

Social Justice and Welfare State: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

The main theme of the research paper is to discuss the concept of social justice and its importance within the welfare state. The study analyses the factors relating to its implementation of social justice. The Ultimate objective of the welfare state is to provide ultimate perfection of human body and human soul. The research also focuses on the comparative study of different political ideologies. The socio-economic and political development in the state depends on the policies based on social justice. The approach of the research is analytical and descriptive. The material sources are original and secondary also. References and conclusion are in the end.

Key Words: Social justice in perspectives, Welfare state and modern states.

Introduction

The modern concept of “Social Justice” was coined by Jesuit Priest Luigi Taparelli in 1840 based on the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas and given further exposure in 1848 by Antonio Rosmini-Serbati (J. Zajada, S. Majhanovich, V. Rust)¹. Social Justice is justice exercised within a society, particularly as it is applied to and among the various social classes of a society.

A socially just society is defined by its advocates and practitioners as being based on the principles of equality and solidarity. The socially just society understands the value of human rights and recognizes the dignity of every human being. It is general consensus that universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice. The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action treat social Justice as a purpose of the human rights education. (Vienna Declaration) ²

The concept was elaborated by the Jon A. Ryan, who initiated the concept of a living wage. Father Coughlin also used the term in his publications in the 1930s and the 1940s. It is a part of Catholic social teaching, the Protestants’ social Gospel, and is one of the Four Pillars of the Green Party upheld by green parties worldwide.

Social Justice in Different Perspectives

There is the concept of *Adal* in Islam. Islamic teachings believe in equal social, equal economic and equal political rights for the citizens of an Islamic state.

The Quran contains numerous references to elements of social justice. One of the Islam’s five pillars is Zakat, or alms-giving. Charity and assistance to the poor-concepts central to social justice-are and have historically been important parts of the Islamic faith. Islamic governance have been associated with social justice. For the Muslim Brotherhood the implementation of social justice would require the rejection of consumerism and communism. The Brotherhood strongly affirmed the right to private property as well as differences in personal wealth due to factors such as hard work. However, the Brotherhood held Muslims had an obligation to assist those Muslims in need. It held that Zakat (alm-giving) was not voluntary charity, but rather the poor had the right to assistance from the more fortunate. (Jhone L. Esposito)³.

Though monetary donations are the most practiced way of Zakat, Islam is deeply rooted in the tenets of volunteerism and social activism. Monetary donations are the most practiced way of Zakat. Islam is deeply rooted in the tenants of volunteerism and social activism. The ecological well-being of the planet (animal rights, global warming, natural resources degradation); locally, nationally, globally, is a campaign to which every Muslim must adhere.

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Many Muslims practice this today by ensuring that they produce minimal waste, give to charity what they no longer need, and spend time in prayer and meditation upon the bounties of nature so as to more mindfully approach all that is provided by nature, and ultimately, Allah.(The Eco Muslim)4.

Other areas of society in need may be the safety and security of minority populations, women or persons of color, children, the elderly, the developmentally or physically disabled. Social Justice in Islam is a tenet to which every Muslim corroborate in his or her daily life, and without which would create a void in all their efforts towards attaining true spirituality and a connection with God.

Hinduism Ancient Hindu Society was based on equality of all beings. However, to divide labor society divided itself into hundreds of tribes. (Jati) India was governed by people of non-Hindu faith from the 8th century which caused ruptures in societal fabric. Caste is a word from the Portuguese word "casta" and caste came to define the Jatis only 500 years ago. Considerable social engineering occurred during the British rule which impacted the society's self governance. There was some social injustice in which some jatis considered themselves superior to others. The present

Jati hierarchy is undergoing changes for variety of reasons including 'social justice', which is a politically popular stance in democratic India. Institutionalized affirmative action has swung the pendulum. The disparity and wide inequalities in social behavior to some of the jatis led to various reform movements in Hinduism for centuries. While legally outlawed, the caste system remains strong in practice, with social and employment opportunities strongly governed by one's caste of birth (Jayaram.V.)5

The term "Social Justice" was adopted by the Jesuit Luigi Taparelli in the 1840s, based on the work of St. Thomas Aquinas. He wrote extensively in his journal *Civiltà Cattolica*, engaging both capitalist and socialist theories from a natural law viewpoint. His basic premise was that the rival economic theories, based on subjective thinking, undermined the unity of society present in Thomistic metaphysics; neither the liberal capitalists nor the communists concerned themselves with public moral philosophy.

The encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* on Reconstruction of the Social order, literally in the fortieth year of 1931 by Pope Pius XI, encourages a living wage, subsidiary, and advocates that social justice is a personal virtue as well as an attribute of the social order, saying that society can be just only if individuals and institutions are just.

Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*. (God is Love) of 2006 claims that justice is the defining concern of the state and the central concern of politics, and not of the church, which has charity as its central social concern. It said that the laity has the specific responsibility of pursuing social justice in civil society and that the church's active role in social justice should be to inform the debate, using reason and natural law, and also by providing moral and spiritual formation for those involved in politics.

The official Catholic doctrine on Social Justice can be found in the book *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, published in 2004 and updated in 2006, by the Pontifical Council *Iustitia et Pax* (theories of Social Justice)6. Monetary donations are the most practiced way of Zakat. Islam is deeply rooted in the tenants of volunteerism and social activism. The ecological well-being of the planet (animal rights, global warming, natural resources degradation); locally, nationally, globally, is a campaign to which every Muslim must adhere. Many Muslims practice this today by ensuring that they produce minimal waste, give to charity what they no longer need, and spend time in prayer and meditation upon the bounties of nature so as to more mindfully approach all that is provided by nature, and ultimately, Allah.(The Eco Muslim)7.

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Liberation Theology is a movement in Christian theology which conveys the teachings of Jesus Christ in terms of Liberation from unjust economic, political, or social conditions. It has been described by proponents as “an interpretation of Christian faith through the poor’s suffering, their struggle and hope, and a critique of society and the Catholic faith and Christianity through the eyes of the poor”, and by detractors as Christianity perverted by Marxism and Communism, (Barryman, Phillip) 8

Although liberation theology has grown into an international and inter-denominational movement, it began as a movement within the Catholic Church in Latin America in the 1950s-1960s. It arose principally as a moral reaction to the poverty caused by social injustice in that region. It achieved prominence in the 1970s and 1980s. The term was coined by the Peruvian priest, Gustavo Gutierrez, who wrote one of the movement’s most famous books, *A Theology of Liberation* (1971). Sahra Kaleeb says, “Marx would surely take issue with the appropriation of his works in a religious context...there is no way to reconcile Marx’s views of religion with those of Gutierrez, they are simply incompatible. Despite this, in terms of their understanding of the necessity of a just and righteous world, and the nearly inevitable obstructions along such a path, the two have much in common; and particularly in the first edition of [*A Theology of Liberation*], the use of Marxian theory is quite evident.(Sarah Kaleeb)9.

Social Justice and Welfare State

A welfare State is a concept of government in which the state plays a key 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 organizations (encyclopedia of Britannica) 10

The welfare state is funded through redistributionist taxation and is often referred to as a type of “mixed economy”. This taxation usually includes a larger income tax for people with higher incomes, called a progressive tax. This helps to reduce the income gap between the rich and poor. When income inequality is low, aggregate demand will be relatively high, because more people who want ordinary consumer goods and services will be able to afford them, while the labor force will not be as relatively monopolized by the wealthy.(Pickett and Wilkinson)11.

The Otto von Bismarck, the first Chancellor of Germany, created the modern welfare state by building on a tradition of welfare programs in Prussia and Saxony that began as early as in the 1840s, and by winning the support of business. Political philosopher John Rawls draws on the utilitarian insights of Bentham and Mill, the social contract ideas of John Lock, and the categorical imperative ideas of Kant. His first statement of principle was made in *A Theory of Justice* where he proposed that “Each person possessed an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. For this reason justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others.” (John Rawls) 12.

All societies have a basic structure of social, economic, and political institutions, both formal and informal. In testing how well these elements fit and work together, Rawls based a key test of legitimacy on the theories of social contract. To determine whether any particular system of collectively enforced social arrangements is legitimate, he argued that one must look for agreement by the people who are subject to it, but not necessarily to an objective

notion of justice based on coherent ideological grounding. Obviously, not every citizen can be asked to participate in a poll to determine his or her consent to every proposal in which some degree of coercion is involved, so one has to assume that all citizens are rescannable. Rawls constructed an argument for a two-stage process to determine a citizen's hypothetical agreement:

- The citizen agrees to be represented by X for certain purposes. And, to that extent, X holds these powers as a trustee for the citizen.
- X agrees that enforcement in a particular social context is legitimate. The citizen, therefore, is bound by this decision because it is the function of the trustee to represent the citizen in this way.

This applies to one person who represents small groups (e.g., the organizer of a social event setting a dress code) as equally as it does to national governments, which are ultimate trustees, holding representative powers for the benefit of all citizens within their territorial boundaries. Governments that fail to provide for welfare of their citizens according to the principles of justice are not legitimate.

To emphasize the general principle that justice should rise from the people and not be dictated by the law-making powers of governments. Rawls asserted that, "There is a general presumption against imposing legal and other restrictions on conduct without sufficient reason. But this presumption creates no special priority for any particular liberty" (John Rawls 2003) 13.

This is support for an unranked set of liberties that reasonable citizens in all states should respect and uphold to some extent, the list proposed by Rawls matches the normative human rights that have international recognition and direct enforcement in some nation states where the citizens need encouragement to act in a way that fixes a greater degree of equality of outcome.

The United Kingdom, as a modern welfare state started to emerge with the Liberal welfare reforms of 1906-1914 under Liberal Prime Minister Herbert Asquith. These included the passing of the Old-Age Pensions Act in 1908, the introduction of free school meals in 1909, the 1909 Labour Exchanges Act, The Development Act 1909, which are related to greater government intervention in economic development, and the enacting of the National Insurance Act 1911 setting up a national insurance contribution for unemployment and health benefit from work. (Bentley Gilbert, 1976)14

In December 1942, the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Social Insurance and Allied Services was published, known commonly as the Beveridge report after its chairman, Sir William Beveridge, proposing a series of measures to aid those who were in need of help, or in poverty. Beveridge recommended to the government that they should find ways of tackling the five giants, being Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness. He argued to cure these problems; the government should provide adequate income to people, adequate health care, adequate education, adequate housing and adequate employment. It proposed that all people of working age should pay a weekly National Insurance contribution. In return, benefits would be paid to people who were sick, unemployed, retired or widowed.

The basic assumptions of the report were that the National Health Service would provide free health care to all citizens. The Universal Child Benefit was a scheme to give benefits to parents, encouraging people to have children by enabling them to feed and support a family. One of the themes of the report was the relative cheapness of universal benefits. Beveridge quoted miner's pension schemes as some of the most efficient available, and argued that a state scheme would be cheaper to run than individual friendly societies and private insurance schemes, as well as being cheaper than means-tested government-run schemes for the poor. The Report's recommendations were adopted by the Liberal Party, Conservative Party and then by the Labour Party. (Beveridge) 15.

The social democratic welfare state is one of the great achievements of the twentieth century. Its provisions give concrete expression to the grand ideals of liberty, equality, and solidarity-while its institutions have improved conditions and life opportunities for millions. But the European social model is also being challenged by the transition to a knowledge-based economy, as the collapse of the post-war settlement since the knowledge-based economy, as the collapse of the post-war settlement since the 1970s is accompanied by newly emerging social risks.

Indeed, modernized social democracy represents, a constant search to build and sustain political majorities for reforms of economic and social institutions which counter injustice and reduce inequality. The modernization of the European Social model remains a top priority on the agenda of national and international policy. Traditional social policy discourses have implicitly assumed the type of poverty associated with maximum prevalence. The poor are contrasted with the “non-Poor” as a discrete group remaining permanently impoverished. This concept underlies much of the rhetoric concerning the presumed growth in long-term dependency on benefits. Recent studies of static and dynamic poverty within the EU show that the proportion of poor people leaving poverty from one year to the next varies sharply. It is important not to underplay the extent of long-term poverty, or the hardship and despair that accompany it.

But the evidence suggests that every year, significant numbers escape appears to be highest where the overall incidence of inequalities within a country is lowest. US evidence also indicates a distribution of different experiences among the poor, rather than the prevalence of a discrete underclass. In fact, public policy is still wedded to a conception of exclusion implying permanent entrapment. This is not wholly compatible either with the empirical evidence, or with the social democratic commitment to self- autonomy and independence (Patrick Diamond, 2003)¹⁶.

There are key differences in persistency across countries. For example, research on low-wage persistency shows that the proportion of workers who continue to be low paid after five years ranges from 6 percent in Denmark, to 34 percent in the UK and the US. Sweden (11 percent) and Germany (15 per cent) lie closer to Denmark. Mobility rates out of low pay range from 24.5 per cent in Denmark, to 18 per cent in the US (OECD, 2001).¹⁷

Conclusion

It is concluded that Social Justice is also a concept that is used to describe the movement towards a socially just world, i.e., the Global Justice Movement. In this context, social justice is based on the concepts of human rights and equality, and can be defined as “the way in which human rights are manifested in the everyday lives of people at every level of society. A number of movements are working to achieve social justice in society. These movements are working to towards the realization of a world where all members of a society, regardless of background or procedural justice, have basic human rights and equal access to the benefits of their society.

The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC) is largest organization dedicated to faith-based approaches to public policy reform in the areas of social justice and poverty eradication. ISARC has a shared hope to mobilize, facilitate, and empower diverse faith communities to research, educates and advocate for public policy for the elimination of poverty in Ontario. ISARC’s values include human dignity, social equity, mutual responsibility, fiscal fairness, economic equity and environmental sustainability. Since 1986, ISARC has been a leader in mobilizing faith communities to advocate for system change in the Province of Ontario, Canada.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action affirm that “Human rights education should include peace, democracy, development and social justice, as set forth in international

and regional human rights instruments, in order to achieve common understanding and awareness with a view to strengthening universal commitment to human rights,”(Vienna Declaration)¹⁸. Although welfare states are active to dispense social justice in the society, but welfare states in future will need constantly raise employability levels across the workforce, not merely among ‘easy to reach’ groups, and tilt high-skill labor market demand incrementally in the direction of get disadvantaged. There should be greater use of employment creation schemes that produce long-term benefit savings. These are the lessons here for all social democratic welfare states.

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