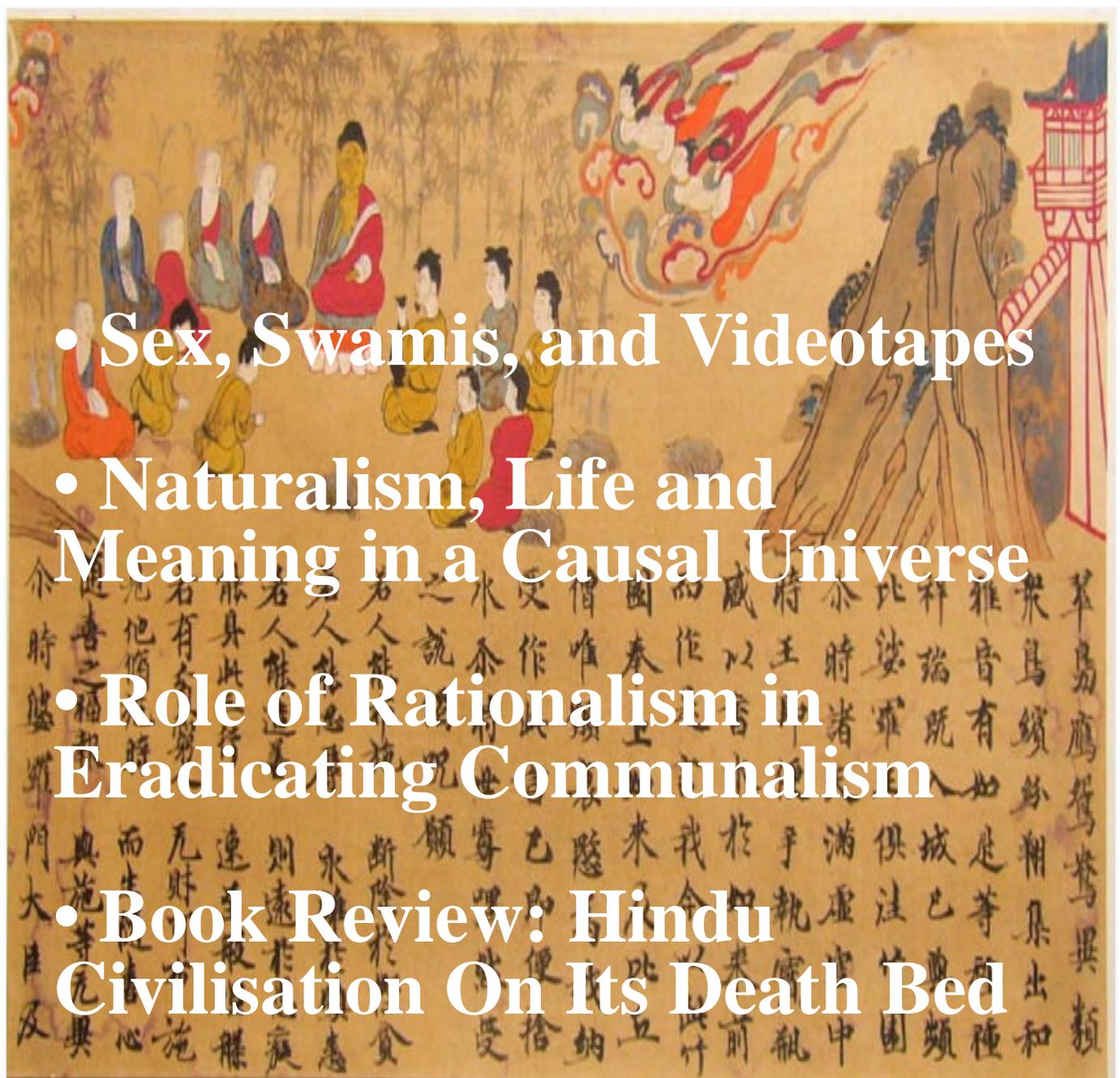


INDIAN SKEPTIC

No. 01/04

April 2010



• Sex, Swamis, and Videotapes

• Naturalism, Life and
Meaning in a Causal Universe

• Role of Rationalism in
Eradicating Communalism

• Book Review: Hindu
Civilisation On Its Death Bed

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manoj trichambaram

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*It shall be the duty
of every citizen of
India -*

*to develop the
scientific temper,
humanism and the
spirit of inquiry and
reform*

*(Article 51A (h) Part IVA -
Fundamental Duties,
Constitution of India)*

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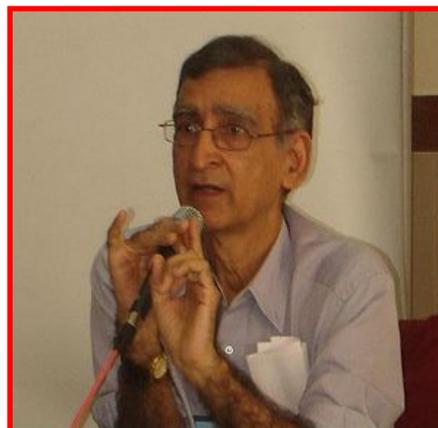
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Swamis, Celibacy and Sex Scandals

Ram Puniyani

Many a sex scandals related to Holy men have come to surface during last few weeks (March 2010). Its not that these are the first one's to have been brought to social attention, such incidents have been coming to social notice time and over again. The present ones' about Swami Nityanand and Ichhchadhari Baba (Bhimanand) have highlighted the same in a very intense fashion as these scandals are very blatant.

One recalls in recent history many such cases have startled the media and society, the allegation of a foreign writer about Satya Sai Baba, then allegations against Gurmeet Ram Rahim, Santosh Madhavan, happenings of the Kamkoti Peetham Shakarachrya are quite well known. From other religious traditions, one recalls the recent book by Sister Jesme (Story of a Nun) and the news that the Roman Catholic Church has sacked a priest accused of pedophilia as large number of complaints



were coming forth in Germany from people who were abused as children. At another level the RSS pracharak (RSS pracharaks are to remain bachelors for political reasons) Sanjay Joshi had also to give up his political responsibility when a CD related to his sexual exploits came to surface.

In all these cases the underlying mechanisms are different. In Catholic establishment, to remain unmarried is the norm and many cases have come to light, which have shamed the establishment. The Hindu God-men are all 'stand alone' systems, not an organized Church. While comparing these may not be easy, what is common in these is that the organizations where members remain celibate to discharge their religiously or politically ordained duties, many of them do get tainted by the fall out of such acts.

What is different about the case of these God-men in particular is a deliberate misuse of their 'spiritual attainments' to indulge in carnal pleasures, under the guise of spirituality, to the extent of running sex rackets in association with those in power. Here is the case of gross abuse of faith to



the extent of deliberately setting up a situation to exploit the women devotees. The methods used by the swamis are diverse. This should come under a serious crime not only at legal but also at social level to ensure that such gross abuse of faith is brought under serious scanner.

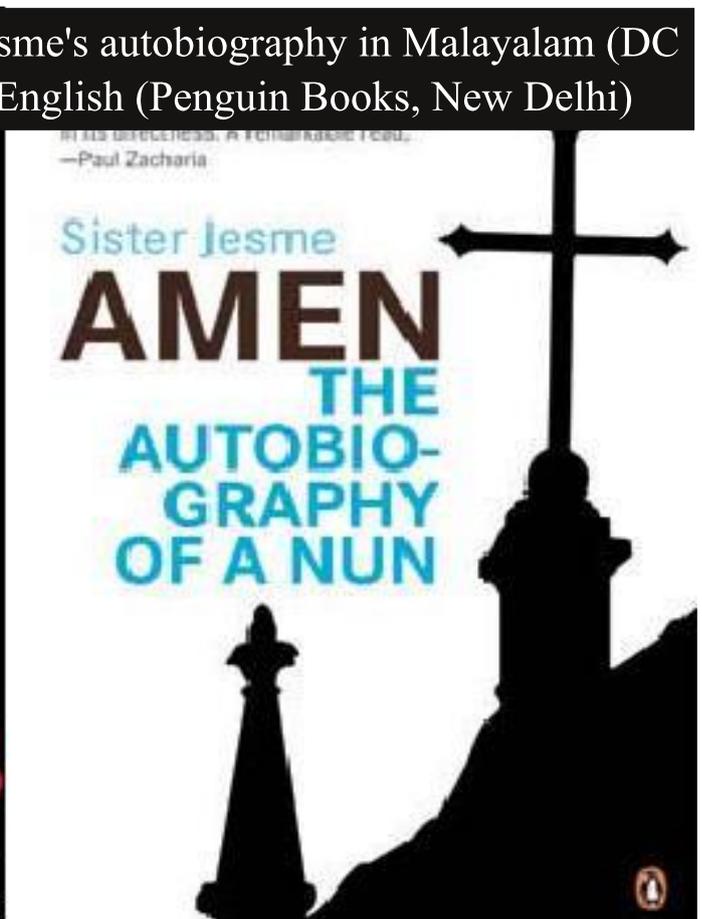
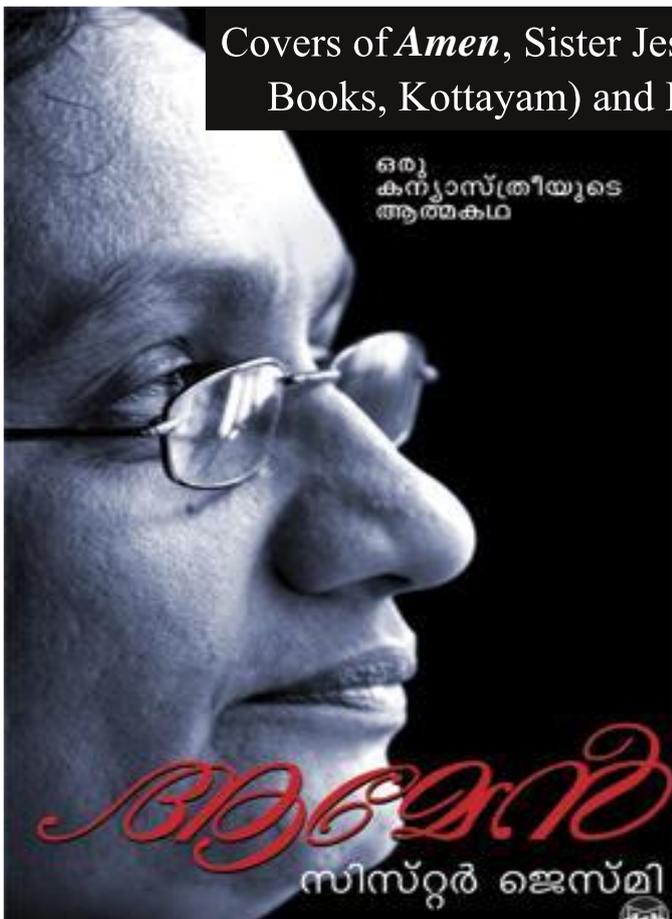
As such the concept of celibacy in many a religious orders had a spiritual base in the noble idea of renunciations and transcending of the physical pleasures to attain the higher spiritual platform. The religious Gurus have been of different types as for as celibacy is concerned. In early India there were renouncers as well as those who led a family life. Patanjali stated “*swa-ang jugupsa, parai asansargah*”, meaning that with increasing spiritual insights, with mind achieving higher truth, apathy for physical body comes in. This is what is supposed to have made celibacy the path to sanyas. Celibacy, Brahmcharya has been highly respectable in sections of society.

After 8th century celibacy was taken to exalted levels into Hindu tradition by

Shankara, while he was leading the battle of Hinduism against Buddhism. To attack Buddhism he adopted various concepts from Buddhism itself, e.g. the concept of renunciation of material wants, celibacy included. Today the idea of celibacy is prevalent mainly in Buddhism, sects of Hinduism and amongst Catholic priests. These three have base in religious traditions. For much different reasons, mainly political one’s, organization like RSS has also brought this in for its propagators.

Patanjali’s argument is repeated by modern God-man, Sri Sri Ravishaker. According to him as you go to higher levels, body becomes insignificant and interest in sex is reduced to nothing. There have been dissenting note from within the stable of God-men itself. The major such voice was that of Osho, Bhagwan Rajneesh. He argued that sex could be transcended only through experience; this was what he preached and penned down in his book, *Sambhog se Samadhi tak (From Sex to Superconsciousness)*.

Covers of *Amen*, Sister Jesme's autobiography in Malayalam (DC Books, Kottayam) and English (Penguin Books, New Delhi)



These semi philosophical outpourings apart, the biological compulsions have always accompanied the celibates and the scandals have kept popping out from such institutions and individuals, telling us that these sexual escapades are a rule than an exception. It may be in the form of child abuse, same sex relationships to downright cunning methods indulged by God-men to trap the women on the pretext of their 'spiritual' pursuits. Different philosophical sounding arguments are dished out to the unsuspecting laity.

From last few decades these incidents are coming more to the surface as the phenomenon of God-men has mushroomed all around. This phenomenon is an accompaniment of the existential anxieties of the globalized world, the razor edge

there is an increased religiosity, collusion with the corporate World and the state. In India in particular, a subtle Hinduization is going on as such and this has been aided by the private sector. There is an active promotion of religious tourism. Higher education has been handed over to private sector, some of whom use religious trusts to run these institutions to impart 'value education'. State has been generous in giving away land at highly subsidized rates to the Gurus and God-men.

One can also see the rise of religious Right here and in different countries during this period. RSS is having a field day in culturally Hinduizing the social space, and God-men are the major players in the game. One can say that these swamis of the ilk of Nityanad and Ichchhadhari are just the

When the language of religion is used with great aplomb, the reason is forced on the back-foot and the suppression of human rights takes the garb of religion. Since religion is accompanied by faith, which in turn can create hysteria, the latter ensures that blind religiosity and blind faith rule the roost. The beneficiaries of these arrangements are the entrenched social, economic powers.

competitive era, where cut throat competition at work place, heightened consumerism and moving upward in the scale of financial earning is the only index of one's success. The need for emotional succor is leading to the rise of the industry of God-men.

The God-men, belong to many categories, each having his-her own entrepreneurial skills. God-men put out their brand of spirituality, which apparently gives solace to the aggrieved middle and lower middle classes in particular amongst others. God-men have set up institutions which cater to vastly expanding market. Meera Nanda in her book, the '*God Market*' argues that

visible part of a larger phenomenon. These two cases also show the range of activities, from the spiritual façade to downright sex racket.

The broader picture of the phenomenon is much more disturbing. Last three decades have been one of the most tragic periods of human history for different reasons. It is this period when the global political and social phenomenon has adopted the language of the religion. This language has created multiple problems. On one hand, one major religious community has been demonized, and on the other there is a big set back to the rational thinking and progressive values. When the language of

religion is used with great aplomb, the reason is forced on the back-foot and the suppression of human rights takes the garb of religion. Since religion is accompanied by faith, which in turn can create hysteria, the latter ensures that blind religiosity and blind faith rule the roost. The beneficiaries of these arrangements are the entrenched social, economic powers.

Globally, US took on Russian forces by promoting the conservative versions of Islam, used the religious language to train Al Qaeda, and laced its ambitions for oil in the language of religion. Here in India those who were opposed to social transformation of caste and gender, used Ram Temple type issues, created mass hysteria around identity issues and have tried to push back the process of social transformation. The increased social presence of God-men is an accompaniment of this process. They have a dual function.

On one hand they aid in creating conservative values, refurbished caste and gender norms from Manusmriti are propagated, and on the other they exploit this situation for their material enhancement, sexual exploitation included. Interestingly the God men who talk of renunciation and going to higher levels themselves are the biggest beneficiaries of material riches. Society has to learn the lessons from the sprawling wealth and sexual exploitation done by section of God-men and to understand as to what is really taking place in the garb of holy clothes is a mere misuse of faith for crass purposes. Nityanand and Icchadhari Baba is a sort of barometer of the phenomenon which has gripped our society.

Dr Ram Puniyani is a professor in Biomedical Engineering & Biotechnology at the Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai

Humour

The scandalous affairs of Swami Nityananda has made joke writers busy! We reproduce a few hilarious sms we have received.

"It is easy to search god, but difficult to search hidden cameras". -
Swamy Nithyananda

"Children in the dark make mistakes" - Swami Vivekananda
"Mistakes in the dark make children" - Swami Nithyananda

Om Nithyananda Swamiye Namaha...Send this sms to 25 people. You'll get a super model within one week.... One man broke the chain.....he now goes to bed with his wife!

Kamal Hassan: 300 films, 40 flops...
Rajinikanth: 36 years..170 films...30 flops
Swami Nithyananda: Only one film,..Super Hit!
What a genius actor Swamiji!

Sex, Lies and Religion

Narendra Nayak

It has hit the headlines again- the holy men indulging in not so holy activities! Well, screaming headlines and bordering on pornography video footage for the sensation mongering media have brought to the fore what religion is about- sex! If one were to look for the common factor between jihadis, swamis and the priests of the Roman Catholic church it could be only one- obsession with sex.

As it is said one craves more for what one has been deprived of and sex is the one which has been denied to all these categories. It is not that such behaviour does not occur between followers of other religions in similar circumstances, but their number is significantly less and hence does not hit the headlines as often. However, some such have been reported among Jains and Buddhists too.

The behaviour of Nityananda whose tapes have been played as nauseum on some of the TV channels has been justified as consensual sex and that being caught on vide has been said to be invasion of his privacy. The saffron robed pimp who has been caught in Delhi can get away with lack of evidence. But, more despicable is the act of the Roman Catholic clergy who have traumatised innocent children and probably scarred their psyche for life. No number of apologies from Vatican can remove this trauma from the minds of these children who have been betrayed by the very guardians of the religion whose deity was supposed to be watching over and protecting children! Well that brings us to sex and the jihadis- what do they have in common? If one recalls most of the jihadis are young boys brain washed into sacrificing their lives for a trip to heaven

A snap shot from the video exposing the godman



where they can indulge in carnal delights to their hearts content with dozens of virgins who will remain in that state regardless of the number of times they indulge in sex!

Well why do religions have this obsession about sex and prescribe celibacy for their so called enlightened? Many of the so called preachers have to lead very austere lives- with exceptions of course! If you take the Roman Catholic clergy only delights that are forbidden to them are that of indulging in sex! They can enjoy all other luxuries in open, while the forbidden one could be indulged in secretly or with unsuspecting children. There is a saying- If

his nose at people joined the debate by demanding strictest of the punishment for those who call themselves as swamis and indulge in such immoral activities. What about those who call themselves as that and indulge in land grabbing, extortion and such rackets? What about those who promise cures for everything under the sun without a shred of evidence to support their claims? They would naturally be silent on these issues as these are precisely the things in which they indulge!

Why should 'celibacy' be prescribed for these people? One argument of the saffron brigade would be that suppression of he

The Roman Catholic church believes in prescribing abstinence in only one department. The same thing is applicable to many of the so called Swamijis and Jagadgurus of the religious establishments in our country. The jewellery on their person would put to shame the brides of the wealthiest of our land.

you want gay nights and good dinners, dine with saints and bed with sinners! The Roman Catholic church believes in prescribing abstinence in only one department. The same thing is applicable to many of the so called Swamijis and Jagadgurus of the religious establishments in our country. The jewellery on their person would put to shame the brides of the wealthiest of our land. All this is excused as the desire of the devotees. Probably the same could be the excuse for indulgence in sex too. If a devotee desires the same what is wrong with fulfilling that would run the argument of the defenders of these swamijis!

Not to be left out of the debate on moral degradation of the saffron robed, the squeaky voiced one who teaches people to breathe and the one who has made millions by indulging in contortions and thumbing

sexual urge leads the diversion of this energy to other channels and this is supposed to be the reason for the extraordinary shine on their faces and the rest of the body. The Roman catholic church may talk about the original sin and the need to be kept away from it. There are quite a few cults who prescribe celibacy for their followers. One young lady who was the follower of such a cult called Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vidyalaya had attended one of our five day workshops for miracle exposure. After tolerating her presence for a few days, I asked her a question about Brahmacharya prescribed by her cult. She replied that it would lead one closer to god etc, as brainwashed by her cult. I had to ask her where she would have been if her parents were celibate. She had no reply but mumbled vaguely. Then I asked her whether her cult forbids breathing, eating etc. her reply was in the negative. In that

case why should they forbid only one biological activity that too which is very much needed from the continuance of the race? Of course, my pointed questions resulted in her absence from the program from the very next day. She was a very junior activist of that cult. The more well known people like the Nobel peace prize aspirant squeaky voice and the contortionist have more convoluted excuses for celibacy and justify by it by various 'reasons'. This abstinence theory is more of a Christian import as it is the biblical concept of 'original sin' of Eve that has labelled reproductive activity as a curse of God! This idea of abstinence from sex or Brahmacharya was also promoted by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi as one of the most desirable of virtues, probably

come to this same conclusion about the cases filed against an actor in Tamilnadu for advocating premarital sex. It may be recalled that cases had been filed against this lady for making a public statement to that effect a few years back. There had been demonstrations by women's groups and a number of cases filed against her all over Tamilnadu just to harass. The judgement in her special leave petition filed at the Supreme Court had quashed all these cases and had also pronounced that sexual activity between consenting adults cannot be construed as a criminal offence. We have to see what the Dals and Senas of our district have to say about it. Their view is that even going together or speaking to each other in a public place is an offence and the police act like agents of these



St. Peter's Square, the basilica and obelisk

induced by the guilt in his mind that he was indulging in that when his father had died.

Well, this leads us to the question of the sexual indulgences of the so called renunciates. is it illegal? Well if seen from a legal point of view sexual intercourse between two consenting adults of the same or different genders is not a crime. There are laws on adultery applicable if the woman indulging in heterosexual activity is married, but if she is not, then it cannot be called as anything illegal. However one has to note that these sections on adultery are gender specific- they are applicable to the woman only! It does not matter if the

people. This sense of outrage is even more when the male belongs to another community and the female is a Hindu!

We do agree that the clergy of all religions are human like all of us. If they are, then it would behove them to act like humans and not like superhumans. Let them give up their hypocrisy about these things and stop calling themselves by fancy names and fancier titles. They should not demand or get any exemptions from any laws of the land and get facilities at subsidised rates or free and land at throwaway prices. Many times they are the repositories of the ill gotten wealth of corrupt politicians since

they are exempt from tax raids. Let them be treated exactly like us ordinary mortals and then we shall agree that they too can indulge in those activities in which we do!

When this is the case women shall treat them like they do other males, no one will think that the children are safe with them. If all these happen I am sure that their robes shall lose their charms and they will be categorised as ordinary mortals that we

are. The shine on their faces due to the austerities that they allegedly practice will disappear and from Brahmacharis they will become sansaris like all of us!

BS

*Prof Narendra Nayak is the president of
Federation of Indian Rationalist
Associations*

**The Koran! well, come put me to the test –
Lovely old book in hideous error drest –
Believe me, I can quote the Koran too,
The unbeliever knows his Koran best.**

**And do you think that unto such as you,
A maggot-minded, starved, fanatic crew,
God gave the Secret, and denied it me? –
Well, well, what matter it! Believe that too.**

**So I be written in the Book of Love,
I have no care about that book above;
Erase my name, or write it, as you please –
So I be written in the Book of Love.**

Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

Translations by Richard Le Gallienne

What I Learned from the Pedophilia Scandal



January 2006



Tracie Harris is a graphic designer in Austin, Texas, US. According to the website, <http://www.atheist-community.org/>, "her long, slow recovery from a rabid fundamentalist upbringing led her to the creation of *Atheist Eve*".

Tracie Harris has been publishing *Atheist Eve* since 1 October 2004 and all her earlier works are archived at: <http://www.atheist-community.org/atheisteve/>. *Atheist Eve* is reproduced by *Indian Skeptic* with the author's permission.

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Are You A Freethinker?

Naturalism, Life and Meaning in a Causal Universe

Ajita Kamal

Many of those of us who call ourselves freethinkers are aware that there is some fundamental difference between the way we view reality and the way the superstitious folks do. We believe in a naturalistic reality and the others subscribe to the supernatural. But what exactly is this difference? What does it mean to believe in a naturalistic reality? What is 'natural', and how is it different from 'supernatural'?

The key to understanding the natural universe is understanding the notion of causality. This idea can be stated simply as the relationship between two dependent events, where one is the caused and the other is the cause. Science works only because the natural world exhibits

causality. In physics, causality is more accurately viewed as interaction between two events, objects or situations, with each of the two being both cause and effect at the same time.

The key to understanding the natural universe is understanding the notion of causality. This idea can be stated simply as the relationship between two dependent events, where one is the caused and the other is the cause. Science works only because the natural world exhibits causality. In physics, causality is more accurately viewed as interaction between two events, objects or situations, with each of the two being both cause and effect at the same time.



“Everything that happens.... presupposes something upon which it follows by rule”

Immanuel Kant



To get an idea of how supernaturalists relate to the notion of causality, let us consider three examples. Each is a hypothetical case where an individual suspends belief in causal reality at different points of reasoning.

Case-I

Sethu from India believes that the Hindu god Ganesha is the keeper of his fortunes. Sethu spends 5 hours every week, praying to and performing duties for Ganesha. He strongly believes that his actions have been keeping him safe and comfortable.

In his regular life, Sethu is an engineer. His job requires him to possess and frequently rely on an exceptional amount of data on cause and effect. Even when he decides to go perform his puja, he doesn't just close his eyes and wish that he was at the temple. He gets in his car and goes through the motions, knowing that the mechanics of the automobile will be the effect. He has a naturalistic understanding of these things. Cause and effect are intuitive in this way.

Yet when Sethu gets to the temple, he stops thinking in naturalistic terms. A very different type of behavior sets in. He appeals to what can only be conceived of as magic. This is his supernaturalistic side.

What happens here is that Sethu goes from a world where causality operates, to one in which causality does not apply, and he makes this switch based on no evidence at all! At the point where he begins to seek a supernatural explanation, Sethu stops subscribing to the real and observable principles of cause and effect and starts believing in magic.

Case-II

Jen in the US knocks on wood to avoid tempting fate every time she boasts about herself to someone. She doesn't really think about it past the ritualistic rap of knuckle on cedar. Her life is full of these meaningless idiosyncrasies.

But Jen is a successful businesswoman. She

“Shallow men believe in luck, believe in circumstances. Strong men believe in cause and effect.”

Ralph W. Emerson



What is superstition?

"To disregard the true relation between cause and effect."

Robert G. Ingersoll



makes extremely rational decisions analyzing numbers all day long, to seek and identify patterns. She has an exceptional grasp of her natural surroundings, using the principles of cause and effect extremely well to navigate through life. Yet the superstitions are all right there. The early morning coffee and horoscopes, the frequent tarot card readings and psychic healing visits- all side by side with the everyday real-world things she does.

Jen finds it really easy to switch back and forth between the magical fantasy world ,where cause and effect do not apply, and the real naturalistic world where they do.

Case-III

Yalda in Morocco believes that allah is the reason she exists. In fact, allah is the reason everything exists, since he created everything. But the laws of cause and effect do not apply to allah. In fact, he created those as well.

Meanwhile, she exercises her mind everyday at her job as a computer programmer. She understands how the code

she writes has an effect, which has another effect and so on. Yalda acts as we all do when it comes to practical matters, under the premise that cause and effect apply in our universe. But when it comes to allah, she suspends belief in reason. She does not stop to question the logical incoherence of claiming to know anything at all about an all-knowing being who cannot be known because he is beyond cause and effect.

In each one of these cases there are two types of behaviors- those based on naturalistic ideas and those based on supernaturalistic ones. If we extend this reasoning to numerous beliefs in popular culture, it becomes apparent that everywhere a supernatural concept is evoked there is a required suspension of the laws of causality. In fact, belief in any supernatural requires a voluntary surrendering of the reasonable and fundamental assumption of science that all things must have a natural cause. To the superstitious mind, magic appears to be a reasonable solution- a sufficiently explanatory state of affairs. This sort of

“All reasonings concerning matter of fact [the empirical reality] seem to be founded on the relation of Cause and Effect.”

David Hume



thinking is manifested in everything from belief in homeopathic medicines and psychic healing, to belief in god.

Not only is causality key to understanding natural reality, but understanding the causal nature of reality is also important towards attaining a better idea of who we are as sentient beings. The three above case-studies all defer to an external supernatural force. However, there is another type of supernatural belief, one that is just as prevalent and harmful, but involves looking inward, into oneself. This is the belief in the idea of an internal supernatural self; a soul.

The belief in a soul is manifested in many forms in human society, most prominently in the widespread belief in “free” agency. This is the illusion of an uncaused entity within us; the seat of our consciousness and sentience. This type of uncaused “free” agency is commonly known as free-will, or more technically, contra-causal free-will.

Is it possible, or even advantageous to forgo the supernatural belief in contra-causal free-will? Will our society be able to function morally without the notion of uncaused agency? Can personal responsibility survive as a fundamentally beneficial social construct, even in the absence of free-will? The answers to these questions and others will be covered in future parts of this series on naturalistic philosophy. The next one will be on the nature of knowledge, it's forms and its attainment (epistemology).

BS

Ajita Kamal is the founder and administrator of www.nirmukta.com. This article, first published on nirmukta website, is the first of a series of introductory articles he is writing on naturalistic philosophy.

As to truth, justice, and fidelity, who have been their brave exponents and daring proclaimers? Nearly always the godless ones; the Atheists; they lived, fought, and died for them. They knew that justice, truth, and fidelity are not conditioned in heaven, but that they are related to and interwoven with the tremendous changes going on in the social and material life of the human race, not fixed and eternal, but fluctuating, even as life itself.

Emma Goldman

The Philosophy of Atheism

Role of Rationalism in Eradicating Communalism

R.G.Rao

To be communal means to work for the welfare of the community. In Indian context however the word has become synonymous with conflicts in the name of religion, ethnicity, etc. People or groups spreading hatred, instigating violence towards other communities are called communalists.

The core of communal politics is guided by the agenda of certain sections of the society that are opposed to the democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity. Communal politics flourishes on hate propaganda. By creating an external enemy and provoking people with distorted facts, they generate a hysteria which grips the masses and gets manifested in violence. The issues they select have nothing to do with real problems of the society, but are issues with pure emotional appeal, and are in a way decoys hiding the real social issues. Mass hysteria is generated by the systematic spread of hatred against weaker sections of society; they also use false history or mythology to control the minds and social behavior of large sections of society. Often we find fundamentalist forces using or exploiting people for their communal purpose by appealing in the name of patriotism; often we find that certain communities are branded as antinational by fundamentalists, as if one has to subscribe to their view or ideology to prove one's patriotism. To spread hatred, myths are often created; history or facts are distorted to suit their communal agenda.

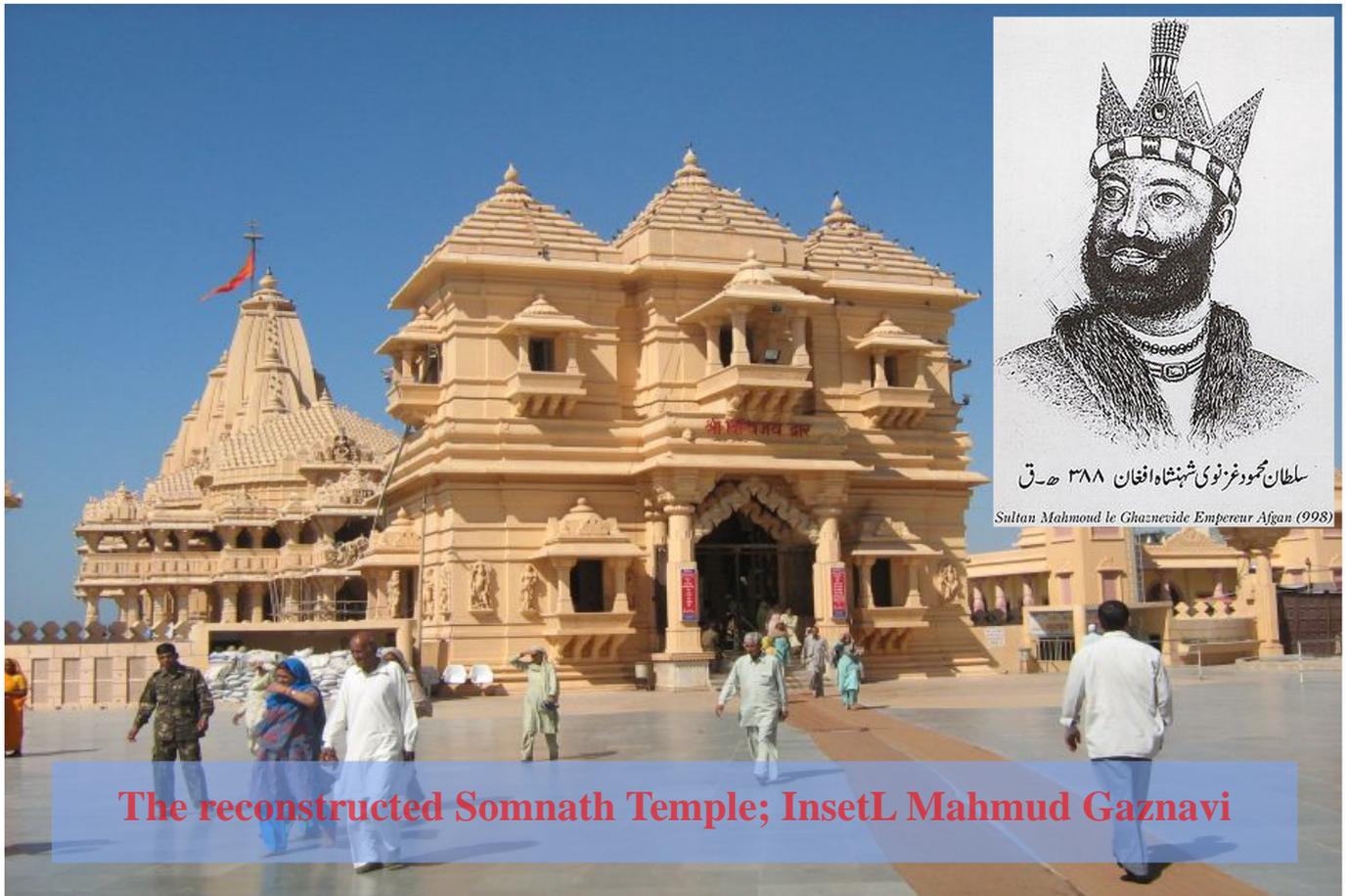
An example of this distorted history is – Muslim kings destroyed Hindu temples.

If we want to counter this type of myths, we should try to understand the facts. The fact is, ransacking of temples was done by kings irrespective of their religion. Temples were repositories of wealth. So to get wealth, temples were looted by the Marathas in Tipu's sultanate and it was repaired by Tipu Sultan. Actually looting temples was a way of humiliating the rival kings.

The famous temple of Somnath was looted by Muhammed Ghazni. His main aim was to loot the tons of gold kept inside the temple. On his way to Somnath he first had to fight Muhammed Fath Dawood and in the process the mosque of Multan was damaged before attacking the temple. Many of his army men were Hindus.



Tipu Sultan



The reconstructed Somnath Temple; InsetL Mahmud Gaznavi

Parmar kings destroyed Jain temples. Similarly Aurangzeb not only destroyed some temples and mosques but also gave Jagirs to many temples.

One of the major myths propagated by communal groups is the story that ours was the only great ancient civilization and all other civilizations were degraded ones. In this context it needs to be noted that only people with progressive rationalist ideas have fought for the human rights of marginalized people. Take the example of U.S.A where women or black people were deprived (by the religious right) of many a fundamental right including the right to vote. In fact, all religious and fascists forces have always denied human rights to ordinary people.

For the last few years a number of new-age, spiritualist movements have mushroomed all over the country in the name of revivalism of religion and culture in which the old dangerous conservative ideas are being presented in a new deceptive garb of science and modernism. Some even have the audacity to claim that they are

promoting scientific temper. The unfortunate thing is that these movements have captivated the minds of the rural and urban middle class - intelligent and liberal, modernized and cosmopolitan people. Today in Goa, Maharashtra and elsewhere in the country, there are large sections of the people who are faithful disciples, followers or sympathizers of one or the other religious movements. The leaders of these movements, the godmen, are a great challenge to us, the humanists and rationalists who have been striving hard for the promotion of social reform and the scientific values in the society. We will have to think upon the ways and means not only to counteract these forces but try to eliminate these forces and enlighten the people and infuse in them the philosophy of scientific temper. Thus only rationalism will be capable of countering the forces of communalism.

BS

To be continued in the next issue..

R.G.Rao (Somu) is the National Secretary of Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations

From the President of FIRA

Narendra Nayak

The month of March has been a very trying time for the religious forces! To put it in very parliamentary language, the excreta has hit the revolving blades of the air circulating electrical device for a number of them.

Scandals and Religions

At the fore front is the head of the Vatican, a person called as Pope Benedict who is the spiritual head of the huge empire of the Roman Catholic Church. As it is well known the Roman Catholic clergy have a tendency to exploit sexually those in their care. Probably, the enforced celibacy has something to do with that resulting in the repressed sexual urges manifesting themselves in different abnormal ways! It was not only that such things happened but a number of senior members of the clergy undertook steps to suppress the information letting the guilty get away scot-free.

It is not that the Roman Catholic Church was not aware of these happenings. Most of my education has been in Catholic institutions and even as child there have been many incidents involving the priests and the scandals have been always hushed up. While we can blame the enforced celibacy for these the attempts to suppress the news from leaking out has been an encouraging factor for the perpetrators. There can be no excuses for pedophilia. It is not the unsavoury incidents are confined to homosexual activities. There have been scandals involving those who have been embroiled in heterosexual relationships too. That perhaps could be condoned as an



activity between consenting adults. But, such have also resulted in criminal activities like murders and rapes. The most rational thing for the church to do would be stop these unnatural vows of chastity and celibacy and let them indulge in these natural activities and produce more of the faithful and increase the membership of their church!

The godmen of our country would like to compete with others of their ilk in every department. In the field of scandals they are not far behind. The last month has seen two such incidences hit the headlines for all the wrong reasons. One of them from Delhi was running a call girl racket under the convenient disguise of the saffron robes! His clientele included lots of high and the mighty many of whom disowned him the moment he was discovered to be a pimp! The cases booked against him are sure to take a long time to be decided and even if he were to be proven guilty, the offences are not very serious ones. The one from the South may not have committed any offences under the laws of the land related to the exposures in the media, but along with these

sexual escapades many other unsavoury incidents were dug out which included things like land grabbing from the government and private individuals.

Organizational Strength

We are going ahead quite well in our attempts to reach the younger generation. We have had meetings with the youngsters at Bangalore, Mahad and Indore. In our training programs we are trying to involve the younger generation in the task of carrying forward the movement and they seem to be quite interested. We have had a

necessary for us to have our own devoted exclusively for our movement, That is because the organisations with a broader set of aims and objectives have to attend to their other spheres of activity too and cannot devote all their time and energy for our movement. They also have limitations due to their heterogeneous constitutions and many times are funded by sources which would dry up if they take up the issues which we do. So, it is very much needed to have our own organisations which can take up fearlessly issues concerned with the movement. It is our endeavour to set up such in areas where



Narendra Nayak addressing the 1st Karnataka State Rationalist Conference held on 14 March 2010 (detailed report in our next issue)

good number of social work students at the two programs held at Mahad and Indore and many of them have suggested that it should be a part of the curriculum for the social work courses. Our attempts to have a federation at the Karnataka State level seem to be bearing fruit. In the meeting held at Bangalore on the 14th March we have had encouraging signs and hope to have strong working units in all districts soon. Many of the districts have functioning organisations and we hope to involve them all in furthering the movement. Though we have many like minded organisations supporting and collaborating with us it is very much

there aren't any and where there are strengthen them,

In the meanwhile there have been developments in parallel in other organisations which are involved in the movement. With a younger set of people who are keen to join in and organise people of their generation we are soon to see young blood being infused into the movement, Nirmukta which started as a web site has now become a central point for the movement for the younger generation of activists who are now very much involved in taking the movement forward and setting up what is required

for the furtherance of the cause. This is a very welcome development as we see that the younger generation appears to lack the fire that we had. After more contact with them we have now realised that they had been lacking a proper direction and role models. Now they have realised that it is possible to lead a life without any religious ceremonies like we have done.

Census 2011

Another issue that confronts us is the census of 2011. How do we use it to further our cause? Is there a provision for us to declare ourselves as a separate category as atheists/non believers? As of now we are classified as Hindus though we do not follow any of the religious ceremonies, follow the caste system or have anything do with their dogmas. We have to think about this issue. Those of us who have been enjoying reservations may not like to lose those facilities because they are affirmative action being taken to set right thousands of years of oppression. We don't know whether they may lose their entitlements to these if they state that they are atheists. We have had many deliberations on these issues and the conclusions are yet to be formed. To me it looks reasonable that we too must be counted and should have our own lobbies and pressure groups to protect our interests. In particular we are the only group demanding separation of religion from politics and the state. It is very much needed in a secular state that no religious activity of any sort should be funded and/or

supported by the state. We see at present that the Indian state has a policy of appeasement of all religions.

Attacks on Humanists

We have been under attack from all religious reactionaries. This is to be expected in a country where the state has a policy of bowing down to all sorts of pressures. A group of fundamentalist Muslims have succeeded in pressurizing the Andhra govt. to file cases against our movement. Krantikar has been at the receiving end of these for translating some of Tasleema Nasreen's writings into Telugu and publishing them in book form. Subba Rao and Inniah who have kept stocks of his book have been also booked under the same sections. Now they are out on bail and the law will take its own course. It is strange that in a democracy people should be persecuted for publishing things which have been on the internet for ages. The same was done in Karnataka by a newspaper and protests followed which resulted in deaths of two innocent people by police firing. The spreading intolerance and the new visa restrictions have resulted in causing problems for any foreigners who want to visit India. This has resulted in cancellation of the IHEU international conference which was to take place in Hyderabad in August 2010.

BS

**Prof Narendra Nayak is the President of
*Federation of Indian Rationalist
Associations***

Liberty is always unfinished business.

Title of 36th Annual Report of the American Civil Liberties

Union, 1 July 1955-30 June 1956

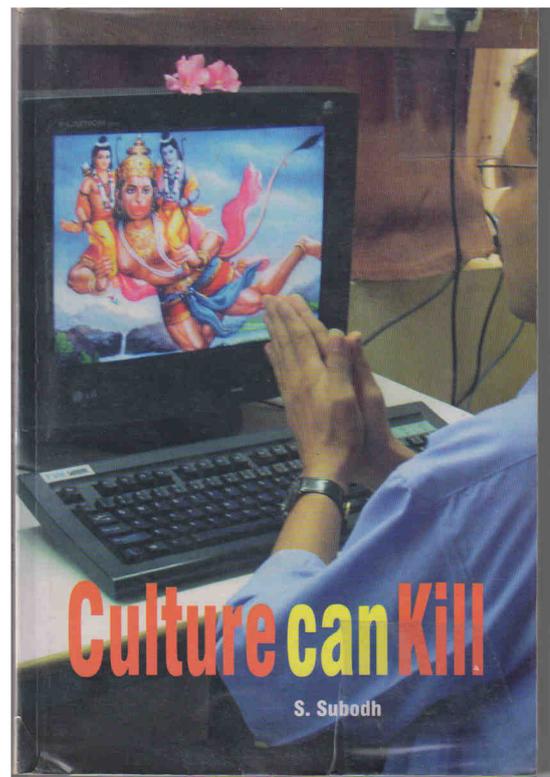


Hindu Civilisation On Its Death Bed

Prabhakar Nanawaty

While describing the plight of our country, Nobel Laureate V. S. Naipaul once called India "a wounded civilisation". But according to S. Subodh, the author of the book "*Culture can Kill*", the wounds are festering and would not heal. The wounded civilisation is on the verge of death unless some drastic steps are taken. In fact, the question now is "how costly shall we make the funeral?" Apparently one will feel that his comments are very harsh and uncalled for. While whole world is praising this would be superpower (in the year 2020, 2050, ...2300 ?) why such pungent remarks to such a great country? However as one goes on reading the text thoroughly from prologue in the initial pages to comments in the end pages of the book, one realizes that what the writer is saying is undoubtedly correct from all viewpoints. As Kumar Ketkar mentions in the foreword, culture has the broadest civilizational sweep as well as the narrowest identifier connotation. Indeed the term civilization is not regarded as identical with culture.

S Subodh is not here for bashing anything connected to India or Indian - culture, religion, faith, traditions, rituals, scriptures etc. In fact according to Kumar Ketkar, S Subodh is an original thinker, unconventional and rebellious. He has been perplexed and perturbed for quite some time, particularly for the last twenty

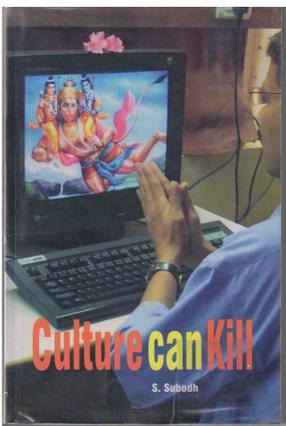


years. He has seen his beloved country, India slowly degenerating into communal cauldron. He was searching for the causes of downfall of this glorious civilisation. As an intellectual, he was offended by the mediocrity of the self styled Hindu educated intelligentsia. As a modern and secular person he felt that the country was giving up its magnificent past in the name of religious and cultural chauvinism.

Dr Anil Kane, who had written introduction to this book, emphasizes that whatever has been said in the book

addressing exclusively to "we Hindus" is applicable to the entire mankind of all the religions without exception. Whatever may be the fundamental dictates of the religions, all the known religions have dogmas that require blind faith; idol worship has crept in, in some form or the other, cross, kaba, mazars, churches, synagogues, etc. All religions have considered women to be inferior without exception. While writing "why this book?" author makes it clear that he has no axe to grind, no ideology to promote. In fact he has so much to lose and little to gain. But surely to light the flame of hope in the life of a billion people is an undertaking worth any kind of effort and risk.

forget the hype created by media, vested bureaucracy and so called intelligentsia, about this country, what kind of India do we see in its heartland? Author describes a typical scene of worshipping a stone shaped statue of a Goddess, -Sheetaladevi, Santoshi Mata, Mariaai any name you can ascribe to it - in village outskirts. The ceremony is designed to appease these Gods/Goddesses though every one claims that he/she doesn't believe in superstitions; but very act suggests different thing. Orthodoxy, and traditions, are still ruling the masses including the educated. The educated class feels that there is no point in flogging the dead horse. Author also agrees that there is no point in just flogging the



Whatever may be the fundamental dictates of the religions, all the known religions have dogmas that require blind faith; idol worship has crept in, in some form or the other - cross, kaba, mazars, churches, synagogues, etc. All religions, without exception, have considered women to be inferior.

Culture

Author has taken lot of efforts for in-depth study of this great Indian culture which is killing us, making us disabled to create or compete. Our traditional beliefs, values and attitudes are responsible for our condition. Fatalism, contentment, irrationality, obsession with spirituality, faith, elevation of poverty and renunciation etc are the causes of our disgrace. Author is not just giving his opinions since he knows that an opinion, however passionate, is not an argument. He invites the readers to approach the core issues in stepwise details to gain the right perspective.

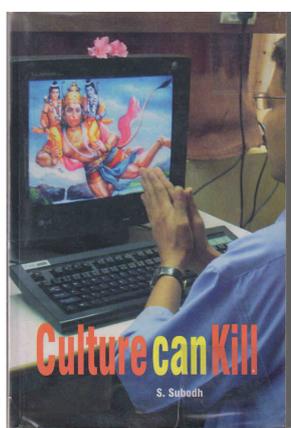
Like an expert medical practitioner, he goes into threadbare details to arrive at correct diagnosis of the disease before making any suggestions of remedial action. Once we

dead horse but dissecting the beast. The dissection gives valuable insight into the diseases that affect this country - slavery to mindless tradition, sheepish one-track mentality and plain gullibility. Author feels pity and has been shocked to see how much of India still is living in subhuman conditions even in 21st century. Most urban India will not acknowledge that we are backward. How do we explain someone who can't understand that he does not understand? who refuses to understand? No statistics will reveal their insistence. No proof is suffice to change their opinions. All the while author wonders that the most important amazing fact about our problem is: It is not that we don't see the solution. It is that we don't see the problem at all! What we desperately need today is courage to face our faults. Not to denigrate ourselves. There is no way any reasonable person can deny India's problems. But we

conceal the problem with myths, the myth of our past.

Symptoms

Author has tried his level best to highlight historical events impartially on which the traditionalists build their dream castles. Surprisingly after a few incidences of glory, author finds that there is nothing much worth mentioning. Our history is not just a story of innocence lost. It is a story of being kicked, beaten and shot through the heart for a thousand years by scores of invaders. How many times has Delhi been burned and temples looted in India? We lost count. We lost wars, we lost territory



According to the author since our culture is based principally on our religion and is an indistinguishable part of our religious experience, our problems have their deepest roots in our religion, spirituality and our excessive obsession with both of these. We are trained to believe in myths and accept non-reason.

and we lost our self-esteem. In spite of these records of all the lost battles still we feel proud of our glorious past. It is all wishful thinking. In fact our intellectuals and politicians believe literally in the history not knowing which is history, which is myth and which is mythology. The problem with the past is it blurs the future. It vitiates our present, befuddles our future and stops us from thinking clearly about our problems. Subodh is not making the sweeping statements but logically arrives at these unpalatable conclusions. Readers will no doubt agree with the author once they go through the chapters included in Section 1: the symptoms.

Author is convinced of the fact that there is no relationship between historical achievement and future performance. Like any share market conditions, the past performance is no guarantee for the future.

However we Indians are very good at blame game. We generally assume that we know the answers, but are quite helpless. Instead of confronting the crises and taking responsibility for our infirmities, we faced our historical crisis with hands folded, blaming everything and everybody except ourselves. Foreigners did it. Fate did it. Kali Yuga did it. It just happened. We then start blaming politicians, corruption, illiteracy, poor leadership, overpopulation etc. The author has taken pain to explain his readers how flimsy are these reasons and how this brain washing of common people is rampant in our society. The blame game in which everybody blames everybody else for everything continues for

ever and ever.

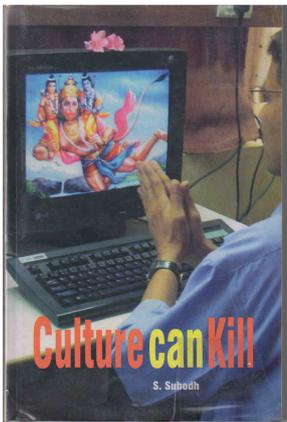
Diseases

In the next section on the diseases, author had tried to find out what might have gone wrong and where. According to him since our culture is based principally on our religion and is an indistinguishable part of our religious experience, our problems have their deepest roots in our religion, spirituality and our excessive obsession with both of these. We are trained to believe in myths and accept non-reason. While pointing the shortcomings of this society author compares our society with other societies in the world. Surprisingly he finds a vast difference amongst them. Though other societies too were infested with religious bigots, traditions, etc, our society did not come out of the shackles of religion, tradition and faith, whereas other

societies managed to throwaway these restraints long back. India was somehow left completely untouched by the momentous developments witnessed by other (western) societies - isolated, detached, unconcerned by what was going on. When the intellectual ferment was going on in Europe, we had many writers - poets and saints. We had no original thinkers or real innovators; no challengers to tradition but only those who illustrated and explained ancient theosophy. Religion by its very nature is anti-modern, traditionalistic, anti-change. We completely missed the boat almost 500 years ago by neglecting technology, creativity, productivity, innovativeness. What we missed was not confined to material

The author is convinced that it is not so. We have a lot to learn from it. When we compare our society with that of America we will find a direct contrast to what a successful dynamic society looks like. According to Subodh, there are mainly three reasons for this stagnant Indian society where everything stands still: status of women, educational limitations and caste discrimination. Though every one of us knows these particulars, we are afraid to say so.

The author has arrived at these conclusions very logically. The dominance of a handful of high caste people over vast majority in the society resulted into culture of inequality. As a result the state suffered,



The *Gita* as an example of contradictory statements, misinterpretations and ambiguous testimonials. It is full of catch - 22 type statements; very difficult to assign any confirmatory meanings.

progress alone; we missed the culture of progress, the ideas, the progress in the humanities. As medical professionals establish the link between smoking and lung cancer, the author also tries to find the root causes for Indian regression by comparing with the American society. He concludes that cultural atmosphere makes all the difference. In America innovation is not an option but the way of life. It is a condition for survival, survival of job, survival of company, and survival of government. The author in fact lists out the differences between these societies and identifies the deficits of the Indian society. He concludes that culture influences the progress. Most people of India assume and assent in private that Americans are materialistic and we, the Indians, care more for love and family, values and the like.

society withered and religion prospered. Similarly the causes of the self-defeat - disunity, resource mobilization, beliefs and attitude - kept us in the last rung of the developmental ladder. While explaining the causes of the defeat in almost all wars fought for last 500 years, the author points out that we lack 'killer instinct'. Fatalism, Maya, non-attachment, philosophical fantasies etc are the main causes of our failures in the warfront. There was no will to win. Instead we had pious wish to be released from this materialistic world. We pray and enemies slay us.

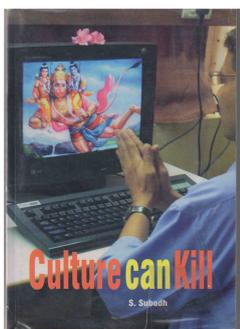
One will agree with the conclusions drawn by the author on our long-lasting affection towards spiritualism and ancient belief system. These are most damaging contributors to our failures in almost all the

fields. All the elements in our culture - attitudes, actions, customs, traditions, rituals - are traceable to our over abundant faith in the spiritual matters. Rather than questioning the belief in vital matters, we coin new convenient definitions to make the facts to confirm our belief. Interesting thing about belief is, if facts confirm the belief the belief is strengthened; if facts go against it the belief is strengthened even more - that is the beauty of belief. In fact, religious beliefs are matter of faith, not of rational thought. However idol worship, Jihad, slavery, persecution, cruelty, mythology all have been rationalised at one time or the other by these religious zealots. In this process, the religion and the God became the controllers of the ethical values.

Causes

Based on the symptoms the author concludes that the society is suffering from diseases. The author then tries to find out the probable causes for the diseases. According to him, the causes are: ● failure to empower women ● caste system and a status conscious society ● restricted education ● wrong child rearing practices, authoritarian culture ● over abundance of spirituality and faith which were blocking creativity, innovation and rationality ● mythology trained people in credulity, non-reason ● isolation from the world, promoted by exaggerated notions of our purity and superiority.

A few distinctive beliefs in our culture have



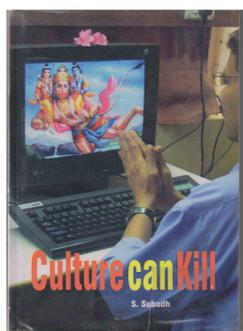
Unquestioning trust in Gurus discouraged
independent thought and creativity. Belief in rebirth
promoted harmful fatalism

The author feels that there is a lot of confusion about values, ethics and religion. According to him when there was little knowledge, religion included everything under its broad canopy; science, logic, ethic, literature. Supreme God filled human needs. God, being unverifiable, is a great advantage since anything and everything can be attributed to Him without fear of contradiction. He lives in people's minds largely because none can prove that He does not exist. According to Subodh, ethical values need not be attributed to religion or God. God and religion are not ends in themselves. Ancient societies utilised the God concept to advance much needed values like love, non-violence, family bonding and brotherhood. In our zeal to build foundations for these values mistakenly emphasize the means - God concept - more than the end itself - survival and welfare.

held us back for long. Our belief is that money is evil. We glorify the poverty thus encouraging the hypocrisy. Unquestioning trust in Gurus discouraged independent thought and creativity. Belief in rebirth promoted harmful fatalism. When there were no books, no schools, no internet, high importance was given to belief in teacher was natural and justified. In those days man had no knowledge, no means of knowledge, no accumulation of knowledge, no precedents. Three L's taught were lie low, listen and learn. After paper was invented it was read, remember and regurgitate - no criticism, no circumspection. We spent huge money on erecting stone statues and idols and temples. Even today while schools, hospitals and roads are strived of funds temples are flush with funds. We are in fact intellectually unproductive. Poverty steals our youth and spirituality our old age.

Spirituality has become a high flying flourishing industry with its own management setup, seminars, study courses and Ashrams. Spirituality encourages fatalism. Fatalism is worst than laziness. It provides us with philosophical foundations to justify our laziness and failures. Our culture discourages innovation and independent thinking. There is basic hostility to accept anything new. Our civic sense, civility, morality all are confined to our close circle of family and friends only, no others. We have only one vision, tunnel vision which can move only backward direction. With all these negative feedbacks, the author is sure about no improvement in our society is possible without upheaval of religion. Scratch a Hindu and you will find a philosopher. Our

Interpretation of Hindu religious texts is a matter of huge controversy and recrimination. Language of these texts is used to confuse, obfuscate or evade issues. In fact a beautiful (?) poetry has been mistaken for philosophical truth. Meaning of words and syntax changes from person to person and from time to time. Word *Dharma* has multiple connotations and can be used the way you would like to use. It is amazing to see how many Hindu philosophers wriggle out of intractable theosophical problems through the simple expedient of amending, refining, redefining, bending, stretching, changing or questioning the meaning of simple words. Rituals and limitless faith that violate common sense dominate Hindu religion. Ritual is an integral and inseparable part of



"Religious hallucinations are quite common in schizophrenic people. They are signs of illness, not religious sight. It is no easy thing to distinguish between mental illness and religious insight" - George Graham

tryst with tradition, culture and religion had reared ignorance, ambiguity and doubts about the physical world and its reality.

While discussing about religion-infested society, author was not able to decide what can be called religion and what is mere sect, cult or faith in powerful personalities. Hindu religion is mix of all these things; there is no simple way to decide. Karma theory which is the core of Hindu religion had let us down on every front. In fact author feels that there is nothing like personal God, soul and rebirth except through faith. The Author quotes George Graham, a noted psychologist in verbatim: "Religious hallucinations are quite common in schizophrenic people. They are signs of illness, not religious sight. It is no easy thing to distinguish between mental illness and religious insight".

Hindu religious ethos ever since the sacrificial fires of the *Vedas*. The author cites the *Gita* as an example of contradictory statements, misinterpretations and ambiguous testimonials. It is full of catch - 22 type statements; very difficult to assign any confirmatory meanings. That is why the author feels Hindu religion as religion of losers.

A society which considers intelligence is a handicap and undesirable, is surely paving the path of decline. Pious people in India believe that intelligence is a hindrance in matter of religion. To them reason or even skepticism is not only undesirable; it is an unmitigated evil. They all have a distrust of intellect. According to them mental derangement itself is somehow holy if only accompanied by kindness and humility. Though on one hand the modern Hindu

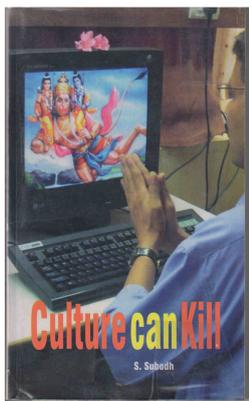
says that he doesn't believe in myths yet he often believes health fads, rumour mongering, political gossip, astrology, pseudoscience.

The author attacks pseudoscientific nature of religion. Nowadays it has become fashionable to make tall claims about scientific nature of Hindu religion, to include a sprinkling of modern scientific words to impress the educated reader, and then merrily present the most controversial assumptions as universal truths; how the Vedas knew quantum physics, how the soul is pure light, energy, entropy, or whatever. In India, a Guru will espouse faith, ethics and devotion. In America he will

are self defeating; no amount of technological progress will help us.

Remedies

Author regrets at slow pace of modernisation of Indian society. The change is too little, too late. Most of the times change is local, superficial and involuntary. Today we dress in western modes but wear Indian culture over our sleeves and also deep within our hearts. We need real and immediate modernisation. Real modernisation is modernisation of attitudes, belief and values. Modernisation per se, will not make us rational unless we ourselves learn to be rational. If we



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emphasize intelligence, science and knowledge.

In fact the logic by which Hindu religion functions has been correctly rechristened as Hinductive logic which is neither inductive nor deductive. Author quotes many interesting and amusing examples in support of this newly coined word for typical Hindu logic. While summing up the discussions on root causes of failures author mentions that technology can make us smarter but it cannot make us smart. It can extend our reach but it cannot teach us how to think. So modernisation in the physical sense alone is not enough. We need to modernise our minds too. If our values are not clear, rational and balanced; if they contradict natural instinct; if they

compare ourselves with other modern societies we are learned, they are intelligent; we are reproductive, they are creative. Now it is high time to break the bonds of religious tyranny completely. We should treat religion as an irrelevance on public life. We need not continue to love the cobwebs that surround us - holy stones, holy places, scriptures, sacred threads, Ganga water, cow urine, etc. The relentless retelling of epic tales to adults must end. Meaningless debates and discussions or interpretation of scriptural stories and statements serve no useful purpose. Even conflicts like Hindu and Muslim - which are basically competing ideologies - can be resolved through modernisation of minds and beliefs. Nostalgia for the past is not going to do any good. We must break the

vicious circle of self-fulfilling deflation of expectations and achievements. While we have time to turn around, we do not have unlimited time. While religion ruled the dark ages, reason must rule the computer age.

The author is very clear in his mind about the future line of action to mend our ways and improve our life. He had pinned his hopes on the intellectuals and elite class of the society. Unless this class changes the society will not change, since rest of the population follows this class. As he rightly puts it: "We in India today are a society of conflict thinkers in uneven transition and mixed messages. Imposition of a western culture on an ancient tradition and childhood conditioning have created a kind of perplexed elite. Those elite are always wondering about which direction to take. Although they may have a compass, its needle keeps flickering constantly. They are so to say, strangers to themselves; yet they themselves may not always no clearly. The same considerations apply to our younger generation in India today; and to the bright boys and girls. "

As the author mentions rightly, this book is not presenting the theory that neither fate nor foreigners nor genes, nor sins caused

our demise as a strong nation and our degradation into depth of destitution. We ourselves are responsible for our fall. But we are not dumb. It is now left to us whether to abandon the past completely, make a clean sweep and start afresh with the new ideas, new thoughts, rational attitudes and technological innovations. The book has displayed what we are and what we should be. The book is an eye opener to all of us and it has also strengthened some of our views about the path in which we have to proceed. Let us hope we will fulfill the wish of the author of this book.

Culture can Kill

by S. Subodh

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Prabhakar Nanawaty is the editor
of ***Thought & Action***, the ezine
published by Maharashtra
Andhashradha Nirmoolan Samiti.
Email: pkn.ans@gmail.com

**It is not the consciousness of men that determines their
existence, but their social existence that determines
their consciousness.**

Karl Marx

'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy' (1859)

preface

Bangalore Vicharavadi Sangha

(Bangalore Rationalist Association)

Bangalore Vicharavadi Sangha conducts monthly lectures and discussions on various topics. Those who are interested in attending the programmes conducted by the association may contact:

Dr. M.N.Keshava Rao (Phone: 26690269. Email: keshava_rao@hotmail.com)

A.S.Nataraj (Phone: 26696553. Email: rajsri@bgl.vsnl.net.in)

BVV Subba Rao (Phone: 09886679088. Email: babukadur44@gmail.com)

Tools for Skeptical Thinking

Carl Sagan

Carl Sagan's famous essay, *The Fine Art of Baloney Detection*, more or less encapsulates the basic tenets of Skeptical Thinking. The present article is an extract from the essay.

The full text can be found in one of Sagan's best-sellers *The Demonhaunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*.

- Wherever possible there must be independent confirmation of the "facts."

- Encourage substantive debate on the evidence by knowledgeable proponents of all points of view.

- Arguments from authority carry little weight—"authorities" have made mistakes in the past. They will do so again in the future. Perhaps a better way to say it is that in science there are no authorities; at most, there are experts.

- Spin more than one hypothesis. If there's something to be explained, think of all the different ways in which it could be explained. Then think of tests by which you might systematically disprove each of the alternatives. What survives, the hypothesis that resists disproof in this Darwinian selection among "multiple working hypotheses," has a much better chance of being the right answer than if you had simply run with the first idea that caught your fancy.

- Try not to get overly attached to a hypothesis just because it's yours. It's only a way station in the pursuit of knowledge. Ask yourself why you like the idea. Compare it fairly with the alternatives. See if you can find reasons for rejecting it. If you don't, others will.

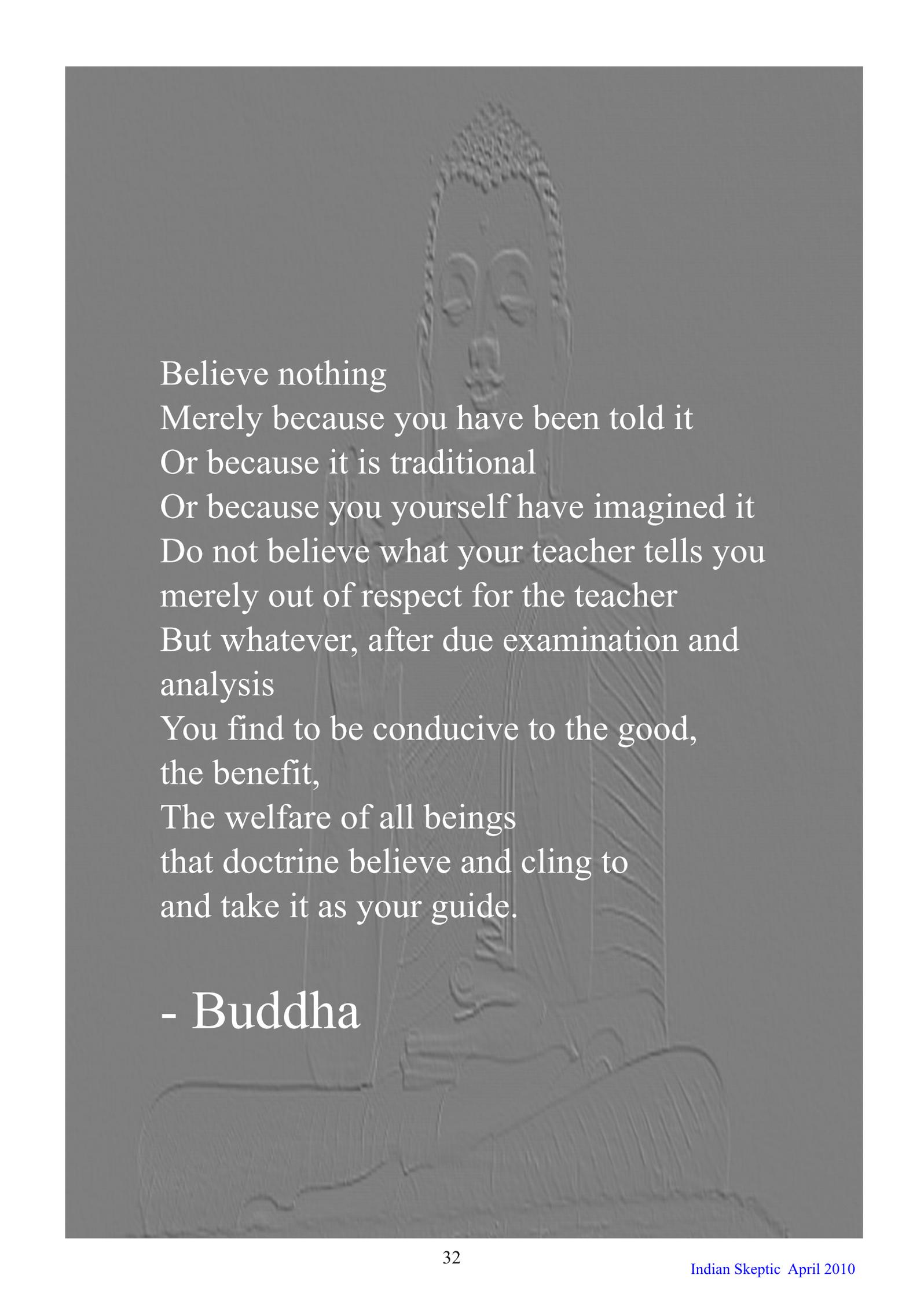


- Quantify. If whatever it is you're explaining has some measure, some numerical quantity attached to it, you'll be much better able to discriminate among competing hypotheses. What is vague and qualitative is open to many explanations. Of course there are truths to be sought in the many qualitative issues we are obliged to confront, but finding them is more challenging.

- If there's a chain of argument, every link in the chain must work (including the premise) —not just most of them.

- Occam's Razor. This convenient rule-of-thumb urges us when faced with two hypotheses that explain the data equally well to choose the simpler.

- Always ask whether the hypothesis can be, at least in principle, falsified. Propositions that are untestable, unfalsifiable are not worth much. You must be able to check assertions out. Inveterate skeptics must be given the chance to follow your reasoning, to duplicate your experiments and see if they get the same result.



Believe nothing
Merely because you have been told it
Or because it is traditional
Or because you yourself have imagined it
Do not believe what your teacher tells you
merely out of respect for the teacher
But whatever, after due examination and
analysis
You find to be conducive to the good,
the benefit,
The welfare of all beings
that doctrine believe and cling to
and take it as your guide.

- Buddha