

# Discussion questions



1. Throned in splendor, deathless, O Aphrodite Sappho's plea to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty, is set in a conversational tone. Here the poetess is pleading the goddess to calm her tortured soul. She has been spurned by her lover who also happens to be a woman. The poem is in fact a conversation between the spurned lover and the goddess. Sappho, one of the most famous of women poets in ancient Greece is also controversial in the sense that her views are seen as lesbian by modern standards. Here, she request Aphrodite to come down in her chariot drawn by sparrows and offer solace. She also requests the goddess that her lady lover may change her mind and come back to her (Sappho). The poetess is then assured by Aphrodite that her lady love will indeed come to her bearing gifts, even though it may be done unwillingly.

2. Arjuna's dilemma:

The scene is set for the great Mahabharata war where the Pandavas are facing the Kauravas (who are cousins) in order to regain their lost kingdom. But when Arjuna sees his opponents comprising of his teacher (guru), relatives, and countless innocent soldiers, he gets into a dilemma. He is confused as to whether he should run away or fight the war. He is overcome by grief when faced with no choice but to fight. The crux of the Bhagavat-Gita is the advice on life and the duties of man by Krishna in order to convince Arjuna that people have to make take choices in order to fulfill their duties.

3. Confucian philosophy:

Confucius meant that he began a sincere learning of his philosophy at age fifteen. It could be that a person at this age can begin to understand philosophical and develop philosophical concepts through learning. By age

thirty, the great man had developed a focused mind, but could not fully understand the concept of 'self'. Ten years later, Confucius began to understand and become adept at the concept of profound contemplation. His mind began to be free of doubts. By fifty Confucius had a clear picture that there is divine intervention or direction in the lives of man. A person should engage in selfless service to others. By sixty, he had rid himself of the concept of self and attained universal wisdom of equality. At the age of seventy, Confucius had developed and perfected his philosophy, where the mind clings to nothing or is detached even though present in the world.

#### 4. Catullus love for Sappho:

Catullus, termed as a love poet, wrote about his love for a lady referred to as Lesbia. Critics are divided as to the identity of the woman. Some say that the figure of the poet's love and desire was Sappho while others feel that it is a lady called Clodia. The feeling of his love and desire are intense and also have references to treachery by the lady and the subsequent hurt caused by it. In effect, the relationship was passionate while it lasted. But in the end, the lady love obviously spurned Catullus and ended their affair.

#### 5. Ovid's Metamorphosis:

The changes in Metamorphosis can be seen at many levels. It can be a change from life to death, it can be transformation of humans (and lesser gods) into animals and plants, changes at the metaphorical level, or humiliation and deification of mortals by gods. Examples include the self metamorphosis of Daphne into a laurel tree to escape Apollo's advances, punishment by Apollo to Midas by giving him donkey ears, transformation of Jove into a bull to attract Europa, and Mercury taking the role of a shepherd in order to kill Argus. Ovid does not seem to have a high opinion his gods. It

is the personal lust and egos of these gods, combined with their power that makes this metamorphosis possible (often to their advantage). In effect gods (and superior powers) have the power to influence and control lesser beings in the world.

#### 6. Prophecies of Jesus Christ at the Last Supper:

Jesus Christ made two horrifying or dramatic revelations during the Last Supper with his twelve disciples. The first shocking one was the one the twelve would betray Him and his beliefs to the Romans. The second addressed primarily to Peter states that he would deny the leadership of Christ. Apart from understanding that his end was near, both the above prophecies turned out to be true.

#### 7. Treatment of girls and women according to the Koran:

The teachings of the Koran and Islam in its purest form give a lot of respect to women and girls. According to the book titled 'Islamic family structure', the Prophet had prayed to god to have a baby girl and hence it is considered an honor to be the parent of one. The Prophet goes on to say that girls are loving, caring and can become good companions to the parents. The teachings go on to say that any aunt who takes care of the girl child shall have divine blessings and will be protected from the 'fire of hell'. It is enough that proper care be taken of the girl child and god will provide sustenance necessary for the child to survive and grow in life. With regard to status of women, the Koran had originally granted equal rights and status to women alongside with men. The Holy book considers equality of genders in truthfulness, obeying to each other's needs, humbleness, charity, and mutual chastity. It is another matter that the current status of women in

Islamic society (according to the Koran) or any other society does not reflect equality and fairness.