Journey Into Light

Life and Science of C.V. Raman
Why is the sky blue?  
Raman explains to children

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The book is a biography of Raman dealing with his colourful life as well as his scientific work. Commissioned jointly by the Indian National Science Academy and the Indian Academy of Sciences in connection with Raman's birth centenary, the book will be formally released during the Centenary Celebrations in November 1988.

The name of Raman is familiar to the world of science not only through the effect which bears his name, but also owing to the names of derivatives such as stimulated Raman scattering and the Raman laser. But little else is generally known about the man himself other than that he won the Nobel Prize and that he was always to be seen wearing a turban!

Raman was born when the Raj was at its peak. However, India was in a suppressed and subdued
state, with opportunities for the pursuit of science practically non-existent. Thus Raman had to settle for an administrative career, although he displayed an unusual talent for physics even while in college. Arriving in Calcutta in 1907 to serve as the Assistant Accountant-General, Raman chanced to discover the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, founded some thirty years earlier on the model of the Royal Institution in London. But the Association was far from active. Raman promptly became a life member and, working in his spare time, built up a reputation both for himself and for the Association, conducting research mainly on vibration and acoustics.

In 1917 Raman gave up the lucrative Government job to become the Palit Professor of Physics and soon, with contributions from Saha and Bose, made Calcutta a place renowned for physics. It was during this period that Raman's interest shifted to optics, an interest that became life-long. The climax came in 1928 with the discovery of the Raman effect but in its wake also came jealousy and discord.

In 1933 Raman moved to Bangalore to assume the Directorship of the Indian Institute of Science, the first Indian to do so. Seized with an ambition to transform it into a world-renowned centre of excellence, he initiated several reforms, all of which boomeranged. Forced to resign the Directorship, he remained in the Institute as a Professor and, owing to shortage of resources, pursued the study of the optics of heterogeneous media although his heart was in nuclear physics.

In 1948 Raman retired to found his own institute. Active in research till the end, he studied mainly crystal optics, the colour of flowers and the physiology of vision. Fiercely cherishing his independence, he rejected all Government support as well as positions of authority. A sharp critic of many Government policies, he was much misunderstood and often maligned. Only now are his roles as a conscience-keeper for science and in the building up of the base of Indian science becoming evident.
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payable to the Indian Academy of Sciences,
The author, who is currently with the Defence Research and Development Organization, was earlier in the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Bombay, and in the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, Kalpakkam. A condensed matter physicist, he has worked in some of the areas pursued by Raman. He is a Fellow of the Indian National Science Academy as well as of the Indian Academy of Sciences, and is currently the President of the Indian Physics Association. He was Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow from 1984 to 1986 and was awarded the Sir C.V.Raman Prize by the UGC in 1979.