

Comparison of the Relationship between Freedom and Development in the Thought of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi and Amartya Sen

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Abstract: This study, with the aim of comparing the relationship between freedom and development in the thought of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi and Amartya Sen, was conducted using a descriptive-analytical method. The findings indicated that in the thought of Mesbah Yazdi and Amartya Sen, freedom and development are interconnected, yet in their perspectives this connection is accompanied by different emphases and interpretations. Mesbah regards freedom essentially as liberation from servitude to tyrants and worship of other than God; thus, he does not accept freedom in the Western liberal sense, but acknowledges it within the framework of the Islamic system. He considers freedom as an important value, but not an ultimate goal, and believes that it must be defined within the framework of ethics and religious teachings. For Mesbah, development is also seen as a means to achieve transcendent and spiritual goals, such as human felicity and perfection. However, Amartya Sen considers development as a process in which individuals' real freedoms are expanded, and more opportunities and capabilities for choice and participation in life are provided. He believes that freedom is both a tool and an end of development. In other words, development is a process through which people gain greater freedoms in choosing, living, acting, and participating in society. Sen also holds that overcoming developmental challenges requires the formal recognition of individual freedoms. For him, development is essentially the expansion of freedoms, and its ultimate aim is the removal of unfreedoms and the increase of human choice.

Keywords: Freedom, Development, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, Amartya Sen.

Introduction

The concept of freedom and development, and their relationship with each other, is one of the important subjects that has occupied the minds of scholars in sociology, political science, philosophy, economics, and religion, particularly in the contemporary period, and has drawn various perspectives and approaches. Freedom and development, as one of the principal theoretical concepts in political philosophy and social sciences, have faced semantic and conceptual difficulties from the past to the present, and different thinkers, based on diverse approaches, have presented distinct interpretations of these two notions. These interpretations become significantly divergent when they are grounded in schools of thought whose theoretical foundations differ essentially. For this reason, in Islamic thought and Western schools, there are fundamental and principal differences in presenting freedom and development, their dimensions, elements, and frameworks, and most importantly, in their relationship with one another.

In Western thought, especially from the Renaissance and Enlightenment onward, freedom has been regarded as one of the foundational principles of political, economic, and social development. Individual and political freedom, the right of choice, freedom of expression, and democracy are considered the essential pillars of development. In the Western world, development has generally been accompanied by the expansion of individual and social freedoms. Economic freedoms, human rights, and civil liberties have paved the way for technological progress, the free-market economy, and democratic institutions. In Islam, freedom does not carry the absolute Western meaning; rather, it is defined within the framework of divine law (Sharia). Human freedom must be exercised within the boundaries of moral

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principles, justice, and religious values. Freedom in Islam is always accompanied by responsibility before God and society. Unconditional freedom is not accepted; instead, freedom is conditional upon observing the limits and regulations of Sharia. Development in Islamic thought is not merely material growth but also encompasses spiritual, moral, and social advancement. Social justice, solidarity, and the preservation of human dignity are among the key elements of Islamic development. Islam emphasizes the harmony of individual freedom with collective needs and the preservation of social order; therefore, individual freedom should not come at the expense of society and the rights of others. For a long time, the prevailing approach was that freedom constituted one of the components of political and social development based on the Western model. Consequently, Westerners sought to demonstrate that development would only be realized when Western-style freedom was established in Islamic countries and the Third World. However, since this perspective was incompatible with the teachings of Islam, it has today been challenged. One of the most important Islamic thinkers who critiqued the Western concept of freedom and the Western model of development is Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi. From his perspective, the origin of human freedom lies in Almighty God, whereas Western theorists believe that the origin of human freedom lies in human nature itself. Moreover, according to Mesbah Yazdi, the ideals and objectives of Western development ultimately terminate in material goals. Since development is not limited to economic growth but also includes cultural and social dimensions, the ideals and objectives of Western development in these dimensions, too, ultimately lead to material ends (Mesbah, 2009), resulting in a one-dimensional approach to development.

Some contemporary development theorists have also criticized this approach. The development-as-freedom approach, which Amartya Sen presented as a systemic approach, represents a new perspective in development discourse. By emphasizing the agency of human beings as both the goal and the means of development, this approach can respond to the need of countries for an appropriate model of development. Comprehensive in scope across political, economic, social, and cultural spheres, it considers the path of development to lie in creating freedoms for human beings in these domains, holding that the goal of development should be nothing other than the attainment of various freedoms (including access to economic facilities, social opportunities, political liberties, and more). In other words, development is itself the provision of freedoms, and the aim of development is the elimination of unfreedoms and the expansion of human choices (Sen, 1999). Freedom in Amartya Sen's view is distinct from the word "freedom" in its common usage, especially in political discourse where it is often reduced to freedom of speech with an emphasis on political expression. In Sen's perspective, freedom has a much broader meaning, encompassing the various aspects of economic, social, and political life. In this approach, attention to human dignity and the removal of any form of deprivation and restriction that undermines dignity is central. The outlook of this approach toward development is a humane, ethical, and compassionate one (Urban Economics, 2008:167).

In general, thinkers throughout history have been influenced by the issues and crises of their societies, and they have sought to resolve their communities' problems, becoming the sources of transformation. Hence, freedom and development are among the essential and foundational needs in social discourse. Yet, freedom and development do not have precise definitions, evoking a fluid and slippery concept. The main question, however, is what the dimensions and limits of freedom and development are in Islam and the West, and what relationship exists between the two. To answer this question, addressing the ideas of Ayatollah M. Yazdi and Amartya Sen as two thinkers who, in the two civilizations of Islam and the West, have paid attention to the issues and problems of their societies and have become the source of transformations, can help us achieve the objectives of this research. In the Islamic civilization, Ayatollah M. Yazdi, as a thinker and in the position of a religious scholar, has in most of his works, including the book *Freedom*, presented numerous discussions on freedom in Islam, while also expressing his approach to development in the roundtables of *Religion and Development*. In the West, Amartya Sen, as a philosopher and social economist, in his book *Development as Freedom*, has defended freedom and elaborated on its various dimensions. In light of the above discussions, the fundamental question pursued in this research is what characteristics and components the concepts of freedom and development have in the views of Ayatollah M. Yazdi and Amartya Sen, and essentially what relation exists between freedom and development in the thought of these two.

Research Questions

1. What is freedom (concept, foundations, framework, etc.) in the thought of Ayatollah M. Yazdi and Amartya Sen?
2. What is development (concept, foundations, framework, etc.) in the thought of Ayatollah M. Yazdi and Amartya Sen?
3. What is the relation between freedom and development in the thought of Ayatollah M. Yazdi and Amartya Sen?

Research Method

In the present research, an attempt has been made, by employing the descriptive method, to extract and expand the views of Ayatollah M. Yazdi and Amartya Sen regarding the concepts of freedom and development and the relationship between them. In fact, the present research method is descriptive-analytical, in which efforts have been made, based on the content of available texts and scientific documents and by employing the card-indexing tool, to extract and analyze the opinions of these thinkers.

Theoretical Background

Regarding the relation between freedom and development and its comparison in the views of Western and Islamic thinkers, no specific theoretical and analytical study has yet been carried out. However, in terms of comparing the approaches of Western and Islamic thinkers to freedom and development, numerous studies have been conducted in Iran, some of the most important of which are as follows:

- Sharifani, M. et al. (2022) in a study entitled *An Analytical and Comparative Exploration of Types of Freedom from the Perspective of Islam and the West* have clarified that multiple definitions and types of freedom have been proposed, each focusing on a particular dimension of it. Since man is a social being, he cannot possess absolute freedom; therefore, freedom will always be limited and subject to constraints and conditions.
- Shamsaei, H. et al. (2017) in a paper entitled *The Concept of Freedom from the Perspective of Islam and Its Comparison with the Concept of Freedom from the Perspective of the West* showed that in the Western school, freedom is limited to the law or to the point where it does not harm the freedom of others, while in Islam in some contexts the scope is even narrower, and in others it is broader. In certain matters, the Western view appears very restricted, while in others it seems to have expanded excessively, bordering on licentiousness.
- Seyed Aminollah Ahmadiani Moghadam et al. (2017) in a paper entitled *A Comparative Study of Freedom and Responsibility from the View of Ayatollah M. Yazdi and Jean-Paul Sartre* argued that Sartre equates man with freedom, and the only state in which man is not free is when he realizes he cannot be free. He also considers man responsible at a universal level. On the other hand, Ayatollah M. Yazdi emphasizes human freedom and acknowledges various responsibilities for human beings.
- Pourranjbar, M. (2014) in her M.A. thesis at the University of Isfahan entitled *A Comparative Study of Freedom from the Perspective of Martyr Beheshti and Amartya Sen* examined the differences in the understanding of freedom and its frameworks in Islam and the West. Employing a comparative method, this study answered the question of what commonalities and differences exist between freedom in the thought of Martyr Beheshti and freedom in the thought of Amartya Sen. The findings show that Martyr Beheshti and Amartya Sen agree on the importance of freedom, the role of society in the discussion of freedom, individual and social freedom, attention to corruption in society, opposition to despotic governments, and critique of classical economic liberalism. Amartya Sen views freedom as a goal, an instrument, and an opportunity for the creation of new values in the process of development. In contrast, Martyr Beheshti considers freedom as inherent in human nature and believes that if freedoms are not realized, the mission of human creation is violated.
- Rahimi (Roshan), H. and Hosseini, S. F. (2017), in a study entitled “A Comparison of the Anthropological Foundations of Progress and Development in Islamic Thought and Liberal Democracy Theory”, examined the differences between the Islamic and Western views of man

and the issue of progress. The results of this study showed that the difference in the anthropological foundations of Islam and the West is one of the main factors in the difference of views on progress and development. In other words, a serious contradiction in the definition of man is one of the most important and influential factors in shaping the type of progress in Islamic and Western (liberal-democratic) perspectives.

- Akhtar Shahr, A. (2017), in a paper entitled “Development in the West and Islam: Results and Consequences”, concludes that poverty and lack of commitment, destruction of human beings, self-forgetfulness and confusion, disrespect, destruction of the family, internal contradictions of the capitalist system, the expansion and deepening of class gaps, and increasing poverty of the lower classes are among the most important consequences of development in the West. Whereas Islam, as the final and complete religion, not only emphasizes social and economic justice, poverty alleviation, creation of public welfare, and economic independence, but also offers practical solutions for achieving these goals.

Definition of Concepts

Freedom

Freedom in its literal sense means release, the opposite of slavery, being without bonds, and being free. In the technical sense, freedom is a broad and general concept with foundations, components, frameworks, instances, and multiple dimensions, which makes it difficult to give a unified definition. This is why various definitions have been proposed by scholars, to the extent that Isaiah Berlin presented around 200 definitions for freedom. The definition of freedom in Western societies, which is often expressed under the term liberalism, is a set of demands and policies aimed at providing the greatest possible freedom for the individual. In general, liberalism holds that since man is born free, he must have the choice to shape both his personal and social life freely and live accordingly. Therefore, what Western societies emphasize in defining freedom is the centrality of man and granting him individual freedom in worldly life, so that nothing – not even the state – can restrict his freedom. In other words, “liberalism can be understood as a set of methods, attitudes, and policies whose main purpose is to provide or preserve individual freedom as much as possible against the domination or control of the state or any other institution” (Zarshenas, 2014, p.13).

Freedom has various types, among which are: individual freedom, social freedom, political freedom, economic freedom, freedom of belief, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, and so on (Bashirieh, 2001, p.108). The important point here is that at first glance it seems that social, political, and economic freedoms in human societies today are products of Western liberal-democracy ideology – or at least this is the claim of the West (Hosseini, 2012, p.37). However, with some reflection on the concept and dimensions of freedom, we realize that before Western political systems recognized social, political, and economic relations based on the principle of human freedom, Islam had already recognized this right for human beings. In the Qur’an and Islamic narrations, we encounter numerous references to the right of human freedom (Taheri, 2021, p.4).

Development

Michael Todaro defines development as a multidimensional process that requires fundamental changes in social structure, public attitudes, national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, reduction of inequality, and eradication of absolute poverty. Development must show that the entire social system, in harmony with the essential needs and diverse desires of individuals and social groups within the system, is moving toward a state of life that is better materially and spiritually (Todaro, 2008, p.135). In modern definitions of development, attention to ethics and human values is introduced as an inseparable part of development, emphasizing that ethics can have a profound impact on the economic, political, and social dimensions of development, and that ignoring ethics will lead to serious problems and deviations in human development (Astroulakis & Marangos, 2009). Denis Goulet, known as the founder of ethical development, considered elements such as customs and traditions, demography, indigenous cultures, ethics, and values as essential in development models. He considered answering three questions essential in development models: What does a good life mean? What is the basis for implementing justice in society? What must humanity do to live in harmony with nature and preserve it

for future generations? (Goulet, 1997). The answers to these questions are largely based on the value system governing each society, and thus can vary across nations. In summary, in defining development, three points must be considered: first, development should be regarded as a value-laden concept; second, it should be seen as a multidimensional and complex process; and third, attention must be paid to its close relationship with the concept of improvement (Azkia & Ghaffari, 2008, p.8).

Freedom and Development in the Approach of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi

Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, in defining freedom, emphasizes that the concept of freedom as an “abstract matter” differs from concrete concepts, since in defining freedom – similar to defining notions such as “democracy, liberalism, civil society, and civilization” – reaching an agreement about them is not easy. These concepts are “highly elastic, vague, and slippery”, and numerous and diverse definitions have been provided for them (Mesbah Yazdi, 2012a, vol.1, p.61). He discusses freedom in three domains: the philosophy of rulings and theology, the legal domain, and the ethical domain. He accepts an approach to these that aligns with his understanding of religious principles, rulings, and foundations, while also placing restrictions on them. From his perspective, in the field of philosophy and rulings regarding freedom, the question arises whether human beings innately have the power of choice and can freely choose to have faith. In other words, can a person truly choose something by their free will, or are there other factors that determine their behavior? In the realm of ethical freedom, the discussion is whether there is a force that can compel a human being to act, or whether choosing good and bad matters and value systems is also voluntary. Finally, in the legal domain of freedom, the question is to what extent are we free to adopt behaviors that no one has the right to prosecute or control us for? (Roshan & Shafiei Seyf Abadi, 2010–2011, p.34).

A key point in Ayatollah Mesbah’s thought regarding freedom is that he accepts the essence of “freedom” but highlights an important point: he views freedom in a general sense and rejects its Western type, instead acknowledging a form of “restricted” freedom. In reality, he does not negate freedom but considers it subject to “restrictions”. From his perspective, Islam does not accept freedom in its Western meaning and form. The reason for this outlook is his belief that in Islam, human life is not limited to this world, and spiritual and religious interests take precedence over material interests. In this context, he introduces three restrictions on freedom above the law:

1. This type of freedom causes disturbance to the spiritual interests of human beings, their divine soul, the position of vicegerency of God, and their humanity;
2. It harms material interests, as well as the health and security of human beings;
3. Freedom is desirable only to the extent that it does not result in violation of the rights of others, and thus it is not the Western form of freedom (Mesbah Yazdi, 2012a, vol.1, pp. 59-62).

He considers the foundation of human value to be the worship of God (Mesbah Yazdi, 2012b, p.91). In his anthropology, what constitutes the essence of man is defined in the light of divine monotheism, knowledge, and servitude to God. Accordingly, he interprets freedom as the absence of obstacles in the way of developing talents in order to traverse the path of perfection. In fact, discussions of freedom within this range of Islamic thought focus on man’s freedom from vices and lusts, separating the soul from impurities, worldly attachments, and dependencies (Lakzaei, 2000, p.257). In this same vein, he states: “Islam is the religion that proclaims freedom, but freedom and release from the worship and obedience of anything other than God and from tyrants – not release from obedience to God. Although man is created free and endowed with choice, legally and doctrinally he is obliged to obey God; that is, he must, with his free will, choose to obey God” (Mesbah Yazdi, 2012c, p.90). In light of this view, it can be said that true and complete freedom, in his thought, is man’s liberation from anything other than God. In essence, freedom means being released from the chains of tyrants and attaining the ability to move and soar toward the destination of humanity, spiritual and divine transcendence. Therefore, from his perspective, the most important goal of human freedom is the growth and perfection of man (Bagheri Dolatabadi and Nouri, 2015, p.67).

Ayatollah Mesbah, when discussing political and social freedoms, given that the government he envisions in society is an Islamic one, and naturally, its law is also the law of Sharia, therefore political and social freedom is likewise limited to divine laws. In other words, if by politics we mean lofty principles and laws that not only guide the members of society collectively but also determine the duties of individuals from a moral and inward perspective, then certainly political and social freedom within this framework differs from the concept presented in liberalist politics. This is because, essentially, politics in this view undertakes the management of the rational life of human beings – both individually and socially – for the attainment of the highest material and spiritual goals, such as religious programs, regulations, and teachings (Bagheri Dolatabadi & Nouri, 2015: p.67). In his thought, freedom begins from the spiritual dimension and extends toward the social and political dimension. As he explicitly states: “Legal freedom [political and social] returns to religious and legitimate freedom in its Sharia sense; consequently, freedom must always be within the framework of divine and Islamic laws – neither less nor more” (Mesbah Yazdi, 2012a, vol.1, p.227).

Regarding the concept of development, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi’s approach is such that in the West, development is considered synonymous with, and directed toward, economic development, and it is explained as such. Economic development, from his view, can be analyzed from two perspectives: the material and the axiological, and he attributes the differences in development among individuals, organizations, or societies more to the axiological aspect. According to the commonly known definition of economic development, generally two essential elements are considered, which are introduced as fundamental to development: capital accumulation and the use of advanced tools and technologies. If we want to present an exact definition in analytical terms, the word “development” is used somewhat loosely; nowadays, the concept of development is nearly synonymous with modernism. If we consider the kind of progress that is desirable, then development will take on a positive axiological value; that is, when we say development, it conveys the idea that it is something everyone ought to accept and that it is desirable for all. Especially with regard to this positive axiological aspect of development, we must define development in such a way that a person or society, in order to reach its desired goals, uses the best means – so that these means enable them to achieve results sooner than other methods. Generally speaking, an economic system pursues certain goals, such as improving economic conditions, public welfare, per capita income, national income, and other factors that must be considered. In any case, if this economic system uses better means to achieve those goals, it is said to have achieved development. Naturally, in an economic system, what is considered essential is capital and technology. Thus, it is stipulated that capital accumulation and advanced technology must be used. It can be said that what is meant by these two elements of “sooner and better” relates to a kind of quantity and quality. When we say “sooner”, this refers to the quantity of time; for sometimes, just as the very essence of a thing is desirable to a human being, attaining it sooner becomes another form of desirability. Of course, quantity arises at other levels as well; that is, whether one person, two people, or a percentage of society achieves that goal is also significant. The “best” element, however, pertains to quality. We may be satiated, but with what kind of food and what pleasure derived from that food? This latter dimension is related to quality and hence becomes axiological. The point, then, is that we should take into account a general analytical concept, which is the kind of behavior that an individual, an organization, or an entire society engages in so as to reach the goal of that system “sooner” and “better.” Naturally, this concept will be relative; that is, it will be derived in comparison with the behaviors of other individuals and organizations. In this concept, we have room for maneuver (ibid. pp.5-6)

In another general description, he considers development to be concerned with the voluntary and intentional actions of human beings, and from this perspective he analyzes the issue of development. “Given that development originates from the actions of individuals, and the essence of human actions lies in their being voluntary, and every voluntary act has a motivation, inevitably anyone who wishes to do something whose result is development must naturally have a motive. Motives themselves are of various kinds. We can identify several categories of motives for voluntary human acts, all of which can, in some way, be interpreted as relating to the satisfaction of needs; that is, man feels that for his life he has certain needs, and attention to these needs becomes the motivation for undertaking actions to fulfill them. Of course, need is taken here in a broad sense, one that includes spiritual, moral, and ethical needs

as well. With this broader meaning of need, it is almost synonymous with motivation, namely, anything that drives man toward performing a voluntary action” (Mesbah Yazdi, Larijani, & Mesbahi, 1994: p.10). On this basis, one of the issues that can illuminate certain fundamental discussions in the design and definition of a model of development is the “criterion for distinguishing between real and false needs of human beings”. “One of the very important issues that plays a determining role in planning, choosing, and outlining a comprehensive model of development is the matter of distinguishing real needs from false needs. This is because the delineation of any model of development is in fact influenced by the worldview and the epistemological and axiological system of the theorist, and in practice directs society toward those very philosophical foundations” (Khalili Tirtashi, 2003: p.105). In fact, Ayatollah Mesbah attributes the differences in development among cultures to the quality and evaluative system of those cultures. In this sense, whenever a society wishes to attain its economic goals, it must engage in a voluntary and conscious movement. Such a voluntary movement requires certain psychological premises and motivations. In other words, this movement depends on the intellectual, cultural, and psychological backgrounds of the individuals who are involved in it. Therefore, it is natural that in any human action, the element of culture plays an essential role; and as long as the intellectual, belief, and value-based foundations of individuals do not change, they will never undergo any significant transformation in terms of quantity or quality. Thus, cultural change is one of the factors that gives rise to development (ibid., p.6).

Overall, it may be said that Ayatollah Mesbah’s definition of development, in the general sense of the term, points to a process that subjects all dimensions of human social and individual life to purposeful transformations. Transformations that elevate human relations – with one another and with nature – in line with foundational human beliefs and inclinations, whatever they may be. Specific economic development in any society is wholly dependent on the principles and foundations particular to that society and it is these foundations of development that determine the differences between various forms of development (Aghajani, 2000: p.99). In addition to this, he regards development as a cultural matter. Accordingly, in proportion to the diversity of cultures, there will be different developmental processes, even if we make use of the same materials technically and technologically. In a general summation, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, as an Islamic philosopher and an ethicist, views freedom as bounded by the Sharia and the divine will. True freedom, from his perspective, means the ability to choose the good and to draw closer to God, a process that entails restrictions on material and worldly choices. Freedom without ethics and Sharia is not true freedom but rather a form of abandonment and licentiousness. From his viewpoint, the goal of freedom is to achieve moral and spiritual perfection – that is, choosing the divine path and avoiding harmful and misleading choices. Freedom, therefore, finds its true meaning within the framework of Sharia limitations.

From Ayatollah Mesbah’s perspective, development goes beyond economic and material growth, and its primary aim is moral and spiritual perfection and drawing nearer to God. True development means reforming individuals and society in accordance with religious and ethical values. Material progress without spiritual growth is meaningless.

Freedom and Development in Amartya Sen’s Approach

Amartya Sen regards freedom not merely as an instrument of development, but as an end in itself. The philosophical, political, and economic works of Amartya Sen pursue the goal of expanding human freedoms and capabilities as the ultimate purpose of social arrangements. According to Sen, these goals take precedence due to particular considerations regarding the aims of utilitarians or Rawlsian primary goods (Alkire, 2010:191). In his book *Development as Freedom*, Sen assigns two fundamental positions to freedom: the primary goal of development; the principal means of development. Thus, freedom holds both an “intrinsic role” and an “instrumental role” in development. The “intrinsic role” of freedom pertains to the inherent significance of freedom in enriching human life. Intrinsic freedoms include basic capabilities such as the ability to avoid hunger, malnutrition, disease, and premature death, as well as freedoms such as participation in politics, freedom of expression and absence of censorship, literacy, and more. According to this perspective, development is a process that leads to the expansion of these freedoms and other fundamental freedoms. In this regard, Sen attributes an “evaluative role” to freedom:

the measure of success in achieving development lies in the degree of expansion of “people’s freedoms”. Unlike conventional views in development economics, which define development solely by indicators such as growth in national income, industrialization, and the like, the criterion for development is the expansion of freedoms (Hosseini & Masoudi, 2018:107). From Sen’s standpoint, economics has gradually shifted its focus from the value of “freedom” to that of “utility”, “income”, and “wealth”. This shift has come at a great cost: the loss of the value of freedom. The reason lies in the intrinsic importance of individual freedoms. The “instrumental role” – or in other words, the “influential role” – of freedom (the role individuals play in development) concerns the relationship between the expansion of various freedoms and development, and relates to how opportunities, facilities, and different rights affect the enlargement of human freedoms and, consequently, development. Freedom is a causal factor in generating rapid changes toward development. Achieving development depends on the free responsibilities of people. Individual freedoms stimulate the creation of personal opportunities and serve as the primary source of creativity and social influence. Greater freedom enhances people’s self-confidence as well as their ability to affect the world, and these capabilities are central in the process of development.

The place of freedom as an instrument of development lies in the fact that different kinds of freedoms are interrelated, and one type of freedom may lead to the enhancement and expansion of other freedoms, thereby resulting in development (in the sense of freedom). Five main types of instrumental freedoms can be identified:

1. political freedoms;
2. economic facilities;
3. social opportunities;
4. transparency guarantees; and
5. protective security.

The common feature of these instrumental freedoms is that they strengthen people’s general capabilities to live more freely, such as increasing life expectancy and improving life prospects – in effect, the freedom to continue life and the enhancement of its quality. Public policy aimed at strengthening human capabilities and fundamental freedoms can be implemented through these five interconnected types of freedom. Instrumental freedoms are empirically linked and mutually reinforcing. The role of each of these freedoms and their specific effects on one another constitute crucial aspects of the development process (Sen, 2000:40-166; Sen, 2012:116). Amartya Sen regards freedom not merely as an instrument of development, but as an end in itself. His philosophical, political, and economic works pursue the goal of expanding human freedoms and capabilities as the ultimate purpose of social arrangements. According to Sen, these objectives take priority due to specific considerations regarding the aims of utilitarians or Rawlsian primary goods (Alkire, 2010:191). In short, according to Amartya Sen’s liberalist perspective, freedom is both a means and an end of development.

In a concise summary, Amartya Sen, the Indian economist and philosopher, defines freedom as the capabilities and opportunities an individual possesses to achieve a desirable life and human flourishing. From Sen’s viewpoint, freedom encompasses both positive freedoms (such as access to education, health, and social participation) and negative freedoms (absence of obstruction or limitation). Freedom without the capability to act and make genuine decisions is meaningless. For Sen, the goal of freedom is to enhance the quality of human life and to expand opportunities for fulfilling human desires and values. Amartya Sen views freedom as empowering the individual to achieve their own objectives. Sen also sees development as a multidimensional process whose main goal is to increase the real “capabilities” and freedoms of individuals for a better life. The focus is largely on economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions to ensure real opportunities are available to everyone.

Discussion and Conclusion

The Relationship between Freedom and Development in the Thought of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi

The relationship between freedom and development in the thought of two prominent thinkers, Mesbah Yazdi and Amartya Sen, can be examined from various perspectives. This section provides a brief overview.

General View

Mesbah Yazdi, as an Islamic philosopher and thinker, views freedom within the framework of religion and ethics. He believes that true freedom is achieved when a person follows the path of realizing religious and moral virtues. From this perspective, absolute and unrestricted freedom is not only meaningless but can also lead to corruption and deviation.

Freedom within the Framework of Sharia

Mesbah Yazdi considers freedom to be conditional upon adherence to religious and ethical laws. According to him, economic, social, and cultural development must occur within this framework.

Development

In Mesbah Yazdi's thought, development is a process accompanied by spiritual and moral growth. Purely economic or material development, without attention to religious and ethical values, is incomplete and unsustainable.

The Relationship between Freedom and Development in Amartya Sen's Thought

General View

Amartya Sen, the Indian economist and philosopher, recognizes freedom as a fundamental pillar of human development. He links development not merely to increased income, but to expanded freedoms and human capabilities.

Freedom as Both Goal and Means of Development

Sen emphasizes that freedoms – including political, social, economic, and cultural freedoms – are both the goal of development and the means to achieve it.

Empowerment of Individuals

He believes that development is successful when individuals can choose and experience a life they value. Freedom of choice, social participation, and access to resources are key components of development.

Human Development

For Sen, human development means increasing people's opportunities and capabilities to do what they find meaningful, rather than merely increasing income or production. Common Aspects of the Relationship between Freedom and Development in the Thought of Mesbah Yazdi and Amartya Sen
Finding common aspects between the thoughts of Ayatollah Mohammad-Taqi Mesbah Yazdi (an Islamic philosopher influenced by Islamic wisdom and Shiite jurisprudence) and Amartya Sen (an Indian-born economist and philosopher with a liberal and human-centered approach to development) requires careful examination of their respective concepts of freedom and development. Despite fundamental differences, some relative commonalities can be identified as follows:

The Importance of Freedom as a Prerequisite for Human Growth and Development

Mesbah Yazdi: Freedom is not viewed as an ultimate goal but as a prerequisite for spiritual growth and human perfection within the framework of Islamic law.

Mesbah Yazdi: Desired freedom is freedom in the path of truth and servitude to God.

Amartya Sen: He considers freedom both a means and an end of development (in terms of "capabilities"); a person must have the possibility to choose a life they value.

Commonality:

Both link freedom to spiritual or human development, although Mesbah emphasizes spiritual elevation within the framework of religion, while Sen emphasizes free choice in life.

Development as Human Empowerment

Mesbah Yazdi:

- Desirable development is development that brings humans closer to true perfection, which, from his perspective, is realized in connection with God and religion.

Amartya Sen:

- Development is achieved when people can realize their potential and are freed from social, economic, and political constraints.
- Commonality:
- Both emphasize empowering individuals to achieve perfection, though their definitions of “perfection” and the path to it differ significantly.

Critique of a Purely Material Approach to Development

Mesbah Yazdi:

- Purely economic development is insufficient; development must encompass ethical, religious, and spiritual dimensions.

Amartya Sen:

- He highlights the inadequacy of traditional indicators like GDP for evaluating development; development must be assessed based on real freedoms and capabilities of people.
- Commonality:
- Both critique materialistic or purely economic approaches to development.

Valuing Human Dignity

Mesbah Yazdi:

- Human dignity is realized through obedience to God and fulfilling religious duties.

Amartya Sen:

- Human dignity lies in the ability of all people to make free and equal choices.
- Commonality:
- Both emphasize human dignity, albeit grounded in different epistemological bases.

Summary of Commonalities

Despite fundamental differences in philosophical, religious, and epistemological foundations, Mesbah Yazdi and Amartya Sen share relative commonalities in areas such as linking freedom and development to human growth, critiquing materialist development, emphasizing empowerment, and valuing human dignity. However, these commonalities are often superficial or terminological, with significant differences in meaning and ultimate goals.

Differences in the Relationship between Freedom and Development

1. Definition and Nature of Freedom

Mesbah Yazdi:

- Freedom is limited to religious and Sharia frameworks.
- True freedom is freedom within servitude to God and obedience to divine law.
- External freedoms without adherence to divine limits may be harmful or misleading.

Amartya Sen:

- Freedom is the ability to choose freely and exercise autonomy in life.
- Freedom has intrinsic value and is a core pillar of human development.
- Individual and social freedoms are extensive, without specific religious restrictions.

Nature and Purpose of Development

Mesbah Yazdi:

- Development means growth in spiritual and moral perfection and realization of divine goals.
- Economic and material development is valuable only if it contributes to spiritual growth.
- Development without consideration of religion is meaningless or even dangerous.

Amartya Sen:

- Development is a process that enables individuals to enhance their capabilities and have more choices.
- Development is not limited to economic growth but includes political, social, health, and educational freedoms.
- Emphasis on a secular and multidimensional approach to development.

Role of Religion and Ethics in Freedom and Development

Mesbah Yazdi:

- Islamic religion and ethics form the foundation of freedom and development.
- Freedom without religion is not true freedom.
- Development must be guided within the framework of religious teachings.

Amartya Sen:

- Takes a secular and rational approach to development.
- Religion, as a cultural factor, may have influence but is neither essential nor foundational.
- Emphasizes human choice regardless of religion or ideology.

Perspective on Limits to Freedom

Mesbah Yazdi:

- Restrictions on freedom are principled and necessary; absolute freedom leads to chaos and misguidance.

Amartya Sen:

- Freedom should be expanded as much as possible, with limits only to prevent harm to others.
- Political, economic, and social freedoms should be maximally protected.

Table (1): Summary of Differences

Comparison Axis	Amartya Sen	Mesbah Yazdi
Definition of freedom	Freedom as choice and free will	Freedom within the framework of religion and servitude to God
Goal of development	Individual empowerment and broad freedoms	Spiritual and moral perfection within the framework of religion
Place of religion	A cultural factor, but not a necessary condition	Foundation of freedom and development
Limitations on freedom	Minimal, only to prevent harm to others	Mesbah Yazdi

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