

Editorial

Friday, August 23, 2019

To the rescue for the degrading environment ; we can do it

Development is a multi dimensional concept covering political, economic, social, cultural, spatial, scientific, technological, moral, spiritual, ecological and environment development.

Everybody is aware of the ecological deterioration and environment degradation, but none acted to do something to save it. Every pedestrians see plastic bottle, and other waste scattered in our footpath. But, 'blame' to those who threw it or perhaps to the government authority is the reaction. He or she will not pick it up to throw it to the right place. There are many who talks saving our environment, rivers and forest. But everyday the thousand people dump their waste at the roadsides, threw garbage at the river smuggled woods using any unfair means. Some waited for camera to take a shot while planting a sapling to show their love for the mother nature but will never look back to see whether the sapling he or she planted is grown.

It is we human being, which is responsible for the crime committee towards the nature. The recent flood across the country including Manipur is fall out of what we human being had committee for hundreds of years. Deterioration of nature is more seen to less develop and developing countries. City based intellectuals who visited only once or twice to complete their thesis keep blaming the ignorance of the common people who have less knowledge of saving the environment as survival is more important for them. Schemes and projects always turn a flop show as they were prepared on table without studying the need of the people residing in interior forest land. And the money which are meant for the environment are gold mine for those working on the table.

The state of Manipur had witness five times devastating flood since N. Biren Singh took charge of Chief Minister. Again the people of the state now witness scanty rainfall, which flooded most part of Imphal city but keep the cultivable field dry. Almost all cultivable land of the state still remains dry. Farmers in the state now fear that they would not be able to start their cultivation work. If the paddy field remains dry the way it is, we don't need any fortune teller or scientist to predict that Manipur may face famine.

Discussions over the issues only put the blame to common people of both Hill and Valley area who never had any knowledge of how much money has been sanctioned for the preservation of the forest land in their respective land.

Chief Minister N. Biren Singh's new initiative - Green Manipur Mission is perhaps an appreciating initiative. However, it is skeptical to most people as the Mission to make Manipur Green seems rather a publicity matter. A proper planning to make sure that such an initiative continues to make Manipur a real green state.

It may be mention that for the first time in the history of Manipur, A village called Ringui in Ukhrul district donated around 600 acres of land to an NGO to make the area green. Though the village is far from Imphal with limited access of Education, they have showed their enthusiasm in protecting the environment and rebuilding a forest. Forest and Environment Minister, Th Shyamkumar had assured to make the piece of land as a forest zone but the promised he made is still yet to see into action. The good service of the villagers of Ringui will not only make their village famous but will help in reducing the global warming, even though it might effect only .00001%.

If more villages in the state of Manipur started donating land for plantation of trees than Manipur will set another example in the protection of the environment in the whole country. What remains skeptical is the sincerity of the forest department authority.

Well the challenges before the country particularly in the state of Manipur is to preserve and protect the natural environment or revive it where it has been degraded. It must be remembered that the problem of environmental degradation is social problem which has to be solved by the people themselves with some sort of policy and programme from the government

A short term course in Ecology and Environment at Awareness should be arranged for the benefit of the elected representatives starting from PRI, Municipalities, corporation, MLAs, MPs, Development planners and administrators which would give them a proper understanding of nature, the important of flora and fauna and other natural resources especially forest wealth and their management.

The recent series of activities taken up by the state government however showed some enthusiasm to save the environment. At the same time making people aware about the issue is also important to protect the environment.

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Culture Ministry's New 'Vedic Heritage' Portal Only Debases the Study of Vedas

Courtesy : The Wire
By : Vasudevan Mukunth

The Union culture ministry had announced in November last year that it would develop a 'Vedic Heritage' portal to promote the Vedas, and hoped to inaugurate it by March 2019. It would appear the portal is finally online; the last update was posted on July 29, 2019. Though Arun Goel, the then (and present) secretary to the ministry, had hailed it as a "new paradigm" to disseminate "pure scientific information" last year, a sampling of its contents suggests it is only more of the same.

Consider the following, drawn from one document that claims ancient Hindu texts far surpass the abilities of modern particle physics to describe the fundamental nature of reality.

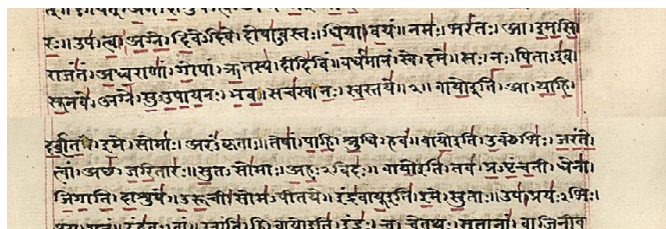
In word science, by dropping last letter 'e', pronunciation [sic] of the leftover word 'science' would be nothing else than Saankhya, but may be with slightly different dialect. It means that Sankhya Darshana was regarded as the book of science and word science was accepted as the synonym of Saankhya, centuries before Christ. In fact, there is little on the portal's pages to suggest good scholarship – or any scholarship – and is the usual Hindutva revanchism in yet another bottle. Almost all the documents have been published under the banner of 'Vijnana Bharati', a nonprofit organisation with a focus on "swadeshi science". Some excerpts + comments from the particle physics document follow:

The beauty of Sanskrit language is in its evocative and meaningful vocabulary. As every word is created with some root, following some grammatical laws, one word may have many meanings. Therefore, while seeking the right meaning of a Vaidic Richa, it is required to select the right meaning of the word. Some times the same Richa or the Mantra may provide the explanations related to the God, the Jeevatmaa, or the Prakriti. It depends on the selection of right series of related meanings, and the procedure adopted in finding its explanations. Sounds like cherry-picking...

The Vedas, as well as the Vaidic Particle Physics (VPP), starts knowing a thing, right from the sub-base of the foundation and then to the rest of the structure. The VPP starts its studies of the universe right from the study of the building blocks of this huge creation, while the modern science is awfully confused on the question of building blocks.

It's probably "awfully confusing", instead of "confused", because it has allowed itself to be guided by evidence instead of presupposing what the building blocks could be. They are producing confusing and illusive theories like the Quark Theory, which has consumed more than three decades of thousands of scientists. They still keep the destination far away. The other prevailing theory, the S-matrix Theory and its Bootstrap Approach is much in line with the VPP, except a slight but significant difference. This suggests an inability to admit complexity, as well as an unwillingness to accept that a prevailing theory of particles can explain some things perfectly well but fail to make sense of something else, and still be considered a legitimate description of reality.

(There is an interesting bit of history here: Max Planck – whose research sparked the 20th century revolution of quantum mechanics – struggled to make sense of energy quantisation because it forced him to "sacrifice" his "previous convictions about physics" (source). Niels Bohr would help resolve this dilemma with his



philosophy of correspondence: that a philosophy that extends the application of an older theory in a new domain must replicate the predictions of the old theory in the older domain. In effect, different theories could apply to different domains of study and simply correspond with one another instead of having to be fundamentally unified and apply in all domains at once to be true.)

Second, the author's preference for "S-matrix Theory" is fascinating. S-matrix theory was developed in the 1960s as an alternative to quantum field theory but lost out. However, it was later refurbished and reinterpreted as string theory, which today has progressed so far from its seeds that the author's sympathy for S-matrix theory seems to be just that. Then again, we could be splitting hair here.

In the VPP, after studying the state of affairs and before beginning the creation of universe, as mentioned in the Vedas, we find certain amazing properties of the Prakriti. One of the properties is its dual behaviour. Individually it behaves like a particle, while collectively, its behaviour is like energy.

Why? Who cares. This property is described in the Rigveda 10/129. ... In the Mantra 2 and 3, three imperative words appear: A a n e e d a w a a t m a, Swadhyaya, and Salilam.

The first word, a a n e e d a w a a t m a means the energy, which was inert, which was not active, not flowing, which was in the stagnant form like water confined in a jar. ... On arrival of creation period, everything became active and creative energy. This substance of the stagnant energy on being active becomes raw material for the creation of the universe. It means the material cause of the creation of everything is energy.

Evidence? Who cares. Mr. Geoffrey Chew, one of the principal architects of S-matrix theory and its Bootstrap Approach and Fritjof Capra, considers energy to be the material cause of the creation. In S-matrix theory, there are no distinct entities and no basic building blocks; there is only a flow of energy showing certain well-defined patterns. The second part of the above statement shows that the above theory is in line with the VPP. It is the first part of the statement, which has 'the slight but significant difference' as we mentioned...

This is cherry-picking plain and simple: to associate with a theory of physics after the fact in an attempt to inherit its now-ded credibility. Second, such cameo invocation of Fritjof Capra is possible likely because former Union home minister Rajnath Singh did something similar in November 2014. Capra and his *Tao of Physics* are beloved of the Hindutvawadis because of the book's quest for *post hoc* parallels between quantum mechanics and eastern philosophy.

The second very important word is Swadhyaya. It means self-supporting or self-generated. The mist-like substance filled in everywhere was not created by somebody, nor was it supported by some thing. S-matrix theory proposed to describe the properties of particles without the notions of space-time

and within an abstract mathematical object called the scattering matrix (hence the name). So when the "mist-like substance filled in everywhere", where or what is 'everywhere'?

The third important word appeared in the third Mantra of the Sookta and that is Salilam. The word *salila* is usually taken as the synonym of water. No doubt, the water is an example of *salila*, but it does not mean *salila*. Unadisootra defines *salila* to be the fluid. The Oxford dictionary says "fluids consists of particles that move freely among themselves and yield to the slightest pressure". It means that the Salilam is the group of particles with the least or no cohesion in between.

Being a fluid does not mean having no cohesion between particles. Water is strongly cohesive. 'Salilam' – whatever it is – may be fluid but that identity doesn't preclude adhesive or cohesive behaviour, and indicates that the author could be interpreting the text wrong.

Now, when we accept the particle form of the Prakriti particle, we accept all the mathematics related to the particle. After all, it must have some geometry, some mass, and some volume. We know they would be very small. They could have been 10^{-26} gm (mass) or 10^{-30} cc (volume). This figure may have been smaller or greater. What so ever, it must be some mass and some volume.

The assumption of implicit and explicit properties does not constitute a mathematical foundation. More importantly, this is an attempt at a qualitative description of physical reality, and due to its presumed inviolability, a pretty bad one at that. The author goes on to define three *guna*, or *natures*, that make up all Prakriti particles. Their organisation is such that no Prakriti particle can be composed of only one or two of the *guna* but must by definition encompass all three. The author equates the feature to the persistence of magnetic dipoles but it seems to me to be more like asymptotic freedom. Then:

When the time to commence the creation is arrived, the balanced state of the three gunas in the particle is smashed and the direction of the acting gunas is reversed from inwards to outwards. At the moment, the particle ceases to be recognised as Prakriti, and then it becomes Mahat. This sudden change in the direction of application comes with a great impact and results in the big bang as the mantra suggests.

The passive voice is a menace. Apart from keeping sentences long and clunky, it also glosses over active agency. "She threw the ball" becomes "the ball was thrown", and "X smashed the particle" becomes "the particle is smashed". There is no discussion of where or what X is because X has been removed from the equation.

The rest of the document descends into more nonsensical descriptions of the electromagnetic force and electric and magnetic fields, among other things. This is nonsensical not because its conclusions are at odds with what we have uncovered using the methods of science and mathematics but because it does not tolerate argument, leave alone

doubt, and is nonplussed with contradictions. There is no room to disagree, so agreement itself is rendered meaningless. As a philosopher of science might put it, it is 'not even wrong'.

In the last half-decade or so, pseudoscience has become a grave threat to India's democracy. This document – together with the 41 others like it listed on the 'Vedic Heritage' website – contribute to it, together with the silence of those who know the texts are spurious but won't speak up, by spreading false knowledge from a position of authority.

For example, one of the documents, entitled 'A Glimpse of Science in Ancient India – Retrospection from IISc', claims "astrology has a basis in science" and that "much of the criticism [of] astrology can be traced to a complete ignorance or misunderstanding of the ... law of karma." One of its authors, K.I. Vasu, founded Vijnana Bharati. Will IISc's top scientists speak up?

However, there is even more at stake here. The culture ministry's effort to promote the study of the Vedas is pernicious to serious and legitimate Vedic scholarship above all else. Its inability to engage with the great philosophical and even sociological insights the Vedas offer, preferring instead the narrow lens of Hindutva supremacy, cheapens the value of these ancient texts.

The Government of India's excuse to support and promote pseudo-scholarship has been that doing so will uplift the Hindu politico-religious identity. However, it has only come at the expense of efforts to properly preserve Vedic texts and their interpretations over the centuries, to institute centres of study free of bureaucratic interference, to support scholars with grants and scholarships and to ensure India – the home of the Vedas – is also the place where modern Vedic scholarship is at its best. But this is the exact opposite of what has been done.

The same can be said of Sanskrit, the language of ancient India's Brahmins and to which ministers of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are so quick to attribute linguistic supremacy. But apart from championing its virtues in public addresses, the ministry of culture has done nothing in the last half decade to preserve it as a language. Did you know, for example, that 'the first people to leave behind evidence of having spoken Sanskrit aren't Hindus or Indians [but] Sryians'?

The BJP's fascistic outlook and majoritarian politics doesn't have room for such possibilities, and whose attitude is generally opposed to the conditions necessary for honest, rigorous study. Look no further than the treatment meted out to the likes of Audrey T r u s c k e e, S h e l d o n Pollock and Patricia Sauthoff – all excellent scholars reviled only for their foreignness and audacity to question what the government propagandises as the truth. The 'Vedic Heritage' website is what the BJP would have in their stead, and in the process ruin the cultural heritage that belongs equally to all Indians.

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