

12 July 1927



REMEMBERING
THE MAHATMA

150th BIRTH
ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION
at IISc






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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.







SPEECH BY M. K. GANDHI AT INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, BANGALORE


The Hindu, 13 July 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 *begar*¹ 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 *Daridranarayana*. The real *Daridranarayana* even I have not seen, but know only through my imagination. Even the spinners who will get this money are not the real *Daridranarayana* 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 for all the twenty four hours, let the big corner in your heart remain perpetually warm for the benefit of the poor millions.

¹ - Forced labour



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.



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NEWS REPORT

Mahatmaji at Tata Institute



The Hindu, 12 July 1927

This evening Mahatmaji and party motored to the Indian Institute of Science and he was received by the staff and students of the Institution. Dr C Smith took him round the several departments and **Mahatmaji was particularly impressed with the electric section.** In the wireless, Mahatmaji himself had a "*listening in*" and was very much pleased with the arrangement. Finishing further inspection Gandhiji arrived at the meeting quadrangle where the staff and students had gathered in all their numbers.

With a short speech from one of the students and the purse presented to him, Mahatmaji spoke in English for a few minutes thanking them for the purse and for their exhibition of patriotic spirit and self-sacrifice. He suggested that in as much as they were enabled to acquire so much knowledge and have the advantage of such elaborate organizations and institutions all because of the labour, unwilling or almost forced labour of the millions who were the real "**Daridranarayan**" of the land, the students must realize that all the knowledge they gained and the advantages they derived should be utilized to better the condition of their countrymen. Otherwise, he remarked, the huge apparatus which they worked and the immense knowledge they were acquiring from day to day would be no more than Sutan's Workshop as Rajagopalachari once stated. **They must install and develop wireless machinery in their heart which would respond to and communicate with the hearts of the millions for whose services it was worthwhile sacrificing anything.** That would be an achievement more glorious and more enduring than the wireless machine which they just then showed him.

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In concluding, he put in a touching plea for searching into one's heart and developing its capacity for love and sacrifice side by side with the scientific researches they made in the Institute. **He exhorted them to wear khaddar as a practical demonstration of their love and sympathy for their country's poor and not be afraid of appearing in Khadi.** Let them not conclude that by presenting a purse they had finished their duty; rather their duty has just begun! Whether in the Tennis Court or in the Billiard room the problem of the heart, the problem of helping the poor of their country knew no time or place and every moment of their life should be given to this one thought. **They must keep the lamp of their love for the motherland and her children always bright, trim and steady.** And as they did that so they deserved the knowledge and the advantage they were deriving from the Institute".




After the function, Mahatmaji and party returned to Kumara Park.





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.



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