



Raja Ramanna (1925-2004)

Raja Ramanna was born at Tumkur on 28th June 1925, his father B. Ramanna, being a district magistrate of that place. Later, the family moved to Mysore and Raja Ramanna had his early education at the Good Shepherd Convent and at the Bishop Cottons School in Bangalore. His college education was at St. Joseph's College, Bangalore and later at the Madras Christian College, Tambaram, where he obtained his BSc (Hons.) degree in Physics. Being a brilliant student he found no difficulty in getting selected as a Tata Scholar for higher education in London. He obtained Ph.D. degree at Kings College, London, and soon after his return to India in 1949 joined the newly started Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay as a research student.

His interest in Nuclear Physics and particularly Reactor physics and design, soon directed his attention to Atomic Research and he became the head of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre at Trombay, Bombay. After his term was over, he took up the office of the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. For some time he was the Minister of State for Defence; and, till recently, member of the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian

Parliament. Finally, he decided to settle down in Bangalore and was able to secure a munificent gift from J.R.D. Tata to build a new Institute, the first of its kind in Bangalore. The National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) near the Indian Institute of Science complex. Ramanna continued to be associated with the Institute as Director-Emeritus till the end. He also remained Chairman of the Governing Council, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

He visited IITK several times in the 1980s and always made a point to have an informal discussion with the students and faculty associated with the nuclear engineering programme. His last visit was in 1997 for the retirement function of Professor K Sriram, the founder-head of nuclear engineering (see photograph).

Ramanna was a connoisseur of music and an excellent player on the piano. He gained proficiency in this art and had given several concerts. Apart from his love for science and music he was a philosopher with a



deep love for the country and its rich culture. On a visit to his son in Bombay, he complained of some uneasiness, was admitted to the hospital, and within two days, the stalwart of India's nuclear programme, who was associated with the country's first nuclear test in 1974, died in Mumbai of intestine problem. He was 79 and is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son. Without any fanfare, the body was cremated with only the nearest family members and H.N. Sethna, P.K. Iyengar, S.K. Jain, S.C. Hiremath and B. Bhattacharya, his former colleagues in the Bhabha Atomic Research Center being the chief mourners.

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