

A Space for Dignity: The Vantage of Capability Approach

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Reflective narratives from an organizational actor's everyday life sometimes render insights into what constituted his immediate milieu and what constituents contributed to his general well-being. Also, unique functional models of organizations generate scholastic interest as some strike a balance among the interests of the individual, his desire for some sense of freedom and his acceptance of the diversity of others. A structural understanding of such an organization often brings into the foray the potential length and breadth of embeddedness of the organizational culture vis-a-vis the socio-economic canvass of the actors who continuously interact with this system. An investigation into the functioning of a worker cooperative society revealed some remarkable inferences on a seemingly intangible theme 'dignity'. This case study research mapped the journey of the worker along with the business evolution of the enterprise.

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Introduction

The case ecosystem was that of a Worker Cooperative Society which originated in Kerala and later spread across the country rendering a successful model in the service sector. The research largely looks at how this Worker Cooperative Society has built in itself a structure that drives 'dignity' and has at the same time placed itself in a strategic vantage in terms of its business performance. Without compromising the objective of the enterprise to earn desirable profits and stay insulated in times of distress, how has this Worker Cooperative ingrained dignity (beyond decent work) in their processes and functioning? The paper shares some thoughts in this direction using an interpreted framework of Capability Approach.

Understanding Literature

Social theorists across centuries have often given such core questions to humanity to ponder. Some

of the search was to fundamentally make sense of the life as we lived and the institutions like society and family which made an indelible mark on the human actor. A set of such literature reading has been placed hereunder which speaks of what constitutes (justice-laden) society and social institutions pointing in the direction of freedom, self- order and capabilities.

Reflecting upon Adam Smith's ontological view that human nature is essentially ordered and so is society when allowed with sufficient freedom; he puts forth the premise that self- order may produce unity and concord. What Smith referred to as the 'invisible hand', that guides society towards stability and harmony simultaneously empowers each individual to pursue his and her own interests (positively). He famously lays the groundwork for his argument that self-love is the force that drives the market system in his 'An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (Smith, 1784) where he says: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantage".

He, recognizing the ill effects of such unfettered freedom to pursue one's self-interest which may work against the choices of other members of society, further searched for answers in his "Theory of Moral Sentiments" (Smith, 1759). In his analysis the sine qua non for a suc-

cessful liberal system of free people and markets is security for all participants: "Society... cannot subsist among those who are at all times ready to hurt and injure one another". Smith believed that the source of this refuge must be a system of justice that establishes and enforces principles of interpersonal behavior that ensure individuals' security. He also emphasized that such cohesiveness of a liberal order would be a result of self-organization or self-government which stems out of the ethical maturity of the actors.

Another theory that almost succeeds Smith and is often read in unison is that of John Rawls who was essentially dissatisfied with the traditional arguments in philosophy particularly the utilitarian arguments (greatest good for the greatest number) on what makes social institution just. Even the human intuit argument which believes that humans get to understand intuitively what is right or wrong by relying on his innate moral sense, failed to bring together the questions on the format of justice and equality. Inspired by David Hume's (circumstances of justice) and Immanuel Kant (fair choice situation) views, John Rawls famously united the themes of justice and equality in his 'A Theory of Justice' (Rawls, 1971). He believed that society ought to be structured in such a manner that the greatest possible liberty is ensured to members as long as the liberty of one member does not infringe on that of the other. This situation would then tend to promote mutually acceptable principles of justice and argues that inequality is acceptable only if it privileges those

who are worst off. Amartya Sen critiques these arguments through his 'The Idea of Justice' (Sen, 2009) that ideas about a perfectly just world do not help address real inequality. He explains that Raul as he emphasizes that institutions grant justice in society, has failed to consider the effects of human behavior on the institutions' ability to maintain a just society.

One must not only evaluate freedoms for people to be able to make decisions they value but also work to remove obstacles to those freedoms, that is, expand people's capabilities.

Sen, on the other hand, argues that governments/ leadership should be rather evaluated against the concrete capabilities of their citizens/ constituent actors. He defines capability as "*a person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being; [it] represents the alternative combinations of things a person is able to do or be*" (Sen, 1993). Capabilities are opportunities or "*the freedoms [people] actually enjoy to choose the lives that they have reason to value*" (Sen, 1992). Bringing back what Kant once explained that humans as an end in itself and not as means to an end, Sen believes that one must not only evaluate freedoms for people to be able to make decisions they value but also work to remove obstacles to those freedoms, that is, expand people's capabilities. Since the late 18th Century, questions on social justice have largely concentrated on the balance between freedom and equality. Sen (1980)

apparently renders a solution to some of the core issues by posing question: "Equality of what?"

Looking from a strategic vantage, the capabilities approach framework can be one way in which a particular structure can be understood to imbibe its nuances. Now understanding 'dignity' which has a rather subtle underlying presence in all these arguments would enable the integration of the core concepts that form this paper. To be dignified or have dignity is first to be in control of oneself, competently and appropriately exercising one's powers. Then, dignity is about self-command and freedom leading to self-organization remembering Aristotle's claim that Freedom is obedience to self-formulated rules (Aristotle, ca. 350 B.C.E./1925). He begins by saying that the highest good for humans, the highest aim of all human practical thinking, is *eudaimonia*, a Greek word often translated as well-being or happiness - where self-order leads to realizing freedom paving the way for well-being.

Karl Marx believed that work itself means dignity which was further expanded to include the necessity for interesting and meaningful work to ensure dignity at work (Agassi, 1986; Fox, 1994; Hodson, 1996, 2001; Hodson & Roscigno, 2004). Some scholastic inquiries briefly touch upon the theme of dignity as a recognition of self-esteem/worth (Maslow, 1965) followed by pleas for 'humanization of work' through writings of Freidman (1977); Gemmill (1977); Khan (1981); Rosow (1979); Ryan (1977); Schumacer (1979). Our definition of dig-

nity at work encompasses both the structural prerequisites as well as the meaningful work stances posed above.

Kant (1964/1785) explains that in the realm of ends everything has either a price or a dignity. Whatever has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; on the other hand, whatever is above all price, and therefore admits of no equivalence, has dignity. Kant postulated dignity resides within the human being, rather than being determined by one's behaviors. Kant's thought that every human being should never be treated as a means, but always as an end in itself (Kerstein, 2014; McCrudden, 2014; Rosen, 2012). His perspective on dignity (or *Würdigkeit/Würde*) introduces an egalitarian view of dignity (Rosen, 2012), which means that every human being has an intrinsic worth which should not be violated.

The relational aspect of dignity is relevant according to Rosen (2012), with the notion that dignity obtains relevance through its focus on duties. He argues that it is through the implication of duty resulting from inherent dignity that directs human actions (Bayefsky, 2013). Kant believed that the most important duty that one had was to oneself leading to ways to behave and direct actions respectfully. This tends to reflect while exercising freedom and independence where the individual with dignity derives his privileges in line with his moral obligations. This, to a large extent, answers the concerns on free-riders who may be an after-effect of uncontained freedom.

Durkheim (1964) explains individual dignity as a defining feature of modern society. Assaults on individuals, according to Durkheim, are therefore perceived to be assaults on what is the center of modern society. Hence, to us, the starting point and inevitably the ending point are the individual actor in our inquiry into dignity in organizations. As Herbert Simon (1985) points out "Nothing is more fundamental in setting our research agenda and informing our research methods than our view of the nature of the human beings whose behavior we are studying"

Key Questions & Conceptual Frame

The study attempts to reveal the following through the framework of Capability Approach:

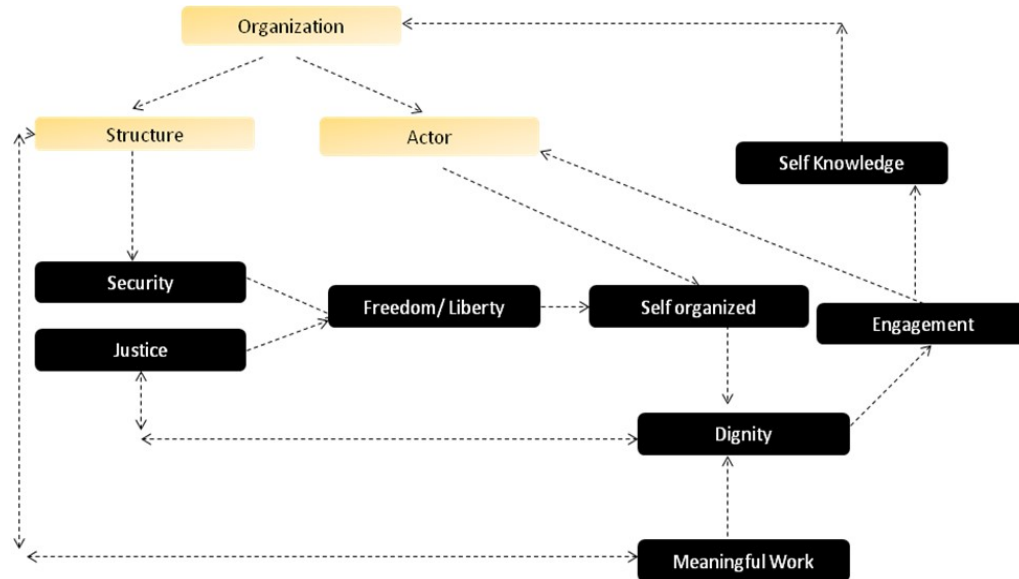
- How has capabilities and functioning manifested in a Cooperative Society?
- How has the Worker Cooperative Society ingrained dignity within its structure?
- How was the organization built on freedom, agency and self-organization?

The conceptual framework given in fig.1 brings together the scheme within which the study has been carried forward. In a secure and just organization structure, the employee actor is granted freedom which facilitates his self-organization. As a result of this, dignity may be attained which leads to en-

hanced meaning of work. Dignity facilitates engagement which enhances self-knowledge and influences the or-

ganization further. Meaningful work continuously interacts with the organization structure.

Fig.1 Conceptual Framework



Research Design - Case Study

As Yin (1981a, 1981b) emphasizes that the strategy adopted by a researcher may be employed to serve exploratory, descriptive or explanatory purposes. Among the key imperatives to determine the type of research to be adopted, is the type of questions that are being explored through the study. The present study envisages exploring “how” or “why” questions rather than “what”, as derived from the set of research questions which form the basis of the inquiry. A suitable strategy that seems to fit into the research is a case study which has been adopted owing to the confidence in the power of narratives to bring out embeddedness that may be prevalent between the phenomena and the contexts.

The choice of case study as a strategy is primarily owing to the fact that it grants flexibility to understand the subject over a period of time rather than depending on mere frequencies and incidence limited in time and space. For this, this case study relies on a multitude of evidence like documents, artifacts, interviews and observation. Tsoukas and Hatch (2001) iterates that case study enables an effective understanding of organizational complexity because it makes it possible to maintain contextuality, reflexivity, purpose and motives, and temporal sensitivity for grasping and explaining actuality. Speaking of contextuality, this case study is read from its original environment or context and is positioned to explain ‘why’ and ‘how’. Through powerful reflexive

narratives, case studies are empowered to capture complexities and the researcher may explore, describe or explain retaining the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events.

Detailed in-depth interviews were undertaken with the key actors of the case ecosystem to understand the themes under exploration. In addition to this, secondary source of information was relied upon to collect data from the relevant internal stakeholders to understand the organization better. News articles on the organization, souvenirs on their 50 years and other key documents were referred to pin the relevance and narrations of stalwarts within and outside the system.

Cooperative Societies

Since their emergence in England in 1844, a cooperative has been popularly studied as an economic model that advances members' collective interests and has been considered an invaluable tool for human and economic development. However, owing to the multifarious influences, the cooperative movement has transformed from being just an economic model mainly for the poor and vulnerable to becoming a significant player in the global economy. In Hubert Calvert's words, "Co-operation is a form of organization wherein persons voluntarily associated together as human beings on the basis of equality for the promotion of the economic interest of themselves."

Acknowledged in the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, and the General

Assembly resolution 51/58 adopted in 1996, cooperatives are largely viewed as an effective tool to enable a group of people to mobilize resources to meet their requirements. In the process of resource mobilization to meet these needs, cooperatives encourage entrepreneurship in communities where they function. There are arguments that structural finesse may not be a viable or market-friendly alternative that insulates environmental stress and promotes successful business. However, the literature explains that the combination of associationism and market forces makes cooperatives a veritable market option. Against this backdrop, Menzani and Zamagni (2010) argue that "cooperatives can be seen as an instrument for unleashing the market's full potential" primarily because of their economic and social underpinning. In the absence of this recognition, the successes and failures of cooperatives would be defined in purely economic terms at the expense of the social and cultural dimensions (Garnevska et al., 2011). Also, Wanyama et al. (2009) emphasize the non-economic benefits of cooperative society as a "holistic social economy model."

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When understanding the mechanisms that promote social and economic well-being of the community, the statement of Zeuli and Cropp (2004) that cooperatives have "the potential to create more substantial social and economic benefits

within a community than non-cooperative firms” is of relevance. Similarly, Bertulfo (2007) envisions that “while focusing on member needs and wishes, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities”. This comes out of the belief and understanding that when the innate needs as well as the socio-economic requirements of the members are addressed, it creates opportunity for spillover and this surplus can positively impact the society at large. These benefits arise out of the member actor’s participation in the engaging business enterprise with each enshrined with empowered agency exercising their ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others (International Co-operative Alliance, 2007) – the values that are the essence of cooperatives.

Research Ecosystem– ABC House (ABCH)

ABC House¹ has an intriguing story that dates back to pre-independent India when the Central Government enterprise ABC Board (since 1942) used to run a restaurant chain. The chief objective of the House has been to propagate the agenda of coffee among an otherwise tea-loving population. The Board has made an indelible mark in facilitating the translation of coffee from a home-grown beverage to a market-favorite and priced produce.

The ABC Board’s decision to shut down en-masse these institutions in 1955

threatened the survival of most of the ABCH and the workers who earned their living through these institutions. This led to the birth of the cooperative society, under the able-leadership of Shri DEF who is popularly known as the General of the Poor. The ABC Board Labor Union which was stealthily formed in the year 1947 later made its way to be the revolutionary platform for protest to take back the displaced/ soon-to-be displaced workers. The Union was recognized by the Board only in the period 1954-57 after a series of protests and campaigns raised by its workers.

Capability Approach

The capability approach (CA), by design has been derived to explain poverty, inequality or well-being. CA enables a framework that can help understand, conceptualize and evaluate the phenomena. Qualitative methods have also been used while analyzing through capability approach, some examples being that of Alkire (2002) who used participatory methods in the selection and assessment of well-being, Wolff and de-Shalit (2007) while studying on deprivation in affluent societies.

A key reason to employ CA in the current study can be elaborated herein: “There is a deep complementarity between individual agency and social arrangements. It is important to give simultaneous recognition to the centrality of individual freedom and to the force of social influences on the extent and reach of individual freedom. To counter the problems that we face, we have to see

¹ *The original case ecosystem has been kept anonymous owing to privacy reasons*

individual freedom as a social commitment.” (Sen, 2000, Preface). Extending the thought a bit, we consider individual freedom to be a critical building block for dignity in organizations.

It may be understood that its normative framework grants flexibility to conceptualize the themes in the format that is conducive with the variables under analysis. As Sen elaborates, the CA should be understood as a way of assessing individual human well-being. By upholding the stress on human diversity, CA directs attention to analyzing structure in terms of individualization. The CA is not primarily interested in investigating the question of how much resources are being spent but rather whether the resources are directed appropriately, taking into account the needs of the individual adequately. More individualization and less standardization enable plurality in understanding the individual actor. The CA in this sense can be seen as a foundation for framing research questions about what is interesting, important or distinctive about policies and possibly even configurations of policies that are a direct expression of structure.

Often research attempts to concentrate on individual actors as disentangled from others who are their fellow actors within the same ecosystem. “(A) basic observation of sociology and psychology is that the individual and the community ‘penetrate’ one another and require one another, and that individuals are not able to function without deep links to others” (Etzioni, 1993). Also, research which focuses on agency and the individual choice

often insufficiently portrays the impact of individual actors on the institutions and its structure. “(I)n valuing a person’s ability to take part in the life of the society itself, there is an implicit valuation of the society itself, and that is an important aspect of the capability perspective” (Sen, 2009).

Contextualizing the Concepts

In the study that ensues, the paper takes one through the core theoretical underpinnings of capabilities approach and attempts to map observations from the cooperative. We have picked and chosen some relevant facets of the approach in our context and point out instances from the cooperative which reveal seemingly interesting embeddedness.

The definition of individualism as propounded in the capability approach, seemingly align with ‘ethical individualism’ which postulates ‘that individuals, and only individuals, are the ultimate units of moral concern... This, of course, does not imply that we should not evaluate social structures and societal properties, but ethical individualism implies that these structures and institutions will be evaluated by virtue of the causal importance that they have for individual well-being.’ (Robeyns, 2005). Much of the work on the capability approach and human development as a whole has engaged groups specifically – women’s groups, social movements, public actions, democratic practices and so on. Sen takes the normative position of ‘ethical individualism’ – the view that what ultimately mat-

ters is what happens to every single individual in a society. Here although the interests are collective, the unit of analysis is individual. The collective behaves in ways that restore and build the freedom and agency of the individual. In the ABCH, although the structure is quite sacrosanct, the individual actor interacts with the system and their rendition is what forms the basis of the study. To a large extent, this study is a series of perceptions of individuals as they interacted with the organizational systems. His individual capability and functioning along with the value judgments is what is being discussed here. Hence the study spins around the thoughts, perceptions and experiences of the individual narrator.

One of the first and foremost arguments of the approach is that functionings are things people value. From a macro perspective, this stance encourages the participation and engagement of people whose lives are at stake, in order to ascertain whether they will value instances/practices/ changes that might ensue. Here understanding engagement is extremely important while learning about capabilities and functionings. In the case of the cooperative society, one finds that there is a pattern of complex socialization that paves the way for engagement. The socialization is revealed throughout his journey and is further facilitated through mentoring.

ABCH structure believes that all the skills that is required for his functioning lies within him. In order to instill confidence in a comparatively less educated actor, he gets groomed by the structure

through knowledge socialization. Every actor begins his tryst from the kitchen as an unskilled dishwasher and learns from the environment to gain skills that are quintessential to taking up higher responsibilities. He learns cooking, he learns to serve the guests and eventually bookkeeping. He gradually attains confidence and engages with the structure with an even stronger desire to contribute. He slowly starts adding value to his life and values the meaningful work that the organization allows to render. At each step, he is naturally endowed with dignity. These actors, in a meeting conducted once in two years, decide their office bearers and manages the strategic direction of their enterprise. The regional language has been made the administrative language to further increase transparency and ease in communication.

Another argument is that functionings are things people 'have reason to value'. Herein, the capability approach introduces value judgements explicitly. The functionings should ideally lead to mutual complementarity wherein one does not infringe on the freedom of the other negatively. The reason that we feel may be ascribed to this Cooperative Society is that of genuine and dependable service rendered by their enterprise for the working class of society particularly the bottom of the pyramid. This can be named under heads like unadulterated food, price protection for staples, ascertained shelf life to always plate fresh food items and several other conscious practices.

Even before a strategic decision on any price increase, they consider that

there are close to 50,000 people who utilise the service of ABCH every day. It is estimated that nearly 19,000 people depend on ABCH exclusively for their daily lunch. For example, meals have been charged Rs 40 from March 1, 2017. Before this increase in price, for over 40 months, they served meals at Rs 35. The private vendors have increased their prices at least thrice in this 40 months period owing to the increase in prices of pulses, rice and vegetables. The price of Tea, Rice and Chappathi has been protected to ensure that these most sought-after staple food items become affordable to anyone especially daily wage earners and manual workers. Another example is that “a vegetable curry costs just Rs 15 in ABCH and there are no private places in Kerala which serves the dish in such a price”, says Mr Madhusoodanan, a veteran employee. “The quantity of the vegetable curry has been proportionately assumed against 3 chappatis so that there is less wastage and optimization as well as sufficiency at every level.”

Another conscious decision that drives ABCH is that they do not place more than five food items at a time on their menu and ascribes a shelf life for each food item. When the ABCH opens at 6 am, they serve Upma (thick porridge from dry roasted semolina or coarse rice flour) and Banana. By 6.30 am, Idly (fermented and steamed rice-gram cake) is ready and added to the menu. By 7.00 am, Wada (fried rice-lentil snack), by 8.00 Puri Masala (unleavened deep-fried Indian bread with Potato curry), by 8.30 Masala Dosa (fermented rice-gram

crepes with curried Potato stuffing) as well as ghee roast (fermented rice-gram crepes cooked in clarified butter), by 9.00 Chappathi, Paratha, (types of Indian bread) Vegetable Curry and Chicken Curry gets added to the menu. By 9.00 am, the food that was prepared at 6.00 am that is Upma and boiled Banana is withdrawn as it has completed 3 hours of its perfectly fresh life. Later by 9.30 am, Idly gets withdrawn and by 10.00 am, Wada is out of the menu cards. So systematically each of the food items moves out of the menu. Even the spices are ground within ABCH from the raw materials and masalas (spices) are prepared directly by the cooks. They also have a legacy which believes that freshness is more important than taste for any food.

The absence of refrigerator was yet another exclusive feature of their branches. Till the year 2010, they never used refrigerators in any of the ABCH, however due to global warming and the rise in atmospheric temperature they use refrigerators only where non-vegetarian food is served. It was found in a study among the workers of ABCH that no instance of cancer has been reported among any of the workers so far. This also is a testimony to the quality of the food that gets prepared and served. When one comes face to face with a structure of this strength, we believe that it renders more than one reason to value.

Capabilities are the freedom to enjoy valuable functionings. So, they combine functionings with a kind of opportunity freedom. As T. H. Green wrote, ‘We do not mean merely freedom from re-

straint or compulsion ... when we speak of freedom as something to be so highly prized, we mean a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying' (Sen, 2002). It was revealed in the study that owing to the actor's engagement at every business process in the organization, there has been a sense of enhanced meaning of work for the actor. Not only the employee actor is a worker but also is a strategist, an auditor and a manager. He not only works in the kitchen but also brings together insights to ensure good governance in his society. This freedom to engage with each and every business process facilitates his learning and widens his horizon of functioning.

In a light conversation, an employee Mr Raghavan said that the transformation of an individual within ABCH is equivalent to the process of germinating a coconut. There are several directions in which the coconut is placed so that the sprout gains sufficient strength. In the same way, the personality of the individual who is a young adult, at the age of 18, as he walks in gets molded within its walls. With no prior experience in engaging in any form of employment, the employee is as good as a fresh coconut, chuckles the employee. Here the employee actor builds his personality and learns self-organization at a very early age which directly translates from freedom to express their original self. Here freedom is a rather intrinsic faculty than an externally infused mechanism.

Maybe this naturally flows from the legacy of the organization where free-

dom always manifested responsibility. "While functioning in the new format in the 1960s, we decided to render service without even taking one cup of free coffee" remembers another employee. They paid for every food item that they consumed from their enterprise. They decided to take no holidays/ leaves till the time ABCH stabilizes. They voluntarily took a pay cut from their entitled Rs 70 to Rs 65 for nearly 5 years. To further stabilize the finances, the employees decided to be employed only for 11 months in a year and the 12th month would be without pay. This system continued for about 4 years until the balance sheet truly attained balance.

The capability of the individual actor is built on a strong vantage of justice and equality which drives dignity.

At ABCH, the capability of the individual actor is built on a strong vantage of justice and equality which drives dignity. An interesting anecdote by the writer Nadakkal Parameshwaran Pillai says that back then in official parlance, it was impossible for the ABC Board (the older format of the institution before it became a Worker Cooperative) to mention the name of a worker with a prefix 'Shri'. There are several accounts of 14-18 hour work schedule which the workers had to complete each day. On the one hand, while the Government lauded the efforts of ABC Board to promote the prominence of Coffee and often rewarded the key players in the higher band of the organization, the worker or the

ones who were enablers of such a feat was not recognized and were left to their meagre existence. When such atrocities reached its zenith, in the year 1946, an article named “ABCH Workers Are Humans Too” floated among the workers which signed with an evocation “if you seek to lead a decent life, then come together and collect”. This call for action, later led to the formation of the worker cooperative which was built on the value of dignity, ensuring a harm-free and respectful work environment for its workers.

So when the ABCH came into its official existence, the pillars on which the structure was created was designed quite naturally. It surely was justice, equality and dignity. Even the difference between the salaries of various grades of employees is extremely minimal. There would be a maximum difference of INR 15 between the highest and the lowest paid in ABCH, back then at the commencement of the Society. So equality among the cadres was the chief focus of this structure, a feature that has been derived from their communist political philosophy. Gradually, by 1962-63, bonus was established followed by medical allowance, 36 days privilege leave, 20 days casual leave, up to 60 days medical leave, provident fund, prosperity (kshemam) fund, Gratuity, double salary if worked on a holiday and education allowance. Staff quarter was another facility that was added eventually to an employee’s entitlements. The most distinctive entitlement that was available for a ABCH cooperative society employee is that of pension. Moreover, the ‘tip’ that one pays

for a service in the ABCH has been collectively decided to be deposited for the old-age relief fund program for employees.

These goals might not necessarily make an individual happier or more comfortable, but they are reached through reasoned reflection.

Understanding the clear distinction between freedom and agency forms another part of the analysis of the cooperative. Agency here is taken to mean that each person is a dignified and responsible human being who shapes her or his own life in the light of goals that matter, rather than simply being shaped or instructed how to think. These goals might not necessarily make an individual happier or more comfortable, but they are reached through reasoned reflection. (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). In order to move towards collective action and democratic participation, agency is extremely important particularly because it leads to freedom. Alkire (2002) considers agency as a key dimension for human well-being with a scope for expansion. In the case of an agency, it is again shaped by the structure of the opportunities available in the immediate environment. The disadvantaged groups often accept and come in to terms with their predicaments thereby limiting their aspirations to the extent that the structure guarantees. Hence the interests are often unfortunately curtailed and systematically limited. But the dual combination of capabilities and functioning energizes

to create a unique combination that questions the structure and enhances agency.

In order to understand the manifestation of his true agency, it is important to learn the recruitment process. Any candidate who is 18 years of age can be a potential employee, quite unheard of in any job postings. Employees are recruited through advertisements in the newspaper followed by an interview of the shortlisted candidates. At the closure of the interview, the President and Secretary ensure that the potential employee is aware of the rules and regulations which they are to follow. The fresher employee is then trained in several departments and is up-skilled to complete his tasks. Once recruited, they are assigned cleaning tasks and are instructed to set aside two hours during the day to learn the vocation. They also believe that it is almost impossible to be lethargic in this organizational structure as the responsibilities have also been clearly divided among the workers. It was also explained that mentorship principles run the program and the relationship between the mentor-mentee strengthens the structure. With such a gamut of activities happening almost parallel, the absence of a so-to-say professional management system should ideally make the system challenging. However, the integration of the vision of socialism at every step with a focus on mentorship of the unskilled shapes and leads the current format of

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functioning. They believe that the rich legacy that has shaped the organization is what has enabled to keep this format intact. There is no commander of tasks, there is no executor of instructions, and there are just individuals carrying out their responsibilities in a self-organized manner. The management system thrives on communication and information exchanges which eventually converts itself into the knowledge needed to execute the tasks and duties. It was thrilling to note that this system has been in existence all the way through globalization and almost three decades of the information explosion in the Indian subcontinent. However, it stands tall lasting the test of time.

Conclusion

Recognizing the capability approach as a framework to examine conceptualized phenomena, the study analyzed a worker society cooperative on the tenets of Sen's original theme and the interpretations that followed. The study traveled through various touch points that revealed the strengths of the structure of a worker cooperative as well as the commendable contribution it rendered in creating a dignified organization. The freedom, equality and justice which manifested at several junctures were explained with the help of the narratives thereby throwing light on reading the potential of worker driven cooperatives and the strategic impact they can create on the ecosystem.

The capability approach is a proposition that social arrangements should be evaluated according to the extent of freedom people have to promote or achieve

functionings they value. If equality in social arrangements is to be demanded in any space – and most theories of justice advocate equality in some space – it is to be demanded in the space of capabilities. (Alkire, 2005)

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