

# An Evening with Raman at the Gymkhana

*CV Raman was the Director of IISc from 1933 to 1937. It was in this period, in November 1935, that Kenneth Aston arrived as the professor and head of the Department of Electrical Technology. Uma Parameswaran, in her biography of Raman, writes that Aston was not Raman's choice for the post and became "one of Raman's bitterest foes".*

*The following is an account, from the IISc archives and by an unknown author, of an eventful Gymkhana meeting in 1936 that featured Raman, Aston, K Sreenivasan (Assistant Professor of Electrical Communication Engineering) and disgruntled students who took matters into their own hands.*

A business half-yearly meeting of the Gymkhana was held in 1936, to elect office bearers, etc, for the ensuing half-year. There was a fairly large gathering of the members of the Gymkhana, consisting mainly of students of the Institute. Among the staff members other than the Director, Prof K Aston and Mr K Sreenivasan were present. They were sitting in the middle of the hall along with Prof Aston's research students like Mr Annaswamy Iyengar, BN Narayana Iyengar, etc.



CV Raman (Courtesy: RRI Digital Repository)

The Director who is the present President of the Gymkhana arrived just before the time of commencement of the meeting. He saw on the verandah Mr Chakradeo, a student of the Institute, who had some days previously been suspended by order of Council [of IISc]. The Director went to Mr Chakradeo and privately told him not to come to the Gymkhana and also not to attend the meeting and cause trouble. Mr Chakradeo said he was eligible to attend the meeting and if he should not be present at the meeting, he should be given an order to that effect by the Director in writing. The Director called the General Secretary and was writing the required order.

Meanwhile, Mr Narayandas (II year ET [Electrical Technology]) who was sitting inside the hall went out and talked to Mr Chakradeo. Immediately, Mr Chakradeo went and sat inside the hall, apparently determined to attend the meeting. The Director sent word through the General Secretary to Mr Chakradeo that the required letter was ready. But, Mr Chakradeo replied that he was going to attend the meeting ignoring the Director's advice. The Director then came into the Hall and occupied the Chair. Most of the members had already from the morning been expecting some trouble, because there was a rumour that Chakradeo backed up by some of his friends and some members of the staff was thinking of attending the evening Gymkhana meeting and creating trouble. Hence, everyone present was expecting with excitement some trouble or disturbance.

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Mr Oke, General Secretary, before proceeding with the business of the meeting, raised a point of order and said that Mr Chakradeo, who had been suspended from the Institute by order of Council, was present at the meeting. He wanted a ruling from the Chair whether Mr Chakradeo could be present at the meeting and participate in discussing the business of the Gymkhana. The Chairman rose up and said that he was present there in two capacities, namely, as Director of the Institute and as President of the Gymkhana. He said he had given some thought to this problem as he had been informed earlier in the day that Mr Chakradeo was thinking of attending the meeting. He said that as Mr Chakradeo had been suspended from the Institute by order of Council, he was convinced that Mr Chakradeo was not eligible to take part in the Gymkhana activities, and hence, he asked Mr Chakradeo to leave the meeting.

Mr Patwardhan (I year ET) (recent convert from Physics to ET) immediately rose up and questioned the ruling of the Chair. Immediately, he was followed by Mr K Sreenivasan, who rose up and questioned the ruling of the Chair and said that the matter should be discussed before Mr Chakradeo should be asked to leave the hall. At once, there were shouts of "Sit down" and "Do not question the ruling of the Chair".

Immediately, Mr Sreenivasan turned round and said to the students, "Gentlemen, I am not talking to you. I am addressing the Chair." He was applauded heartily by the ET research students and some of the regular course ET students who were sitting by him. Mr K Sreenivasan then turned to the Chair and spoke further. The President asked him not to question the ruling of the Chair and asked him to sit down.

At once, Prof K Aston rose up and shouted (at the President) "I want to know whether such iron despotism has ever been known in any part of the world."

Mr K Sreenivasan said that no one with self-respect could remain a member of the Gymkhana and that he would be the first one to leave the Gymkhana in that case. Prof Aston at once followed and slapping his hand on his chest, said "I too". Meanwhile, the behaviour of Mr Sreenivasan and Prof Aston was very much applauded by their followers (Mr Chakradeo and his friends), and disorderly scenes were witnessed. Mr Narayandas (II year ET) rose up and asked Sir CV Raman whether he could legally establish his ruling. The President asked him to sit down and maintain order. At once Messrs K Aston and Sreenivasan rose up, protested, and followed by about 15 students walked out of the hall.

## SCIENTISTS ENTERTAINED

### SIR C. V. RAMAN'S "AT HOME"

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT)

BANGALORE, Nov. 18.

To meet Prof. Max Bourne, well-known scientist and Prof. Kenneth Aston, who have come to the Indian Institute of Science, the first as Reader in Physics and the latter as Professor of Electro-Technology. Sir C. V. and Lady Raman gave a delightful "At Home" last evening at their bungalow.

Pleasant weather prevailed and there was a distinguished gathering present on the occasion.

The guests, on arrival, were received by Lady and Sir C Venkata Raman and conducted to the hall. After tea and music, the guests spent a pleasant hour in conversation.

Among those present on the occasion were the Hon'ble Mr. L. G. L. Evans, British Resident in Mysore, Sir M. O. Forster, Lt.-Col. J. B. Hance, Rajamantrapravina S. P. Rajagopalachari, Mr. V. N. Chandavarkar, Mr. Bava Kartar Singh, Mr. N. Madhava Rao, Dr. B. N. Aiyangar, Dr. C. V. Natarajan, Dr. V. K. Badami, Rao Bahadur B. Venkatesachar, Prof. C. R. Narayana Rao and Dr. P. Krishnamurthi.

### Indian Institute Gymkhana

#### MEMORANDA TO GOVERNING COUNCIL

(From Our Own Correspondent)  
BANGALORE, Dec. 25.

It is learnt that Prof. Aston and Prof. K. Srinivasan, who recently staged a walk out at the Annual Meeting of the Indian Institute Gymkhana questioning the ruling of Sir C. V. Raman, submitted a memorandum to Governing Council

complaining against the alleged autocratic ruling of Sir C. V. Raman at the Gymkhana Meeting and suggesting that Gymkhana should be made independent of the Director of the Institute and should be controlled entirely by students. It is understood that some of the students have also signed this memorandum.

The other members of the Gymkhana who resented the alleged behaviour of Prof. K. Srinivasan and Prof. Aston have also submitted another memorandum to the Governing Council putting forth what had happened at the meeting.

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A report in the Indian Express, dated 25 December 1936, about the Gymkhana meeting (Courtesy: RRI Digital Repository)

“Messrs K Aston and Sreenivasan rose up, protested, and followed by about 15 students walked out of the hall”

A news report about the "At Home" reception that CV Raman hosted for Max Born and Kenneth Aston, after Aston's arrival in Bangalore in November 1935 (Courtesy: APC, IISc)



Aston with Raman, and Gandhi, at a less contentious occasion (Courtesy: APC, IISc)

Mr Chakradeo just before leaving the hall, turned to the President and shouted: “This is not going to be the end. You will see more of this.” Standing outside the door, were the people who had just then walked out. Prof Aston and Mr Sreenivasan were also there staring at the people who were inside. There were some students of the Electrical Technology and Electrical Communication Engineering departments who were sitting right before the door and though they would not have liked to walk out, out of fear, they also one by one slowly walked out. In all about 20 to 25 students walked out. There was shouting and jeering from outside.

The Director then continued with the business of the meeting. After about 5 minutes or so, two or three students were seen going to the switch board in the verandah. Immediately, the lights were off. On examining with a torch, it was found that the fuse block had been removed and placed in an adjacent socket. Some of the students set it right and again there was light. The Gymkhana peon was posted near the switch board. Meanwhile, expecting further trouble, some hurricane lanterns and petromax lights were sent for. Just as expected, in about 10 minutes the lights went off, but this time the electric wires leading from the Hostel to the Gymkhana were cut off as they were easy of reach. The Director requested everyone present in the meeting to preserve order and not be excited and assured the house that though he could fill the Institute with police in no time, he was confident of maintaining order and discipline single-handed.

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The agenda of the meeting was gone through with the help of hurricane lanterns, in partial darkness. During the meeting, the people who had walked out, went about in a batch outside the Gymkhana shouting. Soon, stones were falling on the roof of the building. Some of the students, fearing that stones may be aimed at Sir CV Raman from outside, remained at the doorway and verandah and were keeping watch while the meeting was proceeding inside. The full agenda was gone through, and at about the close of the meeting, Prof V Subrahmanyam and Mr SKK Jatkar entered the hall and were standing at the end of the hall. Before closing, the President paid a tribute to the students present for having upheld the dignity of the Chair and concluded by saying that no institution can exist without the members caring for order and discipline and exhorted the students not to swerve from the right path.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Director wanted to walk to his house. But, the students surrounded him and strongly advised to go home in his car. As Sir Raman left the Gymkhana, he was continually cheered by the students. The disturbers were standing at a distance on the verandah of the Hostel, and were calling the students, who were coming from the meeting as “rats” and went on making fun at them.