

Social Welfare Policy and Constitution of India with reference to the Directive Principles of State Policy

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Abstract: The paper explores the social welfare policies in India with a focus on the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) as outlined in the Indian Constitution. DPSPs, influenced by the Irish Constitution, are non-enforceable guidelines aimed at establishing a welfare state. The paper reviews their historical background, constitutional provisions, and their relationship with enforceable Fundamental Rights. Key judicial interpretations highlight the balance between individual rights and socio-economic goals. The DPSPs have influenced various social welfare schemes, such as MGNREGA and NFSA, aimed at addressing inequalities. However, challenges like underfunding, bureaucratic hurdles, and corruption hinder their effective implementation. The study emphasizes the need for

stronger institutional frameworks and citizen participation to realize the constitutional ideal of social justice.

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Introduction:

On 26th January 1950, the Indian Constitution came into effect. It is a detailed document that provides the principles, procedures, powers, and duties of government institutions. Besides, it points out the fundamental rights of citizens, the directive principles, and the responsibilities of citizens. One thing that stands out in this Constitution is its approach to rights and policies. There are two kinds of rights and policies: The Fundamental rights can be enforced by any court or tribunal while the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) contained in Part IV articles 36-51 are not enforceable in any court of law. This shows that the people who drafted it wanted to have an equilibrium within their constitution where they have rights that can be enforced immediately and at the same time they have goals that are socio-economic and are intended to be achieved in a long run. The DPSP makes an essential part for the realization of this constitutional objective to create a welfare state. They give an extensive order to the state to advance public welfare by ensuring and safeguarding a social order where justice—social, economic and political—shall be the principles claiming the national life of all institutions.

Historically, The incorporation of the DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF STATE POLICY in the Indian Constitution has a significant history. The framers of the Indian Constitution were inspired by the Irish Constitution's Directive Principles of Social Policy. Poverty, illiteracy and socio-economic inequalities were

widespread in the new Indian state according to them. The Constitution makers believed that there should be some principles to guide legislative and executive branches of government in this regard. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who is considered as architect said that although these DPSP are not legally enforceable it should act as “conscience” for rulers while formulating state policies so that justice-social economic policy would be established throughout the nation (Gupta et al., 2016). There is always a discussion about how effective the DPSPs are and their importance due to not being justiciable. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore that they serve as moral and ethical principles for governance. The Indian judiciary has been interpreting these laws for years now; they have at times linked them with fundamental rights so as to make wider the range of rights that can be enforced by courts besides ensuring social economic justice.

Judicial statements show off the need for the DPSPs and that there should be a harmonious relationship between them and Fundamental Rights. For example, in *Kesavananda Bharati V. State Of Kerala* (1973) it was held by the Supreme Court of India as follows: "The Directive Principles of State Policy are fundamental in the governance of the country and must not be overlooked while interpreting laws". Similarly *Minerva Mills Ltd V. Union Of India* (1980) where it was said by the Court that a balance has to be maintained between fundamental rights and directive principles so as to ensure that individual rights do not overshadow socio-economic goals. On the ground, the DPSPs have played a significant role in molding different policies and programs for social welfare in India. You can see the effects of the DPSP through policies such as

employment schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), health programmes like National Food Security Act (NFSA) and Mid-Day Meal Scheme among others. These are methods devised with an aim at dealing with inequalities of economic status among individuals within a country; this is according to what is stated by the constitution which is backed up by directive principles of state policy. However much has been achieved so far but there are still challenges hindering these guidelines from being enforced effectively. The underfunding issue, bureaucracies' bottlenecks alongside corruption acts as stumbling blocks towards achieving set objectives under DPSPs. To overcome these obstacles, we need to follow many different steps. Firstly, we should make our organizations stronger. Secondly, those who govern us must be answerable and open about what they do. Thirdly, people living nearby should take part more.

Historical Context and Constitutional Provisions

DPSPs are inspired by the Irish Constitution and intend to create a fair society through addressing economic and social imbalances. They set out various aims such as ensuring minimum living wage, fair distribution of resources as well as caring for the vulnerable groups in the community. Articles that are key in DPSPs relating to social welfare are:

Article 14. It stipulates – equality before law and equal protection of laws to all persons within the territory of India. This is further highlighted by not discriminating against any citizen on the basis of religion, race, caste or sex. This forms the groundwork for fairness in the legal system. The “Equality Before the Law” is one of the essential elements for freedom and rule by the

Constitution of India. This means that under this provision, which is part III fundamental right of the constitution, everyone should be equally protected by law regardless of his background. What exactly does Article 14 mean? Why is it important? According to Article 14, justice should be administered without any discrimination on the grounds of race, caste, sex, religion, or place of birth. The article also states that every person shall be entitled to equality before the law within the territory of India. This guarantees that no one can be treated disadvantageously by the state in an arbitrary or unreasonable manner and highlights the necessity of observing justness and impartiality while implementing laws.

One of the most important ideas in Article 14 is "equal protection of the laws." This means that the state cannot unilaterally bestow benefits or impose obligations; rather, it must treat people in similar circumstances equally. By leveling the playing field inside the legal system, the idea seeks to guarantee that every citizen has an equal chance to pursue justice and defend their rights. Article 14's significance goes beyond its literal understanding. When it comes to interpreting and extending the reach of this Article, courts have been instrumental. For example, the doctrine of reasonable classification permits the state to categorize people or things in order to enact legislation, given that the classification is reasonable and has a logical connection to the goal of the law. This idea guarantees that distinctions made by the state must be reasonable, equitable, and non-arbitrary. Furthermore, the sphere of legislative enactments is not the exclusive application of Article 14. It also encompasses the judicial and executive arms of the government. The

premise that equality before the law is a dynamic concept applicable to all aspects of governance is reinforced by the ability to appeal administrative discriminatory or arbitrary actions under Article 14. Additionally, the legal precedent pertaining to Article 14 recognizes that equality does not imply perfect uniformity. In order to meet particular circumstances, the law permits fair differentiations in recognition of the varying demands of a complex community. These distinctions, though, have to pass the reasonableness test and cannot serve as a cover for prejudice or arbitrariness. Article 14 does not require that every person be treated in the same way, even if it emphasizes equality before the law. It acknowledges that different circumstances might call for different approaches, but that these approaches must be supported by a logical and acceptable foundation. The idea behind Article 14 basically aims to find a careful balance between the recognition of legitimate distinctions that may result from the complexity of social, economic, and cultural situations and the requirement for uniformity in the application of the law. Article 14 serves as a safeguard against capricious state actions and as a stimulant for social fairness within the constitution. It gives people the ability to oppose discriminatory actions and advances a judicial system that ensures everyone, regardless of background or social status, may access justice.

Articles 15 and 16: The writers of the constitution included affirmative action clauses in recognition of the historical disadvantages experienced by particular communities. The state may provide specific provisions for improving socially and educationally disadvantaged

sections under Articles 15 and 16. Even though they are controversial, reservation policies have been essential in correcting structural injustices and fostering social inclusion.

Article 21: According to an expansive interpretation, the right to social and economic fairness is encompassed by the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21. According to this understanding, the government is required to establish circumstances in which people can live honorable lives free from exploitation and poverty.

Articles 29 and 30: Social justice in a diverse country depends on minority rights protection. Minorities have the freedom to create and run educational institutions while maintaining their unique cultural and linguistic identities, as stated in Articles 29 and 30. By preventing minority communities from assimilating into the culture of the majority, this promotes an inclusive and pluralistic society.

Article 38 and 39: ensures a social order where social, economic, and political justice should guide all national institutions and so promote welfare. The directive principles require the state to allocate resources to maintain the common good and to establish a social order for the purpose of promoting welfare. These values operate as a moral compass, directing legislative and executive acts toward social and economic fairness even though they are not legally enforceable.

Part IV of the Constitution contains the Directive Principles of State Policy, which serve as a roadmap for the government as it establishes a fair and just social structure. These ideas provide a moral compass for the creation of policy even when they are not legally

binding. The commitment to social justice is further emphasized in Article 46, which places special emphasis on advancing the economic and educational interests of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other marginalized groups.

Article 41: Directs the state to offer public assistance in the event of unemployment, old age, illness, or disability.

Article 42: mandates reasonable and humane working conditions, as well as maternity leave.

Article 45: It envisions free and obligatory education for children.

Article 47: Focuses on improving nutrition and living standards, as well as public health.

Judicial Interpretation

The Indian judiciary has been instrumental in the interpretation and incorporation of the DPSPs with the enforceable Fundamental Rights, thereby augmenting their pragmatic importance. The Supreme Court of India has emphasized the significance of DPSPs in a number of important judgments, including:

In *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* (1973), the Supreme Court ruled that the state could not disregard DPSPs because they are essential to national governance.

In *Minerva Mills Ltd. v. Union of India* (1980), the Court stressed the complementarity and coherence between the DPSPs and Fundamental Rights, holding that they must be read in tandem.

In *Unni Krishnan J.P. v. State of Andhra Pradesh* (1993), the Supreme Court acknowledged that, under the DPSP's Article 45, the right to education is inadvertently included in the Fundamental Right to life.

Perspectives on Social Justice in the Constitution:

Ambedkarite Perspective: As one of the main drafters of the Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar offered a distinctive viewpoint on social justice. His dedication to strengthening the Dalits and other underprivileged groups was evident in his emphasis on the abolition of caste and the inclusion of affirmative action measures. Beyond just promoting legal equality, Ambedkar's vision aimed to alleviate the social and economic inequalities that were deeply rooted in the caste system.

Gandhian Perspective: The constitution gained further depth from Mahatma Gandhi's conception of social justice, which was based on the ideas of non-violence and rural self-sufficiency. Gandhi's worldview affected the inclusion of Directive Principles that emphasized decentralized governance, local panchayats, and rural development, even though his focus was on moral regeneration and the upliftment of the masses.

Liberal Perspective: Individual rights and equal opportunity are prioritized in the liberal viewpoint on social justice within the Constitution. It argues that regardless of one's origin, a just society is one in which everyone has equal access to opportunities, resources, and legal protection. This viewpoint emphasizes how important it is for the government to provide fair opportunities for all residents.

Communitarian Perspective: In the pursuit of social justice, a communitarian perspective recognizes the significance of community and shared identities. It makes the case that the Constitution ought to uphold people's rights as well as acknowledge and strengthen communities, particularly those who have been historically marginalized. Affirmative action policies that are designed to improve entire communities are one way in which this viewpoint is expressed.

Impact on Social Welfare Policies

India's social welfare policies have been greatly impacted by DPSPs. Notable programs and policies that were influenced by DPSPs include:

- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA): Offers a legal guarantee of employment, reflecting the values of Articles 41 and 39.
- The National Food Security Act (NFSA) seeks to feed around two-thirds of India's population with subsidized food grains, thereby embodying Article 47.
- Mid-Day Meal Scheme: Enhances nutrition, boosts school attendance, and advances the goals of Article 45 by giving school children free lunches.
- The integrated child development services (ICDS) program addresses child health, nutrition, and pre-school education in order to support articles 39 and 47.

Challenges in the Implementation of Social Justice

Affirmative Action Dilemma: There has been discussion and disagreement on the application of affirmative action and reservation policies. Although these steps are necessary to correct historical injustices, concerns are raised regarding their effectiveness, ability to reinforce stereotypes, and difficulties in defining backwardness.

Intersectionality and Multiple Identities: Addressing only one aspect of identity will not allow social justice to be fully achieved. The quest of justice is made more difficult by the intersectionality of caste, gender, religion, and economic standing. Policies that are inclusive and nuanced are necessary to provide justice for those who identify with several marginalized identities.

Access to Justice: Under the protections of the constitution, vulnerable populations frequently encounter obstacles to obtaining justice. Delays in the judicial system, ignorance, and socioeconomic circumstances all play a part in depriving people of justice. Enhancing legal literacy, modernizing infrastructure, and accelerating court procedures are all necessary.

Changing Societal Dynamics: Globalization, urbanization, and socioeconomic shifts are occurring quickly in India. These modifications present fresh difficulties for social justice, necessitating a flexible and dynamic legal system. The Constitution needs to change to reflect new kinds of inequality and discrimination.

Rights and Duties: The Constitution places equal emphasis on the two. Citizens must uphold peace and the spirit of fraternity even as they have a right to equality and justice. Finding a balance between personal freedoms and group obligations is an ongoing struggle.

Now, In modern India, putting social justice into practice necessitates a multipronged strategy that tackles systemic problems, encourages diversity, and guarantees fair resource distribution. In the current situation, the following are some ways to improve social justice:

Strengthening institutional frameworks:

- Increase transparency and accountability in government programs to combat corruption.
- Implement effective monitoring and evaluation procedures for social welfare programs.
- Strengthen local government institutions (Panchayats and Municipalities) to guarantee that

social welfare programs are properly suited to local requirements.

- Encourage community input into decision-making processes.

Enhancing Education and Skill Development

- Ensure that everyone has access to a high-quality education, with an emphasis on underprivileged areas.
- Enhance infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum relevance in public schools.
- Expand vocational training programs to provide youth with employable skills.
- Collaborate with the private sector to develop apprenticeship programs and job placements.

Economic Reforms and Inclusive Growth

- Implement measures that encourage equitable economic growth, ensuring that gains reach the most vulnerable groups.
- Encourage small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) by providing better access to funding and market possibilities.
- Strengthen social security programs, such as pensions, health insurance, and unemployment benefits, to create a safety net for disadvantaged groups.

Healthcare Accessibility

- Increase the scope and quality of public healthcare services.
- Increase funding for healthcare infrastructure, particularly in rural and neglected areas.
- Focus on preventative healthcare measures such as immunization, sanitation, and public health education initiatives.

Promoting Social Equity

- Implement policies to address gender inequities in education, employment, and political engagement.
- Strengthen legislation and provide resources to address gender-based violence and discrimination.
- Launch specific programs that include marginalized groups such as the disabled, LGBTQ+ people, and the elderly.
- Increase understanding and sensitivity to diversity and inclusivity in society.

Public Awareness and Advocacy

- Launch widespread awareness efforts to educate the people about their rights and the value of social justice.
- Develop a culture of social responsibility and volunteerism among citizens.
- Encourage non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) to advocate for social justice and carry out welfare initiatives.

Conclusion

Finally, India's constitution demonstrates the country's dedication to social justice. Its provisions, ranging from Fundamental Rights to Directive Principles, form a solid foundation for promoting an inclusive and equal society. However, the journey to social justice is constant, necessitating continued work from all stakeholders. India can strive for a future in which every citizen benefits from the fruits of justice and equality by balancing constitutional ideals, legal interventions, and societal growth. The ideology of social justice in India's Constitution represents a rich tapestry of past conflicts, varied opinions, and a desire to construct an egalitarian society. The legal underpinnings, founded on principles

of equality, affirmative action, and economic justice, create a solid framework. However, implementation issues need ongoing introspection and adaptation to the changing socioeconomic context. As India moves forward, the notion of social justice must remain a guiding principle, driving policies that address the various forms of inequality. The country can strive to realize the constitutional ideal of a just, egalitarian, and harmonious society through inclusive government, legal reforms, and societal awareness. The quest for social justice is constant, necessitating collaborative efforts from all stakeholders to turn constitutional aspirations into living reality.

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