Empowering Minds, Transforming Lives...

BHARATA MATA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
BHARATA MATA COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), THRIKKAKARA

"THE COMMUNIQUE"

NEWS LETTER OF BHARATA MATA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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The Communiqué is the monthly newsletter of Bharata Mata School of Social Work, created by MSW students as a student-led initiative. It highlights the extension and outreach activities of the institution, the achievements of the department and students, and reflections from students. The newsletter also provides a summary of important day observances, seminars, webinars, and faculty development programs (FDPs) conducted in the previous month. Through this initiative, we aim to share updates, celebrate accomplishments, and keep everyone informed about the dynamic activities of our school.

MSW INDUCTION



The new academic year began with a three-day Postgraduate Induction Programme designed to help freshers ease into their academic journey with confidence, clarity, and purpose. Conducted in two phases, the programme focused on building self-awareness, emotional well-being, teamwork, and goal setting.

On July 2, 2025, a common induction session was held for all newly admitted postgraduate students. Dr. Baby Chakrapani P. S, Assistant Professor, Department of Biotechnology, CUSAT, delivered a session on the importance of mental health. His presentation shed light on how mental health impacts brain development and cognitive functions, while also highlighting the role of healthy sleep routines and balanced daily habits in maintaining mental well-being. The session was insightful and helped students recognize the importance of prioritizing emotional health as part of their academic and personal development.



On July 4 and 5, 2025, a specialized induction session was organized exclusively for the First Year MSW students (Batch 2025–2027). Ms. Angela Leya Eldon, a skilled master coach and trainer, led this two-day interactive programme focused on teamwork and goal setting. Through a variety of activity-based sessions, students explored group dynamics, collab-

orative learning, and strategic planning. These sessions helped students actively engage with their peers while gaining practical skills relevant to both academic and field-based settings.



Overall, the three-day induction programme served as an effective platform for freshers to gain essential insights and life skills beyond academics. For the MSW batch, it marked a meaningful beginning—one that emphasized self-growth, collaboration, and purposeful learning as key elements of their postgraduate journey.

BSW INDUCTION



A Common Orientation Programme was organized on 2nd July 2025 at the College Auditorium for all newly admitted undergraduate students. A total of 35 Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students participated in the session. The event aimed to introduce students to the institution's vision, mission, and academic environment, inspiring them to embark on their professional journey with purpose and clarity. The session was inaugurated by the Head of the Department of Social Work, followed by an engaging keynote by Dr. Sajeev Nair, CEO and Wellness Evangelist, who shared powerful insights on personal growth and wellness as foundational elements of a meaningful career in social work.



On 4th July 2025, a series of induction sessions were held specifically for first-year BSW students, with the aim of easing their transition into college life and equipping them with knowledge and awareness relevant to their field. The day began with an Ice-Breaking Session at the BMSSW Auditorium, led by Mr. M. Satheesh, CEO of the Swiss Social Work Association. The session included interactive games and discussions that encouraged students to connect with one another, develop communication skills, and understand the importance of empathy and teamwork in the field of social work.



The induction continued with two thematic sessions held at the BMSSW Seminar Hall. In the morning, Mr. James Jose, a social worker from Blue Point, Ernakulam, led a session on "Child Rights", emphasi-

zing legal frameworks, protection mechanisms, and real-life challenges faced by vulnerable children. His experiences provided practical insight for students beginning their journey in social work. In the afternoon, the Mechac Foundation Team facilitated a session on "Mental Health," sensitizing students to its significance in both personal life and professional social work practice. The interactive format encouraged students to engage actively and reflect on the importance of mental well-being in their own lives and in the communities they aim to serve.



These orientation and induction activities marked a meaningful beginning for the BSW batch of 2025, equipping them with both inspiration and foundational understanding for their academic and professional journey.

INTERACTIVE SESSION WITH THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE COLLECTIVE – AADHISHAKTHI



An interactive session with the Indigenous People Collective – Aadhishakthi was held on July 7, 2025, at the School of Social Work. The programme aimed to sensitize students to the challenges, rights, and aspirations of tribal communities in Kerala and to foster meaningful engagement between students and tribal leaders. The main speaker, Mr. M. Geethanandan, social activist and co-founder of the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha, shared powerful insights on the historical and ongoing struggles faced by indigenous communities, emphasizing the importance of advocacy, inclusion, and grassroots empowerment.



The session also featured speakers Ms. Lidiya (State Coordinator), Ms. Reshma K.R. (Community Coordinator), and Mr. Renjith from Aadhishakthi. Ms. Lidiya highlighted the impact of the Adhi Shakthi Summer School, which supports tribal students in pursuing higher education, and acknowledged the contributions of social work students who volunteered at the Admission Help Desk. Personal testimones from tribal students shed light on the stigma and discrimination they face in academic spaces and the realities of the reservation system in Kerala, offering students a deeper and more personal understanding of systemic inequalities

The session created a valuable space for dialogue, where social work students actively participated and asked questions, strengthening their awareness of the social issues affecting tribal communities. The event concluded with a note of gratitude and the presentation of a memento to Mr. Geethanandan by Dr. Elsa Mary Jacob, Head of the Department of Social Work.

ASSOCIATION DAY - 2025



The official inauguration of B-VOIC (Bharata Mata Venture for Organising Inclusive Communities) was held on 11th July 2025 at Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara. The event began with a prayer and a video presentation highlighting the association's vision. Dr. Elsa Mary Jacob, Head of the Department, welcomed the gathering, and Dr. Johnson K M, Academic Director, delivered the presidential address. The lamp-lighting ceremony was followed by an inspiring inaugural address by Shri K. K. Shaju, Member, Kerala State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights.



A proud moment of the event was the honouring of former B-VOIC core committee members — Edwin Jose, Ann Tishna Thankachan, and Ashique Sunil — for transforming their fieldwork into a CSR project. Alumnus Ameer Ali was also honoured for his professional achievements. Dr. Soumya Thomas, Principal, delivered the felicitation speech, and Mr. Sooraj M V extended the vote of thanks.



The day concluded with vibrant B-VOIC Association Day cultural performances, featuring music, dance, and a fashion show that showcased student creativity and the spirit of inclusion. The celebration reflected B-VOIC's commitment to unity, expression, and social change.

SOCIAL AUDIT OF ENTE NAADU JANAKEEYA KOOTAYIMA



The social audit of Ente Naadu Janakeeya Kootayima, operating under the Kothamangalam Municipality, commenced on 12th July 2025. The audit is being carried out by the Department of Social Work, Bharata Mata College (Autonomous), Thrikkakara), with the objective of evaluating the impact, effectiveness, and reach of various projects and programs implemented by Ente Naadu.

The inaugural ceremony was officially opened by C. P. John, former Planning Board Member, and presided over by Shibu Thekkumpuram, Chairman of Ente Naadu. Dr. Sheena Rajan Philip, Assistant Professor and Chairperson of the Social Impact Ass-

essment (SIA) Unit, provided an insightful briefing on the audit's methodology and procedures, setting the stage for the work ahead.



The month-long audit involves active participation from social work faculty and student volunteers, who will engage in data collection, analysis, and field visits to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of Ente Naadu's community initiatives. The audit aims to generate valuable insights to strengthen the future planning and implementation of participatory development programs.

ORGANISATION VISIT - MSW



As part of their field exposure, the Second Year MSW students from the Department of Social Work visited two important institutions on 19th July 2025 — Borstal School in Kakkanad and Chaithram, a suicide prevention center in Ernakulam. These visits aimed to deepen their understanding of juvenile rehabilitation and mental health crisis intervention through direct observation and interaction.

At Borstal School, Kerala's only facility for young offenders, students engaged in cultural and interactive activities with the residents and attended an orientation led by the staff. They observed a rehabilitative approach focused on education, vocational training, and emotional development, highlighting the importance of empathy and early intervention in juvenile justice.



Later, at Chaithram, students interacted with senior citizen volunteers and learned about the center's non-judgmental, confidential support system for individuals in emotional distress. The orientation covered Chaithram's three-level referral system and its emphasis on active listening, crisis handling, and family involvement in suicide prevention.

Together, the visits offered valuable exposure to two critical areas of social work, reinforcing the significance of compassionate, professional, and community-based support systems for vulnerable populations.

SUSTERA FOUNDATION STUDENTS VOLUNTEERSHIP

As part of their fieldwork, First Year MSW students volunteered at a workshop on 'Gender–Inclusive Climate Action in Peri-Urban Kochi', organized by the University of London in partnership with Sustera Foundation and NIT Calicut. The workshop, held in Amballur Grama Panchayath, aimed to explore how climate change impacts women in peri-urban areas.

After a brief orientation, two trainees assisted with registration while others supported activity groups. Participants mapped their localities and shared climate-related challenges faced by women.



The workshop provided the trainees with practical exposure to gender and climate issues, while also enhancing their skills in communication, facilitation, and active listening. It was a valuable learning experience that deepened their understanding of community-based social work.



COLLOQUIUM ON VULNERABILITIES AND CLIMATE

As part of BHARATHION 2025, the Bharata Mata School of Social Work, in collaboration with University College London (UCL), organized a colloquium on “Vulnerabilities and Climate” on 23rd July 2025 at Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara. The event focused on gender-based exclusion in peri-urban areas, particularly how women are often left out of climate resilience and urban planning discussions.

A session earlier that day by Mr. Sooraj MV, Assistant Professor at BMSSW, provided second-year MSW students with an orientation on political ecology and critical perspectives in social work, setting the tone for the colloquium. The panel presented insights from a participatory workshop with women from Amballoor, where issues like heat stress, flooding, livelihood insecurity, and gendered burdens were explored through creative methods such as participatory mapping and 3D scanning. The session emphasized the use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) to amplify women’s voices and highlighted the intersectional inequalities rooted in caste, class, and migration status, despite Kerala’s progressive gender indicators.



The colloquium highlighted how lived experiences, especially of women in transitional peri-urban zones, must be central to effective climate action and policy. It reinforced that real transformation happens when local knowledge and creativity are valued in research and planning. For social work students, attending this session offered valuable insights into inclusive, participatory methodologies and the importance of integrating social justice into climate discourse. The learning underscored the role of social workers in advocating for vulnerable communities and ensuring their perspectives shape development initiatives. The event not only expanded academic understanding but also deepened ethical commitment to promoting equity through community-centered practices.

ACADEMIC RELFECTIONS

EMPATHY ISN'T OPTIONAL IN SOCIAL WORK

Learning to stand in somebody else's shoes, to see through their eyes, that's how peace begins. And it's up to you to make that happen. Empathy is a quality of character that can change the world.

- Barack Obama

We, as a human community, are living in an era marked by war crimes, honor killings, and suicides related to marriage—all driven by ignorance and hatred. The world is increasingly forgetting that we are all human beings, and walls of division are being built between us. Many individuals lack empathy for themselves and for others, leading to low self-esteem and growing hostility toward one another.

The profession of social work has embodied empathy since its early days, aiming to provide social services to those at the margins of society. Empathy in social work extends from self-empathy within the social worker to deeply understanding and empathizing with the client.

Social workers strive for the welfare of individuals, and to truly understand others, we must first understand ourselves. This begins with self-awareness. When we are self-aware, we become capable of practicing self-empathy, recognizing and accepting our own feelings during times of hardship. From this foundation, we can better empathize with others, understanding their emotions and situations more deeply, and offering support with genuine compassion and guidance.

Self-empathy also enables us to reflect and forgive ourselves on a personal level. It creates a space where we can accept our mistakes and grow from them. Only then can we extend that same empathy and forgiveness to others. Empathy is one of the greatest virtues of humanity, but in social work, it is essential to maintain a balance, ensuring emotional involvement does not become emotional overidentification. Social workers are encouraged to practice controlled emotional involvement, which allows them to engage empathetically without becoming overwhelmed or losing objectivity (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014).

Self-care is one way to foster self-empathy in both our professional and personal lives. It is important for us to create and prioritize time to express our feelings and reflect on our experiences. Through self-care, social workers can maintain emotional balance and deliver high-quality services to clients, ultimately empowering them more effectively. Regular self-care practices are essential for preventing burnout, managing stress, and sustaining the emotional resilience required for effective social work (Newell & MacNeil, 2010).



Alen Shilson
Second Year MSW

The world is imperfect, and each of us is imperfect too. Yet, we must not forget that we are all striving to become better individuals and to build a more compassionate and inclusive community. No one is entirely right or wrong; fought through centuries to grather, some of us are closer to the truth, while others are still seeking it. As aspiring social workers, we can work together to build a world where empathy is not seen as a weakness, but recognized as one of the greatest virtues of humanity.

KNOWING OURSELVES TO HELP OTHERS: THE ROLE OF REFLECTION IN SOCIAL WORK

"*Before we can reach out our hand to help someone else, we must first understand the hand we're offering.*"

Social work, at its heart, is about people—real lives, real emotions, real struggles, and real hope. It's not just about textbooks or policies; it's about connection. But how can we truly connect with others if we haven't first connected with ourselves? This is where self-reflection becomes not just useful, but essential.

Why Reflection Matters

In the hustle of helping others—resolving conflicts, advocating for rights, managing cases—it's easy to forget to pause and ask: How am I feeling today? Why did that session affect me so deeply? What beliefs or experiences am I unconsciously bringing into this space?

Self-reflection in social work is like holding up a mirror—not to criticize, but to understand who we are and how our personal history shapes the way we work with others.

The importance of reflective practice is widely recognized across helping professions. *Donald Schön's* influential book, The Reflective Practitioner (1983), though not written exclusively for social workers, introduced two key ideas:

- ***Reflection-in-action,*** or adjusting our approach in real time, such as during a difficult session.
- ***Reflection-on-action***, which involves looking back afterward to evaluate our responses and learn from experience—often through journaling or supervision.

Schön emphasized that professionals grow not only by applying theory, but by staying open to learning from their own lived moments. This kind of reflection is vital in social work, where no two client situations are ever the same. It helps practitioners move beyond a "one-size-fits-all" mindset and respond with empathy, flexibility, and depth.

What Does Self-Awareness Mean in Social Work?

At its core, self-awareness means being tuned into both your strengths and your limitations. It allows you to approach your work—and your clients—with honesty, sensitivity, and an open mind. When you're truly aware of your inner thoughts, emotions, and biases, you create space for genuine, respectful connections.

Knowing what you bring into the room—your values, your emotional triggers, your assumptions—can deepen your presence as a social worker. It also helps you manage your own reactions in challenging situations, making your interactions more thoughtful and less reactive. This kind of awareness cultivates trust and authenticity, not only in how you relate to others but also in how others relate to you.

Therapeutic Use of Self: When Reflection Becomes Practice

Some social workers take self-awareness a step further by using it as a conscious, active part of their work. This approach, often called the therapeutic use of self, involves intentionally sharing personal perspectives or emotional responses with clients when it benefits the therapeutic relationship. It doesn't mean oversharing—it means being human in a way that strengthens connection.

For example, if a client feels unheard or judged, a social worker might gently express their own reaction to that moment, showing that they're listening not just as a professional, but as a person. Used wisely, this method can build trust and deepen

the relationship, allowing clients to open up and feel safe in the space.

This is one of the clearest examples of how self-awareness moves from being an internal process to a practical tool that enhances your ability to support others.

Each of us carries emotional experiences—memories, beliefs, struggles—that can influence our work. Without reflection, this invisible "backpack" can become heavy and unknowingly impact how we respond to clients. Regular self-awareness practices help us unpack, process, and move forward with greater clarity.

Reflection isn't a one-time act—it's a daily habit. A few ways to nurture it:

- **Start or end your day with a self-check-in**: "What moments moved me today, and why?"
- **Keep a reflection journal**: A private space to explore your thoughts.
- **Engage in peer support or supervision**: Sometimes others see what we miss.
- **Practice mindfulness**: Learn to observe without judgment.

By knowing ourselves better, we not only grow as individuals but also become stronger advocates for change. We learn to see others with more compassion, and we approach systems and communities with a deeper sense of justice and responsibility.



In social work, your most powerful tool isn't always your degree or your skillset—it's you. Your presence, your empathy, your ability to reflect and grow. Self-awareness doesn't just make you a better social worker. It makes you a more grounded, more authentic human being.

Anitha Abraham
Second Year MSW

So take time to know yourself. Because the more deeply you understand your own story, the better you'll be able to honor the stories of those you serve.

ACHIEVEMENTS



PLACEMENTS


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SEAPORT-AIRPORT ROAD, THRIKKAKARA, KOCHI-682021, KERALA, INDIA
Phone: +91 94004 63358, Mail: bmssw@bharatamatacollege.in
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