constitutes the notion of

social action which has been given a peripheral position in the teaching, practice and knowledge development of social work globally.

Social action can be defined as an endeavour to bring about or prevent change in a social institution, social system or society as a whole, through a process of making people aware of the sociopolitical and economic realities conditioning their lives and by mobilising them to organise themselves for bringing about the desired change, or to prevent change that adversely affect them. A variety of strategies could be used, with the exception of violence. The need for a theoretical framework for analysing the political, economic and social realities and a consequent selection of strategies and goals should be emphasised. The compatibility of these with the larger social work philosophy will be necessary if the worker has to function as a professional. Therefore, social action should not be seen as diametrically opposed to other methods of social work but rather as an alternative approach of trying to achieve the basic objective of social work practice in order to facilitate the social functioning of the human being in any society. Social action is a logical out-growth of the fundamental belief of the social work profession in the worth and well-being of the individual as more direct services to the individual.

History of Knowledge Development on Social Action

The present pattern of social work education has been in existence for about 60 years. The literature in the 1940s on social work education in India, reveals that the desire to have a model designed to meet the requirements of Indian conditions is as old as the education itself. Clifford Manshardt, the initiator and director of the first school of social work in Asia, was aware that it was 'quite impossible to reproduce Western experience without first submitting it to a great amount of critical analysis and scrutinising in the light of Indian conditions' (Manshardt, 1941). Social work practice in India however, started by laying emphasis on curative methods. Though they made some changes in education by identifying field based specialisations as against the method orientation in the West, social action, as a method of social work, was not given much space either in education or in practice.

The First Review Committee on social work education in India by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1965 noted that, since the objective of social reform has been achieved, the task of the social worker should take a different form, to look after the needs of children

in orphanages, to rehabilitate the unmarried mother and to save children from the stigma of illegitimacy. The other evils in society: poverty, insanitation, prostitution, drunkenness and so on, were beyond the capacity of individual social workers to remove them. The field of social work had become more or less similar to the field of social work in the West. Hence, it had become possible to benefit from the experience of social work training institutions in other countries.

The main methods of social work identified in this Report were casework, group work, and community organisation, along with social welfare administration, social research and statistics. The social work intervention strategies and the areas of practice identified by the First Review Committee, thus, reflected the continuing faith in the 'traditional' welfare approach. In fact, the report of the First Review Committee made out a strong case for a greater emphasis on the delivery of services and specifically listed efforts at 'social reform' as outside the purview of the social work profession, on the plea that the Indian social situation, with the achievement of Independence, had become compatible with the social situation of the West.

Ironically, in 1966, a year after the publication of the report of the First Review Committee, the theme of a seminar organised by the Association of Schools of Social Work in India (ASSWI) was 'The Role of the Social Work Profession in Social Reconstruction'. Most of the papers presented in the seminar severely criticised the traditional welfare approach and emphasised the need for a developmental perspective.

During the 1960s the process of rethinking about the possible goals of social work and, hence, social work education started. Many factors — local, regional and international — contributed to this development. To mention a few: the declaration of the 1960s as the First Development Decade by the United Nations, the initiative taken by the UN system in the region, particularly by the Social Development Division of the ESCAP; the financial, technical and study supports given by UNICEF as also the experience of few professional social workers engaged in the formulation of social policy and social planning; and the role played by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) (Pathak, 1989). Dasgupta (1968) noted that the time was not far when social workers and institutions offering training in social work should plan to reorient their curriculum of studies to meet the coming challenge of the 'growing rural society' in India.

At the 1966 Seminar organised by the ASSWI, at Calcutta, the role of the social work profession in social reconstruction was highlighted by Kulkarni, Hasan, Dasgupta, Nanavatty and others. Kulkarni, took the stand that the professional and social reform goals cannot be separated as far as social workers were concerned. A separation of the two would negate the very effectiveness of the social worker. He strongly advocated the commitment of the profession to act as a powerful force in favour of democracy, social justice and social development (Kulkarni, 1967).

Hasan, disagreeing with the stand taken by Gore, regarding social reform and social work, felt that Gore's attempt to distinguish between social work and social reform, even conceptually, posed a serious problem for the profession of social work in terms of its social responsibility (Hasan, 1967). He was also highly critical of the observations made by the First Review Committee about the role of social work. His position was that though social work is primarily concerned with providing services for the relief of suffering, it is vitally interested in social reform at the same time. Professional social work, thus, has a definite responsibility to promote social reform. Dasgupta, Nanavatty, Pande and a number of other participants in the seminar stressed the same point and in that sense the Calcutta Seminar is an important landmark in the history of social work profession in India.

The realisation of this new perspective of social work also led to the demand of reorienting social work education. Nanavatty stressed the need for recruiting better students, in whom the desired values necessary for development functions could be nurtured along with his advice to staff of the schools to undertake development work for social reconstruction. Hasan, in addition to the points suggested by Nanavatty, stressed the need for teaching of social philosophy in a systematic and planned manner. The need for reorganisation of curriculum and field instruction, faculty development and recruitment of students was stressed. Pande made the point of curriculum reorientation more clear by emphasising a total reorganisation of courses with greater emphasis on social action rather than merely introducing a course on social reconstruction. He also emphasised the importance of reorienting the field instructions in this context (Pande, 1967). Social action was, thus, conceived of as a method of social work when the inadequacy of welfare measures led to the need for social reform in the beginning of the present century in the west and around the 1960s in India.

Similar debates about the scope of social work practice in general and consequently the nature of social action took place in the United Kingdom and the United States of America where social work education and practice commenced in the late nineteenth century and achieved considerable pace in the beginning of the present century. In the West, in 1922, Mary Richmond had referred to social action as one of the four forms of social work. None of the schools of social work, however, has developed a special curriculum for social action; they saw it rather as an integral part of the teaching in casework, group work, and community organisation. The method of social action, consisting as it did of research, planning, enlistment of public support, and interpretation to (and pressure on) those with authority to implement it, has a good deal in common with community organisation. One of the major differences perhaps lies in the emphasis on the types of issues to be dealt with in the respective methods. There has been a growing tendency in the West to identify social action with specialised agencies, to professional groups, and to social workers as individual citizens (Cohen, 1958). Some social workers, however, felt that this represented a retreat from social work's full responsibility. For them, social action was as logical an outgrowth of the fundamental belief of the social work profession in the worth and well-being of the individual as were more direct services to individuals.

Many social workers did not render or accept the role of a reformer and acknowledge the importance of social action. They preferred to see themselves primarily as clinicians. He/She tried to cope with a job and one's own life than assume the role of a reformer, though he/she may have been aware of many social issues which require more than what a caseworker had to offer. In the broader area of social reform and social policy, an opinion poll in the USA asked two questions in 1945. The first was whether a limited form of social action would strengthen the National Conference of Social Work or divide it into warring camps. Limited action was defined to mean, the official public announcement by the Conference of principles which social workers endorse in regard to public policy or social legislation. The results of even this limited approach were so divided that no decision was reached by the Conference (Potter, 1945).

Again, turning to social work education as a barometer, one finds that social reform and social action were not being given the same attention as the courses in methods of treatment and remediation in the US. In a study of 'Social Action and Professional Education' made in

1944 by Marion Hathway, it was evident that matters of social reform and social policy were being dealt with only around the fringe of the total curriculum rather than as an integral part of it.

The trend was similar in India. Although social work paid a lip service to the dual approach, it found itself giving more emphasis to the problems of adjustment and behaviour and less attention to matters of broad social policy. Sinfield (1969) noted that the profession had failed to take a leading role in making society aware of the persistence of poverty. Pathak (1980) felt that poverty has become a matter of intellectual concern among professional social workers in recent years, but, by and large, the curricula of schools of social work in India have remained uninfluenced by the deliberations at seminars on the subject. Several questions, however, were being raised in the West. What was the element of social policy in the day-to-day operations of the social workers ? What should social workers know about the existing body of social policy? What knowledge and skills were necessary to evaluate existing social policy ? What knowledge and skills were necessary to participate in changing the existing social policy ? An examination of these questions lead to the need for a better foundation in social philosophy (Cohen, 1958). It also exposed the weaknesses of training in such areas as social action, social administration, and community organisation.

The struggle to gain professional acceptance in the community has accentuated some of the stresses within social work itself. Woodroofe (1974) felt that some of the stresses spring from attempts to fix rightful boundaries to its domain; others from efforts to define its settings. Some spring from limitations of its knowledge and experiences; others arise from the nature of its own activity. But, perhaps, the most serious source of stress has been the attempt to reconcile the caution of professionalism with social work's traditional commitment to reform. It protects a group which needs to be sustained. It services society which fearfully seeks protection through its work. It embraces values which may be uncongenial to the domination order and it serves as a reminder that society has failed to fulfill its obligations. It is at once the expression of the conscience and the fears of the community, as well as an embodiment of its determination to change and yet remain the same. In the process of clearing a space in the professional world, social work was forced to concentrate on methods and techniques. Social action, perhaps too precarious a basis for professional specialisation, was relegated to a limbo large and broad.

The Second Review Committee on Social Work Education in India (UGC, 1980) in its report stated that,

> an enquiry into the causes of poverty and the evolution of measures of its elimination was the responsibility of social work.... It took up the cause of assisting people in their adjustment to an industrial, urban and metropolis dominated social milieu rather than identifying the causes of poverty and working for its removal.... Our model of social work practice and education was consequently based on an industrial, urban and metropolis dominated society.... social work education was thus based on an individual-urban based model...the late sixties have revealed that industrialization cannot eliminate poverty even from the affluent societies....It has brought to the fore the global need to emphasize the teaching of social action, social policy and social administration, since it is the social milieu and not only the individual, that is the major client of the profession.

During the early 1970's the social development perspective was advocated by a few social work educators which is now generally accepted by most schools but is still to be implemented by many. In view of the recent emphasis on the social development perspective and the goals related to it, it has been argued by Gore (1981:1-13) that the proportion of social science content in social work curriculum needs to be increased substantially. He stated:

> If we really want to take on broad social development tasks as part of our professional responsibilities, our curricular content in social sciences will have to be wider and deeper. Our knowledge in the area of developmental economics, organisational behaviour and the analysis of social systems will have to be extended at least to the extent to which we emphasise the understanding of human motivation for psychiatric social workers. Is this a realistic goal for our schools ? Can this be attempted in a two-year programme of instruction where we admit students even without any base in the social sciences ?

The advocacy of social developmental perspective and goals for social work practice have led to some debate recently whether social work curriculum should continue to support the *status quo* in society or advocate and work for system change (Desai, 1985). A further issue debated is on the very nature of social work roles and tasks. Can we

simultaneously, through a two-year programme, prepare students for the traditional role of ameliorative-rehabilitative function of social work as well as the new role of initiating social change as activists or catalysts of change ? Some social work educators are doubtful of the feasibility as well as the desirability of combining the two models (Siddiqui, 1987).

By the 1980s the discussion on social development and social policy issues has come to centrestage, particularly in developing countries as noted earlier. The scope of social work practice was vigorously de-bated in the 1980s. The doubts about the efficacy and relevance of the American model (casework oriented clinical approach) surfaced, on account of two main reasons. The first being the persistence of mass poverty despite three decades of development planning. The second was the rethinking on the reasons of poverty and the consequent change in focus from individual deficiencies to social deficiencies — whether structural in nature or inadequacy of services. The inability of counsellors, group workers or even community organisers to make a dent in the mass poverty started the exhortations for social action. The 1980s produced three major works on social action, beginning with *Social Work and Social Action* (Siddiqui, 1984), *Social Action Through Law* (Gandhi, 1985), and a chapter on social action in the *Encyclopedia of Social Work in India* (Dasgupta, 1987). Social action, as a method of social work, has thus, acquired a distinct identity.

In 1980, a seminar was organised by the ASSWI on the theme of 'Social Work and Social Action' at Madras. The deliberations of the seminar produced a comprehensive text which was edited by Siddiqui (1984). The principles of the method were suggested by Britto (1984), an activist, who was working for his doctoral degree in the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. The focus of his doctoral work was social action. He has drawn his theory about the principles of social action largely through a study of Gandhian Satyagrahas undertaken during the national struggle for freedom. He also suggested models of social action. Singh (1984) and Siddiqui (1984) dealt with the process details, struggles and tactics, and different models of social action as well. Issues relating to definition and scope were given considerable atten-tion. Its relationship with other methods, in particular community organisation, were discussed and definite positions stated. The conflict and disruption strategies were discussed and advocated as a legitimate part of social action method in India. Desai (1984) focussed on issues relating to incorporation of social action in the curriculum of schools

of social work in great detail. This lead to the debate about the compatibility of social action with the professional nature of social work. The availability of existing theoretical base was also questioned. The possibility of including the elements of social action in various field practicum situations was suggested.

A year later, a symposium in Delhi was organised by the Department of Social Work, Jamia Millia Islamia, on the theme of social action through law. It was devoted to highlighting the role of public interest litigation in promoting social change and justice. Gandhi's (1985) text on social action contains the papers presented in the symposium. It is ironical to note that the symposium on social action in Jamia failed to take note of the earlier text on the subject in India. It, however, did not deal with matters related to the method of social action but provided details of socio-legal issues relating to labour, dowry, prisons, tribals and slum dwellers, and advocated the need for use of Public Interest Litigation to safeguard their interests.

In 1987, the *Encyclopedia of Social Work in India* included an article by Dasgupta which dealt with various issues pertaining to social action as a method of social work.

The discussion around the theme of social development and its relevance to social work continued during the eighties. The relationship between social reform, social change and social work received considerable space in the social work literature. Social action was deliberated upon in relation to these discussions but it did not emerge as a potent tool for intervention in the work. The nature of professional practice in social work, particularly in the USA, was more firmly moving in the direction of becoming individual centred. The welfare services were gradually moving towards greater privatisation on account of a general shift in the social policy to cut down the expenditure on welfare. Social workers were opting out for private practice rather than taking up jobs in institutional settings.

During the 1970s, radical literature on social work occupied considerable space but during the 1980s, despite the predictions that militancy in social work practice will increase (Mungham, 1975), the trend has been towards greater consolidation of social services. During the last decade and a half (1980-95) literature on social action, by and large, remained peripheral in the West while in India the method received specific attention. During the period, articles dealing with the specific details of the method did not occupy any significant space in the leading journals of social work in the West.

The discussions on social responsibility in the context of social development in the West was limited to looking for a collective role for the profession rather than professional practice avenues in developmental practice. 'Social reform' *per se* was not seen as part of a professional's job description in the West but in India a section of social work educators had attempted to design their curricula by assuming that social reform was an inherent part of social work practice. It was seen as a part of one's professional or social responsibility or commitment, within a liberal ideological framework. Professionals were expected to submit memorandums, take up causes of exploitation and harassment resulting from specific policies, or initiate direct action. However, in practice, this was generally done as a voluntary activity or as part of a professional organisation's activity rather than as part of the individual's job. It was this difference of conceptualising social reform as a collective responsibility and compatibility with job responsibilities that resulted in social action being reduced to a peripheral position, both in practice and in professional education. Social action thus remained a nostalgia, a romantic notion with most social work professionals. On an emotional plane they did identify themselves with the underdog, with the rational understanding that as individuals they had limited capabilities to accomplish any agenda for social reform howsoever conceived.

Content Analysis

The first text on social action in India *Social Action* was published by M. Vasudeva Moorthy in 1966. Prior to this, only one article on the subject appeared in the *Social Work Forum* by Nanavatty in 1965. Moorthy identified different types of disabilities people generally suffer from and their causes. He broadly identified two types of causes:

- God made; and
- man made.

The second cause was subdivided into self inflicted and those imposed by others. This subcategory which included war, political exploitation, lack of social and civic amenities, social prejudices and so on, provided the justification for social action, which he identified as one of the four methods of social work.

He defined social action as a process of securing legislation, mobilising public opinion to bring about change. The social activist was seen as a social reformer but not as a revolutionary. He felt that revolution meant sudden change which was not very desirable and led

to violence. He used a rather interesting term — 'continuous' legality — as an important characteristic of social action. He emphasised the necessity of keeping action within the legal framework. Talking about the process of initiating a reform, Moorthy had the following stages in mind.

- Identification of an issue by the reformer/actionist.
- Generating awareness and feelings about the issue.

Research was seen as a strategy and as a means of generating awareness. He recommended use of influential actors such as political and religious leaders, theatre personalities, youth leaders, women activists, and so on, as agents of generating awareness. He also identified lectures, seminars and conferences as means of generating awareness and consequently social action. He favoured the use of foreign aid for financing social action but only with the approval of the state. He concluded by rejecting conflict strategies and pressure tactics and suggested the role of a watchdog for those engaged in social action.

Nanavatty (1965) in his paper on social action defined social action as a process of bringing about the desired changes by deliberate group and community action. 'Social change' was the central concern of social action, both with Nanavatty and Moorthy, and the legislative action formed a major strategy for bringing about the change. The relationship of social action with social work was not dealt with in detail and hence, at times, social action was seen as part of the more established methods (casework, group work and community organisation) and at other places a method in its own right. This confusion was created by Western notions of social action as noted earlier. A good example is Seed's (1973) description of social work: 'The term "social work" was first used in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century in connection with the activities of people who had a sense of belonging to a movement which aimed at social advance based on disciplined and principled forms of social action.'

Social action was, thus, being conceived as voluntary action on the part of society to help the needy poor. Seed (1973), therefore, discussed three types of disciplined social action:

- social action within a developing system of social administration;
- the charity organisation movement; and
- direct social action.

The interesting point to note was that as an exclusive method of social work, it referred to social action as the action on the part of

ordinary or extraordinary members of society either to help some individuals or groups or to tackle a larger social problem. The conceptualisation of social action by Moorthy and Nanavatty was, therefore, somewhat different from that of Seed, yet the similarity in approach was obvious.

In the same issue of *Social Work Forum,* in which Nanavatty wrote about social action, Mathur (1965) wrote an article on the concept of social education. Mathur felt that the problems faced by the people were manifold and got manifested at the local level which became the battleground for analysis, discussion and action. All problems cannot be tackled at the local level. He recommended the need for building up tiers of organisation at all levels which would not act only as pressure groups but would develop vital links with the existing structures of coordination, joint planning and social action.

Barnabas wrote an article on social action in 1966 in which he advocated the need for social action. He felt that social action besides bringing about change, could also be initiated to resist change which was undesirable and was similar to the definition of social action given by Dunham (1958).

This analysis of social action made it obvious that it was the traditional emotional commitment to social reform of educated elites and middle classes which lead to these exhortations. The authors did not feel the need for any theoretical framework. Unlike other methods of social work, the issues relating to methods and techniques of social action were not discussed in detail. In the mid-1960s the term social action simply meant personal involvement beyond the point of established conventions. Questions about the social structure or social institutions were not dealt with. Even the existing theories of the relationship between the social and the individual were not taken into account. The occurrence of problems at the individual, group or community levels was discussed with reference to the need for social action and social reform, and the ultimate goal of social reform was not a change in society; instead it was the resolution or diffusion of a specific problem. This was in line with both the Gandhian philosophy and the liberal philosophy of the West. The emphasis on morality and personal charisma on the part of the actionist was rooted in the Gandhian philosophy.

In a way these expectations ran contrary to the then social work principles applicable to other methods. The worker, in other methods, was generally expected to play a passive role and was expected to

remain in the background. The client was expected to take his/her own decision and the worker acted as a facilitator rather than as a charismatic leader.

Of the collection of six papers presented in a seminar in social work and social action, edited by Siddiqui (1984), the first paper dealt with different issues related to social action as a method of social work. It discussed different issues involved in defining social action and its scope. The issue of identifying it as an independent method or as a part of community organisation was dealt with in considerable detail. The paper suggested treating it as an independent method. The scope of the method was left open for debate and the need for a theoretical framework to understand the scope was emphasised.

In the discussion on the process, four stages were identified:
• developing awareness;
• organisation;
• selection of strategies; and
• action.

These stages were based on the tactics identified by Lees (1972). The Sarvodaya method and its process details were also indicated to explain the process. It, thus, attempted a synthesis of indigenous and the Western concepts to arrive at a hybrid strategy of intervention.

The paper on principles of social action by Britto (1984) dentified six principles. These principles were based on the process Gandhi adopted in mobilising the masses during the national struggle for freedom in India. The principles suggested were:
• credibility building;
• legitimisation;
• dramatisation;
• multiple strategies;
• dual approach; and
• manifold programmes.

In yet another paper, Britto suggested some models of social action. He broadly classified the models in two broad categories: elitist social action and popular social action. Social action, he felt, could be carried out by the elite for and on behalf of the masses with or without mass participation. In the elitist category he included three types of models: legislative model, economic sanction model and direct physical action model. In the popular category, he identified, direct mobilisation, dialectical mobilisation and conscientisation models. These attempts to conceptualise the principles and models were grounded in theory as

well as on an analysis of mass movements. Similar attempts to interpret the material related to social workers' involvement in influencing social policy, researching the problem, planning a solution, enlisting public support, presenting the data to those in authority and the nature of social action had been done in the USA as reported by Khinduka and Coughlin (1975). The process of developing theory to inform practice related to social action had thus commenced in the the 1980s in India.

Desai (1984) in her paper discussed issues relevant to incorporation of social action in the social work curriculum. She raised the issue of the need for a theoretical base of social action which she felt was non-existent. She examined the existing material related to social action and referred to the analysis of literature on social action by Khinduka and Coughlin in the USA. She highlighted the dilemma of lack of consensus on the matter of strategies of social action which she identified as collaborative, bargaining and conflictual. She made an interesting point that social action was a total way of thinking and feeling and acting and, hence, could not be relegated to one course. She discussed the various issues related to field work and research and the institutional arrangements related to social action.

Singh (1984), in his paper, dealt with the history of social action and noted that social action was as old as human society. He referred to the writings of Aurobindo (1907-8) on passive resistance and later to the the writings of Gandhi and his efforts to mobilise the masses. He also discussed a number of definitions to highlight the issues related to defining social action. The democratic framework, non-violence and constitutional compatibility of action as characteristics were emphasised. In his discussion on process the following factors were recognised: Need, Base, Agent, Process, Resources, Goals and Action. He identified models of social action as Institutional (state), Institutional (social), Social Institutional, Populist, Gandhian, Militant non-violent, Gentle non-violent, Citizenship model and so on.

Singh (1984) emphasised the need for making social work practice more aggressive. He also felt that social action was closer to social reform than to revolution and it should be non-violent in character. He quoted statistics to show that of the 27 schools offering Master's level programme in social work, only four schools had some content on social action, in their curriculum.

Another significant piece of writing on the subject of social action during the 1980s, was the article on social action by Dasgupta (1987).

Dasgupta took the position that whereas development had been the main lever of change in the new nations, welfare, a built in mechanism of the developed world, was also concerned with social change. Social action, he felt, was the method that helped to bring about these changes. In fact the failure of the welfare model led to a movement for civil rights and a militant approach to welfare.

He identified two broad models — not non-violent and non-violent — and emphasised the fact that both the models used conflict as a weapon. The not non-violent worked within the system and the non-violent tried to bring in a different type of society. He felt that social action movements broke the narrow confines of welfare rights and made common cause with liberation movements of various hues that were then going on all over the world. They included the struggles of homosexuals, militant Christians, as well as those to end the Vietnam War, anti-consumerism and other radical movements of various kinds, both not non-violent and non-violent. Social action, as one of the methods of social work, he suggested, could be used in different settings.

He identified two sets of processes — P1 and P2. The stages in process P1 were:

- identification of injustice;
- defining the position;
- building support;
- mobilising pressure;
- sustaining reaction; and
- transforming values and structures.

In process P2, eleven steps were indicated:

- sensing that something is wrong;
- problem identification;
- building support;
- problem diagnosis;
- gathering information
- setting action goals;
- inventing new approaches
- weighing approaches;
- making final plans;
- implementing the new approach; and
- evaluating the process.

These details of the processes were based on the two different scenarios represented by the Ben Carnion School of Social Welfare and the Action for World Development respectively. He concluded

that both the models of social action evolved from two different types of community organisations.

Social Reform, Social Work, Social Action

Social reform, social work, social action and social protest may be seen as serially linked. Just as social work can be seen to be related to social reform in its value orientation, it may be said to be linked with 'social action' in its activity orientation. Social action is an effort on the part of social workers to achieve social and structural change — with the help and on behalf of the underprivileged groups in society — but within the norms laid down by law for seeking change. The initiative and leadership in 'social action' is still with the outside leader who may be a member of the 'establishment' or the elite group in society (Gore, 1981).

Seed (1973) felt that the social work of the late nineteenth century did, at a minimum level, evidence these movement characteristics. There was a strong normative commitment to the alleviation of social problems and reduction of conflict in society. This was promoted in a variety of ways through such forms as the university settlements, contacts with government that the influential elite enjoyed, tenants' associations and charity visiting. However, despite these activities it is difficult to assume that social work has become a movement for inducing change in the society.

The role of social work as a social movement and the rise and 'fall' of the welfare state has been succinctly described by Perlman and Gurin (1972). They note the paradox in social reform:

> It usually springs from passionate indignation but has a way of setting like plaster into institutional moulds. The end re-
> sult...may well be an efficiently operating bureaucracy en-
> gaged in doing what the reformer had worked so hard to bring
> . into existence, but the outcome often seems alien to the
> reformer who started the process. The programme that
> emerges becomes either flaccid or rigid, and a new cycle of
> discount and reform is generated.

It is difficult to view professional social work at this time as it is practised, as 'an open system of ideas'. Professional concerns and preoccupations are too well established for any major accommodation to changing perceptions. This is not to deny that within the profession there is a group of members subscribing to reform ideals. Social sciences, as yet, cannot offer a sufficient understanding of the individual

person in relation to his/her life situation. As a result, we are impelled to make a choice between personality and social structure, although it is obvious that what we require is not a choice but an integrated theory. But this is where the problem of reconciliation as well as its authenticity begins. Even if Marxian analysis is, in the broadest terms, accurate, the prescription for creating a socialist society offered by Marx is still rather simplistic and gravely deficient.

What adequate checks could there be on exorbitant power? And can fundamental changes be secured by persuasion, instead of force and bloodshed ? Democratic socialists believe that socialist change can only come through evolutionary democratic processes, to achieve any practical benefit,; and in practice, despite the value of Marxists criticism, there is little evidence to suggest that Marxists have been any more successful than others in building the 'good society' (Pritchard and Taylor, 1978). The construct of an ideal society is further questioned by the postmodernist and poststructuralist debates.

Social workers are peculiarly vulnerable to 'consumer control' as Mungham (1975) noted or what Johnson (1972) calls 'communal patronage'. But at the same time indeed, for some segments inside social work the only effective social work practice is that which will serve to destroy the very basis of social work as a profession.

Conclusion

The social work profession is going through a period of expansion and redefinition. The changing social characteristics of social workers, together with the reorganisation of the work and market situation of social work, seem to suggest that the scale of militancy in the profession will decrease rather than increase.

However, this factor alone cannot determine the outcome and character of social work concern for social reform. Some role, for instance, would have to be given in the development of militancy among social workers to their ideological commitments and their experience of the poor conditions in which their clients live. Reform work, even though individual social workers can and do choose to support pressure groups, such as the Narmada Bachao Adolan, or the movements for the protection of environment or similar other protest movements, would continue to be a voluntary concern. As a segmental profession, and welfare bureaucracy, social work is both the subject and promulgator of cross-cutting political actions and tensions in the West but in India it has remained largely apolitical and timid in character.

There are, within the professional ethos of British social work, four views which may be characterised as the moral-ethical; the psycho-pathological; the psycho-social and the radical-political (Pritchard and Taylor, 1978).

The moral-ethical view sees social work as an apolitical activity — an essentially individual and moral concern, a task consisting funda-mentally of tidying-up societal loose ends and casualties, the concern being centred on the individual and the implicit assumption being that the problems, and hence the need for a social work function, are not peculiar to our society and would remain in any social system. Such an outlook sees social work as being concerned with those people who are socially inadequate and are unable to exist in a community at an acceptable level without both material and professional help.

Alternately social work can be seen, again apolitically, as a therapy exercise in which the social worker's role is to help people adjust to the dominant norms of society (thus by implication accepting, at least in their professional roles, the social structure as given). This psycho-pathological view of social work sees the need for 'treatment'-,that is, some sort of intervention on behalf of society to another individual, but implies that the causal factors are exclusively within that person.

The psycho-social view of social work stresses the extent to which the client's situation results from social and general environmental influence. These factors should, according to this concept of social work, be com-bined with individual psychological/emotional influences to achieve a correct perspective on the client's situation. Politically, this concept of social work is often held to imply a social democratic perspective.

Social work, therefore, can be seen as a reforming agent within society, helping both the individual and society to evolve via the social democratic parliamentary system along more socially concerned and humane lines. In comparing Gandhi's views to those of Habermas, Pantham noted the extra-rational elements in Gandhi's approach of truth-centred direct action. According to Gandhi, the 'attribution of omnipotence to reason is as bad a piece of idolatry as is worship of stick and stone believing it to be God' (cf.: Pantham, 1986: 203). Gandhi's approach requires partici-pation in action and involves the abdication of persuasion even by argumentation: 'everyone should follow his or her own inner voice'. The shift from persuasion to dialogue is a matter of principle in Paulo Freire's (1972) popular education approach.

Pritchard and Taylor (1978) noted that from a Marxist perspective, society, and the function and role of social work within that society, is

viewed somewhat differently. From this viewpoint the essential feature of British society (and the Western world generally and after the collapse of the communist block it is becoming a global reality) remains its basic capitalist structure. To a very large degree this structure determines the shape and nature of the social and political institutions. The way in which British society and political culture have evolved have, according to the Marxist view, masked the essentially irrational and contradictory nature of the system. Despite a welfare-oriented capitalist system (although even this is open to major questioning), the fundamental point about the society remains not its welfare but its capitalism. This analysis is valid for India too, and in the emerging reality of a twenty-first century, similar views are being expressed here.

Panikker (1995), while commenting on culture and globalisation, noted that the exogenous cultural presence is not only unsettling the indigenous but also tries to hegemonise it for legitimising a concept of social development modeled on the advanced capitalist societies. Gavaskar (1995) similarly noted in the context of agenda for transformation that, awesome technological strides under the aegis of capitalism have helped market forces to penetrate the remotest corner of the globe. Industry and agriculture and space and culture have been increasingly colonised for capital accumulation.

In part, the confused relationship between social work and political action reflects the 'fragmentary' character of social work; but it also reflects the uncertainties of contemporary politics in India. Part-time radicalism was one of the crucial elements in the failure of the Congress and other left of the centre political parties. A commitment to radical politics must mean a commitment to a style of life which is congruent. Ideology, which is not tested and practised in everyday behaviour, will inescapably become unworkable and brittle with age. Integral to the radicalism of the structural change is the struggle for a new life. Social action, as a method, therefore, will remain on the periphery rather than become a central mode of intervention in India.

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