

Divya
THE RAINBOW CHILD



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Divya was fifteen when the dark, menacing clouds came over the horizon of her life. When the storm of adversity begins to brew amidst the blinding whiplashes and deafening thunder of impending disaster, who can predict if the fury of the floods will sweep away home and hearth, or if a relenting Providence will mitigate their ferocity and permit survival? Who can know the future?

Everyone in their colony remembered Divya as a young girl. She had been so irresistible that all the other parents ungrudgingly paid the tribute of calling her the sweetest child in the neighbourhood. Some even dubbed her “our little rainbow” affectionately.

When Divya was ten, her teacher taught the class about sunlight being a composite of seven colours. She explained how sunrays, refracted and dispersed through drops of water or mist, are split into seven colours to form the colourful arch adorning the heavens. The little girl sensed the secret of this delight of Nature, and danced down the road on her way home that evening, singing:

I am born of a raindrop
To sing, to dance, and to hop.

A rainbow did seem to enter the house in her wake.

Divya's home was located in what had originally been a rural area, but was now one of the outermost suburbs of the expanding metropolis of Chennai.

Her father, Govinda, had been a diligent student in his day and had managed to, against all odds, obtain a degree in mechanics, secure a job in an engineering firm, and rise to the position of a departmental manager in its factory. He was an honest, hard-working man, aware of his official duties and his family responsibilities. His ambition was to be promoted, through his merit and performance, to the post of factory manager.

His wife, Geeta, a pleasant and energetic young woman, was a good wife and a good mother. Their firstborn, Niranjana, was two years older than Divya. Geeta was diligent in her housework, keeping their two-bedroom home meticulously clean, and doing all the cooking and shopping for provisions by herself. Their part-time maid came in daily to sweep the floors, clean the dishes and wash the clothes. With two children in school, and their college education to provide for eventually, the need to practise frugal thrift and save for the future dominated the lives of Govinda and Geeta.

Considering her rural, almost rustic background, Geeta had done remarkably well in even completing high school, but the demands of a communal life left her with no freedom to study further. She stayed at home, learnt domestic skills, and looked after her parents who were bent low before their time with problems pecuniary and physical, till relenting fate brought her a good alliance and she was married to Govinda. She now had a better home and status, but the family had to set the goals higher, strive harder and raise the whole standard of living for the next generation. Geeta worked on enhancing her knowledge through her children's textbooks to help them in their studies. In this, her husband shared as much as he could, given the pressures of his

own work. It was a well-knit, harmonious and fairly disciplined family, grateful for blessings received and willing to work hard for its own betterment.

This serenity in the family, this peace in spite of strife and struggle for material adequacy, had its basis in its eldest member, Raman, Govinda's aging father. Raman had lost his wife to typhoid several years earlier. In those communities, at sixty, one was already living on borrowed time, with the poorly nourished and overworked bodies worn out and falling apart. That she could hold the infant Divya in her arms for a while was itself a fulfilment which had made the grandmother's farewell easier.

Since then, Raman had lived with Govinda and Geeta. He was respectfully and affectionately accommodated in their home. His meagre pension as a retired headmaster of a high school was in some measure a contribution to the family budget.

He sometimes visited, by turns, his other sons, Ravi and Sekhar, who lived elsewhere in Chennai and held managerial jobs, earning salaries that provided a fairly decent living to their families. He stayed for about a week at a time with them, once or twice a year, and otherwise lived quietly with Govinda's family.

He had been a dedicated teacher always, keen to communicate and comfort, concerned about the future of the youngsters he taught. He considered it his duty to inculcate the joy of learning in the rather unruly and indifferent kids of poor, illiterate farm labourers and construction workers. His aim was that school should be for them not an infliction reluctantly suffered, but a benediction gladly awaited.

With love and laughter, always caring and sharing, the patient, pleasant teacher had nurtured generations out of which had emerged scholars, with their standard of life elevated several-fold. Some had even gone on to become doctors, lawyers, engineers

and, Raman recollected with a bemused smile, lecturers in colleges. He felt blessed. Teaching was a sacred profession.

From an early age, Raman had been spiritual by nature, easily and instinctively feeling the presence of a supreme Order and Authority in his life, no less than in the whole of creation. Therefore he looked for and took advantage of every opportunity to get instructed in religious and philosophical teachings. He would pedal his cycle for miles willingly if any discourse or chanting programme was held within reach. These talks were often couched in basic expositions, intended for an audience with no scholarship or sharpened intellect, but, to one who could sieve and shift the husk from the grain, great truths were revealed in those simple terms.

Raman's mind and heart worked in great affinity, and often tears, rising unbidden, comforted him with the conviction that a personal truth of one's own being could reach out to God and be graciously received. He read whatever books he could borrow from libraries, and structured for himself a knowledge base that contained concepts of creator and creation in credible, and even irrefutable, terms.

The mighty declarations of Vedantic lore opened their mystic secrets to his searching mind. The assumption of a personalized identity for the human individual was itself the fundamental error. It then followed that all subsequent conclusions were in error, being founded on a primordial ignorance of the Truth. That Truth is what is called God.

No man is an island. 'Do not send to know for whom the bell tolls, for it always tolls for thee.' The reality of oneself is that one is Total Consciousness, not a fragmented, and thereby limited, individual; not a mere flash in time between the womb and the tomb. Seen thus, the seeker of truth becomes one with the mind's concept of God. Thence follow the ultimate scriptural

declarations: *Ahamṛ Brahmāsmi* (I am Brahman) and *Tat tvam asi* (That thou art).

As these illuminating thoughts took possession of him, they became the very substratum of his existence. The purpose, direction, and fulfilment of his life lay in so living within the mind that this objective knowledge could become subjective experience.

This heightened goal and dedication made him a rare human being indeed, one with pristine values and an understanding of universal harmony, a man of enduring peace. He was much more than a teacher of a curriculum; he was a teacher of life.

With his perception of the divine dispensation that ran unerringly through all lives and all events, and with a peaceful acceptance of destiny's writ, he saw how the threads of personal lives were interwoven in the matrix of the cosmic fabric, so that the totality, when seen truly, was only a single movement in time and space, with no inherent discord.

Yet, individual minds, unable to see this grandeur in the Creator's scheme, laid out their own demands and courted grief and resentment and suffering when their desires were not fulfilled. They had not a clue to the basic tenet that there has to be a causal rightness to the demands one may make, in terms of the progression of one's own life.

In the causal continuity that relates action and reaction, there must be a deserving to justify a demanding. One who approaches the unfolding phenomena of life with this fundamental rightness of intellect is naturally calm, secure, and peaceful at all times. That alone is a life lived to its true potential.

