

# FUTURE SOCIAL WORK: Opportunities and Challenges

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## ABSTRACT

International social workers help individuals, families, groups, neighbourhoods, and communities around the world overcome the challenges they face, such as poverty, substance abuse, or even after a natural disaster. Social work is a challenging career in many ways – emotionally, mentally and often physically. However, the education required to attain this career is easy in some ways but difficult in other ways. Generally, the less advanced the degree you are pursuing is, the easier it will be to meet graduation requirements. To further complicate things the world has just gotten more complex. The regional economies, societies, and cultures have become integrated through a globe-spanning network of communication and trade. Globalisation is mostly used to refer specifically to economic globalization: the integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign direct investment, capital flows, migration, and the spread of technology. However, globalisation is usually recognised as being driven by a combination of economic, technological, sociocultural, political, and biological factors; it can also refer to the transnational circulation of ideas, languages, or popular culture through acculturation.

**Keywords:** Emotionally, Mentally, Physically, Globalisation, Technological, Sociological, Political, Future...

## Introduction

Social work in today's world has established itself as a significant fully fledged profession at par with any other profession. The scope of social work is very wide. There is a dire need for people who can provide help to the disadvantaged members of the society. Nowadays, it has emerged as one of the most in-demand professions in India. There are also various top NGOs in India. The future of social work builds on its historic and current strengths, incrementally integrating technology into its practice at all levels. Social workers continue to be concentrated in behavioural health and child welfare, while stepping into other roles as systems evolve to enhance well-being for all. Industrial and commercial units too are looking to hire social workers. Vinoba Bhave was an Indian social reformer who advocated non-violence and human rights, Baba Amte. The next on our list is Baba Amte and he was known to help many poor people. Jyotiba Phule, Medha Patkar, Anna Hazare. "Social Work is a vast discipline with lots of job opportunities." The working area of social workers is very vast; they work with population from newly born to elderly people. They serve their services to individual, families and communities.

You can employ where the need of child and family social worker is needed. International social workers help individuals, families, groups, neighbourhoods, and communities around the world overcome the challenges they face, such as poverty, substance abuse, or even after a natural disaster. Social work is a challenging career in many ways – emotionally, mentally and often physically. However, the education required to attain this career is easy in some ways but difficult in other ways. Generally, the less advanced the degree you are pursuing is, the easier it will be to meet graduation requirements "Change is the only truth!" is an old adage that has transcended and withstood the challenge of time. Changes world around are happening

progressively at a faster pace with each passing year. So unfathomable is the impact of human development on the world we live in. This presents the world innumerable and diverse problems. To further complicate things the world has just gotten more complex. The regional economies, societies, and cultures have become integrated through a globe-spanning network of communication and trade. Globalisation is mostly used to refer specifically to economic globalization: the integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign direct investment, capital flows, migration, and the spread of technology. However, globalisation is usually recognised as being driven by a combination of economic, technological, sociocultural, political, and biological factors; it can also refer to the transnational circulation of ideas, languages, or popular culture through acculturation any discussion on the political dimension, warrants a discussion on the geopolitical as it need to consider influences – national and international. International conventions assume relevance considering the fact that almost all nations subscribe to some particular convention. International conventions such as the International conventions on climate change (IPCC) warrant signatory countries to bring in mandate to develop instruments to prevent pollution, preserve forest cover, preserve and protect biodiversity as well as preserve water sources all of which are inalienable to human existence and continuation.

These conventions argue for the rights of women and have been instrumental in the fight against female genital mutilation (FGM), violence against women, as well as in arguing for better service and working conditions. In India we found very strong clamour by women's groups to negotiate for the Amendment 376. Other conventions related to children have made nations more child-friendly. Clearly, the pollution standards have been major consideration in setting up industries. In the state of Kerala, this has been pro-acted upon, with the major source of employment being in the service. Social work in former context will have to be on retraining and rehabilitation those thrown out of employment. Whereas, in the service industry context social work would have issues of managing a qualified work force and retaining talent as in HR. There have been instances where industries have polluted or 'overexploited' natural resources, in the context of industrialization. Here Corporate Social Responsibility becomes the focus, wherein the company is made to share a part of its profits on with the local community by way of social projects, income generation programs (IGP), developmental activities or even local employment. In child-friendly societies it is the prerogative of social work to ensure compulsory free education and engage in areas such as life skills education. In communities lacking with the same social work engagement would be in advocacy and providing support – financial or volunteers – to create an ambience for child-friendliness. In societies which lack in such enactments it become the prerogative to campaign and influence policy with governments toward education, nutrition and child rights and freedom from exploitation and abuse. The ethos of transparency have such large public appeal. The developed nations have been lobbying transparency in all spheres including public administration and business. There have been a number of instances internationally. Such movement had been championed by various organisations, globally especially Transparency International that publishes annually an annual ranking of nations in the order indicate the level of corruption. Here lobbying and networking with civic organisations especially using social media to garner support becomes the area of operation as well as challenge to social work. Social networks and similar platform may be effectively used to challenge and moderate election manifestos and creating agendas for public debate. From its part, social work needs to self-introspect on its own area of operations, especially the NGOs to examine the element of transparency and accountability in the services being provided since these are largely based on public money. Following the transformation of GATT was modified as WTO, Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) was initiated by way of the patent and process patents. Patenting initiated as a protection for legitimate rights of businesses to reclaim their investment in R&D. However, this was found to have a dire impact on the price and availability of goods, especially essential medicines. This could be countered by way of promoting safe supplying and by even promoting local indigenous medicine. The 1-2-3 Treaty India signed has been of bilateral

implications; India had to comply to the nuclear safety standards against being embargoed. In returned we have allowed US to proliferate nuclear technology for peaceful means, as in the case of nuclear power plants.

### **Migration**

International and nation – is yet another area of possible intervention. In the event of international migration social work has intervened by of educating potential migrants on the perils of illegal migration and get them to do undergo procedures for formal migration by linking them up with the government bodies; e.g. Ministry of External Affairs, NORKA-Roots in Kerala. Similarly, repatriation is another area of possible intervention given the increasing clamour at the international level for “sons of soil.” With the tightening of immigration procedures especially in the Gulf and strict norms along line of the ‘nikahat’ in Kuwait, Bahrain and Sultanate of Oman, many Indians have been force to flee the Gulf, often resulting in a exodus fearing stringent action by the Police in those countries. Local communities and governments have been ill prepared to receive and rehabilitate these repatriates. Possibility of engagement may be in retraining, start-ups in areas of their own aptitude, establishing IGPs. etc. Domestic migrants are a growing concern; there are challenges related to sub-human living conditions, communicable diseases, human right violations, spiralling crime-rates, inequitable payment, poor and unsafe working conditions resulting in occupational hazards and death, exploitation relating to transfer of money and travel expenses, inaccessibility to social security measures including health and public distribution system, etc. Hence, rehabilitation, starting community kitchens, negotiating health coverage and service, advocating with the law and police, initiating jagrathasamithis to assure safety and combat crime, training in allied trade, founding of cooperatives, group insurance packages, etc. may be areas of intervention.

### **Economics**

Increasing national debt has been a phenomenon of far reaching consequences. Nations once considered developed; especially Europe has been experiencing financial doldrums and are becoming increasingly cash strapped. In India and is some other countries such as India, economic austerity has been a logical occurrence. The above financial austerity has found governments looking for alternate funding. International instruments mandated the exploring new avenues of engagement such as Public-Private Partnership (PPP) -demanding transparency and accountability and abiding by the business model. Added to these changes is the emergence of a burgeoning middle-class. Most of the developing nations will ride on the youth bulge in its population during the first three decades of the new millennium. This presents specific problems to nations and of relevance to social work. There will be increasing number of youngsters taking to higher education, but in adequate job opportunities manifesting in a high degree of unemployment. Family counselling, health education, lifestyle and environmental modification, work-life balancing are areas of possible intervention. In order to prevent redundancy, it demands ongoing training and retraining in emergent technologies.

### **Globalisation**

The non-state actors such as the WTO, World Bank or the Asian Development Bank have been players in determining the fate of nations. Following this India contracted with the World Bank for a dole out through an economic instrument which it termed the Structural Adjustment Program (SAPs). One of the conditions was the adherence to the patent regime, suspension of all social subsidies – especially in health, welfare, agriculture and education – as well as subjecting itself to a restrictive export quota system. Fortunately, economics at that juncture worked well in India, as a result of which India was able to leverage itself out and get into a position to renegotiate on lot of areas including patents pertaining to generic medicines. Subsequently, post-2000s, we find

narrowing gap between Developed and Developing countries. All these things have consequences in terms of impacting on the social security of the vulnerable. Without subsidies the protection available by way of the safety net does not happen, leaving the vulnerable all the more vulnerable. Devising plans at the local levels become important. The same applies to funding agencies; foreign funds subsequently dried up with many of the developing nations themselves in economic hardship and being reduced to the level of not being able to fund projects. Resource mobilization at the local level becomes the prerogative of Social work. Such funding becomes all the more important since it brings in ownership as well as accountability. However, this was found to have a dire impact on the price and availability of goods, especially essential medicines. This could be countered by way of promoting safe supplying and by even promoting local indigenous medicine. The 1-2-3 Treaty India signed has been of bilateral implications; India had to comply to the nuclear safety standards against being embargoed. In return we have allowed US to proliferate nuclear technology for peaceful means, as in the case of nuclear power plants. Local communities and governments have been ill prepared to receive and rehabilitate these repatriates. Possibility of engagement may be in retraining, start-ups in areas of their own aptitude, establishing IGPs. etc. Domestic migrants are a growing concern; there are challenges related to sub-human living conditions, communicable diseases, human right violations, spiralling crime-rates, and inequitable payment, poor and unsafe working conditions resulting in occupational hazards and death, exploitation relating to transfer of money and travel expenses, inaccessibility to social security measures including health and public distribution system, etc. Hence, rehabilitation, starting community kitchens, negotiating health coverage and service, advocating with the law and police.

### **Trends**

Given the above challenges emerging globally, it is worthwhile looking at the prospects and summarizing the same. Here are some trends and the prospects for social work. There is a struggle for talent. Industry and the service sector having grown by leaps and bounds especially over the 2000s, experience a talent deficit. In this scenario the induction of the new recruits as well as training and retraining existing staff becomes an imperative. So is also retaining. Some of the strategies employed by Indian companies are ‘partnering with Campus’ and ‘catch ‘em young’ where an attempt is made to locate them in institutions and nurture them in areas compatible to personal goals of the individuals and the companies’ core competencies. Other soft strategies include employee engagement, job enrichment, and ESOP. Other areas of smoothing corner include counselling, negotiating, mentoring, training, educating and motivating them to deliver as per the performance standards. Apart from strategizing, social work may impart life skilled cationic well as soft-skill training based on result oriented objectives. This may not still be effective in evading attempts at employee poaching (head hunting) given the possibilities of the internet and social media.

### **Tapping on Social Recruiting**

Social media have grown beyond mere platforms of communication, to become a way of life. Given the pace at which communication goes viral, it becomes a challenge to control information that damages company reputation. The HR has to ensure the company image of being ‘employee-friendly’, ‘family-friendly’, ‘model employer’ etc. conveyed, tallies with the reality of working at the company. Thus, image management becomes an opportunity. Managing Diversity this being the age of acquisition and mergers; it becomes emergent that companies have to deal with two different corporate cultures and identities. This can create the possibility of interacting Trans culturally. The bottom-line, companies are going to have diverse workforces especially in the face of having to cater for “niche skills” which are extremely rare. One of the challenges of HR from social work point of view is to make the workforce acclimatize with the cross cultural environment which is a

mandatory for business success. It is also imperative that HR balances flexibility with work and quality of work.

Separation of the undesirable workforce in the interest of the company is also a very crucial yet sensitive issue. This becomes all the more contentious with a multicultural workforce and with women into the work force. Managing obsolescence and preparing for separation is a challenge.

### **Conclusion**

The world we live in has undergone drastic and irreversible changes. It all perhaps may be traced back to the years of evolution of human civilization. Yet, the last three decades have witnessed sweeping changes of such velocity that pervades all spheres – political, economic and social. This discussion does sensitise the reader to the complexities arising out of the interconnectedness of these phenomena as well as its multidimensional impact. Challenges that arise also presents prospect to social work. But the question staring the profession in the face is whether it is prepared to take on these challenges. The possible avenues that could spearhead the growth of the profession have been pointed out as – training, research, entrepreneurship, projects, counselling and ecology. In this era, where more and more people run after the glittery world of corporate, we witness a contrasting world with a vision to work for the betterment of the society. Working for the society can be done through different ways, but the purpose always remains the same – impacting lives of people directly or indirectly. Social work has its impact on various areas of development of a country.

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