The science behind God

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Not everything in our experience can be reduced to regularity of scientific information —Bloomberg

Scientists are often asked if they believe in God. Now, the notion of God so varies from person to person that an answer of the yes/no type will be grossly misleading. Is the scientist expected to "prove" the existence of God by demonstrating how well-ordered the working of the universe is? Does the assumption that God exists, help him understand why there are laws of science? Judged purely by scientific logic, a fresh hypothesis that simply justifies only what is already known is no advancement of one's understanding. Surely, the God that seers from different religions experienced was different from the above scientific postulate. In other words, putting the above question to a scientist (because he is a scientist) is unfair.

Questions like, "Why is the universe governed by laws of science?" or "Who decided that these and no other laws shall operate?" are beyond the scope of science. But the basic faith a scientist has, that keeps him in business, is that there are some basic laws governing nature and the declared aim of science is to find them. Beyond that, any other belief relating to "Is there God?" may be answered by a scientist not in the role of a scientist but as a human being.

The responses from different scientists may differ, thus indicating that the question cannot be answered in an objective term. For example, the question: "Why does the Sun shine?" In this context, it is interesting to refer to what Albert Einstein had to say. In his article on science and religion in the scientific periodical *Nature*, on November 9, 1940, he commented on the anthropomorphic notion of God: "During the youthful period of mankind's spiritual evolution, human fantasy created gods in man's own image, who, by the operations of their will, were supposed to determine, or at any rate to influence, the phenomenal world. Man sought to alter the disposition of these gods in his own favour by means of magic and prayer. The idea of gods in the religions taught at present is a sublimation of that old conception of gods. Its anthropomorphic character is shown, for example, by the fact that men appeal to the Divine Being in prayers and plead for the fulfilment of their wishes."

Imagine the following everyday situation. College student, say A, does not study regularly and as examination approaches, he realises that he cannot get a high percentage of marks he needs for further studies. So, he goes to the temple and promises to make offerings to God if he passes with flying colours. Another student, say B, in a similar position, finds out the examiners and bribes them for high marks. A third student, say C, works hard conscientiously throughout the year and is confident of scoring high marks on his own efforts. Are the expectations of A about the morality of his God any different from those of B with respect to the examiners? If God in the temple or a *pir* in a *dargah*, indeed fulfils the prayers of A is God not doing injustice to C who has worked hard and prepared well for the examination? Why should A get the same marks as C by propitiating God?

Einstein had objections to a God of this kind. He urged: "... In their struggle for the ethical good, teachers of religion must have the stature to give up the doctrine of a personal God, that is, give up that source of fear and hope which in the past placed such vast power in the hands of priests..."

I share Einstein's views. As a scientist, I am impressed by the way the universe seems to run according to some specific laws, which apply equally all over; and would be happy to know why. However, not everything in our experience can be reduced to regularity, symmetry, etc., of scientific information. The role of the perceiving individual cannot be altogether ignored.

Another great intellect of this century, Rabindranath Tagore, described his childhood experience when he came across a rhymed sentence loosely translated thus: "It rains, the leaves tremble," in these words: "... The rhythmic picture of tremulous leaves beaten by the rain opened before my mind the world which does not merely carry information, but a harmony with my being. The unmeaning fragments lost their individual isolation and my mind revelled in the unity of vision. I felt sure that some Being, who comprehended me and my world, was seeking his best expression in all my experiences, uniting them into an ever widening individuality which was a spiritual work of art..."

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