

The science of possibility

Dr Rashmi Sharma Expounds On How The Future Begins With Purpose

INTERVIEW



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Science is most powerful when it inspires curiosity beyond laboratories. Leading this vision is Dr Rashmi Sharma, head, National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC) and the Science Heritage Research Initiative (SHRI), Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India. She shares her journey and thoughts on innovation, and her vision for young India.

Finding her calling

From an early age, I was drawn to biology and aspired to become a doctor. Although I could not pursue medicine, my passion for life sciences led me to biochemistry. One of my greatest motivations is Soumya Swaminathan, whose achievements have paved the way for women in science. I am also inspired by pioneers like Janaki Ammal and many other women scientists. Their journeys reflect challenges women have faced in science, while their perseverance continues to urge future generations.

Nurturing scientific temper

The biggest challenge to scientific temper is our highly structured education system. Innovation thrives on curiosity and out-of-the-box thinking, but class-



Dr Rashmi Sharma with GT reporters

rooms can sometimes limit both. Encouraging students to explore, experiment, and learn-by-doing fosters innovation, while research laboratories help turn ideas into reality. However, neither can succeed without strong policy support. Students, researchers, R&D institutions, and policy-makers all play equally vital roles in advancing science.

Bringing research to youngsters

I realised that there is often a gap between research and the public. To bridge this gap, I have designed a special programme for school students. Under the Department of Science and Technology, we support numerous institutes, many of which are engaged in cutting-edge research. Through this initiative, students can undergo residential training with researchers and actively participate in research projects. Research and innovation are the backbone of a nation's development, so we identify talent early and nurture it.

Celebrating heritage

India possesses a vast reservoir of traditional knowledge, but for a long time we did not fully appreciate its scientific value. Today, we are rediscovering and documenting this heritage through science-based approaches. Our food traditions, for example, are rich in nutrients such as iron, zinc, and other micronutrients. Similarly, practices like yoga and meditation have been part of our culture for centuries and are now increasingly recognised for their benefits to one's physical and mental well-being. Scientific documentation helps us understand and preserve these valuable traditions.

Looking towards tomorrow

Science is advancing at an incredible pace with transition from the IT revolution to the age of Artificial Intelligence. Perhaps quantum technologies will define the next era. Concepts such as teleportation, currently associated with science fiction, may one day become possible. We are also entering an age of exploration, with the possibility of human settlements on the Moon and perhaps even other planets in the future. At the same time, strong policies and ethical frameworks are absolutely necessary to ensure that scientific inventions contribute to progress rather than destruction.

Message for Amitians

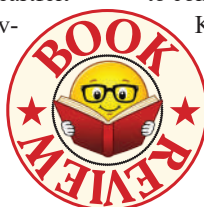
My message is simple: continue working hard and make our nation proud.

Confessions & curiosities

Book: Before Your Memory Fades | **Author:** Toshikazu Kawaguchi
Published in: 2022 (English edition) | **Genre:** Fantasy, Magical realism

Synopsis: The third novel in the bestselling 'Before the Coffee Gets Cold' series once again invites readers to heartfelt stories of people who wish to travel through time. The story moves from Tokyo's Café Funiculi Funicula to Café Donna Donna in Hakodate and follows customers who wish to revisit the past in search of closure, forgiveness, or answers. The time travellers must remain seated in a single chair, can only meet people who have visited the café before, and must return before their coffee gets cold. Through four hopeful characters – a daughter who resents her late parents,

a comedian longing for the woman he loves, a grieving sister, and a man hoping to confess his feelings to an old friend, Kawaguchi gently explores love, loss, regret, and the importance of cherishing the present. **Why is it worth reading:** This book feels like a warm cup of coffee on a rainy day. It's quiet, comforting storytelling and relatable characters make each tale deeply moving, despite their magical premise. Kawaguchi's simple yet heartfelt writing reminds readers that while the past cannot be changed, our understanding of it can. Each story offers a fresh perspective



Iconic quote:
"Things that you put off saying until tomorrow are sometimes never said."

on grief, relationships, and second chances, leaving readers with plenty to reflect on long after the final page. Before Your Memory Fades is a touching novel that will leave you eager to return to the café for more of its earnest tales.



Rating: ★★★★★
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