

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 is 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 Louise 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 books' 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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