Chapter-6

Implications for Social Work Practice

In common parlance, social work has been perceived as benevolent activities for the poor, disabled and marginalised in the society. It was known as alms giving, relief work, charity work and upliftment of the needy and poor across the globe. In ancient period poor, needy, handicapped and widows were taken care of, by the joint families, communities and religious institutions. However, the change in political economy across the world changed the embedded social security measures, institutional structures and systematic set up.

Development in outlook of the cities and change in mode of production from agriculture to industry based, created different social problems which impacted the existing social security measures and institutions. The expansion of cities, paradigm shift in nature of human living, large scale migration and concentration across the peripheries of cities created a cosmopolitan viewpoint. Hence, to respond to emerging social problems due to distorted relationship between family members and communities, society develops institutional mechanisms which are called social welfare agencies. Later on, it was felt that problems need more scientific response and therefore social work domain paved the way.

The humanities, social sciences and political sciences domain have coined and used different terms like social welfare, social reform, social security, social assistance, social justice and social legislation to qualify development process witnessed by people in the society. Social welfare is basically aiming to provide basic economic necessities, high standard of health and living conditions and well being of the backward communities and vulnerable groups. It is mostly rendered by Government agency for the benefit of people through different schemes, services and programs to improve the status of people.

In Indian context there were practices of untouchability, child marriage, polygamy, prohibition of widow remarriage, Sati, Debadasi system, which were considered as social evils and roadblocks for social development. The social reform had been a
deliberate process to bring changes in community practices, beliefs, values and institutions, towards eradication of these social evils.

Social security is basically a protection shield provided by certain organizations against certain risks for community members. Social assistance is sub-set of social security provided in the form of financial aid by appropriate Government to identified persons and families to respond to emergencies arising due to some external factors.

Social justice is the heart and bedrock for social work practice. It creates equal opportunity and equal resources for all, irrespective of their social and economic status. It stems out from nation’s constitution and international treaties. In Indian perspective, social justice is denied to large sections of people like Dalit, children, women, scheduled tribes and displaced communities. Hence, social work as a profession has accountability to restore justice. It must be noted that, social work operates through the principle of human rights and social justice.

As a subject, “social work” has travelled a long path and re-orchestrated itself with scientific body of knowledge, conceptual and practice framework in diversified context. It has been acknowledged as inter-disciplinary subject to address human problems in the existing environment by exploring his/her strength and adopting multi-disciplinary approaches.

Social work as a practice deals with various social problems and issues with systematic and scientific approaches. It helps and enables human being to respond to crisis that evolves out of defunct relationship with the environment and existing stakeholders in the human setting. Social work mobilizes oppressed, victims of injustice and inequality and endeavours to resolve the socio-economic disparity and promotes social change process. Thus, it is an empowering process, which helps individual, groups and communities to challenge the unjust systems and establish justice for growth and development.

Social work as interdisciplinary subject, in its various forms, responds to multiple complex relationships between people and environment. It has been theorised and conceptualised by different academician, practitioner and commentator in different times across the world.
In 1942, Fink opined that “social work is provision of services designed to aid individuals, singly or in groups, in coping with present or future social and psychological obstacles that prevent or are likely to prevent, full or effective participation in the society”. This perspective throws light on enhancing the capacities to cope with the problems and advocates for fullest participation in the society.

In 1955, Friedlander described social work as “a professional service, based on scientific knowledge and skill in human relations, which assist individuals alone or in groups to obtain social and personal satisfaction and independence”. In this note, we got introduction of professional service which is characterised by body of knowledge, values and core of ethics.

H. H Stroup in 1960, defined Social work as “the art of bringing various resources bear on individual, group and community needs by the application of a scientific method of helping people to help themselves”. From this note, we can argue that social work is an art and science.

Ralph W Tyler (1952, 55) once wrote that “professional activity involves complex tasks which are performed by the artistic application of major principles and concepts” (Sheafor, Horejsi and Horejsi; 1994). It can be construed that, social workers bring changes through innovative skills, abilities and artistic abilities. Professional training and work experiences actually build the artistic abilities for social workers.

In 1956, first working definition of social work practice was developed by NASW as “social work practice is the responsible, conscious, disciplined use of self in a relationship with an individual or groups. Through this relationship, the practitioner facilitates interaction between the individual and his /her social environment”.

Konopka (1958) noted that, “social work is an entity representing three clearly distinguished but inter-related parts- a network of social services, carefully developed methods and process and social policy expressed through social institutions and individuals. All three are based on a view of human being, their relationship and ethical demands made on them”.

It is a voluntary service rendered by individuals or expert agencies using different methods to influence the relationship of human being and immediate environment.
The mission is to enable people to develop their full potential, bring quality in the relationships and prevent from any form of dysfunction. Thus, it is a service towards solving the problem and bringing positive changes in the lives of human being. Therefore, social workers are change makers in the society.

The National association of social workers (NASW) in 1970 came up with a working definition in its Model Statute Social Worker’s License act as “professional activity of helping individuals, families, groups and communities to enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and for creating societal conditions favourable to this goal”.

In 1984, Curriculum policy statement developed by Council on Social work Education described social work practice as a helping process intended to elevate the ability of people to “accomplish life tasks, alleviate distress and realize individual and collective aspirations”.

It must be noted that, social work profession operates in preventive approaches and thus puts effort to prevent problems in human life, community and society and also enhance the social functioning. Though social work is accountable to enhance the social functioning of all people but throughout the history this discipline has worked with vulnerable groups, people at risk, oppressed and marginalized. Moreover, it has worked with the people rather than for the people.

In 2001, The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) defined social work profession as it “promotes social change, problem solving in human relationship and the empowerment, liberation of people to enhance well being. Utilizing the theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environment. The principles of human rights and social justice are the fundamental to social work”.

The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) General Assembly and IFSW General Meeting in July 2014 approved that “Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social
sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing”. Thus, we can wrap up by saying that social work is accountable to promote social change, social development, social cohesion, empowerment and liberation of the people.

In Indian context, academicians and social work practitioners have attempted to co-create the construct of social work concept and its definitions. According to Sushil Chandra (1954) “Social work is a dynamic activity undertaken by public or private effort in the implementation of social policy, with a view to raise the standard of living and to bring about social, economic, political and cultural well-being of the individual, family and the group with society irrespective of its stage of social development.”

In 1957, Indian Conference on Social Work evolved the definition as “Social work is a welfare activity based on humanitarian philosophy, scientific knowledge and technical skill for helping individuals or community, to live a rich and full life.”

S.K.Khinduka (1962) opined that Social work, “help an individual in his social functioning. It is based on certain knowledge foundation, call for skill in human relationship on the part of its practitioner, and has a set of values furnishing its philosophical base.”

In 1969, Mirza R Ahmed described “Social work is professional service based on knowledge of human relations and skill relationship and concerned with problem of intra-personal and or inter-personal adjustments resulting from unmet individual, group, or community need.”

Moorthy and Rao (1970) noted that social work is “help rendered to any person or group, who is suffering from any disability, mental, physical, emotional or moral, so that the individual or group so helped is enabled to help himself or itself.”

From these above mentioned definitions and commentary it can be summarized that social work is

- a professional service
• it is being provided by professionals
• it works on humanitarian philosophy which intends to increase prosperity and happiness
• it has scientific body of knowledge
• it addresses the psycho-social problems of human being
• it takes up the person and environment in totality
• it intends to develop community resources to solve the individual’s problem
• the relationship is key foundation in social work practice
• social work discipline and its perspectives believe that social problems is product of malfunctioning of social institutions
• it analyses the client problems from the lens of bio-psycho-socio-cultural functioning

Contemporary definition of Social work:-

Since from its inception, social work practice aims to focus on human needs and striving for developing human potential, human rights perspectives and framework along with the perspectives of social justice has been driving force for social work in this world. The discipline with its evolving perception has embraced diverse disciplines and theories of human behaviour.

The practice has shown trajectory of qualitative engagement, by the trained personnel, with vulnerable groups, excluded communities, disadvantaged sections for their justice, inclusion and rights. The empowering process enables individual, groups and communities to attain standard of life. It has been conceptualised as an art and science by the commentator and academicians. It is an art and requires specific skills to understand people and human relationship.

Social work as science:- Social work is not the science like other pure science subjects i.e mathematics, physics, chemistry, zoology, botany etc. But Social work as a discipline uses scientific knowledge from other fields and builds its theoretical perspectives and practice framework. Social work as science has its own scientific approaches and scientific body of knowledge. The approach is embedded with specific methods, principles, techniques, tools, values and code of ethics.
In social work profession, social workers collects, consolidates and analyses the evidence to define the social functioning of people. Social worker applies observation, experiences, conducts studies towards formulation of new techniques, programs and perspectives, uses data as evidence, examines the effectiveness of interventions and their impact on the social functioning of people and critically evaluates ideas and practices mentioned in other professions.

**Approaches of Social work:-**

The Social work practice does operate through three basic approaches. The Therapeutic approaches calls for enhancing psychological and emotional well being of persons who face difficulties in quality transactions with his/her immediate environment. It also enhances the well being of people who face coping problems in the family, community and larger society. The maintenance approach talks about repairing the existing situation and facilities in the society. It calls for improvement in the physical conditions and helps people adjust in the society. The emancipation approach is most contemporary in the discipline and talks about social change in its system and structure. It works for social justice and intends to restore rights of the oppressed.

**Types of Social Work practice:-**

In social work practice, we often see direct intervention by the social worker in the form of rendering direct services. In this process, social workers meet the clients. It may be understood as clinical social work. National Association of social workers (1991) defined clinical social work as “professional application of social work theory and methods to the treatment and prevention of psycho-social dysfunction, disability, impairment, including mental and emotional disorders.” Clinical social work encompasses intervention directed to interpersonal interactions, intra-psychic dynamics, and life support and management issues. In this chapter, the researcher has attempted to explore the implications to deal with malnutrition issues and its victims from the clinical social work perspectives.

Sheafor, Horejsi and Horejsi (1997) explored the social work interventions from the perspective of size of client systems. They coined the term as micro, mezzo, macro level of social work practice. In micro level practice, social workers focus on
interpersonal relationship in the family, child and parents and family members. In macro level practice social worker engages with the larger system of society and works in the domain of social policy analysis, advocacy, resource mobilization, administration etc. It explains work of social workers in an agency setting, community setting and society as a whole. In mezzo level practice social worker includes the relationship among individuals, self help groups, therapy groups, peers at school. Thus it may be concluded that, social work is an application of behaviour theories aiming towards building positive relationship amongst human being and its environment and promotes social change.

**Origin and development of Social Work in India :-**

In India, we can trace the practice of social service as charity for soul purification process since vedic period. The Rigveda, Upnishads and other mythological books carry the history of charity. In this period, social services were performed by Yajnas. By the later part of vedic age, Dana(charity) became institutionalized. It has linear relationship with the concept of acquiring punya( merit). Thus, the main inspiration of social work actually stems out from religious teaching.

The evolution of Buddhism in India was a historic moment which called for egalitarian society and focused on Karma. This era embraced the values of Karma, Dana and Punya and Sangha. The Sanghas were the centre for spreading literacy in the country.

In Mughal era, we have seen the contribution of kings like Humayun and Akbar for the cause of society. Akbar was the first architect of comprehensive systems of poor relief in the country. He demonstrated his liberal priority by granting land and resources for all religions in India. The commencement of British era marked with change in mode of production. Paradigm shift in the economy from agriculture to industrialization process took place and created many social problems.

India is a country blessed with many social reformers who have contributed a lot to eradicate the social maladies in 19th century. Raja Rammohan Roy was the greatest icon in Indian history who worked for abolition of Sati in West Bengal and more over focused on the religious and social reforms. He advocated for women liberty and education for the social development process. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, was the
second pioneer in this field and struggled to establish importance of women’s education and prohibition of polygamy. He advocated for widow remarriage. Joint effort of Ram Mohan and Vidyasagar resulted into the resolution of Widow remarriage act passed in 1856. In the Western part of India, voice was also raised against these social evils. Jyoti Rao Phule, Ranade, Telang, Bhandarkar, D. K.Karve, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gokhale were the eminent personalities in the field of social reforms and welfare in India.

In 1920, we see the emergence of pioneering role of Mahatma Gandhi for the cause of rural poor. His synthesis of life and ideology became the focal point in social revolution based on secularism and human values. He integrated the political reform process with social reform in India. He worked for the scheduled caste, Dalit, backward communities, women in India and struggled for equality across all sections in society. He advocated for GRAM SWARAJ which is the symbol of emancipation of last man in the society.

Along with the contribution of individual reformers organizations like Brahma Samaj, Prarthona Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ram Krishna Mission, Theosophical society and servants of Indian society had played significant role towards social reform in India.

In the beginning of 19th century, India had witnessed the concept of modern social work practice with the advancement of work by Christian missionaries. In 1880, Sreerampur Christian Missionary was established to work for the special people. Establishing houses, orphanages for children and destitute were the key intervention point for them. Development of labour union in the period of 1890 to 1920 also changed the situation of workforce in India.

Professionalization of Social work :

The social work education and professionalism has its root in later half of 19th century. The appointment of full time staff for operation in social welfare agency actually germinated the need of training in USA.

Mary Richmond, in 1897, advocated for a training school in the meeting of National conference on charities and corrections. Under her mentorship, in 1898, New York Charity organization Society established the first school of social work as Summer school of Philanthropic work which later became Columbia University School of
Social Work. The first full scale social work school was established in Amsterdam in 1899 as Institute for social work training. Mary Richmond could be considered as the first trained social worker in the US. Her book Social Diagnosis published in 1917 had been the foundation of social work theories and practice. Gradually many social work schools across the western countries came out to develop trained social workers to reach out to the clients with sound body of knowledge and practice perspectives.

The first professional school of social work was established by Sir Dorabji Tata Trust as Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work in 1936. This school is now known as Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Post independence, many social work schools were established in India and social work profession has grown with diversity over time. The scope and field has expanded as it synergised with multi-disciplines.

Professor Murli Desai (2002) argued that, Indian social work profession is evolving in nature as it has combination of focus on individuals, families and communities. Social work profession is aiming towards achieving freedom, balanced by duties, valuing wisdom and using theories and techniques of the west in an eclectic manner.

There are controversies in literature to explain social work as profession but it has adhered to the distinguishing characteristics of a profession in large extent. Few intellectuals have contested the nomenclature of social work profession and claimed conflict between professionalism and consumerism. Few academics claimed social work as semi profession.

However, social work has the following distinguishing characteristics to qualify as profession,

- Systematic and scientific body of knowledge which may be imparted- The discipline is based on scientific knowledge acquired through in-depth literature. It analyses human being as biological entity and can be explained through social and psychological perspectives. The area of knowledge in social work practice encompasses human behaviour and social environment aspects, methods and techniques of social work, defines the social problems and moreover explores the fields of social work.

- Determination of own standard of education and training, which is usually long, extended and formal- Social work as a discipline has established its
standard of education through different committee’s recommendation and
guidelines to respond to the emerging needs of human and his environment.

- Technical skill is acquired by special training—Skills of social workers
developed through classroom process and training. It is the capacity of the
workers to apply the knowledge he gathered during the classroom process.

- Enforcement of minimum qualification for entering into the profession for
achieving the professional standard

- Code of ethics—Social work practice is based on human values and inherent
worth and dignity. Its key axis is social justice and human rights and
professional integrity.

- Setting of minimum fees for professional services—Social work was
understood as voluntary, selfless, non-remunerative and religious activity. The
paradigm shift from voluntary social workers to trained white collar jobs is a
unique example of evolution of the discipline. Now days, this profession has
been in practice with commensurate fees structure across the fields of practice
in India and the world.

- Existence of professional association and membership in that body—There are
number of professional bodies in India as well as at international level which
sets some standard of practice, organise the cross learning workshops,
seminars, conferences to improve the body of knowledge and set direction for
future to respond to the emerging needs and problems in the society.

- Freedom of practice

- Formal channel of communication

- Fulfil the societal needs

- Social approval—Social work as a profession has been accepted by respective
governments and non-Government parties. It has been observed that, social
workers have been deployed by the Government and NGOs for development
work.

In this journey social work as a subject has established its relevance and has occupied
an important place in development discourse and dialogue. In the evolution process,
social work has embraced many theories of change to understand society and human
development in a more scientific nature. It has built its theoretical relationship with
other social science subjects to critically analyse human behaviour, problems and also intending towards problem solving method, to facilitate individual and social change.

It has travelled and built its sound body of knowledge, established professional bodies to set the standard of practice, came up with code of ethics and values and has been recognised in larger society as problem solving method. To enhance the body of knowledge it has encouraged evidence based practices and also conducted many researches.

The establishment of school of social work in India and across the world went through curricular evolution and paradigm shift in practice and produced trained social work professional with sound knowledge, understanding on practice framework.

Values and Principles of Social Work Practice:-

Social work emerged from humanitarian ideals and its values are based on equality, worth and dignity for all people. Social work does not merely respond to the emergencies but also address everyday personal and social problems. The key values in social work practice are human rights, social justice and professional integrity.

The key principles of social work practice are as follows:-

- Upholding and promoting human dignity and well being:- Social workers must accept that an individual has inherent worth, dignity and respect. He should defend the person’s integrity and well being. Biestek (1957) noted that, acceptance as occurring when the worker perceives the client as he really is including his strength and weakness.

- Respecting the right to self-determination:- Social workers should make environment and enhance the capacity of the client to make their own choices and decisions. This principle assumed that, client is capable and competent to take appropriate decisions impacting his/her lives.

- Promoting the right to participation:- Social workers must promote full involvement of client in all aspects.

- Treating each person as a whole:- Unlike other profession, social work does not operate in single lens as it works with human being. Social workers accept the problems of the client and analyse from bio-psycho-social and
cultural lens. It takes care of family, community, society and environment of the client. Social worker must look beyond the client’s immediate problem and must assume the ensuing issues which may affect the client. Thus, it defines social workers to work on the long term and short term implications of change process for the client.

- Identifying and developing strengths: Social workers must focus on the strengths of individual, group and communities. It is the client’s abilities and potentials that are most important in helping to bring about change (Saleebey, 1992). The strength based perspective is the most discussed buzzword in the discipline.

- Challenging discrimination: Social workers are accountable to challenge the discriminations that emerge out from age, sexual orientation, culture, gender, political opinions, economic status, religious beliefs etc.

- Respecting human diversity: Social workers should respect the diversity of society in which they practice. It must be understood that, certain things may be appear as unusual from one perspective and may be appropriate in other life experiences in the society. Social worker must be involved to analyse the diversity in society to strengthen the course of action.

- Distributing resources: Social workers should ensure that resources must be distributed fairly and according to need.

- Challenging unjust policies and practices: Social workers have responsibility to bring to notice of the policy makers about the faulty policy decisions which are oppressive, unfair and harmful.

- Working in solidarity: Social worker’s duty is to challenge the social conditions that contributes social exclusion and should focus for inclusive society.

- Upholding values and reputations for profession: Social worker must act in sync with the values and principles set out in the profession so that his acts do not bring disrepute to the profession.

- Being trustworthy: Social workers should work in a way that is honest and reliable.
- Maintaining professional boundaries: Social workers should develop boundaries in relationship with client, service users and colleagues in agency setting. He should not abuse the relationship
- Making professional judgements: Social workers should make judgements based on balanced reasoning. Social workers should possess self-awareness and self-knowledge and should be fully aware of own values, preferences, prejudices, strengths and limitations.
- Professionally accountable: Social workers should be accountable for his actions and judgements to his/her client, employers and largely to the society.

In the present context of globalization, developing countries are poised with many challenges in terms of its social welfare policies, economic reforms, governance systems and more over to address the emerging dimension of human rights violation.

The urbanization process with rapid industrialization as scoping tool for employment generation on one hand and on the other hand exploitation of the natural resources and thus displacement of the people from their social and cultural root is the new development.

The globalised developmental notion actually brings people in the metros for pursuit of economical growth and improving human living conditions. On one hand it has created space for development of science and technology, booming social media’s intervention in daily lives and on other hand shattered the joint family systems, collective social accountability to respond to individual crisis.

Shift towards individualistic gain has created many rifts in the family, community and larger social fabric. The kaleidoscopic change in the global outlook in terms of international policies and practices, emergence of new crisis has created new horizons of practices of social work in modern concept. Thus, change in the socio-economic and political environment has changed the context and domain of social work practice.

Social work as contemporary discipline helped people in the form of empowerment to challenge the discriminations based on religious and political beliefs, race, caste, gender and sexual orientations. Professor Murli Desai (2002) proposed that, in
contemporary social work practice the social worker has to promote the values of social equity, democratic pluralism, people’s participation and peaceful co-existence. She also went on to add that, social workers in present context need to be critical to ideologies which lead to systematic marginalization in the society, analyse the role of the state, welfare policies and schemes.

Thus values like equality, justice of social work profession and scientific body of knowledge helps the social worker to build appropriate skills towards designing intervention plan for the client, be it individual or community. It also helps to determine to adopt methods and techniques of social work to solve the problem through a collaborative manner.

Therefore, it is an empowering process to meet people’s need of food, education, livelihood, health and housing. Modern social work practice has diversified roles and accountability to respond to the ever changing dynamics of society at micro level as well as at macro level.

**Implications of Social work practice in Health domain with special emphasis to Malnutrition intervention:-**

Social work an evolving discipline has developed it’s connect with other subjects. Social work in its changing dimension has developed its body of knowledge by acquiring scientific evidences conducted by social work research intending to analyse human behaviour, relationship with his/her immediate environments and analysing the social problems with bio-psycho-social and cultural dimension.

Social work process, which has stemmed out from philanthropic work, relief work, has gradually set its course of action with individual, groups and communities, existing or living with problems. New concepts, theories, intervention techniques have emerged out in the social work literature. Actually, as the profession has explored the fields of practice the overall perspectives have been broad based and worked in tandem with professionals from sociology, psychology, political science, social policy, statistics, law and epidemiology.

Social work practice in the field of promoting health care has a long history. However, its implications in the field of malnutrition from preventive and rehabilitation lens are still little explored. In the previous paragraphs we have seen
how social work practice has operated in agency setting and community to address human problems using its techniques, tools and upholding the professional values.

Before establishing the linkages of malnutrition intervention and social work intervention, it is important to understand the overall health care perspectives in Indian context and understanding the relationship between health and malnutrition.

The causative factors of health problems are grounded in the relationship of population and their relationship with environment. Nutrition, the science of food and its status in community depicts the picture of overall health status. The concept of health is also evolving with the advancement of medical technology and science. At present health issues are being analysed from multiple lens ranging from bio-medical concept, ecological concept to psycho-social concept.

Therefore, health is a broader concept and encompasses multiple factors like basic sanitation facility, nutrition, drinking water, housing condition, provision of medical care etc. In this paper, the researcher has considered that good health is largely depended on good nutritional outcome in human body and therefore nutrition is pre-requisite of healthy society and thus productivity.

Practice of social work in the field of health care has been traced back to around 1880 in England. In this time, a group of volunteers were deployed to make home visits for the discharged patients from an asylum. In 1900, in USA nurses were deployed to visit the discharged patient’s houses to provide home based care. In 1893, we have found that Jane Adams engaged first women physician graduate from John Hopkins Medical School to open well-baby and paediatric clinic in Chicago. In India, social workers were first time introduced to health care setting at JJ Hospital, Mumbai in 1946.

In 19th century, we have found that social workers were in leadership role in various social reform movements. Social workers were informed and had gained adequate knowledge on various social factors as inter related dimensions of human life. Effort was made to understand the critical relationship of socio-economic background of the client with deeper understanding of his/her work conditions, status of sanitation, health care practice and food intake as components of health status.
Social workers have considered health as not merely the absence of illness rather looked at social, psychological and emotional well being as important triggers for health. Total well being of individual client actually created a new horizon for social work practice and thus health sector has become largest field of social work practice. Interventions of social work with its innate skill and techniques are applied for prevention of diseases, management of disease and moreover promotion of health status in the society.

In this chapter, the researcher has made an attempt to explore the role of social work profession in changing scenario of health care with special reference to malnutrition prevention and management.

Social work with its changing nature in terms of its construct in body of knowledge, appropriate skills and techniques has been used to reciprocate the changing demands of health care systems across the world. Demographic changes, advancement of biomedical technology, changes in health care systems, health care governance has created new field for social work practice with its interdisciplinary approach.

It has been noted that, public health and social work have shared their common broad goals and public health issues have been incorporated in social work agenda since years. Social workers took up the public health issue in broader concept and emphasised on bio-psycho-social aspects of health components. Social workers, however, are trained and equipped with skills and techniques to address the psycho-social implications of health care in agency setting as well as in community setting.

The paradigm shift of public health from disease management to preventive care has also enhanced the scope of social work practice. Malnutrition, the key component of health, has also been an emerging field of social work practice as the issue itself is multi-factorial in nature and impacts mostly the marginalised section.

Access to services, subject knowledge, family income, educational background of the parents, cultural practices, social taboos, gender discrimination and perception towards cause and effect has been the core component of malnutrition problem in the community. Social work profession has roles in every subset of the problem and can address the issue with a better understanding of individual and service delivery
system. Therefore, social worker’s role can be seen in individual centric client system, community setting and in service delivery system.

Issue of malnutrition has gained considerable attention amongst the global health care providers and policy makers. It has been a serious development agenda, manifested in all the Government’s commitment papers and vision documents. With its changing nature of understanding and evolving dimension of malnutrition, social workers can play a role in wide range of interventions from prevention to management.

After field work and in-depth study of the community vis-a-vis the issue, researcher has explored the following implications of social work practice in prevention and management of malnutrition issue under the ambit of broad health care,

- Social work practitioners engaged in community level, primary care, referral care and specialized care systems for management of malnutrition issue needs to updated knowledge and understanding on standards and protocol of treatment, policies and programs. In community setting, social workers need to know the community diversity, community practices and moreover culturally nuanced practices around the issue of nutrition. Thus, social workers have to be alert, conscious, and analytical.

- As a core principle of social work profession, social workers have to challenge the various manifestations of inequalities in the family, community and society, service delivery systems and more over have to be holistic to address the marginalization process. In the malnutrition issues, we have argued that gender discrimination has greater bearing in access to equal food intake at the domestic level and power dynamics to access the Government services meant to address the malnutrition issue and ensuring food availability. Therefore, it would be an expanded area of intervention where social workers would put effort to ameliorate different dimensions of discrimination and building an enabling environment.

- Social workers, while working with the malnourished children and his/her immediate families must focus on building capacities to cope up with the issue and helping them to find out opportunities to address the issue. The strength based perspectives allow the social workers to initiate dialogue and should invest to build the capacities of care givers of the family and immediate
environment. Anganwadi workers as the secondary care givers also need to be considered as important stakeholders. Therefore social workers must focus to build their capacities to implement the programs in the field.

- Social workers in community setting as well as agency setting in malnutrition management process need to be a team member. It has been noted that, the intervention team is multi-disciplinary and therefore social workers must be well placed to collaborate and facilitate the change process, being an active member of the group.

- Social workers should develop an understanding on practices, values, history of the family of malnourished children and the community in particular. It is the social worker’s accountability to respect the diversity of the family and community.

- Professional relationship building for psycho-social intervention with the malnourished child and parents would be the key imperatives for social workers. The relationship must be objective in nature, genuine, empathetic and characterised with non-possessive warmth.

- There is ample scope of social work practice to enhance client’s participation at all steps of malnutrition management. It is the family members who have to decide and implement the suggestions made by the multi-disciplinary team of malnutrition management in community as well as in the agency setting.

- Social workers must take into account the malnutrition issue throughout the continuum of care approach. We have seen that, malnutrition issue initiates in mothers utero and travels through various phases of life. Therefore, social worker has to develop a comprehensive understanding of each phase.

- The field of nutrition in larger ambit of health care is developing globally in terms of its bio-medical foundations, social practices, best practices in different countries to address causative factors of different forms of malnutrition (stunting, wasting and underweight). Therefore, social workers must be abreast of these issues and specially the global policies and movements addressing the malnutrition issue from macro lens perspective.

- A macro level social work practice emerged in terms of policy designing, implementing and continuously evaluating the progress of the change pertaining to malnutrition issues. India has developed its comprehensive
Nutrition policy in 1993 and National Plan of action in 1995 and hence it is high time to revise those documents with special reference to data that came out in NFHS-III and NFHS-IV and most importantly in tune with Sustainable Development Goal. Social workers with diverse body of knowledge can play pivotal role in designing the policy framework with culturally nuanced implementation plan.

- Social worker’s role has also been placed in the financial aspects of programming intending towards the management of malnutrition. At micro level, social workers can mobilize the community resources to address the issue in preventive and primary care perspectives. At macro level social workers can play a broad role to develop budget and analyse the financial implications for scaled up program implementation in the country.

- To augment the advocacy mechanism and corporate arguments in favour of the marginalised communities and malnourished children, social workers’ accountability will be to maintain scientific records of the children in a particular community. Organized documents, lucid record actually is the hallmark of social work practice in health care setting. It enables the workers to understand the client system in better way and helps to design the treatment or intervention process.

- Social worker has myriad role to conduct researches and collect evidences to strengthen its advocacy. In this advocacy role, social workers need to amplify voices for augmenting the decentralised services systems, filling the capacity gaps of service providers specially the AWWs and bringing quality in the service package.

- In the preventive approach of malnutrition, social workers role bestowed upon the paradigm of awareness building and community education. Behaviour change communication, large scale community awareness process on reasons and impact of malnutrition can be carried out by a group of social workers.

- Finally, social worker should be accountable to his client, families, communities and more over the agency which he/she is representing.

- It has been accepted that, malnutrition intervention team is multi-disciplinary and a team of multiple professionals. Social workers with utmost understanding and knowledge of human behaviour, human entity has the
leadership role to lead from the front with unique skill and techniques. Social workers with thorough knowledge on human behaviour and society should take leadership role in the team as they examine the issue from bio-psycho-socio-cultural lens.

Malnutrition has been accepted as significant global challenge in health care system and calls for comprehensive actions encompassing multidisciplinary approach and techniques. The nutrition landscape in India has suffered a lot since history due to many reasons from natural disaster to power hegemony within the family.

During the field work for this research, it was evidently explored that socio-cultural determinants like education and awareness of parents, health care seeking behaviour, equal food distribution and care, influenced the child nutritional status in the rural area. Moreover, poverty and vulnerability, poor access to Government incentives meant to address the malnutrition issue also creates horizon for social work interventions in which social workers are accountable to play a role of enabler and facilitator.

It must be accepted that, malnutrition issue in India is complex in nature because of diversified socio-cultural practices across the country. The multi-sectoral intervention plan ranging from agricultural production to equitable distribution of agricultural products, ensuring equal access to food care to empowering women to take decisions, strengthening of public distribution systems to generate data for policy advocacy, calls for engagement of social work professional equipped with skill sets and holistic knowledge.

Social work intervention in nutrition domain can be envisaged through use of combination methods widely accepted in this discipline.

In this section, researcher has attempted to put some perspectives on facets of social work method while addressing the malnutrition issue. Application of social work method like case work and group work has enough scope while dealing with malnutrition issue at micro level spectrum.

**Application of Case Work method**- Through this method a social worker can reach out to malnourished child and his immediate family through a clientele approach. This will involve rescuing the malnourished child from immediate crisis and his immediate
care givers from the vicious cycle of malnutrition and restore the measures for optimum utilization of available resources. Through this process, social workers will try to restore psycho-social functioning as well as reaching out to stipulated facility care to access the services. Case work principles enabled the social workers to design an individual care plan towards larger rehabilitation process. Through this method, individual client (malnourished child) is also empowered to adjust with the environment in facility care setting i.e nutritional rehabilitation centre. Through this method, social workers can also explore intervention plan to address the immediate causes of malnutrition ranging from gender disparity in family.

**Application of Group work**- Through this method, social workers are set to address the issue of an individual in a group setting by providing group experiences. In malnutrition intervention, social workers can deploy the group work method while working with mothers and immediate care givers of children in community setting. Through this group work method, the professional social workers can implant knowledge base on malnutrition issue, its implications and more over can collectively design the intervention plan which is gender sensitive and locally nuanced. It also helps to build capacities of mothers and care givers to restore social functioning in the community. In India, there are evidences of successful application of group work method while addressing malnutrition issue through community managed malnutrition intervention led by women and care giver groups. The group work method actually creates the model of collective intervention.

**Community organization, Social Work administration, Social Action and Social Work research** has potential of application in macro level spectrum of nutrition intervention towards addressing the root causes of malnutrition.

While applying the method of Community organization, social workers intends to stimulate the capacity of the community to identify the reasons for malnutrition and also collectively design the plan of action to address the issue. Community organization process is largely used in the country as well as in the world to strengthen the service delivery mechanism meant to address the malnutrition issue. Therefore, successful community organization method depends upon social workers skill set, to invent the potential of the community, explore the internal resources and more over empower them to confront the systemic barriers to obtain the services. This
method of implication of social work practice underpins the role as facilitator, enabler, communicator, liasioning and most importantly dramatization of the issue of malnutrition to bring attention of the policy makers and service providers. We can also envisage the role of social workers as co-creator of local resources to promote community based nutritional resources through collective farming of nutritional plants in the community.

Through Social action method, social workers visualize the most broadbased engagement with the affected community, duty bearers and other relevant accountable stakeholder. Thus, this method can be seen as most instrumental while addressing the systemic and structural correlates of child malnutrition. Through this method, disadvantaged community will be empowered to confront the unequal, discriminative systems and unjust social practices. Most importantly this will be helping them to negotiate with the policy makers and service providers for the effective planning and evaluation of contextually fit programmes.

Social Work administration method also has significant role in malnutrition intervention programme. The body of knowledge on social work administration actually creates the scope for effective planning, budgeting of nutrition sensitive programs for the society and most importantly also develops a comprehensive monitoring and supervision mechanism. Blending of theoretical knowledge on social work administration also develops an inclusive human resource plan to address the issues from facility care as well as through community based interventions. The nutrition intervention in India and globally is co-existing with the challenge of cumulative resource mapping and deployment in different sectors of intervention. However, social work administration develops skills of knowledge of large scale resource mapping and its planning for deployment.

Social work research method has been the most critical and most time appropriate and needed action in this critical nutrition landscape in the world. This method is most crucial as it aims to contribute to create scientific body of knowledge encompassing the detail narratives of socio-cultural-economical and political correlates of malnutrition and also places the successful intervention narratives. Nationally as well as globally malnutrition intervention struggles to generate qualitative and quantitative data for national policy makers and international bodies to orchestrate measures and
set the goals. In Indian context, more evidences are required to design policies and nutrition programs which are gender sensitive, locally nuanced and culturally fit. However, this social work research has also ample scope to innovate successful models for replication and scaling up in the country. The changing dimensions of health care with the advancement of medical technology have widened the scope of social work intervention also. Therefore, social workers also need to play a role to transfer the medical technology in the community field through a coherent knowledge acquired from the field research.

**Conclusion:-**

Thus, Social work profession is well placed to influence the nutrition intervention, with its sound body of knowledge, evolving techniques and skills to approach the issues from individual client system based to community setting. Malnutrition issue as social and physical determinants of health care needs a comprehensive approach with better understanding of human being, society and policy framework.

Therefore, social work as problem solving professional has potential to influence the holistic malnutrition intervention in micro, mezzo and macro level. Social work thus can influence in different phases like prevention of malnutrition, crisis intervention and most importantly promoting mechanisms to address the problems in large scale.

Modern Social work practice with in-depth understanding of human being, society and leader of multi-disciplinary team is poised to address the malnutrition issue. Social work profession has strength to intervene each and every causal factor of malnutrition ranging from socio-cultural factors to macro level policy aspect.

Presently, emphasis of nutrition intervention has been community centric which is beyond facility care. It practically creates vast scope for engagement of social workers with multiple stakeholders. Multi-disciplinary team has been given accountability to address the issue in which social workers can play the lead role and bridge the gaps.