HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: THE AUTO-RICKSHAW DRIVERS OF MUMBAI- A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Conventionally Understanding the issues of development through the ‘tickle down approach’ has got its limitations. For a more comprehensive analysis, there has been shift towards Human Development approach, which focuses on Human Development Index (HDI), wherein development is calculated not only in terms of the Gross National Income (proxy for standard of living), but also life expectancy at birth (proxy for health) and a combined index of mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling for education. However, this index also has its limitations, as it fails to capture other important aspects such as freedom from discrimination, fear of one’s safety, of political participation, etc. In this regard the theoretical framework of Rawlesian framework, capability approach of Amartya Sen, Nussbaum and Charusheela are considered important. The study of status of the auto-rickshaw drivers of Mumbai was undertaken to validate the underpinnings of these theoretical framework on development. Based on the findings, the study report has proposed certain prescriptions.

Key words: Auto-mobile, Human, Mumbai, Auto-drivers

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Introduction: A Process of Unequal Human Development

Conventionally, development has been associated with growth in incomes and standard of living. However, over the years, unequal distribution of incomes across and within nations have demonstrated that the ‘convergence’
hypothesis and trickle down hypothesis do not necessarily hold good. Therefore, the focus has shifted to developing multidimensional aspects of development wherein crucial factors such as poverty, inequality, health, education etc. are given due weightage. Development now has become synonymous with Human Development. However, the Human Development approach is identified often with the Human Development Index (HDI), which each country is calculated using the geometric mean of Gross National Income and life expectancy at birth in each country.

Poverty world over is on rise, both inter and intra-regional, besides sectoral, personal and group inequalities have increased due to an unbalanced and poor development process. The increased pressure on the scarce resources (especially agriculture) has forced people to look for alternate means of survival. Growing indebtedness and marginalization are other factors forcing individuals to migrate to the cities where they mostly work in unorganized/informal sector, as daily wage labourers, taxi drivers, etc.

The study aimed at developing a profile of auto-rickshaw drivers in Mumbai from the Human Development approach with a special focus on the issue of migration; impact of migration on their living conditions, work conditions, health and sanitation and how remittances were sent back home. Also how the community linkages determined the pattern of migration and employment, especially in the informal sector.

The auto-rickshaw drivers conspicuous by their large numbers are employed in the informal sector and they are mostly migrants (significantly unregistered) and have strong community networks. They do not enjoy a decent standard of living, are trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and fail to achieve a life that they have reason to value. Thus Development has little meaning for them.

Mumbai has had a high absorption capacity of migrants. The services of those working as auto workers are utilized well and they usually enjoy a greater level of productivity as compared to their other colleagues working in the informal sector. Any improvement in their condition through a policy intervention is bound to result in huge productivity gains.

The broad framework employed to study the issues concerning the auto-rickshaw drivers is the Rawlesian framework of free and equal citizens possessing equal access to
opportunities and with Sen, Nussbaum and Charusheela providing theoretical underpinnings regarding specific issues in question like importance of health or income in the life of an auto-rickshaw driver. The report based on the study deals with a brief literature review, followed by the data, methodology and the quantitative characteristics of the sample of auto-rickshaw drivers, under five broad heads of issues, viz. Income, Education, Health, Recreation and Inclusion. The study also highlights the major limitations of the study and scope for further research, certain policy measures are suggested to augment the welfare of auto-rickshaw drivers, finally the conclusions

**Auto-rickshaw Drivers in Mumbai: A Literature Review**

There are 246,458 auto-rickshaw drivers in Mumbai\(^1\). After the Bombay High Court ruling, all the auto-rickshaws in the city run only on CNG. They are allowed to ply only in certain parts of Mumbai and are restricted in Old Mumbai.

The Auto-rickshaw drivers face problems like deteriorating working conditions, scarcity of CNG (fuel stations are less), employees charge Rs 2-5 over and above the MRP of CNG, few fuel station resulting in long queues (which reduce the time spent for plying and working) unreliable electronic meters which increases their costs, higher maintenance cost of CNG engines as there are very few well-trained mechanics and service stations, besides, frequent harassment and being ‘challaned or fined by the traffic police.

The cost of owning a vehicle with a permit is much higher than its sale price due to the involvement of agents and middlemen. Most drivers work at close to minimum wages and hence resort to overcharging. Unlike the common perception that autoriksha drivers they refuse passengers when they have to go home, the fact is that very often drunk and aggressive passengers demand to be taken to remote locations, against their will.

A study by Dinesh Mohan and Dunu Roy finds that the majority of the challans are related to parking and waiting issues. Therefore they have recommended that provision should be made for a designated parking and waiting area.

Maharashtra is the 2nd fastest urbanizing State in India with 42.4% of its total population residing in urban areas. The rapid migration to the city increases the burden on the limited civic amenities, disrupts the immigrants family and community ties and limits
opportunities for their cultural activities, besides posing serious constraints in their ability or capacity to work, gain access to educational and health facilities. Moreover, with social as well as political exclusion, the migrants are extremely vulnerable.

A study by Dr. Bina Narayan has underlined that migration has been influenced by absence of alternate employment opportunities and jobless growth in different parts of the country, rural poverty and substantial amount of job opportunities in the urban areas.

She is also of the view that improving the efficiency of the drivers can have larger productivity gains since their efficiency is higher than the others employed in the unorganized sector. A majority of the workers belong to the weaker sections of the society with low educational attainment. Their earnings are also low and usually large families to support back home. With poor sanitation facilities in their dwellings and do not have sufficient savings for unforeseen contingencies.

**Data and Research Methodology**

The study based on the field consisted of Western suburban areas in Mumbai, namely Santoshnagar, Juhu and Bandra and interviewed nearly 25 auto rickshaw drivers on issues of Human Development. The samples were taken from diverse groups, at different times and at different places to maintain the privacy of the people surveyed.
Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative characteristics of the sample are as follow.

1. Inter-Regional Variations in Sample: nearly all but two auto rickshaw drivers were from BIMARU states and a majority belonged to UP as follows.

   ![Pie chart showing regional distribution]

2. Demographic Patterns in Sample: The age which ranged from 25 to 52 years was grouped into two categories, namely, above 30 as ‘old’ and below 30 as ‘young’. The people who were the youngest operated their auto-rickshaws at night and were vulnerable to security issues like getting mugged, etc.. The pie charts below show the age group distribution (in percentage) and the percentage of auto drivers who also run their auto at night.

   ![Pie chart showing age distribution]
   ![Pie chart showing time of work]

3. Recreation Patterns in Sample: Although in rural India poverty is rampant, there have been cases of people buying a DVD player. Similarly many had a television set in their homes (despite living in kuccha and semi-pukka dwellings) and were in majority.
4. Religious Patterns in Sample: with not much religious variation was, the sample comprised only of Hindus and Muslims and the Hindus constituting a majority in this line of occupation.

Basic Over-Arching Structure: The Rawlsian Framework

The basic structure of our study derives heavily from the Rawlsian framework of free and equal citizens. Rawls, in his seminal work, *Justice as Fairness*, talks about the inherent inequality in any system where the positions of responsibility are lesser in number than the people applying for them. He considers this as inequality to be fair in the society, since the losers and the winners in this whole process of unequal development are determined by their respective abilities. One may equate the similarities of such a system with the present context.
of unequal developmental process with emphasis on auto-rickshaw drivers. But, doing so would be essentially wrong!

The reason for this fallacy is the basic presumption on which this whole Rawlsian system of unequal process of development is built - that of equal access to opportunities for each individual in the society for the development of his/her capabilities. This implies that all the individuals in the society, vying for a particular position of responsibility, are provided the exact same environment by the society for the development of their capabilities, after which the only distinguishing feature amongst them is their merit. Thus, assuming that all citizens are free to determine their way of life, their abilities and opportunities, on an equal footing with one another. This assumption is violated in case of the auto-rickshaw drivers, which form the most marginalized sections of the society, with no formal access to education, health, financial or political system (as we will show in the next section). In the absence of these basic, capability enhancing facilities, the auto-rickshaw drivers are not on an equal footing with the rest of the people in the society who have access to all these freedoms in life. Thus, any inequality breeding in such a system is not structural, but a result of policy failure to integrate the marginalized sections of the society with the mainstream.

Furthermore, under the Rawlesian framework, the Difference Principle argues for a case of special emphasis and support for these least-advantages sections of the society. But, in the absence of even a rudimentary form of support system, the auto-rickshaw drivers are doubly cursed to lead a life of misery and despair.

**Issues under Consideration**

Through our survey we tried to bring to light the living conditions of the auto-rickshaw drivers in Mumbai. Although our survey findings hinted at various issues to be considered while evaluating the lives of these people, for the purpose of a formal treatment of the subject we had to follow a reductionist approach. Hence, we have tried to present the issues under five headings, i.e., Income, Health, Education, Recreation and Inclusion. Each section dwells on why the issue is important in the present context, what are our findings related to that issue and what are the theoretical underpinnings of including the issue in our study.
I. Income

Economic growth, in the traditional literature on development, was synonymous with human development, measured usually using income per capita. Thus, over time, it came to be equated with human development. Although, neo-development theorists tried to go beyond income while focusing on human development, the high correlation between the two was undeniable, especially, for the informal sector people, with relatively low levels of income where earnings proved to be an important means to achieve overall well-being and to provide the first layer of social security net.

In the context of the auto-rickshaw drivers, the issue gained prominence over the years because most of them were rural migrants in the city and have some agriculture base. But, disguised unemployment in the rural agricultural sector, coupled with low incomes, led them to migrate to the cities. Their choice of which city they would migrate to was largely dictated by the community considerations, and presence of a relative or a person in that city, as in case of Mumbai. Moreover, the disaggregation of income also hinted at their consumption pattern and savings ability, and their expectation of sustainable higher levels of income.

Concerning earnings, the auto-rickshaw drivers were classified into two categories: one who owned the vehicle and the others who took them on rent/loan. The average earning over both the sub-groups came to be Rs.'250-350 per day. While the daily rent/loan installment on purchased auto was in the range of Rs.'80-90 per day, other expenditures aggregated to about Rs.'70-120 per day, including mostly, but not exhaustively, expenditure on fuel, grocery, auto maintenance and leisure activities, like smoking/drinking. Thus, the daily savings came out to be Rs. '100-150 per day, which aggregated to about Rs. '3000-4500 per month. Majority of these savings were sent as remittances to home.

Notably, absence of close integration with the formal banking system, the auto-rickshaw drivers usually took to community-run informal banks for insurance/loans for family marriages, accidents or illness and in one case to aid farming back home. Though there were no formal clubs or recognized groups, these communities provided assistance in terms of loans, at modest interest rates. Although higher than the formal bank rates, it permeated a sense of trust amongst its members and the communities also ran informal insurance schemes, which covered the insurance of auto and its accessories. It also acted as a safeguard against the local Maratha domination in socio-economic terms. Notwithstanding
these aspects, the auto during their stay in Mumbai enhanced their financial knowledge about interest rate, instalments, etc.

Although the tangible effects of income impacted the quality of life, its intangible effects could be studied from a theoretical perspective, through its role in the enhancement of people’s opportunities of leading a valued life. In the words of Amratya Sen, income enhances people’s command over commodities, which, given their conversion factors, leads to increased set of capabilities. Here, we can see that the auto drivers had a mean income of Rs.7000 - 8000, which enabled them to afford the basic necessities of life. In the framework of Nussbaum, income enters is very vital in the list of ten central human capabilities, which enables on individual to control over one’s material environment. A comfortable level of income allows one to devote time to recreation and at the same time, allows a person to possess movable goods and land, access hospitals and schools etc., which adds to their capabilities of health and life, as described by both Sen and Nussbaum. Although income help them to fulfilling of their basic needs, it (income), however, doesn’t allow them to engage in recreational activities.

II. Health

“Kya Madamji. Aspatal kahan jayenge. Humare liye toh Santoh Nagar wala hi sahi hai. ”

Health related problems are a major concerns faced by the auto drivers. This also sheds light on the important question of quality of life that they lead. Health issues also help shed light on work and family related stress, etc. It also acts as an indirect indicator of poverty, disabilities (or conversely, abilities of a person to achieve improvements in the standard of living and the quality of life that he/she has reason to value), social security systems (access to good quality public healthcare facilities and insurance), etc. Good health also signals improvements in economic performance as it enhances productivity, and reduces losses due to illness by reducing morbidity.

The health problem was classified into chronic problems and non-chronic problems. A majority of the sample reported non-chronic diseases. While, middle-aged drivers complained mainly of backache, majority suffered from diarrhea, cough, cold, fever and malaria. However, a miniscule minority smoked bidi, chewed tobacco and drank, as expected. Also, given the poor sanitary facilities available in their residences/chawls and its surrounding environment, they are prone to other vector borne diseases.
Most of the drivers reported that they could not afford treatment in private healthcare facilities and were also unable to seek treatment in Government Hospitals since the opportunity cost of visiting hospital would lead to foregoing work and the cost of which was very high. They revealed that a usual check up at the Government Hospital involved a blood test. Getting a test done and the results was a three to four day long cumbersome procedure that involved standing in long queues, “parchi katwane se le kar khoon dene tak aur phir report lene tak”. Three hours at the ‘BMC Hospital’ usually entails a loss of earnings of around Rs 400 and they have to pay additional out of pocket expenses (OOP) for medicines, tests etc. in the tune of Rs 200-400.

Any unexpected health expenditure (usually involving major illness or admissions to the hospital) leads to financial distress, borrowing of money from their kith or kin, friends and members of their community. Most of them usually prefer to go to quacks (since the primary healthcare worker is usually absent in their localities) despite being well aware of the fact that the quacks are not qualified doctors. Even a daily expenditure of Rs 100 on medicines is huge drain for them.

Sen describes health as a substantive freedom which has intrinsic importance to an individual’s life. Since healthy lifestyle provides opportunity to lead a life that that the individuals have reason to value with positive spillover effects which enables him/her to pursue other activities such as recreation, income generation etc. and further enhancement of other substantive freedoms.

Furthermore, according to Nussbaum, every individual should be guaranteed ‘bodily health’ i.e. good health (including reproductive growth); and not die a premature death or have it so debased that it effects his productive life. However, in this context she highlights that different individuals would need different amounts of the same (or different) resources to achieve the same levels of capabilities to function.

Moreover, every individual has different conversion factors by which they are able to convert potential functioning into achieved functioning. Combining Sen’s view with that of Nussbaum’s list of basic capabilities, it can be argued that improvements on the health front would also help in ensuring achievements in other capabilities such as play, life and control over one’s material environment. Therefore, any policy of the State to improve the living conditions of auto-rickshaw drivers or those in the informal sector, should incorporate the above mentioned health considerations.
III. Education

A person’s potential can be maximised through education as it enables a person to think, to work properly and to make decisions and to help him to carve out a separate identity for himself in the society. Education would enable the auto-drivers to escape poverty, to climb up the social ladder and ensure education of his spouse and children, which is one way also reflects his attitude towards the importance of women education.

About 94% of the auto drivers were found to be school secondary education, but almost all of them had to voluntarily discontinue their further education for want of money. Almost everyone placed a very high importance on educating their children. In most cases their children were pursuing under graduation courses in colleges.

As one looks at the theoretical underpinnings of the role that education plays in the whole process of human development, Sen and Nussbaum’s view are important. While According to Sen, education helps in capability expansion and Nussbaum incorporates the benefits of receiving education in her proposed list of 10 central human capabilities through the achieved capabilities of (1) senses; imagination and thought and (2) control over one’s material and political environment.

The findings of the study are in congruence with Nussbaum’s and Sen’s theoretical framework as majority of them understand the value of an educated life. However, Charusheela’s critique of the role that education plays in the process of freedom expansion of the people is also important. The current obsession of Indian job market with formal education implies that those without or with relatively low levels of education are excluded from the employment scenario. As in this case, the auto-drivers have few alternative employment opportunities, which adds to their vicious cycle of poverty.

IV Recreation “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”: The essence of the above statement and extended ruminations on the flute question tend to emphasize the significance of recreation in an individual’s daily life. While the preponderance of this question is in relation to the physical growth and mental development of infant, nevertheless, this does not entail that the issue is trivial in the context of adults. Various studies have successfully proven that careful work-leisure balance is necessary for the optimum functioning of an individual.
The study also tried to understand the importance of recreation in the life of an auto-rickshaw driver. The first issue is their perceptions about recreation. Secondly, equally important is the various methods of recreation that are not only feasible to the auto drivers, but also their preference over other alternatives. The Third aspect is the connection between the individual amusements to collective aspirations of seeking entertainment. Fundamentally, the study tried to address the significance of avocation in the life of an auto-driver.

The perceptions about recreation, is about understanding of entertainment from the point of view of an auto driver. It was a bottom-up approach which required sensitivity towards the perception of the subject rather than the perspectives of those who did the survey. The study centred around questions whether entertainment during evenings was perceived as a waste of time, or it was only understood as watching the television. Also what were the aspirations of the family members and his kin, concerning recreation. This is based on the fact that, apart from the direct utility that the subject extracts from entertainment, he also receives indirect satisfaction when his family derives pleasure from certain modes of entertainment.

Some significant patterns in the recreation aspect of an auto-rickshaw driver’s life were observed. Since most of the respondents are immigrants (earning money and sending it back home being their primary motivation) one can expect recreation to play a relatively non-significant role in their lives in the city. Most of the respondents hence did not regard recreation as a separate entity in their lives. The common media of recreation meant television, walks to the garden, celebration of festivals, movies, etc. Those whose family had shifted to Mumbai after their arrival gave more emphasis to recreation than the ones who were staying without their families. Of late, Alcohol had become a medium of recreation as was observed in some cases, but it was not the general pattern. Fundamentally, it was observed that the auto drivers constantly lived in a condition of self-restraint, so that they are able to maximize their remittances back home.

Though the small term benefits outweigh the long run costs, the auto-rickshaw drivers choose to be myopic in certain aspects. Significantly, none of the respondents showed any particular interest in residing in Mumbai and were hopeful that they would go back home one day and comfortably live the rest of their lives at their native place. However, it was also seen that the drivers usually go back home after a long time as they are getting caught in this vicious cycle of wage earning and enhancing saving as an auto driver.
Both Nussbaum and Sen have been strong advocates of the importance of ‘Recreation’ in the life of a human being. While Sen emphasizes the significance of “play” when he talks about the “Flute” question and in his capabilities approach, Nussbaum is not far behind. In her exhaustive list of the fundamental human capabilities, she mentions play as a separate entity. Play, according to her, is a fundamental human freedom, which contributes to the achieved functionings of a human being. Hence, ‘Recreation’, in different forms, is absolutely necessary for the overall development of a person. The study in no way undermined those aspects.

V. Inclusion

The issue of inclusion of the auto-rickshaw drivers into the mainstream of the economy consists of challenges on three grounds - social, financial and political. The social aspect was highlighted in their mistreatment and their isolated inhabitation in certain community clusters during the survey. The financial aspect reflected in their limited financial integration with the formal banking institutions and prevalence of informal channels of credit and money transferring amongst the auto-rickshaw drivers. The political inclusion of the auto-rickshaw drivers was considerably achieved, at least on paper, with most of the drivers acknowledging the presence of voter ID cards and Unique Identification Cards (UIDs). However, the study revealed that the auto-rickshaw drivers were not politically aware, regarding each party’s political agenda or candidates and were clearly not satisfied with the way the political parties addressed their demands.

Both Sen and Nussbaum have championed the case of social, economic and political freedoms to be treated as fundamental components of any individual’s overall freedom and Nussbaum has elaborated it further. While Sen talks of these three freedoms under the five distinct types of freedoms seen in an ‘instrumental’ perspective, under the heads of political freedoms, economic facilities and social opportunities; in her list of ten central human capabilities, Nussbaum mentioned it under the heads of affiliation and control over one’s political and material environment. This brings forth the importance attached to the issue of ‘inclusion’ of the least advantaged members of the society into the mainstream economy and society and the need for a policy to address the issue, especially those in the informal sector of urban India.
Limitation to the Survey and Scope for Further Research

The study group faced certain problems while conducting the survey, which might have biased the inferences. Furthermore, there was the time constraint. Some of the limitations of the study conducted are as follows:

1. The sample space (only 25) was not substantial enough to capture the complete scenario of the auto-rickshaw drivers and their problems.

2. Furthermore, the sample space should have consisted beyond the migrants, who were mostly from the BIMARU states of India. Thus, the sample had little inter-regional variations. This might have led to an undue emphasis on the problems of migrant drivers only. A more representative sample, should have been to include the local auto-rickshaw drivers of Mumbai. This could have placed the problems of other auto drivers in right focus.

3. Most of the auto-rickshaw drivers were usually hard pressed for time during the survey. They could not talk at great length about their problems.

4. A worthwhile comparative analysis between the auto-rickshaw drivers and the taxi drivers operating along the same routes in the city could have provided the rationale behind the choice of occupation of the auto-rickshaw.

Policy Prescriptions

Notwithstanding the limitations of the study, there are some implementable actions that can be taken for the welfare of auto drivers.

- Identification of a Target Group: Prior to directing any policy action towards a section of the society, it is important to identify the specific target group in question. In case of any policy aimed at benefitting the auto drivers, this becomes a problem, as first of all they do not fall under the purview of any government policy specifically designed for them. Secondly, the schemes that they may be entitled to individually are not applicable to all the auto drivers collectively. To resolve this issue, the drivers need be identified by the place of their residence and also by their community participation. Almost all drivers are a part of some community, even if they are not active or contributing members of it.

- Counterparty Legal Duties Required: As a result of not having been formally recognized,
auto rickshaw drivers have an additional problem of violation of their basic human rights (as described above), with no counter-party held legally accountable for them. In passing, one can question the relevance of policy paraphernalia made specifically for them. In this regard, consider the following perspective. The urban formal sector, and some part of informal sector, provides a similar pay as that of an auto driver, yet all of the factories or institutions have formal unions and a legal paraphernalia and protocol administering their daily work. The union and the laws act as a safety net for them. In the case of auto drivers, the unions cover for meager numbers and even then, there are no counter-party legal duties safeguarding the rights of the drivers.

■ Treating the Targeted Group as Participants: The policies designed to help the auto-rickshaw drivers sometimes treats them as mere beneficiaries/ recipients of the policy process, rather than participants in the whole process. This could sometimes lead to policies which do more harm than good to their intended target group. Take the case of the proposed policy of hike in auto fares. While the government might see this as a step towards enhanced earnings for the auto drivers. The auto drivers on the other hand want a revision of the fare structure along with a subsidy on fuel, auto parts, and insurance/policy cover etc., rather the fare hike. Thus, one can notice the glaring misalignment between the incentive structures of the government and the auto drivers. This situation could be resolved if one looks at it through the lens of reasonable pluralism. If the government took note of the reasonably different views of the auto drivers while framing the policy, or treated them as participants in the whole process of policy designing, rather than mere beneficiaries of the help doled out to them, the resulting policy framework could be more effective towards alleviating the problems of auto-rickshaw drivers.

■ Focusing on a Comparative Approach to Justice: Using a transcendental approach to justice in the present context would be more or less ineffective in light of the innumerable counterfactuals to driving an auto (in terms of alternative employment opportunities present) and the altogether absence of any knowledge regarding the ultimate transcendental goal. Therefore, a subjective transcendental stance, even though hypothetical, is not exactly appropriate. As Sen points out, a comparative approach should, in such cases, be of more utility. This would guide the policy to improve the conditions of the auto-rickshaw drivers from their current miserable state, although not at par with the utopian level of living conditions, as embodied by the transcendental
Summary and Conclusion

The study has found that the majority of the auto-rickshaw drivers in Mumbai are migrants and entry into this field is influenced as well as facilitated through strong community linkages. The community network acts as a social safety net and provides the drivers with indispensable services such as loans to meet emergencies, shared kitchens and recreation (common television sets, festivals), etc.

Most of the respondents were educated up to the higher secondary level. They realized the importance of education and considered it as being instrumental in providing access to a better life for their future generations. Most wanted to provide their children with higher education but were well aware that it would be constrained by their financial conditions. They were optimistic about their children’s future with realistic expectations at the back of their minds given the fact that they themselves had to drop out for the want of money.

Most of the income saved was sent back home as remittances to the family. There was very little left over to account for unforeseen contingencies. Their finances were usually balanced on a knife’s edge. A loss of even a day’s worth of earnings due to say illness would also throw their finances haywire. Given the negligible amount of savings available, the drivers had no access to private healthcare. They had no option but to resort to quacks for treatment and lived in slums (in ‘kuccha’ and semi-pukka dwellings with poor sanitation facilities). The public health sanitation facilities in their localities were in shambles. They live within strict constraints that they have set for themselves. The primary motives driving them are the desire to send money back home and save enough to retire and settle back home and set up a small business (such as a small kirana shop) of their own. Recreation has been heavily discounted for by them and lies way below in their priority list. However, for recreation sake, they tend to put their families and community before their individual selves.

Although they hold bank accounts, voter ID cards, UID cards etc. and are members of a Union, the provisions and facilities for their welfare exist only on paper with no actual provisions. More often than not, Union memberships serve the purpose of providing a secure parking space, lower rates when fined and intervention of the union on their behalf when involved with the police.
There is no accountability on behalf of the union and they have no voice. Their concerns remain unheard and the union fails to act as a bridge between them and the government. Though they are politically aware and actively exercise their right to vote, they still face social political and financial exclusion and still remain on the margins of our society. Most out of the list of 10 basic capabilities that should be guaranteed by the Constitution of our State to its citizens are violated in the case of auto-rickshaw drivers. For example, if we were to invoke the argument of practical reason and affiliation, we would find that they are unable to form a conception of what is good for them as they have adaptive preferences. They are unable to plan ahead and critically reflect on their future given the uncertain nature of their existence.

The auto drivers also face social exclusion and are denied the right to be treated in a dignified manner and lead a life of self-respect and free from humiliation. Their basic socio-economic and political freedoms are not protected and they are often subjected to gross human rights violations. They society does not provide them with an opportunity to coexist as free and equal citizens. They are doubly cursed since they are already at a disadvantaged position vis-a-vis the rest of the society and secondly there are no adequate provisions to help them reach an equal footing with others. Most of the policy interventions are far from the realities faced by them. Therefore, any action by the Government on their behalf needs to incorporate their concerns and need to approach solutions to their problems with a fair amount of reasonable pluralism.

References:


