
UNIT 4 VOLUNTARY ACTION AND SOCIAL WORK IN INDIA

Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Conceptual Clarity Between Voluntary Action and Social Work
- 4.3 Areas of Intervention and Implications of Voluntary Action
- 4.4 Relevance of Voluntary Action and Social Work
- 4.5 Government and Voluntary Action
- 4.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.7 Key Words
- 4.8 Suggested Readings
- 4.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall discuss about the concept of voluntary action and its correlation with the profession of social work.

Voluntary action is inseparable from social science and social work theories, values and ethics and practice. Social work, from its inception has been a profession based on humanitarian philosophy having as its basic tenet the intrinsic value of every human being. One of its main aims is the promotion of equitable social structures, which can offer people, security, and development, while upholding their dignity.

After studying this unit you will be able to know:

- the nature of voluntary action;
- factors motivating voluntary action;
- voluntary service in India;
- voluntary organisations at a glance;
- role of voluntary organisations in social welfare;
- role of social worker in voluntary action;
- government and voluntary action; and
- emerging trends in voluntary action.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The term voluntary action refers to the initiatives undertaken by people independently towards the achievement of common goals and objectives. Lord Beveridge describes voluntary action as that action which is not directed or controlled by the state. He calls it a private enterprise for social progress. Thus, a voluntary organisation or agency is one, which is not initiated and governed by any external control but by its own members. Voluntary action presupposes the perception of the need by the community, or a section of the society, its assessment that the need can be met, and its readiness to regard it a duty to mobilize itself to meet the need. For the healthy functioning of democracy, voluntary action of this nature is of the highest significance.

It serves as a training ground for the potential leadership of the community and helps to continually broaden the concepts of social justice. Voluntary action also helps in continually focusing the attention of the members of a community on its problems and needs. It promotes the acceptance by the individual citizens of their social and civic responsibilities and it gives them an opportunity to learn to work co-operatively. Let us now consider some of the advantages and disadvantages of voluntary action. Pioneering has been a major function of voluntary agencies that allows experimentation. Also they have the freedom to initiate work in controversial areas. Even in our country it was voluntary action that worked for the cause of the needy and persisted in it until the statutory agencies were established to undertake the particular services. Another important aspect is the relative degree of freedom from particular political trends, something which is not available for statutory organisations. Voluntary action is also found to be more flexible and free from bureaucratic rigidity. It also has the advantage of ensuring public cooperation. The operational costs of such agencies are minimal due to the fact that the volunteers do the greater proportion of work.

Probably the most common limitation arises out of the limited resources that voluntary agencies have at their disposal. The sporadic character of voluntary action leads to instability. Financially, the private agencies are not sound as they depend on the public contribution, state grants and assistance; social workers engaged in voluntary agencies are paid low in most cases in India.

4.2 CONCEPTUAL CLARITY BETWEEN VOLUNTARY ACTION AND SOCIAL WORK

The term voluntary action is generally used for that action which is concerned primarily with what the individual should do, independent of the state.

Definition of Voluntary Action

According to Lord Beveridge: "The term voluntary action as used here, means private action, that is to say, action not under the directions of any authority wielding the power of the state." However, as viewed above the scope of voluntary action becomes very wide and therefore, he confines its limit to that action which is for a public purpose for social advancement. Its theme is voluntary action outside one's home for improving the conditions of life for him and for his fellows; it is independent of public control. This is private enterprise, not in business but in the service of mankind not for gain but under the influence of a social conscience.

Nature of Voluntary Action

As regards a voluntary worker, Lord Beveridge points out that a voluntary worker is someone who gave unpaid service to a good cause, and the group, which was formed to run this good cause, came to be known as a voluntary organisation. He further adds that in recent years there has been a significant shift of meaning in these concepts. Nowadays, many of the most active voluntary organisations are staffed entirely by highly trained and fairly well paid professional workers. The distinctively voluntary character of such bodies is the product not of the kind of workers they employ but of the manner of their origin and method of government.

Social Work and Voluntary Action

Social work has also ensured the protection of human rights through various social legislations. This enhances the happiness of the entire community by protecting from

injustice and by punishing those who do not conform to the social interest. Besides social legislations tackle social problems like untouchability, child marriage. The dowry system, sati, the devadasi system and various other social problems, thus helping to build a wholesome community. The emerging new notion of social service as a force and instrument in the promotion of planned social change and development enlarges the scope of professional social work activity, which traditionally, has been associated with such fields of practice as child and family welfare, medical and psychiatric social work, school social work, correctional and group services. Social work has also taken up new responsibilities by tying up with other disciplines to fight poverty and the problems of modern society.

Voluntary Organisation

A voluntary organisation, properly speaking, is an organisation which whether its workers are paid or unpaid is initiated and governed by its own members without external control. The independence of voluntary action does not however mean a lack of co-operation between it and public action. But the term voluntary action means that the agency undertaking it has a will and a life of its own. As defined by the National Council of Social Service, a voluntary social service is interpreted generally as the organisation and activities of a self-governing body of people who have joined together voluntarily to study or act for betterment of the community.

Social Workers and People

Social workers work with clients at various levels: the micro-level of individual and family; the meso-level of community; and the macro-level of national and international community. Concern for human rights must be manifested by social workers at all levels. At all times social work is concerned with the protection of individual and group needs. It is often forced to mediate between the people and the state and other authorities, to champion particular causes and to provide support, when state action threatens or neglects the right and freedom to individuals and/or groups. More than other professionals, social work educators and practitioners are conscious that their concerns are closely linked with respect for human rights. They accept the premise that human rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible, and the full realization of civil and political rights are impossible without enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

Check Your Progress I

Notes: a) Write your answer on a separate sheet, as the space below is inadequate.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

1) Explain the concept of voluntary action in relation to social work?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4.3 AREAS OF INTERVENTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF VOLUNTARY ACTION

Here we shall discuss the intervention and implications of voluntary action by understanding the factors that motivate voluntary action, the present scenario of voluntary organisations and their objectives, and voluntary services in the Indian context.

Factors Motivating Voluntary Action

The factors, which motivate people to take voluntary action or the sources of voluntarism, may be identified as religion, government, business, philanthropy and mutual aid. The missionary zeal of religious organisations, the commitment of government of public interest, the profit-making urge in business, the altruism of the 'social superiors' and the motive of self-help among fellowmen are all reflected in voluntarism. Bourdillon and William Beveridge viewed mutual aid and philanthropy as two main sources from which voluntary social service organisations would have developed. They spring from the individual and social conscience respectively. The other factors may be personal interest, seeking benefit such as experience, recognition, knowledge and prestige, commitment to certain values, etc.

Further, a variety of impulses are responsible for the formation of voluntary associations with the purpose of serving their fellowmen or the unfortunate lot of society. Voluntary organisations are strong agents of political socialization in a democracy, and educate their members about social norms and values and help combat loneliness. Psychological impulses lead people to join voluntary action for security, self-expression and for satisfaction of interests. Thus, the psychological joining motivation for voluntary association is a complex phenomenon. It may vary from one individual to another and one group of individuals to another depending upon their culture, social milieu and political environment.

Voluntary Organisations at a Glance

By and large voluntary action is generated through social, religious and cultural organisations. This is made possible by organisations appealing to people for help. But this does not mean that volunteers always work through or in a particular organisation. With the turn of the century people are increasing by turning to political solutions to tackle social and religious reforms and movements.

The sphere of social is still very largely the domain of voluntary workers and voluntary organisations. No complete or reliable data is available about the total number of voluntary organisations in the country, as many of them are not receiving government aid and are working with their own resources. Some of these are all-India organisations concerned with a wide range of activities; others are state or district level organisations. At present in India quite a large number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are working for various causes. They help groups and individuals with diverse political and other interests, contribute to the strengthening of a feeling of national solidarity and promote the participative character of democracy. They have a role to play not only in areas which are accepted as state responsibilities, they can also venture into new fields, work in new areas, unveil social evils and give attention to any unattended or unmet needs. Many of the NGOs act as a stabilizing force by welding together people into groups that are not politically motivated and are not concerned about the fortunes of any

political party or in capturing political power, but are above party politics and are interested in other areas of nation-building and thus contribute to national integration and a focus on non-political issues. Caritas India, NBA, voluntary organisations working for women and children, etc. are few examples of such agencies fighting for human rights.

There are also government-organised NGOs such as Mahila Mandal, Youth Clubs, Co-operative Societies, National Service Scheme, Nehru Yuva Kendras and government sponsored organisations in the form of Trusts setup in the name of diseased leaders, for example, the Kasturba Gandhi Trust, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Nehru and Kamla Nehru Trust, Indira Gandhi Trust, and the recent Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. There are several examples of the Indian NGOs protesting against certain development projects and successfully stopping them. The 'Chipko' movement in the Himalayas, the "Appiko" movement in Karnataka, West Ghat and Save Silent Valley movement in Kerala. The Narmada Bachao Andolan, etc. are excellent examples of this kind. There are several places where there is environmental degradation as a result of industrial activity and there are a number of organisations working on this task. These NGOs face a lot of difficulties as most of them are working individually. Thus, there is a need to activate the existing environmental groups at each district headquarters and set-up a federation of these NGOs at the state or region level so as to create a collective consciousness and fight jointly for a common cause. The Environment Society of Chandigarh, a region NGO, has been able to activate the few existing groups and has been instrumental in setting up several such societies in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. Thus, with the involvement of more and more NGOs the collective action will help the efforts to harmonize environmental and developmental issues to a great extent.

Objectives of Voluntary Organisations

The following are the main objectives for which various organisations are working:

- Protection and development of children
- Welfare of women in the rural areas.
- Services for youth.
- Community welfare.
- Promotion of educational facilities.
- Promotion of public conscience on social problems.
- Promotion of moral standards and family welfare.
- Prevention of disease, health care, etc.
- Protection and welfare of the handicapped.
- Eradication of social handicaps for certain groups.
- Spiritual upliftment
- Prorogation of international brotherhood.
- Promotion of natural interests through voluntary effort.
- Training of workers for fieldwork.
- Protection of nature, animals, etc.

Voluntary Services in India

It is generally claimed that like our culture, Indian voluntary institutions were known in ancient India. The history and development of social welfare in India is primarily the history of voluntary action. The roots of this can be traced to the nature, social milieu and ethos of Indian people who believe in acts of the charity of various kinds.

Voluntary Services, Pre-19th Century

In the pre-19th century, "it was mainly during the emergencies such as famine, flood, etc. that giving on a large scale as voluntary action took place outside the religious channels", according to Dr. P. V. Kane. The Chinese traveler Huein Tsang observes the Indian people voluntarily planted trees to give shade to the weary travellers, and, in groups, dug tanks and wells for the community. In medieval India, communities organised educational institutions, boardings, libraries for students by collecting funds and distributed grants to hospitals, colleges and poor homes. Late in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, severe famine resulted in large-scale poverty and the kings responded generously but there was no insurgency. Throughout the 18th century poverty was dealt by traditional means, that is individual philanthropy and religious charity.

Voluntary Services, Post-19th Century

In the 19th century there were three directions in which voluntary services were manifested. These were:

- Area of religious and spiritual tenets religious reforms.
- Area of customary practices, social and ritualistic social reforms.
- Area of new problems and needs that demanded a solution as a result of urbanization voluntary social work.

In the latter part of the century, enlightened religious and social leaders organised voluntary Movements such as Arya Samaj, Rama Krishna Mission, Theosophical movement and Anjuman-Himayat-I-Islam. Voluntary action got a boost in the early twentieth century when it organised itself through a formal organisation and structure in the form of registered societies. With Mahatma Gandhi in the political realm fighting against the Britishers for the emancipation of the motherland as well as for reforms in socio-economic areas, voluntary action gained unprecedented momentum. Gandhi reinforced voluntarism in the life by decentralization of political authority and the empowerment of gram panchayats, which were to be completely independent of the central government. For him voluntarism was the key to the reconstruction of India's economic and political organisation.

During the last 20 years a large number of voluntary agencies have come up in India. It is estimated that in addition to those which existed in the pre-independence period, the number of such agencies would run to around 20,000, spread through the length and breadth of the country. But mostly these organisations are located and functioning in the urban areas. However, it is difficult to number the voluntary agencies and to classify them into groups based on their objectives. In the post-independence period, due to the breakdown of traditional institutions, the spread of education, social reforms, inadequacy of welfare services to the needy, rehabilitation problems, minority problems, the welfare of SC/ST/OBC etc., a phenomenal rise in the number of voluntary organisations is observed.

Voluntary Services in the Present Century

India appears to be at the threshold of affecting speedy basic socio-economic changes for the betterment of its people in the new millennium. Not only is there a need to strengthen existing democratic elements and processes, natural and social resources need to be harnessed sooner rather than later to produce more wealth and contribute to social welfare. It is imperative that the tradition of voluntary action developed during the last 200 years be further analyzed in order to provide guidelines for further action. This is necessary to cleanse the national climate for constructive and productive voluntary action. There are always new horizons opening before voluntary action. In order to deal with the complex conditions of modern life there is far wider scope for collective action, both statutory and voluntary. Voluntary action is experimental, flexible, and progressive. It can adjust more easily than the statutory authority with its machinery and methods, to deal with changing conditions and with the diversity of cases. This capacity for experiment, for trial and error, is one of the most valuable qualities in community life. Voluntary actions have not only pioneered the way for state action, but when a service has been taken over by a statutory authority, in many cases voluntary agencies continue to provide a valuable supplementary agency with the help and the full consent and/co-operation of the statutory authority. The twentieth century gives abundant evidence of this in the fields of education, public health, and moral welfare and in the many spheres of social assistance where personal attention and good casework are essential.

Check Your Progress II

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

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

1) List any five areas of intervention of voluntary action.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4.4 RELEVANCE OF VOLUNTARY ACTION AND SOCIAL WORK

The contribution made by the professional social worker in the planning and development of welfare services has been quite considerable at the center and in the states. The emergence of the professional group has of course raised all the usual problems of the relationship between the professional and non-professional. The situations is further complicated by the fact that the non-professional is not only "non-socialized" in professional values and skills, but is usually a person who, since he does not derive his livelihood from this vocation, considers himself to be the professional superior in status. The contribution of the professional social worker in the non-governmental sector is limited. The salaries available in the non-governmental sector do not attract the best persons in the field and besides, in this period of transition, it is difficult for the professional to function with any decisiveness without seeming to take over the functions of the volunteer executive.

Professional Social Worker and Voluntary Social Worker

A professional Social Worker, however well equipped, cannot be a substitute for the lay-leader. The former are equipped with knowledge and skills to handle problems of institutional management and interpersonal and inter-group relations. At worst, they are people doing a job only to earn a living; at best they are persons with a sense of pride in their profession and social purpose. Being paid for their work, they are in a position to efficiently do a job that, a community feels a need for. But they cannot easily move a community to accept wholly new ideas which affect its value system. They cannot in this sense become pioneers and leaders of movements; they cannot acquire the moral right to preach or to admonish a group.

However, both the professional and the voluntary social worker have something specific to contribute to social work. The volunteer brings to social work the interest and confidence of the community. A Social worker is an institution, which promotes a full and effective functioning of the other institutions of society. The role of the Social Worker is to achieve this goal using his skills and knowledge. This implies a total acceptance from the worker, of the client or community and a suspension of moral judgment on the part of the worker, a genuine concern for the well being of the client or community and the willingness to offer such professional assistance, as he is capable of. This professional assistance may consist at times of material help, but in a more important way this assistance is directed at the ability of the community to develop and utilize its own resources. The object of professional service is not only relief but also rehabilitation. The successful practitioner of social work must enable his client to help himself—whether himself or in association with other organisations or professions. Thus, the social worker emerges as a separate functionary who is specialized in his area of work.

The role of a social worker in voluntary action depends upon the training she/he has received to be scientific in his/her outlook, skills and a knowledge of human relationships, his/her special contribution in this field is the discovery and the interpretation of social sciences as he/she is equipped to undertake this task for the benefit of the community. It is the function of the professionals to seek the volunteers' help, interest and participation and to enable him/her to find opportunities for his creative work. The professionals can also make a contribution in the formation of the social policies. Besides having discussed these issues of human rights very broadly, we can say, the professional social workers can effectively protect and safeguard the human rights from violations of every kind as they are trained personnel with a respect for human dignity, liberty and have a humanitarian outlook. Therefore, they can have a better outlook on these human right issues than the non-professional workers and can thus extend their services based on their knowledge and professional skills.

Role of Voluntary Organisations in Social Welfare

The development of voluntary organisations in India, in its historical perspective, has been dealt with earlier in this chapter. We will now focus on the role of voluntary organisations in social welfare and planned development. In fact, the social and economic development programme, enunciated in the fourteen point constructive programme of Gandhiji, was used as a spring-board to accelerate the process of political struggle for independence and a way to activate the under-privileged and down-trodden masses to develop themselves economically and socially, on a "self-help through mutual help" basis. A network of voluntary agencies was created to promote different constructive programmes like village industries,

Khadi, Nai Talim, Leprosy Work, Harijan Seva, etc. with the help of thousands of selfless and dedicated workers. This was the basis of social welfare programmes by the voluntary organisations in the post-independence period.

The main objective of planned development is to mobilise the known as well as the hidden, material and human resources in such a way as to improve the socio-economic living conditions of the people to the maximum at a given time. In general, voluntary organisations have a role to play in the economic and industrial development of the country and also to motivate people to eliminate the evil influences of the industrialisation. Though the voluntary organisations do not have much of a role to play in transport and communication, they did play an important role in the construction and maintenance of fielded and village roads.

Impact of Voluntary Services in Social welfare

Voluntary organisations play an important role in social welfare through the development of education, health, housing and providing welfare services for the weak, underprivileged and handicapped sections of the population and through efforts aimed at the social development of people, in terms of a change in their physical, intellectual, emotional, social and moral composition. Social development increases people's capacity to provide and contribute in greater degrees for the own well being as well as for the good of society. It is here that voluntary organisations have played and will have to still play an even more effective role in pushing the programmes of social development forward. While voluntary organisations have traditionally worked in the field of social welfare certain state welfare organisations have also supplemented voluntary efforts, particularly in the field of beggary, prostitution, juvenile delinquency, etc. However, in all the fields, voluntary organisations emphasize the welfare aspect, particularly because state policy focuses primarily on giving financial and legislative assistance to the state welfare organisations.

Generally, the voluntary organisations render their services in all fields of social welfare. Their complexion and orientation also undergo changes with the change in time and situations. A major and successful voluntary action started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave in the form of Bhudan, Gramdan, Shramdan, Jeevandan, (gift of land, village, labour and life), so successfully to bring about a sort of revolution in the thinking process of people to share their assets with the less fortunate people, has lost its vigor. Voluntary organisations have taken on new roles to meet the challenges emerging in a complex society with the advance of science and technology. The examples are the 100% literacy, which was achieved by voluntary efforts in Kerala, the services for the welfare of drug addicts, prostitutes, migrants, victims of terrorist activities, etc. In India, there are about 1000 voluntary agencies working for environmental protection apart from those working to safeguard human rights.

Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakash Narayan and many such leaders have often expressed their faith in voluntary action in social development and have been duly recognized in the official documents in the post-independence era. The Balwant Ray Mehta Committee (1957) observed: "Today in the implementation of various schemes of community development, more and more emphasis is laid on non-governmental organisations and on the principle that ultimately people's own local organisations should take over the entire work". The Fifth and Seventh Five Year Plans relied heavily on voluntary agencies for social welfare programmes and assistance from the State was given to them for this task. Thus, voluntary agencies,

equipped with necessary technical expertise, can be useful agencies of social and economic development.

In short, voluntary organisations have played a magnificent role in providing welfare services in the past, and recognized and appreciated as it is by the public and government. They will be encouraged to assume a still more glorious role for themselves in future. It is rightly said that there is no paradise except where people work together for the welfare of all mankind and hell is where no one even thinks of service to humanity. Voluntarisms in India subscribes to and opts for the first half of this statement and proves it by undertaking various programmes for the welfare of the destitute, the down-trodden, the disadvantaged and the under-privileged and complementing the state in its effort to achieve the ideals of a welfare state.

Check Your Progress III

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

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

1) Voluntary organisations have an important role in imparting social welfare.
Comment.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4.5 GOVERNMENT AND VOLUNTARY ACTION

Though any external agents do not control voluntary action, the government has accepted it as a major means of social welfare and is providing financial assistance without directly being involved in the functioning of voluntary organisation. The Government of India has recognized that voluntary organisations are not able to carry out the welfare programmes to a great extent and moreover the government bureaucracy being rule bound and essentially conservatives, it may not be advisable to entrust development work to the bureaucracy. So a discernable shift has come about in government thinking regarding involvement of NGOs in development since the Sixth Plan period.

While the voluntary agencies have been involved in the government's welfare programmes for a long time, the idea that the scope of this co-operation should be widened has been gaining ground for a few decades. In October 1982, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi wrote to all the Chief Ministers that consultative groups of voluntary agencies must be established at the state level. The document of the Seventh Plan (1985-90) made this resolve clearer when it is said that during this plan, serious efforts will be made to involve voluntary agencies in various development programmes of rural development. Significant for the voluntary social services, is the constitution of the central social welfare board. Finally, of the greatest potential significance is the constitution of a Division of Social Security in the Central Government.

The problem of coordinating the activities of government and non-governmental agencies is in some ways more difficult than the problem of coordinating the activities

of central and state governments. The need as well as the difficulty of co-coordinating government and NGOs are much greater. Particularly within the field of Social Welfare, as different from the areas of health and education, The Planning Commission attempts to establish a liaison between these two efforts in three ways:

- 1) By associating NGOs in the process of planning.
- 2) By entrusting some government sponsored programmes to NGOs for implementation.
- 3) By promoting the growth of NGOs through a programme of grants-in-aid.

There are two ways by which the government could help the existing agencies to function effectively and grow in response to changing situations. One is by offering direct help in terms of finances and equipment. Another way is in the manner in which the existing agencies may continually be associated with statutory action. Yet another important way in which the government can help the voluntary agencies is through legislation. Voluntary agencies, if they are worth the name, must be born of voluntary endeavor. However, it is possible for the government to create conditions under which people may be encouraged to organize new voluntary agencies.

Emerging Trends in Voluntary Action

So far the discussion has focussed on the theoretical aspects of voluntary action. It has now become an irrefutable fact that voluntary action is necessary for social welfare and development though there are scores of statutory organisations and governmental planning. In the modern times voluntary organisations have realized new spheres of work, moving away the traditional outlook and this has encouraged and enlarged the scope of voluntary action. At present, numbers of voluntary organisations are working in India and at the international level for the development of the nation and the people. The main areas of their work include education, health and medicines, child and women welfare, human rights issues, abolition of social evils, national integrity, international peace, etc. More recently, all the researches of social sciences have undertaken large scale measures to alleviate poverty and promote nutrition and self-sufficiency of material needs to all, with the help of national and international voluntary organisations and the developed, rich countries. Even India as a developing country is expected to be self-sufficient by the year 2020.

The violation of human rights, particularly in the case of children, women and bonded labourers, has become a major issue. The ongoing Narmada Bachao Andolan, the forest protection movements and the feminist organisations that are working for the rights of women and for justice against their exploitation are recent example in this case. The problems of social welfare and development have become an integral concern in the process of planning and development. Many new agencies and institutions have come into existence. In many parts of the country, there have been numerous innovative social efforts through the initiative of voluntary organisations and voluntary leaders as well as public agencies. In every field every earlier assumptions are being questioned and the gaps in policy and implementation have come to be identified more precisely. Social challenges, especially the insecurity of the minorities and the international peace problem and looming larger than before. The texture has become increasingly complex and every aspect of social welfare takes on a multi-disciplinary dimension.

Check Your Progress IV

- 1) Indicate if the following statements are true or false. Circle the relevant answer. Check your answers with the ones given at the end of the unit.
- a) Voluntary action is generated through social, religious and cultural organisations.
 True **False**
- b) In voluntary organisations, workers are governed by external control.
 True **False**
- c) A Professional social worker cannot be substituted for the lay-leader.
 True **False**
- d) In modern times voluntary organisations are yet to realize new spheres of work and move away from the traditional outlook.
 True **False**
- e) It is now an accepted fact that voluntary organisations are more successful in reaching out to the poor.
 True **False**

4.6 LET US SUM UP

From this discussion we know that voluntary action is a process of carrying out the implementation of activities towards the achievement of common goals and objectives

Therefore, voluntary actions need to be adapted to the changing scenario and in fact voluntary organisation are changing their outlook and mode of functioning. Today, voluntary action is not a mere charity but a profession as far as the workers are concerned, as they are being paid handsomely. Nowadays many of the most active voluntary organisations are staffed entirely by highly trained and also fairly well paid professional workers. The distinctively 'voluntary' character of such bodies in the product, not in the kind of workers they can employ but in their origin and the method of government.

We have seen in the earlier part of this unit that voluntary action emerged up in the areas of education and social security in the form of societies, homes for the destitute, the disabled, etc. Though some of these functions have been taken up by the state because of their heavy financial responsibility and other reasons, new needs have come up with industrialization and urbanization and some of these can be best met for certain reasons by the voluntary organisations. In fact, with the development of the concept of the Welfare State, the state will seek to do more for the citizens in the future, than is did in the past, whatever may be the political colour of the government. The future of voluntary action must be considered in the light of the above conclusion. With the development of science and technology, in this computer era, the interest is becoming the ideal medium of communication, as it is much faster, cost-effective and environment friendly. It is now accepted by all concerned that voluntary organisations are more successful in reaching out to the poor and in poverty alleviation due to their being small, flexible, innovative, participatory and cost effective in their style of functioning.

Voluntary organisations in India, going by the number of registrations in all the states and the Union Territories, exceed one million in number, and are increasingly getting

aware of the potential of the internet. A survey in 1998 by CAP covering 4508 prominent voluntary organisations revealed that 4.5% of all respondents had already developed their websites. The web presents new potential for working, information sharing and resource opportunities for voluntary organisations. The information super highway can prove to be the new path to self-sufficiency for voluntary organisations in the fields of health, development and welfare. It is hoped that voluntary organisations and charities involved in implementation of socio-economic, development programmes would use and fully harness the convenience and speed of the internet and information technology to help the poor and thereby accelerate the pace of socio-economic development in India.

4.7 KEY WORDS

- Voluntary action** : Voluntary action is that action which helps in continually focussing the attention of the members of community on its problems and needs.
- Voluntary organisation** : Voluntary organisations are that agency of political socialisation in a democracy which educate their members about social norms and values and helping them in achieving common goals and objectives.
- Social Work** : Social work is that branch of study which deals with human problems in society and assists in understanding democratic principles oriented towards securing for all people a decent standard of living, acceptability, affiliation, recognition and status. It is a process to help the people to help themselves.
- Professional social worker** : Professional social workers are people who render a professional service by assisting individuals, groups and communities. On the one hand, they attempt to help the individuals in the social milieu and on the other hand they remove the barriers, which obstruct people from achieving the best that they are capable. Being paid for their work, they are only in a position to efficiently do a job that, a community feels, needs to be done.

4.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Bisno, Herbert (1982), *The Philosophy of Social Work*, Washington D.C, Public Affairs Bureau.
- Bhattacharya, Sanjay (2003), *Social Work: An Integrated Approach*, Deep & Deep Publications (P) Ltd, New Delhi.
- Clark C. Asquith, S. (1985), *Social Work and Social Philosophy*, Roulhedge and Keg and Paul, London.

- Chaudhary, D.P. (1981), *Profile of Voluntary Action in Social Welfare Development*, Sidhartha, New Delhi.
- Dasguptas (1981), *Towards Post Development Era*, Mital Publication, New Delhi.
- Diwakar V.D. (Ed.) (1991), *Social Reform Movements in India: A Historical Perspective*, Popular Prakshan, Bombay.
- Eva, Schindlen & Lippit, Ronald (1977), *The Volunteer Community*, University Revinoan & Associates Inc. California.
- Frenda, M. (1985), *Voluntary Association and Local Development*, Young India Foundation, New Delhi.
- Haw & Jones (1975), *Towards a New Social Work*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.
- Kulkarni P.D. & M.C.Nanavatti (1998), *NGOs in a Changing Scenario*, Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi.
- Mukherjee K.K. and Mukherjee Sutpa (1988), *Voluntary Organisations: Some Perspectives*, Gandhi Peace Centre, Hyderabad.
- Pathak, S. (1981), *Social Welfare: An Evoluntrary Development Perspective*, Macmillan India, New Delhi.
- Ranade, S.N. (1974), *Voluntary Action and Social Welfare in India*, Voluntary Action Research, David Horton Smith, Zexinton Books, London, 1974.

4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) The term voluntary action, means "private action" that is to say, action not under the direction of any authority wielding the power of the state. Voluntary action is that action which helps in continually focusing the attention of the members of a community on its problems and needs. However, the scope of voluntary action can become very wide and therefore, it confines its to that action which is for a public purpose for social advance. Its theme is voluntary action outside one's home for improving the conditions of life for the individual and the community it is independent of public control. This is private enterprise, not in business but in the service of mankind not for gain but under the influence of a social conscience. On the other hand, social work is that branch of study which deals with human problems in society and assists in understanding democratic principles oriented towards securing for all people a decent standard of living, acceptability, affiliation, recognition and status. It is a process to help the people to help themselves. Social work has also ensured the protection of human rights through various social legislations. This enhances the happiness of the entire community by protecting from it injustice and by punishing those who do not conform to the social interest. Besides legislation tackles social problems like untouchability, child marriage, dowry system, sati, devadasi system, etc. thus helping to build a wholesome community. The emerging new notion of social service as a force and instrument in the promotion of planned social change and development enlarges the scope or professional social work activity, which traditionally, has been associated with such fields of practice as child and

family welfare, medical and psychiatric social work, school social work, correctional and group services social work has taken up new responsibilities by tying up with other disciplines to fight poverty and the problems of modern society.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) a) Protection and development of children
- b) Welfare of women in the rural areas.
- c) Services for youth.
- d) Community welfare.
- e) Promotion of educational facilities.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Voluntary organisations are that agency of political socialization in a democracy, which educate their members about social norms and values and help them achieve common goals and objectives. We can understand the role of voluntary organisation in social welfare and planned development from earlier times in Indian. In fact, the social and economic development programme, enunciated in the fourteen point constructive programme of Gandhiji, was used as a spring-board to accelerate the process of political struggle for independence and a way to activate the under-privileged and down-trodden masses to develop themselves economically and socially, on a "self-help through mutual help" basis. A network of voluntary agencies was created to promote different constructive programmes like village industries, Khadi, Nai Talim, Leprosy Work, Harijan Seva, etc. with the help of thousands of selfless and dedicated workers. This was the basis of social welfare programmes by the voluntary organisations in the post-independence period.

In general, voluntary organisations have a role to play in the economic and industrial development of the country and also to motivate people to eliminate the evil influences of industrialization, and this ultimately leads to social welfare in general.

Voluntary organisations play an important role in social welfare through the development of education, health, housing and providing welfare services for the weak, underprivileged and handicapped sections of the populations, and through efforts aimed at the social development of people, in terms of a change in their physical, intellectual, emotional, social and moral composition. Social development increases people's capacity to provide and contribute in greater degrees for the own well being as well as for the good of society. It is here that the voluntary organisations have played and will have to still play an even while voluntary organisation have traditionally worked in the field of social welfare more effective role in pushing the programmes of social development forward, certain state welfare organisations have also supplemented voluntary efforts, particularly in the field of beggary, prostitution, juvenile delinquency, etc. However, in all the fields voluntary organisations emphasize the welfare aspect, particularly because state policy, focusses primarily on giving financial and legislative assistance to these state welfare organisations.

Generally, the voluntary organisations render their services in all fields of social welfare. Their complexion and orientation also undergo changes with the change in time and situations. A major and successful voluntary action started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave in the form of Bhudan, Gramdan, Shramdan, Jeevandan (gift of land, village, labour and life), to bring about a sort of revolution in the thinking process of people to share their assets with the less fortunate people, has lost its vigor. Voluntary organisations have taken on new rules to meet the challenges emerging in a complex society with the advance of science and technology. The examples are the 100% literacy, which was achieved by voluntary efforts in Kerala, the services for the welfare of drug addicts, prostitutes, migrants, victims of terrorist activities, etc. In India, there are about 1000 voluntary agencies working for environment protection apart from those working to safeguard human rights.

Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakash Narayan and many such leaders have often expressed their faith in voluntary action in social development and have been duly recognized in the official documents in the post-independence era. The Balwant Ray Mehta Committee (1957) observed : "Today in the implementation of various schemes of community development, more and more emphasis is laid on non-governmental organisations and on the principle that ultimately people's own local organisations should take over the entire work". The Fifth and Seventh Five Year Plans relied heavily on voluntary agencies for social welfare programmes and assistance from the State was given to them for this task. Thus, voluntary agencies, equipped with necessary technical expertise, can be useful agencies of social and economic development.

In short, voluntary organisations have played a magnificent role in providing welfare services in the past which has been recognized and appreciated as it is by the public and government. They will be encouraged to assume a still more glorious role for themselves in future. It is rightly said that there is no paradise except where people work together for the welfare of all mankind and hell is where no any one even thinks of service to others. Voluntarisms in India subscribes to and opts for the first half of this statement and proves it by undertaking various programmes for the welfare of the destitute, the down-trodden, the disadvantaged and the underprivileged and complementing the state in its effort to achieve the ideals of a welfare state. Hence voluntary organisations have an important in imparting social welfare.

Check Your Progress IV

- 1) a) True
- b) False
- c) True
- d) False
- e) True