CHAPTER - VIII

CONCLUSION

In the introduction to this thesis, the beginning of a journey through Mulk Raj Anand’s autobiographical novels had commenced with a search. In this chapter, the study attempts to enumerate a few points that arise as a result of the search, by way of conclusion.

It may be helpful to recapitulate the parameters that this thesis set out to examine at the beginning of the search. It attempted to understand Krishan Chander’s endeavour to portray a 'contemporary myth of man' in the Indian context. The significance arose because Krishan Chander symbolised the quintessential ideological position of the contemporary Indian who stood poised in a society at crossroads. His attempt to recreate a contemporary image contained the aspirations of his countrymen who felt out of tune with a world that seemed to have passed them by – a world in which they wished to participate by contributing to the harmonious music of human life with the characteristics notes of their own tradition and culture. Thus Krishan symbolised this attempt in his desire to seek harmony in the
Indian context and thereby tune himself to the larger life of the human world. This becomes his tryst with destiny, which in turn was the focal point of the present work. The thesis also attempted to examine the literary genre of the autobiographical novel and consider some of its differentiative characteristics. The proceeding chapters of this thesis have made a preliminary effort in this direction, which are enumerated in this chapter.

The thesis attempted to examine and react to Krishan Chander's endeavour to propose a 'contemporary myth of man' in Chapters III, IV, V and VI.

In examining Krishan's individual response to the life offered to him by his society, it was seen, that he came to reject it. A young but sensitive Krishan begins to question the understanding and interpretation of life around him in the Morning Face. This compels him to take issue with the traditional way of life of his society, which he finds unacceptable. This is signified by his decision to turn into a 'supreme rebel' and fight against the religious and social understanding of his day. This rebellion became synonymous with a rejection of the manner of life of his forefathers, which appeared to him to be rife with illogical superstition, irrelevant religious practices, and
immoral life style, a hypocritical outlook, a fanaticism about the caste system, capped by the inhuman practice of untouchability. Krishan could not accept this way of life that neither appealed to his moral sensibility nor to his humane outlook. On the other hand, he began to see freedom from this bondage to tethered immorality as the only way. Thus his decision to 'find my own way' in the Confession of a Lover becomes synonymous with a call for freedom from such a life. In this decision Krishan's re-examination of his roots, it is seen, leads him to completely discard the traditional way of life and to opt for a different way of life. Therefore, his life henceforth not only symbolises a denial of traditional norms and rules of living, but also underlines the urge for freedom which is obvious in his relationship with Yasmin.

In the above context, the answer to India's illness arising from its past tradition and culture, was thus offered by Krishan's crusade for freedom. In this call for freedom he sought to end, as it were, the containment of Indian life which appeared to be tethered to endless bondage. In fact, freedom, thereby became the key to set free Indian life from its meaningless customs and practices. Moreover, freedom also gave the sanction
required by Krishan in his aspiration as a poet-in-the-making. It enabled him to 'experience' life in every way and thereby create poetry, arising from the experience. Thus, Krishan sought to experience love through Jasmin and she became not only his physical partner but also his creative threshold. This proposal for freedom was later fully articulated in The Bubble where Krishan goes to England and experiences the practical situation of a society offering more freedom than the Indian society. England, symbolised the 'utopia' that Krishan desired because of its way of life. It signified, as it were, a society which offered freedom for the individual, logical interpretation of life based on scientific outlook, and equality of human beings irrespective of caste, creed etc. Here, Krishan meets Irene who offers him a relationship completely founded on freedom, which society accepts. However, it is in his relationship with Irene, that Krishan's idea of freedom changes in its scope and meaning. This is so because Irene who is an artist believes that life is an 'aesthetic experience', and clearly articulates her bohemian outlook. For her, life becomes a continuous experience of sensations and feelings, and freedom becomes the means to such an end. Thus, freedom which began as a denial of social and religious restrictions evolves into individual freedom which is not
bound to any social or religious norms, nor to any other strictures or restrictions - Individual freedom, becomes a freedom without any principles of limit. In accepting Irene's argument, that he cannot stop her from 'experiencing life' with other men, Krishan realises that individual freedom denies even the bond of relationship since relationships too can curtail freedom. In this realisation Krishan shows the extent, scope and meaning that individual freedom can assume. Finally, it is this individual freedom that Krishan Chander proposes as 'contemporary myth of man'.

Against this background, the study took its position and differed from Krishan's point of view. It raised some objections to his endeavour and found it difficult to accept his understanding and interpretation. In the first instance, the study could not accept the way in which Krishan comes to reject the tradition and way of life of his forefathers. This is so, because Krishan's re-examination of his roots, which was to be the foundation of his endeavour, took its position by arguing against the lives of people who were either weak or travestial representatives of the traditional life. Thus, Krishan's argument against religious tradition arising from his rejection of his mother's interpretation and understanding or his father's attitude and
practice (who symbolised the general way of life in Indian society) was at best the denial of a travestial and weak understanding of religious tradition. Moreover, it was seen that he did not make any effort to understand the ideal traditional life either by discussing his confusions and seeking answers, or by reading the religious texts of his tradition. Thus Krishan is seen to have refused even to consider the answers provided by the Upanishads, without a personal study. In effect, the study could not agree with Krishan’s re-examination of his roots because his argument took position by arguing against the travestial understanding and practice and not its ideal form and interpretation.

The thesis also differed from Krishan’s criticism and denial of the complete religious tradition of India on the basis of practice of untouchability. This is so, since he seemed to overlook the fact that the Arya Samaj of which he was a member, not only denied the practice but also accepted within its folds, members irrespective of their castes. The lacuna of Krishan’s argument was also seen when he refuses to consider other faiths in India like Theosophy, Buddhism or Jainism which are religious faiths without the practice of untouchability. The most serious point of difference, however, arose, when it was seen that
Krishan refused to consider a contemporary endeavour by Gandhi to fight against the inhuman practice and at the same time re-interpret Indian religious life. Therefore Krishan's rejection of the complete religious tradition of India could not be accepted. In the same way, Krishan's argument against the social norms of Indian society like arranged marriages, restrictions prescribed for women and other social practices could not be accepted since he does not make any effort to understand their earlier relevance, their ideal practice and the traditional understanding behind them. The absence of any discussions with serious and ideal practitioners of the traditional life made his argument against such practices only an argument against the practice of his day. Therefore, his move to thereby reject the complete traditional life was unacceptable when contrasted with the efforts of many Indian saints who discarded irrelevant practices and thus reinterpreted and rejuvenated Indian life.

In the final analysis Krishan Chander's endeavour to propose an alternate way of life based on his rebellion and rejection of the complete traditional life of his people could not be accepted because it did not take issue with the ideal understanding. In other words, it did not go to the 'root of the matter'. A few lines from *Hind Swaraj* are illustrative of the point being made:
"A true servant of India will have to go to the root of the matter... He is a true physician who probes the cause of disease, and if you pose as a physician, for the "disease of India, you will have to find out its true cause". ¹

In view of the above position of the study, it is clear that Krishan's rebellion in his effort to understand Indian life, failed to be convincing. Likewise, his proposal for individual freedom as an alternate way of life was also difficult to accept. In the first instance, the question whether individual freedom was the cure for the Indian illness, when the diagnosis itself was inconvincing, became a basic difference. This was further emphasised when the study showed that individual freedom apparently offered the solution to what appeared to be the containment of Indian life. It did not, however, offer more possibilities for human life; and on the other hand showed inherent lacuna when stretched to its logical conclusion. Thus, freedom did not really offer freedom, nor did it offer equality, nor did it offer happiness as seen in the case of Krishan and Evelyn. The

study showed how freedom allows the treatment of women like Evelyn and her exploitation became its most unacceptable quality. Not only did she symbolise its most tragic victim, she also symbolised the new creed of untouchables because of her pitiable and forlorn condition. Moreover, individual freedom, not only appears to be too hypothetical for practical living, but also symbolises appalling and uncontrollable consequences in the event of its misuse. Against this background, it was also difficult to accept the unlimited sanction that freedom gives to an artist in his quest for experience to thereby create art. The study raises the question that an artist too is a part of society and must shoulder social responsibilities and work within its framework. In the final analysis, the study maintained that just as Krishan Chander rejects the 'age of the Gods' under a travestial understanding of the practice of tradition; the proposed contemporary ideal also cannot be accepted because of the literal and therefore travestial form of meaning that freedom can assume. Thus, unless this freedom is redefined by the principles of limit the study believes that Krishan's search for a 'contemporary myth of man' has to continue.

It is in the context of Krishan's rebellion in his effort to rejuvenate Indian life, that the study attempted a comparison
with Stephen Dedalus, the protagonist of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The comparison lay emphasis on juxtaposing their individual response in their effort to take issue with 'what is as it is' in the life offered to them. A comparative analysis showed the parameters of Stephen Dedalus' rebellion which was striking by its seriousness, contemplation and commitment. It also showed the invincibility of a rebellious endeavour arising from his personal search, not only to understand the ideal traditional way of his society but also to personally attempt by trial and practise to achieve the ideal form. Failing which, Stephen rejects the religious way of life by denying only the travestial understanding and never its ideal interpretation. In contrast it was shown how Krishan not only rejects the ideal religious life of his people but also does so by seeking sanction from arguing against its travestial understanding and practice. The differences were also shown in the attitude of Stephen and Krishan to freedom, which was their ultimate aim. On the one hand, Stephen's emphasis in his call for freedom, was to create an atmosphere in which he could through artistic priesthood re-create the 'uncreated conscience' of his people; On the other,Krishan sought to deny of all restrictions, whether religious or social, to enable the individual to pursue
unlimited happiness. The study also showed the extent to which Stephen and Krishan were ready to pay the price for their non-conforming attitudes, and convince the reader of the seriousness of their mission. Thus the thesis made an attempt to show by comparison that such a grave endeavour has to be characterised by Stephen's commitment, contemplation and seriousness - Only such an effort could signify hope for contemporary Indians in their aspirations to re-establish and rejuvenate Indian life.

On the other hand, the thesis made an attempt to study the autobiographical novel as a literary genre. It defined principles of limit and detailed the extent to which an autobiographical novel should be an autobiography and also the degree to which fictional faculties may be utilised in its creation to resemble the novel. In differentiating between a higher level of verisimilitude and a lower level of verisimilitude the birth of the autobiographical novel was made possible. The study maintained that the autobiographical novel must re-create the higher level of verisimilitude by creating the protagonist in the image of the author; he should pursue the same goal and direction that the author pursues in real life. In contrast, the fictional impulse was defined as operating in the creation of
the lower level of verisimilitude signified by the use of episodes, incidents and facts from real life. Thus a proposed definition of the autobiographical novel was as follows:

The autobiographical novel is the story of the life of a protagonist, who is modelled in the image of the author. The re-created story of the protagonist subjected to fictional impulses, however, must pursue the same direction and goal pursued by the author in real life, in a spirit of verisimilitude.

Arising from the above context the study showed that certain novels commonly known as autobiographical novels like Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* do not fulfil the conditions of this genre. Further, the study enumerated the various ways in which the fictional faculty of the author could treat his autobiographical material and universalise its message: The superimposition of ancient myth or symbolism, the imaginative juxtaposition of ordered and convincing narration, the utilization of episodes and incidents which are strictly not autobiographical but fit into creating the higher level of verisimilitude, the emphasis on certain characteristics of the protagonist are some of them. Finally, the autobiographical novel in its creation not only
calls for composure and integrity from the author but also for a prudent use of the freedom of artistic expression. In fact, in this prudence lies the success of the autobiographical novel.

Likewise, it was shown that the Seven Ages of Man of which the present thesis studies four novels, fulfill the conditions of the genre as defined by the study. An attempt to compare the autobiographical novel Seven Summers with its corresponding autobiography Pilpali Sahab showed that Anand creates the autobiographical novel in a spirit of verisimilitude except for certain emphasis which are not mentioned in the autobiography. The comparison also showed the extent to which Anand uses the creative faculty of imagination to enhance the literary value of a dreary narrative into a highly readable and enjoyable creation.

In the above context, an attempt to examine the literary technique of Anand as an autobiographical novelist in his effort to propose a 'contemporary myth of man' was considered. The study laid emphasis on the importance of the characterisation of the protagonist in the autobiographical novel. It maintained that the main theme of the narrative rests on the protagonist's shoulders and in his capacity to bring authenticity and verisimilitude
to it. In this context the study showed that the technique in
the characterisation of Krishan Chander lacked the strength to
bring convincing authenticity in his role as a rebel. Therefore,
the central issue of the autobiographical novel was also weakened
and did not portray authenticity and verisimilitude. The weakness
in the protagonist's characterization was attributed to his
expedite development as a rebel in the Morning Face itself.
Further, the portrayal of Krishan's ideological development
against weak or travestial characters and points of view emphasi-
sed the weakness in his characterization. Thus the technique
lacked strength because it did not pit the best against the best
in characters, ideology and understanding but created the prota-
gonist by arguing against a weak or a travestial interpretation.
Similarly, the digression into various sub-themes though portra-
ying reality, loosen the structure and unity of the main theme.
In this context the symbolism of the Krishna myth was shown to
be partial and therefore inconvincing. On the other hand, Anand's
felicity of expression, gift of language; wonderful use of
imagination within the limited contours of autobiographical
fiction, artistic ability to evoke a picturesque description of
life makes the autobiographical novels exceedingly readable.
Nevertheless, the study maintained that the absence of authenti-
city and verisimilitude in the content matter, eclipses the
beauty of Anand's expression and thereby fails to achieve a heightened communication and impact on the reader.

In the final analysis, the thesis maintains basic differences not only in Krishan Chander's endeavour to examine his roots, but also in his crusade for individual freedom as a 'contemporary myth of man'; it also raises the question of such freedom even in the case of an artist in his quest for experience as a threshold to create art. The study has tried to show the reasons that led to this disagreement. Nonetheless, this does not reduce the importance of the frantic and urgent need to re-establish a contemporary image as fundamental to Indian life - In identifying and representing this need through his artistic mission, and endeavouring to contribute to the betterment of the Indian people, Anand, without doubt takes the Indian applause.