

Science without Religion Lame, Religion without Science is Blind

Jakkinaboina Sridevi

*Pragathi College of Education, Ghatkesar, Hyderabad, Telangana State
E-mail: shree77222@gmail.com*

According to common perception, a huge gulf exists between science and religion. Apparently, no doubt, science deals with things concrete, whereas religion is based upon abstract ideals. Science implies fact, religion involves faith. Religion is basically a matter of instinct and science that of reason. But these are the broad characteristics of science and religion which have meeting places also – and the first meeting place is in the human mind and nature themselves. It is the human mind which proves facts and starts believing in them and it is the mind alone which nurtures faith and reverence and believes in some higher entity. When one talks about two apparently divergent things like science and religion or other seemingly opposite things, one has to keep in mind the complexity of human nature. Its very complexity demands influences from antithetical ideas and makes their co-existence necessary as well as feasible. To use a term from the world of music one can say that in the initial stages of human civilisation human knowledge was of the “mono” type i.e. undifferentiated. The sort of complexity which has crept into the human world in modern times was lacking. Religion had scientific connotations also. During the Rig-vedic period the worshipping of Gods and Goddesses and the subsequent beginning of many religious customs and practices were inextricably woven with scientific purposes. For example, the common practice of offering Jal (water) to the sun-god during sunrise. It is a fact that the first rays of the sun are beneficial to the eyes. The practice of fasting prescribed by religion as a mark of abstinence was also derived from the fact that it cultivates patience and will-power (besides being good for physical well-being). Similarly the custom of hawan during a puja or a yagya had its origins in the fact that it purifies the atmosphere. But gradually during the later Vedic period with the increased influence of the priests and their tendency to misuse religion for their own-mercenary considerations the scientific part of these practices got suppressed by superstitions and nameless fears.

Since time immemorial religion has been there with the human beings as an integral part of their life and life-style. Unable to understand natural phenomena even as awed by

them, the human mind ascribed everything to a supernatural entity—omniscient and omnipotent. Wonder and instinct prompted humans to worship the unknown presence. Slowly, experience and widening thought processes eroded the sense of wonder and awe. The developments in modern science is a relatively recent phenomenon. It is significant to note that in Europe the major turning point both in the fields of humanities as well as science came into being through the Renaissance only after the Reformation in the 13th and 14th centuries. The developments in scientific inventions and the urge of individual freedom and quest for knowledge can be considered as a sort of sharp reaction to the suffocating atmosphere created by the misuse of religion. Somehow, it is to be seen, religion and religious practices have this inherent lack of ability to meet the growing aspirations of the people, to fall behind the fast-changing world. It hankers after status-quoism and the tendency to keep people in compartments. Once Jonathan Swift stated: “We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough religion to make us love, one another,” But actually the fault does not with religion. It is human failing that religion is often not considered as a matter of personal preference, but is sought to be imposed upon all people. The role of a priest comes under a cloud all the time because one can learn science from the scientist, art from the artist but not religion from the priest.

The general notion that since science and religion represent two different worlds of materialism and spiritualism and that’s why they remain in conflict is, however, not wholly correct. Had science only to do with materialism and religion with spiritualism the conflict would perhaps not have arisen. The problem starts when both encroach upon each other’s field. But as the horizons of human knowledge widen, the barriers to discussion start falling down. As civilisations advanced, philosophers and scientists attempted to explain the moving heavens in rational terms. Perhaps the first major confrontation between science and religion came into being with the publication of *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* by Copernicus. Copernicus, against the general belief advocated by Ptolemy that the sun moves around the earth,

stated that it is the earth which moves around the sun. This new theory upset the standard philosophical and religious beliefs of the medieval era. It not only meant the collapse of the concept of universe as described in the Bible, but also meant that man no longer occupied a central place in the universe, Man had been removed from his pedestal, and his home was reduced to but one of man's planets. Goethe, the German philosopher, stated that the theory of Copernicus made "a great demand" upon mankind to accept the new facts. As he said:

What became of our Eden, our world of innocence, piety and poetry.....the conviction of poetic-religious faith?

What sort of treatment was meted out to the followers of Copernican system, Galileo and Bruno, by the religious authorities is well known to us.

Besides other scientists, the single most important influence on Christian society and its religious beliefs has been that of Darwin and his Origin of Species. Giving a crushing blow to the Christian concept that man is the child of God, Darwin stated that man has actually evolved from the stage of apes to human beings. His theory brought religious belief and scientific temper into a direct conflict as never before. Darwin's famous theory of "natural selection" as a reasonable explanation for the method of evolution put, as A.N. Whitehead in his celebrated book Science and the

Modern World said, "religion on the defensive, and on a weak defensive." Darwin's work enabled us to see the position of man and our present civilisation in a truer light. Man is not a finished product incapable of further progress. He has a long history behind him and it is not a history of a "fall" but of an ascent. The progress in science had its direct corollary in the dismantling of many baseless religious beliefs and superstitions.

Science has certainly influenced society by altering the religious thinking and attitude of the people. But science has its own limitations. It has broadened the human reach, it has made possible the things undreamt of, but somewhere along the line it has created a psychological void. Scientific inventions have created for every man a little world for himself. The communication gap is the 'in' thing. Surrounded by electronic gadgets, moving in the throbbing car, man leads a prosaic life. And he feels the void. Can ignorance be the only reason for the use of many religious and spiritual "gurus" – fake or genuine? If that had been the case, one would not have found rich and poor, educated, half-educated and uneducated alike making a beeline for the ashrams, giving donations and alms, going for pilgrimages etc. For many it might be a matter of faith, for many a way of relinquishing their burden of sins even though remaining steeped in them – and for many just a matter of ritual because their fathers and grandfathers have been doing so for aeons. It reflects a sorry state of affairs that religion has come to be generally identified with only these manifestations of one's religiosity – and

science has to share the blame. It has to share the blame because though it has influenced human life tremendously, it has also, what Wordsworth said about the Industrial Revolution "blunted the discriminating powers of the mind." The discoveries of science and their application have created an atmosphere in which the baser element of man's nature has come to the fore quite prominently. The growing materialism and consumerism have created two distinct classes of haves and have nots, fostering social and class tensions. And what is more alarming, the situation resembles what W.B. Yeats describes in The Second Coming:

The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

In the Indian context the spread of communalism is a case in point.

Modern man has tried to develop science as his religion and finds that inadequate. Science has yet to find the solution to the question of First Cause. Every question which evades solution in the material world comes under the purview of the spiritual. Scientific attitude can at best improve the lot of mankind but to preserve it one needs a religious attitude. An attitude which has as its basic tenets tolerance, universal love and brotherhood, the spirit of accommodation and respect for mankind as a whole. To say this is not to say that scientific temperament has nothing to do with the advance of mankind. If one develops scientific temper which has as its basic tenets objectivity, impersonality, analysis and reason, many drawbacks can be overcome. So the need of the hour is the cultivation of a sense of proportion between scientific temperament and a religious temperament.

All human endeavour is directed towards achieving perfection, towards reaching, what Plato said, the "idea". In that respect, whatever human beings do in various fields cannot be supposed to be totally contradictory and incompatible. The quest of truth is the concern of both science and religion. Science takes the path of analysis, of facts, of experiments; religion proceeds through enquiry and personal experience and rests ultimately on faith. Whether the matter is physical or metaphysical, whether the method is analytical or enquiring their aim is and should be towards bettering human life as a whole.

REFERENCE BOOKS

- [1] Power of your subconscious mind – Author : Dr. Joseph Murthy.
- [2] Religion versus Science – Author : Ron-frost.
- [3] A Quantum case for God – Author : Dennis Zattina.
- [4] The relation between Religion and Science – Author : Wood borne.
- [5] Science without religion is lame, Religion without science is blind – Author : Albert Einstein.