

## Definitions of Social Action

Social action is an individual or group behavior that involves interaction with other individuals or groups, especially organized action toward social reform. Some definition is to be given below that help to better understand the social action.

**Max Weber** defines social action: action is social in so far as by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by acting individual it takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course. It includes all human behavior when and in so far as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to it.

According to **Talcott Parsons** "A social action is a process in the actor-situation system which has motivational significance to the individual actor or in the case of collectivity, its component individuals".

According to **Max Weber**, "An Action is 'social' if the acting individual takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course".

**BALDWIN (1966)** defines social action as “an organized effort to change social and economic institutions as distinguished from social work or social service, the fields which do not characteristically cover essential changes in established institutions.

**MARY RICHMOND** has defined social action as “mass betterment through propaganda and social legislation”. This definition stresses on improving the condition of huge sections of population as an aim of social action with propaganda and social legislations as main strategies.

## Objectives of Social Action

**Mishra (1992) has identified following goals of social action:**

- Prevention of needs
- Solution of mass problems
- Improvement in mass conditions
- Influencing institutions, policies and practices
- Introduction of new mechanisms or programmes
- Redistribution of power and resources
- Decision-making
- Effect on thought and action structure
- Improvement in health, education and welfare

### **Characteristics of social action**

It has motivational significance

It has some aspects

It is a process in the actor-situation

Social action is not isolated

Has a meaningful understanding

So from the above definition we can say that social action refers to an act which takes into account the actions and reactions of individuals

### **Concept of social action**

Social Action has been used to signify a wide range of primarily voluntary initiative to bring out change in social systems, processes and even structure. Social Action is one of the most controversial methods of social work practice that has brought about a lot of debate among the social work practitioners as it addresses and uses the conflict present in social system to realize the goal of social justice and empowerment.

Mary Richmond was the first social worker to use the word 'social action' in 1922. In the Indian context, Social action is taken as a transformational practice to meet the objective of promoting well-being by bringing change in the arrangements in social system that lead to inequality and injustice, preventing people from realizing their full potential as self-determining agents. ® Social action is a method of social work used for mobilizing masses in order to bring about structural changes in the social system or to prevent adverse changes.

### **Types of Social Action**

According to Max Weber social action like other social forms of action may be classified in the following four types

1. **Rational Action:** In terms of rational orientation to a system of discrete individual ends that is through expectations as to the behavior of objects in the external situation and of other human individuals making use of these expectations as conditions or means for the successful attainment of the actor's own rationally chosen ends.
2. **Evaluative Actions:** In terms of rational orientation to an absolute value; involving a conscious belief in the absolute value of some ethical, aesthetic, religious or other form of behavior entirely for its own sake and independently of any prospects of external success.
3. **Emotional Actions:** In terms of effectual orientation especially emotional determined by the specific affects and state of feeling of the actors.

## PRINCIPLES

Considering Gandhian principle of mobilization as a typical example of the direct mobilization model of social action.

Britto (1984) brings out the following principles of social action:

Principle of Credibility Building

Principle of Legitimization

Principle of Dramatization

Principle of Multiple Strategies

Principle of Dual Approach

Principle of Manifold Programmes

Credibility can be built through one or many of the following ways: Gestures of goodwill towards the opponent Example setting Selection of typical, urgently felt problems for struggles Success

It helps in securing due recognition from the opponent, the reference- public and the peripheral participants of the movement.

It is the task of creating public image of leadership, the organization and the participants of the movement as champions of justice, rectitude and truth.

## PRINCIPLE OF CREDIBILITY BUILDING

Legitimization is a continuous process. Following are the three approaches to legitimization: Theological and religious approach Moral approach Legal and technical approach

Leaders of the movement might use theological, philosophical, legal-technical, public opinion paths to establish the tenability of the movement's objectives. □ Legitimization is the process of convincing the target group and the general public that the movement- objectives are morally right.

## PRINCIPLE OF LEGITIMIZATION

Almost every leader mobilising the masses, uses this principle of dramatization. The following are the techniques:

Use of songs Powerful speeches

## Role of women Boycott Slogans

Dramatization is the principle of mass mobilisation by which the leaders of a movement galvanize the population into action by emotional appeals to heroism, sensational news-management, novel procedures, pungent slogans and such other techniques.

### PRINCIPLE OF DRAMATIZATION

The basket principle indicates the adoption of a multiple strategy, using combined approaches and also a combination of different types of programmes.

Zeltman and Duncan have identified four development strategies from their experience of community development. These have been framed for use in social action. They are:

Educational strategy

Persuasive strategy

Facilitative strategy

Power strategy

There are two basic approaches to development: conflictual and non- conflictual. Taking the main thrust of a programme, one can classify it as political, economic or social.

### PRINCIPLE OF MULTIPLE STRATEGIES:

This cooperative effort indicates that Gandhians adopted or attempted to a dual approach in their mobilization.

This is a natural requirement consequent upon the attempt to destroy the system established/maintained by the opponents. □ Any activist has to build counter-systems or revive some unused system, which is thought to be beneficial to the mobilized public on a self-help basis without involving the opponent.

### PRINCIPLE OF DUAL APPROACH

This principle means developing a variety of programmes with the ultimate objective of mass mobilization.

These can be broadly categorized into three parts: Economic Programs Social Programs Political Programs

### PRINCIPLE OF MANIFOLD PROGRAMMES

The innovative approaches, participatory techniques, outreach, and holistic thinking are critically important in creating a better world, which is indeed the vision of social work profession.

The scope of social action is very vast and it is one of the most apt methods of social work practice even in today's context as the approach of social work practice has shifted from charity to empowerment, the scope of social work has expanded enormously. □

Action System

Target System

Client System

Change Agent System

It is important to understand the systems from the perspective of social work intervention which determines the scope of Social Action.

**The following steps forms part of Social Action. They are:**

The Initiating set

The Legitimizers

The Diffusion set

Defining the need

Commitment to action

Goals

Means

Plan for action

Mobilizing and organizing resources

Launching the program

Carrying out the program

Final evaluation

Thus it can be understood that the SOCIAL ACTION is effective method to involve people to analyse, understand and solve their own problem with or without external assistance