



Science and Spiritualism

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Science and Spiritualism are two schools of enquiry into the Ultimate truth. These appear to be diametrically opposed and apart because of their apparent techniques of investigation and enquiry and their consequent formulations. But in reality, this may not be completely true because Science has not completed its enquiry yet. Science has not given its final verdict on the origin and nature of the universe and the ultimate force governing the universe. With the latest scientific research going on at the sub-atomic or nano level and spiritualism already affirming the presence of energy at each stage of matter, there is a distinct possibility of convergence of the two apparently diverse approaches. But before exploring the possibility of any synthesis between the two, let us go into the fundamental contours of these two schools of thought.

Science can be defined as the study of the physical world and application of this study to the welfare of mankind. Science is a search for universal truths, an attempt at understanding the mysteries of nature. Spiritualism, on the other hand, is a search for identifying and understanding the truths of our inner self, which is believed to have no physical existence. Spiritualism derives itself from 'Spirit'. Apart from the philosophical meaning and its attributes, the word 'Spirit' according to Chemistry means something which evaporates. Thus philosophically, spirit is understood to be something, which is ethereal and relates itself to metaphysical existence. This inner self may be called consciousness, mind, soul or *Atma*. Spiritualists believe that by listening to the voice of our *Atma*, we can make sublime not only our own lives but also the lives of others, thereby transforming the whole world into a blissful state of perfect peace and harmony and thus we would be able to

usher in what is commonly known as *Satyuga* or the age of truth and truth alone.

Some of the questions that come to mind here are:

- Are the concepts of Science and spiritualism as simple as stated above?**
- Are there any similarities and dissimilarities between the two?**
- Does the concept of Atma (soul) have a universal appeal?**
- Can mankind really transcend into an era of Satyuga (the age of righteousness) from its present position in Kalyuga (the age of sins)?**

Science seeks to explore the secrets of the physical world surrounding us - the boundaries of which extend beyond our imaginable limits. The methods of this research are based on the steps of formation of a hypothesis, experimentation, collection and analysis of data and finally stating the result in the form of a formula, principle or law. Subjectivity of a researcher does not play any role because his derivations are liable to be challenged and verified by other scientists subsequently. This law or principle becomes universal only when it is not disproved by any other scientist. Still there is always a scope for its modification in the light of new research.

History of Science is thus a saga of the dedication and research and even sacrifice of hundreds of scientists for the welfare of mankind. Many of them had to suffer bodily and some of them lost their lives during the course of their research. A few were even executed because their findings stood in contradiction to the orthodox beliefs. The case of Giordano Bruno, who was burnt alive for pronouncing that the earth revolves around the

Sun, is a typical case in point. Similarly, Marie Curie, discoverer of radium and winner of Nobel Prize for both Physics and Chemistry died of cancer caused by radiations emitted from the material on which she worked for years together with her husband Pierre Curie. Incidentally, Pierre met with a fatal accident and possibly escaped the agony of cancer. Their daughter and son-in-law, Irene Joliot Curie and Frederic Joliot Curie, who were awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, also met with similar fate due to cancer.

There are numerous other such examples in the realm of Science. The latest one is the ongoing Geneva experiment, popularly called Big Bang-2, the greatest of all experiments involving about 8000 researchers from 85 countries of the world, who have been working for the last 15 years. On September 10, 2008, when the experiment was to start, some Indian astrologers predicted that this would be a day of total annihilation for the whole world, a *Pralay* or a doom's day, thus creating a fear psychosis in the minds of the people at large. However, not even a speck of the earth moved or shook on this account on that day. Even today or at some later date if something goes seriously wrong with the experiment, the scientists present there at that moment would be the only ones to run the risk of their lives rather than anybody else. But it is only due to the call of their inner conscience to know the truth that they are sitting at the top of a volcano.

Thus Science and scientific research is the result of human inquisitiveness and urge to explore the truth with the aim of bringing prosperity for mankind. However, it is another matter that sometimes or in certain cases the findings of the scientists have resulted in disastrous consequences for the world and humanity. But it has never been the intention of the scientists to use Science for evil purposes. That is why they always say that 'Science can be a good servant and a bad master.'



Photo courtesy: Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan



However, now it is being argued that Science has not been able to solve all the mysteries of Man and Nature, what to speak of providing solutions to every problem Man faces today. (For instance, no definite cure has been found for deadly diseases like cancer and AIDS). It has rather raised more questions than it has solved. One can clarify these misgivings if one keeps in mind that scientific endeavor is a continuous process and no time limit can be set to arrive at the final findings. Thus Science has its own limitations. This idea of limitation of Science is generally summarized by referring to Heisenberg's 'Principle of Uncertainty or Indeterminacy' enunciated in 1927 in Physics. To understand all aspects of this principle a detailed discussion of relevant Physics is needed, but simply this principle states that it is not possible to find simultaneously the exact position and velocity of a particle like electron, because the process of measurement itself alters either of the two. Therefore, some uncertainty in measurement gets introduced by itself and exact measurement is not possible. This took the physicists by surprise as till then Physics was thought to be an exact Science and led some of them to believe that at the sub-atomic level of matter (where scientists seem to be helpless), there may exist a possibility which when understood or realized may play a vital role in understanding an objective truth or ultimate reality. This grey area or region of possibility brings both Science and spiritualism close to each other. In other words, it is believed that it is at this boundary where Science at present stands or ceases to operate and spiritualism begins. Is this not where study of physics ceases and the pursuit of metaphysics begins?

Spiritualism or spiritual quest unlike the scientific enquiry begins from the internal to the external. Unlike a scientist starting with a hypothesis towards experimentation, verification and formulation, spiritualist starts with a faith,

a conviction and undoubted belief in some sort of primal force or energy that impels to evolve and manifest itself. Like an electric current of energy it energizes every object into which it enters and takes its shape. This non-stop flow of energy unites the whole universe. As a spiritualist focuses, dwells upon and concentrates his entire consciousness upon this energy, he finds its presence everywhere from the tiniest particle to the biggest object conceivable. This unity in diversity is the central credo of spiritualism and a spiritual person, while in communion with the primal energy (call it The Divine) transcends all man-made barriers of caste, creed, region and religion. Once he has realized this divine presence in every visible and invisible object, his outlook turns mystical and pantheistic. According to this view, nothing moves or happens without the divine will and the divine will is autonomous and sovereign. As his spiritual quest proceeds further, he starts realizing that this divine force or divine will has certain definite attributes (what a scientist would call properties). Some of the attributes of the Divine are its complete sovereignty over His creation, its timeless eternal presence, its attitude of total impartiality including its complete absence from rancor, malice or fear of any of its creation and its unconditional compassion towards its creation. It dwells in its creation, here, there, everywhere yet over and above their constitutional dimensions. The whole creation originates from it and merges into it as it wills. While a scientist is able to substantiate his findings and formulations through physical and



visible demonstrations to us, a spiritualist can at best describe and state his experience through similes and metaphors which evoke images of sensual perceptions such as those of fragrance, love, joy and consummation. In fact, language proves to be an inadequate medium to convey the mystical experience of a spiritually realized or enlightened person. This hiatus or communicational gap between a mystic and ordinary logical human being is due to the difference in their level of consciousness. While the mystic has enlightened his consciousness without depending on his sense perceptions including his rational mind, the empirical or logical man never endeavors to go beyond his mental faculties.



Thus, while a mystic rejoices in the oneness of his consciousness with the Divine, he finds an ordinary human being, the logical, empirical person groping within the shell of his constitutional circumference of his physical existence. The scientist and the mystic come nearest to each other in a boundary situation where a scientist finds some sort of entity or consciousness at the sub-atomic level. It is at this level that there is a scope for a synthesis between Science and spiritualism, where and when practitioners of both streams would acknowledge the presence of a common entity. Moreover, at this stage as formulations and beliefs of scientists and mystics are wide apart, their tools of enquiry, too, are different. While a scientist relies completely on his physical and mental faculties as well as the equipment during his scientific pursuit, a mystic regards these faculties as inadequate tools for his spiritual quest. His whole reliance is on his consciousness which is the sum total of all his faculties plus something more powerful and efficient than all the senses combined. While a scientist experiments with the assistance of his faculties, a spiritual seeker activates his consciousness through concentration and meditation on a force, which resides in his consciousness. With



persistence in concentration and meditation this force is stirred, which in turn, enlightens his consciousness. Once this consciousness is enlightened, the whole mystery is resolved and a mood of ecstasy takes over the mystic. He acquires a peace that passes understanding.

To conclude, both scientists and spiritualists are seekers of truth differing in their approach of enquiry yet progressing towards the same goal. Whereas the spiritual seeker begins from inside, the scientist proceeds from outside. Since the inner quest has no developed medium of communication to pass on his experience, he takes the help of abstract modes of expression. A scientist has a well developed commonly shared medium of communication, using which he can convey his formulations. Now, when Science is exploring the sub-atomic state of existence, he too finds handicapped in conveying his perception. Let us hope that Science at the end of its quest may find its beginning where spiritualism has already arrived. Suffice it to say that both the approaches are valid because both are in pursuit of truth. Both scientists and spiritualists are seekers of knowledge and not information - because knowledge begins where information ends. Both have impacted human thought and the way humanity has progressed or regressed. Whereas Science has enlightened our mental horizon, spiritualism seeks to enlighten our psychic and still unnamed faculties. Let us pay attention to both and hope to be benefited from both.



A Short Story

Your Weakness

This is the story of a 10-year-old boy, who decided to study 'Judo' despite the fact that he had lost his left arm in a devastating car accident.

The boy began lessons with an old Japanese Judo teacher. The boy was doing well, so he couldn't understand why, after three months of training, the teacher had taught him only one move. "Sensei," the boy finally said, "Shouldn't I be learning more moves?"

"This is the only move you know, but this is the only move you'll ever need to know," the Sensei replied. Not quite understanding, but believing in his teacher, the boy kept training.

Several months later, the Sensei took the boy to his first tournament. Surprising himself, the boy easily won his first two matches. The third match proved to be more difficult, but after some time, his opponent became impatient and charged; the boy deftly used his one move to win the match. Still amazed by his success, the boy was now in the finals.

This time round, his opponent was bigger, stronger, and more experienced. For a while, the boy appeared to be overmatched. Concerned that the boy might get hurt, the referee called a time-out. He was about to stop the match when the Sensei intervened. "No," the Sensei insisted, "Let him continue."

Soon after the match resumed, his opponent made a critical mistake: he dropped his guard. Instantly, the boy used his move to pin him. The boy had won the match and the tournament. He was the champion.

On way back home, the boy and the Sensei reviewed every move in each and every match. Then the boy summoned the courage to ask what was really on his mind. "Sensei, how did I win the tournament with only one move?" "You won for two reasons," the Sensei answered. "First, you've almost mastered one of the most difficult throws in all of Judo. And second, the only known defence for that move is for your opponent to grab your left arm."

The boy's greatest weakness had become his greatest strength.