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POVERTY AND INCOME INEQUALITY IN INDIA: SOCIAL WORK RESPONSES

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SOCIAL WORK INITIATIVES IN THE DIRECTION OF EMPOWERMENT OF MARGINALISED GROUPS IN REDUCING POVERTY AND MAINTAINING ECONOMIC EQUALITY

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Introduction

Indian society has been marked by social, political and economic inequalities since millennia and vast section of people have been subjugated on the basis of class, caste, religion, gender, lineage, disability and sexual preference. Marginalization can be determined by considering the condition of marginalized persons and their style life. Most important life problems in marginalized areas are consisting unemployment. As a result, they continue to suffer due to poverty, hunger, ill health, social and cultural alienation. The laws such as Right to Information need to become a tool for the marginalised groups to enquire certain aspects of their marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination. Social Work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and empower Individuals to achieve well-being of the community have expressed. Social work is benefiting from theories of human behaviour and social systems and through interfering with one another to create a balance between individuals and their environment. The skills of social workers may be employed to alleviate adverse social conditions through their operational public, private, civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations. Through them social workers provide a wide variety of social services to meet social needs or mitigate social problems.

What is Social Marginalization?

Marginalization is a slippery and multi-layered concept. Whole societies can be marginalized at the global level while classes and communities can be marginalized from the dominant social order. Similarly, ethnic groups, families or individuals can be marginalized within localities. To a certain extent, marginalization is a shifting phenomenon, linked to social status. So, for example, individuals or groups might enjoy high social status at one point in time, but as social change takes place, so they lose this status and become marginalized. Similarly, as life cycle stages change, so might people's marginalized position.

Poverty and Economic Marginality in Brief

People who are experiencing marginalization are likely to have tenuous involvement in the economy. The sources of their income will vary. Some will be waged and some will depend on state benefits, marginal economic activity such as casual work, or charity. It is not unusual for people to combine, or move between, these various ways of getting money in their struggle for survival. Poverty, dependency, and feelings of shame are everyday aspects of economic dislocation and social marginalization. These experiences affect men and women differently and vary with age. Poverty and economic marginalization have both direct and indirect impacts on socio-economic conditions of the people.

Financial Inclusion of the Marginalised for Economic Equality: Some Glimpses of Union Budget 2017-18

Budget is one of the important tools of financial planning and it reflects the political economy of the country and priorities of the Government. The Finance Minister of India has presented the Union Budget of Rs.21.47 lakh crore for the financial year 2016-17 in the Lok Sabha recently. There has been mixed response to the Budget from different quarters but the allocation for social sector, rural areas,

farmers, SCs, STs, women and children is quite significant. It is told in the Budget speech that the Government wants to ensure the distribution of the fruits of growth to farmers, workers, the poor, SCs, STs, women and other vulnerable sections. The allocation for skill development and rural livelihood opportunities has increased. It is targeted for mason training in rural areas to supplement the housing and infrastructure construction work in rural areas. It is expected that all these schemes will bring qualitative change in the rural areas and generate employment but the effectiveness and proper implementation of these programmes have been a matter of concern where there has been no improvement in matters of transparency and accountability of public spending in rural areas. In spite of allocation, MGNREGS has not reached to the job needy card holders. It is a fact that everywhere machines have been deployed in place of human labour. However, in the Budget it has been targeted to build farm pond and compost pits out of this programme but some of the issues may get resolved with the increased allocations. The plan for using space technology to plan MGNREGS as digital scrutiny will bring qualitative improvement.

Social Work Intervention with the marginalized sections

Social Work other than the great importance given to equality between individuals and try to make this community is equal. There is increasing recognition of the primary role of social work in promoting social development. This role is very critical in situations of persistent poverty since poverty has a crippling effect on the functioning and well-being of individuals in society. In view of this, social work has a critical role to play in contributing to efforts towards poverty eradication and the promotion of social development. From the review of literature, there is no doubt that many plans, programmes and strategies have been put in place to address the issues of poverty and economic inequality in India. The detailed explanation is mentioned with regard to social work intervention in the direction of empowerment of the marginalised in reducing poverty and maintaining economic equality in Indian context.

Social Casework

In modern societies where traditional norms and values have either broken, or are fast breaking down, situations. This situation is being faced by the marginal communities too. The idea of a social worker acting as a caseworker or a counselor is a recurrent and powerful notion in social work throughout its history, and has also been closely associated with some of the key values of social work and particularly recognizing the inherent worth of the individual and respecting him or her. Social Case workers are required to mitigate the effects of these problems. Their role in providing support and a sense of belonging to maladjusted persons cannot be overestimated. Using their professional skills and knowledge, social case workers help in assessing the clients' needs and applying agency, community and public welfare resources and programmes to address relevant social, health or economic problems. (http://www.social workers.org).

Social Group Work

Social Work initiatives assist the marginalized sections in their various problems like Drug and alcoholism, unemployed school leavers, juvenile offenders, criminals, people with physical and mental disabilities, older adults, are among many groups that call for social work intervention in contemporary societies. Social workers play a crucial role by joining hands with the government and NGOs in formulating and implementing social policies and programmes for assisting such needy and vulnerable groups. It emphasizes the use of creative groups as a vehicle for change, and group members' participation and democratic control is considered to be highly essential (Reid, 1983 as cited in DuBouis and Miley, 2005). It offers opportunities for learning, joint action, role modeling, relationship building, empowerment and change (Brown, 2002).

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Community Organization

Community organization is currently one of the most popular methods of social work worldwide. This method or approach places much emphasis on self-help projects and programs which are undertaken by the people themselves to meet their own felt needs and advance their overall economic and social development. Community organization entails bringing people together to deal with shared problems and to increase their say about decisions that affect their lives. This approach also entails engaging in a broad range of social change activities, including advocacy with and on behalf of the community for reform underlying social, political, and economic conditions that undermine human dignity, Community organization addresses problem such as lack affordable housing, drug abuse, discrimination and lack of access to health care. Community organizing helps develop people's skills, their sense of efficacy and competence, and their sense of worth; it also creates capacity for democracy and for sustained social change. Apart from rural areas, community welfare programmes play an important part in urban development schemes. Slum clearance, rehabilitation of mental patients, vocational rehabilitation, provision of recreational facilities and low-income housing programmes are common examples.

Social Work Administration

Social Work Administration is crucial in shaping institutional or organizational structures which facilitate the achievement of national goals. These goals are not restricted to welfare ones only, but extend over technical, economic, agricultural and whatever other desirables may be an integral part of national development. Social work administrators provide services to a variety of clients to improve their quality of life. More specifically, social work administration is a practice intervention used by social workers to achieve service effectiveness and organizational change. (http://depts.washington.ed)

Social Work Research

Social Work Research facilitates the investigation and analysis of social needs and problems of the marginalized sections and provides directions to policies and actions that help to make remedial goals identifiable and achievable. The intervention design helps to assess the realistic nature of the problem and also the impact assessment to know about the outcome of the problem solving mechanisms. Social workers conduct social research to investigate the causes of social problems such as poverty, homelessness and substance abuse which hinder national development and to evaluate the effectiveness of agency programme operations aimed at mitigating such problems. Their research findings are analyzed and recommendations made regarding remedial policies and programmes. (http://www.social workers.org). Krysk and Finn (2007) observe that social workers are expected to use research to boost the profession's scientific status and as a tool for improving social conditions.

Social Work Initiatives with the Children

Parents of children in need and children at risk often have physical, social, economic or health problems of various kinds. Adults of working age may have more than one disabling condition, exacerbated by obstacles reflecting stigma, poverty, exclusion and discrimination. Amongst older people, ageing presents an increasing range of physical, sensory, intellectual, emotional and psychological challenges, coupled often with environmental and economic limitations.

The prime focus for work with children and families is the well-being of the children. Children should be assisted to overcome barriers that create inequality. Social work skills, knowledge and persistence may be needed to establish working relationships of trust, find the key to engaging the family's cooperation and interest, identify the issues with the family, lead

Those through the process of assessment help them participate in determining the direction of change and ensure their aims, capacities and plans are identified and developed. Social workers may

also help children and parents to maintain any changes made. Social work requires controlled, emotional commitment, readily discernible as present or lacking to most users. Social workers have to take the decision and maintain the commitment.

Social Work Intervention working with the Aged

Most of the outcomes sought through social work intervention are common to work with adults of working age and with older people. Social work with the aged entails:

- Working together with the person and others on strategies for their empowerment, independence and control of their own lives

- Identifying the person's abilities, assets and potential for capacity-building, and enabling them to develop to the full

- Assisting the person to explore and access alternative living situations, including those with the benefits of smart housing and housing-based support schemes

- Assisting the person with their assessment of their support needs and preferred solutions, and with securing satisfactory arrangements

- Where the person wishes, helping them to access direct payments and establish and manage support arrangements to their specifications

- Assisting the person and their family through the transition to higher levels of support needs, whether through increased disability, ill-health or bereavement, or in order to access opportunities for independence and participation

Strengths and Challenges of Social Workers working with the Marginalized Groups

Social work has the skills to promote the participation of socially excluded groups, to manage change, negotiate conflicts and build on capacity. Social Work skills are often deployed to good effect in collaborative work with other professionals, either in on-going multi-disciplinary teams or in ad hoc joint work around the needs of an individual or family. The distinctive social work contribution combines a developing body of knowledge and skills, a set of core values and priorities, and a range of personal qualities. Perceptions of social work's relatively weak professional status are also reflected in ambivalent relationships with employers and government. It is argued that the social worker's job is too narrowly defined by the local authority, with an over-emphasis on prescribed responses. Social workers feel hemmed in by procedures and bureaucratic requirements imposed by government guidance and local authority rationing and accountability requirements, severely limiting their contact time with people and their scope for professional discretion.

Social Work Responses to empower the Marginalized Groups

The different stages and aspects of social work intervention working with the marginalised groups are in practice. Among them only a few are listed below:

1. Identifying the problem to overcome

Social work's distinctive contribution is to use empathy, communication and relationship skills to achieve acknowledgement that change is needed. A change in organisational response may be required. Both individuals and organisations may need to be convinced of the need for change.

2. Assessing the Situation

At an early stage of contact social work involves assessment of the family situation through appraisal of what is seen and heard in contact with the family in and out of the home, through careful interviewing, enabling members of the family to express their feelings and views, and through communication with other organisations and professionals in contact with the family. The social worker

will lead the family through the process, highlighting and explaining the importance of examining the various kinds of information. Social workers will use a range of knowledge, models and frameworks to decide what information is needed and to assess the information collected.

3. Empowering the Family

Social Workers seek to enable family members to identify both what they want and the extent to which they are able, with or without help, to achieve those ends. They will discuss ways of achieving those things that the family cannot currently achieve and develop plans for achieving them.

4. Dealing with conflicting needs and wishes

Social workers must take the various factors taken into consideration with regard to the views, wishes, needs and tensions of the family members. Consulting with others they must judge what action should be taken in the best interests of the children, though where there is a dispute with parents it will be the children's hearing tribunal that makes the 'final' decision.

5. Achieving change, meeting goals:

The social worker's skills in counselling may help the parent(s) identify why they are not attaining their goals, what they need to do to meet their own and their child's needs. The social worker may develop and implement a programme of work with the parent(s) or child, negotiate for another professional to undertake a programme of work with parent(s) or child or negotiate access to day care, respite care, welfare benefits, any or all of which may relieve stress or exhaustion.

Personal Qualities of Social Worker dealing with the Marginalised Groups

Practicing social work effectively in dealing with the marginalised sections is a demanding task. It requires the social worker to develop and maintain high levels of knowledge and skill, and to possess a number of personal qualities. These include:

- The ability to apply core social work values as a basis for decision-making in situations of complexity, uncertainty and competing or conflicting interests.
- The capacity to tolerate uncertainty and anxiety and not to close down options prematurely.
- A mature, unthreatened sense of their own identity.
- Good emotional intelligence and an ability to establish relationships in situations of challenge and risk.
- Clarity in assessing and responding to situations involving complex relationships and risks.
- Flexibility in analysing human situations and developing creative solutions.
- The intellectual curiosity to stay up-to-date and develop a broad understanding of people and their circumstances.
- Acceptance of multiple, sometimes competing accountabilities.

Conclusion

The contributions social work makes to development are many and varied. These contributions have been discussed through the presentation of the various approaches or strategies employed by social workers throughout the world and the role of social work in its totality in the history and present realities of development, in the developed and developing countries. The most important contribution of social work perhaps is the consideration it gives to the human and social sides of development. This is essential in order to avoid high material and economic standards without consequent matches in human and social standards.

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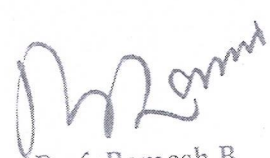
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