Excerpt from Dr. Narendra Dabholkar’s Scientific Temper 1

English Translation : Dr. Vivek Monteiro

We live in a scientific age. From the time we wake till the time we sleep at night there is not a single thing that we can do without the help of science. We wake up, take a toothbrush, apply toothpaste, and turn on the tap at the washbasin. Take note- none of these things were available in Maharashtra a hundred years back. There were no toothbrushes, no tooth paste and no washbasins. At that time you would have to use a twig from a tree and water from a well. And many of you may have a degree in science. And after telling you all this at this university in Maharashtra, I will ask a simple question and wait for ten seconds. Anyone may answer the question. The question is - number one : the importance of scientific temper is stated in our constitution. Number two- ‘developing scientific mindset’ is mentioned as a core objective in our national education policy. Number three- ‘scientific outlook’ has been included in value education. Number four- ‘scientific temper is the foundation of the scientific age in which you live. And number five, the philosophic foundation of the science education that you have received is the scientific temper. So, can anyone tell me, in one word, what is this, so important,‘scientific temper’?

Like, in school, we are asked to write synonyms of words. If asked ‘aqua’, we write ‘water’. If asked ‘sun’, we write ‘sol’. If the word is ‘luna’, we write the synonym ‘moon’. So, listening to my speech, think for a moment and write a synonym for ‘scientific temper’. My experience is that in 99 percent of the universities in Maharashtra, 99 percent of the time, there is no answer to my question, and if there is an answer, it is incorrect. In short, ‘scientific temper’ means, to ‘investigate causes and effects’, it means ‘rational causality’. Number one - behind every phenomenon, there are causes. Number two – my intelligence can comprehend these causes. Number three- though we do not today know the causes of every phenomenon in the world, but whenever and however they will be understood, I also can understand how they will be understood because of rational causality, and Number four- this is the most reliable way known to mankind of gaining authentic knowledge.

Until humankind acquired scientific temper, humans were only another weak species in nature. ‘ Behind whatever happens in my life, there is God, there is destiny, there is fate, there is accumulated indulgence, there is karmic consequence, the sins of past lives, the time of my birth- as long as humankind was unaware of rational causation, these were various kinds of beliefs held by humans. Then we humans discovered rational causality, and went from being dominated to becoming independent, from being subject, to becoming free. And mind you, this was an extremely important and extremely exciting event in the history of humankind.