UNIT 1: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL CASE WORK

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1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Outline the landmarks of historical development of social case work in India, United States of America and United Kingdom;
- Understand the role played by various organizations and individuals in the development of social case work as a method of social work;

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Social case work is a primary method of social work concerned with the development and improvem ent of individual's ability to lead a better life. Inability to adjust with the environm ent leads to conflict scenario between individuals and the surroundings. An individual's quality of life depends on better family life, improved schools, better housing, better health facility, economic opportunities and better relations between the social institutions and other individuals. Deprivations of these internal or external elements

might develop obstacles to healthy life and accumulate frustrations in individuals leading to various psycho-social problems. The main goal of social case work is to solve adjustment problems by building individual's capacities and capabilities and to make individual realize the importance of improving his/her coping mechanism to lead a healthy life.

Definitions of Social Case Work

'Social case work may be defined as the art of doing different things for and with different people by cooperating with them to achieve at one and the same time their own and society's betterment' (Richmond, 1915). Mary Richmond gave a very appropriate and scientific definition of **social case work**. In 1915 she said that case work is an art provided to people for theirs as well as for society's betterment. In 1922, Richmond gave another definition 'Social case work consists of those processes which develop personality through adjustments consciously effected, individual by individual, between men and their social environment'. She asserted that social case work is for the change of the personality of the individual for proper social adjustment.



Case Work is an art provided to people for their as well as for society's betterment.

'Social case work is a process concerned with the understanding of individuals as whole personalities and with the adjustment of these individuals as whole personalities to socially healthy lives' (Taylor, 1926). Taylor lays emphasis on the need for understanding the total personality of the individual for bringing about healthy adjustment in social life.

Reynolds (1935) defines case work as 'that form of social work which assists the individual when he struggles to relate himself to his family, his natural groups and his community'. A counselling function was introduced into the case work definition by Reynolds. Case work uses counselling as one of the main tools to assist individuals in his adjustment with the social environment consisting of family members, groups and the community in which one lives.

1.3 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL CASE WORK

The poor, from the very beginning of the civilized society, have been

the concern of humanists, philanthropists and socio- religious activists. Its description is found in the Vedic literature and of course much later in the western countries. Casework as practiced today, a purely western (predominantly USA) model, also owes its history to the work carried out by individuals and organizations with the poor.

The evolution of social case work as a method can be attributed to the charity work to the social welfare services to the pure professionalization of social work from colonization period to post world war periods. Charity and alms giving was considered an ideal and humanitarian act to alleviate the sufferings of poor, destitute, disabled, old aged and sick in those days without recognizing its worth. In England various welfare acts were also passed especially the Elizabethan Poor Law (1601), As per this law, assistance was provided in the form of money, food, clothing or goods, given to alleviate poverty as an outdoor relief without the requirement that the recipient enter an institution.Those receiving indoor relief were required to enter a workhouse or poorhouse. Gradually various societies and groups felt that charity, alms giving and government interventions have only catered to their material needs made people dependent on external support. As more experience and knowledge was gathered by groups and societies related to human behavior and its environment new insight came through in the nature of social problems and it made people realize that in all the cases it is not the individual who is entirely responsible for his/her condition, and individuals are interlinked with the social, economic and political environment they live in.

1.3.1 IN INDIA

India's culture and religions advocated the need to help the poor and needy in the form of charity. References can be made from Bhagatwatgeeta, Rigveda, Upanishads like Brihadaranyaka, Chhandogya and Taittriya which prescribes that every householder must practice dana or charity. After the vedic age charity took the form of welfare in various empires. Great kings such of Magadha empire such as Bimbisara and his son Ashoka; Kanishka, Gupta dynasty ruler like Chandra Gupta, Samudra Gupta; Harshavardhan

of Pushyabhuti dynasty; Sultanate ruler and Mughal ruler made efforts to make their empire a caring state through charity as well as welfare activities directed to improve the conditions of poor, women, prisoners, destitute and the orphans.

During British rule, various organizations such as Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj, Theosophical Society, Ram Krishna Mission, Muhammedan Literacy Society, The Bombay Widow Remarriage Association, Bengal Hindu Widows Association, Indian National Social Conference and the Servants of India Society hugely contributed towards upliftment of the poor, women, labourers, peasants and lower caste people.

But these efforts of Kings and organizations were paternalistic and welfare oriented and did not aim at assessing individual problem or building capacity of individual to adjust to their environment independently. Further, the relationship between the facilitator and the needy was not professional. There existed an important difference between modern professional casework and traditional helping of needy individuals.

India during its pre independence era especially from 1840-1910 did not experience any breakthrough in the development of Social Work or Social Case Work as it was in UK and USA. During this period various organizations and associations were established in UK and USA which aimed at systematic investigation and assessment of the needy people. In 1911, N.M. Joshi had established Social Service League in Mumbai which conducted training programme for volunteers who are at the service of people suffering from famines, epidemics, floods and such other disasters and also who conducted welfare programmes among the poor and the destitute. The first professional social workers who did casework in the Indian settings were trained in the American School of Social Work. In 1936 Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work, now known as Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS), was started to conduct training programmes to those who had a University degree in the field of social service. Casework as a theoretical course and as a method of practice in the academic programme started from the year 1946. Nowadays social casework is practiced in many agencies, institutions and organizations such as hospitals, clinics, courts,



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industry, military family welfare agency, child welfare agency, institution for the aged, destitute, and the orphans.

1.3.2 IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA)

The contribution of Association for Improving the Condition for Poor and Charity Organization Society is very instrumental in the development of Social Case Work as a scientific as well as a professional method of social work. The establishment of Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor (AICP) and Charity Organization Society emphasised self-respect, self-dependence and relief suitable to their needs in its work with the poor. The contribution of Mary Richmond is enormous in developing Social Case Work.

The Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor was a charitable Organization in New York City which was established in 1843 and was incorporated in 1848 with the objective of helping the most deserving poor and providing support for moral enhancement. The directors of the new charity, made up of some of the city's richest people, believed that the existence of the city's apparently permanent indigent population was not due to economic conditions or adversity, but instead could be best explained by some fault in the poor themselves, which the AICP was determined to fix. The Organization believed in "moral reformation" transformation of poor and was opposed to "gratuitous charity". The association emphasized on capacity building to end poverty. The association also took up efforts to insure that only the "deserving" poor received charity and people who were idlers, malingers and vagrants were to be sent to workhouses to do hard labor, while people of debase and depraved character were locked up in penitentiary as a warning. The association also made efforts to sensitize police and other agencies to arrest or detain vagrant children between the ages of five and fourteen for further evaluation and rehabilitation.

The Charity Organization Society (COS) was one of the main contributors of the development of social case work both in UK and USA. During the colonial period (1620-1776) English people migrated from present UK and settled in America in the thirteen colonies on the eastern sea board.



The Elizabeth Poor Law, 1961 divided the poor into 3 types. i. The able-bodied poor. ii. The impotent or unemployable poor iii. the dependent children.

The Elizabeth Poor Law extended support to these people who are in need. The assistances were provided in terms of indoor and outdoor relief. The Charity Organization Societies founded in England in 1869 sought to restrict intervention of outdoor relief distributed by the Poor Law Guardians. Later on Charity Organisation society was also started in USA in 1877 on the pattern of the Charity Organization of London. The first Charity Organization Society was organized in Buffalo in 1877. CSOS's were also established in Boston, Philadelphia and New Haven. These societies found that the system of outdoor relief was not being availed by the most deserving or needy rather the less deserving were availing the benefits of the relief. To tackle this, local societies were formed with the intention of restricting the distribution of outdoor relief to the elderly, ill or 'non-able bodied' and to force them to accept the workhouse test. The COS's activities were volunteered by group of volunteers called "friendly visitors". Later on these friendly visitors were also named "Paid Agents". They collected systematic data about the needy individuals and families and assessments were made to find out the specific interventions needed and also played an educational role to improve the character of people. One of the important ideas that evolved from these visits was that single and alike intervention cannot be used for all poor or deprived, rather each case needed to be handled according to its own nature of problem. The efforts of these volunteers' visits helped in building a knowledge base on human problems relating to his/her environment. Cleary the understanding of human behavior and the idea of "helping them to help themselves" paved the way for the development of Social Case Work.

In 1898, COS of New York started training course for workers involved in the activities of COS. Later on New York School of Philanthropy was created which today is known as Columbia University of Social Work. From 1911 onwards Case work had emerged in USA as an accepted formal technique and as the early social workers handled cases of families in need, they were called caseworkers in USA.

Mary Richmond played a vital role in recognising social case work a scientific method. She was trained to be a "friendly visitor," at Charity

Organization Society. During the First World War Red Cross Home Service was operated under the leadership of Mary Richmond. She along with others of the home service applied their skills to problems faced by service men and their families. In 1917 Mary Richmond wrote her first book called ' Social Diagnosis' which provides a methodology of helping clients through systematic and scientific approach of assessing an individual's problems and treating them accordingly. In 1922 she published another book 'What is Social Case Work?' in which she defined social case work as "Social case work consists of those processes which develop personality through adjustments consciously effected, individual by individual, between men and their social environment"

1.3.3 IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The development of social case work in United Kingdom is greatly related to the development of Social Work through charity works. Charity activities to help poor people were considered pious duty of Church during medieval periods. The basic objectives behind this charity was the purification of soul of alms givers and therefore, there was no relationship between them with the result that churches did not make any effort to provide any permanent remedy for improving the conditions of the poor .

In 1961, Elizabethan Poor Law was passed also known as "43 Elizabeth" to regulate the basis of handling relief for the next 233 years. It laid down more logical system of poor relief. In 1867 Edward Edison, first volunteer was of the view that alms relief had no meaning in the context of the problems. Cannon Samuel Augustas Barnet followed his idea and later University Settlement House was founded which was named as Tonybee Hall.

The middle of the nineteenth century was a period of scientific and humanitarianism awakening. Thomas Chalmers a Scottish minister criticized the methods of poor law. According to him proper investigation of each case should be made and NGOs must be involved to direct and supervise such activities. Base on his ideas London Charity Organization Society was formed in 1869. COS ensured that nobody was getting

assistance without investigation. It also attempted to find (1) a job (2) medical treatment (3) education (4) counseling for financial gain (5) encouragement for creative plans.

In 1895, a concept called 'Almoners' (outside visitors) was introduced. Sir Charles Loch appointed Almoners in hospitals to serve patients effectively. Almoners used to interview prospective patients to qualify for the relief to be given by authorities. Almoners were similar to friendly visitors and paid agents. This position is now taken up by medical social worker. The proliferation of the idea of studying case by case with a systematic assessment lead to the development of Social Case Work method in UK.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Describe the role played by Charity Organization Societies in the development of Social Case Work as a systematic method of helping needy in UK and USA.

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Q 2: How did Mary Richmond define social case work ?

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1.4 SOCIAL CASE WORK DURING FIRST WORLD WAR (1914-1918), ECONOMIC DEPRESSION (1930) AND SECOND WORLD WAR (1939-1945)

The occurrence of the First World War (1914-1918),the Second World War (1939-1945) and Economic Depression (1930) made a wide impact on the development social case work in UK and USA especially in the field development of Psychiatry during this period as it provided a better understanding of human behaviour. The emergence of Freud's

Psychoanalysis (a method for treating a mental illness and a theory which explains human behaviour) in 1920's greatly influenced the approach employed by the caseworkers in dealing with individuals. As discussed earlier, the first book on social casework was published in 1917 by an American, Marry Richmond. Various definitions of casework in the 1920s under the influence of Freudian theory no more emphasized external factors. It held the individual responsible for his plight and it was he who was helped to cope with the social problems confronting him.

During the same time, social reforms and social problems received little attention compared to its earlier period when the emphasis was on correcting the social environment of the client. In 1920s, under the Freudian influence, casework was to "untangle and reconstruct the twisted personality" and change human attitudes so that the client could adjust to his environment and its influence.

In contrast to the trend in 1920s, caseworkers shifted their focus in 1930s from individual to modification and manipulation of the client's environment to enable him to adapt to his situations satisfactorily. This change was because of acceptance of the idea by Americans that social and economic variables influenced man's behaviour meaningfully.

After World War II, with the problems of morale, leadership, propaganda, separation, communication, etc., social workers found social sciences more useful. Interest in social environment, along-with ego psychology, received more attention and the definition of Richmond (1922) that casework consists of "those processes which develop personality through adjustments consciously effected, individual by individual, between man and their social environment" was considered to be the best by Hamilton (1951). Perlman (1957) also emphasized on the problems of social functioning.

The new psychoanalytical approach was accepted by caseworkers that helped them in assessing clients and their problems. The advent of economic depression in 1930s also gave social case work new opportunities to look in to the economic factors which were causing distress to clients, leading to emotional distress and breakdown. After the Second World War there was increase in personal problems of clients due to financial crises

emotional problems also increased. Various agencies started to help individuals and families to adjust to their situations.

Though many may not agree, the present understanding of casework is more or less fully contained in the definition by Boehm (1958) which emphasizes both external and internal factors, and uses the concepts of social functioning, social role, malfunctioning, and, of resources. Many new trends are coming forth and possibly no definition will ever be able to cover all the changes and trends emerging from time to time.



1.5 LET US SUM UP

- The evolution of social case work as a method can be attributed to the charity work to social welfare services to pure professionalization of social work from colonization period to post world war periods.
- Gradually various societies and groups felt that charity, alms giving and government interventions have only catered to their material needs and made them dependent on external support.
- The first professional social workers who did casework in the Indian settings were trained in the American School of Social Work.
- The Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor was a charitable organization in New York City which was established in 1843 and was incorporated in 1848 with the objective of helping the most deserving poor and providing support for moral enhancement.
- The society found that giving out charity without investigating the real problems behind various social issues would create a class of citizens that would always be dependent on alms giving.
- In 1917 Mary Richmond wrote her first book called ' Social Diagnosis' which provides a methodology of helping clients through