CHAPTER-8

Counselling & Rehabilitation of Women Desertion: A Social Work Perspective
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COUNSELLING AND REHABILITATION OF WOMEN DESERTEES: A SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE

Social work is a recent offshoot of social science. It deals with social disorganization, both individual and group-related.

Social work has been defined by the Sixth International Conference of Social Work (1952) as a process which makes it possible for the individual to achieve his/ her maximum potential through existing institutions or to modify existing institutions to provide a healthier environment – physical, emotional, social and spiritual – in which the individuals may grow and function to the fullest of their individual capacities.

Social work does not concern itself only with certain vulnerable groups at a particular point of time but it is concerned with overall strengthening of client groups through entities such as development and growth of spirit of self-help and self-determination, self-reliance, organizational development and growth of indigenous leadership. Mobilization of people and maximizing their participation therefore would demand both institutionalization and socialization of the process of social change.

Social work is preventive and developmental. Conventionally social work functions are defined in terms of “restoration of impaired capacity, provision of individual and social resources and prevention of social dysfunction. In the initial phases, social work was more concerned with
remedial activities, and only marginally tried to highlight the need for social reform and change, thus, emphasizing the need to integrate preventive and remedial approach on a continuum (Panwalkar, 1987).

In the following pages, an attempt is made to propose remedial measures through social work methods to woman desertion in the context of family disorganization and marital disruption and maladjustment.

8.1 Issues of Woman Desertion

The thesis has revealed that woman desertion has to be tackled from two sides:

1. Preventive, and
2. Developmental.

It has been observed that the very institution of family is in a state of disintegration. Since it is not in a position to adapt itself to the challenges of modern forces, it needs to be strengthened through external support. Mohsin (1972), in his article “Nature and Scope of Family Welfare Services in India” says that welfare services are provided to families as it is generally recognized that the family in our age needs outside help to meet the material, social and psychological needs of its members. According to Kumarappa (1941), the family is in need of outside help when it is faced with a crisis in order to prevent it from breaking down. Such a situation is created by a variety of factors such as lack of money, illness, existence of a physically or mentally handicapped member, or an unhealthy emotional situation, which creates problems of human relationships. Often these factors are so intermingled that it becomes difficult to identify the real cause of the family trouble. M.S.Gore (1968), suggests “in all those situations in which a number of economic, social and emotional problems are intermingled with each other, families need outside help as they feel

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1 See also Prasad’s Social Work as a Profession (1987).
inadequate to meet these challenges satisfactorily by themselves. These situations become more complicated in the Indian setting as there is a great variety in the composition of Indian families. There exist in our society both traditional joint families and modern nuclear families. Both of them have a number of dependents such as widows or orphans or unemployed relations. Because of the lack of universal coverage under public assistance programmes in the case of old age, sickness, unemployment, etc. the family has to shoulder greater financial responsibilities, which naturally create a number of economic, social and emotional problems and generate unbearable tensions and strains (p. 294).

D.Paul Choudhary (1972), in his article “Strengthening the Family through Social Services” says that traditionally the Indian joint family, whose members were bound together by strong ties, functioned as the country’s main social security protection. But the process of industrialization and the growth of urban centres have weakened to a large extent the traditional Indian family and, in some cases it is no longer possible for the joint family to look after all its members. The unitary family that is now emerging comprises husband, wife and children, though not infrequently dependent parents also live with them. The changes taking place in the joint family have to ascertain social problems such as broken homes, neglected children, juvenile delinquency, neglect of the aged and the handicapped. These social problems, it would appear, have become more widespread because of the breakdown of the basic social security protection formerly provided by the institution of the joint family.

It is clear that family disorganization could be prevented to a great extent by providing welfare services to the disorganized or those in the process of disorganization.
V in his article *Family Welfare* (1968) proposes many welfare services for needy families. To quote: Families in all parts of India need support and protection. This can come generally through State policies and directly from social services and social welfare services and social services including family welfare services.

In order to prevent woman desertion, the following strategies may be proposed so as to strengthen family organization.

1. Identification of breaking/broken families, especially from rural areas and urban slums and areas that need help.
2. Employment opportunities for both men and women.
4. Family counseling: Counselling is an activity through which a better perception of one’s problems, understandings and misunderstandings, capacities, abilities and potentialities, and provide appropriate remedies. It has been observed in the thesis that institutional relationships between members of the family in general and the different subsets – brothers-sisters, parents and spouses – in particular, is breaking down. New family relationships have to be built on the basis of interpersonal relations characterized by equality of sex, age and class status. This system necessitates that individuals and groups should take others into confidence and maintain the relationships. Lack of understanding between members might lead to family breakdown. Under such conditions, family counseling is very important. Ranjan Amin (1972) speaks of providing guidance to parents and adolescents.
8.2 Marital Counselling

Marital counseling is becoming an important remedial measure to solve marital conflicts. It has been observed that three factors have caused marital conflicts:

1. Low age at marriage,
2. Husbands’ rash and violent behaviour and,

1. Low Age at Marriage in modern society has become more a problem in modern than was the case in traditional society. Young married women in their early years of marriage happen to be suffering from social, psychological and sexual crises. They are not prepared to face family life. The husband and wife on the one hand and mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law on the other, are not able to build healthy relationships on personal basis. There are cases where more than 5 per cent of the young married deserted their husbands within 6-10 months of marriage. There are more than 30 per cent cases of those who deserted the family due to harassments by the mother-in-law, who was herself in fear of losing her son. Woman desertion due to marital conflicts can be resolved through marital counseling. D.Mohan (1972) in his article “Pre-marriage and Marriage Counselling” suggests ways and means of helping the young and newly married girls to adapt themselves to the new roles and statuses. Pre-marital and marital counseling provides the necessary expertise both in terms of dissemination of knowledge as well as essential action fulfilling an essential role. (p. 33). Similar use of counseling techniques are suggested by Purnima Mane in her article “Research on Marital counseling and Therapy in India: Relevance and Priorities for Indian Practice” (1991).

8.3 Empathy

Empathy is one of the techniques of counseling. In a general sense empathy means ‘If I were you’. In other words it means: What would have
happened if I were in your position’. It means looking at our problems from their point of view of others not from our point of view.

According to Keef (1976), empathy refers to a set of behaviours that constitute a skill central to effective social work intervention at every level. In the words of Udai Parik (1960), empathy is the ability to perceive the mood and feelings of another person. It is understanding of the feelings, sufferings or situation of another person without these feelings communicated by words. It thus denotes the understanding of the behaviour of another on the basis of one’s own experience and behaviour. It has been observed that much of woman desertion occurs due to lack of an objective understanding of one’s situation, of view, mental condition, feelings and emotions. Use of empathy as a method of knowing each other may solve problems of desertion and divorce.

8.4 Rehabilitation of Women Desertees

This section deals with the programmes with which the problems of women desertees could be minimized.

1. **Registration of Women Desertees**: At present, there does not seem to be any provision of registering women desertees. Desertion, legally, is recognized as a ‘waiting period’ for a pending case of divorce. But desertion as a full status condition is not recognized. The deserted status is in the balance. Therefore, the government by passing legislation, should register them so as to make them eligible for various welfare services.

2. **Censes of Women Desertees**: Regular socioeconomic surveys of women desertees should be conducted by the government itself. It will give a picture for their intervention measures.

3. **Improvement in Economic Condition**: A majority of the women desertees are in a state of poor financial condition. They must be
provided help under SHGs and other small scale industries, for their overall development.

4. **Promotion of Associations and Organizations**: Women desertees should be encouraged to promote and organize associations so as to enable themselves to fight for their rights.

5. **Provision for Sites, Houses and LIC**: Women desertees should be given housing sites, low-income-group houses and LIC facilities not only for themselves but also for their children.

6. According to Shyamala Pappu (1987), the following measures should be provided to women desertees:

   “At present there are no organized welfare measures provided for such women at the government level. Only a few voluntary agencies have undertaken employment programmes. Provision should be made in law for reservation in government jobs and jobs in state-owned undertakings/corporations/companies under the enabling provisions of the Constitution. Article 15(3) of the constitution of India provides that the State can make beneficent provisions for the advancement of women and under this clause a small percentage of reservation can be made for needy, weak and vulnerable women. Such an action will be in consonance with the Constitution and will not violate any of the provisions of the Constitution”.

REFERENCES


