

Engg body to go by the book, keep ancient science in syllabus for now

BHARATIYA VIDYA SAAR BOOK AICTE says got 4,800 signs in support of move, 2,300 against it

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MUMBAI: Amid the controversy over the decision to include the Bharatiya Vidya Saar Book as part of the reference material for an elective course on Ancient Knowledge Systems for engineering students, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) said no change is expected anytime soon, as more people are supporting the move than opposing it.

On September 27, a group of scientists and experts filed two online petitions against the book, claiming that it endorses pseudoscientific claims about supposed inventions in ancient India.

The petition highlights some of the "outlandish claims" mentioned in the book, including a theory on how Rishi Agastya invented electro-voltaic cell and also gave the method of electrolysis to produce oxygen and hydrogen from water, and how the speed of light and theory of gravitation have been accurately mentioned in Rig Veda.

The All India Council for Technical Education has promised the book will be submitted to another expert panel if enough complaints are received.

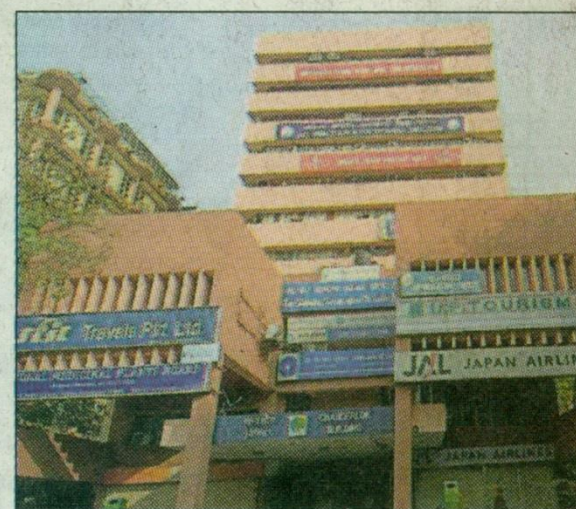
"There are 2,300 signatures against the book, and 4,800 in its support," said Anil Sahastrabuddhe, chairman, All India

UNSUBSTANTIATED THEORIES: EXPERTS' VERSION

According to the online petition filed against the book, experts highlighted some of the case studies that were "unsubstantiated":

1. Rishi Agastya invented electro-voltaic cell.
2. Rishi Agastya gave the method of electrolysis to produce oxygen and hydrogen from water
3. Rishi Kanad in Vaisheshik Sutra discussed types of motion as well as Newton's laws of motion
4. The book 'Vaimanika Shastra' was written by Rishi Bharadwaj about 5000 years ago
5. The book 'Vaimanika Shastra' is authoritative text on not just construction on aeroplanes but also on navigation, aviation fuels and pilot preparation
6. The speed of light has been accurately mentioned in Rigveda.
7. The theory of gravitation has been first mentioned in Rigveda

"All these claims stem from misunderstanding or deliberate mistranslation of philosophical verses or ascribing an ancient origin to verses composed in the last century. Several of these claims have explicitly been debunked over the years by respected academics. For example, you can read the paper written by members of Aeronautical Engineering faculty of IISc in 1974, debunking all claims in Vaimanika Shastra"



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Council for Technical Education. HC Pradhan, scientist and expert said the problem is that the book is being portrayed as "scientific research", whereas it has case studies which have already been proven to be wrong.

"Ideas that have not been proven to be true in hundreds of years can't be portrayed as science. A case study has to be approved by an expert panel and printed in several journals before it is considered official,"

said Pradhan, adding instead of insisting on placing this book and its content as "science", AICTE should clearly mention it has case studies that are open to suggestions and yet to be proven on paper.

Officials at AICTE, however, feel the book is meant for students to experiment with, and find out for themselves what is true. "That is true science, where students use their own experiments and ideas to prove age-old

scientific methodology.

The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (publisher) has also promised to make references available to students in the book," said Sahastrabuddhe, adding the council is asking colleges to conduct scientific investigations and find out the truth behind these theories, in the spirit of scientific research.

"We'll take action when there are enough complaints against it," said Sahastrabuddhe.

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HC PRADHAN, scientist