PART ONE
Social Policy And Social Welfare
A Social Historical Perspective

CHAPTER-1

Introduction

In this brief opening chapter I propose to explain my approach in studying the evolution of social welfare in India and the rationale for it. In the process, I hope to alert the reader to the value-orientation behind this approach, which is vitally important, because I strongly believe that all intellectual endeavors are influenced by ideology.[1]

It is helpful to start with the definition of the terms 'social welfare' and 'social work'. The task is not easy. There have been several unsuccessful attempts to define these terms so that a uniform meaning is attributed to them, both nationally and internationally. Social welfare is used here as a term which is broader in scope than social work. It may be defined as the organised provision of resources and services by the society to deal with social problems. These services may be provided by the state or by voluntary organisations, with a view to ameliorating the conditions of the people affected by the problems as well as to protect others who are likely to be affected in the future. This definition is wide enough to include the traditional and modern views of social welfare, i.e. the residual and developmental concepts of social welfare. It also includes social work. The term 'social work' refers to the work of voluntary social workers, professional social workers and other social work personnel employed in the field of social welfare.

The first part of this book deals with the history of social welfare in India. The subject matter of history is not the frozen and mummified past, but the change and evolution of society. History 'is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past'.[2] The study of any history poses a serious problem because we look at past events through contemporary concepts and mental framework.[3] This tendency cannot altogether be avoided (though it could be kept under check by our awareness of its existence) because 'we can view the past and achieve our understanding of the past, only through the eyes of the present'.

Ahistoricity, both in a literal and a Marxist sense, is characteristic of social welfare literature. It may be asked why one should study history, which is concerned with the 'dead past'. It may even be argued that such an endeavour is undesirable for two reasons: it may lead to nationalistic chauvinism by glorification (even mythologisation) of the past; and it may reinforce the existing orientation to the past when we need an orientation to the future to bring about planned social change. These questions raise very pertinent issues because the dangers referred to are real and not imaginary. Yet, it is both necessary and desirable that we study aspects of Indian history because it provides us 'the key to the understanding of the present'. As pointed out by E.H. Carr, 'The past is intelligible to us only in the light of the present; and we can fully understand the present only in the light of the past. To enable man to understand the society of the past, and to increase his mastery over the society of the present, is the dual function of history.'[4]

There is a special reason why one should study the history of social welfare, 'even if the past does not provide easy and clear lessons'. Clarke Chambers has observed:

> Historical study may, for example, remind us of experiments in social welfare or in the delivery of social services which we have forgotten or never fully understand. It may provide educators, administrators, and practitioners with professional models drawn from the past. Apprentice social workers especially, I imagine, need to know that social concern did not begin with themselves ... it is important to sense in both heart and mind that others have gone before, that one stands in a long and honourable tradition of both social service and social prophecy, for many early social workers laboured to serve those in need while, at the same time, they moved to elaborate public policies which might alleviate and perhaps even resolve [and prevent] the complex social problems which were the source of human need.[5]

In studying the evolution of social welfare in India from ancient times to the present, I have broadly adopted the approach and method of social history. According to Hobsbawm 'social history is at present in fashion', and 'it is a good moment to be a social historian'.[6] But it is not for these reasons that I have tried to follow the approach of social history. An aspect of the tradition of social history is that 'it referred to the history of the poor or lower classes, and more specifically to the history of the movements of the poor ["social movements"]'.[7] In recent years it is also concerned with the study of social structure and its transformation, i.e. the history of societies rather than the dynastic history of rulers, their conquest of new territory and their exploits in war. It is based on the conviction that 'the social or societal aspects of man's being cannot be separated from the other aspects of his being. They cannot, for more than a moment, be separated from the ways in which men get their living and their material environment. They cannot, even for a moment, be separated from their ideas since their relations with one another are expressed and formulated in a language which implies concepts as soon as they open their mouths.'[8]

The study of social structure in its totality is the essence of social history. This is elaborated in the next chapter, which provides the theoretical framework for the remaining chapters (Chapters 3 to 7) which cover the evolution of social welfare in India. If the reader is disappointed in the application of the approach, it is not only due to the lack of time and space, and my intellectual limitations, but also because of the extreme paucity of historical evidence which enable the historian to write reliable social history of the life and movements of the poor. This deficiency is especially marked in relation to the ancient period and to a lesser extent to the medieval period.[9]

An evolutionary and developmental perspective, is another major aspect of the theoretical approach. Hoogvelt mentions three focal elements of the concept of development:

Development as Process, i.e. as an evolutionary process of growth and change of man's social and cultural organisation (that is of society).

Development as Interaction, i.e. as a process of growth and change of societies under conditions of interaction with other societies; and

Development as Action, i.e. as a consciously planned and monitored process of growth and change. [10]

The theoretical framework as presented in Chapter 2 is based on Hoogvelt's ideas of development as a process, i.e. as an evolutionary process of development, and development as interaction. I believe that the integration of these two theoretical aspects of development is both appropriate and necessary for the study of the evolution of social welfare in a society which has undergone the process of colonisation. Hoogvelt's concept of development as action forms the basis of the theoretical discussion in Part II.

CHAPTER-2

Towards A Theoretical Frame Work For The Study Of Social Welfare

Introduction

A survey, whether in India or abroad, reveals the relative absence of theoretical and analytical literature dealing with social welfare-its nature, goal, function and evolution.[1] This is more so with regard to the Indian situation. A limited attempt at the theoretical analysis of social welfare in the Indian social context has been made by only Gore. Explaining his approach to social welfare, Gore makes reference to the relationship between social welfare and social structure in some of his writings.[2] He also states that his approach is sociological.

The main problem in these brief discussions on social structure and social welfare is the lack of a definition of the concept of social structure. Blau writes:

> The concept of social structure is used widely in sociology, often broadly, and with a variety of meanings. It may refer to social differentiation, relations of production, forms of associations, value integration, functional interdependence, status and roles, institutions, or combination of these and other factors. A generic difference is whether social structure is conceived explicitly as being composed of different elements and their interrelations or abstractly as a theoretical construct or model.[3]

We shall view social structure in concrete terms and not as an abstract concept only. In other words, social structure has its parameters.[4] A study of Gore's writings reveals slightly varying views of social structure at different places. In one of his later writings he has used cultural themes in Indian social work as the basis of his discussions.[5] One gets the impression that social structure is conceived in functional terms and that too with great em-phasis on norms and normative behavior in society. This is broadly in keeping with the Parsonian functionalist view of social structure.

Limitations of Functional Approach

In our opinion, the Parsonian view of social structure with its emphasis on the normative system is inadequate for the analysis of social welfare. Firstly, this view of social structure excludes from its considerations the political and economic components which in our view are the most important and dynamic elements. Also, its concern has been with social equilibrium and social order which introduce an implicit and continuing bias towards stability and order as against conflict and change.[6]

The concept of culture is equally, perhaps more, inadequate as an analytical tool for the study of social welfare. In the words of Mills, culture is a spongy concept.[7] What is more, culture as a concept originated in a certain historical context which has influenced its subsequent evolution considerably.

> The concept of culture, as used in the parlance of the human science, arose from a great human confrontation. The idea of culture was one of the principle intellectual outgrowths of the worldwide meeting between the expansionist West and exotic non-Western peoples. The configuration began with the contacts of exploration and matured into the relationships of empire. From this experience the West derived a growing need to find order in its increasing knowledge of immensely varied human lifeways. As the emerging science of anthropology developed the culture concept, it thereby provided an important means to this end of discovering order in variation.[8]

In other words, the concept of culture, though very comprehensive in its scope as used by anthropologists, suffers from the same ideological bias as the functional concept of social structure.[9] For this very reason it shall not serve our purpose.

Social Structure: A Dynamic View

The concept of social structure is likely to give an impression of being a static concept with a view of society as a fixed

entity. This is not our intention. We shall view social structure essentially as a dynamic concept which is similar in many respects to the concept of social system as defined by Myrdal.[10] Social structure is an evolving, changing entity with interdependence among its component parts. The idea of interdependence implies the chain effect arising out of a change in any one component of the social structure. However, theoretically we do not assume that these chain reactions of change, originating in one component will result in simultaneous synchronic changes in the other components in the same direction. This may be the case generally. But we do not rule out (on the contrary, we even accept) the probability of change in the opposite direction in some of the components of social structure. Theoretically, this is the major difference from the structural-functional view of society, according to which endogenous changes always lead in the same direction which is the equilibrium and order. Our conception is somewhat nearer to the Marxist concept of dialectical tendencies resulting in contradictions and conflicts which frequently lead to significant changes in social structure.

Social Structure: Its Components

The components of social structure are the social institutions. Social institutions may be defined as established and organised ways of meeting social needs in a distinct area of social function. As components of social structure, social institutions have both ideology and elements of structure. The structure of the social institutions may be fairly concrete. Thus the meeting of the social needs in a particular area may be directly carried out by the institution through this concrete structure, as in the case of the family. When the structure is more complex and less concrete, then the social function is likely to be carried out by a set of formal organisations like schools and colleges in the sphere of education, and by church, monastery, temple or math in the religious sphere.

The social institutions include economic, political, religious, educational and legal institutions, and family, kinship and mar-

riage, etc. Social welfare, too, is to be viewed as a social institution which is a component of the social structure.[11] While we have listed some of the well-known component social institutions, it is not implied that these institutions are equal in importance. The Marxist view of social structure emphasises the dominant and the determining role of the economic institution, and in particular the processes of production and the relations of production. All other institutions including the political institution are conceived as superstructures standing on the base which is the economic institution. The historical evidence available to us since Marx put forth his theory, to a great extent lends support to the dominant and determining position of the economic institution in the social structure. However, there is also evidence which calls for a slight modification of the orthodox Marxist view of the primacy of the economic institution.

Interdependence and Autonomy

Among the Marxist scholars there are some who would like to attribute considerable measure of autonomy to the political institution and give it a prominent position, perhaps next only to the economic institution.[12] We are in agreement with this view. In other words, while we do not accept that all social institutions that are components of social structure are equal in their importance, we do recognise the interdependence, to some extent, of the various social institutions. At the same time, we also recognise the primacy of the economic and political institutions over the other social institutions. There is considerable historical and contemporary empirical evidence to indicate a fairly close relationship between the economic and the political institutions, which does not contradict the essence of the Marxist view of the determining influence of the economic institution. In other words, the two most dominant social institutions, the economic and the political, while being closely linked to each other and retaining a measure of autonomy between themselves, frequently reinforce each other. For these reasons, we may view these two institutions in their interrelated, slightly autonomous and unequal rela-

tionships as, borrowing a phrase from MacIver, an institutional-complex.[13] However, the economic institution tends to influence the political institution more than the other way round.

Concept of Structural Differentiation

Emergence of new social institutions in human societies is a matter of historical record. This process can be well described through the concept of structural differentiation as formulated by Smelser:

> ....stated in very general terms ... under conditions of social disequilibrium, the social structure will change in such a way that roles previously encompassing many different types of activities became more specialised; the social structure, that is becomes more complex and differentiated.[14]

The intellectual roots of the concept, as pointed out by Smelser, are very diverse. From the main ideas of thinkers like Karl Marx, Adam Smith, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, Smelser has developed his model of the historical change and evolution of social structure. The general feature of this model rests on the well-known sociological principle that as a society develops, its social structure becomes more complex'.[15] Extending this general principle. Smelser propounded that 'rapid social development involves the same increasing complexity of structure in other institutions as well-in education, religion, politics, the family and so on'.[16]

Smelser's model has several defects, some of which are due to his structural-functional approach to social change. But, as an explanatory concept which describes the process of structural change on a graded scale from simple to complex social structures which results in the emergence of not only new roles and functions in society but also new social institutions, it is eminently useful. We shall utilise it only thus, as a concept and not as a model.[17] But it leaves the crucial question open: what factor (s) sets in motion this process of structural differentiation? This is a major defect in his model and perhaps, recognising it Smelser states that it is an open-ended model. In our view, it is an advan-

tage because it permits the use of any theory to fill this gap in the model. This, up to a point, is what we will do.

As societies move from simple to complex social structures, new social institutions emerge to take over the functions which are being shed by the previous institutions. Another outcome of this process may be the birth of new occupations (and professions) within the same social institution as a result of the growth of knowledge and technology, and the growing complexity of tasks. An example of this would be the emergence of industrial managers following structural differentiations in industry and industrialising societies. The function of managing a factory which used to be performed by the capitalist-owner is differentiated into two or more separate functions performed by two distinct occupational groups-the industrial enterpreneur and the manager.

Concept of Society and Its Boundaries

The concept of social structure which has been explicated earlier would require a definition of the term society. Are we concerned with the structure of village communities as society? Are we concerned with a segment of national population such as peasant society? Finally, are we concerned with the entire population residing in a small, medium or large-sized geographical entity known as a village, a region or a nation? There is no doubt at all that in our conception of society we are concerned with human beings in their social relationships. At the same time our acceptance of the interdependence of the elements of social structure and the cumulative change-producing effects of any change within any one of these elements poses a serious theoretical problem. Ideally speaking, we shall have to consider human beings inhabiting this globe as part of the concept of society. In fact it is not only an ideal conception but also an empirical reality. One has only to recall the momentous developments of the recent past, such as increase in the price of petroleum and the world food shortage and information technology globalisation, to remind ourselves of the interdependence of people as a world society.

While this type of conceptualisation has its merits, it will create a variety of other complex problems, both of a theoretical and practical nature. Theoretically, the tasks include a delineation of systematic linkage between various parts of the world society. This may be possible when we select one or two elements for explicating a relationship between nation-societies in different parts of the world.[18] Empirically, the task is complicated because of the various societal mechanisms which are operating at different levels, geographical and otherwise. So we are compelled to demarcate somewhat arbitrarily the boundaries of human society for the purpose of our theoretical framework. A frequent approach is one of the geographical boundary which sets its limits to a modern nation-state. We shall accept this as a parameter of the society when we speak of a social structure.

How is the nation-society to be viewed for the purposes of analysis? Do we think of it as a homogeneous entity in the sense that all the people accept the same values and norms, and all of them have similar needs? In the structural-functional conception of society such a homogeneous view of the people is frequently assumed. This may serve the theoretical purpose. But it creates severe complications when we try to apply it to an empirical reality.[19] For this reason, we see society as composed of many segments cross-cutting each other on the basis of a variety of parameters such as religion, occupation, sex, administrative-political boundary, language, kinship, social customs, values, etc. This is not a chaotic picture of innumerable, heterogeneous groups of people of varying sizes scattered geographically in different administrative units. While we see society as not homogeneous but segmented, we also view it united in some ways. Certainly, one of the most dominant factors contributing to this unifying process of a society is the concept of the nation and consciousness of belonging to a nation. Also, some dominant value themes of ideology may contribute towards the unification of the people.

Social Welfare- A Component of Social Structure

It is time that we define our approach to the study of social welfare. Social welfare is a component of social structure. The nature of social welfare at any given historical point of time is influenced, and to a great extent determined, by the nature of social structure which has evolved historically at that point of time, in particular by the economic and. political sub-systems of the social structure. In our opinion, the economic and political components are very crucial for the concept of social structure and the understanding of human society.

Social welfare, as mentioned before, is a component of social structure. The historical evolution of the goal, nature and the functions of social welfare are influenced and determined mostly by the economic and political institutions of the social structure. While this view might seem a Marxist one, it may be pointed out that it has also been the view of the structural-functional sociological analysts. For example, a classic and an original piece of sociological study examining the nature of social welfare in the social context of the U.S.A. is Industrial Society and Social Welfare by Wilensky and Lebaux.[20] It was a pioneering study. Our own thinking has to some extent been influenced by this analysis of the linkage between the nature of society and the evolution of social welfare in U.S.A. Our main difference with Wilensky and Lebaux is in regard to their conception of the nature of American society as an industrial society. We do not dispute the predominantly industrial character of the society. However, we differ from them in that they exclude the political institution from their conception of the society, and thus fail to analyse its influence on the development and nature of social welfare. But we agree with their basic postulate that the emerging nature of social welfare in the U.S.A. was due to changes in the structure of society.

Structural Differentiation and Social Welfare

Application of the concept of structural differentiation will explain the appearance of social welfare as a new social institution as society in its historical evolution becomes more complex and specialised. This happens when the simple social structure of a tribe grows into a complex social structure of a feudal-agrarian society and later into a capitalist-industrial or socialist-industrial society, as a consequence of the changes in the institutional complex of economic and political spheres of the social structure. Communal ownership of social resources and the kinship relationship of the early tribal social structure, with its simple fruit-gathering or nomadic pastoral economy has no need for social welfare as an institutionalised, specialised function. But, with the evolution of a complex feudal society based on agrarian economy and private ownership of agricultural land, the stratified, class-based society has a new social function of meeting the needs of the slave labourers or serfs, and of integrating them with the feudal social structure. This integrative, need meeting function leads to the appearance of charity as an ideology and as a social function.[21]

The institutional manifestation of charity as a concrete social function may vary, depending upon the type of feudal-agrarian society and its other component elements. In many ancient feudal societies, charity was a function of the king and his nobles (the feudal lords), and of religious institutions, like churches, temples, mosques, monasteries, and maths, etc. The ideology was mostly linked to, or was part of, religious doctrines. This was due to two reasons. In early feudal societies (and also to some extent in contemporary feudal societies) religion was the source of all ideologies and religious sanction was a powerful instrument for conformity in behaviour. The divine origin of monarchy and the divine right of the king are examples. It is important to note here that whereas a new social function has emerged and it is institutionalised, the function is performed by a number

of existing social institutions like monarchy, religion, nobility and also the extended family. In the Indian historical context, we may also add the village community and caste. In this type of social structure, social welfare function is fragmented in a number of social institutions.

With the further growth of complexity in social structure and the consequent structural differentiation found in capitalist-industrial societies, social welfare emerges as a new social institution. It performs the fragmented pieces of social welfare function which are being given up by other social institutions. The nucleating family sheds its social security function which it performed as an extended family before and it is taken over as a state responsibility to be administered under new organisational and occupational arrangements. This, as well as other social welfare functions performed by the social institutions like caste, religion (church/math/mosque/temples) and nobility, apart from the extended family, are now performed by the formal organisations, while retaining their links with the previous institutions. This is manifested in the work of sectarian, religious welfare organisations which continue to be inspired or influenced by their particular ideology. On the one hand, welfare institutions established and run by Christian missionary orders, mainly with the help of nuns and priests, and on the other hand, the welfare institutions like hostels for poor students, schools and colleges, orphanages, widow homes, etc. organised and administered by caste associations belong to this category. Gradually this process may lead to the birth of a new occupation or profession which will complete the process of institutionalisation.

Modernisation, Industrial Societies and Social Welfare

The modernisation theorists have outlined an evolutionary model of societies on the basis of a typology of societies as traditional and modern. Some of them have in fact, identified modern society as an industrial society and the direction of developing societies is seen to be toward this goal of an industrial

society. Empirical data from Japan and some European and North American countries are used to formulate a highly generalised typology, which gives the impression of a very objective scientific law applicable to a variety of political systems, and in particular, to both the representative democratic forms based on plurality of political parties and free elections, and the one party socialist (or communist) countries.[22] This is now carried one step further by postulating a post-industrial society whose characteristics have been described, once again at a level which permits inclusion of a variety of political systems.[23]

These theories and models have been criticised, on account of the reductionist approach as well as on other grounds. We are in agreement with these criticisms.[24] It is our view that an economic structure of a society includes many crucial elements and its industrial character is only one of them. As stated earlier, we also believe that the political system is an equally important component which is closely linked to, and to a great extent influenced by, the economic system. It is for this reason that we consider it inadequate to treat modern social welfare as the product of an industrial society. It is vitally important also to take into account the political systems or the character of the state and its apparatus, the political and social ideology, and the nature of the economic system, whether it is of the capitalist free-enterprise, state capitalist, or socialist variety.

Though the Soviet Union and the U.S.A. are both industrial societies, the manner in which the respective social structures try to discharge the social welfare function displays a very significant difference. While one can identify concrete tasks of a similar nature in social welfare in these countries, the organisational framework, types of personnel, their training, etc. are vastly different. Counselling of the problem child in school and psycho- therapeutic treatment of the mentally ill are found both in the Soviet Union and the U.S.A. But the therapeutic and counselling techniques vary significantly, because of the nature of social structure which in turn gives birth to different sets of therapeutic ideologies and techniques. In accordance with its

overall orientation to the social group, and not the individual as in the U.S.A., the aims, ideology and techniques of counselling and psycho- therapy in the Soviet Union reflect group-orientation.[25]

The U.K. and Soviet Union (or Czechoslovakia) as industrial societies have comprehensive social security programmes under state auspices.* But in the latter two industrial societies, which have different political and economic institutions, there is no professional social work of the type found in the U.K.[26] Even between the U.K. and U.S.A. which are similar in many respects, including the industrial, urban character of their societies, social welfare as a social institution has developed differently. This could be explained in terms of their historical development, and in particular, on the basis of the politico-social ideology of these two countries.

Social Institution and Social Control

Our next task is to delineate in what manner social welfare as a social institution is linked with other social institutions and to the social structure as a whole. Social institutions are developed in order to serve as mechanisms of social stability and social control. The different social institutions perform this function in their own designated areas with varying degrees of importance and emphasis. Whereas the social control function of the coercive apparatus of the state like the police, the military, the judiciary, etc. is direct, visible and perhaps of a high degree, this very function is performed by other institutions in less visible and more subtle ways.

In the case of education for example, the social control function is not so obvious and is frequently missed by those who criticise the educational system for its failure to bring about social change. This is because, firstly the social control function of education is gradual, and of a long-term nature, and secondly, because of its invisibility. Through the process of ideological in-

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*   Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia ceased to exist and new nations have come into existance.

culcation and also by other means such as socialisation, the young population is gradually prepared for accepting the norms and conditions of the social structure. Particularly, the ideological element of education is frequently overlooked by many theorists because of the emphasis on the production and acquisition of knowledge. Much of our knowledge is not only theoretical but it is also highly value-oriented. This is true even of those branches of knowledge in social sciences which have come to acquire an aura of neutral scientific laws.

Social welfare as a component institution of the social structure is developed and used for social control. This is done by means of providing certain concrete services to those sections of the population which are likely to rebel or revolt. Social security is one such example.[27] The other means used include a variety of psychological influence mechanisms on this segment of the society to bring about conformity with the norms of the society. Frequently, and more popularly, this type of activity is known as counselling. It is claimed as a highly complex scientific activity with the professed intention of helping the people in their problems. A careful analysis of much of this type of work would reveal its non-scientific, ideological character. This is best illustrated in the famous sociological analysis, Faith of the Counsellors by Paul Halmos.[28]

It may be conceded that the above statement that social welfare is an instrument of social control is not valid in the case of physically handicapped and mentally retarded persons. This group is in any case a very small proportion of the population which is the target of institutionalised welfare services. The major group who might pose a threat to the status quo are the poor and destitute who are without honourable means of livelihood, and the underpaid and exploited members of the working class.

Also, individual actions of charity based on altruism are not ruled out. In an excellent sociological analysis of the basis of altruism, Gouldner has formulated the concept of the norm of beneficence. He says:

This norm requires men to give others such help as they need. Rather than making help contingent upon past benefits received or future benefits expected, the norm of beneficence calls upon men to aid others without thought of what they have done or can do for them and solely in terms of a need imputed to the potential recipient. As we view it here, the norm of beneficence is a diffuse one encompassing a number of somewhat more concrete normative orientations such as "altruism", "charity", or "hospitality". In short, the norm calls on men to give something for nothing. Such norms are apparently found in the most diverse of primitive or nonliterate societies, no less than in "Christian" cultures where we once heard of the duty of "charity".[29]

Social Welfare and Social Change

Earlier we had said that social welfare as one of the social institutions is essentially a mechanism of social control. The social control nature of social welfare is an inherent characteristic irrespective of the nature of the political and economic framework of the social structure. In other words, whether in the U.K., U.S.A., Soviet Union or Yugoslavia, social welfare will be utilised as an institution for social control. In an example quoted earlier, we had made reference to the ideology and techniques of counselling in the Soviet Union and in the U.S.A. Whereas the nature of ideology and techniques would reflect the politico-economic content of the respective social structure, in both cases the main aim is to secure conformity of behaviour on the part of those who seem to be deviants in distinct areas of social norms, like the problem child and the mentally ill person.

The above statement regarding the inherent social control nature of social welfare and other institutions does not rule out the possibilities of social change through these social institutions. Again, the historical empirical evidence indicates that almost all social institutions seem to have an in-built potentiality for change, including fundamental change in the social structure. Even such an extremely coercive social institution like the military seems to possess elements of social change. An example which illustrates this point graphically is the role of the military

in Portugal. After nearly four decades of absolute dictatorship, it overthrew the dictatorial regime and tried to bring about a socialistic social structure.

Why and how social changes take place within social institutions devised as mechanisms of social control and deliberately used by the ruling groups for that purpose, is not always quite clear. In other words, there is no convincing generalised theoretical explanation to account for the potentialities of change in social institutions, except in the Marxist theory.[30] The Marxist theory explains it on the basis of a dialectical tendency in the society, which leads to conflict, and ultimately towards a higher level of social development. There is another explanation of this process. Social change is the result of unintended and unanticipated consequence of human actions. So, the social control aim of the social institutions can be undermined.

Leonard has attempted to adapt the Marxist theory for social work practice.[31] The main element of this model is Paulo Friere's concept of concientisation, which is an educational process designed to develop among the oppressed people 'critical reflection on reality and subsequent action upon it'. It aims at transforming social reality through concientisation of the beneficiaries of social welfare. There are two major defects in this model. Firstly, most social workers do not have the freedom to engage in such radical practice, because they are employees of the state and are charged with the responsibility of social control. Secondly, even if a few social workers manage to do this, it will not lead to a basic transformation of society, unless it is linked to the political process of radical change.[32]

Earlier reference to typology of societies, such as tribal, feudal, capitalistic and socialistic with reference to the nature of social welfare should not be taken to mean that all human societies can neatly be classified in one of these categories or that there is an inevitable movement from one type of society to the other. As stated before, we do not view social structure only in theoretical terms but also as an empirical reality. At the same time, a theoretical formulation is necessary in order to under-stand the empirical data pertaining to social structure or any aspect of it. In other words, our approach all along has been that these classifications of society are in the nature of ideal constructs for the purposes of theoretical formulation, in the Weberian sence. While usefulness of an ideal theoretical construct is recognised, it should not be mistaken for empirical reality; nor empirical reality be so interpreted as to suit the theoretical needs. What is required is a reflective analysis wherein we make a theoretical formulation first and then examine it with reference to an empirical reality.[33] Following such an analysis, we turn back to the theoretical formulation and make appropriate modifications. This is a forward-backward kind of intellectual exercise, moving from theory to empirical data and back to theory. We may even conceive of this as circular analysis which is different from the linear analysis.

So far all the theoretical formulations of human society viewed within evolutionary perspective have proved to be inadequate when examined in the light of empirical data. This is true of the Marxist theory as well as the modernisation theory.[34] What we are likely to find is a continuum from one end of the theoretical construct to the other end, and human societies at present are likely to exhibit all or many features identified with one (or more than one) particular type of social structure at a specific stage of social development. What is important to note is that all these features are not present in an equal degree of dominance or coverage of the population involved. In case of developing societies like India particularly, we may find elements of tribal, feudal-agrarian, capitalist-agrarian, capitalist free-enterprise, and state capitalist elements in varying degrees and with varying dominance. This means that when we view the nature of social welfare holistically, we are likely to see a mixed pattern of the elements of social welfare, discussed with reference to certain major types of social structure. In particular we may find the features of social welfare of an industrial-urban society in regard to the population living in urban areas, and many features of social welfare of a feudal-agrarian type of social structure in

most of our rural population. Even within the urban population, we are likely to encounter elements of rural social structure among the recent migrants and most of the slum population.[35]

So we may find elements of social welfare of a modern industrial society in some respects, of the feudal-agrarian society in some other respects, and also elements of other varieties of social structure. But the most prominent pattern when viewed nationally is likely to be a combination of social welfare of a feudal-agrarian and industrial-urban society based on an exploitative, economic and social relationship. On the one hand we may still notice the elements of the feudal master-client system operating as in the case of agrarian bonded labour (legally in existence until recently) and elements of social welfare as performed pre-dominantly by such social institutions like extended family, caste and village communities; on the other hand, we may see modern capitalist or state capitalist elements of social welfare like social security for organised industrial labour, secular residential institutions for the destitutes, vagrants and the handicapped, social assistance schemes of a token nature in the case of the neglected and destitute aged population in the urban society, and a mixed variety of sectarian, formal organisations like caste or religion based welfare institutions.

It is for this reason, that we need to view social welfare in developing societies like India as dualistic or pluralistic in nature, combining elements of social welfare from feudal-agricultural and capitalist-industrial system. The need for such a conceptualisation has been recognised some time ago by theorists in allied disciplines like economics and sociology. The concept of a dual society was formulated to explain the extremely dualistic nature of the economic system of the developing societies by the well-known Dutch economist Boeke.[36] Another prominent theorist from the discipline of anthropology, Robert Redfield formulated the binary concept of great and little traditions. An attempt has been made to apply this concept to developing societies by some of the anthropologists subscribing to the recent modernisation theory. The modernisation theory itself is based on the binary concept of traditional and modern society.

The application of these to the Indian social structure and also to the social structures of some other developing societies in Asia and Africa has led a few of them to propound the view that developing societies include features of both traditional and modern societies. Rudolph and Rudolph in their study of Indian society in the context of modernisation theory have come to the conclusion that the traditional elements sometimes tend to operate in the direction of modernisation, and the modernised sector of the society seems to contain some significant traditional elements.[37] For these reasons, we are of the opinion that developing societies are to be viewed essentially as dual societies, or better still as multiple societies. What is important is to see which are the dominant elements and in what segments or sectors of the society these elements are found.

To conclude our discussion, it is our view that the feudal-agrarian nature of social welfare is more likely to be found in the rural population of Indian society and the capitalist-industrial elements of social welfare are likely to be found among the urban population, and that too among the middle and, upper classes of the urban population. The paradox of the simultaneous presence of two or more types of social welfare in developing societies like India is to be noted as an empirical reality. This is in accordance with our theoretical formulation that a national social structure is to be seen essentially as segmental and heterogeneous, and not as a homogeneous society.

CHAPTER -3

Social Change And Social Welfare In Ancient India

In Indian literature on social reform and social work it is customary to trace the heritage of modern social welfare to the beginning of the nineteenth century, especially to the time of Rammohun Roy. If at all any reference is made to an earlier period, it is by way of stray remarks in passing about the social reform activities of some Muslim or Maratha ruler.[1] Occasionally one comes across, however, vague, global reference to social welfare in ancient India-mostly as a glorification of the past.[2]

Periodisation of Indian history is a complicated and controversial issue. The popular classification is based on the religion of the rulers. Accordingly, 2500 B.C. to A.D. 1000 is treated as the ancient period, A.D. 1100 or 1200 to A.D. 1800 as the medieval period and the period from A.D. 1800 onwards as the modern period. Thapar is of the view that the end of the ancient period should be roughly eighth century A.D. or possibly a little earlier.[3] There is however, a rather more specific problem in studying ancient Indian history. It covers a vast period of more than three thousand years for most of which there is little historical evidence, especially about the social structure. Precisely for this reason, the approach here is chronological only in a very broad sense and rather like a frog-leap through history, skipping periods and details either because of the absence of adequate material or their relative unimportance for our purpose.

Indus Valley-The First Urbanisation

The earliest of the Indian civilisations is the Indus valley culture of Harappa and Mohen-jo-daro (now in Pakistan) which was in existence roughly about 3000 to 2000 B.C. It ended about 1750 B.C. The Indus civilisation is characterised by a high level of urbanisation and affluence. Kosambi writes:

> The Indus cities show town planning of a truly amazing nature. Besides the straight streets meeting at right-angles, there was a superb drainage system for carrying away rainwater and cesspools for clearing the sewage. No Indian city possessed anything of the sort till modern times, far too many still lack these amenities. There were enormous granaries far too large to be in private possession. They were accompanied by small tenement houses in regular blocks which must have accommodated the special class of workers or slaves who pounded and stored the grain. There was evidence of considerable trade, some of it across the ocean.[4]

This indicates a well-developed agricultural system which could support the population of large cities with surplus food, the presence of a state, a system of government and the existence of a class-based society where there was the rule of a few over many. Some kind of slavery seems to have been practised. When we consider that the Indus people were essentially peaceful and not violent, we can assume that some type of social welfare was in existence which took care of the minimum needs of the slaves and other lower classes. Unfortunately, we know very little of their social structure, so that any more conjecture will be historical fiction of little relevance.

The Vedic Period (1700 to 600 B.C.)

Sometime toward the end of the second millenium came from the north-west, perhaps from Persia, a hymn-singing, pastoral nomadic tribe, speaking an Indo-European language, and known in history as the Aryans. From the first wave of the Aryans to the Buddhist period-approximately one thousand years-we can observe the progress of the ancient Indian civilisation from nomadic, tribal groups to the tribal settlements (Janapadas) and then to the beginnings of an agricultural society along the Gangetic basin. This is also the period during which the caste system evolved gradually.

It is more helpful for our purpose to adopt Dumizel's concept of 'tripartite division of social functions', and then see the

changes in these functions.[5] The early Aryans were familiar with the division of social functions into those of the sovereign, the warriors and the people. The function of the sovereign was originally performed by an elected chief and gradually this evolved into a hereditary kinship as the tribes grew in size and began to live in one or more settlements. So also the functions of the warriors which originally might have been performed by all those members of the tribe who could fight a war, gradually became more or less a professional hereditary occupation. Thus emerged the group of Kshatriyas who were to become a caste in the Varna system. With the clearing of the forests, made possible by the discovery of the iron, and the development of tribal agricultural settlements, there emerged the communal ownership of land by the Kshatriyas. At about the same time came into existence the other major professional class, the priests, who came to be known as Brahmins. Those who did not own the land, but did manual work on it as producers of food (and later also traders) constituted the social function of 'the people'.

Shastri has depicted the communitarian republics of the early Vedic period in idyllic terms.[6] Whether or not one agrees with all the detailed descriptions of the communal life of these tribal republics, where the social resources were shared by the members of the tribe through daily or periodical ritual distribution, we may agree with Shastri's main conclusions:

> In this communitarian society which functioned like an extended family, everybody's needs were catered to by everybody. There was a life of complete mutuality and reciprocal assistance whether the needs were basic or special, generic or arising out of vulnerable situations like disease and external danger. In knowledge and skill people differed only in quantity and everybody did for others in need what others did for him in similar circumstances. The whole business of helping people in need was everybody's business mainly handled in a collective way. Thus everybody was client and agent both on different occasions or for different purposes.[7]

As the tribal territories progressed and grew in size, they coalesced to form the kingdom, which was increasingly headed by hereditary chieftain-kings. The growing population and the prosperity of agriculture also led to the emergence of cities in the Gangetic basin. This is known as the second urbanisation, a consequence of which is the crystallisation of a new Varna group of traders (Vaisya). The social function of 'people' included the trader and the agricultural producer who did not own the land, the Sudra. By then the four-fold division of social functions had emerged though it was still fluid and had not solidified into the rigid caste system it was later to become.

'Technologically the new urbanisation was based on iron, the widespread domestication of the horse, the extension of plough agriculture and a far more sophisticated market economy than that of the earlier period.'[8] The agricultural land which was collectively owned by the Kshatriyas, was mostly tilled by the slaves (Dasas) and hired labourers (Bhritakas). The political control remained with the Kshatriyas, one of them becoming the king through lineage. Lineage, speech and customary law were the three criteria which defined social status in the earlier tribal society. Now with the gradual emergence of caste (Jati) originally based on a fourfold theoretical classification of the Varna system, society was stratified into five social groups of the classical framework of the later caste system. Caste (Jati) became a more dominant indicator of social status than the ritual status (Varna).

Urban life in the cities, which were mostly capitals of Janapadas, was dominated by the wealthy mercantile class (Shrestin) and the guilds (Srenis). The stratifications of urban society included the traders (Vaisya) who were on a lower status than the Brahmins, the landowning Kshatriyas mostly remaining in the countryside. The traders were wealthy and might have contributed considerably toward the governmental expenditure. Next to them, on a lower status, were the weavers (Karmakaras) who were considered as Sudras and thus lumped together with the hired labourers and slaves. It was into this emerging pattern of society that Buddha was born.

Buddha's teachings and the subsequent evolution of Buddhism during the Magadhan empires have to be viewed then in

the particular context of a society which was changing from a tribal- agricultural settlement to a class-based prospering agrarian economy with its affluent urban centres and the emerging new classes. The polity was also changing from tribal territory to a centralised kingdom or empire. Buddhism was essentially a movement of social protest against a society characterised by the dominance and excessive ritualism of the Brahmins. The supremacy of the priests also meant the dethroning of the warrior class to which Buddha belonged. Thus, Buddha's teachings might be viewed as both a reaction against rigid, ritualistic Brahmanism and a reaction of a Kshatriya to the loss of his status.[9] What is most significant in Buddha's religious teachings is the enunciation of a moderate Middle Path between the two extremes of Brahmin ritualism and Lokayata materialism. This Middle Path was easier for the common people to understand and practice. Buddhism also did away with the mediating presence of a Brahmin in spiritual and religious matters, and stressed the religious experience of a person, thus introducing an element of freedom and individuality, although of a limited nature. It is of significance that the new class of merchants and the lowest class of Sudras embraced Buddhism in large numbers.

As in the Vedic period, social harmony and social order remained ultimate values which could not be questioned. But in its life-affirming aspects, in its perception of change, in respect of the relation of man to fellow human beings, Buddhism introduced a major shift in the ethico-religious philosophy of the time. Buddhism accepted the Karma theory which stressed the law of causality based on individual's actions. This had certain positive implications. Firstly, it held out hope of a better future by its cyclical view of time, the observance of Dharma and the eightfold path. Thus, change was seen as within human control. It was not perceived as a sudden break with the past but as a gradual slow movement.

Another important change in the direction of individuality is what is described by Dumont as the 'outwardly individual'.[10] This is the appearance of a renouncer or an ascetic, usually of noble birth who does not accept any of the social customs and rules, and retires to the forest for meditation. After some time he returns to society to influence it with his immense moral and at times, political authority, usually in the direction of change. The renouncer is a non-conformist par excellence. He is an individual freed from social constraints. But his interests and orientation are to the other world and so he is an 'outwardly individual'. Where renunciation was not possible, the person could become a lay disciple and follow the Middle Path.

The acceptance of Karma, according to Thapar, also served the purpose of explaining the origin of social inequality and the creation of the caste society.

> Not only was a man's social condition a reference point in social justice, but disease, physical pain, and even death were seen as aspects of social justice, although the moral responsibility for this condition rested with the individual. Thus the sting of social protest was numbed by insisting that there was no tangible agency responsible for social injustice, or even an abstract deity against whom man could complain, but that responsibility belonged with man himself. This in turn tended to curb non-conformity in behaviour for fear of the consequences in the next life.[11]

Ahimsa or non-killing was one of the major ethico-religious doctrines of Buddha as well as Mahavira. It is of significance because of its life-affirming quality, even though carried to the extreme to include non-killing of animals by Mahavira. Apart from this ethical aspect, it also reflects the need for an agricultural society to preserve animal wealth. Politically it could be an attempt to make the state more humane by discouraging cruel punishment of the subjects. At the same time it also discouraged violent actions by the people against the ruler even when there may have been cause for it.

According to Buddhism, at the individual level, elimination of suffering is possible by the elimination of desire and by following a path of dhamma (right conduct). Buddhism laid great emphasis on good deeds or merit (punya) and charity (dana). The purpose of these doctrines seems to be to promote social

good by altruistic actions of people at all levels, especially those who were better placed in society such as the ruling class and the wealthy agriculturist and merchant class. 'Charity was seen not only as a means of alleviating the suffering of the materially poor, but also as the giving of gifts, (Dana) especially to the sangha (the order of monks).'[12]

The sangha was not an exclusive group outside the society. It was closely linked to the lay community on whose support it existed and thrived. People from all castes could join the sangha, where there was no distinction of status based on caste. Sanghas were also centres of learning, and they were responsible for the spread of literacy, thus breaking the exclusive privilege of learning from the ritually superior Brahmins. They contributed toward the equality of the sexes, for even women could join as nuns and take to learning. But all these egalitarian measures were limited to the sanghas and the society outside remained stratified as before. 'It was almost as if the creation of a radical, egalitarian society within the monastery exhausted the drive toward such a society in the world outside.'[13] This is the most charitable interpretation one could make for the failure of Buddhism to bring about equality in the society at large.

Buddhism introduced a new perception of cyclical change as dependent upon human actions. However, says Thapar, this

'perception of change and the need to come to terms with it were not seen as synonymous with a radical ideology in favour of total change ... [involving] a complete reorganisation of the social structure. To that degree, Buddhism in its historical role touched the chords of protest but went no further. This was perhaps, because the groups for which it was projecting a new ideology ceased to be the protesters at a certain historical point and became the heirs.[14]

Buddhism in essence remained a conservative ideology with emphasis on the ethics of reconciliation.

The social change resulting from the new economic system based on agrarian society with private group ownership of land and growing urban centres to meet the needs of commerce,

inevitably led to hierarchical social stratification. This in turn gave rise to the concept of charity. Shastri states:

Earlier when there was common ownership of property by the tribe, dana was a protection as of right, against starvation, for the sick, the aged, the maimed and the weak, who had the first claim on social property. But when private property and class rule came across (during the late Vedic period and after), Dana was converted from an instrument of social insurance to a privilege of the ruling class ... dana became now a voluntary virtue and charity of the kings and kshatriyas. It also lost the character of an equal and general distribution.[15]

Thapar states that giving gifts in the form of dana and daksina seems to have been limited to priests and Brahmins. It was initially arbitrary, as it was given by the tribal chief/king or hero to celebrate an event, 'generally a successful battle or cattle raid or victory over the enemy. The gift [was] made therefore not so much in the spirit of charity but as symbolic of success and as an investment towards further success on future occasions.'[16] The items given as part of dana were initially (i.e. early Vedic period) cattle, female slaves, and infrequently male slaves and also grain. In the later Vedic period, in addition to these items, land and gold coins also became items of gift. The purpose of gift-giving was said to be threefold: as a magico-religious function of propitiating the supernatural; a mutual conferring of status; and as a means of exchanging and redistributing economic wealth.[17]

Thapar believes that in the earlier periods when the whole tribe participated in the yajna, 'some of the wealth may have been redistributed among a wider group'.[18] In the later Vedic period, gift-giving became less arbitrary and it was increasingly institutionalised. Gifts were given by the king on specific occasions such as the aswamedha yajna. During the Buddhist period, the donors included not only the king but also the grhastha (the householder) or the gahapati who could be a trader or a landowning khattiya. The occasions for gifting were also more in number because the life-cycle ceremonies such as the thread-ceremony, and marriage and death ceremonies were added to the religious ceremonies by the king. The king as well as householders of the

other two dwija (twice-born) castes performed these ceremonies. Dana was also stressed as the duty of the householder.

Gradually, by the time of the later Vedic period, dana not only became institutionalised but it also acquired the characteristics of charity with religious ideology as a sanction behind it. By giving dana, one acquired punya (merit). 'It was no longer given merely in celebration of an event or a heroic personality or in connection with a ceremony.'[19] It became part of 'the ethical aspect of performing an action such as giving a gift'. The notion of exchange remained central, but in return for tangible wealth the donor acquired merit.[20] The institutionalisation of charity and its ideological basis in the acquisition of merit, whether in this life or in the next, became firmly established during the Buddhist period. The gift-exchange in an earlier, tribal context might have met the needs of the lower castes whose share in the production of wealth would have been meagre. Later, as dana got converted into charity, it ceased to play any significant role as a social mechanism for redistribution of wealth, because, both dana and daksina became increasingly a process of exchange between the better-off sections of society.

Guilds were important corporate organisations which performed a variety of economic and welfare functions in ancient India. The dim beginnings of the guilds can be traced to the Rgvedic period. By the time of the seventh century B.C., and especially during the Buddhist period and after, they played a dominant role in the economic sphere of society. Sreni dharma (usages of the guilds) gradually acquired the force of law and a guild was recognised 'as a definite part of state fabric'. The guilds derived their income from a variety of sources. The main sources of their income, however, were the contributions of individual members, the gifts of the king, the profits earned by the corporate undertakings of the individual members and the income by the levying of octroi and other duties. In South India, guilds owned lands. The income from these, and the taxes levied on professional groups were important sources of revenue for them.

Apart from performing a variety of political and economic functions for the benefit of their members, the guilds seemed to have provided them some form of social security. According to Tirumalachar, 'some part of the funds was utilised for the relief of deserving persons such as the distressed, the diseased, the blind, the idiotic, the infirm, the orphans and helpless women'.[21]

The transition of the scattered population of ancient India from small tribal peasant communities to an agrarian society was followed by two parallel developments. One was the emergence of heterodox sects with their new moral religious ideologies. The more prominent of these were led by Buddha and Mahavira. The other development was the evolution of a new type of large polity in the form of the early Kosala and Magadha states. More important of the two was the Magadha empire under the Mauryas.

A major work of this period is Kautilya's arthasastra, which is a compilation of the strategies and practices of statecraft followed by the kings. It also provides some glimpses of the social conditions of the period. Among the duties of the king is mentioned the objective of the welfare of his subjects: 'In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness; in their welfare his welfare; whatever pleases himself he shall not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he shall consider as good'.[22] At the same time, it is also stated that the king should personally attend to those waiting with petitions at his door in a specific order of priority. The last group mentioned includes, minors, the aged, the afflicted, the helpless and women.[23] It was the duty of the king to provide them with maintenance.[24] He was also to provide subsistence to helpless women when they were expecting and later, to the children they gave birth to.[25] These statements of the duties and responsibilities of the king have been interpreted by some writers to mean that the Mauryan state was an ideal welfare state.[26] But a careful reading of the entire arthasastra, and the context in which the welfare duties of the king are mentioned would not support such an interpretation. The emphasis throughout is on the security and the strength of the king. Else-

where, for example, it is stated that among the various possible distresses which could occur, the distress of the king is the most serious because 'the king is, as it were, the aggregate of the people'.[27] Since poverty and misery could lead to disaffection among the people and so undermine the security of the kingdom, the king was strongly advised to take preventive measures against these.[28] It is in this perspective that the various welfare duties of the king should be seen.

As already mentioned, Mauryan society was based on a pros- pering agricultural economy and a growing urbanisation. The king owned a very large portion of cultivable land which was directly administered by the superintendent of agriculture. A variety of positive and negative measures were taken to promote cultivation of waste land, colonise forests, establish new villages and generally ensure agricultural prosperity. The king's treasury was to always remain full. This was a matter of great priority. The state was very actively engaged in industries and trade including the manufacture and sale of liquor, and the employment of prostitutes. There was a superintendent to regulate prostitution, which was so widely practised that it was a source of revenue.[29]

The society was rigidly stratified both economically and according to the varnashrama dharma. The Vaisyas were the main producing class, both in agriculture and trade. They were assisted by the Sudras, the hired labourers (karmakaras), forced labourers (vishtis), and slaves (dasas). They were paid very poor wages, especially the latter two, who received only the broken grain as wages in kind. The economic condition of these people, whether they worked for the king or for private employers, was pitiable.

The general population had few rights. Their duties were not only specified in great detail for all aspects of their lives, but also strictly enforced. A close watch was kept on them through a comprehensive and efficient system of espionage. There was a huge bureaucracy running the highly centralised system of administration, which was supported by a large professional army.

There was little freedom for the people. The Mauryan state was truly an Orwellian nightmare.

The status of the women was, however, somewhat better in comparison to the later periods. They enjoyed limited property rights. They could obtain a divorce in certain circumstances. Widow marriage was not only permitted, it was encouraged. It was also possible for a woman to have children without marriage. On the whole, 'the position of women in the society was not edifying. A woman was mere property of another and was a mere leather bag (for holding the seed). She was conceived as a child-bearing machine.'[30] The emphasis was on procreation to serve the interests of the state.

The state strongly discouraged asceticism, which was becoming very popular following the Buddhist influence. None could be an ascetic without making provision for his dependents. Widows and crippled women, and destitutes who could no longer continue their traditional work as prostitutes or temple slaves were to be employed in the state weaving departments by the superintendent of weaving.[31] Employment was also provided to the agriculturists through public works such as the building or repairing of forts and watertanks. People working in such projects were supplied with food. During natural emergencies like floods and famines, the king distributed food and grains to the needy. The king was to keep half the grain collected freely from the people as an insurance fund against famines and take permanent measures to prevent famines.[32] If all these measures failed to take care of poverty, only then, the state provided maintenance to the poor and the needy, perhaps, in charitable institutions.[33] Managers of these charitable institutions were accountable to the village officer (gopa) or city officials (nagaraka or sthanika). They were to make detailed reports to their superiors to ensure that there were no spies recruited from among the inmates of these institutions. It is in this total perspective that the objective, role and character of social welfare needs to be viewed. Sinha's position that it was a welfare state with positive concern for the people who were treated by the king as his chil-

dren is to put a gloss on the unedifying nature of the system.[34] Kosambi may be too harsh but nearer the truth when he says that 'this type of protection was nearer to the care of the master for his cattle than of a father for his children'.[35]

The state during this period was governed by a political philosophy which did not accept any ethical principle as a guide to the king's actions. What mattered most was the survival of the kingdom and the increasing strength of the ruler. To that end all means could be, and were, used. The welfare of subjects was not the main aim of the king, though the arthasastra stresses the duties of the king, which includes the welfare of certain categories of people.

Social Welfare During Ashoka's Reign

The reign of Ashoka during the third century B.C. is frequently referred to as the golden age of ancient Indian history. By all accounts he was a great king imbued with a high sense of idealism and humanism. He initiated several humanitarian and administrative measures which contributed greatly to the welfare of the masses. 'He appears to many people in many guises, a conqueror who forsook conquest when he saw the suffering it caused, a saint, a combination of monk and monarch-and so the images can be multiplied.'[36] In one of these multiplied images, he also appears as a social worker.[37] In the historical social structural approach we have adopted, we should look at Ashoka's role and achievements in the context of the social conditions of his time.

The Mauryan empire, founded by Chandragupta, reached its peak during the reign of his grandson Ashoka, whether in terms of the territory it acquired, the state of the economy, or the comprehensive administrative system it developed. 'The earlier nomadic pastoral economy with occasional trade and agriculture was already transformed into an agricultural economy with increasing possibilities for commerical interests.'[38] It was an expanding economy with considerable urbanisation, and a high level of production and commerce that led to great economic pros-

perity. There was also a wide variety of taxes including taxes on actors and prostitutes. Considering the evolution by then of a fairly solid caste system with its heirarchical arrangement, it is not far-fetched to conceive of an unequal distribution of social resources, resulting in the concentration of wealth in the mercantile class and the landowning warrior class. Expenditure on numerous public works, financed out of the tax-collected state revenue, apart from providing employment to a large number of poor people, might have resulted in social equity by its redistributive effect.

Politically, the Ashokan empire, like that of its Magadhan predecessors, was a highly centralised state where the ultimate source of all authority lay with the emperor. There was no separation of the judicial and executive functions of the government. There was a comprehensive and well-organised public administration system which reached out to all parts of the empire, including the most remote border areas as well as the rural interior. This administration was run by a huge bureaucracy whose higher officials were selected personally by the emperor and who themselves selected their subordinates. It was a highly efficient administration. But, unlike the earlier Magadhan empires, it was not ruthless and it was tempered with a pervasive philosophy of humanism propagated by the king through the doctrine of dhamma. A novel and welcome feature of Ashoka's public administration was that it reached out to wherever the people were rather than made them travel long distances to transact official business. This was achieved by the periodical tours of officials. The emperor himself set the example by his frequent tours during which he met the people to hear their grievances and visited elderly people to pay his respects.

The emperor and the administration were certainly sensitive and responsive to people's needs. But the administration remained centralised. Unlike as in the earlier tribal councils, the people had no representation. There were checks on the overbearing behaviour of officials by the emperor's instructions and guidelines which were publicised throughout the state by royal

stone edicts and oral proclamations. Though himself a convert to Buddhism, Ashoka did not make it a state religion. While he encouraged the propagation of Buddhism, he also permitted other religious practices including Brahmanism.

A wide range of social welfare activities were organised and implemented by the state under Ashoka. This included women's welfare, for which he appointed a special group of mahamattas, known as ithijhaka mahamattas (Superintendents of Women). They were also to supervise the work of the ganikadhyakashas or Superintendents of Prostitutes. During the fourteenth year of his reign, he created another special cadre of officers, dhamma-mahamattas or High Commissioners of Charity. Their functions included the recording of charitable donations by the royal family and the regulation of charity.

The commissioners of equity were ordered specially to look after the welfare of prisoners. Many convicts, then having been kept in fetters after the sentence had expired, were to be released. Others in jails had helpless dependents, whom the new commissioners were charged with helping out; prisoners sentenced to death were allowed three days of grace to settle their affairs, but there was no question of abolishing capital punishment.[39]

The welfare activities of the king seem to have been administratively well coordinated under the overall charge of the highly placed dhamma-mahamattas. In other words, we can conceive of these social welfare officers as the counterparts of the modern state directors of welfare, women's welfare and commissioners of charity, but with one major difference. Social welfare today in India occupies a low status in the governmental administrative system. In Ashoka's administration it seemed to have received a very high recognition and status. The dhamma-mahamattas were probably the most influential among the king's officers. Referring to their status, Thapar observes: 'Originally their work was largely that of welfare, but gradually their power increased until they could interfere in the working of various re-

ligious sects and secular institutions. The king became increasingly dependent upon them'.[40]

Ashoka had the judiciousness and the clarity of mind to view the priorities, tasks and problems of the state in proper perspective. He recognised that agriculture was the backbone of his economy and so he gave high priority to rural development. A special cadre of officers, known as rajukas were appointed as the junior officers at the grass-roots level working under the overall supervision of pradesikas, who were perhaps like our district collectors or deputy commissioners. Work of the rajukas included revenue collection and of course, the teaching of dhamma. Towards the end of his life, during the twenty-seventh year of his rule, some decentralisation was introduced by Ashoka when he delegated some of his powers to the rajukas in certain judicial matters. They were empowered to give rewards and punishments to the people during the course of their work.

Ashoka's approach to the welfare of his subjects was based on paternalistic humanism. To him all his subjects were his children (savve manusse paja mama). He developed a very comprehensive system of social welfare which included women's welfare, rehabilitation of prisoners, rural development, free medical care, regulation of prostitution and provision of public utilities like roads, rest houses for travellers, wells, etc. The creation of separate cadres of state officials to implement these programmes is an accomplishment that compares very favourably with the social welfare system of some of the modern social democracies of Europe. The Ashokan state was truly an early proto-type of the modern welfare state, to be found only among the most developed and affluent nations in the present century. It is very tempting, particulary to the Indian social workers today to be very nostalagic about this golden era of social welfare. But we need to look at this achievement in the context of the social structure and the problems of the state during Ashoka's rule.

The underlying ideology of the Ashokan state and especially of its social welfare, was the doctrine of dhamma. The idea of dhamma as developed and propounded by Ashoka is

difficult to convey in English. It can be translated as virtue or the principle of equity.[41] Both these ideas express, perhaps, an aspect of dhamma. Why did Ashoka make dhamma, to use a current phrase, the directive principle of his state policy and more importantly of social welfare? Why did he place such a great emphasis on dhamma and social welfare?

The major part of his 5th Rock edict is devoted to the theme of social welfare. Thapar is of the opinion that dhamma is an invention of Ashoka. The idea might have been present in Buddhism and Brahmanism. Perhaps he deliberately chose what was until then a relatively minor religious idea in both the religions, to make it his main ideology, and thus tried to weld together the disparate elements in his population, divided into a variety of sub-groups such as Brahmans and Buddhists, tribal, agricultural, and urban populations, the vast bureaucracy and the people, and the recently conquered subjects of border areas like the Kalingas, who were yet to consider themselves as subjects of the new state.

In a state so vast in its territory (never before in Indian history had there been a kingdom of that size) and social diversity (ranging from the tribal population of border areas to the highly urbanised population of the Magadha province) it is only to be expected that there would be considerable tensions and conflicts. Something had to be done to unify and integrate such diverse elements if the Ashokan state was to survive as a single entity. Dhamma as an ideology and social welfare as a practical instrument of social policy seemed to be the solutions to this problem.[42] The other alternative was the continuation of the authoritarian oppressive rule of the previous kings, with a greater degree of ruthlessness which could have led to tragic consequences.

This is not as far-fetched an interpretation as might appear at first glance. The state and society under Ashoka were similar in many respects to modern developed nations. A prospering economy leading to the generation of surplus social wealth; a high rate of taxation to skim off some of this surplus wealth from the classes where it tended to concentrate; acceptance of a comprehensive scheme of social welfare meant for all the people (and in particular for the poorer sections of the society), and using it as a means of social integration and social control; a sprawling bureaucracy, particularly for the administration of welfare; and a liberal political-social ideology; these are the major similarities between these two types of societies, separated in time by about 2000 years. But there are significant differences also. While the modern welfare states are highly developed industrial, urban societies of a relatively small size, the Ashokan state was a big territory still in the process of unification as a state, with a well-developed agrarian economy, but without the advantage of the ideology of nationalism and national conciousness among the people. Ashoka was attempting the reconciliation of the classes with his philosophy of non-violence and Dhamma, as Gandhi was to do several centuries later.[43] It is not without significance that independent India chose the ashoka chakra as the national emblem.

CHAPTER-4

Social Policy And Social Welfare
In Medieval India (1206-1706)

Historical literature on the evolution of social welfare generally deals with the modern period from the time of Rammohun Roy and occasionally with the ancient period before the advent of Muslim rule in India.[1] This is a sad commentary both on the secularism of modern, post-independent era of Indian society and in particular on the tradition of scholarship among writers on social welfare. It is well known that the British colonial administration was based on the administration as it had evolved during the Mughal rule and that in turn was influenced by the contributions of the Sultanate period. For a proper understanding of the present social policy, a historical perspective is necessary and desirable because it would reveal a thread of continuity in social policy as a response to the prevalent social structure.

This chapter deals with social welfare from the early thirteenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth century, covering the Sultanate and Mughal periods. The approach to the study of the period is according to the method of social history. The focus is not on individual kings and their achievements except to the extent they contributed significantly to the changes in social institutions and social policy. It is, for this reason, not strictly chronological, but sequential. The institutional approach is also justified for another practical reason. 'Chronologically, the Sultanate does not possess continuity; geographically it lacks territorial definition, for its boundaries constantly changed. It is only in the smooth evolution of institutions that the Sultanate is revealed as a political entity.'[2] These observations hold good equally for the Mughal rule which is interrupted by the brief rule of Sher Shah

and his son Islam Shah Suri. And the territorial boundaries kept changing even after the long reign of Akbar.

The Turkish and Afghan invasions of India and the establishment of the Sultanate introduced a major new element in Indian society-foreign conquerors with a new religion, which was so different from the then prevalent Brahmanism as to be called by one eminent historian as 'a complete antithesis of their whole system.'[3]

Social Structure and Social Welfare
During the Sultanate

The political structure was characterised by the autocratic rule of the Sultan, whose word was law. This is best illustrated in the statement of Muhammad Tughlak that 'He who obeys the Sultan, obeys the Lord Merciful'. Though the Islamic tradition of polity was essentially a republican system of government, in theory at least, the character of the state during the Sultanate was contrary to the teachings of Islam.[4] Legally, the society was divided into two classes, i.e. the king or the ruler and the subjects (riayya). In reality, there were many classes such as the theologians (ulamas), the nobility (umrahs), the slaves, the artisans and the peasants, the last two constituting the mass of the people.

Very early during the Sultanate, the practical needs of consolidating conquered territory and providing effective administration in a foreign country, where the mass of population followed the native religions, impressed upon the rulers the wisdom of introducing certain changes in the roles and functions of the king. These were divided into two broad categories-one in his traditional capacity as the protector of religion (din panahi) and the other as the provider of 'secular administration (jahandari).[5] The first of these was more of a symbolic role. It consisted of leading the religious prayer (khutba) on Fridays and Eid, collecting charity tax (zakat) and ensuring the purity of religious practices of the faithful (and for this purpose appointing influential ulamas as the chief qazis or imams in mosques). Of

course, it also meant the personal observance of religious practices by the king. Waging of war for the spread of faith (jehad) was subscribed to in theory, but was not practised seriously as a function of the king.

The Sultanate was an Islamic state. This means that the ruler was enjoined to establish the kingdom of the faithful (dar-ul-islam) and wage wars against the kingdom of the unbelievers who were considered enemies (dar-ul-harb). While the apologists of the Sultanate have called it a 'theocentric' state, critics have argued that it was a theocratic state.[6] According to the principles of Islamic law, non-Muslims who were considered dhimmis (allies) and muajids (protected people) could remain as subjects on payment of a special poll tax called jiziya. This was in the nature of a concession or special treatment to subjects of the other faiths. All the same, it created a category of second-class subjects, who were mostly the Hindus, being the majority among the non-Muslim population of India during the period of Sultanate.

The levying of jiziya on Hindus by the Sultans of Delhi has been a topic of much controversy. One interpretation, which takes a favourable view, is that the jiziya 'was levied as a tax to cover the cost of military protection provided for the dhimmis.'[7] The other view, which is extremely critical, is that it was an invidious poll-tax which made the status of Hindus inferior to that of Muslims.[8] Whatever the legal justification in Islamic law for the imposition of jiziya on non-Muslims, it cannot be denied that it discriminated against the Hindus and other non-Muslims.

In the other areas of wordly affairs, the duties of the king were generally limited to the maintenance of peace, protection from external attacks, levying of taxes for purposes of administration, and providing strict and impartial justice to the people without discrimination between the classes. Beyond these limited secular functions, the rulers took little interest in promoting the general welfare of the masses. It is reported that Balban's son, Bughra Khan in his last words to his own son, Muizzuddin Kaikubad urged: 'Only that ruler in truth and justice be called

and deemed a king in whose territory no man goes to sleep naked and hungry, and who makes laws (zabita) and frames measures (mawazin) through which no subject of his has to face any material distress (darmandqi) endangering his life.'[9] The giver of this advice, of course, had no opportunity to practise it, and one to whom it was addressed did the opposite.

The economy was mostly based on agriculture of the subsistence variety. The land was cultivated by the peasant who was the owner. The tools and techniques were of a primitive type, as to a great extent they are even today. The production was for local consumption mostly and the small surplus produce after the needs of the peasant, his family and dependent artisans were met, was used to pay the revenue taxes to the king and feed the urban population. The peasant and his family worked hard on the land. 'In return for all this labour he was lucky if he could obtain a square meal every day.'[10] There were 'many industries of considerable importance' during this period and they were located in urban areas or port towns. More important among these were textiles, metal work, stonework, indigo and paper and they catered to the needs of the urban classes, prominent among whom were the Sultan and his nobles. Part of the industrial produce was exported outside the country as there was considerable development of foreign trade through the ports of Bengal and Gujarat. While there were many family type of industrial organisations, there were also factories (karkhanas), 'the best equipped and most efficiently organised were those of the Sultans of Delhi, or, at a later date, of the various minor rulers in the provinces also.'[11]

The considerable amount of inland and foreign trade led to the emergence of a class of merchants, brokers, money-lenders or bankers and the agents (vakils) of foreign merchants. These groups along with a significant number of physicians (hakims) formed the small urban middle class.

The nobility mostly consisted of foreign Muslims from Turkey or Afghanistan, and they were the high officials in military and revenue administration. Indian Muslims and Hindus were

rarely recruited as nobles except occasionally by rulers like Muhammad Tughlak. Nobility, unlike in medieval Europe, was not hereditary. A noble retained his privileged status at the pleasure of the king. The king depended on their loyalty and support in consolidating and maintaining his control over the conquered land and its population. While the temporary status of the nobles certainly created insecurity among them, collectively as a group they wielded considerable influence over the king. They were held together both by a common fear of insecurity and mutual interests.

The slavery, like the nobility, was also a peculiarly Indian pheno-menon. It was not the classical hereditary manorial slavery of medieval Europe. The slaves were mostly prisoners of war who had high social status previously and were generally, though not exclusively, Hindus. Some of the slaves-mostly children who were sold during the severe famines which were quite common-belonged to the poor families. Unlike the royal slaves, these slaves had low social status and were purchased by the nobility or the upper classes in the cities. They worked as domestic slaves in the houses of their owners. Slaves were converted to Islam and in theory at least were equal to other Muslims, and so had a higher status than the Hindus. Some of the royal slaves wielded considerable power and even usurped the throne. They could also earn their freedom if the king was pleased by their actions.

Life of the people in the countryside, where most of them lived, continued as before. The ruler at Delhi could die or be overthrown or similar changes take place at the provincial level, but the traditional leadership through caste panchayats and the village panchayats exercised power over people as they had done for centuries.[12]

This is not to say that many centuries of Muslim rule had not brought about any changes in the Indian society. But the changes were gradual and did not lead to a fundamental change in any major part of the social structure, not even in the religious composition of the population. Whatever conversions to Islam took place were mostly voluntary, with the minor exceptions of prisoners of war, and occasional forced conversions as a result of the religious bigotry of a ruler or his subordinate officials. A great proportion of those voluntarily embracing Islam were the untouchables, or the Sudras who, perhaps, were impressed by the appeal of the egalitarian religion, and hoped to improve their material conditions and social status. More often than not these expectations were belied. The umrahs and the other upper class Muslims were generally of foreign origin and they did not accept as equals the newly converted Indian Muslims. The Indian Muslims were segregated in the cities in separate living quarters and even amongst them social differentiation based on caste continued. Conversion to Islam might have conferred some limited advantages to a few persons, but for this group of people as a whole there was little benefit in terms of better social status or standards of living.

The social structure sketched above clearly brings out the polarisation of the population at two extremes. At the top were to be found the Sultan and his nobles (and a few dependent middle classes) with their retinue of personal attendants and entertainers indulging in luxury and wasteful expenditure. At the bottom were the large mass of oppressed peasantry (along with a few artisans and workers from karkhanas in cities) toiling day and night for a bare living. Such a social situation could spell danger resulting from the inevitable social tensions. Something had to be done to hold together the widely-divided society.

Not surprisingly, we find that the two central values which were emphasised and propagated at that time were loyalty (namak halali; yari) and charity (khairat).[13] Apart from the un-Islamic theory of the divine origin of the Sultan propagated with the acquiescence, if not willing connivance of the ulemas, and the building of the popular image of a benevolent and impartial king, these two values were to act as a bridge between the polarised and antagonistically situated social classes. The concept of loyalty permeated the social pyramid-loyalty of the slaves to their masters, of the nobles to their benefactor, and of

the subjects (peasant masses) to the divine king. There were two types of charity: institutionalised and organised charity which included charitable actions by the king and religious institutions; and secondly, the charitable actions of well-to-do individuals.

Reference was made earlier to the building-up of an image of a benevolent king. As part of this image-building through charity, the king distributed coins and valuable articles during religious festivals and on state celebrations like his accession to the throne and a victory in war. Some kings were really extravagant in this respect.

The kings also granted land free of taxes to scholars, religious persons, and mosques. Grants in cash or kind were made for the feeding of the poor and the beggars at the mausoleums of the previous rulers.

> When a monarch died, a big establishment with a special staff was created to look after his spiritual assistance in the next world; a costly mausoleum was constructed over his grave; charity houses were opened around it .... An immense quantity of food was spent in charitable feeding which attracted an unusually large crowd of professional beggars to the capital.[14]

It is reported that for the mausoleum of Sultan Qutb-ud-din Aibak in Delhi, Muhammad Tughlak assigned an allowance of 100,000 maunds of wheat and rice. 'The rations for the poor and needy were fixed at 12 maunds of flour and a similar quantity of corn every day. In times of scarcity, Ibn Batuta (who was supervising the arrangements) raised the allowance to 35 maunds of wheat and flour with a proportionate addition to the quantity of sugar, ghi and betel leaves.'[15] During famines, revenue taxes were generally not collected. The food grains stored in the royal granaries were distributed to the poor in the cities. A vigorous and assertive ruler like Alauddin Khalji intervened to reform corrupt practices of the merchants by fixing prices for the daily necessities during the periods of scarcity and inflation. He succeeded in bringing down the prices of essential commodities and services so that they were within the purchasing capacity of the common people. But this was limited to the capital city of Delhi and benefited only the urban population. The motive behind these market reforms however, was not the welfare of the subjects, but the high expenditure from the treasury in paying the allowances of soldiers.[16]

Islam emphasises austerity in living, sharing of wealth and giving of alms to the poor for this purpose. In keeping with these religious injunctions, a few wealthy noblemen went about distributing alms to the poor.[17] By this, they were also trying to follow the examples of their masters-the Sultans. It is said that the nobles under Sultan Balban vied with one another in acts of generosity. Malik Ali, a noble of Balban, always gave a gold or silver coin to a beggar. Fakhr-ud-din, another noble, provided 1000 dowries for poor girls every year. Ghias-ud-din Tughlak had earned a great reputation for charity during his governership. Khawas Khan, a trusted noble of Sher Shah provided shelter in houses and tents put up by him for the needy and served them meals himself. The Hindus received uncooked food stuffs. And Mohammed Gawan spent all his weath on the poor and himself ate the coarse food of a peasant and slept on the ground with a straw mat for a bed.

Islam does not recognise the separation of the religious and wordly aspects of social life. Common values which are found in the religious tenets are to be the basis of the whole society including the polity. It ordains 'that equality before God should be given a social and political expression in the form of legal and political equality, that the bait al-mal, or public treasury, should be regarded as a means of promoting public welfare'.[18] Here is an ideal statement of an egalitarian society. In reality, however, the form of state and government that were brought into existence by the Sultans were quite contrary to this philosophy. The public treasury was treated as the personal property of the Sultans, though an image of generosity was sought to be maintained through extravagant and indiscriminate bestowal of gifts on certain public occasions.

The genuinely orthodox ulemas could not have accepted this state of affairs. But most of them, whether out of prudence or selfish motives, compromised by coming to terms with the rul-

ers. There was, however, one major group which did not follow this easy course. They were the religious leaders belonging to the Sufi sect.[19] Sufism had already developed as one of the major religious sects of Islam in Iran and Arabia by the time the first Sultanate was founded in Delhi. Some of these Sufi leaders also came to India and began to spread out in different parts of Northern India. Ajmer, Delhi and Multan became the head-quarters of major Sufi sects like the Chistis, Qadris, Naqsha-bandis and Suhrawardis.

Sufism is a fine blend of the purity of Islam and its emphasis on austerity, equality and public welfare, combined with a deep mysticism and spirituality. It had also a pronounced social and philanthropic character. A basic feature of Sufism, though not universal, is the sheikh, his disciples (murids) and the monastery (khanquah) which was organised on the basis of community living. Social service was performed by some Sufis as a matter of religious principle or unintentionally and incidentally. Mujeeb remarks that Sufism took Islam to the masses and in doing so it took over the enormous and delicate responsibility of dealing at a personal level with a baffling variety of problems.[20] Mujeeb's thumb-nail sketch of the portrait of the celebrated Chisti saint, Hazrat Nizamuddin, is of absorbing interest for anyone interested in the heritage of social welfare in India. The sheikh had made the consolation of people his life-long mission. The sight of the poor and hungry masses affected him deeply. 'So many miserable poor men sit in the corners of mosques and shops hungry and starving; how can I get this food down my throat, he asked.[21] Another time he remarked: 'No one in the world has to bear as much sorrow as I have to, because so many people come to me and relate their sorrows'.[22]

The khanquahs of prominent Sufi saints, especially of the Chisti order, were the concrete manifestation of the bait al-mal philosophy. Though personally leading a most austere life of poverty, scrupulously keeping away from politicians and rulers and even refusing offers of patronage, the Sufi sheikhs stressed the value of making an honest living out of one's labour. Some of

them however, accepted gifts of money and material from their admiring disciples, among whom were the wealthy nobles. They distributed these gifts liberally to the needy Muslim masses who came to their khanquahs or lived there as disciples (murids). They maintained langars (free kitchens) where cooked food was served, and gave shelter to the poor students studying under them, and occasionally provided even stipends in cash or kind to poor families. Usually one of the disciples of the sheikh was appointed as the manager of the khanquahs. Qureshi states that 'so widespread was this charity and so generous the alms that they were partially responsible for the existence of a class of professional beggars'.[23]

The status of women in Islam, though not one of complete equality, is much better than in Hinduism. In practice, however, Muslim women during this period were socially not better off than their Hindu counterparts. It is true that there are some rare examples like Razia Sultana succeeding her father to the throne and a few similar notable examples. But these were exceptions to the rule. The attitude toward women is reflected in the following quotation, though it is with reference to female slaves: 'Buy a Khurasani woman for her work, a Hindu woman for her capacity for nursing children, a Persian woman for the pleasure of her company, and a Transoxianian for thrashing her as a warning for the other three.'[24]

The women were confined literally to the four walls of their homes and when on rare occasions they went out, they were to completely cover themselves by wearing the burkha. There was only a minor difference in the case of Hindu women, who were to observe purdah when they went out of their homes. Chastity was an ideal virtue for a bride and a married woman.

The major social problems of this period (apart from poverty and exploitation) were alcoholism, gambling and prostitution. All these seem to be essentially problems of upper-class urban society. 'Though drinking is forbidden by quran, it is difficult to mention any social group in Muslim society which did not

drink.'[25] The state was indifferent to this vice and only Alauddin Khalji tried to prohibit it for some time but failed.

Prostitution seemed to be widespread. 'No attempt was ever made to abolish or prohibit prostitution on ethical grounds. On the other hand,... the administration helped in regulating the profession, which was also a source of revenue'.[26] Justification for not prohibiting prostitution was that it protected the Muslim women from immoral and lustful men. It is said that Sultan Ghias-ud-din Balban used to say as one of the four principles of din panahi (protection of religion): 'Sinful and shameless deeds should be ruthlessly suppressed, but prostitutes should not be prohibited from practising their profession secretly, for if there were not prostitutes to gratify their lust, libidinous rascals would attack Muslim harems.[27] Similar arguments have been put forth in the modern times to oppose the abolition of 'red light' areas in the cities by the defenders of women's morality.

The practice of sati or self-immolation of the widow on the funeral pyre of her husband, was quite widely prevalent among the upper caste Hindus, especially among the Rajputs. The Sultans of Delhi had issued an order whereby licence had to be obtained before burning a widow within the kingdom. This was intended to discourage the use of compulsion or social pressure to force a widow to burn herself. It seems, however, that the licence was generally issued and there was no attempt to enforce the law from the point of view of accomplishing its objective.

Education And Medical Care

Before the advent of Muslim rule in India a type of educational system had already evolved in Muslim countries. It had a distinctly religious bias. These theological schools were known as madrasahs and were maintained by the state. Apart from the madrasahs, there were the maktabs to provide primary and lower secondary education; and they were maintained by munificent noblemen. Iltumish, the first Sultan of Delhi, was also the first to establish a madrasah in Delhi. A succession of Sultans such as Balban, Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughlaq, continued this

tradition. Significant progress in the educational sphere was made during the rule of Firoz Tughlak. He endowed thirty madrasahs in different parts of his kingdom. In Delhi alone a thousand colleges, and seventy hospitals were established during the reign of earlier Sultans. 'The staff of the hospital consisted of physicians as well as surgeons; attendants served the sick and nursed them; medicines, food and drink were provided. Eye specialists formed part of the staff.'[28] But the state-supported medical care seemed to have been mostly limited to Delhi, until it was extended by Sher Shah who had a physician resident in every serai. Sher Shah had constructed a large number of serais (rest-houses) for the convenience of travellers. But the main or at least one of the main reasons was the need to provide prompt medical relief to the wounded soldiers during the wars which were quite common in those days.

Social Structure and Social Welfare During the Mughal Rule

The basic elements of social structure during the Mughal rule were more or less similar to those found during the Sultanate. The divine theory of kingship not only continued but received greater emphasis under Humayun and Akbar. The division of society basically into two or three classes, the nobility, the masses, including the peasantry, artisans and the slaves, and a small middle class also remained. The nobility continued to be dominated by Muslims of foreign origin and extraction. They controlled the administration and commanded the army, leading a life of luxury and conspicuous consumption, attended by a vast number of domestic servants. If anything, the Mughal rulers only perpetuated the system and made the disparity between the upper and the lower classes more glaring.

In matters of social reform, however, there was a bold attempt by Humayun to prohibit the evil social custom of sati when the widow was past the age of child-bearing, even if she offered herself willingly. Though there was no violent protest from the Hindu population, Humayun was persuaded to cancel the orders

as he was made to believe that such interference in the religious customs of the people would arouse the anger of the Divine Being and result in the downfall of his dynasty and perhaps in his own death. However, the earlier practice of restraining relatives from persuading the widow to perform sati unwillingly was continued by posting the king's officers at the place of burning. Major changes were introduced by Akbar in the religious, political and administrative spheres. For this reason, it would be appropriate to discuss them in some detail.

The state, which was theocratic during the Sultanate and early Mughal rule, became 'secular' as a result of a series of orders issued by Akbar in the early part of his reign. He abolished the pilgrim's tax in 1563, jiziya in 1564 and slavery in 1583. These measures introduced legal equality among the subjects, irrespective of their class and religion. Akbar's religious policy which evolved gradually over the years was initially one of religious tolerance. It later became a policy of religious equality and thus granted full freedom to the citizens in matters of religious beliefs and practice. He not only reversed the earlier policy of religious discrimination according to which new temples could not be built without permission, and the state withdrew support to the existing places of worship, but he liberally granted money and tax-free land for the benefit of Hindus, Jains, Parsees and Christian missionaries.

Akbar had been eulogised by his admirers and strongly criticised by the orthodox Muslims during his own life-time. He evokes similar reactions among historians today. Because of his religious innovations Akbar was considered a heretic and an apostate by the orthodoxy. However, he was praised as insan-i-kamil (Perfect Man) by his courtiers. It is said that his religions policy and practices were so admired by the Hindus that he was revered as a rishi.

The establishment of din-i-ilahi is the most controversial of the emperor's actions. Was it a new religion or a heterdox religious sect like the Sufis? According to a recent assessment, it is neither. It was the attempt to recruit and create an elite corps around a concept that was based on the principles of sulh-i-kul (Universal Concord) and loyalty to the emperor, which meant being prepared to lay down their lives for him. 'The elite had to be ready to sacrifice their religious prejudices and interests, if so demanded.'[29] In contemporary terminology we may call it an attempt to create a committed bureaucracy who were pledged to uphold and practice the new religious principles and liberal social policy of the emperor.

Akbar introduced substantial reforms in the state grants for charitable purposes. For a considerable period since the beginning of his reign, the power to confer cash grants or revenue-free land (madad-i-maash) was vested in the office of the sadr-us-sudur (Minister for Charity and Chief of Religious Affairs). This power seems to have been abused by the first appointee to the post, Sheikh Abdun-Nabi who was corrupt and indiscriminate in giving revenue-free lands. Though the powerful Sheikh is reported to have occasionally granted tax-free lands even to Hindus, he was a fanatical Sunni whose corruption and harsh ways of dealing with Hindus, compelled Akbar to replace him later by a liberal Muslim.

To prevent indiscriminate granting of lands for charitable purposes and misuse by falsely claiming this tax concession, Akbar set a ceiling for such grants by the sadr first at 500 bighas, then at 100 bighas and finally at fifteen bighas. Grants of land above this ceiling could be sanctioned only by the emperor. All those grantees who held more than 500 bighas of land were directed to produce their grant deeds before the emperor who personally scrutinised them before approval. Those who failed to do so were to be deprived of their lands. Subsequently, those grantees with 100 bighas or more were deprived of three-fifths of it and those who gave up old lands (which were bad) for new were asked to surrender one fourth of it. He instructed his provincial revenue officers (kroris) not to recognise any claims to madad-i-maash lands, unless they were certified by the sadr-us-sudur, and later by the emperor himself. To avoid inconvenience to the grantees and possibly also for considerations of adminis-