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Social Work in India Do We Love being at Crossroads?

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Teaching as well as practice in India has been more favourably inclined towards engaging with issues and domains which remain within its comfort zones. The profession is still undergoing the existential crisis and that is why the tag of being 'at the crossroads' is unrelentingly 'real' even now. Under the garb of the popularly held belief that 'social work has to be apolitical', schools of social work and practitioners have opted to carve out a convenient functional niche that singularly avoids any encounter with a discomforting agenda, and prevents its constituents from taking a counter-hegemonic posture. Keeping in view the endemic nature of oppression, and its frequent manifestation in violence based on gender, caste, and religion, the schools of social work in India, need to review their thrust/objectives, courses and praxis. A Gramscian framework is used to make sense of the popular professional perceptions (common sense) on social work teaching and practice. Examining the value bases and world views which inform the teaching and practice of social work, this article argues for integrating the values of human rights and social justice. The article cautions the social workers from becoming what Gramsci calls the dominant group "duputies" exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony.

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Whatever answer one accepts to the perennial question of 'remaining on the cross roads', there must be a cultivated, if not a natural agreement on the need to examine the value bases and world views which inform the teaching and practice of social work. In Europe and America, this 'need' was quite emphatically stressed upon, on the eve of the twenty-first century and the new millennium (Specht and Courtney, 1995; Chambon and Irvin, 1999; Ife, 2001; Powell, 2001; Ferguson, Lavalette and Mooney, 2002; Dominelli, 2004). For example, the need to stir debate about 'a new course

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