**A NOTE ON ARGUMENTATIVE INDIAN: AMARTYA SEN**

**Introduction**

Argumentative Indian is a collection of essays by Amartya Sen, an economist and Nobel Prize winner. It focuses on the ‘Argumentative history of India’. The first essay in this collection is titled ‘Argumentative Indian’ which comes under the broader heading Voice and Heterodoxy. This essay explains in detail about contemporary India (2005), tracing back the history from traditional ancient India.

**Summary**

The essay starts with a negative introduction about India, “Prolixity is not alien to us in India” with an illustration about the longest speech record set by an Indian, Krishna Menon. Then this statement is further substantiated from ancient Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, comparing its length with Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey.

**Dialogue & Significance**

From the epics, the argumentative tradition is traced out from the argument of Krishna and Arjuna that is quoted in Bhagavad Gita. Not only the argument that won but also the other side of the argument is given the equal significance “A defeated argument that refuses to be obliterated can remain very alive”. These dialogues of Krishna and Arjuna is borrowed by European culture and certain famous personalities like J. Robert Oppenheimer due to its significance. First world borrowing from the third world that shows ‘the gap that can be filled by borrowing’ in postcolonial reading. The argument has not lost its significance even in contemporary time is the assertive statement of Amartya Sen.

**Gender, Caste & Voice**

The tradition of arguments is confined to an exclusive part of the male elite, who have taken the place left by the Britishers in India. Though India is said to be patriarchal, it had and has women leaders governing the country, that is traced from ancient text Upanisad and Indian history. Yet such women leaders are not elected in the US (first world). In the case of caste, the argument has not come to an end yet. This is centred on ‘Hinduism’, brahmin- dominated orthodoxy, that the other underprivileged changed their religion and got educated to be privileged.

**Democracy as Public Reasoning**

Indian democracy is formed by the impact of the British, which itself is under the queen’s rule. Definition of democracy is ‘government by discussion’, which was never practised in India. As said earlier the privileged upper elite male community occupied the place of Britishers in independent India and governed it according to their desire. People in India have lost their argumentative tradition that they accept all policies without questioning it.

**Understanding Secularism**

India is a secular country that gives place for Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Parsees, Sikhs, Bahas and others. The origins of all these religions are also discussed in detail from history. Secularism in India is ‘no man should be interfered with on account of religion, and anyone is to be allowed to go over to a religion that pleases him’, is different from that of the west. But Indian secularism has also changed with the rise of Hindutva and its policies.

**Sceptics, Agnostics & Atheists**

All these concepts are also explained by the religious secularism and heterodoxy that is traced from the traditional past of India. India has a massive religious literature attempting to arrive at a solution to the religious problem, which gave rise to these philosophical concepts.

**Science, Epistemology & Heterodoxy**

Before the history of scientific contributions across the world began, it has already begun in India. This can be proved by the history of ancient India. Many philosophical understandings sprang up in Indian writings before it appeared in the western mind. Yet it was not recognized, as India is a third world country. Contribution by Indians in trigonometry and astronomy are of historical importance.

**Importance of Arguments**

Argumentative heritage of India is needed to look at the impact of different influences that have shaped India and its traditions. It helped in the development of the democracy, intellectual and social history of India.

The essay ends with a positive note praising the importance of arguments. Not only India, but Indians also develop the developing tradition.

Reading it in a postcolonial way, this essay not only lists the riches of India but challenges the first world countries pointing out their dependence on third world countries.

On the other hand, India is not the same as before. Things have changed. The argument has become extinct. Acceptance has taken its place in contemporary India.

 **What is identity according to Amartya Sen**

'Identity' relates to our own sense of self in everyday life. It is by nature complex and allows for plural affiliations. Human beings, cannot live otherwise. People are killed not because of their identities but because of the way they are identified.

**What is multiple identity?**

A multiple identity is When you have a multiple identity you have different cultural outlooks in your life. You may also have different values and beliefs in your family. People in your family may also have different ancestry i.e. from different countries.

**W hat is argumentative tradition?**

From the epics, the argumentative tradition is traced out from the argument of Krishna and Arjuna that is quoted in Bhagavad Gita. Not only the argument that won but also the other side of the argument is given the equal significance “A defeated argument that refuses to be obliterated can remain very alive”.