

## **Dr. Saroj Ghose: Father of Science Museums in India**

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The scientific community mourns the loss of Dr Saroj Ghose, a pioneer in science communication and education. Dr. Saroj Ghose left an indelible mark on India's scientific landscape. Born on September 1, 1935, he dedicated his life to making science accessible to all.

Dr. Saroj Ghose completed his schooling from Narkeldanga High School with record distinction and took an unconventional career path by dedicating himself to science communication rather than traditional engineering roles. He began his journey at the Birla Industrial and Technological Museum (BITM) in 1958, laying the groundwork for a lifelong commitment to making science accessible for all. His academic pursuits took him to Harvard University to pursue an M.S. degree in 'Control Engineering' and later the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., where he pursued his doctoral work under the guidance of Dr. Bernard Finn, Curator of the Electricity Collections. After his return to India, in 1974, he submitted his thesis on 'The Introduction and Development of the Electric Telegraph in India' with Jadavpur University and earned a PhD degree in Engineering.

Immersed in the innovative educational approaches he observed abroad—particularly at San Francisco's Exploratorium—Dr. Ghose recognized the potential of interactive learning. This inspired him to

pioneer the concept of hands-on science education, significantly influencing the way scientific knowledge is disseminated in the country.

A visionary from the outset, he believed in taking science to the masses, and this belief led to the creation of Mobile Science Exhibition (MSE) buses—an innovation that brought museum experiences directly to communities. Recognized by UNESCO and the Limca Book of Records, this initiative remains the largest and longest-running non-formal science education program in India.

In 1978, when the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM) became autonomous, Dr. Ghose's leadership guided the institution through its foundational years. One of his pioneering contributions was transforming the Mumbai Science Centre site—a former dumping ground—into a vibrant space that introduced the concept of an open-air science park, a global first. As Director General of NCSM from 1986 to 1997, he introduced a tiered model for science centres: national, regional, and district-level institutions. This approach led to the establishment of 18 centres across the country, ensuring wider outreach and accessibility.

Among Dr. Ghose's most notable achievements is the creation of Science City in Kolkata, one of India's most visited and financially self-sustaining science museums. His passion for innovation also led to the establishment of the Central Research and Training Laboratory, which strengthened NCSM's research foundation.

After retirement from NCSM in 1997, Dr Ghose kept himself busy with the development of Kolkata Panorama for Kolkata Museum Society, Parliament Museum, Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum etc. He was also the Museum Advisor to the President of India. He also played a key role in the development of Gujarat Science City, Ahmedabad.

Dr. Saroj Ghose had held several important positions in the Paris based International Council of Museums (ICOM) between 1974 and 1998 and twice became its President (1992-95 and 1995-98). He was also the President, Second Science Centre World Congress, 1999.

For his lifelong contributions, he was awarded 'Indira Gandhi Prize' from the Indian National Science Academy as well as 'Hari Om Trust Award' from University Grants Commission for Popularization of Science in 1988. In 2001, NCSTC, Govt. of India, awarded him 'National Award' for the best effort in science popularization amongst children. He was conferred with 'Padma Shri' (1989) and 'Padma Bhushan' (2007) by the Government of India. In 1996, he received 'Primo Rovis International Prize' from the Trieste International Foundation, 'ASTC Fellow' [Association of Science and Technology Centres, USA] in 1997.

Heartfelt tribute to his legacy and we remain committed to furthering his mission of democratizing science for all.