

# Analyzing Spirituality and Science: The Root and the Shoot System

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**Abstract:** *This article explores the relationship between spirituality and science, highlighting their complementary nature rather than inherent contradiction. It delves into the historical conflicts and fundamental differences, addressing the varying understandings of reality, modes of perception, and epistemologies. The article emphasizes that both spirituality and science seek truth in their respective domains, with science focusing on measurable phenomena and spirituality delving into the immeasurable aspects of consciousness and being. It argues that a holistic approach, integrating spiritual wisdom and scientific exploration, is essential for addressing contemporary challenges and advancing human understanding.*

**Keywords:** spirituality, science, reality, consciousness, complementary

## 1. Introduction

The process of civilization has been a continuous movement of physical discovery and experience repeated over and over in the society and gradually formulated and distilled as mental knowledge. It is a movement from below to upwards, from physical to mental, a movement of unconscious learning maturing into conscious knowledge. The development of science has followed the same course.

The word Science most often refers to a way of pursuing knowledge. Science is a systematic enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe. Physical observations, experimentation and technical innovations have been primary tools of modern science.

Modern science broke down the confining limitations of superstitions by an intense observation and experimentation with material phenomena leading directly to those propagated by religions. The development of technology, the improvement in instruments for observation and measurement made the scientific resolution possible. In all great discoveries a change of perspective occur revealing order and relationship in place of isolated phenomena. This act of perception is a rising of consciousness of the scientists to a plane in which relationship becomes evident. The primary instruments which have supported the development of science limit its growth and power of discoveries. Having based itself on physical observations as corrective for the speculations, Science isolated and eliminated all that was not immediately verifiable through physical instrumentation. As a result Science has been able to uncover the mechanism governing many material phenomena, but it has not succeeded in discovering the underlying reality and the process of creation which governs all phenomena in nature.

On the other hand our Vedic rishis worked in opposite direction from raising and expanding their powers of consciousness and then directed that consciousness to illuminate the reality of the nature. They discovered the underlying reality from which all phenomena are created through spirituality. Spirituality may refer to the way individual seek and express meaning, purpose and the way

they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature and to the significant and sacred.

The spiritual and scientific quests have been the two great quest of humanity but somehow the feeling has developed that science is antagonistic to spirituality. We should whether this is really so or it is because we give science and spirituality rather narrow meanings. If we look at the origins of science and spirituality we find that these quests have originated out of our inquisitiveness. We inquire our surroundings, into what is happening within and around us. For example we inquire why sky is blue in color. Why the sun rises and sets? Why eclipses occur?-these all are questions of scientific interest. In the same way questions like who am I? What is the purpose of life? What is death? Is there something beyond death? –are all the questions in the field of spirituality. The scientific quest is to discover the order in which external world of space, time, energy and matter. The spiritual quest is to discover the order in our consciousness. Since the whole of reality is built up of both matter and consciousness than how spirituality and science can be contradictory?

## Contradictions between Spirituality and Science

Considering the divergence between spirituality and science the first would be the understanding of what constitute reality. In spirituality, the reality is transcendent and immanent, beyond here and now but in all cases above every categorization and conceptualization of the mind. It is beyond the psycho-physical realm and yet encompasses this domain. One cannot comprehend in the sense of its being encompasses because nothing can encompass that which is infinite. Yet it can be known by the intellect which is divine noetic faculty at the center of our being. Ultimate reality is absolute and infinite, the supreme good and the source of all good. It is beyond being as well as constituting being which is the origin of cosmic hierarchy and levels of universal existence.

In contrast, for modern science reality is which can be empirically verified. Everything that is beyond the empirically verifiable cannot be treated scientifically, nor strictly speaking can it even be of scientific significance. To all extents and purposes it is non-existent. To use the language of Hinduism, the teal is atman while modern

science is a science of Maya or more exactly of its lower reaches. In Buddhist terms Samsara existence even if extended to the galaxies, the real is known through the twin source of revelation and intellection with the aid of Buddha, while both of these sources and along with them metaphysical and cosmological truths are denied by modern science.

Spirituality is always aware of the basic distinction between the principle and its manifestation, between atman and Maya, nirvana and samsara, the divine essence and the veils which hide and yet reveal the opfany of the divine. The foundation of all traditional metaphysics is in fact the distinction between the absolute and relative, and the knowledge of the relative in the light of the absolute. By denying the absolute in the metaphysical sense modern science cannot absolute the relative but mistaking the cosmic illusion for reality. Its grave sin is what Buddhism calls the error of false attribution. As a result the modern science denies not only the absolute in itself but also the hierarchy and levels of being beyond the psycho-physical and the measurable.

There is of course a metaphysical significance to those discoveries of science which correspond to some aspects of physical reality and are not purely conjectured for all that is real. This truth concerns precisely what lies beyond the confines of the modern science.

Spirituality depends ultimately upon a revelation from the spirit on the basis of immutable principles. Modern science is also based on set premises but later has not descended from heaven rather they are the creations of those philosophers who have woven together the elements that constitute the paradigm within which modern science has functioned. Strangely enough it is only during the past few decades that the dependence of modern science upon a particular world view and paradigm of physical reality is becoming accepted in some circles while the majority of modern educated people continue to believe that spirituality is based on the faith and that certain assumptions about the nature of the reality and science on the contrary are based upon reason and observation. Both in fact base themselves upon faith in a body of knowledge which for spirituality is considered to be truth and for science premises and fundamental assumptions.

The great difference is that in spirituality the doctrine descends from the immutable divine order and in science from rational and empirical philosophies of a purely human order. It is because of the radically different epistemologies views of reality and premises involved that the science cannot confirm the Divine origin of the world or its eschatological omega point and the reality of the spiritual worlds above the reality of the spiritual world above the physical or the immortal nature of the soul of man. Nor it can point out what constitutes the goal of human life.

Science is based upon the idea that there is only one mode of perception. The world according to it is what we see and science extends the word see to include what is shown by the microscope and the telescope which do not represent a

new mode of seeing but simply the extension of what human eye perceive.

In contrast spirituality is based upon the basic thesis that not only there are levels of reality but also the levels of consciousness which can know those levels of reality. What we see or perceive of the external world depends upon our mode of consciousness, not in a sense that for example a geologist looking upon a mountain sees certain geological structures which a non-geologist cannot see rather in a sense that non-physical levels of reality of what taken only physically can be known only if we possess higher levels of consciousness. This does not mean that this knowledge is based on some kind of subjectivism but it means that we possess a higher level of consciousness; we have the preparation to see other dimensions and levels of the reality in question. In any case according to all traditional spiritual doctrines what we see depends upon our mode of consciousness and knowledge, and our mode of consciousness in turn depends upon our mode of being. Hence the centrality of spirituality is which transforms our mode of being as well as consciousness.

This great contrast becomes more evident when we consider the fact that to become educated as a modern scientist it is not necessary to undergo any spiritual training but only to develop certain mental faculties and keenness of observation, in total contrast to the case of spirituality when it is practiced seriously and not simply talked about, spirituality demands the transformation of our whole being and a change in how we think, perceive, evaluate and act.

### **Spirituality and Science: Are They Really Contradictory?**

Satyanastiparo dharma! An ancient Sanskrit saying which means that, 'there is no religion higher than truth' is central to both spirituality and science as both seek truth and grasping the essential nature of reality. Science aims to understand the fundamental principles underlying the physical universe in all diverse forms. Spirituality is the awakening of wisdom concerning how we affectively relate to each other and to the world. Science seeks to enlighten our minds, while spirituality seeks to awaken our hearts. Each is necessary for full fruition of the other. Although some may consider science to be antagonistic to spirituality but the truth is that compulsive attachment to particular doctrine are inimical to both science and to a deeper realization of spirituality.

The historical conflicts between science and spirituality are all due to the tendency of the doctrine and dogma to be mistaken for truth. The dogma is believed to be reality itself, not simply an attempt to describe reality. Science seeks truth but can never say that the absolute truth has been attained. Scientific theories are modals of reality and must always be considered tentative. Science makes a distinction between a theory and the reality that theory is attempting to describe. A theory is an attempt to explain the observations and to predict the phenomena as yet unobserved. Theories are models of reality not reality itself.

Actually both spirituality and science are two complementary inquiries into reality. Any feeling of

antagonism between them is a product of narrow vision. Science deals with what is measurable and spirituality is the quest for discovering and understanding the immeasurable. A scientist would not be intelligent if he denies the existence of the immeasurable. There is nothing that is anti-science but definitely there is a lot that is beyond science.

The spirituality and science must to go hand in hand. We not only need to have an understanding of the laws that govern the phenomena occurring in the external world around us but also we need to discover the order and harmony in our consciousness. Human understanding is incomplete unless it covers both aspects of reality i. e. matter as well as consciousness. Indeed the division between spirituality and science it itself the creation of human mind. Reality is one undivided whole which includes both matter and consciousness. Our thoughts being limited to our experience, divide the external world from the inner world of consciousness, in much the same way as our mind divides time from space though they are both two aspects of a single continuum.

Science without spirituality seeks to work mainly in human interest and gives birth to technologies of comfort and convenience as well as control. Science denuded of deep values and human spirit follows the lead given money and materialism. Such science works for those who can pay for it and does not accept any constraints in its search to find the secrets of nature to meet insatiable human greed, particularly the greed of the powerful and privileged elite. A dispirited science is more likely to be misused and exploited by vested interest. So science without spirituality is not only incomplete but is also vulnerable and even dangerous.

On the other hand spirituality without science is also incomplete. Such spirituality seeks otherworldliness and gives birth to institutionalized religions infected with dogmas, blind faith and fundamentalism. Spirit stripped of daily concerns of human affairs follow the lead given by gurus, priests and missionaries who promise their followers a place in heaven and infect fear of hell. Thus, exploiting the natural human urge for a spiritual fulfillment. Science without spirituality has ill-served the earth and spirituality without science has degenerated into dogmatic. Hence we can say that science clarifies our spiritual realizations and spirituality inspires the evolution of science.

## 2. Conclusion

Many people believe that spirituality and science are contradictory to each other. But this notation is wrong. As a matter of fact both are complementary to each other. The aim of both these institutions is to explain different aspects of life, universe and human existence. There is no doubt that the methods of spirituality and science are different. The methods of science are observation, experimentation and experience. Science takes its recourse to progressive march towards perfection. On the other hand the tools of spirituality are faith, institution and the spoken words of the enlightened. In general, while science is inclined towards reason and rationality, spirituality is the essence of religion.

So both the scientist and the religious man need to be actually aware of the limitations of the human mind and to transcend them if they aspire to have a holistic perception of reality. Education needs to address itself to the creation of an inquiring mind which is both spiritual and scientific at the same time if we are to avert the crises of the modern civilization.

Without spiritual knowledge science can never achieve the positive position in this world. For example new technology may be the assets for the generation but on the other side its disadvantages remains hundred times. So when it goes into the wrong hands we all know what happens next. But when it remains with the spiritually awakened person, it can make the positive effect to the world and to people. At root, the deepest spiritual traditions have essentially the same epistemology as scientific philosophy. Science uncovers the abstract principles underlying nature, and spirituality informs us of the proper way to regard all this – with vast love. Hence we can say that spirituality is the base of science. Science with heart, deep values will be the religion of the future. Thus we can say –

**“Science without spirituality is lame and Spirituality without science is blind”**

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