In 2003, Randi challenged Dr. Emoto's claims surrounding Tri-Vortex Technology ,

an "alternative medical technology" developed by Brian David Anderson (in the US) and Anton Ungerer (in South Africa).

Recently in India, Naveen Jindal, a Member of Parliament and one of the biggest industrialists in the country came across the "bangle" and its miraculous claims during his trip to South Africa and believes in its powers. He has recently sent tweets to the effect that he has personally " personally from this " and that it is " unfair to dismiss the claims ".

Indian mentalist, magician and skeptic, Nakul Shenoy, has been applying public scrutiny to these claims, which he believes are harmful to the public good. Randi.org interviewed Nakul on his public education and skeptical activist campaign .

JREF: First off, what is the exact claim and who is making it?

Nakul Shenoy: This "Tiranga bangle" campaign was inaugurated by our Minister of State (HRD) Shashi Tharoor and is avidly promoted by eminent industrialist and Member of Parliament Naveen Jindal, and will be distributed through his Flag Foundation. Then again, it is not just a tri-coloured band that would foster patriotism and the spirit of one-ness.

This bangle, supposedly powered by "Tri-Vortex Technology" and imported from South Africa, claims to cure a long list of ailments — everything from acidity to arthritis — and also purify water and even protect people from harmful cell phone radiation! Further, we are assured that it

would "prove particularly beneficial for athletes and the elderly". There have been a number of media reports that focus on the product launch of the bangle and its amazing properties.

JREF: Isn't it possible that some of these claims are valid? Have the healing claims about the bracelets been tested by scientists?

Nakul Shenoy: Indeed! It would be a great advancement in science and health if these claims were real! Researching the possibilities, I discovered that CAMcheck (a South African consumers' guide to scams, pseudoscience and voodoo science) had a couple of articles on this pseudoscientific "technology." In summary, they call Tri-Vortex related products "pseudoscience baloney, quackery, and scam".

A second article on the same site speaks about a consumer complaint regarding the product's false advertisements, which was upheld by the South African ASA Directorate as being unsubstantiated and in contravention of the local consumer protection laws.

JREF: If the claims are real, it would be a huge advance in medical science. Are you willing to conduct a test of these bands yourself, should the company accept the challenge?

Nakul Shenoy: India is a country plagued by superstition, "black magic," quack cures and magic remedies, and so the last thing we need is that our Members of Parliament peddle or support by association such snake oil to the gullible. The very least our MPs could do is put this product and its claims to a rigorous scientific test with respect to its medical claims.

After a sustained Twitter campaign questioning and ridiculing the claims of the Tri-Vortex Bangle, we finally saw the Minister of State Shashi Tharoor issue a public clarification that his launching the product in no way endorses its claims, and that "scientific temper requires that any claims of health benefits be tested empirically before being accepted or dismissed".

This clarification from Mr Tharoor is a huge win in itself for the campaign we have been running. After all, if the technology is found to be real and beneficial, we should indeed harness its amazing life-changing properties for the benefit of one and all around the world. On the

other hand, if it proves to be a pseudoscientific fraud -- as I believe the evidence clearly demonstrates -- we would prevent thousands of our countrymen in India, and in other countries, from falling prey to yet another scam that has the potential to hurt their health as well as their pockets.

In this particular context I am exploring organizing or conducting controlled group experiments to verify the validity of the claims. These would be held under proper observation conditions and would help validate the claims, if they can be substantiated. I am confident that the James Randi Educational Foundation will also come forward and happily put the One Million Dollars from its Paranormal Challenge on the line, should the claimants apply for the test.

JREF: Why is a Minister of State and Member of Parliament in India involved in promoting such products? Are you suggesting they have financial interests?

Nakul Shenoy: Not at all. Mr Tharoor and Mr Jindal count among of the more respected and well-meaning parliamentarians in our country. Plus Mr Tharoor has just issued his clarification that his launch in no way endorses the claims.

The reality is that despite ample evidence to suggest that the so-called "Tri-Vortex" technology is pseudoscience, Mr Jindal remains convinced that the technology is real and insists he has p ersonally benefitted from it
.Thus, he sees no harm in making this "technology" available to others, in spite of numerous articles online questioning the veracity of its tall claims — especially with regard to its healing properties.

It is in this bleak context that I implore on our popular, well-meaning MP to be an example of working in the public good based on science and desist from promoting quackery and pseudoscience. If anybody is convinced from personal experience that what they have on offer

is real, the least they can do is validate it through scientific lab tests . And this is what we hope Mr Jindal would also agree to.

JREF: What can our readers do to help you? Can we assist even if we do not live in India?

Nakul Shenoy: Those of your readers who are from India can help us immensely by supporting the petition
and requesting the parliamentarian to reconsider their stand in support of this scam product. The international readers too can pitch in making the world more aware to this new scam that is making the rounds.

Everybody, no matter where they are, can help in spreading the awareness to their friends and contacts and making the movement stronger. After all, this "technology" has now reached Indian shores from the USA and South Africa, and there are also a few reports of its existence in UK and Australia. So clearly it is developing into a global scam.

JREF: Big picture, why do you even care about this issue? Shouldn't people be able to believe what they want without your trying to restrict their ability to buy products you don't believe in?

Nakul Shenoy: Having been a performing magician for most part of my life, I have faced numerous situations where people, educated and well-to-do ones at that, associate magic with paranormal and yogic powers.

Research exists in India and abroad to show that even among the well-educated, well over one third of the people associate simple magic tricks to being the fruit of yogic or paranormal powers! If this is the case among our more educated and in our cities, one can only fear the worst among the millions that make our villages and the country.

Of course, people have every right to believe in what they want and to buy what they wish. Yet, it would always be nice to be able to prevent the gullible from being taken for a ride, and that's why I am ringing the alarm bell, much like James Randi and his foundation has been doing about similar scams for decades. I hope that we will be able to diminish belief in this fake product, if only to help people from being abused by unscrupulous promoters of the fake healing bands.

For more information about the Trianga Bangle, check out Nakul's post here .

And please sign his petition to stop promoting unscrupulous magic cure products here

Nakul Shenoy is The Mind Reader - a Bangalore-based professional magician and stage hypnotist. An occasional blogger at www.nakulshenoy.com , he haunts twitter as @nakulshenoy.