

## **AIPSN Press Release**

### **National Scientific temper day (NSTD) on 20th August, 2021**

All India People's Science Network (AIPSN), comprising of 40 member organisations, has been observing 20th August as the National Scientific Temper Day (NSTD) in the memory of Dr. Narendra Dabholkar, who was assassinated on 20th August 2013. Campaigns have been launched every year along with fraternal organisations and movements throughout the country. This year the campaign focuses on the need for Scientific Temper to fight Covid and the need to oppose promotion of Astrology by Governmental efforts. So far almost all the states of India and nearly 200 districts started to observe this day through webinars, outdoor programmes, poster rally in social media, and mass meetings obeying Covid rule. As part of the NSTD observance, signature campaigns both online (<https://aipsn.in>) and offline in local languages in States have involved thousands of activists, scientists and educationists. A twitter campaign was also undertaken on 20th with the hashtag #NSTD2021 #LongLiveDabholkar. This year NSTD 2021 was observed by conducting two all India level Webinars to understand the issues by state committees; all India webinars focusing on women and Youths on scientific temper; release of all India statement in nearly 8 languages; web based signature campaign currently with more than 1500 signatures; preparation of posters in nearly 10 languages for social media campaign in all states; state level webinars in nearly 20 states; physical meeting of NSTD campaign in 200 districts; demands of different states to enact anti superstition bill; miracle explanation and pledge taking on the 51 A (h) part of our constitution in all branches of PSM; articles highlighting NSTD in local dailies in different states were the highlights of NSTD-2021.

All India People's Science Network (AIPSN) and its constituent bodies note with concern the recent announcement by IGNOU to start 'MA-Jyotish' course from the current academic year. We also note similar courses have been running in at least a handful more public funded universities. We note that authorities in these universities are defending such courses by claiming that these courses fulfill the NEP 2020 recommendation of introduction of 'Indian Knowledge Systems' in curriculum at all stages.

India has a rich tradition of knowledge generation in multiple fields including astronomy, mathematics, metallurgy and philosophy. The tree of modern science is watered by all great cultures of the past in different ways and in different eras. Some of the Indian contributions to this collective knowledge are undeniably significant and they will occupy a crucial part in any wholesome learning of science.

Astrological predictions have been invariably shown to fail in any controlled statistical test. There is no scientific basis for believing that planets have any meaningful effect on the human body. The astrological principle that the effect of planets would vary based on your birth chart even defies plain logic. Introducing such an unproven and illogical field as a teaching course by IGNOU is promoting superstition by governmental effort. Further, its introduction goes against Article 51A (h) of the Indian Constitution which stipulates that it is the fundamental duty of every Indian citizen to adhere to scientific temper.

Promoting scientific temper, which is a fundamental duty for each one of us, requires us to oppose the promotion of pseudoscience, especially by governmental bodies.

We express our great concern in regard to the encouragement and promotion of fake data, pseudoscience and irresponsible decisions by the Central and some state governments, on the one hand which have contributed to the spread of the pandemic, and the neglect of a planned response based on scientific policy on the other. Covid cannot be fought without scientific temper. Fighting Covid scientifically requires the reversal of policies promoting private health care for profit leading to the neglect and decline of effective public healthcare systems in most states of India. Fighting Covid requires effective implementation of a national policy for universal free vaccination on a crash basis. It requires planning based on honest data collection. While wasting huge sums in self advertisement on free vaccination, the Central government and several state governments are failing in practice at the ground level to ensure adequate supplies of vaccines, oxygen and even the proper disposal of the dead bodies of those who succumbed to Covid. Media organizations reporting accurately the situation on the ground are being systematically targeted and sought to be silenced by the misuse of the state apparatus. Thus the government itself is promoting fake data and actively trying to suppress the truth.

We appeal to all citizens, mass organizations and educational institutions to participate in the National Scientific Temper Day (NSTD) observances for August 20<sup>th</sup> for promoting scientific temper in these challenging times and to raise our voices against the brutal killing of Dabholkar, Pansare, Kalburgi and Lankesh and condemn the threatening of intellectuals for their writings or holding seminars.

The NSTD 2021 campaign by AIPSN and fraternal organisations have demanded:

1. Astrology (i.e. predictive part of Jyotishastra) related courses should be discontinued from every public funded university. Instead of that we demand the introduction of Astronomy in Indian universities.
2. Reversal of privatization policies and restoration of scientific policy for ensuring good quality public health care as a universal right.
3. The government stops its attacks on media reporting honestly on the Covid situation.
4. Respect be shown to our constitutional article 51a(h) for actively promoting scientific temper at a mass level in order to effectively combat and defeat the Covid pandemic.
5. An atmosphere of tolerance, debate and dissent which helps science and scientific temper to flourish.
6. Culprits involved in the assassination of Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare, MM Kalburgi and Gauri Lankesh are punished.

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