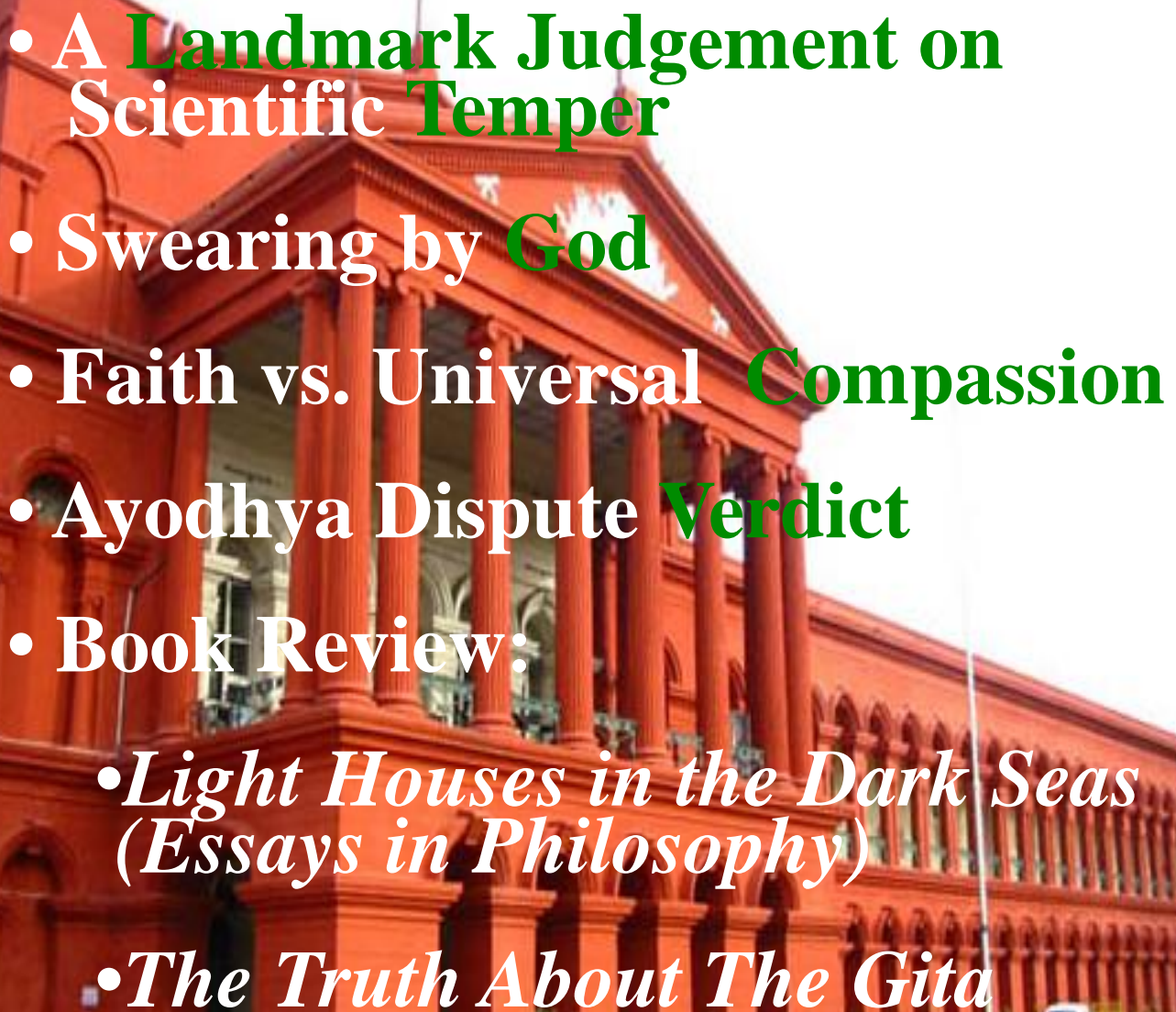


INDIAN SKEPTIC

No. 01/10

October 2010

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- A **Landmark Judgement on Scientific Temper**
 - Swearing by **God**
 - Faith vs. Universal **Compassion**
 - Ayodhya Dispute **Verdict**
 - Book Review:
 - *Light Houses in the Dark Seas (Essays in Philosophy)*
 - *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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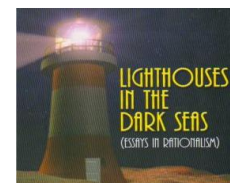


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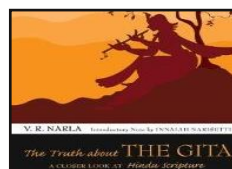


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A Landmark Judgement

Ramesh Nagaragere

There have been occasions when Indian judiciary has surprised, shocked and disappointed people who expected it to pass verdicts which would take the society forward. One well known case in point is the judgement given out by the Rajasthan high court against Bhanvari Devi in 1994 saying that those who had been accused of raping her were from the upper castes and hence could not have done such a heinous deed and acquitted all of them.

But now and then we come across some silver linings creating some hope in us about the efficacy and forward looking nature of the judges. I refer to the judgement announced by Justice H N Nagamohan Das of the High Court of Karnataka on 13th September, 2010 (WP No. 1750/2008 (GM – Police)). At one stroke he quashed the non bailable warrant issued by a lower court against Mr Hulikal Nataraj for 'hurting the Hindu sentiments' by criticising and talking against some

dearly held beliefs of many Hindus. This is surely a landmark judgement since it belongs to that group of decisions of learned judges like Justice V R Krishna Iyer. This emboldens and strengthens the hands of those who have been fighting against obscurantism and superstition which are still respected in this society since they are our 'tradition'.

Now, for the details of the case. Mr Nataraj teaches at Swami Vivekananda Higher Primary School, Doddaballapur some 35 kms away from Bangalore, He is well known for his acts of exposing the miracles, a programme popularised in Karnataka and in many other parts of India by Prof Narendra Nayak. On 26th February at one such programme at Madikeri in Coorg district of Karnataka he is said to have explained the dubious nature of Makara Vilakku and the case of an eagle going round the Garuda Stambha at Ayyappa temple of Shabari mala. (It could be



mentioned here that some time one of the trustees of Ayyappa temple admitted that the so called divine JYOTHI WAS ONLY A HUMAN CREATION.) He is also said to have called the so called theerthobhava at Bhagamandala, the sudden springing up of water in the river Kaveri as 'false'. The next day, on 27th February a complaint was lodged against him by one Chethan , an activist of Bhajarangadal of Madikeri with the police of the town. The charge was that Mr Nataraj, by calling these phenomena false had hurt Hindu sentiments. The police registered a case against him, filed it in the court of the magistrate at Madikeri. and a non bailable warrant was issued against the accused. This act on the part of the police

The text of the judgement reads like a treatise on rationalism and scientific temper. The constitutional obligation of every citizen of India to uphold and promote scientific temper and a spirit of enquiry without which no society can ever dream of moving in the direction of progress is also mentioned to support his decision. The most surprising thing is that the importance of Section 51 A(h) of Indian Constitution which addressed this issue was lost on the police officer as well as the judge at Madikeri.

Justice Nagamohan Das divides the text into five parts of which three are devoted to a delienation of the issue at hand, Under

Especially noteworthy is the extent of intellectual efforts put forth by the Judge to build up a case for acquitting Mr Nataraj. The text of the judgement reads like a treatise on rationalism and scientific temper. The constitutional obligation of every citizen of India to uphold and promote scientific temper and a spirit of enquiry without which no society can ever dream of moving in the direction of progress is also mentioned to support his decision.

and the court at Madikeri did cause some furore at that time and was forgotten later.

Karnataka was reminded of this case again on 13th September, 2010 when the press reported that the case against Mr Nataraj was quashed by the High Court judge Justice H N Nagamohan Das. Mr Nataraj had challenged the order of the Madikeri court in the High Court of Karnataka and his case was argued by the well known Advocate Prof Ravi Varma Kumar and his assistant Mr Irshad Ahmad.

Especially noteworthy is the extent of intellectual efforts put forth by the Judge to build up a case for acquitting Mr Nataraj.

titles such as FREEDOM OF SPEECH, SUPERSTITIONS, and FUNDAMENTAL DUTIES, he traces the growth of the spirit of inquiry among humans everywhere, The very first sentence, almost axiomatic, sets out the direction and tone the whole text was to follow, 'UNFREEDOM is the result of oppression and freedom is the outcome of liberation'. The learned judge cites various verdicts of the English, American and Indian seats of justice in this regard in support of his arguement. The words of Justice Frankfurter in the case DENNIS Vs. United states (34 US 494(1951) are very much relevant in the present context when we are still plagued by by those swearing in the name of cultural

nationalism and superstitions calling them parts of a glorious tradition, '...the liberty of man to search for truth ought not to be fettered, no matter what orthodoxies may challenge. Liberty of thought soon shrivels without freedom of expression '.

The judge also quotes extensively thinkers like Buddha, Basaveswara, Nehru and Dr Radhakrishnan to uphold the importance of being open minded, He rightly notes that scientific temper takes one beyond Science and 'creates a conducive atmosphere to

'mechanical manner'. Finally on the basis of all these findings all grounded on rationalism, progressive thinking and commitment to the spirit of the Indian Constitution the learned judge quashes the order of the lower court and discharges Mr Nataraj of all charges.

A judgement of this importance, notwithstanding some unease Iyer and Nagamohan Das stand tall among hundreds of judicial functionaries many of whom , unfortunately, are not very much different



eradicate class discrimination, slavery, bonded labour, untouchability, gender discrimination and racial discrimination' He also points out that when a citizen is threatened for discharging his fundamental duty of promoting scientific temper he/she can approach the court for a direction to the government to protect him/her from any harm.

The text of the judgement reveals how the complainant from Bhajarangdal and the police officer have bungled in their interpretation of the words 'wounding the religious feelings of Hindus. Similarly it also notes that the judicial officer at Madikeri has gone about the case in a

from the judge of the Rajasthan High Court already referred to. The victory of Mr Nataraj is not merely a personal gain but it is the victory of scientific thinking and rationalism over irrationalism and of democracy over fascism.

BS

Prof Nagaragere Ramesh was Principal of National College, Jayanagar, Bangalore and is currently associated with People's Democratic Forum and Bangalore Vicharavadi Sangha

Swearing by God

Narendra Nayak

In the place where I was born and probably elsewhere in our country the religious sensitivity is very high. If a Muslim were to be asked to swear by the Gita or the Hindu by the Quran there would be riots. But no one is bothered about the feelings of us the non-believers! In order to spare people from taking oaths on a variety of books, in the courts of Karnataka a placard is hung in the witness box from which one reads- I swear on the name of god that what I say will be the truth and nothing but the truth. This is supposed to be a secular form of oath. In a place called as Shimoga about 200 Kms from Mangalore an atheist refused to take oath in the name of god and was hauled up for contempt of court. He appealed to the High Court, which set aside that and came down heavily on the judge for trying to impose his religious beliefs on a witness.

My first brush with this form of oath was in 1980 when I got married under what is called as the Special Marriages Act. This act enables us- those without any religious beliefs- to get married without any religious rituals. The registrar when he came to the house wrote on the application-registration of a Hindu marriage under the special marriages act- I told him sorry strike that off. He said what is the problem? You are both Hindus. I replied no, I am not. During the marriage 'ceremony' he told me to hold up my right hand and swear I take so and so as my wife in the name of God. I told him no, no name of God business. He looked at me like a master chef spying a fly in the soup and said OK omit the god. So, I took the oath without the name of the non-existent god.



My next brush with oaths was a few years later. As a consumer activist I had filed a complaint against Readers Digest who were running some sort of cheating lottery to promote subscriptions, at the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade practices commission for India. Mangalore to Delhi was a three-day trip in those days! After going to the hearing I was sworn in as a witness. As my usual practice, I refused to take oath in the name of god. There was no expression of surprise at all- the judge said you could solemnly affirm and I did that. The lawyer for the magazine was asked do you have any question to the witness- he said no. I remarked just for this I had to come all the way to Delhi spending a week of my time? The judge looked sternly at me and asked young man are you employed? I said yes sir. Then he said has your employer given you leave on duty? I said yes sir. I am giving you first class train fare, take that and go. If you utter one more word I will haul you up for contempt of court. As a citizen you are duty bound to attend as a witness when summoned. If you don't the court will make you attend by a warrant! I said yes sir, sorry sir and scooted out of the place!

The third time I had to take oath was to testify at my case against the management of the Kasturba Medical College, Mangalore where I used to work. I was put in the witness box and the bench clerk pointed out a piece of cardboard hanging in inside that and told me-read from that- the text was -I swear in the name of god that I shall speak the truth and nothing but the truth. It was both in English and Kannada. I said no. He said what? I told him no, I cant swear in the name of God. He said what is your problem it is not any Hindu, Muslim or Christian God, it is the universal god. I said I am an atheist and I cannot swear by the name of any God. The commotion attracted the attention of he judge who asked what is the matter. I replied that I am an atheist and shall not swear by the name of any God. He said you could solemnly affirm. I remarked that I was going to do precisely that but the bench clerk is objecting to that. He gave a withering look to the clerk and ordered let him. Later on the bench clerk told me that in his three decades of service it was for the first time that he was seeing some one was refusing to take oath in the name of god!

The next occasion for me to bear witness was a trial of a supervisor of an orphanage who was sexually exploiting girls under his care, I was sworn in as a witness, the prosecution lawyer finished his examination and the defense lawyer started his cross examination. It ran like this:

D (defense lawyer): You did not take oath in the name of God.

I: So what?

D: YOU DID NOT OATH IN THE NAME OF GOD.

I: YES I DID NOT TAKE OATH IN THE NAME OF GOD.

D: I WANT IT TO GO ON RECORD THAT THE WITNESS DID NOT TAKE OATH IN THE NAME OF GOD.

I: Are you implying that I am not under oath or something?

D: (to the judge)- SIR, I WANT IT TO GO ON RECORD THAT THE WITNESS HAS NOT TAKEN OATH IN THE NAME OF

GOD.

J (Judge): The form of oath is irrelevant; the witness is under oath that is all.

D: I KNOW THAT SIR, BUT I WANT IT TO BE ON RECORD THAT THE WITNESS HAS NOT TAKEN OATH IN THE NAME OF GOD.

J: Not allowed.

D: I OBJECT.

J: Objection overruled. It shall not go on record. Proceed. If you have any more objections file an appeal under section...(I don't remember that section)

D: (to me) YOU ARE AN ATHEIST.

I: HOW MANY TIMES SHOULD I TELL YOU THAT? I SOLEMNLY AFFIRMED BECAUSE OF THAT.

J (to D): You can stop asking questions about his religious convictions and go on with your cross examination

D: That has a bearing on his testimony.

J: No it does not have, go on.

The next few times I had to bear witness were some long pending cases where nothing much happened. Then once more there was a case in which I was summoned as witness and that was when I was assaulted and stoned at when I was demonstrating to people outside my laboratory that the Ganesh idols 'drinking milk' was just a phenomenon of physics. Some local thugs had come with a mob to take revenge for some past grudges. The taking oath went on without any problems as the bench clerks had got used to my form of taking oath. The examination by the prosecution went on smoothly. Then came the turn of the defence.

D: You are an atheist.

I: Yes.

D: Do you know there is a Vithoba temple on the road where your business is.

I: Yes.

D: Do you know there is a Venkataramana temple situated about 200 meters from your business?

I: Yes.

D: Do you know there is a Kathyayani temple on the road parallel to the street where your business is?

I: I don't know.

D: Why don't you know?

I: Because I don't know.

Judge (to D): Are you conducting a quiz or something about location of temples? Go on with your next question.

Many times there have been occasions when people are asked to stand up for prayers and all have stood up except a few of us, we have refused to light lamps and so

on. The very same people who talk about hurting religious sentiments do not understand that our sentiments too get hurt when we are asked to pray to the secular, universal 'God'.

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

For my part, I say that the first duty of the thinking, free man is ceaselessly to banish the idea of God from his mind and consciousness. For God, if he exists, is essentially hostile to our nature, and we in no way depend on his authority... Each step in our progress represents one more victory in which we annihilate the Deity.

P J Proudhon

System of Economic Contradictions, [1846]

ATHEIST EVE

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>Bible_Boy: What if you're wrong and you waste your life living according to your own standards and not by what a loving god says? And in the end you wind up in hell, where you're tortured forever in hell fire?! Have you ever thought of that?

>Bible_Boy: Have you ever burned even your finger on a hot iron? You know how much that hurts?! Imagine that all over your whole body all the time with no stopping! It will be ETERNAL torture. And all you have to do to avoid it, is believe in god.

>Atheist_E: Pick the wrong god, and what happens? What if the god you choose isn't the right one and you end up in some other god's version of hell? And even if you're threatened, how do you make yourself believe? If I say fairies will kill you if you don't believe--do you?

>Bible_Boy: PLEASE read the Bible! I don't want you or anyone to be tortured for all ETERNITY. It's the most HORRIBLE thing that could happen to you!!! And if you just believe, you don't have to worry about it. I know the god in the Bible is real. I feel it in my heart!!!

>Atheist_E: But I don't worry about it--any more than you worry the fairies will kill you. And you could be wasting your entire life on a lie, right? Fear is a terrible justification for belief. It sounds like you were indoctrinated, and taught to fear even questioning it?

>Bible_Boy: Oh, no! It's not about FEAR!!! Once you have god on your side--there is nothing to fear, it's all about god's LOVE!!! I'm not scared!

>Atheist_E: *facepalm* Sure. Thanks for clarifying. How could I have thought otherwise?



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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Ayodhya Dispute Verdict

Commit the Crime and be Rewarded

Ram Puniyani

Nation heaved a sigh of relief following the three judges delivering the verdict on Ayodhya case (30th September 2010). There was no violence anywhere, something which was feared very much. The day passed off peacefully and the fear that violence will engulf parts of the country proved to be wrong, thanks to the maturity shown by large sections of population. As such the judgment was an exercise of sorts trying to do a balancing act, between all the parties involved, Ram Lalla Virajman, Nirmohi Akhada and Sunni wakf board. The title of the land has been divided into three each sharing one part. Also court has declared since Hindus believe the 'birth place' of Lord Ram to be below the place where the central dome of the mosque stood, that place should be allotted to Hindus. In response RSS chief in a jubilant mood proclaimed that now the path for a grand Ram temple has been opened at the site and all the parties should cooperate in this "national" work.

As Mulayam Singh Yadav has correctly put it, the Muslim community is feeling betrayed. First their mosque is entered into by miscreants who install the Ram Lalla idols there. Then in a well orchestrated assault RSS combine demolishes the Mosque and now the court operates on the RSS theory that Lord Ram was born at that spot. It seems if matters go the way they are going there is no need for scientific disciplines of History, Archeology and others as a section of political force can gradually build up the faith, act upon that and then the court will legitimize the criminal acts in the name of faith of a



section of society. The law of the land will come to such a pass is beyond the imagination of those who wish to adhere to the values of freedom movement and the Constitution of India.

Just to recall RSS combine, more popularly known as Sangh Parivar, picked up the issue of Ram Temple in Ayodhya in the decade of 1980s and later orchestrated the faith of section of Hindus that Lord Ram was born precisely at the spot where the mosque is located. Interestingly the trend of Lord Ram being regarded as the core deity of Hindu religion came up in the medieval times, more particularly after Goswami Tulsi Das wrote the story of Lord Ram in the popular Awadhi language. Till that time Valmiki's Sanskrit Ramayana was the major one prevalent in the society and being the language of elite, worship of Lord Ram was restricted to a section of Hindus. Tulsidas was pulled up by the Brahmins for his writing the story of Ram in Lok Bhasha, Avadhi, as Brahmins were supposed to be using Dev Bhasha; Sanskrit only. Tulsi Das was around thirty years old when it is claimed that the Ram Temple

was demolished. The demolition claim is unlikely to be true as had such a demolition taken place Tulsidas must have mentioned this in his writings. As such the later interpretations of Ram have been so different for different people.

One understands that Kings had been ruling for the sake of power and wealth and victor kings many a times destroyed the defeated king's holy place to humiliate the defeated king. The British introduced communal historiography aiming to pursue the policy of 'divide and rule' propagated that Muslim Kings destroyed Hindu

different wings of RSS combine. The crimes done by this stream have been richly rewarded by this verdict!

Now RSS and its progeny is taking the line that Muslims should hand over the land of their share to RSS front, to see that the aspirations of 'Nation' are fulfilled and a grand Ram Temple is built there. It is not only Hindus who constitute the nation. All the Hindus of the nation do not hold any such belief about the birth place of Lord Ram. All the Hindus do not want a Ram Temple there. As such majority of Hindus have kept aloof from this issue, many of

For RSS combine the matters of bread butter and shelter are secondary and imaginary constructs culled out from mythology form the base of their identity politics, the politics of Ram Temple, Ram Setu, Cow slaughter ban and what have you. We are in a catch 22 situation. The communalization of polity and society is so much that now faith, systematically constructed by a section of political stream is becoming the basis of law.

temples to insult Hindu religion. This type of Historiography spread hatred amongst communities and became the foundation on which the communal violence started taking place in due course. As such Babri Mosque was a protected monument, under the custody of Government of India. Government failed to get the illegally installed Ram Lalla idols removed from the site and also failed to protect the mosque form the onslaught of RSS combines' attack on the mosque in 1992. So de facto, with this judgment the RSS agenda of dividing the nation along communal lines is being legitimized by ignoring the fact of installation of idols and by turning a blind eye to the Babri demolition, coordinated by

them have looked with horror and disbelief the way the faith of people has been manipulated to catapult BJP to the seat of political power. Since the issue was highlighted and brought to the electoral arena; Hindu majority have never voted for the agenda of Ram temple. No doubt a section of Hindus has been won over to the Ram temple agenda; the majority of Hindus have not approved it as the results of elections show. The latest surveys also confirm that it is not an issue for most of the Hindus, but is an issue only for a handful of Hindus. Moreover the younger generation does not have anything to do with these types of identity related issues and that too imposed upon the nation

through criminal means, the crime of installing Ram Lalla idols and the crime of demolishing the Babri Mosque.

Congress is calling for a negotiated settlement. What can be a negotiated settlement? One; it has to be based on justice, recognizing the due rights of each party involved and there has to be a spirit of give and take. Do those calling for compromise will promise that the matters related to equity and security of Muslim community be granted? The Muslim community has been sliding down on the scales of social and economic indices. Will Sachar Committee- Rangnath Misra Committee reports be implemented in right earnest? Will RSS support such a 'give'? Will Muslim community be able to live in security hereafter? India has 13.4% of Muslims in the population. In the communal violence, more than 80% of victims are Muslims! Will RSS withdraw the 'Hate spreading books' from its Shishu Mandirs? Will its Shakhas stop doing the 'Hate Propaganda' against the minorities?

For a moment one feels like supporting a compromise formula. Sure and that's a good thing. One may be willing to talk of give and take, negotiation if the battered Muslim minority and also Christians are promised equal status as citizens, the baseless propaganda against them is held back, and the Congress takes it upon itself to fulfill the promise of Manmohan Singh that Muslim minorities have the first right to development resources as they have been left behind due to the social-economic discrimination and due to the politically motivated violence against them. Will all the guilty of communal violence be punished? Those behind Delhi anti Sikh massacre, Mumbai violence and Gujarat

violence are roaming with their bloated chests; can they be brought to book before a negotiated settlement is talked about? In a way can we trust the state for abiding by the rule of law to protect its citizens before demands of sacrifice from them are articulated?

One can very well say that the very politics of Communalism is using Ram Temple issue to violate the Indian Constitution and the amity amongst the communities. One can appeal to the minority communities to make some sacrifices but one knows that they will get nothing in return. The way communalism has seeped into the very vitals of our society and polity it has created situations where minorities are being treated as 'second class citizens'. The dominating 'Religion based nationalism', the politics of Hindutva with the agenda of Hindu Rashtra, will not let them live in peace and dignity. For RSS combine the matters of bread butter and shelter are secondary and imaginary constructs culled out from mythology form the base of their identity politics, the politics of Ram Temple, Ram Setu, Cow slaughter ban and what have you. We are in a catch 22 situation. The communalization of polity and society is so much that now faith, systematically constructed by a section of political stream is becoming the basis of law. As noted Film maker Anand Patwardhan pointed out on the day of Ayodhya verdict, it is 'Victory of Hindu Sharia: A sad day for India'. One hopes the younger generation, and all those believing in the Indian constitution will try to move on from the identity politics, politics which abuses faith for short cuts to power and paves the way for a sane society concerned about the human justice, and affirmative action for weaker sections of society. **BS**

Life has no meaning a priori ... It is up to you to give it a meaning, and value is nothing but the meaning that you choose.

Jean-Paul Sartre

Faith vs Universal Compassion

Part - II

P L Rao

Post Independence scenario - Religion and Commerce

After Independence India has accepted a secular Constitution. Even though the earlier grouse of Brahmins control is a non-issue now, religious influences and caste factors are playing havoc with the administration. It was just by a quirk of fate that India escaped being turned into a Hindu Rashtra a few years ago.

A recent development is the rising power and commercial influence of temples, *Mutts*, Churches, Mosques, minority educational Institutions, *Babas*, NGOs etc. Never in the past, had politicians unashamedly bowed before every monk, swami, priest or *maulvi* for vote bank as now. The wealth, influence and quantum of real estate grabbed from State by caste-bodies through dubious means are

alarming. This sector holds much of the landed property in prime areas in all parts of country next only to State. Every decision of State is made considering the impact on this or that religion. Saffron clad sadhus adorn dais in Public functions in hordes and speak on every matters except religion and betterment of common man. Country is divided caste wise more than ever, each having its own temples, deity and mutt and swamis. Each one thinks first of their own sub-sect. Thus basic issue of faith and relation with Super Power are relegated to backyards.

Let us now take other examples, say music or fine arts. Kritis were composed by saints as bhajans extolling particular deities. But the same song we hear today is set to a *raga, tala, laya* and *sruti*. Wordings of *pallavi* have receded to redundancy. No doubt music is gaining popularity, more



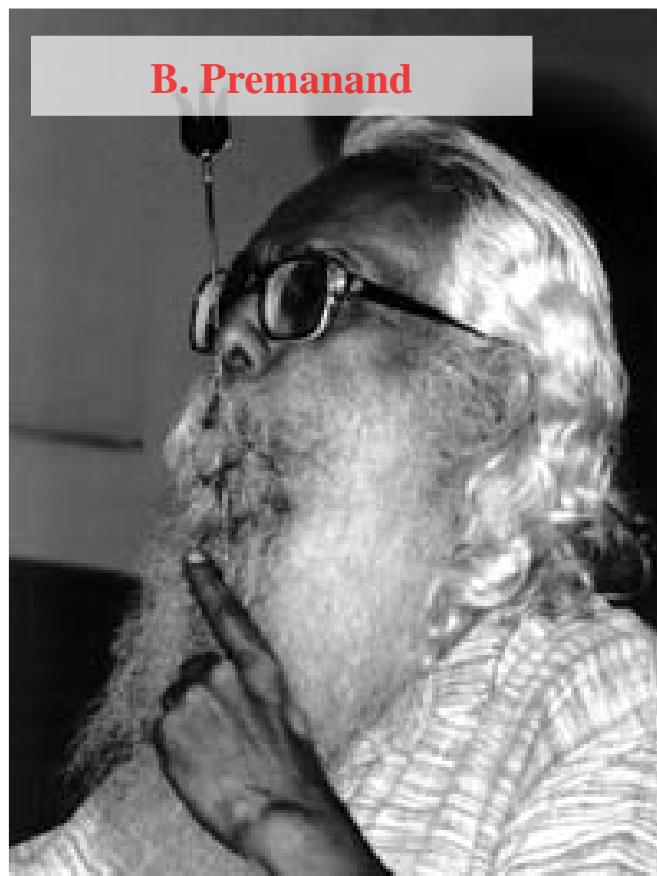
youngsters and sponsors are entering in with modern gadgets. Artists travel abroad and earn well. But the fact is that it has lost its “devotional” touch as a media for propagating faith. Same is the state with dance, painting, drama, yoga, religious pilgrimage etc For the sake of mass appeal, (if foreigners can be attracted and profit is ensured) even helipad will come up on mountain tops. The disgust one develops of a “holy places” has to be experienced by traveling as a commoner.

On other front, large sculptured works like temples, monasteries, *viharas* and shrines of yester millennium, where worship got stopped due to end of ruling dynasties or natural calamities, have got converted as archeological monuments or heritage sites to get recognition from international fraternity, thus deprived for worship by common folk for ever. Biggest organized fraud around is the annual *Makara Vilakku* at Sabari malai in Kerala, where the light appearing at distant hills appearing at dusk time, witnessed by lakhs of devotees is nothing but a bonfire lit by locals, in connivance with the State for attracting tourists (See *Bangalore Skeptic* - January 2008 & June 2008). *Cauveri Udbhava* at Talakaveri at exact moment of year is no magic either. Whatever be the intentions behind these decisions, these are clear examples of society and Governments high jacking Instruments and Institutions of God for their gains. Can such helpless Power salvage common man?

The Flourishing field of religion

Religious field is flourishing today due to the vast scope of earning money, fame and power. Scandals and Swamis sail together. But the Institutions survive due to political patronage enjoyed by the community as a whole. None bothers if stated objectives of these are flouted as people are just pigmies.

Usual “miracles” played by Babas to allure masses are ‘producing’ scented ash (vibhuti), watches, gold rings. They peddle faith healing and sell sacred stones.



Mr. B Premanand and Prof Narendra Nayak have for last 30 to 50 years exposed such tricks played on public and the skeletons lying hidden inside their cup boards. The former established a hospital for the poor in Podanur, toured extensively in India and abroad, advising people not to get cheated by Babas. He brought out many books, CDs and Videos. He was convinced that here was no miracle in this earth. He used to say “Name any Mutt or Baba, and I will show the scandal / shady deal inside it”. For decades before his death in October 2009, he paid a heavy price for annoying these powerful godmen. Now Prof Nayak is now heading the Rationalist Movement in India. Both challenged the miracle mongers to demonstrate their feats under fraud-proof conditions. But have found no takers.

There is another class: Gurus and Matajjis who deal with only top CEOs, company bosses, foreigners, top government officials and country heads. Elegantly attired, these Gurus walk out at steady pace to the dais of Ashram set in extreme luxurious style. The back ground is enough to hypnotize any business tycoon. After all inside he is just

like any other common man, least heard of spiritual salvation etc. He needed a Stock Exchange to convert his shady assets into white, cleanse his soul for once and gain respectability. One more version of yoga, variant of a breathing practice, meditation and stress relief techniques are enough to befool them.

A recent trend is the rise in number and status of Indians abroad and the consequent increase in the number of temples and religious platforms. Affluence of the younger community and nostalgia (opportunity for gathering with Indians or outing for weekend) are the two factors responsible for this. Religious awareness spread here is braided with modernism befitting the sophisticated elite class, lacking depth and seriousness. No contribution towards analyzing the trend or deriving a meaningful interpretation of religion is possible from these entities.

Thus, god and faith are the most exploited and discarded aspects in to day's life world over. If He really ruled, He would have been the most detested One. Stripped of commerce, the entire institution of Faith would crumble to pieces. Faith today is not a free standing pillar, but is propped up by commerce. The end result is fundamentalism and the religious strife prevailing all around in the World.

Faith in Devine matters: an obstacle to upliftment of mankind:

A question often posed is why concern about Divinity? Why not work for human reformation directly? The fact is that the term Faith 'exists' in life of man as dog in the monger. Priestly community still demands of its disorganized followers to stick to rituals and customs. The educated youth is too engrossed in accumulation of wealth to seek a solution to this largest evil. Instead, would atone by donating liberally to any cause of religion and wash hands off.

But transformation of man is feasible only

Stripped of commerce, the entire institution of Faith would crumble to pieces. Faith today is not a free standing pillar, but is propped up by commerce.

The end result is fundamentalism and the religious strife prevailing all around in the World.

when every man thinks. Not when few think for all with their concept of betterment, of society or self as the case may be. Each brain has infinite capacity if the self imposed veil of conditioning is shed off. Thus first task of one is to transform oneself by deep introspection - Then seek that of others, not by confrontation, but by showing with self practice and pursuance. Transformation of society starts from each one of us.

In effect, Faith, now focused towards Divinity, should get refocused as concern towards all animate and inanimate beings in eco system. The task is how to change common man's outlook, rather than expect rescue operation at every crisis in one's life. A holistic approach to problems of society helps ie, if one sees 'Brahman' in everything around and develops Universal compassion. There are near to ideal examples around us showing that this is not

Action Plan

One begins by asking of himself: “Do I get pricked by the violence in Kashmir, Naxalite movement, worldwide terrorism, exploitation by powerful, deaths due to poverty, abnormal rise of disharmony within family life and dragon of corruption and superstition embracing all walks of life?”. One who dispassionately looking around sees that the Truth, in reality, lies not in Heaven, is not an alien concept, but is in the Earth around us amidst the joys and sorrows of life. Ecosystem is the greatest inheritance to us, which we are bound to preserve and deliver in tact for next generations.

If one still has reservations on implementation, hear Mark Twain: “Let us so live that when we die, even the undertaker will be sorry”. Some one else said: “Imagine your own funeral, and you will realize what kind of impact you have created on those around you”. As easier solution, if one opts to get liked by everyone around, it is not a very tall order for the neo rich of today -Just adapt 4 slums. But in process, he would have created an army of beggars for perpetuity. Hence one can leave sustaining impression (his consciousness) on Earth only by working for permanent solutions to problems of mankind, ie by raising others’ confidence level. This brooks no compromises or half measures, each of which can puncture it easily. Thus caution against distraction of energy is important.

The best dictum”From cradle onwards, interfere the least in physical actions of a child. But NEVER dictate in psychic field. Encourage in it at all ages faculty of self discovery and decision making be fitting its age and never pamper. Thus brought up, child grows as useful citizen of Earth”. Here again we have the poser from Swami Vivekananda to society: “Give me hundred people committed (as me) towards mankind and I will transform whole World”. From his achievements, we see that his was not a hypothetical notion.

Now consider implementing immediately few simple actions for which you need take permission from nobody.

- 1) Re-script your Faith as concern towards all species on earth. Always keep pondering what lasting help you can render to the needy, rather than expecting from others. Own up a holistic approach in all your dealings.
- 2) Never expect or owe anything of others. If one is mentally of this frame, physical field will take care of itself, exceptions notwithstanding.
- 3) Live sincerely, always inquiring before every action, using your best judgment, least annoying others in process.
- 4) Prepare a declaration donating your vital organs to worthwhile causes after death.
- 5) In the will, advice against any religious rituals after death, which are all waste. Those who remember you will anyway assemble on their own. One need not worry about the post death scenario except from the angle of his pending responsibility to others.

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(Inspired by the teachings of J
Krishnamurthy)

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From the President of FIRA

Narendra Nayak

Allahabad High Court Judgement on Babri Masjid Dispute

As we enter the festive season the outlook for scientific temper in India looks bleak. The recent judgement of the Allahabad High Court in the title suit of the Rama Janma bhoomi dispute shows that even judiciary is not above superstition. One can only wonder as to what made the judges decide that Rama was born at the particular spot. Though it is qualified by the statement that it is believed, it looks like the belief has been accepted as evidence by the learned judges. Courts at least in our country are not to go by popular sentiments or by religious beliefs- they are here to interpret the laws of the land. But, the three-judge bench of the Allahabad High court has thrown all these to the winds and has declared that they would go by extra judicial considerations.

Here we have non-existent gods being represented by human beings, the gods being declared as minors and what have you. In such a scenario there is also a compromise-in order to preserve peace, the litigants have been granted pieces of the disputed property! Though all the three judges have agreed that the 'miraculous' appearance of the idols was by a human agency, the self appointed guardians of this temple, which came into existence because of the appearance of these idols have been granted a piece of the land. The judges have also come to the conclusion that Rama was a historical



figure and that he was born in that very place! While volumes have been written about this, as the rationalist movement we have to take cognizance of this and we have to think of arresting this dangerous trend. For this purpose, we called a meeting of the executive committee of our federation, which was attended by the president, Patron, national secretary, and some of the members of the executive committee. Some members have already sent their opinions. After due considerations of all points of view it was strongly felt that we should get impleaded as a party. The legal advice has been that it is basically a property dispute and third parties have no locus standi. After deliberating over this matter though all of us wanted to get impleaded the consideration of our meager resources and the more pressing problems needing urgent attention have made us decide that we would leave the matter for the Supreme Court to decide upon as all present felt that

the Supreme Court would be more rational in its approach and would consider all the points which have now converted a civil dispute about a piece of land into a referendum about the existence of a mythological figure! The deliberations of this meeting and the various issues discussed will be duly circulated by the National secretary.

We have another important judgment, which brings us cheer. One of our colleagues of the movement Hulikal Natraj, who had taken my training nearly two decades back had been asked a question in a public program at Kodagu about the Makara Vilakku at Shabarimalai. For the uninformed this is a miraculous light appearing on a hill called Ponnambala Medu at around 6pm on the Makara Sankranthi day, which is on the 14th of January. This hill is opposite to the temple of Ayyappa at Shabarimalai in Kerala. He replied that it was not true. The Hindutwavadis managed to register a FIR and tried to get him arrested for hurting religious sentiments! He had to move the High court of Karnataka to have the FIR quashed. The judgment of the High court has come as a shot in the arm for us. The judge has come down heavily on the police for having registered a FIR on some one exercising his constitutional duties of creating scientific temper. He has also castigated the higher ups in the police hierarchy and the Home secretary had to apologize in the court for the same.

In the last month I too had been asked the same question during programs in the same places. I had replied that the Makara Vilakku is true! I had also mentioned that it is true because the Kerala State Electricity Board arranges for burning camphor when a prearranged signal is given! Last year the trustee of the temple of Ayyappa had gone on record stating that the Makara Vilakku is a man made phenomenon. The Kerala Yuktivadi Sangham had exposed that nearly twenty-five years back along with photographs in leading newspapers! Yet some people want to believe that to be a

miracle.

I was also asked questions about another event which happens in October at a place called Talakaveri in Kodagu. At the prearranged time the river Kaveri is supposed to spring out a tank in that place. I replied that I do not know how it happens but would be glad to investigate and submit a report if invited in writing. This got due publicity in the media some of whom had distorted what I had said. Some organisations taking advantage of this started a so called 'campaign' asking for a criminal case to be filed against me and that I should be arrested etc. A number of threats were also made including that my programs would not be allowed there! But, I went there on the 7th of this month and had a number of interactions in public and educational institutions. The members of the Kaveri Sene (army) were nowhere to be seen and all these passed uneventfully!

We have had excellent interactions with the students of a number of colleges in and around Mysore. One of the most memorable ones was at the department of Humanities at the Mysore University. On the 5th October, the World Teachers' Day celebration was held with the participation of the students and the faculty, The interactions went on for nearly 2 hours with a number of questions. The Vice chancellor of the University was also present and he sat through the program making notes! The students were exposed to our point of the view for the first time! The person who had organised the program, Dr.Panditardhya, a Professor of Kannada also spoke at the meeting. He told me that he was besieged with questions from the students the next day in his class!

We are lining up a number of programs in this area in this month. We proposed to have interactions, demonstrations and also training programs. It has been also proposed to set up organisations to promote rational thinking. We do hope to build up a strong movement in this area, which is the heartland of Karnataka.

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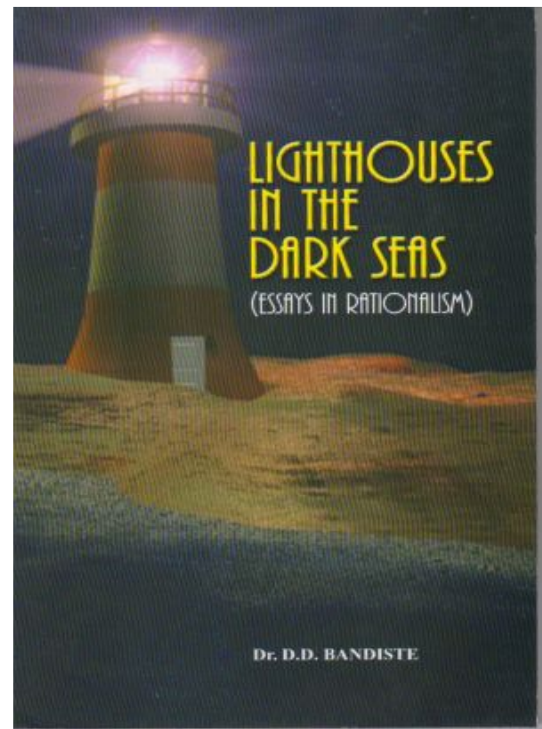
Rationalism: A Way of Life

Prabhakar Nanawaty

Dr D D Bandiste, the author of the book, *Lighthouses in the Dark Seas* is a retired professor of philosophy, Government Arts and Commerce College, Indore. In fact in his younger days he was a participant in Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha (RSS) activities and had worked in various capacities for that organization. He completed his BA Hons in philosophy from Guwahati University, MA in psychology, philosophy and LL B from Benaras Hindu University and Ph. D from Sagar University. The topic of his Ph. D thesis was *The Ethics of Bertrand Russell*. This thesis was a turning point in his life and made him later an ardent rationalist. Apart from a large number of research papers, individual chapters contributed in books and magazines edited by others, he had written number of books in Marathi, Hindi and English.

Meaning of Rationalism

As the author rightly says in this book, *Light Houses in the Dark Seas*, rationalism is a huge topic. It is a way of life based upon human enlightenment. In fact rationalism as a philosophy of life is of recent origin. As yet it is more misunderstood than understood. The book attempts to throw light on some of the topics of interest like 'What exactly is Rationalism', 'Socrates: the Polestar of



Rationalism', 'Buddha: the SuperRationalist', 'Outline of Rational Ethics', 'Rational Alternative to Religion' etc.

In the chapter "What exactly is Rationalism", the author tries to trace various finer points of this concept. Basically this concept is based upon the reasoning faculty of human beings. In fact in 17th and 18th century rationalism did not accept Empiricism. But now all the antagonism has gone. Empiricism is now the foundation of rationalism. Because of

this, rationalism is always nearer to facts; what it says does not amount to airy nothing. It stresses that we should keep our eyes and minds open. We should not be carried away by emotions and superstitions. Our life should not be an unexamined one. As such rationalism avoids the matters that are not arguable logically and empirically. It must be verifiable. Author feels that rationality is the function of a living and active brain. Therefore the fact is that where there is a living brain there is rationality. As such human beings are not the only rational being existing; every being is rational to some extent or other. Human being is not just rational. Like any other beings he too possesses in him the non-rational elements like feelings, desires, instincts, impulses, emotions and various

that anger and hatred are sometimes good; it will be pity if we do not get angry when we should or do not hate the evil things.

Rationalism is not one more dogma, creed or religion. The primary aim of all religions is to ensure immortality and liberation for its followers. In fact this liberation and/or immortality are possible only in supernatural transcendental existence. But rationalism does not accept anything transcendental or supernatural. Naturally it rejects religion; but this does not mean it rejects morality advocated by religions also.

Objections to Rationalism

In part 2 of this Chapter, the author lists out the objections to rationalism by the people

Rationalism is a human philosophy . The welfare of the fellow beings is its central concern. Rationalism wants us to handle the psychological states wisely and selectively. Contrary to rationalism, religion asks us to suppress all emotions.

cravings. In spite of the thinking capacity endowed by nature to human beings, human rationality is still quite weak as well as inefficient. Very often it errs and is even unable to dominate the situations.

Though rationalism is a mundane philosophy, it is also a human philosophy meaning thereby the welfare of the fellow beings is its central concern. Rationalism wants us to handle the psychological states wisely and selectively. Contrary to rationalism religion asks us to suppress all emotions. In fact all emotions and instincts are not harmful type; instinct of love, affection and self preservation are quite helpful. So are curiosity, creation, construction, exploration. They are good for human beings. The author even feels

mostly those who gain through irrationalities. He takes each point and logically refutes the objections. One of the objections to rationalism is its acceptance of empiricism since empiricism is liable to errors. However empiricism is evolving it goes on eliminating the error and comes nearer to the truth. One more objection to rationalism was there is no scope for mysticism and mystic intuition. There were thousands and thousands of persons who claimed to possess mystic knowledge. Now in spite of tall claims to absolute and infallible knowledge, the mystic intuition appears to be nothing more than imaginations of well meaning persons. This we can see in the contradictory statements made by prophets of various religions. In fact there is no independent means to

decide the truth of what mysticism claims. One more criticism to rationalism is that rationalism very often gets aligned with materialism, atheism, hedonism, consumerism and modernism. Rationalism is not necessarily committed to either atheism or materialism. Atheism says that God does not exist and materialism holds that all things are products of the initial stuff matter. Rationalism has kept its mind open. It is prepared to accept even the contrary views, if proved. However rationalism appears to be more inclined to rejecting God than accepting God since there is a widespread harm caused by accepting God. It believes that it is better to suspend belief in God, spirituality etc for want of legitimate proof as well as its harmful effect.

Though hedonism – preaching eat, drink and be merry – is treated as base philosophy, everyone tries to fulfill the same though do not express explicitly. Pursuit of happiness and filling of the biological needs need not be condemned. According to the author, inadequate rationalism has created some of these problems; greater rationalism will certainly solve them in due course of time. Only intentions may not suffice. We need to be more sensible, more rational and more active than before.

Socrates

While commenting upon Socrates Dr Bandiste questions why was he required to be martyr? In fact Socrates was the first martyr for keeping reasoning alive. Socrates never incited an armed revolution against the established state of religion. How then was he a dangerous person? His blunder was he taught people to question the established beliefs and ways. But no establishment tolerates questioning. It wants only faithful and blind followers. Socrates was a philosopher and philosophy wants a continuous use of our reasoning or critical faculty. Of late scientists are doing this task and hence they too are being attacked by religious authority. Socrates

has died because of wrath of the establishment. The Socratic spirit has become immortal and a polestar in the field of philosophy and rationalism.

Buddha

In the chapter on Buddha, the author has all the praise for Buddha as a person, as a rationalist and as a philosopher. Author feels that Buddha had a scientific outlook but he was not exactly scientist as we understand today. He was essentially a saint. But saints are usually theists by belief and consider helping the downtrodden as a method of pleasing the superno, the God. Though Buddha was a saint but not of this sort; he did not believe in the existence of God. Buddha suggested a plan of social construction based upon the rational and moral outlook. He found that moral depravity born out of ignorance is the root cause of all social evil. Buddha rejected the meaningless metaphysical quests, the hoax of soul, nihilism, miracles as decreed by God and the theory of transmigration of soul. Buddha preached dhamma as distinct from the dharma taught by others. Buddha did not suggest any new economic, political or social set up. But by suggesting our life should be based upon enlightenment and compassion, he gave humanity an abiding guideline for social reconstruction.

Concept of Soul

Concept of soul must have come up in the minds of primitives to fulfill their certain needs. According to primitive people any thing that moves must be caused by some agency. They posited a river goddess causing the water flow, a wind god that made air blow and so on and so forth. When this logic was extended to human beings, it was the soul that was causing human to move. This was one of their needs. The second need was obviously to fulfill the desire to tide over the death. The biological death was unavoidable and desire to continue beyond death was fulfilled by the concept of soul.

The author then explains in detail the share of problems, confusions and superstitions attached to soul. In fact this appears to be irrational start. As such we must give it up even if it has certain advantages. One must understand that mind thrives on life and life thrives on matter. Author then concludes that we find that recourse to soul is found only where there are living bodies. No one will ever come across a disembodied soul. If this is so why not speak only in terms of biological factors and drop mention of soul altogether?

Rationally Meaningful Life

Author makes distinction between meaningful life and successful life. Being successful is an indication of the presence of an ability to get ahead, to mobilize the available resources, to solve the confronting problems and to find a way out of impasses and blind alleys. But success means many things to many people. The aim to be successful may be noble or mean, myopic or broad based and the means to achieve the same may be corrupt or right. But meaningful life implies a desirable, commendable and admirable life.

Dr Bandiste points out that this rationally meaningful life is to be lived here on this earth; to be shaped solely by human hands and that there is absolutely no idea of human becoming superhuman, God or some such thing. Then he describes what the rationally meaningful life is. Even religion has its own formula of meaningful life which author rejects in toto. According to him a full and integrated blossoming of whatever is distinctly human alone can be rationally considered to be meaningful. In fact this meaning needs to be found as an individual, as a group and of course of humanity as whole. All the innate urges that person has are not distinctly human. Those that are common with other living beings need to be excluded. Though biological urges are important to human beings, they must be fulfilled in a dignified way.

Free Society

While commenting on freedom, the author asks “Freedom: to whom? From what? For what?” He focuses his attention on how the free society likely to look like. People have a notion of free society alleging that it will only mean free and unrestrained sex, drinking orgies, unregulated routine, absence of any social order, prevalence of jungle law etc. Under such description of society, neither any industry, commerce, banking, school, travel nor any type of civil life would be possible. These are wrong allegations of the orthodoxy. Only social order makes a civilized and even a free life is possible for the citizens. Civilization along with its restrictions is necessary so that culture thrives. One should not take a myopic view that the individual is like a part and the society is like organism. The individual is the real and independent unit of action and society is only a fictitious construct. Individual human being is important and is not to be sacrificed at the altar of the society. For this one must shed the mental slavery and conditioning of mind. Human should be liberated from every type of mental slavery, frustration, hopelessness, status-quoism and the mentality to mental surrender. This only enables human beings to achieve their own rational potential.

Rational Ethics

While outlining the rational ethics and creating a rational life, author had listed dimensions of the rational outlook. To quote a few;

- Naturalism replaces supernaturalism
- Facts replace scriptures as authority
- Realism replaces fantasy and delusions
- Activism takes place of fatalism
- Knowledge replaces faith.

According to him this is the way to create harmonious and progressive society.

Rational Alternative to Religion

In the last chapter of the book, Dr Bandiste replies frequently asked questions on religion and throws light upon developing a rational alternative to religion. In fact author adopts the style of Socrates like conversation and very lucidly shows the contrast between religion and rationalism and explains how mankind needs latter to replace the former. According to him this is going to be a huge task. Rationalists must know that there is no short – cut for its development. The present religion-based-culture has evolved over thousands of years. Similarly the evolution of rational culture would also require, may not be a few thousand years but at least a few hundred years. The efforts have to be made at social, institutional and at individual levels.

As Dr Dabholkar mentions in the preface, let us hope that the contents in the book

will induce at least a few people to become their ‘own light’ and chose the right path. The contents and details in the book are in fact good food for thought covering various aspects of rationalism in detail. Author has inserted a large number of quotations in between pages which are quite relevant to lead a rational life.

Lighthouses In The Dark Seas
(*Essays in Rationalism*):

Dr. D D Bandiste,

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**We cannot, we ought not make the least concession
to theology, because in that mystic and rigorously
consistent alphabet, he who begins with A must
fatally arrive at Z, and he who want to adore God must
renounce his liberty and his human dignity.**

Michael Bakunin

Federalism, Socialism, and Anti-Theologism (1867)



The Truth About The Gita

Kavneet Singh

(Continues from the previous issue)

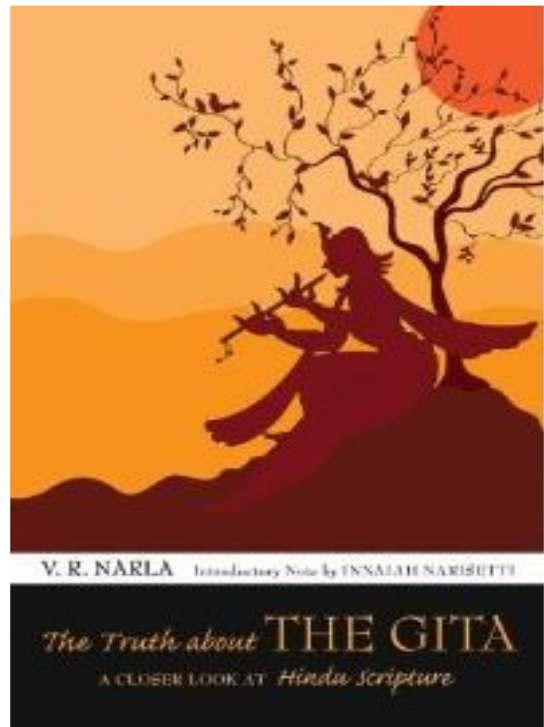
Chapter 15 – Ethics of the Gita

In ancient India ethics never developed, as it did in Greece, into a special branch of study.....An ethical system with a social bearing can develop only in a society that has some social coherence.....[Pages 140-141]

With the caste system rigidly in place no such ethical system could even begin to germinate because the entire society was divided from top to bottom with the sole focus of each sub-group more worried about their supposed position and all the protocols surrounding it rather than develop a sound ethical system for uplifting society.

How can a scripture which makes a reluctant Arjuna take up his arms again and kill his kinsmen to gain a petty kingdom promote world peace?.....[Page 142]

A man-god glibly lectures a soldier by convincing him to kill all those, he loves and cares for, simply cannot be a man of peace and freedom. That rather makes Krishna a very unethical and violent man akin to a modern day terrorist with a dangerous agenda.



Whatever these and other commentators on the Gita might say, the concern of ethics should be, not with god and his angles, but with man and fellow-men. Its aim should be “the greatest happiness of the greatest number”.....It should promote amity, not strife; it should work for peace, not for war.....[Page 145]

The Gita is all about strife and war and then total annihilation of forces amassed on both sides. Krishna to put it bluntly made Arjuna into a killing machine through his “song celestial” instead of diplomatically

using his wisdom to peacefully resolve the entire conflict which could have been settled amicably if he was a visionary chief with the will to do it. Therefore, unless most Gita apologists are high on something special while reading it, there seems to be no ahimsa (non-violence) being taught, but rather extreme violence is being propagated, justified and sanctified by the dark lord Krishna himself.

From blackmailing, Krishna proceeded to browbeating. He told Arjuna; "being a fool, you think you will be killing Bhishma, Drona, Karna and others. In fact, they are already killed by me." To Arjuna much bewildered and broken down by then, Krishna gave a stunning glimpse of his cosmic form. It was something ghoulish and bloodcurdling.....

The core teaching of the Gita, as Prem Nath Bazaz has put it boldly, succinctly and truly is this: "Murder with impunity".....D.D.Kosambi wrote that the ostensible moral of the Gita is: 'Kill your brother if duty calls, without passion; as long as you have faith in Me, all sins are forgiven.....[Page 148]

The ultimate kernel of the Gita lies in the above statements by Bazaz and Kosambi! The Gita being the quintessence of the Santana Dharma, no wonder ethnic cleansing and genocides are carried out against all minorities with complete impunity with absolutely nothing bothering their conscience, since the dark-lord Krishna will forgive everyone of their sins.

As Arun Shourie points out, the Gita is not consistent. It tells you act not to make a world a better place to live in or to make your fellow-men better citizens to live with, but to seek the merger of your individual soul with the supreme soul.....[Page 149]

Instead of merging one's love with fellow human beings, the entire focus is to kill because it is your duty and then merge with the Supreme soul. But the problem is, after killing you will have no soul to merge with the Supreme!

"Kill , kill one and kill all, kill without the least constraint, because it is your caste duty, because it is in consonance with nature." To sum up, the ethics of the Gita is wholly Machivellian and Nietzschean.....Krishna met his end by an aboriginal hunter who mistook him for a quarry.....[Page 151]

What could be more incredible than such unethical, unconscionable belligerence by a god whose leadership has a billion devotees, leading them off the dangerous precipice into permanent oblivion of Om!

Chapter 16 - Sociology of the Gita

The four fold order was created by Me according to the divisions of quality and work. Though I am its creator, know Me to be incapable of action change (IV – 13) {Gita}....[Page 152]

Nothing could be clearer than the above verse from the Gita where Krishna the dark lord states that he created the despicable caste system. Further caste literally means varnas which in turn means color. Therefore the entire edifice of the so-called caste system is based on racial lines. The stratification of the social mobility is so rigid that there is absolutely no scope for rise in status no matter how incredible one's personal accomplishments. This is the real 'apartheid' of the Brahmin kind!

He may or may not have been the Lord of the Jagat (Universe) but he was certainly the Lord of Jugglery. Taking their cue from the Lord of Jugglery, the commentators on the Gita maintain that caste system is not man-made but god-made; it is "therefore" sacrosanct.....[Page 154]

How on earth does the all knowing god devise such a unjust and wicked system so as to subjugate more than 95% of the population to perpetual servitude. No wonder, it is possible in Krishna's alternate parallel universe where all the 33 million gods reside to do the impossible on this Hindu earth.

For finding, refuge in Me, they also who, O son of Pritha, may be of a sinful birth – women, vaisays as well as sudras, - even they can attain to the Supreme Goal..[Page 154]

This verse of the Gita by Krishna should get an Oscar award for its sheer insolence and the unspeakable gaul to be able to write such filth. It really means that all except the Brahmins and the Kshytrias everyone else is “born out of the womb of sin.” Nothing can be more repulsive than this statement but even worse being that it is from the holiest Hindu text. Dozens of well known commentators on the Gita have given evasive and misleading translations because it boggles the mind, as to how is it possible that a holy text can be downright racist to the vast majority of the population.

Now the forth key – and vicious – verse in the Gita is No.35 in Chapter III.....Better one’s own duty, though devoid of merit, than the duty of another well discharged. Better is death in one’s own duty; the duty of another is productive of danger.....[Page 159]

This line probably the most famous one, from the Gita, is such a senseless and convoluted statement. According to Krishna the most intelligent sudra cannot perform the Brahmin’s prayers otherwise he would go to hell. Instead he should continue to be a shoemaker if his father was one and give it his best and be content. Messing with the sacrosanct varna system can as Narla puts it, “a spell in hell!” Arjuna cares more about upsetting the caste system due to the war, as the war widows may intermarry with other caste-groups or become sex-slaves of the lower castes, rather than the relatives he has killed. The entire Gita is nothing more than barbed wire to keep the brutal caste system in its place.

Chapter 17 – The Gita and Science

A true scientist cannot think, he cannot work, he can hardly breathe in the midst of

the vacuity and vapidness of Vedanta.....[Page 167]

Out of the three Indian-born scientists who have Nobel prizes for their work two won it for their work done in the US and decided not to return to the holy land of the Vedas. Various charlatans posing as theologians propound many fantastic theories of inventions of electricity and flying chariots all found in the Mahabharata eons ago. Even “sciencefiction” has been incorporated into the Gita!

Chapter 18 - Why the Gita

By the time of Patanjali, that is, the 2nd century B.C., Krishna was being worshipped in some parts of the country by some sections of the people as a personal god. Patanjali was too shrewd a man not to take full advantage of this fact.....[Page 172]

The two greatest ruling dynasties prior to the birth of Christ in South Asia were the Nandas and Mauryas both “Sudras.” Neo-Brahminism came about immediately after Pushyamitra murdered Asoka and Brihadratha the descendent of Chandragupta the Sudra emperor. Their two pronged attack to eradicate Buddhism completely; one, to physically kill all monks and Buddhist followers and second, to rewrite and co-opt all those puny gods including Buddha, so that the “sudras” never dare raise their head again. The ever vigilant Brahmins never stopped reinventing their texts to make sure that no other Faith ever subsumes them like Buddhism and Jainism did in the past. The proper title for the Gita should be “The Caste Stays Rigid”. The Gita is basically a grim warning to all followers that they better toe the line of castism or else contend with hellfire.

Chapter 19 – From a Tribal God to a National God

In fact he was disliked, distrusted,

denounced. It is on record in the Mahabharata that once he spoke bitterly to Narada that “the only enjoyment allowed to me is to listen to their harsh words and constant complaints. The incessant invective I am subjected by those for whose welfare I am slaving rankles in my heart perpetually.” [Page 175]

Krishna was a mundane tribal leader otherwise why could he not save his own Yadava clan from fratricide? Historical records show nothing about Krishna other than a indirect reference to “Herakles” by Megasthenes, which Narla attributes to Krishna but there is still no direct proof. Today thousands of books in dozens of languages abound on Krishna.

Not a single one I have come across so far makes any sense other than baseless rehash of a myth. But the publishing continues and Krishna is today the embodiment of manhood, of godhood, a National Hero of India. It boggles the mind how the blind continue to lead the blind.

Chapter 20 – The Two Bhagavans

The second Bhagavan saw peril to the caste system in this approach. And so, to sanctify the system he took it upon himself full responsibility for its creation..... [Page 183]

Bhagavan (god) Buddha who under the prevailing circumstances did his best to have equality and justice to all through his sanghas. Bhagavan (god) Krishna on the other hand created a first class con to usurp all logic and common decency from the laity and keep them in permanent servitude.

And whoever, at the time of death, gives up his body and departs, thinking of Me alone, he comes to My status (of being); of that there is no doubt (VIII – 5).....[Page 189]

Even genocidal killers like Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi could enter heaven provided they had Krishna’s name on their lips. Gita instead of being a book

of immortality is a book of high immorality which justifies extreme violence and apartheid.

If the Mahabharata is the “Encyclopedia Brahminica”, the Gita is equally certainly the “Bible of Bondage”..... [Page 191]

Narla is at his finest and could not have put it any better.

Chapter 21 – All Things to All Men

What is far more shocking, it can be cited to justify mass murder. The Gita affirms that one neither slays nor is slain” (II-9). So, when you kill, where is the question of homicide? And when you kill a whole population, where is the question of genocide?..... [Page 199]

No wonder the modern day Brahmin puppeteers at the helm of the levers of power continue to commit genocides on various religious and ethnic minorities with absolute impunity, guilt free because they will have the name of Krishna on their lips and be absolved of all sins before they ascend to swarg (heaven) and be lavished with more than the standard 72 virgins.

Yes indeed The Gita is undoubtedly a non-ethical work. And yet, we read it, we treasure it, we venerate it. It is the greatest triumph of the unknown author or authors who fabricated the Gita; it is an equally great tragedy for India and the world..... [Page 200]

The Gita seems to be the “Art of Slave Making” at its best. Narla hopes that the Hindus of India will soon throw the Gita into the dustbin of history permanently to get out from the retrograde morass of the current deluded thinking, which is dragging the people and the country backwards with no end in sight. V.R.Narla had the guts of a tiger, the memory of an elephant, and the critical faculties of a very intelligent human. Narla is a giant among men, to give a brutally honest critique of the most revered holy text of the Sanatainists

(Hindus) using common sense and logic.

This is one of the finest critically written books I have ever read. Anyone trying to understand the 'true' heart of Hinduism without getting bogged down in the

quicksand by reading hundreds of various books on this subject, needs to carefully read this book. This brilliant, little known classic has just been reprinted by www.prometheusbooks.com in July 2010.

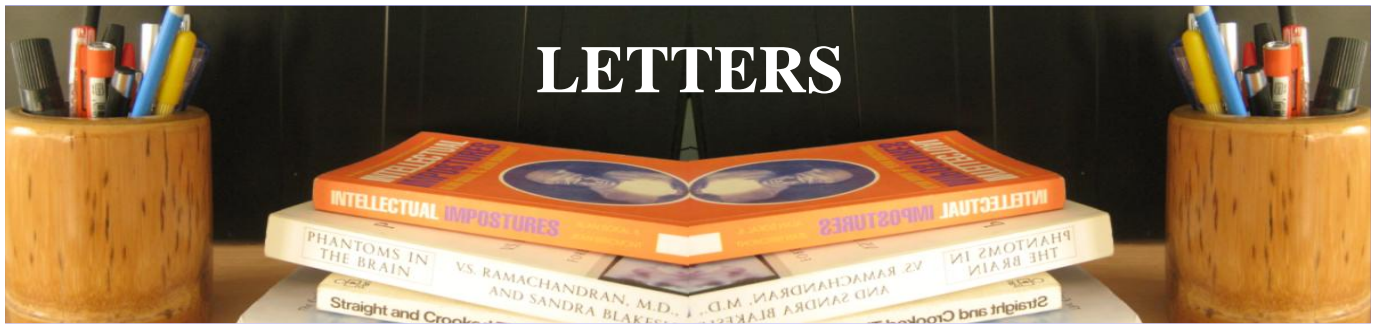
BS

Utopian? Guilty Your Honour.

Revolutionaries are often reproached for being utopian, of being dreamers. Yes, we are dreamers, because like children, we don't like nightmares. Yes, we are utopian. This utopia is not a heavenly paradise come to Earth. Neither is it a return to a mythical Golden Age. This 'other' place is a symbolic territory, based on our revolutionary refusal to put up with a world founded on the violence of class and ethnic or sexual domination, of the exploitation of labour and the body, of alienation.

Anarchist Federation

Beyond Resisence



An article loaded with prejudice

It would make sense if Indian Skeptic carries a disclaimer on the opinions aired in the articles published. The only rational part of the article on "Ayodhya...Verdict" is the call for a truth commission. No thinker ever supports attempts to reverse history! It is futile. At best we can blame our ancestors for having allowed to happen what happened..

The article is loaded with prejudice .I cannot accept it. I am yet to read in IS a paper on rationalising the issue which is immersed in the two concerned religious bigotries.

SG Nagaraj
Bangalore

Dr Ram Puniyani replies:

I think it is not an attempt to reverse history or to counter pose one fundamentalism against the other. The issue is that a political formation is trying to achieve its political goals by misusing history, by manufacturing faith around concocted history. So the point as a rationalist is unraveling the history from faith, to disjunct faith from politics. Only by countering the politics built around faith can we prepare the ground for development and sustenance of rational thought.

One is just hinting at the rational view of looking at the past to see the present. Only then can we promote a society built around scientific spirit.

Sending you the background chapter o Ayodhya in the next mail.

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.

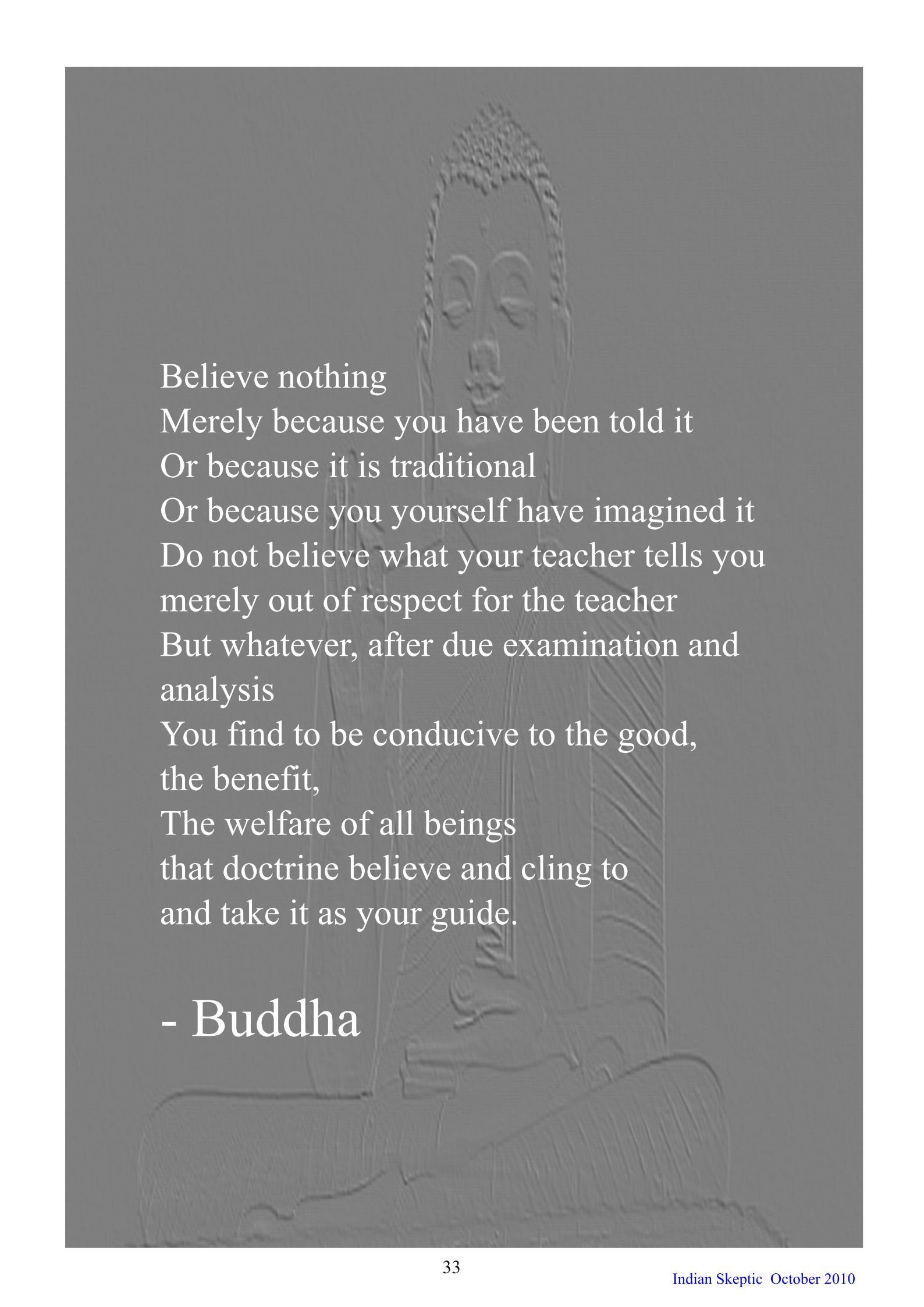


- Quantify. If whatever it is you're explaining has some measure, some numerical quantity attached to it, you'll be much better able to discriminate among competing hypotheses. What is vague and qualitative is open to many explanations. Of course there are truths to be sought in the many qualitative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