CHAPTER IV
THE TRADITION OF SERVICE

This chapter traces the tradition of service in India, the basic understanding and approach to service and the relevance or otherwise of the above social work.

In the Indian tradition, service has been built into life. Raja Ram Shastri is of the opinion that "in a civilization as ancient as India, one can easily suspect the existence of an age before the age in which the concept of charity took its modern shape in Europe."¹ Shastri's opinion is supported by Majumdar who states that "the spirit of doing good to one's fellow beings and initiating or taking part in activities for the welfare and common good of all seems to have been a special characteristic of Indians in ancient times."² However until recently service to others has not been treated as a specialised activity requiring conscious efforts. Concern for others and caring for those who need help has been part of normal life. The daily arrangement of life, the daily rituals and worship, all of these have built-in methods of helping others. The fundamental idea underlying the approach to service and charity is deeper than merely helping. The basic idea is to share whatever one has, be it material goods, money,
knowledge or whatever else. The sharing can reach the intensity of sacrificing for the sake of others. Such sharing naturally results in a situation where everybody is provided for and nobody is left out wanting and needy. Thus, in the Indian context "sharing" is more appropriate than "helping" to describe the service tradition.

Service in Philosophy and Literature

A review of the Indian philosophical literature and social institutions, reveals the importance given to service activities. Each and every individual was expected to be sharing and caring for others. Service to the needy has not been considered as a special activity of a particular agency like the State, religion or any specific group. On the other hand, service is considered to be the responsibility of every individual. This is an idea that recurs from the Vedic to the modern writings. One of the common prayers of today is found in the Rg Veda, seeking for the welfare of all.

"May all be happy, may all be free from disease. May, all realize what is good. May none be subject to misery.

O glorious Lord, urge even a miser to charity and soften the heart of a niggard."³
The **Purusa Sukta** of the *Rg Veda* describes the creation to have been caused by the sacrifice of the Supreme Being of a part of Itself.⁴

A whole section in the *Rg Veda* is dedicated to the deity **Dāna** personification of charity. The nine verses in this section speak of the need for charity and clearly state that the richer the person more liberal should he be.⁵

The **Upaniṣads** inspite of their primary concern towards self-enquiry, speak of charity and service. The **Praśna Upaniṣad** refers to the **Iṣṭa-Pūrtha** activities of the individuals. **Iṣṭa** are "the daily sacrifice of Agnihotra, austerity, truthfulness, maintenance of animals, feeding of guests and feeding of the birds and beasts... Sinking wells or excavation of tanks for the public, building temples, giving food to the hungry, laying out public gardens - these are called pūrta."⁶

The **Brahadāranyaka Upaniṣad** has a story about the gods, humans and demons praying to the Supreme for a boon. The Supreme appearing before them uttered the single word "Da" and disappeared. The word **Da** was explained as "dama" meaning self-control by the Gods. **Dāna** or charity by the human beings and **daya** or compassion by the demons. Thus, each of the groups was told to nurture that which was most
needed and important. So, it is charity that the humans are told to cherish.

The Rāmāyana of Valmiki also extols benevolence in the form of charity. In the Rāmāyana, Rāma distributes "his entire possessions as gifts, to the brahmins and scholars, as alms to the poor, the destitutes and orphans, and as subsidies to servants and dependent." Specific days of the month were marked for compulsory alms giving. There were other practice like giving of charities on special occasions like the Yajña.

The Mahābhārata also emphasises on charity and service. The Anuśasana parva states that "I shall tell thee what constitutes the highest good of a human being. That man who practices the religion of universal compassion achieves his highest good. That man who regards all creatures as his own self, and behaves towards them as towards his own self succeeds in attaining happiness... One should never do that to another which one regards as injurious to one's own self." The Bhāgavata purana contains the story of the king Ranti Deva, who at the height of famine in his kingdom, offers the last morsel of food that he has, to a hungry man and prays, "I donot pray to the Lord for a state in which I
shall be endowed with the eight fold powers, nor even for the state of liberation from the cycle of birth and death. I desire only to abide within all beings and undergo the sufferings that accrue to them. By taking over their sufferings they will be free from misery."\textsuperscript{10}

There is an unmistakable emphasis on service in the \textit{Gita}. It was already seen in the previous chapter that the \textit{Gita} considers a fully evolved person to be one who works for the welfare of all. The \textit{Gita} uses the word \textit{"lokasangraha"} to mean welfare of all. \textit{Lokasangraha} is the supreme ideal of the well being and solidarity of the entire world.\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Lokasangraha} does not lie merely in the physical wellbeing of the individuals. It extends beyond fundamental human requirements of physical wants to vital and larger aspects of social cohesion and social unity. In fact, \textit{lokasangraha} includes all factors that result in happiness of individuals and peace in society. The purpose of \textit{lokasangraha} is \textit{sarvabhubhutahita} meaning good of all living creatures. Such is the ideal of service in the \textit{Gita}.

The Dharmasastras discuss charity in great detail. The \textit{Visnu Dharmasastra} specifies the different articles which should be distributed during the different months of the year, and the rewards that can be gained by the gift of each of the specified articles. For example gifting
coloured cloth in Chaitra (April-May) month results in acquisition of good fortune. By gifting honey and sesame seeds in Versaka (May-June) absolves one of all sins. The articles to be gifted include coloured cloth, honey and sesame seed, umbrella and shoes, food, rice and cloth, cow, clarified butter, bull with gems, cereals and scents, powdered salt with a bit of gold and bed furnished with pillows and bedsheets. Good fortune, being absolved of all sins, increased cattle wealth, eternal merit, residence in heaven, good digestive capacity, free from dangers of wilderness, are the rewards that one can reap by gifting the various articles.

Besides giving various articles in charity, public works like excavation of tank, giving of water, planting trees, building bridges, erecting and painting or cleaning of temples are also considered to be meritorious activities which result in rewards of various kinds to the person.

The best of all gifts is protection. The gifts one can give includes cow, land, horse, fuel, etc. Each of these gifts carries its own reward to the giver.

However, caution should be exercised in giving gifts. Persons who are hypocrites, arrogant, covetous, deceitful and braggarts should not be given gifts. Nor should one make a gift for fame, out of fear, or to a benefactor.
Thus, the Visnu Dharmaśāstra provides a practical guide for gift giving.\textsuperscript{12}

The Dharmaśāstra of Vyasa has strong views on charity.\textsuperscript{13} It allows spending of one’s wealth for one’s own enjoyment, acts of piety or fame. The rest of the wealth is only a trust and not the private property of an individual. Both wealth and human life are transient. Death is the only reality and therefore everyone has to acquire pieties everyday. So, "Why not give away your riches in charity?"\textsuperscript{14} According to this Dharma Śāstra "even the beasts live and pamper their own bellies. Of what use is the strength, health and longevity of him who does not do any act of public good."\textsuperscript{15} Even if one has only one morsel of food, half of it can be given to the poor. Death never really occurs to a charitable person. In the opinion of Vyasa, "of a hundred, one is born a hero; of a thousand a wise man; and of a hundred thousand, an orator. I doubt whether a man of true charities will ever take his birth or not."\textsuperscript{16} Only a person who gifts with reverence is a true giver of gifts.

The Śanka Dharmaśāstra describes the merits of gifts given at different sacred places. Atri states, "even from a limited income, something should be given away daily, with care and liberal spirit. This is called Dāna."\textsuperscript{17} The Daksha Dharmaśāstra prohibits a householder from taking his
food before his guest is fed. The Likhita Samhita describes the Iṣṭa-pūrta acts and explains the merits that accrue out of the performance of these acts. According to Manu, gift making or charity is the highest virtue to be practiced in the kali-yuga.

The importance attached to service gets reflected throughout the writings of the subsequent centuries as well. The songs of the saints of the Bhakti cult period have considerable emphasis on service. Ādi Śankara, Sri Rāmānuja and Madhāvacharya also gave due importance to service. Ādi Śankara’s non-dualism makes all human beings parts of one existence. Thus, Ādi Śankara preached an idea greater than equality. He propagated oneness of all living creatures. Sri Rāmānuja can perhaps be considered a true revolutionary. An event in his life states that he was taught a sacred chant by his guru, who extolled the value and benefit of the chant but forbade Sri Rāmānuja from teaching it to others. Openly defying the instructions of his guru, Rāmānuja climbed the tower of a temple and propagated the chant to all those who assembled there, because he believed that every one should benefit out of the good of the chant. Madhāvacharya established the tradition of feeding all those who came to worship at the temples and maths. Each one of them instituted a tradition and approach which was best
suited to the socio-economic conditions of the times during which they lived.

Perhaps, the best illustration of a saint-poet's emphasis on service is seen in the song of Narsi Mahta. His song that was adopted by Gandhi as a prayer states "A vaisnava has compassion for all. Any who suffer he helps, but having helped he never then feels proud of the deed he has done." 21

Customs and Institutions Fostering Services

The idea of service was not merely an ideal. It was effectively transformed into customs and practices in the society. The ideal of sacrifice was manifested through the yajñas in the Vedic period. The word yajña means sacrifice. The earliest forms of yajña were those which were performed by small communities of the pre-Vedic times. These yajñas were not mere rituals but collective activities, wherein all the members of the community share the economic goods. This is probably the earliest experience of socialism. Private property as such did not exist and whatever goods were available belonged collectively to the community and the purpose of the yajña was to share the goods. 22 From being such a social activity, the yajña became more a religious ritual during the later vedic period. However, the social
significance was still retained. The performance of yajña was made possible by the participation of the members of different groups of the community. Specific tasks were assigned to each of the groups. Some sociologists believe that caste originated in the division of labour during the performance of yajña.\(^{23}\) According to Shastri, some of the yajñas of the Vedic times continue to exist till recently retaining their original social relevance.\(^{24}\)

At a later period Iṣṭa-pūrtha activities became the means of sharing and service. As explained earlier, iṣṭa are ritualistic offerings, while pūrtha are activities formally and ceremonially dedicated to the service of the people, as worship of God. Subsequently, the paṇca-maha yajñas fostered the tradition of sharing.

Still later, the temples assumed considerable importance in the religious and social life of India. Temples were not only places of worship, but assumed several roles as centres of education, art, culture and administration. The temples were also "the dispensary, the patrons of hostels and hospitals, the source of certain amount of free or cheap food to the poor section of the community and much more besides. It stood out as the concrete symbol of the Hindu Welfare State."\(^{25}\)
Buddha's message of compassion is a significant point in the history of social work tradition in India. The followers of Buddha established "Viharas" and "Sanghas" which acted as health and welfare centers. According to Shastri, individual psychological help assumed special significance in Buddhism, due to its preoccupation with the psychospiritual aspects of life. In addition to such psychological help, the Buddhist monks continued to practice "the communitarian collective traditions of earlier times."28

Regarding the role of kings in relation to charity and service, Kautilya's Arthasastra enumerates the services that the king should do. The King's duties included personal attention to the petitions of the minors, the aged, the afflicted, the helpless and women, providing subsistance to helpless women when they were expecting and later to the children who were born to these women.29

In Pathak's opinion Ashoka developed a "very comprehensive system of social welfare which included women's welfare, rehabilitation of prisoners, rural development, free medical care, regulation of prostitution and provision of public utilities like road, rest houses for travellers, wells etc. The Ashokan state was truly an early proto type of the modern welfare state."30
Historical evidences show that King Harshavardhana used to periodically distribute his entire wealth amongst the needy.  

During the Moghul period also service continued to be a part of the ruler's duty. Islam also fostered service by making "Zakat" or compulsory contribution of one fifth of one's income, a fundamental religious duty.  

The Christian missionaries who came along with the entry of the British treated services as a priority amongst their activities. Their contribution to the field of service is considerable.

The family in India has been a major social institution contributing to the ideal of sharing. The traditional joint families functioned as educational centres, hospitals, old age homes, recreational centres and orphanages. The main characteristics of the joint family are common prayer, common hearth and common pool of income. Joint families practised the creed of 'to each according to one's need and from each according to one's merit'. No member of the family was deserted and made a destitute, due to mental or physical illness, old age, personal calamities like widowhood, loss of parents etc. Codes for running such families were laid down in the Grihya Sūtras. One such


Grihya sūtra states that the man of the house, who is the head of the household shall eat his food only after the guests, old people, children, pregnant women and women under his care have consumed their food. Practically, he should eat only after all the members in the family have eaten. Such was the sense of responsibility that he was expected to possess.

The caste groups and communities also fostered service. It is common to find trusts and charitable institutions established by individuals singly or together with other members of their caste or religious groups. Chettiars of Tamilnadu comprising largely of rich business class people have established several such institutions. The Jains have several trusts in the city of Madras alone. The Parsees are another notable group who have contributed greatly in this direction.

Modern Approach

The nineteenth century is generally considered to be a period of Indian renaissance. It was a period of sweeping reforms and the tradition of service gained further importance. The period of social reform began with the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the 1818 to abolish Sati. The following period till 1947 - the year of independence is
generally considered to be an era of reform. It is during this period that reforms through legislations were attempted. The use of legislations for social change is a method that emerged during this period. The major reform movements of this period are the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission and the Indian National Congress. While all these movements were involved in macro socio-religious reforms they were also actively engaged in micro level service activities, like establishment of educational institutions, medical centres etc.

The writers of this period were also deeply concerned with the social issues. Tagore, who is considered to be the national poet expresses socialistic ideas in his writings. One of his prayers in the Gitanjali, seeks the strength never to disown the poor or bend knees before insolent might. In yet another poem, he thanks the God, because his "lot lies with the humble who suffer and bear the burden of power, and hide their faces and stifle their sobs in the dark." Tagore’s social concern was not confined only to his writings. By founding Sriniketan, he became a pioneer in the field of rural development in India.

Bharathiyar, the patriot-poet-saint of Tamil Nadu has covered the following social issues in his poems: untouchability, casteism, women’s liberation, education for
the masses, national integration, equality, economic development and social justice. Other writers of this period also have covered similar themes.

The approaches and the works of the nineteenth century social reformers are too vast to be condensed into a single part of this thesis. Besides Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda who were the founders of the three major reform movements, there were several individuals working in different parts of the country. Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar was a pioneer who started several schools for girls when education was totally denied to them. Brahma Samaj had leaders like Keshub Chandra Sen and Debendra Nath Tagore who contributed significantly to reform work. In the western part of India, a great many persons were involved in reform and welfare work. Bala Gangadhr Tilak, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Jyitibai Phule, are only a few names amongst the many. In the south, Annie Besant a leader of the Theosophical Society was involved in reform, welfare and political activities. Sri Narayana Guru, was one of the outstanding personalities of this period. His life history is considered to be the history of social revolution in Kerala. He was born in a so called untouchable caste of Kerala. A spiritualist of no small stature his contribution lies in the fact that he used
spirituality to revolutionise the society which was decadant due to extreme rigidity of the caste system. The rigidity of the caste system resulted in inequality amongst the different castes. Sri Narayana Guru preached and practiced universal brotherhood. His message is expressed in the motto of "one religion, one God for man." In addition to giving a philosophy of social reform he also transformed the philosophy into action, by leading protest activities.41

It is clear even from the preceeding brief analysis that the works and thoughts of the social thinkers and reformers of the recent past of India often display immense magnitude and great variety. However, an overall understanding of the approaches to social service, reform and welfare can be developed by analysing a typological paradigm developed by Dr. Gore. The typology has been presented by him to discuss the variety of reform and welfare experiences in the Indian tradition. In Dr. Gore's opinion the various approaches to welfare and reform in the Indian tradition can be classified into four categories. His classification is presented in the following page.42

The classification clearly indicates the wide variety in the Indian approaches to social welfare and service. The basic motivation ranges from a selfish individual salvation to deep concern for human welfare. The type of assistance
**Approaches to Social Welfare and Social Work**

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<tr>
<th>Religious-Traditional</th>
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<th>Liberal Missionary</th>
<th>Ethical Revolutionary</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. Orientation to existing social structure</td>
<td>Unquestioning conformity</td>
<td>Reforms in social structure</td>
<td>Revivalist conformist or limited reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Types and level of needs perceived</td>
<td>Primarily individual physical needs for food and clothing and the religious spiritual need of promoting individual salvation</td>
<td>Primarily the needs arising out of 'unfair' social arrangements</td>
<td>Needs of individuals who suffered from existing social arrangements: physical needs: need for education and vocational rehabilitation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Organization, methods and tools</td>
<td>Direct charity or charity through temples, mosques, etc.</td>
<td>Educational and legislative measures</td>
<td>Establishing of 'orders' with full time staff to give leadership in community: establishing of residential institutions.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Establishing an 'order' - use of religious symbolism: Satyagraha: Lok Shakti, etc.</td>
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</table>
offered are also of great many a variety. They include the physical needs of food and clothing. The needs also included creation of opportunities for better living through educational and vocational training. The needs of those groups which were discriminated against were also taken into account. The methods used in these approaches range from direct charity to training of persons to carry out the welfare work. The paradigm of Dr. Gore, presents a comprehensive understanding of the tradition of social welfare in India, through the typology that he offers.

Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi are two persons whose thoughts and approaches are of special relevance to social work. Swami Vivekananda who is considered to be the 'greatest Hindu monk', 'patriot-saint', and 'founder of neo-Vedantism' revolutionised spirituality. Without compromising on the basic tenets of spirituality, he elevated service to the level of spirituality. His message in short was 'service and spirituality'. The greatness of Gandhi, the father of the nation and his contribution to the social scene is only too obvious to be recounted. However, due to the magnitude and method of the Gandhian contribution, it is not possible to exclude Gandhi from any analysis of social welfare and service in India, even though his contribution is common knowledge. Therefore, in the
following sections, the contributions of Swami Vivekananda and Gandhi are presented.

Swami Vivekananda's approach

It is in Swami Vivekananda, that one can find the culmination of the ideal of service in Indian society. According to him, service and sacrifice are the twin ideals of India. By founding the Ramakrishna Mission with the primary objective of rendering service, Swami Vivekananda translated the ideal of service into action. His ideas have considerable relevance to social work. So, in the following sections his ideas and approach to service are being analysed in detail.

Swami Vivekananda became personally aware of the social and economic conditions of India, when as a novice entrant into sannyasa he travelled the entire country. He is supposed to have openly wept at the conditions of the poor and coined the term dharidhra narayana, to denote the poor.

Swami Vivekananda identifies four causes for the present decadance of India. The first cause is ignoring the past of the country and its culture. He is of the firm belief that "the great seers of ancient India saw so far ahead of their time, that the world has to wait centuries yet to appreciate their wisdom." The wisdom of the
ancient has not been understood and appreciated by the present society. The inability to do so has caused several problems.

The second cause of degeneration is the lack of exchange of ideas between India and other countries. India according to him has failed to give the "life giving truths to thirsting nations outside the Aryan fold"\textsuperscript{44}, nor has she compared things with other nations. Insulating herself from others, not giving nor taking, India has ceased to grow, instead has decayed.

Perversion of religion is the third cause that Swami Vivekananda identifies. In his opinion religion has been reduced to nothing but debating practices relating to purity and pollution. His entire thought in this regard is most comprehensively expressed in the following quote. "We are neither Vendantins, most of us now, nor Pauranics, not Tantrics. We are just 'don't touchists'. Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking pot and our religion is 'Don't touch me, I am holy!'\textsuperscript{45} He is in total contempt of the superstitions and meaningless ritualistic practices.

The last two causes of decadences are tyranny over masses and neglect of women. According to him, "no amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India
are once more well educated, well fed and well cared for." He believes that if India has to improve, the position of the women has to improve. The former cannot take place in the absence of the latter.

These causes have resulted in cultural heresy and fanaticism, physical weakness, lack of faith in ourselves, lack of self help, obedience, organizing capacity, business integrity and love and in the emergence of laziness, selfishness and jealousy.

Swami Vivekananda's solution to remedying the situation of decadence was to train individuals to work towards the betterment of the situation. He considered renunciation and service as the twin ideals of the Indian society. He wanted young men and women, who would renounce the ordinary life and take up life of service and spirituality. He identifies three essential qualities that are necessary for working for others. First of all the workers should have immense feelings towards the people and their problems. "Do you feel that millions and millions of the descendents of gods and sages have become next door neighbours to brutes? Do you feel that millions are starving today, and millions have been starving for ages?" He wants the feeling for the others suffering and misery "to course through the veins becoming consonant with the heart beats." Having felt so
intensely, the workers should possess the ability to arrive at practical solutions to the problems. Finally the workers should have unshakeable and unselfish will to work. "If your wives and children are against you, if all your money goes, your name dies, your wealth vanishes, would you still stick to it", is the question he raises to the workers. A combination of the feeling, practical solutions and strong motivation would result in miracles is his firm belief.

Swami Vivekananda has himself suggested methods of solving India’s problems. His entire approach is based on human dignity and mass awakening through proper education. At the individual level, it is vital to restore the lost human dignity to the individuals. He states that "if faith in ourselves has been more extensively taught and practised, I am sure a very large portion of the evils and miseries that we have, would have vanished."  

With regard to the poor masses of India, he is of the firm opinion that "the only service to be done to them is to give them education, to develop their lost individuality." The poor have been 'tyrannised', 'hypnotised' by a small group of people who have 'monopolised learning or wield the power of riches or arms.' Suppressed by a small minority the poor have sunk to the lowest possible level of human existence and they have all but forgotten that they are
human beings. The best way to remedy the situation is to awaken them by educating them. However, by education he does not mean a static formal system. Education must be life-building, man-making and character making. Such an education should contain spiritual and secular knowledge and this education should be taken to the poor masses. While recommending such ideal education he is realistic enough to realise that the poverty in India is such that, "the poor boys would rather go to help their fathers in their fields, or otherwise try to make a living, than come to the school." In such a case the education should be taken to the poor. They must be educated wherever it is possible and whenever it is possible. The poor and the masses thus becoming educated would form the legislative body, the power that rules the country. The process of educating the poor and lower classes to become the rulers of the country and to become aware of their own spirituality and strength may be slow. According to Swami Vivekananda, the slow rate of change need not be a problem as this kind of a change is an evolution and this evolution paves the way for a 'constructive method' of changing the situation in the country.

Swami Vivekananda is also very clear about two other vital factors relating to serving the poor. First is the
motive underlying service. No service can be done for selfish reasons like name, fame or even one's own salvation. The work has to be done silently in a spirit of worshiping God. According to him every man, woman and child is a God. By doing service, one worships the 'Shiva' in the 'Jīva', the God in man. So, the basic approach is to work in all humility, in fact in a thankful spirit that the poor offer an opportunity for the rich to serve God and worship God. To love the poor, to serve them is the duty of the educated, and the affluent because the educated and the affluent have become what they are only at the cost of the poor.

Secondly, the poor should not be thrust with ideas from others. "Every nation, every man and every woman must work out their own salvation. Give them ideas, that is the only help they require, and then the rest must follow as the effect." Thus he placed emphasis on self-help, which basically arises out of the faith in the capacity of the people to remedy their lives.

In summary, Swami Vivekananda believed in re-building the nation on the foundation of spirituality drawing inspiration from the past and providing the opportunity to the poor to become humanised. Humanising the poor, being the task of the educated and affluent. The task itself is to be done in the most humble fashion, with no selfish motives.
From the social work point of view, it is interesting to note that he was a pioneer who propogated a training for social work and social service in the modern times. His emphasis on poverty as the fundamental problem is very significant. While most others at that time were concerned with problems of special groups like women, the Harijans etc, he was primarily concerned with the mass poverty that was existing even then. His analysis of the causes of the problems and the approach to solution of these problems is of tremendous relevance to social work. He propagated total transformation of the society, but the transformation itself would begin with the poor. The changes that are envisaged would begin from within the poor group, and not be imposed by outsiders. The outsiders' role would be confined to enabling the poor to solve their own problems. Thus he emphasised human dignity, self-determination, self-help and he believed in the capacity of the poor to be able to manage their own life situations and better themselves. He thus, worked for a macro level change beginning at the micro level.

His concern with the motive for social service is similar to the social work profession's emphasis. The social work profession also demands that social work be done in total objectivity with no expectation of reward from the clients.
Gandhian approach

Yet another approach that needs to be analysed is the Gandhian approach. Gandhi's method of work, his actual contribution to the social, economic and political situation are common knowledge. Where social workers are concerned Ammu Menon Mazumdar has worked out in complete detail Gandhi's contribution to social welfare.54 Frances Yasas has researched on Gandhian values and professional social work values.55 The primary relevance of Gandhian approach lies in the fact that his approach is extremely indigenous. Gandhian constructive work, as it is termed, believes in the dignity of individuals, equality of all and democratic means of functioning. Truth and non-violence are the foundations on which the constructive work stands. The aim of constructive work is to bring total change in the society by generating will and strength in the people themselves.56 The power that people possess is the moral power which will even regulate the political and economic power in the society.

Comparing Gandhi and Vivekananda reveals many common factors in their approach to social work and these common factors seem to arise out of the Indian tradition. Both of them believed in oneness of life, and disbelieved in segregating social problems, as is evidenced from their
desire for an overall change in society. Both respected the
common man and believed in the common man’s ability to
change things. Both their approach emphasised education as
the means of helping the poor. Vivekananda advocated
service as a form of worship and Gandhi believed that
serving others helps those who offer service. Vivekananda a
renunciate himself, demands renunciation from the workers,
Gandhi preached and practised simple living. Self-help was
their common theme. Both were intensely patriotic
unhesitatingly used Indian terminologies like Shraddha,
Dharidhra-Narayana, Satya, Ahimsa, Harijan and so on.
Neither of them wished to usher in change by disturbing and
destroying the basic Indian traditions, but they both were
ruthless opponents to degraded customs that pass of in the
garb of religion and spirituality. Vivekananda declared
that 'a religion that cannot wipe the tears of a widow has
no reason to exist' Gandhi declared that there is no
religion greater than truth. Both were basically humanists
with an universal outlook.

The common factors amongst the Indian philosophical
tradition, Gandhi’s and Vivekanda’s approach is schematically
presented below.
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<th>Gandhi</th>
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<td>Dignity of the individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Man as a spiritual</td>
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<td>being</td>
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<td>Control of self</td>
<td>Satya &amp; Ahimsa, Bramacarya</td>
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<td>Self-help</td>
<td>Self-help</td>
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<td>by self only</td>
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<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>Restoring the lost dignity by education</td>
<td>Educating the individuals</td>
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<td>Lokasangrāha</td>
<td>Sarvabhutahita</td>
<td>Sarvodaya</td>
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<td>Dharma</td>
<td>Regeneration of India</td>
<td>India's freedom and reconstruction</td>
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<td>Amritasya putrāha</td>
<td>Dhariḍhra Narayana</td>
<td>Harijan</td>
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<td>Prefering śreyas to</td>
<td>Spirituality and service in preference</td>
<td>Moral basis of all actions in preference</td>
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<td>preyaś</td>
<td>to personal gains</td>
<td>personal, pleasure basis</td>
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Professional social work, which is seeking public recognition, would benefit immensely if it would pay attention to the Gandhi-Vivekananda approach to social work. Discerning and assimilating some of the methods that they adopted would enrich social work profession by providing a strong Indian basis and identity to the profession.
Relevance to Social Work.

The analysis so far leads to a few basic conclusions. Firstly it is clear that Indian society and philosophy have a definite service and welfare tradition. Secondly this tradition has been a part of the individual life, social organisation, culture and religion. Thirdly the tradition of service has considerable idealistic orientation.

In fact it is the long tradition of service that has been a block in acceptance of social work profession in the Indian society. The idea of a profession with the purpose of alleviating problems is alien to the Indian mind. The Indian tradition basically arising out of its philosophy, views life as a unified whole, in which personal and social problems form a part. Similarly helping a needy person and lending a helping hand at times of crisis are also part of one's life. The social organisation was such that individuals or groups with problems were accommodated and assisted and were not ignored.

In this tradition, the professional social worker becomes an enigma. The need and value of the formal training that the social worker goes through is neither understood nor appreciated. To the layman, helping is a natural spontaneous act and not an outcome of an intellectually deliberated behaviour. Treating social work
as a profession involves payment of a salary to the worker. But expecting remunerative rewards cannot be accepted as a motivation for any kind of social work in the Indian tradition. Ethical humanism, religious pursuits and spirituality have been the basis of the tradition of service. Feeling for others is an important factor. Whereas the professional social worker is directed by scientific humanism, secularism and rationality. The social worker is expected to be objective and unemotional, as being subjective and emotional are two major hindrances to professional behaviour. Such contradictions between the traditional approach and the professional approach creates a chasm between the two and makes the latter less acceptable.

The strength of the traditional approach lies in the fact that, it offers complete freedom, for a person to do service in any fitting manner, as and when the need arises. The social work as a profession, lays down certain restrictions on the practitioner. Perhaps dedication to work is greater in the former rather than in the latter. However, the profession of social work has certain positive factors. It offers a scientific and empirical approach to understanding of human problem and their solution. It concretises and thus provides definite directions to the process of helping. The skills and techniques that the
profession possesses are of immense assistance in the helping process. Thus, it can be safely concluded that both the traditional and professional approaches have their own roles to play. It is not necessary to compromise one for the other. On the one hand, so long as people feel for one another, people will continue to help one another however unscientific the process of helping may be. On the other, the usefulness of a structured, formalised, scientific method of helping is being established by the professional social work. Thus, both these approaches can contribute to each other. As far as the professional social work is concerned, it will benefit immensely, by making use of the indigenous terminologies. It can also benefit by recognising and respecting the value of the tradition of service in India. In the ultimate analysis, the profession will stand to gain because the orientation to service is so deep rooted in the Indian psyche.
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27. ibid., p.15.
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50 ibid., Vol.V, 332.
51 ibid., Vol.IV, p.362.
52 ibid., p.362.
53 ibid., Vol.IV, p.363.