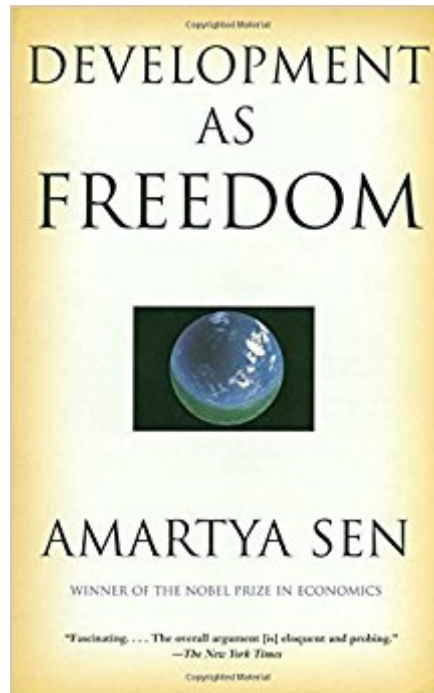




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Development As Freedom



Synopsis

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. *Â 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. *Â Development as Freedom* *Â* is essential reading.

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Customer Reviews

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. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Sen's work helps to create a humane worldview in which we can humanely conceptualize development today. His view of an interconnected system of freedoms that are both the ends and means of development is fascinating. *Development as Freedom* manages to make this concept very approachable while not compromising the core values in which it hopes to instill. I would certainly recommend this book to those actively working in the field of development, as well as those who want to expand their understanding of how to address poverty and aid the oppressed. It should be noted that Sen does use a broad stroke approach that may leave the reader with questions about specific strategic interventions, but addressing these more detail oriented scenarios was not the

author's intent.

Development as Freedom is one of the most well written books on the value of freedom in society. It touches upon the values economists should emphasize (and often don't) and the errors made in the name of paternalism and a state that lead economic life. It is a book to be added to the likes of The Road to Serfdom (Hayek) and Capitalism and Freedom (Friedman). For such important and clear thinking Sen is worth the Nobel prize. In terms of economics, Sen makes the clear case that it is freedom and not wealth that should be maximized. He defines a freedom as anything we have a reason to value, which is different than the usual definition and will strike many as strange, but accepting his definition is key to understanding and agreeing with the value of freedom in society. For example, we may want growth to get development, but development can also be defined as extended life expectancy (the freedom to enjoy more years alive) or less hunger (the freedom to avoid hunger). I highly recommend Development as Freedom to anyone interested in development. As someone from a developing country, Sen is particularly attuned with the realities and the policies that are able to bring freedom, and hence development, to the developing world.

I liked some of the ideas and he has a wealth of knowledge. Some of the statistics are very interesting and they imply that we should look at new ways to fix old issues. Overall, however, I felt the text massively repetitive and not well written. Sen is not concise. Some of the sentences he writes take up 6-7 lines of text with multiple parts that should be separated. The poor writing massively detracts from his subject matter. The overall logic seems unclear for why certain things are necessary or good that a government must carry out. If you agree with his assessments of what constitutes an instrumental freedom that is great but if you are not convinced he will do nothing to convince you. If you are looking for a good book on developmental economics, look elsewhere. I must stress, the writing is not good and it is massively repetitive.

Great read

Sen gives a point of view that is unique in advocating development as equality for all. Through political and economic development we can solve many of the problems of famine, disease, and poverty that exist in very nation, whether rich or poor.

Great book; needed it for college class.

Ordered for daughter. She enjoyed it.

Amartya Sen has been assailed as having written a piece of liberal utopian propaganda, but he does have a valid argument that democracy does have a preventive place in human suffering noting that famines have never occurred within a democracy and states that give women the chance to earn their own livelihood are stronger than those that aren't. Sen perhaps does not devote enough time to the problems with democracy. Democracy cannot and should not be seen as a cure all that will bring wealth and prosperity to the common man. Authoritarian leaders throughout history have starved and brutalized their own people from Stalin, Hitler, Mao, and others. Economic growth may be higher in authoritarian regimes, but that's with tight state controls without the controls the economy plummets and you still have a tired mass of people who may lose jobs. Democracy may be a preferred solution, but I question how realistic such an idea is, considering that democracy requires a preparation period and a democratic willingness from the elites and populace. Without this, democratic efforts will fail. Sen does a decent job of building a case for democracy and freedom, but I question the realism of the idea.

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