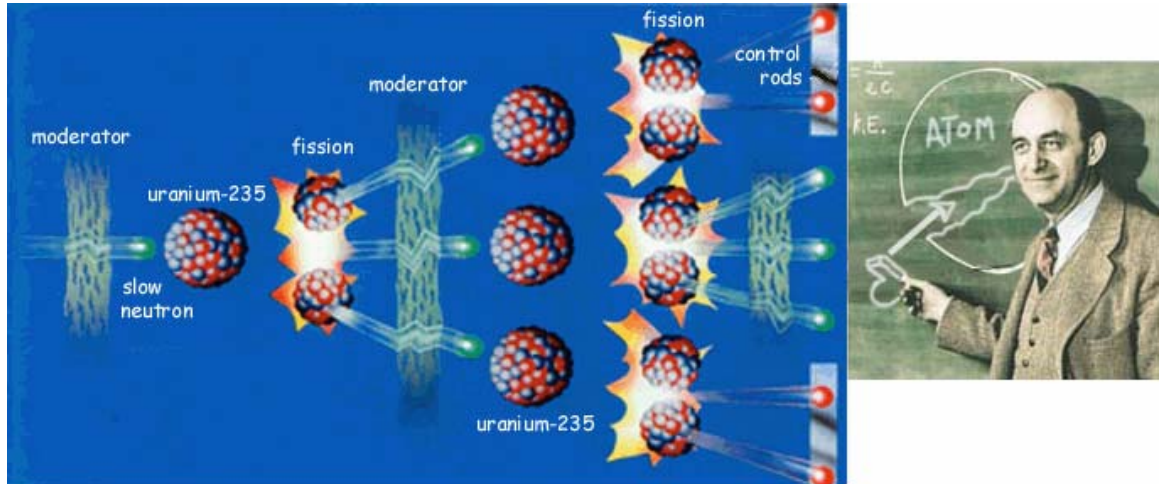


Who Discovered Nuclear Fission ?



Enrico Fermi was a great Italian-American theoretical physicist: He was one of the chief architects of the nuclear physics. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics In 1938 for his outstanding discovery of neutron-induced nuclear reactions.

Fermi was born in Rome on 29th, September 1901. He was a brilliant student and obtained his doctorate in Physics from the University of Pisa at the age of 21. His research was on X-rays.

In 1926 Fermi became a full time Professor of theoretical physics at the University of Rome. In 1929, he was elected a member of the Italian Academy. In 1934 he succeeded in making a fundamental discovery in the field of physics. This was the result of 10 years of arduous research. He discovered that when elements are bombarded with slow neutrons, the material becomes radioactive and begins to emit radiation. In this process the element changes into a different material. For example, iron, when made artificially radioactive by neutron bombardment, turned into manganese. In this way Fermi found about 80 new artificial nuclei.

About this time, Italy, under Mussolini, was in the grip of a Fascist government. This affected Fermi directly because his wife was a Jew. So he wanted to leave Italy. Fortunately at this time (in 1938) he was named for Nobel Prize. He was given permission to go to Sweden to receive the award. Fermi left Italy with his family never to return. After receiving the award, he went to U.S. and became a citizen of United States. Subsequently he became Professor for Nuclear Studies at Columbia University.

Who Discovered Nuclear Fission ?

In 1942, during World War II, Fermi built the first atomic reactor in an empty Squash court in Chicago. Here he set off the first man-made nuclear chain reaction. Later he helped to develop the atom bomb.

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