Chapter VI

Conclusions
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One of the major tasks confronting the countries of the third world is the problem of bringing about improvement in the lives of the weaker sections of the society.

While the affluent countries are not completely free from the problem of the underprivileged strata, these problems tend to attain alarming proportions in the case of developing countries.

In most of these countries, a large percentage of the population struggles in dire poverty, below subsistence level, and the task of obtaining one square meal a day to keep the body and soul together is of overwhelming importance for such populations.

A critical appraisal of social stratification highlights the causes that contribute to the perpetuation of weaker sections in society.

Some of the major causes as seen in the third world countries, are low production and productivity along with gross inequality in the distribution of goods and wealth. Most of these countries lag behind in terms of scientific
development and technological growth. Very often, their production processes are built around low level technologies which are not conducive to the optimum utilisation of the available resources.

Experience would seem to indicate that in such malfunctioning systems a dose of inputs very often results in widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots. There is widespread class exploitation leaving weaker sections as badly off as ever.

Scheduled castes as a poverty group and their development is the focus of this study. Anti-poverty programmes attempted in the rural context in India aim at making provisions for the basic means of survival for these disadvantaged groups. The scheduled castes also referred to as the 'untouchable substratum' of the Hindu society are no longer that class of people who were once classified as 'untouchables'. Social mobility programmes and constitutional safeguards have been initiated to deal with the practice of untouchability in a strict way.

The Scheduled Castes form an integral part of the Hindu and Sikh society and are distributed all over the country. In contrast, the Scheduled Tribes of India (also
a vulnerable group in the context of welfare) are more or less gathered together in some of the remote areas of the country and are out of the bounds of the Caste System prevalent in the Hindu and Sikh societies.

The problems of the Scheduled Castes, as they form a part of the caste system, can be understood or even solved only in relation to the other castes.

A cross-national perspective on minorities undertaken in the introductory chapter suggests that the untouchables of India are not the only disadvantaged, deprived, oppressed, backward and exploited group in the world today.

The main programmes for social development of those groups in the Indian context have been:

1. removal of untouchability, 2. economic development,
3. educational development, 4. programmes to promote social and occupational mobility to integrate these groups with the rest of the community, and 5. occupational facilities, general and special.

"Untouchability", a custom by means of which the upper castes kept those scheduled castes away at a distance allowing them a place which is subordinate within the system, was attacked by the reformers and social thinkers.
Consequently, it remains abolished by law, but is still in vogue in its overt and covert forms.

The scheduled groups are found predominantly in rural India and the major thrust of the development programme is to bring about awareness of development as well as preparation for and participation in 'change'.

Many of the programmes for development during the last 50 years and over have been taken up to promote socio-economic mobility of these groups.

Questions have been raised: How have these groups responded to the situations of deprivation? What significant measures have been taken up under the auspices of welfare planning? What ultimately has been the response to such welfare measures?

To those questions, the study added: How strong has been the commitment of the larger society of the Hindu caste majority to uplift the minority group of scheduled castes? How sincere has been the commitment of the state to the weaker sections? What has been and what could be the role of welfare personnel in this important development task? This study addressed these questions and attempted to delineate the scope of these areas.
The present study of the socially disadvantaged class of scheduled castes has, in all 194 respondents — heads of the households in five villages in Medak district of Andhra Pradesh.

All the respondents were the heads of households. As explained earlier these respondents were divided into three units for the purpose of analysis. Unit one consists of three villages allowing the researcher to make permissible generalisations about the rural scheduled caste problem. Unit two consists of one village belonging to the same district (Medak) very near to the city of Hyderabad. This was included into the study for perceiving urban influences and those of exposure to better facilities network. Unit three consists of all the respondents of yet another village, which is being exposed to a non-governmental agency’s continued intervention in the social development of these groups. The agency’s main thrust is on Adult Education, Rural Housing Scheme and proposals for Co-operative Endeavour.

The study makes a comparative analysis for the following variations:
Poverty and prejudice are still the two most important components of social disadvantage in India. The former being economic and the latter socio-psychological. Social disadvantages for the scheduled castes include:

A. Low income
B. Low caste status
C. Low potential education
D. Rural residence for the majority
E. Unfavourable attitudes and discriminatory behaviour to these groups on the basis of income, ethnicity and caste.

The socially disadvantaged groups, the world over, are found to be representing either of the two attitudinal dispositions: (1) Social disadvantage adversely influencing
positive personality-cum-attitudinal disposition with traces of intelligence, aspiration and modernity, as in the case of Islaas in the study. Conversely, social disadvantage inculcating negative personality traits, such as anxiety, alienation and prejudice, as in the case of Hadgas to a great extent.

The victims of social disadvantage, therefore, develop apathy, fatalism and even indifference.

Literacy plays an important role in discussions on development. The ability to read and write obviously provides a means of linking the individual with the larger society and permits the individuals to participate more effectively in the modernisation process.

As our concern here in this study is with direct economic consequences of investments in the development process, it must be noted that literacy is one such investment. Scarce resources and very specific planning targets of our development programme do not permit the possibility of literacy as a means of linking the disadvantaged to the larger society.

Bose (1961) found that literate farmers who participated in community activities were more likely to accept
modern agricultural practices. He concluded that literacy has a positive impact on the adoption of modern agricultural practices only among those farmers who did not participate in community activities. Conversely, 'participation' had a positive impact on 'adoption' only among the non-literate farmers. Inferences can be drawn from the present study that social participation and literacy have been the alternative means to the desired end—"awareness" of one's own problems and resources to meet them.

Either literacy or participation in community affairs has provided the necessary link between the individual scheduled caste farmer and the larger society that permitted him to utilize the technology available in the larger society.

Sub-caste differences even among the scheduled castes clearly influence the levels of living, as found in the study. Kolas have shown relatively better incomes.

Participation in co-operatives and political party membership did not have any direct effect on increase in the levels of living.

Urban contact also has no direct effect on the development of the disadvantaged communities. This inference
is in direct contrast to Saieodo's (1971) conclusion based on Nigerian data, that urban contact acts as a "trigger" mechanism in modernisation processes. Saieodo, also did not include in his design the most relevant kind of linkage, i.e., contact with the development agency.

We infer that urban contact may well affect a broadening of experience for the disadvantaged scheduled caste farmer, but it may serve only limited ends, such as recreation with little direct modernising influence on that farmer.

Mass media contact and specially contact with development programmes, are the two types of individual societal linkage which seem to be influential in the overall development of the client groups. However, with only 24 literate persons in a five-village study, mass media exposure is limited.

The study points out that caste, level of living and levels of education have an indirect effect on developmental outlook of the client groups, and together with mass media contact they can do better. Higher educational achievement and higher income enhance their links with larger society.

The non-literate may not use mass media especially
the print media, but his contact with the departments of rural development can increase his awareness of available resources. Thus literacy cannot be singled out for awareness of resources alone.

We recognise that the biggest single direct influence on developmental or aspirational outlook of the client households is disposable income mostly used for consumption of the households.

This income has no capacity of directly facilitating the purchase of modernisation/diversification of the basic occupation—agriculture. Even those who are categorised in higher income brackets, did not reflect any such orientation towards modernisation.

Credit facilities extended by institutions for such 'modernisation' to the client groups have been minimal. When a two-acre plot needs inputs to the tune of Rs.5000/-, the institutions actually extend aid to the tune of Rs.1000/- and often less than that. This happens due to the lack of comparable assets of the clients for hypothecation purposes. The clients already indebted to the institutions of finance due to their earlier 'needs' for which they had once hypothecated their assets have nothing to show for a second application. Institutions of finance
demand settlement of the earlier debts before they clear the new application. This leaves the client in a situation where he forfeits a major part of the new benefit to settle the earlier debts. The case of such under-finance scores out total possibility of any development/modernisation.

In the resolution of problems the disadvantaged groups throw up need-oriented actions, during the process of which their contact with formal sources is likely to increase. Those very formal sources which open the gates of awareness to them may even close the doors; the present client communities start realising the benefits.

Broadly the programmes of development offered by the government fall under the following categories.

1. Agriculture.
2. Habitat.
3. Education and education-based employment.
4. Economic development programmes.

Habitat appears to be the programme directly relevant to the client community next to which is agriculture. For these programmes most of the clients made a minimum of seven visits to the agencies and formal sources.

Government programmes for development of weaker sections
do not seem to have adopted a uniform pattern of services. In the rural sector except agriculture-based support programmes of loans and subsidies, the rest of the programmes are offered in phases. Housing for instance is the major development programme offered in one village wherein it was perceived by the client group members in differing need situations. Some perceived it as a need of immediate nature and some as an attributed need and some participated in the programme lest they should lose the benefit. It is not as though the disadvantaged wish to continue in the impoverished dwellings, but the economic condition of their households do not permit them to think of altering the housing situation. At the same time when the government comes forward with housing programmes they are attracted to it for the component of loan involved in it and also because at that time there is no other programme which the government is offering to them.

One thing that emerges from the study is that none of the respondent households in all the units of the study has suggested "self-sufficient" positions. This could be viewed from various angles. Poverty of the rural household is such that it does not allow them to come up to self-reliant positions.

If 'self-sufficiency' is operationally understood
as self-reliance, or one's strength to rise to the occasion, be in a position to provide for the basic needs and beyond, then it is very natural that the disadvantaged backward communities like the scheduled castes in the rural context are not very likely to reach this stage, given the constraints of their position in society, their income, their educational achievement and occupational mobility.

A number of investigations carried out earlier have shown that Panchayati Raj institutions have neglected the disadvantaged groups. The local committee in the village uses a trifling portion of its resources, if anything at all, for the development programmes meant for scheduled castes. The Indian ombudsman for scheduled castes has shown that they obtain very little representation even in the areas where they form a sizeable portion of the population.

All the socio-economic disabilities and educational backwardness have continued despite statutory membership in the village panchayat. In all the units more than one representative of the scheduled castes has been associated with the local committee or the party.

Without strengthening the economic base and redeeming the scheduled castes from the economic dependence, political representation implies no substantial change. In fact in
many panchayats they are accommodated as showpieces and this appears to satisfy the government. We rule out the possibility of such panchayats playing the role of change agencies in tradition-bound Indian village communities. This positively confirms the belief of weaker sections in government agencies/reforms and personnel.

The perception of the respondents that government functionaries alone can play a vital role in developing the weaker sections, arises from their understanding based on the process of interaction with the government functionaries.

At the application stage or at the stage at which they receive the benefit, or at stages in between their interaction with the government functionaries is formal, involving a lot of procedures. This interaction makes them feel that every stage is an important activity and finally culminates in the delivery of the service.

The client community knows that many of the government functionaries are from the upper castes and also are elites. But they also know that a government functionary cannot openly show his caste tendencies, especially when he is at the stage of implementing developmental programmes for the weaker sections.
It is very surprising that people's representatives, the very sources of awareness in the first instance, are not actually associated with the actual help required by the client communities.

In this study the need structure of the disadvantaged and sources of awareness of the developmental programmes have been identified. Needs have been classified as follows:

(1) Needs corresponding with the development programmes which is being offered by the government in the area.

(2) Needs, not necessarily immediate nor priorities of the client groups, but the ones for which the government is offering development programmes.

(3) Needs of immediate nature, felt by the disadvantaged groups for which few development programmes are offered by the government.

Several researchers have indicated that the family is a more effective teacher than the school. A comprehensive review of the correlates of academic achievement brings into focus that the parental attitudes to education involving interest in school, encouragement to children and occupational careers... consistently emerge as being of outstanding importance.
The respondents' educational and occupational aspirations pertaining to their children are as follows:

Educational aspirations:
1. Liberal education up to 10th class or matriculation.
2. Intermediate or technical qualifications.
3. Graduation and above.

The occupational aspirations of the respondents are as follows:
1. Government jobs including clerical administration cadres.
2. Private jobs including self-employment and private industries.
3. Professional jobs including the field of Law, Medicine, Teaching, Technology and Engineering.

Deprivation and impoverished situation conditions the aspirations of the respondents with regard to the educational and occupational goals of their children. The certainty with which their aspirations are likely to be supported was viewed from the following angles:
1. Respondents' economic status.
2. Respondents' willingness to contribute to the creation of a conducive environment for education.
3. Availability of educational resources for the disadvantaged families.

Briefly recapitulating, we present the other inferences not touched upon in the foregoing paragraphs but significant enough to deserve a mention here: The levels of awareness, response, and participation in the development programmes differed from one unit to the other. The village-hamlets clubbed under unit one had very significant differences among themselves and as such afforded a holistic picture of Medak district worker-section-development-programmes and its implementation under the aegis of the state government. The village-hamlet under the supervision of non-governmental organisations had a significant contribution in terms of levels of awareness, response, adaptation and participation of the client group. The village-hamlet nearer to the city of Hyderabad did not show such of the attributed influence due to the metropolitan developments and social facilities which are also within the reach of the client group. The study made an attempt at developing the role of social work in the social change and drew elaborate implications for intervention of professional social work at various levels.

We will now shift the focus of our discussion to the
level of generality and view the social realities which confront the social work profession. Poverty and population are interrelated issues which confront us and affect the social functioning of the major segments of our population. These two basic issues give rise to illiteracy, malnutrition, poor habitat (sanitation, potable water, housing, communication and accessibility to services), low productivity, unemployment, underemployment and the disabilities resulting from social and economic inequity and exploitation of the vulnerable and weaker sections of our society. As an answer to these realities we have to achieve growth with social justice. There is a greater polarisation of incomes between the small advantaged and the large majority of the disadvantaged. A large proportion of the latter population is rural and poor. The structural rigidities that characterise the socio-political institutions, and resource systems are controlled by the power groups with vested interests. These power groups are found to be active everywhere in the system, from the grass-roots, i.e., village community upwards. This prevents a large number of our population from taking advantage of social development. Change is, therefore, required at the institutional, community and personal levels in terms of redistribution of the resources as well as in attitudes,
values and behaviour related to self and to the society in which the individual has both rights and social responsibilities.

These, then, are the social realities to which social work must respond and redesign their educational and training goals.

The goals of development are to enhance the well-being of people, ensure social justice and opportunities for people to develop their capacities to become participating and contributing citizens. This in short is social functioning.

Social functioning is crucial to social welfare. This can only be achieved through involvement of the people in 'need' in their 'need-oriented actions'. A 'top-down' model similar to the medicare situation in the developing world is not the answer. The 'top-down' approach suggests planning and possible services being planned and implemented by external agents with little contact with social realities. This approach rules out any possible involvement of the people, as illustrated in one of the study-villages wherein a voluntary agency planned a development programme for women which failed.
What constitutes alternative means of livelihood?
What constitutes alternative means of development? These questions, we firmly believe, the clients should answer themselves. And, in case they fail themselves due to their low social functioning, social work must restrict to the task of enabling the clients to define their goals/ objectives.

Social work has been termed as an 'enabling profession'. We seem to be tangentially moving away from this basic precept, and gladly indulge in the process of weathering the client system.

Designing a service anticipating a need which may develop in future is a sign of forethought. But, surely carrying the same to the client who has not asked for it as yet is carrying our commitment to extremities of paternalism.

The ultimate object of social development and social work is to liberate the deprived from the state of dependency and extend the power base as widely as possible. This forces social development and social work to aim for three basic goals of self-reliance, self-development and developing variable strategies for economic growth which integrate the traditional and modern sectors and stimulate awareness of social and political conditions.