

Amartya Sen on Poverty and Famines

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Abstract: -

In his book 'Poverty and Famines: An essay on Entitlement and Deprivation' (1981). Amartya Sen studied the famines in Bengal, Ethiopia, Sahel and Bangladesh. In it, he explains that famine is many times more man-made than natural. He has shattered the traditional theory of 'food availability' of famine. In these various famines, the availability of food grains did not decrease notably. But in the event of a famine, the ability to control food production through purchasing power based on the income and wealth of the society - the reduction in 'Entitlement' and the defect in the famine planning and food distribution system have exacerbated the famine. In this context, Sen says, "Famine cannot be prevented, but its effects can be avoided."

According to Amartya Sen, famine is a form of starvation, but it does not affect all sections of the society equally. There has never been a famine in history that has had the same devastating effect on all sections of society. Famine more affects the poor, especially those who have less Entitlement of food availability. Because, in the event of a famine, there would be a slight decline in food grain production for those who have less Entitlement over food availability, there was a huge drop in food supply for them. Therefore, they are more prone to famine.

Amartya Sen's book "Poverty and Famines" presents a new analysis of famine. For this, a more rational analysis of the new concept of 'Entitlement' has been done. Referring to this book, the London Review of Books has said that "the author's mind works like a search light and contradicts the old established assumptions". The Economist, London, writes, "The book expresses the best sociological tradition by economically, based on experience and logic." Thus, Amartya Sen's thought on poverty and famines are become important in the world.

Key Words – Entitlement, Exchange Entitlement and Famine

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I. Introduction of Amartya Sen: -

Amartya Sen is the world-renowned Indian intellectual and humanitarian and the first economic thinker to receive the Nobel Prize in Economics (1998). He linked the economy with the goal of human welfare. For the first time, he turned his study of economics toward philosophy and ethics.

Amartya Ashutosh Sen was born on November 3, 1933 in Shantiniketan (Kolkata) in West Bengal. His father's name was Ashutosh and his mother's name was Amita. He was educated at St. Gregory's School, Dhaka. Later, in 1953, he did his BA in Economics from Presidency College, Kolkata. Then, for the second time, he received a B.A. in economics from Trinity College, Cambridge University in 1955. Done. He then went on to earn an MA and a Ph.D. degree from the same university in 1959.

Amartya Sen has taught at various universities. Jadavpur University (1956-58), Delhi School of Economics (1963-71), London School of Economics (1971-77), Oxford University (1977-88), Harvard University (1988-1998) and Carnell University (1978-1985). He was also Master (President) of Trinity College, University of Cambridge (1998-2004). He was also president of the International Economics Association (1986-88) and of the American Economic Association (1994).

Amartya Sen was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1998 for his work on welfare economics and social equivalence theory. Amartya Sen made a significant contribution to the field of economics by introducing various concepts. In recognition of his work, the Indian government in 1999 awarded him the highest civilian honor in India: "Bharat Ratna".

The following views of Sen are important in economics. Social choice theory, poverty index, welfare index and famine analysis. In this article, the study was conducted on Amartya Sen's view on poverty and famine.

II. Starvation and Famine: -

The main problem of hunger is starvation. But Amartya Sen made the difference between starvation and famine. Explaining the difference between famine and starvation, Amartya Sen says: "Every famine has starvation, but every starvation has no famine." According to him, the famine is mainly linked to the lack of rights. Hunger simply means that people are not getting enough food. This situation arises due to the absence of rights. Three things need to be clarified in the famine.

1. Normal decrease in diet.
2. Continuous reduction in dietary intake.
3. A sudden decrease in diet.

The third factor is related to famine. In short, famine causes hunger. The second reason is poor eligibility. Lack of entitlement can lead to hunger even under normal circumstances (without famine). Famine, in turn, greatly reduces some people's food rights. Therefore, people starve from hunger. There is no doubt that famine is a terrible form of hunger. But there is a difference between famine and hunger. Because the effect of famine is greater on the poor and they have less right to trade. In this context, Amartya Sen states: "There is not a single famine in history that has had the same impact on all sectors of society". Therefore, Amartya Sen linked hunger to the realm of Entitlement.

III. Poverty and Famine: -

According to Amartya Sen, there is no doubt that hunger increases greatly during famines. However, the effects of famine do not apply equally to all sectors of society. The famine has a greater impact on the poor in the community, especially those with less food rights. Not all sections of the society have equal right to food. Therefore, when the production of food grains is less, the importance of the law increases. Therefore, for some sections of society, a small drop in food production leads to a drastic drop in the food supply. In his book *Poverty and Famine* (1981), Amartya Sen explained that through an in-depth study of the famine in Bengal, the impact of the famine on landless farm workers, non-agricultural workers, nomadic pastoral communities, rural workers, small farmers is greater. , Ethiopia, Sahel and Bangladesh.

In short, according to Sen, the effects of famine are more pronounced on the poor, especially on those who have less authority over food production.

IV. Factors that increase the severity of famine: -

In his book *"Poverty and Famine: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation"* (1981), Amartya Sen studied various famines in Bangladesh (India), Bengal, Ethiopia, Sahel etc. During the period 1943-1974. In doing so, it contradicted the traditional theory of famine: "the availability of food". He said there was no further decline in the availability of food during the famine. But, due to the decline in trade rights and poor management of the famine, the famine has intensified. According to him additional factors are responsible for the increasing severity of famine.

1. Decrease in the area of exchange authority: -

The effect of famine does not depend on the availability of food grains in the country, but on the right of the people to exchange. Sen explained that the famine in Ethiopia did not significantly reduce the availability of food. This is because the availability of food grains in the country depends on the total production of the country. But people in the famine-affected areas have lost their jobs, livelihoods and purchasing power. As a result, their right to trade is reduced. Due to famine, this region could not attract food grains from other parts of the country. Farmers can also buy grain from the market during famines. But the absence of agricultural production means they have no control over market demand. If there is no income, then how can there be demand in the market!

In short, the real problem in a famine is not the availability of food but the right to exchange.

2. Decrease in Employment: -

The famine causes some sectors of society to lose their jobs, such as landless farm laborers in Bengal, stray herders in Ethiopia, rural laborers and small farmers in Bangladesh, and stray herders, fishermen and small farmers in the Sahel. As a result, their income has decreased and their purchasing power has decreased. As a result, their right to trade is reduced. So, people are starving. Sen explained that the famine in Ethiopia has not led to a significant increase in food prices. But a sharp drop in employment curtailed the right to trade and forced people to starve.

3. Price increase: -

Famine raises the price of grain, which in turn amplifies the effects of the famine. Amartya Sen pointed out that during the Bengal famine of 1943, there was not a significant reduction in food production, but there was a significant increase in food prices during this period. But there is no increase in wages in comparison to that. As a result, the rights of the people were reduced. Falling jobs on the one hand and rising food prices on the other have led to a sharp decline in the rights of subsistence farmers, small farmers and sharecroppers paying workers, fishermen, rural artisans and general workers. Therefore, this class has been most affected by the famines.

In short, rising food prices played a role in amplifying the effects of the famine.

4. Food Storage and Speculating: -

One of the many causes of famine is hoarding and speculation. Fall in food production during the famine has led to a rise in prices. As a result, food prices skyrocket during famines. So, in this situation it is more profitable for traders and big farmers to invest their money in food grains instead of investing in banks. As a result, the tendency to hoard food grains increases during the time of famine and encourages speculation.

According to Sen, there has been a severe shortage of food grains in the market due to stock and speculation due to slight fall in the availability of food in the event of famine. Hence the effect of famine increases.

5. Defects in Government Planning: -

According to Amartya Sen, in order to reduce the effects of famine, the government should plan for the famine. In the event of a famine, the role of the government is very important. But famines in Bengal, Ethiopia, the Sahel and Bangladesh have shown a lack of adequate government planning. The government was in a hurry to deal with the famine. For example, during the Bengal famine, the government introduced and ended various food storage schemes. Suddenly the government abolished price controls on food purchases. As a result of all this, rumors have spread among the traders regarding the prices of food items. This inspired food preservation. As a result, the food supply increased and famine intensified.

6. Defect in distribution system: -

To mitigate the effects of famine, the government must effectively implement the distribution system. In Bengal, Ethiopia, the Sahel and Bangladesh, the government has not implemented the food distribution system effectively. According to Sen, during the Bengal famine of 1942, food imports from one region to another were limited. Therefore, during the famine there was no flow of grain into Bengal. Therefore, it was not possible to stop the price increase. Finally, the government eased restrictions on food imports. But then there was not much difference in food prices between the famine zone and other areas. Therefore, the effect of the famine could not be mitigated. The lack of a food distribution system has further aggravated the famine.

7. Inequality in Purchasing Power and Income Growth: -

Another factor responsible for the increasing effects of famine is inequality in purchasing power or income growth. During famine, the purchasing power and income of public servants, beneficiaries of the public distribution system, industrial workers and traders increase. Their demand for food was increasing. On the other hand, agricultural laborer's, non-agricultural laborer's, small farmers, nomadic herders and fishermen have lost their jobs. As a result, their purchasing power is reduced. This class found itself in the grip of famine.

8. Decrease in demand for nutritious food: -

During a famine, the demand for nutritious food such as fish and milk decreases due to the economic consequences of the famine. Therefore, the productive class of these goods is most affected by famine.

V. Conclusion: -

In his book *Poverty and Famine*, Amartya Sen studied famines in Bengal, Ethiopia, the Sahel and Bangladesh. In this he explains that famine is natural but it is more artificial than natural. They have broken the traditional "food availability" theory of famine. These various famines have not significantly reduced the availability of cereals. However, in the event of a famine, the lack of trade rights and flaws in famine planning and food distribution systems exacerbated the famine. In this context, Sen says: "Famine cannot be prevented, but its effects can be avoided." According to Amartya Sen, famine does not affect all sections of society equally. Never in history has there been a famine that has had the same devastating effect on all sectors of society. Famine particularly affects the poor who have little access to food.

Amartya Sen's book "Poverty and Famine" offers a new analysis of famine. For this reason, the new concept of 'entitlement' was analyzed more rationally. Referring to the book, the London Review of Books states that "the author's mind serves as a research light and refutes old established notions." Thus, Amartya Sen's thinking about poverty and famine has become important in the world.

Glossary: -

Entitlement: - What we can get based on our available income and wealth is called Entitlement.

Exchange Entitlement: - The combination of any commodity which a person can get in exchange for an item in his jurisdiction is called Exchange Entitlement.

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