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.....*From Our Archive***Social Work As A Profession****Rajeshwar Prasad****Profession: A brief introduction:**

To comprehend the ‘professional nature of Social Work’, a comprehension of *Profession*- its history, structure and functions, is perhaps, important. Historically, it is argued that ‘professions have developed from vocations’ in a society developing from simple organisation into complexity and variegated functioning. But it is true also that all ‘vocations’ even in the most developed, complex and advanced societies, have not assumed the status of profession. It may be true that some of these vocations are striving hard to acquire the ‘status of a profession’ but many more are still functioning at the rudimentary level of ‘vocation’. Internal social structure of any society (like the *Guilds* of England and other European countries and the *Varna* system of the Hindu society), Feudalism, organised Church, and Capitalism (and now, global Capitalism) have transformed many vocations into professions. Functionally, the professions are conceived of ‘some specialized roles, activities, services and functions’ rendered by knowledgeable, trained and specialized functionaries to fulfill those needs, demands and requirements of a society, which cannot be normally fulfilled by lay people and/or other ordinary vocationals’.

In social science more particularly in sociology and social work there exists a big volume of literature related to ‘professions’ but so far an exact definition of *profession* is difficult to pronounce. Etymologically, profession also refers to ‘view of religious faith on

entering religious order’; calling or occupation especially learned, scientific or artistic (Prasad, 1993). This meaning of profession is derived from English lexicon. It may be interesting however to explore as to whether we have any specific word in the *Sanskrit* lexicon synonymous to profession, or not.

In Sanskrit language the words used for Business, Calling, Occupation, Service and Profession are many, non-specific and overlapping for example, *Vyapar*, *Vyavsaya*, *Vratti* are commonly used for Business, Calling, Occupation, Service and Profession (see, Williams, 1971). Otherwise also the Sanskrit words have more than one meaning. Secondly, the complexity occurring too fast in Indian society has not been adequately absorbed in the Sanskrit language. And thirdly, Sanskrit language is too traditional and obstinate to include newly emerged processes, phenomena, words into its vocabulary so easily. So, it is perhaps, difficult to identify ‘Profession’ by a specific Sanskrit (and thus Hindi also) word. This aspect may be important in understanding the very nature of any profession in the Indian milieu as also the profession of social work.

The already existing social system more particularly the primitive occupational organisations, do determine the development of certain occupations leading to sophistication and thus acquiring the status of a profession. For the sake of comparison we may take the examples of ‘Guilds’ of England and the *Varnas* of the ancient Hindu social system. Both of these are related to the division of society on the basis of functions assigned to a specific group, so vital for the functioning, maintenance and continuity of a society. The *guilds*, though rigid in their structure, acted as the ‘groups looking after the apprenticeship training of the entrants’. These guilds may be taken as hatcheries of contemporary professions. On the other hand the *varnas* of the Hindu social organisation were limited to the intellectual functions performed by the *Brahmanas*, the functions of the warrior being discharged by the *Kshatriyas* and the business, including agriculture being done by the *Vaisyas*. The *Sudra* as the fourth varna, it is argued, is a later addition wherein the non-Aryans, vanquished groups and other tribals were put together to perform menial jobs. These varnas

to my mind cannot be equated with the guilds of England. They cannot also be equated with the contemporary *castes*, particularly the occupational castes. In the Vedic literature, especially in the *Atharva-Veda* (Shastri, 1977; Sampurnacharya 1987), there is a copious reference to *Srenis*, which were organised around specific occupations e.g. *Rathkar* (makers of the chariot— a carpenter), the *Charmakar* (those dealing in leather, leather goods etc.), *Bapta* (the barber) etc. These *srenis* were not lower in status with the *varnas* but instead of being flexible and forward looking like the *guilds* that were responsible for catering to the improved skills of occupationalists in the era of industrial revolution or the international mercantilism, these *srenis* got degenerated into the highly variegated, extremely closed and badly mauled social groups devoid of any innovation and change. Neither the *varna*, nor the *sreni* and not also the *jati* could spurt occupational up-gradation in India that may grow into a modern ‘profession’.

Another social institution, which has supported and sustained the growth of profession in the European societies, is the institution of *Church*. The classical etymological meaning of profession that refers to the ‘view of religious faith on entering religious order’, was strengthened by the church’s control over certain societal functions viz. divinity, law physic (medicine) aesthetics and pedagogy; these are still referred to ‘old professions’ inspite of these being secularized (except divinity) and freed from the church control. There have been umpteen movements in the Western world that were responsible for freeing older professions from the strangulating church control and making them not only secular but increasingly intellectual, specialized and highly technical. In the Hindu society however, the institution of *varna* has exerted control over the societal functions. For example, the learning and teaching of *vedas*, imparting training to the pupils in warfare, business, agriculture etc, had been the exclusive function of the *Brahmana*. The *varnashrama dharma* (the duties assigned to the different *varnas*) was zealously guarded and meticulously followed by the ‘Hindus’. No doubt, certain occupations were upgraded due to intellectual and scientific innovations, for example, *Ayurveda* and

related advancements in surgical functions, but these too were reserved for the Brahmanas. The ancient role of *bhishak* (the doctor/surgeon), though considered inferior than the function of divinity, could be performed only by the Brahmanas. One may see that the traditional function of *Vaidya* is still performed mostly by the Brahmanas. So is true of other similar occupations that had acquired sophisticated, intellectual–scientific status. No doubt, the *varnashrama dharma* was enforced harshly yet, it cannot be equated with the organized religious *Catholic church*. The reasons of loosening of control over occupations/professions by the church in the West and the *varnashrama dharma*<sup>3</sup> in the Hindu society are very different. The secularization of professions in the Western world owes its origin to a number of social, economic and political processes, more particularly to the scientific and technological advancements and the industrial revolution. It may be recognised that the scientists challenged the irrational biblical foundations which were sooner or later accepted by the society. Whereas in India all the movements challenging the illogical and irrational foundations of Hindu thought were swallowed by the rigid, hierarchical, differential, irrational and highly philosophical Hindu social order. Vallier (1968) rightly observed that both christian and non-christian groups of religions have always tried to maximize their sphere of dominance and influence in modern society.... Moreover, the religious specialists were concerned about the non-empirical and religio-ethical absolutes which have paved the way of the development of modern scientific professions. In India one may find that the traditional occupations- *panditai* of the Hindus and leading the *namaz* in the mosques by the maulavis of the muslims- have not as yet professionalized as the church’s clergy has become; similarly the practice of traditional medicinal systems- *Ayurveda* by *Vaidyas* and the *Unani* by the Hakims, are largely family-based still and they have not yet acquired the status of ‘modern professions’. This may be attributed to the very structure and function of clergy and the modern scientific and technological revolution affecting the Christian church. Talcott Parsons observed that the clergy in Judaeo- Christian world has been the primary historical matrix from which the modern professions have differentiated (1968). It is in this

context that one can understand the modern professionalized character of 'modern medicine', 'contemporary legal system' and 'Western pedagogy' operating in highly professional manner in most traditional societies of Africa and Asia, where colonial powers transplanted these systems over and above the traditional educational, legal and medicinal systems.

More than the internal structure of clergy, the pervading scientific and industrial revolutions may be responsible to shape the nature of modern professions, including of course, not only diversification but the heightened aspirations of many occupations to acquire the almost impregnable status of professions. In most traditional societies, including India the thrust of philosophical systems has been on spirituality- *Adhyatma*, which did not encourage inquiry into the secrets of nature, considered sacred, thus thwarting the growth and development of science, technological jump, as also the diversification of occupational activities so important for the emergence of 'professions'. Materialistic philosophy of the West, man's desire to conquer nature, a quest for improving the very existence and living of human beings, the attendant operations of social and economic institutions and movements facilitated not only the growth and development of professions in the Western world but also led to their secularization and diversification. Not only the scientific professions could not grow due to these stumbling blocks but the social professions were greatly affected by these inherent socio-cultural factors so dominant in our society.

#### **Attributes of a Profession:-**

It is no doubt difficult to give a definition of Profession but a set of attributes, traits, characteristics or marks of identification that qualify a vocation to be characterized as a profession, may certainly be identified. A vocation so as to qualify for being included in the 'prestigious' list of profession may not have *all the attributes* so eloquently professed by the social scientists but the absence of major characteristics from any vocation, occupation and/or social activity /practice may cast doubts on its status of being a profession. So, the

scholars attempting to define a profession have in fact, given traits that distinguish simple vocations from professions.

Abraham Flexner (1915), A.M Carr–Saunders (1928), Ernest Green Wood (1953), Willian J. Goode (1957 and 1960), Talcott Parsons (1958), A.M. Carr–Saunders and P.A Willson (1959), Robert C. Stone (1961), Everett C. Hughes (1963), B. Barber (1963) N.K Denzin (1968)', E. Friedson (1972) and host of other social scientists while discussing the nature of profession, and also in the context of analysis of vocation of medicine, pharmacy, social work psychology sociology have given a number of attributes of a profession. These attributes, traits or characteristics may be summarized as: (i) systematic body of knowledge that may be imparted institutionally; (ii) set of technical skills that may be specially acquired processually; (iii) determination of own standards of education and training which is usually long, extended, universal, standardized and formal; (iv) more rigorous adult socialization experience provided to the student-learner in professions than in other occupations; (v) enforcement of minimum qualifications for entering 'professional work force' and thus achieving professional status; (vi) code of ethics for professional practice; (vii) prescribing fees for professional services; (viii) professional practice often being legally recognized and most legislation concerned with the profession being shaped only by that profession; (ix) existence of some form of licensure, and the licensing/admission boards are manned by the members of the profession; (x) freedom of practitioner from lay evaluation and control; (xi) the norms of practice enforced by the profession being more stringent than legal control; (xii) existence of professional associations and the members are more strongly identified and affiliated with the profession through these associations, than the members of other occupations; (xiii) formal channel(s) of communication between the professionals, e.g. newsletters, bulletins, research journals, meetings, seminars, workshops and conferences; (xiv) primary orientation to community interests; (xv) fulfillment of a societal need; (xvi) rewards which primarily symbolize work achievements; (xvii) cluster of occupational roles valued in society; (xviii) appropriate medium of delivering services; (xix) viewed as

social movements; (xx) related with specific needs, requirements and sanctions of society at large; (xxi) conceived as ‘communities without physical locus’; (xxii) described as ‘a set of ideal characteristics’; (xxiii) projected as ‘a class, status and power oriented group of people having specialized skills’.

Due to researches done by social scientists to explore social, economic, psychological, cultural, political and commercial dimensions of a profession in different societies innumerable attributes have been identified and exemplified but it is true that an ‘occupation’ to qualify for ‘profession-hood’ may not have all the traits so identified. However, it is true also that the needs of the community, sanctions by the society and legal institutor by the State do establish and recognize the profession that be.

#### **Professions vis-à-vis Community, Society and the State:**

Notwithstanding the conflicting views of functionalists and Marxists on the nature, organization, role and function, of professions it may be recognized that professions and professionals have influenced societal functions and the affairs of the State and society. Many important services in the community have been taken over by the ‘profession’ instead of the family or other institution/occupation as in the past.

Modern human societies are deeply imprinted by ‘professions both in the management of their existing structures and institutions’. On the other hand, the State while striving for the fulfillment of aspirations of its citizens not only patronize ‘professions’ of hue but also attempts hard to ‘professionalize’ its administration. The community and the civil society, on the other hand, not merely use ‘professions’ to fulfill certain needs, made complex due to social changes but also mediate between professions, society and State in situations of conflict and confrontation.

It is in these contexts that the ‘occupation of social work’ need to be critically examined so as to objectively assess its status as a ‘profession’. This examination has to be done in the background of Indian social milieu on these dimensions: (i) whether there is a genuine need of the community of ‘social work services’ to be

rendered by ‘other professionally trained workers’; (ii) whether these services can be obtained by common people on payment of fee; (iii) whether the Indian society has identified ‘a configuration of actions’ entailing execution of functions required for delivery of certain human services; (iv) whether the society has accorded ‘sanction’ to these actions/activities/services for being identified as profession, and (v) whether the Indian State has enacted any law to recognize and establish ‘social work’ as a profession like medicine, law, engineering, architecture etc. We will examine status of social work as a profession *per se* and in India on these parameters.

#### **Social Work as a Profession:**

There are contradictory views about social work profession: whether or not it is a profession, and whether it ought to be a profession or not. Maclver (1931), Witmer (1942), Brown (1942), Clarke (1947), Hollis and Taylor (1951), Pollak (1952), Greenwood (1953, 1957), Fink (1955), Easton (1956), Bisno (1956), Cohen (1957, 1958), Wilensky and Lebeaux (1958), Stroup (1960), Friedlander (1964), Etzioni (1969), Feldstein (1971), Toren (1972), Goldstein (1974), Souflee (1977), Pathak (1981), Prasad (1987, 1993), have reflected on the nature of social work occupation/profession taking into consideration the attributes of a profession explicitly detailed by Alex Flexner (1915) and many others later on.

Professional status of social work has been challenged on innumerable counts, important of these being:

- Its failure to develop knowledgebase which may be claimed to be specific and special to social work;
- eclectic nature of social work theory makes it professionally irrelevant;
- it is difficult to identify those ‘set of technical skills’ which may be exclusively associated with social work practice and specially acquired during professional socialization;

- as compared to other modern scientific professions viz. medical and engineering assessment, of positive and/or negative outcomes of social work interventions is difficult to make;
- largely, the practice of social work in significant fields- medical, psychiatric, developmental etc., puts it in an auxiliary position;
- social work professionals lack autonomy as compared to other professionals- lawyers, doctors, technocrats etc.;
- mostly, social work practitioners have 'employee roles' in governmental and non-governmental organizations, hence lack independence in their functions and operations;
- still the society at large, even in the Western world equate 'professional social work' with religious/Church charity/function, and do not generally approve 'charging of fee' by the social work functionaries;
- it is difficult to claim that 'social work' has been able to assert monopoly over some services needed by the society at large.

It is in this context that A. Etzioni and Nina Toren called social work a quasi/semi profession although on the other hand, some of the analysts lamented that in countries like U.S.A. Canada it has become 'over-professionalized'. There may be other arguments to question the professional status of social work; for example, Nanavaty (1994) contended that 'Professional Development of Social Work is fraught with many contradictions. Conceptually it is continuously questioned whether it is a process of social adjustment or social change. .... Much of the complementary process of social adjustment and social action for change depends on the value judgment and value commitment of the professional practice of social work. The basic question today is what value judgment the profession holds to meet the condition of emerging 'market economy', which is acquiring an universal influence, nay domination, and what action it is ready and equipped to take to ensure social development and welfare under changed

circumstances. Does the profession succumb to the reality of the survival of the fittest, letting the vulnerable population to fend for themselves, or is the profession ready to wedge action to make market economy more humane. This is where the *myth of the profession* lies in claiming social action but succumbing to the neglect of social security for the vulnerable". This statement highlights the irrelevance of 'social work profession' in the changing context of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) world over. This perhaps, is the biggest constraint today in the professionalization of social work globally and more particularly in ex-colonial, underdeveloped societies including India.

The observations of Brij Mohan who was trained as a 'professional social worker' in India and practiced it in USA for more than three decades may aptly characterize the nature of social work: "However, if you happen to critique the human condition and related disciplinarity at the same time, you may not escape the conclusion that social work still retains an intellectually parasitic character and we, social work educators, have not really succeeded in establishing an authentic foundation for its future. The visions of 21<sup>st</sup> Century (social work) are *neither scientific nor aesthetically very promising*. Continuance of a flawed method, without serious examination, is an act of bad faith and we are all guilty of a kind of professional malpractice" (2002 pp. 16-17).

#### **Social Work In India:**

Although social work is stoutly considered a profession in India by all those who come out of the schools/departments of social work with a M.S.W./ M.A. (Social Work) degrees but I hesitate to accord it a full professional status. I am inclined to agree with Sushil Chandra who, instead of labeling it as an occupation or profession, described it as a "dynamic activity undertaken by public or private effort in the implementation of social policy, with a view to raise the standard of living and to bring about social, economic, political and cultural well-being of individual, family and the group within a society irrespective of its stage of development" (1954, p.13). The status of social work as

a 'profession' in India may be contested on many grounds, which will be explained later. However, the following statements may provide some cue in this regard.

Richard Hugman observed that "The development of social work also has been marked by *crises of identity*, as it springs from the social circumstances in which it is practiced, being formed by and in response to social policy' (n.d.). In India, there is certainly a crisis of identity of social work; it is an offshoot of traditionalism, religious obscurantism on the one hand and the legacy of British colonialism on the other.

Commenting in the Asian context David Drucker (1994, p. 531) wrote: "Social work, it becomes clear, can find a developmental role in an almost limitless range of situations and does not need to cramp its vision, style and potential settings, agencies and concepts of 'professional' which imitate those that have emerged in affluent countries for the minority few who, it is conceived as needing to be adjusted". The blind imitation of 'professional model' of social work, it is forcefully argued scuttles the role of 'social work activity' in developmental context in societies like ours. And why only ours, social workers realized the non-development role of 'social work profession in Western societies also and consequently, more than three decades ago many schools of social work in USA and Canada changed their names and course nomenclature to 'Social Development School/Course'. It is certainly true of Indian context too where 'social development may be a more relevant nomenclature replacing social work'.

Yet another constraint in professionalization of social work, not only in India but in other societies, both developed and developing, is an over shadowing echoes of 'spiritualism' created by the loud voice of Hinduism, Christianity, Sufi-Islam etc. Musafir Singh and Asutosh Pradhan in 'Social Work-The Ethico-Spiritual Paradigm', presented in a national seminar held at Ladnun (Rajasthan) pleaded for 'Spiritualized Social Work'. Eulogising the 'social work' done by self transformed persons, through *Sadhna*, the authors averred that "the

attainment of such spiritual heights is beyond professional competence and spiritual 'managers' of mankind" .... "Social work has its roots in ethics but must have its culmination and crowning apex in spirituality" ..... "Spirituality, inspite of expressional differences, carries the images of eternity and universality".... "***When social work education is spiritualized, it will acquire an unprecedented vigour and force which its professionalization had stifled or eclipsed***". So, in some way or the other, both in India and abroad, religiosity, spiritualism and idealism still permeate and dominate the psyche of both scholars and lay public thus thwarting the total professionalization of social work activities. No doubt, ethics-Code of Ethics- is one of the essential ingredients of any profession but intermingling of 'ethics', 'values' and 'spirituality' with professionalization or preferring spirituality over professionalism, make the situation worse. And, it may shock the readers that in India there is no 'Code of Ethics' of social work profession so far evolved, framed or adopted by the 'profession'.

One of the essential elements of a profession is that the appended services are provided in lieu of a prescribed fee but ambivalence in this regard may be seen from A.R. Wadia's remarks: "... Those who take up this work (social work) cannot make it a source of income and *so any assistance that can be given by them can only be a matter of love and honorary service*" (1961, p.3). This kind of ambivalence pervades the thought system of most social scientists including some of the trained social workers, other intellectuals and lay public. It is indeed a big hamper in the acceptance of social work as a profession in India.

I had stated earlier that I hesitate to call *social work* a full-fledged profession and some broad aspects of negation have been stated already. Thus on the count of attributes that go for making an occupation a 'profession' one may rightly hesitate to accept it as a profession in India on the following counts:

- Not only that it has failed to develop knowledge-base of its own but in the Indian context the knowledge-base, theories, methods,

- tools and techniques- the whole pedagogy, are American, and thus alien and irrelevant;
- its literature is in English and it is borrowed from U.S.A., U.K. etc., and the books in Hindi, and for that matter in other Indian regional languages are either trans-literation or a shabby translation of the books from foreign milieu;
  - the Indian State (including the provincial governments) have not formally recognized social work as a profession, for, like other established professions, there is neither an Act/Law to bestow it professional recognition nor also there is established a Social Work Council (like the Medical Council of India, Bar Council of India etc). to provide social work a professional status;
  - consequently, there has neither developed a licensure system nor also a system of registration of social work practitioners;
  - social work practitioners thus, do not have any autonomy in their 'professional practice', which goes against their recognition as 'professionals';
  - in spite of the fact that 'professional social work' was transplanted in India almost seventy years ago and decade after decade it is claimed that it is a 'profession', its 'professionals' have not been able to organise themselves and establish a 'professional organisation', which is one of the important indicators of professionalization<sup>4</sup>;
  - not only that the professional organisation of social workers do not have sizeable membership (even the senior social work educators do not take membership of these societies, what to talk of other professionals) but even the Association of Schools of Social Work In India does not have regular membership of schools/departments/institutes of social work, which is evident of *unprofessional* stance of social work educators/other senior professionals;

- it may not be surprising to note that the 'profession' has not been able to evolve a *Code of Ethics* (there was a Code evolved by the alumni of TISS which has not received national consensus and has not yet been nationally adopted) of social work profession similar to other established professions in the country;
- in India, a vast majority of 'trained social workers' have employee status and there are no avenues whatsoever, for independent practice which again is a negative point;
- social work 'practice' in established fields like medical, psychiatric, legal etc. is merely auxiliary thus denying it a distinct professional identity;
- since the last report made in our paper on 'Social Work As A Profession' in the *Encyclopaedia of Social Work In India* (1987), the communication channels- professional journals- have no doubt increased but the quality has not improved; the *Social Work Forum*, other Newsletters and Bulletins have ceased to be published; apart from *Contemporary Social Work* published from Department of Social Work, Lucknow University, Lucknow, other schools e.g. Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai continue to publish journals;
- *Indian Journal of Social Work*, published by Tata Institute of Social Science, has shown improvement in respect of material related to 'social work' by Indian scholars/practitioners;
- yet another journal has been started by the Indian Society of Professional Social Work but instead of making it nationally representative, it has been converted into an 'international' organ; only very recently, *Professional Social Work Perspectives* has come out from a university department of social work; however, irregularity, financial and scholarship asphyxia of most of these organs marks their bane;
- not only that there are fewer takers for organising professional social work conferences but there are also very few seminars, symposia, workshops organised on emergent issues of social

work; the participation of 'professional social workers' in these academic events is sorrowful indeed;

- Indian social work as a profession has not identified itself with mass problems of society-poverty, lower-caste, tribal, gender exploitation, etc., hence it is not a significant partner in social development;
- the overriding importance to ethics, values, spirituality, religious tinge to social work activities, and above all the ambivalence in regard to adopting it as a source of livelihood, have hampered its growth as a professional entity in India; it may be evident from the fact that in most organizations (except the industry) the professionally trained social workers are scantily represented and meagerly paid; an organisation like the Central Social Welfare Board pays a paltry sum of Rs. 2500/- p.m. to a trained social worker working as a whole-time counselor in the Family Counseling Centres run by it and none of the trained social workers' organisations have effectively protested against this kind of exploitation;
- it may thus, be accepted gracefully that Indian society has not yet accorded acceptance and recognition to social work as a profession.

### **In Conclusion:**

In spite of these short-comings it may be said that 'social work is considered as a profession in India' for it is argued, that in other occupations too, who claim profession-hood, there may not be found 'all the traits of a profession' that are variously stated by the analysts of profession. It is argued forcefully by the exponents of social work as profession that after all, it is the self-image of the functionaries that matters, and the 'trained social workers' consider themselves as 'professionals', and that's all that matters.

The exponential growth of institutions imparting social work education and training also supports the stand that social work is a profession. Since our write-up on 'Social Work As A Profession' in

1987 and even after the Third Review Committee Report on Social Work Education of the U.G.C., there has been an explosion in the establishment of schools and departments of social work in India.

The exact official figures are not available with either the University Grants Commission or the Association of Schools of Social Work In India but a modest guess talk of more than 150 institutions imparting such a training/education in the country at the Diploma/Degree level.

Although there are social work schools/departments now open in Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Assam, Orissa, Meghalaya but Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, Mizoram<sup>5</sup>, Sikkim, Pondicherry, Andaman & Nicobar, Goa, Lakshdweep and Jammu & Kashmir still lack such facilities. More and more institutions are concentrating on specialization of Human Resource Development/Industrial Relations and Personnel Management rather than developmental social work. Graduates with specialized degree in Psychiatric Social Work either from Bangalore (NIMHANS) and / or Ranchi (RINPAS) when appointed as teachers tend to open courses in social work specializing in medical and psychiatric social work. All these initiatives thwart the much-desired developmental social work relevant for tribal, rural, urban poor and other weaker sections.

The economic policy of liberalization, privatization and globalization has immensely affected the national educational endeavour. There is a big entry of private sector in professional education in India and the proliferation of medical, engineering, information technology, management institutions may be seen in all parts of the country. Social work institutions have also multiplied without caring for educational and training norms as well as other standards of professional education. If one counts more than thirty management institutions in a city like Ghaziabad the number of social work schools have also equally soared in and around Nagpur. There is an explosion of institutions for social work education in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu etc. controlled by sugar barons, political big-wigs and other 'educational-industrial entrepreneurs' in the country. All these



institutions have been opened for profiteering and not for any pioneering efforts for professional excellence.

The professional standards of social work education have been diluted by many an old established departments also by starting 'self-financing' courses. Now the governments also find it convenient to start self-financing professional courses in engineering, medicine, and management and of course, Social Work. In these 'self-financed courses' if there is anything that is non-regrettably sacrificed, it is the quality of training of future professionals.

One may find that a university like the Indira Gandhi Open University has started a Bachelor's course in social work by 'distance mode' and many newly established institutions of social work, imparting education of social work at the Master's level, advertise in their Admission Notices that 'Field Work is not a compulsory component' in their courses. This is done to attract 'part-time' learners who are able to pay heavy fee. Professional status of social work in India may also be evaluated on these counts that go contrary to making an occupation a profession.

I have been a protagonist of a 'Unitary Department/Institute of Social Science with Social Work as one of its constituents. Being a product of such a department at Lucknow University and later as a teacher at the Institute of Social Sciences at Agra, I was more concerned than ever that social work get theoretical and conceptual strengths from other social sciences, and other social science disciplines get practical nuances, realistic data for theory building and praxis from Social Work. But the 'purist social work professionals' argued against it saying that for being a profession, social work must have an autonomous and independent department. And ultimately, social work was separated from sociology/ economics/anthropology, in most universities resulting in de-intellectualization of social work and 'unrealistic theorization' in other related social science disciplines.

An interesting feature of social work education today is the reversal of 'isolationist trend'. Many of the established departments of Sociology e.g. at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh; Benaras Hindu

University, Varanasi; Barkatullah University, Bhopal; Rani Durgawati University at Jabalpur; Himachal Pradesh University, Simla etc., have started courses in social work as a constituent part of sociology department. Social work education is part of Education Faculty at M.J.P. Rohilkhand University, Bareilly and the Dean of Education not only chairs the Courses Committee but also acts as examiner, without any expertise in social work. Similarly, social work department at Faizabad is headed by an economist; at Jhansi (Bundelkhand University) it is a constituent part of Social and Preventive Medicine and at S.J.M. University, Kanpur it is a part of Adult Education. In most new departments of social work, the faculty is either on contract or honorary. All these also further dilute the professional character of social work.

In conclusion again, it may be asserted that social work as a child of welfare capitalism was so far supported by *welfare statism* in most parts of the world. It got direct or indirect support by governmental policies, schemes, programmes and finances provided to support social assistance, social welfare, social security and other poverty alleviation measures, in Asia, Africa, Latin America and even in some European and North-American nations, to provide jobs to 'professional social workers' and to sustain liberal capitalism. But the contemporary 'global capitalism' with processes of LPG and good bye to 'welfare state' has further challenged not only the professional character of social work but its very existence as a genuine recognized activity.

#### Notes:

1. In *A Dictionary, English And Sanskrit* by Monier Williams, the following words have been used to identify different work-activities:
  - **Business**— *Karma, Kariyam, Arth, Vyapar, Vyavsaya, Vyavhar, Kariyaudyoga.* (p.71).
  - **Calling**— *Vratti, Jeevika, Upjeevika, Vyapar, Vyavsaya.* (p.74).

- **Occupation**– *Vyapar, Kariyam, Karma, Vyavsaya, Vyavhar, Udyog, Udhyam, Pravratti, Pravartanam, Vratti, Karyaudyog, Karmaudyog.* (p.545).
- **Profession**– *Vratti, Vyapar, Vyavsaya, Vartanam, Pravratti, Vratam, Vratita, Jeevika, Upjeevika, Jeevanvratti, Jeevanopaya, Upjeevanam, Ajeev, Ajeevanarth, Udyog* (e.g. Shasta Vratti – Military, Chikitsavratti- Medical). (p.629).
- **Service**– *Vyapar, Karyam, Karma, Vyavsaya, Vratti.* (p.730).

There is however, no specific word for profession in Sanskrit Lexicon.

2. There is a controversy over the four-fold division of Aryan society; the inclusion of **Sudras**, destined to perform menial functions it is argued, is done much later in the post-Vedic period. The **Purus-sukta** of the Xth Mandal of **Rigveda**, it is maintained by some scholars is an interpolation. However, ordinarily the division of Aryan society in four **Varnas** is widely accepted.
3. **Varnasharam-dharma** may be precisely understood as (i) division of society into four layers- **Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya** and **Sudra** which was determined by birth; (ii) four-fold division of life span into four **Ashrams**– **Brahmcharya, Grihastha, Vanprastha** and **Sanyas**, wherein the active period for **Kama** and **Arhta** was fairly limited for twenty five years– from twenty sixth year of age to fifty years in the **Girhastha Ashrama**; (iii) again the individual activities were also divided into four categories **Kama, Arth, Dharma** and **Moksha** amongst which **Dharma** and **Moksha** were supreme and ultimate objectives of individuals. The first element of **Varnashramadharm** created hierarchy and strict divisions of society based on occupations. It put restrictions on both social and occupational mobility. In the historical past it also alienated large groups of Hindi society from acquiring knowledge. Apart from restricting active engagement of individuals in **Kama** and **Artha** only in the **Gurhastha Ashram**, people were motivated for Abstinence and Renunciation in the

**Vanprastha** and **Sanyasa** ashrams. All these too were obstacles in the growth and development of professions in India more particularly the social professions like social work. Too much involvement in ‘other worldly’ affairs, social philosophy of contenance and minimization of needs, belief in fatalism and glorification of poverty are all against innovations, this worldly achievements, materialistic growth and progress and hence antithetical to science, technology, riches and of course, professional development.

4. The establishment of Association of Alumni of Schools of Social Work in India was done on the pattern of its international counterpart. It was later converted to Indian Association of Trained Social Workers. When I was president of IATSW, there were hardly 300 members in 1979-82. It became defunct. Later the Indian Society of Psychiatric Social Work was converted into Indian Society of Professional Social Work having negligible membership. Another society has been formed in Sept. 2005 at IGNOU again with no membership.
5. North-eastern Hill University, before the establishment of a University in Mizoram, at its campus in Aizwal; had initiated teaching of social work there. I along with Professor K.D. Gangrade and Dr. Bharati Sharma were members of the Committee of Courses for MSW degree. After long and continued discussions on various issues we had formulated a 5-year course for entrants with 10 + 2 qualifications. For, we had realized that direct entry at the MSW level does not fulfil conditionality of ‘sufficiently longer professional socialization’. We had, however; stipulated exit points 1,2,3 and 5 years of education and training with a certificate, diploma, Bachelors and Master’s degree respectively. I still hold that social work to attain profession hood must follow this pattern of education.

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