POST – COLONIAL INDIAN DEMOCRATIC STATE: ANOMALIES IN WELFARISM

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Abstract:
This paper examines the post-colonial Indian democratic state, with a focus on the political system established in India after gaining independence from British colonial rule in 1947. The study provides an overview of the key features, challenges, and anomalies of the Indian democratic state, highlighting its evolution, strengths, and weaknesses.

Introduction:
India gained independence from British colonial rule on August 15, 1947, marking the beginning of a new era in Indian politics. The post-colonial Indian democratic state was established, with a constitution that enshrined democratic principles, fundamental rights, and social justice. This paper aims to explore the key features, challenges, and anomalies of the Indian democratic state, providing insights into its evolution and current state.

Literature Review:
Numerous studies have examined the Indian democratic state, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses. (Rudolph & Rudolph, 1987; Kohli, 1990; Jalal, 1995) These studies have emphasized the importance of India's democratic institutions, including the Constitution, the Parliament, and the judiciary. However, they have also highlighted the challenges faced by the Indian democratic state, including poverty, inequality, and social injustice. Eradicating extreme poverty and rebellious nonconformism[1] of the "dangerous classes"- madhouses, workhouses and jails all served to "punish and discipline". School teachers, visitors to the poor, housing supervisors and social workers became the infantry in the campaign[2] for "social control." Not only regular employment, but a good conduct, abstinence from pleasures, addiction became conditions[3] for receiving welfare benefits. Bismarck's Germany, USA after the Civil War, France after World War I are the examples to such.

During the Middle Ages, in the area of weak local and regional government, the wandering poor presented a major threat to the security of landholding peasants, thus representing a threat and an opportunity to the established ranks of security. The priests took advantage of this situation and became charitable entrepreneur spiritual advocates thus collective action notion emerged to create collective goods. Income inequality has effect[4] on crime, on social discontent, overall, on the distribution of wellbeing.

Hugh Dalton - uses utilitarian social welfare function saying social welfare is sum total of individual utilities and it is the result of individual's income – a utilitarian social welfare function. Atkinsons (1970)- measures social welfare not only the income but the social loss involved in unequal income distribution or we can say it is the sum total of individual utility values. If social welfare is seen as a function of individual well beings, then variations in the conversion of incomes into well-being must be taken into account, with adequate attention being paid to the variable relationship between incomes and functioning capabilities.

After the World War II, in western Europe social security schemes were intensified. In 1950, after recuperating from war devastations, all democratic societies speeded up welfare state[5] procedural. In 1960, s and 1970, s clientele of welfare provisions expanded accordingly. The second phase was the professional advisors who put a pressure on the governments to adapt collective measures for development. The third phase was the enlightened citizenry itself who decided what is needed for welfarism and what is not. In 1942 the 'Beveridge Report in the UK proposed a far reaching 'Settlement', as part of a wider social and economic reconstruction, once victory in the World War II was secured, and became the blue print for the British welfare state. By 1948 'security from the cradle to the grave' for every citizen was created.

Hayek, Beveridge were never inked to the concept of welfare state and they remained anti collectivist to the idea of collective security. The 1970, s saw crisis of the welfare state due to change in

economic and social patterns and the polarised political culture. By the end of 1980, s welfare state had been restructured[6] in which private, state and voluntary sectors could exist side by side. Keynesianism was implemented in Western Europe to overcome the II World War effects. Archbishop William Temple wrote about the welfarism in his book citizen and Churchmen in 1941. French Revolution's outcome liberty, equality and fraternity. Utilitarianism of Bentham and others sought to carve out greatest happiness of greatest numbers. Bismarck's social security measures. The Atlantic Charter of 1941's freedoms incorporated freedom from fear and want. The social liberals like Green, John Atkinson Hobson and Hobhouse discovered obstacles to human self-development.[7] Welfarist governments especially in the global South[8] are becoming increasingly entrepreneurial, and in the process poor citizens are getting pushed to the margins, evicted from their land and relocated to city fringes.

Key Features of the Post-Colonial Indian Democratic State:

The thinkers had developed some ideas where state should perform some responsibility in managing some common problems like extreme pollution, ruthless exploitation of labour and unmitigated health hazards and sufferings of the general masses. The admirers of liberalism thought that until and unless the state dispense justice, at least partly, to the highly complicated problems then liberal state could face odds to a great extent. So, this is the general perspective where welfare state started to function with ever changing connotation from time to time considering the magnitude of problems. Welfare economists and social democrats argued that without this model social and political development is impossible. Some of the outstanding features are :

1. Constitutional Democracy: India adopted a constitution in 1950, which established a democratic framework, guaranteeing fundamental rights, and promoting social justice.
2. Parliamentary System: India follows a parliamentary system, with a President as the head of state and a Prime Minister as the head of government.
3. Federal Structure: India has a federal system, with power divided between the central government and 29 states, along with 7 union territories.
4. Multi-Party System: India has a vibrant multi-party system, with numerous national and regional parties.

Welfare term refers to a variety of government programmes directed to the poor and economically needy. Welfare programmes can be divided into those providing cash and those that provide in kind assistance. Their interest is not to lift the families out of poverty, but rather to provide short term assistance to tide individuals through periods of economic vulnerability caused by events such as the loss of job, family dissolution or illness. Social security represents a functional equivalent of the providential aspects of private saving. Payroll taxes are deducted from wages and serve to finance the benefits to those who cannot work a compulsory accumulation of transfer capital. As a result, social security taxes tend to be fiscally regressive, increasing income inequality while benefits may have a progressive effect. Closely, connected to the web of welfare state benefits and services are the sectors of health care and education. Elementary education is compulsory up to early adolescence in all welfare states and is closely regulated in large part subsidised by government.

There is no single denomination to define the area of the welfare state. Even within one country, a panoply of legal, ideological and institutional characteristics intermingles to produce a conglomerate of arrangements.[9] Social security measures were instrumental in transforming "non-wage workers into wage workers." Multi-dimensional poverty[10] has twelve indicators- nutrition, child mortality, maternal health, access to schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, water access, power, housing assets and bank accounts. The working class in India are those who are pushed out[11] of the agrarian labour market. Their identity is shaped by the existing caste and class system. In a democracy like India's, addressing these shortcomings requires both a government committed to rethinking its policies and a well-informed public that recognizes the severe levels of social and economic deprivation. [12]However, deep-rooted inequalities often limit public discourse to the concerns of the affluent.

Challenges faced by post-colonial India's democratic state:
1. Caste and Social Inequalities: India continues to grapple with caste-based discrimination, social

inequalities, and economic disparities.

2. Corruption: Corruption remains a significant challenge, affecting various aspects of Indian life, including politics, bureaucracy, and business.

3. Regionalism and Identity Politics: India's diversity often leads to regionalism and identity politics, which can create tensions and conflicts.

4. Economic Development: India faces significant economic challenges, including poverty, unemployment, and inequality.

5. National Security: India has faced numerous national security challenges, including terrorism, insurgency, and border disputes.

Indian welfarism, despite its progress, faces several anomalies that hinder its effectiveness. Here are some key anomalies:

Inclusive Anomalies

One of the primary anomalies in India's welfarism is the exclusion of marginalized groups from social welfare programs including programmes like MGNREGA and PMJDY for excluding certain groups, such as nomadic tribes and homeless individuals. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and justice, certain communities, such as transgender individuals, sex workers, and those with disabilities, continue to face discrimination and exclusion. Inadequate representation: Welfare policies may not adequately represent the needs and concerns of diverse groups, such as women, children, or the elderly.

Implementation Anomalies

Despite the allocation of substantial resources, many programs suffer from inefficiencies, corruption, and inadequate delivery mechanisms. For example, the Public Distribution System (PDS), a program aimed at providing subsidized food grains to below-poverty-line households, has been plagued by corruption, inefficiency, and inadequate coverage. Similarly, the National Health Mission (NHM), a program aimed at improving healthcare services, has faced criticism for its inadequate implementation, including shortages of healthcare personnel, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient funding. The other inadequacies include:

1. Welfare programs often suffer from inefficient delivery mechanisms, leading to delays, corruption, or misuse of resources.

2. Insufficient transparency and accountability in welfare programs can lead to corruption, mismanagement, and ineffective use of funds.

3. Welfare programs often face inadequate funding, which can limit their scope, coverage, and effectiveness.

Structural Anomalies

India's welfarism also suffers from structural anomalies, including inadequate funding, insufficient capacity, and limited accountability. The Indian government's welfare expenditure,
as a percentage of GDP, remains relatively low compared to other developing countries. Furthermore, the lack of a unified welfare framework, inadequate data collection and analysis, and insufficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms hinder the effective implementation of welfare programs.

1. India's welfare architecture is often fragmented, with multiple schemes and programs operating in silos, leading to inefficiencies and duplication of efforts.

2. Welfare policies often focus on providing relief rather than addressing the root causes of social and economic issues.

3. Welfare programs may prioritize material benefits over human development, such as education, healthcare, and skills training.

Demographic Anomalies

1. Welfare programs often favour urban areas, leaving rural populations with limited access to services and benefits.

2. Welfare programs can vary significantly across states, leading to unequal access to services and benefits for citizens.

3. India's demographic changes, such as population growth and urbanization, can create new challenges and unmet needs that welfare programs may not adequately address.

Addressing these anomalies is crucial to strengthening Indian welfarism and ensuring that welfare programs are inclusive, effective, and responsive to the needs of all citizens.

Analysis

India's poverty ratio dropped substantially, from 45% to 22%, during the period due to economic reforms and expanded access to basic amenities. Reports from Bhalla, Virmani, and Bhasin indicate a decline in poverty numbers, with the poor population decreasing from 270 million in 2011 to 84 million in 2017, although these metrics predate the COVID-19 pandemic's impact. To address inequality and mitigate the effects of crises like the pandemic, state intervention and reallocation of resources is a must. For India, technology initiatives such as Aadhaar, Jan Dhan accounts, and mobile banking (often called the JAM trinity) were deployed to facilitate financial aid to those in need. Proposals for universal basic income and increased healthcare spending are presented as potential strategies to bolster welfare and establish a more inclusive social contract between the state and individuals. The corporate sector is also called upon to share responsibility[13] in supporting these efforts. In essence, this approach advocates for enhanced welfare policies, urging both governmental and corporate contributions to promote equitable growth and poverty alleviation.

Development that directly contributes to economic growth and social development, is development expenditure such as investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and welfare programs. Development expenditure aims to create long-term benefits by improving productivity and living standards. The non-development expenditures are essential operational expenses that do not directly enhance economic development. Major components include:

o Interest Payments: Payments on debt, which take up a significant part of non- development expenditure, especially if debt levels are high.
o Administrative Services: Operational costs associated with running the government, including salaries and general administrative costs.
o Pensions: Payments to retired government employees, which are mandatory and often a large and growing expense in state budgets.

Analysis of welfarism on a few selected states Kerala's Financial Reshuffling Needs

Kerala is known for its high level of welfare spending, which has helped achieve strong health and education indicators. Kerala's expenditure on salaries, pensions, and interest payments has grown rapidly, consuming a large portion of its budget and limiting the funds available for development initiatives. There is a relationship between democracy and development in Kerala with an attention on left politics. The comparative question is why the same left West Bengal government has not achieved the same welfare as that of Kerala? The social security benefits and wage related policies are the result of democratization leading to poverty alleviation to some extent. But the same policies posed problem to development in the 1980's. (Esping Anderson 1990). The Kerala model was blamed because of government negligence of productivity, working class, poor working culture. Policies in Kerala's post-independence show the touch of colonial past. To continue meeting its welfare goals,[14] Kerala might need to consider:

• Increasing state revenues through higher tax compliance, new tax sources, or more effective resource mobilization.
• Reviewing andn prioritizing expenditure, possibly reducing inefficiencies in administrative spending and finding sustainable ways to meet pension obligations.
• Kerala's debt level requires careful management to prevent excessive interest obligations that could crowd out welfare spending.
• Leveraging private sector participation in infrastructure projects can reduce the immediate burden on the state budget while still promoting development goals.

West Bengal's Leftist Administration: The Communist-led government in West Bengal prioritized land reform to benefit tenant farmers and small landholders. Through initiatives like Operation Barga,

they secured tenancy rights and redistributed land, empowering marginalized rural populations and enhancing agricultural productivity. However, unlike Kerala, West Bengal's Left-led government did not achieve comparable social progress across sectors. Although some agrarian reforms were introduced, they largely aimed to secure the Communist Party of India (Marxist)'s voter base rather than to broadly uplift all rural communities (Dasgupta, 1984; Kohli, 1989). Consequently, West Bengal continued to lag in key indicators like poverty reduction, literacy, mortality rates, and life expectancy, showing little improvement over neighbouring states with less effective governance.

	Sen poverty index	Literacy rate	Female/ male literacy ratio	Under 5 Mortality per 1000
Kerala	0.13	89	0.93	40
West Bengal	0.24	51	0.75	139
All India	0.18	45	0.61	117

Source Shariff (1999)

All this advancement may be due to the colonial touch – the princely state policies had created Kerala's exceptionally advancement from the rest of India. The communist government and its policies augmented the development in a way 'push from below' policy of Kerala. The Radicalization of caste was the necessary parameter to communist upgradation in Kerala. Like, Antonio Gramsci's hegemony in Kerala it is the hegemony of the communist due to its 'civil society' concept rather than a secret cell like the others.

Congress Leadership in Karnataka: In Karnataka, the Congress government implemented policies aimed at both welfare and economic development in rural areas. By promoting employment schemes and rural infrastructure, Karnataka was able to provide rural residents with job opportunities and better access to essential services, thus tackling poverty through a combination of social support and economic empowerment. Janata Party in Uttar Pradesh: The Janata Party's government in Uttar Pradesh also focused on reducing poverty by creating rural jobs and offering support to agricultural workers. Their approach emphasized job creation and agricultural stability, which helped sustain[15] rural livelihoods and decrease poverty levels.

Addressing Existential Anomalies[16] in Welfarism in India

The transformative services—such as digital public expenditure, biometric identification through the Aadhaar program, and mobile banking—have enabled the Indian government to transfer funds directly into beneficiaries' accounts. With over 300 programs delivering benefits nationwide, this system has significantly reduced discretionary selection of beneficiaries and streamlined the direct transfer process. This approach has not only expanded the reach of welfare benefits but also carries important implications for voting behaviour[17]. Social welfare programs should be envisioned as a comprehensive system that supports individuals throughout their life cycle. Traditional poverty assessments in India have often centered on calorie-based, income-focused metrics, which are limited in capturing the broader scope of human well-being.
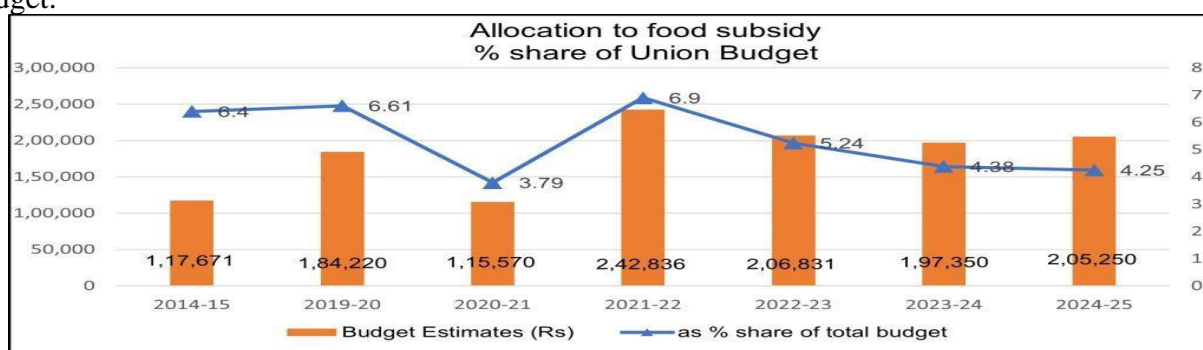
By 2050, nearly 20% of India's population will be aged 60 or older, highlighting the need for more robust social pension systems. Additionally, while the government has made strides in programs addressing access to water and sanitation, tackling nutritional deprivation will require addressing entrenched social norms related to gender and caste. These norms must evolve if progress is to be fully realized in public health outcomes. Proactively adapting policies would help prevent the repetition of past policy shortcomings, enabling a more responsive and resilient support system[18] for future challenges. India's limited welfarist agenda is primarily driven by the notion of welfare as a response to need, rather than recognizing welfare as a fundamental right or an obligation of the state. The idea of welfare is often seen through the lens of charity and benevolence, lacking formal acknowledgment as a state duty. In this framework, welfare rights are relegated to the non-justiciable Directive Principles of State Policy, which do not provide enforceable rights for citizens.

The welfarist orientation of the state faces challenges from three main sources. First,

international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, along with proponents of technocratic development and market-driven reforms, question the moral justification and practical effectiveness of welfare institutions. In the context of India, discussions tend to focus more on efficiency and effectiveness rather than the moral implications of welfare. The economic policy conditions imposed on India often reflect external pressures for policy changes that align with significant local social interests.

The second challenge to welfare systems does not aim to weaken the interventionist state but instead seeks to promote a more selective approach to redistribution. This is evident in the demands from advocates for group rights concerning specific welfare provisions. In India, politics of reservations, for instance, appeal to rights based on needs, with those needs often defined through traditional social categories such as caste. In these political actions, rights serve as a foundation for claiming welfare rather than as a basis for opposing redistributive welfare policies. Thirdly, New democratic movements are questioning the depoliticized definitions of development and welfare and are aiming to integrate[19] these concepts into political discourse, establishing crucial connections between them. This paper suggests that if the Indian state shifts from an interventionist model to a welfare-oriented one, this redefined concept of welfare will significantly rely on these emerging forms of democratic politics, which reinterpret the idea of development.

The socialist model embraced by Nehru was influenced by Marxist theory and Fabian socialism but took a more pragmatic stance. Rather than seeking to eliminate private enterprise,
Nehru advocated for a mixed economy characterized by a welfare state founded on egalitarian ideals. In the absence of sustainable social benefits, a new digital welfare framework has emerged, representing a significant aspect of India's economic landscape. Conversely, this competitive welfarism subsidizes public access to essential goods and services. Competitive welfarism model tends to adopt traits of a techno-patrimonial system, where governance and political authority are concentrated in individual rulers. This shift in India's governance and welfare strategy may favour specific groups while leaving many others marginalized in terms of access to welfare initiatives.
Ranked as having a "serious" hunger level on the Global Hunger Index (GHI), India is in the midst of a major food and nutrition crisis, further intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a 2024 UN report on food security, India has the largest number of undernourished people in the world, amounting 194.6 million. Meanwhile, budget allocations for food subsidies through the Public Distribution System (PDS) have dropped from 6.61 percent in 2019–20 to 4.25 percent in the 2024 budget.

Allocation to food subsidy
% share of Union Budget

Year	Budget Estimates (Rs)	as % share of total budget
2014-15	1,17,671	6.4
2019-20	1,84,220	6.61
2020-21	1,15,570	3.79
2021-22	2,42,836	6.9
2022-23	2,06,831	5.24
2023-24	1,97,350	4.38
2024-25	2,05,250	4.25

Source: Union Budget 2014–15 to 2024–25

While MGNREGS funding rose from INR 60,000 crore in 2023–24 to INR 86,000 crore in 2024–25, about 20 percent of this amount will go towards settling outstanding dues from the previous fiscal year. Despite the Union Budget 2024–25's focus on employment generation, the funding falls short for the 13.08 crore active MGNREGS workers.

The NSAP, providing non-contributory pensions for the elderly, widows, and people with disabilities, has an increased budget of INR 9,652 crore—up by only INR 16 crore from the previous year, which, when adjusted for inflation, actually signifies a decline. The India Ageing Report 2023 highlights that around 6 crore elderly people currently belong to the poorest wealth quintile, yet only

2.21 crore senior citizens are enrolled in the NSAP. Pensions from the central government have stagnated at INR 200 per month for the elderly (since 2007) and INR 300 for women and disabled persons (since 2011). States have been supplementing these pensions by contributing five to ten times more from their budgets. Furthermore, the lack of a recent census forces schemes like the NSAP, PDS, and PM-JAY to rely on outdated 2011 data, leading to the exclusion of many marginalized individuals.

In the 2024–25 budget, the Ministry of Education has been allocated INR 1,20,628 crore, which accounts for 2.5 percent of the total budget and just 0.37 percent of GDP, falling short of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recommendation of 6 percent of GDP. Investment in education is crucial for sustainable growth in any developing economy. According to UDISE+ data, increased privatization has led to the closure of 61,923 government-aided and government-run schools between 2014–15 and 2021–22, while private schools increased by 47,680. This trend exacerbates barriers to education, reinforcing social divides along caste, class, and gender lines. Furthermore, the NEP's "school rationalization" policy led to the closure and merger of at least 50,000 schools, especially in remote areas, which violates the Right to Education Act and hinders access for those in regions already lacking educational infrastructure. Meanwhile, the budget for higher education has declined from 1.37 percent in 2019–20 to 0.98 percent in 2024–25, reflecting reduced support for higher education accessibility.

The Ministry of Health's budget allocation has steadily decreased[20] from 2.16 percent of the total budget in 2019–20 to 1.88 percent in 2024–25. Although the National Health Policy aims to allocate 2.5 percent of GDP to healthcare, the current budget falls short, at only 0.27 percent of GDP. Funding for the National Health Mission (NHM) has also reduced, from 1.2 percent in 2019–20 to 0.74 percent in the latest budget. Data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 highlights that approximately 60 percent of women in India lack access to affordable healthcare due to limited infrastructure and a shortage of medical staff. NFHS-5 data shows that 40.4 percent of women reported difficulty accessing medicines, while 39.2 percent faced barriers in reaching healthcare providers. Furthermore, 31.2 percent noted the absence of female healthcare providers at health centres. As a critical program for equitable and affordable healthcare, reduced NHM funding jeopardizes access to health services for vulnerable groups. Of the 30,285 hospitals under PM-JAY, 43.73 percent are private, contributing to higher healthcare costs. For the scheme to meet the needs of its growing enroller base, the government must ensure adequate infrastructure. While building a strong tertiary healthcare system is important, focusing on primary healthcare can help improve overall health outcomes and reduce costs.

In India, state governments play a crucial role in implementing centrally-designed programs[21] and have the authority to introduce their own social policies or enhance central schemes, potentially expanding their reach or increasing their benefits. By the 2000s, this environment enabled state chief ministers to gain electoral recognition from voters for the implementation of even centrally-funded programs. In India, the two primary areas of social assistance[22] spending are the MGNREGA program and the Public Distribution System (PDS), which provides subsidized staples like wheat and rice through fair-price shops. These programs make up about 33% and 49% of the country's total social spending, respectively.

The active lobbying by influential groups to control resources[23], coupled with the socio-economic landscape at the local level, has impacted the intended goals of empowerment. Originally, empowerment aimed to amplify the voices of marginalized groups and foster equality across all social classes. However, it has also generated its own unique socio-political dynamics. Limited awareness, low literacy rates, and reliance on unskilled labour are emerging as significant obstacles to effective policy implementation.

Conclusion:

The post-colonial Indian democratic state has made significant progress since its establishment in 1947. However, it continues to face numerous challenges and anomalies, including poverty, inequality, social injustice, corruption, and inadequate implementation of policies and programs. Addressing these

challenges and anomalies is crucial to strengthening India's democratic institutions, promoting social justice, and ensuring inclusive and sustainable development.

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