

TATA INSTITUTE OF FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH

Silver Jubilee Celebration

SPEECH by

PROFESSOR S. CHANDRASEKHAR

on Saturday, April 10, 1971

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Your Excellency, Mrs Bhabha, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is right and proper that on this occasion when we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research we recognize that the values underlying the concept 'fundamental' are under question. For example, when I recently appeared as a member of a panel before a large gathering of students I was asked, "You come from a country in which poverty is a way of living for most. Under these circumstances, why should the Government of India spend money and resources for the building of observatories and of laboratories devoted to pure research?" This question cannot be evaded. And my answer was that one's contributions to the total human endeavour can be directed either towards the long range or towards the short range. In the short range there can be no doubt that the social needs come first and are paramount. But the pursuit of scholarship contributes to the long range aspirations of the human spirit. Man has always been curious about his environment and has sought to understand the universe around him. Otherwise how can we account for the fact that the tradition of astronomical observations and astronomical interpretations

have continued unbroken from antiquity to the present and has prevailed in all civilizations. It seems to me that quite apart from the fact that the pure science of today is a applied science of tomorrow, fundamental research, like all scholarly pursuits, fulfils a basic need of the human spirit. That the leaders of science, of commerce and of the Government of India recognize this basic need is gloriously manifested with the celebrations of today and I am proud and honoured to be a part of them. Thank you.

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