

POVERTY AND CAPABILITY

DEPRIVATION

WHAT CAUSES POVERTY?

NOT HAVING MONEY!

LOW INCOME IS CLEARLY ONE OF THE MAIN CAUSES OF POVERTY...



... BUT, POVERTY ITSELF CAN NOW BE SEEN AS THE DEPRIVATION OF BASIC CAPABILITY, NOT JUST INCOME!

AND THAT'S WHY WE NEED THE 'CAPABILITY APPROACH', RIGHT?

OBVIOUSLY! POVERTY AND CAPABILITY DEPRIVATION ARE INTRINSICALLY IMPORTANT! LOW INCOME IS ONLY INSTRUMENTALLY SIGNIFICANT, AS IT IS NOT THE ONLY THING GENERATING WHAT WE CALL... POVERTY!



YES, THERE ARE OTHER CAUSES OF POVERTY, AND EVEN LOW INCOME EFFECTS CAN VARY BETWEEN COMMUNITIES, FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS.

YES, THINGS VARY ACCORDING TO AGE, GENDER, AND THE SOCIAL ROLES SOME PEOPLE HAVE TO PLAY!

RIGHT! HANDICAPS SUCH AS OLD AGE, DISABILITY, OR ILLNESS CAN REDUCE A PERSON'S ABILITY TO EARN INCOME, BUT ALSO MAKE IT HARDER TO CONVERT INCOME INTO CAPABILITY, AND SO...



... THEY NEED HELP!

EXACTLY!

DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME WITHIN THE FAMILY ALSO COMPLICATES THINGS... SOME GET MORE THAN THEIR FAIR SHARE...

YES! BOYS GET FAVOURED!

... WHILE OTHERS ARE SYSTEMATICALLY... DEPRIVED OF MANY OPPORTUNITIES!

GIRLS EVERYWHERE!

IT'S TRUE!



THE CAPABILITY DEPRIVATION OF GIRLS IS WIDESPREAD, ALL OVER THE WORLD!

IT TRAPS THEM IN A TIGHT WEB OF ILLITERACY, UNDER-NOURISHMENT... AND EARLY DEATH!

WE SEE IT!

THESE THINGS ARE NOT EASILY SEEN, WHEN LOOKED AT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF SIMPLE INCOME ANALYSIS!

EVEN IN NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE, THEY SAY!

YES! THE RELATIVE DEPRIVATION OF THE POOR IN RICH COUNTRIES CAN BE THE SOURCE OF ABSOLUTE DEPRIVATION IN TERMS OF... CAPABILITIES!

WE DON'T SEE THE WHOLE PICTURE!

THAT'S WHAT THE 'CAPABILITY APPROACH' DOES, IN THIS POVERTY ANALYSIS! IT SHIFTS THE ATTENTION AWAY FROM MEANS - LIKE INCOME - TOWARDS ENDS, OR... WHAT PEOPLE HAVE REASONS TO ACHIEVE!

EXACTLY!

WHEN ECONOMIC REFORMS WERE IMPLEMENTED IN INDIA, TO OPEN UP ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PEOPLE, THEY FOUND THAT NOT NEARLY ENOUGH EFFORT HAD BEEN PUT INTO THE SOCIAL PREPARATIONS IN ALL THE VARIOUS COMMUNITIES!

IT'S THE SAME HERE!

THINGS LIKE BASIC EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE? ALL THE FREEDOMS THAT COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER?

YES! AND SO INDIA DID NOT TAKE OFF ECONOMICALLY...

... LIKE MANY OTHER ASIAN ECONOMIES DID? JAPAN, TAIWAN, SOUTH KOREA, AND LATER CHINA, WHO HAD ALL SUPPLIED GREATER SUPPORT TO THEIR PEOPLES!

DON'T TELL US!... BASIC EDUCATION, HEALTH CARE, AND LAND REFORM!

THAT'S RIGHT! AND EVEN IN INDIA ITSELF, A STATE LIKE KERALA, WHICH ENJOYED ONLY MODERATE ECONOMIC GROWTH, SOMEHOW REDUCED ITS POVERTY MUCH QUICKER... WHY?

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AY!

?! I DON'T KNOW!... WHY?



BECAUSE KERALA HAD INVESTED IN BASIC EDUCATION, HEALTH CARE, AND LAND REFORM!



IT SEEMS SO!... BUT WE MUST NOT CONFUSE ENDS AND MEANS HERE! WE HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE NEED TO BE IN PLACE, AND THAT IT IS THESE THAT MAY HELP US TO REDUCE POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION!... RIGHT?



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IN TERMS OF THE LIVES PEOPLE ACTUALLY LEAD, AND THE FREEDOMS THEY ACTUALLY ENJOY? THEN HELPFUL POLICIES CAN BE CREATED?



YES! THEN BY EXPANDING HUMAN CAPABILITIES WE CAN EXPAND PRODUCTIVITY AND EARNING POWER!



BUT, THE PEOPLE... HAVE TO DO IT, FOR THEMSELVES!

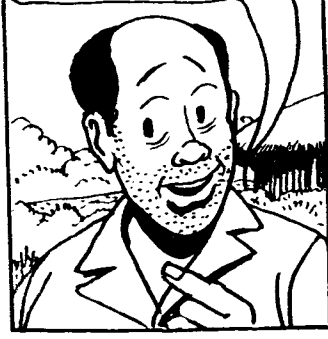
YES! SIMPLY BY BEING FREE TO TAKE PART IN SOCIETY AND THE ECONOMY! BUT IT IS NEVER EASY. INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION INEVITABLY CAUSE PROBLEMS!



PROBLEMS OF FAIRNESS?

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YES! ANY DEEP AND OBVIOUS UNFAIRNESS, IN ANY SOCIETY, CAN SPLIT IT! BADLY!



BUT, DON'T SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT JUSTICE IS SIMPLY FAIRNESS?



THEY DO... BUT YOU CAN'T COMPLETELY ERADICATE INEQUALITY-OR IT HAS ALWAYS PROVED DIFFICULT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE TRIED!



?! WHY IS THAT?... IN THIS DAY AND AGE?



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WELL, IF YOU DON'T HAVE A JOB, FOR EXAMPLE, AND YOU ARE THEN GIVEN SOME 'UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT' TO MAKE UP FOR IT...



WE DON'T HAVE THIS 'UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT'... BUT, WITH IT OR WITHOUT IT, THERE IS STILL INEQUALITY!



... YOU STILL DON'T HAVE A SELF-FULFILLING OCCUPATION. YOU CAN SUFFER PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM, LOSING SELF-MOTIVATION, SKILLS, AND SELF-RESPECT! EVEN 'UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT' OR SOME INCOME, DOESN'T MAKE UP FOR THAT!



SO, IT ALL BOILS DOWN TO ATTITUDES ABOUT SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES!... DOESN'T IT?



WHETHER YOU'RE ENABLED TO TAKE UP THE CHALLENGES OF YOUR LIFE, OR TO JUST LET THE STATE, OR SOME OTHERS, TAKE CARE OF YOU?



SO... WHAT IS THE ANSWER?



PROBABLY, SOMETHING BETWEEN THE TWO... BUT, IT ALL DEPENDS UPON IF YOU HAVE THE CAPABILITIES IN THE FIRST PLACE!



AND ALL THIS IS COMPLICATED, DON'T FORGET, BY INEQUALITIES OF GENDER! MANY WOMEN, AND ESPECIALLY GIRLS, ARE DENIED THE CHANCE TO DEVELOP THEIR CAPABILITIES!



SEN ALSO REFERS TO THE ISSUE OF MISSING WOMEN, BECAUSE THEY DIE EARLY! THUS THEY ARE MISSING FROM THE PROCESS ACROSS THE WORLD!



IT'S SO UNFAIR, BECAUSE SO MANY WOMEN ARE BEING DEPRIVED OF THEIR FOUNDATIONAL CAPABILITIES! IT'S UNJUST! RIGHT?



IT IS NOT SIMPLY INCOME INEQUALITY... IT IS GENDER INEQUALITY! IT IS THE DEPRIVATION OF THE RIGHT TO DO THINGS FOR THEMSELVES, THAT THEY ARE QUITE CAPABLE OF DOING!



THE ONLY WAY OF CHANGING THIS IS BY PUBLIC DISCUSSION, AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION BY WOMEN AND MEN, SO AS TO CREATE NEW PUBLIC POLICIES IN A DEMOCRATIC FRAMEWORK!



“The issue of public discussion and social participation is thus central to the making of public policy in a democratic framework. The use of democratic prerogatives—both political liberties and civil rights—is a crucial part of the exercise of economic policy making itself, in addition to other crucial roles it may have. In a freedom-oriented approach, the participatory freedoms cannot be but central to public policy analysis.”

Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 1999, p.110.