

INDIAN SKEPTIC

No. 01/09

September 2010

- 
- **Alternative Medicine**
 - **Colour of Terror**
 - **Faith vs. Universal Compassion**
 - **Book Review:**
 - *Superstition: Belief in the Age of Science*
 - *The Truth About The Gita*

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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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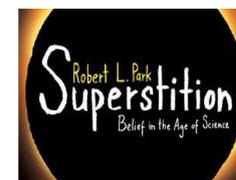


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Superstition: Belief in the Age of Science

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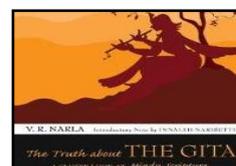


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Alternative Medicine

Narendra Nayak

When one hears this term we tend to understand that this is a term used to describe something that offers a tested, tried alternative to main stream systems of medicine. In India we have the three types of systems of treatment and diagnosis- the recognized evidence based one - the scientific system, the recognized but not evidence based ones coming under the acronym AYUSH- Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy. The third has a list which can almost never be complete but common ones like electrohomeopathy, reiki, pranic healing, aromatherapy, music therapy, gem therapy etc. The term alternative medicine perhaps describes the last class. This class seems to be the favourite hunting ground for quacks of all types.

The scientific system of medicine being called popularly as allopathy as the term was coined in those days when the more dominant system was called as homoeopathy devised by a German called Samuel Hahnemann who proposed that the



minute doses of those which could cause these symptoms of the particular disease in a healthy individual could cure that disease. Since the other system of medicine prevalent at that time believed otherwise it was called as allopathy or the other. At that time this system of medicine involved treatments like purging, bleeding, leech therapy, injections with toxic substances etc. The side effects of these were so unpleasant that the patient many a time would be better off without the treatment! By contrast homeopathy involved treatment with sugar pills and



Homeopathy involved treatment

with sugar pills and tinctures

whose active ingredients, if any,

were respectively milk sugar and

ethanol.

tinctures whose active ingredients, if any, were respectively milk sugar and ethanol. None of these could be harmful to normal people unless they were lactose intolerant! That explains why this became very popular! Those were the times when no treatment was better than drastic treatment and the mortality rate was higher after treatment with the remedies described above under allopathy! Nomenclature apart, it was this system that developed as it was not based on any irrefutable dogma

discarded and consigned to the dust bins of history. Methods of diagnosis and treatment are not based on some individual's idiosyncrasies but on methods of science. This system absorbed many things from other systems of medicine and knowledge and grew.

On the contrary the so called alternative systems of medicine, many of which cannot be called as that by any stretch of the most fertile of imaginations, are based on



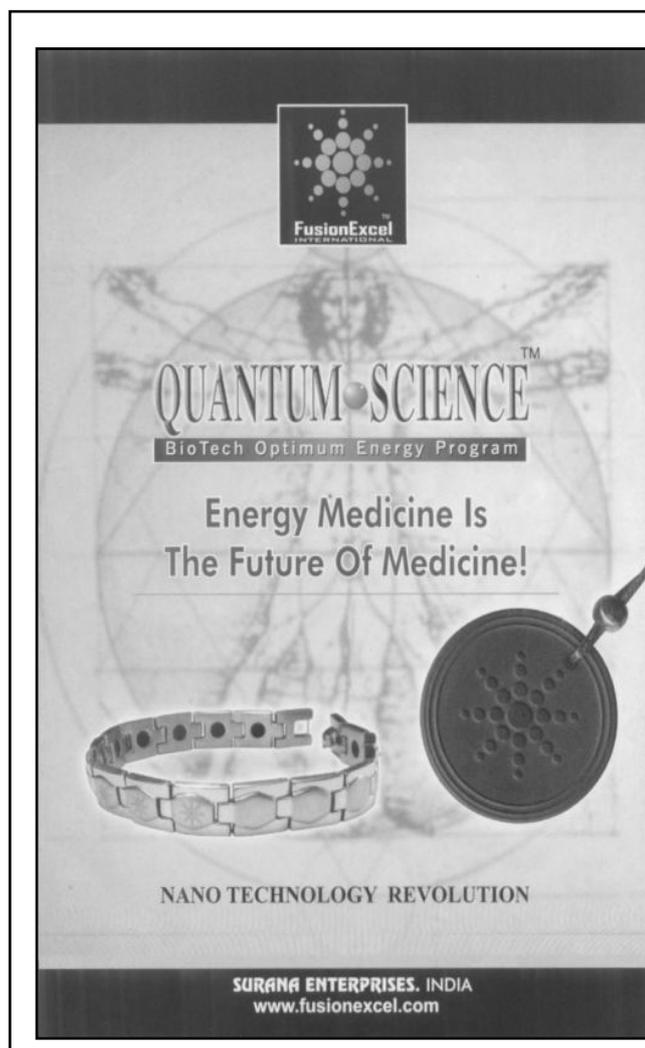
and is subject to self correction. Things that were the norm at one time got discarded when more sophisticated investigative methods showed that they were not desirable. Innumerable such examples can be given for these. For example laxatives which were prescribed at periodic intervals to all for cleaning the alimentary tract are now no longer used unless it is needed for surgery or radiography; at one time infection with malarial parasites was therapy for syphilis etc. Once evidence to the contrary came up or less harmful methods of treatment or more efficient drugs were discovered the older were

hypotheses unsupported by any evidence. They are based on presumptions of certain individuals, pseudo scientific assumptions and unsupported claims. They also peddle unproven remedies, devices and books of dubious claims. There are arguments that these are very inexpensive but the facts prove otherwise. In quack therapies like aroma 'therapy' small phials of perfumes are sold at exorbitant prices. While one may claim that there are more expensive perfumes that are no problem if a perfume is sold as such. One can decide whether one wants to purchase that at the quoted price. But, when it is claimed as a curative,

evidence is needed which is never forthcoming. Most of the time the so called evidence offered by these proclaimers of alternative medicine are testimonials from well known individuals.

Many countries have very effective laws to deal with these so called alternative systems. If any one claims that their concoction, device or incantation can be used as treatment for any disease, it is for them to prove that. If one fails they are subjected to heavy penalties including

Consumer protection act, the section under unfair trade practices of the MRTP act, The Drugs and magic remedies (objectionable advertisements) act the peddlers of these dubious concoctions and quack remedies manage to get away through various loopholes like claiming them to be traditional remedies or under religious freedom etc. Some times the advertisements are so cleverly worded that it is very difficult to pin them down. Under many of these only the affected parties can complain or go in for litigation which they are loath



The so called alternative systems of medicine, many of which cannot be called as that by any stretch of the most fertile of imaginations, are based on hypotheses unsupported by any evidence. They are based on presumptions of certain individuals, pseudo scientific assumptions and unsupported claims. They also peddle unproven remedies, devices and books of dubious claims.

imprisonment. That is why many peddlers of such do not carry on their activities in these countries. Some of our peddlers of such concoctions remain silent about their claims in such countries and some of them pitch their sales calling them as nutritional supplements made from edible ingredients! Some of them could not be sold as such too because of the unacceptable levels of toxic metals and such! But, in our country these people are lucky though there laws like the

to. These are so rampant that even a Supreme Court judgment has not affected them. In 2004 the Supreme Court of India has passed a judgment on more than a dozen so called systems of medicine stating that they have absolutely no scientific basis and should not be allowed to be practiced as systems of medicine. These include in addition to those already mentioned above things like magneto therapy, gem therapy, color therapy, urine therapy, etc.



Again the term 'therapy' is very vague term! So, a hotel could call itself as an Institute of Nutritional therapy- since there is some calling themselves Naturopathic hospitals and the practitioners as Naturopathic doctors. If nature itself can heal we don't know why these so called therapists are needed! One can get a certificate for many of these quack therapies from degree mills offering these and then call themselves as therapists and prefix Dr. to their names! I can always say that I am under treatment for breatho-therapy and every day get my therapy from the Institute of Nutritional Sciences round the corner (of course a fancy name for a restaurant!). A barber could call himself a Tonsorial therapist (the surgeons used be those long back and that is why the surgeons have the title Mr. in England!) and so on.

How do these alternative therapies gain legitimacy? One is due to their ads and programs on TV channels we can see many of these so called specialists on TV channels- the cancerologists, the kidneyologists, the sexologists and so on. That a qualified person in the field is

barred from advertising is not known to the lay public and hence they think that these are genuine. Of course the terminologies I have used for these so called specialists is deliberate as the respective specializations are called differently among the really qualified practitioners. Then we have people with respectable qualifications endorsing such quacks. Once I remember a professor of medicine who was also the Dean of a Medical College inaugurating the asthma relief camp of a steroid quack. The very same person who went on to become the Vice Chancellor of a deemed university also presided over a convocation of a quack and handed over degrees to other quacks. The quack who was the leader was hounded out of Mangalore and is now pursuing his quackery at Kolhapur I am told! Some of the qualified people treat patients referred to them by such treating them as if they are their professional colleagues. One thing that has to be admired about these alternative medicine guys is their gift of the gab! Their bedside manners, their use of pseudoscientific jargon could put any genuine specialist to shame! Their easy accessibility and their flexible terms of payment, money back guarantee and such attractive qualities are another plus point.

For those who are very fond of alternatives of our ancient civilization- want an alternative mobile? Breed homing pigeons and carry them in your pocket. You can send home messages in your alternative mobile. Want an alternative idiot box? Take a card board box of the size you want and go to the performance you want to see- open it hold it in front of your face and you have an alternative TV with full stereo hi-fi audio! Want an alternative car? Go to our villages you have the all terrain one or two ox power models! I am sure even the most vehement supporters of so called alternative medicine would not want any of these! In that case why does this so called alternative medicine work some times? As any honest general practitioner will tell you 80% of the patients have some self limiting disorder! These patients will get cured whether any treatment is taken or not! It is the main task

of the family doctor to decide whether you need specialist treatment or not. This doctor also prescribes palliatives so that the symptoms become manageable.

So, that raises the question as to how safe is it to go to these quacks? One has to remember that without a proper training these people are in no position to determine who comes in which category. Again, they refuse to admit failure and go on administering different things about which they have little knowledge and/or training. Some diseases which can be cured in the starting stages become untreatable later like cancers. Some emergencies require immediate treatment like an acute abdomen, internal bleeding etc.

So, please remember that there are no alternative lives and no alternative to good health when you think of something like alternative medicine. Again remember a color therapist will not go to a gem

therapist when he is ill! He will go to the nearest qualified specialist in scientific medicine with all the latest gadgets and drugs! To hell with the alternative treatments! As a wag remarked let us see a music therapist treat an aroma therapist or vice versa!

Despite of all the short comings that can be blamed on to evidence based, scientific medicine- it works, it is based on sound evidence and peer reviewed. It is not based on any individual's untested hypothesis or divine revelations or testimonies of individuals. It changes as new findings emerge, always subject to self criticism and peer review. In fact, most of published work is a review of the past methods. More importantly it changes and does not crow about the good old times when every thing was so good and everyone was so healthy. It does not have any unquestionable central dogma.

BS

**The real purpose of the scientific method is to
make sure nature hasn't misled you into thinking
you know something you actually don't know.**

Robert Pirsig

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

Colour of Terror: Saffron, Green or Black?

Ram Puniyani

Can terrorism be labeled or given the prefix of a holy color associated with religious sentiments? This debate came to the surface with P. Chidambaram stating, "There has been a recent uncovered phenomenon of saffron terrorism that has been implicated in many bomb blasts in the past. My advice to you is that we must remain ever vigilant and continue to build, at both Central and state level, our capacities in counter-terrorism," to the top policemen (August 25, 2010). There was a strong reaction to this from the Hindutva parties, parties working for the goal of Hindu Nation, BJP and Shiv Sena. The Congress spokespersons were also in a quandary, one of them supported the statement and the other one disowned it, saying that terrorism has just one color black. BJP spokesperson demanded apology. Shiv Sena's Uddhav Thackeray demanded resignation of Mr. Chidambaram, while his father, the supreme dictator of Shiv Sena Bal Thackeray, demanded to know the color of bloodshed in Kashmir and Delhi anti Sikh violence.

Chidambaram's statement has a background of multiple acts of terror coming to light since the Malegaon blast of Sept 2008, when role of Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, Swami Dayanand Pandey, and Swami Aseemanand came to surface. It was Hemant Karkare, Chief of Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad, who successfully unearthed the whole conspiracy by these saffron clad people. They had other associates in Lt. Col. Prasad Shrikant Purohit, Retired Major Upadhyay and



many others, who are working for the goal of Hindu Rashtra. This blast was preceded by many similar one's in which associates of Abhinav Bharat, Sanatan Prabhat and Bajrang Dal were suspected. Just to recall, when this conspiracy by all those inspired by the ideology of 'Hindu Rashtra' came to surface, there was a great discomfort in BJP-Shiv Sena RSS quarters. Shiv Sena mouth piece Samana stated 'we spit on Karkare who is investigating this case'. On the other hand a major BJP leader stated that Karkare is anti National (Deshdrohi). Same Karkare was killed when the terror attack took place in Mumbai on 26/11, 2008. The real undercurrent of this complex story is yet to be unraveled and recognized fully, still the situation leading to the death of Karkare led the then minority affairs Minister A R Antulay to say that there might have been terrorism plus something, which led to the killing of Karkare the man investigating these terror blasts.

It is after this event that the word Saffron Terror, Hindu terror came to be coined and got wide currency. This prefixing of

religion and a holy color of a religion came in the backdrop of wide usage of another word Islamic terrorism, Jihadi terrorism, the words coined by American media and picked up world over. Surely these terminologies Islamic terrorism and Hindu terrorism are misnomers. The word Jihadi Terrorism and Saffron terrorism have been used to describe a pattern in these acts of terror. Jihadi word was a deliberate concoction as Jihad does not mean killing, it stands for striving for betterment etc.

and Culture (Vedic). This was a word parallel to political Islam, which was made the base of politics of Muslim League. Muslim League used a green flag, Hindu Mahsabha used saffron flag. Later RSS from 1925 picked up the ideology of Hindutva to attain Hindu Rashtra.

In contrast to Indian tricolor, RSS insisted on using Saffron flag. Saffron color which stands for renunciation and devotion in Hindu tradition was usurped for political



In contrast to Indian tricolor, RSS insisted on using Saffron flag. Saffron color which stands for renunciation and devotion in Hindu tradition was usurped for political goals, the goals which were opposed to the goals of Indian National Movement

What about Saffron Terrorism, the term used by Chidambaram and many other scholars-activists-journalists? It can be explained in the context of this word, saffron, being high jacked by the believers of 'Hindu Nation', the believers of Hindutva, a political ideology using the identity of Hindu religion. One knows that to use the word Hindutva is fraught with dangers. It is a politics but gives the impression of being a religion. This word was coined by Savarkar, the ideologue of Hindu Mahasabha. As per him it means whole of Hinduness, race (Aryan) geographical area between Sindhu to Seas

goals, the goals which were opposed to the goals of Indian National Movement. Indian National Movement was struggling for plural, secular democratic India, while the bearers of green flag, Muslim league wanted and Islamic Nation and those waving saffron flag wanted Hindu Nation, both these political currents were a throw back to times when the concept of democracy, human rights was absent and the status of dalits and women was subordinate to men of high social status.

During the decade of 1980, RSS, VHP and associates launched their campaign for Ram

Temple and there was a blatant use of religious imagery and symbols for political goals. As such the political goals of RSS progeny, the agenda of Hindu nation harps to the values of Manu Smiriti in modern form. Surely this politics asserts the supremacy of social system prevalent in ancient times. No wonder, Ambedkar burnt the Manusmirit and later drafted the Indian Constitution to project the values of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

RSS and company used the symbols of saffron flag in its mobilization campaigns all through 1980s and 1990s. There was extensive use of saffron stickers for political propaganda for Ram Temple and Hindu Rashtra. RSS has a whole wing of assorted saffron clad sadhus, asserting that Hindu holy books have a primacy over Indian legal system; Indian Constitution. VHP, to which these sadhus belong is the other major RSS associate. VHP stated that decision of the Holy, saffron clad, Sadhus is more important than that of Indian courts. In nutshell saffron color, the color associated with religious sentiments came to be abused by this political outfit for its political goals. No wonder its politics came to be associated with saffron color. During NDA regime when BJP's Murli Manohar Joshi was communalizing the school text

books and education system, it came to be labeled as Saffronization of education. It is pity that a holy color of renunciation has been associated with a political ideology.

The present statement by Chidambaram is just a continuation of the popular association of the word saffron with Hindutva-RSS politics in the political arena. In the present era of monopolar World, dictated by the ambitions of US greed for oil and plunder of the global resources, politics has been given the veneer of religion. That's why they use the word 'Clash of Civilizations' for their political goals. That's why so far Islam and Muslims have been demonized. U.S. and large section of globe, India in particular are in the grip of Islamophobia. It is time we see the sanctity of religions and oppose the use of religious symbols, colors and terminologies for political goals.

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

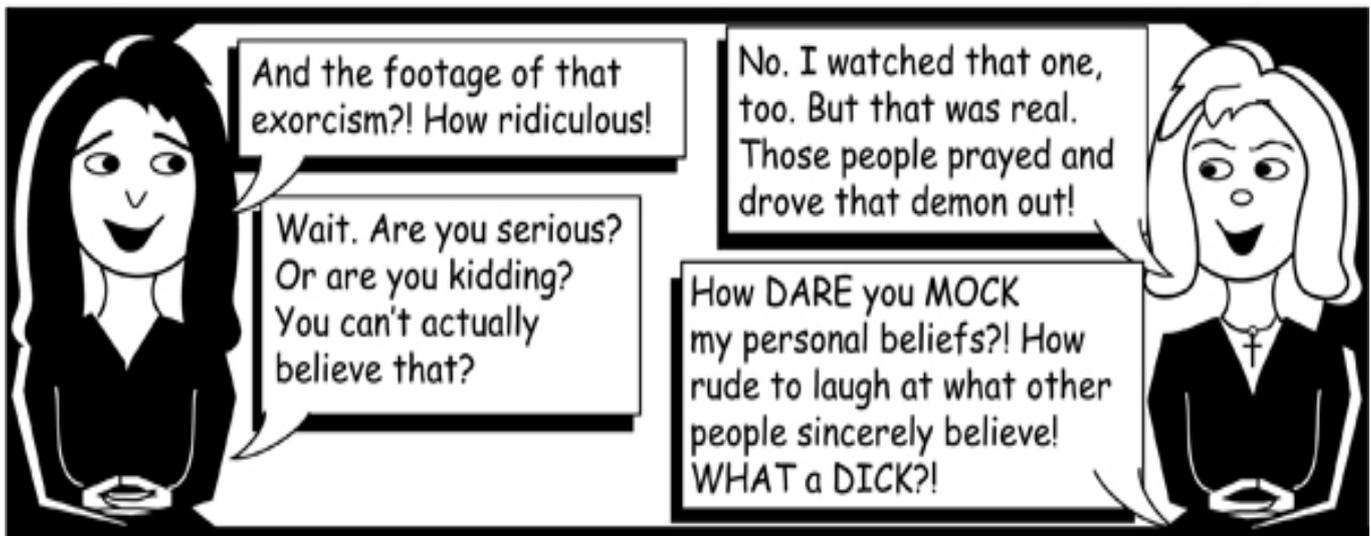
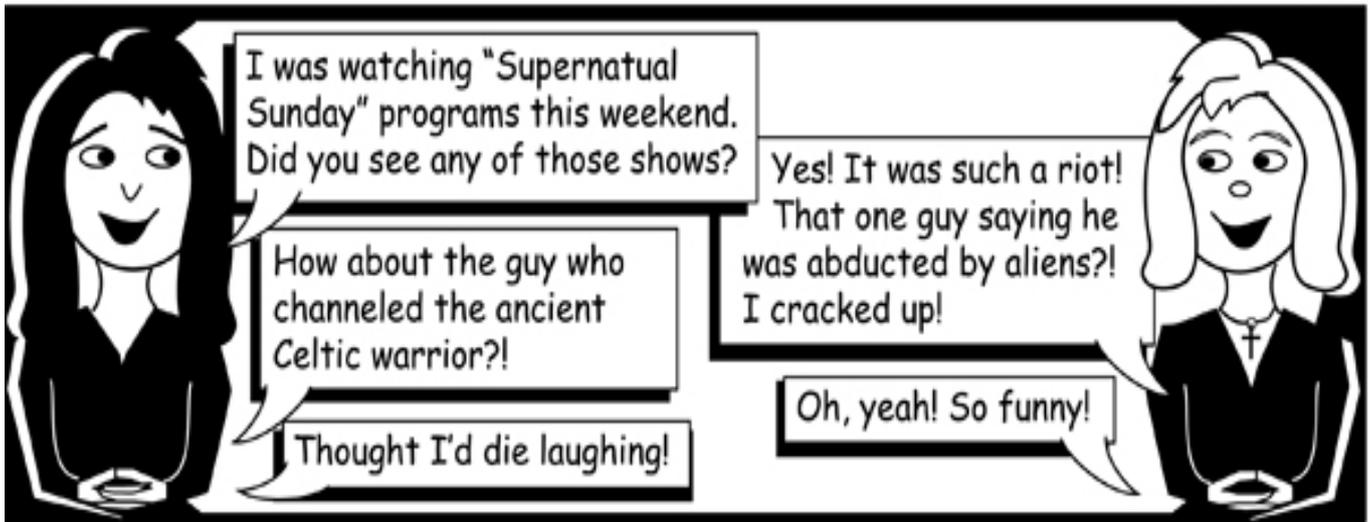
Whenever a chief of state speaks of God, be sure that he is getting ready to shear once more his people-flock.

Michael Bakunin

God and the State (1871)

ATHEIST EVE

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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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Faith vs Universal Compassion

Part - I

P L Rao

Recently in a temple, a famous speaker in his discourse on the subject “divinity, Ethics and You” was extolling virtues as man’s innate goodness and need of belief in God and compassionate treatment of others. Suddenly, there was interruption—an announcement: “Will the owner of car number xxx kindly move it aside as it is blocking passage? Secondly that as some thefts had occurred of late management has declared the manned footwear stand at gate as free service. Even before his sentence was over, there was a hustle around. Everyone was rushing out to deposit his worn sandals in the main stand. Such is our etiquette and the chasm between the noble ideals we hear and the practice in lives. The preface applies more aptly to the subject of this article.

visit to a crematorium, listening to harikatha or performing a pilgrimage can kindle it for once, but true faith is much beyond that. The ‘belief’ one claims from half knowledge boosts up ego, vanity and develops as pestilence. Every time one is led into believing for unworthy reasons, his self confidence, capacity of inquiring, doubting, judiciously analyzing and taking right actions vanes.

As per Milton, “If one believes things that his pastor or elder said so without knowing reason, the very Truth he holds becomes his heresy”. An aphorism of Coleridge says: “He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth, will proceed by loving his own sect of Church better than Christianity and ends loving himself better than all”

Definition and Meaning

Faith or belief is the unique faculty that prompts proper decisions and knits into harmonious working all the energies of our person. It helps to bind men together and directs them into common action, thus it is more relevant for others. It is a mental bond that develops after deep examination and total acquaintance. In material world, it is seen between aged couple, kid and mother, parents and child, siblings and friends. Faith is not momentary, transient and sentimental feeling. It is wrong to believe on insufficient evidence or to nourish it by suppressing doubt and avoiding investigation. That which develops after a

If one was loaded with a pattern of belief in childhood, which he persuaded later, his tendency is to push away any doubts arising in mind, avoid questions, reading books and company of people who are likely to disturb his belief. Result is he loses confidence in self and needs some crutch for survival for ever. The power earned by faith is highest when it is derived after deep self introspection.. It will then apply as well to others as common property. For this, discussion with others has very limited role. In fact when belief is complete, one never need ask for help. It does not demand commonality in outlook. One is accepted simply as he is. That demands generosity and mutual tolerance.

Worldly Examples

In Worldly relationship, there are many positive examples. But in theology, how one positively states that he believes in Lord Rama, Almighty or a Gospel? Is he ready to surrender before that entity at real point of disaster? If his faith is an abstraction without any material or heavenly expectations, it matters not. But it is rarely the case with the “believers” around us. Incidentally, this is the main topic of ongoing debate: – Whether the Absolute involves itself with the day to day micro level administration of Earth or is everything self destined? My feeling is that it is a fallacy to assume that micro level management of all creations on earth, whose interests clashes with each other, is handled by Almighty, which has endowed instrument of large brain to man. Secondly, despite all strides made by Science and technology, much of the worldly events are incomprehensible. If there is something called Divine justice, how explain the greatest tragedies befallen on the most pious community of people of Tibet and now cloud burst in Ladakh?

Again, just as blind can not read printed script, Power (if it exists,) which is without form and quality, can not be experienced by physical faculty of brain. This being the case, how does a man, who takes many precautions before striking a simple financial deal, bestows his destiny into the lap of a Power of which everything is enigma?

In this subject, we hear of Meerabai, Kabir, Thyagaraja, Ramakrishna and Prophet Mohammed etc who claimed intimacy with Divinity. Fact is that they meditated for decades attributing a particular form to their Deity, sang, danced and worshipped this form day or night in forest or desert, went mad with “devotion”, to such an extent that is believed in medical circles as trance, disabled mind or dream. When attention of one is continuously focused in single object, losing rest, sleep, hunger, seeking prolonged solitude, he loses sense

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This being the case, how does a man, who takes many precautions before striking a simple financial deal, bestows his destiny into the lap of a Power of which everything is enigma?

of realism and turns out to be victim of deranged brain as hallucination or delusion. Now, if he sincerely ‘believes’ that he ‘saw’ God, the statement has to be weighed in our yardstick. Please note that Kabir did not see Allah, nor Meera find Rama even though all are Deities at par.

Like wise, Swami Vivekananda (1863 – 1902 CE), a great rationalist hailing from an educated background, was not highly impressed with all talk of Ramakrishna’s regular ‘communion’ with Goddess. But concurring with his sincerity and humility, led Ramakrishna Mission, redirecting its focus from metaphysical towards humanism and dispassionate intellectual inquiry of all religions.

Now ask any theist which is the focal Power of his faith. A reply in plural exposes him as faith in tens of Gods is as good as in none. Secondly compartmentalized Powers can never solve all crises. One does not start testing doctors after falling ill. Sincere theist however will get perplexed at the question, wonders why this did not occur to him earlier. Please note that no two people (even seers) will answer alike with straight forward answer if asked to define faith and explain what lies beyond life. But majority are sheep in a

carefully preserves this myth as a tool to tame the occasional skeptics and rebels.

Is Faith Accumulation of Knowledge?

Faith is usually described as product of knowledge of religious texts. One who is capable of reciting chapters of Gita or Veda ex tempore is held in high esteem and repeated recitation of words "Rama", "Shiva" or "Om" would elevate him. Fact is words "Holy", "Sacred" "Bliss" and



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flock, simply taught to "believe", not knowing what to believe. Any next query will provoke an arrogant reply and annoyance for exposing their hollowness. It is obvious that this belief in term "Belief" "can not carry one far. This "Theist" deprived of thinking capacity is doomed to suffer.

This World of faith is built around us by Society in connivance with the priestly community (Seers, sages, Popes and Imams) from collective imagination with explicit objective of reining in the common man. Despite knowing its futility, society

"Super conscious state" are all simple words, in no way different from word "Food" which would not satisfy your hunger however earnestly you utter hundred times. Accumulation of knowledge in physical or metaphysical world only enhances one's ego. In today's fast growing world of science and technology, one can never be abreast with latest developments. Likewise, in metaphysical field, reading for spirituality is accumulation, which develops as a fad with no end to it. Wisdom lies in denying knowledge in transcendental field. This only can ignite faculty of constant awareness and Inquiry.

This calls for a fresh look around at all moments of life which does not mean a brain of super potential, but simply an awareness that it is conditioned (that is, deprived of natural state as of child) and then a resolve to come out of this influence. Gifted with largest brain of all species, man has to use it to full potential. One is as Great (or worse) as he behaves with humility and sincerity towards betterment of others. Instead, running after any abstractions or shunning rightful responsibility is escapism.

History of Growth of Faith

Faith in an entity is the backbone of any theology. We now examine how true this statement is by taking example of few religions. Hinduism was born in about 2 000 BC as a blend of emigrant Indo Aryan and earlier existing Dravidian culture. Latter were basically nature worshippers and Aryans brought in a cult of assigning each natural event as sunshine, flood, rain, wind, sickness, fire, water etc to a different Power. These were appeased by performing sacrifices, Yagna etc. Hinduism was thus ritual based, worshipping a large phantom of gods. In this process, gradually castes other than Brahmins and Kshatriyas felt themselves alienated as second class citizens. As reaction, by 6th Cent BC, Buddhism rose up, focusing on sufferings of common man and stress on nonviolence. The declaration of Buddhism as State religion and the Missionary movement started by Emperor Asoka (4th Cent BC) resulted in spread of Buddhism to Central and East Asian countries. This continues to be popular with the Dalit and other castes in India even today. While Hinduism professed faith in multi powers, Hinayana Buddhism, the original version, advocated total humanism.

Christianity took birth in the first Century CE in Europe as reaction to repression by Roman Emperors and in 4th Century CE, was declared as its State Religion. In next centuries, Roman church broke up as Catholics and Protestants. Battles were

waged between them for thousands of years, each seeking supremacy in entire Europe and New Continent. The Vatican City in Italy continues to be an autonomous seat of Pope who administers churches world wide. Countries and property controlled by each wing of Christianity are numerous.. Now even after all have accepted Democracy, each Nation declares by one of the two sects of Christianity.

Buddha, Mahaveer Jain (Jainism is contemporary to Buddhism) and Christ preached only humanism. The terms faith and miracles do not figure with them. but got inserted in Christianity and Mahayana Buddhism in later centuries by devotees. In Hinduism, revived by Shankara (788 – 820 CE), other Acharyas and Sants, basic stress has been to search for Truth and find salvation at individual level, with no concern towards even family members.

Till advent of Asoka in India, the Rulers and majority citizens were Hindus, so there was no conflict. This trend of Ruler professing allegiance to a religion continued in East Asia and later in Christianity also. The religious thought here percolated from Ruler downwards. Under pressure, duress or compulsion, particular religion got upper hand. Later, Hindu monks converted many Rulers in favor of Hinduism. Nepal is the continuing lone example.

Islam was founded by Prophet Mohammed (570 – 632 CE) in Central Asia and spread over in Asia, Africa, part of Russia and Europe. It started the new cult of “forcibly convert or kill” the non believer people of Nations it won over. From 10th Century, it entered India in waves and consolidated itself. Now with about 20 crore of population, it is the second largest religion in India, is also the second largest one in the World.

Thus word Faith towards Almighty at individual level had no meaning anytime in history.



From the President of FIRA

Narendra Nayak

In the month of August we decided to concentrate on Karnataka for a change. Being my home state and having conducted programs all over for nearly two decades, I was under the impression that organising the movement would be a cake walk. But, it is proving otherwise!

In October, 2009 some of us met at Bangalore and decided to have an organisation at the state level. The group included the members of the executive committee of FIRA from Karnataka, members of the Bangalore Vichravadi Sangha and some others. It was decided to contact the existing network of our activists and also others, who were interested and conduct a meeting at Bangaluru in March, 2010. The meeting held on that day was attended by about



100 from different parts of the state. However Bangalore and the nearby districts were heavily represented and there were hardly any from the Northern and north eastern parts. So, it was decided that we would hold another meeting a year later



after conducting district level meetings all over the state. So, we set out with our task in June, 2010.

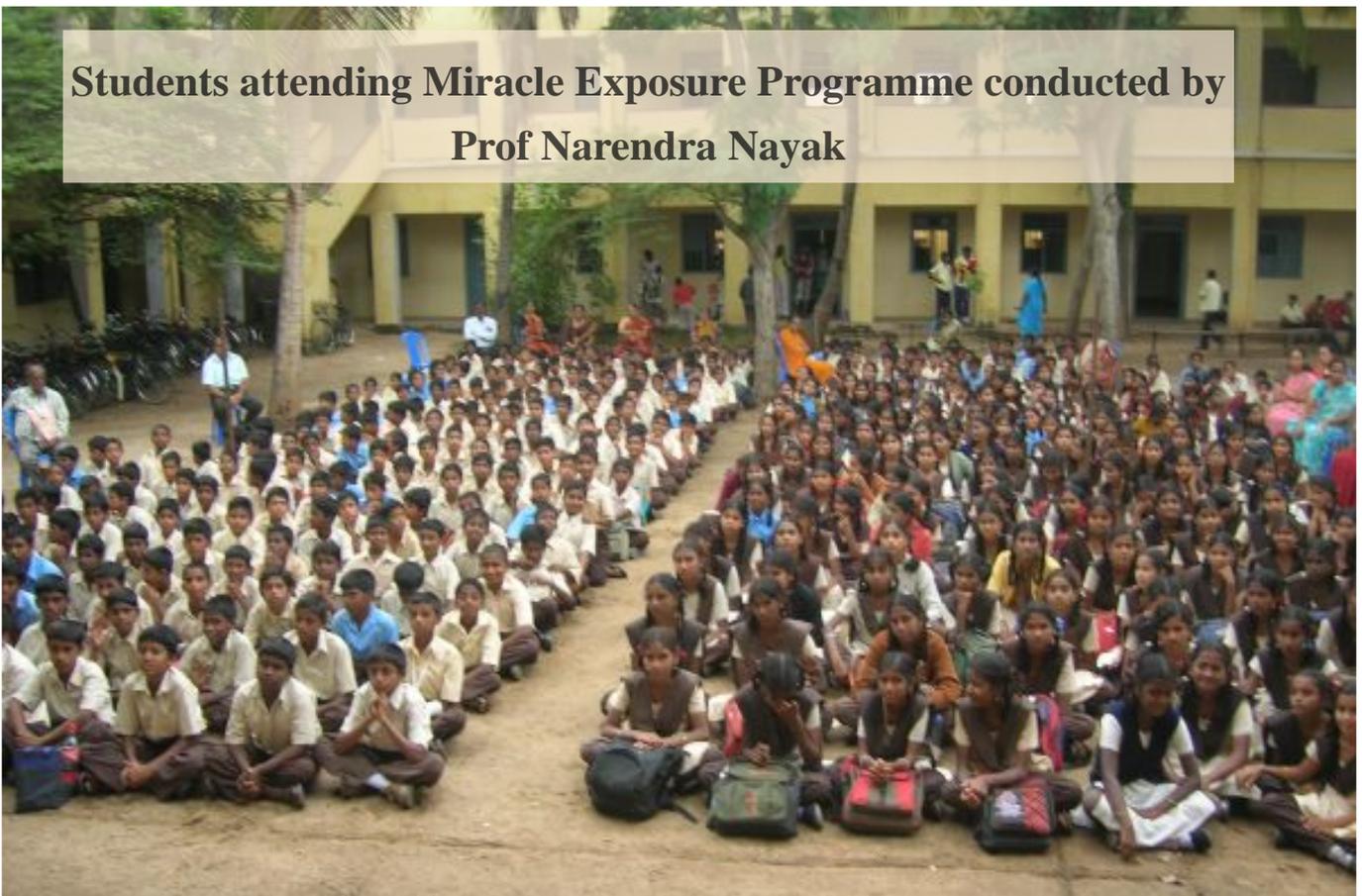
Our first meeting was held in Dharwar in June. We had about 25 people from the different taluks of the district. The next meetings were in August to cover the districts of Hassan, Mandya, Mysore and Kodagu. Our team of four office bearers M/s K.Subba Rao, Srinivas Natekar, Swami and I covered these districts. We have formed district committees in these places and have entrusted them with the task of building up a network in their areas.

At the national level we see intolerance on the rise everywhere this intolerance is to everything imaginable. People get offended by what others eat, do dress, speak or even think! Intolerance is a part of all religions. In Kerala we see that a college teacher's hands being chopped off for using the name of Mohammad in an imaginary dialogue while there is nothing to suggest that it was the prophet of the Muslims who was the target. Those named Mohammed are dime a dozen and they should issue a

fatwa against naming any one after their prophet so that his name may not be 'insulted'. I can recall one such incident which happened nearly two decades back about a short story published in Deccan Herald, Bangalore.

Well some thing about interesting people I meet in my interactions. Just a week back I had an interaction with students at a village near Sri Rangapatna near Mysore. I was speaking about a Lakshmi Kavach advertised on TV channels that can bring wealth. One little girl said it does bring wealth. When I asked her to whom, she replied that to the sellers of the thing! I just wonder what happens to the sharp reasoning powers of these children when they grow up. A couple of months back when I was conducting a training program one of the trainees asked me whether I believed in the power of mantras. When I replied in the negative, he asked me why they were chanted during my marriage. I replied asking him that who said that mantras were chanted during my marriage. It was his turn to be flabbergasted. He asked weren't they? I said no. I also told

Students attending Miracle Exposure Programme conducted by Prof Narendra Nayak



him that I got married under the special marriages act which does not need any chanting of mantras. He was dumbstruck, but recovered to ask me for the proof. I told him that usually I don't carry my marriage certificate with me but in the future I may!

A week back at a college at Madikeri in Kodagu I was asked by student whether makara vilakku (a light which appears at Ponnambala medu opposite shabarimala on the makara sankramana day) is true. I replied that it is so. It is supposed to be a tribute lit by other gods to Aiyappa, the presiding deity of Shabarimala. I said it was true. Then I added it is truly a heap of camphor lit by the employees of the Kerala State Electricity Board! This so called miracle had been exposed by the Kerala Yuktivadi Sangham nearly 25 years ago! Last year a trustee of the temple himself had given a press statement that it was man made! Any way, the intention of the whole question was to try and implicate me in a criminal case. One activist who had said that it was false had been named an

accused in a case filed by a Hindutva group for having hurt 'religious sentiments'. He had to get the FIR struck down by the high court of Karnataka. The complainants and the police know very well that there is going to be no conviction in the case but the whole purpose is to harass the rationalist and try to weaken the movement.

The very fact that the Hindutva gang has started trying to harass us makes it clear that we have had an impact on the people. When people get to know the other side which has not been presented to them, they start asking in convenient questions which trouble the vested interests and affect their exploitative tactics. So far they have ignored us under the impression that whatever we say will not be taken seriously. Their reaction shows that we have made an impact on peoples thinking.

As we grow we can expect more reactions from them and hopefully support from the people. We have a long way to go!

BS

The existence of God implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the negation of human liberty, and it necessarily ends in both theoretical and absolute slavery.

Michael Bakunin

Federalism, Socialism, and Anti-Theologism (1867)

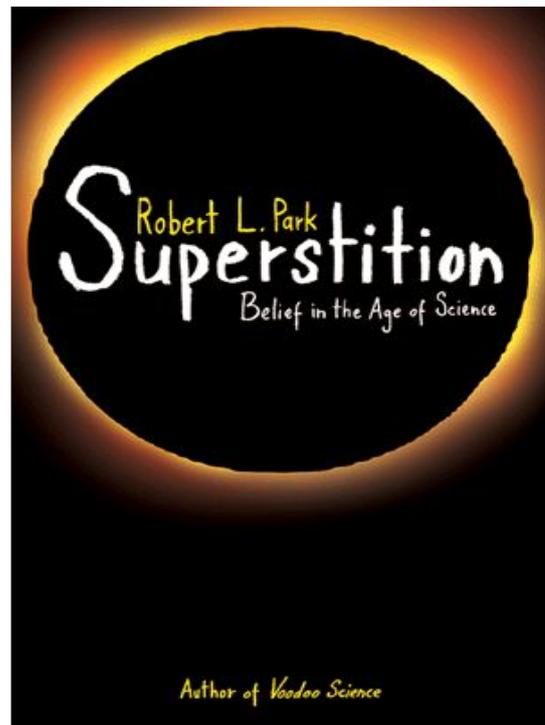


Mistaking Pseudoscience for Science

Prabhakar Nanawaty

Robert L Park is a professor of Physics at the University of Maryland. His earlier book *Voodoo Science: the Road from Foolishness to Fraud* received raving reviews from all corners of the world. As mentioned in the cover page of this book “Robert Park sides with focus of reason in a world of continuing and he fears, increasing superstition. He explains how people too equally mistake pseudoscience for science...” In *Superstition*, Park asks why people persist in superstitious convictions long after science has shown them to be ill-founded. He takes on supernatural beliefs from religion and the afterlife to New Age spiritualism and faith-based medical claims. He examines recent controversies and concludes that science is the only way we have of understanding the world. He discusses parapsychology, homeopathy, and acupuncture; he questions the existence of souls, the foundations of intelligent design, and the power of prayer; he asks for evidence of reincarnation and astral projections; and he challenges the idea of heaven.

In India, somewhat smart but illiterates generally propagate the superstitions among common people and exploit the gullible on the pretext of God, religion, tradition, fear, or even incite them to



acquire wealth by sacrificing animals or sometimes human beings. But Western World has passed this phase and now so called ‘scientists’ spread the New Age superstitions and exploit even the highly educated well read people. Parker has taken the task of unveiling the mask of these bogus scientists who are influencing the people to become superstitious even in 21st century.

Superstition is not limited to sorcery,

poltergeist, astrology, witches, ghosts and demons, haunted houses etc. It has now a vast canvas in research centers, schools and colleges, film studios, print and electronic media too. There are a number of scientists who can concoct any natural event to their superstitious beliefs and impress upon common people about their 'findings' and trap them for ever and ever. In fact these 'findings' are nothing but superstitions of some other order.

good as saying that human beings are born because of some divine plan which is at cross with Darwin's theory of evolution. According to advocates and supporters of Templeton Foundation, 'Many people don't realize that science basically involves faith' thus twisting the dictionary meaning of faith.

Trustees of Templeton Foundation award a large sum of money to prize winners. Most

In India, smart but illiterates propagate superstitions among common people and exploit the gullible on the pretext of god, religion, tradition, fear, and even incite them to acquire wealth by sacrificing animals or sometimes human beings. Though the Western World has passed this phase, the so called 'scientists' spread the New Age superstitions and exploit even the highly educated well-read people. Robert L Park has taken the task of unveiling the mask of these bogus scientists who are influencing the people to become superstitious even in 21st century.

Convergence of Science & Religion

Park takes the issue of Templeton Foundation which is trying its best for convergence of science and religion for furtherance of good in the society. This Foundation has a large sum of money at its disposal to incite border line scientists to work towards their goal. Their goal is: *understanding the order in the universe and understanding the purpose of the universe are not identical, but they are also not very much apart.* In fact the phrase "the purpose of the universe" is rather scary. Purpose conjures up images of fanaticism. It is as

of the prize winners were drawn from the field of religion; like Mother Teresa, Bill Graham, the evangelist, Charles Colson, who exposed the Watergate scandal but basically a staunch churchgoer etc. Recently it changed its policy and started giving prizes to selected scientists who are the possible candidates to achieve the aims and goals of the Foundation.

The author had gone into details of 'who can buy the dialogue between science and religion' and the vested interest of the prize winning scientists. In fact author cites an example wherein Templeton Foundation

managed to take over a prestigious function of American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) which has a unique position among scientific societies and which fosters the entire spectrum of scientific research. He finally concludes it is a futile exercise to think in these terms and these efforts of Templeton Foundation and similar types are one kind of superstitious activities misleading the public.

Intelligent Design

In one of the chapters in this book, Park comments upon intelligent design issue which is making headlines in the American media circles. It was the then President George W Bush called for “intelligent design” to be taught in science class alongside evolution as competing theories. It appears as though President was declaring war on science. There is no dispute about Darwin’s evolution theory among scientists. Darwin’s theory had freed the human mind from the shackles of tradition. However every culture in the world still has a central creation myth. But according to American constitution, the religious teachings are not allowed in the class rooms. To circumvent this clause, the supporters of religion had invented this bogus idea of intelligent design. The great irony is that the war is over a theory that neither side believes – certainly not the scientists, who overwhelmingly accept Darwinian evolution, but not even Christian fundamentalists, who would prefer genesis to intelligent design.

In support of their dogma one would find a large surge of books condemning Darwin and his theory in the Western world; e.g. Darwin on Trial by Johnson; Finding Darwin’s God by Miller; Darwin’s Black Box by Michael Behe etc. Johnson’s book marked the founding of Intelligent Design movement in US. The book is more of a legal document than science treatise. In fact the book outlines a strategy for ID movement:

- Don’t get involved in details or arguments over scientific facts
- Forget about the great flood and the age of the Earth as mentioned in the Bible
- Don’t mention the Bible or creation, much less God
- Keep the focus on the ‘gaps’ in evolution
- The fallback position is “Teach the controversy....”

It appears that his strategy is working at least in US.

It makes a very interesting reading about controversy between ID and evolution. Though the case was lost by ID supporters, still it raises its head in one form or other. That is why author desperately asks the question “Are there other superstitions that persist in spite of clear evidence to the contrary?”

As a matter of fact author finds a few more superstitions in the guise of scientific justification of mass prayers, DNA as soul, scientific explanation for afterlife and out of body experience, natural calamities like tsunami as a punishment by God, the quantum ploy, homeopathy as an effective medicine, placebo effect as a therapy, etc.

Futility of Prayers

While commenting on the futility of prayers author states that “people speak confidently about the power of prayers but in a war both sides pray for victory. The 9/11 terrorist attacks had come at the hands of men of deep faith who prayed to their god that morning for the strength to face certain death so that they might take the lives of total strangers and enter heaven as martyrs.” In fact President George W Bush proclaimed a National Day of Prayer for the victims of 9/11 attack. Author then gives a detailed a scientific explanation about the effects of prayer on hypothalamus and how it numbs the senses and thus prayers enter into a Prozac World. Dr Herbert Benson, M.D. who heads the Mind – Body Medical Institute is a strong supporter of prayers and concocts scientific

theories and proves the theories by fake data. Author exposes him and his theory thoroughly. Alas! In spite of this these types flourish beyond imagination!

Columbia University published an article “Does prayers influence the success of In Vitro – Fertilisation – Embryo Transfer”. Such randomized fake studies are in plenty. Author quotes a reference of a scientist, Francis Galton, who published a paper “Statistical Inquiries into the Efficacy of Prayer” way back in 1872. In this paper he reports about longevity of British Monarchs and Archbishops etc. Though these powerful people has access to the best medical care, they should have long lived compared to the ordinary folks. In fact thousands and thousands might have prayed for their good health. But Galton data showed no difference at all. According to author, Park, the world is about to undergo a revival of religious fervor. In spite of number of studies conducted for last 130 years in which futility of prayers had been highlighted, the supporters of prayers still insist that it has the effect. That is why author terms it as superstition since it has no credibility whatsoever.

DNA as Soul

Opposition to stem cell research is very strong in US not because of ethical issues involved or for its long term ill effects. The hostility is due to strong lobbying of religious minded members in the committee constituted in this regard. The religious conservatives opposed ‘the Pill’ when it was introduced way back since they believed life begins at the moment of conception. In most religions life is defined by the existence of soul; but there is a scant agreement on when that happens. Once we accept the existence of soul then we are forced to accept eternal life, reincarnation, past life regression, existence of ghosts, haunted houses, heaven, hell etc. People quote number of examples of live experiences and vouch for its truthfulness. As such the author warns us that anecdotal evidence is simply not to be trusted, even

when the anecdotes are our own. We must still test and verify. Opposition to stem cell research is also due to misconception of the existence of soul.

According to scientists out of body experiences is just another misperception of a brain that must reconcile a number of sensory inputs. In fact though most of the religions emphasize on the existence of soul, but the spirit divides rather than unites discriminating on the basis of gender, race, language or geographical distances. Dispute over the soul remain unresolved because there are no facts, only unsupported beliefs.

While commenting on near-death experience (NDE) author comments that we have well documented tendency to confound what we are seeing with what we remember. They are not always the same. When an image is observed the brain tends to fill in the picture with images stored in the memory. NDE has become more common due to modern resuscitation techniques. For a scientist it is hard to imagine less reliable evidence. In fact when we hear the news of constructing DNA using only off-the-shelf chemicals, we have to accept that the concept of divine spark or vital life force now seems to be meaningless. Life is just chemistry.

Punishment by god

According to Western World (more so even in the Eastern World!) any natural calamity, whether tsunami that kills hundreds of people or a tree that falls on a lonely walking person, is generally classified as an act of God, meaning no one can be held legally responsible for its consequences. In fact most religions treat it as test form God to see how humans respond. According to them this is a punishment to sufferers for their past sins irrespective of their age, sex, health condition or conditions in which they live.

If we take tsunami disaster as an example, it was one of the powerful earthquakes

recorded since the invention of modern seismometer. We live on the thin solid crust of a molten planet. The crust is broken up into tectonic plates. "Occasionally the plate fracture or slide one over the other resulting into earthquakes. Science is nowhere near being able to predict earthquakes much less to prevent them but modern communications can spread a tsunami warning at the speed of light. This is 21st century. No longer we submit meekly in the blind forces of nature." Praying is not going to be the answers to such disasters. We can turn to science to lessen the sufferings caused by the disasters.

New Age Mysticism

Deepak Chopra and Bhagwan Rajneesh like cult figures avoid direct competition with the more conventional religious miracles of the faith healers. World is full of gullible people. Though there is plenty of gravy to everyone why a New Age energy healer should squabble with faith healers? Energy healers have found a large number of followers who neither believes in science nor in religion. Simply they join the New Age revolution and start believing in everything. New Age embraces spiritualism, reincarnation, channeling, mediums, holistic healing, astrology, crystals, pyramid power, and more. Lacking guidance from a sacred book or tradition, belief itself becomes unifying principle behind the New Age. They claim they have a 'secret' and blame scientists for not revealing the 'secret' which is outcome of quantum world. They entrap the celebrities in this quantum world and make money. New Age movement claims to find confirmation in science especially the science of quantum physics. It is no doubt a clever strategy relying on the public's unfamiliarity with the mathematical foundations of quantum theory.

Some of us may still remember that there was US defense research program for remote sensing and triggering the nuclear mechanism using extra sensory perception

(ESP). The author describes in detail how the US Government was fooled by aggressive scientists like Helmut Schmidt who was German born physicist and parapsychologist. He fabricated a Random Number Generator (RNG) which will enhance the statistical results as compared to flipping of coins. He convinced himself and others that psycho kinesis phenomenon is true with the help of RNG. Psycho kinesis was a buzz word in 70's popularized by Uri Geller type frauds. US Army was desperate and believed that ESP will be of some help for triggering the nuclear arming device. Schmidt claimed that even from moon, which is at 250000 km away, RNG and ESP works. After spending lots and lots of funds, energy and time the program was abandoned.

The basis for ESP was in fact misinterpretation of quantum mechanics which in turn based upon Schrödinger's famous equations. According to his theory, at subatomic phase the act of observing the electron is said to 'collapse' the wave function at that point. It looks as though some conscious act of observation created the thing observed turning a fuzzy probability function into a thing. In fact this interpretation was ridiculed by Schrödinger himself. Some took this much further arguing that since events on an atomic scale are affected by the act of observation, and since everything in this Universe is made of atoms we should not be surprised to find thoughts influence events on the macroscopic scale in which we are living. This opened a Pandora's Box for the paranormal community. It provided scientific cover for every New Age fantasy from telepathy to Feng Shui. New Age vocabulary included the words like 'quantum non locality', 'entanglement', 'collapsing' etc without any relevance. Author feels that we must ask how conscious a human observer must be to 'collapse' a wave function. Then observer can be anybody, even a chimpanzee too. It is a sobering reminder that science has its own superstitions.

Alternate Medicines

With regard to homeopathic medicine author is of the opinion that Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy therapy, can be forgiven his quaint medical beliefs. When he wrote the original 1810 edition of *Organon*, vitality was an accepted reality. Louis Pasteur was not yet born; germ theory of disease did not exist. But while Hahnemann can be forgiven, but not his today's ardent followers; they know Avogadro's number. The germ theory of disease is taught in school. Yet one third of the population believes in alternate medicines like homeopathy. In fact most of them have roots in ancient superstitions. These medicines omit costly clinical trials. As such any one can proclaim a new alternate therapy and be rich within no time. Desperate people will try anything at any price – what alternate medical practitioners got to lose? In this regard one must understand that healing is more than elimination of pathogens and regeneration of damaged tissue. It also calls for belief from debilitating perception of pain. Perhaps alternate medicine relieves the pain but retains the disease as it is.

The author describes how complimentary and alternate medicines (CAM) became political issue in US as a part of hobnobbing with China. It was a senator who popularized acupuncture in US and media was mad about its supreme healing power. This is nothing but placebo relieving the pain. According to author our brain has a 'poppy field' to relieve us from painful feelings. He holds endorphin and prostaglandins responsible for placebo. He hopes FMRI technology will be able to clear the mystery behind placebo effect.

In acupuncture 'Qi' or 'chi' is the Chinese equivalent of 'elan vital' or the vital life force. In Ayurveda it is called *Prana*. Acupuncture is said to increase the flow of 'qi' helping to balance the body function, which is said to be good though it is not clear why. There is not much point in inquiring further; there is nothing more

acupuncturists can say except "it works". The same answer we get from homeopathy, ayurveda, and perhaps from all the CAM practitioners. In response to "how does it work?" they have a stock answer of "it has been around for more than 3000 years, so it must work." In fact astrology has been around much longer than acupuncture; ghosts and demons have been around longer still. In fact they are all relics of time while *Homo sapiens* were evolving and qi, chakras, energy healings were just imagination of ancient men and nothing more.

While explaining why superstitions still prevail, author feels that superstitious belief can also be thought of as a natural condition of childhood. The brain is quite receptive at that age since it is a question of survival. It is vulnerable to superstitious explanations of the world. But why are some people not able to shed their superstitions as most do? If anything like 'belief gene' is there it should have turned off as we mature. But some time and for most of the people it won't.

In conclusion, author emphasizes that what science is learning about the laws that govern the universe gives us the power to transform the world into closest thing to paradise that any one of us will ever see. This knowledge did not come from sacred texts or the revelations of prophets. Science is the only way of knowing - everything else is just superstition.

Superstition: Belief in the Age of Science

Robert L Park,
Princeton University Press, 2008, pp
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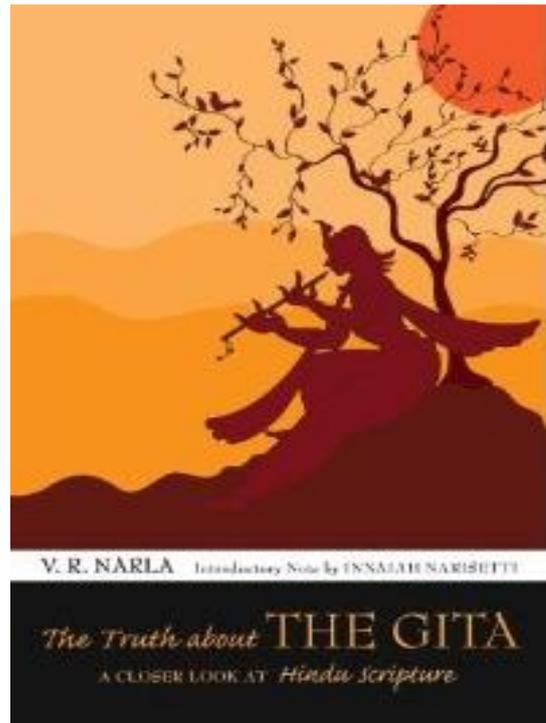
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The Truth About The Gita

Kavneet Singh

Ventakeswara Rao Narla is an essayist, journalist and author who has written over 30 books in Telugu and English on religion, history and current events. He was the editor of the *Andhra Prabha* daily and the editor of the *Andhra Joyti*. A rationalist and a humanist, he could be called Andhra Pradesh's one of the greatest 'critical thinkers' of the 20th century. R.Narla has gone through the section of the Mahabharata epic called Bhagvad Gita with a sharp scalpel and has spared no effort to get to the true interpolation which practically everyone else seems to shy away so as not to upset the status quo or are simply afraid of the consequences. The result of his effort is *The Truth about The Gita – A Closer Look at Hindu Scripture*, the book under review here.



Chapter 1 – Doubtful War

From our material it is impossible to say where the great theme-battles of the two epics Ramayana and Mahabharata were fought, let alone when – if indeed they represent any historical events at all.....[Page 46]

Narla, quoting D.D.Kosambi hits the nail on the head from the get go. The Gita has been handled with kid gloves for so long that there seems to be no one willing to critically examine it and face the wrath of the teeming followers.

Out of the forty-one contributors, not even half a dozen show any capacity to think boldly, rationally, originally. And one or two of them have such a fuddled mind as to argue in all seriousness that what millions of people have believed for thousands of years as true cannot be fictitious.....[Page 47]

It is the educated in India who lead the charge of claiming the Hindu texts as 'true' which borders on imbecility. In the sphere

of religion, critical thinking has rarely been applied with force so as to get to the 'truth'. No wonder there is stunted growth in the realm of critical examination of religion which has drastic digressive ramifications nationwide.

Chapter 2 – False Signposts

The Vikram Era, for instance, is said to have begun in 58-57 B.C. Who is this Vikram after whom the Era is named?.....The 2000th anniversary of Vikram was celebrated with due pomp in 1943.....None of the mutually contradictory essays in such volumes proves anything beyond the will to believe.....When the chronology of ancient India is so uncertain, so hazy, even when we come down to historical times, is it not useless to try to fix a period for the persons and events mentioned in our two epics..... [Pages 48-49]

It is extremely clear that there is no proof of valid dates anywhere in the Hindu epics yet the word 'yug' is used many times. The word 'yug' literally means millions of years, when the fact is that modern man only existed, starting around 200,000 years ago.

And they end up by laying down stringent rules which govern a man's life.....for they tell him how to find his way to heaven, and once there, how to make a beeline for the gorgeous bedroom of a gorgeous Ramba or a Maneka or a Tilottama or a Varudgini of – well, he has a wide choice..... [Page 50]

The end result of man, according to the Hindu texts is, if he apparently does land in 'heaven' is to have ravenous sex with all the heavenly maidens available for his pleasure.

Through all myths and mythologies, to whichever nation they may belong, are intrinsically nasty, ours are easily the worst from a moral point of view. Furthermore, they are most undependable as sources of history..... [Page 51]

Religions can only be measured against the touchstone of morals and ethics. If Hindu religious texts are to be examined with that yardstick then they become mostly obscene to the profane with extremely little left of value for the betterment of mankind.

No valid distinction between history and mythology and naturally there was a tendency to confuse the two, to mythologize history and to give mythology an historical garb. We can thus see why there was a total lack of historical sense among the Brahmans who composed the brahminical literature.....[Page 53]

Brahmins when it comes to their Religion have a dirty habit of suddenly pretending to lose all their faculties, instead painting all the Hindu texts with a broad brush of historical truth when absolutely none exists.

Chapter 3 – Duel with Dates

As if this confusion is not enough, some scholars do not accept the synchronism of the Kurukshetra War and the beginning of the Kali age... [Page 58]

As mentioned by Narla various astronomers imposed their authority and arbitrarily set dates which are scientifically untenable.

The very concept of the Kali Age is based not on reason but faith. Faith and fabrication go together, just as reason and truth march together....[age 59]

All rationality has been thrown to the winds to fabricate the most absurd timeline called Kali Yug and many other 'yugs. A real time and place is required to make something true otherwise it is simply a myth. Hundreds of scholars of all hues are still trying to rationalize something that is completely irrational akin to the Greek myths of yore.

Chapter 4 – Fear of Disillusionment

Let us admit uncompromisingly that no Aryan culture has been isolated anywhere in India as a material and recognizable phenomenon.....[Page 61]

Mortimer Wheeler a famous archeologist after much research could not find any evidence to show any great Aryan culture which can shed light on the wondrous Hindu epics at all. Hundreds of other archeologists have tried their best to prove that these epics are real history but fall short on evidence leaving a big question mark on the validity of the same.

What does all this show? It shows that the historicity of the Kurukshetra War is doubtful; the long list of its participant kingdoms is doubtful; the extent and ferocity are doubtful; indeed, everything about it is doubtful including the singing of the Song Celestial by Krishna.....[Page 66]

Nothing has been found with the help of carbon dating methodology so far! Even with the help of the Institute of Chronology more akin to the Institute of Astrology, absolutely no agreement has been reached on any definite dates of these mythical events of the Mahabharata.

Chapter 5 – A Fraud of Monstrous Size

The sheer bulk and weight of the Mahabharata, and its sheer nonsense, crushes out all commonsense, even all common decency, from Indian life and thought.....internal evidence shows the handiwork of three scribes, Vysa, Vaisampayana and Souti....But the truth is that, apart from these three, there were many more nameless scribes and scribblers, fabricators and forgers, who put their finger into the prodigious pie.[Page 68]

This seems to be the most fantastic fairytale ever written by Brahmins to co-opt and enslave all the natives of the Indian

sub-continent in perpetuity. A small ballad ended up being heavily padded and tampered to create one heck of a religious monstrosity.

All this helped make Buddhism develop rapidly as a major threat to Vedism or Brahminism, as some would prefer to call it. To counter-attack it was necessary to create a rival. After trial and error, the folk hero of a tribe of cowherds in and around Madhura proved handy. But about the third or fourth century B.C., he was built up into a god.....[Page 73]

The obscure dark skinned local folk hero like Krishna is propped up into a religious deity over time. Next a pro-Karuva slant is changed to a pro-Pandva slant due to the sacrifice at Janamejaya who was supposedly a Pandva descendant and lavished gifts. Third there was very serious editing done by hordes of Brahmins to elevate the priestly class to the top of the social ladder permanently.

And with every revision, that influence has become more reactionary, more deadly. A part of that revision, let me add, is the Bhagvad Gita, the Song Celestial, with the exhortation to kill, to kill in cold blood, to kill as a matter of caste duty.....[Page 75]

The critical key to the entire Song Celestial is the understanding of the dark lord Krishna's brainwashing of Arjuna the warrior, so that Arjuna becomes a killing machine without a conscience. What could be a more violent and vile scripture than that!

Chapter 6 – Outer Citadel and Inner Fort

“It is difficult to excel”, as P.D.Metha says, “the Hindu sense of dramatic in religion....The poet author of the Gita could hardly have chosen a more arresting opening scene for his philosophical song.....[Page 77]

The essence of the Mahabharata is in the

Gita and it is the Gita's convoluted sense of righteousness which is the most troubling factor. Sutas or poet-ballad singers the real originators of the small Mahabharata going back in time, which got rewritten and rehashed to make it into a voluminous piece of second class literature.

Now for the Mahabharata being a work of moral grandeur, it is (to put it mildly) a preposterous claim. To us who are ordinary mortals without any esoteric powers, the mortals of the Mahabharata are muddy, crude, revolting.....[Page 78]

After thoroughly examining the Mahabharata anyone who does not get revolted by the sheer immorality and highly unethical traits of the characters in this fairytale which is being passed off as religion needs to stop, pause and critically rethink, why Brahmins need to justify their amorphous text and their anomalous position.

Chapter 7 – Who is Krishna

Herman Oldenberg once asked, "Who is Krishna?".....[Page 80]

The number of different Krishnas going back in time will drive any sane person crazy.

There were however, 900,000 of them, and in order to satisfy them Krishna became 900,000 different men. These exact figures are given in the text, and it adds that the park resounded with the coitus of 1,800,000 persons. Then it proceeds to describe the collective sexual orgy..... [Page 85]

Krishna in various purana texts including the Mahabharata Purana seems to have multiple personalities, which includes being a world class sex manic to an extremely devious politician pretending to be a warrior.

The devotees of Krishna to justify the going on between their god and gopis, but a

special feature of Hinduism. It has two sets of laws, one for the weak and another for the strong; two sets of norms, one for the high and another for the low; two codes of ethics, one for the gods and another for the mortals. Small wonder there is such a lot of double-think and double-speak in Indian life..... [Page 89]

I have yet to read a more incisive critique by getting straight to the heart of the matter. Narla has hit the nail on the head; as the unethical and immoral conduct of Indians in general, emanates exactly from these holy Hindu texts such as the 'Gita'.

Chapter 8 – Krishna as Man

Hopkins says of Krishna: "Krishna is a pious hypocrite".....no amount of excuse, of which there is enough offered, could do away with the crude facts of tradition, which represented the man-god Krishna as a clever but unscrupulous fighter....[Pages 90-91]

Every possible trick and treachery imaginable is used by Krishna without lifting a finger in the great war of the fable, Mahabharata.

Among Indian pundits, Sukthankar had the fullest knowledge of the case against Krishna, and to the best of my knowledge his is the ablest summary of that case. It reads: That paradox of paradoxes...A grotesque character who claims to be the highest god and behaves uncommonly like a "tricky mortal".....[Page 92]

Even Sukthankar a Krishna author-devotee admits the culpability of Krishna's highly unscrupulous behavior and breaking all protocols of honorable conduct. Even though Krishna admits been ashamed of committing a sin by his dishonorable acts there is no retribution or guilt at all by the highest god-man or man-god of the Hindu pantheon.

Chapter 9 – Krishna as Statesman

It was that concern which urged him to set up Krishna as a symbol of resurgent India – united, free, powerful..... [Page 98]

Bankimchandra Chatterji the supposed pioneer of modern Indian literature propped up a completely flawed man-god as the inspiring (god-man) statesman for the rest of India to emulate. That is why Indians became emasculated permanently.

When Krishna was unable at any time in his long life to unify his own Yadava people, is it not preposterous to claim on his behalf that he was a great statesman who unified the whole of India?.....Krishna himself joined in the massacre in its final stages. To call such a man a far-sighted statesman, a great unifier of the nation, is to take leave of one's senses..... [Pages 102-103]

Logic gets thrown out and bombastic adulations are poured onto Krishna when in reality, a man such as him would be reviled in any other country on Earth based on his conduct.

Chapter 10 – Krishna as God

So his going to Darpudi's rescue in response to her prayers is baseless..... [Page 104]

Krishna is made out to be savior of Darpudi's honor through supernatural powers when he was not there at the time of her dishonor therefore could simply do nothing.

His first act in this part of his life was assassination of his maternal uncle Kamsa. Assassination is not too strong a term for it..... [Page 105]

Krishna committed a heinous crime and one of many, but got away because the Brahmin editors have made his character exactly like their own.

Krishna is no less famous for his abductions. He carries away Rukhmini a day before the time fixed before her marriage to Sisupula..... Any by right of forcible seizure conquest, he adds 16,000 women from the harem of Naraka to the list of his wives..... [Page 105]

Krishna would be in the Guinness Book of World Records today for the numbers of women kidnapped by a single man ever and for producing only 180,000 sons.

The champion boozer of the city is the Lord's own half brother, Balarama. Rarely is toddy absent from his hand....The Lord himself is neither a vegetarian nor a teetotaler. Men as well as women amongst the Yadavas were addicted to drinking..... [Page 107]

Meat eating and binge drinking was the norm and the dark Lord himself partook in all of it happily without which it would be impossible to have the energy to satisfy 16,000 women.

The whole Krishna saga is a magnificent example of a true believer can manage to swallow, a perfect setting of opportunism for the specious arguments of the Gita....[Page 109]

In fact Sitanath Tattavabhushan a historian of Hinduism comments, "If all that the Mahabharata and Puranas say about him [Krishna] is true, he cannot have been the incarnation of God". It could not be clearer than that!

Chapter 11 - Who Wrote the Gita?

Chapter XVIII, Verse 70, In that verse Krishna says, "and whoever studies this sacred dialogue of ours...".... [Page 110]

How on earth did Krishna discern that if all humans studied his dialogue rather a lecture given to Arjuna albeit only eighteen chapters long, they would reach heaven or swarga where shapely maidens will be available at their beck and call. A man-god

with such a demented mind can hardly have highly intelligent and ethical qualities to impart!

His education was perfunctory.....Moreover he was too much of a dilettante to have studied much later in life. He was more interested in a belle than a book..... [Page 112]

A man-god who spent practically all his time with girls can hardly be expected to come up with sublime inspiration to lead the world through righteousness into heaven.

Unlike me, Gajan Shripati Khair has veneration for the Gita. Here is Khair's own able summing up of his conclusions: The first author composed some portions of the existing.....The second author added six more chapters....The third author recast the whole poem by adding his own verses.....Logic, coherence and consistency are subordinated to the indoctrination of the main principles underlying his philosophy....[Pages 117-118]

There is no question that not just the small Gita but the entire Mahabharata, for that matter the entire spectrum of puranas have been written by dozens of different authors over a very long period of time, adding and editing to suit their economic and social standing in their realm. But to the question whether Krishna is the author of the Gita – the answer is a resounding no!

Chapter 12 – And When?

Furthermore, though there are no references to the Buddha and Buddhism in the Gita, the Mahabharata as a whole is not free from them. The words “Buddha” and Prati- Buddha” occur here and there in the text of the epic.....[Page 120]

All claims by the Hindu establishment make the time frame of the Gita between 800-200 B.C. But all evidence seems to lead to the 3rd century A.D., because the writings of the Gita indicate that the

authors of the Gita were all aware of Buddha therefore the Gita is post Buddha and not pre-Buddha as is claimed.

Chapter 13 – Gita as Scripture

The Gita is no Veda or Vedanga. The scriptural authority which it now possesses is a late acquisition.....Even S.A.Belwalkar had to own it, though tacitly, when he said that the gita attained its “dominant position” during “the last twelve hundred years”, that is after Sankaracharya's lifetime.....[Pages 124-125]

The same Hindu-Brahmin Sankaracharya who murdered millions of Buddhists through the largest ethnic cleansing, a Holocaust of the 12th century, brought the Gita out of total obscurity to promote his own sectarian and caste interests to blunt the rapid rise of Buddhism. This decadent text with his alchemy was made to shine like gold. All four Acharyas were from the four southern linguistic areas. Their dark and deep influence lasted till the eighteenth century. No wonder a mentally enslaved people were ruled easily by the Mughals for a millennia and the British for over two centuries.

The very first of its translations into English appeared in 1785. Translated in by Charles Wilkins under the title Bhagvat-Geeta, or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon, its publication was actively promoted by the then Governor-General of India, Warren Hastings.....Its French rendering by M.Parraud (Le Bhagaut-Geeta) appeared in 1787.....[Pages 126-127]

The elasticity and the double speak of the text compounds the dichotomy, no wonder Gandhi and his assassin Godse both revered the Gita. The Gita is so ambiguous that a normal person will go nuts trying to figure out any ethical spirituality within it.

Upadhyaya proceeded next to print in parallel columns all the passages lifted verbatim from the Upnaishads and they

total up to twenty-two.....But the first prize in plagiarism should go to the Gita. It is a shining honor?..... [Page 130]

So much priestly fraud has been committed that no wonder everything is contradictory and there is no continuous inspiration to the sublime.

Chapter 14 – Has the Gita a Philosophy?

As far as India is concerned, the synonym for philosophy is darshana.....And so the very term darshana has put Indian philosophy on the wrong track.....[Page 131]

There can be no original philosophy through blind faith and without critical thinking. Evasive, primitive philosophical opinions which are highly retrograde, regressive, immoral and unbelievably unethical make up the unholy religious classic.

The fact of the matter is, it is a poem, a collection of songs – not a work of theological philosophy.....Page 133]

Some Hindu authors such as Sarma define the Gita as a collection of songs, some as a drama (ishwarleela – god’s sport) and many others much more.

The “high god”, as Kosambi rightly pointed out, repeatedly emphasizes the great virtue of non-killing (ahimsa), yet the entire discourse is an incentive to war.”.....[Page 135]

The contradictions abound therefore the Gita is a riddle hidden in an enigma. The problem is that the riddle has been solved – the Emperor has no clothes!

Eclecticism is not integration. Different ideas and concepts, borrowed from different sources by an eclectic, do generally merge into a integrated whole, but abide side by side as separate entities and led a split personality, to a double life, and ultimately to downright

hypocrisy.....[Pages 136-137]

Some very astute men calling themselves Brahmins with the sole purpose to psychologically control the masses for eternity by usurping all power and silencing any dissent in perpetuity very ably created this unholy tale of other worldly proportions.

“Why is a man to obey and why is it difficult to disobey?” questioned Eric Fromm, the German born American psychoanalyst.....My obedience makes me part of the power I worship, hence I feel strong..... [Page 137]

Fromm has figured out the Gita riddle from a different angle and he is right!

The deluded despise Me clad in human body, not knowing my higher nature as Lord of all existence (IX-11 Gita).....[Page 139]

Krishna did not write the Gita but, the umpteen world-class plagiarists who concocted the Gita made sure that the godly fabrication was drilled into anything which walked on two legs so that its authority is unquestioned forever.

(To be continued in the next issue)

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Skeptic News

District Level Meetings of Karnataka State Federation of Rationalist Associations

The second district level meeting (the first meeting was held in Dharward in June 2010) of **Karnataka State Federation of Rationalist Associations (KSFRA)** was held on 22nd August 2010 at 11hrs at Women's Junior Collage, Hassan. The meeting was presided by Prof. Narendra Nayak and chaired by Mr. Anthony Swami, President, BGVP. Mr Subbarao, State Convenar, KSFRA, explained the reason for convening the meeting. Prof Nayak explained in detail the relevance of rationalist movement and the need for strengthening the movement to fight against superstition, religious bigotry, etc. Prof Nayak answered the questions raised about the movement.

Mr.Srinivas Natekar explained in detail the necessity of forming a district level adhoc committee. After detailed discussions, an ad hoc two member committee was formed to oversee the setting up of a permanent committee in Hassan District. It was agreed to hold the next meeting on 18th September 2010 to chalk out future activities. The meeting was attended by a cross section of society including activists of KRVP, BGVP, CPI, CPM, DSS and other like minded groups. The meeting was well represented by youths.

The third regional meeting was held in Mandya at the Sports stadium on the evening of 22nd August 2010. The arrangements were made by Mr. Siddaraju.

An ad hoc committee was formed with Mr Kempe Gowda, Mr Krishne Gowda, and Mr Nagesh as members. It was decided to hold the next district level meeting on 11th September 2010. This meeting also was attended by a cross section of the society including a large group of teaching community.

The fourth district level meeting was held in Coorg on 23rd August 2010 at the initiative of Dr.Ganapathi. The meeting was attended mostly by elderly persons. Prof Narendra Nayak and others explained the aim of the organization. Here too an ad hoc committee was formed under Dr Ganapathi.

In the evening Prof Nayak was interviewed by the local representatives of visual and print media. All newspapers gave wide publicity in their next day edition. On 25th TV-9 channel carried a 10 minute programme which included a live demonstration of miracle exposure held on 24th August at General Cariappa PG College, Madikeri. On 23rd August Navodaya School in Madikeri attended by nearly 500 students.

The fifth meeting was held on 24th August 2010 in Mysore at Maharani Women's Teachers Collage at the initiative of Mr.Krishne Gowda. A five member committee, including medical professionals, collage lecturers, teachers, and activists of DSS was formed to oversee the activities of KSFRA in Mysore District. Though it rained heavily, the meeting was well attended by a large no of youths giving enormous satisfaction to the organizers.

BVV Subba Rao
State Convenor, KSFRA

Skeptic News

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)

District Level meetings of Karnataka State Federation of Rationalist Associations are being convened across the state. Those who would like to be part of the organization are requested to contact the State

Convener of KSFRA

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.

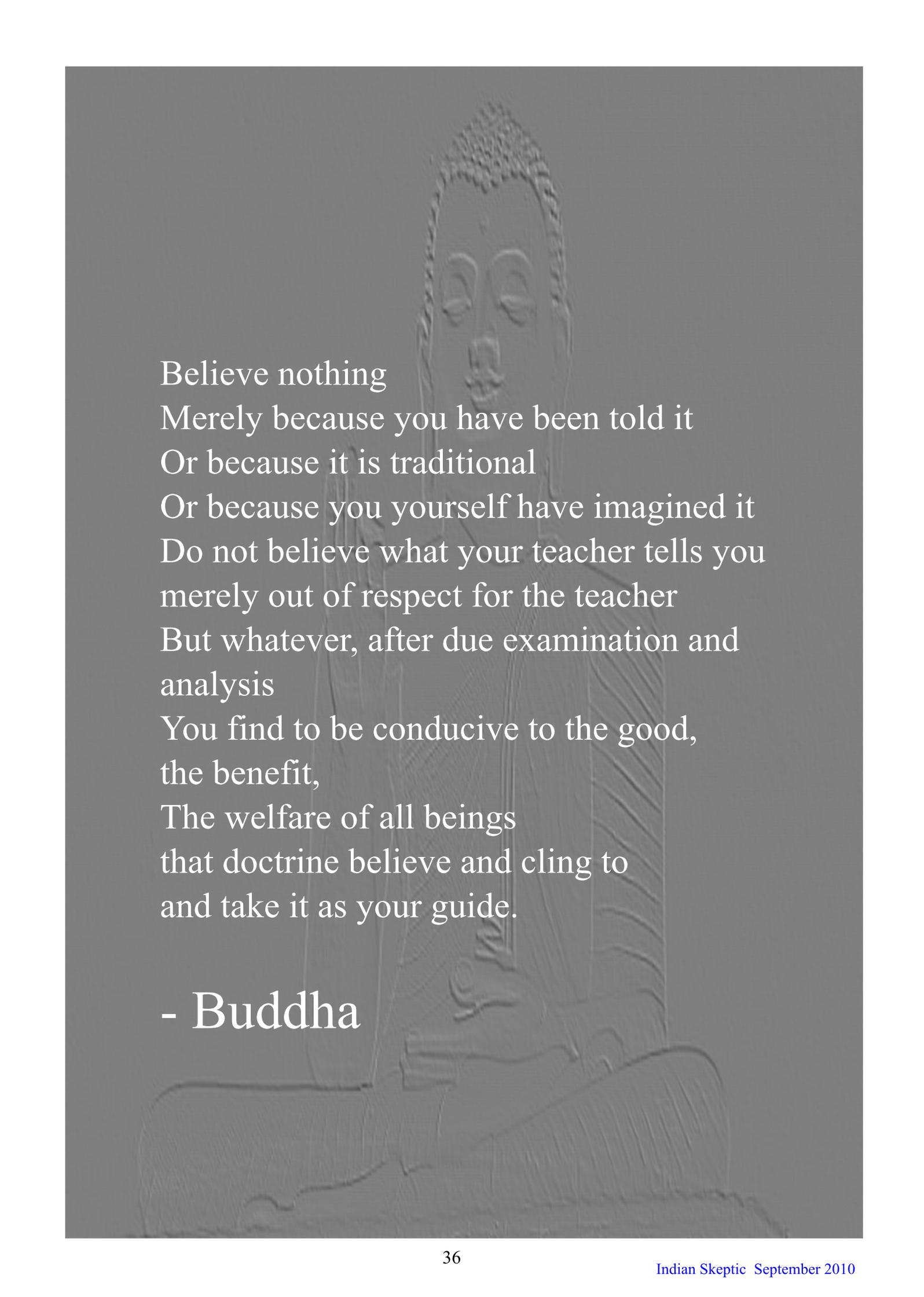


- Quantify. If whatever it is you're explaining has some measure, some numerical quantity attached to it, you'll be much better able to discriminate among competing hypotheses. What is vague and qualitative is open to many explanations. Of course there are truths to be sought in the many qualitative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