

The Future of Social Work: Seven Pillars of Practice

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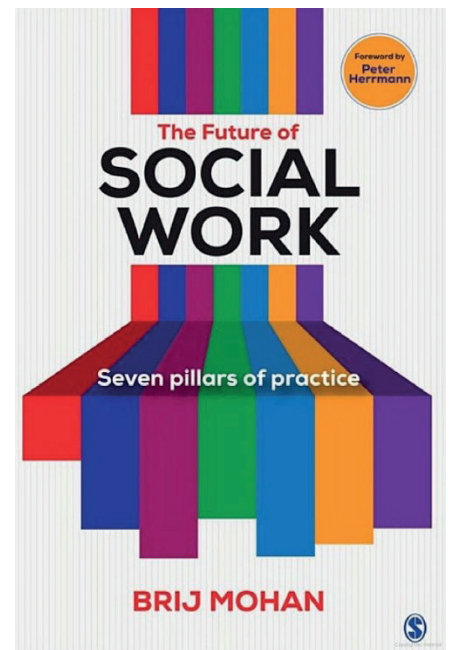
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Introduction

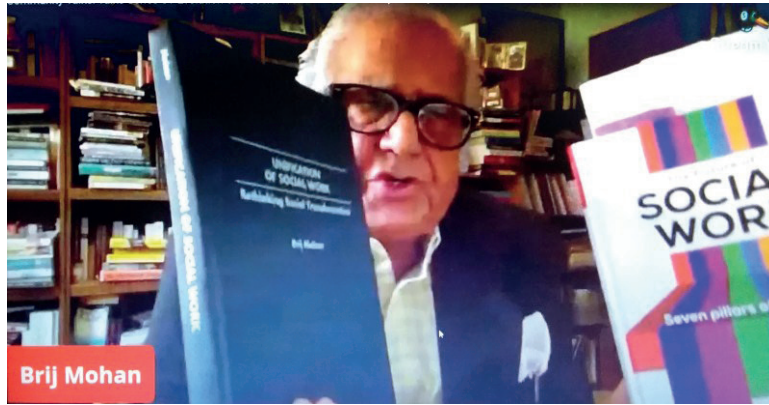
“The goal of social work should be the end of itself,” Dr. Brij Mohan contends. This aphorism makes him a messiah and heretic at the same time. Dr. Mohan is a prolific intellectual whose volumes of writings have nearly launched an international movement to “think critically and act globally.” In a digitally revolutionized world, neither “social” nor “work” will remain the same.

Dr. Brij Mohan is a protégé of the late Professor Saiyid Zafar Hasan who in his own right may be called a legendary pioneer. Dr. Mohan’s mentor modernized social work education, policy and research in most of the social work schools in India. When he went to the United States of

America, Dr. Mohan followed his footprints. Since 1975, Mr. Brij has been teaching, speaking, and publishing in the United States where modern social work evolved as a profession. Born, educated, and trained in India, his emergence as a “Social Work Pioneer” (1995, NASW) in the US, is an achievement that merits a Presidential national award from the Government of India. Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith recognized this prodigious contribution and honored him with a Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*) in 1994.

Strengths of the Book

This bio-professional background is duly contextualized to signify the importance of the book under review.



SW's evolution as a profession is a cross-fertilization of some valued tenets of the Enlightenment. As science and reason broke down the walls of ignorance and superstitions, traditional cultures began to question the age-old dogmas and institutions that bred social misery. Along with came the revolt of the learned, angst and anger of the enlightened and innovative visions of an intellectual. This book is a precise narrative of the triumphs and tribulations of a professional who has studied social and personal issues – ranging from domestic violence and child abuse to poverty and xenophobia – in the world's most advanced nation. Brij Mohan, with uncanny courage and sociological imagination, unravels this paradox.

The book contains ten chapters and an illuminating Foreword by Peter Herrmann. It seems to embody the opus of Brij's interdisciplinary philosophical thrusts that seek to legitimize social work practice. Since he has been a professor all his life, his indelible insight into curriculum designs, administrative issues, labyrinths of campus politics, and the politics of funded research loom large in the shadows of SW's future – the heart of this book. His erudite critique, thoughtful analyses, and masterfully narrated experiences are assets to a profession which is still growing in search of an identity.

Conclusion

"Social Work should be a candle rather than a mirror," he concludes. This is most relevant where professional culture seeks to "clientize" victims of poverty and injustice. Social Workers don't have "clients" like insurance agents and dentists. They have human beings ravaged by social problems. SW's inherent problem has been – and continues to be – that it mimics medicine, law, and engineering without comprehending the nature of its professional mission. Both India and the West are ill-served by a therapeutic culture. Doubtless, this book is riveting and analytical; it's innovative and provocative; diagnostic and futuristic. Social work educators and policy makers cannot afford to ignore the basic formulations proffered in this compelling monograph.

Reviewer

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