

Block

2

BASICS OF SOCIAL WORK

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INTRODUCTION TO BLOCK 2

The first block of this course clarified the important concepts related to the Social Work and the Evolution of Social Work in India and abroad. In this block, you will be introduced to the philosophy, principles, methods and ethics of social work profession.

The first unit “Professional Social Work: Nature, Scope, Goals and Functions” describes the place of social worker in the society. We also discuss about the various tools that the social workers use in their profession. The variety of approaches and ideologies of social work profession are also introduced to you in this unit. The second unit “Professional Social Work: Generic Principles and their Application”, further explores the areas of social work, methods, principles and their application. The third unit “Voluntary Action and Social Work in India,” describes the non-governmental initiatives being taken to improve the living standards of people. The fourth unit “Social Work Ethics in Indian Context”, deals with the need and importance of professional ethics in Social Work profession in the Indian context.

These four units will help you understand social work profession, its need for society, its functions, and the application of its methods. The study of these four units will enable you to understand the basics of professional social work better.



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UNIT 1 PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK: NATURE, SCOPE, GOALS AND FUNCTIONS

Content

* Kanaka Durgaube

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- 1.8 Approaches of Professional Social Work
- 1.9 Let Us Sum Up
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1.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to provide a basic understanding of the Philosophy of Social Work i.e., to make the learner understand the nature of Social Work. This unit studies the nature of social work, scope of social work, functions of social work, the goals of social work, the ideologies of social work, and the spiritual nature of social work.

The study of this unit is expected to enable you to understand the broad perspectives of social work and the interlinking of the various aspects which together indicate what social work is all about.

After studying this unit you will be able to understand:

- What is social work and misconceptions prevalent in the public.
- Nature of social work.
- Scope of social work.
- Functions of social work.
- Goals of social work.
- Personal attitudes of the worker.
- Social work and ethics.
- Ideologies of social work.
- Spirituality and social work.

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Different people give different meanings to social work. Social work for some is *shramdan*, for others it may be charity or disaster relief. Services like road building or cleaning houses or surrounding places will come under *shramdan*.

But all these are not always social work. Social work helps people with behavioral problems, marital problems and rehabilitation problems of chronic patients.

The reasons for misconceptions are :

- 1) Social workers are unable to separate western professional components and traditional religious components of social work.
- 2) Terminology has not developed as social workers are preoccupied with solving problem of day to day nature.
- 3) Precision and accuracy is lacking as most of the findings are drawn from social sciences.
- 4) Social work deals with problems about which even a layman has some fixed ideas.
- 5) Adding to this confusion politicians, film stars and cricketers describe some of their promotional campaigns as social work. Since, trained social workers who are paid and untrained social workers who are not paid and work voluntarily, work side by side, layman often cannot understand the difference between the kind of activities that come under the label of social work carried on by a wide range of persons with differing backgrounds.

1.2 NATURE OF SOCIAL WORK

Some individuals have personal or family problems. Sometimes, they cannot solve these by themselves. So they need help from outside. Such help comes from trained people. The individual seeking help is known as a client and the trained person helping him/her is known as a social worker. Such helping activities are known as social case work.

The client should have some motivation for self improvement. Readiness to accept help is a pre-requisite condition in social work. The social worker only adds to the client's own efforts to improve his/her situation. He/she does not impose his/her advice or solution on the client, respecting the client's right to self-determination. Social workers should not feel superior to, or be contemptuous of the clients. They should have empathy i.e. they should try to understand the client's situation by placing themselves in his/her role. But at the same time, they should not feel like the client. The social worker must understand and accept the feelings of the client.

During disasters and natural calamities, hundred of people donate cash and kind to help the victims. They will not have any direct contact with the victims. This is generally known as social service as it involves providing some help to the help-less. But in social work, face to face interaction of the worker and client is important. In certain instances, in addition to temporary relief, the social worker also helps in improving interpersonal relations and adjustment problems related to disaster and natural calamities. The kind of involvement needed to deal with deeper issues and other relationship problems is called social work.

Scientific Base of Social Work

Social work practice has a strong scientific base. Social workers do not believe in knowledge for its own sake. Social work has a basis, a scientific body of knowledge, though borrowed from different disciplines of social and biological sciences. Social work like any other discipline has three types of knowledge:

- 1) Tested knowledge.
- 2) Hypothetical knowledge that requires transformation to tested knowledge.
- 3) Assumptive knowledge which is practical wisdom that requires transformation to hypothetical knowledge and from there to tested knowledge.

The knowledge is borrowed from sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science, economics, biology, psychiatry, law, medicine, etc. All disciplines have contributed much to the understanding of human nature. Social workers make use of this knowledge to solve problems of their clients.

Social work is rooted in humanitarianism. It is "Scientific Humanism" as it uses scientific base. Social work is based on certain values which when organized constitute the "Philosophy of Social Work". Social work is based on faith in the essential worth and dignity of the individual. Man is an object of respect not because he/she is rich or powerful but because he/she is a human being. Human nature endows the individual with worth and dignity which, every other human being has to respect.

Social work is against any kind of discrimination based on caste, colour, race, sex or religion. This means that social work does not believe that only the strong will survive in society and the weak will perish. Those who are weak, disabled and/or need care are equally important for social workers. The individual is understood as a whole with the same worth and dignity in spite of differing psychological, social and economic aspects. The social worker believes in the capacity of the individual and also recognizes individual differences. The individual's self-determination is given importance. He/she should be understood from both domestic and cultural points of view. Social work is a combination of "idealism and realism". To a social worker, an individual is important but society is equally important. The individual is greatly moulded by social circumstances. But, ultimately the individual must bear the responsibility for his/her conduct and behaviour. The worker has to solve the problem on account of which the client is disturbed. Hence, social work is problem solving in nature.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

- 1) What are the reasons for the prevailing misconceptions in social work?

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2) What is a professional relationship in social work?

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1.3 SCOPE OF SOCIAL WORK

The concern of social work is to help people who are in need, so that they develop the capacity to deal with their problems by themselves. It is both science and an art. Social work is a science in the sense that the knowledge taken from different disciplines form the body of knowledge for a social worker and she/he uses this theoretical base for helping people i.e., for practice. What theory postulates has to be put into practice. The required capacity to do it is known as skill. Hence, professional social work with selected knowledge and the set of social work values, has to be transformed into a professional service.

A social worker has to establish a positive relationship with the clients. She/he should know how to interview and write reports. She/he should be able to diagnose i.e., find out the cause for the problem and finally she/he should work out a treatment plan. An Assessment of the problem, planning for its solution, implementing the plan and evaluating the outcome are the four major steps involved in social work. Social worker's keen interest in helping the client, alone will not solve the problem. She/he should know how to help her/his clients. The methods of social work will help him/her to understand ways of helping people. Social work methods are:

- 1) Social case work
- 2) Social group work
- 3) Community organization
- 4) Social work research
- 5) Social welfare administration
- 6) Social Action

The first three are known as direct helping methods and the last three are secondary methods or auxiliary methods. These six social work methods are systematic and planned ways of helping people.

Social case work deals with individual problems- individual in the total environment or as a part of it. An individual is involved in the problem as he/she is unable to deal with it on his/her own, because of reasons beyond his/her control. His/her anxiety sometimes temporarily makes him/her incapable of solving it. In any case, his/her social functioning is disturbed. The case worker gets information regarding the client's total environment, finds out the causes, prepares a treatment plan and with professional relationship tries to bring about a change in the perception and attitudes of the client.

Social group work is a social work service in which a professionally qualified

person helps individuals through group experience so as to help them move towards improved relationships and social functioning. In group work, individuals are important and they are helped to improve their social relationships, with flexible programmes, giving importance to the personality development of the individual in group functioning and relationships. The group is the medium and through it and in it, individuals are helped to make necessary changes and adjustments.

Community Organization is another method of social work. Being made up of groups, a community means an organized systems of relationships, but in reality no community is perfectly organized. Community Organization is a process by which a systematic attempt is made to improve relationships in a community. Identifying the problems, finding out resources for solving community problems, developing social relationships and necessary programmes to realize the objectives of the community are all involved in community organization. In this way, the community can become self reliant and develop a co-operative attitude among its members.

Social Welfare Administration is a process through which social work services both private and public, are organized and administered. Developing programmes, mobilizing resources, involving selection and recruitment of personnel, proper organization, coordination, providing skillful and sympathetic leadership, guidance and supervision of the staff, dealing with financing and budgeting of the programmes and evaluation are, some of the functions of a social worker in administration.

Social work research is a systematic investigation for finding out new facts, test old hypotheses, verify existing theories and discover causal relationships of the problems in which the social worker is interested. In order to scientifically initiate any kind of social work programmes, a systematic study of the given situation is necessary, through social work research and surveys.

Social action aims at bringing about desirable changes to ensure social progress. Creating awareness about social problems, mobilizing resources, encouraging different sections of people to raise their voice against undesirable practices, and also creating pressure to bring about legislation are some of the activities of the social workers using the method of social action. It seeks to achieve a proper balance between community needs and solutions mainly through individual and group initiatives and self-help activities.

1.4 FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL WORK

The basic functions of social work are restoration, provision of resources and prevention. These are interdependent and intertwined. Restoration of impaired social functioning has two aspects-curative and rehabilitative. The curative aspect eliminates the factors responsible for the individual's impaired social functioning. That means disturbed interpersonal relations are corrected by removing the factors responsible for it. After removing the factors responsible for the problem, the individual has to adjust to the new remedy or device suggested. The individual is helped to adjust to the needs of the new situation. That is what is known as rehabilitative aspect. For example, a hearing aid is suggested as a curative measure for a partially deaf child, whose social relations are impaired due to the problem. That is the curative aspect. Getting oneself adjusted to the hearing aid is the rehabilitative aspect.

Provision of resources has two aspects, the developmental and the educational.

The developmental aspect is designed to enhance effectiveness of the resources and to improve personality factors for effective social interaction. For example, Mr & Mrs X are living happily in spite of some differences of opinion. They are not going in for a divorce and there is no problem in their marriage. But with the help of a family counselling agency, they can sort out their differences and improve their relationship. This is what is known as the developmental aspect. The educational spectrum is designed to acquaint the public with specific conditions and needs for new or changing situations. For example, a talk given by a counsellor to alleviate family and marriage problems is an educational process.

The third function of social work is prevention of social dysfunctioning. It includes early discovery, control or elimination of conditions and situations that potentially could hamper effective social functioning. For example, starting a youth club in some areas for boys may help prevent juvenile delinquency. Pre-marital counselling for youth may prevent marriage problems in future.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What is the scope of social work?

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2) What are the functions of social work?

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1.5 GOAL OF SOCIAL WORK

The goal of social work is to reduce suffering by solving people's problems. People have psycho-social problems with regard to their physical and mental health. Apart from this, adjustment problems in children and adults can be dealt with separately. In other words, social work enhances social functioning of individuals, groups and families by providing recreational services to the public; and by a judicious use of leisure time, can prevent delinquency and crime in the society. It also links client system with the needed resources. Social work helps the individual in bringing about a change in the environment in favour of his/her growth and development.

Social work provides democratic ideas and encourage the development of good interpersonal relations, resulting in proper adjustments with the family and neighborhood.

- The goals of the social work profession translate its general purpose into more specific directions for action.
- These goals and objectives lead social workers to enhance clients' sense of competence, link them with resources, and foster changes that make organizations and social institutions more responsive to citizens' needs (NASW, 1981). Specifically, social work's goals and related activities include:
 - Enhancing people's capacities to resolve problems, cope, and function effectively.
 - Linking clients with needed resources.
 - Improving the social service delivery network.
 - Promoting social justice through the development of social policy.

Social work does not believe in 'Social Darwinism'. It does not accept the principle of survival of the fittest. Hence, it works for social justice through legal aid. It also promotes social justice through the development of social policy. Social work improves the operation of social service delivery network as well.

1.6 PERSONAL ATTITUDE OF THE WORKER

The Social worker is also a human being. She/he will experience all the emotions that a human being experiences. As she/he is in the position of helping others, there is a tendency to feel superior. Sometimes, when the client is narrating his/her sad, painful past experiences, the social worker will identify with her/him and experience the same feeling as the client. Sometimes, the social worker may tend to see the client as a mirror image of herself/himself. All this may have its roots in the worker's early life and experiences. She/he has to understand her/his own feelings and control them while being professionally involved in the helping role. She/he must accept the feelings of the client as they are. She/he should not get them mixed up with her/his own. She/he must focus on helping the client by constructive and positive use of the client's emotions and resources.

1.7 SOCIAL WORK AND ETHICS

Any profession usually gives a lot of authority to its professional. A layman who requires social work help may be knowing the intricacies of the problem. A social worker's professional advice is valuable and his/her judgement may not be questioned. But power, when it is not regulated by norms of behavior, is liable to degenerate into tyranny. Social workers may charge a high price for their professional service or make undesirable demands from the public. Hence, in order to regulate the professional, a code of conduct is developed by professional organizations.

Philosophy of Ethics: The professional has an ethical responsibility towards the clients, the employing agency and the colleagues. She/he has a responsibility towards the community as well as his/her profession. The professional person's relationship with his/her client is the basis for her/his service. The relationship should be impartial and objective. The professional should not discriminate on the basis of sex, caste, creed or colour. The professional has to keep the client's problem and related information very confidential. He/she should have a healthy relationship with colleagues based on equality, co-operation, helpfulness, and regulated competition.

The professional has a responsibility towards society, and should contribute all his/her ability and resources for the good of society. The responsibility towards the profession are even greater for the professional. Formal and informal methods of social control ensure that members conform to the code of ethics. A profession exists when it is recognized. Recognition comes only by reserving jobs for people with technical training, giving preference to qualification in jobs, providing awareness for promotions, financial resources, etc.

Ethical Responsibilities of Social Work: A social worker has ethical responsibilities towards his/her clients, the employing agencies, his/her colleagues, his/her community and towards his/her profession.

A social worker's ethical responsibilities towards his/her clientele impose the welfare of the individual as his/her primary obligation. The social worker should give greater importance to professional responsibility rather than over personal interests. She/he has to respect his/her client's (self determination) opinion. She/he should keep confidential all matters related to the client. The social worker should respect the individual differences among clients and should not have any discrimination on a non-professional basis.

The social worker has an ethical responsibility towards his/her employers and should be loyal to them. He/she should provide correct and accurate information to his/her employer. The social worker should be held accountable for the quality and extent of service, observing the regulations and procedures of the agency. She/he should help his/her agency in increasing its public image even after termination of his/her employment.

The social worker has to respect his/her colleagues and should help in fulfilling their responsibilities. The social worker should assume the responsibility of adding to her/his knowledge. She/he should treat all without discrimination and should cooperate with other research and practice.

The social worker has an ethical responsibility towards the community in protecting it from unethical practices. She/he has to contribute knowledge and skills for the betterment of the community.

Above all, the social worker has an ethical responsibility towards her/his own profession. She/he should defend her/his profession from unjust criticism or misinterpretation. She/he should sustain and enhance public confidence through her/his self-discipline and personal behaviour. The social worker should always support the view that professional practice requires professional education.

1.8 APPROACHES OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK

If the global historical background of social work is analyzed, we can understand the following ideologies of social work.

Social Work as Charity: Religion encouraged individuals to help their neighbors who were in need of help. The people who were in need of help were given alms. Thus, western countries started their social work practice with charity mode. As religion encouraged them to help their fellow-human beings who were poor, they started giving alms in cash and kind. Soon they realized that they could not give enough to the increasing poor and a way-out was required to overcome the problem. At that time, the state (Government of UK) intervened by enacting legislation

and initiating state responsibility to take care of the poor.

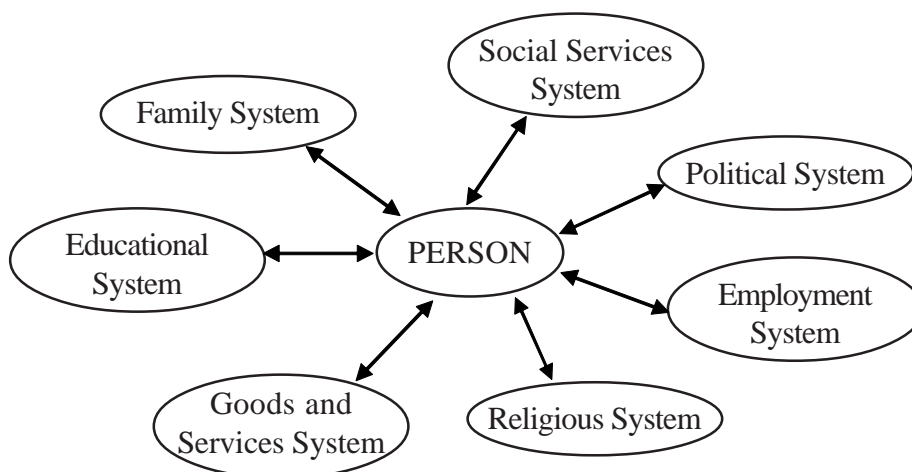
Welfare Social Work Approach: The state started providing its share of service in giving alms, and by passing the Elizabethan poor Law (1601) in UK to deal with the poor. The Act divided the poor into three categories, the able bodied poor, the impotent poor and the dependent children. The first category was forced to work in the workhouses, whereas the other two categories were given alms in alm houses. The Act, as well as subsequently passed enactments were unable to solve the problem of poverty. The government realized that an individualized approach was needed to understand the problem. The problem may be one, but different individuals have different causes for the same problem. They realized that the individual cause has to be investigated for its solution. Hence, charity organizations were started to do that work.

Clinical Social Work Approach: In 1935, the Social Security Act was passed recognizing the need for helping the poor. The Act was meant to handle the problem that was a consequence of industrialization. The state took over some of the financial problems of the people. A large number of volunteers were taken. As volunteers were trained people who could employ case work practice, they also supervised untrained people. Most people realized that money alone could not solve problems and they turned to counselling roles. Counselling has drawn its base from psychological sciences, particularly from Psychoanalytical theory.

Clinical social work is a specialized form of direct social work intervention with individuals, groups and families, which mostly take place in the worker's office. In this approach with the disciplined use of self, the worker facilitates interaction between the individual and his/her or her social environment.

Ecological Social Work Approach: In ecological social work approach, problems are seen as deficits in the environment and not as personal deficits of the individual. Social work tradition emphasized social treatment and social reform which become the basis for ecological approach. Professional social workers and their employing agencies consider themselves as change agents aiming at systemic change. Identifying the problem, identifying the clients and target system (which is causing the problem) and identification of "action system" with which change agent can achieve goals for change are the steps in ecological approach.

Radical Social Work Approach: Social workers are not satisfied only with care of



Person in Environment Conceptualization

the disabled and the deviants. In 1970, due to influence of Marxism, they advocated oppression as the cause for many problems. They broadened their professional responsibilities to include reform and development in order to bring about an equitable social order.

Some radicals in the profession have gone beyond social reform and development. The social workers aim is changing the system by bringing basic changes in the social institutions and relationships instead of dealing with adjustment problems and seeing individuals as victims of an unjust social order. This is called radical social work and for various reasons it has also failed to deal with the problems.

Progressive Social Work: Progressive social workers may identify themselves with radicals, activists, etc. They are unhappy about the injustice in the society. The progressive social workers strive to alter the oppressive element in the society. They help their clients heal their wounds and educate them to make proper choices so as to build their future.

Feminist Social Work: Liberal feminism is the school of thought that emphasizes equality of sexes and demands legal reforms and equal opportunities for suffrage, education and employment to both men and women. Liberal feminists do not analyze the roots of gender oppression in the society.

Marxist feminists view women's oppression as the outcome of capitalist mode of production, where there is division between domestic work and wage work, only the latter is productive.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the ethical responsibilities of social worker?

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2) What are the different ideologies of social work ?

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1.9 LET US SUM UP

Social work aims at helping people to solve their problems. Mostly social work deals with interpersonal problems, such as marital problems, parent-child problems, rehabilitation of chronic patients, etc. It is different from social service. The presence of professional relationship and face-to-face interaction makes social work different from social service. Social work has a knowledge base borrowed from other social and psychological sciences. Social work has methods such as social case work, group work, community organization, social action, social welfare administration, and social work research.

Social work has three important functions, restoration of impaired social functioning, provision of resources and prevention of social dysfunctioning. Social work's goal is problem solving. It deals with psycho-social problems of physical and mental health, corrects the problems of interpersonal relations, and provides social justice.

The social worker's personal attitudes such as love and hostility should not interfere with his/her professional work. A social worker like any other professional, is guided by professional ethics. She/he has his/her ethical responsibility towards his/her profession, client, colleagues and the community.

The social work history will give an account of different ideologies from charity, welfare approach, clinical approach, ecological approach, radical approach to progressive social work and feminism.

1.10 KEYWORDS

Professional relationship	: Relationship of the worker and the client based on the workers acceptance of the client and client's faith and respect for the worker.
Restoration	: Bringing the client back to normalcy in case of disturbed social relations.
Personal attitudes	: The worker, as She/he is also a human being, may have subjective feelings, which are known as personal attitudes. These attitudes are to be controlled.
Professional ethics	: The social worker having a knowledge of theory, training, specialization and professional organization are controlled by professional ethics. These ethics are rules of conduct.
Misconceptions	: Wrong ideas which need corrections.

1.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

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1.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) ● Social workers are unable to separate western professional components and traditional religious components of social work.
 - Terminology has not developed as social workers are pre-occupied with solving problem of day to day nature.

- Precision and accuracy is lacking as most of findings are drawn from social sciences.
 - Social work deals with problems about which even a layman has some fixed ideas.
 - Adding to this confusion politicians, film stars and cricketers are naming their activities as social work. Since trained workers who are paid and voluntary untrained workers who are not paid, both work side by side, a layman cannot understand what is meant by social work.
- 2) The worker should accept the client as he/she is without any discrimination and the client should be willing to take worker's help because of his/her confidence in him/her and his/her agency.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) Social work is a science in the sense that the knowledge taken from different disciplines forms the body of knowledge for the social worker and they use this theoretical base for helping people i.e., for practice. The methods of social work will help him/her to understand ways of helping people. The social work methods are: 1) Social case work, 2) Social group work, 3) Community organization, 4) Social work research, 5) Social welfare administration, 6) Social action.
- 2) The basic functions of social work are restoration, provision of resources and prevention. These are interdependent and intertwined. Restoration of impaired social functioning has two aspects - curative and rehabilitative. The curative aspect eliminates the factors responsible for the individual's impaired social functioning. This means disturbed interpersonal relations are corrected by removing the factors responsible for them. After removing the factors responsible for the problem, the individual has to adjust to the new remedy or device suggested. The individual is helped to get adjusted with the needs of the new situations. This is what is known as the rehabilitative aspect. Provision of resources has two aspects developmental and educational. The developmental aspect is designed to enhance effectiveness of the existing resources and to improve personality factors making them more equipped for effective social interaction. The educational spectrum is designed to acquaint the public with specific conditions and needs for new or changing resources. The third function of social work is prevention of social dysfunctioning. This means early discovery, control or elimination of conditions and situations that could potentially hamper effective social functioning.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Social worker has his/her ethical responsibilities towards his/her clients, employing agencies, his/her colleagues, his/her community and towards his/her profession.
- 2) If the global historical background of social work is analyzed, we can understand following ideologies of social work-social work as charity, welfare social work approach, clinical social work approach, ecological social work approach, radical social work approach, progressive social work and feminist social work.

UNIT 2 PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK: GENERIC PRINCIPLES AND THEIR APPLICATION

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** B.V. Jagadish*

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- 2.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with important areas of social work. After studying the unit you must be able to:

- understand the factors that influenced the emergence of professional social work;
- understand the generic values and principles of social work; and
- know how social work intervenes in different levels of society.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Over the years, social work has been transformed from a simple helping profession into an empowering profession and in the process passed many a milestone. With a well defined and established value system, principles, skills and techniques, it occupies an important position in the society. Today, the social work profession is shouldering the unprecedented responsibility of maintaining a social order that promotes the good of everyone. It is playing an active role in bringing about planned change with an emphasis on humanization of social relationships and transactions for the overall betterment of society.

2.2 GENERIC VALUES OF SOCIAL WORK

In this section, you will learn about the values of social work and their application. Any professional activity is guided by a set of values. The body of knowledge of social work has certain core values, evolved over a period of professional practice, that are common to all social work practice situations, irrespective of the methods.

Before we dwell on these, let us understand the meaning of the term value. Every social group has its own set of expected behaviour patterns that all the members in it strive to follow to accomplish a desired end state. In other words, values are fundamental norms and preferred behaviour patterns, shared by members of a society or a subgroup, which aim at integrating and channelling the organized activities of the members. A value specifies whether to follow or not to follow a particular behaviour. For example, truthfulness is a value every group upholds. The value prescribes that people speak the truth and proscribes telling lies. People are willing to expend certain effort and energy to realize a value; they are ready to sacrifice to uphold a value, and impose sanctions if anyone threatens to deny or defile the value. Some examples of values are honesty, truthfulness, integrity, patriotism, respect for elders, etc.

The values of a profession are, therefore, its basic fundamental beliefs and preferred behaviour patterns to be upheld by the professionals while practicing. Social work as a profession dealing with people having problems of social adjustment and social functioning has its own values that guide its practitioners. The social worker has to follow the social values of the society to which he/she belongs and has to have thorough understanding and appreciation for the social values prevalent in the society. Many of the problems of the clients are related to a social value that they are not able to uphold. For example, a person not taking proper care of his/her family, has a problem in following the value of 'responsibility' as head of the family. The problem may arise because the client might not have matured mentally or he/she does not want to take up the responsibility because it is burdensome. In such a situation, the social worker, having a fair understanding of the value of one's responsibility towards the family, counsels and helps the client to take up his/her responsibility as the head of the family. Thus, the social worker restores the social functioning of the client.

As a member of society, social worker also adheres to these social values. Sometimes the social worker may get into a dilemma whenever he/she has to deal with a client who has violated social values which the social worker upholds in high esteem. For example, a social worker, strongly subscribing to the value of honesty and earning by rightful means, may find it difficult to work with an open mind with the client who is an offender and who has caused damage to society. The values of the profession come to the rescue of the social worker in these types of value conflicts and dilemmas.

Social work values and basic philosophy are related. Philosophy analyzes the basic principles and concepts of social life. It provides the significance and importance to the values of social life and interprets the ideals and moral behaviors of individuals, society and their relationships. The values when organized into a rational system, forms the philosophical background of social work.

Social work values focus on three general areas: values about people, values about social work in relation to society and values that inform professional behavior (Dubois & Miley, 1999). Some of the fundamental values of social work are discussed below:

The value is the conviction in the inherent worth, integrity and dignity of the individual (Friedlander, 1977). A person failing to perform or follow the social functioning prescribed to him/her is considered an unworthy and undesirable element by society. He/she is denied dignity and considered as a person with no integrity

and treated degradingly by the society. People are not so much concerned about why the person has not been performing his/her social responsibilities properly. This value reminds the social worker that every client that comes (with a problem) to him/her is not to be considered as a person having no value and no virtue because he/she is in a disadvantageous situation. For a social worker the client is as worthy as any other person and the client is in that situation because of many other factors acting upon him/her. Given an opportunity to understand and analyze the social situations better, the person may get out of the problem and may not get into a similar problem situation again. Making a person feel worthy of himself/herself and treating him/her with dignity, encourages the person to engage seriously and overcome his/her problem and lead a purposeful life. The conviction in the dignity, worth and the integrity of any individual, enables the social worker to deal with any type of client with a positive frame of mind.

The second value is belief in democratic functioning. Social work relies on the democratic process while dealing with the client system. This implies that decisions are taken through consensus and nothing is imposed on the client. The worker, the client and others, are all involved in the decision making process. While doing so, the right of the client in choosing the solution, is given utmost importance.

The third value is the firm belief in equal opportunity for all, limited only by the individual's capacities (Friedlander, 1977). This value expresses the need for social justice. Social work fights against social injustices meted out to the disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of society. Irrespective of caste, religion and economic status, intelligence, etc., every one must have equal access to societal resources. At the same time, social work also takes into consideration, the limitations of the individual's capacity to access these resources and make use of them. For example, if a disabled person wants to pursue mountain climbing as a passtime activity, he/she should not be disallowed because he/she is disabled. But at the same time, if he/she does not have the physical strength and capacity to climb mountains, then he/she may be made to realize that mountaineering is not suitable for him/her and he/she should choose some other activity which is more suitable for him/her.

The fourth value is social worker's social responsibility towards himself/herself, his/her family, and his/her society (Friedlander, 1977). This value cautions the social worker not to neglect himself/herself, his/her family and the society in which he/she is living while discharging his/her professional duties. If he/she fails to perform his/her responsibilities towards himself/herself and his/her family, then he/she himself/herself or his/her family may fail to perform their social functioning and may become failures needing social work intervention.

The fifth value is to transmit knowledge and skills to others (Sheafor & Morales 1989). This value instructs the social worker to provide the information that he/she has, that would enable the client to take care of himself/herself, in case the client faces similar problems in future. This is to ensure that the client does not become dependent on the social worker throughout his/her life. Further, it also suggests that sharing of information and skills among the co-professionals goes a long way in promoting the competence of the professional practice.

The sixth value is separating personal feelings from professional relationships (Sheafor & Morales 1989). This value reminds the social worker that he/she should not allow personal feelings to intrude in a professional relationship, as this may make him/her over concerned or develop a biased or prejudiced view about the client

and his/her problem situation. The social worker might have undergone similar experiences and been in similar social situations in his/her personal life. And there is a possibility that he/she might relate these to the present client and may lose the objectivity needed for social work intervention. Therefore, he/she should be watchful about any of his/her personal feelings that are affecting his/her professional relationship.

The seventh value assumes high standards of personal and professional conduct (Sheafor & Morales 1989). It emphasizes that the conduct of the social worker should be exemplary at both personal and professional levels. As a professional, he/she should follow the code of ethics outlined for the social work practitioner. The success of any profession depends on the integrity and character of the professionals practicing it. In social work practice situations, clients come with a number of fears, hesitations, doubts and distrust about everything around them. They have to confess a number of confidential and emotional information and expect a lot of trust from the worker. Divulging the confidential information carelessly or making fun of the clients plight or looking down upon the client does great harm. Even his/her personal behaviour outside practice hours should not only be acceptable to people but should also gain him/her respectability. The social worker is a respectable member of society and he/she should not indulge in any conduct that is considered bad or disapproved by society. Therefore, it is essential that a social worker be a person of high integrity and of high ethical conduct.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

- 1) Explain the term value? Discuss the need for a social worker to have a good knowledge about social values prevailing in society.

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- 2) Explain any two values of social work.

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2.3 GENERIC PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL WORK

Principles are statements of dos and don'ts to get best results-while practicing social work. They are the guide- posts for the professional to carry out the work in the field. Principles are elaboration of the values in the form of understandable

statements to practice a profession. For example, the value of dignity and worth of an individual is expressed in the principle of belief in the self-determination of an individual or group or a community. The principles are time tested and arrived at out of vast experience and research.

A principle is a verbalised statement of an observed uniformity related to some class of objects... Principles that is general rules or laws, concepts, fundamental truths, generally accepted tenets are the means by which we proceed from one situation to another... (Barr, A.S. & Burton).

The most widely discussed generic principles of social work are as follows:

- Principle of Acceptance
- Principle of Individualisation
- Principle of Communication
- Principle of Self-determination
- Principle of Confidentiality
- Principle of Non-judgmental Attitude
- Principle of Controlled Emotional Involvement.

Now let us discuss these principles.

Principle of Acceptance: The client and the social work professional should both accept each other for getting the best results. The client should accept the worker because the worker is the one who is helping the client to overcome his/her problem situation. In social work situations, the client may approach the social worker directly or the social worker may be nominated by the agency or someone might refer the client to the social worker. Unless the client feels that the social worker has the potential to understand his/her predicament and is concerned about helping him/her out of the problem, the client may not cooperate in the relationship through which the social work intervention is to be planned. Any doubt about the competence of the social worker by the client results in serious complications in the helping process. Similarly, the worker should also accept the client as a person with a problem who has come to him/her for help. Irrespective of the appearance and background of the client, the worker should accept the client as he/she is, without any reservations. Sometimes the personal experiences of the worker may come in the way of accepting the client. For example, a worker who was abused by his/her alcoholic father during his/her childhood may find it difficult to accept an alcoholic client who has come for help in restoring his/her family relationships. In this case, the social worker should not be influenced by his/her childhood experience of being abused by his/her alcoholic father whom he/she hated and rejected, and show hostility or indifference towards the client. Mutual acceptance is the beginning of the process of establishing a strong professional relationship towards working out a solution to the client's social dysfunctioning.

Principle of Individualisation: A belief in the uniqueness of the individual and his/her inherent value lies at the heart of social work practice. Each person's nature is capable of integrating and directing its own forces in a way that is different from that of every other individual nature. Social worker views the problem of each client as specific and helps the client move forward finding the most satisfactory means for him/her to deal with his/her particular problem situation.

This principle reminds the social worker that while dealing with the client, it is to be kept in mind that the worker is not dealing with an inanimate object or inferior being. Because the client could not find a way out of his/her problem, he/she need not be looked down upon as a person without dignity, worth or value. This is a general response the client gets from the community. And this makes the client feel that he/she is a human being without any worth and develops a poor image of himself/herself. The social worker, as a caring and helping professional should believe that the client is an individual with dignity, worth and respect and has the potential to come out of his/her undesirable situation with dignity and respect given the right environment and encouragement. Further, the social worker should always consider that each client is unique and distinct from other clients having a similar problem as each person responds and reacts to the same stimuli differently and gets into or gets out of different problem situations in different ways.

Principle of Communication: In social work, the communication between the social worker and the client is of paramount importance. The communication could be verbal, that is oral or written, or non-verbal where gestures, signs or actions are used to send the message. Most of the problems concerning human relations arise due to faulty communication. In communication, a message is sent by the sender and received by the receiver. A true communication takes place when the meanings of the terms and other symbols the sender and the receiver use and act upon are shared and have the same meanings. If the message of the sender is properly or correctly understood by the receiver then the communication is smooth. But if the receiver fails to interpret the message correctly (the sender wants to convey), then there is a break or misunderstanding in the communication process, which results in confusion and problems. Sometimes, the sender is unable to express the feelings or what he/she wants to communicate, that also leads to miscommunication. In addition to these there are other barriers to the smooth flow of messages, such as distance, noise, temperament, attitudes, past experiences, mental capacity to comprehend and so on.

The social worker should have enough skills to grasp the verbal and nonverbal communication of the client. Communication is stressed in social work relationship because the backgrounds of the client and the worker may be different, the mental state of the client and the worker may vary. The environment in which the communication takes place may change from time to time giving enough scope for miscommunication. Therefore, the worker should make all the efforts to see that the communication between him/her and the client is proper. The function of social worker is principally to create an environment in which the client feels comfortable in giving expression to his/her feelings. The atmosphere includes the client's trust and confidence in the worker and the worker's acceptance of the client. The client should be assured that the worker understands correctly what he/she wants to convey. For this, techniques such as clarifications and reclarifications, elaborating what the client has said, questioning and reframing of what the client has said, can be effectively used. Similarly, the worker has to make sure that the client understands correctly what he/she is conveying to him/her. For this, the worker may ask the client to repeat what he/she is saying. In this way, miscommunication between the worker and client can be reduced and it can be ensured that the worker-client relationship is well established and strengthened.

Principle of Confidentiality: This principle provides a strong base for effective use of social work intervention. It helps in building a strong worker-client relationship.

In social work, it is most important to provide information to the worker. This ranges from simple factual information to what may be very confidential. A person may not be willing to share certain information about his/her personal details with anyone unless the person with whom it is shared is trustworthy. He/she must have confidence that worker will not misuse it to cause discomfort, or to ridicule or to cause damage to his/her reputation. In social work, unless the client provides all the information that is necessary for the worker, it is not possible to help the client. For this to happen, the client should have absolute faith in the worker that the information passed on to the worker will be kept confidential and will be used only for assessing and working out possible solutions to the client's problem. That is why the worker should assure the client that the confidential information about the client is not divulged to others to the disadvantage of the client.

To follow this principle the worker faces certain dilemmas. Firstly, should the confidential information be shared with other agency personnel who are associated with the case and fellow professional social workers who too can assist the worker in resolving the problem of the client. Secondly, what should he/she do about some information concerning the criminal activities of the client, wherein as a responsible citizen he/she may be required to pass it on to the investigation agencies whenever he/she is asked? In the case of the former the social worker may share the information in the best interest of the client. But in the case of the later, it is really tough for the social worker to withhold information as it has been received under the promise of keeping it confidential. In such circumstances, the decision is to be left to the client whether to disclose it to the social worker or not. And the social worker shall make it clear to the client that he/she cannot give any guarantee of non-disclosure to the concerned authorities, where legal requirements compel ordinary citizens to make disclosure of information received by him/her.

Failure to maintain confidentiality, seriously affects the worker client relationship. Therefore, the worker has to show discretion while securing and sharing information about the client with others. Information that is needed should only be gathered from the client. Prior consent of the client is to be taken before sharing the information with even those who are concerned about the client.

Principle of Self-determination: This principle emphasizes the client's right to self-determination. Every individual has the right to assess what is good for him/her and decide the ways and means to realize it. In other words, it points out that the social worker should not impose decisions or solutions on the client simply because the client has come to him/her for help. No doubt, the client has come to social worker because he/she could not solve the problem by himself/herself. The social worker should support and guide the client to develop insights into his/her social situation in the correct perspective and encourage and involve him/her to take decisions that are good and acceptable to him/her. In this way, the client is helped not only to realize his/her potentialities but also to feel independent and like a person with worth and dignity. Social responsibility, emotional adjustment and personality development are possible only when the person exercises his/her freedom of choice and decision.

Principle of Non-judgmental Attitude: The principle of non-judgmental attitude presumes that the social worker should begin the professional relationship without any bias. That is, he/she should not form opinions about the client, good or bad, worthy or unworthy. He/she has to treat the client as somebody who has come to him/her for help and he/she should be willing to help the client without being

influenced by the opinions of others about the client or his/her situation. This enables the worker to build the professional relationship on a sound footing as both the worker and the client feel free to their understanding of each other. However, it is to be noted that a non-judgmental attitude does not mean not making professional judgments about the problem situation and the various options being considered in order to tackle the problem.

Principle of Controlled Emotional Involvement: The principle of controlled emotional involvement guards social worker from either getting too personally involved in the client's predicament or being too objective. In the case of the former, the worker may over-identify with the client because he/she finds a lot of similarities between the problem situation of the client and over life situation/s or with the personality of the client. This may interfere with the professional relationship and judgments about the client's problem. The worker may start sympathising by over indulging in the client's life and this may interfere with the client's right to self-determination and independence.

In the case of the latter, by being too objective and detached, the client may feel that worker is not interested in him/her and his/her predicament. This may inhibit the client from coming out with all the confidential information. The feelings of worthlessness and helplessness may be reinforced in the client. All this may result in a premature end to the professional relationship. Therefore, the social worker should maintain a reasonable emotional distance even while sympathising with the client. He/she should indicate the understanding of the predicament of the client without showing pity or appearing to be indifferent.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Explain the principle of individualisation with examples.

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2) Discuss the principle of non-judgmental attitude.

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2.4 PROFESSION: A RESPONSE TO HUMAN NEEDS

Human needs can be broadly classified as physical needs and psychological needs. Physical needs revolve around physical comforts that protect us and enable us to perform efficiently in society while psychological needs refer to emotional and mental states such as the desire for love and affection, social recognition, spiritual fulfillment, etc. Every individual strives and struggles to meet these needs. Needs are met in complex interactions between the individual and the social environment. Sometimes, individuals fail to meet some of these needs due to certain reasons. In earlier societies, the unmet needs of people were taken care of mostly by family or by occupational groups such as merchant guilds or by religion or by the political group in authority - clan, king or the government. As societies evolved, needs became more and more complex and helping activities had to be organized in systematic manner. The ingenuity and compassion in man enabled him/her to satisfy those unmet needs, that are causing misery to people, in more innovative ways with a human touch and a scientific temperament. This, in turn, resulted in the evolution of various professions such as medicine, nursing, engineering, law, etc. Social work is no exception to this. Social work profession exclusively evolved to give relief to human society by finding permanent solutions to these unmet human needs.

Poverty is a serious obstacle to meeting these needs. During the period upto the 18th century, the attitude of the society from the point of the king and the aristocracy as well as the church towards unmet needs owing to poverty of people were mainly due to the failure of the individual or due to the sins or wrath of the God. Therefore, there was no need to come to the rescue of such people and they were left to fend for themselves. But with the advent of great philosophers and social thinkers, the understanding of human suffering, mostly manifested in poverty and pauperism underwent a change.

The scientific inquiry into the causes of poverty indicated that (i) social and economic conditions rather than individual failure are the causes of poverty and the pathetic and utterly inhuman living conditions of the poor (ii) poverty cause various other social problems in society (iii) alms giving and temporary relief measures are of no use (iv) permanent solutions have to worked out to deal with the problem of poverty and thereby the other needs of the people, and (v) people want to come out of poverty and they can be helped to come out of it.

The charity organization society and settlement house movements, the YMCA and YWCA organizations developed in response to the needs of the poor, the destitute, the illegitimate and orphaned children and unmarried mothers on one hand and on the other the disabled, the mentally disturbed, immigrant workers living in the neighbourhood communities, almshouses, reformatories, and asylums. Charity was provided on scientific lines by undertaking a thorough investigation into the state of dependence and the factors responsible for it. The needy were encouraged to find resources within the family and the community and become independent. A scientific approach to charity and philanthropy replaced untrained volunteers by trained paid workers. The final outcome was the birth of the profession of social work by the late 19th century, to cater to the physical, social and emotional needs of people. Social work as a profession responds to people's needs in ways that no other profession does. Social work brings out the full potentialities of the clients and enables them to stand on their own in meeting their needs.

2.5 SOCIAL CHANGE FOR HUMANIZATION AS THE GOAL

Social change is inevitable and many forces of change are acting upon various social institutions. Sometimes the changes are slow while at other times these are rapid. Whenever sudden and violent changes take place, people are taken off guard and fail to cope with the disruption and disorganization caused by these changes. The changes before and during the medieval periods were slow, but since the industrial revolution, changes have occurred very rapidly and traditional institutions and ways of living received a jolt. This has caused great misery and suffering. In the process of social change certain sections gain at the cost of others. This in turn causes social tensions and disorder. It is always desirable that social change be planned so as to minimize its ill consequences and maximize its benefits. Social work emerged in an attempt to shoulder this responsibility.

The goal of social work is to bring about humanization of the society through a process of planned change. Social work is strongly committed to the most fundamental human values and principles-human dignity, equality, democratic way of functioning, right to self determination, and right to privacy. Only these values and principles can establish a society with a human face.

The social work profession with commitment to social betterment, intervenes at individual, group, community and societal levels to tackle and guide the forces of change for the good of society.

Professional social workers, practicing in public or private settings, or social work educators at the schools of social work, who are in constant touch with those needs of the people which demand changes in social situations can foresee the forces that are likely to effect change and initiate steps to manoeuvre change for social betterment. The areas of social change are prevention, reform, re-socialisation, rehabilitation and planning (Pierce, 1989).

Practitioners experiment with the desired change situations at the micro level. Social work educators undertake research to analyze the social conditions and factors of change. For example, to change the position of women and empower them in society, social workers may initiate the formation of small groups of women and give them information, training and support to take decisions in key areas of their life such as education, career, marriage, etc., thereby empowering them. The results of such experiments are passed on to the policy framers who in turn incorporate desired changes in the relevant policy areas and effect the change at the macro level. Thus, social work contributes to social change in a planned way and for the betterment of society.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are different types of human needs?

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2) How does social work process brings about planned change?

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2.6 INTERVENTIONS IN THE BASIC UNITS OF THE SOCIETY

Social work practice is carried out at different levels of society. Social work intervention takes place at the level of the individual, family, group, community and society at large. The interventions at each level are more or less independent and sometimes inter-dependent depending on the nature and demands of the case in point. Social work practice has developed methodical ways to intervene, and these have crystalized into different methods of social work to deal with various units of society. Casework method deals with individual and family levels, group work method with small groups and also at the family level, community organization method at the community level and social action method at the societal level.

The individual level intervention attempts to restore the social functioning of the individual. The intervention is done at two levels. At the first level, work revolves around the client alone and helps him/her to overcome his/her problem situation by bringing about the changes in his/her behaviour, approaches, attitudes and perceptions towards his/her life situations. In some cases the problem is not with the individual but with the environment in which he/she is living and it is not sufficient to work at the individual's level only. Therefore, work at the second level includes both the individual and his/her environment, be it the family, or peer group or the community or social organizations such as school, the work organization or a social club.

The family being the basic social unit to which every person belongs has a great influence on the well being of not only the individual but of the entire social system. The family becomes the unit for social work intervention while providing help to the individual member of a family or the entire family. Stroup (1965) has outlined three types of needs that call for family work. They are- firstly those due to external factors, secondly those due to internal factors and lastly, a combination of internal and external factors. These factors result in malfunctioning and marital discord due to miscommunications or a serious difference on attitudes and opinions among family members. Sudden calamities may disintegrate the family such as the sudden death of the earning member of the family, separation of the spouses due to occupational demands, serious illnesses, etc. Failure of the members, particularly the spouses to perform their roles leading to the neglect of children, elders and sick members in the family may be due to lack of understanding, pressures of

work and other social commitments.

The group as a unit of intervention is envisaged when a group of people have a common problem or need. The groups may either be already formed or they may be formed by the social worker. Growth and developmental problems, such as problems in the performance of social roles, decision-making processes, leadership styles and the communication patterns can be better resolved through a group experience rather than by an individual approach. Here the group, constitutes the client system. At the group level intervention, the focus may be on a particular member of the group or a specific number of members or the whole group itself.

The community as a unit of social work intervention seeks to tackle the problems/needs affecting a large number of people living in a community. At the community level, social work bridges the gap between social welfare needs and social welfare resources. It promotes cooperative and collaborative attitudes among the different groups in the community. It campaigns for the involvement of people in the community affected by the problem/need. Social work intervention aims at the empowerment and capacity building of the community. It enables the communities to present their case assertively and effectively before the local authorities and other agencies; builds up leadership among the different groups in the community; enhances the community's decision making capabilities and the mobilization of various resources for improving the living conditions.

Social work is practiced in social welfare organizations being run under government and private auspices. The social worker as an administrator has to plan, organize, direct, and coordinate the delivery of services, has to prepare budgets for meeting the costs, has to supervise the staff and finally, report to the higher levels about the performance of the organization. Social work knowledge is required in administering these functions. Knowledge of group work comes in very handy to the administrator for forming task groups/teams for improving efficiency and effectiveness of the service delivery and for conducting and overseeing the deliberations of such groups/teams.

Check Your Progress IV

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Discuss the intervention of social work at family level.

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2) Discuss the need for intervention of social work at group level.

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2.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have learnt about the meaning of the term value and the different professional values of social work, such as inherent dignity and worth of the individual, commitment to democratic functioning and social justice. We have also learnt about the generic principles of social work such as acceptance, individualisation, self-determination, confidentiality and so on. We also looked into the types of human needs and the development of the social work profession to meet these needs with reference to poverty. We have also examined how social change can be brought about through planned intervention by social work process. Finally, we have information about how social work intervenes at different levels of basic social units such as family, group and community.

2.8 KEYWORDS

- Charity Organization Society** : An organized and scientific way of delivering services and assistance to urban poor.
- Generic** : General or common.
- Confidentiality** : To maintain the secrecy of information given.
- Individualisation** : Asserting the uniqueness of a person.
- Principle** : Statements directing ways to be followed to accomplish a goal.
- Settlement House Movement** : A movement to improve the living and working conditions of immigrant workers settled in urban neighbourhoods.
- Social work intervention** : The action or change efforts undertaken by a professional social worker to deal with the client's problem.
- Value** : Higher order of social norm that prescribes and/ or prohibits a behaviour.

2.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

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2.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

- 1) Values are fundamental norms and preferred behaviour patterns shared by members of a society or a sub-group which aim at integrating and channeling the organized activities of the members. A value specifies whether to follow or not to follow a particular kind of behaviour.

A social worker should have good grasp of the values of society because many of the problems of the clients are related to a social value /s that they are not able to uphold. For example, a person not taking proper care of his/her family has a problem in following the value of 'responsibility' as head of the family. The problem may arise because the client might not have matured mentally or he/she does not want to take up the responsibility because it is burdensome. In such a situation the social worker, having a fair understanding of this value of responsibility towards the family, counsels and helps the client to take up his/her responsibility as the head of the family. Thus, the social worker restores the social functioning of the client.

- 2) Social work profession has a number of values to guide the professional while practicing social work. Two such values are the inherent worth, integrity and dignity of the individual and the firm belief in equal opportunity for all, limited only by the individuals capacities. The first value reminds the social worker that every client who comes to him/her with a problem is not to be considered as a person having no value and no virtue because he/she is in a difficult situation. For a social worker, the client is as worthy as any other person and the client is in that situation because of many other factors acting upon him/her. Given an opportunity to understand and analyze the social situations better the person may get out of the problem and may not get into a similar problem situation again.

The second value is the firm belief in equal opportunity for all, limited only by the individuals capacities. This value expresses the need for social justice. Social work fights against social injustices meted out to the disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of society. It emphasizes that every person should get his/her due share in society and works in that direction. Therefore, irrespective of a person's gender, age, race, caste, religion and economic status, intelligence, etc., everyone must have equal access to societal resources. At the same

time, social work also takes into consideration the limitations of the individual in his/her capacity to access these resources and make use of them. For example, if a disabled person wants to pursue a career in mountaineering he/she should not be disallowed because he/she is disabled. But at the same time, if he/she does not have the physical strength and capacity to climb mountains then he/she may not be allowed to opt for mountaineering as his/her capacities do not permit him/her to do so.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) This principle reminds the social worker that while dealing with the client it is to be kept in mind that the worker is not dealing with an inanimate object or inferior being. Because the client could not find a way out of his/her problem, he/she need not be looked down upon as a person without dignity, worth or value. This is a general response the client gets from the community. And this makes the client feel that he/she is a human being without any worth and develops a poor image of himself/herself. The social worker as a caring and helping professional should believe that the client is an individual with dignity, worth and respect and has the potential to come out of his/her undesirable situation with dignity and respect, given the right environment and encouragement. Further, the social worker should always consider that each client is unique and distinct from other clients having a similar problem as each person responds and reacts to the same stimuli differently and gets into or out of the problem situation in different ways.
- 2) The principle of non-judgmental attitude presumes that the social worker should begin the professional relationship without any bias. That is, he/she should not form opinions about client, good or bad, worthy or unworthy. He/she has to treat the client as somebody who has come to him/her for help and he/she should be willing to help the client without being influenced by the opinions of others about the client and his/her situation. This enables the worker to build a professional relationship on a sound footing as both the worker and the client feel free and open to share their understanding of each other. However, it is to be noted that a non-judgmental attitude does not mean not making professional judgments about the problem situation and the various options to tackle the problem.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Human needs can be broadly classified as physical needs and psychological needs. Physical needs revolve around physical comforts that protect us and enable us to perform efficiently in the society while psychological needs are related to emotional needs such as the desire for love and affection, social recognition and spiritual fulfillment.

Professional social workers practicing in public or private settings or social work educators at the schools of social work who are in constant touch with those needs of the people which demand changes in social situations, can foresee the forces that are likely to effect change and initiate steps to maneuver change for social betterment. Practitioners experiment with the desired change situations at the micro level. Social work educators undertake research to analyze the social conditions and factors of change. For example, to change the position of women and empower them in society, social workers may initiate the formation of small groups of women and give them information,

training and support to take decisions in key areas of their life such as pursuing education, career, marriage, etc., thereby empowering them. The results of such experiments are informed to others and passed on to the policy framers, who in turn, incorporate desired changes in the relevant policy areas and effect the change at the macro level. Thus, social work contributes to the social change in a planned way for the betterment of society.

Check Your Progress IV

- 1) The family being the basic social unit to which every person belongs has a great influence on the well-being of not only the individual but of the entire social system. The family becomes the unit for social work intervention while providing help to the individual member of a family or the entire family. According to Stroup, there are three factors that cause problems at the level of the family. They are- firstly those that arise due to external factors, secondly those due to internal factors and lastly, a combination of internal and external factors. These factors result in malfunctioning and marital discord due to miscommunication or a serious difference in attitudes and opinions among family members. Sudden calamities disintegrate the family, such as the sudden death of the earning member of the family, separation of the spouses due to occupational demands, serious illnesses, etc. The failure of the members, particularly the spouses to perform their roles, will lead to neglect of children, old and sick in the family due to lack of understanding, pressures of work and other social commitments.
- 2) The group as a unit of intervention is envisaged when a group of people have a common problem or need. The groups may either be already formed or they may be formed by the social worker. Growth and developmental problems/needs, the performance of social roles, decision-making processes, leadership styles and the communication patterns can be better resolved through a group experience rather than by individual approach. Here, the group constitutes the client. At the group level intervention, the focus may be on a particular member of the group or a specific number of members or the whole group itself.

UNIT 3 VOLUNTARY ACTION AND SOCIAL WORK IN INDIA

Contents

* Sanjay Bhattacharya

- 3.0 Objectives
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- 3.3 Areas of Intervention and Implications of Voluntary Action
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- 3.5 Government and Voluntary Action
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3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall discuss about the concept of voluntary action and its correlation with the profession of social work.

Voluntary action is inseparable from social science and social work theories, values, ethics and practice. Social work, from its inception has been a profession based on humanitarian philosophy having as its basic tenet the intrinsic value of every human being. One of its main aim is the promotion of equitable social structures, which can offer people security and development, while upholding their dignity.

After studying this unit you will be able to know:

- the nature of voluntary action;
- factors motivating voluntary action;
- voluntary service in India;
- voluntary organizations at a glance;
- role of voluntary organizations in social welfare;
- role of social worker in voluntary action;
- government and voluntary action; and
- emerging trends in voluntary action.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The term voluntary action refers to the initiatives undertaken by people independently towards the achievement of common goals and objectives. Lord Beveridge describes voluntary action as that action which is not directed or controlled by the state. He/she calls it a private enterprise for social progress. Thus, a voluntary organization or agency is one, which is not initiated and governed by any external control but

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by its own members. Voluntary action presupposes the perception of the need of the community, or a section of the society, its assessment that the need can be met, and its readiness to regard it a duty to mobilize itself to meet the need. For the healthy functioning of democracy, voluntary action of this nature is of the highest significance.

It serves as a training ground for the potential leadership of the community and helps to continually broaden the concepts of social justice. Voluntary action also helps in continually focusing the attention of the members of a community on its problems and needs. It promotes the acceptance by the individual citizens of their social and civic responsibilities and it gives them an opportunity to learn to work co-operatively. Let us now consider some of the advantages and disadvantages of voluntary action. Pioneering has been a major function of voluntary agencies that allows experimentation. Also they have the freedom to initiate work in controversial areas. Even in our country it was voluntary action that worked for the cause of the needy and persisted in it until the statutory agencies were established to undertake the particular services. Another important aspect is the relative degree of freedom from particular political trends, something which is not available for statutory organizations. Voluntary action is also found to be more flexible and free from bureaucratic rigidity. It also has the advantage of ensuring public cooperation. The operational costs of such agencies are minimal due to the fact that the volunteers do the greater proportion of work.

Probably the most common limitation arises out of the limited resources that voluntary agencies have at their disposal. The sporadic character of voluntary action leads to instability. Financially, the private agencies are not sound as they depend on the public contribution, state grants and assistance; social workers engaged in voluntary agencies are paid low in most cases in India.

3.2 CONCEPTUAL CLARITY BETWEEN VOLUNTARY ACTION AND SOCIAL WORK

The term voluntary action is generally used for that action which is concerned primarily with what the individual should do, independent of the state.

Definition of Voluntary Action

According to Lord Beveridge: " The term voluntary action as used here, means private action, that is to say, action not under the directions of any authority wielding the power of the state." However, as viewed above, the scope of voluntary action becomes very wide and therefore, he/she confines its limit to that action which is for a public purpose for social advancement. Its theme is voluntary action outside one's home for improving the conditions of life for him/her and for his/her fellows; it is independent of public control. This is private enterprise, not in business but in the service of mankind, not for gain but under the influence of a social conscience.

Nature of Voluntary Action

As regards a voluntary worker, Lord Beveridge points out that a voluntary worker is someone who gave unpaid service to a good cause, and the group, which was formed to run this good cause, came to be known as a voluntary organization. He/she further adds that in recent years there has been a significant shift of meaning

in these concepts. Nowadays, many of the most active voluntary organizations are staffed entirely by highly trained and fairly well paid professional workers. The distinctively voluntary character of such bodies is the product not of the kind of workers they employ but of the manner of their origin and method of government.

Social Work and Voluntary Action

Social work has also ensured the protection of human rights through various social legislations. This enhances the happiness of the entire community by protecting from injustice and by punishing those who do not conform to the social interest. Besides, social legislations tackle social problems like untouchability, child marriage, the dowry system, sati, the devadasi system and various other social problems, thus helping to build a wholesome community. The emerging new notion of social service as a force and instrument in the promotion of planned social change and development enlarges the scope of professional social work activity, which traditionally, has been associated with such fields of practice as child and family welfare, medical and psychiatric social work, school social work, correctional and group services. Social work has also taken up new responsibilities by tying up with other disciplines to fight poverty and the problems of modern society.

Voluntary Organization

A voluntary organization, properly speaking, is an organization which whether its workers are paid or unpaid is initiated and governed by its own members without external control. The independence of voluntary action does not however mean a lack of co-operation between it and public action. But the term voluntary action means that the agency undertaking it has a will and a life of its own. As defined by the National Council of Social Service, a voluntary social service is interpreted generally as the organization and activities of a self-governing body of people who have joined together voluntarily to study or act for betterment of the community.

Social Workers and People

Social workers work with clients at various levels: the micro-level of individual and family; the meso-level of community; and the macro-level of national and international community. Concern for human rights must be manifested by social workers at all levels. At all times social work is concerned with the protection of individual and group needs. It is often forced to mediate between the people and the state and other authorities, to champion particular causes and to provide support, when state action threatens or neglects the right and freedom to individuals and/or groups. More than other professionals, social work educators and practitioners are conscious that their concerns are closely linked with respect for human rights. They accept the premise that human rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible, and the full realization of civil and political rights are impossible without enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Explain the concept of voluntary action in relation to social work.

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3.3 AREAS OF INTERVENTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF VOLUNTARY ACTION

Here we shall discuss the intervention and implications of voluntary action by understanding the factors that motivate voluntary action, the present scenario of voluntary organizations and their objectives, and voluntary services in the Indian context.

Factors Motivating Voluntary Action

The factors, that motivate people to take voluntary action or the sources of voluntarism, may be identified as religion, government, business, philanthropy and mutual aid. The missionary zeal of religious organizations, the commitment of government for public interest, the profit-making urge in business, the altruism of the 'social superiors' and the motive of self-help among fellowmen are also reflected in voluntarism. Bourdillon and William Beveridge viewed mutual aid and philanthropy as two main sources from which voluntary social service organizations would have developed. They spring from the individual and social conscience respectively. The other factors may be personal interest, seeking benefit such as experience, recognition, knowledge and prestige, commitment to certain values, etc.

Further, a variety of impulses are responsible for the formation of voluntary associations with the purpose of serving their fellowmen or the unfortunate lot of society. Voluntary organizations are strong agents of political socialization in a democracy, and educate their members about social norms and values and help combat loneliness. Psychological impulses lead people to join voluntary action for security, self-expression and for satisfaction of interests. Thus, the psychological joining motivation for voluntary association is a complex phenomenon. It may vary from one individual to another and one group of individuals to another depending upon their culture, social milieu and political environment.

Voluntary Organizations at a Glance

By and large, voluntary action is generated through social, religious and cultural organizations. This is made possible by organizations appealing to people for help. But this does not mean that volunteers always work through or in a particular organization.

The sphere of social service is still very largely the domain of voluntary workers and voluntary organizations. No complete or reliable data is available about the total number of voluntary organizations in the country, as many of them are not receiving government aid and are working with their own resources. Some of these are all-India organizations concerned with a wide range of activities; others are state or district level organizations. At present in India quite a large number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are working for various causes. They help groups and individuals with diverse political and other interests, contribute to the strengthening of a feeling of national solidarity and promote the participative

character of democracy. They have a role to play not only in areas which are accepted as state responsibilities, they can also venture into new fields, work in new areas, unveil social evils and give attention to any unattended or unmet needs. Many of the NGOs act as a stabilizing force by welding together people into groups that are not politically motivated and are not concerned about the fortunes of any political party or in capturing political power, but are above party politics and are interested in other areas of nation-building and thus contribute to national integration and a focus on non-political issues. Caritas India, NBA, voluntary organizations working for women and children, etc., are few examples of such agencies fighting for human rights.

There are also government-organized NGOs such as Mahila Mandal, Youth Clubs, Co-operative Societies, National Service Scheme, Nehru Yuva Kendras and government sponsored organizations in the form of Trusts setup in the name of deceased leaders, for example, the Kasturba Gandhi Trust, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Nehru and Kamla Nehru Trust, Indira Gandhi Trust, and the recent Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. There are several examples of the Indian NGOs protesting against certain development projects and successfully stopping them. The "Chipko" movement in the Himalayas, the "Appiko" movement in Karnataka, West Ghat and Save Silent Valley movement in Kerala, The 'Narmada Bachao Andolan', etc., are excellent examples of this kind. There are several places where there is environmental degradation as a result of industrial activity and there are a number of organizations working on this task. These NGOs face a lot of difficulties as most of them are working individually. Thus, there is a need to activate the existing environmental groups at each district headquarters and set-up a federation of these NGOs at the state or regional level so as to create a collective consciousness and fight jointly for a common cause. The Environment Society of Chandigarh, a regional NGO, has been able to activate the few existing groups and has been instrumental in setting up several such societies in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. Thus, with the involvement of more and more NGOs, the collective action will help the efforts to harmonize environmental and developmental issues to a great extent.

Objectives of Voluntary Organizations

The following are the main objectives for which various organizations are working:

- Protection and development of children.
- Welfare of women in the rural areas.
- Services for youth.
- Community welfare.
- Promotion of educational facilities.
- Promotion of public conscience on social problems.
- Promotion of moral standards and family welfare.
- Prevention of disease, health care, etc.
- Protection and welfare of the handicapped.
- Eradication of social handicaps for certain groups.

- Spiritual upliftment
- Promotion of international brotherhood.
- Promotion of natural interests through voluntary effort.
- Training of workers for fieldwork.
- Protection of nature, animals, etc.

Voluntary Services in India

It is generally claimed that like our culture, Indian voluntary institutions were known in ancient India. The history and development of social welfare in India is primarily the history of voluntary action. The roots of this can be traced to the nature, social milieu and ethos of Indian people who believe in acts of the charity of various kinds.

Voluntary Services, Pre-19th Century

In the pre-19th century, "it was mainly during the emergencies such as famine, flood, etc., that giving on a large scale as voluntary action took place outside the religious channels", according to Dr. P. V. Kane. The Chinese traveler Huein Tsang observes the Indian people voluntarily planted trees to give shade to the weary travellers, and, in groups, dug tanks and wells for the community. In medieval India, communities organized educational institutions, boardings, libraries for students by collecting funds and distributed grants to hospitals, colleges and poor homes. Late in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, severe famine resulted in large-scale poverty and the kings responded generously, but there was no insurgency. Throughout the 18th century, poverty was dealt by traditional means, that is individual philanthropy and religious charity.

Voluntary Services, Post-19th Century

In the 19th century there were three directions in which voluntary services were manifested. These were:

- Area of religious and spiritual tenets, religious reforms.
- Area of customary practices, social and ritualistic social reforms.
- Area of new problems and needs that demanded a solution as a result of urbanization of voluntary social work.

In the latter part of the century, enlightened religious and social leaders organized voluntary movements such as Arya Samaj, Rama Krishna Mission, Theosophical Movement and Anjuman-Himayat-I-Islam. Voluntary action got a boost in the early twentieth century when it organized itself through a formal organization and structure in the form of registered societies. With Mahatma Gandhi in the political realm fighting against the Britishers for the emancipation of the motherland as well as for reforms in socio-economic areas, voluntary action gained unprecedented momentum. Gandhi reinforced voluntarism in the life by decentralization of political authority and the empowerment of gram panchayats, which were to be completely independent of the central government. For him/her, voluntarism was the key to the reconstruction of India's economic and political organization.

During the last 20 years a large number of voluntary agencies have come up in

India. It is estimated that in addition to those which existed in the pre-independence period, the number of such agencies would run to around 20,000, spread through the length and breadth of the country. But mostly these organizations are located and functioning in the urban areas. However, it is difficult to number the voluntary agencies and to classify them into groups based on their objectives. In the post-independence period, due to the breakdown of traditional institutions, the spread of education, social reforms, inadequacy of welfare services to the needy, rehabilitation problems, minority problems, the welfare of SC/ST/OBC etc., a phenomenal rise in the number of voluntary organizations is observed.

Voluntary Services in the Present Century

India appears to be at the threshold of affecting speedy basic socio-economic changes for the betterment of its people in the new millennium. Not only is there a need to strengthen existing democratic elements and processes, natural and social resources need to be harnessed sooner rather than later to produce more wealth and contribute to social welfare. It is imperative that the tradition of voluntary action developed during the last 200 years be further analyzed in order to provide guidelines for further action. This is necessary to cleanse the national climate for constructive and productive voluntary action. There are always new horizons opening before voluntary action. In order to deal with the complex conditions of modern life there is far wider scope for collective action, both statutory and voluntary. Voluntary action is experimental, flexible, and progressive. It can adjust more easily than the statutory authority with its machinery and methods, to deal with changing conditions and with the diversity of cases. This capacity for experiment, for trial and error, is one of the most valuable qualities in community life. Voluntary actions have not only pioneered the way for state action, but when a service has been taken over by a statutory authority, in many cases voluntary agencies continue to provide a valuable supplementary agency with the help and the full consent and/co-operation of the statutory authority. The twentieth century gives abundant evidence of this in the fields of education, public health, and moral welfare and in the many spheres of social assistance where personal attention and good casework are essential.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) List any five areas of intervention of voluntary action.

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3.4 RELEVANCE OF VOLUNTARY ACTION AND SOCIAL WORK

The contribution made by the professional social worker in the planning and development of welfare services has been quite considerable at the center and in the states. The emergence of the professional group has of course raised all the usual problems of the relationship between the professional and non-professional. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the non-professional is not only "non-socialized" in professional values and skills, but is usually a person who, since he/she does not derive his/her livelihood from this vocation, considers himself/herself to be the professional superior in status. The contribution of the professional social worker in the non-governmental sector is limited. The salaries available in the non-governmental sector do not attract the best persons in the field and besides, in this period of transition, it is difficult for the professional to function with any decisiveness without seeming to take over the functions of the volunteer executive.

Professional Social Worker and Voluntary Social Worker

A professional Social Worker, however well equipped, cannot be a substitute for the lay-leader. The former are equipped with knowledge and skills to handle problems of institutional management and interpersonal and inter-group relations. At worst, they are people doing a job only to earn a living; at best they are persons with a sense of pride in their profession and social purpose. Being paid for their work, they are in a position to efficiently do a job that, a community feels a need for. But they cannot easily move a community to accept wholly new ideas which affect its value system. They cannot in this sense become pioneers and leaders of movements; they cannot acquire the moral right to preach or to admonish a group.

However, both the professional and the voluntary social worker have something specific to contribute to social work. The volunteer brings to social work the interest and confidence of the community. A Social Worker is an institution, which promotes a full and effective functioning of the other institutions of society. The role of the Social Worker is to achieve this goal using his/her skills and knowledge. This implies a total acceptance from the worker, of the client or community and a suspension of moral judgment on the part of the worker, a genuine concern for the well being of the client or community and the willingness to offer such professional assistance, as he/she is capable of. This professional assistance may consist at times of material help, but in a more important way this assistance is directed at the ability of the community to develop and utilize its own resources. The object of professional service is not only relief but also rehabilitation. Thus, the social worker emerges as a separate functionary who is specialized in his/her area of work.

The role of a social worker in voluntary action depends upon the training she/he/she has received to be scientific in his/her outlook, skills and a knowledge of human relationships, his/her special contribution in this field is the discovery and the interpretation of social sciences as he/she is equipped to undertake this task for the benefit of the community. It is the function of the professionals to seek the volunteers' help, interest and participation and to enable him/her to find

opportunities for his/her creative work. The professionals can also make a contribution in the formation of the social policies. Besides having discussed these issues of human rights very broadly, we can say, the professional social workers can effectively protect and safeguard the human rights from violations of every kind as they are trained personnel with a respect for human dignity, liberty and have a humanitarian outlook. Therefore, they can have a better outlook on these human right issues than the non-professional workers and can thus extend their services based on their knowledge and professional skills.

Role of Voluntary Organizations in Social Welfare

The development of voluntary organizations in India, in its historical perspective, has been dealt with earlier in this chapter. We will now focus on the role of voluntary organizations in social welfare and planned development. In fact, the social and economic development programme, enunciated in the fourteen point constructive programme of Gandhiji, was used as a spring-board to accelerate the process of political struggle for independence and a way to activate the underprivileged and down-trodden masses to develop themselves economically and socially, on a "self-help through mutual help" basis. A network of voluntary agencies was created to promote different constructive programmes like village industries, Khadi, Nai Talim, Leprosy Work, Harijan Seva, etc., with the help of thousands of selfless and dedicated workers. This was the basis of social welfare programmes by the voluntary organizations in the post-independence period.

The main objective of planned development is to mobilize the known as well as the hidden, material and human resources in such a way as to improve the socio-economic living conditions of the people to the maximum at a given time. In general, voluntary organizations have a role to play in the economic and industrial development of the country and also to motivate people to eliminate the evil influences of the industrialisation. Though the voluntary organizations do not have much of a role to play in transport and communication, they did play an important role in the construction and maintenance on village roads.

Impact of Voluntary Services in Social welfare

Voluntary organizations play an important role in social welfare through the development of education, health, housing and providing welfare services for the weak, underprivileged and handicapped sections of the population and through efforts aimed at the social development of people, in terms of a change in their physical, intellectual, emotional, social and moral composition. Social development increases peoples' capacity to provide and contribute in greater degrees for the own well being as well as for the good of society. It is here that voluntary organizations have played and will have to still play an even more effective role in pushing the programmes of social development forward. While voluntary organizations have traditionally worked in the field of social welfare certain state welfare organizations have also supplemented voluntary efforts, particularly in the field of beggary, prostitution, juvenile delinquency, etc.. However, in all the fields, voluntary organizations emphasize the welfare aspect, particularly because state policy focuses primarily on giving financial and legislative assistance to the state welfare organizations.

Generally, the voluntary organizations render their services in all fields of social welfare. Their complexion and orientation also undergo changes with the change

in time and situations. A major and successful voluntary action started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave in the form of Bhudan, Gramdan, Shramdan, Jeevandan, (gift of land, village, labour and life), so successfully to bring about a sort of revolution in the thinking process of people to share their assets with the less fortunate people, has lost its vigor. Voluntary organizations have taken on new roles to meet the challenges emerging in a complex society with the advancement of science and technology. The examples are the 100% literacy, which was achieved by voluntary efforts in Kerala, the services for the welfare of drug addicts, prostitutes, migrants, victims of terrorist activities, etc. In India, there are about 1000 voluntary agencies working for environmental protection apart from those working to safeguard human rights.

Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakash Narayan and many such leaders have often expressed their faith in voluntary action in social development and have been duly recognized in the official documents in the post-independence era. The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957) observed: "Today in the implementation of various schemes of community development, more and more emphasis is laid on non-governmental organizations and on the principle that ultimately people's own local organizations should take over the entire work". The Fifth and Seventh Five Year Plans relied heavily on voluntary agencies for social welfare programmes and assistance from the State was given to them for this task. Thus, voluntary agencies, equipped with necessary technical expertise, can be useful agencies of social and economic development.

In short, voluntary organizations have played a magnificent role in providing welfare services in the past, and recognized and appreciated as it is by the public and government. They will be encouraged to assume a still more glorious role for themselves in future. It is rightly said that there is no paradise except where people work together for the welfare of all mankind and hell is where no one even thinks of service to humanity. Voluntarism in India subscribes to and opts for the first half of this statement and proves it by undertaking various programmes for the welfare of the destitute, the down-trodden, the disadvantaged and the under-privileged and complementing the state in its effort to achieve the ideals of a welfare state.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Voluntary organizations have an important role in imparting social welfare. Comment.

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3.5 GOVERNMENT AND VOLUNTARY ACTION

Though any external agents do not control voluntary action, the government has accepted it as a major means of social welfare and is providing financial assistance without directly being involved in the functioning of voluntary organizations. The Government of India has recognized that voluntary organizations are not able to carry out the welfare programmes to a great extent and moreover the government bureaucracy being rule bound and essentially conservative, it may not be advisable to entrust development work to the bureaucracy. So, a discernable shift has come about in government thinking regarding involvement of NGOs in development since the Sixth Plan period.

While the voluntary agencies have been involved in the government's welfare programmes for a long time, the idea that the scope of this co-operation should be widened has been gaining ground for a few decades. In October 1982, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi wrote to all the Chief Ministers that consultative groups of voluntary agencies must be established at the state level. Significant for the voluntary social services, is the constitution of the Central Social Welfare Board. Finally, of the greatest potential significance is the constitution of a Division of Social Security in the Central Government.

The problem of coordinating the activities of government and non-governmental agencies is in some ways more difficult than the problem of coordinating the activities of central and state governments. The need as well as the difficulty of coordinating government and NGOs are much greater, particularly within the field of Social Welfare. The Planning Commission attempts to establish a liaison between these two efforts in three ways:

- 1) By associating NGOs in the process of planning.
- 2) By entrusting some government sponsored programmes to NGOs for implementation.
- 3) By promoting the growth of NGOs through a programme of grants-in-aid.

There are two ways by which the government could help the existing agencies to function effectively and grow in response to changing situations. One is by offering direct help in terms of finances and equipment. Another way is in the manner in which the existing agencies may continually be associated with statutory action. Yet another important way in which the government can help the voluntary agencies is through legislation. Voluntary agencies, if they are worth the name, must be born of voluntary endeavor. However, it is possible for the government to create conditions under which people may be encouraged to organize new voluntary agencies.

Emerging Trends in Voluntary Action

So far the discussion has focussed on the theoretical aspects of voluntary action. It has now become an irrefutable fact that voluntary action is necessary for social welfare and development, though there are scores of statutory organizations and governmental planning. In the modern times, voluntary organizations have realized new spheres of work, moving away the traditional outlook and this has encouraged and enlarged the scope of voluntary action. At present, numbers of voluntary organizations are working in India and at the international level for the development of the nation and the people. The main areas of their work include education,

health and medicines, child and women welfare, human rights issues, abolition of social evils, national integrity, international peace, etc. More recently, all the researches of social sciences have undertaken large scale measures to alleviate poverty and promote nutrition and self-sufficiency of material needs to all, with the help of national and international voluntary organizations and the developed, rich countries. Even India as a developing country is expected to be self-sufficient by the year 2020.

The violation of human rights, particularly in the case of children, women and bonded labourers, has become a major issue. The ongoing Narmada Bachao Andolan, the forest protection movements and the feminist organizations that are working for the rights of women and for justice against their exploitation are recent example in this case. The problems of social welfare and development have become an integral concern in the process of planning and development. Many new agencies and institutions have come into existence. In many parts of the country, there have been numerous innovative social efforts through the initiative of voluntary organizations and voluntary leaders as well as public agencies. In every field, every earlier assumptions are being questioned and the gaps in policy and implementation have come to be identified more precisely. Social challenges, especially the insecurity of the minorities and the international peace problem are looming larger than before. The texture has become increasingly complex and every aspect of social welfare takes on a multi-disciplinary dimension.

Check Your Progress IV

- 1) Indicate if the following statements are true or false. Circle the relevant answer. Check your answers with the ones given at the end of the unit.
 - a) Voluntary action is generated through social, religious and cultural organizations.

True	False
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 - b) In voluntary organizations, workers are governed by external control.

True	False
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 - c) A Professional social worker cannot be substituted for the lay-leader.

True	False
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 - d) In modern times voluntary organizations are yet to realize new spheres of work and move away from the traditional outlook.

True	False
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 - e) It is now an accepted fact that voluntary organizations are more successful in reaching out to the poor.

True	False
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3.6 LET US SUM UP

From this discussion, we know that voluntary action is a process of carrying out the implementation of activities towards the achievement of common goals and objectives.

Therefore, voluntary actions need to be adapted to the changing scenario and in fact voluntary organizations are changing their outlook and mode of functioning. Today, voluntary action is not a mere charity but a profession as far as the workers are concerned, as they are being paid handsomely. Nowadays many of the most active voluntary organizations are staffed entirely by highly trained and also fairly well paid professional workers.

We have seen in the earlier part of this unit that voluntary action emerged up in the areas of education and social security in the form of societies, homes for the destitute, the disabled, etc. Though some of these functions have been taken up by the state because of their heavy financial responsibility and other reasons, new needs have come up with industrialization and urbanization and some of these can be best met for certain reasons by the voluntary organizations. In fact, with the development of the concept of the Welfare State, the state will seek to do more for the citizens in the future, than it did in the past, whatever may be the political colour of the government. The future of voluntary action must be considered in the light of the above conclusion. With the development of science and technology, in this computer era, the internet is becoming the ideal medium of communication, as it is much faster, cost-effective and environment friendly. It is now accepted by all concerned that voluntary organizations are more successful in reaching out to the poor and in poverty alleviation due to their being small, flexible, innovative, participatory and cost effective in their style of functioning.

Voluntary organizations in India, going by the number of registrations in all the states and the Union Territories, exceed one million in number, and are increasingly getting aware of the potential of the internet. A survey in 1998 by CAP covering 4508 prominent voluntary organizations revealed that 3.5% of all respondents had already developed their websites. The web presents new potential for working, information sharing and resource opportunities for voluntary organizations. The information super highway can prove to be the new path to self-sufficiency for voluntary organizations in the fields of health, development and welfare. It is hoped that voluntary organizations and charities involved in implementation of socio-economic development programmes would use and fully harness the convenience and speed of the internet and information technology to help the poor and thereby accelerate the pace of socio-economic development in India.

3.7 KEYWORDS

- Voluntary action** : Voluntary action is that action which helps in continually focussing the attention of the members of community on its problems and needs.
- Voluntary organization** : Voluntary organizations are those agencies of political socialization in a democracy which educate their members about social norms and values and helping them in achieving common goals and objectives.
- Social Work** : Social work is that branch of study which deals with human problems in society and assists in understanding democratic principles oriented towards securing for all people a decent standard of living, acceptability,

affiliation, recognition and status. It is a process to help the people to help themselves.

Professional social worker : Professional social workers are people who render a professional service by assisting individuals, groups and communities. On the one hand, they attempt to help the individuals in the social milieu and on the other hand they remove the barriers, which obstruct people from achieving the best that they are capable of. Being paid for their work, they are only in a position to efficiently do a job that, a community feels, needs to be done.

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3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1) The term voluntary action, means "private action" that is to say, action not under the direction of any authority wielding the power of the state. Voluntary action is that action which helps in continually focusing the attention of the members of a community on its problems and needs. However, the scope of voluntary action can become very wide and therefore, it confines itself to that action which is for a public purpose for social advancement. Its theme is voluntary action outside one's home for improving the conditions of life for the individual and the community. It is independent of public control. This is private enterprise, not in business but in the service of mankind, not for gain but under the influence of a social conscience. On the other hand, social work is that branch of study which deals with human problems in society and assists in understanding democratic principles oriented towards securing for all people a decent standard of living, acceptability, affiliation, recognition and status. It is a process to help the people to help themselves. Social work has also ensured the protection of human rights through various social legislations. This enhances the happiness of the entire community by protecting it from injustice and by punishing those who do not conform to the social interest. Besides legislation, it tackles social problems like untouchability, child marriage, dowry system, sati, devadasi system, etc., thus helping to build a wholesome community. The emerging new notion of social service as a force and instrument in the promotion of planned social change and development enlarges the scope of professional social work activity, which traditionally, has been associated with such fields of practice as child and family welfare, medical and psychiatric social work, school social work, correctional and group services. Social work has taken up new responsibilities by tying up with other disciplines to fight poverty and the problems of modern society.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) a) Protection and development of children
- b) Welfare of women in the rural areas.
- c) Services for youth.
- d) Community welfare.
- e) Promotion of educational facilities.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Voluntary organizations are those agencies of political socialization in a democracy, which educate their members about social norms and values and help them achieve common goals and objectives. We can understand the role of voluntary organization in social welfare and planned development from earlier times in Indian. In fact, the social and economic development programme, enunciated in the fourteen point constructive programme of Gandhiji, was used as a springboard to accelerate the process of political struggle for independence and a way to activate the under-privileged and down-trodden masses to develop themselves economically and socially, on a "self-help through mutual help" basis. A network of voluntary agencies was created to promote different constructive programmes like village industries, Khadi, Nai Talim, Leprosy

Work, Harijan Seva, etc., with the help of thousands of selfless and dedicated workers. This was the basis of social welfare programmes by the voluntary organizations in the post-independence period.

In general, voluntary organizations have a role to play in the economic and industrial development of the country and also to motivate people to eliminate the evil influences of industrialization, and this ultimately leads to social welfare in general.

Voluntary organizations play an important role in social welfare through the development of education, health, housing and providing welfare services for the weak, underprivileged and handicapped sections of the populations, and through efforts aimed at the social development of people, in terms of a change in their physical, intellectual, emotional, social and moral composition. Social development increases people's capacity to provide and contribute in greater degrees for the own well being as well as for the good of society. It is here that the voluntary organizations have played and will have to still play an even more effective role in pushing the programmes of social development forward. Certain state welfare organizations have also supplemented voluntary efforts, particularly in the field of beggary, prostitution, juvenile delinquency, etc. However, in all the fields voluntary organizations emphasize the welfare aspect, particularly because state policy, focusses primarily on giving financial and legislative assistance to the state welfare organizations.

Generally, the voluntary organizations render their services in all fields of social welfare. Their complexion and orientation also undergo changes with the change in time and situations. A major and successful voluntary action started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave in the form of Bhudan, Gramdan, Shramdan, Jeevandan (gift of land, village, labour and life), to bring about a sort of revolution in the thinking process of people to share their assets with the less fortunate people, has lost its vigor. Voluntary organizations have taken on new roles to meet the challenges emerging in a complex society with the advance of science and technology. The examples are the 100% literacy, which was achieved by voluntary efforts in Kerala, the services for the welfare of drug addicts, prostitutes, migrants, victims of terrorist activities, etc. In India, there are about 1000 voluntary agencies working for environment protection apart from those working to safeguard human rights.

Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakash Narayan and many such leaders have often expressed their faith in voluntary action in social development and have been duly recognized in the official documents in the post-independence era. The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957) observed : "Today in the implementation of various schemes of community development, more and more emphasis is laid on non-governmental organizations and on the principle that ultimately people's own local organizations should take over the entire work". The Fifth and Seventh Five Year Plans relied heavily on voluntary agencies for social welfare programmes and assistance from the State was given to them for this task. Thus, voluntary agencies, equipped with necessary technical expertise, can be useful agencies of social and economic development.

In short, voluntary organizations have played a magnificent role in providing welfare services in the past which has been recognized and appreciated as it is by the public and government. They will be encouraged to assume a still

more glorious role for themselves in future. It is rightly said that there is no paradise except where people work together for the welfare of all mankind and hell is where no one even thinks of service to others. Voluntarism in India subscribes to and opts for the first half of this statement and proves it by undertaking various programmes for the welfare of the destitute, the downtrodden, the disadvantaged and the underprivileged and complementing the state in its effort to achieve the ideals of a welfare state. Hence voluntary organizations have an important role to play in imparting social welfare.

Check Your Progress IV

- 1) a) True b) False c) True d) False e) True



UNIT 4 SOCIAL WORK ETHICS IN INDIAN CONTEXT

Contents

* Joseph Varghese

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Case Situations
- 4.3 Ethics - An Introduction
- 4.4 Need for the Ethical Behaviour in Social Work
- 4.5 Purpose of a Code of Ethics
- 4.6 A Model of Code of Ethics for Indian Social Workers
- 4.7 Problems Faced by Social Workers in Ethical Decision Making
- 4.8 Lets Us Sum Up
- 4.9 Key Words
- 4.10 Suggested Readings
- 4.11 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will enable you to understand the ethical aspects of social work practice. A social workers primary function is problem solving in human relationships. These situations are often complex and delicate in nature. Therefore, ethical decision-making is important in these situations and in this unit you will be given an introduction to ethics and its relevance in social work.

At the end of the unit you will be able to:

- understand what ethics is;
- discuss the importance of ethics in social work;
- familiarize yourself with the code of ethics of social work; and
- understand its application in social work situations.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Among the major problems Indian society faces are those of abuse of authority, corruption and social discrimination. Social workers are part of this society as much as anybody else. They will, no doubt, be influenced by these values. Their personalities would have internalized these values and consciously or unconsciously their behaviour reflects these values. But social work advocates values radically different from these values.

A sound understanding of social work values is needed so that professional behaviour is guided by these values rather than any other values. Another issue related to ethics is that most of them are based on western experience and there applicability in the Indian situation is often questioned. In this unit we will discuss these issues briefly.

4.2 CASE SITUATIONS

Before we start our discussion we offer you few brief case situations to clarify the importance of values and ethics in social work practice. Try to place yourself in the situations and make your judgments. Assume that you have the power to make decisions and implement them.

- 1) You are the administrator of an agency and you are sending applications of poor families to the government agencies asking for financial aid. Your subordinate wants you to reduce the annual income of the families shown in the documents as he/she feels that it will improve their chances of getting the aid. Besides he/she says that all other agencies do the same and if your agency does not do that, households of your community will be at a disadvantage. Will you agree to knowingly misrepresent information to help the families?
- 2) A woman buys female babies from poor families and offers them for adoption to well to do families. She claims that she is not making money in the process and is only interested in helping the female babies as well as the families. She says that if the babies are not removed from the families they will most likely be killed or ill-treated which also will most likely result in death. (She quotes certain statistics to prove her point). She says that she is breaking the law but compares it to Gandhi's breaking of the law during freedom struggle. The aim is the greater good of society with no loss to anyone in the process. Is she doing the right thing?
- 3) A man is infected with HIV/AIDS during a blood transfusion after an accident. He/she says that his/her family members should not be informed as he/she will be thrown out of the house and he/she has nowhere to go. At the same time, there is a risk of other members of the family getting infected particularly his/her wife. Should you keep the information confidential or disclose the person's health status to his/her wife/family members?
- 4) Your colleagues in the counseling centre discuss the problems of the clients and make fun of their problems. When you ask them why they do so, they say that the information does not go out of the group and that the clients will never come to know of this. When you say that you will report this to your superior they threaten to break up their relationship with you if you proceed. Will you be willing to be ostracized by the group, to resolve a problem on account of which nobody seems to be affected?
- 5) Your superior conducts a programme on health in the community but misreports them as educational programmes. When you ask why he/she does so, he/she says that the bureaucratic system in the agency has lead to a wrong understanding of the problem and the community needs health awareness not education. Is he/she right in manipulating the records?
- 6) An unwed woman comes to seek assistance from you to abort her foetus. She says that she has no choice as the father of the unborn child has refused to marry her. Her parents have arranged her marriage with someone else. But if they come to know of this they will certainly cancel the marriage. The pregnancy has reached a stage where it can not be legally aborted. The woman has not informed her parents about her condition and does not intend to do so. Will you help her to abort even though it is illegal?

- 7) A policeman tortures a criminal saying that he/she is guilty and deserves the punishment. Do you think that the policeman is right in doing so?
- 8) Your client (opposite sex) proposes marriage to you. He/she says that you both have the same social background and therefore should get married. She points out that there are a number of instances where professional relationships have become personal. For example, colleagues working in the same office get married; doctors marry nurses and so on. Will you accept the proposal if you feel that he/she fits the requirement of your life partner?

As you may have noticed most of the above cases deal with situations in which all options available seem to be right from one or the other perspective. In real life also most of the time social workers are often confronted with such situations. An understanding of the ethical dimensions of decision-making thus becomes important.

We have instances reported in the press about misappropriation of funds, sexual abuse of clients under their care and abuse and torture of children and so on. These are clearly wrong in the eyes of law as well as according to the ethics of the profession. Since these actions are clearly wrong we have not given examples of such situations. We have chosen to focus on those actions, which are 'gray' or ambiguous in nature.

4.3 ETHICS - AN INTRODUCTION

The word "Ethics" is derived from Greek - meaning "custom" which is the branch of axiology, one of the four major branches of philosophy, which attempts to understand the nature of morality; to distinguish that which is right from that which is wrong. Ethics also called moral philosophy is concerned about what is right and what is wrong. Ethics involves "making decisions of a moral nature about people and their interaction in society" (Kitchener, 1986). Ethics is generally defined as philosophical discipline that is concerned with human contact and moral decision making (Van Hoose & Kottler, 1985). Ethics can be divided into two sections - normative ethics and metaethics. Normative ethics deals with the principles we live by. Metaethics has a larger concern and it deals with the nature and methodology of moral judgments. In other words, it deals with the basis on which decisions should be made. Should the ultimate consequences of the decision, for example be promoting happiness or promoting perfectionism in society? Religious people base their decisions on what they believe to be the will of God and on God's word. As social workers we are interested in ethics so that our relationships with clients, our colleagues, our superiors and our subordinates are within the framework of social work values.

Social work rejects Social Darwinism and utilitarianism. Social Darwinism is a modern name given to various theories of society that emerged in the United Kingdom, North America, and Western Europe in the 1870s, which claim to apply biological concepts of natural selection and survival of the fittest to sociology and politics. Utilitarianism is a system of ethics according to which the rightness or wrongness of an action should be judged by its consequences. The goal of utilitarian ethics is to promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Social work initially emerged in the Western countries including U. S. A. and was therefore influenced by Judeo Christian values. As the profession began to spread to Gulf and other parts of Asia, the religious traditions of these countries also influenced the social work profession in these regions. Social workers are trying to incorporate

indigenous values into the profession so that the profession gets better recognition and acceptance from the people. This process will be an extended one, as most post-colonial societies are yet to recover, intellectually and academically, from the colonial experience.

Scientific values and methods have also influenced the practice of social work. It may seem strange that social work is influenced by two seemingly contrary values of science and religion. Social work rejects those religious values that advocate that an individual suffers due to other worldly reasons like God's anger or predestination. It believes that every individual has the capacity to solve his/her problems if he/she is provided with the necessary resources. Consequently, factors that cause an individual's problem or a social problem are identified using scientific methods namely observation, description, classification and explanation. Solutions based on rationality are identified and formulated. The following values are the basis of social work profession - social justice, the dignity and worth of the individual, importance of human relationships, integrity and competence.

You must have noticed that professionals who deal with the human body, human psyche and human relationships always have a code of conduct. Doctors have a code of conduct which they have to follow while they are practicing. Doctors pledge to prescribe only beneficial treatment, according to their abilities and judgment; to refrain from causing harm or hurt; and to live an exemplary personal and professional life. Lawyers have their own code, which they have to follow when they are interacting with clients, pleading before a judge and questioning witnesses. These codes have evolved over time during which these professions emerged in society. As these professions emerged there were several instances of misuse of these positions by unscrupulous individuals who harmed the professions. The codes were formulated so that behaviour of these professionals are controlled and society's trust in them is not lost.

Professions that have ethical codes generally have a body of fellow professionals who are elected by the professional organization to oversee their implementation. In advanced countries these bodies have wide ranging powers. These include the power to censure the offending member; impose a fine on the member and even revoke the member's license to practice. When one former American President was found guilty of perjury the Bar Association of his/her home state revoked his/her license to practice in the court and now he/she is not allowed to practice law in that state. In India, the license of a doctor-actor was revoked by the Medical Council after it was alleged that he/she had advertised a medicine which did not meet the standards set by the Council. Of course in both these high profile cases there existed a political angle to the problem which lead the respective associations to take such drastic steps. But these examples do show that the ethical codes of professions are a serious matter and that professional bodies are powerful organizations. We shall now specifically take up the social work code of ethics.

4.4 NEED FOR THE ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR IN SOCIAL WORK

Social work is a problem solving profession. The social worker comes across varied and complex situations. Ethics help professionals to act morally in difficult situations. The need for such behaviour in social work is important due to the following reasons:

Social workers during their interaction with clients and their significant others have sensitive information: The purpose of the client to share information is to enable the social worker to get better insight into the problem and then help the client to solve the problem. But if the social worker reveals this sensitive information inadvertently or purposely to others, he/she will be damaging the client's cause and further complicate the problem. Strict observance of the principle of confidentiality is necessary in this situation.

Social workers are often in situations where their decisions can cause serious damage to the client: Social workers often deal with clients who are facing serious problems. Their personalities are often disintegrated and they may be vulnerable to emotional and physical abuse. Even otherwise there is a power relation between the social worker and the client. The case worker has more knowledge and is in greater control of his/her emotions than the client. This power should not be used to the disadvantage of the client. In some cases the caseworker may unconsciously commit an error which causes damage to the client. The chances for such errors are minimized when the social worker has internalized the social work ethics.

Social workers occupy positions of authority in governmental and non governmental organizations: Any position of authority has an element of accountability attached to it. Accountability means 'to give count of'. You have been entrusted with certain goods and after use you have to account for what you have used, for what purpose, how and to what effect. Social workers, unlike others have an additional responsibility - they have to see that the human dignity and human self is preserved.

Probably no other profession deals with these aspects as directly as social work. A policeman has to only think whether his/her action would reduce the crime rate and whether he/she is following the due process of law when he/she is acting. The lawyer has to only think whether his/her client's interests will be served by his/her actions. A priest has to only worry whether his/her actions will help fulfill the individual's religious needs. But the social worker's decisions should express concern for human dignity and human self.

Social workers are often in positions where they can allocate resources: In most cases, allocating resources to one party means not allocating it to others who are also needy. This is true of a country like India where scarcity exists almost everywhere. In an adoption center, a social worker may be asked whether a particular couple can be allowed to adopt a child. The social worker's opinion will have a bearing on the lives of at least three individuals.

Social workers have to preserve professional autonomy: In a democratic country the government is the ultimate authority and it plays an important role in regulating other institutions. But some times this regulation becomes an intrusion into the internal affairs of the professions which is not desirable. If the professionals themselves regulate their affairs, government action becomes unnecessary and their professional autonomy can be preserved.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

- 1) List some reasons why social workers should have a code of ethics.

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4.5 PURPOSE OF A CODE OF ETHICS

We have seen the importance of ethical behaviour in social work. Those countries, in which social work has been fully accepted as a profession by the society, have a code of ethics. A code is a systematic collection of regulations and rules of procedure or conduct. Code of ethics in social work can thus be defined as a set of rules and regulations that should govern the conduct of the social worker in his/her relationships with his/her clients, fellow professionals, colleagues, the agency and society in general.

According to the National Association of Social Workers, USA (NASW) Code of Ethics serves six purposes:

- 1) The Code identifies core values on which social work's mission is based.
- 2) The Code summarizes broad ethical principles that reflect the profession's core values and establishes a set of specific ethical standards that should be used to guide social work practice.
- 3) The Code is designed to help social workers identify relevant considerations when professional obligations, conflictual or ethical uncertainties arise.
- 4) The Code provides ethical standards to which the general public can hold the social work profession accountable.
- 5) The Code socializes practitioners new to the field, to social work's mission, values, ethical principles and ethical standards.
- 6) The Code articulates standards that the social work profession itself can use to assess whether social workers have engaged in unethical conduct.

These codes have been formulated by experts in the profession and presented before the general assembly of the social work association of that country. In the general assembly, the issues are discussed word by word. Different points of view are expressed and debated upon. After such wide ranging discussions and several revisions, the final draft of the code is put to vote and accepted. The broad participation of social workers and the democratic procedure followed by the assembly ensures that the codes receive wide acceptance. It has a substantial influence on the social worker's practice in these countries. If anyone is found breaking the code, action is taken after a formal inquiry.

In India, however, there exists no association, which commands such authority among the social workers. Some associations, which are basically regional based, have developed a code of ethics of their own. However as these associations have limited selected members and exclude a majority of the social workers of the

country, their influence on social work practice is limited. The government has also not recognized any body and has not entrusted anyone with the authority to regulate social work. Efforts were made to formulate a Professional Social Workers' Bill that is aimed at regulating the social work practice in the country. However no results have been achieved.

Here we have tried to present a model of a code of ethics, which can be used in social work practice in the Indian context. The social workers are encouraged to adhere to these codes even during their training period. As one goes through the code it will be noticed that ultimately it is the responsibility of the individual who has to maintain these standards in his/her or her behaviour. External agencies can only regulate the social worker's behaviour up to a certain extent. Therefore it is necessary that we internalize these values and make them a part of our personality.

4.6 A MODEL OF CODE OF ETHICS FOR INDIAN SOCIAL WORKERS

(Since there is no code of ethics available in India, the following code of ethics is based on the code of ethics of different associations of different countries. In the discussion that follows, the code is developed by us and keeps in mind the Indian conditions.)

The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history, are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective. The core values are:

- service
- social justice
- dignity and worth of the person
- importance of human relationships
- integrity
- competence

1) **The Social Worker's Conduct and Behaviour as a Social Worker**

The social worker should act in accordance with the highest standards of personal conduct as a social worker: The social worker should maintain high standards of personal conduct when he/she is dealing with others. High standards of conduct would mean that the social worker should not engage in dishonest acts, cheating and deceit. Usually a person's life is 'divided' into two - professional and personal. The individual's professional life is supposed to be open to public whereas in his/her personal life he/she has the freedom to do as he/she pleases without breaking the law. But the social worker has great responsibility even in his/her personal life. For example, it is unlikely that a social worker can be bigamous and still maintain the community's respect as a guide or leader.

The social worker should strive to achieve a high level of competence and proficiency in the practice of the profession: Pursuit of excellence is a desired

goal of every committed professional, no matter what the field is. Social workers are not different from others in this aspect. A social worker should, in various ways, update his/her knowledge about the areas related to his/her practice.

The social worker should take only those cases which he/she can handle with his/her level of competence. The decision to take up the case should be made after a thorough and impartial study of the facts and circumstances related to the case. After taking up the case, if the social worker at any stage feels that the case is beyond his/her competence, he/she should make arrangements to transfer the case to a more competent professional.

In some cases the social worker may himself/herself or herself undergo stressful situations which may affect his/her performance. The social worker should take professional help and make alternative arrangements for his/her clients. Even, otherwise the social worker should ensure that his/her / her problems do not interfere with his/her behaviour with the client and consequently affect the client adversely. The social worker should not misrepresent his/her qualification, and experience in order to get a job or a promotion. When generally recognized standards do not exist with respect to an emerging area of practice, social workers should exercise careful judgment and take responsible steps (including appropriate education, research, training, consultation, and supervision) to ensure the competence of their work and to protect clients from harm.

The social worker regards as primary the service obligation of the social work profession: Social work as a profession legitimizes its existence by providing effective service to the clients. The social worker is allowed to intervene in the private life of the individual provided that he/she takes responsibility for the same. Acceptance of the client regardless of his/her personal qualities is important in the relationship. The professional should ensure that discriminatory and inhumane actions are not allowed in his/her practice and within his/her sphere of authority.

The social worker should act in accordance with the highest standards of professional integrity and impartiality: The social worker should take care to ensure that social work values and principles are applied in its practice. He/she should be able to resist all harmful influences, the sources of which are within the agency or outside the agency; from colleagues, subordinates or superiors; from bureaucrats, politicians or anybody else who is in a position to do so.

The social worker engaged in study and research should be guided by the conventions of scholarly inquiry: Research in social work is related to human problems and people who are experiencing these problems are more often than not, experiencing severe trauma. The researcher, while collecting information from these sources should take into account the sensitivity of the problem, the impact the process will make on the individual and the impact on the service delivery of the agency on the whole. The researcher should not coerce anybody to participate in the research process. Further care should be taken to ensure that no harm is done to the respondents as a consequence of their participation in the research work.

II) The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Clients

The social worker's primary responsibility is towards the best interests of the client: The social worker is expected to serve the client with full loyalty and to the best of his/her abilities. The phrase 'best interest' is easy to say but difficult

to practice in real life situations. In the Indian situation many aspects related to the client's welfare may have to be compromised as the choices available are very limited. Social welfare programmes and social welfare institutions have their limitations and so does the bureaucracy who manages and implements these programmes. Further, the severity of the social control mechanisms at different levels prevalent in the society limits the scope for independent action by individuals. For example, a woman who is facing harassment by her husband's family for more dowry is most likely to be sent back to her parental home as there are hardly any options. Her parents may not want to keep her in their house for the fear of humiliation and apprehension about her future. In these cases, social workers also have to accept the choices available and act accordingly. But the social worker can do regular follow up visits to check the condition of the woman and prevent further harassment. The social worker should not under any circumstances use the relationship with the client for private benefit.

The social worker should collaborate and consult with fellow social workers and professionals of other disciplines if it serves the interest of the client. In some cases, when other professionals will not be as cooperative as one may want them to be, the social worker should remember that he/she has to take a holistic view of the client and also protect his/her dignity. Hence he/she can set aside his/her ego in the interest of the client.

In the Indian situation, the social worker should see that the client is not discriminated against on the basis of sex, caste, religion, language, ethnicity, marital status, or sexual preference. The social worker's relationship with the client is a professional one and therefore has specific objectives. It would be wrong on the part of the social worker to interfere in those areas of the client's life which are not related to the problem. For example, a social worker may be a moralist who believes that homosexuality is a sin, but his/her / her client who has come to him/her/her for HIV / AIDS counselling may be a homosexual. In such a situation, one should not condemn the patient. It is always advisable to understand the client's problem from his/her perspective.

Rights and Prerogatives of Clients: The social worker should make every effort to foster maximum self-determination on the part of clients. Self determination means giving the client the necessary opportunities, support, confidence and knowledge to make decisions that will affect his/her life. The social worker when confronted with situations where the client cannot make decisions should keep in mind the rights of the clients, his/her socio-cultural situation and other relevant facts that affect the client while making decisions for the client.

Confidentiality and Privacy: The social worker should respect the privacy of the client and hold in confidence all information obtained during the course of professional service. Information regarding the client can be given to those individuals who need to be informed with the knowledge and consent of the client. Information kept in records should be carefully maintained and access to these records should be restricted.

When information has to be shared with others, the social worker should tell the client about it and seek his/her consent. The client's feelings and emotions regarding this should be respected and action may be taken accordingly.

Fees: When setting fees, the social worker should ensure that they are fair, reasonable, considerate, and commensurate with the service performed and with due regard for the clients' ability to pay.

The social worker is not in the profession solely to make money. Social workers should not make their endeavours, merely money making activities. Therefore the social worker should charge fees that are fair and reasonable, taking into consideration the time and expertise he/she has used in course of the service delivery.

It may be noted that unlike in the West, social work practice in India is yet to gain professional status. There is no accrediting body or regulatory body. The common man is not adequately educated or informed about the social work profession and the benefits one can seek from them. As on date, social worker are only employed and paid by agencies and private practice for monetary gain hardly exists.

III) The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Colleagues

Respect, Fairness, and Courtesy: The social worker should treat colleagues with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith. This is applicable to colleagues who are social workers as well as those who belong to other professions.

Dealing with Colleagues' Clients: The social worker has the responsibility to relate to the clients of colleagues with full professional consideration. In case of the absence of the colleagues, the social worker should deal with the clients as he/she deals with his/her own. The social worker should not steal colleague's client, influence them outside the formal channels or try to mar the reputation of the colleague. A colleague's client can be transferred only with the full knowledge and consent of the colleague. However, a client is free to change his/her facilitator on his/her own free will.

IV) The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Employers and Employing Organizations

Social worker as an employee: The social worker should adhere to rules and regulations of the employing agencies. Most agencies have a hierarchy and will assign the social worker a position in an agency. The social worker should try to follow all the legitimate instructions of his/her superiors. The social worker's response to unethical practices in the agency will have to be dealt according to the seriousness of the offense, its adverse effect on the clients and on with society. In no circumstances should the social worker be part of any wrong- doings done by the agency even if he/she is employed by that agency.

V) The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to the Social Work Profession

Maintaining the Integrity of the Profession: The social worker should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge and mission of the profession. The social worker should remember that he/she is part of a larger community of professionals and his/her actions will positively or negatively affect the profession and its professionals. The social worker should take to the appropriate agency any instances of serious wrong-doing by members of the social work profession.

The social worker should not misrepresent his/her professional qualifications and abilities. For example, a social worker should not claim that he/she is a medical doctor even though that may increase his/her credibility with the community and make them more responsive to his/her message.

The social worker should not misrepresent facts regarding the clients even when it seems to benefit them. The profession's credibility and the social worker's credibility will be affected if the impression is given that facts are distorted for that purpose.

The social worker should assist the profession in making social services available to the general public: The social worker's involvement in providing social services does not end with his/her working hours. The social worker should make available his/her time and expertise for efforts which seek improvement in society.

The social worker should take responsibility for identifying, developing, and fully utilizing knowledge for professional practice: The pursuit of new knowledge and clarifying issues pertaining to existing knowledge is an important aim in any profession. The social worker should participate in the continuous process of updating knowledge and skills and keep himself/herself informed about the latest developments in the discipline.

VI) The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Society

Promoting the General Welfare: The social worker should promote the general welfare of society. The social work should participate in all efforts which seek to eradicate social problems of discrimination and exclusion, violation of human rights and promotion of equality.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What should be the conduct of the social workers towards other professionals working with him/her/hers?

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4.7 PROBLEMS FACED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

Ethical decision-making is difficult in any society as it can result in adverse consequences for the social worker. She/he/she may have to suffer losses because her/ his/her decisions more often than not harm the interests of some individuals or groups that intend to benefit from the situation.

Crisis of Values in Indian Society

Many social scientists have commented on the crises of values in Indian society. Values of honesty, propriety, concern for others, accountability among government officials and corporates, are seen as lacking in Indian society. According to some,

the crises are caused because we have forgotten our ancient values. For others, crises of value have been caused because Indian society is still undergoing the modernization process. Social workers have to live and work in such situations and are naturally affected.

Voluntary Associations as a Money-making Venture

The availability of large funds from international and national donors as well as local and government sources have led to the setting up of numerous voluntary agencies. Many of these agencies claim to work for the people but the real purpose seems to be to make money. Corruption, misappropriation of funds, lack of accountability and improper accounting procedures are some of the allegations that are made against these agencies. In the process, the very purpose and ideals of setting up VOs and NGOs get defeated.

Lack of Common Perspectives in Social Work Related Issues

In many ways, Indian society is in a state of transition. Certain issues related to individual autonomy, collective orientation, individual rights and responsibilities are difficult to resolve in any society. Indian society, caught between traditional and modern forces, faces a number of problems related to such issues. Also different groups are influenced by Westernization to varying degrees. All these cause problems for social workers in interpersonal relationships.

Powerlessness of the Social Worker

The social worker, in many cases, intends to do the work with propriety but lacks the power to do so. There are other institutions and authorities on which the social worker has to depend on while facing difficult situations. Their methods of functioning are very often found to be different from that of the social worker. Sometimes there are problems of lack of accountability, the negligence of staff, vested interests and even the presence of criminals in welfare institutions. The social worker has no choice but to go along with these as he/she has no power to change the situation. At best, he/she can achieve minimal changes. Anything beyond this involves risk and not every one can afford to go to that extent.

Lack of Support from the Civil Society

In India the social work profession has not gained much recognition from the government and the society at large. The misdeeds of a few social workers, many of them not even professionals, (sadly, Indian society does not distinguish between professional and voluntary social workers) have contributed to the loss of image and the moral authority of social workers. People suspect social workers of having ulterior motives when they take up social issues. All these have resulted in lack of public support for the social worker and weakened his/her power to achieve social change.

Lack of Professional Bodies and Professional Support

The existence of a professional body can give the much needed training and support for social work professionals. Secondly, if any social worker is being harassed for legitimately raising relevant issues the professional body can give him/her support. This will enable social workers to take up public causes without fear.

Lack of Importance Given to Studying and Discussing Professional Ethics

While all social work educators consider social work ethics to be important, it is given secondary importance in the curriculum. Students frequently consider it to be idealistic, rather than something, which should be practiced in the field. In fact, social work syllabuses of many universities in India do not have ethics as a component for classroom teaching.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Mention two reasons which make ethical decision-making difficult in Indian context.

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4.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed social work ethics, its importance in practice and some of the problems associated with ethical decision-making in the Indian context. Ethics deals with 'what ought to be'. It helps the social worker to simplify the complex situations in which he/she will often find himself/herself. The social worker has to meet the high standards the codes recommend. In the process it is not only the social worker's personal credibility which is affected when a social worker misbehaves, but the credibility of the whole profession.

There are many problems regarding ethical decision-making and we have discussed some of them here. These problems show that the social worker should be extremely careful while making decisions which affect powerful people. Unless social workers get adequate recognition from society and the government, it would be difficult to bring about any basic changes in society. Till this happens, the social work discipline will remain a secondary profession in society.

As mentioned earlier, one necessary step in gaining social recognition, is the formation of a professional social work association which has the sanction of the government and which will have adequate authority to control the members' professional practice and conduct. The association will have as its members only professionals who are qualified social workers and the office bearers will be elected on the basis of popular vote.

4.9 KEY WORDS

Utilitarianism

: Utilitarianism says that what is morally right is whatever produces the greatest overall pleasure or happiness. Consequently, it can allow an

action, which results in the suffering of a few people if the total effect on society is positive. Other actions which utilitarian can support are abortion and euthanasia if it results in happiness for the individual concerned.

Civil society

- : Civil society has been defined differently by different writers. Here it refers to all forms of associations in the society that are outside the government and which are voluntary in nature. Civil society will include agencies like mass media agencies, voluntary organizations, trade unions, development agencies and professional organizations.

Social Darwinism

- : Darwin gave the theory of the 'survival of the fittest' which said that some members of a species survived and others became extinct because the former had some innate qualities which enabled them to win over the weaker ones. Drawing an analogy for human society, Social Darwinism believes that the people who have the necessary qualities will triumph over others and the losers deserve to be eliminated, not physically but socially.

4.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

British Association of Social Work, (2003), Code of Ethics.

Gensler, Harry J, (1988), Ethics. A Contemporary Introduction, Routledge, London.

National Association of Social Work (USA), (2003), Code of Ethics, US.

4.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Social workers deal with problem-solving in human relationships. In the process the social worker gains information about the client which can be used to the client's disadvantage. Secondly, clients are often found to be in an emotionally weak state which a social worker can exploit for personal gains. These two consequences should be avoided. Three, social workers have to maintain their credibility in society.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) The social worker should treat other professionals with courtesy, understanding and respect. They must obey the legitimate orders of their superiors. With fellow social workers, they must have a good working relationship. They must always keep in mind the welfare of the client.

Check You Progress III

- 1) Social workers in India do not have professional bodies which can support them in difficult circumstances and secondly Indian society is undergoing a crises of values as values are being questioned. This has affected every section of the society including social workers.

