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Late B.P. Poddar
(1920-1981)
Founder
B.P. Poddar Group

VIKRAM SARABHAI-FATHER OF INDIAN SPACE PROGRAM



In today's world with the advent of technology space research has got tremendous boost. India is also taking the competition in her own stride to become one of the most advanced nations in space research. The *Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)*, established by Vikram Sarabhai, is the primary space agency of the Indian government. ISRO is amongst the six largest government space agencies in the world, along with NASA, RKA, ESA, CNSA and JAXA.

Modern space research in India is most visibly traced to the activities of scientist S. K. Mitra who conducted a series of experiments leading to the sounding of the ionosphere by application of ground based radio methods in Calcutta in 1920's. Later, Indian scientists like C.V. Raman and Meghnad Saha contributed to scientific principles applicable in space sciences. However, it was the period after 1945 which saw important developments being made in coordinated space research in India. Organized space research in India was spearheaded by Vikram Sarabhai.

The establishment of the ISRO was one of his greatest achievements. He successfully convinced the government of the importance of a space programme for a developing country like India after the Russian Sputnik launch. Dr. Sarabhai emphasized the importance of a space programme in his quote:

"There are some who question the relevance of space activities in a developing nation. To us, there is no ambiguity of purpose. We do not have the fantasy of competing with the economically advanced nations in the exploration of the moon or the planets or manned space-flight. But we are convinced that if we are to play a meaningful role nationally, and in the community of nations, we must be second to none in the application of advanced technologies to the real problems of man and society".

Vikram Ambalal Sarabhai was born on 12 August 1919 in the city of Ahmedabad, in the state of Gujarat in western India. His interests varied from science to sports to statistics. He set up Operations Research Group (ORG), the first market research organization in the country. Sarabhai established many institutes which are of international repute. Most notable among them are Nehru Foundation for Development, Ahmedabad, Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) which are considered world class for their management studies, the Physical Research Laboratory at Ahmedabad.

Sarabhai set up Ahmedabad Textiles Industrial Research Association (ATIRA), which helped the booming textiles business in Ahmedabad. He also set up Center for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT). Not stopping with all these he went ahead and set up Blind Men Association (BMA) which helps visually challenged people with necessary skills and support. And along with wife Mrinalini Sarabhai he founded Darpana Academy of Performing Arts. Other well known institutions established by him include Faster Breeder Test Reactor (FBTR) in Kalpakkam, Variable Energy Cyclotron Project in Calcutta, Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL) in Hyderabad, and Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL) in Jaduguda, Bihar. The great visionary Dr. Sarabhai passed away on 30 December 1971 at Halcyon Castle, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The family of BPPIMT takes the opportunity to pay its homage to this great son of India on his ninety third birth anniversary.

- Prof. Dr. Sutapa Mukherjee
Principal, BPPIMT

