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SCIENCE IN THE 'NEW TESTAMENT' AND SANKARADEVA'S PHILOSOPHY

Modern man tends to be spiritually sick today, because his faith on the 'sacred' has dried up. The danger to man's faith in God and religion arises to a great extent in the present age from a pronounced attitude of materialism which views God as an outsider in the world of man. Man's devotion to God and his devotion to worldly obligations have become mutually exclusive in some circles. Man is deeply involved in the reality of the world, and is impervious to whatever is beyond the universe. The idea may be intended to mean that loyalty to God means disloyalty to the world and vice versa.

The experience of the last two centuries has led some men of discernment to realize that the pursuit of science in the light of intellectual experiments and reason has achieved many positive results. Some direct or indirect consequences of such achievements have produced negative effects leading mankind away from the desired goal of attaining divine bliss. The German Philosopher Neitzsche, was convinced that science had definitely robbed the world of sense, and that God had abandoned the universe forever, and that no substitute for Him might be found.

The position however, is not tragic, for many of the leading anti-God thinkers have ultimately 'back-tracked'. They finally discovered the scientific data to hold that there is an inner core of mystery behind the natural phenomena. This inner core may be another name for God. So, in spite of all trials and tribulations, god survives. God's consciousness being ignored in human nature, man has constantly been in search of Him since time immemorial. In this unending process, myriads of faiths and creeds were created, which reverentially
strove in their own way to identify the creator of this uncomprehensible universe. These spiritual and religious exercises were intended to discover the sublime path leading to the reality of the knowledge seeker. Discovery of God can result not only from scientific experience, but also from combining man's comprehension of the infinitely expanding mysterious universe with his inner personal responsiveness. Science can develop plausible theories of birth and existence of galaxies, stars, world and atoms, but it cannot explain where all these matters and energies come from nor also why the universe is so constituted and so commanded to perform.

Moreover, Scientific method is inadequate to prove the existence of Reality. For example, love which has a strong effect in man, is not amenable to scientific demonstration. Similarly, the ability to appreciate beauty, sensibility to kindness, a soft corner for the sick and destitutes cannot be proved or demonstrated. But in spite of these limitations of science, the acquisition of scientific knowledge is making it more and more possible to gain deeper faith in God. Francis Bacon, the English Philosopher said: 'A little science took man away from God. Much science brought him back to God'.96 Before we discuss the influence of Science in Sankaradeva's philosophy and in the "New Testament, it is necessary to find out the similarities, and dissimilarities if any, between science and religion.

Religion and science are two aspects of social life, of which the former has been important as far back as we know anything of man's mental history, while the latter, after a fitful flickering existence among the Greeks and Arabs has suddenly sprang into importance in the sixteenth century. It has ever since been increasingly moulding, both the ideas and the institutions among which we live. Between science and religion, there has been a prolonged conflict, in which until the last few years, Science has proved victorious. Of course, a
superficial study regarding the relation or distinction between religion and science will show that the relation between them is rare.

The very distinction between science and Theism is also uncompromising and original, because both science and theism seem to occupy two different worlds. While science deals with the phenomenal world, theism deals with the noumenal world. In other words, science is concerned with the visible world, and theism is concerned with the unseen world. Scientific knowledge is sensual, whereas theistic knowledge is super-sensual. For science, reality is empirical, but for theism Reality is transcendental. Now, there arises one question: can a rational human being be satisfied with such types of distinctions between science and theism as they are generally understood? Are these distinctions accurate? These are the problems to be dealt with carefully and informatively in order to draw true and accurate conclusions.

Though the commonsense distinctions between science and theism is not accepted to be fixed and final, yet it is not left out to be useless. Apart from such distinctions, the rational minds make certain additional distinctions. They point out that the distinction between science and theism rests on the different methods or approaches which they follow.

A religious creed differs from a scientific theory in claiming to embody eternal and absolutely certain truth, while science is tentative. Induction is the means of scientific knowledge. In science, conclusion always entails something new to the body of knowledge. But deduction is the method of religious knowledge. It is based on the conviction of reality. Our particular experiences support that conviction.

The universe has been conveniently divided by the sciences into physical, biological etc, but the religion tries to understand the universe as a whole. According to James Jeans,
the greatest achievements of twentieth century is that physics consists in the general recognition that man is not yet contacted with the ultimate Reality. He writes: "we are still imprisoned in our cave, with our backs to the light and can only watch the shadows of the wall."\(^9\) This lead us to believe that the Reality is exposed to intuition alone. Scientific methods are not applicable to the mystical spiritual realms. Religious revelation is an experience which as a matter of principle, lies beyond the domain of science.

But according to Millikam, Novel prize winner in Physics, human well-being and all human progress rest upon two pillars at bottom namely:

(1) the spirit of religion and
(2) the spirit of science (or knowledge)\(^9\)

Scientific study of the world is analytical. At first it makes us follow a direction that leads away from the divine Reality. On the other hand, the same scientific insight into things shows us the synthetic structure of the world. It obliges us to reverse our direction and, by its natural extension, turns us back to the unique centre of things, which is God.

There are also many more differences between Science and Theism regarding the acceptance and the denial of the doctrine of incarnation, also the doctrine of heaven and hell. Faith in the existence of heaven and hell is derived from the divine revelation. Divine revelation is not accepted by science. Science generally does not accept things which are not demonstrable. Revelation can neither be demonstrated nor be given any criterion. So naturally, the outlook of science comes in conflict with the notion of revelation. Revelation, which is purely a religious phenomena cannot enter into the scientific dominion. According to Christianity Jesus is the only saviour, because he revealed the Christ, the spiritual idea of God. Jesus proved by his life and works that it is the Christ or truth revealing the spiritual
eternal nature of God and man touching human consciousness, which takes away the sin of
the world. According to the scientists, Jesus also may be governed by the Christ.

Another problem that baffles a scientist is the acceptance of the doctrine of
incarnation by the mystics. Sankaradeva accepted the twenty-four incarnations of which the
first ten are considered to be most important. In the 'New Testament', the understanding of
Jesus as God incarnate also acquires a new dimension when he is seen as the consummation
of a process of cosmic evolution, which occurred as an expression of God's creative will.
The meaning of incarnation of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth is illuminated in
various ways by the scientific account of man's origin. For God becoming man, the
incarnation is an event in human history, can now be seen as the consummation of that
evolutionary process, in which the rise of man succeeded the general biological sequence.
The sequence observed and inferred scientifically implies for Christian that both the
processes of cosmic evolution and the incarnation are alike expressions of the creative self-
limiting love of God.

But the doctrine of incarnation is not compatible with the scientific view of modern
period, because science itself is based on empirical test but the incarnation of God cannot be
verified by empirical knowledge. Hence the doctrine of incarnation is not scientifically
accepted. The modern age is the age of technology and applied science and modern
civilization is termed as the technical civilization. Applied scientists want to replace the
natural world by a man-made world. Paul Davis expressed it this way: "Though science
may explain the world, we still have to explain the science. The laws which enable the
universe to come into being spontaneously seem themselves to be the product of exceeding
ingenious design. If physics is the product of design, the universe must have purpose and the
evidence of modern physics suggests strongly to me that purpose includes us. This man of science clearly recognizes the transcendental at power which is God.

But according to Christian theology, God created man in His own image. God created man to share God's purpose and enjoy fellowship with Him. God finished the creation in six days and took rest on the seventh.

But the Biblical idea of creation is contrary to the Hindu idea of creation as discussed in the Purāṇas and the 'Bhāgavad Gītā'. Sankaradeva holds that the subtle jīvas and subtle material powers of the universe emanated from Paramātman, from which both the conscious and the unconscious parts of the universe sprang forth. But Darwin's theory of biological evolution showed that man has evolved just like any other species of the world. Hence, the evolution of man can in no way be called the special creation of God. In fact, certain kinds of scientific researches can come very close to theology in the question considered. Scientists believe that we are very close to the understanding of the central mechanism of the world, the ruler that governs all matters and energy in the universe. They claim to be very close to a very complete understanding of the forces of nature, including how matter arose from nothingness. Descartes says that, "give me matter and motion, and I will construct the world."

Bergson says that 'elan vital' is visualised as a creative force which pervades matter, but is in itself immaterial. This mysterious force appears in man as love, and love is proclaimed as identical with God. Love is an emotion felt by man. Jesus Christ loved all human beings, and so he showed the path of salvation through his example as an ordinary human being. His life of sacrifice is viewed as the way for others to follow to attain their own salvation. The spiritual selfhood is identified as the central Christ, as opposed to the
person of Jesus. God did not create the world in the traditional Christian sense, but rather is its divine principle. Man is the reflection of divine qualities, but most people cannot see beyond their own bodies and mind.

Christ preaches purity, charity and self-denial. Christ is not something added to the world as an extra. It is towards Him and through Him that the inner life and light of the world is effected in sweat and tears. The Christian belief is that God so loved mankind, that He sent His loving son to redeem them from sin. It is this image of God that inspires a Christian in fashioning his life in the service of the world.

In Vaisnavism, kalki is described by Sankaradeva as one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu who will bring destruction of the most wicked and the immoral in order to save the good ones. Only after destruction, the chaotic situation will come to an end and peace will be established. In this context, Radhakrishnan also felt the great need of a moral revolution in this age of science. The religious mysticism of Sankaradeva forbids all sorts of crimes and injustices. His tenets are free from superstitious beliefs and practices. Fear, greed, and hatred can be the causes of an individual's breakdown as well as the disruption of the human race.

Both the 'New Testament' and 'Vaisnavism' are needed to promote inner peace, develop love in place of hatred, give encouragement in place of unknown fear, and teach to be satisfied with the minimum requirements. Both the religions give instructions for true love. A scientist can do his best for the outward comfort of people, but not for the inner peace and happiness of mankind. Science does not include art or friendship or various other valuable elements of life. Science has nothing to say about such values and can not prove and make a proposition such as: "It is better to love than to hate, or kindness is more
Science can tell us much about the means of realizing our desires, but it cannot say why one desire is preferable to another.

Science does not assume the existence of an ordered world, but presupposes that it does not have to be as it is but is contingent. Capra says that the modern physicist experiences the world through an extreme specialization of the rational mind, but the mystic through an extreme specialization of the intuitive mind. Hence we may refer to an old Chinese saying that: "Science does not need mysticism, and mysticism does not need science, but man needs both."  

Mystical experience is necessary to understand the deepest nature of things, and science is essential for modern life. Both science and mysticism point towards oneness of the universe which includes not only our natural environment but also our fellow beings. The survival of our whole civilization may depend ultimately on our ability to experience the wholeness of nature and the art of living with it in harmony.

The beginning of modern science is traced in the development of philosophical thought which led to an extreme formulation of the spirit-matter dualism. This formulation appeared in the seventeenth century in the philosophy of Rene Descartes, who based his view of nature on a fundamental division into two separate and fundamental realms, mind and matter. The Cartesian division allowed scientists to treat matter as dead and completely separate from mind or consciousness. The material world is the multitude of different objects assembled into a huge machine. Such a mechanistic world view was held by Isaac Newton who constructed his mechanics on this basis and made it the foundation of classical physics. From the second half of the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century, Newton's mechanistic model of the universe dominated all scientific thought. It was
paralleled by the image of a monarchical God who ruled the world from above by imposing His divine law on it. The fundamental laws of nature searched out by the scientists were thus seen as the laws of God, invariable and eternal to which the world was subjected.

In contrast to modern science, if we look back into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when Sankaradeva propagated his faith, one would be astonished at the rapid progress of science. At the same time, one would be able to realize the difficulties and physical pains which the great genius had to face due to the lack of material facilities during his time. Dr. Radhakrishnan said that we can now get rid of poverty, physical pain with the help of science. Therefore, it is obvious that, in the technical age, the value of non-violence and love for humanity have diminished. Self-centredness and not feelings of co-operation and help, dominate the human mind. There are abundant opportunities for people to become possessive, selfish and egoistic. Christianity has become less of a universal mission which serves others, and more of a means of improving the social and economic conditions of the various communities. The schools and medical services which at one time were maintained for the purpose of making the knowledge and love of God known to others are now all too often maintained primarily to serve ourselves.

Science has been described as a search for truth. Technology may be described as the application of scientific knowledge. If technology is a positive force in society like any human activity, it must also be submitted to the Lordship of Divine. The development of technology has great need of spiritual wisdom. Science and technology are important public activities in the world today. It is normally observed that in the modern scientific age, the rich classes of people generally enjoy the privileges. The poor and the down-trodden classes of society are neglected and given less importance to the technical civilization. Among the
four Purusārthas, Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa, only Artha and Kama find satisfaction in the modern age. Sankaradeva gave more importance to Dharma and Mokṣa. It was beyond the power of his imagination to think of scientific achievements including nuclear war etc. as he belonged to the dark age of science. The religious mysticism of Sankaradeva forbade all sorts of crimes, punishments and injustice. His tenets are free from superstitious beliefs and practice. He taught people to shun fear, greed and hatred, as these are devastating instincts of human beings and might ruin the human race. Pride is another cause of disintegration among people. Sankaradeva professed against pride and egoism in various ways. As a mystic, he tried to promote inner peace by reciting and hearing the name of Kṛṣṇa. At present, our society is in need of geniuses like Sankaradeva and Jesus Christ who can give the perfect instructions for promoting true love and brotherhood. The claim of God is not the authoritarian claim of power, but the moral claim of conquering weakness.

Our notion of love of God is derived from our experience of human love. Our experience of human love leads us to an approximation to God's love as limitless and universal. At this point Vanstone, is in a sense, effecting a revolution in our thinking about the creative love of God. The universe is the totality of being for which God gives himself in love.

Traditionally, God has been conceived of as unexposed to or unaffected by what happens in the world. If God suffers with the world, how can we avoid pantheism or anthropomorphism? The self-sufficient source of the cosmic world, according to Sankaradeva, is nothing but Īśvara. He is the creator and sustainer of the world. He has neither beginning nor end. But modern science is marching onwards in order to find out the body and the energy of the whole world. Science is concerned with the creation of the world
while theistic religion deals with the creator of the world. The creator of a creation has no manifestation apart from the creation. So we can assert that science is complementary to religion and religion is complementary to science. In fact, certain kinds of scientific researches come very close to theology.

Some scientists believe that we are very close to understanding for the first time, the central mechanism of the world, the laws that govern all matter and energy in the universe. They claim to be very close to a complex understanding of the forces of nature, including how matter arose from nothingness. Surely they are talking about our most fundamental understanding of creation. Arnold, however, claimed that he was giving a scientific account of God. He talked about an enduring power, which promoted righteousness. Nietzsche, for example, dismissed the idea of creation as a survival from the ages of superstition. One can explain nothing with a mere word. Arnold thought that his own position was scientific, because he based his arguments for religious truth on what he took to be identifiable, analysable moral experience whereas Christian theologians, he felt, began by assuming the personal loving God, expounded on Trinitarian lines.

Scientists in the twentieth century were compelled to admit the mystery of the cosmic world. Modern Science conceives that all events have causes, and that there is a source of cause. This source is nothing but force, energy or power. This energy can neither be created nor destroyed. Scientists enumerate six types of power. They are motion, heat, light, electricity, magnetism and chemical affinity. In addition to them, there are other forces namely vital force and psychic force. Science postulates that these eight types of forces are but the transformations of one Supreme Power. According to Sir Isaac Newton, it is the subtle spirit. Without the vibration of the spirit, no object in this universe can discharge their
respective functions. From the second half of the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century, the mechanistic Newtonian model of the universe dominated all scientific thought. It was paralleled by the image of a monarchical God who ruled the world by imposing His divine law on it.

In the middle ages, theology was described as the 'Queen of Science' that is, the highest and most authoritative form of knowledge. All rational enquiry had to conform to the canons of theological thought. The knowledge of God surpassed all other knowledge, and there was a sense in which all knowledge was subservient to the revealed truth of God. The religious view of the world dominated all thinking and whenever there were clashes the religious view won the day.

The division between science and religion was heralded by the Copernican revolution of the seventeenth century. From the time of Galilio onwards, natural science as a source of knowledge, developed with a life of its own. Although scientists such as Galilio and Newton were in the main religious men who subscribed to the beliefs and practices of the Church, Natural sciences became independent of religion and of theological enquiry.

Today natural science rules as queen over all and is commonly accepted as the supreme source of all knowledge. One of the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century, Bertrand Russell rooted his diverse and wide ranging philosophy in such an assumption. And Karl Popper saw science as providing the best example of the growth of knowledge. Therefore, it is only through the study of the scientific knowledge that one of philosophy's central concerns, epistemology, can be pursued. Contemporary religious thinkers now tend to take the authority of science for granted and they try to match theology to the prevailing Western Scientific tradition.
Both science and religion are human activities. Each contributes to the characterization of civilized man. Each has a profound bearing on human life and its aspirations and achievements. Each begins at the same root of a state of puzzle and inquiry of wonder and awe and the desire to find out how and why the world is. The fundamental concern of each is to grapple with the world and place man in it, to make same sort of sense of life, to discern some sort of order in the world. One provides assumption and motivation for the other.

Yet science and theology tend to go their own separate ways. From the scientist's point of view, theology is not empirically based and is therefore irrelevant to science. From the theological point of view, science is not a part of Biblical revelation and therefore is irrelevant to theology. Each searches for the truth and finds the same within its own subject and authority. Francis Bacon, in the early seventeenth century was one of the first, who accepted the doctrine of Christianity as true and allowed room for natural theology. He emphasised upon the distinction between the two, inspired by divine revelation and knowledge arising from the senses.

Bacon believed that only systematic and empirical knowledge can give men knowledge of the natural world. The source of true knowledge is nature itself, which does not lie. Nature, according to Bacon, "bears the signatures of God and it is these, the true forms of things, which are the goal of natural philosophy and not the false images imposed on things by man's mind."103

During the last century Thomas Huxley reviewed the remarkable rise of the sciences and proudly pronounced the death of theology in the Western Intellectual World. There is no doubt that the members of the Vienna Circle were inspired by what they saw as the
prevailing spirit of enlightenment in Vienna. They were consequently fired with a crusading evangelistic mission to eliminate metaphysics from every area of life. The purpose of their mission was to propagate a scientific world according to rational principles which would penetrate into every form of life, like education, upbringing, architecture and shaping of economic and social life. In the wake of the general repudiation of logical positivism and its attendant themes regarding the cognitive adequacy of science, a scattering of exploration into the possible connection between the scientific and religious ways of thinking have appeared.

Mechanistic materialism was challenged on the ground that it allowed no place for the thinking subject in the growth of scientific knowledge.

Kant demonstrated the importance of the thinking subject in his epistemology and he established a link between sensibility and understanding. Only knowledge which is the product of the noumenal self can enable us to realize the ultimate Reality. The knowledge of the noumenal self is nothing but the intuitive knowledge. It is the task of the mystic to lay down the ways and means in order to have such spontaneous intuitive experience. According to Sankaradeva, it is through devotional practices that one can realize such kind of experiences. In the case of scientists also, the knowledge of the noumenal self plays a dominant role. No scientist can create unless his intuitive consciousness makes his vision clear. Pure intuitive knowledge has tremendous impact on the growth of scientific knowledge. At this point, we can draw a series of conclusions, by saying that both theism and science are interdependent. Our analysis has however shown that the distinction cannot be made out in an absolute manner. This view can be expressed now in three inter related propositions, namely:
(1) The distinction between reason and faith is not exclusive of each other.
(2) Reason is not self-contained.
(3) Reason requires faith.

References

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