



HEIGHT OF NOON

(A Novel)

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HEIGHT OF NOON

(A Novel)

I

The day Anand took charge as Vice-Chancellor there was a general rejoicing all over the campus for it was the eternal Professor to be the Vice-Chancellor of that city. And the way he came to occupy that high position was itself a surprise to everyone. His retirement as Professor was drawing near and he was being made ready for that moment. The department he served for twenty five years as its chairman, the college council presided over by him as the Principal of the College, the student unions all were busy with farewell functions for him at the end of the month. He was taking it easy and his plans were to go abroad as a Visiting Professor.

That was 25th afternoon. By 30th September he would retire. He was sitting in his departmental room quite relaxed. The Deputy Registrar from the University came to see him. He wanted to be quite excited and he was perspiring. He wished Professor Anand 'Good afternoon' and aided, 'Sir, the Secretary, Education department, just now rang me up. He wants to know when you'll take charge'.

'Take charge' Anand exclaimed for he immediately remembered Lakshmi's words that morning.

'But the orders have come from the Chancellor and you Vice-Chancellor of the university and the letter is posted to you'.

'I haven't received any letter' Anand said.

'The government has received a copy of the letter from the Chancellor. So the Secretary wishes to know when he can hand over charge to you as Vice-Chancellor'.

'Please inform the Secretary that I shall take charge on 27th September. Let him come that morning' Anand said.

'Yes. I shall inform the Secretary and find out whether 27th will suit him' the Deputy Registrar murmured.

But Anand said categorically.

'Please tell the Secretary that I would like to take charge on 27th and let him make it convenient for himself to come'.

He talked as though it was God's will. He knew it was providential. God's blessing had come to him. He realised once again that divine Providence had always played a greater role than his individual effort in life. He felt that things were made ready for him by the benevolent hand of God. That was his experience throughout his life. Anand abandoned his idea of going abroad. He had a greater role to play in his own country and he was given the opportunity to serve the university for another three years. When he reached home there were already friends and admirers waiting to garland him. Roses and noes. Anand was literally bathed in the endless phuster of rose garlands.

From the department Anand rang up Lakshmi and told her about the good news. The house took a festive colour and Lakshmi was all smiles, almost willing to say that her prophecy had come to be true. Her prayers were answered and she saw the fulfilment of her ambition for her husband. The daughters and the sons, all felt elated. For two days visitors poured in; congratulations came from all parts of the State. It looked like a big achievement especially because an internal Professor was appointed Vice-Chancellor just five days before retirement. It was something unique and everyone felt that a good man got what he deserved. To all of them it looked like divine dispensation for they knew that Professor Anand was not in the habit of asking for anything. As a scholar he was interested in teaching and research. He had the scholarly pride and humility. So he was not ambitious for administrative posts, but if any such post was offered to him he would not run away from responsibility. That was why he was happy to be the leader of the university.

On 26th evening Anand went with his family to the Hills and they spent a quiet night mostly expressing their grateful devotion to the Lord of the Seven Hills. In the morning they all went to the temple for darshan. One of the Professors who used to be friendly with Anand was also there on the Hills. He was well known to the temple officials and he introduced Anand to them. They were all taken in and Anand presented himself to the Lord before he reported for duty in the university. Twenty five years ago he had the first darshan of the Lord when he joined the university and finally by God's grace he became the President of the university. All these years Lakshmi was with him as a partner sharing with him his expe-

iences, pleasant and unpleasant, with an unswerving loyalty to God.

Anand went to the office and the officers of the university received him with happiness. He was no stranger to them. They all knew him. As the Principal of the University college for six years he proved himself to be a fair and just administrator. So they looked forward to another spell of that justness and fairness from him. He knew what was expected of him and more than anything he was answerable to God.

Anand went to the office a little early that day. The Secretary had not yet come. But he went straight to the room and occupied the chair at the auspicious moment. Anand was not orthodox, nor did he believe in any ritual. Yet he had some intuitive way of thinking. The Secretary came with a copy of the order, the Chancellor's order to Anand was still on the way. By the time the formalities were over that copy of the order also came by post. Photographs were taken and everything seemed to be propitious. The farewell parties organized earlier now became welcome parties.

At the college council welcome party some Professors praised Anand lavishly. They referred to him as an excellent teacher and a perfect gentleman. One Professor said that Dr. Anand could occupy any post of responsibility with distinction and any university could be proud of him as its Vice-Chancellor. He only meant it as a compliment due to Anand for his proven merit. Immediately another Professor who took pride in his outspoken statements and often bluntness mistook the other Profe-

essor's praise as flattery. With righteous indignation he said.

'Dr. Anand's success is our success. He had been one among us for several years and his elevation is a tribute to us'.

Most of the Professors were embarrassed. They did not know how they were responsible for Anand's well deserved elevation. In fact none of them hoped that Anand would be the Vice-Chancellor. Anand himself did not expect that. So he simply smiled knowing full well that it was God's grace that blessed him.

Anand took everything in its stride. The good, bad and the indifferent aspects of life never bothered him. So at the council meeting he replied.

'I feel that we should all work together for academic excellence, for a university stands committed to teaching and research'.

They all appreciated his sentiments and nodded in assent as he spoke. Then there were other welcome functions and receptions. His students teaching in various colleges of the university as lecturers expressed their rejoicing on his elevation through various parties organized in several places. It looked as though they were waiting for such an occasion for a long time. Anand realised that his task was a stupendous one as so many wished for his success. He should live up to their expectations and not falsify their hopes about the development of the university in his term of office.

A year after Anand took over the responsibility of the university administrative planning and development something personal and pleasant took place. His work was recognised by the American scholars and he was to be honoured at the annual meeting in New York. It was a welcome relief for him from his onerous duties. While going to New York he stopped in London just to have a glimpse of the Christmas gaiety. Years ago while he was a student he enjoyed the season and all the joyousness associated with the Christmas. So he wanted to recapitulate those moments of joy, love and happiness spread over towns and cities all over the Christian world. He was invited for lunch by the Principal of the University College, Cardiff, where he took his Ph.D. He visited his old college after nearly twenty years. One of the Professors received him at the station in Cardiff. He took Anand to the Department where he met some of the staff members whom he knew earlier. There was a world of difference between the old campus and the new one. New buildings had come up and the whole place was unrecognisable. Even the surroundings had changed. Anand was happy to be back in his college. That was two days before Christmas but already the mood was on. In the college itself there were quite a few parties where men and women were celebrating the season.

The Principal's lunch was a memorable one to Anand. The Principal felt that Anand should visit the University college again and give a few lectures in his area of specialization. He asked the concerned Professor to think of inviting Anand.

'When can you come and stay for a few days? This is vacation time, so you can't meet anyone now'. The Principal commented.

'I can spend sometime in May. That's the time when I am relatively free' Anand answered.

The Principal was very happy that one of the past students had distinguished himself as a scholar and had become the Vice-Chancellor of a university in India. Incidentally the Principal of the University college was also the Vice Chancellor of that university at that time. Anand was immensely pleased with the fine gesture of the Principal and he thanked him for his courtesy and warmth in inviting him to be with them in May.

Anand's next visit was to the Open university in London. Distance education was indeed a bold experiment and Anand was keen on seeing the good work done in the Open university. He had discussions with the Vice-Chancellor and the Deans, and later he was taken round the campus. He saw the film depicting vividly the growth and development of the university over the past ten years. Within those years the university had established itself and it received respectable recognition from the older universities. That was something amazing for Anand. Extension Studies, Anand believed, would be one way of bringing the university nearer to the common man. What the conventional courses could not do, continuing education, population studies and other extension studies could. So he was wholeheartedly in love with the type of innovative measures taking place in the Open university.

In those two or three days he spent in London he saw to his great delight everything covered with snow. The open places, the buildings, all were covered with sheets of snow. It was picturesque to see the whole phenomenon of nature transformed into one large mass of whiteness. It was cold and chilly winds were blowing with snow flakes falling.

After a few days stay in the U. K. he flew to New York. It was pretty cold. Some of the Andhra residents in New York knew of his visit. A few of them came to the airport. He was taken to the hotel where he had to stay. His room was on the forty fourth floor and the hotel was in the busiest part of the city. The presentation of papers and the business connected with the annual meeting of the association was conducted in the same hotel. So Anand felt that it would be convenient for him to stay in the hotel though it was expensive. He attended one of the sessions in the morning and listened to the papers presented and the discussions that followed each paper with pleasure. He entered the realms of scholarship and he was one with the scholars. It was a pleasurable experience on the whole. He met some of the scholars with whom he had informal discussions.

In the evening he had to attend the banquet in the New York university club. It was only walking distance from the hotel he stayed. It was awfully windy and chilly, that being December. When he reached the club the Secretary of the Association, received him warmly and Anand presented a copy of his recently published book to him. His book along with other books published in that year were displayed on a table while members started

coming in. They first had drinks which gave an opportunity for members to move about and chat with one another. Anand being a teetotaler was looking for some soft drinks when one of the members observed his predicament and brought him a coke. Anand could see some of the members he had already met in a conference in Syracuse two years ago. He presented a paper at that time and it was received quite well. So Anand was not altogether a stranger to them. Some had read his books and articles though they might not have seen him. Anand found himself in good company and he enjoyed talking to them.

Then at 7 p.m. all of them shifted to the banquet hall. The Secretary of the association placed Anand at a table where some Canadian scholars were already seated. Some of them knew Anand, so he felt quite at ease in their company. After the banquet the meeting started. Anand stood up as the Secretary introduced him to the members. In his citation the Secretary said that the association would like to acknowledge Dr. Anand as a distinguished scholar, an accolade that was intended, he said, to reflect their admiration for his numerous excellent publications. He also mentioned that in the *Festschrift* presented to Anand in his university some of the scholars assembled there had contributed articles thereby showing their respect for the scholarship of Anand. His sustained work and contribution to scholarship was referred to in laudable terms. The citation reminded Anand of the convocation ceremony when honorary degrees were conferred on eminent persons. He felt happy that his quiet work was well rewarded. The members gave him a warm ovation. That was a great moment for Anand and Lakshmi was

dressing of it for a long time. Unfortunately she could not follow him on any of his trips abroad either because of her poor health or because of some domestic problems. She was the sacrificing type and she never grudged his going abroad at any time. That evening Anand wistfully thought of Lakshmi and her concern for him.

The next day was again given to the presentation of papers. In between the morning session and the evening session there were a few free hours. Anand wanted to do some shopping and luckily for him one of the Indian ladies, Asha, who was doing a course in computer science in an Institute near his hotel could go with him. She and her husband were at the airport when he came from London. They were introduced to him through a common friend and they were asked to receive him in New York. It was convenient for Asha to go with Anand for shopping. He had a craze for buying gifts for all the members in the family. Wherever he went either in India or abroad he would invariably bring presents to the family. He derived immense pleasure in doing so. His house was full of souvenirs and curios and Lakshmi used to refer to the house as a museum. Asha patiently went with Anand and she seemed to be a pleasant, friendly type of person. She was young and active, neatly dressed and conversant with the ways of the New Yorkers. She took pleasure in associating herself with Anand. On the third day of the conference when Anand wanted to leave the hotel Asha invited him to their flat. She said that it was no inconvenience for them to put up Anand in their flat. Other Indians also saw him. He had several of them coming to him and asking for lunch or dinner. But his time was limited.

The night before he was leaving New York the Andhra Association gave him reception. Anand wanted to spend the day with his old friend in Green Park area. They were together in school and college in India and Dr. Ramesh was then working in New York. So instead of going to Asha's flat he went to his friend's house. The friends who dropped Anand in Dr. Ramesh's house agreed to take him in the evening for the reception. It was arranged in the hall of the temple where generally meetings were held. On the first floor gods and goddesses were installed. The temple was in a residential area and it stood imposing and beautiful. Lord Venkateswara figured there also as one of the many Hindu deities in the temple. Indians away from home had the comfort and satisfaction of recreating something typically Indian through the temple, and it was a source of sustenance to them in times of stress. The basement of the temple was used for social gatherings and for young Indian girls to learn dancing. Often dance and music classes were conducted there.

Anand, Dr. Ramesh and Mrs. Ramesh were received by the members of the Association and after tea there were speeches. There were quite a few Andhras and most of them seemed to be prosperous. Anand was affectionately welcomed by the President of the Association in his opening speech. Then Dr. Ramesh referred to Anand's work as he happened to know about it. Anand in his reply thanked the hosts and talked about the Indian scene of education. He also appealed to them to look homeward and come back to their country with their rich experience. It was a pleasant and enjoyable evening and it was a rewarding experience to meet the members of the Andhra Association. The next night when Anand left New York some of them came to the airport to say good bye to him.

CHAPTER 2

Anand returned to India with the hope of visiting the University college, Cardiff, in May. But then to his great surprise he was elected Fellow of the University college. This was a distinction conferred on the past students of the college for distinguishing themselves in their areas of specialization. Anand was happy about it. The Principal invited him for the Fellows dinner in June, so Anand's trip was postponed to June. He was back in the University college, Cardiff, in the first week of June. The fine summer weather reminded him of the days when as a student he used to play tennis. Those tennis courts were now converted into parking area for cars. Anand gave a few lectures and he could meet some of his old friends. The weather was fine and it was a pleasure to go about and see men and women basking in the sun. He felt he was a student again.

One evening Anand visited one of his old friends who lived a few miles away from Cardiff. He maintained correspondence with him, so it was easy for him to contact him. Anand and John used to play tennis table tennis and badminton, all wrist games. Their friendship was mostly through games. Anand had several friends like that, but he also had others who belonged to his discipline and would discuss with him various aspects of their subject. There were some others who were Fabians with whom Anand had political affiliations. He was also seen very much in the Theosophical society every Sunday evening. The moment Anand reached John's house, John was all smiles. His face beamed forth cheer and he was happy to see Anand after so many years. Mrs. John

joined her husband in welcoming Anand. A tall young man appeared in the doorway. He was like John and he was introduced as his son. His daughter was away attending some course in Exeter university. John seemed to be affluent and life had been kind to him. Anand spent an hour talking to John and Mrs. John. John was delighted to see Anand as Vice-Chancellor and he himself was expecting to be the Headmaster of the school where he worked.

After tea Anand made a move to go back to Cardiff and John offered to take him back to the hotel. While driving John was talking all the time. He was so full of reminiscential thoughts that his driving seemed to be no hindrance to his talking. As it was late in the night there was not much of traffic. Gradually the conversation turned to Mary. She was his friend and he wanted, at one stage, to marry her.

'Anand do you know anything about Mary' ?

'No' Anand said.

'You know I loved her and wanted to marry her. But she had a tragic fate'.

'Is she dead' ?

'No, but her life was shattered to pieces. Half way she gave up her Hons. course and took up a job in some other place. She used to ring me up now and then and assure me of her love for me. Later she stopped ringing me up and I was told by her mother that she got married to someone there'.

'What a pity!' I exclaimed.

'The man she married was found to be a lunatic and he was sent to an asylum'.

'Did you see her again'?

'No, but I heard from her sister that Mary was terribly upset'.

'Sometimes it happens like that. Mary must be very unlucky. She may have married again'.

'Yes, she did, but even this seems to be a failure'

John was sad for a minute and added:

'Anyway I am lucky in my domestic life. You have seen Anne, she is an understanding type of woman. We have one son and one daughter, both are coming up quite well in studies. Perhaps I wouldn't have been happy with Mary. She was ambitious for many things and it would have been difficult for me to satisfy her.'

'We get what is destined for us. Especially marriages seem to be mostly based on predestination. Even though we think we are choosing, the choice itself is predetermined. There is no explanation why A should fall in love only with B. I am glad you are happy and contented'.

'Even as a student I used to be simple and modest. I am still the same man'.

'I see that. There is no change in you'.

'How about you and your family'?

'I am equally lucky as you are and my success is largely dependent on my wife. She is a fitting companion

to me, patient, loyal and generous. Even if I go wrong on certain occasions she gives me the right advice. So the stream of life has been a smooth one'.

They reached the hotel and John left Anand promising to see him again the next day. The moment he left him Anand slowly moved to his room. Mary was still in his mind. He remembered clearly the first time he saw her in the Fabian Society meeting. She smiled and started talking to him.

'You are from India, I suppose' Mary said

'Yes'

'Did you join the university recently'

'Yes only a few weeks ago'

'There is an Indian girl, have you seen her? O she is so lonely. I hope you will talk to her. I'll bring her tomorrow'.

Mary went on talking like that as though she had been his friend for ages. Anand could see that she was simple, warm hearted and friendly by nature. She was full of curiosity, anxious to know about men and matters. That was Anand's first impression of her.

'I would like to hear from you all about your country. I am very much interested in India'.

Anand was pleased. Anyone who said a few fine things about India or showed any interest in his country was invariably his friend. He was so full of national spirit that he often felt annoyed if anyone spoke slightly of his country.

'I am glad to hear that' Anand said.

'I shall see you tomorrow lunch time at the Porter's desk. For the present bye, bye'.

Mary left Anand and rushed to the Bus stand. She was in a hurry to go as she lived a little away from Cardiff. Anand just watched Mary with amusement for she seemed to be a little unusual. Most girls would fight shy to talk to foreigners whereas she was quite friendly. Mary was good looking and she walked with an ease. She did not suffer from any prejudices, so she could talk with ease and comfort. In her dress, in her talk and in all her movements there was only decorum and dignity. She was natural, there was neither pose nor affectation in anything she said or did. She was uninhibited. So Anand was definitely interested in Mary and he looked forward to meeting her the next day.

On time Mary appeared at the Porter's desk and cast a lovely look at Anand.

'Let us go and sit in the park. It's lovely' Mary suggested. Both of them moved to the park and sat on a bench. The sky was clear. It was October, slightly chilly, not cold.

'In your part of the country, is it very hot?'

'Of course it is hot'.

'How I wish to be in such a place; I don't like this cold weather'.

'Winter is no doubt bad, but spring and summer are lovely. My first winter in England was awful. Everything

was dark and dismal. The trees were bare and I didn't see any birds either. I wondered whether it would be like that the whole year. In April I found the birds coming back, thickets and bushes green again and the plants blossoming.'

'Yes our spring is lovely. If only it is spring all the time how pleasant it will be!' exclaimed Mary.

'How is it possible? The original sin has brought the change of seasons, we can't help it. Even things delightful become stale if they are seen all the time. Change is the law of life. Even in a man's life there are changes, he cannot remain youthful all his life'.

'True we grow old. In this world nothing remains constant. Even man's love.....' Mary stopped and looked meaningfully at Anand.

'Perhaps man's love is constant. We hear of great lovers like Antony who have sacrificed everything for the sake of love.'

'O these are all stories created by poets and story-tellers. In real life conditions are different.'

'May be' Anand added.

'Anyway in your country do you choose your partners?'

'Not very often. Once in a while young men and women may choose, but this is not common. The practice is that the elders first discuss, find out the family background and then finally the partners concerned will see each other. There isn't anything like being engaged.'

'So love grows between the two only after marriage. Prior to that they are almost strangers.'

'Yes' Anand said.

Anand observed how in the west even after all that elaborate process of knowing each other, getting engaged and marrying, there were some odd cases of incompatibility in temperament and other excesses in behaviour leading to the break up of marriages. So his own conviction was that no system was completely satisfying. He was not prepared to condemn any system for each had its advantages as well as disadvantages.

'Don't you think we are better off in this respect?' Macy queried.

'I don't think so for very often even this system has failed. The increase in divorces only means that something has gone wrong somewhere'.

Mary looked at him sadly for in a way she saw the truth in what Anand had said and she did not know what was in store for her. Then she wanted to change the topic. So she said,

'How about your caste system?'

'As bad or as good as your class system. The same barriers hold good in both the cases, ours is based on social customs, yours is based on economic conditions.'

Mary thought that Anand was clever. For everything he had an answer, all the time on the defence, though. It was time for them to go. Anand realised that they would miss lunch if they were to go on talking like that for some more time. So he suggested,

'Let us have lunch in the town'

'Wonderful' Mary said.

Anand distinctly remembered all those days when he was friendly with Mary and they liked each other's company. A month later Anand saw her with John. So there was no break in his friendship with Mary for John was his friend. In fact he felt that John was the right person for her for he was dependable. Mary was highly emotional and it would be better for her to depend on someone whose feet were firmly on the earth. That was his understanding of John and Mary but that night as he listened to John he too was moved by the unsuccessful venture of Mary.

The next day at the dinner given by the Principal he met several ladies and gentlemen and one of those ladies happened to be his contemporary. She said she knew the Indian girls who were studying at that time in the University college. In fact one of them was her room-mate in the hostel. She inquired whether Anand had ever met them in India.

'No, I haven't seen them'

Anand said and added,

'They were from Kenya. I wonder whether they had come to India later'.

Anand knew one of them for she used to come to him for some help in studies. She was doing her first degree and she could not follow some texts. Even though Anand was not very keen on teaching at that stage she imposed herself on him. He liked her for her simplicity though

intellectually she was still to grow. He himself did not know whether she was fond of him, but he never allowed himself to be overpowered by emotionalism. A few years later he heard that her mother had come to India in search of some good alliance for her. For one moment Anand's mind was given to those two Indian girls and he wondered what had happened to them.

The dinner was good and the invitees being limited they could talk to each other in a friendly manner.

After the dinner Anand came back to the hotel and thought of his student days in Cardiff. Anand enjoyed his stay in Cardiff and he had several happy memories of his stay. He was a member of the Fabian society and his first talk in the U. K. was an address to that society. The University college had a good debating tradition. Every Friday evening there were the debates in which Anand invariably participated. He was considered to be a good speaker. On his getting the degree his Research Supervisor invited him for Tea. Incidentally Anand told his teacher about his keen interest in debates. Immediately the teacher, a sternish Anglo-Catholic, said, 'Yes, I saw your name with the devil'. That was the occasion when Anand supported the President of the Rationalist Society on 'Religion has outlived its usefulness'. Anand was a humanist and he felt that the essence of religion, of loving fellow human beings was given a go by, and man's inhumanity to man was on the increase. For all important debates leading persons of the day were invited and students used to support them. So Anand was amused when his teacher made him the devil's disciple. In the debate on the colonial policy of the government Anand supported the Under Secretary for Colonial affairs, while an African

student was with the opposition led by a Conservative M. P. The debates used to be lively. There was a lot of intelligent mischief too. Especially the back benchers were always busy, heckling the speakers. It was indeed good fun to participate in the debates. Even though Anand very often disagreed with the Conservative students on political issues, they were all his good friends.

In those student days one thing that shocked him was the death of Gandhi. He and his friend were coming on the bus when a gentleman next to them told them 'Your Gandhi is dead'. Anand's friend burst into tears, but Anand controlled himself. He satisfied himself by writing an article on Gandhi and that was published in one of the local papers. It was amazing to see how the newspapers in the U.K. unanimously praised Gandhi as a true Christian, who practised the Christian concept of forgiveness even to his foes. Most of them felt that the prophecy of the Second coming was in a way fulfilled. Jesus Christ and Gandhi were put to death by their own people on a Friday. Even Gandhi's political opponents expressed similar sentiments in their papers. Anand admired the Britishers for their catholicity of outlook. He was very much amused by Shaw's cryptic comment, 'It shows how dangerous it is to be too good'. Anand never forgot that significant observation. He viewed Gandhi as a martyr who came into this world with the mission of getting Independence to India. Once that was achieved he was recalled, for martyrs had no will of their own. They would submit themselves to the will of God. Gandhi did not live even for a year after India became free. Anand read a lot of literature published on Gandhi at that time. That was one event that kept him thinking for a long time. It stirred his imagination deeply.

and he thought he should write on Gandhi one day. In the week he spent as a visitor in Cardiff, he was full of nostalgic reminiscences of his student days.

On the last day of his stay in Cardiff, Anand attended the Fellows dinner. The new Fellows were introduced to the distinguished members by the Principal of the University college. One of Anand's contemporaries in the college was placed next to him at the same table. He was President of the Students Union in those years when Anand studied, and he too used to participate in the debates. Anand knew him and his friend could easily recognise him. He said,

'When the Principal suggested your name for the Fellowship I imagined that it must be you. My guess is correct'. He shook hands with Anand and they had a pleasant time talking of the old days. Anand was grateful to the Principal for having invited him and made it possible for him to spend a few days on the campus.

Unfortunately by that time neither his Professor nor the Director of his research was living. A few years ago he saw his Professor while returning from the U.S.A. But his Director died too young. At the time of the Fellows Dinner Anand remembered distinctly how the Professor was kind to him. Immediately after the war all the British universities were full and it was difficult to get admission for any course let alone Ph.D. Anand tried his best to get admission for Ph.D. in some universities, but he failed. Till then he believed in man's innate strength, his capabilities and self effort. Nothing was impossible for man if only he tried sincerely. That was his implicit faith in himself. But after coming to Britain he was baffled on many occasions in his trials for getting admission. His own effort came to a dead-

end, when by chance he visited Cardiff on an invitation from his friend, Mohan.

That was first September. Anand and his friend were waiting in the hall for the Professor. He came with a cheerful look. He was typically Welsh. He sat by the side of Anand. Mohan was standing a little away facing them. The Professor said slowly but sweetly,

'Yes, I have seen the preliminary chapters. They are promising. We'll take you for Ph.D. You can come in the first week of October and register for the course.'

Anand's joy knew no bounds. It looked as though a miracle had happened. The Professor's words were sweet as music. This was a quite a contrast to Anand's first experience in London.

Anand reminisced over the events leading to that experience in London. The Second World War was over and a few months later Anand got a passage on a ship to London. There was not much time. Everything had to be done in a hurry. His students were waiting to give parties to him. The Principal was not for such an exuberance from the students. He did not permit them to hold farewell parties to Anand in the college. So Anand's students arranged them in the town. They wished that Anand would return with laurels. In a way their wishes were blessings to him. He loved his students, naturally they were fond of him. At the home front Lakshmi did not say much but like a brave comrade helped him.

Just on the day of departure Anand went to the post office to see whether there was any mail for him. There was a letter from London. The Professor said that Anand

should come for the next academic year, not in January. The troubles had started. He could not postpone. No one would understand his plight. So he kept the letter with himself. He did not tell even Lakshmi. He hoped that everything would be all right for him. Till then everything came to him favourably.

So Anand sailed from Bombay and he was in London by the middle of January. It was the coldest day he could imagine. The terribly cold winter already dispelled some of his romantic ideas about England. Fed on the romantic poets he dreamt of a land of natural beauty, but to his great horror everything was dark and the trees looked menacingly demonic with dark barks and with no leaves on the branches.

Anand entered the Professor's room. In fact his correspondence was with the Reader, who left for Canada on some other assignment. The Professor looked at him coldly as though Anand was unwanted. With a forbidding voice he said,

'I asked you to come in September, for the next academic year, not now. Why have you come now?'

'I am sorry. I got your letter only on the day of my departure. So I couldn't postpone my journey. I was helpless.'

'Anyway what course do you want to pursue?'

'I wish to enrol myself for Ph.D. so that on my return I may train my own students for research. Our universities are good upto the postgraduate level, only at the research level we need guidance.'

The Professor looked at him for a minute. Perhaps he thought that Anand was over confident. The Professor said,

'You are only twenty five. You are a fresher. I can't take you for Ph.D.'

Anand was flabber gasted. His dreamland collapsed like a pack of cards. Anand's pride was hurt, but there was no alternative. He had to take the admission for M.A. or loaf about. He never thought that he would receive negation and rejection in life. This was a new experience for him, a bitter experience. He was terribly upset. He spent a year in London working grudgingly and feeling humiliated as he could not get his ambition fulfilled.

So when he got admission for Ph.D. in Cardiff he couldn't believe himself. For the first time in his life Anand realised that God's grace was needed before anything could be achieved. Man's efforts alone could never give success in life. In the final analysis, he felt, divine dispensation counted in a large measure. This was a new awareness that came to Anand. He accepted his defeat. He no longer over emphasised man's almightiness. He was humbled and this was the first stage in the gradational process of his understanding God's ways. Whereas he tried his best for admission and failed, almost unexpectedly he got what he wanted. It was a godsend, and it meant that it was God's will that he should join the University college for Ph.D.

The Fellows dinner was on, and his mind was in retrospect. He saw how God fulfilled himself in many ways. Did he ever imagine that he would be honoured by his own

college ? He did n't even think of it for he was ignorant about the Fellowships. It was another grand day for him bringing back to him sweet memories of his college life.

The next day he left for London. He was invited by one of his friends in Gravesend; a few miles away from London, to spend a day or two with him. Dr. Prasad and Mrs. Prasad received him at Paddington station and they took him in their car to Gravesend. The drive in the car was pleasant. Anand found their house cosy and comfortable. The Prasads had only one son and he was studying in the local school. They came from Anand's native district and he had an innate liking for all those who came from that area. He was very fond of that rich, cultural region through which river Krishna flows. So anyone coming from that area reminded him of that beautiful cultural belt. Dr. Prasad and his wife were introduced to him by his close friend from that area.

After lunch Dr. Prasad took Anand to Charles Dickens centre in Rochester. It was an old house associated with the novelist's life and work. It had a history of its own and it figured in some of his novels. Anand was amused to listen to the recorded versions of dialogue from some of the novels of Dickens. He saw life-like figures presented in glass enclosures and the whole scene was rendered realistic through the reproduction of speeches. One could see Oliver Twist getting his lesson in pickpocketing from Fagin. Anand felt that such recreations of characters, with their voices reproduced, was wonderful. It looked as though the past lived in that house dramatically with all that visual perception.

The next day Dr. Prasad proposed a visit to Canterbury, the holy town. It was a good drive and they were soon in the ancient town. They visited the cathedral, spacious, historic and monumental. Naturally the martyrdom of Becket was very much in the mind of Anand. To be in Canterbury was something of a pilgrimage to the holy and the devout, and the whole place breathed that atmosphere. Then they drove to Dover. The Dover cliffs, white chalk ones, reminded Anand of King Lear and the scene where Gloucester imagined himself to have fallen from the cliffs. Ships were moving about. Some men and women were learning boating. Holiday revellers were in plenty. Prasad and Anand spent an hour watching the busy, strolling human figures. They drove back to Gravesend. Anand thanked the Prasads for their hospitality and for giving him an excellent holiday far from the madding crowd. He was asked to spend a day more but he had a tight schedule and the next day he had to fly to New York.

CHAPTER -3

Anand after his holiday in Gravesend flew from London to New York. This time he wanted to visit some American universities for establishing collaboration with his university in India. One of his visits was to Wisconsin. He had some correspondence with the Dean, so he was keen on exploring possibilities for a collaboration with Wisconsin university for M B A. programme in his university. Anand was full of ideas of introducing new courses and of making departments research oriented. So he had discussions with the Dean and the letter of understanding between the two universities was prepared.

Anand stayed with one of the Professors from India in Madison. A dinner was given in his honour and he could meet quite a few of the Indians resident in Madison. One of them, a medical practitioner was from Andhra. Naturally he took more interest in Anand and invited him for dinner the next day. At about six in the evening Dr. Siva Rao took Anand to his house in his car. He was a very pleasant type of person. Anand asked him,

'Don't you feel like coming back to Andhra?'

'Yes, we would. My wife and I have been planning to return to Andhra and start a nursing home, perhaps a year later.'

'That's good' Anand said.

'They reached the house and Mrs. Rao was introduced to Anand. Then he saw another woman just peeping in and going away. The moment he saw her he felt it was a

familiar face. A moment later she came with a pot of tea and some cups. Dr. Rao said,

'This is my mother-in-law'

'Namaste' Anand said mechanically but something was worrying him. Then to his great relief the woman said,

'Don't you recognise me? I was your student Latha'

Anand was simply amazed. It took one minute for him to recollect that old familiar face.

'Yes, I remember. I taught you before I went abroad. You belonged to my first batch of student.'

Anand looked at her smilingly. He thought that there was not much of change in her. She was still attractive. Looking at her Anand said,

'Age has not withered you. You still seem to be active and cheerful'.

'Yes this weather has done me good. I have been with my daughter in the U. S. A. for the last one year. Before leaving India I saw in the newspapers that you were appointed Vice-Chancellor'.

Dr. Rao was pleased with himself that he had invited someone already known to his mother-in-law. In fact he didn't mention Anand's name in the house. He simply said that he had invited a Vice-Chancellor for tea. Or else Latha would have told them even earlier about her association with Anand. Mrs. Rao looked at Anand with reverence as he happened to be the teacher of her mother

'It's indeed a surprise, a pleasant surprise for I did not know that my mother-in-law was your student. The unexpected always fascinates me and I am glad that your coming is like a family reunion.'

Dr. Rao was jubilant.

'How is Lakshmi?' asked Latha.

'Fine' said Anand and added, 'we often speak of you. Especially Lakshmi mentions you in some context or the other'.

'I am glad to hear that. Lakshmi is a gracious lady' Mrs. Rao was curious to know about Lakshmi. So she questioned,

'Who is Lakshmi? You mean Mrs. Anand, do you know her?'

'Yes I know her. We have been good friends. We are almost of the same age. We have been like sisters.'

'But you have not been writing to her'.

'O that doesn't matter. Where hearts meet correspondence is a poor show and you know that I am no good in writing letters. But I love Lakshmi'.

Anand was listening to Latha in a happy, amused manner. Dinner was served. It was a simple, homely meal, a typical Andhra meal. Anand liked it very much as he had missed the Andhra food for the last few days. Anand was strange that way. Even though he stayed in the U. K. for three years and visited foreign countries several times he was terribly fond of Andhra food. Being a vegetarian naturally this food gave him variety and spicy material. Anand thanked his hosts and left the place.

The moment Anand left the place Latha started talking.

'Anand used to be a good teacher. Students loved and respected him. He was the most popular teacher at that time.'

'Even now he talks in a pleasant manner. He is soft spoken and he looks cultured' Dr. Rao commented.

'It's so strange that we should invite him for the sake of formality and find him to be no stranger at all. He comes from our parts' Mrs. Rao touchingly referred to him.

'More than thirty years ago I was his student. He still has a cheerful disposition. Except that his hair has turned grey he looks energetic and active.'

Latha nostalgically thought of Anand. Suddenly she inquired,

'I wonder when he is going back'

'We have no idea, perhaps next week' commented Dr. Rao.

All the three were thinking of India. Their minds were racing back. They could go back only after a year as per the agreement, Dr. Rao had. Latha could go but she did not like to leave her daughter. She was the only child for her. Even though she could go back with Anand, yet she did not venture to say that.

That night her mind was completely given to the remembrance of those youthful days when she was Anand's student. Those were the salad days for her when the idea

of being in love with someone pleased her immensely. It fed her imagination and gave to her a dreamy existence. She herself requested Anand one day after the lecture was over to give her some help in English. He was a little puzzled. By nature he was shy and reluctant to talk to women. He was no woman hater, but he was no woman's man either. He married Lakshmi on his own accord. Even though Anand's marriage could not be called a love marriage yet it was based on Anand's liking for Lakshmi. Naturally therefore he wanted to be faithful to Lakshmi and lead a peaceful life with her.

If the sudden surprising meeting in Madison disturbed Latha that night it was equally irksome for Anand. He lay awake for a long time and thought of Latha's romantic infatuation for him. She came to his house everyday for one hour, and as he taught her she would be smiling all the time. Always that smile that bewitched and intrigued him. Anand did not know whether she was admiring him or was smiting at him for he seemed to be too dull in matters of love. One day he ventured to ask her,

'Do you follow me?'

'Of course I do. I like your teaching, that's why I have come seeking you'.

'Yes that puzzles me. I wonder why you should choose me'.

'Because you are so good you are an excellent teacher... ..your teaching thrills me.....'

Latha stopped abruptly but it looked as though she wanted to say something else.

'So it is my teaching that pleases you'.

'Not just the teacher in you, the man in you is of great appeal to me'.

Anand smiled. He understood that Latha was fond of him. She gradually endeared herself to Lakshmi. Whenever she was free she used to come to Lakshmi. She was almost a member of the family. Lakshmi, being good natured, never felt jealous of Latha. As they were almost of the same age, it was easy for them to like each other. Latha had a way of being useful to Lakshmi in her work. So the one hour Latha spent with Anand was nominal. Her association with Lakshmi became more significant. Lakshmi with her generous nature took it as an association of her past life, or else she could not understand why she should be so fond of Latha. She had her own sisters, not as though she was starved of that affection. Latha was sweet and endearing to Lakshmi. She was equally friendly with Anand casting amiable looks and making no secret of her love for him. Anand understood Latha's fondness

for him, but his loyalty to Lakshmi was unquestioned.

One day Lakshmi asked Anand,

'What do you think of Latha? Is she intelligent?'

'Of course she is intelligent. She is also good in attracting men'.

'Don't be silly. Latha is simple and childish. I like her' Lakshmi said.

Anand had nothing more to say. He had to accept the verdict of Lakshmi and not hint to her that Latha

was in love with him. Even if he had said that, Lakshmi would have flatly refused to believe. So a few months more rolled on in this harmless fondness of Latha for Anand.

Luckily for him his passport to go abroad came just when Latha was finishing her course and going away for her summer vacation. While taking leave of him Latha touched his feet reverently and he blessed her. Anand went abroad and Lakshmi informed him later about Latha's marriage to someone of her caste. Anand had a sigh of relief, but it was a difficult and trying time for him also. He no doubt liked Latha but he also knew that he could never be unkind to Lakshmi.

At the dinner in Madison with Dr. Rao, Anand came to know that two years ago Latha lost her husband. Even while he lived she was not keen on him. It was a conventional marriage where the humdrum life went on according to certain social norms and nothing outwardly could be seen disturbing or disquieting. Latha's romantic flights of imagination had no outlet but she got reconciled to the way of living acceptable to society and apparently made no further attempts at realising her long lost world of romantic love. Anand remembered that only once in all those years Latha saw Anand and Lakshmi almost by chance in Madras. It was an accidental meeting. Lakshmi and Anand were invited by some friends and Latha happened to come there as she was related to them. The moment she came she literally embraced Lakshmi and said 'Namasthe' to Anand. She looked at Anand, as of old, with lovingness. Then she got busy in talking to Lakshmi and revealed her mind freely to her. It was through

Lakshmi that Anand could get an idea of Latha's unfathomable mind. For all practical purposes he could see her as a happy soul for that was her outward appearance. But the seething discontent and unhappiness could be revealed only to Lakshmi for they had been real good friends. Anand was amazed to find Latha so very patient in accepting life as it came to her despite her inward cravings for a different life. That night in Madison he was in a mood to luxuriate on his fanciful association with Latha but the next day he was off to Washington.

In Washington he knew one of the officers in the Embassy and he arranged Anand's visit to Smithsonian Institute. Anand saw the Director and after discussions it was found that the Institute would be interested in establishing contacts with some departments in his university. The Director said that in a day or two a batch of young scientists were going to Bombay. Anand's visit to the Institute was communicated to them and at lunch time they all met Anand. Anand thanked the Director for the interest he had evinced in having collaborative work with his university in India. Later the curator and one of the young scientists took him round and showed specimens of animals preserved and most of them were rare ones. No doubt all that work needed dedication and financial support. Anand's stay in Washington was fruitful for he could meet some other officers also who would be useful to the university.

Anand was busy with university affairs, the moment he returned. He was committed to his work and he was thoroughgoing in everything he did. He aimed at perfection and never did anything half-heartedly. Work

was his religion, and service to mankind, he thought, was service to God. Lakshmi understood him completely and never grumbled about his deep involvement in his professional work. Both of them shunned publicity. Anand never craved for anything, nor demeaned himself by asking for favours. He knew that God would give him what he deserved at the right time and his duty was to do his work patiently, sincerely and faithfully. His work had to be judged by God and not by human beings. So he had to do it flawlessly and to the best of his abilities. This patient waiting for God's grace and not getting unduly excited if things did not happen as he planned was developed by him through some experiences he had in life. He realised that if he did not get what he asked for, it only meant that God had other plans for him and he had to wait. He submitted himself to God's will and he found to his surprise that what God gave him was much better than what he had asked for or planned for.

CHAPTER 4

Anand came to such conclusions only through an awareness of some rich, revealing experiences in life. The first time he realized that man's effort could be crowned with success only with God's grace, was when he got admission for Ph.D. in Cardiff. His planning failed and finally it was divine dispensation that took him to Cardiff. Similarly on his return to India he applied to several universities. He hoped that at least in some place merit would be recognised and he was prepared to go anywhere. His first interview was in Delhi. The Principal was exceedingly courteous to Anand and he was selected. Even as he was taking the interview in Delhi there was a telegram for him asking him to go to Poona. That was summer. The heat and dust were terrible. Still he went to Poona. One candidate there posed as though he was the chosen one and that the post was meant for him. Anand felt like going away without attending the interview. In fact none was selected at that time. Strangely enough there was another telegram for him directing him to go to Baroda. He was tired by then, yet he proceeded to Baroda. The train was crowded and he reached Baroda late in the night. Next morning he attended the interview but it was only a farce. It was pre-determined. He came to the station and near his compartment he found one of the Selection Committee members and also one of the candidates who came for the interview. That candidate was selected even though he was not highly qualified. He told Anand that he was surprised to see his own teachers on the Selection Committee.

Finally Anand reached his home town after an absence of ten days. He was quite exhausted. He had enough of

those interviews. There was still some more time for him to join the college in Delhi. He thought he could relax. But he had to take another journey, for a post card from Hyderabad was waiting for him. The Professor simply said, 'If you wish to join the university, please come immediately'. So Anand had to go to Hyderabad. The Professor was glad to see Anand. He wanted him to wait for a few days for getting the orders. But nothing happened because of some administrative bungling. The Professor, being a good man, was profusely apologetic and Anand quietly left for Delhi. It occurred to Anand a second time in his life that he had to submit himself to divine direction.

Life in Delhi pleased Anand. The cosmopolitan atmosphere was a welcome relief to Lakshmi and children for they were too long in a provincial town. They breathed an air of freedom. There was much of social life and often they used to go for picnics visiting several beautiful places in Delhi.

In the college Anand was loved and respected by his students and colleagues. They all trusted him. The authorities found him to be an understanding type of person committed to his work. Most of his colleagues were senior to him in age and they suffered from the onslaughts of partition. As they narrated their tales of woe, Anand listened to them with sympathy. Fresh from a British University he was much moved by their accounts of human suffering. But it also surprised him to see them with their raw feelings of passion, jealousy and hatred. In fact he could not understand why they were up against each other, even though all of them had the same cruel fate of losing everything they loved. Their suffering did not chasten them, on the

other hand it hardened them. They were full of bitterness, incapable of seeing someone else in a better position.

But Anand was loved by all of them, mostly because of his high qualification and friendly nature. The warring tribes had no hesitancy in confessing their own innermost feelings to Anand. He was one with all of them, yet all the time he kept himself aloof and detached. One of their colleagues once commented that Anand was like water on the lotus. On another occasion one of the calm-going teachers whispered to Anand that some of their colleagues were totally wicked. Anand being a humanist was piqued. He simply said, 'Mr. Singh, when you see a good man, thank God that He has created a good person. When you see someone wicked, feel sorry for him for after all he is also a part of God's creation'. Singh was amused and delighted. He said that what Anand had stated was upanishadic. But Anand refused, 'Frankly speaking I have not read Upanishads, Mr. Singh. My observation is based on common sense'. But Singh took Anand to be a wise man full of philosophic wisdom. Singh was so good to Anand that he presented a set of Radhakrishnan's books of philosophy, for he found Anand to be extremely deserving to have those books. He said that he had waited for a long time to present them to a good man, and he found Anand to be that man.

His students were always eager to talk to him. He was put on every committee and he had to deal with student problems. He endeared himself to them even though he did not speak to them in Hindi. He understood them; but he was a little hesitant to speak to them in Hindi. Out of curiosity some students used to ask him, 'Sir, don't you know any Indian language? You always speak in English'.

Anand would smile and say, 'O yes, I have my own language richer than your language. It is older too.' The students would laugh. Often Anand was put to embarrassment for he was mistaken for a Northern Indian. So every one would speak to him in Hindi and even though he said he was from the South they would not accept it.

'May be your forefathers might have migrated from the North to the South' they used to say.

Anand smilingly would add, 'Perhaps'.

On the whole he found his friends to be warm hearted. Often they invited themselves to Anand's house for they liked some of the South Indian dishes prepared by Lakshmi. They visited his house sometimes uninvited too. In turn they invited the Anands, but they never ventured to go unless they were invited. Anand was sought after for advice by both the groups in the college. It used to be difficult for him to keep their secrets to himself and advise them in the right manner, mostly for the good of the institution.

In the third year of his stay in Delhi Anand developed a curious thinking. He lived in a locality in New Delhi where several government officers stayed. He saw the comforts and the privileges they enjoyed even though they were not so highly qualified as he was. He felt that teaching did not give him the advantages that an officer enjoyed. He asked himself why he should deny his family the comforts of a good life just because he loved teaching. He remembered the day when an officer of the India House in London suggested that he should take up a government job, and he flatly refused. He felt that his research experience should be useful to others in the Indian universities.

So he opted for a teaching assignment and he did well as a teacher. Perhaps the city life had its own temptations far remote from the seclusion of teaching. So Anand tried for some administrative jobs. Twice he came to know that he was selected, but on both the occasions there was some hitch, and some interference, and the administrative machinery stood in the way of his getting orders of appointment. He was disgusted with all that manipulation and intriguing that went on behind the corridors of power. As he was in Delhi he could know the inner politics. Sometimes he asked himself why he was hankering after an administrative job, one that he rejected earlier immediately after getting his degree in the U. K. There was a conflict in him between what he considered to be the chosen path for him and the alluring picture of a life of power that he dreamt of. But twice that venture deluded him.

In the fifth year it so happened that a Vice-Chancellor of a South Indian university visited Delhi. Someone who knew him offered to introduce Anand to him. As they reached the house where the Vice-Chancellor was staying, the host asked Anand,

'Are you from the Ministry of Education ?'

'No, I am in the university'

The gentleman who offered to introduce Anand was still waiting for an opportunity, while the host took the lead. This was quite unexpected. The Vice-Chancellor was smoking a cigar with relish and enjoyment. He studied in foreign universities and he was known for his urbane outlook. Slowly he said,

'Why do you want to teach in Delhi ? In your subject, we don't have such a highly qualified person like you in our parts. We are now starting a new university in the South. You'd better join the university and develop the department.'

All this he said on his own in an unhurried manner. He looked like one who took life easy. The way he talked indicated that Anand had an obligation to teach in his own State and not in Delhi. He was gracious in his reference to Anand, and to Anand it seemed to be too good to be believed. Once again the divine agency started working even though Anand could not understand it at that time. The gentleman who was still waiting to introduce Anand felt embarrassed. He wondered whether Anand knew the Vice-Chancellor and pretended to be not knowing him. So he asked the Vice-Chancellor,

'Sir, do you know Anand ?'

'I don't know him, but I have heard about him. We would like to have him in the new university'.

Anand thanked the Vice-Chancellor and left the place in high spirits. He dashed to the college and looked at his colleagues with some peculiar superciliousness. He thought that his merit was recognised. Very soon he would head a new department in a new university. That gave him elation and a new sense of achievement. He never thought that so much good luck would come to him almost unasked for. Lakshmi was equally delighted. Anand floated in an airy imagination for the next three months. Everything seemed to be propitious and he became reconciled to teaching. He forgot all about the two inauspicious attempts he made at being an administrator.

The joy of teaching came back to him. He wore a new look of confidence and complacency.

After three months the Vice-Chancellor came again on some work in Delhi. Anand went to see him. He had to wait for sometime. Then the Vice-Chancellor came and expressed his unhappiness about the way the new university was shaping. He no longer had any say in its matters. He told Anand very clearly that he would not be taken. He felt sorry for having given him unnecessary hopes. If Anand had the elixir of life before, now he was in the nether world. His feet dragged on. After all that jubilant expectation, the unfavourable news looked like an anti-climax. He told Lakshmi about the unexpected turn of events. He had to accept his defeat.

The peculiarity was that the negation came as unexpectedly as the good news. Anand realised that he would never get anything in life so easily as all that. Even if someone took a liking for him, he had to go through the mill; not for him favours from others. This was his mood of resignation, yet he smarted under repeated reversals. He had to bear the brunt of the blow for a few months. Then came the summer vacation. Anand spent the last few months in a restless manner. From the day he heard about the new university he felt he had an obligation to go back to his State. It was a strange obsession with him. When he went abroad it was only with the view of getting a research degree so that he could come back and serve the cause of research and teaching in the Indian universities. But Delhi with all its attractions blunted this purpose in him. In the university, as yet there was only teaching, and not much research work was done. Anand very much liked to do research on his own. In that mood

of disgust he tried for those two administrative posts unsuccessfully. So even after five years of stay in Delhi, he was still groping in darkness and his future seemed to be as bleak as it was when he first joined the college in Delhi. The dedicated teacher in him was slowly ebbing out.

Quite ferociously he developed a nostalgic attachment to his State. He asked himself whether he was a refugee among refugees. Something goaded him that he should go back to his State. He really did not know in what moment the Vice-Chancellor told him about the new university, it made him crazy. Once the idea caught him, Delhi lost its glamour for him. He longed to be in Andhra. Some inner fury overpowered him to serve the new University, named after the Lord of the Seven Hills. He was till then an agnostic. So there was nothing religious about his choice. He looked at it only from the academic point of view, not from any sense of a greater destiny awaiting him. Even though divine dispensation repeatedly showed itself to be stronger than human effort, he did not as yet surrender himself to the will of God. He still struggled to assert himself as an independent intellectual, not to be deterred by the inhospitable happenings in life. And he very much wanted a distinct identity for himself. Even though he had broad human sympathies for the less privileged classes in society, yet he maintained an aristocratic exclusiveness. Riches had no meaning for him, yet he loved to maintain a dignified aloofness from the sordidness of life. Like most other human beings Anand was a bundle of contradictions. The deeper self in him had yet to materialise.

Anand and his family planned to go to the South in the summer vacation. In all those five years they went to

the South only once. So they were longing to be back in Andhra. Anand loved his village. Even though he had been abroad and lived in Delhi for five years his village with its ancient temples, green fields and large tanks always appealed to him. The rustic in him never left him. Perhaps on that account he could never talk with a twisted tongue and flatter anyone. He was invariably courteous with every one but he was frank and open in his talk with others. It was indeed difficult to see when his rustic truthfulness overpowered his acquired sophistication. So coming back to the village in the summer was something dear to him.

The moment he reached his village, his brother, who taught in the High school, told him that the new university advertised for a Readership. Anand immediately wrote to the Registrar stating that he would be in Andhra for a month, and if they liked to correspond with him they could write to him within that time. He was asked to come for an interview in Madras. They did not specifically mention the post for which he was called for interview. Anand did not take the interview seriously. He did not know anyone, it gave him freedom to express himself freely. Moreover, his British degree and his stay in Delhi gave him confidence, perhaps over confidence. His replies were very curt. At one stage he was talking and talking, and one of the experts ventured to suggest, 'Dr. Anand, don't lecture to us'. Perhaps some of the members felt that Anand was proud because he did not show the customary modesty that a candidate for a job was expected to show. He was absolutely indifferent and he did not talk to them about his pay or designation. In fact it was only a lectureship that was advertised. Even then the new university was appointing persons independently irrespective of the posts adver-

tised. The scholar in Anand revolted against all such mercenary transactions of pay and designation. If he wanted to serve the new university he would, or else Delhi was there for him. That was his attitude and the authorities took advantage of his silence.

At the time of the interview Anand was so reserved that he did not talk to any other candidate. He left the place, immediately after the interview, but on second thoughts he felt he should know some details about the post. So he came back. Luckily one of the candidates talked to him.

'Where are you working?'

'In Delhi.'

'This is only a lectureship and they won't pay so much as you are getting in Delhi.'

He was in fact the local candidate. Anand was an outsider even though he was an Andhra. The local candidate was good enough to give him an idea of the experts and the officers of the university. Anand felt that the local gentleman would get the lectureship. He left the place thanking him for the information. That very evening he left Madras and went to his village. He told Lakshmi that a local person might be appointed and that they could go back to Delhi after the vacation. Lakshmi never contradicted anything that Anand said. That was her way of managing him. She knew that he did not like to be opposed. So she was a silent spectator, sometimes puzzled by the strange moves of her idealist-husband. She simply said,

'All right, whatever is destined will happen. Let us not worry'. Yes, destiny was something unshunnable, but Anand was still trying to wriggle himself out of an awkward situation, for he was over-qualified for that post. Yet if he did not get it, would it mean that no one cared for merit? He still believed that somewhere merit would be recognised. He did not lose faith in himself or in the good qualification he possessed. He was prepared to fight the battle of life, and one day he hoped, the reward would come. That was his thinking, but often reality seemed to be remote from his ideal world.

Much to his surprise, within a week he received the letter of appointment putting him on the same pay and designation he had in Delhi. In fact that pay happened to be slightly more than the Reader's pay in the new university. Anand did not know the details of the grades and it looked as though the authorities wanted to test him. Perhaps they wanted to see whether he would care to come on such unfavourable terms. They could not leave him altogether for he was highly qualified.

Anand wavered for a few days. He had an established reputation as a good teacher and he was loved and respected by his colleagues and students in Delhi. He was almost settled in life by the time he went abroad. A second time he started afresh when he joined the college in Delhi. Now a third time he was trying to hazard all that and come to an unknown place with no improvement in his status or in the salary. It looked foolhardy. However he went to Delhi to apprise the Principal of the new developments. The Principal of the college was extremely unhappy. He did not want to lose Anand. Very touchingly he said,

'Anand, there are some teachers who are good in teaching, but they do not have a higher research degree. One may be a good researcher, but he may be a poor teacher. One may even be a good teacher and a good researcher, but as a man he may not be good. In you, we find all the three combined. You are a good teacher, a good researcher and above all a good man. You love to be useful to others. It is difficult to get a person like you'.

Anand was perplexed. He never thought that Principal Gupta had such a perception of men and matters. He took him as an administrator, perhaps unfeeling and business-like in his relationship with others. He never imagined him to be so discerning and so humane. So Anand thanked him profusely, yet he pleaded,

'I think I have to go'.

'Why should you go? The offer is in no way an improvement on your present position. You are definitely taking a risk by going there. We will do every thing good for you. You have a better future in Delhi. What's the use of going to a provincial university?'

The Principal tried his best to discourage Anand from going to the South. He was very generous in his promises. For three days the temptation was on. Finally Anand said,

'I have a domestic problem. I thank you for your kindness, yet I think I have to go'.

'What's the problem?' queried the Principal.

'My sister is to be married. Unless I go to Andhra I can't find a suitable alliance. So please permit me to go'.

The Principal was exuberantly liberal. He said,

'Anand, you can go on leave for one month on full pay. Celebrate the marriage and come back to us'.

Anand was dumbfounded. He did not know what to say. Nor did he expect the Principal to be so warm hearted. It was a new experience for him, but something told him that he should take the risk. He loved adventure and he felt that life with all its hardships was lovable. He did not bargain for a life of ease and comfort. He was still in his early thirties, so the struggle could go on for some more years. He was not in a hurry to settle down. He had a romantic fascination for unexplored regions. So while appreciating the Principal's gesture he was anxious to go in search of an unknown fate. He requested the Principal,

'Please let me go for a year. Let me see how life will be at the other end'.

The Principal realised that there was no point in pressuring Anand to stay. So he said,

'Anand, I have one request. Please don't inform the students that you are leaving us'.

Anand promised to go away the next day itself without informing anyone. In fact it was still vacation time, only a week later the college would be reopened. Anand really did not know why the Principal made that suggestion. But he saw no difficulty in observing that condition. He thanked the Principal and left Delhi the very next day.

Only one of his colleagues knew of his departure. He came to the station to see him off. Peculiarly enough Anand saw one of his students also searching for him near the train. Anand wondered how he came to know of his movement. The time was up. The train moved out. Anand said 'good bye' to his colleague and his student. The adventurer was looking forward to a new experience.

Anand's mind was full of vague fears and doubts, for the picture was not a rosy one. It was only a change, not a change for the better, as things seemed to be at that time. The moment he entered the compartment he saw one familiar face. He was from the Andamans, he used to be in Delhi moving about as a busy idle person. He had no specific job and no settled income. Anand very often saw him in the company of his friend, who was very kind to that gentleman. Despite all his clabbable qualities perhaps Delhi gave him nothing. So he was going back with his family. Anand sympathised with him, for he too was in a similar predicament of establishing his identity and finding his roots away from Delhi. Anand was often given to such imaginative ideas. He talked to that gentleman for sometime recapitulating some of the happy associations in Delhi.

The long journey to the small town exhausted him completely. Late in the night he reached that place and there was no accommodation. He had to make do with some room in the choultry and the next morning when Anand saw the officer concerned for accommodation he expressed surprise that he had come. Then Anand reached the University college to report himself to duty. The Principal

came late and Anand had to wait for sometime. The Principal wore the typical South Indian dress with a closed coat and a turban on. He seemed to be very reserved and not very communicative. He did not show any enthusiasm in receiving Anand. Anand's first interview with him chilled him. He did not very much like the place. In the evening he saw groups of men going about the streets with drum beating and some kind of body movements considered to be dancing. He wondered what it was, and he was told that it was a religious ritual. Anand never saw the big temples of the South, nor was he acquainted with the rituals of the temples.

A week after he joined, one Saturday morning, he went up the Hills. That was Asthamam day when the Lord's accounts were calculated and the debt he owed to Kubera still remained unpaid. It would be over only by the end of Kaliyuga. It was an auspicious day, so there was a lot of rush in the temple. He just entered the temple and saw the two figures at the entrance. He thought he had finished seeing the temple, and he was about to go away, when someone pushed him inside from the exit side. It was a vision of supreme bliss for him. He felt he had come to the journey's end. Just for a split second he was at peace with himself. It was a mystic experience, not repeated again. He was thrilled on seeing the idol in a majestic pose, offering benediction to the devotees. To Anand it was a novelty.

But the small town with its grotesque manners repelled him. His family as yet did not join him. The fruitless search for a good house went on for weeks and weeks. He

was almost a foreigner to the local people, and often he was mistaken for some Panjabi or a U.P. fellow. He was questioned whether he was an Andhra. He wondered whether Lakshmi would like the place, that too when there was no decent house for rent. He murmured out of self-pity, that it was a fall for him from civilization to barbarism. Essentially Anand was warm hearted, but the local people seemed to be matter-of-fact and very practical in their approach to life. That was Anand with his spirit of adventure in the new university. His cosmopolitan outlook gave him a rude shock, for it was irrelevant in that small town.

CHAPTER—5

I

Within a week of Anand's joining the new university a telegram came from Delhi. Principal Gupta informed Anand of the revision of pay and asked him to return to Delhi. Already Anand was feeling a little disappointed with the new place and the job. So the telegram still pulled him down. He felt that he had made a mistake in leaving Delhi. So he went to the Registrar and showed him the wire. The Registrar said,

'We have searched the whole of the South for a suitable person and only with great difficulty we could get you. Whatever is due to you, will come to you'.

It looked like a promise, but the Vice-Chancellor was away. So Anand could not see him. Anyway he said to himself that he would wait for sometime, at least for a year, so that he could prove himself to be a good teacher and establish his identity as an Andhra. So he wrote to Principal Gupta that he would wait for a year. Peculiarly enough within that time his sister's marriage was celebrated. He sent the wedding card to Principal Gupta in Delhi. Pat came the reply, 'Now that your headache is over, come back to Delhi.' Anand was pleased to know that he was still wanted.

Anand wanted to take a final decision only after two years. Even though he came all the way from Delhi his services were not properly utilised. The authorities were still studying him or there were pressures on them for having brought an outsider who was young and would stay

with the department for years and years. All the other Heads of the Departments were retired persons who might stay only for a few years as a passing phase. But Anand was in his early thirties by the time he joined the department and he would go on for years. Perhaps there was rethinking on that account. Anyway patiently he taught the undergraduates for two years. They became his admirers and his reputation as a good teacher was established. But nothing was done by the authorities. Perhaps they were still watching him. So he was puzzled and perplexed.

In the beginning of the third year he ventured to go to the Vice-Chancellor and express himself freely.

'I have been here for two years, but no effort is made to start the Postgraduate course. If for any reason you want to bring someone else, you are free to do so. I can go back to Delhi. They still need me'.

The Vice-Chancellor liked Anand. Even then he was taken aback when Anand talked like that. He too was feeling awkward in keeping Anand without utilising his services properly. Apparently there were pressures on him, yet he did not like to lose Anand. He might have realised that Anand's patience was exhausted. So he said,

'Dr. Anand, we will do something for you'.

Anand could not say anything more. He thanked the Vice-Chancellor and hoped that something would be done for him. But nothing happened.

Anand went to Madras for a Seminar. He was away for a week and by the time he came back there was a

message from the Registrar that he should see him immediately on his return from Madras. Strangely enough, Anand on his return journey met an elderly gentleman in the train. In a casual manner they started talking for they were the only occupants in that first class compartment. The gentleman asked Anand to choose the name of a flower. Anand said 'Rose' and the gentleman predicted that he would go abroad. He said that things were getting ready in his absence for his trip abroad, and on his return life would be in the ascendant. The moment Anand saw the Registrar he told him that in his absence his name was sent to the U. G. C. for an assignment to go to the U. S. A. The Registrar also told him that he might not be selected, for the University sent only three names, but the U. G. C. wanted another name so that they could choose two out of the four names. That was how Anand's name figured in the last minutes mostly because of compulsion, not out of choice. So the Registrar asked Anand to keep it confidential and avoid unnecessary speculation for it was unlikely that he would get it. Only the first three names were the recommended ones whereas Anand's name was a subsequent addition.

But Anand remembered the prediction and he felt that it might come to be true. Within a few weeks he heard that he was selected to visit the American universities for hundred days for studying the General Education programme. Anand was one of the ten Indian educators selected that year. He was happy to get it. Lakshmi felt that something better awaited him. The small town seemed to augur well, and that was the third year of his teaching in the university. Along with him the Principal of the local women's college was also selected. She was one of the

chosen three of the university. Anand was the first teacher from the university college to get this opportunity of going abroad. Life seemed to be moving ahead. For nearly three years it was static. Often he had to accept the humiliating situation of being a Lecturer with the experience and qualifications of a Professor. But he never blamed anyone. He knew his own limitations. Whereas others used to approach and bring pressure on the authorities he was reluctant to talk about his job. His thinking was that when he was fed up with all that patient waiting he would leave the university. Sometimes he was too outspoken in his talk.

At the time of the dinner given to him and the lady Principal by the Vice-Chancellor on the eve of their going abroad, the lady naturally expressed her gratitude to the Vice-Chancellor in flamboyant and colourful language. Anand's turn came and he simply said,

'By God's grace I go to the U. S. A. and I wish that opportunities of this type may come to others also, so that the university will have the best of their experience.'

Even for the sake of formality he did not express his gratitude to the Vice-Chancellor. His contention, when questioned by friends, was that he could not utter an untruth for his name was sent only as a filling up the gap. The authorities might have found Anand a strange person. Yet they liked him.

Hundred days in the U.S.A., visiting various universities, was a pleasant task for Dr. Anand. He felt that all the good work he had done in the U.K. for the Ph.D. for three years, was rewarded by an unexpected holiday for

hundred days. In the first month he even attended some classes to see the difference between the British and the American systems of teaching. Lecturing in the American universities was informal whereas in the British universities it was quite formal. A lecture was a serious exposition of scholarship for one hour. In the American universities a lecture could just become discussion half way if the students expressed some doubts. So it was partly lecturing and partly discussion. The Seminars in the American universities and the Tutorials in the British universities prepared the students for thinking on their own. The students gained confidence through discussions. Unfortunately none of these could be tried successfully in the Indian universities for various reasons, Anand thought.

Wherever Anand went he was received warmly by the American scholars in his area of specialization. It was a fruitful exchange of ideas and a shared experience for Anand with those scholars. It enriched his knowledge. It gave him confidence. The visit served as a second education for him. He studied in a British university, now he had the benefit of studying the American pattern of education. From one angle he was coming out of his narrow specialization, and his intellectual horizons were broadening. Perhaps God wanted him to have all that rich experience so that he could be more useful to the university. He liked the American scholars for their warmth. Their informality pleased him. It was a pleasure for Anand to move from the east coast of America to midwest and then to the west coast using all modes of transport. He visited several universities, had discussions with several scholars

The only awkward situation for Anand was that on many occasions when he met the Indian students he was embarrassed for they often said that they would never come back to India. It irked him to see them preposterously enslaving themselves to western materialism. Being a nationalist he never imagined himself to be anything but Indian. The Indian students were all admiration for their American teachers because they were friendly and sociable. Equally so, Anand thought, would be the Indian teacher. His affection for his students was traditional. So he could not understand the lopsided views of the Indian students abroad. In the Indian context, if a teacher were to be friendly and informal with the students, naturally they would expect him to extend favours to them. Sometimes that attitude could be unpleasant both to the teacher and to the student. So the Indian teacher would be hesitant to mix freely with his students. Anand was unhappy to find the Indian teacher maligned. Moreover the Indian system of education like the British had a religious bias whereas the American system was secular and not unduly hierarchic. Anand therefore could not sympathise with the attitude of the Indian students abroad.

At the end of the hundred days Anand was invited to visit the U. K. The British Council extended its invitation to the Indian educators and Anand was very happy to see Britain again. He roamed about in London searching for old books. In the American cities too he was a frequent visitor to the bookshops and he had a good collection of books, especially books out of print. He was a bibliomaniac. Even as a student in the U. K. that was his hobby, collecting books. He wanted to see his Professor in Cardiff and the British Council arranged his trip. They

wanted to put him in a good hotel, but he preferred to stay with his landlady in Cardiff. She and her husband were very kind to him while he was a student. They liked him. So he stayed with the landlady and she was happy to receive him. His Professor introduced Anand to his colleagues and he was mightily pleased to see his own creation prospering well in the academic sphere. Then Anand saw some of his old friends and his visit to Mary was memorable. She was still trying to get married and seemed to be not very happy. Her spirits revived on seeing Anand. The good old days came back to them. She said lovingly,

'Anand, you haven't changed at all. Life must have been kind to you'.

'Of course it has not been too bad'.

She laughed for he was using the typical understatement of the Britisher. Then she narrated her sad experiences and he felt sorry for her. He thought that she could have married John who loved her immensely. Anand said consolingly,

'Forget all about the past. Think of the present. You are intelligent and you can do some creative writing. It will be an outlet for some of your suppressed feelings. This will be one way of getting relief, and it also gives you a sense of fulfilment.'

Mary seemed to be convinced about what Anand said. She cheered up a bit and she said,

'Anand thank you for showing me a way out of this impasse. I shall try. I hope I shall succeed'.

'Of course you will', Anand said emphatically. On the whole Anand liked her even though she was a little wayward as a student. He often advised her to get a degree. But she was more interested in live human beings than in dead authors. Whenever Anand commented on her lukewarm attitude to studies she used to say,

'O I am bored with the lectures. I come to the university to see and talk to intellectuals like you'.

That was invariably her method of sleeping him. If only she had taken her studies seriously she could have taken up a job and kept herself busy with that work. Anyway Anand was not prepared to criticise her. It was time for him to leave her and go to London. He never saw her again. For a few years she wrote to him about her success as a creative writer. Even her domestic life seemed to be better. Somehow after some years there were no more letters from her and Anand did not know what had happened to her.

II

Anand visited Paris and Geneva and returned to India and to the small town with a new sense of achievement. He was more vocal than before and he was quite frank in his talks with others. Many grew jealous of him, but he did not bother. On his return he was made a Reader. The Vice-Chancellor was very much interested in the General Education programme. So Anand had to discuss with him about the introduction of the new course and he became the Coordinator for General Education in the university. He was busy with the new programme, conducting seminars and workshops, and he was keen on making the new course successful.

Meanwhile, Dr. Murthy, the Principal of the University college, who was one of the three recommended for the educational tour of hundred days, took a dislike for him. First Anand did not realise that. The Principal was a retired Professor and Anand respected him as an elderly man. The way Anand was liked by the students was irksome to Murthy. He realised that Anand was taking a lead in the shaping of the new course. It also meant that the Vice-Chancellor was giving greater encouragement to Anand in introducing the new course. All this was galling to the Principal. He felt he should have done that pioneering work whereas it was entrusted to Anand, almost unasked for. The principal created situations where Anand was embarrassed,

Immediately after Anand's return from the U.S.A. the Vice-Chancellor told him that he could admit students for M.A. and the Principal congratulated him for getting the post-graduate course. A few students applied for the course and they were called for interview. Dr. Anand was present on the committee. Dramatically the Principal raised the objection. He asked Anand,

'On what authority can I admit these students for M.A. ? I haven't received any orders from the university'

Anand felt humiliated. He did not understand why the Principal had called the students for interview and then declared that the whole thing was spurious. He did not request the Vice-Chancellor for the post-graduate course. He said it on his own and the Principal confirmed it. So Anand felt disappointed. He told Principal Murthy,

'You start the course when you get the orders. For the present ask the students to go away'.

He walked out in a huff and he told some of the students waiting there to get away.

That was the starting point of Anand's confrontation with the Principal. A kind of cold war started. Anand was polite to everyone, but he could not tolerate hypocrisy. The Principal very often used to call the teachers in the department and talk to them for hours. He slowly influenced them. That was his type of administration where the underlings were encouraged to flout the authority of the Head of the Department. This meant that at a certain stage, out of sheer necessity, the Head of the Department might compromise with the Principal. That was the strategy, but Anand was very independent. He would never undermine his merit by submitting himself to any undue authority that tried to submerge his individuality. He fought back and he never conceded. In fact he never bothered to talk to the Principal. He ignored him.

This conflict came to a head when the Professorship was advertised. Somehow something told Anand that he would not get it that year. Lakshmi was cautious. She said, "Why do you yourself say that you won't get it?" Anand was called for the interview. As he entered the room the Principal's face became darker. Anand was very much upset. It spoiled his mood, and he did not talk so boldly as he did the first time he came for an interview in that university. There was one senior gentleman who had been a Professor for sometime in some other university. He was in trouble at that time and he was without a job. He was known to the members of the Selection Committee. So naturally they supported him and the Principal was with them. But he did not have a research degree, and the

Vice-Chancellor did not like to disappoint Anand. So the discussion went on for half an hour. It was a crucial decision that the Vice-Chancellor had to take. Anand came to know of the sequential happenings in the discussion a year later after he had become a Professor. He was told that the Vice-Chancellor finally asked the experts,

'Why can't Dr. Anand be made a Professor?'

The experts were cornered. They said,

'Dr. Anand is a good scholar. We like him. We have nothing against him. Only last year he was made a Reader, and he is not even forty'.

'If that is so, we will not fill up the vacancy. Next year he will be of age'.

The Vice-Chancellor clinched the issue. All this was supposed to be confidential, but it was known later. A few days after the interview the Vice-Chancellor saw Anand at a meeting. He said,

'Your headship is saved. So far so good, even though we couldn't make you a Professor this year'.

Anand thanked him for his kindness.

The fifth year was a trying time for Anand. Post-graduate courses were started in the university and the Honours courses were abolished. Anand had to accept a heavy responsibility. Even at the time of the admissions the Principal gave trouble, and it continued throughout the year. The class work started and Anand was doing most of the teaching because all others were almost freshers. They were teaching the post-graduate students for the first

time. In his anxiety to make a good beginning Anand was too enthusiastic about the work and discipline in the department. Some of his colleagues construed it as an authoritarian attitude, and one or two students did not like the idea of discipline. So there was some unease in the department.

Dr. Anand went to Delhi on some U.P.S.C. work. His colleagues felt that Anand was thriving. Even as a Reader he was decisive and often dogmatic in his assertions. So some of the teachers thought that he would perhaps be a dictator if he were to be a Professor. So they wanted to create a situation whereby he would leave the university. They knew his temperament, that if things didn't go well, he would get out. He would never hang on, for he had a lot of self-respect. The Principal's support gave them the audacity to rebel against Anand. His position was slightly weak because he did not get the Professorship that year.

In that U.P.S.C. meeting in Delhi he saw one of his former colleagues. His colleague was very much surprised to see him. He said,

'Only yesterday we were talking of you. Principal Gupta has now become the Vice-Chancellor of a new university. He wants you to come as Professor and develop the department. In fact I should have written to you today. I am glad I have met you'.

'Thank you very much for the good news. I am grateful to Principal Gupta for thinking of me for the Professorship. I shall write to you within a few weeks about my decision, Anand said

Anand was happy to think that there were some kind persons who were still fond of him even though in the small town conditions were different, mostly because of caste prejudices.

By the time he came back it was very late in the night. Lakshmi looked worried. She told him,

'In your absence your colleagues in the department have sent an anonymous letter against you to the Vice-Chancellor. I wonder what will happen.'

Luckily for Anand a copy of that letter was sent to him. It was pungent and bitter. It mentioned that they, the students, were in hell only because of Anand's tyranny. It was supposed to be a letter from the students, but it was clearly from the teachers. Anand was unperturbed for there was the offer from another university. If the Vice-chancellor were to be harsh on him he would quit immediately. That new university also was started in a holy place. From one holy place to another place of sanctity, it did not matter. That was his stubborn faith in himself. So he told Lakshmi,

'Don't you worry. I have an offer from Principal Gupta. He is now the Vice-Chancellor of a new university and he wants me to head the department as Professor. We don't belong to this place. What does it matter if we go away?'

Lakshmi listened to him in silence. Perhaps she thought that her husband's wander-lust was not yet over. Anand was fond of moving about whereas Lakshmi was for settling down. Perhaps she prayed to God that all should be well.

The next morning Anand saw the Vice-Chancellor.

'I have been to Delhi. In my absence there has been an anonymous letter. I really do not know whether I am doing the right thing for the department. You can advise me if I am wrong'.

The Vice-Chancellor graciously put it.

'Dr. Anand, the best place for an anonymous letter is the waste paper basket. It has already gone to that place. What you are doing is correct. Go ahead with your work. These fellows want to take it easy. A certain amount of discipline is absolutely necessary especially in the initial stages of the growth of the department'.

Anand never expected that the Vice-Chancellor would take such a reasonable attitude. In fact the Vice-Chancellor had already investigated the matter and satisfied himself that nothing was wrong with Dr. Anand. He even felt that it was a conspiracy to drive him out. His own analysis was that when a good person was doing his work sincerely the easy-going ones were finding it difficult to adjust. He realised that Anand needed support from the administration, whereas the Principal and his followers speculated that Anand was cold shouldered and he would very soon go. Anand took it as a challenge and he defied the Principal more openly and blatantly.

Throughout the year the tug of war went on. At the end of the year the Professorship was advertised again. The Principal at last succeeded in going to the U. S. A. for a few weeks. So conditions seemed to be favourable to Anand. Still he could not be sure of anything. So he saw the Vice-Chancellor and said,

'The Professorship is advertised again.'

'Yes it is our duty to advertise, your duty to apply' the Vice-Chancellor commented.

Anand was sulking for he did not know how many times he had to apply. Noticing his discomfiture the Vice-Chancellor said,

'Not that we are unaware of your merit, yet certain formalities have to be gone through. So you'd better apply'.

Anand kept quiet. He did not get any assurance, he felt. In his heart of hearts he did not like to apply, lest last year's experience should repeat itself. He wanted to go to the new university in the North.

That was the time when something unusual and unexpected happened at the domestic level. After a gap of several years, when Anand and Lakshmi were almost thinking that they would have no more children, a daughter was born. A few minutes after her birth Lakshmi told Anand that he should apply, that being the last day for the receipt of applications. The moment Lakshmi suggested to Anand, his mind was settled, though he was dodging so far. He went to the Registrar's office and gave the application. His duty was over. He had a sense of relief.

Two weeks later unofficially Anand came to know that he would be given the Professorship. Yet the clouds still hovered. Nothing was definite until the last minute. Anand heard that several approached the Vice-Chancellor with letters of introduction from powerful persons. But

one saving feature was that Principal Murthy was away. When Anand appeared for the interview he found that the experts were changed. So a new atmosphere prevailed and Anand was hopeful of his success. Or else he could migrate to the North. That gave his confidence. He did well in the interview and he was selected. But the recommendation had to be ratified by the Syndicate and that would take some time. Only then the orders would come.

Anand's colleagues in the department were busy speculating. Some of them hoped against hope that Anand would leave. One of them came to his house one evening and proffered information.

'It seems some one from Kerala is appointed Professor. He has written to a friend to look for a house:

Anand calmly said,

'Your information is wrong. I am appointed Professor'.

The man was stunned. He could not speak for a minute. He was sweating awfully. His whole body was shaken.

'Perhaps my information is wrong' he murmured and left the place. Anand could never forget that scene. Speculation was rife and Anand's colleagues had tough time in convincing themselves that Anand would go. At last on a good day Anand received the orders. The Principal in-charge, an elderly gentleman, blessed Anand. He timed it in such a way that after the 'puja', worship of the Lord on Friday, he called Anand and gave the orders to him in person. That proved to be an auspicious time.

The next day there was confusion in the department. The office-boy came and told Anand that the teachers were feeling nervous. They were thinking that Anand would give them trouble as a measure of retaliation for all the wrong things they had done. Anand felt sorry for them. He called them in and explained to them.

'You need not bother about that anonymous letter. I never cared to know who had done it. Forget all about it. We should all work together for the good of the department, and see that it gets a good name. I want you to be happy in the department. You are free to see me anytime you need my help. I hope you will live in peace'.

Anand spoke movingly and they cheered up. He stuck to his promise and in all the remaining two decades of his headship of the department he never made it difficult for them to survive. All of them remained with him all those years except one. He was a little scared of the authorities for he came to know that he and some other person in the department were conveniently exposed as the persons responsible for that anonymous letter. So two weeks after Anand had been a Professor the young man told him that he was leaving the department. Anand was puzzled.

'Why do you want to go'?

'The administration may harass me. The other gentleman has some local support. So he can manage. I think I should go before trouble starts for me'.

Anand pitied him. He was sorry for him. Anand by nature was generous. He never harboured any grouse against anyone. He loved humanity with all its good, bad and indifferent people. So it pained him to see a young

man recklessly leaving a position for something uncertain. In fact one of the Professors asked Anand,

'Now that you are a Professor, Anand, why are you keeping quiet? You should find out who exactly was responsible for that anonymous letter. If it were to happen to me I would have finished them by now.'

Anand smiled. He understood the moral indignation of his friend, yet he believed in forgiveness as the rarer virtue. So he said,

'Thank you Professor for your interest in me. But why should I bother? Nothing untoward has happened to me because of that letter. There is God above who punishes the wrong doers'.

That was Anand's way of doing things for the rest of his professional career in the university. He was generous to all and he was never petty minded or vindictive.

Exactly it took five years for Anand to be a Professor in the new university. The riddle was over. The daughter made him a Professor. He started telling everyone like that. So one day when the Registrar happened to go by the side of Anand's quarters, Anand invited him to come in. He showed his little girl to the Registrar and he smilingly questioned,

'Is this the daughter that has made you Professor?'

'Yes' said Anand proudly and with conviction. One year ago he could not become a Professor even though he had the same qualifications at that time. Nothing new had happened within that year except that he was fighting all

the time. Perhaps he was rewarded for fighting, thought Anand. He also realised that all his merited work was nothing as compared with divine disposal. Anand was slowly getting reconciled to the worship of the Lord.

Anand often likened his daughter to Perdita of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. Perdita brought prosperity to a barren land, and his own daughter Padma, he felt, had given peace and prosperity to the family. Anand's great dream of becoming a Professor was fulfilled. He no longer bothered about anything, and he belonged to the department wholly and completely. Even if nothing came to him later in life it did not matter. Such was the content and peaceful existence that he wanted, and it came to him. What more did he want? Nothing.

CHAPTER—6

I

Professor Anand was kind to everyone. He believed in the well known maxim that service to mankind was service to God. He not merely believed, he practised it all his life. One evening the President of the Cooperative Society sent his clerk all the way to the university quarters suggesting that Professor Anand should build a house.

'Sir, the President wants that you should take a loan from the Co-operative Town Bank for building a house. The first instalment will be paid to you tomorrow'.

Anand was amused. He could not understand why the President should be worried about his building the house. Of course he knew Anand, but even then, it was surprising that he should take all that trouble of sending his clerk to him. He asked the clerk,

'Supposing I take the loan and won't build the house, what will happen?'

'Nothing, You can return the amount'.

'If that is so, I shall come tomorrow'.

Anand took the whole thing in a non-serious way. He did not realise at that stage that it was divine ordinance. He thought he could please the President by taking a loan and then return it after a month or two. He was not keen on building a house. In fact two years ago Anand purchased the house site. Yet he made no effort to construct a house for he did not like to settle down in that small town.

But mechanically he went to the Bank all right. He took the loan and Lakshmi got busy. She and her second son, who had just finished his B.Tech., started corresponding with one of the close relatives. He was knowledgeable in 'Vastu' and he came from a distant town. On an auspicious day they started the work. Anand was watching his wife's anxiety to build a house. He was like a spectator, detached and not much interested in the whole process of building the house. For six months he maintained that indifference. He used to say that he would sell the site even though the foundations were laid. Lakshmi was very much pained whenever Anand said that he would sell the site. She repeatedly affirmed that the house had to come up. It was God's will. That was her vision.

Anand did not mind buying a car even in the first year of his becoming a Professor, but building a house did not appeal to him. He wanted to be free, free to go to any part of the world. He did not like to be burdened with debt. He was reluctant to have his free spirit curbed and conditioned by permanent acquisitions. Not that he was a recluse or a philosopher, only he did not want to belong to that small town. With all that conflict in his mind he did not allow the construction work to go on speedily. But one evening an inner prompting, some revelation came to him. When he visited the site he saw a beautiful building before him. He did not know, for one moment, whether it was a vision or a reality. Then he realised that he was foolish in denying the gift of God. Once he decided to build the house it came up quickly and they moved to their house far off from the university and from the din and bustle of the town.

Anand never again longed for moving out of that town. He understood that his destiny was with that university and he surrendered himself to the will of God. He never asked for anything, but from that time onwards everything was made ready for him by the protective hand of God. Anand learnt the lesson of doing things irrespective of the reward. He became a karma yogi. His contention was that when God was so kind to him, in return he should be helpful to others. He had this view even earlier, but now it acquired a new dimension. It became his faith, solemn faith to be useful to other fellow human beings.

Anand never moved out of the department for participating in social gossip or university scandals. He was glued to his chair and Lakshmi amusingly used to comment that wood had entered his soul. Lakshmi looked like the presiding deity in the house. Anand never did anything that might displease her. Harmony prevailed. There was domestic peace. Anand could devote himself to the service of the university whole heartedly. And he was immersed in his work.

Most of Anand's success in life was due to the happy, homely atmosphere that prevailed in the house. It was a closely knit family and it looked like a fraternity. Years later in the evening of her life, while Anand was the Vice-Chancellor, Lakshmi used to narrate some anecdotes relating to Anand's boyhood days to her two grandsons. It was a pleasant sight to see Lakshmi seated on the sofa with her two grandsons on either side. They used to listen to her with rapt attention. Everyday Lakshmi would give one episode and call it a chapter, as if she was writing a book on her husband. She took pleasure in recapitulating all those

events of the past in the form of a story so that the grandsons could easily follow. She started her narrative from the days of Anand's boyhood.

'Your grandfather Anand came from a prosperous middle class family and in that village they were considered to be rich. They had landed property and his father Raja Rao was very much respected in that area for his uprightness and helpfulness to others. He was generous, and as a Gandhian the spirit of service to the country was uppermost in his mind. He was a great influence on the villagers and once or twice a week he used to address them on the Gandhian ideals. Those were days of sacrifice and heroic martyrdom. Men and women, educated as well as uneducated, came under the spell of Gandhi. His simplicity won the hearts of the village folk and they were ready to sacrifice everything for the cause of the country. Anand felt proud of his father for he saw every one showing a reverential awe for him. Anand grew at such an auspicious time when his family was in the stream of fighting the foreign rule.'

'Did our grandfather see Gandhi?' asked one of the grandsons.

'Yes, he saw Gandhi in his ninth year when Gandhi visited Anand's village', said Lakshmi.

She continued the narrative.

'Anand used to go everyday to the fields for in those days farming was done on their own. The rough language of the servants fascinated Anand and he cultivated some of those swear words. He liberally used them on others not knowing that they were not meant for good society. Life was pleasant and he never thought of going to school.'

The grandsons were smiling and they were amused

Boys of his age used to go to school, but he roamed about the paddy fields. It did not worry him. Anand loved the vast open spaces of nature, the tall trees growing about, the tanks and the canals in the village. It was difficult for him to think of sitting in a narrow, crowded class room, only to be beaten by an irate teacher. His father was busy with the Congress work, and his mother got vexed with him one day. She literally dragged him to the school. Of course the school was only a few yards away from their house. He was taken to the headmaster and he said that Anand should sit outside, meaning another class room. But Anand thought that he was asked to sit on the verandah of the school. For one moment he was happy thinking that he could run away, but to his dismay he was sent to another room where some other teacher was teaching. In that room he saw his friend Gopi. He was his friend and he lived in the house opposite to his house. He was junior to Anand only by a day. When he saw Gopi he was reconciled to his lot, and a few minutes later there was the interval when both of them ran away. Anand and Gopi were very much interested in dogs and whenever they saw a good looking puppy they would take it away by force. Anand's mother having failed in sending him to school reported the matter to his father. He was a little worried because by then Anand was already seven years of age and he did not learn even the alphabets. Raja Rao's father was a good agriculturist and he cultivated lands on his own. But he was not much educated. So his first reaction was that perhaps Anand might be like his grand father. But then the times were changing and he could not allow his son to be uneducated. Something had to be done.

Despite his busy Congress work he himself started teaching Anand, but that could be only in the night time when Anand felt sleepy. So the teaching exercise did not go far. Anand's mother did not like her son to be tortured in the night time for the sake of education. At worst Anand could be a farmer, she consoled herself.

Lakshmi took up the narrative the next day.

'Grandma, we are ready to listen to you now'.

She was happy to see them interested in knowing about their grandfather. Lakshmi continued.

'Raja Rao finally gave the lands on 10/10 and Anand could no longer roam about the fields. He was unhappy that he was denied his pleasure. But one day he saw his father listening to a young man reading from a big, fat book. He was curious to know what the book was about. He heard them talking in Telugu now and then, and he understood that the book was on Swami Vivekanand. He watched them with rapt attention and something told him that he should also read such books in English. He ran to his mother. She never saw him so excited. So, she said,

'Why are you so excited?'

'I want to read books like the uncle'

He used to call that young man uncle. His mother simply laughed for till then Anand was not interested in studies. She told him.

'You don't know even the alphabets. How can you read such books, that too in English?'

'Of course, I shall, I shall definitely read and read like the uncle. You will see' Anand said. His face became brighter as though he had a vision.

That was the starting point in his life in his quest for knowledge. The odyssey of life started. His father was amazed to see the reluctant Anand furiously trying to learn everything in a speedy manner. His memory power was terrific. He could read once and repeat the whole thing. He created a sensation in that little village for his excellent memory power and quick grasp of the subjects taught to him. He seemed to be a prodigy. The boys who considered him a dunce before, could not compete with him.

The next day Lakshmi told her grandsons about their great grandfather's involvement in politics and courting prison. The grandsons looked seriously. She said,

'Meanwhile the Gandhian movement was gaining momentum. Gandhi started with the boycott of British goods in 1920, the year in which Raja Rao became a Congressite. He had been working consistently and sincerely from that time onwards for village uplift and rural development. That was the constructive work that Gandhi was doing preparing the country for a greater onslaught on the British imperialism. Gandhi's visit to Anand's village was a great event for the villagers. Men and women from the neighbouring villages also came to have the pleasure of seeing Gandhi and hearing him. Gandhi and his entourage in cars passed in front of Anand's house and he watched them with keen interest. A little away from his house in the open place opposite to the village temple the meeting was conducted. Raja Rao took

the lead. He translated Gandhi's speech into Telugu. He took Anand for Gandhi's blessing. Anand instinctively touched Gandhi's feet and he was blessed. On other occasions when his father asked Anand to pay respects to eminent scholars and Swamis he flatly refused. But that day Anand was thrilled by Gandhi's presence and he paid his homage to the great leader. That was the magnetism in Gandhi. He was a sarot among politicians. Men and women were bewitched by his disarming smile. Women who naturally loved gold joyously gave away all their gold jewels to Gandhi for the cause of the country. It was a remarkable day for Anand to see his father perform an arduous task and everyone had a good word for Raja Rao. Anand felt happy for the rare opportunity of seeing Gandhi and for being blessed by him. That was a moment of triumph for Raja Rao and his family'.

'We are proud of our great grandfather' said Suresh.

'Our grandfather was lucky in having seen Gandhi' commented Ramesh.

'But the clouds were gathering' observed Lakshmi.

'Gandhi after visiting most of the villages in the country announced the next phase of activity. He felt the pulse of the country and he launched the Salt Satyagraha Movement in 1930. Thousands and thousands of men and women courted arrest. Simply for uttering the name of Gandhi they were imprisoned and sometimes were beaten mercilessly. In his own village Raja Rao was getting ready and a few volunteers trained by him were also preparing themselves to be arrested. Sometimes the volunteers used to tease Anand telling him that his father would soon go to jail. Whenever they mentioned that, he used

to weep, for separation from his father was unbearably for him. He loved his father for his generous nature. He was equally fond of his mother who used to give excellent accounts of her own father. He was an officer in the British Government. So father-in-law and son-in-law did not very much like each other. Anand took his maternal grandfather as his model, but he also liked the freedom movement and his father's participation in it.

On one occasion when Raja Rao addressed a huge gathering in a village exhorting the people to follow Gandhian ideology, he and his volunteers had to be arrested. The village Munsiff was reluctant to report against Raja Rao, but Rao's own cousin who was the Karnam of the village insisted that Rao should be imprisoned. He had a grouse against Rao because on a prior occasion he refused to support the Karnam in one of his wrong deeds. So the spite was there. The Karnam gave a twist to it and pleaded that the younger generation should be saved from the bad influence of Rao. He was a loyalist, he did not like the Congress movement. To him Rao was an anarchist. So finally the matter was reported to the police and the next morning the whole village was agog with the news.

The grandsons were full of curiosity. They eagerly asked the grandmother,

'What happened? Did the police arrest our great grandfather?'

'Listen to me' said Lakshmi

'The Sub-Inspector with a handful of police came and they all stationed themselves in the building facing Rao's house. The lady of the house tolerated them hoping that

they would not arrest Rao. Her brother-in-law knew the Inspector, but Raja Rao refused to be free from his obligation of going to prison. For ten years he had been working for the Congress movement advocating and practising Gandhian ideals. He, like many other brave men and women of that age, faced the challenge. The police first arrested the volunteers. They did not like to arrest Raja Rao. They feared trouble. The people were becoming furious and they were losing their patience. They did not want their leader to be arrested. The police waited for some reinforcement and for the arrival of the Circle Inspector from the neighbouring town. Meanwhile thousands and thousands of people flowed in like a stream to that narrow street. There was tension and commotion. Raja Rao knew that he would be arrested. He was bidding farewell to men and women who came to see him personally at his house. Anand was weebegone. He could not face that situation. Outside, the surging crowds started throwing stones on the police. Politely a word was sent to Raja Rao to accompany the police to the nearest town. Raja Rao addressed the huge crowd and most of them felt that he might not survive the rigours of prison life. Raja Rao and his followers were sentenced to prison for one year. Raja Rao was given B class but all the same prison life could never be satisfactory.'

For one moment the grandsons felt sad, but they cheered up again. Lakshmi narrated, 'Gandhi's call for Salt Satyagraha was a tremendous success, unprecedented perhaps in the history of the world. The non-violent struggle was something unique. Even boys and girls were drawn to the charisma of Gandhi. They used to sing the songs composed on him. Anand wrote to his father in

prison that he also would court arrest. The grandsons were happy to hear that.

'I think our grandfather was brave in writing like that' commented Ramesh.

'Yes that was the spirit of the people at that time. It was a sight to see young and old people, men and women, boys and girls, moving about singing patriotic songs'.

Lakshmi added,

'The Superintendent asked Raja Rao how old the boy was. Anand was only ten at that time, he and a few other boys used to enact every night the scene of uttering Gandhi's name and be arrested. A few days later the police came again. Perhaps the Karanam reported against the boys also. It was getting dark. The police straight went to the same building where they had arrested Rao and the volunteers earlier. The lady of the house abused them and asked them to get out. She was a strong willed woman and she never cared for anyone, not even the Karanam. But she had a lot of respect for Rao and his family. She was angry because the police had shamelessly arrested a good man. No one was prepared to give food to them. The merchants refused to sell anything to them. The police left the place cursing the village. That was the noble spirit of the village in that movement and they loved their village patriot, Raja Rao. It was rumoured that the Sub-Inspector fell from his horse and broke his arm. The Karanam and the Munsiff lost their married daughters and the whole village said it was retribution'.

There was a break for a few days. Lakshmi started the story telling. 'As the father was in prison there was no one

to teach Anand. He and his friend Gopi had all the time at their disposal. They roamed about freely. Anand's mother did not like to say anything lest he should be grieved. By the time the father returned from prison Anand forgot everything he learnt. His quick memory perhaps was not retentive.

Rao's work benefitted the villagers. Most of them could read and write. Rao educated the villagers sincerely. He did a lot of social work and he helped several persons in need. That village and the villages nearby had admiration and affection for him. So, they were glad to see Rao back from prison.

But the economic depression was casting its shadows. Rao realised that his own financial position was far from satisfactory and he was heavily in debt. The prices of the land came down. Gold was sold at the lowest price. The thirties were gloomy years, and ready money was not available. The money lenders who were liberally giving huge amounts as debt to Rao, now withdrew their support, and he had some domestic problems also. Rao on his return from prison tasted the sordidness of life. Anand insisted that he should be admitted in a high school in a town nearby. Rao wanted him to wait for a year so that he could settle money matters. Earlier Rao never bothered about money. He was liberal in giving money especially to poor students. He helped anyone in trouble. Food was never denied to anyone who came to their house. So the house was called a choultry by some of the inhospitable relatives of Rao who felt that he was unduly charitable. Now that Rao was a little down financially they looked at him mockingly. But the villagers were still fond of him.

There was no abatement in their esteem for him. Only a few relatives like the Karanam were right from the beginning critical of him and his involvement in the Congress movement. They gloried in their loyalty to the British government and they felt that Rao deserved to go down financially.'

One day Lakshmi told the grandsons about Anand's early education. 'Anand was admitted in a high school. He was curious. First he forced his father to send him for studies. But soon he was homesick. He missed the comforts of his home. There was no one to take care of him and the food in the hotel was awful. So every Friday he used to run back to his village and take it easy for a week. The boys called him Inspector for he was absent, most of the time. But he used to get good marks, especially in English. So the class teacher liked him. Somehow the year was over. Then he decided to leave that school. Luckily for him, by then a high school was started in a place nearer to his village. For the next three years he studied in that new school and fared well. The teachers liked him. It looked as though they owned him.

But at the homefront conditions were becoming increasingly difficult. Financially Raja Rao was going down and he was obliged to sell his ancestral lands. Even his health caused him trouble. Educating Anand therefore became a problem for Rao. Raja Rao understood that Anand was brilliant. Then came the hurdle. Anand wanted to join a college. College education was a costly affair. Rao was hesitant to send Anand for college studies. Apart from the financial burden there was the problem of getting a job. In that village there were already a few graduates who

were unemployed for a number of years. So the relatives again started their attack on Rao. Rao thought that it would be foolish to send Anand for higher studies. He was discouraged by the negative approach of his relatives, but yet in his heart of hearts he felt he should send Anand to a college. Anand's own argument was that his fate would be different from that of the others. The ill-starred persons should not be quoted as shining examples for him, that was Anand's stubborn faith in himself. The father had to yield and Anand was right in insisting on education, for he was born for better things in life'.

Lakshmi thus used to narrate the incidents in Anand's early life with relish, and the two grandsons enjoyed her story telling for a number of days. She was anxious that the little children should know something about their family background. So the episodes were given piecemeal and the grandsons could easily follow her.

In a similar manner Anand had the company of his little grandson Santhosh, Padma's son. Santhosh was a lively child, full of imagination. His cheerful face, expressive eyes always fascinated Anand. After retirement Anand was, to some extent, relieved from boredom by the fellowship of Santhosh. One morning Santhosh asked Anand.

'Grandpa, narrate the story of *The Mahabharata*'. Anand hesitated because of the epic's vastness. However, he started telling Santhosh of the Pandavas and the way they lost everything in the game of dice. Then Anand moved on to the thirteenth year of the exile of the Pandavas. Santhosh immediately stopped Anand.

'Grandpa you have swallowed many things. You have not given a single incident of Panda a varavasam.'

Anand smiled and Santhosh started the narrative on his own. After a few days he surprised his grandfather again, 'Grandpa, one should not be too greedy about money. what has happened to Kasim in *Ali Baba*? He is killed by the robbers. Of course in the picture he is made to live.' Anand and Santhosh enjoyed each other's company tremendously.

II

In fact Anand's marriage with Lakshmi was providential. In the second year of his Intermediate a marriage alliance came. In those days the most significant thing in a village was the celebration of a marriage. Even from his seventh year Anand was in the marriage market. Coming from an affluent family naturally many suggestions and offers used to come. At one time it looked as though he might get married to a girl of a different caste. Anand's father, Raja Rao, used to address a young girl as his daughter-in-law. That gave the impression to Anand that he would be married to her. A few years later she was married to someone of her own caste. But in the present marriage deal things were different. The bride's father was Raja Rao's friend. He too was a Congress worker even though he did not go to prison like Rao. He was not rich and he could not offer any dowry. So he approached another Congressman hoping that dowry would be no consideration. They accepted Gandhian ideals. But Raja Rao did not like to be burdened with expenditure on Anand's education as well as on his marriage. So Rao thought that the best way would be to send Anand to see the girl. This was something unusual. But Rao's hope was that Anand might reject the girl.

Anand saw the girl. The moment he saw her he felt like marrying her. Her innocent looks captured his imagination. He was only seventeen and she was thirteen. What did they know of life? Nothing. Yet strangely they liked each other. Rao created a novel situation in asking Anand to see the girl. Anand exercised his freedom and told his father that he liked the girl. Rao was essentially a liberal minded person, though financial troubles crippled his energies and his thinking. He did not like to stand in the way of his son's choice and the marriage was celebrated.

Anand became a Lecturer in a college near his village, and students liked him terribly. This gave him confidence and he started thinking that every man's character was his destiny. He made it or married it. Man's will power and determination could achieve the most insurmountable things in life. That was his assumption or perhaps over-confidence bordering on self-glorification. He repeatedly said that it was his indomitable self effort that crowned him with success. He did not, as yet, visualise that it was God's grace that blessed him. He had to go a long way before he could understand the need for grace. He was very young, imaginative and very intelligent. He was an intellectual not to be classified with the generality of mankind, he thought. One might call it intellectual snobbery.

The first victim of his egotism was Lakshmi. Even though she brought him luck, he thought he had done a favour in getting married to her without taking any dowry. After her marriage her education was stopped. Only later in life she could improve her qualification through

external study. She was very intelligent but like the women of that day she had to be content with the humdrum life of domestic chores. Often Anand wondered whether she had any idea of the great sacrifice he had made in marrying her. Now and then he used to tease her. She did not like it for she was of a serious type and very much devoted to Anand. Gradually he started looking at her with condescension as though she was not equal to him. Even though he himself chose her much against the wishes of his parents he was unnecessarily fussy in dealing with her. She bore it patiently like patient Griselda. Only when Anand said anything disparagingly about her father or her family she was annoyed with him. She tolerated all other angularities in him, for she too realised that he was very intelligent.

Anand on the whole was warm hearted, friendly with others. Only occasionally the pride in him made him too critical of others. His students liked him and took him as a hero. There were a few Boswells for him, even among girls, and they took him as their ideal teacher. They praised him lavishly and they never allowed anybody to say a word against him. That was their adoration for him, and this stirred in him an eccentric idea that he should get a Ph D. It was eccentric because in those days Ph. D. was something rare, especially in English literature. He wrote to one or two Indian universities and he was asked to wait until the war was over. Meanwhile his mind worked on a novel idea of going abroad and getting a Ph D from a British university. He had a rich, fertile, imagination with no relevance to reality. When he told his friends they laughed at the idea. They thought he was moonstruck. They said that they did not suffer from any of those quixotic ideas. They

were simple and they wanted a calm life. A comfortable home was all that was needed for them. They had their feet on solid earth. But the moment the students came to know of Anand's plans of going abroad they were jubilant. He taught them only for two years, but they were extremely fond of him.

When the villagers heard of Anand's ambition they were thrilled. They felt that the village would be honoured. One of the young men who had a lot of admiration for Anand's father said with a good heart that he would bear the whole expenditure for Anand's studies abroad. Many others in the village had similar feelings of love and respect for the family. Anand's father-in-law was not happy with this venture. He told Lakshmi that she could oppose Anand's move, but she firmly stood by Anand. The women in the neighbourhood told her repeatedly that she should not allow him to go. But she was shaken in her faith of Anand. She never wavered.

Anand got his passport, but the war was still on, and had to wait for a few months for his passage. It was a period of torture for him. Once he decided to go, he had to go. There was no peace for him. But others did not understand why he should take a plunge into the unknown future when he was already settled in life. In those days of trial, he realised that Lakshmi was his true partner. He received solace from her. The intellectual came down from his ethereal plane. He was amazed to see the simple woman show such firm faith in him. He was touched by her loyalty. He also felt that she had no illusions and delusions like him. She was steady and contented with a pragmatic approach to life. Lakshmi

became his source of strength ever since he planned to go abroad. Anand's love and affection for Lakshmi grew with the tide of time, and they looked inseparable for the rest of their lives.

CHAPTER 7

I

As a Professor Anand maintained a dignified aloofness and the university politics never bothered him. His primary obligation, he thought, was teaching, doing research and conducting research. He was consistently true to his objectives. He considered teaching an art, for a good teacher had to take care of the average students as well as the merited ones. Anand was on the whole a lovable Professor, that was the verdict of the students.

When the Principalship of the University College was offered to him, Anand accepted it even though he liked teaching and research. He was clear in his mind. If any administrative responsibility was placed on him he would not shirk, for in a developing country the educated had a greater obligation to work for the well being of the country. So if his services were needed as an administrator he would not run away from it. That was the spirit with which he accepted the Principalship. He took it as a challenge and continued as Principal for two terms and those six years were full of problems and puzzling situations. The best in Anand came out during those

years and he was on the whole liked and loved by the students. Or else he could not have faced those tempestuous winds that blew at that time, and his was the longest period of Principalship in the University College.

But the peculiarity was that he never took the Principalship as a full time job. His primary obligation was to the department. So Anand stayed in the department in the morning, taught his students and conducted research, as in the past. Only in the afternoon every day he was the Principal. His predecessors were always in the Principal's office. By contrast Anand seemed to be not much involved in the Principalship, and in course of time if students or teachers complained about his non-appearance in the Principal's office in the morning, he thought he could safely give up the Principalship. But no one ever bothered about it and the office cooperated with Anand whole-heartedly. They all liked Anand and respected him for he treated them kindly and understood them sympathetically. So they did the work very sincerely and there was absolutely no delay in the movement of the files. As long as the work was going on smoothly it did not really matter whether Anand stayed in the office only in the afternoon. The teachers and the students adjusted to his style of working and the university office never disturbed him in the first hour when he would be teaching in the department every day. So the system worked well. Of course when there were problems he stayed on patiently for hours and hours. He left the office only after solving the problems.

Anand was quite independent and he was not in the habit of collecting a group of teachers for advice or for carrying news to him. He never believed in a coterie and

when he had an open mind untrammelled by caste or personal prejudices there was no need for him to depend on others. He was afraid that such a system of so-called loyalties might hamper his sense of fair play. So he viewed every problem independently and according to his reasoning power. He had no preconceived antipathy or liking for any group. He was in a large measure fair and just to everyone. This saved him from many a predicament, and it did not matter to him even if he gave up the Principalship anytime he liked. That was his detachment, but whatever he did, it was wholehearted service to the university and it was considered to be good. That way he was quite involved also in his work.

For six years Professor Anand was the central figure on the campus. He was on every commission and the Vice-Chancellor had full faith in him. He left him free and never questioned any of his decisions. All academic matters and all college affairs were completely left to Anand. He was the deciding factor. Even in important administrative decisions he had a major role to play. Any imposition on his work would have curtailed his freedom and he resented any such hindrance to his own way of thinking and working.

In the last year of Anand's Principalship, Pratap came to see him. He was one of his best students, and he did his Ph.D. under his guidance. Later he entered administrative service. He respected his teacher, Anand for his love of freedom. So he wondered how Anand could manage the administration of the college as Principal. As Pratap himself was in the administrative service he was curious to know of Anand's experience as Principal of the University.

College. That day Anand was relatively free and he was in his house feeling quite relaxed. Pratap queried,

'Sir, you are essentially a teacher and a scholar. I wonder how you could allow yourself to sacrifice your interests and be an administrator'.

Anand smiled for Pratap was in the habit of putting questions to him even as a researcher under him. So he saw only his old student, not the officer in him. He said,

'Yes I have been successful as Principal mostly because of my non-involvement in the group politics of the university. I did not surrender myself to the Principalship and I still belong to the department. The students and the teachers have confidence in me that I would be fair and impartial. Fortunately for me there is a large measure of cooperation from the students and the teachers of the college'.

'Even then it should be tight rope walking all the time. As you are all by yourself both the groups can give you enough trouble'.

'Yes, you are right. From one angle my non-involvement makes me an arbitrator but it is like the razor's edge. Both the groups can give me trouble'.

'A very delicate position' said Pratap.

'Yes true. Look at this situation. At about four in the morning there was a ring for me. That was summer. We were all sleeping up'sairs. The phone must have been ringing for a long time. At last my daughter heard it and woke me up. The phone was from the Vice-Chancellor's

bungalow in the mango grove. The students were disturbing the peace of the place. Only a few months ago the Vice-Chancellor had a stroke, so naturally the lady was worried. The university officers, the Registrar, the Deputy Registrar were already there. I had to trouble my son for taking me in the car and we reached the place. That was mango season and the first thing we noticed was that the students were eating the unripe mangoes. Then I saw the university officers and the lady. I told my students that they should all go back to the hostels and not disturb the Vice-Chancellor. Luckily they agreed'.

'So far so good. They could have refused also'

'Quite likely, but somehow they tamely yielded. I myself was surprised. We all came back to the hostels. I allowed the rival groups to go on shouting at each other. It went on for nearly an hour, and by then perhaps they were exhausted, I think'.

'What was exactly the problem?'

'In the name of honour apparently they were fighting. One group that year was leading the students union. They were celebrating the cultural festival. The other group was in charge of the hostels. The Secretary of the hostels, the leader of that group, said that he would not allow the breakfast to be served. That was his way of taking vengeance against the other group. Naturally the other group resented it. When argument fails it comes to blows, you know that'.

'Seems to be a tricky situation'

'And some teachers were on either side helping them. So the problem was not an easy one.'

'When the students have genuine problems it is easy to solve, but when they are egged on by teachers it becomes difficult. The problem becomes complicated. It must have been a trying time for you', Pratap said.

'For one hour I watched the whole show when one group was almost jumping at the other group, but mind you, they were not prepared to hit each other. Finally I said, "The hostels will have to serve breakfast. The cultural programme for the evening will be cancelled." Each group felt it had succeeded.'

'Wonderful. "A Daniel come to judgement!"' Pratap cheerfully said.

'At ten I asked the students to meet me in the college so that we could discuss the problem and not have such unpleasant occasions recur in future. We met at ten and after the meeting was over the leaders of the two groups were moving out leaving on each other like jolly good friends. My own feeling is that basically students have no deep rooted hatred for one another, and their abnormal behaviour is only the creation of their teacher leaders who use them for their ends.'

'It's a pity that teachers try to settle their professional rivalries through the students', Pratap observed.

'And students do it partly because of caste affiliations and partly because of a fond hope that they may get a class in their examinations.'

Pratap felt sorry for such unbecoming deeds. Anand continued, 'whenever I saw the two groups fighting I was always reminded of *Romeo and Juliet* where the Capulets and the Montagues were all the time fighting.'

'Perhaps this is a new phase where the students develop their leadership qualities on the campus.'

Just then Vijay Kumar came. He was a contemporary of Pratap for research under Anand. They were both close to him and they competed with each other for Anand's affection. Pratap looked at Vijay cheerfully.

'Sir, I think Vijay is lucky. He is still with you as your colleague in the department whereas I had to go out'.

'Yes, Vijay no doubt has the benefit of being with me, but it also means a sheltered life. You have the advantage of coming into contact with a large number of people and you have to face odd situations in life'.

'Of course that is true. Academic life is less burdensome than administration' Pratap observed.

'Pratap, our Professor has proved himself to be equally good in administration' said Vijay.

'Yes, he has been telling me of some of those intriguing problems' said Pratap.

'Even in the emergency period when on the whole conditions were controlled, the Professor had to shepherd the erring sheep carefully. Sir, don't you remember how some of our students were taken to the police station and you had to rescue them' Vijay commented.

'Some of our students defied the police orders and they were taken to the station, Their friends came and earnestly requested me to get them released. The Chief Minister was visiting the town. So the Collector accompanied him to the Hills. I had to go to the Hills to see

him. Luckily the Registrar was with me. The Collector appreciated the interest I took in my students and he said that all of them would be released provided they expressed their regrets in writing. We came down and went to the police station.

'Perhaps for the first time' said Vijay.

'Yes, the Inspector too was happy to see me in the police station.'

'It must have been awkward for you. A different world altogether' Pratap said.

'The students were called and I told them that if they expressed their regrets they would be released. They were reluctant to say 'sorry' for they had violated the police orders knowingly. I told them that they should discuss it among themselves and tell me about their decision in the evening.'

'Perhaps they were famished by the evening' Pratap said.

'Yes their enthusiasm was over. They looked woe-begone. They were already fed up with their stay and they wanted to be taken away. But two of them, their leaders, still resisted. Now the Inspector started taking it easy and he told me that I should stand surety for the students.'

'He was tricky, I think' Vijay said.

'I don't know what was in his mind. I flatly refused to sign. I said only their parents could do that, not I. I told him that he could release them on the basis of the

Collector's instructions and on the students' statements of regrets, or else he could keep them. I lost patience with him for I found him dilly-dallying. Then he came round and all of them except the two student leaders were taken to the hostels.'

'I think it was humanitarian service. Who would take all that trouble?' said Pratap.

'The next morning when I saw the newspaper I found emergency declared. So I rushed to the police station and told the two students to give letters of regret and come out of that wretched hole. They were still unwilling to do that. Just at that time the Collector himself came and told me that I should take away my students or else he himself would be helpless. The two realised the gravity of the situation and calmly walked out.'

'Peculiarly enough both of them now occupy high positions in the government,' Vijay added.

'That's why I was always considerate to the students. We never know their future.'

'And some teachers could not understand your kindness to the students. They considered it leniency,' Vijay commented.

'I know: some have mistaken my attitude to the students. My own feeling is that if we do not understand them properly or at least listen to them patiently they tend to go to the outsiders for help. Why should we allow our own students to be at the mercy of politicians and opportunists? So I always looked at the students' problems sympathetically'.

'And that is the proper approach. Why should teachers shun their students? As the students are young naturally they will be emotional, but they are amenable to reason. They get perverted only when wrong influences pressure them' Pratap observed.

'Of course sometimes the students behave in a strange manner' Vijay said.

'Like most of us. We are all like that. You remember, all of you failed to settle the students' problem on the hostel day. You were also associated with the hostels at that time.'

'Yes we tried our best to pacify the two groups. Till very late in the night we discussed, but it was futile. The warden finally brought them to you for your guidance' Vijay explained.

'What was the problem?' queried Pratap.

'Like the Big Indians and the Little Indians in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* the two groups were furiously divided over a petty issue of who should welcome the Chief Guest for the hostel day. Their tempers ran high and they were not in a mood to concede. There were nearly hundred students and their leaders on either side were adamant. I suggested that the leaders of both the groups could welcome the Chief Guest, the more, the merrier, I said. But then the question was who should do it first. Evidently each group wanted to be the first one. I suggested tossing, but that was not agreeable to them. The students' contention amused me and I could understand their peculiar sense of dignity.'

'So what did you suggest' inquired Pratap.

'I told them that there were two ways of coming out of that awkward situation. One was that the hostel day celebrations would end up with Tea, as they had already invited several friends and spent a lot of money. But the meeting would be cancelled. I said I would explain to the Chief Guest our difficulty. Luckily that year he was from a local college. The other way was to have the meeting also, but none of them would welcome the Chief Guest. I would myself do it and the reports would be read by the wardens. Of course they could all be seated on the dias.'

'Perhaps that was important for them more than welcoming the Chief Guest or reading the reports' Vijay commented.

'Yes in a way it is true. All of them unanimously agreed to the second suggestion and I managed the whole show.'

'Indeed it requires infinite patience' observed Pratap.

'Not only patience but also sympathetic understanding', Anand said.

'Yes I agree with you. As you are a humanist you could have those wider sympathies for the students' Pratap eulogised.

'Students, in general, feel happy about your Principalship. Especially your admission procedure has worked well, for merit alone is the criterion, apart from the reservations. I distinctly remember one gentleman, who had tough time with you, coming to me and asking me whether you were a communist', Vijay said.

'Yes some are a little taken aback when I say that I have to take care of all those students whose parents are poor and uneducated and would not come and see the Principal whereas educated people would try to argue in favour of their children's admission. I tell them bluntly that I need not be a Principal for doing wrong things. I think I am a little harsh on visitors who feel that because of their position they should be given special treatment. I thoroughly resent such an attitude from them.'

'You are justified in treating them in that manner. Some people pose and they should be taught a lesson' added Pratap.

'I am glad to hear that. I do my duty sincerely, even though I am a Principal only in the afternoons' Anand laughingly said.

Anand could go on describing his experiences as Principal for a long time. On the whole he was a successful administrator. Pratap was extremely happy to meet his Professor after so many years. He found no change in him and he still looked cheerful and active. Pratap and Vijay took leave of Anand and he was all affection for them.

ii

After six years of administrative work Anand became free. Rotation of Principalship was introduced, and he was solely responsible for his department. It gave him time to go back to his critical and creative work. That was also the time when he could visit most of the temples in the South. Lakshmi and his daughters were with him and they enjoyed those visits to the magnificent temples of

the South. The hoary Indian traditions still remained intact despite the passage of time, and the temples stood as prinnacles of our glorious heritage. In fact Anand was writing a novel on a saint's life and the temples figured in that narrative. So he wanted an authenticity for his descriptive accounts. In the last three years of his professorship he could spend more time with Lakshmi and the children, and life was peaceful.

In the last year of his Professorship, quite unexpectedly Anand received an invitation from the North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, to visit the university and to deliver lectures in his area of specialization. He stayed for a few weeks in Shillong. He was happy to be there for it seemed to be a pleasant place. He stayed in Shillong club and he was reminded of his stay in England. Every morning as he got up he saw the sun shining but within a few minutes the sky would be dark. Clouds moved about and invariably there was some shower or drizzle. It used to be cold. Anand liked the English weather despite all its vagaries. Especially the landscape in Shillong pleased him. It is a hilly tract, picturesque and full of undulations. All the time one had to go up and down. There were lakes all around. By the side of Shillong club, where he stayed, there was a lake. That was a captivating scene for Anand. The green vegetation all around fascinated him. In the evenings he could stroll about the lake watching men and women rowing the boats. He liked the younger generation of teachers in the department. The Professor and his colleagues were cordial to him. The students liked Anand and they were happy to attend his lectures. Anand's public lectures were attended by students and staff members of the other

faculties also. He was respected for his scholarship and Anand was happy for the acclaim he received for his work.

One of the younger members of the department, a Reader used to come to Anand every evening. He would sit with him and put searching questions, and Anand enjoyed talking to him. On certain days they used to go for long walks. There grew an affinity between them. It was an intellectual communion and the young man being a poet was full of creative imagination. At that time he was all by himself as his family was away in some other place. So he had ample time to keep company with Anand. With his innate curiosity to know more about teaching and research he often put questions to Anand. The young man, Dr. Ravinder had a genuine thirst for knowledge.

'You have been a Professor for a number of years. In all these years what is your experience of human relationships? Those who are helped by you, are they grateful to you?'

Anand laughed.

Dr. Ravinder, you are a poet. So you may not understand reality. Poets live in a world of their own. Anyway you have posed a fundamental question. But I ask you, why should anybody be grateful for the help he receives?'

'Because we are governed by certain norms and ethical values. So it shocks me if some one is ungrateful'.

'That means you are a very sensitive person. Of course I am also sensitive. I am not thick skinned, yet -'

take a realistic picture, where it is difficult for people to be grateful'.

'Are you not pained when you find flagrant violation of human conduct?'

'No. No doubt many teachers, even senior Professors, complain of base ingratitude in their students. But my view is that I help others because I am in a position to help. I hope you remember the famous line, 'gratitude So burdensome' It only suggests that it is difficult to be grateful.'

'It's an excellent line. But I don't remember who said it.'

'It is Satan in *Paradise Lost*. He tries to explain his position that gratitude is an unending phenomenon. The more he receives, the greater is the need for him to be grateful to God. Milton of course uses it in a sarcastic manner, but he must have understood human nature.'

'I think it is a grand line typical of Miltonic diction'.

'So my thinking has been that when I do a good turn, I need not expect anything in return. I have the satisfaction that I have made someone happy. In this world of tension, jealousy and hatred some of us will have to take the lead in creating harmony and happiness. Especially the gifted ones have to bear the cross for the welfare of the others. Great saints, martyrs and mahatmas have done it. We in our humble manner should try to alleviate the suffering of others. That's my faith. So I am not upset if someone behaves in a strange way'

'I think this is something special in you. The general tendency is to expect something in return, at least gratitude, for all that one does. Human love is selfish. Only God's love is sublime.'

'Maybe, I have no godliness in me, yet it has been humanly possible for me to do good to others. As I have a mind to help others, I think, I have succeeded.'

'I am glad to hear of your enlightened views. It is an education for me.'

Anand gave the instance of one of his students victimised by administration, and he had to rescue him. In another instance the Ph. D. result of one of his students was submerged for a long time, and he had to fight for the award. Anand also referred to his students whom he had placed in one of the P. G. centres of the university, and they shaped well. Anand told Ravinder that he was happy in finding his students well placed in life. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than to see them in prosperous conditions.

'So all your life you have been helping your students,' complimented Ravinder.

'I don't take any special credit for that service. I have done my duty as a teacher in contemporary society.'

'I am glad to meet an ideal teacher like you. I wish, I had been your student.'

Anand smiled. It was time for dinner. Ravinder left Anand after thanking him for his illuminating talk. For two or three days they could not see each other. ~~When~~

they met again, Ravinder was anxious to have Anand's views on research work in Indian universities.

'Professor what do you think of research work done in our universities?'

'Our direction in research seems to be heading towards a crisis.'

'Why do you say that? You have yourself trained several candidates for Ph. D.'

'That's true. At one time we didn't bother about research. Now the wave has come in full swing. So there is an undue haste, and much of the research work is done in a haphazard manner, all the time concentrating on the ends of promotions, not on the means adopted in getting them. Many universities do not have foreign examiners on the plea that the results might be delayed. And very often the topics chosen for research tend to be survey types, and do not yield genuine original work. In our anxiety to produce more and more Ph. Ds we are sacrificing quality for quantity. This is the bane of research now.'

'Then how about the guides? Very often they don't have time or they say they are busy. Out of necessity the candidate puts himself to all sorts of ridiculous situations. Pleasing his guide becomes his major concern, and finally he expects his guide to write the thesis for him. Or he may get it written by someone else. The latter can happen especially when the guide says that the thesis can be shown to him after the whole work is over.'

'The other extreme is when the candidate thinks that he is the sole author of his work and the guide has done nothing for him' commented Anand.

'A simple case of ingratitude' Ravinder added.

'A good teacher is respected by the students even now, despite all the corroding influences on them. I am personally happy with them' observed Anand.

'You are lucky that way for your rapport with the students seems to be a pleasant one' Ravinder commented

'Occasionally you may find a black sheep. That is inevitable. We cannot help it. Good and bad go together. We can't bargain for a world of goodness alone. Honestly I think such a world would be boring. So I have tolerated even the wrong ones. I go back to my argument that any help I have rendered is out of love. If one remembers it, well and good. If he doesn't, it does not matter'.

'But it is difficult to maintain that attitude. Very often we think of realisation, especially when we are in power. I see that you are a fully evolved person and you have attained wisdom. I am glad that I could spend a few hours with you and listen to your profound talks.'

Ravinder was mostly conventional and he was full of admiration for Anand. Anand left Shillong with a lot of good will among the students and teachers of the department. Particularly his association with the Professor was a pleasant and memorable one.

CHAPTER—8

i

As the retiring time was approaching Anand planned to go abroad as a Visiting Professor for an academic year. His plans were again upset when five days before his retirement he was appointed Vice-Chancellor. The whole town was pleased with the news. The general feeling was that Anand richly deserved the elevation. Especially when some Professors seriously treated as the sons of the soil, it was providential that he should get the offer. Even after twenty five years of teaching in the University, Anand was dubbed as an alien for he did not belong to that area. No doubt he had his own house in the town, but that did not make him a local person. When Anand paid a courtesy call to the Governor, the first question he put to him was, 'Do you belong to that place?' Anand, emphatically said that he was not from that place but he had taught there for twenty five years in the University. As Anand came out, the Secretary told him that one of the Professors in the University sent some students to the Governor to complain that he did not belong to that place. Anand smiled and thanked him for the caution.

Anand somehow developed a new faith that the Vice-Chancellorship was God given and no one could check him out for three years. He said repeatedly that it was a covenant between him and God and he had to fulfil his duty in the name of God. He took it as a holy mission. He was like Thomas Becket 'Wishing subjection to God alone'. He waited sufficiently long enough so that when it came it could give him freedom to act. Anand and Lakshmi finally

believed that God's grace was extended to them. This belief gave him supreme moral strength to uphold and maintain a sense of justice in administration. He affirmed and asserted that God chose him for doing some good to the University. But then he also avowed that he would do it only for one term. He gave to his assignment a sanctity and significance as though he was God's agent to do justice to all. Even the lowest of the low in the University could see him. He never denied access to anyone. As students came in large numbers he talked to them patiently and pleasingly. He was confident that he could manage them. Most of the teachers were known to him and some of them were his past students. Even among the non-teaching staff, many knew him and some worked under him when he was Principal of the University College. So the conditions were favourable to him, and it was everyone's expectation that he would be fair minded and just in his dealings with others.

When Anand saw the Chief Minister a week after assuming charge the minister was relinquishing his position that very day. Three more Chief Ministers who came later were kind to Anand. The Education Ministers were always courteous to him. Anand was extremely lucky in his relationship with the government for there were no pressures on him. His job was to strive for academic excellence and for peace on the campus. All that he could do mostly because of an inner poise and a sustaining power divinely ordained. Laxshmi's presence gave him the fellowship of a trusted partner in life and they did not like to move to the Vice-Chancellor's bungalow. Their own house was more suited to their way of living, that was at once simple and dignified. The house was

neat and tidy. Anand felt that domestic peace was necessary for becoming successful as teacher or administrator in the University. He received that full co-operation from his sons and daughters. In the house it was a tacit understanding that they would not talk of University affairs because they wanted to lead the same calm and simple life they had before. Anand had no confidants and even his most trusted colleagues never ventured to feed him with prior information. They sincerely believed that he would never do any wrong thing.

The moment Anand became Vice-Chancellor the students of his department requested him to continue teaching them. He was not averse to teaching in his own area of specialization, but he wanted them to request the Head of the Department to forward their letter to the Registrar. Only if the Head requested him he could come to the department, Anand told them. Anand used to teach in the first hour every day and then go to the University. His teaching for one hour sustained him intellectually for the whole day. After that pleasant one hour he could accept the routine work however dull it might be. Teaching was a source of strength for him and it invigorated his mind, or else perhaps his administrative work would have deadened him. On certain days he would find a large number of students waiting for him at his office. Of course they respected him for the teaching he did. They considered it a service to the department, yet sometimes they could be agitated too. Often he wondered whether the students were still taking him as the Principal of the University College. So he asked the students one day why they come to him when they had their Principal and Deans also. Their reply was revealing,

'Sir, you will listen to us patiently. If you can do something immediately you will, or at least tell us when it can be done. So we are sure of receiving some positive response from you. Therefore we come to you, that too in the last minutes when every other source is tried. Sorry to disturb you'. Anand smiled and told them, "All right I shall try to do my best for you. But when you come to me in large numbers you need not be shouting and yelling for you will be disturbing the work in the office. When I am prepared to see you there is no need to have all that paraphernalia".

Anand had a way of talking to the students and invariably he could soften them. They might be coming in a frenzied manner, but they often went back cheerfully. He knew the students and his experience as a Principal helped him in establishing a fairly good rapport with the students.

Despite the auspicious beginning that Anand had as a Vice-Chancellor a naughty problem was hovering over the University. That worried his predecessor who half way resigned and Anand had to face that unsolved problem. After a few weeks of receptions and welcome parties this riddle surfaced and the busy bodies on the campus watched Anand closely. First he talked to the students but that did not yield results. As the Principal of the University College he could be all the time in touch with the students, but as Vice-Chancellor he was remote for he was responsible for the whole university. To that extent there was distancing also. Of course he could work through trusted lieutenants, but he did not believe in creating the chosen few.

Years ago when Anand was the Principal of the University College he introduced the indirect system of elections for the Students Union. It worked well all those six years. Later there was a lot of trouble on the campus and elections became unmanageable. Then the demand was for direct elections and the authorities were a little hesitant for they feared outside interference and greater disturbance on the campus if they allowed such a system. Anand talked to the teachers and to his great surprise he found them as divided as the students on this issue, some supporting the direct method and some others the indirect method of elections. So the divergent demands of the students for one system or the other were partly sponsored by the teachers. He tried for a compromise between the two groups of students, but that was not allowed to be successful for the teachers on either side were keen on seeing their own views carried out by the students. He himself did not like to express his view lest he should be identified with one group or the other. For a few months this hubbub went on.

Finally Anand decided to create four Schools and they functioned under the aegis of the University college. Each School had four office bearers of the Students Union and all were duly elected through the direct method. The Schools thus provided leadership opportunities to sixteen students as compared with only four office bearers before. Similarly four Senior Professors became the four Deans of the Schools on the basis of seniority, and the senior-most Professor became the Principal of the University College. Anand introduced this system and it answered the aspirations of ambitious students and teachers. Dean-ship and Principalship were by rotation, every two years.

there would be a change. Headship of the department was also rotated every two years. All these positions were interlinked and on the whole the changes were acceptable. The student elections ever afterwards were conducted peacefully and in an orderly manner. Anand was glad that he could introduce a system that survived and worked successfully.

Then another important question that puzzled Anand was about the non-Ph D. teachers. Of course he distinctly remembered his visit to Sydney a few years earlier where, the Commonwealth Vice-Chancellors Congress discussed this question. In that conference many speakers felt that all accolades were given to the researcher. The consensus was that teaching should be the primary obligation of a teacher. Anand was a little surprised for his own preference was for research. Several of those speakers felt that undue importance was given to research and very often the researcher shirked his responsibility of teaching under the pretext of doing research. The general view was in favour of giving more importance to teaching. In fact Anand thought that a good teacher could be a good researcher also. There was no divorce between the two.

Anand to a large extent was convinced that good teachers should be recognised and rewarded even though they did not have research degrees. When he became the Vice-Chancellor he thought about it. One way was to give some special weightage for long teaching experience at the time of the interviews for Readerships and Professorships. But the long teaching experience could also mean that the teacher had vegetated, for teaching would become routine after some years, unless it was supplemented by

the exhilarating experience of research. That was one way of thinking. But there were good teachers who were liked by the students and Anand remembered that in some American universities the students would evaluate the performance of the teacher at the end of the academic year. But in the Indian context it would be hazardous. If a non Ph.D. was promoted, a Ph.D. could go to a court of law and the courts very often upheld the higher degree. So Anand debated within himself and came to the conclusion that there was no tangible method of rewarding a good teacher even though he did not own a research degree. It was also possible, in a democratic set up, that for every one deserving case there could be nine undeserving ones also. So he decided that an overall picture of teaching, research and publications would be demanded of every teacher aspiring for a higher position. And he introduced a system of marking whereby the Selection Committee could assess the worth of the candidates in a reasonably fair manner. He was for doing justice and he wanted to be impartial. He was scrupulously careful in selecting candidates on the basis of merit and he preferred the local ones.

II

A few months after Anand had become the Vice-Chancellor there was a letter from the Director of Higher Education informing him that he was selected for the Meritorious Teachers Award that year. Only six months ago when the awards were first instituted, Anand was the recipient of that honour. So his first reaction was that the letter was sent to him by mistake. But when he checked the year for which the award was made, he

realised that the government was pleased to choose him for that award a second time. He was very happy to be recognised as a distinguished teacher. Lakshmi and the children were present on the occasion of his receiving the award a second time. It was a proud day for all of them.

Similarly one morning as Anand was looking through the letters he found one addressed to him by the Vice-Chancellor of a neighbouring university. He was delighted to find that D Litt. (honoris causa) would be conferred on him at the ensuing convocation. The unexpected always fascinated him. He was particularly requested to attend the convocation and receive the degree in person. No one near and dear to him was present when he took his Ph. D. degree in Cardiff, so he wanted Lakshmi and the children to be present on this occasion. They did not see that town even though Anand had been there several times before. Padma, his second daughter, was very fond of watching the sea with its waves coming and dashing against the shore. So all seaside towns and cities were an attraction for her. They all reached the place well on time to attend the convocation. After the convocation the children strolled about collecting pebbles and other curious stones on the seashore. The next day they visited another seaside town and they were happy to visit the famous temple in the neighbourhood. The Vice-Chancellor was pleased and happy to have Anand and his family for the convocation. While Lakshmi and the children were visiting nearby places of interest, Anand stayed back as some journalists wanted to see him. He spent sometime with them. They were anxious to know Anand's views on education.

'Sir, you have been an educational administrator for a number of years besides being a meritorious teacher and researcher. The government has honoured you twice as a teacher of eminence. So we would like to have your views on our present education system' said Gopal, one of the journalists.

Anand was not very keen on talking about education for his views might be controversial. However he did not want to disappoint the journalists. So he said,

'Our education system has taken many shapes, but still it retains the British pattern. We looked to the American system with enthusiasm but we found it difficult to be practised. We still go on with the British system without putting faith in it. So even this does not work well. In fact we don't seem to be serious about any system, and we don't have anything that is typically Indian or suited to the needs of our country'.

'So on the whole you feel that the present state of education is not very encouraging' asked Sekhar, the other journalist.

'No doubt our best students compare favourably with the best students of any other country. Our teachers are equally good. But in general the educational standards have gone down. We are anxious to give education to everyone, that is commendable. But we take it to the logical extreme of trying to make everyone a postgraduate. Postgraduate studies are meant for those who wish to specialize in a particular subject. But they are now converted conveniently into general studies meant for general

consumption. And after producing postgraduates in large numbers we keep most of them unemployed and frustrated'.

'True, but how to improve' queried Gopal

'It is not so easy. There are several complications and anything new is resented. My own feeling is that we can be liberal upto the first degree level, but the post-graduate studies should be only for those who would like to specialize and pursue research. At the first degree level there can be two streams, one concentrating on academic studies, the other on vocationalisation. The best of the academic type can go in for postgraduate studies whereas the other group may try for jobs. This will save wastage. By admitting students who are not academically motivated the general level of teaching goes down and along with it the postgraduate studies will be diluted.'

'Sir, what you say is correct. We wonder when we'll come out of this mire' observed Sekhar.

'Another difficulty is that even good teachers will have to limit their stay to their States only. The best in them is not properly exposed and utilised. In the past, good teachers were welcomed everywhere and they could teach in any part of the country. Provincialism has hampered that opportunity. As the medium of instruction is in the language spoken locally no teacher can venture to move beyond his own State. This is another stifling factor in the present system. Linguistic chauvinism prevents all such movement from one university to another university in some other State. No doubt Visiting Professorships and

Fellowships offer some exchange, but they have their own limitations.'

'So, you think that the contribution of good teachers is limited.'

'Yes. And trying to teach even postgraduates in the language of the area is the last straw in our present system. The time has come when our own best students have to compete with others in the world market. To confine the unbounded knowledge in one single book, that too a poor translation, and prescribe it for study at the postgraduate level is retrograde and detrimental to the interests of our future generations.'

'But the policy makers are keen on sending their children to English medium schools and later to foreign universities' observed Gopal.

'Thank you, sir, for enlightening us with your views on education,' Sekhar said.

Gopal and Sekhar left Anand. By then Lakshmi and the children returned after their exciting trip to the neighbouring places. In the evening they had a boating excursion on the sea and it was enjoyable. Those were memorable days, Anand thought, when he could take time off from his busy schedule of work and spend sometime with the family.

As Vice Chancellor Anand had to face many problems. Being fair minded, he could, on the whole solve them to

the satisfaction of all the persons concerned. He had no preconceived prejudices for or against anyone. But tricky situations were also there when he had to be very careful. In the case of one appointment particularly there was a lot of heated discussion and divergence of opinion among the members of the Syndicate. As the interview for a Professorship was going on, some anonymous petitions came accusing the candidate of having taken bribes from the research scholars. Anand could not stop the interview and the candidate, against whom charges of corruption were made, was considered to be the best of the lot.

He was an internal candidate. There was another candidate supported by a strong group and he was from one of the P.G. centres. Just before the Syndicate meeting one group of students saw Anand. They were up against the internal candidate, and they were highly excited. Then another group of students came supporting the internal candidate very strongly. Then a third group came. They were the research scholars who denounced the internal candidate.

Against that background Anand had to conduct the Syndicate meeting. He told the members that they could carefully examine that case. Then the members expressed themselves freely, some opposing the candidate and some others supporting him. They were as divided as the students. The discussion went on for half an hour. Then the Secretary for Education perhaps got fed up with the whole affair, and he said, "Mr. Vice-Chancellor, we have faith in you. If you say that the concerned teacher is a good person, we will have no more discussion and we appoint him Professor."

Anand told the members, "I can only say that he is a good teacher. What happens to him in his private life, whether he takes bribes or loans I cannot say." So he concluded that the candidate would be appointed Professor temporarily, and he would be exposed to a commission. If the commission found him guilty, he would be reverted. If it exonerated him, Professorship would be confirmed.

They agreed with Anand and they were happy to solve that problem. When the meeting was over the two groups of students again saw Anand. Those, who supported the internal candidate, were happy that he was made Professor. The other group was equally happy because he would be exposed to a commission. They could have their pound of flesh at that time. So the two groups were pacified.

On the whole Anand's association with the Syndicate members was pleasant. It was a large group consisting of MLAs, MLCs, Professors and Principals of the colleges. It was a good combination. As universities were no longer just centres of learning but were public institutions fed on public funds, Anand felt that the public had a right to know what was happening in the universities. Even though the academics were supposed to be better, very often they tried to settle old scores against their rival groups and individual teachers on the campus. So Anand was not keen on having academics only on the Syndicate.

iv

Anand was happy with his children. The two sons were married and settled in life. Only in the case of the

first daughter, there was some delay in getting her married. Lakshmi wanted that their children should be at least postgraduates. So no serious thinking was done until the daughter took her M. A. degree. When Anand looked for suitable alliances, he himself was not in favour of many matches. Sometimes it was the other way. The daughter was not liked by the suitors. This quest went on for a few years and Lakshmi was very much worried about it. Even Anand was perplexed. He could not understand why he was unsuccessful in performing the marriage when even ordinary poor parents could manage. Finally he decided that his daughter should take up a job and get married as and when she liked. He went abroad and on his return he planned to put her in a job. Peculiarly enough, in his absence quite casually an alliance came up and by the time he returned the alliance was almost fixed. He was away only for two weeks and within that short time the god-given moment had come. He marvelled at the way the unsearchable dispose of highest wisdom functioned in the world. God's ways once again seemed to be mysterious to him. He struggled and struggled to get the daughter married, and when he accepted the defeat, the protective hand was extended to him. Within a month after his return from abroad the marriage of the first daughter was celebrated. A few months later the second daughter too was married. Anand was keen on celebrating that marriage in the town itself so that a large number of guests could attend. Even there he failed. Both the marriages had to be performed on the Hills, the abode of the Lord, and peculiarly in the same place and in the same cottages. It was God's will. When the second daughter Padma was married Anand had a curious feeling. She brought him

prosperity and the guardian angel was leaving him. He was pained, but he realised that he was only one among thousands and thousands of parents in the world to whom daughters might have brought good fortune, but one day they had to leave. Her parting reminded him of Sakuntala's separation from Kanwa, her foster father. It looked as if the second daughter's marriage was in a way hurried through a divine agency for only a few days later Lakshmi was ill. Anand's fortune touched the zenith and it came full circle in the declining fashion in the next few months.

CHAPTER-9

1

Anand's term of three years as Vice-Chancellor was coming to a close. Throughout the day he was busy conducting interviews for various posts in the University. He was much worried about Lakshmi's health. He had a sleepless night. The phone was ringing. It was four in the morning. At twelve in the night his son came and told him that his mother all of a sudden developed breathing trouble and oxygen was being administered to her. For one moment he looked at his son angrily as though he was responsible for the decaying condition of his mother's health. Only the day before Anand left the hospital and his wife Lakshmi looked cheerful. Her face was peaceful and quiet. Before leaving her he looked at her lovingly and was very much impressed by the sweetness in her face. The doctors assured him that nothing untoward would happen. More than all those assurances his faith in God was unshakable. He felt that God would save him and there was no danger to Lakshmi's life. She too had that immense faith in God. So when Dr. Anand left his wife he had no idea that any unfortunate turn of events would take place.

Anand's son could have given him a ring instead of coming all the way by spending hours on travel by bus. At twelve Anand could not go. So he planned to go early morning and made arrangements for the interviews to be conducted in his absence. In the last two months he was very much worried because of Lakshmi's poor health. Even though he was a great believer in the goodness of things and enjoyed life in all its varied aspects, yet these two

months were a torture to him. He took Lakshmi to various hospitals and finally the Cancer Institute in Madras, after a series of tests, found out that she was suffering from cancer and that it had already come to the second stage when it attacked the liver also. The doctor at the Institute expressed his helplessness and pronounced death for her in a few weeks. Anand was furious with him. He cursed the whole tribe of doctors. By the time the tests were over it was 5th August and on the 6th, Anand had to go abroad for attending an international conference in Cambridge where he had to chair a session. A few months ago when he accepted the invitation he never thought even for one moment, that his wife would be ill or that she would be attacked by a fell disease.

Life was good for him. He received several honours and they came one after another as if he was born to be honoured. To the onlookers, and to some of the Professors in the university, it was breath taking, for Anand's work received wide acclaim and recognition abroad.

Anand was modest enough to realise that it was God's grace and not so much his extraordinary merit that gave him all those accolades. But then success in life gave him a complacency that nothing could shake him and he basked in the sunshine of God's kindness. Then suddenly he was brought to a sense of reality, the cursedness of life in the shape of his wife's illness.

All the academic distinctions and honours only created jealousies in others. As human nature would go some of them could not simply understand why all the good things in life should go to Anand alone and the awards seemed to come to him unasked for. This was too much for

some, and they hopefully wished that something might happen to nettie and perplex the ever cheerful Anand. Yes, the hour had come and Lakshmi was ill. He wanted to cancel his trip to the U.K. in view of the Institute's findings on 5th August. On the 6th when he got up in the morning Lakshmi was already up. She was slightly coughing. Anand tenderly touched her and patted her on the back as though the cough would subside. She turned to Anand and said,

'You can fly today as per programme. I'll be all right. Don't worry about me'.

Anand was flabbergasted. He just gaped at her unbelievably. He was silently watching her. Almost in a mood of elation she said,

'Last night I had a pleasant dream. God will take care of me'. So in the evening Lakshmi was sent home and Anand flew to Bombay on his way to the U.K. He had to attend two conferences, one in Cambridge and the other in Birmingham. By the time he returned ten days elapsed. He was very much perturbed and anxious while he was in the U.K. but he maintained a poise which gave no hint about the internal storm brewing in his mind. On his return he found Lakshmi lying on an easy chair looking fresh and calm as though she had no ailment at all. She quietly asked Anand,

'Did you slip and fall on reaching the fourth floor of your hotel in London?'

'Yes' he said in great surprise, and questioned her 'how did you know?'

'I had a dream'

'Luckily it's only a minor fall. It still aches at the ankle, though' he said.

In his absence it was suggested that Lakshmi should be taken to Vellore for treatment. Anand personally saw the Director of the hospital at Vellore through a common friend. The Director was courteous and he promised to do his best. The rest was God's will, he said. Anand appreciated his sentiment, for he felt that a patient should not be left without treatment whatever might be the nature of the disease. It would be barbaric to leave the patient to his or her fate just because it happened to be a fell disease. So the hope was there that Lakshmi could be treated. It gave to Anand a sense of fulfilment for in the final analysis it was God's will that one could be saved or not saved from death. No one could defy death not even the mighty monarchs, Anand philosophised. Still there was a snag. When the Director wanted to talk to the specialist he was told that the doctor was away and would be back only after a few days. So some more delay and nothing could be done. Finally a date was fixed and Anand returned with hope.

A day before going to the hospital Lakshmi accompanied Anand to the Hills. That was his birthday, so he wanted to go to the temple. He did not like to trouble her as she was very weak. For the last two months she was on liquid diet. So naturally the drive to the Hills would be taxing. But Lakshmi got ready and followed Anand to the Hills. With special permission the car was taken to the temple direct. She got out of the car and walked briskly to the temple. Anand was pleased and

happy to see her move about in a normal fashion. He took it as a favourable sign and as a blessing from God. It gave him confidence that the Lord was with him in his hour of need.

Ever since he came to that provincial University from Delhi nearly thirty years ago Anand had shown unswerving loyalty to the Lord of the Seven Hills. He served the University for nearly three decades right from its inception in various capacities and finally as its Vice-Chancellor in the last three years. When he came to that University he took it as his trust with God. The Lord in His infinite mercy blessed Anand and his rise in the academic world was phenomenal though steady. That day when he and Lakshmi had the darshan of the Lord he never thought that it would be the last visit together. He interpreted the visit favourably and he looked forward to improvement in Lakshmi's health. They came out of the temple with a happy feeling and renewed faith in God.

The next day Lakshmi was taken to the hospital. As they drove in the car she was calm and peaceful. She was hoping to return within a fortnight and as she reached the hospital she was full of hope. The doctors discussed the case and finally decided that radiation therapy should be given to her going by the tests conducted in Madras. Anand stayed for five days. He used to sit with his daughter and watch Lakshmi. He was hesitant to talk to her lest she should be tired. In those two months much of the fat was shed and Lakshmi's face acquired all that fineness and sharpness of features so conspicuous in the bloom of her youth. On the day Anand was coming back to the University on some urgent work he looked at her

face very closely and he was happy to see her with some inner peace. She reacted favourably to therapy and all seemed to be well with her.

It was a calm before a storm for the very next day after his departure there was the complication and his son came rushing late in the night. The moment his son told him about the crisis Anand became unnerved. He wanted to start at four in the morning. But by four there was that phone call from Vellore. He took the phone with misgivings. He asked his daughter how her mother was. She said amidst sobs that all was over. Anand could not speak. He was dumbfounded. His citadels of hope and his implicit faith in God all crumbled in one moment. So far life had been peaceful, pleasant and satisfying for him, but now he had to face the tragic fate. He could not understand why God should give to man heights of glory and abruptly drop him down unceremoniously. He wondered why man was discomfited and rendered helpless. He was angry with God for he never thought that He would give him such a raw deal and make him miserable for the rest of his life. Like Adam he questioned why God had given him all those good things of life almost unasked for, and then had abandoned him to a life of suffering. For one moment he could not reconcile himself with God's ways.

Anand started for Vellore. His son was with him. But both of them were sitting like dumb and mute creatures. The driver too was shocked. All of them, the cook, the driver and the attenders, liked Lakshmi. To them she was the embodiment of grace and kindness. Anand felt a heaviness and numbness. The shock was so

great that he could not even weep. It would have been better if he had wept like everybody. That would have given him some relief. As the car was reaching Vellore it was slightly drizzling and a car coming in the opposite direction struck Anand's car and hit itself against a tree. Anand's car had a miraculous escape but its clutch plate was off. So the car stopped. The driver looked at Anand helplessly. A bus was coming that way. Anand and his son got into the bus and reached the hospital.

Anand was in a hurry to see his wife. Suddenly it dawned on him that he had no wife. Added to that Lakshmi's body was already removed to the ice chamber. His daughter was sitting all by herself in the room, sad and disconsolate. The servant who was at the door was in tears the moment he saw him. The bed was spread neatly and the room was cleaned. Nothing tragic seemed to have taken place in that room. But to Anand it was a tragedy. To the hospital, to the nurses and the doctors it was just commonplace. There was nothing unusual about it. So many would die and the atmosphere was one of cold acceptance, no tears to be shed and no regrets at all.

A few hours later the van was ready to take the body of Lakshmi back to her home. The whole life of Anand was suddenly changed from happiness to gloom. He never bargained for such a tragic onslaught on his life. No doubt he heard of several pitiful incidents in life, of accidental deaths, of harrowing and distressful accounts of misfortune. But his life was so far sheltered under the benevolent hand of God. Anand felt that God for one moment withdrew His protective hand and he fell. He was given to such gloomy thoughts as the body was being

brought to the van and laid on one of the seats. Lest it should roll down, the body was tied by ropes. Anand had the shock of his life. The woman who had been his partner in life for more than forty years was just nothing. The transitoriness of life oppressively depressed him.

The van moved out with his son in it. Anand and his daughter had to wait for another hour and they later came in a car after paying the bills in the hospital. Anand never thought that such a catastrophe would take place. He was furious with God's dispensation. For the time being he lost faith in God, in everything that he cherished and loved so far in life. Like the midday sun he rose in his career always blessed by God. Now he felt he had alienated the sympathies of God. All around him there was desolation. Why did God take him to heights and abandon him callously, Anand asked himself. He was dazed and stupefied. He thought that Lakshmi lived only for her children and not for him, for after retirement he had to lead a solitary life like a recluse. It would be a living death, he knew. As the car was bringing him from Vellore his mind was racing fast with all those interrogations of God's ways. Hitherto he talked of God's essential justice all the time with gusto, but what had happened to him, he mused. For all his faith in God he was left with a tragic fate. In that dejected mood he said to himself 'no more Gods for me'.

While Anand was thus wrestling with God's justice the car reached his house. He saw to his surprise a huge crowd. The whole university seemed to be there and he was touched by the generous gesture of men and women gathered there to condole him and his family in the hour of affliction. He never expected that there would be so

many to share the grief with him. No doubt he had that goodwill from all sections, the teachers, the non-teaching staff and the students of the university. In seeing them he forgot his grief for a few moments. Till the evening friends, relatives and well wishers were coming in a stream. Suddenly the sky became cloudy. As the body was taken out there was a shower. Everyone felt that Lakshmi had a full life. She lived a good life and died at the height of her glory. Lakshmi was no more, the light was gone, and Anand's life was given to darkness. His facial expression changed. It had lost its optimistic cheer. Clouds hovered about his face and his looks were dull and hazy. Life had lost its glamour and dreariness overpowered Anand. From the height of noon he fell to a shadowy afternoon like the setting sun.

ii

By the time the rituals were over, Anand's term came to a close. He was disinclined to continue. He developed a curious argument that it was Lakshmi's prayers that were answered by the great God above for he never prayed for that position. Ever since Lakshmi attended the first convocation in the University she wished and prayed that one day Anand should be the Vice-Chancellor and she should have the honour of attending the convocation as the first lady in the University. Very often she said that, To Anand it mattered very little whether he was the Professor or the Vice-Chancellor. In fact, he loved teaching and he was a good researcher. Besides being a critic he was a creative writer. So he could get into a world of his own whenever he felt disgusted with the sordidness of every day life. In his house he had a

room for himself where he sat surrounded by books on all sides. No one disturbed him while he was in his room. Lakshmi called it the Professor's den and Anand liked to have those hours of seclusion all by himself. Lakshmi prayed for his success and a day prior to his elevation as Vice-Chancellor she told him that he would get it. She said she had a vision wherein she saw a telegram for Anand with the message 'get ready to take charge'. When he heard about it he simply laughed, but he very much appreciated her ambition for him. He was proud of her and of her innate faith in God's justice. So when the source of his strength was dried up just twelve days before the term of the Vice-Chancellor had come to a close he wondered whether it was a warning from God that he should wind up the show. Surely the height of noon was over, or else Lakshmi would have survived. Anand convinced himself that he would not continue as Vice-chancellor.

But most of his friends thought otherwise and some of them ventured to argue with him. Of the Professors, quite a few, either because of genuine love for him, or because of some self interest, used to suggest to him that he should continue as Vice-chancellor for another term. One evening, a few days after the bereavement one of the Professors chose to meet Anand at his house. Normally no one disturbed him once he left the office, but that evening surprisingly the Professor came. In the first few minutes reference was made to the unfortunate tragic occurrence and Anand reacted philosophically.

'What can we do? We have to accept the inevitable end. In a man's life there should be some unpleasant events also, or else he forgets God

'True, only we all felt that Madam could have lived for a few years more. Only a few months ago the daughter's marriage was celebrated, so this unexpected blow to you comes as a shock to all of us. It must be worse for you'.

'Yes, I agree with you. My wife's death is a rude shock to me. Not so much because she died, one day all of us have to die, but the way it has happened, that has shaken me. That's why I am disinclined to continue'.

'O no, please do not give up. You have done much for the University, another term will only mean greater peace on the campus.'

'The University may gain but I don't feel like carrying this heavy burden in my present state of utter confusion. Anyway let us leave it to God. He knows when to pull me out or to continue me' Anand concluded.

The Professor had nothing more to say. He still hoped that Anand would continue, and he posed a question.

'If the government chooses to extend your services for one more term what will you do?'

'Of course I will accept. I do not run away from responsibility. Only from a personal angle, in view of this unexpected blow, I am doubting my own capacity to do this job for another three years.'

'Don't be modest, Sir. If you cannot do it, who else can? You have been fair to everyone and you are a humanist to the core. We only wonder why such a good person should not give his best for the general good of the University for another term. That's all. We have no

personal interest because we know full well that you won't go out of the way to do anything for anyone, not even to your kith and kin'

Anand smiled and the Professor was pleased with himself. He thanked Anand for his patient hearing and left him to his world of philosophical speculation. Anand was not a student of philosophy, but he was philosopher by nature. He was always balanced. He never unduly elated nor was he unbecomingly depressed on any occasion. Very often he was called a stoic. In fact he was a karma yogi who believed in doing everything with detachment and as a service to God.

Even to this fully evolved person who always appeared to be calm and serene, and was never perturbed even under trying circumstances, Lakshmi's death was unbearable. He suffered from a sense of guilt that he left her on University work and did not give the attention due to her. He wanted to be away from everything that reminded him of Lakshmi as if that would ease his tension. So he wanted to be free from every thing. But much to his irritation and often disgust he had to continue for another six months. In the first three years he took his position as a challenging task. Lakshmi used to give him the moral support that all would be well, and all was well with him. Now he was not sure of God's disposition, and bereft of the loving care of Lakshmi he felt awful. He imagined to himself that he was on a precipitous rock and he would fall any moment.

So his only course was to pray to God for relief. Anand knew full well that God's ways were mysterious and inscrutable and he really did not know whether he

should continue. It was a great conflict in Anand and he wondered whether God was still with him in his hour of trial. A spiritual vacuum overpowered him. He became inactive, diffident and withdrawing. All his life he was known for his bold and daring spirit, but now he became tame and listless. For six months he prayed for relief and when it came it was typical of God's ways once again. Just a few days before his retirement there was a telegram from the government that the extended period of six months was over even though five days were still there. That telegram came exactly when Anand was starting from his house to conduct a meeting in the University. His personal assistant told him on the phone about the wire and Anand simply accepted it. He refused to go to the University and he was relieved of his great burden after having put in nearly twenty nine years of service in the University.

Anand felt happy that God at last had listened to his prayers. But the practical minded persons thought otherwise, for it could be a spurious telegram also, in all likelihood it was. But it did not matter to Anand. He was asking for relief and whether it came five days earlier or later was immaterial. It was also possible, he thought, that God in his fury could have driven him out as he persistently and almost doggedly prayed for relief. That sudden and unexpected manner in which he was sent out could be God's way of dealing with unruly children like him, Anand felt. Anybody would pray for promotion and betterment not for relief. So curious prayers should be answered with puzzled answers and Anand did not know whether the relief given to him was God blessing or ire. Anyway he was free and that's all he needed at that time.

Nearly three decades of service to the University in various capacities, as Professor, Dean, Principal and finally as Vice-Chancellor was over. There was a sense of relief.

But very soon he realised that scholarship in isolation had no appeal to him. He was always in the midst of people. His Principalship for six years and Vice-Chancellorship for more than three years gave him an excellent opportunity to serve the University and to be involved in matters and issues in no way connected with him. As a leader he had to take up responsibility. After having played such an important role in the academic and administrative affairs of the University for several years, to fade away into nothingness, scribbling something critical or creative had no meaning for him. Especially when he still had the intellectual fervour and physical energy to be active and useful to others he had no business to cover himself in obscurity, he thought. But then he also wondered whether God expected him to be active and useful to others even to the last day of his life. Anand often indulged in such endless speculations.

Anand was a dedicated teacher and a conscientious administrator. When he was feeling satisfied with what he had done, and was looking forward to a peaceful retired life with Lakshmi, the blow came. It was at the height of noon, and his whole edifice crumbled with the death of Lakshmi. Thereafter something was missing in his life and he was no longer sure of himself, or of God's disposition towards him. He still wanted to serve mankind, but in what manner, he himself did not know. He had to wait, like the scholar gipsy, for the godgiven moment, whenever that might be.