

To,
The Editor

Date: 4 Jan 2015

Sir/Madam,

Press release on the session 'Ancient Sciences through Sanskrit'
at the Indian Science Congress – 2015

The All India Executive Committee of Breakthrough Science Society (BSS) expresses its happiness at the commencement of the 102nd Indian Science Congress at the University of Mumbai premises being held on 3-7 Jan, 2015. It is heartening to see that an impressive number of distinguished scientists including Nobel Laureates from across the world are participating in the Congress and discussing on various topics of scientific and social importance such as Biodiversity conservation, Clean Energy, Space Technology, Nanoscience, Nutrition & Health etc.. We wish the Congress a grand success.

At the same time, we note with deep concern the proceedings of the Symposium on 'Ancient Sciences through Sanskrit' organised on Sunday, 4 January at 9.30AM – 1.30PM. The topics in the symposium include "Ancient Indian Aviation Technology", "Neuro Science of Yoga: Understanding the Process" etc.. Here are the reasons for this worry:

- None of the speakers of this session are scientists of any repute, and scientists who are known to have worked extensively on science in ancient India are **not** among the speakers.
- Even before the congress, one of the speakers, Captain Bodas had claimed that "ancient Indian aeroplanes travelled from one country to another, from one continent to another, and from one **planet** to another" and that "in those days, aeroplanes could move left, right, as well as backwards, unlike modern planes which only fly forward".
- Some of the preposterous claims made by the speakers during the session are as follows:
 - "Findings of ancient Indian sciences have been taken by Germans by exploring Sanskrit literature who used them to master us but now, we should master them by learning more about ancient sciences".
 - "To understand Einstein, one needs to read Vedas". A typical fanatical claim without any reference to which part of which Veda throws any light on relativity and how it was historically possible for the conception of relativity in Vedic times.
 - Captain Bodas repeated the same absurd claims without the minimum scientific honesty of citing experimental evidence but only by referring to scientifically scrutinized and discredited texts of Shri Bramhamuni Parivrajaka and Shri G R Josyer.
 - Most shockingly, the chairperson did not allow questions to be asked. This is a complete paradox.
Questioning is the very essence of scientific thinking but not allowed in a science congress.

Indians can justifiably be proud of our varied and colourful cultural history spread over two millennia. Our contributions to philosophy, art, music, literature, astronomy, mathematics, and medicine are renowned the world over. The richness of our culture is the direct outcome of the openness with which our ancestors welcomed and assimilated the essence of other cultures. The result is a wonderful collage that we have come to recognise as our cultural legacy.

In fact, past Presidents of Indian Science Congresses in their addresses - like **Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray's** talk on 'Dawn of Science in Modern India', 1920, **Sir Ram Nath Chopra's** talk on 'Rationalisation of Medicine in India', 1948 and **Prof.P.Parija's** talk on 'Impact of Society on Science', 1960 - dealt with Science in India in an objective and educative manner while giving due recognition to the achievements in science in ancient India. We are deeply astonished and outraged that such a hallowed assembly of scientists has been misused to make false and chauvinistic claims about ancient India tarnishing the genuine contributions of the great science personalities of yore.

The scientific enterprise is a quest to understand and explain natural phenomena based on theories that are supported by observations and experimental evidence. It is a dynamic process that involves constant advancement. The theory of relativity, quantum mechanics and molecular biology evolved in this process. No great scientific or technological accomplishment, whether it is aeronautics, plastic surgery, in vitro fertilisation or stem cell therapy, can be made without a substantial theoretical edifice. The glorious advancements in the field of aviation or neurosciences or biological sciences are built on the edifice of modern science. Hence, to claim that such innovations already existed in ancient India is not only false, unhistoric and against the **ethics of science** but also **dangerous** as it can inflame fanatical passions. As Darwin said, false facts are more dangerous than false views.

In this context, we heartily congratulate **Dr Ram Prasad Gandhiraman**, scientist with NASA's Ames Research Centre for his wonderful effort in rallying the support of 220 scientists and academicians around the world against the session on 'Ancient Indian Aviation Technology' which is an affront to credibility of the Indian Science Congress.

We wholeheartedly join **Prof. PM Bhargava** (founder Director, Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad) and **Dr. Rajesh Kochhar** (former Director, National Institute for Science, Technology and Development Studies, New Delhi) and other scientists who have criticized this unpardonable attempt to dilute the integrity of scientific process and the rich heritage of Indian Science Congress.

Thanking You,

Yours' sincerely,