

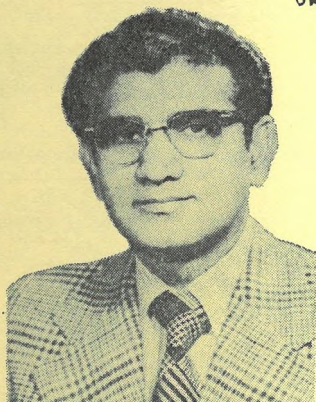
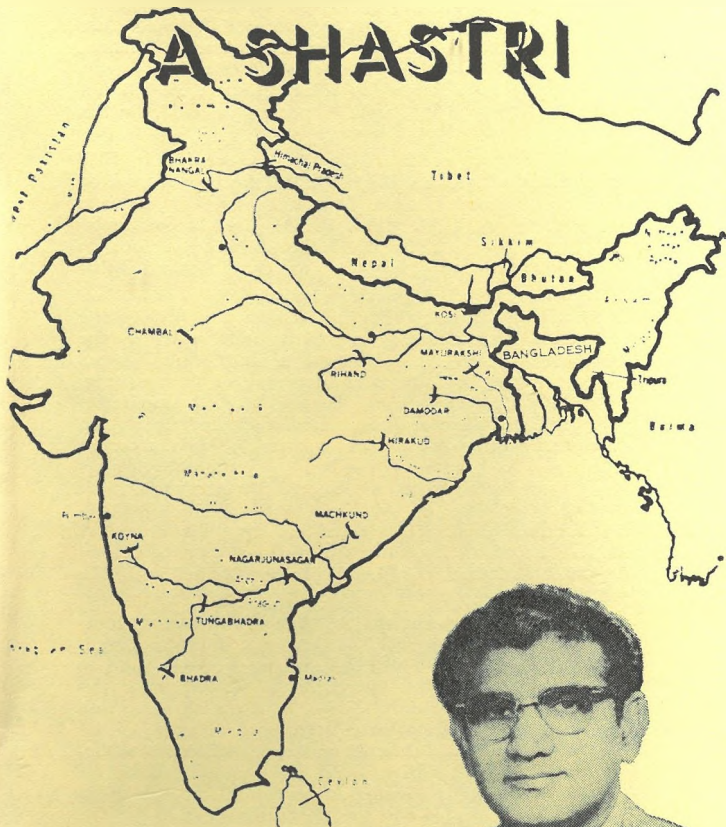
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Chaudhari, Anand. *I was a Shastri*. Toronto, Ontario: Ontario Bible College, [1980?].

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I WAS A SHASTRI



ANAND
CHAUDHARI

FOREWORD BY ANGUS MacKAY

My wife and I have been very close to Anand since he came to us at the Canadian Presbyterian Mission, Jhansi, U.P. just at the time he was beginning to say, as it were, "I have begun to follow Jesus . . . I'll not turn back, I'll not turn back." And, praise God, he has been going right on ever since.

I shall never forget that Good Friday evening in 1954 when Anand arrived on the scene all the way from Goa and some distance beyond Bombay, tired out from a journey of about 1,000 miles in III Class accommodation, then wandering for an hour or two on foot in the city of Jhansi looking for our Bundelkhand Bible School.

In Goa while in the valley of decision and undergoing great stress and anguish of mind and soul, by the providence of God Anand heard a short radio gospel message followed by the announcement of its source -- Bundelkhand Bible School, Jhansi, U.P. Immediately he boarded the train and after a tedious journey arrived with nothing but what he was wearing: a shirt, trousers and sandals. As I came up the hill from the church after spending all day there in our Good Friday services, there was Anand coming up to the front of the bungalow from another angle. Our weariness disappeared as we went inside and an hour or so more in extremely earnest conversation about the Lord, Jesus Christ and His great salvation.

I was profoundly impressed by Anand's intense seriousness and genuine sincerity, and his readiness to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and, at the same time, to dedicate his life whole-heartedly to Christ and His service. As we were about to close the conversation and go down to the hostel where Anand was to stay he said to me something like this: "You know, when I was beginning to lose faith in my old religion and to be influenced by different ideologies, my ambition was to go ahead and use my talents to the fullest extent in the field of literature -- as a great secular writer, journalist, translator, etc. and now my vision is to be all that and more for Jesus Christ and His cause."

ANAND CHAUDHARI

*FROM HINDU PRIESTHOOD . . . TO COMMUNISM
. . . TO CHRIST*

ANAND CHAUDHARI is a lithe, coffee-coloured Indian, a Hindu from the South of India. He is almost painfully quiet, and speaks with the slow, thoughtful tone of the philosopher, a subject that he studied at the Bombay University. When he first spoke at an O.B.C. Chapel service, of the Lord's dealing with him and how he came to Toronto Bible College, he was almost a disembodied voice.

There were no heroics or embellishments of an oft told tale. He spoke slowly, almost too softly, and yet as one listened, it was with a palpitating heart. Here was the story of true, deep experiences with God that needed nothing more than the telling. It was the account of a man who early had learned to "dwell deep" with his God.

It is a story that we felt must be told to the Christian community. Yet when set down in print, the words seem so cold, so strange and "other worldly." The following is just as Anand has told it, and as you read it, realize that this is indeed God's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

It tells how God reached into the heart of India's four hundred million people, touched one man, then brought him to Canada to study at Ontario Bible College, in order that He might prepare him as a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth". Anand's intention is to return to India, on completion of his studies here, and there among his own needy people, proclaim the "unsearchable riches of Christ."

This is the purpose for which Ontario Bible College exists. And in a day when fewer Christian young people from North America seem concerned for the lost of other nations, we are trusting that God will send us more such men, from overseas, that they in turn might go out, "HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE."

D. C. PERCY

ONTARIO BIBLE COLLEGE

“My Father was a ‘Shastri,’ A Hindu Priest”

ABOUT 22 years ago, if someone had told me that one day I would become a Christian, I would have been deeply offended. I was born and brought up in a very orthodox, high caste, Hindu family in Goa, on the southwest coast of India. There, in our family and our community even the word “Christian” was considered a most abominable thing. My father was a Hindu priest, a “Shastri,” or “Teacher,” and since I was the oldest son in the family, according to old Bengali tradition he wanted me to be a priest like himself. So from my very childhood, he gave me religious training suitable for the priesthood.

My mother was also a very religious woman, and this influence added to my training. Hinduism was my family, my training, my life.

When I was nine years old, tragedy struck our family. My four youngest brothers, caught in a severe epidemic of small-pox, died, one after the other. When my parents saw that I too had contracted the disease, they were completely shocked, and it seemed that Hindu faith was not enough.

“My Father Prayed To God”

ONE night, my father sat at my bedside, and seeing my life slipping away, from the depths of his heart he prayed to God . . . a God he did not even know. I remember that prayer: my father promised that if God would spare me, I would be given to Him for His service. He doubtless meant in the Hindu priesthood, but how differently God answered. For He did hear that prayer, and I recovered.

This experience made my father more anxious than ever about my education and religious training, for he

was an honest man, and was determined that he would live up to his part of the bargain with God. He secured the help of another priest, and both gave their fullest attention to my studies.

This secluded life of hard study and strict observance of religious rites carried on for two years. It was then that my aunt, her husband and other relatives came from Bombay to our home in Goa, to take part in some special Hindu religious ceremonies. While in our home, they persuaded my father to send me to Bombay with them, for my secular education. Very unwillingly, for he did not want to lose his last son, he finally agreed, and I went to Bombay.

“Religion, Philosophy, and Communism”

IN Bombay, a new life began for me. I found it difficult to become adjusted to the new situations of the great city. I had always lived a secluded life, and now became withdrawn to a life of reading and study. Over the years, my interest in religion and philosophy had been developed, but here, in both High School and University, I had the opportunity to study many other subjects, most of them completely new to me.

Through a friendship with a fellow student, I became particularly interested in Communist philosophy. I began to attend Communist study classes, the “cells” that are to be found all over the world. And here I found that my faith in my religion, and in my little knowledge of God, was not strong enough to stand. I became more and more involved in Communist students’ activities, and it seemed as though this would be my new religion.

In a very remarkable way (was this the way God was answering my father’s prayer?) I also came across some books which were written by ex-Communists, men who had become disillusioned with its teaching and ideology. Through reading them, much confusion was created in my mind, and I scarcely knew what to believe.

“The Great Debate”

THEN another, still more remarkable, thing happened and for the first time in my life I came into contact with Christianity.

Our Student Debating Society organized an Inter-Collegiate debate on the subject: “Will there be peace in this world?” I was chosen, together with one of my classmates by the name of Joseph, to debate for our Society.

Not knowing what else to do, I debated along the usual Communist lines. My arguments were weak. Then Joseph took the stand, and in the course of his speech, he made what was just a passing remark, and without any further explanation, about the Lord Jesus Christ. His only comment was, that according to his faith, Jesus Christ would come again to establish His kingdom of peace. And of all that was said, this single mention of the Lord Jesus Christ made a deep impression upon my mind.

During the following days, I tried to forget what I had heard, but I couldn't. That Name seemed to be hooked into my mind, and could not be shaken loose. Then it struck me: I had studied just about everything else, why not see what this was all about? So I contacted Joseph, to find out where to start.

“I Started Reading the New Testament”

JOSEPH was wiser than he knew. I cannot remember him as having a robust or zealous faith, but God can use the weak things too, and Joseph gave me a Gospel of Matthew to read.

I took it home eagerly and read the first two or three chapters. But as I read the account of the birth of Christ and the other narratives of those chapters, my Communist trained mind rejected them as I was now rejecting the Hindu myths. I put the book to one side, still seeking, still wondering.

After about a fortnight, I found myself reading the Gospel again . . . this time carrying on to the fifth

chapter of Matthew, and was then swept on in the magnificent story. The Sermon on the mount really gripped my heart. I read it again and again. And for the first time in my life, I realized the emptiness of my life and the sinfulness of my heart.

I read through Matthew, and the other Gospels. Much that I read I did not understand, but I was like a parched desert, soaking up the life giving water.

For about four months, my mind was like a battleground. On one side of the fight was my Hindu religion and the influence of Marxist philosophy, and on the other side was the unique person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“The Crisis”

THE crisis point came in the month of January, 1954, when I came to the decision that the Lord Jesus Christ was none other than the living God, the Giver of real peace and life, and that I must surrender my life to Him alone. I did just that.

Then one after another, two very tragic things happened.

One was the sudden death of my friend Joseph, who had become very close to me. Another was the very cruel death of my dear parents and my only sister. It happened in this way.

My father, mother and sister arrived at Bombay on their way to Allahabad, the Hindu holy city. For very devout Hindus, this city is of special importance, because the three most “holy” rivers of India (the Ganges, the Jumna and the invisible Saraswati) all meet here. All year 'round, Hindu pilgrims visit this city to take baths in the sacred waters, to gain merit and to cleanse away sin. To take a bath in them on special auspicious days has special importance.

“The Twelve-Year Festival”

MY parents and sister were on their way to take a bath during the most auspicious days which only come, according to the Hindu calendar, every twelve years. In that year, from February to March, 1954, tens of thousands of people (according to press reports, over six million made the pilgrimage) arrived to take a bath at the sacred confluence of these holy rivers. The crowds were so dense on the river banks and beyond, that it was almost impossible to move. Suddenly, as the multitude awaited the sacred moment to bathe, an elephant, being ridden as part of a heard bringing in pilgrims, ran amok. Soon elephants and people were one tangled, inseparable mass. It had rained the night before, and on the slippery footing, people went down, only to be trampled and pushed in the maze of legs.

Those who were near the river bank were pushed into the water, and as more and more people were shoved, they went in deeper and deeper, to drown and be swept down the river.

“Trampled to Death”

MY parents were trampled to death. Before he left me in Bombay, my father had insisted that I return to my Hindu faith and to my task as a ‘Shastri.’ On parting, he said that we would discuss it further when he returned. He never did return. He died, with hundreds of others, on that panic-swept river bank.

When the tragic news reached me, I was terribly shocked. I couldn’t believe it. My relatives turned on me, saying that God had cursed me because I was reading Christian books and telling others about Christ. During those days . . . how I suffered, mentally, physically. It is impossible to describe what I went through.

“His Peace”

STRANGELY enough, even in those first days of shock, the gracious words of Christ came to give me my only real comfort: *“Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in Me.”* Somehow I began to

feel that I had been so severely separated from all that I loved, in order that I might love Him more. The feeling came to me insistently, that I must leave everything, including College and my degree, and dedicate my life to serve the living and the true God.

“His Word”

ONE day when I was re-reading Matthew's Gospel, I heard what the Lord said to the young man: *“Go sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me.”*

I felt that this is what the Lord would have me to do. So I left my College, and the fascinating city of Bombay and returned to Goa. There, in my native place, with all the old familiar things around me once more, I sealed my decision. I sold everything that my parents had left for me, gave it all to the tenant farmers, and followed Him. Was it easy to break the last threads that linked me to my family and my youth? No . . . but neither was the Cross easy for Christ.

“I Had Never Seen a Church or Missionary”

WHAT was next? I had never been to Church, had never seen a missionary or a pastor. I only had my New Testament. A strange situation? It was indeed.

I spent my last night at Goa, and very wonderfully God showed me the place where I had to go. I had been able to listen to a radio broadcast that night, and of all things it was a Gospel Message that I heard. At the end of the broadcast, there was an address given: “The Bible School, Jhansi, North India.” That was the place where I must go!

I left Goa, and after travelling over 1,000 miles, in a

miracle of journeying with God, I arrived at Jhansi, North India, in April, 1954.

It was here that I met my first foreign missionary, the Rev. Angus MacKay, of the Canadian Presbyterian Foreign Mission Board. And before long, I realized that the Lord had brought me to the right place.

“Bible School”

AT the Jhansi Bible School, I saw and read for the first time the whole Bible. Mr. MacKay opened the Word of God to me, and once again, I was like parched ground, drinking in the water of life.

In the Bible I realized more and more what my gracious Lord had done for me on the Cross. What a joy it was to study the Word!

When I finished the two-year course at the Bible School, the Lord opened the door for me to go to Delhi and serve Him through the program of the Christian Literature Institute. Later on I served in the Delhi Bible Institute. What a joy it was to tell hundreds of non-Christians about the Lord Jesus Christ, through weekly radio broadcasts, Bible study classes, correspondence and public campaigns. How wonderfully God heard and answered the prayer of a Hindu Priest, and claimed me, his son, for Christian service.

In 1965, the Lord very definitely pointed out to me my own need of further Bible training. While I was seriously thinking and praying about my next step, I received a bundle of old, used magazines. Among them was the 70th Anniversary issue (Sept. 1964 edition) of the Ontario Bible College Recorder. Thus God spoke to me once again, and this time it was about Canada and the Ontario Bible College. Such a trip was almost impossible at the time, and it seemed that I could not leave India. There were many hurdles in the way, but one by one, the Lord removed them all, and opened the way for me to come to Canada. I left India a week before my

beloved country was attacked by Pakistan, over Kashmir. Surely the theme of that first early debate that started me toward Christ, carried the theme for India and the world: Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, is the only hope.

Through the help of Rev. Angus MacKay, and another Canadian Presbyterian missionary, Rev. Russell Self (a Graduate of O.B.C.) I arrived for training, only that I might carry back to my people, the good news, that "Jesus Saves."

How true it is, "*The Lord moves in a mysterious way. His wonders to perform.*"

This is Anand's unique testimony. We are grateful for the Christian friends who make it possible for us to help prepare him for the Lord's service at O.B.C. He is not alone as a foreigner. There is a score of other young people from Africa, Latin America, Europe, the United Kingdom, the West Indies and Australia, who have travelled all the way to join with American and Canadian youth to prepare for the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a joy it is to know that there are so many, who, like Anand, have been saved by the Lord Jesus Christ and separated unto His service.

Since graduating from O.B.C., Anand Chaudhari has seen God work in a wonderful way through the various agencies that have come into being in India through his ministry.

Now associated with the Christian Nationals Evangelism Commission, and with the help of interested friends God has opened doors to new opportunities almost undreamed of a while ago.

An investment in one life — under the blessing of God — has brought eternal dividends.

Here is Anand's update of what God hath wrought.

An Update — With God

THE four years spent at Ontario Bible College were full of blessings. Fellowship with fellow-students of different denominations was educative, inspiring and encouraging. Missionary Conferences under the dynamic

leadership of Rev. D. C. Percy added a new dimension to my spiritual life and vision. Teaching and exhortation received from the dedicated and teachers created deeper reverence and love for the word of God and hunger for the closer walk with the Lord. Loving affection, deep interests and sound counsel of Dr. S. L. Boehmer was always a source of encouragement. Leaside Bible Chapel became my spiritual home where my spiritual life found needed nourishment and strength. The Lord provided a real friend, counsellor and brother beloved in the person of Wilson Flanagan. Many churches of different denominations gave me opportunities to minister the Word of God and blessed me with rich fellowship. Association with the Christian Transportation Inc. opened up a new avenue of service.

The Lord not only blessed my life with warm fellowship and love of His children but provided a home away from home. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bingley and Miss Ruth Andrews took me into their home as their own son and showered upon me such parental love and affection which cannot be expressed in words. Because of their generosity, my dear wife was able to come to Canada during my last year at O.B.C.

Many other friends and families endeared themselves to us about whom we can only say, 'we thank our Lord upon every remembrance of them.

Before graduation I applied to the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Chicago, U.S.A., for further studies and was accepted. I was very glad because it was the desire of my heart for many years. But after my graduation when my wife and I prayed about this, we definitely felt that the Lord wanted us to be back in India. So in obedience to His command we returned in the month of October 1969.

After returning we sought the Lord's will concerning our future ministry and sphere of work. We received offers from several organizations, but the more we prayed about this the more we felt that the Lord wanted us

to labour for Him in an area where very little work had been done. As we waited upon Him, the Lord burdened our hearts for the State of Rajasthan and for the whole of North India.

Update — In Rajasthan

BEFORE I proceed further let me say something about this province of Rajasthan. Before 1947 the present province was not in existence. There were several separate, independent native states ruled by kings and queens. In 1950 monarchy was abolished, and all these states were merged into Indian Union, and the present State of Rajasthan of 26 districts was formed.

Rajasthan has an area of 342,274 square kilometers, and is the second largest state in India. Over 30 million people live in this colourful state, out of which 90 percent are Hindus, 7 percent Muslims, while only 15 in every 10,000 people are Christians. There are not more than 30 small churches in this province of 30 million people and fifteen districts out of twenty-six do not have even one church. Pastors of the most of the churches are not interested in evangelism and the vast majority of Christians are only nominally Christians.

I had visited this province in 1963 and 1964 and knew some of the workers who were labouring for the Lord. When we returned to this province in 1970, we invited these workers to our home for consultation and prayer. We shared with them our burden and vision and the four-fold programme of evangelism, follow-up, training young people for ministry, and planting new indigenous self-supporting churches.

We all waited upon the Lord for three days and were led to form the Rajasthan Bible Institute to implement the four-fold programme. A Board of Directors was formed and in due course the Institute was registered with the Government as a non-profit religious society. We started the work in Kota and then moved to Jaipur, the capital city of this province.

What God is Doing!

DURING the last six years with the Lord's help and His guidance, we have been able to undertake the following activities:

1. **PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS:** Several Gospel campaigns have been held in different parts of Rajasthan and North India. Thousands of tracts and gospel portions have been distributed through these efforts. Thousands of Hindus and Muslims have heard the Gospel, some for the first time. It was a real joy for us to see scores of young people coming to the Lord at each campaign. In spite of persecution and opposition from their families and society some Hindu young men have obeyed in following the Lord in the waters of baptism and serving Him in the local churches.

2. **CORRESPONDENCE COURSES:** The first correspondence course for Hindus, based on the Gospel of John, was started in the month of August 1970. Only a couple of advertisements in the local newspapers brought in hundreds of requests. Currently, over seven thousand men and women are enrolled in this course. Due to rapid growth in literacy, this is becoming one of the effective means of evangelism.

3. **RADIO BROADCASTS:** We started our first 15-minute weekly radio broadcast in Hindi in November 1970 over F.E.B.A. Seychelles radio station. This broadcast is evangelistic in nature and specially geared to the needs of non-Christians. Another 30-minute broadcast was added in 1972. This is a systematic Bible study broadcast mainly designed for Christians. In answer to our prayers of many months our Lord provided funds to start our third 15-minute weekly broadcast over the powerful Radio Ceylon in April 1975. We praise God for this.

The response to these broadcasts has been very encouraging. We have now over ten thousand listeners who listen and write to us regularly. There are over 20 million radio-transistor sets in India. What an oppor-

tunity of reaching millions of people through the powerful means of radio.

4. THE CHRISTIAN RAILROADER MAGAZINE: In co-operation with the Christian Transportation Inc. Toronto, Canada, we started publishing the Christian Railroader, a monthly magazine, five years ago to reach the one and a half million railway employees in India.

5. V.B.S. AND SUNDAY SCHOOL: In 1973 we conducted Vacation Bible School in this city. This was the first time people heard about V.B.S. 150 children attended regularly. This has become now an annual feature. After the first V.B.S. children asked us to start a Sunday School which we did. Now over 100 children attend the Sunday School regularly.

6. BIBLE SEMINARY IN HINDI: Hindi is the official language of the six provinces of North India. In other words, Hindi is the language of over 250 million people. In all the schools, except a few convent and private schools the medium of instruction is in Hindi. But it is a sad, sad thing to note that there is not even one Evangelical Hindi medium Bible School of B.Th. level in the whole of North India. The Lord had given us a great burden about this need but we could not do anything about this due to accommodation problems. Last year in June, 1975, the Lord wonderfully opened up the door for us to move into the property where we could start the school with at least a handful of students. In August, 1975 our vision became a reality and we started first year B.Th. course in Hindi with thirteen students. We cannot take in more students till we have building facilities. The Lord has provided enough land through the generosity of Christian friends in Canada and the United States. If in the next two or three years we can have our own building to accommodate at least fifty students, a printing press to print and publish Christian literature, and a well-equipped studio to produce Gospel broadcasts, we can reach millions of people with the Gospel. With our graduates we can see self-supporting churches established. The fields are white unto harvest

and the harvest is plentiful. What we need is more prayer warriors, labourers and facilities.

As I look back, my heart is full of praise and gratitude to my Lord and Saviour, Who not only saved me and brought me out of the darkness of hearthenism into His marvellous light, but has made me His ambassador. What a privilege to serve the true and living God.

Perhaps you would like to share. Why not contact:
—Anand Chaudhari.



Ontario Bible College