



By S. Chandrasekhar

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### Understanding the Text

1. How does Shelley's attitude to science differ from that of Wordsworth and Keats?

Answer: Wordsworth in his *A Poet's Epitaph* looks at science with a critical mind. Even in *Tables turned* he praises nature and appreciates the beauty it bequeaths to the humanity and is critical of how humans ruin it all with their science and art. Keats in *Lamia* talks of two facets of human nature: one is sensual and other emotional. Keats calls philosophy destructive and pleasure unreal and calls them inseparable. However, it is not that one must take Wordsworth's and Keats's take as absolute. Shelley, for instance, is of a different opinion. For scientists it is best if they consider Shelley. A. N. Whitehead's testimony called Shelley's attitude to Science, an opposite pole to that of Wordsworth. He loved science, and was never tired of expressing in poetry the thoughts, which it suggests. Science symbolised to him joy, and peace, and illumination.

2. 'It is not an accident that the most discrimination literary criticism of Shelley's thought and work is by a distinguished scientist, Desmond King-Hele.' How does this statement bring out the meeting point of poetry and science?

Answer: A Desmond King-Hele, a British physicist, is the author of *Shelley: His Thought and Work*. He said that Shelley's attitude to science emphasises the surprising modern climate of thoughts in which he chose to live. Shelley describes the mechanisms of nature with a precision and wealth of detail. It is a perfect fusion of poetry and science. A scientist critically reviewing a poet's work on science. S. Chandrasekhar points out two examples from Shelley's poetry in support of what is said about him. He points out that in his poem *Cloud*, a creative myth, a scientific monograph, and a gay picaresque tale of cloud adventure are fused together. Then he cites an example from *Prometheus Unbound*, which has been described by Herbert Read as the greatest expression ever given to humanity's desire for intellectual light and spiritual liberty.

3. What do you infer from Darwin's comment on his indifference to literature as he advanced in years?

Answer: Darwin, a great scientist, known for his work *On the Origin of Species*, enjoyed literature only until he was 30, as he said. He enjoyed poetic works of Byron, Coleridge, Shelley, etc. immensely. Shakespeare's historical plays gave him much pleasure. However, as he advanced in his age to reach the benchmark of 30, the charm faded and he began losing interest in pictures and music that once gave him great delight. He tried reading poetry and Shakespeare; however, he found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated him. It is surprising that the answer to this change is in Darwin's own statement. His mind had become some kind of a grinding machine to process laws out of facts. It caused atrophy of that part of the brain on which higher tastes depended. It was hard for Darwin to infer it as well and, thus, his romance with literature died away.

4. How do the patterns of creativity displayed by scientists differ from those displayed by poets?

Answer: Poets are the bards celebrating the nature surrounding them. While, scientists are the ones to harvest nature and its mechanism and mark inventions. Poets such as Wordsworth and Keats criticise humans of exploiting nature. Whereas, scientists on the other hand utilize the given resources of nature to create and invent. However, it is not that there is an enmity between poets and scientists. Shelley said, undoubtedly the promoters of utility, in this limited sense, have their appointed office in society. They make space and give time. Here we have Darwin, who enjoyed literature immensely, however, until he was thirty. He said later, 'My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone on which the higher tastes depend. Thus, it can be understood, while the poets celebrate the present and arrest it making it all immortal, the scientists create and invent leading us to a tomorrow, thus, marking a difference.

5. What is the central argument of the speaker?

Answer: A In the essay patterns of creativity, S. Chandrasekhar tries to figure out the reason for the difference in the patterns of creativity among the practitioners in the arts and practitioners in the sciences. He did not answer it, rather, he made an assortment of remarks that bore the answer. He cites examples explaining how poets and scientists view each other defining the difference in their views. There are poets such as Wordsworth and Keats who are worshippers of nature, who believe that humans sabotage nature by the technological advancement. However, there are poets like Shelley, who do poetry on science. It is difficult to segregate the views and put them into water tight compartments. Darwin, for instance enjoyed literature immensely as it gave him utmost joy, but only till the age of 30. W. B. Yeats, in praise of Shelley's A Defence of Poetry, called it the profoundest essay on the foundation of poetry in the English language. The author of the essay, Chandrasekhar wonders in the end that why is there no such A Defence of Science written by a scientist of equal endowment. Perhaps the answer to the question he knew already.

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