

## Rethinking Humanities: Harmonizing Humanities and Science

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Since 'National Education Policy 2020 with Special Reference to Science and Humanities' is a theme of this Conference, I propose to focus on one aspect of this policy. There is really a rethinking of Humanities in this aspect of the policy because it is going to introduce a very important welcome change now in the choice of subjects for the students. It is going to give the students of Arts and Science faculties a kind of freedom of wide choice while selecting their subjects of studies. There will not be the restrictions about subjects of the two streams of Arts and Science faculties. They can choose a combination of subjects from both the faculties at the same time, i. e. from physical sciences, social sciences, languages and literatures. That means they can have a combination of subjects like Biology and Psychology; Physics and English Literature etc. for their studies. This is really Harmonizing Humanities and Science. So far these two streams were often taken to be compartmentalized and were segregated from each other. Rethinking of science and harmonizing it with humanities such as literature can help the society because Science as such is neutral and is not meant to think of an awareness of human values which is an ingredient of humanities.

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Perhaps the basic assumption in this kind of division was that these two streams belong to different faculties of the brain. That may be true, yet what actually is seen can stand to the contrary. Actually, the spirit of Humanities and Science is always harmonized in the genius. Interestingly, scientific inventions and discoveries do possess an element of intuition which is far from the laboratories and objectivity before the scientific research is started. Vice versa, arts cannot exist without logic and some

scientific principle working in the shapes, tunes, balance etc in them.

As regards the academic syllabi of our higher education field, aspects like statistical data collection in the research in social sciences are always science-based. Hence, obviously science has to enter there. I propose to consider the case of literature in humanities here. A touch of scientific attitude and awareness of logic is necessary for studying literature, too. It can give and develop certain discipline and control in the writing of students. For example, if they are expected or required to write an essay of 800 words, they will not let it go to 1000 words.

Scientific attitude is very much there in the branch of literary criticism as it mostly uses some set theory in order to analyze the text objectively but it is also needed in appreciating literature. Literature is not all made of sentiments and emotions. Nay, even the writing of literature, moreover poetry, also becomes worthier if it has an intramural knowledge of science. A writer setting out to write a story or novel about a farmer's life should know something about agriculture. Great poets may not be exactly scientists but their knowledge and awareness of sciences is very clearly seen in their immortal pieces of the art of poetry. I do not claim that the study of such combinations of subjects is going to make all the students great literatures but it will certainly help them in whatever work they do. Many poets as Shelley in his Ode to the West Wind and so on do show that they possess the knowledge of scientific systems. There have been scientists like Johan Wolfgang Goethe who was a great creative poet at the same

time. We can find such examples in literatures of different languages.

The examples of a Sanskrit poet Kalidas, English poet John Donne and Marathi poet Kusumagraj would be pertinent here.

The long poem Meghadoot (Cloud Messenger) by Kalidas is popular among literature lovers throughout the world. Its theme is the poetic request of a Yaksha to a black cloud to take his message to his beloved wife from whom he is currently separated. This is pure fantasy but it has become a drama of love, the greatest emotion of human life, because of the poetic treatment given to it by Kalidas. The loving prayer to the cloud narrates the proposed journey of the cloud to his wife in the Himalayas from a place near Nagpur in Maharashtra, and this narration exhibits Kalidas' deep, detailed and exact knowledge of not only the geography of the land but also meteorology. He is aware of the growth, movement and dissipation of clouds, the average life time of a typical monsoon cloud and so on. He explains the timing of the season when such big clouds are seen; ingredients of the cloud as smoke, electricity, water and wind; the position of clouds at the advent of the monsoon; the stages of its journey; the names of the rivers and mounts on the way; the places where the cloud can draw water and where it can and does usually rest and so on. Dr. Ranjan Kelkar, a renowned meteorologist has expounded this issue in his essay about Kalidas and Meghadoot. This fund of scientific knowledge certainly enhances the beauty of the poem which has retained its attraction to date.

The British poet, John Donne belonged to the later Renaissance period when knowledge of sciences was advancing. It had an impact on the intelligent poet, Donne and also his poetry. The images in many of his poems provide the evidence. We can consider one of his poems, “Valediction : Forbidding Mourning” that vows his love would be constant in spite of the imminent separation. He tells his beloved that the lovers are like two feet of the compass. She is the steady foot and he, the moving one. If she is steady and constant, he can move safely and properly. If the moving foot goes too far, the steady foot bends and calls the other one. Finally, the moving foot is sure to complete the circle and go back to the steady foot. The accurate knowledge of the compass in Geometry has made the poem more beautiful and appealing.

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“Pruthveeche Pemageet” (The Love Song of the Earth) is a poem of fantasy by the well-known Marathi poet Kusumagraj. He imagines here that the Earth loves the Sun God from afar though other planets are longing for her. She describes one by one the condition of the lovelorn planets. These descriptions are based on the actual characteristics of the planets. For example, she loves the sun in spite of his fire. The moon is being reduced in body. The Mars becomes red by blushing, Jupiter or Guru is serious and big but requests for love silently. The knowledge of astronomy and realistic observation makes the description scientific and this adds to the beauty of poetry.

Rethinking Humanities:  
Harmonizing Humanities and Science is certainly the need of the hour in the educational field.