CHAPTER - VI

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The Bubble is the latest novel published by Anand and is the fourth volume of the series. By now Anand has given enough evidence of the autobiographical nature of the work and the reader is left in no doubt as to the identity of the main character -- it is Anand and Anand only. The resemblance between Krishan and his creator is not a matter of a few details; it is one of total identity. So when one opens this last of the published works of the series it is with the anticipation of learning more details about the author's personal life. It is this which sustains the reader's interest in the work as he thumbs through the pages of sometimes drab details.

Krishan arrives in London, as Anand did in September 1925 at the age of twenty. In the first letter to Noor, Krishan mentions how he managed to get accommodation in an attic room in a cheap hotel. He dreads being alone in London and without much money. Unlike in India, hardly any one speaks to him for the first time in his life the terror of being utterly alone. A twitch in the linking line of his
eyebrows, brings to his memory what his mother has always
told him -- that it is a bad omen. Suddenly amidst the
loneliness he remembers his mother and is pained to think
that she may be beaten by his father because of him. When
this thought comes, he cries out:

Oh Mother!
Oh my mother!
When the memory of you comes to me
My heart aches. (The Bubble 3)

Krishan makes a self-analysis to find out why he has
come to London. He honestly thinks that though he boasts of
being a follower of Gandhi, he secretly wishes to lead the
English style of life. As in India, in England too he is
haunted by ghosts. His attention is glued to the semi-naked
women on the posters advertising underwear in the Tube
railway by which he goes to meet his friend Sardar Trilochan
Singh. He is impressed to see the English people washing
their cars and recollects how in India the people make
servants and untouchables do such work. However, the fear he
felt during his childhood days in the cantonments surges
again when he sees the Englishmen with their strange pinkish-
red colour. When he goes to the house of Trilochan Singh a
young girl opens the door and he is at once attracted to her and confesses to his friend Noor about his susceptibility to women. Similarly, when he meets Lotika, a married woman, in the same house, he is drawn to her also. He describes her to Noor in great detail and admits that he cannot resist beauty. It is this weakness that prompts Professor Henry to call him an impatient heart squanderer, for Krishan has already replaced Yasmin's image with that of the beautiful Lotika. He confesses that he longs to be folded in the embrace of a woman. He sends a letter to Noor telling him that he is not lonely as he has met a warm-hearted and beautiful Indian woman, Lotika. He says that two boyhood fears have remained with him even after he became an adult. One is that of the white man ever since he was threatened with a cane by Captain Cunningham for staring at him. The other is that of the ghosts that his mother had often frightened him about. The fear of ghosts is one of the personal traits he shares with Anand, pointing to their identification, as the following passage from an autobiographical essay shows:

And unless I am in the dark, and frightened of ghosts, or in some other danger, or using proverbial speech like "for God's sake", I have never invoked the giant Patriarch. (Why I Write 10)
Krishan is fortunate to be accepted by Professor Dicks (Professor Hicks in Anand's life) at the University College in London to do research for a Ph.D. degree in Philosophy. He is also lucky to get a part-time job in a bookshop at two pounds a week. He feels proud because he can be true to Gandhi's ideal of earning while learning. It is through his friend Nikhil Sen that he is able to get the job. Nikhil also introduces him to a literary critic Bonamy Dobree, who lectures in some universities. Anand has dedicated the novel The Bubble to the memory of Bonamy Dobree and his wife Valentine Dobree.

Anand describes through some of the characters how the Indian students behaved in England during his time. Almost all the Indian students picked up girls especially the maids on their day off. While one Indian student Mehta picked up a girl every day, another student Shamsher Singh picked up a girl every hour and ended up with syphilis! The continuous rain and the absence of a real friend makes Krishan lonely and homesick. He exclaims that he longs for the Indian sun and his mother waiting with food in the kitchen for his return home. So one finds that the memory of his mother always haunts him, though he would not accept the fact. He
also learns to his dismay that there is much colour prejudice beneath the politeness shown by the British people. The Dean of the University College, for example, has made it known that he does not like oriental students consorting with University College girls. The question of money weighs on his mind. His friend advises him that money is everything in this world and points out to him how the English love work. Hearing the talk of Torchí, Krishan reflects:

I am depressed by this gospel of work of the English. All my dreams smashed up! I wanted the happiness of the leisurely reading of books of philosophy, the writing of poetry and sheer joy of idleness. If work is the only thing, where would be the time to think, talk, and play -- and to wonder. Except that I recalled old Gandhi often invoked Ruskin's idea of "Work is Worship". And I realise that philosophy is really a luxury which one can only afford if one has a fat allowance from home. (The Bubble 29-30)

Krishan confesses to Noor that the real purpose of his wishing to learn dancing is that then he will somehow be able
to embrace the legs, breasts and waists of women! Searching for a cheaper place to live in, Krishan feels frustrated at the reception he gets from people. No one is willing to rent room to a coloured person. He tells Noor that God has abandoned him and lack of money makes him feel depressed and helpless. The world appears inhospitable and hostile. He takes a room on rent because he is drawn towards a large colour print of a lovely woman in frame on the wall! Unashamedly he tells Noor that he has fallen in love with the oval-faced girl in the picture! In the house where Krishan is staying a young girl Evelyn falls in love with him. Though he responds physically to her, he has no love for her and as such no intention of marrying her. When he announces to her his intention of going away to North Wales, he feels sad to see Evelyn cry. When he tries to console her, he finds that he uses the Punjabi language as he finds English words of endearment hackneyed by comparison. In the process of consoling her, he makes love to her and offers as explanation for his behaviour to Noor, "You will ask why, then, did I make love to her. Well, I agree, it was a selfish thing to do -- the lust! Maybe, the arrogance of the ardent Indian male, trying to kindle the soul of a woman!" (The Bubble 63).
In this novel also Anand is merciless in his criticism of Brahmins. He wonders how the Brahmins who drink cows' urine as nectar before religious rituals can feel tainted if the shadow of an untouchable falls on them. Unlike the other Indians whose aim of obtaining the Ph.D. degree was to enter Government service, Anand wished to teach. As a true Gandhian he did not want to enter the Imperial Education Service.

While helping Mrs. Dicks to wash dishes, Krishan remembers how he used to help his mother to scrub utensils. When Professor Dicks asks him if the caste system still existed in India, he remembers with shame how his mother had abused the sweeper-boy Bakha for carrying him home in arms when he was injured in an accident. This incident happened in the life of Anand. He recalls in his autobiographical essay, "But when, in a quarrel, I was hit on the head by a sharp stone, he (Bakha) bore me home. My mother abused him for touching me and beat me" (Looking Back V).

Krishan also recalls with shame the filthy mucous secretions in the untouchables' lane, where sweepers and washermen and cobblers were confined by the high caste
Hindus. While conversing with Professor Dicks and telling him he admired his mother's God Guru Nanak, he tries to force his rough Punjabi voice into a whisper. He suddenly realises that North Indians are generally loud and crude. Professor Dicks asks him to go to Dolgelly village in North Wales and read the classics of Greek and Modern Philosophy. He finds it hard to console Evelyn when she breaks down on hearing that he is going away. He also finds that in England also women are considered inferior to men. He confesses that he shares along with the Indians the false pride that only a man should express his desire and not an Indian woman. He writes that most Hindus, who are the descendants of Manu, have seldom tried to understand the soul of a woman, and do not know the things women keep concealed in their hearts. While consoling Evelyn, he wonders how one's mother-tongue comes back when one is tender. Anand poignantly describes the feelings of Krishan on leaving the young girl who was the only source of comfort in his days of misery and loneliness in London. Krishan puts forth many arguments to justify his leaving Evelyn, after making love to her, never to return to her.

Even in his dreams his mother makes frequent appearances. He writes:
Actually in my dreams I often see mother, above the reverberations in my head riding on the milky way towards me, beckoning me with despairing gestures, to come home. And, uncannily enough, whenever I sensed the alienness of everything intensely, and cold shoulders on every side, I realise how like her I am in her broodings, as she used to sit and ply the spinning wheel and break into Nanak's hymns. I did not then want to be like her. Now I see that she is my beloved mother and I am her prodigal son. Perhaps by writing these words I want to connect myself with her. (The Bubble 41-42)

Krishan is concerned at not receiving any reply to his letters from Noor and he suspects Master Ishaq of taking them from the postman and secretly destroying them. So he decides to maintain a diary in North Wales and write down all his thoughts and feelings in it and send it through someone to Noor in India. So the next chapter, Part Two, titled 'The Ascent of Mount Snowdon' is Krishan's North Wales Diary. It is a novel method of narration adopted by Anand and keeps the reader's attention engaged. Anand quotes a few lines each
from George Bernard Shaw, Jacob Bruchme and William Blake before commencing the diary. When Krishan reaches the small village Dolgelly he is reminded of his beloved Kangra Valley in the Himalayas and the happy family at Daska. While in conversation with Reverend Thomas, Krishan feels proud to be a Hindu. He writes that he felt a pride in his voice about being a Hindu, which he had never thought was in him.

It must be mentioned that Krishan accepts the fact that he is an egotist and he terms his father a benign patriarch. While arguing with Reverend Thomas about their respective religions, Krishan cannot but mention that while Christ was always portrayed to be in torment, Lord Krishna was a happy God dancing with Radha. He thinks that Gandhi's emphasis on the need for suffering to attain goodness may have been the outcome of his meeting Christians in England when he was there. He believes that the Reverend Thomas, in spite of his dogmatism, is a kind person. He also realises that, apart from doctrines, the Christians radiate a grace which is not there among the Hindu and Muslim priests. He understands that, though the British are oppressive in India, in England they recognise the worth of every individual.
Though he has read James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* twice, he does not wish to imitate Joyce because his own background is different. However, Joyce's narration in the first person singular in the novel attracts him. He wishes to write a novel of quest like the novel of Joyce. In this context he writes, "As a philosopher I must aspire to be the conscience of my own people, albeit a bad conscience, as they are sunk in the millions of slaveries from which they have yet to emerge to freedom" (*The Bubble* 78). Viewing the landscape of North Wales and the famous Mount Snowdon, he thinks of the beloved Kangra hills where he spent his vacation during childhood. He remembers how enthusiastically he had walked fifty miles to see the Shiva Lingam in the Amaranth cave near Pahalgam. He feels that he is at home only while climbing mountains in Kangra. He makes a self-analysis and writes about himself, "I feel that, inside me, I am simple, elemental, a villager, naive -- perhaps the naive poet that I called myself on meeting the critic Bonamy Dobree" (*The Bubble* 81). On a Sunday morning Krishan thinks of going to the village chapel to attend the Sunday morning services. But he is not sure whether he wants to go because he is a non-believer and does not especially believe that Christ is the son of God. He believes that man need not go on longing for the end of the world to receive
the Last Judgement and to be helped out by Jesus Christ. However, his reluctance to go to church disappears when he is informed that a young school teacher, Lucy Gray, will accompany him!

As with other women, Krishan desires intimacy with Lucy Gray and confesses that he lusts for her body. He offers to cook a curry, the preparation of which he has learned from his mother. Incidentally Anand has written a book on Indian cooking titled *Curries and Other Indian Dishes*, which was published in London in 1932. On seeing Lucy Gray, Krishan remembers the Anglo-Indians he had seen in India. Excepting the nurse-wife of Captain O'Sullivan, the Anglo-Indians were rude and arrogant and were ashamed of being born to Indian mothers. Lucy Gray is the first Anglo-Indian to treat Krishan as a human being. While discussing Anglo-Indians Anand is surprised to realise that no Anglo-Indian has till then joined the Gandhian movement. The Anglo-Indians thought themselves to be complete Englishmen. Anand is angry that while real Englishmen like Allan Octavic Hume, Annie Besant, B.G.Horniman and Reverend C.P.Andrews joined the Indian National Movement, the Anglo-Indians had remained aloof. Anand angrily writes that no Anglo-Indian had come out openly to support the cause of Indian freedom.
In England Krishan is able to get a closer look at the Christians and Christianity and comes to the conclusion that the Christian faith has filled the people with a kindliness which is absent in the Hindu religion. He recalls how the Hindus gather around a victim of an accident and do not offer help. They believe that it was the victim's karma and that he is suffering for the bad deeds that he may have committed in the previous birth. The Christians, on the other hand, believe that the pain of others could be redeemed by a helping hand. He feels that if Lucy is in love with him and wants him to embrace Christianity before marriage, he will readily do so. Though he is in love with Lucy she considers him a brother and states so in a letter. Anand visualises the situation of Lucy Gray, the Anglo-Indian, after her marriage to the Welshman Robert. Though the husband may be an arrogant and insensitive person, the Indian blood in her will make her subservient to him. When she is disillusioned with him, she will turn to God for consolation.

Anand says that for an Indian woman the second husband is the God she would turn to for salvation. Anand is familiar with the abject submission of the Indian wife to her
husband and he remembers how his own mother took solace in her gods when she was ill-treated by his father. This mute suffering by the Indian wife infuriates Anand very much and is evident in all his writings.

Again Krishan thinks of his attitude towards God:

My God was killed by me, every time one of the females I worshipped had died. And I had felt the childish freedom of not having to bow to an image, though I sometimes apologised to him in the dark for not believing in Him. I felt that men have created gods and there is no need to grovel before them. So in broad daylight, I cannot accept the Almighty, the powerful and the beneficent. (The Bubble 128)

This reads like a paraphrase of the following autobiographical passage of Anand:

My first real essay was a letter to God Almighty, asking Him why He had caused the death of my little cousin Kaushalya, at the age of nine, by inflicting on her the dread disease of lungs, when she had not done anything bad. I put the letter in the hands
of the priest of the temple. But God did not answer my protest. So I have tended to regard Him, since then, as the enemy of mankind. (Why I Write 10)

Fact and fiction fuse together here -- rather, fact is presented as fiction. In the art of make-believe fiction it is presented as fact, and the illusion is sustained by suggestive touches of detail and language. What Anand does is the opposite -- presenting fact as fiction -- and there is no make-believe involved as the reader by now is sure that the main character is not Krishan, but Krishan—Anand.

On Christmas day in the year 1925, while climbing Mount Snowdon, Krishan meets Irene Rhys, a beautiful girl, who comes to play an important part in his life. On the impact Irene has on him, he writes, "I wondered if the great God of lightning had sent me the heavenly nymph Urvashi in this girl's incarnation. Certainly, the whole of me seemed to extend itself towards the flowering of another smile on her gay rose face" (The Bubble 143). Irene, daughter of Professor Richard Rhys, turns out to be quite a modern girl and takes him home to introduce him to her parents. For a fancy dress ball he suggests that Irene dress herself up as
Radha, consort of God Krishna. There is a certain amount of guilt in him as he kisses Irene for he remembers his mother's warning that after too much of happiness comes pain. He makes chicken curry for Irene's family, which he has learned from his mother. He is proud to be a Punjabi and informs Irene that Punjabis are earthy, foolish, generous and good-hearted. The Punjabis take great pleasure in eating, drinking and making merry. The readers are informed that Krishan's mother was a good recontreur and used to keep her sisters at the spinning wheel laughing with her stories. Fascinated when Krishan talks about his family, Irene asks him to write about his family. She promises to type the book for him and also promises to marry him if he can get someone to publish his book. He promises to write his first little novel and dedicate it to her.

Meeting Irene and writing an autobiographical novel at her request are factual details from Anand's life. The autobiographical element becomes more pronounced hereafter in the novel. Anand does not attempt to conceal his personality in this novel and does not keep a distance between himself and the protagonist.
The third part of the novel is titled 'Babes in the Wood'. Anand quotes a few lines from Jalal-ud-Din Rumi, D.H. Lawrence and Kisai of Merv. He writes this part of the novel in the third person. He presents the difficulty of a writer when writing a novel. Anand writes:

He (Krishan) felt his novel must have the intimacy of personal experience, even if it was to be in the third person singular, and still rise above Narcissism. That is why he was talking of He and She, in the third person singular, while retaining real names, Krishan and Irene. Of course, in the first person writing the flow is more natural. In the third person it is more contrived. Anyhow, he must go beyond the moment, deep into each character. (The Bubble 164-165)

Krishan tells Irene, after reading to her the first page of the novel, that he will not put his hero and heroine in the golden age of the Homeric legends as James Joyce has done. He feels that all the characters in a novel cannot be imaginary. He is definite that there can be no novel without real people and only names are changed to avoid libel action.
Unlike Yasmin and Evelyn, Irene is not in love with Krishan and he is aware that they are of different wave lengths. In fact Krishan is in love with her and he is not sure even when they make love that Irene really enjoys it. Irene's stepfather Professor Rhys is also in love with her and her mother is jealous of her beauty. As such Irene is a complex character and does not give much value to kissing or love-making. Brought up in an Indian atmosphere, Krishan is under the impression that once a woman gives her body to someone, she is his forever. However, he finds that as far as Irene is concerned he cannot be complacent about it. He is consumed with jealousy to see his beloved Irene dance with Solomon Smiles and kiss him. It is not very flattering for Krishan, dressed as Lord Krishna, to see Irene dressed as Radha, in close embrace with Solomon, her boyfriend. Tears well up in his eyes and he leaves the hall without her.

In moments of crisis and dejection the wise sayings of Mama Dayal Singh come to his mind. He prays to God, in whom he does not believe, to remove the jealousy from his nature and for a moment he curses himself for renouncing God. The stories his mother used to tell him he remembers even in his grown-up days. When lying with Irene he wishes they could die together in sleep. Though she has met the handsome Mehta
only for a few minutes, Irene dances with him in an intimate manner and gets herself expelled by the University authorities. On hearing the news Krishan comes to offer consolation and finds that she is in bed with Mehta. She does not open the door and Krishan understands that Irene hates the priggishness in him and once again finds himself alone and friendless in London.

In the England of those days coloured people including Indians, were considered by the English as a lower breed. The betrayal of Irene makes Krishan think of the women in India. Manu had declared that marriage should have the approval of the elders and the wife should worship her husband. Women were considered to be impure, tempters and untrustworthy. Anand admirably describes the status of women in India. An Indian woman is under the care of the father when a virgin, is guarded by husband against straying when married and is looked after by her son when she is widowed. Krishan becomes indisposed and he recalls how his mother used to tell his father that men are weak and collapse at the slightest hurt. He is against arranged marriages and considers the first night of the married couple as the murder of the soul of the woman. To him arranged marriages are only the rape of the virgin by the lord and the master. In a
letter to Krishan, Irene explains her view on sex relationship. She writes that a woman has the right to have sex with any man she likes and she may do so in all kinds of moods. In the letter, Irene accuses him of being a self-centered philosopher having a super ego. She vehemently declares that she will never be a Hindu wife. She points out that Krishan shows himself as something different in written words. He feels that Irene is quite right when she accuses him of egoism. He feels that in spite of his rebellion against his father, he may have inherited the power mania of the patriarch from his father. He replies to Irene explaining certain actions of his. He reminds Irene of the confession from childhood onwards, which he has written about and read to her. He tells her of the different world he has been brought in and how he could not afford luxurious things during his childhood. He tells her of his mother who is a peasant woman and worships many gods. He tells her of his father who, though he comes from a craftsmen's family, became the servant of the white Sahibs. Irene finally goes to Ireland to stay with Maud Gonne, the woman who refused to marry Yeats and who was the central theme of the play The Countess Catheleen.
In the meanwhile his friend, Mr. Perkins, whom he has nicknamed Charlie Chaplin, commits suicide at his lodging. Curiously enough Krishan wants to see his dead body because he wants to see the face of death! The death of Perkins reminds him again of the death of Kaushalya, uncle Pratap, Devaki and Yasmin. While travelling with Irene completely happy, Krishan again suddenly remembers his mother's warning that after too much happiness, comes pain. He also remembers his mother's description of how sinners suffer in the Hindu Hell.

Along with a long confessional, Krishan is also writing a novel about himself and Irene. He wishes to discover the psychological laws which operate behind a woman's smiles and frowns. To him a woman is uncanny with her contrary feelings. At the Yoga class, he does not want to lower himself into the grovelling posture of prayer. He recalls that whenever he visited the Golden Temple at Amritsar with his parents he never took the posture of prayer. When in the Yoga class Guru Ramji requests everyone to pray, Krishan instinctively pronounces the word 'Mother' in Hindi. Observing the effect of Yoga on Irene, Krishan realises the depth of Indian philosophy. He wonders why he has always been contemptuous of all the philosophies of his
ancestors. He decides to study Tantra. He has glanced at Arthur Avalon's translation of Tantrik texts and he realises that they had penetrated the unconscious before Freud.

He is always unsure of Irene's love and the shadow of the handsome Madan Mohan Mehta looms large between them often. He is really at times like a grovelling worshipper at the feet of the "Goddess" Irene. He feels that he will become a genuine philosopher if he can understand the enigma of Irene. He is still afraid of Irene's hidden anger, her sulks and tantrums. He feels terrible that he is wasting his time trying to understand the whims of a wayward woman. When he witnesses the play Hamlet with Irene he realises that he resembles Hamlet and that he himself is a minor Hamlet, as he dimly recognises the cluster of feelings of his various split egos. Though hopelessly in love with Irene, he eyes appreciatively the slightly uncovered breast of Jean, an actress. Out of jealousy he once physically attacks his rival Mehta at Soho and is immediately remorseful for having forgotten Gandhi's teaching of non-violence.

To the sculptor Eric Gill, he vehemently denies that he is a Hindu. He says that though he is born a Hindu, he does not want to belong to any religion. He also concedes
that he is not a good Hindu! Eric Gill advises him to be a Hindu whether good or bad. He tells of his friend Coomaraswamy who converted to Hinduism because he fell in love with Indian culture. In fact Krishan feels guilty that he has not touched the core of Hinduism deeply enough. This is how Anand describes his conversion to Hinduism in *Apology for Heroism*:

Through an exposition of the Hindu view of Art which I attempted, under the guidance of Ananda Coomaraswamy, E.B. Havill and Eric Gill, I saw the development of Indian thought in some kind of perspective. And I got to grips with the religious and philosophic ideas which had survived beneath the debris of all those complex and intricate schools of thought which had developed from the Vedas and Upanishads through the humanistic revolt of the Buddha, through the Epic and the classical periods, and the codes of medieval times into the later schools of Brahmanical theism, Vaishnavism, Saivism and Saktism. (*Apology* 66)

He sends to an acknowledged critic named Bonamy Dobree the manuscript of the part of the novel that he has written
It was during this time that England was facing the strike of miners who were asking for living wages. Anand describes in detail the situation at that time in England. The English intellectuals did not rally to the side of the miners. Alfred Noyes wrote a poem in the Morning Post called 'England First' against the miners. Anand wears the mask of Krishan to express his views on the strike. Krishan feels that the miners' strike is doomed to be a failure and wishes Gandhi were there to lead the miners. He feels that the British rulers have not learnt a lesson from their mistakes. Like General Dyer, who ordered a platoon of soldiers to shoot innocent people at Jalianwala Bagh in 1919, Churchill was getting the army ready to shoot the striking miners. Krishan toys with the idea of asking the Indian students to do a sitdown strike in the college against the British Government in support of the miners. During the strike he meets Krishna Menon and he describes him as a tall, lean curly—haired dark God. He also meet for the first time Eltie Helman, a slim girl with dark hair and wearing rimless glasses. Watching the medical students who support the miners, Krishan
forgets the teachings of Gandhi and feels murderous waves of hate welling up in him. Krishna Menon introduces himself to him and says that he has been sent by Mrs. Besant to teach in the Letchworth Theosophical School. He tells him that Mrs. Besant wants the Indians to start a society called 'Commonwealth of Indian League' to inform the British people about the urge for freedom among the Indians.

Krishan is sad to hear that the miners' strike has been called off. Anand writes in his book Apology for Heroism, which he termed as a brief autobiography of ideas, that the miners' strike of 1926 had a profound influence on his life. Anand was pained to see that the majority of the students of the University of London acted as blacklegs and tried to sabotage the General Strike. In the novel, in the free fight that occurs in Gower Street, Krishan suffers a minor injury because he supports the cause of the miners. The General Strike had made Anand realise that, like the Indians, the ordinary British people were yet to win their liberty. Anand writes, "The Strike of 1926 had shown me categorically that Britain was organized and run in the interests of a small minority which could suppress the majority as violently at home as it did in the Empire"
Anand says that the British Government by breaking the General Strike, demonstrated the class nature of society. The failure of the General Strike made Anand disillusioned and reminded him of the slave status of India.

The fourth part of the novel is titled 'Thieves of Fire' and it is a diary written by Krishan of his journey with Irene to Paris and back. While in a cafe at Paris with Irene, Krishan thinks of Confession, a novel that he is writing. He asserts that he feels that apart from the exuberance of his own egoism in the novel, he has been trying to be truthful in Gandhi's way. In the Paris cafe he gets an idea. He writes:

I must take out the portion about the sweeper-boy Bakha from the confessional and write about him as a new kind of hero of India, a failure against the twiceborn, but one who makes the effort to come up from the labyrinths. I must create a hero, beyond the weak-kneed me. My nerves tingled at the inspiration which had just come. (The Bubble 337)

Krishan feels that he can remove his feeling of guilt for having deliberately lied to his mother, when he was a
boy, that his brother Ganesh had thrown his shoes into the river. He lied to get more love from his mother. He believes that by including this episode in the novel, he can atone for his guilt. Writing a novel of a confessional nature is an act of expiation for both Krishan and his author. This is how Anand describes how his creative impulses shaped up:

When I come to think of the first urges which made me write, I remember it was the sheer compulsion to dramatise myself and draw attention. I came back from school one day and, in order to get a bigger share of sweets than my brothers, I told my mother that my elder brother had hit my younger brother with a stone and nearly killed him. Unfortunately for me, the story I had concocted was proved to be untrue, because my brother turned up safe and sound. (Why I Write 10)

The fifth part of the novel is titled 'Conversations in Bloomsbury'. This chapter is written in the first person singular and is about Krishan's life after he returns from Paris to London on hearing about Irene's father's death. Krishan mentions his meeting E.M. Forster, the author of A
Passage To India in this novel. Though meeting him for the first time Krishan tells him that he ran away from home because his father beat his mother. He also informs Forster that Indian children are abjectly subservient to their fathers. He wishes to show his novel to Forster and get his opinion and he informs that Forster also figures in the novel. From the taped conversation with Mulk Raj Anand, Marlene Fisher writes, "And it was during the years 1929-1932 while living at No.5 and No.7 Great Ormond Street that Mulk met E.M. Forster who not only became instrumental in the publication of Untouchable, but who also, as a man, encouraged the young writer both with friendship and with loans" (36).

Krishan again meets the Jewish woman, Eltie Helman, who sells Communist pamphlets. He is drawn towards her beauty. Anand remembers her in his book Apology for Heroism and writes:

To some extent these ideas may have arisen through the sympathy and friendship of a young Communist girl, Eltie Helman, from whom I bought a few pamphlets one day in Gower Street and with whom I developed one of those friendships which alleviate
the lot of the lonely Indian student, who comes from the close intimacy of family life in India and finds himself plunged into a highly individualistic, selfish society, where friendship is difficult, exclusive and rare. (Apology 65)

Krishan meets Leonard Woolf and Virginia Woolf also during this period. He had sent her some part of his confessional novel for her opinion. She informs him that she likes the opening sentences of his novel, where the innocent child wanders on the Grand Trunk Road. He confesses to her that his reading of several volumes of the novel by George W.H. Reyonds, where he uses long sentences, has influenced his writing also. Krishna Menon sends an invitation to him to attend the housewarming party at the Commonwealth of India League office which is to be presided over by Bertrand Russell. The real-life counterpart of this episode is briefly mentioned by Anand in the following passage from the Apology for Heroism, "I met V.K.Krishna Menon, a follower of Mrs.Besant, and began to work within his office in the Strand" (Apology 66).

The sixth part of the novel is titled 'Dublin Diary' and is a diary maintained by Krishan during his stay in
Ireland. The narration of the story is continued by Anand in this fashion and is full of diversions. Meeting all sorts of people in Ireland, Krishan realises that, "Certainly, if I wanted to write novels, I must see the world as a prism, not from the frozen eyes of people drinking hard drinks in Saloon Bars, but also from the bleary eyes of the jokers, boxers and jailbirds in the Public Bar" (The Bubble 515). At Dublin Krishan visits William Butler Yeats and comes to the conclusion that the poet worships youth and beauty genuinely. Witnessing Lady Gregory's play at the Abbey, he is reminded of the peasants of Central Punjab. The crowd on the stage are very much like the people of his mother's hamlet Daska. Unlike the people of London who are aloof and cold the Irish people, like Indians, are a friendly people. Seeing them he writes:

In the turbulent whirlpool in my belly, I had the hunch that my choice of Bakha for a hero for the new novel was instinctively correct, because the naivete of the Punjab peasant has lingered in me and I could ally myself with the folk more intimately than with the bedraggled Babus of India or the white collar lower middle class clerks of England. In Bloomsbury I had tended to forget my
folk in intellectualist individualism. (The Bubble 495)

One finds that in almost all novels, Anand's preoccupation is with the pathetic condition of the poor and the downtrodden. The characters, like Bakha in his novel Untouchable, are drawn from among real people he had known during his childhood. It is also noteworthy that Anand retains some of the real names of the people whom he had known in his life, in the novels also. Incidentally till this novel was published Anand was known to his friends as a poet from India.

In Ireland, reading the works of Irish writers, Krishan wonders at the passion the writers brought to the pain and pleasures of life. The Irish writers go to the extremes of indiscretion and are not worried about the censure of critics. He finds in the poems of Yeats an underlying guilt about the neglect of the poor. He realises that the Irish writers have a lot to teach him and decides that he must learn from them to write about the brutal facts of life.
A.E. George Russell regularly receives the journal *Young India*, and Krishan borrows the copies from him. Once, while going through the journal at leisure, he comes across the story of Uka. Gandhi, in his inimitable style, had written how Uka, a sweeper-boy, was brought to the Sabarmati Ashram and Gandhi had insisted on the inmates of the Ashram to treat him as an equal. Gandhi had adopted Uka as his son and had appealed to everyone to call the untouchables Harijans, sons of God. This article in the journal moves Krishan very much. He writes that his own love for Bakha has been intensified and confirmed by the love given by the Mahatma to the sweeper-boy. Any misgivings that he has in writing about a day in the life of Bakha, an untouchable, vanishes on reading the article. He had imitated James Joyce's stream-of-consciousness method of narrative and feels that he may have confused the situation by borrowing the literary style of James Joyce. Joyce's *Ulysses* has great impact on him and it teaches him that the unities of time and space are possible all in one day in the life of a character. What Anand mentioned as the plight of Krishan in imitating James Joyce is in reality what Anand himself felt. Anand writes about his novel *Untouchable*, "For one thing the book was too amorphous. The influence of Joyce had not been assimilated, but more or less imitated, specially in the long
reverie sequence of Bakha after he was slapped on the face by a high-caste man" (The Story 8). Like Krishan, Anand on reading Gandhi's journal Young India was moved by the genuineness of Gandhi's love for the untouchables. Like Krishan, Anand also decided to go and meet Gandhi and read to him parts of his novel, Untouchable. Anand felt that by meeting Gandhi he could derive courage to write the awkward things he had to write in the novel. This sixth part of the novel ends with Irene being charged with gun-running and sentenced to one year imprisonment.

The seventh part of the novel is titled 'Journal to Irene'. Since Krishan is convinced that any letter that he may send to Irene may not be delivered to her in jail, he proposes to write a journal which he hopes will be delivered to her through some person directly. He has finally decided to return to India and join Gandhi's non-violent campaigns. In the journal he gives a detailed description of his friend Mehta's murder of his wife and his family back-ground which is responsible in a way for his action. About his long confessional Krishan writes to Irene:

I must tell you, love, I am continuing the long confession in narrative, letters, diaries,
etcetera, with new technical tricks to achieve alienation of characters, against the Aristotalian hypothesis of a drama evoking pity by a mere straightforward tragic narrative. I hope to finish the part about my pilgrimage to the West by the time we meet. And I shall read it aloud to you. (The Bubble 543)

From Anand's confessional novels the readers get a glimpse of the character of the great personalities of India during the time. For example Anand describes the personality of Krishna Menon during the pre-Independence days. Of him Krishan writes, "When I first met him (Krishna Menon) he was a gentle, kindly schoolmaster, a near disciple of the theosophist Krishnamurti. Now, he is maturing into a politician, shrewd, suspicious and angular. And he knows that Gandhi disturbs him for not being non-violent in his speeches" (The Bubble 547).

Krishan describes his meeting with T.E.Lawrence, the legendary man who shook the Turkish empire in Arabia and came to be called affectionately as 'Lawrence of Arabia'. Though he has been in London for sometime and is on the verge of obtaining his doctorate, he is not able to get over his fear
of parental censure. So when his guide, Professor Dicks informs him that there is a letter from his father requesting him to come back to India as his mother wishes to see him, Krishan becomes uneasy.

Part Eight of the novel is titled 'A letter from father'. Krishan's father writes to his son from India. It is a poignantly written letter and is in all likelihood a reproduction of his father's letter to Anand verbatim. Addressing Krishan as 'dear darling son', his father at the outset of the letter gives his forgiveness for leaving India without obtaining his blessing. From the letter one learns that Krishan's dear friend Noor died of tuberculosis and Krishan had not sent even a single letter to his parents in the past two years. One fully agrees with Ram Chand when he writes to his son that the relationship between a father and his son is a blood relationship, giving the parent the right to guide and mould him. He informs his son how he has been given the honourable titles of Rai Sahib, Honorary Captain and made Registrar of the Amritsar court, as recognition of his loyalty to the British Government. When one reads the letter one admires Ram Chand for rising from the low coppersmith background to such greatness. He passed the Matric from the Church Mission High School at Amritsar and
joined the 38th Dogras Regiment in the army. He informs his son how devout a Hindu he is and refused the offer of Hall, a Missionary Father, to send him to London to become a doctor if he converted to Christianity. From the letter the readers come to the conclusion that Ram Chand is a religious person and holds the Vedas and the Upanishads in great regard. He advises Krishan that the only thing in life is faith in the Almighty and daily prayer is the only way to show gratitude to Him for the life He has given. It must have come as a revelation to Krishan that his father was a dutiful son and used to send money to his mother every month from his pay. The letter again and again stresses how a son should respect his parents. The latter part of the letter wherein Ram Chand describes how frugally he lives with his wife in order to educate his sons is really touching. He reminds Krishan that it is because of his loyalty to the British that Krishan is able to get the Silver Wedding Fund scholarship in London.

The ninth chapter of the novel is Krishan's reply to his father's letter and is written on 30th January 1927. The letter describes how as he grew up he felt love for his father, then fear and finally hatred. He explains the agony he felt whenever his father beat his mother. He informs his
father about his writing a long confessional and a short novel about Bakha, the untouchable, whose father was the Jamadar of sweepers in Ram Chand's regiment. He does not want to become a Professor or write the Civil Services examination. He writes that though he may go on studying various philosophies he longs to experience life. His desire is to work for people, and be with them in their sufferings. He talks of his resolve to meet Gandhi and work with him for the upliftment of the downtrodden people of India. Though he promises to return soon to India, he will first go to Gandhi in Ahmedabad before coming to Amritsar. He recalls how his mother abused Bakha for carrying him in his arms after he was hit on the head by a stone. He finds fault with his father for charging higher interest on mortgages of jewellery by the poor people. In great detail Krishan mentions his father's short-comings and greed for money. He writes, "And so, with the coming of outward richness, the inner poverty may have increased, as every word of yours became a shout, every look red-eyed, and a permanent scowl became your face" (The Bubble 589). Assuring his father that he continues to love him, Krishan writes:

But how can a young man hold his head high and look at the stars if he is always falling at the elder's
feet? I have learnt that in order to grow up, to be adult, I must not revert back to the old order of relations between father and son, where the son is always benthead before the father and can't ask questions, answer back, or disagree, even respectfully. (The Bubble 595)

The last part of the novel is a letter written to Irene by Krishan. This is his last letter to Irene as he is preparing to leave for India. Tender sentiments are expressed in the letter and he remembers with a sense of nostalgia the many happy moments they shared together. On his way to India, Krishan plans to go to Paris to meet Andre Gide to get confirmation of his mentor Bonamy Dobree's idea that anything can be a novel provided one brings imagination to it. Krishan ends the letter promising to wait for her release from prison. Irene plays an important role in the life of Krishan and his creator Anand. She is responsible for both writing their confessional. As the novel ends the readers are informed of her involvement in Irish politics. Anand writes about Irene in his autobiographical essay, 'Why I Write', "Irene, my artist girl-friend, who had joined the I.R.A. underground army, suggested on one of her visits that I should write short novels about some of the characters who
As mentioned earlier The Bubble is the last novel Anand has written till date. Anand had promised to publish the remaining three novels to complete the long confessional series Seven Ages of Man. The autobiographical element is more pronounced in The Bubble. Krishan merely reflects what Anand himself aspired for "In my confession I am trying to discover my lost innocence, the flow of love for everything in life, all that choked our breath as children, the don'ts imposed by our elders and by the Dharma bugs" (The Bubble 588).