

## An Appeal to Observe the 8th National Scientific Temper Day — NSTD 2025

20th August 2025

Dear colleagues, friends, and fellow citizens of India,

As we prepare to observe the 8th National Scientific Temper Day (NSTD) on 20th August 2025, we call upon every democratic, and socially conscious individual and organisation to come together in reaffirming a vital constitutional duty — the duty to develop and promote scientific temper, as enshrined in Article 51A(h) of our Constitution.

This date — 20th August — holds deep significance. It marks the brutal assassination of Dr. Narendra Dabholkar in 2013, a fearless rationalist, tireless campaigner against superstition, and an unwavering advocate of scientific temper. His murder at the hands of forces intent on silencing scientific temper was followed by the tragic killings of Shri Govind Pansare, Prof. M.M. Kalburgi, and Ms. Gauri Lankesh — each a champion of reason, critical inquiry, and democratic values rooted in justice, equality, and human dignity.

Though their voices were silenced, their vision continues to guide us through the observance of National Scientific Temper Day. Initiated in 2018 by the All India People's Science Network (AIPSN), in collaboration with the Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmulan Samiti (MANS), this day has evolved into a people's movement. Year after year, it has drawn together students, scientists, educators, activists, and concerned citizens from all walks of life in a shared commitment to critical evidence based thinking and social justice.

It is important to remember that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar firmly believed that the development of scientific temper was indispensable for India's progress and social transformation. For him, scientific temper — grounded in critical inquiry, and evidence-based reasoning — was not just a mindset, but a weapon to combat deep-rooted social evils like superstition and casteism. Ambedkar viewed science as a democratizing force that made knowledge accessible to all, cutting across caste and class, and empowering individuals to question injustice and dismantle oppressive power structures.

A major milestone in the journey to uphold scientific temper was the 2024 National Convention for Declaration on Scientific Temper, held in Kolkata on February 28. The outcome — the Kolkata Declaration on Scientific Temper — calls upon all of us to recommit to evidence-based reasoning, critical thinking, and democratic values. Acknowledging the profound societal and technological transformations since the earlier declarations of 1981 and 2011, the Kolkata Declaration broadens our understanding of scientific temper — it includes natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and the lived experiences of ordinary people. In today's age, where misinformation, pseudo-science, and manufactured ignorance are spreading rapidly — often propelled by technology itself — we must counter them with knowledge, reason, and evidence based arguments.

This year, NSTD 2025 will be marked by a spirited and inclusive campaign from August 1 through September, centred on the powerful theme: “Ask Why?” This is a call to revive curiosity, critique, and courage to speak out against the divisiveness and violence around us. This year not only in our country but in other parts of the world we have murders, killing and wars that propagate hatred and divide human beings on the basis of caste, religion, ethnicity and nationality. The flames that were fanned by vested interests are yet to die down in Manipur. The terrible ongoing genocide in Gaza that needs to be stopped goes on due to Israel's war machine that is supported by primarily the US. What we need is peace inside and outside the country. War and killing are driven by political and economic benefits of existing regimes. Peace is the triumph of democratic and humanitarian understanding.

Across the country, diverse programmes need to be organised — activities, rallies, human chains, public lectures, street plays, songs, exhibitions, poster campaigns, debates, film screenings, hands on experiments, anti - superstition awareness and meet the scientists. These events are to be aimed at not only celebrating scientific temper, but also to defend it — as a living constitutional imperative.

The content of the programmes should be to dispel the misinformation and false narratives that are spread wilfully by the Government and the family of socio-political organisations that are behind the current regime. These narratives at times are state specific either based on mythological or religious narratives that they try to spread for their political and electoral purposes. Some are done across the nation as with the unscientific content in NCERT textbooks like omitting Darwin's Theory of Evolution.

We urge the following immediate actions:

1. Uphold and defend Article 51A(h): The Central and State Governments must actively fulfil this constitutional duty by promoting scientific temper across all domains — from education and governance to science communication and public outreach.
2. Invest meaningfully in science, education, and the arts: We demand greater public investment in education, health , scientific research, humanities, and the arts — all of which are foundational to nurturing reason, creativity, critical thought, and respect for diversity.
3. Protect academic and intellectual freedom: Institutions of learning and research must be shielded from political interference, ideological policing, and anti-scientific propaganda.
4. Resist the spread of pseudo-science and superstition: We must confront unverified claims, irrational dogmas, and superstition with inquiry, verification, and open, democratic dialogue and press for enactment of anti-superstition and prevention of black magic act throughout India. We need to campaign for stopping the witch hunting of women with false claims.

NSTD 2025 is not merely a commemorative event — it is a people's movement to reclaim the values of democracy, social and economic justice. It is a platform where every question counts, every doubt is honoured, and every citizen becomes a co-creator of a more informed, inclusive, self reliant and equitable India.

We urge scientists, educators, women , students, activists, journalists, writers, artists, and all concerned citizens to join this campaign with spirit and determination. Organise, innovate, question — and together, let us make scientific temper a dynamic force towards a democratic, equitable and just Indian society.

The All India People's Science Network (AIPSN) invites you to:

Endorse this appeal,

Participate in NSTD activities across the country, and join the movement committed to reason, social justice, and democracy.

Let us rise — not only to remember, but to act. Let us hold high the torch of scientific temper so that the socio-politically supported forces against it cannot extinguish the light of inquiry, equality, and democracy.

With solidarity and resolve,

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