

CAPABILITIES, INSTITUTIONS, PATTERNS OF DEPRIVATION**Gyanaranjan Swain****Lecturer****Department of Political Science
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Abstract: *The central focus of this article is to make an attempt to understand deprivation and inequality in the context of capability approach. The objective here is to explore the possibility of linkages between capabilities, institutions and patterns of deprivation and how capabilities within a democratic institutional framework can address the question of deprivation. In this context, the institutional framework is emphasized, because there is a strong belief that only democratic institutions provide the space necessary for capability approach to operationalise. Democracy has the necessary support structures for capability approach to flourish. The basic premise of capability approach i.e. respecting individual freedom is guaranteed only in a democratic set up. Institutions have power because people have faith in the institutions. The research seeks to explore how institutions even in a democratic set up also cause deprivation and how capability approach is handicapped to address those problems.*

Key Words: Deprivation, Human Development Index, Marginalisation, Ontology, Egalitarianism

DEFINING DEPRIVATION

Deprivation, material or otherwise, occupies significant place in the debates of social science and social policy. Plenty of literature on deprivation directly or otherwise has been generated. Penguin Dictionary of Sociology defines deprivation as inequality of access to social goods. It includes poverty and wider forms of disadvantage. Broadly speaking, deprivation indicates absence of opportunities, lack of well being, entitlement failure because of shortage of income and purchasing power, prudentially absence of valuable key items, lack of accessibilities and possession of material and otherwise needed resources. It is a value based concept, which includes unmet entitlement and distributive injustice linked with growth process, as every growth process has a specific distribution process. Moreover, process of development decides the patterns of growth, which in turn decides the process of distribution and investment.

In general, deprivation refers to a condition in which people lack what they need. The concept has sociological and political significance because the degree of

deprivation decides their status in the society both as a political and social entity. Deprivation can be absolute and relative. Absolute deprivation indicates a lack of basic necessities such as food, water, shelter, and fuel. A state of relative deprivation, however, is based on a perceived difference between what people have in comparison with others. Implicit in this is the idea that people are selective in whom they choose to compare themselves to. Those at the bottom of social class systems in many industrial societies, for example, are objectively better off than many of those more highly placed in class systems of nonindustrial societies. Those in industrial societies take no comfort from this, however, because they do not use such societies as point of comparison. In this sense, relative deprivation exists when individuals see themselves as lacking what they believe they should have within the context of the particular social system they live in and their position in it.

The concept of relative deprivation has been most used in the literature of development studies, where it is argued that relative, not absolute, deprivation is most likely to lead to pressure for change.

Whether absolute or relative, multiple deprivations occur when one form of deprivation (such as low income) tends to overlap with others (such as low access to healthy food, safe neighborhoods, and quality education. People are relatively deprived if they cannot obtain, at all or sufficiently, the conditions of life i.e. the diets, amenities, standards and services, which allow them to play the roles, participate in the relationships and follow the customs which are expected of them by virtue of their membership of society. If they lack or are denied resources to obtain access to these conditions of life and so fulfill membership of society they are in poverty. Deprivation can arise in any or all of the major spheres of life, at work place, in neighborhood and family, in a range of social and individual activities outside work and home or neighborhood and in performing a variety of roles in fulfillment of social obligations. In principle there could be extreme divergences in the experience of different kinds of deprivation. In practice, there appears to be a systematic relationship between deprivation and level of resources. There are studies on psychological indicators of deprivation such as powerlessness, voicelessness, dependency, shame and humiliation, etc.

Analysis of various dimensions of deprivation has been captured through different perspectives and frameworks. These perspectives may be classified broadly in two categories-liberal and radical. Liberal framework of analysis of deprivation deals with both absolute and relative deprivation but situates it beyond class categories. In this framework of analysis, class is not considered sufficient to capture all dimensions of deprivation. It depends on welfare state to take care of deprivation through effective implementation and liberal democratic institutions. Even there are differences within the liberal school. One school while ignoring the class dimension focuses on discrimination and inequality. However,

there is another stream of liberal thought which argues that deprived themselves are responsible for their misery. Some liberals even characterize peasants as thieves, dishonest and exaggerated the cause of deprivation from the propertied class perspective. However, critics argue that such exaggeration is a strategy of the dominated class to defend deprivation of rights and comforts to a community.

In radical framework of analysis deprivation, is considered as a product of social process linked with mode of production. It takes Marx as its pioneer for his analysis of exploitation. In Marxist sense of the term, deprivation is the product of exploitative relations of production, which drives out the labour away from the means of production and subsistence, through expropriation of surplus from labour. Material deprivation is the basis for all other forms of exclusion, which creates a bipolar society of exploiter and exploited, and oppressor and oppressed. So long as the process of alienation of producers from the means of production continues and they are kept away from the control of the means of production, exploitation will exist in such a society. It suggests that deprivation is inevitable in an exploitative process of development and growth. Nature and forms of exploitation and expropriation of surplus vary with nature and form of production relations as every mode of production has its own system of distribution, which decides the forms of exclusion/inclusion of labour from the means of production, which in turn decides the extent and level of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation and exploitation. Thus, the process of exclusion is dependent on a particular mode of production. This appears necessary to look into the process of exploitation and exclusion through an analytical framework of production relations. Unlike liberal framework of analysis, this framework takes account of all dimensions of deprivations together instead of looking

into material or any other aspect of deprivation. However, the main criticism against radical framework of analysis is on account of lacking non-material articulation and non-class analysis. In their interpretations, deprivation can be dealt effectively through more than class and material, value based moral and prudential dimensions, i.e demand for right, justice, failures, etc. Thus, determination and assessment of well being/deprivation is a social process influenced by social expectations and conditioned by life experiences.

Human development and deprivation indicates two different dimensions-achievement and entitlement failure. Achievement has been measured through composite index of longevity, education and per capita GDP (Gross Domestic Product) which has been measured as Human Development Index, where as Deprivation is measured as absence of these dimensions of Human Development Index (HDI), which is known as Human Poverty Index. The study of poverty and deprivation has had its ups and downs. The massive emergence of these phenomena in the midst of the cataclysms of the industrial revolution has placed an item on the public agenda of policy making which has not been easily grasped by the social sciences, despite the visibility and transparency of the amount of human suffering involved. Poverty, can be viewed as a problem of the poor themselves, it can be seen as constituting a problem for the non-poor, for whom the very existence of the poor is a constant threat, or it can be interpreted as a problem of the poor and non-poor alike. It is the changing intricacy of such a relationship cutting across the social and economic fabric of any society that accounts for the shifting definitions of poverty and for the intellectual and political difficulties of the conceptualizing what deprivation means and what ought to be done about it. Boundaries that separate the poor from the not so poor and the non poor are

constantly redrawn, exclusion practiced in everyday life is mirrored in statistics and social analysis, the economic foundation and the legitimating beliefs attached to all forms of inequalities affect the conceptualization of the phenomenon and possible intervention strategies. Social science research reacts to and anticipates options that emerge in the social policy arena. It depends on the capacity of a society to integrate those who are considered worst off whether and where deprivation will find its place on the public agenda. In all industrialized countries the trail of development has been marked by a slow, grudging, but inevitable acceptance of putting the issues of deprivation and poverty on the policy agenda. Gradually the problem of the poor has been transformed into the problem of deprivation. Others speak of a process of structural marginalization which pushes people from participation in the core institutions of society to the margins. Poverty, landlessness and marginalization result from long-term process of structural inequality, which creates deprivation and denies basic entitlements required for minimum subsistence to certain sections of society. It is primarily the denial of control over productive resources, structures of opportunities and distribution of power that marginalizes and impoverishes the deprived and disadvantaged. The process of vulnerability, deprivation, marginalisation, exclusion and impoverishment are consequential effects of structural inequality. Such a process is intimately linked with conditions of a precarious existence and of social insecurity, further heightened once the full impact of the new technological developments make their repercussions felt throughout society. The prospect of coping with a precarious existence with which many groups in society are confronted today, presents a new challenge for the societal management of uncertainties on a scale of different magnitude. It is a challenge, which has in the past been

unevenly responded to by governments and social scientists alike. However, given the pressure of the problem and the complexity of social interdependence, the dynamics of deprivation are likely to continue to hold their place on the public agenda.

THE SOCIAL ONTOLOGY OF DEPRIVATION

The experience of deprivation can take place both at individual and collective level. The experience of deprivation can be more painful when it is seen from the point of view of human experiences. So far social scientists have understood deprivation only in terms of lack of basic resources needed for a dignified life. But there is more to understand deprivation when one looks at the experiences of individual or the collective community that experience it. Social scientists have ignored this particular aspect of deprivation. This can be termed as a colonial understanding of deprivation. We have to move beyond the resource based understanding of deprivation if at all we have the intention to provide a more sophisticated theoretical framework to understand deprivation and inequality. The social ontology of deprivation brings power dimension in the analytical discourse of deprivation. Inequality reflects the unequal power relations deeply rooted in our society in many structures which can be manifested in multiple forms like caste and class.(Mohanty, 1983). In the following analysis, I have tried to provide a theoretical framework which is sensitive to the collective aspect of deprivation without losing the individualist orientation. Social ontology of deprivation is important because it is one of the best ways to respect human diversity which is so central to Sen's focus of capability approach.

The idea of bringing social ontological aspect of deprivation has two objectives. First, to provide a sophisticated theoretical framework of deprivation that goes beyond poverty and second to bring back our attention to the element of human diversity in a society. When deprivation is

understood as chronic poverty, policy makers tend to focus more on welfare measures which are essentially top down. This has been elaborately examined in the next paragraph where we have discussed how institutions have consistently emphasized the top down approach. Hence, there is a need to move beyond poverty analysis of deprivation. Deprivation can also happen to people having good and reasonable income status. But there are many other ways through which individuals and collectives suffer from deprivation. For example, gay and lesbian people seek the freedom to appear in public as they are, without shame or fear of violence, the right to get married and enjoy benefits of marriage, to adopt and retain custody of children. They have drawn attention to the ways the configuration of public spaces has excluded and marginalized them, and campaigned against demeaning stereotypes that cast them as stupid, incompetent, and pathetic. As a matter of fact, most of the egalitarian literature has excluded them from their purview of analysis.(Anderson, 1999). The same applies also to the case of caste based differences in India. For example, a person being economically very affluent is excluded from the public space. What we seek to place before our scrutiny is how deprivation entails ontology.

Most of the egalitarians like Rawls, Dworkin, Cohen, Arneson have spoken extensively in favor of either resource based or welfare based approaches to reconstitute the society. Resource based egalitarians argue that people should be entitled to equal resources. But at the same time, they should be held responsible for their choices thereafter. Welfare egalitarians argue that welfare is a legitimate space of egalitarian concern. They advance two important criticisms against resource based egalitarians.(Anderson, 1999). First, people value resources for the welfare they bring. Egalitarians should care about what

ultimately matters to people, rather than focusing on merely instrumental goods. Second, resource egalitarians unfairly hold people responsible for all of their preferences and choices. But there are occasions when our choices and preferences are influenced by social and environmental circumstances.

Elizabeth Anderson in her analysis of equality opposes both of these view points. Here I am trying to bring Anderson into the analysis because, Anderson's argument against egalitarianism has some initial advantages which can be of great help while conceptualizing the social ontology of deprivation. But her conclusions while formulating the idea of democratic equality go too far. Here, Sen has provided better solutions and more comprehensive package in order to understand inequality and deprivation. Anderson's arguments are attractive because she attacks the compensatory nature of recent egalitarian writings. In her own words, "The proper negative aim of egalitarian justice is not to eliminate the impact of brute luck from human affairs, but to end oppression, which by definition is socially imposed. Its proper positive aim is not to ensure that everyone gets what they morally deserve, but to create a community in which people stand in relations of equality to others."(Anderson, 1999) The point that we are trying to make here is that deprivation is very much associated with oppression along with other dimensions which has been discussed in the beginning of the chapter. Deprivation can be addressed if the marginalized and excluded are given due space in public sphere. This is the argument which we are trying to make here. Let us take the example of tribal deprivation in India. Most of the analysis on tribal deprivation has focused on their socio-economic condition and measures in terms of improving their social condition. No analysis has focused on oppressive

agenda of deprivation. The idea of deprivation needs to be reconceptualised with a focus on oppression and domination so that it can be sensitive to the demands of the collective or groups. I will come to the point why I can not endorse Anderson's conclusions regarding equality. I argue that Sen's capability perspective has better formulations than Anderson's idea of 'democratic equality'.

A similar effort has been made by Irish Marion Young in her book *Justice and Politics of Difference* where she makes an attempt to reconstitute political theory, sensitive to social situations, institutions and practices. She argues that instead of focusing on distribution, a conception of justice should begin with the concepts of domination and oppression. (Young, 1990). Such a shift brings out the importance of social group differences in structuring social relations and oppression. Theories of justice have operated with a framework that has no room for social groups. She argues that where social group differences exist and some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, social justice requires explicitly acknowledging and attending to those social group differences in order to undermine oppression. (Young, 1990). Evaluating inequality and deprivation in terms of social groups enable us to reveal important aspects of institutional relations and processes. This helps us to identify structural inequalities in society.(Young, 2001). Even though many philosophers, social scientists profess an interest in structural inequality, they use the term without explaining the meaning. Structural inequality can be defined as a set of reproduced social processes that reinforce one another to enable or constrain individual actions in many ways. Deprivation happens because of social pressures and social identity. Not every time deprivation is related to income deficiency. Social scientists are clueless when deprivation happens in a group or

because of social structures. For example, the utmost lower castes in India are those performing cleaning jobs. Even though the Government provides them reservation or any other monetary benefits, yet that caste is marginalized from the public space. Hence the mental agony of being identified with that particular caste amounts to deprivation. It can be argued that the present discourse on deprivation has excluded such kind of social oppression and domination. What essentially we are trying to do here is to introduce the element of domination and oppression in the analysis of deprivation so that the sensitivity of groups and collectives can be adequately addressed in Political Theory. Unfortunately political theory has not questioned the economic interpretation of deprivation so far and has tried rather to reproduce the same understanding in its own discipline. Political scientists should have been sensitive to the questions that have been raised so far in this chapter.

We would like to discuss two issues before going back to our original discussion of how modifications in the capability approach can be extremely helpful for reconstituting political theory. The two issues that we would like to focus here are *self respect* and *power*. Egalitarian theories of justice regard self respect as a primary good that all persons in a society must have if the society is to be just. They also talk of distributing self respect. Self respect is not an entity or measurable aggregate, it cannot be parceled out of some stash, and above all it cannot be detached from persons as a separable attribute. While Rawls does not speak of self respect as something itself distributed, he does suggest that distributive arrangements provide the background conditions for self respect. Self respect, however, also involves many non-material conditions that cannot be reduced to distributive arrangements.(Young, 1990) In many ways, self respect is a function of culture and not all of the conditions of self respect can meaningfully be conceived as goods that individuals possess. They are

rather relations and processes in which the actions of individuals are embedded. (Young, 1990). The distributive paradigm tends to conceive of individuals as social atoms, logically prior to social relations and institutions. Conceiving justice as a distribution of goods among individuals involves analytically separating the individuals from those goods. Such an atomistic conception of the individual fails to appreciate that individual identities and capacities are in many respects themselves the products of social processes and relations.(Sandel, 1982)

However, there is an interesting turn here in our argument. We draw conclusions from both Young and Sandel and many other communitarian thinkers. Yet, the distinctiveness of our argument lies in the fact that the arguments are primarily liberal. What we are trying to do here is that being a liberal how can I be sensitive to the demands of the groups so that deprivation can be minimal. We have argued that one need not completely accept all the arguments of communitarians. While other liberal theories of justice and inequality do not have the flexibility to accommodate the demands of groups, capability perspective has the flexibility to do that. It is a different thing that Sen has not discussed this elaborately. But to make capability approach interesting we need to prove that capability approach has enough grounds for collective aspirations.

Similarly, the idea of power that is being constructed in the realm of liberal discourse can also be contested. Egalitarian distributional theories most often exclude issues of power from the scope of their theories. For example, Ronald Dworkin explicitly brackets issues of power in his discussion of equality, and chooses to consider only issues of welfare, the distribution of goods, services, income and so on.(Dworkin, 1981) Iris Young has a problem when power is conceptualized in distributive terms. It will then mean implicitly or explicitly conceiving power as a kind of stuff possessed by individual

agents in greater or lesser amounts.(Young, 1990). While the exercise of power may sometimes depend on the possession of certain resources-money, military equipment and so on, such resources should not be confused with power itself. Power consists in a relationship between the exerciser and others through which he or she communicates intentions and meets with their acquiescence. A distributive understanding of power which treats power as some kind of stuff that can be traded, exchanged and distributed misses the structural phenomena of domination.(HeartStock, 1983). Domination indicates structural or systemic phenomena which exclude people from participating and determining their actions or the conditions of their actions.

Theories of deprivation have important lessons to learn from the above understanding of power and self respect. The language of power and self respect has never been articulated in such a manner. Deprivation combines aspects of self respect, issues of power, domination and marginalization from public space. Capability approach need not be sensitive to the communitarian aspirations searching for 'embedded self'.(Kymilka, 2002) Rather they can be sensitive to some of the aspirations of the groups by reconstituting the realm of capabilities. The issue of collective capability comes only when individuals are increasingly identified with groups and their social identity takes precedence over their individual identities. The numerous presences of caste groups, ethnic groups and many other minority groups in India make lot of sense for the capability approach to reconceptualise the term capability in the context of groups.

In the previous paragraphs we have discussed that Anderson's arguments are valid to some extent. However, her conclusion with regard to developing a theory of democratic equality is not sustainable because it is not comprehensive. Anderson argues that

democratic equality "integrates principles of distribution with the expressive demands of equal respect. Democratic equality guarantees all law-abiding citizens effective access to the social conditions of their freedom at all times. It justifies the distributions required to secure this guarantee by appealing to the obligations of citizens in a democratic state. In such a state, citizens make claims on one another in virtue of their equality, not their inferiority to others".(Anderson, 1999) The point that we are trying to make here is that Anderson is correct to assess the nature of freedom and individual's effective access to the social conditions of their freedom at all times. She misses the linkages between freedom and functionings. Functionings are beings and doings which the person values most. So while Anderson gives importance to the value of freedom as an end in itself the value of freedom as an important means to achieve effective opportunities is missing in her analysis. That is why we believe capability perspective is the best when it comes to deprivation analysis because it combines the two elements of freedom and functioning. If Rawls' and Dworkin can be criticized for ignoring the role of freedom in their analysis, Anderson can be criticized for ignoring the value of real opportunities which the individuals cherish in their life. Iris Young's analysis tends to move towards the communitarian direction. Her analysis is correct in the sense that social contexts are important considerations for group based deprivations and inequality. But to base the entire analysis on the communitarian premise is to miss the individualist orientation of capability approach. The problem with communitarian understanding is that they do not look at individuals as the basic unit of analysis. We need a theory which treats individuals as the unit of analysis but at the same time sensitive to the demands of groups or collective units formed by individuals. We are trying to construct a theory of

capability which can articulate such a standpoint.

The distinctiveness of capability approach lies in its emphasis on freedom and real opportunities. Lack of individual freedom and real opportunities amounts to deprivation. A close look at the policy decisions of our Government will reveal that institutions have consistently ignored these two important aspects. In the next section we have tried to show how institutions have consistently relied on approaches where the individual is either a passive precipitant or beneficiary. The issues of freedom and opportunities are lost in the debate over approaches.

DEPRIVATION IN AN INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The experience of deprivation is considered to be an important issue before the policy makers. This section addresses the question of how institutions address the question of deprivation within their framework. It is important to locate the structures and agencies through which institutions address the issue of deprivation. One of the important facts that every institution believes is that relative deprivation is a structural characteristic of any system of social inequality. In fact, a person or a group may find himself or themselves in a situation of deprivation because, in spite of the struggle to better her own position, she has been a constant loser or is unfit for the struggle or has simply dropped out. Institutions believe that the question of deprivation can be dealt with, but cannot ultimately be eliminated. The effectiveness of social policies aimed at dealing with it can only be evaluated in terms of the effects they have upon the recipients of the policies, not in terms of the extent to which they are able to avoid its reproduction in new forms or aspects or in different groups or individuals. Individual governments use very different instruments to handle this problem, but their emphasis is usually based on redistribution. These policies, in

other words, are not meant to tackle the question of reproduction, which is counteracting the mechanisms which produce a status of deprivation.

Let us take a classic example of India and how from time to time the institutions have addressed the issue. In many policies the citizens are treated as beneficiaries. We mean what is given to them, becomes a matter of charity. Citizens do not access those resources as a matter of right. (Jayal, 2001) If someone looks at the constitution, it is very clear that there is a precedence of fundamental rights over directive principles of state policy. While liberty of the individual has been guaranteed, welfare rights have been left to the good intentions of the state.(Jayal, 2001) The philosophy of welfare adopted by the Indian state adheres to a need based conception of justice in theory, but in practice is based on ideas of charity, benevolence and paternalism. The idea of a right to welfare or justice is deliberately precluded. The questions of hunger and poverty which are so central to deprivation have rarely been articulated in the vocabulary of rights.

The moral necessity of state intervention to the idea of basic needs is the starting point. From the recognition of basic needs as requiring redressal by public authority, it is but a short step to the articulation of these needs in the form of rights. However, the assertion of a moral or natural or even human right is not as practically efficacious as the assertions of a legally enforceable right. Within a needs based approach, state action as institutionalized charity adequately meets the requirements of justice, and there is no room for rights-based individual or collective action. It is sufficient for the state to be the grand philanthropist, bestowing largesse.

If one closely looks at the approaches of the Indian Government to address the question of poverty, clearly it will be visible that how institutions are responsible for deprivation. Let us take the

case of India's planned economic development. In the post-independent India, the state has been intervening in the development process through planning and resource allocation to different sectors. The first phase of development strategy was to increase food production and raw materials as a prerequisite for industrialization. In second phase, efforts were made to concentrate on rapid industrialization. Third phase laid emphasis on increase of agricultural output as a base for other sectors and for building self-reliance. Before making an attempt to evaluate it, we must mention the fact that India made a significant progress in many ways. But there are areas and basic concerns, which the social scientists have not paid enough attention.

Our main objection to this welfare approach is its nature of operation or the way it intends to serve the poorer sections of the society. Top-down nature of welfare approach, we contend is questionable. Central government and state government make all the programmes for the poor. The top bureaucrats may not have the expertise to decide a policy, which affect a particular locality or section of the society. Welfare approach unilaterally decides what the people's needs should be. It never looks upon the local aspirations. Whether the exact locality needs that policy or not is not addressed by welfare approach. For example, community development programme (CDP) was launched in India in 1950's. Policies were made at the top without involving the substantial participation from the bottom. So, ultimately, CDP failed in many ways. If we specify it more elaborately, CDP emphasized that tribal needs should be addressed more clearly and they should enjoy special privilege. The emphatic point is that tribal community is not a unified community and hence any specific plan of action cannot be specified for all of them. But the government did exactly that. The most

careful observation about welfare approach is that here beneficiaries are receivers and they do not decide what they want.

Similarly in the late 1960's and 1970's seventies there has been an attempt to redefine development in human terms with an emphasis on providing basic standards for the poorest sections. There has been marked shift from the dominant 'growth-first-redistribution-later' approach to strategies promoting growth with equity and redirecting resources with favorable bias towards the poorer and from industrialization to rural development. Here it is important to note here that, while the process of reconceptualisation of development theory was progressing, the international Governmental organizations like world Bank, IMF, World Food Programme, e.t.c were quick to embrace the rhetoric of growth with equity, poverty alleviation and basic needs.(Bhaskar Rao, 1993)

Here, few things need to be emphasized. First, let us examine the status of the international institutions, which we have discussed in the last paragraph. These institutions sustain themselves by 'appropriating the surpluses of developing countries. Absolute poverty is a condition of life so degraded by disease, illiteracy, malnutrition and squalor as to deny its victims basic human necessities. It is a condition of life suffered by relatively few in the developed nations but by hundreds of millions of the citizens of the developing countries. He also discussed how the concentration of poverty is in the countryside of the developing nations and how investment, limited to the modern sector, increases the disparity in income. It shows that international institutions have embraced the poverty discourse. But, we have to look at the reasons why they are interested to look at the poverty of the developing nations. Critics like Mohanty have argued that in the name of empowerment and growth with equity these institutions want to control and expand their

base in the market. (Mohanty, 2000) Here human deprivation is politicized in the name of expanding the choice of people. But, the important question lies in how to look at and conceptualize the strategic needs. In most of the cases, the local people do not have a say. These issues are decided by bureaucrats.

There are some interesting observations in equity approach. First it emphasizes upon strategic needs. So, it encourages target-oriented approach to empower people. The question is what are these strategic needs? It looks at these strategic needs in terms of fulfilling the basic necessities of human life. For example, the Fifth Five-year Plan adopted tribal sub-plan policy. Along with this, several anti-poverty measures were also taken. In the tribal sub-plan, several measures were taken to fulfil the strategic needs of the tribal people. It realized the tribal understanding of individual rights and took steps accordingly. But, the problem was that there was no coordination among the planners. Again, top bureaucrats were involved in planning. No doubt, it emphasized tribal participation. But, the tribals who participated in the development project associated themselves with mainstream elites. The planners took steps to pacify the tribal elites. If this was the approach then there could never be real participation by the tribals.

It is interesting to mention the contradiction between tribal economy and the approach of the five-year plans. We know that planned development is based on the formal economy. Unlike the community resource based economy of the tribals, the formal economy is based on the right of the individual to property. Only, the articulate and the literate are able to take advantage of it. But, the state recognized only the formal system and put its legal and administrative weight behind it. As a result, the interaction between the formal and informal economy becomes a conflict between the powerful and the powerless. (Fernandis, 1989) The tribals

who belong to the informal system, have been rendered powerless and are at the mercy of the agents of the powerful system. (Sharma, 1978)

More recently, the Indian establishment has focused on rights based understanding which has strong potential to expand the choice of people. Rights based approaches provide basic guarantee to the citizens. In welfare and equity approach, deprivation can be more, because of the very nature of the approach. There is no choice or freedom for the people. But in rights based approach, which I firmly believe is a marginal improvement over the rest of the approaches, citizens enjoy the benefits as a matter of right and not as a matter of charity. This has significant bearings for the question of deprivation. The recently introduced National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (NREGA) has lot of potentials to address the basic premises of deprivation. Deprivation is caused by institutional failure to address the basic livelihood questions of the poor citizens. NREGA seems to be the right incentive in the hand of the poor to improve their conditions. Yet, it is very much premature to predict the impact of NREGA.

So far we have argued that institutions in India have deliberately ignored the claims of individuals over their rights. The issues of freedom and real opportunities have been ignored. Deprivation in India is a product of institutional incapacity to evolve the norms and policies to provide freedom and opportunities to the people. The top down nature of Indian policy makers makes it extremely difficult for the individuals to exercise autonomy. The Indian state takes the rights of individuals as a matter of relief and charity. Individuals receive benefits as passive beneficiaries. Indian state has been rightly called as paternal state. This is in fact the most important reason for deprivation.

However, this is not to suggest that capability approach itself is not free from internal criticisms. Apart from institutional

settings responsible for deprivation, we have many other internal contradictions in capability approach which suggest that even the capability approach needs to be sensitive to the demands of groups and collectives. In the next analysis, I have tried to show that even capability approach within the present framework has serious dilemmas and contradictions. As I discussed in the previous argument with regard to the social ontology of deprivation, the perspective of groups and collectives are missing in the present structure of capability approach.

CAPABILITY APPROACH: EMERGING CONTRADICTIONS

The objective of this section is to engage the capability approach with some of the important dimensions of social reality and to what extent capability approach captures those realities. The advents of globalization and state's focus on institutional form of democracy have made capability approach vulnerable to lot of criticisms. The following is an outline of arguments against capability approach.

Capability Approach in the Context of Globalization

We have argued in the previous chapter that Nussbaum's framework of analysis lacks the framework for probing the ontology of social dynamics in India. Society in India has taken a different shape with the advent of globalization. The context of globalization presents lot of challenges before the capability approach to prove itself. We had seen in the list prepared by Nussbaum that the list does not provide us adequate safeguards to promote the general well being of the groups or even the individual in the face of a social context. Globalisation provides us an opportunity to look at the framework of understanding provided by Amartya Sen. The framework suggests that the discourse on globalization has created tension within the school of capability approach. Capability approach as understood by Sen

has failed to respond to the challenges offered by globalization.

As the literature on Amartya Sen suggests, he defends the process of globalization and market economy and believes that the benefits of globalization will trickle down to the grass root. But the real question is, how this process will start and what is the mechanism through which he plans to implement this. Sen emphasizes the need for 'public action'. His idea of public action means state intervention. While I do not deny the historical inevitability of the need of the state, yet without changing the power structure of the state, if we believe that state will deliver all goods then it is foolish. The interesting contradictions within the Indian state make an interesting study for analysis. While Sen's intentions are good yet the visibility of state acting in favour of the poor is very less. The advent of globalization has made the situation more worse. Globalization will unite the whole world in every respect. While the idea seems to be very attractive, the developments with regard to globalization say something else. Globalization has produced a world full of disparities among countries and the poor are at the receiving end. The state is continuously challenged and it has stopped working for the benefit of the poor. So what will happen to the freedom of poor in India? Will globalization enhance their capabilities to achieve valuable functionings? Whether globalization has any emancipatory role to play for the deprived and poor sections. These are some of the critical questions which the capability approach has to respond in the near future. It is true that globalization has changed the nature and character of the notion of state. The point that I want to make here is not to raise a debate over the existence of globalization. The question that I am keen to propose is how far the development process generated by the forces of globalization has been equitable and sustainable. Do they really care for existing unequal structures of society? The more fundamental questions are development at

what cost and at whose cost. Capability approach has to respond to the emerging realities of this changing nature and dynamics of state and society. It has to locate itself within the broad framework of the process of globalization and see how it is addressing the new equations of oppression and structures of inequality. The process has produced a situation with increasing commoditification and monopolization of natural resources like land, water and forest, their unsustainable use and unequal distribution, exploitative power relations, the centralization of decision making and disempowerment of communities. The big question is to what extent capability approach will capture these new realities? The tract record so far has not been very encouraging.

There are many forces working restlessly to oppose the process of globalization. They are broadly called people's right groups. They emphasize on building a society free from coercion, exploitation and inequalities. They are now active participants in the social movements directed against the onslaught of globalization. The movements of landless, unorganized labour in rural and urban areas, adivasis, dalits and displaced people, peasants, urban poor, small entrepreneurs and unemployed youth took up the issues of livelihood, opportunities, dignity and development. Moreover, the process of development itself resulted in large scale displacement, destitution, centralization and destruction of resources.

Capability and the Problem of Liberal Representative Democracy

At many places Sen clearly says that community empowerment is important goal of development. That does not mean that Sen gives lot of emphasis on community for individual's development. Sen is absolutely silent on the need of the community to engage the individual. There have been many instances where the community as a whole has taken a lead. "The resistance by women in the chipko

agitation to save community forest in Uttarakhand in the early 1980s or the struggle of the villagers against Birla's Hariyar polymers factory in Dharwad-kusnoor in Karnataka assert community rights over displacement by dams or factories. The successful opposition to the silent vally project in Kerala or Bodhghat, Inchamalli or Koel-karo projects by tribals in Chhattishgarh and Jharkhand reinforced the importance of forests and green cover and the inalienable rights of tribals. The shoshit Jan Andolan in Maharashtra also had been a forum for coordinated struggle for community rights over land."(Sangvi, 2007) Sen's capability framework does not address the issues that affect the community as a whole. It does not have space for mass movements of resistance. Let us understand this with a hypothetical example. Suppose, in a city ninety percent of population want that there should be vegetable outlets owned by big names like Big Apple, Subhikhya, or Spencer. Sen says that people should be given freedom to choose the best that they like. Let us say these outlets are opened and considering the fact everybody has decided to exercise their freedom. Now the problem is what about the vegetable vendors, the small vegetable cultivators who directly sell the product in the market. For the urban elite, who do not have the time to go to each and every vegetable vendor to collect vegetable will find the Reliance outlet or Big Apple outlet to be more comfortable. The important point that I want to draw here is that even maximizing freedom of individuals can be penalizing for some in the society. Sen will never endorse this argument. The point that we are trying to make here is that state as a neutral agency for ensuring freedom of individuals has some limitations. The limitations arise because of the representative democratic character of the state. To explain it further, representative democracy limits the sphere of the state to work within the broad framework of the utilitarian approach. Interestingly, Sen vehemently criticizes the

utilitarian approach and then proceeds to explain what he means by capability approach. So without Sen's acknowledgement, capability perspective for all practical purposes becomes utilitarian. This is the problem of capability perspective. In fact, there are many scholars who discuss people's rights, believe that participatory democracy is more suitable for guaranteeing people's rights. In this context, D.L.Seth argues that "It is in the politics of grass roots movements, where the scope of democracy is being actively searched and expanded through their everyday political struggles, that participatory democracy is conceived as not just desirable but a necessary organizational form and political practice."(Seth, 2004) Under conditions of globalization, where the institutions of representation are being subordinated to hegemonic global power with the structures of political and economic decision making becoming more remote even alienated-from people, the movements for participatory democracy has acquired a new relevance. In contemporary democratic theory the notion of political participation is articulated in terms of political obligations and legal-institutional rights of citizens with respect to electing representative governments and ensuring their democratic functioning. By conceiving participation in passive terms of limiting citizen's role and activities to the institutional arena of elections, parties and pressure groups, the theory secures the decision making procedures of representative governments from the high intensity politics of mass mobilization and direct action, which the occasionally surfacing popular movements generate in a representative democracy.(Sangvi, 2007)

Capability perspective broadly works within the framework of liberal representative form of democracy. Even though it speaks about giving people the right to decide their own choices, there is no reference to how this will be achieved. Even if Sen gives specific emphasis on

'public action' yet nothing is clear from that. As long as there is absence of institutions of substantive democracy, people's freedom cannot be assured. 'Technocratic management of politics'(Chandhoke, 2003) is a major hindrance to the growth of community and its empowerment. It seems without any acknowledgement, capability perspective does believe in that view of politics. Community can be empowered only when we allow them to take their own decisions. Capability approach in practice, puts lot of emphasis on the state to strengthen these communities. Indian state because of its meritocratic and technocratic nature, assumes that they are the best to decide about the communities. This is exactly what happens in Panchayati Raj Institutions. (PRIs)

There is no doubt about the fact that PRIs have a great potential to empower the rural communities. Capability approach does not specifically address these issues. Let us take another example how the state has hampered the growth of community's power to address their problems. It is now statutory that PRIs are the chief institutions of rural development. Capability perspective also says the same thing. What has happened in the 1990's is the growth of NGOs as agencies for rural development. State has heavily funded these NGOs. We call them as counter agencies of rural transformation. The state has no faith in the PRIs. That is why it is promoting parallel institutions of grassroots development. The problems with the NGOs are numerous. First, their agenda is managed by their funding agencies. So obviously people's demand at many times is hijacked by the NGOs. This is one of the reasons as to why the state has sponsored the NGOs to appropriate the people's movement in a passive manner. Manoranjan Mohanty argues that instead of NGOs we need to promote People's Democratic Organisations (PDO). According to him, people's democratic

organizations are characterized by three things. First, a PDO is a political entity that emerges from a struggle, whereas an NGO is a legally incorporated entity formed by a group of people which may not necessarily have a background of struggle. Second, the PDO derives its main resources-money and personnel from the local area where it is active. NGOs generally are funded by external agencies and the state. The third element is the question of accountability. While the NGOs are accountable to their funding agencies, the PDOs are accountable to the local people. These are some of the valid points argued by Mohanty. If the idea is to give them the freedom to decide their own choice and decisions then obviously it cannot be NGOs.

The idea of empowerment and enhancement of people's capabilities will be successful only when there is functioning democracy and decentralized power structures, the rule of law and institutions-political, economic and social-that will uphold, promote and sustain people's basic rights to development. The gap between resources that help us to achieve freedom and the extent of freedom itself is important in principle. Individuals must have the freedom, knowledge and ability to choose from alternatives. Social conditioning, social barriers, and social sanctions may inhibit an individual's ability to seek the right means to well being because of caste, gender, class and religious differences.

We have argued that PRIs and the PDOs have a great potential to work within the broad frame work of capability approach. However, it is to be noted that PRIs needs to be seen as institutions of self governance and not mere implementation agencies for centre or state. Self help groups have acquired prominence in the present development discourse. The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) should be in charge of monitoring the SHGs and not the NGOs. The idea that PRIs are political institutions and hence faction

ridden, should be given up. Capability approach needs to clarify these things. It has to emerge from the world Bank sponsored 'Good Governance 'model. There is a need to focus on building people's power. The problem with para state institutions is that they depoliticize the system, and neutralize the political discontent of the people. Capability approach as argued by Sen and further explained by Nussbaum and other philosophers have never looked into this aspect. In which kind of democratic framework, capability approach can offer the best has never been explained by these philosophers.

There is a caution in this understanding. Here I have appreciated PRIs as the role model for democratic empowerment. But before we proceed, we need to understand the background inequalities that operate at the grassroots level. Real grassroots democracy is possible only when all the shareholders of democracy take part in the decision making process. I have argued that this is not possible in the present liberal representative model at least at the grassroots level. Because people are passive recipients of the policy decisions. Since capability approach is primarily understood within the space of liberal democratic model, we need to evolve a political framework which can articulate the language of people's rights.

Capability and Alternative Development

Development has become a buzzword in recent times. But nobody agrees on the framework of development. People have different opinions regarding development. But a majority of them believe that development means progress of the majority. But this development model is very much unfair to the people who stay at the margin of the centre. They call for an alternative model of development. Alternative development implies a development process, which is just, humane and sustainable. Is the capability perspective appropriate to capture the

essence of alternative development? Alternative development stands for issues of justice and respect for humanity. Today, India is facing a crisis of development in the sense that development is viewed in the eyes of the majority. Rapid industrialization, construction of big dams are some of the examples of development which the state supports. The problem with such a view of development is that a minority section of the society gets excluded from the benefits. It is not clear by whom and for whom development was planned and development towards what. It appears that the process of development has benefited only a few at the expense of many. Capability approach because of its nature and dependence on the structure of the state, is forced to endorse such a view point. Today development means economic growth and endless technological innovations and control of natural resources. This also includes transforming the traditional social structures into a modern type as in the industrial nations.

Moreover, mass production of consumption goods, the rise of multinational companies and control of technology and information by some have resulted not only in unbalanced distribution of these goods but also in serious imbalances in employment opportunities and affordability of consumption of goods. Small and medium economies are drained out of their resources in order to strengthen the rich nations and their economic institutions. All this has increased rural poverty, city slums and national debt. Wanton exploitation of natural resources has caused pollution, ecological and environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources all over the world. Liberalization and globalization are put forward as world processes through which national economies are opened up and strengthened by integrating trade investments, financial markets, and consumer markets. However, the entire process has generated contradictory results. Extension of national markets and

national economies to outsiders to be guided by international institutions such as IMF, World Bank, and WTO has often resulted in their fragmentation and destruction. Macro-economic stabilizations and structural adjustment programmes imposed by the IMF and the World Bank on developing countries have contributed largely to destabilizing national currencies, running their economies and causing the impoverishment of millions of people. The entire process has resulted in exclusion of minorities like dalits and tribals from the development process.

Sen's capability approach essentially looks at the World Bank, IMF as important institutions of global governance. He does not foresee the structures of domination associated with these institutions. Capability approach seeks to empower the people not as autonomous agents, rather as passive recipients of policies and programmes. Even though there is enough voice within the capability approach to give autonomy, yet the outcomes are different. Sen argues that development means freedom or autonomy to the people. But what he means by 'people' is not clear. Capability approach needs to define 'people'. When people constitute as minorities then there is a problem with Sen's capability approach. As long as capability approach looks to settle the issues within the broad perspective of World Bank, it cannot provide justice and security and more importantly autonomy to the minority groups or individuals.

Capability and Social Exclusion

In this section, I will discuss how exclusion takes place in a specific form in India and how capability approach is inadequate to respond it. Amartya Sen is one of the few rare scholars who has devoted considerable attention to the idea of social exclusion. To Amartya Sen, exclusion means capability deprivation. (Sen, 2004) He argues that the idea of social exclusion reinforces the understanding of poverty as capability deprivation. We have no problems with

the way Sen understands social exclusion. But the mechanisms he suggests for addressing the issue of social exclusion are something that can have serious implications for the discourse on inequality and deprivation. Sen suggests that Market mechanism has the potential to address the issue of social exclusion. He further adds that if there is a problem, it is with the creation of social opportunities and not with the market itself. To quote Amartya Sen:

The market mechanism does, of course, arouse passion in favour as well as against, but fundamentally it is no more than a basic arrangement through which people can interact with each other, and undertake mutually advantageous activities. Thus seen, it is very hard to appreciate how any reasonable critic could be against the market mechanism in general. The problems that arise spring typically from other sources-not from the existence of markets per se-and include such concerns as systematic exclusion from the use of the processes and fruits of market operations, insufficient assets or inadequate preparedness to make effective use of market transactions, unconstrained concealment of information by business leaders, or unregulated use of commercial or financial activities that allow the powerful to capitalize the markets, but by allowing them to function better and with greater fairness and inclusiveness. Here the overall achievements of the

market are deeply contingent on the creation of social opportunities. And it is precisely in this connection that the eastern strategy starting with Japan nearly century ago can be seen as having achieved quite a breakthrough.(Sen, 2004)

Before, we arrive at any conclusion we need to understand the above paragraph carefully. He speaks about creation of social opportunities. Two basic questions are important in this context. First, who will create social opportunities? Sen gives emphasis on 'careful and determined public action'.(Sen, 2004) I have questioned this idea of public action elsewhere. Public action will deliver only when it is supported by institutions which are inclusive and democratic. The idea of public action will work only when the entire state structure will be democratic. For example, the conditions of tribals. Sen insists on public action to address tribal deprivation. He obviously makes a reference to state agency to do it. Who is part of the agency of the state? How many tribals are there in the institution? Whether the people who are going to be involved have any practical experience of tribal conditions or life system? These are some of the critical questions which need to be addressed before we conceptualise exclusion as capability deprivation.

The second question is more fundamental. The question is whether capability enhancement will reduce the possibility of social exclusion. There are studies which indicate that even education and health are not enough. Without employment that guarantees a decent income to the majority, how will people use their capabilities? We already have number of educated unemployed. Besides, without removing the traditional as well as the new bastions of privileges and power, 'governance' will not translate into people's ability to access services meant

for them and to be used by them for their best interests. There is a good example to explain this problem. Let us take the case of transgender communities.(Eunuchs). Let us say some of them are highly educated. Yet they remain in the category of highly excluded groups. What is the meaning of education for them? If education cannot enhance their position in the society, if they cannot live with honour and dignity, then it is meaningless to speak about building people's capabilities. I don't think Sen has grasped this problem at all.

The fact of the matter is that only capability enhancement will not reduce the possibility of social exclusion. We need to evolve a structure which produces '*productive human capability*'. I insist on this term because the term is very much different from the term capability. Because productive human capability is directed towards the desired destination. It is more goal oriented and target oriented. If valuing freedom does not reduce my chances of being socially excluded, then what is the need of capability? Productive human capability expands the realm of capability perspective. Productive human capability is sensitive to the demands of the groups, has an element of self respect and it adequately addresses the issues of power.

Capability and the Ontology of Caste, Class and Gender

Indian society truly represents a multicultural and plural society. Here, individual identities overlap so frequently that we call that each of us carries multiple identities. For example, take the case of a poor woman dalit. Poor indicates the class, dalit signifies caste and woman indicates gender. A single individual carries so many identities. In this section, we are trying to unfold the structures of inequality embedded in our society. It is important to note that a straight forward analysis of inequality will not reveal the true nature of inequality in Indian society. The historical existence of inequality and their redressal

cannot be addressed by the capability approach. The basic focus of capability approach has been enhancing individual capability. I have two objections to this. First, how can we address the issue of inequality simultaneously? I mean the capability framework does not have adequate tools to look at the issues simultaneously. The issues of domination at the class-caste-gender level need a perspective which can simultaneously handle such interconnections. Let us take the example of poverty. Poverty is an issue whose understanding is incomplete without the interface of caste, class and gender.(Mohanty, 2004) But for Sen and others Poverty is seen as lack of entitlements. The deep rooted inequality because of these factors gets neglected in Sen's analysis. Secondly, the issues of power and the hierarchy of relationship have not been addressed by the capability approach. More specifically, The capability approach ignores the institutionalized structures of power and social domination. By institutionalized structures of power, I mean a power hierarchy in society backed and supported by institutions. The beauty of Sen's analysis of inequality lies in the fact that he acknowledges the fact that there are multiple sources of inequality. He takes pain to emphasize that inequality is not just a matter of income distribution or even of the distribution of material resources in some wider sense of the term. He argues that inequalities have to be considered not merely within a single space, but within a number of different spaces. A major problem in the study of inequality therefore is to identify these spaces and to analyze how they are related to each other through the process of exclusion and inclusion.

Three questions could be raised here. First, the inherent properties of social arrangements, second the social evaluation of distinctions within institutions and third, the place of power in the maintenance and transformation of organizations. Sen

discusses the evaluation and assessment of social arrangements in general. But, it is difficult to determine what exactly the author has in mind when he refers to social arrangements. It is not easy to understand the case for equality in social arrangements without some notion of the pre-conditions for the existence and operation of such arrangements. Social scientists are disappointed when inequality is measured in a single matrix. Sen raises lot of hope when he values human diversity to be an important element while considering inequality. Hence, Sen raises our expectations by pointing to the significance of human diversity and dwelling upon the need to take a great many things in addition to income into account. But, how are we to conceive of the arrangement of these in relation to each other? Very little is said about the rules of combination that might enable us to proceed from simple, to more complex ones. Sen is correct to argue the linkages between human diversity and inequality. But he does not suggest that the more there is diversity, there will be more inequality. Rather he is keen to find a solution where human diversity may be so arranged so as to minimize inequality. The point that I am trying to make here is that Sen is more interested in providing solutions rather than going deep into the problem.

It is true that Sen speaks about human diversity. But he does not at all speak about inequalities because of low social esteem. For example, a neurosurgeon ranks higher than a cleaner, but it is not easy to explain exactly why. The common sense explanation that the former enjoys a higher income than the latter and that the two will continue to be esteemed unequally even after their incomes are equalized, The evaluations that are made by the members of a society are extraordinarily complex, but they are not altogether devoid of a structure. Thus social inequality is not just a matter of the distribution of goods and resources among

individuals, but also one of the relations among persons with a component of evaluation built into them.

Similarly, Sen never addresses the question of power in social arrangements and inequality produced because of power relations. Power is an extremely fluid phenomenon; it exists in many different forms, such as coercion, domination and manipulation. Besides the state, in every structured organization, there is a chain of command and obedience. However, Sen does not engage and explain the extent to which social arrangements can dispense with inequalities of power. More importantly, he does not have enough space in the capability approach to raise issues of self respect, power and domination.

So far I have argued that deprivation can be analyzed in terms of denial of rights, absence of human freedom, opportunities and lack of entitlement. The most distinctive argument of this chapter is that deprivation has a social dimension and the issues of power and domination are intricately related to deprivation. Deprivation and inequality needs a framework which includes the issues of self respect and power. Institutions in India have taken a wrong way to address these issues. They have taken welfare and resource based approaches to address these issues. Majority of them have taken individuals as passive beneficiaries who are at the receiving end. As long as the issue of exclusion of individual from public space is marginalized, the debate over inequality and deprivation would continue to bother the social scientists. I have argued that apart from the institutions, even the political framework within which capability approach of Sen would like to operate needs to reinvent it. The support for market economy, absolute faith in liberal representative democracy have put a big question mark over the effectiveness of capability perspective.

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