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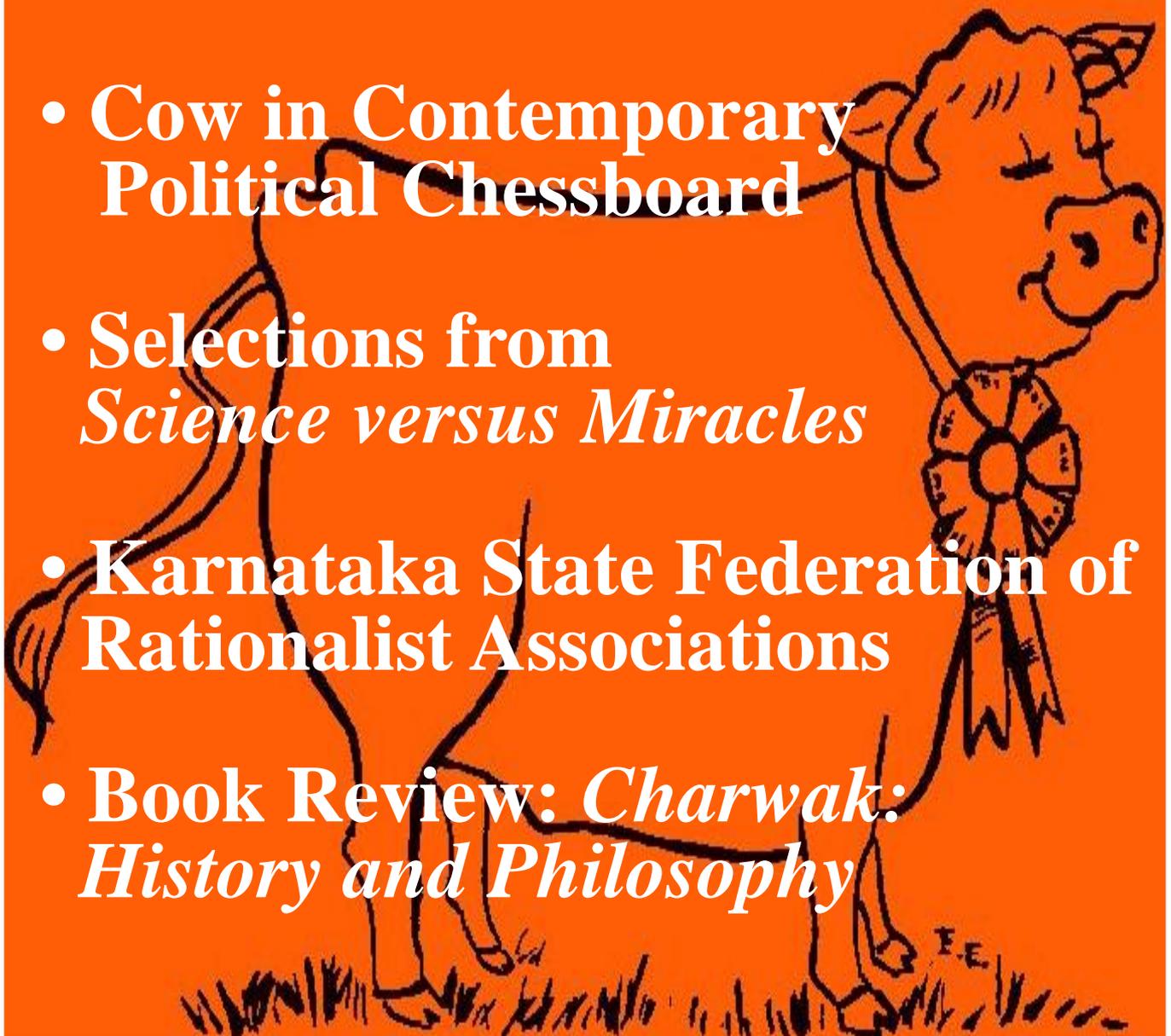
August 2010

- **Cow in Contemporary Political Chessboard**

- **Selections from *Science versus Miracles***

- **Karnataka State Federation of Rationalist Associations**

- **Book Review: *Charwak: History and Philosophy***



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bskeptic@gmail.com

*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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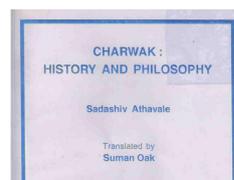
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Cow in Contemporary Political Chessboard

Ram Puniyani

Karnataka BJP Government has passed “Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill 2010” (June 2010). There has been a strong opposition to this move from the civil society. Some of social activists point out that this piece of legislation is “communal in intent and anti-farmer in consequence”. There have been series of meetings to express the concern of people, especially those of dalits and farmers to this legislation. Some of them said that implementation of the bill in its present form will deprive citizens the freedom to choose their food. Mr. Girish Karnad the noted film personality asked “As long as their choice of food is not affecting others, why its consumption should be prohibited?” Others pointed out that the bill is trying to polarize the majority and minority communities through this bill. It was also pointed out that Gujarat, where such a law already exists, was a leading beef exporter in the country. The points made also indicated that the controversial anti-cow slaughter Bill, if implemented, would discourage farmers from rearing cattle and will lead to a shortage of milk.

It is not the first time that the debate around Cow slaughter bills, beef eating is taking place. When BJP led NDA was in power it went to the extent of appointing a committee to go into the matter and the committee concluded that cow protection should be made fundamental right and there is a need to constitute Central Rapid Protection Force to prevent cow slaughter, and also to invoke POTA to detain those smuggling cows! The Cow obsession of



BJP is a part of deeper agenda of targeting Muslim minorities as they want to Brahminize the society by creating situations where beef eating becomes a taboo for large sections of society.

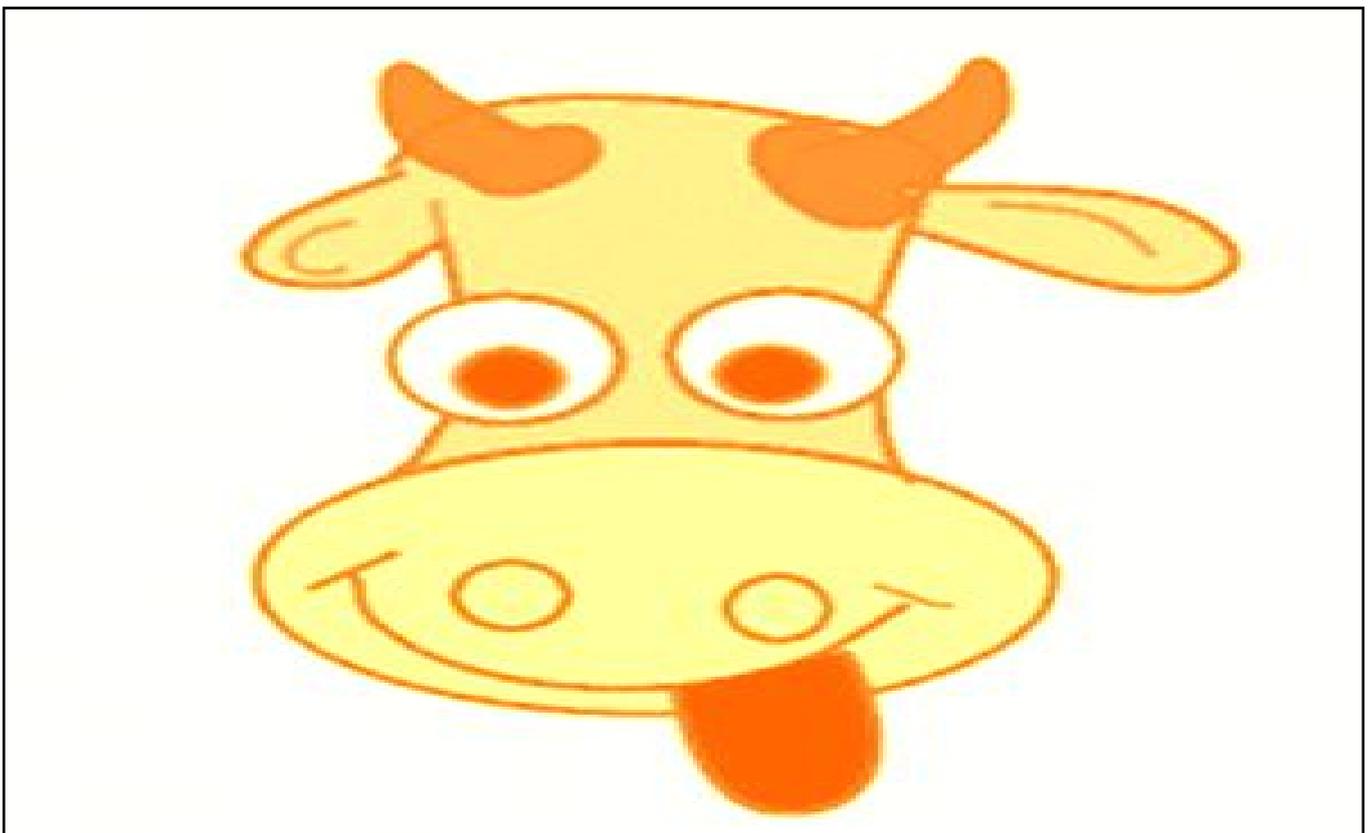
Needless to say beef is amongst the cheapest sources of proteins for the poor, especially dalits and adivasis. Till just a couple of decades ago there were many communities who were preferring beef to other expensive protein rich food. At the same time the minorities, Muslims and Christians, for whom, beef is neither a taboo nor a compulsion, are being looked down on this pretext. Large propaganda campaigns are on through which minorities are being demonized around the issue of beef eating and cow slaughter. One recalls the incident of Jhajjer where 5 dalits were done to death on the suspicion of killing a cow and VHP’s Acharya Giriraj Kishore justified the event as saying that cow is so sacred for Hindus that killing of dalits does not matter. Similarly, Sheikh Rahman a cattle trader was killed in Orissa on the cooked up charge of selling cows for slaughter.

When Uma Bharati became the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister she converted her official residence into a sort of Goshala, (Cow Shed). Currently the products from cow dung and cow urine are being promoted as divine medicines to cure many ailments. Even patents have been obtained for drinks based on Cow urine. The practitioners of scientific medicine have all the doubts about efficacy of these, beyond placebos, as no scientific study and trial of these has taken place. The procedures laid down to introduce a new drug in the market are not followed and through mushrooming chains, the cow products as medicine are proliferating in number day by day.

The 'Cow' seems to be the next emotive chariot which probably is being projected after the decline in the fervor for Ram Temple issue. One has no problems in respecting animals of one's choice, but the fear is this is/will be further used as the issue to divide the communities. In our plural democratic society how can faith of section of one religious community dictate the policies of the state?

As such most of the propaganda that beef eating was brought to India by Muslims is

a mere hog wash. Most of the serious researches into the sacred Hindu book, Vedas, show that Beef eating was a norm in Vedic times. Researches and studies by Mahmahopadhyaya Bharat Ratna Pandurang Waman Kane's '*Bhartiya Dharmgrantho Ka Itihas*' (History of Hindu Holy books), Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, "*Did The Hindus Never Eat Beef?*" in "*The Untouchables Who were they and Why they became Untouchables* (Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches vol.17 (Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai 1990, first edition 1948 pp 323-328) and the contemporary Historian, D.N. Jha, *The Myth of Holy Cow*, all point out that beef was popular food in Vedic times. Swami Viveknand emphasizes the same point in a different way. While addressing a meeting at Shakespeare club, Pasedena, Californian, USA (Feb 2, 1900) he declared, "You will be astonished if I tell you that, according to old ceremonials, he is not a good Hindu, who does not eat beef. On certain occasions he must sacrifice a bull and eat it. (Vivekanand, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekanand*, Vol 3, Calcutta, Advait Ashram, 1997) Similarly the major ideologue of Hindutva, Savarkar said that there is nothing sacred about cow, it is a useful animal.



After the advent of agricultural society, rise of Jainism and Buddhism the concept of non-violence came up in different forms and later after 8th century Brahmanism projected Cow as its icon. Since then Cow is the projected as sacred, as 'mother' and gradually large sections of Hindus started regarding her so. In deference to the sentiments of Hindus, most Muslims Kings prohibited cow slaughter. Babur in his will to Humayun writes, "Son, this Nation Hindusthan has different Religions. Thank Allah for giving us this Kingdom. We should remove all the differences from our heart and do justice to each community according to its customs. Avoid cow-slaughter to win over the hearts of the people of this land and to incorporate the people in the matters of administration. Don't damage the places of worship and temples, which fall in the boundaries of our rule."

Since the rise of communal streams during freedom movement the communalists have been resorting to all the tricks to rouse emotions around matters of faith. So killing pig and putting it in the mosque & cow slaughter issue have been resorted to times and over again. It was during freedom movement itself that we see that the apostle of peace and non-violence, Mahatma

Gandhi, a total vegetarian offering beef to his Muslim guest. A story goes that when one of his Muslim friends' son from South Africa visited him in Sevagram Ashram, it happened to be the festive day of Bakr Id. Gandhi offered beef to the boy, the boy in turn refused to eat beef saying that he will not have any non vegetarian food in the Ashram as the Ashram practices non violence. What a touching sentiment on both the sides. Respect others' practices!

Today with the rise of communalism we need to recount the examples set by Gandhi in matters pertaining to community relations and the efforts to demonize and communalize by resorting to such symbolisms of cow or Ram Temple should be put aside to focus on the issues of living in peace and harmony in a plural society.

BS

Dr Ram Puniyani was Professor of Biomedical Engineering at IIT Mumbai. Currently he is associated with various secular initiatives. His website - www.pluralindia.com

It is morally as bad not to care whether a thing is true or not, so long as it makes you feel good, as it is not to care how you got your money as long as you have got it.

Edmund Way Teale

Circle of the Seasons (1950)

Quoted by Carl Sagan in *The Demon-Haunted World (1996)*

Selections from *Science versus Miracles*

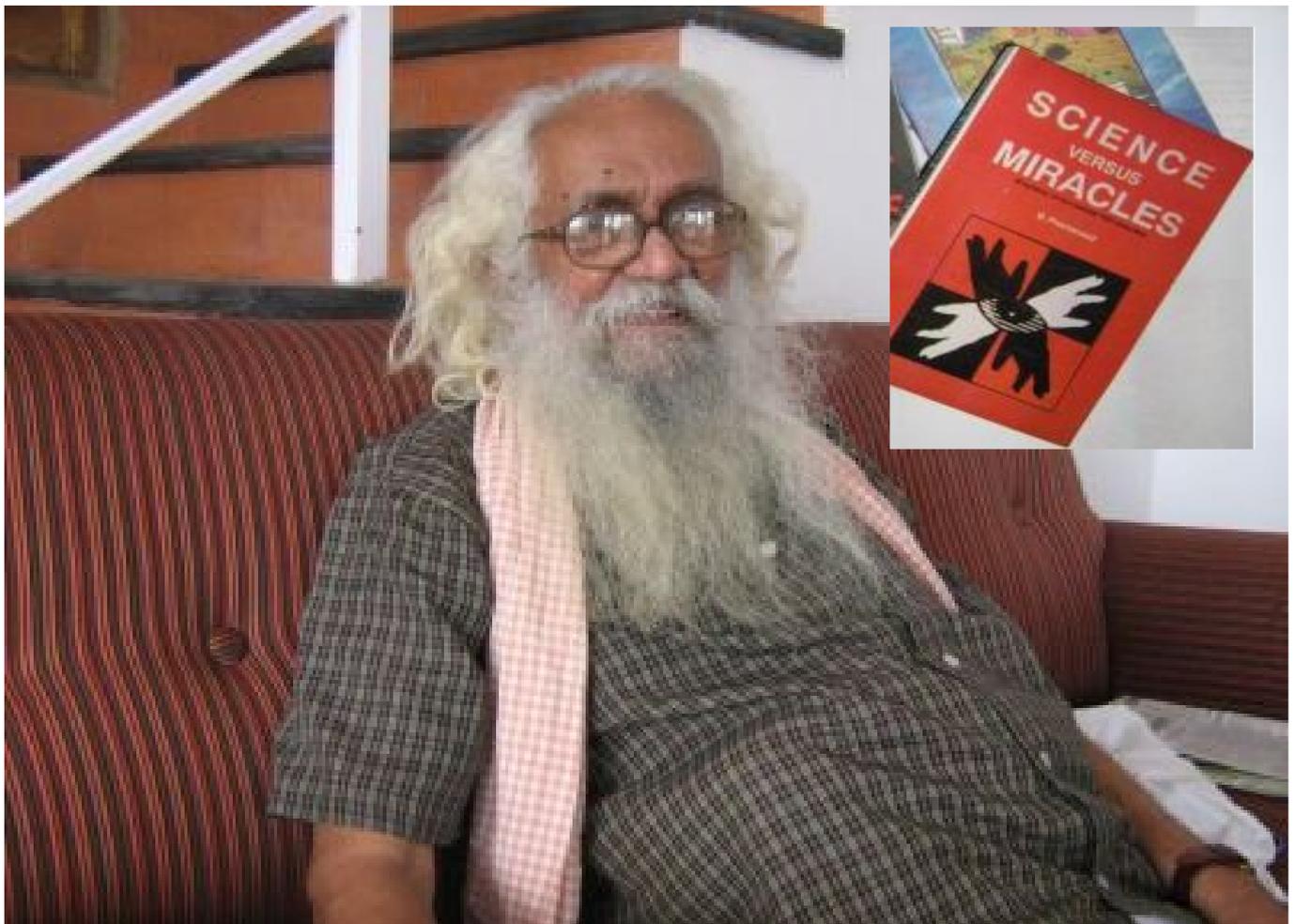
B. Premanand

Every Indian citizen has the right to believe or not to believe in god. This right is restricted by the understanding that individual belief and its practice must not harm the beliefs or practices of others. Every religion conceives god a Perfect, Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent, and as Creator, Protector and Destroyer of the Universe. While this belief in god is a philosophy of life, religions exploit the beliefs of the people.

Belief in god is not a problem for humanity. It is the religions that create dissidence between the people, destroying the peace and harmony of society and thus hampering the progress of humanity.

What is harmful is that a few persons claiming to be incarnations of god or all the gods put together. Claiming that they have attained siddhis (supernatural powers) through meditation or practice of Kundalini Yoga, or that they are possessed by gods and goddesses, they publicize their miraculous powers and thus exploit the credulous people.

A ‘miracle’ is a phenomenon that seems unexplainable by the laws of nature. So it is held to be supernatural in origin, or ascribed to be an “act of god”. ‘Supernatural’ implies existence outside the natural world, especially not attributable to natural forces or attributed to the immediate



exercise of divine power. A 'mystery' is an unexplained natural phenomenon about which we do not have any explanation yet. Much of the natural phenomena which people originally thought to be miracles or acts of god, have now been explained as natural laws and so are no more miracles, but mysteries.

Creation means producing something out of nothing. Manufacture means producing something using raw materials.

The theory of conservation states that mass and energy are two sides of the same coin and they can neither be created nor destroyed. Therefore, the claims of godmen that they can create anything from nothing are opposed to these laws. If the claims of godmen are false, then they should be prosecuted for cheating the public and exploiting them. Or, if they are true, the education department should stop teaching the theory of conservation and relativity to students.

Let us now examine the claims of godmen that they can create anything from nothing. Whatever they have produced so far are things which are already there in the universe. They are things which they can hide in their hand or on their person. What they cannot hide in their hand or body are produced out of vessels, boxes etc or from beneath their robes, earth, or from sand. They have not created a space ship, an airplane, a train, motor vehicles, bicycles or buildings, because such things cannot be hidden.

The first question to be put to them is: if they can create anything from nothing, why do they not come forward for investigation of their claims under fraud-proof conditions? They answer that their miracle are beyond human comprehension and therefore beyond the method of science, so they cannot allow themselves to be investigated. One of our Supreme Court Justices, VR Krishna Iyer, argued thus: "How could you question Jesus Christ about whether he is the son of god?"



You have to believe the claim or reject it. In religion and god, there is no questioning; one has to have implicit faith.

But what is this faith? The definition given to the word 'faith' is: belief in something which you have not experienced! Yet these godmen are human beings, born the same way we are all born, and they live and die just like us. If these supernatural powers are indeed beyond human comprehension, how have they come to possess these powers? And if they have acquired these powers, or if these powers are their inborn qualities, how can they be beyond human comprehension?

Suppose we accept, for the sake of argument, that these self-professed avatars or godmen may have supernatural powers. But when another person duplicates an act of creating objects from nothing in the same way, surely they have the moral obligation to demonstrate that their method is not that of any ordinary magician who uses sleight of hand, chemicals, mechanical apparatus, or human body to produce the same effect. Surely, they are liable to investigation as proof of their claims to godhead. It is only after they allow investigation and prove beyond doubt that their acts are not tricks, that their claims to powers beyond science and human comprehension can be accepted.

BS

Religion for the Poor and Uneducated

ATHEIST EVE

DESIGN ©2010

"Evangelical pastors are helping to create a terrible new campaign of violence against young Nigerians. Children and babies branded as evil are being abused, abandoned and even murdered while the preachers make money out of the fear of their parents and their communities."

—guardian.co.uk "The Observer"

"The pornographic images, which reduced some of the churchgoers to tears, were meant to whip up support for a bill under consideration in Uganda that would make some gays and lesbians eligible for the death penalty."

—abcnews.go.com "World News"

"In 1996, a group called the Taliban took control of the country. They banned television, music, and movies! Girls were not allowed to go to school. Luckily, the Taliban have been defeated here in Kabul thanks to the United States."

—<http://library.thinkquest.org/CR0212302/afghanistan.html>

"By maintaining its ban on condom use, the Catholic Church is contributing to the AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa. Condoms have been demonstrated to prevent infection 90% of the time. If the Vatican cared more about people's lives than a rigid doctrine that most Catholics reject, they'd make an exception to allow condom use to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS."

—<http://catholiceducation.org> "Will Condoms Really Stop AIDS in Africa?"



Some people live in poor countries and have no opportunities or education. If religion gives them hope and happiness, I don't see why you would have a problem with it?



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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From the President of FIRA

Narendra Nayak

After hectic tours and training programs all over the country it is time to sit and make an overall assessment of our situation. The last few months have been a round of travel, travel and more travel! We have had a number of training programs, interactions with people from various backgrounds and most importantly made very serious attempts to consolidate the gains made by the publicity accorded to us by a TRP hungry visual media and sensation loving print media. We are under no delusions that we are enjoying any support from them due to sympathy to our cause but we would like to use them like they would like to do the same to us.

In the past few months we have had extensive media coverage due to a variety of factors as I assess them. They have lost the credibility with the public due to their uninhibited coverage to a number of so called paranormal phenomena some of which are obviously laughable! Besides, their advertisements publicized as news and lopsided coverage of many events has caused a serious loss of credibility even among the superstition loving people of our country. This might have led to their desire to increase their levels of credibility by covering the so called 'other side' which we represent. Again, it may be the novelty of our presentation that might have been a cause. All said and done whatever the motives may be we got excellent media coverage during our last series of training programs at UP and Delhi.

It started with a TV channel called India TV whose Lucknow bureau chief had come for a training program of ours there.



She was quite impressed by the presentation and invited me for a shoot at their Lucknow studio. It went on exceedingly well and must have got good TRPs. The very next day I was invited by them to their Delhi studio next time I made a trip there. From Lucknow our next training program was at Allahabad. On the third day of the same we had the very attractive 'fire' items like fire walking, dipping hands into 'boiling' oil etc. These were covered by half a dozen TV channels and a good section of the print media. The next day I was invited to the studio of a Channel called as Sahara TV for two separate sessions for their two channels an hour apart. Following that another one called as Live India invited me for a live session. As soon as that was over, I was asked whether I would go to Delhi the very next day at their guest. I had to refuse as the training program was to be over the next day and we had to go to Meerut on way to Baghpat.

On our way to Meerut I had a call from the same channel whether I could come to their

studio from Meerut railway station itself. That was the beginning of another round of media coverage. Our Baghpat training program got fantastic coverage from as many as twenty channels and a dozen newspapers with photographs. We had two young women sitting in a pit taking 'samadhi'. After they came out walked on burning embers for added effect! The publicity was such that two of the channels broadcast it live with OB vans. That was followed by features and studio invitations from many channels. In fact in the last two months we have had good media coverage showing that rationalism is also an exciting thing more than superstition.

In July I was invited to Delhi for a program called as INSPIRE which was to get the younger generation interested in basic sciences. There were lectures by a number of eminent scientists and also hands on programs. We had the opportunity to interact with about 120 young bright minds and our emphasis was on rational thinking being the root cause for all scientific processes. This was well received by the student participants and even the volunteers

from the college, Miranda House of the Delhi University wanted a presentation and had many interactions. On a free day I used the opportunity to go to some resettlement colonies and had interactions with the underprivileged sections of the society.

Orissa or Odissa as its newly proposed name is a state full of contradictions- rich mineral wealth with starvation deaths, a long history of rational thought with superstitions of all sorts, conversions and communal riots and many such. There are many organizations there and even a magazine called Charcha devoted to propagation of rational thinking is brought out quarterly. There are a number of organizations and activists. Now, we want to consolidate that into a movement well organized and having representation from all over the state. Last month when I paid a visit to Bhubaneswar and Konark we tried to do that. We are planning to have a state level meeting and also have training camps for activists in the month of October.

The same process is now taking place in Karnataka too. We have a number of



First conference of Karnataka State Federation of Rationalist Associations held in Banalore on 14 March 2010

individuals and organizations in many places. But there is the need to consolidate these into a cohesive movement. In this direction we have taken a number of steps. In March we conducted a meeting at Bangalore. One was held in the month of June at Dharwar to cover the North Western part. Now we have plans for meets at Hassan, Kodagu in the month of August and for the north eastern parts in September. With these we plan to have a state level convention followed by an organization having a state wide presence.

In Uttar Pradesh various organizations and individuals have expressed interest in building up the movement. We plan to build this up into a state wide movement with representatives from all over and a bank of activists to tackle claims of the paranormal. In Delhi too some of our activists have planned to organize some interested persons and start building up a movement. One weakness we have noticed

is that the movement is very weak in the metropolitan cities! This is to be corrected and there is a great need for representation in the political and commercial capitals of the country. Here I mean Delhi and Mumbai where we are almost non existent.

We have been putting our maximum energies into getting the younger generation interested in the movement. When I meet them I do get reminded of my younger days when I was fired with the enthusiasm to change the world and I find that fire raging even when I am on the wrong side of fifty. We do have youngsters with such enthusiasm and it is a fond hope that we can build them up into a movement of younger generation. The web site nirmukta.com and the nirmukta community are a step in this direction and we do hope that they will take over the task.

BS

Where did God come from? If you say that I must not ask the question of where God came from, then why must I ask the question of where the universe came from?

Carl Sagan

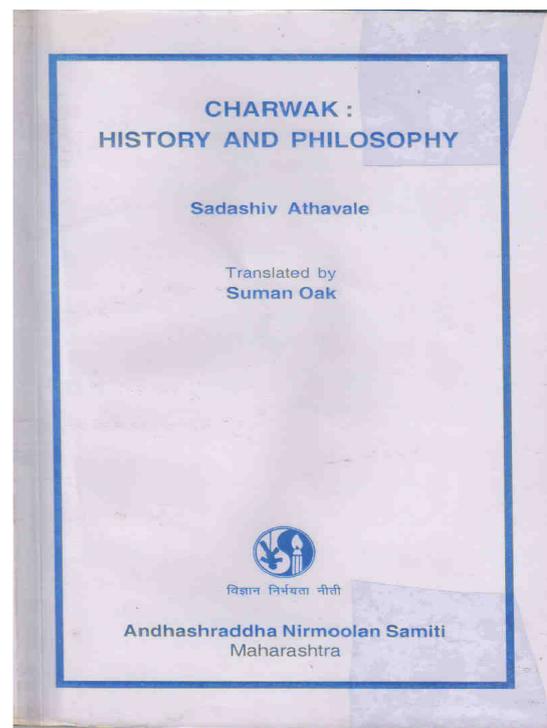
The Varieties of Scientific Experience: A Personal View of the Search for God (2006)



Tracing the History of Charwak Philosophy

Prabhakar Nanawaty

The book, *Charwak: History and Philosophy* was originally written in Marathi by a noted historian Prof Sadashiv Athavale (1923 -2003). Amongst the well-known Maharashtrian historians like K N Sane, Vasudevshastri Khare, Rajwade, Sardesai, Parasanis, Bhave, Apate, Shejwalakar, G H Khare, Setumadhav Pagadi, etc who enriched the history in general and Maratha history in particular by writing in vernacular language, Prof Sadashiv Athavale has a distinct place amongst them. Due to his frank and pragmatic insight about the historical personalities and painstaking efforts he put to support his statements and conclusions, he did not get much acclaim as expected while he was alive nor posthumously. In fact he gave new dimension to the traditional biographies like Rana Pratap, Chhatrasaal of Bundelkhand, Krishna Devaraya of Vijayanagar etc. and educated the scholars of Maharashtra. However amongst his interest and books written, the research paper on Charwak appears to be the one of the most acclaimed and popular essay recognized by historians. We must thank Ms Suman Oak for translating the book in English in verbatim and Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samitee for making it available to non-Marathi speaking readers. The author tracks the



historical aspects of Charwak Philosophy in this lucid volume of 100 odd pages.

There are very many misconceptions about Charwak even among rationalists. Some think that there was a person whose name was Charwak which is not true. One will find a lot of bitter criticism against and outright condemnation of Charwak philosophy by supporters of Veda and Hindu priests. Prof Athavale makes it clear that rather than a person and his teachings,

this was a philosophy of materialism which can be traced back to ancient India. The book makes an attempt to trace the origin, development and rise and fall of this philosophy. According to the author, *Lokayatvaad* and *Charwak* philosophy are one and the same and are two sides of the same coin.

Charwaks in Ancient India

Author makes it very clear about what he meant by history. We generally have a totally wrong conception about history. For us history means genealogies of dynasties, battlefields, maps and strategies, chronological details of particular kingdom, region or society. This has still been imbibed in our minds. However sensible people now think of history as the vision of entire human life. This book is a small chapter in the long history of trends of reflective deliberations in ancient India. The ancient period begins from the time *Sanhitas* were compiled and goes up to 13th – 14th century AD. It is quite surprising that the ancient Indian studies covered all fields of knowledge; not confining to only religious knowledge but also knowledge of economics, erotic science, medical science and of course knowledge of the Brahma – the supreme. This is in fact the creative literature period in the history. This has been made available to us by many oriental and occidental scholars who meticulously studied, interpreted and presented us the conclusions. However the most neglected of this rich and veritable literature appears to be Charwakvaad, the secular – materialist philosophy enunciated in ancient India.

Human beings are quite inquisitive all along the history. They were pondering over a number of questions: who created the animate and inanimate universe? How does it run? Is it controlled? Who controls it and how and why does that entity (God, Supreme) do it? Why was I born? Why I am living? Why am I going to die? What is the meaning of life? Why should we live?

Prof Sadashiv Athavale
(1923-2003), the author of
*Charwak: History and
Philosophy*, has a distinct
place amongst the well-
known Maharashtrian
historians who enriched the
history in general and
Maratha history in
particular by writing in
vernacular language

From where did I have arrived? Where I am going? How am I related to creator and controller? Is there any creator or controller? From where has the surrounding world come?... and so on so forth. This innate desire to know gave birth to various doctrines like theism, atheism, determinism, law of chance, fatalism, spiritualism, materialism, humanism etc. We Indians felt that the quest for the Brahma will answer all these questions. But a few amongst us were not satisfied with this Vedant philosophy and hence they interpreted in some other way. Though the Vedant philosophy was popular in ancient India, it does not mean that others were wrong. This philosophy of minority is generally termed as Charwak philosophy which had been existing all along since the time when the ancient Indian Rishis visualized the Richas some 3-4 thousand years BC.

The philosophy of Charwaks has many extraordinary characteristics. They were the first to refute the validity or legitimacy of Vedas. They stressed that the Vedas are not *Apourusheya* (i.e. of superhuman origin). They cannot be divine or made by god. Nor do they have inner validity of their own. On the contrary they are the creation of foolish but shrewd men – priests and *Bhikshuks*, living on religious offerings. *Agnihotra*, *Shraaddha*, the cycle of births and deaths, heaven and hell, the fruits of our deeds and all such conceptions are their sweet fabrications that ensure the gullible into their design. Chasing the impossible objectives like *Moksha* (liberation) and *Nirvana* (salvation) is as good as wasting one's life. The life on this earth is real and human beings should enjoy it and live happily. All the caste and colour discrimination is unscientific. The value of fidelity and slave like mindset in relation to the husband forced on the women are weapons of the cruel men to subjugate women. In support of these ideas author had reproduced the *Sutras* which were handed over to us from 14th -15th centuries AD.

According to the author, Charwak philosophy as we know, it can be tracked down almost *Rigved* period. Though *Rishis* (and people!) believed in gods, deities, *Yadnyas*, the benefit of performing *Yadnyas* etc, there were some sizable *Rishis* expressed diverse thoughts. Plain materialism was in the vogue. Many *Pandits* openly refuted rebirth and maintained that death means total extinction of a person. In fact there were broadly three schools of philosophical thoughts: *Vedant*, *Sankhya* and *Lokayata*. *Vedant* was theistic and spiritual; *Sankhya* and *Lokayata* were atheistic and materialistic. In fact we may find derogatory and dismissive references to *Lokayata* in *Vedant* literature. Most of them were in a messy and disorganized form. In fact *Charwak Darshan* was not systematically enunciated and could not be called a logical rational philosophy that *Lokayatya Shaastra* is.

It is indisputable that Charwak philosophy with all its *Sutras* came into being before the Buddha period. In fact, Bouddhas treated Charwak/Lokayata philosophy as *Vitandvaad* (argumentative) rather than *Praman Shaastra* – the science of validation. Jain *Granthas* too were adapting this line of thinking. Even Brahmanic literature like *Ramayan*, *Mahabhashya* (*Patanjali*), *Arthashastra* (*Chanakya*) also mention about *Lokayata*. *Arthshastra* considers *Lokayata* to be discipline of investigation (*Anvikshiki Vidya*). If it is so then it cannot be *Vitanda*. Supports for antiquity of the *Lokayata* philosophy are a plenty. First it is in the Vedas and *Upanishads*, later in the Bouddha and Jain literature, i.e. from 6th century BC to 2nd century AD. In fact the word *Charwak* comes into picture in the 6th century BC.

Who is Charwak?

Generally we have curiosity that who that *Charwak* in whose name the famous atheist philosophy is propagated. Had there been any *Charwak* in the ancient past? According to Prof Athavale, this has been extensively debated and there is no evidence on the basis of which any decisive conclusion can be drawn. No biographical information regarding a person named *Charwak* the philosopher, who propounded *Charwak Darshan*, is provided in any available Sanskrit or vernacular ancient literature. Many writers play upon the word *Charwak* and tried to explain it. Some have made a pun on the word *Charwak*. According to fun makers *Charwaks* are those who believe only in *Charvan* (eating) and do not care about sin and merit. Another interpretation is they are *Charu Waks*; who have a sweet tongue. In fact there was character of this name in the play *Prabodhanchandroday*. *Madhvacharya* too refers *Charwak* as a proper noun instead of adjective and describes him as *Nastik Shiromani*. In *Mahabharat* *Charwak* appears as demon. In the history of *Charwakvaad* there are many personalities who adhered to this philosophy. *Ajit Keshkambali*, *Brihaspati*, *Bharadwaj*,

Pradeshi, Virochan, King Kuruchandra are some of the names appear as *charwajvaadi* in the ancient Vedic, Bouddha and Jain literature.

Distinctive Nature

In the ancient days all Vedic, Bouddha and Jain philosophers proceeded to solve the mystery of the universe. They raised the questions in this regard and tried to answer them. Every one thought that their conclusions are logically correct. However they seem to slip somewhere. But one philosophy stands out and shows no such weakness and again it is *Charwak Darshan*.

Charwakvaad's logic and its way of examining validity are quite extraordinary. They reject all religious books and all sacred statements. When they reject the validity of the Word, they honestly stick to their statements. They do not have faith in any *Shruti*, *Smruti* or in any *Tirthankar* (Jain) or *Tathagat* (Bouddha). They don't start their discussions by bowing down before their founder Brihaspati. Word testimony has no place in their logic. They even refused the analogies. For them sense of perception is base for their inference.

They refute all deceptive validation like authority of *Veda*, attempts by elders, and advocated uncompromising rationalism. They are the founders of rationalism. They gave us a specific method of reasoning. Today's advance logic takes up exactly the same stand as was adopted by Charwaks. Their science of validation was meant for the smooth running of world affairs and daily routines of the individual and social life. Can a rationalist student in search of truth takes up a stand other than Charwak philosophy?

As typical Indians (who believes in Sanatan dharma) firmly believe that the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* have amassed all knowledge; they contain all scientific discoveries in them; they have already revealed all the truths regarding human life and there remains nothing more to be said.

And we expect others to agree with this. All the *Sankhya*, *Naiyayik*, *Vaishishik*, *Vedant* and other philosophers were engaged in deep and incisive thinking; but all their thinking concentrated on problems of the universe, its nature, nature of life and external world. They needed some comfort to carry out their studies without interruption. This peaceful atmosphere, they must have thought, could be assured by maintaining status quo. So they were interested in keeping *Varnashram* and caste system alive and also insisted that people should adhere. They never felt need for more justice in the social life of those days. They might have said that killing animals for sacrifice might pollute *Yadna* rituals. But they did not doubt about the fruits of rituals nor rejected the *Yadna* culture. *Manusmriti* was the guide and philosopher to all of them.

The Jains and Bouddhas opposed the *Yadna* system and shook the concept of priest's superiority. They also realized that instead of Vedic rituals, good conduct on part of the people will improve the social condition. But could they do away with caste discrimination with success? Jain religion has survived with all its defects of Brahminic religion – castes, untouchability and all. The Bouddhas have almost disappeared from India. The *Bouddhas* and Jains had suggested that it is possible to replace the traditional discriminatory social system that is dominated by the priestly class with some alternative method. But when we try to find out what they were contemplating our illusions wither away. Nirvan did not pull out of the quagmire of the concepts of rebirth, heaven and hell. They did not tell common man how to lead a rich and happy life. For the common man to live a secular worldly life, he needs good food, good clothes and healthy sensuous fulfillment. But when some great soul tells him that the chasing of such a goal is wrong, he is perplexed. Their teachings humiliate the humble innocent people. In fact priests were replaced by *Muni* and *Bhikshu*.

Charwaks' criticism of Vedas was altogether different. When they reject the Vedas, they rejected the testimony of the Word too. They were very sincere and truthful to their stand. They spoke very clearly without any ambiguity. They rejected the divine and eternal nature of Vedas. Charwaks demonstrated how ridiculously childish and foolish were the concepts on which the Vedic rituals are based.

The Jains and Bouddhas too had criticized Vedas like the Charwaks. But later they had to propagate theories of omniscience and attribute of possessing indisputable religious knowledge. They could not envision a happy prosperous life on this earth nor could they offer it to others. Only Charwaks could advocate explicitly that one should not rise above confounding concepts of heaven, Yadnayaag, penance, liberation, caste discrimination etc and do something useful and productive like agriculture, trade ... and lead a happy life. The Charwaks alone could take this firm stand that could lead to worldly life which would have made common man happy.

Scientific Base

The ancient Indian thinkers confronted with questions regarding life and surrounding world. Charwaks too entered into this intellectual arena, but their findings were altogether different than others. They tried to progress as directed by their logic of validation by direct sense perception. In fact this made their life very difficult. The theist philosophers found it very convenient to transfer it to the agency of everything that happens to be god and shirk all responsibility. For them everything is in Veda and if required interpret from Richa. Though Bouddhas had no faith in either god or Veda, they left all the unanswered questions alone. A kind of escapism was advocated. They did not bother about the soul, Atma and god etc, but in the same breath they believed in hundreds of previous lives.

According to Charwaks, knowledge that is perceptible to the senses is true knowledge. Any item of knowledge should be verifiable. The debate regarding Moksha, Brahma etc are meaningless. We should refrain from indulging in imagination. In fact they added fifth element Akash to the basic four elements viz, earth, water, light and wind. Charwaks analysed the concept of God in detail and concluded its non-existence.

Charwaks had thought about the science of life. Life originates when the elements combine in specific proportions. There is no property of intoxication in the elements from which the alcohols are made but their chemical mixture produces an altogether a new substance called wine. The elements like water, earth do not possess any vitality; they are not alive.

Charwaks were not prepared to accept the existence of Atma – soul beyond the body with vitality of a living being. A few of them accepted the concept as a convenience during the arguments. That did not mean that the soul survives after death and enters into another body. They even questioned that had any body ever seen a departing being going to the other world. Their opinion about god, origin of the universe, nature of the universe and biology are indications of their scientific outlook. The Charwaks were in fact propounded the rational, scientific way of thinking.

Moksha is Freedom

The ancient Indian philosophers deliberated on human life and aim of life. There were heated debates and criticism. Finally they could arrive at four objects of life: Dharma – religious duty; Arth – earning to sustain the family and self; Kama – enjoying the life and produce heirs; and Moksha – liberation. Moksha was of paramount importance for all Vedic, Bouddha and Jain thinkers, philosophers, writers and even poets. Most of the interpretations about what is Moksha are

incredible; but all agree that it is the supreme goal of human life, it is noble and exalted thing to achieve, human beings should strive for nothing less than that and beyond that nothing remains to be achieved. The common burden of these philosophers is that man caught in the cycle of rebirths because of his ignorance. As such he should attain knowledge to escape from the chain of successive births and reach a blissful state.

In this regard Charwaks' first step was to free themselves of the idea of virtually endless chain of births and deaths. There was no place for previous lives or rebirths in Charwak philosophy. According to them man should live in such a way that in the end he will get peace and happiness. Considering the whole human life, the Charwaks tell us that happiness is possible only through activity, being involved in productive work. Charwaks had extolled the importance of freedom in the same sense as in the West, albeit several centuries ahead of them.

Value of Life

The popularly known Indian philosophy advocates that life here is worthless but there is no escape from it. Though Bouddhas and the Jains rejected the god and Vedas they too believe that life is full of grief and ultimate goal of human life is getting rid of thirst and desire.

Against this background, the couplets attributed to Charwaks

: ||

(‘enjoy as long as you are alive. Incur debts if you must enjoy. How can this body once reduced to ashes be reborn?’) attracted severe criticism from all corners. In fact in the above couplet there is nothing objectionable except for the phrase incur debt if you must but enjoy. Asking to live happily appears to be acceptable; but incurring debts is dangerous. Would the Charwaks, who were quite sensible ever offer such advice to people? In fact these

couplets were quoted out of context. The author gives full explanation about this and one must read it in original. As a matter of fact the original words - : - were replaced by Madhavacharya during later period to denounce Charwaks.

Charwaks never accepted the supernatural origin of Vedas. Men wrote Vedas. The Charwaks advocated hedonism and propagated enthusiastically. They never seen to be telling people to steal, cheat, plunder, pilfer or amass wealth through corruption. On the contrary they attacked religious hypocrisy. Their advice to people was to earn living by fair means of agriculture, trade, service etc. and live happily; achieve the two goals of life Arth and Kama; do not believe in the deceptive ideas of other world and fall prey to the bluffs of the shrewd and cunning priests. Such down to earth advice was of tremendous importance in the social life of ancient India.

Failure of Charwak Philosophy

The Charwak philosophy was propagated from the pre-Buddha period up to 15th century AD. During this long period this philosophy was always despised; ridiculed; not a word in its favour or in favour of its followers was spoken or written by any one any where. They were always referred as Nastiks. Bouddha philosophers called them Vitandak – excessively argumentative. In fact Arth Shaastra and Kama Shaastra were in reality aspects of Charwak philosophy. Yet Vatsayana, author of Kama Shaastra ridiculed Lokayatiks. However Indian philosophy advocating spiritualism in all walks of life, sometimes, acknowledged the arguments and redefined their concepts. They in fact used to study Lokayat Shaastra. Baring the mention of a few Charwak philosophers, not a single book written by any Charwak philosophers exist today. Everything which did not conform to spiritual philosophy just disappeared.

Though Charwakvaad is meant for the well

being of the masses, but what has happened in reality? Charwaks have been telling for centuries not to remain enslaved to the Vedas. But even today great scholars seek support for their opinions in the Vedas. Charwaks shouted themselves hoarse that god does not exist; Yagnas are meaningless and rituals are fraud. But even today common man is enslaved to them. They dissected the notions of both Atma and Moksha. Yet the never ending ranting about them has become a permanent character of Indian history. In fact theist philosophy was successful in creating negative opinion that Charwaks were all whimsical and licentious individuals. As a matter of fact Charwaks must have been a small group of honest, responsible, brave and dedicated individuals. They were not in a position to effectively shape the thought and conduct of Indians. And yet Charwakvaad deserves a place in the history of thought. Among all the philosophies that were enunciated in India Charwaks holds a singular place. Not only were they the most logical rationalist philosophers but also obliged others to become rational to some extent.

Prof Athavale had succeeded in bringing out the essence of this philosophy in this

volume. His statements are often supported by the extensive references and he quotes Sanskrit shlokas in verbatim to support his interpretation. We must also be indebted to Ms Suman oak who translated and included the preface written by noted thinker Lakshmanshaastri Joshi who provides further evidences to support Prof Athavale's explanations.

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Sadashiv Athavale

Translated by Suman Oak,

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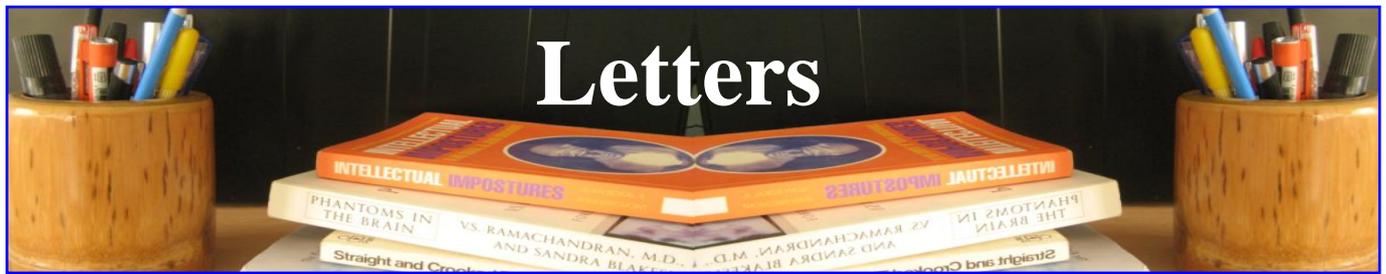
***Prabhakar Nanawaty* is the editor of
Thought & Action, the ezine
published by Maharashtra
Andhashradha Nirmoolan Samiti.
Email: pkn.ans@gmail.com**

**What we need is not the will to believe, but the wish to
find out.**

Bertrand Russell

Quoted in *Science, Nonscience and the Paranormal* (1987)

edited by H. Narasimhaiah



Dear Indian Skeptic,

Thanks a lot for sending me Indian Skeptic on mail regularly.

I read it with interest regularly. I have some suggestions for improvements.

- 1. Since it is becoming an e-journal. It might be better to change the format (or have optional format) to html file.*
- 2. Within pdf file you can give links to articles on content page. This means that the content page will become clickable (that is I can read content page and click on it to reach an article.)*
- 3. The image size could be reduced without losing clarity. This might help in reducing current file size of 1.52 MB. (This file size is no problem for me, but can create problems for others.)*
- 4. You are probably using some kind of DTP software to produce this. The two column format looks good on printed journal. However on e-journal single column will make it more readable.*

Pramod Sahasrabuddhe

Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge: it is those who know little, and not those who know much, who so positively assert that this or that problem will never be solved by science.

Charles Darwin

Introduction, *The Descent of Man* (1871)

Karnataka State Federation of Rationalist Associations

S Srinivas Natekar

The first Karnataka State Rationalist Conference was held on 14th March 2010 at Akhila Karnataka Makkala Koota, Bangalore. The conference was held to launch a platform to bring together rationalists from across the state. Delegates from various parts of the state attended the conference and deliberated on the launching of a state level organization.

Dr. Viajya, journalist and literary critic, inaugurating the conference said, "There is

need to spread rationalism to rural areas. Today, when even scientists and educated people are propagating superstitions, it is the duty of rationalists to free the people from superstitions. We should become militant activists to spread rationalism as it is not an easy work".

Srinivas Natekar, presenting key note address, criticized the media for spreading unscientific ideas like life after death, etc without analyzing them scientifically.

Dr Vijaya



Skeptic News

‘Corrupt politicians have joined hands with religious organizations by donating money through budget which is a dangerous signal to the society. At this critical juncture there is a need for us to form a platform to fight against superstitions’ he said.

U. Kalanathan, patron, Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations (FIRA), spoke about the need of a Federation, the formation of units at various levels and the activities to be undertaken by the organization. He stressed the need for activity based education and to reach all the people of the society.

Narendra Nayak, President, FIRA (also representing Dakshina Kannada Vicharavadi Sangha, Mangalore), presided over the function. He called upon the

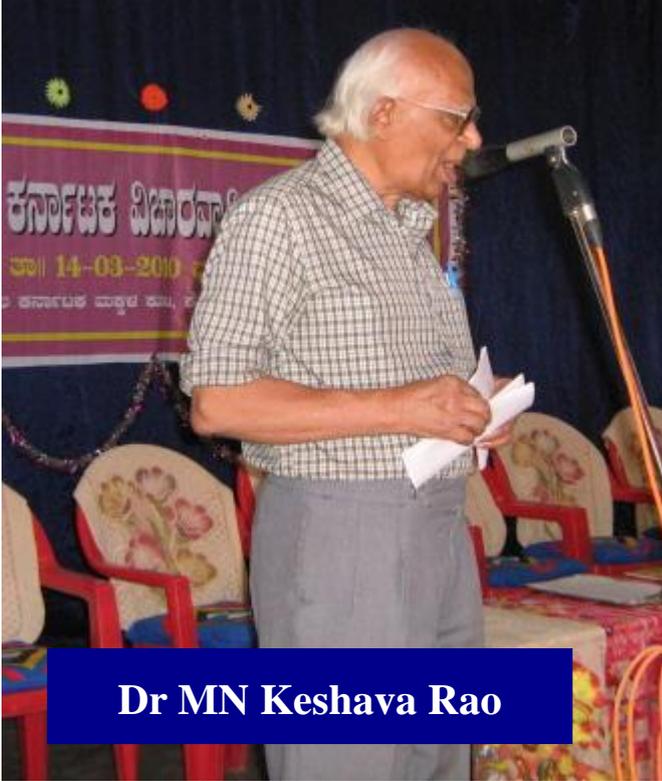
delegates to work unitedly to strengthen the Karnataka State organization. ‘Let us work and fight together against religious fundamentalism and superstitions and to form rationalist groups even in rural areas, as it is done in Kerala’, he said.

Delegates from various parts of the state narrated their own experiences in propagating rationalism. They expressed their view about the need, formation and the strengthening of a rationalist organization at the state level.

Sripal, an advocate from Shimoga and activist of Komu Souharda Vedike, spoke about the experience he and his friends had in opposing the proposed ban on eating beef in Karnataka. When they publicly ate beef to express their protest against the



Skeptic News



Dr MN Keshava Rao

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Sripal, an advocate from Shimoga and activist of Komu Souharda Vedike, spoke about the experience he and his friends had in opposing the proposed ban on eating beef in Karnataka. When they publicly ate beef to express their protest against the possible ban, they were arrested and case was booked against them. He told that they ate beef to show that it was not only the Muslims who eat beef but many from the other community too. He stressed on the need to have a state level rationalist organization to have our voice heard on such occasion.



S Srinivas Natekar

Skeptic News



U Kalanathan

A resolution was passed unanimously to protest against the action and called the state government to withdraw the cases filed against them. The bill was criticized as it is antidemocratic to interfere with the food habits of the people in the name of religious sentiment and it is violation of human rights. Another resolution criticized allocating money to religious organizations through budget.

B.V.V. Subbarao, convener of the conference, thanked all for success of the Conference. A. S. Nataraj addressing the closing ceremony told, "Road ahead is difficult. But we have to move forward and fight for right and spread rationalism".

S. Srinivas Natekar Shravana Belagola Hassan District Karnataka

Other prominent activists representing various science, rationalist, and Dalit movements spoke at the conference. E. Basavaraju, General Secretary, Bharatiya Gyan Vijnana Samiti, Karnataka, Yeriswamy, editor of Putani Vigyana, VT Rajashekr, editor of Dalith Voice, Nagaragere Ramesh of People Democratic Forum, Kranti and Deshmukh (Maharashtra Andha Shrudda Nirumalana Samithi), Nehru (Tamilnadu Rationalist Forum), Iringal Krishnan (Science Trust, Calicut), and Dhanuvachapurm Sukumarn (Kerala Yukthivadi Sangham) also spoke at the conference.

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Adv Sripal

Skeptic News

Karnataka State Federation of Rationalist Associations

has convened a meeting on 22nd August 2010 (Sunday) at

Hassan. Those who would like to attend the meeting are

requested to contact the State Convener of KSFRA

Mr. BVV Subba Rao, . Phone: 09886679088. Email:

babukadur44@gmail.com

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)

Tools for Skeptical Thinking

Carl Sagan

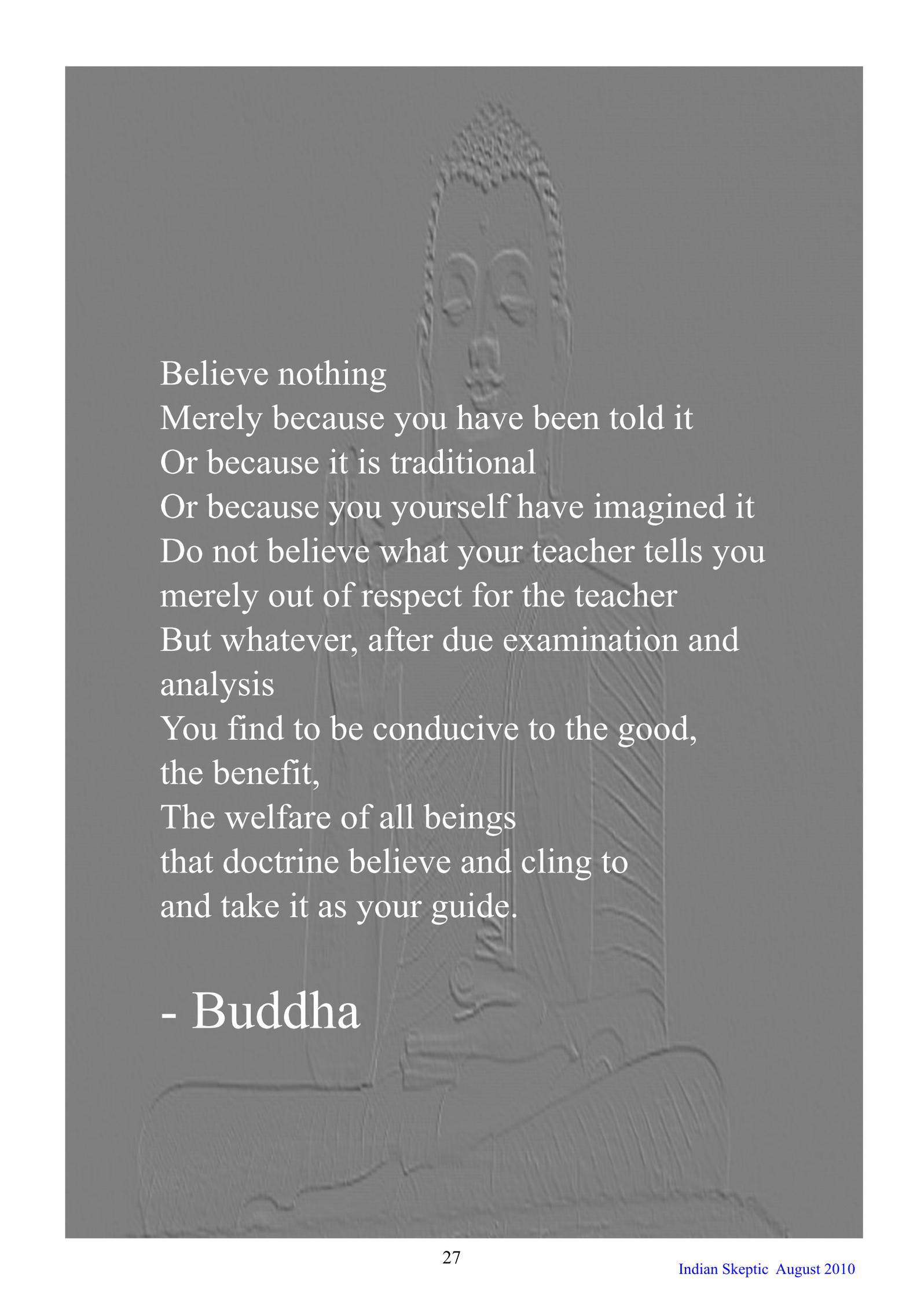
Carl Sagan's famous essay, *The Fine Art of Baloney Detection*, more or less encapsulates the basic tenets of Skeptical Thinking. The present article is an extract from the essay.

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