

Book Review

Haagh, L. (2019). The case for universal basic income. India: Polity. 140 pp. Rs. 1027.

Universal Basic Income as an idea has drawn the interests of political theorists, economists, policy makers as well as several tech entrepreneurs of the twenty first century. This idea of universal basic income aims to provide each individual within a political community with a basic economic security in the form of cash without having any conditions attached to it. Historically, the idea of basic income ranges from Thomas Paine's design of ground rent to Milton Friedman's proposal for negative income tax. The fundamental objective of these different concepts that argues for basic minimum income has been to build a support for essential economic security for individuals. The arguments in support of basic minimum economic security have existed over a long period of time and they were revived again by the end of twentieth century through the writings of Philip Van Parijs and Guy Standing in context of failure of neoliberal economic promises as well as rising automation in production processes. Their arguments for the defense of the policy of universal basic income ranges from individual freedom to social justice. In this backdrop, Louise Haagh's book "The case for Universal Basic Income" published in 2019, by polity publication is an attempt to build a case for basic income security on the lines of its ability to prioritize human development and its capacity to shape public institutions that can lead to incorporation within the society.

Louise Haagh has articulated her arguments in support of universal basic income in three separate but interrelated chapters. Each chapter attempts to provide an argument for the support of universal basic income. The first chapter looks into the idea of individual security and how the fragmented claim making progress leads to dissipation of public responsibility and on these lines the writer argues for a wider re-democratization of state is required through basic income reforms. In the succeeding chapter, the author is trying to build a case for universal basic income with respect to its ability to enhance civil rights and equality in the backdrop of political and economic competition. And the last chapter takes a look at the ability of basic income to create a new model of democratic governance that has the capacity to increase incorporation in society, in place of existing constant competition that is cutting off the

self from the society. However, the arguments presented in these chapters are closely interlinked as incorporation in society leads to creation of stable institutions and greater human development.

According to Louise Haagh, the book “The case for Universal Basic Income” is arguing for the idea of basic income "*as part of democratic reconstruction at a juncture of global crisis in governance*". The major arguments supporting the idea of basic income in a democratic and stable society are: Firstly, basic income has the capacity to stabilize the human condition by providing a sense of existential security. The confidence provided by the income security enhances the independence enjoying capacity of an individual. Secondly, building on the first argument, basic income in extension will lead to a greater stability and equality in social relations, resulting in greater cooperation at the societal level. Furthermore, at the level of the system, the stable monetary foundation provided by basic income mixed with other public developmental social policies can build a mutually supporting system that can support and enhance each other's effects.

Furthermore, the author goes on to argue that the idea of basic income is not a fad because firstly, this idea of unconditional right to monetary security has enjoyed cross-cutting support from market liberals such as Frederick Hayek to Milton Friedman and Charles Murrey to Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. It has also enjoyed the support of left liberals such as Bertrand Russell to Claus Offe. They all agreed on one argument that the modern state has failed to secure the basic independent status of citizens. Secondly, the idea of basic income is already electronically viable and supported by half of the population of Europe. And lastly, the libertarians' argument for a smaller role of state is linked with their support for basic income.

She couples the argument for basic income with human development and social equality with the already existing argument for freedom and security as mentioned above. She propounds that basic income fills the gap in the infrastructure of modern democracies and economies and can lead to democratization of the economy. Hence, the author's argument made in support of basic income on the basis of basic human development has four major aspects. Firstly, basic income is architectural meaning it provides the foundation for building a complex economic security infrastructure. Secondly, basic income is a progressive step towards bringing out institutional changes that are more important than

the initial payment of basic income. Thirdly, the case of democratic human development focuses a great deal on governance and therefore emphasizes on the role of state and strategic planning required for human development. Lastly, basic income has the capacity to create a stable institution which is important for freedom and human development.

The second chapter titled 'Human Development Freedom' is attempting to build support for the idea of basic income on the ground that basic income can work as an institution that expresses humanist norms i.e. developmental provision which is designed to support the agency and self of an individual throughout his or her life. The idea of democratic humanist perspective developed throughout this chapter pays attention to both the human development approach and for rethinking the idea of competition economy and justice.

The idea of human development approach as illustrated by the author is subdivided into several human functions of existential need, cognition dependence, and reliance on structure. These facets of human development approach are analyzed with reference to basic income's ability to safeguard these human functioning. The author argues that basic income is fundamental for human security structures that support human functioning and she also highlights an experimental research which argues that "*problem solving is linked with the absence of pressure*". So, basic income provides the guarantee for the right to subsistence in a situation where individuals feel coerced by society and that restricts their opportunity to carry out basic duties with dignity. Basic income also recognizes a form of status independence that is fundamental for human functioning and it makes a case for a system of learning and working without constant competition and testing. Basic income also has the ability to build cooperation in care and greater relations across gender and in society. Cooperation in care is directly linked with mental and physical health and individual security which gets enhanced in the presence of basic income. A case for control over time is also made with reference to freedom and basic income. Basic income provides greater control over work and leisure which in turn leads to greater control over leisure and freedom.

The case for basic income is also made to reassess the idea of a competition economy and how it affects the process of justice. Haagh argues that basic income is important in reshaping the rules that it may serve to reinforce legal and normative expectations that are concerned

with equality in the basic developmental process framework. The author argues to re-examine the idea of justice in the context of competitive economic culture. The competitive economic culture creates exclusion, deepens inequalities and eventually leads to the weakening of state and society. To illustrate, she provides the argument of how 'supermanagers' have been able to set their own wages since the 1980s whereas the global share of workers in unions has fallen drastically. Therefore, she argues that the idea of justice exists when it is embedded in the conditions individuals receive. In this context, basic income firstly restores the status of individuals and helps them in gaining a control over their own lives and secondly, it also becomes elementary and critical in correcting and forestalling injustices from occurring.

In the succeeding chapter titled 'Democratic Development' the author Louis Haagh looks at the long term implications of a policy like universal basic income in the broader context of analyzing and re-examining the relationship that exists between the different levels of democratic development. In this context, the author begins with arguing a case of universal basic income on the basis of its ability to constitute a civilised development path. The idea of civilised development looks into the ability of universal basic income in creating stabilising incorporating mechanisms within a society. So, as the cooperative structure within a society can be formed. Contemporary globalization has created great inequality and has failed in creating a stable society. To build on this argument, the author employs Ralf Dahrendorf's understanding of anomie to argue that the competition processes of modernity have led to creation of new vulnerabilities that is separating self from social bonds and human reality. She also draws from David James' idea and claims that modern capitalism is unjust because it divides stability unequally. So, the author Louise Haagh on the premises of the major critics of basic income, that is the high cost of a program like universal basic income and the concern that contributions will fall in the long run, makes a case for a reverse developmental incentive structure that is based on creating stabilized incorporation mechanisms in the society that will lead to creation of cooperative structures. Secondly, she sets out to understand the relevance of universal basic income in the context of other policies and benefits. For this, she compares the idea of universal basic income with negative income tax, universal basic services and universal basic infrastructure. She argues that the problem that lies with negative income

tax is that they reproduce and idealise market fluctuations and implementing a policy like negative income tax would have to trace these fluctuations in income with respect to the market. With respect to universal basic services and universal basic infrastructure, she argues that income security and services are not strangers but extensions of each other. However, universal basic infrastructure and universal basic services would not be able to solve the problem of developing capital investments or in-house work conditionalities. The author also derives her argument for the support of building a policy like universal basic income on the impact that new technologies would have under globalization. She argues that a new age of inclusive artificial intelligence employment would require a combination of social corporation and more advanced technical skills which can be developed under the aegis of an economic security in the form of basic income. Lastly, the author analyses different forms of basic income experiments that have been taken up in countries like Denmark and the United Kingdom. These partial basic income brought out several shortcomings that exist in the already existing welfare system which can be solved by universal basic income. She argues that partial basic income gets stuck with the targeting approach and universal basic income, even if it is initially low, can help build structures of shared norms.

However, she goes on to argue that basic income would not be able to solve the question of dependency if it's pursued in isolation and in existing underlying inequality. Therefore, she argues for a three-tiered system of welfare with basic income as the foundation to build a new cooperative system on which a three layered system of welfare could be built. The other two would include public regulation and investment to rebuild occupation economies and public support for a system of contribution and saving. This system would ensure that the return on the investment on human learning is optimized over the individual life cycle and across society as a whole. Therefore, she argues for basic income to build the defense of the public realm and underpins this argument for the idea of civic equality and human development.

Universal basic income as an aspirational idea has been revived in the last three decades with respect to the failure of neoliberal market economy in creating an equal and just society. This book is an attempt to enrich the idea of universal basic income by building a normative case

while also employing empirical examples to analyse the impact of other welfare policies with respect to the idea of universal basic income. The idea being explored in support of a policy like universal basic income is that basic income has the capacity to improve and secure individual security as well as can lead to greater incorporation in society. This is favorable for creating co-operative institutions and inclusive growth. However, the author also warns us about putting all our eggs in the single basket of universal basic income. She argues that basic income with its lifelong security structure can improve civic development of society and give normative priorities to human development but it should be the part of the scheme but not the whole.

Consequently, the book's argument of building basic income as a part of democratic reconstruction at a time of crisis at the global level in governance looks into basic income's capacity to work against the existential threat for individuals, to help in cognitive development of individuals as well as its capacity to work as an institution for social incorporation. This book's attempt to touch on the wide array of arguments in support of universal basic income, somewhere makes it lose the depth of the arguments. This book employs several theoretical concepts throughout the book such as idea of anomie, human development ethics, idea of autonomy, etc. However these theoretical concepts are not explored in depth. This book also builds its case on the long term implications of a policy like universal basic income and doesn't thoroughly deal with its short term challenges. Nonetheless, this book's understanding for building a case for the idea of universal basic income adds to the already existing defense in favor of the idea of a policy of universal basic income.

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**Chandra, Y. (2021). The Tale of the Horse: A History of India
On Horseback: Picador India. 336 pp. Rs. 464.**

Chandra's work brings a breath of fresh air in the field of Indian history writing. It deals with Indian history making horse the pivot around which everything else revolves. She talks about the role of the horse in Indian culture and mythology. She attributes the introduction of horses in India to the Indo-Aryans who migrated to the subcontinent from the North and the West in waves from circa 1500 BCE. The book is divided into three parts and nine chapters. The first part of the book deals with cultic importance of the horse in different religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. It then tells us about the sea and caravan trade in horses. The author informs us about 'droves after droves' of horses reaching the court of Akbar from Central Asia and Iran. Infact horses from Central Asia including Khorasan and northern Afghanistan, constituted the chief item of import in the overland trade until the seventeenth century (p.37).

The Mughal rulers supported the trading activities. Caravanserais were set up on trade routes for the traders to provide shelter to them. These caravanserais contained quarters for caretakers and stores. They also had separate place for the animals brought by the traders. The author provides the example of a caravanserai called Nur Mahal near Jalandhar in Punjab. Named after its patron Nur Jahan. Different activities took place at these caravanserais and the author is successful in painting a picture which almost takes one in the middle of the hustle and bustle of these past day motels. We find that farriers selling horseshoes, sellers of grass and hay, cloth sellers, musicians, dancing boys and girls, barbers, tailors, washer men and prostitutes all gave their services to the traders and travelers at the serais.

Horses were also brought to India through sea. They were transported from the ports of Persian gulf and the Red Sea. The author empathetically brings out the ordeal faced by horses on these journeys. They were bled before the journey 'to render them extremely tame and without any vice', forced to stand throughout, secured with straps (p.57). For the rulers of Deccan and South India sea trade in horses was a better way to obtain horses than getting them from overland routes. Traveller and horse trader Athanasius Nikitin, described the port of Dabhol on the Konkan coast as a bustling meeting point for horses from Central Asia as well as the Middle East. The two main powers of the south, the

Bahamani and Vijayanagara rulers, competed to buy up the shipments of Arab-Persian horses. The sea trade in horses between the Middle East and South India lasted nearly a millennium since about the eleventh century until the twentieth.

The book provides us important information about the native breed of horses in India. Abul Fazl himself records that 'Hindustan was breeding horses of its own by the late sixteenth century' (p.81). The author argues that horses could be bred in India and it was well established by thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as against the views held by many foreign travelers and writers. Indeed as author says horses reared in the subcontinent were better suited and easily adapted to its climate. In the Mughal army too 30 to 40 percent of horses were homegrown. An important argument is made by the author about how colonial rule proved detrimental to native horse breeds. Breeding of native breeds such as the Kathiawari was sidelined (p.56).

This work goes beyond the trade and warfare paradigm in relation to horses. It gives us a multifaceted picture of the horse in Indian history. Everyday information such as foreign travelers spending a night in cowshed and surviving on peacock meat is given. How the popular hindi idiom 'Ghoda Bech ke Soya' is related to a horse's sale by a trader is explained by the author in terms of the hard journey that horse traders undertook to sell their horses.

The second part of the book talks about Rajputs and the role of horse in their history, culture, evolution, and power. The Rajputs were devoid of the supply of horses until the Delhi Sultanate ruled but from the sixteenth century it changed. The author brings out the symbolic importance of horse in the Rajput culture. She as many others have done recently identifies that Rajputs became a closed caste group only in the fifteenth-sixteenth century and their ascent to this position was based on performing services and establishing marital relations with older and established lineages. The author describes the role of Colonel Tod and his work '*Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*' in the making of the Rajput identity as the warrior on horseback.

Horse played an important role in establishing the Rajput power and identity. The book also gives us details about horse breeding in Rajasthan. An interesting point brought to light by the author is that in Rajasthan along with stallions, mares too were given similar status. We get information about past sports such as 'chaugan' (polo) being played

by the Mughal emperor and his close aides. It became a way to exercise the tactics of the battlefield. It made them better riders. Matches were organized in the night too with the help of Masaals.

The author not only shares the pain of the warriors on the battlefield but that of war animals too. The author shows through paintings that women of elite Rajput households knew the art of riding and practised equestrianism within the confinement of purdah. Three paintings from Jodhpur are cited as example that show women playing polo (p.184). The book mentions Shalihotra and its role in the maintenance and keeping of horses in India. The horses are divided in this particular text on the basis of castes such as ‘the horse that emits sweat as sweet smelling as flowers through the different seasons is considered of the Brahmin caste’. However Shalihotra does give contain relevant information such as training and managing of horses, advice on examining horses and telling their age by scrutinizing their teeth and about different diseases that can affect a horse.

The third part of the book gives us information about horse fairs and role of marginalized groups in the history of horses. The people who were appointed as caretakers and stable hands never quite get the attention of a scholar. The author tries to fill that lacuna. However a better reading of various bahis (revenue registers) of eighteenth century Jodhpur state would have made the work more holistic. We find information about the organization and payment given to different classes of non-combatants that served the Jodhpur state. But the author is successful in conveying to the reader that history of Rajasthan is not just history of Rajputs but also includes history of various communities that inhabited the land and contributed to its culture and magnanimity. The detailing about horses from its feed to its tack (bridle, saddle, bit etc.) shows the mastery of the writer over her craft. In the end it can be said that its time to shed the colonial mindset that looked down upon the colonies and write histories of the subcontinent by moving beyond the Eurocentric view.

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