

Scenario of Labour Welfare in India "A Study"

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Introduction :

The term welfare brings in many ideas, meaning to state well being, good health, happiness, prosperity and the development of human resources. The concept of welfare has been a total concept involving physical, mental, moral and emotional well being of individual.

The Concept :

Welfare is called as relative concept for it is related to time and space. Changes in it have an impact on the system. As a result the potential changes in the welfare content keep changing with time and space. It is also been observed that the welfare as a concept differs from country to country and from place to place.

Secondly, welfare is a positive concept, as to establish a minimum standard of living, it would demand certain minimum acceptable conditions of existence in both biological and social. Thus, when this is defined it is necessity for the components of welfare in terms of health, food, clothing, housing, medical assistance, insurance so on are to be taken care of.

Further, labour welfare as a concept has both positive and negative sides like, it deals with the provision of opportunities which enable the worker and his family to lead a good life, socially and personally and on the negative side it provides opportunities for undesirable consequences and labour problems.

The concept of labour differs from country to country, industry to industry and from time to time and region to region. Further it also depends on the kind of problems with which the society is confronted that is moulded according to the age group, sex, soci-cultural background, economic status and educational level of the employees in various industries.

Definition :

There could not be just one single definition to find universal acceptance. The simplest of all could be to understand that labour welfare as “efforts to make life worth living for worker.”

The Encyclopedia of social sciences welfare is terms as voluntary efforts of the employers to establish within the existing industrial system, working and sometimes living and cultural conditions of the employees beyond what is required by law, the custom of the industry and the conditions of the market.”

It could also be defined as “such services, facilities, amenities, which may be established in or in the vicinity of undertakings to enable persons employed therein to perform their work in healthy and congenial surroundings and to provide them with amenities conducive to good health and good morals.”

Another definition on labour welfare defines it as “that cover all the efforts which employers make for the benefit of their employees over and above the minimum standard of working conditions fixed by the factories act and over and above the provision of social legislation providing against accident, old age, unemployment and sickness.”

Another definition on labour welfare states that “such services, facilities and amenities as adequate canteens, rest and recreation facilities, sanitary and medical facilities, arrangements for travel to and from work and for the accommodation of the workers employed at a distance from their security measures, as contribute to an improvement in the conditions under which workers are employed.”

Thus these definitions enables us to understand as one “in which much can be done to combat the sense of frustration of the industrial workers, to relieve

them of personal and family worries, to improve their health, to afford them means of self expression, to offer them some sphere in which they can excel others and to help them to a wider conception of life.”

The most significant definitions describes labour welfare work as “the voluntary effort of the employer to improve the living and working conditions of his employees, the underlying assumption of course being that the first essentials to the welfare of the employees are steady work, a fair wage and reasonable hours of labour.”

Of all these definition, it is very much transparent to note that none of these definition is complete or comprehensive. There is no precise, definitive outline or demarcation in this subject and thus they may give overlap and ambiguity in certain areas of action.

However, it is a well known fact that labour welfare promotes the well being of the workers in a variety of ways. Any kind of voluntary service will come under the purview of labour welfare if it aims at helping the worker to work better and in more congenial surroundings and also to live better physically, socially, morally, economically and intellectually.

Objectives of Labour Welfare :

In the beginning humanitarianism and social awareness motivated labour welfare activities. Driven by the desire for greater efficiency and output from workers and with a view to attract better workers, employers lured them into their Organisation through labour welfare measures.

Further, some of the few issues tackled by labour welfare measures are as stated below.

Such labour welfare measures persuade workers to accept mechanization and sometimes labour welfare measures were used by the employer as a tool to combat the outside agencies on their employees.

Labour welfare measures are often undertaken to avoid paying of tax on surplus and simultaneously building up good relations with the employee.

Sometimes labour welfare measures are undertaken to meet the minimal requirements that is followed by other organisations in the industry.

Theories of Welfare :

The Policing Theory - is based on the contention that a minimum standard of welfare is necessary for labourers. The theory assumes that without compulsion, periodical supervision and fear of punishment, employers will not be ready to provide even the minimum welfare amenities.

Therefore the theory postulate that the welfare state has to step in to prevent these atrocities and exploitation and force industrialists to offer minimum standard of welfare to their workers. Thus various laws are promulgated in order to compel every organisation to provide the minimum standard welfare measures leading to.

The passing of laws relating to the provision of minimum welfare for workers, Periodical supervision to ascertain that these welfare measures are provided and implemented and punishment of employers who evade 'or disobey' these laws.

It is seen from the above that the emphasis by the theory is on the fear and not on the true spirit of welfare. As such many big industrialists do not undertake the welfare measures that are not backed by law, been though these may bring in some good relied to the workers and improve their life.

While the others in spite of being capable to carry out, they are not interested to carry out any welfare Programmes while the others try to find loopholes in the law and convince the factory inspectors they have duly carried out the legal requirements.

The Religious Theory - is propounded on the concept that a man is essentially a religious animal. Even today many acts of man are related to religious sentiments and beliefs. Hence these religious feelings sometimes prompt an employer to take up welfare activities in the expectation of future benefits either in his life or in some future life.

According to the theory, any good work is considered an investment both the benefactor and the beneficiary are rewarded, based on this philosophy many charitable and other religious institutions have come into existence.

Another aspect of the religious theory is the atonement aspect, as some people take up welfare work in a spirit of atonement for their sins and any welfare act is treated either as an investment or an atonement.

Further, according to this theory man is primarily concerned with his own welfare and only secondarily with the welfare of the others. The religious basis of welfare cannot be rational, nor universal or continuous.

The Philanthropic Theory - is based on mans love for mankind. In Greek philo means loving and anthropes mean man and hence loving mankind becomes the key factory for the theory.

Man is believed to have an instinctive urge by which he strives to remove the suffering of others and promote the well being and this being very powerful drive it impels him to perform noble sacrifices. Thus the labour welfare movement began in the early years of the industrial revolution with support of Robert Owen and in India the movement began with the ardent support of Mahatma Gandhi, who strove for the welfare of the labour.

The Trusteeship Theory - also called as paternalistic theory of labour welfare says that the industrialist or employer holds the total industrial estate, properties and profits accruing from them in trust. Hence he uses them for himself and for the benefit of his workers and for the society.

Here the workers are treated as minors and they are ignorant because they lack in education and they are not able to look after themselves. Therefore employers have the moral responsibility to look after the interest of their wards who are the workers. Here there is no binding or obligation legally but only morality issues are raised.

Here, the welfare of the labour depends on the initiative of the top management and more related to moral conscience of the industrialists and hence may create a goodwill between the labour and management.

The Placating Theory - is based on the act that labour groups are becoming demanding and militant. They are more conscious of their rights and privileges than

ever before. Their demand for higher wages and better standards cannot be ignored and hence it said that the timely and periodical acts of labour welfare can appease the workers.

The Public Relations Theory - provides the basis for an atmosphere of goodwill between labour and management and also between management and the public. Labour Welfare programmes under this theory work as a sort of an advertisement and help an industrialist to build up good and healthy public relations. The theory is based on the assumption that the labour welfare movement may be utilized to improve relations between management and labour. Thus an advertisement of the industrialist in promoting labour welfare schemes may improve his relations with the public and at the same time these kind of programmes may lack sincerity and continuity as such programmes when loses its advertisement value may become redundant and be withdrawn or even abandoned may become only a publicity stunt rather than labour welfare.

The Functional Theory - also known as efficiency theory, welfare work is used as a means to secure, preserve and develop the efficiency and productivity of labour. It is obvious that if an employer takes good care of these workers, they will tend to become more efficient and will thereby step up production. Thus this depends on the healthy relationship between the union and management and their mutual concern for the growth and development of the industry.

Thus higher the production is of benefit to both management and labour, as the labourer will get better and higher wages and also to share profits. This concept would work well when both the parties have identical aim.

In India it is said that the industrial system clings largely to the paternalistic approach and some management try to achieve this through police control. Either way workers start expecting too much from employers as a result of which employers provide welfare measures in a somewhat half hearted manner. Thus the theory works more effectively by reason of an intelligent and willing participation of workers.

Principles of Labour Welfare :

Principle of Adequacy of Wages - labour welfare measures cannot be a substitute for wages, workers have a right to adequate wages, but high rate of wages alone cannot create a healthy environment nor would bring in commitment on the part of the workers. A combination of social welfare, emotional welfare and economic welfare together would achieve good results.

Principle of Social Responsibility - plays an important role in welfare services and is based on the relationship between welfare and efficiency, though it is difficult to measure this relationship. Whether one accepts the social responsibility of industry or not, the employer quite often accepts the responsibility for increasing such labour measures as would increase efficiency. For eg. Diet planning in canteens.

Principle of Re-personalisation - the development of human personality is found to be the goal of industrial welfare and this principle should counteract the baneful effects of the industrial system. Therefore it is necessary to implement labour welfare services, both inside and outside the factory.

Principle of Totality of Welfare - emphasizes that the concept of labour welfare must spread throughout the hierarchy of an Organisation and employees at all levels must accept this total concept of labour welfare without which the labour welfare would not be implemented.

Principle of Co-ordination - is a concept of co-ordinated approach that will promote a healthy development of the worker in his work, home and community. This is essential for the sake of harmony and continuity in labour welfare services.

Principle of Democratic Values - Cooperation of the worker is the basis of this principle and thus consultation and the agreement of the workers in the formulation and implementation of the labour welfare services are very necessary for their success.

Moreover, workers allowed to participate in planning these programmes get keenly interested in their proper implementation. This principle is based on the assumption that the worker is a mature and rational individual and industrial democracy is the driving force here and workers also develop a sense of pride hence they are made to feel that labour welfare programmes are created by them and for them.

Principles of Responsibility - recognises the fact that both employers and workers are responsible for labour welfare. Trade unions too are involved in these programmes in a healthy manner, for basically labour welfare belongs to the domain of the trade union activity.

Further, when responsibility is shared by different groups, labour welfare work becomes simpler and easier. Accordingly various committees are elected or nominated and various powers and responsibilities in the welfare field are delegated to them. For Eg. Safety committee, the canteen supervision committee, etc.

Principle of Accountability - is also known as principle of evaluation. Here one responsible person gives an assessment or evaluation of existing welfare services on a periodical basis to a higher authority. In this criteria one judge the success of labour welfare programmes.

Principle of Timeliness - The timeliness of any service helps in its success. To identify the labour problem and to discover what kind of help is necessary so solve it and when to provide this help are all very necessary in planning labour welfare programmes.

Principle of Self Help - is the facts that labour welfare must aim at helping workers to help themselves in the long run. This helps them to become more responsible and more efficient.

Need and Scope of Labour Welfare :

Labour welfare has become essential because of the very nature of the industrial system and the approaches to this system differ from country to country. Since our country is still going through the process of economic development, it is of great consequence and somewhat easier to counteract the baneful effects of the industrial revolution that has adversely affected the people all over the world.

Thus the need for labour welfare was strongly felt by the committee of the Royal Commission on Labour as far as back as in 1931, primarily to protect every industrial worker from the hands of their employers.

Further, the above commission mission to protect labour was emphasized in the state directive principles of the following articles.

Article 41 - The state shall within the limits of its economic capacity and development make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and in other cases of underserved want.

Article 42 - The state shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

Article 43 - The state shall endeavour to secure, by suitable legislation or economic organisation or in any other way, to all workers, agricultural, industrial or otherwise work a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities and in particular the state shall endeavour to promote cottage industries on an individual or cooperative basis in rural areas.

Some of the necessities for the Labour Welfare Measurement to introduced :

- There were only 25 million during the initial period of industrial growth, while the strength of the workers is increasing year after year and hence, need for a mechanism to look into the welfare of the labour.
- Workers put in long hours of work in unhealthy surrounding and the drudgery of the factory work continues to have adverse effect. To counter these welfare measures were felt necessary.
- As a result of hardwork, they fall prey to alcoholism, fambling and other immoral activities results in absenteeism and other problems in the organisation. Hence the need was felt.
- Good education and training facilities for workers were also felt necessary as there was high rate illiteracy and lack of proper education background.
- Good training provided will reduce industrial accidents, increases workers efficiency and create a sense of commitment among the workers.
- Welfare activities like family planning, child welfare facilities and maternity care assist workers in a variety of ways, which would reduce the mortality rate and maintain good health of the spouse and children of the family, which would create a confident note in the workers.

- Promoting welfare activities lead to better working conditions and standards for industrial workers.

Scope of Labour Welfare :

Contribute to the productivity of labour and efficiency of the enterprise. Raise the standard of living of workers by indirectly reducing the burden on their purse. Be in tune and harmony with similar services obtaining in a neighbouring community where an enterprise is situated. Be based on an intelligent prediction of the future needs of industrial work and be so designed as to offer a cushion to absorb the shock of industrialization and urbanization. Be administratively viable and essentially development in outlook.

However no labour welfare activities can be limited to facilities, within or near the undertaking nor can it be comprehensive as embrace the whole range of social welfare or social services. It therefore follows all the extra mural and intra mural welfare activities as statutory or non statutory welfare measures undertaken by employees.

It bring under its purview all welfare activities and amenities related to canteen, rest and recreation facilities, medical assistance, better health, nutrition and sanitation, travel to and from work, education, housing, holiday facilities and soon.

Conclusion :

Labour welfare in India has a special significance as the constitution provides for the promotion of welfare of the labour for humane condition of work and securing to all workers leisure, social and cultural opportunities. Labour welfare is measure to promote the efficiency of labour. The various welfare measures provided by the employer will have immediate impact on the health, physical and mental efficiency, alertness, morale and overall efficiency of the workers and thereby contributing to the higher productivity. Moreover, the workmen require protection from certain calamities which imperial their efficiency. Social security aims at providing collective measures to protect the members of a community against social risk as their individual resources are seldom adequate to after protection against hardship. Both assistance and social insurance from integral parts

of the system of social security. Labour welfare introduces the extra dimension to industrial relationship which ever a satisfactory wage alone cannot provide. Labour welfare express the humane interest as enlightened employer has in the well being and contentment of the people who work for him. Labour welfare means activities designed for the promotion of the economic, social and cultural well being of the employees. The term labour welfare includes any thing done for intellectual, physical, moral and economic betterment of worker by government or by other agencies over and above what laid down by law in various contingencies like illness, unemployment, disability and death which have direct impact on the well being of the worker and the dependent.

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