Social Work and Marginalisation in India: Questioning Frameworks

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INTRODUCTION

"Each case and each situation must be individualised," argued Octavia Hill in her *Letters to Fellow Workers* (Hill, 1875; Kendall, 2000). However, the argument in this chapter is that the role played by hegemony in the making of a social reality and its meaning-making by people needs to be examined. Each case and each situation must therefore be examined through the lenses of language, hegemony, and common sense. Professional social workers are obliged to work in diverse sociocultural settings many of which may be diametrically opposed to their own personally cherished sociocultural ideals. It is also possible that the practice setting and the community relationship that exists within it may be so structurally rooted that professionals may be unable to locate structural inequalities and oppressive realities in a specific sociocultural context.

India continues to witness virulent intolerance on the basis of caste and religious identities, aversion to diversities, and diminishing shared spaces. There is an increase in the incidence of conflicts on the basis of identity assertion and reactions to them, while age-old caste-based atrocities on people belonging to marginalised caste groups (now popularly and assertively referred to as Dalits) continue unabated. These are serious concerns for social workers and practices where they are employed. This is even more so when the social work fraternity at the global level is arguing for the empowerment

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