CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Mulk Raj Anand as a writer symbolises the critical voice of the contemporary Indian against the stagnant and claustrophobic degeneration of Indian life. In fact his committed struggle against the Indian way of life and understanding, arising from its past tradition and culture has been the moving force behind all his writings. It is this artistic position of Anand that this study emphatically identifies as being both relevant and poignant to the contemporary Indian situation. The focal point of this thesis consequently, attempts to examine and consider, the concept of the 'contemporary myth of man' as depicted in Anand's autobiographical novels. Anand articulates this object in mind when he addresses his protagonist and says:

"You seem to be aspiring to the new contemporary myth of man of the Kaliyug, the iron age ..."

(Morning Race, p.7)

1. The textual references quoted throughout the thesis are in consonance with the editions mentioned in the bibliography. Henceforth the titles of the autobiographical novels will be in abbreviation when referred to in quotations as:

Seven Summers = SS; Morning Race = MR;
Confession of a Lover = COL & The Bubble = TB;
In this endeavour, Anand desires to usher in a change in the total Indian context and to bring in freshness for decay, happiness for unhappiness and growth for stagnancy thereby enriching contemporary Indian life. It is this tryst with artistic destiny that Anand echoes when he tells his protagonist:

"The struggle of rebels like you cannot be in vain. For the hangover of the passions, the self-searchings and the actions of man like you, may penetrate into the faculties and experiences of some other human beings. And a few men may take heart and may face the realities". (Morning Face, p. VII)

It is in the above context that the present work attempts to study the autobiographical novels of Mulk Raj Anand. Therefore, the study focusses its attention on the theme of the autobiographical novels and considers the artistic technique of the novels in the light of this claim - to find a 'contemporary myth of man'.

It is well known that Anand had put down a huge confessional as early as in 1925. The confessional was a first
preparation of artistic material, the contents of which had been brewing in his consciousness from early boyhood onwards. In pouring forth the dichotomies that he perceived between what the Indian heritage and tradition seemed to represent and what he as a contemporary Indian could not accept, Anand had identified the fountainhead that was to contribute to his life's mission. The confessional also helped him to identify his position as an artist in the artistic arena, and as a human being in the world at large. It then gave him a purpose and an opportunity of contributing to the Indian quest in his position as an Indian writer in English. This contribution was to organize itself as the artistic endeavour to promote an understanding of man's life which Anand echoes when he says:

"... I have been confirmed in one fundamental realisation, that truth alone should matter to a writer, that this truth should become imaginative truth, without losing sincerity. The novel should interpret the truth of life, from felt experience, and not from books. And one should adventure through life and always try to see in the intricate web of circumstances of human existence, the inner core of reality, or at least
attempt to probe the depths of human consciousness, relentlessly, even against one's pet prejudices..."²

It is this 'compulsion to pursue the truth of human relations' and his intention to 'see people as they were, growing in this world, that led Anand to believe that 'literature and art as the instruments of humanism'. He expresses this belief and elaborates his ultimate objective to examine human life in his attempt to understand and redefine it:

"The possible emergence of human beings as individuals, through the struggle for illumination, exercised through the will, and through continuous experience, and through the search for every creative possibility, may lead to the making of the individual, to 'Destination Man'."³

The intensity of this belief motivated the writing of the confessional which become the source material for all his writings. Anand gives expression to his endeavor in the manner of the ancient sages of India when he says:

3. Ibid., p. 253.
"I began to write the confessional, in great despair about my own failure as a youth, aspiring to know also through the default in my upbringings in a society, which was rotten through and through. And I began to answer the question in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: where the sage asks his confused disciple to ask himself the question: 'Who am I?' 'Where have I come from?' 'Where am I going? ....'

The autobiographical novels arise as grafted growths out of the confessional and are also infused with the same motive that Anand articulates above. In trying to identify a meaning of life, the protagonist of the autobiographical novels bears Anand's artistic cross in his search to find his place in the totality of life. Thus Anand published the Seven Summers (1951), Morning Face (1968), Confession of a Lover (1976) and The Bubble (1984) - four of the proposed seven parts under the septet of autobiographical fiction titled the Seven Ages of Man. It is the above mentioned autobiographical novels that are the subject matter of this study.

The autobiographical novels chronicle the story of
the growth and development of the protagonist, Krishan
Chander Azad, the third son of an army Head-Clerk and an
illiterate mother. His story becomes relevant to us, because
Krishan is a prototype for all Indians in the contemporary
situation, since his life story represents the quintessential
position of the life of an Indian in the Indian society through
a period of transition. A transitional society which placed
fellow Indians at cross-roads, because it represented an inheri-
ted and traditional way of life from the past, but at the same
time saw before it a modern and fundamentally different idea
of life from the western world. For a contemporary Indian the
choice between these apparently different ways of life became
the horns of a dilemma. Political subjugation under the British
only emphasized the difference between the Indian life and the
western ideal, making the predicament of the contemporary
Indian more emphatic. The choice which apparently signified a
3 denial of a traditional, conventional, ritual-ridden, super-
stitious society in exchange for a modern, scientific, logica-
ally structured way of life was, in reality, not so straight
forward a selection. The contemporary Indian had to face the
truth behind the apparent Indian way of life by critically examining the Indian traditional position before he made a choice. This meant that he had to re-examine his tradition, re-establish and re-structure his roots to change Indian life from what appeared to be the quagmire of tradition to the freshness of contemporary life. It is the re-examination of his traditional roots that made the Indian predicament not a mere matter of a straight forward and simple choice between the Indian and the western idea of life, since re-examination led to India's ancient culture and tradition and to the thought of her ancient sages. This in turn meant the evaluation of India's contemporary position from an understanding of her tradition in the light of the current aspirations of her citizens, who were influenced by the western ideals of life. Therefore the contemporary Indian had to endeavour to create the conscience of his people in the smithy of his soul by examining his tradition to reinterpret the contemporary situation. It is this endeavour that Anand represents in the autobiographical novels and, therefore, the story of the life of Krishan Chander Azad becomes the story of a contemporary attempt to understand Indian life. Thus, in Seven Summers Anand
traces Krishan Chander's life through the first seven years of his conscious childhood and thereby lays the premise of the autobiographical novels in which the tradition, culture and the Indian way of life is defined. The next autobiographical novel, *Morning Face* traces Krishan Chander's growth through his boyhood years to early youth. It recaptures the soul drama of Krishan Chander and represents the first phase of the dichotomy experienced by a youth when he is faced with the Indian understanding of life as opposed to the western ideal. Further, the *Confession of a Lover* traces Krishan Chander's life from early youth to young manhood and represents his rebellion against what he believes to be the Indian understanding of life. In this autobiographical novel Krishan takes issue with the accepted norms of Indian society and consciously rebels against them. This individual response endeavours to advocate a need for complete individual freedom in which the individual can function, as against what appears to be the binding and constricting practices and customs of Indian life. In advocating this need for individual freedom, Krishan symbolises the influence from the western idea of life, which to contemporary Indians represented an ideal of freedom.
as operative between the individual and the society. In the fourth autobiographical novel, *The Bubble* Krishan travels to England, not only as an academic student in pursuit of academics but also as a contemporary Indian still searching for the answers to the Indian situation. In *The Bubble* Krishan experiences the western style of life, where individual freedom is a practical reality, a concept he had earlier understood only in theory. At the end of *The Bubble* Krishan upholds the ideal of individual freedom but the process of the search for a contemporary Indian ideal is still smithering in his soul. The remaining three parts of the septet of autobiographical fiction have to be considered before final answers can be formulated. The present study, however has to contain itself with an examination of the first four autobiographical novels that have been already published, in its attempt to examine the endeavour by Anand as a contemporary Indian.

It is this endeavour by Krishan Chander to re-examine, re-structure, and re-establish Indian roots that the study attempts to examine, since Krishan Chander's search for a contemporary meaning of life becomes a meaningful search for me as a contemporary Indian. The study emphasises the relevance
of this search from Krishan Chander's life time to the present day maintaining that it remains essentially unchanged. This, despite the fact that Krishan's life time represented a period of political subjugation under the British. This is so because the attainment of political freedom has not also meant a solution to the ideological predicament of contemporary Indians which continues to trouble them. The present day still symbolises the need for 'our efforts to build the tentative hypothesis of a new contemporary Indian civilisation'. Therefore, the struggle for a meaning of life in the Indian context continues to be important and meaningful, thereby making this study relevant to contemporary endeavour. This thesis proposes to make the attempt by journeying literally and metaphorically along with Krishan Chander's life through the autobiographical novels. The direction and method that the study adopts can be described in Anand's own words, when he says:

"But in order to indicate which way India is moving
I would like to analyse some of the inner strains of

the past, which weigh so heavily on India, to explain some of the seeming confusions and disparities, and what may be the possible direction of advance. In this way, the huge question mark 'whither India'? which hangs on our heads may be answered .......

The main argument of this study with respect to the thematic analysis has been carried out in Chapters III, IV, and V. To facilitate the clarity of articulating Krishan Chander's attempt and then to take position with his individual response, the above chapters have been divided into two sections each. The first section of each chapter describes the relevant parameters of Krishan Chander's life as depicted in the four autobiographical novels and puts into sharp relief his individual response to his family, to society and to religion. The section II of each chapter then attempts to examine and consider Krishan Chander's individual response and critically evaluate his understanding and interpretation of his roots and his consequent effort to re-establish them.

6. Ibid., p.8.
Therefore, in Chapter III the first two autobiographical novels *Seven Summers* and *Morning Race* have been considered. The section I of this chapter titled 'Krishan and his early world' chronicles the early life, background, and inherited influences of a young Indian boy. Here, Krishan Chander's innocent childish wonder slowly begins to question the accepted patterns of Indian life. Section II attempts to examine this initial hesitation in Krishan's acceptance of the Indian way of life and is titled 'The Making of a Rebel'. What is it that Krishan rebels against? Why cannot he accept traditionally followed practices and customs of Indian society? What is his justification to rebel against the society of his ancestors are some of the questions that will be raised to understand his individual response. This chapter, finally articulates Krishan's decision to become a 'supreme rebel' against the traditional way of life.

The details of Krishan Chander's life through the *Confession of a Lover* are chronicled in the first section of Chapter IV under the title 'A Rebel in Indian Society'. In this section the relevant parameters of Krishan's individual response
as a rebel have been considered. In Section II titled 'Rebellious Ways', the study attempts to examine the reasons, interpretations and understanding of his individual response in his capacity as a young adolescent, conscious of the steps that he takes in his encounter with Indian life. This chapter establishes Krishan's complete rejection of the Indian way of life and his clear articulation of the need for individual freedom as a contemporary Indian alternative.

The Section I of chapter V titled 'Krishan and the new world' details Krishan's journey to England, his stay in the western society which believes in greater individual freedom than Indian society as chronicled from the autobiographical novel The Bubble. The second section titled 'An Indian rebel in western society' attempts to examine Krishan's individual response in the context of his desire to advocate individual freedom in the Indian context. Section III of this chapter titled 'Individual Freedom: An Ideal for our Times?' raises a few questions for consideration as to whether Krishan's belief in individual freedom can be an alternate way of life for the contemporary Indian situation. At the end of Chapter V the
study takes issue with Krishan's attempt to re-examine his traditional roots, and raises certain fundamental points of disagreement with his individual response, symbolised in his rebellion.

Arising from the above position the study, therefore, attempts to compare Krishan Chander's rebellion with a similar rebellion represented by Stephen Dedalus (the protagonist of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*) in Chapter VI. In Section I of this chapter titled 'The Individual Response of Stephen Dedalus's Rebellion' the parameters of Stephen's response as a reaction to his family, society and religion have been chronicled from the autobiographical novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In Section II titled 'Krishan and Stephen: A comparison', the study tries to compare Stephen's rebellion and Krishan's rebellion in their endeavour to understand the life around them, and their attempt to propose an alternative way of life. The study takes its final position by its agreement with Stephen Dedalus's convincing rebellion as against the comparatively unacceptable attempt symbolised by the parameters of Krishan's rebellion. The analysis of the thematic content of the autobiographical novels
in its attempt to seek an alternative way for contemporary Indians then hopes to draw a possible and plausible direction from the manner of the rebellion symbolised by Stephen Dedalus.

The study also attempts an examination of the literary parameters inherent in Anand's artistic position as an autobiographical novelist. Consequently a study of the genre of the autobiographical novel becomes the subject matter of the second chapter, of the thesis, titled 'The Autobiographical Novel'. The first section of this chapter makes a preliminary effort to consider and identify certain differentiative characteristics of this literary genre. How is an autobiographical novel different from the autobiography? What are its similarities with the characteristics of the novel? Can a novel with discernable autobiographical material qualify as an autobiographical novel? These are some of the questions raised to attempt a definition of this genre. In Section II titled 'Pilpali Sahab and Seven Summers: A comparison' the study compares Mulk Raj Anand's autobiography Pilpali Sahab with its corresponding autobiographical novel Seven Summers in the light of the points elaborated in the earlier section.
Similarly, Chapter VII, attempts to examine the literary technique of Anand as an autobiographical novelist, attempting to depict a contemporary ideal for Indian society. Here the study tries to relate the technique to the thematic content and thereby examine the authenticity of the structure, characterization, language, symbolism and style of the autobiographical novels. And finally, in Chapter VIII, the study incorporates its findings and main conclusions.

It is in the context of the outlines defined in the foregoing pages that the study undertakes a search. The search without doubt is a self discovery at two levels - at the first level, it is a search for a meaning of life in the Indian context in the contemporary situation and at the second level, it is an attempt to decipher the characteristics of a relatively unknown genre of literature, the autobiographical novel. In providing this opportunity Anand, therefore, sets the reader of his autobiographical novels, on an enchanting journey, which is not only meaningful to a contemporary Indian, but also relevant to a student of English literature.