

# **Chapter – I**

## **Introduction**

The central research question of this study is How do trained and voluntary social workers practice in the development sector? What are the distinguishing features of trained and voluntary social workers? What similarities and distinctions exist between their approaches, knowledge, skills, values, ethics, commitment, and motivation? Are they diametrically opposed to one another, or do they each provide unique but mutually supportive contributions to the field of social work practice? These are some of the most fundamental questions that have been considered throughout the course of this study. In this doctoral research, the questions mentioned above are addressed by: a) formulating and developing a conceptual framework based on various theories and previously conducted studies that are relevant and significant; and b) empirically validating such a conceptual framework by conducting exploratory and purposeful fieldwork using appropriate techniques and tools.

### **1.1 Conceptual Framework of the Professional Practices of Social Work**

Social work is a phenomenon that spans a century. It may have existed in various forms from the beginning of human civilisation. In the modern period, the phrase ‘Social Work’ has diverse meanings for different people depending on the context. For instance, to a layperson, ‘Social Work’ refers to any form of assistance to the poor and disadvantaged. In the opinion of some, ‘Social Work’ is synonymous with philanthropy. Social work gradually established itself as a profession with a scientific knowledge basis and educational pedagogy as a result of the changing demands of society. If we examine the social work landscape in India, one may trace the origins of conventional social work methods and understanding back to ancient civilisation and discover that it was supported by a variety of religious beliefs and rituals. Industrialisation and urbanisation in India caused complicated societal concerns, which led to the development

of professional social work in India in the 20th century.

In addition to a novel institutionalised approach in the form of the social work profession, Voluntary Social Work has existed for a very long time. Voluntary social workers have been enormously involved in various issues ranging from social reforms to developmental to social action. We cannot ignore the voluntary sector's contribution to the welfare and the development of the country. The coexistence of professional and voluntary social workers has been maintained in India. These categories have distinct characteristics and have their own issues. The present research, therefore, focuses on practices of trained and voluntary social workers to comprehend the nature of social work practice.

The study has also focused on the identity of social workers in India – a process including the identity crisis of professional social workers on the job and the identity crisis of voluntary social workers in the theoretical arena of social work education and training. This work relates to the area of social work research, which seeks to comprehend social work practices and their diverse components. In addition, it addressed a substantial issue, namely the identity of social workers and their contribution to the field of social welfare and development.

This chapter of the present research work introduces the theme of the work in detail and the underlying theoretical framework of the study, including the concept of social work, the nature of social work in India and the practices of social workers. It discusses constructivism as philosophical underpinnings to define the theoretical framework of the social work in the study. The later part of the chapter deals with the concept of professional practices and professional practices of social workers.

### **1.1.1 Concept of Social Work**

It is essential to examine the core and foundational issues of the field in order to explore and understand the concerns of this research study. It will suggest a meaningful direction in the construction of the present theme. In light of this, it is vital to answer the question, “What is

Social Work?”

First and foremost, social work refers to work that relates to society. How does this work differ from others? What kind of work qualifies as ‘Social Work’? What does the adjective ‘Social’ mean in the phrase ‘Social Work’? Does it vary or remain constant based on context? What is the objective of ‘Social Work’? These inquiries will lead to the explanation of the research study.

People may interpret the nature of social work in various ways. It is defined in a variety of ways by dictionaries around the world. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, social work is “work of benefit to those in need of help, especially professional or voluntary service of a specialised nature concerned with community welfare and family or social problems arising mainly from poverty, mental or physical handicap, maladjustment, delinquency etc. Hence a social worker is one who undertakes social work, especially someone who is professionally trained.”

The above definition emphasises activities that provide assistance to the needy and meet the social needs of a particular location through professional or voluntary efforts. In the early 20th century, social workers’ approach evolved from ‘charity’ to ‘professional social work.’ In 1898, Mary Richmond termed it “applied philanthropy.” Simon Patten coined the term “Social Worker” in 1890 to refer to friendly visitors. Later, numerous attempts were made to define the complex identity of social work.

Cheney explained, “Social Work includes all voluntary attempts to extend benefits, which are made in response to needs, are concerned with social relationship and avail themselves of scientific knowledge and employ scientific methods” (Cheney; 1926). In his explanation, Cheney refers to social work as work or activity and discusses its purpose. Even if it discusses scientific knowledge basis and practices, it does not refer to it as ‘professional’ social work. It embarked on the path to a ‘professionalised’ form.

In 1955, W. Friedlander defined it as “a professional service, based on scientific knowledge

and skill in human relations, which assist individuals, alone or in groups, to obtain social and personal satisfaction and independence.” It focuses on Social Work as a ‘Profession’ and highlights knowledge and skill sets as required tools for the intervention.

However, the National Association of Social Workers, USA proposed a working definition in 1956, which defined social work practice as “like the practice of all other professions, is recognised by a constellation of values, purpose, sanction, knowledge and method. It is the particular context and configuration of this constellation which makes it social work practice (NASW; 1956 mentioned in Singh R.R. 2014).” This definition constructed three pillars, namely the knowledge, skills, and values of the social work profession, and strengthened the ‘professionalisation’ of social work. In addition, the ‘contextualisation’ phenomenon of social work practice was noted.

Social work also focuses on social improvement and social change. Malcolm Payne states, “Social work claims that social improvement can be achieved by interpersonal influence and action. Social change can be harnessed to individual personal development and that carrying out these activities together should be a profession” (Payne, 2006).

Even in the twenty-first century, when the Social Work Profession has expanded its horizons, with footprints in over 125 countries, the effort to define or redefine ‘Social Work’ is ongoing. According to R. R. Singh (2014), “...definition of social work should be reviewed every ten years which may be operationalised in the national and global context (Singh, 2014).” Nadarajah, 2014 presented similar kinds of questions. He explained social work as “a mode of engagement, which is an expression of our sympathetic/compassionate sentiment, born out of our sociability and directed at those in need of help. Social work stems from the general concern for the well-being of others and the particular concern for those in distress. It is directed on a voluntary basis at helping people materially and/or non-materially, enabled by our moral sense. It supports integration and attachment and, directly or indirectly, contributes to the orderedness of social life to the sustainability of society. Today, through our sympathetic,

compassionate sense, social work has also extended beyond the human world to include all of nature” (Singh R. R., 2014).

Indirectly or directly, social work is concerned with social relations since it involves connections and conflicts between individuals, group dynamics, and community cooperation. Jordan (1997) says that social work “begins where the community has difficulty in providing”, and it “seeks to strengthen the bonds of inclusive membership” (Nair, 2015).

In July 2014, the global definition of social work was modified by the IFSW and IASSW as, “Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversity are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being.”

The IFSW-IASSW definition has proven to be a significant milestone in the development of social work. It has signified changes in the profession’s thrust areas, aims, and focus. Moreover, it explains social work as a Practice-Based Profession, which is an extremely significant phenomenon. However, the term Practice-based profession was not precisely defined.

What is a practice-based profession? To comprehend this, we must first understand the Practice-based approach. According to the Wageningen University & Research, “...The practice-based approach is about the dynamic interactions that make a practice, the active role of actors in this and the way the policies, ideas and knowledge emerges.”

According to the preceding explanation, a Practice-based profession is an area in which ‘practices by practitioners’ play a central role. However, it does not assert that only practices are important. The word ‘Profession’ carries the connotation that it is grounded upon scientific understanding. Therefore, the term practice-based profession indicates a reciprocal interaction

between theory and practice in the social work discipline. Desai K. (2013) claimed in his doctoral thesis, "...the congruence between theory and practice has important implications for social work education/training and social work practice. The practice-orientation in Social Work demands the application of theories in practice, on the one hand, and the revision of theories based on practical knowledge, on the other. The two might be integrated through research on the new ideas that are generated through field practice in light of a body of theoretical knowledge that already exists (Desai K. 2013)."

The relationship between theory and practice is peculiar to Social Work. The application of theory to practice distinguishes this field. The same can be stated for the process of defining social work. It has been subjected to a review process and revised accordingly at a specific time interval. Numerous academicians, committee reports, conferences, and organisations have defined 'Social Work' in accordance with evolving practices and 'context'.

In lieu of defining social work as one entity, one practice, and one social system, the researcher argues that social work continually redefines itself because it is influenced by people, social needs, and social change. Thus, to understand social work, it is essential to explore, analyse and comprehend the social context of a specific location, which constructs a particular social or interpersonal scenario. Social constructivism provides the logical foundation for this argument. Therefore, it serves as the theoretical foundation for this research work.

### **1.1.2 Social Constructivism Paradigm**

Social constructivism emphasises two aspects: the role of culture and context in understanding societal events and the construction of knowledge based on developed understanding. (Derry, 1999). Social constructivists reject the concept of objective reality. According to constructivists, the reality is created by human interactions in society. Likewise, knowledge is constructed by human interactions, which are influenced by 'context' According to social constructivism, knowledge is, therefore, a human product (Ernest, 1999).

In his paper, Ruth Grossman Dean (1993) mentioned, “According to social constructionists, our categories and assumptions are fluid, continually influenced by the communities to which we belong.”

Social constructivism provides a highly relevant lens for social workers who work in diverse ‘contexts’ characterised by pluralism and multiculturalism in the modern period. In addition, the concept of social constructivism tackles the identity of social workers by answering the question, “who is a social worker?” Consequently, social constructivism is a suitable theoretical lens for constructing the concept of this research study.

### **1.1.3 Social Work: From the Lens of Social Constructivism**

According to the social constructivist theory, social phenomena are ‘constructed’ by human interactions, and when these interactions change, so do social phenomena. Similarly, changing societal needs necessitate appropriate social work action. It means that if a person performs some activity aimed at the betterment and well-being of society in a certain manner and declares, “This is social work,” it is valid. If someone claims to be performing it in a different context, using the same or a different approach suited to a specific society, then that is also social work. It illustrates how every social circumstance presents an opportunity to be adaptable and achieve change. It is an extreme constructivist stance.

According to the extreme constructivist approach, any effort to improve society is social work. For instance, if an engineer constructs a high-quality bridge, it will ultimately contribute to the growth of society. Does it qualify as social work? No, this concept lacks clarity. Here, another perspective on constructivism defines social work in a comprehensive manner. On a broader scale, some professions work for society but within a defined social context (for instance, engineer in the example mentioned above). In contrast to other professions, social work is defined by its efforts to modify a particular social context along with social improvement. The individual who accomplishes this work is a social worker.

According to Payne (1996), a category of professions that includes doctors, teachers, nurses, psychologists, and engineers, among others, focuses on the concerns and interests of their clients. For them, social order and social situation constitute the context within which they assist individuals. While some groups and professionals, such as legislators, economists, journalists, policy planners, etc., seek social improvement and social change in the context. However, they do not connect individuals, families, and groups to the changes. In this instance, the social worker's claim is unique. A social worker works with individuals, groups, communities, and at the policy level within a specific social context while simultaneously seeking to change the given social context to promote societal betterment.

The previous argument characterises social workers according to their functions. As per this definition, a social worker engages in work for betterment by leveraging social relationships and linking individuals to change. In light of this perspective on the identity of social workers in India, numerous social workers operate in diverse sectors throughout India. Many of them are professionally qualified social workers, while others are amateurs or voluntary social workers.

Another viewpoint which is a less extreme view of constructivists, is that construction is a process by which people arrive at a common point and establish it as a norm in particular societies (Payne, 2006). This theoretical perspective supports the idea that the meaning and perception of the term "social work" varies according to the social needs of a particular region. For instance, a report published at the Tenth International Conference of Social Work on "The term 'Social Work as used throughout the World' provides a clear picture of 'social work' perceived by various countries.

In Australia, social work is considered in its broadest and generic sense. Nonetheless, the usage of social work varies across the continent. In a broad sense, social work in Australia refers to activities by organisations whose primary aim is to restore or promote certain aspects of the physical, economic, and social well-being of individuals and groups. In Canada, the term 'social work' is generally understood by the social work profession, in which the use of

skills and knowledge concerning the interaction between man and his environment enables people to achieve greater measures of adequacy in their social functioning. In Chile, the terms 'social service' and 'social work' are used interchangeably. However, they attempted to distinguish between these two terms. In Chile, social work encompasses all efforts made to promote social welfare, and anyone can perform it, whether a professional or not. While 'social services' refers to the same tasks described above but are carried out exclusively by professionals.

The concept of social work is very vague in Finland, which refers to professional workers in the field of social assistance and social welfare. In Israel, it denotes an activity providing care to the people who are or consider themselves unable to perform satisfactorily in life situations. It is carried out by both trained workers and voluntary workers. It is also recognised as a discipline based on determining and attempting to achieve the aims of the social welfare policy of that country.

In Japan, social work is a journey from '*Shakai-jigyo*' to '*Shakai-fukushi-jigyo*' that is from 'social enterprise' to 'social welfare services'. According to the report, the term 'social welfare services' was gradually replacing the term 'social work' in Japan, where social welfare services were considered more appropriate to emphasise the new trend of social work in which the emphasis has shifted from relief to prevention. In the Philippines, it is described as a 'giving' and 'helping' activity, a kind of 'fix-all'. In Pakistan, social work is considered an activity of help to the needy by professionally trained people with skills and scientific knowledge of human behaviour.

In the United Kingdom, social work is defined as helping people with the aid of social services to resolve their personal and social problems, which they are unable to meet without such help. In the country, it is undertaken by statutory or voluntary agencies. It may be carried out by professional or lay workers, and it may be paid or unpaid. Whereas, in the United States of America, "Social Work consists of a body of knowledge, skill and ethics professionally

employed in the administration of the social services and the development of the programmes of social welfare”, according to a statement used by Karl de Schweinitz at the School of Social Welfare, University of California, Los Angeles.

The above explanation of ‘social work’ perceived by various countries reflects elements of constructivism. Different nations defined “Social Work” in accordance with the context and its necessities. Similarly, in the Indian setting, social work activities with various approaches have existed for a very long time. The lens of constructivism provides a ground for considering the past and present experiences of diverse social work activities and affirms the identities of professional and voluntary social workers in India.

In view of this, it is essential to take note of the historical background of social work in the country, which will describe the coexistence of voluntary social workers and trained social workers in India.

## **1.2 Social Work in India: Historical Approach**

Social work has a very rich legacy in India. There is a progression from a charity approach to empowerment, human rights, and social justice. It was initially inspired by religious teachings. Charity, support for the needy and helpless, and brotherhood and love for all beings are the virtues shared by all religions. In ancient India, families and local communities were primarily responsible for the care of the physical and mentally disabled and underprivileged. Later, the king had responsibility for the protection and welfare of all. Gore (1965) noted, “The giving of alms, feeding and care of the destitute were acts of religious merit. The kings and chiefs were enjoined to provide free kitchens during famines. The temples provided shelter to the homeless. The source of this welfare activity was mainly religion. From the age of the Buddha to the twentieth century, India has had a succession of men whose source of inspiration for their humanitarian activity and preaching lay in their search for spiritual salvation. This, however, is not a unique feature of India, as is often likely to be believed. All over the world, different people

have found inspiration for humanitarian activity in their religious teachings (Gore, 1965).”

The social scenario changed in India with the arrival of the Britishers and Portuguese. During this changing phase, two additional factors emerged. One of these was the increasing influence of Christian missionaries in the field of social services to the needy and helpless. Another significant factor in the evolution of social work in India was the twentieth-century reform movements in Indian society. The actions of Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s Brahma Samaj, Dayanand Saraswati’s Arya Samaj in northern India, and Vivekananda’s Ramakrishna Mission influenced the social life of the people. It was the catalyst for the establishment of organised social services in India.

Further, the industrial revolution and urbanisation led to rapid social change. Parallel to this, during the freedom movement, close contact was developed with western ideas of liberalism, rationalism and democracy. It has influenced the attitude, perception, and values of intellectual people towards social services. As a result, a humanistic and rational approach to social work was adopted. The Servant Society was founded in 1905 by Gokhale. According to Gore (1965), “It was probably the first major organisation in the field of social work, which did not have a religious bias (Gore, 1965).” The later part of the century was marked by the Sarvodaya movement and the concept of ‘Constructive Workers’ based on Gandhian philosophy in the social welfare scenario of India.

Along with a growing concern for social problems and social welfare, several thinkers of the 20th century saw the necessity for a scientific approach to social work to meet the changing needs of Indian society. The Social Service League, a Mumbai-based voluntary organisation, used to offer a 15-week training programme for voluntary social workers. (Nair,2014; Desai K, 2014). We can consider it as the first training school for social work in India. Clifford Manshardt, an American protestant missionary serving the needy in Mumbai’s Nagpada Neighbourhood house, founded the Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work in 1936. It provided the initial course for the two-year Postgraduate Diploma in Social Service Administration. This

school is currently known as the Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai. Thomas (2012) described this concept as an 'exotic plant' brought over from the United States by Manshardt (Thomas, 2012). In 1946, the YWCA (Young Women Christian Association) started the second pioneer school of social work in Delhi, i.e., the Delhi School of Social Work, which is associated with the University of Delhi. Later, other social work schools have also been established, including the Faculty of Social Work at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Lucknow School of Social Work, and many more.

This advancement in the field of social work had a profound effect on the country's established practices in social work. Social work was synonymous with volunteerism in the Indian setting. However, it was then made apparent that the word "social work" refers to activities that ensure the well-being of the people by using certain skills.

The model of professionalisation of social work has been borrowed from the west. As stated previously, the pioneers of the social work profession recognised the necessity for scientific training in response to the escalating needs of society. Consequently, they obtained solutions in the form of a model of professional social work approach from overseas, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom. 'Paid' social workers were a new concept at the time, and it was initially difficult for professional social workers to gain acceptance in Indian society. Several attempts were made to explain this idea and its necessity in India to many stakeholders, including voluntary social workers, government officials, and community leaders. Gore (1997) mentioned in his paper published in the *Indian Journal of Social Work on A Historical Perspective of Social Work Profession* mentioned that "The Indian Conference of Social Work, which met in 1947, provided the first opportunity at the national level for the voluntary and professional social workers to meet and discuss their ideas. An Organising Committee under the chairmanship of Dr J.M. Kumarappa, Director of the first School of Social Work in the country, prepared an agenda in which, among the substantive areas of discussion, were also topics relating to the need for a scientific approach to social problems and their solution. The term

scientific had acceptance, and no one mentioned the term professional. The relative roles of volunteer and paid functionaries in social work (service) were discussed in more than one section and in more than one conference between 1947 and 1950. There had to be much give and take through the root of a dialogue on the need for a scientific analysis of problems and a search for scientific solutions to them (Gore, 1997).”

The profession began to gain acceptance as a result of a constant dialogue with many social welfare field stakeholders. Although it did not receive widespread recognition, it overcame opposition from the field’s existing stakeholders. Along with the evolution of professional social work, the religiously driven and rationalistic-humanitarian approaches to social work continue to operate in contemporary social work practices. Instead, voluntary social workers have made significant contributions to the development of society. Thus, based on past and present practices of social work in India, it can be stated that ‘social work implies the practice of certain skills in the area of social welfare. Anyone, paid or voluntary, who practices these skills, is a social worker (Gore, 2000).’

However, rather than focusing solely on “paid” or “unpaid” work, it is crucial to highlight the training aspect, which is of great importance in the cases of social workers. The training imparts knowledge, skill sets, and attitudes that influence the practitioners’ practices. According to current social work practice trends in India, voluntary social workers are not necessarily unpaid. What differentiates these two categories, however, is their training: one is scientifically and academically trained, while the other is not academically trained and may not obtain formal training. However, remuneration can be considered as one of the criteria for determining the nature of practices in both categories.

As a result, social work in India appears to comprise two coexisting realms of work practices. One who views social work as the humanitarian responses of individuals or groups to recognised societal problems. Second, consider it in the context of industrialisation and modernisation. It provides help in a methodical and organised manner. Corresponding to these work styles are two

types of social workers: voluntary and professionals. It requires a thorough understanding and definition of these categories because they encompass a vast scope and create some “confusion.” Therefore, these categories must be specified in this research.

### **1.2.1 Professional Social Workers**

Professional social workers are those who receive scientific training and a set of skills to perform social work. A professional social worker possesses an academic degree (Graduate, Post-Graduate, or Doctorate) in social work from a recognised institution. However, the number of professional social workers is small in India due to the recent inception of the profession in the year 1936. Nevertheless, it is rising gradually.

According to Gore (1965), “.... Professional social workers do so not only in the sense that the person designated earns his/her living by doing what was traditionally regarded as social work but in the sense that he has an area of special contribution – a contribution which is different from that of other professionals and which he is able to make because of his special preparation for the task (Gore, 1965).” These people have specialised knowledge and a set of skills to meet societal needs. They promote a rational and scientific approach to tackling social problems according to social structure. Professional social workers have their own association and Code of conduct. It has a stated set of values and ethics that must be adhered to by all professional social workers.

Gore (1965) noted that professional social workers are humble men who have certain equipment of knowledge and skills to handle problems of institutional management and interpersonal and inter-group relations, unlike the heroic nature of reformers and voluntary socialworkers. He mentioned the contemporary weakness of this category, which lies in a lack of enthusiasm and emotional conviction. Hence, they are only able to do those works efficiently, which a community finds to be done. They cannot change the existing value of the community and make them able to accept a whole new idea. Therefore, unlike voluntary workers, they cannot initiate

and govern any movement.

However, with the aforementioned approach to work, professional social workers cannot simultaneously meet the current demands of society and fulfil the promises made by the profession. For instance, in the global definition of social work, the profession recently mentioned its inclination toward human rights and social justice. According to Devi Prasad (2014), “In a recent National Consultation, the profession has reaffirmed its commitment and obligation to meet the challenges emerging from the neoliberal regime and marketisation which are overwhelming....” (Devi Prasad, 2014). To achieve these promises, professional social workers must possess characteristics such as commitment, motivation, etc. Social workers would not be able to address the current needs of society with an attitude of fulfilling job requirements like an ordinary job. However, they are not required to play roles such as “martyrs,” “sacrifice,” or “hurt themselves to help others.” However, it needs commitment. Some academicians and experts assert that it is the fourth pillar of the social work profession.

Even though there is still much ground to cover, the gradual development of the profession in India has led to a rise in the number of professional social workers engaged in the development sector. Professional social workers are currently involved in various fields, including community development, working with issue-based groups such as child rights, women’s rights, LGBT, etc., and have also made significant contributions to the medical and correctional fields.

Professional social workers are masters in the various techniques and methods of social work. The profession has resolved that “As professional social workers and representatives of social work educational institutions, we are together in solidarity for social justice and equality in favour of the poor and the marginalised section of the society” (Nadkarni and Desai, 2012).

The best part of them is that these people have a sense of social purpose and the capacity to work methodically. As indicated previously, professional social workers are a young and progressively rising group in India because it is only seven to eight decades old. The concept of

professional training continues to evolve in response to the needs of the contemporary era.

### **1.2.2 Voluntary Social Workers**

The voluntary social work sector is an important tool for bringing about social change and fostering a more humane and just society. Some questions arise when studying this category.

What is Voluntary Action? Who exactly are Voluntary Social Workers?

A layperson's understanding of voluntary social workers is unpaid work undertaken by an individual or organisation for the benefit of society. However, this is not entirely clear. Currently, the nature and actions of voluntarism have evolved and expanded to encompass a broader landscape and a broader array of social concerns.

Different views and contexts have been used to describe the concept of voluntary action by academicians and experts. In India, the term 'voluntary' often refers to 'non-economic' activity, i.e., performing any action of one's own free will and without receiving remuneration. Unpaid or honorary services are synonymous with voluntary services. Nonetheless, it is sometimes used to signify a "non-government" context. It implies that the term 'voluntary' is applied to organised social work activities, whether paid or unpaid, free from state control, such as non-governmental organisations, voluntary organisations, etc. Professional workers in voluntary organisations are often referred to as voluntary workers despite being professionally trained.

Dantewala M.L. (1998) defined voluntary action as "any action by an individual, an informal group, or a duly-constituted organisation, which is not prompted by external pressure or self-interest, can be termed 'voluntary action'. Even so, action by such voluntary formations should have a purpose, a goal, a cause, concern or vision. The motivations for action which is unrelated to one's self-interest, including the prestige and publicity often associated with it, are too varied and complex to permit their grouping in a well-defined rubric. The only common factor prompting such action is dissatisfaction with the prevailing social order and urge to improve it (Dantewala,1998)." This explanation attempted to specify the meaning of 'voluntary', though it

is said that the 'voluntary' sector is too vast and vivid to make it unable to cover under a single umbrella.

In India, the concept of voluntary social service is a century old and equally prominent in contemporary society. As mentioned earlier, it has also changed from charity to philanthropy to a more structured kind of social services. Initially, religion served as the impetus for such actions, followed by the emergence of rationalistic ideals. In addition, industrialisation and westernisation led to the development of organised social services in the form of voluntary organisations. Up to the time, the most prevalent notion about voluntary social work was the relief of distress or helping the disabled through individual or group efforts. Voluntary social workers were valued for their altruism, charity, and spiritual desire to assist those in need. Today, the concept has expanded, and voluntary action has undergone significant transformations in response to the evolving requirements of society. (Billimoria, G.R, 1961). In the context of contemporary social work practices in India, it is notable that voluntary social workers are engaged in spreading awareness, sensitising people regarding their civic responsibilities, and empowering them through enabling their participation in the process of change and development. Many voluntary social workers have been active in human rights and social justice fields and have adopted social action strategies. Changes in the social structure and needs of society influence the evolution of voluntary activities. B. Devi Prasad in 2014 mentioned that "... the voluntary sector is one of the major recruiters of professional social workers, the sector's growing visibility and importance is a challenge to the profession indirectly. Though both work for a common goal, i.e., social development, there were occasions when one thought the other was less professional or not committed enough to realise the goal (Devi Prasad, 2014)."

Voluntary social workers have humanitarian or sometimes spiritual approaches in their work. They approach their work with a spirit of humanity and social responsibility. In the words of Billimoria G.R. (1961), "social service becomes part and parcel of his daily life so that his/her

conscious or unconscious actions are all aimed at making the world a better place to live in.”

Voluntary social workers have an enormous contribution to the field of social development. Devi Prasad (2014) mentioned a few major strengths of this category: a) Diversity of areas covered by voluntary, i.e., from relief and rehabilitation to development and advocacy. b) Sector-specific expertise they brought to their area of work. c) Its innovative role, experiments and promotes new areas of development. d) Connection to people and its ability to take on movement in society by giving voice to the voiceless and marginalised.

Based on the above discussion of voluntary activity, it is impossible to deny the identity of voluntary actors as ‘social workers’, i.e., Voluntary Social Workers. This type of social worker is not academically trained, but they nevertheless serve the community. They have their own perspective and way of conduct. To comprehend social work practices in India, it is also critical to recognise the practices of ‘voluntary workers’.

### **Trained and Voluntary Social Workers**

Trained and voluntary social workers have different perspectives, knowledge, and skill sets as a result of their orientation, which influence their practices. This study, therefore, will explain distinct features of practices of trained and voluntary social workers in the development sector at the individual, group, and community levels at large.

To comprehend the professional practices of both categories, it is necessary first to define the word professional practice. Therefore, further in the chapter, the focus is on the ideas of the profession, sociological analysis of the profession, and social work as a profession, from which it derives the components of social workers’ professional practices.

### **1.3 Concept of Profession**

The term ‘Professional practice’ is a construct constituted by two concepts. On the one hand, the term ‘professional’ contains the notion of ‘profession’, perhaps highly debatable and loaded

with difficulty to define. The other key term is 'practice'. Hence, to define and understand the concept of professional practice, this section will explore the concept of the profession, and based on that, it will define professional practices.

In the Oxford English Dictionary, the 'profession' means- "Senses relating to professional occupation" (Oxford dictionary). The latter include the following:

- A. An occupation in which a professed knowledge of some subject, field, or science is applied; a vocation or career, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification. Also, occasionally as a mass noun: occupations of this kind. In early use, applied spec. to the professions of law, the Church, and medicine, and sometimes extended to the military profession.
- B. More widely: any occupation by which a person regularly earns a living.
- C. By way of an occupation; professionally.
- D. The body of people engaged in a particular occupation or calling, sometimes with defining words, such as legal, medical, etc.

Flexner (1915) acknowledged the difficulty of defining the term profession and decided to form his criteria by generalising what he described as "a few professions universally admitted to be such—law, medicine, and preaching." He later added architecture, engineering, university teaching, literature, painting, and music. He characterised a profession as 'intellectual and learned' and "definitely practical, becoming increasingly altruistic in motivation (Flexner, 1915)."

Hughes (1958) wrote: "A profession is an occupation which has attained a special standing among occupations (Hughes, 1958)." The Canadian McRuer Report (1968–1971) makes a similar distinction: a profession requires some years of education and training to get expertise in the concerned field and should get qualified to practice, while in the occupation are not high,

but it focuses on technical skill.

In the post-Flexner era, the concept of the profession has been the subject of intense debate. There is currently no definition of ‘profession’ that is mutually agreed upon and approved by all social scientists. Reagan (2010) remarks for the reason is: “The problem, from a philosophical and conceptual perspective, is that we have a lack of clarity about what it means to be a ‘professional’, as well as the lack of a clear and coherent definition of what we really mean by ‘professionalism’ (Reagan, 2010).”

Before discussing the principal characteristics of the professional practice of social workers, it is necessary to define and comprehend the term ‘profession’. Therefore, a brief overview of the sociology of the profession is necessary to clarify some ideas and establish the theoretical foundation of the professional practices for the present study.

### **1.3.1 Sociology of the Profession**

As Robert Dingwall (2008) observes, technological progress may render ancient occupations obsolete (for instance, as a result of the invention of new building materials), and new ones come on stage (the electrician in the nineteenth century). In addition, “as society develops, work becomes more complex, and the division of labour more specialised through the dissection of occupations”. The development of the nation-state, capitalist economy, and advances in science and technology led to the formation of the concept of the modern profession. Monteiro (2015) states, “The major professions, such as Medicine and Law, achieved their privileged status in the second half of the nineteenth century. Most contemporary professions are a twentieth-century phenomenon, with the increasing specialisation of knowledge and expansion of technology (Monterio, 2015).”

According to Monteiro (2015), “sociology of the profession started with the distinction between profession and occupation by Andrew Abbot. The distinction is defined as ‘every activity, work, function or job that is the main source of someone’s livelihood is called as ‘occupation’; while

‘profession’ reflects a more or less specialised, well-paid and prestigious occupation, whose models are Medicine and Law as learned professions.’ This explanation led to the emergence of terminology of ‘semi-professions’, ‘quasi-professions’, ‘sub-professions’, or ‘pseudo-professions’, which mean intermediate occupations (more than mere occupations but not possessing all traits of professions) (Monterio, 2015). This view asserts the hierarchical differentiation between occupation and profession. In addition, there is no discernible difference between occupation and profession. Thus, the question ‘what is a profession?’ remains unchanged.

Further, in sociology, three main approaches/theories exist, which formulate the theoretical base of the professions: the functionalist, the interactionist, and the conflict approach.

**The Functionalist Approach** – It is also known as the standard model, trait, or taxonomic approach of the profession. It can also be referred to as the attribute approach, as it defines specific attributes of the profession. The origin of the functionalist/attributes/taxonomic approach is associated with A. Flexner’s ground-breaking paper published in *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction, the USA* in 1915, on “Is social work a profession?”. He proposed six attributes of the profession, which were as follows-

1. Professional activity is based on intellectual action along with personal responsibility.
2. The practice of a profession is based on knowledge, not routine activities.
3. Practical application of the theory.
4. Techniques to be taught and develop skill sets.
5. A profession is organised internally.
6. A profession is motivated by altruism, with members working in some sense for the good of society.

According to Flexner, only those occupations that possess the above characteristics are considered professions, while the remainder are merely occupations. He proposed a ‘semi-profession’ category based on its fitness level to the attributes. More than twenty attributes were offered, but no general consensus was reached.” (Flexner, 1915)

This ‘professional’ model dominated until the 1960s. It is criticised for being a professional ideology. Other authors from this school have primarily emphasised and listed characteristics of the ideal profession.

**Interactionist Approach** - Beginning in the 1970s, a new approach to the profession emerged, which was termed interactionist. It rejected the distinction between profession and occupation, deeming it irrelevant. As opposed to attributes, the central idea is that professionalisation is the dynamic process through which a profession is constructed by those who practice it collectively and as a way of self-fulfilment. (Monterio, 2015).

**Conflict Approach** - The third approach, i.e., the conflict approach, perceives the profession as an actor in the economic field that wins the exclusivity of practising an activity in the market of services, monopolising and closing it.

These three approaches are also known as the trait approach, the process approach, and the power approach. The present research considers the ‘process approach’ for the construction of ‘profession’. Because, in today’s period of change and dynamic society, it is no longer acceptable to define any concept within a very confined and restrictive border, as is the case with the trait approach. In addition, it views ‘profession’ from a comprehensive perspective than merely an economic one.

In light of the interactionist or process approach, a profession is defined as any legitimate occupation through which an individual may or may not earn their primary regular income and its utility and dignity. ‘Professionals’ are those who profess full-time engagement in legal activity and possess the requisite knowledge and skills to work in that sector. Nonetheless, the

practitioner's excellence domain (which encompasses knowledge, skills, and attitude) is a crucial component that is examined.

## **1.4 Social Work as a Profession**

Abraham Flexner (1915) was the first to address the professional status of social work. He proposed the criteria mentioned above (mentioned in the previous section) to decide the status of social work as a profession. Based on those criteria, Flexner concluded that social work could hardly fit in the profession's criteria, unlike medicine and engineering. Though, he appreciated the professional spirit of social work.

After four decades, Greenwood (1957) claimed that social work is a profession because it satisfies five basic attributes, which are as follows-

1. Systematic theory.
2. Authority or control over the nature and extent of services provided to the clients.
3. Community sanction: A profession gets community sanction if it fulfills two requirements: minimum criteria of entry into the profession, like completion of particular education and training program and professional licence.
4. Ethical codes which should be enforced by professional associations
5. Culture: It includes a) Social value: The service that a professional render to society is so important that regulation is needed to prevent unqualified persons from performing such service. b) Norms: Professionals have proper ways to behave to involve in their work personally. c) Symbols: Insignia, emblem, folklore, buzzwords, distinctions, titles and awards.

However, other scholars disagreed with the ideas expressed by Greenwood. Etzioni (1972) found that social work was a semi-profession like nursing and teaching, which are shorter, less

legitimate, less autonomy and lack a specialised body of knowledge than the profession. However, by the end of the 20th century, social work gained wide recognition as a profession in the west (Nair, 2014).

In India, the social work profession does not enjoy the status of the profession fully because it is unable to fulfil all criteria given by Flexner and Greenwood, like western society (Nair,2104). Though, it has covered a long path to achieving those criteria in the country and established itself as a profession.

In the journey of professionalisation of social work in India, there have been some requirements like professional association (which is gradually developing), authority control, which controls entry and exists in the profession and licencing system. However, this journey made significant development in establishing a knowledge base and inculcating skill sets in the fields of social work. It has developed a code of conduct and required skill sets to practise social work in India. Even various stakeholders, including academicians, and researchers of the social work profession, are engaged in creating an indigenous base of the social work profession in India.

In India, contemporary social work practices are highly dynamic and encompass a broader scope. To understand the nature of contemporary social work practice in India, it is essential to explore the professional practices of social workers. The subsequent section will therefore define the concept of professional practices.

## **1.5 Professional practices of Social Work**

**Professional Practice** - To define ‘professional practice’ before discussing the professional practices of social work is necessary. In the preceding section, the term ‘professional’ is defined as pertaining to a profession; similarly, the term ‘practice’ refers to a routine or customary procedure or method of doing an activity.

Green B, in 2009, defined professional practices as, “There are at least four senses in which the

term professional practice might be understood and operationalised here. (a) Firstly, it refers to the notion of practising a profession, as in the familiar expression practising medicine or practising law. (b) Secondly, it could refer to the notion of practising professionalism—that is, the fact that one enacts professionalism one practices what it is to be professional. In this case, professionalism is understood as a practice phenomenon, a matter of practice and identity. (c) Thirdly, it can be understood as referring to, or evoking, a moral-ethical quality: a distinctive quality of being in the world, an attitude or disposition towards the objects of one’s practice, whether they be persons or not. In this sense, one can speak of an organic relationship between practice and ethics—the ethics of practice and the practice of ethics. (d) A practice might be described as ‘professional’—in contrast, then, to what might be seen as the sphere of the ‘amateur’—analogously to what happens in sport and other areas (e.g., dancing), where one is paid a fee for the service that one provides and enacts, often on an explicit, formally constructed scale. (Green B, 2009)”

In this study, each of these senses are considered important to varying degrees. To meet the evolving needs of the field, all professions require their participants to have an ideal ethos regarding an appropriate (professional) attitude, knowledge and skills. Therefore, the term ‘professional practice’ refers to the ideal practices specified by practitioners and their outcomes, which are supposed to be possessed and followed by all members of that profession.

In India, the social work profession has already developed specific criteria or prerequisites or ideal characteristics that can enhance the efficacy of social work practices, referred to as ‘professional practices of social workers’. Based on this, there are specific components that are required to be possessed and implemented by all trained (academic) and voluntary social workers in India, which are as follows:

- 1) Knowledge
- 2) Skills

3) Value & Ethics

4) Commitment

5) Motivation

This research will explore the abovementioned components of the professional practices of professionally trained and voluntary social workers.

### **1) Knowledge:**

Knowledge is an essential element of effective social work practices. Social workers need to possess knowledge of a range of things to practice. Knowledge in social work informs practitioners about the challenges and situations of clients. It derives from social science fields such as sociology, psychology, and economics, among others. A social worker must have knowledge of society, its structure, composition, needs, social relations, social interaction, cultures, customs, etc., which enhances their capability to understand the community in which they operate. It enables one to understand widespread social problems in society. A social worker must know the sociological, economic and political background of the location, including knowledge of leadership and their roles and responsibilities, the type of leadership and its qualities, and the existence of different interest groups.

In addition, a social worker should have knowledge of psychology, such as human development, behaviour, and psychopathology. It will provide an understanding of the complexities of a person's behaviour, thought process, and the capacity to assess the client's situation and determine an appropriate intervention technique. Moreover, an understanding of relevant policies, programmes, and laws is necessary for the practice.

One of the essential elements of a social worker's knowledge base is information about the organisation where he or she works. It primarily includes the vision and mission of the agency and the roles and responsibilities of the self and others.

Gore (1965) mentioned in his book on *Social Work and Social Work Education* that “the area of knowledge covered in the curriculum of a school of social work in India, which can be grouped as follows:

- 1) Knowledge about human beings and society is drawn primarily from psychology, sociology, social psychology, economics, and to a lesser degree, political science.
- 2) Knowledge about methods or techniques of social work such as casework, group work, community organisation, social administration, and to a lesser degree, social action
- 3) Knowledge about and ancillary to and particular fields of social work, e.g., medical socialwork, care of the physically handicapped, tribal welfare, etcetera. (Gore, 1965)”

It is expected that every social worker should possess this knowledge, which makes them able to understand society and practice effectively in their context.

## **2) Skills:**

According to Desai A. (2002), “skills is the practice component that brings knowledge and values together and converts them into action (Desai A, 2002).”

Skills in social work include the ability to deal with groups of varying ages, sexes, and social strata, mobilise resources, find indigenous leadership, skills required for teamwork, communication skill and many more. Various methods in social work demand diverse skills. A social worker must possess all of the competencies specified in the various social work methods. Likewise, diverse sectors of social work require a distinct set of skills.

Datton and Kohli have identified five broad categories of skills. These are as follows:

1. Cognitive skills: This category covers analytical, evaluative, and research skills.
2. Administrative skills include record keeping, report writing, and working knowledge of information technology.

3. Interpersonal skills: It includes communication, both verbal and non-verbal skills.

Understanding of self/self-awareness, making and sustaining working relationships, using authority, working with difference, working in partnership, advocacy and negotiation.

4. Decision-making skills.

5. Use and management of resources.

A set of skills plays a crucial role in making social work practice effective and fulfilling clients' demands at an individual, group and community levels and societal interests at a broader level.

### **3) Values & ethics**

Values and ethics are integral to practice in all fields. In the field of social work, values and ethics constitute the foundation of the profession. The social worker must be conscious of his or her values and ethics and control for improper intervention in the practice setting.

The preamble of the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) states, "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 (NASW)." Core values of the social work profession are as follows-

- 1) Service
- 2) Social Justice
- 3) Dignity and worth of the person
- 4) Importance of human relations
- 5) Integrity
- 6) Competence

Based on this, NASW derived ethical principles of the profession, which leads to the development of a professional attitude. These principles are as follows-

Value I: Service

Ethical Principle: Social worker's primary goal is to help people in need and address social problems.

Value II: Social Justice

Ethical Principle: Social workers challenge social injustice.

Value III: Dignity and Worth of the Person

Ethical Principle: Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person.

Value IV: Importance of Relationship

Ethical Principle: Social workers recognise the central importance of human relationships.

Value V: Integrity

Ethical Principle: Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner.

Value VI: Competence

Ethical Principle: Social workers practise within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise.

In addition, various professional social workers associations have given a code of conduct for

social workers, like the Code of conduct given by IFSW (International Federation of Social Workers), Australian Association of Social Workers, etcetera.

#### **4) Commitment**

The state or characteristic of being dedicated to a cause, activity, or other endeavour is known as commitment. It is essential for social workers to have a commitment to their work. It is considered that a high level of commitment to one's profession is a necessary prerequisite for a willingness to take on the challenging responsibilities that are expected of social workers (Arkin, Freund and Saltman, 1999). Many scholars consider commitment as a crucial pillar of social work practices.

#### **5) Motivation**

Social work is a profession in which the capacity for self-motivation is an absolute prerequisite. Motivation is the starting point for social work. Only a motivated social worker will be able to work for the benefit of society and motivate others to fulfil their life tasks. As a result, it is an essential part of the professional practices of social work. There are numerous aspects that affect social workers' motivation. In a sense, social work begins with self-motivation, but it is affected by several other elements. A social worker's interaction with the individuals or groups and community is affected by his motivation. There are numerous motives, including religious, humanitarian, and economic ones.

In order to understand the professional practices of social workers, the current study explores the five key components listed above.

### **1.6 Research Theme**

This chapter of the study constructed the concept of social work based on the constructivist theoretical framework, addressed social work as a profession in light of the process approach to the concept of the profession, and deduced the five key components of professional practices of

social workers required by both trained and voluntary social workers.

Based on it, this research studies the nature of practices of trained and voluntary social workers. As mentioned earlier, in India, two streams of social workers exist together. Gore (1965) noted that “professional and voluntary social workers have something specific to contribute to social work. If the professional can bring training and the skill of a specialist, without which the intricate problems of modern society cannot be tackled, the volunteer brings to social work the interest and confidence of the community. ...Immediate and concerted action is required on the part of both” (Gore, 1965). Humility and humanity, knowledge and skills are essential to social work; for both voluntary and trained social workers. These groups of social workers have distinct characteristics and working methods. Therefore, this study explores the practices of both categories of social workers.