

## SORRY DOCTOR...

In December 2003, Bhandarkar Institute was vandalized by 150 attackers destroying irreplaceable manuscripts! Why? Because the Institute's staff provided some research material to Dr. James Laine whose claims "hurt their sentiments"!!

Let's take a time slice of Pune in those 10 years... the hate crime and religious fanaticism are rising, no one cares about red lights at traffic junctions, mushrooming deemed universities are churning out mediocrity, our municipal corporaters are mastering the art of fist fights while we are excelling in using refined ways of bribing our bureaucrats and evading taxes. On 13<sup>th</sup> January 2010, a RTI activist Satish Shetty was assassinated in Talegaon, about 40 kms away from Pune. In the same year, out of the 9 social activists killed all over India, 5 were killed in the neighboring areas of Pune. **While this escalating violence is manifesting in our daily routine, the worse is the diminishing tolerance for each other's thoughts, the apathy of intelligentsia, and the unabashed acceptance of helplessness.**

Why are we all literally crying since Dr Narendra Dabhokar's assassination?

The shameful words expressed in the editorial of *Sanatan Prbhat* just the day after Dr. Dabholkar's brutal assassination, "one gets what one deserves", are actually applicable to all of us. I'm sorry Doctor but we DID NOT DESERVE A MAVRICK LIKE YOU!

9 years prior to this time slice, Dr. Dabholkar - the most humble crusader striving for eradication of blind faith, a radiant rationalist and an articulate man of incessant faith in human values - was relentlessly trying to have 'a rational dialogue' with those saying NO to the proposed anti-witchcraft Bill. 30 years prior to this time slice, he had waged a war against exploitation of 'victims of superstitions' in the hands of fraud babas, *tantric-mantriks* and self-proclaimed godmen. His 'war' was non-violent though. Ironically the sharpness of his words, thoughts and deeds was supremely powerful and unbearable that invoked such despicable brutality and martyred Dr. Dabholkar! His conviction and articulation made most politicians uncomfortable. Unlike many other intellectuals, Doctor was also an activist. He had the vision and capability to lead a grass root level mass movement. His personal rapport with thousands of activists across rural Maharashtra was unparalleled. His 15 years' contribution as an editor of the 66 years old weekly "Sadhana" resulted in substantial increase in its subscribers.

Still with all these credits, his movement was restricted to lakhs and did not gather crores. His two decade long call could not gather popular momentum that was gained by Anna Hajare in a few months. Why didn't we see crores of young followers of Dr. Dabholkar as we saw them protesting in support of *Nirbhaya*??

Let's think of 'we' centric reasons behind it!

Dr. Dabholkar's campaign against superstition and inhuman rituals needs certain level of intellectual introspection. It compels us to check our position on an abstract concept like faith as opposed to the concrete issues like corruption and rape. We ourselves do not think that there is darkness in our own beliefs and thoughts which needs to be eradicated. We are just not used to such intellectual abstraction and lack the discipline to challenge our own 'faith'. Do we realize that many of those young protesters are queuing up for *darshan* in front of Saturn temples on Saturdays, Sidhdhivinayaks on Tuesdays and *Datta* temples on Thursdays?? Do we get disturbed to see more youth becoming 'religious'? Do we even observe that most of our neighbours have some 'spiritual gurus/matras' whom they seek solace from?? Do we question in our own minds (let alone challenge it publically) the sponsored, vulgar celebrations on the occasions of *Dahi hundi*, *Ganeshotsav*, or *Navratri*? Do we frown to see our friends' fingers being adorned with astro-crystals and gem stone rings prescribed by astrologers and godmen? Are we ready to accept that religion and practicing rituals are proving to be our cumulative catharsis?

Actually, Dr. Dabholkar did not ever challenge our faith and religious belief. He merely challenged the superstitious practices and unscientific claims of godmen. Yet we simplistically labeled him as anti-Hindu. We did not even attempt to understand the provisions of the bill proposed by him. If we do not find anything objectionable in scientists like Dr. Kalam or icons like Sachin Tendulkar visiting *Satya Sai baba*, why should we expect the social media to engage in an enlightened debate on the bill proposed by Dr. Dabholkar?

Sorry Dr. Dabholkar, we failed you!

We are ashamed that we may fail to find your assassigators!

We are ashamed that we will move on expediently!

We are ashamed to be a lethargic, by stander of the present!

Sorry Doctor, we never deserved you!

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