

# NEP 2020 and the Discipline of Humanities: Shifting Trends and Holistic Education

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## **Abstract**

In shaping the holistic development of students and teachers the Discipline of Humanities has always played a pivotal role. It has always formed the ethos, values and beliefs of every individual of the society. The research paper is an endeavor to trace the social responsibilities of the Humanities Discipline amidst the present global environment. It is an attempt to elucidate the contours of this Discipline in the light of NEP 2020. In the present era of globalization, how socialization can be enhanced with a value-based education, is emphasized in the present paper. In the light of NEP 2020, exploring the Discipline of Humanities would be a novel aspect to discern how the skills of learners and holistic development go hand in hand.

**Keywords:** Being Human; Holistic; Humanities; NEP 2020; Values .

## **Contextuality of NEP 2020 and Humanities**

BHARAT is a land of myriad shades of arts, heritage, culture, languages, humanities, science, and technology. The new National Education Policy 2020 aligns with and promotes the country's broader national goals of 'Ek Bharat- Viksit Bharat – Shreshtha Bharat'. The new Policy echoes the characteristic vision of the Nation to provide equitable, inclusive, and quality education to every citizen of the country especially- the youth in academic institutions. The Introduction of the Policy clearly states: "Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development". (03) The social and ethical responsibility of an individual derived from education is the basis of knowledge creation and assimilation. Inculcating values through education in one's character gives the sense of 'being human'.

Emphasizing the above given view a promising solution is “Humanistic STEM”, which blends scientific and technical studies with an emphasis on human welfare, values, and culture (Bourdeau & Wood, 2021). Amanda Hirsch rightly avers, “This approach meets the growing demand for STEM graduates who are not only technically skilled but also creative, empathetic, ethical, and globally aware.” It is the learner who can bring home the social and ethical significance of the nation.

The concept of holistic development mentioned in the recent draft of National Education Policy 2020 focuses on the ‘greater purpose’ of life. It signifies that the purpose of life should not be to chase success only but to achieve ‘excellence’ by one’s hard work. Excellence can be achieved brilliantly when one realizes and recognizes one’s culture, ethos, beliefs, traditions, values, and humanity. In the contemporary global scenario where the environment is full of artificial immediate needs, the social, global, and fundamental values of a human being can be rejuvenated by exploring the unfathomable world of Arts and Humanities.

Every learner is different from the other. The Discipline of Humanities respects the differences, choices, and similarities. The mounting pressure, the stress, the competition race, and the grades can be witnessed these days in the education hubs and coaching centers resulting in suicides. All learners are not for Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Engineering, Mathematics, Aeronautics and what not. Gem cum learners can be found resplendently in the deep ocean of Humanities too. A singing soul clasping happily its hands is an answer to an unhappy man full of social pressures and competition under the rote system of Indian education.

Power of the Sun, glory of the Moon, humming buzz of the bees, the unheard melodies, God- the Pilot, innocence of the Lamb, the burning eyes of the tiger in the night of the jungle, the incomplete kiss on the Grecian Urn, the fragrance of apple juice in Autumn season and the list is endless. Today the social and global responsibility of Humanities Discipline is to meet one’s creative thinking, to comprehend the symbolism of life, to bring home the spirit of human values.

Here it would not be out of context to refer to the inaugural speech at Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre. The magnitude of the vibrant arts, heritage, culture, painting, food, and fashion of India was expressed. With pride, Ambani opined: “Amidst the globalization, technology and urbanization one needs to cherish not the surviving but the thriving culture of 21st century Indian civilization of artistic and cultural heritage in

cinema and music, in dance and drama, in literature and folklore, in arts and crafts, in science and spirituality, all of which are India's intangible national wealth."

### **Multi-disciplinarity of NEP 2020**

One of the central tenets of the National Education Policy 2020 is the cultivation of critical thinking and creative skills. The conglomeration of disciplines and their acknowledgment in the learners is the foundation of advancement, self-development, and skill enhancement. The above mentioned approach is in the Policy document section 11.2. It avers "assessments of educational approaches in undergraduate education that integrate the humanities and arts with Science, Technology, Engineering, and mathematics (STEM) have consistently showed positive learning outcomes, including increased creativity and innovation, critical thinking and higher-order thinking capacities, problem-solving abilities.." (36).

Education is a wholesome process which can be completed only through the blend of both- STEM subjects and the Humanities. Policy's section 11.4 refers to holistic and multidisciplinary education, as "described so beautifully in India's past, is indeed what is needed for the education of India to lead the country into the 21st century and the fourth industrial revolution." (37) If one imparts scientific and practical knowledge, measurement and calculations; the other trains the mind for pedagogy, creativity, communication, critical analysis, human values, etiquettes, ethics, and beliefs.

Every learner has different interests, capabilities, and aptitudes. In the contemporary digital, techno-savvy, and artificially intelligent era, to realize the essence of life and to refine one's social, philosophical, creative, cultural aspects and humanistic values- the stream of Humanities stands at par. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics are no doubt essential for the industrial and technological advancement of a civilization but the Discipline of Humanities is very much essential for social, cultural, ethical, creative, spiritual, and moral advancement.

Here it would not be out of context to quote Olga Tokarczuk. She appropriately avers: "Tenderness is deep emotional concern about another being. Tenderness perceives the bonds that connect us, the similarities, and the sameness between us. Literature is built on tenderness toward any being other than ourselves." Thus one can realize that screws, nut bolts, nails, etc. do join the parts of machines but paintings, poems, dance, music, language, literature, etc. join a man with mankind.

NEP 2020 has de-compartmentalized the curricular and extra-curricular, vocational and non-vocational, humanities and science. NEP 2020's thrust is on Higher education in India. It has taken various measures by emphasizing the multidisciplinary approach in Higher Educational Institutions promoting research. Thereby it clearly focuses on the holistic development of students.

NEP 2020 provides global education along with value-based education along with life-skills- based on Dharma, Shanti, and Ahinsa. It enhances students' participation in 'seva-karya' too (NEP 2020, Section 11.8). Such multidisciplinary education reflects the importance of assimilation to cope with the global changes of the 21st century. It wants the students to inculcate values and skills which will make individuals a better citizen and a human being.

Education is useful only when one is taught its responsibility towards fellow human beings. The policy has laid down the importance of interdisciplinary research. NEP 2020 emphasizes on the relevance of research culture to catch up with the needs of the hour. The amalgamation of values and technological development along with research and innovation is a perfect combination to address the requirements of the 21st century. Section: 9.1.3 of the Policy draft states: "The purpose of quality higher education is, therefore, more than the creation of greater opportunities for individual employment." Thus the Indian and student-centric NEP 2020 has imprinted a benchmark impression on the present education system enhancing global competency.

### **Holistic Education: The Shifting Trends**

In the light of providing a holistic education to the students, Section 11.3 of the new NEP 2020, mentions significantly that "A holistic and multidisciplinary education would aim to develop all capacities of human beings- intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, and moral in an integrated manner." (36)

Section 09 of the NEP 2020 draft also states, "... Given the 21st-century requirements, quality higher education must aim to develop good, thoughtful, well-rounded and creative individuals" (33). The qualities align with the Humanities very well. The Section 09 further states: "a quality higher education must prepare students for more meaningful and satisfying lives and work roles. To develop holistic individuals, a set of skills and values must be incorporated at each stage of learning. At the societal level, higher

education must enable the development of an enlightened, socially conscious, knowledgeable, and skilled nation that can find and implement robust solutions to its problems.”

The above lines of the NEP draft clearly highlights that the Policy aspires to enhance the feeling of pride and respect towards the ancient history of Bharat and our great heritage. Thus, with effective enactment of NEP 2020 all over the country the scope of the Discipline of Humanities widens all the more.

Instead of peripherizing Humanities, the task of higher educational institutions is to hone the essential role of the discipline in being human. Section 11.4 avers “IITs will also move towards more holistic and multidisciplinary education with more arts and humanities”(37). In the contemporary digital age, higher educational institutions may prove as custodians of skills of creative thinking. Sections 17.5, 22.13, and 22.20 of the new National Education Policy emphatically promote the integration of Indian Culture, Arts, Language, History, Sanskrit, Research etcetera.

The scope of the Discipline of Humanities is ever-increasing. Languages, literature, philosophy, performing arts, history, sociology, etc. fall under the umbrella of the discipline of Humanities. The diverse range of subjects of Humanities open vistas of new professions and innovative employment prospects. Below given are some successful employment prospects provided by the stream of Humanities. They are as follows:

- 1) **Applied Humanities:** reinforces the studies in areas like managing significant archives, how to conduct museum studies, how to pursue historic preservation, what is historical editing, etc.
- 2) Translational Humanities studying and teaching emerging media, data analytics, social media, etc.
- 3) Critical Humanities offer fresh and novel perspectives to deconstruct ideologies, concepts, entities, and theories in fields of the cultural structure of knowledge. It elucidates the narrative patterns, discourse, and language frameworks that mold an individual’s critical understanding. It also paves the way to describe how gender, race, sexuality, and other forms of social hierarchy reinforce one another in defining knowledge and power.

- 4) **Global Humanities:** To emphasize cross-cultural contacts, student exchange programs, migration and Diaspora, colonial and post-colonial cultures, and many more, Humanities become fundamental to the critical evaluation and analysis of comparative literature, religion, art, music, and history.
- 5) **Legal Humanities:** in fields of understanding rights, protections, violence, oppression, etc.
- 6) **Medical Humanities:** in the field of medical sciences also medicine and bioethics, can be connected to literary studies and arts which helps in the great betterment of health and social care disciplines.

Also, Content writing, Blog writing, Communication Skills, etc. are innovative ventures from the stream of Arts and Humanities. They bring job opportunities in Event Management, Mass Media, Journalism, Travel, and Tourism sectors too. Focus on Liberal- Arts based Cultural Studies, Comparative Literature, History and Culture, Fine Arts and Music, Media Studies, Linguistics and Multilingual Studies, Philosophy, Genome Remote Sensing, etc. delineate the ever-widening scope of the Discipline of Humanities.

The sharpening of the creative skills and analytical approach in the fields of 'Green', 'Blue' and 'Ocean' Humanities by learners and faculties, present the significant shifting trends of the Humanities Discipline. Therefore one may observe that science and technology help in achieving great feats of advancement and development, but at the same time history, literature, politics, arts, sociology, etc. shape the society and environment we live in.

Thus one can find that the Humanities is far from being encased. It cannot be static. The fields associated with the Humanities and the values and purposes of a humanistic education have shifted over time. To quote here Steven Mintz would be highly significant. He states: "Today, the Humanities offer not only cultural literacy with the best that was ever written or created but also provide tools for leading a richer, more meaningful life and methods of analysis that allow us to critically evaluate the medical, scientific and technological developments that are transforming the contemporary society." He again opines: " We also need to understand that insofar as the humanities speak to universal human concerns, the Humanities disciplines need to embrace inclusion and speak to diverse forms of cultural and artistic expression and philosophical and theological reflection."

tion, preferably from integrated or comparative perspectives.”

Therefore one must endorse the importance of the Humanities as a very significant Discipline for the learners. It is like an impetus underlining comparative analysis, literary interpretation, critical evaluation and contextualizing the minds of people. In such a way, the discipline of Humanities inspires, influences and shapes one’s perceptions, emotions, hopes, sentiments, dreams, fears, and modes of expression thereby creating the ‘Rasa’(essence) of life.

### **NEP 2020 vs. Humanities vs. Value-Based Education**

At such a juncture of implementation of NEP 2020, a blend of Humanities and Arts with the STEM subjects and the new vistas of Humanities, it’s time to reach home the spirit of skill-based and value-based education. Section 9.1.2. claims: “For the purpose of developing holistic individuals, it is essential that an identified set of skills and values will be incorporated at each stage of learning.....”(33). Amidst the burgeoning globalization, the STEM vs. STEAM models of education carve a niche in the enhancement of the holistic development of learners in higher education. Universal human values of mutual understanding, happiness, peace, prosperity, harmony, integrity, social justice, equality, reverence, etc. are all fostered and nurtured under the umbrella of Humanities Discipline.

The Discipline of Humanities infuses in learners the above characteristic features. It forms their beliefs, ethos, values, cultural understanding in a global environment. Through such kind of nurturing, the Humanities teaches learners the skills of critical and logical analysis of human conditions. Skills of empathy, creativity, understanding, communication, social cohesiveness, flexibility and adaptability to various situations are enhanced and ingrained in learners with the help of a value-based education as embedded in NEP 2020. Such skills are increasingly sought after by employers too. Such invaluable expertise is liked by global recruiters to hire Humanities graduates and postgraduates in the workplace.

The fabric of the Indian society is well-knit with the thread of values. Value education is not just teaching it as an academic subject. On the other hand, it is imbibing in the students the core values of being upright as a pillar of humanity, who can work for the upliftment and welfare of society first and the Nation as a whole.

Exploring the crucial role of value education and integrating it into the academic curriculum is the need of contemporary times. Value based ed-

ucation definitely fosters socialization, holistic development and life skills of the learners. Instilling such character traits in learners rectify their behaviors, attitudes, and thoughts which furthermore help in their future goals to lead a better life.

The Discipline of Humanities is not about orange sunrises and pink sunsets only. The Humanities stream emphasizes the passing on of the value-based education which guides the individual in their conduct and decision-making. Such transferring of knowledge serves as a moral compass for every learner, imparting a sense of direction and purpose bringing in positive contributions to society. Here it would be significant to cite the Policy's approach in its Introduction: "Education must build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate, and caring, while at the same time prepare them for gainful, fulfilling employment" (03).

Such value-based education prepares the learner for the skills that are essential to resolve ethical dilemmas. It teaches the learner to make responsible decisions and positive commitments to society. Beyond the textbooks and exams, the New Education Policy emphasizes value-based education integrated into a student-centric curriculum. As we pursue learning and research with interdisciplinary approaches of science and literature, one should strive to acquire fundamental life lessons, promoting the social harmony and progress of the nation.

Here it would be significant to quote David Brooks' views on Arts and Humanities in his column entitled "How Art Creates Us". He opines, "Building a friendship or creating a community involves performing a series of small, concrete social actions well: disagreeing without poisoning the relationship, being a good listener, knowing how to end a conversation gracefully, knowing how to ask for and offer forgiveness, knowing how to sit with someone who is suffering, knowing how to host a gathering where everyone feels embraced, knowing how to see things from another's point of view."

Thus from the above-cited lines one can observe that Humanities as a Discipline furnishes our mind with emotional knowledge and wisdom. NEP 2020 and the Discipline of Humanities promote the liberation of creativity, artistry, connectivity, and spirituality.

## Conclusion

After taking a deep dive into the splashes of the social responsibilities of



the Humanities in the light of NEP2020 one may conclude that to promote personal, spiritual, social, and national development the stream of Humanities is an integral part of all learning. It is a STEAM that breathes life into the STEM models of education where A stands for ART. The STEAM produces the rain of excellence in both technology and human-logy. The rain wets the young minds of the Bharat and forms the basis of knowledge creation. The relevance of the Humanities can never be underestimated in the ongoing debates of preference of the STEM models of education in the contemporary global environment. A learner may forget the algorithms or  $\sin(Q)$ ,  $\cos(Q)$  but he never forgets the virtues of truth, respect and harmony imbibed in him.

The exploration of new and innovative vistas of Humanities open the doors more for future times declaring India as a global educational hub and a Shreshtha Bharat. Thus the research article is a humble endeavor to highlight the responsibilities of the educational fraternity as well. The Policy exceptionally introduces: "The curriculum must include basic arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports and fitness, languages, literature, culture, and values, in addition to science and mathematics, to develop all aspects and capabilities of learners and make education more well-rounded, useful and fulfilling to the learner. Education must build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate and caring, while at the same time prepare them for gainful, fulfilling employment."

The Byzantine world, the mysteries of Life and Death, the Sphinx, Tiresias, God the Pilot, the dreary deserts, Catharsis, the issues of Gender and Cultural Identities, Indenture, Diaspora, LGBT, Racism, Feminism, Critique, Cultural and Comparative Studies, Folklores, Sonnets, Odes, Orientalism, Rasa theory, the Journey of Magi, the Wasteland, the two Inches of Ivory, the Scholar Gypsy and the endless list of this glorious wisdom would have remained absent for many of us in the lack of the Humanities Discipline.

We as educationalists must aim at inculcating human values in the learners. The 21st-century paradigms of education in the light of the Humanities Discipline have brought in holistic development breaking the silos of single subject principle. 21st Century Humanities infuses the students to celebrate and rejoice their creative choices, differences, hopes, and dreams. For a teacher, it's time to go beyond the limitations of subjects, thoughts and attitudes to mould every young learner into a visionary. Hence, one can conclude that the Major Subject is Being Human first, with the help of the Humanities, Values, and Life Skills.

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