

Transition towards a Market Society: Commodification of Public Health in India and Pakistan

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Abstract : Market Economy can be broadly defined as economic system where supply and demand regulate the economy and in which decisions pertaining to production, consumption, allocation of resources, price and competition are made by collective actions of individuals or organisations with limited government intervention. On the other hand Market Society is one where instead of the economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economy. A market economy becomes a market society when all of land, labour and capital are commodified. This transition also has effect on people's attitude and values. Such a transition commence impacting the non-material aspect of life such as public education, public health and the like. The inception of neoliberal policies in non-market norms altered the nature of social goods like public health that raised the following questions. What impact would the transition to a market society make on people in terms of accessibility to public health? Is healthcare a commodity that can be subjected to a competitive market place? What kind of private investments are being made in public health and how do private investments alter the nature of a public good like healthcare? This research problem will employ empirical-analytical approach that includes deductive reasoning which will be using the existing concept of market economy and market society as a foundation for the analytical framework and the hypotheses to be examined. The research also intends to inculcate the naturalistic elements of qualitative methodology which refers to studying of real world situations as they unfold. The research will analyse the existing literature available on the subject. Concomitantly the research intends to access the primary literature which includes reports from the World Bank, World Health Organisation (WHO) and the different departments of respective ministries of the countries for the analysis. This paper endeavours to highlight how the issue of commodification of public health would lead to perpetual increase in its inaccessibility leading to stratification of healthcare services where one can avail the better services depending on the extent of one's ability to pay. Since the fundamental maxim of private investments is to churn out profits, these kinds of trends would pose a detrimental effect on the society at large perpetuating the lacuna between the have and the have-nots. The increasing private investments, both, domestic and foreign, in public health sector are leading to increasing inaccessibility of public health services. Despite the increase in various public health schemes the quality and impact of government public health services are on a continuous decline.

Keywords : commodity, India and Pakistan, market society, public health

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