CHAPTER VII

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The foregoing chapters dealt very specifically with how Anand transmuted autobiographical material into stuff for his fiction. A chapter each is devoted to four of his later novels namely, *Seven Summers*, *Morning Face*, *Confession of a Lover* and *The Bubble* and shows the extent to which the autobiographical element is contained in each novel. Anand himself has said, "As always, my characters are taken from my intimate experience, but are sought to be transformed -- often a lamb becomes a lion and a dove becomes a jackal. I rely on my subconscious life a good deal in my creative work and allow my fantasy to play havoc with facts" (*Art is not* 237). In the four novels taken up for study Anand has not been able to keep the distance between himself and the protagonist Krishan Chander Azad, though he claims to have done so. Undoubtedly, with the help of imagination and an inimitable style Anand has made the novels interesting to read.

The hero of these novels is Krishan, who, like Anand, was born and brought up in Peshawar. Obviously the author
was familiar with the place and its surroundings and this came in handy when it came to describing the nativity and background of the character he created. But the similarity between the author and the character extends beyond this. Like Krishan's father, Ram Chand, Anand's father was also a descendant of a coppersmith. As Anand's father had joined the army and come up in life through sheer hard work, Krishan's father also forsook the hereditary craftsmanship and joined the army. Krishan's mother Sundari, who came from the humble peasant stock, is modelled on Anand's mother Ishwar Kaur. Like Anand, who was not impressed with the religious fervour of his mother, Krishan also looked askance at the religious rituals performed by his mother. The effect of the unnecessary and wasteful expenditure incurred by his mother, was that Anand developed a strong dislike for the Brahmin priests who exploited the ignorance of people like his mother and extracted money from them. The anger and disgust that Anand felt towards the Brahmins is echoed in the denunciation by Krishan also. Anand himself has said,

If there is any alliance between myself and a character, it is with the narrator. But, always in my novels, the characters take charge. The novelist
should try to become the great god, Brahma, who creates mankind, but is not responsible for it, that is to say, does not determine their destiny. Distance is very important in art, because art though like life and reflecting it, is not life. Literature and life are parallel developments. (Art is not 238)

As Anand's father was in the army, the family had to live in the cantonment. When Anand makes his hero also have a similar background and milieu, it must be attributed to more than mere coincidence. Blessed with a keen memory, Anand is able to recapture the life of the cantonment during the pre-Independence days and Krishan's description of cantonment life replicates it exactly. Anand's childhood friend Bakha, who is the hero of Untouchable, reappears in Seven Summers as one of the characters. So strong was his attachment to Bakha that Anand mentions him in many of his writings. Having been himself a mute witness to the shabby treatment meted out to untouchables, Anand was drawn towards Gandhi, who championed the cause of the downtrodden. If reading an article by Gandhi on an untouchable boy in the Hind Swaraj made Anand to go to Sabarmathi Ashram, the same reason makes the hero Krishan also visit Gandhi.
The idyllic beauty of Daska, his mother's ancestral village, and the simplicity and innocence of its people had always captivated Anand. Krishan too traces his ancestry to the maternal side to Daska and echoes the same sentiments about the pristine purity and charm of the village. Anand's maternal uncle Sharma Dayal Singh, who had influenced him very much, also plays a prominent role in the novels. Anand remembers his beloved aunt Devaki and her daughter Kaushalya in the novels. The tragic life of beloved aunt Devaki and her excommunication for befriending a Muslim woman and the untimely death of his cousin Kaushalya are faithfully recorded in the novels. Anand mentions these two people in some of his other writings also. The great value Anand attached to friendship is seen in Krishan's long friendship with Noor Mohammed. From a very early age Anand was susceptible to the charms of women and many of the references in his novels show him as a very passionate man. He was susceptible to the pleasure which the sight and even the smell women gave, as he says in his autobiographical essay, "My Childhood", "Again, I have only to look in the mirror of my heart, to recollect the perfume of the flowers of Motia and Molsari, which radiated from the presence of my lovely
aunt, Devaki" (37). Krishan too mouths the same feelings when he refers to his aunt Devaki as radiating the smell of Motia and Molsari flowers and his other aunt Aqqi as emitting the smell of curds. In the latest novel *The Bubble* Anand describes in great and minute detail the intimate relationship between Krishan and Irene. Irene, it has to be remembered, was the real life character with whom Anand was in love and it was on her suggestion that Anand started writing the confessional work which, however, failed to find a publisher. The life of the fictional Krishan and the author of the novels converge here and the identification of the two, which so far had remained in the realms of the possible, becomes a certainty here. It is as though Anand was tired of the camouflage of fiction and chose to bare the real identity of the character he had described so far behind the veil of fiction. With the pretense of fiction discarded, the novel reads exactly like his autobiography, and events and characters are depicted alike in both.

For example, Anand faithfully records how he came to be influenced by Marxism through a girl named Eltie Helman. Anand does not change the name of this Communist girl in the novel *The Bubble*. The anger and frustration he felt at the high-handed way in which the General Strike of 1926 by the
miners in England was put down by the British Government are conveyed through Krishan in the novel *The Bubble*. Of the strike Anand writes in his book *Apology for Heroism*, "But, more than Eltie Helman, it was the British Government which, by breaking the General Strike, demonstrated to me the class nature of society" (65). Anand mentions in his novels some of his British friends like E.M. Forster, Bonamy Dobree and Eric Gill, the sculptor. In fact it was E.M. Forster who wrote a foreword to the novel *Untouchable*, which enabled Anand to get a publisher. Anand's meeting with Krishna Menon and the activities of the India Office in the Strand in London are described in *The Bubble*. Having known Krishna Menon personally while in London, Anand describes him through Krishan. Since some of the later novels that have been taken up for study were written during the pre-Independence days, the readers are given a detailed account of the political and economic situation prevalent during foreign rule. For example, Anand, who was at Amritsar when the Jallianwallah Bagh tragedy took place, gives a graphic account of the whole sordid affair in *Morning Face*. The visit of Annie Besant to Anand's college -- the Khalsa college in Amritsar -- and the effect it had on the students including Anand are fictionalized in the novel *Confession of a Lover*. As in the other novels, Anand uses many Punjabi and Hindi words in
these four novels. In the novel *Seven Summers* Anand has provided a glossary at the end of the novel giving the English equivalents of the Punjabi and other Indian language words that he has used in the novel.

The novels examined here contain a lot of factual details and incidents in the life of Mulk Raj Anand. (Details of the real-life counterparts of events and characters in the novels are given in the Appendix). 'Style is the man' goes the saying; similarly 'the novel is the man', one can say of Anand.

The study is largely confined to the biographical - personal mode; it has been an attempt to trace the close parallel between Anand's life and his fiction. It has not ventured into the deeper psychological realms. A comprehensive study of a person's work is possible only if one probes the motives and urges which live beyond or beneath the conscious level -- the archetypes and symbols which can give an inkling of the fathomless depths of the mystery called the human soul. This work is a study of what appears on the surface; the whirlpools and undercurrents that the placid exterior camouflages call for a psychological study which is not the researcher's purpose here.
Poetic creation, according to Eliot, is a process of depersonalization. This is true of all literary creation. The first impulse for the writer is an urge or motion from within the realm of his personal experience and, from the way he treats it, it acquires a universality of significance transcending the limits of subjectivity. What the Bible says in *The Genesis* — that God created man in His own image — is true of all creation; every creation will partake of the image of the creator. The novel is taken as an objective genre; but however much the novelist tries to distance himself from his work, his personality is bound to leave his stamp on it. That is why one can tell, for example, a Jane Austen's work from an Emily Bronte's. In Mulk Raj Anand there is a writer who does not make use of the fig leaf of objectivity; he, on the contrary, accepted the confessional nature of his novels and declared openly how the chief events and characters of his fiction are slices of his own personal and social life.

In a letter Anand was kind enough to write to this researcher, he draws attention to the fact that any study of the confessional nature of the novels is bound to remain partial as three volumes of the seven-volume series are yet
to be published. But the purpose of this study is not to make an exhaustive analysis of the works but to light up one way of approaching them. What is true of these four novels must be true of the remaining novels of the series too.

Nor does the confessional or autobiographical nature of these works detract from their universal significance. One can, as Blake did, see 'a world in a grain of sand' and 'a heaven in a wild flower'. The individual is a type of the species and so Anand's experiences, as portrayed in these novels have a multi-dimensional existence -- as autobiographical works, as records of the author's age and as universal human documents.