CHAPTER - 9

MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter is devoted to the main findings of the research, specifically to those from which lessons can be learnt to improve social policy and social programmes in formulation, implementation and evaluation. The findings are broadly grouped under:

   i) social policy and social programmes in Sweden
   ii) how integration, if any, is achieved between social policy and social programmes
   iii) the process of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation
   iv) the relationship between government and voluntary action in the policy and programme process.

1) Social Policy and Social Programmes in Sweden

Despite the fact that William Beveridge and Otto von Bismark initiated many welfare reforms in Great Britain and Germany respectively, Sweden emerged as the best welfare state in the world. It was possible because
Sweden borrowed welfare measures from other countries without any qualms improvised upon them and made them relevant to its needs and requirements. It is possible for other countries to do likewise provided they keep an open mind. It goes to the credit of India that like Sweden, it also has been very responsive and receptive to welfare measures as practised in different countries and incorporated them in its constitution. But, unlike Sweden, India failed in either improvising them to its needs or lacked the needed political will to implement them.

As Rome was not built in a day, welfare reforms in Sweden were introduced over a long period one by one, stage by stage. The principles which guided Sweden in its welfare efforts were a) to remain sensitive and responsive to ever changing social and economic conditions both within the country and outside and b) to bring continuous changes in its policies and programmes to keep them up-to-date in meeting the challenges posed by ever growing and complex problems. While countries like India can claim rightfully more time to reach the stage Sweden is, they certainly cannot have any excuse.
in not developing right attitude and approach towards welfare. After all, one should not forget that well begun is half done.

Of course Sweden's right intentions and approach had the backing of the favourable economic conditions which unfortunately countries like India lacked woefully. Sweden had plenty of natural resources and was one of the richest countries of the world. The cheap hydel power was a major factor in the industrial development of Sweden. Further Sweden's meagre population of about eight and a half million equivalent to Bombay's population, never was any drain, on its development. However, the lesson for both developing and developed countries is that they should learn not only to exploit their resources, but also conscientiously and conscientiously distribute the fruits of development among the different strata of society. This is what Sweden has achieved by spending as much as one third of its budget on welfare.

Sweden was also fortunate in having cultural homogeneity by way of one language, greater people's participation
through literacy and awareness and political stability due to single party ruling almost for four decades. While India can claim similar political stability, unlike Sweden, it faced married problems due to cultural diversity, lack of people's awareness and involvement. Cultural and social conditions cannot be borrowed. What is needed is to seek solutions. That is what Sweden has done and that is what other countries can do, albeit in the face of more challenging cultural and social conditions.

Moreover, India has a rich history of social reforms movement given to voluntary action. If only India decides to evolve social policies and link them to social programmes, it can make a beginning on the path already covered by Sweden. The directive principles of state policy, the fundamental rights in the Constitution of India and preamble to the various Five Year Plans indeed reflect the social policy intentions of the people through the State. Though, it should be noted that there is no mention of 'social policy' in the otherwise lengthy Constitution of India.
ii) Integration Between Social Policy and Social Programmes

Social policy is like a good intention and howsoever laudable it may be it will serve no purpose unless it is made effective through action. To Sweden goes the credit not only for evolving appropriate social policies but also for translating them into action appropriately through various social programmes. One notices a great deal of uniformity between the formulation of social policies and their implementation through various social programmes.

In India, though sizeable welfare services are offered, many of them are not related to social policies. There are policies without social programmes and vice-versa.

A comprehensive and integrated view of social policy taken in Sweden not only bridges a gap between welfare and development but also offers a balanced coverage to reformative, preventive, and curative needs of welfare. For example, in Sweden evolution of welfare policies and programmes are invariably backed by reformative social
policies and social legislations. The Swedish social policy model is equally development oriented in that it has attempted to restructure the society in some areas—the case of housing where the shift was made from private ownership to cooperative and public ownership.

In India, this is possible if only the political parties stop giving importance to personalities, caste, and religious factors and start evolving political ideologies. In order to either come in power or remain in power, political leaders resort to emotional appeals and offer short term benefits as remedial welfare rather than undertaking long-term development policies. For example, the state of Tamil Nadu boasted of the free tooth-powder supply scheme, free chappal distribution scheme, and free mid-day meals scheme to the school-going and the aged as some of the best welfare schemes. Relief materials after floods and drought are given with a lot of fanfare and publicity. In India, therefore, within the welfare policy, the residual and compensatory welfare policies overtake the redistributive welfare policies like education. Such measures in the long run create dependency syndrome on the part of people. A
week before the elections, even agricultural loans paid through public financial corporations like the Banks are waived in the name of welfare measures, thus destablishing financial institutions and thwarting the very meaning of credit-repayment philosophy. Since profering of doles in the name of welfare helps political parties to get re-elected, state and central governments continue to follow such short-term measures of welfare in the name of policies but in reality there is neither any policy nor any programme worth its name linked to or based on it. Even most reform policies introduced as social legislations are practiced more in breach.

iii) The process of Policy Formulation, Implementation and Evaluation

Evolution of any policy in Sweden owes its birth to the joint initiative of both government and voluntary action. The efforts of political parties, trade unions, cultural bodies and media play very crucial role. The policies are never exclusively decided by the Ministry. In fact, every policy decision is open to a
decentralisation of both finance and programme related powers to local bodies.

In developing countries like India, every decision is taken at the centre, with the state and the local bodies being used only to implement. Even the evaluation of services rests with the central government. Granted that India and other developing countries have not developed proper realisation at the grass-roots level and there are many forces of political and social nature which create more hurdles in development and welfare at the lower levels. Still, not to consider and implement decentralisation even upto state and district levels only shows lack of sincerity of purpose. There is a lot to learn from Sweden in this regard.

Sweden provides welfare services from cradle to grave. Schooling is compulsory for all children starting at the age of seven and nine years. The guiding principle behind the Swedish social policy is the effective utilisation and coordination of existing resources as seen very clearly from the case of health services.
In India there is constitutional provision for free and compulsory education up to the age of fourteen. However, the government claims that being a poor country it is not in a position to provide fully equipped schools. Since literacy is a key element in the eradication of ignorance and poverty, more attention needs to be given to this problem. Unfortunately, in terms of national expenditure, not even one per cent is spent on primary health and education care, whereas more villages are provided with TV facilities than potable drinking water.

The basic premise of governments in developing countries which uses poverty or low economic development of state as an alibi needs to be questioned. In health area, for instance, the issue generally revolves round the shortage of doctors in rural areas. The doctor-population ratio has come to be accepted as a standard measurement of health services and indirectly of the health of the population. The question is whether even the resources available are uniformly spread. For example, in most metropolitan cities in India, one finds that there are proportionately more health resources
than the health needs. The health resources in Bombay are proportionately more than what is available in the entire state of Maharashtra.

The problem with India and like developing countries is not the availability of resources but their equitable distribution. The irony is that whereas on the one hand government lacks the political will to implement legislation relating to land ceiling, land distribution and the Minimum Wages Act, on the other hand it goes on doling innumerable benefits under the Integrated Rural Development Programme mainly to enable the poor to float above the poverty line. No amount of investment under such programme will remove the real cause of poverty. The uniform and effective redistributive health policy and programme of Sweden is a striking example which India can well emulate in many fields including of course health.

The social policy in Sweden considers regional variations in terms of needs and population rather than dividing the resource equally among the various
geographical units. The massive integrated rural development programme can learn from this principle a great deal where in its first phase help was ensured for six hundred families living below the poverty line from each block irrespective of whether the block had any family living below the poverty line or not. Under this arrangement the most prosperous Punjab and the most backward Bihar and Orissa stood to receive the same amount as grant.

In Sweden, the principle of equality is observed in the case of housing. The ownership of houses was made more on cooperative basis. There were no special houses constructed for the under-privileged which not only pave way for the dependency syndrome but also reflect upon the users’ self-respect and self-dignity. In the case of India separate housing colonies for lower income groups no doubt therefore, have created more than one problem.

Two principles govern social welfare in Sweden the most, among others - a) the minimum standard principle which provides that no man should be below the poverty line
In India where the basic fabric of family as an institution is still intact and strong the programmes meant for children and the aged should treat family as a unit for welfare and not commit the mistake like Sweden. However, in recent years there is a greater need for institutionalised care for the aged and children found in conflict with law.

Conclusion:
In spite of certain negative effects the Swedish welfare scheme is worth emulating. On a closer examination one finds that the Swedish welfare schemes provide for individual liberty, enhanced family relationships and freedom for self-determination. The Abortion Act of 1975 provides compulsory requirement of a social worker to discuss matters of abortion with a client after the twelfth week, thus giving women help and support in a difficult situation (self determination). Children below the age of eighteen years are entitled to care, security and good upbringing by the parents who have to provide maintenance and education (strong family support). In adoption, the approval of the child is required if he is twelve years old and if below eighteen
years, the legal custodian has to agree. In the case of divorce, it is granted without stating the reasons for it as the court does not wish to examine the personal relationships between spouses. The custody of child in or out of wedlock can be transferred to the father, if the court finds this to be in the child’s best interest.

In short, the Swedish model of social policy combines developmental and welfare approaches. Its welfare policy is basically redistributive in nature. Residual welfare approach is followed in cases where family as a social institution is unable to fulfil its responsibility. Among all welfare approaches, the achievement performance approach is restrictively practised.

Thus the Swedish model of social policy indeed provides insights in offering diversified services for the well-being of citizens. Sweden no doubt has attempted to bring an integration among reform, welfare and development approaches of social policy. However, there are indications of welfare element playing a relatively
dominant role. The Swedish society is quite conscious of these developments as reflected in the current debates in Sweden both in and outside parliament.

For countries like India, the Swedish experience provides the need for a national social policy to unify the diversified social services offered under the aegis of different social programmes. However, for any social policy to be effective and fruitful the State should consider political and economic factors prevailing at macro and micro levels, the exogenous forces influencing them; the level of social, economic and cultural conditions prevailing in the country, resources at the command of the State and the capacity of the voluntary action.

A young democratic and welfare State like India can draw many useful insights from the Swedish experience. The researcher hopes that this study will provide lessons for policy makers, activists, and social workers at all levels, to weigh all aspects - the intended and unintended, positive and negative consequences of welfare policies - and help evolve comprehensive and
optimally beneficial policies. The study emphasises the need to have an integrated social policy perspective which should be linked with social programmes and the organisation of services with feedback to bring the necessary and continuous changes at the policy, planning, programme and organisational levels.