

A Deeper Look at the Origin and Evolution of the Social Work Profession

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine how social work has changed from its beginnings to the early 21st century in India, Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States. It emphasises the significance of understanding social work's past in order to consider the field's potential futures. Qualitative research methods were utilised, and information was gathered from existing literature, informants, and through field visits for observation and verification to validate the collected data. Almshouses, or choultries, in India, can trace their origins back to the time of Buddha. Records from the Chinese traveller Fa-Hien reveals similar hospitals in India around 400 BCE. From the 7th century AD, the temples served food to devotees through 'temple kitchens. These institutions paved the way for almshouses in China, the Middle East, Europe, and Britain, signifying that the groundwork for Social Work as a profession in India predates the Charity Organisation Society and the Settlement House Movement. Although Social Work, both as a career and as a way of living, evolved in India, they were not explicitly mentioned as such in the countless books on Social Work that have been published over the decades.

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Introduction

Social work originated from a gradual development in India, based on the people's inherent and supportive disposition to serve. Temples in India have been more than places of worship; they have also fulfilled a social function for a long time. A long-standing custom of feeding the populace has been embraced by many of the nation's temples, enabling pilgrims and visitors to share healthful, delectable meals every day (CNN, 2021). During Buddha's time, "Buddha Vihars" had a significant impact on its evolution, as did the establishment of hospitals by monasteries in India and Sri Lanka from 400 BC to 260 BC. These hospitals provided shelter for the poor and disabled homeless people, resembling almshouses more than modern hospitals. The practice of offering temple kitchen meals to devotees and the establishment of Choultries/ Madams/ Chatrams, providing rest, food, medicine, and shelter to travellers for safety during their journey or pilgrimage, significantly shaped the early landscape of social work. This authentic origin extends to an ancient period, documented by the renowned Chinese traveller and Buddhist monk, Fa-Hien (Faxian), who observed and introduced this phenomenon to China. Subsequently, it spread to Middle Eastern countries and eventually reached France, England, and the USA, emerging as almshouses. This historical trajectory suggests that the foundation for social work as a profession was established in India far before the formation of the Charity Organisation Society (COS) and the Settlement House Movement. In India, almshouses performed a crucial role in providing care and support to those in need and laying the groundwork for the future growth of social work as a profession.

Objectives

The purpose of this paper is to examine the development of social work from its beginnings to the early 21st century in India, Europe, Britain, and America.

Method

A qualitative method was used to explore how social work has developed from India.

Information was sourced from existing literature, and individuals with knowledge in the field. Additionally, field visits were undertaken to verify the collected information.

India

Social work has a long history that spans across time, reaching its modern professional form in the late 19th century. This development draws from ancient practices such as poor relief, popular education, and care for neglected children (van der Linde & Limperg, 2014). While it was commonly believed that social work originated in Britain and the USA, especially through British almshouses that offered support to the poor and distressed, records reveal an earlier origin in India. Today, social work in India has attained great heights, especially in the context of social work education, which has also entered the online realm (Krishnan & Joseph, 2023). This however does not mean that there are fewer issues to tackle with. In India, problems such as child trafficking still exist (Krishnan, 2023). Almshouses, known as Chattiram, Chavadi, Choultry, Madam, etc., in India, trace their origins back to the time of Buddha in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE (Monier-Williams, 1963).

Goose and Moden (2010) assert that almshouses have existed for thousands of years, initially associated with monasteries, and were first established in India and Ceylon between 400 BCE and 260 BCE. Buddha Vihars, meaning 'dwellings', provide facilities to travellers and pilgrims during challenging seasons. Dating back to the 2nd century BCE, early examples are rock-cut caves in Karli, Nasik, Junnar, and Bhaja. Modern instances include the South India Buddha Vihar in Chennai and the Karnataka Guest House in Tirumala. In ancient and medieval India, choultries, known by various names like dharmasala, cared for pilgrims, travellers, and traders. Equipped with kitchens, these rest houses facilitated rest, refreshment, and shelter during journeys, essential for safe travel along trade routes and to religious sites. A possible origin of the term dharma is the Sanskrit root "thar", which means to uphold or sustain. India has a long tradition of social responsibility and service. Social work emerged from this tradition of dharma, not as a foreign concept, but as an expression of our innate nature. (Dubey, 1978; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023; Fennell, 1892; Goetz, 1959; Sewell, 1882). Constructed by a Pandiya King in the 6th century CE, the Meenakshi Temple in Tamil Nadu exemplifies a rich tradition. It offers 'Puttu', a dish of steamed rice flour, coconut, and jaggery, as part of the country's worship culinary experience (CNN, 2021; Tulabandual, 2023). Temples across India have not only addressed spiritual needs. Many typical Indian temples, whether in a city or village, will have its own kitchen where these meals are cooked, sanctified and served, and offered free of charge or for a small token price, but also played a vital social role by providing meals to the masses (CNN, 2021). This practice, dating back to the 7th century CE, is deeply embedded in Tamil Nadu's tradition of Temple Kitchens or "Madaipalli", where devout servants of God and devotees receive nourishment (Gautaman, 2008; UNESCO, 2021).

In contemporary times, the Tamil Nadu state in South India bears witness to the enduring legacy of almshouses, inns or choultries (referred to as madam or sathiram in the local Tamil language), that is 'a place of accommodation and food for passers-by'. These establishments once provided rest, food, medicine, and shelter to travellers, leaving visible remnants of their existence. The region preserves specialised shelters that were dedicated to the well-being of travellers during their journey or pilgrimage, highlighting the lasting impact of these historical practices (Tulabandual, 2023).

Some of these shelters not only accommodated adult travellers but also provided for infants and children. Known as Pillai Madam, where "Pillai" in Tamil denotes infant or child, and "madam" signifies a care home or choultry, inn. The facilities offered in Pillai Madam were baby cradle/cribs and milk for infants, along with a resting place for lactating mothers travelling on Mangammal Salai, (the roads named after Rani Mangamma, the queen of the Nayak empire), in today's Madurai, India, from 1689 to 1704. An illustrative case of a temporary child shelter (pillai madam) exists in Idiakhil village, located on the Madurai-Tenkasi national highway in the erstwhile Tenkasi Taluk of Tirunelveli District. This shelter, still visible today, echoes the ancient origins of almshouses. Temple kitchens in ancient Tamil kingdoms further attest to this tradition, where food was prepared and served to those in need. Queen Mangammal, a remarkable administrator and builder, constructed rest shelters (Madam or Chattiram) along roads in her kingdom, offering rest and food for travellers.¹ Another vivid illustration is "The Sathya Dharma Salai," established by Ramalinga Swamikal to provide free food for the poor in Vadalur, Tamil Nadu, in 1867. On the inaugural day, he kindled the fire in the stone stove and declared that it should burn continuously, ensuring a perpetual source of food for the hungry. The establishment, which remains operational and is managed by volunteers, consistently provides free food to all individuals, irrespective of their caste and creed (My Dattatreya, 2021; Prasad, 2022; The Hindu, 2022). Existing literature indicates that India is a true pioneer in establishing almshouses, considered the earliest form of social work. This traces the authentic beginnings of social work to a much earlier era in Southeast Asia (Legge, 1886). Legge also reported that the renowned Chinese traveller and Buddhist monk, Fa-Hien or Fa-Hsien or Faxian, documented and introduced this remarkable phenomenon

to China. These almshouses housed the poor, orphans, widows, widowers, childless individuals, maimed and crippled, providing medical attention and sustenance. In the early Christian era, this almshouse model extended from India to China, the Middle East, and Europe, demonstrating its widespread impact.

Almshouses in China, and the Middle East

Similar almshouses to those in India appeared in China by 542 CE. The oldest known hospital or hostel of God, Hotel-Dieu, was founded in Lyon² in 542 CE by Childebert-1, king of the Franks³, providing shelter for the poor, disabled, and homeless (Barker, 1987). In 652 CE, St. Landry established the renowned Hotel-Dieu of Paris, while Santa Maria Della Scala in Siena is believed to have founded Italy's oldest hospital in 898 CE. Hospitals emerged in Damascus in 707 A.D., Cairo in 874, Baghdad in 918, and three in Egypt between 925 and 977 (Christian Medical College Library, 2017). These hospitals paved the way for almshouses in Europe, notably London's establishment in 936 CE.

Almshouses in Europe and Britain

King Athelstan introduced almshouses to Britain in 936 A.D., establishing St Peter's Hospital in York. The oldest surviving British almshouses, the Hospital of St. Oswald in Worcester, dates back to 990 A.D. However, these almshouses were diverse, categorized as bedehouses and maisons dieu. Bedehouses resembled hospitals, while maisons dieu were smaller, and informal, often requiring residents to beg. Subsequently, tax-supported poorhouses emerged as residential institutions for those financially struggling, serving as precursors to "outdoor relief." Managed by a poor master or overseer of the poor, poorhouses aimed to provide long-term support but also housed those convicted of public begging (Crannell, 2014; Sweetinburgh, 2004; University of Cambridge, 2016).

The Legal Origins of Rights and Welfare

The roots of welfare and rights can be traced to the Magna Carta, which was the first source of written law or constitution. On June 5, 1215, King John of England conceded to the barons' terms amid a conflict stemming from his diminished status after papal excommunication and defeat by France in 1213. Struggling to replenish his treasury, King John demanded money from non-combatant barons for military services. This financial imposition instigated a feud, culminating in King John's surrender and the signing of a charter by the barons on June 5, 1215, a pivotal moment in the evolution of legal and constitutional principles (Trueman, 2015). Initially named the "Articles of the Barons," this document evolved into the renowned Magna Carta four days later. Following modifications, both King and barons released the final version, signifying "the great charter" in Latin. Establishing fundamental human rights for the nobility, it is acclaimed as the first constitution in the history of Europe. After King John's passing, his son, Henry III, reissued the Magna Carta in 1217 and 1225, solidifying it as the definitive version (The National Archives Education Service, 202; British Library, 2020).

On June 18, 1349, King Edward III issued The Ordinance of Labourers, a pivotal moment in welfare and rights history. Imposing restrictions on peasants' mobility, prohibited them from seeking better job opportunities. The ordinance mandated residency in their home manors, laboring for lords irrespective of wages, and criminalized begging and almsgiving (Ibeji, 2011). Only those incapable of working were allowed exemption. A distinction was drawn between the "deserving poor" – elderly, disabled, widows, and dependent children – and the "undeserving poor," encompassing able-bodied but unemployed adults (Barker, 1987). The Statute of Labourers in 1351 mandated gainful employment for individuals under 60 and regulated fair pricing for food, preventing excessive profits. This approach was enacted through Parliament, shaping welfare policies (Rothstein & Liebman, 2003). The roots of English labour law date back to the 1349 ordinance. In 1526, Juan Luis Vives, a Spaniard, crafted an influential relief scheme. It featured four components: registration of the impoverished, creating job opportunities for the able-bodied, raising private and institutional funds, and supporting the remaining impoverished. Vives' ideas influenced European nations and laid the groundwork for the British Poor Laws (Rothstein & Liebman, 2003).

The Poor Laws of Britain

In 1531, Britain introduced the first statute to address poverty, empowering local magistrates to grant licenses for alms solicitation to specific individuals (elderly and disabled), and penalizing unlicensed beggars severely. The Vagabonds Act permitted begging only in designated areas, imposing imprisonment or flogging for violations. Unfortunately, the legislation didn't cater to the jobless, offering them little choice beyond starvation or unlawful means. It wasn't

until 1535 that a bill proposed a public works system, funded by an income and capital tax, addressing unemployment concerns (Intriguing History, 2017).

In 1536, the Henrician Poor Law emerged, marking a pivotal shift in welfare strategies. While imposing harsher penalties on beggars, it mandated public officials to mobilize resources from churches to aid the needy, infirm, and elderly. Additionally, officials were encouraged to utilize church funds for job creation and offer craft training to children aged 5 to 15, ensuring future gainful employment. The Henrician Poor Law represents a crucial turning point, emphasizing empowerment over pure charity (Trattner, 2007).

In 1572, a crucial development in addressing poverty emerged with the implementation of the Parish Poor Rate, a nationwide levy aimed at providing for those unable to support themselves. This alleviated the government's dependence on voluntary contributions from churches, with a portion earmarked for creating employment opportunities. Under this taxation system, those requiring assistance were obligated to register with the government (UK Parliament, 2023).

In 1601, the Elizabethan Poor Law further shaped welfare strategies, decentralizing poor relief administration to the local level. Parishioners were taxed to support their indigent residents, while apprenticeship schemes for underprivileged children and workhouses for dependents were established. The law's pivotal shift in mindset emphasized that aid should solely target the genuinely destitute, not supplementing wages (Alchin, 2017).

Individual Efforts for the Relief of the Poor

St. Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) was a French Catholic priest (also known as the "Great Apostle of Charity," was a French Catholic priest who served the underprivileged for his whole life. In 1617, he established the "Ladies of Charity" to visit the poor in their homes" (Watson, 1922). Since, this organisation did not perform as expected by him; he co-founded the "Daughters of Charity," in 1633, which was recognised as first organised charity in Europe. It provided family services after screening and classifying families according to their capacity for self-sufficiency. In addition, he also established a system of friendly visits to the impoverished and a way to avoid giving to those who can do some things for themselves (Gladden, 2018). He also organised fundraisers to support famine, slavery, and war victims. He was well-known for his generosity, humility, and compassion, and many others were motivated to practise kindness by his example. He is revered as the patron saint of voluntarism and charity (Alchetron, 2022; Aletea, 2021; Attwater, 1982; Hallow, 2023; The Editors of Encyclopaedia of Britannica 2023; Unionpedia, 2022).

Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) formulated a 'community-based friendly visiting system' in the most impoverished area of Glasgow, Scotland, in 1819. His choice of Glasgow was influenced by its status as an industrial hub grappling with severe poverty (Loch, 1888). Rejecting public poor relief, he advocated local community solidarity and empowerment over charity. Chalmers structured his parish into districts, each overseen by a deacon responsible for conducting home visits and collateral contacts. Regarded as the pioneer of 'Scientific Social Work', he embraced the scientific method by personally validating the needs of the impoverished and needy, laying the groundwork for future casework. Deacons fostered relationships, considering material conditions, family connections, and friendships as foundational for providing support and care. Concurrently, Chalmers instituted quality primary education and weekend schools, integrating secular and religious components for children. Chalmers principle of "help the poor to help themselves" resonated and influenced notable figures like Joseph Tuckermann, Charles Stewart Loch, Octavia Hill, and Mary Ellen Richmond. Chalmers' concepts had such a widespread influence that they were even taken to Germany (Elberfeld system) in 1853 and the Netherlands (Charity According to Ability) in 1871 illustrating their global impact (Humphreys, 2001; Loch, 1910; Roof, 1972; Smith, 2002; Steyaert, 2010; Young, & Ashton, 1956).

The Elberfeld System (1853)

The German city of Elberfeld developed and implemented the Elberfeld method in 1800, which represents a unique way to assist the poor (McMillan, 2019, The Hospital, 1888). Elberfeld, a municipal division within Wuppertal, Germany, established the "Allgemeinen Armenanstalt" or "General Poor House" under the guidance of social reformer and Wuppertal mayor Johann Jakob Aders and co-founder Caspar Voght. Funded by the municipality and church groups, its goal was not merely financial aid but also addressing the root causes of poverty (Sillem, 1896). Initial efforts involved appointing volunteer visitors to assess relief applications in 1802. By 1841, the city adopted a district-based structure with elected boards of supervisors.

In 1852, Daniel von der Heydt, the influential leader of the poor administration and often acknowledged as the progenitor of the Elberfeld System, introduced a novel approach to poverty management inspired by the theories of Thomas Chalmers. This innovative "poor order" marked a significant shift in Elberfeld's social policies (Willis, 2016). Successfully implemented in 1853, it became known as the "Elberfeld System." This innovative approach spread beyond

German towns, influencing developments in England and America (Butterwege, 1998; Krabbe, 1989; Loch, 1888; VinDaj, Inc, 2011; Werner, 1953). The Elberfeld System's impact reached far beyond its origin, shaping the trajectory of social welfare practices on an international scale.

The Netherlands Experiment (1871)

"Liefdadigheid Naar Vermogen" (LNV) translates to "Charity According to Ability" in Dutch. Founded by Louis Blankenberg at 18, along with family and acquaintances, on January 1, 1871, in Amsterdam, it marked the Netherlands' inaugural modernized poverty relief society. LNV's mission focused on uplifting and promoting self-help through personal volunteer engagement with impoverished families. Pioneering cooperation within Amsterdam's municipality, LNV became the cradle of modern social work in the Netherlands, emphasizing hands-on support and collaboration (van der Linde & Limperg, 2014).

Charity Organization Society⁴

The society 'Organising Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicity' was founded in London on April 29, 1869 at a meeting held at the home of Lord Lichfield (Family Action, 2021; 2023), marking a pivotal moment in the evolution of professional social work (Willis, 2016). It eventually became the 'Charity Organisation Society' (COS) on April 9, 1870. Influenced by the 'George Joachim Goschen Minute' (Poor Law Board, 1871), a group of social reformers led by Octavia Hill, William Ewart Gladstone, John Ruskin, Helen Bosanquet, C.B.P. Bosanquet, W.H. Fermantle, Lord Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Henry Edward Manning, Martha Beatrice Webb and Sidney James Webb, Edward Denison, and Charles Stewart Loch founded the COS⁵. From 1869 to 1870, Edward Denison held the position of honorary secretary for COS. From 1870 to 1875, C. B. P. Bosanquet was the first full-time secretary, succeeding Denison. Sir Charles Stewart Loch⁶, the acknowledged founder of COS, held the position of secretary from 1875 to 1913. One of the founding goals of the COS was to advocate for policy changes to help those experiencing the consequences of poverty to create a more objective assessment of the relief requirement. The COS also aimed to coordinate charitable agencies in the city, shifting from indiscriminate almsgiving to targeted philanthropy. Women volunteer workers conducted meticulous interviews to tailor assistance to individual needs, concentrating on tackling individual challenges and documenting for effective coordination. By the end of the 1870's, volunteer family-visiting workers were being placed with families to provide the practical and emotional support they needed. This pioneering approach laid the foundation for "modern social casework and counselling", impacting the trajectory of "professional social work" (Family Action, 2011, 2023; Humphreys, 2001; Otter, 2005; Roof, 1972 as cited in Smith, 2002; Shigemori, 1999; Winsten, 2015; Young, & Ashton, 1956).

Octavia Hill, (1838 –1912), one of the main Founders of the COS, inspired by German Elberfeld System. As a founding member of COS, she began a home-visiting programme that formed the groundwork for modern social work (Darley, 2004). She embraced the motto "Help without Alms", rooted in Thomas Chalmers's concept of "empowering the poor towards self-reliance". She trained volunteers to focus on "helping people help themselves" rather than doling out money. A pioneer of the affordable housing movement, Octavia Hill is celebrated as the architect of modern social work (Steyaert, 2010).

The American Charity Organization Society

The COS movement found its way to the United States through the initiative of two individuals: Rev. Stephen Humphreys Gurteen, who had previous experience with the COS in London (Watson, 1922), and Guilford Smith from Buffalo, New York. Witnessing the escalating destitution during the Long Depression of the 1870s, they embarked on a plan to address the issue. Rev. Gurteen traveled to England in 1877 to study the operations of the London COS, and upon his return, he collaborated with Smith to establish the first city-wide COS in Buffalo in 1877, marking a pioneering effort in the USA (Hansan, 2013).

The Buffalo Charity Organization Society played a pivotal role in the formation of the National Association of Societies for Organizing Charity, the precursor to the Alliance for Children and Families (Hansan, 2013). In 1882, Josephine Shaw Lowell founded the COS of New York City, laying the foundation for the Social Service Association of New York. Shaw Lowell's group pioneered investigations into systemic causes, significantly contributing to the growth of the 'Social Work' field (Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, 2020). Consequently, the London COS, established in 1869, served as a model for the COS movement in USA (McMillan, 2019)

A pioneer in applying scientific methods to social work, Mary Ellen Richmond (1861–1928) was a trailblazer in implementing scientific methodology within professional social work, explored the causes of poverty and social marginalisation by examining the relationship between individuals and their

environments. She started her career in 1889 at the Baltimore branch of the Charity Organisation Society. She developed the theory and practice of "social casework diagnosis", based on the idea that care should be directed towards the individual within their specific situation or environment. She wrote two influential books, "Social Diagnosis" (2017) and "What is Social Casework?" (1922), and is widely recognised as the "mother of social casework". She is a key figure in the social work history and is considered a "**principal founder of the social work profession**", stressing the importance of professional education. (Steyaert, 2010)

Settlement House Movement

Settlement houses presented a distinct contrast to the friendly visitors, representing a different aspect of the development of social work. They aimed to help the poor working class through education and fostering societal transformation. One of the first was Toynbee Hall, founded in 1884 in East London by Canon Samuel Augustus Barnett and his wife Henrietta Barnett. It was named after Arnold Toynbee, a 19th-century social reformer (Kiger, 2023). Inspired by the English model, some people in the UK set up similar houses in the US. The first one was the Neighbourhood Guild, founded in 1886 by Stanton A. Coit in New York City (later University Settlement House). Jane Addams (1860- 1935), a social activist, feminist, and Nobel laureate, and Ellen Gates Starr, established Hull House in Chicago in 1889 (Hansan, 2011). It provided various services, such as food, job training, childcare, and arts, to those who needed them.

Addams' work shaped the basic ideas of social work. She inspired social workers to find and meet needs, and to enable people to help themselves. Through Hull House, she gave education and new ways of living and caring to the poor. Her vision of 'helping people to help themselves' is the essence of social work.. Through Hull House, Addams not only offered education for employment but also presented a new means for individuals to sustain themselves and care for their families. The core of social work, encapsulated by the concept of 'helping people to help themselves,' reflects Addams' visionary approach to community support. Hence, Addams is acknowledged as one of the pioneers of modern social work and recognised as the founder of the social work profession in USA (Addams, 1931; Darley, 2004; Social Work Degree Centre, 2016; Stuart, 2013).

Origin of Professional Social Work Education

The field of social work has a contemporary, scientific foundation (Huff, 2022). It is believed to have originated from three distinct sources. The initial strand involved individual casework initiated by the COS, contributing to the establishment of social work as a recognised profession. (Family Action, 2011). The second aspect involved social welfare administration, encompassing various methods to alleviate poverty. The idea of relief of paupers came from the English Poor Laws of the 17th century but was formalised by Charity Organisation Society. Third was social conditions improved through political action, working with groups and communities. This was done through the Settlement House Movement (Lymbery, 2005). The COS was a key player in the advancement of social work as a profession and in the proper training of social workers.

To address social issues impacting school children, COS developed the first School Care Service and the Institute of Hospital Almoners in **1895**. **The COS** organised a series of lectures for its district offices and created a Committee on Training in **1897** (London Metropolitan Archives, 2006). The very first school of social work, with a two-year full-time programme, was established in Amsterdam, The Netherlands in 1899 (Kendall, 2000: 155-156). In 1901, the COS inaugurated the first social work training programme at the present-day London School of Economics (Family Action, 2023). As a spinoff of the COS, the School of Sociology was established in 1903 and amalgamated with the London School of Economics in 1912 (remarkably, Martha Beatrice Webb and Sidney James Webb, two of the founding members of COS, were also among the founders of the London School of Economics and received financial assistant from Sir Ratan Tata Trust of India, to encourage research in 1913 (LSE, 2024). Together with Bedford College, the COS launched its own 12-month social work training programme in 1915. It also gave students from other courses real-world experience. As a result, paid professional social workers progressively took over the district offices' workloads, diminishing the significance of voluntary workers (London Metropolitan Archives, 2006).

In the USA, Mary Richmond started the training for caseworkers, which began as a summer course. Since the first social work course in **1898**, social workers have led the creation of private and charitable organisations to help the needy (NASW, 2023). The New York Charity Organisation Society started a full-time graduate training programme in 1904 through the New York School of Philanthropy, which later evolved into the first social work school in the United States, Columbia University School of Social Work (Columbia University, 2023).

Clifford Manshardt, an American theologian, moved to Byculla in Bombay in 1925. In 1926, he established the Nagpada Neighbourhood House, drawing inspiration from London's settlement house movement. Manshardt, recognizing the necessity for professional social work training to tackle issues in

Indian slum areas, secured funds (\$15) for the Nagpada Neighbourhood slum improvement programmes from the 'Tata Trust.' Later, he became the director of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, influencing the formation of the Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work in 1936. Furthermore, Manshardt assumed the role of founder and director of the institute from 1936 to 1941. This institution holds the distinction of being the first of its kind in India and South Asia. The institute's primary goal was to provide professional training for individuals working with slum dwellers and mill workers. The school was renamed as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in 1944 and became a deemed university in 1964. Today, TISS is one of the leading institutions of social work education and research in India and the world. More schools of social work were set up with agencies as the need for better training increased. They became professional institutions approved by universities as the community recognised them (Healy, 2001; Indian Christian History; 2021; Mukhopadhyay, 2005; Pathare, 2014; Social Workin, 2020; The Tata Group, 2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the origins of modern social work may initially seem rooted in the West, a more in-depth analysis reveals that the concept of charity, which underpins the development of social work, originates in the East, with India playing a significant role. Today, social work has gained a significant foothold in the country which includes a wide range of settings from working with the intellectually challenged (Krishnan & Meena, 2023) to palliative care (Krishnan & Butola, 2022). Since its inception, the roots of social work have extended and matured further in subsequent years, particularly in the Western nations of Britain and the USA. A pivotal moment in the evolution of the profession occurred with the distinction drawn between charity and social work practice. This differentiation not only enhanced the discipline but also contributed to its recognition as a valuable profession both in Britain and globally. Consequently, there is a compelling need to revisit and revise the literature on the evolution of Social Work, recognising India as the birthplace where Social Work first emerged.

Footnotes

¹ Information was collected through direct field visits and knowledgeable elderly persons in and around the villages

where the Pillai Madam is located.

² The city of Lyons is located in southern France. The region was home to numerous Roman Empire major cities and has been populated from prehistoric times.

³ German speaking invaders known as the Franks arrived in the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century.

⁴ In 1946, the COS was re-named the Family Welfare Association, and in 2008 it became Family Action.

⁵ Rooff (1972) pointed out that there is disagreement over whom among Thomas Hawksley and Henry Solly were the founding members of the COS.

⁶ Loch was born in Calcutta where his father was a Judge in the High Court of Calcutta.

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