

RAMANNA, THE MENTOR OF INDIA'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME

Mumbai: The mentor of India's first nuclear blast at Pokhran in 1974, Raja Ramanna left an indelible imprint on India's nuclear programme.

Handpicked by the founder of India's nuclear programme Dr Homi Bhabha, Ramanna proved to be a great pioneer in the growth of Physics in India and put the country on the world nuclear map within a short time after his great theory of nuclear fission was established between 1965 and 1968.

Once in it, he never looked back from the area of his passion, and rose to become the head of Bhabha

Atomic Research Centre (BARC), the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and Secretary in the Department of Atomic Energy. But his moment of glory came during India's first nuclear explosion at Pokhran in 1974.

Born in 1925 at Tumkur in Karnataka, Ramanna was a graduate of the Madras University. He later left for the United Kingdom where he completed his PhD in London. Returned to India and joined Homi Bhabha, who was then at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.

PTI



A file picture of Dr Raja Ramanna seen with L V Nagaraj at the Bharati Vidya Bhavan in Banaglore, during the Visweshwaraiah birthday celebrations.

His student days....

Mysore: Renowned nuclear scientist Dr Raja Ramanna who passed away on Friday has his roots in Mysore.

The internationally reputed scientist, spent his student days in Mysore. Raja Ramanna who completed his primary education in Good Sheperd Convent in the city, had learnt music at the Mysore Palace. He had mastered violin from the Mysore Music Association. Maharaja Jayaramarajendra Wadiyar had given him scholarship to encourage him to further his studies. Ramanna's father B Ramanna was practicing law in Mysore till 1950. Later he became sub-judge. His grand father Krishna Iyyengar was District Judge at Kolar. His father-in-law Kadaba Narasimha Iyengar was Huzoor Secretary at the Mysore Palace.

Ramanna and his family resided at Vanivilas Mohalla residence in the city. Rajaramanna was well versed in Gurumane Sangeeta, Sanskrit, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavata, Shankara Bhashyam and Rigveda. He also served as adviser to the Sanskrit Academy of Melukote.

Achievements

1977-1978: President of Indian National Science Academy

1978-1981: Scientific adviser to the Defence Minister

1972-1978 & 1981-1983: Director of BARC

1983-1987: Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission

Jan-Nov 1990: Union Minister of State for Defence

Director-general of DRDO, Director of National Institute of Advanced Studies, Secretary of Department of Atomic Energy, Member-Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Committee to the director-general, International Atomic Energy Agency, Vienna

A file photo taken 16 December 2000 shows Dr. Raja Ramanna (L), displaying his Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and



Industry (FICCI) Millennium Lifetime Achievement Award presented to him by former Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

AFP

Remembering Ramanna

"It is a great shock for all of us as he was always a father figure to the entire department. I feel so helpless sitting here although I had been following his condition since yesterday afternoon and when the end came last night, it was blow to me personally," Chairman of Atomic Energy Commission, Anil Kakodkar

"So many of us owe him a lot as he recognised the talents of his colleagues and brought the country to a stature to have a say at the international nuclear forum," Scientific Advisor to the Government of India, R Chidambaram

"He was the most practical nuclear scientist who had put India on the world map in the field of nuclear science. He recognised the importance of fundamental science and its influence on the society. He was very patriotic and his death is a great loss to the nation," former Chairman of Atomic Energy Commission, P K Iyengar

"Ramanna was a man of tall stature and the entire scientific community admired him for the manner in which he had sowed the seed for the growth of physics in Trombay by allowing the attitude of free inquiry," Director of the Centre for Advanced Technology (CAT) and the Physics Group BARC, VS Sahni

The man who turned down Saddam offer

New Delhi: When Raja Ramanna visited Iraq in 1978 as a personal guest of then president Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi dictator had made an offer that lesser men would have found hard to turn down.

"You have done enough for your country. Don't go back. I will pay you whatever you want," he told India's leading nuclear scientist who authored the country's first nuclear explosion Pokhran I in the deserts of Rajasthan.

Seeing the bemused look of the tall, broad-shouldered Indian, Saddam, who was keen to develop his own bomb, said: "I expect you to honour this offer."

Years later, Ramanna recalled staying awake all night worried that Saddam would prevent him from returning home. He never went back to Iraq.

Ramanna's contemporary Indian scientists and his admirers often cite his encounter with Saddam Hussein to explain why the West is not really worried about India becoming a nuclear proliferator after it joined the exclusive nuclear club uninvited with a series of tests in May 1998.

AWARDS

Among the many awards he received were Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Memorial Award, Nehru Award, R D Birla Memorial Award, the Meghnad Saha Medal, INSA, the Honorary D Litt by Viswa Bharati and DSC by several universities, Padma Vibhushan award

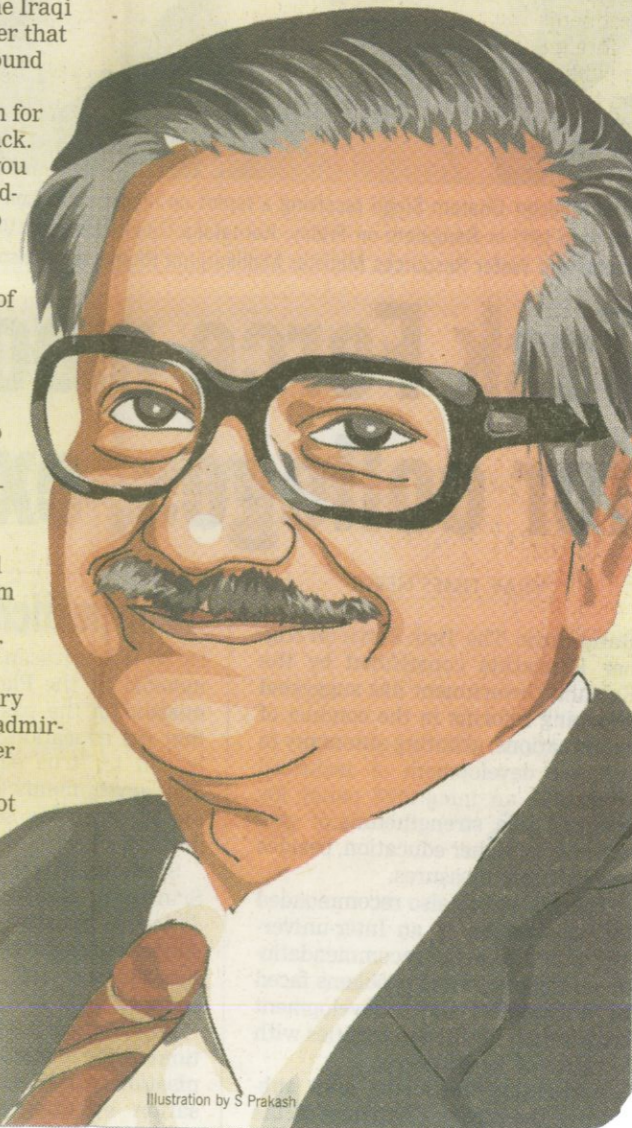


Illustration by S Prakash