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Editorial

KAPS founded in the year 2012, as a body to promote professional social work in Kerala and to take up issues related to the profession, has undergone substantial transformation from being a state body, to becoming an lead and model organisation for similar associations across India. The COVID-19 spell found KAPS adding on more energy, reinvent and innovate in numerous ways quite surprising for other organisations. We had witnessed an outburst of activities starting May wherein we find the KAPS organising series of webinars and training programmes with tremendous pull of an audience from even out of country participating. The contribution of KAPS skills academy, district chapters and KAPS HR & AHT wing are worth mentioning here.

The manner and magnitude of activities, thanks to the support from its founder members especially the ebullient General Secretary Dr.Ipe Varughese, Joye James S.J. and Cherian P Kurien has found KAPS calling the shots especially in defining paths to excellence in the realm social work. The arrival of Ms. Lida Jacob (IAS -retired) and Dr.Joseph Sebastian into the helm of affairs has expanded the spectrum of our activities and engagements. The recent involvement of the KAPS think-tank in discussions organised by NITI-Aayog, and later at the districts and state-levels regarding the National Council for Professional Social Work Bill 2020 auger much hope in shaping our profession at the National-level and in addressing the lacunae of a Council in upholding standards in education and practice.

Our search for excellence and in exceeding limits has made us foray into research and plans for district chapter wise research initiatives. We all very much aware of webinars and research presentations happening within. The journal is our attempt to create indigenous knowledge and to further define the profession and its standing within the country, beyond the state. Our first set of articles mostly devolved from presentations during the IIIrd and IVth Kerala State Social Work Congresses held in better times. As a team KAPS

significantly valued the importance of organizing conferences, not just to congregate and discuss matters concerning our profession, but also, to share and source our learnings. Going a step beyond that, KAPS by way of launching Empower- The Journal of Social Work, has a tool to disseminate our collective learnings.

In the process, the social work andragogy wheel (Jose, 2013) wherein the practice is the keystone in learning, is being addressed. For 'learning' to happen, reflections need to fructify, which are reported in the form of documents and research papers. These documents are subject to criticism during conferences and at present webinars, within which meta-learning happens leading to further reflection, corrections and refinement. The outcome results in more presentable documents that eventually emerge as indigenous literature (theory). Empower is meant to be the launch-pad for our young budding learners and practitioners to step into the ocean of research and publication. The present issue, also the first, is a reflection on our eclecticism presented in five articles and a book review.

The article titled "A Study in Internet Addiction, Exposure to Sexually Explicit Material and its Impact among Adolescents" by Reny Rajan and Simmy Xavier, is an exploration into the new normal of internet engagement. Internet being an essential part of our daily life, adolescents and youth are exposed to sexually explicit material. This has been empirically associated with negative outcomes - physical, emotional and psychological health. The study brings out how the young users are accidentally exposed to sexual contents by prying algorithms, even during casual searches for information. The exposure eventually becomes addictive, and, besides making them feel guilty, leave them 'irritated' when they consciously control the exposure to such sexually-explicit contents. Almost half of the participants emerge scarred with body image issues as they find themselves 'unattractive' or 'inadequate' compared to others they view. The same idea finds place in the paper in a subtle way.

The second article is an inside view into the controversial foray of Corporates into the realm of governance, in this case local self-governance. Titled "Corporate Social Responsibility" to "Total Social Responsibility": The

Journey of Kizhakambalam Gramapanchayath into Sustainable Development with Twenty-20”, the author Jolly John O.V., presents the Twenty-20 movement in Kizhakambalam GramaPanchayat in the State of Kerala, as a ‘new model’ in rural development. The “Twenty-20” was a CSR project initiated by Kitex Garments Ltd. and Anna Aluminum Company with a socio-political participatory framework. This a social action project guised in the form of a people organisation, which eventually captured the local governance with an absolute majority in Kizhakkambalam Gramapanchayat. The researcher used an exploratory sequential mixed method design in studying the unique projects implemented to attain sustainable development. It was found that there was substantial improvement in the Multidimensional Poverty Indicator, indicative of poverty alleviation in the Kizhakambalam GramaPanchayat. The study also portrayed how Kitex Garments Ltd and Anna Aluminum Company went beyond the minimum involvement as prescribed by the Indian Companies Act, to enhance its involvement to “Total Social Responsibility”, wherein the company consider themselves a ‘friend’ and ‘well-wisher’ to the Grampanchayat. The reader may also need to consider whether the objectives of Corporates is to indulge in local self-governance considering the clash of interest that goes against the principles of CSR.

The third article is a book review titled “Breaking the Silence: Child Sexual Abuse in India”, by Neena Ronish. The review is regarding a report published in February 2013, by Human Rights Watch (HRW), an international organization, aimed to protect the human rights of people around the world. The India report, reviewed the Indian government responses to child sexual abuse and challenges in protecting children and in treating victims. In a detailed review, Ronish looks at the report consisting of case studies of eight victims to examine what the Indian Government does to prevent abuse, how it responds when it receives allegations of abuse, and how it treats victims after they are abused, besides interviews on government officials, doctors, police officials, lawyers, members of non-governmental organizations, and children. On the whole, the report was useful in providing guidelines in addressing the problem, especially for research and policy implementation. Even though it

address the child abuse ‘in India’, it still mostly covers northern India mainly, largely ignoring the South wherein cases are reported more owing to better education and could list unaddressed problems in child abuse or diverse risk factors owing to cultural variation.

The fourth article titled “Challenges in Professional Relationship between Male Social Workers Trainees and MSMs” by Rasique P. Mary Trisil, attempted to explore the nature of relationship between MSMs and Male Social Workers, and the challenges in maintaining it within the professional boundaries. The study takes shape from the insufficient studies on hurdles while interacting with the kothi community. This empirical study commence among a group of 20 social work trainees studying in two colleges of Malappuram District, who had worked with the Suraksha Project. In-depth interview was used as the method of data collection, and the interview guide as the tool for the study. The trainees in general experienced ‘gender-bias’ in the context of communication with the MSMs, specifically the kothi community, rendering them ‘very uncomfortable’ to engage. Although it took a longer time for rapport-building and to gain the trust of the MSM clients, it was noticed that the kothi community was very comfortable working with women social work trainees, with whom they shared without any inhibition. The study points out how crucial belief-bonding was in preventing proliferation of HIV/AIDS among MSMs. There apparently is a divergence of the title from the sample taken, given that the title hints at Male Social Workers, when in actuality both male and female social work trainees were considered among the sample of 20 respondents.

The last article titled “Solo Travel: ATransformative Experience for Women” by Gilda Mani and Sonny Jose is a reflection on Kerala context, with its experiments on public spaces and women accessing them. The activity of travel is a positive act of self-fulfilment. Solo traveling provides individuals the opportunity to explore their own limitations and new territories; besides it enhance feelings of independence and freedom. This present qualitative study documents the experiences available to women engaging in solo travel in a pa-

triarchal society as Kerala, which imposes restriction on women from indulging in themselves and travel. It was found that, restrictions of organised travel as well as the unavailability of a suitable partners being a drive for solo-travel. Destination features, “pull” women into travel solo as an alternative to escaping mundane worries. Social constructs on gender, financial constraints and harassment at the point of embarkation are problems often encountered. In general, women became more confident, bold and independent on account of their travel experiences; further, they gather a better understanding of life through travel, and become able as well as better disposed to take crucial decisions regarding their life and execute them as they wish.

The fifth article is a reflective status report on the Social work students associations in Kerala. Titled “Students in Professional Social Workers’ Associations & Kerala Social Work Student Congress”, the authors Akhila. V. R., Nivya. S. and Ipe Varughese document the journey of student associations over the last two decades acknowledges the relevance of integrated approach of theory and practice to Social work education. Especially important is in educating the students on the mission, vision, goals, values, and ethics of practice in the profession. Professional Associations adjudicate members on their professional competence and come together to perform social functions which they cannot perform in their separate capacity as individuals (Merton,1958). Besides, socialisation being the foundation of Social Work Practice, can be boosted with confidence with the help of social work professional associations (Kimberly, Louise and Roe Bubar, 2013). This article studies social work professional associations, specifically about KAPS (Kerala Association of Professional Social Workers) banner, and affiliated to IFSW (International Federation of Social Workers) through INPSWA (India Network of Professional Social Workers’ Associations) with more focus on the involvement of social work students in professional association. The activities and working of KAPS Student association through Social Work student Congress is highlighted to depict the importance of a professional body for students to build their skill of networking, collaborating, innovating and gathering expertise in social work

fields that could be enriched with the help of Student Association of KAPS.

We, on the editorial team hope that the themes as diverse as corporate indulgence in local self-governance; the intersection between heterosexual perspectives and gender on same sex behaviour; gender and leisure; electronic media and adolescence exposure to adult sexuality; government responses to child sexual abuse as well as the activities of student social work associations would titillate your research appetite and invite critical thinking. Looking forward to your responses to our endeavours.

Sonny Jose Ph.D.