



# Development as Freedom

By Amartya Sen

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## Development as Freedom By Amartya Sen

By the winner of the 1988 Nobel Prize in Economics, an essential and paradigm-altering framework for understanding economic development--for both rich and poor--in the twenty-first century.

Freedom, Sen argues, is both the end and most efficient means of sustaining economic life and the key to securing the general welfare of the world's entire population. Releasing the idea of individual freedom from association with any particular historical, intellectual, political, or religious tradition, Sen clearly demonstrates its current applicability and possibilities. In the new global economy, where, despite unprecedented increases in overall opulence, the contemporary world denies elementary freedoms to vast numbers--perhaps even the majority of people--he concludes, it is still possible to practically and optimistically restrain a sense of social accountability. *Development as Freedom* is essential reading.

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

When Sen, an Indian-born Cambridge economist, won the 1998 Nobel Prize for Economic Science, he was praised by the Nobel Committee for bringing an "ethical dimension" to a field recently dominated by technical specialists. Sen here argues that open dialogue, civil freedoms and political liberties are prerequisites for sustainable development. He tests his theory with examples ranging from the former Soviet bloc to Africa, but he puts special emphasis on China and India. How does one explain the recent gulf in economic progress between authoritarian yet fast-growing China and democratic, economically laggard India? For Sen, the answer is clear: India, with its massive neglect of public education, basic health care and literacy, was poorly prepared for a widely shared economic expansion; China, on the other hand, having made substantial advances in those areas, was able to capitalize on its market reforms. Yet Sen demolishes the notion that a specific set of "Asian values" exists that might provide a justification for authoritarian regimes. He observes that China's coercive system has contributed to massive famine and that Beijing's compulsory birth control policyAonly one child per familyAhas led to fatal neglect of female children. Though not always easy reading for the layperson, Sen's book is an admirable and persuasive effort to define development not in terms of GDP but in terms of "the real freedoms that people enjoy." (Sept.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

In his first book since winning the 1998 Nobel Prize for Economics, Sen (Trinity Coll., Cambridge) presents a decent summary of his thought. Advancing development as a method for expanding economicAand thus politicalAfreedom (he sees both as a means and an end) Sen recapitulates his studies of famine, poverty, life expectancy, mortality, and illiteracy in the Third World. A somewhat controversial choice for the Nobel Prize (since his focus on what is called "welfare economics," which makes human welfare central to economic thought, is not universally respected), he employs a strong ethical framework that gives his writing a level of moral authority not common in economic scholarship. Aimed at the intelligent reader, this densely written book is somewhat repetitive and dull, but it comes without the math that usually accompanies economic studies. Recommended for academic libraries and suitable for large public libraries; those that need at least one book by this Nobel laureate could even chose this over Sen's most famous work, *Poverty and Famines*.APatrick J. Brunet, Western Wisconsin Technical Coll. Lib., La Crosse Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From [Booklist](#)

Sen, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize in economics, has produced a work of eminent value. He focuses on the tendency of Western economics to emphasize gross national product or aggregate wealth as indicators of national well-being. A more sentient measure of the usefulness and value of development is whether it expands "real freedoms that people enjoy." Sen examines other determinants of a nation's wealth, such as social and economic arrangements, political and civil rights, industrialization and technological progress and modernization, factors that can substantially contribute to expanding human freedom. However, as both a means and an end, freedom (the need for the individual to be involved in making decisions regarding his or her life) provides the foundation for well-being. Sen provides practical examples of the application of his concepts. Despite a healthy GNP in the U.S., African American men have a shorter life expectancy than men living in certain Third World countries. This book is a great read for social, as well as political and economic, planners. *Vernon Ford*

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