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AMARTYA SEN'S CONTRIBUTION IN CAPABILITY APPROACH

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The Concept of capability Approach is as relevant as ever to the design of effective policies to combat poverty and deprivation. The capability Approach has proved powerful tool in reshaping thinking about topics as diverse as gender, human security and climate change besides generalized policies on poverty reduction and inequalities eliminations.

The capability Approach is a broad normative framework for the evaluation of individual well being and social arrangements. The design of policies and proposals about social change in society. The capability Approach is used in a wide range of fields, most prominently in development thinking, welfare economics, social policy and political philosophy. Although the capability Approach has its roots in the writing of Aristotle Adam Smith, J.S. Mill and Karl Marx, but it got prominence only after the publication of pioneer work of economist and philosopher Amartya sen. Finally the concept of capability Approach was adopted by international development agencies such as World Bank and UNSP as human development approach of poverty reduction, placing greater attention to social sector infrastructure education and health. Thus, the capability Approach remained in forefront of poverty reduction approaches in third world countries like India.

The Present Paper analysed Prof. Amartya Sen's Contribution towards development of Capability Approach. The paper also gives holistic view of Sen's Capability approach, Nussbaum's Contribution and Finally the world Bank's adoption in the form of human development.

Prof. Amartya K. Sen's Approach towards capabilities :

Conceptual framework

The conceptual foundation of the capability Approach can be traced in Sen's Critiques of traditional welfare economics on the following grounds.

Traditional Welfare economics considers income and commodity demand as the main source and base of well being on an individual as well as the society. Prof. Sen emphasizes that economic growth and expansion of goods and services are necessary for human development. At this point Prof. Sen seems to agree with Adam Smith. Sen considers income as one of the core factors of well being, but not the only factor as well being as different people and communities may differ in their capacity to convert income into valuable achievements. Well being of different people cannot be compared merely on the bundle of commodities or the income available with them because of lack of information, the traditional welfare economics lacks the foresightedness in the sense that it does not consider the well being of the people in terms of their capability to function with the goods and services inter alia the income, at their disposal.

Sen also questions the welfare or utility approach because it concentrates on happiness, pleasure and desire fulfillment. Sen emphasizes that utility does not distinguish between different sources of pleasure and pain or different kinds of desire. Sen points out that there is more to life than achieving utility. Happiness or desire fulfillment represents only one aspect of human existence. Rights and positive freedoms and many other things of intrinsic value, that have been neglected under the welfare approach, are also of great importance while considering utility a criterion of well being.

Sen criticizes economists on the ground that they use utility as the focal variable in theoretical work but translate this into a focus on income in their empirical works.

In more specific terms capabilities represent the various combinations of functioning that the person can achieve. Capability is a set of vectors of functions, reflecting the person's freedom to lead one type of life or another. A functioning is an achievement of a person. What she or he manages to do or be. It reflects, as it were, a part of the 'state' of that person. Sen terms valuable beings and doings as functioning. Functioning has the following characteristics.

- i. Functionings are all the 'ends' of human life.
- ii. Functionings can also be means.
- iii. Functionings can be elementary such as escaping morbidity and mortality, nourishment and mobility.
- iv. Functionings can be general capabilities to be nourished and communicate.
- v. Functionings can be specific capabilities to enjoy a luxurious life.

Sen clarifies that a person's functioning and his/her capabilities are closely related to each other, but with different instincts. Sen says, "A functioning is an achievement, whereas a capability is the ability to achieve. Functionings are in a sense, more directly related to living conditions, since there are different aspects of living conditions. Capabilities in contrast, are notions of freedom, in the positive sense; what real opportunities you have regarding the life you may lead. Here is an example to differentiate between functioning and capabilities. Consider the two persons, one suffering from hunger in Kala Handi, and the second a white collar job activist decided to go on a hunger strike at the gate of the factory for salary hike. Although both persons lack the functioning of being well nourished, the freedom they had to avoid being hungry is distinct. Although both lack the achieved functioning in terms of nourishment and hunger free, the person on hunger strike has the capability to achieve this functioning which the Kala Handi person lacks.

Prof. Amartya Sen's approach towards capability is a path breaking approach and improvement order welfare economics. It has following merits:

- I. It is flexible and exhibits considerable degree of internal pluralism, which allows researchers to develop and apply it in many different ways.
- II. There is no definitive list of capabilities. Instead Sen argues that the selection and weighting of capabilities depends on personal value judgement.
- III. Sen's capability Approach can be used to assess individual advantage in a range of different space. Capability Approach provides a wider concept of well being and deprivation than the simple assessment of poverty.
- IV. Capability Approach has also been adjusted to focus on inequality, social justice, living standards and rights & duties.

Further Readings on capability Approach “Nussbaum” contribution

Prof. Amartya Sen certainly created a new dimension in welfare economics in the form of the capability Approach with a theory of good to guide moral judgement. In continuation of Sen's approach many different ethics of human well being and need have emerged in development studies, social sciences and philosophy.

Martha Nussbaum a widely respected classicist and Aristotle Scholar, embraced the 'capability Approach' to human development. Nussbaum gave it a distinctly Aristotelian flavour.

A necessary component of Nussbaum's capability Approach is the list of basic capabilities. She asks an Aristotelian question, "what activities characteristically performed by human beings are so central that they seem definitive of the life that is truly human." Two more precise questions are then formulated, "which changes or transitions are compatible with the continued existence of a being as a member of the human kind and which or not? "What kinds of activity must be there if we are going to acknowledge that a given life is human." Answer of these questions lies in the core list of Nussbaum.

Her list includes-

1. Life
2. Bodily health and integrity.
3. Bodily integrity
4. Senses, imagination, thought
5. Emotions
6. Practical reason
7. Other Species
8. Control over one's environment.
9. Application
10. Play

Nussbaum further classified capabilities into three types. Basic capabilities are the innate equipment of individuals that is the necessary basis for developing more advanced capabilities. She points out that most infants have the basic capability for practical reason and imagination, though without a good deal more development and education they cannot use it.

Internal capabilities are states of persons that are sufficient conditions for the exercise of the corresponding function. Most adults have the internal capability of use of speech.

Combined capabilities are defined as internal capabilities plus the external conditions that make the exercise of a function a live option. The aim of public policy is the promotion of combined capabilities; this requires two kinds of efforts (i) The Promotion of internal capabilities, and (ii) The making available of the external institutional and material conditions.

In her treatment to capabilities, Nussbaum is more specific. Her exhaustive list of basic capabilities provides basic political principles that have been given due importance and place in constitutions of almost all the countries of the world. These factors have been guiding principles in human rights legislations and development policies. Fundamental rights and directive principles of state of Indian constitution have given due recognition to core capabilities of human well being much prior to western scholars attempts in this direction. Be it John Rawls, Amartya Sen, Nussbaum & Avid Clark or many more western thinker, their thoughts have due recognition in developmental policies in most of the countries. However, the Issue of operationalising the capability Approach is still of great importance because it is rather difficult to quantify certain vectors of human capabilities, which have been highlighted by Prof. Amartya Sen and others.

Capability Approach Translates in to human Development :

Several attempts have been made to apply the capability Approach in the policies and programmers of development in general and human development in particular the concept of human development as enunciated by World bank and its Subsidiaries and various organizations of United Nations (UNDP, FAO, WHO, UNICEF, etc.) has its theoretical basis in the capability Approach several indices have been developed on the basis of Capability Approach.

Expectancy of life at birth, education as measured by adult Literacy and gross enrollment ratio and adjusted read. GDP per capita, availability of safe and wholesome water, effective participation in economic and political decision making etc. are the core functioning of capabilities that have been discussed by Sen, Mussbaum and amny others. These indexes provide a better understanding of development of a country region as compared to GDP based index which is an imperfect indicator of human development. HDI ranking of countries pared the way

for respective governments, of somewhat lower HDI, to reform their policies. The same happened in a continental country like India.

Although, these indexes consider just a few functionings and that too in crude manner, it is probably the application which has had the greater impact on policy making. It shows the usefulness of the capability Approach.

CONCLUSION

Prof Amartya sen provided a sound base for human development and reduction of poverty and inequality in the form of capability in Approach. Martha Nussbaum erected a edifice on it with clear cut demarcations in the form of basic capabilities and ultimately the UN agencies and the World Bank beatified the concept in the form of millennium Development Goals and certain specific measures of human development. These efforts established the usefulness at capability Approach in poverty reduction and bridging the gap between haves and have notes. These theoretical developments brought qualitative changes in policy initiatives at micro and macro level in third world countries. Despite many shortcomings on theoretical basis, the cpability Approach proved its worth in its empirical usefulness.

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