

In Search of Possible Physical Laws in Spirituality

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THE PURPOSE OF CIVILISATION is progress through development and the uplift of the human personality. Materialistic progress is dealt with by science which is space-bound and time-bound. But in spiritual progress there are no such limitations since it deals with perennial values. The progress in spiritual plane is basically a path for self-perfection while progress in the material plane is simply a journey towards perfection through material or physical comforts including various kinds of security. The progress in materialistic front often seems to oppose spiritual development. Such an inverse relation is perceived in the history of civilisation.

Science versus Religion/Spirituality: Pros and Cons

There is thus an apparent contradiction or conflict between the spiritual and material view of life. It is our common experience that the lesser the sense-enjoyments the higher the life of a person or in other words, 'the lower the man ... the more delight he finds in the senses', as Swami Vivekananda pointed out.¹ Apart from being bound by space and time, the third factor is causality; all these three together could be termed as STC, or space, time, and causality. Science follows this law of STC, which is under the realm of objectively measurable entities. Such distinctness of space and time disappears in Einstein's theory of relativity. All of us in this world are bound by physical limitations. What is the use of progress

if our end is ultimate extinction as the second law of thermodynamics leads to the conclusion that the world is heading towards a 'heat death'. This means that the universe is continuously progressing towards disorder from simple ordered beginnings, starting from simple organisms to increasingly diverse and complex organisms. In the words of Swamiji: 'Time, space, and causation are like the glass through which the Absolute is seen, and when It is seen on the lower side, It appears as the universe. This Absolute (a) has become the universe (b) by coming through time, space, and causation (c)' (2.130). He said this about progress: 'The spirit is the goal, and not matter. ... it is very good to be born within the limits of certain forms that help the little plant of spirituality, but if a man dies within the bounds of these forms, it shows that he has not grown, that there has been no development of the soul' (2.39-40). He said further: 'Beyond that, beyond the senses, men must go in order to arrive at truths of the spiritual world ... These are called Rishis, because they come face to face with spiritual truths. ... and the truths of spirituality we also see in a superconscious state of the human soul. This Rishi-state is not limited by time or place, by sex or race' (3.253).

Spirituality, on the other hand, is outside this STC frame. It is unlimited, unchangeable, eternal, and not bound by natural laws. It is beyond our sensual perception and cannot be perceived even with advanced instruments though

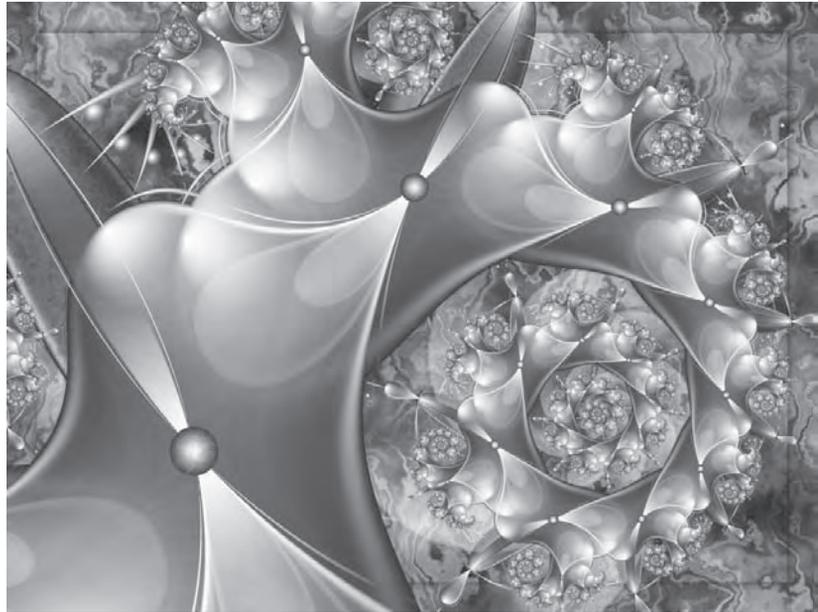
many animals individually possess much better sensual perceptions than human beings. For example, bats can 'see' at night and can sense ultrasonic sound beyond human perception. That is why spiritual truths and values discovered and realised by Rishis thousands of years back, as described in the scriptures, still exist and are accepted. It is because of this unchangeability and eternal value that Swamiji held this spiritual science in high regard:

'That science is the greatest which makes us know Him who never changes!' The science of nature, changeful, evanescent, the world of death, of woe, of misery, may be great, great indeed; but the science of Him who changes not, the Blissful One, where alone is peace, where alone is life eternal, where alone is perfection, where alone all misery ceases—that, according to our ancestors, was the sublimest science of all (3.370).

Swamiji said this on the superiority of spiritual truth: 'It is infinitely grander and better to know the laws that govern the passions, the feelings, the will, of mankind. ... the mainspring of the strength of every race lies in its spirituality, and the death of that race begins the day that spirituality wanes and materialism gains ground' (2.65). Thus, spirituality is realised by one who practises. It is true everywhere for all times and does not fail the test of time.

Faith is the basis of true scientific investigation. It is also the foundation of spirituality, but it is not enough, one has to practise as well. Though this forms the common factor in the path of finding truth, the difference is that the method is objective for science while for spirituality, the method is subjective. Scientific truths are knowledge revealed as laws that scientists discover by studying the pattern and regularity

at which they occur. These laws are repeatable, verifiable by anybody, anytime, and anywhere in the world. Spiritual truths, on the other hand, are not worldly knowledge and do not come from the outside, but evolve from within us once our body-mind complex evolves and is fit to accept these truths. There is no life without truth and nature does not create anything that is untrue. Nature reacts violently against untruth and falsehood.



But science constantly strives for the exploration of truth. Sometimes the old law is discarded when a newer idea emerges. This absence of finality is the essence of science according to Bertrand Russell. Scientific truths are known through intellect but spiritual truths cannot be revealed through intellect alone, but only by rigorous practice can one realise the truth through experience. Swami Vivekananda said: 'Experience is the only source of knowledge' (6.81). This discipline should be practised with one's whole heart and for such practice, purity is the prime requirement. When one spiritually experiences a fact it is no doubt a personal experience but

it is by no means a private fact. Such a fact is also predictable and verifiable by anybody else through their personal experience. That is why it is told in the scriptures that the experiences of no two spiritual aspirants can be identical. Intellect has no place in spiritual life; it cannot take one very far.

It is true that science has given us much by way of improvement in the materialistic comforts of life by reducing man's helplessness in the face of natural disaster. Science has also created conditions for material happiness in man. The quest of science is not limited to land and sea but extends to outer space as well. But in spite of these, to be happy in the real sense, one has to turn to one's inner being. The objective knowledge of science has given us a blind bulldozer power by the so-called manipulation of the forces of nature beyond the limited human capacity, through powerful instruments. But this cannot give us a grand vision. Pertinent examples are nuclear power, rocket engine, and lately, laser miracles. But without a spiritual goal the power of science is most likely to be unstable as happens in most societies. Modern science has no scope in this regard and so has paid virtually no attention to the development of inner mental resources to guide and balance the intellect with emotions in the use of outer material resources. Thus, science is of little or no help in controlling our emotions or thoughts.

Human being's higher activities are prompted by spiritual ideals and aspirations towards truth, goodness, beauty, and the like. But science is not to be blamed for the evil intentions of humans and the exploitation of discoveries by dictators. The true spirit of science is as noble as spiritual idealism. The mechanical progress of science has indeed mechanised human mind, thereby drying its creative potency. Science does not recognise any privileged

individual or class since the truth is pursued objectively in an impersonal manner. The activities of humans can be intrinsically creative if they are instigated and sustained by truth, goodness, beauty, and the like. The observation and experimentation should be recorded with absolute honesty without any fear of punishment or temptation of any reward; though in actual practice scientists may not be of pure and moral character, as we often hear cases of plagiarism in Indian scientific research. It is unfortunate for a country like India, which gave birth to some prominent world religions. Science has given us mastery of the external world but it has nothing to offer for the internal world.

Science has contributed little for the cultivation of imperishable values like truth and dignity of a person. It is for this reason that it is often said that the marvellous technical development of science has done as much harm to human beings as good. It has saved time but cannot say what to do with leisure. Miracles in medicine have driven out diseases but cannot bestow mental peace. Values are purely subjective and have no place in science. One has to realise this limitation of science to get the vision of higher values. The beauty of a flower, rainbow, or scenery is all subjective. Swami Vivekananda said: 'Life is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down.'²

Albert Einstein once said that science can de-nature Plutonium but cannot de-nature the evil in the heart of man. This means that the technique of science can even split apart the constituents within an atom like Plutonium which are very strongly bound together by inbuilt powerful nuclear force, but science is helpless to drive out the evils residing within us. It is the vision of religion or spirituality that can guide our emotions to exploit them for human welfare. Hence

the basic difference between religion or spirituality and science is the inner guidance that may be termed as morality or ethics which includes some self-control, struggle, the sacrifice of pleasure of flesh, and the denial of natural cravings of animal life. One has to acquire mastery over the senses and the mind to motivate and upgrade personality in controlling desire and passions and be prepared for the sacrifices it entails. In other words, it is refining, increasing, and transforming the sense of human perception in this direction. Problems in our life come almost from this paradoxical nature of life, combination of two complementary strivings. We are in an apparently helpless status. Swami Vivekananda rightly said:

We are caught, though we came to catch. We came to enjoy; we are being enjoyed. We came to rule; we are being ruled. We came to work; we are being worked. ... We are being worked upon by other minds, and we are always struggling to work on other minds. We want to enjoy the pleasures of life; and they eat into our vitals. We want to get everything from nature, but we find in the long run that nature takes everything from us—depletes us, and casts us aside.³

Swamiji also believed that the same scientific method of investigation is needed to be applied to religion and spirituality. In his own words: ‘This must be so, and I am also of the opinion that the sooner it is done the better. ... Not only will it [religion] be made scientific—as scientific, at least, as any of the conclusions of physics or chemistry—but will have greater strength, because physics or chemistry has no internal mandate to vouch for its truth, which religion has’ (1.367).

Some Concepts of Spirituality

The Bhagavadgita says that the ‘self-restrained man keeps awake during that which is night for

all creatures. That during which creatures keep awake, it is night to the seeing sage.’⁴ Worldly people cannot understand spirituality so it is dark or night for them, but on the other hand, the spiritually enlightened persons are fully sensitive, being unattached through a complete control of all of their senses, and remain immune or dark to worldliness.

A person may be highly successful by material standards and even have a great intellectual capability but may be greatly barren and false in inner life with defects and compromise in behaviour. While truly enlightened persons may be too loose in worldly affairs, mere intellectuals may be, in Swamiji’s words, ‘moustached babies’ (3.218). One may be a total failure by worldly standards but can be rich in the inner life. Progress in spiritual development is therefore inversely proportional to worldly development. So it is grossly the difference between the good and the pleasant, physical health and mental health. A person having moral perfection and leading a perfectly chaste and virtuous life develops a subtle power of understanding that unfolds one’s innate divinity, which radiates a rare type of beauty and personality and enables one to know and comprehend things beyond the realm of space, time, and causality. Spirituality is this super-sensuous knowledge and values that bring harmony in society upholding supreme justice.

(To be concluded)

References

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3. *Complete Works*, 2.2.
4. Gita, 2.69.