

PREFACE

How should we distribute the scarce resources and opportunities among the individuals in a society? What should be the aim of distribution? How could we begin to make improvements towards creating a globally just world? There has been a vigorous debate and discussion on such questions from Plato to Rawls to provide a more systematic way of managing our collective interest and to define the concept of justice. Ideas of social justice became a common reference point in almost all political discourse and philosophical enquiry. As such, concepts such as rights, liberties, equalities, needs and deserts have been accommodated into justice's sphere which has increased its influence in political philosophy over times.

From the publication of Plato's *Republic*, to the emergence of new approaches and theories on analysing the concept of justice, complemented by changes in Europe (due to Renaissance and Industrial Revolution), the concept too got developed and elaborated, becoming a vital exercise in the modern era of political philosophy. This practice arguably reached its high point in 1971 with the publication of, *A Theory of Justice*, by John Rawls. Reviving the themes of classical 'social contract' thinking, especially that of Immanuel Kant, Rawls understood and defined justice not in terms of law of nature or something based on reason, but as a fair distribution of primary goods among the people which consist of the basic rights, liberties, opportunities, and

also benefiting the least advantaged person (the marginalised people) thus making the procedure fair and just.

However in the present scenario, the demands of justice (in terms of principles of justice) cannot be formulated by focusing only on just institutions or on distributing the primary goods, thereby ignoring the broader outlook of social realizations of the people. Under such a circumstance, an alternative having an influential and significant analysis of the idea of justice is provided by Amartya Sen, when he formulated the demands of justice not only in terms of principles of justice that were entirely concerned with just institutional arrangements for a society, but also emphasised on the broader outlook of social realizations, the freedoms that people can achieve in reality, thus giving importance to the reasonable behaviour and original lives of the citizens.

Providing a detailed critique of the universal accounts of justice, primarily in his book, *The Idea of Justice*, Sen promotes the notion that people should have their own perspectives and accounts of justice; thus socially, just outcomes will not be universal across all cultures and societies. However with the minimal level of peoples participation in the political process, contributed by lack of education and inadequate representation of dissenting voices (in case of India where religion and superstitious beliefs controls the minds of the people), to what extent Sen's realization- focused notion of justice be practically implemented, is still a question.

The task of philosophical accounts of social justice is not only to understand the injustices of the actual world, but also to have influence on actual or practical policy making. As such this research work has been confined to analyse how Amartya Sen's notion of justice has evolved over the years, reassessing it and to evaluate to what extent it can be practically implemented in the present globalised world. While critically engaging with Sen's notion of justice, the study intends to make in-depth analysis by revisiting his notion of justice, trying to search for reconciliation between Sen and Rawlsian principles of justice, by going beyond Sen's notion of justice.

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