
UNIT 2 INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL WORK CONCEPTS-II

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

In the earlier unit, we learnt some concepts, which are used in connection with professional social work training and practice. We continue the exercise and present another set of concepts.

By the end of this unit, you should be able to :

- know the meaning of various concepts such as social service, social welfare, social work, social policy, social justice, social security and social defence;
- define these concepts;
- distinguish between these and other related concepts, wherever necessary; and
- understand the significance of these concepts for social work teaching and practice.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we continue our study of concepts that are relevant to social work profession. Here we deal with concepts such as social service, social welfare, social work, social policy, social justice, social security and social defence. The modern state has taken major responsibility in ensuring the welfare of its citizens. Voluntary action by individuals and agencies also contribute to supplement these efforts. In some cases voluntary agencies act as critic of government's performance by raising issues related to human rights violation. We must understand the relevant concepts to understand these issues.

2.2 SOCIAL SERVICE, SOCIAL DEFENCE, SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Social Service

Every civilized society has a duty to enable its members to lead an emancipated, respectful, decent and dignified life. Personality development and optimum realization

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of potentials, talents and abilities is possible when a person has provisions for varied kinds of services like health, housing, education, recreation, etc.

Broadly speaking, the term service means "an act of helpful activity; help" (Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary 1996:1304). The term help never means spoon-feeding. It has been etymologically derived from Teutonic 'helpan' which means aid or assistance given to another through some kind of reinforcement or supplementation of the other's actions or resources to make him/her more effective in terms of performance of socially expected roles as a responsible member of society (Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary 1996:659). Thus social service in its broadest sense means any aid or assistance provided by society to enable its members to optimally actualize their potentials to effectively perform the roles expected/prescribed by society and to remove obstacles that come in the way of personality development or social functioning. According to H.M. Cassidy (1943:13), the term "social services" means "those organized activities that are primarily and directly concerned with the conservation, the protection and the improvement of human resources", and "includes as social services: social assistance, social insurance, child welfare, corrections, mental hygiene, public health, education, recreation, labour protection, and housing" (Friedlander, 1963:4).

Social services thus are those services which are envisaged and provided by society to its members to enable them to develop optimally and help them to function effectively and to lead life of decency, dignity, and liberty. These services directly benefit all the members of society, irrespective of their religion, caste, race, language, region, culture, etc.

The two other terms used in literature are: public services and social welfare services. A finer distinction between 'public services' and 'social services' is that the public services are envisaged and organized by the state as an institution created by society to manage its affairs, to the citizens. Social services are envisioned and provided by people in society as enlightened persons for promoting human and social development. Despite this fine distinction, both the terms are quite often used interchangeably and taken as synonyms of each other.

At present when the state is gradually withdrawing from social sector leaving everything to market forces/ corporations or corporate bodies or organizations and civil society organizations, it is more appropriate to use the term 'social services' as compared to public services.

Social welfare services are those 'social/public services' which are specifically visualized and designed for weaker and vulnerable sections of society to enable them to effectively compete with other sections of society to join the mainstream.

The characteristic features of social services

- 1) Social/public services are visualized and organized by society/state.
- 2) These services directly benefit all sections of society.
- 3) These services have a very wide scope including everything that has a direct bearing on the quality of life of people.
- 4) These services aim at promoting human and social development, protecting human rights of people and creating a sense of duty among them towards society.

Social services are very important for social work because:

- 1) Social work is concerned with promoting human and social development.
- 2) Social work seeks to enhance effective social functioning and create new social institutions which are required, and modify the existing institutions in order that people may optimally realize their potentials and effectively contribute their mite towards society's proper functioning.
- 3) Social work aims at promoting 'sustainable' development by conserving and developing environment so that enough resources may be left for future generations to enable them to lead a proper life.

Social Defense

In the present age of corrections, reformatory theory of punishment is being strongly advocated mainly on the ground that 'criminals are not born but are made' by adverse and oppressive social conditions that prevail in a social system. A concern for the protection of society, as also for promoting the interests of an offender as a human person belonging to a civilized society, is being widely shown too.

The term 'social defense' has both narrow and broad connotations. In its narrow sense, it remains confined to the treatment and welfare of persons coming in conflict with law. In its broad meaning, it includes within its realm the entire range of preventive, therapeutic and rehabilitative services to control deviance in general and crime in particular in the society.

The aim of social defense is to protect society from the varied kinds of deviance resulting into widespread social disorganization which seriously disrupts the effective functioning of society. In the absence of any well - thought out policy and planned programme of social defense, the basic objective of any society to ensure happy and peaceful living to all its members is seriously hampered. Thus social defense is a planned, deliberate and organized effort made by society to defend itself against the attack of disruptive forces which endanger its law and order and thereby impede its socio-economic development. With increasing incidence of acts of people in violation of the prevalent laws of society, it has become essential to formulate policies and plans and organize programmes which may help in preventing the illegal activities and treat and rehabilitate the offenders in order that they themselves may be able to lead decent and dignified life and may contribute their best towards effective functioning of society.

Social defense consists of measures relating to prevention and control of juvenile delinquency and crime, welfare services in prisons, after care services for discharged prisoners, probation services, suppression of immoral traffic, prevention of beggary and rehabilitation of beggars, prevention and control of drug abuse and alcoholism and treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts and alcoholics.

Correctional services which are part of social defence programmes are an important field of social work practice. Social workers are working as care workers, probation officers, managers of juvenile cadres, etc.

Social Security

Security i.e., freedom from danger or risk, is one of the accepted needs of people. Every person wants protection against any kind of unforeseen event which may endanger his/her safety and threaten the continuity of his/her income; and this security has been

guaranteed to people through varied kinds of institutions which have been fast changing. Initially, this security was being provided through the institution of joint family and occupational guilds and caste in India. But in course of time these basic social institutions started disintegrating. It was realized by enlightened people that some deliberate efforts were required to be made at the level of society to ensure security of its people. It was for the first time in 1935 in England, that a pioneer Sir William Beveridge, came forward with the idea of 'social security' as means of freedom against five great giants: want, disease, ignorance, idleness and squalor. Since then social security has become very widely used in social science literature.

In contemporary society, social security has become very important because

- 1) The traditional social institutions like joint family, caste, occupational guilds, etc., are not able to provide the needed security.
- 2) There has been a revolution in science and technology leading to the emergence of global village and promotion of tendency among people to frequently move, and even migrate from one part of the world to another, frequent occurrence of accidents, even those which are fatal, and exposure to varied kinds of diseases including occupational diseases. All these expose people to varied risks.
- 3) There has been a sea change in values and orientations of people - from collectivism to individualism, from spiritualism to materialism, and so on.

Hence, people today lack in basic human sensitivity and concern for others, and are bothered only about themselves or at best their family members' or closely related person's needs.

- 4) There is a sizeable section of society which is illiterate, unemployed and poor leading a sub-human and insecure life.

Defining social security for the first time Sir William Beveridge (1942:120) expressed the view: "The term 'social security' is used to denote the security of an income to take the place of earnings when they are interrupted by unemployment, sickness or accident, to provide loss of support by the death of another person, and to meet exceptional expenditures, such as those concerned with birth, death and marriage."

The International Labour Organization (1942:80) defines social security "as the security that society furnishes through appropriate organization, against certain risks to which its members are exposed."

According to Friedlander (1963:5): By "social security" we understand a programme of protection provided by society against those contingencies of modern life-sickness, unemployment, old age, dependence, industrial accidents and invalidism - against which the individual cannot be expected to protect himself and his family by his own ability or foresight".

The National Commission on Labour in India (1969:162) expresses the view: "Social security envisages that the members of a community shall be protected by collective action against social risks, causing undue hardship and deprivation to individuals whose private resources can seldom be adequate to meet them."

Thus we define social security as the collective endeavours made by people in society to protect as a matter of right their brothers and sisters against varied kinds of unforeseen situations called contingencies such as biological like maternity, economic such as

unemployment and bio-economic like old age, which imperil their working capacity and disrupt their continuity of income and thereby impair their ability to support themselves and their dependant family members with decency and dignity and which they cannot face by utilizing their own as well as dependant's resources.

Major characteristic features of social security are:

- 1) Social security is the security deliberately provided by making collective efforts by people in society in an organized manner as a matter of right.
- 2) This security protects against different types of contingencies or unforeseen situations which may confront people from cradle to grave, from birth to death.
- 3) These contingencies may be purely biological such as maternity, or they may be purely economic such as unemployment, or they may be bio-economic such as superannuation, retirement, etc.
- 4) These contingencies imperil the working capacity of people and disrupt the continuity of income and impair their ability to lead a decent and dignified life for themselves as well as dependants in the family.
- 5) It is not possible for common people in society to effectively face the challenges thrown by these contingencies by utilizing their own as well as their dependants' private resources.
- 6) Collective endeavours made may or may not require the beneficiaries to contribute - may be very nominally, for the benefits which they may avail of in case of occurrence of certain specified kinds of contingencies.
- 7) Social security benefits may be in the form of cash or kind or both.
- 8) Social security is both a mental state and objective fact. In order to provide proper protection to people against contingencies, it is necessary that they should have confidence that benefits adequate in quality and quantity will become available whenever required.

There are three major forms of social security: 1) Social insurance, 2) Public/social assistance, and 3) Public or social services. In case of social insurance, prospective beneficiaries are required to make some contribution, usually it is very nominal for the benefits which they are given in case of occurrence of contingencies. These benefits are so decided that they may be able to cater to assumed average need. However, in certain cases, special exemption may be granted from the requirement of payment of contributions.

Public / social assistance may be given in cash and / or kind to enable people to meet the existing actual need and to lead a minimum desirable standard of living. A subtle difference between public and social assistance is that public assistance is provided through the state exchequer after assessing the existing actual need and ensuring that prospective beneficiaries fulfill certain prescribed eligibility requirements including those relating to family responsibility and observance of morality. Social assistance is provided to indigent people considered to be eligible according to certain specified criteria by some civil society organizations to enable them to satisfy their basic minimum needs. Public/social services are made available by the state/society to promote human/social development. Sometimes a very fine distinction is made between public and social services. The former is organized and provided by the state and the latter by society through some civil society initiative.

Understanding of the concept of social security is essential for any professional social worker because he/she works for promoting human and social development, increasing peoples' active participation in various types of programmes directed towards guaranteeing a minimum desirable standard of living to everyone. In case people's continuity of income is threatened and their capacity to work is impaired, they will not be able to satisfy their own minimum needs. Besides, they will both be able to extend support to their family dependants and perform their social roles effectively.

Social Welfare

All civilized societies throughout the globe have been praying for the wellbeing of the entire mankind. In India our sages longed for 'May all be happy' and worked for devising such institutions as could promote the welfare of all and strengthening them from time to time. Derived from 'welfaren', the term 'welfare' means "the state or condition with regard to good, fortune, health, happiness, prosperity, etc." (Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary, 1996:1619). While expressing his views on the concept of welfare, Sugata Dasgupta (1976:27) has observed: "By welfare we refer to the entire package of services, social and economic, that deal with income support, welfare provisions and social security, on the one hand, and view the whole range of social services, on the other."

Friedlander defines social welfare as (1963:4), "the organized system of social services and institutions, designed to aid individuals and groups to attain satisfying standards of life and health, and personal and social relationships which permit them to develop their full capacities and to promote their well-being in harmony with the needs of their families and the community." In the opinion of Wilensky and Lebeaux (1965:11-19): "two conceptions of social welfare seem to be dominant today: the residual and the institutional. The first holds that social welfare institutions should come into play only when the normal structures of supply, the family and market, break down. The second, in contrast, sees the welfare services as normal, "first line" functions of modern industrial society, the major traits of which, taken together, distinguish social welfare structure as:

- 1) Formal organization
- 2) Social sponsorship and accountability
- 3) Absence of profit motive as dominant program purpose
- 4) Functional generalization: integrative, rather than segmental, view of human needs
- 5) Direct focus on human consumption needs,"

"Social Welfare in a broad sense", as conceived by Skidmore, Thackeray and Farley (1991:3-4), "encompasses the well-being and interests of large numbers of people, including their physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and economic needs. . . Social welfare includes the basic institutions and processes related to facing and solving social problems." While highlighting the aim of social welfare, Zastrow (1978:3) observed: "The goal of social welfare is to fulfill the social, financial, health and recreational requirements of all individuals in a society. Social welfare seeks to enhance the social functioning of all age groups, both rich and poor. When other institutions in our society such as the market economy and the family, fail at times to meet the basic needs of individuals or groups of people, then social services are needed and demanded."

Durgabai Deshmukh, the first chairperson of Central Social Welfare Board in the country (1960:VII) clearly said: "The concept of social welfare is distinct from that of general

social services like education, health, etc. Social welfare is specialized work for the benefit of the weaker and more vulnerable sections of the population and would include special services for the benefit of women, children, the physically handicapped, the mentally retarded and socially handicapped in various ways".

We may, therefore, define social welfare as specifically designed system of services and institutions aimed at protecting and promoting the interests of weaker and vulnerable sections of society, who left to themselves, will not be in a position to maximally develop and effectively compete to enter the mainstream and to live with liberty, decency and dignity.

Important characteristics of social welfare

- 1) It is a deliberately organized system of services and institutions.
- 2) These services and institutions specifically cater to the varied kinds of needs of weaker and vulnerable sections of society.
- 3) The weakness and vulnerability of these sections may originate not from any personal fault of people but from different types of physical, mental, social and moral handicaps that they may encounter and which adversely affect them.
- 4) The aim of social welfare is to protect and promote the interests of these sections to enable them to optimally realize whatever potentials, talents, abilities they may have to carve out a dignified place for themselves in society, and to effectively discharge the duties and responsibilities of positions which they happen to occupy.

Check Your Progress I

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

- 1) What is the scope of social defense?

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2.3 SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL POLICY

Social Justice

The term justice eludes any precise definition. Dias (1985:65 - 66) rightly says: The term justice is too vast to be encompassed by one mind. Krishnamurthy (1982:18) has also been of the view: "In spite of best efforts, it has not been possible to clearly define justice. Though every society throughout human history has had some arrangement for administering justice but its nature and form as also the methods and manners of administration have been varied, depending upon the values and norms that have prevailed in a particular society at a particular point of time. Every society develops some system for protecting and promoting the socially accepted rights of people. These systems,

broadly speaking, are characterized by two types of approaches: (1) protective and (2) promotive. Protective approach safeguards people against abuse and exploitation, and promotive approach creates such conditions in society as may spontaneously ensure equality, freedom, fraternity and provide special opportunities to those who for some reason (s) have lagged behind and are out of the mainstream.

Aristotle defines justice as "virtue of the soul distributing that which each person deserved". It is the name of certain moral rules essential for promoting people's well-being. Justice towards people in society has been equated with holiness towards God. It is truth in practice. Thus justice is comprised of all virtues which ensure conformity with the morally prescribed code of conduct. Justice, in the ultimate analysis, stands for doing away with injustice. The term 'justice' is used today in two senses: (1) abstract sense, and (2) concrete sense. In its abstract sense it refers to a code of conduct, legal as well as moral, which promotes people's welfare.

In its concrete sense, it denotes the faithful implementation of existing laws. Traditionally, justice means the virtue by which we give to every man what is due to him /her as opposed to injury or wrong. Today it means the protection of rights which people are entitled to enjoy.

Justice is the hallmark of any civilized society. Justice has to be done at all costs. Fiat Justicia Ruat Coleum (Let heavens fall, justice has to be done) has been the guiding principle followed by all civilized societies.

Justice is of immense social significance. It gives rise to a sense of duty and concern for others. It creates and sustains trust and confidence among people. It preserves law and order. It fosters understanding and thereby promotes harmony and integration. It strengthens unity and solidarity. It generates an atmosphere of peace and tranquility. It underscores the principle of live and let others live or peaceful coexistence. It accelerates socio-economic development, and ultimately optimizes the personal and social functioning.

Social justice, a part of the overall framework of justice, implies within its ambit the idea of 'just distribution' and not 'equal distribution' of benefits for the purpose of creating a just society. Miller (1967:1) has rightly observed: "The concept of social justice is best understood as forming one part of the broader concept of justice in general. As a special form of justice, it means what is socially just and what is socially just keeps on changing with time and space.

Social Justice is a dynamic term which provides sustenance to the 'Rule of Law' in a democratic society. It helps in the establishment of a just social order by removing varied kinds of inequalities with the help of law and ensures freedom for optimal personality development of the individual. It has a tilt in favour of removal of structural and systemic inequalities because the basic idea underlying social justice is equalization by providing special opportunities to weaker and vulnerable sections of society who either because of being subjected to social suppression and oppression or because of being the victims of varied kinds of disabilities and handicaps, are prone to be misused and even abused and exploited. Left to themselves they will not be able to be the part of the mainstream of society. The expression social justice, in its narrow sense, means rectification of injustice in personal relations of people and broadly, it refers to removal of imbalances in political, economic and social life of people.

According to Justice Krishna Iyer (1980: 157-158), " Social justice is a generous concept which assures to every member of society a fair deal. Any remedial injury,

injustice or inadequacy or disability suffered by a member for which he is not directly responsible, falls within liberal connotations of social justice." The concept of social justice is broad enough to include within its ambit not only distribution of means, benefits, burdens, etc., throughout the society as it results from its major social institutions (Miller, 1972:22) but also biological, social, economic and cultural development of individual in a society (Govind, 1995:6). Justice Krishna Iyer (1980) is absolutely correct when he says: "Social justice is no narrow legalistic nostrum but, in its spacious sweep, confronts and conquers arrogant inequity and entrenched privilege, restores repressed and oppressed men to their wholeness and through plural strategies tinged with spiritual touches, offers the only healing hope for ailing humanity."

Developing countries like India characterized by fairly widespread and serious problems of unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, ill-health and insanitation, stand committed to promote welfare of people. For example, the Constitution of India in Article 38 clearly adumbrates: "The State shall strive to promote the welfare of people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life". Minimum needs of people necessary for their empowerment or capacity building, will have to be satisfied; and opportunities for fullest development of every one, and special opportunities for people belonging to underprivileged sections of society, not because of any fault of theirs but because of non-egalitarian and unjust social system which has been assigning to them far inferior social status in social hierarchy based on ascription, will have to be given.

The term social justice as used here refers to adoption by society whose social system has, through a deliberately evolved invidious arrangement by which certain sections of society have been subjected to oppressions, suppressions, neglect and even rejection and forced to live a life of miseries and sufferings at an inferior level, of such special protective, remedial, ameliorative and promotive measures as may be instrumental in removing their special disabilities and enabling them to lead a decent, dignified, unfettered and respectful life characterized by equality, liberty and fraternity.

The general aim of social justice is to ensure the just and orderly functioning of society, distribution of benefits according to entitlements, contributions and needs of people and imposition of punishments according to the severity of their deviations and damages caused to society.

Specific objectives of social justice are:

- 1) To ensure that 'Rule of Law' prevails in society.
- 2) To guarantee 'equality of opportunity'
- 3) To provide special opportunities to weaker and vulnerable sections.
- 4) To ensure equality of outcome.
- 5) To prevent abuse and exploitation of weaker and vulnerable sections.
- 6) To preserve the religion and culture of minorities and to provide freedom to pursue and propagate them without endangering public order and peace.

Wherever discrimination, abuse and exploitation exist in the name of caste, colour or creed in any part of the world, some kind of arrangement for social justice also exists simultaneously. Even in the most developed country of the world, the United States of America, a system of affirmative action in the form of special opportunities for the

development of Blacks and natives exists. In India, for its system of stratification known as caste, special privileges have been given to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes right from the time of enforcement of Constitution of India. In course of time, they have also been extended to socially and educationally backward communities currently known as 'Other Backward Classes'. Now various political parties in power - some in states and some at the Centre, are vying with each other to extend the benefit of social justice to economically backward upper castes and Muslims in order to get some mileage in the impending elections.

Social Policy

Policy, broadly speaking, refers to a framework within which a stated course of action is adapted to attain certain objectives.

The term social policy is quite often used loosely and unprecisely. Eyden (1969:5) has been of the view that "social policy is taken as including those courses of action adopted by the government which relate to the social aspects of life, action which is deliberately designed and taken to improve the welfare of its citizens." In the words of Kulkarni (1987:94), "The key word 'policy' implies adoption of a sagacious course of action in order to achieve the desired objective(s) What is pragmatic is called policy and what is based on principles is referred to as doctrinaire." Yet at another place he (1978:15) writes that "the term 'social policy' has been used to denote three specific areas or aspects, namely : i) the social objectives of state policy, including those of economic growth; ii) the policy with regard to the promotion of social services as an integral part of a developing economy; (iii) the policy governing promotion of social welfare services as a part of development plans."

Thus social policy means a framework within which or stated course by adopting which the state as protector and promoter of the interests of society as also of human rights of people wants to conduct its affairs so that the goal of welfare of all may be promoted by organizing a series of services in diverse fields of nutrition, water supply, education, health, housing, employment, recreation, etc.

The salient features of social policy are as under:

- 1) Social policy is the policy of state responsible for conducting the affairs of society.
- 2) It states the framework within which and course of action by adopting which affairs of society are to be conducted.
- 3) It relates to people in general and concerns itself with provision of social services which in their nature are direct and general.
- 4) It aims at promoting human and social development.

A finer distinction has to be clearly understood between social policy and social welfare policy. While social policy concerns itself with the provision of social services affecting the life and living of people in general, social welfare policy relates itself to organization of specially designed social welfare services for weaker and vulnerable sections of society to enable them to come at par with other sections.

The scope of social policy is fairly wide. It includes within its range all such services which have a direct bearing on the modus vivendi of people in a society and varied kinds of related matters which may have a bearing on such services.

As observed by Kulkarni (1987:94), "Modernisation of society, implying adoption of

science and technology, raising the national standard of living, building up civic and political institutions to suit the changed and changing needs and problems, and generally to work towards an open, pluralistic society of equal opportunity, could with all these elements be regarded as the pith and substance of social policy."

The basic source of social policy is the Constitution of any country under which specific laws promoting proper human and social development are enacted.

Social policy in India has been specifically enunciated in Part IV of the Constitution entitled as Directive Principles of State Policy. There are specific Articles like 38 and 46 which provide for promotion of people's welfare within the overall framework of social justice. It is noteworthy here that there has been a drastic change in social as well as social welfare policy of the Government of India after 1991 - the year in which the policy of liberalization, privatization and globalization has been adopted as part of the Structural Adjustment Programme.

Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the objectives of social justice?

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2.4 SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL ACTION

Social Work

Social work which emerged out of the need to provide relief to the poor in a systematic manner gradually grew into a semi - profession or profession having expert knowledge and technical skills for effective provision of help to the needy. In the initial stage it was concerned with helping people to solve their psycho - social problems which obstructed their effective social functioning. In course of time, it was realized that social living as it operates at the practical plane had three distinct and noteworthy levels: of individual, group and community. There was need for dealing with them separately by developing three different methods of social work viz. social casework dealing with individuals, social group work dealing with groups and community organization dealing with communities. In course of time, they were accepted as the three primary methods of social work. It was also realized that while providing social work help by using these three methods, there was always a need for providing some social/welfare services and gathering validated knowledge, and this realization finally culminated into development of two subsidiary/ auxiliary methods of social work namely, social welfare administration and social work research. In course of time it was seriously felt that since psycho-social problems have their roots in faulty social structure and system, and any client facing these problems cannot, be held responsible for his/her problems, there was need for evolving and including some weapon in the armoury of social work which could play a

significant role in bringing about desired changes in society, and thus emerged social action as an auxiliary/secondary method of social work.

Researches in social services have continuously established that since various dimensions of social reality are indivisible, social reality has to be taken as an integrated whole. Consequently, social workers also thought of integrating the separate practice of its primary and secondary methods and today there is well accepted notion of integrated practice of social work involving the use of all the six methods according to situational requirements.

In order to understand what social work is, it appears essential to present some important definitions given from time to time.

Dr. Abraham Flexner (1915): Social work is "any form of persistent and deliberate effort to improve living or working conditions in the community, or to relieve, diminish or prevent distress, whether due to weakness of character or due to pressure of external circumstances. All such efforts may be conceived as falling under the heads of charity, education or justice, and the same action may sometimes appear as one or another according to the point of view."

Cheyney (1926) includes in social work all "voluntary attempts to extend benefits in response to needs which are concerned with social relationship and which avail themselves of scientific knowledge and employ scientific methods."

Helen L. Wilmer (1942:121) expressed the view. "The prime function of social work is to give assistance to individuals in regard to the difficulties they encounter in their use of an organized group's service or in their performance as a member of an organized group."

According to Arther E. Fink (1942:2) " Social work is the provision of services 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 society,"

J. P. Anderson (1945) says: "Social work is a professional service rendered to people for the purpose of assisting them as individuals or in groups, to attain satisfying relationship and standards of life in accordance with their particular wishes or capacities and in harmony with those of the community."

Helen I. Clarke (1945:16) observes: "Social work is a form of professional service comprising a composite of knowledge and skills, parts of which are and parts of which are not distinctive of social work which attempts, on the one hand, to help the individual to satisfy his needs in the social milieu and on the other to remove, as far as possible, the barriers which obstruct people from achieving the best of which they are capable."

In the opinion of W.A. Friedlander (1963:4): "Social work is a professional service based upon scientific knowledge and skill in human relations which assists individuals, alone or in groups, to obtain social and personal satisfaction and independence."

Boehm (1959:54) in the Curriculum Study sponsored by the Council on Social Work Education expresses the view: "Social work seeks to enhance the social functioning of individuals, singly and in groups, by activities focused upon their social relationship which constitute the interaction between man and his environment. These activities can be grouped into three functions, restoration of impaired capacity, provision of individual and social resources and prevention of social dysfunction."

A perusal of the above definitions clearly indicates that it is very difficult to define social work but still keeping in view its historical development from service to professional service and its concern from helping people in need to changing the social system, we may define social work as under:

"Social work is a specialized kind of work - honorary or paid, done by making use of scientific knowledge and technical skills with humane and democratic outlook, to render help to people in need to enable them to realize their potentials optimally, to perform their social roles effectively and to live in a free, decent and dignified manner, particularly by introducing required changes in personality as well as social structure."

Important characteristics of social work as it exists today, particularly in India which has had great social service tradition, are as following:

- 1) Social work is a specialized kind of work.
- 2) This work is performed by persons who are specifically trained to do this work.
- 3) Education/training for social work equips social workers with some specialized kind of scientific knowledge and technical skills and develops among them a democratic and humanitarian outlook and orientation.
- 4) Social Work adopts the required strategy according to the nature of problem it deals with and its root causes which may lie in the personality structure of the person who is facing problem or in the unequalitarian and unjust social system of which he/she is a part.
- 5) Strategy used in social work may introduce changes in the personality structure of person faced with problem and /or bring about transformation in social structure as well as system.
- 6) Social work promotes human and social development, ensures fulfillment of human rights and guarantees performance of social duties - obligations towards family members, people in the community and members of society at large.
- 7) Social worker may accept compensation for the work done by him/her either from those who engage him/her or take work from him/her or from those who benefit from his/her work. At times, moved by altruistic considerations a trained social worker may be seen providing services absolutely in an honorary manner.

Social Action

Every person by sheer virtue of living in society and therefore, being a social animal, does participate in social action. The concept of social action, generally speaking is comprised of three components:

- (1) Social being, (2) Social context or situation, and (3) Inspiration.

As a concept, it originated in Sociology - the science of society. Action is to be distinguished from behaviour in that it involves meaning or intention. "Social action in Sociology is analysed in terms of typical actors in typical situations by identifying actor's goals, expectations and values, the means of achieving those goals, the nature of situation and the actor's knowledge of that situation" (Ambercombe, Hill and Turner, 1986:14). There are two main forms of action theory-

1) hermeneutic and 2) positivist. Hermeneutic theorists like Schutz uphold that action invariably has meaning. Positivists like Parsons explain action in terms of goals and means defined by social structure and internalized in course of socialization.

Social action in Social Work which is considered as one of its auxiliary methods is different from that in Sociology. A review of available literature on social action reveals that there is no unanimity on the concept of social action which has quite often been confused with community organization, community work and community action. It was Mary E. Richmond who in 1922 used this term for mass movement through propaganda and social legislation. Since then, a number of definitions have been given by various writers on the subject. Some noteworthy among them are as under:

Kenneth L.N. Prey (1945:348): Social action is "the systematic, conscious effort directed to influence the basic social conditions and problems out of which arise the problems of social adjustment and maladjustment to which our service as social workers is directed."

Elizabeth Wickendon (1956): "Social action is a term applied to that aspect of social welfare activity directed towards shaping, modifying or maintaining the social institution and problems that collectively constitute the social environment. Social action is concerned with adjustment of the social environment to meet recognized needs of individuals and to facilitate those relationships and adjustments necessary to its own best functioning."

Arther Dunham (1958:52): Social action "may be defined as efforts to bring about change or prevent change in current social practices or situations through education, propaganda, persuasion or pressure, in behalf of the objectives believed by the social actionist to be socially desirable."

W. A. Friedlander (1963:218) "Social action is an individual, group or community effort, within the framework of social work philosophy and practice that aims to achieve social progress, to modify social problems and to improve social legislation and health and welfare services."

K. K. Jacob (1965:63): "Social action is essentially an effort aimed at initiating suitable changes and reforms to improve socio - economic conditions and to better social climate."

M. V. Moorty (1968:217): "Social action is a social work technique which makes entire community, or at least a large number of its members, conscious of the unsatisfactory state of affairs and desirous of effective solutions."

Thus social action may be defined as a method of social work in which conscious, systematic and organized efforts are made under the guidance of professional social worker, by some elite(s) and /or people themselves to bring about change in the system which facilitates the problem solving and evil eradication and thereby improves the conditions in society to enable people, particularly the weaker and vulnerable sections, to optimally realize their potentials and effectively function as part and parcel of the mainstream of society.

Important characteristic features of social action as used in social work are:

- 1) It is a method of social work which is practised in close collaboration with other methods;
- 2) It aims at bringing about changes in social structure and system to enable people

realize their innate and inherent capacities and to participate in social functioning at equal plane. The ultimate aim of social action is to promote equality - social as well as economic and reduce injustice, abuse and exploitation.

- 3) The process of social change sought to be introduced through social action may be reformative in nature directed towards eradication of social evils or it may be developmental geared towards creation of new institutions or strengthening of the existing institutions threatened by vested interests of certain dominant sections of society.
- 4) The method of social action seeks to usher in the desired changes in society through conscientisation, awareness generation, promotion of social integration, formation and strengthening of people's own organizations, formulation of conducive policies, enactment of socially healthy laws, eradication of existing social evils which impede the desired development of people and retard social progress.
- 5) Social action in its basic nature is non-violent. Undoubtedly, there are vested interests in society, i.e., the powers which exercise domination and rule, want to perpetuate the status quo. They become impatient due to organized strength of the people involved in social action and direct the state machinery to suppress the voice of dissent, even by resorting to violent methods. Though there are some writers like Britto (1980) who advocate the conflictual nature of the social action process (may be because it creates some kind of conflict between the vested interests of the privileged and rich and genuine interests of the deprived and depressed) yet at the practical plane it has to adopt and follow the methods and techniques which do not lead to violence and bloodshed.
- 6) Social action as a method contemplates that all power is taken away from the so called 'do gooders' and it should actually be transferred to the people who are the intended beneficiaries, and in order to achieve this, it takes recourse to desired transformation in social policies, laws, plans and programmes.

Check Your Progress III

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

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

- 1) How is the concept of social action in Sociology different from that in Social Work?

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2.5 LET US SUM UP

We conclude our introduction to the basic concepts related to social work and disciplines related to it. As the course progresses you will come across these concepts repeatedly and your understanding will become broader. When you go to the field, practice the social work methods or conduct research, there will be greater scrutiny of these concepts.

Social security, social services, social welfare and social defense are primarily related to government policies and programmes. Social services refer to any aid or assistance provided to society to enable its members to perform effectively as a citizen. In other words, it consists of all efforts to improve the human resources of the society. Social defense on the other hand consists of all efforts by the society to prevent deviant behaviour which can lead to social disorganization.

Social service is promotive whereas social defense is preventive and rehabilitative. Social security refers to the protection of citizens from various risks like disease, want, unemployment and idleness. Social welfare is the organized system of social services and institutions to provide the citizen with those services and goods which will help the citizen lead a productive and satisfying life.

Social justice is a much discussed topic in our country. Clearly there are many dimensions to the concept. Basically it means that every member of the society gets his or her due, that is a fair deal. It stands against all values which advocate inequality, violence, entrenched privileges etc. Social justice is part of the larger social policy which is also discussed. Policy can be defined as the framework within which a stated course is adopted to attain certain objectives.

Finally we discussed social work and presented a brief discussion on it. You will, of course, be studying about social work in detail later. Though there are six methods in social work we have discussed only one method, social action, as the term is used differently in different disciplines.

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2.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Social defense consists of measures relating to prevention and control of juvenile delinquency and crime, welfare services in prisons, after - care services for discharged prisoners, probation services, suppression of immoral traffic, prevention of beggary and rehabilitation of beggars, prevention and control of drug abuse and alcoholism and treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts and alcoholics.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) The specific objectives of social actions are :
 - i) To ensure that 'Rule of Law' prevails in society.
 - ii) To guarantee 'equality of opportunity'.
 - iii) To provide special opportunities to weaker and vulnerable sections.
 - iv) To ensure equality of outcome.
 - v) To prevent abuse and exploitation of weaker and vulnerable sections.
 - vi) To preserve the religion and culture of minorities and to provide freedom to pursue and propagate them without endangering public order and peace.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Social action in Sociology refers to the process in which an actor does a particular act in a specific social situation. This act has a goal and the action itself is governed by the norms and values of the society where this action is taking place. Social action as a method of social work is conscious systematic and organized efforts made under the guidance-of other/ or people themselves to bring about positive change in the system.