

Science is a boon or bane essay sample

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The pursuit of knowledge carried on by scientists for the past several centuries has produced results over which opinion is sharply divided. Science, originally intended to conquer and harness the forces of nature for the good of man, is looked upon by some as the chief cause of the suffering of humanity today. On the other hand, there are a good many people who consider science to be the harbinger of all progress, prosperity and comfort. The controversy has been raging for a long time, though science goes on taking long strides, obviously regardless of the conflicting opinions pronounced on its achievements. Leaders of thought, be they scientists or not, however, occasionally pause and ponder whether science is going the right way and really promoting human welfare. A dispassionate and comprehensive survey of the fruits of scientific advance in the various spheres of human life provides sufficient ground to be sceptical about the claim that science is an unqualified and unmixed blessing to humanity. They have reason to conclude that all is not well with science and its application.

Pure science is a relentless search for truth, for the discovery of the laws of nature. As such, no fault finding is possible with pure scientific research. The position, however, changes materially in regard to the application of scientific research in the field of practical activity. Science is like a sharp sword which can be used for either defending yourself against the enemy or cutting your own throat. What the pure scientist gives to his fellow-beings may thus be turned to their advantage, or exploited for subversive and destructive purposes. The application of science, therefore, depends upon the just or unjust aims man has in view, and the history of the world shows

that the application of science has not always been governed by principles of justice and consideration of the general good of the people.

The 19th century witnessed the invention of steam locomotives, oil engines and other automobile machinery. Consequently, heavy industries of iron, cloth, etc., came to be set up. Production of these and other goods increased rapidly and their quality also improved a great deal. It was claimed that the burden of drudgery and physical labour was taken off the shoulders of man and shifted to the machine. Apparently, the claim was correct, but the labour-saving devices of new machinery dealt a death-blow to cottage industry, resulting in large-scale unemployment. It also brought into being the tyranny of capital over labour. The rich industrial magnates exploited the situation and utilised the inventions of science for feathering their own nests. A new form of slavery—the subjugation of the factory and mill-workers to the capitalist—raised its ugly head. The condition of workers in mills, coal pits and factories in England and other countries was pitiable beyond description.

Even women and very young children did not escape the new method of exploitation. Thus, what was hailed as a great blessing eventually turned out to be a curse, particularly for the exploited labourers and frequent conflicts in the shape of strikes, lockouts between capital and labour became the order of the day. Labour-saving machinery was applied to the service of man, but the overall result of this application was perhaps more evil than good. There was discontent, friction, immeasurable wealth on the one hand, and abject poverty on the other—palatial residences of capitalists stood in sharp contrast to slums in every big industrial town. Not only that, every

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industrially advanced nation began to look for its raw materials in other countries and markets for its finished products. Thus, economic and industrial advantages become an additional motive for aggressive wars. The application of science in the social sphere also produced highly questionable results.

The introduction of machinery gave a new tempo and speed to human life and activity. Material considerations seemed to prevail over other interests, the sanctity of joint family life was violated ; art and literature came under the spell of the mechanisation of human life. People came to have more medicines and better surgical aid, but that did not promote better standards of health. Outdoor life, love of natural surroundings came to be at a discount and life on the whole became highly artificial, mechanical and prosaic. Science has done the greatest disservice to mankind in the field of armaments and destructive engines of war. The invention gunpowder was hailed as a great achievement but humanity should rue the day on which this invention took place. Steadily and relentlessly, gunpowder has been used for new weapons so that today artillery, gun-fire, shells and bombs have become a hellish terror to everybody. Curiously enough, some of the best scientific-brains have devoted themselves to the invention of increasingly improved weapons of death and destruction.

First came simple aerial bombing—then the atom bomb, followed by the far more terrible hydrogen bomb. And now we know that scientists are experimenting with cobalt, neutron and nitrogen bombs—for out-matching the hydrogen bomb in their destructive power. That colossal sums of money and the best brains of humanity have been wasted on the production of

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instruments of war is indeed” a sad commentary on the application and use of science. Today, if an atomic war is unleashed, there is not the least doubt that whole towns, countries and even continents will be -wiped off in the general holocaust. And as yet all attempts to ban the production of atomic weapons or, for that matter, the application of science to destructive purposes have so far proved abortive. There are some sceptical thinkers who would like to forgo all that science has so far given and prefer, if possible, a revival of life as it was before the march of science changed it.

This reactionary policy is as suicidal as the unrestrained use of science. To ban science altogether is to miss the real point at issue, and, to put it bluntly, to turn one’s back upon all the progress that mankind has made, in spite of the abuse and exploitation of science. It should not require much argument to convince a person that science, if pursued and applied in the right manner, can prove a real blessing to humanity. Thus what man needs today is not a ban on science,, but ban on its misdirected use and application. Man’s existence on this globe is a continuous progress of adjustment and adaptation to his environments, which are not always favourable. . For instance, man has to battle with, and hold his own against, the elements of nature, such as air, wind and weather, the high seas and the lofty mountains. The climate at places is either too hot, too cold, too dry or too wet; the soil, in some parts of the world fertile, in others hard and unproductive.

Again, man contracts all manner of ailments, infections and diseases. It is in all these and many more spheres that science comes to his rescue. With its help he can cross the unchartered seas, fly through air, travel in deserts,
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turn infertile wastelands and arid fields into green pastures, harness the course of angry rivers, provide dams and bridges over them and even produce artificial rain, if necessary. The science of medicine and surgery has alleviated human pain and suffering beyond measure and opened up new vistas of health and longevity of life. There is evidence to show what blessing the proper use of science can confer on man. It is equally true that there is plenty of misery, poverty, under-nourishment and suffering in the world. Many countries still retain a primitive way of life ; the standard of living of their people is indescribably low. A great many parts of the world still lie undeveloped, unaffected by the magical touch of science.

There is, therefore, a lot to be done by scientists to improve the lot of mankind. The average man wants food, clothes, house, education for children, adequate medical help, and proper opportunities for self-development. He does not want long-range artillery, atom bombs . or shellers. He loves peace and smooth fruitful life in which every-body must have enough to satisfy his physical wants as well as find food for his mind and soul. Now, if science can answer these needs of mankind, it can certainly be a blessing. That Science can achieve this laudable purpose is not a vain dream, provided man's conscience is awakened and the heart of the scientists and those who govern their activities is in the right place. Atomic energy, for instance, can perform as great constructive miracles as the havoc by its bombs. Let the scientists utilise it for peaceful purposes as vigorously as they applied it for destruction, and it will not be long before the world is turned into a veritable. paradise. At bottom, therefore, the problem of science is a moral problem. Man has to learn to be fair, accommodating

and just. If this miracle takes place, science would cease to be the dreadful monster which it often has been in the past.