Assignment on Commodities and Capabilities

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Assignment- Commodities and Capabilities
(by Ritika Palit: TA, HDP Course)

Please keep the answers as short as possible. Wherever possible, answer in your own words. Please remember there is not any one correct answer. Try to highlight your own understanding of the concepts in your answer.

I. Short Answers
1. Sen rejects the study of commodities and utility, critiquing the ‘utilitarian’ approach to welfare economics. Explain the two main characteristics he criticizes.
2. Give a suitable example for any three of the Central Human capabilities as listed by Nussbaum.
3. Explain the three group of conversion factors with examples.
4. Distinguish between achieved functionings and potential functionings.

II. Medium Answers
1. Explain Sen’s transition from ‘happiness’ to ‘valuation’ in his monograph ‘Commodities and Capabilities’ in your own words.
2. Nussbaum claims the language of capabilities has an advantage over the language of rights, especially in terms of gender justice.
   a) Explain her argument. (medium answer)
   b) How is this highlighted in the Indian Constitution? (short answer)
3. Briefly explain Charusheela’s comments on Nussbaum’s ethnocentric normative assessment on the capabilities of the illiterate.

III. Long Answers
1. Explain the conflict between ‘utility view’ and ‘functioning view’ as viewed by Sen.
2. Explain Charusheela’s argument on literacy playing a universally emancipator role in the contemporary world.
3. Compare and contrast Nussbaum and Sen’s approach in studying the issue of capabilities.