

## CHAPTER-VI

### CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to examine the four novels, Mulk Raj Anand's Seven Summers (1951), Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope (1960), Manohar Malgonkar's Distant Drum (1960), and Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children (1981) from the point of view of how the novelists' personal experiences are appropriated in the fictional form and how such writers either enrich or impoverish their literary creations by making most of both the worlds 'fiction and facts'.

This dissertation attempts to examine the literary genre of the autobiographical novel and to consider some of its distinctive features. It defines the principles of limit and details the extent to which an autobiographical novel should be an autobiography and also the degree to which fictional impulses may be utilized in its creation to be entitled as novel. The study maintains that the autobiographical novel must recreate the higher level of verisimilitude by creating the protagonist in the image of the author; he should pursue the same goal and direction that the author pursues in real life. And at the same time, the study attempts to examine the lower level of verisimilitude signified by the use of episodes, incidents and facts from real life.

Further, the study examines the various ways by which the author tries to transform the facts into fiction by using fictional impulses; and in doing so how he makes an attempt to universalize

the facts of his life. The study also makes an attempt to examine how the author uses ancient myths and symbolism in his novel.

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the most celebrated authors of the older generation in the Indian novelists in English. He is very prolific writer, besides being an art critic and a journalist. He is also well known for his social commitment. He writes in the tradition of social realist.

Seven Summers is the first volume of his seven-volume autobiographical fiction. Seven Summers is compared with its corresponding autobiography Pilpali Sahab. It is observed that Mulk Raj Anand creates the autobiographical novel in the spirit of verisimilitude except for certain incidents which are not mentioned in the autobiography. The fictional element really substantiates and deepens the authenticity of his personal experiences. Anand makes skilful use of the artistic expression to transform facts into fiction .

In Seven Summers, Anand tries to portray 'the contemporary myth of man'. Apart from some of the differences, there are many similarities in the delineation of the protagonist and his parents. The portrayal of Mulk Raj of Pilpali Sahab is an exact replica of the protagonist, Krishan Chander in Seven Summers. But the character of Krishan in Seven Summers is intensely developed by exploiting fictional impulses, whereas Mulk Raj in Pilpali Sahab is sketchy and less detailed. It is the 'sense of smell' with which Krishan identifies female character in Seven Summers. In Pilpali Sahab

it is only aunt Devaki who smells like 'milk and honey' which becomes in fiction a small like 'molsari and motia' flowers. In order to create a romantic atmosphere this change has been made.

Mulk Raj's mother Ishwari Kaur is very submissive and meek who humbly obeys her husband in Pilpali Sahab; but in Seven Summers Krishan's mother Sundari is more forceful and commanding. Thus some of the facts of life, under fictional treatment move away from the real life.

Anand seems to be adopting an objective and unsentimental attitude towards life. However, at times he also becomes sentimental when Krishan says:

*Childhood, oh childhood! How easy it is for one to yield to the slightest happiness and the merest breath of sorrow in one's childhood! And is there any joy as pure or any sorrow as fleeting as that of childhood? What was the magic of those days which is not here today? (p.31, Seven Summers)*

The title, Seven Summers itself clarifies its significance as an autobiographical novel. Anand seems to be tempted to make use of 'fictional license' in this novel also. In order to emphasize the role of the protagonist, Krishan, Anand has used Krishna-myth. Krishan is created in the mould of Lord Krishna. Anand uses this Krishna-myth in a different way, making necessary changes in the original one. We know that Devaki was Krishna's mother and Yashoda was his foster mother. But Anand has made some changes in their

traditional roles by making Devaki, the foster mother of the protagonist who is supposed to be the modern Krishna and transforming Draupadi, to use M.K. Naik's phrase 'into modern Putana'. In this context the symbolism of the Krishna myth seems to be unconvincing. However, Anand's use of language and his artistic ability to describe life vividly make Seven Summers highly readable.

Though the autobiographical impulse has given authenticity to the material in the novel, the fictional impulse has given the necessary imaginative freedom to shape the material into a significant story.

Anand's belief led him to reject some of the features of traditional idol-worship, ritualism, castes, superstitions etc.. He stresses that man should have a complete freedom. In this sense he proposes a 'contemporary myth of man' in Seven Summers.

In the third chapter Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope has been analysed as an autobiographical novel. The protagonist, Ramaswamy is created in the image of the author. Ramaswamy's life is identical with that of the author. Both of them marry to French women and go abroad for their higher studies. Both of them have a philosophical bent of mind. The name of the protagonist like other characters in the novel has a connotative reference to the old myth of Krishna. Though he bears the name of Rama, he is Krishna for Savithri who acts as his Radha.

In the Serpent and the Rope, Rama's quest for Absolute

Truth and his philosophical discussion regarding the Self and Brahman become so dominant that the story of Rama is driven into margin. Therefore, M.K. Naik calls The Serpent and the Rope 'a semi-autobiographical novel'. Instead of writing a separate book on Indian philosophy, Raja Rao has adopted the form of a novel because, Advaitic philosophy is central to his consciousness and his identity. And that is why the hero of the novel and the author become indistinguishable.

The Serpent and the Rope is deeply rooted in Indian philosophy. It depicts man's quest for self-realization. The novel subserves the author's impulse of displaying the writer's proclivity to philosophical disquisition and commitment.

The story goes on two lines; one is the story of the protagonist Ramaswamy and Madeleine and the people who come in contact with him like Savithri, Little Mother, Saroja, etc.; the second is the discussion of Vedantic philosophy which occupies much space in the novel.

Rama takes interest in non-dualistic philosophy. For him all phenomena are unrealities and the only real reality is the Brahmic; one which dwells in our Selves. Thus, The Serpent and the Rope is a journey of the soul towards self-realization. The epigraph written at the very beginning of the novel speaks volumes 'Waves are nothing but water. So is the sea' (The Serpent and the Rope). Similarly Rama argues that the individual soul is

nothing but the Brahman.

The Serpent and the Rope presents the total vision of life. The rich heritage of the Indian consciousness is portrayed in this novel through numerous stories from Indian mythology, history and folklore. Here, Raja Rao tries to connect the past and present, inner and the outer, the old and the new and creates timelessness.

Both Ramaswamy and Madeleine are in search of their separate identities. And this search for identity is modern man's thematic preoccupation or ever obsession. The contingent reality described by Raja Rao in the novel is so enriched with details not only of the situations and places, but also the details of ancient Indian tradition imbued with the quest philosopher and thinker.

In The Serpent and the Rope, Raja Rao has included the well known personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Gautama Budha, Sankaracharya; and mythological personalities like Lord Krishna, Durvasa, Yagnyavalkya, Dharamraj etc. who are famous for their views on life, tradition and culture of the Indian society. Apart from this, Raja Rao makes use of digressions like stories, folklore and myths to explain the central idea.

In The Serpent and the Rope symbols are used not to convey the meaning of Rama's life but to lay stress on love, ritual marriage between Rama and Savithri. Their union represents self-realization. Rama stands for the individual self and Savithri, for the power of devotion. Thus, The Serpent and the Rope is

replete with rich symbols, legends and myths.

Though The Serpent and the Rope deviates from the traditional notion of novel-writing, it is the finest work ever written in Indian Writing in English which reveals the multifarious picture of India and Indian sensibility. Thus, The Serpent and the Rope is a very fine example of the autobiographical novel. In it, we find a real blending of the autobiographical elements and fictional impulses. In other words, Raja Rao's hero is almost a photographic replica of his creator and his preoccupations are identical with those of the author, as we know him. In this sense, The Serpent and the Rope may be said, perhaps to be the finest example of this genre.

Manohar Malgonkar's Distant Drum is also treated as an autobiographical novel. It is an autobiographical novel in the sense that the story this novel deals with is based on Malgonkar's own experiences as an army officer in the Indian Army. Kiran Garud is created in the image of the author. The whole story revolves around Kiran Garud as he is the central figure in the novel.

Malgonkar had no first-hand knowledge of the war, as he had not actively participated in the war. He was in 'a strategic place; the Intelligence Corps' which gave him the chance to come into direct contact with the army officers and the soldiers who fought on the Burma front.

In order to achieve the artistic unity and compactness of structure, Malgonkar makes his protagonist, Kiran Garud to

take part in the active battle. And thus Malgonkar tries to fulfil his unfulfilled desire of becoming an active soldier which could not have been possible for him in real life.

Distant Drum tries to pursue the same goal and embody the same spirit in the fictional work which is the goal and spirit of Malgonkar in real life. Malgonkar doesn't describe the personal life and family background of Kiran Garud. The life of Kiran is portrayed in relation to the military code of conduct. Therefore, in a way we can say that Distant Drum is a fictional documentation of the military code which Malgonkar holds most important in real life as well.

On one occasion, in the course of the novel, Ropey Booker, an officer-turned-businessman tries to give him the big offer but Kiran plainly rejects the offer because he is a devoted army officer who is proud of his profession. Malgonkar also was tempted by <sup>such</sup> offer but he succumbed to the temptation. This change in the character of Kiran artistically contributes to the significance of the central theme. The fact and fiction merge so deeply in the depiction of the army life that the autobiographical aspects are masterly converted into fiction without being noticed. Malgonkar seems to have steered clear of these extremes by stopping short at using his personal experience at a particular stage from where fiction begins. In actuality, Malgonkar becomes a 'boxwallah' but in the novel, he denies Kiran Garud this privilege.



The main theme of Distant Drum is the growth of the protagonist, Kiran Garud as an army officer who throughout the novel remains loyal to his profession as a duty-bound soldier. Apart from the main theme, Distant Drum is a story of the union of lovers, Kiran and Bina Sonal. This is, of course, the romantic aspect of the novel. It also throws light on the ideal friendship between Kiran Garud and Abdul Jamal which has an authentic ring.

Malgonkar portrays ideal friendship between Kiran and Abdul. They join their hands to put down the 1947 riots in Delhi. This description of the two army friends attempting to put down the fires of communal hatred has an authentic ring. In other words, this incident also occurred in the life of Malgonkar. Perhaps Malgonkar wants to suggest that strength of the friendship between Abdul Jamal and Kiran Garud is yet another aspect of the army code of loyalty which stands the test of time.

In short, the delineation of Indian Army life seems to be authentic in the sense that Malgonkar tries to achieve the principle of verisimilitude by skilfully converting his factual experiences of army life into the artistic framework of the novel. In fact, the glorification of the character of Kiran is a digression from the actual truth; but in this novel, this digression befits with the central theme. Distant Drum is a novel where we find Malgonkar mixing his material of facts and fiction in an entertaining manner, particularly his art of developing the plot of the novel.

Malgonkar is a master story teller in the tradition of Somerset Maugham and John Masters. They may be termed as entertainers. And yet, Manohar Malgonkar's case is different in the sense that in his major novels, including Distant Drum, he makes use of his personal life and philosophy in an extremely readable text. His belief and convictions emerge as authentic after making sufficient discount to entertainment value of the novel. Distant Drum is an excellent example which presents a moral contrast between the new code of morality of the politicians on the one hand, and the army code of loyalty and morality, on the other.

Salman Rushdie's Midnight Children is also treated as a new genre in the form of the autobiographical novel. In Rushdie's fiction Timelessness seems to be the major theme. He makes use of fantasy as the device which makes it possible for the novelist to reach the unreachable of human experience. Fantasy is, in fact, what Madhusudhan Rao calls, 'a Time-denying' and 'Space-denying concept'.

Midnight's Children cuts across traditional notion of fiction-writing. The narrative moves backwards and forwards. The narrator refuses to follow the linear method of narration. Therefore, Midnight's Children greatly differs from the earlier realistic fiction. Though Midnight's Children is an autobiographical novel, the story goes beyond confession and it incorporates the story of a whole country. Rushdie mixes facts with extremely fanciful events. In doing so, he indulges in 'fictional license' and breaks away from

the rules of a well-made plot.

In Midnight's Children, the personal life is glorified by relating it with the history of India. It is to be noticed that Rushdie was born in June 1947, but the protagonist of Midnight's Children who is created in the image of Salman Rushdie was born on the historical midnight of 14-15 August 1947. It is explicit that Rushdie has made this change in the date of birth of Saleem to magnify the private life story of the protagonist by connecting it with the historical life of India. Thus, the autobiographical information is embedded in the narration of the history of his family and more picturesquely his life in Bombay. The personal and historical stories are intermixed in such a manner that they are inseparable. The fictional aspect is the imaginative recreation of personal experiences and the individual perception of the larger, national history. This is an inextricably heady mixture of a vibrant and dynamic consciousness.

Saleem Sinai and other midnight's children are bestowed with the gift of the miraculous power of imagination. Rushdie lends him the power to see, to report more than he could as an ordinary man. It is because of this power that Saleem recalls the life story of his grandfather, Aadam Aziz. In fact, Rushdie tries to evoke events which are out of his personal range and the unexpressed thoughts of others. Thus he goes away from the actual truth.

In the final analysis we can say that Midnight's Children

is in the tradition of Tristan Shandy, and Thomas Mann's Tin Drum, a genre of the novel which is concerned with the art of selfconscious narrative itself. In other words, the novel is concerned with the theme of novel writing itself.

Midnight's Children can be said to be the best novel that is best imaginative literary creation, a work of literary art, which is also related to the genre of autobiographical novel. Fact and fantasy, as it were, vie with each other to enrich rather than impoverish each other in this novel.

To sum up, we may say that Mulk Raj Anand's Seven Summers approximates more to real events in the author's life since Anand is a well known social realist. One aspect of this closeness of the personal life and the fictional life is the use of language which is experimental to suit the Indian ethos and environment. Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope, on the other hand, moves away from the personal autobiographical elements and meanders into philosophical abstractions; and so, the novel is sometimes criticised as a no-novel. Manohar Malgonkar's Distant Drum is an autobiographical novel but which may be said to belong to the romantic realism and the novel of entertainment. And yet, the novel depicts in a very serious manner, the author's personal experiences of the army life as well as his commitment to the army code of behaviour and morality just as much as Anand's commitment to social justice.

Finally, Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children is an entirely different kind of novel in the sense that it deploys various narrative techniques to narrate essentially the author's preoccupations with his personal life inextricably connected with the life of his country - or history. In fact, Rushdie's preoccupations of the self and historical facts are extremely problematic, in the sense that they are highly individualistic. And hence, the use of fantasy and 'magic realism' in his novels to project his personal predicament in relation to the historical events in India. In this sense, Midnight's Children may be said to be the best model in the tradition of Tristram Shandy, Thoman Mann's The Tin Drum and which lends an entirely different dimension to the autobiographical fiction.