UNIT 8: FORMS OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

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8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit shall enable you to -

- discern the ideological base of different forms of social work practice;
- understand the emergence of reform movements and social activism for social change.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

Social work as a profession is rooted deeply in the beliefs and the social climate that prevailed during any time and hence what seems to be fair and right at one point of time may be criticised later. The profession is also based on certain ideologies that dominate during each period. Hence, the approaches of social work practice have also undergone changes such

as charity, welfare, clinical, ecological, radical and progressive. This unit shall discuss the different forms of social work practice according to the changing times commencing from the conventional practice to the contemporary practice.

8.3 CONVENTIONAL SOCIAL WORK

Conventional social work, also referred to as traditional social work, was individualistic in nature as it focussed on the individual's problems. During the 19th century, India was subject to prolonged colonisation leading to poverty and other serious problems that affected individuals and their families. Philanthropic organisations played a dominant role in reaching out through their services to the needy. Social workers were engaged with providing for the basic needs of individuals and the nature of help was more of benevolence where the services were focussed on fulfilling basic needs like food, clothing, shelter and employment. Belief in Freud's Psychoanalytic theory about conscious and unconscious drives and the unresolved 'id' contributing to an individual's problems was also the basis for social work practice and intervention. Conventional practice believed that the root causes of problems were centred within the individual client and hence the psychological needs were addressed. Hence, the individual and his psychological make-up were identified as the causative factor for problems. Social workers focussed on the individual's emotions, interpersonal capacities and skills rather than advocacy for fulfilment of their needs.

The medical model was the thrust of practice where the social worker is seen as an expert who diagnoses the problem and suggests solutions for the clients to adhere to. It can be seen that there is the power or control utilised by the social worker that is patriarchal and hierarchical. The professional social worker uses his knowledge to pronounce judgement and controls the client's life through means of case management.

Conventional social work is seen as form of social control that is capitalistic in nature where the rich and the powerful in society define and constrain the poor and the less powerful. In spite of the help rendered to the

needy, this traditional or conservative social work practice was criticised to a large extent. It could not deal with the surmounting social problems in spite of its emphasis on reform of the individual. The ideological basis was on the hegemony of patriarchy, classism, racism and other oppressing structures. Client was expected to adapt to these oppressing structures. The conventional social workers failed to respond to the social structures as problematic and did not come in favour of advocacy or any form of activism.

Structural social work came up with contrasting focus on the wider social structures to be responsible for personal problems and emphasised on structural changes rather than individual changes for resolution of problems. Social movements were initiated to make people understand the control of dominant powers and how they have been oppressed, creating space for social empathy rather than empathy that is individualistic, characterising conventional social work. In a country like India, where there are visible signs of oppression and marginalisation, this conventional social work practice will not be feasible to handle issues pertaining to different oppressed groups. Therefore, voices of dissent have questioned this practice and recommended radical approaches to deal with the contemporary social problems. The contemporary social work practice emphasises on the need to change the environment calling for macro level of policy and governance to fulfill the rights of the oppressed which cannot be fulfilled with micro level of practice pertaining to conventional social work practice like casework and group work.

8.3.1 Charity and Philanthropy

Charitable work or philanthropy flourished in industrialized countries from the 89th century onwards. Philanthropy which is historically a part of charity consisted of donating money to help the needy rather than being a volunteer providing service. Organisations were formed by the middle and wealthy class to provide relief and welfare to the poor and less privileged in order to take care of their needs. It was one way of transferring resources from the rich to the poor. Then there came about a situation where it was

felt thatthese charity efforts should be in an organised manner and adapt scientific or humanitarian aspects rather than focussing on religion, which led to the establishment of two kinds of charity - the Charity Organization Society (COS) and Settlement Houses. Early philanthropy and Church social activity laid foundation for Charity organizations and Settlement movements.The first COS was founded in England in 8869. It started with friendly visitors. Friendly visitors mainly were women who tried to help by praying. Later on this movement became more secular and involved component of treatment in the work. Charity organizations applied ideas of scientific philanthropy to their daily activities. They stressed on religious values with the goal of saving the miserable from the sins of poverty. COS was regarded as the forerunner of modern casework. Scientific charity's goal was the moral improvement and effective regulation of the disorganised and stigmatised working class people.

The Settlement Houses functioned differently and staff members were linked to the community because they lived there. They helped the communities in dealing with their problems rather than providing charity. They persuaded the local politicians to support the community with basic services. Settlement movement rests on three main ideas: reforms, research and residents.

The methods of group work, community organisation were used in working with the communities. Modern social work grew out of the kind of activities of the COS.

In the beginning of the 20th century, there was a shift in the approaches, the term 'charity' was replaced by 'social welfare' and 'philanthropy' was replaced by 'social work'. As time progressed, social welfare was associated with agencies and programmes. Social work practices therefore went through a change from charity and reform to welfare to development and human rights.

8.3.2. Welfare

Social welfare refers to the services that are usually provided by the state, aimed at promoting the well-being of individuals, family, social and

community relationships that enhance solidarity and mutuality in society(Payne, 2006). It does not mean only providing financial assistance and other services to the needy but also denotes collective responsibility to meet the needs of all those in need. There has been a change in understanding the concept of social welfare. Welfare services need to be institutionalized so that the support systems are already available as first line for individuals to cope with the social problems that keep changing. Further, welfare which was seen as part of charity, philanthropy and relief has now become an individual's right. From the focus only on the poor, welfare has broadened its scope to include a whole range of issues like disability, unemployment, health issues, children, women, old age and so on. Welfare services have now become part of the state responsibility rather than a few voluntary programmes that existed earlier.

Social welfare is therefore concerned with any kind of intervention that is concerned with promoting the wellbeing of the individual and the society. It therefore deals with services to address any social problem, or preventing any issue and thereby improve the quality of life of human beings.

8.3.3. Administration

Administration is a process of direction and coordination in an organisation to execute its goal and purpose. Two broad aspects are important in administration. The first part consists of having the knowledge and understanding of the subject area and the field of services and the second part is about the understanding related to the techniques of planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating, budgeting and accounting.

Social work enables the process of administration through guidance, planning, stimulation, organization, creating structure and through research. It calls for implementing programmes related to welfare by applying professional skills and competencies related to social work. To execute any welfare programme, there needs to be an organization which can be either managed by the government or by individuals or a trust. For these organisations to function, administrations of the various activities are crucial. These activities can be classified as administrative task, finances and

budgeting, personnel, service delivery, evaluation of the services and documentation of the activities through periodic reporting.

For effective implementation of any welfare service, it calls for good administration. Only then will the welfare programmes be planned and executed systematically. It is also imperative that there is regular evaluation of the welfare activities carried out and follow up of the activities are also maintained to ensure that the programmes reach the beneficiary. Hence, welfare and administration go hand in hand for the successful implementation of services for the needy in the society.

8.4 RADICAL SOCIAL WORK

Radical social work emerged in the 8970s, due to the influence of Marxist theory, particularly in Europe and Latin America. It proposed that social distress arises from the oppression of the working class by the capitalist elites. Its ideology is that the most effective way to achieve goals of equality and solutions to social problems is to eliminate or make major changes in the existing institutions. It includes techniques for peaceably bringing about these changes, including passive resistance, demonstrations, strikes and political and social activism.



Radical Social Work : ideology is that the most effective way to achieve goals of equality and solutions to social problems is to eliminate or make major changes in the existing institutions.

According to Bailey and Brake, whose Radical Social Work appeared in 1975, the social worker should try to understand the position of the oppressed in the context of the economic and social structure they live in. The self-styled radicles critical of conventional social work, reinterpret social work history and social work training as phases of late capitalism. It is a libertarian socialism which is propounded by the radical school, founded on anti-authoritarianism.

Structural concerns are central totheir critique: social welfare is seen as a capitalist attempt to resolve the antagonisms between aspects of production and consumption. A healthy labour force must be maintained at all costs, in order to keep production moving. Benefits can mitigate the worst excesses of exploitation and poverty.Welfare sustains capitalism with the full co-operation of the working class, never questioning the fundamental character of social relationships in capitalist industrial society.

The radical sees social work as immersed in an ideology which encourages collective action. It invites an exploration of the ideology of social work, and thus a reorientation away from the method of individualised casework.People must be shown their position in society, not their moral condition or their psychological handicaps. Alienated and oppressed, the people coming to social workers must be encouraged to join hands with others in expressions of community - solidarity, must have their self-esteem enhanced and must be shown that they have been mere pawns in the capitalise power politics game. Structural change, not marginal reform is the ultimate goal.

The traditional social work approach that attempts to intervene at individual level by examining the problems at individual level was criticised by radical critiques. Conventional social work shall not be able to address problems such as ethnic conflicts, land acquisition, fight to control natural resources, conflicts with the State etc. Itis here that radical social work is brought in to handle these issues. It stresses the need for social workers to stand together in unity to address the political and socio-economic conditions that have an impact negatively on our lives.

Radical social workers have contributed to the development of inclusive and genuinely anti-oppressive practices in social work. The focus is on action that brings about social change and improves people's lives by changing social structures.By using the varied methods of social work like group work, social action and creating awareness, radical social work aims to bring about a society that is just and fair.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is the philosophy of radical social work?

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Q 2: State the function of 'settlement houses'.

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8.5 LAW AND SOCIAL WORK

There is an interface between social work practice and the legal systems of any country. Law provides a framework to enable social workers make important decisions regarding their clients and their welfare. It helps in preventing any anti discriminatory practices and protects the rights of clients. Legal frameworks stem from the principles of social justice and human rights which are indispensable to social work profession. Social workers need to be well versed with different legislations so that they can help their clients handle their issues effectively. They may practice in settings related to children, women, minorities, marginalised groups, health and mental health sector, disability, industrial sector, HIV/AIDS, internally displaced groups, gay rights, human rights etc and accordingly they should be aware of the laws of the state pertaining to the sector they are involved with. Being conscious and updated with the legislations related to their service enables them to also become advocates of any reforms needed for the benefit of clients. We find many social workers actively participating in framing of legislations, amending provisions of certain laws to suit changing scenario, and most importantly in policy formulation.

The term used in social work to laws relating to welfare is social legislations that offer protection or benefit to the society to promote social justice. It is aimed at protecting the rights of the vulnerable, oppressed, socially and economically backward sections.They are also known as welfare legislations because the emphasis is on promoting the welfare of human beings. Social work approach has changed from welfare to right based and accordingly the legislations also should highlight these provisions. Only when the rights are guaranteed and outlined by means of laws that

are passed by the government, social workers can claim justice to their clients whose rights have been violated. Changing social issues and concerns should therefore be reflected through appropriate legislations and social workers play an important role to ensure that it becomes a reality. Most of the legislations pertaining to the marginalised have been framed during the colonial role and have no significance in the current times. It calls for either repealing those laws or amending them through a radical approach to suit the interests of the people concerned.

8.6 SOCIAL REFORM AND MOVEMENT

Social reform refers to a change brought about in the community or social institution to replace certain values or practice that is irrelevant. Reform of any social order that affects quality of life, deprivations, unrest and misery to sizeable sections of the society can be initiated either by a single individual or a group of people. They have a strong belief that progress in society can only be accomplished if the institutional structure issuitably modified or altered. It brings change in social institutions and creates favourable conditions for the social progress of those who are continuously suffering from discrimination and social neglect. It is a movement motivated by an urge to uproot traditional values of social life and institutions and bring about new values and pattern of social life. It involves radical changes in social system.

Social reform requires pioneers and leaders of public opinion to bring about a change in the values and social institutions in a community. The modern social work practice in India developed out of the social reform movement of the 89th century. The social reformers believed in the principle of individual liberty, freedom, and equality of all human beings irrespective of sex, color, race, caste, or religion. They attacked a number of traditional, authoritarian, and hierarchical social institutions and launched social reform movements.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one of the greatest social reformers of India. He was con-cerned about a number of evil customs andled a crusade

against the evil and inhuman practice of Sati, in which a widow was forced to immolate herself on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband. He opposed the view that Sati was a voluntary act of the widow and his strong arguments and activities against the practice convinced Lord William Bentinck to introduce legislation for the prohibition of Sati called the Prohibition of Sati Act. Social reforms against evil practices like untouchability, child marriages etc. that violate the basic human rights of human beings led to the formulation of legislations aimed at protecting their rights. These reform movements aimed at eliminating social evils in the societyand bringing about equality among its citizens.

A movement is initiated to bring about social reforms which bring us to the discussion on what are social movements. A social movement may be defined as an organized effort by a large number of people to bring about or impede social, political, economic, or cultural change. Social movements engage in various kinds of protest, including demonstrations, sit-ins, and sometimes violence. Religious and secular ideologies have influenced social movements that have brought about changes in social structures or created new ones. Most of the movements consist of organized groups that strive towards a common goal with the purpose of bringing about a change, or resist some change, or to provide a political voice to those who are unable to stand up for their rights. It can occur at the individual or societal level to advocate for marginal or radical changes. Social movements arise when there is a feeling of deprivation or discontent and ends when they succeed in attaining their goal, become part of larger movements, or they cease to be relevant.



A Social Movement may be defined as an organized effort by a large number of people to bring about or impede social, political, economic, or cultural change.

8.7 SOCIAL ACTIVISM

Social activism in India has been around since pre Independence time. The Dandi march, civil disobedience movement and non-cooperationmovements are all examples of social activism.

Activism is an effort to promote, or bring about changes in the social, political, economic or environmental conditions through peaceful means of

resistance. Campaigns, writing letter in newspapers, forums, protests, strikes, boycotts and rallies are other means of activism.Social workers engage in activism to change structures by training social action groups or movements to ensure the survival of democracy in the country. Some social activists even lay down their lives for the cause they are striving to attain.

An example of social activism in India is the initiative taken by Anna Hazare against corruption. He fasted at three different periods to convince the government to pass the Lokpal bill. This initiative led to an increased awareness about social activism in the country. Other noteworthy activists who have made a positive difference in the lives of people through their selfless and persistent efforts are: Kailash Satyarthi, the recipient of the **Nobel Peace Prize** for his efforts in rescuing more than 80,000 child labourers and bonded labourers from slavery and exploitative conditions of labour; Ashok Row Kavi, gay rights activist who is striving to legalise homosexuality and works for the sexual minorities in the country; Bezwada Wilson, recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award for vehemently campaigning against inhuman manual scavenging to assert the right of the person to a life of human dignity and many others who have stood up for the abused, exploited, oppressed and marginalised sections of the society as a voice of the voiceless.

8.8 SOCIAL NETWORK

Social reforms, social movements and social activism can also be initiated through the social media platform by creating social networks. Social media is utilised to change public opinion, mobilize activists, and shape public policy and the internet is used as a tool for political movements. In the recent times, it can be seen that social networks directly affect political opinions and processes and social media activism has gained immense attention. If there is some grievance or a disturbing issue that is legitimate, people feel they can talk about it openly and gather support to address the issue. By using social networks like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, one's campaign is instantly kicked off and it surfaces onto friend's pages and

gets viewed, retweeted, liked and shared. Social media has proven itself to be an indispensable tool for activists.

People are more likely to participate in these social movement activities when they are requested by friends and family members. Sometimes, the issue does not matter but just because they are recommended by someone known to them, they get involved in these movements. The social networks are what that ties up or pulls people into social activism. This process is also called recruitment which is an important aspect of social movement that cannot succeed if sufficient numbers of people are not recruited into the movement. Recruitment of large number of participants in the social networks is important to transform them into social activists resulting in the movement to succeed.

It is observed that people tend to support victims whom they have seen and can identify with and support the cause for which they campaign. There is great power in peer pressure and being validated by their peers. The popular campaigns have been #**BlackLivesMatter,** #**PrayforParis,** #**RefugeesWelcome,** #**MeToo** that had used the social media as a vehicle of activism to create global awareness on issues that had impacted the lives of many individuals. Just two words along with a hashtag in #MeToo campaign for sexual assault survivors carried significant importance as it required a lot of courage for people to share their stories.

One advantage of these social networks is that one can start a campaign or support a campaign from within their home and help in creating awareness and raising concerns about issues that affects them or others. By being part of these networks and social media campaigns, one can be aware of what is happening around, how they can get involved and thereby contribute to social change.

ACTIVITY 8.9

Identify any social activism campaign using social media. Analyse the purpose and the impact of the campaign.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: What is the key feature of postmodernist thinking?

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Q 4: Which is the campaign related to victims of sexual abuse?

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8.10 LET US SUM UP

- Social work profession is rooted deeply in the beliefs and the social climate that prevailed at that period.
- Conventional social work, referred to as traditional social work was individualistic in nature, focussing on the individual's problems. The individual and his psychological make-up were identified as causative factors.
- The ideological basis was hegemony of patriarchy, classism, racism and other oppressing structures.
- Philanthropic organisations (Charity Organizations and Settlement Movements) played a dominant role in reaching out to the needy.

Charity organizations applied ideas of scientific philanthropy to their daily activities. Social workers were engaged with benevolent services like providing food, clothing, shelter and employment.

- The conventional social workers were not in favour of advocacy or any form of activism.
- Shift in approaches happened in the beginning of the 20th century - 'charity' was replaced by 'social welfare' and 'philanthropy' was replaced by 'social work'.
- Welfare refers to the services provided by the state, aimed at promoting the well-being of individuals, family, social and community. It has now become an individual's right.
- Administration is a process of direction and coordination in an organisation to execute programmes related to welfare of the needy.
- Social legislations are referred to laws that offer protection or benefit to the society to promote social justice. It is aimed at protecting the rights of the vulnerable, oppressed, socially and economically backward sections.
- Social reform is a movement motivated by an urge to uproot traditional values of social life and institutions and bring about new values and pattern of social life. It involves radical changes in social system.
- Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one of the greatest social reformers of India. He was con-cerned about a number of evil customs and led a crusade against the evil and inhuman practice of Sati,
- Most of the movements strive towards a common goal with the purpose of bringing about a change, or resist some change, or to provide a political voice to those who are unable to stand up for their rights.
- Activism is an effort to promote, or bring about changes in the social, political, economic or environmental conditions through peaceful means of resistance.

- Social networks affect political opinions and processes and social media activism through Twitter, YouTube and Facebook have gained immense attention.Advantageof these social networks is that one can start a campaign or support a campaign from within their home and help in creating awareness and raising concerns about issues.



8.11 FURTHER READING

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8.12 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

Answer 1. The radical sees social work as immersed in an ideology which encourages collective action.

Answer 2. The Settlement Houses helped the communities in dealing with their problems rather than providing charity.

Answer 3. Key feature of postmodernist thinking is the aspect of questioning.

Answer 4. MeToo.



8.13 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q.1: Differentiate between conventional social work and structural social work practice.

Q.2: What is welfare? Explain the relationship between welfare and administration.

Q.3: What is radical social work approach?

Q.4: How is law related to social work?

Q.5: What is social activism?

Q.6: How can social networks and media be used for bringing about reform movements?

Q.7: Explain the main dimensions of conventional social work.