

Press Release
National Campaign on Scientific Temper
7 Nov2023 to 28 Feb2024

All India People's Science Network (AIPSN) and Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS) are starting a national campaign on Scientific Temper on 7th Nov2023. This day marks the birth anniversary of both, Sir CV Raman, and Marie Curie, Raman the only Indian who throughout his life worked in India and won the Nobel Prize. Curie, the woman scientist who first won the Nobel prize. Both the scientists were critical thinkers who valued the importance of basic scientific research and the role science plays in transforming society. Both questioned false prevailing beliefs and made significant contributions to science.

AIPSN-BGVS will carry on the National Campaign on Scientific Temper from 7 Nov 2023 till 28 Feb 2024 with the slogans "Science for Secularism" and "Science for Democracy". We firmly believe that rationality, secularism and scientific temper are a great democratizing forces and are determined to make knowledge available to all including those who were systematically prevented from accessing it. As Ambedkar and Nehru have pointed out rationality is crucial to democracy and bedrock of our Constitution. They viewed the future India not just as a political but also a social democracy. Their dream was to build the country based on ideals of liberty, equality, justice and fraternity. They wanted to end centuries of oppression and ill-treatment meted out to the marginalized and excluded classes. A dream shared by millions of Indians who participated in the freedom struggle. This could happen only in a secular state where all citizens, irrespective of religions, caste, gender and region are treated equally.

We are now witnessing an ever-increasing clash of ideas, on the one hand there are those who want to keep the society under the yoke irrational, anti-science, myths and superstitions and on the other side are those who want to build a future based on rationality and scientific temper. In the recent past we had never experienced anti-science and irrational ideas being propagated with impunity by the people placed at higher administrative position of the country. We have witnessed with concern that:

- Method of science and evidence-based reasoning are no longer going to be considered as the way to finding truth,
- Pre-conceived beliefs and reliance on scriptures are getting more importance in decision making,
- People in power are expressing mythology as history and theology as science or philosophy,
- School books are rewritten with distorted and pseudoscientific facts,
- Scientific theories like Darwinian evolution contrary to religious beliefs are deliberately expunged from syllabus,
- Spreading of communal hatred and lodging atrocious attacks on Dalits, minorities and weaker section of the community are becoming a regular feature,
- Rationality and reason are gradually getting dumped, encouraging cultivation of irrationality and unreason,
- Democratic rights of dialogue, debate and dissent are viewed as antinationalist acts,
- Constitutional binding of developing scientific temper, spirit of enquiry and reform according to article 51 A(h) are trampled upon by the current ruling regime on regular basis.

An atmosphere of irrationality and anti-science feeling was created in the country with the result that science popularizers and propagators of scientific temper - like Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare, M M Kalburgi and Gauri Lankesh - were murdered by forces which are against scientific temper and rationality. We strongly believe that at this point in the history of independent India, our Constitution and democracy is threatened by these forces. We feel that, today a National Campaign on Scientific Temper is necessary to protect the constitutional democracy of India that is needed if we are to remain a secular and pluralistic country which was envisaged by the makers of the Constitution.

The National Campaign on Scientific Temper (NCST), is not just a struggle against superstition. It is a systemic battle against a wholesale assault on scientific temper, critical thinking, evidence-based reasoning and, indeed, on science itself. Superstition exists primarily due to the persistent backwardness of our society, and the conspiracy of vested interests to exploit it. In order to subvert the rational thinking the present ruling class, which is the prime mover of current political regime have repeatedly invoked religious, traditional, cultural and nationalistic sentiments of wide sections of the people. The defense and promotion of scientific temper at the current juncture is a battle that requires to be fought on many fronts against a systemic assault on evidence-based reasoning, pluralism, freedom of thought and reduced role for S&T as a key driver of inclusive self-reliant development.

Ambedkar said "The sovereignty of scriptures of all religions must come to an end if we want to have a united, integrated modern India". The Statement of Scientific Temper published in 1981 states that "Scientific temper is incompatible with all types of dogmas / traditions whether religious or social". For the past nine years, numerous efforts by top government ministers, officials and by even some judges have been made to push and promote mythology as science. They have tried to build a fake, manufactured narrative of a mythical past when ancient Vedic-Hindu knowledge preceded, and indeed surpassed, all knowledge from all other civilizations and cultures. This does great disservice to the many real, major achievements in ancient India, which may come under suspicion due to this cloud of untruths and exaggeration.

Scientific temper is also being undermined when the government refuses to collect data or denies or falsifies official data. Which it has done repeatedly in the past nine years. Without collection of data, its critical examination not effectual policies could be formulated. It not only devalues evidence-based reasoning but also subverts evaluation of policies and conclusions. Leading scientists and technologists have expressed concern that, for the first time since Independence, they are nowadays not consulted for policy-making which is often done without evidence-based expert opinion as witnessed during demonetization and the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the campaign, the unscientific social-cultural and false a-historical narratives of the groups who seek to manufacture a single "Indian" culture will be countered. These fake narratives are now sought to be spread through the school and higher education system. They try to force manufactured "national" culture and identity upon the huge cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity that is the real India. We will undertake activities to counter all the false narratives. We are aware that the critics of these trends are viciously attacked as anti-national, westernized, and products of "colonized minds." We are also aware that we will be confronted by an organized army of violent trolls, but we also strongly believe that our society, our democracy is threatened and it is our duty to protect it. This can only be done by reaching out to the masses and building a scientifically tempered society.

AIPSN-BGVS calls upon all rational, critical thinking people to join in the National Campaign on Scientific Temper. We in the process will also build a broad alliance of all those organizations who cherish the constitutional values and dream of propagating scientific temper in the country.