Understanding Limits to Human Development: Group Affiliation and Social Conditioning

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Abstract

Capability approach brings about a fundamental shift in thinking about development by powerfully arguing development as 'freedom'– freedom to choose valuable 'functionings'– rather than the functionings themselves. According to the capability approach development entails expansion of the 'capability space'. The paper argues that elementary aspect of the capability space is its "connectedness" both extensive and intensive. However, the capability approach is typically characterised by various notions which tend to sever the elementary connectedness of the capability space. The paper, therefore, attempts at highlighting the interactions and interconnections among these notions and intends to demonstrate that these interactions and intersections, in fact, may become extremely vital in understanding 'limits' to capability enhancement.

I. Introduction

The capability approach pioneered, consistently developed over a long period of time and brought into vogue by Amartya Sen (Sen, 1982, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1995, 2000)andprofoundly enrichedand extended by some very distinguished thinkers(Alkire, 2002; Clark, 2005a; Nussbaum, 1995, 2000; Robeyns, 2003; Sakiko, 2003) is regarded asa broad, interdisciplinary and normative framework[1] offering remarkable insights as to what constitutes a 'better' human life, and how further 'betterment' may possibly be achieved. The approach, originating in the domains of poverty and inequality, and subsequently being applied to diverse domains across disciplines[2], brings about a fundamental shift in thinking by powerfully arguing development *as* 'freedom'– freedom to choose *valuable* 'functionings'– rather than the functionings*themselves*,

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[1]   The fact that the Capability Approach is fundamentally a 'framework' rather than a 'theory' as such is discussed in Robeyns (2000, 2005).

[2]   Application of capability framework is commonly found in the study of well-being and living standards, quality of life, freedom and liberty, social justice, gender bias and differences, horizontal inequality assessment etc. besides poverty and inequality ranging from Economics to Philosophy and Ethics.

which denote some levels of 'realised achievement'(Sen, 1989, 1995). It is, indeed, this emphasis on the idea of 'freedom to achieve', distinguished from 'achievement' itself,makes the capability approach highly beguiling and seemingly 'liberating'.

The notion of capability, in brief, includes 'genuine choice with substantial options' (Clark, 2005b). Therefore, development entails expansion of the 'capability space'. Further, capability 'reflectsfreedom' to lead different type of life that an individual values or has reason to value (Sen, 1999, p. 33). Notwithstanding, it may be noted that 'expanding capability'implies, at least, two possibilities viz. enhancing choicesby making available *additional*functionings i.e. quantitative expansion of freedom and/ or *empowering* people to exercise choices over *available* functionings i.e. qualitative expansion of freedom. Therefore, it is held that the goodness of capability (set) should be judged both by *quantity* and *quality* of available opportunities (Sen, 1995). In a traditional, highly stratified society, it is commonly observed that the latter i.e. the qualitative dimension tends to get preponderance over the former. This is because, very often it is found that given the 'available options', not all individuals are *allowed* to choose (or exercise freedom) whatever he or she values.This is due to the feature of *connectedness*– extensiveas well as intensive– involved in the capability space, which imposes limitations of diverse kinds on realisation of functionings i.e. achievements. The distinctions between 'positive' and 'negative'freedom; and between 'agency' and 'well-being' aspects of freedom made in the capability approach, thus, have serious implications on the*connectedness* of the capability space. It may be argued that implication of having such distinctions often can be genuinely 'limiting'.It is in this context that 'interactions' and 'intersections' between 'positive' and 'negative' freedoms, and 'agency' and 'well-being' aspects of freedom, rather than distinctions amongst them, can be of special relevance. The present paper intends to demonstrate that these interactions and intersections, in fact, may become extremely vital in understanding 'limits' to capability enhancement.

In this paper it is argued that the *way*capability approachdichotomises the notion of freedom– imputing*intrinsic* significance to oneand *instrumental* importance to the other – tends to miss out some intricate and nuanced aspects of the diverse 'interactions' and 'intersections' between myriad notions of freedom involved, which eventuallyturns out to beself-limiting in general;and particularly soin deeply stratified, custom-ridden societies.

The scope and purpose of the present paper, therefore, entail 'understanding' various *forms* and *nature* of 'limits' to human development in general, and thosecontingent on*group affiliation* and *social conditioning* in particular viewed from the capability perspective. While doing so, field insights and experiences from a large-scale survey relating to human development in Assam, India has been used[3]. The paper, however, does not intend to offer any *way-out* of overcoming the 'limits' as such. On the

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[3]   This survey was conducted during June 2013 to February 2014 among 39998 households covering all districts of the state by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam under the overall supervision of the Institute to which the author belongs.

contrary, it seeks to highlight some of the nuanced issues which can prove to be extremely critical in making the capability approach, indeed, a 'self-liberating' one.

The paper, accordingly, is divided into four sections. The first section introduces the 'limiting possibilities' of the capability approach. The second section elaborates the limiting aspects of capability approach in greater details with special reference to group affiliations and social conditionings. The third section offers pointers to 'potential liberating aspects' of the capability approach, and the last section concludes by summing up the main contentions.

II. Towards Understanding the 'Limits'

It is well-knownthat in the capability approach, the development is seen as 'a *process* of expanding the *real freedoms* that *people* enjoy'(Sen, 2000, p.3)[4]. The three terms viz. 'process', 'real freedom' and 'people' are most significant in this understanding of 'development'; and what follows next, I shall try to demonstratehow, while trying to appreciate and utilise the approach, these three crucial terms get either obscured or at least, becomeambiguous[5] in the approach itself.

The centrality of the idea of 'freedom' in capability approach is well-argued and well-discussed.The fundamental motivation behind the approach rests on the notion that human life is all about 'doings and beings' what people 'value or have reason to value' and, hence, ultimate evaluation of human life needs be carried out with respect to peoples' capability to perform valuable doings.As such, two constitutive concepts have been put forward viz. 'functioning' and 'capability' to neatly formulate the approach. The 'functioning' in the approach is construed as 'what a person *manages* to do or be' while 'capability' stands for 'various combinations of functionings she or he *can* achieve' (Sen, 1987, 1989)[6]. In fact, a person does not perform a single functioning in life; rather she or he carries out a collection of functionings, that too not all at a time but spanning over his life time. To describe such 'collection of functionings', Sen uses the notion of 'functionings n-tuple' and the universe from which this sub-set is drawn has been termed as 'capability set' or 'capabilities'. In most of the time, however, discussion regarding capability approach confines only to the notion of 'functioning' and 'capability', although the terms 'functionings' and 'capabilities' have been used to denote both 'functioning' and 'functioning n-tuple', and 'capability' and 'capability set' respectively. For the sake of simplicity, functioning and functionings, capability and capabilities have been used interchangeably in capability literature.

Undoubtedly, the distinction between 'functioning' and 'capability' is elementary in capability framework. Typically, a 'functioning' is taken as an 'achievement' of an individual while the 'capability' is considered to be the embodiment of her/his 'real

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freedom to achieve'. In this sense, the differential capabilities of individuals are indicative of differences in 'real freedoms' that individuals enjoy, which, eventually,produce differential 'achievements'. As it is widely held, the shift of focus tocapability as the*end* is the most salient feature of capability approach, which distinguishes it from the class of 'achievement focused' evaluations of human life. In answering the mind-boggling question: 'equality of what', Sen, therefore, argues that it is the equality in terms ofcapabilities – the basic capabilities to be exact, whichis most*relevant*[7]. This claim, however, does not dispense the other dimensions of evaluation as irrelevant,rather, it suggests that they are, perhaps, *instrumental*at best, not definitely*intrinsically* important; - capability is the only intrinsically important end.

'Richness' and 'Diversity' of Functionings

The essence of evaluation of human life on the space of capabilitylies in the 'extents of freedoms' (Sen, 1995, p. xi) to achieve functionings i.e. having greater number of valued alternatives to choose from. The capability expansion, therefore, involves enabling people to have more choices of valued functioning. Sen, however, dismisses the mechanical way of 'counting the number of alternatives in the range of choices' while evaluating capability (Sen, 1995, p. 5)[8]. He, on the contrary, emphasises that while evaluating capability, examination of the 'nature' and 'value' of attainable functionings is also important, which can offer useful information regarding the capability space itself(Sen, 1995, p. 5). The point can be better understood by referring to the peculiar case of a professional killer whose capability space typically accommodates various functionings like 'to be able to kill someone', 'to be able to rob someone', 'to be able to kidnap someone' so on and so forth. Capability space derived from these sorts of functionings when expandedsurely wouldn't qualify as development today, even if the person has his/her own reasons to value these functionings. Needless to explain, this is precisely because of the very 'nature' and 'value' of the functioningsinvolved in it. Therefore, two things: the *richness* i.e. the value/worth of the functionings and the *diversity* i.e. choice-range of the functioningsi.e. the notion of 'freedom' involved are of special interest in the capability evaluation. I, this context, would argue that not only the *distinction* between 'functioning' and 'capability' is significant in capability evaluation, but also the *interconnectedness* between the two is equally important simply because the notion of capability is a derived notioni.e. only the space containing 'relevant' and 'valuable'functionings can be labelled, in turn, as 'relevant' and 'valuable'.

This point takes us to two well-debated areas of capability approach viz. who selects relevant functionings and how, and when selected, how one can evaluate capability set to which the particular functioning belongs. As regard to the first point, the debate is broadly divided into two opinions: having a prescribed list of valuable capabilitiesand

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[7]   In fact choice of relevant focal variable and how valuable is the variable two concerns of capability approach. See Sen (1999, p 32).

[8]   For interesting problems of counting choices See Sen (1999, pp.34-35).

not having any such list. Nussbaum, for instance, suggests such a list– list of 'central human capabilities'(Nussbaum, 2000), while Sen himself doesn't provide any and contends that selection of relevant functioning is an act of reasoning and part of democratic process. A few, who believe in having a pre-defined list, further tries to findout 'processes' of doing it (Alkire, 2002; Robeyns, 2003). Second issue is rather operational– problem of deriving *unobservable* capability based on information related to *observable*functionings. There are situations when due to technicalities involved, it is practical to evaluate functionings themselves. These issues, and several other connected issues, however, have been sufficiently discussed and debated (Robeyns, 2000, 2005). I do not intend to indulge in these areas here; rather I would try illuminating a few other related aspects.

It is, indeed, not difficult to see that whether one favours a pre-determined list or not,one thing is certain that functionings have to be *valuable*in any case– either the person preparing *the* list has reason(s) to value them or the individuals choosing them have reason(s) to value. Clearly then, the *richness* or the worth or value of functionings is to be judged by their underlying *reasons* i.e. how 'valuable' really is the chosen functioning. This aspect– mechanics of justifying a functioning in one's life– throws up a plethora of extremely complicated questions, a few of which I intend to discuss below in some detail for placing my argument in perspective.

'Reasons to Value': Some Features

Within the capability literature the role of cultural indoctrination and adaptive preference in 'value formation' and 'choice' is not uncommon really. I will turn to this aspect a little later. Before that let us focus on a few aspects of 'reasons'*themselves* as such so as to gauge the enormity and complexity of the issues involved.

Let us begin by admitting that it will be really naive to believe that there is only *one* reasonbehind a functioning. Indeed, individuals engage in the same functioning for myriad reasons. For instance, an individual sees 'to be educated' as an important functioning in life for a variety of reasons viz. education gives knowledge, education gives employment, education gives status and respect in society so on and so forth. There will surely bemultiple, possibly all, reasons behind the motivation to choose the given functioning i.e. 'to be educated'. I suggest, while valuinga functioning, besides the reason(s) favouring the functioning,it may be useful to examine the reason(s) for *not choosing* the functioning as well. Let us look at the following reasons obtained from a surveyto the question: 'why have you not sent your child to school?' i.e. reasons for not choosing the functioning 'to be educated':

Table 1: Reasons for never enrolling children to schools

Reasons for being never enrolled	No.	Percent
Need to work at home	181	17.94
Need to support earning	154	15.26
Cannot afford	56	5.55
Looks after siblings	13	1.29
School too far	36	3.57
Ill health	58	5.75
Not interested in study	343	33.99
No use of education	50	4.96
Got displaced/shifted	70	6.94
Others	48	4.76
Total	**1009**	**100**

Source: Assam Human Development Survey (2013-14), Total Sample HH 39998

It is, thus, clear that just as individuals have reason(s) to value a particular functioning, they also have reason(s) *not to value* the functioning. It is the *net worth*, not the only reason(s) *in favour* of functioningthat determines the ultimate 'choice' – whether or not the given functioning is chosen. For example, the reason 'to get employment' motivating to choose the functioning 'to be educated', will be *weighed* against the reason 'no use of education' in providing employment before one decides whether to choose the functionings 'to be educated' or not.

I, now, would like to bring in the second aspect, which can be called as *contemporaneity* of reasons. The contemporaneity of the reason refers to the 'objective situation' of the society. This is to be distinguished, however, from the social and cultural factors influencing the value formation. Besides, cultural and social norms, 'objective' conditions also influence the reason(s) to value or not to value a given functioning. The reason 'no use of education', indeed, emanates from the objective condition of unemployment prevailing in the society. It is to be noted that the *net worth* gets shifted completely when objective conditions change with times. For instance, in absence of unemployment, the two reasons – 'education gives employment' and 'no use of education' – put against each other – should expectedly shift the balance in favour of the former. Similarly, in our earlier example of the capability containing functionings – 'to kill someone', 'to kidnap someone' etc. is no longer valuable today, but it used to be extremely valuable, in fact, the most sought after in earlier times when warfare itself was important for the state. This point – the change in objective condition changes the net value of reasons for and against functionings – will be of particular relevance in examination of reasons to value any given functioning.

The third aspect, which results from the multiplicity of reasons (both 'for' and 'against' a functioning) relates to *interconnectedness*amongst the reasons, and also between reasons and *other* functionings. This point can be illustrated with the help of Table 1. For instance, the reasons 'need to support earning' and 'cannot afford' are related – they both relate to one reason viz. 'lack of financial means'. The lack of financial

means can be due to another functioning failure – not being able to engage in decent employment. This failure again may be a result of other functioning failure, say, 'not being educated'. Supposing otherwise i.e. being able to achieve education, it would possibly result in 'no use of education', thus remain unemployed (lived experience). It is, thus, obvious that 'reasons' and 'functions' all get enmeshed in a very complicated manner in practice, and there is, perhaps, no definitive way of arriving at one or more *elementary*reasons of choosing a relevant functioning. Moreover, the *order* in which various functionings are chosen over time or space (i.e. the given *description* of functioning n-tuple) can well influence reasons for choosing subsequent functionings.

Table 2: Primary school going children by School-type

Type of school	No.	Percent
Government/Government Aided	25248	84.29
Private	4504	15.04
School run by NGO	50	0.17
Government *Madrassa*	89	0.30
Private *Madrassa*	56	0.19
Cannot Say	6	0.02
Total	**29953**	**100.00**

Table 3: Reason for choice of private schools

Reason	No	Percent
Good Infrastructure	1492	33.13
Quality Teachers	946	21.00
Regular Classes	681	15.12
Student Care	1169	25.95
Extra Activity	126	2.80
Others	90	2.00
Total	**4504**	**100.00**

Source: Assam Human Development Survey (2013-14), Total Sample HH 39998

Adding forth aspect here would make the whole picture all the more obscured, and this relates to *multi-layered* reasoning and choice effecting a functioning. To perform the functioning 'to be educated', in effect, one has to choose a school. Now this choice of school is based on a set of other choices e.g. what type of school– government or private, which medium– mother tongue or others etc. Each of these choices will have own set of reasons 'for' and 'against' the choice.

The Table 2 and Table 3 above portray such a picture. The reasons for choosing private schools over the government schools, in fact, are*the* reasons due to which the government schools were *not* chosen. It, therefore, needs to be recognised that not only the reasons in favour of and against a particular functioning are *weighed* as has been discussed earlier, but also they are placed *vis-à-vis* the possible alternatives to make a choice which may be *instrumental* in making the 'final choice' regarding the given functioning. There can be situations when in absence of alternatives with the

reasons to value viz. having good infrastructure, quality of teacher, regular classes, student care, extra activity etc. the available option i.e. going to government school can be negatively valued as having 'no use' thereby finally deciding to escape the functioning of to be educated.

The fifth and last aspect that can be underlined in this context is that of *interdependence*. This point has been forcefully argued, albeit in a different context, by Dean (2009). He argues that 'interdependence' is *constitutive* of individuals' identity. His notion of 'interdependence', in fact, goes beyondSen's idea of 'responsible functionings'. He finds that individuals' membership in the societybased on the idea of 'responsibility' is rather 'contractarian' in nature. Contrary to this he prefers individuals' membership in the society to be 'solideristic' i.e. the individuals survive through their *attachment* with fellow individuals rather than through *bargain* with them. Indeed, this point can be well-understood by referring to the choices related to basic capabilities (used in the Sen's original sense) with respect to education and health. At an early stage of life the capability related to health and education depends not on the individuals themselves buton the choice and preference of their parents. These have undoubtedly profound implications on their overall capability at a later stage. To say that these are mere 'responsibilities' of parents towards their children would certainly de-humanise the entire set of functionings.

Notion of 'connectedness'

The essence of the five aspects related to reason(s) to value discussed above lies in theirfeature of*connectedness*. The *richness* of functionings (vector of functionings or functioning n-tuple), and thereby, that of capability (set), when evaluated by examining *worth* of their underlying reasons that people have, leads to a complex web of *interconnections* and *dependence*: among various reasons, among reasons and functionings, among functionings, among reasons and objective situations, among individuals and functioningsand so on.The act of valuing functioning, thus, requires individuals to be seen in their *totality*– in terms of all its *connectedness*. This implies that individuals not only happen to *be* in the society,but they *belong* to the society. To my mind, the world *people* referred to at the beginning while defining developmentcomes closer to this meaning of individual, rather than suggestinga collective signifying summative aggregation of independent and autonomous individuals.

It will be, however, completely wrong to construe that elements of this connectedness per se is missing in the capability approach. Sen, for instance, admits quite categorically that 'complex social issues', 'intricate intra-group relations and interactions' can exert influence over functionings (Sen, 1995, p.33). Robeyns (2005, p.98) actually tries to model the underlying fundamental interconnections of capability approach. It may be noted that these interconnections by themselves may be 'limiting' at times. This aspect can be demonstrated by introducing *social conditioning* and *group affiliation* in to the picture.

Social Conditioning and Value Formation

The word *social conditioning* in general connotes the matrix of social institutions, norms, customs and practices. The word finds a place in capability literature in diverse contexts. Sen himself has used it to represent set of social and cultural norms and practices (Sen, 1995, p. 149). Robeyns(2005) seems to include social institutions, social and legal norms, other peoples' behaviour and characteristics, environmental factors etc. within the matrix of social conditioning. The influence of social conditioning on capability is typically viewed in terms of 'conversion rate' of *means* into *functioning*(Sen, 1995, p. 33). Robeyns (2005), for instance identifies three specific sets of factors affecting conversion rate of individuals: personal conversion factors, social factors and environmental factors (p.99). Robeyns, however, makes the influence all the more prominent by linking it directly to capability set itself, value and preference formation and choice. The first i.e. influence of social conditioning on capability set itself, in fact, relates to the *diversity* aspect of functioning, thereby having implications on*real freedom*. It is not difficult to observe that the *means* of functioningscan be very well limited by social conditioning, and such examples are, indeed, many. For example, in discussions on caste in Indian contexts, it is commonly found that some of the means, even if available, are not simply accessible to individuals belonging to particular castes. This again brings in the question of *group affiliation*. I intend to discuss both these aspects in some detail a little later.

The other aspect i.e. the influence of social conditioning over value and choice formationis also quite evident. What is valuable functioning and what is not is hardly autonomous. Social norms, traditions, customs, practices play important roles in determining such valuation overwhelmingly since individuals are born *into* it. The duringthe life time a person naturalises all these elements of social conditioning and becomes a *carrier* of it for that is why these conditionings continue to perpetuate over time. This point is well-accommodated in capability literature and various 'limiting' aspects of this process is being discussed by Sen himself, especially with respect to gender (Sen, 1987). For example, how the 'limiting' features of social conditioning naturalisethe aspirations of women and accordingly their valuation of functionings,has been discussed by Kynch and Sen (Kynch & Sen, 1983). They have shown that even if achievement wise female suffer, utilitarian metric wise they may be still better-off due to such naturalisation and indoctrination. Let us consider a concrete field example depicted in Table 4 to see the connection between social conditioning and value (or say reason) formation.

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Table 4: Plan for future study and reasons for not studying further (child finishing high school in coming 2 years)

Where will you study next	Male	Female	Total
Local Higher Secondary/College	2946	2813	5759
Schools/Colleges outside the district	221	167	388
Schools/Colleges outside the state	11	5	16
Professional/Vocational Colleges	8	7	15
No plans	83	103	186
Will not study further	11	18	29
Total	**3280**	**3113**	**6393**
Reason for not studying further			
No opportunity in the village	2	0	2
Cannot afford	7	9	16
Higher education has no use	2	3	5
Will get married	0	6	6
Total	**11**	**18**	**29**

Source: Assam Human Development Survey (2013-14), Total Sample HH 39998

It will be clear from the above table that the social practice of 'early marriage of girls' imposes a significant 'limit' in realising the functioning of higher education. It is interesting to note that people have reason not to pursue higher education as 'higher education has no *value*'. Now, whether this valuation is based on some objective conditions (like higher education does not provide a decent employment) or is due to traditional values getting preponderance over any *other* values– objective or otherwise– is, however, not very clearly known. Next, Robeyns' inclusion of 'other persons' behaviour' into the matrix of social conditioning is of special relevance to us and a couple of quick points can be made in this regard.

The first point that can be made in this regard relates to what can be described as 'following the trend that the most people follow'. No individual really, and very *naturally*, wants to be an odd-man-out in the society. The way other persons behave is generally taken for granted and people try to follow it. Therefore, this indicates to a clear 'limitation' upon autonomy of individual preferences. Second, the way people treat one goes into form his/her aspirations. In an interview conducted in the Tea Gardens of Assam it could be found, quite interestingly, that most of theschool going boys and girls aspired to be 'army-man' (mostly boys) and 'nun/nurse' (mostly girls). During deep probing as to why they wanted to become army-man or nun/nurse, they replied that they wanted it because this would 'give them respect in the society'[9]. The functioning of becoming army-man or nun/nurseis 'valued' in terms of 'gaining respect'. Clearly, the behaviour of others towards these students has helped in forming their valuation and preference for a particular functioning. The third point relates to 'negative' functionings of crime, kidnapping etc. Ones' behaviour of these kinds certainly puts limit over others' functionings and capabilities.

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[9]   This interview was conducted by Indranee Dutta, my colleague at the Institute.

Group Affiliation and Range of Choice

Let us now turn to the *diversity* aspect of functionings (and capabilities) and to particular limits imposed by *group affiliations* over them. To put it plainly, the diversity of functionings implies the 'range of choice'. Therefore, the diversity aspect is closely related to notion of 'opportunities': expansion of capability essentially entails 'enhancing people choices' (the standard phase of UNDP's Human Development Reports) i.e. providing more valuable options of functionings to people to choose from (Robeyns, 2005). Sen, however, advises not to use the term 'opportunity' in a 'limited sense' (Sen, 1987, p.4). In the limited sense 'opportunity' implies 'availability of options, which is termed as 'advantage' (Sen, 1987, p.3). Rather, Sen uses 'opportunity' in a broader sense: ability to *take* the advantages. Sen argues that this broader notion of opportunity comes closer to the concept of freedom. Therefore, having diversity of opportunities is not merely *instrumental* in capability approach, but is *intrinsic*– an end itself.

Sen clearly identifies two perspectives of freedom viz. 'opportunity' and 'process' perspectives and observes that having opportunity freedom is *substantive* in capability approach (Sen, 2000, 2003). The opportunity perspective of freedom in capability approach is, no doubt, 'positive' in nature – when options are offered people need to take advantage of them on their own(Robeyns, 2000) i.e. this is, indeed, 'freedom from within'. The process aspect of freedom, on the other hand, concerns about procedural features of achievement (Sen, 2003, p.585). The opportunity freedom – positively perceived – is concerned with 'ability to achieve' and, thus, directly relates to capability (Sen, 2003, p.585). Process freedom relates to the *externalities*i.e. the world outside and falls mostly within the domain of negative freedom[10]. The considerable overlaps between the two, nonetheless, is well-recognised (Sen, 2003, pp.585–586). The approach, further, does not dismiss the role of 'negative' freedom, rather accommodates it various forms (Sen, 1987, 1989, 1995, 2000). Notwithstanding, the approach postulates that only 'positive freedoms' have 'intrinsic value' (and also instrumental value), whereas the value of 'negative freedoms' is only 'instrumental'. Sen, for instance, argues that violation of negative freedom results in violation of positive freedom but not *vice versa*(Sen, 2003, p. 586). Since the approach is consistent about the distinction between 'means' and 'ends' placing *intrinsic* value only over the *ends*,and not on the *means*, it is the 'positive freedoms' in opportunity perspective that is central in capability expansion, and consequently, development. In fact, the point that the capability approach underplays the role of negative freedom vis-à-vis positive freedom is well-recognised (Clark, 2005b; Qizilbash, 1996).

With these remarks on perspective of freedom as envisioned in the capability approach, I now turn to a brief discussion regarding the*group affiliation*and its role in the capability.The fact that groups are critically important category determining preferences and values is fairly well-discussed in capability literature, for instance Stewart (2004).

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[10]   Distinction between 'positive' and 'negative' freedom is as per Isaiah Berlin's notion.

The defining character of a 'group', in general, is 'common affiliation'. Members of the groups have shared goals and objectives, as well as identities – bearing considerable *externalities*. Discussion about group is invariably complicated by many issues.How group affiliations implicate capability is difficult to evaluate due to several accounts. To start with, the individuals have multiple group affiliations – all differentially constructed for different purposes. The relative significance and weight of a particular affiliation is contingent over time and context. Moreover, there are considerable intersections among several group boundaries. Locating an individual uniquely is, more often than not, is an enormous exercise. Besides, group affiliations can change over time and there is a considerable fluidity with regard to group membership of individuals.

The limit of group affiliation is very commonly seen in terms of *partitioning* of opportunity set i.e. not all options are available to all individuals in society. Herein Sen brings in his idea of *real* freedom –the freedom *in fact* enjoyed, not *in principle* (Sen, 1995, p. 149). Many a times, difference in achievement is attributed to such partitioning of opportunity, when group inequalities on achievements are highlighted. Before, proceeding further, it will be worthwhile to characterise partitions imposed by group affiliations.

Group Affiliation: 'Perception' and 'Subjectivity'

It can be argued that the partitions over the opportunity set, in general, are operative in two dimensions – *perception* and *subjectivity*.That a particular option is not to be accessed and taken advantage of is a perception so long it is *external* to the individual. When that perception is *internalised* by the individual through a process of 'naturalisation'with the belief that option is indeed not available to him or her – it becomes *constitutive* of subjectivity. It is not difficult to observe such revelation of subjectivity with regard to job preference by different caste categories in India. Similar examples can also be found with respect to religion.

Implication of this characterisation in understanding the limits imposed by group affiliation is quite profound. The common interpretation of limit in the sense of partition imposed over opportunity set draws heavily on perception dimension and hence tries to relate it to negative freedom in its treatment. Group affiliation based customs, rules, tradition, practices, norms – mostly discriminatory in nature – are treated in this way in capability literature. The subjectivity dimension is eschewed in this whole treatment of group affiliation. It is important to note that the subjectivity dimension, essentially, relates to positive freedom and hence, crucial in capability approach per se. The interaction between perception and subjectivity dimension of limits emanating from group affiliation is illustrative of deep interconnection between positive freedom and negative freedom. The link provides adequate ground to argue that negative freedom not only has an instrumental value, but also has palpable *intrinsic* value.

Now, to say that capability approach is oblivious to various 'limits' imposed by social

conditioning and group affiliation will, however, be highly erroneous. The approach does explicitly identify and recognise these limits. For instance, Sen categorically observes that notion of positive freedom implies ability to do things taking *everything into account* (Sen, 2003, p. 586). Notwithstanding, the approach does not 'endogenise' them, rather keeps them 'exogenous'. The notion of positive freedom as articulated in the capability approach suggeststhat one needs to concentrate on 'the *real* freedoms *actually* enjoyed, taking note of *all* barriers– including those from social discipline'(Sen, 1995, p. 149). I suggest that the approach, although, talks about *real* freedom– it is this emphasis on *only*'acknowledging'(i.e. taking note) and 'accommodating' (i.e. taking everything into account) the barriers, rather than 'overcoming' them makes the approach 'limiting'.

Agency Goal and Agency Freedom

This has given us a passage to discuss briefly about role and significance of notion of 'agency' as proposed by Sen (1985, 1987, 1995, 2000, 2003). Sen distinguishes the 'agency aspect' from 'well-beingaspect' of individuals. However, he, at the same time, admits their inter-relations (Sen, 1995, p. 57). Sen defines agency aspect as goals and values that an individual has reason(s) to pursue whether or not they are connected with his/her own well-being. Related to the notions of 'agency achievement', 'agency freedom' has also been proposed. Complicacies arising out of such distinction between agency aspect and well-being aspects are fairly well-treated, and those details and technicalities are not needed for the present context. On the contrary, I would like to underline only the point that this distinction, indeed, reinforces the idea of 'real freedom' as discussed in the previous sections– and it is, in this sense, the distinction is critically desirable in capability framework.

Before proceeding further, one can pose a legitimate question as to whether such a distinction is at all feasible to arrive at in real life. Ananswer is attempted under with help of actual field data.

Table 5: Responses to environment related questions

Question	Response	Number	Percent
Whether feel importance of environment	*Very Important*	31060	77.65
	Not Important	2381	5.95
	Don't Know	6557	16.39
Whether feel happy for better environment	*Very much*	26730	66.83
	Somewhat	5669	14.17
	No	738	1.85
	Don't Know	6861	17.15
Whether concerned for environmental degradation	*Yes*	21456	53.64
	No	4515	11.29
	Don't Know	14027	35.07
Whether responsible for conservation of environment	*Very much*	19552	48.88
	Somewhat	9305	23.26
	No	2262	5.66

Source: Assam Human Development Survey (2013-14), Total Sample HH 39998

Let us try to interpret the above results in connection with a particular functioning 'to protect environment'. People can have different reasons to value this functioning as indicated in the table. Clearly, the first reason 'feeling environment important' may be based on objective assessment or may be based on the next reason i.e. 'I feel environment important for me as I feel happy to find good environment around me'. The third reason again can be based on objective facts i.e. knowing objectively the ill-effects of environmental degradation or simply related to the second reason viz. utility loss. The forth reason, which relates to agency aspect, at leastreflectively, can pretty well be dependent on reason 1, 2 and/or 3. Practically, given the intensive and extensive connectedness of reasons to value it may not be possible to strictly separate agency aspect from the well-being aspect.

I would like to sum-up the forgoing discussion as follows: the essence of capability approach lies in intensive, extensive and varied connectedness among reasons, functionings, capabilities, individuals and social conditionings considered in the broadest possible way. This makes the approach, on one hand, remarkably rich; on the other hand, complicatedly self-limiting. The approach acknowledges the connectedness but tries to disconnect many of the inter-connections by introducing concepts like 'opportunity' and 'process', 'positive' and 'negative' freedoms, 'agency' and 'well-being' aspects etc. and placing one vis-à-vis other.The distinction made this way results in endogenising a part of inter-connections leaving aside the other part of interconnection as exogenous. The capability typically accommodates the endogenised inter-connections *only*, imputing intrinsic values over them, taking the exogenous part as *given*. This distinction, as have been demonstrated,is inherently 'self-limiting'.

III. Possibility of 'Liberation'

As has been clearly mentioned in Section I, the purpose of the paper is not to suggest any way-out to overcome the inherently limiting features of capability approach.Rather, purpose was to understand the limitsof the capability approach in general, and with respect to group affiliation and social conditioning in particular. This was dealt with in detail in Section II. The essence of the argument presented there lies in identifying the myriad conceptual *disconnectedness*vis-à-vis the nature of *connectedness* in the capability space, thereby implying the inherent limits to the approach. This Section offers a plausible line of thinking so as to 'liberate' the capability approach from its inherent 'limits'.

Intuitively, if limits have been predicated on aspects of 'disconnectedness', overcoming of them must necessitate 'unification' of some sort where critical disconnects prevail. The most critical unification, it seems, lies in the sphere of 'agency' and 'well-being'. It is of pivotal significance to accommodate 'agency aspect' within capability space. The major problem one encounters in making such an effort relates to the *collective*nature of agencyaspect and its potential trade off with well-being aspect. This problem is stated by (Robeyns, 2000, p. 18): "just as it is ontologically impossible to speak of well-being of a community, it is also impossible to speak of capability

of a community". The potential solution, perhaps, lies in considering various agency roles as intrinsically valuable functioning themselves so that ethical individualism upheld by the capability approach remains unaffected. This idea of considering agency goals as constitutive of capability comes closer to Robeyns (2000) idea of 'fundamental capability' where fundamental capability is defined as deeper, foundational, more abstract and aggregated capabilities (p. 9). Sen seems to be open to such possibilities when he favours accommodating even the utilitarian idea of'happiness' in the capability framework provided 'to be happy' is considered as a valuable functioning in itself (Sen, 1987, p. 10). Incorporation of agency goals as valued functionings have immense possibilities in 'liberating' the capability approach from its inherent constrains and confines. The agency goal can be defined as 'ability to realise limitation imposed by external conditions and remove those limitation'. This is not exactly the same idea as Nussbaum's 'control' but similar. It is beyond 'enabling' – it is about overcoming the subjectivity – it is about 'empowering'. This provides a much richer and meaningful description of human life. This is, I argue is the *process* of development in true sense.

IV. Conclusion

The paper, to conclude, makes an attempt to interpret Sen's idea of 'development *as* freedom'. It, accordingly, takes up the definition of development as 'a process of expanding the realfreedoms that people enjoy' for critical examination. The three key terms used in the definition viz. 'people', 'real freedom' and 'process' have been interpreted within the rubric of capability approach and it is argued that essence of these three terms may be valuably located in the notions of connectedness, according intrinsic values to negative freedoms and accommodating agency goals into the capability space. Otherwise, as it is argued in the paper, these three creates a dichotomy between endogenous and exogenous where exogenous is to be treated as datum. This dichotomy invariably has to favour status-quo and is, therefore, potentially 'self-limiting'. The notion must be made 'liberating' if it is to emancipate people at the time of present crisis. The paper finds that such a possibility in capability framework if the three key ideas – people, real freedom and process are put into proper perspective.

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