

國家發展研究 第三卷第一期

2003 年 12 月 頁 149-179

# **The State and the Making of the Welfare System in India**

Christian Aspalter

Department of Social Work  
and Social Administration,  
The University of Hong Kong

收稿日期：2003 年 4 月 1 日

接受日期：2004 年 3 月 10 日

## Abstract

This study is the outcome of a one-month-long research trip to New Dehli in the year 2000. The paper addresses the relationship between national building and the functioning of the State on the one hand and the making of the Indian welfare system as it is today. At the same time – and, more importantly – the author looks at the connection between State and the relative absence and failure of social policies in India.

In this study, the author applies a political, historical-institutional approach in tracing the determinants for the successes/failures of India's welfare system. The paper concludes that the political outcome of the 1950 constitutional compromise and the unrelenting social, lingual, religious, and cultural disunity of the country, in fact, are chiefly responsible for the delay, the failure and the relative absence of social policies, and as a result a decent welfare system, in India.

**Keywords:** Politics and Nation Building in India, Political System, Constitutional Compromise, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Social Movements, Caste System, Social Reform, Social Policy, Administration of Social Policy, Social Security, Welfare System, State-Centered/Institutional Welfare State Theory.

## Introduction

For most people in the Western world and East Asia alike, India represents still a mystical country full of fairy tales to be told. This article tries to preempt the impending great demand for new studies on society, culture, politics, and, of course, the economy in the years to come. India certainly is a complex matter, with all the different religions, languages, scripts, ethnic variety, and scattered political landscape of India, with which the British left the people of India after their retreat, trusting the fate and the future of India to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress Party (founded in 1885) that had led and fought for India's independence more than seven decades later, in 1947.

In India, it is meaningful to separate the notion of the traditional "welfare state" from the Western socio-cultural overcoating and to cloth it in a garb that reflects the reality of India in the last two centuries. The author here puts forward the following trouble-free definition of a welfare system (or welfare state system): it is the sum of all governmental regulations and provisions that aim the enhancement of people's living conditions; here the author includes: laws, regulation, and planning in the fields of employment, taxation, social insurance and social assistance, health care, education, housing, and population policy (cf Aspalter, 2002b: 11).

The theoretical framework used here is that of Theda Skocpol (1987, 1992) of Harvard University, of the state-centered/institutional school in welfare state theory that focuses on the nature of political systems, power structures, governmental institutions, constitution making, involvement in wars, national development formation processes, and the political

economy of welfare systems (cf Aspalter, 2002c: 18).

## On the Political History of the Welfare System During Colonial Rule

During the time of increasingly absolute British rule in India, from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century until the year of India's independence—1947—the welfare-political arena of India has seen the formation of a great deal of social movements, which—unlike 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe—grew out of distinct, and sharply divided social classes (the “castes”, the *Jāti*) and, later on, religious communities of that time who bitterly opposed the existing distressing state of social affairs. Among those movements were: the *Brahmo Samaj* movement (1816), the *Arya Samaj* movement (1875), the *Theosophical Society* (1893), the *Ramakrishna Mission* (1897), and the *Anjuman-Himayt-i-Islam* (1898).

Along with those new social movements, also copious numbers of social reformers emerged on the political scene of British India. Among the most outstanding social reformers were: Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar (1820-1891), Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883), Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar (1837-1925), Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-1894), Sasipada Banerji (1840-1925), Mahadev Gobind Ranade (1842-1901), Kundukuri Veereshalingam Pantulu (1848-1919), Gopal Ganesh Agarkar (1856-1895), Dhondo Keshav Karve (1858-1962), Madan Mohan Malaviya (1861-1946), Pandita Ramabai (1862-1924), Swam Vivekananda (1863-1911), Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928), Gophan Krishna

Gokhale (1866-1911), Bhagini Nivedita (1867-1911), Kamakshi Natarajan (1868-1948), Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), and Bhimrao Ramaji Ambedkar (1893-1956).

The political climate of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in India left enough room for the creation of first social/socio-religious welfare movements and the political agitation of individual social reformers, some of whom accomplished the initiation of a new social movement, such as Swami Dayanand Saraswati who attempted to bring about social and religious change by reviving the Vedic religion and the Indian cultural tradition, in which, as he pointed out, there cannot be found any support whatsoever for repugnant customs, such as “caste” discrimination, the restrictions on widow's remarriage, and child marriage (Sharma, 1998: 3). Krishna Gokahle, for example, was the founding father of Servants of Indian Society movement, who promoted voluntary services by workers for the various welfare activities.

Together with the rather benevolent attitude of the British these social activists' efforts resulted in a number of very important pieces of social legislation, which aimed at the alteration of harmful social practices and social inequalities, as well as first provisions in social security (this, however, for a very limited clientele). These laws included: the *Regulation No. 17* of 1829, the *Caste Disabilities Removal Act* of 1850, the *Hindu Widow Remarriage Act* of 1856, the *Brahmo Marriage Act* of 1872, the *Workmen's Compensation Act* of 1923, the *Provident Fund Act*<sup>1</sup> of 1925; the *Hindu Inheritance (Removal of Disabilities) Act* of 1928, the *Child Marriage Restraint Act* of 1929, the *Hindu Women's Right to Property Act* of 1937; and the *Coal Mines Labor Welfare Fund* of 1944; (cf Goel and Jain, 1988).

One of the most important welfare regulations of the government was the re-arrangement of marriage practices by law, which horrendously suppress women. The Brahmo Marriage Act of 1872 is the first, and still very modest, attempt of the government of British India to eradicate suppression of women by means of marriage customs; that is to say, the new law provided for monogamy, a minimum marriage age of 14 for girls (and 18 for boys), and the registration of marriages. But, intermarriages between different "castes" were still taboo due to ancient custom. However, one of the smallest states of India today, Mysore, led the way with regard to permitting intermarriages of two Hindus of "a different caste" in 1908. One decade later, in 1918, Mr. Vithalbhai Patel attempted to legalize "inter-caste" marriages by introducing a new bill in the Imperial Council; which, however, was not passed (cf Goel and Jain, 1988; Natarajan, 1959).

With the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in India (who was coming from South Africa) in 1920, the subsequent political mass movement for the liberation of India from British rule and the liberation of women and the "*depressed castes*"—that is, including the scheduled classes, other backward classes, and member of India's numerous tribal communities—was getting at the forefront of national politics. But, at a closer look we see that the idea of liberating the depressed people of India did not originate from Mahatma Gandhi. In fact, Dr. Anne Besant, for example, the president of the Congress Party, put forward a strong statement and addressed the social question of the time as early as in the year 1917, that is, three years before the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in India. In this statement, Besant stressed the necessity of "removing all disabilities imposed by custom on the Depressed Classes" in the name of

social justice and righteousness. Furthermore, she described these disabilities as being of "a most vexatious and oppressive character, subjecting these classes to considerable hardship and inconvenience". This declaration, however, followed a similar resolution at a Mumbai ("Bombay") meeting held under the auspices of the Depressed Classes Mission Society that was founded in 1906 (Natarajan, 1959: 135, 144).

When Mahatma Gandhi lifted the ban on participation of women in large gatherings of the Congress party, he helped forward a nationwide liberation women's movement calling for a removal of customary suppression of women in Indian society. Furthermore, Mahatma Gandhi declared himself keenly interested in the removal of untouchability of all depressed classes.

The caste system in India was introduced by "Indo-Aryan" immigrants from Persia and Central Asia (thus, composed of a variety of ethnic groups, cf O'Neil, 1985) who sought to protect their status and the ruling elite in a society where most members were of multicultural, and multiethnic, origin. The "Indo-Aryans" were the landed high society of that times, and their descendants settled in far-away places like Assam. The four most famous social classes, the "castes," were: the *Brāhmanas* (the ruling class/priests) and the *Ksatriyas* both of which, in essence, constituted the upper classes, both they represent twice-born (*dvija*) classes and, thus, were entitled to the performance of sacrifices. The next major classes, or "castes," were the *Vaiśyas*, who engaged in the professions such as the trading commodities, domesticating of animals, and farming. The lowest strata of society were the *Śūdras*. The first three classes were not allowed to travel in the company of *Śūdras*, common meetings and meals were also strictly prohibited. The professions

ascribed to the *Śūdras* included handicrafts, culinary arts, and services. Since more and more *Śūdras* began to work in agriculture, the *Vaiśyas* were downgraded to become *Śūdras* as well. There had been dozens of other important "castes" in ancient India, all of which undergone many changes, many became distinct, regrouped, renamed, or simply merged with others. Intermarriages between members of different "castes" had been meticulously forbidden (cf O'Neil, 1985; Bajpai, 1992).

In the 1920s of Mahatma Gandhi, this strict multi-layered apartheid system, which is known as the "caste system," still plagued society, and obstructed social progress and development. In the words of Dr. Besant, Mahatma Gandhi was a first-class social reformer, but he was not a politician. After Mahatma Gandhi had dominated the Congress, he turned the Congress into a "Social Reform League" and stopped the political work of the Congress party. In the years of social reforms under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, a great deal of progress could be achieved, but he was not a revolutionary social reformer from the very beginning. In May 1924, he called for the opening of all public temples to the depressed classes, but he also, at the same time, broke away from the reformers by opposing the lift of prohibition of "interdining" and intermarriages. He also declared his disapproval of the existing education for all classes. Mahatma Gandhi's ambiguous policy stand in the question of social equality in between all "castes" and his principal acceptance of the "caste system," however, also won over a sizeable part of more conservative, orthodox reformers (Natarajan, 1959: 137-51).

In the year 1923, the Indian social security system has made the first important step in direction of a significant welfare system, with the passing of the *Workmen's Compensation Act*, which was the first social

security legislation of modern India; and still is of vital significance for today's workforce. According to the provisions of this Act, compensation is paid for accidents that lead to death, or total or partial disablement for more than three days, if the accident has occurred in the course of employment; also included in this scheme is compensation for occupational diseases. The Workmen's Compensation Act applied only to workers with a monthly income of less than RPS 1,000.<sup>2</sup> All workers in factories and mines, as well as plantation workers, other than clerks, however, are covered by this Act. The Provident Fund Act of 1925 provided social security provision for state employees and railway workers only (Chowdhry, 1985: 287; Rath, 1976: 219).

The rather undisputed rule of the British in India, did not lead to the establishment of a bulk of new social policies other than those aiming at the removal of *diswelfare*, such as long-standing malpractices in the realm of marriage, inheritance, women's social and political participation. And this, again, was only made possible due to the political rivalries mainly between different religious communities on the one hand, and the upcoming of general social discontent that resulted in the raising of new generations of social reformers on the other, which set off as early as the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a consequence, new social movements emerged that aimed especially at social amelioration by means of abolishing or changing a number of appalling customs.

These social movements forced the colonial government to act and break with their long-term practice of acquiescing silently to the wants and demands of the ruling "castes," in return for their support of the colonial regime. The British played both sides, by deferring social reform that was feared by the Hindu establishment—making them increasingly

dependent on the support of the British in sustaining the ancient apartheid system, the “caste system,” and by actively supporting the Muslims in their attempt to raise to power for a second time (formerly ruling most of India, especially between 1200 and 1700), at least in the federal states where they constituted a majority of the population. Muslims were very concerned about their limited chances of self-control and self-governance in a Hindu-majoritarian country. This made the Muslims a great strategic coalition partner of the British in limiting the power of the *Harijans* (literally: the “children of God”); a name for Hindus that has been put up later on by Mahatma Gandhi, to protect their specific interests against the raise of Muslim power and the rigorous rule of the British (cf Stern, 2001).

The third force in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Indian politics, the depressed classes, which were composed of the Untouchables, the OBCs (members of *other backward classes*), and the hill tribes, brought upon slow and significant change in Hindu society, slowly benefiting the masses. The women’s movement joined in the movement of the poor by about the late 1920s. A significant event here was the removing of barriers at temples that tried to prevent the access of the depressed classes by 200 women in Dacca in 1929 (today’s capital of Bangladesh) with the help of members of the Young Men’s Association (cf Natarajan, 1959: 151).

Though it was too early to think about social security plans and other meaningful social policy measures, during and before the time of Mahatma Gandhi, the government did launch a series of social policy legislation that concentrated on the reduction of social *diswelfare* more than the creation of new forms of welfare programs and regulations.

## On the Political History of the Welfare System after Independence

In the newly independent India, the leadership of the Congress party, above all, sought to protect the rights of the *Harijans* and to help resurrect a strong and pure Hindu nation. As a result of which, for example, the Hindi language has been “cleansed,” and Arabic and Persian words omitted, which led to a new linguistic division between Muslims and Hindus, who, from then on, spoke Urdu (the national language of today’s Pakistan) and “purified” Hindi. The earlier attempts of Mahatma Gandhi to promote Hindustani (which was widely used in Northern India before 1947) as the new, and only, national language of Independent India, obviously had failed.

But the Muslim League, established in 1906, which did not join the Indian National Congress, opposed the erection of an Indian nation that included the predominantly Islamic parts of the Indian Subcontinent. In 1937, the Muslim League demanded a separate federal state within an Indian nation; but since 1941, they proclaimed the partition of India and the creation of a sovereign Islamic state, apart from the rest of India. The Partition of India followed in 1947, comprising two predominantly Muslim regions: the former province of Bengal (today’s Bangladesh) in the East and the northwestern provinces of British India (including Western Punjab and Western Kashmir).

In the period following the partition, the Indian government began to pass a series of new laws with regard to labor and social welfare, even before the implementation of the new constitution in 1950. The new laws were: the *Industrial Disputes Act* and the *Coal Mines Labor Welfare Fund*

*Act* of 1947; the *Factory's Act*, the *Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment) Act* of 1948, which both addressed the issue of work hours, conditions of work, leisure time, and health and safety; and the *Minimum Wages Act*,<sup>3</sup> the *Coal Mines Provident Fund, Family Pension and Bonus Scheme Act*, and the *Employees State Insurance Act* of 1948; and the *Industrial Disputes Banking and Insurance Company Act* of 1949; the *Employee's Provident Fund Ordinance* of 1951, and the *Employees Provident Fund Act* of 1952 (Goel and Jain, 1988; ...lab welf.....; Rath, 1978).

The second significant step forward concerning the construct of a more comprehensive social security system in India, the *Employees State Insurance Act*, provided for: (1) medical care treatment; (2) cash allowances during sickness; (3) maternity benefits; (4) employment injury; and (5) benefits pensions for dependents of workers due to employment injury to the insured persons in factories and specialized workshops employing 20 persons or more, as well as other laborers and clerical staff with a monthly wage up to RPS 1,000. By the year 1980, the Employees State Insurance covered 6 million workers and their families, adding up to 27,787,800 persons—in actual fact, a very limited coverage of India's total working population (cf Goel and Jain, 1988: 18-24; Banjeri, 1985: 296).

The Constitution of India of 1950 did not sustainably increase the frequency or the content of welfare legislation of the new republic, when compared to earlier social policies. Article 38 (1) stipulates the advancement of a social order, in which social, economic, and political justice shall form the basis of all institutions of the national life. In Article 38 (2), the Constitution lays down that the state shall, in particular, strive

to minimize the inequalities in status, facilities, and opportunities, not only amongst individuals but also amongst groups of people who reside in different areas, or engage in different vocations.

Furthermore, Article 39 (e) requires that the state shall direct its policies towards securing the health and strength of male and female workers, and that children of tender age are not abused, and that all citizens are *not forced by economic necessity* (this passage may connote a kind of justification of e.g. child labor!) to enter vocations unsuited to their age or strength.

On top of that, Article 41 of the Constitution specifies that the state shall, *within the limits of its economic capacity and development* (this passage is, indeed, very indefinite, and leaves room for a wide range of interpretations), make effective provisions for securing the right to work, the right to education, and the right to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness, and disablement.

Finally, Article 45 insists on the introduction of free, compulsory, and universal education until the completion of the age of 14, within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution; as well as the promotion of educational and economic interests of weaker sections of society and, in particular, of the Scheduled "Castes," and the Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (cf CRI, 2000).

The history of social legislation and administrative regulations of the Republic of India mirrors quite a bit the provisions given in the Constitution, but many important parts, such as the provision and coverage of social security, had been kept very vague. In fact, after 1950, the Indian government undertook numerous efforts in the field of social

security. The first new more important social law of the 1950s was the *Plantation Labor Act* of 1951, which set forth provisions for medical care and sickness benefits for plantation workers.

The next great piece of law in the field of social security was the *Employees State Provident Fund Act*<sup>4</sup> of 1952. Today, Central Government employees are entitled to benefit from the General Provident Fund scheme, and employees of public sector undertakings and other autonomous organizations, like the Steel Authority of India, the Indian Airlines Corporation, Air India, the Port Trust, news agencies, railways, mining companies, etc., can profit from membership in the Contributory Provident Fund scheme. With regard to the Contributory Provident Fund, it needs to note that employee's have to contribute at least 8.5 percent;<sup>5</sup> while the government/employer also contributes the equal amount. To discourage withdrawals from the Contributory Provident Fund, the government has set up a new Incentive Bonus Scheme in 1975 (Chowdhry, 1985: 290-91).

Over the years the government established, in addition, sickness insurance, a pension plan, maternity benefits, special disability benefits, hospital leave, a productivity-linked bonus scheme, various reductions of housing, electricity, and water rates, a deposit-linked insurance scheme (which functions similar to a life insurance), and death-cum-retirement gratuity for Central Government employees. Employees of public sector undertakings and other autonomous organizations may profit from Employees State Insurance, Employees Family Pension Scheme, housing benefits, special social assistance schemes for disabled persons, widows, dependent children, etc. Important social legislations of the Central Government, besides State Government Legislation, were the amendment

of the 1929 Maternity Benefit Act in 1961; Employees' Family Pension Scheme of 1971; Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act of 1972; the Payment of Gratuity Act in 1972; Mica Mines Labor Welfare Fund Act 1972; the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act of 1976; Iron Ore, Mine, Manganese Ore Mines and Chrome Ore Mines Labor Welfare Fund Act of 1976; Deposit-Linked Insurance Scheme of 1979; China Workers Welfare Fund Act 1981, and the implementation of the Employee's Pension Scheme in 1995 (cf Wadhawan, 1989; Barura, 1995; Kurz, 2001).

As stated by Article 42 of the Indian Constitution, the state shall make effective provisions for securing the right to work; education; and public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness, disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want. Whereas employees and workers in the public and semipublic sector are able to rely on a rather comprehensive system of social security, members of the private sector—be it in cities/towns, or the countryside—are left out from any such provisions. There are comparatively meager attempts, for example, with regard to employment security in some federal states. In Maharashtra the Employment Guarantee Scheme offers work to mainly laborers (adult persons) in the vicinity of their place of residence at daily wages that are slightly lower than the minimum wages. Other work programs include the Food for Work Program, which offers surplus food grains from buffer stocks, besides some smaller cash payments, to unemployed rural workforce for work in the construction of various amenities and infrastructure.

In India, there is a connection between higher levels of unemployment and economic development, the greater the degree of



economic development the higher is the rate of unemployment, due to the absence of traditional forms of pre-capitalist relations, and decreasing shares of self-employment in the rural countryside. However, in these backward areas, high degrees of underemployment and extremely low wages pose an even greater problem for the Indian workforce (Chowdhry, 1985: 154-55; Nagaraj, 1999: 79).

Pertaining to old-age income security, it needs to say that there is no social insurance system for old-age pensions. The only schemes that exist are old-age assistance schemes (which, however, are misleadingly referred to as pension schemes, by Central and State Governments). A number of State Governments have introduced old-age assistance schemes for destitute persons, based on an income-test. The minimum age requirements as well as benefit levels, in the mid-1980s for example, varied considerably between 65 and 70 years, and RPS 20 (Andhra Pradesh) to RPS 75 (Jammu & Kashmir) a month respectively. The first federal state to implement such a scheme was Uttar Pradesh in 1957; it was followed by Kerala in 1960; Andhra Pradesh in 1961; Tamil Nadu in 1962; Karnataka, Rajasthan, West Bengal, and Chandigarh in 1964; Punjab in 1968; Haryana, Himachal Pradesh in 1969; Bihar in 1970; Orissa, Delhi, Lakshadweep, and Mizoram in 1975; Jammu & Kashmir in 1976; Gujarat, Goa, Daman & Diu, and Tripura in 1978; Nagaland in 1979; Maharashtra and Meghalaya in 1980; and, finally, Madhya Pradesh in 1981. The rate of the so-called "pensions" is a lot lower than the minimum wages; and certainly to meager to secure a basic living for the needy (Goel and Jain, 1988: 301-02; Chowdhry, 1985: 95-97).

Worthwhile to note is also the highly diverse structure of state authorities (at State Government level) that are in charge of old-age

assistance schemes (cf Jagannadham, 1967; Goel and Jain, 1988: 149-92). In Andhra Pradesh, Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Punjab, and Rajasthan there is a *Department of Social Welfare* that is responsible for running these old-age assistance schemes. In Himachal Pradesh, it is the *Directorate of Social Welfare*; in Nagaland the *Directorate of Social Security and Welfare*; in Gujarat the *Department of Social Welfare and Tribal Development (Directorate of Social Defense)*; in Lakshadweep the *Department of Social Welfare and Culture*; in Uttar Pradesh the *Department of Labor Welfare*; in Bihar the *Department of Labor and Employment*; in Tripura the *Department of Education (Directorate of Social Welfare and Social Education)*; in West Bengal the *Relief and Social Welfare Department (Welfare Branch)*; in Goa and Daman & Diu the *Institute of Public Assistance*, in Maharashtra the *Housing and Special Assistance Department*; in Orissa the *Community Development and Rural Construction Department*; in Jammu & Kashmir and Karnataka the *Finance Department*; and in Kerala and Tamil Nadu the *Revenue Department*.<sup>6</sup>

It becomes clear that the Department of Social Welfare of the Central Government only provides initiative and leadership to the respective government authorities in charge of social welfare, and serves mainly as a clearinghouse of information and forum for exchange of ideas and very general policy guidelines. Furthermore, it administers certain central and centrally sponsored schemes, and it deals with matters related to interstate welfare problems (cf Rath, 1978: 227).

In the field of health care, we see also great differences in the administration, as well as the number and scope of health care policies implemented. When looking at the level of spending of different State

governments, it becomes clear that those states with highest levels of poverty and population explosion—namely Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh—are spending a great deal on health care programs than in the rest of India. The respective levels of per capita spending are RPS 9.61, 11.73, and 17.05, against a national average of RPS 19.91 per capita health care spending. Other—however positively—outstanding examples are Punjab, Maharashtra, and Kerala; with a per capita spending of RPS 25.69, 25.34, and 25.20 in the year 1979/1980. The overall focus on health care provision of the Indian welfare system was decreasing over time, from 3.3 percent of government outlays between 1951 and 1956 (during the First Five-Year Plan) to 1.9 percent between 1980 and 1985 (during the Sixth Five-Year Plan) (cf Banjeri, 1985: 40-41).

The here displayed disparities of social welfare provision between different federal states of India are not to be explained by differences in economic development. Kerala is, in no doubt, the leader among all states on the Indian Subcontinent with regard to achievements in social development. The federal state of Kerala, for example, achieved a total fertility rate of 1.8 (against the worst result, that is, Uttar Pradesh with a total fertility rate of 4.8) in 2000; with a relatively low percentage of the population living below the poverty line, that is, 25.4 percent (compared to 55 percent in Bihar and 48.6 percent in Orissa) in 1993-1994; with the highest percentage of literate female population, that is 86.2 percent (compared to 20.4 percent in Rajasthan, 22.9 in Bihar, and 25.3 in Uttar Pradesh) by the end of the 1990s; and the lowest proportion of child workers in the population (cf GOI, 2000b, c, d; Ramachandran, 2000). The experience of Kerala has shown that—though being a relative poor and economically disadvantaged federal state in comparison (with e.g. a

high rate of unemployment)—it is possible to protect its people against extreme destitution and hardships (cf Ghai, 2000).

Table 1

Kerala in Comparison with other Indian States: Total Fertility Rate (2000), Population Below Poverty Line in Percent (1993-1994), and Female Literacy in Percent (2000)

Selected States	Total Fertility Rate	Population Below Poverty Line	Female Literacy
<b>Kerala</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>86.2</b>
Tamil Nadu	2	35	51.3
Andhra Pradesh	2.5	22.2	32.7
Karnataka	2.5	33.2	44.3
West Bengal	2.6	35.7	46.6
Punjab	2.7	11.8	50.4
Maharashtra	2.7	36.9	52.3
Gujarat	3	24.2	48.6
Orissa	3	48.6	34.7
Assam	3.2	40.9	43.0
Madhya Pradesh	4	42.5	28.9
Rajasthan	4.2	27.4	20.4
Bihar	4.4	55	22.9
Uttar Pradesh	4.8	40.9	25.3

Sources: Government of India (2000b), 'Population and Human & Social Development: Socio-economic Indicators'; Government of India (2000c), 'Population and Human & Social Development: Demographic Indicators'; Government of India (2000d), 'Selected Socio-economic Statistics, India, 1998'.

Broad-scale social security and assistance schemes for the Indian population at large are a dream for still quite some time—even now at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century—the relevant provisions of the Constitution, can be understood, thus, as a general direction for policy makers, to establish a more comprehensive welfare system. However, more than half a decade has passed since the implementation of the 1950 constitution, and India was proud to have, by and large, a “socialist-oriented” ideology. The extensive national of a great number of industries (including e.g. the life insurance industry) are the direct consequence of the overall socialist-oriented leadership of India.

While Mahatma Gandhi was changing Indian social history with his social reform movements between 1920 and 1948, PM Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and his daughter, PM Indira Gandhi (and to some extent also her son, PM Rajiv Gandhi) put forward, especially policies of nationalization of a wide range of industries. The massive efforts of the Indian leadership, above all the Congress Party, of the late 1940s and early 1950s to accomplish the erection of an Indian welfare state system—though residual in nature, and greatly limited to the clientele of government employees and workers in semi-governmental industries—were successful, and, then, continuously extended in the decades thereafter, especially in the field of population/family planning, but also with regard to health care, employment, nutrition, and social assistance.

### Development and Non-Development of the Indian Welfare System: Some Political Explanations

The development of the Indian welfare system, as Drèze and Sen

(1999: 375-76) point out rightly, is not only dependent on government action, but also on that of the general public, which in return can be “particularly important in promoting the positive functions of the government,” such as the provision of public services in social security, health care, child immunization, primary education, and rural infrastructure. Drèze and Sen, furthermore, note that the vigilance and involvement of the public—which, of course, includes social reformers, social movements and the media—can be “quite crucial not only in ensuring an adequate expansion of these essential services but also in monitoring their functioning” (1999: 376).

The modern Indian nation—besides the continuing ramifications of former British rule—has to be thankful, on the one hand, for all the good things that exist in India today to the Gandhi/Nehru dynasty and, thus, the Congress Party (which was highly dependent on the Gandhi/Nehru family until the 1990s and beyond, cf Brass, 1994: 73), and, on the other hand, may blame them for all the bad things, or the things that do not work, or work unsatisfactory at the same time (Priyadarshi, 2000). This is certainly a harsh critique seen from the eye of a person that is not particularly familiar with the history and the successes and failures of present-day India. But, when seen from a greater historical perspective, and especially with the understanding of a political scientist, this sharp comment may contain a lot of truthful bits and pieces.

An earlier study of the author (2002a) on success and failure of population policies in India from 1947 to the present, also pointed at the fateful historical and political circumstances of India at the time of independence, where the historical compromise of Nehru to pacify and integrate the remaining Muslims in the newly-established Indian nation

(after the split of British India into the Indian Union and Pakistan, i.e. including Bangladesh that was formerly known as Eastern Pakistan) led to a misfortunate constellation of state authorities and respective their powers, which had been laid down in the constitution of the new Indian republic in 1950 (cf Kamal and Meyer, 1977: 83-86).

While Nehru fought for a heavily centralized administration of new India, the Muslim League—which worried about the security and self-rule under majoritarian Hindu rule—pushed for a much more decentralized form of government. The result of which is that politics in India, in general, are centrally planned, but—especially with regard to economic and social policy making—and rely on the assistance of governments of each federal state (who of course are often governed by different and opposing political factions and parties). Thus, it was Nehru's vision of a centrally planned and governed state and the subsequent compromise between this vision and sociopolitical reality of the multifaceted Indian society, with its numerous social, religious, lingual, and ethnic cleavages.

Nehru's vision of a strong, central state is not an unusual one for societies with developing economies. South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, for example, all have experienced decades of single-party, authoritarian rule; one of which, Singapore, has, in fact, become one of the world's leading economies, and it seems Singaporean, for the time being are rather satisfied with what they have got. In India, history thought of a very distinct path of socio-political development:

The politics of India, of course, seen from a more narrow perspective, is highly related to the birth of the Indian nation, for and in which Mahatma Gandhi<sup>7</sup> and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru played a central role.

Both Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi fought against imperial rule, starting in 1919 and 1920 respectively. The manifold sufferings and endless efforts of these two leaders of the independence movement in point of fact led to the establishment of the Indian Union in 1947, and the Republic of India in 1950. The roots of Indian nationalism—and, hence, that of the Indian independence movement—reach back into the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after the British East India Company exerted full control over India for the first time in 1850.<sup>8</sup>

The political outcome of the constitutional compromise of the year 1950 has, indeed, had long-standing and far-reaching consequences in the field of social and economic policy making. While Indian planners—who were located in various departments and agencies of the central government in New Dehli—recognized the stringent need for tackling problems such as unemployment, malnutrition, social justice, universal health services, housing, and environmental protection, state governments and their subordinated departments and agencies were not directly under the control of those planning agencies. In a great deal of cases of policy implementations, local governments opposed the policies of the central government, and their policy planning agencies, due to general political power struggle between different parties and faction that ruled India on national and federal state level (cf Banjeri, 1985; Kamal and Meyer, 1977; Das, 1991; Kohli, 1991; and Narang, 1996).

India is a country that is composed of dozens of different political entities that are loosely connected via the Constitution of the Republic of India. The ill-assorted and rather intricate relationship between the Central Government and State Governments; the President and State

Governors, and the State Governors and the State Parliaments (which are directly elected by the people), imposes great restraints for policy-making capacities of the central government (cf CRI, 2002).

Centrally devised policies, as a consequence, were least likely to be implemented in a rather swiftly, and in universal form. Varying policy successes across the federal states of the Subcontinent provide clear evidence for the impact of different political set-ups and policy compromises and interpretations on state government level, especially with regard to policy implementation. Only when financial offers or restraints were at the Prime Minister's disposal could the central government be reasonably sure of cooperation from the side of state governments (cf Kamal and Meyer, 1977: 86).

The political landscape of India is as multifaceted as that of all of Europe together, with strongholds of communists in the East (West Bengal) and the South (Kerala); with Muslim strongholds in Assam (25 percent of population), Kerala (24 percent), West Bengal (20 percent), Uttar Pradesh (17 percent), Jammu & Kashmir (16 percent), and Bihar (16 percent) (against a national average of 12 percent) (cf GOI, 2000c); and with strong lingual and ethnic cleavage between the Indians in the North, largely speaking languages that belong to the Indo-European/Indo-Germanic language family, and the Indians in the South who speak Dravidian languages.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, there is no unitary national language in India. English is only spoken by some 2 percent of the population; Hindi is spoken by only about 40 percent of the population. All together, there are 24 national languages and scripts in today's India. Thus, the political discourse—and, thus, also the cultural and societal exchange—is highly fragmented all across the Indian

subcontinent.

## Conclusion

The cleavage-based political framework of post-Independence India has, hence, produced a unique political setting in which social policy making was made a great deal more lengthy and thorny, than in most countries of the developed Western world. Functional theories that explain the relative absence of welfare state institutions in "Third World" countries with their comparative socio-economic backwardness cannot explain the striking differences of welfare state development in e.g. Mainland China and India, from the late 1940s onwards. The author here found that conflict theories, especially the state-centered/institutional school, that are based on numerous political and socio-political parameters are, indeed, capable of explaining the striking gap between policy efforts and policy outcomes in the case of India, as well as in any other countries, wherever they may occur (cf Aspalter, 2002c).

## References

- Aspalter, Christian (2002a). "Population Policy in India." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. Vol. 22(11), pp.48-72.
- Aspalter, Christian (2002b). *Democratization and Welfare State Development in Taiwan*. Ashgate: Aldershot, UK.
- Aspalter, Christian (2002c). "Discovering Old and New Shores in Welfare State Theory", in C. Aspalter (ed.), *Discovering the Welfare State in East Asia*. Praeger: Westport, CT.
- Bajpai, Ranjana (1992). *Society in India*. S. Chand & Company: New Dehli.
- Banjeri, Debabar (1985). *Health and Family Planning Services in India: An Epidemiological, Socio-Cultural, and Political Analysis and a Perspective*. Lok Paksh: New Dehli.
- Barura, N. (1995). *Social Security and Labour Welfare in India*. New Dehli.
- Brass, Paul R. (1994). *The Parties and Politics of India*. Cambridge University Press: New Dehli.
- Chowdhry, Paul D. (1985). *Profile of Social Welfare and Development in India*. M.N. Publishers: New Dehli.
- CRI, Constitution of the Republic of India (2002). [www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/in00000\\_.html](http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/in00000_.html).
- Das, Hari Hara (1991). *India: Democratic Government and Politics*. Himalaya Publishing House, Mumbai, India.
- Drèze, Jean and Sen, Armatya (1999). "Public Action and Social Inequality", in B. Harris-White and S. Subramanian (eds.), *Illfare in India: Essays on India's Social Sector in Honor of S. Guhan*. Sage: New Dehli.
- Ghai, Dharam (2000). "Some Lessons from Successful Experiences", in D.

- Ghai (ed.), *Social Development and Public Policy: A Study of Some Successful Experiences*. Macmillan: London.
- Goel, S.L. and Jain, R.K. (1988). *Social Welfare Administration: Volume 2, Organisation and Working*. Deep & Deep: New Dehli.
- Government of India, GOI (2000b). *Population and Human & Social Development: Socio-Economic Indicators*. Health, Nutrition & Family Welfare Division, Planning Commission, GOI: New Dehli.
- Government of India, GOI (2000c). *Population and Human & Social Development: Demographic Indicators*. Health, Nutrition & Family Welfare Division, Planning Commission, GOI: New Dehli.
- Government of India, GOI (2000d). *Selected Socio-Economic Statistics, India, 1998*. Central Statistics Organization, Department of Statistics and Program Implementation, Ministry of Planning and Program Implementation, GOI: New Dehli.
- Jagannadham, V. (1967). *Social Welfare Organisation*. The Indian Institute of Public Administration: New Dehli.
- Kamal, K.L. and Meyer, Ralph C. (1977). *Democratic Politics in India*. Vikas Publishing: New Dehli.
- Kohli, Atul (1991). *Democracy and Discontent, India's Growing Crisis of Governability*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.
- Kurz, Sonja (2001). "Indien: Soziale Sicherung für Alle?", in Johannes Jäger et al. (eds.), *Sozialpolitik in der Peripherie*. Brandes & Apsel / Südwind: Frankfurt a.M., Germany, pp.159-176.
- Nagaraj, K. (1999). "Labour Market Characteristics and Employment Generation Programmes in India," in B. Harris-White and S. Subramanian (eds.), *Illfare in India: Essays on India's Social Sector in Honor of S. Guhan*. Sage: New Dehli.
- Narang, S.N. (1996). *Indian Government and Politics*. Gitanjali Publishing: New Dehli.

- Natarajan, S. (1959). *A Century of Social Reform in India*. Asia Publishing: New Dehli.
- O'Neil, Biswas (1985). *From Justice to Welfare*. Intellectual Publishing House: New Dehli.
- Priyadarshi, Praveen; interview with (2000). Dept. of Political Science, University of Dehli, New Dehli, August.
- Ramachandran, V.K. (2000). "A Case Study of Kerala," in D. Ghai (ed.), *Social Development and Public Policy: A Study of Some Successful Experiences*. Macmillan: London.
- Rath, Sharda (1978). *Centre-State Relations in the Field of Social Services: 1950-70*. Oriental Publishers: New Dehli.
- Wadhawan, S.K. (1989). *Social Security for Workers in the Informal Sector in India—A Study of Programmes Implemented by Central and State Governments*. ILO: New Dehli.

<sup>1</sup> Which was greatly restricted in scope covering only government employees and railway workers (cf Rath, 1978: 219).

<sup>2</sup> As of 1985 (cf Chowdhry, 1985: 287).

<sup>3</sup> Which empowered the appropriate government to fix minimum rates of wages payable to employees in industries specified in the respective schedule.

<sup>4</sup> Amended in 1960 and 1962.

<sup>5</sup> As of 1985 (cf Chowdhry, 1985: 291).

<sup>6</sup> As of 1985 (cf Chowdhry, 1985: 291).

<sup>7</sup> Literally meaning "Great Soul" Gandhi, which is a honorary name; his birth name was, however, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948).

<sup>8</sup> The British Empire took over the rule of India in the year 1857.

<sup>9</sup> The Dravidian people originally came from Northwestern India who moved to Southern India after the arrival of the "Indo-Germans/Indo-Aryer" that come from the river *Oxus* ("Amu-Darja") in today's Uzbekistan. Another stream of immigrants from the same area migrated to parts of Northern and Central Europe. The term "Aryer" has been misused and, in fact, abused by the horrifying Nazi Regime in Germany in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which constructed a terrible

"race theory" that led to the systematic killings of at least 5 to 6 millions people of Jewish origin, as well as so many gypsies, and those people resisting the Nazi Regime. Each "race theory" is, by its very nature, completely arbitrary, and completely senseless. As a matter of fact, there are no races, just different mixes and blends of one *humankind*! Originally, the term "Aryer" in Ancient India meant a "class of people that were devoted to religious services", in a way a term referring to the "upper class" of Ancient India. The actual origins of members of this "upper class" are manifold, coming from Iran, Central Asia, or elsewhere (cf e.g. O'Neil, 1985).

# 印度國家與社會福利 制度之形成

龍天祥

香港大學社會工作與社會行政系助理教授

## 中文摘要

這篇論文主要是西元 2000 年在新德里一個月研究經驗的結果。文中一方面提出國家的建立與政府運作的關係，以及當今印度的社會福利制度形成。同時——且是較重要的——作者看出在印度，國家與相對缺乏、失敗的社會政策之關聯性。

在這篇論文中，作者利用一種政治的、歷史制度的方法來探究印度福利制度成敗的決定因素。文中推論出 1950 年憲法妥協的政治結果、國家中彼此毫不相讓之社會、語言、宗教和文化的分歧，事實上是社會政策的遲緩、失敗和相對不足的主要原因，並導致目前印度福利制度的結果。

關鍵字：印度政治和國家的建立，政治制度，憲法妥協，甘地大聖人，尼赫魯總理，社會運動，階級制度，社會改革，社會政策，社會政策的管理，社會安全，福利制度，國家中心的/制度福利的國家理論。