



Social Work Practice With Dalit Communities Affected By Climate Change: Revisiting Rural Social Work From Structural Perspective

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Abstract

The beginning of social work not only in India but in Europe and America was concentrated on micro issues of the society. It mainly focuses on the individual concerns by putting individual as a problematic person. However, this approach sees individual as a subject of social work practice. Unlike micro practice, macro social work practices focuses on broad issues which is based on the assumption that environment and the outer structure of the society has certain difficulty and hence, it should be dealt with. The macro social work approach further focuses on challenging the structural inequalities to bring about change in the society.

Social work practice in India which was heavily focuses on the functional issues of the society ignored the issues that has emerged from the social structure. Nevertheless, there were few attempts by social work practitioners during 1980's to bring the structural issues in centre of social work practice.

The experience of practising social work in rural areas is different from that in urban areas. This has led to the development of a rural specialisation in the social work profession. In this article, the author draws upon his experience of more than 30 years as a social worker in rural settings, to explore the relationship between rurality and professional social work practice and education.

Introduction:

Social Work is profession that engages with various social issues pertaining to society in that particular time period. Starting with charity as an approach of intervention, social work grew up as a full fledge profession with its body of knowledge, methods, code of ethics, values, etc. With the passing time, various approaches emerged to respond to the contemporary social issues. In the preprofessional beginning all was charity, philanthropy, corrections, and social reform (Schwartz, 1977).

The clinical approach based functionalist perspective aimed at problem solving of the individual problems. It has ignored the fundamental issues arises due to the artificial inequalities in the social structure. Environmental injustice posed to the oppressed classes of the Indian society is one of the important issues which is also ignored by social work profession. There were several attempts by social activists and social reformer (who are not trained as a social work professionals) to fight against environmental issues, nevertheless the ideology and approach was liberal in

nature. Thus, the issue of equitable resource distribution especially in rural area was/is still a concern for social work professionals.

There have been initial debates and some initiatives by social work professionals in the field of environment sustainability by challenging the hegemonic power relation with the resource ownership. Dominelli is one of the social work professional who started initiating the discourse of environment in the domain of social work education and practice by promoting Green Social Work. She elaborates “green social work ‘is a form of holistic professional social work practice that focuses on the; interdependencies amongst people, the social organisation of relationships between people and the flora and fauna in their natural habitats; and the interactions between socio-economic and physical environmental crises and interpersonal behaviours that undermine the well-being of human beings and planet earth Dominelli, 2012). It proposes to address these issues by arguing for a profound transformation in how people conceptualise the social basis of their society, their relationships with each other, living things and the inanimate world, to: tackle structural inequalities including the unequal distribution of power and resources; poverty; various ‘isms’; promote global interdependencies; and utilise limited natural resources including land, air, water and energy sources and minerals for the benefit of all rather than the privileged few. The aim of green social work is to work for the reform of the socio-political and economic forces that have a deleterious impact upon the quality of life of poor and marginalised populations and secure the policy changes and social transformations necessary for enhancing the well-being of people and the planet today and in the future’(Dominelli, 2012: 25) .

The aim of green social work is to work for the reform of the socio-political and economic forces that have a deleterious impact upon the quality of life of poor and marginalised populations and secure the policy changes and social transformations necessary for enhancing the well-being of people. Environmental justice highlights the linkage between environmental degradation and power imbalances as the mainly human victims of environmental degradation also must contend with injustices related to class, gender, race, ethnicity, and locale (Bullard, 1994; Nixon, 2011). In the context of India caste and tribe (SC/ST) are the victims of environmental injustices.

Environmental injustice occurs at the macro-level as global economic and political inequalities unjustly shift environmental hazards and burdens away from wealthier countries and onto poorer countries (Healy, 2008). Environmental injustice also occurs at the micro/local level, particularly within developing countries, as poor people bear a disproportionate burden of environmental degradation (Besthorn, 2003; Coates, 2005; Dominelli, 2012; Hoff and Rogge, 1996; IPCC, 2014; McKinnon, 2008; Zapf, 2009). These injustices exist because of global systems of inequality, and global collaboration is necessary to confront them.

The area in which author (social work practitioner and educator) is located and did field interventions comes under the drought prone area. The unfavourable climatic situation has large impact on the everyday life of the people of the vicinity. In this paper we are going to discuss how the environmental injustice due to climate changes the recurrent droughts occurred in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra state in India. Further this paper, we have focused on the rural social work particularly with the inclusion of Dalit has been discussed in the context of climate change and issues related to Environmental Sustainability.

Efforts in India on Environmental Crises:

As mentioned in earlier section, there were some attempts by social reformers and activists in the field of environment. Let us understand their contribution, ideological base and the outcome produced through their efforts.

Mahatma Gandhi’ji (1869-1948): Eminent environmental writers like Ramachandra Guha consider *Gandhi* as an early Environmentalist. His views on nature are scattered throughout his writings. His ideas relating to **Satyagraha based on truth and non-violence, simple life style, and development reveal how sustainable development is possible without doing any harm to nature and our fellow beings.** His idea that "nature has enough to satisfy every one's needs, but not to satisfy anybody's greed" became one line ethic to modern environmentalism.

Sunderlal Bahuguna (1927-2021): He emphasized on the protection of sustainable livelihoods along with the protection of the environment. He was involved closely in resisting displacement and organising forest workers. He was also involved in several constructive activities relating to the regeneration of degraded forests and promoting organic, natural, and traditional farming. Chipko Movement and inspired Appiko Movement in south India.

Medha Patkar: Environmental activism involving the mobilization of masses against challenges posed by the state in India, particularly through a range of satyagraha/social action methods employed to achieve social justice for poor and marginalized people threatened with displacement as a consequence of large-scale dam construction projects. (Satyagraha as method of social action was used by Medha Patkar).

Understanding Rural, Ruralits and Ruralism:

According to Waltman (1986: 467), the word rural means more than a numerical population limit. It connotes a way of and an outlook on life characterized by a closeness to nature, slower pace of living and somewhat conservative life-style that values tradition, independence and self-reliance...rural people use informal networks for decision making and problem solving. They simultaneously experience freedom and isolation. Mellow (2005: 51 cited in Anjali k.) points out that size and density parameters used to define rural population vary from country to country. Her suggestion that 'rural definitions may also consider a community's degree of isolation, the economic base or access to services' is what would set it apart from the way 'urban' is defined. The rural people experience major social problems: poverty, unemployment and underemployment, poor quality of education, inadequate health care services, substandard housing, inadequate...sewage disposal systems and a lack of public transportation services. (Waltman, 1986: 467 cited in Anjali k.)

The Bureau of the Census of the United States defines a rural community on the basis of the size and the density of population at a particular place. In India, on the other hand, the term 'rural' is defined in terms of revenue: the village means the 'revenue village'. It might be one large village or a cluster of small villages. According to the Census Commission of India, a village is an entity identified by its name and a definite boundary. However, in sociological perspectives, the Indian village was characterized by the Asiatic Mode of Production (Marxm 1954). It was perceived as 'idyllic' and reflected dispoism, barbaric egotism, rigid caste system and slavery (Maine). Besides the repulsions, the Indian Village was seen as a 'little republic' (Metclfe, 1979), having self-sufficiency and isolation. Such a characterization continued even the first half of the 20th century (Wiser and Wiser, 1936, 1964), Inter-caste Interdependence and holistic structure were the mean features as observed by Wier and Wiser. Mahatma Gandhi (1962) also eulogized the village community through his idea of Ram rajya. To a considerable extent, the Indian village was considered a 'closed' and 'isolated' system (baden-Powell, 1896, 1899; Maine 1871; Metclfe, 1979 cited in Shramak.l.).

Understanding Context: A Brief orientation of Marathwada Region in Maharashtra State:

Marathwada having a total area of nearly sixty-five thousand square kilometres, lies on the eastern border of Maharashtra. It encompasses eight districts—Aurangabad, Latur, Beed, Osmanabad, Jalna, Parbhani, Hingoli and Nanded. In the 2011 Census, Marathwada had a population of almost two crores. The region experiences an average annual rainfall of 882mm. The rainfall is erratic in this region, and most of the region falls in the Godavari basin. Apart from the Godavari, small rivers such as Shiva, Purna, Velganga, Sindhphana, Dudhna and Bindusara flow through Marathwada. Nearly thirty-two percent of Marathwada falls within the rain-shadow region. Due to these factors, Marathwada is one of the most drought-prone regions of the country. There have been twenty-two droughts in Marathwada between 1870 and 2015.

Within the Marathwada region, the present article is based on the filed action programmes implemented by Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Osmanabad District. Of the eight blocks of Osmanabad district, the experienced gained in Tuljapur block is selected for the analysis of this paper. Tuljapur block have the highest and the second highest population of the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) groups. Within this administrative blocks, three village' case studies are selected for the purpose of analysis. The TISS has implemented watershed development programmes in different point of time. While implementing the Watershed development programmes, inclusion of all the communities particularly, the SCs were taken care by TISS team. While implementing the Watershed development lot of social dynamics takes place. The author has analysed this social dynamics in the context of environmental justice during the implementation of drought combating programme in these.

Before we discuss the analysis of the village case studies let us understand the rural social work in the Indian context.

What is Rural Social Work?

Social work approach to rural development in recent years, in India, the social work profession's approach to working in rural areas has begun with perspectives of 'people centre development' and 'participatory development' is being endorsed globally. One of the core principles of the social work profession is 'helping people to help themselves'. Hence, the application of social work for development involves 'working with the people' to help them achieve what is due to them, that is facilitating/enabling the process of utilisation of rights. Thus, social work especially in the development field focuses on the rights-based approach. The social work process helps people to explore their own potentials, their own resources to deal with the issues confronting them. As the solutions explored and chosen are based on their own resources they are likely to be long lasting.

The role of social work in the context of development is crucial as the process it adopts, does not stop with solutions for immediate issues, but strives for continual development and strengthening of the problem-solving capacities of the stakeholders. The social work profession's basic faith that people can change and have the capacity to change, uniquely equips it to adopt a process oriented approach aimed at building capacities of people, which is very essential for sustainable development (Anjali K. 2008). Observations made by American rural social workers about rural community and change correspond to experiences in the Indian context. Describing rural communities as 'very political', they recommended that social workers 'empower rural people' by involving them in collaborative change efforts (Riebschleger, 2007: 207 cited in Anjali k.). In Tuljapur, the process approach has enabled Dalit members of society who have had no earlier exposure to decision-making to emerge as leaders, and women whose interactions have been otherwise limited to neighbours to assume leadership roles and challenge the established leadership in the village.

Caste discrimination is prominent issue that Dalit community face, irrespective of their economic class. The nature of work with Dalit Community group is to deal with untouchability, discrimination, suppression, unequal distribution of resources and poverty etc. is the one such example of the people-centred social work process. Creating a community support system for the Dalits is very challenging who face these problems. The Dalit community members are made part of village development committees. The Watershed management committees are strengthened and each committee the Dalits are made the members so that they are able to raise the issues they face in the village.

It is very much challenging to raise the issues of Dalit's in the community. There are seldom attempts by development practitioners and academicians to bring the discourse on caste issues in the villages and in the classrooms respectively. There are two reasons why people do not want to talk about it, the first is, they feel that raising the caste issue is creating conflict between the communities (higher caste Vs lower caste) and second group feel that let us concentrate on development issues from sectoral approach such as health, education, employment etc. and they feel that solving issues related to survival is more important than the issues linked to caste. Moreover it is also observed that the professional social workers (Development workers) are not trained to deal the issues related to caste conflict.

Technology-oriented solutions to the social problems are adopted strategy to the problems faced by Marathwada region. Watershed management (land and Water management) is one such project we felt that can help to solve the issues related to caste discrimination and other aspects related castes in the villages. Historically, Marathwada region is drought prone region in Maharashtra state in India. Due to erratic rainfall, increased in dry spells during monsoon and heavy rainfall during harvest season, faced recurrent crop failures, out migration and farmers' suicide as extreme consequences.

Climate change is not only changing the planet physically but also transforming human societies. As witnessed till date, these are not good changes. Extreme weather conditions are causing a greater frequency of natural hazards, impacting livelihoods and poverty levels. This is mounting pressure on grassroots level socio-cultural structures. The Vulnerable groups are finding themselves in more compromised situations with fewer coping mechanisms. Climate change, undoubtedly, is accelerating marginalization of the already underprivileged sections. (Drought, Dalits and Adivasis 2022).

Nature does not discriminate between people. However, structural inequalities in a society ensure that calamities are suffered varyingly by different groups of people. Certain groups exercise control over a larger and unequal share of economic, social, political and cultural resources. The groups on the other end of the spectrum, also called the 'marginalised' groups, control the least of resources. They are left with limited choices of habitation, community resources and livelihood, and are, thus, more susceptible to prolonged and deeper impacts of natural calamities. The study recognises caste and descent as the foundational cause of vulnerability that determines the experience of droughts. The other vulnerabilities are gender based, economic and political. Intersectionality such as age (senior citizens and children) and disabilities influence the pre-existing vulnerabilities. This group suffered due to their physical and age-related vulnerabilities (Drought, Dalits and Adivasis 2022).

Social worker with Dalit issues need mixed approach which mainly comprises social action, social movements with rights based approach. What kind of rights Dalit aspiring for? Right to dignity, rights to resources etc.

Water and Land Management in Marathwada Region of Maharashtra in India: Addressing water crises, soil erosion, deforestation, wage employment, addressing gender issue (participation of women): primary stake holder in environment, water use (save) and agriculture. The villages of Marathwada are mixed-class, mixed-caste community that, taken as a whole, **does not easily wear the label 'vulnerable (?)'**.

Social Work Interventions in Environmental Issues: Understanding Community Dynamics on Watershed Management Projects in Marathwada Villages:

Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Tuljapur Campus has initiated several watershed development (land and water management) projects to combat the drought situation in Marathwada region. Watershed Development programmes imposes ban on free grazing, plantation on common land, ban on cutting the trees (deforestation) etc. However, most of the Dalits and Marginalised communities survive with animal husbandry in the region. Stopping of free grazing will make difficult of the survival of Landless. Particularly it becomes difficult to Dalits and marginalised sections of the villages. Apart from this Dalits are expected to work on the watershed site with low wage rates. This creates conflicting situation in the village. The social work intervention is needed to solve the issue of community conflict and environmental justice. Best practice of case studies on Watershed Development show some lessons to solve these issues.

More than 3 decades of intervention in the rural areas on the issues of land, water, sanitation and larger issues pertaining to environment it was found that Dalits are most vulnerable. They are excluded from these basic resources which are essential for survival. This is not however a individual exclusion but as Thorat observed a group exclusion; a whole community is being kept away from owning these resources. In this connection, author who is also a social work practitioner in rural social work took an efforts to work on the issues related to land, water, sanitatio, agriculture, etc. He along with other social work practitioners used various techniques, skills and importantly the practical starategies to respond to the issues related to resource ownership and allocation. An attempt has been made to conceptualise these interventions. Taking a empericist position, author would like to propose that, these interventions interms of strategies and skills applied should become a framework for other social work practitioners who are willing to work on these structural issues.

Case Study 1: Hamta (name changed) Village

The TISS Tuljapur Off-Campus initiated a programmes on watershed development (water and land management) in few villages of Tuljapur block of Osmanabad district in Maharashtra State. Hamta is one of the village where we started the programme under the scheme called *Shramshaktidware Gram vikas* (Village development through community efforts-free labour) in 1992-97. Basically this scheme is implemented to combat the drought situations in Maharashtra particularly in drought prone areas. The basic objective of the scheme was to conserve the water and stop soil erosion. Tree plantation is very important aspect in this programme. Apart from this technical aspect, there are other objectives to provide wage employment to the land less people and increase the community participation of community through *shramdan* (free labour) for the village development.

The social worker of TISS has provided the information about above mentioned scheme for the watershed development of the village. After several meetings with village community, as a part of the first step of watershed development; it was decided that the plantation on village commons (*Gairan Land*) on the ridge line of the watershed side should be started. The Hamta village has very large quantity (40% out of 1155 hectares) of *Gairan* land and less area of private land. The village commons is basically on the hilly area and it is degraded, hence is barren land. The private land is belongs to very few people who are belongs to Mali (OBC) and Maratha (general) communities. The village has three major community groups, mainly Mali, Maratha and dalits (SC). Among the Dalits, only 10 per cent household own the land. Remaining 90 per cent dalits work on the field of agriculture as a wage labourers or go to Tuljapur town (8kms) to do construction activities. Some of them do animal husbandry; mostly they do goat rearing on the village common land (*Gairan Land*).

During the discussion on tree plantation on barren land the first condition was to 'ban on free grazing' (*charaibandi*) discussed thoroughly. The landless Dalits who were doing goat rearing they have been asked not to take the goats on the hilly areas for grazing, where the plantation will be done. Then the dalits said allow them to graze their goats on the private land when there is off season and no crops on the land. The landed families were not ready to allow them to do grazing activities on their private land. Then the question raised what would be the other option of survival for Dalits in this village? Some people replied that when the watershed developed, most of the land become irrigated hence the wage labour capacity and wage rates will be increased in the village. Dalits and other land less people can work as agriculture labourer on the land. Further to this discussion Dalits then raised another issue that now they are independently doing their profession as goat rearing but during the watershed they will have to sale their goats and other animals and remained permanently landless laborers. Their question was very valid. The village people were not able to provide the alternatives to Dalits for their survival. The question is how does this development of watershed is going to help Dalits in their life? Does this model of village development is sustainable? Does this model of village development provide the environmental sustainability? In this model of development survival of animal and human beings (Dalits) are questioned?

The social worker need to play the important role in this situation. The social worker need to take a stand with dalits and landless communities. The development of Dalit is not possible unless the government take some strong step in favour of Dalits. The efforts by social workers can work on certain extend but unless there is clear message to upper caste and landed communities and convinced them that the village resources are belongs to everyone and survival of Dalits and landless is the responsibility of whole village then only the issue will be solved. Will social worker take the stand in favour of Dalits? The social worker can peruse the matter though they do not have authority. In these situations the governments should do the intervention and use their right authority and explain the law of the land. Most of the time the government does not intervene in this kind of situation particularly wherever there are caste conflicts.

The landed people were not ready to share their agriculture resources with village Dalits. Secondly, the village Dalits requested for part of land on lease to grow the fodder on the commons but the landed communities particularly 'upper castes' were not ready to agree on this option too. Then the question is how the *Dalits* of the village will survive in the village? There was lot of contradiction in the government scheme itself. The scheme was based on the component of *Shramdan* (free labour) It was expected that one person from each family should do the *Shramdan* once in a fifteen days. One person from a family will have to do the *shramdam* irrespective of land ownership. Here the *Dalits* since they were working as a labourers they were forcefully asked to do the *shramdan*. They were told that if they don't do the *Shramdan* then the scheme will not be implemented in the village. The question raised by

Dalits that when maximum benefits is going to get to the landed families of upper caste community through the watershed why should they only do the *Shramdan*. Finally with all these village dynamics the scheme called *Shramshaktidware Gramvikas* (Village Development Through free labour) is stopped by the Government.

The role of social worker or community Organisor is very important here:

1. The Social worker should able to convince the people about resource distribution including land.
2. Often it is said that, social worker should be 'non-political'. However, while working on the issues of marginalised communities on structural issues, social worker has to be political as it take aside or partisan with those who are victims of these structural realities. It learned from the above case intervention that the social worker need to take the side of resourceless people, so that their bargaining capacities could increased. It is very important to note that professional social work do not take the side of Dalits, they feel that it will create conflict and disturbances among the villagers. The social worker will be blamed and may be thrown out of village. The social worker should always pretend to show that he/she is good' with everyone.
3. Community organiser (CO) should have the perspectives for the development of marginalized.
4. The CO should be able to understand the socio-cultural practices of the communities. The interventional strategies used by social workers should be based on the context in which they are working. People in the rural areas are rigid about their religion, culture, traditions, etc.

Case study 2: Watershed Development and Community Organisations- (Barati (name changed) Village)

This watershed was implemented in Barati village of Tuljapur Block of Maharashtra. This watershed was financially supported by Donor agency (Tata Trust). The guidelines were developed by TISS social workers. The watershed programme was initiated with Dalits and *Banjara* a Nomadic Tribes. Here the response of the community was very good and the project was implemented successfully. Most of the laboureres were from the same community. The village leader from Dalit community by profession was teacher and he was accepted by upper caste lingayat community in this village. The 'upper caste' community leader and the Dalit leader had a good relationship. The education of Dalit leader made the difference to accept him in the village almost by all the village people. Secondly, the leader of Dalit community did not face atrocities in the village in the past hence did not had the radical approach to resolve the village issues if any. Thirdly, the Dalits of Barati village have some land ownership and hence they are totally depending on the upper caste landed communities. So what we learned from this experience is that the education is the most important tool to change the power structure and mind set of people in the community. The ownership of resources reduces the atrocities and tension between two communities. They do get respect and dignity if they are educated. The SW should use the strength of community for the sustainable development of the village.

Case study No. 3. Dhadgaon (name changed)Village

Watershed Development Programme with Professional: The Watershed Development programme was implemented in Dhadgaon village in Tuljapur Block. The watershed project was implemented with the help of NABARD and WOTR (Watershed Organisation Trust). This watershed development Project covered around 1200 hectors which comprises five villages. The Dhadgaonbeing the centre in the watershed areas becomes the main beneficiary of the programme. A Ninety per cent area in the watershed was non-irrigated and also some land was remained barren for many years before the implementation of watershed project. The watershed development guidelines were well developed by NABARD and WOTR. So everything was well set to implement the project. The salient features of the programmes are as follows:

1. Well composed Watershed Development Committee (WDC) which includes women farmers as well as Dalits and landless labourers.
2. The WDC was the main body to implement the project along with project implementation of Organisation (TISS).
3. The Village Watershed Committee included the 50% women on Watershed Development Committee.
4. The VWDC had independent financial accounts with TISS who was project implementation agency.
5. The *Shramdan* component in the project was up to 16% of the cost of total watershed development of the village. One person from each family was expected to do the *Shramdan* once in fifteen days.

6. It was compulsory for VWDC to form SHG of all women in the village. Separate financial provision was made in the total cost. The money was to be used by women for the entrepreneurship and empowerment activities of the village.

These are some of the important points or guidelines were developed by NABARD for the implementation of Watershed Development programme. The thrust of the programme was participation of community in the programme. To increase the participation of women TISS motivated a lady to work as a supervisor (*mukadam*) on the watershed sites. Generally in most of the places one finds the practice of appointing the men as a supervisor (*mukadam*) on the watershed sites. This has created positive impact in the community.

This project was completed very successfully, though it took more time than the expected in normal circumstances. The project received Award of The Best Watershed project in the region.

As social worker or Community Organizer few sensitive issues need to be raised for the purpose as a part of learning from the project.

1. How was the participation of Dalits in the village? When the village was selected on the basis of mainly technical grounds whether social feasibility was considered in the beginning?
2. Whether village VWDC was sensitive towards the participation and issues of Dalits in the village. If not then they should be provided the caste sensitive training and exposure.
3. How far the project was sustainable? On the basis of environment sustainability. Whether the water increased the village through the project getting the share to all the communities in the village.
4. Whether people of the village taking care of maintenance of the Watershed project?
5. How far women of the village were empowered through the process of project implementation?

Before the implementation of the project, the relation between Dalits and non dalits was hostile which has always created tension in the community. There were some caste atrocities took place some before the project implementation. However, the social workers took this as a challenge to implement the project, with the understanding that relationship may be improved during implementation phase of project with the intervention of social worker.

Dalits had a small land holdings which was not sufficient for their survival. During the implementation phase the caste conflict was emerged. When upper caste stopped Dalits entry in to the temples and allowing them to common places. Dalit community registered complaint against some upper caste people in the police station. Despite the complaint upper caste did not stopped discriminating them. They (upper caste) took the decision to impose social boycott against the Dalits. Because of these reasons Dalits decided to go tuljapur town for wage labour. They were not participating any activities of the village.

On this background TISS started consciously working the Watershed development programme with the reason that this could be the opportunity for social worker to improve the situation of village. We did the efforts for the participation of Dalits in each and every activity. The watershed development project was given the priorities to the land owned by Dalits. Though there were many social and political dynamics the project was completed successfully and it has received the first award as the best watershed project.

Village Leadership: A Challenge or Strategy?

The traditional leadership of one person was challenged through this project in the village. The leadership was with the Village level committee with composition of women. But the person who was ruling the village for many decades was playing very active role behind the curtain. He has influenced all the men members in his favour and they started working under his direction in directly. Since he had a big land portion, grocery shop, fair price shop under Public Distribution system, flower mill etc. so almost all the village resources were owned by his family only. He was *Sarpanch* in the village for more than two decades, therefore, he was a power centre in the village. He was not allowing anyone to develop their leadership in the village but somehow this VWC has challenged him some sense. But his casteist and patriarchal attitude towards Dalits and Women carried by VWC members also. This leader of village was instigating the upper caste youths against Dalits. I feel at this point of time the social worker

would have taken the side of Dalits but then it would have taken the long period to complete the project. There was always the pressure from the funding agencies to complete the projects within the period; therefore, the social workers were giving more important to complete the project. In this kind of situation, the social workers need to work towards the changing the perspectives of the village community in a very systematic manner. This should be the part of project.

1. The social worker need to understand the socio-economic and political dynamics of the village.
2. It is important to understand the history of the caste conflict of the village.
3. The social worker should understand the power structure in the village, influential leaders and their perspectives towards the issues of Dalit and women are very important.

Strategies: A framework for Social Work Practice

1. Village leadership: It is very important components found in all the villages. The approach of the leader plays crucial role in the development process. Leader should be capable of shouldering the responsibility of the process. Therefore, the social worker needs to develop a training module for creating development oriented leadership in the village.
2. There should be constant discussion on these aspects with all the village communities and do not shy away from these issue.
3. Social worker should take rational stand by following the principles of social justice, dignity of the people, non-discriminatory approach and equitable distribution of resources.
4. If the situation arises that the social workers should take stand towards Dalits, they should (Dalit community) feel that there someone who support their issues and then they will get confidence to raise their issues. Confidence building is very important aspects. The village community is always feeling that Dalit are creating hurdles in the development of their village.
5. The Dalit community leaders should able to understand the overall changing situation of the society. They should able to be accepted by other communities. In the above case studies, it has been observed that in two villages, the other caste community accepted them.

Conclusion:

Social work practice with rural communities needs rejuvenation in terms of its approach, strategies, methods and skills. It is important for social work practitioners to bring out the structural issues related environment. Environment and sustainable development are closely associated concepts. Land and water are basic resources required for the development especially in the rural areas, However, there is unequal distribution of these resources excludes Dalits and other marginalized groups from this sustainable development process.

Thus, the interventions by social work practitioner in the villages mentioned in the articles are learning for not only for the social work professionals but for the students of social work who are actively engaged in rural communities for their fieldwork.

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