

Concept of A Welfare State

Synopsis: A State is a political structure, and institution within a given society. Its necessity arises because of the need of better opportunities for individual and social development. In democratic and welfare states, the ultimate power is vested in the public. The State makes a society more united, meaningful and powerful. It imparts a strong sense of nationality, patriotism and togetherness. Welfare of the citizens is the essence of a State. It is the duty of a welfare State to provide security, equality before law and of opportunities, a decent standard of living etc. to all its citizens without any discrimination. Freedom from want and fear are the two basic pillars on which a welfare State stands.

India is a welfare State and its constitution guarantees certain fundamental rights and freedoms to all its citizens. These are justifiable and cannot be violated by the government. The sovereignty vests in the public and they are real master. The Directive Principles of State Policy further strengthen the concept of a welfare State as they are to be borne in mind while carrying on the State administration. These direct the government to strive continuously for the welfare of its citizens. Social welfare and well-being can be said to be the essence of the Indian Constitution.

The State is a political institution and structure in a society created to achieve specific objectives in regard to serve its citizens with more and better material, mental and spiritual gains. Its aim is to make the life of an individual citizen more secure, comfortable, interesting and meaningful. An individual is a social unit essential for a society and government. Society is an ever-changing and evolving complex system and the State the expression of its desire for better order, discipline, growth and governance. A State is like a circle within a circle for more wide, comprehensive and inclusive. In democratic societies and States, public is the ultimate and sovereign power, though the State is run by a particular political party or group of such parties voted to power. The ultimate sovereignty of the masses is the cornerstone of democratic states. Thus, a State should reflect the collective will, aspirations, desires and ambitions of a society and work for the welfare of its citizens. It should ensure conditions that are conducive to the proper and rapid development of the individual and the society as a whole.

Man is a social animal and as such shares his life with others. He enters into social relationship with other human beings to make life worth living. To further strengthen this bond of relationship and make life more meaningful,

cohesive, disciplined and profitable, the political institution called State has been created. A State makes a particular society more organized, united, purposeful and disciplined and thereby ensures better standard of living and growth, there is better sense of belonging, likeness and commonness because of a State. The State imparts a sense of nationality, patriotism, and togetherness to a society. Therefore, it is in the fitness of the scheme that a State should always aim at welfare of the individual and the society as a whole. The concept of the State as a mere instrument of political power or the Police State is now no more acceptable. Maintenance of law and order, internal security, discipline etc, Are the essential duties of a government in a State but within the framework of social welfare. The State has to ensure that there is no repression, highhanded, exploitation, harassment and police excesses. Equality before law equality of opportunity etc. from the essence of modern polity. There cannot be any type of discrimination on the basis of cast, creed, birth, status, sex etc. in a welfare State. The weak and backward have to be protected against the rich, the privileged and the strong.

A welfare State has to constantly reflect and assert the public will through its governance and administration and take such decision that make distribution of national income and resources more equitable and fairer. It has to steer clear of both the capitalistic and totalitarian ways of governance so as not to allow insecurity of the individuals, exploitation of the weak, gross inequalities, concentration of wealth in a few hands, exploitation of natural resources, regimentation and unnecessary uniformity. The major goals of a welfare State are economic balance, social and political justice, economic growth, better standards of living and safeguard of certain basic rights and freedoms. Thus, the concept of a welfare State is very wide and inclusive and envisages an order in which all have an access to basic needs of life and a decent and honorable living. It implies social, economical, physical, mental and spiritual welfare of the people to the maximum possible extent in a given situation and society.

Freedom from want and fear are the two fundamental pillars on which a welfare State is built upon. Freedom from want means proper employment opportunities, removal of poverty, a decent living and literacy, and physical and mental health. Freedom from fear involves social and economic security, guarantee of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In a welfare State, the benevolence is quite widespread and also includes such schemes as unemployment, sickness and disabled insurance, old-age pension, maternity and accident benefits, child and women welfare programmes etc. The provision of free, compulsory and universal elementary education, more

opportunities for better and higher education and health facilities through the use of government funds are other essentials of a welfare State.

India is a Welfare State, a Sovereign, Democratic, And Secular, Socialistic Republic. There are certain basic and salient features in the Indian Constitution which make it a truly Welfare State. These include among other: provision for fundamental rights and their constitution remedies; parliamentary sovereignty with judicial supremacy, proclamation of the sovereignty of the people, the principle of universal franchise, directive principles of State policy and establishment of independent judiciary. In very clear terms the Indian Constitution vests sovereignty in the people of the nations because it is the people who have enacted, adopted and given themselves this Constitution.

The founding fathers of the Indian Constitution envisaged a welfare State which is clearly reflected in the Preamble of the Constitution which seeks to provide all the citizens of the country Justice-social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, faith and worship; Equality of status and opportunity and promotion among all citizens fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation.

Part 3 of the Indian Constitution guarantees fundamental rights which are justifiable and enforceable through the courts of law. Constitutional remedies are available in case any of these rights is violated. Article 32 of the Constitution specially confers a duty on the Supreme Court to safeguard the fundamental rights of the people. These rights are protected against all encroachments- both executive and legislative. These rights include right to equality before law and equal protection before law, the right to freedom of speech and expression, of assembly, of association, of movement, of residence and settlement and of occupation and business. The right against exploitation includes prohibition of traffic forced labour and prohibition of employment of children. The other rights include freedom of religion, faith and conscience; cultural and educational freedom and the right to constitutional remedies. The right to property is no more a fundamental right; however, it is still a constitutional right.

The Directive Principles of State Policy are also important in the sense that they be borne in mind while carrying on the administration of the State. These principles lay down very categorically that "The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing a social order permeated by social, economic and political justice to minimize inequality of income, status, facilities and opportunities, amongst individuals and groups. The State shall endeavor to secure just and human conditions of work, a living wage, a decent standard of living and social and cultural opportunities for all workers. The state

shall endeavour to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living and to improve public health. The State shall direct its policies towards securing equitable distribution of the material resources of the community and prevention of concentration of wealth and means of production.”

The Directive Principles also seek to provide free and compulsory primary education, to secure a uniform civil code for the citizens, to organize village panchayats and to promote educational and economic interests of weaker sections and to protect them from social injustice among other things.

Social welfare and well-being is the essence of the Indian Constitution. Welfare is not a matter of charity. Article 17 of the Constitution abolishes untouchability and forbids its practice in any form. The responsibility for implementation of various welfare schemes is being shared between Centre and the State governments. The Centre is responsible for formulating welfare policies and programmes besides coordinating, guiding and promoting implementation of welfare services by states. Many schemes are being implemented to secure the welfare of scheduled tribes and scheduled castes, minorities, backward classes and other weaker sections of the society like women, children and disabled people.

Poverty and illiteracy are two major problems before the country, There cannot be any real welfare State if there prevails widespread poverty and illiteracy, In India there are millions and millions of Indians who are living below poverty line without basic essentials of life, The literacy rate is also very low specially among women, tribal's, scheduled assets and the rural poor. Recently the Center has taken a decision to make the right to primary education a fundamental right. It is a step in right direction. Education helps in economic emancipation as well. Freedom is useless unless there is freedom from hunger, ignorance, fear and superstition. It is the fundamental duty of Welfare State to alleviate poverty, spread literacy and eradicate economic and social inequality. These areas should be given the highest priority in our planned development.