

CHAPTER - V

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Anand's adolescents like Munoo, Bakha, Lalu, Krishan Chander Azad, all of them belong to the pre-independence India. They respond and react to these socio-historical forces of that time. Munoo and Bakha are victims of the contemporary caste and class system. The British Govt. and other evil forces in village destroy Lalu's happiness. The middle class Krishan tries to understand the historic process of Indian freedom movement around him. These boys react to their circumstances. Bakha and Munoo recognise their tragedy. But they are passive. Their anger is only on the emotional level. Lalu tries to rebuild his life and fails in it. But in this failure lies his success. Poetry and participation in political activity are Krishan's responses to his experiences.

These boys are bitter ~~xxx~~ critics of the ritualistic religion and the dead customs. They wonder at the strange ways of God. They dislike the superstitions. Bakha tries to comprehend the strange behaviour of God. Lalu is up against the rituals. He cuts his long hair. He dines in Musalman's shop. He rejects the unwritten code of conduct prepared by the elder generation. Krishan questions the existence of God who kills his near and dear ones. Bakha and Munoo long

for education. But they are deprived of this right. But life is their teacher. Their experiences outside school educate them about their place and position in society. Lalu's education in highschool gives him * power to express himself in English. Because of this education, he acquaints himself with the western culture. Krishan graduates in college, literature, philosophy, formal education and instruction by some senior friends like Uncle Dev Dutt transform Krishan. He applies his wisdom of heart to his problems.

Education leads to love for the modern life. All these boys aspire for modern life. Bakha and Munoo want to imitate the manners and dress of their British master. Bakha wants flush system as a remedy to his problem. Lalu is after machines. He thinks that modern cultivation systems in the fields and co-education in the schools will solve the problems of our country. He fails in his attempt to organize the masses. His revolt against religion against the British Government make him an ardent supporter of the modern life. Krishan wants the schools which will help the students to grow up. In Krishan's case, love for the modern life shifts to America as they defeated the British.

All these young boys come from Punjab and other northern states. Their consciousness is shaped by the folk songs and the romantic stories of Punjab. The adventures of Raja Rasalu happened some centuries ago in the same Sialkot district to which Lulu belonged Dr. Atma Ram says,

"Lulu's original was Raja Rasalu. The Lulu-Maya of affair echoes the Hir-Ranjha episode"¹

The tales of Raja Rasalu and Heer-Ranjah are oft-quoted by his heroes. They show that the vitality of Punjab rural culture is integral to the consciousness of his adolescent characters.

The gradual loss of innocence leads his adolescent heroes to face new experiences. These experiences harden their life and they establish their identity. Almost all of them receive physical assaults. A slap on Bakha's face directs him to his position in society, Munoo is beaten first by his uncle and then by Babu Nathoo Ram's wife. He runs like rabbit when the violence of the Hindu-Muslim riots troubles him not only on emotional level but actually on the streets. Krishan receives seven stripes on back and brief jail for his participation in Gandhi's

non violent, non co-operation-movement. The villagers beat Lalu for his hair-cut. They abuse him. 'pig', 'dog', 'son of pig', 'rascal' are the kind of adjectives used for almost all his heroes, when addressed by the senior generation. The moment of physical assault is the moment of awareness for them. They understand their position in society.

The social environment puts a number of restrictions on these characters. But they are optimistic. They have a tremendous urge to live their own life. Bakha considers and reconsiders his future with the possible solutions to his problems. The unjust economic system kills Munoo. But Munoo is never tired of a life. He floats on this life-sea with a curious look to comprehend this life. He experiences the life at various places. Lalu is not interested in the mere psychological understanding about his place and position in the Money Ruled society. But he tries to do something on his own. Lalu recruits himself in the army and experiences war in Across the Black Waters. He elopes with the daughter of the land-lord. He tries to organize the peasants against British Govt. He fails in this heroic gesture. But according to Anand, true heroism lies in the recognition of failure. Krishan seeks solace in poetry.

The boys experience the strange world around them. They face, ghaon-moon and ghaon-moon is a typical punjabi word for the state of confusions. Their path goes through various emotional, social, moral confusions. Through these confusions, they mould their identities. In fact, Anand wrote his two thousand pages long confession in order to clear his confusions. This confession is a source book for his novels like Untouchable, Morning Face, Confession of a Lover. There are a number of parallels in the actual life-story of Anand and the portraits of his adolescents.

Anand's boys listen, recite and compose poems. Some companions of his protagonists share experiences with them. His heroes are after idealisations. Bakha is impressed by the poet's talk of redemption. Lalu praises Zhandu for his bravery against Police. He respects the senior leaders in the peasant's movement. Munoo tries to become like Ratan. Lala Kechar Nath, Uncle Dev Dutt, Poet Iqbal, Principal Jag Mohan are Krishan's mentors in his active life.

But all is not well in Anand's treatment of theme of adolescence. There are adolescent girls in his novels. Sohini is Bakha's sister. Munoo feels attraction for Babu Nathoo Ram's daughter, Sheila. Lalu loves and marries Maya.

Krishan loves and loses Yasmin. But all these girls Sohini, Maya, Sheila, Yasmin come as a complement to the protagonist's character. They form a part of the hero's emotional world. Maya adjusts herself to the wishes and plans of her lover. Yasmin loses her life for her intimate love. Anand has not done full justice to these girls as adolescent characters.

NOTES AND REFERENCES.

1. Dr. Atma Ram,

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