



Science for Society

Science for Man

Science in Thinking

BREAKTHROUGH SCIENCE SOCIETY

8A Creek Lane, Kolkata 700014, WB, INDIA

Tel: (033) 22640563, 9433369069, 9433944608, 9477514644

E-mail: breakthrough@ieee.org Web: www.breakthroughindia.org

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A Voluntary Organization Committed to the Cause of Science, Culture and Scientific Outlook

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Statement on the ISRO Chairman's unrealistic claims on science in ancient India

Mr. Somanath, the ISRO Chairman, while addressing the convocation ceremony at the Maharishi Panini Sanskrit and Vedic University in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, on May 24, 2023 talked about the achievements of science in ancient India in an exaggerated and eulogized manner, creating confusion in the minds of people. He said that great developments of science in different branches, like metallurgy, astrology, astronomy, aeronautical sciences, physics, etc., took place in ancient India and were later taken to Europe by the Arabs. Thousands of years later, Europeans brought the same knowledge back to us as discoveries of modern science.

It is an undeniable fact that great developments in science took place in ancient India with significant contributions in the fields of astronomy, mathematics, chemistry, metallurgy, medicine etc. It is also true that significant developments in science took place in other parts of the world like Mesopotamia, Greece, Egypt, etc., around the same period. Later, the Arabs took the lead, accumulated and preserved the knowledge, and through them, it reached Europe. It is through interactions and exchanges that science, or for that matter, any branch of knowledge, develops and grows. It is a cumulative process. Each successive stage builds upon the earlier stage, testing the existing ideas and discarding those that have been proven wrong. This is the natural course of the development of science. Naturally, the later developments are richer and advanced than the earlier ones.

The renaissance in Europe marked a new beginning. Modern science, based on observation, hypothesis-formation, and experimental verification, started with Galileo. This objective method was a qualitatively different stage incomparable to anything in the past. On this sound footing, the triumphant march of science continued with the great contributions of Newton, Faraday, Maxwell, Darwin, Einstein and many others. Today's knowledge based on modern science is far advanced than the ancient knowledge of any civilization.

The science we have today is the culmination of humanity's accumulated knowledge. We should respect and regard the contributions of great minds in the past, be it the Greeks, Egyptians, Indians, Chinese or Arabs. Only a petty mind would think of eulogizing the achievements of a particular region or section. One simple question to Mr.Somanath is: If superior knowledge in astronomy, aeronautical engineering, etc., is available in the ancient texts in Sanskrit, why isn't the ISRO using them? Can he show one piece of technology or theory that ISRO has taken from the Vedas and applied to make a rocket or a satellite?

The Breakthrough Science Society requests public figures, including administrators of scientific organizations, to reflect the ethos of science in their public discourses because people look up to them as representatives of the scientific community. Science develops through questioning the old ideas and the unrealistic claim that our ancient knowledge was superior will confuse the students and hamper the development of a scientific bent of mind. This in effect will only retard the progress of science in India.

D. Mukhopadhyay

Dhrubajyoti Mukhopadhyay
President

Soumitro Banerjee

Soumitro Banerjee
General Secretary