

Integration of Science and Spirituality

Imbalance or disharmony in any system, any action, generates problems of one kind or the other. Narrow-minded approach or lack of comprehensive considerations eventually leads to inadequate and problematic consequences, even though it might seem to offer some immediate success. This is because of the incomplete comprehension or negligence of some of the crucial aspects of a situation. In order to achieve an orderly, well-organized, balanced and fulfilling human life, we need to pay due attention and give proper importance to the necessities of its interwoven physical, intellectual, mental and spiritual realms in the individual and social domains.

A human being consists of a marvellous amalgam of matter and consciousness force. The physical or the gross body is made up of the basic elements and their evolved reactions and results, so its healthy sustenance and vigorous functioning largely depend upon the balanced concentrations and activities of these vital constituents. The subtle or the conscious body – mind and the inner self, which also lies at the base of the living existence of the physical body, receives the transmitting energy from enlightened thinking and virtuous sentiments. The vedic philosophy emphasizes the harmonious growth of both – the gross and the subtle realms. This comprehensive and integral approach lays the foundation of personal, familial, social and global development in an ideal way. Discrepancies, imbalances or disorder in any sphere of life causes different kinds of complications and difficulties of varied nature, which directly or indirectly hinder, retard and even reverse the graph of healthy soul growth and ascent.

A thorough understanding of human life becomes feasible by a comprehensive study of the interrelationship between the human mind, Nature and the Omnipresent Consciousness Force. The major schools of thought and branches of knowledge that have emanated from the quest for fathoming this relationship have had entirely different approaches.

While the material based modern science has designed sophisticated tools and technologies to shape the gross materialistic facets and external structure of progress, the inner foundation of this outer structure is embedded in the indwelling spirit in the individual and the collectively. Science contributes to the civilization and advancement of materialistic resources and spirituality holds the key to the harmonious and virtuous development of personality. Science reveals the mysteries of Nature in the manifested world, while spirituality unfolds the secrets and objectives of its subtle existence. Analysis of the structure and perceivable properties of things is the subject matter of the different branches of material science. Decipheration and study of the origin and deepest purpose of life pertains to the fields of spirituality. Thus, broadly speaking, the former deals with answering "What and How?" and the latter with "Why and What for?" Both search for truth in their own fields of inquiry. Like the two banks of a river or two invisible edges of the horizon, both are perennially connected with each other but seem to stand far apart. Mutual cooperation and integration of the two is most desired for their relevance and necessity in human life.

Unfortunately, these two gigantic streams of search for truth have, because of the way they have been followed and practiced, largely remained compartmentalized and mutually exclusive. Modern science has exhaustively excavated, extracted and exploited the natural resources and gained enormous mastery in the physical world. However, for want of the guiding light of spirituality, it couldn't really make a positively constructive, viable and righteous use of its mammoth wealth of knowledge of the principles underlying the physical phenomena. Matter and the visible world became the prominent foci of its advancement and so the objectives of life and its prime purpose got sidetracked and almost lost from sight. What was really needed was, to also search for solutions to the riddles of human psychology and the complexities that entangle the basic aims of life.

Scientific research of the physical world enabled man to understand laws of the material world. But the infinite power of the inner self, the consciousness-force of pure sentiments of love and compassion, noble thoughts, etc remained unknown and ignored. As a result, materialistic civilization overtook the charge of life and the key role of sublime consciousness and associated faculties got neglected in the mist of illusions and ignorance. It was bound to happen. When extrovert hunt for prosperity in terms of materialistic resources and comforts and their possession became the sole objective of life, why would one bother to understand the importance and utility of noble thinking, virtuous character, and altruistic sentiments? The generous attitude of benevolence, selfless cooperation and adoption of ethical conduct emanate from and expand with the support of spiritually evolved emotions. If one is not even aware of the importance of emotions and intrinsic tendencies in human life, why would he care for their refinement? The mad rush of self-obsession, rat-race for possessions, power and blind progress driven by the ego and selfishness seen everywhere within and around us today reflect the bankruptcy of the human heart (emotional core) and sheer disregard of the inner self. This is the major cause of the ever-increasing agonies, fears and problems the world is facing despite the dazzling scientific advancement, technological development and enormous materialistic strength and wealth today.

The grains of scientific research will serve the real purpose and will be beneficial in the true sense only if it opens its barriers and goes beyond "What and How?" to see "Why and What for?" — to encompass the search for the dignity of humanity and ultimate aim of human life. Revered thinkers and philosophers from different parts of the world have been expressing these views on scientific progress ever since its advent. Eminent talents like Leo Tolstoy and Theodore Roosevelt have commented that scientific quest revolves around "what is it?" of every thing, or "why something happens like the way it does in the physical world". But it does not quite try to find "for what purpose the thing is existing?", or "for what objective is something happening the way it is?", etc. Tolstoy further writes at one place that the childhood of modern science has begun with the quest for "what and how?"; the stage of its maturity will be reached when it also begins answering "why and for what purpose?". The hidden depths of Nature and life can be plumbed by appropriate and meaningful research on "why and for what purpose?" This type of scientific research in the inner fields of consciousness force will mark the meeting point of science and spirituality. Plato has also observed that the completeness and ultimate progress of science lies in its entry into the spheres of spirituality.

Why was this world created? Why the gamut of species of different creatures including human beings produced? Why is the perpetual cycle of Nature running the way it is? For what purpose is every component of the cosmos moving in its specific sphere and order? Who is governing this universal order? Where is the original cause of the manifestation of Nature and the genesis of this ever-expanding cosmic existence? This basic quest of the existentialists is beyond the scope of the modern material sciences.

Leaving aside these rather abstract puzzles, there still remains a plethora of questions concerning the origin, purpose and limitless expressions of human life and evolution of consciousness and the undeciphered layers of mental and emotional cores that are fundamental to the understanding of human life; but are not considered by the modern sciences.

Tolstoy expresses his heartiest appreciation for the constructive contributions of scientific developments to human civilization but he also deplors the near total neglect of moral aspects, value systems and deeper emotional effects, etc in the pursuit of scientific research.

In his thorough review-essays in "Science is Not Enough", the author scientist Vannevar Bush (1890-1974) writes that "the focus and scope of science has largely been confined to the analysis and synthesis of material substances and entities. It cannot claim absolute knowledge of anything with certainty. Its discovery of atom is an evidential example in this regard. It has still not been certain of the structure and functions of the subatomic units and their (further) sub-particulate constituents. Its continual research keeps annulling or deviating its own convictions and thus disapproving the sufficiency of its findings so far". In the views of the thinkers like Theodore Roosevelt (1933+) – "Science will be no better than a pool of artificial tools and techniques unless its search begins from metaphysical basis and incorporates the fields of consciousness".

Distinguished scientists like Warsen Beaver also opine that science will have to leave out its prejudices and adopt a broadened attitude for comprehensive research towards revealing the mysteries of Nature and resolving the problems of life. At present its approach is prejudiced in the sense that its search for truth is confined only to the perceivable realities of the world.

Dr. Beaver expresses his views on the reality of sublime consciousness as – " In the moments of deep sorrow, fear or helplessness, we do experience some inner inspiration that induces inexplicable hope and courage. It also gives us strength and light to counter the adversities or find discerning solutions to the acute hardships. This sublime power of inner consciousness is an expression of the Almighty. Each one of us does experience His presence in some form, some time in the course of life".

Science and spirituality have somehow been mutually contradicting in their approaches and have always regarded each other's principles and objectives as superficial. This negative competition has deprived both of their complementary roles towards holistic

human growth. The convictions and practices of spirituality weaken their authenticity in absence of scientific spirit and openness. The philosophy and teachings of spirituality without having scientific approach lose their relevance and originality in the smog of blind faith and superstitions. Science also remains narrow and incomplete without incorporating spirituality, which is the base of enlightened evolution of the mental and emotional domains. Science without spirituality has no bonds of values and so there is an obvious danger of its becoming amoral and apathetic. This is what we are witnessing today. Science has undoubtedly made grand constructive contributions to the external development of human civilization, but it has unscrupulously invented dreaded products of mass destruction and global devastation. Its unchallenged might and reckless advancement appear to threaten the very existence of life on earth. It is high time the tyranny of this unbridled blind power is controlled and made accountable to humanity. The role of spirituality is self-evident in this regard.

Science and technology can generate means of progress but not the means of peaceful co-existence and happiness; neither can these nurture moral values and inner strength. Science and technology may produce material wealth and prosperity but not the nectar of soothing emotions, spring of love and compassion or light of courage, wisdom and sagacity. Unless science is integrated with spirituality to fill-in this gap and both the complementary powers are encouraged to flourish within mutual cooperation, the present trends of progress would be inexorably hurtling towards the suicidal edge of global extinction.

Once a dacoit came to listen to a scholar- preacher's sermon. The scholar was very eloquent about the virtues of forgiveness and non-violence. The sermon ended. The preacher took the offerings and walked towards his village. There was forest in-between. The dacoit bounced upon the preacher and asked for all the money he was carrying. The preacher was a brave person and had a bamboo stick in his hands with which he threatened to hit the dacoit. The dacoit got scared and politely asked him that only a shot while ago he was preaching about the virtues of forgiveness and non-violence which he himself was not practicing. The scholar said that the sermon was for law abiding gentle people but for criminals like the dacoit the stick serves the sermon. Looking at the resolutely strong-willed scholar the dacoit took to his heels.