

## **WELFARE SCHOOL**

Welfare or humanistic school of thought in human geography was mainly concerned with the different aspects of social well-being of the people. These included aspects such as housing, health and education. Welfare geography is an approach to geography where the emphasis is on spatial inequality and territorial justice. Destined up with the rise of radical geography in the early 1970s, welfare geography stresses the need to identify and explain the existence of crime, hunger, poverty and other forms of discrimination and disadvantage. Welfare school in geography sought to reveal who gets what, where and how. This early work was largely descriptive and developed the abstract formulation used in welfare economics, grounding it empirically but maintaining the use of algebraic representations.

The welfare geography approach deals with the issues related to inequality and injustice. The approach grew up as a reaction to the quantitative and model-building traditions of the 1960s. In the 1970s there was a major redirection of human geography towards social problems, viz., poverty, hunger, crime, racial discrimination, access to health, education, etc. The issues such as the distribution of the fruits of economic development received attention mainly as a result of dramatic socio-political changes in Eastern Europe and South Africa.

Therefore, the basic emphasis of welfare geography is on who gets what, where and how. The 'who' suggests a population of an area under review (a city, region or nation). The 'what' refers to various facilities and handicaps enjoyed and endured by the population in the form of services, commodities, social relationships, etc. The 'where' refers to the differing living standards in different areas? And 'how' reflects the process by which the observed differences arise.

Welfare school in geography focuses on the connection between the spatial variation of need and structures of a provision in the creation of geographies of welfare (Smith 1973). A rather late arrival of welfare approach in humanities and social sciences and particularly in geography has several political, historical, and psychological reasons, e.g., the Vietnam War, crime explosion, environmental degradation. The manifestation of social, political and economic injustice through these crises in cities and towns led a group of social scientists to come up with a new idea and promote the radical approach. Especially, with geography, the issue of distribution was taking new urgency (Smith, 1977). Before the dawn of the

Quantitative revolution, geography, like the other entire main sister disciplines from Humanities and arts faced many philosophical and methodological problems. Geography did not progress as a well-regulated discipline. In the recent years, geographers have, however, adopted new strategies by restructuring their courses of the study and designed the themes around contemporary issues like socio-economic development, rural-urban studies, making the subject a primary source of awareness of local surroundings and regional milieu. During the last five decades, the subject matter of geography has experienced immense changes in the subject-matter, philosophy, and methodology. The issues of primary concern on which the geographers are concentrating nowadays include hunger, poverty, racial discrimination, pollution, environmental pollution, social inequality or injustice and use and the overuse of depleting resources, etc. Some of the leading works and issues which have been useful in the public policy making are Black-Ghetto, Geography of Crimes and Geography of Social Well-being.

The welfare approach in geography has been defined differently by some eminent scholars of geography. Mishan was of the view that, “theoretical welfare geography is that branch of study which endeavours to formulate positions by which we may be able to rank, on the scale of better or worse, alternatives in the geographical situation open to society.” In the spatial context, Smith defined welfare geography as the study of “who gets what, where and how.” The geographers whose prime concern are the problems of society and are trying to formulate more realistic plans for public policy by giving the description and explanation of the phenomena. Through such analysis, they evaluate their plans and suggest suitable strategies for the balanced development. The explanation involves the empirical identification of territorial levels of human development and the human condition.

The urban-based industrial and social infrastructural policy adopted by planners is widening the already wide gap on the one hand, between the rich and the poor and on the contrary between rural and urban population. The highly advanced and developed countries like U.S.A., Russia, Australia, and Japan have spatial disparities in levels of human development. In the United States, the overall material standard of living is higher than anywhere else in the world. Millions of Americans, especially Negroes (black people), live in poverty and social denial in ghettos (city slums). In many parts of the rural south of U.S.A. (Texas, Georgia, etc.) the living conditions of some people are as bad as anywhere in the African continent. In these ghettos, the rate of crimes like drug addiction is very high. The perseverance of widespread poverty in American slums, the most affluent society in the

world is a paradox which underlines the failure of economic growth under a capitalist system to uplift the lives of all people to a current standard of decency. The planners with the help of geographers can construct general social amenities which can benefit all sections of the society. Geographers, however, cannot be the cure for all the ills, inequalities and socio-economic imbalances that are persistent. Geographers can analyze the spatial dimension of environmental problems, natural hazards and more particularly they know how to handle, analyze and interpret spatially distributed data. This consciousness of and facility of tackling the spatial dimension, which is a major component of all problems of resource and environmental management, is something not provided by those in other disciplines and have a tendency to be overlooked if a geographer does not arrange it. A welfare society needs better sharing of commodities, better distribution of commodities and better of means of manufacture among individuals (groups or classes) and places. All these things are more easily attainable if geographers who are dealing with the man-environment interface and elaborate the spatial distribution of phenomena are actively involved in the procedure of planning and formulation of public policies at different levels of development, i.e., the local, regional, national and international levels. In countries like Sweden, the Netherlands, France, Norway, Israel, Denmark, U.S.S.R., Australia and New Zealand where geographers in collaboration with the scholars and scientists of other fields to design public policies. Which is effective and beneficial and reaching all sections of the societies. Similarly, Geographers in India can also provide practical proposals for solving the various social, economic and infrastructural problems that are caused by rapidly increasing population.

The issues dealt by welfare geography demand an interdisciplinary approach of the highest order. And, in a rapidly changing era of globalisation where the developing South stands deprived vis-avis the advanced North, there has been a renewed interest in welfare geography. D. M. Smith has advocated the welfare approach to human geography. According to him “the theme of human welfare provides an integrating focus for a more relevant human geography.” It attempts to provide both positive knowledge and guidance in the normative realm of evaluation and policy formulation. His definition of human geography as the study of ‘who gets what where and how’, “provides a frame of reference for the restructuring of the field in a manner which facilitates the analysis of all human geographical patterns in terms relevant to human life chances.” Naturally it involves four basic tasks, viz, description, explanation, evaluation and prescription with regard to human welfare problems like development and under-development, poverty, social inequalities and the like. For human

geography to be relevant to the needs of a society must focus directly on the problems faced by the society and advance the cause of social justice.