*Shakespeare and Our Humanity* I begin with the limitations of the paper –that I have only 10 minutes in which to present it and that I am like a 20 year old student of Mohini in the area of Literature.

In this presentation I give three reasons for thinking of Shakespeare as humane.

Many literary critics believe that a young boy from an unknown village could not have had the numerous insights that Shakespeare reveals in his works. Such an approach is not **wholistic** or **interdisciplinary**. It is like catching the bull by the tail and not by its horns. We cannot base our analysis on modes based on dualites—mind vs matter, men vs women, white vs black, small town vs city, natural vs supernatural etc etc with one side far, far superior to the other. This is the result of pure logic and materialism at the cost of intuition and our humanity, with racism, gender and caste bias, and all forms of oppression. Such polarities defeat the purpose of life. Shakespeare’s plays express images of God-Satan, Adam-Eve, Cain-Abel through archetypes of day-night/shadow, male-female polarities of the soul, and good-evil in all of us to bring out the meaning and purpose of life. He also brings out the meaning and purpose of life through archetypal sounds of nature like wind, rain, thunder, lightening, water, etc. Since these patterns occur numerous times they corroborate one another in their meaning. In doing this Shakespeare risked a cruel death hiding forbidden humane teachings that were spiritual to bring out the meaning and purpose of life, stressing that survival is insufficient.

As we were leaving for home after our Shakespeare session on the 7th a small discussion erupted on the prevarication of Hamlet, and someone equated him with Arjuna, the Every Man prevaricator. I kept thinking of Rahul Gandhi, especially while Ahmed was talking. But, Arjuna did finally act in spite of his prevarication because he had a spiritual anchor in Krishna, non dichotomous..

The humane journey being complex, full of light and darkness, good and evil in tempests of rain, wind, thunder causes many to seek a guide. Arjuna had one in Krishna. Whom did Hamlet have? How could he distinguish the true from the false, the illusion from the reality? I choose Hamlet only because we began with him and focused primarily on him. As future king he had a moral duty towards his people and country. He had to decide how it is ‘nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune', 'to take arms against a sea of troubles' ‘to be.’ His prevarication is his discernment process between his Jeevatma and his Paramatma. If we think not in terms of geography (small town, Strafford/capital city, London) but in terms of centuries should we, moderns, not be non materially better off than ancient people? Should people in the West, or anywhere else enjoying greater affluence not be non materially superior to those with no material affluence? Simple observations reveal this to be untrue and that great material possessions often lead to anomie hindering our growth as humane beings.

From a **cultural perspective**, both, Arjuna and Hamlet were steeped in religions and cultures which forbade killing, except in rare circumstances like self defense. Cultures in spite of their geographical and historical variations are based on the **Natural Law**, a law engraved in every human heart from which the Wisdom traditions of the world have naturally drawn, be it called dharma, dhamma, Tao, the Kin-dom of God. These wisdom traditions say that the welfare of every human lies in the welfare of all. We are aware that we must love God and people, that pride, stealing, lying, murder, greed are a no-no and that there are no limits to charity, forgiveness, compassion, generosity etc. Since natural law has evolved over thousands of years and existed even before any religion, faith and reason are not separate, revealing that the natural is supernatural and the supernatural is natural, (no dichotomy) beautifully expressed not only in Shakespeare’s works but also in ancient Indian society, and in the art of many cultures. Egs In the popular American song debuting in 1918 sung by Head Master Cornelius Beale. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6SXi4I47Qw>

I'm forever blowing bubbles, Pretty bubbles in the air, They fly so high, nearly reach the sky, Then like my dreams they fade and die. Fortune's always hiding, I've looked everywhere, I'm forever blowing bubbles, Pretty bubbles in the air.

The Impossible Dream Song by Andy Williams **Lyrics**

To dream the impossible dream To fight the unbeatable foe
To bear with unbearable sorrow To run where the brave dare not go

To right the unrightable wrong To love pure and chaste from afar
To try when your arms are too weary To reach the unreachable star

This is my quest, to follow that star No matter how hopeless, no matter how far
To fight for the right Without question or pause To be willing to march
Into hell for a heavenly cause And I know if I'll only be true
To this glorious quest That my heart will lay peaceful and calm
When I'm laid to my rest And the world will be better for this
That one man scorned and covered with scars
Still strove with his last ounce of courage
To fight the unbeatable foe To reach the unreachable star

This is my quest, to follow that star No matter how hopeless, no matter how far
To fight for the right Without question or pause To be willing to march Into hell for a heavenly cause

***Somewhere Over the Rainbow*** Judy Garland in Wizard of Ors
[Somewhere over the rainbow Bluebirds fly](https://genius.com/Judy-garland-over-the-rainbow-lyrics#note-7785274)
[Birds fly over the rainbow Why then, oh why can't I?](https://genius.com/Judy-garland-over-the-rainbow-lyrics#note-7787474)

Hamlet was like our Man From La Mancha painfully blowing bubbles in his quest to reach the unreachable star, to fly over the rainbow expressing the insufficiency of surviving.

We are all steeped in our cultures, so steeped as to be generally unaware of its limitations. There are many social scientists who say that society must have a **transcendent structure** or culture especially that of modern science and technology can cause us to forget our humanity, making us robots, forgetful of values like charity, forgiveness, compassion, generosity, of *Vasudaiva Kutumbakam*. Like Arjuna we need spiritual anchors too, surely in Krishna and Jesus, Muhammad and the Buddha to discern our problems, personal and social today, but also in the form of a book club like this and in the arts. In the past society generally provided us with the humane wisdom by which we realized the transitoriness and the worthlessness of material grandeur--To thy own self be true, Satyamev Jayate is vidya, God consciousness giving us ananda, dissolving the ego, teaching us humility, finding the kin-dom of God within us because all is vanity of vanities. Hamlet shows us how necessary it is for society to have a transcendent structure when he says to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern *What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason!
how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how
express and admirable! in action how like an angel!
in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the*

*world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me,*

*what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not
me: no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling
you seem to say so.***- *Hamlet* (2.2.295-302),**

Similarly with Manto about whom it was said at an earlier session that his writings are all dark. Manto being leftist probably had no spiritual anchor.

What good can come from Stratfford that a young boy from an unknown small town/village could not have had the numerous insights that Shakespeare reveals in his works and the courage to express them in spite of the possibility of a cruel and torturous death is similar to the question the Pharisees had about Jesus. What good can come from Nazareth? Are not his parents Mary and the carpenter Joseph? Such an analysis overlooks the possibilities of a **metastatic faith,** a belief that the fundamental nature of reality can be changed through existential consciousness in which humans participate with the divine. This is the Biblical story from Genesis to Revelation, revealing God as alpha and omega the beginning and the end; in Judaism it is described as truth and derived from the first, middle and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet describing God as beginning, middle, and end of all; the BG says (10:20) “I am the Self, O Gudakesa, seated in the hearts of all creatures. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings.” Arjuna is addressed as Gudakesa as one who has conquered the darkness of sleep and moves through widening cycles of consciousness. this is also expressed in our image of God as SatChidAnanda in whose image we are, and beautifully expressed by Hamlet, "What is a man If his chief good and market of his time Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more. Sure, he that made us with such large discourse, Looking before and after, gave us not That capability and godlike reason To fust in us unused" (4.4.32-38).