

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

# IT'S EASY TO CRY

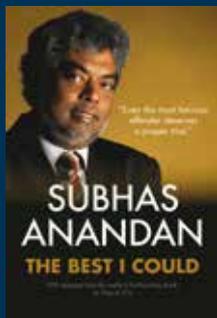
"In this book, I am sharing with you all my feelings very candidly about what I have gone through and practically baring my soul.

Through these crises, I have learnt to cope with life better and face my greatest fears instead of rolling over and playing dead."

Subhas Anandan (1947–2015) was Singapore's best-known criminal lawyer, having led several landmark cases that shaped the face of criminal law in Singapore.

In the first volume of his autobiography *The Best I Could*, first published in 2008, Subhas Anandan covered many sensational cases, such as those of Anthony Ler, Took Leng How and Ah Long San, and espoused his views on the mandatory death sentence and police entrapment.

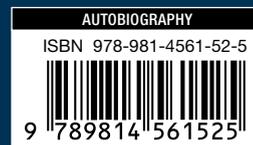
In this second volume *It's Easy to Cry*, this foremost champion of pro bono work moves away from depicting gruesome murders and delves instead into the emotions behind the crimes. He writes about cases where deep and complex emotions are displayed, like the mother who lied and pleaded guilty to save her son. He also shares his thoughts on the many people, including Singapore's Chief Justices and Attorney-Generals, who have affected him in one way or the other. It is also a searing and honest account of his life, career and friendships — dictated to his wife in 2014 while undergoing kidney dialysis.



"...a candid, at times brutally honest rendition of the boy, the man, the lawyer and the mentor who would ultimately become the voice of Singapore's underdogs and unwanted."

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SUBHAS ANANDAN

IT'S EASY TO CRY

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AUTHOR OF THE BESTSELLING BOOK, *THE BEST I COULD*



# SUBHAS ANANDAN

## IT'S EASY TO CRY

"I always hope that those who have been punished for their offences will be given a second chance to live their lives better."

For Review only

# SUBHAS ANANDAN

IT'S EASY TO CRY

# For Review only

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*To all my siblings to whom I owe so much.  
I know that this dedication is nothing compared to how you stood by me.*

*To my elder sister, Subhashini, who has been there for me in more ways  
than one that I have lost count.*

*To my younger brother, Sudheesh, who is always there for me.  
Silently strong, he gives me the confidence and the assurance to attempt  
the things I otherwise would not have tried.*

*To my younger sister, Sugadha, who assures me of spiritual support.  
Her prayers give me confidence to do the work I do.*

*To my beloved youngest sibling, my late brother, Surash,  
who was my best friend. He encouraged me to do whatever I desired  
and I really miss him very much.*

# For Review only

## CONTENTS

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Acknowledgements	7		
Foreword	11		
Preface	15		
01 Getting Tired	17	19 Feeling Useful	107
02 The Passing of Dear Friends	23	20 Ah Soo, a Dear Old Friend	110
03 A Caring Teacher	28	21 Sad Occasions and Happy Moments	117
04 A Mother's Unconditional Love	33	22 A Question of Face	120
05 A Sudden Loss	37	23 Clash with the Law Society	127
06 The Good, the Bad and the Ugly	42	24 Chief Justices	131
07 Pushed to the Brink	46	25 Attorney-Generals	141
08 At Death's Door	51	26 At the Casino	151
09 Your Smile in Every Cloud	56	27 1963: Loyola College	154
10 You Are My Sunshine	59	28 My Somalian Experience	169
11 Second Chance	65	29 A Son's Promise	179
12 Rebels of the 1970s	69	30 My Beloved Mother	184
13 Underage Sex	76	31 Slipper Man's China Bride	187
14 Special, in Every Sense of the Word	78	32 Every Criminal Deserves a Defence	192
15 Obsessive Love	83	33 The Yellow Ribbon of Hope	195
16 My Dear Friend, Francis	90	34 Last Words	213
17 How I Started Practice	96		
18 MPD Nair, JBJ and the NCMP Scheme	103	Epilogue: A Tribute to Subhas Anandan	217

# For Review only

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been six years since I wrote my first book *The Best I Could*. A lot has happened in those six long years, both good and bad. I have had the pleasure of working with friends and colleagues in KhattarWong LLP and then of helping set up RHT Law Taylor Wessing LLP.

My son, Sujesh, has decided to read law, a switch he made from banking and finance. Whether he chooses to practise criminal law is entirely up to him as I have always emphasised to him that he should pursue his own dreams.

My wife, Vimi, has been my pillar of strength through all the crises I have faced. She has always stood firmly by me, unwaveringly, constantly encouraging me and providing me with her love, kindness and understanding. She has been my soulmate ever since I first met her.

My legal practice has been my passion but I must say that the law was not my original choice of career path. I had thought of many other careers before I embarked on law. I was unsure as to whether I would practise law upon graduation but circumstances led me to commence practice after I was called to the Bar on 20 January 1971.

My health took a turn for the worse days after I launched *The Best I Could* in December 2008 but God was kind and I was back at work by early 2009, still chasing my passion in practice, especially pro bono work which I have been involved with since I started practice

in 1971. This time, in addition to pro bono work, I visited schools and gave talks to encourage students and provided monetary support to students in need as much as I could. I have always been an advocate of a second chance and I believe that every one deserves it, if the need arises.

My health deteriorated further as evident in the increase in the number of pills I was taking a day but that did not deter my spirit to live life to the fullest. Knowing that Vimi and Sujesh were very understanding and supportive of what I do, I delved into anything and everything where I thought I could be of help to anyone, whether it was emotionally, legally or financially.

I have always felt that some of Singapore's criminal laws were ready for change, especially the right to counsel by an accused person on his arrest. I am also against the mandatory death penalty. I have always believed that the discretion of the hearing judge to decide on death penalty is most important but the law unfortunately binds the hands of the judge in such cases.

I have been honoured to sit on many steering committees in recent years. These include the committee set up by the former Attorney-General Sundaresh Menon, our present Chief Justice, to reform areas of criminal law and the committee set up by the Ministry of Law to review homicide. We have yet to settle on many of the proposed changes but I am glad that at least the process of formal discussion has started.

My dear friend, Noor Mohamed Marican, informed me one day that the Muslim Lawyers Association would like to organise a tribute in my honour. As I have always been very passionate about providing support for ex-inmates, he wanted to arrange a bursary award in my name with the Yellow Ribbon Foundation. Personally, I felt that this

honour was too great to accept and told him not to pursue it. However, Marican, being Marican, would listen only to himself and did what he felt was honourable and befitting as I was already in the twilight of my practice. On hindsight, I thank him for it. It was truly an honour.

I have been on dialysis since the beginning of 2014 and it has been very hard to bear. It took a toll on me emotionally but in time, and with the support of my wife, I have learnt to keep myself occupied during the agonisingly painful four-hour sessions, three times a week. This was when I decided to dictate this book, *It's Easy to Cry*, which I had promised the publishers that I would do. It may seem disjointed as I would dictate as I sat in the dialysis chair and my thoughts would be different each day.

**Subhas Anandan**

December 2014

# For Review only

## FOREWORD

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The launch of *The Best I Could* at Books Kinokuniya, December 2008.

My beloved darling husband, Subhas. What can I say about him that has not already candidly been said by him and those who knew and loved him? He was my soulmate in every sense of the word. We have very different personalities but we connected at every level, be it about food, movies, gossip, serious topics of discussion, a joke or his work and passion to help those in need. He was ever willing to share with me everything in his thoughts.

Every day, I would pick him up from work. The moment he got into the car, I would ask, “How was your day?” That would spark a continuous monologue of his day in the 15-minute drive home. He never failed to share his day’s experiences with me. Sometimes I wonder if he just needed me to ask him how his day was, so that he could just rattle on, not expecting me to grasp any of it. But I did and there were moments when he would seek my layperson’s view on some matters.

I have known Subhas for two-thirds of my lifetime. We shared a great life together, through good and bad times, and came out closer and stronger for it. We share a son, a great person with a lot of his father’s qualities and I can’t ask for more. I admired Subhas’ generosity towards others, his passion for helping the needy and his dedication to his work. It was totally fine for Sujesh and me to take a back seat when

it came to his passion for work. He always knew we would understand and he made it a point to keep us abreast of his comings and goings.

Despite his busy schedule, Subhas never missed dinner at home with the family. He was a great father, who was first a friend to our son. He never failed to attend to our needs in any way he could. We knew that he put us above all else deep within him and we allowed him to pursue his passion, most of the time without troubling him. He appreciated this from us.

Subhas was also a very loving son and brother. His parents and siblings meant the world to him and he would do anything for them.

I will always treasure the memories that have been created between us and I will live the rest of my days appreciating and fondly reminiscing the love and joy he gave me.

With all my love,  
Vimi



**SUBHAS  
ANANDAN**

# For Review only

## PREFACE

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I was wrongfully detained in remand prison from the end of January to the middle of November 1976. While in prison, I toyed with the idea of writing a book about my experiences in prison. It was even reported in the press as I had mentioned it to a journalist on my release from prison.

David Marshall, who was my lawyer then, rang me up and told me, “Be careful, my lad. You don’t want to look for trouble. You may state issues that are protected by the Official Secrets Act. I suggest that you hold on.” I took his advice and held on for a very long time until 2008, when I decided to write my first book *The Best I Could*, which, to my surprise, became an instant hit. I initially thought to entitle it “It’s Easy To Cry”, but somehow when I wrote that book, I felt “The Best I Could” was more apt.

In my first book, I wrote of gruesome murders and some of the more unusual cases that I thought would be of interest to the reader. Many people think that crime means killing, lust, sex and money but this is not always the case. Sometimes, a commission of crime shows the true nature of a man or woman, and such a commission can be a noble act to save someone. Many of the cases that are mentioned in my second book depict situations where deep and complex emotions are displayed, like a mother who lies and pleads guilty to save her son.

So now, having the opportunity to write another book, I feel that it would be most appropriate to entitle it “It’s Easy to Cry”, because it is dedicated to cases that bring humanity and emotions to the forefront and to show that sometimes accused persons commit crimes of passion which they regret doing. This book shows to the reader that there are cases where people have pleaded guilty just to protect someone they cared for or to ensure that their loved one does not get into trouble.

In my new book, I also share my thoughts of people who have touched me one way or other.

Vimi felt that I should not write this book, as I was unwell, and especially when I was in the dialysis centre because I would get too emotional. When she heard the first part of my recording, she was convinced that I was indeed getting too emotional. I told her that it *is* an emotional book and I have to tell the story the way I want to. If it is emotional and if the stories arouse conflicting emotions in the reader, then I have succeeded.

---

ONE

GETTING TIRED

In August 2013, I was beginning to feel unwell, but I kept working. I was in my office when my assistant, Diana Ngiam, brought one of the submissions that she had prepared.

I looked at the submissions and said that there were missing points. She had failed to mention some of the facts that happened in court. She said, “You know, Uncle, I’ve gone through the notes very carefully.” Then I said, “Go and look at it once more.” She went back to her room and later realised that I was right. She approached my nephew, Sunil, who was also working with me, and said, “Uncle may be getting older but he is still very sharp. His memory is so good.” Sunil laughed. She came back with the amended submissions, and this time I said, “Yes, this is what I wanted.”

Diana is a very intelligent girl, very compassionate to all, including the accused persons. Sometimes she feels too much and that is not good, but I am glad that she’s part of my team. After reading the submissions and approving it, I told her, “Diana, I’ve got a funny feeling that I will not be accompanying you and Sunil to court anymore. I somehow feel that my career is going to be over soon.” She looked at me and said, “You may be a little under the weather but you are not going to die. Don’t talk like that.” She was very upset. I said that there was no point being upset for this was what I felt. She came closer and looked at

me and said, “No, Uncle, you are going to be with us for many more years.” I laughed.

The following month, I fell gravely ill and was taken to hospital. I was diagnosed with heart failure but after a few days’ rest in hospital, I was discharged. Soon after, I resumed work but realised that I was not able to cope with a full load. I was in and out of hospital over the next couple of months, and fell ill again in the middle of December 2013.

Doctors were at their wits’ end as to what they could do for me and several propositions were put to me, all of which I had initially rejected. One of the doctors gently explained to Vimi, and Chechy (my elder sister, Subhashini, as I address her in Malayalam) that my sole kidney was failing and there was nothing more they could do other than recommend dialysis, and even that was risky due to my failing heart. They offered palliative support if my family so needed it and indirectly suggested that there was nothing more they could do for me. On hearing this, both Vimi and Chechy decided that they were not giving up on me and with their faith in God, they believed that I would be well again. Vimi explained the circumstances to me and insisted that I should fight on. Gently, I told her, “Ask Dr Ching to see me.” Associate Professor Ching Chi Keong is my cardiac electrophysiologist, who had recommended the insertion of a Cardiac Resynchronization Therapy Device (CRTD), which I had initially rejected. As it was the least invasive, I finally decided that I should give it a shot. I should not go without putting up a fight.

The procedure was a success but sadly, by then, my kidney had been impaired. I was required to go for dialysis three times a week. This altered my lifestyle significantly. I found it hard to cope emotionally and I would get upset with myself, depressed and frustrated with what I had to deal with — three sessions a week, being pricked twice on the



This photo was taken on 24 December 2013 on the eve of Subhas’ 66th birthday. He was already listed on the ‘Dangerously Ill List’ and could receive visitors without restriction. Clockwise: Vimi, Sunita, Subhas, Chechy, Sudheesh, Syon, Sujesh, Sugadha, Sunil and Sharon (Sunil’s wife).

arm at each session and being confined to an uncomfortable chair for four hours to dialyse my blood. It was during the long and weary four hours that I decided I should start dictating this book to keep myself occupied. It was very difficult to cope with the change and accept the fact that this situation would probably be my new way of life. In this depressed state of mind, I found it hard to get started writing this book. I would dwell on the past, remembering the times I could do so much and that would send me spiralling down emotionally. I would suddenly break down and cry uncontrollably, especially when I met with old friends who would reminisce about the good times we shared. It was certainly not their intention to upset me. They thought that reminiscing about the good times would cheer me up but instead I ended up feeling depressed as I knew that those days were long gone.

Once I am in that frame of mind, it was difficult to get out of it. It was so tragic. I would pray to God to take me away.

*“Dear God, please take me away. I don't want to live anymore if I have to go on dialysis. It is painful and depressing and I am always tired and miserable.”*

Vimi and Sujesh have been solid support for me. Sujesh is studying in Nottingham but he would make every effort to return home to be with me. He told his mother when she asked if he missed holidaying with his friends, “All these places will always be there, but my father will not.”

My siblings, Chechy, Sudheesh, Sugadha; my sisters-in-law, Syon, Justina, Nan, Komi and Lilian; my brothers-in-law, Nala, Nara and Bhas; nephews, Sunil, Suresh and Naresh; and nieces, Sunita, Seeta and Shona, were constantly by my side, not only supporting me but being a source of comfort for my wife and son. They took turns to visit me and encouraged me. Their presence and moral support opened my eyes to why I should fight to live. I tend to lapse into depression and each time someone would talk me out of it and show me life in a positive light. It has been an emotionally and physically tormenting experience coping with my poor health. I was previously racing through life, but suddenly, that lifestyle has come to a grinding halt. It was hard to bear. The positive thoughts that got me through these low points were my wish to see my son graduate; see my niece, Sunita, get married; and attend my nephew, Naresh's, wedding. Inevitably, there were moments of depression when I forgot these desires and allowed myself to dwell on negative thoughts.

Vimi would always tell me, “Be brave, think of positive things. Just know that your glass is half full and not half empty. We are here with you and I will never leave you. We will always take care of you.

Don't be afraid to fight this fight.” Sometimes when I am down, I feel like no one understands me. I don't know why but I feel insecure and afraid that Vimi would leave me although deep within me, I know she will always be with me. When I am alone in my room or alone attempting to read a book, negative depressing thoughts would creep into my mind and that whole day is ruined.

It has been a very trying time for all of us but I must say that I am definitely feeling better and slowly accepting my condition and new way of life.

On some dialysis days, I get visits from dear friends like Ann (Vimi's best friend), Choo Poh Leong and Julia (friends from my teenage years), or Ah Teng and Ramli (my childhood friends). They always encourage and cheer

me up. I truly appreciate their visits. With the help of constant medical discussions and assurances of good doctors like Professor Ong Biauwei Chi, Associate Professor Ching Chi Keong, Dr Manish Kaushik together with Chechy, my brothers-in-law, Dr A Nalachandran and Dr Bhaskaran K Nair, I have begun coping better with dialysis. I have settled into a routine that allows me to go back to office on days that I don't have to go for dialysis as my heart is getting stronger with the help of the CRTD. I have found myself in the right frame of mind to start this book and dictate whenever I can.



Subhas with his siblings on his birthday, December 2006. From left: Chechy, Sugadha and Sudheesh.

They say that in any incident, there will always be a silver lining. To me, my illness has made me a more realistic person, one who realises that in the past, I got all my priorities wrong. It was my career first, my career second, and my career third. I didn't make time for my wife and son. I didn't make time for my siblings and I didn't make time for my other relatives and very close friends. These are the people who are now with me through my difficult times. My sister-in-law, Komi, her husband, Nara, and their three children, gave me so much



With dear friend Choo Poh Leong.

moral support and encouragement through this difficult time. I feel quite blessed that I have people like them with me. Of course, my other sister-in-law, Nan, her husband, Nala, and their family, were always there for me, too. As is often with expectations, it doesn't surprise me that they are there, but sometimes you also wonder why some are not. It really doesn't matter. It is in the time of crises that you know who your friends truly are.

## TWO

### THE PASSING OF DEAR FRIENDS

After I wrote *The Best I Could*, many events happened in my life, one of which was the loss of many a dear friend.

“Botak Maniam”, also endearingly called “Tata” (grandfather in Tamil), was the only grandfather that I knew who was young at heart and had so much compassion for his friends.

We first met at Naval Base School where we were studying. I was in the primary level and he was in the secondary level. He was then House Captain and a great sprinter. I admired his athletic abilities. Later he joined the Naval Base Police Force and retired as an officer.

It is somewhat strange that despite our age difference, we got along so well. He was a man of few words, always like an older brother to me, and incredibly dependable. We enjoyed each other's company and as we got older, we often indulged in card games, especially poker which he loved to play.

In his twilight years, he became seriously ill and was warded at Singapore General Hospital. Regrettably, I was told that I should not visit him as my immunity level was low from a recent illness. I felt miserable and anxious. Knowing that my dear friend Botak Maniam was so sick and I was unable to visit him, made me feel helpless with despair. Some time after that, one of our friends rang me and said that he was coming by to pick me up. He told me that Botak Maniam