

nnology

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THERE is a source that created everything else in the universe and is present everywhere and administering the universe. What could the nature of this be? A vacuum? A field force? Brahman? It will be some time before humanity can say with some conviction that 'this is it'. But perhaps, the process will be quickened with the coming together of two disciplines that have been probing the realms of realities for the truth, in their own way. *The Science & Spiritual Quest* programme which was held in the city last week was a step in this direction, or so it was hoped.

Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind. So said Einstein, an oft-quoted person at the meet. Substitute religion with the more accepted spirituality and that was what the crux of deliberations at the SSQ symposium that saw scientists and philosophers listen to each other's point of view. This was an initiative above all to initiate a spirit of openness between two disciplines and to influence each other in the process of growth.

The general conclusion seemed to be that there was something to be gained in an exchange of ideas - for science a broadening of its view beyond the measurable, sensory world, for spirituality a fresh look at its methods and a possible adaptation of the reliable methods of science.

Consciousness took on a palpable presence as participants ventured to study its nature - was it something that arose from a neural process, a by-product of the brain or is it a state of being that has immense powers to transform the individual? The reductionist theory where everything was stripped of any individuality and reduced to a particle governed by particle physics and quantum mechanics came for much questioning. Do we really believe we are mere assembly of atoms, particles or neurons, whichever you prefer?

Science and its 'inadequacies' came under the 'spiritualscope' at the meet more than the reverse. While studying the physical world, science depends on many unobservables whose existence was brought out in the measurement of these alone. When you talk of energy, potential, phase, these are abstract as the atom or the prana. Science then is cognition and description of the observed in terms of the unobservable! Taking quantum physics and the wave function, another unobservable, all observations which

Realities all

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are made from this make it evident that there is a non-locality in the world, and that all particles are connected! A cosmic connection! Why does the electron have the same properties anywhere in the universe? Why is a mouse and man so similar at the genetic level and different at the macro level? Any explanations, science?

Another thought that was much discussed was the creation of the universe. Did God

really play dice, or was there a pattern in everything, which explained why everything was the way it is? How does one explain the many chances that led to life on earth - the right distance to earth, the right amount of matter in the universe, the right density, that what happened in a trillionth of a second charted the course of our universe? How does one explain the interplay of chance and necessity in this creation? Can this cosmic lottery be explained only by an ensemble theory that lies between the strong anthropic principle which presupposes the evidence of an intelligence being, and a weak anthropic principle according to which the universe must contain properties that allow us to exist! The anthropic principle of cosmology tells us that the universe is finely tuned to the existence of life and even of life that is conscious of its own existence. Can one demonstrate that the universe is not only adapted to us but to a civilisation much more advanced than ours, as ours can be expected (hoped?) to be 100000 years hence? If there is an intelligence behind the universe, would not this give some coherence to the universe?

Finally, is reality to be only that which is matter or information that has a physical effect or also, thoughts and emotions and the consequent intentions?

There were the more intellectual exercises when someone spoke of boundaries and the need for contrasting backgrounds to define boundaries, as also when another spoke of an interaction between the free-willed consciousness and the will-free universe. Would some kind of contamination of each other's basic nature take place?

Not all agreed for the need for a dialogue. Some flatly declared that beyond science is silence, and that spirituality was mere noise while some others equated spirituality to the prowess of supermachines of tomorrow! However while science and its methods came under critical appraisal, the same was not true of philosophy. One got the impression that this was sacrosanct area that could not be questioned. Is our philosophical knowledge as of today absolute? Is there no scope for improvisation? Surely, knowledge and wisdom are continuing processes?

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