

Concept of Social Welfare: A Brief Study from the Perspective of India

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Abstract:

Since the middle of the 20th century, modern states, whether liberal or communist, established or developing, have assumed the function of a Welfare State in various historical periods. The term of Welfare State is expanding in the political lexicon and has multiple implications. Undoubtedly, the welfare state is a compromise between communism and unrestrained individualism. It attempts to include all the positive characteristics of the two types of governance for the benefit of the people.

Keywords: Social welfare Communist, political lexicon, liberalisation, individualism.

A Welfare State consists of both the policies for assisting people and the accompanying concepts. The Welfare State concept emphasises the government's role as the giver and guardian of individual asset and societal welfare through economic and social programmes. The State is no longer considered solely as a protector of life and property, but also as a tool for promoting human wellbeing. As a dynamic concept, 'welfare' has experienced significant evolution with the time that has passed. In its beginnings, welfare policies were essentially religious declarations. With the provision of health, educational, and housing services, regulations for the protection of the working class, security measures, etc., they gradually assumed more tangible forms. Along with income creation, market regulation, and law enforcement, modern welfare states provide a vast array of social services. With the evolution of the notion of social welfare, the range of social services has expanded significantly. The concept of Welfare State has expanded the reach even more. It wasn't until the 20th century, notably after World War II, that the goals and extent of the Welfare State became obvious. This resulted in the adoption of the Welfare State concept by nearly every democratic nation on earth. In this sense, it may be claimed that the growth of the Welfare State was not rapid, but rather progressive. Currently, the terms welfare state, social justice, and democracy are used interchangeably.

Welfare State is committed to its social obligation of ensuring minimal individual and communal welfare standards. Being fundamentally a harmonious combination of communism and unrestrained individuality, it ensures the development of a progressive society. It strives to elevate the populace from a dull and disparaging existence to one that is purposeful and exalting. It ensures the provision of life's essentials without restricting opportunities for free business. In other terms, the Welfare State represents "actual liberty." Thus, the fundamental functions of a Welfare State are

- (i) the provision of a minimum standard of living,
- (ii) social welfare legislation,
- (iii) economic development,
- (iv) the generation of income,
- (v) the creation of employment opportunities,
- (vi) the protection of civil liberties,
- (vii) the encouragement of political participation,
- (viii) the regulation of specific industries,
- (ix) social controls, and
- (x) social services.

In a welfare state, social services have taken precedence over all other functions. Here, the government protects 'minimum levels of income, nourishment, shelter, and education' as a political entitlement, not as charity, for every citizen.

In western industrialised cultures, opposition to the Welfare State has grown over the past three and a half decades. The developing nations, which previously wore their humanitarian insignia with such pride, have not spared this trend. The world has been overwhelmed by a tsunami of globalisation and liberalisation, which appears to be fundamentally hostile to the underlying values of the welfare state. The resistance to the Welfare State originates from the expanding role of government in all aspects of public life in the name of the citizens' welfare. The primary critique, however, focuses on "the expense of welfare, which appeared to exceed the available resources." The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the steady deterioration of communist socialist ideology have exacerbated the problem. The Welfare State placed an excessive amount of trust in human nature and behaviour. Individuals in Welfare States become increasingly reliant on the philanthropy of the

society and the charity of the state, rather than harnessing the benefits of welfarism to encourage initiative and entrepreneurship. The adoption of flawed concepts and tactics by governments in their pursuit of socioeconomic development has exacerbated the problems of the Welfare States. The emergence of irresponsible individual and political leadership was precipitated by the implementation of different populist programmes to appease voters and advance political goals. These extremely mistaken practises are also penalised in the economic realm. This makes the cost of welfare a significant burden on even the governments of wealthy nations. Consequently, a small surplus remains for welfare expenditures. Thirdly, especially in emerging nations, a major portion of financial resources is used to cover the cost of establishment. Also, the narrow and vested interests of the ruling elites are gratified under the guise of welfarism. Moreover, because the government attempts to execute so many various types of activities, it naturally becomes ineffectual, resulting in a diversion of the welfare state's objectives and strategies. All of these contributed negatively to the perception that government spending on social welfare is a waste of precious public resources.

After all is said and done, it is impossible to just wish away the concept of the Welfare State. The need for social and economic security through state involvement for economically and socially disadvantaged segments of the population cannot ever be minimised. The criticism of the Welfare State is not directed against the values it espouses, but rather at the government's policies and tactics for achieving its welfarist objectives. Inadequate planning, appraisal of programmes on a regular basis, and evaluation of the efficacy of actions have produced numerous problems in the Welfare State. Therefore, the current imperative is not to eliminate welfarism, as no modern government can afford to do so, but rather to remain more focused on increasing efficiency. Policies of economic liberalisation must be pursued, but in a manner that allows private sectors to make a substantial contribution to wealth creation, the minimization of state involvement in economic matters, and the adoption of cost-effective methods for the distribution of social assistance to the needy. It is also vital to limit the scope and concentration of welfarism so that "after a specified period of time, the individual is anticipated to be self-sufficient, rendering welfarism obsolete."

Approaches to Social Welfare Research

The issue of social welfare has been handled from several angles. At one end of the spectrum are hard-core "Conservatives" who view profit-motive as fundamental to human

behaviour. Therefore, the market system that satisfies this fundamental instinct should not be altered. They consider government assistance as corrupting and make life easier for shirkers and sloths. The ultra-conservatives celebrate hardship and poverty as prerequisites for the advancement and prosperity of society. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the "Utopians" who attribute welfare to human compassion and view it as the final solution.

The 'liberals' and 'leftists' fall between these two extremes. The former, and not the latter (Social Democrats or Reformists), are faithful believers in the efficacy of the market process. The fruits of development will eventually trickle down to them. However, in an effort to prevent the collapse of the capitalist system, they endeavour to rectify its negative impacts. In addition to providing broad public services, the state should provide specific services to the poor and disadvantaged. Welfare is typically focused with the supply of goods and services or the essential duty of caring for those people of society who have difficulty caring for themselves. They expect that a welfare state led by social justice may combine the benefits of justice and democracy.

However, this strategy has always seen welfare as a secondary concern to economic development, believing that economic progress will materialize in the flow and expansion of benefits. Since the 1960s, the failure of social development efforts and social welfare organisations in both developing and industrialised countries has necessitated a shift in this perspective on welfare. Social welfare came to be viewed on par with economic goals, and not just as a tool to compensate for the detriments caused by industrialisation. General disenchantment with economic growth prompted the search for an alternative development model. The notion that poor nations should gamble with their extra resources prior to choosing social welfare was rejected. The prevailing attitude was that "Social Welfare is not a luxury a poor nation should forego." In an impoverished nation, social welfare initiatives are much more urgent. Social Welfare services were acknowledged as prerequisites for any meaningful growth in poor countries.

In developing nations, however, social welfare services remained inadequate, primarily because to the absence of organised and articulate weaker sections that could apply pressure on policymakers. The majority of resources supplied to social services are monopolised by elites because "the government has made it very simple to grant advantages to elites while portraying them as democratic successes." The effort to impose a developmental role on

welfare should be evaluated in light of the actual evolution of welfare and the restrictions within which it operates. This method has garnered widespread support, particularly from western researchers, and has been adopted as a model for welfare by the majority of developing nations.

The most powerful opposition to the liberal perspective comes from "Leftists" or "Marxists." While they view capitalism as adverse to welfare, they argue that welfare is only viable under socialism, with state control over production and distribution, and on the basis of need. They consider the social welfare measures under capitalist regimes to be grossly inadequate and intended to prevent any potential Revolution. Marx observed astutely, "A portion of the bourgeois are interested in redressing social complaints in order to ensure the survival of bourgeois society." Marxists believe that after the revolutionary downfall of capitalism, genuine welfare is attainable within a socialist framework.

In an effort to fight the Leftist onslaught, the Liberals no longer saw social services as only special welfare, but as an inherent component of the process of growth. However, economic growth remains their stated objective, and they are willing to accept only a few changes and shun a thorough reform of the system.

Models of Welfare

A comprehensive understanding of welfare demands an examination of the nature and function of the numerous models of welfare services produced by researchers. Although numerous models have been created, it appears advisable to concentrate on the most important ones.

The "Residual" and "Institutional" Models were two of the first models created by Willensky and Lebeaux. The former regards social services as emergency services provided ad hoc for the sole aim of survival. This concept is based on Shlonsky's depiction of welfare as a "necessary evil" that "attempts to keep the number of recipients as low as possible and to supply only the elements deemed required for subsistence." The "Institutional Model" regards welfare as functions of society to people in need, as well as to others, in order to help them reach their potential. It emphasises security, equality, and humanitarianism, while advocating "a universalistic nature of social services to be made available to the broader public without sacrificing the basis of economic individualism."

The "Developmental" Model is one step ahead of the Institutional Model in that, unlike the Institutional Model, which aims to prevent or correct social problems, the "Developmental" Model, as claimed by Dologoff and Feldstein, assumes the possibility of establishing some sort of social welfare institutions in order to improve living conditions and promote human development. However, it sees no need to alter capitalism and remains persuaded of its advantages. Mishra's "Normative" or "Marxist" Model places an emphasis on institutionalising welfare. Revolutionary abolition of the private property system is the only path to socialisation, which may then manage the production and distribution processes according to the criteria of need.

However, the aforementioned models are by no means universally acceptable. Regarding their applicability, there are significant concerns, despite the fact that they are, in many ways, excellent.

Social Welfare in India:

Social Welfare is not a new concept in India. It has existed since the beginning of India's history. It is described as "certain service supplies and material support provided by all or a portion of society to a person deemed in need." It is an innovative idea. It encompasses the entirety of human endeavours. The concept or aim of social welfare is one of antiquity. The Upanishad states, "Let everyone be joyful and well." Let everyone be rewarded with enjoyment, and let no one suffer." The Arthashastra of Kautilya also points in this direction.

Even if it had reached a desirable level in the United Kingdom and the United States at the time, the indifference of the British government impeded the growth of social welfare in the manner of institutional care and social security procedures in India. In India, the field of social work did not enter a new phase until after independence. The Congress government designated India a welfare state after independence. It should be mentioned, however, that post-independence India, with its idiosyncrasies deriving from a long period of colonial control, found it impossible to apply the western model of Welfare State in its entirety to its underdeveloped economy. India's adoption of a welfare model was hampered by its poverty, limited infrastructure, large population, and coexistence of feudal and capitalist economic systems. In reality, it was through thorough planning, as seen by the Five-Year Plans, that India was able to reach a noteworthy level of social welfare.

The emphasis placed on the welfare aspect in different five-year plans demonstrates that our commitment to a Welfare State is total. Social welfare's inclusion as an integral aspect of national planning was not a question of happenstance or fad. It was an earnest endeavour to give the lengthy tradition of providing aid to the afflicted people of the society a structured form. Since 1920, the modern history of the social reform movement in India may be attributed to Gandhian efforts. The Gandhian Era is genuinely the "Age of Social Revolution." Gandhiji's ardent advocacy for the uplift of the "Harijan" and women ushered in a new era of social welfare. The Indian notion of social welfare differs from the Western notion, which is predicated on the development of more wealth. It has an effect on the material and spiritual sides of life. In India, social welfare refers to a range of social services designed to satisfy the particular requirements of individuals and groups that, due to social and economic, physical and mental handicaps, are unable to access community services or have been historically refused access to these services.

Indian planners have taken a holistic approach to the challenge of development. According to them, development affects all facets of community life. Economic planning in India therefore encompasses educational, social, and cultural sectors in addition to economic ones. Modern welfare provides a productive and growth-oriented perspective for programme objectives, target groups, and services. It enables physically and socially challenged individuals to achieve their innate potentials and, as a result, to develop and become independent, hence decreasing their degree of dependence. Welfare services are viewed as instruments for human resource development. Beneficiaries can be integrated into the development mainstream by means of the processes initiated by these programmes. Recognizing the multidimensional character of developmental issues, emphasis has been placed on cross-sector approaches and preventive programmes.

In India, social services are generally geared toward meeting the needs of society's marginalised communities. In such demographic segments, women comprise a strong bloc. As they constitute about half of the Indian population, they are given priority in national development programmes. Leaders and politicians in India have recognized that any benefit plan is insufficient unless it takes into account the requirements of women and provides for their wellbeing. The development of the status of women was a commitment made by the constitution's drafters and acknowledged by the administration from the outset as one of the

most important challenges facing the nation. However, the status of women in India, especially those living in rural regions, remains largely unchanged. Clearly, this is a depressing indictment on the situation of women.

Therefore, any strategy or plan for growth must take into account the condition of women, since constitutional principles can guarantee the necessary equality for their development.

Conclusion

Since its foundation as an independent nation, India has adhered to the Welfare State ideals. In fact, Social Welfare values are deeply established in the culture and heritage of Indian civilization. Consequently, the Constitution of India has a number of provisions that implement welfare orientations. Subsequently, legislation has been enacted to meet the demands of the populace, particularly the needs of the marginalised and oppressed. Welfare has also been emphasised in successive Five-Year Plans. The situations of women, children, and those belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been improved with special attention. As it claims and as evidenced by a number of schemes and programmes, the government has not lost sight of its primary objective, which is to care for marginalised groups such as women and children.

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