

CHANDIGARH IS TALKING ABOUT

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A novel Austrian writer

Film producer and author Andreas Weber is sceptical about the EU, yet believes there is no alternative to it

Shimona Kanwar/TNN

Chandigarh: Austria has taken over the Presidency of the European Union. To commemorate the event in the city, the Embassy of Austria in India, 'Saar Sansaar,' Indo-German Friendship Society and Alliance Francaise presented a reading session with the Austrian writer and film producer Andreas Weber.

In his first-ever visit to the city, Andreas seemed sceptical about the formation of EU. "The entire project is capitalistic and business-oriented. Actually it is a part of globalisation that believes in outsourcing. However there is no alternative," he feels.

Dr AL Mehta, chief editor, *Saar Sansaar*, has translated Andreas' works in Hindi. Disclosing the development of his first novel, *Lanz*, the author says, "When I was ten years old my father's friend narrated a true incident of a German widow who was tortured during the World War II. Her head was tonsured as an act of punishment by the Nazi regime. The story often haunted me till I decided to pen it as my first novel."

Inspired by Ernest Hemingway, Joseph Conrad, *The Great Gatsby* by F Scott Fitzgerald and Schopenhauer, besides some Austrian writers, Andreas switches voices from first person to third person. Unlike an 'authorial' voice, the story is sprinkled with the author's autobiographical elements. In fact, the characters are a projection of the author himself.

"The characters in my story are often journal-

ists. As I am fascinated by crime and suspense, my stories weave such interests as a piece of fiction," reveals Andreas.

Starting his career as a journalist, Andreas made some documentaries on Austrian writers. One of his best research works and documentaries was on a pen friend of Ernest Hemingway, Fritz Habeck. "After an arduous job I could find this person who was a renowned author once upon a time, but his professional decline turned him bitter. I shall be working on his biography," notes Andreas.

Though he has a conventional approach towards story telling, he has no desires to follow experimental writings. He also aims at writing about subjects that make people think. "I write in my native tongue, German, this helps in spontaneity. My setting and background is generally Austria with a picaresque landscape. However, novel writing is a challenge in itself," notes the author.

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