

Mr. J.R.D. Tata's speech at the inauguration of the
Tata Institute of Fundamental Research on
15th January 1962

Mr. Prime Minister, Shri Sri Prakasa, Shri Chavan, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. As Chairman of the Council of this Institute, it is my privilege and deep pleasure to welcome you all here today and to thank you for responding to our invitation. I am particularly happy to welcome the Prime Minister, the Governor and the Chief Minister of our State and to thank them for their participation in this function. Also welcome Krishna Menon, Defence Minister.

2. I am also happy to welcome Mr. Krishna Menon to whose Ministry we are indebted for the release of this fine plot of land which used to be in their possession. Many of those present were on this very site, eight years and fourteen days ago, when you, Mr. Prime Minister, were good enough to lay the foundation stone of this set of buildings and laboratories which are to be inaugurated and, so to speak, consecrated this afternoon. We were grateful for your presence then; we are even more grateful and happy for it today, for in the intervening years you have given constantly renewed proof of your sustained interest and that of your Government in the work done here; an interest without which the Institute, could never have grown to its present stature of one of the world's leading centres of fundamental research.

3. Tall oaks do not from all little acorns grow, but if this acorn planted some seventeen years ago, is now such a tall and sturdy oak, it is mainly because of the encouragement and generous financial support it has received from the Government of India, thanks to you, Sir. For that

we are deeply grateful as we are also to the Government of Maharashtra and its predecessor, the Government of Bombay, who joined Tatas from the very beginning as co-sponsors of the Institute and have borne their share of the burden ever since.

4. While this Institute has benefited much from the generous support it has received and from the large funds placed at its disposal by the Central Government over the years, I venture to claim, on its behalf, that the services it has, rendered to Indian science and to the country as a whole, have been fully commensurate with the effort and funds lavished on it. In thanking, therefore, the Government of India, the Government of Maharashtra and the Tata Trusts for their sponsorship and support of this Institute, I hope I may, at the same time, congratulate them on the excellence of their judgment in making such a sound and rewarding national investment!

5. I shall leave it to Dr. Bhabha to describe or evaluate the scientific work done in this Institute. To most of us the world of pure science, and particularly that of higher mathematics and theoretical physics is a totally alien one far beyond our ken or comprehension, but although some may deplore it we do vaguely realise that our present civilisation is being increasingly moulded by the headlong advance of science and technology; that abstract scientific theories of today may well become practical realities of to-morrow and, that in our own country the vast programme of development on which we have embarked under the Prime Minister's leadership cannot succeed if we do not keep pace with the march of science and technology in other countries.

7. It is, in passing, of interest to note that, as far back as a century ago, at a time when most of today's scientific knowledge did not exist, Jamsetjee Tata, almost prophetically, saw clearly the need for Indians to become science and technology minded as a prerequisite to their achieving political freedom and economic progress. There has been, happily, a striking thread of continuity linking Jamsetjee's dream of yesterday to the reality of today for it was Jamsetjee who founded the Institute of Science at Bangalore. It was there that Dr. Bhabha undertook his first scientific work in India and it was to continue and expand this valuable work that the Tatas Trusts and the Government of Bombay jointly formed this Institute.

8. We are all aware of the immense progress India has made in science and technology since the days of Jamsetjee Tata, and particularly since Independence, thanks again to our Prime Minister's vision and understanding. Only a few amongst us, however, realise that in the specialised fields of mathematics and theoretical physics on which are being laid the foundations of the new atomic age in which we shall soon all live happily - unless we are all blown up before that - the major part of the work done in India has been centred in this Institute.

9. While the Institute has contributed substantially to the world's pool of knowledge in the fields of high energy physics and mathematics, in my view its greatest value to India has lain in the training, the opportunities, and for further study and experimentation in the inspiration it has provided to a host of promising and enthusiastic young scientists, most of whom are today playing a vital part in the development in India of the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

10. Before I make way for the more important speakers on the programme, I would be failing in my duty as well as depriving myself of much pleasure if I omitted to take this opportunity to say something about the part Dr. Homi Bhabha has played in the establishment and development not only of this Institute but of India's progress in the field of nuclear science and atomic energy.

11. Scientist, engineer, artist, builder and organiser extraordinary, Dr. Bhabha is perhaps still too young to be referred to as the father of Indian atomics, but whether he likes it or not, there is no doubt whatever that that is how he will be known in the future, for, to the best of my knowledge, every single programme of research and development in the field of nuclear science and atomic energy undertaken up to now in India, has in some way or another been his personal baby.

12. Like almost all great mathematicians and theoretical physicists, Dr. Bhabha achieved international recognition at an early age. If he had chosen to remain in foreign lands and continued to devote his creative genius to pure science, he might well have become known as one of the greatest scientific minds of the century. He chose instead to return to serve India and to apply his formidable mental powers and capacity for creative work to the task of giving India the specialised and highly rarefied disciplines and techniques necessary to harness nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Beginning with this Institute, which he founded in a very small way in 1945, with the help of the Tata Trusts and the then Government of Bombay, Dr. Bhabha, on behalf of the Government of India, went on to create and direct the Atomic Energy Establishment at Trombay and the national atomic programme as Secretary to Government in the Department of Atomic Energy and Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. To him

goes the major credit for the almost incredible progress that India has, in a very few years, made in the field of atomics and the stature she has acquired in the world. I do not wish to embarrass Dr. Bhabha any further, but it is right that, on this occasion, we should pay tribute to him and recognise the immense contribution he has made and still continues to make to India's scientific and industrial progress.

13. I feel I should, before I conclude, almost mention one other man who did much in his time for the development of Indian scientific resources in general and for this Institute in particular. I refer to the late Dr. Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar. Just as Dr. Bhabha has been primarily responsible for all developments in India in nuclear physics and atomic energy, Dr. Bhatnagar was the moving spirit in the establishment of the great chain of national laboratories set up by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research under the leadership of its Chairman, the Prime Minister. Dr. Bhatnagar, as Director of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and Secretary to Government in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Scientific Research, was a staunch supporter of the work of Dr. Bhabha in this Institute and we honour his memory for the part he played in our development.

14. May I welcome you all once again and thank you very much for your presence and encouragement?