



# Gandhi at IISc



Gandhi at the Department of Electrical Technology, with CV Raman, Kasturba Gandhi, Kenneth Aston (head of the department), and Mahadev Desai (Gandhi's personal secretary)

Mahatma Gandhi did not reject modern science; he did, however, have his reservations about many aspects of how it was being done. He believed that the problems of the poor and those at the margins of society should be the focus of scientific research. He viewed technology with suspicion because, in his view, it would lead to unemployment on a large scale, a view that was in conflict with those in the scientific establishment, including Sir CV Raman, an ardent admirer of the Mahatma himself. In spite of his apprehensions about science and technology, Gandhi visited the Institute twice, in 1927 and in 1936.

of their lives, on their miseries and the miseries of their families and children. Think of God for half an hour every day, spinning the charkha and weaving your cloth. Think of all these when you are thinking of God every day for half an hour. May He give you the wisdom to know how you can save the poor of your land. This is all I have to say to you today.

*The Hindu*, 13-7-1927

201. SPEECH AT INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE,  
BANGALORE

[July 12, 1927]

I was wondering where do I come in? There is no place here for a rustic like me who has to stand speechless in awe and wonderment. I am not in a mood to say much. All I can say is that all these huge laboratories and electrical apparatus you see here are due to the labour—unwilling and forced—of millions. For Tata's thirty lakhs did not come from outside, nor does the Mysore contribution come from anywhere else but this *degar*<sup>1</sup> world. If we were to meet the villagers and to explain to them how we are utilizing their money on buildings and plants which will never benefit them, but might perhaps benefit their posterity, they will not understand it. They will turn a cold shoulder. But we never take them into our confidence, we take it as a matter of right, and forge that the rule of "no taxation without representation" applies to them too. If you will really apply it to them, and realize your responsibility to render them an account, you will see that there is another side to all these appointments. You will then find not a little but a big corner in your hearts for them, and if you will keep it in a good, nice condition, you will utilize your knowledge for the benefit of the millions on whose labour your education depends. I shall utilize the purse you have given me for *Daridranarjuna*. The real *Daridranarjuna* even I have not seen, but know only through my imagination. Even the spinners who will get this money are not the real *Daridranarjuna* who live in remote corners of distant villages which have yet to be explored. I was told by your professor that the properties of some of the chemicals will take years of experiments to explore. But who will try to explore these villages? Just as some of the experiments in your laboratories go on

<sup>1</sup> From *The Hindu*, 13-7-1927  
<sup>2</sup> Forced labour

210

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

for all the twenty four hours, let the big corner in your heart remain perpetually warm for the benefit of the poor millions.

I expect far more from you than from the ordinary man in the street. Don't be satisfied with having given the little you have done, and say, "We have done what we could, let us now play tennis and billiards." I tell you, in the billiard room and on the tennis court think of the big debt that is being piled against you from day to day. But beggars cannot be choosers. I thank you for what you have given me. Think of the prayer I have made and translate it into action. Don't be afraid of wearing the cloth the poor women make for you, don't be afraid of your employers showing you the door if you wear khadi. I would like you to be men, and stand up before the world firm in your convictions. Let your zeal for the dumb millions be not stifled in the search for wealth. I tell you, you can devise a far greater wireless instrument, which does not require external research, but internal—and all research will be useless if it is not allied to internal research—which can link your hearts with those of the millions. Unless all the discoveries that you make have the welfare of the poor as the end in view, all your workshops will be really no better than Satan's workshops, as Rajagopalachari said in a joke. Well I have given you enough food for thought, if you are in a reflective mood, as all research students ought to be.

In concluding, he said that they must keep the lamp of their love for the motherland and her children always bright, firm, and steady. And as they did that, so they deserved its knowledge and the advantage they were deriving from the lamp.

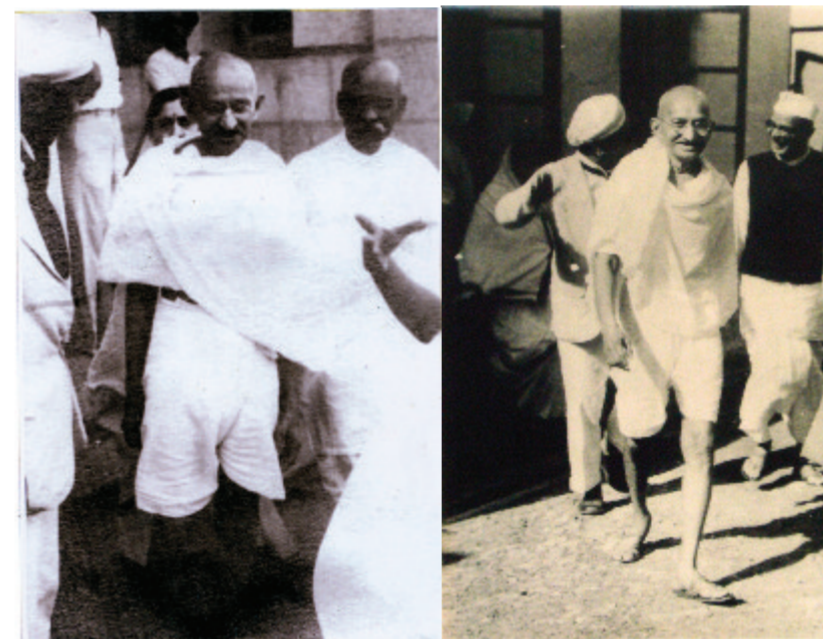
*Young India*, 21-7-1927

<sup>1</sup> This paragraph is from *The Hindu*, 13-7-1927.

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211

Full text of Gandhi's speech



Gandhi with  
CV Raman (first from left)

Gandhi with CV Raman (left) and  
Mahadev Desai (right)

Gandhi's second visit to IISc was in the summer of 1936. An ailing and frail Gandhi was advised complete rest by his doctors. He chose to recuperate at Nandi Hills near Bangalore. During his stay, he was visited by Sir CV Raman, the then Director of the Institute, and his wife, Lokasundari. Raman invited Gandhi to IISc, and Gandhi readily accepted the invitation. He came to IISc on 12 June, 1936 and left Bangalore the same day.