



Demons, doomsday and deduction

You say that we go round the sun. If we went round the moon it would not make a pennyworth of difference to me or my work.
Sherlock Holmes, *A Study in Scarlet*

This is a demon-haunted world, doomsday is imminent [ever heard of 2012 millennialism, or the movie *2010?*], aliens are invading us, UFOs abound, Christ's 'thousand years reign' is impending, Satan is about to be unleashed, hell breaks loose, the branded number of the beast '666' [rather 616?] is already in our midst unbeknownst erstwhile, eternal judgment is nigh, and signs of tsunami, earthquakes, volcanoes and floods prevail. In short, the END is coming.

Pretty alarming! Besides there are lots of evidences to compound there hysteria. But fortunately they are fictional works in Hollywood films and books. In fact they are the only concrete evidences we have so far! Of course you don't have to remind me, there are also holy (religious) books.

From the brighter side, we have faith healers, soothsayers, astrologers, miracle/medicinal water [I mean here the usual H₂O] - an elixir, and natural remedies for cancer and other terminal illnesses. Just to think of it, why do we still need hospitals at such expensive costs? Why do we struggle for MBBS and other medical courses, while it must be far more reasonable to learn how to pray, to save expenses and time?

It is for the simple reason that they are as nutty as a fruitcake in the light of science. If one has a proper understanding of the nuts and bolts of science, these things are as hilarious as they can be. If you don't find the funny side of them, I assure you, they are still simply *nuts*! But the thing is, we don't want them to be evanescent puffballs, for we find them amusing as entertainments are so costly these days, and science is not that particularly funny. Besides human credulity really knows no bounds and there will always be gullible people for their benefit, and we should not discourage them too much!

If I were given to make a choice of best scientifically inspiring books, I shall not want to leave out Carl Sagan's *The Demon-Haunted World* and Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes*. Never think that textbooks are the only place where you can acquire scientific thinking. In fact most of them are boring, and we read them only for the sake of education.

For starters, you should not be imprudently alarmed, *The Demon-Haunted World* in nothing sort of stories about demons; it is about the demons in the sense that there are none. They are figments of our imagination, or rather those of the pea-brained bonkers. It is as the subtitle says: *Science as a Candle in the Dark*.

As to *Sherlock Holmes*, the crude cliché about the science of deduction will always ring in my ears. Especially the precept of Holmes that in analyzing the truth, one must dispel all possible evidences, eliminate all the impossible, and accept whatever remains, however improbable it is. It sounds so all true to science.

This is because science is the best - if not the only - tool to understand reality. It is far from reality when people praise God for their political achievements, government competency, or success of their ministry, while we ran out of gas (cooking gas and petrol) [Have you noticed how a bit different our English is?], electricity, and food and water supplies. Though the Gospels, we claim, have expelled demons from our spirit-infested land and brought enlightenment to us, we are still so much in the dark [literally also, the light just went off while I am writing this very sentence ... Goddamn it!].

Science is a candle in that dark, the only candle worth lighting, a light in the darkness.

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