FIRA
FEDERATION OF INDIAN RATIONALIST ASSOCIATIONS

25–26 JANUARY 2027
MANGALURU

14th National
FIRA Conference

National Conference of Humanists, Rationalists, Atheists and Freethinkers
and Biennial Convention of FIRA

Rationalism for Youth

DKRA GOLDEN JUBILEE / 50 YEARS OF RATIONAL INQUIRY



25–26
JANUARY 2027
Monday and Tuesday

AIKBEA Auditorium

All India Karnataka Bank Employees Association
Kapikad, Bejai-Kavoor Road
Mangaluru, Karnataka 575004

Organised and hosted by

Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations (FIRA) in collaboration with Dakshina Kannada Rationalist Association (DKRA), Karnataka, and Aid Without Religion Trust, Mangaluru, Karnataka.

₹1,000	300	2 DAYS
per delegate for both days	delegate places	Monday and Tuesday

REGISTER ONLINE
form.jotform.com/262958010888064
dkvsmangalore@gmail.com

Scan to register

Academic programme and registration

The conference theme is ‘Rationalism for Youth’. Delegates are invited to submit papers for oral presentation on one of the following academic subthemes.

Critical Thinking in the Age of Viral Campaigns

50 Years of Dakshina Kannada Rationalist Association (DKRA)

Article 51A(h) in Action: Scientific Temper as Civic Resistance

Women and Superstitions: Unpacking Social Realities

Prescribed paper format

Element	Requirement
Title	14 point, bold and centred
Author details	Author name, institutional affiliation and contact details; 12 point, bold and centred; author name underlined
Main text	12 point, with 1.5 line spacing
Word limit	2,500 words
Font	Times New Roman
File format	MS Word .doc or .docx

Important dates

Milestone	Deadline
Last date for paper submission	15 November 2026
Selected authors informed by	25 November 2026
Last date for delegate registration	7 January 2027

Submit the MS Word paper to

dkvsmangalore@gmail.com

Delegate registration

The registration fee is ₹1,000 per delegate for both conference days, 25 and 26 January 2027. It includes food, a delegate kit, badges and handouts. Registration is limited to 300 delegates. Registration is confirmed after payment.

Register online

https://form.jotform.com/262958010888064

For registration assistance, contact Vivek on +91 97432 90032 or Mayoor on +91 99022 58950.

Travel and accommodation

Conference venue

All India Karnataka Bank Employees Association (AIKBEA) Auditorium, Kapikad, Bejai-Kavoor Road, Mangaluru, Karnataka 575004.

Reaching Mangaluru

Nearest airport

Mangaluru International Airport (IXE), Bajpe. Prepaid taxis and app-based cabs are available at the airport.

Nearest major railway station

Mangaluru Central (MAQ). Mangaluru Junction (MAJN), at Kankanady, is an alternative for trains that do not serve Central.

Nearest intercity bus terminal

KSRTC Bus Stand, Bejai, Mangaluru.

Local onward travel

Use a taxi or autorickshaw to AIKBEA Auditorium at Kapikad, Bejai-Kavoor Road.

Accommodation

Accommodation details will be shared through the conference WhatsApp group after registration. For information about single rooms and dormitories that delegates can book, contact Vivek on +91 97432 90032 or Mayoor on +91 99022 58950 on WhatsApp.

Book directly with the hotel and confirm its current rates and room availability. For dormitory options and further accommodation assistance, contact the conference organisers.

Accommodation assistance

Vivek: +91 97432 90032 | Mayoor: +91 99022 58950
Conference email: dkvsmangalore@gmail.com

Accommodation options

Hotel	Budget category	Location	Booking phone
Hotel Nandini	Budget	Opposite KSRTC Bus Stand, Bejai	+91 90084 44222
Hotel Panchami	Budget (AC and non-AC)	Opposite KSRTC Bus Stand, Bejai	0824 2211986 0824 2211214
Mangalore Stay Inn	Budget to mid-range	Bejai-Kapikad Road, near Baliga Stores	+91 96115 01613
Ginger Mangalore	Economy to mid-range	NH 66, near Infosys, Kottara Chowki	0824 6663333
Hotel BMS	Mid-range	NH 66, Kuntikana, Derebail	+91 78999 17277 +91 99026 82277
The Ocean Pearl Inn, Bejai	Upper mid-range	Bejai-Kapikad	0824 2863800 +91 91482 87333

Places to visit around Mangaluru

Plan sightseeing before or after the conference sessions. Nearby options include:

- Pilikula Nisargadhama, including its science and nature attractions and the Swami Vivekananda Planetarium.
- Panambur Beach and Tannirbhavi Beach.
- Sultan Battery, a historic watchtower by the Gurupura River.
- Srimanthi Bai Memorial Government Museum at Bejai and Kadri Park.

What to bring

Reusable water bottle

Please bring your own reusable water bottle. Disposable single-use water bottles will not be provided at the venue; water refill cans will be available.

Travel and tourism sources

Dakshina Kannada district travel information
Mangaluru Airport transport information
Karnataka State Tourism travel guide for Bejai bus stand
Mangaluru Smart City visitor attractions

People behind the conference

CHAIRPERSON

Dr Narendra Nayak

President, FIRA; Secretary, DKRA

+91 94482 16343
narenyen@gmail.com

CONVENOR

Eric Lobo

Convenor, 14th National Conference, FIRA
+91 98451 05181
ericlobo13@gmail.com

CHIEF COORDINATOR

Vivek Vijay Kumar

Executive Member, DKRA

+91 97432 90032
vivekvk32@gmail.com

Advisors

Shyam Sundar Rao
Advisor; Trustee, Aid Without Religion Trust

Prabhakar Kapikad
Advisor; Trustee, Aid Without Religion Trust

Vasudev Uchchil
Advisor

Santosh Bajaj
Advisor

DKRA Executive Committee

Full name	Role
Madhav Rao	President
Narendra Nayak	Secretary
Krishnappa Konchady	Joint Secretary
M S Kamath	Treasurer

Aid Without Religion Trust

Trustees	Role
Narendra Nayak	Managing Trustee
Shyam Sundar Rao	Trustee
Prabhakar Kapikad	Trustee
Hariyappa Pejavar	Trustee

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE / FIRA

Dr Narendra Nayak President	**Dr Sudesh Ghoderao** General Secretary	**Sajit C** Treasurer	**E T Rao** Vice President
R Tamil Selvan Vice President	**Lal Salam** Vice President	**Harish Deshmukh** Vice President	**J V Krishnaiya** Vice President
Manoj Bansod Vice President	**Samba Siva Rao** Secretary	**M N Buddha** Secretary	**Mohan Viswanathan** Secretary
Gangadhar Sahoo (IAS) Secretary	**Ram Kumar** Secretary	**Haribhau Pathode** Secretary	**Thressia John** Organising Secretary
Vijay Khanderao Office Secretary	**Iringal Krishnan** Member	**M S N Murthy** Member	**Basanti Acharya** Member
Monica Shridhar Puramshetty Member	**Mamta Nayak** Member	**Mayoor Shetty** Member	**Dr Dhaneswar Sahoo** Patron

Dr Narendra Nayak / President
+91 94482 16343 | narenyen@gmail.com

Dr Sudesh Ghoderao / General Secretary
+91 94222 57654 | sudeshghoderao@gmail.com

FIRA website: https://fira.org.in/

Conference inquiries

Vivek Vijay Kumar, Chief Coordinator, 14th National Conference, FIRA
+91 97432 90032 | vivekvk32@gmail.com
dkvsmangalore@gmail.com | Registration: Vivek +91 97432 90032 / Mayoor +91 99022 58950

About DKRA

DKRA GOLDEN JUBILEE

50 YEARS OF RATIONAL INQUIRY

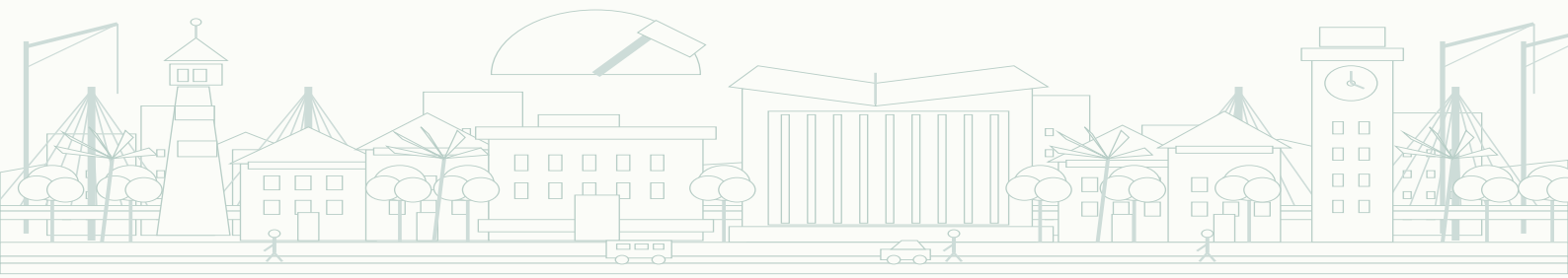
Dakshina Kannada Rationalist Association (DKRA), also known as Dakshina Kannada Vicharavadi Sangha, is a Mangaluru-based organisation that promotes rational inquiry and scientific temper. It began as the South Kanara Rationalist Association on 25 November 1976, following efforts by a group of young rationalists to bring Abraham T Kovoor's Divine Miracle Exposure campaign to Mangaluru. Its early membership brought together students, young professionals and others interested in questioning claims of supernatural powers.

Public demonstrations and education have been central to the association's work. Its members have explained how apparent miracles can be produced through ordinary physical methods, encouraging audiences to examine evidence and ask questions. The association worked with Basava Premanand and later developed its own capacity to conduct programmes. Participation in the Bharatiya Jana Vignana Jatha in 1987 and collaboration with Karnataka Rajya Vijnana Parishat helped extend these activities through educational and public networks.

DKRA's work became closely connected with the Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations after its secretary, Narendra Nayak, was elected FIRA President in 2004. Through demonstrations, workshops and training, the association has contributed to the development of science activists and teachers who can explain so-called miracles and challenge superstition. Its activities have also addressed misleading advertisements and other claims that call for scientific examination.

The association's social work includes support for inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. Aid Without Religion Trust, established in 2011, provides a related avenue for helping people and supporting activities without religious or superstitious conditions. Together, these efforts connect rational thinking with practical assistance and public engagement.

The Golden Jubilee marks 50 years of the association's work and an opportunity to involve a younger generation. The conference theme, Rationalism for Youth, carries that purpose forward by encouraging young people to question, investigate and participate in the movement. DKRA's history also records the contributions of members, volunteers and supporters whose work has sustained the association over five decades.



DKRA 50 years

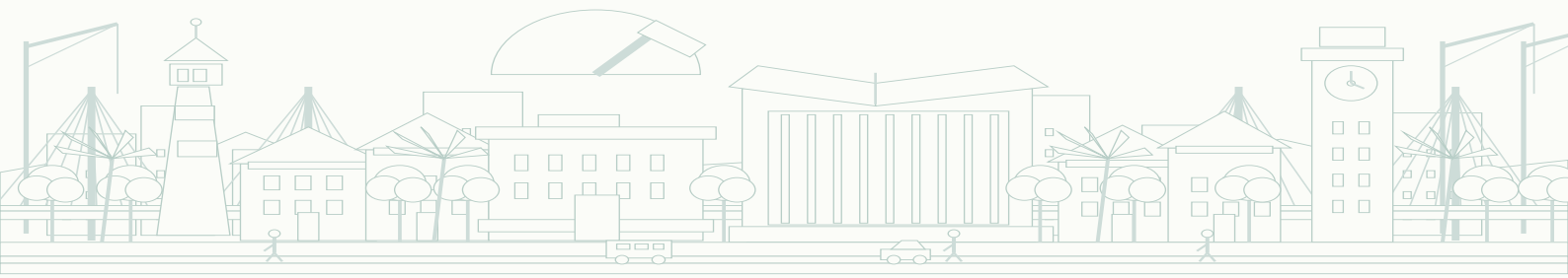
It was 1976, during the Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi. The press was subject to pre-publication censorship: censored material had to be removed, and the space could not be left blank. Newspapers wanted to generate controversy and debate, but criticism of the government would be cut out. By the standards of the time, a safer topic was the debate about godmen and their claims of supernatural powers.

Among the most prominent was Sathya Sai Baba of Puttaparthi, who claimed to "materialise" objects from thin air. Two eminent rationalists, Abraham T Kovoor and H Narasimhaiah, challenged such claims. Kovoor, who was born in India and lived in Sri Lanka, visited India to conduct his Divine Miracle Exposure campaigns. He offered a reward of one lakh rupees to anyone who could demonstrate one or more of the so-called miracles on his list. This provoked reactions from orthodox groups and devotees of godmen.

A newspaper published in Manipal carried an article about Kovoor and rationalists in general. I was finishing my MSc at Kasturba Medical College, Manipal, and was furious when I read it. Kudpi Rajanikant Shenoy, my brother Rajendra and I wrote a rejoinder. The editor initially refused to publish it. After arguments and a sit-in of sorts, it appeared. When the editor called Kovoor a fraud, we said we would bring Kovoor to Mangalore so that he could test that claim. The task of arranging the visit fell to us.

We approached the Indian Rationalist Association (IRA) for a programme in Mangalore during Kovoor's next tour of India, due a few months later. IRA replied that dates could not be allotted to individuals, but organisations could apply subject to certain conditions. We formed the South Kanara Rationalist Association (SKRA). Although it had been conceived a few months earlier, we regard 25 November 1976 as its founding date.

There were about 25 members. Five were over 40; the rest were 25 or younger. The older members were G K Nettar, B R Mallya, Raghuvir Kodial, Dinakar and a Mr Patil, whose first name I cannot recall. He was the registrar of Karnataka Regional Engineering College, now NITK. Among the younger members were Kudpi Rajanikant Shenoy, Vinod Kamath, Manel Annappa Nayak, Prakash Shetty and others from a circle of friends called the Nalli gang. Arunachalam Kumar joined from KMC, Mangalore, where he was in his final year of MBBS. The Nayak family was represented by three brothers: Rajendra, Surendra and me. Other members included bank employees and students. Sadly, there were no women.



Building public outreach

As I recall, the association's first programme outside its own meetings was at the University of Mysore's postgraduate centre at Konaje, then known as Mangalagangothri. Panditaradhya, a lecturer there, organised it. As secretary, I spoke to students and staff about rational thinking and attempted to demonstrate how "vibhuti" could apparently be produced from thin air, a signature claim of Sathya Sai Baba. Our apparatus, a pouch connected to a tube, jammed after two demonstrations. The head of the department, Dr Varadaraja Rao, angrily asked who had invited us, but quietened down when told that it was Panditaradhya. Our first attempt at public outreach had mixed results.

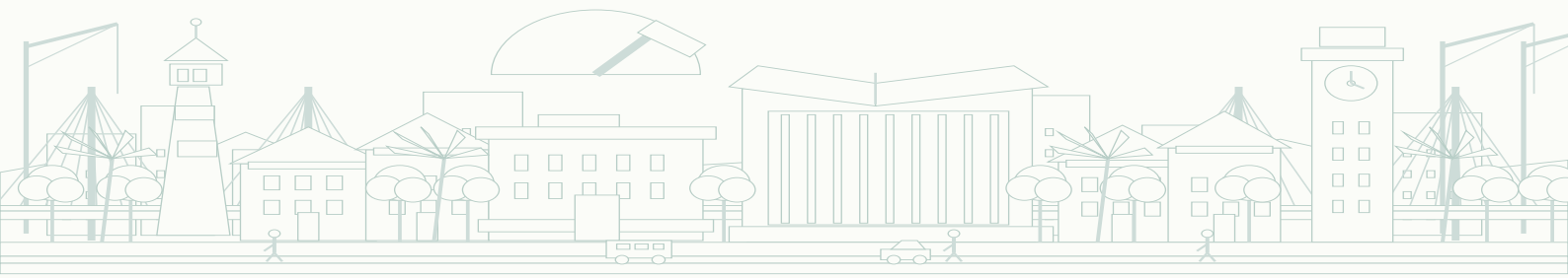
Organisational work continued. We communicated by postcards and met at a maidan near what are now the Karavali Utsav grounds. Meanwhile, I married without a religious ceremony, during rahu kalam on a day considered inauspicious, and subsequently became less active. Later presidents and other members tried to sustain the association, but activities were mainly organisational, with little public outreach.

Kovoor's death in September 1978 left a major gap. Basava Premanand emerged to carry his work forward with energy and commitment. We came into contact with him through Shankar, a magician with Maya Amateur Magicians. Shankar had invited Premanand and his brother Dayanand to conduct Divine Miracle Exposure programmes in the district, beginning in Udupi and continuing in Mangalore.

The Udupi event was held on a Sunday and preceded by a procession in which we performed apparent "miracles": pulling a car using ropes attached to hooks through the skin of the back, placing burning camphor on the tongue, and other demonstrations. When Premanand opened his speech with the words "Aum is the sound of reproduction", a crowd rushed onto the stage and attacked him. He stopped speaking, and the rest of the event proceeded smoothly. The Mangalore programme, organised by SKRA, passed without incident.

A regional newspaper then campaigned against rationalists. The association clarified its positions on issues including atheism, provoking a backlash. The magicians distanced themselves, saying they were entertainers without an ideological affiliation. The association decided to work with people who shared its ideological clarity. On Premanand's next visit, rationalists organised the programmes with Samudaya, a progressive cultural organisation. These were well received. After inviting Premanand several more times, the association decided to develop its own programmes.

The Bharatiya Jana Vignana Jatha in 1987 provided an opportunity. One of its activities promoted scientific temper by explaining so-called miracles. This work later continued through the Bharatiya Gyana Vigyana Samithi. The programmes became widely known, and the association gained recognition in Karnataka. Collaboration with Karnataka Rajya Vijnana Parishat extended our reach through its statewide network of branches.



Campaigns and continuity

After DKRA secretary Narendra Nayak was unanimously elected President of FIRA in 2004, the activities of the two organisations became closely connected. Much of the work conducted by FIRA's President also reflected DKRA's contribution. Aid Without Religion Trust was established in 2011 to support people and activities without religious or superstitious conditions, and has financed work needing such assistance.

The National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC) recognised Narendra Nayak as a national-level master resource person for training science activists and teachers in the scientific explanation of so-called miracles. He has trained thousands of activists across the country.

We have campaigned against superstition and unscientific claims, from misleading advertisements to claims of seeing while blindfolded. We have challenged individuals and organisations in India and abroad, including cases in which religion has been used to exploit followers. We have joined campaigns concerning allegations of exploitation at Dharmasthala. We also took up the case of RTI activist Vinayaka Baliga, who was murdered after questioning the accounts of the Venkataramana Temple and Kashi Math.

We have supported and conducted inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. The secretary also undertook an NCSTC project to train two activists in every district of India to investigate claims of miracles. The project was abandoned after 2014.

Threats and the murders of rationalists added a new dimension to our work. Narendra Dabholkar was killed, followed by Govind Pansare, M M Kalburgi and Gauri Lankesh. The secretary received police protection from 2016 to 2023. Attempts were also made on his life, which he survived. Continuing this work has meant facing threats to personal safety.

We remember supporters who are no longer with us. Devadas M, who actively accompanied the secretary on his travels, died of COVID-19 a few years ago. Prasanna, an electrical engineer, was another valued supporter. Vittala Bhandary, who participated in our activities along with his father, R V Bhandary, died during the pandemic.

Many others continue to support the association, both as members and from outside it. A complete list would be difficult to compile, but their contributions have sustained our work.

As DKRA completes 50 years in 2026, we look to a younger generation to continue this work with new ideas and energy. A series of commemorative activities is planned, beginning with an inaugural meeting on 22 November 2026 at the Karnataka Bank Employees Association Auditorium.

