Chapter 4

Development of Social Work as a Profession

Many social work educators (interviewed during the research) shared the opinion that, social work geminated from voluntary and charitable work that finds its roots in philanthropy. This slowly gave way to training in social work practice, which has evolved into a profession. The development of social work as a profession, like other professions, has been supported by the development of Social Work as an academic discipline. Social Work builds the knowledge base of social work profession and trains people in becoming professional social workers. Thus, it is social work practice that paved the path for the development of the academic discipline, Social Work. Since its infancy, there have been many discussions and debates about the purpose for which Social Work trains human-power. Therefore, discussions on the nature of social work practice and the theoretical inputs required for it have been argumentative.

However, as stated in the earlier chapters, the Social Work fraternity has come to an understanding that social work practice is plural in nature and is supported by different ideological and theoretical frameworks. These have been captured (in Chapters 2 and 3) through the reflections of educators and students on the different components of Social Work: (i) curriculum (including both coursework and fieldwork practicum), (ii) pedagogy, and (iii) evaluation procedure of the students' performance. In addition to the discussions on these specific components, there have been perennial debates in Social Work that reflect on and impact the theory–practice relationship in Social Work. On the basis of the reflections of educators and students, and secondary literature, this chapter seeks to analyse the theory–practice relationship with regard to the debates and discussions on the purpose of Social Work, the historical development of Social Work, and the development of social work as a profession.

Purpose of Social Work

The purpose(s) of Social Work depends on the context of social work practice. The context of practice is determined by a number of factors: the geographical location of the institutions of Social Work, the philosophy of these institutions, the ideology of the educators, the social and academic background of the students, and the socio-cultural background of the people with whom students practise social work in the field. Due to these factors there are different

viewpoints on the purpose of Social Work[1]. The most common of these is that the purpose of Social Work is to train students, so that they can facilitate the process of empowerment of 'people in trouble'. According to senior educator, Ms. Bhatnagar of the University of Delhi,

> *The purpose of Social Work is to produce manpower through education and training so that they can help people in adjusting with the existential conditions in the society, but they need to play the role of only facilitators in this process. So that, after their exit from a given situation, people can independently help themselves.*

Many educators and students of Social Work, when asked about the role of social workers, rhetorically replied: '*to help people so that they can help themselves*'. This suggests that social workers are suppose to work within the established system and its norms, and help the 'troubled' or 'deviant' people to adjust within the larger society. Thus, it is assumed that social problems are located in the individual inadequacies of the people and that the norms of the given system are accepted as social facts that exist irrespective of the individual consciousness. These can be observed through field experience and are followed by interventions (using methods, techniques, and skills of Social Work) at the individual and family levels. Senior educator, Ms. Subhramaniam of the Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai said,

> *Social Work trains students to help individuals and families who are not able to cope with the accepted norms of the society. Although the process of helping begins with charity, but the final aim is empowering these individuals and families so that they are able to utilise their full potential and lead functional lives in the society.*

Similarly, Mr Gangte of the Assam University, Silchar highlighted that social workers work within the system and help the individuals in trouble to adjust with the 'mainstream' population. These reflections highlight that the purpose of Social Work is micro-oriented and that it trains human-power for individualistic field interventions.

However, in order to work at the individual level, it is necessary to understand a problem at both micro and macro-level. According to Ms. Bose of the Visva-Bharati, Sriniketan, Social Work inculcates in the students values of commitment and dedication towards social care through knowledge of theory and fieldwork training. In doing so, it develops in them an understanding of discrimination and troubles that individuals face due to economic, political, psychological, or social reasons. This was confirmed by Mr Thomas of the Madras School of Social Work, Chennai:

> *A social worker is expected to understand those aspects of human behaviour and social environment that might make a person vulnerable, and after developing the understanding of these factors, develop the skills to; (i) influence and direct the individual behaviour on the one*

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[1] The purpose or intent of social work and social work education is crucial. It reflects the philosophy of development and direction of change. It focuses on working out the structure, contents and process of curriculum building. It is, however constrained by the vision and mission of the profession, and the theoretical knowledge and skills of practice, available at a given time (Nanavatty 1990: 309).

hand, and (ii) alter her/his social environment, on the other, in a positive direction to empower that person and make her/him self-reliant.

Many students from different institutions of Social Work also confirmed to this viewpoint. The reflections of Shilpa from Assam University, Silchar and Christy from Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai highlight this: *"The purpose of Social Work is, to develop capacities in individuals who are committed to social causes, so that they can enhance the social functioning of individuals, groups, and communities by creating favourable societal conditions"* (Shilpa). *"The purpose of Social Work is to train individuals who can work for the welfare of the society, the understanding of which is developed through the knowledge of both theories and methods of social work practice, and through direct field exposure"* (Christy).

As different from this, there were others who reflected on the purpose of Social Work as being more radical, a purpose which supports interventions at macro-level and pushes for systemic changes. According to senior educator Mr Sinha of the University of Delhi, the purpose of Social Work is to enkindle in the students as well as the educators, the understanding about the oppressive structures of the society and then to develop strategies to alter them by looking at the macro-system in an unorganised context. Mr Dubey of TISS, Mumbai shared similar views. He said,

The primary purpose of Social Work is to develop a critical perspective towards the neo-liberal model of development. One of the strategies for meeting this purpose can be, advocating for the voice of the marginalised people in policy decisions so that these decisions are not detrimental to the interests and rights of the marginalised people".

Students of TISS, Mumbai, from the specialisation "Dalits and Tribals: Social Justice, Equity and Governance," highlighted that the purpose of Social Work is to develop an understanding about the oppressive structures of the society that are detrimental to the rights of the marginalised communities in India such as dalits and tribal people. The social workers, according to these students, should play the facilitating role of organising the marginalised sections of the society so that they are collectively able to assert their rights and stand against the oppressive structures like the caste system in the Indian society. They further added that Social Work should look at developing an alternative political ideology that is rooted in equality for all by developing discriminating policies in favour of the marginalised sections.

A close look at the above mentioned purposes of Social Work highlights two important points: (i) diversity in viewpoints with respect to the purpose of Social Work and (ii) common understanding that the purpose of Social Work is connected to the concept of social justice. It is probably the strategies for interventions, being suggested, that are diverse. According to Ms. Vashi, of TISS, Mumbai, *"Social Work aims at social justice. In order to fulfil this aim, social workers need to work closely with the people and represent their voice in the process*

of development". This also highlights that the purpose of Social Work can only be met if there is consent of the people. Therefore, it is clear that the approach of the social workers is one of working with the people and not for them.

In a nutshell, the purpose of Social Work is to educate and train people who are committed to work for the betterment of the society (by working with the people). Whether a social worker will work at the individual, group, community, or policy level is a matter of individual choice. The choices made by the social workers are tacitly guided by their ideological positions. Thus, the purpose envisaged by a social worker and the intervention strategies that are conceptualised by her/him are based on some ideological framework. Senior educator, Mr Khan of Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi observed, although ideology plays an important role in guiding action in the field, many social workers are not conscious of it, and, therefore, many times, they get confused in making choices with respect to different intervention strategies. If they are conscious of their ideological position then they will be aware of both the outcomes and the challenges of their practice.

But one of the major challenges of Social Work (as expressed by social work educators) is that, due to diversity in opinions about the purpose of Social Work, there is no one ideology that guides social work practice today. Earlier, when Social Work was in its infancy, there was a dominance of a particular ideology, but the subsequent changes in the existential conditions have opened up new areas of social work practice which in turn have led to the development of a new line of thought, giving rise to debates that are yet to be resolved. According to Mr Sinha of the University of Delhi, the functionalist ideology of earlier social workers has played a dominant role in the development Social Work. Consequently, education, training, and practice of social work shaped after therapeutic model. However, the repeated failure of social workers to address the macro-level problems from the functionalist orientation and individualistic interventions, paved the way for the development of radical thought in Social Work. Therefore, today, radical thinking, although peripherally, has been able to find its space in Social Work.

The ideological frameworks that guide the development of different perspectives in Social Work are underpinned by various theoretical frameworks. This highlights the importance of theory for social work practice. David Howe (1987) argues that not only is theory in social work integral to any practice, but also its relegation to an implicit, unarticulated status leads to a poor, indeed dishonest practice. On the basis of two dimensions namely, (i) notions of 'order' and 'conflict' in the society, and (ii) understanding of the society 'objectively' and 'subjectively', Howe has delineated a taxonomy of social work theories (see Figure 4.1). In arriving at this taxonomy, Howe adapted concepts from the four paradigms of social theory that were developed by G. Burrell and G. Morgan (1979) as follows:
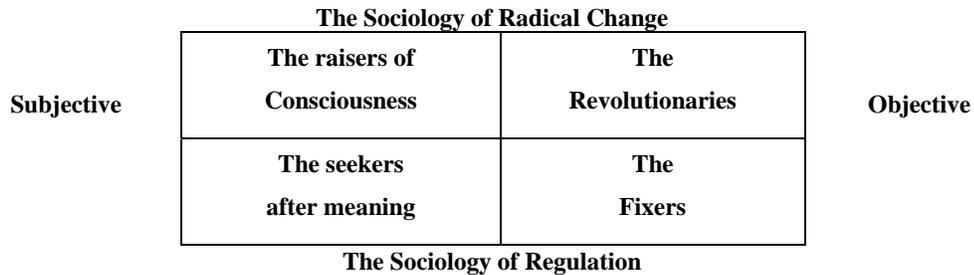
Functionalists: The fixers

Interpretivists: The seekers after meaning

Radical humanists: The raisers of consciousness

Radical structuralists: The revolutionaries

Figure 4.1
Taxonomy of Social Work Theories

The Sociology of Radical Change

	The raisers of Consciousness	**The Revolutionaries**
	The seekers after meaning	**The Fixers**

Subjective (left) **Objective** (right)

The Sociology of Regulation

Source: Howe (1987: 50)

If we compare the purpose(s) of Social Work with the four orientations shown in Figure 4.1, we might be able to locate each purpose in one of the four orientations. For example, Ms. Bhatnagar's observation that Social Work produces humanpower to play the role of facilitators in helping people to adjust with the existential conditions in the society is compatible with 'The fixers' orientation in Social Work. The opinion of students of the specialisation 'Dalits and Tribals: Social Justice, Equity and Governance' of TISS, Mumbai that the purpose of Social Work is to work for the empowerment of the marginalised sections of the society is compatible with 'The raisers of consciousness' orientation in Social Work. This orientation has found its basis in postmodernism, borrowing concepts such as conscientisation popularised in the work of Paulo Friere. Nearly a quarter century ago P. Ramachandran observed,

> The focus of social work in the coming years should be on the liberation of the marginalised poor in tribal and rural areas and in the urban pockets of India. The methodology of social work will be a people centred' approach involving their conscientisation and, thereby, ensuring their participation in this process of liberation [. . . .] It [conscientisation] is thus a process through which people achieve a deepening awareness of the socio-economic, cultural and political reality which shape their lives, as well as the realization of their capacity, and actualisation of this capacity to transform that reality (1988: 17).

However, behind all the four orientations there is a commonality and that is to work for the well-being of people.

The different viewpoints that exist in Social Work today have developed over a period in consonance with the changes in the existential conditions in the society. Social Work might have come into existence based on a particular line of thought earlier, but the continuous

changes in the society have had a strong bearing on its development. Some of these changes have been accepted with resistance, while others, more openly. This, in turn, has also had a strong impact on the theory–practice relationship in Social Work. The next section discusses these shifts and their impact on the theory–practice relationship vis-à-vis the history of Social Work.

The History of Social Work

From the time when Social Work emerged in Victorian England to the current postmodernist times, it has come a long way. With the move from charity organisation and service-delivery to organised social work practice, different methods of social work practice emerged. Currently, six methods of social work practice are recognised by the institutions of Social Work; Social Casework, Social Welfare Administration, Social Group Work, Community Organisation, Social Action, and Social Research. These methods evolved in Social Work with changes in the context of practice. The reference to the context is also important as certain methods came to be practised more in the developing and under-developed countries than in the developed countries of the West. In the Indian context, community organisation emerged as one of the central methods of practice alongside casework. This is in contrast to the West, where casework has always remained the prominent method of practice. Comparing the individualistic society of the West with the Indian society, which has been predominantly based on community living, highlights why practice of community organisation gained prominence very early in India.

However, as the origins of Social Work are located in the West, the western line of thought has had a strong impact on the development of Social Work in India during its early period. The two countries that have pioneered the development of Social Work in the world are United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA). Of these two, India majorly adapted the USA model of Social Work in the beginning. Also, the training of early Social Work educators of four major institutions of Social Work in India (twenty-six out of fifty-one social work educators) took place in USA (Yelaja 1969b). Even the literature that was and is referred to in teaching students in India was borrowed from the West (Nagpaul 1972). Thus, before discussing the Indian history of Social Work, it will be useful to have a discussion on the earlier developments in the West.

History of Social Work in the West

The emergence of Social Work can be located in the 'Charity Organisation' movement that developed in Victorian England in the 1860s. According to Mark Philip (1979), Social Work

first formed in the space between the two major 19th century discourses of wealth and poverty. The first Charity Organisation Society was founded in London in the year 1869 with the following ideal:

> Charity given indiscriminately and thoughtlessly demoralized; it encouraged habits of thriftlessness (sic). and dependence and these, the society considered were a root cause of poverty and pauperism. True Charity, administered according to certain principles, could encourage independence, strengthen character, and help to preserve family as the fundamental unit of society (Woodroofe 1961: 28).

This highlights two important points about the trend in mid-Victorian thought. Firstly, during the shift from pre-modernity to modernity, there was a growing belief in the scientific method accompanied by transference of service from God to man; thus, a shift from philanthropy to organised charity. Secondly, the belief in individualism led to the distinction between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. Thus, it was the character and not the circumstance that was considered for personal failure. According to Kathleen Woodroofe (1961), in the beginning, social work played the dual role of 'social sedative' and 'social regenerator'. As social sedative, it tried to damp down social discontent by stressing duties of the rich towards the poor. As social regenerator, it tried to create the power of self-help in poor, focussing on the individual rather than her/his environment.

Based on the belief in individualism, coupled with the concept of organised charity, Social Work developed its first method of practice, 'Social Casework'. It evolved from a set of principles to guide volunteers into a technique that could be imparted by education and training from one generation of social workers to the next. Charity organisation in USA also developed on the pattern of English ideology with the underlying assumptions of individual initiative and self-reliance. The pioneering work to develop casework as a scientific method came from Mary Richmond (1917), who delineated its process in four stages: (i) thorough investigation, (ii) accurate diagnosis, (iii) co-operation with all possible sources of assistance, and (iv) treatment. She added three dimensions to give a scientific basis to this method: they are (i) the concept of a systematic method by which a social diagnosis could be made to serve as the basis of treatment, (ii) the knowledge of human behaviour, necessary for a better understanding of the individual, her/his family and the social relationships by which s/he lived, and (iii) the concept of democratic process of social work in which the caseworker and the client could co-operate to their mutual advantage. She highlighted the need to provide a sociological basis to casework. Thus, the focus of casework shifted from the person to the problem and process. This highlights an epistemological shift in the practice of social work, wherein the meaning of social in social work gained more prominence.

After the First World War, Social Work came to be influenced by the teaching of Sigmund Freud and his disciples. Many concepts handed down by psychoanalysis, such as

understanding of forces that control human behaviour and past experiences of the client, were learnt by the social workers who were now concerned with psychological maladjustment of the client, rather than her/his material needs. Another important development that took place in the development of casework as a method of social work practice was the increasing emphasis on the word 'client'. This indicates that, as methods started to develop in Social Work, there was a gradual move towards developing social work as a profession. This was a major shift from philanthropy and charity; associated more with voluntary work.

These shifts in Social Work had a close connection with the socio-economic context of the West as well. An examination of the socio-economic context of post-First World War throws light upon the emphasis which was put on private profit and growth of industry under 'liberalism'. Under liberalism, poverty was regarded as a moral problem of individuals and not as an economic problem. This was further strengthened by the survival of the system after the 'Great Depression' of 1929. These existential conditions had a direct bearing on Social Work as well, as is evident from the emphasis on psychological inadequacy and not the social realities of the industrialised and competitive society.

Another factor that influenced the development of Social Work in the West was its close association with the state. The establishment of Federal Emergency Relief Administration by the American government to suppress social conflict had its impact on the development of Social Work. Social workers were given the responsibility for the administration of public relief. This changed the social setting within which social work operated and enhanced the scope of social work to develop into a profession. Social workers could now enter the established structure of the government to carry on the activities entailed in the new programmes of public relief. This paved the way for the development of social welfare administration as a method of social work practice.

In the midst of these developments, which promoted the growth of social work as a profession, lesser developed methods like social group work and community organisation started to capture the attention of social workers. Like casework, these methods also originated in England, but soon reached America, where they received more attention as compared to their English counterparts. According to Woodroofe,

> Community organisation and social group work, then, are two corners of the field of social work which have been tilled more sedulously in America than they have been in England. Perhaps the explanation for this is to be found in what de Tacqueville called the 'greater relish' which the more egalitarian Americans entertained for forming associations and for finding general principles underlying the myriad manifestation (1961: 180).

The origin of group work can be located in the 'Settlement House' movement in Victorian England. Although main inspiration for founding this movement came from religion, the true intent behind founding these settlements was to establish a dignified form of

relationship between the rich and the poor. The practice of group work involved creation of groups around selected interests in order to compensate for the sense of loss that an individual felt in the modern industrial state.

Initially, social group workers focussed on discovering the characteristics of groups, the classification criteria for groups, the importance of human growth of free activity within groups, and the settings in which group work can best be used. In doing so, they borrowed from literature on progressive education and social psychology (ibid.). But then efforts were made to develop an independent theory of group work. This was initiated with the publication of Grace L. Coyle's book *Social Process in Organised Groups* in 1930. In her book, Coyle borrowed the concept of 'grouping process' developed by Charles S. Cooley and of 'structure' from John Dewey to explain how the structure of a group evolved. The discussion on group work also highlights that group work as a method of social work practice was also based on the assumption underlying casework about the nature of society. It did not advocate for any radical change in the structure of the society. It chose to operate within the dominant framework of the existing order and was careful not to threaten the *status quo*.

The origin of community organisation as a method of social work practice can be located in the Charity Organisation Society (COS) itself. Within COS there were two distinct trends of thought that emerged. The first was leading to individualisation and casework, the second towards socialisation and community organisation. Under this second approach social workers started to advocate for changes within the existing framework of the society which would produce less adverse effects upon the individual. Community organisation as a method of practice has undergone many changes as the context of practice has changed historically. It was first recognised as a method by settlement house workers. Initially, during the progressive era, it included three core elements: (i) an integrated collaborative practice that delivered desperately needed services, intervened at the individual as well as the community level and sought to develop solidarity between the settlement workers and the neighbourhood residents, (ii) a sense of essential importance of community and community building, and (iii) a willingness to organise and advocate for social, political, and economic justice (Fisher 2005). Prior to the 1920s, aiding individuals, building community, and changing society were all integral parts of community organisation practice pyramid (Berry 1999).

Responding to the conservative political economy in the West and the efforts within Social Work to gain credibility as a profession, between the 1920s till the onset of the 'Great Depression', community organisation concentrated on the reform impulse. Thus, experts in community organisation started to develop a more rigorous and exacting approach to the study and practice of community organisation (Schwartz 1965). When the world was hit by the Great Depression in 1929, community organisers turned back their attention towards social policy advocacy and social action. This initiated the move towards advocating for

economic, political, and social change. But this change did not sustain for long within the realm of community organisation as during the period of the 'Cold War' social workers withdrew from the political scene. As Austin notes,

> Community organisation during this period (the 'Cold War'), like group work and casework, was primarily focussed on interpersonal processes – that is, how inclusively self-help groups were organised and how democratic decisions were made, not with specific outcomes impacting poverty, racial segregation, or general patterns of discrimination (1999: 196).

Although social action started to take shape within the womb of community organisation prior to the 1960s, especially during the post-depression phase in the 1930s, it started to develop and gain recognition as a method of social work practice during the 1960s. Many factors are responsible for this and it is hard to pinpoint which one played a more significant role. One probable reason for this was the rising influence of the Soviet Union and the Marxist ideology, which provided an alternative to individualised growth under capitalism in the USA. Even in America, there were mass social movements being organised by the coloured people for civil rights and power, by students against the war in Vietnam, and later on by women for gender equality. This reform context not only expanded the opportunities for community organisation, but also started to provide a legitimate basis for the development of social action as a method of social work practice. This also indicated the inclusion of a macro-framework in Social Work alongside the dominant micro-framework.

But, with the expansion of the private marketplace post-1975 the micro-framework again exerted its influence on Social Work. Issues became highly private and individual, and people became highly isolated, moving away from social solidarity. Even in the sub-field of community organisation in Social Work, there was a turn towards more conservative approaches, as only these approaches received acceptance, support, and funding. However, since social action had started to develop alongside the dominant model of Social Work, it led to the emergence of a new form of Social Work based on the Marxist ideology. These social workers came to be known as the radical social workers who advocated for collective action to bring about radical change in the society. According to Fred Powell (2001), radical social work emerged within a wider ambit of 'Left' critique of the welfare state. For radical social workers, the historic mission of social work could only be achieved by politicisation of social work role and tasks into an explicit alliance with people's movements and allies on the political left.

The decade starting from 1970 characterised the publication of numerous texts and papers on radical social work. Various authors, such Roy Bailey and Mike Brake (1975), Daphne Statham (1978), and Peter Leonard (1975) started to provide texts for radical social work. These texts clearly advocated the method of social action in social work practice. In addition, they talked of co-operation of Social Work with the progressive social movements

of the time. During this period, *Case Con,* a British news-sheet, describing itself as a revolutionary magazine for social workers, advocated for replacement of welfare state with the workers' state.

> *Case Con* believes that the problems of our 'clients' are rooted in the society in which we live, not in supposed individual inadequacies. Until this society, based on private ownership, profit and the needs of a minority ruling class, is replaced by a workers' state, based on the interests of the vast majority of population, the fundamental causes of social problems will remain. It is therefore our aim to join the struggle for this workers' state (as cited in Bailey and Brake 1975: 146–47).

In addition, radical social workers also started to attack the traditional methods of social work, namely, casework, group work, and community organisation. Underlying this critique of traditional methods was the larger attack on 'professional approach' of social work.

> One important tool for professional social work has been casework a pseudo-science . . . The casework ideology forces clients to be seen as needing to be changed to fit society. Social work now expanded to include new (and not so new) tricks, such as community work, group work, welfare rights work, etc., which, when professionalised, end up by becoming the same sort of mechanism of control as traditional casework, often with the additional merit of being less expensive for the ruling class . . . It must be fought at every opportunity (ibid. 145–46).

However, towards the end of 1970s and in the beginning of 1980s, radical social work distanced itself from the orthodox Marxist position and started to advocate for an incremental struggle, calling it evolutionary Marxism. With the shift from modernity to postmodernity, radical social work started to incorporate the postmodern critique in social work. According to Robert Mullaly,

> The contribution of postmodernism to a structural analysis is to help us recognise that although oppression and exploitation may be universal phenomena, they will be experienced differently by different people living in different contexts . . . Marxism, for example, has often overlooked other forms of oppression, such as patriarchy and racism and has often viewed the working-class as homogenous group whose members are equally exploited, not recognising stratification, ethnicity, gender, and other types of differences within it (1997: 115–16).

In addition to Mullaly, there have been others, such as Bob Pease and Jan Fook (1999), who emphasise the importance of postmodern theory and how it offers new strategies for social workers concerned with political action and social justice.

The radical critique of traditional Social Work was met with a strong response. One important criticism of the traditional social workers has been that radical social work subordinates practice to theory. According to Karen Healy, "Radical analysis can overlook the emancipator potential in everyday social work practices by establishing standards that devalue much of the change activity in which social workers are involved" (2000: 5). Martin Davies (1981b) also suggests viewing social work in more positivistic terms of systemic maintenance, containment, control, and support. However, many radical social workers have

asserted their influence despite the fact that, in Social Work, the radical branch has been consigned to a peripheral status. Jim Ife writes,

> Such [radical] social workers have often been perceived as being a minority within the profession, and many indeed have discarded the label 'professional'. They have, however, exerted an important influence on social work, in that they prevented social workers from feeling too comfortable in a 'professional' role, they have reminded social workers of the importance of the analysis of power, and they have held out a more radical alternative. This influence has been very important in preventing social work from becoming too complacent and maintaining a 'critical edge' to social work theory and practice (1997: 57).

Thus, radical social work, with its socialist origins, differs in its analysis of problems from conventional analysis. Rather than locating the problem in individual inadequacies, it takes into consideration the broad social context. In giving importance to social action, it draws inspiration from the collective struggles of people that have the power to change their oppressive circumstances.

Today, Social Work internationally includes many things, from the individual-centric work to the radical work. With the expansion of international NGOs, it has opened new opportunities for social work practice. But, this domain does not belong to only the social workers and involves people from various fields and disciplines. The analysis of the history of social work in the West highlights a few important points on the theory–practice relationship in Social Work.

To begin with, social work practice has always influenced the development of the academic branch of Social Work. The earlier methods of social work practice were developed theoretically once they came to be practised in the field. Rather, one may say that Social Work formalised and refined what was already being practised in the field. Then, a few methods of social work were developed as extensions of already existing methods of practice. For example, community organisation emerged from the practice of settlement workers who were initially only involved in practising group work. Social action emerged initially as a branch of community organisation before acquiring an independent status in Social Work. This also indicates that theory development in Social Work has largely been around the methodology of practice. Thus, in Social Work curriculum, methodology has always enjoyed a space as the core component. However, the context of practice has had a strong bearing on the development of Social Work. The ideologies of different times have come to influence not only practice but the academics of Social Work as well. These ideologies have been underpinned by different theoretical frameworks and have borrowed heavily from the knowledge of the social sciences. Therefore, the knowledge of theories and concepts borrowed from various Social Sciences (although in a limited frame) has also been included in Social Work.

The developments that took place with respect to social work in the West, especially in USA, have had an impact on the development of Social Work in India. In the earlier times, the model developed in USA heavily influenced the components of Social Work in India. Later, with the realisation that the Indian context is not completely compatible with the western model, certain changes took place in Social Work. We shall now turn our attention to the development of Social Work in India.

Development of Social Work in India in Comparison with the West

In India, social service as a helping activity existed in one form or the other through ancient times. Finding its roots in philanthropy, which was inherent in all the religions, the concept of charity was well known in India. Gauri Rani Banerjee (1967), one of the pioneers of Social Work in India has documented about social welfare in ancient India and the various forms of service that were adopted to help people in distress. Also, the work of social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, etc. finds a place in the history and philosophy of Social Work in India. In addition, Gandhi's ideology and his constructive programme find a place in Social Work education and training.

In India professional social work began with the establishment of Sir Dorablji Tata Graduate School of Social Work (now known as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences) in the year 1936 under the leadership of Clifford Manshardt, an American missionary. Thus, India entered into the domain of Social Work late as compared to the western countries. During the earlier years of its development, Social Work was concentrated in towns and cities. This was largely because most of the methods of social work practice were borrowed from USA. According to Dorothy Moses (1961), the curricula of the earlier institutions of Social Work were patterned after the social work institutions in USA; rather, many of the teaching staff in Social Work were trained in the West.

> . . . . the philosophy, theories, methods, principles of social work as prevalent in the Metropole were diffused to India and our educational system adapted itself and created the necessary mechanisms to accommodate and integrate this innovation (social work profession) into itself. It is natural for India (sic). social work to have all the major traits of American social work (Siddiqui 1984: 55).

However, the westernisation of Social Work in India was met with some resistance by many Social Work educators. Not only did they try to contextualise Social Work with respect to the Indian situation, they also raised doubts about the urban orientation of social workers. This critique received thought and attention as large masses of Indian population resided in rural areas. People involved in working with the communities were more receptive of this critique and consequently, they started to raise concerns about the role of social workers in community development programmes in rural areas. According to K.D. Gangrade,

> Indian society is characterised by and has a tradition of corporate life, with such traditional institutions such as the joint family, caste and community. Interdependence of individuals through help and co-operation within these institutions is much more part of their daily existence than individualised and independent existence . . . In the light of such a cultural background we have to consider the application of community organization to the Indian scene (1971: 24).

Thus, one can see that, although the content of Social Work was largely borrowed from the West, critique with respect to the rural context of India came to influence its development. Then, the difference with regard to the predominant ideology in the West and in India again came to influence the development of Social Work: individualism based on a capitalist ideology in the West was in contrast to the community-oriented living in India. Although, western methods of Social Work were borrowed, the Indian context exerted its influence in their application.

Initially, Social Work in India also started in an urban setting in Bombay (now Mumbai). Therefore, casework and group work received closer attention as compared to community organisation. Community organisation in India was dormant during the first phase of development of Social Work. A major shift in focus took place when the Government of India launched Community Development Programme (CDP) in 1952: the focus of CDP was on rural communities. But, still, most of the professionally trained social workers concentrated on the practice of casework in urban areas. Thus, although the focus of community organisation was rural, the major thrust of Social Work remained urban in character (Siddiqui 1997).

Post 1970s, when community work in the West was experiencing a radical shift towards conflict-oriented work, the focus of community work remained welfare-oriented in India and community organisation as a method of practice started to gain recognition. Post 1980s, there were a few isolated cases of educators in Social Work, especially in the field of community organisation, who advocated for collective resistance against the state. These educators critiqued the community development programmes of the state and the apolitical stance of the social workers. Drawing from the social movements and the grassroots initiatives entailing collective assertion, they started advocating for a change in the community organisation perspective. Thus, within the Social Work academia, they started debates on social justice (Andharia 2009).

Social action as a separate method (not as a part of community organisation) of practice did not receive much attention in the beginning. Even in the West, social action enjoyed only a peripheral status, but attempts were made to develop a literature for this method. In India, there is hardly any literature that has been produced to develop social action as a method of social work practice. Mr Dubey of the TISS, Mumbai said that most of the literature that is being used in teaching social action is borrowed from the writings of social scientists in social

science journals and the literature of various social movements in the country. But this problem, although to a lesser extent, exists with other subjects in Social Work as well. Social work educators across different institutions of Social Work were of the opinion that most of the literature that is being used in teaching is borrowed either from the Social Work literature developed in the West or from the social sciences.

As mentioned earlier, Social Work methods and principles were borrowed from the developed countries, but still attempts were made by social workers trained in casework and group work as well to incorporate elements peculiar to the Indian context and raise awareness with respect to the importance of developing indigenous literature. In the early 1960s Gauri Rani Banerjee observed,

> At present we are mostly utilising the body of knowledge developed in the USA. The methods of social work . . . have been made use in India for over a decade, and it is high time that we tried to see how far the cultural differences call for the adaptations of the basic processes" (1961: 432).

Grace Mathew (1992) notes, in India many clients were involuntary, who were compelled to receive the attention of social workers. The persons who received the attention of social workers did not approach them on their own volition. In a way, social casework services were imposed on them. This also highlights that Social Work does not enjoy as much societal recognition as in the West. One possible reason for this is that, in India, an institutionalised system of social work practice with government support did not exist as in the West, and, therefore, social workers had to approach the clients for individualised practice rather than the other way round.

Another sharp contrast in the development of Social Work has been that, in America, the focus of Social Work has been on specialised training in methods of social work practice. Whereas, in India, the focus of Social Work has been on an integrated approach that is based on a generic model. Even in the institutions of Social Work that follow a specialisations-based model, the focus has been on areas and fields, and not on methods of social work practice. The reasons for this are (i) plurality in the purpose of Social Work, as envisioned by the people in the Social Work fraternity, and the absence of a continuously functioning professional body that can define the ambit of social work activities, (ii) social work activities being considered as voluntary and, therefore, lack of institutionalised support from the government, and (iii) the multiplicity of problems in the India that calls the attention of the social workers who are limited in number, who therefore need to possess the knowledge of all the methods and intervention strategies.

Thus, the development of Social Work historically has always been centred on methodology because of its practice-orientation. The theories and concepts borrowed from the social sciences play a supportive role in providing a better understanding of the society and the people with whom social workers work. Having examined the history of Social Work, let

us now turn our attention towards the discussion on the growth and development of social work profession.

Social Work as a Profession in India

The development of social work as a profession has been under debate both within the social work fraternity and outside of it. Over the years, the definition of a profession has undergone change and new vocations or semi-professions have come to be accepted as professions. Meher C. Nanavatty (1952) has cited four characteristics of a profession as enumerated by Carr-Saunders in the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*: (i) the development of the body of knowledge upon which the skill rests, (ii) the reservation of functions to the qualified by means of licensing or the restrictions of the professional bodies, (iii) the development of the professional consciousness amongst the practitioners, and (iv) the contribution of the specialised skill and viewpoint to appropriate problems in the surrounding society. As regards development of social work profession in India, currently it is weak with respect to the first three characteristics. The first characteristic is weak as many educators and students complain that most of the knowledge base of social work is borrowed from the West and is not of much relevance in the Indian context. Till now, the professional bodies of social work have not been able to ensure licensing of social work practice in India. Also, in India the professional bodies of social work are rendered almost dysfunctional and there is not much professional consciousness among trained practitioners.

The criteria to qualify as a profession, many a time, have been laid out in comparison to universally admitted professions such as medicine and law. Social work, in order to attain a professional status, has also resorted to such comparisons. In his lecture, Abraham Flexner (1915), 'Is Social Work a Profession?', delivered at the National Conference on Charities and Corrections, examined the characteristics of a profession with reference to social work. The characteristics of a profession, as listed by him in 1915 are still relevant for social work in India, as it is still struggling to establish a professional status for itself.

Firstly, professions are intellectual in character, the professional assumes responsibility for her/his decisions, and there is a considerable degree of originality in the decisions that are made by the professional. Secondly, professions are learned in character, that is, they involve a steady stream of ideas. Thus, every profession involves the borrowing of ideas from either natural or social sciences which need to be learnt in order to become a professional in a particular field. Thirdly, every profession involves the component of practice. The knowledge that is learnt needs to be applied by every professional having a definite and practical objective to her/his work. In other words, every profession is definite in its purpose. Fourthly,

a profession needs to possess an educationally communicable technique which can be imparted through a professional course (hence the importance of an academic discipline for every profession). As the profession gains more recognition, it should be backed by the simultaneous development of a highly specialised educational discipline, which should also involve a component of training. Fifthly, every profession should have its own professional body which advocates for a common social interest. This focuses on devotion to well-doing as an accepted mark of a professional activity in which the pecuniary interest of the individual practitioner is on increasing realisation of responsibility to a larger social end rather than promotion of individual interest. Thus, professional bodies are assigned the task of establishing a code of ethics for every profession. Lastly, every profession has a definite social status attached to it (ibid.).

If we examine social work as a profession in India with respect to the characteristics given by Flexner then social work might qualify as a profession. For example, the learned character, the practical purpose, a professional course, professional bodies/organisations all exist in India but still many do not accept it as a profession. Many social workers argue that, in comparison with the West, the concept of professional social work came late to India and it is a matter of time before the work of social workers will be accepted and recognised as a professional activity. They also advocate that, it will require organisation and lobbying on the part of the social workers, with the academicians taking the lead, for the attainment of a professional status for social work in India. However, there are contrary views both within and outside of social work fraternity on the acceptance of a professional status by academicians, bureaucrats, Government of India, and the society at large.

Challenging Views from Outside

The biggest challenge that social work faces for being recognised as a profession is the haziness of its social status. It is still assumed that social work is voluntary in nature and any individual (with a kind heart) who wishes to pursue social work can do so. In India, the lack of governmental support compounds this problem. Many social work educators have sought to organise a 'National Council for Social Work Profession' that would be recognised by the government (similar to the Medical Council of India). But, so far their efforts have not been successful. Some would argue that social worker's efforts are limited to identification of a problem; solving that problem requires the services of other professionals such as doctors, lawyers, bureaucrats, and teachers. To counter this observation, social workers argue that their work involves intellectual power of analysis and discrimination, breadth and flexibility of sympathy, sound judgement, skills in utilisation of available resources, etc. These tasks

cannot be performed by people who only voluntarily assume to help the people in need. Thus, there is a distinction between social-service delivery and professional social work activities.

Then others also emphasise challenges that social workers in India are involved in multiple activities and there are no distinct fields of social work, that is, social workers are involved in different fields such as disaster management to child welfare to community organisation etc. Professions need to be limited and definite in scope but the high degree of specialised competency required for action cannot possibly go with social work. Lack of specificity in aim adversely affects the training of social workers in a specialised area. The occupations of social workers are so numerous and diverse that no compact and specialised educational discipline is feasible. Therefore, most of the institutions of Social Work in India offer generic training programmes for social workers rather than specialised ones. People within the social work fraternity, who promote the development of social work as a profession, argue that the reason behind this is not the inability of social work to organise specialised training programmes, but it is the multiplicity of problems in India coupled with limited number of institutions of Social Work to meet the demand that calls for a generic training programme. In India, they point out – well-informed, tactful, judicious, sympathetic, and resourceful – people are needed more than specialised personnel.

Another major hindrance for social work to attain professional status is the job factor. There are hardly any practice areas in the fields of social work that are reserved for social workers. In addition, the concept of receiving payment for doing social work is far from being accepted in India. There is not enough recognition that the work done by social workers involves continuous dedication and, therefore, they do not have the time to be involved in any alternate activity for employment in order to make a living. More so, social workers argue, they need to be remunerated for the services that they offer to the society as they are in the welfare and interests of the people.

Also, people from academia raise issues about the quality and quantity of the publications that have been produced in social work. There is dearth of literature that has been produced by the social work academicians and practitioners. To this critique, the social work fraternity responds that there are social work journals that have been continuously publishing articles and research papers pertaining to social work practice and it needs to be taken into consideration for recognising social work as a profession.

To the challenges that are raised against calling social work a profession, social work fraternity has tried to produce contrary arguments in its favour. But social workers in India are of the view that lack of organised lobbying on the part of social workers is the major reason for the non-attainment of a professional status. As mentioned earlier there are oppositions not only from outside but within the social work fraternity itself for calling social work a profession. This issue has been debated by social work educators for some time now

and the irony is that the involvement of practitioners in this debate has been found to be minimal. A possible reason for this might be that the fields of social work practice involve others too.

Social Work and its Professional Status: The Debate within the Social Work Fraternity

Before we begin the discussion on social work as profession, its needs, the problems faced, and the opposing views, let us highlight the different characteristics of a profession, vis-à-vis social work, as expressed by social work educators from different institutions of Social Work (see Figure 4.2).

According to senior educator Mr Pandey of the University of Delhi, the philosophical tenet of social work profession is that of working with the people, with a humanitarian approach. A professional approach to social work involves the use of methods of social work practice that are learnt. Within the larger ambit of the methods, techniques of how to work with people are built in. The skills of working with people are based on the individual application of the different techniques. In addition to this, Mr Pandey said, there is a certain degree of agreement when it comes to the principles and values, knowledge base and the different skills that are required for practising social work, but the problem arises with the employability factor in social work profession.

Educators who argue in favour of professionalism in social work highlighted three important points. Firstly, they said, if social work gains professional status then the quality of Social Work education could be maintained uniformly throughout the country. Secondly, with professional recognition, societal recognition with respect to the importance of the work done by social workers will improve. Lastly, it will provide security to the social workers in terms of their employability. Mr Iyer of the Madras School of Social Work, Chennai highlighted that social work as a profession currently faces competition in the field of social development from other professions and disciplines such as management, engineering, and the social sciences. Senior educator, Ms. Swamy of the Karnatak University, Dharwad similarly observed that most of the welfare-oriented and development-oriented activities have been undertaken voluntarily by people from other disciplines; therefore, social work struggles to get both professional status and societal recognition.

Figure 4.2
Characteristics of Social Work Profession
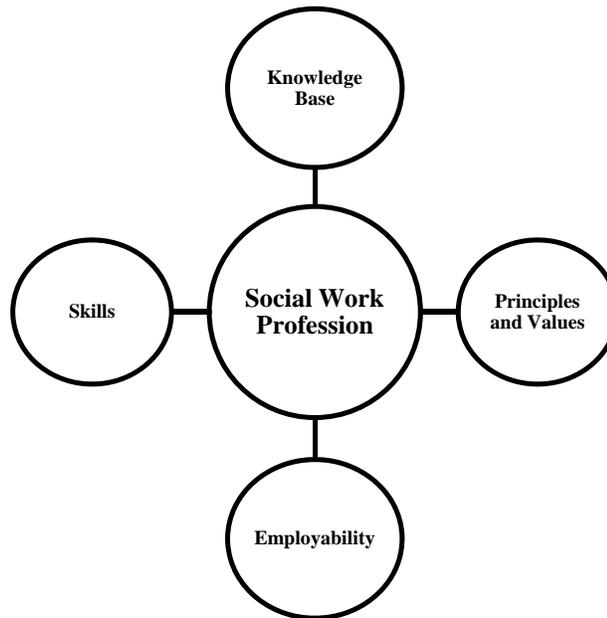
Source: Field data

Senior educator, Ms. Bhatnagar of the University of Delhi said that social work as a profession is weak in India due to the absence of a professional council of social work. Also, the education and training of social workers is weak because of fragmented fieldwork, and incompetent supervision in many institutions of Social Work. Mr Pandey of the University of Delhi was of the opinion that the absence of a professional council for social work has been the biggest hindrance in attaining a professional status for social work in India. If there is a professional council then like the West, social work will be licensed, elevating it to professional status. He further added,

> *Licensing not only guarantees a permission to practice, but also helps in developing an organised system of practice. In addition to this under an organised system of practice job opportunities can be created for trained social workers. Once the jobs are created then they start influencing practice and consequently the development of the profession. After a continuous development slowly the concept of private practice also emerges in a profession. But due to fragmented efforts of the social work fraternity, the concept of private practice did not emerge in social work profession. The efforts to come up with professional bodies of social work were not met with uniform acceptance by social work educators and practitioners throughout the country. The absence of a strong professional body created the hegemony of TISS which is referred to as the gatekeeper of social work profession in India. Even the premier journal of social work in India, the 'Indian Journal of Social Work' is published by TISS instead of a national level professional body.*

However, Ms. Vashi of TISS, Mumbai was of the opinion that the absence of licensing in social work is beneficial as it provides flexibility in terms of visualising the philosophical base (social justice) of social work from a radical angle. It also facilitates the politicisation of social issues which is important for a macro-approach in social work. Mr Sinha of the University of Delhi said that licensing of social work will create a hierarchy between the trained social workers and the para-professionals. Currently, the para-professionals constitute the bulk force of social work practice, and the licensing system will create a sense of insecurity in them. Senior educator Ms. Kriplani argued against this viewpoint by drawing an analogy with the medical profession. According to her, para-professionals are the appendices to the main professional. As far as the hierarchy is concerned, it exists even without licensing. This view was confirmed by Surya, a student of the Karve Institute of Social Service, Pune who has three-year experience of working as a para-professional. He said, *"I joined MSW because in the organisation where I was working I realised that I could only get a further promotion (irrespective of my field knowledge) or a higher position (with a better salary) in any other organisation if I pursue a MSW degree."*

In brief, those who support the view that social work in India should aim at professional status, identify four important requirements for realising it: (i) creation of an independent identity for social workers, (ii) maintenance of uniform standards for Social Work education and training, (iii) provision of security in terms of the employability of social workers, and (iv) formulation of a code of ethics for social workers. For achieving professional status, many Social Work educators across different institutions of Social Work argue in favour of following the western model and the establishment of a strong national level professional body of social work that not only keeps the ethical standards in check, but also promotes specialisations in social work.

However, those who are against calling social work a profession argue that the professional status will limit the scope of social work within the boundaries set up by the state and its policies. In the West, where it is recognised as a profession, social workers perform limited roles within the government departments and do not enjoy the space to experiment in performing multiple roles. Whereas in India, social workers are able to intervene in different situations of need such as natural disasters, social movements, etc. Ms. Vashi of TISS opined that, in India, social work has the potential to create an alternative voice for the people outside the boundaries of the state. If social work attains professional status then it will limited to individual-centric work. Mr Sinha of the University of Delhi was of the opinion that social work should not strive for professional status as it is a western notion that defeats the very purpose of social work, namely, social justice.

Some educators also expressed the concern that professionalization of social work will also shift the focus of social work more towards jobs and employment. Mr Khan observed

that institutions of Social Work, on the demand of the students, now focus on job placements, because of which other aspects of social work profession such as maintenance of ethical standards becomes a problematic as then the focus is more on higher salary packages and market demand. Professional status carries with it an understanding that Social Work education and training prepares the students to take up certain jobs in the society, but the market has its own demands; it wants social workers to take up already laid down tasks in the voluntary sector. As a result of the market demand, Social Work needs to incorporate more of skill-based training courses in the curriculum rather than focussing on the intervention strategies based upon a sound understanding of the theoretical concepts.

The above discussion highlights the diverse viewpoints with regards to the attainment of professional status for social work. The views also highlight that those who argue in favour of the professional status lay greater emphasis on the traditional, well-developed forms of social work practice based on the scientific methods of social work practice. The orientation in this case is predominantly micro with well-defined boundaries of social work. On the other hand, those who argue against professionalism in social work operate from a macro-view and give more space to radical social work. Senior educator, Ms. Kriplani of TISS, Mumbai said that educators and students inclined to radical social work develop a sound understanding of the oppressive structures of society, but in social work it is important to work with the people and understand their needs and desires, and this understanding is missing in the radical approach. Senior educator, Ms. Jhunjhunwala of the M.S. University, Baroda also supported this view and said that radical social work only develops a perspective. Ms. Kapoor of the University of Delhi observed that traditional social work is more individualistic and task-oriented and fits well within the professional ambit of social work.

Mr Khan of the Jamia Milia Islamia shared a more comprehensive view and said that both the approaches should be given space in social work. Therefore, in Jamia Milia Islamia, they have categorised the specialisations as social welfare and social development. It is a matter of personal choice for the students to opt for either of the two approaches. Social welfare is more focussed on traditional social work and social development takes on a critical perspective. Ms. Bose of the Visva-Bharati, Sriniketan similarly deliberated that both the approaches have their limitations; the choice depends on the ideological predilections and their respective reach in the practical situations. However, Mr Krishna of TISS, Mumbai opined that the two approaches should not be viewed as an 'either or' situation, rather in both micro-practice and macro-practice both the perspectives should be taken into consideration. Even when they appear conflicting in practical situations, the choice should be based on the field situation rather than on a rigid pre-conceived ideology.

One of the central features of any profession is the existence of a professional body that directs its growth and development. For the social work profession, at the international level,

there are professional bodies, such as the International Federation of Social Workers, that direct its growth and development internationally. In the developed countries like UK and USA, there are national level professional bodies of social work that are active. But this is not the case in India. Although, many efforts have been made to come up with national level professional bodies of social work, they have hardly been recognised and, therefore, have not been able to create a strong impact on the development of the profession. Let us, therefore, discuss the roles of and the challenges faced by professional bodies of social work in India.

Professional Bodies of Social Work in India

In India, many efforts have been made to come up with national and state-level professional bodies of social work to foster the development of social work as a profession. Some of these include Association of Schools of Social Work in India (ASSWI), National Association of Professional Social Workers in India (NAPSWI), Indian Association of Trained Social Workers (IATSW), Maharashtra Association of Social Workers Educators (MASWE), Bombay Association of Trained Social Workers (BATSW), and Karnataka Association of Professional Social Workers (KAPSW). Out of these, ASSWI has been the most influential association, according to many social work educators. But many educators also highlighted that, with the passing years, especially post 2000, even the significance of ASSWI has gone down considerably in the social work fraternity and it has become almost dysfunctional. Meher C. Nanavatty, in his analysis of the literature on professional associations of social work highlighted,

> Coming to the promotion of professional associations . . . They have remained as peripheral activities. Though during the seventies and the early eighties, the professional associations had shown some signs of growth and vitality, due to internecine conflict arising out of individual motivation versus social motivation as well egocentric leadership, the IATSW ceased to exist. In spite of some efforts at revival a new spirit could not be infused. This is one of the most important handicaps of the profession of social work in India (1997: 298).

The Role of Professional Bodies. One of the primary roles of a professional body is to maintain a minimum standard and quality of education and training of social work in the country. Mr Gangte of the Assam University, Silchar said that the professional bodies should aim at ensuring a healthy standard of fieldwork training in Social Work. Ms. Bhatnagar of the University of Delhi, opined that, as supervised fieldwork training is one of the core components of Social Work, therefore professional bodies should ensure that distance learning in Social Work is abolished. In the distance learning programme, fieldwork training is fragmented and unsupervised. She further added that, like other professions, education and training of Social Work should be done through a regular five-year integrated programme of Social Work and this is something that should be ensured by the professional bodies. Senior educator Ms. Jhunjhunwala of the M.S. University, Baroda strongly expressed that, in the

current scenario, the primary role of a professional body is to stop the commercialisation of Social Work education and curtail the mushrooming of self-financing institutions of Social Work that collect capitation fee from students. Senior educator, Ms. Thadani of TISS was of the view that commercialisation of education is rampant in almost all the professions and, in the current globalised times, under the auspices of neo-liberalism it will be hard to control this phenomenon for Social Work. Therefore, the attempt should be to find out ways of enhancing the quality of education in the new institutions so that they are able to meet the minimum standards of education and training. The concern regarding the minimum standards of Social Work education and training in different institutions of Social Work through regulation by a national level professional body is perennial and has been expressed by stalwarts like Armaity S. Desai for a long time. According to her,

> . . . a School [institution of Social Work] not meeting standards could be given a specified period of time, such as two years, when it could be given professional membership, and the School assisted to reach this objective through consultations and loan of faculty from other established schools, or assistance from a school in the same area. Only as we do this vigorously, we will be able to turn out a professional social worker, who is well equipped and whose knowledge and skills are relevant to our society's needs. To achieve tasks, the Association [ASSWI] needs a standing committee on curriculum, and another on minimum standards and accreditation of Schools (1973: 10).

Senior educator Ms. Pinto of Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai said that, apart from ensuring minimum standards, professional bodies should maintain the academic rigour in social work profession. This can be done by creating a common platform for Social Work academicians and social work practitioners to come together in conferences and seminars to up-grade their knowledge and skills. Ms. Wankhede of the Karve Institute of Social Service, Pune said that, professional bodies need to promote research on Social Work education and training so that the knowledge base of social work can be up-graded, based on evidence and observation. S.R. Mohsini, in reference to IATSW, stated,

> There is a dearth of indigenous literature on Social Work in India . . . . There is an urgent need to develop indigenous literature on different fields of social welfare. The Association has a plan to select different papers and articles pertaining to various fields for welfare from various Social Work journals and to publish them with a (sic). exhaustive introduction after getting them to be roughly edited (1973: 21).

Ms. Kriplani of TISS, Mumbai was of the opinion that, apart from focussing on the higher education in Social Work, professional bodies should focus on the training of para-professionals through field exercises for skill development. Ms. Swamy of the Karnatak University, Dharwad further added, apart from training of para-professionals, professional bodies should organise refresher courses for trained practitioners so that they can regularly up-grade their knowledge. These issues and concerns have been raised for long but little has

been implemented. For example, the role highlighted by Ms. Kriplani and Ms. Swamy above has been discussed by K.N. George more than three decades back,

> Preparing auxiliary personnel and offering orientation, refresher and other types of in-service training programmes to different categories of personnel of Government and voluntary sectors including those occupying developmental positions at higher levels in Government and non-government agencies are the responsibilities of the Association and the Schools (1974: 61).

Professional bodies are often referred to as the gatekeepers of a profession. As social work is struggling to attain a professional status in India, one of their primary roles is to give professional legitimacy to social work, to ensure recognition of Social Work education as a pre-requisite for social work practice and improving the working conditions of the social work practitioners (Mohsini 1973). For this, professional bodies need to push for a national council of social work on the one hand, and lobby for getting recognition for Social Work as a professional course on the other. In addition, the professional bodies also need to ensure that the national council (if it comes into existence) should be controlled by them rather than being dominated by bureaucrats (Nanavatty 1993). Once the national council is in place, then professional bodies can also push for opening compulsory positions for social workers in state welfare departments and welfare agencies. Another added dimension to this is the licensing of social work through the national council. Ms. Swamy of the Karnatak University, Dharwad said, "*Licensing of social work will regulate standards of social work practice as the social workers will always be under constant pressure to maintain ethical standards in their practice, failing which their licenses could be cancelled*". In this way the professional bodies can act as watchdogs for practitioners.

The professional bodies should also facilitate the protection of the financial interests of both the academicians and practitioners. As far as the academicians are concerned, they should look at maintaining uniform salary scales. Ms. Gawaskar of Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai said that, in Maharashtra, most of institutions of Social Work fall under the state welfare departments and the educators in these institutions do not get pay in accordance with the Sixth Pay Commission. Professional bodies should take up these issues and fight for equal salary scales for Social Work educators. Similar view was shared by Mr Sargaonkar of the Karve Institute of Social Service, Pune. Ms. Sukhdev of the Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi opined that professional bodies should promote accreditation of social work practice so that the work of the practitioners gains societal recognition. In addition, professional bodies should define the dimensions of social work profession and accordingly create job opportunities for the practitioners.

One supposed role of professional bodies of social work, which had the consensus of most of the social work educators, was the formulation of a code of ethics for social work. Ms. Kriplani of TISS, Mumbai observed that currently many social workers are engaged in

profit-making activities in the voluntary sector. Such practices are creating a bad name for the social work profession as well as for the non-government organisations. The professional bodies should develop a code of ethics which should be mandatory for the trained social workers to follow. However, she added that it is a utopian thought that every social worker will follow the ethical standards as laid down by the professional bodies, because even in the well-established professions such as medicine, not all doctors follow the ethical standards.

Having outlined the role of professional bodies as expressed by social work educators, now let us highlight the challenges faced by the professional bodies of social work in India and the reasons for not their being fully functional.

Challenges Faced by Professional Bodies of Social Work in India. Most of the professional bodies of social work are either limited to the Social Work educators or are dominated by them. Bodies like ASSWI and MASWE are meant only for academicians and are concerned only with Social Work education and training. Other bodies such as NAPSWI and BATSW are open to social work practitioners as well, but are still dominated by academicians. Senior educator Ms. Pinto of Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai said that the practitioners, especially the para-professionals, feel left out and think that their concerns are not given importance by the professional bodies. Therefore, many practitioners refrain from attending the meetings of the professional bodies. Ms. Krishnan of the Karve Institute of Social Service, Pune observed that not only are the professional bodies dominated by educators, they are dominated by senior educators of the well-established institutions of Social Work. This creates a kind of a hierarchical framework in the professional bodies. Senior educator, Ms. Kriplani of TISS, Mumbai however, said that the hierarchies in the professional bodies are bound to exist. One should look at the positive side and respect the boundaries, as they are not about creation of hierarchies. The boundaries clarify and specify the roles of different people in the social work fraternity (educators, trained practitioners, para-professionals) that are based upon their capacities.

Many educators also feel that the professional bodies should first and foremost protect the academic interests of the social work fraternity. More academic conferences, seminars, and research studies should be organised so that members view these professional bodies as places of learning and expanding their knowledge base. Ms. Wankhede of the Karve Institute of Social Service, Pune said that no regular dissemination of academic information takes place on the part of the professional bodies, and, therefore, educators have lost interest in the activities of the professional bodies. This has fragmented these bodies and rendered them dysfunctional. Mr Pandey of the University of Delhi mentioned that people who are predominantly involved in community work feel that the regulation of social work through the professional bodies would lead to forced homogeneity in social work. Consequently, the diverse range of concerns and issues that exist in community work will not be captured. This

concern, expressed by people involved in community work, according to Mr Pandey is not true as it will not lead to homogenisation of different activities in which social workers are involved.

Senior educator, Ms. Swamy of the Karnatak University, Dharwad said that the challenges faced in the establishment and functioning of professional bodies of social work were neither addressed by the pioneers of Social Work and TISS nor was the authority and responsibility of the leadership passed to other institutions of Social Work. Similarly, senior educator Ms. Bhatnagar of the University of Delhi observed that, as social work was a growing profession, many educators competed to occupy key positions in the professional bodies, and, therefore, the more important roles that these bodies should have taken up got lost in the politics of power. This resulted in a lack of solidarity and the professional bodies became dysfunctional in the course of time.

Ms. Swamy of the Karnatak University, Dharwad and Mr Gangte of the Assam University, Silchar also raised the concern with respect to the cultural diversity of India and the location of institutions of Social Work in different parts of the country. According to them, the cultural differences and the diverse environment of social work practice did not give way to a common understanding of social work and the people could not come together in a national-level professional body. Consequently, they could not arrive at a consensus with respect to the roles of these bodies; different regions came up with state level professional bodies to address their specific concerns, rather than looking at some uniformity at the national level. Ms. Pinto of Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai said, "*As the national level professional bodies were not functioning therefore BATSW came up with the idea of promoting a Maharashtra level state council and developing a code of ethics for the social workers in their state*". In addition, she observed that professional bodies which take up the individual concerns of social work educators have been found to be more popular as compared to those that look at the larger interests of the social work fraternity. For example, MASWE is more popular as it actively takes up individual issues such as pension, minimum wages and enforcement of Sixth Pay Commission in the salaries of Social Work educators in Maharashtra.

However, senior educators who have been involved in the professional bodies argue that professional bodies have become dysfunctional because of lack of financial support from anywhere and lack of political support from the government. In addition, social work fraternity is so scattered in the country and they are so busy in their individual work that there is no time for them to come together and promote the growth and development of the professional bodies. Thus, the views of the senior educators (for dysfunctional professional bodies) are based more on the administrative limitations of time and money.

From the above discussion on the development of social work as a profession and the different viewpoints on the professional bodies, two points of consensus among Social Work educators, whether they support a professional status for social work or not, can be highlighted. Firstly, there is no objection on the development of a code of ethics for social work fraternity. And, secondly, the need for maintaining quality education and training of Social Work is widely recognised.

But one point that did not emerge clearly from the reflections of the educators on professional aspect of social work was clarification in terms of the practice component. A strong critique that senior educators (who view social work as a profession) have against radical social work is that students, even if they are influenced by the radical perspective, do not end up practising the same after the completion of the master's programme. If the question is about a job in the end, then the professional status can facilitate that process. In case some students do want to take up activism, they are free to do so as citizens of the country; the social work profession, thus, only sets boundaries for the profession and not for individuals. They even cited examples of other "professionals" such as Dr Binayak Sen[2] to support their argument. The educators who oppose professional status for social work counter this critique by saying that it is the irony of our time due to the extremely powerful role of the market: the framework that we oppose ironically becomes the framework of our operation! The market does not give a choice as we are always a part of it. When asked about the alternative path for social work, then the radical educators argued that social work should move towards establishing itself as a strong academic discipline (with a strong theoretical base) rather than as a profession. But, in such a case, the question arises with respect to the uniqueness of Social Work in comparison to other academic disciplines such as economics, political science, sociology or interdisciplinary area studies such as development studies. The only characteristic that distinguishes Social Work is the practice component and a disciplinary path does not support the practice component. On the other hand, the claim for professional status ipso facto assumes the practice component. These were a few unresolved dilemmas that emerged during the course of this research[3].

Summary

Finding its roots in philanthropy, social work germinated from voluntary service-delivery activities into a profession. However, the case for professional status has been perennially

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[2] Mr Binayak Sen is a medical doctor by profession, who as an activist has for many years fought for the rights of mine workers, factory workers, and tribal population in Chattisgarh (a state in India), both in individual capacity and as a member of People's Union for Civil Liberties.
[3] For further reading on the traditional (professional interest based), radical (change oriented), and mixed approach to social work, refer to Nanavatty (1990).

debated on in social work, especially in India. This debate is rooted in the different viewpoints that exist vis-à-vis the purpose of social work practice and the role played by Social Work education and training in developing different perspectives on it. Of late, these viewpoints have at least converged on one point, that is, the promotion of social justice. Therefore, the International Federation of Social Workers has come up with an all-encompassing definition of social work that has been widely accepted by the social work fraternity all over the world.

The intervention strategies of social workers are predominantly guided by the individual ideologies that they adhere to. These ideologies, in turn, are guided by the different theoretical perspectives. For example, the activities that involve mainstreaming of individuals in need or trouble are guided by the functionalist perspective that draws heavily on the theories and concepts of positivism. Also, the different viewpoints that exist on the purpose of social work are based on the field experiences of the social workers. This explains the intertwined nature of relationship between theory and practice in social work. The field experiences of the social workers are also shaped on the basis of the existential conditions, that is, the context of practice and the ideologies that dominate it at different points of time in the historical development of social work profession.

Historically, after social work started to emerge as a scientific activity, it developed different methods of intervention. The theoretical domain always played a supportive role in providing an understanding of the different situations that social workers encountered in practice. The dominance of a particular ideology and forms of society during different points in time has influenced the development of social work whether it was the functionalist perspective in the Victorian England, or community living in India, or the individualistic spirit in USA, or the plurality propagated by postmodernist ideologues in current times. Social work fraternity being a part of the larger society has time and again adapted to the changes in the existential conditions.

One of the perennial concerns for the social work fraternity that has been under discussion over the decades is the professional status of social work. In the West, social work is recognised as a profession, which permits only licensed practice in limited boundaries for professionally trained social workers. This growth of social work as a profession has been supplemented by the professional bodies of social work that are responsible for maintaining the ethical standards for social work practice.

However, in India social work is not yet fully recognised as a profession. Different people (both within and outside the social work fraternity) share different opinions with respect to the professional status of social work. But, despite this, efforts have been made to establish professional bodies of social work to promote the growth and development of social work as a profession. The different roles of these professional bodies have been identified as

follows: (a) maintaining and enhancing the quality of social work education in India, (b) promoting the establishment of a national council of social work, (c) developing a code of ethics for the professional social workers, (d) facilitating training of para-professionals, and (e) creating employment opportunities for social workers.

Simultaneously, these bodies have also faced numerous challenges, as there are many people who do not support the view of developing social work as a profession. Some of these arguments or apprehensions include: (a) creation of hierarchy among educators, trained practitioners, and para-professionals, (b) lack of space for creativity and innovation in social work as professionalization would set boundaries for social work practice, (c) professional bodies catering more to individual interests rather than promoting the goal of social justice, and (d) lack of rigour in these bodies to promote academic interests of the educators.

From the discussion in this chapter on the purpose(s) of Social Work, its history, and the discussions on the development of social work profession (as has been discussed earlier) are influenced by different theoretical perspectives. However, the opinion of senior educator Mr Khan of the Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi that the knowledge of different theoretical perspectives helps in drafting multiple intervention strategies with predictable outcomes captures the importance of theories for social work practice. In addition, the new developments, as observed by social workers in the field, can be used to develop practice theories as well as refinement of existing theories. This validates the importance of practice for theoretical development of social work.

Thus, we may conclude that the theory–practice relationship in Social Work education and training and social work profession (whether explicitly recognised or tacitly assumed) exists in a cyclical form and is reflected in discussions on different aspects of both Social Work education and training – such as curriculum, pedagogy, evaluation, fieldwork component, history, and its purpose – and the professional status of social work.

So far – in chapters three, four, and five – we have discussed the theory–practice relationship in Social Work by examining its different aspects. This discussion has mainly focussed on the overall academic and professional base of social work. Let us now turn our attention to a practice area of social work and see whether and how theory and practice are related in on-field interventions. The area of social work practice that has been considered in this study includes the interventions made by social workers (both trained and para-professionals) in alleviating the problems of street children, individually or in groups, as a significant part of the metropolitan city population. In the next two chapters, we will draw the aetiology of the issue, identify the intervention strategies, and examine the theory–practice relationship in the intervention strategies.