

Block

2

RELIGION AND SOCIAL WORK: INDIAN CONTEXT

UNIT 1

Hinduism and Social Work	5
---------------------------------	----------

UNIT 2

Islam and Social Work	20
------------------------------	-----------

UNIT 3

Sikhism and Social Work	31
--------------------------------	-----------

UNIT 4

Jainism and Social Work	43
--------------------------------	-----------

UNIT 5

Buddhism and Social Work	54
---------------------------------	-----------

UNIT 4

Christianity and Social Work	67
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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Religion is thought to be one of the important motivators for altruistic behaviour in any society. In professional social work, the innate altruistic tendencies of practitioners are heavily drawn from 'Religions'. The present block on 'Social Work and Religion' comprised of six units written in Indian context gives details in this direction.

Unit 1 is on 'Hinduism and Social Work'. Hinduism, one of the oldest religions, believed in by a large multitude in India, is considered not only a source of worship of God but also a code of morality and a way of life. The present unit examines the extent of humanistic and rational bases of professional social work, which is allegedly an alien concept for most Indian practitioners and share common ground with Hindu Philosophy.

Unit 2 on 'Islam and Social Work' focuses on the study of Islamic values and practices in relation to social work. From an Islamic perspective, the world is a collection of multifarious but inter-connected realities. There are no social groupings, caste grades or social classes in Islam. All people have been created alike and, irrespective of their lineage, they stand in one row. The unit, highlights the commonalities between social work and Islam, that existed over the years, and the involvement of Islam in social services in India.

Unit 3, Unit 4 and **Unit 5** focus on Sikhism, Jainism and Buddhism respectively. Unit 3 deals with Sikhism and its various concepts, values and principles that are inherent in social work discipline. The unit on Jainism deals with the concept of Ahimsa or non-violence to inculcate peace which is also one of the targets of social work today. Unit 5 discusses, Buddhism and social welfare. The works of social service being carried out by the Buddhists are considered to be the work done in different forms intended for the benefit of humankind. It explains the linkages of Buddhist ideologies to social work profession.

The **last unit** is on 'Christianity and Social Work'. It has elaborated history of Christianity in India; the belief, practices and teachings of Christianity; the contribution of Christianity to the fields of social work. All the six religions have similar approaches to helping people in various situations. All these religions have made valuable contribution to the growth and development of social work education and practice in India.

UNIT 1 HINDUISM AND SOCIAL WORK

*Manju Kumar**

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Sacred Texts of Hinduism
- 1.3 Social Concern in Hinduism
- 1.4 Hinduism and Professional Social Work
- 1.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.6 Further Readings and References

1.0 OBJECTIVES

Religion is claimed to be one of the important motivators for altruistic behaviour in any society. Professional Social Work draws heavily on the innate altruistic tendencies of practitioners, which they share with entire humankind. Hinduism, one of the oldest living religions, believed in by a large multitude in India, is considered not only a source of worship of God but also a code of morality and way of life. To what extent humanistic and rational bases of professional Social Work, which is allegedly an alien concept for most Indian practitioners, share common ground with Hindu Philosophy and world view, is indeed worth looking into.

The following discussion is aimed at helping you to:

- appreciate major Hindi beliefs and concepts, and cherished values;
- comprehend what behaviour and attitudes are considered desirable and virtuous by most Hindus;
- identify and affinity between the concepts and values of Hinduism and professional social work;
- enrich modern social work philosophy through ancient Hindu wisdom; and
- avail of this knowledge while working with Hindu client groups.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Hinduism, one of the oldest living religions, with a history stretching from around the second millennium B.C. to the present, is India's indigenous religious and cultural system. It encompasses a broad spectrum of philosophies ranging from pluralistic theism to absolute monism. Hinduism is not a homogeneous, organized system. It has no founder and no single code of beliefs; it has no central headquarters; it never had any religious organisation that wielded temporal power over its followers. Hinduism does not have a single scripture as the source of its various teachings. It is diverse; no single doctrine (or set of beliefs) can represent its numerous traditions. Nonetheless, the various schools share several basic concepts, which help us to understand how most Hindus see and respond to the world. Ekam Satya Viprah Bahuda Vadanti — "Truth is one; people call it by many names" (Rigveda I 164.46).

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From fetishism, through polytheism and pantheism to the highest and the noblest concept of Deity and Man in Hinduism the whole gamut of human thought and belief is to be found. Hindu religious life might take the form of devotion to God or gods, the duties of family life, or concentrated meditation. Given all this diversity, it is important to take care when generalizing about “Hinduism” or “Hindu beliefs.” For every class of worshiper and thinker Hinduism makes a provision; herein lies also its great power of assimilation and absorption of schools of philosophy and communities of people, (Theosophy, 1931). Many Hindus call their tradition *santana-dharma*, the eternal law that governs everyone irrespective of belief. It is believed that these truths regarding the universal law were divinely revealed to ancient sages. For many eons they were passed down orally and only later written down. Hinduism is a synthesis of religion and philosophy; as also a way of life.

1.2 SACRED TEXTS OF HINDUISM

Hindu religious literature is divided into two main categories: ‘Shruti’ and ‘Smriti’; Shruti – that which has been heard (revealed truth); and Smriti that which has been remembered (realized truth). Shruti consists of unquestionable truth and is considered eternal. It refers mainly to the Vedas themselves. Smriti is supplementary and may change over time. It is authoritative to the extent that it conforms to the bedrock of Shruti. If Shruti is ‘direct experience’, Smriti is ‘tradition’ – the experience remembered.

The Shruti

The Sruti is composed of the four Vedas – the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sarna Veda and Atharva Veda. The Vedas form the oldest sacred texts of Hinduism.

The Vedas

The term Veda comes from the root Vid, i.e., to know. The word Veda means knowledge. When it is applied to scripture, it signifies a book of knowledge. Each of the four Vedas may be divided into two sections: The Mantra portion, also called the Samhita, is a collection of hymns to be used in Vedic sacrifices; the Brahmanas portion contains specific rules and regulations for the sacrifices as well as prose commentaries explaining the meaning of the mantras and rituals.

Upanishads

The Upanishads contain highly philosophical and metaphysical writings about the nature of, and the relationship between, the soul (*atman*) and *Brahman*. The Upanishads are often referred to collectively as Vedanta (lithe end of the Vedas”), not only because they appear physically in the concluding pages of each Veda, but also because the mystical truths they express are seen by many as the culmination of all the other Vedic knowledge.

The Smriti: Post-Vedic Hindu scriptures

The books that appeared after the Vedas were called *Smriti*. Smrti literature includes *Itihasas* (epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata), Puranas (mythological texts), Agamas (theological treatises) and Darshanas (philosophical texts).

The Epics

The Mahabharata and Ramayana are the national epics of India. The Mahabharata, attributed to the sage Vyasa, was written down from 540 to 300 B.C. The Mahabharata tells the legends of the Bharatas, a Vedic Aryan group. The Ramayana, attributed to the poet Valmiki, was written down during the first century A.D., although it is based on oral traditions that go back six or seven centuries earlier. The Hindu philosophy reflected in the epics is the doctrine of avatar (incarnation of God as a human being). The two main avatars of Vishnu that appear in the epic are Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, and Krishna, the chief protagonist in the Mahabharata.

The Puranas

Puranas contain a narrative of the history of the Universe, from creation to destruction, genealogies of the kings, heroes and demigods, and descriptions of Hindu cosmology, philosophy and geography. There are many texts designated as 'Purana'. The most important are Mahapuranas. There are 17 or 18 canonical Puranas, divided into three categories, each named after a deity: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

Darshanas

Darshanas: Darshanas represent six schools of Hindu Philosophy. Blavatsky (Theosophy, 1931) calls these six schools 'Demonstrations'. They are like the six fundamental points; each of them presents but one view of truth; not one of them in itself is complete. Each of these six schools *demonstrates* completely the whole of the world-process from one particular angle of vision. The same universe, the same world-process, the same panorama is looked at from one side and then another.

The Dharmashastras

The Dharmashastras (law books) are considered by many to form part of the Smriti. From time to time great law-givers (e.g. Manu, Yajnavalkya and Parashara) emerged who codified existing laws to ensure that the Hindu way of life was consistent with both the Vedic spirit and the changing times. Manu Smriti (The Laws of Manu) is a body of rules for ritual and daily life compiled probably between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200.

The Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita (literally: Song of the God), usually considered part of the sixth book of the Mahabharata (dating from about 400 or 300 B.C.), is a central text of Hinduism, a philosophical dialogue between the Lord Krishna and the warrior Arjuna. This is one of the most popular and accessible of all Hindu scriptures. The Gita discusses selflessness, duty, devotion, and meditation, integrating many different threads of Hindu philosophy; it is a microcosm of Vedic, Yogic, Vedantic and even Tantric thought of the Hindu fold. It speaks not only to Vaishnavas but to all people, and it is accepted by the members of all Hindu streams as an influential text. Indeed, the "tag line" of each chapter of the Bhagavad Gita refers to the book as the "Gita Upanishad" and as a "scripture of yoga," thereby establishing that in this text, Lord Krishna speaks the truths of yoga and the Upanishads for all.

Important Hindu Virtues

Following are some of the important qualities listed in the scriptures:

- 1) *Ahimsa* (non-violence) – based on the concepts of *a/man* and reincarnation
- 2) *Sam yam* (control of mind and the senses) – considered essential for any form of morality
- 3) Tolerance – of different beliefs, opinions, religious traditions and persons.
- 4) Hospitality – demonstrating magnanimity, and the value of service
- 5) Compassion – based on notions of *atman*; an ability to feel for others as we feel for ourselves
- 6) Protection – giving shelter to others, especially those less fortunate
- 7) Respect – for all living beings; for sanctity of life
- 8) Wisdom – knowledge is contrasted with ignorance; ability to sift out right and wrong
- 9) Austerity – Practical wisdom and discipline in addition to theoretical knowledge
- 10) Celibacy – important for spiritual life; only one of the four *ashramas* – *grihasthya*-permitted sexual gratification
- 11) Honesty – to avoid self-deception; essential to build trust within relationships.
- 12) Cleanliness – includes external hygiene and inner purity
- 13) Charity – “Charity given out of duty, without expectation of return, at the proper time and place, and to a worthy person is considered to be in the quality of goodness.” (*Bhagwad Gita*, 17.20)

A Tenfold system of virtuous duties was prescribed by *Manu Smriti*: (1) “Contentment; (2) Abstention from injury to others, active benevolence, and returning good for evil; (3) Resistance to sensual appetites; (4) Abstinence from theft and illicit gain; (5) Purity, chastity, and cleanliness; (6) Coercion of passions; (7) Acquisition of knowledge; (8) Acquisition of Divine Wisdom; (9) Veracity, honesty and fidelity; and (10) Freedom from wrath and hatred;” – *Manu*, vi, 92.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Space is given below for your answer.

- 1) What are some of the most important virtues that a Hindu is expected to inculcate in life?

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1.3 SOCIAL CONCERN IN HINDUISM

While one need not believe in a personal God or follow an organised religion, and yet be good compassionate, humane and socially-sensitive a large number of people are still influenced and motivated by religion. Historically, religion has shown enough evidence of having rich potential for motivating and inspiring social concern.

Social Concern at Doctrine Level

The concepts of soul (*atman*) and God highlight the concept of equality among all living beings, humans as well as animals and plants. God dwells in all living beings and, therefore, every living being deserves respect. This makes all life sacred.

God is perceived as '*patit paavan*' and '*deenbandhu*' "Le., One who is a friend of the meek and the poor and One who redeems the fallen. Serving only one's own self amounts to hypocrisy and selfishness, but serving others especially the needy is serving God, as he is '*antaryaami*' who dwells within all of us. Since human beings are gifted with a sense of discrimination (unlike other living beings), He seems to prefer to act through humans.

The law of *Karma* is essentially a moral law, intended to motivate social responsibility. The law does not mean destiny or fate. It simply means that, whatever I do have consequences not only for others, but also for me. If I see a person in pain and do nothing to alleviate his or her pain believing it to be his / her karma, I incur the bad karma of losing an opportunity of helping and failing in my moral duty or '*dharma*'. I should help as my duty and leave the result to the person's *karma*. Hindu scriptures are clear that our good deeds do count for the Law of Karma as '*purrya*' and a good deed means acceptance of social responsibility (Nadkarni, 2007).

Social commitment comes under *dharma*, an entirely ethical concept constituting the core of Hinduism. Practice of *dharma* does not mean observance of rituals, but living a life of truth, nonviolence, compassion and equal regard for others and their welfare, reflected in selfless service to society. A key verse relevant here is from Bhagavad-Gita (the Gita): "He who judges pleasure and pain in others by same standard as he applies to himself, that '*yogi*' is the highest" (chapter 6, verse 32). This verse constitutes a forceful call for equality and social justice. The highest *dharma* is considered to be non-violence ('*ahimsaa paramo dharmah*') in a wider sense. It is not, just non-killing, not even mere tolerance, but more. It is compassion, forgiveness, selfless help, peace and harmony.

The ultimate test of what is moral is what promotes the welfare of all. "What is ultimately good for the welfare of all beings is what I consider as Truth" (Shanti Parva 329-13). The earnest prayer everyday is *sarveshcha sukhinah santu, sarve santu niraamayaah, sarve bhadrani pashyantu, maa kaschit dukhamaapnuyaat* ("let all be happy, let all be free from illness, let all find security, may no one face sorrow"). The stress is on '*sarve*' i.e., all.

Freedom is valued in a broad sense and is prayed for not merely for one's own self, but for the whole group or community, as reflected in *Rigveda* (VIII 68.12). The prayer is not for '*moksha*' or liberation from the cycle of births and deaths.

It is for freedom in this very world, including freedom from deprivation. *Mahabharata* subordinates what is traditionally regarded as the ultimate goal, viz, *moksha*, to dharma of compassion – “I desire no kingdom, no heaven, not even *moksha* for myself; I desire only that beings afflicted by sorrow be relieved of it” (Nadkarni, 2007).

The concept of *maaya* (illusion) highlights the value of clear perception of reality. Instead of promoting ‘otherworldliness’ as it is claimed by some philosophers, it emphasizes need for analysis and reflection on dynamic relationship of *purusha* and *prakriti* – the spirit and matter; the nature and purpose of the world; the cyclic nature of creation; and the real identity of the soul (*atman*). This concept encourages human beings not to get trapped in narrow social identities, prejudices and misconceptions about self and others but to perceive all beings as capable of realizing their Real and Divine nature.

Compassion and help to others in need is a highly cherished value in Hinduism right from the Vedic phase. ‘*Daan*’ (charity) was recognised as the most potent way of *earning punya* (merit qualifying entry to heaven). The call to help others and not be selfish comes out clearly in *Rigveda* (X 117.6). *Padmapuranam* declares, “those who always feed the crippled, the blind, children, the old, the ill, those helpless and pinched by penury, will enjoy bliss in heaven; there is no end to the *punya* accumulated by constructing wells and tanks, where aquatic animals and those moving on land drink water when they desire, for life is centred on water”. The Gita not only values generosity and charity, but also adds that it has to be without any contempt towards the beneficiary. A gift, given with contempt to the receiver, is ‘*taamasik*’. It is much lower in status than the selfless gift given with humility, considered as ‘*saatvik*’. The poor are to be regarded in Hinduism as ‘*Daridra Naraayana*’ (those among whom god is present), who should be served with respect and love (Nadkarni, 2007). The well known Saint Narsi Mehta reflects the same in his famous song ‘*Vaishnav jan to taine kahiye je peer parayi jaane re*’ – call that one a true Vaishnava (devotee of Lord Vishnu) who empathizes with the suffering of others, and who relieves others’ pain with humility.

The concept of ‘*yajna*’ as ritualistic offering of food in sacrificial fire or even animal sacrifice is based on sharing with others what one has. The philosophy is that we have received everything that sustains us from god, and we repay our debt to god through *yajna*, by sharing with others what we have with us - be it food, wealth, knowledge, or simply labour or work.

Though origins of *Bhakti* can be traced to *Rigveda* itself, Gita formally recognised *Bhakti* as a valid path of god realisation, along with ‘*jnaana*’ (knowledge) and *karma* (selfless work). The significance of *Bhakti* was that unlike *jnaana* and *karma*, it could be practised by all, lowest of the low, meekest of the meek. At one stroke, *Bhakti* took the poor and the deprived within its scope. Like the Gita, *Thirukkural* believed to be written in the early part of the first millennium. in *Tamil* laid emphasis on compassion to all, helpful nature, humanism, truthfulness, hospitality and so on.

Social Concern in Practice

Social Concern of Hinduism in Practice is reflected in day-to-day behaviour of the people and in activities of religious institutions.

Early Vedic Period

Early Vedic period is normally characterized by a collective way of living where property is under common ownership of the tribes. Whatever was collected or hunted had to be done collectively in large groups (Gana). The collective labour that was undertaken by Vedic Aryans was termed *Satra* which means a session, implying collectivity. Thus the supportive practices of distribution and consumption were also performed collectively. There was a life of complete mutuality and reciprocal assistance whether the needs were basic or special, arising out of vulnerable situations like disease, external danger. The fireplace was the nucleus of the tribal society. The *yajna* ritual re-creates all aspects of primitive tribal collective life. The concept of '*yajna*' as ritualistic offering of food in sacrificial fire or even animal sacrifice is based on sharing with others what one has. The philosophy is that we have received everything that sustains us from god, and we repay our debt to god through *yajna*, by sharing with others what we have with us – be it food, wealth, knowledge, or simply labour or work. In the tribal way of life whether during war or peacetime the share (*havi*) of every member of the tribe was distributed in a function called the *Havana*. The practice of charity or '*daan*' involving a giver and a recipient was not relevant at that stage of social evolution. The term *daan* is used in Vedic literature to describe the act of distributing wealth among members of a tribe.

Later Vedic Period

An agrarian system of society developed towards the end of Vedic period. Private property and occupation based class system emerged. Extended families (*kul* or *clan*) inhabited separate hamlets. The warrior class (*kshatriya*) became responsible for protection of the community. The leader of the warriors was called the king. The proceeds of war and later on the proceeds of tributes and taxes came into the hands of the warriors and the king. It now came to be looked upon as *rajasva*, literally meaning that which belongs to the king. The practice of distributing wealth thus accumulated among the kingdom's of populace continued. This distribution was looked upon as *daan*. There was, however, no formal law that made it compulsory for the king and noblemen to observe this custom. *Daan*, thus acquired a voluntary character which was looked upon as an act of piety and merited *punya* for the doer. There are numerous references in *Upanishads* to the merits of giving *daan* and the correct manner of doing so, e.g. giving with humility and with due respect to the recipient. *Upanishads* held that life is a succession of *Yajna* or service for others. Charity was not merely a social service but it was like a prayer. One did it for one's own sake, because one felt it was a privilege as he/she was serving Lord through it. The habit of giving Alms was common and no household should turn away a beggar empty handed as it was considered a sin.

Post Vedic Period

During the post Vedic era, the Hindu society and polity were, by and large, supposedly governed by texts called shastras, especially *Manusmriti* (MS) and Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (AS). Despite commitment to the caste system and patriarchy, the shastras were not totally devoid of social concern and sense of fairness and justice. MS and AS, both, emphasize promoting the welfare of people through good governance. (MS - 1. 111 and 112; Naarada *Smriti*; AS - I 19.34)

Though MS is generally condemned as anti-women, according to both AS and MS,

destitute women were to be given special attention by the king and were to be helped with raw material for handicrafts or given other help. Such of those women who were disabled from going out, had to be provided with help at their doorstep. The wife had an absolute right of maintenance against the husband.

Kautilya (Chanakya) was the counselor of King Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Maurya Dynasty. His expositions in *AS* lay down the guiding principle for kings – “In the happiness of people lies the king’s own happiness, in their welfare his welfare; he should follow what promotes peoples’ welfare, and not just what pleases him”; provide public services and infrastructure; and ensure the rights of women, consumers, borrowers, wage earners, patients and even prisoners (*AS* - I 19.34).

During the entire period of Mauryan Empire, Reign of Ashok, the Buddhist Emperor; and subsequent Gupta Empire, there has been emphasis on charitable acts.

Welfare of people was the main task of the kings, who devoted their life for the same. It is worthwhile mentioning here that in the Gupta period, the workshops for amelioration and training of handicapped persons were established for the first time in India.

The *kshatriyas* (warrior class) along with the *vaishyas* (the trading class) offered charity not only to the *brahmins* but also to the community at large. Construction of wells, tanks, canal etc., plantation of trees in forest, garden, construction of temples, *dharamshalas* (inns), schools, hospitals and the like were intended for service of the people and dedicated as prayer of God. It was believed that working for the welfare of others lead to accumulating of *punya*. *Daan* constituted of charity for alleviating the suffering of materially poor as also giving of gifts to social service institutions. Families were enjoined upon to look after their sick and the handicapped. The workers’ guilds (*shrenis*) looked after the interests of their worker members. Respective caste *punchayats* addressed to the welfare needs of their members. *Nandi Purana* mentions construction of hospitals wherein sick person were given medicines free of cost.

In the wake of establishment of the feudal system, employers of *shudras* had duties towards them, ensuring that they were adequately fed, clothed and sheltered; looking after them in emergencies like illness and death and contingencies like marriage in their family; and to see that their hard work was properly rewarded (*MS* - X 124).

The epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, show that recipients of help were not necessarily poor or the sick. Ram and Arjun received counsel to overcome their dilemmas. Rishi Vashishtha and Lord Krishna respectively acted as counselors to help Ram and Arjun make decisions within their *dharma*. In fact, brahmins often acted as *kulgurus* (counselors of the family) – as an anchor in stress for *kshatriya* and *vaishya* families; conducted *yajna* for their prosperity and welfare; helped in conflict resolution within the family; acted as educators for the client families (*yajman*) and received *dakshina* in return for their services. These brahmins / priests were scholarly; skilled in rituals; maintained humility; led pure and austere life, and were highly respected.

The British Rule: Reform Movements

The nineteenth century during the British Rule was the pivotal period that brought about an enormous transformation in the religious, social, economic, political and

cultural spheres. Reform and Revivalist Movements like Brhmo Samaj, Prarthna Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramkrishna Mission along with numerous individuals brought about a major turnaround to revive the Hindu ideals. A number of *sanyasis* (ascetics) led people's movements to overthrow exploitative systems. Several Hindu religious leaders took up the cause of the poor, not just by way of charity, but by mobilising them to end their exploitation. Shri Narayan Guru (1854-1928) in Kerala lifted a whole untouchable caste Ezhavas, into the mainstream in this way, quite within the framework of Hinduism.

Welfare Work by Institutions and Individuals: Contemporary Scene

Today, some reform movements like Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission are still actively involved in spiritual guidance along with welfare of the people. They are making significant contribution in the fields of education and health care. Needy students are given scholarships, the elderly, the sick and the destitute are provided shelter and support. Other areas of operation include education of girls, clinics and opening of libraries.

Vivekanand Kendra following Swami Vivekananda's belief "Serve man, serve God," runs an impressive number of social welfare projects. Some programmes are for the purpose of propagating yoga; others use education to develop the personality. There are rural development programs to channellise the energies of the people toward national reconstruction, and natural resource development programs to convey ecological technologies to rural areas. Medical centers located in 26 places cater to 100 surrounding villages in Tamil, Nadu. "The Kendra is actively involved in several social developmental activities based on the ideas and values taught by Sanatana Dharma. These include education for the tribal children of Assam, Arunachala Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and Andaman and Nicobar Islands; rural development projects in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Bharat, etc." To strengthen the fibre of the younger generation the Kendra has initiated the Clean India for Cleaner Life project during the Vivekananda Decade (1993 to 2002) (Hinduism Today, April 1983).

The trend has gained momentum as more institutions like the Brahmakumaris, ISKCON, Swami Narayana Mission, and the Art of Living are also in the field and working not only for Hindus, but also others. Apart from social service, these organizations and their workers strive to elevate the moral and spiritual level of people, dissuading them from drugs, alcohol and smoking, and making them derive greater happiness and joy from simply being better human beings at peace with others as also with their own selves.

Traditional matts and temples started giving more and more attention to social service, to such an extent that practically every math is now engaged in social service. The famous temple at Tirupati was in the field of social service right from the 16th century by developing irrigation works in a drought-prone region. The temple has, in the modern age, branched out in the field of education (from primary to university) and health care.

A Saivite organization founded in Madras (Chennai) in 1983 with a broad manifesto to include making hospital visits to console the disabled and suffering; feeding the poor once each month after temple worship; providing emergency services, including disaster relief from draught, fire, flood and personal misfortune among various religious activities.

The modern age gurus like Sri Sathya Saibaba, Mata Amritanandamayi, Sri Sri Ravishankar and others are known now for their social service in many countries of the world in almost all continents through their vast institutional network, catering to the spiritual as well as mundane needs of Hindus and non-Hindus alike, and spreading the message of peace and love (Nadkarni, 2007).

The Swaminarayan Mission (the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha –BAPS) is based in Gujarat. Their large corps of volunteers donate millions of hours annually, giving BAPS the ability to operate a prodigious list of socio-spiritual activities including a campaign against addictions such as smoking, drinking and drugs. Large exhibitions in temple complexes, as well as mobile exhibitions displayed in schools, factories, village squares, fairs, railway stations and private functions, explain Hindu philosophy and the adharma of addiction and contribute greatly to the long lasting success of these campaigns around the world.

Hindus in contemporary Indian society continue to conduct *yajnas*, praying for the prosperity of the doer and *kalyan* (welfare) of all; offer charity to the poor and the indigent, feed the destitutes and offer voluntary service for social causes. The ideals and virtues mentioned above continue to be held in high esteem; and guidance is sought from spiritually enlightened persons who are deeply revered.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Space is given below for your answer.

- 1) Give a short summary of the efforts of the Hindu religious organizations with regard to people's welfare.

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1.4 HINDUISM AND PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK

Having made an effort to comprehend the core values and concepts that drive or influence the Hind psyche in the context of altruistic attitude and behaviour, it is time to recapitulate our understanding of Social Work – its mission, responsibilities; assumptions and core values. It is hoped that juxtaposing the two sets of beliefs and values, we will be able to perceive affinity, if any, between the two.

Social Work

Schools of Social Work commonly teach that the origin of the profession lies in the humanistic principles of the many world faith traditions. However, a large number of social workers, regardless of their personal religious affiliations, are trained to think that their religion has no relevance for their everyday professional practice (Ram A. Cnaan, 2004).

Professional Social Work is claimed by many practioners in India to be an alien concept that has been brought here from the West. The very notion of getting paid

for service offered to the needy is alleged to be antithetical to our basic values and culture. The following discussion is aimed at identifying affinity, if any, between Hindu Philosophy and beliefs and values and concepts believed in by professional social workers.

Social work emerged as a response to common human needs which include physiological, psychological and developmental. The practice of social work creates an atmosphere where these needs are met satisfactorily. As a helping process it concentrates its efforts to develop better adjustment between individuals, their subsystem and larger system. This is done through interaction of client and the worker. Social Worker tries to bring about social change with a better balance between client and environment. The worker is expected to internalize certain values, undergo certain discipline; and acquire necessary knowledge and skills for comprehending the concerns of the clients and helping them to deal with the same. The emphasis is on building / mobilizing client's own inner and external resources so as to empower the client to deal with future challenges in life.

According to the Code of Ethics developed by the National Association of Social Workers (USA), the mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history, are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective:

- service social
- justice
- dignity and worth of the person importance
- of human relationships integrity
- competence.

This constellation of core values reflects what is unique to the social work profession.

Hinduism and Social Work

The affinity between Hinduism and modern Social Work becomes immediately apparent in the light of the foregoing discussion.

- 1) The Hindu Philosophy and Traditions are replete with the importance accorded to the spirit of service and compassion; and sacrifice of personal gain in favour of other less fortunate.
- 2) The Hindu concepts of social conscience and social concern emphasize the fact that one's welfare is entwined with that of others. The mutual aid and mutual interdependence have been in practice right from the ancient times.
- 3) However paradoxical it may seem, the concepts of God, Soul and Maaya (illusion) provide the foundation for social justice. Hindu Philosophy holds all living beings equal with similar capacity to realize their real potential; to achieve divinity. It discards all social ranks and differences as illusory (*maaya*) and temporary and denounces all discriminatory practices as sinful act.
- 4) Like professional social work, Hindu philosophy believes that human beings can and do change towards self-actualization-the goal of life. It is strongly

believed that soul's natural inclination is towards self-realization – realization of its divine nature. The religious and spiritual activities with the help of *gurus* help them move towards their goal of life. The spiritual and religious activity involves emotional and mental well-being; acquiring rational and clear perspective and removing misconceptions; getting connected to reality and realizing one's Self.

- 5) The concept and practice of *dharma* is closely linked to the concept of social functioning as we know it in social work literature. Doing what is expected of us in a given station in life role; doing it well and getting satisfaction out of it has been considered the basis of mental well-being. *Dharma* as linked both with social position (occupational or social) and with different stages in life covers social functioning concept in all of its connotations. In-depth understanding of the concept of *dharma* can help Social Workers provide effective professional service.
- 6) Relationship between the worker and the person requiring professional help is a vital component in social work practice. Among various principles of professional relationship, the principle of acceptance is the most basic and held almost as an absolute value. Hindu belief in the divinity of man makes it compatible with this principle. Having faith in the fact that all human beings are striving towards self-actualization makes it possible to maintain *non-judgmental attitude* towards even the so-called worst criminals. Hindu scriptures contain numerous examples of criminals, prostitutes and cruel people getting redeemed because God who dwells in all is perceived as *patitpaavan*, the redeemer of the fallen. As the goal of life is seen to be merging in God, the qualities of forgiveness and compassion are seen as divine and thus desirable to inculcate in one self. The practice of *ahimsa* (non-violence), further, underlines an absence of hatred towards or blaming of the person in need of rehabilitation or reform. The principle of *controlled emotional involvement* has been very adequately expounded in the Gita. The images of *sthitaprajna* and *sthit dheer* present a person who has achieved high emotional stability, has clear perceptions, high degree of self-awareness; is socially conscious, remaining detached feels compassion for his fellow beings. Controlled emotional involvement does not preclude empathy, compassion, kindness and positive regard for the person in need of help.
- 7) Frequently professional literature has reflected critically on the *power and authority* inherent in worker – client relationship by the very fact that client feels inadequate and looks upon the worker as an expert capable of helping him or her and as one having control on necessary resources. Hindu scriptures maintain that the giver is not superior to the receiver. The same divinity is operating in both the receiver and the giver. The giver should rather be thankful that the receiver has accorded the giver an opportunity to merit *punya* for the good deed. That the two are intrinsically equal, mutually helping each other comes quite close to the assumptions and practice principles held by feminist therapists.
- 8) The dignity of human beings upheld as a core value in Social Work is actually the foremost belief in Hinduism. The belief that one's true identity is defined not by physical and social attributes but by its divinity is drawn from the concept of *Atman*. All human beings have to be respected as they all have

the same spiritual core. The recognition of innate dignity of human beings is a *given* in Hindu Philosophy. In the words of Swami Vivekanand, “Have faith in man, whether he appears to you to be a very learned one or a most ignorant one. Have faith in man, whether he appears to be an angel or the very devil himself.”(The Common Bases of Hinduism)

- 9) The ‘strength perspective’ that the social workers have begun emphasizing, rather than focusing on the deficiencies or problems, surfaces in Hinduism, almost effortlessly. That all human beings have the innate strength and tendency to realize self is a matter of faith. The call of the spiritual gurus is to draw forth the inner resources of all human beings - to start with what each one has rather than highlighting what one lacks. The fact that one has lost direction, is emotionally disturbed, is unable to carry on one’s duty (dharma), is quite understandable because of the very nature of life in the world of *maaya* (illusion). But the person in need of help is not completely ‘helpless’.
- 10) The concept of innate worth, further, supports the principles of *self-help* and *self-determination*. The worker primarily enables or even facilitates client’s mobilization of his own inner and external resources. A well worn definition of social work, “Social work helps people to help themselves” bears this point out. The client has to take ownership of his own change process. The spiritual guidance by the gurus and scriptures is founded on this requirement of the devotee taking ownership of his desire to achieve self-realization. The *gurus* do not impose their will on the devotee.
- 11) The concept of reincarnation coupled with the law of *karma* states that each human being despite having a common divine spark is born with a *unique destiny*. This is in alignment with professional assumption that each person is unique, irrespective of the fact that he or she shares certain common characteristics with those in the same social group.
- 12) The law of *karma* further helps in keeping the process of help focused *on the ‘present’*. Consequences of our actions (including thoughts, speech and deeds) as occurring in the present have significance for us and those around us in our milieu. The concept of duty helps us in getting over our defense mechanisms.
- 13) Development of the *professional self* is the cornerstone of the training of professional social workers. The social worker learns to believe in certain assumptions, like each human being is unique; inculcates certain core values and develops some important qualities like compassion, controlled emotional involvement, respect for all human beings etc.; acquires high degree of self-awareness; achieves emotional stability; offers help without seeking to satisfy his / her own needs through the helping process; acquires necessary knowledge; becomes a citizen sensitive social conscience; strives continuously towards self-actualization; and finally becomes a role model. The ideal of *nishkam sewa* (the *Gita*) is not working without remuneration; it is working without self gain or praise; it is working with compassion but with detachment, without imposing own will or views and letting the person in need of help move at his or her own pace. The worker may act as a listener, an enabler, a facilitator or more actively be a teacher, coordinator, mediator, or an advocate; but very often, he / she acts as a catalyst, bringing about a change just by *being* – being the Professional Self. In fact, the people hold professional social

workers in India “to be *on God’s side*, regardless of workers’ personal spiritual and religious beliefs. Social workers are held responsible as *social workers* to live up to humankind’s nearly universal image of a higher power: we are to do good as God does good, we are to uphold truth as God upholds truth, we are to stand for justice as God stands for justice, we are to protect freedom as God protects freedom, we are to pursue peace as God pursues peace, and we are to show kindness as God shows kindness.” (Rabbi Moshe ben Asher).

Check Your Progress III

Note: Space is given below for your answer.

- 1) Explain main points of affinity between Hindu concepts, beliefs and values and those held by Professional Social Work.

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1.5 LET US SUM UP

The above exposition will, hopefully, bring out various points of affinity between Hinduism and professional social work – the former an ancient value system still influencing the lives of a vast majority of Indian population and the latter, an allegedly alien concept transported to Indian soil by some social work educators. It is hoped that the discussion above will demonstrate that modern ‘professional’ social work need not be seen as entirely irrelevant to Hindu psyche; that there are numerous meeting points; that Hindu beliefs and values can be drawn upon to enrich and strengthen the humanistic and rational approach to social work practice.

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UNIT 2 ISLAM AND SOCIAL WORK

M.Z. Khan*

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Islam and Social Work Values
- 2.3 Islam and Social Work Practice
- 2.4 Muslim Community's Contribution to Social and Welfare Services
- 2.5 Islamic Institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Further Readings and References

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is generally accepted that religious ideology deeply influences individual and collective outlook and conduct. Keeping this in view, the present Unit is focused on the contribution of Islam to Social Work in the Indian Socio-cultural context. In a general way, the main objectives of the present unit are:

- to outline distinctive values of Islam that overlap with Social Work Philosophy;
- to look into the practices prescribed by Islam which have enriched Social Work approach and practice;
- to examine Islamic community's work for the welfare of the needy and indigent; and
- to delineate Islamic community's contribution to social services.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As the origin of the discipline of Social Work is often traced to religious ethos and compassion, it would be relevant to examine the contribution of Islam to Social Work philosophy, in general, and to its practice in India, in particular. May it be noted that the present form of Islam originated in Arabia early in the seventh century A.D. It was introduced to the Indian subcontinent first by sea-faring Arab-Muslim traders who settled on the Malabar Coast in north Kerala. Later on, beginning with 812 A. D., by invading Muslim chieftains taking the mountainous Hindu Kush route in the north. Apparently segments of invading armies and of their entourage preferred to stay on and settle down. Gradually, the faith gained acceptance and spread to the four corners of the subcontinent.

Over the centuries, adherents of Islam have grown in number and, at present, India has a substantial Muslim population (20 per cent), and is estimated to have the third largest Muslim population in the world. This apart, Islamic values and practices have profoundly influenced Indian social tradition. Certain writers (see, for example, Singh, 1973) consider the process of Islamization as an important modernizing influence on the Indian social tradition. Has it also influenced Social Work and its practice in India? It may be restated that Social Work profession deals with individuals, singly and collectively. Its main concerns are ... the creation

of those conditions within the society, and the development of those capacities within the individual, that increase the probability of a more satisfying way of life for the members of that society” (Bisno, 1952). For its applicability and effectiveness, it is heavily dependent upon the social organization and cultural ethos (Aptekar, 1961), including faith and religion. Given this, the possibility of Islam having an impact on Social Work practice is strong. May it be kept in view that Islamic tradition is determined mainly by three sources: (a) Holy Qur’an, (b) Sunnah – sayings and practice of Prophet Mohammed, and (c) Fiqah or Ijtihad – interpretation given by the knowledgeable on emergent or disputed issues. In a way, these also determine the ‘world view of Muslims’.

From an Islamic perspective, the world is a collection of multifarious but interconnected realities which have and continue to come into existence through the will of God (Behishti and Bahonar, n. d., p. 54). In Islam, racial groupings, caste grades, or social classes have no place. All people have been created alike and, irrespective of their lineage, they stand in one row. In principle, whole world is based on equity and justice. Further, the believer has *eiman* (faith in Islam) which, in turn, brings several social obligations (Behishti and Bahonar, n.d., p. 41). Given this perspective, it would be highly relevant to study Islamic values and practices in relation to those of Social Work.

2.2 ISLAM AND SOCIAL WORK VALUES

While a *value-base* is necessary for all professions, it is crucial for Social Work (Gutierrez, 1999). It gives form and substance to professional ethos. It provides a direction and focus, and lends professional authority to multi-layered Social Work practice. At one and the same time, the value-base of Social Work provides for stability and change in social organization and functioning (Dominelli, 2005). Moreover, pay attention to Social Work mission, practitioner-client relationship or intervention methods – all are found to be linked or even dependent upon societal values. Indeed, the value-base of Social Work is informed by numerous historical-cultural forces including religious ideologies. Let us examine Social Work values and Islamic values – and the overlap between the two.

The nature of individual: By the very fact of his or her existence, every individual is unique, has worth and dignity and has common human needs as well as individual needs (see also, Bisno, 1952). Individual behaviour is the outcome of interaction between the biological organism and its surrounding physical and social environment. Man is amoral and asocial at birth, and interaction with the social environment develops social and ethical perceptions, attitudes and behaviour patterns. Further, human suffering in all forms is undesirable and should be prevented. As far as possible, individual should be involved and participate in the intervention programme meant for the self-betterment or development (Reamer, 2005). This is what is going to have an enduring impact and to ensure sustainability.

From an Islamic perspective, man is neither a pre-destined being (Qur’an 75: 36)* nor has he been allowed a free reign to pass an aimless life (23: 115). Every individual has been endowed with dispositions and capabilities, accompanied by a sort of inner direction and innate guidance (91: 7-8). A bundle of instincts, urges

* Holy Qur’an is divided into *surahs* and *ayats* – all are numbered and universally recognized. In this presentation, the first number in a Quranic citation indicates *surah* number, and the second, *ayut* number.

and desires, all individuals have human dignity and self-esteem (Behishti and Bahonar, n.d., p. 187). They have an inalienable right to life, right to livelihood, right to privacy, right to have family and right to religious affiliation (Umri, n. d., pp. 12-16). While they are to make efforts at their own to resolve their problems and to achieve prosperity and salvation, they may not be, in the hour of exigency, left to fend for themselves (Behishti and Bahonar, n.d., p. 194). It would be thus seen that the Islamic view of man or individual has a noticeable similarity with the values Social Work attaches with the individual.

Interpersonal and group relations: Needless to state, Social Work rejects the doctrine of *laissez faire*. The rich or the powerful are not necessarily 'fit', and the poor or the weak are not necessarily 'unfit'. Social Work stoutly stands for socialized individualism (see, Bisno, 1952) which is largely instilled in individuals through the group process. It is a common observation that most of the engagement, awareness-generation and education of an individual come from group interaction (Gutierrez and others, 1999). Through this, rugged persons are moulded into socialized individuals. What is the position of Islam with regard to these value-assumptions?

As is known, Islam places a premium on group living. All adult males are expected to perform their prayers five times a day with *jamaat* (congregation of believers). Usually this is done in a mosque where the prayer is led by *imam* (meaning, group leader, not a priest but a learned person in the group of devotees). Besides, the Qur'an lays emphasis on interpersonal tolerance, "... those who control their wrath and are forgiving towards mankind, Allah loves them" (3:134). The sacred book ordains, "Help one another unto righteous and pious duty" (5:2). It also underlines (49:11) mutual respect, "O ye who believe! Let not a folk judge the other ... nor insult by nicknames" (quoted by Ahmed Moulvi, 1979). Prophet Mohammed, the messenger of God, has directed his followers, "Behave towards other people as you like them to behave towards you" (Behishti and Bahonar, n. d., p. 325). The stance of the messenger is equally clear in respect of cordial interpersonal relations, "As my Lord has commanded me to perform my religious duties, in the same way He has ordered me to be friendly with the people" (Behishti and Bahonar, n. d., p. 337). Islamic tradition, likewise, abounds with references that enrich precepts commonly associated with group process and group living.

Community living: Generally speaking, community is viewed as a complex of social unity in which individuals and groups have shared interests and values, customs and activities. It may also be thought of as a network of interconnected, interrelated and interdependent groups. Individuals and groups living in a community have 'a core of common attributes', and an under-pinning of mutual understanding, camaraderie, equity and justice.

Communities are characterized by value-structures that transcend their form, size or location. In a community, individuals and groups cooperate and collaborate with each other for the fulfillment of their common needs. By doing so, on the one hand, they promote we-feeling among themselves and, on the other, they reinforce community's cohesion and identity. Keeping the foregoing in view, let us turn attention to Islamic edicts in this regard.

May it be noted that Islam attaches great value to concerned and conscientious community living. For the annual festival of Eid, all the believers in the community

are expected to foregather and offer prayer in one congregation. This ritual apart, the Quran ordains individuals and groups to shun vanity (in the land), to enjoin kindness towards others, and to eliminate inequity (31:13). Behishti and Bahonar (n. d.) cite the prophet as pronouncing: He who sleeps satiated while his neighbour is hungry is not dear to Allah (p. 328). Muslim has been a revered companion of the prophet. He cites the prophet as directing his people to gladly accept meal invitation from the neighbour, as it promotes understanding and solidarity (Ansari, n. d.).

As mentioned earlier, Islam totally forbids discrimination on the basis of colour, caste, creed or position. The concept of brotherhood or fraternity permeates all Islamic rituals, customs and community living. Flowing from this is the concept of 'justice' - an inseparable part of Social Work values. In Islam, this concept comes up repeatedly and forcefully (Umri, n. d.). "When you judge between people", lays down the Qur'an, "you should judge with a sense of justice" (4:58). That justice is the bed-rock on which social order and civil society rests, is unequivocally reiterated by the sacred book, "Believers! Adhere to justice and bear witness before Allah, even though it be against yourselves, your parents or your relatives" (4:135). Assuredly, these concepts have influenced not only Social Work values but also jurisprudence globally.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Space is given below for your answer.

- 1) Trace the social work values inherent in Islam.

2.3 ISLAM AND SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The approach underlying Social Work practice has undergone marked changes in response to changed social conditions. In modern times, the elitist paradigm of social welfare faces several philosophical and operational reservations. While residual provisions that target *socially excluded* needy individuals and groups are retained, much emphasis is, at present, laid on their capacity-building and empowerment. In this, due importance is given to those social values, usages and practices that do not conflict with the basic tenets of social justice. Secondly, Social Work practice aims to have both social stability and social change, in consonance with the prevailing social, economic and political conditions. Towards this, it adopts essentially an evolutionary approach. Thirdly, apart from its value-base, Social Work practice draws upon a distinctive set of methods, techniques and fields of practice. Lastly, more often than not, Social Work practice is required to deal with a multilayered context, and to adopt multiple methods to have an efficacious intervention (Dominelli, 2005). It would be hence interesting and appropriate to examine as to what extent Islam has influenced Social Work methods and prioritized its practice areas.

There is no denying the fact that, at the time when Islam was manifested, the concept and practice of Social Work, as is understood in modern times, did not

exist. However, the religious ideology did set out many approaches and practices which clearly overlap with this 'helping profession'.

Islam recognizes that there would be many individuals who face a plethora of problems which they cannot overcome or circumvent unaided. They need to be helped by the knowledgeable and experienced persons (Behishti and Bahonar, n. d., p. 503). In spite of the concepts of equity and justice, a section of the population would remain under-privileged or even marginalized. They certainly deserve the attention and generosity of well-to-do and prosperous persons: In their wealth, there is a share for those who ask for help and those who are under-privileged (Qur'an 51: 19). All the believers are called upon to give away to the needy and indigent *khairat* (alms), *sadqua* (*khairat* for the well-being of loved ones), *fitrah* (thanks-giving alms for *ramadhan*), and *zakat* (one-fortieth value of a Muslim's annual savings in cash or kind). As a matter of fact, *zakat* is one of the five mandates which every Muslim is expected to carry out. Here, a clarification needs to be offered, lest it is taken that Islamic philanthropy encourages begging or breeds 'social parasites'. Islam lays down as who are eligible to receive *khairat*, *fitrah* and *zakat*, and who are not. It also prescribes the purposes for which these doles can be or cannot be used. For example, none of these can be utilized for building or furnishing a mosque. Furthermore, the prophet is reported as saying:

If the giver would know how much *sawab* or good is there in giving away, he would never refuse a beggar and, if the beggar would know how much bad or harm is there in begging, he would never stretch his hand for alms.

Islam has also conceptualized, and has put in place the system of 'public assistance' to the socially handicapped and under-privileged. In accordance with their needs, they would be provided assistance from *Bait-ul-Mal* or public exchequer (Ahmed Moulavi, 1979). During early caliphates, *Bait-ul-Mal* would also accept *zakat* to be subsequently disbursed among the deserving and destitute.

As is known, 1400 years ago, when Islam was manifested in Arabia, the peninsula was inhabited mainly by tribes, many of them nomadic tribes. Almost perpetually, these tribes would be in conflict with each other on issues big and small (Prophet Mohammed himself was constrained to engage in quite a few battles). This apart, from the very beginning, Islam attracted persons and groups from distant lands who widely differed in their racial, ethnic and lingual attributes. Given this diversity, appropriate strategies had to be worked out and implemented to evolve and strengthen a unified and coherent group identity and community feeling among the believers. In this regard, Qur'an mandates: Cooperate with one another for virtue and heedfulness, and do not cooperate with one another for the purpose of vice and aggression (5: 2). Towards this, the modality evolved was post-prayer meetings, especially after Friday noon prayer (see also, Irving and others, 1992). Among other things, the congregation in the mosque would take up and discuss issues of group and community concerns, and necessary action would be initiated. The tradition continues to this day all over the Islamic world, though the focus and concerns of such meetings have undergone a perceptible change.

Islam also recognizes social intervention fields. To illustrate, older persons have been given a special place. The elderly have, in the prime of their life, contributed to society's growth and development and, in the evening of their life, they cannot be left to fate and to face hardship and privation. While some of them would need economic or financial assistance, others may require just psychosocial support.

What is the position of Islam on the issue? “We have enjoined on man kindness to parents” (Quran, 29:8). Prophet Mohammed calls upon the believers to respect the elderly and to be kind to the young. Imam al-Sadiq, a renowned Islamic thinker, proclaims: Respect for an aged person is a part of the respect for Allah (Behishti and Bahunar, n. d., p. 347). Needless to state, geriatric-care has, in modern times, emerged as a major area of Social Work practice.

On the other hand, Islam comes down heavily on individual and group vices. Pay attention to the habit of gambling. Since pre-historic time, it has wrecked and ruined persons, families and even kingdoms. Islam is totally opposed to the practice. There is great sin in gambling, says the Qur’an (2: 219). Islam declares intoxicating and habit-forming substances (cannabis, opiates, etc.) as *makrooh* or abominable, which all should avoid and detest. Furthermore, it comes down heavily on the drinking habit. Alcohol use is pronounced as a *gunah-e-kabirah*, that is, a major sin (2: 219), and the user would never be forgiven. It may be noted that both substance abuse and alcoholism are, in modern times, a priority concern of welfare workers in most societies.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Space is given below for your answer.

- 1) Write a brief note on the approach of Islam on the elderly.

2.4 MUSLIM COMMUNITY’S CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIAL AND WELFARE SERVICES

As mentioned earlier, Islamic influence started flowing into India more than thirteen hundred years ago. Muslim chieftains and adventurers invaded intermittently northern parts of the country. Perhaps attracted by its salubrious climate or by the bountiful natural resources, some of them also settled down. For nearly seven centuries, different parts of the country have been ruled by Muslim emperors, kings, nawabs or rajahs. In between, there have been scores of saints, *sufis* and *auliyas* who have worked among and with the people to improve their living condition. This has led to a prolonged and intense cultural interchange between Muslims and other population groups in India (see also, Mujeeb, 1967). Besides, over the years, Islamic community has made a significant contribution. For discussion purposes, it may be divided into two broad groups.

- a) **Social Services:** Indeed, services like roads, hospitals and schools are critically important. These provide people a progressive basis to change and develop and to improve their quality of life. Quite a few Muslim rulers and potentates have devoted attention and resources to infrastructural development in the land.

In this connection, one name that readily comes to mind is that of Sher Shah Suri (1472. 1545) who ruled a large part of north India. He was a visionary ruler and

introduced many military, civil and social reforms. He coined and introduced terms like *rupayya* (rupee coin), *pargana* (district or subdivision) and *munsif* or magistrate (see Hussain Khan, n. d.). These terms are in currency even now. In his empire, he built a network of roads, with *sara is* (inns) at regular intervals where wayfarers and their steed could rest and recoup. Some of these facilities survive even to this day.

Several rulers have also paid attention to health-care. Sher Shah Suri is reported to have posted *hakims* (practitioners of *unani* medicine) at many *sara is* to provide health-care to wayfarers as well as to general public (see Pathak, 1981). Allauddin Khilji, early in the fourteenth century exercised social control over essential commodities, regulating supply and prices – a measure which greatly helped lower and lower-middle class people (Fuller and others, 1967). Emperor Firoz Tughlak (1309-1388) had organized *Diwane-e-Khairat* which also supported facilities for the treatment of the sick and the afflicted (Majumdar, 1961). However, a more substantial contribution to health-care and treatment of diseases came from *hakims* engaged in private practice. While they were patronized and recompensed by kings, nawabs and rajas, they would treat ailing public usually free of cost. Emperor Akbar and several other rulers are reported to have given land-grants to *hakims* (Chand, 1978).

Although the concept of mass-based schooling and education was not there in the medieval period, a chain of *maktabs* and *madrasas* had come into existence. Often attached with mosques, these *madrasas* imparted instruction (mostly to boys) on Qur'an, *sunnah*, and elementary subjects. Most of these *madrasas* used to enjoy the support of the ruler in the form of land grants (Pathak, 1981). To this day, the practice of mosques having attached *madrasas* has continued, though it is unclear that these have sufficiently updated themselves in approach and educational technology.

b) **Welfare Services:** Rendering help to the less fortunate and to the under-privileged has been an essential feature of Islam (Majumdar, 1961). This is evident from the elaborate system of *khairat*, *fitrah* and *zakat* which all believers are required to take out and pass on to the needy and indigent. At times, the needy would comprise not only beggars and mendicants but also middle class persons facing financial stringency. *Diwane-e-Khairat* set up by Emperor Firoz Tughlak (1309-1388) granted financial assistance to deserving persons for getting their daughter married out (Majumdar, 1961). Such persons were (and are) also eligible to receive *fitrah* so that they and their family could, for example, celebrate and enjoy the festival of Eid. Emperor Akbar (1542-1605) had set up a fund, *Madad-i-Maash* (Abul Fazl, 1972). Among other things, the fund provided famine relief, and the affected would be provided 'food for work' (Pathak, 1981). In Lucknow, Bara Imambara, a large imposing complex, completed around 1783, is supposed to have been built through 'food for work' programme during a prolonged and devastating famine in the region. Some accounts show that even middle class persons facing stringency due to famine participated in the 'lowly' construction-work and availed benefits from the 'food for work' programme.

Although, in medieval India, begging hardly existed as a significant social problem, there would be persons, perhaps victims of calamities or circumstance, needing succour or relief. Firoz Tughlak (1309-1388) is reported to have allotted 1, 00,000 maunds (about 40,000 quintals) of wheat and rice for this purpose. (Pathak,

1981). Similarly, at one point of time, Sher Shah Suri (1472-1545) had organized 'free kitchens' at various drought-stricken places in his empire, and spent 500 Asharfis (a gold coin usually weighing about 10 grams) on them daily (Hussain Khan, n. d.).

Check Your Progress III

Note: Space is given below for your answer.

- 1) Briefly describe concept of social welfare services in Islam.

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2.5 ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS AND NON- GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Over the years, several Islamic institutions have come up which may be briefly described. As mentioned earlier, *Unani* system of medicine has been vastly popular among Muslims. They also have had, among them, several famous *hakims* (practitioners of *unani* medicine) who have, from time to time, set up *matabs* or clinics. Usually, located in cities and towns, these *matabs* would cater to the health needs of the people in the area. Further, these would render services to the low-income persons free of charge. A few among these *matabs* also paid attention to institutionalize their system and managed to create a niche for themselves. The example that could be readily cited is of the Hamdard (Wakf) Laboratories, Delhi, which is regarded as the largest producer of *unani* medicine in the world. Apart from this, there are *tibbia* (*unani* medical) colleges which offer educational programmes leading to a graduate degree in *unani* medicine and surgery (e.g. Tibbia College, a constituent college of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh). These colleges provide consultation as well as hospital services at no or nominal charges.

In the field of education, the role of *maktabs* and *madrasas* has already been underlined. Apart from this, quite a few Islamic institutions have come up in response to changing social and political conditions which need to be mentioned. In 1875, Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College was set up at Aligarh with a view to promoting learning and education among Muslims with an English or Western approach.

Converted into Aligarh Muslim University, in 1920, this institution has, over the years, made a notable contribution to the educational and cultural development in the country. Yet another institution is Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, which was set up, in 1920, as a nationalist institution, in the wake of freedom struggle, and in response to the call for indigenizing education in the country. Subsequently, in 1988, it was made a 'central university' through an act of Parliament. As at present, it caters to the educational needs and aspirations of young and talented people regardless of their colour, caste or creed. The contribution of this institution in promoting generic as well as professional education in the country is regarded highly.

India has yet another unique Islamic institution, namely, *wakfs*. For long, well-meaning citizens have bequeathed immovable properties (land, residential house, commercial shops, etc.) to ‘trusts’ – Sunni Wakf Board or Shia Wakf Board – in towns and cities almost all over the country. Between them, these Wakf Boards control properties worth thousands of crores of rupees. These provide financial support for the maintenance of mosques and *madrasas*. A few also have organized vocational training centres for imparting technical skills and generating self-employment among young people. Subsequently, in 1964, Government of India had set up Central Wakf Council to facilitate the development of *wakf* properties in cities and towns into revenue-generating assets, and to extend loan to minor development projects conceived by non-governmental organisations. Doubtless, these Wakf Boards have an immense potential for doing welfare and development work for the Muslim community.

As is well-known, Islam prohibits usury. It implies that the lender must not levy any charge on cash or kind borrowed by persons for their personal or family use. In view of this injunction, several Muslim countries have evolved interest-free banking. In India, too several regional non-banking financial institutions have come up which pay to their depositors dividend instead of fixed interest, and accept share in profit from their borrower. In southern and western India, quite few self-help groups have come up which extend interest-free micro-credit facilities to the members. Indeed, these self-help groups need to be further popularized.

At this juncture, a mention may be made of *yatimkhanas* or orphanages, mostly located in areas having a concentration of Muslim population. Having been on the social scene for centuries, these provide shelter, food and clothing to parentless children, who are mostly victims of nature-made or man-made calamities. Some of these institutions also impart instructions to resident-children in religious learning. Usually, these *yatimkhanas* are managed through donations, *sadqua* (alms in the name of loved ones), and *zakat* (specified share in the savings of a Muslim). Some of them also have the *wakf* support to themselves. It might be added that the *yatimkhanas* provide a useful social service, although the services they render could be further improved and standardized.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: Space is given below for your answer.

- 1) Write a brief note on Wakfs.

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2.6 LET US SUM UP

In this presentation, we have noted that Social Work philosophy and practice and religious ideologies have much in common. This is abundantly clear when we turn attention to Islam. Social Work considers every individual to be endowed with worth and dignity, as well as having physical and psychosocial needs. Further,

Social Work aims to enable individuals to overcome their suffering or limitations. Islam, too, views man almost from a similar standpoint: All individuals possess human dignity and human rights; but they are not predestined or expected to pass an aimless life. Many among them would require guidance and help.

As we know, Social Work recognizes that, in making a person into a socialized individual, group process and community living has a critical role. Likewise, there are specific pronouncements in Islam stressing on collective living. This is evident from modes of worship and rituals. It emphasizes on happy and cordial neighbourly relations. Equity, fraternity and justice are a pre-requisite for and a driving force behind group process and community living. Indeed, these happen to be the recurring themes in Islamic philosophy.

Contemporary Social Work practice pays attention to welfare needs as well as to developmental needs of individuals and groups. On the other hand, Islam urges upon individuals and groups to make effort, but it recognizes that there would be several among them who cannot do this unaided. It has also devised a 'public assistance' programme. Similarly, it has identified certain issues which are key concerns in present day Social Work practice.

Over the years, Muslim community has substantially contributed to such social services in India as roads, *sorais*, health care and education. It has provided succour to the indigent and to the victims of famine and drought. As at present, several Muslim institutions have come up in health, education, micro-credit and care of the orphans which have catered to the needs not only of Muslims but also of other communities.

Thus, the commonalities between Social Work and Islam are many and varied – and which could be gainfully exploited to have a better and more effective Social Work practice, and to improve the quality of life of the people.

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UNIT 3 SIKHISM AND SOCIAL WORK

*Ushvinder Kaur Popli**

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Basics of Sikhism
- 3.3 Social Work Ideals Inherent in Sikhism
- 3.4 Concepts, Values and Practices Common to Sikhism and Social Work
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Further Readings and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit deals with Sikhism and various concepts, values and principles related to social work inherent in it. After studying the Unit you must be able to:

- understand the basic philosophy, value and principles of Sikhism; and
- understand the linkage of values, principles, ethics of Sikhism with social work.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Sikhism, the youngest and the fifth largest world religion was founded about 500 years ago by Guru Nanak in Punjab district (of what is now India and Pakistan). Sikhism is based on Guru Nanak's aching and those of the nine Sikh Gurus who followed him. There are about twenty million Sikhs in the world, and most of them live in India. It emphasizes the belief in one Supreme Being 'the Creator'. It offers a simple straight path to eternal bliss and spreads a message of love and universal brotherhood.

The Sikh faith is a distinct religion based on the teachings of the 10 Gurus, the first of who was Guru Nanak Devji. In 1708 the tenth and the last human Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singhji, vested spiritual authority in the Holy Sikh Scriptures (Guru Granth Sahibji) as he declared that the line of personal/human Gurus to an end, and installed the Granth Sahib as the Guru, the symbolic representation of the ten Gurus.

Sikhism has various aspects and values that are closely associated with social work. Like social work, it believes in liberty, universal brotherhood and welfare (Sarbat Ka Bhalla). It gives women a very high status. It believes in worth and dignity of the individual.

The unit is aimed at helping to understand that Sikhism did contribute to the evolution of social welfare and modern social work. The present unit has been divided into two parts i.e. Basic ideals of Sikhism and linkages of Jainism with philosophy of social work.

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3.2 BASICS OF SIKHISM

Key Beliefs

Sikhism is a way of life; something to be lived according to a pattern. Its main virtue is simplicity. There is no supernaturalism or mythology on which it rests. It does not believe in devils or angels or heavenly spirits.

Sikhism is opposed to all ritualism and formalism. Sikhism does not enjoin blind faith. Blind obedience to an external authority is discouraged. Sikhism is a faith of hope and cheer. Though it affirms Karma, it recognizes the possibility of the modification of one's Karma with the grace of the Guru or God. It does not lead to despair and defeatism. Sikhism is a democratic religion which emphasizes social and sexual equality.

Sikhs strictly believe that there is One God, who is *Nirgun* (transcendent) and *Sagun* (immanent). While being absolute and beyond human comprehension, God can be realised and experienced through contemplation and service. A Sikh's way of life is guided by the following principles which are to a great extent in line with Social Work: Sikhism stresses the importance of doing good actions rather than merely carrying out rituals.

Importance of Letter 'Five' in Sikhism

The numeral panj (five) itself has a symbolic significance in Sikh usage. It holds a special mysticism in the Sikh faith. Physical bodies, it is believed are made of *five* elements; there are *five khands* (regions or stages) in the ascent to the meeting point of realization of the highest spiritual truth; the traditional village council, *panchayat*, consists of *five* members in the popular belief that where five *panches* have assembled together (for the sake of administering justice), there God Himself is present; it is *panj piare* (the Five Beloved Ones) who prepared and administered *amrit* (the holy initiatory water) to novitiates; *five banis* (scriptural texts) are recited as *amrit* is being prepared; the Sikh did sow *five takhts* as the seats of the highest religious authority and legislation; and traditionally for the daily religious devotions a regimen of *five banis* is laid down. Their homeland is Punjab – the land of five rivers. Bhai Gurdas (1636) Records: As one Sikh is sufficient to announce his identity, two of them make up the holy congregation. Among five of them God him-self is present.

The most prominent and distinguishing marks of the Sikhs, especially of the members of the Khalsa brotherhood, are the *panj kakars*, (*panj* = five; *kakar* = symbols). They are known as 5K's because their names start with the letter "K."

The Five K's (Articles of Faith) are:

- 1) Un-cut hair (Kesh), a gift from God representing spirituality;
- 2) A wooden comb (Kangha), symbolizes cleanliness;
- 3) A steel bracelet (Kara), represents self restraint and link to God;
- 4) A short sword (Kirpaan), an emblem of courage and commitment to truth and justice;
- 5) A type of underwear knickers (Kachhehra), represents purity of moral character.

Some Important Aspects of Sikhism

Guru Granth Sahib: (Guru = spiritual teacher; Granth = book or volume; Sahib, an honorific signifying master or lord) is the name by which the holy book of the Sikhs is commonly known and is the living Guru for the Sikhs.

The eleventh Guru, The Holy Book is the centre of all Sikh usage and ceremony. It has the potential to inspire all and talks to the person 'you'.

Kirtan: (from Skt. *Kirti*, i.e. to praise, celebrate or glorify). A commonly accepted mode of rendering devotion to God by singing His praises. It is a necessary part of Sikh worship. Music plays a significant role in most religious tradition. In Sikhism it is valued as the highest form of expression of adoration and counts as the most efficient means of linking the soul to the Divine Essence.

Turban: It is a long scarf wrapped around the head: The *dastar* (turban) is an essential accompaniment, which is worn to maintain the sanctity of *Kesh* (hair) and is treated with utmost respect. The religious significance of the headdress (a male turban or a female scarf) should be respected, because it is a covering for one of the 5K's (Kesh) and is also a symbol of a Sikh's honor.

Langar (community Kitchen): Close to the principles of social work based on worth of an individual, acceptance and equality is the philosophy behind the Langar (Guru's kitchen-cum-eating-house).

Places of Worship: The Sikh place of congregational worship is called a *Gurdwara*, meaning "Doorway to the Guru" or "House of God". The prayer hall represents God's court. Sikhs give utmost respect to the Holy Guru Granth Sahib. There is no hereditary priestly caste among the Sikhs. Even a layman who can read the Granth Sahib can perform religious ceremonies, though 'granthis' or priests are employed in most of the Gurdwaras.

Basic Articles in Sikhism

- i) **Unity of God:** There is but One God-Ek-Omkar. He is unborn, omnipotent, infinite, formless, all-knowing and all-pervading.
- ii) **Simran and Sewa** form the essence of Sikhism. Simran means to remember and Sewa means to give voluntary help without any external reward. Simran and Sewa can be done by performing the following (three golden rules of Sikhism) duties:
 - 1) **Kirat Karna:** means to earn an honest livelihood. To work with one's own hands.
 - 2) **Naam Jaapo:** Naam Jaapo means to remember God always in our minds at all times.
 - 3) **Vand Chhako:** means to share our earnings with others. Sikhs should give charity to the needy and care for the needy.
- iii) **Equality:** Sikhism emphasizes equality for all human beings. All human beings are equal and alike in front of God. They all should be loved, respected and treated equally. No distinctions have to be made on the basis of gender, race, religion, wealth, caste or creed.
- iv) **Character Building:** If the mind is impure, it cannot deserve union with Divinity. The development of character is the only foundation on which the

edifice of disciple-ship can be raised. Conquer of the five deadly sins – lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride is must. Morality is the foundation of Sikh religion.

v) **Sikhism Values:**

- 1) **Love** – Love of God is given high importance by the Gurus. We can love God only when we cease to love ourselves. We must first destroy the ego (haumai).
 - 2) **Humility** – In complete humility and humbleness all selfishness disappears; one has no ego and the soul no longer lives for its own self.
 - 3) **Compassion** – In Sikhs, Guru demand a high level of compassion; one should help and serve others in words and deeds. Service to mankind is service to the God.
 - 4) **Contentment** – It is an important virtue for Sikhs. It is to abide by the will of God with happiness. The soul of a such a person is satisfied and linked to God. By devoting one's life to service, one gets rid of ego and pride.
 - 5) **Truth** – Truth means truthfulness of mind, body and action. Guru Nanak preached, "Truth is higher than all things but higher still is the truthful living."
- vi) **Faith:** One must have perfect faith in the Guru. Sikhism literally means the way of the disciple. The disciple must follow the Guru's word. Sikhs believe in the Guru Granth Sahib – "the Living Guru" or the Sikh holy book. Sikhs do not believe in idols or idol worships or rituals.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Space is given below for your answers.

- 1) What are the five K's (Articles of Faith) in Sikhism?

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- 2) Explain any two important aspects of Sikhism.

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3.3 SOCIAL WORK IDEALS INHERENT IN SIKHISM

In the previous section we have come across concepts such as social and sexual equality, community kitchen, sewa, charity and care of the needy, compassion,

contentment and truth which are familiar terminologies or values inherent in professional social work.

The Sikh Gurus were concerned with the total personality of man. There was an integrated approach to human and social problems which are also in time with social work ideology.

Liberty

Sikh view of life includes a concern for freedom of the individuals and people. Guru Teg Bahadur (the ninth Guru) offered his head but did not compromise his commitment to freedom of conscience. Ideal of liberty can be built on the premise of the moral standard postulated by the Sikh Gurus. In Sikh thought every human being is an end unto himself. The man is made the ultimate judge of the worth or desirability of every social and political institution like in social work. In reality all social institutions and associations are intended to help the individual attain the main object of his life; self realization or the development of the best in him. But to achieve this, the society must be organized on a healthy basis of justice, fellow feeling, liberty and equality and must be free from oppression of any kind.

In Sikhism liberty becomes real only when : (a) man is freed from the bondage of superstitions and oppressive social practices and beliefs; (b) economy is un-exploitative; (c) rulers are just and responsible; (d) freedom from fear is firmly ingrained in the minds of men; and (e) popular sovereignty is institutionalized.

Justice

A Sikh is supposed to live and die for justice and whoever does wrong has to suffer at the hands of dispenser of justice. The operative principle of justice in Sikhism is then an appropriate system of reward and punishments. In economic field, Sikhism condemned usurping the other man's right and acquiring the things which do not rightfully belong to a person and it believes amassing of wealth involves commission of sinful act. Squandering away the resources of nature in wasteful manner is also condemnable. Eating without working and living like parasites has been strongly disapproved. Beggary is degrading and this dehumanizing practice is thought to be the result of greed of the rulers and inhumanity of the rich.

In the administrative field, corruption, graft, lack of impartiality constitutes unjust practices. The root cause of all these social, economic, administrative and political ills is the ignorant, lethargic, indifferent, frightened and listless populace. Sikhism envisages a society wherein justice forms all its activities and institutions.

Universal welfare and brotherhood

According to Sikhism, affectionate, sweet and respectful attitude towards fellow human beings and commitment to the welfare of all is the hall mark of the social conduct of a religious person. Like social worker he must be companionate and considerate towards others and to be so one is required to exercise restraint over ones desires and cultivate temperate life style.

According to Sikhism, God blesses those who take care of the lowly. Sikhs fight the battle for the downtrodden but these are in the interest of total society in the sense that these help remove the sick and unhealthy parts of the body politic and give it a new momentum to move in the right direction. Universal love for the mankind is emphasized in Sikh's daily prayer for the well- beings of all humanity.

Sewa (Voluntary Service)

Sewa (voluntary service) is one of the key concepts of social work and is a prominent part of Sikh religion. Sewa comes from Sanskrit root *sev* (to serve, wait or attend upon, honour, or worship), is usually translated as 'service' or 'serving' which commonly relates to work paid for, but does not convey the sense in which the term is used in the Sikh tradition. Traditionally in the Indian (Hindu) society, *sewa* in the sense of worship (of Gods) has been the preserve of the high-caste Brahmans. In the Sikh sense, the two connotations seem to have merged together for the reasons: first, because of its egalitarian meaning (Sikhism does not recognize caste distinctions and hence no distinctive caste roles in it) and second, God in Sikhism is not apart from his creatures.

In Sikhism, illustrative models of voluntary service are organized for imparting training, in the Gurdwaras. Its simple forms are: sweeping and cleaning the floors of the Gurdwara, serving water to or fanning the congregation, offering provisions to and rendering any kind of service in the common kitchen-cum-eating house, dusting the shoes of the people visiting the Gurdwara, etc. *Sewa* in Sikhism is imperative for spiritual life. Three varieties of *sewa* are sanctioned in the Sikh lore: that rendered through the corporal instrument (*tan*), through the mental apparatus (*man*) and through the material wherewithal (*dhan*).

Ahimsa (non-violence)

The term *ahimsa* is formed by adding the negative prefix *a* to the word *himsa* which is derived from the Sanskrit root *han*, i.e. 'to kill', 'to harm', or 'to injure', and means not killing, not-harming, not-injuring. Sikhism accepts *ahimsa* as a positive value, and there are numerous hymns in the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Scripture, advising men to cultural and the ethical values of *daya* (compassion) and *prem* (love). It however, does not accept *ahimsa* as a mere absence of *himsa* or violence. Love, justice, equality, self-respect and righteousness are some of the overriding social values being promoted by Sikhism.

The positive value of *ahimsa* that is similar to that of social work values like compassion, love, universal brotherhood, freedom and self-respect, must prevail in Sikhism. However, if these are violated, man must resist. When all peaceful methods for such resistance are exhausted, the use of sword, so says Guru Gobind Singh, is lawful.

Sikhism and Service for Community

Sikhism emphasizes on Sangat, Pangat and Langar. Sangat is the congregation of Sants holy people or people gathered together for Naam Simran. It is the gathering together of the men and women of poor community to praise the Name of the God. Pangat forms the integral part of the 'Guru Ghar' as the people irrespective of caste, creed, wealth, sex and religion and sit together in a line. Langar is the common kitchen room in the Gurudwara where everyone irrespective of their caste, class, creed, religion and sex sit together and eat from the common kitchen. It is not for the person only. Community services of the Sikhs are identical to the community work concept inherent in social work.

Sikhism and Health

Sikhism values the sciences and the knowledge of healthcare practitioners, and Sikhs are not prohibited from using any medical procedures. They believe that

smoking cigarettes and drinking alcoholic beverages deters a person from God's way of life, so they are urged to avoid these practices.

Sikh Perspectives on Health Care

- The sanctity of life is an injunction, therefore;
 - Assisted suicide and euthanasia are not encouraged.
 - Therapeutic genetic engineering is accepted.
- Organ transplants and blood transfusions are accepted. If need be on medical grounds consult the patient and family before procedures requiring the removal of hair.
- Maintaining a terminal patient on artificial life support for a prolonged period in a vegetative state is not encouraged. Most Sikhs will probably specify a period of time during which they would prefer to be kept on life support.
- There is no contradiction to autopsies.
- Cleanliness is part of the Sikh way of life. Daily bathing and personal hygiene should be provided unless advised otherwise by the attending physician due to a medical reason. Washing and conditioning of hair, including male facial hair, with shampoo or soap should be done as frequently as needed.

The Healing Power of Naam

Divine name is the medicine for all ailments. The Gurus have stated that any ailment which cannot be cured by innumerable remedies, vanishes with the application of Naam. It is firmly believed that the recitations of Jaapji Sahib, Sukhmani Sahib and Dukh Bhanjani Sahib cure ailments of all kinds. It is fully effective for removing all mental, physical or spiritual pain and suffering. Hearing the true bani dispels sufferings, ailments and agonies.

It is important that funeral and cremation arrangements be made in advance in consultation with the family and according to the wishes of the dying or deceased patient, if possible. With minimum delay, the body is to be removed to the funeral home for expeditious cremation, unless the family is waiting for a close relative to arrive. Provide routine post-mortem care. The body should be covered with clean linens and shrouded. If the person is wearing any of the 5K's, they should remain with the body.

Allow the family and Sikh Granthi, to follow Sikh traditions for preparing the dead body for funeral. The dead body should be given the same respect as during life. For hospice care, the family may wash and clothe the body immediately after death.

Sikhism and Education

Education has a definite role to play in the process of social change, which will have to be planned and engineered in such a way that the people adapt to the constantly changing society and culture. Education is to do acculturation, socialization and to cultivate spiritual, moral, social and ethical values. All these points have been properly and relevantly understood by Sikh Gurus. Sikh Gurus used education as a tool to bring the social change and at the same time cultivate ethical, moral, spiritual and religious values. They did not allow the process of change to slow down.

Educational Values of Sikhs

Sikh Gurus lived at a time when there was political instability, social backwardness, cultural lag, administrative corruption, moral degradation, factual illusion, religious dogmas, spiritual ignorance, moral and cultural bankruptcy. Jogies (saints) exploited the masses and above all the women folk were not only ill treated but considered sub-humans.

Guru Angad, the second Guru stressed mental as well as physical development through education, Sports and discipline as the important characteristics of a Sikh. "Salvation can only be gained by education and knowledge and not by futile acts or rituals like piercing ears etc."

Education – A Tool for Social Change

In order to bring all these changes in vertical and horizontal perspective of social set up, Sikh Gurus made the use of the tool of education. Education in those days was rigid, narrow and non-productive. It was non-committal and non-compatible to the inclusion of human values and virtues and be in tune to human perfection. However, out of many methods, Sikh Gurus, had chosen the path of education and sharpened it. All these values, however, acted as educational instruments to bring social change and Gurus made use of it to the maximum for this purpose.

Sikhism and Caste System

A total rejection of caste system is a typical feature of the Sikh tradition. Sikhism in fact originated as a voice of protest against the many prevalent ills of contemporary Indian society. The caste system was most damaging and debilitating of them. Guru Nanak, the first Guru condemned caste and caste ideology as perverse, and rejected the authority of the Vedas and supremacy of the Brahmins. The Gurus rejected the aspect of Hindu dharma and issued their own new version of dharma, which was at least as far as caste was concerned, completely at variance with the Hindu Mores. They made the Dharma perfect and universal by blending the four castes into one.

Besides denying the authority of the Vedas and Shastras the Guru took some practical steps to impart an egalitarian thrust to the nascent Sikh Community. The twin institution of Sangat (company of the holy) and *Pangat* (commensality), where no discrimination on the basis of caste, birth and social status was observed, went a long way in inculcating in the Sikhs the spirit of equality, brotherhood and humanitarianism as in social work.

It must be borne in mind that there is vital distinction between caste and caste system — Jatts and Khatri among the Sikhs are in reality occupational classes and not castes as under the Varanasrama Dharma. Distinctions wherever noticed are not ethnic but economic. There has been no discrimination against anyone while attending religious gatherings or dining in Guru - Ka- Langar i.e. community kitchen.

Sikh values condemn the caste system and preached equality of all. So much so that Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus happily linked themselves with the low castes "The lowest of the lowly, lowest of the low born, Nanak seek their company, the friendship of the great is in vain." (A.G.P.15). Sikh Gurus did not try to bring this change only by their writings, but did so in their actions, by giving them respectable place in Guru Granth Sahib. He entered the Bani of Ravidass the shoe maker, Sadhana the Butcher and Namdev the Chhimba in Adi Granth.

At the time of the Gurus, women were considered very low in society. Society regarded women as inferior and a man's property. Women were treated as mere property whose only value was as a servant or for entertainment. They were considered seducers and distractions from man's spiritual path. Men were allowed polygamy but widows were not allowed to remarry but encouraged to bum themselves on their husband's funeral pyre (sati). Child marriage and female infanticide were prevalent and purdah (veils) was popular for women. Women were also not allowed to inherit any property.

The transformation the Sikh Gurus brought in woman's status was truly revolutionary. The concept of equality of woman with man not only gave woman an identity of her own but tended to free her from all kinds of fetters to which she was bound in the Hindu society. Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, raised his voice for justice to women and provided the scriptural basis for equality which was not to be found in the scriptures of other India born religions.

Women were no longer considered a source of sin. They came to be respected as equally good members of the society. In the medieval India, the practice of sati (immolation of a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband) was common. Guru Amar Das carried out a vigorous campaign for the abolition of this inhuman and barbarous practice. He also sought amelioration of the position of women by deprecating the custom of purdah (veil) and by encouraging widow remarriage. No woman could come to the congregation in purdah. He also spoke against the practice of polygamy and preached to have only one wife. He condemned female infanticide.

Issues, problems and empowerment of women are some of the important areas of intervention by professional social worker. Several hundred years before the advent of social work discipline, Sikhism promoted these aspects and strived to provide equality to women in every sphere in life.

3.4 CONCEPTS, VALUES AND PRACTICES COMMON TO SIKHISM AND SOCIAL WORK

1) Compassion, Love and Charity

Compassion towards suffering brethren is an inherent part of human nature. It is an innate human urge. It is because of this impulse that people have always come forward on their own will and accord to provide help to persons in distress. People want not only means for survival, but also love, affection, autonomy, respect, recognition, self-actualization, moral and spiritual development. Generally it is out of their natural feeling of devotion and dedication to serve the mankind or at least the members of their own society that people extend their helping hand to the needy. People generally do it because of their desire to go to heaven after death or to get rid of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth (for example in Hindu religion) by attaining salvation through charity or other forms of help to the oppressed and suppressed in the society. When we look into history of social work, we can find that social work started with charity. Both compassion and charity can be seen in Sikhism and Social work as well.

2) **Universal Brotherhood and Welfare**

Both Sikhism and social work believes In universal brotherhood and welfare. Both believe that an individual should have affectionate, pleasant and respectful attitude towards fellow human beings. An individual should not be selfish; he/she should think about the welfare of all and battle for the downtrodden as well as for the best interest of whole society.

3) **Equality and Liberty**

Both Sikhism and social work talk about equality for every individual in the society without discriminating on the basis of caste, creed, religion, gender, wealth and race. Everyone is equal and alike in front of God. They should be given love, respect and equal treatment. According to Sikhism man is made the ultimate judge of the worth or desirability of every social and political institution while social work also holds the same view. Both give emphasizes that everyone in the society has liberty to take his/her decisions. Sikh Gurus brought the transformation to the status of women which is also an area of social work concern. Women are to be respected as equally good members of the society. The Guru (Guru Amar Das) denounced Sati as an infliction of unforgivable cruelty on women and tried hard for the emancipation of women from this forced brutal social practice. He condemned female infanticide. Such opposition had been made by many social reformers in the past and professional social work also promotes same values.

4) **Justice**

In Sikhism an individual has to live and die for justice and whoever does wrong has to suffer at the hands of dispenser of justice. They believe that persons should be far away from sinful acts. Beggary was not considered to be good. Corruption, graft, lack of impartiality constitute unjust practices. Sikhism envisages a society wherein justice forms all its activities and institutions which is identical with modern social work. In social work, social workers are engaged changing the unjust societal conditions. They are particularly sensitive to the most vulnerable members of the society. For this, social workers are committed to promoting public understanding of the effects of such oppression and encouraging an appreciation of the richness to be gained from human diversity.

5) **Voluntary Service (Sewa)**

Voluntary service is one of the key concepts in the profession of social work. Many social workers give their services in the field of education, health and so on. Most of the voluntary organizations provide their services voluntarily in times of emergencies such as famine, flood and in such similar situations. Similarly, in Sikhism, voluntary services are inherent in the form of sweeping and cleaning the floors of the Gurudwara, serving water to or fanning the congregation, dusting the shoes of the people visiting Gurudwara. Such practices from the place of worship motivate the Sikhs to extend the same to the larger community.

6) **Social Responsibility**

Sikhism emphasizes that a Sikh should give charity to the needy and should care for the elderly. Social work's values also teach an individual that he/she should be socially responsible towards oneself, the family and the society. This value cautions the social worker not to neglect himself/herself, his/her family and the society in which he/she is living while he/she is discharging his/her professional duties.

7) Non-violence and Truth

Non-violence and speaking truth are inherent to both social work and Sikhism. In fact non-violence was one of the models of social action practiced by world leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and freedom fighters in South Africa. Social work has imbibed such methods, values and practices over the years from various religions, national leaders and social movements.

8) Langar (Community Kitchen)

In the practice of community kitchen, individuals develop the feeling of community togetherness and participation for a common purpose, self help, co-operation and coordination which is similar to the community organization method of social work. Langar is the common kitchen room in the Gurudwara where everyone irrespective of their caste, class, creed, religion and sex sit together in a pangat and eat from the common kitchen. In social work also a social worker is taught to respect an individual's racial and ethnic background, culture and religion and to avoid discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, sex and religion.

9) Education and Empowerment of Women

The Indian society has accorded differential status to women throughout the history. Both Sikhism and social work also give importance to education, which is a tool for social change and empowerment of women. In the words of the former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, "Empowering women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation; when women are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their thoughts and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation". Education and the empowerment of women are both essential and indispensable for a prosperous nation. The approach of Sikhism to empower women and to give them equal status is in line with the principles and values of social work.

Opposition to Caste System

Opposing to caste system can be seen in both Sikhism and social work. Emphasis has been given to non-discrimination on the basis of caste, and social status. In Sikh religion, there is no discrimination against anyone while attending religious gatherings or dining in Guru-ka-Langar i.e. community kitchen. Similarly in social work, it is expected that a social worker does not discriminate anyone on the basis of one's caste, sex, age, creed, colour and social status.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Space is given below for your answer.

1) Describe in brief "Sikhism and Education".

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3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this chapter on Sikhism, we have tried to understand one of the religions of India i.e. Sikhism and its various concepts and values related to social work and also examined the key beliefs and basic articles of Sikhism. The discussion covering various aspects clearly indicate the traces of social work values, philosophy and code of ethics enshrined in the Sikh religion. While studying the origin of social work values and principles, it is essential that a student of social work is familiar with the social work ideals inherent in the Sikh religion.

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UNIT 4 JAINISM AND SOCIAL WORK

*Gracious Thomas, Asutosh Pradhan**

Structure

- 4.0 Objective
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Basic Ideals of Jainism
- 4.3 Values of Jainism Inherent in Social Work
- 4.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.5 Further Reading and References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The present Unit has tried to trace various values, ideals and concepts pertaining to social work in Jainism. An attempt has been made to study the social issues and problems which the religion tried to address in the past and in the present day as well. After studying the Unit, you will be able to:

- understand the basic philosophy, values and principles of Jainism; and
- identify and trace social work values, ideals and concepts inherent in Jainism.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Jainism, traditionally known as Jain Dharma, is a religion and philosophy originating from BC Centuries of South Asia. In the 21st Century, Jainism is a minority religion in India with growing communities in the United States, Western Europe, Africa and elsewhere. Jains have contributed to sustain the ascetic tradition. Jainism has significantly influenced other religions, ethical, political and economic spheres in India for well over two millennia. Jainism gives stress on the spiritual independence and equality of all life with a particular emphasis on non-violence which is one of the strategies being promoted by social work profession in several countries. Self control is the means by which Jains attain Moksha.

Vardhamana Mahavira

The Jain order, has four components: monks, nuns (sadhvi), lay men and lay women (shravika). The founder of Jainism was Vardhamana (C. 599-527 BCE), later known as Mahavira, the twenty-fourth and final Tirthankar. A wandering ascetic teacher, who recalled Jains to the rigorous practice of their ancient faith, and lived in Magadha, presently known as Bihar State. Traditionally if we look, Lord Rishaba is regarded as the first to realize the truth, ultimately followed by Lord Parshwa (877 - 777 BCE) and Lord Vardhaman - Mahavira. Mahavira was contemporary of Siddhartha Gautam Buddha (C. 566-486 BCE), and like the Buddha he was the son of the king of a politically powerful clan. He was educated as a prince, married and fathered a child. Despite his royal upbringing, he left his home to pursue a life of asceticism in search of spiritual salvation, at the age of thirty.

Mahavira taught for thirty years with the patronization of kings and finally died of self-imposed starvation at the age of seventy-two. Mahavira stressed in his teaching

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the need to fight passions and bodily senses to purify the soul and gain omniscience. Many of his followers also became renouncers and abandoned worldly pleasures. The body of believers was divided into two groups. The first group was of renouncers, composed of both monks and nuns. The second group was lay practitioners, whose position was subordinate to the renouncers.

4.2 BASIC IDEALS OF JAINISM

Jain Dharma: An Overview

Mahavira serves the religion as an illustration both of spiritual realization and social reconstruction. This religion is also utterly humanistic in its approach, and spiritualistic in its depth. Though humanistic, yet it is wider than humanitarianism, for it embraces all the *sentiments of beings* from one-sense to all the five senses. Jaina formulation of ethical theory is grounded in Jaina metaphysics. It argues that conceptions of bondage and liberation, *punya* and *paap*, heaven and hell, pleasure and pain and the like, lose all their relevance and significance, when we exclusively recognize either their permanence as constituting the nature of substance. Its strong ethical discipline constitutes a distinct importance in Jainism. The Jain ethics tend to translate the fundamental principle of ahimsa into practice.

So far as the Jain community is concerned it is one of the ancient communities of our country. It is scattered throughout the length and breadth of India from hoary antiquity to the present day. Jains are also found in small numbers in various continents. Jainism being an independent religion, has its own vast sacred literature, distinct philosophy, particular outlook on life and special ethical rules of conduct based on fundamental principles of *Ahimsa*. The Jain principles of Ahimsa were accepted and promoted by several Kings and heads of State throughout Centuries. World leaders of modern times including Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela promoted Ahimsa and non-violence while fighting for restoring freedom for India and South Africa respectively.

Jain scriptures were written over a long period and the most cited is the Tattvartha Sutra, or Book of Reality written by Umasvati (or Umasvami), the monk-scholar, more than 18 centuries ago. The primary figures in Jainism are Tirthankars. Jainism has two main divisions, which began around the second century BC and was finalized in the first century CE, formed the Digambers ("Sky Clad"), or naked ascetics, and the Svetambaras ("White Clad"), who wear a simple white garment. Both the sects believe in ahimsa (or ahinsa), asceticism, karma, sansar and jiva.

Jainism promotes compassion for all human and non human life. Human life is valued as a unique, rare opportunity to reach enlightenment and to kill any person, no matter what crime he/she may have committed, is unimaginably abhorrent. It is the only religion that requires monks and laity, from all its sects and traditions, to be vegetarian. The values for human life promoted by Jainism is very relevant to the discipline of professional social work.

Jains are remarkably welcoming and friendly towards other faiths. Several non-jain temples in India are administered by Jains. The Jain Heggade family has run the Hindu institutions of Dharmasthala, including the Sri Manjunath Temple, for eight centuries. Jains willingly donate money to churches and mosques and usually help with interfaith functions. Jain monks, like Acharya Tulsi and Acharya Sushil Kumar, actively promoted harmony among rival faiths to defuse tension. In fact the

great contributions made by Jain Monks down the centuries to promote harmony among different groups of population are lessons for social work profession which is mandated to help people to help themselves in different problem situations.

Influence and Role in Indian Society

Jainism has existed continuously in India for over 2,500 years. Jain beliefs, particularly ahimsa, have had a significant influence on India's Culture. Asoka (B.C. 238), who became a Buddhist Emperor, stressed the practice of ahimsa in his reforms. In the twentieth century Mohandas (Mahatma Gandhi 1869-1948) was influenced by the concept of ahimsa when he developed his policy of nonviolent resistance in India's struggle for independence. The same strategy was followed by the freedom fighters of South Africa, particularly Nelson Mandela who was also awarded Nobel Peace Prize. Aung San Su Kyi of Myanmar is yet another world leader of the 21st Century who is following the non-violence path to restore democracy in that country.

Ethical Principles

Jainism has its own philosophy, values and principles that are very much in line with social work values, philosophy, principles and code of ethics. Jain monks practice strict asceticism. On the other hand the laity, who pursue less rigorous practices, strive to attain rational faith and to do as much good as possible in this lifetime. Following strict Jain ethics, the laity choose professions that are highly regarded and protect life and totally avoid any violent ways of earning a livelihood:

The Jain ethical code is taken very seriously. Five vows are followed by both laity and monks/nuns, which are

- 1) Non-violence (ahimsa, or ahinsa)
- 2) Truth (Satya)
- 3) Non-stealing (Asteya)
- 4) Chastity (Brahma-charya) and
- 5) Non-possession or Non-possessiveness (Aparigraha).

For laypersons, 'Chastity' means confining sexual relations within marriage. For monks/nuns, it means complete celibacy. Non-violence involves being vegetarian and some choose to be vegetarian. Jains are expected to be non-violent in thought, word and deed, towards humans and every living creature. While performing holy deeds, Svetambara Jains wear cloths over their mouths and noses to avoid spittle falling on texts or revered Images.

Along with five vows, Jains avoid harboring ill will towards others and practice forgiveness. Their belief is that Atma (Soul) can lead one to become Prmatma (liberated soul) and this must come from one's inner self. No Jiv can give another the path to salvation, but can only show the way. In social work too, the worker is a guide and philosopher to the client who only shows the way and the final decision/act is left to the choice of the client.

The 18 Sinful Activities

Jains refrain from all types of violence (Ahimsa) and have isolated 18 types of sinful activities that which, if eradicated, can eventually lead to liberations. These

sins are violence; untruth; theft; unchastity; possessiveness; anger; arrogance; greed; deceit; attachment; hatred; arguing; accusation; gossip; criticism; predilection and disliking; malice; and wrong belief. Mahatma Gandhi was deeply influenced by this Jain emphasis on peaceful, protective living and made it an integral part of his own philosophy. Gandhiji's ideology was fully based on non-violence. He urged his followers to speak the truth, and give utmost importance to the dignity and worth of an individual. He believed in the dignity of labour and the right of all people to earn a livelihood. He did not impose his views on other people, but showed understanding and love for them. Jainism, its methods and values are in line with practices, goals, philosophy and methods in the profession of social work.

Of the five ethical principles prescribed by Mahavira to his followers, Ahimsa is considered to be the most important. It is a positive philosophy of love contained in the ethics of non-violence. *Jainism emphasizes on complete absence of ill-will. In case of truth, householders are not insisted to observe it strictly.* The spirit of the principles is that: Ahimsa is the most important virtue to be followed; all the virtues are to be rigidly followed in such a way that the principles of non-violence are not broken. Some exceptions were made in regard to these and avoidance of falsehood in regard to all other aspects was all that was advocated as constituting of *Satya*. *Asteya* signifies the strict adherence to one's own possession, not even wanting to take hold of another's. All the evil practices observed in trade and commerce such as adulterating the materials and not giving others their money, not weighing or measuring properly and indulging in black marketing constitute *Asteya*. Carefully and scrupulously avoiding such malpractices constitutes the observance of the *Asteyavrat*.

Householders are expected to relative observance of this principle. Living a life of *Brahmacharya* for a householder is being completely faithful to one's wife (or husband) as the case may be. Even thinking of other women (or man) would be doing damage to the principle. It is also synonymous to sex purity and it helps the individual in securing for him/her and for others domestic happiness. It is also a deterrent against sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS etc., which is being propagated extensively today throughout the world. The principle of APARIGRAHA (non-possession) means necessarily to renounce all his/her property and wealth before taking to the "order". Thoughts about his/her former possessions may still linger on with him/her in his/ her mind. The ascetics have to combat this tendency to retrospect about what he/she no longer "possesses". Though, this reference is mainly made to property or wealth, strictly. Speaking the principle is extended to cultivation of a particular type of attitude towards life. Man's attachments towards his/her home and people as also money and other things relating to them becomes so much that it will not be an exaggeration to maintain that he/she considers them all as his/her possessions.

Amongst Jains, Digambaras hold the view that *women are not entitled to Moksha in this life*. On the contrary

Svetambaras believe that women can reach *Nirvana* in this life. However, even a small community of Jains is divided into more than 100 castes. Each caste is formed of very small groups. Since all these castes are endogamous, many have necessarily to be constrained to remain unmarried and as such their population seems to be fast declining. There are nearly sixty sub-castes whose population is estimated to be less than 100.

Contribution to Indian Culture

Though the Jains constitute only 0.4 per cent of the Indian population, their contributions to Indian culture and society have been considerable and remarkable. Jains are among the wealthiest of all Indians and also among the most philanthropic. They run numerous schools, colleges and hospitals and are the most important patrons of the Somapuras, the traditional temple architects in Gujarat. In contrast to some religious groups, Jains encourage their monks to go for higher education and to get involved in research. Jain monks and nuns, particularly in Rajasthan, have published numerous research monographs. This is unique among Indian religious groups, and parallels the Christian priests and nuns. According to the 2001 census, the Jains are India's most literate community. India's oldest libraries at Patan and Jaisalmer are preserved by Jain institutions.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Space is given below for your answers.

1) What are the five vows in Jainism?

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2) Describe the contribution of Jainism to Indian Culture.

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4.3 VALUES OF JAINISM INHERENT IN SOCIAL WORK

The Jain Community and their Social Organisation

The Jain community is small in demographic size because of which they are a very closely knit group. Though there is no strong evidence of social service being done by this community in the past, however in the recent years the Jain community have come forward and have established various types of social institutions for providing social services for the Jain community in particular and also to the general population. Charity among the Jains extends to the rest of the animal and plant kingdom also i.e., cows, birds, insects.

Institutions of Charity Promoted by the Jains

The Jain institutions can be broadly divided into two categories, namely, charitable institutions run for the general populace and those exclusively for the Jains. It is obvious that the Jains are in a position to maintain a large number of institutions because they are a relatively rich community. By running institutions of the first

type they have secured the good-will of others and through the institutions of the second type they have tried to protect their religion and stabilise their community for all these years.

The Jains are inclined to start charitable institutions for the benefit of all people irrespective of religion, caste or creed because Jainism has enjoined upon its followers to show compassion to all living beings and especially to the needy. Further, it is one of the six daily duties of a Jaina layman to give something in the form of gift to others. The gifts have been classified into four kinds, namely, gifts of food (*ahara-dana*), protection (*abhaya-dana*), medicine (*ausadha-dana*), and learning (*sastra-dana*).

Institutions established for the general public are in the form of *dharmasalas* or rest houses, *anna-chhatralayas* or alm-houses, at pilgrim and other centres for the benefit of poor people; educational institutions like schools and colleges, public libraries, vocational training centres for development of skills in specific trades, *ausadhalayas* i.e. dispensaries and hospitals, mobile medical units for providing free medical services through camps in poverty stricken, rural and remote areas.

Other than these the Jains established and managed special institutions called *Pinjarapola* for the protection and care of helpless and decrepit animals and birds. It is evident that the practice of service was not limited only to the human beings that proves a point that Jainism has an ecological perspective. A strong belief in this concept will help in promoting and maintaining ecological balance and sustainable development.

Jain Associations and Charity Organisations

Though people belonging to various Jain Sects have established their own institutions as per secretarian affiliation some organizations were established that cut across the Jains of all sects and sub-sects and have made concerted efforts in a more organised manner. Sucumbrella organisations have been carrying out various welfare activities in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka and other parts of Bihar.

In the second category of Jain institutions, those of a religious nature get prominence over those of social or educational in character. Such institutions are basically involved in the preservation of canonical literature, books and manuscripts that are rich in traditional wisdom and have high intrinsic value. Institutions named as *Grantha-Bhandaras* are often housed in the Jain temples. Of late these institutions have initiated the editing, translation and publication of these works in both print and digital form. These literature which are mostly in *Prakrit*, are being produced in English and other prominent Indian languages so that the inherent richness can benefit the society at large, both at the national and international level, and help establish a peaceful and just order.

Composition of Jain Associations: The Jains have started various institutions of a social character for the betterment of their community. In the first place, they have organised a large number of associations with a view to bring the members together and to solve several social problems. A majority of such associations are formed by a particular caste or *gaccha*. Sometimes the associations are confined to the particular caste or *gaccha* members hailing from a certain locality. While others are formed on a regional basis which is technically open to all Jains of that region but in reality they are dominated and run by the members of one sect.

Further, both the sects (Digambar and Svetambara) and practically all the sub-sects have their associations of an all-India character.

All these small and big associations have tried and to a considerable extent succeeded in eradicating irreligious and bad practices of their members.

Like members of other communities the Jains have recently launched some co-operative institutions *for* their benefit. The main *form* of cooperation is in the field of housing *for* providing affordable and cheap residential space.

A Culture of Giving

Where they could not start such institutions on their own accord, they help such projects and programmes run by NGOs and voluntary organisations which are secular and non profit in character. This is done either by constructing buildings for them or by making substantial donations to them. The Jains of late have developed a *culture of giving* by providing donations in cash and kind for projects and programmes pertaining to social service, social reform, epidemics, relief and rehabilitation work at the time of natural calamities and disasters like floods, famine, earthquake, or the recent incidents like the tsunami, etc. The Jains have contributed liberally and unsparingly to relieve mankind affected by such natural catastrophes.

Educational Institutions promoted by the Jains through charity or otherwise for promoting education

Among the variety of institutions established by the Jains, educational institutions have found the maximum favour. Along with religious education, general education is also provided not only to the Jain community but also for the general population of society. For that matter gurukulas, regular and boarding/residential schools and colleges have been established by the Jain community in practically all big towns and cities all over India. Likewise, Hostels are also established for providing accommodation on nominal fee basis or for free to the children belonging to poor Jain families who are pursuing their education. The students residing in such hostels are free to join any institution for their education but they are compulsorily required to take some elementary religious education, for which provision is made by the authorities, and to lead a religious life.. The poor and deserving students are also provided with scholarships for the pursuit of education. Funds are constituted, in the name of Jain Tirthankaras or the religious heads, to provide for scholarships or loans to deserving students wherever they may be. Preference is given to those who opt for Jainism or technical/ professional courses. Such a provision has helped the spread of education among the Jain community.

Higher Education: In the field of higher education and for the promotion of the high ideals and rich knowledge that is inherent in Jainism or Jain Philosophy the Jain community established the Jain Vishva Bharati University (JVBU), a *Deemed-to-be University*, in 1991 at Ladnun, Rajasthan. Though promoted by the Terapanth sect of the Svetambara Jain community it has been successful in representing the entire Jain community as such in terms of academic programmes, research and discourses.

Lord Mahavira said 2600 years ago – ‘Nanassa Saram Ayaro’ i.e. “Right conduct is the essence of knowledge”. This spiritual voice is the motto of the University. Every programme and every activity is directed towards the realisation of this

motto. The goal of the JVBI has been clearly spelt out in the preamble of the JVBI's constitution which reads "The Jain Vishva Bharati University is an endeavour in the direction of putting into practice and to promote and propagate the high ideals of Anekant (non-absolutist outlook), Ahimsa (Non-violence), Tolerance and Peaceful Co-existence for the weal of mankind". The JVBU has a resolve to constitute and establish itself as an Institute of Advanced Studies, Research and Training in Jainology in the context of comparative studies in Jainology, World Religions, Ahimsa (Non-violence) and World Peace." The mission is to integrate modern science with ancient wisdom of the great spiritual practitioners and visionary seers. The institution seeks to interweave moral and spiritual norms and values with the materialistic and economic fibers of mankind to foster and develop universal human relationships for the peaceful co-existence of individuals, groups, communities, sects, races, religions and nations.

The University offers post-graduate, under-graduate, diploma and certificate level programmes and courses in both regular and distance mode. The courses offered are in the field of Jainology and Comparative Religion and Philosophy; Prakrit and Jain Agam; Science of Living, Preksha Meditation and Yoga; Non-violence, Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies; Social Work; Computer Applications; and Education. The unique feature of all the programmes offered is the integration of Spiritualism, Science of Living, values and Ethics that are unique to Indian and Jain Philosophy.

The programme in social work offered by JVBU has incorporated a separate and compulsory paper titled

"Ethico-spiritual Approaches to Social Service" which is an innovation that was long due in the field of social work education and practice. The objective behind the introduction of this course is to enrich the social work curriculum with the rich philosophical, ethical and service components that religion has to offer to modern society which is grappling to find solutions to problems like social unrest, war, communal violence and conflicts, terrorism, intolerance, consumerism, crime, drug addiction, etc. The course covers the basic tenets of all important religions – their philosophy, mythology, symbology, methodology and institutional forms. It deals with the socio-cultural and political context and origin of various movements like Sufism, Bhakti movement, etc. and the contributions of religious and social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ramkrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, etc.

Significance of Jainism from a Social Work Perspective

Apart from involvement in religious work the Jain Acharyas true to the spirit of Jain philosophy have made indelible contributions by working incessantly for the welfare of mankind - eradicating social evils, reforming social customs, building up national character and educating the masses about the principles of non-violence, universal peace and brotherhood.

Establishment of Social and Economic Equality

Jain egalitarianism rejects the Hindu division of society into higher and lower castes. It finds no basis for the idea that makes one caste superior to the other. On the contrary, it finds castism an evil based on hatred, pride, and deluded vision.

The most significant contribution of Jainism in the social field was the establishment of social equality among the four *varnas* i.e. classes prevalent in the society. Lord Mahavira succeeded in organising his large number of followers into a compact social order quite distinct from that of the Brahmanic social order of his time that was replete with inequality, discrimination and inter-caste rivalry. His social order was such that provided for social mobility and did away with the criterion of birth for membership into any class.

Another major contribution of Jainism is the principle of *aparigraha* or non-possession or non-acquisitiveness which means that one should abstain from the greed and worldly possessions. The vow of *parigraha-parimana vrata* i.e. the vow to limit one's worldly possessions, is very relevant in the present age of consumerism and is noteworthy because it indirectly aims at economic equalisation by peacefully preventing undue accumulation of capital in individual hands. In addition to this the Jaina concept of *chaturvidha-dana*, i.e. four-fold gifts (giving food to the hungry and the poor (relief), saving the lives of people in danger, distribution of medicines and spreading knowledge) can help in providing relief to people who are in dire states and cannot fend for themselves.

Religious Emancipation of Women

Another distinct contribution made by the Jain Acharyas in the field of social reform was in the direction of raising the status of women in India. In the latter part of the Vedic period women had practically been reduced to the status of Shudras. For example, they were debarred from the right of initiation and investment with the sacred thread. They were considered to have no business with the sacred religious texts.

Since the days of Rishab the low position of women was definitely changed in many ways. They removed various restrictions imposed on women especially in the practice of religion including the study of the sacred texts and adopting ascetic life.

Impetus to Female Education

The religious independence given to women had its repercussions in other fields also. Equality of opportunity was accorded to women in several social spheres of action. The importance of imparting education to females, along with males, was realised even in the ancient past by Rshabdev, the first Tirthankara, who had advised his two young daughters, Brahmi and Sundari, that “only when you would adorn yourself with education your life would be fruitful because just as a learned man is held in high esteem by educated persons, a learned lady also occupies the highest position in the female world.” According to Jain tradition women are expected to know 64 arts which include dancing, painting, music, aesthetics, medicine, domestic science, etc.

Inculcation of the Belief on Self-reliance

Tirtankara Mahavira and the Jain Acharyas launched an intensive attack on the attitude of complete submission to God by the people for attaining their final objective in life, viz. liberation. They clearly proclaimed that nothing here or elsewhere depends on the favours of God but everything depends on the actions of the people. Divine dispensation was thoroughly rejected. This philosophical perspective of Jainism is co-terminus with the saying “Helping people to help themselves” that

professional social work identifies with. Very recently Noble Laureate Amartya Sen's 'capability approach' (Sen, 1990) that proposes for the building of capacities of individuals and communities infact advances the concept of liberation that Jainism promotes as said earlier.

Emphasis on Non-violence, Tolerance and Culture of Peace

The major contribution of Jain Philosophy is on the emphasis on the observance of Ahimsa i.e. non-violence to all living beings to the maximum extent possible. In the present age that is replete with violence, terrorism, communal conflicts and war, the principles of non-violence as propounded in Jainism would come handy. A major cause of violence at the community, national and global level and among castes, classes, religions, regions, and nations is intolerance. The theory of *Anekantvad* or nonabsolutism i.e. belief in the others point of views is also significant or a respect to the view-points of the other as significant, will help in removing intolerance and help in fostering an environment of dialogue for peaceful co-existence. This will ensure in setting the pace for a culture of peace and a just social order.

Development of Balanced and Integrated Personality

Literally *Jina* means a conqueror, that is, one who has conquered the worldly passions like desire, hatred, anger, greed, pride, etc. by one's own strenuous efforts and has been liberated himself from the bonds of worldly existence. This concept of the human being is close to the one that a professional social worker has to strive for, that is, in terms of the 'professional self who has to practice self restraint in terms of professional fees that he charges, refraining from counter-transference, etc. Meditation has been given a very important place in Jainism.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Space is given below for your answer.

- 1) Write a short note on "Jainism and its relation to social work".

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4.4 LET US SUM UP

Though the followers of this religion are found all over the country, they are concentrated mainly in the western part of India: Kamataka, Maharashtra, Gujrat, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Historians have noted the fact that Jainism originated with kshatriya belonging to the gana-sanghas. This religion was associated with non orthodox thinking which rejected vedic authority, Brahmanic and the caste orders and founded orders comprising bhikkhus who renounced the world.

In this Unit we have tried to outline the evolution of social work. A brief description about the history of this religion, its teachings and the values that are common to social work and Jainism have been given in this Unit. In a nutshell, the concept of Ahimsa or non-violence is the main contribution which has stood the time of test as far as Jainism is concerned.

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UNIT 5 BUDDHISM AND SOCIAL WORK

*Gracious Thomas, Nita Kumari**

Structure

5.0 Objectives

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Basic Ideals of Buddhism

5.3 Linkages of Buddhist Ideology in Social Work

5.4 Concepts, Values and Practices Common to Buddhism and Social Work

5.5 Let Us Sum Up

5.6 Further Readings and References

5.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit tries to identify the traces of social work values, concepts and ideals in Buddhism. The religion has preached the concept of love of self and neighbours and the beauty in serving those in need. Social work has its roots in human values and several of these values can be traced back from Buddhism. After studying the Unit, you should be able to:

- understand Buddhism, its philosophy, values and principles; and
- trace various ideals pertaining to social work in Buddhism.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Buddhism social welfare is considered as the work done in different forms intended for the benefit of mankind. Such a work ranges from simple individual acts of charity, teaching and training to organized service in different forms for the betterment of the community which are common areas of social work intervention. Buddhism is a very pragmatic religion. It believes that the world in which we live is sorrow-laden and that it is possible to transcend it. Buddhism, it may be said, is primarily concerned with ways and means to get rid of this sorrow. It is in this context that the idea of social service in terms of Buddhism becomes important. Before talking about Buddhism and Social Work, it may be worthwhile to know about the views of the Buddha on those issues that are directly connected to the concept of social work.

5.2 BASIC IDEALS OF BUDDHISM

Life of Buddha

Historically Buddha Siddhartha Gautam, founder of Buddhism was born in the city of Lumbini and raised in Kapilavastu, near the modern town of Taulihawa, Nepal. After Siddhartha was born, his father, king Siddhartha, was supposedly visited by a wise man and told that Siddhartha would either become a great king (Chakravartin) or a holy man (Sadhu). Determined to make Siddhartha a King, the father tried to protect his son from the unpleasant realities of daily life. So, he made arrangements in such a way that Gautama would never know worldly sufferings. Despite his

father's efforts, at the age of twenty-nine, he discovered the suffering of his people, first through an encounter with an elderly man and on subsequent gaps outside the palace where he encountered various sufferings of people such as a diseased man, a decaying corpse, and an ascetic.

Gautam, deeply depressed by these sights, sought to overcome old age, illness and death by living the life of an ascetic. Gautama escaped from his palace, leaving behind the royal life to become a mendicant. For a time on his spiritual quest, Buddha experienced with extreme asceticism, which at that time was seen as a powerful spiritual practice: such as fasting, holding the breath, and exposure of the body to pain. He found, however that these ascetic practices brought no genuine spiritual reliefs.

After abandoning asceticism and concentrating instead upon meditation and, according to some sources, anapanasati (awareness of breathing in and out), Gautama is said to have discovered what Buddhists call the middle way – a path of moderation that lies mid-way between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. He accepted a little milk and rice pudding from a village girl and then, sitting under a pipal tree or sacred fig. (*ficus religiosa*), now known as the Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, he vowed never to arise until he had found the truth. His five companions, believing that he had abandoned his search and become undisciplined, left. After 49 days of meditation, at the age of 35, he attained bodhi, also known as “Awakening” or “Enlightenment” in the west. After his attainment of bodhi, he was known as Buddha or Gautama Buddha and spent the rest of his life by teaching his insights (Dharma). He died around the age of 80 in Kushinagara.

Precepts in Buddhism

There are eight precepts in Buddhism. Among them five precepts are not given in the form of commands such as “thou shalt not...”, but are training rules in order to live a better life in which one is happy, without worries, and can meditate as well. They are:

- 1) To refrain from taking life. (non-violence towards sentient life forms).
- 2) To refrain from taking that which is not given (not committing theft).
- 3) To refrain from sexual misconduct (abstinence from immoral sexual behaviour)
- 4) To refrain from lying. (speaking truth always)
- 5) To refrain from intoxicants which lead to loss of mindfulness (refrain from using drugs or alcohol)

In the eight precepts, the third precept on sexual misconduct is made more strict and becomes a precept of celibacy.

The three additional rules of the eight precepts are:

- 6) To refrain from eating at the wrong time (only eat from sunrise to noon)
- 7) To refrain from dancing, using jewelry, going to shows etc.
- 8) To refrain from using a high, luxurious bed.

Buddha has also taught with clarity, how people should live with their family members and other members of the society, bringing happiness not only to themselves but also to the world.

Condition for the Welfare of a Community

The seven conditions for the welfare, prosperity, and happiness of any community, nation or country have been described in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta of the Dighanikaya. These conditions must be considered before serving the people for their gradual development and welfare. The conditions include:

- 1) To assemble on occasion whenever necessary to discuss the affairs of the community.
- 2) To do everything by consensus.
- 3) To respect old traditions and not transgress them.
- 4) To respect and obey elders and superiors.
- 5) To respect, worship and honor all religions.
- 6) To honour and respect all holy people, irrespective of their caste, creed or gender.
- 7) To respect women in general.

Buddha and Buddhism

The sixth century B.C. witnessed a great restlessness in the world and it was an era of awakening. During this period there was a spiritual and moral unrest too in the society. As a result, reformists raised their voices against the evils of existing social order in their respective countries and showed new ways to the people. This period of religious awakening prevailed not only in India but also in other parts of the world. As a result of this spiritual unrest in the 6th century B.C. many reformists' schools, thoughts, doctrines, and streams sprang up. Of these, mainly *Buddhism* and *Jainism* survived and the rest either died out or got outlived.

Gautam Buddha was the founder of *Buddhism* and one of the noblest and the greatest teachers of the world. *Buddhism* was based on the noble teachings of *Buddha*.

The *Buddha* himself wrote nothing but his teachings were handed down through his disciples. *Buddhism* was also one of the radical movements reacting to the dictatorship which arose in Asia during the later part of B.C.

Buddhism is a *psycho-ethical* tradition which is manifested mainly in two paths as a process of thought of gradual pacification (*Pariyatti*) and a way of practical application in life (*Patipatti*). Thought unfolds the nature of reality, eradicates the ignorance and resents admonition for visualization of truth face to face. The only problem is the suffering of mankind. The solution is the attainment of a state of bliss and the path is the tri-stepped way, passing from one point to another. It is

Dukh (suffering); the latter is *Nibbana* (*Moksha* or *Nirvana*) and the path, the *Magga*. Non-violence (*ahimsa*) is one of the main planks of the teachings of the Buddha. Non-violent attitude towards all living beings, which is the first precept in Buddhism, is based upon the principle of mutual attraction and rightness common to all nature. Buddha openly opposed the caste system as propagated by the brahmanas and according to him no person could be superior or inferior in society merely by reason of birth.

Gautam Buddha clearly pointed out that the position of man depended on his conduct. This meant that it was a person's attitude and behaviour (*karma*) which made a man superior or inferior. The Buddha had a very positive and revolutionary attitude towards women. The Buddha opened the doors of his Samgha and Dharma for the equal benefit of both men and women – a position that was exceptional for the time and was perceived as radical and dangerous by his critics. Adoption of such a position reflects an attempt on the part of the Buddha to locate virtue and spiritual potential beyond conventional gender distortions. A large number of women took advantage of such an opportunity. There is enough evidence to suggest that women not only were conspicuously present in the earliest community, but also seem to have held prominent and honored places both as practitioners and teachers. It cannot be denied that the Buddha unfolded new horizons for women by laying the foundations of the Order of Nuns. This social and spiritual advancement for women was ahead of the times and, therefore, must have drawn many objections from men, including monks. Despite various forms of disadvantages and harassments, the combination of education in monasteries, free time, and a sense of personal moral superiority must have led many women into an organized life of unknown possibilities. Here, women were able to indulge in activities outside the home, including proselyte, development of organizational skills, and above all, an atmosphere where they could experience a sense of accomplishment.

Another very interesting aspect of the teachings of the Buddha was that he preached nonwastefulness, simplicity, contentment, liberality, and generosity. This aspect of the teachings of the Buddha is very relevant in the profit-driven global economy which is guided by unbridled development and gigantism and non-wastefulness. By pointing out that the vulgar chase of luxury and abundance is the root-cause of suffering, Buddhism encourages restraint, voluntary simplicity, and contentment. Within this framework of Buddhist teachings, an attempt has been made to examine the *theory* and *practice* of social work in *Buddhist* tradition.

The teachings of the Buddha, clearly indicate that early Buddhists were very much concerned with the creation of social conditions favorable to the individual cultivation of socially engaged values. In course of time, Buddhism became a major religion and spread through most parts of Asia.

Buddhism and its Followers

There were many followers of the Buddha in the ancient period. Menander I, also known as Milinda was an Indo Greek king who ruled in the middle of the second century B.C. He was famous as a great patron and supporter of Buddhism. He was a great benefactor that the community looked upon him as a saviour who took up social activities for their welfare. Kanishka was a Kushan of Yuezhi ethnicity who ruled over the Northern part of the Indian subcontinent during first century B.C. A number of legends about Kanishka were preserved in Buddhist religious traditions. Along with the Indian kings Ashoka and Harshavardhana, he is considered by Buddhists to have been one of the greatest Buddhist kings. Along with social welfare related activities, he also encouraged Buddhist missionary activities abroad.

King Harshavardhan is famous as one of the greatest Buddhist rulers of ancient India. He became a patron of Buddhist art and literature. He made numerous

endowments to the University at Nalanda for spreading education. All these kings used Buddhist teachings for social and welfare work for public.

In the modern period, Buddhism has spread to various countries of Europe, America, and Australia. Though Buddhism has been taking up social welfare activities since its inception but in the recent years, the involvement of Buddhist in social work has increased tremendously. A lot of Buddhist leaders are getting involved in social work. The Buddhist monks and nuns are coming out of the monasteries and do social service along with and for the common people. It is a new trend in the sense that the areas of interest are vast and extensive.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's unique contribution in reviving Buddhism showed its relevance in the modern society. He adopted Buddhism formally in 1956. Dr. Ambedkar saw Buddhism as offering a basis for a just society. He believed that democracy requires an attitude of respect for one's fellow citizens, and this requires that they have a moral sense. He saw Buddhism as training people in ethical responsibility and changes underlying attitudes. Various new and old buildings dedicated to the Buddhist religion are used by traveling or resident monks. The innovations in the Ambedkar movement for social work and justice in Buddhism represent their social unity in the face of continued inequality in society. Besides Ambedkar, there are also other Buddhist converts influenced by the Maha Bodhi Society of Anagarika Dharmapala who are involved in social work for mankind. 'The Dalai Lama and his followers are working for the social welfare of the society. Tibetan Buddhists are pre-occupied with social work in various fields like education, health services, prison activities etc. In fact, the Dalai Lama was conferred the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

Neo-Buddhist Movement in India

Buddhism is against the caste based social inequality. Buddhism has been used as the instrument of eradication of ascribed social inequality. Hence the most significant Buddhist mass revival of the new age was led by Ambedkar in India. He found in Buddhism the message for the upliftment of the oppressed in India. He used and interpreted Buddhism as the ideology to bring social equality and justice for the oppressed mass, especially for the scheduled castes. After many years of spiritual search, he became convinced that Buddhism was the only ideology that could effect the eventual liberation of out castes in India. On 14th October 1956 he performed a mass 'Consecration' of the Scheduled Castes to Buddhism in Nagpur, Maharashtra. The new converts were mostly from the Scheduled Mahars Castes (a Scheduled Caste) (Gamez, La. 1987:381). This mass conversion was aimed at the rejection of untouchability and for participation of the oppressed castes towards undertaking more social and political activities for their liberation from the exploitative forces. One aspect of conversion movement was to radically undermine the Hindu dominant culture by rejecting its basic tenets of hierarchy, purity and pollution. This understanding of Hindu culture created a tendency of negation among the Dalits of Maharashtra. This religion was very important in as much as it developed negative consciousness which drove the Dalits of Maharashtra to undertake more creative and organized political action for their emancipation. Ambedkar's idea behind conversion was to make it a part of the larger political movement based on the material contradictions inherent in Indian Society (Guru, 1989: 419-420).

Check Your Progress I

Note: Space is given below for your answers.

1) What are the eight precepts in Buddhism?

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2) Name any two followers of Buddhism.

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5.3 LINKAGES OF BUDDHIST IDEOLOGY IN SOCIAL WORK

Buddhism and an Exploration of Social Action

In Buddhism “social action” refers to the many kinds of action intended to benefit mankind. These range from simple individual acts of charity, teaching and training, organized kinds of service, “Right Livelihood” in and outside the helping professions, and through various kinds of community development as well as to political activity in working for a better society.

It is clear from the evidence of the Buddha’s discourses, or suttas in the Digha Nayaka that early Buddhists were very much concerned with the creation of social conditions favourable to the individual cultivation of Buddhist values. An outstanding example of this, in later times, is the remarkable “welfare state” created by the Buddhist emperor, Ashoka (B.C. 274-236). Buddhism arose in India as a spiritual force against social injustices, against degrading superstitious rites, ceremonies and sacrifices; it denounced the tyranny of the caste system and advocated the equality of all men; it emancipated the woman and gave her complete spiritual freedom. (Rahula, 1978).

Social Action and the Problem of Suffering

Buddhism, however, is humanism in that it rejoices in the possibility of a true freedom as something inherent in human nature. The ultimate freedom for Buddhism is to achieve full release from the root causes of all suffering and social evils: greed, hatred and delusion. To weaken, and finally eliminate them in oneself as well as in society, is the basis of Buddhist ethics. Buddhism offers to the individual human being a religious practice, a way, leading to the transcendence of suffering. Buddhist social action arises from this practice and contributes to it. From suffering arises desire to end suffering. The secular humanistic activist sets himself the endless task of satisfying that desire, and perhaps hopes to end social suffering by

constructing utopias. The Buddhist, on the other hand, is concerned ultimately with the transformation of desire. Hence, he contemplates and experiences social action in a fundamentally different way from the secular activist. In short, Buddhist social action is justified ultimately and above all by the existence of social as well as individual karma. Immediately it is simply concerned with relieving suffering; ultimately, in creating social conditions which will favour the ending of suffering through the individual achievement of transcendent wisdom.

Buddhism is, in one sense, something that one does. It is a guide to the transformation of individual experience. In the traditional Buddhist teaching, the individual sets out with a karmic inheritance of established volitions, derived from his early life, and certainly from his social environment, a part of his karmic inheritance. Nevertheless, the starting point is the individual experiencing of life.

Social Action: Giving and Helping

Social action is an act of giving (dana), but there is a direct act which we call charitable action, whether it be the UNESCO Relief Banker's Order or out all night with the destitute soup kitchen. "Whoever nurses the sick serves me", said the Buddha. David Bradon, who has written on art of helping, reminds us that "respect is seeing the Buddha nature in the other person. It means perceiving the superficiality of positions of moral authority. The other person is as good as you. However untidy, unhygienic, poor, illiterate and bloody-minded we may seem, he is worthy of your respect. He also has autonomy and purpose. He is another form of nature" (Brandon, 1976).

Teaching the Dharma is one of the most valuable sources of learning open to a Buddhist. Buddhism is a systematic self-help practice, in which the teacher can do no more than point the way and, together with fellow Buddhists, provide support, warmth and encouragement in a long and lonely endeavour. This is in fact very close to social work definition of "helping people to help themselves". Buddhists always seek to cultivate a spirit of openness, co-operation, goodwill and equality in their relationships.

Violence and Non-violence in Buddhism

The first precept of Buddhism is to abstain from taking life. But it must be made clear that the Buddhist "percepts" are not commandments; they are "good resolutions", sincere aspirations voluntarily undertaken. They are signposts. Buddhists always try to avoid direct involvement in violent action or in earning their living in a way that, directly or indirectly does violence.

Well known is Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent struggle against religious intolerance and British rule in India, and also the Rev. Martin Luther King's black people's civil rights movement in the United States. A familiar situation for many people today is the mass demonstration against authority, which may be conducted either peacefully or violently. Robert Aitken Roshi recalls the care of a friend who organized an anti-nuclear demonstration at a naval base passing through a small town in which virtually every household had at least one person who gained his livelihood by working at the base. Consequently, when the friend visited every single house before the demonstration he hardly expected to win the people over to his cause. But he did convince them that he was a human being who was willing to listen to them and who had faith in them as human beings. "We finally had our demonstration, with four thousand people walking through this tiny community,

nobody resisted us, nobody threw rocks. They just stood and watched (The Ten Directions, Los Angeles Zen Center, I (3) September 1980).

Buddhist Spiritual Centers

The Buddhist communities and centers of social outreach are the examples of good society. The activities of such communities/centers are:

- 1) Any healthy spiritual community, by its very existence, offers to the world a living example not only of the good life but also of the good society. Certain spiritual values are manifested in its organization and practice in a way not possible in print or in talk.
- 2) Such communities are commonly reaching and training communities. They offer classes and short courses and also longer periods of training in residence, in which the trainees become veritable community members. And it may be true in terms of the “openness” of the community to outsiders who wish for the present to open up their communication with the community through some participation in work, ritual, teaching, meditation.
- 3) The community might involve itself in various kinds of outside community service, development or action beyond that of teaching and the necessarily commercial services which may sustain the community’s “Right Livelihood”. For example, running a hospice for the terminally ill, providing an information and advice center on a wide range of personal and social problems for the people of the local community, and assisting and may be leading – in various aspects of a socially deprived local community.

Buddhist’s Community Services and Development

Various community developmental activities have also been initiated by a non-residential “lay” Buddhist group, whose members as householders and local workers may have strong root in their town or neighbourhood.

The Harlow Buddhist Society has recently opened Dana House, a practical attempt to become involved with the ordinary people of the town and their problems. The new center has four regular groups using it. The first is an after-care service for those who have been mentally or emotionally ill. The center is there for those in need of friendship and understanding. The second group is a psychotherapy one, for those with more evident emotional problems. It is run by an experienced group leader and a psychologist who can be consulted privately. The third group is a beginner ‘meditation class based on the concept of ‘Right Understanding’. The fourth group is the Buddhist group, which is not attached to any particular school of Buddhism.

“Peter Donahoe Writes: ‘we have endeavored to provide a center which can function in relation to a whole range of different needs, a place of charity and compassion where all are welcomed regardless of race, color, sex or creed, welcome to come to terms with their suffering in a way which is relative to each individual’”.

A very good example could be mentioned here of a Buddhist-inspired movement for community development, is the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement of Sri Lanka. “Sarvodaya” means “awakening of all” and “Shramadan” means “sharing of labour”, making a gift of time, thought and energy. This well describes what is basically a

village self-help movement, inspired by Buddhist principles and founded in 1958 as a part of a general national awakening. It is now by far the largest non-governmental, voluntary organization in Sri Lanka.

Various village development projects are undertaken on the initiative of the villagers themselves. Action is focused initially on Shramdana camps in which villagers and outside volunteers work together upon same community project such as a road or irrigation channel, pre-school care for the under-fives, informal education for adults, health care programs and community kitchens, with cooperation of State agencies as appropriate.

Essential to these community development programs in Sarvodaya Shramadana's system of development education program operating through six institutes and through the Gramodaya Centers each of which co-ordinates development work in some twenty to thirty villages. The movement also provides training in self-employment for the youth who comprise the largest sector of the unemployed. Although the main thrust of activity has been in rural areas, the movement is also interested in urban community and there is local interest.

Social Service

Social service manifests as presence and dignity. It is an important means to promote and nurture sanity in society, environment, education, healthcare, home, relationships and the arts throughout the world. The practice and study of Sambhala Buddhist meditation engenders a deep understanding of tolerance and care. The Shambhala Buddhist are engaged individually and in groups in compassionate work all over the world.

The Shambhala Prison Community (SPC) serves spiritual and educational needs of inmates in federal, state, country and municipal prison systems and jails. The SPC provides meditation instruction by qualified instructors; pastoral counselling; the distribution of books and recorded tapes; written correspondence; and newsletters, magazines and pamphlets relevant to the meditative path. Prison Dharma Network (PDN), is a support network transformation and rehabilitation facilities.

Buddhism and Social Work

During the past few decades Buddhists have been re-examining the teachings of their Religion and finding a basis for social action, for confronting war, racism, exploitation commercialism, and the destruction of the environment. In practice, Buddhism is a Volitional effort of well being of others. The origins of the philosophy of social work can be found in *Buddhist* system and Indian culture. Thus social work in early Buddhist tradition is a psycho-ethical concept initiated for the dawn of complete harmony on the beings in the society with a happy blending and balancing of spiritual and material achievements. The principle of social work is directly connected with the idea of social order, conceived by Buddha. He conceived a social fabric and an order where there is a ground (*Bhumi*) of unalloyed love and affection, surcharged with the waves of universal friendliness, compassion, joy and equanimity. This was named as *Bhrama Vihara* by Buddha. As regards the training and orientation of social workers, it may be added that development of monastic establishments, each *Vihara*, with a sizeable habitation of monastic dwellers, turned into educational centres. A provision of two types of teachers namely *Upajihaya* and *Acariya* was made to provide training in the theory and practice of monasticism and social service respectively by each of them. During *British* and post independent periods in India *Buddhism* also tried to continue and adopt the

welfare measures for the welfare of Buddhists and other fellows of different religions. Many voluntary agencies have come into existence apart from *Viharas and Sanghas*. These are in the form of *Dharma* centres, *meditation* centres, *Vipassana* international academy, youth *Buddhist* society and so on. Most of these organizations run free homoeopathic dispensary, schools for poor and needy children, ambulance service in the community, disaster management and emergency relief, free educational scholarship for handicapped children, canteen service, and free dispensary and so on. *Buddhism* has also welfare foundations which have constructed medical and health clinics. They also train public health educational trainers and volunteer coordinators who set up network of community-based workshops to train local women in the basics of personal hygiene and water sanitation process. *NGOs* are also providing low-tech household, water sanitation systems and educational materials. Certain agencies are also working on *HIV/AIDS* and other communicable disease for women and children.

Socially Engaged Buddhism

Interestingly, Buddhist social work has become very popular under the title of *Socially Engaged Buddhism*.

Before proceeding further let us understand what we mean by *Socially Engaged Buddhism*. At its broadest definition, socially engaged Buddhism extends across public engagement in caring and service, social, and environmental protest and analysis, non-violence as a creative way of overcoming conflict, and right livelihood and similar initiatives toward a socially just and ecologically sustainable society.

Socially Engaged Buddhism is a new form of Buddhist movement. It is obviously rooted in the very nature of Buddhism. It can be said, therefore, that socially engaged Buddhism is the reinterpretation and application of traditional Buddhist doctrines. For Buddhism, of course, the ultimate freedom is to achieve full release from the root causes of all suffering: greed, hatred and delusion, which clearly are also the root causes of all social evils. Their worst forms are those which are harmful to others. To eliminate these evils in oneself, and, as far as possible, in the society, is the basis of Buddhist ethics. And here Buddhist social work has its place. The experience of suffering is the starting point of Buddhist teaching and of any attempt to define a distinctively Buddhist social work. Buddhism offers to the individual human being a religious practice, a way, leading to the transcendence of suffering. Buddhist social action arises from this practice and contributes to it.

Now engaged Buddhism is a global phenomenon, taking many different forms. The engaged movement cuts across the lay-monastic divide and includes Buddhists from traditional Buddhist countries as well as Western converts. As a matter of course, those movements have developed in some of the Buddhist countries of Asia. In many cases these movements have arisen as a heroic response to extreme conditions of invasion, civil war, and tyrannical government. Over several decades they have been inspired and led by several personalities outstanding for their integrity, steadfastness, and shared values. They include A.T. Ariyaratne of Sri Lanka, Thich Nhat Hanh of Vietnam, Ajahn Buddhadasa and Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Noted Buddhist leaders from the Soka Gakkai Movement, the Taiwanese Fo Guang Shan and Tzu Chi Foundation, and the Korean Jogye Buddhist Order are some outstanding Socially Engaged Buddhists and Buddhist organizations in contemporary East Asia.

So we see revival of Buddhism in this modernized global world and the terms 'Humanistic Buddhism' or 'Engaged Buddhism' are being used. It refers to active involvement by Buddhists in social work. Those who participate in this movement seek to implement and actualize the traditional Buddhist ideals of wisdom and compassion in the modern world. In other words, engaged Buddhism, applies these ideals to social issues of peace and justice, environmental degradation, human and animal rights, community-building and the provision of care to those in need.

Thus, before concluding we can say that *Social Work in Buddhism* also reveals that as a minority community it was compelled to live and work with several communities and was obliged by circumstances wherein self-interest and survival played a decisive role to adopt a change in their mode of life, involving long cherished beliefs, social relationships and patterns of living and behaviour including diet, language, even social status and religious rituals or ceremonies as in the case of *Sanskritisation* by the backward communities in India. Some of it may also be undertaken under compulsion or by enlightened or intelligent understanding of the changing time and circumstances and the necessity for appropriate change.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Space is given below for your answer.

1) What is Socially Engaged Buddhism?

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5.4 CONCEPTS, VALUES AND PRACTICES COMMON TO BUDDHISM AND SOCIAL WORK

1) Social Welfare

All civilized societies throughout the globe continue to work for the well being of mankind. In both social work and Buddhism, social welfare is considered as the work done in different forms intended for the benefits of humankind. Such work ranges from simple individual acts of charity, teaching and training to organized services in different forms for the betterment of the community, which are also common areas of social work intervention.

2) Precepts

The precepts in Buddhism and social work values are very similar to each other. Non-violence; not committing theft; refrain from sexual misconduct; always speaking truth; and refraining from abusing drugs or alcohol are some of the common concerns. Gandhiji strongly propagated some of the values and teachings found in Buddhism such as self-sufficient villages, celibacy, non-violence and truth.

3) Social Services

The Buddhist monks and nuns from the monasteries are doing social service along

with and for the common people. Both Buddhism and social work provide social services to the members of the society to enable them to develop optimally and help them to function effectively and to lead a life of decency, dignity and liberty. These services have been rendered to all the members of the society, irrespective to their religion, caste, race, language, culture etc.

4) Social Work Values and Conditions in Buddhism

Both social work values and Buddhism teach the individuals to understand their responsibility towards oneself, the family, and the society. Buddhism and social work values caution the social worker not to neglect himself/herself, his/her family and the society in which he/she is living while he/she is discharging his/her professional duties. Both Buddhism and social work teach the people to respect and obey elders and superiors; respect, worship and honour all religions; honour and respect all people irrespective of their caste, creed or gender; respect the worth and dignity of each individual and respect women in general.

5) Upliftment of Oppressed

Upliftment of oppressed in society have been taken into consideration by both social work and Buddhism. Both are against the caste based social inequality and emphasized social equality and justice for the oppressed mass, especially for the scheduled caste. They are aimed at the rejection of untouchability and favoured the participation of the oppressed castes towards undertaking more social and political activities for their liberation from the exploitative force.

6) Compassion

The Buddhist way of life is compassion, equanimity, tolerance, concern for self reliance and individual responsibility which are similar to social work. The social worker's compassion is the prerequisite for effective social work practice. Both Buddhists and social workers empathize with others. They willingly join with and enter into the pains of those who are distressed or troubled. Both believe in self reliance; dignity of each individual; cultivate spirit of openness, co-operation, goodwill and equality.

7) Community Welfare Services

Buddhist communities are reaching and training community members in general and running hospice for the terminally ill, providing an information and advice center on a wide range of personal and social problems for the terminally ill, for the people of the local community and assisting in various aspects of a socially deprived local community. Similarly, a number of professional social workers are engaged in providing welfare services to the communities. Various community developmental activities have been initiated by Buddhists. After care services have also been provided by Buddhist group to those who are mentally or emotionally ill.

8) Empowerment of Women and Development of Organizational Skills

Buddhism and social work has a very positive and revolutionary attitude towards women. Both believe in equal benefits for men and women. Both in Buddhism and social work women are able to indulge in activities outside the home, including proselyte, development of organizational skills, and above all, an atmosphere where they could experience a sense of accomplishment. Buddhists have also made

numerous endowments to the university at Nalanda for spreading education. Tibetan Buddhists are also pre-occupied with social work in various fields like education, hospice services, prison activities etc.

9) Buddhist Movements

Several Buddhist movements were aimed at the welfare of the community. One of the Buddhist inspired movement for community development was the Sarvodaya Shramadan Movement of Sri Lanka. Similarly, social movements are highly significant for social work because they bring about desired changes in the social structure, eradicate social evils and prevent abuse and exploitation.

5.5 LET US SUM UP

In Buddhism we see that the teachings of the Buddha are as relevant today in the society as they were when the Buddha was alive. Social work has become a part and parcel of the Socially Engaged Buddhism. It may not be out of place to conclude in the words of the Dalai Lama, the greatest Buddhist personality of modern times: "I believe that the embracing of a particular religion like Buddhism does not mean the rejection of another religion or one's own community. In fact it is important that those of you who have embraced Buddhism should not cut yourself off from your own society; you should continue to live within your own community and with its members. This is not only for your sake but for others' also, because by rejecting your community you obviously cannot benefit others, which actually is the basic aim of religion" (Dalai Lama, 1976).

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UNIT 6 CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL WORK

*Suresh Pathare**

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 A brief History of Christianity in India
- 6.3 Beliefs, Practices and Teachings of Christianity
- 6.4 Christianity and Social Work Profession
- 6.5 Contribution of Christianity to the Fields of Social Work
- 6.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.7 Further Readings and References

6.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit will help you to understand Christianity as a religion and its basic values, principles and teachings. This attempt is to explain to you the background and history of Christianity and help you to know the contribution of Indian Christians in the field of social work profession.

When you complete this Unit, you will be able to:

- provide some information about Christianity, its history, nature, practices and social teachings;
- explain the contribution of Christianity in the fields of social work; and
- enable you to appreciate and assimilate the teachings of Christianity in the practice of social work.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to have an understanding about the contribution of Christianity to social work profession, it would be appropriate to discuss the background information about Christianity in general and Christianity in India in particular. Therefore an attempt has been made to give a brief account of its origin, essential nature and chief characteristics. This unit is divided into three parts. In the first part of this unit we attempt to explain the Christian religion, its origin, history and present situation. Secondly, we try to summarize Christian beliefs, teachings, values, practices and its social vision. And lastly we will discuss the contribution of Christianity to social work profession.

The Meaning and Introduction to Christianity

Christianity is the name given to that definite system of religious beliefs and practices, which were derived from the teachings of Jesus Christ in the country of Palestine, during the reign of the Roman Emperor, Tiberius. According to the accepted tradition, the day of Pentecost, in A.D. 29, is regarded, as the beginning of the

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Christian religion. Thus Christianity is a religion of the people who follow Jesus the Christ. In our effort to understand the meaning of Christianity, we examine three aspects: (1) A set of beliefs, (2) a way of life and (3) a community of people. Different Christian groups or denominations place different levels or provide varying degrees of importance on these three aspects, but they always involve all three. All the three aspects are based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, who is also known as the Christ. ("Christ" was originally a title. It is the Greek form of the Hebrew word "Messiah", meaning "anointed".)

Christian faith is centered on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Christianity, for its first thousand years, was largely confined to the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and parts of India. However, it spread throughout the world during the second millennium mainly due to missionary work and colonization. Christianity is closely linked to Judaism. Jesus was a Jew. He lived between 3 BC to 36 AD. He lived and taught in Palestine, (although not exclusively) among fellow Jews. Christianity separated itself from the main body of Judaism for the reasons that Christianity came to regard Jesus as Son of God who died on a cross and rose from the dead. This was unacceptable to most Jews. The birth, death, resurrection of Jesus are historical facts recorded in the Bible.

Bible is the religious scripture of Christians. It includes the Hebrew Bible (known to Christians as the Old Testament) and the New Testament (life and teachings of Jesus Christ and some of his disciples). In order to know more about Christianity it is suggested that you may read at least one of the Gospels in the New Testament.

The Gospels contain the life and teachings of Jesus. Since Christianity is about following Jesus the Christ, there's really no substitute for knowing about his life and teachings other than the Bible. If you want to read just one of the gospels, it is suggested that you read Luke as it contains very good narrative of Jesus's deeds and teachings. Another book, which will help in understanding Christianity, is the Acts of the Apostles that gives a glimpse into the beginnings of Christianity.

Christian Denominations

There is a diversity of doctrines and practices among groups calling themselves Christians. These groups are sometimes classified under denominations. Christianity may be broadly divided into four main groupings: Roman Catholic or "Catholic Church," which is in communion with the Pope of Rome; Eastern Orthodox Churches; Protestantism which was separated from Catholic Church in the 16th century under Martin Luther, and the Restorationists comprising of various unrelated Churches that believe they are restoring the "original version" of Christianity

6.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA

Christianity came to India in 52 A.D. St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew, the immediate disciples of Jesus Christ, brought it to India (Moraes 1964: 25-45). It is believed that St. Thomas preached the Gospel of Jesus in the Southern parts of India, especially in Kerala and Bartholomew in the Western parts of India, especially around Kalyan and Thana near Mumbai.

A new era for Christianity in India began with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498 under Vasco da Gama. The Catholic Church was spread under state support and Churches were established wherever the Portuguese empire expanded (David

2001: 27). Fr. Robert de' Nobili, a Jesuit priest from Italy was another person who played an instrumental role in bringing Christianity to India during 1605 to 1642. He preached Christianity mainly among the so called upper Castes people with the idea that conversion of the high-caste persons to Christianity would help in its spread.

Protestant Mission

The first phase of Protestant Christianity had begun in Tamil Nadu in 1707 and it had been confined mainly to the South. In 1793, the arrival of William Carey, a Baptist missionary, at Calcutta marked the beginning of the second phase of the Protestant mission in India. As Carey, was not allowed by the East India Company to settle in Calcutta to do his missionary work, he was compelled to seek shelter at Serampore, a Danish colony, on the banks of the river Hooghli. Carey, Marshman and Ward launched into vigorous protestant missionary work by translating and printing the Bible in a few north Indian languages and by starting a printing press as well as schools.

In 1813, the British East India Company passed the Charter Act, with which another chapter began for Christianity in India. This Charter had made provisions for imparting religious knowledge to the British subject. Prior to this charter East India Company opposed missionaries coming to India for evangelization. 'The British East India Company was in India for eighty years before building a church even for its members, and for a period bitterly resisted the sending of the missionaries' (Thekkedath 1984:381).

Among the Eastern Indian states (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa) have the oldest Christian community (380 years). The first Christian establishment in the region was in 1620 by a Jesuit Missionary Simon Figueredo, under the invitation and patronage of Mughal Governor of Patna, John Maquirrum Khan. The Tibet-Hindustan Mission began in 1703 and Bettiah Mission in 1715. The presence of Christianity in north east states, was founded with the arrival of two Portuguese missionaries on 26th September, in 1626 in Assam.

The Christian Population and the Current Trends in India

Christianity is the largest world religion with 2.1 billion adherents, a figure that includes those who may not be active members of an organized Church. Current trends show an increased membership in many parts of the developing world with a concurrent decline in membership and church attendance in much of the developed world. A few states of country like Kerala, Goa, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Manipur have notable presence of Christians while Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Gujarat have less than one per cent of the total population.

In the North East, the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Manipur together have 13 per cent of Christians. In Goa, Christians constitutes 29.86 per cent of the total population. Elsewhere, Christians are much more scattered and they form just 0.44 per cent in Gujarat, 0.10 per cent in Haryana and 0.09 per cent in Himachal Pradesh. Over 31 per cent of Christian population in the country reside in Urban India. According to the census of 2001, the number of Christians in India is 2.13 of the total population.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Space is given below for your answer.

1) Present a brief account of Christianity in India.

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6.3 BELIEFS, PRACTICES AND TEACHINGS OF CHRISTIANITY

In order to initiate discussion on Christianity and social work we will briefly discuss the social teachings of Christianity in terms of its values, principles, beliefs and practices. Every religion has social teachings. It gets expressed through a variety of social concerns. The social vision of Christianity is arising from its scriptures, theology, social teachings and the historical development. The emergence of liberation theology in the latter part of the twentieth century took Christianity to concrete forms of social action for social transformation.

The Christian life is centered around some essential aspects of the Christian religion. Among them the following are key ones:

- Fellowship with God
- Our relationship with others
- Obedience to God's commands
- Discipline

Christianity is built around the value of relationship: with God and with others. When Jesus was asked to summarize his teachings, he said that it was all about "loving God and our neighbour". Everything else is a means to that end. One of the most important terms used in Christianity is "fellowship". This term covers their life together in communion as Christians. This means first of all that they spend time together in family, in worship, work, service to others, and having fun. They hold community as a value; it is in and through community that they desire and achieve their life's ultimate goal of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Bible refers to the Christian community using organic metaphors, such as a vine and a body. It talks about them sharing with each other and supporting each other.

The Christians have their religious rules that are meant to regulate their behaviour and facilitate the modes of worship. Respect for others, regular prayer both individual and communitarian, discipline, self-less service to others and sharing of faith are some aspects of Christian life. As mentioned earlier, Christianity is about relationships: with God as father, with Jesus as the Son of God, with our family and friends, and even with enemies. Relationships are based on communication. Since prayer is the primary means of communication with God, it is the basis for our relationship with him. We are dependant on the all powerful God and we ask for his blessings in prayer. Receiving God's blessings and mercy is the result of the deep relationship

that we build with him in prayer. This is true even when dealing with other people. Often we can see something about a person. But until they're willing to share with us about it, all that we might do is going to be somewhat impersonal, and not part of our relationship with them.

The Universal Prayer

When his disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, Jesus taught them the famous universal prayer: "Our Father in heaven, holy be your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Christian values, ethics and principles for human relationship is clearly evident in this prayer which is also appreciated by people from various society and culture.

Repentance

Another major component of Christian life is repentance. The term "repent" means "to turn around". In repentance, Christians evaluate their lives in light of God's message, and take the necessary corrective measures. In different Christian traditions, there are somewhat different ways of doing this. For Catholics, the sacrament of penance (or in more modern language: reconciliation) provides a structured environment where a priest helps the people review their actions and motivations. For Protestants and non-catholic Christians repentance is often done in the context of private reflection and prayer, although many also use small groups or partners to help provide some structure. This includes both things we did that we shouldn't have, and thing we should have done and didn't. As Jesus pointed out, these include not just physical actions, but words and attitudes as well. Avoiding sin in the future requires change. It may be changes in attitude, in approach, in behaviour, or simply avoiding certain kinds of situations where we know we are likely to fall into the old patterns of behavior. Christians are urged to forgive and forget.

The Ten Commandments

Jesus advocated the Ten Commandments which were handed down by God to the Prophet Moses about whom we read in the Old Testament. They are:

- 1) I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other gods before Me.
- 2) You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
- 3) Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
- 4) Honour your father and your mother.
- 5) You shall not kill.
- 6) You shall not commit adultery.
- 7) You shall not steal.
- 8) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
- 9) You shall not covet your neighbour's wife.
- 10) You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.

The gist of the ten commandments is “love of god and love of one’s neighbours”. Although the first three commandments are related to god and the individual concerned the remaining seven commandments are very much in tune with the values, principles and ethics expected to be followed by people from every walk of life in the society including the social workers.

Christian Discipline

Living a disciplined Christian life requires planning and a consistent approach. There are certain precautions taken by Christians which are referred to as “discipline”. Christians generally set aside specific times each day for prayer and study, both individually and as a family. The traditional Catholic approach to accountability is individual confession to a priest. By involving another person, we make it less likely that we’ll slack off. Priests are also trained as spiritual counsellors. Thus they may provide guidance in dealing with any personal and spiritual problems, and in deciding how to bring about necessary changes.

Christians are fundamentally committed to serving the needy. The primary way of judging someone’s spiritual state is by looking at what they do. It’s worth mentioning here that the Christian life includes everything that a Christian does. There are certain aspects of life that are specifically Christian, such as the way of worship and prayer. However the Christian life also includes the other aspects of life such as, doing your job honestly, and treating your friends and family respectfully. God knows what is best for us. Indeed most Christians believe that they have a specific purpose in life: “They have come from God and will go back to him”.

Evangelism

Jesus commanded his disciples to spread his message of love and service to the entire world. This is referred to as “evangelism”. Christians practice evangelism in many different ways, ranging from “friendship evangelism” to sending missionaries to other countries and places where the “word of God” has yet to reach. Evangelism is essentially combined with service and that is why the Christians often run education institutions and medical centers even in the most inaccessible areas.

In a more comprehensive sense evangelization means the preaching and witnessing the love of God for us and our love for God. It includes fraternal love of all human being, pardoning others who offend, practicing self-denial and helping out those in need. It is also about touching their lives on the personal, social, community, family, national and international levels and making active efforts to do good and avoid evil. Keeping in mind rights and duties, peace, justice and progress, bringing about human advancement through development and liberation, to overcome the problems hunger, chronic epidemics, illiteracy, poverty and injustice. Christianity teaches embracing the whole person in all the aspects of life, viz., one’s material and spiritual needs. In short, the social teaching of Christianity is man, in his totality, his needs, his aspirations, and his relationships with other human beings in the society and with God (Jadhav Jeevendra: 2006, p. 24).

The Ultimate Assurance

In chapter one of the book of Jeremiah it is written: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you”. In chapter 29:11 of the same book it is written: “I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm”. Reiterating this promise, Jesus in

John's Gospel says: you did not choose me but I chose you. If you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you so that your joy may be complete. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (for more details you may read chapter 13-17 of St. John's Gospel).

Check Your Progress II

Note: Space is given below for your answer.

- 1) Explain the key aspects of Christian life and its social teachings.

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6.4 CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

As discussed above, the basic tenets of Christianity show compatibility with the cardinal values of social work. Moreover, social work flows from the same premise of Christianity, which upholds the dignity of the human being. Christianity as a religion has certainly played a central role in the development of social work as a profession. While studying the history of social work we have studied that social work profession originated under the inspiration of the Judeo-Christian religious traditions of its philanthropic founders. The Charity Organization Society (COS) and the settlement house movement originated through the work of clergy. Later, the American Social Gospel Movement played a key role in supporting the development of public social services and a legislative remedy for social problems (Dubois 2004: 197).

Midgley (1989) has given the detailed account of the role played by religiously inspired individuals and organisations in the emergence of social work in the Western industrial countries during the nineteenth century. A Scottish clergyman, Thomal Chalmers, is generally acknowledged to have formulated the basic principles of social visiting, which subsequently evolved into social casework (Young and Ashton, 1956). The clergy were well represented among the formative leadership of the Charity Organisation Society, and it was another clergyman, the Rev Stephen Gurtee, who first imported the Charity Organisation Society concept to the United States (Leiby, 1978). Yet another clergyman, Samuel Barnett, conceived the idea of the settlement house while serving in St. Jude's Parish in the East End of London. Barnett was also known for his progressive, reformist activities and, aligned with the Fabians, he supported state intervention in the economy and in social affairs (Bruce, 1961). In this regard, his work paralleled the progressive reformism of the American Social Gospel movement which championed the creation of public social services, and the extension of legislative authority to remedy social problems (White and Hopkins, 1976).

Christian religious ideas have also influenced the development of social work concepts, and particularly its values and ethics. Biestek's (1957) exposition of

social casework which emphasized compassion, love, understanding and acceptance is perhaps the best example of the infusion of Christian notions into social work. The welfare services during the initial period of the profession were more in the nature of amelioration, by and large carried out by semi-religious organizations and well-intended philanthropic citizens (Vakharia 1999: 8).

Christian Contribution to Social Work Profession in India

In India also the Christian religious organizations have played a major role in the development of social work. The major schools of social work in India were founded under auspices of Christian missionaries and they combined a religious orientation with secular professional education. Missionaries of American Marathi Mission established the first school of social work in Asia – Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) at Mumbai. It was Dr. Manshardt a Christian missionary of Marathi mission who conceived the idea, prepared the blue print of TISS and provided leadership during its formation stage. Among other schools, the Delhi School of Social Work (presently Department of Social Work) at Delhi University was founded by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Center for Studies in Rural Development, Ahmednagar was founded by the Missionaries of American Marathi Mission, Nirmala Niketan at Mumbai, Loyola College at Chennai and Trivendrum, Madras Christian College in Tamil Nadu, Rajgiri College of Social Work in Kerala, Indore School of Social Work in Madhya Pradesh and Stella Maris in Tamil Nadu are some of the prominent Institutes of Social Work started by Christians.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Space is given below for your answer.

- 1) Discuss the contribution of Christianity in the development of Social Work Profession in India.

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6.5 CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE FIELDS OF SOCIAL WORK

It would be appropriate at this stage to present a brief account of activities undertaken by the missionaries in India. According to the information made available by the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI), the apex body of the Catholic Church in India, Christians are involved in education from pre-primary to college/ university level; health care including medical colleges, hospitals and health care clinics; care of orphans, widows, leprosy patients, AIDS victims, street children, destitute women, scheduled castes/tribes and other socially disadvantaged sections of the society. While the CBCI has a dozen commissions addressing issues of specific target groups, the non-catholic Christians are equally active across the country extending the much needed care and support to the needy. About 80 per

cent of the services being provided by the Christian missionaries are in the rural sector.

i) Contribution of Christianity to Social Reform in India

Christianity certainly played a pivotal role in the social reformation of India. Its religious leaders and members have kept up a long tradition of systematic and disciplined work in bringing about social reform in the field of education, social service, research, social justice and so on. The contribution can be found in the pre-British era, during the British rule and the post-independence period. G.A. Oddie (1979:3) in *Social Protest in India* gives an account of missionaries' involvement in social protest and agitation for social reform. He wrote: 'The conditions and the situation in India were a crucial factor prompting the missionaries' involvement in social protest. There was a great impact of Christian teachings on the progressive social thinkers and reformers like Jyotiba Phule, Mahatma Gandhi, M.G. Ranade, K.T. Telang, N.G. Chandavarker, Shahu Maharaj, Dr. B.R. Ambedker and others. Influenced by the dedication and missionary zeal of Catholic missionaries, particularly the Society of Jesus, veteran political leader Gopal Krishna Gokhale, referred to as the Guru of Mahatma Gandhi, drafted the constitution of the Servants of India Society on the lines of the constitution of the Society of Jesus (SJ).

Christianity rejected caste structure as dehumanizing, helped to humanize the cultural ethos and structures of the Indian society. It protested against division, exclusion and exploitation. Christians raised voice against evil practice of child marriage and Sati. Pandita Ramabai holds a very unique place amongst the Christian social reformers who worked for social awakening of society in Maharashtra towards the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. She was the first to start the home for child widows. She took initiative to mobilize support for the Marriage of Consent Bill in India. Until this Bill, physical relations maintained by a husband with his wife less than 12 years of age was accepted. William Carey, another Christian missionary pioneered the movement that led to the abolition of the dreadful practice of Sati. It has been pointed out that Christian missionaries have done far more for women's education in India than the government or the native reformers. Christian missionaries were the first to initiate girls' education in India. Later taking inspiration from Christian missionaries Mahatma Phule taught his wife Savitribai and started a school for girls.

Christianity in India was a liberating force for the caste-ridden society, particularly to the oppressed and lower castes of the society. The Christian missionaries greatly expanded opportunities for dalits' education in schools and they succeeded in bringing the situation of all dalits to the public's attention and making it a matter of public concern. Historical evidences show that the missionaries had a consensus not only in condemning caste but also in trying to eliminate caste within the Churches. Christian Missionaries pioneered in mixing caste, including dalits, within their schools despite opposition from higher caste parents. And they took an active role, generally on behalf of lower caste and dalit converts, in trying to abolish some of the disabilities from which they suffered: prohibitions against the use of public roads and public wells and, in the South of the count against the practice of women wearing a "breast cloth" to cover the upper portion of their bodies (Webster, 1996:38). Another work that missionaries undertook was the conscientization of the dalits.

ii) Christian contribution to the Modern Education

The Christian missionaries laid down the foundation of the existing education pattern in India. The roots of Western education in India, invariably found to have been first introduced by the Christians. In the education sphere, the contribution of Christian missionaries was in the form of opening of primary and high schools, colleges, adult literacy centers, technical training centers, etc. Educational service of Christianity has been recognized as highly valued service to the nation. The contribution and commitment of Christianity in the field of education can be well understood from the quality education provided till today.

Alexander Duff, a Scottish Missionary played significant role in the foundation of Calcutta University. Another missionary of the Scottish missionary Society John Wilson, helped to establish Bombay University in 1857 and served as its vice chancellor in 1869. He was also a pioneer of education for the low castes. The early missionaries William Carey and his close associates William Ward and Hoshua Marshman were pioneers in missionary education. They played important role in giving education in English medium as well as in vernacular. The Church in India own and manage over 30,000 educational institutions including about 400 colleges, four universities, technical and vocational training institutions.

Besides the schools and educational institutes, Christianity has also contributed in terms of scholarly work in the field of education. These include the contribution of Sanskrit scholar Robert De Nobili whose literary work is still available in Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit; Reverend William Carey who is known as the father of printing technology in India; Tamil Poet Constantius Joseph Beschi, author of Marathi epic *Kristapuram*, Fr. Thomas Stephens, Rev. Justin Edward Abbot, who authored 11 books in English and Marathi on the lives and works of the medieval Hindu saints of Maharashtra; Hindi Scholar and lexicographer Padam Bushan Fr. Camil Bulcke, who was founder member of Bihar Sahitya Academy and was appointed as member of many committees at the national level by the Central Government and he tried a great deal for recognition of Hindi as the national language; Rev. Baba Padmanjee who is well known as the first novelist in Marathi literature; Malayalam language scholar John Earnest Hanxleden alias Arnos Pathiri; Historian Fr. Henry Heras, who established the Institute of Indian History and Culture at Mumbai, Fr Stephen Fuchs a renowned Anthropologist who founded the Institute of Indian Culture, Mumbai, and the Jesusits who founded the Voluntary Health Association of India.

iii) Social Service, Social Welfare and Social Action

Christianity in India has a long history of social service and social welfare through its institutions and other social service organizations. Christian Missionaries' involvement in social welfare activities can be seen right from the early part of Christian presence in the country. Their contribution in social service can be traced from the well known service of some of the missionaries like Pandita Ramabai, the pioneer of women's emancipation in India who established the home for widows and destitute women; Mother Teresa, who served the people by starting homes for the poor, sick and destitute; Rev. Graham Staines, who served lepers in Orissa; Fr. Herman Bacher, a pioneer of rural development, etc. The missionaries established homes for the physically and socially handicapped, deaf, dumb and blind; rescue homes for the welfare of women, orphanages, etc. all over India.

Liberating people from bondage of all forms of oppression has always been the

main goal of the Christian Churches. Therefore the development schemes of the Church consist not only of providing food, clothing and shelter to the needy, but also helping people toward the achievement of self-reliance and dignity. The missionaries introduced various innovative methods of helping people. The Christian communities are the bases from where the missionaries reach out to all sections of the people through the services rendered to the poor and the needy. The Christian missionaries dared to reach to the un-reached by opening up service centers in remote areas and has been undertaking literacy work, education, relief work, social services, health care, etc.

Health Care Settings

The missionaries have been providing medical services for the poor people especially women and children. Beside the hospitals every missionary was equipped with enough knowledge to give substantial practical medical assistance to people during the emergency and to meet the simple day to day requirements of the villagers. Today in India, there are about a dozen Christian medical colleges, two of which are over 100 years old. There are over 150 nursing schools, and about 10 medical and health care settings including hospitals, institutions of the disabled and leprosy patients founded and administered by Christians. There is an overwhelming presence of Christians in medical service sector (about 34% of health care professionals). When the Governments are facing difficulty in staffing the more remote hospitals with doctors and nurses, the Christian hospitals and organization have been able to recruit and retain committed senior staff. The Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI) is a forum of Christians working in hospitals and medical field. It was set up in 1905 by a group of missionaries serving in India as Medical Missionary Association (MMA) for supporting each other professionally and spiritually. In 1926 it was renamed and has grown in strength by keeping pace with the changing healthcare needs in this country. CMAI has done pioneering work in several areas including leprosy, tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/ AIDS. Today the association has 330 Institutional members. There are other Health Service Sector Organizations such as the Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI) with over 3000 institutional membership, Sister Doctors Forum (SDF) which is the largest forum of Catholic Nuns who are Medical practitioners in the world with over 600, members, and the Nurses' Guild that have been rendering commendable services to those who are involved in the much needed health care.

Relief work at the time of natural and manmade disasters like famine, epidemic, earthquake, riot, etc. is another significant contribution of the Christians. The Christians find themselves compelled to give attention to disaster-affected people. Many a time the Government has officially expressed appreciation of the services both of Christian Organizations and individuals in such work.

Recently, the Christian Churches in India has been shifting its approach to social service and welfare. It is moving away from mere alms-giving, charity, help, service and poverty alleviation programmes to development, self-help, critical social awareness, organizing people at the grass roots levels to fight for their rights. The Christian Churches in India is involved in the issue of liberation, mobilization and conscientization and in the activities such as promoting and protecting children and women's rights. Fighting for the rights of fishermen, Tribals, Dalits, as well as working on the issues of ecology and environment are also part of the Christian social involvement.

Check Your Progress IV

Note: Space is given below for your answer.

- 1) Explain the contribution of Christianity in the field of modern education.

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6.6 LET US SUM UP

The aim of this Unit was to help you to understand the Christian religion and its contribution to social service and social work. You are now familiar with the meaning and nature of Christianity. Also you know the background, history and the trends of Christian population in India. Being aware of the contribution of Christianity in professional social work, you will be able to describe the relation of Christianity and social work. The contribution of Christianity is found in most of the fields of social work in India. We discussed some of these important contributions. You are now equipped with the knowledge and understanding of the teachings and principles of Christianity. You will now be able to appreciate and apply some of the values and concerns of Christianity in the practice of social work.

6.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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