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Science and Sanatan Dharma Essay

Swami Vivekananda and Science

In the modern world, one of the greatest struggles is the battle between science and religion. It is believed that one can never have both, but must pick a side. However, this is not the case when it comes to Hinduism. Swami Vivekananda, a Hindu monk, believed that science and Vedic spirituality were not mutually exclusive and should fit together, especially since the Vedas contained numerous scientific theories (Rajaram), and also that religion was a science that simply answered different questions about the universe.

Nikola Tesla, the scientist who invented alternating current, was, in 1895, “working a good deal now upon the cosmology and eschatology of the Vedanta. I clearly see their perfect union with modern science, and the elucidation of the one will be followed by that of the other (Complete Works, Vol. V, Fifth Edition, 1347, p. 77). (Grotz) " Tesla was fascinated by how the teachings of an ancient religion seemed to fit so well with the discoveries of modern science, and even met with Swami Vivekananda in order to discuss his findings, “that force and matter are reducible to potential energy” (Grotz). When comparing the Samkhya theory from the Vedas, which implies that matter is made up of energy, to science, *prana* translates to energy and *akasha* translates to matter, terms Tesla used frequently after he studied Vedic science. Swami Vivekananda also was hoping that Tesla would be able to prove the Samkhya theory, as this would bring the Vedas and Hinduism into the world spotlight. It would prove to western skeptics of Vedanta and eastern believers of faith only that the two were in harmony and should be taken seriously. Also, an increased awareness of Hinduism would lead to an

increased awareness of India, leading to more Western help that would aid Indians, as the only reason Swami Vivekananda even became a traveling monk was that “His mounting compassion for India's people drove him to seek their material help from the West. (Vivekananda Biography)”

Swami Vivekananda also believed religion was a science. He wrote that "Religion deals with the truths of the metaphysical world just as chemistry and the other natural sciences deal with the truths of the physical world. The book from which to learn religion is your own mind and heart. The sage is often ignorant of physical science, because he reads the wrong book — the book within; and the scientist is too often ignorant of religion, because he too reads the wrong book — the book without. (Parlato)." The fact that he placed science and religion at the same level shows how open minded he was when it came to salvation. This unique (for the time, anyway) viewpoint stemmed from the Swami's childhood, where he “embraced the agnostic philosophies of the Western mind along with the worship of science (Vivekananda Biography).” But even after he learned about Vedic philosophy, Swami Vivekananda never forgot or ignored science, and indeed, hoped that science and Vedanta would partner harmoniously.

The Hindu monk Swami Vivekananda, who introduced Hinduism to the Western world, believed that science and Vedic spirituality should be more interconnected, as the scientific theories and explanations in the Vedas, composed thousands of years ago, often were similar to those in modern science. He also believed that religion was a science. If science and the Vedas were studied together more frequently, it is possible that an increasing number of scientific and theological ideas could be created.

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