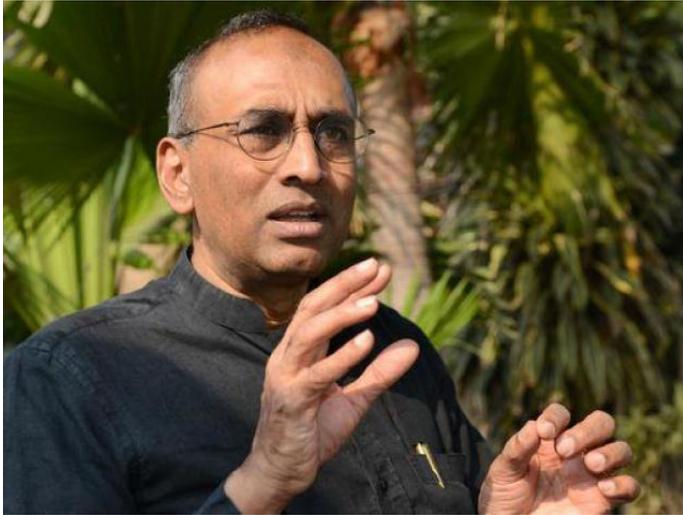


Nobel Laureate Dr. Venkatraman Ramakrishnan speaks



Prof. Venkatraman Ramakrishnan. (Photo Courtesy: The Hindu)

Nobel Laureate Dr. Venkatraman (Venki) Ramakrishnan, who has recently been elected as the President of the prestigious Royal Society, London, expressed strong views on the recent events in the arena of science in India.

In an interview published by The Hindu (March 20, 2015), he said “There is no room for political, personal or religious ideologies in science. Science is about investigation based on facts and experiments.” He also referred to the happenings in the

102nd Indian Science Congress, Mumbai, “I heard that some nonsense was spouted at the Indian Science Congress by people who are ideologically driven” he said. “What was astonishing to me is that the Indian science establishment did not speak out instantly and strongly about it. That needs to happen. I don’t have a problem with any government, including the current one. However, governments and scientists in India need to ensure that politics and religious ideology do not intrude into science. They belong to separate spheres and if they are not kept separate, it is science in India and the country as a whole that will suffer.”

In another interview televised by NDTV on March 20, 2015, the interviewer posed a question regarding the recent remarks by Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi “... the fact that Karna was born outside his mother’s womb showed that genetic sciences existed in those times” and “...we worship lord Ganesha, there must have been a plastic surgeon who got an elephant’s head on a human body and began the practice of plastic surgery.” In reply, Prof. Ramakrishnan commented that “faith and belief should not be mixed with science”. “Modern science is evidence based. It is based on experiments and logical reasoning. In fact it is the opposite of faith. The motto of the Royal Society reads ‘Nullius in verba’ in Latin for ‘Take nobody’s word for it’. That is, you don’t take anybody’s words as truth, you have to look at facts, data and confront them. I think this is a very healthy attitude and it has advanced science tremendously in the last 350 years. When it comes to matters of religion, belief, etc., they are matters of personal faith and the two spheres should not be mixed.”

Responding to questions on improvement of science education in India, he said “Even though English is the international language of science and at higher levels English is very much required, at the school level good science books should be made available in the regional languages since a large number of students learn through the regional languages. The quality of books in the regional languages and the teaching and training is very important”.