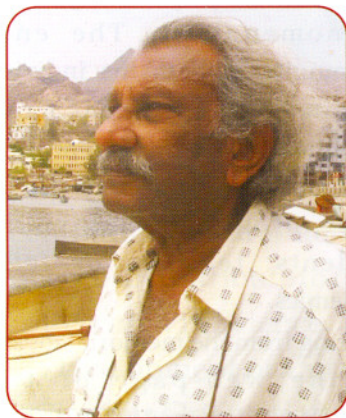


OBITUARY



**Venkataraman Radhakrishnan
(1929–2011)**

Prof. Venkataraman Radhakrishnan, a well-known astrophysicist, passed away on 3 March 2011. Son of Nobel Laureate Sir C. V. Raman, Radhakrishnan struck his own illustrious note in his scientific career and was famously averse to making known the familial connection. His never-ending enthusiasm and the knack of applying physics in everyday life inspired many young souls.

Radhakrishnan was born on 18 May 1929 in a suburb of Chennai and was brought up in Bangalore. He pursued BSc degree in physics from Central College, Bangalore. In 1955, he joined the Onsala Observatory, Sweden and worked on the 21 cm H1 line, which he worked with at every institution he joined thereafter. In 1958, he moved to Caltech and studied the polarization of radio waves and radio interferometry at the Owens Valley Radio Observatory. During 1964–65, he sailed 19,000 miles to reach Sydney, Australia and joined CSIRO. Radhakrishnan was widely acclaimed for his pioneering work

on the 21-cm H1 line, its emission and absorption. He also made a mark in visualizing the magnetic field of Jupiter.

Radhakrishnan returned to India in 1972, on an invitation, to serve as the Director of Raman Research Institute (RRI), Bangalore, after Raman passed away in 1970. He headed the institute till 1994. His leadership gave a direction to the institute and added scope for wide areas of research. He also helped in building low frequency radio observatories at Gauribidanur and Mauritius. He delivered the Milne lecture of the Oxford University in 1987 and the Jansky Lecture of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory in 2000. With a love for travel, he took to sailing and flying expeditions in his youth and later resumed these activities in the 1990s. He often spoke and wrote about the physics of sailing and gliding. He had planned for another sailing expedition in April 2011.

A researcher par excellence, Radhakrishnan had an approach different from the others, in that he would not want credit in publications of collaborative work; he did not prefer being called a 'scientist' or being interviewed. All in all, he preferred staying away from limelight. His 80th birthday was celebrated by RRI with a conference titled 'Radicals in Science: Nature or Nurture', which was held in August 2010. One could see several friends and eminent scientists attending the event and sharing anecdotes about him. Soon after this he set sail for Thailand and Malaysia on a sailboat designed by him and was back in December.

Radhakrishnan is survived by his wife Francoise-Dominique, son Vivek, daughter-in-law Namrata and two granddaughters. His absence will be deeply felt. A few lines by Paul Anka fit what Radhakrishnan may have thought a night before his demise, only if he knew his end was near:

*"And now, the end is near
And so I face the final curtain, My
friends, I'll say it clear,
I'll state my case of which I'm certain.
I've lived a life that's full, I've travelled
each and ev'ry highway
And more, much more than this, I did it
my way."*

Richa Malhotra.

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