T. Radhakrishnan Menon

Thanickal Radhakrishnan Menon (or TRK, as he was known to his colleagues) was born on 14 April 1925. After an early education at the Shree Rama Varma High School and the Maharajah's College, Ernakulam, he joined the Presidency College, Madras for a masters degree in physics. He then moved to the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, for a doctoral degree under the guidance of C. V. Raman.

In 1953 Vikram Sarabhai inducted TRK into the newly established Ahmedabad Textile Industry's Research Association (ATIRA) in Ahmedabad, and deputed him for training in textiles and electronics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other institutions in USA. On his return, TRK set up and expanded a school of work at ATIRA to elucidate the relationships between molecular structure of fibres (as determined by X-ray diffraction and optical microscopy) and their rheological/tensile properties. This field was then of theoretical and practical interest in the context of the increasing use of synthetic fibres in the textile industry. He guided five doctoral scholars in this area. TRK also led ATIRA's work in two other areas: refinement of physical test methods for textile fibres, yarns and fabrics and development of inexpensive and rugged testing instruments for use in textile industry. Of these, the cotton fibre fineness tester and the direct reading yarn count balance were well received and are in use in a large number of mills. The fibre fineness tester won an award of the Inventions Promotions Board.

In 1969, TRK relinquished his post of Deputy Director and Head of Physics Division at ATIRA to take over the Directorship of the Indian Jute Industry's Research Association (IJIRA) in Calcutta. He was instrumental in setting up the Mechanical Processing Division, the Centre for Machinery Design and a pilot plant for jute processing and was also involved in expanding the research activities in chemical processing of jute products. He also initiated a survey research in jute industry to provide benchmarks to the management in assessing productivity, quality and cost of production.

TRK returned to ATIRA in 1980 as its Director. In the next ten years, he guided ATIRA through one of its most difficult periods financially, triggered by the fundamental changes in the modes of textile manufacture in India. He met this challenge by re-orienting

ATIRA's research and consultancy activities to bring them in line with structural transformations in the manufacture of textiles and clothing in India and international textile trade. As a result, apex industry organizations as well as the Central and Gujarat State Governments increasingly sought ATIRA's assistance in the areas of overall textile policy, modernization, running of state-owned textile mills, and textile exports. TRK retired in 1990, after a successful career as a scientist and leader of men.

An excellent theoretical and experimental physicist, gifted with a prodigous memory, quick grasp and incisive analytical skills, TRK was ideally suited for identification and conduct of original research. His command over English made him a very effective communicator, both orally and in writing. TRK was an able research administrator as well. Sensitive to the aspirations and welfare of staff members, he set up at both ATIRA and IJIRA, mechanisms to improve communication within the organization. He introduced several refinements in the personnel appraisal and development policies at ATIRA to facilitate *inter se* comparisons and to chart faster career paths for outstanding scientists.

His contributions in the areas of textile manufacture and trade research brought many recognitions. Well over 100 papers record his scientific achievements. He was a Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences and the Bureau of Indian Standards and a recipient of the C. V. Raman Centenary Medal. The Textile Institute of Manchester and the UNCTAD invited him to present papers at international conferences. He was a member of the Expert Committee set up by the Rajiv Gandhi Government to help formulate a new textile policy.

As his numerous friends would testify, behind a gruff exterior TRK was a warm and humane personality with a sense of humour and dry wit. He was a voracious reader and an aficionado of classical music – Carnatic, Hindustani and Western. In the later years of his life, he immersed himself in the study of the tenets of the Hindu religion and philosophy. TRK leaves behind his wife Padmaja and two children, Anand and Mallika.

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