

**Dissertation Title** : Amartya Sen on Freedoms as Capabilities: A Critical Study

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## **ABSTRACT**

Development is ordinarily understood as economic growth. For Amartya Sen, however, this is not so, no matter how good the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) might be, that cannot be equated with development. Viewing growth in GDP as the single indicator of development is a traditional concept of economic development. Sen, in contrast, maintains that the main purpose of country development is to provide freedoms to human beings. He insists that freedom is both the principal means and primary end of development. Freedoms enhance human capabilities enabling people to live as they wish and to do what they desire. Fundamentally, all humans hold some capacity to choose what is best for them; true human freedom therefore means the ability of persons to do those things that they themselves choose.

One of Sen's major contributions is merging the contrasting views of ethics and economics. Profitability and ethics remain on opposite poles, constituting a permanent conflict of interest. The present research aims to demonstrate the possibility of applying Sen's philosophy of freedom to national development.

Sen defines development in terms of human beings, making persons the key factor and core focus, not merely a tool, of development. This is indeed human development. The objective is to enhance human well-being and to improve the quality of lives. He argues that income, though necessary for living, is only a mechanism giving access to goods, not something leading to the ultimate goal of sustainable development.

Sustainable development must take into account providing people the freedom to choose according to their needs and desires. People must have freedom of choice, including the capabilities needed to perform activities they value and to develop themselves in ways of their own choosing. Sen's freedom agenda includes political and economic rights, the ability to participate in society without shame, transparency among individuals and the state, and finally, security protecting persons from all kinds of threat. These are at once indicators of and approaches to appropriate development. This kind of development is conducive to more freedom, allowing the people to generate more capabilities to live their lives and enriching the quality of life. Sen's concept of poverty contrasts with the general understanding of poverty as a shortage of material assets. Sen understands poverty rather as a kind of capabilities deprivation.

The present research finds that if governments are to engage in genuine national development, the five items of Sen's freedom agenda must be incorporated in order to put the country on the right track and to better emphasize human beings as the center of development. This would go beyond development in economic and material terms, and even beyond the innovations that are greatly influencing today's world.