CHAPTER - II

Section - I

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL

This chapter attempts an enquiry into the literary term the 'autobiographical novel'. It makes a preliminary effort to identify certain differentiative characteristics of this literary genre and thereby propose a definition of the literary term. This study takes its position by considering that evaluative studies in English literary criticism frequently use the expression 'autobiographical novel' to describe certain literary processes. A few of the novels most commonly referred to under this evaluation are, Charlotte Brontë's Villette, George Eliot's The Mill on the Floss, Samuel Butler's The Way of All Flesh, D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers, Somerset Maugham's Of Human Bondage, and James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. In the realm of Indian writing in English, R.K.Narayan's The English Teacher, Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope, and Mulk Raj Anand's septet titled the Seven Ages of Man are also considered to be autobiographical novels: What is

1. The word 'autobiography' according to the Oxford English Dictionary is said to be coined by Southey in 1802. The usage of the word 'autobiographical' as connected to autobiography is credited to Carlyle in 1831.
it that differentiates these literary works from being merely novels on the one hand, or being straightforward autobiographies on the other? Under what recognisable qualities and differentiative characteristics can the literary genre, the autobiographical novel, take its birth?

Usually, critical responses to novels which are called autobiographical novels claim to identify a recognizable amount of autobiographical material in the fictional work. Pointedly the criticism identifies easily discernable co-relation between the author's own life and experiences with the life and experiences of a character in the fictional re-creation. Moreover, available biographical and autobiographical information helps criticism to establish an objective corelation between the fictional work and the real life of the author. Accordingly, Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*, is said to be an autobiographical novel, since a significant amount of David's experiences and feelings can be objectively co-related to Dickens' personal experiences and feelings. Consequently, can such an objective co-relation be a sufficient condition to identify novels as autobiographical novels?
Spengemann, in his study of The Forms of Autobiography, repudiates and takes objection to such a facile identifying condition when he observes:

"Those who call David Copperfield an 'autobiographical' novel usually mean that portions of David's history closely resemble what we know about Dickens' own early experiences. While this rough and ready terminology may serve the presumably, but not self evidently, useful purpose of identifying novels that contain biographical information about their authors, it fails to explain how such novels are necessarily more autobiographical than those which do not. The fictional details we can trace back to some documented event in the writer's prior life is not more autobiographical than one whose source we cannot discover because the germinal experience was either too deeply personal to admit of documentation or too common to be noticed."

Spengemann's point of objection may be solved by the existence of an explicit statement by the author himself clearly underlining

the autobiographical content of his work. Further, if such an explicit statement is augmented by an objective co-relation between the content of the novel and the available biographical and autobiographical information of author's life, then the identifying condition appears to be fulfilled. However, in the absence of sufficient co-relative data, the presence of two or more dissimilar biographical references and the absence of an explicit statement by the author, the above criteria appears to lead to an argumentative proposition. Therefore, Spengemann's objection to identifying autobiographical novels merely on account of obvious biographical co-relation still remains to be answered. The specification, therefore, calls for something more definite and explicit which will then answer the question — What is the essential difference between the autobiographical novel and a novel which contains obvious autobiographical material?

This study will try to answer the above question from the point of view of the genre of autobiography and an understanding of its differentiative qualities in a broad context. An autobiography is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, as a 'story of a person's life written by himself'. The genre
of the autobiography admits to the presence of a writer who writes about his own life, which forms the content matter of his literary work. Further, the thematic re-creation in the autobiography is qualified by a principle of limit in which the autobiographer has to function. The principle of limit demanded by the genre expects the autobiographer to pay homage to the spirit of truth in his recollection of the life and times that he re-creates. This means that an ideal autobiography should embody a spirit of verisimilitude in which the autobiographical information provided by the author and correct biographical information should substitute for each other. The spirit of verisimilitude, therefore, not only means the truthful recollection in the lower levels of fact, episode, details or other concrete and practical aspects of the autobiographer's life, but has to also fulfill a verisimilitude of a higher level - a verisimilitude in recreating the principles and the spirit of life that governed the quintessential direction of the life that is portrayed. However, M.K.Gandhi's My Experiments With Truth and St.Augustine's Confessions qualify as autobiographies even though they do not make a one-to-one description of all the events of their lives. These
autobiographies fulfil the higher condition of verisimilitude in which the essential truth and direction underlying the events of their lives is portrayed in an epiphanic recollection. Therefore, such literary pieces are called autobiographies, because the autobiographer recreates his life in a verisimilitude of spirit, truth and direction, which is also the essential spirit, truth and direction of the life that he lived in this world. Arising from the fact that the spirit of verisimilitude has to be recreated, it is clear that the autobiography will automatically consider the 'germinal experience' of Spengemann since a relevant germinal experience will necessarily contribute to the spirit of the author's life. Therefore, the ideal autobiography is a literary endeavour by which the author draws material from the events and experiences of his own life and tries to convey in a spirit of verisimilitude a meaning of that life.

Arising from the above context the literary genre of the autobiographical novel appears to share certain similar characteristics with the genre of the autobiography. The autobiographical novelist, like the autobiographer, also draws material from the events and experiences of his own life. He
tries to re-collect and re-create the experiences of his life and thereby depict a meaning of that life. However, this literary exercise does not lead to the writing of an autobiography, because the autobiographical novelist makes use of autobiographical material and subjects it to the fictional impulse of his imagination. It is this process of combining the world of reality with the world of fiction that gives birth to the autobiographical novel. Therefore, the autobiographical novel is bracketed between the genre of the novel on the one hand, and that of the autobiography on the other. In defining principles of limit, the study will try to outline the extent to which an autobiographical novel can be an autobiography on the one hand, and a novel on the other. Like the autobiography, the autobiographical novel is the story of the life of the protagonist, who is modelled in the image of the author. The life of the protagonist in the autobiographical novel should follow to a large extent, the real life story of the author. Therefore, the autobiographical novel, like the autobiography should recreate a certain extent of verisimilitude in the lower level of facts, episodes, events and incidents from the author's life. This degree of similarity in the lower
level of verisimilitude is defined by the selection of such experiences from the real life of the author, by the autobiographical novelist, so that he can re-create the same spirit of verisimilitude of the higher level, in the life of the fictional protagonist. Therefore, the protagonist's life should be identical with that of the author by sharing some identical experiences from real life, and thereby recreate the spirit of verisimilitude of the higher level achieved in the autobiography. In effect the protagonist of the autobiographical novel should pursue the same goal and embody the same spirit in the fictional world which is the goal and the spirit of the author in real life also. Therefore, it is not just the presence of autobiographical elements in a novel that makes it an autobiographical novel, but the presence of such autobiographical details that will co-relate a similarity between the central issue or the pursuit of a goal in the author's life as well as in the life of the fictional protagonist. In the final analysis, therefore, the autobiographical novel, like the autobiography, should fulfil the condition of the higher level of verisimilitude. It is the fulfilment of this condition that provides an answer to Spengemann's 'germinal
experience; since like the autobiography, the autobiographical novel portrays the spirit of verisimilitude that automatically includes relevant germinal experiences, within its scope. However, unlike the autobiography, this literary genre may admit fictional faculties in recreating the lower level of verisimilitude.

The emphasis that this study lays on the limitations in which an autobiographical novelist has to create his protagonist seems to raise a few issues: Does the autobiographical novel seek to make a literal representation of the self of the author in the self of the protagonist? Does the autobiographical novel considered in this light impinge seriously on the creative faculties of the author? Needless to say, these questions will be considered by attempting to identify the novelistic techniques and fictional impulses that may be allowed in the autobiographical novel. At the outset the very fact that the autobiographical material becomes recreated in a fictional outline gives it a symbolic connotation. The personal life of a single person in a unique set of circumstances becomes in a fictional treatment the prototypical life
of his times. Therefore, D.H. Lawrence's protagonist Paul Morel in *Sons and Lovers* or Samuel Butler’s protagonist Ernest Pontifex in *The Way of All Flesh* transcend the limitations of their lives and become the representative voice of their times. It is in this enlarged connotation that the autobiographical novel overcomes the limiting scope of the autobiography by the fictional outline of its creation.

In the portrayal of the character of the protagonist the autobiographical novel has its central concern. This is so because the complete story of the narrative depends on his characterization, and his relation to the surroundings. The protagonist though modelled in the image of the author may appear under an assumed name. This name can have connotative references to the old myths or stories and thus emphasise his role by the symbolism. In fact, the author can superimpose the whole autobiographical novel in the framework of a well known myth or story. Accordingly, James Joyce gives his protagonist the mythical as well as the religious name, Stephen Dedalus, by this fictional license. This gives emphatic meaning at various levels to the main narrative of *A Portrait of the Artist As A Young Man*, which is difficult to achieve in the
autobiography. Similarly, Mulk Raj Anand alludes to the
Krishna myth in his autobiographical novels by creating
Krishan the protagonist, in the mould of Lord Krishna. There­
fore, an autobiographical novelist may use such symbolism from
the imaginary world of fiction to intensify the effect of his
work, and convey a meaning of his life that is not possible in
a straight forward autobiography.

In the portrayal of the protagonist's character the
author may bring in such characteristic dissimilarities that
will artistically contribute to the emphasis of the central
theme. The author may emphasise a real characteristics in
himself or play it down to heighten the effect of the message
he wishes to convey. Thus, Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of
the Artist as a Young Man* is portrayed as as far more serious
and almost humourless character than Joyce was said to be. This
artistic license is probably used by Joyce to emphasise and
thereby enhance the severity of Stephen's obsession with his
goal. It is in the use of such fictional faculties that the
author may present the reality of his case. However, in the
context as Avrom Fleishman\(^3\) points out, the author has to

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resist the temptation to 'self-magnification' as well as 'extravagant self-denigration'. Therefore, the autobiographical novelist has to be vigilant that he will neither glorify his personality nor be over critical about it by the use of fictional circumstances and thereby create a totally different image of himself. In effect, the spirit of verisimilitude has to be maintained despite the use of fictional impulses. The case of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* may be an example of this situation. In the novel, Jane falls in love with Mr. Rochester and is on the verge of marrying him unaware of the existence of his first wife. On the other hand, Charlotte Brontë is said to have fallen in love with Monsieur Heger, fully aware of his married status. Therefore, the circumstances in which Jane falls in love are totally different from Bronte’s. This becomes important when we consider that such an individual response by a lady in the early nineteenth century would be unacceptable to her society. Therefore, by changing this detail in *Jane Eyre* Brontë makes Jane a more religious and moral character than her own self. It is in this sense that a parallel between Jane and Charlotte makes Jane a morally magnified character and thereby makes a digression from the actual truth.
In effect, Brontë as an autobiographical novelist suppresses a major characteristic of her life in the portrayal of Jane's character. Therefore, as Fleishman says we ought to measure the success of this fiction by the degree to which the author presents the truth of his case in the artistic framework of the novel. Once again this emphasizes the earlier position of the study which demands the re-creation of the spirit of verisimilitude in the higher level, in the autobiographical novel.

Further, the author may bring back to life any of his close associates who may have died in reality. The resurrec­ted person may be given a contributory role to the protagonist's own destiny in the novel. Helen Burns in Jane Eyre is said to be modelled in the image of Charlotte Bronte's sister Maria who had died early. In this re­surrection the author may give expression to his desires and feelings for the dead person, and thereby fulfil deeply personal sentiments.

The author has the license to roll several characters into one and make him into one representative character in the autobiographical novel. Similarly, the author may simplify his family or his surroundings to achieve a concentrated
effect on the main issue. It is this license that D.H.Lawrence uses when he removes an elder brother and younger sister but adds one younger brother in *Sons and Lovers*. In doing so, the author achieves an artistic unity and tightness of the structure of the autobiographical novel that may not be possible in the autobiography. The existence of a character also may be treated in an imaginary and visionary aspect as James Joyce details the character of the 'undefined female' in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

The author may attribute certain experiences and incidents which have in reality occurred to someone else, as his own. Joyce does this in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, when he describes Stephen Dedalus discussing views on aesthetics with the Dean of studies. This discussion in reality took place between J.F.Bryne (Joyce's close friend and fellow student) and the Dean of studies. However, the transplantation of this incident does not refute the spirit of verisimilitude of Joyce's own thought and opinions. Therefore, such a fictional license emphasizes the authenticity of James Joyce's pursuit of a goal and gives Stephen's characterisation an authenticity within the limits of the genre.
The author may include in the narrative any well known person who characterises a particular school of thought or idea of life even if the author has not come in contact with them in real life. This can be done with a view to either contribute positively or contrast negatively to the central theme of the autobiographical novel. Thus, hypothetically Mulk Raj Anand could have included Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru etc. who are well known for their views on the tradition and culture of the Indian society, since it is this issue that Anand elaborates in the autobiographical novels. The author can build conversations with such famous personalities and thereby contribute to the artistic authenticity of the autobiographical novels.

In one sense an author may achieve the fulfilment of his goal in the autobiographical novel even if he could not do so in real life. The autobiographical novel differs from the autobiography by its capacity to seek answers to the problems of real life in the imaginary world of fiction. He may therefore resolve the conflicts from answers out of the imaginary world unlike the autobiography which has to resolve itself in the real world. The author may therefore realise the
achievement of a goal through the achievement of that goal by his protagonist in fiction. He may have his unfulfilled wishes fulfilled through the protagonist and achieve a satisfaction which fortune was not ready to bestow upon him in real life. It is probably this that Charlotte Bronte achieves in Jane Eyre when she frees Mr. Rochester by the accidental death of his first wife and makes way for Jane's marriage with him.

One of the most important motivations in writing an autobiographical novel could be the realisation of such a satisfaction through the life of the protagonist in the fictional treatment. However, there could be other equally important motivations to a creative artist to whom the treatment of life in the contours of mere facts and actuality may be drab and uninteresting. The fictional impulse, the imaginative treatment which transforms mere reality, probably draws the author to treat his autobiography in a novelistic manner. But the motivation may also be a complex mixture of various other conditions. The incapacity to look at stark reality in its bareness, the impossibility of seeing home truths face to face, the desire to gloss over minor personal weaknesses, the
need to hide behind a protective proxy, the desire to tell the story of one's life and yet appear to be telling a fictional story so that the reader does not openly see the author's personal records, the desire to reach a wider audience, may contribute to the author choosing the autobiographical novel, as a literary form which by its open structure allows the documentation of fact in fiction.

From the above discussion it is not difficult to see that the writer of the autobiographical novel has a large degree of artistic license. James Joyce who uses the ephiphanic technique, creates an argument and case for himself that is not only effective but also artistic. In doing so he achieves a unity of literary presentation and fulfils his purpose of communication, so difficult to achieve in the straightforward autobiography. It is in this sense the autobiographical novel becomes an experience of both aesthetic pleasure and ideological instruction satisfying the needs not only of presenting a possibility of life, but also doing so in the beauty of literary expression. Therefore, despite what appears to be a limited scope for the autobiographical
novelist, the ideal autobiographical novel can draw from the intensely personal and true events of life and raise them to the beauty of fictional endeavours. The case of James Joyce is a proof of the achievable zenith of this literary genre which has changed the whole literary scene by its presence.

It is on the basis of the foregoing discussions that a definition of the autobiographical novel emerges as follows:

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

In the context of the above mentioned definition and the foregoing discussion the study will consider a few examples of novels mentioned as autobiographical novels. The study believes that certain novels normally accepted as autobiographical novels do not fulfil the essential conditions
of this literary genre. The ease of Charlotte Brontë's Villette, is an illustrative example of the point being made. In Villette the heroine of the novel, Lucy Snowe, is said to be modelled in the image of Charlotte Brontë. The central theme of the novel as pursued by Lucy Snowe is the fulfilment of her role as a teacher as well as the fulfilment of love through marriage, with her colleague, an unmarried bachelor Monsieur Paul Emmanuel. Biographical data on Charlotte Brontë indeed confirms that she pursued the same goals in real life that Lucy Snowe pursues in Villette. However, their stories differ in one important aspect, because Charlotte Brontë sought fulfilment of love from her colleague Monsieur Heger, an already married man. Therefore, the problems, conflicts and their resolution in Lucy Snowe's case will be very different from that faced by Charlotte Brontë in early nineteenth century England. Miss Snowe, in effect, does not participate in Bronte's pursuit of a goal because of the very dissimilar

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4. Villette has been discussed as an autobiographical novel by critics, notably by Roy Pascal and Avrom Fleishman:


circumstances. It is in this sense that Villette cannot be called an autobiographical novel. However, Charlotte Bronte's more famous novel Jane Eyre, fulfills the essential conditions of the autobiographical novel to a greater extent. This is so because the central character Jane in her love for Mr. Rochester and desire for fulfillment of love in marriage, discovers his married status and finds herself in Bronte's shoes. In fact, Jane faces Bronte's conflicts and emotions in her desire for fulfillment of love from a married man, in the religious and social conditions of her society. It is this similarity of the central issue of Jane's as well as Charlotte's life that makes Jane Eyre an autobiographical novel. This is further augmented by the similarity of religious views that Bronte held and which she makes Jane believe in. In the final analysis therefore this study proposes that Villette cannot be called an autobiographical novel while Jane Eyre qualifies to the conditions of the genre. It is in conformity with this line of argument that Samuel Butler's The Way of All Flesh also becomes an autobiographical novel. The central theme of this novel represents the central issue and position held by Butler in his actual life. Thus, Ernest Pontifex and Mr. Overton
emphasize and depict Butler's views on the religious and social conditions of his family life and that of society, and his rejection of those views. It is this similarity and shared autobiographical details that makes The Way of All Flesh an autobiographical novel.

Once again the point established by these examples shows that the autobiographical novel has to maintain the higher level of verisimilitude. The autobiographical novel therefore enjoys artistic license only in the recreation of the lower level of verisimilitude — in fact, episodes, incidents, events etc. In effect, the spirit of verisimilitude at the higher level of the autobiographical novel and its corresponding autobiography (if written) will be identical.

In the light of the foregoing discussion of the autobiographical novel a point has to be made regarding certain novels like Of Human Bondage by Somerset Maugham and Sons and Lovers by D.H. Lawrence. In such cases where the protagonist at the end of the novel is still in the formative period of his life a definite pursuit of a goal may not be clearly identifiable. In this situation how can the study identify
them as autobiographical novels where definition the identifi-
cation of common direction and pursuit of goal in the
protagonist's life and that of the author is imperative. This
may be possible if critical evaluation can find in the life
of the protagonist a possible and plausible justification for
the later life of the author. Thus Paul Morel in Sons and
Lovers quintessentially embodies the struggle that D.H.Lawrence
embodied in later life and justifies its autobiographical
status.

The complex relationship in the voices of the author,
the protagonist (who is the author in proxy) and the protago-
nist if he is telling the story can result in a complicated
position, for the reader of the autobiographical novels. Where
does he stand in relation to the writer? In both the auto-
biography and novel, the reader-writer distances are well
adjusted and definite. In the autobiography, the reader iden-
tifies with the narrator-author. In the novel, either the
reader identifies with the protagonist of the novel or he and
the author stand apart to watch the drama of the fictional
world that unfolds before the mind's eye. In certain novels,
where the author is also one of the characters, the demarca-
tion lines may be hazy but they are recognizably different.
In the autobiographical novel, however, the voice of the narrator in the novel, and the voice of the author who is writing the narration either merge or sometimes appear to be distinct. Always in the background is what Wayne Booth in his *Rhetoric of Fiction* calls the "implied author", in an even more complex situation than in the case of the novel. This inter-related complex maze of voice of the author, the autobiographical novelist and the protagonist may lead to certain difficulties in their perception. However, authors have tried to overcome this problem of narration by various means.

Usually, the simple but often used narrative form is the first person singular, where the protagonist speaks for himself. This is the style that Mulk Raj Anand uses in his autobiographical novels. Sometimes, authors use the third person narrative form where the protagonist becomes the author's mouthpiece. James Joyce sometimes utilizes this technique when he depicts Stephen's thought process. In the first person narrative the author has to control his narration especially when he is depicting the protagonist as a child in his younger days, Mulk Raj Anand does this by making Krishan speak in the tone and style of a child. James Joyce achieves
this effect by describing childhood through the imagination from the child's point of view. Further the immense possibilities opened up by the stream of consciousness technique that have made narration effective and definite, especially in this genre. Samuel Butler in *The Way of All Flesh* does it in yet another way. He makes Ernest Pontifex the protagonist of his younger years and Mr. Overton that of his mature self. Mr. Overton, as it were, is the narrator of the story, but Ernest Pontifex also narrates the story when Mr. Overton is absent from the scene of the narration. By using this double level of voice, Butler achieves a thoroughly straightforward narrative in an ingenious way.

One of the areas in which the autobiographical novel may be exploited negatively is the autobiographical interpretation of real life to conform to psychological or sociological theories. In this case a writer may begin to see his life through the coloured mask of his acquired interpretations even when the incident may not warrant such a view. Thus very often the relationship between parents may be interpreted as either Oedipus or Electra complex so that they provide explanations and justification for the behaviour pattern of the
protagonist. It is such a possible superimposition of theory that may make the autobiographical novel completely different from actual truth. In the end, therefore, the autobiographical novel not only calls for candour, and integrity from the author, but also calls for a prudent use of the freedom of artistic expression. In this prudence lies the success of the autobiographical novel.

Is the 'Seven Ages of Man' Autobiographical Fiction?

Critical evaluation of Mulk Raj Anand's septet of fiction under the project of the Seven Ages of Man often make reference to its autobiographical nature. Anand also explicitly refers to their autobiographical similarity. Moreover, from the essential characteristics that this study identifies as differentiative features, Anand's Seven Summers, Morning Face, Confession of a Lover and The Bubble can be seen to fulfill the conditions of the genre, and qualify as autobiographical novels. This is because the Seven Ages of Man, portrays the story of the life of the protagonist Krishan Chander, who is modelled in the image of the author, Mulk Raj Anand. Further, the circumstances of Anand's life and
direction have been re-created in a spirit of verisimilitude in the life of the protagonist, and therefore fulfill the characteristics of the genre.

In close analysis, the circumstances of Krishan Chander's life from Seven Summers to The Bubble closely resembles Anand's own life. Thus, Krishan Chander and Anand happen to be the third son of an army Head-Clerk and illiterate peasant mother, and grow up in the similar circumstances of cantonment life. Apart from sharing these details biographical information about Anand shows that he reacted to his environment in the same way as Krishan is depicted in the fictional recreation. Thus, like Anand, Krishan feels strongly about the practice of untouchability and the constraint that Indian society places on its members. Later, Krishan also makes reference to certain incidents that troubled Anand in the process of his growth to maturity, like the death of cousin Kaushalya (Morning Face, p.89), and the death of Aunt Devaki (Confession of a Lover, p. 96).

5. Anand makes pointed references to these events which influenced him in real life in:
Further Krishan is portrayed as holding opinions about tradition, religion, superstition and Indian culture as Anand also believes in. Likewise Krishan begins to take issue with the tradition and customs of his society in the same way as Anand reacted to the Indian situation. They also share the pursuit of a goal of finding a contemporary myth of man for the present Indian situation. Both travel to England in to study as well to search answers for their confusions about life. It is this similarity of goals in a verisimilitude of circumstances that makes the Seven Ages of Man, an autobiographical fiction.

In the final analysis, therefore, the genre of the autobiographical novel makes the articulation of a fact of life in the fictional outline possible in an ingenious way. The openness of its structure provides an opportunity for contemporary man to articulate the unique circumstances of a personal life in symbolic representation to all men of his time. Moreover, the realities of life can be offered to the literary world in a beauty of expression surmounting the ordinary and often drab circumstances of his life. Thus autobiographical novel conveys to all men the individual trails of one person, who attempts to understand the meaning of life, which reflects the eternal endeavour of all mankind.
In the earlier section an attempt to define the autobiographical novel and to identify certain characteristics of the genre has been made. The study includes a pointed reference to some novels which claim autobiographical status, and tries to see how autobiography transforms itself into autobiographical fiction. In this section there is an attempt to compare Mulk Raj Anand's autobiography Pilpali Sahab with its corresponding autobiographical novel the Seven Summers. The comparison is made against the background of the issues raised in the earlier section with a view to seek answers to certain questions: How does a fact of life from the autobiography become a literary piece in the autobiographical novel? What sort of novelistic devices does the author use to convert fact into fiction? How does the novelist exploit the autobiographical element?

It is a rare opportunity to be able to compare the autobiographical novel and its corresponding autobiography,
describing the same time span in the life of the author. 
Seven Summers and Piipali Sahab detail the life of their 
protagonist Krishan Chander and Mulk Raj Anand respectively 
in their first conscious seven years of childhood. Seven 
Summers, the autobiographical novel was written in 1951 
while the Piipali Sahab appeared only in 1985. The fact that 
Anand, chooses to write about essentially the same life 
through different literary genres, raises the question about 
the reason and motive that compelled Anand to do so. In the 
preface to the Piipali Sahab, Anand says that he had made 
'some efforts at self examination' in his earlier confessional 
narrative. But the critical reaction to this work clearly 
brings out that it was good decorative prose and well disgui­
-ses the truth about the proverbial Indian mother fixation and 
other distortions, which emerge in the child growing to boy­
hood and youth'. Perhaps it is this criticism that might have 
compelled Anand to begin 'a more factual narrative' in the 
form of an autobiography. In fact, he confesses that the 
'struggle to know myself' impelled him to write the autobi­
ography:
"I hope without sparing the analysis of those infantile disorders, lies and selflove, which may have become decorative prose in the fictions, and thus ignored the social evils of my inheritance".  

Thus Anand admits that the Seven Summers did not fully satisfy his endeavour at self examination by its nature as an autobiographical novel. Anand believes that by admitting fictional overtones, the autobiographical novel disguises the truth of his situation which he wants to re-examine in the autobiography. It is in this context that the previous section had stressed the idea of verisimilitude, both in the autobiography and the autobiographical morel. In admitting fictional techniques to organise autobiographical material, the author's prudence to portray the essential truth remains a challenge to the writer of the autobiographical novel. Therefore, when Anand admits to changes in Seven Summers as disguising the truth, its comparison with Pilpali Sahab may provide the possible answer to the question: Under what conditions can autobiographical material subjected to the author's fictional impulse disguise the truth of the situation?

What strikes one at first *Pilpali Sahab* and *Seven Summers* in their near similarities in the broad outline of their stories. In both, the life of their protagonist is chronicled in identical environments and surroundings. Accordingly *Pilpali Sahab* chronicles the life story of young Mulk Raj, the third son of an army Head-Clerk Lal Chand and an illiterate, peasant mother Iswari Kaur. The story begins with descriptions of life in Mian Mir cantonment and later shifts to Nowshera cantonment to the place where the 38th Dogra regiment moves. The descriptions of Mulk Raj’s life is filled with episodes and incidents characteristic of a young boy’s life. Similarly, *Seven Summers* chronicles the story of young Krishan Chander, the third son of an army Head-Clerk Ram Chand, and an illiterate, peasant mother Sundari. The details of descriptions beginning in Mian Mir cantonment later shifts to the Nowshera cantonment as in the case of *Pilpali Sahab*. Once again Krishan Chander’s life is filled with similar, if not identical incidents that fill Mulk Raj’s life. Both the books close their narratives with the news of the out break of World War – I.
The first glance also brings to notice a major difference, in the different titles of the books. *Seven Summers* appears to symbolise a chronicle of a time and a recreation of the story of young childhood in Indian society. On the other hand *Pilpali Sahab* refers to the character of the story and emphasizes the work's personal and comparatively limited connotation, in keeping with the genre of the autobiography. Thus, by the mere choice of the title Anand is able to extend the meaning of his life, as a chronicle of an age. This then is one of the main advantages of the autobiographical novel that it suggests the universalization of a single experience. It is in this context that Anand's objective to propose a 'contemporary myth of man' begins to gain argument from *Seven Summers* onwards which cannot be substantiated in the same way by *Pilpali Sahab* because it is essentially a single experience of a life. Further, the *Seven Summers* is divided into two sections, 'The Road' and 'The River', while *Pilpali Sahab* is divided into sections titled with the main incident or episode described in the section. The titles of the sections in *Seven Summers* have given rise to many critical comments, which try to relate symbolic meanings to the life of the protagonist. This reinforces the
earlier mentioned point that autobiographical fiction is more universal in meaning when compared to the autobiography.

Apart from the above mentioned interpretative difference, the Seven Summers and Pilpali Sahab share close resemblance in the portrayal of the main characters - of the protagonist and his father and mother. The portrayal of Mulk Raj of Pilpali Sahab is an exact replica of the protagonist Krishan Chander in Seven Summers. In fact, the details of Mulk Raj Anand as a pampered child who demands attention and preferential treatment over his brothers is what the character of Krishan Chander also portrays. Both are small built but lively, mischievous, attention seeking, sensitive and intelligent children. They also exhibit a sensitivity to their surroundings and have a questioning attitude to their environments.

Mulk Raj, like Krishan Chander is fond of his parents, especially of his mother. In Seven Summers, Krishan who is at first close and free with his father, moves away from him as time passes on, in fear of punishment and father's demands of obedience. In Pilpali Sahab Mulk Raj always maintains a distance from his father, from the beginning, owing to the same fear. Mulk Raj as well as Krishan, hero worship the eldest brother but is plainly antagonistic to the elder brother.
This results in the protagonist often being lonely and friendless. In Pilpali Sahab this loneliness is attributed to the malicious intent of his elder brother Des Raj, who is said to have tutored his friends not to play with Mulk Raj for fear of hurting him, since he is small built. Mulk Raj admits that the friends listened to Des Raj because Des shared with them his share of eatables. In Seven Summers, however, Krishan is lonely on account of his small physical stature, a defect imposed upon him by nature. Therefore the loneliness in Pilpali Sahab, which Mulk Raj contributes to, by not sharing his share of eatables with his friends becomes a loneliness imposed upon him by nature in Seven Summers. Thus the sense of loneliness caused by reasons totally outside his control, contributes to his character as a lonely and isolated young boy, in the autobiographical novel, whereas in Pilpali Sahab his unsharing characteristic provides reasons not only of a fault in his own character but also a reason for his loneliness. Therefore his feelings of pity for himself in Seven Summers arouses sympathetic feelings in the reader, but they do not move the reader similarly in Pilpali Sahab. Against this background Mulk Raj's friendship with the untouchable Dhaka and the female characters can be viewed differently in
Pilpali Sahab and in Seven Summers. For example in Pilpali Sahab his loneliness caused on his own account leads him to these friendships. However, his own sensitivity also contributes to his indignation at the treatment meted out to Haka, and strengthens his friendship. In Seven Summers, however, the implied rejection on account of his small physical stature makes him unwanted. This feeling, together with his sensitivity and indignation cements his friendship with Haka. It is in such subtle tones and levels of implied meaning that Seven Summers differs from Pilpali Sahab. It is also in this subtle manner that the presentation of the character differs. What is of significance is that, though it is essentially the same portrayal in both the books, the change in emphasis makes the difference. This subtle change in emphasis later assumes great significance in the autobiographical novels, where Krishan Chander puts forward an argument against the Indian way of life. His sense of isolation and loneliness may provide the threshold for his argument against the treatment meted out to him. It also provides the conditions for his development as an artist in the later autobiographical novels. In this instance, the study identifies how autobiographical material may undergo change in the fictional treatment and thereby lead to an interpretation which is different from actual life.
This may then change the spirit of verisimilitude essential to the genre of the autobiographical novel as identified in the previous section. Apart from this, however, the other characteristics like being good at studies, of being fond of aunt Devaki, of wanting to become a Sahib like the Britishers, are identical. Nevertheless the portrayal of Krishan Chander in Seven Summers is far more detailed and intensely developed by extensive descriptions. In contrast, the portrayal of Mulk Raj in Pilpali Sahab is sketchy and less detailed.

The portrayal of father and mother in both the works is almost identical. Accordingly father in Pilpali Sahab as a Head Clerk in the 38th Dogra Regiment, who is afraid of his British superiors and is always willing to compromise anything to please them is also portrayed, exactly in Seven Summers. His short temper and robust nature, his tight fistedness in money matters, his constant injunctions to his children to study and to prove worthy, his disapproval of mother's religious beliefs and superstitions, his Arya Samaji beliefs are also identically portrayed. Similarly, father's other characteristics of the pleasures of eating, dance, drink and merriment and consequential quarrel that arose between him and mother are also described exactly in both the books. The
minimal change is in the name of the father who is Lal Chand in Pilpali Sahab, and Ram Chand in Seven Summers. Similarly mother who is Iswari Kaur in Pilpali Sahab becomes Sundari in Seven Summers. She is also portrayed in an exact manner in both the works. She shares a superstitious religious attitude, a dislike and hatred for the British presence in India, an unflinching criticism of her husband's subservient attitude to the British, a dislike for her sister-in-law Devaki, a disapproval of Milk Raj's obvious partiality for his aunt Devaki; and is always engrossed in providing services to her husband and her children. However, in Seven Summers Sundari is portrayed as a more forceful and domineering character, while Ishwari Kaur has been characterised as more servile and subdued wife and mother. Thus, Anand comments in Seven Summers:

"Father was then lord and master only in name. For actually, mother ruled the house, though nominally he was the capricious god whose will revolted in wild tempers and terrible scenes when she becomes too overbearing. There was thus an alternation of mastery and servitude between them, sometimes father lording and sometime mother occupying the supreme position, though
if the sum of their lives together be resolved father submitted like a child most of the time"... (SS, p.72)

It is surprising that Anand brings in this change of tone in mother's character because it makes a significant difference in the later autobiographical novels. In Morning Face and Confessions of a Lover one of the chief reasons, for Krishan's dissatisfaction with father is the treatment meted out to mother, who as a wife stoically and silently bears up to ill treatment. It is difficult to understand, therefore, what Anand achieves by changing this fact of mother's subdued character in Pilpali Sahab to aggressiveness in Seven Summers. However apart from this change the other characteristics are essentially identical.

In the final analysis the portrayal of the main characters in the autobiography and in the autobiographical novel can be said to be minimally distinct. While in Seven Summers, each character is subjected to vast details and description, and therefore they appear to be rather distinct and inter-woven in mutual development, in Pilpali Sahab the characters appear to be sketchy and faint. Even minor characters in Seven Summers are sharply delineated in contrast to the Pilpali Sahab.
However, one of the main differences in the portrayal of the female characters is the 'sense of smell' that envelops and distinguishes them in the *Seven Summers*. In *Piplali Sahab* it is only aunt Devaki who smells like 'milk and honey' while the other female characters are not said to have any distinctive smell. In the *Seven Summers* however each female character is characterized by a particular smell - mother of 'milk and sugar', aunt Devaki of 'molsari and motia flowers' aunt Aqqi of 'essence of curds' and little mother Gurdevi of 'burnt sweet grass'. This is further emphasized by Krishan's admission:

"... not only did they look different, but I noticed, since that was my first instinctive way of getting to know people, that they also smelt different". (SS, p. 16)

But, of course, no male character is portrayed to smell in a distinct way. What difference does this 'smell characterisation' really mean in the larger context? In the case of aunt Devaki, a fact (that of her smell being like 'milk and honey') becomes in fiction a smell like 'molsari and motia' flowers. In normal connotation flowers and their scent is usually associated in the case of the beloved, while a more down-to-earth smell of
'milk and honey' is without such romantic allusions. Thus by changing this detail in the Seven Summers Anand, succeeds in creating an atmosphere of romance which is absent in reality. This slant becomes important when we consider that Krishan in Morning Face and Confession of a Lover begins to see aunt Devaki in the mould of 'Krishna and the gopis' and suggests his own romantic feelings towards her, in what is actually a foster mother and foster son relationship. It is quite clear how by such an imaginative description of smell, Anand achieves a viewpoint in its totality, which is far removed from actuality. The point becomes further emphasized because Krishan only uses it to identify female characters and not the many males whom he meets. When we juxtapose this conscious partial treatment of women by the artist Anand, and Krishan's own argument that his 'susceptibility to the female began with hugging mother tight', we wonder how susceptible Mulk Raj really was by way of mother's influence in real life. Moreover, the narrative of Pilpali Sahab which details a normal relationship between mother and son characterized by affection and fondness cannot give rise to the suggestion that he is susceptible to the female because of mother. Thus the Oedipus complex in Krishan's case in Seven Summers appears not to be substantiated in Mulk Raj's life in Pilpali Sahab. Once again, there
therefore, this change in portrayal brings the significant change in the protagonist's character and understanding of life. It also shows how the change in the autobiographical material in *Seven Summers* under the fictional treatment moves away from the portrayal of the actual situation. It is in this context that a point was made in the previous section where a superimposition of theory (psychological, sociological, ideological etc.) could result in the autobiographical material being explanatory of a theory without support from real life. Once again this raises the question of verisimilitude, as being important in the recreation of autobiographical material, in the autobiographical novel.

The episodic comparison of *Pilpali Sahab* and *Seven Summers* shows that they share a large number of identical incidents: The death of younger brother Prithvi, the first day at school, the incident of being hit by a stone, visit to Daska for maternal uncle's marriage and introduction of Grandfather Nihalu, the bombing of the viceroy's car, the Delhi Durbar, etc. Some incidents are slightly changed but are essentially similar, for example a visit to the exhibition in the *Pilpali Sahab* becomes in *Seven Summers* a visit to the circus.
On the other hand some incidents are exclusive to the Seven Summers: Eating the mud incident (p.31), Incident of the Juggler and the bear (p.29), Incidents of playing with Maya, Dr. Balmukund's daughter (p.163), incident of the lost silver spoon (p.134), incident of the visit to the Sparrow house (p.141), etc. are a few of these. In the case of the autobiography descriptions of the marriage of eldest brother Hans (p.141), the kidnapping of Jarnel Sahab's Memsahab (p.197), and incidents of Mulk's molestation are exclusive. In Seven Summers the description of the homecoming daughter-in-law Draupadi, (pp.58-95), descriptions of the early days of Krishan's mother's marriage are wonderfully detailed. The autobiographical novel also contains a fairly detailed account of the story of Lord Krishna (pp.169-174), the story of Maharaja Duleep Singh in greater detail than in Pilpali Sahab which he hears from grandfather Nihalu, description of the story of Raja Basalu, and an incident where Krishan imagines to be the brave and heroic Raja Rasalu (pp.166-167). Krishan also describes in Seven Summers the beautiful strains of the love story of Heer Ranjha, which haunt him in his love of poetry ever after (pp.211-215). All these find absolutely no mention in
the autobiography though in all probability Mulk Raj must have heard them in his childhood. The reason why some episodes which are not included in the autobiography but are described in the novel needs to be answered - Either they should have been in the autobiography and were omitted for some personal reason, which raises the question of whether this can be done without violating the rules of the genre, or alternatively Anand wants to make the novel look like a novel and therefore builds into the novel some elements which are not strictly autobiographical. The transformation is thus more like picking and choosing episodes, and does not change the basic story structure of the Seven Summers by the inclusion of these incidents. On the other hand, the same effect is achieved in the Pilpali Sahab with a lesser number of incidents. Nevertheless the detailed accounts of incidents present in Seven Summers succeeds in heightening the effect of the life portrayed as compared to the portrayal in the Pilpali Sahab. In Seven Summers for example the incident of Krishan being hit by a stone is used as an authentic base for his inward turn and bent of mind, his sensitivity and heightened awareness. Anand uses this incident to emphasise Krishan's sense of imagination
and his heightened sensitivity to his surroundings. Thus one of his reactions, to the Surgeon's 'cruel', shining knives and forceps when being operated is:

"Helpless under the gas, my brain wheeled and fought imaginary battles with an imaginary knife. One of these aberrations I still remember vividly: A dark, ugly witch with flashing white teeth was coming towards me as I sat by a steaming cauldron. I felt that she was going to throw me into this sizzling pan by rolling me, as I had grown very strong and heavy, across a board. But I was determined that I would dodge her and, putting my leg across her as the sepoy wrestlers did to their adversaries, throw her into the cauldron instead. She was coming. There, I had caught her. Heave, push, strain and lo, I had toppled her over into the pan. She was frying in the grease. And I laughed but - "There now, you will be all right", Colonel Bailey was saying in his queer Hindustani. And the stretcher was being brought to the table, and sleep was creeping into the pupils of my eyes ... And I woke later to find my mouth parched, my nostrils dilating, my heart beating eagerly, my eyes exploring the room to find someone to touch, to contact, to hold. I was beginning to conquer Death".

(SS, p. 158)
The incident is also used by Anand to impart Krishan with a more-than-normal sense of imagination and sensitivity:

"The illness left a permanent mark on me, however, I felt a curious dread of everyone and everything, and become touchy, like a sensitive plant, so that tears would spring to my eyes at the least little thing". (SS, p.161)

This imagination and sensitivity couples with curiosity to make Krishan stand apart from normal children. The same emphasis on personal traits is absent in Pilpali Sahab though the traits are not entirely absent. It is in such emphasis and stress that there is a difference in portrayal between the Pilpali Sahab and Seven Summers.

A comparison of similar incidents in Seven Summers and Pilpali Sahab gives an idea of the novelistic treatment that Anand uses to recreate autobiographical material. The death of younger brother Prithvi, is an important incident in the life of the protagonist in both the Seven Summers and Pilpali Sahab. The study juxtapose the incident 7 to see how the artist Anand

7. The verbatim accounts of this incident as it appears in Seven Summers and Pilpali Sahab is attached as Appendix A.
succeeds in converting a fact of life into fiction, and how
he transforms autobiographical material by the fictional
impulse.

In Seven Summers, Anand succeeds in fictionalizing the
fact of life, by a fine recreation of the incident from the
child Krishan's point of view. Here the mood of the scene is
very artistically developed and it succeeds in creating an
atmosphere of intense seriousness and feeling. In comparison
the incident in Pilpali Sahab is described in a matter-of-fact
manner, where the bare essentials of narration are put together
in a pure, simple, straight forward description. Therefore the
description in Pilpali Sahab shows how Mulk Raj suddenly finds
himself alone at home. In the silent household the child reacts
to the loneliness and begins to cry. Mulk Raj soon forgets his
loneliness in the company of the orderly Clayton and is
excited to receive the gift hamper from Kernel Longdon Sahab.
Only later he sees mother in tears and this pulls him away
from the excitement of the toys and he too begins to sob. In
Mulk Raj's mind, Prithvi's death ultimately means complete
attention from mother because it eliminates a competition for
mother's lap. In effect Mulk Raj feels no loss, but the gain
of mother's attention despite his fear about Prithvi becoming
a jinn or a bhooth after his death.
On the other hand in *Seven Summers* Anand creates the first impression by his introduction to the incident: ".... there descended one day the shadow of an invisible, frightening thing called "Death". The mood is emphasized when we are told that Krishan and Ganesh have spent the whole morning in "little mother" Gurdevi's house. In the Indian content, this practice of sending the children to the neighbours, in the event of a death is quite common. Therefore it succeeds in creating the right tone and atmosphere at the beginning of the incident. Further child Krishan's reaction on entering an empty house and noticing the locks on the residential rooms and seeing the empty cot on which Prithvi used to sleep is very sensitively portrayed. This detailing makes the description more realistically comprehensible and authentic. Similarly Krishan's reactions to Ganesh's presence as a 'strange security' and his dislike of Ganesh's play-acting as father, add to the artistic handling of the situation. The dramatic entry of mother and aunt aqqi in wet clothes, her remonstration at seeing Ganesh and Krishan, her concern not to touch them without purifying herself, contrasted by Ganesh and Krishan running to her, succeeds in building the realistic minute details of the incident. Krishan's reaction and understanding
of Prithvi's death as an absence from mother's lap is not only extremely realistic but a sensitive recreation of the child's point-of-view of death. Here the emphasis is put on the fact that Prithvi will no longer be seen in mother's lap as compared to the slant given in Pilpali Sahab, where Mulk Raj is almost conceitedly happy to have no more competition for her lap. The whole incident builds up with tension from the beginning and reaches a crescendo until mother's entry. Exquisitely does Anand handle the situation by articulating the tragedy through mother:

"For I still carry the taint of Prithvi's dead body about me" (SS, p. 22)

In contrast it is the orderly clayton in Pilpali Sahab who drably brings the event to the notice of the readers, without therefore creating an impact and intensity that mother's words succeed in creating. Finally, the incident is wonderfully resolved. In Pilpali Sahab Mulk Raj is borne away by clayton, while as in Seven Summers Krishan finds solace only in mother's lap and consolation comes in the form of sleep where nothing disturbs the child's mind.

In effect, therefore the incident in Seven Summers is far more detailed, more realistic and more artistically handled
to create an atmosphere and mood befitting the incident of death. The incident in *Seven Summers* leaves an emphasis that is absent in the corresponding description in the *Pilpali Sahab*. It is this difference that we find throughout the *Seven Summers*. However, the basic tone and emphasis on the character of the protagonist and on the meaning of the narration essentially remains unchanged. The one difference is probably in the heightened effect that is caused in *Seven Summers* compared to a subdued bare effect of *Pilpali Sahab*. It is this artistic authenticity that is present in *Seven Summers* which is not seen in *Pilpali Sahab*. Thus the author ingeniously changes the bare and drab autobiographical material into a picturesque evocation of the memories of childhood in the autobiographical novel. The role of imagination in the restricted contours of the real world have been amazingly utilised by Anand to change the seemingly ordinary and normal life into the intensely charged and moving recreation of life.

In the final analysis therefore a tangible difference is seen in the recreation and emphasis that Anand as an artist displays in the autobiographical novel, *Seven Summers*. Without *Pilpali Sahab* it would have been difficult to see the extent of this emphasis and the change that has been brought about.
Again it is Filpali Sahab which shows how beautifully Anand succeeds as a novelist in converting drab autobiographical material into an intensely interesting and extremely readable autobiographical novel. It also shows how Anand has succeeded in being authentic in the portrayal of characters to a large extent. Apart from a few misplaced emphasis on the protagonist's character Anand also creates Krishan with amazing objectivity. Therefore the question whether Anand has reached a different understanding of himself at the end of Filpali Sahab as compared to Seven Summers needs to be answered. One gets the impression however that Anand has nothing different to say in terms of 'end product' in the autobiography. Anand succeeds in producing a novel which is minimally distinct from the straightforward autobiography and therefore it is very likely that he introduces minor changes in detail, absent in the autobiography. Moreover the fact that both these literary pieces, cover essentially the same period in the life of the protagonist that of his young childhood, probably contributes to their immense similarity. In this context it is surprising that Anand chose to write the autobiographical novel, and then the autobiography to achieve the minimal differences that these literary pieces achieve. Probably the corresponding autobiographies of later autobiographical novels in which thought, introspection and understanding characterize growth will yield interesting differences and fulfil Anand's desire to face the truth.