

## BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE ON Smt. LOKASUNDARI LADY RAMAN

By

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We are grieved to hear of the passing away of Smt. Lokasundari Lady Raman on 22nd May 1980 at her residence 'Panchavati' in Bangalore. She was 86 years old. She was the devoted "Dharma Patni" of Professor Raman from the day when she was chosen by him as his life-mate.

Professor Raman was 19 years old when he passed the Indian Audit and Accounts Service Examination in 1907 and joined the Calcutta Office as Assistant Accountant General. Smt. Lokasundari joined him soon after. His service in the Department continued till 1914. By that time, Prof. Raman, by the researches of himself and of many scientist colleagues who worked under his guidance in Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar's Indian Association for the cultivation of Science, had built up a flourishing school of Physics in Calcutta so much so Sir Ashutosh Mukherji, the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, invited him to take up the newly founded Palit Professorship of Physics. Prof. Raman readily agreed to resign his service appointment and take up the professorship so that he could devote his whole time to Research work in the Indian Association and teaching in the University. This meant whole time work for Prof. Raman from early morning till late in the evening.

Right from the time she began her married life in Calcutta at the age of 15 years, Smt. Lokasundari Raman dedicated herself to social work under the inspiration of great social reformers and educationists such as Ashutosh Mukherji, Rabindranath Tagore, Dr. B. C. Roy, Mahatma Gandhi and other eminent personalities. With her great human qualities and innate flair, she was able to befriend and help women and children in distress. She did yeoman service during the war days, in housing and feeding and giving protection to women and children who had fled in Burma during the First World war.

Smt. Lokasundari, besides being greatly interested in music and the fine arts, so greatly admired the scientific activities of her husband

that she did not mind any personal inconveniences. Her hospitality and kindness are well known to the many scientists and research scholars who have worked with her husband.

I first met Lady Raman in January 1922. In the summer of 1921 Prof. Raman went to England to attend the Congress of Universities of the British Empire at Oxford, where he made contacts with many leading scientists. On his return voyage across the Mediterranean, he was fascinated by the deep blue colour of the deep sea and making observations with some simple equipment, came to the conclusion that the generally accepted explanation that the colour of the sea was due to reflected skylight, was not correct.

On his return to India in December 1921, he started laboratory experiments, confirmed his ideas, and sent out a paper on "The Molecular Scattering of Light and the Colour of the Sea". I had joined Prof. Raman as a research scholar in December 1921, and in January 1922, I accompanied him to Madras where he gave a few lectures with demonstrations on his recent researches.

Lady Raman joined Prof. Raman at Madras and we all travelled together from Madras to Calcutta by train. I had the privilege of staying with them, whenever I was in Calcutta. Even after I joined the University of Rangoon as a Lecturer in Physics in 1922 I used to come to Calcutta during vacations and spend a good part of the time with them. This continued till 1925, when I took up an appointment in the Indian Meteorological Department. The discovery of the Raman Effect took place on 28th February 1928.

Lady Raman accompanied Prof. Raman when he went to Europe in 1930 to attend a scientific conference in U.K., the award of the Hughes Medal by the Royal Society, and the Nobel Prize giving ceremony in Stockholm. I give below a few extracts from the article which Lady Raman wrote in the "Raman Number" of the Calcutta Municipal Gazette in 1931 shortly after their return from Stockholm. "..... Our stay in



Stockholm extended for a week from the 9th to 16th December 1930. We arrived by train at Stockholm, the capital city of Sweden, at 8 o'clock in the morning of the 9th December. The platform was crowded with people waiting to receive the guests.....not being white-skinned, we could not mix with the natives of the country without being recognised, moreover our multi-coloured Indian dress was making us conspicuous to every eye....it was very difficult to get rid of the newspaper men. They must hear about Indian politics; my husband talked about educational matters but what was I to talk about? I could only speak on the habits, customs and beliefs of our country. It certainly interested them."

Describing the Noble Prize Award Ceremony Lady Raman wrote :

"The award of the Noble Prize took place on the 10th between 4 and 7 p.m. If I shut my eyes, I can still see as in a dream, the great Concert Hall of Stockholm, decorated with flowers and flags, filled with more than 4,000 people, the King and Queen of Sweden and the Royal family occupying the first seats. The Nobel Laureates then entered the Hall, each accompanied by a Professor in his own subject and followed by such Nobel Laureates of previous years as were present in Stockholm and the members of the Academy. As the procession entered, the whole audience stood up and remained standing until the Laureates took their seats amidst a fanfare of trumpets.....Dr. Pleijel, Professor of Electro-Techniques in the University of Stockholm, then rose and spoke on my husband's investigations on the scattering of light and the new effect that had been discovered by him, and addressing him said : 'Sir Venkata Raman, The Royal Academy of Sciences has awarded you the Nobel Prize in Physics for your eminent researches on the diffraction of light and for your discovery of the effect that bears your name. The Raman Effect has opened new routes to our knowledge of the structure of matter and has already given most important results. I now ask you to receive the prize from the hands of His Majesty'.

"The whole ceremony took about 3 hours and was followed by a Royal banquet. The Nobel Laureates sat at the Royal Table. The dinner was of the most lavish scale. Wine flowed freely. A few vegetarian dishes had

been considerately provided for us. When it came to the drinking of health, we had our cups filled with water. In replying to the toast, Sir Raman spoke of the glories of ancient India. He spoke of the great renunciation of Buddha, the Royal ascetic and world teacher and of his message of non-violence and love which embraced all living creation. It was nearly twelve when the party broke up."

On Sir C. V. Raman moving to Bangalore, Lady Raman took keen interest in various social activities. She founded the Seva Sadan in the year 1935. She was nominated as the President of the Karnataka State Council for Child Welfare by the Government of Karnataka in the year 1955. She rendered valuable services as the President of the State Council from 1955 to 1977 after which she was serving the Council as a Life-patron. She had also been associated with the Red Cross and Bharath Scouts and Guides.

The Indian Academy of Sciences, of which Professor Raman was the Founder-President used to hold Annual General Meetings at different University centres in India, and symposia and seminars of general interest were organised. Lady Raman used to accompany Prof. Raman for these Annual Assemblies.

Lady Raman was associated with several institutions for women and children in Karnataka and had taken initiative in their establishment and continued maintenance. At the Vani Vilas Hospital, Bangalore, she was mainly responsible for starting 'creches' and the trained Nurses' Association. She was associated with a number of institutions working for the welfare of less fortunate women and children, like Seva Ashram, Red Cross State Council, etc. One outstanding institution which gives a glimpse of her initiative drive and sustained interest is the Seva Sadan at Bangalore of which she was the Founder-President from 1935. The Institution takes care of orphaned and neglected poor children, provides free lodging, boarding and education and helps them to get employment. The Institution is a tribute to Lady Raman's disposition towards the poor and the helpless, a rare quality among the well-to-do!

Lady Raman leaves behind two sons Shri V. Chandrasekhar and Shri V. Radhakrishnan but as many will testify, she was a mother to a much larger community of people than just her own children.