

Capabilities Of Decision Making : Among Women in the Working Poor Population

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Abstract

An important concern regarding the gap that remains in the social security provisioning system is, whether it is because of institutional failure or the very knowledge of social security provisioning is enforcing an essentialist standpoint. In theoretical tone, is it only the archaeology of knowledge that determines the way we understand 'women' and their relation with paid work and social security provisions or the kind of knowledge itself creates grounds for structural exclusion. The aim was to understand the role of social policy in the creation of democratic space for women empowerment, and to what extent such policy knowledge can enhance the scope of women's participation in decision making at the village level. Following narrative analysis as the dominant method of data interpretations the paper focuses on the issues of freedom and capability at the local level and its challenges.

Keywords: Gender, Informal Work, Capability and Empowerment

Introduction

This paper has critically analysed the decision-making capabilities of working poor women population in rural Bengal to influence or negotiate with the provisioning of social policy or to question the fault lines that remain (or emerged with time) in the codified policy knowledge framework. The discussion has re-evaluated the idea of gender, as it has thought of, from the perspective of capability as an approach of development and empowerment through the implementation of social security or social protection policies. For instance, the debate and discussion of gender as a concept has undergone important paradigm shifts. The idea of gender began its journey from the arguments against patriarchal relations and division of labour and gradually expresses itself in relation to the sensitive issues of poverty, inequality, and contradictory and conflicting identity of women from different geographical locations. It has been realised that it is not only about empowerment but also on the issues of disempowerment in relation to the modern development discourse. An important question is also, how far the academic scholarships have successfully influenced the regime of welfare states and has created a

space for democratic and gender-sensitive negotiations either to access social security or to participate in the market. Thereby, it is important to understand, how, the new discourse of development since the 1980s has redefined the issues of empowerment/local protest/voices/space for negotiation under the welfare regime and later in the form of larger inclusive development. Since the 1980s, a major shift in policy debate can be observed in understanding and addressing problems of poverty. During this time the attention was greatly shifted towards the nature of poverty itself. This new conceptualisation has gone beyond the narrow definition of poverty and puts more emphasis on well-being, capability, vulnerability, etc. (Williams 2013: 193-212). In this regard, Amartya Sen's contributions form the core principles of the human development approach that evolved in the Human Development Reports.

The Human Development Report was the first of its kind, which shifted the focus of development economics from national income accounting to a people-centred policy approach. The first Human Development Report was launched by Mahbub ul Haq in 1990 with great ambition for forming a comprehensive approach towards

sustainable development. From its inception, the UNDP published Human Development Report (HDRs) and has adopted Amartya Sen's capability approach as a conceptual framework for analysing the challenges of contemporary development. This alternative methodology with the broader Human Development Indices (HDI) is a composite measure of achievements in basic human capabilities (Fukuda Parr 2003: 301-317).

This approach of human development defined development, as a process to enhance a person's functioning and capability in terms of increased choices to a range of things that a person could do or be in life. In the present-day context, this approach seems to have an impact on the policy choices on poverty, sustainable development, gender equality, governance, and globalisation. As argued by Sen (1999, 2009), the studies of deprivation should focus on functioning and capabilities of persons, rather than the narrow measures of income or consumption-based indices of poverty. Sen insists that improving peoples functioning should be the ultimate concern of poverty research which should reflect in the development indicators (Qizilbash 2011: 21-42).

Interestingly, the critical literature in this domain has doubted the means by which capabilities are realised in practice. The paper examines a few important critiques of Sen's work like Charles Gore (1993: 429-460), Sugden (2004: 111-134), and Cohen (1993: 2156-2160). The critiques have extended the debate on the capabilities of the poor, and have unfolded other important dimensions of policy knowledge on poverty as emerged from the experiences of developing nations.

It appears that, though the capability approach articulates the role of entitlements, such as social security in the expansion of personal freedom, the approach seems to share no significant cues about concrete steps for mitigating poverty at the household level. In theory, the approach has never claimed for providing a model for poverty reduction rather it focused on creating broader evaluative space for wider justice. But important questions remain regarding the extent that this space can be utilised for raising voices in practice and in relation to gender.

Methodology

This paper has analysed the experiences of social policy implementation among daily wage-earning women workers as a medium to find answers whether our understanding of 'policy knowledge' is taking an essentialist standpoint, because the implementation of social policy is more a socio-political phenomenon and thereby it leaves behind a question of its impact on working poor and women. In the formation and implementation of social protection policies two important questions are, how and why poor people decide to access or not to access the social security provisions? From this premise, the paper explores the notion of policy knowledge as influenced and determined by an individual's decision-making capabilities. Individual's decision-making capabilities are sensitive to identities like gender, political affiliation, status of migration, and many others. At the household level, the decision for social security is greatly influenced by the individual's access to resources, networks, and their previous experiences of harassment and negligence.

Regional location of the study:

Chinsurash-Magra is an important sub-division of the Hoogly District, consisting of ten Gram Panchayats, viz., Digsui-Hoera, Mogra-I, Mogra-II, Chandrahati-I, Chandrahati-II, Saptagram, Bandel, Debanandapur, Kodalia-I, Kodalia-II. From these ten Gram Panchyats 'Kodaliya Gram Panchyat I' has been purposively selected, as it is located adjacent to the district headquarters. The area was expected to have had a better impact of social protection policies. This paper is a part of my Ph.D. thesis where I interviewed women from 340 households drawn from 2700 enlisted below the poverty population. The calculated sample size is 340. The sample size was calculated from the below poverty lists published from the Kodaliya Gram Panchayat in 2010. Further, the stratified random sampling method was adopted to derive a proportionate sample from each Samsad (strata). Statistical calculation has been done from the statistical data available on Hoogly district of West Bengal.

However, in the research process soon it was realised that the below poverty list published by the Panchayat in 2010 was largely inadequate in capturing the region's true picture of poverty, this measuring criterion not only consists of a higher error quotient, but it reveals the identification of below poverty households was largely socio-political in nature. For instance in the region migration, before and after Bengal partition, political favouritism and class and caste-based discriminations are quite obvious, and more importantly, as I was looking into the issues of women the research explores various gender-sensitive discriminations which not only complicates the rules of provisioning at the local level but also establishes an exploitative relation with gender. For a more comprehensive understanding of discriminations in relation to gender the paper has focuses on the data that extracted from three villages with a large number of migrated below poverty, lower caste population, and geographically located far away from the village panchayat's office.

Nature of Population Following the History of Migration

A large number of households once uprooted from Bangladesh and migrated to India, were worst sufferers, with minimum or no recognition from the local government. Ensuring social security provision to these households involves complex political and social negotiations. The political shift had not only caused prolonged impoverishment to the poor households it reduced their scope for organised resistance. So the history of migration and caste politics is important in illustrating why and how the Partition had hit the lower caste migrants harder than those who migrated earlier. The influx in Bengal continued for many years even after Partition in different forms, and the role that the government played in recognition and resettlement of these poor households itself was ambiguous. The discrepancy was reflected in the official definition for displaced persons and also in the kind of provision provided. Household survey as a method of data collection had provided the scope to capture the diverse experiences of migration. It was evident that in the region, the poorest of the poor, who till now are not being

recognised as Indian citizens and unsuccessful in accessing formal coverage of protection policies, are late migrants (migrated long after Partition). However, in the area there are also migrants from Bihar, U.P, and other remote areas of Bengal who came in search of better employment. But the number of people who migrated from Bangladesh is strikingly high. As Table 4.11 reveals, 29% of the households migrated from Bangladesh to India because of Partition and 10% migrated internally (from other parts of the country).

In the Figure 4.b, the categories of migration are compared with the level of income. Where income is a continuous variable and migration categories are: 'migration due to partition', 'internally migrated', and 'non-migrates'. The figure 3.c, illustrates that apart from a few extreme cases the household income from all the three categories concentrates around the income level of 3500. The figure depicts an extreme case of one household earning fourteen thousand had originally migrated from Bihar, whereas in the category 'migration due to partition' the outliers are towards the lower end of income quintile groups.

Overall, the data speaks about a relationship that exists among Partition, migration, and poverty. Ensuring social security provisions to these households, with minimum or no recognition from the local government, involves complex political and social negotiations. This prologue socio-political marginalisation had not only caused impoverishment to the poor households it reduced their scope for organised resistance. So the status of migration was an important determinant of exclusion, but even then, it was difficult to take migration as only criteria of analysis. The status of households depends on how and when they migrate and how successfully they created local networks. Though, in the present-day context migration is an important cause of suffering but that does not mean non-migrants households less suffer, especially women-headed below poverty line households suffer equally or even worse.

It is to argue that, in third world context 'gender' has a different connotation, which is not confined in essentially

productive and reproductive roles. The relations men and women establish with various social institutions are determined by the kind of struggle he or she has been associated with. The vocabulary of West European and American scholarship shed little light on the way this great economic transformation has influenced the socio-cultural and political relations in developing nations (Harris 2004). Contextualising women in broader historical perspectives show how her negotiating space is greatly defined by her conscious understanding. The history determines the relations individuals establish with society, culture, and also with bureaucratic administrators. It is also important to mention that the research strategies adopted by western feminists are mostly to explore the context of the third world. This position of research in turn determines the specific approach and tools of analysis. On the other hand, for Dalit and third world feminists it is a struggle for identity. So the present study chooses to create a space whereby women themselves have narrated the causes of disempowerment and narrated to the research.

It is interesting to note that, it was difficult to take caste, class or employment status as a unit of analysis as because the nature of the population is complex and the caste and class have taken much difficult form to explore separately, for instance, the research came across many upper-caste women those economic condition is equally or worse than many lower caste women. The focus on disempowered women as subaltern subjects in Spivak's work has dislodged the articulation of subaltern histories from their particular class-based formations. Spivak emphasises how an exclusive focus on class and economics overlooks the material practices and historical role of women in the transition from colonialism to national independence in India (Spivak 1988). The relevance of Spivak's argument was realised, when the research came across many households headed by women, those who, despite their higher caste identity had suffered a worse fate than lower caste women because of the Partition of 1947.

The focus of the research from the beginning remain in gender, so I decided to include the issues, women in the

process of interview, identify as reasons of exclusion from the provisions of social policy. The negotiations and interactions that women are involved in their everyday living are important to illustrate the issues of capability and disempowerment. From the narratives, three broad themes have been derived which illustrate the nature of individuals functioning and capabilities. First, the issues of insensitivity and negligence, second the harassment causes to villagers and third, subjugation associated with corruption.

Insensitivity and negligence:

The issues of insensitivity and negligence not only hinder the poor household's access to social security but to a great extent it inhibits their economic and social inclusion. A woman staying with two small children and alcoholic husband specifically spoke about the issues of negligence and insensitivities.

The woman while illustrating the behaviour of the doctor at the health centre explained how the social relation and perception about an individual's identity determine the kind of treatment and care one receives.

She narrates, my husband is an alcoholic and I somehow managed to survive with two small children by doing domestic work and help from my mother and brothers. We do not have a proper house and clothes to wear. For two proper meals, I and my two small children often go to my mother's place. With my limited capacity I cannot seek private health services, so I try to visit the local health centre in the office of local Panchayat situated near my mother's house. For simple things instead of going to the hospital we go to the health centre.

She further elaborates, we are poor, and so the behaviour of the health centre doctor is also indifferent toward us. The doctor hesitates to touch us as if we are dirty and not clean enough. The insensitivity reflects in his behaviour. This kind of behaviour is an insult but as I do not have money I cannot go to the private doctor, I have to visit them whenever required (Field notes 2013, kodaliyapanchayat).

Further, the experiences of four different households are depicted below to illustrate their suffering during critical health problems because of insensitivity and negligence on part of the health workers.

The first case was of a woman who got a lesion during her first delivery i.e., five years ago and it was still causing her pain. If she does some heavy work it causes severe pain in her stitches. Her family with a monthly income of Rs.3000 spent more than ten thousand in the last five years on her health but nothing positive has happened.

In the second case, a woman was suffering from an infection in her body from the time of her first delivery. She came to know about the infection only at the time of the second delivery. Both the deliveries were done via caesarean section. The prolonged infection in the body made her second delivery critical. At the time of the interview her youngest child was five years old, i.e., already five years had passed after the second delivery. In between her health condition had further declined. Initially, the family made sincere efforts to cure her, but since the two years they stopped spending on her health as nothing fruitful was happening.

The third case of negligence was shared by a 45 years old woman. One year earlier she was suffering from severe tooth-ache and for that initially, she went to the hospital but the doctor was in a hurry. So, after quick observation without paying attention to the problem the doctor prescribed a few costly medicines. However, the pain increased after taking those medicines and she had to come back to the hospital. The doctor then prescribed two new medicines but the pain continued and gradually became unbearable. Then she approached a private doctor who asked her to stop taking the prescribed medicines and gave her new ones which cured her pain. She shared this experience while explaining her views regarding the government health infrastructure. According to her lack of care and irresponsible behaviour is the major problem in assuring good health.

The fourth case is of a woman who had an appendix operation at the local government hospital and has been

suffering from health complications since then. Her family with a monthly income of Rs.2500 spend a lot of money on hospital, doctor, medicine, testing, and travelling but the quality of the treatment she received was extremely poor. She said that, the sonography report received from the hospital was blurred and useless and thus, the actual diagnosis became difficult. A time came when the family had to stop her treatment due to a shortage of money. Her pain and suffering remained the same. At the time of the interview the lady was unable to sit, stand, or bend properly for a long time as it caused pain in her stitches. But she continued with all the required domestic activities. Though, she lives with her in-laws the scope for receiving support from them was limited as her aged father-in-law was also suffering from critical health issues.

The issues of insensitivity and negligence are not the simple drawbacks in the health delivery mechanism. This in reality creates broader grounds for discrimination. Thus, women experience different layers of patriarchy either within households or in a larger community. Along with the sufferings of being widowed, deserted, irresponsible, or alcoholic husbands, women were vocal about the gender-sensitive issues in social security provisions. The provision of social security is largely the domain of a few males. Women headed households consider having male members in the house or good rapport with the male Panchayat members are essential to access social security provisions.

Experiences of harassments

Experiences of harassments to access social security provisions have created apathy among villagers. Though the argument can also be like, individuals can overcome the issues of negligence and harassment with their knowledge of the legal right, which will be the case of enhanced capability. But the arguments from villagers were not the same; they keep on defining harassment as a socio-political tool that excludes villagers from social security provisions. For example, the knowledge that households below a certain level of monthly income are eligible to access specific health, food, and housing provisions, now this

knowledge by itself is meaningless unless people hold the capability to question, criticise and reform the legal procedures according to their need.

The sources of harassment are not always in its local rather it has national and transnational epicentres. For instance, a large number of below poverty households never get the scope to enlist their name in the officially published list for BPL households. Locally this omission is caused by political patronage, corruption, etc. and at the national and transnational level it is larger political interests and framework of rules that create the conditions of omission. It is not only an error in measuring indices of poverty line, but also a political representation of poverty. All these factors together determined the capabilities of individuals and households and which in turn influence the decision-making procedures. To illustrate the phenomenon further the next section illustrates the experiences from the public distribution system.

Experiences from the Food Security Provisions

The struggle for food in India is a continuous struggle. Among a few important measures that the government of India has adopted to ensure food security for its citizens are the green revolution, Indira Gandhi's 'GaribiHataoAndolan' and the recent 2013 Food Security Bill by the UPA government all these three have different context and appeared in different political scenario.

Along with this many more schemes for employment generation like IRDP, DRDA, and recently MGNREGA were introduced for poverty eradication in rural India. Hence, the approach of understanding the food crisis never remains the same. For a few it is a developmental challenge; the Human Development Report considers it more in terms of a human rights challenge. Others consider that more than judicial intervention, public action is essential (Jha 2002: 5159-5163). Despite being the most widely covered social protection policy; the burden of negative impact is more upon the poorest of the poor. Prevailing corruption, political party influence, bad quality food grains, non-availability of essential items, rude behaviour and harassment have worked together in

compromising with the provisioning system. This negative impact of exclusion is more on single earning women households, and seen intensified in the case of the migrated households. Two important cases narrate this phenomenon.

The research process introduces a woman aged around fifty-five, who was extremely feeble and sick, and took shelter in the house of a co-worker. The lady was a daily wage construction worker and did not have anyone in her immediate family. She had been experiencing rapid deterioration in her health for the past two years. At the time of the interview she had problems like the swelling of the leg, and frequent high fever which had further reduced her work capacity leading to less income, which in turn resulted in restricted access to a doctor. She was also unable to get ration as she did not have a ration card. Her official documents were spoilt after her father's death; though she applied for a new ration card she could not get one due to a lack of supporting documents. She was illiterate and not intimidated by official procedures. Though she was eligible to get a BPL card which could make her life easier, but she could not get access. Getting legal documents is a complex procedure, especially for poor migrants, as it requires resources like political networks, information about official methods, and good health. She had never received any co-operation from her extended family members.

Another incident was reported by a woman from the fishermen's colony. She told about an old lady who died due to hunger the previous year in their neighbourhood. There was no one to look after the old lady and she was unable to do any paid work for long. Gradually, she become malnourished and was unable to consult a local doctor. The community members, with earnings not more than Rs 50 per day per family, tried to help her with their limited means, but she died due to hunger. As the region is among the most neglected region in the area, the local Panchayat hardly listen to them.

Moreover, it was found that, households in the area without ration cards were mostly migrants. Migrants

from Bangladesh, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh faced harassment, as transferring or getting a new ration card requires money which they cannot afford. Thereby, along with the social component, the disparity in food distribution is largely political. It is important to acknowledge that democracy had its limitations. Though, Sen's theory about democracy has widely acknowledged the importance of democratic government in famine reduction, to some extent the theory seems to be deterministic in nature (Gore 1993: 429–460). As in the present case, the democratic structures are itself repressive. In the present case they had neither created space for public action, nor had they been able to increase the scope for poor people's participation in scheme implementation. Thus, harassments are not a few isolated incidences rather a pattern can be observed where it creates and maintains institutional power relations to dominate the procedures of inclusion and exclusion.

The subjugation associated with corruption

In the present economic and political condition of India, corruption is not a mere threat in the implementation of development policy, as a part of bureaucratic transactions. Rather, corruption was defined as the language of decision-makers that not only compromises with the provisioning of social security to the needy, but to a great extent enhance discrimination at the community level.

At the institutional level, this typical culture of corruption enforces rigid structural hierarchy that manifests less sympathetic attitude towards the poor, women, older population, and migrating communities. To illustrate the impact of corruption in the provision of social security, the section has cited cases from experiences of housing provision under Indira Awas Yojana (IAY).

Corruption in the housing project of Indira Awas Yojana (IAY):

Ideally, the allocation of houses under Indira Awas Yojana should follow the decisions of the local democratic body of the gram sabha (democratic meeting at the village level). The gram sabha plays an important role in identifying the poorest of the poor households in the

locality and accordingly allocate the IAY housing money. However, in the studied Panchayat it is the Panchayat pradhan (head) and his close associates who dominate the decision of housing provision. Due to this, the provision of houses in IAY is largely political.

A villager says, people who already have big houses are getting IAY housing money, with their well-connected political networks (Field notes 2013, KodaliyaPanchayat). Moreover, from each provisioning of IAY housing money the Panchayat claims Rs.5000 as bribe. Probing further into the reasons like why households give bribe? It was found that the households pay bribe because of the perceived consequences. Households with their limited capability to challenge the local power structures find it beneficial to receive the minimum amount of IAY money even after paying the bribe. Thereby, paying a bribe is a conscious decision of a few poor households depending on their capability, power and need.

As a woman says, whatever we are receiving free of costs is our profit rather than not receiving anything (Field notes 2013, KodaliyaPanchayat).

Harassments in the IAY housing provision was more prominent among households in the migrated colonies.

Two such migrant households describe that initially, when we applied for IAY housing money, the Panchayat's office assured us about the provision. Based on that assurance, before monsoon we began repairing the houses. Later, due to some unknown legal problems we failed to receive the money, but by that time we already spent a lot of money on construction mostly by borrowing (Field notes 2013, KodaliyaPanchayat).

Authorities hardly bother to provide a valid explanation for refusal and harassment caused to the villagers. Random excuses like the housing scheme has stopped are given to the villagers. A female government official elaborately explained the reasons behind this kind of exclusions. According to her, the provisioning of IAY houses requires to have legally registered land document. But, all the squatter colonies formed after Bengal partition had

forcefully acquired the land and settled based on temporary allotments. In the present-day context those temporarily given land documents are not being considered as a valid proof for providing houses. As a result, a large number of migrants staying in those colonies cannot access the housing money.

Thereby, corruption is not only a social hazard but at the same time it is disempowering, humiliating, and discriminating. In the opinion of village women, corruption is more than a simple phenomenon of taking undue advantages it strengthens the authoritative stands of a few powerful individuals.

Thus, all these together forced poor households to compromise with basic human capabilities. The assumption that strengthening the structures of institutional provisions will strengthen the capacity and functioning of common people seems problematic. Even though the burden of criticism falls upon the field level workers, in reality their capacity to bring change in the nature of implementation is limited. Argument as emerged from findings that the protocols for institutional supervisions are overlooking the importance of co-operative efforts which might be more beneficial in the implementations of development activities. This process of knowledge codification is greatly influenced by who plays the dominant role in decision making? Hence, the argument is that depending upon the decision-making procedures institutions retain the reasons for exclusion for which corruption, negligence, and harassment become the mechanisms of exclusion.

Going back to the debate of 'capability and decision' that the paper began with, it is Amartya Sen's Capability approach which forms the core principle of human development indices that provides a framework for analysing basic human capabilities. The objective is to ensure basic human capability through entitlements.

However, from the above findings it could be suggested that entitlements alone hardly ensure emancipation. The provision of social policy involves complex social relations depending on an individual's identity, socio-cultural

position, and history. Even though, the Human Development Report provides an in-depth overview of the nature of poverty and also upholds the contradictory pictures of poverty and deprivation across nations but, the debate exists to what extent this approach can explore the disparity in true sense. It seems that it is not enough to capture the disparity in terms of food, health, income, and education but is also important to include other social exclusions like political patronage, caste, geography and migration. The structural exclusions caused to migrated households in the region have continued to be discriminated across generations. Even though, many migrated households successfully accessed the IAY housing money and many of them access PDS (Public Distribution System) services, but in reality that has neither enhanced their scope of earning nor has given them the power to better negotiate with the social security provisions.

This systematic exclusion does not recognise the local voices, conflicts, and knowledge. At the local level decisions are being taken by those who are in power or it is the national and international institutions with specialised knowledge that are gaining wider importance in the matters of policy decisions. At the societal level recognition of these kinds of tacit knowledge is essential to reduce prevailing disparity and inequality. This phenomenon is also reflected in the critical debate of entitlements. The contributions of Roger Sugden (2004: 111-134), M.S Gore (1993: 429-460), G.A Cohen (1993: 2156-2160) and Mozaffar Qizilbash (2011: 21-42) are important in this regard.

Sugden argued (2002: 111-134) that, the goal and process of development is difficult to be homogenised. Indicators can be useful in comparative analysis but local people should enjoy the freedom to embark on the strategy of development which is rooted in one's history, culture and should reflect upon their development priorities. Danger always remains in extending the indicators into rigid criteria or categories. Such judgemental categories of development set the parameters and moves away from the locality as the unit of analysis, despite the fact that the

locality has different criteria of development. As a result the localities become the subject of strategic decisions.

Sugden (2002: 111-134) also argued that external prescriptions inherent the interests of a few important concerned actors. For example, international organisations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank are being criticised for their approach towards less developed countries which cause inflexible structural adjustment programmes and explicitly serves the interest of transnational capital by insisting on rapid opening of the market. Thereby, it is transferring the ability of planning from governments to those controlling transnational corporations.

Even though the new approach towards human development was initiated from an alternative thinking, debate remains regarding the extent it can successfully curb the conceptual framework of traditional belief of trickle-down impact in practice. The narrow aim of growth and orthodox thinking in economics is equally evident. A related argument is also evident in the post-colonial literature where underdevelopment has been conceptualised more as consequences of the world capitalist system.

Following a similar line of debate, the writings of G.A..Cohen (1993: 2156-2160) focused on the relationship between 'freedom and control'. Cohen argues that Sen's official topic is inequality but his motivating interest is poverty. Sen has re-examined inequality but he does not undertake to say everything relevant to every aspect of the theme.

Cohen (1993: 2156-2160) illustrates the phenomenon by explaining the conflict between freedom and control. He cites a case of malaria control program, to state that the kind of freedom an individual enjoys in an environment without malaria is not his own. It is the State, who is the controlling agent of this kind of freedom. If the policy of malaria elimination is adopted democratically then people's control to exercise freedom might enhance. In most of the cases the decision of malaria clearance is achieved by an undemocratic administration or under the

distant direction of international agencies as a result people have neither control nor freedom. According to Cohen, even if people do desire a life without hunger or malaria, the elimination of these maladies through public policy does not enhance their ability to choose to live as they desire.

In contradiction, Sen defines this kind of provisioning in terms of effective freedom. In Sen's view effective freedom is important because in the modern complex society there is much that we cannot secure individually rather a collective method is helpful. Notably, Cohen's contradiction with Sen is more from a philosophical perspective. Cohen acknowledges the political importance of Sen's view Qizilbash (2011: 21-42).

Charles Gore (1993: 429-460) in his famous article Entitlement Relation and Unruly Social Practice: A comment on the work of Amartya Sen examines the conceptual biases and analytical deployment of Sen's entitlement analysis. Focusing on the rules of entitlement Gore argues that with time rules of entitlement are equated with state-enforced legal rights. His main argument is that despite various modifications and extensions, Sen retains a view on the rules of entitlement which downplays the socially enforced moral rules or compartmentalises them in the domestic sphere. This in Gore's perception is greatly inappropriate with the kind of philosophical argument Sen is making.

Moreover, Gore (1993: 2156-2160) argues that, to improve Sen's idea of entitlement requires incorporating the non-governmental sites of rulemaking and rule enforcing. It is also imperative to examine how the state-enforced legal rule and socially enforced moral rules together enable the command over commodities.

This broad overview includes the issues of power relations and discursive practices as the central element of entitlement analysis. Here, the entitlements are seen as the outcome of an active process of negotiation. Gore (1993:429-460) spoke for a 'consequence sensitive' and 'right inclusive' approach which is essential for assessing the consequences of state-enforced legal rights and their

interplay with the socially enforced moral rules.

At the end, the recent writing of Qizilbash (2011: 21-42) is important because his understanding of the capability approach has included both the strengths and weaknesses in a more comprehensive manner. To illustrate the strength and weakness of the capability approach he divides the approach into a thin and thick view.

The thin view articulates the case for seeing capability and functioning as providing the evaluative space of information alongside other spaces such as utility. In Qizilbash's (2011: 21-42) opinion, when the approach is restricted to constitute this sort of view it need not specify the functioning that are relevant to evaluate in various contexts or can specify the relative weights to be given. Thereby, the approach can be used with a range of evaluative approaches to weighting and views about valuable functioning. Sen's concern is that resources and primary goods are the means which are not valuable by them. If the real concern is people's life then emphasis should be in measuring the differential rates at which means (resources and primary goods) are converted into an opportunity to achieve the valuable ends.

On the other hand the thick views focused on the articulation of specific all-purpose lists of functioning or it sets the weight. It suggests that, in various contexts and different purposes distinct lists might be helpful. At the same time it stresses the role of public reasoning through discussion and debate. It conceptualises this scope of decisions as a matter of social choice because theoretical reasoning on its own cannot provide different societies with a list of functioning or its weights which would necessarily be acceptable to people with different views. More importantly, authors like Martha Nussbaum have further thickened Sen's writing on capability by incorporating elements from the works of others and her thoughts. Importantly, Sen has also acknowledged the possibilities where weights assigned to different functioning might change over the years as any society priorities other needs (Sen 2009).

Thereby, even though the capability as an approach has

opted for broader space in policy knowledge disparity remains in the conceptualisation of capability as basic human functioning and control of the poor to utilise the knowledge space. The broader framework of gender knowledge should provide the space to capture the conflicts that are arising because of local and global changes. As argued the provision of social security and capacity to decide what kind of social security is required, i.e., the liberty to access or create those kinds of changes are two different issues.

Discussion and Conclusion

The UN Commission for the Social Development adopted a resolution in February 2010 that urges governments to develop systems of social protection and to broaden their coverage including workers in the informal sectors. The emphasis remains on the strong policies for developing integrated interventions (ILO 2010). However, despite such standardised universal measures, contrary arguments emerged from different local experiences which gets reflected in the literature. First, doubt arises from the social security coverage data. Though, social security has conceptualised in terms of broader human rights in reality only a minority of the world's population enjoy the right, while the majority lacks comprehensive and adequate coverage. In Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia the number of people with access to even the most rudimentary protection is estimated to be less than ten percent (World Social Security Report 2010/2011). More recently, the World Social Protection Report 2017-2019 depicted that, globally only 45% of the World Population is covered by at least one social protection benefit, 4 billion people are still unprotected. Only 29% of the global population has access to comprehensive social protection, 71% are not or are partially protected. 83 million mothers are still unprotected. Secondly, important arguments emerged from the struggles and experiences of third world nations. This includes the academic theories like the colonial and subaltern line of argument, developed as a theoretical protest against the Western notion of development.

Further, the above discussion has critically analysed the capability as an approach in 'policy knowledge'. It seems even if the approach is methodologically demanding but, do at least warn against its reductionist impact (Gore 1993, Cohen 1993). Though, Sen always speaks in favour of public reasoning and contextual logic but in practice the approach has not contributed much to enhance the space for public reasoning. The approach at the local level has largely been evolved as an intervening tool in the hands of state or international organisations. The objective of strengthening the basic human capabilities or functioning like getting nutrition, not to be hungry etc., has not challenged the procedural drawbacks involved within the delivery mechanisms, and the negative impact of such structural exclusions is even severe among the working women population. Economic participation of women does not have enhanced women's capabilities to demand such provisions nor has it created a scope for women's participation in academic movements. Thus, even though, the capability approach appears critical to enhancing the evaluative space in theory but in reality this has not encouraged people's democratic participation in knowledge creation.

Analysis derived important insights like corruption is not a simple issue of giving bribe instead these are the mechanisms for structural exclusion. The experiences of harassment and negligence were also not portrayed as a few exceptional incidences but they convey a kind of social relation which resists poor people's access to social security. The decision about social security at the household level depends on the kind of relationship they had established with the local authority and their conscious understanding of the vulnerabilities that they are exposed to. Thus, the awareness or knowledge about social security by itself is inadequate to enhance poor women's access to social security. Rather, it is needed to locate the poor households in the context of changing global and local relations. Further, the paper has problematized the health in terms of accessibility the findings brings out that it is not only physical extortion or direct violation of law. To a great extent it is the domination and the control over knowledge.

In reality the grounds of not provisioning remains largely tacit in nature. For example, regarding problems of accessing government health facilities 16.8% women spoke about inadequate infrastructure, 5.9% shared their feeling of negligence, 25.6% mentioned about higher travelling costs, 29.4% mentioned about long waiting hours and 22.3% were vocal about limited free medicine. Further, food security data shows that, in spite the Public Distribution System is the most extensively covered social protection mechanism in India but its real impact on the poorest of the poor is limited. The data shows that among the households, with income not more than Rs.2500, 23.1% feels neglected, 28.6% talked about the political interferences and 26.4% consider powerlessness as important factor against accessing quality food grains.

Thus, from the previous feudal relation the poor are entering into a new social relation with the government and its officials mainly through the provisioning of social security and social protection. This appears to be equally exploitative. A Substantial literature in theorising women and the idea of empowerment emerged as a critique of mainstream western understanding. In India, this alternative line of argument is found in the writings of Postcolonial, Subaltern, and Dalit feminist. This is a struggle where feminist thinkers from the south redefined the idea of 'empowerment' from the emerging consciousness from the south that colonial education had largely distorted. To question the 'global framework of policy knowledge' as third world researchers our inquiry should begin from the assumptions and objectives of any development program and about its impact on changing local relations. As evident from the narratives, it is not a mere gap in ideation and implementation, but it strengthens specific knowledge categories that are less flexible and sensitive towards local needs. Thus, studying the sensitive issues of poverty and gender primarily should be considered as a methodological challenge.

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Table: 1.1 Frequency of Migration (N=340)

Reasons	Percent
Partition	28.8
Internal Migration	9.7
Non Migrated	61.5
Total	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table: 1.2: Problems for accessing government health facilities (On the basis of first preferences) N=340

Problems	Percent
Inadequate Infrastructure	16.8
Feeling of Negligence	5.9
Higher Travelling Costs	25.6
Long Waiting Hours	29.4
Less free medicine	22.3
Total	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table: 1.3: Reasons of unsatisfactory rationing system

Income quintile	Do not have time (%)	Negligence	Powerlessness	They are happy	Political Interferences	Total
Not more than 2500	22.0	23.1	26.4	14.3	28.6	23.1
2501-3000	33.9	32.2	26.4	19.0	28.6	29.2
3001-3500	13.6	20.7	20.0	19.0	21.4	19.1
3501-4000	13.6	11.6	13.6	33.3	14.3	15.1
4001-above	16.9	12.4	13.6	14.3	7.1	13.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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