THE CONCEPT OF WELFARE STATE
WITH REFERENCE TO INDIA
(With Special Reference To Ancient Indian Texts)

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I certify that this work is
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INTRODUCTION
In India, more than in any other country, the views of the ancient thinkers are found to be the theoretical basis that influenced the social life of individuals. More than two centuries ago, the people of the East India Company understood this characteristic of the Indian society and realized that they could not rule India successfully unless they acquired some knowledge of India's past. The measure-ment initiated by the authorities of East India Company has led to the growth of the study of indology. Although at inception it carried some political motive, in no time purely academic interests dominated the study. Many Western scholars of these days had taken up the study of indology with unparalleled zeal. The major contribution of these Western thinkers lies in the systematization, translation and interpretation of the ancient Indian texts - the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Bhāratavācchana, Brāhmaṇas, the great epic of India, the Kāvyas and Mahābhārata, Arthasastra, Hitopadeśa, dramas, stories and several others. A knowledge of these treatises gradually came into public focus. The above texts were originally written in Sanskrit. There was a major break through in the understanding of these texts, when the translations of these texts along with interpretations were put within the reach of the educated society. This task was stupendous. It is the dedicated service of several Westerners that accomplished this. Many of these

scholars who pulsated the true nature of the ancient Indian thinking were all appreciation for India’s past. The intellectual achievements and spiritual attainments of India’s past evinced the admiration of those scholars. Such was the admiration of Rümel, a German indologist for Indian culture, that in his introduction to Reynor’s book ‘On the Cultural History of Nations’, he wrote, ‘The cultural history of mankind is of great interest to that kind-hearted nation which is the creator of no harmful, yet many a beneficial art, the Hindu nation. Everything that transpires to their realm is inherent in a magic spell to make us more virtuous and more modest’. This recognition on the part of the Western scholars became evident in the last century. It was Max Müller, the great German indologist, who gave a powerful stimulus to both English and German indology by his translation of the holy scriptures of India which reflect her spiritual life. Max Müller had put his heart and soul into this work and made it the best contribution of his life. He viewed India as paradise on earth. He said, ‘If I were to search the world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow – in some parts a very paradise on earth – I should point to India. If I were asked, under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems and

1. quoted by Wilfred Nello, Germany – Veda’s Second Home, Bonn, 1906, p.1L.
has found solutions of some of them which will deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant — I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself, from what literature we here in Europe — we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of the Greeks and the Romans and of one Semitic race, the Jewish — may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life not for this only, but a transfigured and eternal life, again I should point to India. Lasell and several others arrived at such a conclusion because their ascertainment of India was based on scriptural writings. But the India of the nineteenth century presented a different picture. The practice of Sati, lifelong widowhood, child marriage and caste endogamy were prevalent in the society. These were also upheld by the orthodox religious advocates on the pretext that they were supported by the ancient scriptures. This situation drew the attention of a few nationalists who deeply felt the contrast between the rising industrial society of the West and the decaying society of India. They also felt that the above practices were inhuman and brutal. There cannot be any doubt as regards the strong influence exerted by the scholars of the Western world on this group of educated intellectuals. This is one of the chief causes for the rise of reformers in this aspect. Since these practices were said

1. India What can It Teach Us? F.G.
to have derived their sanction from the sacred scriptures and didactic literature of the same period, the reformers began to show that these practices did not enlist any support from the scriptures. Trouble started at this point. Those texts which constituted the main source for the social history of ancient India contained mutually contradictory statements on several aspects of social life. The reformers picked out and focussed light on the passages which supported their case. Their opponents reassorted their point of view on the strength of a few other passages. This situation became insurmountable when isolated statements of those texts were taken in support of each one’s view.

Ivan renounced scholars have succumbed to this temptation and fanatically searched for modern concepts in ancient Indian thought. The result is that they found prototypes of several modern concepts such as democracy¹ and socialism², institutions like assembly³, theories like social contract⁴, and the like. Since about three decades some scholars have been tracing welfare state ideas in the ancient Indian polity. Many of them referred to ancient India as a Welfare State⁵.

Those findings were not only questioned, but their opposites were brought to light by a few other scholars⁶.

1. M.V. Patwardhan, Marx; The ideal democratic republic of India.
2. U.R. Bhawmik, Carthickal Lectures.
4. B.N. Bhawmik, op.cit.
5. A separate list is included in the Bibliography section of this thesis.
6. J. Coone; Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious point of view.
Opinions relating to the philosophical enquiries of the ancient Indians are also subjected to similar controversies. It is philosophy that enquires into the true nature of things and establishes ultimate goals for people. Hence the direction in which people proceed in determined by the ultimate goals they have set before them. A fundamental question relating to this enquiry is about the true nature of man. According to Sri Aurobindo, what were we before birth and what are we after death, are the questions, the answer of the one depending upon that of the other, which the intellect of man has yet to itself from the beginning; without even now reaching in any final solution.\(^1\)

Ancient India viewed life from a particular angle and created social institutions and concepts to accomplish the ends which it had in view. Hence it will be wrong to see the exact prototypes of the modern concepts in that society or in their idiom. Any similarity between any two institutions need not be taken as an evidence to modernity of tradition. Traditional society cannot be studied in isolation from the contemporary beliefs and convictions. It is these beliefs and convictions that shaped their society. Hence the concept of welfare State in ancient India cannot be justified without a proper understanding of the several concepts that are related to it. On account of this, the religion and

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philosophy of the ancient Indians, the development of their thought, their view of life, their basic social organisation in the form of caste system, the status of women and their role in the society and the significance of a few socio-ethical concepts have to be examined and analysed. The present study is a modest attempt to evaluate the true nature of the ideas of state in ancient India and to examine the application of the concept of welfare state to the same.

The first two chapters of this work are concerned with the religion and philosophy of ancient India. The first chapter traces the development of ancient Indian thought and evaluates the view of life it embodies. The second chapter ascertains the significance of a few fundamental concepts that lead an individual to achieve the goals of his life. In this context the true nature of the purusārthas, karma and the dharma dharmas is discussed to gain an insight into their contribution to individual's way of life. In the third chapter the organisation of society as conceived by the ancient Indians is analysed and also it is seen how the caste system as a social organisation enables the individual to pursue those duties to which he is well suited. In the fourth chapter, the status of women is evaluated by an examination of the treatment accorded to them. This chapter appears to be superfluous because it does not directly contribute to the theme of the thesis. Nevertheless the
controversy on the status of women in ancient India is unsettled. An improper knowledge of the status of women will affect our understanding of ancient Indian society. If women who constitute about half the population of any society are looked down upon, that society can never claim any achievements in the development of social philosophy. In this account a clear picture of the status of women is absolutely essential for our present study.

In the fifth chapter, ancient Indian views on the origin, development and functions of state and kingship are studied. In the sixth chapter the concept of Welfare State is elucidated. In the concluding chapter the concepts 'sudra' and 'hitam' are analysed and the relationship between the goals of the people and the ends of the state is shown. Also the identity between the ends of ancient Indian state and the fundamental assumptions of Welfare State, is seen.

The present study is confined to ancient Indian texts noted in the Bibliography section of this work under the title 'Primary Sources'. Instead the term 'Hindu' the term 'Trishupegical' is used, especially to indicate that Philosophy of six orthodox systems (adhergams) is not touched upon in this work. The Indian Philosophy reached its culmination in the Upanishads and this is evident from the philosophy of life reflected in the didactic literature of our period.