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**Topic: Social Planning**

Planning is commitment to concentrated action. It is adjustment of social institutions to new social, economic, and political conditions. It is not necessarily rational because it is not always guided by reliable scientific information. For example, in India, if for eliminating poverty, emphasis is laid only on increase in production and the issue of control over population explosion is completely neglected, how could it be called rational planning?

**Social Planning**

Till sometimes back, the word 'planning' was generally used in the economic sphere only to control and direct economic activity. Or, in other words, its use was delimited to economic development. But recent sociological studies have proved that there are social aspects of economic development also.

It was experienced that economic development was slowed down by the social-structural features of the society. There is no doubt that people want to have better material conditions of living. But even the activity which is necessary for achieving such an end is not forthcoming due to social-structural frameworks.

**Types of Planning**

- Democratic planning
- Totalitarian Planning

The only important difference between these two is that in totalitarian planning people has faith or fear in the dominant minority which draw the blueprint of planning, i.e., set the goals and decides the means to achieve them.

While in democratic planning there is participation by the people through the representative institutions in setting up the goals and in deciding the means to achieve them. However, whether it is democratic planning or totalitarian planning, once the goals and means are decided and accepted, these are enforced by the agency of planning—government or any corporation or institution.

**Social planning aims to-**

- Change in social organization
- Community welfare (like improving educational facilities, increasing employment opportunities, doing away with evil social practices, etc.).

**According to Riemer, three important characteristics of planning are:**

- Prior determination of objectives and proclamation of values
- Concreteness, that is, laying down concrete details of its subject-matter
- Co-ordination of diversified skills and diversified professional training.

**Some of the important principles are:**

- Development proposals and procedures should be mutually consistent
- Goals of development must be stated in terms that have positive value to the community
- Planners must have a thorough knowledge of the beliefs and values of the community's culture
- Development must take the whole community into account
- Community must be an active partner in the development process, and
- Communication and coordination between various agencies of development is essential.

The countries, including Japan and Germany, which have done better are those which have no planning commissions and have no plans. Should India follow the same path?

**For the success of a plan, we have to bear in mind a few things:**

- Plan must stem from the people themselves,
- People's participation is extremely necessary,
- Initiative for implementing the plan is to be taken not by the planners but by the activists in different walks of life,
- Priorities have to be decided in advance, and
- Arbitration in decision-making must be by a person who has technical knowledge and is a trained professional because he has the capability of visualizing alternative solutions.

In India, economic planning was advocated by M. Visveswaraya in the 1940s. The Indian National Congress appointed a National Planning Committee on the eve of the Second World War (1938-39) to frame an all- India plan. But it was the Bombay Plan (known as Tata Birla Plan) which made people planning-conscious in India.

The Government of India set up in 1943 a committee of the Viceroy's Council, known as Reconstruction Committee of Council (RCC), which was assisted by Provincial Policy Committees to chalk out plans for reconstruction. In 1944, the Department of Planning and Development was also created. However, at this stage, government plans were not concerned with definite economic targets.

They were mainly concerned with issues like raising standard of living, increasing purchasing power of people, stabilising agricultural prices, developing industries, removing wealth disparities, and raising the level of backward classes. Different provinces were asked to prepare their own plans. There was no resource budget and no priorities.

**Planning Commission was to-**

- Determine priorities
- Plan balanced utilisation of the country's resources
- Make an assessment of the material, capital and human resources of the country
- Assess the progress achieved from time to time and recommend readjustment, and
- Identify factors which retard economic development

Since its inception, Planning Commission has so far prepared nine Five Year Plans, each focusing on different objectives, say, family planning, increasing employment opportunities, increasing annual national income by 5 per cent to 7 per cent, growth of basic industries (like, steel, power, chemicals), maximum use of manpower resources, decentralization of economic power, reducing inequalities in income distribution, achieving social justice with equality, and so on. It could be said that the central objective of planning in India has been to raise the standard of living of the people and to open out to them opportunities for a richer and more varied life.

But has planning in India achieved the objectives of planned change? During the period of fifty years of planning, the average rate of economic growth has been 3.5 per cent. Though it is not bad in comparison to the world's average of 4 per cent, it is definitely poor in comparison to the average of 7 per cent to 10 per cent of the developing countries.

Following Ronald Lippit (1958:96-99), it may be pointed out that certain principles have to be put into practice if a development programme has to be successful.