

“Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It gives me immense pleasure to inaugurate the Moturi Satyanarayana Centre for Advanced Study in Humanities at KREA University today. I commend the management, staff and all those associated with this momentous milestone in KREA’s journey which has been synonymous with imparting quality education in humanities and social sciences.

Named after an eminent son of India, Padma Bhushan Sri Moturi Satyanarayana garu, I am certain that this Centre, with its academic rigour and focus on quality, will grow into a transformative and engaging hub of teaching and learning. As a freedom fighter, one of the framers of the Indian Constitution, and a Parliamentarian, Moturi Satyanarayana garu was a multi-faceted personality and a key figure in India’s political history.

An ardent follower and companion of Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Moturi Satyanarayana garu was a major proponent of the use of Indian languages in all walks of life. He took up the advocacy of Hindi in South India as a key mission in his life, while also promoting his mother tongue, Telugu, through various publications. Incidentally, he was also the founder Secretary of Telugu Bhasha Samiti.

Dear sisters & brothers,

We must accord due importance to Indian languages, especially our mother tongue, at all levels of education and administration. We must always remember that language is one of the foremost aspects of our cultural heritage; it gives us identity, self-respect and makes us who we are. That is why, I often say, feel proud to speak in your mother tongue!

The National Education Policy 2020 is a visionary document that recognizes the importance of liberal arts and focuses on a multidisciplinary approach in education in tune with contemporary times. It aims at de-compartmentalizing Indian education and breaking the rigid and artificial barriers between 'professional vs liberal education'.

As NEP rightly points out, even in ancient times, ‘good education’ was described as the knowledge of the 64 kalas or arts. This included knowledge in scientific fields like chemistry and mathematics, ‘vocational’ fields such as carpentry and clothes-making, ‘professional’ fields such as medicine and engineering, as well as ‘soft skills’ such as communication, discussion, and debate.

Such a holistic approach to education must be revived again, with an emphasis on liberal arts. It is unfortunate that liberal arts have been relegated to a secondary position in education in recent decades. Liberal arts nurture the qualities of critical thinking, problem-solving and adaptability in an individual. These attributes are in high demand in the 21st century economy, where no sector of the economy works in a silo. We must, therefore, rediscover our ‘parampara’ in liberal arts in order to shape well-rounded individuals.

In this regard, the students pursuing the fields of STEM- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics must get adequate exposure to liberal arts and social sciences in their undergraduate programmes. Various assessments of such courses where humanities and arts are well integrated have shown an enhanced creativity and innovation, higher social and moral awareness, improved critical thinking, teamwork and communication skills among students.

I am happy that many engineering colleges are moving in this direction. I am pleased to learn that the IIT Bombay has recently introduced an interdisciplinary undergraduate course that covers liberal arts, science and engineering in one programme. I am told that KREA University also offers such courses. This would contribute to expanding opportunities in order to open up new career pathways.

Friends,

More institutions must explore offering such interdisciplinary courses. A number of career trajectories in the coming years will require employees to have wider knowledge in diverse fields. We need youth who not only have an in-depth knowledge of their specialized area, but also have the ability to assimilate perspectives from other areas, integrate knowledge from all disciplines and also have soft skills for good communication, informed discussion and debate. Possessing sound knowledge in multiple disciplines, apart from having expertise in specialized area will help in realizing the full potential of our demographic dividend.

Brothers and sisters,

My appeal to parents is to encourage and infuse in children curiosity for arts, literature and social sciences from a young age. In a race to make it to the top national institutions of science and engineering, we are ignoring essential subjects in school such as languages and social sciences.

In addition, rote learning practices will ruin the creative abilities of a child. We must rather produce engineers, doctors and scientists, who come up with innovative solutions to the challenges faced by humanity.

Higher educational institutions in liberal arts too must continue this spirit of inquiry and creativity in their campuses. In the research on social sciences, we need to encourage more diverse voices and not limit universities to become exclusionary spaces and echo chambers. It is my view that the scholars in social sciences should work closely with the practitioners and policy-makers to get a grip on real-life issues which they will be striving to understand and analyse.

Lastly, while technical institutions should integrate arts into their curriculum, students from the arts and humanities background should be given options to gain exposure to scientific disciplines such as computing, artificial intelligence and other such frontier areas. They must be abreast with the latest technological developments and skilfully apply these advances in their own research work.

As for members of the faculty, learning, recognition and empowerment in an academic ambience of collaboration, should form the basis of career development. They should focus on preparing learners to access the increasingly wide range of career opportunities open to them in this day and age.

In this regard, I am confident that this Centre will foster innovative research, nurture a new generation of social scientists, strengthen inquiry practices within and across disciplines and provide fresh insight into important public issues. I congratulate the founders, administrators and the Vice-Chancellor of the University for their efforts in setting up this centre. My heartiest compliments to the family of late Sri Moturi Satyanarayana garu who have come forward to generously fund this venture and created a corpus for the successful functioning of this Centre.

Once again, I am very happy to have inaugurated this Centre. With efforts such as these, I am sure India will become a hub of learning in humanities and social sciences, along with other fields and will emerge on the world stage once again as Vishwaguru. Together, let us strive and make great spaces for vibrant, inclusive, multidisciplinary learning again.

Thank you all.

Jai Hind!”
