

Baroda Experiment 1932: An Indigenous Model of Community Development

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ABSTRACT

In modern times, lot of complexity has arisen and social work profession is important to solve this complexity and problems. Social Service based on humanitarian ground is an age old phenomenon for India and for West. We could see it from the historical perspective throughout the ages. Age old epics across the religions taught the world the lessons of life, service to mankind and compassion for the poor and disadvantaged. Since the ancient time the social fabric of the society has changed immensely, the simple and uncomplicated societies are now changed into complex and complicated one. This complexity of the society has given rise to many personal and social problems which turn made social service activities into organized social work profession. The philanthropic and religious charities of Kings and elites notwithstanding, the very structure of Indian society has provided the means for taking care of the needy and the destitute through the institutions of family, caste and community. One cannot undermine the efforts of the erstwhile King of Baroda State in pioneering development during his regime. Sayajirao ushered in progressive reforms and modern amenities and towered over the other princes loyal to the British. The Baroda Experiment is a great milestone in history of Social Work Education and Community Development. Hoping this paper will initiate a series of serious and productive deliberation on the topic.

Keywords: Social Service, Humanitarian, Community Development

INTRODUCTION

Genesis of Social Work in India is an age old phenomena, though social work as a profession was recognized and developed by western countries yet the bases on which the profession rests upon very well exist in the foundation of Indian history. The seeds of evolution of Social Work could be explored in world ideologies i.e. secular, humanism, protestantism, rationalism, welfarism, liberalism democracy and utilitarianism. The notion of welfare stemmed up in India in the roots of Dharma. The history of human sufferings and selfish desire too persisted in human society and so existed the mutual assistance to provide protections to humanity. History speaks volume of initiatives taken by kings, queens, landlords, foreign conquerors and invaders, and also under the system of diarchy and later under the constitutional reform of 1935 which ushered in a new era of popularly elected government in the provinces. Social Work emerged as a profession from the perspectives of social services, charity, reform and welfare. Social Work traveled a long way from welfare to empowerment and development and the present emphasis of the profession is protecting and promoting people's rights.

Social work education in India, in the true sense of the term, dates back to 1936 when Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work (now Tata Institute of Social Sciences) was established in Mumbai under the leadership of Dr. Clifford Manshardt of the American Marathi Mission, with a view to preparing trained manpower adequately equipped with the knowledge and skills required for shouldering varied kinds of responsibilities in the field of social welfare. Obviously, the School was based on the pattern of Schools of Social Work in the United States of America, but, at the same time, it had had certain distinctive characteristic features, especially in respect of social work intervention in industrial organizations, directed towards improving the appalling conditions of workers in urban industrial centers. The school sponsored a series of lectures on 'Some Social Services of the Government of Bombay', as a result of which major areas of governmental responsibilities in the field of social services could be finalized; and this led to a noticeable change in the functions of the State, which accepted that the promotion of welfare was its prime concern.

The philanthropic and religious charities of Kings and elites notwithstanding, the very structure of Indian society has provided the means for taking care of the needy and the destitute through the institutions of family, caste and community. The structure of Hindu society was such that the joint family used to look after the helpless members

and the caste feelings created a strong bond of kinship. The institution of Panchayati Raj, apart from building up infrastructure, provided support system to the village community. Joint family system served as a useful social institution for taking care of the needy and destitute members; it protected child widows, the physically handicapped, mentally retarded, disabled persons and unemployed members of the family without any consideration of individual contribution. The caste system as an institution has grown and developed through many centuries and is firmly rooted in the Indian social structure. As caste values were based on the ideals of service, caste played a significant role in looking after the interests of its own members and in promoting their welfare. It has developed its own organizational structures, and provided social security to people belonging to 'own biradari'. Another solid pillar of Indian social structure has been the village community, which, in the past, has enjoyed local autonomy through the 'Village Panchayat'. It had both executive and judicial powers and its members were treated with respect by the king's officers. The Panchayat also distributed the land, collected taxes out of the procedure and paid the government's share on behalf of the village. Other religious communities like Muslims and Jews had the system of Zakat and Tithe respectively for providing the welfare services to the needy. In Hindu religion too, daandakshina, doles, construction of institutions like bridhashrams, dharamshalas, and the like were considered as religious obligations which were reinforced in myriad of ways. During the British period, Christian missionaries initiated the wave of social reform. The serampore missionaries were the first evangelical Baptist missionaries in India, who identified the need of a series of reform measures necessary within the Indian social structure. They opposed child marriage, polygamy and female infanticide, Kulinism, self-torture and Ghat murder. They worked for the abolition of sati and advocated for the widow remarriage. The initiatives of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in abolition of sati system, Ishwar Chandra Vidhyasagar in Widow remarriage, Sashipada Banerjee and Kesab Chand Sen in women's emancipation from exploitation and discrimination along with M.G. Ranade, Jyoti Rao Phule, D. K. Karve, Gopal Hari Deshmukh and Tilak in addressing a variety of issues crippling the then Indian society, have been some of the efforts that led to social reform movement in India which later on converged with political freedom under the leadership of Gandhiji.

The social work profession in the recipient country identifies incongruous components of the western model and work to adopt, adjust or modify them in order to improve the model's fit to the local country and culture. A peep into the local historical context is necessary for proper and adequate understanding as well as critical assessment of Baroda's Model to social work education. The erstwhile Baroda state was fortunate in being ruled by an enlightened, progressive and able ruler namely, Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad. His constant quest and continuous zeal for the development of Baroda city is well-known. He was a pioneering educationist and the founder and builder of prestigious educational institutions. Baroda owes a great deal to his sagacity and vision. The founding of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (popularly known as M.S. University or MSU) took place in 1949, along with several other universities in the country. It coincided with the ushering in of an era of constitutionally set, guided and striven for objectives of good life, for all the citizens of a newly created India. All thoughts and actions were in the direction of achieving the goals of speedy economic development and social justice.

Community Development Programmes in India:

The programme of rural reconstruction was to be part of a wider programme for bringing about a rapid increase in standard of living. Increased agriculture production lay at root of all development. Therefore, the programme was progressively expanded to cover measures such as provision of irrigation facilities; conservation of soil; production of nucleus seed; their multiplication and distribution; education in agriculture and supplementary occupations.

The idea of community development is not new in India. The name is new, the prominence given to it today is new, but it has grown out of the experiences of the past, viz., Sriniketan Movement (1921), Martandam Experiment (1921), Gurgaon Experiment (1927), Baroda Experiment (1932) and Experiments of Gandhian Tradition (1935). During the Second World War, Community Development programme emerged as a technique of development for underdeveloped, agrarian economy based countries. It was opted as an alternative to class struggle and people's violent demand of their own well-being. It was a method of accelerating the process of social, economic and political growth of the under-developed region of a country.

Among these programmes, one cannot undermine the efforts of the erstwhile King of Baroda State in pioneering development during his regime. Sayajirao ushered in progressive reforms and modern amenities and towered over the other princes loyal to the British Raj. Starting in 1893, he introduced free and compulsory primary education.

By 1906, it covered his whole state. He was the first Indian ruler to embark on such an audacious mission — a target which independent India could not achieve until the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 was enacted. The Maharaja opened hundreds of schools for Dalits as well as encouraged their admission to regular schools. But the Maharaja did not stop merely at sending boys and girls to schools. Colleges offering a plethora of subjects including technical ones were opened under his aegis, leading ultimately to the creation of a university which still bears his name — the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda.

Baroda Experiment 1932

This movement was started by V.T. Krishnachari in 1932 in the Baroda state where he was Dewan at that time. In the first instant its objective was to bring about a rapid increase in standards of living, industrialization and rapid expansion of the educational system. The second objective was to increase agricultural production through the provision of basic necessities for the development of the same. At first, some extension workers were taken on deputation from Dr. Spencer Hatch of Marthandam.

The first rural reconstruction centre commenced work in April, 1932 in a group of villages around Kosambain, Navsari district.

After the centre had been at work for a year, the number of villages under it was increased and Baroda state issued an order explaining the aims of the movement as follows:

1. The centre aims at effecting an improvement in all aspects of rural life changing in fact the outlook of the agriculturist, the target being creating desire for a higher standard of living.
2. Work intended to realize this aim was made intensive. It was confined to a group of villages in which superintendent and his trained co-workers can establish personal contact with all the agriculturalists.
3. Village leadership was developed.
4. Opportunities for Economic Development.

The entire Baroda state was divided into four main regions and each region was supervised by the supervisors. They were expected to take care of the citizens and to support them for all good activities.

In 1908, Pandit Atmaram Antasari was invited by Maharaja in Baroda. Maharaja was progressive and so he developed special department for Antyodyas in the same year. Maharaja used to give equal protection to the oppressed and disadvantaged sections of the society and used to monitor their provisions and facilities personally. Secondly, in those days finding teachers for Antyodyas was a problem. So Maharaja himself invited Arya Samaj People to the Baroda State and they were given special land to establish their ashrams and provide education to them.

Economic Programmes:

1. Subsidiary occupations, kitchen gardening, weaving, poultry farming, silk worm rearing, bee keeping or any other trade may be found suitable.
2. In each village, Panchayat was made live-body discharging its function of providing drinking water, improving sanitation, building village roads in other words adding to the opportunities to village life.
3. Farm improvements in cotton and other crops
4. Co-operative society to inculcate thrift

Maharaja always use to give importance to people's participation and so every village got Panchayati Raj and Village Library. He was visionary who always cared for the well-being of the people. He also established Baroda College. Earlier, it was part of Mumbai University; later it became The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, world-wide recognized residential University spread over 292 acres of land. It is now proudly imparting education in 111 departments, 14 faculties and 3 constituent colleges with 41000 students, 1500 teachers and 1500 non teaching staff. No affiliation was given to outside universities. And now this university is a boon to all of us.

Educational and Moral Programme:

Methods of work, self-help, dignity of labour, shramdan, self-respect, trust, non-violence are given a lot of importance. The Baroda Experiment teaches many lessons for community development and Social work profession, it teaches us how to take all the communities together. The Consultative approach of Maharaja is applauding. Maharaja strongly aimed to remove Untouchability from Baroda state, therefore he use to invite people from all communities, community leaders for 'Samras Bhoj' where they would also talk and interact with each other. He believed that action should began at home and so this initiative helped him to create 'Samras' community.

CONCLUSION

Thus Baroda Experiment as its roots to create a New India which is self reliant & promote all round development. The initiative of Atmanirbhar Bharat is a vision which Maharaja saw for our democratic India. It is concern for the whole world's happiness, cooperation and peace: It rests upon five pillars - economy, infrastructure, system, vibrant demography, demand. The Baroda Experiment leads all the social workers to realize the roots of our work in a *Bharatiya* manner. It is a need of the hour to reflect over the work done for Bharatiya.



Let's see the solution of the problems faced by people in India, let's also see the possibility & opportunity to have social and economic life flourishing the way it was earlier. Above all let's create our own indigenous model of social work by understanding and reflecting over the thoughts of projects run for community development like Baroda Experiment and many more.

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