Science Versus Religion: Differences and Commonalities

Religion is faith and science deals with measurable principles, facts rather than any obligation of fidelity. Religion is a particular system of faith and worship of a personal God or goddess who are the ultimate supernatural controlling power.

Science and religion are always pictured together as rivals, although they were once complementary.

Religion developed in medieval times and science as a subject developed during the renaissance period.The invention of paper and the practice of writing standardized religious texts.

Religion was created by man (literally men because no woman has contributed for any religion and every religion that has ever existed on earth has degraded the status of women). There are many verses in religious texts like the bible (genesis and old testament), Quran, Bhagavad Geeta, etc which are completely sexist and are absolutely discriminatory in every logical sense. Although much of the text is somewhat impartial for women and men this is misinterpreted.

Religion was created to deal with values and as a way of life for example Sanatan Dharma. But gradually converted into a controlling force. Religion is now a fearful tool to control the thinking process and not question miracles. But science teaches us to be skeptical as scientific evidence is incompatible with faith.

Science is seen as a modern belief to counter religion. But this notion is wrong as science has existed since prehistoric times. Even during ancient civilizations, there were great scientists, geographers, mathematicians etc who had the zeal to find answers of questions unanswered by religion.

- Brahmagupta (597 AD- 668 AD) established zero as a number, gave the formula to solve a quadratic equation.
- Anaximander (610 BC-546 BC) described the structure of earth, theorized about evolution and concluded life began in wet conditions.
- Archimedes (287 BC-212 BC) founded the science of mechanics, hydrostatic, precisely calculated pi, invented many mechanical devices.
- Eratosthenes (276 BC- 194 BC) calculated the earth's size, the science of geography.
- Euclid (325 BC- 270 BC) author books 'elements' (mathematics) , 'optics' (explained behaviour of light).
- Hippocrates, Galen, Empedous, Aryabhatta, Charaka, Varahmihir and many more other physicians, mathematicians, geographers, astrologers were there.

Science and technology were always a part of evolution. This is evident from various prehistoric architecture like Carnac stones, France; Dolmen in Ireland; Stonehenge, England; the great Pyramids of Egypt. These are very complex architectural designs that require technologies like rock cutting, sonic drilling, etc. Even today with so much advancement in science, it is quite impossible to acquire such scientific detailing in monuments.

Ancient civilizations like the Indus valley civilization were very well developed, well equipped, and have evidence of some rituals but no specific religious beliefs.

Paleolithic cave paintings have figures of animals (horses, bison, deer, etc). They are as old as 52,000 years and most early ones gave simple geometric shapes. Some of these caves are Lascaux cave, France; cave of Niaux, France both are 17000 years old. Nearly 40000 years old Maros cave paintings on Borneo island of Indonesia have handprints. Bhimbetka caves in India have been mentioned in religious texts and the cave paintings are 30,000 years old.No God-like figures have been discovered in these caves paintings yet. Some paintings do have signs of rituals.

Many idols of God like Ganesha, Devi have been excavated in India and even in Australia which suggests that religious beliefs spread with people.

Intentional burials of early Homo sapiens and burning of dead bodies in some might be evidence of religious belief or may be their scientific learning.

Religion has used science to promote itself. And how the public accepts facts may be influenced by religion. Also religious institutions has been modifying traditions in a controlling way to conquer fearful minds.

Religion doesn't allow questioning, and the answer to doubts is most of the time 'God's wish'. The theory of creation according to religious texts is quite unrealistic. For example the story of genesis. No religious texts mention dinosaurs, ice age , stripes on animals, other hominids and other things of which we have physical evidence of existence.

All major religions state that their God created everything, then even evil is created by God. Is it God's will to starve children to death, foeticide, rapes etc.. These matters have no excuse. Religion is deep-rooted and its roots form a base of patriarchy. Science investigates while religion interprets. Both may coexist as science is open to challenges and may find an answer to the existence of God.

Fundamentalist religious beliefs do promote conflict and reduce harmony. Globally, radical Christians and Muslims are opposed to each other, even though they have the same ideology on many issues like they both oppose abortion, birth control, gay marriage, pre-marital sex and support prayers in school, death penalty etc.

Religious texts may be imaginative writing instead of real facts or they may be an exaggerated form of truth. That's why they are called mythology.

Many religious teachings and traditions are scientific. E.g. vegetarianism in Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism; alcohol consumption is prohibited in some while permitted in others; fasting without water in some while water is used for almost every other ritual in some. These are all influenced by geographic conditions where the religion originated.

Even there are many variations of same religion at different locations. But this is not the matter with science. There is a vast difference in how religion is interpreted today and how it developed. As religions passed from generations it has been misinterpreted and modified either intentionally or unintentionally in deciphering the text.

With the advancement in technology and imparting scientific teaching, the fundamentalist nature of religion is changing as more people are becoming self-educated and adopting humanity as their religion.

Conclusion:

As it was well said by Newton that ' gravity explains the motion of planets, but it cannot explain who sets the planet in motion'. Science might now have answers to such questions today, but it answers questions with evidence. Fundamentally religious beliefs become hostile when challenged and don't allow doubts. This has to be considered what we want in the upcoming generations. There should be curiosity and zeal to know the facts not just to follow what has been taught. We need to rethink that is it fair to teach a child how to pray rather than to teach basic maths or moral values like sharing, caring.

Religion is a personal opinion that can not change facts. But in a liberal and rational society, facts must be able to change opinions. Even today religion and science coexist. Religious texts are taken in a literal sense in theocratic governments but the secular constitution and democratic values are a must in multicultural societies.