

Abdus Salam, Nobel Laureate from Pakistan and one of the outstanding figures in modern particle physics, died on 21st Nov. after a long bout with Parkinson's disease.

Among the several achievements of a distinguished scientific career, Salam will probably be remembered best for his contributions to the theory of the unification of weak nuclear forces and electromagnetism. This theory, for which Salam was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics in 1979 together with Steven Weinberg and Sheldon Glashow, is an integral part of the modern understanding of the fundamental forces of nature. Abdus Salam was also one of the leading proponents of the idea of the grand unification of all known fundamental forces including gravity, an idea that is today one of the fundamental goals of the discipline of high-energy physics. He was, together with Indian physicist Jogesh Pati, one of the first to suggest the possibility of the decay of the proton, till then believed to be an entirely stable particle. With his collaborator John Strathdee, Abdus Salam also made fundamental contributions to the idea of a new symmetry principle among the fundamental particles, known as supersymmetry. The discovery of evidence for this symmetry is one of the foremost items on the agenda of experimental high-energy physics today.

Born in the town of Jhang in the Punjab, now in Pakistan, in 1926, and educated in Lahore and then at Cambridge, where he completed his doctoral degree, Abdus Salam was quickly acknowledged as a rising star and advanced rapidly to becoming one of the leaders in his discipline. After three years of teaching in Lahore, Abdus Salam moved back to the United Kingdom, first to Cambridge as lecturer and then to Imperial College of the London University as professor.

His stint in Pakistan having convinced him of the difficulties of doing science in the newly-independent countries, Abdus Salam became in time one of the leading advocates in international forums of the importance of developing science in the Third World, a cause that occupied him even more after the Nobel Prize.

In 1964, Abdus Salam founded with the support of the International Atomic Agency the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, Italy. With a mandate to encourage

and support scientists working in the Third World and provide them an opportunity to interact with the best scientists from advanced nations, Abdus Salam's leadership ensured that this Centre became firmly established as one of the major centres of theoretical physics in the world. Abdus Salam's firm internationalism made the ICTP, in the years of the Cold War, an important common meeting point for scientists from both East and West. Apart from seeking to spread the ICTP model, a task in which he was partially successful, another of Abdus Salam's unique initiatives in later years was the founding of a special programme for developing mathematics and physics in Africa.

Despite his having been scientific advisor to the President of Pakistan, Abdus Salam's relationship with the government of his homeland was marked by some strain, especially during the Zia regime. Though a devout Muslim, his being a member of the Ahmediya sect made him a target of the fundamentalists in Pakistan. Abdus Salam himself sharply differentiated between his scientific work and his religious beliefs and spoke out strongly against attempts at promoting any "Islamic" science in Pakistan.

Abdus Salam retained strong links with the Indian scientific community and was a visitor to scientific meetings and conferences in India on several occasions. Abdus Salam was an open admirer of the relative advance of science in India and its scientific leadership and sought a special contribution from Indian scientists in the activities of the ICTP.

Increasingly incapacitated by his advancing illness, Abdus Salam ceased to be active as scientist and administrator in 1994.

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