

NOVEMBER in Bangalore evokes for many people nostalgic memories of a man, who, in his life-time, became the Knight Errant of Indian science. On the 21st of this month in 1970, at the age of 82, Sir Chandrashekhara Venkata Raman passed away after glorious achievements in the realm of science, leaving a legacy for others to follow and emulate.

My first encounter with Raman was in 1948. I went to his home to take pictures, accompanied by film director M. S. Sathyu who was in his teens then. Realising the importance of my assignment and my then nervousness before celebrities, he offered to assist me and carry my costly camera and lights.

Raman sat in his room, proudly displaying his Nobel Laureate Citation, while I nervously moved around making small adjustments here and there on the location.

The sudden bang of a bursting bulb. In one split second, Sathyu dropped my camera on the hard ground. The otherwise calm and sedate scientist's face displayed a feeling of intense anger. He ran towards Sathyu, held him by the collar and thundered: "What kind of an

Memories of a great scientist

By T. S. Satyan

whose walls were painted dark. All around were stones big and small, of various shapes and sizes — neatly arranged on wooden platforms and tables. "They look ordinary and

nice combination of both science and art." I bent my head in shame.

Raman switched off the lights and beamed ultraviolet rays on the stones all over the room. The ordinary stones looked brilliant, dazzling and glowing in various colours of the vibgyor.

"What beauty! What glory! We live in a world full of these things which we ignorantly pass by. It needs the vision of a scientist to find beauty in them".

We wanted to stay longer in the room. But Raman, a busy man, had other engagements. "Come again when you feel bored. But make sure of a firm appointment."

A couple of months later, when I became the Secretary of the Mysore Photographic Society, I went to Raman again and requested him to inaugurate an International Exhibition of Photography we had organised. He readily agreed, but not without making a friendly but sarcastic remark: "Oh! you have organised an international photo show! Have you learnt to hold your camera firm?"

In February 1950, I went to Raman to interview him to gather material for an article. He spoke of the "Raman Effect" which won for him the Nobel Prize in Physics.

The discovery was no mere chance. Behind it lay the unremitting work of seven long years and more than that the urge of the spirit of adventure that drove this doyen among physicists into the uncharted realms of human knowledge.

It was the same spirit that compelled Raman to go to Sweden to receive the Nobel Prize even before the awards for that year were made known to the world.

Under British flag

He told me: "The ceremony is celebrated with pomp and dignity in Sweden. There were about 10,000 people in the assembly. Sweden's King was in the chair. Five of us had to receive the prizes. All of them were seated in their chairs flanked by the national flags of their countries. But I was sorry that I had to sit under the British flag. We were still ruled by the British. The Indian Civil Disobedience Movement was in full swing. Mahatma Gandhi was in jail."

When Raman's name was called the entire assembly rose, including the King of Sweden. They stood to attention to honour a great son of India. "Tears rolled down my eyes, as I listened to the citation", he said. "An emotion of joy tinged with sadness enveloped my mind."

He was not merely a scientist. A lover of art, the beauty of nature, the fruits, flowers and the landscape of Karnataka fascinated him. He was so fond of flowers, that whenever he was garlanded, he would let it remain around his neck until he reached home.

His knowledge of literature, economics, politics and social problems was outstanding. He spoke with authority on many of the burning problems of his day. On the population problem he once told me: stop breeding like pigs and the problem will solve itself."

He loved Bangalore so much that he always called it the best city in the world. When I last met him, he was working on the structure of the diamond. There was in this a strange apprehension, for he himself had a mind and a nature much like this crystal — hard, brilliant and multi-faceted.

assistant are you? Do you know the damage you have caused for this lovely instrument?"

He lovingly ran his fingers on my camera, looked through the lens, the viewfinder and, like a doctor, wrote his prescription on a piece of paper. "Prisms gone away. Replace one broken piece and realign. Set right the metallic dents".

We both felt like running back home crestfallen, our first photographic assignment gone to pieces.

Raman put his arms around us and said: "Relax. Come in and I will show you something which will help you relax."

He took us inside a room

uninteresting aren't they?", he asked.

"Of course they are. We won't even care to touch them, let alone try and preserve them as you do?"

"Nonsense. What subjects did you study at College? Humanities, I suppose."

"Yes, Sir."

"No wonder. You boys don't seem to know even the rudiments of science. It is time, you started learning. Colleges don't teach much."

Looking straight into my eyes, he thundered again. "You are a cameraman who seems to be ignorant that photography is a

