

Social Welfare Policies of Indian welfare State: A Reality Check

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Political freedom and democracy are mere cry to wilderness in the absence of social welfare and equality. These terms as such are of no vital significance to the common man of this country unless they serve s means to bring about a change in the socio-economic relations of the community to cherish the ideal of social welfare and equality of enshrined in our Constitution . A democratic Welfare state cannot adopt an attitude of indifference to the challenge of social inequality and economic injustice and its organs are paralyzed without it. Gone are the days of laissaze fair when any direct intervention, the part of the state in the socio-economic field (for the promotion of well being of its citizens) was regarded as an evil.

In the present era of ‘welfare state’ ,In India , the state has assumed immediatly new functions for beyond its own capacities and resources. Sixty three years later independence, 42 percent of children go to sleep on an empty stomach, 40 percent of patients cannot pay for hospital treatment and their a housing shortage of 25 million units and counting in urban India alone. Our Government schools and hospitals are among the most glaring symbols of official apathy and neglect. Public investment in crucial sectors such as health and education as a share of GDP is way behind that of advanced and even many emerging economies. Public policies, public administration are not fulfilling the need of citizens of India. So the concept of

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welfare state seems to be lost in the perspective of social administration in India. In this paper we evaluate the function of Indian welfare state as well as we will find out the way how the social need can be fulfilled by the welfare state through its welfare social policies or administration. Before go ahead we should clear the terms like social administration and social welfare policies and welfare state which are used in this paper. I

Dictionary defined **Social Administration** is the study of social arrangements and policies aimed at meeting social needs especially state welfare systems. Academic social Administration has typically adopted a practical, problem-solving, reforming approach, frequently criticized as being empiricist, prescriptive and narrow, theoretical informed approaches to welfare are now more common. However, as the processes of transferring responsibilities for public welfare from the state to the private sector.¹Social Administration has been defined variously by different authorities. Some of the definitions of social administration are being reproduced below:-

“Social Administration is the participation of the public administration to work with the people in the administration of community services like, health, education and housing, social security services like insurance assistance and grants; and social welfare services for the destitute, disabled, delinquents, drink and drug addicts etc.”²

Prof .D.V Donnison defines social administration in its narrower and broader senses.” Narrowly defined social administration is the study of the development structure, and practices of the social services. Broadly defined, it is an attempt to apply the social sciences including philosophy to the analysis and solution of a changing range of social problems”³

This definition takes a negative view of the social Administration, as it emphasizes merely on the solution of social

problems and not on the creation of opportunities for the well being of the individuals, groups and communities comprising a society.

In the light of welfare state social Administration is a meeting ground-” A partnership between public and private social service agencies”. A partnership in which, the voluntary agencies do not only enjoy an equal status but in certain cases are recognized social administration, social policy, public policy, good Governance and welfare so that in the light of understanding these terms we can understand the actions and policies of India as a welfare state and what are the realities which the Indian citizens are bearing in this Democratic country first, what is the social policy - Basically and Considerably social policies are the basic concept of welfare state. It is and applied subject, It was developed to meet the needs of people who would be working in the public services. Social administration in the area of the field concerned with the practicalities of service organization and delivery. In the U.S, it is dealt with as public policy or policy analysis.

After considering these terms we should understand the term welfare state.

Welfare state

India’s constant efforts to improve the material conditions of the masses of this country and to give them a sense of participation in social equality has always to be guided by a sense of ethos, sense of right and wrong and sense of social justice. Article 38 to 46 of the constitution of India emphasizes the of India.

India emphasizes the importance of promotion of Welfare of the people and educational, and economic interests of women. Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes and other weaker sections.the term social welfare is certainly not new to India. It

is there since the beginning of the history of India. It has been defined as “specified services supplies and material assistance given by all or part of society to a human being thought to be in need”.⁴

It is a dynamic concept, changing its sphere form time to time, according to the social and cultural patterns of a society. It is dynamic in the sense that the methods and techniques, followed by any society in grappling with social problems, will change as the problems grow in number.⁵ The Idea or ideal of social welfare is an ancient one so far as India is concerned. The Upanishad says, “Let all be happy and healthy. Let all be blessed with happiness and let none be happy”. the Mahabharata recites, “I do not long for a kingdom, heaven or rebirth, but I wish to alleviate the sufferings of the unfortunate”. India as a welfare state adopted social welfare policies in its constitution. Basically A **welfare state** is a concept of government where the state plays the primary role in the protection and promotion of the economic and social well-being of its citizens. It is based on the principles of equality of opportunity, equitable distribution of wealth, and public responsibility for those unable to avail themselves of the minimal provisions for a good life. The general term may cover a variety of forms of economic and social organization⁶ Welfare provision in the contemporary world tends to be more advanced in countries with stronger developed economies. Poor countries tend to have limited resources for social services. There is very little correlation between economic performance and welfare expenditure.⁷ The Central Government of India welfare expenditures are a substantial portion of the official budget, and state and local governments play important roles in developing and implementing welfare policies

Reality test of India as a welfare State

Welfare State means that the State that take care the Welfare of the State.. i.e. State is just not limited to collecting

tax and protecting life and property from internal and external threat but also into a look out for the Growth of the People by way of health, education, shelter, food and others.. It means that State do care for those who are in equipped and deprived.

Yes India is a Welfare State.. It is in its Constitutional itself has as Directive Principle and India has tried to achieve it.. But these Welfare policies are not adequately monitored and implemented.. Rather it has given an effective corruption and partialism.. All the Government Hospitals were inadequately serviced duty to crisis of management due to policies in the Legislation.. Schools run by government institutions are incompetent and in surplus.. Slum dwellers signifies the mass level migration and show the inadequacies in the Villages or respective states.In this reality test we analyse the state welfare policies regarding public investment in social infrastructure especially from the point of view education, health , standard of living, population, housing, nutrition etc.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who was a student of economics at the time, described other important features of the Bombay Plan at an event to mark its 60th anniversary; “The Bombay Plan laid great emphasis on public investment in the social and economic infrastructure, in both rural and urban areas;it emphasized the importance of agrarian reform and agricultural research, in setting up educational institutions and a modern financial system. Above all, it defined the framework for India’s transition from agrarian feudalism to industrial capitalism, but capitalism that is humane, that invests in the welfare and skills of the working people.”

As this peek at India’s economic history shows, public investment in social infrastructure has always remained a primary objective — at least on paper. Even when Manmohan

Singh, as finance minister, was dismantling Nehru's legacy and opening India's doors to the world and embracing liberalization, he stressed on the continuing need for government to spend on sectors like education and health. "A vast number of people in our country live on the edges of a subsistence economy," he said in his Budget speech in July 1991. "We need credible programmes of direct government intervention focusing on the needs of these people. We have the responsibility to provide them with quality social services such as education, health, safe drinking water and roads."⁸

The reality, though, is different. Successive governments at the Centre have surreptitiously been pruning public investment in a clutch of crucial sectors while maintaining the usual rhetoric about "wiping every tear from every eye".

Recent high-visibility programmes launched by the UPA government seem to have hiked spending on social sectors such as education, health and sanitation. There also appears to be an increase in spending on economic services like agriculture, rural development (which includes the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme), energy and transport. However, as a proportion of the GDP, central government expenditure on social and economic services has suffered a certain decline since 1992, the beginning of the 8th Plan,⁹ when expenditure on these was 7.3 percent of GDP/ It soon declined to 7.1 per cent in the 9th Plan (1997-2002) and further to 7.009 per cent during the 10th Plan (2002-07).

This is spending by just the central government. Total public investment derives from both the central and the state governments. If one looks at combined expenditures, public investment in health and education has virtually stagnated — if taken as a share of total expenditure or of GDP — even though the absolute amount being spent is increasing. As a share of

GDP, the combined expenditure on education and health was 4.3 per cent in 1990-91 and 4.28 percent in 2007-08. Why is this significant?

Central Govt. Expenditure on Social & Economic Services		
	Total (Rs. Crore)	As share of
8th Plan (1992-97)	76,064	7,322
9th Plan (1997-2002)	137,105	7,132
10th Plan (2002-2007)	225,475	7,009

Till the slowdown in the Indian economy last year as a result of recession in the advanced countries, India had exhibited dramatically high growth rates of GDP. The peculiar nature of this growth was that it was highly concentrated among high income groups and corporate, say Surjit Mazumdar, professor at the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, a New “Delhi-based think tank/ this led to increasing revenues for government — tax receipts increased from about 15 per cent of GDP in 2002-03 to 18 per cent in 2007-08. In short, government had much more money at its disposal for spending. “Since 2004, the government faced a special situation in which it was possible for it to somewhat increases its expenditures in areas that had been neglected for a long time without coming into conflict with the objectives of keeping taxes low as well as controlling the fiscal deficit. Expenditure growth could, in such circumstances, be allowed to keep pace with high GDP growth without increasing the public expenditure to GDP ratio. This is precisely what happened till the global crisis disrupted the situation - with the deficit having now increased, the familiar old story of the need to rein in government expenditure is back”, explains Mazumdar.¹⁰

In other words, so long as the country saw high GDP growth and the government was flush with funds, expenditure rose — albeit marginally, by only that tiny bit more to keep pace with the increase in GDP. In actual terms, there has been no real swing away from the policy of keeping public expenditure low. The proportions are virtually the same as earlier, showing minor increases.

The result of this tight-fisted policy shows up all around, but it's most sharply visible in the standards of living of the bulk of India's population. In a majority of sectors that affect the common man directly — like education, health, agriculture, nutrition, housing, roads and transport — there is increasing disarray and shortage caused by insufficient investment. Simultaneously, there is a rise in private expenditure on heads such as education and health. As per the National Account Statistics, private expenditure on education and health increased from 2.79 per cent to 4.55 per cent of GDP between 1990-91 and 2007-2008.

While the government has tried to introduce the so-called 'public-private-partnership' (PPP) model in many of these sectors in an attempt to woo private investment, the results are a uniform deterioration of services and facilities. PPP has also been tried in building roads and highways with disastrous results. Over half of the country's vast road network lies unmetalled because of lack of investment as there are no returns here.

In many areas, like in housing, a piecemeal or creeping privatization has taken place de facto, with government agencies becoming mere brokers. Take the Delhi Development Authority (DDA). Even as the capital faces a housing shortage of over 1.2 million units, Delhi's largest landowner has transformed itself into the biggest land broker. In 2006-07, it spent just 1 percent of its total expenditure on building flats and shops. On the other

hand, it derived 18 per cent of its huge income from land deals and 32 per cent from investment of its reserve fund.

According to estimates by the Planning Commission, there is a housing shortage of nearly 25 million units in urban India, requiring about Rs. 3.61 lakh crore in investment. Since 99 per cent of this shortage is in the economically weaker sections (EWS) category, there is virtually no possibility of self-financing. Only an active government policy of providing affordable housing can mitigate this situation.

Neglect of sectors like education and health, in the fond hope that the private sector will step into the breach, is a very short sighted policy. In all advanced countries, the basis of prosperity was laid by first ensuring that citizens got their basic rights — health, social security, education, care of the elderly. Even today, most advanced democracies spend a huge amount, and a considerable portion of their GDP, on these sectors.

According to the latest (2009) data from 26 countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the average net social expenditure by governments (on health, education, social security, etc.) is 25 per cent of the net national income. The range was from 9 per cent in France. Comparing India with OECD may seem Sri Lanka and Bangladesh spend a larger proportion of their budgets on health, for instance, than we do? Clearly, there is an urgent need to increase public spending on the social sector to ensure basic human dignity. India as a welfare State could not show its good intention because of certain weakness noticed in the welfare schemes undertaken by the Government of India, the ideal set before could not be achieved. The Social welfare field had so far been a combination of various welfare activities, without aiming at an integrated approach.

In the absence of clear social policy and necessary legislation, social welfare programmes could not make much progress.

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