UNIT 12 : SOCIAL WELFARE: MEANING; IMPORTANCE; NATURE AND SCOPE

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives
12.2 Introduction
12.3 Defining Social Welfare
12.4 Evolution of Social Welfare
12.4.1 Evolution of Social Welfare in India
12.4.1.1 Pre-British Period
12.4.1.2 British Period
12.4.1.3 Post Independent Period
12.5 Importance of Social Welfare
12.6 Nature of Social welfare
12.6.1 Social Welfare as an Art
12.6.2 Social Welfare as Science
12.7 Scope of Social Welfare
12.7 Let Us Sum Up
12.8 Further Reading
12.9 Answer To Check Your Progress
12.10 Possible Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to-

- understand the concept of Social Welfare
- trace the history of Social Welfare administration in India
- understand the importance of Social Welfare
- know about the Scope of Social Welfare

12.2 INTRODUCTION

Social Welfare pertains to the efforts made by the government and voluntary organisations to help families living below the poverty line by providing them with medical care , public health services, looking after their household needs , helping in social adjustments etc.

Social welfare is a structured system of social services and institutions, designed to aid individuals and groups in order to acquire agreeable levels of life health and life. Thus, Social welfare endeavours to provide services to the weaker sections of the society , who are unable to make use of social services or have been traditionally deprived of these services.

12.3 Defining Social Welfare

Social Welfare is considered to be a branch of Public Administration as it identifies the social problems and then endeavours to solve them by introducing programmes for the betterment of the under privileged and deprived sections of the society . It is mostly based on social sciences and other sciences and as such is not considered to be an independent discipline. Wayne Vasey (1958) states that social welfare comprise two main features- The utilisation of welfare measures to support or strengthen the family as a basic social institution through which needs are met; and the intent to strengthen the individuals' capacity to cope with their life situation. Prof. Fried Lander (1959) mentions that social welfare is the organized system of social services and institutions designed to aid individuals and groups to attain satisfying standards of life and health.

Dolgoff,R. & D.Feldstein describes social welfare in these words: "In its narrowest sense, social welfare includes those non-profit functions of society, public or voluntary, which are clearly aimed at alleviating distress and poverty or at ameliorating the conditions of the casualties of society." (1980 Understanding Social Welfare, P.91)

According to the definition given by United Nations, "Social welfare as an organized function is regarded as a body of activities designed to enable individuals, families, groups and communities to cope with the social problems of changing conditions. But in addition to and extending beyond the range of its responsibilities for specific services, social welfare has a further function within the broad area of a country's social development. In this larger sense, social welfare should play a major role in contributing to the effective mobilization and deployment of human and material resources of the country to deal successfully with the social requirements of change, thereby participating in nation-building." (1967).

From these definitions, it is clear that social welfare aims to permit individuals the development of their complete capacities and the promotion of their well-being in harmony. But at the same it should be remembered that social welfare is mainly secured through institutional organization of society, and its activities are directed towards the development of that organization. Significantly, social welfare is strictly connected with the improvement of the weaker, marginalized and vulnerable sections of the populations. However, it has a broader implication which is concerned with the overall development of human beings.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Fill in the blanks

a) Social Welfare pertains to the efforts made by the _____ and _____

b) Social welfare is a planned/structured system of social services and institutions, designed to aid_____and_____ in order to acquire agreeable levels of life health and life.

c) Social Welfare is considered to be branch of _____

2. What is the aim of Social Welfare ?

3. What is the UN's definition of social welfare?

12.4 Evolution of social welfare

The issue of concern for the poor, the disabled and the needy had existed in all societies at all times. However, the concept of a welfare state and the development of an organised form of welfare system have originated at a later phase. In any country, the concept of social welfare is influenced by the evolving social, economic, political and cultural trends and therefore this term could attain a fixed meaning only at the price of failing to meet new situations. As such, Social Welfare system has passed through various stages in the context of all the nations.

Industrial revolution and its resulting changes had forced Medieval England to pass some acts like The Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 which was later amended and Speenhamland Act of 1796. These acts are important events in the development of social welfare in United Kingdom. The adoption of Poor Law of 1601 and Law of Settlement and Removal of 1662, American Revolution, Establishment of Morrill Act and Freedom's Bureau, emergence of Charitable Organisations Society and finally the establishment of several colleges and universities to give training in social work are some of the milestones in the development of social welfare in United States.

12.4.1 Evolution of Social Welfare in India

The Indian society, right from its inception can be said to have been predominated with the concept of social welfare as the principles of humanitarian philosophy had a pertinent place in the society. However, the evolution of social welfare in India can broadly be categorised into three periods-

12.4.1.1 Pre-British Period

The pre-british period includes both the ancient and medieval India. Social Welfare during this phase formed an integral part of the religion and responsibility of the government. The rulers of this period mostly undertook measures of social welfare. There were

several charitable institutions for the poor and the disabled and , several works of public utility were also undertaken by the rulers. These included building separate hospitals for men and animals, construction of national high ways, rest houses etc. Village republics were set up to look into the matter of village administration and protection of the weak. Arrangements were made for irrigation and free medical facilities to the people. Further, the rulers also reformed the system of communication and built roads, established charitable institutions, and almost all the rulers personally took interest in the problems of the cultivators, the disabled and the destitute.

12.4.1.2 British Period

During the British period, the Indian society was orthodox and custom bound. Most of the customs were approved under the cover of religion . Certain customs such as sati, untouchability, dedication of women to temples, caste system existed in the society. The British rule influenced a new way of thinking characterised by rationalism, democracy and liberalism. As a result of this, people were motivated to raise their voice against the social evils prevalent in the society and social welfare during this period evolved in the form of social reform movements.

A number of reform movements emerged during this period such as the Brahma samaj, Arya samaj, Rama Krishna Mission which raised the public opinion against the evil practices of our society and succeeded in introducing some legislation as a relief to this situation. Further, several leaders advocated social reform along with the growing Nationalist Movement. The contribution of Mahatma Gandhi is significant in this regard. Gandhi appealed for the equality of women, harijan welfare, betterment of rural economic life and for a system of education geared to the work and life of the people. Gandhiji's social reform was a part of his larger public life and was included in his "constructive programme" which was a movement for economic betterment and for improving the tenor of social life.

12.4.1.3 Post Independent Period

After India attained independence, social welfare programmes were undertaken in a more organised pattern and had its base in the Indian constitution which empowers the state to promote the welfare and meet the basic needs of the weaker sections of the society. The programmes that were initiated and included in the Five Year Plans and were implemented in the course of the Plans. In each Plan, a definite target group was identified and funds were allocated for meeting their needs. Further, Social Welfare Department was established to co-ordinate the welfare programmes of the country. The Social Welfare Advisory Board was also established in all states and union territories to co-ordinate the voluntary efforts in the nation. A sizable portion of the financial assistance from the Board is extended to voluntary institutions through the State Boards. Thus, passing through different stages, social welfare in India has acquired its present status.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. Social Welfare, during the pre-british phase formed an integral part of the ..... government.
5. During the British period, the Indian society was _____ and _____.
6. Name some reform movements which emerged in the british period?

12.5 Importance of Social Welfare

The significance of social welfare can hardly be denied, yet its mission in nurturing human values and its utility in promoting social progress are little known. Social Welfare holds a very important role in social life especially in the context of industrialised societies. The changes that the institution of social welfare is expected to perform are three main functions which can be termed as Maintenance Activities, Development Activities and

Change Activities. Maintenance activities include all those attempts to help individuals and groups to lead a smooth and stable life whereas developmental activities include all attempts that aim at the growth of individuals and all social institutions. Change activities aim at changing the individual, family and group functioning as and when found necessary for their benefit. Further, social welfare presents a measure of security for the old, the unemployed, the displaced, the disadvantaged. Social Welfare provides a source of protection for the children who are deprived of nurture and care within the family. Thus, social welfare charts a better life for people in numerous ways.

Social Welfare programmes forms an important part of the system. As our country continues to suffer from the unique social problems of overpopulation, pollution, severe and persistent poverty, and public health, we continue to struggle with the financial means to become a more developed and prosperous nation. The well trained professionals in social welfare will help in improving the conditions.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. Social Welfare holds a very important role in social life especially in the context of _____.
8. What are the three main functions that a social welfare institution is expected to perform?

12.6 Nature of Social Welfare

The nature of Social Welfare as to whether it is science or art, has gained importance. There is debate on the nature of Social Welfare and each opinion gives their justification in its own way. Social welfare lends itself to two usages. It stands for the process of administering the social welfare programmes. It is also an area of intellectual enquiry. The first is practice, the second is study. As a practice social welfare is decidedly an art.

12.6.1 Social Welfare Administration as an Art

The following arguments have been given to support that social welfare is an art.

- It can be acquired- The art of social welfare can be acquired. By the provision of proper training, talented persons can become versatile administrators. As such, in regards of acquisition, social welfare administration is like other arts.
- It is subjective in nature- With the application of knowledge and skill, a social welfare administrator can make notable changes and development by combining and bringing together available human and material resources to change the very fate of the nation. Today the success of every welfare programme depends on how a social welfare administrator performs the job.
- Practical application of knowledge- Art is the practical application of systematic knowledge. Practical application of knowledge is not only theory but putting the theory into practice. Similarly, social welfare administration is not merely theory but it is application too as it is by practice that best knowledge can be acquired.

12.6.2 Social Welfare as a Science

The ones who believe that social welfare administration is a science point out that there are certain specific and clear principles on which day to day administration of social welfare programmes is being run and managed. They further assert that, the principles are based on sound and rational principles, which are also considered universal. The following arguments have been put forward to justify that social welfare as a science:

- Application of Scientific Method: The claim of a discipline to be called a science depends on whether the scientific method of study is applicable to it. Social welfare can be

called a science, because the scientific method of study is equally applicable to it, as in the case of other social sciences.

- Critical Examination: Critical examination and study of evidence is the prime requisite of any scientific study. This is possible in social welfare also.
- Universal Guidelines: Universal principles of social welfare also provide the colouring of science. Although, the guidelines cannot be put to use in similar way, the guidelines definitely help the administrator in proper implementation of social welfare programmes.

However, the nature of social welfare administration as a science has been criticized on the basis of lack of experimentation and objectivity. Thus it is not an exact science, but is a science in its own way. It is also an art, because it is connected not only with formulation of general principles of social welfare programmes but also with the actual running of the administration of social welfare programmes.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

9. With the application of knowledge and skill, a social welfare administrator can make _____ and _____ .

10. The guidelines helps the administrator in proper implementation of _____ .

12.7 Scope of Social Welfare

The scope of social welfare is quite diverse in nature. With the emergence of new social problems of entirely different nature, a new strategy needs to be evolved for their solution. It may require optimum utilisation of available resources like human, institutional, financial, technological etc. in a changing context. The social welfare incorporates a number of factors that are significant in the entire process of successful solution of social

problems. According to Bhardwaj, the scope of social welfare administration can be classified into two categories-

- **The POSDCORB view**

The POSDCORB view of social welfare is the narrow view and takes into account mostly the execution of the government's sponsored programmes. This view as such, corresponds with the managerial view. Henri Fayol, L. Urwick, Fercey M. Ovean and Luther Gulick are advocators of this view.

- **The Integral View of Social Welfare**

The field of social welfare is expanding with the emergence of new social problems every day. As such, another view of the scope of social welfare emerged, namely the integral view. As the social problems increased manifold, the government which was already overburdened, not being able to successfully tackle the problems involved various non-governmental organisations for this purpose. Therefore, this view incorporates not only the subject matter of social welfare but the implementation aspect as well, which is primarily the focus of POSDCoRB view.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

11. The scope of social welfare is quite _____ in nature.
12. According to Ramesh Bhardwaj, the scope of Social welfare can be categorised into _____ and _____ .
13. The POSDCORB view of social welfare takes into account mostly the execution of the _____ .
14. The Integral view incorporates not only the subject matter of social welfare but the _____ as well



12.8 LET US SUM UP

- Social Welfare pertains to the efforts made by the government and voluntary organisations.
- Social welfare is a structured system of social services and institutions, designed to aid individuals and groups in order to acquire agreeable levels of life health and life.
- Social Welfare is considered to be a branch of Public Administration.
- Social Welfare is mostly based on social sciences and other sciences and as such is not considered to be an independent discipline
- The concept of social welfare is influenced by the evolving social, economic, political and cultural trends and therefore this term could attain a fixed meaning only at the price of failing to meet new situations.
- The Indian society, right from its inception, can be said to have been predominated with the concept of social welfare.
- Evolution of social welfare in India can be divided into three phases- Pre Brititish Period, British Period and After independence.
- Social Welfare holds a very important role in social life especially in the context of industrialised societies.
- The institution of social welfare is expected to perform three main functions which can be termed as Maintenance Activities, Development Activities and Change
- The nature of Social Welfare as to whether it is science or art, has gained importance.
- It is argued that Social Welfare Administration is an Art on the basis of the principles that- it can be acquired, is subjective in nature and requires Practical application of knowledge.
- It is argued that Social Welfare Administration is a Science because- it applies scientific methods, because there is room for critical evaluation and the guidelines which are followed are universal.

- The scope of social welfare is quite diverse in nature.
- The social welfare incorporates a number of factors that are significant in the entire process of successful solution of social problems.
- The POSDCORB view of social welfare is the narrow view and takes into account mostly the execution of the government's sponsored programmes.
- The field of social welfare is expanding with the emergence of new social problems every day.
- The integral view incorporates not only the subject matter of social welfare but the implementation aspect as well this view incorporates not only the subject matter of social welfare but the implementation aspect as well



12.9 FURTHER READING

Devi, Rameshwari and Parkash Ravi (1998),"Social Work and Social Welfare Administration, Methods and Practices", Vol. I, Mangal Deep Publications, Jaipur.

Saikia, J.P. (2008). Samachya and Samadhan, Vidya Bhawan, Jorhat: Assam.

Skidmore, Rex A. (1983), "Social Welfare Administration: Dynamic Management and Human Relations", Prentice Hall Inc. London.

Schatz, Harry A. ed. (1970), "Social Work Administration: A Resource Book." Council on Social Work Education, New York.

12.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No. 1.

a) Social Welfare pertains to the efforts made by the government and voluntary organisations.

b) Social welfare is a planned/structured system of social services and institutions, designed to aid individuals and groups in order to acquire agreeable levels of life health and life.

c) Social Welfare is considered to be branch of Public Administration

Ans to Q No. 2. The aim of social welfare is to provide services to the weaker sections of the society, who are unable to make use of social services or have been traditionally deprived of these services.

Ans to Q No. 3. UN's definition of social welfare state , "Social welfare as an organized function is regarded as a body of activities designed to enable individuals, families, groups and communities to cope with the social problems of changing conditions. But in addition to and extending beyond the range of its responsibilities for specific services, social welfare has a further function within the broad area of a country's social development. In this larger sense, social welfare should play a major role in contributing to the effective mobilization and deployment of human and material resources of the country to deal successfully with the social requirements of change, thereby participating in nation-building".

Ans to Q No. 4. Social Welfare, during the pre-british phase formed an integral part of the religion and responsibility of the government

Ans to Q No. 5. During the British period, the Indian society was orthodox and custom bound.

Ans to Q No. 6. Some reform movements which emerged in the british period are -the Brahma samaj, Arya samaj, Rama Krishna Mission which raised the public opinion against the evil practices of our society and succeeded in introducing some legislation as a relief to this situation.

Ans to Q No. 7. Social Welfare holds a very important role in social life especially in the context of industrialised societies.

Ans to Q No. 8. The three main functions that a social welfare institution is expected to perform are Maintenance Activities, Development Activities and Change Activities.

Ans to Q No. 9. With the application of knowledge and skill, a social welfare administrator can make notable changes and development.

Ans to Q No. 10. The guidelines helps the administrator in proper implementation of social welfare programmes.

Ans to Q No. 11. The scope of social welfare is quite diverse in nature.

Ans to Q No. 12. According to Ramesh Bhardwaj, the scope of Social welfare can be categorised into POSDCORB view and Integral view.

Ans to Q No. 13. The POSDCORB view of social welfare takes into account mostly the execution of the government's sponsored programmes.

Ans to Q No. 14. The Integral view incorporates not only the subject matter of social welfare but the implementation aspect as well.



12.11 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

A) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words

Q.1. Discuss the evolution of social welfare in India?

Q.2. Write a short note on the nature of Social welfare?

Q.3. Discus the scope of Social Welfare?

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