

I Can't Breathe, Do Something!

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the airways, hence a chain reaction begins. This chain reaction causes the asthma symptoms.

Common factors or triggers causing asthma are:

- Dust mites
- Pollen
- Cigarette smoke
- Animal fur
- Exercise
- Few drugs such as aspirin and Beta blockers.
- Air pollution, paint/hair sprays
- Viral infections

Interestingly not all people have the same triggers. One needs to be careful about one's own triggers. Though it usually develops in young age, some adults may develop asthma from their working place through exposure to chemicals or dust.

Treatment

Inhalers of various types are prescribed as treatment for asthma. Consult your physician and prepare an 'Asthma Action Plan'. Remember, you must visit a doctor if you are suffering from asthma, as the action plan is purely customized for each individual.

Your treatment depends on the severity of your symptoms. Your doctors will follow up with you and also ask you about any side effects that you may be experiencing. Dosage will be adjusted accordingly or medications will be changed depending on your condition. The ultimate target is to achieve the maximum control with the least amount of medication.

Prevention

Though asthma cannot be totally prevented, measures can be taken to prevent its symptoms.

- Follow your Asthma Action Plan.
- Continue the use of medications as prescribed by your physician.
- Keep track of your symptoms.
- Get regular check-ups for your asthma.
- Avoid smoking during pregnancy; you don't want your child to develop asthma.

Asthma is a chronic (long-term) disease that affects your lungs. It causes *wheezing* (a whistle like sound when you breathe), *shortness of breath*, *chest tightness* and *coughing*. In most cases, these symptoms appear at night or early morning. People with asthma often have asthma attacks. It's the flaring up of asthma. These attacks can be mild, moderate and sometimes severe (which is life-threatening).

Globally around 250 million people are suffering from asthma, and in Bangladesh alone, the figure is around 10 million, which includes mostly children.

Causes

When the airways come in contact with the triggers (inhaled substances), the airways react and the muscles around them tighten. This narrows the airways, causing less air to enter the lungs. More is the inflammation; more is the swelling, as a result making the airways narrower. As part of the reaction, cells in the airways make more mucus (thick, sticky liquid) which makes matter worse. Mucus may further narrow

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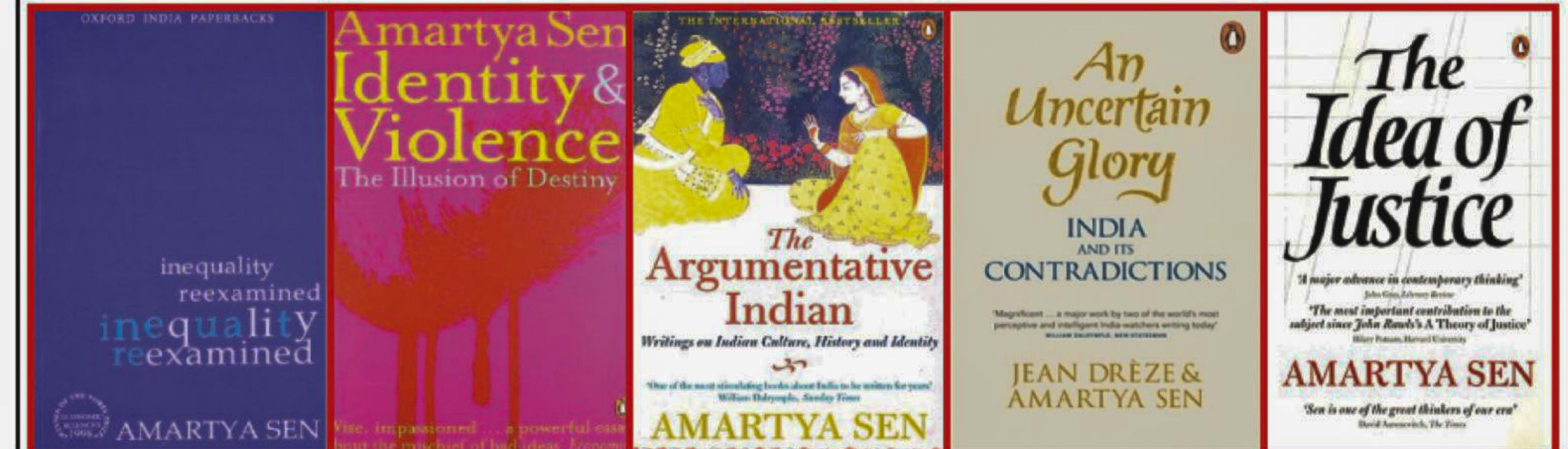


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