

Origination And Characteristics Of The Welfare State

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Abstract

The welfare is derived from mercy “Rahma”. Welfare and good will are synonymous. Allah says: *وما أرسلناك إلا رحمة للعالمين الأنبياء*” The sending of the Holy Prophet (SAW) aimed the welfare of all mankind. The Prophet (SAW) defined his Deen as the betterment saying that: *الدين النصيحة*. Before migration to Medina all the Muslims were advised to seek good will for the people and bear the hardships if any which result an Islamic welfare state at Medina. This state was the initiative towards a peaceful world which was the dream of Hazrat Ibrahim (A. S) “ *رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ* “, *”أَهْلُهُ مِنَ التَّمْرَاتِ*”, this verse refers to a welfare state where peace and economy grown up best. Ironically, welfare must be understood in its general and comprehensive meaning that includes all aspects of human life. The objective of Shari'ah, as far as people are concerned, is five-fold: The protection of their religion, life, mind, offspring, and property. Thus everything that implies promoting these five things is Maslahah (interest) and everything that implies harming them is Mafsadah (harm).” The Holy Prophet (SAW) for the first time established brotherhood among the residents of Medina. They promised to protect the city from invaders and respect each other. Helping the poor and needy, improving the literacy by establishing the Suffa and literating the Muslim children by Non Muslims prisoners shows that good will, helping the needy, tolerance, literating commons, economic growth and establishing the peace are the objectives of a welfare state. The purpose of this article must be construed to as somewhat ambitious.

Key words: Welfare, mercy, peace, good will.

Origination and characteristics of the welfare state

The welfare is derived from mercy "Rahma". The concept of a welfare state goes back to first organized human society with different norms accordingly. Origin of life as per the Quranic directives possible only when the climate became pleasant for all living things as narrated in the Holy Quran: "أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَⁱ إِنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَⁱ" Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them and made from water every living thing? Then will they not believe?" Similarly on another occasion it is stated as: "And He placed وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبَارَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَاتَهَاⁱⁱ on the earth firmly set mountains over its surface, and He blessed it and determined therein its [creatures'] sustenance". The name "رحمن" for Allah is repeatedly used in the Holy Quran which refers to the welfare and benefiting for all living things in this world. To maintain this balanced and well proportioned environment both materially and spiritually for all living things Allah used to send special persons which were called Messengers or "Rosul". The last and latest personality was Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) along with code of life i.e Quran and termed his sending as welfare and mercy for all creature as narrated: "وما أرسلناك إلا رحمة للعالمين"ⁱⁱⁱ

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) defined his Deen as the betterment:

Islam revolves round the betterment and welfare of human which means that الدين النصيحة^{iv} beings and animals too both for this world and after world. Allama Hamad bin Muhammad Khattabi (388 A.H) and Allama Maarzi almaliki(536 A.H) defining the word "النصيحة" as the encyclopedia of good will and beneficiary activities like purifying the Honey from other liquids and sewing of clothes from being torn out to hide one's body.^v

As far as the welfare state terminology is so commonly used by the west and European countries that they are the pioneer of the so called welfare state concept and they have adopted some virtues of their own culture. But really the matter is not so and the Muslims and Islam are the real pioneers of welfare state concept which is far better from the current welfare state authorities.

The liberal west premised the welfare state upon the philosophical assumptions that the individual welfare cannot be entrusted alone. The welfare policies came out after World War II in the west. They continued today in some form or fashion, but these policies are gradually atrophying even from west since the early 1990s when Europe and America experienced their first cultural revolution that promoted social welfareism. During this period the main concern was that the state should assumed responsibility to protect the people from abject poverty through unemployment benefit, health care, free education by raising taxes to enough these needs. A western scholar W.H. Beveridge's coined famous term that the state should provide for the welfare of its citizens from "cradle to grave".^{vi}

Even though these countries have done much for the welfare of their citizens but in fact the welfare of some still on destitution of others on global level because the western countries have plundered the resources of the nations of Asia and Africa. Describing these welfare practices Noam Chomsky narrated in his famous work as "Prosperous few and the restless Many".^{vii}

The welfare state concept of the west increasingly led to the dissolution of family system and other social problems relating to children upbringing and culturalization and old age family members etc. In such a scenario, societies within welfare states may eventually experience a tragic ending of the truths of the modern era.

In case of the matter concern to non western and Muslim countries, they blindly copying the west without evaluating critically the down side of modern economics and politics which hurting and damaging the other poor and developing countries and their nations. They are poised to beat the west in their own game.

Keeping in view the origination of welfare state, it is crystal clear that the Western and European countries have ultimately borrowed the basic concept of Islamic welfare state and their values since second world war resulting their material life prosperous and economical. On the other hand most of the Muslim countries and nations have considered the welfare state only adopted by the west and have less trend to look their own Islamic background and their sources. This is causing their valued life westernized.

Islam is quite capable of giving an alternative paradigm in conjunction with other wisdom traditions. The fact that Muslim today do not have a west like welfare is not due to Islam but due some political reasons. In its wider concept it explore the essence and potential of the Islamic Welfare state. Heuristics models of Islamic welfare state have provided insights into the influences of religion upon different kinds of welfare states, but no model exists by which specifically to understand Islamic welfare traditions.

First we take a look of Muslim perspective of welfare in the light of Quran and life of Holy Prophet and his successors.

The welfare, betterment, mercy or word falah (فلاح) and rahma (رحمة) is replete in the Holy Quran, without which there will be no justice in the society. However the Islamic concept of welfare is not the same as idea of modern welfarism. Islam stresses welfare and good will. This article explain the Islamic tradition of Zakat, its significance is one of the central pillar of the Muslim faith and the principles through which it addresses the relief of poverty and the redistribution of wealth. The Holy Quran exalts:

" إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَمِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمَوْلَاةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَرَمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ^{viii}"

"The alms(Zakat) is only for the poor, and the needy, and those who collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and to free the captives and for the debtors and for the cause of Allah, and for the wayfarers."

On the other occasion narrated in the Holy Quran:

"قَلِيلٌ وَ لِلرَّسُولِ وَ لِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ۚ كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنْكُمْ" ^{ix}

"It is for Allah and His Messenger, and for the near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer that it become not commodity between the rich among you."

Although it is not a crime to be rich or to be poor as long as one's means are noble and he is destitute of laziness and concupiscence of soul. However hoarding of wealth, its congealment in to fewer hands and high income disparity among members of society is not accommodated in the Islamic tradition. Very high income differential may give rise to envy, jealousy and resentment that destroy the human soul and the desired society. The Quran encourages charitable giving in order to ensure collective welfare and condemn the others.

" الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ " ^x

"Who has gathered wealth and counted it. He thinks that his wealth will make him last forever"

Quran admonishes humans:

" لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ بِينَ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ " ^{xi}

"Never will you attained righteousness unless you spend for the cause of God out of what you cherish, and whatever you spend is known to God."

Accordingly the Holy Prophet Ahadith and his life along with his successor's authorities reflect the welfare state betterly. The Holy Prophet has said: "Allah has made zakat obligatory upon the Muslims. It is to be collected from wealthy among you and to be distributed among the needy ones." ^{xii}

Similarly it is also narrated by the Holy Prophet:"the state is the guardian who has no other guardian."

As a state head of Medina he stated:"When y one dies in debt or leaves behind dependents unprovoked for, the later should come to me because I am their guardian. If anybody dies while he owes a debt and does not leave behind any property for its payment then responsibility for its payment is mine (as head of the state). But any one leaves any property behind, it is for his heirs.

^{xiii}

Islam urge for welfare activities for human beings and animals too through zakat and other charitable expending of wealth. While having fasting during Ramazan aimed to feel the need of needy persons due to which rich one help the poor for their welfare and they are honored by the poor in return.

During the first decade of Islam the Holy Prophet troubled for the everlasting welfare of people without any expectation in future from them which result an Islamic welfare state at Medina. This state was the initiative for a peaceful world.

The welfare state of Medina tied the inhabitants for historical brotherhood and establishing peace. All the sects were given freedom of worship as their basic human right.

Later on the reign of first four caliph specially and some other commonly worked for the betterment of all human beings.

Characteristics of a welfare state

1:- Equal Rights of citizens : All the human beings have some basic equal rights irrespective of cast, creed, color, nationality and sex. A welfare state has its foremost duty of providing these rights equally to every citizen. Islam seeks to establish such a society where all citizens of the state enjoy equal rights. Islamic law holds both Muslims and non-Muslims equal and no superiority or privilege is given to the Muslims on any ground. The history of Islam is replete with such examples. Once, a Muslim, who was accused of killing a non-Muslim, was presented in the court of Hazrat Ali (ra). The evidence supported the accusation. When Hazrat Ali ordered the Muslim to be killed by way of qisas, the relatives of the murderer made the brother of the killed forgive by paying him the compensation money. When the Caliph came to know of it, he asked, "Perhaps these people may have coerced you into saying so." To this, he replied in the negative, saying that the killing would not bring his brother back. Since they were paying him blood money, it would help the family financially to some extent. The Caliph agreed to the deal but added that the principle underlying the functioning of his government was "the blood of those of our non-Muslim subjects is equal to our blood and his blood money is like our blood money."^{xiv}

2:- Provision of food: A welfare state must provide such opportunities by which every citizen may get their nutrient easily and accordingly to their need. If someone is unable to get the food by himself due to disability, aged one or underage, the state may provide the same on priority base. The life of the Holy Prophet as an evidence shows that he would feed the hungry even he has to go without food for so many days. He (PBUH) always directed his followers to feed the slaves as they eat themselves and clothe them with such clothes as they wear themselves. Any one facing starvation will be asked from head of the state.

3:- Freedom of worship: Every citizen has the right of worship according to his own view and creed. A welfare state must guard the individuals to perform their religious activities without any interference by someone else. Islam ordains people to worship Allah Almighty but it does not coerce followers of other religions to accept Islam and change their creed. Invitation to truth and use of coercion are mutually exclusive realities. The Holy Quran has communicated the Islamic message of truth in these words: "(O Glorious Messenger!) Invite towards the path of your Lord with strategic wisdom and refined exhortation and (also) argue with them in a most decent manner. Surely your Lord knows him well who strayed away from His path and He also knows well the rightly guided."^{xv}

4: Education: As per the UNO Human Rights article 26, everyone has the right to get education. Education shall be free at least at elementary stages. Education shall be compulsory. Technical education shall be available generally. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) arranged educating the Muslim children by the non-Muslim prisoners in return of freedom on the eve of Ghazw e Badar.^{xvi}

Similarly establishing Suffa is great example of educating the citizens by the state.

5:- Employment: It is the responsibility of a welfare state to provide opportunities of working job accordingly. Provision of food in the form of job and business will lead the citizens to live a happy life.

6:- Health and shelter: Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health. Protection from deadly diseases and provision of equal opportunities for curing of ill people with at least expenses. Similarly housing schemes are to be launched to provide shelters to citizen on low cost.

7: Old age, disable and unemployed benefit: The old aged citizens are to be supported in every sort of life because they spent their lives in serving the state. Similarly disable members need for help. While unemployed and children must give stipends by a welfare state so that they may not be load for others.

8:- Security: The welfare state must bring peace in the country and to provide security and protection to the honor of every citizen. In the current era it most obviously clear that only those states are welfare whose provision of security is all ok.

Conclusion:

Welfare state survive almost in every human society with some different norms. Good will and betterment to human beings is always planned priority by Allah when this universe was to be born. Fertility of soil, water and normality of climate all these things resulting a welfare and pleasant environment to mankind, animals and even to plants. Disturbance of this balanced phenomena is considered unlawful and prohibited for true followers of Allah.

All the messengers of Allah were the real well wishers of human beings both in this life and life after death. Our Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) always helped the poor and needy irrespective of their religion. He remained kind to animals too and prohibited his followers from contaminating the water, wasting water or cutting trees which result danger to living things.

All possible steps were taken by great caliphs of Islam during their reign by protecting them from any invaders, providing shelter, food and scholarships for old aged people and unemployed persons.

After World War II, the Western and European countries are trying to establish welfare states with full swing from other one so that credit goes the prosperous nation. Similarly developing countries like Pakistan, Turkey and Malaysia also copying the west and Europe blindly in establishing the welfare state. But this should be kept in mind that Islamic Principles of welfare run counter to the modern theory and practices of welfare because the latter is not rooted best as the earlier one.

Keeping both theories of welfare state, some common characteristics of welfare state are:

Security provision to the citizens, keeping peace and harmony among them, providing food easily, free education, health care, freedom of worship, freedom of expression and job opportunities to all citizen equally irrespective of cast, religion and color.

References

ⁱAl Quran, Anbiya:30

ⁱⁱAl Quran, Al Safaat:10

ⁱⁱⁱAl Quran, Anbiya:107

^{iv}Imam Muslim, Saheeh Muslim, Hadith:555

^vAl Asqalani, Ibn E Hajar, Fath-ul-Baari, Vol: 1,P36

^{vi} Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill & Bryan Turner, Dictionary of Sociology, Penguin Suffolk, UK,1988, P.269.

^{vii} Noam Chomsky and Barsamian, The Prosperous Few and the restless Many, USA, Odonian Press 1933.

^{viii}Al Quran, Al Toba:60.

^{ix}Al Quran, Al Hashr:7.

^xAl Quran, Humaza:2-3

^{xi}Al Quran, Al Imran:92.

^{xii}Imam Muslim, Saheeh Muslim, Hadith:573.

^{xiii}Imam Bukhari, Saheeh Bukhari, Hadith:755.

^{xiv}Imam Abu Yousaf, Kitab Ul Khiraj,P:187.

^{xv}Al Quran, Al Nahal:125.

^{xvi}Imam Ahmad Bin Hambal, Musnad Ahmad, Hadith:2216