

SCIENCE AND/OR SPIRITUALITY?

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ABSTRACT

The present paper attempts to understand the relationship science has with spirituality. Attempts have been made here to examine the impact science has made in various spheres such as society, religion, spirituality, tradition etc. The churning would result in the fact that spirituality is blind without science and science is lame without spirituality.

Keywords: Science, society, tradition, literature, religion, outlook, philosophy, knowledge, human, reasoning

Introduction

Science is a queer thing; it brings gifts with one hand and stabs you in the back with another. In simple terms, science is any or that department of knowledge in which the results of investigation have been logically arranged and systematized. Further, science is an orderly presentation of facts, reasoning, doctrines and beliefs concerning some subject or group of subjects. In general, it may be called systematic knowledge. It results in the knowledge of fact or facts, phenomena, laws, approximate causes, gained and verified by exact observation, organized experiment and ordered thinking. Science probes into numerous subjects: fusion power, embryo research, complex and fatal diseases, habits of animals, congenital defects, space explorations, remote sensing, analysis of the brain, stellar dynamics, etc. in this essay we would delve into various spheres where science has made an impact.

The impact of science on society

The first conundrum to be dealt with would be the impact of science on society. This impact is tremendous in many ways. A rational outlook is needed to counter superstitions and their mal-effects. Men and women living in social groups remained in ignorance for long. The fear of the elements, as well as the diseases and the epidemics made them fear the gods and the goddesses, the cause of all that.

In India, even today, the rural people fear the wrath of the Devi causing the small- pox, which the government has successfully controlled. The greatest contribution of science is towards those factors

which have rid the human mind of the fears. The days of black magic and witch-craft are well over. Science in its modern form is barely 300 years old. Science has ruthlessly decimated superstitions. Religion is no longer a concern of the state; it is a matter of individual belief. With social networking magnifying its presence like never before, the world has become a small place. Socializing with fellow humans around the globe is no more asks for any physical or mental exertion. Time, distance has undergone a sea change which never occurred before. A society is governed by its philosophy in thought. The principles formulated during the medieval age are undergoing change. Today the philosophy of existentialism is at work, laying accent on individualism and subjectivity.

Science and Literature

The next conundrum to be considered while referring to science is literature. Tyndall, a famous scientist of the 19th century, owes his taste for science to the works of Tennyson. The rise of science in the 20th century gave a new turn to the mind of novelists, dramatists and poets. The traditional style of writing particularly that of the Victorians left an indelible impact upon it. Science developed on new researches revolutionizing the infrastructure of human thinking. The new frontiers of science and knowledge caused the demolition and attrition of the old values and new ones burgeoned in its place. The writings of D.H.Lawrence, radical in nature owe their existence to the new theories propounded in the field of Psychoanalysis. His *Sons and Lovers* is the child of the *Oedipus complex* discovered by Freud. Both science and literature differ from each other; the former totally interested in the point of the subject under research and the latter in the universality of expression.

Science and Tradition

The last aspect that I would like to compare or rather correlate with science would be tradition. The influence of science on tradition has a rather negative result. Science, roughly 300 years old has pushed man back to reality and has given a new philosophy which causes to jettison the traditional beliefs. The discipline of science has created a rational outlook on life and the people. A battle royal came to be waged between intellectuals and the church-advocacy. Sir Francis Bacon was one of the earliest literary thinkers to be gripped by the scientific temperament. The fear of sin prevailed among the people of the world. The fear of the divine wrath would smite them if they did anything wrong. Now their sense of sin has been uprooted. This very infrastructure of mystical belief has undergone a sea of change.

The human mind has been shaped and modeled in such a manner that it is no longer in a mood to accept anything other than the empirical system of belief. The naturalism principle appeals to one's mind more than anything else. Empiricism is the doctrine which says that all knowledge is derived from

sensory experience. Mysticism, on the other hand, holds the doctrine or belief that through contemplation and love, man can achieve a direct and immediate consciousness of god without the use of reason or any of the senses. The scriptural wisdom today has been pushed to village lore alone. The intellectual puts forward his analytical genius pitching against it and the result is that symbolically idealized morality attached to conduct falls apart like old plaster on a seedy building.

Science and Religion

It may be of relevance here to quote Sandra B. Lubarsky in the following lines, "That religion is strong which in its ritual and modes of thought evokes an apprehension of the commanding vision. The worship of god is not a rule of safety: it is an adventure of the spirit, a flight after the unattainable. The death of religion comes with the repression of the high hopes of adventure."¹ The more one inquires into science, the more questionable it becomes. Many of the theoretical and practical claims of science seem to be piecemeal analytical approaches. Its specialization has the disadvantage of often serving to keep it from addressing or understanding the real cause of the greatest problems such as ecological imbalance and pollution, physical, mental and psychological illnesses, social disruption, economic crises and many more.

Take for example, all the expert assurances about the impossibility of accidents in the modern nuclear technology before the Three Mile Island and the Chernobyl disasters took place. Only a handful of the more intelligent physicist warned against a likelihood but they ended up being treated by the scientific community as outsiders. Man discovered the atom and the atomic bomb. He lives in perpetual fear of the weapon that he himself has created. It is said that man has known everything, but he does not know himself.

The scientist cannot stop the rise of greed or hatred in the human lives or in the human heart; he can only forge the weapons they require and improve their lethal efficiency. Man lives in daily dread of the extinction as a result of the discoveries of science; for any moment the storm of hatred may rain bombs over their homes. Science has deprived man of self confidence. He is afraid of himself, for at the slightest provocation he is transformed into a wild and vicious beast. Baba feels that science has managed to get recognition, but not realization. The great scientist Einstein, in his last years regretted that his scientific discoveries had led to the production of the atom bomb. Similarly Sir Isaac Newton breathed his last in a mental asylum. True knowledge must secure mental peace and enduring joy. Science, bound by its limited perspective, promotes aggression, unwanted needs, desire and other similar tendencies. No wonder Sathya Sai Baba frequently refers to science as the splitting of love whereas spirituality as the

spirit of love.

Conclusion

At the end, I would just like to say that science in its purest form is just like a knife. It could be used to take away lives, just like a criminal or to save lives like a surgeon. We can consider it as a bonanza or a curse. It depends on the perception of the individual. Spirituality must not be perceived merely as a ritualistic and pious life. It should, on the other hand, be a journey to discover the ultimate transcendental stage. It is not a choice between science and spirituality but a choice of science and spirituality. My attempt would be aptly summarized by a quote from Albert Einstein, "Spirituality is blind without science and science is lame without spirituality."²

REFERENCES

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