

BOOK REVIEW

B. K. ANAND : EASY TO ADMIRE, DIFFICULT TO EMULATE, Edited by R. L. Bijlani. Jaypee Brothers, New Delhi, 1997, pages 115, Rs. 150.00

The author is an ardent admirer of Prof. Anand. It shows in every line of the book. In this respect the book is distinctly different in its tenor in the sense that it is usually with a certain amount of condescension that evaluation of an Indian scientist is undertaken by another Indian unless he is a Noble laureate (in which case, of course, the appreciation is overdone). It is almost as if we are somewhat abashed about our own scientists. This is specially so if the achievement of the scientist is a collaborative one in which case the credit slips on very unobtrusively to the Western collaborator. The fact of the matter is that an Indian scientist's achievements tend to be inspired, in that usually there is negligible correlation between his best recognized work and all the other of his endeavours. But in this case it happens that Anand has many milestones to his credit, although the best acknowledged is still his first. Bijlani sums up this complex and sensitive situation when he describes Anand's discovery of the feeding centre as "a product of the combination of the precision of the West, imagination of the East, and a misbehaving instrument".

There are many similarly revealing statements about the scene in Indian science. The story of how Anand was appointed to the chair at AIIMS is another case in point : "On receipt of the 'Confidential' report from Prof. Fulton, a person no less than the Health Minister of India, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, personally requested the Chief Minister of Punjab to send Dr. Anand to New Delhi" – typical of how professional reputations have to be personally promoted by well-meaning statesmen, and not directly by fellow professionals. The story is reminiscent of Prof. Laski recommending the now President K. R. Narayanan to Prime Minister Nehru for appointment to the Civil Service.

The book is full of interesting anecdotes about the personal life of Prof. Anand and his many professional achievements. It will be a worthy possession for all Physiology Department libraries in India.

P. S. RAO
Department of Physiology,
All India Institute of Medical Sciences,
New Delhi - 110 029