

Rationalist thinking, scientific temper and Opportunistic Godmen in India.

India was always a land of mystery to the entire world. There was this aura of mysticism and magic to our country. Some people took it in a positive spirit; some took it the other way round. We have been called a nation of snake charmers known for the Indian rope tricks. The countless number of Gods we worshipped and the numerous religious practices created a kind of wonder to the viewer. They created their own myths which sadly are being followed even today.

India has a vast cultural background. We have produced great scientists like Boudhayan, Aryabhatta, Bhaskaracharya to name a few. We are credited to be the founder of "Pi", the Pythagoras theorem, Zero, Decimal system etc. We were once ahead of the world in matters related to Medical and Astronomical sciences. Aryabhatta in the year 499 AD had cleared the air about the world being round and that sun was static. It was many centuries later that Galileo confirmed it. Greats like Susruta who had mastered the science of surgery using traditional methods are still a source of amazement. "Susruta Samhita" has explained in detail the surgical procedures for ailments that are still considered difficult with the advent of the modern implications.

One may then wonder if India was once a race ahead of its time then how come it is considered today as the nation with outdated ideologies. Blame can be put on our colonial masters who had only the motive of keeping India at bay and use her solely for their advancement. Plus the world was mostly ruled by the colonial powers and thus western thinking and achievements were far more spread than Indian ones.

Human nature is as such that man was always fascinated with things he had no explanations for. There was always an incline for the mystic and fear towards the paranormal. People always believed in superstitions one way or the other irrespective of race, cast, color, creed or location. Black cats, good luck charms etc are global examples. The human mind has always wanted someone to confine into and if that power was supernatural then it was all the way more apt.

This is where the so called "God-men" come into existence. They bridge the gap between the mere human and the Supreme Being. Paving a path to spiritual salvation with promises to rid one of their sorrows and sufferings. They make sure to exploit our beliefs in the supernatural and give us a false hope of a divine interference in our humble life. These God-men leave no stones unturned to falsify their backgrounds and bombard us with lies to etch an image in our mind. An image portraying them as the messengers of god or most absurdly as their re-incarnations themselves. For this they use false stories, witnesses and miracles. Producing ash with a sway of hand in the air may seem magical to a majority but this trick can even be done by a roadside magician. These people have even used our cultural knowledge of Vastushastra and Astronomy to their own advantage because it's proven that if human mind is shown an act to which he can relate then there are more possibilities of him believing it.

Human mind thinks rationally in major aspects of our life. But these God-men have successfully eluded the rational thinking. Even after seeing the God-men living in luxury and amassing a great fortune the followers never bat an eyelid. There are lot of examples to prove this, most famous being the case of Asaram Bapu and Baba Rampal. Even Mata Amritanadamayi was in news recently because of the revelations made by her disciple Gale Treadwell. But it took no time for the dust to settle and things to get back to normal.

Nobody ever wonders, from where these God-men get money to open huge schools and colleges. They never wonder if the only source of their income is charity then why their schools and colleges are not free. Why you have to pay a huge management fee like any other institution to study there? Why are they trying to make profits? Where is this extra profit then going to? Why aren't they themselves doing charity on a daily basis? There are a lot of people who actually do think this way but they are belittled by the majority for whom the God-man is the ultimate truth. Even the western world is among the chunk of these followers giving the God-man a global platform and recognition. There have been numerous cases where it has been shown the God-men using their power and fame towards illegal and immoral activities. Baba Rampal is the latest example whose history is botched with blood stains and treachery. He even used his followers as human shields turning the tables. Those who had gone into his asylum were in turn made into his own shield against the police.

God is supreme and he doesn't need our money. He doesn't need to prove himself through human re-incarnations. If someone is trying to compare himself to the Supreme Being then that should be the first signs of red alert. All our religious scriptures very well explain that life consists of Ups and downs and failure and sorrows are part of the learning process. People need to understand that there are no shortcuts. As Mahatma Gandhi once said "Apna Kaam Swayam Karo" (Do your work yourself). You only have the power to face your problems and convert them into your greatest learning.

This Godman menace can be curbed by the combined actions of the people, society and the government.

Rather than donating loads of money in the name of religion and these god men, people can resort to charity. Offering flowers or oil worth thousands to the temple deity leads to no prosperity. Rather if that money is channeled towards buying food for satiating somebody's hunger, then that will definitely lead to happiness of soul. In today's time you can either buy a garland of rose for hundred rupees or buy food to feed at least five people. The choice is yours.

Government also needs to play an important part. Illiteracy is the main fuel for fueling this menace. Literacy opens the mind and paves way for wisdom and rational thinking. Close monitoring of these God-men needs to be done and transparency in their public dealings to be maintained. Society needs to stop emphasis on superstitions and need to start applying wisdom while dealing with this kind of phenomenon. They need to understand that god is supreme and

no one can take his place. We need to start appreciating people for the deeds they do, not what they only preach but never practice.

India is on a roller coaster ride towards speedy development and is now turning into one of the fastest economies. Literacy in many parts of our country is picking up and people are learning more and more about scientific ways of life. Compared to the olden days nowadays influence of the Godman is declining. People are opening up and discussing ideas and news via social media and internet. People are now more aware than ever. The future of India and the world at large is bright. The world is moving into the futuristic era and India will once again reclaim her right place at the top.