

NCERT Solutions for Class 12

English Kaleidoscope

NON-FICTION - The Argumentative Indian

Questions

Stop and Think (Page no.179)

1. Sen quotes Eliot's lines: 'Not fare well/But fare forward voyagers'. Distinguish between 'faring forward' (Krishna's position in the Gita) and 'faring well' (the position that Sen advocates).

Ans: According to author, Krishna has exhorted in the Gita, that Arjuna should not think of the fruit of action whatever it may be. But he should just fare forward and do his duty that is to fight in the battlefield without thinking about the consequences of the battle. But the author is of the opinion that a person should "farewell" not just "forward". He says so because in the modern times, the circumstances are completely changed so we should be aware about the doubts and destructive consequences of our action. So we should take any action after complete discussion.

2. Sen draws a parallel between the moral dilemma in the Krishna-Arjuna dialogue and J. R. Oppenheimer's response to the nuclear explosion in 1945. What is the basis for this?

Ans: There is a close resemblance between the Krishna-Arjuna dialogue and J. R. : Oppenheimer. Oppenheimer invented the weapons for mass murder which were used in Second World War of 1945. He was a great follower of Krishna. He was responsible for killing of so many people. He did not repent for his action but the modern world is quite different. In the contemporary world, we can't be blind to the consequences of our actions. Today we are facing different types of global problems. The most serious problem is terrorism which is a serious threat for security. Apart it, growing poverty, confrontation, financial crisis, regional problems and nuclear power are some of the other threats. This is the reason why we can't neglect Arjuna's consequential doubts and follow Krishna's arguments of action.

Stop and Think (Page no.186)

1. Maitreyi's remark—‘what should I do with that by which I do not become immortal’—is a rhetorical question cited to illustrate both the nature of the human predicament and the limitations of the material world. What is the connection that Sen draws between this and his concept of economic development?

Ans: According to the writer, Yajnavalkya, the scholar and teacher, told Maitreyi, his wife, that wealth is not powerful enough to help a person to achieve immortality. The author's concept regarding economic development is somewhat different. According to him, this issue concerns between income and achievement, between commodities we can buy and the actual capabilities, we can enjoy and between our economic wealth and our ability to live as we would like. While there is a connection between opulence and our ability to achieve what we value. He says that wealth or economic luxury is not so important as life and death. So we should ponder over about it for a free and satisfied life.

2. It is important to see that the Indian argumentative tradition has frequently crossed the barriers of gender, caste, class and community. List the examples cited by Sen to highlight this.

Ans: Amartya Sen is an eminent scholar who has put a number of examples to show that people of lower social strata worked hard to maintain the argumentative tradition of India. In Mahabharata, we find that it was Draupadi who was the motivating factor of the Battle of Mahabharata who made Yudhishthira ready to fight the war. She did so by her eloquent mocking dialogues. The dialogues of Bhishma and Bhishma in Mahabharata are on the heights of argumentative nature. Apart it, the poets of the Hindu Bhakti Movement rose against the prevailing social barriers with their sharp arguments. They were from the weakest section of society. Some of them were Kabir, Dadu, Ravidas, Sena and Meera Bai. Along with it, the argumentative tradition was given an eminent place by women scholars also. These women scholars contributed a lot to maintain the tradition. Sarojini Naidu was the first woman President of Indian National Congress who was

elected in 1925 while Nelli Sen Gupta was second who was elected in 1933. Krishna Menon put a record of nine hours non-stop speech at the UNO.

In our scriptures specially in Upanishads, Gargi and Maitreyi participated in the arguing combat. They put a lot of questions also. Rani Laxmi Bai or the Rani of Jhansi challenged the British rule. Thus, it is evident that argumentative tradition has been continuing since long without any barrier of cost, creed, gender, class or community.

Understanding the Text

1. What is Sen's interpretation of the positions taken by Krishna and Arjuna in the debate between them?

[Note Sen's comment: 'Arjuna's contrary arguments are not really vanquished... There remains a powerful case for 'faring well' and not just 'faring forward'.]

Ans: The author says that the Bhagvad Gita portrays the message of faring forward inspite of all the challenges. Krishna advocates that one should fare forward without thinking about the consequences. But Sen feels the contemporary world quite different. It is full of terrorism, insecurity, wars and violence. So in his opinion, the message of Arjuna 'faring well' is more appropriate.

Arjuna's contrary remarks should not be ignored. To support his statement, he takes the example of J. R. Oppenheimer, the physicist who developed the nuclear weapons. Sen firmly believes that simply 'faring forward' is not judicious in this era of violence. The best solution will be to judge the situation sensibly and then take the appropriate actions. Therefore, he supports Arjuna's decision of 'faring well' and not just forward.

2. What are the three major issues Sen discusses here in relation to India's dialogic tradition?

Ans: The three issues that Sen discusses in relation to India's dialogic tradition are the issues of gender, caste and voice. There was a time when arguments and disputations were confined to some elite groups. It is also true that the contribution of some women scholars can't be ignored. Gargi,

Maitreyi and Draupadi actively participated in argumentation. Sarojini Naidu and Nellie Sen Gupta are famous for their argumentative politics. Some poets like Kabir, Ravidas, Dadu, Mira Bai protested against the social barriers and inequality though they belonged to the weaker section of society. Thus, class, caste, gender, voice are no barriers in relation to India's dialogic tradition.

3. Sen has sought here to dispel some misconceptions about democracy in India. What are these misconceptions?

Ans: According to the writer, democracy in India is a subject of persistent arguments which are very helpful for the development of democracy. But it is also true that two major misconceptions about democracy in India have crept in. These misconceptions are-

(1) that the concept of democracy was a gift to India from the western world and India simply adopted and implemented democracy after its independence.

(2) That democracy is most suitable form of Government in India because of its history. So it is necessary that India should avoid both these misconceptions.

4. How, according to Sen, has the tradition of public discussion and interactive reasoning helped the success of democracy in India?

Ans: Sen is of the opinion that democracy is closely and intimately related to public discussion and interactive reasoning which helped in the success of democracy in India. He has a firm belief that persistent arguments are inherent part of public life in India. In India, there is no imposition of any singular perspective because it is an outcome of reasoning which introduced multiple perspectives. Common people of every section of society participated in this democratic system so their opinion is an inherent structure of democracy. Thus, the tradition of public discussion and interactive reasoning helped the success of democracy in India.

Talking about the Text

1. Does Amartya Sen see argumentation as a positive or a negative value?

Ans: Amartya Sen is an eminent scholar. He always sees argumentation as a positive perspective. Arguments develop intellectual standard. Argumentation helped to put heterodoxy in Indian politics. It is also helpful to remove all the barriers of inequality from our society. Through argumentation, the opinion of masses is put into action which helps in maintaining democracy in our country. Argumentation is a defence to protect our country on international stage. In this way, we can say that Sen firmly believes the importance of argumentation for proper functioning of democracy in India.

2. How is the message of the Gita generally understood and portrayed? What change in interpretation does Sen suggest?

Ans: Gita is considered to be portrayed in a sense that we should do our duty without thinking about the results. It is an exhortation given by Krishna of faring forward. But Sen thinks something different. He suggests that along with Krishna's faring forward, Arjuna's faring well should also be considered in the present scenario. In the present time the world is quite different. It is full of violence, wars and terrorism. So he says that our attitude can't be indifferent to the consequences. Thus, Sen suggests that while putting our action, we should keep Arjuna's arguments in our mind.

Appreciation

This essay is an example of argumentative writing. Supporting statements with evidence is a feature of this kind of writing. For each of the statements given below state the supportive evidence provided in the essay

(i) Prolixity is not alien to India.

(ii) The arguments are also, often enough, substantive.

(iii) This admiration for the Gita, and Krishna's arguments in particular, has been a lasting phenomenon in parts of European culture.

(iv) There remains a powerful case for ‘faring well’, and not just ‘forward’.

Ans:

It is true that the author has put supportive evidences with his arguments in the essay. Below are the supportive evidences for each of the statements—

(i) This statement is referred to Krishna Menon who was the defence minister of India from 1957 to 1962. He led a delegation to the UNO where he delivered the longest speech of nine hours.

(ii) The Bhagvad Gita which is a small fraction of Epic Mahabharata presents a tussle between two contrary moral positions. It presents the exhortation of Krishna to do one's duty and Arjuna's doubts about ill consequences.

(iii) Some European poets and scholars appreciated the Bhagvad Gita in the Nineteenth Century. One of them was Wilhelm von Humboldt who said Gita to be "the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue" Eliot in his poem Four Quartets summaries Krishna's views as 'And do not think of the fruit of action!' Fare forward, while Christopher Isherwood translated the Gita into English.

(iv) In the present scenario, it has been important that we should think over the consequences of the action in addition to consider Krishna's exhortation for doing one's duty without caring of the result. Today's world is full of terrorism, wars, violence, insecurity and gruelling poverty. So it has been essential to think about the result. J. R. Oppenheimer who developed the weapon of mass destruction in the World War II, followed Krishna's argument to 'faring forward' but today, we'll have to go with Arjuna's faring well also.

Language Work

I. (a) The opening two paragraphs have many words related to the basic idea of using words (particularly in speech) like ‘prolixity’. List them. You may look for more such words in the rest of the essay.

Ans:

(i) Loquaciousness

(ii) colossally

- (iii) stimulation
- (iv) perspective
- (v) incessant
- (vi) disputations
- (vii) substantive
- (viii) vindication

(b) Most of the statements Sen makes are tempered with due qualification, e.g., ‘The arguments are also, often enough, quite substantive’. Pick out other instances of qualification from the text.

Ans:

- (i) moral position
- (ii) profound doubts
- (iii) tragic desolation
- (iv) unjust usurpers
- (v) manifest problems
- (vi) regional peace
- (vii) arguing compact
- (viii) gruelling poverty

II. A noun can be the subject or object of a sentence. Notice this sentence

Democracy is a Western idea.

In this sentence democracy and idea are nouns. (they are abstract nouns)

A noun is the simplest form of a noun phrase. A noun can be preceded by

- (i) an article or demonstrative: an idea, the idea, this idea; and/or**
- (ii) an adjective: a Western idea [There can be more than one adjective, or an adverb and an adjective]: a quintessentially Western idea.**
- (iii) and/or numerals and quantifying phrases: three very influential Western ideas; such a tradition. (quantifying phrases such as a few/some/one of the many)**

A noun can be followed by prepositional phrases and relative or complement clauses. There will be nouns and noun phrases within the prepositional phrase as in ‘traditions of public discussion’.

III. Noun phrases can also have phrases in apposition following the main noun.

Notice the following sentence

The ancient Sanskrit epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, are colossally longer than the works that the modest Homer could manage.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata add to the meaning of the main noun (epics) and are placed next to it. They are separated from the main sentence by commas. Notice the expansion here:

The ancient Sanskrit epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which are frequently compared with the Iliad and the Odyssey, are colossally longer than the works that the modest Homer could manage.

The relative clause—which are frequently compared with the Iliad and the Odyssey—that follows, adds more information to the epics.

IV. Parenthetical phrases or clauses may also follow the noun phrase.

(i) This can be traced back even to the Upanisads—the dialectical treatises that were composed from about the eighth century BCE and which are often taken to be foundations of Hindu philosophy.

The clause italicised here gives additional information about the noun ‘Upanisads’.

TASK

Examine the noun phrases in these sentences from the text

- The second woman head of the Indian National Congress, Nellie Sengupta, was elected in 1933.**

- **This concerns the relation—and the distance—between income and achievement.**
- **This may be particularly significant in understanding the class basis of the rapid spread of Buddhism, in particular, in India.**

Ans:

Noun phrases are as follows :

1. the Indian National Congress, Nellie Sengupta.
2. the distance between income and achievement.
3. the class basis of the rapid spread of Buddhism.