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The Survivors Eternal Search for Human Existence

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Human existence mean freedom of thought, liberal life and wholeness of life. These concepts are very important and primary in common man's life. According to the theory of existentialism every person is naturally free. Through his free thinking, a person gives meaning to his existence. The freedom of the individual is determined by different elements. However, man is the creature of circumstances and circumstances control the condition of human being but every decision is not according to the circumstances rather it may be reactionary. The modern life is full of complexities. The person is in such world where he can not do what he wants. He is forced to do what he does not want. In capitalistic society a man is not regarded as a living entity rather he has to accept the role of a cog in the machine. A common person demands only his existence. He is in search of truth but what he gets-only advices. The ugly face of modern life can be changed only through the alteration of contemporary circumstances. And when a person does revolt against the establishment then naturally it creates imbalance between a person and establishment. Novel is the genre of literature that emerges from the imbalance between society and human being. 'The novel deals with the individual, it is the epic of the struggle of the individual against society, against nature and it could only develop in a society where the balance between man and society was lost, where man was at war with his fellows or nature in a capitalistic society'

Gurdial Singh concentrates in his novel ***The Survivors*** on the primary questions like free thinking, the contradiction between an individual and society. Through the self respected Bishna, he calls for freedom from cultural subjugation. This novel is a saga of a person who has free thinking. He lives with self respect and at the same time he does not attack on other people's honour. He wants that whole humanity should live happily. The self respecting person has a revolutionary bent of mind and consciousness for his identity.

Bishna, the protagonist of the novel, belongs to working class.

He is rare individual because he believes in culture and hard work.

He has to face hardship because of his self respect. However, he neither know how to fight with establishments, nor lives in the hope of revolution, nor compromises with state and society. His demand is justice and his rights, which denied, make him angry. This dissatisfaction and anger takes the form of tragedy. The clash between reality and dreams begins from this.

The whole matter was that the state wanted to get Bishna's house in the name of law. Bishna says that he has bought this house after spending a lot of money and even according to court, the owner of the house is Bishna. But the feudal king who is slave to British Govt. asserts that the house of Bishna is needed for the progress of the market. He offers some money as the consolation but Bishna does not agree with him. Bishna fights with state but the state is all powerful. The state takes the help of police for possession of the house. Bishna is treated not as a common man but as a rare criminal. A case is registered for not cooperating with the police. Bishna and his 'brother Bhagta get three month's imprisonment and a fine of hundred rupees as a punishment.

The root cause of tragedy is his conflict with social establishments. The new relations emerging out of changing economic conditions are against him. Bishna is an ideal hero of Gurdial Singh. His idealism lies in the negation of state and the so called human relationships. The society will collapse in a minute if we apply his values to it. Bishna believes in complete liberty. He has a hatred for salvation. He does not know the conceptual meaning of liberty. He lives fearlessly, it does not matter whether his gestures are liked or not by the society. He lives with high self esteem, to preserve this he can put his heart and soul.

Bishna appeals to the minister for justice that as house has been possessed by force. But he does not get any satisfactory answer. He is humanistic, that is why he fights with injustice. His gestures are full of determination. There is no possibility of dialogue or compromise. Two ideologies cannot go hand in hand.

His single mindedness can be seen in his discourse. In high court, he becomes angry when the magistrate calls Toti Mall as 'Seth Ji' and him a labourer. He is the representative of working class. He does not accept the elite group that has devalued working class. He negates the caste system.

When Surjan, the landlord says to him, "Oh ! labourer where are you ?" Bishna becomes angry. This rare type of self respect makes him rigid, obdurate in the eyes of the society. Hard labour and honesty is the base of his freedom. He does not work for any body's sweetwill. Had he been aware of the conceptual understanding of freedom in politics, he would have reached its peak point. Through the character of Bishna, the novelist not only shows a rare individuality but also the society to which he belongs.

Bishna is a representative of the working class having deep sympathy with them. He rebukes the landlords but he helps 'Budhe' till death. Bishna is against hypocritical love, affection and sympathy. When 'Hatia' sympathises with for him, he becomes angry.

The meaning of his life is hard work and revolt against feudal society. His is an undefeated soul and a fearless personality. He is free and revolutionary. Life to him is like a game and fighting with administration is his hobby.

* He lives in present and does not care for future. His struggle with establishment is his religion. He is humanistic. He does not compromise at any cost. Inferiority complex can not come near him. He is against slavery. He is the real supporter of poor and the needy. His existence is a barrier for exploiters. He has deep sympathy, kinship, love for poor working class. He does not have any principles nor any ideology. He learns by his experiences. He can clearly see the social reality that is divided into two parts.

He depicts his personality by his relationship with working class whose exploitation is his own. His hatredness for rich and dishonest shopkeepers and businessmen is so intense that it can be seen clearly in case of persons like Seth Goka! , Shiv Kam,"Thaman Mall", 'Toti' and 'Tholla' are rich and disliked by Bishna. They are the worshipper of money and making money is their sole motive. To exploit others, to possess others property is a part of their living style. They are considered unhuman and immoral by Bishna because they make money with non-humanistic ways. The hatred is reciprocal. Bishna hates them and they dislike him. They are afraid of Bishna and consider him rigid, quarrelsome but Bishna is a microcosm of love, humanity and sympathy. His behaviour with children is child like. He plays childish games with Kala and Maghi. His relationship with 'Rama Akali' is exemplary.

Bishna does not love money. He preter humanistic values to materialistic things. Human beings are of prime importance to him. His wife Daya Kaur is also a kind hearted lady. The love of money separates a person from human values. He wishes to end all the desires for money.

Bishna's nephew Maggi is also representative of Bishna's ideology. His views match those of his uncle. Maggi also does not care for any person. He hates rich people and loves humanity. He wants to destroy the exploiters. Bishna's views on established political and judicial system are clear. The law is made by the Govt. Officials like A.D.A, Market Officers ministers for their own profit being slave to money. They are merely puppets who dance to the tunes of their seniors. They do not have their own identity. Bishna does not like the cowards who walk on the same path, are beaten, yet do not learn from experiences.

Bishna neglects the state and law. He believes that the rights can be availed by force and not by request. He faces the Market Officer and police bravely. He is revolutionary and humanistic.

Bishna is a dare devil. The person who is free cannot be afraid of anyone. He requests the minister but he changes his style very soon. He calls a spade a spade very bravely in front of that minister. He openly disregards the political system and law. He is Obstinate to set his rights. He defaces the so-called secularism of law. According to Dr. T. R. Vinod, The negation of law is his sublime gesture. "

Bishna does not hesitate to fight with state. To think about profit or loss is not his business. He does not repent for his actions. therefore, some critics consider him a living entity. Dishonesty is far away from him, that is why he could not succeed in any business. He hates the rich businessman not because of their caste or creed but because of their dishonesty. He does not establish relations that are based on money. He is in the favour of social change in established society.

Bhagta is his soul mate. He looks after him. He loves his children. He prays to God for their happiness. He takes responsibility on his shoulders. But when Bhagta comes in favour of the rich businessmen, he separates himself from Bhagta.

He does not like this gesture of Bhagta and remembers this for the whole life. He has great love for the poor and labourers. However, Hateia a funny character, is close to Bishna. He tells him the whole secret of the lady he has bought. When Kannia tells Bishna that Haria is going to die he becomes very sad. The melancholia can be seen in his eyes.

After the death of Daya Kaur, he becomes very sad. When he sees the grand Bangalow of Toti Mall his heart gets beyond control and is sad to see his house undertaken by Govt. He shatters totally When Kartari says, 'I cannot make chapatis for the so called relative Bishna. He takes the support of wine and wants to murder Tholla. In the end, Bishna who fights for justice, dies. He fights for justice and his rights till death, however, he becomes weak in the end. The adverse circumstances and complexities of life make him weak."

Externally, he does not bend but at the internal level, he is shattered, First time when he goes to prison, it does not matter much to him. But at the second time he loses his enthusiasm. Now he does not try to possess the home. After the death of Daya Kaur, he becomes weak. Which leads to decline from the peak point of revolutionary consciousness. He tries to kill Tholla. In reality the root cause of his fall is that his revolt is at individual level. He is not aware of the collective efforts at a political level. He fights with state and power all alone.

In nut shell, it can be stated that the protagonist Bishna has liberal thinking, and he fights with established political and judicial system. He hates rich and dishonest businessmen, at the same time he has intense love for poor, workers and labourers. Bishna has all the qualities of revolutionary leaders. It seems that the sole motif of Bishna's life is to fight with establishment. He has a progressive and humanistic bent of mind. According to Prof. Puran Singh, though, he is defeated but he turns out a true Sikh of Guru.