

## NEWS &amp; VIEWS

## A Lesson of humility for young audience

Scientist, Nobel Prize winner and down to earth Indian, Venkataraman Ramakrishnan, demonstrated his greatness once again on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2009, at Chennai. He was addressing a packed auditorium of over 3,000 students at the University of Madras. Removing the vale of aura that the audience put on his Nobel Prize image, Dr. Ramakrishnan said “A Nobel Prize does not make a person great or a role model. You cannot go into science thinking of a Nobel Prize. You can only go into science because you are interested in it.”

He was blunt in his reply to the students’ query as to how they could emulate him as a role model.

“Last year, the lecture (of mine) was held in an auditorium with a capacity for just 300 people, and half the seats were empty. What has changed? I am still the same person doing the same science. Why are people so immersed when some academy in Sweden gives an award? a bemused Ramakrishnan asked the audience of the jam packed auditorium and told them that they should appreciate their subject for what it is. “Do not worry about getting a prestigious award. Award or no award, one must pursue his/her efforts...” he exhorted the students, reminding one of the advices Krishna gave to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita “Karmaneye Vaadhikarasthe” (Do your duty without worrying about the fruits of your work).

Even at his media interaction immediately after the Nobel award for chemistry was announced for him, he was clear

on this. He had said then that he was just an ordinary student who grew up like any other ordinary child and adolescent but concentrated deep on the subject because he liked it. Nobel Prize or any other prize was never in his mind when



Venkataraman Ramakrishnan

he was studying the subject. And there is no change in his attitude even today. Making this clear he told his young audience at Chennai “the ribosome, molecule that translates genetic information into proteins. does amazing chemistry, but I am not a chemist. I have just learnt enough to work on my problems.”

It was much more than a demonstration of humility. It was the power and strength of a person who understands himself from his own perception and from what his inner conscience tells him. And such people do not get carried away on praises, prizes, awards, position or power.

Nobel Prize or Global praise every one cannot get, but the qualities that can be attributed to Dr. Venkataraman Ramakrishnan can certainly be imbibed and emulated by young and old alike. And it will keep one’s mind clear and head high in front of any challenge. An easy way to experiment with truth or ethics in one’s own mind’s lab, whether the individual is below average, above average or super intellect.

A.V.

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