

Truth, beauty, art... forays into the dimensions of science

Science Correspondent

BANGALORE: It is not often that one finds eminent scientists, writers, artistes and academicians converging on a subject which is understood to work on its own principle. But it did happen at the seminar on 'Dimensions of Science' where scholars ruminated on whether science was indeed 'universal'.

"Science today constitutes the supra-national culture. If anything is universal and international, it is science. So one has to be very careful in demanding utility from science. In fact, whenever science has been done irrespective of its usefulness, it has given great service to mankind. On the contrary, whenever scientists have been commissioned, no major discoveries have been made," said Prof. C.N.R. Rao, chairman of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) on Thursday.

Speaking on 'Doing Science: Imagination Within Boundaries and Passion Without Limits', he said scientists always had a difficult job as their problem was not getting new ideas but getting rid of old ones. And they had to do that without any poetic licence and flights of fancy. However, that did not mean that science and aesthetics did not meet. "The beauty of science is that every advancement opens a new door of exploration. Science should be done for science's sake," Prof Rao added.

Luminaries from various spheres gathered at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) for the

seminar, jointly organised by the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) and NIAS.

Noted physicist Raja Ramanna, speaking on 'Science and Security', said security was an "in-built evolutionary evil" which no one had been able to get over.

Criticising the Western countries stand on arms reduction treaties, he said poor countries were subjected to sundry inspections and sanctions even if they wanted to develop a technology to meet their domestic requirements.

Echoing the concern, Prof. Rajesh Kochhar (IIA) said modern science was 'Brahminised' during the colonial period and 'Kshatriyaised' after independence. "For historical reasons, there has been a hostility towards production of wealth through science and this hostility has harmed science. The Mandalisation of science, that gave Europe its strength, has not taken place in India," He added.

The difference between a poet and a scientist, outlined by Prof Rao, in terms of restrictions on imagination, was crystallised by the noted poet and writer Keki Daruwalla. In his lecture on 'Science and poetry: intersecting at the fringes', he said poetry and science were destined to meet but only peripherally.

"It is not good enough to say that science is an objective study of phenomena and the poetry is subjective, that one deals with the outer reality and the other with the inner.... In both, the sum is greater than the parts"