

From the Chief Editor's Desk . . .

Science and Spirituality: A Plea for a Dialogue

Science and spirituality are generally regarded as two opposite poles of human existence. Science has its own sphere of study – the physical universe, while spirituality has a much wider sphere of study – the metaphysical universe. Further, science has its own methods of knowledge – observation, experimentation etc., while spirituality has its own distinctive methods of knowledge – experience, intuition, followed by scriptures and the like. To scientists, the matter is the ultimate reality on the basis of which universal laws have been propounded. Phenomena like consciousness, God, spirit, soul etc. are either illusory or epi-phenomena (secondary phenomena). Opposed to this thesis is the stand of spiritualism. Spirituality takes phenomena like consciousness as primary and all other matters and objects are illusory or derivatives from the primary cause. Thus, the differences in contents, methods and objectives of science and spirituality leave no room for doubt that science and spirituality are poles apart and obviously any dialogue, not to say of any synthesis/reconciliation/marriage, between science and spirituality appears to be a far cry.

There was a time in the past when science and spirituality were not so distinctively separated as in modern times, though it will be not correct to say that they did not fight with each other in the past. With the dawn of the Renaissance, the Industrial and Scientific revolutions since the sixteenth century A.D., the western world separated science and spirituality as two different domains. The story-line of the separation between science and spirituality is now four thousand years old. With the coming of Descartes and Newton and their followers, materialistic monism became the religion of the world, while idealistic monism – the universe of spiritualism – was ousted out of the rational world of science.

During the last seven decades, Quantum physics and Quantum mechanics challenged the theory of matter as the ultimate reality, man as machine and similar ideas. Einstein's theory of Relativity challenged the hitherto held scientific theories of Absolute Time and Absolute Space. It will not be wrong to say that the new discoveries and theories in the field of Quantum physics, Quantum mechanics and theory of Relativity have ushered in a new revolution in the scientific revolution of earlier times. The bases of Cartesian and Newtonian science which ruled the world for four centuries have been questioned and disproved to certain extent. The bases of classical science objectivity, material monism and

reductionism, causal determinism, continuity, locality and epi-phenomenalism have been challenged by Quantum and Relativistic Science. It has led to the fall of materialist ontology. Without entering into details and niceties of these highly technical theories, it may suffice to say, for the present, that who/which converts possibility into actuality is a mystery.

Similarly, the neuroscientists are concerned about the source of the consciousness in the brain as well as the power/source which converts the parts into the whole consciousness. Such questions have opened a visionary window for a dialogue between science and spirituality, if dialogue is taken to mean as a free flow of meaning with people in communication. The dialogue between science and spirituality is desirable in the light of these new findings. It has been indicated that Quantum science may remove many lacunae in the cosmology and the evolution based on earlier Classical science and may ultimately vindicate the viewpoints of sacred cosmology and the evolution of biological order. A few preliminary attempts have been made in this direction of integrating science and spirituality on the basis of Quantum science. Naturally, this may lead to a revaluation and reinterpretation of spiritual as well as scientific visions of the reality, the cosmology, the evolution, the man and the universe and similar subjects. For dialogue, the methodology, both of science and spirituality, have to be adapted and adjusted so that unified holistic view of the God, the man and the universe may emerge. This may be possible only when science and spirituality are integrated into one organic whole where we may have science within consciousness that may complete the story line of science.

The Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, is wedded to such fundamental research themes relevant to humanity. It is with this idea that a cell has been established to undertake research on subjects like consciousness on the combined bases of science and philosophy. It is with this view that recently some research papers on consciousness have been published by the Institute. The present issue of *Summerhill : IAS Review* also contains an analysis of 'computer and mind' besides usual reviews.

The *Summerhill : IAS Review* has been given a new format in order to make it research oriented with critical essays also along with the reviews. I do hope that the present issue, with a changed format, would be welcomed by the scholars and general readers.

V.C. SRIVASTAVA
Director