

Symposium
Law and Literature: Literary Citations in Judgements
9th October 2021

The department of English, RGNUL organised symposium titled “Law and Literature: Literary Citations in Judgements” on 9th October 2021. Prof. G.S. Bajpai, Vice-Chancellor, RGNUL mulled over the significance of citations while addressing the participants from different institutes. He elaborated upon judgments that incorporated literary references to voice the rights of marginalized. He eulogised the poetic insights of Justice Dipak Misra. Prof. Bajpai cited quotes of Goethe deployed by Justice Misra to put forth the rights of LGBTQ. “The legal fraternity drafted verdict decriminalising Section 377 by quoting the words from the literary works of Goethe, Vikram Seth and William Shakespeare to emphasize on uniqueness of identity, freedom and individuality,” he said. Prof. Bajpai further remarked, “Judges profusely use literary sources to explicate legal terms and substantiate crucial concepts.” “William Shakespeare, Franz Kafka, Oscar Wilde, Charles Dickens, Milton and Yeats have been perennial favourites to this day and have been cited in varied ways by judges to advance equity and justice,” added Prof. Bajpai.

Prof. Naresh Kumar Vats, Registrar, RGNUL focussed on the use of literary citations that enabled judges to deliver incisive and landmark judgements. Ms. Chanima Wijebandara, Judicial Officer, Sri Lanka highlighted on the “purple patches” in judgements. Dr. Navleen Multani, Assistant Professor of English and PRO, RGNUL expanded on common law’s affection for literature. Quoting Aristotle and Leonardo Da Vinci, she spoke about the joy of understanding and applying knowledge of literary works to decipher norms and eternal truth. “The rhetorical trinity, three modes of persuasion, ethos, logos and pathos, intertwined in literary works can effectively be used by judges to evoke empathy for the dispossessed and transcend narrow perspectives to usher in changes,” she said. Dr. Tanya Mander, Assistant Professor of English, deliberated on literary works that deepen understanding. 103 participants from different institutes attended the online symposium. The symposium was moderated by Pranit Singh, Namah Bose and Raghav Arora.