CHAPTER - V

THE AFFAIR AND ITS AFTERMATH :
CONFESSION OF A LOVER
Anand has divided this novel into twelve parts. The first part is titled, 'First year Fool' and narrates Krishan's experience of the first day in college. He has successfully passed the Matric examination along with his brother Ganesh. While Ganesh is sent to the Medical School at Agra, Krishan is to go to the Khalsa College at Amritsar. He prefers the Khalsa College to the Dayanand Anglo Vernacular College at Lahore, though the latter is considered to be the hotbed of rebels against the British Government, because of his love for his lovely aunt Devaki.

The thrill of cycling towards the Khalsa college on the first day is described by Anand in his inimitable style. Krishan's vanity makes him jubilant for he is one of the three students to have passed the Matric from the Government High school at Jhelum. As he cycles towards the college to be interviewed for the Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy, he feels happy that he has been freed from the restrictions imposed on him by his parents. Still full of rebellion he knows that he can now
read Gandhi's _Hind Swaraj_ without being reprimanded by his father. Apart from the restriction-free life in college where he can devour as many books as he likes, he is excited at the thought of living with his Devaki who smelt of milk and honey. However, on reaching the portals of the college, he receives a rude jolt when the senior students rag him. The students ridicule the sola topee on his head and the homespun clothes that he wears; they find the incongruity of the dress amusing. Anand shows how the students of the college were intensely aware of the political situation prevalent then in India and how opinions were divided on the greatness of Gandhi. The college is aided by the Maharaja of Patiala and the chief Khalsa Diwan who are supporters of the British government and a number of students like Panduman Singh find Gandhi a Bania seditionist. As usual Krishan's short stature is a subject of ridicule in college also. Though the ragging by students make him unhappy, he is to strike a lasting friendship with a student named Noor Muhammad. Though the reception accorded to him at the entrance of the college by the students is far from pleasant, his interview with the Principal Walters and other professors is a success. To the Principal he proudly confesses that he considers Gandhi a saint. He recites a few lines of
poetry in Urdu he has just made up on the spot. Anand too, while at college, preferred poetry to prose to express his sentiments.

At the college he becomes eligible for the Silver Wedding Fund Scholarship because of his father's meritorious services to the Angrezi Sarkar. Anand's father, Ram Chand, had won the Meritorious Service Medal for his loyalty to the British. It is curious that Anand, who was ashamed of his father's loyalty to the British, did not find it revolting to accept the scholarship meant exclusively for the children of the Army men. Later on while in London Krishan does not hesitate to ask for the Silver Wedding Fund Scholarship from Professor Dicks to do research for the Ph.D. degree. In a letter written by his father while Krishan is in London, he reminds him how he has benefited by his loyalty to the British. His father writes:

We had hoped that you would enter the service of the Sarkar, whom I have served for thirty years, who have given me the honourable titles of Rai Sahib, Honorary Captain, and made me Registrar of the Amritsar Court, and who gave you the Silver Wedding Fund Scholarship for pursuing your studies
in London University, inspite of your joining the Gandhi Movement, because of my loyalty to their salt, for which they have also given me the Meritorious Service Medal. (The Bubble 577)

As Krishan grows up he realises that his father is no more a hero to him and that he does not approve of many of his actions. If he feels ashamed of his father's servile attitude towards the British, he is furious about the manner in which he exploits the helpless Devaki. His father is jealous of Ananta, a handsome young man, and suspects that Devaki may leave her wealth to him. Money is a great consideration for him. Though Krishan himself likes Ananta, he is afraid that Devaki may love Ananta more than himself. For him who has hopes of a wonderfully happy life in Amritsar as a college student, the entanglement of Devaki with Ananta proves to be highly depressing. To get rid of his dark mood he attempts to write a poem forcing his mind back to his buoyant mood of the morning. It is fortunate that he can confide in his newly acquired friend Noor Muhammed. Again and again he is angry with his family. He complains to his friend about his family. His father, he says, is greedy and his mother stubborn and ignorant and worships her gods all day. He knows that his eldest brother Harish takes bribes
and goes to Bazaar women. He accuses his family of making his beloved Devaki spend her money on Ganesh's marriage. He declares that he is fed up with their hypocrisy.

So his anger against his family arises out of his great love for his aunt Devaki. Anand himself did not forget or forgive his family for ill-treating his aunt Devaki. Anand uses often the word 'ghaon-maon' adapted from Punjabi to describe Krishan's confused state of mind. Krishan's friend Noor accepts him as his leader. His father, who owns a confectionery shop, does not show him much affection. So Noor thinks that there are many things common between himself and Krishan. The animosity towards his parents is so deep-seated that it is manifest even in his adulthood. A person who wants to love everyone and learn everything becomes angry, bitter and malicious if he ends up grappling with hypocrites all around. The atmosphere in Kucha Fakir Khanna where he lives with aunt Devaki becomes oppressive. He advises his friend Noor to learn to rebel and tells him that they should condemn the Brahmins and the Mullahs. He concedes that his mother, a peasant woman, has respect for Gandhi and does not really mind his eating in the houses of sweepers.
Anand describes through his Muslim characters how they viewed Gandhi with suspicion. Syed Hassan, a second year student, on being ridiculed for wearing a Scotch tweed suit, retorts that he would wear home-spun Khadi if Gandhi promised equal representation to Muslims in legislatures. Anand wishes to record the names of persons who sacrificed their lives for the cause of freedom and are not known to many. One such person he introduces in this novel is Dr. C. L. Bhatia, who left the Imperial Medical Service because he felt that Indians would have no dignity unless they lived in a free India. Moreover he was eager to join Gandhi's Satyagraha and go to jail. Anand ends the first part titled 'First year Fool' with the arrival of Krishan's maternal uncle Mama Dayal Singh.

The second part of the novel is titled 'Dark Night'. The narrow lane of Kucha Fakir Khana, where he lived during his college days was where his coppersmith brethren worked. He remembers how his father held in contempt his relatives who worked as coppersmiths in small shops. Because of the raging contradictions inside him Krishan continues to feel lonely inspite of the presence of his lovely aunt Devaki. Like school, he feels, college too has little to teach him. Poetry, ignored by everyone because it cannot get anyone a
job in British government, is the only subject which interests him. Anand comes down heavily on the parents and teachers of his time whose ideal of a job for their children is Sarkari service. Even while Anand was in England his father had requested him to come back to India and sit for the Civil Service Examination. He had replied that he felt it would be better for him to be with the outcastes than to cultivate the false life of the rulers of India by entering the I.C.S. or I.E.S., or any other imperial service.

During periods of morbidity during this time Krishan's escape is through poetry. The unconventional poems that he writes do not satisfy him. His adolescent mind is tormented by thoughts of death and ghosts. Again and again he wonders why death has come so early to his dear cousin Kaushalya and uncle Pratap. To make matters worse for him, he does not get the sympathy and understanding of his college friends. Small in stature, he is not taken seriously by his friends. His feelings towards Devaki also undergo a subtle change. He has reached adolescence and is irritated at times to hear the singsong manner in which she greets him. Though he is preoccupied with morbid thoughts, he feels great sympathy for his widowed aunt. Now that he is a young man, he becomes self-conscious whenever hugged and kissed by his aunt. He
feels guilty of his incestuous thoughts about her and realises that she must be looked upon as mother. One feels that Krishan's mother is justified in her accusations against Devaki because she offers him liquor one evening and offers to teach him to play cards. It is surprising that Krishan does not notice anything immoral in her action. While his father maintains a diplomatic silence over the actions of Devaki, his mother, a peasant woman, does not mince words while accusing her of attempting to spoil her son.

Anand does not spare the minutest detail in his descriptions in the novel. Thus one finds him mentioning that Krishan drank liquor from the cutglass tumbler that was stolen by his father from the Officers' mess! When Devaki breaks down into tears, Krishan's heart bleeds but he is afraid to offer comfort in the presence of his mother. Anand has portrayed Devaki in such a manner that the reader never for a moment despises but only pities her. According to Krishan, his aunt Devaki can do no wrong. He is certain that his father has an affair with Devaki and feels that his mother also suspects as much. His mother's animosity towards Devaki springs from her jealousy of having to share her husband with another woman. It is indeed Devaki's misfortune that Krishan's parents arrive precisely at the moment she is
sharing a glass of liquor with him. It is touching when she puts forth the pathetic plea to learn to read and write as she desires to read The Gita. This baring of her innermost thoughts comes as a revelation to Krishan as well as to the readers. The readers, like Krishan, assume that Devaki being an illiterate woman is satisfied with her lot to lead a happy-go-lucky life. Krishan on whom Devaki has left a lasting impression, describes her state of mind admirably.

Anand narrates how the elders of the pancyahat play a major role in making Devaki's life miserable. These elders among the coppersmiths set a strict moral code and are severe on people who stray from the righteous path. Though the censure of the elders has little impact on the menfolk, the effect on the womenfolk is great. Anand vividly describes the heartless manner in which the elders condemn Devaki in the presence of Krishan's parents. Devaki attracts the censure from the elders because she is beautiful and refuses to lead the life of an ideal widow. Even Krishan does not escape the wrath of the elders as he is warned to keep off the Muslims. The elders conclude the meeting ordering Krishan's father to invite seven Brahmins and have a fire burnt with a mound of ghee to purify the defiled household and give a feast to the brotherhood.
If the behaviour of the elders towards Devaki revolts Krishan, their ritualistic belief infuriates him. The narrow-minded elders of the panchayat are unreasonable in their condemnation of the younger ones. The attitude of the elders only intensifies the turmoil raging inside his adolescent mind. He is able to see through the hypocrisy of the elders. They condemn Ananta because he is suspected to be the lover of Devaki. He knows that the elders in reality are against Ananta because he is organising all the poor coppersmiths to form a trade union. He admires Ananta because he openly lives with Janki, whom he has abducted from a respectable household, without marrying her. It may be recalled that Janki and Ananta are fictional counterparts of two of the author's relations (they appear again in The Big Heart). When the elders unashamedly praise his father, he wants to denounce him as a scheming person who covets Devaki's wealth. He has sense enough to know that whatever he says will not be taken seriously by the elders. The elders view Devaki as a disease because her beauty is supposed to breed emotions in men! Whenever confronted with injustice, Krishan feels helpless to fight. The headman of the elders appears to be the very incarnation of God Yama and he himself a weak worm who cannot rise in revolt.
Though reading and writing poems proves a diversion from the external turmoils, Krishan nourishes the thought of going to Gandhi who, he hears, is engaged in the work of emancipating the untouchables. (Anand, himself, could fulfil his desire of meeting Gandhi only much later, in the year 1932). In the meanwhile he has to be content with the company of his friend Noor. However, he finds in Amritsar the lower middle class Muslims more rigid than the Hindus. In Dhab Khatikan, a lane in Amritsar where only Muslims live, the women—young or old—cover their faces when they see anyone pass. Krishan finds that his friend is in no better condition than himself. Noor's father is an overbearing person and Noor meekly submits because he is married and has a child. Anand was outspoken like Krishan in the novel. When the strict Chaudhri, Noor's father, asks him sternly whether he says his prayers regularly, Krishan boldly replies that he does not believe in religion.

Krishan realises that inspite of his aggressiveness and chatter, he is really morbidly shy inside. His anger against Muslim and Hindu priests never leaves him. Though he is against superstition and ridicules Devaki, he can sometimes be an obscurantist, if only out of fear. Sometimes
he himself is terrified of spirits. The study of Persian under Professor Maulana Murtaza Hussain is a great pleasure for him. He feels that the Professor is also, like him, against rituals. Professor Henry is a welcome change from other Englishmen because he believes that Gandhi is right and believes in India's right to freedom. He tells Krishan that he prefers the wisdom of the Rishis of the Vedas and the Upanishads to English lyrical poetry. Anand mentions characters like Professor Henry to show that there were Englishmen in India during that time who believed in India's right to freedom. Professor Henry has nothing but contempt for his fellow Englishmen and it is a revelation to Krishan that an Englishman can dislike his own brethren. His prejudice against religion and priests is so intense that he does not want to read the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins because he was a Jesuit priest! For Krishan, Professor Henry is certainly a new kind of Hindu priest who has not assumed the power which his knowledge gives him or usurped the prerogatives of omniscience.

As with other women Krishan is drawn towards the lovely stepmother of Noor named Nargis. With a fine acquisaine nose and sharp features, Nargis seems to him like Leonardo's Mona Lisa. Anand would like to project Krishan as
the modern version of the God Krishna. In fact his father writes to Krishan:

You were given the name Krishan, because we thought you might live up to the image of the great Lord Krishna, who advised the Pandus to win war against evil, as incarnations, of Vishnu, Shiva and the goddess Durga, set such wonderful example before us, of heroic deeds, of destroying evil, and giving prosperity to worshippers. (The Bubble 578-579)

So the readers find Nargis telling him that she could become a gobini to Krishan, and Krishan feels the warmth of her breasts as she embraces him. To him, Nargis looks like Cleopatra enthroned in Alexandria. If he was not impressed by the seance of his aunt Aqqi some years ago, now he is fascinated by the phenomenon of possession in the lovely Nargis. Witnessing the seance of Nargis, he is inclined to abandon his rationalism.

Anand devotes quite a few pages to the seance and the woman getting possessed. Obviously Anand was greatly impressed in his youth by the seance and could not define the logic behind it. It is also curious that both Muslims and
Hindus believed in the authenticity of the seance.

Krishan's boyhood days are just before the Independence and the relationship between Hindus and Muslims is not in a very cordial state. His father has only recently left the Aga Khan faith and people are not yet convinced that his father has completely left the Aga Khan. Under such circumstances the visit of Nargis to Devaki's house only helps to rouse the suspicions of the Hindus about the loyalty of Krishan's family to the Aga Khan faith. Unwilling to believe the seance nonsense, he thinks that the two women Devaki and Nargis are playacting when they invoke their spirits, as an escape from their misery. He cannot believe that the soul can survive after death and enter another person's body.

The predicament of the head of the Thathiar Panchyat can be understood. The coppersmith community has severed itself from the Aga Khani Ismaili faith. The Hindus have not accepted them back when they want to return to the caste order and the Brahmins have to be appeased with a special religious ceremony performed. As they are still under probation, the panchayat leader does not want to create any complications by associating himself with Muslims. Because
of immaturity or a strong prejudice against his own religion he is disinclined to accept his point of view. His only retort to the panchayat Chief is that his father has eaten beef at the officer's Mess and that Muslims are more loyal in friendship than Hindus. He becomes aware of his uneasy transition from the naivete of childhood and boyhood to youth. He often regrets the loss of childhood innocence. The theme of lost childhood is recurrent in many of the writings of Anand. For being friendly with Muslims, the Panchyat excommunicate both Krishan and Devaki. Anand, in his inimitable style, describes the closed society of the coppersmiths. One has to accept the fact that even today in most villages the elders of the panchayat lay down the code of conduct for the villagers. The readers feel that Krishan is at great pains to vindicate his actions and Devaki's. He is not so generous while dealing with the hardship and annoyance of his father caused by the actions of Devaki. Because of the thoughtless manner in which they defy the panchayat and become intimate with the Muslim family, Krishan's father is summoned to appear before the panchayat and he faces the threat of having his whole family being excommunicated. Anand, however, is justified in condemning the manner in which the panchayat punishes the villagers who stray from the righteous path. In this instance as an
atonement for Krishan and Devaki interdining with the Muslims, Krishan's father has to feed seven Brahmins, who will perform puja for seven days on their behalf! Krishan is furious that the persons who ultimately benefit by the transgression are the Brahmin priests.

The feeling of loneliness and the knowledge that her lover will not be allowed to visit her drives Devaki to commit suicide. The coppersmiths who excommunicated her and Krishan's parents who betrayed her are responsible for Devaki taking her own life. Krishan also feels guilty because he wishes to go away from the filthy lane to a college in Lahore. The death of his aunt Devaki, which is to haunt him throughout the rest of his life, is so shocking that it is better left to himself to describe. Waking up to hear his mother shout that Devaki had ended her life, he rushes to her bedroom. He sees her head dangling to one side with the whites of her eyes shining frightenightly against her once lovely face. He does not wish to look at the face again for fear of spoiling his image of her loveliness. He writes:

My love for her (Devaki) had already become guilt for her death. The whole world would think that I was part of the family which had driven her to
death, by accepting her excommunication. The shock of losing her had dried up my bloodstream. There were no tears in my eyes. Only fumes. And my heart pounded heavily. My breath came and went as though in hysterical hiccups. (Confession 96)

Krishan is not only sad that Devaki has died but begins to fear that her ghost may come and possess him to remind him of his guilt everyday. The night before her suicide, Devaki presents her plight to Krishan. A sense of insecurity has come to her with the knowledge that Krishan will be sent away from her to a college in Lahore and Ganesh, her adopted son, has no intention of leaving the hostel at Agra and living with her. Added to this sense of loneliness, the shame of excommunication by the brotherhood seems to hang heavily on her. She cannot comprehend how a widow who wants to lead her own life can be branded as a bad woman. The effect of his lovely aunt Devaki's death is poignantly narrated by Anand in many of his writings.

With the suicide of Devaki the second part of the novel comes to an end and the third part of the novel is titled 'The Tramp and the Girl'. The untimely death of all the three members of the family namely Kaushalya, uncle
Pratap and aunt Devaki in quick succession makes Krishan brood again on death and question the existence of God. He writes that death has cast its shadow on his life for many years and he never forgives either his parents or the coppersmith brotherhood for the death of Devaki. He does not mind his father being in love with Devaki but despises him for coveting her money.

Anand describes in great detail Professor Henry's discussion on death with Noor and the skeptical Krishan. Anand has ably portrayed Professor Henry philosophically accepting the inevitability of death in a typical Hindu manner, quoting profusely from the Rig Veda. Anand never lets slip an opportunity to air his views on God and religion. So Krishan tells Noor:

I think the Hindu prayers are just a way of drugging oneself with temple bells and ritualistic recitations. People go to the temple to escape from mundane worries and go back to money-making and their petty lives. Their small ambitions! Even the Mullahs preach sermons in Arabic, a language which many Muslims don't understand. (Confession 107)
Krishan, who feels that poetry is the only way out for him, is thrilled when he learns that his friend Noor will introduce him to the poet Allama Iqbal who resides at Lahore. He is excited at the prospect of meeting Yasmin, the sister-in-law of Noor. Yasmin plays a great part in the life of Krishan. He approaches the Philosophy Professor Sodhi to ask him the meaning of life and what he should do to calm himself. Anand gives a vivid description of the arguments in the Philosophy class between the Professor and the students.

A day before the Id festival Krishan visits Noor's house and meets the seventeen-year-old Yasmin. Anand describes poetically their first meeting. The slim swan-waisted girl, Yasmin, with her big eyes and almond-coloured face completely captivates him. Yasmin seems to be the younger incarnation of Mumtaz, the mistress of Harish, Krishan's brother. Her innocence and pert manner of speech greatly attract Krishan. The fact that Yasmin is betrothed does not deter him from entertaining fond thoughts about her and it seems to him that she also responds to his advances. Krishan feels that Yasmin is aware of his admiration for her. However, the fact that Yasmin is betrothed leaves him sad and frustrated. For consolatory advice, he seeks Professor Henry
and the Professor who had understood Krishan very well advises, "You are potentially a young god. You are spontaneous in your reactions. Good to discard the conventions and be fresh and simple and innocent" (Confession 118).

Krishan wonders if Yasmin is like the other women he has fallen in love with. He thinks of Mumtaz, Kaushalya, Dr. Chunilal's wife Sumitra and Devaki with whom he was ardently in love in the past. He cries out his doubt:

In the innocent indulgence of my fantasies about all these women, in my spontaneous contacts with them, in what I called my love for them, I had burnt like a 'moth on the flame'. My spirit had fed on love and love and more love. And now Yasmin? Oh my soft heart! So easily susceptible to the female! Perhaps it had all begun with hugging mother tight. (Confession 123)

The sense of loss that Krishan feels at the death of Devaki is to an extent alleviated by the new relationship with Yasmin. Anand declares that Krishan always needs the presence of a woman to reassure him. With this Muslim household Krishan feels more at home than in his own
household. After seeing a film that night, he takes a vow that he will unashamedly follow the example of Charlie Chaplin and always worship women. He writes in Punjabi, his mother-tongue, a poem addressed to Yasmin who has gladdened his soul. He is very proud to discover that he can write poems in his own mother-tongue. However, Yasmin departs for Lahore only after sending to Krishan a farewell letter in Urdu verse wherein she confesses her love for him. It can be said that with Yasmin begins Krishan's first real love affair. Earlier, the women he was in love with were older than him and had not responded to him in the manner he wanted. It is unfortunate that the Hindu-Muslim animosity came in the way of the love of these two like-minded people. The news that Yasmin is departing to Lahore makes Krishan again relapse into despondency and again he wonders why God should create human beings only to make them suffer. This is a page taken straight out of the life of Anand. This is how Anand recalls the whole thing in his autobiographical essay, 'Why I Write':

Then I fell in love with a girl, the young sister-in-law of a college friend of mine, and she wrote a letter to me in the form of a poem. So I answered
back with a poem of my own, in Hindustani. And, after writing quite a few of these calf-poems, I imagined I had become a poet. (11)

So engrossed is Krishan in his misery that he remains unmoved when informed that his mother is ill. Only when Prabha reminds him that she is after all his mother, does he feel the prick of conscience. Though his mother has been cruel in her dealings with Devaki, she has shown preferential treatment to him. As he was not physically strong, his mother always stood by him. He regrets having neglected his mother and writes about her:

Perhaps, she (mother) was darkminded, blunt and harsh and cruel in her denunciations, because she was a peasant woman. But, apart from the Kali in her, there was also the Lakshmi, the mother who had brought us all to the world, given us whatever she had to eat, saved money from the housekeeping to give us occasional pocket money, devoted herself to the family and had taken nothing at all for herself. "May I be your sacrifice" were the words she had uttered every time any of us was afflicted with an illness. (Confession 130)
And through the character Prabha, Anand extols the virtues of mother. In an eloquent manner Prabha tells Krishan that there is a mysterious connection between a mother and her child. This sermon of the humble and illiterate Prabha makes Krishan realise how arrogant, gauche and egotistical he has become. He still feels hatred towards his mother because of her treatment of Devaki. When the illiterate hillboy comes and tells him in a worried tone that his mother is groaning with pain, Krishan realises that he has all along considered his mother an ignorant Ayah. He has treated her so long as a servant woman not responding to her show of love and affection. Remorse makes him rush out of the house in search of a doctor and he prays to God, in whom he does not believe, to make his mother get well. This is how Anand describes this phase of his own life, in his autobiographical essay, 'My Childhood':

There were several crises of conscience before this acceptance took place. For instance, going to school and learning English fairly well, riding a bicycle, wearing a western hat and preferring double roti, I had begun to think of my mother, who was then learning Hindi from my father, as our illiterate servant. Then, one day, when she was
not well, I had to go and get medicine for her; and I realised that, though she was illiterate, she was not my servant but my mother, the only mother I could have. (39)

The third part of the novel titled 'The Tramp and the Girl' ends with Krishan realising that there must be a strong and mysterious bond existing between himself and his mother. Anand in this part of the novel has admirably portrayed a mother yearning for the love of her son and the insensitive son remaining unmoved.

The fourth part of the novel is titled 'Pilgrimage'. In this part the reader finds that Krishan continues to be in a tormented state of mind. His ambition to become a poet has not materialised and he has not been able to reconcile himself to the loss of his aunt Devaki. Reading a battered edition of Kulliyat of the poet Mir, presented to him by Yasmin, is the only consolation for the wretched Krishan. While on the subject of Mir's poems, Anand digresses and narrates the whole story of Mir's 'The River of Love'. Anand wonders why in Persian, Urdu and Punjabi poetry love is shown always to end in tragedy. Anand suspected that many Urdu poets had written about love without actually having experienced the passion. In English literature and films
there is always the hope of the realisation of love. He had read W.M. Reynold's *Mysteries of London*, which his father had, and he has always believed that to love is not a crime. Krishan frankly admits that his susceptibility to the charms of women cannot be denied. He is well aware that Hindu dharma enjoins every young man to regard a woman as a mother or sister. He honestly admits that certain emotions of his are far from moral.

Krishan feels proud that he is only one among his friends to have found a girl to love. He resolves to blaze a new trail by defying parental authority and marrying a girl of his own choice. Then he hopes he will be qualified to write about love. He waxes eloquent on the subject of injustice done to women and confesses to Noor that he adores women. According to him women are more tender than men and have sympathy for others. The men murder the souls of women with their moral laws and false pride. He confesses that he looks at women with desire. He entertains immoral thoughts against the pretty young wife of Ralia. He used to contemplate on the shapely form of the hillwomen who came to fetch water from the well. He cannot understand why anyone should avoid admiring a woman because she is married to another!
With the hope of meeting the poet Iqbal and Yasmin, he goes to Lahore with Noor. In those days Lahore, the capital of Punjab, was a kind of Paradise for the youth. At Lahore Yasmin informs him that her wedding to a railway guard has been fixed. The meeting with poet Iqbal is more rewarding as he is able to clear his mind of the many doubts that used to assail him. Iqbal, whose ancestors were Brahmins, declares to Noor and Krishan, "Scratch an Indian, whether he be born a Hindu or a converted Muslim, or a Christian, or a Sikh, and under his skin you will find the Vedantist. And we are probably the most soulful people, in the world. But Hindu religion has destroyed everything of the Vedic spirit, through its closed caste system and ritual" (Confession 150).

Anand describes in great detail the interview that takes place between Krishan and Iqbal. When Krishan goes to see his mentor Lala Kedar Nath at the Government College hostel, he little suspects that he is courting trouble. Lala Kedar Nath has become a terrorist and believes in Lalla Rajpat Rai more than in Gandhi. Unwittingly Krishan gets involved in the bomb making of Kedar Nath and lands in police custody. Along with Kedar Nath, Badri Narain and Sri Ram, he is charged with being a party to the conspiracy of waging war
against the King-Emperor. Though not really involved in making or throwing bombs, he does not want to plead innocence. Lalla Lajpat Rai is present on the first day of the trial when Krishan with others is presented to the Magistrate. Krishan realises that he has become a hero without wishing to be one. Though a firm believer in non-violence, he finds a new energy coming to him at the thought of violence. He is moved to see the terrorists pay the price for their love of their motherland. As they are taken to jail in a closed police bus, Krishan is elated at being involved in the national struggle. Anand was to an extent involved in the freedom struggle and much of what is presented as Krishan's experience is drawn from his life-experience. The meeting with Lala Kedar Nath, the bomb incident and the consequent confinement in jail, and the Yasmin affair are all episodes from the author's life.

In the prison cell, Krishan's thoughts are all about Yasmin. Anand's description of Yasmin borders on the obscene when he describes Krishan thinking of her:

The image of Yasmin seemed to dissolve the tension about the inevitable drama of the trial. She was mute. Demurely she had draped her innocent face
with the sequins of her dupatta, so that she was half-revealed half-concealed. Did I imagine this because I did not wish to see her sad? The ends of her muslin tunic were rustling over her firm young breasts, the two unripe mangoes which I hoped one day to suck. (Confession 164)

The angry father threatens to turn Krishan out of the house and disown him as he does not want a rebel in the house. He firmly believes that the Angrezi Sarkar is invincible. However, Krishan's mother supports him and again demonstrates her native wisdom in her arguments with her husband. She points out to her husband that the British Sarkar has not done anything in return for the years of loyal service rendered by her husband. To the frightened Krishan, his father appears to have been transformed into a demon with red eyes. His father slaps him on the head and he collapses near his mother. The behaviour of his father has the worst effect on him. Vividly remembering the incident he writes movingly about the unbridgeable chasm that arose between him and his father. He feels that they can never now talk to each other as there will always be a curtain of hatred separating them. The attitude of his mother undergoes a change after her illness and she is no more an aggressive
woman. Krishan feels that whatever difference there was between them has vanished. He feels guilty for having involved his mother in his turbulent life. The fourth part of the novel ends with Krishan becoming frustrated at Yasmin's inability to come with him to Shalimar as her father will not give her permission because she is shortly to be married. The thought that he will not be able to marry Yasmin because of the Hindu-Muslim feud makes him miserable and on the spur of the moment he decides to board the Frontier Mail bound for Bombay. He does not take leave of Noor as he fears that he might be dissuaded from running away.

The fifth part of the novel is titled 'Monsoon'. Krishan has boarded the servants' compartment of the Frontier Mail as a stoway and wonders what he will do in Bombay. He has fled from Lahore because he is convinced that he cannot persuade Yasmin to elope with him and he feels like a traitor to be bailed out leaving Lalla Kedar Nath to face the trial. In the Frontier Mail he is fortunate to make the acquaintance of an Englishman, Reverend Thomas Williams, who not only buys a train ticket for him to Bombay but also gives him an introductory letter to Mr. Horniman of the Bombay Chronicle. Anand takes the opportunity to inform the readers
through Reverend Williams how the British devastated India. Reverend Williams exclaims, "I tell you, the White Sahibs have done nothing. Only imposed the machine civilisation on people with the sword. Money is the white man's god. Exploitation is his religion! They have sapped the energy of the people everywhere!" (Confession 186).

Another Englishman that Anand mentions is Horniman who apologises to Krishan for the bad behaviour of the British in India. Horniman himself is arrested for writing anti-Government articles and is on bail. He is a journalist and a follower of Gandhi. Krishan feels a wave of nostalgia for Peshawar and the friendly Pathans when he meets the Pathan chowkidar of the Bombay Chronicle office. The Pathan chowkidar Ladh Khan allows him to stay in a house in Dadar which he has rented out to a couple. Lakshmi, a demure little woman, accidentally touches his hand while handing over a glass of water. He is thrilled by this touch and wishes that she would take her dupatta so that he could have a look at her face. He declares that nowhere has he found so much of filth, scum and decay as in the slums of Bombay. Becoming friendly with Abdulla Malik, the cook of Mr. Horniman, Krishan wonders why the Christians and Muslims gave their friendship so readily. Horniman becomes the first
mentor in Bombay for him. A more mature person now, he analyses his opinion of God and concludes that he cannot reconcile himself with the God who has always failed him. However, he admits that perhaps there is a cosmos, designed by somebody. He confesses that he refuses all religions because they forbid love-making. Anand brings a new character named Mr. Marmaduke Pickthall, a friend of Horniman. This Englishman, a new convert to Islam, is engaged in translating the Koran from Arabic to English. Krishan feels that there must be much wisdom in the Koran if an Englishman is translating it. When he goes to Pickthall's house he wonders why he has converted to Islam. He writes:

Though, why had he (Pickthall) become a convert from one faith to another, when it would have been better to be like me, believe in everything original, fresh and new, at all levels, I could not fathom. Even mother was more coherent in her illiterate acceptance of all the gods of all the religions. I wondered if I had not unconsciously accepted her simple acceptance inside me, inspite of my questionings. (Confession 205)

Krishan also meets in the house of Pickthall a young
Parsi woman who has also has converted to Islam. Her name is Dastur and she is secretary of Pickthai. As can be expected he admires her also and offers to teach her Persian. Though Dastur cannot be called beautiful, he feels drawn to her because he is ever susceptible to women. Though Yasmin has gone into his blood and he cannot forget her, yet her image is blurred by the image of Dastur! His stay at Bombay comes to an end when there is a letter from his father asking him to come back as the college is about to reopen.

The sixth part of the novel is titled 'The Soul and Body of Action' and begins with the return of Krishan to Amritsar. Loneliness and the thought of Yasmin make him attempt to write a novel with the title 'The Absent One'. Earlier, on his arrival from Bombay, he had received a letter from his father forgiving him for his misdemeanours. His father wants him to continue his studies and compete for Extra Assistant Commissionership or get a King's commission in the Army. He considers that the ambition to be a poet is a childish one and that only rich landlords can afford the luxury of being poets. A very practical man, he is of the opinion that Philosophy has made his son mad. The father and the son hold opposite ideas about what constitutes a successful life. While for Krishan success in life is
becoming famous poet, his father thinks that getting an employment with the Government is the ideal life. Krishan feels that his father continues to deny him everything in life and decides to be a rebel. Only when he starts writing a novel does he realise the difficulties involved. He realises that in writing a poem, only verbal expression is necessary whereas in prose narratives there have to be dramatic scenes and a plot. He expresses his frame of mind during this period:

Oh how impressionable is the adolescent! How the growing youth in me was trying to find, through the fumbling with emotions, and in the awkward situations I faced as a lover, freedom from my despairs, my loneliness, and my abject slavery to Yasmin! But though the hundred different betrayals of the day shocked me, I clung to the world. How often I tried tricks, including prayer, to get calm! (Confession 239)
He finds that the power of words possesses him and that he can make words dynamic. To him the mere art of putting words on paper is exhilarating and inebriating. He feels that the study of human relations is superior to philosophy. He considers the day wasted if he is not able to write something. He finds the sons of the middle class Amritsar merchants very uncivilised. They are crude and small-minded and view Gandhi with suspicion. He is thrilled to know that Annie Besant is to address the students at Khalsa College. Anand describes in detail the visit of Annie Besant to the college and the speech she gives to the students. She exhorts the students to follow Gandhi and the students are impressed by her oratory. Annie Besant's lecture has profound effect on Krishan and her visit to the college proves disastrous to the college. Anand takes time off to give the details of how people from various walks of life were influenced by the teachings of Gandhi. The members of the Governing body of the college meet and suspend the Principal Mr. Walters, Professor Henry, Professor Teja Singh and Professor Bawa Harikrishan Singh for allowing Annie Besant to address the students. Krishan with other students stage a satyagraha demanding the immediate withdrawal of the suspension order. The 'dharna' or the sit-down strike staged
by the students is termed as 'satyagraha' by the press. Action is demanded by some national leaders against the management of the college. At the same time Gandhi welcomes the protest against the impurity that has crept inside the Sikh shrines. Krishan, after taking part in the dharna, feels proud that he has shown the way to his family by being the first to follow Gandhi. He is arrested along with his college-mates for staging the dharna. He stoically suffers the brutal beating by the policemen because Gandhi has asked the people to follow non-violence. The sixth part of the novel ends with the arrest of Krishan. Professor Sodhi has understood Gandhi well and he cautions the students that satyagraha requires proper preparation of mind. Krishan's mother with other women of the neighbourhood also joins the satyagraha. Meeting different kinds of people, he declares, "I realised that, in our country, there were only two kinds of people, saints and sinners, those who had changed their minds and those who had no minds to change" (Confession 267). Though a firm believer in non-violence, Krishan resists the attempt by a Sub-Inspector to arrest him. He bites the hand of the officer and kicks him furiously. He acts in such a manner because he knows that his mother will be taken to task by his father if he is arrested. Again this incident is taken from Anand's own life. This is how he recalls it in
his autobiographical essay 'Looking Back':

I was not non-violent however. We students went on strike after the dismissal of our English Principal, who had called Annie Beasant to lecture in our college. I had to go to jail for a month with other rebels. When I came out, my father raised his hand on my mother for indulging me.

(Looking Back V)

The seventh part of the novel is titled 'Spring Air'. Krishan and the other students are lodged in jail for staging the dharna. Anand describes the political situation in India during that time. The Government was not in touch with the mood of the people of India. Anand writes how the Britishers, by keeping their distance from the Indians, failed to feel the pulse of the people. The British rulers in each district, relying on information from their officers and sycophants, ruled from the sequestered shades of their bungalows in the civil lines. They were blissfully unaware of the sad plight of the native population. Anand admirably points out how the British Government was living in a fool's paradise. The British ignored the poverty, the misery and the squalor of India and took advantage of the confusion
prevailing, without caring to alleviate the suffering. Anand comes down heavily upon the callous attitude of the British Government and declares:

They ruled us, somehow, anyhow, mostly for their own good, from the civil lines, the kutchery and the cantonment. But for all their efficiency, they were ghosts, and seemed to have lost the capacity to imagine what we wanted or even to wonder at our behaviour, or why we asked questions. They lulled themselves into insouciance by pretending that their bearers and cooks and babus had great affection for them and the British Raj. (Confession 273)

The British could not understand how Gandhi could make Indians, beaten for generations into moral weakness, people of courage by asking them to be non-violent. The British who had only contempt for the Indians expected Indians to break down in every crisis. Anand, however, concedes that among the despicable British were some white Sahibs who were farsighted and sympathised with the Indians.
Unhappily married, Yasmin yearns to be with Krishan again. Alone with his sweet-heart Yasmin, on the edge of the river Beas, he becomes an ardent lover. He describes the scene with great passion:

Now I could feel her heaving breasts under me. I could sense her legs parted under the weight of my maleness. And I smothered her with kisses, above the bosom. Then I took her left nipple visible under her muslin tunic into my mouth, sucked it and was going to bite it but desisted. I was trying to control the ardent Punjabi heart squanderer in me with the tenderness of the Urdu poet. (Confession 301)

Krishan imagines that his love Yasmin and himself are incarnations of Laila and Majnum, Shirim and Farhad, Heer and Ranjah.

Anand could describe intimately the love-making if he so desires:

I tore the buttons off her tunic near the bosom and slobbered my way from the left nipple to the right, caressing the lovely, warm, sweat-covered
protuberances. I recalled how I had to be kept off mother's breasts as I wanted, even in mature childhood, to suck her for milk. Only now, after all those years, had I the chance to fulfil that foolish urge again. (Confession 301)

The eighth part of the novel is titled 'The Examination'. Krishan has made a pact with Yasmin that as soon as he has finished his final examination he will take her away. For a fleeting moment he thinks of suicide if Yasmin's sister does not hold out any hope of his getting Yasmin. For a minute he wonders whether he will consume poison, or hang himself or drown himself in a river. These thoughts vanish in a flash because he remembers his success in the college and his vanity is inflated. Anand always describes in detail how it is always the unfortunate wife who suffers in an Indian family. His own mother had to bear the beatings of his father whenever he was angry. Yasmin who is married to a Railway Guard much older than her is miserable. The Railway Guard has mistresses and ill-treats Yasmin after coming home drunk.

He comes to the conclusion that only death can bring him the ultimate freedom. He is obsessed with the idea that
the ultimate solution for the miseries of life is death. He does not believe in life after death and so does not accept his mother's words that one would be punished for the sins committed in this life. Once he decides to commit suicide, he begins to consider everything around him as sacred. There is an increased show of affection towards his friend Noor. He envies the freedom of existence of the beautiful butterflies and loves the colour of every sweet pea. It is indeed touching to read the thoughts that go through Krishan when once he decides to commit suicide. When he makes up his mind to commit suicide he is surprised at his tears. He understands that the tears are from self-pity and out of pity for Yasmin and his own mother who always dotes on him. Unnerved by such thoughts he postpones his plan of ending his life. Ironically it is Mama Dayal's teaching which is fatalistic, leaving everything in the hands of god, which encourages him to commit suicide. So on a full moon night he finally decides to end his life as he is certain that there can be no reunion with Yasmin. Tying a rope to the rafter of the verandah on top of the terrace of his house, he sits down to write a farewell letter to his friend Noor. At that exact moment, fortunately, his mother arrives and he gives up the intention. It appears to him that his mother is the angel of life who has come to save him, for it is his mother who will
suffer most by his death. He thinks that telepathy must be a fact and that his mother and Yasmin have conspired to save him. He wonders if there could be unseen influence at work. He wants to understand religion properly and seek the meaning of prayer. He wonders if God exists and writes:

Maybe, there was a God, who had decided, inspite of my revolt against His very existence, to be merciful. And He had felt that the punishment He gave me was too dis-proportionate for my crime of disbelief. Or He was punishing me properly by condemning me to live and suffer for my bad deeds.

(Confession 334)

To the confused Krishan the thought comes that if he writes a poem about his state of mind, his mind will clear up! Accordingly he invokes the help of the goddess of music, Saraswathi. Interestingly Saraswathi is the only Hindu goddess Krishan accepts. He wonders if his love for Yasmin is really a divine one. He confesses to the corroding doubt that he really wants the pleasure of physical love. He is aware that he loves himself and his pleasures more than he loves Yasmin. He fears that he is a megalomaniac. He wants the experience of making love, but did not want the burden of companionship. Though such thoughts arise in him, he wishes
to rise above his animal instincts and get rid of the lust from his body. He wishes to go to Mama Dayal Singh because only he can teach him to purify himself. This chapter of the novel ends with Krishan’s resolve to elope with Yasmin.

Part Nine of the novel is titled ‘Perfumed Garden’ and in this chapter Krishan’s friend Noor thinks of a plan to bring Yasmin and her child to Kashmir for a reunion with Krishan. He is happy with the anticipation of meeting his beloved Yasmin again and that too in the happy valley of Kashmir. He is so happy that he exclaims that there can perhaps be God after all who designs everything. Though he refuses to believe in God, he imagines in his dreams Yama, the God of Death, and Chitragupta, the accountant of the God of Death! The ninth part of the novel ends with Krishan receiving the news that his beloved Yasmin has passed away suddenly and he is sure that it is not a natural death and that her husband has murdered her.

Part Ten of the novel is titled ‘Something Black in the Pulses’. One finds Krishan in a morbid mood and again contemplating suicide to escape from the miseries of life. He cries out to God in whom he does not believe and declares that He has betrayed all. He cries out, "God had betrayed us
all. He had deceived us with minor joys and then left us to stew in the juice of our sweat and tears and sorrows. This included the oppressors, who were also the slaves of their demoniacal impulses for power over others" (Confession 369).

Krishan boldly tells the elders who have gathered around his father that he hates the Agha Khan because he spends the money donated by the coppersmith brotherhood on his studs of race horses in England. He openly accuses his father in front of the elders of being secretly in love with Devaki and betraying her in the end. He is afraid that his mother is inviting her husband's wrath on herself by supporting him. When his mother tells her husband that it is natural for a mother to defend her son, her husband becomes infuriated. He kicks his wife and slaps her head and torso. Krishan tries to protect his mother and is dragged away by his father and slapped on the head. His mother collapses on the floor and Krishan falls beside her and buries his head on her lap. He is humiliated by the ill-treatment and runs to the terrace in an attempt to commit suicide by leaping from there. Fortunately the elders prevent him. Remembering that day Krishan writes how his heart was suffocating with the unappeased arrogance and disdain of the elders. He remembers with bitterness how he was punished and humbled for defiance.
What hurts him most is the fact that his innocent mother too has been penalised for no fault of hers. The punishment received by his mother makes him leave home.

The next part of the novel is titled 'Friendship'. Krishan is full of abhorrence for the elders of the coppersmith brotherhood. They had mutely watched his father kick his mother and these people thought themselves to be the guardians of religion and the custodians of propriety. Walking alone on the streets of Amritsar, he is filled with nostalgia. The P.B.N. High School reminds him of the English Inspector of Schools who mercilessly beat Mohkam Chand. When he passes the spot near Kotwali he remembers the seven stripes he received from the Havildar on the orders of the Anglo-Indian Inspector of Police, Mr. Beatty. He also remembers how his mother cried and slapped Mr. Beatty. Suddenly he decides to go abroad and pursue Western education.

Anand gives the reasons for his leaving India in the early autumn of 1925, in the autobiographical book Apology for Heroism. He declares, "The immediate cause of my impetuous decision was that my father hit my mother in an argument about my having gone to jail in the Gandhi movement
and having fallen in love with a Muslim girl from Lahore" (Apology 45).

Krishan requests Noor to bring his mother to the Golden Temple so that he can plead with her to raise money for his intended trip abroad. He does not wish to meet his demon father. He requests his mother to bless him and allow him to go to England. His mother gives him five hundred rupees that she has saved and promises to give him more money after pawning her earrings. The Principal, Lala Jag Mohan, is generous enough to write out a cheque of three hundred rupees as an indefinite loan and also presents him an overcoat.

The last part of the novel is titled 'Going Away' and it is a short chapter. Krishan wants his departure to England to be known only to his beloved mother and Noor. But to his dismay he finds that Noor's whole family and Mama Dayal Singh are at the railway station. His mother breaks a coconut, puts the saffron mark on his forehead and gives him Ganges water to drink. Krishan hastens to add that all these rituals of his mother has no meaning for him and he tolerates it at the request of Mama Dayal Singh. As the train moves his mother asks him to write to his father and says that he
may forgive him for going abroad without obtaining his blessing. Krishan also decides to write to his father and thereby end the conflict with him.

As usual, the main incidents of the novel are straight from the novelist's life and have been referred to or described in detail in his different autobiographical writings. Matching event to event and character to character between the novel and the author's life-story will be interesting; just two such instances of the parallelism are given here. The two main events which serve as milestones in the course of the hero's life are his experience at the police station which serves to root him firmly to the nationalist cause and his departure for England which alters the whole course of his life. This is how Anand describes them in his autobiographical essay 'Looking Back':

These (stresses caused by the feeling his father was a servant of the Britishers who oppressed Indians) were to become permanent after I got seven stripes of the cane from the police in Amritsar, in 1919, as I had wandered out of home to see what the curfoo was about.
A mentor of my youth, Lala Kedar Nath, follower of Lala Lajpat Rai, initiated me in the school of treason and I learnt to make a bomb. But my learned adopted uncle, Dev Dutt, told me about Gandhi: that the Mahatma said one must not hit back.

I left home and sought the advice of the poet Iqbal. He asked me what I wanted to do. I said "I want to follow in your footsteps and study philosophy in Germany". He said: "My footsteps will take you to Germany. But you don't know German. Go to London. I will give you letters to friends". And he gave me a gift of Rs.100. My mother wept as she gave Rs.300 stolen from the housekeeping. I left home without telling my father and caught an Italian boat from Bombay with the help of B.G.Hormiman, Editor of Bombay Chronicle. (V)

Thus Anand leaves one in no doubt about the nature and identity of the main character. A novelist normally is like a ventriloquist; what one hears is his muffled voice passing
through the mouth of his character. But Anand throws away the fig leaf of fiction and faces and talks to the reader directly, and as the novel progresses, the borderline, already thin in his novels, between autobiography and fiction totally disappears and one reads the novel with the full feeling that one is reading his life-story. No wonder Saros Cowasjee says about the novel, *Confession of a Lover*, "The book's theme is Anand's many loves: his love of political and social freedoms, his love of Gandhi, his love of poetry, and most of all his love for Yasmin" (184).