

## PRESS RELEASE

The All India People's Science Network (AIPSN) comprising of 38 member organisations spread across the country gave a nationwide call for observing August 20<sup>th</sup> as the National Scientific Temper Day (NSTD) from this year onwards as scientific temper is now under unprecedented attack in India. 20<sup>th</sup> August is being observed as National Scientific Temper Day in honour of Dr.Narendra Dabholkar, champion of scientific temper, who was killed in an act of premeditated murder by right-wing communal terrorist forces, on this day five years ago in 2013.

The killing shocked the nation, but more rude shocks came when several similar murders were committed over the next few years. Govind Pansare, who worked to support inter-caste marriages, delivered lecture on the true legacy of Shivaji, and condemned the glorification of the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi, was killed in 2015. M.M.Kalburgi, a scholar who studied socioreligious reform movements of the 12<sup>th</sup> century in Karnataka and the related challenge to dominant narratives, was murdered in 2016. And Gauri Lankesh, fearless journalist and fierce critic of communal bigotry, was gunned down in 2017. It has now come to light that at least some of these murders were probably committed by the same extremist group. But the common thread definitely was the threat these forces felt from these campaigners for reason and scientific temper, and against bigotry and intolerance. These murders are extremist expressions of the intolerance openly displayed by some mainstream communal forces, including persons holding high political office, targeting sometimes with violence all those who question their prejudice, communal hate campaigns, and continuous dissemination of fake news, "alternative facts" and falsified histories, including in science.

An appeal signed by leading scientists including Dr. Jayant Narlikar and many other scientists has also been released to educational institutions which states: *As citizens of India as well as part of the world community of the 21st Century, it is one of our fundamental and civilizational duties "to develop and promote the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;" as per article 51 A(h) of our Constitution. We believe that this task has not received the attention and commitment it deserves and calls for, and on the contrary, there is a very worrying and disturbing atmosphere being whipped in the opposite direction. There is therefore an urgent need to take it up with much vigour and enthusiasm in a systematic and sustained manner at all levels. The role of schools, colleges and the educational institutions is particularly important and critical in taking it forward. Promoting scientific temper is not only the work of scientists, but of all citizens in Indian democracy. Dr. Narendra Dabholkar was one of the foremost proponents of scientific temper in recent times. Through his lectures and writings, he spread the message of scientific temper among all sections of society. It is therefore particularly appropriate that 20th August, the day on which he was martyred should be observed as 'National Scientific Temper Day' all over the country.*

A joint appeal by AIPSN and Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmulan Samiti (MANS) founded by Dr.Narendra Dabholkar was given to mass organisations and associations to join in this collective national endeavor for observing 'National Scientific Temper Day', towards building an India of reason and humanity with well informed and rationally empowered citizens.

We assert that promoting scientific temper, defending plurality, harmony and composite culture is a fundamental duty of all citizens, and especially of professional scientists and social scientists, as enjoined in the Directive Principles of our Constitution. The right and duty to question is basic, not only for science, but also for democracy.

On August 20<sup>th</sup> rallies and marches against the attack on scientific temper, pledge taking of 51 A (h) constitutional duties promoting scientific temper, explanation of science to expose the miracles and demonstration and engaging of students in science experiments in schools to inculcate scientific temper are being organised along with fraternal organisations all over the country with the intention of carrying forward this struggle and working together in the days to come to defeat the ideology of communal hate politics and build an India of reason and humanity with well informed and empowered citizens.

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