

SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL WELFARE



SHANKAR PATHAK



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A HISTORICAL- CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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A Social Historical Perspective

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A FEW WORDS ABOUT THIS BOOK

At this stage of my life (82 years), I had thought, I would not take any trouble, make any effort regarding my published work – collection of papers, books and subsequently published articles in academic journals. But certain events that took place about fifteen months back, prompted (tempted?) me to reconsider my earlier decision. The result is a selection of my published writings, mainly from two books and addition of four chapters specially written for this selection, and arranging them in one volume, grouped under a common theme. The entire part one of my book, Social Welfare-An Evolutionary And Developmental Perspective, Macmillan-India (1981) is included here as part one. In the second part, I have included selected writings from my other book – Social Welfare, Health and Family Planning in India, Marwah Publications, Delhi, 1979. I have also added four chapters especially written for this book recently (March, April 2012) namely, Helping Process in the Bhagavadgita, Bhakti: Concept, Ideology And Spread, Professionalisation of Social Work 1975-2012 and Developmental Social Welfare. The notes and reference have been retained, with appropriate deletions and renumbering, following the chapter numbers in this book.

All my books are out of print. There may be a demand for these books because the number of institutions providing social work education at the under-graduate and post-graduate levels has increased, and may be close to 200.

Having made the selection about a year ago, I had given up the idea of publishing it, mainly due to some practical difficulties. M.H Ramesha of Niruta Publications succeeded in persuading me in publishing this book, by offering the necessary help for revising and updating the previously published writings and in writing the new chapters.

Though I retired in 1990, I was professionally active until 2000,

and so I was in touch with the developments in the field of social work. I have tried to revise and update the previously published writings, by taking note of the relevant literature which I was aware of and which was available to me. In particular, I should mention the major academic project-Review of Fifty Years of Social Work Literature, special issue of the Indian Journal of Social Work, April, 1997. Given my personal circumstances such as my location, age and related problems, computer illiteracy etc, I have done my best to improve the quality of the manuscript while revising and updating it. I am aware that there may be some deficiencies and I hope the readers will be indulgent and ignore them.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to Nirmala .L, for her help in computer printings of drafts, struggling patiently with my handwriting, T.F. Hadimani for preparing a very attractive design for the cover of the book and M.H. Ramesha for daring to publish it. Ponnaswamy .N, Venkatesh .K, K. Anantha Murthy and Nayana M.K have also done computer printing of some parts of the manuscript and I thank them. Pamela Singla of the Department of Social Work, Delhi University, has taken much trouble in securing for me the copies of the printed versions of the talk, by B.N. Ganguli and Elmina Lucke which appear as Appendix I&II and I greatly appreciate her help. Ms. Zakia S. Pathak had gone through some of the chapters in the second part of this book and made editorial improvement of the manuscripts when they were first published; she also provided me with two books for my reading which I appreciate. K.S. Ramesha has done the final typesetting of the computer-script of this book very competently and I thank him. M.A. Boratti translated a few lines of the vachana by Chennabasavanna and I am greateful to him.

August 15, 2012
Bangalore

Shankar Pathak

PART ONE

Social Policy And Social Welfare
A Social Historical Perspective

CHAPTER-1

Introduction

In this brief opening chapter I propose to explain my approach in studying the evolution of social welfare in India and the rationale for it. In the process, I hope to alert the reader to the value-orientation behind this approach, which is vitally important, because I strongly believe that all intellectual endeavors are influenced by ideology.¹

It is helpful to start with the definition of the terms 'social welfare' and 'social work'. The task is not easy. There have been several unsuccessful attempts to define these terms so that a uniform meaning is attributed to them, both nationally and internationally. Social welfare is used here as a term which is broader in scope than social work. It may be defined as the organised provision of resources and services by the society to deal with social problems. These services may be provided by the state or by voluntary organisations, with a view to ameliorating the conditions of the people affected by the problems as well as to protect others who are likely to be affected in the future. This definition is wide enough to include the traditional and modern views of social welfare, i.e. the residual and developmental concepts of social welfare. It also includes social work. The term 'social work' refers to the work of voluntary social workers, professional social workers and other social work personnel employed in the field of social welfare.

The first part of this book deals with the history of social welfare in India. The subject matter of history is not the frozen and mummified past, but the change and evolution of society. History 'is a

continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past.² The study of any history poses a serious problem because we look at past events through contemporary concepts and mental framework.³ This tendency cannot altogether be avoided (though it could be kept under check by our awareness of its existence) because 'we can view the past and achieve our understanding of the past, only through the eyes of the present'.

Ahistoricity, both in a literal and a Marxist sense, is characteristic of social welfare literature. It may be asked why one should study history, which is concerned with the 'dead past'. It may even be argued that such an endeavour is undesirable for two reasons: it may lead to nationalistic chauvinism by glorification (even mythologisation) of the past; and it may reinforce the existing orientation to the past when we need an orientation to the future to bring about planned social change. These questions raise very pertinent issues because the dangers referred to are real and not imaginary. Yet, it is both necessary and desirable that we study aspects of Indian history because it provides us 'the key to the understanding of the present'. As pointed out by E.H. Carr, 'The past is intelligible to us only in the light of the present; and we can fully understand the present only in the light of the past. To enable man to understand the society of the past, and to increase his mastery over the society of the present, is the dual function of history.'⁴

There is a special reason why one should study the history of social welfare, 'even if the past does not provide easy and clear lessons'. Clarke Chambers has observed:

Historical study may, for example, remind us of experiments in social welfare or in the delivery of social services which we have forgotten or never fully understand. It may provide educators, administrators, and practitioners with professional models drawn from the past. Apprentice social workers especially, I imagine, need to know that social concern did not begin with themselves ... it is important to sense in both heart and mind that others have gone before, that one

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CHAPTER -3

Social Change And Social Welfare In Ancient India

In Indian literature on social reform and social work it is customary to trace the heritage of modern social welfare to the beginning of the nineteenth century, especially to the time of Rammohun Roy. If at all any reference is made to an earlier period, it is by way of stray remarks in passing about the social reform activities of some Muslim or Maratha ruler.¹ Occasionally one comes across, however, vague, global reference to social welfare in ancient India-mostly as a glorification of the past.²

Periodisation of Indian history is a complicated and controversial issue. The popular classification is based on the religion of the rulers. Accordingly, 2500 B.C. to A.D. 1000 is treated as the ancient period, A.D. 1100 or 1200 to A.D. 1800 as the medieval period and the period from A.D. 1800 onwards as the modern period. Thapar is of the view that the end of the ancient period should be roughly eighth century A.D. or possibly a little earlier.³ There is however, a rather more specific problem in studying ancient Indian history. It covers a vast period of more than three thousand years for most of which there is little historical evidence, especially about the social structure. Precisely for this reason, the approach here is chronological only in a very broad sense and rather like a frog-leap through history, skipping periods and details either because of the absence of adequate material or their relative unimportance for our purpose.

INDUS VALLEY-THE FIRST URBANISATION

The earliest of the Indian civilisations is the Indus valley culture of Harappa and Mohen-jo-daro (now in Pakistan) which was in existence roughly about 3000 to 2000 B.C. It ended about 1750 B.C. The Indus civilisation is characterised by a high level of urbanisation and affluence. Kosambi writes:

The Indus cities show town planning of a truly amazing nature. Besides the straight streets meeting at right-angles, there was a superb drainage system for carrying away rainwater and cesspools for clearing the sewage. No Indian city possessed anything of the sort till modern times, far too many still lack these amenities. There were enormous granaries far too large to be in private possession. They were accompanied by small tenement houses in regular blocks which must have accommodated the special class of workers or slaves who pounded and stored the grain. There was evidence of considerable trade, some of it across the ocean.⁴

This indicates a well-developed agricultural system which could support the population of large cities with surplus food, the presence of a state, a system of government and the existence of a class-based society where there was the rule of a few over many. Some kind of slavery seems to have been practised. When we consider that the Indus people were essentially peaceful and not violent, we can assume that some type of social welfare was in existence which took care of the minimum needs of the slaves and other lower classes. Unfortunately, we know very little of their social structure, so that any more conjecture will be historical fiction of little relevance.

THE VEDIC PERIOD (1700 TO 600 B.C.)

Sometime toward the end of the second millennium came from the north-west, perhaps from Persia, a hymn-singing, pastoral nomadic tribe, speaking an Indo-European language, and known in history as the Aryans. From the first wave of the Aryans to the Buddhist period—approximately one thousand years—we can observe the progress of

the ancient Indian civilisation from nomadic, tribal groups to the tribal settlements (Janapadas) and then to the beginnings of an agricultural society along the Gangetic basin. This is also the period during which the caste system evolved gradually.

It is more helpful for our purpose to adopt Dumizel's concept of 'tripartite division of social functions', and then see the changes in these functions.⁵ The early Aryans were familiar with the division of social functions into those of the sovereign, the warriors and the people. The function of the sovereign was originally performed by an elected chief and gradually this evolved into a hereditary kinship as the tribes grew in size and began to live in one or more settlements. So also the functions of the warriors which originally might have been performed by all those members of the tribe who could fight a war, gradually became more or less a professional hereditary occupation. Thus emerged the group of Kshatriyas who were to become a caste in the Varna system. With the clearing of the forests, made possible by the discovery of the iron, and the development of tribal agricultural settlements, there emerged the communal ownership of land by the Kshatriyas. At about the same time came into existence the other major professional class, the priests, who came to be known as Brahmins. Those who did not own the land, but did manual work on it as producers of food (and later also traders) constituted the social function of 'the people'.

Shastri has depicted the communitarian republics of the early Vedic period in idyllic terms.⁶ Whether or not one agrees with all the detailed descriptions of the communal life of these tribal republics, where the social resources were shared by the members of the tribe through daily or periodical ritual distribution, we may agree with Shastri's main conclusions:

In this communitarian society which functioned like an extended family, everybody's needs were catered to by everybody. There was a life of complete mutuality and reciprocal assistance whether the needs were basic or special, generic or arising out of vulnerable situations like disease and external danger. In

knowledge and skill people differed only in quantity and everybody did for others in need what others did for him in similar circumstances. The whole business of helping people in need was everybody's business mainly handled in a collective way. Thus everybody was client and agent both on different occasions or for different purposes.⁷

As the tribal territories progressed and grew in size, they coalesced to form the kingdom, which was increasingly headed by hereditary chieftain-kings. The growing population and the prosperity of agriculture also led to the emergence of cities in the Gangetic basin. This is known as the second urbanisation, a consequence of which is the crystallisation of a new Varna group of traders (Vaisya). The social function of 'people' included the trader and the agricultural producer who did not own the land, the Sudra. By then the four-fold division of social functions had emerged though it was still fluid and had not solidified into the rigid caste system it was later to become.

'Technologically the new urbanisation was based on iron, the widespread domestication of the horse, the extension of plough agriculture and a far more sophisticated market economy than that of the earlier period.'⁸ The agricultural land which was collectively owned by the Kshatriyas, was mostly tilled by the slaves (Dasas) and hired labourers (Bhritakas). The political control remained with the Kshatriyas, one of them becoming the king through lineage. Lineage, speech and customary law were the three criteria which defined social status in the earlier tribal society. Now with the gradual emergence of caste (Jati) originally based on a fourfold theoretical classification of the *Varna* system, society was stratified into five social groups of the classical framework of the later caste system. Caste (Jati) became a more dominant indicator of social status than the ritual status (*Varna*).

Urban life in the cities, which were mostly capitals of Janapadas, was dominated by the wealthy mercantile class (Shrestin) and the guilds (Srenis). The stratifications of urban society included the

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CHAPTER-7

Social Policy And Social Welfare During The Colonial Period (1800-1947)

The East India Company was established in 1600 and began its trading activities in the southern part of India soon afterwards. With the acquisition of Diwani rights in Bengal in 1765, the Company took on a new role as the colonial ruler of a part of the country. But the Company had little interest in framing a social policy towards its subjects, because of its preoccupation with maintaining and expanding colonial territory. It was only by the beginning of the nineteenth century that it was compelled to devote some attention to the other aspects of administration, apart from the collection of revenue and the maintenance of law and order. In this chapter we will discuss the colonial government's social policy in broad outline from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Social policy, in the final analysis, pertains to governmental policy. When we take into account the nature of colonial society and the government, it includes the policies of the government in such areas as religion, social welfare and social legislation, education and medical care.

Perhaps the most prominent area where a social policy existed was in the field of education. No other social policy was subjected to such detailed debate as the educational policy. Also, from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards education claimed the lion's share of the governmental expenditure as compared to other social sectors like medical relief, famine relief and social work. Before the Charter

Act of 1813, the Company administration took hardly any interest in providing education to its subjects. Until then what little was done in this area was mostly due to the work of Christian missionaries. By this Act, the Company had to accept responsibility for the education of Indians and 'this was the beginning of the state system of education in India under the British rule'. During the period 1813-54, very little was in fact done by the colonial government to discharge this responsibility. So the missionaries continued to be the main agency to provide education to the people. This period, however, was characterised by many violent controversies which centred around the object of the educational policy, medium of instruction and the method and agency for the spread of education. The participants in the debate included the emerging Indian leaders, Christian missionaries, and officials of the government. Wood's Education Despatch of 1854 set the controversies at rest, at least for some time, by declaring that the main object of the educational system was to spread western knowledge and science, and by acknowledging the inability of the government to provide for all the educational needs of the country. So it emphasised that the bulk of the country's educational institutions would have to be organised by private bodies and instead of the education of the minority elite by the government, the education of the masses should be the duty of the state.

Until 1854, the Company did not accept direct responsibility for the education of the masses and its educational policy was influenced by what is known as the Downward Filtration Theory. According to this, the Company was expected to give a good education to only a few persons and they were in turn expected to educate the masses. The choice of the Downward Filtration Theory was dictated more by the limitation of funds at the disposal of the government than by any ideology.

Wood's Despatch stated that the education of the masses was the duty of the state, and both English and vernacular languages should

be used as media of instruction at the secondary stage. But in actual practice, the colonial educational policy continued to be governed by the Downward Filtration Theory, and by Macaulay's Minute which had stated the object of education to be the creation of a class of persons who would be 'Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect'. It argued that the claims of English as a medium of instruction was far superior to that of any vernacular language.

As a consequence of this policy emerged a system of education which was elitist, confined to a small urban population and benefiting certain groups which were traditionally well placed like the Brahmins, Kayasthas, Parsees and Bhatias. Another consequence of this policy was the practical disappearance of the indigenous system of education by the end of the nineteenth century. In spite of its many major defects, the indigenous system of education was not without some good features. For instance, it was more widespread, extending into the villages and it was in tune with the past heritage of the country. The educational system that finally emerged under the British 'was not top-heavy but light in its foundation', because of a narrow base of primary education.

The Crown rule which began after 1857 professed the welfare of its subjects as the goal of colonial government and some halting efforts were made in that direction. One such attempt was the increasing expenditure on education by the central government. (The educational grant which was one lakh rupees under the Charter Act of 1813 had increased to ten lakhs of rupees per annum by 1833.) The all-India expenditure on education increased ten times by 1932-33 as compared to 1882-83. This led to a substantial expansion of higher education in urban areas, especially at the levels of secondary and collegiate education. Not all this expansion was due to the actions of the government. The emerging Indian elite saw in western education a panacea for all the ills of Indian society and promoted its spread

with great enthusiasm and organisation. With a few notable exceptions such as Jagannath Shunker Sett and D.K. Karve who advocated vernacular language as the medium of instruction, and G.K. Gokhale who sponsored a bill in the Central Assembly in 1913 for providing mass education through compulsory primary education, most of the Indian leaders accepted the model of education as evolved by the colonial government and tried to popularise it among the people. There were also sectarian demands for the provision of special educational facilities by the government to the neglected or disadvantaged groups. The government was compelled to yield to this pressure for political considerations during the latter part of the Victorian era. Thus, special measures were adopted to promote education among Muslims, Harijans and other backward classes and among the tribal population. The education of women which had long been neglected by Indian society also received special attention. Even though Gokhale's attempt to promote compulsory primary education failed, a substantial expansion of primary education took place between 1921-47, after the colonial government transferred education to the Indians, first under the system of dyarchy and later under the constitutional reforms of 1935 which ushered in a new era of popularly elected governments in the provinces. There was also further expansion of the special facilities of education for Harijans and backward classes. A new programme of adult education was also introduced during this period with a view to eradicate illiteracy among the masses.

An objective overall review of the achievements of the colonial government in education will reveal some positive features. First, it introduced western science and knowledge through modern education with English as a medium of instruction. This had far-reaching consequences on Indian society, both politically and socially. It contributed to the modernisation of Indian society by facilitating the development of national consciousness among Indians, which in

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PART TWO

Social Work – Profession And Practice.

A Cultural Perspective

CHAPTER-9

Evolution Of Social Welfare In India

In the evolution of social welfare in India, like in many countries, two broad trends can be noticed: reform of the society and the provision of specific services to the handicapped and disadvantaged individuals and groups. Much before the beginning of social reform during the nineteenth century, there were several religious reform movements by the saints. They were revolting against the religious inequality and in some cases against social inequality as well. They fought against the prevalent practice of excluding the lower groups in society from opportunities to worship God, and their access to religious knowledge. Some of them attempted to remove the social discrimination by preaching that all human beings were equal before God.

The social reformers from Ram Mohun Roy to Gandhi also aimed at reforming the Hindu society. They focussed their attention on the abolition of some religious or social practices which were detrimental to the welfare of certain segments of the Hindu society, such as sati, prohibition of widow remarriage, child marriage, idol-worship and some features of the caste system. They approached their task of reform, which concerned mostly women and children, from a rational and critical analysis of the social system of the day. To achieve their goal they relied heavily on state intervention and the instrument of social legislation. The reform activities which began in Bengal spread to several parts of the country. It was an elitist reform

movement confined mainly to the western educated, urban middle class. It did not become a mass movement until the entry of Gandhi on the social reform arena. The point to note here is the fact that many of these social reformers who began their work with a broad orientation to social problems and the need to change society in certain respects, very soon found it necessary to provide specific services to individuals affected by the harsh features of the society. Thus institutions were established to provide shelter and education for widows, orphans, and destitutes.

With the entry of Gandhi on the political and social scene of India, we see the beginning of a new phase in social reform. For Gandhi, the struggle against social inequality could not be separated from the fight for political freedom. At the same time, he felt that the fight for freedom and political equality has no meaning without fighting for social equality. Gandhi was not content with his efforts to change the society. He also established organizations to provide services and to work for the welfare of the weaker sections of the society. Unlike the social reformers before him, Gandhi's field of action was not limited to urban areas. His analysis of rural poverty led him to initiate measures for rural development through self-sufficiency of the villages. While not agreeing with all the Gandhian ideas and programmes, it must be pointed out that there was none before him (and none after him so far) who had his breadth of vision, the integral view of society (social and political, rural and urban) and who had realised the value of people's participation in the struggle for social and political reform. For the first time social reform became a mass movement drawing in its fold large number of men and women from all strata of society.

I. Evaluation of the Role of Government in Social Welfare

Before India came under the British rule, social welfare activities such as care of the handicapped and the destitutes, were the respon-

sibilities of the joint-family, caste and religious institutions. The government or the rulers assumed only limited responsibility for social welfare. During the period of British rule, with the gradual changes in Indian society like urbanization and industrialization, organized social welfare came into existence. These were mostly in urban areas. The government, which subscribed to the *laissez-faire* theory of state, followed a policy of least intervention in social reform and assumption of minimum responsibility for social welfare. Most of the social welfare work was done by voluntary organizations through volunteer service. These organizations were mostly run on communal lines and their service was limited to a particular caste or religious group. The state passed some social legislation on its own initiative, mainly for the control of vagrancy and crime. Other social legislation were introduced reluctantly by the government under pressure from the social reformers like Rammohun Roy and others who followed him. Institutional services were provided by the government in provincial capitals or in big industrial towns under the legislative measures introduced for the control of delinquency and crime. Thus, during the British period, the government played a very minor role in social welfare. One area where the government was more active was the welfare of industrial workers, mainly under pressure from textile mills in England, and later also due to the work of the philanthropists and early trade union leaders like N.M. Lokhande, S.S. Bengali and N.M. Joshi. Several provincial governments passed a series of labour legislation to regulate the working hours in the factory, and to provide minimum safety and health measures for the prevention of exploitation of workers. The introduction of these measures were particularly pronounced during the period of popular rule in the late 1930's when Congress party came into power in the majority of provinces of British India. All these resulted in better working conditions in factories and, provision of housing and recreational measures for industrial labour,¹

After the Independence, one of the major problems facing the government was to provide shelter and food to the refugees who were pouring into the country in large numbers. This was a problem of unprecedented magnitude, and the government had to organize relief and later rehabilitation measures on a massive scale. The task was handled by the government by utilizing its administrative machinery and personnel in association with some voluntary social workers and organizations. A few professional social workers also participated in this tremendous humanitarian work. The problem is still there, though not on the same scale, as expatriate refugees continue to come from other countries.

Increasing Role of the State

The year 1950 marks a new phase in the role of the state in social welfare. It was the year during which the Constitution came into force and the Planning Commission was established to begin work on the planned development of the country. The Directive Principles of State Policy emphasized the achievement of justice-social, economic and political. This was further elaborated in the various articles of the Constitution. Article 38, directs the state "to secure and protect a social order which stands for the welfare of the people". Various articles of the Constitution deal with specific activities to be undertaken by the state in this direction. Some of the major references to the state activity to achieve the welfare of the people are: securing adequate means of livelihood to all citizens; the protection of the strength and health of the workers and avoiding circumstances which force citizens to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength; protection of childhood and youth against exploitation or moral and material abandonment; to secure the right to work, education and public assistance in cases of underserved want such as unemployment, old age, sickness etc.; to secure just and human conditions of work, a living wage, a decent standard of life, leisure

and, social cultural opportunities for people; to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, especially the scheduled castes and tribes.²

The goal for the country was stated originally, as the creation of a welfare state and later, as the achievement of a socialistic pattern of society. This required that the state should play an increasingly major role in the field of general and social welfare of the people of this country. The necessity for the state to assume a more dominant role in the field of social welfare was recognized in the First Five-Year Plan which stated that "As the social structure becomes more complex, the state is called upon to play an increasing role in providing service for the welfare of the people".³

II. The Goal, Nature and Functions of Social Welfare in India

It is necessary to define the goal, nature and functions of social welfare. Such an attempt is beset with many formidable difficulties. The nature of social welfare and its area of operation do not lend themselves to a clear and precise statement as in the case of other professions like medicine, law etc. What is more, such a definition cannot have universal applicability. In the past, several attempts have been made to define the nature and scope of social welfare. The following quotation is taken from a U.N. document:

Social welfare is an organized function and is regarded as a body of activities designed to enable individuals, families, groups and communities to cope with the social problems of changing conditions. But, in addition to and extending beyond the range of its responsibilities for specific services, social welfare has a further function within the broad area of a country's social development. In this larger sense, social welfare should play a major part in ensuring that the human and material resources of the country are effectively mobilized and deployed to deal successfully with the social requirements of change and thus contribute to nation building. Social welfare tasks are those which involve the improvement of social functioning and social relationship in meeting social needs at individual, group or community levels. Such tasks may consist of providing services as a

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CHAPTER-11

Professional Social Work In India -1975 To 2012

After reviewing the literature for fifty years, pertaining to social welfare, social work and development it was observed that

some key concepts like social change, macro-micro levels and structures, and problem of inter-linkages between them, empowerment and so on, have neither been adequately and clearly conceptualized nor discussed in operational terms”and the literature failed to provide guidelines for practice or testable propositions which can be the basis for the further development of usable theory, discovery of operational procedures and techniques for practice”. There has been very little research on the theory building and practice of social development and social welfare “(Pathak, 1997)

Reviewing the literature on group work Joseph observed that

“the written contribution of Indian authors to the literature of group work has been extremely sparse or limited There has very rarely been any addition or challenge to the western literature on group work from the experience of social work in India, though the reality in India is significantly different in many ways”(Joseph, 1997).

Reviewing the literature on social action as a method, the author concluded that

The changing social characteristics of social work, together with the reorganization of the work and the market situation of social work, seem to 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 mode of intervention in India”(Siddiqui, 1997).

In her overview of all the reviews of social work literature during the period of fifty years (1940-1996). Desai noted a declining tendency in the articles published by social work writers in the Indian Journal of Social Work. She concludes “one still comes across masters and doctoral dissertations, which state that these are exploratory studies because no previous literature exists in that area!” (Desai, 1997). If they are not exploratory studies, they may be survey type of research of a field of social work, though this is also rare. A study of medical social work in Bombay by Gita Shah and a study of psychiatric social work in India by Ratna Verma are worth mentioning here. There has not been a single experimental research or evaluative research of the quality and impact of social work intervention. Even in U.K and U.S.A. this is very rare. There has been one modest experimental research in the mental health field as part of an M.Phil dissertation by an Iranian student (!) at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and it has not been published. Practice wisdom has been talked about for a long time, both in the West and in India, but remains elusive or even invisible to the eyes of the academic researchers. The need for documentation of the field experience and experiment, and to attempt at conceptualization and testing has been advocated (Joseph, 1997; Pathak 1997). Both of them have lamented the loss of such valuable knowledge. Practitioners rarely write and when they do, they tend to be either descriptive or recycle what has been written and published before, mostly by the western academics. One exceptional piece of publication of a very high quality of an experiment of social work intervention in field practice, with a family of a schizophrenic patient by Rima Balachandran, perhaps, remains unnoticed and unutilized by social work educators. And the author, alas passed away at a very young age, thus depriving us a possible future contribution to knowledge based on social work practice in India.

Finally, about the professional associations. The I.A.T.S.W went

out of existence by mid-1980's after making some significant contribution. A decade later, the other association A.S.S.W.I, also ceased to exist having made some memorable contribution. An association of psychiatric social workers, which was established in 1970, taking advantage of the void created by the demise of the two associations (I.A.T.S.W; A.S.S.W.I) renamed itself as the Indian Society of Professional Social Workers in 1986 and claims a membership of 900 in 2010. It holds annual conferences for a day or two, arranges a Memorial Lecture and awards Life-time Achievement Awards to the "chosen" academics. Note that the field practitioner is ignored. It also publishes an "annual journal" irregularly. Since 2000 only four or five issues have been published.

An introductory book on social work by an American author, published about two decades ago began with the sentence "social work is a practice-led profession". It was a practice-led occupation (not a profession) when it grew out of the charity organization movement (C.O.S) in London, New York, Chicago and other cities in U.S.A. When they first thought of offering training to the volunteers, they (the leaders of C.O.S.,) drew upon their own field experience of charitable work, home visits, study of family life and the neighborhood, and assessed the cause of poverty (individual poverty), and looked for causes much more in the "character" of the bread-winner, whether he was thrifty, hardworking and suffered from any character defects like alcoholism etc, rather than in the social environment. They also recognized the importance of personal influence of the visitor on the individual and the family. Gradually all this led to the search for a theory which would unlock the mystery of human behaviour. And then there appeared a visionary, Sigmund Freud who was ignored largely in his own country*. He made a lecture tour of U.S.A on his discovery "Interpretation of Dreams". The leaders of

* He was born in Austria and practiced in Germany

social work field were mesmerized by the Freudian psychoanalytical theory of personality development, which seemed to explain the causes of problematic human behavior in almost any area-poverty, delinquency, marital/family crisis, neurosis and even psychosis. This led to what one author has called “Psychiatric Deluge”. It took quite some time for disillusion to set in and a quest for another theory. Behaviour theory was now crowned as a major professional practice theory. Evidence of some limited nature from research was available based on experimental research. Psycho-analytical theory was not completely rejected. As Gellner has said elsewhere, if you study the history of basic sciences, you will come across a cemetery full of dead and rejected theories who once ruled their respective fields like physics, chemistry etc. However, in the social sciences, all the theories are alive, though some of them old and weak, with little following. The field of social science is overcrowded, with increasing number of aged theories (like the increasing old age population in many countries developed and developing) in several academic disciplines. (Gellner quoted in Pathak, 1989) There is also additional borrowing of theories from other disciplines and professions.

With the desperate search for professional status, succeeding in opening the sacred portals of the prestigious universities like Columbia University, New York, and University of Chicago and other universities in U.S.A., U.K., and later also in India, courses were devised as a two year graduate course (post-graduate), along with teachers with academic degrees of Ph.D, crowding out the earlier practice-rich, methods-course teachers who had worked for several years in the field, mainly in the private family and child welfare agencies, and some in medical college-linked private hospitals and psychiatric departments, child guidance clinics etc. This is as described before elsewhere, the process of academicisation of social work (Pathak 1989). Social work ceased to be a practice-led profession, which once it was, during the first few decades of the twentieth

century. In India, right from the beginning in 1936, it has been a “profession” led by social scientists as teachers, with none on the faculty with any kind of field experience*. Even when a significant change in the composition of the faculty and the content of the syllabus took place and fieldwork began to be stressed as part of social work education in some institutions in Bombay (Mumbai), Delhi, Baroda (Vadodara) and Madras (Chennai), it remained a weak, less important part of the curriculum, both in terms of the marks/credits allotted to it and the quality of supervision, which was more a name than a reality. Today what one hears of it in a city like Bangalore with about fifteen undergraduate and postgraduate institutions including several “deemed” universities in addition to the earlier single, dominating (not always for quality) old-style university, is very depressing. The situation in other parts of the country may not be significantly different with rare exceptions.

Certainly there is a change in terms of the numbers of institutions, teachers, acquisition of degrees (M.Phil, Ph.D), and the number of students passing out of these institutions. There is also a change in the academic language , “professional” becoming more popular, replacing the “trained” social worker. Otherwise, there is no change in the status, public recognition, employment, recruitment procedures etc. We are, then back to square one or to put it differently, we have been running only to discover that we are standing still, where we were fifty or sixty years ago.

A popular textbook which is widely used in U.K and U.S.A has listed eleven “theories” under Part II of the book**. Out of these, four are called ‘perspectives’, one, a model and only one is referred to as

* The first Director of T.I.S.S had some field experience in urban community work in Chicago and Bombay.

** Modern Social Work Theory, Malcolm Payne, Palgrave-Macmillan, (3rd Edition) New York 2005.

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CHAPTER-14

An Indian Perspective Of Social Work

During the past several decades, there has been much talk of the need for developing an indigenous model of social welfare. Very rarely this idea has been pursued seriously to the point of making a beginning in that direction. The reason for this is obvious; it is easy to criticise but difficult to create. G.R. Banerjee is one of those very few Indians who has tried patiently and persistently to be creative by continually thinking and writing on an Indian perspective of social work. Her contributions have been brought together in a book of essays-Papers on Social Work-An Indian Perspective. In the first thirteen papers, she propounds the basic concepts which form part of Indian social work. They are: concepts of social welfare as *kalyan* or *mangal*; concepts of love, duty or Dharma and Ahimsa; Concept of detachment or Nishkama Karma; concepts of self, professional self, self-help, and Karma theory; concept of social functioning and social consciousness. According to Banerjee, the ancient Indian concept of social welfare was broader in scope than the western concept. It included not only remedial but also preventive measures. It was not restricted to a particular group or class but was meant for all, rich, or poor, normal or handicapped. The goal of human activity was the welfare of all human beings; i.e. *loka sangraha*. It was the duty of human beings, particularly the leaders to work for the welfare of society.

Banerjee is critical of the overemphasis on the rights of an individual in western societies. She equates rights with concern for material

comforts, though it implies obligations or duty, which is neglected. She asks whether this extreme craving for material comforts based on conviction of individual rights, can bring about human happiness. An individual cannot be made to love another person by emphasizing the right or by legislation. The Indian concept of duty or Dharma is superior to the concept of right. While right makes people selfish and thus divides them, the concept of duty with its emphasis on obligation, unites people. But the concept of duty is not based on social pressures. In that case it will be bitter. It becomes sweet when "love greases its wheels". Duty also implies self-denial.¹

Self is an indivisible whole which provides continuity to the otherwise changing personality. It includes body, mind, intellect and awareness or consciousness. It has a spiritual element, the soul, which is immortal. Dichotomy of self, as professional self which operates in one's work life from the 'other' self is not valid. It is the same self whether in private life or professional sphere. When we speak of professional self we refer to the manifestation of self in our work life. Self cannot have a different set of values and behaviour in private life and in professional work. Love is not a quantity or a thing to be bargained or negotiated. It is a quality of the self developed on the basis of awareness of its identity with the whole of humanity. It implies imaginative empathy. Ahimsa is an aspect of love. It does not mean non-killing or avoidance of physical violence. It has a positive meaning. Ahimsa is not possible without love. It is akin to the western social work concept of acceptance.

Banerjee's description of the concept of rights is too narrow. It is not correct to say that the rights emphasize only the privileges and comforts of the individual. The concept of rights of man originated in the context of a social philosophy based on man as a rational being, capable of taking decisions in his best interests. It implied freedom of action consistent with the rights of other men. As noted by Banerjee, it implies obligations or duty. Such rights as freedom of speech and

worship refer to the non-material aspects of human life which are overlooked by her. If there was an overemphasis on rights to the neglect of obligations, on material aspects of the rights rather than the non-material, then we could take the same position as Banerjee takes regarding the misconception of karma theory: to reinterpret correctly the concept of rights so that a proper balance is maintained between the material and non-material, and between rights and obligations. It is true that recourse to rights will not ensure love and affection to others. Affection cannot be provided by legislation. Is it also not true that one cannot love another because it is his duty? The problem then, is inherent in both the situations, one where there is an over-emphasis on rights and the other, on duty. Banerjee recognises this difficulty which is met by her by stating that love has to grease the wheels of duty to make it sweet. By this, she makes love a quality, analytically at any rate, independent of duty. By the same logic is it not possible to temper the concept of right with love as an essential accompanying element?

At this point we need to refer to the karma theory and its implications. In the paper, "Karma Theory and Social Case Work" she gives a fairly comprehensive and correct exposition of Karma theory. This theory is postulated on the ideas of immortality of the soul and the existence of a series of births, through which the soul has to pass before reaching its ultimate goal of Moksha, i.e. uniting with the Absolute, thus ending the chain of births and deaths. Man's life is determined by his actions. What he is today is the result of his past actions and what he will do now will influence what he becomes in the future. There is no fate or god which determines his life. The responsibility is on the individual. This, according to Banerjee, is not a fatalistic theory as wrongly criticised by some western writers. By its emphasis on action, it also discourages lethargy or inertia. All this is true in a strict sense of the theory. Banerjee says, if people have misunderstood this to mean fatalism, inaction and helplessness, let

the social worker correctly reinterpret it to stimulate the people to act i.e. to do their duty. But there are some problems here which are not taken into account by her.

The modern social worker works in a secular context in his professional sphere. He is concerned with the present condition of misery and its solution not only in this life, but in the foreseeable future. The problems of unemployment, poverty and parent-child conflict etc. need to be solved as promptly as possible, from the point of view of the client. But according to Karma theory, the present miserable condition is unchangeable as a matter of strict necessity of cause and effect. It is the *phala* aspect of the Karma theory which a person has to go through, since it is the product of actions in the previous birth or births. The hope of a better future based on the individual's right actions or duty now is to be realised in the next birth. It refers to the *sanskara* aspect which states the tendency of action to bring about 'a result in future'.² It is then little comfort to a client to be told that during this birth he has to undergo whatever the suffering which cannot be undone. Even if the theory, strictly speaking, is not fatalistic and pessimistic, it tends to create that effect. As social scientists and social workers, we are concerned with reality and its implications. The client's perception of his situation, however incorrect it may be from our objective assessment, is an important factor to reckon with. The problem is not so much the incorrect understanding of the Karma theory which also obtains in many cases and a reinterpretation of it to correct it, but of what effect it will have on the clients. Does it hold out hope? Does it stimulate him to act? Banerjee's answer is in the positive. I can only agree partially. This may be the effect on some people. On the other hand, quite the opposite effect may be there on some other people.

There is another difficulty, were we to agree with Banerjee's answer completely. That is the question of defining what is the correct action of the client in the present situation. The Gita is quite

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CHAPTER-17

Sarvodaya Methods Of Social Work

In September 1964 the Gandhian Institute of Studies, Varanasi, appointed a Working Group consisting of Gandhian constructive workers and professional social workers with the purpose of developing a bridge between the two which might ultimately lead to the "fusion of the traditional concepts of social work as visualised by Mahatma Gandhi and the professional concepts of social work developed in the Western countries". The Report of the Working Group has already been published. The Gandhian Institute organised another seminar at Varanasi from March 20 to 22, 1967, to continue the dialogue between the two groups of social workers. The purpose of this seminar was to develop a greater insight in the sarvodaya methods of social work by making "a comparative analysis of some of the important techniques as practiced by a few outstanding leaders of the sarvodaya field".

During the seminar a sentence in Prof. Dasgupta's paper led to a lively discussion. He had said that "the end of social work is the end of social work". This, Shri Dharendra Mazumdar queried. "Is it possible, he asked, to conceive of a society at any point of time where there will be no need for social work?" He felt that whereas there could be an "end" of social workers in a particular community, he believed that in any society, however well-organised and developed, there would always be a need for social work.

Acharya Ram Murti addressed a question to the professional

group. He explained that the sarvodaya group makes a difference between welfare work and liberation work. Welfare work is in the nature of providing relief to people suffering from various problems. Liberation work refers to the total, fundamental change in social relationship and the institutional structure of society; it implies mobilising the people's power and leading a movement to break deadlocks created by powerful vested interests in a community. The Acharya asked: Are the professional social workers willing to lead or participate in such a people's movement? In reply, some pointed out that social action is a method of social work and the professional social worker is supposed to participate in a programme of social action. Dr. Ruby Pernell answered the question: Theoretically a professional social worker believes in participating and leading a movement or direct action programme. However, in practice, professional social workers are unable to do this because they are employees of government or government-aided organisations. The service rules and their own concern for job security prevent them from participating in such direct action programmes.

Dr. Chatterjee's paper attempted to analyse the Gandhian concept of change of heart by comparing it with the theories of different schools of psychology. He pointed out that "to Gandhian logic, the change of heart was a total, revolutionary, cataclysmic event, encompassing the entire 'philosophy of life', so that all actions subsequent to the change of heart are in conformity with the radical change that has taken place at the core". Like professional social workers, Gandhians also believe that "mere intellectual acceptance, on grounds of logic, is not enough; the change has to be at the levels of emotions and feelings too-the involvement has to be total, at the cognitive, conative as well as the affective levels." According to Dr. Chaterjee, there is one essential difference between the Gandhian and the Freudian concept of personality change. In Gandhian technique, change of heart is sought through strengthening the control of the super-ego.

The appeal is to the conscience. In Freudian psycho-analysis, normalization(change) is sought through lessening the control of a too severe and unrealistic super-ego.

A major part of the discussion centred round the nature of identification with the people. Shri Dhirendra Mazumdar had stated in his paper that while working in villages, he noticed a certain barrier between him and the villagers. While they respected him, they did not accept him as one of them. In order to identify with the villagers, and to gain their acceptance, he changed his way of living to such an extent, that his own people called him a "dirty person". The question was raised whether it is necessary to identify with the people so totally? The professional social workers, while agreeing about the value of identification with the people, did not accept the idea that they have to change their whole way of living as stated by Shri Mazumdar. They stressed the need for equality, respect for people, to meet the people at their own level of thinking and behaviour, and to understand the problems from the point of view of the people.

The concept of empathy was mentioned by one of the professional social workers, which was claimed to be similar to the sarvodaya concept of total identification with the people. However, there is an important difference between these two concepts, which was not mentioned during the discussion at the seminar. The sarvodaya group generally seemed to believe that in order to understand what problems mean to people, it is necessary for a social worker to live among them under similar conditions. Professional social workers feel that this is neither necessary nor desirable. It is not necessary because it is possible to identify with people and understand their point of view without living like them. It is not desirable because a social worker has not only to understand the people's point of view but also maintain the objectivity essential for an accurate assessment of the situation. Also, his helping role is more effective at a remove. The main features of the sarvodaya approach to social

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CHAPTER -20

Bhakti- Concept, Ideology And Spread

The title of this chapter has been carefully chosen, after much deliberation. Bhakti as a religious concept is said to be present in rudimentary form even during the vedic period, while it is widely believed to have its origin in the Agamas and post-Agamic religious literature, culminating as BhaktiYoga in Bhagavadgita. Here we are concerned with its manifestation during a period of almost thousand years from the seventh century, originating in Tamil territory (Tamil Nadu) moving upwards to Kannada speaking territory (Karnataka) from there to Marathi (Maharashtra) and Gujarati (Gujarat) speaking territories. It also erupted in the north-eastern U.P., spread towards the eastern India (Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Odisha) and downwards to the central parts of the country (Rajasthan, M.P.). A religious concept developing into a religious ideology, modifying in major respects the earlier version of Bhakti, with mass appeal, attracting in significant numbers the middle and lower strata of society, cutting across all barriers of jati (caste), gender, occupation, social status, and even religion. This phenomenon has been described, debated, eulogized and critically assessed by scholars from different parts of the country over a period of several decades. It has been labelled as an "event", socio-religious, socio-political and social protest movement, etc. Some writers have gone so far as to call it a

revolution'.* So some preliminary clarifications and observations seem to be necessary on the choice of the title, before proceeding further.

Bhakti as a concept refers to devotee's love for God, a personal God who may be formless, Nirguna or Saguna, a supreme reality or power to whom he surrenders himself, a total surrender based on unconditional and intense love. This may take the form of marital love as in the case of Andal for Krishna, Meera Bai for Girdhar Gopal and Mahadeviakka for Chennamallikarjuna (Shiva). These instances, incidentally illustrate the Saguna form of Bhakti. In Saguna Bhakti, the God may be one of the two- Shiva or Vishnu in human form as Rama or Krishna. Sometimes one may notice the blend of both Nirguna and Saguna Bhakti as witnessed in Narasimh Mehta and Kabir, though in Kabir Nirguna Bhakti is dominant. Bhakti becomes an ideology when it attempts to convert the masses to the particular concept of Bhakti with prescribed rules of conduct and forms of worship. We notice this in the Warkari saints of Maharashtra and Veerashaiva saints of Karnataka. As a result sects emerge, forming their own community of fellow worshippers, providing mutual support, solidifying the bond of kinship among the followers. The emergence of sects may be a spontaneous process or a byproduct of the teachings of the leaders of the particular type of or form of devotion as in the case of Kabir and Warkari saints or a deliberately organised collective or group as in the case of Sikhs or Shivasharanas (Veerashaiva saints) of the medieval Karnataka.

The word "movement" is widely and popularly used to refer to the emergence of Bhakti ideology and the establishment of new sects or

*. D.P.Mukerji, my teacher at Lucknow University, was a great scholar and he was one of the founders of the discipline of sociology in India. He stated that "their (Bhakti movements) larger number much about the same period would entitle us to include them in one broad movement" and "the movement had the spirit of a revolution". Later, he called it a "mirror revolution". Indian Culture, 1946, reprint Roopa and Co. Delhi 2006.

panths which separate themselves from the rest of the population, with a new identity of their own such as Kabir Panthi's, Dadu Panthi's and Veerashaivas for example. It is not quite appropriate to use the word, social movement or Bhakti movement, if the word is used in a strict sociological concept of social movement. Social movement, sociologically defined involves a goal or a cause to be achieved which is clearly specified as part of an ideology which has a strong emotional appeal to the masses who are the "target population", availability of charismatic leaders like Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, Basaveshwara (Basawanna), and Chaitanya to name a few charismatic leaders. Social movement lasts for a few years or at the most a few decades. Recently in this country, Anna Hazare emerged as a charismatic leader in the movement against corruption and earlier, Jaya Prakash Narayan in another socio-political context. To sum up, a clearly defined cause or goal, an ideology with a strong emotional appeal and an organisation, whether already existing or specially created are the necessary components of social movement. This sociological definition may not be applicable to the several Bhakti "Movements" covering a span of seven to eight hundred years or almost thousand years. It is for this reason the title was chosen, avoiding the term "movement" using instead a simple descriptive word "spread", along with the words concept and ideology. But it may be unavoidable to use the term "movement" in the later part of this paper partly because it has been widely used by writers on "Bhakti" schools of various types in different parts of the country, and partly for linguistic convenience. In that case the words "Bhakti movements" the plural will be used.

Contribution of Bhakti Movements

Here an attempt is made to summarise the major contribution of Bhakti movements as a whole covering the period of almost a thousand years or slightly less. Bhakti purified the traditional vedic-

brahmanical religion by eliminating the excessive, rigid ritualism as part of worship. It also democratized religion by making it a "right" of every individual to approach and worship god, without having to go to the temples, (entry was restricted to the non-Dwija castes) not requiring to use the services of a priest, not having to spend money on a variety of pooja materials- flowers, fruits, coconut, camphor, incense sticks, sandalwood, ghee etc, and pay the fee to the priest (Dakshina). In other words, worship of god could be done inexpensively and conveniently, convenient in terms of time and location (one's own house or the immediate neighbourhood), while engaging in one's occupation for livelihood. The Bhakti movements' emphasis on continuing in one's traditional occupation, with a sense of pride and duty to one's family and society at large is expressed in the much quoted Kannada word "Kayaka". In one of the vachanas Basava said "Kayaka is Kailas" i.e. work is worship. This aspect of Bhakti movements has been termed as the principle of life-affirmation as distinguished from the traditional dominant religious ideology of "Moksha", liberation from this worldly life, breaking the cycle of birth and rebirth. Albert Schweitzer stated that this dominant life-negating ideology of Hinduism was retrograde, devaluing the present life of people in this birth*.

The Bhakti poets, it may be noted, did not completely reject the religious theories of the dominant Brahmanical traditional religion. They accepted the basic idea of Karma theory, the cycle of birth and rebirth, and the liberation from this cycle as the ultimate goal. However, they modified these ideas significantly.

Kabir says: The doer is not the one who has gone and sold himself as a slave to his deeds.....

I am not going to a place called the hell

*. Article in Atlantic Monthly 1958. I am unable to give the details such as the month and number. I am relying on my memory when quoting Schweitzer.

.....

**I am the agent of all my actions
Yet I am different from my deeds
O saints,
The doer is different from his deed**

(Tr. Dharwadker) (Emphasis mine)

Note the modification of the Karma theory in the above quotation from Kabir. Similarly, Chennabasavanna, a prominent Shivasharana theorist has said that one's actions will yield result in this birth itself. He counsels that "industry is superior to destiny, since the work undertaken by one gets transformed into destiny and bears fruit". He avers that "one's self-effort can be either productive or destructive".

(Tr. Boratti)

While subscribing to the theory of Moksha as the most desirable and final goal of one's life, yet one should not reject the present life or be indifferent to it. Purandara Dasa has said:

Human life is precious. Don't spoil it you fools

.....

One should swim across (the river of life) live and win

(Tr. N. R. Shastri)

It's hard to be born a human:
You won't be born another time.
The ripe fruit that falls to the ground
doesn't grow back on the branch

Kabir (Tr. Dharwadker)

Do not torture your body with thirst and hunger
 Give it a hand when it stumbles and falls
 To hell with all your vows and prayers
 Just help others through life, there's no truer worship

Lal Ded (Tr. R. Hoskote)

The above quotations from Purandara Dasa, Kabir and Lal Ded convey their life-affirming message to the human beings.

Bhakti poets rejected the iniquitous social structure based on fourfold classification of society, the high and low classification of the population. Many references in the Bhakti poetry use the term "Kula" which is closer to the concept of social class or clan than jati (caste). The word 'jati' is also used by Kabir and in the vachanas of Shivasharanas such as Basava.

BHAKTI MOVEMENTS- A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

The status of women since vedic times has been inferior to men. Women were not entitled to education. "The Hindu woman, religiously is a Sudra, not entitled to the Gayatri Mantra. Exceptions to the rule were there, the Brahnavadinis (like Maitrayi, Gargi etc). But their example need not suggest the ideal state of Indian womanhood in as much as the more vital ideals of motherhood and housewifery (sadyovadhu) were always competing" (Mukerji, 1946). Brahnavadinis who were very few, had to pursue their studies without marriage (Shoba, 2012). Bhakti poets, most of whom came from the lower strata of society treated woman as equal to man, without any gender discrimination. "Some of the mystic sects even permitted free selection of companions, separation and widow remarriage" (Mukerji, 1946). We may note, however, that Shivasharanas were against divorce and remarriage, and did not consider female slaves as equal. In fact there are highly critical references to slaves in the vachanas of Basava (no 467, 468, 636).

"Why does a slave need to decorate herself and look attractive? Why does she have to wear golden ornaments?" Bhakti movements produced some wellknown poets such as Andal, Lal Ded, Mira and Mahadeviakka. In addition to the above mentioned women saints, there were other women saints like Bahina Bai, Jana Bai and others from lower castes in Maharashtra, and there were about 27 women, mostly from lower castes among the Shivasharanas i.e. about 12 per cent of the total.

With the exception of Andal, the other three of the prominent four women Bhakti poets Lal Ded, Mira and Mahadeviakka were married and led a family life briefly which was unhappy. They left their marital homes, declared their love to a male god, even claimed that they were married to their male gods. Mira chose Girdhar Gopal (Krishna) and Andal also declared her love for Krishna. Mahadeviakka chose Shiva as her lover. Their love, described in their poems were highly erotic to the point that they were considered subversive. Here is an illustration:

He bartered my heart,
looted my flesh,
claimed as tribute
my pleasure,
took over
all of me.
I'm the woman of love
for my lord, white as jasmine.

(Tr. Ramanujan)

All three women poets, Mira, Mahadeviakka, and Lal Ded, chose to defy conventional norms as applied to married, upper-caste women, wandered freely and all alone, demonstrating their love for the chosen male gods in various forms, especially through erotic love



Shankar Pathak, of the Department of Social Work, Delhi University has made a commendable innovative attempt to study the growth and development of social welfare in India from the lowest rung of the ladder of civilization to its present plans of attainment....

Pathak comes out with great courage and individuality in his analysis of the contribution of social reformers like Ram Mohun Roy, Vidyasagar, Sasipada Banerjee, Jyotiba Phule and others...

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