UNIT 3 : PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL CASE WORK

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3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the nature and philosophy of social case work
- Explain the guiding principles of case work method
- Understand the practice of case work in Indian context.

3.2 INTRODUCTION

As we know Social Work has six basic methods: three primary and three secondary. Case Work, Group Work and Community Organization are the primary methods and Social Welfare Administration, Social Research and Social Action are the secondary methods. Social Casework, a primary method of social work is concerned with the adjustment and development of the individual towards attaining more satisfying human relationship. It is based on a one to one interaction between an individual and a case worker. The adjustment and development of an individual depends on his use of available resources. Sometimes due to certain factors, internal or external he fails to avail existing facilities.

3.3 NATURE OF SOCIAL CASE WORK

Every professional's help has two components: one, the professional skills and knowledge, and the other the personal characteristics and experiences of the life professional life. These two components set the way the professional helper will assist the needy individual to meet his needs or solve his problems and thereby lead a better life.



Four basic components of case work are person, problem,place (agency) and process.

For example, a physician will help only with physical problems, a teacher with educational problems and a lawyer with the legal problems. But social workers help the total individual, i.e., with every aspect of life which, is detrimental to his living a full life-a life wherein one is not uncomfortable with the happenings in and around him.

Pearlman (1957) tries to understand this process of helping individuals in terms of a person with a problem, who comes to a place (an agency) where a professional representative (trained person) helps him through a given process. He/ She thus delineates the four basic components of social casework, viz., person, problem, place (agency) and process. She explains that problems basically arise from some needs or obstacles to the fulfillment of these needs, or accumulation of frustrations, or maladjustment, or sometimes from all of these put together.

These individually or together threaten or have already attacked the

person's living arrangement or the effectiveness of his efforts to deal with it. These problems are tackled through a process which is a progressive transaction between the professional (trained) helper and clients. It consists of problem-solving operations carried on within a meaningful relationship (purposefully established).

These operations aim at developing the client's effectiveness in coping with his problem and/or so influence the problem as to resolve or alleviate its effect. The person is the one who is "in need of help in some aspect of his social-emotional living, whether the need be for tangible provisions or counsel". As he begins to receive such help, he is called, 'client'. The place is "a social service agency or a social service department of another kind or a human welfare agency". Perlman (1957) thus defines social casework as a "process used by certain human welfare agencies to help individuals to cope more effectively with their problems in social functioning".

The concept of 'social functioning' has gained quite an important place in social casework. This concept fully explains the meaning of the adjective, 'social', used with the word 'casework' and helps in differentiating it from psychotherapy.

Social casework enables an individual to obtain a higher level of social functioning through an interpersonal transaction or face-to-face or person-to-person encounter. The caseworker helps the client to act in order to achieve some personal/social goals by utilizing the available resources in terms of strength of personality of the client, his social system or material provisions available in the community and/ or agency. Caseworker's knowledge and expertise, and material resources are used (as tools) to inject strength in the person to enable him to move more satisfyingly in the social situation he finds difficult to deal with.

3.4 PRINCIPLES OF CASE WORK

The principles of social casework are applied in establishing a meaningful and purposeful relationship between social caseworker and the client. Relationship is the medium through which changes are brought in

the behaviour and personality of the client. The term relationship in social casework was used for the first time by Miss Virginia Robinson in her book, "A Changing Psychology in Social Case Work" in 1939. The social casework relationship is the dynamic interaction of attitudes and emotions between the social caseworker and the client with the purpose of helping the client to achieve a better adjustment between himself and his/her environment. Thus the purpose of establishing relationship is to help the client with his/ her psycho-social needs and problems. The relationship between caseworker and client may be more strengthened by using certain principles. Since case work is an established method of social work, it is guided by certain principles. These principles are given below:

3.4.1. Principle of Individualization

No two persons are alike in all qualities and traits. Their problems may be the same but the cause of the problem, the perception towards the problem and ego strength differs in every individual. Therefore, each individual client should be treated as a separate entity and complete information is required to establish an understanding of the client in order to solve his problem. **Individualization** is the recognition and understanding of each client's unique qualities and the differential use of principles and methods in assisting each toward a better adjustment. Individualization is based upon the right of human beings to be individuals and to be treated not just as a human being but as a human being with his own personal differences.



Individualization is the recognition and understanding of each client's unique qualities and the differential use of principles and methods in assisting each toward a better adjustment.

3.4.2. Principle of Meaningful Relationship

Relationship is the basis of all help. The relationship should develop around the act of helping the client. Helping the client is the purpose for which interaction takes place between the worker and client which is affected by their experiences of relating with people in the past, their expectations from each other and anxieties about the situation, values that governing their lives, norms of behavior , knowledge and experience about the subject

matter of interaction. Necessary to develop relationship is the worker's training in and mastery of inter personal skills like active awareness, building trust, communicating, listening and expression of feelings etc. Relationship is an emotional bond which works as a transmitting belt between client and the case worker. The purpose of establishing relationship in social casework is to change the behaviour of the client or to achieve adjustment in maladjusted situation. Meaningful relationship is developed in social casework by demonstrating the interests in client. He/she is convinced of the caseworker's warmth as an individual and conveys respect and caring for him/her. In return, the caseworker helps the client to trust in his/her objectivity and feel secured as worthwhile individual.

3.4.3. Principle of Acceptance

Social caseworker accepts the client as he is and with all his limitations. He/she believes that acceptance is the crux of all help. It embraces two basic ideas one negative and one positive. He/she does not condemn or feel hostile towards a client because his/her behaviour differs from the approved one. Later on, he/she tries to modify his/her behaviour step by step. **Acceptance** implies liking the client irrespective of his negative qualities and conduct. It is an expression of good will towards the client and criticisms if any are done out of goodwill. It is conveying deep concern and active understanding to the client who is liked by the worker in spite of his problem-behavior for which he is hated or punished by the society. No effective relationship is possible without accepting the client.When the case worker shows any dislike, or indifference it may keep the client away and and a positive relationship may not be established. Acceptance involves observance of common courtesies and respect for his ideas and treating him as equal to self; for example leaving chair, wishing him, moving forward to receive, or see him off, respecting appointments, etc.



Acceptance implies liking, accepting the client irrespective of his negative qualities and conduct.

3.4.4 Principle of Communication

Communication is a two-way process. There must be proper communication between caseworker and the client, which helps, in proper understanding of each other. It is the road to the identification of the client's

problem. The function of social caseworker is primarily to create an environment in which the client will feel comfortable in giving expression to his/her feelings which is centred on effective communication between them.

3.4.5 Principle of Purposeful Expression of Feelings

Purposeful expression of feelings is the recognition of the client's need to express his feelings freely, especially his/her negative feelings. The caseworker listens purposefully, neither discouraging nor condemning the expression of those feelings. Sometimes he/she even stimulates and encourages them when the expression is of therapeutic nature. It is to recognize the client's feeling and express it freely before the case worker, especially his negative feelings. The case worker listens purposefully, neither discouraging nor condemning the expression of these feelings sometimes even actively stimulating and encouraging them when they are therapeutically useful as a part of the case work service.

3.4.6 The Principle of Controlled Emotional Involvement

The social caseworker tries to understand the client's feelings and emotions but he/she does not involved emotionally in client’s problems. The case worker must not be emotionally involved with the client during the case work process, when the client communicates his feelings or problems with the case worker. The case worker has to respond to all feelings of the client with his knowledge and understanding. and tries to understand the client's feelings and emotions but does not involve emotionally in their problems.

3.4.7 Principle of Non-Judgmental Attitude

The non-judgmental attitude is a quality of the casework relationship. The caseworker does not blame the client for his problem nor assigns any responsibility for their miseries. He/she only evaluates the attitudes, standards or action of the client.

3.4.8 Principle of Client Self-Determination

The client's self-determination is the practical recognition of the right

and need of client's to freedom in making their own choices and decisions. But this right is limited by the client's capacity for positive and constructive decision making. Social responsibility, emotional adjustment and personality development are possible only when the person exercise his freedom of choice and decision making. Case workers have to give this right to the client so that he can decide and take best possible action in his self interest. This is reasonable also because he knows himself better than others. And the case worker is only an enabler who helps him through his expertise to take the best possible decision and action in the circumstances. The case worker should understand that these rights are limited and not an absolute one. There are client who are unable to take proper decisions by themselves. For eg: children, immature adults, mentally retarded or mentally ill people and they should not be given this right to harm themselves.



Social responsibility, emotional adjustment and personality development are possible only when the person exercise his freedom of choice and decision making.

3.4.9 Principle of Self-Awareness

It means that caseworker should know his/her own strengths and limitations in dealing with client's problems. If he/she feels that the problems of the are client is beyond his/her capacity, the client should be transferred to the appropriate authority.

3.4.10 Principle of Social Functioning

Social functioning means the functioning of the individual in his social roles and relationships, with emphasis on his/her relation to the environment. The caseworker tries to assess the roles of the client and his/her capacity to perform these roles.

3.4.11 Principle of Tuning Behaviour

Man has body, mind and intellect as three instruments of experiences through which life constantly pulsates. These three instruments have their own distinct characteristics in each person. Hence each person has unique personality. There is need of tuning three instruments for right perception and thinking. The social caseworker can do this as per of the case work process.

3.4.12. Principle of Social Learning

Social learning is a pre-requisite to the changes that are inevitably involved in problem- solving. The social learning processes involves (1) arousing and focusing attention and concern, (2) organizing and evaluating the problem and planning future action, (3) searching for and acquiring new information, (4) providing opportunities to the client for new experience. of the client, his social system or material provisions available in the community and/ or agency

3.4.13. Principle of Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the preservation of the secret information concerning the client, which is disclosed in the professional relationship only. Confidentiality is based upon the basic right of the client; it is an ethical obligation of case worker and is necessary for effective case work Practice. Everyone prefers to keep his things to himself and save it from leaking out unless disclosing it is more beneficial to the person. Once the worker imbibes the value of worth and dignity of an individual, he will refrain from encroaching upon the client's privacy and maintain the confidence repose in him. Once the client loses confidence in him, he will not believe the worker and the while process of communication will break down, it will them become impossible to assist the client in his problems or in fulfillment of his needs. Maintaining confidentiality for all the transactions, that take place between the case worker and client in correctional settings or other places where law needs information for justice purpose, is very difficult. In such situations, the client must be made aware of these limitations.



Confidentiality is the preservation of the secret information concerning the client, which is disclosed in the professional relationship only.

3.4.14. Principle of Resource Utilization

Services are provided to the individual in recognition of his contributions to the society. It is only because of this that the government takes care of those who are not cared by any one. Example: orphans, destitute, handicapped etc. Therefore all the personal resources and resources available within the community or agency and with relatives of the client should be utilized to help the client. Resources may be in terms of money,

material, power and influence, capabilities etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Describe the nature of case work.

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Q 2: Explain the principle of Individualization.

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3.5 SOCIAL CASE WORK AND INDIAN SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Social case work was practiced in India under the cover of religious and social sermons. Indians had their own ways to achieve and accomplish the individual purposes. It is not surprising and unnatural to find traces of social casework in any culture as every culture has its own ways to deal with and tackle the individual's sufferings and problems.

This is present in the Indian culture too which is evident from the scriptures where the most common techniques used to help the individual clients have been following:

(1) Story-telling,

(2) Imparting knowledge,

(3) Prayer,

(4) Yogic exercises,

(5) Fasting,

(6) Learning and practing behaviour in the company of saintly persons, and

(7) Demonstration or modelling behaviour (setting examples), In the Gita, Lord Krishna has used techniques of re-educating, informing, imparting knowledge, clarifying the reality to enable Arjuna perform his roles.

These techniques of helping individuals could not be popular perhaps because these were available only in Sanskrit-a language of elite in those days of India. It remained confined only to certain class of people and certain areas of nation. And, even during the British rule, only few attempted to present it into a systematic way for the consumption of common people. People were encouraged by the policy of education in those days to study English and import knowledge from the western world.

It so happened that those subjects who had enough to go by, we wanted to be liketheir rulers to get rid of our inferiority feelings, to please them and also acquire materials of comforts and fame in the British circles. It is because of these and many other such reasons that (the educated) copied British ways of life, their language and various aspects of their culture.

This tendency probably was further accentuated by the work of missionaries whose converts became 'Madam' and 'Sir' in no time. All these and many other factors kept people, away from the own cultural treasures. Social casework of today is not totally different from our traditional (scripture-described) approach to individual problem. The old system of casework like the present one has been very rational and based on intellectual and logical discussions leading to knowledge of reality, self-control and practice of a constructive and socially useful model of behaviour.

The stress in the scriptural approach was more on the social aspect of the personality, i.e., the person should conform to the social standards and derive pleasure by contributing significantly to the growth of and harmony in the society. Casework as practicsd today by the professional social workers also emphasises the social aspects of the case. Social casework, as taught today in Indian schools of social work, has been imported from the West, specially from USA. Efforts are taken to changing the syllabi of social work as per the changes occurring in USA and western world. of late, social work has undergone some changes in the West.

Consequently, in place of social casework, social group work and community organization, an integrated approach (to be discussed separately) has been adopted by many of the schools of social work there. However, in India, the old model of social work teaching and practice is

continuing and social casework, social group work and community organisation are being taught as methods of working with people-individual, group and community-as before.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: State the Indian techniques used as case work method.

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3.6 LET US SUM UP

- Social casework is a method of helping people as it is individualized, scientific, and artistic. It helps individuals with personal as well as external and environmental issues that affect them through the use of definitive tools, techniques and processes.
- Casework as practised today, a purely western (predominantly USA) model, too owes its history to work by individuals and organisations with the poor.
- Social casework enables an individual to obtain a higher level of social functioning through an interpersonal transaction or face-to-face or person-to-person encounter. The caseworker helps the client to act in order to achieve some personal/social goals by utilising the available resources in terms of strength of personality
- Social learning is a pre-requisite to the changes that are inevitably involved in problem- solving. The social learning processes involves (1) arousing and focusing attention and concern, (2) organizing and evaluating the problem and planning future action, (3) searching for and acquiring new information, (4) providing opportunities to the client for new experience. of the client, his social system or material provisions available in the community and/ or agency.

- Social casework (or social work) values have roots in the democratic social system. These contain certain ideas which are valuable to anyone engaged in social work practice.
- The principles of social casework are applied in establishing close relationship between social caseworker and the client. Relationship is the medium through which changes are brought in the behaviour and personality of the client.
- Social casework was practised in India under the cover of religious and social sermons. Indians had their own ways to achieve and accomplish the individual purposes.
- Social caseworker, helps the client to understand his self, his situation and his ways of deciding and acting to enable him to modify (or enrich) his style of thinking, feeling and acting and to solve his immediate and future problems.



3.7 FURTHER READING

1. Richmond, Mary (1922), What is Social Case Work, The Russell Sage Foundation, New York.
2. Sheafor, B.W. & Others (1997), Techniques and Guidelinesfor Social Work Practice, Allyn and Bacon, London.
3. Trevithick, P. (2000), Social Work Skills : A Practice Handbook; Open University Press, Philadelphia.
4. Vass, A.A. (1996), Social Work Competences, Sage Publications, London.



3.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

Answer 1. Social casework enables an individual to obtain a higher level of social functioning through an interpersonal transaction or face-to-face or person-to-person encounter. The caseworker helps the

client to act in order to achieve some personal/social goals by utilising the available resources in terms of strength of personality of the client, his social system or material provisions available in the community and/ or agency. Caseworker's knowledge and expertise, and material resources are used (as tools) to inject strengths in the person to enable him to move more satisfyingly in the social situation he finds difficult to deal with.

Answer 2. Principle of Individualization states that no two persons are alike in all qualities and traits. Their problems may be the same but the cause of the problem, the perception towards the problem and ego strength differs in every individual. Therefore, each individual client should be treated as a separate entity and complete information is required to establish close relations in order to solve his/her problem from root. Individualization is the recognition and understanding of each client's unique qualities and the differential use of principles and methods in assisting each toward a better adjustment. Individualization is based upon the right of human beings to be individuals and to be treated not just as a human being but as this human being with his own personal differences.

Answer 3. In India, historically, the most common techniques used to help the individual clients have been:

(1) Story-telling,

(2) Imparting knowledge,

(3) Prayer,

(4) Yogic exercises,

(5) Fasting,

(6) Learning and practising behaviour in the company of saintly persons, and

(7) Demonstration or modelling behaviour (setting examples), though in Gita, Lord Krishna has used techniques of re-educating, informing, imparting knowledge, clarifying the reality to enable Arjuna to perform his roles.



3.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q.1: Give Pearlman's understanding of case work method.

Q.2: Describe the nature of social case work.

Q.3: Explain the connection between principles of meaningful relationship and controlled emotional involvement.

Q.4: What are the limitations of the principle of client's self-determination?

Q.5: In the Indian context, how did social case work evolve as a method?
