

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'."]

Answer. Sen believes that no matter what the message of the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna's position that 'everything goes well' should not be ignored entirely. Krishna believes in the concept of moving forward, regardless of the consequences. Sen said that Arjuna made a more practical choice than 'faring well'. In the modern world, there exists a world full of war and violence. He cited J.R. Oppenheimer (a physicist from the American group that developed nuclear weapons) as an example to support his argument.

Sen believes that Krishna's 'faring forward' during this period of violence should not be considered because it will lead to negative consequences; on the contrary, today's best solution is to take appropriate action and evaluate the situation. Therefore, Sen 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?

Answer. Sen majorly discusses the issues related to caste, gender and voice and breaks these barriers under India's argumentative tradition. He also declares that these barriers have previously been removed many times before, as early as the 8th century BC.

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

Answer. The two biggest misunderstandings about democracy in India that Amartya Sen tried to dispel are

1) The assumption that the western world endowed India with the practice of democracy and simply took over democracy after its independence.

2) That India is particularly suitable for democracy because of its history.

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

Answer. Sen believes that public discussion and interactive thinking help shape India's social world and culture. He said that India's political traditions have deeply influenced Indian politics and made differences in the natural state of India. Controversy is an integral part of Indian public life. Common opinions are an indispensable part of democracy, and the tradition of public debate and interactive discourse help increase the success rate of democracy in India.

Talking about the Text

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

Answer.

Sen treats argumentation as a positive value. Argumentation sparked dissent and shaped Indian politics to a large extent. He even claimed that argumentation was an important contribution to the development of democracy in India. Argumentation supports the opinions of ordinary people, which helps maintain democracy in our country. Therefore, Sen believes that argumentation is extremely important for the normal operation of democracy.

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

Answer. 'Bhagavad Gita' is described as Krishna's one-sided wisdom, despite the disastrous consequences; however, Sen believes that Arjuna's consistent and more sensible analysis of 'faring well' should also be

placed in the context of today's violent world. Looking back, Sen suggests that the interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita needs to supplement Mahabharata's broader argumentation wisdom.

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) Proximity 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'.

Answer.

The supportive evidence provided in the essay is as follows:

- (i) 'Krishna Menon's record of the longest speech ever delivered at the United Nations (nine hours non-stop)'.
- (ii) 'The famous Bhagavad Gita, which is one small section of the Mahabharata, presents a struggle between contrary moral positions'.
- (iii) 'It was spectacularly praised in the early nineteenth century by Wilhelm von Humboldt as 'the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue.' In a poem in Four Quartets, Eliot summarises Krishna's view in the form of an admonishment: 'And do not think of the fruit of action! Fare forward.' Eliot explains: 'Not faring well/But faring forward, voyagers.'
- (iv) 'As we reflect on the manifest problems of our global world (from terrorism, wars, and violence to epidemics, insecurity, and gruelling poverty), or on India's special concerns (such as economic development, nuclear confrontation or regional peace), it is important to take on board Arjuna's consequential analysis, in addition to considering Krishna's arguments for doing one's duty.'

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.

Answer.

- In the given sentence, 'the second woman head' is the main noun, whereas 'the Indian National Congress' further specifies it and additional details such as the name and the year complete the phrase.
- In the given sentence, 'income and achievement' is the main noun which is preceded by a relative clause.
- In the given sentence, 'Buddhism' is the main noun, preceded by an explanatory clause.