

BREAKTHROUGH SCIENCE SOCIETY OBJECTS TO ISRO CHAIRMAN'S CLAIMS ON SCIENCE IN ANCIENT INDIA

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May 30, 2023 10:47 pm | Updated May 31, 2023 01:58 am IST - Bengaluru

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ISRO chairman S. Somanath | Photo Credit: File photo

The Breakthrough Science Society, a voluntary organisation committed to the cause of science and scientific outlook has raised objections to ISRO chairman [S. Somanath's recent statement](#) hailing the role of Sanskrit in India becoming a knowledge society since Vedic times.

In a statement, the society said Mr. Somanath, while addressing the convocation ceremony at the Maharishi Panini Sanskrit and Vedic University in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, on May 24, talked about the achievements of science in ancient India in an exaggerated and eulogised manner, creating confusion in the minds of people.

The society added that Mr. Somanath 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. Great developments in science indeed took place in the Indian subcontinent from around 600 BC to about 900 AD.

"It is also true that such developments took place in other parts of the world like Mesopotamia, Greece, Egypt, etc., around the same period and even earlier. 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 these 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 society said.

It added that 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 others. Today's knowledge based on modern science is far advanced than the ancient knowledge of any civilization," it added.

The society said that 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 Somnath 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 society said.

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