

## Choose the path in which you are good at: NIAS Director's advise to students



**Dr Binoy, Assistant Professor, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, interacting with school students during a workshop on "Student Network: A Platform for student – scientist partnership".**

*Image credit: National Institute of Advanced Studies*

"You must choose the path in which you are good at", advised Dr Baldev Raj, Director, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru. Citing the example of the great scientist Dr Homi Bhabha, Dr Baldev Raj mentioned that Bhabha's father wanted his son to become an engineer and look after the family-owned industry. However, Bhabha chose to become a scientist.

Dr Baldev Raj was speaking at a workshop on "Student Network: A Platform for student – scientist partnership", held at the National Institute of Advanced Studies. A good number of young students, teachers and young scientists participated in the workshop that was held on December 1, 2015.

The workshop was held as part of a bigger project aimed at "understanding the role of student networks in creating awareness about environment, water, sanitation and hygiene in rural and soioeconomically marginalised areas". The programme is funded by Eco WaSH Programme of the National Council for Science and Technology Communication, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India. The project aims to bring young students, teachers and scientists onto a common platform so that they can work together to find scientific and technological solutions to the socio-economic problems faced by the country.

Elaborating on how science touches our lives, Dr Baldev Raj said, "Science has provided good quality of life and reliable health care". While noting that, demographically India is a young country, he suggested that we need to think about ways to take care of people in different age groups. "We need to think about how we are going to take care of men and women in mid-careers, aged people, and transgenders". Speaking about the argumentative nature of

science, Dr Baldev Raj said, "Science has never been done by conformity. Science is about questioning". He went on to suggest students not to "agree too much with elders".

Prof V S Ramamurthy, Former Director, National Institute of Advanced Studies, and previously the Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India noted that "The school going kid is the most tech-savvy in the family". Speaking about how information technology has transformed learning, he said, "When I was a student, teacher was the only source of information on all subjects. Today, information comes from many other sources and teacher is an enabler". Picking up an example from Africa, he explained how temperature measurements made by the school students helped to create a weather map of Africa. Pitching for engaging school children in various research activities, he said, "Students, teachers, and scientists should work as a team".

Anuj Sinha, Chairman, Network for Indian Science Communicator Organisations, New Delhi spoke about the skills the students need to develop as citizen scientists. "Understanding cause and effects, predicting behaviours, and manipulating outcomes, are important skills in science", he said. Explaining the importance of documentation in science, he said, "As scientists, you must learn how to document your work. Whatever you work, whatever you observe, whatever you measure, you must be able to document them properly".

Dr Binoy, Assistant Professor, National Institute of Advanced Studies and Principle Investigator of the project gave a presentation on how the 'Student Network' helps students share ideas with fellow students and scientists, and find solutions to pressing issues our country is facing today.

The workshop ended with a question and answer session in which students asked questions to topics ranging from tree felling to garbage disposal to making biodegradable plastics.