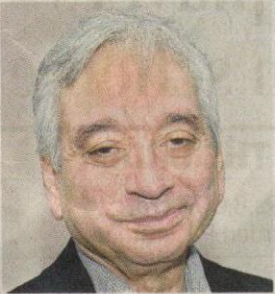


PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY KAMALJIT BAWA AND IISc. PHYSICIST AJAY SOOD WILL JOIN A SELECT GROUP OF SCIENTISTS FROM INDIA TO BE ELECTED AS FELLOWS

# THE ROYAL SOCIETY WELCOMES TWO BENGALUREANS



Mohit M. Rao  
BENGALURU

At a glittering ceremony in London on Saturday, the names of two researchers based in Bengaluru will be entered in a historic charter book containing the who's who of the scientific world.

Professor of Biology Kamaljit Bawa, who founded the independent research organisation Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) and physicist from IISc. Ajay Sood will join a select group of scientists from the country to be inducted as a fellow by The Royal Society.

Even amidst the elation, the two scientists told *The Hindu* via email that the low proportion of Indian scientists – that is, those whose research have come out of India – elected as fellows re-

mains a matter of concern.

That is not to discount the influence of Indian scientists. There are three others of Indian origin in the list of 52 fellows chosen this year.

“They (three Indian-origin scientists) constitute a very large proportion of the relatively small number of Indian scientists abroad. (However,) the reverse is also true, for we (Profs Sood and Bawa) represent a very small proportion of a very large number of Indian scientists...Thus, there is something wrong with Indian science despite the extraordinary success of its scientists,” says Prof. Bawa, who is perhaps the first Indian to be elected based on his work in conservation science. However, he was quick to point out that despite his work in environmental advocacy in Bengaluru, much of his research was conducted as a faculty of University of Mas-

sachusetts, USA. Among the reasons, he says, are “poor and shrinking” resources for science and the “poor” state of higher education.

Similarly, Prof. Sood – who remains the only scientist whose work has been based entirely in laboratories in India – says: “Unfortunately, we have very few scientists working in India who get elected...I really wish that we should have more persons working in India getting elected to The Royal Society. That will be the true influence of Indian science on the international scene.”

Following the announcement, Prof. Sood says numerous younger colleagues and students approached him saying it was “inspirational”. Prof. Bawa said that the recognition of Indian conservation science on a global stage will give the “emerging” field a boost in the country.

Besides having famous scientists, the Royal Society has been deeply involved in science-policy interface, and public dissemination of science. I certainly have a lot to learn in these areas and am looking forward to my association with the Society

**KAMALJIT BAWA,**  
founder of ATREE



It is indeed gratifying...More so because the work is experimental and we have been able to do it fully based in India

**AJAY K. SOOD,**  
Professor, Department of Physics, IISc.

## PROUD DAY FOR NATIONAL CENTRE FOR BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Among the Indian and Indian-origin scientists inducted as fellows and foreign members, two have been intimately involved with research in Bengaluru-based National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS).

Upinder Bhalla, Dean, NCBS, said, “We’re delighted that the fine work of our overseas colleagues John Kuriyan (US-based molecular biologist inducted as

foreign member) and Kamaljit Bawa have been recognised...In addition to being outstanding scientists, they have made major institutional contributions (and) have been closely involved with the development of NCBS programmes.”

While Mr. Kuriyan is on the management board of NCBS, Mr. Bawa is involved in the wildlife and conservation programme there.

Anurag Kumar, Director, Indian Institute of Science – which has seen its researchers C.N. Rao and Roddam Narasimha, among others, previously inducted in the society – said, “The fellowship is recognition of his (Ajay Sood’s) research that has spanned several decades. While he may have conducted his research entirely in IISc, The Royal Society recognises him on his individual research.”