

Introduction To Social Work**UNIT-I****Introduction**

Social work is relatively a newer and socially less recognized profession, mainly because of its inability to demonstrate the ready visibility of results that follow from its practice. The most important reason behind this inability is the use of social relationships as the major medium of professional practice/help which by their very nature are intangible. The major concern of this practice/help with changing personality structure of people and social structure and system in society both of which again are not distinctly visible. Because of the nascent growth of the profession, there is a lot of confusion in respect of various terms which are used while teaching in class-room, doing research in social work and practising the profession with people in need in society. Since effective professional practice demands clarity in terms of the varied kinds of concepts used, it becomes obligatory to clarify and define them and point out the distinction between similar concepts used in social work or the same concepts used in other social sciences like Sociology and Psychology from which social work has heavily borrowed. Some of the noteworthy concepts dealt with here are: charity, shramdan, social action, social defense, social justice, social movement, social network, social policy, social reform, social security, social services, social welfare and social work.

Charity, Voluntary Action and Shramdan**Charity**

Quite often charity, particularly the giving of alms, is also considered social work, which is not correct. The term charity as defined in the Webster's Encyclopedic

Unabridged Dictionary (1996: 248) refers to “charitable actions, as alms giving or performing other benevolent actions of any sort for the needy with no expectation of material reward”.

Most of the organized religions all over the world have advocated charity as a great virtue which their followers must possess. Reinforcing this, Mujeeb (1968: 324) writes: “Every religion enjoins charity, and some forms of charity is an essential element in the practice of all religions”. The Hindu religion sanctifies charity. The earliest reference to charity can be traced in the Rig Veda, the oldest, wherein the god Rudra is highly praised for giving many gifts. Encouraging charity it mentions (1.XIII.2): “ May the one who gives shine most”.

All the Hindu scriptures unequivocally advocate the virtue of charity which must be unfailingly practiced by every householder. Charity has been glorified as an exercise in spirituality and socially sanctioned as a duty to be performed by every Hindu to pay the Rinas (varied kinds of debts which every Hindu owes).

However, it has also been cautioned that charity should be given to a person who deserves it. The Atri Samhita clearly mentions that an undeserving person who accepts help, commits theft, and the persons who helps him/ her abets the theft. Generally, men including Brahmins (scholars seriously devoted to studies) and disabled were considered to be the eligible persons.

The Old Testament has laid a great stress on charity. Jews have been enjoined upon to obey God and to care for the needy. Love for the neighbours has been advocated as an important duty in Judaism.

Christianity advocates brotherly by love. “Suppose that a man has the worldly goods he needs, and sees his brother go in want, if he steals his heart against his brother, how can we say that the love of God dwells in him.” Jesus Christ himself said: “I was hungry and

you gave me food; thirsty and you gave me drink; I was stranger and you brought me home; naked and you clothed me, sick and you cared for me, and a prisoner and you came to me Believe me, when you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me.”(Mathai, 1968:318-22)

In Islam, charity has been depicted as equivalent to prayer, Mujeeb (1968:324) writes: “As every Muslim must pray, he must also, if he possessed the prescribed minimum of property, pay a contribution to the public treasury (bait al mal). Apart from obligatory payments, generosity and hospitality, feeding of the hungry and provision of amenities for travellers have been imposed on the Muslim as obligations that are almost as binding as any religious injunction.” On special occasions Muslims distribute sweets, fruits and even money among their friends, relatives and poor. The giving of alms is one of the five basic tenets of Islam; and Waqf, dedication of property for purposes of charity, is an important part of Muslim law. Zuckat, Fitrah, Sadqua or Khairat are noteworthy concepts of Islam related to charity. Under Zuckat every pious Muslim is required to spend one fortieth of his annual income on charity. It is the God’s portion.

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