



Mains Practice Question

Q. A welfare state is based on the principles of equality of opportunity and equitable distribution of wealth. Comment. (150 words)

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Approach

- Define the concept of the welfare state.
- Explain how the concept of the welfare state is imbibed in the Indian constitution.
- Give examples of policies and schemes that provide for the welfare state in India.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

- The welfare state is a concept of government in which the state plays a key role in the protection and promotion of the economic and social well-being of its citizens. It provides a social security net which may include education, housing, sustenance, healthcare etc. Without ensuring equality of opportunity and equitable distribution of wealth, the welfare of the marginalised and deprived sections of society cannot be ensured.

Body

- India at the dawn of the independence inherited several economic (chronic poverty) and social challenges, for example, vulnerable sections of the society such as women, Dalits, children were deprived of basic means of living.
- In this context, the Indian Constitution imbibes the concept of the welfare state, which can be depicted in the form of Fundamental Rights and the other as Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP).
- Fundamental rights sought to implement political equality and Directive Principles of State Policy sought to implement socio-economic equality.
- In pursuance of this, the Indian state has provided many schemes and policies. For example:
 - Enforcing Article 16(4) the government can provide for reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class that is not adequately represented in the state services.
 - In pursuance of Article 21A, the Parliament enacted the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009.
 - This Act seeks to provide that every child has a right to be provided full-time elementary education.
 - The Maternity Benefit Act (1961) and the Equal Remuneration Act (1976) have been made to protect the interests of women workers.
 - Schemes like Ayushman Bharat, Jal Jeevan Mission, Saubhagya scheme etc. are all steps towards fulfilling the mandate of the welfare state.

Conclusion

The welfare state is the mandate of any mature democracy. Therefore, both citizenry and government

should strive to make society more inclusive and equitable. While equality of opportunity provides all the sections of the society a level playing field, equitable distribution of wealth empowers them to maximise their productivity and contribution in society. Government schemes like Stand Up India, Start Up India, Jan Dhan Yojana and policies like land reform policies, reservations for the marginalised sections in job opportunities are some of the steps being taken by the government in this direction to ensure equitable distribution of wealth and to provide equality of opportunity.

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