CHAPTER VII

"HARMONY RESTORED"
HEIGHT OF NOON
In *Height of Noon*, Prof. Rama Sarma presents an enlightened and optimistic outlook of life in the novel. The different stages of a self-made man are wonderfully delineated here. The protagonist Dr. Anand rises from the stage of a careless and school-evading young boy to the position of the Vice Chancellor of a University. The novel is about the glorification of personal as well as professional life of an ideal teacher administrator. The vast panorama of life with its ebbs and flows, pains and pleasures, disappointments and hopes, and failures and successes is presented here. Through some revealing, illuminating experiences in life, the protagonist, Dr. Anand learns about the efficacy of willing submission to God's will. The novel becomes all the more appealing when learnt that it is an autobiographical narration of the personal and academic life of the writer himself. As P.M.D. Rajendra observes “The protagonist of the novel *Height of Noon*, Dr. Anand, seems to be a thinly-veiled portrayal of the author himself”.¹

*Height of Noon* is a campus novel depicting the academic life of the Universities in India today. The presentation is through the perspective of an academician, who begins his life as a lecturer and gradually rises to other positions in the University.
In this present age of science and technology when writers of literature are becoming rare, Rama Sarma emerges as a promising novelist whose writings tend to bring back classical values of true literature. His novels fore-shadow the revival of Indian values as against the deteriorating western values. And in this novel the author presents a comprehensive and exchanging view of life, which invites careful and systematic study. His novels present a slice of rich fabric of Indian life with all varieties of human relaxations as well as sordid machinations, not only of pre and post independent India but also of the days of saint composers of medieval India.²

Anand’s conversation with Mary amply brings out his views on India’s caste system and serves as good repartee to the prejudiced thinking of the westerns:

As bad or good as your class system. The same barriers hold good in both cases. Ours is based on social customs and yours is based on economic condition. (P.No.18)
In all of his novels we find certain unique features like a quest for things nobler, service to the humanity, high aspirations, reconciliation with fate and finally, a total surrender to the will of God. These themes are found in modern writings. As against the romantic idealists Rama Sarma presents realistic characters in all his novels. His characters do not drop down from a romantic dream world, but they are the real ones found around us in the society whose joys, sorrows, musings, and actions are true to actuality. This realistic and rationalistic approach to characterization in his novels emerges from the intense and shrewd personal observation and autobiographical experiences. Every experience of the protagonist is invariably that of the author himself.

While the other three novels The Stream, The Bliss of Life and Pastures New deal with the glorification of domestic life, devotional love, and Hindu faith respectively Height of Noon presents, glorifies the personal and academic life of a committed teacher. Dr. Anand, the protagonist, faces the mile of life and finally reaches the heights of success and glory. Thus, he achieves, not only through his merit and efforts but also with an unswerving faith in the divine dispensation. As Mr. Mukaram puts it 'with a firm faith in God, so rare in our troubled times. Anand encounters the failures, success, joys, sufferings, fulfillments, disillusionments, domestic peace, official problems and professional rivalries, unruffled with a philosophic calm'.

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In this novel, the novelist resorts to the flash back technique to present many details from Dr. Anand's life. The occasional shift from the present to the past adds sustenance to the narration and grips the interest of the reader. The novel begins with Dr. Anand receiving his order of appointment as the Vice Chancellor of the very same University in which he works. The order comes almost on the verge of his retirement from service in the University thus extending his service for another three years. He believes that he has a greater role to play in his own country and so abandons the idea of going abroad. Moreover, he views it as God's will and so he should accept it as a God given gift.

He knew it was providential God's blessing had come to him. He realized once again that decline 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. (P.No.2)

Like all other protagonists of Rama Sarma's novels Dr. Anand also exhibits his total faith in God. When he is appointed as the Vice Chancellor, as a mark of expressing his grateful devotion to God, Anand visits the temple of the Lord of the Seven Hills in Tirumala along with his
family members. His joy is greatly shared by his wife Lakshmi, whom he always treats as his friend, guide, and philosopher on the domestic front, she remains always a loyal and amicable wife to him. As the popular saying goes, she is the woman behind his success at every stage of his life. It may not be a physical support but certainly it is the spiritual and moral boost that Anand receives from her all the time. Anand’s very success in his academic life is due to the happiness he enjoys at home in the company of his wife, Lakshmi.

Rama Sarma makes it clear how the domestic happiness goes a long way in shaping the personality of a man. In the delication of women characters, the influence of Shakespeare and Shaw is inevitably there on the novelist. Rama Sarma holds the view that in taking a man either to the heights of glory or the depths of degradation a woman plays the pivotal role. If Dr. Anand enjoys glory on the social front it is mainly because of the happiness, contentment, support, and encouragement he gets at home from his wife. But for her support, life would not be so obvious for him. Dr. Anand himself admits before his friend John in Cardiff:

-------- 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. (P.No.14-15)

Dr. Anand assumes his office as the Vice-Chancellor. He is no stranger to the place or people there. As the principal of the same University college, he served for six years proving himself as a fair and just administrator he knew what was expected of him and more than anything, he felt, that he was answerable to God. He takes charge amidst a whirl of compliments from the students, staff, colleagues, and especially from his former students teaching in various colleges of the University as lecturers. He realizes that his task is a Herculean one and he shall live up to their expectations and not falsify their hopes about the development of the University during his term in the office.

A year after he takes over the responsibility, something personal and pleasant takes place. His work is recognized by the American scholars and he is chosen to be honoured at the Annual Confederation in New York. In a way it is a welcome relief for him from his onerous duties. On his way to New York, he halts at London, just to have a glimpse of the Christmas society, which he used to enjoy years ago while he was there. He wishes to recapitulate those moments of joy, love, and happiness. He is invited for lunch by the principal of the University college, Cardiff, where he secured
his Ph.D. He visits Cardiff nearly after two decades. He cherishes his nostalgic reminiscences there.

He visits the Open University in London. At that time distance education was a bold experiment and on seeing the good work done in the Open University Anand decides to introduce the same in his own University. After a stay for two or three days he flies to New York. At the meeting and in the banquet arranged later in the evening, he enters into the realms of scholarship in the company of other scholars. It is a pleasurable experience for him. At this juncture he is reminded of his wife, Lakshmi. He wistfully thinks of her and her concern for him as she is not present there to share his joyous moments. Rama Sarma makes it clear how the domestic bliss continues to influence one, wherever one goes.

The night before he leaves, the Andhra Association in New York gives him a farewell. He appeals to them to look homeward and come back to India with their rich experiences. The nationalistic zeal and patriotic fervour which are invariably shown in all novels of Rama Sarma, find their place even in this novel. In fact, Rama Sarma always expresses a deep concern over brain drain, which he makes the main theme of his novel, Look Homeward, published in 1976. There too he makes an earnest appeal to all those Indian scholars, intellectuals, and professionals to look homeward, and serve their mother land to the best of their abilities.
Anand returns to India with the hope of visiting the University college, Cardiff once again. It appears to be a premonition, as this dream comes true when he receives the news that he has been elected Fellow of the University college, Cardiff, a distinction conferred on the past students of the college who distinguished themselves in their areas of specialization. His second visit to Cardiff and his re-association with his old friends give him immense joy. He is reminded of all his past experiences in Cardiff in contrast with those he had in London.

Years ago Anand had been to London seeking admission to Ph.D. He was thoroughly disappointed by the Professors there, who denied admission to him. When he started in India for London, he was full of high hopes. There was a certain pride in him. As Somanath finds,

Anand's supreme faith in himself is strengthened by his success as a lecturer. He indulges in self glorification and assumes intellectual snobbery. He claims credits for his indomitable self-effort for his success. Anand's supreme faith in himself is rudely shaken when he fails to get admission to Ph.D. in some University in Britain.4
When the Professor of the University said that he was still too young and fresh to be registered for Ph.D. Anand was flabbergasted. He never thought that he would receive negation and rejection in life. This was a new and bitter experience for him. He spent a year in London working grudgingly and felt humiliated as he could not fulfill his ambition. Later, he got admission for Ph.D. in Cardiff by providence just when he had lost all hopes of getting admission. Unexpectedly he got the opportunity he had aspired for. Then for the first time in his life

Anand realized that God's grace was needed before anything could be achieved. Man's efforts alone could never succeed 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 emphasized man's almightiness. He was humbled and this was the first stage in the gradational process of his understanding God's ways. (P.No.105)

The novelist emphasizes and testifies to this fact in all his novels and plays. This transformation in man from pride and protest to humility and acceptance invariably finds place in all his writings. Any glory that comes to man is not the result of his own capabilities but it is the gift of God.
Time and again he asserts that this is not the experience of anybody belonging to one particular religion but of anybody belonging to any religion or region. Glories do come to the deserved but only through faith in God and after total submission to his will.

From London Anand flies to New York. This time he desired to visit some American University for establishing collaboration with his University in India. He is always full of ideas for introducing new courses and for making departments research oriented. So he discusses with the Dean and the letter of understanding between the two Universities is prepared.

In Madison, Anand stays with Dr. Siva Rao, a professor from India. When he is introduced to Siva Rao's mother-in-law, much to his surprise, he finds her to be Latha, his old student. When he sees her, he recollects how she had developed romantic infatuation for him in those days. By then, he was already married. Though he understood Latha's fondness for him, his loyalty to his wife, Lakshmi was unquestioned. Later, when Anand went abroad, he came to know through Lakshmi’s letter that Latha was married to someone belonging to her caste. Now he meets her after nearly two decades. The petty passionate glories of the youth become the preoccupations during middle or old age.
After his successful and fruitful visits to Cardiff and America, he returns to India and gets busily engaged with the University affairs. He is totally committed to his work. He always aims at perfection. Work is his religion and service to mankind, he thinks, is service to God. His wife, Lakshmi understands him completely and never grumbles about his deep involvement in his professional work. Hence they remain a happy couple. Anand’s total submission to God’s will bestows on him glories much better than what he had aspired for or planned for. Happiness in the domestic front gives him the sustenance and moral strength to carry out his professional work successfully. His past struggle to get a job, to get admission for Ph.D., and then his brief professional career as a lecturer in Delhi University – all these experiences teach him lessons for leading a better and meaningful life. He realizes that if he did not get what he had asked for at any stage in the past it only meant that God had other plans for him and he had to wait. At this juncture, he recalls how he had certain experiences in the past to prove his.

The first time when he realizes that man’s efforts could be crowned with success only with God’s grace was when he got admission for Ph.D., in Cardiff. Similarly, on his return to India, he applied for jobs to several Universities in India. After appearing for interviews in Delhi, Poona, Baroda, and Hyderabad, ultimately he had to join the Delhi University, which was not his choice at that time. Life in Delhi seemed to please him.
He endeared himself to all the people in the University. During the third year of his stay there he tried for some administrative jobs. Twice he was almost on the verge of selection, but some hitch stood in the way of his getting orders of appointment. He was disillusioned and disgusted with all the manipulations and intrigues that went on behind the corridors of power. In the fifth year, the Vice-Chancellor of a South Indian University came there and he advised Dr. Anand to apply for a teaching position in a newly started University in the South. He also hints that he might be given the chance of heading the department in that new University. Anand always preferred to do research on his own. But in the Delhi University he could not get that freedom. Naturally, he was tempted to try his luck once again

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...... some inner fury overpowered him to serve the new University named after the Lord of the Seven Hills. He was till then an agonistic. So there was nothing religious about his choice. He looked at it only from the academic point of view, not from any sense of 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. Like most other human beings, Anand was a bundle of contradictions, the deeper self in him had yet to materialise. (P.No.44)

When he attended the interview in Madras he understood that it was just a lecturer's post and the salary might be less than what he was getting at that time in Delhi. Moreover, he came to know that there was a local candidate, who, he thought, had a better chance of getting that job. So Anand lost hopes about the job and made it clear to his wife that the chances were bleak.

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 the salary happened to be slightly more than the Reader's pay in the new University. So, the divine dispensation showed its blessings once again on him. When the principal of the Delhi University came to know about this, he felt very unhappy as he did not want to lose a teacher like Anand, and said quite touchingly,
Anand, there are some teachers who are good at 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'.(P.No.48)

Anand was dumbfounded. He did not 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. So, while even as he appreciated the principal’s gesture he was also anxious to go in search of an unknown fate. The principal had to assent unwillingly.

Thus Anand’s life stream flows to new pastures with all new hopes and aspirations only to bless him with the bliss of life awaiting him. The glorification of his personal and academic life begins here. He joins the new University where fate designs better and greater things for him.

By the time Anand joins the new University, there were just undergraduate courses in his department. Even then he continues to work
with a hope that some day the post graduate courses would be started because his main aim was to promote research work. But, to his utter disappointment, the University did not start any post graduate courses for about two more years. So, in the beginning of the third year, he goes to the Vice-Chancellor and expresses his dissatisfaction. The Vice-Chancellor promises to do something. In the mean time Anand is selected to visit the American University for hundred days for studying the general education programme. Anand becomes the first teacher from the University College to get this opportunity of going abroad. Life moves ahead smoothly with all glories. His wife Lakshmi always has a premonition that something better awaits her husband all the time.

Visiting various Universities for hundred days in the U.S.A. becomes a pleasant task for Dr. Anand. He feels that all the good work he had done in the U.K. for his Ph.D., for three years is rewarded by an unexpected holiday from his usual routine for hundred days. Since it was a felt experience, the novelist vividly accounts for the difference between the British and the American systems of teaching in an oral interview with the researcher. He explains,

Lecturing in the American Universities is informal whereas in the British Universities it is quite formal. In the American University a lecture includes discussion on
students' doubts also. So it is partly lecturing and partly
discussion. The seminars in the American Universities
and the tutorials in the British Universities prepare the
students for thinking on their own. The students gain
confidence through discussions. Unfortunately none of
these is tried successfully in the Indian Universities for
various reasons.(P.No.57)

Wherever Anand goes, he is received warmly by the American
scholars in his area of specialization

It was a fruitful exchange of ideas and a shared
experience 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 for him. 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.(P.No.57)

Anand utilizes all this rich experience only to be more useful to his
own University. The only awkward situation Anand takes on many
occasions in whenever he meets the Indian students there, he is embarrassed to hear from them that they would never return to India. It irks him to see them preposterously enslaving themselves to western materialism. Being a nationalist, he never imagines himself to be anything but an Indian. It is this patriotic favour which makes him advise the Indian students there to look homeward and serve their own motherland.

On his way back from the U.S.A. Anand visits Cardiff, Paris, and Geneva. He returns to his own University with a new sense of achievement. He becomes more vocal than before and he is quite frank in his talks with others. Dr. Anand returns to India as a 'Man, a complete man', a perfect one with rich and enlightened experiences. The glorification of his academic career gradually reaches its pinnacle.

Typical of the protagonist of Rama Sarma, Anand also has to encounter the trials and tribulations during the process of his glorification. Dr. Murthy, the principal of the University College develops prejudice against Dr. Anand. The latter's achievements, his popularity among the students, his selection for the U.S.A. tour, his efficiency in carrying out new programmes like seminars and workshops, the way he wins the confidence of the Vice-Chancellor – all these make Dr. Murthy grow jealous of him and he creates such situations where Anand is put to total embarrassment. This is the starting point of Anand’s confrontation with the principal. A
cold war begins between them. Anand is polite to everybody but is quite incapable of tolerating hypocrisy and plotting. He never undermines his merit by submitting himself to any undue authority that tries to submerge his individuality. So, he fights back.

The conflict comes to a climax when the professorship is advertised. For some unknown reasons it is deferred by a year. Opportunely the post graduate courses are commenced in the University. Anand does not opt out of teaching because all others in the department are quite fresh to their profession. In his anxiety to make a good beginning Anand is too enthusiastic about the work and discipline in the department. Some of his colleagues conceive it as an authoritarian attitude and a few students do not like the idea of discipline. Consequently, there is a sense of some unease felt in the department. Problems are created by his dissidents. He overcomes all those hurdles with divine help. He is blessed with the professorship. Despite all hurdles and problems, the glorification of his academic life continues. Co-incidentally, at home, he is blessed with a daughter. He thinks that his daughter has fetched him the professorship. So he often likens his daughter to Perdita of Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* who brings fertility to a barren land.

When he becomes a Professor his rivals in the department fear that he may become vindictive. But Dr. Anand believes that forgiveness is a
rare virtue. He is generous to all and he is never petty-minded or vindictive.

As Mukharam rightly observes,

Dr. Anand, the ideal teacher administrator accepts his colleagues and students with all their limitations for he is a humanist to the core believing in the essential goodness of man.\textsuperscript{6}

It takes five years for Anand to become a Professor in the new University. His great dream of becoming a Professor is fulfilled. Even if nothing comes to him in his later life, it does not matter. Such is the contented and peaceful existence that he desired to have and it comes to him. He thinks, he wants nothing more. Yet little does he realize at that time that it is not the last glory that he receives. Blessed are the souls that are chosen by divine dispensation on whom the grace of God continues to shower impiously.

Even in the home front, the glorification continues. It is sheer providence that makes him construct a house at the feet of the Lord of the Seven Hills. He understands that his destiny is with that University and he surrenders himself to the will of God. He learns the lesson of doing deeds irrespective of the reward. He becomes a Karma Yogi. It becomes his faith, his solemn faith, to be always useful to other human beings.
As a Professor, Anand maintains a dignified aloofness and the University politics never bother him. His primary obligation, he thinks, is teaching, research and guiding research scholars. He is consistently true to his objectives. In the mean time, another glory comes to him. He is offered the principalship of the University College. Dr. Anand accepts the offer. Though teaching and research are his main concerns, he does not wish to shirk any other responsibility placed on him. He takes it as a challenge. The best in Anand comes out during the next three years and on the whole, he is liked and loved by all.

The peculiarity of Anand is that he never takes the principalship as a full time job. His primary obligation is to the department. He stays in the department in the morning, teaches his students and conducts research as in the past. He used to attend to his duties as the principal only after fulfilling his primary obligation as a teacher.

The main reason for the success of Dr. Anand was that he was never in the habit of gathering a group of teachers to advise him or for bearing news to him. He never believed in a coterie. He is fair and just to everyone and never had any preconceived liking or antipathy for any group which probably led to his success in different capacities. When a former student queries him, Dr. Anand replies,
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 teacher have confidence in me that I could be fair and impartial. Fortunately for me, there is a large measure of co-operation from the students and the teachers of the college. (P. No. 93)

After six years of administrative work, Anand becomes free. It gives him time to go back to his critical and creative work. He wishes to create a zeal in his students to produce creative research work. But, he expresses his deep concern and anguish over the way in which research work is carried out in most of the Indian Universities today:

His (Dr. Anand) comments on the state of research in Indian Universities have a ring of authenticity about them and they seem to have arisen from the rich experience of Rama Sarma as the research supervisor. 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.D.s. We are
sacrificing quality and quantity. The views of Dr. Anand expressed in his press conference held on the occasion of D.Litt., being conferred on him by a neighbouring University hit nail on the maladies of the educational scenario in modern India.7

Dr. Anand tries to maintains certain standards in teaching and research work and soon his sincerity and commitment to work are recognized and he receives the reward at the right time. Just five days before his retirement, he is appointed as the Vice-Chancellor, the first teacher incumbent from within the same University. The farewell parties turn into welcome parties. He once again accepts it as the gift of God Anand some how 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 fulfill 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. (P.No.108)
As Vice-Chancellor, he is very fair and sincere in discharging his duties. Even after becoming Vice-Chancellor, he never puts an end to teaching or research work. It is his commitment to work which wins him several laurels and awards. He is selected by the Government for Meritorious Teachers Award twice, that too in consecutive years. He worked for three and a half years as the Vice-Chancellor, doing yeoman service to the University and introducing several new programmes in collaboration with some foreign Universities.

This is the zenith of his glory. One who starts his career as a lecturer rises to the position of the Vice-Chancellor of the same University. He receives one honour after another as he richly deserved to be honoured. He achieves this not only with all the merits he has in him but with a faith in God, and a total submission to the will of God. It is a metamorphosis from protest to acceptance. A self-willed and self-opinionated, individual turns into a Karma Yogi. The novelist himself confirms this saying, “in fact he (Dr. Anand) was a Karma Yogi, who believed in doing everything with detachment and as a service to God”.(P.No.134)

The novelist presents life in its totality, with a gradational process of man’s elevation to the height of success with a ripeness in understanding the complex problems of life and encountering them with fortitude on one side and philosophical calm on the other. He possesses a conviction that
devotion to duty is devotion to God as well as an implicit faith in the Hindu Dharma of domestic life that wife and husband are complementary to each other. Finally it ends on a lofty note of total surrender to divine dispensation with unswerving faith in God. It is precisely for these reasons, the novel can be acclaimed for its universal significance, global appeal, and epic grandeur.

What imparts artistic unity to this complex and rich thematic material in the enlightened, optimistic outlook of Dr. Anand. The novel begins with the delightful news of Anand’s appointment as Vice-Chancellor, a day before his retirement as Professor and ends with the relinquishing of the Vice-Chancellorship after the tragic bereavement, the death of his wife, Lakshmi, who has been a loyal partner and a sustaining force in his life. Dr. Anand, after his wife’s death, furiously prays for relief. The height of noon is over, he thinks that he has fallen to a shadowy afternoon was the setting Sun. At the same time his thirst for work remains unquenched and he keeps waiting patiently was the scholar-gipsy for the God-given movement of complete surrender to the will of God.

The novelist brings out Lakshmi’s character with a subtle pervading feminine grace as Anand’s active but detached life is posited with vigour.
The novel also widens the frontiers of a campus novel as it shows the disturbed and disturbing campus life in the Indian Universities and, enriches the Indian English Fiction by adding “a well made novel: on the theme of Indian academic life and the search for identity of a highly conscientious intellectual.

Dissecting Anand’s bent of mind when he was fresh as a lecturer, the author writes: “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”. (P.No.87) After Lakshmi’s death, Anand’s gloomy thoughts are traced: “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”.(P.No.129) He is found ‘wrestling with God’s justice’ in his stupefied mind:

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 happened to him, he mused. For all his faith in God he was left with a tragic fate. (P.No.130)

Though it helps project the character’s state of mind and renders his mental process, Rama Sarma’s method is undramatic method, “since we are
conscious of the author standing beside his characters on the stage, and our attention is divided between them and him."8

Height of Noon is realistic in more than one sense. First, there is autobiographical realism since Rama Sarma maintains a very thin veil between Dr. Anand and himself. For instance, Sri Venkateswara University at Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh in which he worked is referred to as the ‘university named after the Lord of Seven Hills’. It is also true that Rama Sarma had worked in Delhi University before he came to serve S.V.University, Tirupati. His Vice-Chancellorship is also corroborated by the description given on the title page of the novel.

Apart from the realism at the personal level, there is historical realism too. The amount of Anand’s boyhood is narrated by Lakshmi against the background of Freedom Movement during 1920s and 1930s. Gandhi’s visit to Anand’s village and his magnetic influence on the people are re-lived in the novel. This link with history is again taken up when the death of Gandhi is reported during Anand’s student days in Cardiff.

Further, the novel amply brings in ‘academic realism’ relating to the conditions in Indian university. Certain important problems of the university are highlighted as Dr. Anand grapples with them and finds solutions to them setting certain standards. For instance, the jealousy and
animosity of the Principal towards Dr. Anand come in the way of his
elevation as professor in his first attempt. He succeeds only in his second
attempt in due recognition of his merit. As a principal, he does not involve
himself in the group politics of the university and plays fair and impartial in
tackling problems. As such, he gets ample co-operation from the students
and the teachers. In solving the disputes of students, Dr. Anand is
convinced of the essential goodness of students. He says:

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.... 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.

(P.No.95)

The author also throws light on the sorry state of research in the
universities. Research work is done hastily sacrificing quality. Foreign
examiners are done away with to help the candidates. In some cases,
candidates expect tier guides to write theses for them. Further, in the case
of giving promotion to university teachers, he decides “that an overall
picture of teaching, research and publications would be demanded of every
teacher”. (P.No.114) Another important issue is limiting the stay of
university teachers to their States. As such "the best in them is not properly exposed and utilized". (P.No.113)

The title of the novel, Height of Noon, is symbolic of the pinnacle of Dr. Anand's glory in his personal life as well as in his academic and administrative career like the sun at noon. On the one hand, the pinnacle overlooks the steps he has climbed to reach his present state with God's benevolence. The title seems to suggest that one should learn to accept God's will and to accept life as it is and that wisdom lies in such affirmation of life.
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