
UNIT 4 S. RADHAKRISHNAN AND AMARTYA SEN

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to give you a short introduction to the philosophies of two eminent thinkers of India: Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Amartya Sen.

- Radhakrishnan was India's President, whose birthday is celebrated every year as teacher's day. He is a philosopher who spoke extensively on larger issues of philosophy.
- Amartya Sen is a living Nobel Prize winner in economics. Economics is a science of production, distribution and consumption, and any question on what, how and why, raised in economics, imply philosophical presuppositions.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975) was born into a middle class Telugu family at Tirutani in Tamil Nadu state, a town in Madras Presidency, British India, 64 km to the northwest of present Chennai. His early years were spent in Tirutani and Tirupati. His father was a subordinate revenue official in the service of a local landlord. His primary education was at Primary Board High School at Tirutani. In 1896 he was shifted to the Hermansburg Evangelical Lutheran Mission School at Tirupati. He joined the Voorhee's College in Vellore but switched to the Madras Christian College at the age of 17. He graduated with a Master's degree in Philosophy from the Madras Christian College in 1906. Radhakrishnan wrote his thesis for the M.A. degree on "The Ethics of the Vedanta and its Metaphysical Presuppositions". This got published as a book when he was only 20. **Amartya Kumar Sen** (born 3rd November 1933) was born in Santiniketan, West Bengal, the University town established by the poet Rabindranath Tagore. Sen hails from a well-known liberal academic family from East Bengal (present-day Bangladesh). His maternal grandfather Kshitimohan Sen was a renowned scholar of medieval Indian literature, an authority on the philosophy of Hinduism. He was a close associate of Rabindranath Tagore in Santiniketan. Sen's father was Ashutosh Sen and his mother was Amita Sen. Sen began his high-school education at St Gregory's School in Dhaka in 1941, in modern-day Bangladesh. His family migrated to India following partition in 1947. Sen studied in India at the Visva-

Bharati University school and Presidency College, Kolkata before moving to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he earned a First Class BA (Honours) in 1956 and then a Ph.D. in 1959.

S. Radhakrishnan and
Amartya Sen

4.2 PHILOSOPHY OF RADHAKRISHNAN

Radhakrishnan was not a follower any one system of thought, but open to various viewpoints presented by different philosophers. Among all the viewpoints, of course, he was more at home with the metaphysics, epistemology and ethics of Advaita Vedanta which became his line of thinking.

Metaphysics

Following Sankara, Radhakrishnan was of the opinion that reality is Brahman that is one, spiritual, transcendent and absolute. He called it spiritual because it is not material. He called it transcendental because world cannot exhaust it and it is absolute because it is one, pure consciousness, pure freedom with infinite possibility. Brahman is indescribable and manifests itself as God who is the creator of the world.

According to him, there are two worlds: the material world that science studies and the spiritual world that the spiritually inclined perceive. He calls it transcendence or infinite aspect of soul. Upanishads speak of it as “*sarvam khalvidam Brahma*” – everything permeated by Brahman or the spirit which cannot be perceived in any other way. This spirit comes to its fullest expression in human who has a unique position. According to him human is a peculiar combination of egoism and self-transcendence, of selfishness and universal love. This is due to finite and infinite aspects in human. Thus human has a special role in creation. Human is a being capable of self-transcendence, self-reflection and planning.

Since human is embodied spirit (finite-infinite, with body and soul), one cannot attain one’s ultimate destiny directly. Therefore the first aspect of one’s destiny would be freedom from embodied existence. But although that may make one free, that will not put an end to creation; and so long as the cosmic process does not come to an end, complete unity will not be established. Therefore, the final aspect of one’s destiny must be the realization of unity at the end of the cosmic process. One cannot be free from cosmic process till all others are saved. The world process will reach its final goal when every individual will realize Divinity. Radhakrishnan calls it “*Sarvamukti*”. Once this is realized, the purpose of creation is fulfilled and everything will go back to Brahman.

Epistemology

Radhakrishnan accepts three sources of knowledge - sense experience, intellectual cognition (discursive reasoning) and intuitive apprehension. Sense experience acquaints us with the outer characteristics of the external world. We come to know the sensible qualities of the objects. The data yielded by sense experience constitute the subject matter of natural science. Discursive reason or what Radhakrishnan calls logical knowledge depends on analysis and synthesis of the data of perception. He calls logical knowledge indirect and symbolic. We are able to handle and control the objects of nature with such knowledge. Logical knowledge and sense-experience are the means by which we are capable of practical purposes and control over our environment.

Though he accepts the two means of knowledge, they fail to reveal the “original integrity of the perceived object” (IVL, p.106). Intellectual symbols cannot represent perceived realities, as what they are. Moreover, the entire life of feeling and emotion, ‘the delights and pains of the flesh, the agonies and raptures of the soul’ remain out off from thought. He thinks of a higher mode of apprehension where thought, feeling and volition are blended into a whole, where there is no duality, the distinction between the knowledge of a thing and its being. It is a type of knowing by becoming. Radhakrishnan calls it Intuitive Apprehension. In the intuitive apprehension the knower establishes an identity with the known. This can be made clear by taking the example of anger. No intellectual deliberation can give us any idea of the emotion of anger. We can know it only by being angry. Thus we say intuition establishes a unity – almost an identity between the knower and the known. The object known is seen not as an ‘object outside the self, but as a part of the self’.

When he speaks of intuition he uses the word “integral insight.” This doesn’t mean that he makes a compartmentalization in the knowing faculty of human. Rather he says “human’s awareness is broadly speaking of three kinds: the perceptual, the logical and the intuitive; manas or the sense-mind, vijnana or logical and ananda which for our present purposes may be defined as spiritual intuition. All three belong to the human consciousness”. When Radhakrishnan uses the term “integral experience” to refer to intuition, he emphasizes three things. First, intuition is integral in the sense that it coordinates and synthesizes all other experiences. It integrates all other experiences into a more unified whole. Second, intuition is integral as it forms the basis of all other experiences. In other words, Radhakrishnan holds that all experiences are at bottom intuitional. Third, intuition is integral in the sense that the results of the experience are integrated into the life of the individual. For Radhakrishnan, intuition finds expression in the world of action and social relations.

Intuition is the ultimate form of experience for Radhakrishnan. It is ultimate in the sense that intuition constitutes the fullest and therefore the most authentic realization of the Real (Brahman). The ultimacy of intuition is also accounted for by Radhakrishnan in that it is the ground of all other forms of experience.

Finally, intuition, according to Radhakrishnan, is ineffable. It escapes the limits of language and logic, and there is “no conception by which we can define it” (IVL 96). In such experiences, thought and reality come together and a creative merging of subject and object results” (IVL 92). While the experience itself transcends expression, it also provokes it (IVL 95). The provocation of expression is, for Radhakrishnan, testimony to the creative impulse of intuition. All creativity and indeed all progress in the various spheres of life is the inevitable result of intuition.

Religion and Ethics

Radhakrishnan’s ethical teachings must be understood from the background of his religious faith and metaphysics. Every philosophy and religion begins with an intuition. When the need of explaining intuition to others, need of language comes up. When we are born in a tradition the basic content of intuition comes to us as a ‘condition of sensibility,’ in which we are born, brought up and have our being. In this sense, Radhakrishnan ‘never lost faith in a spiritual power beyond the experiential flux of phenomena’ From his study of Indian culture he got two more basic principles namely; universality of outlook and democracy in view of life. (This universality of outlook refers to his faith in the basic oneness of humanity, as all are identical with Brahman or sharing the same qualities of God from whom all came or received the common quest.

Democracy in view of life refers to the tolerance of different points of views, different ways of looking at and different ways of living etc.

When we speak of Religion, as Radhakrishnan understands it, we must make a distinction between Religion and religions. Religion for him is personal intuitive experience. It is an insight into the nature of reality (darsana) and experience of reality (anubhava) (HVL p.15). It is an inward and personal experience which unifies all values and organizes all experiences. It is the reaction to the whole of reality by the whole human. In his book, *Idealistic view of Life*, he calls it spiritual life, the culmination of intellectual, moral and aesthetic activity or a combination of them. (IVL p. 88-89). Different religions according to him are different explanations of this experience. In the course of time, in its effort to explain the intuitive experience there came up external structures in the form of rites, ceremonies, institutions, programmes etc. According to him when the central fact touches a devotee, an experience within, of abounding vitality or inner life which transcends consciousness is the result. When overwhelmed by this, a new humility is born in the soul, cleanses it of pride, prejudice, privilege thoughts and creates a feeling of tenderness and compassion for one's fellow humans. According to him when such humans abound in society, a difference in the life of the society is the result (S. Radhakrishnan, *A Centenary Tribute*, p. 376). According to him, the need of the time is to go from religions to religion, and for that two things are to be emphasized: inner experience and ethics.

Religion also means spirituality which is impossible without ethics, which is the sum total of values and virtues that makes social life smooth and good. Thus he says: "After all, what counts is not creed but conduct. By their fruits ye shall know them and not by their beliefs. Religion is not correct belief but righteous living. 'Religion is universal to the human race. Wherever justice and charity have force of law and ordinance there is God's kingdom', there is Religion. The truly religious never worry about other people's beliefs. Look at the great sayings of Jesus; 'other sheep I have which are not of this fold' (HVL p.37). Jesus' ethics is universal. He says "do unto others what you like them to do to you". When we have such an ethical stand, we are creators of God's kingdom or Religion.

While speaking about Hindu ethics Radhakrishnan explains the purushartas (the four supreme ends of human craving). He writes 'ancient Rishis of India were not only spiritual masters, they were also psychologists, who looked at the motives behind our actions, and they realized that desires or cravings are the very center of our life. Each of these cravings tries for satisfaction. Basically they are four: parental instincts and sexual instincts (kama), desire for power and wealth (artha), desire for social harmony and common good (dharma), and union with the unseen (moksa). These desires are not distinct and independent, but always try to win upper hand and win over the other. The greatness of the person consists in making a co-operation of the four and bringing an overarching unity in life. For each one is a whole in oneself' (HVL p. 56).

The meaning of the word Dharma is really complex. The whole of Ethics could be reduced to this concept. Etymologically it comes from 'dhr' means to hold. *Dharma* is that which holds. It is classified differently. First, as vyaktidharma (or individual duty) and sadharana dharma or ordinary duty. When dharma is applied to social life it becomes vyaktidharma and on the basis of it again we have varnadharma and ashramadharma. There are four varnas: Brahmana, kshatriya, vaisya and sudra, and that is based on nature and capability and each one has to perfect one's nature. Then ashramadharma based on four ashramas: brahmacharya for student, garhastya for family people, and then when one grows in age Vanaprasta and sannyasa. Then

Sadharanadharma is obligatory on every one irrespective of caste, creed and status. This consists of practicing charity, peace, benevolence, fortitude etc.

According to Radhakrishnan freedom is one of the foundations of ethics. Freedom can be understood in three levels. Psychologically it is freedom to act this way or that way. Moral freedom is freedom to choose between alternatives with knowledge and volition. But here knowledge may not be perfect, so error, evil or ignorance may occur. This is what we see around us. Human made enormous progress in knowledge and scientific inventions. But along with that corresponding moral and spiritual progress has not happened, rather declined in standard. Our natures are becoming mechanized, void within, we are reduced to atoms in a community, members of a mob. Science and experiments of communism and capitalism brought possibilities of material well-being that has ability to wipe out poverty and illiteracy but actually they are not going away due to lack of fellowship and co-operation, due to mutual conflict, lack of confidence and exploitation. All these come up from baser passions of human nature, its selfishness and hatred, its insolence and fanaticism. Thus we must go beyond psychological and moral freedom into spiritual freedom that leads to integral liberation, liberation of the ‘whole human’, not like economic or political liberation. For the cultivation of a complete human being, we require the cultivation of inward peace, the grace and joy of souls overflowing in love. For this all-round growth needs physical efficiency, intellectual alertness and spiritual awakening.

Education

The universities are the means to a new world and higher education is an instrument in solving problems. The object of education is to bring forth the ethical human, the human in whom all the capacities are fully developed. Being truly educated means having the light to see the truth and the strength to make it prevail.

Social and Political Philosophy

The cornerstone of Radhakrishnan’s social philosophy is the axiom that all human beings are of equal worth, entitled to the same fundamental rights. The human individual is the most concrete embodiment of the Spirit on earth and anything that damages one’s dignity is morally wrong. “The state that governs least is the best.” Democratic government is the most satisfactory since it rests on the consent of the governed.

Economics

Social justice is possible with economic justice. In capitalism, there is unequal concentration of economic power. He also opposed communism and fascism. Radhakrishnan advocated an international state in which the differences need not be fused, but they need not conflict.

Check Your Progress I

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

- 1) What was Radhakrishnan’s view of Brahman?
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2) Explain briefly Radhakrishnan’s social and political philosophy.

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4.3 PHILOSOPHY OF AMARTYA SEN

At the age of 23 Sen became Professor and Head of Department of Economics at Jadavpur University, Calcutta. During his tenure at Jadavpur University, he had the good fortune of having the great economic methodologist, A. K. Dasgupta, who was then teaching in Benares Hindu University, as his supervisor. Subsequently, Sen won a Prize Fellowship at Trinity College, which gave him four years of freedom to do anything he liked, during which he took the radical decision of studying philosophy. That proved to be of immense help to his later research. Sen related the importance of studying philosophy thus: “The broadening of my studies into philosophy was important for me not just because some of my main areas of interest in economics relate quite closely to philosophical disciplines (for example, social choice theory makes intense use of mathematical logic and also draws on moral philosophy, and so does the study of inequality and deprivation), but also because I found philosophical studies very rewarding on their own.”(<http://econdse.org>).

Metaphysics

When we ask the question what is there, Amartya sen will answer, that which we see through our senses and understand through our intellect. Thus we have human beings who have the ability to treat themselves as subject (subject here is one who has ability to study anything else as other) and everything else as object. The subject finds himself as a relational being, a person belong to different groups. The same person can be Indian citizen, a British or American resident, a poet, a government employee, a man or a woman, a student of philosophy etc. All these belongings put some force over his choices and decisions that he takes and answers he gives for the problems he faces today and on his priorities. This complexity is complexity of metaphysics for him. This is very much linked with epistemology. Let us explain it.

Epistemology

Once we understand individual as member of a group and nature of group as multi-dimensional with sub-classifications we enter into a complex web. Here comes up clash of interests, role of ambiguity and for him the central issue in epistemology is clarification of this ambiguity. Let us explain it with an example. Suppose I like Malayalam poetry. Poetry as a group includes all the poetries of past and present all over the world. Again poetry itself can be classified into classical, historic, epic, patriotic, nature, philosophic etc. When I say I like Malayalam poetry which type I mean? And how I get over the ambiguity? Here he brings in the use of reason and experience.

Ethics

Amartya Sen's ethics has the foundations of liberalism and welfare in it. He got this from his family background and childhood experience. His liberalism is one that accepts freedom, tolerance and democracy. He appreciates very much the intellectual plurality of Indian heritage and says question and dissent is there in Indian blood. He proves it in his book 'the Argumentative Indian' by quoting from ancient texts. According to him "Sanskrit has a larger volume of agnostic or atheistic writings than in any other classical language". The tolerance of minority views and criticism we can see even in scriptures like Bhagavad Gita, especially in the talk between Lord Krishna and Arjuna. His childhood experience which is another strong influence in his ethical ideals, he explains in 'the story of Kader Mia.' It is story of a mindless violence. Kader Mia, a Muslim daily labourer, who came to Hindu predominant area for work was stabbed in the back by communal thugs. He was taken to the hospital by Sen's father. On the way he was going on saying, his wife told him not to go there for work, they may harm you, but he could not bear the cry of his children for bread. Sen says the penalty for that economic un-freedom turned out to be death, which occurred later on in the hospital.

He was inspired by Gandhian ideals of economic and social welfare based on ethics. According to Royal Swedish academy that conferred the Nobel Prize to Sen in 1988, "he restored ethical dimension to economics". His sensitivity to the marginalised is visible in his works and attitude to economic theories of capitalism and communism. According to him the slogans like "you have to break some eggs to make an omelette" is dreadfully misleading and mistaken in terms of understanding the nature of human. Thus he stands for participatory economics. According to him economics without human welfare is fruitless. Thus economist must look into grass root situations. Poverty must be defined not as deprivation of food, but in terms of illiteracy, poor health care system, inadequate land reforms, gender differences, deprivation of women and positive neglect of children. He says "with uncomfortable areas of our socio-economic life such as inequality, deprivation, sex bias, malnutrition, illness and starvation ever present, the economist has a duty to suggest measures to remove them. He has to examine the legal system and the wage structure. Our policy makers are not to be obsessed with total consumption but with the provision of basic needs for the people's needs. (Cf. "Amartya Sen's economics and Gandhian Ideal" by Dr. N. Mahalingam in 'Mahatma Gandhi, Sun of the Millennium' ed. Sheshrao Chavan). It is his concept of justice that forced him to go into the root causes of deprivations in society. All types of disadvantages class division, caste division, backward region, inequalities within family in terms of schooling, food, allocation of resources etc he treats. In this context he criticises some traditional cultural values like self-sacrificing, which disproportionately praised, idealized and idolized, that deprived group, be it girls at home consider deprivation as a virtue. It is from this background he writes against women's deprivation, poverty, illiteracy, failures in child welfare, child bearing and child rearing, lack of basic health etc.

Social Philosophy

Sen's papers in the late 1960s and early 1970s helped develop the philosophy of social choice, which first came to prominence in the work by the American economist Kenneth Arrow, who, famously proved that all voting rules, be they majority rule or two thirds-majority or status quo, must inevitably conflict with some basic democratic norm. Sen's contribution was to show under what conditions Arrow's impossibility theorem would indeed come to pass as well as to extend and enrich the theory of social choice, informed by his interests in history of economic thought and philosophy.

In 1981, Sen published *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (1981), a book in which he demonstrated that famine occurs not only from a lack of food, but from inequalities built into mechanisms for distributing food. Sen's interest in famine stemmed from personal experience. As a nine-year-old boy, he witnessed the Bengal famine of 1943, in which three million people perished. This staggering loss of life was unnecessary, Sen later concluded. He presents data that there was an adequate food supply in Bengal at the time, but particular groups of people including rural landless labourers and urban service providers like haircutters did not have the monetary means to acquire food as its price rose rapidly due to factors that include British military acquisition, panic buying, hoarding, and price gouging, all connected to the war in the region. In *Poverty and Famines*, Sen revealed that in many cases of famine, food supplies were not significantly reduced. In Bengal, for example, food production, while down on the previous year, was higher than in previous non-famine years. Thus, Sen points to a number of social and economic factors, such as declining wages, unemployment, rising food prices and poor food-distribution systems. These issues led to starvation among certain groups in society. His capabilities approach focused on positive freedom, a person's actual ability to be or do something, rather than on negative freedom approaches, which are common in economics and simply focuses on non-interference. In the Bengal famine, rural laborers' negative freedom to buy food was not affected. However, they still starved because they were not positively free to do anything; they did not have the functioning of nourishment, nor the capability to escape morbidity.

Sen's revolutionary contribution to the philosophy of development economics and social indicators is the concept of 'capability' developed in his article "Equality of What." He argues that governments should be measured against the concrete capabilities of their citizens. This is because top-down development will always trump human rights as long as the definition of terms remains in doubt (Is a 'right' something that must be provided or something that simply cannot be taken away?). For instance, in the United States citizens have a hypothetical "right" to vote. To Sen, this concept is fairly empty. In order for citizens to have a capacity to vote, they first must have "functionings." These "functionings" can range from the very broad, such as the availability of education, to the very specific, such as transportation to the polls. Only when such barriers are removed can the citizen truly be said to act out of personal choice. It is up to the individual society to make the list of minimum capabilities guaranteed by that society.

Sen was seen as a ground-breaker among late twentieth-century economists for his insistence on discussing issues seen as marginal by most economists. He mounted one of the few major challenges to the economic model that posited self-interest as the prime motivating factor of human activity. His work helped to re-prioritize a significant sector of economists and development workers, even the policies of the United Nations.

Welfare economics seeks to evaluate economic policies in terms of their effects on the well-being of the community. Sen, who devoted his career to such issues, was called the "conscience of his profession." His influential work *Collective Choice and Social Welfare* (1970), which addressed problems related to individual rights (including formulation of the liberal paradox), justice and equity, majority rule, and the availability of information about individual conditions, inspired researchers to turn their attention to issues of basic welfare. Sen devised methods of measuring poverty that yielded useful information for improving economic conditions for the poor. For instance, his theoretical work on inequality provided an explanation for why there are fewer women

than men in India and China despite the fact that in the West and in poor but medically unbiased countries, women have lower mortality rates at all ages, live longer, and make a slight majority of the population. Sen claimed that this skewed ratio results from the better health treatment and childhood opportunities afforded to boys in those countries, as well as sex-specific abortion.

Governments and international organizations handling food crises were influenced by Sen’s work. His views encouraged policy makers to pay attention not only to alleviating immediate suffering but also to finding ways to replace the lost income of the poor, as, for example, through public-works projects, and to maintain stable prices for food. A vigorous defender of political freedom, Sen believed that famines do not occur in functioning democracies because their leaders must be more responsive to the demands of the citizens. In order for economic growth to be achieved, he argued, social reforms, such as improvements in education and public health, must precede economic reform.

Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.
- 1) Explain briefly that Amartya Sen’s Ethics is one that accepts freedom, tolerance and democracy.
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- 2) How do you understand Sen’s concept of ‘capability’?
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4.4 LET US SUM UP

Both Radhakrishnan and Amartya Sen have clarity in their thought and expression. Both are very good teachers, well known all over the world. Radhakrishnan went abroad after being mature in his world vision, just to teach his understanding of philosophy of religions, but Amartya Sen had long research experience outside India and his basic discipline is not philosophy immediately but economics. Radhakrishnan was basically a spiritual and religious man respecting the intuitive thinking in Indian culture. Amartya Sen though respects Indian mind of tolerance and reasonableness, critical of its religious bend. He is a self-proclaimed atheist. For him religion is to be the ‘handmaid’ of ethics and values.

4.5 KEY WORDS

- Fanaticism** : Fanaticism is a belief or behavior involving uncritical zeal, particularly for an extreme religious or political cause, or with an obsessive enthusiasm for a pastime or hobby. The fanatic displays very strict standards and little tolerance for contrary ideas or opinions.
- Liberalism** : Liberalism is the belief in the importance of individual freedom. This belief is widely accepted today throughout the world, and was recognized as an important value by many philosophers throughout history.

4.6 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

- 1) Following Sankara, Radhakrishnan was of the opinion that reality is Brahman that is one, spiritual, transcendent and absolute. He called it spiritual because it is not material. He called it transcendental because world cannot exhaust it and it is absolute because it is one, pure consciousness, pure freedom with infinite possibility. Brahman is indescribable and manifests itself as God who is the creator of the world.
- 2) The cornerstone of Radhakrishnan's social philosophy is the axiom that all human beings are of equal worth, entitled to the same fundamental rights. The human individual is the most concrete embodiment of the Spirit on earth and anything that damages one's dignity is morally wrong. "The state that governs least is the best." Democratic government is the most satisfactory since it rests on the consent of the governed.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

- 1) Amartya Sen's ethics has the foundations of liberalism and welfare in it. He got this from his family background and childhood experience. His liberalism is one that accepts freedom, tolerance and democracy. He appreciates very much the intellectual plurality of Indian heritage and says question and dissent is there in Indian blood. He proves it in his book 'the Argumentative Indian' by quoting from ancient texts. According to him "Sanskrit has a larger volume of agnostic or atheistic writings than in any other classical language". The tolerance of minority views and criticism we can see even in scriptures like Bhagavad Gita, especially in the talk between Lord Krishna and Arjuna. His childhood experience which is another strong influence in his ethical ideals, he explains in 'the story of Kader Mia.' It is story of a mindless violence. Kader Mia, a muslim daily labourer, who came to Hindu predominant area for work was stabbed in the back by communal thugs. He was taken to the hospital by Sen's father. On the way he was going on saying, his wife told him not to go there for work, they may harm you, but he could not bear the cry of his children for bread. Sen says the penalty for that economic un-freedom turned out to be death, which occurred later on in the hospital.
- 2) Sen's revolutionary contribution to the philosophy of development economics and social indicators is the concept of 'capability' developed in his article "Equality of What." He argues that governments should be measured against the concrete capabilities of their citizens. This is because top-down development will always trump human rights as long as the definition of terms remains in doubt (Is a 'right' something that must be provided or something that simply cannot be taken away?). For instance, in the United States citizens have a hypothetical "right" to vote. To Sen, this concept is fairly empty. In order for citizens to have a capacity to vote, they first must have "functionings." These "functionings" can range from the very broad, such as the availability of education, to the very specific, such as transportation to the polls. Only when such barriers are removed can the citizen truly be said to act out of personal choice. It is up to the individual society to make the list of minimum capabilities guaranteed by that society.