Twitter Thread by Sadaa Shree

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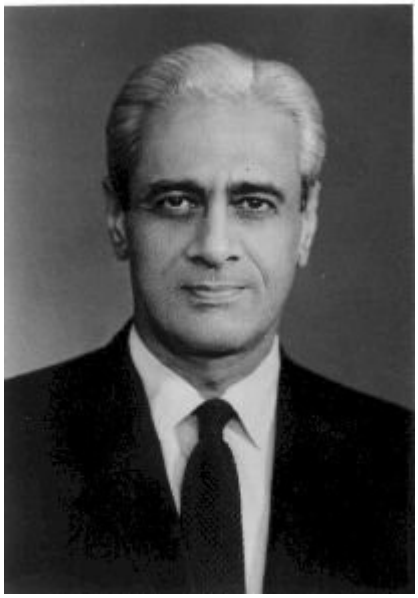
@SadaaShree

Satish Dhawan, the 3rd chairman of ISRO after whom the Sriharikota space center is named, and the man who shaped the organization and it's process to what it is today.
Thread on his Jayanti today.



While Vikram Sarabhai, is well known as the founder of ISRO, it was Satish Dhawan who actually built on that foundation, put down the processes and structure that would define it and was a major reason for it's success.

The father of experimental fluid dynamics research in India, one of the eminent researchers in the field of turbulence, was born on September 25, 1920 in Srinagar, and graduated from Lahore University with a rather unusual combination-BA (Maths), BE(Mech) and ME(Engg Litt).

When India became independent in 1947, Satish Dhawan, let for US to do his higher studies where he graduated in MS(Aerospace Engineering) from University of Minnesota and a Masters in Aeronautical Engineering from Cal-Tech and a double PhD in maths and aerospace engineering.

It was during his time, that the department emerged as center of experimental fluid dynamic research in India. In fact it was a pilot project conducted by him that resulted in setting up the world class wind tunnels for aerodynamic testing at the National Aerospace Lab(NAL).

In 1962, he became the youngest ever director of IISc, and would also be it's longest serving one too and one of it's most distinguished. After 9 long years, he went on to a sabatical to his alma mater, Cal Tech, and it was around this time, that Vikram Sarabhai passed away.

It was then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who requested him to take charge of ISRO, which was still in it's infancy then. Sarabhai had earlier been in touch with Dhawan, for advice in setting up a rocket motor facility in India.

Dhawan agreed to take over ISRO, on two conditions, one that it's HQ would be at Bangalore, and another that he be allowed to continue with IISc(his first love as he called it). Indira Gandhi agreed to both, and he soon took charge after his sabatical at Cal Tech was over.

ISRO was formally born on May 1972, when the space program was placed under a separate Dept of Space, till then it was under Dept of Atomic Energy. Dhawan took over as both Chairman of ISRO, and Secretary of Dept of Space, beginning a long and succesful stint.

Basically India's space program is handled by 3 institutions, Dept of Space responsible for the ideas, Space Comission that handles the nitty gritties of funding, logistics and ISRO responsible for the actual delivery. It was Dhawan who worked out the integration here.

More than anything, he introduced a professional management structure at ISRO. Dhawan set up small teams of experts presided over by a Project Director, which encouraged innovation, and then the efforts of alll these teams were coordinated towards a common goal.

He bought in specialists from outside, and by giving the Project Director a free hand, Dhawan ensured red tapism, the bane of many Indian PSUs, was drastically curtailed. He also encouraged indigenous suppliers to ISRO, most of the firms manufacturing the equipment are Indian.

And he also handpicked the best talent available for the space program. APJ Abdul Kalam was asked to lead the SLV-3 project, Roddam Narasimha to head the research at NAL and UR Rao in charge of the Aryabhatta mission.

It was not just in picking the talent, it was the way he handled it too. He encouraged youngsters, and if the project was a success, he gave them full credit, while in case of a failure, he took the responsbility on himself. It was one of the finest examples of leadership.

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Professor Dhawan’s management philosophy was that when success comes in after hard work, the leader should give the credit of the success to the team members. When failure comes, the leader should absorb the failures and protect the team members- APJ Abdul Kalam

If ISRO, is one of the success stories we can be genuinely proud of, credit goes to Satish Dhawan, who put in a professional management structure in place, picked the best of talent, gave complete backing and independence to the teams, pioneered innovation.

India’s first satellite Aryabhatta, development of communication satellites like INSAT and remote sensing systems like IRS are all due to Satish Dhawan’s efforts. He made Vikram Sarabhai’s dream of effectively utilizing space technology towards India’s needs come true.

Even after retirement Satish Dhawan, took a keen interest in policy matters related to science and technology. He was against militarization of space. The space center at Sriharikota has been named after him, a fitting tribute to a man who literally built ISRO.

He passed away on January 3, 2002, India lost one of it's finest scientists. And yet his legacy lives on in the space center at Sriharikota. And everytime you hear of an ISRO success story, we shall always remember the man who made it possible. #SatishDhawan

Today as we celebrate #SatishDhawan Jayanti, take time to pay a tribute to the sterling contribution of the man who made ISRO to what it is today. A great scientist, leader and a gem of a human being. #Naman #SatishDhawanCentenary

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