CHAPTER-4

With the Seven Ages of Man, begins to appear insights, the piling-up of which makes a man truly-human in so far as it may give ‘wisdom of the heart’ as well as enlightenment from which may come karuna, compassion or pity or love.¹

-Mulk Raj Anand.

This long autobiographical revelation, composed as a token of love for the Welsh Professor’s daughter Irene, is the first of Mulk Raj Anand’s literary articulation. The revelation is being published now in parts in the form of a novel, ‘of new consciousness’ entitled Seven Ages of Man.

Seven Summers (1951) is the first part. Morning Face (1968), Confession of A Lover (1976) and The Bubble (1984) are other parts. Seven Summers, Morning Face and Confession of A Lover are according to Anand, not autobiographies but autobiographical novels. In these three volumes, Anand has reconstructed his childhood and boyhood days from his earliest recollections to the Year 1925. Seven Summers deals with the first seven years of Anand’s half conscious and half unconscious childhood.

In Seven Summers, Krishan narrates his experience and evolution through the early years of his childhood, and the later six ages will spring out of these childhood experiences. In Seven Summers Anand recaptures, with perfect knowledge of child psychology, details of the first seven consciousnesses of his childhood, and portrays the
growth of the child Krishan in a schizoid society with his vital energy or mischievous living for energized curiosity and the desire for personal identity. Born as the third son, with Harish and Ganesh older than him and Prithvi a child in the lap, Krishan notices first of all schism between his father and mother. His father Ram Chand is the Head-clerk in the Military office of the 38th Dogra Regiment and proud of his position. His mother, Sundari, is simple and orthodox, who loves her children, especially Krishan, dearly. She believes in the worship of a mixed pantheon. His elder brother Harish is peculiarly self-centered, gives up his medical studies, takes up a job as jailor to fulfill the wish of his wife Draupadi, and sets up his home in the city. Ganesh, his school-going brother, is meek and more inhibited than Krishan. Prithvi, the sick child, expires later. And Shiv comes into existence. Aqqi is the youngest sister of his mother, but they do not ‘seem as sisters at all’. Her husband, Jai Singh, is a drunkard who beats her often. Aunt Devaki is charming and is all love for Krishan; and her husband Pratap is a gentle and liberal Smith. There are Babu Chattar Singh, the Quartermaster clerk (his father’s rival in the office for higher position) and his childless wife Gurdevi who wishes to adopt Krishan. There is also the regimental temple priest Pandit Bal Krishan who exploits the faith of the people, especially Krishan’s mother. Krishan’s playmates are Ali, the son of the regimental saxophone player, the sweeper boy, Bakha who loves Krishan much, Chhota, the flute-player in the regimental band, Ram Charan, the washer-woman Gulaboo’s son and others. Anand further introduces a variety of characters of diverse natures like the European officers of the Regiment. The magnanimous commanding officer colonel London, the squint eyed Adjutant Major
Carr, Captain Owen and the deaf Captain Cunningham and soldiers and other Indian personnels of different castes and creeds. At the school there are the cruel teacher Din Gul who beats Krishan and other boys mercilessly and the Kind Head Master Abdul Gaffar Khan who pats Krishan with love. At his mother’s village Daska, Krishan comes across his mystical grandpa Nihal Singh, Grandma Gujri and widowed aunt Amrit Kaur, who are jealous of his mother’s prosperity and the kind hearted uncles Sharam Singh, Dayal Singh and Sardar Singh. In his split society of diverse characters, the consciousness of Krishan grows under the exigencies of events like being pricked by the thorns while plucking a rose, turning truant from school to pick berries and a near fatal accident from which the hero survives after a prolonged illness, during which he becomes more and more introvert, till his father suspects he is going mad.

The scene of action shifts from Mian Mir cantonment to Lahore, Amritsar, Nowshera cantonment, Daska and back to Nowshera. And within this action there are retrospective echoes of events at the cantonment of Sialkot, Ferozepur and Peshawar. And within one place the action shifts from one spot to another alternately, indicating new vital sensations. The tragic experiences are interspersed by comic ones to intensify awareness. Secretly the hero hopes to go with his dear aunt Devaki to Amritsar as her adopted son. Instead Ganesh is offered to her. He is made to eat dust and cactus fruit and is beaten by Ali. His brother Ganesh contrives to make him commit the sin of killing a kitten by dropping it in the well, implanting guilt in the little one. He notices the death of his little brother Prithvi. He is often shocked by the beating inflicted often by his angry father at home, the merciless teacher Din
Gul at the school, the vengeful class-fellows Ali and others outside the class room, and the ill treatment meted out to his mother by her jealous widowed sister Amrit Kaur and mother Gujri on the eve of his uncle’s marriage at Daska. Thus becoming aware of the underlying pain in life amid the imperceptible feelings, Krishan survives through mother’s love.

*Seven Summers* is a novel of intense feelings. Here, Anand dramatizes the compassion in the first seven-years of his life. He presents a soul-searching diary of the real, intimate life known to himself. Anand feels the terrible need to write about himself to reveal the inner life lived during his childhood. Anand regards *Seven Summers* as his major work. Its excellence lies in the personal intensity, in the purity and immediacy with which the author records his experiences. The novel is an attempt to present an autobiographical fiction. The exploration constitutes of the theme of innocence and experience constitutes its philosophic base. Any re-construction of the past implies creative imagination of a high order. However, the difficulty lies in bridging the gap between the actual experience and its recapitulation. He has largely succeeded in reviving the beauty and glory of childhood. He also succeeds in explicating the thought and behaviour of the child’s mind with a personal urgency.

Krishan, the child-hero of *Seven Summers* is truly a memorable character. He possesses the universal traits of a sensitive adolescent, remarkably open to experience and watching the world not through a glass darkly, but as, fresh, undivided and eminently beautiful. The narrative takes on the quality of his perceptions, successfully recording events and impressions, physical and symbolic actions- in effect, the
whole range of sensations in the theatre of the mind. Anand’s use of the technique of interior monologue not only helps him in registering the concrete, normal everyday facts of existence, but also modulates into subtle poetry. For instance, the hero’s love for Aunt Devaki is expressed through sensuous imagery:

I bathed in the glow of her beauty, tense and excited and bound up in a deep lover for her. And I felt neither the milk and sugar of my mother, nor the curd of aunt Aqqi, nor even the sweet burnt grass of little mother Gurdevi, could surpass the mixed smell of Motia and Molsari flowers which was my aunt Devaki.²

The sensuous effect here is unmistakable. Carried to logical limits, it leads to a healthy eroticism as in the passage:

Gentle as the sound of breeze which stirred the tops of Casuariana trees was her voice hard as two mangoes were her breasts as she pressed me to her bosom to soothe me, thrilling as the cold raindrops were the kisses she showered on my face, and never can I forget the singing voice made hoarse by the way she bent her profile over my forehead.³

Love and latent sensuality are perhaps the basic motivations of the child-mind. Anand’s narrative frequently refers to these. Thus the use of stream of compassion technique becomes indispensable to give its reader a true and comprehensive picture of the character’s mind. At
times, the sensory and sensuous notations invite a comparison with
D.H.Lawrence: at the other times, they evoke a keen relish for the
poetry of the earth reminiscent of Keats.

*Seven Summers* not only initiates the hero to the hallowed land
of romance but also brings him back to the earth. A child’s thirst for
experience is insatiable. Every experience is a fresh signpost. Therefore,
it is eminently desirable, whether it pleases or hurts him. A visit to
sparrow house in the company of his father to watch the birds pleases
the hero immensely and transports him to the region of ineffable blues:

Soon I could hear nothing except the isolated
groans and cries of animals and the itinerant
rhythm of a parrot’s speech. And I suddenly felt
lighter than air. I had the sensation that I was
floating upwards in the sky. Then the dark
whorl of the evening descended upon me and
closed my eyes, and I felt as though the light of
the spark lit into me by my father’s sing-song
had lifted me on high with its strange raucous
music and transported me to a city beyond the
sky.  

On the other hand, when he gets beatings from his teacher in the
school, he sinks to the utmost depths of degradation and pain:

I shrieked aloud and fell tottering at the
master’s feet. A river of tears flowed down my
face, smarting where the five fingers of the
master had imprinted and themselves on my
cheek, my blood boiling with anger and fear and resentment and pain. 5

Even the child’s love for his mother is tinged with desire:

I felt linked to her in a love that was simple and immutable and beautiful and sad. I put my arms round her neck while she wept silently and I clung to the tormented warmth of her dark face. 6

Again, while convalescing after a serious injury, he apprehends more clearly than before the deep tremors of his love for his mother:

My mother invariably gave me hot milk that made me sick. But I was grateful enough. Especially at such moments, when I knew that she was neglecting Shiva to come to my side. I felt I should never love any body as much as I loved her, for she had not slept for nights when I had near death and had never opened her lips except to utter: “May I become your sacrifice.” Only the child can comprehend the mother’s courage and sorrow. 7

The child also feels the tremors of desire for Rukmini, the twelve year old daughter of the physician who presses him to her bosom. He becomes aware of the hidden sexual urge:

She was a slender fawn-like creature, with an unwashed neck but with a heart-shaped face which shamed the warmth of gold with its

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tender bloom. And her long black hair fell in two plaits on her shoulders, matching the colour of her almond eyes. It was curious that I should have become conscious of physical desire so early, but as I clung to her neck and felt the pressure of her budding breasts, as I rested my cheek against her cheek and felt the touch of her long hands, I became suddenly aware of a strange and wild rapture such as I had faintly felt in being fondled by aunt Aqqi and Devaki. 8

The psychological motivation of the child is further explored in relation to his playmates. Discarded by them from the game of mock-warfare, on the ground that he was younger than they, he tries to force himself on them. His need for self-assertion is so great that he runs headlong to the top of the hill which is the imaginary fortress to be conquered, and he pronounces himself to be the victor:

I rose to the crest of the hill, my ambition poised in the rhythm of my body, though my limbs were heavy with fatigue and my breath came and went quickly. And as I stood on the top of the hillock, I shouted: ‘I am the conqueror, I am the conqueror’! 9

Anand seeks to convey in his fiction what he has called “the wisdom of the heart” 9 the inner core of his tradition and the temperament of his people – of all people. An anecdote he has more than once told gets very much to what he hoped to capture.
I remember that experience I had...in the fair going with my mother, at the age of eleven, near Amritsar .....she was talking to an old woman and wouldn’t come away. I kept dragging her skirt and ultimately she did come away. And then she said to me, “you are a very naughty boy. Couldn’t you see the dead son of that woman in her eyes?” And I thought that was the thing I wanted, this novelist in my mother who could see the dead son of a woman in her eyes. 11

Wanting to strengthen this kind of perception in himself and also wanting to experiment with the new myth that man makes himself, Anand came to sense that the focus in Iron Age is the individual, was the basis for arriving at an understanding of man’s plight, and the greatest theme of all was man himself, the “promise for man’s evolution to higher consciousness.”12 His emphasis, from the beginning of his career has been on the objectification of felt experience through the presentation of individual men and women. It has been, as he learned from the poet Iqbal, on the self in the process of becoming.

One of the technical problems resulting from such points of view that Anand had to face in The Seven Ages was “how to use the felt experience of one person to represent the felt experience of many people.”13 Anand knew that in his case, “the links and connection between his life and his writings were usually interwoven.”14
Anand further asserts that in this judgment. Most novels tend to be autobiographical to the degree that they are born of authentic experience. As he had written some years earlier to one of his critics:

I believe in the confessional novel. In the first person singular. One can be nearly honest, peel the onion---layer by layer, and get to one’s conscience....I am writing my autobiographical novel (not autobiography) from the same compulsion.\textsuperscript{15}

In the three confessional novels many of the incidents did, in fact, happen and sometimes “even names are taken of people who are dead....because all dead become legends.”\textsuperscript{16} However, the literal autobiographical events in these novels are often altered in time and invariably have been selected because of their appropriateness in theme or content to the larger purposes of \textit{The Seven Ages} as a whole. The autobiographical elements in all these novels are Krishan Chander’s struggles to grow and the emotional, intellectual and national context in which those struggles take place.

Another reason why Anand had chosen to write \textit{The Seven Ages} as autobiographical fiction rather than as autobiography is that he does not employ his subjects and themes primarily as an act of introspection. His chief effort here is not to use fiction as self-analysis or as an excuse to probe unfolding of his own identity. In \textit{The Seven Ages} the search is for human minimums. It is not certainties he grapples with.

\textit{But hunches,...doubt,...the direction towards becoming. The urges for freedom on all planes are the main motive force. The context is the
whole of life, the trauma of birth, innocence, experience of evil and good, . . . . . the struggle to mirror struggle itself in books which may be more than one self.” 17

Seven Summers in some ways, like Joyce Cary’s (1888-1957) A House of Children (1941), captures the lost glory of Eden. It is a quiet book, set in a low key, but has rich emotional implications. At the same time, it is remarkably transparent and serene. It may not have the passionate intensity of The Big Heart (1945) but its appeal is surely timeless. This is so because the nature of experience it seeks to communicate is universal and timeless. The hero of Seven Summers is a child of yesterday, today and tomorrow. There is nothing in him that is not for all time. He is alive to experience the very narrow of his bones. In as much as constant reordering of feeling goes on in his mind, the cumulative effect of the novel is one of unceasing exploration.

II

Morning Face (1968) deals with Mulk Raj Anand's period of boyhood and adolescence. It is not for nothing that Anand likes to proclaim that he “was born with wide-open eyes” 18

Anand discovers in his childhood and early life concerns and sympathies that lost him a life time. Infact, the characters vibrate with the intensely felt sympathies or antipathies of the novelist or the creatures of the world of boy Anand's childhood experience. The problems he has been trying to resolve, the attitudes he has been maintaining, all seem to be rooted in these early years of his life.
Morning Face was written in 1926 a 2,000-page autobiographical novel - a long confession, as Dr. Mulk Raj Anand calls it, coming from the compulsion of a morbid obsession with himself and the people whom he had known.

The novel Morning Face was too huge, and possibly too amorphous, for publishers to take an interest in it, and so it became the source-book of his subsequent novels and at last in 1951 was issued the first section of the autobiographical narrative written twenty-five years earlier. Seven Summers, as the name indicates covered the first seven years of the hero-narrator's life. It is a sensitive study of childhood set in the Punjab of the opening decade of the century, and Krishan Chander, so full of liveliness and love of life, wins the reader's heart at once which has already been disussed in the first part of this chapter.

Morning Face is a sequel to Seven Summers, and apparently five more novels were to follow, and the entire series will carry the name Seven Ages of Man, spanning a period of forty years-"Bandematram" to Independence from the partition of Bengal to the partition of India, in its final form. Seven Ages of Man might conceivably run to 3,500 printed pages and come to be hailed as one of the longest fictional narratives of all time. The grandeur of conception and the industry and stamina, Dr. Anand is bringing to his vocation as a novelist are worthy of all praise. The title, of course, comes from Shakespeare.

And then the whining school,
boy, with his satchal,
And shining morning face,
Creeping like snail,

Unwillingly to school.¹⁹

Krishan of *Seven Summers* has now passed from childhood to boyhood, and he does sport his "shining morning face". Like Lord Krishna, Krishan too, has in his beloved aunt, Devaki, a second mother. Actually, Krishan is a cross between the mythical Krishna and the average street Urchin; and as Krishan grows, he is seen to be both uniquely himself and the prototype of Indian boyhood.

One of the four sons of Babu Ram Chand, a Havildar in the Army, Krishan is subject to all the visible and invisible stresses and tensions in a sprawling family of uncles, aunts, cousins and other relations. Oscillating between the home and the world, between bouts of illness and seasons of calf-love for Devaki, aunt Mumtaz, his brother's mistress Shakuntla, the doctor's wife and Helen, the clarionet player's daughter- always seeing in his latest flame the image of Sophia of Reynolds Mysteries of the court of London. Young Krishan moves from innocence to experience and parallel to this movement from the war years (1914-1918) to the beginning of the Gandhian era (1925-1940) sparkled off by the Amritsar massacre.

Much of the communal life, described here differs little from the life of the people in other parts of India, even in the extreme South; words, exclamations, idioms, gestures are the same. On the surface politics and economics tend to create sharp divisions; but social life is the invisible underground river. That it should be possible to identify Krishan with Indian boyhood and the life around Krishan with Indian humanity at large is not the least of the merits of this immense autobiographical novel.
Morning Face is the autobiography of the protagonist Krishan Chander which covers his childhood and adolescence. Anand shows various developments of his character in this period. Precocious and sharp, Krishan Chander is an extremely sensitive child. Showing his loyalty to his country, he directly attacks the disloyalty of his father because he is a servant of British Government. He criticizes saying,

I wanted to dub his relations with the alien Sarkar as out right treachery.  

In the beginning of the novel, novelist shows Krishan Chander's exploitation by school teacher. Master Budh Singh beats him badly for his minor mistakes. When Batalia, monitor of the class, comes to know that master Budh Singh has beaten Krishan Chander mercilessly he decides to complain to the Head Master against Budh Singh. He complains to Master Shah Nabaz about the cruel behaviour of Budh Singh towards his fellows. Master Shah Nabaz consoles the students and asks them to report to the Head Master. Again he boosts their courage saying,

I know some of the boys told upon the others so unless you are united and speak with the one voice, you will always be beaten by this master.  

Infact, Master Budh Singh always curses and abuses students for their minor mistakes. He does not even like anybody to criticize the Angrezee Sarkar. He tells the students about the glorious achievements of the British Government.

White Sahibs have done to us. They have taught us to wear clean clothes. They have
taught us not to talk so much, but work hard. They have given us canals, roads, railways, hospitals, Schools. This is the Government High School in which you are studying! So learn to be grateful.²²

Due to cruel behaviour of master Budh Singh, Mr. Shekh Abdul Hamid, Principal of P.B.N. High School suspends him. But the reaction is that Mr. Marsdon, Inspector of the Schools decides to reinstate him and Abdul Hamid to be transferred. The result is that the boys of the senior classes decide to go on a strike against the order of Mr. Marsdon. Meanwhile Mr. Beaty, Superintendent of Police, asks Krishan Chander to be very respectful to master Budh Singh because he is a very obedient servant of the British Sarkar. Apart from this Krishan feels that there are worlds beyond his little world of school and home which are completely unknown to him and the commanders of the world are British officers who can do whatever they like. Again he curses himself that he is also condemned to be a little Choohia by master Budh Singh. Being a sensitive child, he always criticizes the cruel behaviour of the British Sarkar because they treat Indians like slaves and animals. But his father and elder brother do not agree to his opinion. To them they are servants of the British Sarkar. About the various roles of Krishan in the novel, K.V. Sinha says:

Living fitfully with a conservative family and a ritualistic society, Krishan Chander grows sensitively to a life of quest of love. He traverses the path of hell in the nectar-city of Amritsar. Now transformed to a city of dreadful
nights. His infatuation with the charming singer Mumtaz, his captivity in Ludhiyana Jail for breaking the night curfew, his resentment against the British rulers, his sense of satisfaction in the protective love of Aunt Devaki and mother and finally his consecration to poetry - all form the crux of his experiences.  

Anand has dealt with Krishan Chander's exploitation in his earlier novel Seven Summers. It is a painful irony of the school masters, the preacher and social reformer exploit their own students demanding extra money. For instance, Master Buddh Singh forces students to take tuition from him which the poor parents of the children cannot afford. As Krishan's mother urges Budh Singh that she cannot pay tuition fees because his father has gone to war to save all from Germans and hardly she can pay his school fees. Anand refers to Krishan Chander's beating by the school master to pay the fees for private tuition. Krishan Chander expresses his anger saying:

The school master beat me for not knowing anything about compound interest and the fear of his rod made me a dunce so far as arithmetic was concerned. The master would not take the trouble to go over again in the class because he wanted to be engaged as private tutor to me. But to my father the extra fee of five rupees for an hour tutors seemed preposterous.

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Besides beating and taking extra money in tuition, Budha Singh also demands different type of gifts from the students:

Now I am saying to all of you remember tomorrow, you are to bring only gifts you can. From you and your greedy father Batalia, I expected nothing very much but from little Choohia and Ganesh his elder brother indeed badly, and you Naeem and your brother Aslam are the sons of a doctor. So get me some quaunine and tincture to dine.25

A very strange thing happens when Dr.Oupadi comes to know about the illicit relationship between her husband Harish Chandra and prostitute Mumtaz. She tells Krishan that her husband Harish always beats and curses her and returns home being drunk As she shows her resentment saying,

They have no shame! They can go to Musalman prostitutes, eat and drink with them but I am not allowed to go home to my parents because we retain our faith in Aga Khan.26

Oscillating between the cruel behavior of master Budh Singh and broken-relationship of Dr.Oupadi, Krishan is unable to take a proper decision to solve the problems. The sudden death of his uncle Pratap brings profound grief in his family. His another uncle Dev Dutt is a sensitive man who takes the event very seriously and exhorts everyone in the family by saying that death is inevitable.
It is true that many characters and situations of Anand's fictions and short-stories re-appear in two autobiographical novels *Seven Summers* and *Morning Face*. In *Morning Face* the child, playing in the garden recalls the story of *The Road*, which appears in *The Tractor and Corn Goddess* (1947), Bakha, hero of the *Untouchable* appears as

A black colossus with his enormous turban
unstuck and his thick khaki tunic and shirt
with sweat and dirt. 27

Like *Untouchable*, there is also a glimpse of caste- prejudice and untouchability, because of which Bakha, Goghi and other sweater boys cannot join school. Several times Bakha appears requesting Krishan to teach him English lesson. He shows his resentment to his job:

As I build a broom, the sepoys think I am just
dirt, because I handle dirt. 28

In both *Seven Summers* and *Morning Face*, education is a prominent theme. In his essay on *Education in Lines Written to An Indian Air* (1949), Anand thus criticizes the system of British education in India:

What is the education....we do want for our children. The answer is that we want the kind of education which releases their potential creative energies. Which does not impose anything on them that they do not want but which liberates them instead which demands little from them but gives them much, which is
not taking it out the children to appease our
own frustration, but which is giving without an
ulterior motive to the extent to which it is
humanly possible to give.... 29

About Krishan Chander's school education, M.K. Naik remarks,

The education which young Krishan receives
both at the primary and secondary stages is a
painful story of suppression and repression and
cane-driven scene. 30

Krishan Chander's father illustrates his uneasy compromise
between the old and the new. Although he is a member of Aryasamaj, a
reformist movement of India, yet he participates in all ceremonies over
which his devout wife presides. For the sake of his interest in
modernity, he ridicules the images of Lord Krishna and Buddha and
photograph of Agakhan. About the basic conflict between tradition and
modernity, M. K. Naik remarks,

Morning Face which has a wider scope presents
the interaction between tradition and
modernity in a much more comprehensive
manner. 31

Krishan Chander as he grows becomes increasingly aware of the
interaction and becomes the modern to solve problems. Meanwhile, his
family moves from the narrow and segregated world of the cantonment
to the joint family of Amritshar. A great clash takes place in his family

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on the belief of the haunting spirit of the saint Lok Nath. At a visit to
the Golden Temple, young Krishan finds his devout mother and his
sceptical father clashing the wonders.

Why the talk about religion always ended upon
in a quarrel. And I was to be forever frightened,
in my secret heart, of ash-smeared ascetics,
and begun to loathe all the sprines and symbols
of all the religious and found my mind, at that
movement, set in the directions against the
almighty God.\textsuperscript{32}

Krishan’s fight against the traditions of his family as well as
those of his village alienates him from the society. Further he comes to
develop his political consciousness under the influence of uncle Dev
Dutt following the tenets of the Aryasamaj. Through Dev Dutt he
comes to know the revolutionary Godhara Movement, The Budge-
Budge riots and the freedom struggle. Krishan breaks the curfew and
goes to prison and receives seven stripes on his back. During the last
phase of his life we find him joining the political movement, disobeying
the order of head master. The result is that he has been rusticated from
the school. Thus the revolt against tradition and support for political
struggle are the prominent aspects of Krishan Chander’s life. We tacitly
witness here the theme of the autobiographical fiction which presents
the protagonist’s inner world of his consciousness and the other world in
which he lives and grows.
Through the character of Mumtaz, Anand shows the basic problems of prostitutes in India. Through the presentation of Mumtaz's relation with Harish Chander, Anand shows her tender relation with Krishan. In the whole novel, Krishan emerges to solve various problems prevailing in society. He directly attacks the cruel role of British officers in crushing and exploiting the poor people. He asks all the victims of society to unite and start a revolt against the unjust system.

The transformation of Krishan from an inquisitive young boy into a revolutionary and an agnostic is gradual and convincing. But the parts dealing with Krishan's changing attitude towards the whites and his growing nationalism make some of the less interesting reading in the book: They do not have the immediacy or the personal involvement one hands in, say, his love life or schooling. Except for the account of the Jalianwala Bagh Massacre, which is grippingly written, the curse of the British rule in India is largely conveyed to us through long diatribes by Krishan's uncle Dev Datt, Dr. Chunni lal, Masters Harish Chand, Har har and Kedar Nath. From their discourses we learn of the mutiny in the Dogra Regiment, The Budge-Budge riots and the Rowlatt Act. Anand does not load the dice against the British, but he keeps repeating the old arguments till they become tiresome. And there is hardly any humour in these sections to relieve the tedium.

In *Morning Face* re-appear many characters and incidents of Anand's fiction. We learn something about Hindu society, about the Joint family system, child marriage, the religious observances at the time of birth, marriage and death. Some of the customs are gruesome,
like that of the women wailing for the dead. On the death of uncle Pratap, Krishan returns to Amritsar to find that,

The women stood lined up on both sides of the gutter, like soldiers on parade their bosoms bare and their heads uncovered, even as they struck, with rhythmic strokes of their palms, first their foreheads, then their breasts and then their thighs, chanting the while a unanimous dirge, as the barber's wife led of chorus: Hai! Hai Shera! The sharp, clear and repeated sound of the palm slaps electrified the atmosphere, making me feel as though I was almost at hell's doorstep, where these women, having consigned the body of uncle Pratap to oblivion, were now mourning for his spirit, perchance Chitragupta, the accountant of hell, might forgive him his misdeeds in recompense for the physical suffering they were imposing on themselves.\footnote{33}

The book is full of sharp observations. Anand has a gift for seeing deep into human mind and analysing its subtleties which we perceive throughout the novel.

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\textbf{III}

\textit{Confession of A Lover} (1976) was published by Arnold-Heinemann, New Delhi, in February 1976. It is the third volume to have been published in Mulk Raj Anand’s projected seven volume confessional novel, the Seven Ages of Man.
Confession of A Lover deals with Krishan Chander's life at Khalsa College Amritsar from 1921 to 1925. The novel begins with a description of Krishan's first day at college and ends with his departure for England. During the years of his stay at Amritsar, the narrator comes to realize slowly and painfully that the carefree days of his childhood have passed and that he will have to break with a society he has come to consider hypocritical and that he has

“to do everything to grow to master my kismat.”

Such a point of view represents one of the many moments scattered through Seven Summers (1951), Morning Face (1968), and Confession of A Lover (1976) in which fact and fiction merge. Although Krishan was finally lured to take an honour’s degree in philosophy, it was to the reading and writing of literature that the eighteen-year-old gave himself. In fact, his love for knowledge and literature compelled him to make a pilgrimage to Lahore to visit the great poet, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal.

Knowledge...experience of that knowledge, and reverence for all who give knowledge. Even if you don't agree with them. These things are important, Read, read, everything that comes your way...you can grow. Everyone can....Only life, life and more life. Taste it and see...it is bitter sweet.

Later, Krishan was, in all good faith, to parrot his hero to new friends in Bombay.

The individual is all, according to the poet Iqbal....And he evolves by enlightened
action...self-awareness is not an escape from
the world, but a way of grappling with it. 36

Thus to know oneself and to express that self in verse became for
Krishan Chander inseparable endeavours.

My heart,-
a
Coloured
balloon,
punctured
beyond repair.... 37

Young as he was, he was no stranger to desire. As his fantasies
about Mumtaz or even about Aunt Devaki had revealed in Morning
Face. In Confession of A Lover, however, Krishan has an experience
of love with the delicate and intelligent Yasmin. Although it ends in
disaster, the young woman's death, it gives him moments of exquisite
tenderness. The sister-in-law of his Muhammedan friend, Nur, Yasmin
is bold enough to offer her hand to krishan in the darkness of the
cinema where they are watching a Charlie Chaplin film, identifying
with the comic's vulnerability. Krishan can hardly believe what is
happening to him and he is unmindful in these first moments of the
terrible difficulties that must be set a relationship between a Hindu man
and a Muslim woman.

Soon after Yasmin's returns from Amritsar to her home in
Lahore, She is married by arrangement to a Muhammedan railway
guard. Her letters and poems to Krishan reveal her unhappiness which
even the birth of a daughter would not mitigate. Finally, when Yasmin
is back in Amritsar visiting her sister, Naseem, she agrees to go on an
outing to the Beas river with Naseem, her husband, Nur, and Krishan. Wandering off to the river banks away from sister and friend Krishan and Yasmin spend a Haidee- juan day of mutual love and sweetness. Bumbling and inept at first, Krishan soon realizes how to give as well as how to take sexually and he is overwhelmed by the unashamed yet tremulous way in which Yasmin receives him. Afterwards, Krishan feels changed:

I didn't know why, but I felt as if I had today discovered oneness and manyness in my own being through direct intimate experience of the earth and water and woman. My life, Yasmin had called me.

We were but images of the same love, clinging to each other through time our love was only a confirmation of other loves. 38

In fact, it is his encounter with Yasmin, horribly broken off later when her brutal husband murders her as she is about to run off with her daughter to her lover, Krishan, that teaches him something of the true nature of one kind of love and that enlarges his understanding of the existence of many kinds of love. Moreover, Krishan's growth into the recognition that the separate concrete loves he felt were, somehow part of a larger, all embracing love which is the essence of Confession of A Lover.

There is, for example, his daily relationship with Nur from whom he learns about the love called friendship. Unlike Krishan, the young Nur, already married, conforms with patience and resignation to the life proscribed for him by his father and by his community. At the same time, he admires, sympathizes with and even encourages Krishan's
rebelliousness and creativity. Giving and more giving characterize Nur. Thus, heart-broken at the end of the novel over his friend's determination to go away to London, he virtually teaches Krishan the meaning of friendship. To Krishan now this friendship:

had been the only residuum of the bitter years.
The only safe haven of escape from torments.
The only permanent reality...I wanted. Whatever happened to worship with Nur may be worship friendship itself. Whatever else I may come to do or may not do. Where ever, I should be in his world, or beyond.39

Nur is not Krishan's blood brother, older or younger as Balram was Krishan's. But his unfailing even unquestioning loyalty and devotion to Krishan, often enough given at some cost to himself, hark back to the ancient story. As a student Nur may be plodding and hard working rather than imaginative or brilliant or intuitive but as a friend, a kind of lover he already knows and lives what Krishan is just beginning to grasp. It is Nur who, with a heart heavy as stone in the face of Krishan's imminent departure, goes to plead with his friend's mother to let her son go. It is Nur about whom Krishan rhapsodizes:

Oh Nur the failure. Warn out by his years, inwardly weary of the compromises he had had to make. Who had yielded to my vision of a new birth...oh to suffer as he was surely suffering for me at this very moment! Oh my friend, there, in me, around me and soon to be far
away, but in me, always, really-Oh my beloved friend.... 40

Still other kinds and levels of love come to be more deeply understood by Krishan in *Confession of A Lover*. He had long been accustomed to and now became increasingly grateful for the devotion and self-sacrifice of his mother and his aunt Devaki. In this novel Devaki’s death shatters Krishan and loosens another link in the weakening chain that ties him to his home.

*My heart was suffering with the unappeased arrogance and disdain of the elders. I had been punished and humbled for my defiance. What was most hurtful was the fact that my innocent mother had been penalised for my crimes, that was the last insult I could better. I would leave home.* 41

Devaki, Krishan's spiritual mother, had left him through death and now he was to leave his real mother, with her sorrow-filled blessing as with Nur's to live in another country.

*I had the presentiment...that, whatever, I may feel about this simple peasant woman. My mother, the tie with my family was broken for me, forever.* 42

His mother's love for Krishan was one of the few certainties in an uncertain world. She even pawns her jewellery to help pay for her son's passage to London. The woman had always been a heart base for
Krishan. At this climatic moment of the novel even Naseem's mother-in-law puts aside and temporarily redeems herself from the traditional cruelty towards her daughter-in-law in her genuine love for Krishan.

That was to be in the future, however. In the present of *Confession of A Lover*, Krishan's education, that is his formal thinking and reading was reinforcing the healthy intellectual skepticism he had already exhibited in *Morning Face*. From his first day at Khalsa College to his graduation with honors, Krishan read everything, he could. And the more he had, the more he continued to question. Proud of his own intelligence and singled out by his teachers as exceptional, Krishan saw a greater and greater gap between what he found in books and what he lived in his life. His professors at Khalsa College were not the harsh task-masters he had suffered under in the other schools he had attended. In fact, Lalla Jag Mohan, his principal, at the end of the novel contributes to Krishan's fare to Europe. Yet even the Professor Henry with whom Krishan had spoken about the novel he was trying to write, or professor Bhatia or Mr. Walters couldn't answer his questions.

What was the self really....what was thinking itself ? And the whole apparatus of fears, of horrors, prides and prejudices. Who was it in me that was loving? 43

Each of the three volumes of *The Seven Ages of Man* so far published ends with Krishan's departure, literal or metaphoric and a simultaneous anticipation of what the immediate future may hold, invariably an anticipation of a brave new world. As with *Seven Summers* and *Morning Face, Confession of A Lover* is structured
around movement. In this case, although there are actual journeys to Lahore, to Bombay and finally to another country, but the real journeys for Krishan are fundamentally inward. The opening paragraph of confession in which krishan is going from his home to the still unknown world of college captures Krishan's rhythms. This is how we witness a natural flow an excitement.

As I cycled along towards Lohgarh gate. As I cycled along. Pressing the peddle hard and insinuating my old two-wheeler past way walking pedestrians. As I cycled along...as I cycled along....as I cycled along, along I was full of the naive enthusiasm of a young heart squanderer, ready to love everyone and every thing... 44

The roads Krishan was to travel over during the next four years of the novel and the inner landscapes he passes, sometimes pausing at length, are reflected in his poems. In his conversations, in his alternating moods, and in the voice that increasingly has its own note and pitch.

Like Seven Summers and Morning Face, Confession of a Lover is a first-person narrative, but in Confession, the three distinguishable voices of the previous two novels begin to merge. There is not the strong sense there was in Seven Summers and Morning Face of an adult Krishan Chander, reminiscing about and recollecting himself as a child but quite often we confront a number of touching scenes and sights.
IV

In *The Bubble* (1984), Krishan is a young novitiate in London, researching into philosophy. Bursting with youthful exuberance, he embarks upon a quest for self, for love and for unfettered freedom. A chance meeting with Irene, the step-daughter of a Walsh Professor Rhys, leads him into a series of significant adventures. At her request, he starts writing the story of his life and when Irene leaves for Ireland, away from her orthodox mother, to work for the Irish Liberation Movement, Krishan becomes forlorn and lonely. His conversation with Bloomsbury and intellectuals like Bonamy Dobree, E.M. Forster (1879-1970), Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), Leonard Woolf (1880-1968), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) and others yielded rich dividends. In fact the novel makes a departure from the conventional novel form by taking a cue from the doyens like Goethe (1749-1832), Thomas Mann (1875-1955) and Andre Gide (1869-1951), mingling imperceptible longings with the passionate datum of experiences as they are filtered through the highly charged consciousness of his protagonist.

*The Bubble* consists of ten parts which are in the nature of cinematic montage. The novel is dedicated to the memory of Bonamy Dobree and Valentine Dobree and is prefaced with a quote lifted out from William Shakespeare:
Seeking the bubble reputation

Then a few lines from Gopala Reddy, the eminent Telugu poet:

Today is a bubble
Beautiful and multi-coloured
Floating down the river of time......

The theme is further hinted at in the elongated conversation of the hero with prof. Rhys who informs him:

The new magicians think the sperm in a little spark. It grows in ovum. The bubble opens at birth and then seals the child with each perception. The bubble opens and in the bubble tries to grow and move. In the transparent glass the moves are reflected. As the skin absorbs the air, so the soul grows....something like this happens all the time. 45

The first part of the novel is entitled as The Exile (Letters to Nur). There are 13 letters purportedly written by Krishan to Nur, his college friend, during the period between 1-10-1925 to 22-10-1925. The story grows pari passu with the growth of the hero in self-education. Anand uses the epistolary technique in the first part, which is full of nostalgia and reminiscence and deals with the hero’s receiving of ‘culture shock’ in London. Then follows the diary entries documenting Krishan’s experiences:

There is an old folk tale of a woman. One night it seems, people heard wailing from a cottage and the cry; ‘I am burning! I am burning! I am
on fire...!' The neighbors broke open the door and rushed in with buckets of water. They found no fire. Only an old woman burbling. 'I am burning' as though in dream. 'Where is the fire?' The neighbors asked 'Inside me', the old woman said. 46

Leaves from Krishan’s diary between 12-11-1925 to 26-12-1925 form an interesting episode. It is Krishan’s North-Wales Diary, giving the details of second part The Ascent of Mount Snowdown. Anand quotes from G.B. Shaw:

Everyone is ill at ease until he has found his natural place. 47

As he tells us:

The urgent secret desire to write a novel of the Quest, like A Portrait of The Artist as Young Man by James Joyce, though not an abstract to reconstruct my being, by recalling the concrete experience through which I occasionally become aware myself in the past. 48

Here Krishan meets Irene Rhys, who plays an important role in his life. Their love episode is the most fascinating part of novel.

The title of the Third part of the novel is Babes in the Wood which is prefaced by a couplet from the peom by a famous Persian poet, Jalal-uddin Rumi:
There is a beloved hidden in your heart Let me
show her to you if you have eyes.\textsuperscript{49}

Anand intimately recalls the details of Krishan’s love affair with
Irene and also his long deliberations with prof. Rhys on abstruse
philosophical realms. Again in the part Four of the novel, Anand has
used the epistolary form, the letters written during the period from 1-7-
1926 to 14-7-1926, providing for the narrative continuum. Entitled
Thieves of Fire it gives the details of his journey to Paris and back
again quotidian life in London. Anand quotes Andre Gide:

Everything new should find us completely
footloose.\textsuperscript{50}

It is Krishan’s pleasure-trip to Paris, alongwith Irene, which bears a
remarkable semblance with Anand’s own experiences. He writes in his
dairy:

Only my wish was to get there quicker, fly a
little higher, because of Iqbal’s falcon I have
inherited. We had some superhuman superman
like Gandhi, Tagore, Iqbal, who had rejected
the money world and wanted new utopias, built
by the weakest men through sheer courage of
defiance of the prevailing anguish.\textsuperscript{51}

During the protracted stay in Paris, Anand comes under the
influence of Marxian ideology, which he consciously accepts as his
Principia Ethica. He feels the necessity of a global ‘revolution’ of the
sort in India and desires to go to Soviet Russia, the promised land of his
dreams and aspirations. In his conservation with Irene, he observes:
With my admiration for the breakthrough of the legendary Lenin I have wished I could go to Russia to see what the Revolution had done. This talk awakened my desire to go there.....

In the words of Tristan Tzara, once his associate, he finds a solution for all social evils afflicting Indian masses. He says, ‘After people reclaim freedom from slavery....And they want to go back to old human condition,. He looks at Tzara almost worshipfully, and words sound like ‘a revelation'.

Part Fifth of the novel entitled Conversations in Bloomsbury, begins with a quote from E.M. Forster:

People and books reinformed one another; Intelligence joined hand with affection, speculation Because passion and discussion was made profound by love.

1981. The book is dedicated to ‘Saros Cowasjee, who ‘instigated’ this serious ‘gossip’.  

During his stay in England, he comes under the influence of Marx’s ideology and Russian Revolution in which Lenin played a pivotal role. Anand has observed:

Lenin felt that if Russia, China and India could unite after discarding the trappings of superstitions and feudal decay and throw off the white man’s rule ---the whole world would change.  

Part Six of the novel is in the form of a diary which spans the period from September 3, 1926 to September 19, 1926 and it is entitled as Dublin Diary (Playboy of Western World and Dierde). It gives the details of Krishan’s visit to Ireland with Irene. Here he meets Madam Maud Gonne, Lady Gregory and other Irish nationalists who were struggling for Irish Independence. It narrated Irene’s involvement in Irish Freedom Movement which resulted in her one year’s imprisonment, and Krishan’s decision to return to England to complete his thesis. He returns to India and finds himself involved in the maelstrom of Indian politics, and decides to write a novel on the evils of untouchability.

Part Seven of the novel is intrinsically in the nature of a journalistic exercise, which is entitled Journal to Irene Anand quotes Confucious:
It is man that makes great truth—not truth that makes man great. 57

This journal covers the period from October 10, 1926 to October 19, 1926. In the part Eight, A Letter From Father there is a letter from his father written from Amritsar, which Krishan quotes:

I write this letter because the relationship between father and son is blood relationship giving the parent the right to guide and mould the young. 58

It is fairly a lengthy letter, full of advice, more in the nature of Polonious’ advice to his son, and reveals the domineering personality of his father. In the part Nine A Letter to Father again, there is a letter dated January 30th, 1927 from a ‘rebel son’ Krishan to his father’s response to his earlier letter. He writes:

How can young man hold his head high and look at the stars if he is always falling at the elder’s feet. 59

He confesses in his letter that the “source of love” for father “had been drying up” to congeal into near hatred 60 just before he left for England for pursuing higher studies. He frankly admits to his father that

And I saw the contrast of affection given to me by Dr. Iqbal, Lala Man Mohan and mother against your harshness. 61
This letter also reveals Krishan’s belligerance in not heeding to the advice of his father who wanted him to enter the services of the British Government. He observes:

I know how disappointed you will be with me for not following your advice to compete for the Indian Civil Service. 62

He bluntly tells his father of his intention “to make a new beginning, to start life again.” 63 and gives his reasons for coming over to England:

And I will be free to wonder, to seek, to adventure to live by trial and error....I pray that I may be liberated from the scrap heap, to become ‘a force of nature, away from the small minded frightened little men always writing petitions to the Sarkar. 64

He rejects his father’s intermittent admonitions and wants very much to follow the advice of Dr. Iqbal.

Are you a lover? Then be firm on the path of your friend. Till God (the cosmos) is caught in your net. Beside in the free land of the heart. Give yourself up and depart towards Truth. Trust Truth as the first step on the way of ‘Self. Rely on your creative self. Suppress all irresponsible and self fancies. 65
This letter which is fairly lengthy, reveals not only Anand’sellicosity but also shows up his refusal of paternal authority and “an
urge to overcome the danger of alienation in search of new way.”

The final part A Letter To Irene of the novel which is again in
the form of letter, is addressed to Irene. He quotes:

And in this geography of hope, the polestar, you
and I will be held together with love.

Krishan writes his letter to Irene from London before deciding to
return to India. He is aware of the fact that he has “to make more
choices in the new life.....there will be new challenges, new
situations, new difficulties...one must awaken to fresh
possibilities, latent in the winter’s decay the opening of buds into
flowers and the promise of the coming of luscious fruit on the tree
of happiness.” Finally he vows:

As long as I can walk, I will move at a faster
pace; As long as I can stand, I will struggle.

The novel is fairly voluminous, encompassing letters, diary
entries, journals and third-person narration. The different artifices such
as his early letters to Nur, through his Dublin Diary and letters to Irene,
his father, allow to see himself more or less as he is or he should be.
Krishan’s voyage of self-discovery takes him to different emotional
vicissitudes and self-propelled traumas which form the pulp of the
novel. Krishan’s interminable deliberations with prof. Hicks into
abstruse philosophical thoughts and his various escapades, specially
with Lucy, whom he passionately loves, all are intended to be variations
on the same theme. His emotional relationship with Irene, like Rama’s
attitude towards Madaleine in *The Serpent and The Rope*, remains ambivalent. When Irene goes off to Ireland to participate in that country’s Independence struggle, it helps him in a way to renew his contacts with India. In a letter to Irene, Krishan indicates his possible involvement in the freedom struggle:

> And now each of us is a fuller being than we met. We are free to grow into each other and into ourselves. ⁷⁰

His virtual separation from Irene, and all his eventual heartburns, seem to have lent to Anand’s imagination a kind of creative ignition which he very much needed. He recollects, almost with a touch of nostalgia, his reunion with Irene in Paris and Berlin and makes a journey into the chartered destination. In fact, *The Bubble* is a fictionalization of Anand’s felt-experiences now told with the intimacy and facticity that are rare in fiction writing.

The novel abounds in images and symbols, which are merely meant as decorative flourishes, but functional emblems.

There is a sharp etching of characters and incidents against the backdrop of Indian politics, and the narration constantly shuttles between Europe and London where Krishan reads avidly Andre Gide (1869-1951), Rimbaud (1854-1891) and a host of other significant poets. The central image of *The Bubble* defines and ordinates the perspectives of the theme, that of Krishan’s quest for viable identity. If the bubbles of Krishan’s early self-complacency are burst in the earlier part, he later musters to gather the various ‘bubbling selves’ into a synthetic apprehension of life and progresses in his self-education.
Anand has an abiding faith in man and in his perfectibility. The post-lapserian Indian Adam can now think of regaining his lost paradise, his primal roots are the confused spectacle of life. Anand’s scientific humanism and his commitment to see that his generation comes out of the centuries of human bondage are evidently projected in all these fictional autobiographies.

That the autobiographies serve as fictional form to lay bare many of the unresolved tensions and enigmas is unquestionable. It becomes more meaningful when Anand’s autobiography starts asserting its own autonomy over fiction. Anand’s commitment to rational humanism, which borders on the left-wing writing, is revealed not only the fundamental dichotomies involved in man’s struggle for existence but also in his aspirations for a radiant future, which seem to have been annulled by the stiffness of the social convention which admits no caveats of rational ideas. The fictionalized autobiographies skim beyond the persona, and beyond the clock-time to encompass the whole gamut of human experience.

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Mulk Raj Anand’s novel, “Private Life of An Indian Prince” was published in 1953, the year in which E.M. Forster’s the Hill of
Devi appeared and a decade later Manohar Malgonkar’s The Princes came out.

The immediate impulse behind Private life of an Indian Prince was to provide therapy for his own illness, written from the white heart of a tremendous crisis. ⁷¹

The central character of Anand’s novel is Maharaja Ashok kumar of Shampur, a princely state in the North, in Shimla hills. Popularly known as Vicky among his friends, he wavers on the question of his state’s accession to India, and after resisting the initial moves, signs the instrument of Accession under the political pressure of Sardar Patel. Though the primary impulse behind writing the novel originated from teacher in love, the novel impressively deals with how various political movements were active at the time of attainment of political Independence. Through the character of king Victor who represents the likes of the princely Maharajas, Anand seems to impress upon that the king is an individual whom he had taught in Shimla in the twenties who ended up in an asylum.

The narrator is Dr. Hari Shanker, his personal physician, in drawing the character of the Maharaja, Anand projects an image of intensely realised human agony. It takes all the ingenuity and patience of the doctor to see through the shamming and feigning of Ashok Kumar and it is only at the last when the Maharaja’s life is at shambles that he is able to analyse the various strands of his complex personality. He says,
I had often suspected that great many of his Highness's rages were deliberately assumed because of an innate exhibitionism, a strong desire to show off at all costs....Vicky was a complex personality and it was only towards the end of my association with him that I succeeded to any extent in disentangling those elements in his nature which were deliberate play-acting from the neurosis which possessed him.\(^72\)

The story opens dramatically with a public scandal caused by the Maharaja when he took out Russell to the ravines "for the obvious purpose." The Maharaja's peccadilloes become a talking point for every one. Dr. Hari Shanker reflects sardonically that the British who had forced the princes into a political straight-jacket left them no more territories to conquer, not much to do, except to achieve the only other conquests left to them, the conquests over women.

There are diverse pulls in the life of Ashok Kumar. The old feudal virtues of a Kshatriya prince are in conflict with the trappings of an English culture acquired at the chief's college. And again, he is racked by domestic disharmony on the one hand, and on the other, by the open revolt of his people. There is also the rift between the Tikyali Rani and Ganga Dasi who began her life in the palace as a humble nurse maid to the daughter of the second Rani, and who worked her way up by showily edging into the affection of the Maharaja by whom she had a son. She was too ambitions a woman to let go of the opportunity to plant her son on the throne. Her first covert move was to
poison the son of the Tikyali Rani and at the same time persuade the Maharaja to declare her son as heir to the throne. Rani Indira promptly sent a communication to the political department pointing out the mysterious circumstances of her son’s death, which put paid to the Maharaja’s declaration. This estranged Tikyali Rani from the Maharaja. When Ganga Dasi found that her move had been stymied, she influenced the Maharaja to raise money through extortionist taxes to buy property in her name. The people who got wind of it naturally revolted. To stem the angry crowds, the government banished. Ganga Dasi and her son from the state but the order was never really implemented. The Maharaja who was making a head way tried another tack with the Tikyali Rani. He hoped that by growing intimate with her once again, he would be able to get round her obstreperousness. This led to a piquant situation. The Rani conceived again and gave birth to a son. But Ganga Dasi is not one to lose heart quickly. She turned on her charm and trapped the Maharaja in the coils of her convoluted love. The Maharaja feels helpless like “a rat in a hole”. She in her turn accuses him of cruelty. There is strange inexplicable love-hate relationship which binds them together. Dr. Hari Shankar thus describes it.

......both highly emotional and inflammable. She too was essentially weak-willed and cruel in consequence, with the added ruthlessness of a woman always able to take her, and if she did not get drunk. She resented his attempt to dominate her because of an inordinate love of power in her own being.
Ganga Dasi in a final bid to gain power tried to enlist the support of Dr. Hari Shanker but knew only too well that her mercurial temperament had unsettling effects on him. She could gain acceptance for her son as the legal heir only when her relationship with the Maharaja was satisfied through marriage. But such a consummation was unlikely as long as he felt unsure of her faithfulness. There was nothing in her behaviour to warrant confidence. She was indiscreet enough to go to bed with one of the visiting Americans when Ashok Kumar organised a tiger-shoot for them. When her passion got the better of her, there was no stopping her. Her malady is perhaps deeper. Dr. Hari Shanker explains to the Maharaja that it is the result of an inner conflict in her “between being possessed and dominated, and the will not to be forced”.

The Sardars add to his troubles by demanding a settlement out of him. The communists grab the land from the rich, loot ammunition from the army arsenal and the Praja-Mandal organises a rebellion. He signed the instrument of Accessoin because of a concatenation of circumstance at home which were now beyond control. The elopement of Ganga Dasi with his one- time political secretary, Bool Chand, virtually shattered him. He cries in anguished sorrow.

Oh it is a mad, back torture to think of this faithless woman whom I love: Why couldn’t I love Indira? Why did I have fallen in love with a whore.⁷⁴

In an age which no longer holds kingship sacrosanct, the Maharaja finds himself in an invidious position as the remnant of an absolute monarchy. He suffers all the ills of a decaying order. Mulk Raj
Anand perceives the inherent contradictions in the role of a hereditary king like Ashok Kumar who came to the Shampur Gaddi just before the second world war and was not able to follow the drift towards a general change in the political structure of the country. More than the skullduggery of the British or the alienation from his own people with whom apparently he could never establish rapport, it is the betrayal of Ganga Dasi that brought about his inevitable doom. When the new premier of his state, Pandit Govind Das called on him to discuss the affairs of the state, he held him responsible for both his disasters, losing his state and his mistress, but made a feeble appeal to him to ask Bool Chand, his present secretary to restore Ganga Dasi to him. “I shall go mad it she does not come back......oh! I am broken, broken, broken!” He virtually abased himself by his conduct. On the advice of his doctors, he goes on a trip to Europe, has a fling at London Shop assistant to erase the growing memory of Ganga Dasi, wreaks vengeance by getting Bool Chand murdered and finally becomes insane under the pressure of events. Ashok Kumar goes to pieces due to an unresolved inner conflict. He becomes no doubt an object of pity, and draws our attention towards him irrespective of countless lapses on his own part.
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