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# UNIT 38 A FIRST GUIDE TO ARGUMENTATION

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## 38.0 OBJECTIVES

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- to again illustrate how some rhetorical devices are put to use in well-known texts;
- to show how inappropriate grammar may cause confusion in messages;
- to proceed to consider the features of valid argumentation;

In this unit we

- introduce you to the idea of a fallacy;
- introduce you to the idea of a fact, and the importance of facts; and
- ask you to consider what a valid generalization is, what an overgeneralization is, and the language that is appropriate to a generalization.

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## 38.1 INTRODUCTION

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Presentations, public speaking, reports, discussions and minutes of meetings all finally stand or fall on the strength of their content – what they convey. The skills of evaluating the truth or validity of what is being said, and of phrasing our own arguments so as to be valid and truthful, will make us into reliable and trusted communicators who are taken seriously. We have said that rhetoric was the art of the orator. Today we can say it is the art of using language to influence the thoughts and the actions of others.

We all respond to good writing or good speaking. Often we do so unconsciously, becoming convinced that someone is right in what they say, or that they are honest, upright, and sincere (or the opposite), without being able to say precisely why we hold these opinions. As we become sensitive to rhetorical devices and the power of argumentation, we should be able to analyze our emotional reactions and say why we feel the way we do. This will allow us to think critically and respond creatively to either support or oppose an opinion. Let us look at some acknowledged pieces of great speaking or writing and see how they achieve their effect.

As for grammar, most often grammatical correctness or incorrectness serves to indicate our level of education or sophistication. It is often possible to communicate in the absence of grammar. But there do exist a few instances where incorrect grammar leads to the wrong message being communicated. We shall look at a few instances of these.

When someone is trying to influence your thoughts and actions, the first thing you must learn is to recognize that they are doing so. The second thing you must learn is to judge or evaluate the manner in which they are trying to influence you. In our day to day life, we are surrounded by people making claims and offering opinions on a number of topics, ranging from politics to washing powder. The media beam advertisements at us in between airing news and discussion programmes. It is therefore useful to make it a habit to listen and read critically and thoughtfully, so that the opinions we form have a sound basis.

In this unit and the rest of this block we shall look at some of the properties of logical thinking and reasoning, and how these may be used in argumentation. We shall also list some common fallacies or illogical and illegal forms of argument, and illustrate them. (The word fallacy has two meanings: a false or mistaken belief, or a false argument or false reasoning.) Logical thinking is sometimes referred to as “vertical thinking”, to distinguish it from the free-ranging, associative thinking known as “lateral thinking”. While logical thinking promotes your critical and evaluative powers, lateral thinking comes in useful to develop your creativity.

These two forms of argumentation, together with sensitivity to style – formal, informal and colloquial uses of language, the correct and meaningful use of words, avoiding ambiguity in expression, and clumsy sentence construction – will help you to write better and speak better.

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## 38.2 THE EULOGY

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A eulogy (pronounced *you-l-ji*) is a laudatory speech or written tribute. It is especially a speech or article in praise of someone who has died. But the word is also more generally used for any high praise or commendation.

### 38.2.1 The Candle in the Wind

One of the most memorable eulogies in recent history was Sir Elton John’s tribute to Diana, the Princess of Wales, during her funeral on September 6, 1997. Elton John sang “Candle in the Wind”, a song that he and writer Bernie Taupin had rewritten in honor of the late Princess. The original song was written as a tribute to Marilyn Monroe.

When Sir Elton performed in Westminster Abbey, it was more moving than the speeches since music appeals to the emotions and not to the intellect. A song is more memorable than any speech.

Goodbye England's rose;  
May you ever grow in our hearts.  
You were the grace that placed itself  
Where lives were torn apart.  
And it seems to me you lived your life  
Like a candle in the wind:  
Never fading with the sunset  
When the rain set in.  
And your footsteps will always fall here,  
Along England's greenest hills;  
Your candle's burned out long before  
Your legend ever will.

✓ Check Your Progress 1

1. Identify the similes in the song.

2. Identify the metaphors in the song.

3. Identify the personification in the song.

### 38.2.2 The Light has gone out of our Lives

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's speech when Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated is among one of the most well known speeches in the world today. Read the extract from it below.

Metaphor: Gandhiji's life a light.

Descriptive terms instead of the name: our beloved leader, Bapu, the father of the nation

Antithesis, or contradiction for emphasis: he is no more and yet he is with us ... but we cannot see him or run to him ...

The light has gone out and yet it has not, for it will shine for eternity ...

Litotes, or negation: no ordinary light (= 'an extraordinary light')

We shall not attempt to analyze this speech exhaustively, for it is so much more than a eulogy. It is a heartfelt tribute, and a plea to the nation, to carry on with the principles of living in justice and peace. The plea is made by a man, himself a leader of the nation, who keenly feels the absence of *his* leader.

Friends and comrades, the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. I do not know what to tell you and how to say it. Our beloved leader, Bapu as we called him, the father of the nation, is no more. Perhaps I am wrong to say that. Nevertheless, we will not see him again as we have seen him for these many years. We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him, and that is a terrible blow, not to me only, but to millions and millions in this country, and it is a little difficult to soften the blow by any other advice that I or anyone else can give you.

The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many years will illumine this country for many more years, and a thousand years later that light will still be seen in this country, and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light represented the living truth ... the eternal truths, reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom.

All this has happened when there was so much more for him to do. We could never

think that he was unnecessary or that he had done his task. But now, particularly, when we are faced with so many difficulties, his not being with us is a blow most terrible to bear. ...

### 38.2.3 Negation and Parallelism

We have seen in Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's speech how negation occurs along with a certain parallelism of thought and expression. Parallelism of expression is a device we encounter very often in some of the great writers and speakers. Here is a very well-known opening paragraph from a novel by Charles Dickens.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us,...

#### ✓ Check Your Progress 2

2. Can you identify the novel which begins with the words quoted above?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

3. Who said: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country"?

.....  
 .....

4. "I come bury Caesar, not to praise him." Where is quotation taken from?

.....  
 .....

5. Who said "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind," and on what occasion?

.....  
 .....

## 38.3 GRAMMAR CAN AFFECT MEANING

Now let's look at some common "grammatical errors" that cause confusion in messages. Most errors of grammar do not in fact cause confusion in the message or the meaning, as much as they affect the status or prestige of the user. That is, it does not matter much for the meaning whether you say **children** or, incorrectly, **childrens**. Again, the meaning is clear whether you incorrectly say **childrens** or correctly say **children are**. Your listener may conclude unfavourable things about your education or your carefulness with language and may deny you a job, but he or she is not likely to wonder what you mean.

But some kinds of grammatical errors are dangerous, because they convey the wrong message.

### 38.3.1 Too and very

A classic example of a wrong message conveyed by nonstandard grammar is the word **too** used in the sense of **very** in Indian English. In standard varieties of English, if you say something is “too good”, it does not mean “very good”. It means (approximately) that something is so good that you fear something bad will happen. This is illustrated in the cliché **too good to be true**, as in “**The news that I had won the lottery was too good to be true**”. The news is **so** good that it **cannot** be true.

Let’s look at a couple of other examples:

**He was too angry to say sorry (so he did not say sorry).**  
**The box was too large to go through the door (so it did not go through the door).**

So ‘too’ does not mean ‘very’. Now perhaps you can appreciate this true story about a communication gap that occurred on a bus in England, as a group of students and teachers set off on a picnic:

British lady: Lovely day, isn’t it? Wonderful weather!

Ravi (enthusiastically): Yes, too good, too good!

British lady [thinks in puzzled silence]: Is he being ironic or sarcastic about our British weather?

Does he mean it is too good to last? Is he laughing at our weather, comparing it to all that sunshine they have in India? Perhaps he wants to suggest it will rain later in the day, and spoil our picnic!

### 38.3.2 The Passive Infinitive

There are some infinitives in English that appear to convey the same meaning whether the infinitive is in the passive form or in the active form. Look at these pairs of examples.

**There’s work to do.**  
**There’s work to be done.**

**There are six letters to write.**  
**There are six letters to be written.**

**Give me the names of the people to contact.**  
**Give me the names of the people to be contacted.**

But now compare the sentences below:

**There’s nothing to do. (= I’m bored. I have nothing to do.)**

**There’s nothing to be done. (= something has gone wrong, and there’s no way of putting it right. What has happened has happened; it can’t be helped.)**

There are also sentences that must be used only in the passive or only in the active.

**I’ve got letters to write. (You cannot say: I’ve got letters to be written.)**  
**These sheets are to be washed. (You cannot say: These sheets are to wash.)**

The letter was nowhere to be found.

The children were nowhere to be seen.

You are to be congratulated on your prompt action. (= I congratulate you.

If you say 'I am to congratulate you ...,' it suggests that someone else has directed you to congratulate this person!)

No one was to blame for the accident. (= it was no one's fault)

No one was to be blamed for the accident. (= there were instructions that no blame was to be attached to anyone for the accident)

### 38.3.3 To verb or -ing verb

Many times, a sentence can be formed with either a to-infinitive verb or a gerund, an -ing verb, and it does not matter whether you use the to-infinitive verb or the gerund/ -ing verb. For example, the pairs of sentences below mean the same:

I like cooking. I like to cook.

She began crying. She began to cry.

He continued reading. He continued to read.

I hate to sing. I hate singing.

But now look at these two sentences.

He stopped to smoke. (= he halted, so that he could smoke)

He stopped smoking. (= he quit smoking)

#### √ Check your progress 3

6. Say what the difference in meaning is between these pairs of sentences. Consult a dictionary, or ask someone who knows more English than you do, if you cannot see any difference in meaning.

I remembered locking the gate

.....

I remembered to lock the gate.

.....

I forgot to meet the teacher.

.....

I forgot meeting the teacher.

.....

They went on shouting.

.....

They went on to shout.

.....

I regret telling you that you have failed.

.....

I regret to tell you that you have failed.

.....

### 38.3.4 few/ a few

“Few people like bitter gourd, but there are a few who do”. This means that although not many people like bitter gourd, some people do. The word *few* means ‘not many.’ When used without the article *a*, it emphasizes the negative element: there aren’t many instances of something. When used with the article *a*, it shows that there still are some instances of something, though not many of them. It emphasizes the positive aspect.

#### ✓ Check Your Progress 4

7. Use few or a few in the contexts given below, choosing between these words with care.
- He’s good at his work; he makes \_\_\_\_\_ mistakes.
  - He’s good at his work, but he makes \_\_\_\_\_ mistakes.
  - I want \_\_\_\_\_ chocolates.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ people realize how difficult it is to write well.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ do realize this, however, and they are usually good writers too.
  - It has rained \_\_\_\_\_ times.

## 38.4 FINDING THE FACTS

Many discussions of political and social events are expressions of opinion that may not be based on facts. Failure to make sure what the facts are is the first handicap for good critical thinking. What is a fact? We may define it thus:

A fact is an event in space-time which remains the same under different viewpoints. In ordinary discussion, a fact is invariant as seen by competent observers.

A fact is **verifiable**, that is, people can check whether something is the case, or not. So if an event is reported, it is customary to report its time and place of occurrence, as this makes it easier to verify.

If a speaker is not sure that something is a fact, the language (s)he uses must indicate this. There are expressions in every language which allow a person to say whether they personally know or saw something, or whether it is hearsay. For example, in English, the expressions below are “disclaimers:” they indicate that the speaker did not personally verify the facts.

It is reported that / Reports suggest that / ... are reported to be or have / ... reportedly

It is said that / .... are said to be or have / People say that/ They say that  
Apparently, / It appears that / ... appear(s) to have or be

It is rumoured that / there is a rumour that/ ... are rumoured to have or be

✓ **Check Your Progress 5**

8. Rewrite these sentences to make it clear that you have not verified whether they are facts or not, using one of the expressions given above, as appropriate.

i. Ram is ill with chicken pox.

.....

ii. Shekhar has taken to drink.

.....

iii. Maya has 39 pairs of sandals in her closet.

.....

iv. Our neighbours have bribed the police.

.....

v. A meteor hit the earth at this spot 10,000 years ago.

.....

9. Define a fact.

.....

.....

.....

Here are a few different kinds of facts.

i) Material objects or creatures at given places and dates; or collections of such objects

e.g. the tamarind tree at the intersection of the village road and the highway  
a man named Hamara Dil living at no.4, Pender Road, Vahiin  
the large rock in my back garden  
the buses belonging to the government transport corporation on this day  
the cars licensed to ply as taxicabs in this city this year

ii) Happenings at given places and dates, usually verified by competent witnesses, and recorded in some permanent way

e.g. the day India became independent  
the train accident at \_\_\_\_\_ when the storm came on ...  
the cyclone in \_\_\_\_\_ that occurred on .....  
the eclipse of the moon at ..... on .....  
the day the Everest was first conquered ....

iii) Processes verified by observation or experiment

e.g. the boiling point and freezing point of water  
brushing your teeth regularly prevents tooth decay  
the water in this well has been certified not fit to drink

Facts like these are usually not subject to argument.



It is not possible for an individual to personally verify each of these facts. We must rely on second-hand sources of information. The question then is: are the sources trustworthy? Are they authenticated by a competent authority? Are they up-to-date? We normally choose the sources of our information according to their reputation, in the belief that they would have verified the information carefully. Thus we trust what we read in a textbook, a reference manual or an encyclopedia, and in a reputable newspaper or magazine, or hear or see from a reputable media source, or some other person we judge to be competent. We do not however normally depend on advertisements for our facts!

✓ **Check Your Progress 6**

10. Give two examples of your own of each of the three kinds of facts listed above.

i) Material objects or creatures at given places and dates; or collections of such objects.

.....  
.....  
.....

ii) Happenings at given places and dates, usually verified by competent witnesses, and recorded in some permanent way

.....  
.....  
.....

iii) Processes verified by observation or experiment

.....  
.....  
.....

Since we have no memory of being born or indeed of the first two or three years of our lives, we all depend on others' accounts – mainly, the narratives of our family – for facts such as our date and place of birth, our childhood illnesses, whether we have been immunized against certain diseases, and even who our parents are. There is an interesting anecdote in Sunil Gavaskar's autobiography, "Sunny Days", about the circumstances of his birth – how he was almost exchanged with some other baby.

Most of us, of course, have more ordinary life-histories! But mistakes do happen, and when they are discovered, it is news. Let us look at a news report from *The Hindu* of May 28, 2008.

**Twins meet 28 years later**

Madrid: Twin Spanish girls who were separated at birth owing to a medical error have met by chance 28 years later. And one of them is suing the Spanish hospital involved.

The two were born in a hospital in the Canary Islands, where one of them was switched by mistake with the baby of another family.

Two of the three women involved in the mix-up have grown up in a family that was not their own.

The twins, now 35, discovered each other in 2001. “It happened by chance”, thanks to a friend of one of the twins.

Their lawyer is seeking three million euros in damages for the “moral harm” inflicted by the hospital’s mistake.

It is important to find the facts before we start building up an argument. The rules for arguments help us to make sure that the structure of an argument is correct, but they do not guarantee the truth of the argument, if our facts are not right.

One story often cited to show the importance of getting all our facts together, of not making a judgment if our facts are incomplete, is that of Herodotus and the Nile. Herodotus (1st century BCE) is considered ‘the father of history’, a man who paid great attention to research and verification. He travelled throughout the Greek empire and was particularly attracted by Egypt, then a land of magnificence. Thus he considered the question: “Why does the river Nile overflow its banks every summer?”

The known facts were the following. From the middle of June every year, for a period of about three months, the river Nile flooded back to as much as ‘two days’ journey inland.’ “I made every enquiry from priest and peasant”, says Herodotus, “but nobody knew why”. Herodotus then considers three explanations that had been advanced:

- i) the Nile is an exceptional river that flows upstream from the ocean (i.e., it flows backwards).

Do you think this was a good explanation? Herodotus did not. He thought there could be no exceptions to the general rule that rivers flow towards the ocean.

- ii) Northwest winds from the Mediterranean backed the river up, i.e. they blew against the river’s current, not letting it flow into the ocean.

Herodotus rejected this theory because there were other rivers flowing into the ocean which were subject to the same winds, but whose waters did not back up.

- iii) The melting of snows must cause the overflow.

Herodotus thought this a plausible reason. Yet he rejected it. He pointed out that the Nile flowed north from a region hotter than Egypt, where birds flew to spend the winter. He argued that snow could not be found in such a country.

So Herodotus could not solve the puzzle of the flooding of the Nile. As it happens, the third theory is the right one. During Herodotus’ time, no one had visited the sources of the Nile. It turns out there are great snowfields in Ethiopia, close to the equator! But Herodotus did not know this.

### 38.4.1 Getting Rid of Unimportant Facts

One important strategy for clear and even creative thinking is learning to see which facts are relevant and which facts are not. That this is fundamentally a creative act is suggested by the anecdote about Michelangelo’s sculpture of David. The sculptor is reported to have said that he saw the figure in the stone, and chipped away whatever was not the figure – whatever was unnecessary!

This is the challenge before all of us. We are surrounded by an ocean of facts. We have to choose from these the facts that are relevant for our purposes and concerns.

Here is a puzzle. **Hint:** the puzzle shows the importance of getting rid of irrelevant facts.

✓ **Check Your Progress 7**

11. Two cyclists A and B begin to pedal towards each other at the same moment. They are thirty miles apart and their rates of travel are equal, 15 miles an hour. Just as the cyclists begin to pedal, a fly takes off from A's handlebar to B's handlebar, and back to A's, in an ever-decreasing round trip. The fly's rate of travel is 40 miles an hour, with no allowance for stops and starts. When the cyclists meet, the fly is crushed between the handlebars. How far has the fly flown?

## 38.5 GENERALIZATIONS AND THE FALLACY OF OVERGENERALIZATION

Facts lead to generalizations, by a process of reasoning known as induction or inductive reasoning. Reasoning allows us to bring order to the world; the world is not just a set of random facts. We can form general rules on the basis of specific experiences. A generalization allows us to extend an observation from a particular instance to all relevant instances.

The operative word here is 'relevant' instances. Those of you who know some statistics will know how important it is to select the sample properly from which you reach a more general conclusion. Since this is not a course in statistics or research methodology, we shall not go into those details here. We shall only note that there are generalizations that are perfectly valid. One valid example of this kind of reasoning, known in the Sanskrit tradition as 'sthaali pulaaka nyaaya', is a very homely image. How do you test whether a pot of rice is cooked or not? By picking up a grain of rice and seeing if it is cooked or not.

Note that the single grain of rice is **representative** of the entire pot of rice: that is, the grains of rice are all essentially similar in their characteristics. (For example, we don't usually cook together different kinds or varieties of rice, or even rice from different harvests.) Moreover, the grains of rice in the pot have all been subject to the same environmental influence: they have been cooked over the same fire. The grain of rice you picked to test is **typical** of all the grains of rice in the pot.

When our sample (the grain of rice) is not representative of the entire population (the pot of rice), we have an overgeneralization; and overgeneralization can be considered the first fallacy in argumentation.

Overgeneralizations are pervasive in popular talk. Most of us experience a single event, and jump to conclusions from it. We react emotionally rather than rationally when we say: "Don't go to that restaurant: the service is terrible!" on the basis of a single experience. Most of our prejudices – our negative feelings about other cultures, races or religious groups – may be overgeneralizations.

One reason for an overgeneralization may be size of our sample: it may be much too small. If the population is not entirely homogenous, our sample must reflect its diversity. Otherwise we have an overgeneralization. As the popular saying goes,

One swallow does not make a summer.

[If you're wondering what that means, imagine living in a cold country from which the birds disappear every winter to a warmer climate. You're eagerly waiting for the winter to end, and looking for signs of the beginning of summer. You see a swallow – a bird that returns when the weather turns warmer. Is a single swallow enough for you to conclude that summer is here?]

Thus where a grain of rice suffices to make a valid generalization, a single swallow does not!

The person who makes an overgeneralization may say in defence that his experience, although a single experience, was **typical** of the general one. We see this very often when people exchange opinions about cars, travel, tourist destinations, airports, cities, restaurants, schools, and even people. What seems to happen is that like-minded people with the same kinds of experiences get together and agree on what they feel. They ignore counter-evidence without knowing it, and so sample only partially. Indeed, a real danger is that when you have half-formed an opinion, you look only for confirming evidence, and not for counter-evidence!

Opinions based on overgeneralizations are harmless as long as they remain at the level of 'small talk'. But as reasoned argumentation they fail the test.

Many popular proverbs are instances of overgeneralization. Popular wisdom is not infallible; it is based on personal experience, and is a glorified form of small talk. This is why you often find pairs of proverbs that contradict each other, as you will realize when you check your progress, below.

### ✓ Check Your Progress 8

12. What form of reasoning are you using when you pick up a single grain of rice from a pot, to see if it is cooked?

.....  
.....

13. Can you find a proverb or a popular saying that is the opposite of these proverbs?

i. A bird in hand is worth two in the bush. × \_\_\_\_\_

ii. Two's company, three's a crowd. × \_\_\_\_\_

iii. Look before you leap. × \_\_\_\_\_

iv. The early bird gets the worm. × \_\_\_\_\_

v. A penny saved is a penny earned. × \_\_\_\_\_

vi. Two heads are better than one. × \_\_\_\_\_

Chester Bowles was an Ambassador to India from the U.S.A. In his book 'An Ambassador's Report,' he observes that after three months in India it would have been easy to write the book, for he had learned all the pat answers by that time. (A 'pat' answer is an easy answer that everyone knows. The adjective 'pat' means not only 'exactly right, appropriate,' but also 'too quick, glib:' it has a derogatory sense.) After eighteen months it was much harder, for by then he knew that most of the pat answers were wrong. The longer he stayed, the more complicated India became.

### 38.5.1 How to State a Generalization

Statements that use words like all, always, or never, imply that there are no exceptions, and so these words should be used only for 'universal truths', otherwise they risk becoming overgeneralizations. Such words of course occur during quarrels when each party is trying to exaggerate their grievances: "You always leave the cooking to me", "You never clean up your room", "You're never on time". Here the consideration is not factual truth or logical argument, but the need to register a strong complaint.

More importantly, we must understand that a simple statement in the simple present tense in English has the status of a universal truth. So we say "The sun rises in the east". We don't have to use always in this sentence: it is understood. That is, English uses the simple present tense to express what is true: "The earth is round"; "Things fall to the ground if they are not supported"; and so on.

This means that if you don't intend your statement to be a universal truth, and you are using the simple present tense, you have to add a qualifying word like usually, many (which does not mean all), often, or some and sometimes. You can also use the words a few. Be careful to differentiate this from few, as explained earlier in this unit!

Suppose you see a banyan tree for the first time. Until then you have only seen plants which have their roots in the ground. The banyan tree has aerial roots. Suppose you exclaim: "Oh, so the roots of trees grow in the air!" As a spontaneous exclamation, in the context you utter it, the statement will pass. But now suppose you write a letter and say, "Just imagine, the roots of trees grow in the air!" The reader will understand this to be a claim about all trees. You should rather write, "The roots of some trees grow in the air", or as the textbooks put it: "Some trees have aerial roots" (note that they do not say "Trees have aerial roots"!).

The passive voice can have the effect of turning a general statement into an overgeneralization. Compare these two sentences, quoted from the linguist Noam Chomsky:

Beavers build dams.

Dams are built by beavers.

The first sentence is a statement about an animal called a beaver, which builds dams. All beavers do this, so the statement is fine.

The second sentence is a statement about dams. This is the effect of the passive voice, which has made the object of the first sentence the subject of the passive sentence. What is the result? Pause for a moment to think about how the meaning has changed.

The second sentence implies that all dams are built by beavers! The first sentence implies only that some dams are built by beavers. So you can see how the passive sentence results in a false claim about dams. In the passive voice you need to say "Some dams are built by beavers".

## √ Check Your Progress 9

14. Say which of these statements are universal truths. Then rewrite the statements that are not universal truths appropriately, to get rid of the overgeneralization.

	Universal Truth
i) No creature has three legs.	Yes / No
ii) This park is always crowded.	Yes/ No
iii) Young people nowadays have no respect for the elderly.	Yes/ No
iv) Leaves make food for plants in sunlight.	Yes/ No
v) All that glitters is gold.	Yes/ No

## 38.6 LET US SUM UP

- The word fallacy has two meanings: a false or mistaken belief, or a false argument or false reasoning.
- Logical thinking promotes your critical and evaluative powers.
- Making sure what the facts are is the first step for critical thinking. A fact is an event in space-time which remains the same under different viewpoints. In ordinary discussion, a fact is invariant as seen by competent observers. A fact is **verifiable**.
- There are expressions in every language which allow a person to say whether they personally know or saw something, or whether it is hearsay.
- In English, there are expressions that indicate that the speaker did not personally verify the facts.
- We can think of three different kinds of facts.
  - Material objects or creatures at given places and dates; or collections of such objects
  - Happenings at given places and dates, usually verified by competent witnesses, and recorded in some permanent way
  - Processes verified by observation or experiment.
- If we must rely on second-hand sources of information, we must judge whether the sources are trustworthy, authenticated by a competent authority, and they up-to-date. We choose the sources of our information according to their reputation, in the belief that they would have verified the information carefully.
- The rules for arguments help us to make sure that the structure of an argument is correct, but they do not guarantee the truth of the argument, if our facts are not right.
- One story often cited to show the importance of getting all our facts together, of not making a judgment if our facts are incomplete, is that of Herodotus and the Nile. Herodotus could not solve the puzzle of the flooding of the Nile.

- because during Herodotus' time, no one had visited the sources of the Nile and seen the great snowfields in Ethiopia, close to the equator.
10. One important strategy for clear and even creative thinking is learning to see which facts are relevant and which facts are not.
  11. Facts lead to generalizations, by a process of reasoning known as induction or inductive reasoning. We can form general rules on the basis of specific experiences. A generalization allows us to extend an observation from a particular instance to all relevant instances.
  12. One valid example generalization, known in the Sanskrit tradition as 'sthaali pulaaka nyaaya,' is a homely image of testing whether a pot of rice is cooked or not, by picking up a grain of rice and seeing if it is cooked or not.
  13. The single grain of rice is **representative** of the entire pot of rice: it is **typical** of all the grains of rice in the pot.
  14. When our sample (the grain of rice) is not representative of the entire population (the pot of rice), we have an overgeneralization; and overgeneralization can be considered the first fallacy in argumentation.
  15. One reason for an overgeneralization may be that the size of our sample is too small. If the population is not entirely homogenous, our sample must reflect its diversity.
  16. A simple statement in the simple present tense in English has the status of a universal truth.
  17. If you don't intend your statement to be a universal truth, and you are using the simple present tense, you have to add a qualifying word like usually, many (which does not mean all), often, or some and sometimes. You can also use the words a few. The passive voice can have the effect of turning a general statement into an overgeneralization.

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## 38.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

**Similes:** Diana is said to have lived her life "like a candle in the wind..."

**Metaphors:** Diana is referred to as "England' rose".

There is a wish that this rose should "grow in our hearts", as if our hearts were fertile soil.

Her life cut short is a "candle burned out ..."

**Personification:** Diana is "the grace that placed itself ..."

### Check Your Progress 2

2. This is the opening paragraph of *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, set in the period of the French Revolution, an event and a period that lent themselves to a description in terms of these contradictions.
3. John Fitzgerald Kennedy, a former President of the United States of America.

4. Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare. These are the words of Marc Antony.
5. Neil Armstrong, on the occasion of the moon landing by an American spacecraft, taking a step on the moon.

### Check Your Progress 3

6. I remembered locking the gate. = I locked the gate, and I remember this. (But perhaps it is now open – who has opened it? ...)

I remembered to lock the gate. = I did not forget to lock the gate; I was careful to lock it.

I forgot to meet the teacher. (= I did not meet the teacher)

I forgot meeting the teacher. (= I had met the teacher, but I had forgotten this)

They went on shouting. (They continued to shout)

They went on to shout. (After doing some other activity, they progressed to shouting.)

I regret telling you that you have failed. (I've told you this, and I wish I had not told you.)

I regret to tell you that you have failed. (I'm telling you this now, and I'm sorry to tell you this.)

### Check Your Progress 4

7. a. few    b. a few    c. a few    d. few    e. a few    f. a few

### Check Your Progress 5

8. These sentences can be rewritten in more than one way. Our answers are only a sample.
  1. Ram is ill apparently with chicken pox.
  2. Shekhar is rumoured to have taken to drink.
  3. Maya is said to have 39 pairs of sandals in her closet.
  4. Our neighbour's appear to have bribed the police.
  5. Reports suggest that a meteor hit the earth at this spot 10,000 years ago.
9. A fact is an event in space-time which remains the same under different viewpoints. In ordinary discussion, a fact is invariant as seen by competent observers.

### Check Your Progress 6

10. Please provide your own examples and discuss them with your fellow-students.

### Check Your Progress 7

11. 40 miles. No complicated sums are necessary that calculate the length of the fly's "an ever-decreasing round trip" between the handlebars of the two cyclists, although on hearing this story engineers have been known to whip out their slide



rules, mathematicians their calculators, and laymen to demand pen and paper. The answer can be arrived at by eliminating the unnecessary facts.

How long before A and B meet? One hour, of course. (The cyclists are 30 miles apart. Their speed is 15 miles an hour each, so they will take an hour to meet.) The fly therefore has to fly for an hour, and its speed is given as 40 mph. Therefore, the fly must have flown 40 miles!

### Check Your Progress 8

12. Generalization, or going from the particular to the general, known to the Sanskrit tradition as 'sthaali pulaaka nyaaya'.
13. Proverbs or popular sayings with opposite meanings:
- |   |   |                                     |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| i. A bird in hand is worth two in the bush. | × | NOTHING VENTURED,<br>NOTHING GAINED |
| ii. Two's company, three's a crowd.         | × | THE MORE THE<br>MERRIER             |
| iii. Look before you leap.                  | × | HE WHO HESITATES IS<br>LOST         |
| iv. The early bird gets the worm.           | × | HASTE MAKES WASTE                   |
| v. A penny saved is a penny earned.         | × | PENNY WISE, POUND<br>FOOLISH        |
| vi. Two heads are better than one.          | × | TOO MANY COOKS<br>SPOIL THE BROTH   |

### Check Your Progress 9

14. Universal Truth
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| i) No creature has three legs.                              | Yes |
| ii) This park is always crowded.                            | No  |
| <b>This park is usually crowded/ sometimes crowded.</b>     |     |
| iii) Young people nowadays have no respect for the elderly. | No  |
| <b>Most/ Many/ A few young people ...</b>                   |     |
| iv) Leaves make food for plants in sunlight.                | Yes |
| v) All that glitters is gold.                               | No  |

**A few things that glitter are gold/ Some things ...**

In this context you can also use just few, if you mean that very many of the things that glitter are not gold:

**Few things that glitter are gold.**

This statement is equivalent to saying: "All that glitters is not gold".