

BREAKTHROUGH SCIENCE SOCIETY



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

To
The Editor

Date: 5 January, 2019

Sir/Madam,

Regarding the unscientific claims at Indian Science Congress – 2019

The All India Committee of Breakthrough Science Society (BSS) expresses its happiness at the commencement of the **106th Indian Science Congress** at the Lovely Professional University, Punjab being held on 3-7 Jan, 2019. It is heartening to see that an impressive number of distinguished scientists from 60 countries including 3 Nobel Laureates are participating in the Congress and discussing on the focal theme **Future India : Science & Technology** (ref: <http://isc2019.org/>) with very relevant topics covering agriculture, forestry, veterinary & fishery sciences, anthropology, Archaeology, Psychology, chemical & material sciences, Information & Communication, Medical & Physical sciences, 'New Biology' etc.. The Congress has also featured an interesting concept of a 'Time Capsule' - a collection of objects representing today's technology – buried 10 feet deep for posterity. In his inaugural address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recalled the rich legacy of ISC due to its association with some of India's finest minds, including **Acharya JC Bose, CV Raman, Meghnad Saha, and SN Bose**. We wish the Congress a grand success.

At the same time, we are astounded and even, horrified at the following claims made at the Congress (video recording at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7CkA38Okc8>):

- Kauravas were born due to stem cell and test tube technologies.
- Lord Rama used 'astras' and 'shastras' while Lord Vishnu sent a Sudarshan Chakra to chase targets. This shows that the science of guided missiles was present in India thousands of years ago.
- Ravana didn't just have the Pushpak Vimana but had 24 types of aircraft and airports in Lanka.
- Theoretical physics - including the contributions of Newton & Einstein - is totally wrong. Gravitational waves will be renamed as 'Narendra Modi Waves' and gravitational lensing effect will be renamed as 'Hashvardhan Effect'

It is absolutely distressing that these claims were made in the **Children Science Congress** section of ISC where the audience was largely comprised of **teachers and young students**.

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, the past presidents of Indian Science Congresses - **Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray** (1920), **Sir Ram Nath Chopra** (1948) and **Prof.P.Parija** (1960) - dealt with Science in India in an objective and educative manner while giving due recognition to the achievements in science in ancient India.

Now, 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 and that too, in front of young and impressionable minds.

The scientific enterprise is a self-correcting quest to understand and explain natural phenomena based on critical observation, experimental evidence, universal verification and constant advancement. Stem cell research, in vitro fertilisation, science of ballistics & guided missiles, theory of relativity, quantum mechanics etc.. have evolved in this process. It is important to note that **no technological accomplishment** can be made without the relevant **scientific theoretical foundation**. For instance, construction of guided missiles requires electricity, metallurgy, mechanics, projectile motion, radars, optics, motion sensors, wireless communication etc.. and there is **no** evidence for the existence of these underlying pillars of scientific knowledge in ancient India.

Puranic verses and epics are poetic, enjoyable, contain moral elements and rich in imagination but **not** scientifically constructed or validated theories. Hence, it is wrong to mix mythology and science. To claim that such innovations already existed in ancient India citing these sources is not only false and unhistoric but an affront to the real achievements in science in ancient and medieval India. Further, such false facts are, as Darwin said, **more dangerous** than false views.

This is **not** the first time this blunder has happened. In ISC, 2015 at Mumbai, false claims on the existence of aircraft in ancient India was made but was rebuffed by the science community in an online petition signed by over 1000 science academics and communicators and submitted to the president of ISC. In ISC, 2016 at Mysore, false claims about Lord Shiva being the first environmentalist and tiger skin to reverse aging process were made and BSS staged a protest demonstration in front of the ISC venue which was lauded by large sections of science community. No wonder that Nobel Laureate Venki Ramakrishnan termed ISC a 'circus'.

We spare no words to condemn this unpardonable attempt to dilute the integrity of scientific process, to tarnish the genuine contributions of ancient India and the rich heritage of Indian Science Congress. But, ISC does not seem to be learning from the past mistakes. Hence, it is time that scientific community speaks up again and in a stronger voice.

Thanking You,

Yours' sincerely,

Dr Dhruba Mukhopadhyay
President

Dr Soumitro Banerjee
General Secretary
Breakthrough Science Society
All India Committee